

No: 246

CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR 2003

Volume 20 Issue 10

OPENING TIMES

OCTOBER 2004

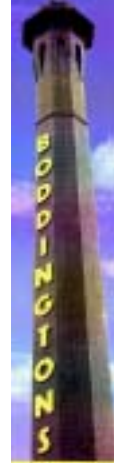


The FREE CAMRA Regional Magazine covering Central, East & South Manchester; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield



BODDIE BLOW

AXE LOOMS FOR MANCHESTER ICON



This time they've done their homework and prepared the ground. Two years ago Interbrew beat an unaccustomed retreat in the face of the uproar that greeted their plans to downgrade Boddingtons Strangeways brewery. Long time observers of the ruthless brewery closures that have marked the history of this company regarded this as more a temporary respite than a permanent reprieve, and so it has proved to be.

Let's be clear, there will be a concerted campaign to keep Strangeways Brewery open. The brewery unions, the City Council and CAMRA have pledged to fight tooth and nail to prevent the move and it remains to be seen how open to persuasion Interbrew (or InBev - as they have renamed themselves) are. They are unused to vociferous protest when closing plants, and certainly the outrage expressed in 2002 seemed to catch them unawares.

However, they are a determined and, when the need arises, a ruthless company when it comes to the elimination of what is deemed to be excess capacity. And this time around, the two major posts in Interbrew UK are not occupied by Brits but by less sentimental and less UK-oriented Americans. The prognosis must therefore be less than optimistic.



USE IT OR LOSE IT

So how did it come to this? In an *Opening Times* editorial two years ago local Boddies drinkers and licensees were urged to turn to cask. "If you care about Boddies beer and the future of the brewery, you won't touch a pint of the smooth stuff again" we urged. It seems our words largely fell on deaf ears. The relaunch of 'new' Boddington's Cask last year seemed to offer hope for the future, particularly as there was a major push on quality with the involvement of Cask Marque. But while there was some measure of support for the new beer, it was in many respects half-hearted. While Interbrew own no pubs, this should have been no barrier to in-house promotions across the north-west. Where were the in-pub tastings? What attempts were made to push it to licensees (and so undue the damage of previous years when Boddington's cellar teams actively pushed smooth)?

The fact is, some licensees weren't even issued with new pump-clips and didn't know what they were selling. We know of one pub where this was the case and if there was one there were certainly others. Given the marketing might of Interbrew, you have to wonder if this was a relaunch doomed to fail.

Why can't the company that likes to call itself 'The World's Local Brewer' match the success of our real local brewers and grow cask ale volumes in a declining market? Could it possibly be that they don't want to?



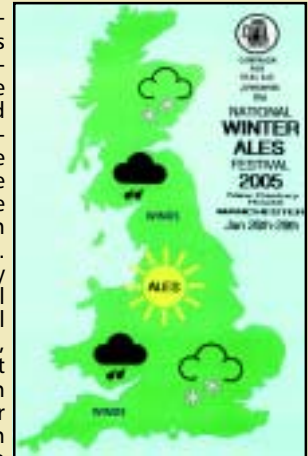
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER
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"Save the Cream"
The Campaign to Keep Boddies in Manchester

NATIONAL WINTER ALES

Planning for the return of CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival and Championship in January are well advanced, and the only thing *Opening Times* won't be able to reveal over the next months are the names of the beers in the competition. What we already know is that there will be a vast range of all types of cask beer, with a North West micro-brewery bar, in addition to a Winter Ales & Competition bar, and a UK bar, a large cider and perry bar, an amazing foreign beer bar with unusual Belgian beers, draught American Ales and a vast range of draught Bavarian and other German beers. Hopefully the draught Irish beer bar will also return. New this year will be an extensive bottle-conditioned beer bar (Real Ale in a Bottle) featuring beers from micros from (largely) the northern half of Britain.



THE 1995 CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE is now on sale! Only £13.99! See page 8 for Details

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**...AND
EVEN
A SMALL
BEER
GARDEN!**

**PUB OF THE MONTH
OCTOBER**

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
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31						

2004



**The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month
award for October 2004 has been won by the Horse and
Farrier on Gatley Road in Gatley.**

The Horse and Farrier is a Hydes' pub and one of the oldest pubs in the brewery's estate, dating from around 1700. Over the years the pub has been sensitively extended but it still retains a labyrinth of small individual rooms served by a central bar. The most recent renovation turned the pub into a Hydes' 'Heritage Inn', introducing improvements in the kitchen and the menu, the addition of a further small room on the left hand side of the pub, and a general smartening up and opening out of the interior. Another change introduced has been the introduction of a non-smoking for those customers that prefer not to inhale other peoples' smoke.

The pub caters mainly for drinkers but it is also now attracting more people to dine. Over the last two years it has experienced a steady increase in trade for both beer and food. Alan Hazelhurst and his wife Jenny, who run the Farrier, have been in the trade now for some 25 years and know well how to attract customers. I am not sure whether it's the pubs cleanliness, friendliness, good food, good beer or relaxed ambience; but Alan and Jenny are clearly doing something right as over this time the pub has become increasingly popular.

Attention to beer quality is also an important element in attracting and retaining regulars. Hydes Bitter, Light, Jekyll's Gold and the breweries bi-monthly craft ale, currently Over the Moon (a very drinkable 4.5% mellow autumn beer), are on sale. To supplement these beers the pub has regular mini beer festivals, the last one proving so popular it completely sold out of beer and so another is already being planned for early in the New Year. With such enthusiasm and regular turnover, beer quality is always second to none and a good pint can be guaranteed.

So why not join the local CAMRA group to celebrate the presentation of the Pub of the Month award to Alan and Jenny Hazelhurst and their staff? The date for your diaries is Thursday 28th October. You should expect the pub to be rather busy that night. **SB**

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 246

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 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).



IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

I have been asked in various interviews what I thought of the Boddington's closure announcement. 'Shocked but not surprised' has been my invariable reply. It had been made clear to CAMRA that the re-launch of Boddingtons Cask last year was a last roll of the dice for the brewery. Equally when presenting the Cask Champion Award earlier in the year, it was clear that this hadn't worked. We were told that cask volumes had continued to decline and those taking the brewery tour reported large empty spaces. Clearly there has been outrage at the announcement. While this is both understandable and justified, local drinkers and licensees who are now bemoaning the closure should consider their own actions. While there were some welcome conversions from keg to cask there just weren't enough. Two years ago it was made clear that the future of this brewery depended on the success of cask beer. Those who have chosen not to support cask Boddingtons are hardly in a position to criticise now. What now? While there will be a vigorous campaign to save this brewery, some thought has also to be given to a post-closure scenario. The assumption is that Hydes' will brew cask Boddies, although that is by no means a completely done deal. Whoever makes it (and ideally it will be still brewed at Strangeways), we must all then make sure that once the beer has been put at arms length, it is not allowed to wither and die. Interbrew are less than reassuring on this point. On the plus side, they are continuing their involvement with Cask Marque to maintain quality. On the other hand, no cask specific promotion is promised. They say that cask Boddies will benefit from generic promotion of the Boddingtons brand. Currently this consists of a huge push for takeaway containers to drink at home - that helps neither cask Boddies nor the pubs that sell it. Whatever happens to Boddingtons Brewery, *Opening Times* will continue to support Boddingtons Bitter as a traditional Manchester cask beer, brewed in Manchester, for Manchester. We make no apologies for that.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel:

Having just returned from a holiday in Ireland, I am writing to correct the views expressed in your Curmudgeon column in last month's Opening Times.

I found going into pubs in Ireland a really positive experience. Gone were the clouds of smoke, the smell of smoke in the air and afterwards on your clothes, and most of all the threat to health. Smoking, unlike responsible drinking, harms not just those who choose to partake but also those who don't.

I am not what Curmudgeon stereotyped as an "anti-smoking zealot" but I am one of the majority of British drinkers who want to be able to enjoy a pint without suffering the discomfort caused by the smoke of others. Rather than a step to alcohol prohibition, the banning of smoking could be the saving of the public house in the country in the long term.

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.

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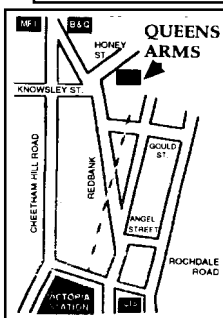
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CASK BEER WEEK

A year ago, Manchester's four family brewers, Holt's, Hydes', JW Lees and Robinson's - chose a spectacular way to publicise Cask Beer Week, by pedalling the



'World's Largest Bike' between the four breweries. This year was a rather more sedate and sophisticated affair, hosted by Holt's at the Ape & Apple in central Manchester.

The theme was real ale and food, with the former provided by the Manchester four, plus Thwaites and Jennings. Holt's own catering division provided the wide range of food, comprising a selection of entrées, with a suggestion as to the best accompanying beer, followed by an extensive buffet.

Executives, head brewers and other staff from the breweries were there in numbers. After a brief introduction by Edwin Partridge of Holt's, Oliver Robinson welcomed everyone and drew attention to the fact that six breweries had joined together to stage the event; what other industry would do a similar thing?

The aim of Cask Beer Week was to make a positive statement about the product. As the national brewers reduced their spend on cask ale, this presented the family brewers with a great opportunity. While national real ale sales had declined by 6.7% in the previous 12 months, sales among the family brewers were up by 4%.

Quality was paramount, whilst remaining true to a great national and regional tradition. Between them, the six breweries represented employed 3,200 people, operated 1,352 pubs and produced 1,004 million pints a year. Mr Robinson thanked CAMRA and Cask Marque for their support and mentioned that Lee's Giles Dennis has won the title 'Brewer of the Year'.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

As usual, there is news from our local family brewers.

Robinson's - the new seasonal Kick Off (4.2%) is now available and is a full-bodied beer with a delicious spicy undertone (ginger has been used in the brew) and is an excellent autumn ale. Last month also saw the welcome return of draught Old Tom (8.5%) for the 2004-05 season. Early samplings indicate this could be a vintage year! The next seasonal will be a return of the popular Robin Bitter.



JW Lees - another new seasonal for autumn. This is Ruddy Glow (4.5%) and again this is a potential classic, being full-bodied and warming with a moreish dry finish. *Opening Times* has sampled this in both Rain Bar (City Centre) and the Lloyds Hotel in Chorlton and it has invariably been on top form. By the way, the Lloyds has also produced some very tempting menus for the Christmas period - well worth checking out.



