

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



## BOOMING BREWERIES



### NATIONAL AWARD FOR MARBLE & NEW VENTURE FOR SHAWS

**W**hile 'consolidation' (for which read takeover and closure) continues amongst the family brewers, our local micro brewers continue to make a mark. Last month Manchester's Marble Brewery hit the national headlines with a top award from the Vegetarian Society, while Shaws of Dukinfield has gained a real "Shaw's" pub.

#### TOP VEGGIE BEER

The Rochdale Road –based brewery, at the back of the Marble Arch pub, gained the Vegetarian Society's award for 'Best Provision for Vegetarians in a Pub or Pub Chain' at a ceremony on the famous Cutty Sark in London.

The award wasn't for the food at the Marble Arch, although that is restaurant class, but for the range of organic and vegan beers produced by Head Brewer James Campbell. James told us "We use ingredients that have not been treated with pesticides and are not genetically modified, which makes it better."

Marble Director Jan Rogers told us "Five years ago we were asked to make an organic beer for the Manchester Food & Drink Festival and decided at the same time to go vegan, to cut out all impurities.

"It was a bit of a risk at the time, but we've never looked back since. We know now there's a market out there for traditional beers made the old way.

Special beers currently available include Chocolate (5.5%), a rich stouty-type beer and Christmas Eve will see the launch of this year's brew of Port Stout (4.7%) with a bottle of organic port added to each 9-gallon cask.

Apart from the Marble Arch, you will find Marble Beers at the Knott (Deansgate, Manchester), the Bar (Wilbraham Road, Chorlton) and the Marble Beer House (Manchester Road, Chorlton), along with an increasing number of free trade outlets.

#### MAJOR PROJECT IN ASHTON

Shaw's Brewery in Dukinfield operates in part of the old Shaws Brewery, which lost its independence to John Smith's over sixty years ago. Now one of the old Shaws pubs is stocking beers from the company's modern day successor.

The pub in question is the former Chaplins at 1 Old Street, Ashton, which has now reverted to its old name of the Angel and is once again stocking Shaws cask beers after many years as a keg-only outlet. Not only that but there are some exciting plans for the pub.

It is notable for the spectacular mosaic tiled exterior and there are plans not only to restore this but also to reinstate much of the pubs original interior and layout. This is a major project, and in this licensee Andrea Draycott, who took over the pub on 30 December last year, is being assisted by funding strategist and accountant Leonie Barnes.

A funding package is currently being negotiated but if all goes according to plan, the next 12 months or so will see these exciting plans, which will certainly put this corner of Ashton on the map, come to fruition.

Meanwhile the town has a cask ale gain with Shaw's Autumn Dark and Angel Gold on handpump. The pub also has displays detailing the history of both it and the brewery, which make for fascinating reading while you drink your pint.



18<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>  
January  
New  
Century  
Hall,  
Corporation  
Street  
Manchester



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# JOHN WILLIE'S A MILD APART



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**IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..**

Just what is going on? We seem to be revisiting the bad old days of the sixties with almost every month bringing news of yet another family brewery selling out to a predator.

Both Ridleys of Essex and Gales of Hampshire have taken the money and run. Ridleys was hawked around but its Monaco-based tax exile chairman (not perhaps the best advert for the long term future of his company). Perhaps then, that was a takeover waiting to happen, particularly as the company also had a pile of debt.

Gales is harder to fathom. The chairman has bled on about the forthcoming smoking ban affecting trade and there being fewer opportunities for growth in the foreseeable future. Given that family brewers have traditionally taken the long view and ridden out ups and downs in trading performance, you can't help but feel that this is just a convenient excuse. The £93 million offered by Fullers is perhaps a more convincing reason for the decision to sell...

Will the contagion spread north? Without doubt, the four Greater Manchester family brewers would all make tempting bid targets and it's a fair bet that more than one company has already run a slide rule over them. Would they sell? Well you can never say never, I suppose but I am prepared to stick my neck out on this one. My gut feeling is that none of the controlling families will sell their heritage down the river - but that doesn't mean we can be complacent. These companies need our support and encouragement - they are guardians of much of pub and cask beer heritage and without them we would all be much the poorer.

*John Clarke*

Amidst all the doom and gloom and armageddon-like prophesies of 24-hour mob rule, there was a piece of good news last month, when Enterprise Inns, who seem to be the most innovative of the leading pubcos announced a deal with SIBA (the Independent Micro Brewers association) to take directly delivered beers from SIBA members throughout the estate where tenants want the beers. Potentially there is a massive opportunity for the micros here, and it shows that Enterprise at least realise that there is a genuine market - albeit they see it as a niche market - for a proper variety of craft-brewed real ales.

*Paul Hutchings*



**OPENING TIMES LETTERS**

**From Martin Church, Kro Bar (via e-mail):**

Just a word regards smoking legislation. I am sure you are aware of the fudge that the government has decided on. For us it's a no brainer, food accounts for far too much of our trade to stop serving in order allow smoking. We have large heated outside areas which the smokers will be able to use once the law comes into place. However I feel sorry for small pubs where food is a small but essential proportion of trade who will have to make a tough choice. We are being penalised for serving food, and will lose trade. Bars that don't bother serving food will benefit out of this new legislation. We as a company are very pro an outright ban on smoking in pubs, this will have the least effect on small pubs and large pubs alike, and will lead to a healthier environment for all workers and customers



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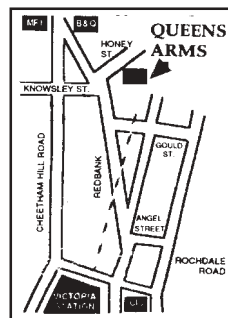
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# PUB OF THE MONTH DECEMBER

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2005



**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for December is the Vale Cottage on Kirk Street, Gorton.**

The Vale Cottage really is a hidden gem, just off Hyde Road but hidden by trees and shrubs. Indeed the aspect from the pub is almost rural in feel and this carries through to the look at atmosphere of the pub itself.

Comfortable and well appointed with subdued lights and even horse brasses, parts of the pub date from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It has been like this for many years but in recent times an apparent lessening of interest from a long-serving licensee left the pub somewhat adrift.

However in February John and Maureen Smith took over. Both with experience of the pub trade, they have set about reviving the pub's fortunes across the board. Maureen runs the kitchen and has earned the Vale Cottage a growing reputation for its properly home-cooked food, with Friday lunchtime being especially popular.

The beer has been revitalised, too. The only cask ale on offer when John and Maureen took over was John Smith's Bitter and one of John's first actions was to remove the beer that bore his name! This was replaced by Wells' Bombardier, a hit with the generally more mature customer base, and this has been complemented by Taylor's Landlord. A third cask beer, probably of session strength, will be introduced soon. A recent popular introduction has been Hoegaarden wheat beer on draught.

With no music, apart from background tapes, often reflecting John's passion for Northern Soul, and no pool tables, this is a pub for conversation, although it is lively enough, with the quiz nights being especially popular.

This well-deserved award to a revitalised pub will be presented on Thursday 22 December – a fine start to the festive season, but get there early if you want a seat. JC

The Vale Cottage is just off Hyde Road – take the path to the right of the Lord Nelson. Hyde road is of course well served by buses from Stockport (203) and Manchester (201-205)

*Pub of the Month certificates are framed for us by Picture This who offer the most competitively priced bespoke picture framing service in Greater Manchester. They specialise in framed breweriana and also offer a 10% discount for CAMRA members. Phone 0161 477 0009*



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**Season's Greetings  
to all readers of Opening Times**



**Only one or two snippets for you this month...**

A new licensee has taken the helm at Robinson's Red Bull on Hillgate. Colin Speed arrives from a year's stint as Assistant Manager at the Elizabethan in Heaton Moor. Prior to that he worked in the pub trade in Spain. He told OT that it was great to be home again, and that the Red Bull was always a pub he had wanted to run. He takes over as a tenant with the intention of leaving much as it has always been at the pub. Robbies seasonal beers may occasionally be tried, but everything appears very steady for now.

Mention of the Red Bull brings news of a very special presentation to long-time barmaid Linda Oliver on the occasion of the famous annual Hillgate Stagger (Fri. Dec 16th). To tie in with the 30th Hillgate Stagger, we are presenting Linda with an award for her long service to the branch, the Stagger and to the pub. She has now served over 41 years at the pub as barmaid and part-time cellarman, she is now working for her third licensee - first were Arthur and Isobel, then came the long tenure with Brian, and now Colin Speed. Linda has witnessed vast change on Hillgate with many pub losses and other alterations occurring; Hillgate is now a lot quieter, she thinks. Linda is on first-name terms with all of the Robinson family as they use the pub as their unofficial "tap".

You could say that the future has now begun for Linda - she turned 60 in November and has reduced her hours (Tues to Fri only) from 54 per week to 31. She loves the job, and the people she meets, so is determined to continue on. The award is a celebration of Linda's efforts and her continuing service throughout the years to the many thousands of people she must have served at the Red Bull over such a lengthy term. So please join us on the Hillgate Stagger on Friday, December 16th, we start at 7.00pm in the Queens Head (Turners Vaults) on Underbank; the award shall be presented at c.8.30pm at the Red Bull. A good night is promised.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on Hillgate, the Flying Dutchman has its tenancy advertised on Robinson's website. Other vacancies are the ever-present Nicholsons Arms (which with its almost perpetually boarded windows and generally unattractive aspect must surely be almost unlettable, I would have thought). Also back on the market, and I was surprised by this, is the tenancy of the Church Inn in Edgeley, a pub that had had considerable investment in recent months.

