

CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR 2003

OPENING TIMES

Volume 20 Issue 8

AUGUST 2004



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

GTR MANCHESTER PUB OF THE YEAR - THE ARDEN ARMS

DOES NATIONAL GLORY BECKON FOR STOCKPORT HERITAGE PUB?

AFTER WINNING the local CAMRA Pub of the Year Award, Stockport's Arden Arms has now scooped the Greater Manchester title as well. This means that the pub will now go forward to the 'Super Regional' round in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year contest, one step away from the final itself.

This Grade II listed building has remained essentially unchanged for 150 years or more, and has been a well-loved pub for much of that time. In more recent times, though local drinkers watched as the pub entered a spiral of decline, culminating in the eviction of one set of tenants by Robinson's. Happily those days are now firmly in the distant past and the pub has been restored to its former glory – a much-used cliché which just happens to be true in the case of the Arden Arms.

Those responsible for this transformation are Joe Quinn and Steve King who took over the pub in late 1999. They made an immediate start with a thorough redecoration and spruce up, and followed this with a comprehensive programme of restoration which now sees the pub gleam and sparkle much as it did during its heyday under the long-term tenancy of Jack May. Real fires in the winter months only add to the timeless appeal of the superb local.

Joe and Steve made their names when they owned That Café in Levenshulme, which became something of a gastronomic oasis under their tenure. Unsurprisingly then, a high-class food operation was introduced where well-cooked and imaginative food, 'restaurant food at pub prices', now adds to the pub's many attractions.

Foremost amongst those attractions has to be the superbly kept Robinson's ales. Unicorn and Hatters are the mainstays, although these are joined by Old Tom for the winter months and the current seasonal is also usually available. All the beer is invariably in immaculate condition and it is no surprise that the Arden Arms is once again a fixture in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide.

Winning the regional title is the latest in a long line of CAMRA awards for the Arden. This year's regional competition was particularly strong with contenders such as the Knott (City Centre) and Stalybridge Station Buffet also in the judging.

Steve and Joe are of course overjoyed with the award. "We're very pleased, surprised and happy, it's a real honour", they told *Opening Times*. "Actually it's amazing as we've only been here four years, and only had a pub for four years. We'd particularly like to thank our dedicated staff and great customers"

This well-earned and deserved award will be presented on the evening of Saturday 4 September when a great night of celebration is in prospect.




RETURN OF THE NWAFF

MANCHESTER GETS ITS BEER FESTIVAL BACK!

After a two year sojourn in Burton, CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival returns to Manchester in January 2005 (26 - 29), with twice as much beer, an extra day (Wednesday) and a new venue - the New Century Hall on Corporation Street, under the shadow of the CIS building! The Festival hosts CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival, but with 100+ biters as well - and ciders, perries, and a huge range of draught and bottled foreign beers there's sure to be something for every taste. Fuller details next month.




6,900 CIRCULATED THIS MONTH

In AUGUST'S OPENING TIMES ...

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Icicle Jimmy Ale 4.6%
 eXSB 5.5% Blue Bullet 4.5%
 FlatbaC 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003,
 Brewing Industry International Bronze Award winner 2004)
 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for
 Mild, Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
 Pacific Bitter 3.8% Flying Zebra Best Bitter 4.3%
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PUB OF THE MONTH AUGUST 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	31				



THE STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA Pub of the Month for August is the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport.

This long-time keg only ex-Wilsons pub was acquired by Congleton's Beartown Brewery in December 2001 almost overnight transformed itself into one of the most enjoyable and respected cask ale outlets in the town, and was duly rewarded in July 2002 with a first local Pub of the Month Award. The Navigation then stormed on to win the local Pub of the Year Award (presented the following February) and the Regional Pub of the Year Award in August 2003. Everything about the pub had been improved, and it still had separate lounge and vault. It is nevertheless in the range of well-kept quality beers on offer that the pub really scores. In came six cask ales from Beartown Brewery. Bearskinful and Kodiak Gold are permanent bitters and the superb stout, Polar Eclipse, is also a permanent beer, the rest of the Beartown range rotating among the other handpumps – and such is the demand that a seventh pump was soon needed. To this have been added frequent guest beers and Real cider and perry (at cellar temperature) have also been successfully introduced – with a cider and perry always available and even more available when seasonal demand is there. Prices are keen too, with the beer price per pint depending on strength. The other draught beers are all imported German and other European offerings, Krombacher & Erdinger Wheat complimented by Belgian Fruit beers and a select bottled range. Nothing 'bog-standard' here! This would only have been possible with the right commitment from Beartown and especially the right people behind the bar. Angella Lindsay, together with daughter Chantal has run the pub with impressive efficiency – offering a warm welcome to the many new faces the pub has seen, and never losing the feel of a true locals pub, popular with discerning customers of all ages. The cosy beer garden at the back is also proving extremely popular.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 19 August (note early date) when a full house is expected. Get there early if you want a seat.

The Navigation is well served by public transport. In particular bus 203 will drop you very close.

The Stockport & Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month is decided by democratic vote at monthly branch meetings.

PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF OT - AUGUST 28



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Lollo Summer Love
Greats of English
Literature Special
3.9% abv | Northern County
Superb Session Ale
3.8% abv | Crabtree
Mid-Range Bitter
4.5% | Lansdale
Treston Strength
4.9% |

August Competition

Name the seven beers that have so far been produced at Facer's Greats of English Literature series.

Answers to the email or postal address below to be received by 14th September 2004.
 The winner, drawn from the correct entries, will receive 6 bottles of bottle conditional Facer's Lansdale 1927. Winner will be chosen on 16th September. You must be over 18.

Facer's Brewery, 6 Knoll St Industrial Park, Gt. Clowes St, The Cliff, Salford M7 2BL, email dave@facers.co.uk

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

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, or *.tiff AND you MUST include hard copy back-up. For colour adverts please ring for details first.

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Well done to the Arden Arms for winning the CAMRA Greater Manchester Pub of the Year. Of course, the pub now goes forward to the next stage of the national Pub of the Year contest. How will it fare? Well, I don't yet know what it will be up against but I really do think the Arden has that extra star quality to go a long way in the competition. We already have one national winner under our belt (the Nursery, Heaton Norris) and one runner-up (the Railway, Portwood). Will Stockport get a third gong? Time will tell. However, win or lose, this latest award again testifies to the strength of the traditional pub scene in the town. I have heard that Stockport council might be looking at some way to promote this - here at *Opening Times* we are ready and waiting to help.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Alan Hurdle, via e-mail:

After reading the POM article in "OT", I have just visited the Legh Arms in Openshaw for the first time in many years. I can endorse that the Black Cat mild was excellent and the Horray Henley also very good. I did not try the "other" Moorhouses beer on sale as it was my works meal break! I got the feeling that this was a pub that was trying a little harder than most in this area and deserves support. My usual works venue, The Grove at Clayton, will be losing some trade as I will be returning to the "Legh" several more times.

From Brian Kemp, Macclesfield:

I moved to Macclesfield from London 30 years ago. In the intervening years I have observed the gradual destruction (sorry, improvement) of many of the fine buildings in the centre of the town. Macclesfield must surely be the only town in the country with a by-pass that starts in the town centre! I am now given to understand that the latest desecration planned by Joseph Holt's brewery is to that fine old Victorian building, the Queens Hotel, opposite the railway station. Built on Albert Place in 1874 it is the first view most visitors have of the town when they get off the train (of course that is when there are any!!). Holt's in their wisdom apparently believe they can improve their profits by remodelling the pub, including the frontage, if they can get planning permission, to attract a wider and younger trade from across Cheshire. Apparently they believe everybody in the area is rich. I think they must live in a parallel universe! As if we haven't already got enough trouble in the evening in the area around Park Green from late night drinkers emerging from trendy bars. Holt's seem to think it would be a good idea to have another one around the corner on Waters Green. If they had any sense they would turn it into a good quality small hotel offering short-stay bed & breakfast accommodation with a small bistro-style restaurant. Of course I'm not a businessman so I probably don't understand these things!

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OPENING TIMES ISSUE 244

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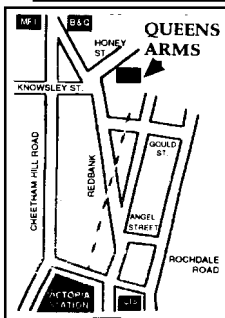
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NEW BREWING GIANT

As we went to press, news was emerging of the creation of yet another global brewing giant. Molson of Canada was agreeing merger terms with Coors of Colorado, also family run.

This would create the world's fifth largest brewer and while the significance of this might not be immediately apparent to UK drinkers, there could be major ramifications. The received wisdom in some parts is that the new company will concentrate on its lager brands but Coors is also a major UK player, having purchased the old Bass brewing interests. A change of direction for Coors could see these put up for sale.

