

Closed Pubs Blight Area

Townscapes across the *Opening Times* area are increasingly being blighted by closed and often derelict buildings – courtesy of the major pub companies that now control many of the country’s public houses.

In the days when most pubs were run by brewing companies, not only would they change hands less frequently, but even if a permanent tenant could not be found the pubs would be kept running by relief licensees. While that remains the case with our local family brewers and some pub companies, the bigger operators seem to have little hesitation in closing pubs and sealing them with ugly steel shutters.

Taking Stockport as an example, closed pubs at the moment include the Railway in North Reddish, the Grey Horse in South Reddish and Windsors in Edgeley – all occupying prominent sites in shopping or residential areas. Worst of the lot has to be the former Wellington (latterly TJ’s Bar) on Wellington Road South – the increasing dereliction of this building scars the town centre just as the Town Council is formulating grandiose improvement plans. Manchester fares just as badly in places – the closed Abbey Hey Hotel has featured in the *Manchester Evening News*’ ‘Get It Sorted’ column, while the Pomona in Gorton is little short of a disgrace. Even the booming City Centre isn’t immune – the Punch Taverns’ shuttered Pig & Porcupine at the end of Deansgate makes a sad counterpoint to the newly-opened Hilton Hotel across the road.

The owning pub companies meanwhile seem oblivious to the urban blight they are inflicting on our towns and cities. Nor are they doing their prospective tenants or leaseholders any favours – the longer these pubs remain shut the less likely they are to be viable if and when they reopen. Indeed some must now be beyond the point of no return.

For everyone’s sake our message to these companies echoes the MEN – Get it Sorted – and soon!



Windsors in Edgeley, Stockport – for sale but no buyers

End of the Line for Railway?



Storm clouds gather over the Railway

Dave Porter has announced that the Railway on Portwood is likely to close early next year. See *Stockport Supping* on page 9 for the full story.

IN NOVEMBER’S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	2	Shaw’s Visit	12
Curmudgeon	4	CHAPs on Tour	13
Stagger	5	Manchester Matters	14
What’s Doing	6	Events Coming Up	15
5 Years Ago	7	Cider & Perry	15
Beer of the Festival 2006	8	Brewery News	16
Stockport Supping	9	Foreign Brewery News	17
High Peak Pub News	10	CAMRA Calling	18
Peak Practice	11		

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Pub OF THE Month AWARD




The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport.

Situated at what could be called the 'Gateway to Edgeley', this Robinson's pub stands on the corner of Greek Street, opposite the Cheshire Regiment's Armoury.

Landlady Sheila Barlow and her husband Tom have run this, their first, very popular community pub for two years. Sheila has previous experience of bar work, but Tom came to the pub a complete novice, and has now become a first rate cellarman. Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn are the regular choices on handpump and are joined by Old Tom in the winter

While the Armoury has always been popular with the more mature range of customer there is always a warm welcome to every person who visits. There are a number of darts teams playing here on various nights and Sheila has even started a Social Club with outings, party nights, artist nights and a Christmas outing for the pensioners amongst the events.

Much needed renovation work was started during the previous landlord's tenure but it's since the Barlows moved in that improvements have really taken off. I have been a regular at the Armoury after County home games for years and have witnessed the changes. The vault used to be brown and dingy, the type of room Andy Capp would like. Now it's bright and airy. A small wooden partition was removed, making the room bigger

At the back of the vault is the Hatters Room, popular with both football and rugby fans. In fact, I have noticed a great increase of County fans coming here in preference to previous match day haunts.

The gents toilet has been brought into the 21st Century and the ladies is due to be enlarged and improved. The lounge is also in line for redecoration. A new back bar has already been fitted by Robinson's and both Sheila and her staff are delighted by it. Well done Robbies - keep up the good work.

As you can see it's boom time at the Armoury. Trade is up 73 per cent and it is one of the few pubs still getting deliveries in 36-gallon barrels. Presentation night is **Wednesday 15 November** (note change from usual date) from 8pm onwards when a cracking event is in prospect. **MW**

The Armoury is well served by public transport with buses 369, 313 and 370 stopping nearby. It is easily walkable from the town centre and Stockport railway station.

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OT – COMMENT...

This month we highlight the scandal of the closed and boarded pubs that increasingly litter our high streets and suburbs.

