

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

OPENING TIMES

Volume 21 Issue 12

NEW YEAR 2006



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

THE MAIN EVENT NATIONAL WINTER ALES FEST BIGGEST & BEST EVER

The highlight on the local and national beer scene this month is without doubt CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival. As last year the venue will be the New Century Hall on Corporation Street in central Manchester. Unlike last year a second hall has been booked to fit everyone in – and lots more beer has been ordered to make sure they have something to drink.



As Festival Organiser Steve Prescott told *Opening Times* "Last year we only booked one floor and we were bursting. At peak times we were only admitting people one at a time, and we had to close early on the last night because we'd run out of beer."

"This year we've got two floors and we can fit in 1,500 people at a time. With the Manchester Evening News as main sponsor there's a real buzz building up, and I think local drinkers are already looking forward to it. The National Winter Ales Festival is developing into a big event of the local social calendar, but it's also going to attract people from all over the country, Europe and America."

Top of the list of attractions Steve and his fellow organisers are laying on is...well, ale. Lakes of it, including some mind-blowingly seasonal beers such as an 11 per center from Abbeydale of Sheffield. But there will be plenty of session strength beers too – in fact says Steve, "everything from three-point-something to stupid." And it will be in peak for as this year CAMRA's cooling equipment will be used to make sure the beers are cellar fresh. Cask beers, on three bars plus the Championship Bar itself, are being sourced from England, Wales Scotland and all Ireland, North & South (at least 12 Irish cask beers) which will be found on Bar 'Near & Far' together with Beers from the North West, as well as Germany (mainly Bavaria), Belgium Holland and the Czech Republic. The huge range of International beers (courtesy of *Opening Times* Ed2) sees the largest range of draught German beers to appear under one roof (ever? - about 50) and a huge range of (80 or so) Belgian draught and bottled specialities including many Christmas and Winter specials. There is also a British bottle conditioned beer bar (sponsored by the Co-op) with over 40 exquisite beers, and at least two local breweries launching RAIB (Real Ale In a Bottle) beers plus a much larger range of ciders and perries and bottled mead in the downstairs hall.

Around the festival, the pubs in Manchester's Northern (Beer) Quarter are putting up a show, to expand and complement the CAMRA offering of beer and especially food, with the Smithfield Hotel and Bar Fringe on Swan Street promoting Beer Festivals of their own, The Beer House on Angel Street chipping in with the relaunch of Paul's famous speciality Sausages, speciality Mash & gravy, as well as their own Beer Festival, and the Marble Arch, Queens Arms and Crown & Kettle promising something special but as yet keeping their powder dry. All in all probably 100 new and interesting beers. Further out the Crescent in Salford and Stalybridge Buffet Bar are holding major festivals. January will never be the same!

The National Winter Ales Festival runs from 18-21 January – see the poster on the back page for full details.

18th - 21st January
New Century Hall,
Corporation Street
Manchester

GOING FOR THE HAT TRICK

North, South East, West, the Orkneys – the nine previous winners of the Winter Beer of Britain competition have come from all over Britain, and from breweries of almost all shapes and sizes, from a big regional to a tiny micro. Two breweries have won it twice, and the first and third winners came from rival breweries run by brothers. And now the question is...who's going to be the 10th? Here are the former champions – what price our first triple winner?

- 1997 Hambleton Nightmare
- 1998 Nethergate Old Growler
- 1999 Dent T'Owd Tup
- 2000 Robinson's Old Tom
- 2001 Orkney Skullsplitter
- 2002 Wye Valley Dot Goodbody's Stout
- 2003 Nethergate Old Growler
- 2004 Moor Brewery Old Freddy Walker
- 2005 Robinson's Old Tom



IN THE NEW YEAR

OPENING TIMES ...

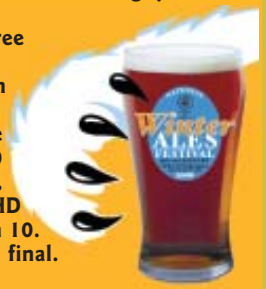
Stockport Supping ...	2
Editor's View	3
Pub of the Month	4
Brewery News	5
NWAF Sponsors	6
Cask Marque	7
Camra Calling	8
5 Years Ago	9
Curmudgeon	9
High Peak News	10
Peak Practice	11
Stagger	12
Mcr. Matters	14
T&H Pub of Season ..	15

Happy New Year to all our Readers, Contributors, Distributors and Advertisers

NWAF COMPETITION

We have four Season Tickets to ALL sessions of the National Winter Ales Festival to give away. To win one answer the following: (two are relevant to current CAMRA campaigns)

- (1) What is the most recent beer to win three overall silver medals in the competition?
- (2) Name the overall Bronze winners from 2003, 2004 and 2005.
- (3) Tie break: Porter is a vibrant beer style because.... (complete in not more than 10 words). Enter by post to NWAF Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD with your address and phone number by Jan 10. Winners notified by phone. Editors decision final.





This month I've been a man on a mission.. As the chill nights draw in, my thoughts turn to winter warmers and so I've been off in search of Robinson's Old Tom, the classic barley wine and, as this was written, the Champion Winter Beer of Britain. Oh yes, the things I do for you lot.

AROUND THE TOWN

I started off at the **Crown**, Great Moor, a reliable Old Tom outlet in year past but found there was none available when I called. This was early December so perhaps it will have appeared for the festive season. Having said that there's a good choice on handpump, with Hatters, Unicorn, Double Hop and the seasonal, Robin Bitter – this was very good, I have to say. The **Travellers Call** is just down the road and resplendent in new signage. Old Tom is here, served from a cask mounted on the bar (there is also Hatters and Unicorn on handpump). A good, smooth example of the beer at £1.61 a half. In Heavily the **Blossoms** also traditionally has a cask on the bar, again alongside Unicorn and Hatters on handpump. A particularly good example here, and a bargain £1.30 a half, too. As you might expect, the brewery tap, the **Spread Eagle** on Hillgate always tries to have Old Tom on draught. Here it is pumped from the cellar and the cooler temperature makes for a very quaffable example. It's served in rather fine half-pint pots, too, and at a very reasonable £1.45 a half. Hatters and Unicorn again complete the line-up, this time on electric pump. The final town centre outlet I found was the **Tiviot** on Tiviot Dale, where again a cask is mounted on the bar in this very traditional town pub, again alongside Hatters and Unicorn. A tad more pricy here at £1.80 a half, but again you couldn't fault the quality. There may be a couple more town centre outlets before the winter is out, though. At the **Swan with Two Necks**, Princes

Street, Ang and partner (sorry, can't recall his name, John) tell me they are to try Old Tom over the winter period. They are keen to keep it right, so it shall be cellar-cooled for the best results. This adds to the range of Hatters and Unicorn, plus Double Hop - one of only two town centre outlets (that I can think of, anyway) for this powerful beer. The **Arden Arms** on Millgate also often has Old Tom available in the winter months – I shall certainly be looking out for it there.