Closer to home, super-regional Greene King has purchased the community pubs run by Laurel Pub Company. A number of these are in the north west so Greene King cask beers could become more widely available locally.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

More news of seasonal beers from the local family brewers.

Robinson's – currently available is Sunny Jim (3.8% ABV), a light refreshing beer with some caramelised Demerara sugar used in the brewing. It has been very enjoyable in local outlets such as the Arden Arms and the Pineapple, Heaton Lane (both Stockport). From early September look out for Kick Off (4.2% ABV). This is described as a "full bodied light mahogany coloured beer" with "an all-malt recipe for added fullness and flavour matched by a generous addition of hops for bitterness and aroma". There will be added ginger, too, for an extra 'kick'.



JW Lees – the current seasonal is Scorchers (4.2% ABV) a light fruity beer, perfect for summer.

The brewery has also launched a bottled version, too. Next month will see the launch of an autumn seasonal, Ruddy Glow (4.5% ABV) described as a "rich ruby coloured beer, brewed with a high percentage of crystal malt to give a sweet taste and a tantalising hint of liquorice". Pubs such as Rain Bar in the City Centre and the ever-excellent Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton will have this.

Hydes – there's quite a lot going on at Hydes. This month sees the launch of a special to mark the Olympic Games. 'Fit as a Fiddle' will be a 4% ABV golden beer brewed using Challenger hops. This will be sold alongside the current seasonal, Tickety Boo (4.1% ABV), a light and crisp summer beer brewed using American Liberty hops. A recent sampling of this at the Nursery really did live up to the description and it seemed an ideal summer beer. Next month will see Over The Moon (4.5% ABV), another autumnal ale described as a "special warming seasonal ale, brewed with just a hint of natural berry juice". Hydes' are also planning a series of pub-based beer festivals to

mark this year's Cask Beer Week, running from 20 September. The pubs will fall into three bands. Some will sell their usual range plus one beer from an extra range including Fit As A Fiddle, Over The Moon, Manchester's Finest and 4X strong ale. Others will sell their standard range plus all of the extra beers while those in the third group will sell their standard range, all of the extra beers plus guest beers from selected micro and other brewers. More on this next month.



Cains - this Liverpool-based family brewer, trading locally at the Gothic in Gatley, has Triple Hop out as the current seasonal. This 4.5% ABV beer is brewed using three hop varieties to create a distinctive taste and aroma. They also have an autumnal beer out in September. This is the 4.5% ABV Cains Red, described as "A full-flavoured ale with a unique ruby red colour derived from the addition of natural berry juice. Flavourful and highly quaffable."

Cains owners Sudarghara and Ajmail Dusanj have scooped one of the country's "UK business Oscars" for reviving the fortunes of the brewery. The brothers – who took the ailing Merseyside brewery back into profit within two years of purchasing it – added another award win to their impressive haul over the past 12 months by winning the North West title of "Entrepreneurs of the Year in the National Business Awards, sponsored by mobile 'phone giant Orange. Ajmail and Sudarghara were announced as winners at regional dinner and now have the opportunity to compete to be National Entrepreneurs of the Year at the award finals, which will be held in London in November. Sudarghara Dusanj said: "Cains is a fantastic Liverpool company and my brother and I are proud to have re-established the business as a flagship enterprise on Merseyside."

MICRO MAGIC

This month's early copy date meant that we weren't able to contact as many breweries as usual. We'll be making up for it next month with a full report on all the local micro brewers, including last month's promised report on new ventures in Wigan and Oldham.

Phoenix – out soon is the excellent clear wheat beer, White Tornado (4.3% ABV). Excellent for the summer months. The continuing work on the brewery is now in its final stages. Phoenix have also taken on a new free trade rep, Andy Richards. Another rep, Matt Jackson, is currently hospitalised following an accident in the Isle of Man TT races.



Pictish – the new beer this month is Siren (5% ABV), described as "a dangerously drinkable strong pale ale. Clean crisp malt flavours lead to a dry bitter finish with a robust hop character."

Brewer Richard Sutton tells us that he is still brewing flat out to meet demand.

Bank Top – another very busy brewery. There's a new beer out called 'Bikes, Trikes and Beer'. This is described as a very pale, almost lager-coloured brew but which is still full-bodied for its 3.6% ABV strength. Bank Top have now installed a further three fermenters to boost production.



Millstone – Windy Miller (3.8% ABV) has been a huge success and may now become a semi-regular beer. In the pipeline is a strong beer, brewed to meet demand from the brewery's West Midlands free trade accounts. True Grit will be 5% ABV and pale and hoppy, in the Millstone style. The hop varieties had not been decided when we spoke to Millstone but are likely to be 'New World'.



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12-3, 6-9.30 Fri; 12-9.30 Sat; 12-8 Sun





FESTIVALS.... FESTIVALS... FESTIVALS

I was quite impressed with the so-called '201' festival of the other week (Smithfield, Swan St. Mcr, Lowes Arms Denton and Cheshire Ring in Hyde. Its difficult to pick 'a winner' when there were good beers on offer in all three venues - and with well over 100 on, one could only sample a tittle or two, but I think the Cheshire Ring just edged it with beers more suited to my palate. Pictured (top) is Duncan hard at work at the Cheshire Ring (his gaff) and below the garden stillage at the Lowes Arms.

Forthcoming in late August are Idy & Sal's Festival at the Crescent (26 -30), and a 'town-wide' festival in Ashton with the bulk of the Real Ale pubs participating in some way - including some keg pubs dipping their toes into the cask fold - on from 27 - 30. The Duke of York, Romiley starts a day later with a beerfest, and there are several scheduled for early September, details of some of which can be found throughout this issue.

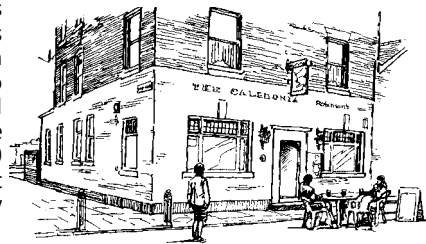
So National Winter Ales is returning to Manchester (Jan 26 - 29, 2005). Not before time, I hear you say. Well after two years absence when the Council sold the venue out from under us, long drawn-out negotiations with New Century Hall (under the CIS complex) have finally born fruit. The hall being a modern function venue does not perhaps have quite the period charm of Castlefield's Campfield Market but there are a number of outstanding advantages. More space - which means roughly twice as much beer and therefore more bitters and milds as well as the stronger stuff, stouts & porters. More space - and that means more people accommodated which should eliminate the 'round-the-block' queues of previous years (except probably after 8 on Friday!), many more toilets (hooray!). The usual suspects should be back, Cider & Perry, more food stalls and what is almost guaranteed to be the largest range of foreign draught beer under a single UK roof (I will see how many are at Olympia's Great British Beer Festival - just to make sure!). OT will be covering plans for the event as they are revealed.



**BEERMONSTER
PUB OF THE SEASON
(SUMMER 2005)**

A well merited and almost certainly overdue award - which but for an

accident (to me) would have been made in June, goes to Alan & Louise at the Caledonia Hotel, in Warrington St., Ashton. A fine town-centre Robinsons Pub which serves excellent food (for which it has won numerous awards) alongside excellently kept beers, it manages the feel of a community pub whilst serving a busy town centre. A regular fixture in the Good Beer Guide, its fine little patio beer garden has won it awards in the Ashton in Bloom competition. One of the relatively few Robinsons Pubs that persevered with Frederics (now replaced by the very good double hop) it also features the current Robinsons seasonal and Cumbria Way in addition to Unicorn (Best) Bitter. I plan to present the award at about 6.30 on Saturday August 21. It should be a very good evening.



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2002
Wobbly Bob
Gold



2004
Wobbly Bob
Bronze



Unlike last time, I've managed to get out and about quite a bit this month. Last time I reported that the **Prince Albert** in Edgeley was closed. No sooner had last month's *Opening Times* hit the streets, it reopened. Outside it's been spruced up very nicely. Inside, though, there's still no real ale. Cask beer, though, is on sale at the recently re-opened **Jolly Crofter** further up Castle Street, where **Boddingtons Bitter** is on handpump.