Just down the road, the firmly closed and boarded Tom Thumbs has now been put up for sale by Enterprise Inns - the freehold can be yours for £235,000.

**IN THE SUBURBS**

Carole Nash took over as licensee at Gothic Bar, Gatley, on Monday 1st August. After Christmas the pub is scheduled to be re-painted and decorated with the floor re-varnished. Cain's mild has been re-introduced and so far it is selling well. Other permanent beers on sale include Cain's bitter, IPA and Formidable ale with guest beers also being sold. The pub has Cask Marque accreditation so good quality should be assured. Carole has introduced a new menu with vegetarian options; food is served seven days a week but at lunch times only. Quiz nights, karaoke and occasional live music nights will also feature. Tuesday nights feature the crib and darts teams with a pub football team now also operating from the pub. This is Carole's first pub so please support her - I wish her well.

Meanwhile in Hazel Grove, the Three Bears on Jacksons Lane was closed for refurbishment as I wrote. Scheduled to reopen on 2 December with, apparently, a more modern theme.

**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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# STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

*Finding myself in Stockport the night before a trip to the excellent Abbeydale brewery in Sheffield, I withstand the very real counter-attraction of Sale versus London Irish at Edgeley Park to pitch up at the start of a stagger round some pubs in the town centre and Lower Hillgate. What's worse, I get my arm twisted to write it up. You lucky people.*

We meet at the **Nelson** on the A6, a pub whose modernisation over the years has not quite effaced the memory of separate rooms. The modern floor tiling is smart and traditional in style, though the coloured glass is crude and garish. One or two of us order Wadworth JCB before noticing that the beer is described as "not yet ready", so we plump instead for "Ruddles" Bitter, now brewed not at Ruddles' long-closed brewery but by East Anglian giant Greene King. Initial disappointment is short-lived, however, as the beer is of well above average quality - indeed it will turn out to be one of the best of the night. A shame, though, that the jukebox is at that annoying volume where those who want to hear it can't really, yet those who would rather talk must shout.

Downhill, the clear glass windows of the **Town Hall Tavern** reveal the absence of real ale within. We move on, by-passing for now our mid-evening meeting-place the **Unity**, to **Cobdens**. You often hear of a pub undergoing a "radical change of image", and never can the phrase have been more appropriate than here. The raffish, not to say seedy, charm of the old Manchester Arms has been replaced by Stockport's take on cafe-bar culture - low lights, soft background music (though a disco is just setting up), a long row of keg founts with a handpump for Robinsons Unicorn at each end. The beer is decent enough but uninspiring; many of us think it too cold, and one or two (especially those drinking halves) need to request top-ups (given without demur). Personally, I'm impressed by the beer's distinctive hoppy aroma in what is clearly not a specialist cask-beer house.

The evening air has onions on its breath as we take the short walk back to the **Unity**, where we are now due. At 8.30 this modernised main-road house is full and bustling with a good-humoured, settled-looking crowd. The karaoke is a bit overpowering for what is not a large pub, but most of us manage to find a quietish

corner, though some find the place too smoky. The beer - Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn on handpump - sadly rates little better than average. For all our criticisms, though, the place is plainly popular with the regulars, and it's good to see such a genuine local atmosphere in the centre of a large town.

Now it's round the corner to **Little Jack Horner's**, a haven of peace compared to the last two pubs. It's another modernised pub, but with separate areas preserved, and the emphasis is on conversation rather than electronic entertainment. Some pleasingly corny examples of pub humour are noted - a notice promises "Special offer on all drinks - buy one get none free". Four big-brand cask beers are on sale: Theakstons Best, Tetley Bitter, Greene King IPA, and Marstons Pedigree. Most of us drink the Theakstons, and find it well above average; the Tetleys and Greene King are received somewhat less enthusiastically, though still perfectly palatable; while our solitary Pedigree drinker proclaims the beer the best of the night.

Next up is the **Royal Oak**, like the Unity a modernised Robinson's house, where one of our number insists I should mention specifically the generous provision of space in the gents' toilets - "you could swing a leopard in there", exclaims my intrepid informant. Though it's surprisingly quiet for the time of evening, there's a pleasant atmosphere, with some customers chatting as others play pool (good to see the table placed well out of the way of other customers). Hatters and Unicorn here issue from the increasingly rare electric pumps - both are above average, but we prefer the Hatters by some margin.

By now we are of course within sight and smell of Robinson's Brewery, and we prove it by calling next at brewery tap the **Spread Eagle**. Again, it's a knocked-through and modernised Robinson's house with a good local atmosphere, despite - or perhaps because of - some stern notices warning against the use of foul language. Local traditions are honoured in that hot blobs are advertised behind the bar (not sure about Cheeky Vimto, though...). As at the Royal Oak, Robinson's two most common beers are served by electric pump; as at the Royal Oak, both are above average, but we prefer the Hatters to the Unicorn.

Walking down Hillgate, I briefly believe I have found a previously undiscovered Stockport pub - but the Drum Inn turns out to be a musical instrument shop! It's closed anyway, so instead we call at the jewellers shop that Holts brewery a few years ago turned into a pub called **Winters**. Town-centre shop conversions from most brewers tend towards the bland and inoffensive - but this is Joseph Holts, so the feel is of a reasonably robust vault which I reckon to be probably the best pub atmosphere so far. On handpump are Mild, Bitter, and Joey's, and while the two mainstream beers are in reasonable form (we prefer the bitter), the Joey's only scrapes an "average" rating, and we wonder whether the pub may be stocking one cask beer too many. One or two of us try the bottled Fifth Sense and find it a deeply disappointing beer, utterly failing to fulfil the promise of the label. Still, stick to the standard mild or bitter here and you shouldn't go far wrong.

Now it's time for one of Stockport's - indeed Britain's - historic gems, the old wine and spirits merchant's premises that is **Turners Vaults**. Though it looks unfeasibly busy from the outside, once inside we find space enough to stand, chat, and even admire some of the historic features. (This is not the place to wax lyrical about the pub's history and highly successful adaptation to the present day - I simply say: if by some chance you've never visited, go now!) Our hearts go out to the barmaid, working solo, who is efficient, cheerful, hard-working - but overwhelmed! Matters are not helped by what appears to be a leaking handpump, which makes the pouring of full measure difficult. Nonetheless, the beer - Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter - is well received, despite being maltier in character than many of the party customarily enjoy.

We've been enjoying ourselves - time has flown - only time for one more pub. And it's not even called a pub - it's a wine bar! Have we gone mad? Well no, actually, for the **Three Shires Wine Bar** has been selling cask beer for some time now, and rounds off the evening very well. The narrow entrance here does not prepare the unwary visitor for the large drinking area that opens up towards the rear. I struggle to discern distinguishing features that make this a "wine bar" rather than a pub, but it's certainly a pleasant enough place to drink. Colleagues tantalise me with tales of the Copper Dragon beers often sold here, but tonight Fullers London Pride is just running out as we enter, leaving Charles Wells Bombardier as the sole cask beer. It's good stuff too - one of the best beers of the night - though one or two of us find full measure takes some time to achieve. Altogether, though, a pleasant end to a varied and interesting evening's drinking.

Well, that's the way it strikes us, one mid-September evening. As ever, you may have a different experience - so why not go along and try the pubs for yourselves?



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 South of Macclesfield, about one and a half miles from the village of Sutton, at 1089 feet (332 metres) stands this family run Cheshire hostelry, set amidst the rolling peaks and plains. Nestling on the hillside and reached down quiet country lanes (some an uphill climb and unlit for most of the way) it is well worth the effort to get there.  
 Several years ago, the local CAMRA guide *Out Inn Cheshire* gave this pub a 'flagship' entry, noting it as one of the best 100 pubs in the county. To its credit, this former free house passed into the hands of Manchester brewers Hydes' and still holds this standing today.  
 The pub dates from the 17th Century and is easily spotted with its predominantly white exterior, and upon entering one is greeted with a small snug which also serves as the main bar area. The adjoining room in the middle section is known as the 'blue room' and acts as a go between leading to the downstairs restaurant. This prides itself on providing good quality food, from simple starters, to more substantial main dishes, and seems to be the most popular place in the whole pub; booking is advisable. There are wonderful panoramic views from this room too, on a clear day you can see across to Jodrell Bank radio telescope and also the Welsh hills. Something of a rarity these days though, are the block of outside toilets, opposite the entrance.  
 I happened upon this pub in late September, which coincided with their first ever mini beer festival, held in a small marquee close to the car park. A little late in the year perhaps as the nights are drawing in, but despite some atrocious weather conditions, it seemed to be fairly well attended on the Friday evening. The beer range, to say the least was impressive, a

majority of them coming from Hydes' own stable. These were (in order of ABV): 1863 (3.5%), the new name for their Light; Dark Mild (3.5%), usually brewed for their Welsh estate; Landladies Bitter (4.0%), a fruity and moreish brew of English malt and hops; HPA (4.5%), a full bodied premium ale; Inspiration (4.5%), a robust autumnal ale and their latest in the seasonal range; Hangman's Ale (7.0%), full bodied and heartwarming. This beer proved to be the star of the show. Originally billed at 6.5%, I expected it to be a blend of the popular winter brew XXXX. Not so! It was a good deal lighter and drank more like a session beer.

The rest of the selection came from Woodforde's (Wherry 3.8%, a floral flavoured bitter); Atlas (Three Sisters 4.2%, dark ruby with dried fruit and roasted malt); Inverlmond (Thrappledouser 4.3%, copper coloured with a slight citrus aroma). Sadly, the advertised Honey Gold 4.2% from Cropton hadn't settled, so was not available. The regular beers inside the pub were also available, these being Hydes' Bitter and Jekyll's Gold. The Friday night was supplemented with a hog roast; hand carved pork complete with crackling, placed on a bap for £3, an ideal snack food and accompaniment to the beers.