OLD TOM IN THE SUBURBS

A visit to Marple in early December found that the **Hatters** on Church Lane was selling Old Tom from a counter-top mounted cask. In halves only for £1.60. And it was a delicious example too. The regular beers are Hatters, Unicorn and the seasonal, Robin Bitter in this case.

A likely outlet for Old Tom was thought to be the **Railway** at Rose Hill. However, on getting there they merely had Hatters and Unicorn. Very good they were though. A local told me that the **Crown** at Hawk Green may be selling it too, but as it was the evening there are no buses to get me up there! Next time however.

Returning to Stockport, I stopped off to check out the range at the **Fingerpost** in Offerton - no Old Tom, but excellent Hatters and Unicorn (served through free-flow electric taps, so do not be put off by the absence of a handpump). I'll keep my eyes and ears open for news of more Old Tom outlets.

Last, but certainly not least, is the ever-reliable **Davenport Arms** in Woodford. The Thief's Neck has been a regular Old Tom outlet for many years – and here you can have the extra treat of sipping it in front of a roaring fire. I have many happy memories of enjoying "a half of Old" with the late John Hallworth on various CAMRA trips to this terrific pub. It's still in the family of course and Yvonne keeps a fine pint and pub. The Old Tom is free-flow here and a very reasonable £1.45 a half.

OTHER BITS & BOBS

While I was calling at the Tiviot I couldn't miss out popping into the **King's Head** opposite. They really are going great guns on the beer front here with regular Marston's Bitter joined by two guests – Naylor's Dave's Waterloo Sunset and Wold Top Bitter, when I called. What really interested me though was the third guest – there's a small cask stillaged behind the bar serving Three Rivers Yummy Figgy Pudding. At 7.5 per cent ABV it was a bargain £1 a half and really was yummy. I'm not always one for beers with added spice but this really it the mark – it seems the regulars think so too as it is selling well.

Duncan Shenton at the Good Beer Guide-listed **Thatched Tavern** in Reddish told me that he will be trying Bass as an additional beer in the very near future. This will make a range of four beers on the bar, as the Bass shall be joining Boddies, Tetley Bitter and Tetley Dark Mild. Depending upon reaction to the new beer, it may change to another guest.

Elsewhere the **Samuel Webster** in Bredbury has been knocked down. This place never added much to the Stockport pub scene and I doubt it will be missed. On Hillgate the **Black Lion** is shuttered up and further up there was still no sign of any life at the **Golden Lion** when I passed in early December.

I was saddened to learn of the demise of Jess, the Olde Vic cat. She was an old animal and her health suddenly deteriorated to such an extent that she had to be gently put to sleep. She is missed by everyone at the Vic and Steve and Jo have asked me to pass on their thanks to everyone who has been kind to and tolerant of (I still bear the scars) her over the years.

The former site of **Bramhalls** in Bramhall has opened as a bar called **Graze** - white walls, glass fronted, wooden seating, no real ale. Finally, news reaches me that long-time (and award-winning) barmaid Linda Oliver at the **Red Bull** on Hillgate, is leaving there to work at the Good Beer Guide-listed **Arden Arms** across town. More, when I have it...

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING RATES (Unchanged since 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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Local CAMRA Pub of the Month, Feb 2004

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

I hope all our readers will try and pay a visit to the National Winter Ales Festival this month. Getting this highly prestigious event back to Manchester is a real feather in the cap for local CAMRA branches, many of whose members are working tirelessly to make it a success, (including Paul Hutchings, the 'Ed(2)' of Opening Times, who is promising one of the most impressive foreign beer bars seen at any British beer festival). If it's a success we think it's ours to keep, at least for a good few years, so please do try and support us in this. It is early days yet but it seems that the new licensing regime may actually be working as intended. After the first couple of weeks, most police forces reported no change in late night problems but a sizeable minority reported an actual reduction in disturbances. Looks like it may be egg-on-face time for the many critics of the new regime. That's the last we'll be saying about it for some time - in the November issue we will look back on the first 12 months and see how it has all panned out. Finally, let me wish a happy and particularly a prosperous New Year to all our readers and advertisers.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 260

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editors: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ♦ (0161) 477 1973; Paul Hutchings, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport Cheshire, SK4 2NP. ♦ & Fax (0161) 432 8384. News, articles and letters welcome. All editorial items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or preferably ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!) or CD-R, or via e-mail to johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com. Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged). Printed by Phil Powell Printers, Failsworth.

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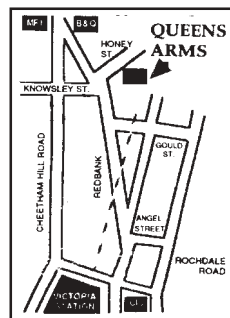
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PUB OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2006

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for January is the Albion Inn on Burnage Lane in Burnage.

For the last thirteen years the Albion has been run by the popular partnership of Ron and Loraine Howard, formally from the Anvil in Wythenshaw and before that from the now demolished Buck & Dog on Bridge Street in Stockport.

Ron and Lorraine are now one of Hydes' longest serving management couples in the brewery's entire estate. During their tenure the Albion has won a clutch of awards including the Hydes' customer service award. Ron was also Hydes' first ever manager to receive the brewery's Cellarmanship of the Year award, and the ever popular barmaid, Gail Davies won Hydes' Bar Person of the Year.

Over this time the barrelage of Light has more than tripled whilst the barrelage of bitter has more than doubled. The Albion is now Hydes biggest volume outlet for Light in the whole of their estate. Such has been the success of the standard range of beers sold in the pub that Hydes guest beers are now being sold at weekends. To achieve this in an area where the competition can offer greatly discounted prices is remarkable. The pub has recently been painted and re-decorated throughout with the small poolroom off the main lounge now made more accessible. For those that like entertainment, live artists play in the pub most weekends and are very popular.


The record of the Albion has been one of steady growth, underpinned throughout by excellent quality Hydes beers. Ron and Loraine Howard and their staff thoroughly deserve the recognition that CAMRA can provide with the award of the Pub of the Month.

