

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

GLOSSOP BACK ON BREWERY MAP



NEW VENTURE LAUNCHES THIS MONTH

BESET BY PRODUCTION and other problems, the ill-fated Glossop Breweries closed last year after no more than six months in production. The town's new Howard Town Brewery is aiming to be around for rather longer than that.

Opening Times has something riding on the company's success too – brewers Tony Hulme and Les Dove were inspired to take the plunge after seeing in these pages an advert for some brewing plant.

Howard Town Brewery is located in what was once Bridge End Fulling Mill, later to become part of the Howard Town Mill complex- one of the largest in 19th Century England. The unit occupied by the brewery is an ex-engineering workshop that had been empty for over a decade before Tony and Les took possession, so they had a lot of work to do to make the premises useable for brewing. Luckily, Les is an engineer by trade so much of the preparatory work was second nature to him. They moved in on 1 April this year and after much hard work, the building was ready to have the eight-barrel brewing plant installed by Dave Porter (of Porter Brewing Co) during the last week of June.

Brewing experience has come from home-brewing backgrounds and more recently some hands-on experience at Millstone Brewery. And of course, Dave Porter has been able to offer invaluable advice and will also be on hand to troubleshoot should the need arise. Howard Town will also have a brewster, too, as Les's wife Janet will also be sharing the brewing duties with Tony.



Les, Janet & Tony of Howard Town Brewery

The first brew took place on Wednesday 6 July and was planned to be Wren's Nest, a 4.2 per cent ABV premium bitter. In the popular, modern style this will be a pale and hoppy brew using Cascade and Pioneer hops along with Halcyon malt. The follow up beer will be Bleaklow, a 3.8 per cent session beer, which will also have more floral notes to it.

Tony and Les plan to have a core range of four beers, and will also produce occasional specials and one-offs. A new beer is planned for the forthcoming Glossop Beer Festival.



Typically, *Opening Times* managed to visit before any beer was available for sampling, but we are impressed by the commitment of Les, Tony and Janet who are only too aware of the pitfalls that may lay ahead. Howard Town Brewery and its beers look set to around for a long time to come – look out for news of future developments in our *Brewery News* column.

Howard Town Brewery is at Unit 10, Howard Town Mill, Mill Street, Glossop, SK13 8PT. Phone 01457 869000. They have a website, too, at www.howardtownbrewery.co.uk

Ready for Action



THE BEST LAID PLANS...

Due to a number of problems, largely the sort that bedevil a magazine produced by part-time volunteers, but quite a few genuinely out of our control, we recognised that *Opening Times* was coming out in the middle of each month, rather than in the first third, and last month we announced a cunning plan to get largely back on track, producing a combined July & August issue for about July 20, and then moving the issue date forward to bring the September issue out about a month later. This would be followed by our 'stunning' (we hope) redesign and upgrade in October. We were quite pleased with this scheme, still producing 12 issues this year but coming more into line with normal magazine practice. Until our production computer died. Totally. Bang. Ceased to be. The frustration of getting a combination of 7 year old parts, operating system and half a terabyte of data (a lot, believe me) onto a set of new bits and the remains of the old box has proved very near impossible. So we decided to get the bulk of the necessary upgrades to allow the redesign done all at once. Which made things far worse! As a result we have been out of action for very nearly four weeks, still have only limited functionality, and this issue will only just see July, if at all. Near normal service (touch wood) will be resumed for our September issue which should come out more-or-less on schedule. As Ed(1) is wont to say "Sorry about That!" Ed(2).

IN JULY/AUGUST'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
 & BIA Bronze Medal Winner 2004) eXSB 5.5%
 Black Pig Mild 3.6% (Bronze Award for Mild,
 Champion Beer of Britain, 2003)
 Pacific Bitter 3.8% Zebra Best Bitter 4.3%

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 JULY 2005

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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31						



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for July is the Pack Horse, Stockport Market Place.

Set back across from the town's parish church, the classic "Brewers' Tudor" exterior of the Pack Horse fronts a multi-roomed interior of considerable character, although much of what you see dates from a highly successful refurbishment carried out some years ago, and which, happily, retained the pub's separate rooms. For many years a Tetley house, the pub has been in the expert hands of Pauline O'Sullivan for the past 17 years. During this time the pub has become a genuine local with a very definite personal touch, functioning both as a lively market pub and a well-loved local used by a loyal band of regulars and numerous clubs and societies that meet there – always a sign of a good pub. Among the groups using the pub are a weekly Friendship Group and the Derbyshire Caving Club.

Given the pub's location there is of course wholesome and reasonable priced food available at lunchtimes and this would make the pub worth a visit. However at the Pack Horse there is the added attraction of good ale. Given the pub's history, Tetley Bitter remains centre stage but coming up on the inside track is the permanent guest, Skipton Brewery's Copper Dragon Bitter, which has rapidly become a favourite with the pub's customers. This well deserved award recognises Pauline's unstinting efforts over a long period of time and will be presented on Thursday July 28 from 8.00pm. The Pack Horse is easily accessible by public transport, being just a 10-minute walk from both the A6 and Stockport station.

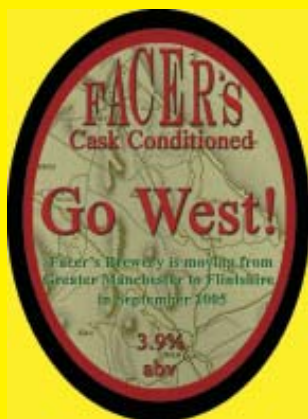
Margaret O'Brien and Dave Platt.

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Facer's Going West...



New 3.9% abv summer ale to mark the forthcoming move to Flintshire

Go West!

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

PUB OF THE MONTH AUGUST 2005



Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for August is the King's Head, Tiviot Dale, Stockport.

The King's Head has been a good local for many years. Old photographs show it in the ownership of Clarke's Brewery of Reddish, and thus it became a Boddington's house from the early 1960s. Latterly it fell into the hands of various pub companies (it is now owned by Pyramid Pub Co) and entered



something of a fallow period, with no real ale available. Enter licensee Debbie Marshall is October 2001. Debbie likes working with real ale but taking a realistic approach to the pub's recent history she sensibly took her time reintroducing it. At first she played it safe with the likes Bass, Worthington Bitter and various Burtonwood beers, including Top Hat. This wasn't an unqualified success and so the pub temporarily reverted to keg-only status.

However, following a rethink and a tie up with Three Rivers Brewery, the second reintroduction of cask ale has been considerably more successful. The regular cask beer is now Marstons Burton Bitter and this is accompanied by two guest beers, either Three Rivers beers or guests sourced via the Three Rivers beer swap schemes. The pub's regulars have now taken to cask and sales are now pretty good, and continuing to build, particularly as local beer enthusiasts start to put the pub on their 'circuit'. The pub itself is an attractive building, still retaining plenty of character despite considerable opening out over the years, with a comfortable wood-panelled interior. Lunchtime food is available from 12 to 2pm, Mondays to Saturdays. Entertainment comprises taped music and, at the back of the pub, a large screen shows varied sports, reflecting the interests of the King's Head regulars.

Debbie deserves both thanks and support for persevering with cask ale, sometimes against the odds, to put the King's Head back on the town's real ale circuit. Our award recognises this and will be presented on Thursday 25 August from 8.00pm. JC.

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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City Life Food & Drink 2005

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MEN Go Guide

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GBG 2004

"This Belgian-style bar would not look out of place in Bruges or Brussels"
GBG 2003

"The ethos of the bar - friendly, robust and a little loud, with masses of character!"
GBG 2005

"The best and longest standing outlet for Belgian Beer in the City Centre"
Good Beer Guide for Belgium 2005

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The Guide (Guardian) 2004



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WE MUST BE MAD!



...BUT IT'S NOT BAD NEWS...

Facer's Brewery and Bazens' Brewery, the two components of the Salford Brewery Syndicate are to go their separate ways. However far from it being the end of the line, the entirely amicable parting of the ways heralds the start of a new era for both concerns.