In my opinion though, this pub is worth a visit anytime. It currently holds Cask Marque accreditation and is an entry in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide 2006. The opening hours are from 11am-3pm, 7pm (5.30 Friday)-11pm during the week; at weekends from midday-11pm Saturday and midday-10.30pm Sunday. It is expertly managed by Peter and Pat McGrath, their son Paul and daughter-in-law Becky. A warm welcome is assured and it makes for a pleasant summer stroll daytime or evening.

To get there by public transport, take the Arriva number 14 Langley service from Macclesfield and alight at Sutton Village. Cross over the road, down Church Lane, bear right onto Judy Lane, follow this to the end turning right again onto Ridge Hill. This eventually leads onto Meg Lane. At the end turn right and follow the road into Cophurst Lane, where the pub is situated. Allow at least an hour for this. It is good walking country too; a booklet featuring short walks is available at the pub for £3, proceeds to the Rossendale Trust.



**FESTIVE FAYRE**

**OLD TOM CAKE**

As is traditional at this time of year, we bring you our festive recipe for Old Tom Cake. We have local brewer Frederic Robinson to thank for this recipe which the brewery have now republished on a glossy red leaflet. While Old Tom is the recommended ale to use, any strong old ale could be used, perhaps even a Belgian Trappist beer.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 4 oz butter
- 4 oz sugar
- 1 cup dried mixed fruit
- 1 bottle of Old Tom
- 2 cups plain flour
- 1 level tsp. bicarbonate of soda
- 1 level tsp. mixed spice

**METHOD**

1. Pre-heat oven to gas mark 4, 180C/350F
2. Place the butter, sugar, fruit and ale into a saucepan, mix well and then boil for three minutes.
3. Sieve the flour, bicarbonate of soda and mixed spice into a bowl, add the fruit mixture and mix thoroughly.
4. Transfer to a 1lb loaf tin and bake for at least 40 minutes in the centre of the oven.
5. Test occasionally with a skewer - if it comes out clean, the cake is done. Old Tom Cake can be eaten either cold, spread with butter, or warm with cream or custard as a pudding.



**HOW DOES YOUR PINT MEASURE UP?**

- Short beer measures cost drinkers £1 million a day
- 8 out of 10 pints are less than 100% liquid
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## AND ANOTHER ONE GONE...



**T**he consolidation in the regional and family brewing sector continues last month with a wholly unexpected takeover. Family brewer Gales, based in Horndean, Hampshire, succumbed to a £93 million bid from fellow family brewer Fullers. Fullers are now conducting a full review of their operations before deciding whether or not to close the Gales brewery (as if they splash out £93 million with no idea of what they will then do...). In all likelihood the sole Gales beer to survive will be the sweet, malty, heavy HSB. While this takeover (and let's face it, inevitable closure) will have little impact locally, the worrying news is that Fullers looked at 10 brewers before deciding on their target. We would like to think that all our local family brewers would have sent Fullers packing.

### FAMILY FAVOURITES

Three of our local family brewers have new beers out and have announced their plans for the coming 12 months.

**Robinson's** – Old Tom is now well established in its regular winter quarters – try the Tiviot and Blossoms in Stockport for very traditional pubs to try this very traditional beer. The current seasonal is the ever popular Robin Bitter (4.5% ABV), full-bodied and dry. Next year's programme sees the return of some old favourites: Enigma (4.7%) is back for January/February followed up by Young Tom (4%) for March and April. The World Cup is marked by England's Champion (3.8%) for May and June, with Sunny Jim (3.8%) back as a summer refresher for July and August. Lighthouse (4%) is back for September/October with Robin Bitter back again for November/December.

**Hydes'** – the current craft ale, Insulation (5%) is a simply stunning light-bodied dry stout. Arguably one of the best craft ales they have produced, this really is worth seeking out. There's a bonus beer this month, too, with 'Yule be Back' (4.6%), described as "generously hopped and full of warming malt flavours". The craft ale programme for next year is themed as Hydes Classics, inspired by the British and American film industry, with pump clips featuring film greats suitably adapted with a beery theme. First up for January/February is Free Spirit (4.8%) "a splendid full tasting deep copper ale". The beer for March/April is Heavenly Draft (4.2%), "a classic amber coloured beer" and in May/June it's Dr's Orders (4.4%), a "elegant light coloured beer characterised by Styrian Golding and English Fuggle hops". The summer special for July/August is Cutty Shark (4.1%), "a true golden beer at its very best" while for autumn the September/October beer is Hidden Treasure (4.5%), a "superb autumnal ale that glows with character" and for the festive season the November/December beer is Stromtrooper (5%). 'dark and delicious, strong and moorish (sic)'

Finally with Hydes look out for the smart new pumpclips for Hydes Bitter, now renamed 'Hydes Original'

**JW Lees** – currently have Plum Pudding (5%) out and this excellent ale with a hint of spice and fruit will be back next winter, too. However Lees are moving to a quarterly basis for their seasonal beers next year. Thus Plum Pudding with have a

three month season from October to December. The other three ales will be Greengate for January-March, a cask version of the brewery's smooth bitter, followed by old favourites Scorch for April to June and Ruddy Glow for August to September.

**Cains** - Cains brewery has picked up one of the UK's largest family business awards for its contribution to Merseyside's positive image. Joint managing directors Ajmail and Sudarghara Dusanj collected the Merseyside Special Investment Fund's (MSIF) Family Business Award alongside fellow recipients at a ceremony in the city. Judges chose Cains - which now sells its beers in pubs and supermarkets nationwide - for the consistent way in which the dynamic family-run brewery has contributed to the Merseyside economy and community, as well as its efforts in positively promoting the region outside the North West.

Sudarghara Dusanj said: "The entrepreneurial spirit of Liverpool has been a key factor in the success of Cains. The support we have received both in the community and from organisations such as Liverpool City Council and the MSIF has always enabled us to promote the region with pride. MSIF director of marketing Geraldine McEntegart said: "The awards are designed to celebrate the achievements of family businesses and mark the contribution they have made to our economy and culture."

### MICRO MAGIC

As ever, our local independent brewers have plenty of tasty treats in store for the festive season....

**Bazens'** - there isn't much to report at the moment I'm afraid' although they hope to start bottling in the next couple of months. There's a new 12-barrel fermenter and 100 more firkins on order ready to increase production and they hope to be brewing like crazy as soon as they arrive! Santa's Reinbeer (4.3% ABV) will be back in the pubs in time for Christmas as will the full range of Bazens' beers hopefully assuming expansion plans all go according to schedule.

**Bank Top** – the Knights of the Round Table series continues with Sir Bors (5%), one of the stronger entrants in the series. The seasonal Santa's Claws (5%) will also be back this month.

**Boggart Hole Clough** – look out for new beers like Great Escape (4.5%) and Boggart Best Bitter

(3.9%), a beer with a light golden colour, reasonable hoppiness and a hoppy aroma. For Christmas, festive beers will include Bogsleigh (5.5%) and First Christmas (4%) **Clarion** – based in Derbyshire, but certain to supply pubs in the *Opening Times* area, this new micro in Blackwell is due to launch its first beer at the Three Rivers Brewery winter beer festival to be held at Heaton Moor Conservative Club. This will be a Christmas beer using Belgian wheat beer yeast.

**Facer's** – Dave Facer finally has the keys to the nascent brewery in Flint and can now get on with transforming it into the fully formed version. This chiefly involves adding drainage and getting the gas supply fixed up, neither of which happens overnight, so he will be continuing to brew at the Salford Syndicate until Christmas and start production at the new brewery in January. He is grateful to Richard and Jude Bazen for their continuing patience in the face of his ever-changing timescales!

So, this year's Christmas brew will be brewed in Salford. With the same hop grist as the very successful Faram's Styrian Gold (ie Styrian Goldings!) the beer will be cunningly titled Santa's Styrian Gold. Unlike the FSG, the malt grist will contain a dab of crystal malt to add a biscuity edge and give a golden colour to go with the name. The ABV will (again, like FSG) be 3.9%, but Dave plans to up the OG and mash temperature a tad to leave a little more residual sweetness.

**Millstone** - True Grit has been voted 'beer of the festival' ("by rather a long way") at the 'War of the Roses' beer festival at the Fox & Goose (Hebden Bridge). As Simon (of the F&G) says ... "You may be interested, from a purely dispassionate point of view, that even in this White Rose heartland, Lancashire was voted as producing the best beer between Lancashire and Yorkshire!!" As you can imagine Millstone are really pleased with how True Grit has been received. They are planning a new Christmas Ruby for December, still 4.7%, still hoping for a good ruby colour, but varying the hops somewhat.

**Greenfield** – another brewery looking forward to the festive season. Rudolph's Tipple (5%) is a dark porter with honey, fruit and a hint of cinnamon while Celebration is a 4% light bitter. Look out, too, for Ice Breaker (4.2%) a light golden bitter with a strong cascade hop aftertaste.





Phoenix - Lots of winter goodies for the ever-reliable Phoenix Brewery. This month Tony Allen has a range of beers for every taste - in order of strength they are Snowbound (4.3%), Christmas Kiss (4.5%), Porter - one of the best - (5%), Golden glow (6.5%) and Humbug (7%).