Hydes' - the new craft ale for autumn is Over The Moon (4.5%), a warming seasonal ale with berry juice in the brew. Early reports are that this is another winner from Hydes. Last month also saw an all-too-rare appearance of cask Manchester's Finest (5.7%). This is a terrific beer, some say the best that Hyde's make (out of a strong range), and it is certainly a classic beer that should be available on draught more often, we think. There are two new permanent additions to Hydes' range in the pipeline. HPA (Highly Prestigious Ale) will be 5-5.5% and is to be a darker, malty brew, which will be available in both cask and bottle. Hydes' 1863 will be a light bitter beer at 3.5%, destined largely for the club trade.

Holt's - from Wednesday 22 September, a few selected Holt's pubs were selling a new beer called Joey's, a low strength (3.5%) beer, at an initial price of £1 a pint. This is an entirely new brew, and not Humdinger with a different name (although draught Humdinger would be very welcome).



Cains - another local family brewer with Gothic in Gatley. Their autumn ale is Cains Red



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International Brewing Awards

			
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(4.5%), a full-flavoured also using some berry juice in the recipe.

MICRO MAGIC

Lots of news from local micro brewers this month...

Khean – quite a few changes at this the 'other' Congleton Brewer, mainly that it's not in Congleton any more! The brewery has upped sticks and moved to Wrenbury, which will now become a two brewery village, as it is already home to the Paradise Brewery. The plant has been sold to John Skeaping who will ultimately be installing it at his Woodlands Farm, near to the well-known Bhurtpore Inn, although it is temporarily housed in an industrial unit very close to Paradise Brewery. Khean's former owner Ken Newsome, will still be involved. This year he brewed two batches of Woodlands Bitter using spring water from the farm and he will continue to brew, albeit on an increasingly part-time basis as John's experience increases (although he will remain a permanent supervisory presence). Luckily Khean beers will not disappear as the plan is to alternate brewing a Khean beer and a new Woodlands Farm beer at what will be known as the 'Woodlands Farm Brewing Co incorporating Khean Brewery'. Not only that but the new set-up will allow both brewing and bottling to expand, thus allowing for wider availability of both Khean and the new Woodlands Farm beers.



Beartown – Meanwhile Beartown is gearing up for major celebration to mark the 10th Anniversary of the brewery and the 5th birthday of the award-winning Brewery Tap. *Opening Times* certainly hopes to be there (we were the first ever CAMRA people to visit Beartown, about one week after production started). The powerful and dangerously drinkable Grizzly Bear (6.8%, pale and very hoppy) will be rebrewed to mark the event. On the pub front, Beartown have recently acquired three new pubs – the Bridge House at Hapton, near Burnely; the Globe in Accrington and Malt 'n' Hops in Chorley. This latter is a well-known free house and the intention is that a range of guest beers will be sold alongside the Beartown range.



Closer to home, Mark Thorpe and Danni Nash have left Bruins in Fallowfield. The pub is currently under temporary management with new tenants expected by mid-October. The main change so far is a welcome increase in opening hours – it is now open all day at weekends and 12-2 and 5-11 in the week.

Pictish – this month's new seasonal is Alchemists Al (4.5%) described as “



refreshing, straw coloured ale with crisp malt flavours and a robust hoppy finish”. If previous year's samples are anything to go by, this is something of an understatement. Blue Moon (6%) was out last month and as superb as ever.



Phoenix – as ever, a range of new seasonals from Tony Allen up at Heywood. Look out for Last Leaf (4.5%), Uncle Fester (4.5%) and Spooky Brew (4.7%).

Porter Brewing – it's that time of year when the superb Porters Stout (5.5%) puts in its annual appearance. Pitch black, bone dry and fabulous. Is this Dave Porter's best beer? We think so. Get it while you can. Stockport's Railway will of course have some.



Millstone – now has a permanent outlet for its beers at the Royal Oak in Delph, which rotates the full Millstone range. The 5% True Grit is now due out at the end of this month and also look out for a return of Christmas Ruby. Windy Miller (4.1%) is now a regular part of the portfolio and generally everything is going great guns at Millstone. Targets are being exceeded and they now get calls asking to buy the beer.

Glossop – sadly, things aren't going great guns here. In fact they're not going at all as brewing has ceased and the plant sold (to a Danish gentleman we understand). Former brewer Don Pape has reportedly put the brewery's failure down to higher than expected overheads.



Shaws – always new beers from Dukinfield-based Shaws. Autumn Gold (4%) is golden and hoppy and Golden Globe (4.3%) and ditto but in a different way) is also proving a best seller and in general the brewery is going from strength to strength. Best Bitter and Tame Valley Ale are regulars and the 4.8% IPA has already been selling well.



Marble – now back on line after a major refurbishment. Chocolate Heavy was due to make an appearance at the Manchester Food & Drink Festival. It will be good to have these beer back.

Facer's – first Salford Brewery Syndicate news; the 2nd week in September saw record brewing at the SBS, with the brewhouse in operation every day by Facer's and Bazens' brewing their respective beers to give combined production of over 30 barrels in the week.



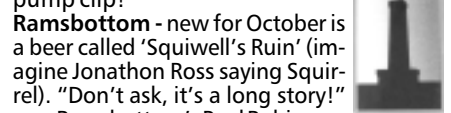
Facer's Brewery news is that the Facer hop yard yielded 3.3kg of lovely Prima donna hops. These were all used as late copper

aroma additions to Dave's one-off 4.4 barrel brew 'Beerjouis Nouveau 2004'. This was due to be on sale in the first week or two of October.

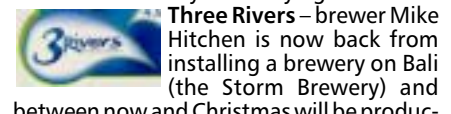
Beerjouis Nouveau 2004 is not to be confused with 'Dave's Hoppy Beer', which he has added to the permanent list by popular demand, especially by the wholesaler who distributes Facer's beer in the Midlands. This beer appeared as the one-off 'Transit' to commemorate the transit of Venus in June and is a 'dry hopped' version of Crabtree. The answer to August's competition, to name all of Facer's 'Greats of English Literature' series of specials, was; Keats, Scrooge, Prancing Pony, Balcony Scene, Wordsworth, Chatterley and Loll's Summer Love. The winner was Rhys Jones, the only person to get them all right!

Bazens' – batches of Icicle Jimmy (4.6&) have sold extremely well. The strong dark and smooth Wild Boar at 6% is to be introduced into the range at the end of this month or beginning of November. The next special for October and November will be Salford's Rose at 4.8%. This is a citrusy amber beer named after (one of) the stars of the bar staff at the King's Arms, Rose, who will be sparkling on the pump clip!

Ramsbottom – new for October is a beer called 'Squiwel's Ruin' (imagine Jonathon Ross saying Squirrel). "Don't ask, it's a long story!" says Ramsbottom's Paul Robinson. This will be a 4.8% ABV, straw coloured, beer'. The Crown, Heaton Lane, was taking some and is a beer to look out for as Ramsbottom beers are invariably worth trying.



Three Rivers – brewer Mike Hitchen is now back from installing a brewery on Bali (the Storm Brewery) and between now and Christmas will be producing one of their beers under license! 'Storm Brewery in Bali' Black Moon is a 4.8% very black stout incorporating Balinese chocolate in the recipe. This beer will be a regular between now and the end of the year and should be available at the Crown, Heaton Lane, which functions as an unofficial brewery tap for Three Rivers. Also look out for the return of the 5.2% Old Disreputable. Three Rivers continues to expand and the installation of a new copper has increased the maximum brew length to 10 barrels.



The item on Cask Beer Week has largely been shamelessly copied from What's Doing, the North Manchester newsletter.



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WORD IS that the Bank Holiday beer festival at the Duke of York, Romiley, was a huge success. I reported last month on the well-judged range of beers on offer and from what I hear I wasn't the only one impressed. The good news is that there will be a re-run event next year. Certainly one to look out for.

Mid-September saw another pub beer festival, this time courtesy of Hydes' celebrations to mark the Family Brewers' Cask Beer Week, at the Horse & Farrier in Gatley. The Horse & Farrier is one of Hydes' 'Heritage Inns' and was refurbished in fine style a couple of years back and is always busy. It was no exception when I called and the first thing I spotted was the formidable Hydes' XXXX on handpump. It was perhaps a little early in the evening for such a powerful brew so I made for the beer festival proper in a marquee outside. This was somewhat quieter than the rest of the pub, perhaps due to the rather bracing atmosphere on a chilly autumn night.

Again there was a well chosen range of beers with Abbeydale Alchemy as my personal favourite, although Darwin Rolling Hitch (5.2%, golden and hoppy) from the north east stood out, too. Skinners Heligan Honey and Kelham Island Pale Rider, the current Champion Beer of Britain, were also very enjoyable. All in all a very good event - I wonder if they'll repeat the Christmas festival from last year?

AROUND THE VILLAGE

While I was there, I took the chance of taking a look at the other pubs in Gatley centre. Well, it would be rude not to, wouldn't it? Furthest out is the Red Lion, which still offers nothing for the cask beer drinker. Luckily, there are better prospects at Gatley Green. Hydes' Prince of Wales has an excellent old-fashioned country pub atmosphere, with an exceptional tap room. Hydes Mild and Bitter are on handpump and always well kept.

Almost next door is Cain's Gothic, the only non-Merseyside tied house of this successful Liverpool brewery. The pub is currently seeking a tenant and perhaps is looking a little tired as a result. However, this hasn't had an impact on the beer quality with both the Dark Mild and Bitter being very good. Completing the handpumped range is Cains IPA and FA plus a guest beer. A good mid to late evening crowd, too.

OUT & ABOUT

An extensive refurbishment has recently been completed at the Davenport Arms, Woodford. The pub has been recarpeted and reupholstered throughout, new fixed seating has been provided in the main bar area, and a new bar top installed. The layout is unchanged, but the pub certainly seems smarter, brighter and more comfortable. Completely new toilets have also been built, although you still need to go outside to reach them. Another change, following a customer survey, is that smoking is no longer allowed in the main bar area, meaning that the tap room is now the only indoor smoking area. Landlady Yvonne tells me that this move has been a great success with the pub suffering no loss of custom at all. Food for thought, perhaps. The beer range remains Robinson's Hatters, Unicorn and seasonal beers, plus Old Tom when available. The new seasonal, Kick Off, was on excellent form when I called.

