

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



RECORDS BROKEN

19TH BEERFEST BIGGEST AND BEST YET



ALMOST EVERY RECORD was broken at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival as the crowds flocked to the Edgeley Park venue in huge numbers.

Attendance records were broken on Thursday night, Friday lunchtime and Saturday afternoon. Even the relatively poor weather failed to put off the record crowds. It total over 4,700 people visited the Festival, the highest ever turnout and five per cent up over the previous year's record attendance.

The thirsty crowds drank over 15,250 pints of beer, plus over 2,200 pints of cider and perry. Beer sales were the highest ever and cider sales second equal highest. 72 new members were signed up, too – the highest number for some years.

While the weather could have been better, the low-ish temperatures helped us with the beer keeping. Many customers commented on the high quality of the beer but unlike last year, the increased beer order ensured that stocks lasted until the planned 11.00pm close, with a good range available until the death.

Many visitors again said how much they liked the new venue, especially being able to sit outside on the stand, and also the fact that the entertainment was in a separate room. The atmosphere in the entertainment room was superb, especially during the performance of Connie Lush & Blues Shouter on the Saturday night. Another highlight were the al fresco performances of the two barber shop choirs out on the stand on Thursday evening. A gleeful Festival Organiser, Jim Flynn, told *Opening Times* "Last year we made a successful move to our new venue but obviously were on a learning curve. This year we sorted out many of the initial teething problems and as a result we really did have our biggest and best beer festival ever". Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous Festival sponsors (the Stockport Express and Robinson's, Hydes', Fullers Beartown, Three Rivers and Leek breweries along with the Royal Oak pub in Cheshire and the Navigation, Heaton Norris) but also the many CAMRA members who gave up their free time to help staff the event.

BEER & CIDER AWARDS

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS of the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is the customers' votes for their favourite beers and ciders. It is traditional for the votes to be very close and this year was no exception, despite a higher than usual number of votes being cast.

In the beer categories the winning beers were:
Mild – Ramsbottom Old Ground Mild, from Ramsbottom
Bitter – Tomos Watkins Cwrw Haf from Swansea
Premium Bitter – Abbeydale Absolution from Sheffield
Special Beer – Abbeydale Port Black Mass from Sheffield
Stout/Porter – Ryburn Luddite Stout from Sowerby Bridge
Strong/Old Ales – Fuller's Golden Pride from London

Total votes cast for each of the category winner were compared to establish the most popular beers. In third place was Fuller's Golden Pride, a powerful pale barleywine. Second was the excellent Abbeydale Port Black Mass, a unique beer produced just for the Festival. There can, though, be only one winner and this year the honours were taken by Abbeydale Absolution, a classic pale, hoppy strong bitter.

In the Cider and Perry competition there was a unique result, with one producer winning both the cider and perry awards. The winning producer is Gregg's Pit Cider from Much Marcle, Herefordshire. The winning cider was 'Brown Snout & White Close Pippin' while the winning perry was 'Aylton Red & Blakeney'. In case anyone is wondering about the names, these are the varieties of cider apples and perry pears from which they are respectively made. Congratulations to one and all!



Visitors and staff enjoy a busy festival including (bottom) Oliver Robinson of the brewery (and a Festival Sponsor)

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Holidays and the run-up to Stockport Beer Festival stopped me getting around as much as I hoped this month. I have however been able to meet some of the town's new licensees.

NEW CAREER BEGINS AT THE GRAPES

Strong ties and a supportive family have helped Carol Mottershead achieve her longstanding ambition of running a public house, for Carol has now taken over as the new licensee of the Grapes at Edgeley. "Its great to be here," says Carol from Heaton Norris, who has waited for over eighteen years to take on a tenancy, as her family have grown up and she, meanwhile, has worked as a care assistant. "Everything is going really well because we have all pulled together as family to provide a first class, friendly local for our customers. I work here everyday to look after the bar and oversee the business, while my husband Stephen, who also has a full-time job is taking care of the cellar. I also have the support of our daughter Kirsty, 18, who works behind the bar, our my son, fifteen year-old Jamie, who helps out at the weekends," explained Carol.

In addition, support comes from Carol's mother Joan who helps clean and polish the Grapes, and her sister Gail, who lends a hand behind the bar, both of who give their services free of charge to provide Carol with the best possible start in her new career. A five-day licensee training course at Robinson's Unicorn Brewery prepared Carol well for the new venture, and having now met most of her customers she has started to add her own distinctive character to the Edgeley pub, with regular quiz nights being among the new attractions. Additionally, Carol would like to recruit pool, darts and dominoes players to form the Grapes own teams and compete in local leagues.

TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

The Swan With Two Necks on Princes Street (Robinson's) has new licensees. Angela and David Bridges took over on 11 April, taking over after 12 months at the Chapman Arms, Hattersley (although the Swan is in fact Angela's fourth pub)

Angela tells me that she intends to be at the Swan for the long term and is already reporting a healthy increase in trade with sales about 50 per cent up so far. One innovation has been the introduction of Sunday opening from 12 noon to 6pm (although if it's busy the pub will stay open longer than this). One of the attractions of the pub for Angela was the kitchen as she had always wanted to run a catering operation - food is currently available from 12-2.30 Monday to Thursday and 12-4 Friday and Saturday. If there is enough demand food may also become available on Sundays, too. Alongside this, the back room of the Swan is to be redecorated and become non-smoking. With top quality Hatters, Unicorn and Double Hop on handpump, the Swan is well worth a visit.

FURTHER AFIELD

I have also been able to complete my round-up in Cheadle. The new manager at the Crown, High Street (Hydes) is Karen Williams who took over on 1 April. Prior to this she had been at the John Millington in Cheadle Hulme from the day it opened and before this came a 12-month stint as manager at the Bromale in Bramhall, having worked there part-time for 23 years.

Karen has known the Crown for many years and has no plans to radically change a pub she loves. Mild and Bitter are the current handpumped beers although the seasonal craft ales are to be tried out - she already has Cask Marque status so quality is top notch. If you like entertainment, then you will want to try out the karaoke on Thursdays or enjoy the singers on Fridays and Saturday.

Nearby at the Old Star (Hydes), the new managers are Marie and Bill Ormonroyd who moved in on 21 April. For the past six years they have run pubs on the Isle of man for Okells (and before that were at the Beehive in Moss Side) but wanting to come home made contact with Hydes and were offered the Star.

Again, it is a case of 'steady as we go' with no major change planned to this locals pub with an established customer base. The current beer range is Hydes' Light, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and HPA, the latter proving very popular. Food is available at the Old Star from 11.30 to 2.00pm, Mondays to Saturdays, with Sunday lunches a future possibility.

