

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



MAKING MUSIC

Details of the entertainment on offer at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, have now been released and we are able to bring you this exclusive preview. This year we are again bringing you some bands new to the event, all well-established musicians and sure to make the event go with a swing and once again we are also able to split the bar from the music, which will be in a

separate entertainment suite.

On Thursday night there are two barbershop groups. **Rainy City Chorus** are Greater Manchester's leading Barbershop Harmony Club, which has been going for just over 25 years and at present has around 30 members. The Barbershop Style is one of a four part close harmony and has links with jazz. The chorus has a huge repertoire of songs ranging from Berlin to the Beatles and includes songs from award winning shows such as "Cats".



Joining them on Thursday night are the **Heartbeat Chorus**. This chorus has grown to include 35 ladies of all ages and from all walks of life. Heartbeats material is wide ranging with songs from the classics to some of the greatest popular musicals and then on again to pop anthems and sixties hits. With vocal power and range beyond imagination it is certainly an entertaining and uplifting experience to hear Heartbeat sing.

Friday lunchtime is the traditional quiet drinker' session but on Friday night it's party time with **Flash Harry**. Flash Harry are one of most versatile four piece showmanship bands in the business. Their material ranges from the soulful Al Green to the Foundations and the Temptations, then on again to the hugely popular Tom Jones and Roy Orbison, finishing with artists like Marc Bolan and the amazing blistering guitar riffs of Phil Lynott and Thin Lizzy. A truly talented band with an outstanding musical ability and professionalism delivering a diverse range of popular music.

On the Saturday lunchtime we feature the **Merseybillies**. The Merseybillies are Liverpool's number one shit-kicking hillbilly band. Bluegrass music is famous for its foot-stomping tunes and blistering instrumental solos and the Merseybillies deliver these in bucket loads. If you haven't heard of bluegrass before you will no doubt recognise Duelling Banjos from the movie Deliverance and the theme from the Beverly Hillbillies, but be prepared to be blown away by the Merseybillies unique take on the moonshining song Mountain Dew and instrumentals such as Dear Old Dixie, Blackberry Blossom and Foggy Mountain Breakdown. No synthesisers, no backing tracks and no rehearsals! This is raw and raucous.

Finally on Saturday night we go out in real style with **Connie Lush & Blues Shouter**. Connie Lush is one of the finest female blues singers in the United Kingdom. She is renowned for her blistering live performances and she has even raised the roof at B. B. King's world famous Beale Street Club in Memphis. Connie has been voted the best female UK vocalist by the readers of Blues in Britain for five separate years and has won numerous other awards including the European singer of the year 2002 in the French Blues Trophy awards. The band is hugely popular throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, and supported B. B. King in his recent UK tour.

(continued on page 3)

GIVE BEER DRINKERS A BREAK!

PLEA TO BREWERS TO ABSORB CHANCELLOR'S DUTY INCREASE.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is appealing for brewers and pubcos to give Britain's beer drinkers a break following Chancellor Gordon Brown's Budget.

The Budget saw the beer duty multiplier rise from £12.59 to £12.92, which works out at £2.03 on a barrel of 3.8 per cent ABV session beer – or just 0.7p a pint.

Now CAMRA is appealing to brewers and pubcos to help out hard-pressed licensees by absorbing the increase.

Chief Executive Mike Benner said publicans and beer drinkers were already reeling from the latest round of wholesale beer prices.

"The increase in duty may not sound like much, but it follows recent wholesale beer price rises by some brewers," he said. "Some pubs will now be charging as much as 10p a pint more than they did only a month ago. At a time when beer consumption is falling and pub-going is in decline this is a potentially devastating outcome for consumers and hard-working licensees."

In its pre-Budget submission, CAMRA asked Mr Brown to freeze beer duty or even make a small cut as part of a long-term strategy of reducing duty to deter smuggling. But Mr Benner criticised Coors, Carlsberg, and Enterprise Inns for sabotaging any chance of a freeze or cut by increasing their prices by 2.5 - 4 per cent.

"Why should Gordon Brown cut his share of the price of a pint when big brewers keep on increasing theirs?" he said.

But he added: "A tax rise is a flawed strategy which will threaten jobs, increase smuggling, and leave responsible beer drinkers out of pocket." CAMRA is also increasingly concerned that the widening price gap between draught beer and wine and spirits bought for home consumption is undermining Britain's pubs.

A pint of 4 per cent ABV draught beer now costs £2 or more in many parts of the country, of which 29p is duty. A 125ml glass of mid-priced wine costs around 83p, of which 20.8p is duty, and a single measure of Scotch costs around 40p, of which 26p is duty. Duty on spirits was frozen again this year.

Mr Benner said: "Pubs are being put at an ever-increasing price disadvantage against the take-home trade. Duty is only a part of the problem, but a very important part. It's a slow drift that needs to be checked before the gap gets any wider."

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Spring Surprise 4.2% Blue Bullet 4.5%
 Flatbac 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003
 & BIA Bronze Medal Winner 2004) eXSB 5.5%
 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for Mild,
 Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
 Pacific Bitter 3.8% Zebra Best Bitter 4.3%

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PUB OF THE MONTH APRIL 2005

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April 2005 is the Fletcher Moss, William Street, Didsbury.

Just off Wilmslow Road in Didsbury village lies this gem of a pub that is easily missed but once found never forgotten. Once known as the Albert and serving the workers of a now closed (and redeveloped) dairy next door it has seen the village change from rural to urban.

A few years ago Hydes' refurbished and extended the pub, to open it up slightly and also install a conservatory drinking area at the back. This was done with care and ensured that the pub did not lose its local atmosphere. A central island bar now serves numerous distinct drinking areas and it remains as popular as ever. At the same time the pub was renamed after the local alderman who was a great advocate for the village and give his name to a local park.

The Fletcher Moss now serves the eclectic mix of customers that is modern-day Didsbury, retaining the feel of a village local with a hint of cosmopolitan life. Since the refurbishment the pub has been expertly run by Ken and Lynn Mallion and their staff, selling the full range of excellent Hydes ales – the rare 'Welsh' dark mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and has recently also started selling the craft ale range. Quality is top notch and the pub is a contender for the 2006 Good Beer Guide.

You are always made to feel welcome whether its your first visit or if you are part of the furniture. So join us on 28 April and raise a pint or more in celebration of all that is great about a social drinking institution. **DH.**

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 252

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). Printed by Phil Powell Printers, Failsworth.



Facer's Brewery

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 Crabtree (4.3%) – Mid Range abv
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 – Dry-Hopped Mid Range Beer
 Landslide 1927 (4.9%) – Premium Strength
 0161 792 7755 dave@facers.co.uk

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Last month's Budget showed the Chancellor in generous mood. With the current moral panic over binge drinking as a convenient excuse, and badly strapped for cash, he might easily have got away with a much bigger increase in alcohol duty.

Instead, he let the industry off with a modest increase amounting to 0.7p on a pint of standard-strength session beer. This would normally trigger a process that would see the retail price of a pint rise by several times the actual increase in duty. The brewer adds VAT to the duty, then doubles it to defend his margin. The publican does the same. Thus this year's 0.7p increase in duty mysteriously translates into a 4p-a-pint rise at the pump. To the hapless punter, who has heard on the TV that the increase is only a penny or so, this looks like profiteering. Nevertheless, he can only pay up... or stay at home.

Tied tenants and their customers have always been treated as cash cows who can be milked to fund the discounts demanded by other sectors of the liquor trade. But in recent years the level of discounting in the off-trade (and in some sectors of the on-trade too) has become absurd. When the nation's leading off-licence chain pays just £8.20 for a case of bottled beer, where does the brewery turn for its profits? Only tied tenants can be forced to pay full list prices for their beer; and as discounting elsewhere becomes deeper and deeper, that full list price becomes more and more onerous.

If the community pubs which are the natural home of real ale are to regain a competitive edge, it may well be time to start lobbying for a review of the entire structure of duty - especially the different ways wine and beer are taxed. These different regimes mean that even when, as this year, the levies on beer and wine go up by the same percentage, the gap between the two opens just that little bit wider. If we're to remain a nation of beer drinkers, we need to take a long, hard look at the whole question of duty.

Despite the hysteria generated by elements of the media, the new licensing regime has come in with a whimper rather than a bang. It's early days yet, with few pubs submitting their applications for the new-style licenses, but to date not one, yep that's right, not a single one, has applied for 24-hour opening. As British Beer & Pub Association spokesmen Mark Hastings told radio 4's Today programme, "this is a we told you so moment".

Common sense might be breaking out in the vexed issue of smoking in pubs. Peter Hain, the Leader of the Commons, has put forward the eminently sensible idea that pubs selling food may not have to ban smoking entirely after all. Instead he has suggested that they could still serve smokers provide they were in a separate room from the rest of the pub. Surely segregation rather than outright banning must be the way forward with this vexed issue. Do we detect an outbreak of common sense?