The culprits are easy to finger – the major pub companies who have come to dominate the industry. While even the reviled (at the time) national brewers would move heaven and earth to keep their pubs open, the bigger pub companies seem to have no such qualms. Locally the biggest culprit seems to be Punch Taverns who are responsible for some of the more prominent eyesores including the Pig & Porcupine in the City Centre.

Some of these pubs and clearly now unlettable or unsaleable but still they remain – closed and shuttered eyesores. Some are obviously past the point of no return – the Pomona in Gorton being a prime example.

What can be done? The pub owning companies – some of whom just consider themselves property owners with little or none of the social responsibility of the old style pub owners, are clearly disinclined to put their houses in order. If that is the case than the local authorities must take matters into their own hands. Threats of compulsory purchase orders are perhaps one answer. These pubs could either be let on reasonable terms to independent entrepreneurs who could make a go of them or, if they have reached the ends of their viable lives, turned over to housing or other community use. Either way, something must be done.

OT – INFORMATION

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Trading Standards – problems in pubs should normally be resolved by a quiet word with the licensee. However sometimes it may be necessary to take it further. These are the local contacts:

- **Stockport:** 0845 644 4301
- **Manchester:** 0161 234 1555
- **Tameside:** 0161 342 8355
- **Trafford:** 0161 912 2274
- **Derbyshire:** 08456 058 058
- **Cheshire:** 0845 11 32 500

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!



Passing the Baton

The long-serving licensee of a popular, Good Beer Guide listed pub has announced that they are leaving, and inevitably there are worries that the character of the pub will change overnight. In the past, when most pubs were owned by breweries, this wasn't too much of a concern. The new licensee would probably keep things much the same, and you just had to hope he would keep his beer as well as the outgoing one. Also, a brewery had an interest in what was sold in the pub, as its name was above the door. If the brewery wanted to be known for selling real ale, then they would ensure that real ale was provided to their pubs.

Now that the majority of pubs have passed into the hands of pub companies, things are different. Large numbers have lost their real ale, as it's no longer possible to point the finger at Brewery X and say "you have a poor record". Nobody notices which pub company a pub belongs to. More than has been the case for many years, a pub's commitment to good beer, and to many other things too, is mostly down to the approach of the licensee. Someone who is enterprising and imaginative can turn round a previously mediocre establishment, but someone who can't be bothered, particularly on the beer front, can easily wreck all the good work. Therefore we need to champion the achievements of the good licensees, and recognise that just because a pub was good five or ten years ago is no guarantee that it still will be today.

Obscured by Smoke

Whatever your views on the rights and wrongs of the smoking ban, it is a fact of life that it is coming in around the middle of next year, and pubs need to start preparing for it. However, their task has been made more difficult by the government dragging their feet on clarifying the regulations that will apply. Many pubs will be looking to make substantial investment in beer gardens, smoking shelters and patio heaters, and need clear guidelines as to exactly what will be allowed and what won't be. But it's unlikely that these will be published until December, leaving precious little time.

In Scotland the official guidelines were couched in very vague terms and subject to widely varying interpretation by different local authorities, which left licensees simply not knowing where they stood. Only 1% of Scottish pubs were able to successfully obtain planning permission for smoking shelters before the ban came in.

It also seems totally over the top to require pubs to put up "no smoking" signs at every entrance, when there will be a general presumption that smoking is not permitted in public areas anyway. And, when it's impossible to supervise every area of a pub all the time, is it reasonable to fine a licensee £2500 for failing to spot someone lighting up on the premises? You might have thought it would be in the government's interest to get the licensed trade onside to bring the ban in as smoothly as possible. But unfortunately it seems that instead pubs are being hit with extra cost, regulation and uncertainty.



Hyde Road with Clive Rushen

As is traditional the starting point was the **Travellers Call** near Pottery Road. The small L shaped room around the bar was hardly bustling, but coincidentally a large group left several minutes after our arrival. Our reputation must precede us! The pub hadn't any loud music, which is a godsend these days. The Hydes' bitter was the only cask ale available, and was eminently drinkable. Given the small size of the pub one can only assume that more regulars drink the real stuff than might be true of some larger places. En route to the Pineapple we passed the keg only **Imperial** and **Nag's Head**, along with the ghost of the **Coach and Horses/Brodies**, looking all forlorn and boarded up. As somebody commented, in its heyday the Hyde Road stagger was a bit of an endurance test, with 12 pubs and 12 breweries, and still some were skipped. In the modern pubco era, with ever upwards rent reviews and ever increasing property values, the stagger has probably survived relatively intact compared to others.