The Crown in Heaton Mersey has a new licensee, Alan Owen, who has previously run bars in the City Centre and worked for Greenalls. The beers are now on handpump, with Unicorn being joined by the Robinson's seasonal. Unicorn sales are up two barrels a week and Alan tells me he also hopes to have the Hatters on as well.



IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

I'm still recovering from Stockport Beer Festival so this month I'll be brief for once!

Just to say hearty congratulations to all those involved with the Festival. This really was the biggest and best Festival yet. Records fell like nine pins and it is a real tribute to the hard work of all our volunteer staff and organisers. Here's looking forward to next year!

John Clarke

Since we've been running a little late in getting our issues out for the last few months (sorry!), the next issue will carry a July/August title and arrive four weeks after this one, but the 'September' issue will be out in late August (like so many other magazines) so the intervals will remain the same (4 or 5 weeks). Just a 'tidying-up exercise'. Now where have I heard that before....

Paul Hutchings

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Geoff Williamson, High Peak CAMRA:

Without wishing to prolong the discussions on the subject of the Swan in Kettleholme I would like to make a (hopefully) final comment and thereby draw the recent debate to a close. The letter from Ken Newsome last month provided some clarity on the previous ownership/ closure/ sale of the pub, and there are many who are more knowledgeable than myself about the facts surrounding these events therefore I will not comment further on them.

I would like to state that as a local CAMRA member and also a regular drinker at the Swan Inn I was very saddened by its closure pending conversion to residential use last October and equally delighted by the news of its subsequent purchase by locals and the reopening in March. While it is easy to portray the previous landlord Ian Edmunds (aka Fred) as the villain for his original decision to close the pub I would like to point out that it was under his ownership that the pub introduced its impressive range of guest beers, including Ken Newsome's Khean beers (I still miss the 'Village Green').

The beer range and quality during this period was responsible for the pub being a firm and regular entry in the Good Beer Guide each year. I accept that this would have been of limited short-term benefit had the pub remained closed, but now it is open the current owners are operating the pub in a very similar style to that established by Fred and his wife Wendy, and are looking to build on the previous reputation for beer choice and quality. Without their period of ownership of the Swan this may never have happened. I wish the new owners well with their custody of this village gem and hope that their new guest beer selection sub-committee continues to promote the excellent diversity of beers from micro-brewers that we drinkers have grown accustomed to expect at the Swan Inn over recent years.

(And with that, I think this correspondence is closed - Ed(1))

From Dave Hallows - outgoing Regional Under-30's Co-ordinator:

Big thanks for article about CAMRA U30 The New Era. The New Generation organised a great success on 14 May (their first event) All co-ordinators were there. The crawl was in 3 waves as there were 30 of us!!! The spin-off from this will be plenty going-on by word of mouth, which holds future events in good stead. Plus the new faces are a lot better looking than us, 'the usual suspects'

All this good publicity will serve CAMRA and its image well. The impact value with the pubs on the crawl is promising. Thank you for your continuing support. It'll mean a lot to all the new co-ordinators....

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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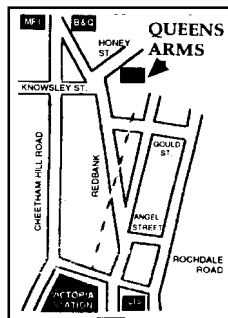
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Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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26	27	28	29	30		



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June is Ye Olde Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport.

Much has been written in these pages about the Woolpack and how it was rescued from closure by landlord and owner Bob Dickinson. That was about 12 years ago now and since then the Woolpack has become a fixture of the local real ale scene with an unerring commitment to quality throughout every aspect of the pub's operation – the food is very highly recommended. However it is on the beer front that the pub scores really heavily. The range has changed over the years and sadly cask mild had to be discontinued several years ago following declining sales. However the range now comprises four cask beers – Theakstons Best Bitter is a regular and this is accompanied by three ever-changing guest beers, usually from micro-breweries both near and far. Needless to say, quality is top rank.

Such has been the consistent attention to detail that the pub has won a string of CAMRA awards over the years including Pub of the Month plus both local and regional Pub of the Year. Naturally the pub has been an almost-permanent fixture in the Good Beer Guide and will be featuring again in the forthcoming 2006 edition.

Under Bob's stewardship, and ably assisted by wife Anita, the Woolpack has enjoyed an enviable reputation. This latest award marks well over a decade of commitment to fine ale and unswerving commitment to quality over that time. Join us on Thursday, June 30th when we too celebrate the pub's success and present this well-deserved award,

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 254

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IT'LL ALL BE OVER BY CHRISTMAS...

As rather too few people seem to be aware, the second half of this year sees the largest shake-up of licensing for Pubs, Bars, Restaurants and Clubs for nearly a century.

106,762 (last time I counted) licence holders need to apply to their local authorities (rather than to Licensing Magistrates as previously) for a new licence to commence on November 1. As with anything to do with local government, three things have happened, unnecessary bureaucracy, needless delay and increased costs, the consequences of which may well be dire indeed. The number of forms needed, plans, detailed info etc. have escalated so that the application (in most authority areas - the requirements differ significantly as you cross the road from one council area to the next) is a burden that requires professional - and therefore - expensive help to fill in and a number of visits from various council officials. Much of the info requested is either guesswork or trivial in the three examples I have studied. Delay in that the fees have only recently been announced as Councils balanced greed and outcry until the last minute, and of course increased costs, substantial in many cases, as well as extra annual fees. The big problem is that so far only 3.6% of licence holders appear to have sent the forms back. Although the new law does not take effect until November, the cut off date for what are classed as renewals is August. After that, all applications are classed as 'New' however long the pub/restaurant has been open, and will therefore go to committee members for consideration and may well be refused.

John McNamara, chief executive of the British Institute of Innkeeping (representing 25% of pubs) said, "I am convinced that unless licence applications are in soon we are going to see 60% of licenced premises having to close in November" and therefore miss the Christmas season and probably never reopen. The legal teams of the big chains will be all right, its the small independents that will suffer. Local Authorities are being quite candid and admit that a flood of applications just before the deadline will pose impossible burdens and simply won't be processed. The government refuses to extend the deadline saying that it's not their problem. Another well intentioned piece of legislation woefully executed. Par for the course.

BUT UNTIL THEN...

What however if your licence, or part of it such as an entertainment licence runs out before November. This point was made to me by the licensee of a small Manchester Pub whose entertainment license - allowing him to open late at weekends, runs out imminently. Well in that case you have to pay the full 5 year whack for a couple of months trading, and then pay it all again before November. A refund sir? Not likely, we are dealing with the grasping hands of the City fathers here, who can thereby afford more jollies to study best practice in Thailand, the States or Bali or whatever. Now if things were going to be delayed, it would make sense, but forking out over £1000 for a couple of months is going to make a serious dent in the bottom line. The big boys and groups can manage, once again the small independents (usually the only decent pubs) suffer.

AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

On top of all this the Home Secretary has indicated levies on ALL pubs in 'Alcohol disorder areas' [read any town centre] - so once again the small, decent, self-policing pubs and restaurants are going to fork out several hundred pounds a week (I kid you not) for extra policing (no doubt nearly as invisible as it currently is on a Friday night) to pay for the trouble inducing vertical-drinking-emporia and bottle bars that encourage the disorder. And frankly how long are the jobsworths at local level going to be able to resist making annual gender/racial/disability awareness reports a requirement for licence renewal? Indeed setting targets for customer types - Are you encouraging asylum seeker/single-gay-disabled-parents sufficiently to get a renewal? Its a nightmare in the making. By the way, how many policemen does it take to ask a handful of drunks to leave a pub? A minimum of 12 apparently. In my day one or two were more than enough.

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WHAT NOW FOR JENNINGS?

The Campaign for Real Ale, has responded to the acquisition of Jennings by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries with a call for W&DB to come clean about their expansion plans. CAMRA is seeking more detailed assurances on the future of the Jennings brewery, beer brands and pub estate.

John Holland, CAMRA's Director of Breweries Campaigning said, "W&DB has secured 82.46% of Jennings, but it is clear that a substantial minority of small shareholders are unhappy with the takeover and have supported CAMRA's campaign to keep Jennings independent."

CAMRA is set to present W&DB with a petition containing over 5,000 signatures from beer drinkers who want Jennings to remain independent and has called for a meeting with W&DB to seek assurances on the future of Jennings as a vertically integrated business.

Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive, said, "A clear message has been sent to W&DB, that while their acquisition of Jennings has been successful, they are now faced with the challenge of convincing the people of Cumbria, smaller shareholders and beer drinkers that they are committed to the future of Jennings as a thriving regional brewery."

Mr Benner added, "We have several concerns which need to be addressed. What are W&DB's future acquisition plans? Experience shows us that takeovers often lead to brewery closures and loss of beer brands, which in turn reduces consumer choice and competition. If W&DB acquires more brewing capacity, a downturn in market conditions would force them to reduce capacity which could lead to the closure of Jennings brewery. CAMRA will not sit back and allow this to happen."

"We would like to thank the people of Cumbria and Jennings shareholders who have supported our campaign to keep Jennings independent. An 18% shortfall in acceptances of the W&DB offer strongly suggests widespread concern about W&DB's plans and this must be disappointing to W&DB."

Time pressures prevented our usual ring round this time so apologies for this truncated 'Brewery New'. We'll have a bumper feature next time, though, including news of a new micro brewery for Glossop.



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THE ROPE & ANCHOR AT DUNHAM

Andy Jenkinson goes rustic...

On a recent surveying social, Trafford & Hulme Branch ventured out into the green open spaces that exist in our branch area to visit a much maligned pub, namely the Rope & Anchor on the outskirts of Oldfield Brow and Dunham. A large country pub, not best known for its beer range or quality.

But all that looks set to change now new licensees Sara Findley and John Rennie have taken over. They took over the pub in January, having moved from the Oxford (previously the Hogshead) on Oxford Road, City Centre.

"It came as quite a shock, from running a busy city centre pub one day to seeing nothing but greenery and the sound of twittering birds the next", said Sara. The Rope & Anchor is perfectly placed to attract the summer masses, situated next to the Trans Pennine Trail, walkers and cyclists are frequent visitors, there is a large car park and a grassed outside children's play area, where summer BBQs sometimes take place. Certain sections in the pub are also open for dog owners and their pets.

Originally built as a private house approximately 150 years ago, the interior features a square central bar area with multiple rooms off. One room housing a pool table, another for smokers, but the majority of rooms are smoke free for diners and drinkers. The pub décor reminds you of a country manor, lots of dark wood panelling and rich, heavy colours, the walls being adorned with prints of country style pursuits. Upstairs there is a large open room with exposed beams and stained glass skylights, ideal for functions and meetings.

Scottish & Newcastle own the pub and as a consequence the beer range has to be chosen through the Cellarmans Reserve, but this includes beers from Adnams, Charles Wells and Marstons. On our particular visit there were four beers available, Caledonian Deuchars, which is the house guest ale, Everard's Tiger, Ridley's Rumpus and Davenports Bitter. Our party tried all the beers and found them to be in excellent condition, a far cry from the pub's previous efforts. Sara would like to get more lines connected and be able to offer a greater range, especially from local micros.



John is in charge of the food operation – as an ex-army chef he has the knowledge of large scale catering. He is currently working on completely changing the menu to one that reflects the pub's location and history, namely a more country/game style of menu. It should be available by the time you read this. Food is served from 12-3 and 6-9 Monday to Thursday, 12-9 on Saturdays and 12-6 on Sundays. National trust members and the over-56s can get 10% off their food bills.

If you wanted to rely on public transport to get to the pub, the 38 bus leaves Altrincham Interchange via Dunham Village at 10 minutes past the hour and returns at 10 minutes to the hour. The bus stop is directly opposite the pub.

The Branch would like to wish Sara and John all the best in their new pub. We certainly welcome the improvements already made in the beer quality and I am sure more CAMRA members will visit. Oh, did I mention that CAMRA members can get a discount on a pint of real ale on production of a valid membership card....



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



THE DIDSBURY, WILMSLOW ROAD, DIDSBURY

Two pubs sit across from each other on the newly reinstated Didsbury village green. One is making a name for itself for the range and quality of its cask beers while the other is something of a real ale backwater.

For many years the role of the former was taken by the Olde Cock while its near neighbour, the Didsbury was a food outlet with just a couple of dreary national brands available over the bar. Those roles have today been largely reversed. The Olde Cock is now owned by Greene King and on the last visit offered just a couple of averagely kept cask beers while the Didsbury, still a food-led operation, is also making an increasing name for itself on the cask beer front.

It's a 'Chef & Brewer' branded house and inside is decorated and dressed in an extremely rustic style which, while perhaps a little over the top, still makes for a pleasant and comfortable place to have a drink, and of course a bite to eat.

The transformation in its beer fortunes is down to manager Paul Johnson, who with wife Paula runs the place with efficient aplomb. There are usually four to six beers available ranging from national brands such as Theakstons Best Bitter to a changing and interesting array of guest beers – just look at the growing pumpclip collection behind the bar to get a taste of what has been offered. And – while being clearly food-led, this is a pub that doesn't object if you just pop in for a couple of pints. On recent visits there have been one or two tables occupied by drinkers alone. There is an extensive no smoking area, including effectively a separate room, and the 'Smooth FM' type background music adds to the relaxed feel.