DOWN THE GROVE

On a recent trip to Hazel Grove, I was very impressed by the guest beer policy at the Rising Sun. There's some real enterprise being displayed here and I hope that my loyal readers in the 'Grove' will try and give this pub the support it deserves. I was generally impressed by the quality of the Robbies beer, too, with perhaps the Grapes and the Three Tunnes being particularly stand out.

There's a new face at the Woodman where Linda Spilsbury is the new licensee. The Robinson's pub is proving a real turn up for the books for Linda who has several years experience in the

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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licensed trade, including time at The Union, Reddish, another Robinson's house. This has always been a lively pub with disco and karaoke and I am told that Linda is thinking of supplementing this with live music on Saturdays. The good thing is that she's also paying close attention to the cellar, so even if the pub's a bit noisy at times, there will be decent pint on offer.

BITS & PIECES

The Railway on Portwood is reaching the end of a lengthy refurbishment, much of it carried out by licensee Alex Lord himself. The seats have all been re-upholstered, some particularly attractive pew seats have been installed along with a striking mural of a locomotive, and the whole pub has been redecorated. A new hanging sign is also in the pipeline, too. On the beer front, the huge range of Porter beers remains available along with three guest beers which go on sale at 7.00pm on Friday night and are often gone by close of business the following day. Needless to say quality is always high at this Good Beer Guide regular. On Lancashire Hill, Beartown have repainted the exterior of the Navigation in cream and black, and whilst the old engineering brick looked smart the pub certainly catches the eye more now.

In Edgeley, the Church has now reduced its cask beer range to Cumbria Way on handpump, thus perhaps becoming the only Robinson's pub not to sell Unicorn.

Hydes' are cock-a-hoop at the success of the John Millington in Cheadle Hulme, which is apparently trading at a phenomenal level. I'm not surprised, as this is one of the most impressive new pubs I've encountered for some time.

Finally, in Heaton Moor it's welcome to Liam and Mandy who took over at the Crown, Heaton Moor Road last month. They have plenty of pub experience having run pubs in St Helens for some time. Liam tells me that he intends to rotate the guest beer with what he calls 'proper beers' like Hop Back Summer Lightning, rather than stick with Wells' Bombardier, which had become something of a fixture. Boddies Bitter- the other cask beer was on top form when I called.



Linda Spilsbury with Brewery Director David Robinson



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Following this year's record breaking event, the festival organisers have decided that the 2005 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will again be held at Edgeley Park, the home of Stockport County and Sale Sharks.

Jim Flynn, this year's Festival Organiser, told *Opening Times* "Edgeley Park proved very popular with festival goers. We did seriously consider going back to the majesty of the Town Hall as we had been so well treated there. However, Edgeley Park gives the Festival the opportunity to grow and our customers particularly enjoyed being able to drink their beer and cider outside. I am very pleased that Edgeley Park wanted us back."

So, grab the diaries and write in the date of the 19th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival - Thursday 2 to Saturday 4 June 2005. It will be bigger and better than ever before.

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WONDERFUL COPENHAGEN?

THE DANISH capital is not the first city which springs to mind when thinking of a beerdrinking weekend. But having heard some favourable reports of quality beer to be drunk there I recently spent a couple of days in the city, writes *Phil Booton*. The flight from London descended into Kastrup airport right over the city and the clear sunny weather allowed a panoramic view of Copenhagen outspread beneath. An auspicious start to the trip. Following a short train journey to the central station I was able to book into my hotel quickly as it was just round the corner.

I decided to make straight for the first of the two brewpubs in the city as it was near to the hotel (and also right next to the entrance to the Tivoli Gardens theme park). This is the **Bryggeriet Apollo**, Vesterbrogade 3, a modern, comfortable bar arranged around the brewing vessels. There is a patio where one can people watch on bustling Vesterbrogade. Two beers are usually available, the standard Pils (4.6), which was a refreshing beer for a hot day and a seasonal special, Altbier (5.7) on my visit. This was rather sweet and overly malty to my taste. I also had food here which was of reasonable quality albeit expensive by UK standards.

I then headed off in the direction of Norrebro, an inner suburb, where the other brewpub is situated. En route I stopped off at a small cafe, **Plan B**, Frederiksborggade 48, which was advertising a big range of speciality beers outside. This proved to be a small eclectically furnished place with an incongruously extensive beer list. The staff recommended an award-winning beer, AZ Ale No 16 from Refsvindingse Brewery (5.7), which was indeed excellent and rather reminiscent of an English ale. They had two beers on draught - Brockhouse IPA and a Grauballe beer, the latter of which I was told was extremely rare in draught form. It was slightly disappointing however, having a sourish bitter flavour. My next call was a highly recommended bar, **Ol Baren**, Elmegade 2. This was a small drinkers' bar with a good draught list including the outstanding Wintercoat ESB (6.1), a fruity, hoppy beer of character. I also sampled Thisted Limfjordsporter (7.9) in bottle here. A very atmospheric candlelit pub with excellent service. Note that Ol Baren does not open until 8 pm except on Fridays, when it's 3 pm. After these pleasant diversions I finally arrived at the **Norrebro Bryghus**, Rysegade 3, the second brewpub in Copenhagen. This opened in 2003 in a converted warehouse and is on two levels, the upper being the restaurant and the lower for drinkers. This to me was a typical boutique brewpub with no fewer than 10 beers available. Fortunately 10cl samplers of four beers were on sale for 45DK. I drank all the beers here in the course of this and a return visit the next day. My favourites were Montceau Ginger (4.5), Bombay Pale Ale (6.5) and La Granja Stout (7.5). There was also a barley wine, Little Korkney Ale at a staggering 12.25%. Interestingly there was also a guest beer on - Honey Gold from the aforementioned Grauballe Brewery, a recent award winner at the Copenhagen beer festival.

After leaving the brewhouse I ventured to another possible recommendation for microbrewery beers. **Blagards Apotek**, Blagards Plads 2, is hidden away in a small square and is quite difficult to find. But it proved well worth finding. A good range of draught beers, including two from Hancocks and one from Fuglsang. The service was very helpful and the beers I tried were very good and the prices were the cheapest I found in Copenhagen. Highly recommended. I finished off the evening in a bar almost opposite my hotel - the **Old English Pub**, Vesterbrogade 2B. This did indeed seem like an English pub but the range of beers was pedestrian, mostly Tuborg and imported global brewery products. A fashionably dimly lit bar which didn't appeal to me despite the friendly service and English atmosphere.

Day two of my visit dawned hot and sunny again and I did some conventional sightseeing before arriving at my first pub of the day. This was **Nyhavn 17** at that address strangely enough. Nyhavn is a busy tourist area by the harbour, lined with bars. This had a very impressive bar front and much polished wood in evidence. Beers were mostly the Tuborg range but there was a bottled house beer from Orbaek brewery, which was a sweet brown ale style at 5.8%. My next planned visit was to **Gullivers Pub**, Gothersgade 2. Unfortunately I was thwarted by a closed door. It appeared that this pub was closed either temporarily for refurbishment or permanently. I later confirmed that the pub has been sold and it is unclear when (and as what) it will reopen.

After this disappointment I made straight for one of the highlights of the trip - **Charlie's Bar**, Pilestraede 3. This amazed me by having no less than 6 cask beers on sale - two each from Harveys and Shepherd Neame and one each from Fullers and Caledonian. Youngs Golden Zest was due on next. All the beers were 45DK a pint. There were also Belgian, German and Danish beers on draught and I was able to try Thisted Oko Humle (5.8), Fuglsang White Bock (7.5), an excellent strong wheat beer, and Hancocks Gambrinus (9.3). Both the barman and other customers were friendly and spoke in English most of the time. A mixed clientele was enthusiastically trying the cask ales. I did sample a half of Harveys Copperwheat and found it perfectly acceptable, if a trifle warm, given the high temperatures outside.

Following more sightseeing and a return visit to the Norrebro Bryghus, my next call was at **Den Tatoverede Enke**, Baron Boltens Gaard (Gothersgade 8B). This is difficult to find as it is in a secluded square entered through an archway from the main street. It is a bar with a big selection of Belgian beers, including about 12 on draught. However the ones I tried were in rather poor condition and the bottled beers were very expensive, even for Denmark. There is a large outside drinking area and high quality (expensive) food is served. But peanuts are also available - a very large bowl for 2DK. Note this pub opens at 4 pm.

I finished off the evening in a small rather smoky local's bar, **Byens Kro**, Montergade 8, just round the corner from Charlie's Bar. I'd hoped that this would have some beers from micros and I was not disappointed. Beers from Brockhouse, Svaneke and Thisted were available in bottles, as well as Mors Stout from Refsvindingse (5.7), although prices were on the high side. But with Kroner to spend I was able to sample a few of these. I intended to try another bar reputed to have a wide range of beers, **McGonigle's**, but in searching for it I inadvertently found myself in a red light area of strip clubs and sex shops. Having been approached by one young lady I decided to return to the hotel, if only to protect myself from temptation!

So overall Copenhagen is a friendly, attractive and not too busy city ideal for a short weekend break. Beer is not a major feature and most bars are dominated by Carlsberg/Tuborg beers but there is some good stuff to be drunk if you know where to go. But make sure you take plenty of money as both drink and food are very expensive - £4-£5 a pint is the norm. Only public transport was noticeably cheaper than in the UK, which possibly says something about differing priorities in different societies!

With thanks to Gazza Prescott for information prior to my visit.

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BREWERY TO BAR:
DISTRIBUTING BEER IN THE
21ST CENTURY

THE DRAYMEN'S TALE BY NEIL WORTHINGTON

In last month's Opening Times, I described how Hyde's manage the business of getting cask ale and other drinks from the brewery to the pubs, clubs and other outlets. This month I describe a Day on the Dray.



For the draymen at Hydes', the working day usually starts at 7am. I went down to the brewery in Moss Side shortly before 7 on a rather wet day in July. Disconcertingly, the first things I noticed were flashing blue lights, four fire engines and a lot of brewery staff standing around in the car park. Fortunately it was a false alarm. Not for the first time, building work had set off the brewery's very sensitive smoke alarms. Just another problem with running a 21st century business in a 19th century building...