So why not join our celebrations on Tuesday 24th January? Please note that due to the date of the National Winter Ales festival in Manchester that the date of the presentation for the pub of the month award has changed from the usual Thursday to Tuesday. So get the New Year off with a bang by joining CAMRA and the regulars at the Albion for a great party night at the Albion to celebrate this well-deserved award. SB

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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We start with some foreign beer news this month, and a story that will gladden many beer lovers, especially Belgian beer lovers, who were saddened when the small Oud Beersel lambic brewery closed some years ago, following a family dispute. It seemed to have gone forever, but now comes news that it is back in action. There's a local connection, too, as the Belgian Belly in Chorlton will be indirectly supporting this revived venture. The revivalist brewers are Gert Christaens and Roland De Bus, known to Jason Barker at the Belly for a couple of years now, having met at a lambic brewers event in Eizeringen near Brussels. At the time Gert and Roland were studying at the Ghent school of brewing and generally learning their trade. Over the next 18 months they always had a new beer for Jason to try on his regular visits to Belgium. One of these, t'Hartje, brewed at the De Graal Brewery, was a strong tripel-style beer. This was the genesis of a beer called Bersalis, a 9% hazy, hoppy tripel, brewed using the kit at the Huyghe brewery. Jason has agreed to export the beer and where it will be known as Belgian Belly Triple. Revenue from the sales of this beer will all be ploughed back into lambic brewing at Oud Beersel, where the brewery has been bought by Gert and Roland. In fact they apparently bought it, or at least started to use it, about a year ago, as one small brew of lambic has already been produced. Production may be limited for a while as the brewery needs some work to get it back into full production. Hopefully some of the young lambic may be released to the trade later this year. This is clearly an exciting development and we will bring more news when we have it.



FAMILY FAVOURITES

News beers abound from our local family brewers this month.



Holt's – available from 1 December was Touchwood (4.5% ABV). This beer was supplied to Holt's managed estate and also to Scottish Courage for their national Cellarmasters Reserve programme. It will be replaced by draught Fifth Sense (5% ANV) at the end of Jan/early Feb.

Hydes' – the craft ale for January/February is Free Spirit (4.8% ABV), "a splendid full tasting deep copper ale derived from finest malt, English Challenger and Fuggle hops". This month may also see the return of cask Manchester's Finest (4.7% ABV) and XXXX (6.2% ABV), brewed mainly for the National Winter Ales Festival but likely to appear in the tied estate.



JW Lees – first of the new quarterly specials is out this month. Greengate, a cask version of a long-standing keg beer, a quaffable session beer, available until the end of March.

Robinson's – back this month is Enigma, a 4.7% ABV beer, very popular in its past two outings.



MICRO MAGIC

As ever, the local micro brewers have a plethora of new beers out. As ever, apologies to those we did not manage to contact this month.

Bank Top – the latest Knights of the Round Table series is out in January. This is Sir Kay (4.2% ABV), details of which had not been decided as we went to press. Bank Top are also brewing two bespoke house beers for two local pubs. Barristers Bar in Bolton has Judges Chambers (4.3% ABV) while the Strawbury Duck and Entwistle has Strawbury Duck (4.2%). These are separately formulated beers exclusive to their respective outlets – a couple the tickers may have missed, perhaps.



Boggart Hole Clough – Christmas seasonal, First Christmas (4% ABV), a pale, hoppy beer, may still be around when you read this. A new special is planned for January but no details yet.



Facer's – Dave Facer is nearly ready for the brewery move, but for obvious reasons is now putting it off till early January. The next new brew will not be out until he's got the brewery in Flint up and running, and this will probably be a permanent addition to the range. Dave was very pleased with the palate and look of Santa's Styrian Gold, and judging by the sales so are other people. He brewed this as a trial for the new beer, so it will be based on SSG but with a lower ABV.

Greenfield – no new beers planned yet, but the brewery is looking to begin tours in the new year when the premises have been spruced up. Plans are in hand to extend distribution of the beers, which will now appear on a more seasonal pattern.



Howard Town – Glossop's new brewery continues to make steady progress. The Christmas special, which may still be available, was Robin's Nest (5.2% ABV), a dark, ruby red, malty ale.



Marble – two new beers last month, both should still be available. Road Rider (4.3% ABV) is a pale, distinctly bitter beer with a good hop aroma. And Christmas Eve saw the traditional launch of Port Stout – this exceptional beer, smooth and rich will be available while stocks last.

Millstone – are planning some new beers in the New Year. As to 'now', they were busy brewing for December's demand as we went to press. Christmas Ruby (4.7% ABV) is a revised recipe using American Bullion hop for aroma, along with some First Gold early on.



Owl – big news from Oldhams's Owl Brewing is the sale of its home, the Hope Inn. Owl's Gordon Potts tells us that the pub was not making enough money to justify its staffing costs. It's not the end of the brewery, though, as this will be relocating to an industrial unit. This will, unfortunately, mean that the brewery will be out of action for 3-4 weeks, about now. The final brew at the Hope was a Christmas beer, Jangle Bells (4.2% ABV), an amber beer spiced with cinnamon and mixed spice. Gordon rejected the temptation to call the beer 'Abandon Hope'!

Phoenix – no new beers for January but Porter and Snowbound will be available until the end of the month. Snowbound is selling particularly well, with Manchester's newly reopened Crown & Kettle being a strong outlet.



Pictish – brewer Richard Sutton has decided not to brew Rudolph's Rocket Fuel this year, instead he's doing a new one - Hoppy Christmas (5.5% ABV) was due to be launched in Mid-December. Celtic Warrior has been brewed again this month and the Centennial went down great guns, so much so that it's going to be brewed again. The January special will be Northern Dawn.

Shaws – the regulars, Best Bitter and Golden Globe, continue to sell well. Current seasonal is Winter Light (4.1% ABV), pale, using Willamette hops. There's a new limited edition beer out – Buffer's Tipple (4% ABV), a mid-amber beer available at Stalybridge Station Buffet and the George, Buxton.



Three Rivers – hopes to launch its new bottled beer range at the National Winter Ales Festival, with the first two bottled beers being Old Disreputable and Manchester IPA. Aquarian Ale (4% ABV) is back for Jan and you might catch remaining stocks of the excellent Yummy Figgy Pudding (7.5% ABV).



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WINTER ALES SPONSORS

They say success breeds success and it is so pleasing to find so many companies within the trade wanted to support the National Winter Ales Festival in its second year back in Manchester.

As the Festival Organiser, Steve Prescott explained this can only be to the advantage of the thousands of beer drinkers the festival is hoping to attract again 'The 2005 Festival was such a success we ran out of beer and queues formed outside the hall. To minimise the chances of this occurring in 2006 we have almost doubled the size of the venue we have hired and have been very keen to significantly increase the beer order this year without putting the Campaign at risk. Without the valued assistance of our sponsors we would have been faced limiting our beer order and possibly charging up to 30p more per pint or an additional pound on the entrance charge for all customers, including members. The commitment of these companies just shows how much the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester has engaged the imagination of people in the area and nationally across the brewing industry.'