From St George's Day to May Day the pub ran a beer festival with an enhanced range on the handpumps – eight different beers were available when I called. However being early evening it also seemed churlish not to try the food, too. There are a plethora of blackboards around the pub but luckily the various menus are also handily placed in small bucket on each table.

There are three to choose from – Snacks (sandwiches, ploughman's, hot baguettes, jacket spuds and prawns 'on draught'), Mains and Specials, the latter changing on a monthly basis. There's also a separate dessert menu and a choice of Sunday roasts. Spoilt for choice, really.

I was with the New Chairman en route to a presentation and the warning from the bar staff of a 40-minute wait for food (the pubs was very busy at 7-ish on a Thursday night) deterred us from putting the menus through there full paces.

Happily the wait was rather less than suggested and it didn't seem long before our food arrived. The New Chairman had ordered off 'Mains' and gone for Chicken Pesto Penne (£8.50) and was presented with a huge bowlful of al dente pasta mixed with large pieces of seared chicken, peppers, red onion and cherry tomatoes, all bound together with a tasty pesto sauce. No complaints there and the portion was such that he struggled to finish. I decided to go for the top of the range on the 'Specials', choosing fillet steak with chips and Café de Paris sauce (£13.95). Served medium rare as ordered, the steak was a generous hunk of tender meat and accompanied by a generous portion of crispy chips, roast cherry tomatoes and a 'shallot, garlic and orange scented' sauce which set the steak off a treat.

OK, you will probably find a similar menu in most Chef & Brewer pubs and there are those who will gibe at this style of what used to be called 'central catering' but it has to be said that this was first class stuff. Good, imaginative and tasty food, well preserved and presented. And who would argue with that? Not me, for one.

The Didsbury is well-worth a visit.

Oh, and the beer. We tried a couple, well three actually. The Coach House spring special (Squires Gold? – I forgot to make a note) was found tasty enough by the New Chairman, and while I was a little disappointed by my Taylor's Golden Best, although it was still a pleasant pint, we were both extremely impressed by the Orkney Red McGregor. We had in fact recently sampled this in Scotland, the beer's home patch, and the pint at the Didsbury was far superior. Well worth a visit. Any bus running down Wilmslow road, to, from or past Parris Wood will drop you near the Didsbury. Food is served most of the day – call them on 0161 445 5389. JC



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STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

GATLEY & CHEADLE

OUR FIRST CALL of the night was Hydes' **Prince of Wales** on Gatley Green. This is a low, three-roomer; it was noticeably smoky upon entering, and for 7.20 it was already pretty busy. The left room provides vault facilities and TV with matchboard fixed seating, the centre area fronts the bar, whilst to the right is a largish lounge which doubles as a dining area. As this was written prior to the April refurbishment, I can only comment upon what we encountered then. Hydes Mild and Bitter were the offerings, the bitter was good, the mild, less so, in fact one of our large party said it was lacklustre. Luckily things have improved with the changes made since the Stagger.

Next was on to Cain's only tied house within Greater Manchester, the **Gothic**. This is a conversion of a former chapel into a one-room bar with a mezzanine gallery to the front from where one can oversee proceedings. With exposed ceiling beams, and some ecclesiastical and Gothic fixtures adorning the walls; I particularly liked the large mirrors. It was busy, with a genuine warmth to it. The Cain's beers were bitter, IPA, FA, Lager (yes, a handpulled cask lager!), and Victorian (a 6 per cent strong beer that one of our party just had to try). All bar the IPA proved to be enjoyable. If you were wondering about Cain's Mild, well the management had withdrawn it from sale some weeks prior as sales were insufficient to maintain quality. Although it is sad that the mild was withdrawn, I cannot argue with the logic of the decision; I commend the Gothic for the choice of ales on offer too. Further on past the Green is the **Red Lion**, this you can ignore as it sells keg and smooth beers only. So, off we trotted to the **Horse & Farrier**, opposite the village's War Memorial. Another Hydes house,



but this one definitely "a horse of a different colour", if you will pardon the pun. This was the busiest pub of the night so far; every room was full to capacity it seemed. The refurbishment of a few years ago has made this an extremely popular destination. Beers were Hydes Light, Bitter, Jekyll's and the seasonal - Satisfaction (4.2%). Whilst many people went for the latter, and it scored well, the other beers were tried with all but the Bitter being well above average. During the day, the Horse is a busy food pub; it now has a separate non-smoking room, and has large capacity rooms either side of the bar, and to the rear of the premises. Some of our party ordered pints, only to be informed that a bus to Cheadle was due in five minutes... Anyway, we all made it onto the 371 to Cheadle High Street (a short ride you may think, but expedient nonetheless). Off the vehicle and straight into the village's premier house, the **White Hart**, by the parish church (you may well question whether the White Hart is top-dog any longer?). For a large house with two rooms to the left of bar and a deep room to the right, it was reasonably busy. When it was refurbished some time ago to create what you see now, I do feel that it has taken away some of what I would say was the "country feel" to the place; there's just something missing, something that makes the place feel less cosy than it ought. The one and only cask beer was Boddies, this didn't lift our spirits greatly either but it was an acceptable drink.

Over the road to the **Crown** (Hydes) was next. This is a busy, converted shop-unit, so it's narrow, but deep. It has booth seating to the front, a small raised area to the rear left, and more seating in front of the bar. Hydes Mild, Bitter and Jekyll's were the offerings; the latter went unsampled, but the others fared well in our tasting opinion. I enjoyed the music being played by a one-man disco, it was non-intrusive Motown / soul music; I felt it added to the ambience. Our party was now of such a size, that two groups of people had formed. The front group went off to **BarSh**, a few doors along the street. This is a modern café-bar conversion of the former Vine pub, lots of blond wood, light colours and a sense of space. Add to this that they sell two cask ales - Boddies and Black Sheep bitter (this had sold out, unfortunately). Unfortunate too, was that Boddies was distinctly poor, however the helpful Bar Manager changed it without fuss. My companions did not think much of its replacement though, and duly left. I was in the rear party so missed all of the aforementioned. I believe it is commendable what the folk at BarSh have achieved so far, but they need to review how they maintain good quality on the cask ales in future.

Further along High Street is Hydes' **Olde Star Inn**. A two room house much in the traditional style - vault (with darts) to right, comfy snug at front, lounge at rear. We learnt that a trainee manager was in charge that night, however that did not affect the quality of the ale, it being exemplary, especially the Jekyll's and seasonal (Satisfaction); the regular Light and Bitter were very good too. The place was bedecked with bunting of an Irish nature, well St Patrick's day had passed recently. At the junction with Manchester Road is the **George & Dragon**. This was at one time a major coaching inn on the way south. It's now one of S&N's pubs (I think), and although it has been altered and updated in décor many times, I feel it has a more 'pubby' feel than that of the White Hart. They are similar in size, with central bars and areas off that; I particularly enjoyed the character of the Snug and the "Blue Room", they had many things of interest in them. The pub now caters for a good cross-section of the general public, not just the young bottle-swiggers, so we had Theakston Best Bitter as our cask beer choice. No one had any complaints about this beer and it was very well received.