Facer's Brewery is to relocate from its current home at the Syndicate in the Cliff area of Salford to a new site some 50 miles west in the rolling countryside of Flintshire.

Dave and his wife Annette have bought a house in Flint Mountain, Flintshire and will be moving in late August. Dave intends to start brewing in Flint as soon as possible after that. Initially this will be in rented premises but Dave will be applying for planning permission to build a brewery on part of the 1.4 acres of the new property. A local architect is already at work on the plans and Dave has had initial discussions with the Flintshire planning authorities.

Dave has also been encouraged by the reception he has received to his recent sales drive in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham. As well as building new local sales he aims to retain his current customer base in NW England, expand into the nearby NW and Central Wales areas, and give extra focus to Merseyside and Cheshire.

The new venture will be called Flint Mountain Brewery and Dave intends to maintain his current range of beers, renaming some of them and introducing just a few slight recipe adjustments. The 'Greats of English Literature' series of specials will be replaced by a new series, details of which he has yet to decide. Dave's new 3.9% ABV special is currently in fermenter and will be called 'Go West' to celebrate the move. Forming the Salford Brewing Syndicate in February 2003 in Knoll St with Bazens' and Facer's breweries sharing the unit, plant (and overheads) has proved a great success and enabled both breweries to expand and prosper more quickly than would have been possible separately.

BAZENS' PLANS

Richard and Jude Bazen have told *Opening Times* "We are very grateful to Dave for his support and the opportunities that forming the co-operative have offered us. We were able to increase production substantially after only one year of trading – a huge boost to the business which would not have been possible for several years had we not joined forces. In addition to sharing the brewery, however, we have also had the unique advantage of being able to adapt and learn new brewing techniques thanks to the collaboration of two brewers from very different brewing backgrounds."

They have offered Dave and Annette their very best wishes for their move to Wales and for the continuing success of the brewery in its new location. The good working relationship between the two breweries will be maintained – they are already discussing the possibility of stocking and delivering each other's beers.

Both breweries are now in a position once again where increasing production is fundamental to their future business plans. Bazens' will be increasing output to 15 barrels (that's sixty 9-gallon casks) a week from October which will help them to meet ever-increasing demand. This will see the return of monthly and seasonal specials. Unfortunately, they have had to turn customers' orders down on several occasions over the last few months – a situation that should be rectified with the implementation of Stage One of their expansion plans. They also hope to move to Stage Two, when Bazens' will be employing delivery and brewing staff, early in 2006.

A recent success for Bazen's was Liberty Bell, the Stockport Beer Festival special, which sold out in a week! Customers have been ringing up asking for more so Richard is hoping to brew it again soon.

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 255

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.



To start with this month, I decided to take myself off to Woodley, part of the town where the pubs were not familiar to me. Luckily all of the pubs are strung out along Hyde Road and easily accessible by the 330 bus.

Furthest out is the **White Hart**. This is a former Bass house and will now be in the hands of some pub company or other. There has been a refurbishment in the not too distant past and I am told that this has involved a lowering of the ceilings, and this, coupled with the quite dark colour scheme, makes for quite a claustrophobic feel, I think. It's all very smart, though, and there are extensive outdoor drinking areas should the walls close in too much. The pub was busy with diners when I called and there is obviously a big food trade here. It's also a real ale gain – Boddington's Bitter is now on handpump, and was of reasonable quality, if a little warm.

The nearby **Railway** is also ex-Bass pub but in this case is now owned by Robinson's. It's also undergone a recent refurbishment and looks very smart indeed – in contrast to the White Hart it has a bright and airy interior. It's a two-roomer with a comfortable lounge and excellent tap room, with two cask beers; Hatters and Unicorn on handpump.

Heading back towards Stockport, the next pub is the **Navigation**. This is a long-standing Robinson's house – clean, tidy, well-appointed and comfortable with the air of stability that comes with a long-serving licensee. Hatters and Unicorn are on electric metered dispense – the handpumps are dummies and disguise the electric switches behind. The star turn here, though, is the stunning bowling green – a rare sight these days and this must arguably be one of the best around.

The **Waggon & Horses** fronting the precinct is keg only. Nearby is the final Woodley pub, the **Lowes Arms**. The current pub dates from 1982, having replaced a much older pub. It's very much of its time with a cavernous and dimly lit lounge and smaller, but still large, vault. There's a potential for outside drinking at the front but I got the impression that this wasn't a greatly used facility. The one cask beer was OK Unicorn on electric pump.

OUT & ABOUT

Returning from Woodley I popped into the **Crown** in Bredbury. This is now run by John 'Capper' Parkin, a well-known figure on the local pub scene and it good to be able to catch up with him. He's certainly made an impression at the Crown, which is very welcoming and comfortable, with huge outdoor drinking facilities, too. I had heard that there was quite a range of beers sold but the handpumps dispensed just too – well-kept Old Speckled Hen and Boddingtons. A word about the Boddies – despite the handpumps and pumpclips with the prominent word 'cask', this is in fact the lower-strength smooth! John was quite upfront about this and tells me that he will revert to the real thing later in the year. He told me his reasons for selling keg beer in this way but I can't say I'm too happy about it. Whilst I was in the **Ladybrook** in Bramhall one of the barmaids enquired whether it might be possible to put a piece in OT about the pub. I'm happy to oblige since in my experience it has improved a lot since the manager was changed late last year with a good food menu and a varying range of guest beers, usually three or four. The current beers when I called were Boddingtons Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier (which are the permanent range) plus Marstons Summer Ale 4.0%, Camerons Long Life 4.8%, Palmers IPA 4.4% and Deuchars IPA 3.8%. Well worth a visit, I think.

Over to Edgeley, now. Ed(1) tells me that he has had his ear bent by the licensee of the **Gardeners Arms** on Northgate Road. It seems that planning permission to redevelop the site has been refused and so the pub will remain both standing and open for business. This is good news. Less good news is that the pub remains firmly of the 'no real ale' variety. Another pub staying open is the **Grey Horse** in Reddish, which will still keep serving the pints during its extensive refurbishment.

I also popped into the **Grapes** in Edgeley, and had a quick word with new landlady Carol Mottershead. She tells me that the pub is going well so far. A refurbishment is underway – the vault looks very smart with new wooden floor and wainscoting. Hatters and Unicorn remain on handpump.

Finally, this OT may be a little late but if it's not you might be able to catch the nautically themed beer festival at the **Ryecroft**, Cheadle Hulme – apart from the usual Hydes' range there will be an additional five guest bitters and a mild. Worth a visit, I think.



IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

So it goes on. Ridleys is the latest family brewer to throw in the towel but on reflection this was a sale that had been on the cards for a long time. Take a small brewery £8 million in debt and a tax-exile chairman living in Monaco and the rest of the story writes itself.

While you can never take things for granted, it is difficult to see any of our local family brewers going the same way. Hydes, Holts, Lees, Robinson's and newcomers Cains seem firmly committed to their long-term independence - a recent visit I made to Robinson's Unicorn Packaging Centre revealed an astonishing degree of long-term investment, for example. While it is fashionable in some circles to dismiss the family brewers it is an indisputable fact that they remain the backbone of cask ale availability both locally, here in Greater Manchester and Cheshire, and on the national scene, too. This is a subject to which Opening Times will be returning in future months.

Meanwhile, the micros bubble away. The dissolution of the Salford Brewers Syndicate represents a new beginning for both Facer's and Bazens'. Those of us who have long admired the products from both concerns are in a win-win situation as Facer's beers will continue to be available (under their new name) while Bazens' will be able to reintroduce seasonal and special beers. Naturally both breweries have the best wishes of all here at OT.

Good luck, too, to the new Howard Town Brewery in Glossop. Their predecessor wasn't around for very long but I have a feeling that this new concern will be with us for the long term.