IN CHEADLE HULME

However the big news this month has to be the opening of the **John Millington** on Station Road. Hydes deserve a pat on the back for a job very well done. The quality of this pub (which was never in doubt in my mind) is a real put down for the local nimbys who campaigned against it. After my visit, I thought I'd take a look at some of the other pubs in the area. I've already written about the **Cheadle Hulme**, and my recent impressions remain very high. The beer, **Holt's Mild**, **Bitter** and seasonal (when available) is about as good as it gets, in my opinion, and the pub is pleasant and comfortable. What more could you want? I also made a rare visit to the **Governor's House**, the area's only tied outlet for Nottingham-based family brewer **Hardy & Hansons**. It was quiet when I called, and though it might lose some trade to the **John Millington** it will still be packed at weekends. There are four cask beers on sale. Two banks of handpumps dispense **Hardy & Hansons Best Bitter**, the darker premium (4.3% ABV) **Olde Trip** and the seasonal, which when I called was a superb beer called **Guinea Gold**. All three were in top form and I see that this pub has **Cask Marque** accreditation. **Boddington's Bitter** is also sold. Finally, I popped into the **Church** across the road. This pub has been doing the business for years now - excellent **Robbies** beers (**Hatters**, **Unicorn** plus either the seasonal or **Old Stockport**), a tempting menu (and I can vouch for the quality of the food) all in a cosy, cottage-style pub - but don't overlook the excellent vault.

TO THE HEATONS

It popped up to **Heaton Chapel** to see if cask beer had yet put in an appearance at the **Chapel House** (it hasn't) and took the chance to try out the pubs on **Heaton Moor Road**.

The **Elizabethan** is still serving a range of well-kept, if fairly safe, beers. When I called - **Shepherd Neame Spitfire**, **Brains Rev'd James**, **Boddies**, **Wells' Bombardier** and **Greene King Old Speckled Hen**. I tried the **Rev James** and it was on top form, and nicely cold for a hot summer's day (although too cold for some, I suspect). The pub itself is nicely appointed both inside and out and they also run beer festivals from time to time. Definitely an asset to the area.

Almost across the road is the **Plough** where the beer range now seems reduced to just **Tetley Bitter** but down the road is the real star turn. This is the **Crown**, a terrific multi-roomed pub which, though altered over the years, still has a very traditional feel with lots of dark wood and etched and stained glass. Obviously a well-used community local, the room at the back left has a memorial to a recently deceased regular, this is one of the best pubs in the area. Two cask beers were on when I called, **Wells' Bombardier** and **Boddington's Bitter**. I tried the **Boddies** and it was some of the best I'd had for a very long time.

The other outlets in **Heaton Moor** are all keg. Mainly new-style café bars (although I'm told a new development on the corner of **Shaw Road** will be selling cask beer) there's also the **Moor Top**. I really don't know why they don't sell real ale here but at the moment all that greets you is a forlorn, unmarked handpump amid an array of keg fonts. A lost opportunity, I think.

OUTDOOR DRINKING

While in the **Heatons** I walked down to the **Nursery**, where all the beer is now on handpump, and tried the new **Hydes' seasonal**, **Tickety Boo**. Very enjoyable it was, too, especially as I drank it outside overlooking the bowling green. This got me thinking about how more and more pubs have outdoor drinking areas these days. Here are some of the best I've seen this year...

In **Offerton** the **Emigration** has a very good area at the back, well-maintained and nicely planted. My visit was let down by some indifferent beer, though. **Edgeley** has the **Royal Oak** on **Castle Street**, a hugely improved pub with good **Boddies** and **Holts**. A lot of work has gone into the yard-cum-garden here and it looks a treat.

Two town centre pubs also stand out. The **Arden Arms**, which does everything well, has quite a spectacular garden in part of the courtyard at the back of the pub and for something small but perfectly formed, try the **Swan With Two Necks** on **Princes Street** where a lot of thought has gone into turning a small yard into something special. Both pubs sell a range of well-kept **Robinson's** beers.



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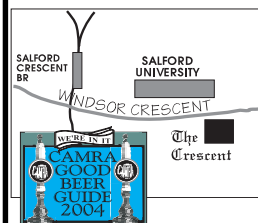
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THE JOHN MILLINGTON

THIS LONG AWAITED £2 million-plus development by Hydes finally opened its doors to the public on Monday 12 July. The Grade II listed Millington Hall on Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, has been restored and extended to create what will surely be an award-winning pub for the Manchester brewers.

The architect is Mike Maddocks who this year won a CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Award for his work on a pub in Nottingham, and looking at the John Millington, you can see the feel he has for what makes a pub work.

The multi-roomed interior makes extensive use of reclaimed materials with a generous use of old pine plus etched and stained glass. Of particular note are an impressive stained glass top-light in the dining area and stone gothic arches. Unlike some conversions, here you can certainly see where the money went. Also of note is that the pub is largely smoke-free with just two designated smoking rooms at the front.

At the back is a large dining area which was certainly well-used when I called. Also proving popular are the extensive outside drinking areas.

The bar is also reclaimed but in mahogany rather than pine and pride of place is taken by banks of new handpumps looking very handsome in polished wood with brass banding. Four cask beers were on sale when I called and these were Hydes Mild, Light, Bitter and the seasonal, Tickety Boo. At £1.85 for the Bitter, the prices were pretty reasonable for both the pub and the area. Quality was spot on and I was impressed by the obviously well-trained bar staff.

I also got the chance to speak to landlord Tim Cutting who, with wife Clare, has moved north to take on the pub. Tim previously ran pubs for the Wizard Inns pub company. He ran three pubs for Wizard during his time with them, including the Red Lion in Wendover, and gained Cask Marque accreditation in all of them. He's very keen on his beer and is delighted that cask bitter is one of the pub's biggest sellers with about 6½ barrels sold in the first week. Once he's established at the pub he would like to persuade Hydes to let him stock a guest beer and he is also keen on the idea of a beer festival. Hydes obviously have a safe pair of hands at the helm here.

The John Millington is, I think, destined to become a major asset to the Cheadle Hulme pub scene - very much worth a visit. JC

PUB NEWS



In Bollington, the Church House is under new management - more news next time. In Higher Hurdsfield, the George & Dragon has reopened with Dave Trotter, a former customer and local, taking over on a five-year lease. On opening only one real ale from Storm was in evidence. However I have since been informed that three real ales are now available, including the ever popular Bombardier - good luck to Dave. In Macclesfield, the Durham Ox has also re-opened, no further details available yet.

The residents of Alderley Edge are celebrating a victory in winning the battle to save the Royal Oak. Macclesfield Borough Council has rejected a development company's application to build flats on the site and the developer's appeal has now been turned down by an independent inspector. Well done to all of those who supported their local pub, especially since there aren't many 'real pubs' left in Alderley Edge.

From our Congleton reporter: the Farmers Arms is selling Bass & Worthington. Further down West Street, the Staffordshire Knot appears to have stopped selling real ale - the handpumps were there, but no pump clips and the only bitter available was Tetley Smooth (or whatever it's called). Pleasingly the pub was pretty empty. The Bull's Head had Hyde's Light, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and seasonal Cloud Nine on offer.

The Counting House was back to its old Thursday night form of not having any guest beers available, however the Spitfire was in good nick. Yates Wine Lodge in Park Green, Macclesfield is being turned into an American bar and grill. All the old signage has gone and new fitted, it looks nearly due to open shortly, I don't think there is much chance of there being any real ale here.



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A ROUND IN THE TOWN – 20 YEARS AGO

Completing our celebration of *Opening Times*' 20th Birthday this is the third of the 'Round In The Town' features from 20 years ago. This one covers Openshaw (and environs) and first appeared in the August 1984 issue. It was a valiant one-man tour conducted by Leigh Musselwhite. As before, the article is followed by a 2004 update.

As with the Clayton crawl featured last month, the aim of this crawl was to boldly go where CAMRA members haven't been for a long time!

Unfortunately they still haven't. So on my own with restricted finances, I thought I'd risk a half in a Whitbread house, namely the **Star & Garter**, Fairfield Street, and was pleased to see the retention of the vault and the introduction of real Trophy on handpump. However, on a subsequent visit only keg was available.

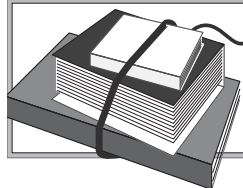
Next the **Bridge Inn** which also sported a handpump. However the landlady seemed to have forgotten it existed and so I sampled my first, but not unfortunately my last, keg Trophy of the day.

Next came a very reasonable pint of Greenalls on handpump in the **Kings Head**. This was followed by Chesters Bitter in the **Steam Engine Tavern** (of Coronation Street fame) across the road and by Wilsons Bitter in the **Union**, Ardwick.

The next stretch began in another **Bridge Inn** (Whitbread) on Pin Mill Brow, with Chesters Bitter. Due to an early start several pubs were still shut, though I concluded that if it was run by a woman and belonged to Whitbread it would probably be open! Wilsons **Old House At Home** was shut so I had more keg Trophy (handpumped Chesters had run out) at the **General Birch**. Holt's **Seven Stars**, Chesters' **Openshaw Inn** and **Whitbread's Old Brewery** shut. A Wilson's pub, believed to be the **Travellers Call** was shut for good. This was followed by more keg trophy in the **Grey Mare**, **Legh Arms**, **Lord Wolseley** and **Drovers Inn**. The **Star**, Chesters', was still shut. Next a couple of Wilson's pubs – the **Drop Forge**, Greenside Street, remarkably similar to the **Falcon** and the **Staff of Life**. The **Malcolm** was yet another Wilson's pub for sale – is it true that part of the 150 year celebrations, Wilson's are selling 150 pubs?

