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**CAMRA
NEWSLETTER OF
THE YEAR 2003**

OPENING TIMES

Volume 21 Issue 5

MAY 2005



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



FESTIVAL FEVER COUNTDOWN UNDERWAY TO STOCKPORT'S MAIN EVENT

WE ARE NOW well and truly in the run-up to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express. The entertainment is booked, the glasses and T-shirts ordered and, most importantly, the beer and cider order has been worked out.



FESTIVAL CIDER & PERRY NATIONAL CHAMPIONS TO FEATURE



Real cider and perry have always been a big feature of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival – our cider sales are proportionally the highest of any beer festival in the country. While we no longer host the National Cider & Perry Championships, we do aim to feature as many of the winners and finalist as possible. The national competition was held at the Reading Beer Festival on 28 May and here are the results:

PERRY

Gold - Gwynt Y Ddraig (Llantwit Fardre, Glamorgan)

Silver – Minchew's Blakeny Red (Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire)

Bronze - Hecks Farmhouse (Street, Somerset)

Unplaced finalists - Merrylegs Fred Perry, Ralph's Medium

CIDER

Gold - Ralph's 3B's Cider (New Radnor, Powys)

Silver - Upton Sweet (Didcot, Oxfordshire)

Bronze - Newton Court Medium (Herefordshire)

Unplaced finalists - Day's Cottage, Mill Top, Wiscombe Suicider, Highly commended - Double Vision

Of the unplaced finalists, Mill Top particularly impressed - a really good robust clean-tasting dry cider from a newish producer at Shaldon in Devon and supplied by Merrylegs. The Newton Court perry was also on form. The cider

(continued on page 3)

As usual *Opening Times* is taking this opportunity to bring you just a small taster of the many beers on offer. There really will be something for every taste, whether you like mild, bitter, stout or strong ales.

There will be up to 10 milds available including, Rarbarber from Anglo-Dutch Brewery, Buddy Marvellous from Wales's Bryncelyn Brewery, the excellent Ramsbottom Old Ground Mild, the rare Hydes Welsh Dark and the powerful Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby.

Lovers of bitter will be well catered for with no less than 69 standard and premium bitters available during the course of the Festival. The Festival special beer will be from Bazens' and with five casks ordered this year it should be available at every session.

There will be beers from Brecon, Ceredigion and Cwmbran breweries in Wales, and from Scotland, Houston, Fyne and Hebridean. Local micros will feature with many new beers, including Millstone's True Grit, and the latest specials from Facer's, Ramsbottom and Shaws. The new pale and hoppy summer special from Marble Brewery will also be on sale. Look out, too, for the ultra-hoppy 12 Monkeys from Oakham and the brand new session beer from Fullers.

12 stouts and porters will include the superb Black Bishop from Abbeydale, Dark Secret from Durham, Sjolmet Stout from Valhalla and the tasty Houston Warlock Stout.

There will also be 10 special beers including cask lagers from Bazens'/Facer's and Leek, Nethergate's classic Umbel Magna coriander beer, the unusual Cherry Bomb from Hanby (let us know what you think!) and a real, unique treat from Abbeydale – we're keeping this one under wraps but it will a never to be repeated one-off!

Bringing up the rear we also have 10 strong ales and this year there are some real treats here. Robinson's Old Tom is a firm favourite of course but others to try include Holy Water, the hoppy 6 per cent Christmas beer from Abbeydale, which has been maturing at the brewery for us since December, and rare cask outings for the normally bottle-only 1845 and Golden Pride (a pale 8.5% barley wine) from Fullers. Look out, too for Trip Hazard (6.5%) from the highly respected Spectrum Brewery.

So, something for everyone. Do remember, though, that not all beers will be on at the same time and one or two may not even arrive (although we usually have an acceptable alternative if that happens).

You can also visit the Festival Website at: www.stockportfestival.fsnet.co.uk

In MAY'S OPENING TIMES ...

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**CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE**
STOCKPORT AND
SOUTH MANCHESTER
BRANCH
**7,000
CIRCULATED
THIS MONTH**



Blue Bullet 4.5%
 Flatbac 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport, 2003
 & BHA 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%

Our permanent local outlets include:
 The Albert Vaults, The Crescent, The King's Arms, Salford
 and Corbieres, Manchester. For other outlets and a list
 of wholesalers who deliver our beers nationwide,
 please visit www.bazensbrewery.co.uk/pub_list.html

For more info, please see www.bazensbrewery.co.uk, phone
 0161 708 0247
 or email info@bazensbrewery.co.uk

PUB OF THE MONTH MAY 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	31				



The Stockport and South Manchester Pub of the Month for May 2005 is The Alexandra, Northgate Road, Edgeley, Stockport.

Situated quite a way from the centre of Edgeley's Castle Street area, you might say it was in west Edgeley. Given that, and if you were to stick to main roads only, you would not be aware of this large Victorian pub at all.

Although primarily a locals pub, it is indeed renowned nationally as it features on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors (it's a Grade II listed building too). Four fine rooms radiate from the bar

- Tap Room, Smoke Room, Commercial Room and Bar Parlour. Then add to this a Billiard Room fitted out with pool tables, table football and video games for those of a sporting bent. Each room has its name etched into the glass of the door. All rooms have their original fire surrounds (albeit with the fires bricked-up) that provide a warming focus to the space. When you stand at the bar, marvel at the splendid stairwell light in leaded glass behind you; all in keeping with the green-flower tiled lobby.

Now all of this would be mere window-dressing if the beer and the management of the pub were not up to scratch. Thankfully, there is no problem on either of those fronts. Local couple, John Downs and partner, Janet Woodward took on the tenancy almost eighteen months ago and during that time have had a profound effect on the business. The last twelve months have seen sales increase by over 170 per cent; this gained them a commendation from Robinson's brewery. Beers on the bar are Robinson's Unicorn and Hatters (the latter making a welcome return to the pub after a long absence). Janet has over 30 years experience in local bar work; John was an Electrician by trade, so this is his first pub. Opening hours are 12-11 Monday to Saturday, and 12-10.30 Sundays. Janet reckons weekends begin on a Wednesday and just keep going. Even though they are quite a way from the centre, visiting supporters to Sale Sharks appreciate the pub's beer and ambience. The pub hosts a pool team, a fortnightly quiz, and they support charity, Francis House. Interest is building all the time. The award is to be presented on Thursday May 26th, around 9pm. So come along for a great evening.

The Alexandra is located on Northgate Rd at its junction with Chatham Street. Transport to the pub: Buses 11, 369, and 371 to Edgeley Road or bus 310 to Bloom Street (Bus 309 returns from here). MM.



Facer's Brewery

It's Back

Cliff Bier

Brewed with lager
malt and hops
And fermented with
lager yeast using the
Salford Brewery
Syndicate recipe
The cask-conditioned
lager for summer
5.2% abv



And The Regulars.....
 Twin City (3.3%) - Dark Slightly Spiced Mild
 Northern County (3.8%) - Pale Session Ale
 Crabtree (4.3%) - Mid Range abv
 DHB (Dave's Hoppy Beer) 4.3%
 - Dry-Hopped Mid Range Beer
 Landslide 1927 (4.9%) - Premium Strength
 0161 792 7755 dave@facers.co.uk

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

Although the Mild Challenge will have finished by the time you read this, May remains the month in which CAMRA celebrates Mild ale in all its forms. So, even though the Challenge has been and gone, please try and take time this month to try one of these tasty beers. Many local pubs still sell it and it makes a cheaper, lower strength alternative to the usual run of bitter on offer.