**Pictish** - this month's special is Winter Solstice (4.7%), "a refreshing pale amber coloured ale. Subtle chocolate malt flavours are balanced by a delicate bitterness and floral hop aroma". Rudolphs Rocketfuel (7.3%) should hopefully be back for Christmas. This is a strong full bodied winter warmer with complex malt flavours and a well balanced finish. Brewer Richard Sutton has also produced a new beer, Centennial 4.5%, brewed with centennial hops. He tells us "It's probably the palest and definitely the most hoppy beer I've done", which means it should be an absolute stonker. It should be landing in pubs about the same time as this issue of *Opening Times*. Look out

too for the superb Pictish Porter which remains available for the winter season **Ramsbottom** - New out at the moment is Wendolene (4.2% ABV), brewed with the help of brewer Paul Robinson's new assistant Ruth(!), and named after Wallace's love interest in *A Close Shave*, Wendolene Ramsbottom. It's very pale and very drinkable, and had had to be rebrewed because the first sold out in no time at all. It's also that time of year so Rammyversary may be making its annual appearance about now.



**NWAF** - For the first time, regional microbreweries (and Cains) will be featured in their own bar at the forthcoming National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester (see below for details) which will be in the Upper Hall, co-located with the European Beer Bar ('Beer Near and Far' - I gather), which should see the launch of a good few new local beers and also give drinkers the chance to try Cains much-praised cask lager alongside some of the world's best. Should be very interesting.

**THREE RIVERS WINTER BEER FESTIVAL**



Mike Hitchen from Three Rivers Brewery is organising a Winter Beer Festival at Heaton Moor Conservative Club, on Heaton Moor Road. This is scheduled to run on Saturday and Sunday, 17-18 December, in the front bar area. It will be open to all and run from 12-11 on both days.

There will be 20-plus Christmas and seasonal beers with a good gravity range (so not just falling over beers) sourced mainly from Lancashire and Yorkshire although there will be one or two well-known names from further afield.

Expect to see the full range of Three Rivers seasonal beers and these will include Yummy Figgy Pudding (7.5% ABV) a Belgian-style old ale brewed with cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and rose hips; Three Threads Porter, a proper old-fashioned blended porter at 5.5% and Murphy's Law a 4.5% amber bitter. This should also be the first outing for the new Clarion brewery, which Mike has helped set up.

Meanwhile at the brewery itself, the plans for a private members club at the brewery are well advanced with plans for a New Year launch. More details about this when we have it. The brewery is also moving firmly into wholesaling other micro-breweries beers with the full range of Durham beers a highlight of an ever-expanding range.

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**CHRISTMAS**  
**BEER FESTIVAL**

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**20** plus Christmas and other Seasonal  
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**STOCKPORT & SOUTH  
 MANCHESTER PUB OF THE  
 MONTH MARCH 2005**



I sit writing this on L-Day. I have yet to be swept up in a rampaging mob, indeed the sights and smells of the burning city, wrecked by the vomiting mob of drunken vandals seems to have passed me by. Nothing much, indeed, seems to have changed. Nor I expect will it. The one thing the Theresa Mays of this world seem to forget, is that the friday/saturday night hordes have only so much money left after buying their Burberry cap, Prada trainers and Paul Smith shirt. They come out late because otherwise their money will run out.

The one upshot that no-one seems to have realised is that it may actually lead to us all drinking a bit less. The reason? Beer prices will go up. Longer opening, higher staff costs. Higher costs chasing roughly the same amount of spending power? Lower profit margins. And the vulture-like hedge funds and Private Equity controlling the pubcos won't want to see that. So increase the margin by.... increasing prices. So the government may well get its way, and slightly reduce overall consumption, but its a roundabout way of doing it.

Nice to see the Christmas Market back in Manchester. And it seems we have pints this time! Trading standards seem to have finally woken up to the boring provisions of the licensing act about the legal measures in which you can serve beer. 0.3/0.4 litres was never among them. And they may look like half litres but they are pints (I took one to a pub to check). Given the way German beer prices in Manchester have been going up, £3 is not really that excessive - check the price of Kuppers Kolsch in the Cornerhouse!

Although Belgian beer is currently pretty well served in Manchester (with James Clay of Elland and Jason of local stockist Belgian Belly doing most of the supply), the provision of German is patchy. Rob at Cask on Liverpool Road has the largest range of bottles, elsewhere there a few wheats about but little else. One of the problems seems to be the short shelf life of the bottles (unpasteurised) compared to the multiple-year lives of Belgian bottles. Oddly enough quite a bit of German draught is available these days, Krombacher is fairly ubiquitous, Paulaner Original is fairly rare these days (try the Crescent or the Christmas Market), their Wheat beer is at Kro and Sand Bar, Lowenbrau can be found at the Knott and 3 Shires in Stockport (where they also have Dortmund), there is quite an amount of Erdinger Wheat beer about, and Fruh Kolsch can be found at Sand Bar and Kuppers Kolsch (if overpriced) at Cornerhouse. Oddly, Sam Smiths who brewed Ayingerbrau under licence (and rather well in the case of the Weiss and D-pils) have torn up the agreement to brew their 'Pure brewed lager' for draught as well as bottles. Pleasant enough I suppose but a flat taste, boring and underwhelming. So as I loathe Old Brewery bitter (I used to drink Tadcaster when it was real, then Museum, then D-pils) I now have to avoid their pubs. There might be some REAL Aying beer at National Winter Ales, where Cains Cask lager can be found side by side with a host of the best lagers in the world. We will see how it stands up. There might also be a new Foreign beer in Manchester Guide as well as the promised City Centre real ale guide. More next month.



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# NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL RETURNS TO MANCHESTER



The return of the National Winter Ales Festival to Manchester in January 2005 was very popular, too popular in fact, with the event somewhat crowded on Friday night and Saturday afternoon, and the beer running out at 7pm instead of 10.30.

Well this year the organisers have promised to do better! More room, and lots more beer. More room because this year the event spreads to both halls in New Century Hall. Upstairs is the largest of the Real Ale Bars, with a mere 120 kilderkins of beer, an expanded (!) European Beer bar, promising the largest range of draught German Beer under one roof, er.... EVER! and the North West Regional Bar with another twenty-odd handpumps dispensing both local favourites and brand new beers from North West micro-breweries, plus stalls and stuff.

In the lower hall there will be another major real-ale bar, the excellent cider and perry bar and last but no means least the Championship Bar. Here you will find all the beers that have been shortlisted in each of the categories of the prestigious Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition that will be judged on the Thursday afternoon, and as this bar ran out of beer first in 2005, more of each beer will be available.

With the increased capacity of both halls, if all the people who joined a queue last year turned up, they could come straight in and we'd STILL have room for more. Seating will be available in the mezzanine and the lower hall. Food, as last year will be dispensed in the mezzanine.

Despite expectations of a cold winter, the organisers are taking no risks and the CAMRA national cooling system, as used successfully in the summer national event the Great British Beer Festival (held for the last several years at London's Olympia, but moving to Earls Court in August 2006) is being brought up, so the beer will be served pleasantly cool, but with a host of stouts, porters, milds and dozens of bitters, not to mention old ales, barley wines and winter warmers, you should soon warm up, no matter how cold the weather outside. Not to be forgotten is the enlarged Real Ale in a Bottle bar, where a number of local brewers are launching new products, which you can sample at the Festival or even take home to enjoy later. The festival starts on the evening of Wednesday 18th January (for opening times see poster on back cover of this magazine) and runs until 10,30pm on Saturday 21st. See you there!

## FESTIVAL STAFFING

No CAMRA beer festival can ever be run without the herculean efforts of volunteer staff. If you are a CAMRA member, and can contribute to this prestigious event even if only for a few hours, PLEASE complete this form and send it in!



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Have you worked at a CAMRA Beer Festival before? YES / NO

I agree to abide by the Festival Hygiene & Health & Safety guidelines, a copy of which will be given to me before I start work at the Festival

Signature.....Date.....

Send your completed form to:

NWAF STAFFING, Brian Taylor  
1 Gloucester Drive, Sale, Cheshire, M33 5DH

Telephone: 0161 962 2396

E-mail: [staff@taylor6102.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:staff@taylor6102.freeserve.co.uk)

Please indicate the sessions you can work on the form over the page

# A WALK TO THE SUN

**RARELY DOES A BEER taste so good as when it has been earned, and a few good beers at the end of a hard days' walking is one of life's pleasures.**

My friends and I had started the day at the Station Inn, Ribbleshead, and intended to do a round robin over Wherside. We got a little distracted, though, and finished the trip with a ride on the train over the famous viaduct. Unfortunately it was dark by then, but I'm sure the views were fantastic. We were doing just fine until we arrived at the Sun Inn, Dent, but the seasonal ale, 'Sheep and Shearful' from the local Dent Brewery was so good we couldn't leave without giving it a fair go and, of course, by then it was too dark to walk back.

But to start at the beginning; The Station Inn does a very full English breakfast that really sets you up for the day. The footpath passes at the back of the pub, taking you right under the Ribbleshead viaduct. We stopped and gazed in awe at the testament to the work of the intrepid and tenacious Victorian civil engineers. It's an amazing monument to their craft, their drive through extreme weather and ground conditions. It dominates this somewhat bleak landscape, complementing the rugged terrain. As we continued, it remained visible, showing how far we had gone and how far we would have to return.

A wander down the valley, a nifty bit of map-reading and we hit the hill. It started as a bit of a challenge, fairly steep, but not too bad, progressing to more of a staircase-style incline. Head down, knees pumping and a lot of puff later got us to what turned out to be a false top with a long drag on a steady slope up to the Trig. Point at the true top. Unfortunately while we were climbing the mist had come down, so the glorious views we were expecting eluded us, making the trudge more of a slog.