The very first job for the draymen is to get yesterday's empties off their vehicle, a curtain sided 17 tonne rigid lorry. They can't do it the day before because there simply isn't room to stack them and still manoeuvre drays, fork lift trucks and pallets. Finally they can start rolling casks on board and lifting cases of bottles. It's a very noisy business.

Everything goes on the dray in some kind of order, designed to make life a little bit easier on arrival at the pubs. For some deliveries, it's easier to unload at the back. For others, unloading at one side or the other makes more sense. When they run out of space on the deck of the dray, they have to double stack some smaller casks - not easy when they're full. But at least they're under cover - for now! Today I'm following Jay Hargreaves and Paul Bird. Jay is the driver, Paul's his mate. They work as a team when they're loading and unloading, one in the cellar and one in the street, but only Jay gets to drive the dray. They've been with Hyde's for donkey's years and seem to know all the pubs in the Hyde's estate. They certainly know the way to them far better than I do!

Waiting for other drays to load up and leave means that it's gone half past eight before our dray pulls out of the yard. But we've got one of the shortest journeys to the first delivery. Within minutes the dray is outside the Old Abbey, aka Kro Bar 3, to drop off a single nine-gallon cask of Bitter. The pub is open, the staff are about (they serve breakfast here) but no-one knows the combination to the lock on the cellar door. We leave the cask outside, pick up an empty and carry on.

Normally we'd also go to Kro Bar, but it's summer time, the students are away and beer consumption is drastically reduced. So it's on to Kro 2, next door to the BBC building on Oxford Road. This is a modern bar in a modern building and it has a modern "cellar", at ground floor level.



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Five casks and kegs are delivered here.

It's still only 9 in the morning and we're heading south to the Victoria in Withington. This is where the problems start. The Victoria is a classic, old fashioned pub, a real beer drinker's pub, and it has an old fashioned underground cellar with an opening to a side street. The problem is in the side street. It's full of parked cars, and there's a garage and a taxi firm at the far end. Everything has to stop for the dray to back in. For the next quarter of an hour, nothing can move. Taxi drivers stand around waiting. They're not too concerned - they're regular customers in this pub!

The cellar door is again locked but the landlady is soon about to open up and supervise delivery. There are lots of casks, and kegs, to go in here. Most of the order is Bitter, in 36 gallon casks, but they also take Mild, Jekyll's Gold, the current seasonal (Ticky-Boo), and various kegs. Casks are dropped straight down through the hatch in the pavement, landing on the big orange PVC square that is a "Vitapad" - the modern successor to the cork mat. Jay gives a bit of a backwards twist to the nines as he drops them, ensuring that any energy not absorbed by the Vitapad results in the cask rolling towards the wall of the street rather than into the middle of the cellar. Giving a "twirl" to a 36 gallon cask is not really an option... Cases of spirits, and shrink wrapped trays of "Manchester's Finest" in bottles, are also dropped into the secure embrace of the Vitapad. The empties are thrown back up and out of the cellar, and from there, onto the dray. All in all, the cellar doors are only open for ten minutes. By 9.35 we're off to the last port of call for the first run, the Friendship at Fallowfield. We've already driven past the Friendship on the way to Withington, but there's a reason for leaving it - Jay and Paul have had problems with theft here before now, and they want to leave as little on the dray as possible. Two other reasons. Hyde's have got the builders in, extending the pub's drinking space by some 60% with a new conservatory. And we finally get a drink here. The staff at the Friendship always get the glasses out - for Coke, or lemonade - while they're busy cleaning and getting ready for the new day!

Delivering to the Friendship means driving down the side of the pub again, but here it's a private entrance, and there's only a low drop to the cellar. Here are 35 barrels to drop off here, mostly casks, some kegs. We're done by 10 o'clock, and after downing some fizzy pop, it's back to the brewery to load up for the second trip. Oh, and another reason for having a two man crew - reversing out of the pub entrance onto a busy main road.

10.25 sees us back at Moss Side. Within another 10 minutes the empties have been offloaded and we're alongside the loading platform to pick up the drinks for the country pubs. While Paul and Jay are rolling casks around, I notice some of the other deliveries taking place. Bulk deliveries of malt and compressed gas arrive round the back of the brewery. Return loads of empty kegs turn up on articulated lorries and have to be reversed into the yard, to be offloaded by the forklift trucks.

By 11.15 we're off again and this time I just can't keep up with the dray. Traffic in Didsbury means I reach the Fletcher Moss (19 casks) just as Jay and Paul are ready to leave for Broomedge and Lymm. There are two drops in Broomedge, at the Wheatsheaf (9 casks) and the Jolly Thresher. At 12.40 I catch up with them at the latter. This has been refurbished as one of Hydies' Heritage Inns, and the work has extended to the cellar, with a modernised drop, straight down, with steel rather than wooden doors. The lads drop 11 casks and kegs and then start unloading case after case of wine (lots of Chardonnay) and bottled beers (lots of real Budweiser). Something else is delivered too - the company's internal mail. In fact the only thing that's not carried on the drays is compressed gas for lager and smoothflow.

Mine host offers us sandwiches and a quick drink but the pub is so busy that we would have to wait. The lads decide to press on. By 1.20 we're at the Bull's Head in Lymm village. Here the dray has to be parked on the main road, just beyond a hump backed canal



bridge. It's too wide to get down the side of the pub to the "cellar", a relatively recent creation in an out-building. The new cellar offers more storage space and more room to look after beers than the original did. It's a long way to roll 12 casks from the main road but they can be rolled all the way in to the cellar, without a drop. And for the first time, the draymen don't have to rack the casks themselves. The landlord takes such pride in his beer that he insists on setting them up on the stillages himself.

The last port of call today is the Old Packet House in Altrincham. It's not a Hyde's house but a free trade account, taking just one or two 9-gallon casks a week. But it has a classic "gantry" for deliveries, the traditional ramp down which casks are rolled, to be caught once again by a Vitapad. The draymen just have time for another quick drink and then it's back to the brewery yard to park up and knock off. Unloading the empty casks will wait until tomorrow.

They've been at work for some eight hours and covered some 50 miles, delivering 128 casks and kegs of assorted sizes and contents to 9 very different pubs, in the city centre, in the suburbs and out in the country. They've not missed anyone out, they've not left anyone short of beer and they've left the cask ale exactly as it needs to be to continue the magical process of secondary fermentation. When you're next supping a pint of Manchester's Finest, raise your glass to the draymen - the vital link between brewer and cellerman!



Cask Marque Award

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 All Bar One, 73 King Street, Manchester
 Angel Inn, 197 King Street, Dukinfield
 Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport
 Bank at Sale, 70 School Road, Sale
 Barsh, 65 High Street, Cheadle
 Barton Arms, 2 Stableford, Worsley
 Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford
 Boatouse, Ferry Road, Irlam
 Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow
 Bulls Head, 155-157 Broken Cross, Macclesfield
 Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane
 Calverts Court, St. Petersgate, Stockport
 Church House Inn, Church Street, Bollington
 Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow
 Cotton Bale, 21 Market Street, Hyde
 Cross Keys, Adswold Road, Cheadle Hulme
 Crown, 81 High Street, Cheadle
 Dog & Partridge, 665-7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury
 Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley
 Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Road, Eccles
 Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
 Farmers Arms, Manchester Road, Swinton
 Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
 Football, 35 Swinton Hall Road, Swinton
 Four Heaton, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
 Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
 Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
 Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley
 Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme
 Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
 Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield
 Harbord Harbord, 17-21 Long Street, Middleton

Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
 Harrys Bar, UMIST, Sackville St Manchester
 High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley
 J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
 Jar Bar, SilkHouse, 4 Park Green, Macclesfield
 John Gilbert, Worsley Brow, Worsley
 Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
 King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
 Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
 Lowes Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
 Moon Under Water, Deansgate, Manchester
 Oddfellows Arms, 73 Moor End Road, Stockport
 Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
 Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Manchester
 Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rusholme
 Paramount, 33 Oxford Street, Manchester
 Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington
 Porters Ale House, Prince Roe Street, Macclesfield
 Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge
 Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester
 Rycroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme
 Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
 Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
 Society Rooms, Macclesfield Park La, Macclesfield
 Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge
 Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge Rail Station
 Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle
 Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston
 Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
 Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester
 Wetherspoons, 47 Piccadilly, Manchester
 White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge
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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

GORTON'S HYDE ROAD

The Hyde Road Stagger has always been one of Britain's great pub crawls, with at one time 12 different breweries' beers available for those with the tenacity to get through the lot. Indeed it was included in the first book of "50 Great British Pub Crawls" However, the loss of local heavy industry and terraced housing have eventually taken their toll on the local pub stock with only seven pubs serving cask beers.

Our first port of call on the August night was the **Travellers Call**. This small multi-roomed pub has a pleasant, well-worn feeling about it with real atmosphere and character. Round the walls the photographs of many vanished pubs are testimony to the number of closures in the area. The other thing that strikes you is the friendliness of the place and the quality of the Hydes' Bitter, the sole cask beer. We sat down to drink our beer and watched Paula Radcliffe start her 10,000-metre medal attempt at the Olympics.

We had to press on however, and having checked out the **Imperial** and **Nags Head**, which were both keg, we walked on past the former Robinson's **Coach & Horses** (closed and boarded) to the **Pineapple**. The Pineapple is 50 metres or so from Hyde Road, behind Kwik Save, and is a real contrast with our first stop. It's an open-plan pub with a L-shaped bar, pictures of Gorton's long-gone industrial past on the walls, and high Alpine chalet-type wooden ceilings. The Hydes' Bitter wasn't bad but not quite as good as in the Travellers Call. The loud disco was making conversation a little difficult and we wanted to find out how Paula was doing. So we moved on.

We arrived at the **Suburban**, just next to Gorton's market to find Paula had pulled out midway through her race. Oh well, there's always Beijing. The Suburban has a depressing, run-down feel to it, in contrast to all the other pubs we visited on the night. The welcome was also a little frosty, with one of the bar staff describing us as 'anoraks' to her colleague. What can she have meant? None of us were wearing one...There's nothing like a

warm welcome....and this was nothing like a warm welcome. The pub does however have reasonable Lees' Bitter, a unique beer in this neck of the woods.