John Clarke

NEW FESTIVAL CHARITY

STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL is looking for a new Festival Charity for the 2006-08 Festivals. Through the sale of beer and other products and donations from our generous customers it is estimated that the chosen charity should expect an income of between £2K and £3K per festival.

Applicant charities must be registered with the Charities Commission, must provide a service to the people of Stockport and /or South Manchester and must be willing to have their name/logo used in festival publicity.

What are we looking for? It is the Festival's aim that the charity, the local community, and the Festival benefit from the Charity's participation. The charity must provide a service to the local Stockport and South

Manchester community; it must be able to participate in the Festival - staffing a stall, selling donated beer - and to assist the Festival with publicity. In return, the Festival will publicise the charity, and provide stall space within the Festival venue, where 4000 people will pass by: an excellent opportunity or the Charity to raise awareness and funds.

Interested charities should write to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 5EG setting out the following

- ☆ How you will be able to guarantee to fully staff your stall at the Festival for all open sessions of the Festival
- ☆ How you will be able to guarantee to be able to obtain at least 3 kils of real ale for each of the three Festivals
- ☆ What you can do to assist the Festival with publicity etc
- ☆ Any new ideas you may have
- ☆ Why the Festival Organising Committee should choose your charity

Applications should arrive no later than 23rd September 2005. The decision of the Organising Committee will be final and no correspondence can be entered into.

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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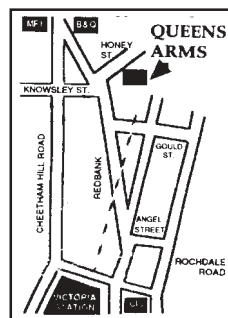
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9.30pm start

*Beer Garden with
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5

CAMPAIGN
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...ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST!



The concentration of the national brewing sector, and the continued attrition among the family brewers, continued at the beginning of July when Greene King snapped up debt-laden Ridleys of Essex. The privately owned family brewer, which it seems had been struggling for some time was effectively put up for sale by the Ridley family and Greene King stepped in with a £46 million offer. Ridley's 163-year old brewery will close in August with some of the brands being transferred to Greene King's Bury St Edmunds plant. The company's main brand, Ridley's IPA, will however be discontinued as it clashes with Greene King's similarly named product.

CAMRA has condemned the deal and has hit out at comments from Ridley's Managing Director, Bob Wales, who was appointed in April 2005. Following his appointment, Mr. Wales said, "The Board and I are delighted with this announcement and look forward to the Ridleys business growing and developing. Ridleys is a good business with some excellent and dedicated people at the Hartford End Brewery site." CAMRA Chief executive has posed the obvious question - "just what has changed?"

FAMILY FAVOURITES

Luckily our local family brewers seem to be faring rather better than Ridleys and are certainly more committed to maintaining their independence. As ever there is news from them all.

Robinson's - the latest seasonal for July and August is Sunny Jim (3.8% ABV), making a welcome return from last year. This is described as "a light, thirst quenching summer ale specially designed to refresh and relax. Brewed from a recipe incorporating an interesting blend of pale and light roasted malts, this perfectly

round and smooth light golden beer has a subtle but distinctive tang of caramelised Demerara."

Hydes' - just for the avoidance of doubt, Hydes' have confirmed that Light is now also being sold as 1863. Regardless of the name, the beer is still the same and the good news is that the name change is helping to grow volumes of this tasty 3.5% ABV beer. The craft ale for July/August is Celebration (4% ABV), described thus; "the much favoured Liberty hop influences the delightful flavour of this light golden beer with a subtle fruit aroma, perfect for those warm relaxing days of summer."

JW Lees - the July/August seasonal is an old favourite, Scorchers (4.2% ABV). This golden, refreshing beer is a regular feature in Lees' pubs in the summer months and is perfect for the hotter weather.

Holts - the brewery has had an order from Scottish Courage for an undisclosed number of casks of Humdinger (3.5% ABV), usually only available in bottle. At the end of the initial contract (about four weeks) the beer may appear in the company's own pubs. The

current seasonal beer, Lightning Holt, is available in a few selected Holts pubs.

Cains - Liverpool brewery Cains has now re-branded the successful Capital of Culture Beer which as first produced in support of Liverpool's bid to become Capital of Culture. Since winning the Capital of Culture the beer has become a permanent fixture amongst the quality beers portfolio produced at the award winning Liverpool Brewery.

Cains 2008 Culture Beer is being distributed all across the North West and now has struck a deal to ensure that it is available across the UK via National Beer Wholesaler "Waverley TBS". Joint managing director of Cains Brewery Sudarghara Dusanj said: "Since the Beer first won the Camra Liverpool Beer Festival of the Festival it has become one of our most successful new beers".

Cains has introduced a number of innovative new beers to the market since brothers Ajmail and Sudarghara Dusanj took over in July 2002. Capital of Culture 2008, Fine Raisin Beer and Cains Finest Lager are just some of the new products winning awards and selling well in pubs and stores since taking over in 2002.





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Beers for July

<p>Brewers gold A.B.V. 3.8%</p>  <p>celtic warrior A.B.V. 4.2%</p> <p>A refreshing thirst quenching pale golden session beer. Malty undertones and a powerful spicy hop aroma combine to produce a dangerously moreish beer.</p>	<p>summer solstice A.B.V. 4.7%</p>  <p>A full bodied mid brown premium ale. Malt flavours dominate the palate with delicate hop aromas in the well-balanced finish.</p>	 <p>A crisp refreshing blonde ale. Rounded pale malt flavours in the mouth are balanced by a subtle bitterness which leads to a dry finish with a delicate floral hop aroma.</p>
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MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER

International Brewing Awards



1998
Wobbly Bob



2002
Navy



2002
Wobbly Bob



2004
Wobbly Bob

MICRO MAGIC

As ever the local micros have a wealth of new beers coming out. As ever apologies to those we couldn't contact in time. Don't forget if you are a local micro with news, the please send it to *Opening Times* at the usual address or e-mail it to:

johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com.

Bank Top - continuing with the 'Knights of the Round Table' range. For July the beer is Sir Lancelot (4% ABV) and for August look for Sir Lamarack (who?) at 3.8% ABV. Both beers will be hoppy, bitter brews.



Bazens'/ Facer's - see the separate article on page 4 for news of major events here.

Phoenix - the 'parlour' at the brewery has now been completed and work continues of the bar after which brewery visits will once again be on the cards. Beers to look out for in the coming weeks include White Tornado (4.3% ABV) a clear wheat beer, Sticky Wicket (4.7% ABV) a hoppy bitter with a 'chewy' flavour, and Midsummer Madness (4.5% ABV), a hoppy seasonal quencher.



Boggart Hole Clough - recent beers have included Bog Hut (4.4% ABV), a light, hoppy bitter ale and Spedo (3.8% ABV) a light, well-hopped golden bitter. When we contacted the brewery two new, as yet unnamed beers were in the fermenting vessels. One is a 4.6% ABV reddish-brown beer, 'well rounded with blackcurrant notes and a herbal aroma' and the other is 4.3% and a light golden beer 'with a slight underlying bitterness and a unique floral and spicy aroma'.

Greenfield - two new beers here. Flying Shuttle (4.4% ABV) is a light amber bitter with hoppy undertones and Old sag (4.4% ABV) is pale and golden with a light hoppy taste. This beer is named after a famous local canal bridge which, well, sags in the middle.

Shaws - Golden Globe and the new Ladysmith Pale continue to sell very well. A new beer is Pilgrims Progress (4% ABV) a session beer using Target and Pioneer hops which can lead to quite a bitter flavour when the beer is 'young'. Dukinfield-based Shaws have also acquired a new permanent, but rather remote, outlet. This is the Good Beer Guide listed Yarcombe Angel in Yarcombe, Devon. The pub recently changed hands and Mossley resident Victoria Hay is the new licensee. Victoria's dad, Neil, is joint owner of Shaws.