At the time of going to press the following sponsors have been announced by Jim Flynn, the Festival's Sponsorship Manager:- **Manchester Evening News** - Sponsor of the Festival itself, **The Co-op** - Sponsor of both the Festival Souvenir Glasses and the Real Ale in a Bottle Bar, **Waverley TBS** - Sponsor of the Festival Trade Session on the afternoon of Thursday, 19th January, **Hydes Brewery** - Sponsor of the Festival Staff, **3 Rivers Brewing Company** - Sponsor of the Entrance Hall and Cloakroom, **T R Theakston** - Sponsor of the Festival Souvenir T-shirts & Camra Shop, **Charles Wells Ltd** - Sponsor of the Festival Programme, **J D Wetherspoon** - Sponsor of the Festival Championship Beer Bar, **Marstons Brewery** - Sponsor of a Festival Beer Bar, **Fuller, Smith and Turner** - Sponsor of a Festival Beer Bar, **J W Lees** - Sponsor of the Festival Web Site, **Cask Marque** - Sponsor of the Beer Cooling System, **Joseph Holt** - Sponsor of the Festival Entertainment, **Beartown Brewery Ltd** - Sponsor of the Festival Stewards, **Gwynt Y Ddraig** - Sponsor of the Festival Cider and Perry Bar, **Cains Brewery** - Sponsor of the Festival Sessions on Wednesday 18th January & Saturday 21st January, **Thwaites Brewery** Sponsor of the Festival Session on Friday 20th January, **Lancaster Brewery** - Sponsor of the Festival Session on Thursday 19th January, **Batemens Brewery** - Sponsor of the Festival Family & Upstairs Relaxation Areas, **Budvar UK** - Sponsor of the Festival Foreign Beers, **Copper Dragon Brewery** - Sponsors of the Festival Downstairs Relaxation Area.

If ever there was a need illustrate that the alleged demise of cask beers is an out and out falsity it is both the support these companies are giving the Festival and for those in the industry their very success in selling and promoting cask beers which proves the point.



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QUALITY COUNTS

"What is the current state of the great British pint in Manchester?" That's the question posed by beer quality assessors Cask Marque who have been carrying out research in the city's pubs' Last month they presented the results at a reception held at the Old Hall, Altrincham, courtesy of Hydes' Brewery.

The event was introduced by Cask Marque chief Paul Nunny who gave some statistics about the organisation (for more details about Cask Marque in general, see Paul Nunny's article in last month's issue). Nationally there are 45 assessors making 14,000 unannounced visits to pubs annually. Currently there are some 3,780 licensees holding the Cask Marque awards, with many of Hydes' pubs signed up.

Paul explained that cask ale is important being both an essential part of our heritage and is only available on draught in pubs (and clubs). It has been under threat because of poor quality so Cask Marque has sought to address that issue.. In Manchester some 209 pubs were checked ("an enjoyable experience") and 3 out of 10 served pints that were below par - while this may seem an alarming statistic, Paul explained that nationally the figure is an incredible 6 out of 10, "so well done Manchester". Temperature is a the key issue, and indeed warm pints are perhaps one of the best ways of putting drinkers off cask beer. The recommended temperature range is 11-13°C but beer has been encountered at a very unappetising 34°, and beers served at temperatures up to 20° are not uncommon. In Manchester there are currently 150 pubs with Cask Marque accreditation - a full list can be found on the website at www.cask-marque.co.uk.

In his address, Roger Protz explained that reports of the near-terminal decline of real ale were false and the country was seeing an encouraging real ale revival. This was demonstrated by the number of new breweries appears in the Good Beer Guide - this year featured eighty new ventures, the highest number in the Guide's history.

Roger was full of enthusiasm for Hydes and talked us through two examples of Hydes Bitter, now rechristened Hydes Original. The first was deliberately served at the wrong temperature, displaying no hop character, too much rich malty notes and an over-fruity taste. The comparison with the correctly served pint was remarkable. The latter had a good finished hop character on the nose, balanced by both biscuity malt and fruit notes coming from the house yeast. This was matched in the taste with an unaggressive but persistent hop bitterness balanced by a juicy malt character. "A beautiful synthesis of hops and malt" was Roger's final verdict.

After a short interview with Cask Marque inspector Peter Lakin, Hydes Production and Distribution Director Paul Jefferies spoke about the brewery. Hydes' will be brewing 120,000 barrels a week by the end of the year. Currently ten cask ales are brewed each week, rising to thirteen January, this total including 3 milds. One of these is of course Boddingtons, and we later learned that Manchester is no longer the heartland of cask Boddies - an astonishing state of affairs for what is something of a local icon. It seems that the Fylde Coast is the place to go for real Boddingtons these days. We were also treated to the premiere of the new Christmas special, Yule be Back. This 4.6 per cent brew has been fermented at a slightly higher temperature to bring out a fruity character. It was certainly a good, firm quaffable beer.

Afterwards we were treated to a buffet courtesy of Hyde and the team at the Old Hall, to whom many thanks for their hospitality throughout the evening.

(Picture Shows Roger Protz)



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Beehive, Claremont Road, Moss Side
Osborne House, 32 Victory Street, Rusholme
Great Central, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
Friendship Inn, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield
The Hillary Step, 199 U. Chorlton Rd, Whalley Rge
Pineapple, Garrett Way, Gorton
Albion, Burnage Lane, Burnage
Sam's Chop House, Black Pool Fold, Manchester
City Arms, 48 Kennedy Street, Manchester
The Waterhouse, 67 Princess Street, Manchester
All Bar One, 73 King Street, Manchester
Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, Manchester
Fletcher Moss, 1 Williams Street, Didsbury
Victoria Hotel, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington
Dog & Partridge, 665-7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury
Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury
Sedge Lynn, 21a Manchester Road, Chorlton
Old Wellington, 4 Cathedral Gates, Manchester
Moon Under Water, 68 Deansgate, Manchester
The Bishop Blaze, 708 Chester Road, Stretford
King's Ransom, Britannia Road, Sale
J P Joule, Northenden Road, Sale
Old Plough Hotel, 56 Green Lane, Sale
Bank at Sale, 70 School Road, Sale
Loves Arms, 301 Hyde Road, Denton
Red Lion, Crown Point, Denton
English Lounge, 64-66 High Street, Manchester
Lloyds No 1, The Printworks, Manchester
Tim Bobbin, 41 Flixton Road, Urmston
Ash Tree, 9 Wellington Road, Ashton U Lyne
Calvert's Court, St. Petersgate, Stockport
Poachers Inn, 95 Ingersley Road, Bollington
Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton, Macclesfield