At the end of this month we have Stockport Beer & Cider Festival – here there will be some 10 milds for you to try along with many other tasty dark beers – stouts, porters and old ales. If you are something of a novice when it comes to this style of beer, this is an ideal opportunity to experiment.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

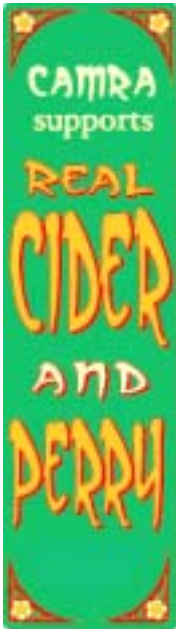
The continuing consolidation in the brewing industry came closer to home last month with the unwelcome bid for Jennings by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries (W&DB). While I say unwelcome, I speak from the beer drinkers' and pub-goers' perspective. Sadly it seems that the Jennings board are happy to roll over and have their tummies tickled, so to speak. Their Chairman has welcomed the approach and although the air is thick with reassurances about the future of the brewery, it seems to have gone unnoticed that W&DB have also refused to give any long-term assurances – in fact going as far to say that they could not commit themselves to brewing there in, say, 10 years' time. Luckily, this is still not a done deal – despite the very regrettable decision by Robinson's (themselves takeover-proof) to commit their large block of shares to W&DB. Apart from Robbies, Jennings' shares are spread very thinly among an army of small shareholders – if they remain loyal to the independence of their local brewery then this deal can still be derailed. The CAMRA Investment Club, with about 1.2% of the shares, has already set its face against the sell-out. I urge any other Jennings' shareholders reading this to take a similar stance. .

John Clarke

FESTIVAL CIDER & PERRY

(continued from page 1)

managers at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival are absolutely delighted at the success of the winners, and commend the judgement of the panel at Reading. All six of the medallists will be familiar to local Festival goers: Ralph Owen and Kevin Minchew are long-standing regular suppliers of ours: Ralph's Bertie's Orchard cider, and Kevin's Malvern Hills perry, won Stockport's Cider & Perry of the Festival awards at last year's Festival. We are looking forward to their superb distinctive and individual produce again, in early June. For the past two years, Newton Court's organic cider and perry has been popular, their perry particularly. Gwynt y Ddraig' Black Dragon cider narrowly missed out to Ralph for our cider award in 2004: we look forward to sampling their medal-winning perry too. We were lucky to obtain Upton's sweet and medium cider last year. And no-one will be surprised at Heck's success: another long-time regular supplier to Stockport, their single-variety ciders and perries are invariably excellent. Of course these represent just the tip of the iceberg – many other ciders and perries will be available on what might be the biggest cider bar we have ever had at the Festival.



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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DUNCAN & LENNETTE SHENTON
A Warm Welcome
to All our customers
BODDINGTONS BITTER,
A Real Traditional Pub
for Real Ale Drinkers -
come and try the cask version
plus TETLEY BITTER
& DARK MILD IN CASK

Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004



Dave and Sue Welcome You To
THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

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

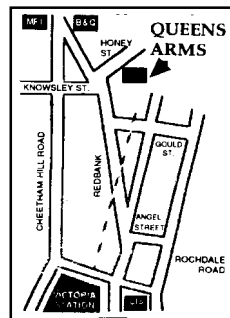
CITY LIFE Food & Drink Festival

PUB OF THE YEAR 2002-3

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Taylors Landlord Championship Beer plus
6 Ever Changing Cask Ales

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& **BELLEVUE KRIEK** on draught
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12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



Tuesday Pub Quiz

9.30pm start

Beer Garden with Children's Play Area

Families Welcome

Hot & Cold Food

Sunday Roast

We're in the Good Beer Guide 2005!



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**IT'S
SUMMER
(NEARLY!)**

**SO THE
BEER
GARDEN
IS OPEN!**

**LOTS OF
BELGIAN
BEERS!**

**AND LOTS OF
OTHER STUFF!**

**OH!, AND
CRISPS!**



**BUT BEWARE OF THE
PIRANHA!**



**DON'T GO TOO
NEAR THE
WATER!**

WE MUST BE MAD!



**B
A
R**



**F
R
I
N
G
E**



**8 SWAN ST.
MANCHESTER
M4 5JN**

**0161
835 3815**



I thought that I wasn't going to have much news this month. However I have been able to get out and about a bit so here goes...

IN THE SUBURBS

I mentioned last month the merry-go-round of licensees in Cheadle and Gatley. Well, now that the dust is settling, I have been able to pop into a couple of the pubs involved.

At the **Prince of Wales**, Gatley Green, Tony and Mary are settling in their new-look pub. Hydes' despatched a veritable army of people to get the pub open in time for the early May Bank Holiday, and it has to be said this is a first class job by Hydes. Much is new although the casual visitor might never guess. For me the star turn is the refurbished vault with a new rustic fireplace (and dartboard surround), leather upholstery and a quarry-tiled floor. Even the small new opening in the wall looks like it's been there for ages. The bar is new too and I was particularly struck but the old mirror at one end. With the warm cream and terracotta décor and low wooden ceilings, you could be forgiven for thinking this was a classic rural pub in the heart of, say, Shropshire, instead of a Stockport suburb. The beer range has been increased to Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and the seasonal or HPA. Tony told me that both Jekyll's and the HPA are selling very well, which is good to see in a pub that was previously just 'mild and bitter'. By the time you read this, there will be lunchtime food available and this may be extended to the evenings if demand merits it. The new-look Prince of Wales is a credit to all involved – get there as soon as you can.

Another pub with new faces behind the bar is the **Royal Oak** in Cheadle where Debbie and Peter Doran have taken over from the Old Star. The pub has been redecorated and cleaned up and I must say it looks better now that it has done for some considerable time. A no-smoking dining room has been introduced (food is available every day and until 8.00pm Tuesday-Sunday, as well as breakfasts from 10.30am) and a beer garden will be up and running for the summer – there are already seats outside.

Beers available are Robinson's Unicorn and Dark Hatters (yes, the rare dark mild) and Debbie tells me that sales are already hugely increased in the relatively short time she and Peter have been there. I shall certainly be calling back before too long.

The **Grey Horse** in Reddish has reopened again but only temporarily pending major refurbishment after the summer during which the vault will disappear and a restaurant area will be added. Obviously a full report will follow when the pub finally re-opens for good. Not too far away, there a sad real ale loss to report. I was dismayed to hear that the **Ash**, Manchester Road, has now stopped selling real ale. This must surely be a retrograde step for this pub and I hope that cask beer is swiftly reinstated. It also looks as though we are about to lose another pub. I am reliably told that the **Gardeners Arms** (the 'War Office') on Northgate Road in Edgeley is schedule for closure and demolition with the site being redeveloped. The owner plans to concentrate on his other pub, the nearby **Bow Garratt** on Brinksway. This is a shame, to say the least – while the Gardeners hasn't sold real ale for some time, it has in recent years been a very well-run pub and will be a real loss.

TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

I made an all too rare visit to the **Kings Head**, Tiviot Dale recently and made a mental note to call in much more often. Cask beer is now firmly established at this underrated pub, with Marston's Bitter as the regular beer and two ever-changing guests. These are usually obtained via the Three Rivers beer exchange programme with other brewers so one guest is usually a Three Rivers beer and the other something pretty interesting. On my visit the Three Rivers beer was Crystal Wheat and the guest Clark's Original Brunette, both on fine form. Landlady Debbie told me that the cask beers were now selling very well and I have to say that the Kings really needs to be added to the 'must visit' map for local beer fans. Food is also available, not only at lunchtimes but in the evenings from 5-7.

Of course the **Crown**, Heaton Lane, remains the top guest beer pub in town. There have been one or two changes in the range here. Whim Ales are now back permanently (and to celebrate the fact there were no less than three available when I last called, including the excellent Magic Mushroom Mild) and there are now two handpumps dedicated to the superb Copper Dragon Beers. Black Sheep is no longer the house beer, this being replaced by the specially commissioned Crown Inn Bitter.

Up in the Market Place, the **Thatched House** is looking very smart with new signs outside and a new bar within. The beer range now comprises two permanent cask ales – Boddies Bitter and Black Sheep Bitter (which sells very well landlady Lisa tells me) plus two changing guests plus Weston's Old Rosie cider on handpump, too. Lisa hopes to increase the cider range with a changing guest cider or perry. The bottled range is now up to 20 or so with not only a good UK range but also one or two well-chosen Belgian specialities including the powerful Bush Beer, Liefman's Kriek and Frambozen plus Rochefort 8 and 10.

Up Hillgate, I see that the **Bishop Blaize** is now open again after the fire but I haven't been able to call in yet. The **Black Lion** was closed on a Tuesday night



as was the Golden Lion. As far as I know the Black Lion is still open for business but I am told that the 'Yellow Cat' is now closed - certainly, there is a 'for sale' sign outside.