Leyden - up at Nangreaves, Brendan Leyden continues to produce interesting beers at the Lord Raglan pub. Three new beers have a car theme. Zephyr (3.8% ABV) is a nut brown bitter, Zodiac (4.2% ABV) a very pale summer bitter while Wolseley (3.8% ABV) is a dark beer.

Porters - Dave Porter spends much of his time installing micro breweries these days (see our front page feature on Howard Town) but still finds the time to make some damn fine beers. Smart new pumpclips have been designed by Railway licensee Martin Wood and this has seen three of the beers renamed - Dark Mild is now Cribden Dark, Bitter is Hameldon Bitter and Porter has become Pitch Porter. Dave's occasional experiments with fruit beers continue and have recently resulted in the appearance of 'Crushed Otter With A Hint Of Kiwi'. This 4.5% beer is a pale and hoppy with just a slight but appealing fruitiness in the background. Stocks will be limited so tickers should get it while they can.



Pictish - Summer Solstice (4.7% ABV) remains available for the season and a recent brew of Celtic Warrior has almost sold out. The July special is Siren (4.1% ABV), a hoppy wheat beer, and for August look out for Corn Dolly (5% ABV), a dangerously drinkable strong pale ale.



Millstone - the beers continue to go down well; in the pipeline is Square Peg (4.1% ABV) for late August. This will be a special in the classical Millstone style (malt and hops yet to be decided) - probably one batch only this year. The brewery is planning to up capacity via an extra 8-barrel fermenter, to be supplied by the Porter Brewing Company.



Three Rivers - the move to new premises is going ahead apace and they should be in the new brewery by the end of July. Straw Boater will be out soon and volumes are increasing month on month. Three Rivers are presently featured in 16 Wetherspoons houses throughout the Manchester area and have produced a brew specifically for them. Julies Pride is a 5% ABV bitter which is amber in colour and quite bitter. A classic English style ale which has been selling extremely well. On the new brewery front the nominal brew length will be 15 barrels but Mike Hitchen is keeping hold of a 3 barrel copper and small fermenter so he has the flexibility to do speciality ales and one off brews.

Beartown - are producing a new beer for the RHS show at Tatton Park. It has been commissioned by a butterfly conservation group and so will be called White Admiral. The 4% ABV golden beer should also appear in the Beartown estate. The powerful (6.8% ABV) Grizzly Bear continues to sell well, despite its strength making it anything but a session beer. Beartown's Ian Burns tells us that there has been a slight personnel shuffle at the brewery. He will once again be taking on the role of Head Brewer while his son Ross will now take on sales and marketing. Beartown also hope to open a shop on the brewery site in the not too distant future.



Look out for our feature on Three Rivers Brewery at their new site in September's OT - available from late August

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BOOK REVIEW

GOOD BEER GUIDE BELGIUM BY TIM WEBB (5TH EDITION, CAMRA BOOKS, 348PP, £12.99)

Either Belgium is getting bigger, or there's just much more to say about it these days. For although the new edition of one of CAMRA's most popular guides is still the same size as the 2002 outing, Holland has simply disappeared. Given the increasingly interesting beer scene in Belgium's northern neighbour, this is regrettable and it seems that Dutch beer aficionados will have to wait for a separate title.

However as the introduction points out, over a million tourists each year visit the "historically fascinating and endearingly daft little kingdom" of Belgium, many if not most of them for the beer, and as 40 per cent of the country's output of beer is exported, it's clearly a matter to be taken seriously. The truth is that Belgium and its beers is an inexhaustible subject which has long deserved a definitive Guide all to itself (or mostly to itself - little old Luxembourg is still hanging in there); and this is it. All the familiar sections are here - getting there, beer tourism, beer and food, breweries, beer bars and so on - they're just much bigger than in previous editions. The breweries section, for instance, has grown from 48 pages to over 70, while the beer bars section is up from 95 pages and 350 bars to 120 pages and over 500 bars. The chapter on beer styles is there, too, but has been completely rewritten and updated. And all in colour, too. Also familiar to owners of previous editions is the Guide's spiky attitude. As Tim Webb says: "We do not do cheery-beery". Indeed part of the joy of Webb's guides has been the opinionated author and seeing how much you disagree with, although this time around I found myself nodding in assent far more often than before. And it's not just the multinational giants that earn



the brickbats (a classic Webb-ism is to be found in the abbreviation he adopts for the company he terms Scottish Courage Alken Maes, or SCAM for short...). Expansionist family brewers such as Palm and Liefmans get the sharp end of his tongue and those producers who mess around with his beloved lambics get a notable kicking (De Troch - "Maybe if they moved out of the locality and lost their lambic appellation, they would stop being a liability for real lambic producers.")

This is primarily a utilitarian Guide rather than a polemic. For practical advice on what to drink and where - and how to get to where to drink it - this is the essential vademecum.

There's some local interest for *Opening Times* readers, too. For the first time, the Guide also covers outlets in the UK. Thus there are full entries for Le Trappiste in Altrincham ("a more authentic Belgian café than you will find in many towns in Belgium"), Bar Fringe ("The best and longest standing outlet for Belgian beer in the city centre") (and in a footnote, the Knott) and, of course, the Belgian Belly - PICTURED ABOVE - in Chorlton ("Owned and run by the irrepressible Barker family, the Belly is a shop on a mission"). And of course, apart from all good bookshops, the Belly will also supply you with a copy of this indispensable book. *John Clarke.*



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STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER PUB OF
THE MONTH MARCH 2005



Trafford & Hulme CAMRA's Pub of the Season for Summer 2005 is the Peveril of the Peak on Great Bridgewater Street in Manchester City Centre.

Situated in an area dominated by loft apartments and office developments, the Pev is instantly recognisable by its yellow and green tiled exterior and classic signage. Inside multi-roomed layout, original woodwork and stained glass has earned the pub a place on CAMRA's National Inventory of unspoilt pub interiors. The three separate drinking rooms and lobby help give the pub's 'local' atmosphere. Entry into the Good Beer Guide was secured in at least 1981, a position it holds to this day. Teresa Swannick, the landlady of 34 years, has done a terrific job of preserving the pub's character, ably assisted by a welcoming bar team including her son Maurice. The pub is a favourite with local office workers and students. Pictures of distinguished and famous patrons adorn the walls, which shows that not all celebrities prefer lifeless and pretentious bars. There are four handpumps and all of them are usually working all week long. Wells Bombardier and Taylor's Landlord are almost always available, with either Black Sheep Best Bitter and Wychwood Hobgoblin Dark Ale on another pump. Recent guests have included beers from York Brewery and an entire showcase of Moorhouses' fine ales from Burnley.



The entertainment is kept simple – a jukebox, with many of Manchester's finest recent recording artists included in the vast selection – and the volume is certainly not intrusive on conversation. The award presentation will take place on Wednesday 27 July at 8.00pm. All are welcome. *Dominic Driscoll.*

BEERIEN TEERING 2005

Dave Hallows reports on this year's event...

This year's Beerienteering event, a real ale drinking game on the lines of orienteering, run by the region's CAMRA Under-30 social group, ha a very close finish. There were just nine minutes between the first three teams.

Teams had to follow the clues and find six pubs in the correct order, travelling on foot or by public transport from the Knott Bar on Deansgate in Manchester. The last pub was eight miles away in Stockport. There were time bonuses and penalties, and the score was calculated in minutes from start to finish.

Last year's champions, *Team Purple*, made a quick start and were on fine form. The organisers were surprised that they and all the other teams managed to solve what was thought to be a difficult clue, earning a 30-minute bonus. Getting it wrong would have brought a 30-minute penalty. After a staggered start, all the teams piled into the City Arms at different intervals. The *Lost Souls* team fared well, as did *Making Poverty History*. A team of eight, *The Misfits*, was a mix of last year's *Bald But Beautiful* and *Barmy Army*. The organisers vainly tried to split them into two groups, but they wouldn't have it. Maybe the presence of a female member in a silver-sparkly dress and shocking pink wig had some bearing on it?