John Clarke

One very interesting story that seemed to pass most people by was to be found in the Manchester Metro a couple of weekends ago. At the height of the 'all-day-binge-drinking' nonsense, the way 'Madchester' Town Centre was dealing with this was highlighted. 'Most' major city centre venues were apparently using only 'safety glass' glasses - news to me, though I know a few do - but were worried about bottles and were to approach suppliers about using plastic 'safety' bottles. I kid you not. As if multi-national mega-corps. could care less and willingly increase their costs. At a time when brewers are finally introducing branded glasses in an attempt to give beer some cachet, (as in civilised European countries) we are now to swig it from the neck out of plastic pop bottles. Apart from the environmental problems, its just too ghastly to contemplate. It would also limit choice to the mega brands only. If thats the future, I'm off.

Paul Hutchings

MAKING MUSIC (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Connie is a wonderfully evocative singer. She has a voice that can handle anything from shouting big band blues, through deep soul, to torch songs and smoky jazz. She also has a stage presence, and genuine warmth, that builds a bond between her and the audience from the first bar of the first number. Connie is most like the legendary R & B singer Etta James. Like Etta she can growl, shout and moan the blues or tug the heart-strings with smouldering soulful ballads. A great example of this is on her version of Randy Newman's remorseful song of depression and excess, "Guilty". Connie also sings jazz standards such as "Autumn Leaves" in an Eva Cassidy mode with an artistry and purity of tone second to none. Supported by John Lewis a seamless lead guitarist and veteran of the blues, bassist Terry Harris and inspirational drummer Karl Woodward, the resulting sound is a complex passionate embrace of blues and jazz at its very best. SB.

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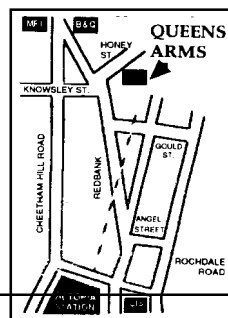
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THE MARBLE ARCH

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN in the pages about the Marble Arch (73 Rochdale Road, Manchester). The classic tiled interior is possibly unique and has gained the pub a well-deserved place on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. It is also well known as the home of the organic and vegan Marble Brewery, where brewer James Campbell produces a range of excellent beers, including the famous, world-class Ginger Marble, from the refurbished brewing plant which can be seen from the more modern back room of the pub.

This back room was also the subject of a makeover last year and is now a no-smoking room, which also houses the food preparation area. While James rules the roost in the brewery, the kitchen is the domain of chef Chris Makin, who arrived at the Marble from the Midland Hotel last October. Since then he and his assistant Pete Cleary have quietly put the Marble Arch on the food map by turning out some of the finest pub food available in Manchester. This is no gastro-pub though, so there's no waiter service and three course meals. Instead you order at the bar from a menu divided into four – Main Dishes, Traditional Dishes, Sandwiches and Light Bites.

Opening Times has eaten there twice in recent weeks and so has been able to put the menu through its paces. On the first visit meals were taken from Main Dishes – Roasted lamb rump (£7.95), Pan-seared



fillet of beef (£7.95), Tempura lemon sole (£3.95), the Sandwiches – Citrus hummus sandwich (with dressed leaf salad £4.50 or £5.25 with chips) and, for the little 'un, a bowl of cheesy chips.

We were pretty much knocked out by all of this. The tender lamb came on a generous cake of 'crushed mint pesto potatoes' a superb combination, setting off the lamb a treat, along with carrot puree and a rosemary jus adding another classic background flavour to the lamb. The steak, properly rare as ordered, came with mushrooms and a red wine jus, and drop dead gorgeous dauphinoise potatoes – I understand these are prepared over two days and were unctuously creamy: a classic version of a classic dish. The sole also garnered rave reviews. It was accompanied by 'pont-neuf' – basically



very large chips, and an outstanding pea and tarragon puree. The hummus sandwich was declared 'lovely' with the generous hummus filling enhanced by a lemon note. The garnish was cucumber and sunblush tomato and a pile of crispy chips.

A later visit saw much of the previous meal revisited along with the Steak & Marble ale pie (£6.95) from the 'Traditional dishes'. This was the 'bowl of stew with pastry crust' type pie but none the worse for that. The puff pastry was crisp and light above a generous portion of tender steak, mushroom and small onions in a very tasty gravy. A well-dressed salad and large portion of chips made for filling accompaniments. This really all is top-class food and at these prices something of a giveaway. You would be hard pressed to get better food in any of the more better-known City Centre eating places – and if you did it would be two or three times the price.

Any quibbles? Well, just one. Given that the Marble Arch (quite rightly) promotes its range of organic beers as also vegetarian and vegan, there is surprisingly little vegetarian choice on the menu, just four items in fact – the aforementioned Citrus hummus sandwich along with Fricassee of asparagus (£5.95), Potato gnocchi (£5.95) and Chilli stuffed with mozzarella (Light Bites - £2.95). A couple more veggie options would balance things up I think. This however is just a minor point that should not detract from the incredibly high standards prevailing here – very highly recommended. JC

Food is served at the Marble Arch between 12 and 8pm Monday-Saturday and 12-6pm on Sundays. Last orders are taken 30 minutes before the end of service. Telephone 0161 832 5914.



After last month's bumper package of news, there's rather less to report this month. Still, I do have a few bits and pieces for you.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

In Cheadle and Gatley there seems to be a right old merry-go-round of licensees. I reported last month that Debbie Doran and husband Peter have left the **Crown** (Hyde', High Street, Cheadle) to take over the reigns at the previously under-performing **Royal Oak** (Robinson's' Stockport Road, Cheadle) and after a brief period of closure they are now firmly ensconced in their new pub. I've not been able to call in yet but I'm certainly anticipating an upturn in the pub's fortunes, and beer quality.

Meanwhile, Mary and Tony from the **Old Star** (Hydes, High Street) in Cheadle have been promoted and they learnt on Monday 21 March that they would move to take over the **Prince of Wales** in Gatley in mid-April. The Prince of Wales is to undergo a substantial refurbishment this month and will reopen on 29 April with an expanded beer range including Jekyll's Gold and the craft ales. I have no news of what is happening to the existing licensees of the Prince of Wales, Graham and Gladys Tyldsley.

Finally, I understand that a change of licensee is in the pipeline at the **Horse & Farrier** in Gatley, and of course the tenancy of the **Gothic** remains 'to let' so it's all change in the village.

In Edgeley, Sandra and Dave George, of the **Grapes** (Robinson's) on Edgeley could well be leaving by the end of April as their request for retirement is due then. Sandra will be a hard act to follow for whomever takes on the pub. Will the pub retain its easy-going, calm, almost gentle atmosphere? We await with interest. Also in Edgeley, the **Gardeners Arms** (aka "War Office"), is set for closure, demolition and the site redeveloped for housing if plans are approved. Owner Dennis Davis will concentrate his business efforts on the nearby Bow Garrett.

Robinson's website also shows that the tenancies of the **Swan With Two Necks** (Princes Street) and the **Waterloo** (Waterloo Road) are also available.

NEW IN BRINNINGTON

There is no place like home according to James and Louise McFarlane who opted to take over as tenants of the **Jack and Jill**, Brinnington in preference to a lifetime spent in the sun. "Before taking on the pub we looked at all the options including a move to Spain where we considered



opening a bar of our own, but we had lived in Manor Road, Brinnington for many years and just didn't want to leave the area," explained James. Since moving into the Jack and Jill the couple have already won the appreciation of customers who are increasing in number week on week. "We have stuck to our guiding principles of providing a comfortable, welcoming environment with a well stocked bar, and as a result our reputation is spreading and we are winning new customers" says Louise. The couple are also keen to be fully involved in their community, and since their move they have raised £50 for the local National Blind Children's Society. Support is also being given to the three 'Junior Blues' football teams that play in Brinnington each Saturday morning, and the teams now enjoy the use of the Jack and Jill as a base where refreshments are supplied courtesy of James and Louise. Next on the agenda will be the opening of a new beer garden as a safe outdoor environment for families to enjoy. "I've worked in several bars in the past," says James, "so with support from Louise's mother Margaret, who is an experienced bookkeeper and partner in the business, we have a great team and a lot to offer."

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 252:

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Robin Pendragon, Manchester:

I can see trouble brewing, pardon the pun, with the coming campaign for full pints. I agree with everything said in Opening Times but there is the technical issue of what is beer and what is froth. Calling for a "100% liquid" pint will probably not do since the foam is also "a liquid". Therefore a pint which was seven inches of froth and one inch condensed beer would satisfy the proposed wording. Even hunting around for a synonym such as "fluid" gets us nowhere since a "fluid" tends to be described in dictionaries as "something liquid" and vice versa. You can go round in circles like that all afternoon if you have nothing better to do.