On to Manchester Road next, under the railway bridge (and what was Cheadle goods station in the Cheshire Lines days) to the genteel surroundings of the **Ashlea** (formerly the Railway). Very much an eaterie these days rather than a plain pub, it still retains the remnants of the horrid over-the-top rusticity of the old Beefeater décor - not even the clumsiest of country craftsmen would have put their names to this pastiche of bucolicness! But hey, some folk probably find it cosy and twee. A good number of people were eating and drinking however, as we tried the two beers - Directors and Marston's Pedigree. Both were very agreeable.

A further half-mile walk north along Manchester Road, then across the M60 motorway gets you to the **Cheshire Lines** (ex Station), this was Cheadle rail station till the mid-sixties. For rail buffs, a single-track freight line (with occasional passing freight train) can be viewed from the rear windows of the pub. This is a Wolverhampton & Dudley pub selling Banks's Bitter, Pedigree, and Marston's Burton Celebration Ale (5%); we all plumped for the latter as it was an unusual find. Scores ranged from good to superb for this beer. In style, this is a comfortable eating house that does well out of the weekend family dining crowd, so being a Friday evening, it wasn't at capacity by any means. Worth a look though, even if you think it is comparatively remote. Golden Days Garden Centre next door often has rare and interesting bottled ales for sale too.



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As I, and others had Stockport buses to catch, we walked back to Cheadle centre to finish in the Royal Oak (Robinson's). They must have had some heavy drinkers in before we arrived because the Mild and Best Bitter had already gone off. All that was left was Old Tom, so that it was! Not a bad drink either. The place was boisterous and busy, but the décor was dark, hard and very stark. The Venetian blinds didn't soften the appearance nor did a room which had had the pool table and, seemingly, all of the furniture removed! All has changed since our visit though, the Royal Oak is under new management and it seems set for a long-overdue renaissance. Such a whirlwind tour of two villages and so many pubs cannot do real justice to any of them (it was hectic, but fun). I suggest you pay some of them a visit, and make up your own minds about them. Enjoy.



SMOKE ROOM BLUES

ROBIN PENDRAGON LOOKS BACK THROUGH THE FUG

Quite a few foodie (and drinkie) magazines currently fulminate in each edition about the undesirable conjunction of eating and/or drinking with smoking.

However the undesirability of smoking in pubs goes back to way before tobacco was known to be dangerous. There are still a few pubs around which have retained their décor from over a century ago. Of those which have resisted the temptation to imitate an airport baggage hall and have kept their separate rooms, their will usually be one room with an automatic door closure signed up as "Smoke Room".

Some of these signs are really spectacular, having been cut into the glass. Even some of the run of the mill "Smoke Room" signs are etch protected on frosted glass. Drinkers were meant to notice them and way back in the late 1950s a chap then in his nineties remembered being banned from one for getting his pipe going in the lounge. The pub in question was the Alexandra Hotel, now demolished. It stood opposite what is now known as the Harp Brewery in Moss Side, a very posh neighbourhood in the 1880s and where oiks smoking in pub lounges were just asking for the bum's rush. It seems that there were a few reasons for banning smoking in pubs so long ago. Some pubs even beck then sold food and it was known from the 18th Century that tobacco smoke and food make poor companions. Former smoking materials were fierce entities compared to today's prissy Golden Virginia, to the point where some of them could even change the taste of the beer. One favourite, called Molasses Black Bar Shag (yes, really) had a tarry liquid on the surface. On rubbing the tobacco up, smokers then had to wash their hands. Only the horniest-handed of navvies had skin which resisted burning from the tar. The fumes from Bar Shag were reputedly somewhere between road making and a shed fire. No wonder its users were banned to the Smoke Room.

The same went for another tobacco called Double Pigtail, which reputedly smelled of a manure fire, and one called Black Block, a chewing tobacco which turned the user's teeth a scummy dark brown, etched copper, and which was reputedly detectable up to half a mile away. Other frighteningly pungent choices in years gone by were cheroots, cigar-like entities scented with suspicious "Eastern Perfumes", cigarettes from Russia, Turkey and the Balkans with seriously hallucinogenic properties and "mentholated snuff" whose odour was somewhere between a clinic and a septic urinal.

By comparison today's cigarettes are small change. But there is still a good reason for seriously thinking about giving way to the health lobby. The reason is because we are all smokers, at perpetual risk of going back on tobacco even if we have given up years ago or even if we never smoked in the first place. It seems that nicotine creates brain receptors which thereafter always gibber for another fix. It is now thought that even passive smokers have these brain receptors. Removal of the temptation is a great help meaning that, through gritted teeth, we have to admit that the "health fascists" have a valid point to make.

Which leaves the question of what is to become of the Smoke Rooms that survive from the Victoria era. My guess - their accoutrements will become collectable antiques. The bar gas lights, cigarette publicity pottery, corporate ashtrays and the spittoons for chewing tobacco users are already in the antique shops, perhaps to be joined in a few years by all that cut glass. I'll still miss it.

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Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow
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
Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley
Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Road, Eccles
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
Farmers Arms, Manchester Road, Swinton
Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
Football, 35 Swinton Hall Road, Swinton
Four Heaton's, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme
Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield
Harbord Harbord, 17-21 Long Street, Middleton

Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
Harrys Bar, ULMIST, Sackville St Manchester
High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley
J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
Jar Bar, SilkHouse, 4 Park Green, Macclesfield
John Gilbert, Worsley Brow, Worsley
Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
Lowes Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
Moon Under Water, Deansgate, Manchester
Oddfellows Arms, 73 Moor End Road, Stockport
Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Rusholme
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
Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge Rail Station
Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle
Tim Bobbin, 41 Fixton Road, Urmston
Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
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9

CAMPAIGN
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REAL ALE

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

June 2005

Thursday 16th - Branch Meeting: The Didsbury, Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 24th - West Didsbury & Withington Stagger: meet 7.30pm Woodstock, Barlow Moor Rd; 8.30pm Railway, Lapwing Lane.

Thursday 30th - Pub of the Month presentation to Ye Olde Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 9th July - Beer Festival Staff Party - Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley. From 8.00pm.

Thursday 14th - Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. 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:

Sunday 18th - Branch Meeting & AGM: Ramseys Bar, Buckingham Hotel, Buxton. Starts 2.00pm to be followed by social around Buxton.