The next pub was the **Pineapple**, a modern (last 30ish years or so) open plan pub with two large joined rectangle rooms around a bar area serving our second instalment of Hydes'. The pub had the Hydes' seasonal special, Cutty Shark, as well as Original. The pub was busier than the previous pub, but the customers were spread over a far larger area, and the music was certainly noticeable. The lure of the novel was too great for much of the party, with most electing to try the Cutty Shark and rating it more than acceptable, although the lone voice trying the standard bitter did rate it higher. Given the 5-1 sample frequency for Cutty Shark, statistically, it was a more reliable option, but then, as we all know, there are lies, damn lies and statistics.

The **Surburban** was waiting, hopefully not in vain, for its next tenant, and in the meantime no Lees cask was in evidence. The promise was that it would arrive tomorrow. Without further ado we moved onto the **Plough**.

This large, and historic old Grade II listed coaching inn dating from the 18th century (except the indoor toilets c.2004) was looking slightly spruced up outside. Inside, the vault was busy, but room was easily found in one of the other rooms for those who don't like propping up a bar. The overall feeling about the beer, both the Hatters mild and the Unicorn bitter, was that it was perfectly acceptable, but wasn't quite the great pint everybody remembered from previous visits.

On the way to the **Royal Oak** we passed the keg only **Lord Nelson**, and **Cotton Tree**. The Royal Oak was the busiest pub of the evening so far, with a bustling local feel packing out both the original bar, and the vault, which was added when the adjacent cottage was bought out in the late 70s. Everards Tiger was the sole

cask beer available after the landlord decided to concentrate on only one about six to nine months ago. The beer was uniformly considered satisfactory, but definitely showing intimations of mortality. The pub was up for sale for a period, and the landlord could have been distracted from the knitting by his new venture, Robinson's March Hare in Ashton. I was reliably informed that the Coronation Street star Bill Piddington was sat at the bar, but then last soap opera I watched with any enthusiasm was Soap.

The **Wagon and Horses** was the biggest pub of the evening, and both rooms were also the busiest in the tradition of Holt's houses. The mild was the proffered choice of most of the party, but unfortunately those with the most bar 'presence' were rewarded with a lukewarm offering. In comparison the bitter was served at a far more acceptable temperature. The warm halves of mild that had sat in the pipes for too long were exchanged without query. The mild shaded the good bitter, and was rated excellent.



The award-winning Vale Cottage

The final stop on the stagger was the **Vale Cottage**, which has picked up several CAMRA awards recently. Set back from Hyde Road behind a screen of trees, this attractive old pub is a firm favourite with the locals and was busy. On offer was Wells Bombardier. Taylor's Landlord, and Blakemere Brewery (Northwich) Navajo. As the weary travellers settled down for the last drinks of the night, Navajo was the more popular choice. The party were split down the middle on which they preferred, and only those capable of number crunching to two decimal places after drinking beer at six pubs in an evening could separate two beers both rated excellent. If you see Caledonian Deuchars IPA instead of Bombardier in the Vale Cottage next time you visit, remember you saw it here first. A mild may also follow (Black Cat was suggested), but its success will depend on how many regulars buy their original drink of choice.

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Good Beer Guide Long Service Awards

North Manchester CAMRA has recently made a series of presentations to three notable pubs marking long-running entries in the Good Beer Guide.

Most venerable of the three is the superlative Crescent in Salford, where Idy and Sal have made the pub a must-visit for any cask ale enthusiast. The picture below shows Idy receiving her certificate from North Manchester Chairman, Steve Smith while a number of bar staff and CAMRA members look on.



Celebrating 12 years in the Good Beer Guide is Maxine Doyle at the Hare & Hounds, Shudehill. Maxine is pictured below receiving her certificate from Steve Smith. The bad news is that Maxine plans to leave the pub by the end of the year. Let's hope that this excellent old-style local with a wonderfully intact inter-wars interior passes into sympathetic hands.



The final award, marking 15 years in the Good Beer Guide, went to the Morning Star in Wardley. This traditional Edwardian pub serves its community well and offers up the best of Holts beers – mild, bitter and the seasonals. Our photograph shows North Manchester Branch Secretary Dave Hallows making the presentation to landlord Dave Venables.



N. Manchester at Greenfield Brewery

A band of CAMRA cohorts battled their way through to the brewery, despite a train service that was vandalised on the night. We were welcomed by able brewer Peter Percival and partner Tony Hart with two beers on handpull, namely Castleshaw and Dobcross Bitter. Both were very well received.