Just up the A6, I am told that the Magnet has been refurbished and is now looking very warm and comfortable. A long standing cask ale outlet, when all around seem to be falling by the wayside, the Magnet is a welcome oasis.

AN APOLOGY

Finally, a word of apology. Last month when commenting on the changes of licensees taking place in Cheadle and Gatley, I said that I had no news of what had happened to Graham and Gladys Tyldsley, former licensees of the Prince of Wales, Gatley. I now learn that Gladys sadly passed away towards the end of last year - I have only been told this belatedly so my apologies for any distress caused.

LETTERS
OPENING TIMES

From Phil Levison, Anglesey:

Thanks to Neil Kellett for answering the question posed in Opening Times 250 - "What happened to Anna Grenhalgh?" (she was the editor of the 'original' Opening Times in the mid-1970s). If anyone has a copy of Opening Times 100 they'll find it contains the same question - I wonder why it took so long to come up with that very full reply? Another one for you Neil - "What happened to Robin Bence?"

From Kath Smethurst, The Castle Hotel, Oldham St, Manchester:

With regard to your article in the April edition of Opening Times, specifically referring to your references to the Northern Quarter area of Manchester, I wish to make the following points.

You state that when the discerning drinker thinks about the Northern Quarter, they think of places such as Bar Fringe, Smithfield, Beer House, Marble Arch, and the Queens. Of these bars, only the Smithfield is actually in the Northern Quarter. You also state that the Queens is an honorary member of the Northern Quarter when in fact the only bar to hold this honour is Bar Fringe. Furthermore, you refer to both Bar Centro and the Castle as being 'shabby' in appearance, and it is this section of your article that I wish to take you to task.

Being in the position that you are, and having held many discussions with you over the last few years with reference to the appearance of the Castle, and the fact that we have been waiting for some time now for a proposed revamp, I find it extremely distressing that you choose not to mention this and instead just describe the pub as shabby, without any effort made to explain the reasons for this.

Furthermore, as you are no doubt aware from your last visit, we have now decided not to wait any longer for Robinson's Brewery and have instead taken it into our own hands to redecorate the pub. As many customers recently have commented, this has resulted in a huge improvement to the décor of the pub in general, and I feel that having made these efforts, to then hear my pub described as shabby is a personal insult to myself and everyone else involved with the pub who have made every effort to try and improve things recently.

I feel that an unreserved apology by yourself is in order, as is a correction to your statement regarding pubs in the Northern Quarter, which in fact are not now and have never been an actual part of the said area. A brief glance at a map of the Northern Quarter would swiftly bear out my points.

(Yes, apologies are due to Kath here - the redecoration at the Castle took place between the article being written (and indeed, going to press) and the publication of OT. I'm pleased to say that the pub now looks a treat. In fairness, though, we did also say that the Castle was a pub "well worth visiting". As to the boundaries of the Northern Quarter, well these seem to be something of a moveable feast these days and even if the pubs Kath mentions may not actually physically in it, they are there spiritually, I think. Ed(1))

From Ken Newsome, Khean Brewing, Congleton:

Whilst I agree entirely with the sentiment and purpose within your article about the Swan Inn, Kettleholme, I feel that some inaccuracies and economies therein lead to an unnecessary darkening of Mr Ian Edmunds, the previous landlord's, character. I would like to take the opportunity to rectify this.

Mr Edmunds. As landlord of the Swan was a valued customer of mine, but more than that he is a very good friend, before and after his time at the Swan. Mr Edmunds originally bought the Swan with the intention of living there one day. There already existed planning permission to de-license the Swan, one of the reasons Mr Edmunds was tempted to purchase. It was purchased from the previous landlord of some 21 years who had himself obtained the said planning permission. True, Mr Edmunds applied for planning permission to build a second home on the car park, and failed, but this was two years before the 'sudden change of mind' mentioned in your article. The previous landlord had also applied for this planning permission for a second house, and even took the case to appeal on being refused. Could this be why the Swan came up for sale to Mr Edmunds? However we must not speculate.

As to being housing for the well-heeled, compared to you and I, John, Mr Edmunds may appear well-heeled. But compared to a fair

proportion of the locals in the Swan, some of whom were in a position to spare, sorry, allocate money for the purchase of the Swan, Mr Edmunds comes out a very poor relation. Some of the locals complaining about the loss of the Post Office, the shop and then possible the pub, (after Mr Edmunds' mere four years in the village), don't even live in the village, and have only been using the Swan for the last two years, making Mr Edmunds' four years a comparative age. I too, am pleased to see the Swan open again, as I hope it will be for centuries to come. However a recent article in the Cheshire Life suggests otherwise, quote: "if it all goes terribly sour, and we have to convert it into a house, we will probably get our money back". I thought the idea was to save the Swan, so why not sell it on as a pub? Having mentioned the above points, I agree that saving a rural (or urban for that matter) pub is a very worthy cause. I hope that the Swan maintains its position in local circles and wish all well who are involved in the project, particularly the new landlord and landlady. I also hope I have out your excellent publication back on its path of pursuing and printing interesting but factual information.

(It's certainly wrist-slapping time this month! There are of course always two side to every pub closure story, so thanks to Ken for giving us the other side in this case. Ed(1))

CAMRA UNDER 30 SOCIAL GROUP: THE NEW ERA! AND BEERIENTEERING TOO.....

New young faces are coming to the fore with Greater Manchester Regional CAMRA U30. Kim Walton and Tim Jackson, Richard Chambers, Amy Joughin and Matt Parr (pictured) have taken over the mantle! Kim & Tim have already organised their first event; a crawl around Salford (starting at the excellent Crescent) and Manchester City Centres back in May.

The next big event is Beerienteering 2 : Quest for the Tankard on Sat 11 June from 2pm. at the Knott Bar, Deansgate, Manchester (opp. Deansgate & GMX stations) **Meet by CAMRA sign.** Dave Hallows (the old 'ead, bowing out) and Mike Flynn have got together an exciting course this year. Beerienteering is like the sport of Orienteering, where teams of up to 6, have to visit 6 pubs in correct order by use by, on foot, by tram, train or bus. It's £1 a head. Proceeds go to the MS Society. Check-in is at the Knott Bar (Marble Beers & Guests) at 2 pm prompt please! Come early if you want to order food first.

Of course, team members can only drink real ale with real cider & perry and genuine Continental beers on draught and in bottle (where available) Soft drinks is also legal!

Rules, maps score sheet and clues are provided on the day. Teams need to find themselves a name and come in sport/fancy dress (they all did last year.....) The winning team gets the Official CAMRA plaque and title holders of Beerienteering 2: Quest for the Tankard Champions. Last year's champions, Team Purple with Nick are expected to arrive to contest their title with the winning score of plus 14 minutes! The score is done by time, staggered start for each team, with chances & challenges along the course to gain time bonuses/ penalties while visiting a variety of carefully picked pubs to find. Let's get a minus score this year! Teams are advised to buy a £3.00 System 1 'Any Bus Day saver' Wondering what the 'tankard thing' is about? Well, its part of the game and like 'Lord of the Rings' **ALL WELCOME, INCLUDING NON-MEMBERS & GUESTS. GOOD WEATHER IS BOOKED!**

The game will finish around 6.30pm. For further details and set of rules contact Dave Hallows. Email: davehallowes2002@yahoo.co.uk 07931750108 (mobile).

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 253:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Butler, Phil Levison, Mark McConchie, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Frank Wood, Glen Mason, Jim Flynn, Paul Moss, Charlotte Bulmer, Rhys Jones, Arthur Taylor.

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 253

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.





SAVE JENNINGS!



The continuing consolidation in the independent brewing sector came close to home last month when Wolverhampton & Dudley Brewers tables an agreed 430p a share bid for the Lake District brewer. Jennings' beers are often seen in the local free trade and they have a smattering of pubs on the fringes of the *Opening Times* area so this is one takeover that could have an impact we all see.