A hasty descent off the top and out of the mist took us across the peat bog and down to the back road to Dent. It was a pretty walk, but longer than we wanted with the pints calling us. My fellow walkers were showing signs of wear, one complaining of

## HEATHER AIRLIE COMBINES THE OUTDOOR LIFE WITH GOOD ALE...

a knee injury, the other lack of nourishment, so the first sight of the cobbles and stone cottages of the village were most welcome and prompted a spurt up the short incline to the glorious Sun Inn. We were greeted with a roaring fire and beautifully conditioned beer, but disappointingly too late for food.

The beer we chose was Sheep and Shearful, the seasonal ale, a stunning, malty, fruity, heart-warming drink, and just what was needed after our walk. We sat and supped by the fire and watched as the pub filled up with thirsty footballers fresh from the game. We even had regular updates on the rugby scores. A very friendly, welcoming place, it's no wonder we didn't want to leave.

The regular beers on tap were Bitter, Aviator and T'Owd Tup, but it was the very tasty Sheep and Shearful that slipped down the gullet so easily that it caused us to loose the will to complete the walk back to The Station Inn. Luckily the Settle to Carlisle railway was saved some years ago, so we were able to catch the train back to Ribbleshead. We even managed to get a lift to Dent railway station from a friendly local. I can't wait for an excuse to return, and next time I intend to stay at the Sun Inn - so I don't have to leave before time!



### SMOKED COD AND HAPKIN

*This is a variant on a traditional Flemish recipe; But I tried it, many years ago in the centre of Belgium's hop growing area - Poperinge. Seafood and beer are particular favourites of Belgians and hapkin is an especially fine, if subtle enhancer of any kind of fish.*

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 Cutlets of smoked cod (Or whiting)
- 260g celery stalks - finely chopped
- 1 large bulb of fennel - finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon English mustard
- 20cl bottle hapkin
- 15cl fish stock (Or use a cube)
- 2 tablespoon coriander - finely chopped
- Salt + Pepper

#### METHOD

Season the cod, then heat the butter and oil in a large frying pan, add the cod and gently fry on both sides. Reduce the heat and add the heat and add the stock. Make sure the liquid is only gently simmering, then add the beer, simmer for ten minutes. Remove the fish and keep warm. Add the mustard, celery and fennel to the liquid, stir in well and simmer for fifteen minutes. Return the cutlets to the sauce and sprinkle with coriander before serving. Baked potatoes and green beans go well with this dish. Swill down with a couple of chilled glasses of hapkin.

## OPENING TIMES ISSUE 259

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Please indicate the sessions you are able and willing to work, along with the nights you require accommodation.

	Mon 16th	Tue 17th	Wed 18th	Thu 19th	Fri 20th	Sat 21st	Sun 22nd	Mon 23rd
09.00								
11.00								
13.00								
15.00								
17.00								
19.00	■	■	■					■
21.00	■	■	■					■
23.00	■	■	■					■
ACCOM- ODATION								

Shaded areas are the approximate times the festival will be open to the public

Accommodation will be provided at the lowest possible cost (a subsidy will be paid by CAMRA upon presentation of receipts) in twin rooms, if you require a single room the extra cost will be YOUR responsibility. Please indicate who you want to be near/share with:-

A deposit of £50 will be required with all accommodation requests as indemnity against lost keys, damage etc. You can pay by cheque or credit/debit card, cheques to be post dated 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2006 and made payable to CAMRA Ltd. Credit/debit cards must not expire before festival dates (deposits will not be processed until after the festival)

Type of card - CREDIT / DEBIT

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you have requested accommodation and are unable to attend for whatever reason you MUST inform the accommodation organiser immediately. Anyone failing to do so will be classed as a "no show" and their deposit cashed.

If you have any queries about accommodation please contact MIKE BALL direct on 0161 367 7448 or [mikeballinhyde@aol.com](mailto:mikeballinhyde@aol.com)

- Please list any special skills you could offer the festival including First Aid qualifications
- Preferred area of work

**WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS FOR THE SET-UP AND TAKE-DOWN**  
Please consider helping on these sessions (incentives are being considered)



## CASK MARQUE

Readers will have seen the regular Cask Marque advert in Opening Times, and will have seen the logo on those pubs gaining accreditation to the scheme. Here Cask Marque's Paul Nunny explains the background to the scheme and how it works.

THE CASK MARQUE TRUST was formed in 1997 to promote cask beer and in particular beer quality. This followed a survey funded by Adnams, Greene King, Morlands (sadly no longer around) and Marstons, which showed that 23% of pints of cask ale were of poor quality. In fact when we trialed the scheme with 1000 pubs, 43% failed.

Quality is key to the future of cask ale as consumers quite rightly demand and expect when they spend their leisure pound. Cask beer when served in perfect condition is like nectar (not the Australian version) and unlike lager has a tremendous variety of styles and flavours. However, we all know which pubs serve great beer and more to the point those that don't and this drives consumers away from the nation's favourite drink. When asked, 49% of consumers said if quality was poor they wouldn't order the same drink again - lost sales and lost customers.

Why is cask so difficult to get right? Because it needs the skill of the landlord and good cooling systems both in the cellar and en route to the bar.

Unlike keg beer and lager which when delivered to the pub is ready to dispense, cask needs the landlord to carry out the second fermentation process in his cellar (remember cask beer is a live product). This takes skill and care. The beer must also be stored in the cellar at 11°-13° C to allow the beer to fine (clear) and condition. The beer then needs to be delivered in the glass cellar cool, which requires cooling equipment to the point of dispense. Particularly in the summer there is nothing worse than a warm pint. This destroys any refreshment value and damages flavour. Still, 40% of non-Cask Marque pubs fail the Cask Marque quality standard and of those 89% fail to serve beer within the temperature spec of 10°-15.5° C which is a generous margin against the brewers' specifications of 11°-13° C.

The Cask Marque plaque is awarded to the licensees who can deliver the perfect pint of cask ale. To achieve this award the licensee must pass two unannounced inspections and be subject to additional mystery drinker visits. Customers have the right to complain to Cask Marque if they find beer in any of our award winning pubs to be in poor condition.

Currently there are 45 beer assessors covering the UK carrying out over 13,000 visits per year to pubs checking beer quality. Men's health magazine say this is the 8th best job in the country, found between a Fighter Pilot in 7th and a Porn Star in 9th!

When assessing beer quality the assessor looks for temperature, aroma, appearance and taste. All the assessors have brewing/cellar services qualifications and extensive industry experience. Each cask beer on sale needs to pass otherwise the licensee fails the visit. Currently the award is held by 3,820 licensees and their details can be found on the Cask Marque website at [www.cask-marque.co.uk](http://www.cask-marque.co.uk) on in our 28 free regional guides which can be downloaded from the website. To further increase the awareness of Cask Marque to the benefit of the licensees we are undertaking a nationwide PR consumer campaign and we have in the first six months generated an equivalent advertising spend of £350,000. The Cask Marque mission has been covered on television, in national and local press, on radio and in magazines and journals.

A recent survey by NOP showed that 26% of cask beer drinkers recognised the Cask Marque plaque. The quality message is getting through both to the benefit of the licensee and his customers. However, the long term winner is cask ale.

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J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale  
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Porters Ale House, Roe Street, Macclesfield  
Jar Bar, SilkHouse, Macclesfield  
Society Rooms, Park Lane, Macclesfield  
Cotton Bale, 21 Market Street, Hyde  
Society Rooms, Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge  
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge  
White House, 1 Water Lane, Stalybridge  
Q Bar, 3-5 Market Street, Stalybridge  
Angel Inn, 197 King Street, Dukinfield  
Wye Bridge Inn, Fairfield Road, Buxton  
Bamford Arms, Buxton Road, Stockport  
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Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport  
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Bulls Head Hotel, 28 Buxton Road, High Lane  
Crown, 81 High Street, Cheadle  
Old Star Inn, 13 High Street, Cheadle  
Prince of Wales, Gatley Green, Gatley  
High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley  
Kings Hall, 13 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme  
Cross Keys, Adwood Road, Cheadle Hulme  
Ryecroft, Turves Road, Cheadle Hulme  
John Millington, 67 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme  
Horse & Farrier, Gatley Road, Gatley  
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Cheadle H'me  
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Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow  
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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

### December 2005

**Thursday 8th** - Branch Meeting with Christmas Quiz and free mince pies: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

**Friday 16th - 30th Anniversary Hillgate Stagger.** Thirty years of the longest running social event of any CAMRA Branch - let's have a record turnout this year! Start 7.00pm Queens Head (Turners Vaults), Underbank; 8.30pm Red Bull, Lower Hillgate. Note we will be pausing in the Red Bull to make a special presentation.

**Thursday 22nd** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Vale Cottage, Kirk Street, Gorton. From 8.00pm.

**Thursday 29th** - Festive Social: Crown, Heaton lane, Stockport. From 8.30pm.

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

**Saturday 3rd** - Branch 30th Anniversary / Xmas Celebration: from 7.30pm at Poynton British Legion, Georges Road West, Poynton. All founder members, current and ex-members welcome. Please contact either Tom Lord 0161 427 7099 or Rod Oliver 0161 449 7915.

**Monday 12th** - Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.15pm

**Saturday 17th** - December Buxton Social: meet at Ramsey's Bar, Buckingham Hotel 8.30pm.

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE!  
JOIN CAMRA NOW - SEE PAGE 17**

### December 2005

*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 5th** - Social Evening: Thai meal and real ale at the Old Ship, Beech Lane, Macclesfield

**Wednesday 28th** - Post Christmas get-together and golden ale extravaganza: Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield.