A couple of Boddies pubs followed, the **Locomotive** and the **Wrexham**. These were followed by two Bass pubs, the **George**, keg Stones ('nuff said) and the **Prince of Wales** selling excellent 4X Mild (Bass can do it right when they want to) alongside real Stones and Toby Light, with a welcome break of Robinson's in the **Forresters** in between.

Another couple of Wilsons on handpump, the **Grove** and the **Gransmoor**. The **Crown** had both Boddies and Oldham- and last but not least was Holt's **Railway**, just in time for me to fall down the railway steps and roll on to the train!



BOOK REVIEW



LAMBIKLAND BY TIM WEBB, CHRIS POLLARD & JORI PATTYN. COGAN & MATER, 64PP, £6.95
"The lost masterpiece of the world of brewing" is how author Tim Webb describes lambic beers and he is arguably correct.

These beers produced in a small area of Belgium, the Payottenland to the west of Brussels, are truly unique. One of the oldest surviving beer styles in the world they have a cult following and yet are unknown to many drinkers (and even of those who do know them many find it difficult to acquire the taste).

Both the fermentation and the subsequent production process of these beers are unique. Fermentation comes not from yeast cultured by the breweries, but from wild yeasts from the air, a method of 'spontaneous fermentation' that dates back many thousands of years. The hops used are different too, in that they are aged so that they have lost their aromatic character and simply act as a preservative. This is necessary due to another individual feature of lambic production – the length of the fermentation and maturation, which can be up to three years in the case of 'old' lambics.

These beers can be blended with younger versions to create the sour, sparkling gueuze, or have fruit, traditionally cherries or raspberries, added to make 'kriek' (cherry) or 'frambozen' (raspberry) beers.

The whole production process is described in much greater detail in this excellent new book by Tim Webb (best known for the periodic CAMRA guides to Belgium & Holland – look out for the next edition in 2005) and two other equally keen beer enthusiasts.

Indeed 'LambikLand' sets out to be the definitive work on the subject and succeeds in fine style – not only in terms of contents but also in the high production values that mark out this book. Apart from a detailed description of the production processes of the variants of lambic beers, there is a full listing of their producers (some brew the beers, some simply act as blenders) plus, just as importantly, a comprehensive(-ish) listing of where you can actually buy these beers in Belgium itself. Indeed, the café listings are perhaps a guide to some of the simplest rustic bars in Belgium. Many are one-room affairs run by elderly licensees so in many instances, it's a case of 'get there while you can'.

Quibbles? Well, a couple. Firstly there are too many typos. OK, you might say, that's a bit rich coming from *Opening Times*, but we don't charge £6.95 a time. And that's the other thing – it may be nicely produced but you don't get a lot of book for your money (especially when you take account of the fact that the text is in both English and Dutch).

Having said that it is a definitive study of the present day lambic scene and for many beer enthusiasts it will be an essential purchase. You can get *LambikLand* from the Belgian Belly in Chorlton (0161 860 6766). The Belly also stocks a comprehensive range of traditional gueuze and kriek so you can take a couple of bottles away and sample the beers while you read about them. JC



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A ROUND IN THE TOWN - TODAY

A modern update of this particular crawl starkly illustrates how the pub and beer scene in East Manchester has been well and truly decimated over the past two decades.

The **Star & Garter**, on Fairfield Street behind Piccadilly Station still thrives as a music venue but sells no real ale. The **Bridge** still stands but no longer functions as a pub. Trophy in all its forms had now been axed and Whitbread have sold their pubs. The **Kings Head** in Chancellor Lane still trades well but only occasionally sells real ale while across the road the **Steam Engine** was demolished years ago after surviving several years as a fire-damaged shell. The Coronation Street reference records the pub's ownership by 'Street' actor Fred Feast. He's dead as well.

The **Bridge Inn** on Pin Mill Brow was demolished for a road scheme. The **Old House at Home** still stands but is no longer a pub while the neighbouring **General Birch** is now a vacant site. The **Seven Stars** is still a good pub with Holt's Mild and Bitter on handpump. The **Openshaw Inn**, with its ornate frontage, still stands but (you guessed) is no longer a pub while the **Old Brewery** has been demolished.

The **Travellers Call** reopened as a free house selling Thwaites and even won a Pub of the Month award in April 1985. It has since been demolished, as have the **Grey Mare** and the **Lord Wolseley**. Luckily the **Legh Arms** thrives with three cask beers, including Moorhouses Black Cat and a guest beer and real cider (and was Pub of the Month in July).

The **Drovers Inn**, after spell as the awful Francs, stands closed and derelict. The **Star** on Pottery Lane was demolished for road widening. The **Drop Forge**, **Falcon** and **Staff of Life** have also all gone. The **Malcolm** still stands but functions as a private house. The two **Boddies** pubs have also both gone. They were the best heritage pubs on Ashton Old Road and the **Wrexham** was arguably listable with a wonderful unspoilt tiled interior, tiny snug and basic vault. After several years of dereliction it was demolished several years ago while the **Locomotive** (renamed the Smithfield after a refurbishment) went this year, after a long period of closure.

The **George** is now a shop while the **Prince of Wales** still stands derelict. The **Forresters** still trades and is a lively local with Unicorn on handpump.

The **Grove** is keg while the **Gransmoor** was sold to (and then by) Wolverhampton & Dudley when they made their initial foray into Manchester. It is now keg and called Screwy Hughies. The **Crown** is keg and Oldham Brewery long since closed. Thank God for Holt's - the **Railway** continues to thrive with Mild and Bitter on handpump, and is now one of the best pubs in Openshaw.



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STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

IN AND AROUND SHAW HEATH

Shaw Heath is both a district of west Stockport and the name of a thoroughfare within the town. It links Cale Green in the south with Edgeley to the north.

Tonight's agenda was to begin with the **Florist** (Robinson's) at the junction with Longshut Lane West. Surrounded by Bathroom and Antique Fireplace shops, this presents a very tidy appearance. You could argue about how many rooms there are, five or six - vault, TV room, bar, smoke room and snug, this last being a long room divided in two. Décor gives nothing much to tempt the eye - the vault has a good selection of photos of football and boxing scenes. Invariably, all of the rooms are connected by various sizes of arch. Despite the lure of the opening games of football's Euro 2004, folk in the TV room were looking at the news; the Smoke Room had some interesting pictures of Stockport. Beers on were Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter (or Unicorn, as the new pumpclips state). Both were in above average condition.

Next up was a Good Beer Guide regular, the **Grapes** (Robinson's), at the very start of Edgeley's shopping district, Castle Street. Run by a long-serving licensee, tonight the pub was displaying a good cross-section of mostly mature locals enjoying a sing-along to the hits of the sixties playing on the jukebox. Two deep rooms flank a bar bedecked with a fine collection of ornamental teapots - a lounge on the right, and vault to the left; the latter has a well-used dartboard and pool table, it also has wall décor that reminded me of a moonscape! The corridor separating them also sees some use as a stand-up drinking area. Beers were Hatters and Unicorn, both were judged very good.

The **Armoury** on the other side of the Shaw Heath roundabout was to be our third Robinson's house of the night; it was also the 8.30pm meeting point, so our numbers were almost doubled here. The Armoury has an interestingly angled façade, set off in cream and blue, it acts as a counterpoint to the solid stone

defence features of the castellated Territorial Army centre opposite. Reminders of the pub's former owners, Bell's Hempshaw Lane Brewery are much in evidence - the Bells logo appears etched into the glass of the internal doors for Lounge, Hall, Ladies and Private; a floor mosaic also greets you at the entrance. The lounge décor is in a restrained rustic style featuring photos of old Stockport and items to do with the Cheshire Regiment. The vault was busy with a darts game. I noted that many years ago Boxing bouts were staged here, as a framed poster of the day exists to that effect. The new beer garden was open too; it's a lovely secluded and walled spot which tonight was being unused. Once more the beers were Hatters and Unicorn, and they were very much on a par with the high standards of the Grapes.

At the **Church Inn**, off Bengal Street we were offered yet more Robinson's beer, this time albeit, only the Unicorn (that's Best, you remember). All of us agreed that this was in comfortably above-average nick. Good to see too, that licensees Lorraine and Mich are still at the helm. The pub is quite small and cosy, decorated throughout in a near sky-blue. Corner bar with a side snug off; pool room to the rear of that and a good horseshoe-shaped room that fronts the outside beer yard.