Wolves have given an "absolute assurance" that the brewery will remain open if the offer is accepted although they have previously declined to offer a long-term assurance on the brewery's future saying they could not guarantee that brewing would still be taking place in 10 years' time. Luckily, this is not a done deal. Local family brewers Robinson's haven't helped matters by pledging their 25% shareholding to

Wolves but the rest of the shares are held by a large number of small shareholders. Only 17% of the shares have now been pledged to Wolves and CAMRA is calling on the rest of the shareholders to follow the lead of its Investment Club (which holds 1.25% of the shares) and refuse Wolves offer and so keep the company independent. In an age when many of these bids are a fait accompli, this is one time when shareholder power can actually make a difference and affect the long-term future of their company.



FAMILY FAVOURITES

HYDES Hydes – the current craft ale for May and June is Elevation (4.4% ABV), a light, crisp and refreshing beer, and marks Manchester as the home of Avro aircraft. The premium HPA seems to have been reduced in strength, too. It was launched as a 5%-ish ABV beer but the current pumpclips show it to be 4.5%.

JW Lees – another new seasonal for May and June. This one is Googly Pale Ale (4.3% ABV), a refreshing light summer ale. Pubs such as Rain Bar, the Lloyds Arms and, in Urmston, the Urmston will be selling this.

Robinson's – the former autumn ale, Coopers Bell (4% ABV) is now an early summer special and has a distinctively malty character complemented by a pleasant hop aroma.

Cains – the Liverpool family brewer operates Gothic in Gatley – on a recent visit this was selling the new Cains Lager on handpump. This was originally launched as a keg product, albeit one made with proper ingredients and matured for a de-

cent length of time, and is now out on cask, and very good it is, too. Full bodied, tasty and refreshing, it is worth seeking out.

MICRO MAGIC

Bazens' – are pleased to announce that they have decided to absorb the latest increase in duty and have not increased their prices this year (their prices have only risen by 5% over the last three years.). As we went to press they were exploring different American hop options for the Stockport Festival special, so we should be in for a real treat there. Bazens' are also looking into commissioning a new 10-barrel fermenter to (hopefully) meet increasing demand.

Bank Top – currently pressing ahead with the 'Knights of the Round Table' range. For May it's Sir Modred (3.6% ABV), a pale bitter, and this will be followed for June by the 4% ABV Sir Bedevere.

Facer's - News is that April was another record-breaking sales month for Facer's, averaging over seven barrels a week for the month. Dave offers his thanks to



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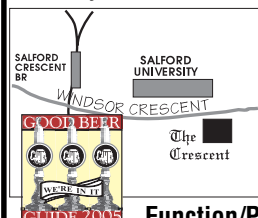
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both repeat and new customers! He's not doing a 3.9% English Literature special to replace Lencten, as he will be brewing Cliff Bier, the Salford Brewery Syndicate recipe 5.2% Cask Lager. Brewed with lager malt and hops and fermented with lager yeast at lager temperatures, the first brew was in the fermenter as we went to press and will be available from the second week in May. In the past demand for this beer has completely outstripped supply, but Dave hopes to rectify that this year. If there is a demand, he may also brew a 3.9% version of this (no name as yet).

Leyden - still going strong at Nangreaves. Two beers came out for St. George's Day - St George and Dragonslayer. Both have now been and gone. Out at the moment is Sebastopol (4% ABV) a hoppy and very dry bitter, and Imagination (4.5% ABV) a very pale beer brewed with lager malts and hops, including pale Optic malt plus Saaz and Brewers Gold Hops. This is selling very well. Brendan Leyden is also planning a house lager, which will only be available at the Lord raglan. The as yet unnamed beer will be 5% ABV, sterile filtered and served under gas pressure.

Greenfield - Peter Percival has taken on a new business partner, Tony Harrat, and converted the business to a limited company. This was launched at the Ashton Arms in Oldham and a one-off beer Black Five was produced for the event. This 4% ABV beer was very black and described as "not quite a porter but not a mild". The dark, bitter brew went very well and will reappear next winter. Cattleshaw (4.2% ABV), very light straw-coloured bitter is selling well and look out for the return of an old favourite, Brassed Off (4.4% ABV) brewed for the local band

festival. Golden and well hopped with Cascade, this is also a big seller.

Boggart Hole Clough - as usual a stream of beers from BHC. Amberlicious (5% ABV) has been and gone but new out is Down The Pole (4.5% ABV) a light golden summer ale.

Pictish - The special for May is the mild, Black Diamond (3.5% ABV) and out for summer is the award-winning Summer Solstice (4.7% ABV). There will be a brand new beer out this month, too. Mistral is to be a 5.2% ABV pale, hoppy strong ale. Look out for this at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

Phoenix - have Mayfly (4.4% ABV) and the excellent Black Shadow mild (4%) is also out - this has also been ordered for the Beer Festival. The summer regulars will be out for June - look for Summer Madness and Tennis Elbow amongst others.

Shaws - the regulars Tame Valley Ale, Golden Globe and Best Bitter are all out and selling well. There will be a new special later this month. It will be 4.5% ABV, pale-ish and hoppy-ish, in the usual Shaws' style, and will also be available at the Beer Festival.

Marble - after a prolonged absence, Marble Brewery's Uncut Amber returned in April and May. This robust 4.7% ABV mild was available for the Mild Challenge. At the end of May a new seasonal is launched. Summer Marble 2005 will be pale, hoppy and very bitter. The plan is to brew an annual summer special using the choicest hops available at the time. This will also be available at the Stockport Beer Festival.

Millstone - Are pretty busy keeping up with demand for their regular beers, plus True Grit, which continues to go down well - it was voted 3rd overall at the recent Oldham Beer Festival. Millstone will also be brewing Summer Daze (4.1% ABV) over the summer months, with a release in mid-June (hopefully).

Three Rivers - Have just done a fully organic beer at 4% ABV but are struggling to name it! A polypin of the beer is available to any reader who can come up with a suitable name which they can use on the pump clip. The beer is light and hoppy made with organic spring barley and First Gold hops. Please send any suggestions to threerivers@acedial.co.uk



Only sufficient space (despite Ed(1)'s worthless promises!) to make a comment on Fullers new 'Discovery' Blonde Beer. Deja Vu! Designed to get lager drinkers to try the real stuff - the aim is excellent (though I think Cains Lager on handpump will be more successful) - yet I can't help remembering Fuller's neighbour Youngs attempt at the 'yoof' market with Triple A (pale, mid strength, served slightly chilled - more than a bit similar). It did well as a novelty, but sales fell over a year and it was pulled. I give Discovery 18 months, tops. Bring back the IPA, say I. A full-length piece next month, or so I'm led to believe (ha!).



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Beers for May

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a.B.V. 4.7%



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Celtic Warrior

a.B.V. 4.2%

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STAGGER

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MILD IN MAY

AS MAY IS TRADITIONALLY the month that CAMRA celebrates mild beer in all its forms, and given that Stockport is one of mild's last true heartlands in the UK, a celebratory Stagger round some of the town's many mild outlets seemed very appropriate.

Our starting point was the **Four Heaton's**, on Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris. This is a Hydes' pub, one of the few breweries producing three regular milds – Mild, Light and the rare 'Welsh Dark'. The Four Heaton's is a pub which pretty much embodies the phrase "don't judge a book by its cover". Externally, it's a pretty uncompromising piece of early seventies architecture, despite valiant attempts by Hydes' to pretty it up, but inside it's a warm and welcoming local. It's much improved too, since the arrival of Chris and Zena Marlborough late last year with cask ale sales well up, and a thriving, vibrant feel to the entire pub. Chris is keen on his beer quality (he quickly obtained Cask Marque status) and this shone through tonight. The mild here is Hydes' Light (just to prove that mild doesn't necessarily have to be dark) and was on top form. One of our party broke ranks and tried the Bitter, which proved equally enjoyable.

From the Four Heaton's it was a stroll into the town centre and the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. Regular readers will know of the high esteem in which this pub is held. Not only does it regularly feature one of the widest ranges of cask ales in the town, but with Graham and Jeanette Mascord it is lucky to be run by people dedicated to quality across the board. It retains much of its multi-roomed Victorian interior and is also gaining a fine reputation for the live music regularly featured. On the beer front there is always a cask mild available and usually a stout or porter, too. Tonight we had the choice of four dark beers – Slaters Monkey Magic Mild, Eastwood & Sanders Night Porter,

Beowulf Dragon Smoke Stout and the superb Pictish Porter. Where to start? Most of us stuck to the night's theme and tried the mild and, whilst enjoyable perhaps wasn't the best mild that the Crown has ever sold (for your author that honour still goes



to the magnificent Bank Top Dark Mild). A couple of our party tried the Dragon Smoke Stout and enjoyed it hugely while two recidivists went for the new house beer, Crown Inn Best, a bitter brewed by an unknown local micro, and found this equally good. It would have been easy to settle here for the rest of the night but more pubs beckoned.