Our next stop was back on Hyde Road itself at the Good Beer Guide-listed **Plough**. This 19th Century multi-roomed pub has been little changed for over 100 years. We chose to go into the vault with its parquet floor, carved bar and wooden bench seating, as a contrast to the recently redecorated lounge and back room. As this was the first pub to sell cask mild, most of us chose the Hatters, which was in good form, but those who chose the Unicorn found it almost as good.

With some reluctance we left the pub and turned left off Hyde Road, down Cross Street, past the **Cotton Tree** (keg) to the **Royal Oak**. This is a warm, welcoming and popular two-roomed pub. There were two cask ales, Boddington's Cask and Shepherd Neame Spitfire. The latter was reasonable but the Boddington's was clearly at the end of the barrel. When this was brought to the landlord's attention the barrel was changed and the beer was in good form. As a consumer such an attitude always makes you want to go back to the pub.

Our next stop required either an A to Z or a keen sense of direction. Luckily one of our number had the latter as the **Vale Cottage** is well worth finding. Largely hidden from the passing traffic on Hyde Road by a small wood, the Vale Cottage is probably the ultimate 'country' pub in an urban setting. This classic pub has been in the same hands for 34 years and it shows. Although there are no separate rooms, the bar effectively divides the pub in two. On the Bar were John Smith's Bitter and Greene King IPA, the winner of the 'Bitter' category at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival earlier in the month (and as the pumpclip proudly proclaimed). Out of curiosity we all chose the IPA and found it on good form.

Leaving the Pub we wend our way through the wooded area back to Hyde Road and on the other side, the **Waggon & Horses**. This large two-roomed pub has been recently redecorated and as a result is more welcoming and less spartan than I thought it on my last visit. The Holt's Mild and Bitter were both at their usual good value prices and both on really good form.

Although this is not the Stagger it was a decade ago, the quality of the beer is as high as ever, if not higher. There are some really characterful pubs en route and where else outside the City centre could you try beers from each of our four local family brewers? A Stagger to be recommended.





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GREATER MANCHESTER CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2004





THE TIVOT, TIVOT DALE, STOCKPORT.

The Tivot is an old fashioned pub, in the best sense of the word. By night it's something of a quiet backwater. By day, it's a lively and thriving town local with a mature clientele who enjoy not only the fine Robinson's beers but also the exceptionally good value food. Despite some opening out, the Tivot still keeps its essentially multi-roomed aspect with front and back rooms, a separate dining room and an exceptional vault, possibly one of the best around. Food is generally served in the dining room and if that is full, as is often the case, the back room as well. When we called on a busy Saturday the pub was pretty much full at 1.00pm but seats were found in the light and airy top-lit back room. Settling down with pints of top-notch Robbies (Hatters and Unicorn on electric pumps – and in the winter a welcome cask of Old Tom on the bar, and all at value for money prices) it was time to peruse the menu. The printed menu offers a standard selection of pub fare – toasties (£2.25), jacket spuds, baguettes (£3), various burger dishes (£2.50-ish) etc. The hot roast beef and onion in a giant barm for £2.25 came highly recommended but we were after something more substantial. Thus our eyes turned to the black-board menu which offered a selection of main course meals all at £4. There are three roasts (beef with Yorkshire pudding, lamb and mint sauce, turkey and stuffing) and three pies, all home-made – steak; chicken, ham and leek; cheese & onion. As there were just the three of us we all tried one of the pies. Food orders are taken at your table and it is good to see that you don't pay until you have had your meal. There was a choice of chips or potatoes and all came with a variety of vegetables. We weren't disappointed. The steak and chicken pies came in individual bowls with puff-pastry tops and each had a generous and tasty filling, packed with meat. The cheese and onion pie was a generous slice of a proper plate pie made with crisp short crust pastry. The chips were light and crisp and the potato option comprised both mashed and roast. The vegetables were mashed carrots with swede, al-

**NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR
THE RACE HOTS UP**

After winning the Greater Manchester Pub of the Year title, Stockport's Arden Arms is now in the next round of the contest which will end next February with the announcement of CAMRA's National Pub of the Year. The next round is what is known as the 'Super Regional' round, whereby the 16 regional pubs of the year are put into groups of four with the winners of each group going through to the final round of judging. So, what's the competition? The Arden is up against the following pubs:
The Manor Arms, Broughton-in-Furness, Cumbria This is a free house featuring Coniston Bluebird, Yates Bitter, Taylors Golden Best and guest beers. It is a popular community pub overlooking the Georgian village square.
The Ship, Middlestone Village, County Durham. A free house with a changing range of beers and twice yearly beer festivals. Following closure by Vaux it was reopened following a spirited local campaign. There is a rooftop drinking area.
The Port Royal Hotel, Port Bannatyne, Isle of Bute. A quirky one this, being described as a family tun recreation of a Russian tavern. Microbrewery beers are served from bar top casks, and there is also real cider and perry. Russian-style food is served. From what we know and have heard of the others, the Arden must have a real chance of making it through to the finals. The finalists will be known in a couple of months. Intriguingly, there is a possibility of two pubs in the *Opening Times* catchment area battling it out for the top spot. Congleton's Beartown Brewery Tap was the winner of its regional title and must also stand a very good chance of reaching the final round.

dente beans and cauliflower with melted cheese. Proper gravy, too. After this we were stuffed and had to pass on the tempting puddings (all at £2.75) but all agreed that this was good honest food sold at bargain prices. "I'm definitely coming back here" said one of our party who had previously been unfamiliar with the pub. Food is available Monday to Saturday from 12 noon to 2.30pm and, I think it goes without saying, is highly recommended. You'll get a good pint too as the Tivot is also a fixture in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. JC



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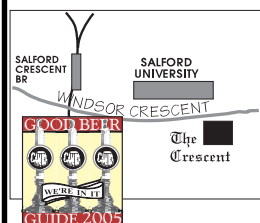
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ORGANIC BEERS REVISITED

Earlier in the year we carried out a tasting of a selection of British organic beers that had been kindly supplied by Unicorn Grocery of Chorlton-cum-Hardy. It has to be said that, with a couple of honourable exceptions, the results were somewhat disappointing. However, as there is a growing interest in organic beers – and an ever-increasing number of products on the market – we thought we would revisit the category and this time extend the selection to include some Continental beers. With one exception all these beers were again sourced from Unicorn Grocery. As usual, all the beers were tasted blind with only the person who had bought them knowing their identity.

It is worth pointing out that the definition of “organic” is that the raw materials have been grown under conditions that strictly limit the use of artificial fertilisers, weedkillers and pesticides. In the UK this is certified by the Soil Association, and there are equivalent bodies in other countries. There is nothing inherent in organic produce that means it will taste better, although many people believe it does – what you are essentially doing is lending your support to a more natural and less intensive form of land use. Indeed we wondered at the last tasting whether the limited range of organic malts available perhaps restricted the ability of the brewers to produce tasty beers.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Beer 1 – Black Isle Wheat Beer (4.5% ABV, 500 ml, £1.85)

This was a pale beer whose cloudy appearance showed it to be bottle-conditioned. It had a fruity aroma with definite tangerine hints; the carbonation was noticeable but not overpowering. It had a fairly soft, easy-drinking character, although with some bitterness in the aftertaste, along with some citrus notes. It was felt that this was an enjoyable, high-quality beer that would be very thirst-quenching on a hot day. The label stated that it was brewed in the Belgian style with orange and coriander included in the ingredients.

Beer 2 – Hartsfelder Ökokrone Export (5.0% ABV, 500 ml, £1.45)

The pale, clear appearance of this beer was what one would expect from a German lager. It is brewed by a small brewery on the borders of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. The aroma had hints of vanilla, with noticeable carbonation and a moderate head. It had a complex mix of flavours, with a toffeish candy sweetness being balanced by some citrus notes, and a lingering dry, bitter aftertaste. This was considered to be another beer of high quality that was certainly on a par with the best non-organic German lagers. It was also available at a very reasonable price.

Beer 3 – Dupont Moinelle Biologique (7.5% ABV, 750 ml, £3.99 or 250 ml, £1.40)

This was another cloudy, bottle-conditioned beer, but much darker than either of the first two. It had a somewhat yeasty aroma with hints of citrus and spice. The flavour was rich, full

and complex, with a strong underpinning of malt, more citrus and spice, and a slight burnt candy note. Also, not surprisingly from its strength, it had a definite “alcohol kick”. Its overall character was very distinctly Belgian, and it was felt to be another impressive beer. The label had a rather attractive design of ears of barley representing a stylised figure drinking from a glass.

Beer 4 – Caledonian Golden Promise (5.0% ABV, 500 ml, £1.50 from the Bottle Stop, Bramhall)

This is a very well-known beer that is widely regarded as the original British organic beer and a pioneer of the style. It was fairly pale, but darker than a typical lager colour. The aroma was fairly malty. The flavour was also malty, with little hop character. Hints of liquorice, citrus, desiccated coconut and even freshly baked bread were also detected. The distinctive burnt toffee Caledonian house character was present, but very subdued. Although not unpleasant, this was felt to be a little disappointing, and a less bitter and hoppy beer than it once was.

Beer 5 – O’Hanlon’s Organic Rye Beer (4.5% ABV, 500 ml, £2.25)

This was another beer whose slightly cloudy appearance revealed it to be bottle-conditioned. It was mid-brown in colour with relatively little aroma and a lack of condition. The taste was yeasty and slightly spicy, with burnt orange notes and a rather sour character. It was generally felt to be lacklustre and one-dimensional, and by some way the least impressive beer of the session. It also did not offer very good value for money compared with the others.

Beer 6 – Pinkus Alt (5.0% ABV, 500 ml, £1.65)


Although having the golden colour and fresh, hoppy aroma of a lager, this is actually a top-fermenting ale, brewed by the Pinkus Müller brewery of Münster, Germany. It had a lively carbonation and dense head. The flavour was predominantly malty, with a hint of sweetness, although some hoppiness came through in the aftertaste. Some tasters also detected spicy and peppery notes. This beer divided opinions amongst the panel, some being fairly impressed while others thought it a little bland.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



This tasting certainly underlined the wide variety of British and Continental organic beers that are now available and showed that, at their best, they can certainly hold their own with their non-organic counterparts. The beer of the session was certainly the Dupont Moinelle, with the Black Isle Wheat Beer and the Hartsfelder Ökokrone also very highly regarded, and some of the tasters also being impressed by the Pinkus Alt. As always, the opinions expressed are only those of a particular group of people – why not try a few of the beers for yourself and see what you think. If you’re interested in organic beers, the best place to go is undoubtedly the Unicorn Grocery on Albany Road, Chorlton (just off Manchester Road), who have a selection of over 35. They also have a number of organic ciders. Their website is at <http://www.unicorn-grocery.co.uk>. We also spotted a fair number of organic beers at the Bottle Stop in Bramhall. One further widely-available British organic beer not included in these tastings is Brakspear’s Live Organic, which we sampled last year amongst British bottle-conditioned beers. This can be found in many off-licences and supermarkets such as Morrison’s.