Opposite the Church is the former Boddington's **Greyhound**. Incidentally, this was the last pub to be built by Reddish brewer Richard Clarke & Co prior to their being acquired by Boddington's Brewery. A fairly modern house that is reached through an outside drinking area, complete with pergola, set higher than street level. Inside, the L-shaped lounge was fairly quiet apart from folk viewing the football, and a few people playing cards in the vault. For some years the beer choice has remained at just Boddingtons, and tonight was to be no exception to that; it scored well though.

Out and across Moseley Street car park gets one to **Ye Olde Vic** (Edgeley's premier free house and another Good Beer Guide regular) on the King Street corner of Chatham Street. A shabby exterior gave way to a very welcome real fire on this slightly chilly June evening. Busiest pub of the night thus far - no football, no half-measures, no nonsense, and above all, No Bloody Swearing! One dog, one cat, and one monkey (the ITV reject, warming itself by the fire). Run by a larger-than-life licensee in what really is a tiny pub - great atmosphere; large outside patio area; quirky décor; a good range of beers and don't forget the Tuesday quiz. Tonight the beers sampled (most of which are sourced through the Really Nice Beer Co.) were Titanic White Star, rated excellent; Northern Hope & Glory, rated very good; and Heather Ales Grozet, which scored as a good. The fourth beer and the cask cider went untried.

Down the King Street West hill now to the **Comfortable Gill** (ex Boddingtons) after having had a look into the gay-friendly and staunchly keg-only Tom Thumbs to confirm that nothing much had changed. The Comfy Gill is a rustic survivor, that offers the drinker three rather basic rooms - two that straddle the bar, with a pool room at the rear. The bar serves only Boddingtons (which we judged from average to good) so perhaps plans that are allegedly afoot for a change of management will see changes to décor and beer range. For a pub situated opposite the entrance to Stagecoach's bus garage, one thing that is unlikely to alter is the loyal custom from the bus staff over the road.

We had to cross the river (Mersey) to finish our crawl at, what is without question, Stockport's finest free house, the **Crown**, Heaton Lane (yep, it's another Good Beer Guide regular too). Dramatically set beneath the western face of the town's landmark 160 year-old rail viaduct. However the drama is not just without, there is also the drama within - the sight of fourteen handpulled beers and a real cider too. Couple the delights of the bar with a four/five room layout, a quiz, live music on four nights per week, and a large beer yard. Something for everyone surely? Well, certainly in terms of beer selection - milds, bitters, pale ales, porters and exotics all featured. For those interested, the beers were: Phoenix Black Shadow and Best; Bank Top Flat Cap; Black Sheep bitter; Eastwood & Sanders Porter; Wentworth WPA and Humdinger; Leyden Posh; Archers Cornishman; Heather Fraoch; Halifax Steam Rebel Yell; and Three Rivers GMT and Oxbow. The cider was Naish's 6%. With such a range and being close to Closing Time, there were many people in the pub eager to sample as many of the beers as they could - the Porter and the Humdinger seemed to be especially popular with folk. No negative comments were received either, so a well-deserved pat-on-the-back to Graham Mascord for all of that cellar work. A popular ending point for a crawl in a very popular pub.



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OASES IN THE PUB DESERT

MODERN DAY HULME has been described as a "pub desert". Not so, as Trafford & Hulme branch discovered on a recent ramble along Stretford Road, writes Neil Worthington.

We started our survey at the Tollbar Inn at Trafford Bar - not in Hulme of course but handy for Metrolink. This is a modern building with Banks's bitter the sole cask offering. A reasonable pint but pricey for the area at £1.87 and a bit on the cold side. From here we set off along Stretford Road, finding our first public house just after the Trafford/Manchester border (marked with elaborate metal signs in the style of pennants). This was the **Platford Hotel**, signed as a Joseph Holt house but actually independent of the brewery, or so we believe. Hotel is a rather grand title for what is now a very basic pub offering Holt's bitter at £1.40. But it's a fairly busy place, clearly appealing to the sportsman - blank betting slips for the bookie's over the road were scattered about, and there seemed to be a lot of traffic between the two establishments. Again a decent pint, well up to the standards of Joey's managed houses.

Cheered up by good ale and a friendly reception, we had high hopes for the **Three Legs of Man** over the road, but this turned out to be keg. And the next port of call was even more dispiriting. This year saw the centenary of the famous meeting of the Hon. Charles Rolls and Sir Henry Royce. It also saw the demolition of the **Sir Henry Royce** public house on Royce Road. Fortunately, we had the glad sight of the **Junction** in the distance. This is an extraordinary place - the oldest building in this part of Hulme by a long way. Almost all of the surrounding buildings date from the last 3 decades but the Junction is a classically solid stone building of the 19th century. It's also triangular in shape, looking a little like a ship that's run aground (if you've had a few) - the more so since the street pattern which dictated its layout has long since disappeared. Rolls Crescent runs along one side of it but there is no sign left of the street which formed its south side. I'm told that it was originally the Grand Junction so perhaps it was named after the railway of that name, opened in 1837.

Inside we found one cask ale on offer and surprisingly it was Hyde's Light, on handpump at £1.55 a pint. The interior decoration is very traditional with old brewery photographs and the like, but the sound system was mostly booming reggae. Again, a quality pint - though some of our party would have liked to see Hyde's Bitter too.

Also on Royce Road but on the other side of Stretford Road, we found the intriguing **A-Fe-We**, formerly the Grants Arms and now billed as an "Afro-Caribbean Community Pub". This also featured West Indian and African music and was decorated to match the music - no sepia prints here! Sadly, no cask ale.

But we had to move on, crossing over Princess Road by the Hulme Arch bridge. This has inspired the new name for a rare local Robinson's outlet, the **Arch**, built fairly recently to replace the Red Admiral. The building is notable from the outside for its blue tiles. Inside it's very high tech, very modern, with red walls and plastic upholstery, a complete contrast from the traditional Junction. It was also very quiet - no music, few customers. This is probably an evening venue, as the DJ's desk at one end suggests. Robinson's Unicorn Bitter was on offer at £2.10 a pint and again was highly acceptable.

At the end of Stretford Road we have Cavendish Street and the **Cavendish** public house, which despite one solitary handpump offers no cask ale. But beyond there is the most impressive **Salutation** where we had a real choice of beers at last. Tetley Bitter (£1.70), Dark Mild (£1.50) and Taylor's Landlord (£1.80) were on offer, and many of us thought the Mild the best pint of the day. Not available but usually on sale were Old Speckled Hen and Marston's Pedigree.

From here, a few of the party continued to the newly opened **Kro Bar 3** or the **Old Abbey** to more exact. On asking some of the locals where the new Kro Bar was, we were greeted with blank expressions though one pointed us in the direction of

Lloyd Street. We meandered down this featureless road, past the **Ducie Arms** on the left but still no sign of it. Two local lads thought it might be along Denmark Street, though east or west they were not sure. Finally the local bobbies on the beat came to our rescue and in the middle of the Manchester Science Park we found our goal, 61 Pencroft Way off Denmark Street near its junction with Upper Lloyd Street to be exact.

This pub isn't always open on Saturday afternoons and sometimes it is hired out for private parties. This was the case when we arrived but we were kindly invited in and found a pleasant little bar which had quite an impressive menu for their busier lunchtime custom on weekdays. There were two beers on of the usual three, Taylor's Landlord and Fuller's London Pride, both in excellent condition. The Kro opens at 8.30 a.m. on weekdays for non-alcoholic refreshments such as tea and coffee.

Subsequently, I checked out Booth Street West, which runs from Boundary Lane to Oxford Road. The **Gamecock** is unequivocally keg but the **Czech Bar**, while keg only on draught products, does offer bottles of authentic Budweiser from Budweis in the Czech Republic plus Pilsner Urquell.

Finally, the best kept real ale secret in Hulme - or is it Chorlton-on-Medlock here? - must be the **Royal Northern College of Music** at the east end of Booth Street West. It has a bar that's open to the public and offers six - count them! - cask ales. These tend to be Tetley bitter, Marston's Pedigree, Old Speckled Hen and Abbot Ale from Greene King, the rare Burton Ale and guests such as Brain's and Deuchar's IPA. They're priced at around £2.20 a pint but for that you get an interesting modern setting, outside two concert halls, with an extensive smoke-free seating area and access to a snack bar. The bar is normally open from 12 to 2, then from 5 till 11, Mondays to Fridays. At weekends it tends just to open in the evenings, depending on what events are on, and sometimes has a late licence.

Don't dash round just yet though, because the bar is currently closed for rebuilding and extension. It is due to re-open on 24th September.



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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, Macclesfield and Trafford & Hulme

Diary

August 2004

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm – will feature summer quiz postponed from last month.