There is also the problem that some beers, especially the sweeter ones, tend to initially have an area between the transparent liquid and the head of foam which is neither one nor the other. On waiting, this area under the head will soon clear and go transparent but for a time it remains opaque. I have asked and it is something to do with the slow dispersal of electrostatic charges on the bubbles.

It depends on the way that the parliamentary draughtsmen go about their work. Ideally it would be best if they had separate definitions for the liquor and the head of foam, based on the fact that foam is opaque whilst even very dark beers are transparent to light. Then the drinkable stuff could be called "clear beer condensate" or something whilst the opaque froth would have to be supplied free, if at all.

I notice that the further south one goes, the more one is likely to be handed a completely flat and froth free full pint whilst beer with a head is more common up here. I am told, but do not necessarily believe, that this goes back to the pre-Thatcher days of heavy industry. Men more in search of rehydration than intoxication, after toiling for 12 hours in plutonian conditions, found that the sparged beer was more refreshing. Southerners who do no meaningful work do not care how refreshing the beer is and therefore do not expect a foaming head.

One could sigh pityingly for the author of the article on page one of the March 2005 OT. He threatens to name and shame those MPs who do not sign up to the EDM calling for a "full pint". In the first place I worry that we do not have a fireproof definition of "a full pint". In the second, MPs thrive on publicity, good or bad, and have no sense of shame or else they would not be MPs in the first place.

There was once a loud campaign for oversize glasses to be made mandatory with the transparent element of condensed beer up to the line and any opaque foam above it. Might one argue that this is still the way to go?



Since February I have been seeking the space to do justice to the Foreign beer range at the National Winter Ales Festival. This, clearly isn't it. For the record, they had 38 draught German Beers on sale, four draught Belgian and over 80 bottles from both countries. In 2006 the organisers are aiming for the 50 draught beers that was the original plan....

FOREIGN BEER OF THE QUARTER

Hummel Bock (7% abv) - NWAf

Wickedly complex unsmoked pale brown Bock Bier from Hummel of Melkendorf near Bamberg. Starting with a 'very nice...' it gets more and more complicated as the subtle malt blend combines with the high alcohol content and subtle hallertau hops to give an increasingly complex finish. Would have been interesting to put it in competition against the likes of Old Tom. Fabulous.

CASK ALE OF THE MONTH

There can only be one winner and this, a marginal reformulation of one of my all-time favourites, was it.

Fullers IPA (4.7% abv) - The Sanctuary (St James, London).

The gravity may have dropped below what is proper for true IPAs - above 5% - but this has everything, colossal hop nose and initial hit, bone dry, full body with light and almost bittersweet hops giving way to the dry intensely bitter finish. And they have the cheek to make it available for only 3 weeks. Utter madness.

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LOTS
OF
BELGIAN
BIER!

LOTS OF
OTHER
STUFF!

OH!, AND
CRISPS!

AND
WE HAVE
TOILETS
WITH HOT
WATER!

WE MUST BE MAD!





BEARTOWN UPDATE



We haven't featured this local micro for some time and are pleased to report that everything is steaming along nicely. The brewery is still brewing about 60 barrels per week with further production planned. Beartown beers will be appearing in the Wetherspoon beer festival due to take place in April and will also be on their guest list for June, July and August. Other guest lists that Beartown beers will be seen on soon are the Unique Inns guest list from next month onwards and one month following that the beers will be on the Enterprise Inns guest list and the Aveybury Inns guest list.

Beartown have also arranged swap programmes with several breweries which, while promoting Beartown beers up and down the country also provides Beartown with a very good selection of guest beers for their tied estate. In addition bottling of the Beartown beers still continues with sales going very well. Spare bottling capacity is available, if any brewery is interested in having their beer bottled they should contact the head brewer, Ian Burns on 01477 537274. Due to the success of the bottling, 9-pint barrels (mini casks) are being tried with a view to adding these to the portfolio as well.

Plans are being formulated with regard to the retail trade. A shop that will sell the full range of Beartown beers in anything from bottles to 18 gallon barrels along side Beartown merchandise is being planned. Along with the plans for a retail outlet are plans for a beer club. For a nominal annual fee, yet to be decided, members will be able to purchase beer at discount prices and take advantage of special offers throughout the year. The brewery are still looking to expand their tied estate with pubs in the immediate area, no firm news is available at this point in time as to where these pubs will be. Meanwhile some

consolidation is taking place with the Junction, Crumpsall and the Cheshire Ring, Hyde, being advertised for sale in the trade press in recent weeks.

On the beer front Blarney Bear was again brewed during March for St Patrick's Day. Beartown brewery will be supporting the Macclesfield beer festival again this year. The festival is due to be held on the 6th & 7th May and they will be brewing two special beers. The first will be a 3.6% ABV light hoppy beer, name unknown at this point in time, and the second will be Dunkel Bear a 5.0% ABV dark wheat beer. Grizzly Bear at 6.8%, which was brewed for Macclesfield beer festival last year, continues to sell very well. They continue to pick up awards to, the latest being for Pandamonium (4.8% ABV), which won Best Beer of the festival at the Wirral beer festival.

FAMILY FAVOURITES

The local family brewers all have new beers out at the moment.

HYDES Hydes – the current craft ale is Satisfaction (4.2% ABV), smooth and satisfying pint, and the craft ale for May and June will be Elevation (4.4% ABV), marking Manchester as the home of Avro aircraft. This is a light, crisp and refreshing tawny beer.

Holt's – there was a slight delay in the production of the ever-popular Thunderholt. It was expected to be in selected Holts outlets in late March or early April. Pubs such as the Cheadle Hulme or the Railway, Openshaw usually stock this. Apparently the 3.5% ABV Joeys is selling well in those pubs that take it – the beer has been spotted in the Sun & Castle, Hillgate.



JW Lees – the current seasonal here is Dragons Fire (4.5% ABV), an excellent rich and tasty dark amber ale. This will be superseded for May and June by Googly Pale Ale (4.3% ABV), a refreshing light beer for Spring. Pubs such as the Rain Bar, City Centre and the Urmston in Urmston are regular outlets.

Robinson's – currently offering Engalnd's Champion (3.9% ABV) as the seasonal, a golden crisply hoppy beer, and this will be replaced for May and June by an old favourite. Cooper's Bell (4% ABV). This was originally launched as an autumn ale and has a distinctive malty character complimented by a pleasant hop aroma derived from the addition of choicest hops late in the brewing process.



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**STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER PUB
OF THE MONTH MARCH 2005**



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MICRO MAGIC

As usual the local micro brewers have a barrel-full of tasty treats out this month. As ever apologies for those we were unable to contact. If any local micro does have any news don't forget you can e-mail it to *Opening Times* at: johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com.

Bazens' – capacity constraints and demand for the regular beers mean that there will be fewer specials this year. However Spring Surprise (4.2%ABV) was delivered at the end of March and is one of only four specials they will be brewing this year. It is based on the Lionbrew which proved very popular last year. Bazens' will however also be brewing this year's Festival Special for Stockport Beer Festival – more news on this next month.

Bank Top – not a lot in the way of new beers as demand remains high for the regular range. The Knights of the Round Table range is being reprised though – look out for the third in the range, Sir Mordred a 3.6% ABV light hoppy bitter.

Boggart Hole Clough – recent beers have been Bunny Boiler (4.4% ABV) a pale golden ale with lemon citrus notes, and Road Runner (4.7% ABV) a light hoppy spring ale with a floral spiced aroma. There was a new beer imminent as we went to press but no further details were available.

Facer's – again no new beers but no new brews, but Lencten (the spring special) is selling well. Dave Facer has now been going two years exactly; sales in the 12 months April 1 2004 - March 31 2005 were 24% up on the same period in 2003/4. He has just bought 40 new stainless steel 9-

gallon casks from Hereford Casks to help keep up with demand, but it already looks as if he needs more!

Owl – this new micro, based at the Hope Inn, Oldham, continues to do well. The OB Bitter proved very popular but is of the menu until brewer Gordon Potts can find time to re-brew it. The Easter special, Bunny Hop (4.1% ABV), a pale and very hoppy beer, proved so popular that it had to be re-brewed. There will also be a special for St George's Day. This will be Dragonbane (4.5% ABV), a lightly textured, pale amber hoppy bitter with a hint of redness to it.

Phoenix – nothing new at the moment as Phoenix is another brewer coping with huge demand for its beers. May will see the annual appearance of the excellent Black Shadow mild (4% ABV) and the hoppy Mayfly (4.4% ABV).

Pictish – the new wheat beer, Quetzacoatl (4.7% ABV) has proved so popular that it is being re-brewed. Some Black Shiver (6% ABV) was still available to the trade as we went to press and the wonderful Blue Moon (6% ABV) will be appearing again in the middle of April.

Ramsbottom – still going strong and supplied some excellent ales to the recent Oldham Beer Festival and should also be making a first appearance at Stockport this year. Look out for Chatterton Riot, a new beer out at the end of the month.