Peter opened the brewery back in 2002, after being an assistant at the nearby Saddleworth Brewery; before that he was in the woollen industry. An interesting point was that the micro has its own supply of sweet spring water. The first ale was Bill O'Jacks and now there has been 30 different beers brewed on the Tanners Business Centre Site on the edge of the scenic village. Maris Otter Malt is commonly used with hops sourced from Charles Faram, including Tettnanger which smells like warm & lovely aromatic green hops to males, but like sweaty socks to those of a female gender! Lately, Hopped & Stoned, a bitter, proved very popular and local trade is very good. However, not many of the locals, nor the pubs in the village know that they have their own brewery on their door steps. An excellent visit enjoyed by all.



Local CAMRA members enjoying the Greenfield tour

More on Paradise Brewery Bar

On my last call I spied two real ales on; Market Special (3.7). A dark brown bitter with a roasted malt flavour and moderately bittered. Nantwich Ale (5.6), again dark brown, sweet & winey. Occasionally, there is a beer from Three Rivers, as Paradise brewer John Wood brews there now one day a week. Both were served in plastic glasses (due to Manchester City Council rules) and were somewhat heavily chilled. But it is a good stop off point and handy for shoppers. as the imbiber can indulge in the delights of al fresco eating from the food hall. There are high tables & stools just facing the bar. **DH**



Phil Levison presents his monthly look back at events from Opening Times past issues

'Beartown Hits Stockport' was the front page headline, guaranteed to delight all local beer enthusiasts. Congleton's Beartown Brewery had acquired its third tied house – the Navigation on Lancashire Hill, Stockport.

Although it has been a thriving local, the Navigation seemed to have lost its way in recent years, and latterly had offered nothing in the way of cask beer. The brewery's initial aim was to get established in the pub, and turn it round from its keg only status. This would be followed by a refurbishment, and a similar operation was planned to that at the Beartown Tap pub in Congleton – an impressive pub by any standards.

Last month's *Five Years Ago* had reported that the 2001 National Organic Brewing Competition was to be held in the Marble Arch Pub & Brewery. Massive interest had been reported in what was actually the Second UK Organic Brewing Competition, and the Henley-on-Thames firm of WW Brakepear & Sons had beaten off stiff competition to win the competition for the second year running, with its 4.6% ABV Live Organic bottled ale.

There was an update on the long running saga of the "Full Pint Law". Poll results showed overwhelming public support for new laws to end the scandal of short measures of beer in the nation's pubs and clubs. 77 per cent of voters backed the laws that ensured drinkers received a full pint every time, and only 4 per cent of drinkers disagreed. A motion had been tabled in the Commons in support of the Government's proposals.

It had been reported that Wetherspoons looked likely to be going ahead with their second development in Stockport town centre, on the site next to the Natwest Bank on Underbank. A new licensing application had been made for what would be part of Wetherspoons Lloyds No.1 chain – basically a Wetherspoons with music and fewer beers. This was the site for Wetherspoons original application, which never happened, and Calverts Court came into being. Now, in 2006, another five years has passed with no progress on the site.

The Campaign for Real Ale had been urging Gordon Brown to support Britain's 400 small brewers by introducing a progressive beer duty system (PBD) in the next budget. CAMRA's call for action followed the previous month's pre-budget speech, which hadn't referred to PBD despite assurances in the budget that the Government was considering such a system. The 400 small breweries had less than 2 per cent of the beer market, but they produced some 2,000 real ales to match local tastes. If the very small brewing companies could pay less tax, it would cost the Treasury very little, yet be of tremendous benefit to the small breweries, who were struggling to survive in an increasingly competitive market.