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 PUB OF THE MONTH - SEPTEMBER 2003



OCTOBER FEATURED PUB

THE CHIEFTAIN, HADFIELD

It is not often that a fairly modern pub, initially built to serve a residential estate, is nominated as a CAMRA Branch pub of the month. It is therefore to its great credit that the Chieftain in Hadfield is one such pub.

The Chieftain is a single storey building of pleasant appearance, with a good beer garden and plenty of floral decoration. It is easy to find on Green Lane just off Newshaw Lane and the A57 into Glossop from Hollongworth. It is also an easy walk from Hadfield railway station. The beers from Hydes' add a valuable variety to the real ales of the area and currently are Dark Mild, Bitter, Manchester's Finest and the regular Hydes' seasonal beer which at the time of writing was Over The Moon. All the beers are on handpump.

There is a spacious and comfortable open-plan split-level lounge and a separate games area. Good value lunches and evening meals are available Monday to Thursday from 12 noon to 2.0pm, and 5.30-8.30pm, and on Friday, Saturday and Sunday all day from 12 noon to 8.15pm.

There is the feel of a good local pub at the Chieftain, which has its regular quiz night each Thursday. The licensees Bob and Denise Kinsley-Smith have run the Chieftain now for 17 years and preside over an excellent pub doing effectively what it was designed to do. Long may it continue to do so.



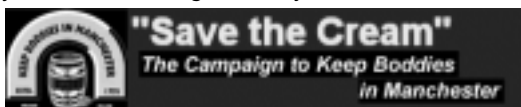
THE OLD MARKET TAVERN, ALTRINCHAM

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA has voted for the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham as its Pub of the Season for Autumn 2004.

Once known as the Unicorn Hotel, this old former mail coach inn has long been a favourite of cask ale drinkers. Today it regularly offers nine cask ales, more than any other pub in the branch area. In the winter, one of these is generally Robinson's powerful Old Tom, served by gravity from a cask at the back of the bar. The other ales, all on handpump, come from a wide variety of regional and micro brewers, some famous and some less so. It's the most regular local outlet for Bolton's Bank Top beers, for example. For lovers of apples there are also three ciders, usually from Saxon of Batley.

The Old Market Tavern has been a Good Beer Guide regular for a number of years, and we're pleased to say that the 2005 edition of the Guide (just published! price £13.99 at all good booksellers) is no exception. It's missed out at least one year though. In 1999 the future of the pub seemed uncertain when former landlord, Wayne Reece, started developing his new Belgian bar, Le Trappiste. Eventually he decided to concentrate on his new venture and the OMT passed to Anne-Marie Holbourne, who had worked there already for quite some time. She set about sprucing the place up and has brought in a few innovations to get different people to try the pub. Male strippers might not have been everyone's first idea of entertainment, but it did bring a lot of ladies in, and Anne-Marie says many of them gave the cask ales a try - probably for the first time ever!

Internally the pub is very much an alehouse, reminiscent of its previous guise as a Hogshead pub, with much bare wood or stone on the floor and a lot of dark wood round the walls. The long bar is the first thing you notice when you enter, with a proud array of handpumps. The mail coach passengers of two centuries ago probably wouldn't recognise it as it's been opened out and extended into what used to be the Town Hall next door. But it still has several distinct little alcoves for privacy, and it has a separate smoke free room (all day) to the right of the bar. The clientele are very varied, with all ages represented, but it has a particular appeal for young drinkers. For many of them, this is where they first learn to appreciate the diversity and subtlety of cask beer. We will be presenting the award to Anne-Marie at the Old Market Tavern on Thursday 14th October, sometime around 9 p.m. We hope you can come along too and join in the celebrations.



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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

October 2004

Thursday 14th - Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. **Note - guest speaker CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner - let's have a good turnout please**

Saturday 16th - Trip to Copper Dragon Brewery, Skipton. Depart Crown, Heaton Lane, 9.00am. Book with Dave Sharpe on 0161 483 3708.

Friday 22nd - East Manchester by minibus Stagger. Depart Crown, Heaton lane at 7.30pm. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973.

Saturday 23rd - New Members Trip to Bazens and Facer's Breweries. Depart Crown, Heaton lane 3.00pm. details from and book with Chris & Karen Wainwright on 0161 456 7345.

Thursday 28th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Horse & Farrier, Gatley. From 8.00pm.

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

Saturday 9th - Evening get together at Poynton British Legion Beer Festival

Monday 11th - Branch Meeting: Ramseys Bar Buckingham Hotel, Buxton. Starts 8.30pm

Saturday 16th to Sunday 24th - Annual Foreign Trip Bruges.

Monday 1st November - Committee Meeting: Hatters Arms, Marple. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 15th - Branch Meeting: Kinder Lodge, New Mills Rd, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm

October 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 11th - Campaigning Meeting: Rifleman's Arms, Moor lane, Wilmslow. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 25th - Macclesfield Pub Crawl: Bridgewater Arms 8.00pm, Puss In Boots 8.30; Navigation 9.00, Beehive 9.30.

Monday 8th November - Campaigning Meeting: Dolphin, Windmill St, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm

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

Thursday 14th - Pub of the Season presentation to the Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. From 7.30pm.

Thursday 21st - Urmston/Flixton Survey - details from John Igson on 0161 962 7976.

Thursday 4th November - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENT

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TALL POPPY SYNDROME

A lot of eyebrows were raised when Greene King IPA won the Standard Bitter category in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain competition, and was runner-up for the overall award. IPA is now probably the best-selling real ale in Britain and, while not an intrinsically bad beer, is widely perceived as rather bland and ordinary. Surely it couldn't have won in a fair fight against so many other more highly-regarded brews.

The organisers pointed out that they go to great lengths to ensure that the competition is a genuine blind tasting, and the fact that it runs over several stages makes it effectively impossible for a brewer to submit a "doctored" sample of a beer that bears little relation to the standard product. Despite this, some still found the decision incredible. However, there are two factors at work here. The first is that a beer produced in small batches by a microbrewery will tend to be sold mainly in specialist pubs where it will be well looked after. In contrast, a beer produced in larger quantities and widely distributed will inevitably end up in establishments where the standards are not so high – so, irrespective of the inherent quality of the beer, the average pint will not be so good. It has often been remarked how some pubs succeed in coaxing a depth of character and flavour out of beers like Tetleys and Boddingtons that few others manage. The second is that, with the best will in the world, if such things matter to you, it is difficult to avoid tasting the policies of the company in the beer they produce. If you know that a beer comes from a large brewer it will inevitably colour your expectations. It might be instructive to see what conclusions the knockers reached if presented with a sample of IPA in a blind tasting and being told that it came from a new microbrewery in deepest Suffolk.

Therefore I see no reason in theory why Greene King IPA shouldn't win this award, although I must admit I have only rarely come across examples that suggested it was deserving of it. The episode underlines how many in CAMRA perhaps set too little store by the standard of cellarmanship in the pub when judging how good or bad a particular beer is. There are few beers in this category than are incapable of being really enjoyable when found in first-class condition, whereas any beer can be unpleasant if not looked after properly.

CRONYISM

One of the most dispiriting experiences in pub going is walking into a strange pub, and finding that the only customers are a small group clustered around the bar. They seem to be friends of the landlord, mostly middle-aged men, maybe with a few wives or girlfriends. And they give you a funny look as if you've invaded their private space. There are plenty of comfortable seats, but nobody's using them. There may be an extensive menu, but nobody's dining. It's even worse when occasionally some of them nip behind the bar to serve themselves, blurring the distinction between staff and punters.

One of the features of virtually all good pubs is that they appeal to a mix of customers who spread themselves around engaged in a variety of activities, such as eating meals, playing games or just reading the newspaper. While there's much to be said for pubs having a strong local identity, a pub that appeals only to a clique of the landlord's mates is surely a pub without a future.

Curmudgeon Online: www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk

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

The main front page headline was "The Great Smooth Rip-off" – pub goers in the North West were being hit in the pocket by the big brewers' push to replace cask ale with bland "nitrokeg" or "smooth beers". Prices were up to 20p or more higher for the new smooth beers compared with cask equivalents. The annual pub prices survey by CAMRA had highlighted the problem, and it had been backed up by local research by members of the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch.

Sadly, it was not only the national brewers who were at it. Both Robinson's and Hydes' had been found guilty of charging more for a smooth version of a cask ale, and Wetherspoons were charging £1.29 a pint for Boddington's cask, with John Smiths "smooth" alongside at £1.39. There was another aspect to the cask/smooth controversy – besides paying more for a smooth beer, drinkers were getting less than a pint, due to the thick head which guaranteed a short measure every time.

★★★★★

Marston's and Banks's had unveiled a trimmed down range of guest ales for their combined estates. Before the changes, Marston's Head Brewer's Choice offered a new cask beer every fortnight, and the more leisurely Festival Beers from Banks's introduced a newcomer every two months. The new programme, simply called The Guest List, would offer a new beer every month. So the original range of 30 had been cut to just 12. There were also changes to the permanent range – Bateman's Dark Mild had been replaced by Banks's Original, whilst another casualty had been Marston's Owd Roger on draught. This popular 7.6% barley wine would remain as one of the brewery's flagships in bottled form – apparently in cask form it had failed to achieve significant distribution. It was unfortunate that the company's current thinking had no room for what would always have been a low volume niche product.

★★★★★

When Allied Domecq decided to put their pub estate on the market, Punch Taverns emerged

as the new owner, and they quickly announced that the 24 in-house breweries in the Firkin estate would be closed. Staff were told that brewing was to cease with immediate effect, and beer in hand would be distributed to the Firkin estate. No more would be produced, and brewing staff would be redundant.