Shaws – based in Dukinfield, Shaws continues to produce a fine range of pale and hoppy beers. Beltane (that's the pagan name for Mayday, by the way) (4.5% ABV) will be

out at the end of the month and also look out for Tame Valley Pale Ale (4% ABV) and the ever-popular Golden Globe (4.3% ABV). There was also an Easter special – Drunken Dragon at 4.4%.

Storm – we have been rather guilty of overlooking this Macclesfield-based micro for too long. They keep picking up awards for their excellent beers, the most recent being another gold award at this year's Accrington Beer Festival. Owner Hugh Thompson told us, 'I was quite taken by surprise as I was not aware that we had entered any beer for the festival. We do however deal with a number of distributors and our beers can end up anywhere in the country. When I found out that it was 'Bosley Cloud' that had won I was particularly pleased as this has proved to be one of our most popular beers out of the dozen that we now have on offer.' With four awards now under their belt Storm Brewing continue to brew high quality beers and with their impressive track record they have been asked to brew a special ale for The Bollington Festival (begins May 13) and will be available in both draught and bottle conditioned versions at a lot of the festival events over the fortnights duration and towards the end of April in local pubs and off-licences.

Three Rivers – nothing new at the moment but Delta Dark Mild will be back in April. Best selling beers at the moment include Harry Jacks (4.1% ABV) a good hoppy bitter and at the other end of the spectrum the dark and dry Old Disreputable (5.2% ABV). The big news is that Three Rivers is on the move down the road. The new premises will be four times the size of the current brewery and will allow Three Rivers to treble its brew length to keep up with demand.



Pictish Brewing Company

Tel/Fax: 01706 522227 Mobile: 07970 177 306

Beers for April

<p>Brewers Gold A.B.V. 3.8%</p>  <p>celtic warrior A.B.V. 4.2%</p> <p>A refreshing thirst quenching pale golden session beer. Malty undertones and a powerful spicy hop aroma combine to produce a dangerously moreish beer.</p>	<p>maelstrom A.B.V. 5.0%</p>  <p>A full bodied mid brown premium ale. Malt flavours dominate the palate with delicate hop aromas in the well-balanced finish.</p>	<p>A strong pale golden coloured ale. Full malt flavours lead to an intensely bitter finish and a powerful hop aroma.</p>
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**MORE CHOICE
BETTER BEER**

International Brewing Awards

			
1998 Wobbly Bob	2002 Navy	2002 Wobbly Bob	2004 Wobbly Bob

STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

STOCKPORT MARKET PLACE

A Stagger around the market area of Stockport is a walk around the most historic part of the town. In the middle is the splendid Victorian Market Hall, and as you walk around there are some excellent old buildings, notably the recently restored Staircase House, housing a museum and the town's tourist information centre. Overlooking the scene is the spire of St Mary's church, well worth a visit in its own right. It is not surprising therefore that some of the most interesting pubs in the town can be found on this Stagger.

First stop is the Bakers Vaults an impressive one-roomed Robinson's pub near the Castle Yard. The large island bar splits the pub into two separate areas and both the inside and out of this fine building have been lovingly restored. Local artists regularly exhibit at the pub, which has also re-established its reputation as a live music venue (one of several on this Stagger). Indeed, a band was setting up when we called but there was only time for one drink, with the Hatters, Unicorn and Enigma, the then-current seasonal, all on very good form. A great start to the night.

As we left the Bakers and walked across the Market Place the church bells were pealing, adding to the evening's enjoyment. Next stop was the Bull's Head, another Robbies house, again with high ceilings and a reputation for live music. The pub was substantially altered some years ago and successfully marries modern fittings and décor with this old market pub. There are many pictures of musicians on the walls, and a nice touch is the pub's logo etched onto the doors and window glasswork. The Hatters and Unicorn were reasonably well regarded by the majority of our large group, but were clearly not up to the standard of the Bakers.

Back across the Market Place to the other side of the Castle Yard and the Boars Head. This Sam Smith's pub has been refurbished with walls put back to create a cosy multi-roomed aspect to it. On the walls are photos and water colours of the market area. As usual with Sam Smiths, there was only one cask beer available, Old Brewery

Bitter at the usual bargain price of £1.19 a pint, and very well received by us all. Well worth a visit.

As we left the campanologists were still going strong and we trekked across the Market Place to the Pack Horse with its mock Tudor exterior, opposite the church. This multi-roomed pub has considerable charm and is clearly a well-used and loved local with a long-established licensee. Its attractions are enhanced by it selling a permanent guest beer from Skipton's Copper Dragon Brewery, alongside Tetley Bitter. The Copper Dragon Bitter was tried by all of us and much appreciated. Again, this is a pub well worth visiting. Leaving the Pack Horse we walked up Churchgate, passing the rear of Robinson's Brewery on our right, to the Thatched House. Again with a mock-Tudor interior, and historic Showells Brewery windows, the Thatched House couldn't be more of a contrast to the Pack Horse. This is a no-nonsense rock pub and none the worse for that. It was packed to bursting point, a punk band was playing loudly and loads of real ale was being sold. The regular beers are Boddingtons Bitter and Worthington Best Bitter plus guests (and although we didn't spot it at the time, an impressive range of bottled beers) and also real cider in the form of Westons' Old Rosie. All the beers tried were well-received and mental notes made to visit again before long.

Looking down over the whole Market Place scene is the Old Rectory. Built in the 17th Century, the blue plaque in the hall tells you that this is the former home of the Bishops of Stockport. Although much of the public areas are given over to a restaurant, there are also comfortable public drinking areas. Two cask beers are sold - Theakstons Best Bitter and a guest, Charles Wells John Bull when we called. Most of us tried the John Bull and found it reasonable (although in my opinion not as good as at the National Winter Ales Festival a few weeks previously). The one person who tried the Theakstons also found it in good form.

Leaving through the garden, back to the Market Place and down Millgate we arrived at our final pub of the evening, the Arden Arms, which that week had been declared runner-up in the National Pub of the Year awards. Entering the pub it is easy to see why it has done so well. The pub is a genuine classic with a superb bard and really atmospheric rooms. We all sat in the corner 'vault', although my favourite room is the small snug that can be only accessed by walking through the bar itself. The Hatters, Unicorn, Enigma and Double Hop were all on top form, as usual. This really is a "don't miss" pub. All in all this was an excellent and varied Stagger, which is a real must for pub lovers.



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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER MILD CHALLENGE 2005



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

The Challenge runs from now until Sunday 8 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2005 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival.

We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Extra – visit a participating pub in 15 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge polo-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially embroidered polo shirt.

This year we are also especially grateful to Hydes' for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how their three milds are made.

A new feature this year is that we are asking all participants to vote for their favourite pint of mild and the pub in which it was served – the winning pub will be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award in recognition of their efforts.

Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL

When you buy a pint or a half of cask mild in one of the pubs taking part, ask the bar staff to stamp your card. Remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub.

When you've filled the card (you'll need 15 different stamps from 15 different pubs) send it to the Mild Challenge address on the card and, after our closing date, we will send off your prizes.

Details of Milds available in pubs during the challenge, and the pubs themselves can be found overleaf.

Simple isn't it? Happy Drinking!



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Cask Marque Award

- | | |
|--|--|
| Albion, Burnage Lane, Burnage | Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple |
| All Bar One, 73 King Street, Manchester | Harrys Bar, UMIST, Sackville St Manchester |
| Angel Inn, 197 King Street, Dukinfield | High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley |
| Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport | J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale |
| Bank at Sale, 70 School Road, Sale | Jar Bar, SilkHouse, 4 Park Green, Macclesfield |
| Barsh, 65 High Street, Cheadle | John Gilbert, Worsley Brow, Worsley |
| Barton Arms, 2 Stableford, Worsley | Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme |
| Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford | King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale |
| Boathouse, Ferry Road, Irlam | Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester |
| Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow | Lowes Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton |
| Bulls Head, 155-157 Broken Cross, Macclesfield | Moon Under Water, Deansgate, Manchester |
| Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane | Oddfellows Arms, 73 Moor End Road, Stockport |
| Calvert's Court, St. Petersgate, Stockport | Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale |
| Church House Inn, Church Street, Bollington | Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Manchester |
| Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow | Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rusholme |
| Cotton Bale, 21 Market Street, Hyde | Paramount, 33 Oxford Street, Manchester |
| Cross Keys, Adswold Road, Cheadle Hulme | Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington |
| Crown, 81 High Street, Cheadle | Porters Ale House, Prince Roe Street, Macclesfield |
| Dog & Partridge, 665-7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury | Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge |
| Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley | Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester |
| Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Road, Eccles | Ryecroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme |
| Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport | Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester |
| Farmers Arms, Manchester Road, Swinton | Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton |
| Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury | Society Rooms, Macclesfield Park La, Macclesfield |
| Football, 35 Swinton Hall Road, Swinton | Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge |
| Four Heaton's, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris | Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge Rail Station |
| Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield | Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle |
| Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury | Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston |
| Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley | Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington |
| Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme | Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester |
| Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield | Wetherspoons, 47 Piccadilly, Manchester |
| Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield | White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge |
| Harbord Harbord, 17-21 Long Street, Middleton | Wye Bridge Inn, Fairfield Road, Buxton |



To find outlets in your area with the Cask Marque award visit our website on www.cask-marque.co.uk or ring us on 01206 752212 and we will send you a regional guide.