Saturday 10th September - Advance Notice: Branch 30th Anniversary Celebrations. Former, founder and current members wishing to attend please contact Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.

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

Monday 13th - Congleton Crawl Itinerary to be notified shortly; E-mail for details

June 2005

Sunday 19th - Arboretum and Lavender Meadow walk plus Summer Pub of the Season Award to Swettenham Arms, Swettenham

Monday 27th - Campaigning Meeting: Bull's Head, Moberley. Starts 8.00pm

Saturday 2 July - Regional Meeting At a venue in the branch area to be confirmed

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

Saturday 18th - Stoke-on-Trent social, visiting Titanic, Bulls Head at Burslem.

Saturday 25th - Urmston/ Flixton survey, meet at 1pm Lord Nelson, onto the Roebuck then the Church Inn at 2.30pm.

Thursday 7th July - Branch Meeting: Lloyds Hotel, Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton (TBC). Starts 8.00pm. Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976

Saturday 16th - Summer social/survey: meet 1.00pm Railway, Broadheath; 2.00pm Bay Malton, Oldfield Brow; 4.00pm Vine, Dunham Massey.

REGIONAL UNDER 30s SOCIAL GROUP

Wednesday 22nd June - Joint Social with North Manchestr Branch. 8pm @ Queens Arms, Honey St, Cheetham.

Saturday 23rd July - Afternoon social. 2pm @ The Railway, Great Portwood St, Stockport. Contact CAMRAU30.Manchester@gmail.com for further details

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '00

ONE WORD dominated the front page – “Armageddon!”. The sub-heading was “Whitbread sell out to Interbrew – Bass up for grabs”. Whitbread were to quit brewing after 250 years, and Interbrew had bought (for £400 million) the three remaining breweries at Magor, Samesbury, and of course, the old Boddington’s brewery at Strangeways. It now looked as if Bass would follow Whitbread by also quitting brewing, particularly as Interbrew had also been linked with Bass. However, it would have been surprising if the regulatory authorities had allowed such a deal to go through. Dutch-based Heineken or South African Breweries would have been more likely bidders. Whitbread owned the Lass O’Gowrie, Manchester’s oldest brewpub, first starting brewing in 1982, and it had recently been rebranded as a Hogshead. It would now have to cease brewing or be sold, for Whitbread not to fall foul of the Beer Orders if the sale to Interbrew went through. It was for this same reason that Punch had to close all the Firkin breweries

★★★★★

The Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA had recently introduced a “Cask Champion Award”, which gave recognition to the individual or organisation that had done most to advance the cause of cask conditioned beer in the Branch area. The inaugural award went to Tony Phillips, Hydes’ Quality Manager, for his initiatives in bringing about a dramatic improvement in the quality of Hydes’ beers and the standard of cellarmanship in their pubs. Hydes’ had just won the award again, this time for the introduction of their new premium bitter Jekyll’s Gold. During the previous few years, both Robinson’s and Holts had introduced new premium beers, Frederics and DBA respectively, but neither had been a great success locally. So it was greatly to Hydes’ credit that they had succeeded in producing an entirely new permanent beer, that had been a great success.

★★★★★

We have probably all seen the signs in the pub promising “Free Beer Tomorrow” or “Free Drinks to Anyone Over 80 Accompanied by their Parents”. Landlords generally treat them as a joke, but for Andy Billington, the landlord of the Globe, Accrington, the joke backfired and he ended up paying for the drinks. He was taken aback when Molly Greenwood called in to celebrate her 80th birthday...accompanied by her mother Elsie Riley, aged 101. When Molly pointed to the sign and demanded drinks on the house, the dumbfounded Mr Billington had no option but to meekly hand over a brandy for Molly and a Babycham for her mother. Then they went back for more...



STUFFED

Once upon a time, there was a characterful pub in mid-Cheshire, with a warren of small rooms, and a cramped, awkwardly-shaped bar counter. It was near to a major road junction, so I always feared that, like so many others, it might suffer some kind of “modernisation”. Recently it was closed for refurbishment and, seeing it had reopened, I ventured over the threshold to see what it was like. The sign outside saying “Casual Dining” didn’t exactly raise my hopes.

I didn’t expect much, and I wasn’t disappointed. All the character had been removed, and it had become just another of those dreadful, bland, knocked-through, over-priced dining pubs, where all the seating is at restaurant-style tables and there’s no remotely pubby area with benches where social drinkers might want to gather.

Continental countries are often praised for their open and inclusive drinking culture. But in many of them you will find a clear distinction between restaurants, which serve meals, and bars, which essentially serve drinks, although they may offer a menu of simple snacks and maybe a daily set meal.

This is something that in this country, outside of major urban centres, is becoming increasingly eroded. Historically, we never had much of a restaurant culture. People either ate at home, or on special occasions went to hotel dining rooms. As prosperity increased, and people became more interested in dining out, pubs more and more began to fill that gap. At first, it was just “snacks at the bar”, with chicken or scampi in a basket, but more and more the tail has now ended up wagging the dog.

Across large swathes of the country, what were once pubs are increasingly becoming dining establishments that offer a dusty welcome to anyone who just wants a drink, or even a straightforward snack. The original function of the pub as a social meeting place has been eclipsed. Very often a group of elderly locals who used to gather for a chat and a game of cards or dominoes have been evicted and left with nowhere else to go. The same fate has befallen a multitude of societies who once used meeting rooms, and brought much custom and goodwill. And this is by no means exclusively a rural phenomenon – a growing number of pubs in urban areas are now going over to the dreaded “country dining” format, and kicking drinkers into touch.

Nobody now seriously disputes that most pubs need to serve some food to give them a chance of survival. But if pubs become establishments whose main purpose in life is to serve main meals, and which have no social function beyond this, they have betrayed their origins. This over-emphasis on food is killing the British pub. I have seen more than one former pub with a sign simply proclaiming “Dining Rooms” – that is a chilling portent of the way things are heading.

Curmudgeon Online: www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk

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Latest pub in the High Peak area to offer continental cuisine is the George in Hayfield, which as well as selling Burtonwood ales, sells Indian Balti dishes.

The Squirrels in Chinley, which was the only pub in the village centre, closed its doors around four years ago and was partially converted into flats because the landlord/owner did not consider it viable to remain open as a pub - and would have presumably given him more income as let flats). Though the local Council at the time gave permission for partial conversion on the very large pub, they continue to turn down applications for permission to convert the rest, to this day, as their policy does not agree with a public amenity being taken away. This does not discount that someday, the pub part of the considerably large premises, may yet open its doors again to the public. **The legendary landlady of the Hatters in Marple, Sadie Davies, who retired some years ago after running the pub from 1967 to 1994, has died. We send our best regards to her family at this sad time.**

The Station in Ashton, a regular outlet for Shaws beers, is due to have new licensees soon - hopefully the local beers will still appear in the pub after the change.