Friday 13th – Trip to Pictish Brewery to present Beer of the Festival Award. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.30. Trip full – book reserve seat with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973

Thursday 19th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Heaton Norris. From 8.00pm. **NB** – note early date

Saturday 21st – BeerMonster Pub of the Season Award to the Caledonia, Warrington St, Ashton 6.30pm

Friday 27th – Hyde Road Stagger. Meet Travellers Call, Hyde Rd 7.30pm; Suburban, Gorton Cross St 8.30pm.

Saturday 4th September – present Regional Pub of the Year Award to the Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. From 8.00pm

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting: Gateway, Kingsway, East Didsbury. Paul Jefferies from Hydes has been invited as a guest speaker.

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 16th – Branch Meeting: White Hart, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm.

August 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:

Monday 9th - Campaigning meeting George & Dragon, Holmes Chapel 8.00pm.

Sunday 15th - Summer Pub of the season award The Stag, Great Warford from 12.00pm.

Friday 27th – Monday 30th - Beer festival at the Ship Inn Wincle

Saturday 11th September - Branch social: Churnet Valley Railway (Three good pubs) meet at station car park 11.30 for drinks and 12.40 departure on train.

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

Thursday 12th - Branch meeting at THE OLD MARKET TAVERN, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. Note change of venue and date

Thursday 19th - Chorlton survey / social: meet at Sedge Lynn at 7.30pm. Visit other nearby pubs then return to Sedge Lynn at 9.30pm

Sunday 29th – Bev's Garden Party, 2pm till late - further details at branch meeting.

REGIONAL EVENT

Saturday 14th August – Winter Ales Fest Initial Organisational Meeting. All volunteers welcome. Crescent, Salford, 12.30pm

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THE UNPALATABLE TRUTH

Pub food is often hailed as one of the glories of the British drinking scene, and you read numerous articles in pub guides hailing the "pub food revolution". Yet, while superb pub food can be found, more often than not it falls within a range stretching from just about adequate to frankly disgusting. These are a few of the areas where pubs get it wrong:

Too expensive. You expect to pay more for food and drink in a pub than at home, and to pay extra for good quality. But when you find pubs charging £15 or more for main courses and £7 for sandwiches it is getting ridiculous. Sorry, but that just isn't a pub any longer.

Too cheap. Equally, if you see a sign saying "Three course Sunday Lunch - £3.95" you just know the quality's going to be rock-bottom too. Cheapness for its own sake is not a virtue.

Too much. At a time when the growing tide of obesity is a major political issue, pretty much every meal you get out of the house is half as much again as you want or need. The thought of "a belly busting pound of chips" is enough to make you feel sick. Smaller portions and higher quality must be the way forward. If people really want to stuff their faces, offer large portions at a higher price.

Too English. Look at the variety of restaurants on your local High Street - Italian, Indian, Chinese, Thai, Mexican, Turkish. Yet what's on the specials board at the Dog & Duck? Steak & Ale Pie. If pubs confine themselves to "traditional English" they are boxing themselves into a corner.

Too formal. At a time when we are moving away from traditional meal times and structures, the typical pub menu is still redolent of thirty years ago with its rigid organisation into "starters", "main courses" and "desserts". Informal, flexible menus cater for the way people really want to eat now and also help to retain the atmosphere of a pub rather than a restaurant. And perish the thought of separate dining areas with place settings.

Lack of local ingredients. Virtually everywhere in the UK has distinctive local produce - cheese, bread, pies, smoked fish, black puddings - often made on a small scale by traditional methods. Yet, even where you find beers from local craft brewers, the only local place the food has seen is the cash & carry down the road. Even if you only feature one or two local items on your menu it helps give the impression of taking an individual approach.

Misleading menus. It still seems to be beyond many pubs to provide individual menus showing clearly what is on offer. If your standard menu is all on blackboards it makes it difficult for the elderly, partially sighted and disabled to peruse it. A list of main courses is of limited use without stating what accompanies them. And if you say "sandwiches - various fillings available" it makes it much less likely people will order them than if you state what the fillings are.

Turkey dinosaurs. Even when pubs offer a range of imaginative, high-quality food for adult diners, children are landed with dismal factory fare packed with salt and additives. Why can't children simply be given smaller portions of adult meals?

Microwaves. It's only too easy to get a vast range of "exotic" meals delivered from a factory in Grimsby to your freezer in a foodservice van. But at a time when processed food is increasingly frowned on, wouldn't it be better to put more emphasis on freshness and authenticity even at the cost of reduced choice?

Chain dining. The pub food market is becoming dominated by chains from Wetherspoon's to Chef & Brewer. The food may be OK in the same sense as a Tesco ready meal is OK, but the menu's the same all over the country, and it's never remotely inspiring. One of the things people value most in pubs is individual character, something a chain pub cannot provide.

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

5 Years Ago
by Phil Levison
JULY '99

The main front page headline "Whitbread Punched Out?" referred to the titanic corporate battle for the Allied Domecq estate of 3,500 pubs. Whitbread, tipped as hot favourites to take over the ailing giant's pub estate, were effectively knocked out of the race when their bid was referred to the Office of Fair Trading. Allied had been desperate to get rid of their pubs and with the exit of Whitbread, the way seemed clear for their bitter rivals, Punch Taverns, to snap up the estate. This would not be good news for local drinkers - whilst Whitbread offered a range of guest beers in their pubs, Punch had been much more restrictive in the beers they made available.

★★★★★

High Peak Branch held a sponsored walk for Christies, when 46 people left the Shepherds Arms in Whaley Bridge, and arrived at the Sportsman in Hyde about nine hours later, having walked 17 miles, and visited seven Good Beer Guide pubs en route. About £2,000 was raised for the hospital, the whole event was judged to have been a great success, and it was decided to make it an annual event.

★★★★★

The latest beer festival at the Bhurtpore Inn, Aston, Cheshire, broke all records both in terms of attendance and those arriving from the nearby Wrenbury Station, which is a small request stop on the Crewe-Shrewsbury line. That year, the chairman of the Passenger Association, John Cresswell, transported a barrel of beer to the Bhurtpore from the Tomas Watkin Brewery at Llandeilo - the nine-gallon cask sold out after just 90 minutes.

★★★★★

Anglesey had acquired a new brewery, for only the second time that century - the first one had been Gwynedd Brewers of Gaerwen, housed in an industrial unit on a trading estate just off the A5. It had been founded in 1980 and closed four years later. This latest new brewery had been set up by experienced home brewer and CAMRA member Martyn Lewis in an old farm outbuilding near his home in Talwm, near Llangefni, Anglesey. The plant had originally come from the Bitter End, in Cockermouth, Cumbria from where it has been transferred to Knowsley, Liverpool, becoming the Cambrinus Craft Brewery. Now it had found a new home at the Anglesey Brewery, Bragdy Ynys Môn. The beers appear in local freehouses, shows and festivals.

★★★★★

The main news from the Cityman column that month was not so much a new opening, but rather a failure to open. This was the long-running saga of the Shambles pubs, Sinclairs and the Old Wellington. Work on the site had ground to a halt. Contractors had been sacked and then claimed they were owed £1.4 million. The Evening News was still talking about the "brick by brick" reconstruction of both pubs, when breezeblocks were clearly being used. So the latest date for reopening had become "by the end of the summer" - the only good news was that both pubs would sell real ale.



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OLD GLOSSOP

Since the Bull's Head was taken over last year by Paul & Barbara Taylor, it has certainly gone back to its former quality as far as the beer is concerned (the curries were and still are not in any doubt, being run by the same franchise all along), with the Robinson's beers now on top form.

There's some interesting entertainment too - on Wednesday evenings in the bar, free of charge, you can hear fine jazz by The Mini Swing Band featuring Jim Galloway (clarinet), Stuart O'Connor (piano) and Mo Green (drums). They play a wide range of favourites made famous by bands of the thirties such as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and Duke Ellington.

The pub has had its bar moved back a little and the tap room door opposite the bar, opened up. The bottleneck at the bar, which was previously almost like a corridor, that was often annoying, has therefore been totally improved. Trade has shot up too, this will be even more so now, as on 18 July the nearby Wheatsheaf closed its doors for the last time, soon to be re-opened as a Greek Taverna restaurant. Only those eating will be able to drink on the premises. Whether this will be overturned if unsuccessful, is not known but for the Bull and the Queens, the third of the trio of pubs in Old Glossop, it will undoubtedly bring them more trade.