The Cask Marque plaque is awarded to a licensee who has passed two unannounced visits by our assessor who checks all cask ales on sale.

**The Cask Marque Trust, Seedbed
Centre, Severalls Business Park,
Colchester, CO4 9HT
Telephone 01206 752212**



MILD CHALLENGE - THE PUBS

These are the pubs taking part in this year's Mild Challenge:

Adswold – Cross Keys; **Bredbury** – Arden Arms, Horsfield Arms; **Bridgemont** – Dog & Partridge; **Burnage** – Albion; **Cheadle** – Crown, Old Star; **Cheadle Hulme** – Cheadle Hulme, John Millington, Church Inn; **Compstall** – Andrew Arms, Northumberland Arms; **Dane Bank** – Dane Bank; **Denton** – Lowes Arms, Red Lion, Chapel House, Masons Arms; **Didsbury** – Fletcher Moss, Royal oak; **East Didsbury** – Gateway; **Edgeley** – Olde Vic; **Gatley** – Horse & Farrier, Gothic, Prince of Wales, High Grove; **Glossop** – Friendship, Star, Old Glove Works; **Gorton** – Plough; **Great Moor** – Crown; **Hazel Grove** – Grove, Royal Oak, Grapes, Three Tunnes; **Heald Green** – Griffin; **Heaton Norris** – Navigation; Four Heatons; Nursery; **Heaviley** – Blossoms; **High Lane** – Horseshoe; **Hyde** – Cheshire Ring, Sportsman; **Lane Ends** – Travellers Call; **Levenshulme** – Kingsway; **Manchester City Centre** – Castle Hotel, Marble Arch, City Arms, Grey Horse; **Marple** – Hatters, Navigation, Ring O' Bells; **Marple/Rose Hill** – Railway; **Mellor** – Royal Oak; **Moss Nook** – Tatton Arms; **New Mills** – Masons Arms; **Offerton** – Emigration; Victoria, Fingerpost; **Old Glossop** – Bulls Head; **Openshaw** – Legh Arms, Railway; **Portwood** – Railway; **Reddish** – Thatched Tavern; **Romiley** – Cow & Calf; **Rusholme** – Osborne House; **Salford** – Crescent; **Stalybridge** – Station Buffet Bar, White House; **Stockport Town Centre** – Arden Arms, Tiviot, Bakers Vaults, Red Bull, Spread Eagle, Pineapple, Crown (Heaton Lane); **Strines** – Royal Oak; **Whaley Bridge** – Goyt Inn, Shepherds Arms, Board Inn, Cock Inn; **Withington** – Victoria; **Woodford** – Davenport Arms; **Wythenshawe** – Airport Hotel.



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MILD – WHO BREWS WHAT

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

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

Dark Hatters*: Hatters Mild with added caramel. Fruity, malty and a rare find but the Castle, Oldham Street sells it.

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

'Welsh' Mild*: an even darker version of standard mild. Very rare outside Hydes' Welsh estate but often sold in the Fletcher Moss, Didsbury

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Facer's: Twin City (ABV 3.3%) – splendid new mild with roasted malt flavour and a touch of ginger added to add a spicy note to the palate.

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

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

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

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

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

Mansfield Dark Mild* (ABV 3.45%) – a good, rich dark mild. A rarity in the north west but available at the Royal Oak in Didsbury

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ansells Mild* (ABV 3.4%) – famous dark Midlands mild now brewed in Leeds, a sweetish refreshing brew. The City Arms, Kennedy Street, City Centre will be featuring Tetley Dark and Ansells Mild during the Challenge. The Goty Inn, Whaley Bridge in another Dark Mild outlet on the Challenge.

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

OPENING TIMES ABROAD - CHORLTON

AS REGULAR READERS will be aware, *Opening Times Abroad* is an occasional series in which CAMRA'S Stockport & South Manchester branch venture beyond our official branch boundaries to spend some quality time in hosterries a little further afield. So it was that a select group spent a Saturday afternoon in early December in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, writes Paul Moss.

First, a handful of us gathered for a pint and a bite of lunch at **The Bar** on Wilbraham Road, a large modern-style bar with much use of exposed wood – floorboards, tables, chairs and even pews! This is an outlet for the excellent Marble beers, and today we were offered Marble Bitter' Manchester Bitter and Ginger Marble, plus Fuller's London Pride and Phoenix Wobbly Bob, which one of my colleagues went for even at this early hour. Food ranges from interesting sandwiches, via light bites, salads, steaks and burgers, to a specials board. There was even some festive fare to remind us that Christmas was on the way – though the fairy lights behind the bar had perhaps already given that away.

More Marble next, at the **Marble Beer House** on Manchester Road – not unlike The Bar in terms of décor, but much smaller and more intimate, and the exposed brickwork gives a more rustic feel. No food is served here, though snacks from Unicorn, a local organic grocery, can be bought at the bar. We chose from Marble Bitter, Manchester Bitter, Lagonda IPA, Chocolate and the guest – Salamander Golden Salamander.

Staying on Manchester Road, our next call was at the local Wetherspoon's, a former snooker hall now known as the **Sedge Lynn**. This revels in Art Deco splendour; notice in particular the high arched ceiling and the imposing and very solid-looking bar back surmounted by a large clock, accompanied on this occasion by a Santa and a Christmas tree. Six cask beers were on: Boddington's Cask, Brakspear Special, Theakston's Old Peculier, Cain's Fine Raisin Beer, Marston's Pedigree, and Davenport's Premium. Surprised to see this last name, we enquired further - the licensee checked and found that this is actually brewed by Highgate Brewery.

We returned to Wilbraham Road next, to the former Tara Hotel, now Holt's **Spread Eagle**, which serves Mild and Bitter. This has undergone a modern-style Holt's refurbishment in recent times, and sports a mixture of carpeted areas and polished floorboards, light and dark wood tables, and an assortment of styles of chair. Unlike in many refurbished pubs, the separate public bar remains.

Still on Wilbraham Road, we moved on to Lees' **Lloyds Hotel**. A magnificent refurbishment, this – Lees have created a modern, light, airy and comfortable pub using a combination of unpolished light wooden floorboards, stone floor tiles, and pale, muted colours on the walls. The cask-conditioned refreshments were Bitter, Crackerjack (the current seasonal), and the powerful Moonraker to stave off the winter chills.

We paused next for a little shopping, as immediately opposite the Lloyds is the wonderful **Belgian Belly**, a specialist in Belgian delicacies – chocolate, cheese and, dearest to our hearts, beers. This was not to be a flying visit, as Jason Barker, who runs the shop with his sisters, insisted we sample some of his Christmas beers.

Suitably refreshed – and with rather lighter wallets – we moved on next to the **Beech** on Beech Road. As we entered, we turned left into the vault. This has bare floorboards, except for the area around the bar, which is stone-flagged. There is a large-screen television, which this evening was showing football - Blackburn vs. Tottenham. The other side of the bar lies the lounge; as is the norm, this is carpeted and generally plusher than the vault. It also leads to a small snug with leatherette bench seating. The

pub was very busy and had a good atmosphere – we enjoyed our beers, selected from Timothy Taylor Best Bitter or Landlord, Green King Abbot Ale, Marston's Pedigree and Caledonian Deucher's IPA.

One more pub to go – "The Famous" **Trevor Arms**, also on Beech Road. Behind the impressive double-bay frontage are two long, narrow rooms separated by a central bar. The vault is on the left, sporting a mosaic-tiled floor and more big-screen football. The carpeted lounge on the right has ceramic tiles in the bar-front and above the bench seating along the wall. It was bustling here, too, though the beer range was rather more limited than the last pub – Boddington's Cask, Charles Wells Bombardier and Theakston's "Refreshing Cask Beer". We weren't sure what this last offering actually was, as we had assumed the "Cool Cask" brand had been discontinued. However, it was anyway unavailable as we ordered our beers, though it was put back on sale shortly afterwards.

The sensible members of the party chose to call it a night at this point. However, one of my colleagues had recommended **Idaho**, so the two of us went to take a look, in the hope of dining there. We were in luck – there was just one table not reserved until later. Although given over to diners at this early stage of the evening, the place has very much the look and feel of a modern bar, kitted out in deliberately basic modern style (complete with plywood bar front!). There are two main attractions here. One is the quality of the food, which was excellent. The other is the huge list of beers from all around the world, including several on draught. Not all are the best of their style, or even the best their country has to offer, but it's an impressive range all the same. No cask beer here, but still plenty to hold the interest of a beer enthusiast.