Across the road on the other side of the viaduct is the **Pineapple**, a Robinson's house with the feel of a suburban local despite being 50 metres or so from Mersey Square. This warm and comfortable three-roomed pub, with its ever-expanding plate collection, is something of an unsung gem, with a loyal crowd of regulars and invariably good beer – it has been in the Good Beer Guide for some years now. Hatters is the mild, of course and all of us tried this and found it very well-kept. Also available are Unicorn, Cumbria Way and the current Robbies seasonal.

Hatters was the drink of choice in our next pub as well, the wonderfully traditional **Tiviot** on Tiviot Dale. A good old-fashioned town local this, busy during the day but quieter in the evening. The beer is on electric pump and again always well-kept in this Good Beer Guide regular. Again we all tried the Hatters and again it was on fine form, as you would expect. There are four rooms in this pub and its heart and soul is arguably the excellent vault and it is here that a cask of Old Tom is stillaged on the bar during the colder months. The last cask of the season was on when we called and while the rest of the party moved on to the next stop, a couple of us stayed behind to have a half of CAMRA's current Champion Winter Beer of Britain and discuss old times with landlord Dave Walker. I particularly enjoyed his tales of the early sixties when the pub would be frequented by ageing 'ladies of the night' – Queenie,

Nellie Swift and the ferocious sounding Red Ada. There was a short uphill walk to the next pub, Beartown Brewery's **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill. Much has been written about this pub too, and regular readers will know how it was rescued from keg-beer hell by the enterprising



Beartown Brewery. Under manager Angella Lindsey the pub has settled into the role of a comfortable local with an added itinerant clientele of travelling beer buffs. Apart from Beartown's wide range there is usually a guest beer on sale along with a couple of real ciders. Unfortunately the Ambeardextrous mild wasn't available tonight but the Beartown range always includes a few dark beers and tonight there was the strong brown ale, Bruin's Ruin, Polar Eclipse stout and Pandamonium, a blackcurrant porter, one of the few British fruit beers that actually works. All three were found to be on good form with perhaps the Bruin's Ruin having the edge. Finally it was back down the hill to the **Railway**, Portwood, owned by another micro-brewer, Porters of Haslingden. Another well-known pub on the town's real ale scene, this pub sells the full Porter range including the chocolately Dark Mild and the signature Porter, along with three guest beers at the weekends. Again this is a quality operation from beginning to end, not only with beer and cider but also the town's best range of foreign beers, in both bottle and on draught.

Most of us stuck to the Dark Mild and again finished the night on a high spot, as you would expect. Other beers tried included the intensely bitter house beer, Railway Sleeper, and also guests from Oakham and Tom Woods. All were on top form.

This of course just scratches the surface – many local pubs still sell real mild, look out for Holt's, Hydes, Tetley and changing guest milds at Ye Olde Vic, which has recently started selling dark beers on a semi-regular basis again. All are there waiting to be enjoyed – if you're not a regular mild drinker, why not try a pint in May – you may be pleasantly surprised.

8



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CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

JUDICIOUS BEHIND THE SCENES TINKERING HAS

PAID DIVIDENDS FOR JW LEES, SAYS ARTHUR TAYLOR. Twenty-five years ago, Giles Dennis arrived to take up the position of head brewer at JW Lee's Greengate Brewery in Middleton. Today, he's one of the longest serving and most highly respected brewers in the country with a string of triumphs to his name.

However, a less well-known achievement of his, which ought to be saluted in CAMRA's May Mild Month, is the way he's dragged the brewery's mild into the 21st century.

One of the first problems he had to tackle in those very early days in fact, was the mild. "Before my time there were several shades of mild, because sometimes even individual pubs asked for different colours," he says. "You could cope with that by adding caramel to the individual barrel, of course - so they tell me!

"But when I came here we had just two milds, a light and a dark, which mainly went to our pubs in Wales. Neither was doing well - sales were in steep decline. We decided that something had to be done."

What he did was to examine the then-popular Oldham Brewery mild and try to come up with something similar. Lee's then new mild entitled GB Mild (Greengate Brewery, you see) was launched to much enthusiasm following a marketing campaign. It was made with Maris Otter pale malt, a little crystal malt, and invert sugar. The hops were Styrian Golding and it came out at 3.5 per cent ABV. Mid-dark, malty, sweetish, biscuity... not long after this borrowing, the Oldham Brewery was bought up then closed down by Boddingtons, which thus neatly removed the competition from Lees.

Then, earlier this year, my sister-in-law, who is a long-term aficionado of karaoke and halves of mild in assorted Lees pubs, asked me if I had tasted the "new" Lees mild.

"No, May," I said, in my insufferably patronising way, "it won Best Mild at the CAMRA beer festival in London last August - but it isn't new." May rolled her eyes and said no more.

A week later I was able to buttonhole Giles at Rain Bar, Lees City Centre flagship, and told him the tale, chuckling the while. "Oh yes, she's quite right," he said. "It is new - we just haven't told anybody yet." Collapse of stout party. The story is almost a rerun of the invention of GB Mild all those years ago. "We went to the Brewing Industry International Awards in Burton last February," explains Giles. "Didn't win anything, which didn't please us of course. The we got to talking about the mild again - sales were beginning to drift down again.

"So we got hold of three barrels of the three winning milds, added one of our own and had a tasting session for about 20 people at the brewery. Everyone blind-tasted all the beers and came up with their conclusions and recommendations."

Over a four-month period, the mild was adjusted, step-by-step, with no publicity at all. "We expected a backlash," sales Giles, "but there was nothing at all at first. Then people in our pub started telling us how much they liked it." What he did was to alter the make up slightly, taking out the invert sugar and darkening the beer with a heftier dose of chocolate malt. It is now technically twice as dark as it was. Nothing else has changed - same hops, same ABV. It's amazing what an apparently simple adjustment like this can make to the character of a beer.

When I finally got round to checking out the new mild, I thought like most people that it was a substantial improvement, fuller, maltier, with hints of liquorice and dark chocolate, a touch sweeter. But no, says Giles. "It's actually more astringent than it was. Most people drink with their eyes and think the darker a beer, the sweeter it must be. Not necessarily so."

Then, last August, came that win at the annual CAMRA beer bash and sales perked up no end, Giles says. There has still been no great effort at re-marketing and re-branding. Surprising really, when you think that other brewers are dropping the word mild as if it were somehow toxic. "We think any brewer worth his salt should brew a mild," says Giles. "I know it has these associations with old-fashioned working class and cloth caps and all that - but so what? It's a historic beer style and we should not be ashamed of it. We still call our mild mild and we're proud of it."



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Bulls Head, 155-157 Broken Cross, Macclesfield
Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane
Calvert's 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
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Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Road, Eccles
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
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Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
Football, 35 Swinton Hall Road, Swinton
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Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme
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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
Ryecroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme
Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
Society Rooms, Macclesfield Park La, Macclesfield
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BELGIAN BEER TASTING, MONDAY 21 MARCH

The Tasting Panel has sampled a range of Belgian beers before, but with so many to choose from, a further visit was overdue. We are indebted to Jason Barker of the Belgian Belly in Chorlton-cum-Hardy for providing the beers for this tasting session. Our first beer was decidedly yellow in colour, and smelt of slightly sour fruit – gooseberries or the like. The big surprise came with the first mouthful: unusually for a Belgian beer, it was very bitter, dry and hoppy – uncompromisingly so (like Holt's used to be, it was suggested!) – though with a background of fruit. One member of the panel found it too bitter for his taste, but the rest of us thought it a very good and refreshing beer. Indeed, it made sufficient impression still to be voted the best beer at the end of the evening. Congratulations to **De Ranke XX Bitter** from Wevelgem in West Flanders, at 6.2% ABV (£1.80).