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

**Thursday 1st** - Branch Meeting: Old Market tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

**Thursday 5th January** - Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham (TBC). Starts 8.00pm.



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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

## DECEMBER '00

**Y**e Olde Woolpack on Brinksway, Stockport, was Greater Manchester's CAMRA Pub of the Year – this was the fifth year in a row that the award had gone to a pub in the *Opening Times* area. That year there had been a strong challenge from the Sportsman in Hyde, which had won the award twice before. It could be said that the Woolpack had had a chequered history. Fifteen years previously it had been a failing Greenall's pub, and this had been followed by an equally failing free house, 'The Hague'. It had however looked as if permanent closure was inevitable when current owner Bob Dickinson rescued it from oblivion, since when it hadn't looked back. Bob's still there of course, and the pub is as good as ever.

★★★★☆

There was an up-date on one of CAMRA's long running campaigns, the battle against short measure. Compulsory lined oversize glasses were to be introduced to every pub, and local Trading Standards officers were to prosecute anyone consistently selling 'pints' containing less than 95% liquid. Today – we are still waiting.

☆☆★★★

Figures released by the Brewers & Licensed Retailers Association (BLRA) and CAMRA showed that Gordon Brown charged 34 pence in duty on a pint of beer – this compared with a duty rate of just five pence for a similar pint in France. When duty and VAT were added together, the Chancellor was taking a third of every pint in tax. The difference in beer duty between France and Britain was 29 pence. The difference in tax was even more stark when Britain was compared with Germany and Spain, where beer drinkers paid only three pence duty on every pint. Not much has changed today.

★★☆☆★

There was news of yet another refurbishment at the Old Mill, Cheadle Hulme – it was going to be a three month closure, with re-opening due in mid-February. It seemed likely that trade had been badly hit by the opening of Wetherspoon's Kings Hall, reputedly one of their more successful pubs. Just up the road was, and is, Holt's Cheadle Hulme and also the Governor's House, which had just been bought by Nottingham family brewer Hardy & Hansons. Robinson's Church Inn made up a quartet of assorted pubs offering a good selection of beers. They have now been joined by Hydes' and their upmarket flagship the John Millington.



### FIRST, THEY CAME FOR THE SMOKERS...

I struggle to understand the motivation of those who claim to be supporters of pubs, yet at the same time champion a total smoking ban. Although the two issues are by no means entirely the same, do they honestly believe that no parallels whatsoever can be drawn between the campaigns against tobacco and alcohol, and that their respective motivations and tactics are wholly unrelated? In the US, anti-drink groups are now running seminars on the implications of tobacco legislation for alcohol policy, something that inevitably is going to spread to this side of the Atlantic.

The recent debate about changing the licensing laws has brought into the open a disturbing amount of anti-pub and anti-alcohol sentiment which could all too easily feed through into restrictive legislation in the future. We already have the government decrying "binge-drinking" – and defining it as drinking three or more pints of beer in one session. If that view becomes general in society, then what chance will there be for anything remotely resembling a traditional pub?

For anyone with even vague memories of the explosion in individual liberties in the 1960s, the current eagerness to ban anything people disapprove of – pistol shooting, fox-hunting, eating fatty food, driving at more than a snail's pace, telling religious jokes – is a cause of astonishment and dismay. Scarcely a week goes by without something that was once legal being outlawed.

Of course in general the motivations behind this are well-meaning, and arise out of a misplaced desire to protect people, rather than from malevolence. But, in the words of former US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, "Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficial. Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion to their liberty by evil minded rulers. The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding". It seems that today more and more people no longer see any inherent virtue in individual liberty, instead preferring the cosy but ultimately suffocating comfort blanket provided by the Nanny State. But it is essential for a free society that adults are allowed to make unwise choices and deal with the consequences of them. To quote another famous American, Benjamin Franklin, "They that can give up essential Liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither Liberty nor safety."

Unless you are prepared to stand up and defend people's freedom to do things you don't particularly approve of, it is likely that all the freedoms you enjoy yourself will be progressively whittled away, and you will end up being restricted to a limited range of anodyne, officially-sanctioned leisure activities.

Opposing a smoking ban is the front line of the fight to protect your ability to visit pubs and drink alcohol. The enemy tanks are on your neighbour's lawn, and it won't be long before they head your way. If you believe that, having conceded a smoking ban, there would be Peace in Our Time for such pubs as remained, you are sadly deluding yourself.

Curmudgeon Online: [www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk](http://www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk)



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The Moulders Arms on Hyde Road, Hyde (across the road from the Sportsman), has been refurbished drastically and is now called Flanagans. You guessed it, a new phase locally of a fake Irish bar. Needless to say, there is no real ale available. The Sportsman across the road, however, still has a generous amount of choice on draught, including what is the only regular local outlet for Hartington Bitter. Though a little quieter now than previously, the quality of the beer has not diminished and it is still well worthy of its Good Beer Guide status.

Into Glossop and a new pub opened its doors on Monday 14th November, named the "Wrens Nest". Situated in the new complex across from Tesco, between the store and a block of exclusive apartments under construction in the old mill that you pass just before the Globe pub, it is a Brewers Fayre (more then, a food outlet that sells accompanying drinks than a pub), but nevertheless it is reported that there IS cask ale, as Boddingtons Bitter is available. They are advertising locally and on their web site, for an opening £5.00 off the price of any two meals.

At the George in Hayfield, the W&D pub has a fairly interesting range of beers on these days. On my visit on 16th November, the Marstons Best Bitter (regular beer) was accompanied by Hook Norton Old Hooky and Belhaven St Andrews Ale, both on form, and these two pumps change guest beers every month. Along with the Royal and the Kinder Lodge, Hayfield now offers a varied range of beers, even the Bulls Head, a pub that had been without cask ale for many years, now has one, in the form of Deuchars IPA when I last visited.

At the Little Mill in Rowarth, three locals have reputedly bought the pub after it was in the same hands for many years, and they are offering more of a choice of beers, with two ever changing guests. We will report more details in future editions.

A quick check on the New Lamp in Hadfield on 16th November found three ales still on draught, on this visit, Charles Wells Bombardier and Greene King IPA, the third I could not remember!

The much publicised changes to licensing law have provided the impetus for one public house in Chinley to extend its operating hours. For at the Crown & Mitre, where Keith and Marion Marland have taken over as licensees, they can see the benefits of revised operating hours at the Robinson's house. However, it is not at the end of the day when they open later, but in the mornings when they will open earlier to build on the services that they provide in the community. "We already cook a full breakfast each day for residents in our three en-suite letting rooms, and now we will offer the same hospitality to non-residents," explained Marion. "Local businesses have been quick to take advantage of the service and we hope to attract more trade into Chinley as we offer an 'early doors' service with tea, coffee and morning papers," she said.

Although coming originally from Handforth, the couple fell for the Crown & Mitre the first time they saw it. They are joined at the pub by Marion's daughter Ellouise, 21, who is silver service trained and is now busy passing on her skills to the three local waitresses who they kept on when they took over as tenants.

The move to take on their first public house together builds on Marion's experience of the trade, who, at the age of three helped her father stock the shelves of a pub where he was licensee. Since then she has built a wealth of experience, including a stint at Stringfellow's 'Millionaire Club'. Likewise, Keith, a retired civil servant, has also worked in the hospitality business before. "Chinley is a lively community and we love being at the centre of it," enthused Marion. "Naturally, serving cask conditioned beer in top form is important to us, and with



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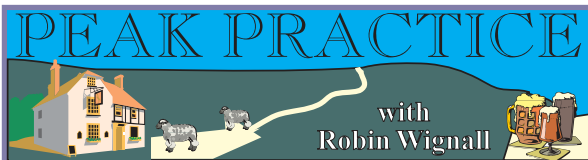
our home cooked food, function room and the investment we have made in staff training, we aim to provide a top class service for our customers."

**There's also notice of a beer festival to be held at the George, Buxton. It will run from Friday night, December 9th to Sunday 11th. They plan to have around 20 ales on over the weekend from local breweries, hopefully like last year there will be several from south Derbyshire.**

**FESTIVAL SUCCESS AT CHESHIRE RING**

Wayne and Jean at the Cheshire Ring (Manchester Road, Hyde) ran their first ever beer festival over the last weekend in October. The "Ale O Ween" Festival ran from Thursday 27 October to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> and featured 34 beers and five ciders and perries. Three of the beers came from the pub's owners, Beartown Brewery, while the rest came from micros all around the country, many sufficiently obscure enough to attract the attention of a fair number of 'tickers' as well as regular drinkers.

Best of all, the festival was a huge success with the pub packed for much of the time. "It was fantastic" says Jean, "we weren't expecting such a success". The first beer to sell out was Mango Beer from the Zero Degrees Brewery in Bristol while the Peelwalls Rum Soaked Cider also attracted rave reviews. The food was also a major success - "Wayne was a star in the kitchen", says Jean. Will there be another? You bet - possibly in conjunction with the nearby Lowes Arms and featuring Lancashire and Cheshire breweries. That will certainly be one to look forward to.



A small rash of 'To Let' and 'Lease for Sale' signs has hit Whaley Bridge recently. Boards are currently posted at the White Horse at Horwich End and the Jodrell Arms and Navigation in the village. The Ploughboy at Disley has had a sign for several weeks, and most areas have similar examples. Low turnover and upward-only rent reviews account for some of these, whilst some licensees are seeking to improve their lot in more profitable pubs.

A few weeks ago the White Hart seemed to be briefly closed for a refurbishment. This has included decoration, furnishings and fittings, and has certainly brightened up the pub's interior. On the beer front a very acceptable pint of Tetley Bitter was available when I called, whilst the guest beer available that evening was Greene King Abbot.