So how to sum up? I've only been an occasional visitor to Chorlton, and had visited only a couple of the pubs before. On this showing, however, Chorlton is an area with much variety and good quality to offer the discerning drinker, and I shall not leave it so long until my next visit!



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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

April 2005

Saturday 16th - Trip to Masham including Black Sheep Brewery. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton lane at 9.00am. Book with David Sharpe in 0161 483 3708. NB trip full at time of going to press.

Friday 22nd - South Manchester Minibus Stagger - minibus leaves Crown, Heaton lane at 7.30pm. Book with David Sharpe as above.

Thursday 22nd - Pub of the Month presentation to the Fletcher Moss, Didsbury. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 7th May - National Pub of the Year Runner-Up Award presentation to the Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. From 8.0pm.

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

Monday 18th - Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.15pm.

Tuesday 3rd May - Committee Meeting: Chapel House, Astley St, Dukinfield. Starts 8.15pm.

Monday 16th - Branch Meeting: Royal Hotel, Hayfield. Starts 8.15pm.

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers an area from Wilmslow to Knutsford down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following:

Monday 25th - Campaigning Meeting: Castle, Castle Inn Road, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

April 2005

Tuesday 26th - Joint Social Evening with North Cheshire CAMRA at the George & Dragon, Great Budworth. From 8.00pm

Friday 6th/Saturday 7th May - Beer Festival at Macclesfield Rugby Club

Thursday 12th May - Presentation of Outstanding Contribution to Real Ale Award: Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm

Monday 16th May: Spring Pub of the Season presentation and New Members' Social: Plough, Prestbury Road, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm.

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

Tuesday 19th - Spring Pub the Season Presentation to the Beech, Beech Road, Chorlton. From 8.00pm.

Thursday 5th May - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 14th - Altrincham Social: meet Old Packet House 1.00pm

REGIONAL EVENT

Greater Manchester CAMRA under 30s Social Group; Saturday 14th May - "Ale of Two Cities" Meet @ The Crescent, Salford (7pm), Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford (8pm), City Arms, Kennedy Street, Mcr (9:30pm), Cafe Bar Centro, Tib Street, Mcr (10:30pm). Contact Tim Jackson & Kim Walton, camraU30.manchester@gmail.com

To Do

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12

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

APRIL '00

The last half dozen or so issues of *Opening Times* had all reported on the plans of Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries to slim down their beer ranges and axe well-established and popular Marston's Bitter. Vigorous local campaigning, and customer resistance had finally had their result – the main headline this month was “Marston's Bitter saved”. Wolves boss David Thompson had attended a packed branch meeting of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, who were delighted to hear that the threatened Marston's Bitter had been reprieved. A brewery spokesman subsequently announced “we have reversed our decision.”

★★★★★

An item headed “Robinson's on Anglesey” listed the progress they had made in buying pubs on the island. It was 1953 when they made their first acquisition, the Kimmel Arms at Moelfre, and then during the 60's and 70's another eight were added – the George & Dragon, Beaumaris; the Gazelle on the Menai Strait, and the Bulkeley Arms in Menai Bridge. Then, along the A5025 came the Four Crosses, the Breeze Hill, Pilot Boat and Trecastell, followed by the Marquis at Rhosybol. 1985 saw the Foundry Vaults in Llangefni, and the Sportsman at Caergeiliog added to the estate, and in 1998 came the California, Brynteg, just outside Benlech, and then the Bedol Penysarn, just along the road from the Pilot Boat, in 1999. This brought the total number of outlets on Anglesey to 13. Now, in 2005, work is in progress refurbishing the Benllech Hotel, the latest Robinson's acquisition, and there are rumours that the Tafarn y Rhos just outside Llangefni will be the next. Also, the Marquis at Rhosybol may be sold, which would reduce the total to 14.

★★★★★

The government's review of road safety had been released on 1 March and it indicated that for the time being, they did not plan to proceed with plans to cut the drink-drive limit from 80mg to 50mg. In more understandable terms, this would have meant that about two pints of normal strength beer would have to be reduced to one. This cut had been proposed in a consultation document issued in early 1998, and it had been feared that if it had been implemented, it would have resulted in the closure of large numbers of pubs outside urban centres.

★★★★★

Still with the government, there had been reports that their White Paper on liquor licensing had been “leaked”, and it made very interesting reading. It seemed that editors throughout the country chose to make a snap decision on whether their publication was “for” or “against” proposals to let pubs open longer hours. The headlines varied from “24 hour drinking shame” to “new proposals to end late-night binge drinking”. Neither extreme represented the full picture of the government's efforts to reform our very antiquated licensing laws. Antiquated they certainly are, dating back to the first World War, when it had been decided that munitions workers made better bombs when they were sober. It seemed a reasonable policy, but not necessarily applying to today's workers.

★★★★★

There were more details of the new micro-brewery for Greater Manchester, with Richard Sutton as brewer (he had been the last brewer at the Footage & Firkin, All Saints, Manchester). He had obtained the plant from Dundee, when Punch Taverns put all the Firkin brewing plants up for sale, and the gleaming, mahogany-clad plant had been installed in a spacious industrial unit in Rochdale. All this had been achieved in a remarkably short space of time, and the new Pictish Brewing Co was soon producing an interesting selection of beers.

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.



THE THIRD WAY

In an attempt to encourage more women to drink beer, the British Beer and Pub Association is spending £1 million on a “Beautiful Beer” advertising campaign. To get away from the macho, pint-swilling image, they are planning to promote the serving of “female friendly” measures of a third of a pint, using glassware similar to wine glasses. This is permitted under current legislation, but very rarely seen nowadays.

It seems a strange move in an era when it isn't uncommon to see women drinking pints, and the amount of alcohol provided will be dismissed by many as paltry. Even with a 5% beer, a third of a pint would only contain 0.9 units of alcohol, compared with 2.3 for a typical 175 ml glass of wine. I suspect many women will see the campaign as patronising.

The only thing wrong with half-pints is the name, with its connotations of half measures, and a half will provide a much more satisfying amount of liquid. Surely what is needed to improve the image of beer is to produce distinctive half-pint branded glasses, and make them oversize rather than brim measures. One aspect of drinking beer that women must find offputting is that it tends to be served in brim measure glasses where spillage is all too easy – but will the pub companies shy away from that idea for fear of undermining their margins?

NO MORE ROOM AT THE INN


A few weeks ago I was in Knutsford and noticed that the former Royal George Hotel in the town centre, which has been closed for several years, was in the process of being converted into a “retail and leisure development”. This made me think how many historic coaching inns have been lost over the years, another fairly local example being the Lamb in Nantwich where I remember drinking Wem Best Bitter many years ago.

All too often nowadays, in market towns the length and breadth of the country, you come upon a development of bijou shops and wine bars called “Red Lion Court” or “White Hart Close” where an old-fashioned hotel once stood. These places often had fascinating histories going back hundreds of years and were social centres for the local area. Regrettably they have fallen victim to the greed of developers and the modern trend towards bland, homogenised chain hotels. One or two, such as the King's Head in Monmouth, live on in the shape of a Wetherspoon's, but that is a poor substitute. Many also had characterful, traditional bars, and in the early days of the real ale revival were often the only place you could find a decent pint locally. For example, in 1977, according to the Good Beer Guide, you could drink Donnington SBA in the Froth & Elbow Bar of the Shakespeare in Stratford, and Wadworth's 6X in the long-closed Swan in Ross-on-Wye, both areas where otherwise at the time you would find little but pressurised Whitbread beers.

One memory that particularly sticks in the mind is drinking Yates's Bitter in the surprisingly basic, stone-flagged bar of the George Hotel in Keswick, which fortunately is still with us, although nowadays it is a Jennings tied house. Give it a try if you're up in that part of the world and you'll understand why such places are worth preserving.

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We hear that the Queens on Ashton Road in Audenshaw, closed recently, is re-opening as an Indian restaurant.

Up in Mossley, the Good Beer Guide listed Britannia had a good choice on a recent visit (on the way to a Branch trip to Millstone Brewery). The regular Marston's Bitter and Pedigree were supplemented with three guests, namely on the night, Titanic Captain Smiths, Camerons Strongarm and Wychwood Hobgoblin. The pub has gained a good local reputation for good wholesome food at reasonable prices.

No chance of any more beer at the Wellington on Caroline Street in Stalybridge - the pub (ex-Good Beer Guide in the 80's) was flattened recently! Similar bad news from Dukinfield where the Masons Arms on Oxford Street is boarded up.