★★★★★

Next up came an amber-coloured beer. The aroma was complex: rich, fruity and sharply sour, with a slightly musty – even blue cheese? – background. All of us being familiar with the style, we immediately recognised this as an example of gueuze. The taste was fruity – a bit like morello cherries, perhaps – and sharp, though less so than other gueuzes, and this faded quickly to a mellow, dry finish. This was **Girardin**, distinguished by its black label, and brewed at Dilbeek in Payottenland (£2.50). Its strength is a typical 5% ABV. Gueuze is a very unusual and traditional style of beer. Lambic beer, meaning it is fermented simply by allowing wild yeast into the fermenting room, is matured then blended with still-fermenting young lambic to create a secondary fermentation in the bottle. The sharp-tasting finished product tends to divide opinion. I must confess to being a big fan, and couldn't resist cracking open another bottle as I wrote this article.

★★★★★

Moving on, reluctantly in my case, to our next sample, we were presented with a beer of a rich red colour, though slightly hazy. Unlike the previous two beers, this had a significant head, and the

strong carbonation was immediately noticeable on the nose. Beyond that, the aromas were of rich fruit – almost like Christmas cake – with an earthy, chocolate character. In the mouth, the strong carbonation subsided into a full, creamy mouthfeel. The flavours were rich and complex: well-balanced malt and fruit, with a dry, chewy aftertaste. This was revealed to be **Het Kapittel Prior** from Brouwerij van Eecke in West Flanders at 9% ABV (£1.90).

★★★★★

Beer number four was yellow, and the nose again indicated a lot of carbonation. The aromas were rather different to the previous beer – grassy and leafy with a sweet note like candy-sugar or vanilla. The first impression in the mouth was a distinct alcohol kick – unusual in Belgian beers, which generally do not drink their strength – plus malt flavours and bitterness, but there were also gentle fruit flavours – gooseberries and citrus, we thought – and perhaps a hint of something like pear drops. The finish was dry, with a slightly sour edge, and the softness of the beer caused us to wonder if there was some wheat in the grist. This beer was **Kwelchouffe Spéciale Blonde** from the brewery at Achouffe in Wallonia, ABV 8.5%, £1.90.

★★★★★

A red-brown beer next, with slightly sweet aromas of toffee or caramel, plus a distinct impression of fruit cake and coriander. These carried through into the flavour, where we found treacle, malt, warm spices and an orangey character. Overall, we thought it pleasant but a little lacking, perhaps because of the stronger beers preceding it. It was **Grottenbier Bruin** from St. Bernadus brewery at Watou in West Flanders, ABV 6.5%, £1.80.

★★★★★

Finally, on to a copper-coloured beer with aromas of candy, malt, and sour fruit. The flavours were rich, malty and fruity, and the beer was quite sweet – candy again. Overall, this was a mellow beer with no sharp edges – perhaps not distinctive enough for some of the Panel. We had finished the evening on **Waase Wolf** from Brouwerij Boelens of Belsele in East Flanders, ABV 6.5%, £1.80.

No small selection like this can do justice to the wonderful world of Belgian Beer. Get yourself over the Channel and discover them for yourself. Failing that, visit the Belgian Belly (514 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy; 0161-860 6766; www.belgianbelly.com) to sample the ever-changing range, not to mention the chocolate, the cheese....Nurse! More gueuze...



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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

May 2005

Friday 20th - Stagger: Hazel Grove North/ Great Moor/Heavily - meet 7.30pm Grove, Hazel Grove; 8.30pm Crown, Great Moor. Both on A6.

Thursday 26th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Alexandra, Northgate Road, Edgeley. From 8.00pm.

Sunday 29th - Provisional trip to Beer Festival at Bentley Brook Hotel, Fenny Bentley. Details from Dave Sharpe on 0161 483 3708.

Tuesday 31st - Sunday 5th June - Setting up, running and taking down Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. All please support this major event.

Saturday 11th June - Beerienteering: Knott Bar, Deansgate, Manchester. Register 1.00pm for 2.00pm start.

Thursday 16th - Branch Meeting: Didsbury, Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm
The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

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

Monday 5th June - Committee Meeting: Tollemache Arms, Mossley. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 18th - Branch Meeting & AGM: Ramsey's Bar, Buckingham Hotel, Buxton. Starts 2.00pm. Will all members please try and attend this important meeting. Meeting will be followed by social around town for the rest of the day.

May 2005

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton.

Thursday 12th - Outstanding Contribution to Real Ale Award: Waters Green tavern, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm.

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

Monday 23rd - Branch Pub of the Year presentation: Prince of Wales, Roe St, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm

Saturday 4th June - Trip to East Lancs Railway Steam Gala and pubs. Possible brewery visit

Monday 13th - Congleton Crawl - itinerary to be notified shortly

The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre.

Saturday 14th - Altrincham social meet at the Old Packet House, 1.00pm

Wednesday 25th - Manchester city centre social, meet City Arms, Kennedy Street. Starts 7.30pm.

Thursday 2nd June - Branch meeting at The Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Branch Contact - John Ison 0161 962 7976.

REGIONAL EVENT

Tuesday 24th May at 8pm in the Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester. CAMRA Under 30 Beerienteering 2005 Marshals meeting. Volunteers needed for 11 June event! davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MAY '00

The main front page story concerned the sweeping licensing reforms proposed in the Government's White Paper, and it was thought they could well prove to be a shot in the arm for Britain's community pubs.

Home Secretary Jack Straw was not proposing a 24-hour free-for-all (which seemed to be the most popular conception) but licensees would have to submit their proposed hours for approval in advance. Also, councillors taking over the licensing function from magistrates would have the power to reject unsuitable hours such as 3 o'clock in the morning in quiet suburbs. Another proposal aimed at making pubs more family-friendly was the abolition of the failed Children's Certificates in favour of a presumption that properly supervised children should be allowed into almost all pubs.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Hearty congratulations were due to two city pubs, or rather a pub and a licensee, for scooping top honours in the national awards run by *The Publican* trade journal. John Willie Lees' Rain Bar, an almost ubiquitous prize-winner in any design competition it seemed, had picked up the award for "Pub Design of the Year", and Mike Dilger of the superb White Lion on Liverpool Road had walked off with the "Businessman of the Year" title.

★ ☆ ☆ ★ ★

The Old Monkey on Portland Street had re-opened after two weeks' closure for refurbishment, and it had undergone a thorough going over, resulting in the following comment in *Manchester Matters* - "Overall the pub is much brighter, and with a far better ambience than it has had for some time."

★ ☆ ☆ ★ ★

It has often been suggested that red wine can be beneficial to health, if consumed in moderate quantities, so it came as a surprise to hear that a group of Dutch scientists had announced that an occasional glass of beer could in effect help to protect the heart. This was because beer contained vitamin B6, which prevented the build-up in the body of homocysteine, an amino acid often linked to a greater risk of heart disease. Eleven healthy men were studied for a period of three weeks, and tests showed that homocysteine did not increase after beer consumption, but rose after drinking wine or spirits. The results were published in *The Lancet* and the researchers stressed that the apparent benefit was recorded after "moderate alcohol consumption", rather than drinking to excess.

★ ★ ☆ ★ ★

There was an interesting item concerning the Waldorf on Gore Street, just off Piccadilly, and described as "one of the unsung gems of the Manchester pub scene". Wayne Nuttall had run the pub very successfully, building up the cask beer trade during the previous few years, and he was considering moving to a pub of his own. But the owners were so appalled at the thought of him going that they sold the pub to him - so he got his own pub without going anywhere.



ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

As I write, it has just been announced that Jennings of Cockermouth have agreed to be taken over by Wolverhampton and Dudley, and we are about to lose yet another of the dwindling number of independent family brewers. Of course W&D have given assurances that they have no plans to close the brewery, and they aim to develop the brands and the pub estate, but we have heard all these promises before, and they are not worth the paper they are written on. I would be amazed if the brewery is still operating in five years' time, and by then Wolves will probably have sold off most of the smaller local pubs and rationalised the brand portfolio to a handful of best sellers. Some may say "they ought to pass a law against it!" But you cannot compel the owners of private businesses to continue operating them if they want to sell up, and in this case, as Wolves have little presence in the area, there are no real competition concerns.