Just up the road at the Shepherd's similar quality Marston's Bitter was tried, whilst the guest beers were Jennings' Snecklifter and Thwaites Lancaster Bomber. Jennings' beers were available in the W&D estates before its take-over of the Cockermonth brewer, and it would be good to see an even wider availability to ensure the brewery's future.

In September and October, Titanic White Star was on sale in the various branches of the W&D empire. The Shepherd's in Whaley Bridge (Marston's), the Royal Oak in Chapel-en-le-Frith (Burtonwood) and the Shady Oak at Fernilee (Jennings) were just three of the W&D pubs whose landlords took advantage of the availability of this fine premium beer from the Stoke-on-Trent brewer. Around the same time Brakspear Special appeared at the Shady Oak and at the Good Beer Guide-listed Bakers' Arms in Buxton (Burtonwood). Brakspear Brewery was eventually relaunched as a separate entity at the Wychwood Brewery in Oxfordshire, following the demise of the original brewery at Henley-on-Thames. Wolverhampton & Dudley certainly deserve some cheers for a guest beer list, which supports some of the smaller brewers. Hopefully their licensees will continue to promote these beers at the bar.

A recent call at the Shady Oak at Fernilee found a new quarterly newsletter (probably available on the pub's web site). Landlord Peter McKinnon writes about accommodation developments, and his role in promoting home cooked food. A bargain Winter Warmer menu is available Mon-Thur, 12.00-until 2.00 and 6.00 until 8.30. Two courses for £6.95 and three for £8.95, well worth trying for choice and quality. Food from the main menu is of course available on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Jennings Dark Mild and Bitter were good accompaniments to the food, whilst Jennings Cumberland, Redbreast (the new Jennings' seasonal brew) and Black Sheep Special were also available.

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# BOOK REVIEW

## CAMRA's Good Cider Guide, CAMRA, 256pp, £10.99

If you can judge a book by its cover, the latest edition of CAMRA's guide to real cider and perry should be the best ever. The cover photograph of apples viewed through a swirling pint of Minchew's cider in mid-pour evokes all the natural goodness of these glorious drinks at their best. And at least at first use, that cover feels sturdier than the flimsy effort provided for the last edition back in 2000; that splendid volume, unquestionably CAMRA's finest effort in the field up to then, was let down by its tendency to spontaneously re-issue itself as a looseleaf edition.

The book starts in fine campaigning style with a stirring article by CAMRA's Director of cider and perry campaigning, Gillian Williams, on how and why CAMRA fights the corner of real cider and perry. Supported by a tabulation of CAMRA's champion ciders and perries of Britain for the last six years, this would have been more useful still had it incorporated a brief statement of what CAMRA means by "real" cider and perry. We could also have done with a campaigning piece on what perry is, why it matters, and how it has been brought back from death's door (something for which CAMRA can take much credit). We do get, however, a thoughtful piece from environmental campaigners Common Ground on the wider significance of apples and orchards in their environmental and cultural context; there is food for much thought in this contribution. Further articles are tucked away between the producer and outlet sections. I fear this approach of scattering articles through the book, abandoned some years since by the Good Beer Guide, may cause these pieces to be overlooked – they deserve better, not least Dave Matthews's international perspective on cider in Wales, Normandy, and Euskadi (the Basque country).

But the heart of any cider guide is the producer listings. So how does this new edition perform? Well, first impressions aren't good. The section is difficult to navigate – the main heading for

each producer is in exactly the same typeface as sub-heads within that producer's entry; directions to producers are frequently vague or non-existent; some producers, even big names such as Dunkertons, have unforgivably terse entries (Lyne Down just gets an address and phone number!); and the maps are a lottery, too often locating producers in the nearest town even if that is several miles away.

And yet. As I went through the entries in detail, name after name of the producers set up in the last five years came off the page, all at least with the bare minimum detail and many with a pen picture giving a good impression of their style along with a product listing. There will never be a complete listing of Britain's cidermakers – the business doesn't work like that – but whether it's an old-established producer or a newcomer you're looking for, you are far more likely to find them here than anywhere else. The book is completed by 100-plus pages of cider outlets, set out in an approximation of Good Beer Guide style. We all know and accept that any pub list is out of date as soon as published, but I never thought I would read a cider guide that had no entries for Bristol – surely the city with the most, and some of the best, cider pubs in Britain. Alongside that gaping void, to mention anything else seems almost like nitpicking, but the listing almost completely misses the recent major swing back to real cider (principally Westons) on the part of the Wetherspoon chain. And can somebody please reassure me that the omission of the wonderful Monkey House at Defford in Worcestershire is merely an oversight? More generally, the pub listings seem more thrown together in this edition than its predecessor; it is a pity to lose the 2000 edition's specific identification of the specialist cider pubs as against the majority in which beer has top billing.

It is an open secret in cider circles that this guide has had a prolonged and at times fraught gestation. No doubt that is to blame for some of the inadequacies to which I have drawn attention above, not to mention other little inconsistencies which the keen pedant will doubtless discover. Nonetheless, it still brings together a very substantial amount of information on this fascinating subject and will be an essential reference for anyone with a serious interest. If you like real cider, you need this book – but there is work to be done to ensure that the next edition is truly worthy of its subject. RPJ



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## PUB NEWS

### "MY KIND OF PUB" – SAYS SINGING LICENSEE

Pub goers in Henbury, Macclesfield are getting more than they bargained for when they call at the **Cock Inn**, for licensee Ronny Barker is dishing up service with a smile and regularly bursting into song as he goes.

New to the Macclesfield area and a previous finalist on Michael Barrymore's TV show 'My Kind of People', Ronnie is no stranger to the stage and aims to host more live entertainment and vocalists at the Henbury pub. "The intention for the Cock Inn is to bring in more top rank entertainers and build a reputation for good quality music and dining. We are not aiming to be a karaoke venue, we are providing a comfortable, environment where professional entertainers will add to the dining experience," he explained. Ronny is joined in the business by his wife Elaine (pictured in photo), and between them they have already brought in a first class chef and developed a new menu to help establish the reputation of the Robinson's house. The couple already have a background in the licensed trade having recently managed a public house in south Cheshire, and are now concentrating on putting all their efforts into developing a pub of their own by providing high class food and drink at Henbury.



"Music has always been important to me so it's great that I can now combine business with pleasure. I'm lucky enough to know some of the best entertainers in the business who I'm sure will go down well with our Friday and Saturday night diners. Naturally I will also be singing, and Elaine and I are looking forward to meeting our guests," enthuses Ronny.



The Railway in Sale has finally begun its long awaited refurbishment. Situated near the canalside and adjacent to the recently finished Waterside development, this area includes a pedestrian piazza, restaurant, theatre, library, new council officers and apartments. The Railway was in desperate need of a major facelift to fit in with this area. Although the work is mainly internal the pub is managing to remain open as usual.

A rumour has reached our ears that the Ducie Arms, situated on Devas Street, off Lloyd Street North, behind the University is due to be demolished imminently in order to expand the University car park. This would obviously be a great loss to the area as real ale pubs are a bit thin on the ground here.

Another rumour is that the historic Britons Protection, a regular Good Beer Guide entry is facing a rather uncertain future. There is some spare land adjacent to the pub, which a developer wants to build on, but also, he wants the land that the BP occupies. He has already approached the owners of the BP who seem to be listening. We are investigating to see if the pub is protected in any way, if so they might do "a Sinclairs" and move the pub down the road, somewhere near the Rain Bar, or heaven forbid do a "Tommy Ducks". The interior is certainly on CAMRA's list of historic pub interiors. We are checking with the City Council planners to see if planning proposals have been submitted for either of the two pubs mentioned.

Trafford & Hulme Branch have declared that the Marble Beer House in Chorlton has been voted the branches Winter Pub of the Season. A presentation will take place in the New Year.

The Old Mill on Barrington Road, Altrincham has changed hands. John Woolley became the new landlord in July and after a refurbishment re-opened as Barrington's Hotel. Two cask ales are now on sale in the form of Thwaites Original Bitter and Lancaster Bomber. John who hails from Warrington and has been in the licensed trade most of his life tells us that the Thwaites Original is proving very popular. Also he is hoping to put on Thoroughbred and Craftsman in the near future. Barrington's sells food from 12 till 7pm and also provides bed and breakfast accommodation. This is a welcome return to cask ales in this establishment and we wish John all the best for the future. Barrington's is only three minutes walk from Altrincham bus, metrolink and rail station.

Jackson's Boat on the banks of the River Mersey at Sale Water Park held its first Oktoberfest. There were 11 real ales on sale including beers from Boggart, Moorhouses, Marble and Highgate Dark Mild. The regular range consists of three out of four from Marstons Pedigree, Old Speckled Hen, London Pride and Bateman XXXB. Well worth a stroll along the Mersey to visit.

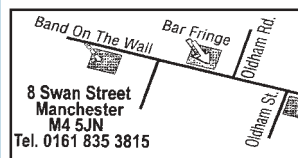
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## GREGG'S PIT – DOUBLE CHAMPIONS

Gregg's Pit Cider & Perry is an award-winning, small scale producer of craft cider and perry. Their ciders and perries are made using traditional techniques from 100% juice of the fruit from their own orchards and adjacent orchards, all managed to organic standards. Their products made a first appearance at this

year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival – and promptly walked off with both Champion Cider and Champion Perry.

So it was that in mid-October a small party of local CAMRA members journeyed to Much Marcle in Herefordshire, where Gregg's Pit trades in the shadow of its giant neighbour, Weston's, to present this unique double award.