Latest from the Swan at Kettleshulme is that a deal with Marstons has been reached, so Marstons will have a permanent pump but there will be three pumps in addition dedicated to rotating guest beers. The new managers will be Chris and Dorothy who, whilst being born in Manchester, have spent the majority of their lives in Canada. They have literally just moved back to the UK and this is the first position that they have taken up. The pub is now open all day at the weekends and 12-3 and 5.30 - 11.00 Tuesday to

Friday. On Mondays it's just 5.30 - 11.00. Simple bar snacks to compliment the beer are available all the lunchtimes that the pub is open. Apart from the Marston's, Adnams beers have been popular and the pub has also built good relationships with all the local micro breweries and these will filter on over the coming weeks. More information can be found on www.the-swan-inn-kettleshulme.co.uk

News from Hyde this month centres round the Cheshire Ring, where Duncan and Rachel left the pub at the end of March - new managers have been appointed at this Beartown flagship pub and it is hoped that it will continue to be a good place to drink in the town.

The Partington Club at Glossop continues to take beer from Shaws but an additional pump sells another guest beer. In the last weekend of March, Hook Norton beers were the flavour of the week.

The Old Oak at Tintwistle, on the main road through the village is closed, with signs up stating lease up for sale.

Another mention for the Lamp at Hadfield, who continue to keep a choice of guest beers on, the latest being Brains SA, Greene King IPA and Everards Tiger. Licensees Derek & Debra Wellings are making a go of this pub, run down for several years but now certainly on the up. Derek is well known to High Peak members as he was full time assistant manager at the Royal in Hayfield under the previous landlord, tending the beer that kept the pub in Good Beer Guide for several years on the trot. I have been having nothing but good reports of late - worth trying if you fancy a trip out into Derbyshire on the train from Manchester.

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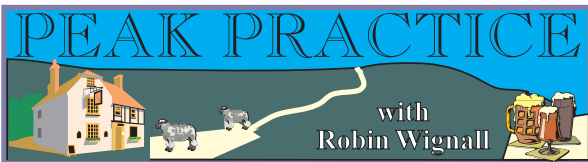
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MILD CHALLENGE IN THE PEAK

By the time this edition of OT hits the pubs, the Mild Challenge will be well underway for many readers. Hopefully challengers will make a serious effort to visit some of the more out of the way pubs on the list. Obviously, those visiting all the pubs will get themselves out to Glossop, New Mills and Whaley Bridge but it is also easy to include these areas if you are looking for just 15 stamps.

At Glossop, returning favourites the **Star** and the **Gloveworks** are joined for the first time by the **Bull's Head** at Old Glossop, just a few minutes walk away from the town centre. Once again in New Mills the **Mason's Arms** carries the flag.

In Whaley Bridge a good mini-stagger presents itself. At Bridgemont the **Dog & Partridge** continues to sell Cains Dark Mild, whilst in the village centre regular Mild Challenge pubs, the **Goyt**, with rare Tetley Dark Mild, and the **Shepherds** with Banks's Original will be glad to see Challenge participants. New this year are the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge and the **Board**, a five-minute walk away at Horwich End. These are welcome newcomers to the Mild Challenge, both serving Robinson's Hatters in good form.

Sometimes not all the village pubs in the Challenge have the all day opening of more urban locals. To avoid wasted journeys the following information might be helpful for Whaley Bridge pubs. The **Dog & Partridge** opens early at 11.00, but has a mid-afternoon close 3.00 to 5.00 Monday to Thursday. The **Goyt** opens from 12.00 each day except Wednesday, when 4.30 sees a start. At the **Shepherds**, new landlord Paul tells me that new hours will see the pub open at 12.00 each day. The **Cock** is also open all day, whilst the **Board** only opens at 4.00 during the week, but all day at the weekend.

If you are having a go at the Mild Challenge, have a go at some of the more distant pubs on the list. Support the pub managements who are supporting the Challenge. They will be glad to see you and make you welcome with some good beer to be had.

MORE NEWS

As alluded to above, there is a new team at the long time Good Beer Guide listed **Shepherds Arms**, Whaley Bridge. Paul and Angela have taken over, but are keen to stress that there will be no great changes. The beer range stays the same, with the hope of an additional guest/seasonal beer of Wolves can be persuaded to stump up for an additional handpump. The bare board tables in the vault have had a good scrub. Paul and Angela hope to serve bar snacks once they are settled in, whilst a project for the summer is to enhance the beer garden. More to come on the **Shepherds**.

Good news from Kettleshulme where the **Swan** really did open on 18 March. There was a further opening ceremony for the benefit of Sky Television News the following Wednesday! Again, a fuller article on the **Swan** will be included next time.

Easter weekend was a busy time at the **Navigation** at Buxworth, as the Buxworth Canal Basin was re-opened after extensive renovation and repair. Narrowboats came in from all over the north and midlands, with boaters and visitors calling in at the **Navigation** and its specially erected beer tent. Although the pub was busy throughout, cold and cloudy weather deterred many people from sampling the delights of the beer tent. Beers to be enjoyed here included **St Austell Tribute**, **Marston's Burton Celebration**, **Adnam's Broadside**, **Abbeydale Moonshine** and **Brain's St David's**. The last one had sold out by the time I reached the tent, but the others were in really good condition. Those who stayed inside certainly missed out.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

JOIN CAMRA NOW - SEE PAGE 18

PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR MAY ISSUE IS APRIL 30

TOP PERFORMANCE

FIRST PLACE in Robinson's annual Best Kept Bar and Cellar Competition has been awarded to the **Devonshire Arms**, Mellor near Stockport. The annual competition held by the brewer is now in its seventh year and involves a comprehensive, top-to-bottom, inspection of 330 public houses throughout the North West and North Wales.

John and Liz Longworth, licensees at the **Devonshire Arms**, secured a near perfect score of 299 points out of a possible 300. They dropped just one point for their otherwise immaculate presentation, but picked up full points for their cellar and the quality of their beer.

The couple have been Robinson's tenants for a total of 20 years with this being their second pub with the family brewer. Their hard work and attention to detail paid dividends this year having achieved 5th position in the 2003 challenge, and leading a close fought competition this time around, in which the top three contenders were separated by just five points.

"We are really chuffed to have won the award, because it not only recognises the very highest standards that we work hard to achieve, but in the past seven years, it has built a tremendous sense of camaraderie and light hearted rivalry between those who compete," John explained.

As a reward for John and Liz's effort they hosted a high profile celebration evening at the **Devonshire Arms** and were presented with The Unicorn Shield which has been inscribed with their names, and will take pride of place in the pub for the coming year. The prize from Robinson's also included a valuable barrel of Unicorn Bitter. As ever, the competition was organised by director Oliver Robinson with the initial judging being carried out by a team of four district managers. In a shift from tradition, for the first time packaging and brewing assistant Stewart Thompson was drafted in to make the final selection through a series of surprise visits when he made his unbiased and independent decisions.

Credit should also be given to Helen and Karl Guare of the **Royal Scott**, Marple Bridge who came second with 295 points and Roy and Betty Williams of the **Bay Horse**, Newton who were just one point behind with a score of 294.



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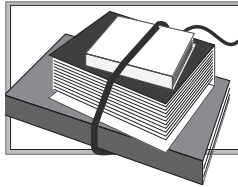
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BOOK REVIEW



Book's Licensed To Thrill

LICENSED TO SELL by Geoff Brandwood, Andrew Davison
and Mick Slaughter, English Heritage, £14.99

This is the first serious treatment of pub design since Mark Girouard's masterful *The Victorian Pub*, published 30 years ago and still in print. Inevitably, therefore, it is going to invite comparison with Girouard; but the two are very different and *Licensed to Sell* belongs on any bookshelf that already has *The Victorian Pub* on it.

One of the glories of Girouard's book is the depth he goes into, citing architects, designers, pub fitters and even individual manufacturers in exhaustive detail. The price paid is that his book's range is confined not only to the Victorian period but also, in the main, to London. It can be heavy going at times, too. By contrast, *Licensed to Sell* travels the British Isles and ranges from the earliest inns to the improved pubs of the 1930s, and even looks at the post-war period.

And where Girouard tends to concentrate on High Victorian design of the grand urban pubs, *Licensed to Sell* stoops to humbler neighbourhood and country pubs, too: for this is not only a history of pub design but also a celebration of what is actually left to enjoy as its subtitle, "The History & Heritage of the Public House", makes clear.

Few people are better qualified to deal with the subject of our surviving pub heritage than Brandwood, Davison and Slaughter – who is responsible for the glowing photography (the book is full colour throughout) – since all three have been involved with the development of CAMRA's Inventory of Outstanding Pub Interiors. Their enthusiasm is infectious and shouts off the page, making the book a good read as well as a historical record. Apart from the main text, there are a host of coloured boxes containing a range of details on subjects as diverse as cask sizes, cider houses and embossing glass. As you would expect from such a trio, *Licensed to Sell* runs the gamut from historic beer engines to traditional pub games, but it's not all worthiness. It closes with a wicked debunk of pub myths. So if you don't want to know how 'olde' Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem is, avoid the last section.