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
Pack Horse, 3-5 Market Street, Hayfield
Farmers Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Stockport
Four Heaton, 63 Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris
Nursery Inn, Green Lane, Heaton Norris
Duke of York, Stockport Road, Romiley
Hare & Hounds, Dooley Lane, Marple
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
Horse & Farrier, Gatley Road, Gatley
Governor's House, 43 Ravenoak Rd, Cheadle H'ime
Bollin Fee, 6 Swan Street, Wilmslow
Coach and Four, 69-71 Alderley Road, Wilmslow
Quarry Bank, Bloomsbury Lane, Timperley
King George, Moss Lane, Hale
Corbens, Hale Road, Hale Barns
Bear's Paw, Warrington Road, Knutsford
Cross Keys Hotel, 52 King Street, Knutsford

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

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

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Telephone 01206 752212**



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

January 2006

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm. **NB guest speaker Oliver Robinson and also 2006 Pub of the Year vote. Let's have a good turnout.**

Saturday 14th - Annual Branch Meal: the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. From 7.30. Buffet meal, prize raffle and guest speaker – **Roger Protz**. Price about £7-£8 per head. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973.

Sunday 15th - Sunday 22nd - National Winter Ales Festival – helpers required

Wednesday 18th – Saturday 21st – National Winter Ales Festival – open sessions.

Tuesday 24th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Albion, Burnage. From 8.00pm.

Friday 27th – Heaton Moor & Heaton Norris West Stagger: starts 7.30pm Elizabethan, Heaton Moor Road; 8.30pm Crown, Heaton Moor Road.

Thursday 9th February – Branch Meeting: Waldorf, Gore St, City Centre (venue tbc) – **selections for 2007 Good Beer Guide will be made at this meeting.**

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

Monday 9th - Branch Meeting: Crown Inn, Victoria Street, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

January 2006

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 9th – Winter Pub of the Season Presentation to the Queens Head, Congleton. From 8.00pm.

Monday 23rd – Campaigning meeting and **Branch AGM** Beartown Tap, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm

Monday 6th February – Social: Borough Arms, Crewe (tbc).

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 5th – Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Old Market Place, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Tuesday 10th – Winter Pub of the Season Presentation to the Marble Beer House, Manchester rd, Chorlton. From 8.00pm.

Thursday 2nd February – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JANUARY '01

The front page headline was 'Bass-aced – Intrebrew forced to sell Bass Brewing by Competition Commission'. In a surprise move that had shocked many industry experts (as well as the Belgian government), Trade Secretary Stephen Byers had scuppered the takeover of Bass's brewing operations by Belgian giant Interbrew. After buying Whitbread's brewing operations the previous summer, Interbrew had made an unconditional offer of £2.3 billion for the Bass breweries, which had been accepted in August. The Competition Commission felt that the industry would be dominated by the powerful duopoly of Interbrew and Scottish & Newcastle.

★★★★★

There was still no positive news of when the long-awaited Wetherspoon's outlet in Stockport was going to materialise. Firstly, they were going to build a new outlet on Underbank, next to the NatWest Bank – a very congested site, and a likely clash of building styles were just two of the problems which would have to be resolved. The usual planning notices appeared, then disappeared, and it seemed that there had been a change of heart. Building a new pub was something of an unusual departure for Wetherspoons, and then they obtained a license for the 'Bensons for Beds' shop on St Petersgate – no details were available as to when the pub was to open, but open it did and trades today as the Calverts Court.

★★★★★

The previous issue of OT referred to one of CAMRA's long running campaigns, the battle against short measure. Now it seemed that the 15 year fight was within an ace of ending in victory. Consumer affairs minister Kim Howells was proposing that a pint of beer should mean a pint of liquid, with the head as an extra – persistent offenders would risk prosecution. But despite a vicious last-minute bid by the Brewers & Licensed Retailers Association to stifle the measure, CAMRA Head of Campaigns Mike Benner had warned that the three-month consultation period announced by Dr Howells would be the most intense period of scaremongering dirty trick lobbying seen since the late 1980s. The optimism proved misplaced, though, and the issue remains live.

★★★★★

Robinson's had just announced the winners of their annual Bar & Cellar Awards, a contest introduced in 1998. All the pubs were automatically entered, and it was a way of both recording quality and improving overall standards throughout the pub estate. This time it was Syd and Jenny Hampson at the Mason's Arms, Denton, who had most impressed the judges. They had also finished in the top three for the previous two years. Runners-up awards went to the King William in Wilmslow and the Railway at Rose Hill, Marple.

★★★★★

Among the pub news were some interesting highlights from the annual Hillgate Stagger: excellent Old Tom in the Spread Eagle served in vintage nip glasses (still excellent but the glasses, sadly, seem to be no more); top-quality Burtonwood Bitter in the Bishop Blaize; the welcome return of real ale to the Lamp (now a cask-ale free Italian restaurant); a pin of Old Tom behind the bar at the Royal Mortar (not seen their since); Adnams Bitter as a guest at the Wheatsheaf (now inexplicably keg-only); drinking the Old Tom dry at the Blossoms...



No FIBBING

Ever since lager has been sold in Britain, brewers have produced versions of foreign beers in this country and sought to create the impression that they are exactly the same as the genuine article. Thus we have such delights as Carlsberg brewed in Northampton and Kronenbourg from Moss Side. In practice, these beers have rarely been a patch on the originals, or even in many cases tasted anything like the same, but it has always been the brewers' view that most consumers simply wanted something cool, wet and alcoholic to pour down their throats and weren't much bothered where it came from.

For many drinkers, this is still the case, but a growing number are becoming concerned about authenticity and are unhappy about the idea of a beer with a German name being produced in Manchester. Research has shown that over 40% of beer drinkers now fall into this category. In response to this trend, a body has been set up called "NoFIBS", standing for "National Organisation for Imported Beers". This is an alliance of importers of genuine foreign beers who are keen to promote their products over inferior home-produced copies. The chairman is the importer of Budweiser Budvar, which of course is one of the best examples of how you will get an immensely better product by choosing the genuine article from the Czech Republic rather than its insipid American namesake brewed in West London.

All but the most downmarket wines make it crystal clear where they are produced, and the same is true of most premium-brand spirits. It would be unthinkable to have a Côtes du Rhone made in Australia, or a Glenlivet distilled in Japan. If brewers really want beer to be regarded as a serious, high-quality product, rather than just the disposable alcoholic equivalent of Coke and Pepsi, then in the future they will have to pay much more attention to authenticity of source. This is especially important as, with an ageing population and growing concerns about excessive drinking, the trend in the drinks market is inevitably going to be "less but better".