★★★★★

King & Barnes, the 200 year old Sussex Brewery, had been the subject of a hostile takeover bid by Shepherd Neame, the Faversham, Kent, brewery, which had promised to keep the brewery open. But Hall & Woodhouse of Blandford in Dorset bought the brewery and closed it, having said they would match some of the Horsham beers. Today Hall & Woodhouse trade under the Badger name, and their current beer list includes King & Barnes Sussex Bitter.



VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 3 - OUT NOW! A Celebration of Real Ale in Stockport's Pubs - Page 19

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Very little news is reported from members in the various areas of the Branch this month.

The Branch however, has been quite active, with a Branch Walk on 29 August when a group of us walked from Hayfield to Bridgmont (Where's that you may be wondering?). Bridgmont is at the start of the Chapel by-pass, as you are travelling up the A6 after Furness Vale. When the by-pass was built, the old road, where the Dog & Partridge pub stands, became a backwater, the road being a cul-de-sac only used by residents and visitors to the pub.

It is a very nice pub too (see recent write up in Opening Times). They also have a beer festival each year (which was the reason we went there in the first place). There were around 15 beers on offer but all were unusual to the area and all were in good condition on our visit. The festival was held outside in a small tent that spilled over into the car park and by the looks of the fire they had been roasting food of some kind the previous day.

The week after, it was the Glossop Beer Festival which the Branch ran as a CAMRA event. Again very successful, the beer ordering was not that far out and the weather ensured that everyone was sat out in the sun having a happy time. Two beers seemed popular by a long way. Eastwood & Sanders Leantown Bitter (one of the Festival Ales brewed by them) was extremely pleasant and the Rolys 1,000 Dozen (named after an infamous Branch member completing 12,000 beers around the time of the Festival) from Shaws Brewery, went down well at 4.8% As we had ordered plenty of these two, they were available for much of the weekend.

Personally, I could not make my mind up which I liked the best but on everyone's comments, if we had a Beer of the Festival, which we didn't, those two had more praise than any of the others. Rare beers ensured that the scratchers had a good stay at the festival, beers featuring from the Calow Top Caravan park at Ashbourne (Haywood Brewery), which are rarely sold out of the Caravan Park's own pub, Barry from Tiger Tops at Wakefield excelling himself with a very tasty 3.0% 'boys beer' (Charlestown Bitter) and the much heavier 6.4% Top O'Town strong mild. Locally, the Lowes Arms beers went well too, Red Rose Porter at 4.7% and Fountain Ale at 4.0% as did the other Shaws beer, Howard Town Bitter, a 4.0% bitter again brewed especially for the Festival.

The theme of getting seven beers brewed and named after the seven old townships of Glossop worked well (I have already an idea for next year on the themes we may use). However, the venue is in doubt due to possible development of the Labour Club car park site where we held the festival. Still, it is early days and we will worry about the venue in another six months time. Hopefully it will continue in some form on the same weekend next year. Thanks to all who helped make the weekend a great success, bar staff, people who helped set up and wash the endless stack of dirty glasses. See you all next year.

**PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR
NOVEMBER ISSUE OF OT - OCT 25**

Ye Olde Admiral Rodney Prestbury

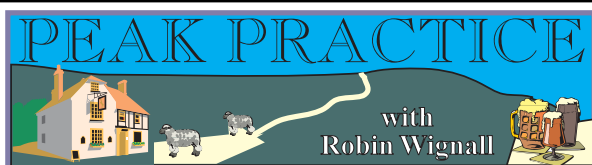
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As summer, if that's what it was, rolled on High Peak was venue to a handful of beer festivals. Unfortunately I missed the event at the **Navigation** in Buxworth, being away in the Lake District that week-end. Stopping in Wasdale I was able to mix fell walking with sampling the offerings of the Wasdale Head Inn and the two pubs of Nether Wasdale. More later.

Late August Bank Holiday week-end saw the return of the excellent little festival at the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont. This year saw a dozen beers, 50 per cent up on last year, all of which sold out on a weekend of largely decent weather, favourable to the festival in the small marquee behind the pub. Prices were held at last year's rate, £2 across the board. Cask jackets kept the beer cool and in good condition. Unusual and seasonal brews included Gales Summer Hog (3.8% ABV), Butcombe Blond (4.3%), and Arundel Summer Daze (4.7%), whilst Hampshire Greece Lightning (4.2%) was an Olympic brew. Exmoor Hart (4.8%) lived up to its fine reputation, as did Moorhouse's Pride of Pendle. Best of the beers were Hydes' Fit as a Fiddle (4%), a fine Olympic special, and the long standing Harviestoun Ptarmigan (4.5%). This really is a super little festival which brings a breath of fresh air into an area which tends to be dominated by Tetley's and Robinson's, and is well worth supporting.

The following weekend saw the official CAMRA festival at Glossop, to run alongside the town's Victorian weekend. This is another festival that really needs fine weather, with marquee and outside drinking. The Friday afternoon turned out to be well spent. Publicity promised 25 beers. Now you can't do all those in an afternoon, but a range of seasonals, festival specials and new brews catered for all local tastes. Local brews included Greenfield Evening Glory (4.2%), Millstone Summer Daze (4.1%) and Autumn Leaves (4.3%), and Howard Town from Shaw's. Eastwod & Sanders Leantown Bitter (4.2%) had to be tried, as did Foxfield Roughtown (3.7%). Callow Top Brewery – a new one to me – seems to specialise in hefty brews, their Bad Ram being 5%, with stronger to follow for those inclined, or already inclining. Again, all the beers tasted were in good form. A big thank-you to all involved, as the small group I brought along, not usually beer festival goers, thoroughly enjoyed their afternoon.

And so back to the permanent mini-beer festival that is Wasdale in west Cumbria. The Wasdale Head Inn is the home of the Great Gable Brewery, and lies at the foot of England's High-est Peak. When Peak Practice called, beers in the back bar included Great Gable Bitter (3.7%), Burnmoor (4.2%) and Yewbarrow Stout (5.5%). These were accompanied by beers from Yates, Derwent and Coniston, and the widely available Black Sheep Bitter. At the other end of Wastwater, at Nether Wasdale, the Screes had Yates Bitter, Coniston Bluebird, a Derwent beer and Black Sheep. Across the road at the Strands (oddly still badged Robinson's/Hartley's outside, though no sign of their beers at the bar) the festival of Cumbrian beers was completed with a fine pint of Hawkshead Bitter. If you are round in west Cumbria in amongst the big hills, enhance your visit with a pint or more of fine Cumbrian ales.

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CAMRA CELEBRATES CIDER & PERRY MONTH IN OCTOBER



Almost all CAMRA Beer festivals feature Cider & Perry Bars, and a range of traditional ciders can be found at many pub beer festivals



UNLIKE REAL ALE production, which can happen at any time of the year, real cider and perry can only be made when the fruit is ripe. Great skill goes into producing both products. Great store is placed by the Craft Brewer in the quality of ingredients and variety of flavours created by the malt, hops, yeast and water used to brew the beer.

It is a Producer rather than a Brewer that makes cider and perry. They may use a mixture of bittersweet and bittersharp cider apples or sweet dessert apples, or a mixture of the two to make cider; but perry can only be made from specialised perry pears, which are high in natural tannin.

The choosing, pressing and blending of the fruit to make cider is just as much of a craft as making beer and produces a vast range of tastes, styles and aromas, similar to those produced in fine wine. Like wine, each year's fruit produces a unique vintage, so much so that cider and perry has been sometimes called 'The Wine of the West'. October is a very active time for producers, especially for those who make only a small amount of cider. Harvest time for cider fruit is roughly from September to November and by October production is in full flow.

Most, if not all, small cider producers will welcome people who have prearranged to come along to see the cider being made. Possibly spending a couple of hours helping to crush the fruit in a scrapper, some of which may still be powered by hand, horse, cattle, steam or run off a vintage farm tractor, then pressing the pulp using small farmhouse-scale presses.

Once the juice is pressed the cider or perry ferments in barrels through to the following spring before being ready to drink by early summer. Larger producers use industrial size scrapers and presses and may concentrate some or all of the juice so that cider production can be sustained throughout the year. For small producers, there is no next batch until the process begins again the next autumn.

CAMRA already have the month of May set aside as Mild Month and following on the success of the Mild campaign, CAMRA now set October aside as Cider & Perry Month. Join us in celebrating these most traditional drinks – elsewhere in this issue is a quick guide to selected pubs in the *Opening Times* area where you will always be assured of a pint of the real thing.



Cider Apples, sorted by type, waiting to be pressed

WHERE TO GET CIDER & PERRY

OK, you've read all about real cider and perry and now you want to try the stuff. While the *Opening Times* area isn't exactly a cider heartland, there are a surprising number of good outlets for those in search of these excellent drinks. What follows is a selection of local outlets, apologies to those we didn't have room for...

Manchester – The Knott, Deansgate: this modern yet traditional bar usually features both a guest cider and a perry, alongside Marble beers and guests from around the country and an interesting selection of Belgian bottled beers, some sourced from the Belgian Belly.

Manchester – Marble Arch, Rochdale Road: usually has one or two guests ciders alongside the full range of Marble beers and guests.

Manchester – Beer House, Angel Street (off Rochdale Road): famous Manchester institution now roaring back to top form. Real cider on handpump alongside many guest beers.

Manchester – Bar Fringe, Swan Street: draught Cheddar cider alongside four changing microbrewery guests and a huge range of Belgian beers, including rarities supplied by the wonderful Belgian Belly.

Manchester – Legh Arms, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw: thriving whilst all around fail. Weston's Old Rosie (fridge cool) served alongside changing guest beers.

Stockport – Crown, Heaton Lane: cellar cool changing guest cider sold alongside fourteen handpumped real ales. A centre for choice and quality.

Stockport – Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Heaton Norris: just a few minutes from the town centre, this Beartown Brewery tied house usually has three to five changing guest ciders and perries served from the cellar.

Stockport – Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley: Westons Vintage on handpump alongside four to five ever changing guest beers in this small and cosy free house.

Stockport – Railway, Great Portwood Street: Porter Brewery flagship with an ever-changing guest cider or perry alongside the full Porter range, weekend guest beers and lots of foreign bottles.