Others may argue that it is all part of the inevitable churning of the brewing industry, and there are plenty of micro-brewers entering the market producing excellent, distinctive beers. However, most micros operate on a tiny scale, and few have succeeded in getting their beers into mainstream pubs as regular offerings, while their track record in building up tied estates has been very poor - remember Trough and Smiles, and even today Porter's and Beartown are retrenching. Twenty micros don't have the impact on the general pubgoer of one sizeable independent like Jennings. The only realistic way to promote the long-term survival of companies such as Jennings is to encourage people to drink their beers, which hopefully will persuade the owners that their business has a long-term future. And, while companies like Jennings may have their faults, those people who are constantly whingeing that their beers (or Robinsons's, or Young's, or whoever's) are bland and disappointing, can really have no cause for complaint at their demise, and indeed could be held partly to blame.

PALE AND UNINTERESTING

Fullers have recently launched a new cask beer called "Discovery" as a permanent addition to their range. This follows what seems to be the current fashion for pale, "blonde" beers intended to win over women and lager drinkers. Now these beers are not the assertively hoppy strong pale ales such as Summer Lightning and Pale Rider that have won so many fans. If they are hoppy at all, it is in a gentle, floral style, and any malt character is subdued too. Although some can be pleasant enough, particularly on a warm day, by and large they are a most insipid bunch of beers. They also seem less capable than other brews of standing up to indifferent cellarmanship, and more than once I've ordered one as a guest beer, not quite sure of what it was like, and ended up with a pint of pale, tasteless, tepid liquid that I really didn't fancy finishing. Perhaps it is high time for a revival of the traditional robust English bitter with generous helpings of both malt and hops and a rich, inviting copper hue.

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The Good Beer Guide listed Cheshire Ring in Hyde, ably run by Duncan & Rachel since it reopened 2 years ago as Beartown Brewery's local outlet in our Branch, has been run for the past 6 weeks by 'Fletch' well known CAMRA member from the Bolton area. He was holding the fort between licensees, Duncan leaving to work in a car sales position. The new licensees are now in place, full details next month.

Another Good Beer Guide pub, up the road in Mottram, the White Hart, sold by owner Geoff Oliver a few months ago to J W Lees, was visited at the end of April to see how it is faring. The devoted clientele seemed very much the same, but the beer choice was much smaller than the previous seven guest beers. Only Lees Bitter was on sale but the temporary couple in charge at the pub, told me that Lees seasonal beers are shortly to go on the bar, in fact posters around the walls advertised this fact. There is a major imminent refurbishment planned and after this, there will be more of a choice of Lees beers on the handpumps. **Robinson's Royal Oak (Mellor), that in recent times doubled up as an Indian restaurant, is changing to Thai food.**

The Bankfield Hotel in Hyde, a former Robinson's pub on Hyde Road, was reported in these columns two months ago as having new signage outside, namely the Spread Eagle. Well, this has been taken back down and auction signs for both the pub and the adjoining properties that Robinson's owned, have gone up. **Ed and Kath Barton, who have run the Cheshire Cheese in Broadbottom for a few years now, have taken over at the Gun Inn on Marker Street in Hollingworth - they are still keeping the Cheshire on too. Advertised in the local press this week was a large advert and a quote from Ed stating that six interesting guest ales will be available at all times. They had an opening night on 29 April with a band named 'Sturdy Beggars' and advertised is an a la carte menu to be introduced, with pensioners' special prices also.**

Latest pubs for sale in the Tameside area for Tenancy or lease by Punch Taverns are: H2O Bar, Melbourne Street Stalybridge, Jolly Carter and Cotton Tree in Droylesden, Queens Arms in Audenshaw, Greyhound in Ashton and the George & Dragon in Newton, Hyde.



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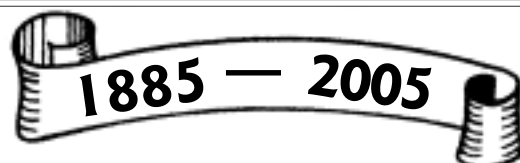
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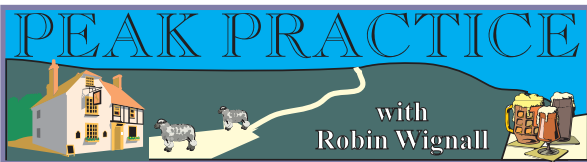


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Hardly had the dust settled on the deal in which Wolverhampton & Dudley bought the Burtonwood estate, and the City sections of the national newspapers gave news on 12 April of another Wolves planned takeover. This time Jennings of Cocker mouth is the intended target of the voracious and avaricious W&D. Despite the growth of the Jennings estate in recent years, to the south and east of its core Lake District area, the takeover would not on the face of it affect the Peak District too much, but in the long term there could be reduction in choice because Jennings beers do appear as guest beers in some tied houses and in the free trade.

There is naturally a view that W&D would eventually close Jennings brewery, and CAMRA and the CAMRA Investment Club have voiced these fears. The impact of these views has forced W&D into a strenuous riposte, published in City sections on 28 April, denying any intention to close, and valuing Jennings brewery as part of its future plans. Unfortunately past form supports the jaundiced view.

The W&D statement claims that other possible takeover agents might not guarantee the future of Jennings in the way that W&D have. Certainly, one would doubt the future if the currently-largest shareholder, Robinson's of Stockport, were to acquire Jennings. Their closure of Hartleys around 1990 gives armour to the sceptics.

Only if Jennings retains its independence can consumer choice be maintained. Jennings beers have appeared in the Shady Oak at Fernilee, the Kinder Lodge at Hayfield and elsewhere. Ironically they also appear as guest beers in the Marston's houses in the W&D estate. Cockerhoop and currently Snecklifter have appeared at the Shepherd's in Whaley Bridge. Jennings' distinctive brews are certainly a welcome addition to the Peak District drinking scene, and long may that choice continue.

★★★★★

A quick visit recently to the re-opened Swan at Kettleshulme, showed things going well. Marston's Bitter was on the permanent Marston's pump. Two beers from micros were available, Bosley Cloud (4.1% ABV) from nearby Storm in Macclesfield, and Moonshine (4.3% ABV) from Abbeydale in Sheffield. Both were very enjoyable. Kettleshulme can be reached by bus from Whaley Bridge or Macclesfield. The no. 60 provides an hourly service to access the Swan for the lunchtime session on opening days. It runs until teatime on Saturdays. A less pub-friendly service operates on Sundays. But on Sundays you could always walk across the lanes and field from Whaley Bridge Station, also a possibility for long summer evenings.

Lastly, change of management at Robinson's Railway in Whaley Bridge. An update will follow when more information is available.

PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR JUNE ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS MAY 31

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Beechwood Cancer Care Centre (registered charity no1006015) based in Stockport, provides emotional and psychological support to patients, their carers and their families. We offer individually structured programmes at our Centre on Chelford Grove, Adswood and this year will celebrate 15 years of excellence in care.

All programmes are offered free of charge and therefore without charitable fundraising we would be unable to help thousands of people who are effected by cancer. The target this year will be around £420,000.

In 2002 we were adopted by the Festival as their charity for a three year period and during that time I have received wonderful help and assistance from Jim Flynn and every member of the organising committee. The support and contributions for those who attend the Festival, the kindness of those who donate their beers for the charity to sell and the work of our volunteers is greatly appreciated by us all at Beechwood. We enjoyed our first year at Stockport Town Hall, last year was very successful at Edgeley Park and we know that this year will be better than ever.

I invite everyone to visit the charity stall where Cain's Formidable, 3 River's Manchester IPA and Marble's Ginger Beer will be on sale. Raffle tickets will be sold and the usual coin collections will take place at the exits. Please give generously again. This is our last year with you. We know that next year we will have a huge void to fill at the end of May/beginning of June and we will miss you all. Thank you everyone for supporting the Beechwood Cancer Care Centre.

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PUB NEWS

I have heard that the owner or landlord of the Chilli Banana at Wilmslow, is taking over the newly opened Merchants House on Buxton Road, in Macclesfield and converting this into a restaurant type of place but retaining the Robbies beers but trying to encourage people to eat more. I am not sure whether this is good or not, for the future of this pub.