A new brewery's beers appearing at the moment in the branch area are the Bradfield range of beers, the Stout and Bitter being available locally in the Star, the Globe and the Gloveworks, all in Glossop.

DOVE HOLES BEER FEST

Following closely behind our own event, that little known gem of the Dove Holes Beer and Jazz weekend is running on Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 July. About 16 Real Ales are available from the Beer Tent adjacent to the Community Centre, behind the Cricket ground in the centre of the village on the main A6. It's open from 12.00pm-1.00am Saturday and 12.00pm-6.00pm Sunday, with free entry at all times for CAMRA members. Hot and Cold food available and Local League cricket on both days - weather permitting. There's easy access by train (Buxton line) or 199 bus from Stockport. Overnight camping facilities are also available - contact Barry Pryme on 0161-483-7492 for further information.

BHURTPORE'S BACK TOO...

With over 100 beers promised, a visit to the Bhurtpore Inn Beer Festival, which runs from 5 to 10 July, is a must for the dedicated alefan.

Travel by train is surprisingly easy, and on Saturday 9 July is even easier. The Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers' Association has arranged for the 11.28 Piccadilly-Cardiff express to stop specially at Wrenbury. A train back to Manchester will depart from Wrenbury at 17.05 for returning visitors. The number of visitors arriving by train is extremely useful to the annual total of users at Wrenbury, hence the support of a Rail User Group for the beer festival. The festival is open 12-3pm and 6.30-11pm Tuesday to Friday and all day on Saturday and Sunday. Group Save Tickets for three or four travelling together are available Tuesday to Thursday and also on the Saturday.

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CAMRA MACCLESFIELD BRANCH AWARDS

Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch launched into a positive plethora of presentations last month.

Immediately following the very successful Beer Festival, aiming to draw people's attention to the many outstanding pubs in the area, the cycle began with the presentation of the Spring Pub of the Season to the **Plough** at Prestbury Road, Macclesfield. This pub, on the old Prestbury Road (now a dead end), surrounded by red brick terraced housing, provides an outstanding range of up to five beers from a variety of breweries, and is well appreciated by the locals. On the presentation night, the Young's Bitter went down well, as did the offering from Moorhouses and all the beers were on good form. Licensee Mark has a passionate interest in the Titanic, and the walls are covered by a variety of posters and mementoes. This meeting was followed a week later by a social at the same venue, on the original published date of the presentation- and again the beer did not disappoint.

The following Thursday a select band met to present a unique 'Outstanding Contribution to Real Ale' award to the **Waters Green Tavern**. (pictured right) A previous recipient of both Pub



of the Season and Pub of the Year awards, it was felt this pub, and Brian and Tracey, deserved recognition as the mecca for local real ale enthusiasts. If you could stay there long enough (and I'm willing to make the experiment), eventually you would meet every real ale drinker in the area there. A recent development has been the regular appearance of dark beers such as Bazen's Black Pig and Phoenix Black Bee honey porter- making an already outstanding pub...well, even more outstanding. Finally- it's a tough job but someone has to do it - the next Monday found the branch at the **Prince of Wales** in Roe Street (pictured left) to present the Pub of the Year 2004 award to Catherine Higginbotham. This pub has a friendly, welcoming and lively atmosphere and attracts a range of ages and types, many drawn by the good selection of up to six real ales, always including Bass and Caledonian Deuchar's - who had also just presented Catherine with a special handpump, only awarded to those who sell more than 70 barrels a year. Hearty congratulations to all our winners.

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CAMRA
FOR
REAL ALE

ZESTQUEST IN CHORLTON

NEIL WORTHINGTON REPORTS...

ZESTQUEST is the name of a fundraising campaign being run by **St Clement's Church** in Chorlton. They want to modernise their Grade II listed building to make it safe and fully accessible. As part of their campaign, they are organising **Chorlton's first ever Beer & Music Festival**, a celebration of local and international real ale.

The Festival will take place in and around the historic church, partly under cover, and partly in the open air. Over 20 real ales will be available, in addition to a selection of traditional ciders and the exclusive Chorlton Festival Ale - Chorlton B&M Best - brewed specially by Three Rivers Brewery. The full beer list is available on the church's website at www.stclement-chorlton.org.uk/beer/beer.htm and represents all the local microbreweries plus others from the region, such as Beartown and Coach House. The beers will vary in strength from around 3.8 per cent to 8 per cent. In addition, the estimable Belgian Belly will be running a Belgian Beer bar featuring up to 40 different beers, and knowing the Belly, this will include a few real treats, too.

Enjoyment of the Festival is not limited to the fine beer. A programme of entertainment and live bands, and quality food will provide a perfect accompaniment to pint sipping.

The Festival will be open from 4.30pm to 11pm on Friday 8 July; from 11am to 4pm on Saturday 9 July, and again from 5.30pm to 11pm on Saturday. Admission is £3.50 for the evening sessions and £2.50 for Saturday lunchtime. Or you can buy a "season ticket" in advance giving entry to all three sessions, for £5.00. Advance tickets can be purchased from the Church or by printing off the order form found on the website.

ZestQuest BeerFest

20+ beers and ciders & music & food

Friday 8 July 4.30pm-11.00pm

Saturday 9 July 11.00am-4.00pm

5.30pm-11.00pm

at St Clements Church, Edge Lane, Chorlton

www.stclement-chorlton.org.uk/beer

Advance tickets cost £5.00

(all three sessions, entrance only)

available on-line or at the church



Investing heart and soul in the Chorlton community

MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

OUT IN THE SUBURBS

Talking to the landlady in the **Royal Oak**, Didsbury. She was very pleased with take-up on the Mild Challenge and pleased with the all round sales of the Mansfield Dark Mild. They are now doing six containers a week, so it is easily holding its own. Sales are throughout the trading hours, so there must be plenty of folk who enjoy this dark, tasty brew.

Staying in Didsbury, the **Fletcher Moss** in Didsbury has now started selling Hydes Craft Ales. On a recent visit Hydes Elevation was on sale and was in good form. The **Nelson** has now changed its beer range. New(ish) licensee Bob told me that live music is to be featured soon, possibly once a week initially starting with a singer/guitarist. The beers on sale at the Nelson have also changed; it now sells Theakstons Mild, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Tetley Bitter. The intention is to monitor the popularity of these beers with the possibility of changing the range if the lack of sales of any beers merit it.