At the Victoria (Hydes) in Withington village, the teams had the chance of a time bonus with the score from throwing three darts. This year was billed as "Beerienteering 2: Quest for the Tankard", so there had to be a tankard, or two tankards, to be precise. One was a decoy. The correct tankard was ignored by three teams, including last year's winners, who thought both tankards were red herrings. That unwise decision made for the close result.

At this stage *Team Purple* were in the lead, with *Lost Souls* and *Three Legs* on their tails. The next pub was the Royal oak (Marston's) in Didsbury, where a simple clue



Beerienteering winners, *Three Legs* team, Matt Par and Amy Joughlin with their trophy!

was solved for a 30-minute bonus. The came Ye Olde Vic on the Edgeley side of Stockport station, which had opened early specially for the event. *Team Purple* were making such good time that the organisers were worried that the team would arrive before they were ready for them.

The penultimate pub was Sam Smiths Queen's Head (Turners Vaults) on Little Underbank. Here the teams could pick up more bonuses when interviewed by CAMRA Under-30 Co-ordinators Kim Walton and Tim Jackson (creator of Beerienteering) and Stockport Beer Festival Head Steward, Paul 'Freddy' Formby. The event ended at the Arden Arms on Millgate, the runner-up in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition. All the teams finished within an hour-and-a-half, and when the scores were added up the *Three Legs* team, Matt Par and Amy Joughlin, were declared the winners. Second, by a mere seven minutes, were *Lost Souls*, and *Team Purple* came third. Nice touch was the informal presentation by the game's creator, Tim Jackson, of a bag of pork scratchings to the last team. Of course it was *The Misfits*.

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
JOIN CAMRA NOW - SEE PAGE 18**

STAGGER

with Pete Farrand

HAZEL GROVE, GREAT MOOR & HEAVILEY

There are two key features of this stagger; one is the A6, all the pubs are on it, and the second is Robinson's, all the pubs, bar one, are owned by Stockport's local family brewer. Our first stop for the evening was the **Grove** in Hazel Grove, north of Commercial Road. Members of our party enjoyed the **Unicorn Bitter** and the **Hatters Mild**. The pub consists of three rooms, a large orange lounge on all of one side of the pub, a games room at the front to the left of the front entrance and an attractive small vault behind the bar.

Swiftly across the busy A6 was our next pub, the **Anchor**, again the Unicorn and Hatters were on good form, served by the now fairly rare method of Electric Dispense into lined glasses. Not surprisingly this pub has something of a nautical theme with a predominance of brass, copper with a red and cream colour scheme.

Next door across the grandly titled, **Brewers Green** was our next pub, the **Woodman**. It looked like a DJ was setting up but mercifully had not started whilst we were there. There was no sign of the carvery restaurant advertised on the sign outside. A small outdoor drinking area adjoins the car park. The only cask beer available was Unicorn which was not in great condition but drinkable.

We strolled down the A6 towards Great Moor passing the former **George and Dragon** which has metamorphosed into **The Phoenix**, now a completely non-smoking pub. One would have thought that such a pub would be the ideal candidate for stocking cask ale, but sadly this is not the case.

The next pub was the much improved **Crown Hotel** in Great Moor, a large pub with two large rooms either side of the bar and two smaller rooms to the side. With the exception of the

café style games room at the back all rooms are decorated with impressive colour drawings of Stockport. There is an attractive carved fireplace in the front left lounge and some unusual Iron arches over the panelled entrance to the Gents. Round the back is a Bowling Green, a great place to drink in summer. The choice of cask beers here was Unicorn, Hatters and Robinson's premium bitter Double Hop, all in excellent condition.

Heading towards Stockport crossing the A6 brings us to the **Travellers Call**, probably as much a museum as a pub. The walls are adorned with profusion of all things nautical: Bells, Telescopes, Lanterns, even a fish tank! The interest does not stop there as the Hand-pulled Hatters Mild and Unicorn Bitter were both on excellent form.


Crossing the road again and walking a short distance brings us to the **Dog and Partridge** a pub with a multi-room feel to it, with a predominance of wood panelling and dark colours. This pub has an outdoor play area with beer garden. We settled in the small area, that can double as a darts room, to enjoy both the Unicorn and the Hatters.

A much longer walk takes us to the next pub, the **Duke of York** in Heaviley. The décor of this pub has been improved in recent years with three rooms towards the front and vault to the rear with an outdoor patio and play area off to the side. Those of us that tried the seasonal beer "England's Champion" were disappointed as it was undrinkable, however it was changed without complaint and the difference in price refunded, so we all ended up drinking Unicorn the only other cask beer on sale and rather average.

The next pub was the **Bamford Arms**, a short distance further, on the Nangreave road junction. This pub which is also a Beefeater has a flame design on the door and a real gas flame burning in a bowl above. (environmentalists look away now!) Inside the pub, the area near the bar, was a mixture of orange paintwork and dark wood which some might refer to as being intimate while others might call it gloomy. The only cask beer available at the time of our visit was draught Bass which was in good form and enjoyed as a change from Robinson's. I believe cask Boddingtons is usually available here. There is also a lot of restaurant here but we did not enter this area. We also noted the pile of neatly sawn logs, a feature of many recent pub refurbishments.


The last pub of the evening was the serial Good Beer Guide listed **Blossoms** on the Bramhall Lane corner. This early Victo-






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rian gem has retained its original multi room layout. We settled in the front left room, where there is a pinball machine, a rare feature in a pub these days. This is a true community local which successfully caters for customers of all ages. Both Hatter and Unicorn, on handpump, were on the top form expected here.

And so to the end of an enjoyable evening where though most beer was of a high standard a little more choice would have been welcome. All of these pubs are on the following core bus routes 192 (Manchester - Hazel Grove), 191 (Stockport - Middlewood) and 199 (Manchester Airport - Buxton). Why not try them for yourselves?

**MILD
CHALLENGE
2005
UPDATE**



This year's Mild Challenge turned out to be more popular than ever. With a mammoth 83 pubs participating, well over 110 people took it to heart to visit at least 15 pubs to collect mild stamps on their passports by drinking a mild in selected pubs. 100 folk went that bit further by choosing their 15 pubs all to be in different areas, thus securing them a commemorative polo shirt (new for this year) and free entrance to the hugely successful Stockport Beer Festival.

By drinking a mild in all 83 pubs, seven valiant souls earned themselves an extra-special polo shirt on top of the other prizes mentioned. So well done to all who participated.

Ten lucky people (plus their guests) will have a VIP visit to Hydes Brewery on July 21st to see how Hydes Mild, Light and Bitter are brewed, and to sample the said beers too of course! The names drawn from the hat were: S Elstone; S Pierce; N Barber; J Rawlinson; J Shepard; H Wood; G Wood; D Pate; C Rogerson; and A Palmer. Going along with them will be the Slogan winner, Steve Smith of Harpurhey. The winning phrase he coined to finish the line "I drink mild because..." was "I want it to stay, not fade away". Well done Steve, he just keeps coming up with winning words year after year.

Another first for this year was that people could vote for their Favourite Mild and in which Pub they found it. The winning beer was Porters Dark Mild, served at the Railway on Portwood. Other beers and pubs were close behind though. In no particular order were, Mauldons McCawber at the Olde Vic in Edgeley; Hydes Dark at the Fletcher Moss, Didsbury; Copper Dragon Black Gold in the Old Glove Works, Glossop; Beartown Black Bear at the Navigation; and a variety of milds (mostly Bank Top DM) at the Crown on Heaton Lane. There were many votes cast for individual pubs, so everyone seems to have had a favourite somewhere. To mark the success of the winning mild at the Railway, a presentation will be organised soon; look out for details on these pages. Finally a big Thank You to our sponsors "The Stockport Express", especially Jim Kershaw and his team, without whom we would struggle to do it. Thanks too, to everyone who participated, all the pubs that took part, Hydes for the brewery visit, and everyone who distributed and collected materials and monies to the pubs. Thanks again, see you on the 2006 Challenge.