While Heineken may not be the most exciting beer in the world, it is significant that a couple of years ago they phased out brewing under licence in the UK, and now all Heineken sold here is a genuine import from the Netherlands. That is a clear sign of which way the wind is blowing. If you are buying foreign beers for drinking at home over the holiday season, it is well worth making sure you are getting something that really does come from where you think it does from the label, rather than being manufactured in some mega-plant in this country. Your tastebuds will certainly appreciate the difference.

THE RIGHT TURN?

Historically, the Conservatives have generally been more sympathetic to the licensed trade – and thus by implication the pubgoer – than Labour, having been the party that did away with afternoon closing in the 1980s and, in the late 1950s, implemented the only post-war cut in beer duty. Recently, of course, there has been a reversal of these positions, with Labour pressing ahead with the liberalisation of licensing hours, and the Conservatives somewhat cynically opposing it. However, this flies in the face of their long-standing principles, and what may appeal in the short term to elderly readers of the Daily Mail is hardly going to help them develop an image as a party in tune with modern Britain. *Curmudgeon Online: www.pubcurmudgeon.org.uk*



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On a wet, windy night up in Mossley, on 7th December, the occasion of my son being in a play up there, I took the opportunity to have a trawl round six pubs, for an update of our branch records.

Firstly I tried the excellent **Britannia** on Manchester Road in Bottom Mossley. Since my last visit Phil and Alison have added two more handpumps, bringing it up to six. On my visit, Marstons Best Bitter was duplicated on two, but that is not always the case if the pub is having a busy spell. Now a W&D pub, the beers all come from their list, but the selection on my visit was good. The Marstons Bitter was joined by Belhaven St Andrews Ale (my choice, very nice), Marstons Owd Roger, Pedigree and Highgate Fat Catz.

At the **Rising Sun** on Stockport Road, I sampled Shaws Golden Globe, a favourite of mine from that brewery, also on was Black Sheep Bitter (regular), and guests were the local Greenfield Brewery's Indian's Head and Archers Village.

Serving me right for doing the two Good Beer Guide entries first, however, I was pretty disappointed to find that the **Billy Goat, Fleece and Stamford Arms** up near the Market Place, did not have a cask beer between the three of them. Finally, I went on past Mossley football Club to the **Highland Laddie** (Robinson's), the Hatters and Unicorn being the choice. I had the Hatters and it was pretty reasonable but not the best I have had.

★★★★★

High Peak Branch members old and new got together on December 3rd at Poynton British Legion Club for a joint bash for the Branch's 30th anniversary and also the annual Christmas 'do'. The attendance was into the sixties.... a great turn out. This Club got to the last four clubs in the country in CAMRA's best club category this year and it is a fair result and credit to them that it was voted the best in the region.

On the night they had Woodfordes Wherry, Millstone True Grit, Pride of Pendle and Copper Dragon Golden Pippin on show, all in fine condition. Members tucked in to an excellent buffet and Ian McDermott hosted a very interesting and difficult quiz with questions about now defunct breweries and beers, reminding us that Pollards brewed a beer called John Barleycorn, for example. It showed that the Branch is still alive and well and I would like to thank everyone, on behalf of the organising committee, for turning up in such large numbers.

★★★★★

Confirmation that the **Wrens Nest** in Glossop does have Boddingtons Bitter (brewed at Hydes) as a permanent fixture. It was fine when I slipped in for a quick one recently, though a lone drinker stood at the bar feels a bit out of place when all the customers are sat round tables eating. Still it's a gain, thetas the main thing.

A pub out on the hills above Hayfield was my port of call on 4th December. The **Lamb**, on the hills between Hayfield and Chinley only sold Marstons Pedigree, however, and at £2.40 per pint, was a little steep, though it was in decent condition.

The Sunday prior to this, two of us attempted to call in **Mateos** on the Charlesworth to Marple Bridge road, but it was closed (at around 1.15pm). When reaching the **Hunters** at Chisworth, we learnt that Mateos had changed hands fairly recently but was faring none too well and is suspected to be closed at present. At the Hunters the beers were Unicorn and Hatters, the former being sampled by both and in good condition on the day.

Same day and into Charlesworth, where the **George & Dragon** had the same two beers on, the Unicorn tried once more but not nearly as well kept as in the Hunters on the day. Finally, across the road at the **Grey Mare**, the lone John Smiths cask was palatable but that's about all you could say as it was pretty lacking in body and taste.

★★★★★

The 'traditional local' continues to thrive on age-old values amidst reforms to the licensed trade. According to Diane Harrison who has just taken over as licensee of the **Tollmache Arms**, Mossley, community spirit and sociability will always be the winning ingredients for a good local pub.

"I'm sure that there will be customers who appreciate that we don't necessarily have to stop serving at 11.00pm each evening. But that is not the only factor in being established as the hub of the community and the best place to enjoy the company of friends," says the thirty eight-year-old from Hadfield.



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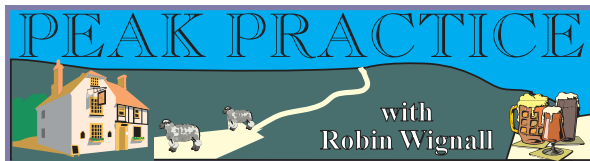


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For Diane this is her first solo venture into the licensed trade having previously balanced part-time bar work with a full-time job as a customer service advisor. "I've always been hard working and believed that the more I put into something the more I would get out. Running my own business is also something that is important to me and as I enjoy meeting new people, taking on a pub was the obvious thing to do."

When asked why she chose the Tollmache Arms, Diane said she had looked at many pubs but this one has the perfect location and the customers had welcomed her as if she had walked into their own home.



By mid-November one of the first serious winter ales has reached the High Peak, with Marston's Owd Roger available in the **Sheperds'** in Whaley Bridge. This 7.6% brew is selling here at £2.25 and is certainly very recommendable. It is presumably widely available in the W&D combined estates as it is also available in the **Royal Oak** in Chapel-en-le-Frith. At about the same time two CAMRA branch members were photographed for a south Manchester free paper enjoying Owd Roger in the Royal Oak in Didsbury.

Other Christmas and winter brews are to be expected, and into December I anticipate some interesting beers in these categories at the **Navigation** in Buxworth and at the new Good Beer Guide entry, the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont.

Mention of the Royal Oak reminded me that in November's Peak Practice a communications glitch meant the wrong variety of *quercus* was referred to at Fernilee, where there is a **Shady Oak**. Apologies to Peter McKinnon. On a recent visit to the Shady Oak, some fine Jennings' Dark Mild was available, along with Jennings' Bitter, Cumberland, and another topical, seasonal brew, Red-breast.