Macclesfield – Waters Green Tavern, Waters Green – one guest cider alongside many changing guest beers in this popular pub close to the railway station.

And to drink at home – two of the best places to buy cider to take home are in Chorlton. The Unicorn Grocery on Manchester Road has a large range of bottled organic ciders from both the UK and overseas. Well worth a visit for these and also a good range of organic bottled beers. On Barlow Moor Road, Carringtons also sells some UK cider but has a particularly good range of Breton and Norman cider from France, alongside a large range of British and foreign bottled beers.

	"Save the Cream" The Campaign to Keep Boddies in Manchester		"Save the Cream" The Campaign to Keep Boddies in Manchester
	"Save the Cream" The Campaign to Keep Boddies in Manchester		"Save the Cream" The Campaign to Keep Boddies in Manchester

CIDER AND PERRY - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY DOES AN APPLE TASTE SWEET YET CIDER IS NATURALLY DRY?

Within an apple there is everything needed to make cider. To make cider the apples are milled, i.e. reduced to small pieces, and then pressed to release the juice. Using the natural yeast, which covers the apple skin (or introduced yeast) and the sugars contained within the juice, fermentation takes place. Once fermentation is completed the sweet sugars have been converted into alcohol leaving a dry product. Cider can then be sweetened by using unfermented apple juice or artificial sweeteners.

WHICH APPLES ARE BEST FOR MAKING CIDER?

The apples, which we eat as dessert fruit, are very different from the specialist fruit, which is usually used to make cider. There are over 600 types of apples grown in The British Isles and each one has a unique balance of sweetness, acidity & tannins. Of these it is estimated three quarters are cider apples. It is the three components of sweetness, acid & tannins, which give the cider its range, and depth of flavour. In the majority of cider making areas specialist cider apples are used, in Kent dessert apples balanced with the acidity of cookers are used.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT A CIDER APPLE?

Cider apples are usually more closely related to the wild crab apple than to eating or cooking apples as they are smaller, harder & lack the unblemished attractiveness of eaters or cookers. If you tried to eat a cider apple you would discover its main difference from eaters or cookers is its tannin level. Tannin is responsible for the fruits astringency, making the fruit taste bitter and drying the mouth, and making it difficult to swallow.

IS THERE ANYTHING OR ANYWHERE SPECIAL NEEDED TO FERMENT CIDER OR PERRY?

Once pressed the juice of apples or perry pears are placed in wooden vats or food grade containers and fitted with an airlock. These are then usually placed in a barn or cellar and allowed to ferment. Fermentation usually is completed by the spring of the following year. This means the cider & perry which we drink this year is last year's crop of fruit.

WHEN IS CIDER & PERRY MADE?

The majority of fruit ripens in September; therefore October is the ideal time to mill and press. The autumn evenings being warmer and dryer than the winter months allow the cider and perry to get off to a good start. Fermentation can be very vigorous at this initial stage.

WHAT IS PERRY?

As cider is made from apples, perry is made from pears, not just any pear though. These are perry pears, which tend to be smaller and harder than dessert pears. Perry tends to be produced sweet or medium sweet although Camra's 2003 National Bronze Perry is Barkers Dry from Worcestershire. Perry also contains natural levels of non-fermentable sorbitol. Perry trees while bearing fruit in 3/5 years will continue to produce fruit for 200 or 300 years which is much longer than apple trees, this has led to the phrase "plant perry for your heirs".



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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

There's quite a lot to report this month, starting with what has become one of the City Centre's favourite watering holes.

With the sell-off of a good number of Laurel PubCo pubs to Greene King, comes the sad news that Ellie Owen will be leaving the excellent **Lass O'Gowrie** on Charles Street. Ellie is the current Manager there, but Greene King are changing the running of the house to that of a tenancy, so she will be going from there, sometime in December in all probability. Regular OT readers will recall that the Lass picked up a Pub of the Month award earlier this year in May, so it is to be hoped that new owners, Greene King, do not mess about too much with the current multi-beer policy that the pub operates so well. Although it does serve a good deal of food, the Lass is primarily a beer house; that is its strong point and it does well at it. The folks in charge have been informed of this, so we wait to see what emerges from the changes. As for Ellie, she shall most likely be moving out of the area to find similar work; Cityman and OT thank her for her efforts and wish her well in her quest, and for the future.

ALSO IN THE CENTRE

So many pubs and so little time. So much so that I thought it was about time I touched base with some of the City Centre pubs I've not had chance to visit for ages, kicking off with one or two near Albert Square. On Tib Lane is the **Town Hall Tavern**, a comfortable and well appointed pub - always busy at lunchtime and 'early doors', it has Boddington's, Bass and Caledonian Deuchars IPA on handpump.

Further on are three pubs next to each other on the corner of Kennedy Street. The **Vine**, for years just selling John Smiths, has a much improved beer range since my last visit. On handpump were Boddington's Bitter, Greene King Ruddles Bitter and a guest beer, Wychwood Hobgoblin. Not to my taste this one, but obviously well kept.

Next door of course is the **City Arms** a famous Manchester institution. I briefly spoke with licensee Sean Piatt who told me that the pub was going great guns, and so it should with such a keen beer man at the helm. There's always a good cask range on at this Good Beer Guide-listed pub and my pint of Orkney Raven Ale was on top form. Tetley Dark Mild is now permanently available on handpump, too, although I didn't have time to stop and try it.

Enveloping the City Arms is the **Waterhouse**, one of the J D Wetherspoon chain. I must admit to not being a great fan of Wetherspoons, although this is rated as one of their better outlets. It certainly has a slightly more pubby feel than most, down to the fact, I suppose, that it comprises a number of small rooms rather than being a vast open-plan barn. Sadly when I popped in the most widely available beer seemed to be 'Sorry Not Available' so I made my excuses and left.

Nearby on the corner of Booth Street is the **Crown**, a much improved pub these days. I was interested to see a handpump for Tetley Imperial but was told that this was no longer sold due to lack of demand. The remaining cask offerings are Tetley Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter and Wells Bombardier. I'm always partial to a drop of the latter and it was on good form here. Finally, I popped my head round the door of the **Seven Oaks** on Nicholas Street. Always a comfortable pub this, it has Tetley Bitter, Boddingtons and Deuchars on handpump.

The only other piece of City Centre news I have is of the continued expansion of the **Kro** empire. Their fifth outlet is to be in Number 1 Piccadilly Gardens, where a number of food and drink operators

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are being lined up to take over the ground floor. With luck it should sell cask beer but I have no firm news at the moment.

OUT IN DIDSBURY

The **Dog and Partridge** has been refurbished. The pub has been opened up – just inside the front entrance, a short wall that formally hindered easy access to the pub at busy times has been removed creating more standing room and, I'm sorry to say, all the free peanuts have now gone. The pub now looks cleaner and brighter, though, and is continuing in the same vein as it did before with permanent cask beers e.g. Theakstons and Timothy Taylor's Landlord plus two or three guests.

The **Olde Cock Inn** on a recent visit was selling no cask beer at all! The manager told me that this was a temporary situation because the students were on holiday and that very soon the former cask beer range will be replaced by a range from the Greene King portfolio. Presumably this is because the Olde Cock is yet another former Laurel house that has passed to the Suffolk brewer.

Finally, the **Nelson** may shortly change its guest beer. I am told that some recent deliveries of Holts bitter to the pub have been un-saleable and have had to be returned to the brewery and licensee Andy Black is becoming fed up with this. He told me that he wants to continue to sell the cheapest beer in Didsbury and that he is going to try Worthington's 1774. He also said that we would like to sell a "dark session beer that is robust, reliable and which would prove popular". I suggested that he contact Beartown brewery so we'll see what happens.

BITS & PIECES

There's not much else to report. I have however noticed that the **Bay Horse** in Longsight has been re-signed outside with one of the shiny new signs announcing 'cask ales'. I am told that John Smith's Bitter is now on handpump. We shall see.

I also had a quick word with Tiny Intra, who took over at **Rain Bar**, Great Bridgewater Street, last March. He has a wealth of pub experience behind him but finds Rain Bar something of a contrast to his last pub, O'Neils at Heathrow Airport. He is a keen beer man, having helped set up and run numerous Firkin pubs over the years. Certainly the beer was spot on when I called – Lees GB Mild fully reflecting its gold medal in the recent Champion Beer of Britain contest, while the new seasonal Ruddy Glow, was one of the best new Lees' beers for some time, I thought.



CHICKS DE BOURGOGNE

Another quick and simple dish which has the additional, sainted benefit of being cheap (if you consider the beer as mainly a luxurious accompaniment) it is also a veggie dish but can be carnified by the insertion of a grilled kebab.

Ingredients for two

- 1 can Chick Peas (curried or plain, as preferred)
- 1 small onion
- 1 tomato
- 2 crushed cloves of garlic
- 2 teaspoons dried ginger powder (or equiv)
- 1 dessert spoon methi leaves (optional)
- 1 teaspoon tomato puree
- 1 dessert spoon of Duchesse de Bourgogne (beer) seasoning

Method

Finely chop the onion and sweat in a little oil for 1 to 1 1/2 minutes - chop the tomato and add to the pan.

Draion the chick-peas and add to the pan for 1 min. Stir in the tomato puree then add all ingredients except beer.

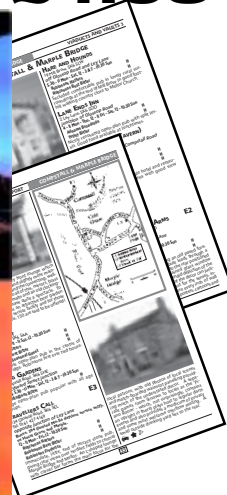
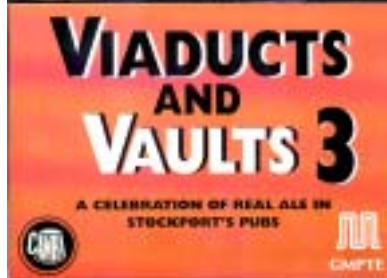
When the dry ingredients have been blended in, remove the pan from the heat and gradually add in the beer.

My way of eating this meal is in a warmed pitta or nan, but I have also enjoyed it with cous-cous and, I imagine it can equally well be served with rice or hominy (grits)

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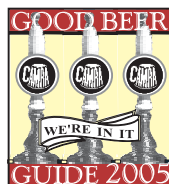


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