Mark McConachie



With the strain of rebuilding the Opening Times computer both to get this issue out at all, and to prepare for "the Big Push" later in the year, I've not had a chance to put pen to paper in any serious way this month. Draught Germans. After a happy period when Paulaner (Munich) was widely available in Manchester, now only the Crescent offers the Original in any serious way. Erdinger dominates the Wheat beer offerings, with Paulaner Weiss at Sand Bar. Lowenbrau still has an outpost at the Knott, otherwise its largely Krombacher, nice but slightly unexciting. Centro breaks the pattern with Jever on draught. A curiosiry indeed but much the same as the bottles, slightly harsh & herby, and to my mind unbalanced. Veltins is making some appearances (Railway, Stockport comes to mind) as is Warsteiner (packaged by Thwaites but properly brewed in Germany). The recent Food Market offered Hacker-Pschorr Edelhof which if expensive was a treat, and Paulaner Dunkel. Still I'm looking to have about 50 different ones at Winter Ales in January (up from 38). More after my Olympia (GBBF) report next month. Oh yes, now nearly 40% of licensees have applied for the new licences - still there's a fortnight to go!

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All Bar One, 73 King Street, Manchester
Angel Inn, 197 King Street, Dukinfield
Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport
Bank at Sale, 70 School Road, Sale
Barsh, 65 High Street, Cheadle
Barton Arms, 2 Stableford, Worsley
Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford
Boathouse, Ferry Road, Irlam
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, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Gothic Bar, 61 Church Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Ch'dle Hulme
Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield
Harbord Harbord, 17-21 Long Street, Middleton | Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
Harrys Bar, UMIST, Sackville St Manchester
High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley
J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
Jar Bar, SilkHouse, 4 Park Green, Macclesfield
John Gilbert, Worsley Brow, Worsley
Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme
King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
Loves Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
Moon Under Water, Deansgate, Manchester
Oddfellows Arms, 73 Moor End Road, Stockport
Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Manchester
Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rushmore
Paramount, 33 Oxford Street, Manchester
Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington
Porters Ale House, Prince Roe Street, Macclesfield
Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge
Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester
Rycroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme
Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
Society Rooms, Macclesfield Park La, Macclesfield
Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge Rail Station
Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle
Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston
Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester
Wetherspoons, 47 Piccadilly, Manchester
White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge
Wye Bridge Inn, Fairfield Road, Buxton |
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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak, Macclesfield and Trafford & Hulme.

Diary

July/August 2005

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 22nd - Reddish Stagger: meet 7.30pm Fir Tree, Gorton Rd; 8.30pm Union, Broadstone Rd.

Thursday 28th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Pack Horse, Market lace, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

Thursday 11th August – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Will feature Summer Quiz. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 19th – Ardwick & City Centre East Stagger: meet 7.30pm Apsley Cottage, Apsley St, Ardwick Green; 8.30 Bulls Head, London Rd.

Thursday 25th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Kings Head, Tiviot Dale, Stockport. From 8.30pm.

Sunday 28th – Mild Award to Railway, Portwood (to include barbecue). From 5.00pm.

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 18th - Branch Meeting: Swan, Kettleshulme. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 1st August – Committee Meeting: Sportsmans Inn, Strines, Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 13th – Annual Branch Sponsored Walk: Glossop to Hyde via Uppermill.

Monday 15th – Branch Meeting: Royal Oak, Mellor. Starts 8.30pm.

September 2nd-4th – **Advance Notice: 3rd Glossop Beer Festival.**

July/August 2005

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

Saturday 23rd – Congleton Beer Festival, Congleton Leisure Centre car park.

Friday 29th – Sunday 31st – Dog Beer Festival, Peover Heath

Saturday 30th-Sunday 31st - Moberley Beer Festival, Moberley Victory Hall

Saturday 13th August (tbc) – Real Ale Bar, Barnton Cricket Club

Friday 26th-Monday 29th - Beer Festival at the Ship, Wincle

Other August events to be confirmed: Bowls Afternoon at the Bulls Head, Moberley; Sunday Lunch at the Eldon Arms, Knutsford.

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:

Wednesday 27th – Pub of the Season presentation to the Peveril of the Peak, Manchester City Centre. From 8.00pm.

Thursday 11th August – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.

Thursday 18th – Hale survey and social: meet at The Railway 8.00pm.

Sunday 28th August – Bev's Annual Garden party. All wishing to attend please confirm

To Do
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JULY/AUGUST '00

FOR THE SECOND month running, the Belgian giant Interbrew had been responsible for the shock headlines. Last month it was simply "Armageddon" and this month is was "Bass Bought Out".

Interbrew said the two companies, Bass Brewers and the Whitbread Beer Co – now renamed Interbrew UK – would continue to operate independently as "focussed brewers, committed to the UK beer heritage and offering a rich portfolio of both beers and lagers." Which, given their track record in recent years, could well have proved something of a culture shock to both of them. As these two latest acquisitions had given Interbrew a market share of well over 30%, it was bound to take some weeks to clear, undoubtedly shedding several brands, probably including Heineken, to satisfy the regulators

★★★★★

Local brewers Hydes and Lees both had new beers in their seasonal ranges for the month. Hydes' had their latest offering in the "T'Ale of the Century" range with Your Bard, an excruciating pun commemorating William Shakespeare. Lees had come up with Scorcher. Robinson's had at last started experimenting with seasonal beers, and had produced Whistling Will, named after a 19th Century local eccentric.

★★★★★

Stewart Revell, the Brewery Liaison Officer for Holts, had reported the sad news that Peter Kershaw, Chairman and Joint Managing Director of the Joseph Holt Group had died on 31 May, aged 85. He was the great-great grandson of Joseph Holt, who set up the Derby Brewery in 1849. Peter Kershaw went to work in the brewhouse after WW2, and was appointed brewing manager in 1953. He became Chairman when his uncle, Sir Edward Holt, died in 1968. During the 60s and 70s, many brewers were promoting keg beers, but Peter Kershaw preferred to maintain production of traditional beer at low prices.

★★★★★

Another Bhurtpore Inn Beer Festival had been scheduled for July, with the usual express trains making a special stop at Wrenbury. That year it was planned to bring a barrel of Norman's Secret Hop beer from Craven Arms by train. The previous year a barrel has been brought by train from the Tomos Watkins Brewery at Llandeilo.

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REALLY GOOD PUBS

In a recent edition of *Opening Times*, Cityman described a city-centre boozier as "a cracking pub, and obviously well-run," even though it sold no real ale. I can see what he meant, but it made me think just how few pubs there are that can in any sense be considered "good", but still don't offer the real stuff.

There are various publications on the market such as "The Good Pub Guide" and its imitators. While these major on the dreaded "country dining pubs", they do include many genuine, characterful establishments. But it is remarkable how virtually every pub featured serves real ale of some kind – as, of course, goes without saying for the "Good Beer Guide".

It is famously difficult to describe what makes a good pub, but probably the key factor is that it offers something to make it worth visiting for people who don't live on its doorstep, whether good food, good beer, good conversation, good music, good architecture or more likely a combination of these. Keg pubs, on the other hand, tend to be those either that appeal mainly to a youth market, or simply serve an indiscriminating, captive local population.

From time to time, you'll come across a pub and think "if it sold real ale, this could be halfway decent". But, in the absence of real ale, there is rarely more than unrealised potential. All too often the lack of decent beer is a sign of a "can't be bothered" attitude that permeates through into every other aspect of what is offered to customers.

BELT, BRACES AND THE REST

At a social function I offered to buy a female friend a drink. She said she would just have a Coke, as she was driving. A reasonable point, you might think, but on this occasion she would not have been driving for at least five hours, by which time any alcohol in a drink would have been fully metabolised long before, and left her with a blood-alcohol level of zero.

If, on that occasion, she really had preferred a soft drink, fair enough. But, in those circumstances, to use drink-driving as a reason to avoid a single alcoholic drink is nonsense, and has no legal or safety justification. This kind of attitude is a direct result of the misleading government propaganda of recent years that has encouraged responsible people to take a ludicrously exaggerated view of risk while – via the replacement of traffic police officers with speed cameras – giving a green light to the irresponsible minority.