The *Royal Oak* is probably the country's most common pub name, and is certainly widespread in the Peak District. The **Royal Oak** at Chapel-en-le-Frith is undoubtedly worth a visit. This former Burtonwood house, now W&D, sold a good pint of Burtonwood Bitter until recently. This has been replaced by Marston's Bitter. Pedigree and a seasonal/guest beer are also available. Other commendable Royal Oaks include that at High Lane where this ex-Burtonwood house retains its Good Beer Guide status whilst at Strines, Robinson's Royal Oak, a call on the 2004 and 2005 Mild Challenges, sells decent Hatters and Unicorn.

★★★★★

Whilst I have used this column to criticise brewers and pubcos for not keeping up to date with badging pubs, I also think it is important to retain links with the past, especially if these are significant architectural features. I recently wrote about the vanishing window at the **Roebuck** in Chapel, for example. I was therefore pleased to find evidence of former breweries when walking through Dore in the western suburbs of Sheffield. Wall-end relief signing shows the **Devonshire Arms** as a former Wards house, whilst the **Hare & Hounds** has a painted Stones sign on the end wall. Ward's was a Sheffield brewery lost in the Vaux fiasco, whilst Stones became part of the former Bass empire, and was eventually closed. Even at the end Sheffield-brewed cask conditioned Stones Bitter was a decent pint, not to be confused with the deservedly maligned, brewed anywhere, widely available, keg product.

★★★★★

Finally, your columnist gained mention is a recent copy of *Fellrunner* being noted as a "real ale correspondent who demonstrated the value of tipping good quality traditional beer by winning the V.60 category" at a local fell race. This was from the pen of Martin Cortvriend, formerly landlord of the then Good Beer Guide listed **George & Dragon** at Higher Hurdfield above Macclesfield, where local drinkers will recall drinking a good range of well-kept, quality beer. Martin is also a fell runner and is not unused to picking up age group prizes!

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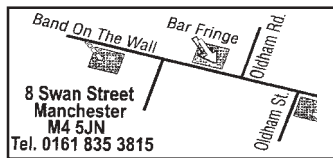
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CHEADLE HULME

It had been a very wet autumnal day, which by the evening had dried off as our early starters arrived at the **Kenilworth** on Cheadle Road, a quarter of a mile to the south-west of Cheadle Hulme centre. Sadly the classic 1930s external appearance was lost during a 'refurbishment' 10 years ago. There are several distinct areas in the pub but it is basically one large room and we settled in the raised non-smoking area to the left of the entrance. The cask beers available on the night were Greene King IPA and Adnams Broadside both on good form. A couple of those present refused to drink the Greene King beer in protest at their recent closure of Ridleys brewery in Essex.

For our next pub we headed north along Cheadle Road and on to Hulme Hall Avenue for about half a mile to reach the recently refurbished 17th Century **Hesketh Tavern** (formerly Arms). The interior of the pub has improved considerably with the raised seating area being removed and the previously rather overpowering colour scheme being replaced by a mixture of off-white walls, wood and many gilded items. The black & white tiled carvery area is almost as big as the bar, showing a strong emphasis on food. Cask ale is available with Greene King IPA (again!) which most of us enjoyed, leaving the Greene King refuseniks to drink the very average John Smiths cask bitter. Incidentally, in 1842 Cheadle Hulme's first railway station was located across the road from the pub behind the row of cottages, it was a short lived and relocated to the present site when the line to Macclesfield was constructed.

Our next stop, the **Church Inn**, a serial Good Beer Guide entry, located on the corner of Ravenoak Road and Church Lane, involved another walk of about half a mile north along Hilltop Avenue and left past All Saints Church, which is depicted on the pub's sign. This cosy establishment has been run by the same family for many years. It has an Italian restaurant in the rear room and is one of very few pubs in the area that still has a separate vault. The Robinson's Mild and Bitter were both very good but Lighthouse, the seasonal beer, was thought to be rather average by most of the group.

The next stop of the evening the **Governors House**, formerly the Ravenoak Hotel, required the shortest walk, otherwise known as crossing the road. This pub is a rare beast indeed on this side of the Pennines, a Hardy Hansons of Nottingham, managed house, one of only three in the Greater Manchester area. It has a central bar and several lounge-style drinking areas around it. The pub was packed but the tantalising selection of ales persuaded us to stay, most enjoyed the seasonal beer Guzzling Goose, which takes its name from Nottingham's annual Goose fair. The other beers available were Olde Trip, Kimberley Bitter and S & B which "is brewed with a slightly more bitter aftertaste for the Manchester drinker" and was rated highly by those who tried it.

A walk down Ravenoak Road past the former Police Station onto Station Road brought us to Cheadle Hulme's newest pub in the shape of the **John Millington**. Although the pub is new, Millington Hall which forms the heart of it dates from the late 15th century and is a grade II listed building. The extensions to the Hall, which form most of the pub, are sympathetic to the design of the original hall. Internally the pub is impressive, being mainly painted in a light olive green colour with several features that look to be recovered from other buildings e.g. a gothic stone arch leading into the separate dining area to the rear. The main drinking area is spread amongst several loosely defined rooms and there is an L shaped wood panelled bar between two of them. This pub has brought its owners, Hydes Brewery, almost instant success but there have been rumours of inconsistent beer quality. No quality problems were evident on our visit however with Hydes' Bitter & Boddingtons Bitter (now brewed by Hydes) being in good condition.

A short walk along Station road took us to our final call of the evening, the **Cheadle Hulme** next to the Station. This is another pub that has seen recent refurbishment, no doubt prompted by the impending competition from the John Millington along the road. The pub is something of a departure from the usual design of a Holt's pub, with modern décor and a colour scheme comprising shades of light brown. It is pleasing to see that the vault has been retained with a more traditional appearance and dart board. The choice of beers on the night were Holt's Bitter and Mild, most found them to be of excellent quality. The end of licensing hours (11pm at the time) forced us to end the night here but I did notice on my way home, through the window of the nearby Wetherspoons pub, The Kings Hall, that it had a beer from Stockport's other brewery, that being Julie's Pride from Three Rivers.

Cheadle Hulme is so large it would be impossible to visit every pub on one night and it makes a pleasant change to find an area where it is hard to find a pub that does not sell cask conditioned beer. My only criticisms would be, that for a Friday night some of the pubs could have done with more bar staff and that the beer prices in some of these pubs are quite high.