Anyone with an interest in the pub will appreciate this book, particularly here in the north west, a region which boasts a huge number of surviving heritage pubs – little wonder then that the book was launched in one of them: the Peveril of the Peak in Manchester City Centre. Highly recommended.

Copies of the book are available from CAMRA (230 Hatfield Rd, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW) for £14.99 or £12.99 for CAMRA members plus £1 for postage and packing.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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

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After last month's slightly spartan column, I have a bit more for you this month, including my long-planned tour of some of the less prominent (from a beer aspect) Northern Quarter pubs.

First, though, news of licensees **not** leaving. Over the past few weeks I have heard reports that both Paul and Sue at the Beer House and Sean Piatt at the City Arms were off to pastures new. I am pleased to say that both reports are groundless.

The **Beer House** seems to go from strength to strength and at weekends in particular seems back to its old form. I don't think the message has filtered through to everyone, though. So if you've not been there for a while, do take time and call in. Paul and Sue are working very hard here and deserve every support. The same can be said for the **City Arms**, really. Sean is a keen beer man and a recent winner of a Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Season Award. Tetley Bitter and dark Mild are sold alongside five or six changing guest beers, always in good nick - Fullers Chiswick Bitter and Skinners Best Bitter were very enjoyable when I called in recently. Sean confirms that despite the rumours, which he too had heard, he is staying put.

N4 REVISITED

When most keen beer drinkers think of the Northern Quarter they think of the Swan Street pubs (Bar Fringe and the Smithfield) together with stalwarts the Beer House, Marble Arch and, honorary N4 pub, the Queens Arms. There are of course many more pubs in and around the area and with a great effort of will I eschewed the 'usual suspects' and undertook a tour of some of the others. It was a mixed bag.

One of the newer bars, **Bluu**, on Thomas Street did in fact sell real ale when it opened but tonight none was available, although one of the handpumps did have a reversed pump clip. The bar staff had no idea if cask beer was currently sold.

Nor is there any cask ale at the reopened **Bay Horse**, also on Thomas Street. This bar and its staff, both so trendy they make your teeth peel, doesn't even offer much of note in bottle either. I really can't understand this lack of imagination here but there you go. Further down is the **Millstone**, and a greater contrast with the Bay Horse you couldn't imagine. Decidedly untrendy with a cosy atmosphere and notably down to earth clientele (much effing and blinding when I was there), real ale is sold in the form of JW Lees GB Mild and Bitter on handpump - the pub was recently acquired by Lees. Of note is some fine glass in the windows - and also an old Wilson's chequerboard inside.

Tib Street runs parallel to Oldham Street and is home to **Bar Centro**, a long time cask ale outlet. While it's looking comfortably shabby in places, Centro remains a good, lively bar and was certainly busy when I called. Three changing cask beers are on handpump and I tried some Facer's Lenctern, not cheap at £2.30 a pint for a 3.9% ABV beer, but in good condition and the usual quality beer you expect from Facer's. I must also mention the music - Centro often hosts music night and tonight some excellent tunes were being played by DJs Danny Webb and Steve Perry who host 'Friends of Music' at Centro on the last Thursday each month 'straight from work till late'.

Centro is now run by the same people who own **Cord** just across the road and round the corner. I was surprised to find no real ale here, as it has been a regular outlet in the past. A very smoky atmosphere, too. The nearby **Wheatsheaf** on Oak Street (Burtonwood) also remains keg as does the **City** on Oldham Street itself.



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Further down the street, **Gullivers**, another JW Lees house, has their Bitter on handpump. I'd not been here for years and on this admittedly short visit struck me as a comfortable pub with an obviously loyal clientele. The music was a bit loud, though. Further down the **King** also remains keg as does a number of other bars on Oldham Street, which I just can't be bothered mentioning. There is however another oasis for real ale on Oldham Street and this is the famous **Castle**. Well-known as Robinson's only City Centre outlet, the Castle also makes a point of selling the full (and I mean the full) range of Robbies beers, including the rare Dark Hatters. It's looking a bit shabby now but remains a pub well worth visiting with its distinctive tiled bar and multi-roomed interior. My penultimate visit was to **Mother Mac's**, on Back Piccadilly. Perhaps the most obscurely situated pub in the City Centre it almost defines 'off the beaten track'. I'd not been for years and was disappointed to find no real ale sold, despite the presence of handpumps for Boddingtons on the bar. It's a cracking pub, and obviously well-run. I'd heartily recommend it if it sold some cask beer. As it is...

And so to the final port of call, the **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street. This pub has had its ups and downs over the years but once again seems settled – the pub was clean and comfortable with a good crowd and atmosphere. There is a bank of handpumps and I believe several cask beers are usually sold. Tonight, though, there was just the one – Deuchars IPA, and very good it was, too.

SAND BAR FESTIVAL

Steve Gingell of **Sand Bar** (Grosvenor Street, All Saints) has been telling me about their 'Made in Manchester' beer festival, which will run from 11 April to the end of May. After visiting CAMRA's Winter Ales Festival the Sand Bar team thought it was timely to take a look at the increasing number of breweries – be they micros or established family business which Greater Manchester has. This gave them the idea for a *Made in Manchester* event running from 11 April to the end of May. This will feature thirty or so ales from ten of the best breweries in Greater Manchester.

From the Phoenix brewery which has supplied their house brew for the last nine years, a special produced for Sandbar for the festival: *All Saints Ale*. Three Rivers, from Stockport - *Manchester IPA* brewed with hops cultivated in Burnage!, another Stockport brew: *Old Tom* from Robinsons a recent CAMRA festival winner, The organic *Ginger Marble*, from the Marble brewery to name but a few

Breweries taking part include: Millstone, Ramsbottom, Merlin, Three Rivers, Boggart Hole Clough, Marble, Phoenix, Robinson's, Hydes, Facer's and Bazens'.

Though Sandbar is known for its range of beers from Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic they are also interested in promoting the local not least as supping local reduces 'beer miles' (i.e. distance/fuel that lorries travel to bring hops, malt etc together and then distribute the finished beer) hence reducing CO2 emissions and pollution. Well worth supporting – I will certainly be popping in.

AND FINALLY...

The **Seven Stars** on AOR in Beswick has had a CPO order placed upon it. It may be demolished before March 2006, as this is the final date when work on new nearby housing will need to commence. The City council are to decide the pub's fate at a meeting some time this month. Apart from a few scattered keg pubs on the estate, this has long been the only cask ale outlet (Holt's Mild and Bitter) for quite some distance. At its height in the

eighties, the pub had a much-discussed extension added to it to boost trade. Decline followed however, with grand plans for the locale and for East Manchester as a whole meaning that vast swathes of nearby housing and such have already been cleared away. Those plans are now beginning to be seen and so the pub may well be lost. The manager wants to leave the trade (and retire, potentially), so there is little or no opposition to its closure. I believe that Joseph Holt may be offered a new site elsewhere as recompense.

I espied the use of oversized glasses in the **Circus** (Tetley) in Manchester recently. This is not a policy of landlord George however, they just happen to have a few boxes of them to use! The near-next door **Grey Horse** (Hydes) has replaced Jekyll's Gold with the monthly Hydes seasonal beer. This has proved popular with regulars and visitors to this cosy haunt.

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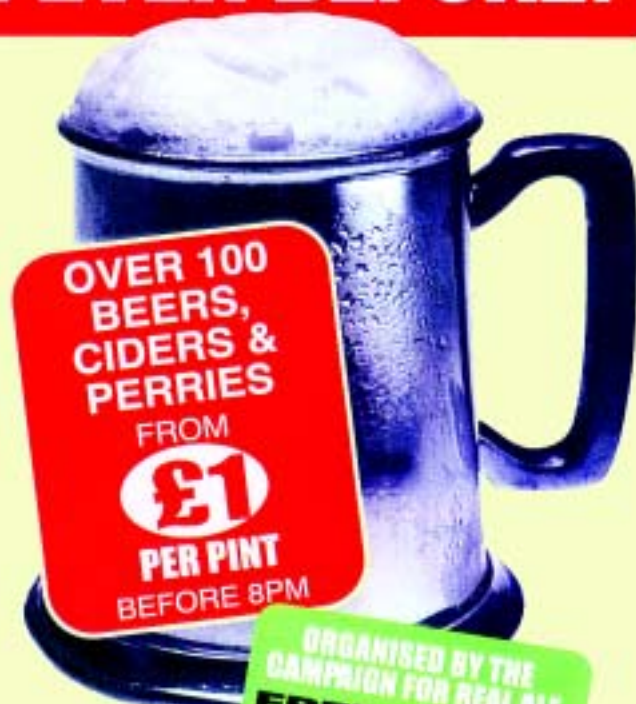
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