Within the law, everyone is entitled to make a judgment as to what for them constitutes responsible behaviour. But if supposedly intelligent people are taking such an inflated view of the level of prudence they need to exercise, it is hardly surprising that pubs are so empty and hundreds are closing every year.

**PLEASE NOTE - COPY DATE FOR NEXT
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Reports that the *Gardeners Arms* in Lumb Lane, Hyde has been refurbished and is now owned by Thwaites, after a long spell as a keg only pub.

Down the hill on Hyde Road, we hear reports that the *Moulders Arms* are now taking Shaws' beers, a handy place to call if on the way to the *Sportsman* across the road, to sample the only local regular outlet for Hartington Bitter.

The Crescent in New Mills, across from the bus station, we reported last year as shut, probably for good. Well, the building has now re-opened - but it has been converted to an Indian restaurant.

A forthcoming local beer festival in High Peak is at the *Dog & Partridge* in Bridgmont (near the start of the Chapel by-pass between Furness Vale and Whaley Bridge), on the 26th-28th August Bank Holiday. High Peak Branch members are walking there from Hayfield over Chinley Churn on the Saturday, meeting at 9.45am at Hayfield bus station. Everyone welcome.

In Buxton the *Railway* is currently closed for a major refurbishment in preparation for the huge block of student accommodation being built just behind it. The Hardy Hanson pub is believed to be challenging Wetherspoons which is just down the road, for the extra custom in that part of Buxton.

Also in Buxton, on a recent Branch Saturday Social in the town, *Ramseys* had a good range of around six beers on sale, alas the pricing was a tad high. I paid £2.50 for a pint of Holdens Old Nick (4.5%) and others paid £2.40 for slightly weaker brews. The choice across the road at the *Clubhouse* that day was limited with only Greene King Abbot or Tetley Bitter. Over at the *George*, however, there were seven beers on sale, at lower prices, and the ones tried were all in good condition. From there, we spent lots of time sat out in the sun at the front of *Wye Bridge House* (Wetherspoons) where a good choice of around eight beers was available, all a lot cheaper at £1.49 and £1.59. Up on the Market Place, we tried the *Bakers Arms* behind, where a choice of three beers was available, all of us going for the St Austell Tribute, which was in good form. Time being a little tight, we managed an average pint of Hydes in the *Spread Eagle* before taking the train back towards the various parts of the branch.

On a visit to the Three Stags Heads at Wardlow Mires (two miles out of our Branch boundary) on 3 July, the choice was Abbeydale Matins, Abbeydale Moonshine, Broadstone Charter Ale and Abbeydale Black Lurcher, exactly the same range as the two previous visits earlier this year. Nothing has changed in this classic pub, run for many years now by Geoff Fuller and his wife, the food choice is all home cooked and wholesome and the place is full of character and characterful customers - a must to try when in the area, a classic. Note, Geoff only opens Friday evening, All day Saturday and Sunday. During the week he spends his time in the adjoining pottery, the shop being open by request at the weekends when the pub is open.

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Finally, a visit to the **Bulls Head** in Old Glossop recently was very enjoyable. Three **Robbies'** beers - **Hatters**, **Old Stockport** and **Unicorn** were on handpump and in good nick. The Indian restaurant is still flourishing and also features works from a local artist on the walls, and I am told that five en-suite letting bedrooms will be installed shortly. With Tuesday quizzes (from 9.30pm) and Wednesday jazz bands (9-11) this is a pub worth visiting. Star of the show, though must be **Big Joe**, a rescue greyhound who has easily settled into his new role as pub dog!

NEW FACES AT THE CHESHIRE RING

After a brief interlude when the redoubtable 'Fletch' kept things on the straight and narrow, there are new permanent tenants at Beartown Brewery's Cheshire Ring in Hyde.

Wayne and Jean Taylor took over at the pub on 1 May, and already the difference is noticeable, with a more relaxed atmosphere prevailing and a notable increase in custom. Wayne is an experienced licensee, whose first pub was the Lord Cardigan at Bramley, Leeds some 14 years ago. He was however out of the trade for 8½ years before taking on his former local, the Cheshire Ring - as a real ale fan he didn't want to



see it fall into the wrong hands when Beartown temporarily put the pub up for sale. The pub has been redecorated and old pictures of the area will be adorning the walls. Pool and darts teams are being sought and live entertainment now features every second Friday. Speciality nights are also being held in the upstairs function room. Freshly made, and good value, sandwiches, are available at all times. In short, this is now a pub on the move, and on the up. On the beer front, the Cheshire Ring features a changing selection from the Beartown range plus changing guests (currently two but Wayne hopes to increase this to three) along with a changing draught real cider or perry. These are supplemented by a range of bottled beers, both UK and overseas, and foreign draught beers, including the new Budvar Dark (the Cheshire Ring is one of a handful of local outlets for this beer). Wayne is keen on beer quality and is looking for Cask Marque accreditation. Just as we went to press, Wayne told me that Jean (and the pub) would be featuring on the Stuart Hall's "Hall's Heroes" programme for local Channel M television - this is in recognition of her extensive charity work. There's a lot of confidence in the way the Cheshire Ring is now being run and it now looks set fair to become yet another jewel in the Beartown crown. Get there soon if you've not been in yet.

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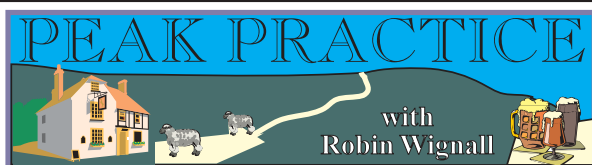
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DOTTED THROUGH the summer calendar of the Peak District are wells dressings, village fairs and school fetes. Fell races are often associated with these village events and fell runners often gravitate to local pubs after races. Indeed some races use a local pub as race HQ for registration and prize giving.

Some interesting guest beers are an attraction to the **Robin Hood** in Rainow, close to fell race happenings, whilst at Kettleshulme both the **Bull's Head** and the **Swan** attract runners and of course locals alike. After a recent race in Tideswell I decided to ignore the doubtless worthy pubs of that village, in favour of an historic gem not far away, the **Three Stag's Heads** at Wardlow Mires on the A623 Chesterfield road at its junction with the B6465. The pub is a Grade II listed building appearing in the CAMRA National Inventory of Pub Interiors of Outstanding Historic Interest. A certificate confirming this is on display at the bar.

The bar room is plainly decorated with a big stone fireplace housing fire and oven. A second room, where there can be live music, has pictures, photographs and cigarette card sets devoted to dogs, many of which appear to be regulars. A dining room can be used by booked parties. Definitely a pub in a time warp and definitely a gem. Beers available were Abbeydale Matins (3.6%) at £1.60, Abbeydale Absolution (5.2%), Broadstone Charter (4.6%) and an 8% house beer from Abbeydale, Black Lurcher, one of the house dogs.

Unfortunately the pub is remote from population centres and only opens on Friday nights, Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays. It can be reached by bus as the X67 Chesterfield service from Manchester, Stockport and Marple gets you there and back during the day on Saturdays, Sundays and BH Mondays. Well worth the trip.

At the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee food is now available following the kitchen refurbishment. Serving times are 12 to 2 and 6 to 8.30 Monday to Saturday and 12 to 8 on Sunday. Food of course accompanies a selection of Jennings beers. Reaching the Shady Oak is now easier as the 61 bus now runs over Long Hill every hour until early evening.

A recent call at the **Navigation** in Buxworth found a real cider on sale, Thatcher's Heritage. This is a welcome addition, which will

hopefully continue. The guest beer that day was a pale, hoppy, refreshing brew from Anglo Dutch, Spike's ont' Way.