We arrived on a 'Big Apple' open day and the orchard was busy with visitors, taking part in cider making and also enjoying some of the excellent products of the operation. Despite the crowds we were able to learn a little about this excellent 'new wave' cider producer.

James Marsden bought Gregg's Pit in 1992 when the title deeds showed the cottage and traditional orchards had been present since 1785. The name originates from a marl pit in one of the orchards, from which it is said the lime mortar was made to point the stonework of the local 13<sup>th</sup> Century St Bartholomew's church.

James immediately began restoring the orchards which had suffered years of neglect, and started to identify their many varieties of cider apple and perry pear trees. He made his first perry in 1994, restoring a tradition to Gregg's Pit that last took place in the 1920s. Helen Woodman joined the team in 1998. The ripe fruit is picked up by hand from the ground from late September until November. It is chopped in a mill to produce a pulp that is left to stand overnight. Not all cidemakers allow the pulp to stand in this way but James believes that this serves to soften the pulp, remove some of the tannin and increase juice extraction.

Next day the pulp is pressed in the traditional manner and resulting the juice stored in airtight steel vessels while the wild yeasts begin their work. Several times during the winter the fermenting juice is racked into clean vessels and when fermentation slows down in May or June, the finished product is ready for bottling or sale on draught.

Gregg's Pit makes a range of named varietal blends and single variety ciders and perries – star turn on our visit was 'Butt & Huffcap' both on draught and in bottle. This isn't being made this year but amongst products that should be available in time for next year's Festival include a single variety Kingston Black cider. One of the fruits used, and which appeared in this year's winning perry, is the Gregg's Pit pear, named after the property and whose trees only grow in the vicinity of Much Marcle.



Our photo shows Stockport Festival Cider Manager Charlotte Bulmer (centre) presenting certificates for the award-winning cider and perry to Helen Woodman and James Marsden.

## CAMRA LAUNCH NEW BOTTLED CIDER & PERRY



CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has launched a new competition during its National Cider & Perry Month (October) to find Britain's best bottled 'real' cider and perry and to help revise its definition on what constitutes a 'real' bottled cider or perry.

CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Month celebrates Britain's 'real' ciders and perries with a variety of different promotions and initiatives throughout October. Although CAMRA have an official definition for draught cider and perry they feel they need to revise what their current definition is for the bottled versions.

Gillian Williams, CAMRA's Director of Cider and Perry Campaigning said, "We feel that the bottled cider and perry market has changed over the last few years and this new competition, judged at a blind tasting, will give us the perfect platform to help us constitute exactly what a 'real' bottle of cider and perry is from the information we receive on the entry forms. The competition is therefore open to all types of produce, pasteurised and carbonated as well as entirely natural."

Cider and Perry producers from around the country are being encouraged to enter the competition by sending four bottles of their product with the completed entry form, which can be found visiting [www.camra.org.uk/ciderform](http://www.camra.org.uk/ciderform), to Gillian Williams, CAMRA HQ, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW

The questions that CAMRA are asking on the entry form include: Is the product pasteurised? Is the product heat treated? Is the product micro filtered? Is the product carbonated?

The blind tasting of the National Champion Bottled Cider and Bottled Perry will be announced along with the National Draught Cider and Perry Champion in May 2006.

### HELEN IS CIDER'S FIRST LADY

Weston's boss Helen Thomas has become the first woman to chair the National Association of Cider Makers. The firm has been a supplier to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival for many years, with their Old Rosie twice winning CAMRA National Cider Championship when it was held at the Town Hall.

Mrs Thomas, whose father was the last Norman Weston, is the great granddaughter of Henry Weston, who founded the business in 1880. She has been managing director of the family firm at Much Marcle in Herefordshire for 10 years, and under her direction Weston's has doubled its output and increased its turnover by nearly three times. She starts her two-year term at the Association – which represents the makers of over 95 per cent of Britain's cider and perry – at a good time for the industry. Tesco is reporting sales of cider up 20 per cent a year since it widened its range to include single varietals from independent makers, while in the pub trade cider sales are growing while beer sales decline.

Mrs Thomas said: "I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead our industry, particularly at this time when there is real momentum, excitement and innovation evident from cider makers. "We have to continually improve product quality, seek innovation in all that we do, and ensure our actions deliver a sustainable industry for all cidemakers and for others in related fields."

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# MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

I popped along to **Font** on New Wakefield Street (next to Oxford Road Station) to see how their first beer festival had gone. It ran on 7 and 8 November but I wasn't able to get down there until 10<sup>th</sup>. Licensee Dominic Driscoll was very pleased with the way the Festival had gone, not only at Font but also the other participating venues, **Pure** and the **Thirsty Scholar**. Most of the beer had sold out during the two days and what little remained was being sold off at just £1.45 a pint (and so I managed to get a bargain pint of first class Rooster's Zulu), there had been a good turnout, from CAMRA and non-CAMRA drinkers and he was buoyed up to try another before too long.

This type of initiative can only be applauded and gives the lie to those who suggest that there is no demand for cask beer in places like Font. This was in fact the first cask beer outing for Pure, where the beer bar was installed on the roof terrace! Sales were good there, too – despite the reports I have had of a none-too-enthusiastic barman. Well done to all involved and especially Dominic, who was the driving force behind the event.

### DIDSBURY DOINGS

I have good news for fans of Marstons Owd Rodger (7.6% ABV). Rob Long at the **Royal Oak** in Didsbury tells me this weekend that he currently has in his cellar enough casks of Owd Rodger to sell over the Christmas and New Year periods and that he expects stocks to last up until around mid-January. He told me with some obvious delight that the first barrel would go on sale from Monday 7th November.

Whilst on the subject of the Royal Oak in Didsbury I would like to take this opportunity to fully dismiss the story about the pub that appeared in the *Manchester Evening News*. The story suggested that due to the new smoking regulations currently under debate in parliament, the pub had decided to abandon its famous cheese and paté lunches

and give itself over to the smokers. Ructions have ensued. No decision has yet been taken as to whether or not the pub will continue with lunches, ban smoking, or see whether any sort of compromise can be found. Hazel Long, the licensee, was angry about the article. She told me "the government has not yet decided the detail of the proposal, until they do the brewery will not decide how it will affect W&D pubs, and until the brewery decides what line it is going to take then this pub will not make a decision". So for the foreseeable future at least, cheese and paté lunches will continue to be sold at the Royal Oak.

The **Fletcher Moss** will be opening half an hour longer mid-week and an hour longer at the weekends. Whilst in the Fletcher Moss I chatted to the ex-licensee of the **Crown & Kettle** before it closed all those years ago, who had some interesting tales to tell

The **Nelson** now sells Black Sheep Bitter, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Tetley Bitter. The pub has applied for 10:00 - 24:00 licensing seven days a week but does not anticipate opening all these hours. Meanwhile the Parrswood is now permanently keg, selling only John Smiths smooth, so that will be my, and *Opening Times'* last visit there for a while. Whilst in the Parrswood I chatted to a woman who said that she had just returned from Bratislava and had taken OT with her on her holidays. She said that she had shown it to the locals in the pubs there and that it was very well received. Can you believe that?

### MORE FROM EAST MANCHESTER

After last month's meander down Ashton Old Road, I felt it only fair to wamble down Ashton New road and surrounding area for this month.

Once again I started at the top, with the **Half Way House** which, because of a planners' quirk, is actually in Tameside. The Holts there was not tried as the bar was heaving and I had a lot of Manchester pubs to visit so the 'thirst pint of call' was at the **Strawberry Duck**, Crabtree Lane, where the Holt's Bitter went down nicely.

Off down the New Road past the ex-**Greens Arms** which after a spell as a dance academy has now become a restaurant. Onto Clayton Lane where the **Blue Moon** and the **Bridge Inn** are keg and the **Fox Tavern** is still boarded up. I thought I might have a bit of luck with the **Victoria** on Croft Street but no such luck - it was all closed up even though there were lights on. For 8 o'clock on a Friday evening not a good sign.

Back onto the New Road and into the **Grove** where I had the pleasure of meeting the new landlady Petra Teal, whilst I enjoyed a nice pint of Holt's. Petra told me that although the Grove is her first pub she is no novice to the licensed trade, having worked behind the bar at the Cleveland Hotel in Crumpsall, the Woodthorpe in Prestwich and the Vine in Manchester City Centre. After wishing Petra, her son and daughter well, I was off on my travels.

What a dispiriting journey it was, every pub after the Grove was keg so I have no inclination to print their names. Except to mention that one advertises that they sell cask ale, the ex-**Bradford Hotel** aka **Champagne Charlies**. Where when I pointed out the obvious fact that they only sold keg the barmaid admitted she didn't know the difference! So ended a disappointing exploration, so many pubs and so little real ale. It was back to Ashton Old Road and I'll leave it up to you to guess where.

### KRO UPDATE

Martin Church has been in touch re the opening of the new bar, **Kro Piccadilly**. It was due to open, touch wood, on 28 November and is situated at 1 Piccadilly Gardens overlooking the grassed area. It will have a restaurant, coffee kiosk, great wine list, but, as Martin guessed, I really wanted to know about the beer. There will be five handpulls to include Theakston XB as a regular, three guest ales and Old Rosie Cider. In addition there will be Kro's usual fairly extensive range of imported bottled beer plus draught Paulaner Hefke Weizen, Frulli Strawberry & Frulli Cranberry for the alcopop generation. Prices are yet to be confirmed, but the luxurious surroundings (i.e. building costs and rent) will mean that they have to be a bit more expensive than your average local.

**Kro Bar**, **Kro2**, and **The Abbey** still going strong. New licensing will result in Kro1 opening until 12 and 1am on Friday and Saturday nights



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