The Queens has a reputation for good wholesome and fresh (and reasonably priced) food, with a range of five real ales, Black Sheep Bitter, Marston's Pedigree, Worthington Cask, the popular Wychwood Hobgoblin and a guest from the pubco list. There is a pleasant set of young waiters on/bar staff including Claire, Joanne and Rebecca. Rebecca is particularly interesting to me as she is my daughter (the one who smiles a lot). Appropriate that my daughter's first part time job is at a Good Beer Guide Pub! The licensees of the Wheatsheaf by the way are now installed at the Royal Oak at the bottom of the Snake Pass. Old Glossop is a gem of a little area that boasts two excellent pubs, with excellent food and beer. For any *Opening Times* readers in the area, there is a bus every half hour from Glossop town centre (no. 390) up into Old Glossop but it is a pleasant walk up through Manor Park or up Norfolk Street from the traffic light, turning right into Hall Meadow Road after a half mile and then following your nose into the village.

OTHER NEWS

The *Odd Whim*, in Ashton is under threat of redevelopment into flats. It is the only bit of remaining history (part of it was built as a gatehouse) of the 'mad' vicar Mr Roe, who founded the Christian Israelite Church in the 19th Century and who was recently featured on a TV programme about his exploits. We hear there are some objections to the planning application are already in.

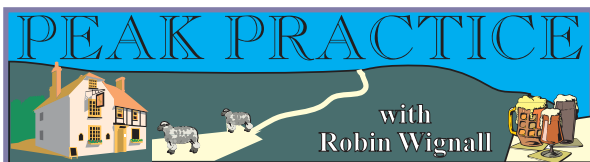
After twelve years in waiting, Rose Casey and her sister Pauline Mercer have decided to go it alone in the pub trade by taking on The Crown in Hyde, where they are now the new tenants of the Robinson's house.

The sisters are no strangers to the licensed trade, having both worked behind the bar of a pub in Bredbury for the past 12 years. "We enjoyed every aspect of the job but have decided that now is the time to take control and build a business together that we can call our own," says Rose.

"We considered many pubs in the area, but it wasn't until we looked at Robinson's website that we learnt that The Crown was available. We then went along to take a look for ourselves and we were hooked immediately. Not only is The Crown ideally situated, the customers are a great bunch of people, and we are now enjoying getting to know them," she explained.

Having already built up a wealth of experience, the sisters are keen to ensure that their new customers at the Robinson's house are well looked after. Rose and Pauline already have an active line up of live entertainments, as well as playing host to both a ladies and men's darts team. Not only that, the sisters will soon be introducing a mid week quiz each Wednesday evening. "We would like to be able to offer something for everybody, and we will be running The Crown as a true community pub where everybody is welcome, with an emphasis on hospitality and good beer," said Rose.





The problem with guide books is that they often serve as no more than a pointer to what is available. They are rarely all consuming, and cannot be all things to all men (or women).

The Peak District is served by various beer guides. Not all of these are recent, but they still have a value in pointing potential drinkers in more or less the right direction. It can be argued that a beer/pub guide is out of date by the time it reaches the printers.

"Out In Cheshire", the current comprehensive guide to Cheshire pubs, edited by George Symes and Simon Scott for the Cheshire branches of CAMRA, dates back to 1998 but is still a good volume. It is a comprehensive guide and includes pubs with no real ale. Pubs in the western fringes of the Peak District are well covered, and general information is largely little changed.

Try, amongst many more, the Stanley Arms at Bottom of the Oven, a fine rural Marston's house roughly west of and below the Cat & Fiddle, the highest pub in these parts; Kettleshulme's two Good Beer Guide listed pubs (see OT June 2004); the pubs of Rainow where the Robin Hood (ex-Greenall's) is a good community local, and the Hanging Gate which is perhaps the pick of the pubs in the Sutton Lane Ends area.

Some of the pubs in the western Peak fall in Stockport Borough and appear in "Viaducts & Vaults 3", Alastair Walker's fine 2003 editing for CAMRA's Stockport & South Manchester Branch. The pubs of Mellor come into this group, of which the Oddfellows is probably the gem.

NOT COMPREHENSIVE

Andrew McCloy's Peak District Pub Guide (202 and 2003 reprint) is a useful guide, but is not, and does not pretend to be a comprehensive guide. In the western Peak pubs in Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire and Greater Manchester are included. Pubs selected for the guide include the Royal and George in Hayfield, but the 2004 Good Beer Guide entry Kinder Lodge is omitted. In Whaley Bridge there are entries for the Shepherds, the Goyt and the Navigation, but no mention of the worthy Dog & Partridge


at Bridgmont, which incidentally, will be holding a beer festival over the bank holiday weekend at the end of August. Thwaites have just published a guide to eating houses in their estate, "We Agree to Differ". It includes their three Peak District gems, the Highwayman at Rainow, the Sportsman at Hayfield and the Grouse on Chunal Moor between Glossop and Hayfield. These also get honourable mentions in at least one of the above publications.

WORTH HAVING

Finally the Good Beer Guide is always worth having. The 2004 edition was available in October 2003, and the final information was collected as early as February 2003, so can inevitably be dated. Inclusion in the Good Beer Guide implies that a pub is a worthy entrant for the quality of its beer sold. But many good pubs selling good beer are omitted, partly because of local competition, partly because of space, and sometimes because of the idiosyncrasies of local democracy in CAMRA branches. In north-west Derbyshire entries include the Little Mill at Rowarth, the excellent Pack Horse at New Mills and the Shepherds at Whaley Bridge. Moving east nothing appears until reaching Hope where the Cheshire Cheese is a well deserving entry.

There is decent beer to be found in the intervening miles, it is just less obviously found and after researching this article in books and pubs it is time to do some more of the latter, and hopefully to find some more of the good pubs left out of guides.

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Good Beer Guide listed.



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THE LOWES ARMS, 301 HYDE ROAD, DENTON

This month sees the third anniversary of brewing at the Lowes Arms. It's also a good place to eat so this is more a combined Pub Grub and Brewery Review.

Long before it became known as a brewpub, the Lowes Arms already had a reputation as an enterprising free house, with good food to boot. With this in mind, a visit to both eat, drink and look at the brewery was organised for mid-June.

The pub is almost on the boundary with Hyde and while it has the appearance of quite a modern building, it has been selling beer and food to the local populace for many, many years. There's been a huge amount of investment in that time and indeed, when we called, a huge outdoor terrace was being built. When finished this will incorporate an enormous fountain – look out for a picture of this in a future issue.

The menu is wide-ranging and includes not just a printed menu but also a specials board. We passed on starters but these include staples such as soup (£2.25) and prawn cocktail (£3.75) alongside more unusual items like black pudding and bacon stack on a red wine and peppercorn sauce (£3.95).

Mains include steaks (6-16oz) with a variety of sauces of which the 'stilton, brandy and cream' sounded very tempting, beef stroganoff, mixed grill and others along with a selection of fish and pasta dishes. There's a snacks and starter menu and also a range of 'light bites'. Really, whatever your pocket or appetite, there will be something for you here.

Spinach and ricotta cannelloni (£6.25) came with chips or boiled potatoes and was described as a good, tasty and satisfying dish. The 'weave of cod and salmon' with hollandaise sauce (£8.75) came with new potatoes and vegetables. Again, a good, well-presented meal with generous portions of tender fish. No complaints either about my spicy cajun viennese roll. This was a large soft roll, bursting with tender and spicy chicken. On the side was a pot of mayonnaise and a salad garnish. A bowl of light and crisp chips ((£1.35) made for a filling accompaniment. Noteworthy was the excellent presentation all round.

Full stomachs and a brewery trip prevented pudding but again the menu included some tempting offerings including a 'Lowes Extravaganza' at £3.25, baked alaska (£2.95) and caramel apple granny (£2.75).

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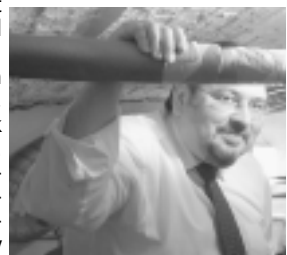
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Not only is the food at the Lowes home-made, but much of the beer is, too. This is the home of the 'LAB' or Lowes Arms Brewery, which started production in August 2001 with local CAMRA member Anthony Firmin as brewer.

These days brewing is in the hands of Lowes' owner Peter Wood (pictured) along with Geoff Bower and newly recruited assistant brewer Steve Lindop. The compact brewery is in the pub's cellar and Peter kindly showed us round.



Brewing takes place about twice a week with a 90-gallon brew length, although three to four brews a week can be produced if demand warrants it.

One change since the start of operations is that the free trade is now supplied, with the beers proving particularly popular in the north-east, notably the Whitley Bay area. Most beer, though still sells through the pub.

The recipes have changed too, with some of the beers now lighter and hoppier than before. There were four beers in production when we called and the aim is to try and get them all to be a little bit different: **Lowes IPA** (3.9% ABV) – a variety of hops are used in the Lowes' beers and this one includes Cascade, Green Bullet and Brewers Gold varieties. It is a light brown beer with a refreshing taste. There was a slight yeastiness to the palate which some will like and some may not.