Just to update, I have been in the Old Ship Inn. This indeed has been altered, the pool table that was in the back room, has been moved into the front half of the pub. The restaurant is in the rear of the pub, where meals can be had Monday to Friday. The pub was fairly lively when I called I sampled a pint of Ale Force by local Storm Brewing and this was on good form - the pub seems to attract all age ranges and is well worth a visit

Another bit of Macclesfield pub news: the White Swan, is closed and boarded. This pub has not long been reopened after a long closure - these backstreet pubs are really finding it hard to survive and need all the support they can get.

Customers of the Three Crowns at Hurdsfield have nothing to fear as Gean and David Windebank retire after five years as tenants of the Robinson's house, for Gene's son Richard has taken over the good work where his mother and step father left off.

Richard is joined in the business by his partner Rachel Clare who has also taken on the role of licensee. "We've both worked in the licensed trade before with Clare's parents having kept several pubs in the Macclesfield area, and I have run bars and restaurants both here and in Spain," explained Richard. The couple recognise the value of the Three Crowns as a community pub and meeting place for local people, and while they will add their own personal style to the business, it is their intention that it will be business as usual in order for the house to retain its established appeal.

"It has become a tradition that our customers are very supportive of the Macclesfield community, and as well as forming teams to play in local pool, darts and skittles leagues, we all like to help charities in the area," said Richard. "During a recent quiz night here at the Three Crowns we collected £220 which has since been donated to Park Lane Special School," he added.

The end of the road has been reached for the Evening Star, James Street in Macclesfield. A planning application has been submitted to convert this former pub into dwellings as it has been bought by a local land owner. This is yet another pub to fall in Macclesfield for conversion into dwelling use. This is a real loss to our campaign, and to pub goes in general, the Evening Star was once a really good local, and I am sure one of the local breweries could have made it good again eg Storm or Beartown , who knows why not.

FESTIVAL SPONSORS KEEP BEER FLOWING

After the massive success of last year's Stockport Beer and Cider Festival the organisers were faced with the decision of how much beer to order for 2005 to ensure that there was little or no chance of running out of beer. This year thanks to the help from sponsors they have ordered over two and a half thousand more pints than last year and we can all look forward to an excellent Saturday night when there is some star studied entertainment. Festival Organiser Jim Flynn told Opening Times "Running a festival is always a financial risk, especially for a voluntary organisation like CAMRA and the temptation is always to be conservative. With the valued assistance of our sponsors we have been able to make a major leap forwards without putting up prices. Stockport is known for very keen prices in comparison with most other festivals and I am pleased we are able to maintain this reputation. The commitment of these companies just shows how much the Festival has engaged the imagination of people in the area and, with a London brewer on board this year, across the brewing industry. I am very grateful to the sponsors for their generosity".

At the time of going to press, the following sponsors were on board **Stockport Express** - sponsors of the Festival itself and the dining and entertainment suites

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Holidays and other business have clipped my wings a bit this month so I only have a few snippets for you. Hopefully normal service will be restored for the June issue. And first, a bit of a bombshell:

END OF AN ERA

'Thank God for the **White House**' I said the other month after surveying the generally dismal pub scene in Ancoats. Well, not for much longer I'm very sorry to say. Perhaps others had an inkling but for me the news of the White House's closure was a bolt from the blue.

John and Jenny Connolly have run a cracking pub for more years than I care to remember - I recall the pub in it's Wilson's days and so was amazed to discover they had taken over just 20 years ago in May 1985. Since then they have made the pub something of a cask ale oasis with a commitment to quality that has seen the pub listed in the Good Beer Guide no less than 16 times since 1987. Their last night is on Friday 13th and then the pub will close, with demolition for redevelopment likely. Jenny told me that their feelings were bittersweet - while they will miss everyone at the pub, they really are looking forward to a well-earned retirement. I for one wish them well - they and their pub will be sorely missed.

OTHER NEWS

The **Bluebell** in Levenshulme is due to have shut by the time this edition is published and such is the extent of the restructuring that it is not due to reopen until just before Christmas. Lets hope Sam Smith's put their cask Old Brewery Bitter on to attract the customers when it does so.

I also paid a return visit to the **Castle** on Oldham Street in the City Centre. Landlady Kath Smethurst redecorated just after I wrote my last piece and wasn't too pleased with my description of the pub as 'shabby'. I meant no offence and Kath's efforts with the paintbrush have certainly improved the look of the pub. The front room is looking a lot neater now - painted in terracotta



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ON THE MARKET

Since the last issue of *Opening Times* was put to bed, the following pubs and bars in what can loosely be called the *Opening Times* area have been advertised for sale in the trade press (in no particular order):

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Lamb, Dukinfield	Freehold	£419,950
(ex-)Bar 5, City Centre	Leasehold	Make an offer
George, Mossley	Freehold	Make an offer
High Society, Stockport	Freehold	Make an offer
Pomona, Gorton	Freehold	Make an offer

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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and cream. A lot of the bric-a-brac on the walls has been removed. The gents' toilets have been painted blue and look far more inviting. So well done to Kath for taking the initiative to give her customers a better environment in which to drink. Kath also told me that the fine old windows at the **Millstone** have been replaced by new plain glass. I haven't seen them myself, but and must have just missed their removal by days when I popped in last time.

It seems that the Saddleworth Brewery now owns 14 **Lloyd Street** and when I called recently three of their beers were on handpump. I think Hopsmacker is the regular and was joined by Ayrton's Ale and the powerful Ruby Tuesday's (6.6% ABV). They also claim to serve the widest range of continental beers available in Manchester. Really? I suspect Charlie at **Bar Fringe** might have something to say about that...

I also received a note from Dominic Driscoll, the bar and cellar manager at **Font Bar** on New Wakefield Street, by Oxford Road Station. There's a real commitment to real ale there - for example at the beginning of May he sold two 9-gallon casks of Stoker's Slake, a 3.6% ABV *mild* from the Three B's brewery of Blackburn. He also tells me that he will be looking after the cask beer in a new bar opening on Tib Street in the summer which will sell one ever-changing guest beer. Obviously I'll bring you news of this when I get it.

6X change

Change to 6X at a pub near you

STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL
2ND - 4TH JUNE



RECENT CAMRA AWARDS

Top: Joe Quinn & Steve King, of the **Arden Arms, Millgate** with their CAMRA National Pub of the Year Runners Up Award, presented in the pub on Saturday May 7. Middle: Johanne Quinn and Steve Brennan of **Edgeley's Olde Vic** with their well deserved



March Pub of the Month Award. Bottom: Cellar Manager Mark Burns (sharing the praise for the pub's beer

quality), Stockport CAMRA Branch Chairman Mark McConachie and Ken & Lynn Mallion of the **Fletcher Moss, Didsbury** with the April Pub of the Month Award.



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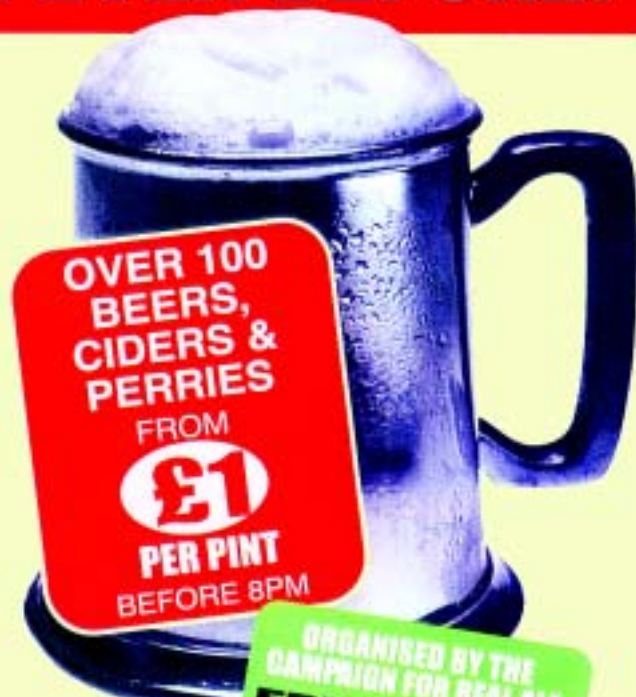
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EVENING
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