Edgar at the **Victoria** (Hydes), Withington very kindly showed me his newly fitted-out beer yard recently. It is ready for all that sunny weather that is coming (when?). Here you can enjoy the Hydes beers - Mild, Bitter, Jekyll's Gold, and seasonal ale in splendid, secluded surroundings. News reaches me that Patrick and Donna (managers) are doing a grand job at the refurbished Hydes' **Beehive** on Claremont Road, Moss Side. Apparently, it is now all one room with an island bar; Mild and Bitter are available on handpull, and trade is much improved. I will have to pay the place a visit very soon.

ON THE EAST SIDE

Upon delivering my OTs to the **Seven Stars** in Beswick on Sunday May 22 landlady Angela, told me that the pub would close on either the Monday or Tuesday, the 23rd or 24th! Angela is retiring to warmer climes abroad, so we wish her well. Owner's Joseph Holt intend to mothball the pub for three or four months, but it may well re-open again following a refurb, this would cater for the new residences that are being built in the surrounding area. Should it not re-open, then there will be no pubs on Ashton Old Road from

the city all the way east to the Legh Arms in Openshaw. Speaking of the **Legh Arms**, on a recent visit I found our licensee of the year nursing a very sore finger. Apparently when extending the decking for the beer garden he was distracted whilst talking to a customer, result one nearly severed digit. Fortunately the finger appears to be getting better and the decking is almost finished. On the beer front I can report that on the day of my visit David had two exceptional beers on, the first was *Blue* a special mix of Pride of Pendle and Pendle Witch that results in an extremely quaffable 4.4% blend. To go with this brew Moorhouses have provided a special pump clip showing the name of the pub and Man City's crest, this combination, being to honour the Legh Arms being awarded Pub of the Year and its association with the Football Club of which David is an avid supporter. The other beer I had the pleasure of trying was *Black Witch* another blend this time of Black Cat and Premier Bitter, resulting in 4.2% mix. Both of these beers were in exceptional condition and I struggled to leave...

I also paid a long overdue visit to the **Pineapple** in Gorton. Cindy Dwyer is the manager of this Hydes' house, having taken over about a year ago, moving to the pub from the Beehive in Moss Side. She has had to take some firm measures to get the pub back on track, and while a few judicious barrings have reduced the pub's trade in the short term, it is now a pleasant and welcoming place to have a drink. I'm sure that as news of the transformed atmosphere here gets around, it will become justifiably popular. It is certainly well placed to take advantage of the new housing going up nearby. There's just one cask beer, Hydes Bitter, and this was on sparkling form - Cindy tells me that she has passed the first Cask Marque test and is due to go through the second in early July. Well worth a visit - I shall certainly be back.

I also hear that the licensee at the **Vale Cottage**, Gorton has changed. Ron the old licensee moved on in early April and his replacement is keen to extend his range of beers, but severely limited by cellar capacity. I only had time for a brief call but hope to get back for a longer chat in time for next month's column.

AND FINALLY....

The **Bulls Head**, London Road has now been open for a couple of months. I'm told there was a dispute with Burtonwood, which meant that it was shut a lot longer than anticipated. It was some time when I dropped in and the promised kitchen refurbishment wasn't yet completed but the toilets have been moved upstairs and a disabled toilet provided downstairs.

Staying in the City Centre, the new Kro operation in Piccadilly, to be called "Kro Piccadilly" is scheduled to open in September. Naturally, there will be a full report in these pages. I'm also pleased to learn that both **Kro Bar**, Oxford Road, and **Kro at the Old Abbey**, now both sell real cider. This comprises the full Westons range which is sold in rotation and sales are very healthy indeed. It's always good to see more real cider outlets, especially when it's such fashionable bars as these.

Last month I reported that Dominic from **Font** on New Wakefield Street would also be looking after the cask beer at a new bar due to open on Tib Street. Well, sort of. The bar is in fact on Thomas Street near the junction with High Street, will be called **Odd Bar** and is due to open this month. More next time.



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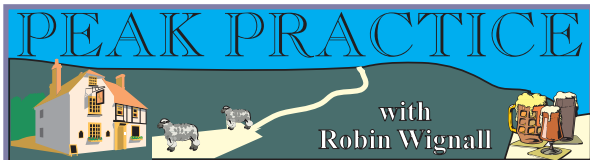
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LOCAL CAMRA AWARDS

Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Chairman Mark McConachie (left) presents Janet Wood and John Downs of the Alexandra, Edgeley with their May Pub of the Month Award, and below, Joanne of the Beech, Chorlton, with Trafford & Hulme CAMRA's Spring Pub of the Season award.





Whilst in last month's article I surmised that the takeover of Jennings by W&D might in the long term affect choice in the Peak District, it turned out in early May that the impact might in fact be greater than this.

Mike Nelson, who in the autumn of 2004 had bought, refurbished and re-opened the **Shady Oak** in Fernilee, after a closure of over a year, has sold the pub to Jennings. So after Mike's brief tenure, the Shady Oak ceases to be a free house and becomes part of the geographical extension of the Jennings estate. This is good news but there is of course the threat of the W&D takeover.

New landlord is Peter McKinnon who has, I understand, taken a lease with Jennings and was on site to take over the Shady Oak on 9 May. Jennings beers were on sale as soon as they were ready, and the opening selection included Jennings Dark Mild, Bitter, Cumberland Ale and Crag Rat. A guest beer is intended and the opener was Brains SA from Cardiff. The kitchen was closed for a Jennings refurbishment, but food was expected to be again available from bank holiday weekend (i.e. by the time you read this).

The Shady Oak stands on the old Long Hill road from Whaley Bridge to Buxton. It can be reached by public transport during the daytime. The 61 bus connects New Mills, Whaley Bridge and Buxton (it actually starts/finishes in Glossop running via Hayfield) and runs every two hours. There are three buses (61A) each way during opening hours on Sunday. The walk from Whaley Bridge station takes just under half an hour, though you could call in after amore purposeful walk through field and over hills. Try to get there if you can, as a visit will be rewarded.

The tenuous nature of the pub trade continues to be noticed, as pub managements struggle to eke out a living. The **Ploughboy** on Buxton Old Road, Disley, is 'To Let'. At Furness Vale, the **Soldier Dick** (keg only up to press) has at last lost its 'For Sale/To Let' boards after over 12 months, but is currently closed and fenced round. More news when it is available.

The dust seems to have settled at the **Swan**, Kettleshulme, after the disagreement reported in the local press. A temporary landlord had been installed following the departure of the landlord in the reported dispute, but a further change was expected by the time *OT* went to press. On an evening at the beginning of June the pub was busy with locals and fell runners after Kettleshulme Fell Race. Marston's Bitter and Pedigree were available, but beer of the night was Copper Dragon Golden Pippin (3.9% ABV). There was considerable demand for this refreshing, pale hoppy brew.

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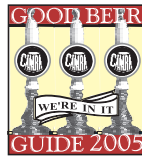
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