Jet Amber (3.5% ABV) – this was initially produced for the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge and proved so popular that it is now in semi-regular production. It's a dark and smooth beer and was very much enjoyed on our visit.

Broomstairs Bitter (4.3% ABV) – this is the mainstay of the range and Peter says, has a 'phenomenal following'. It's a surprisingly dark brew with a malty and biscuity profile combining with a fruity edge.



Old English Ale (4.5% ABV) – this disappointed slightly, perhaps because all the other beers were so distinctive and this was fairly ordinary by comparison. Still very drinkable, though.

In the pipeline are two new brews. One will be called Hop Back Bitter and will be a light coloured 4.8 per cent ABV beer which will be dry hopped for extra bitterness. The other hadn't been named but was planned to be a 4.1 per cent copper coloured beer using Brewers Gold hops and a biscuity finish coming from the use of crystal and amber malts.

The Lowes is certainly well worth a visit – the food's good and there's always something interesting happening on the beer front. There may even be a new beer to mark the launch of that fountain! *The Lowes Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton, M34 3FF. Phone 07734 230680 or 0161 336 3064. Food is served 12-2.30 and 5.30-9.30 Monday-Saturday and 12-9 Sundays. The 201 bus from Manchester or Hyde will drop you outside.*

**BEER FESTIVALS IN
NORTH-WEST WALES**

The first Llandudno Beer Festival was held in 1990, and Rhyl and Denbigh followed with annual festivals until the mid '90s. These, of course, were all CAMRA festivals, and after the formation of the Sir Caernarfon & Sir Fon CAMRA Branch, (or Caernarvon & Anglesey to non-Welsh speakers) the first (and only) Bangor Beer Festival was held in 1995. Since then, beer festivals have been conspicuous by their absence, until last year when Anglesey Central Lions staged the first Anglesey Beer Festival.

This was held mid-September, in two permanent buildings on the Mona Showground, on the old A5 Bangor to Holyhead road. 75 different real ales were available, also cider, perry, wine and food, and there were sessions over Friday and Saturday. For most of the time the bar was attractively staffed by members of the Llangeifni Ladies Football Team. There was live entertainment at each session, and plenty of seating at trestle tables. General consensus of opinion was very favourable and there will be a repeat performance this year on 10, 11 and 12 September, at the same venue.



REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE

The Campaign for Real Ale, CAMRA, is to launch a pilot accreditation scheme for bottle-conditioned beers.

The scheme known as 'Real Ale in a Bottle' will be launched at The Great British Beer Festival on 2 August, after CAMRA's Bottled Beer Competition, at a reception for beer buyers.

"The scheme has been devised in response to an increased number of enquiries from both CAMRA members and the general public about what constitutes a bottle-conditioned beer, how they can be identified, and most importantly where they can be bought" said CAMRA's Georgie Howarth. "Many more people are learning to appreciate the brewer's art to the full by savouring the complex, fresh taste of a beer that has been allowed to mature naturally in the bottle."

To coincide with the pilot launch, CAMRA will highlight the consumer demand for bottle-conditioned products. The aim of the scheme is to recognise bottle-conditioned beers as a separate category to other bottled beers, and encourage buyers to stock and promote them in their retail outlets.

Ms Howarth continues, "All breweries listed in the CAMRA's Good Bottled Beer Guide are eligible to join the scheme and of those surveyed 90% think that it is a good idea. The general consensus appears to be that once consumers understand that they are drinking bottled real ale, they really appreciate and enjoy exploring different tastes, styles and products."

The accreditation markings form two parts to be used on the label artwork: a method of dispense and a clearly identifiable hallmark 'CAMRA says this is real ale'. The logo is to help consumers easily differentiate products. The objective of the method of dispense is to create a better understanding of how to look after and serve bottled real ale.

CAMRA is now discussing with breweries wanting to participate in the pilot launch to encompass these elements on their bottle artwork. Piloting partners will be announced at the launch reception and CAMRA will run a supporting promotional campaign over the coming months.

WHAT IS REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE?

Real Ale in a Bottle (RAIB) is the bottled equivalent of the draught real ales you enjoy at the pub. The beer is unpasteurised and contains yeast and enough fermentable sugars to allow for a slow secondary fermentation in the bottle. Care should be taken when pouring a RAIB to ensure that the yeast remains in the bottle and the refreshing flavoursome beer ends up in the glass. It is important to note that though a particular beer is a real ale in draught form this is not a guarantee that the bottled version will be real also. Most real ales will be clearly labelled but a quick check to see if there is any yeast sediment will confirm if the beer is a RAIB

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Given that this issue will apparently include features on Openshaw and Hulme, the Eds have clipped my wings a bit. So, just a few brief bits and pieces this time.

RUSHOLME AND AREA

A visit to the Rusholme / Moss Side area discovered a few things going on. First was news that the **Parkside** on Lloyd Street South was to close and be converted to flats. Some would argue this is due to the loss of trade from football fans, but surely a pub cannot be sustained by one big day in every fourteen? Further down Claremont Road, I understand the ex-Whitbread **Sherwood** has converted to some kind of club; whilst the nearby **Lord Lyon** (or whatever its new name is) has re-opened as a pub again; no news of what is being sold yet. On the so-called 'Curry Mile', the **Huntsman** has its doors firmly closed, so who can guess what will emerge when they re-open? If I have not already reported that the Hydes' **Denmark** on Moss Lane East was demolished over a month ago, then take this as the definitive report of such.

DISTRACTIONS

Other activities will, at times, get in the way of my pub investigations. Such was the case one Sunday afternoon when on my way to an exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery. This only gave me a few minutes to pop my head around the doors of the newly reopened **Whitworth** - it didn't look a lot different and there appeared to be no cask ale on sale, that is, until you went in to the lower bar where JW Lees bitter was on sale. Strange this, as the pub is styled as a Marston's house. Across on Wilmslow Road, junction of Hathersage Road is the new Banks's pub, **Varsity**. This is a large, high-ceilinged, glass-fronted pub that clearly has students as its target market. Cask ale was available, to my surprise, in the form of Pedigree. Time did not allow me to linger so I will review both of these pubs next time.

DOWN IN DIDSBURY

The **Royal Oak** in Didsbury is to hold its annual Cheese and Pate' festival this year from Monday 16 to Friday 20 August, between 12 noon and 4pm daily. This year there will be up to one hundred different cheeses from all over Europe including Ital-

ian, French German, Swedish, Spanish, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and of course English cheeses. There will be some unusual and mouth-watering varieties of cheeses; one that has captured my imagination is the water melon and feta cheese, which sounds most intriguing. Joining the cheeses will be a variety of pates and home made pork pies including the famous Melton Mowbray variety. Prices for all these cheeses will be no more than the normal lunch prices which can be washed down with an excellent choice of Marstons and Banks's cask conditioned beers. Well worth a try.

Almost opposite the (famous) **Crown** has had a minor facelift inside. The pub has been painted and decorated inside and still serves a range of cask beers including Boddingtons and a couple of guest beers. The pub is owned by Spirit Group (formally Scottish and Newcastle Breweries) who have a novel approach to internal redecoration. Why bother paying professional decorators to paint and decorate the inside of the pub when you are able to cajole and twist the licensees' arm to do the job for you? I don't quite see the connection between being a good licensee and being a good painter and decorator. Do licensees have that much spare time? What would be their position should they refuse to do the work? What standards should you expect when the redecoration has been completed? This sounds like another example of the articles featured in last month's OT of pub owning companies exploiting the good nature of its over worked and under paid licensees in order to save a few quid.

BITS & PIECES

In Openshaw the **Lord Raglan** has been open again for some months, I'm told, and has Holt's Bitter on handpump. Holt's is

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also on handpump at the nearby Pack Horse where it is joined by Draught Bass.

In Levenshulme the former **Ceilidh House** has reverted to non-pub use and is now a solicitor's office. Further up the road, the closed **Ducie Arms** (as I reported last month) has now sprouted a small sign saying that the pub is either for sale or to let. Don't hold your breath for it reopening as a pub.

In Whalley Range the **Hillary Step** has opened on Upper Chorlton Road. When I called it was already very popular with the local Chorltonistas although looking a little unfinished with bare walls and the outside drinking area still not ready. It shows plenty of promise, though, and features four cask beers. The aim is to have two from Thwaites (Bitter and Lancaster Bomber) plus two guests. There's a small but interesting range of bottled beers and also on draught is König Ludwig Weissbier. It's also no-smoking throughout, a move which so far appears to have had little impact on trade. Worth a visit, I think - I will certainly be back once it's bedded in a bit more.

LOCAL CAMRA AWARD



Sam & Lorraine Fraser of the Bakers Vaults Stockport. with the June Pub of the Month Award from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA. A well deserved award was presented on an excellent evening on June 24



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