At the **Swan** in Kettleshulme business continues a usual whilst a permanent team is awaited to run the pub. Readers may have seen adverts in local newspapers for an appropriate couple. During recent visits Crouch Vale Brewers Gold (4%), Bowland Hen Harrier (4%) with Bowland Gold to follow, and Edale Kinder Right to Roam (3.9%) were available and were certainly on good form when I called. Perhaps it was something to do with hops and paleness and bitterness, as well, of course, as good keeping.



PUB NEWS

The Vale, Adlington Rd., Bollington is now open again. This is a free house so anyone's beer might be served, currently two real ales are available, but the owners intend to extend the range to four. The pub is open weekdays 12-3, 5.30-11, weekends all day and meals and snacks are available.

Now to the Cotton Tree. This pub was closed and boarded up and belonged to Pubmaster before the current licensee took over. Now it is a thriving local pub selling decent real ale and hosting live music two or three times a week. So you would think that the owners (now Punch Taverns, who took over Pubmaster) would be pleased. Not so, they have landed the licensee with a staggering 300% rent increase. Previously the pub was costing the owning company money, now it makes money but the greedy pen pushers at Punch want more. Consequently, the licensee has tendered his notice to quit simply because it will be impossible to make a living out of the pub with treble the rent. Punch Taverns - you must be stupid because when the licensee leaves the Cotton Tree it will be shut and cost you money, wouldn't it make better business sense to accept the profit you are currently making rather than close the pub?

Tying the knot at Macclesfield registry office on 25th June marks the start of a whirlwind week for 30-year-old Ben Jackson, who, hot on the heels of marrying his Thai wife, Dao, is launching an authentic Thai restaurant at The Merchants House on Buxton Road. "We couldn't ask for a better start to our married life," says Ben who met Dao two years ago when the couple worked together at the Chilli Banana in Wilmslow, the sister restaurant to their new venture.

"We've both played a big part in the success at Wilmslow and

we are now putting the same efforts into rolling out the Chilli Banana brand here in Macclesfield," says Ben, an ex-pupil of the Kings School. **Not prepared to do things by halves, and keen to ensure absolute authenticity at The Merchants House, the couple have recruited two fully trained, top class chefs from the five star, Ambassador Hotel in Pattaya, Thailand, who will add their own very special flavour in the kitchen. The launch of his own restaurant marks a bold move for Ben who in the past has also worked as a Shakespearean actor at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. "It is obviously a very exciting time for us both, and a steep learning curve, but we have a lot of support from our old colleagues in Wilmslow, and we look forward to bringing the same successful genuine Thai experience to Macclesfield as we start our life together," concluded Ben.**

Rob at the Poachers in Bollington has taken the bold step of replacing long-time Boddingtons with Copper Dragon 1816. Boddingtons and Taylor's Landlord were the two permanent beers. This now brings the number of real ale pumps to five although this occasionally drops to four during the week as demand drops. Okay, so they always had five pumps but I never really counted Boddingtons. I sampled a couple of pints 1816 and the quality and taste were excellent.

The reaction from the long-time drinkers of Boddingtons is interesting. At first there's shock and then surprise at quite how nice the Copper Dragon is and then conversion. These are the kind of drinkers who have drunk Boddingtons since they were in nappies and rarely or never strayed down the other end of the bar to the guest beers. I wouldn't be surprised if they became a bit more adventurous and tried out one of the guests from time to time. The price @ £1.90 stays the same for the time being.



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16



THE ENGLISH LOUNGE

The English Lounge on High Street has garnered rave reviews in some quarters. Robin Pendragon is not so sure...

I generally come away from the English Lounge (High Street, Manchester) disappointed with the beer. They got it right for a time, in a former incarnation as The Hogshead but the beer now seems to be somehow mostly below par. I have to be there at precisely the right time to find something bang on but the recent relaunch was not one of them. Of the four pints on offer I tried the Boddington's (which was what I call 'manky') and Deuchars IPA (drinkable but tired).

EVOLUTION

The latest evolution of The English Lounge opened on 9 May to a clamour of secrecy. There were no incentives to first day callers, which was a really bad sign. Instead newcomers were left locked out on the street until a few minutes afternoon. The result was that it was 12.30 before anyone started eating. For us ordinary Manchester schlocks, lunch starts at 11, seeing as most workers have been on the go since 7.00am. If they aren't even going to open the doors until 12.30 then they are clearly more interested in reaching a clientele named Piers or Jacintha.

They won't get them actually: the food is not right. It's a bit like Wetherspoon's with less boil-in-the-bag but at prices closer to Sam's Chop House. Portions for vegetarians are were too small, pasta portions were too big, they need to talk to their butcher about the quality of the steaks and they need to start doing the chips in beef dripping instead of sunflower seed juice. At £20/£25 a head, for three courses and a pint, it is not quite good enough. This new evolution may well struggle.

CHARMING STAFF

There can be no criticism of the staff. They are completely charming, helpful and aware. The ground floor bar gleamed and the new first floor restaurant is posh and art-deco inspired. One brilliant touch is a bar in the new upstairs restaurant with two of the bitters on handpull, though they will send someone down to get the others on request. There is also a lift to get the aged and infirm up to the first floor. Very nice touch. They have the right beers, but there is a persistent technical problem somewhere. The food is not quite right for the money or for Manchester. The one thing they have got bang on are the staff who are both friendly and clued-up; a very rare combination in Manchester. Not a disaster then, and once the staff put their managers right, this could be well worth another visit. Above all they need an expert to find out why the beer is so consistently inconsistent. I will just leave it a couple of months and then, as Arnie said, I'll be back.

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MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

HIGGINSON TAVERNS AT THE BEER HOUSE

Pete Cash lays a few rumours to rest...

A new pub company, financed by its customers, has emerged in Manchester, largely as a result of the convolutions surrounding The Beer House on Angel Street.

The story of the Beer House as a free house offering a range of beers from microbreweries began in the late eighties with Simon Finch. Later, Idy Phillips and her partner Sal (now at Salford's Crescent) took over, followed by Ian Casson. After Ian's departure the pub was sold and went through a time of mixed fortunes and identity changes.

More recently, when the nearby Pot of Beer closed its doors, licensees Paul and Sue Higginson moved in. The colour clash décor was toned down and real ales once again took centre stage. At first, they were employed by *InnControl*, a holding company which specialises in finding licensees at short notice until more permanent tenants are installed. At this stage, the pub itself was owned by *Innspired*. Soon afterwards, *Innspired* was bought by *Punch Taverns*, who then decided to sell half the estate, including the Beer House, to a property company, *Pub Folio Ltd* (still with me, at the back?).

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18



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Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004

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Date	



Although at present they supply beer, the main *Pub Folio* interest is property and collecting rent. They have announced that within six months all their pubs are to be converted to free-of-tie leases. The *InnControl*, who do not handle long term leases, decided to pull out and the pub was offered to Paul and Sue. As an automatic part of the process, a 'To Let' sign went up outside the pub, and was misinterpreted by some people as a 'For Sale' sign.

Paul and Sue, with investment from their customers, formed a company, *Higginson Taverns*, which is now the tenant of *Pub Folio*. The present lease is for six months until the free-of-tie leases become available. In the interim, an effective freeing of the tie has been secured by paying extra rent. The regular beers are Moorhouses Premier, Black Cat and Pendle Witch, together with the house beer, Premium Blonde from Phoenix. On a recent visit there were also beers from Shaws, Holdens, Archers and Hampshire on the pumps together with two real ciders and an 11% ABV mead, delivered by Merrylegs.

When the free-of-tie lease kicks in, expect to see quality foreign lagers and Belgian beers etc joining the cask ales. Paul would also like to run festivals, but with a difference, such as draught German beers. The rock juke box, once a famous feature, has been restored. A darts board has been installed in the upstairs room, as has a pool table (this can be moved around so the room is still available for meetings). Attention will shortly be given to the range of food, with lighter snacks featuring more prominently.

The Beer House has regained its position in the Good Beer Guide (2006) after several years' absence and is well worth including in any visit to the pubs of the Northern Quarter.

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