Most of these pubs are passed by buses 157 (Manchester/Woodford), 313 (Stockport/Cheadle Hulme) or a short walk from Cheadle Hulme station.

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

The big City Centre news this month has been the opening of Kro Piccadilly on the ground floor of the controversial Number 1 Piccadilly. As ever, the Kro people have come up with a striking example of design creating a very sophisticated spot to have a drink.

At night it stands out a mile. Mainly due to the back-lit orange bar back, which shines out across Piccadilly Gardens – a beacon of excellence in every sense of the word, perhaps. Good use has been made of what is a large cavernous space with quality materials and fittings throughout – I particularly liked the more subtle bottom-lit pale aqua bar front. It really is huge but is carefully split up into a coffee bar, restaurant and general bar area, and despite having only been open for a few days when I called, it was already very busy with an early evening crowd.

There are five handpumps on the bar dispensing some familiar names – Pedigree, Directors, Black Sheep and Hydes' Jekyll's Gold – although the odd guest may also feature, I suspect. The foreign range isn't bad either, with a small number of German beers (highlights – Jever in bottle, Paulaner on draught) and Belgian specialties (highlights – ever-reliable Duvel and again-improving Liefmans).

A major and important addition to the City Centre scene, and destined to be hugely popular I wager.

RUSHOLME AND BEYOND

I hadn't been down to Rusholme for ages so, given a quietish month on the news front, I thought I'd give it a quick once-over. It turned out to be something of a mixed bag.

First let's get the keg pubs out of the way. These hardy perennials seem to have their faces permanently set against selling any cask beer – on Wilmslow Road there is the recently re-opened **Clarence** and the **Huntsman** while down Claremont Road there is the **Lord Nelson** (better known perhaps as the Lord Lyon). Also without cask beer, well any beer in fact, is the closed and 'lease for sale' **Gardeners Arms** on Victory Street.

So, what about the rest? First port of call was the **Whitworth** on Moss Lane East, which was keg-only last time I called. As far as I can see this is now an independently owned free house and cask ale is back majoring it seems, on beers from Coach House brewery in Warrington. Dick Turpin pale ale and a seasonal, Christmas Pudding (4.4%) were on handpump and both were in very good form, with the Christmas Pudding being particularly enjoyable. The **Albert** on Walmer Street remains as reliable as ever with Hydes' Bitter and Jekyll's Gold on handpump sold in a warm and comfortable local. A true community pub, this. Another reliable Hydes' pub is the **Osborne House** on Victory Street, impressively refurbished a few years ago and still looking good. There was a very warm welcome here and Hydes' Mild and Bitter are on handpump.

I had it fixed in my mind that **Hardy's Well** on Wilmslow Road was all-keg, but no cask beer seems to be alive and well in this barn-like pub which, many years ago, must have been something of a flagship for the old Hardy's Crown Brewery in Hulme. Lees Bitter had just sold out but Theakstons Bitter was also on handpump, and very tasty it was, too. That just left the **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove. This used to be festooned with photos of the artistes appearing at the old BBC studios nearby and also sold tasty pints of Greenalls (only rarely will you have read the words 'tasty pint' and 'Greenalls' in the same sentence) and Bass. All gone now. Some interesting old photos remain but of the six handpumps only one was in use, dispensing cask Boddingtons. Having said that, it was a very good example of this now-too-rare cask beer.

FURTHER SOUTH

In Fallowfield, **Bruins** is now defunct. I am told that the bar permanently closed last month this is a shame as it ought to have been a very good outlet for Beartown Brewery but somehow it never seemed to make its mark.

However nearby is Hydes' **Friendship**, a pub that seems to appeal to both local residents and the transient student population. The full Hydes' range is usually sold along with a guest beer – Wychwood Dog's Bollocks had just gone when I called. Another good Hydes' pub is the **Victoria** in Withington – still a top class pub and when I called, selling excellent pints of the latest craft ale, Insulation.

Big news, though, is down in Didsbury. In a surprise move, Hazel and Rob Long left the **Royal Oak** at the end of November. There's nothing sinister in this. At rather short notice they were offered another pub, the **Welcome Inn**, in Marton, near Blackpool. Hazel and Rob originate from the Blackpool area and, when promotion was offered in their home area, they jumped at the chance. The **Welcome** is to undergo extensive refurbishment and I may try and pop in later this year when I journey to Blackpool for the CAMRA AGM. As yet their replacements at the **Royal Oak** have not been announced and the pub is being temporarily managed by the manager of the **Red Lion** in Withington.

Staying in Withington, the **Golden Lion** is now closed and surrounded by fencing, awaiting its fate. Nearby, **Peninsula** in Ladybarn (between Withington and Burnage) has closed and is boarded up. It was formerly the **Talbot** (of ill repute) and re-opened as **Peninsula** a few years ago - initially it had some cask ale but this soon disappeared ("No one was drinking it"). It has both 'For Sale' and 'Pub Business To Let' signs up - the latter is from Enterprise Inns, but I've better news in Didsbury where the **Nelson** seems to be going from strength to strength. Three cask beers are now sold – Tetley Bitter, Black Sheep and, the best seller, **Jenning's Cumberland Ale**.



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The Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Season for Winter 2005-06 is the Marble Beer House, Manchester Road, Chorlton.

The Marble Beer House is one of Chorlton's newer pubs, having been converted from the former Marble Arch World Beers shop some years ago. Since then this Marble Brewery tied house has gone from strength to strength and is now something of an institution on the local beer drinking scene.



Tragedy struck last years when the popular manager, Karen Weldon had to give up the pub due to the serious illness to which she eventually succumbed. Her successor is Warren McCoubrey who has extensive pub experience, initially at The Bar also in Chorlton, but more recently with a lengthy spell running the Knott Bar on Deansgate in Manchester. At the Knott, Warren established his cask beer credentials, selling both Marble beers and guests in top condition, along with a selection of Belgian beers plus real cider and perry. However, the Knott's loss is Chorlton's gain.

He took over at the Marble Beer House in July and is thoroughly enjoying his new role at this smaller and more traditional operation. Recognising the firm foundations laid by Karen, to whose memory he wishes to dedicate this award, Warren has continued the pub's reputation as the home of fine ales. The range usually comprises four Marble beers plus three guests (which include the Marble seasonals). He has also carried on the real cider tradition started by Karen, with either a cider or perry also available. Once a new fridge has been installed he also plans to have a range of Belgian beers supplied by the nearby Belgian Belly. Naturally, Warren is thrilled to bits with news of his award, coming so soon after taking over. "It wouldn't have been possible without the help of Helen, Vicky and the rest of the great staff", he told *Opening Times*. The award will be presented on Tuesday 10th January at about 8.00pm.

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