Cask Marque Award

Wetherspoons, Piccadilly	Porters Ale House, Macclesfield
The Paramount, Manchester	Jar Bar, Macclesfield
Beehive, Moss Side	Society Rooms, Macclesfield
Osborne House, Rusholme	Cotton Bale, Hyde
Great Central, Fallowfield	Society Rooms, Stalybridge
Friendship Inn, Fallowfield	Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge
The Hillary Step, Whalley Range	White House, Stalybridge
Pineapple, Gorton	Q Bar, Stalybridge
Albion, Burnage	Angel Inn, Dukinfield
Sam's Chop House, Manchester	Wye Bridge Inn, Buxton
City Arms, Manchester	Barnford Arms, Stockport
The Waterhouse, Manchester	Pack Horse, Hayfield
All Bar One, Manchester	Farmers Arms, Stockport
Rising Sun, Manchester	Four Heaton's, Heaton Norris
Fletcher Moss, Didsbury	Nursery Inn, Heaton Norris
Victoria Hotel, Withington	Duke of York, Romiley
Dog & Partridge, Didsbury	Hare & Hounds, Marple
Gateway, East Didsbury	Bulls Head Hotel, High Lane
Sedge Lynn, Chorlton	Crown, Cheadle
Old Wellington, Manchester	Old Star Inn, Cheadle
Moon Under Water, Manchester	Prince of Wales, Gatley
The Bishop Blaze, Stretford	High Grove, Gatley
King's Ransom, Sale	Kings Hall, Cheadle Hulme
J P Joule, Sale	Cross Keys, Cheadle Hulme
Old Plough Hotel, Sale	Ryecroft, Cheadle Hulme
Bank at Sale, Sale	John Millington, Cheadle Hulme
Lowes Arms, Denton	Horse & Farrier, Gatley
Red Lion, Denton	Governor's House, Cheadle H'lm
English Lounge, Manchester	Bollin Fee, Wilmslow
Lloyds No 1, Manchester	Coach and Four, Wilmslow
Tim Bobbin, Urmston	Quarry Bank, Timperley
Ash Tree, Ashton U Lyne	King George, Hale
Calverts Court, Stockport	Corbens, Hale Barns
Poachers Inn, Bollington	Bear's Paw, Knutsford
Hanqing Gate, Macclesfield	Cross Keys Hotel, Knutsford



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Navy



2002

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2004

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Beer of the Festival – 2006

Last month we reported on our presentation to Abbeydale Brewery in Sheffield, winners of the 2005 Beer of the Festival at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. The winners of the 2006 award were rather closer to home...

Focus on Marble Brewery...

Regular readers will need little introduction to the Marble Brewery, based at the Marble Arch pub on Rochdale Road, in Manchester.

The beers are rapidly achieving cult status, with frequent mentions in the *Guardian*, for example, and the pub itself, a spectacularly tiled Victorian gem, has also just picked up one major award.

The pub was built in 1888 for the long defunct McKenna's Harpurhey Brewery and ultimately passed into the hand of Wilsons Brewery. In 1984 it was purchased by CAMRA stalwart John Worthington whose renovations revealed the spectacular tiled interior and the mosaic floor – all covered up for about 30 years. John sold his free house to Vance de Becheval who commissioned the in-house brewery, which opened in 1998.

Two years later the brewery became wholly organic and vegan and, with the arrival of head brewer James Campbell has never looked back. The pub and brewery's current owner, Jan Rogers, is happy for James and his brewing team of Colin Stronge and Dominic Driscoll to experiment with a variety of new beers – the three brewers' Tawny Beer Challenge in August was a particular treat.

The core range comprises GSB (3.8%), Manchester Bitter (4.2%), Lagonda IPA (5.2%), Chocolate (%.5%) and the spectacular Ginger Marble (4.5%). It was Ginger Marble that won this year's Beer of the Festival Award, and rightly so as it is a classic of its style, with a real 'slap you round the chops' hit of fiery ginger. A large party of local CAMRA members visited the Marble Arch to present the award. Our photo shows Dominic (left) and James (right) with the certificate.



Not one to rest on their laurels, James and his team continue to innovate. Beers in the pipeline include McKenna's Reprise, a 4.5% porter due out this month, and also a range of bottled beers including a stronger version of Ginger Marble with slightly revised spicing.

The Marble Arch pub is also celebrating, having been voted Pub of the Year in the recent Manchester Food & Drink Festival Awards. This is long-overdue recognition for a pub that manages to be both a local and a destination pub. The spectacular interior is matched by the large range of beers (in-house and guests) and excellent pub food. Congratulations to all involved.



Railway to Close

The big news this month has to be the announced closure of the Railway on Portwood in Stockport.

It was six years ago that Dave Porter agreed to sell the pub to developers and over the intervening years there have been several reports that the end was nigh. Now it really is, as the developers have decided to exercise their right to buy the pub.



The Railway – doomed to closure

Dave has put notices up in the pub explaining that he effectively signed away its long-term future at a time when it was not performing as well as he hoped. Since then, of course, the Railway has become one of the town's real ale flagships supported by a large and loyal crowd of regulars and attracting visitors from wide and far. Showcasing the entire Porter Brewery range, weekly guest beers, real cider and an excellent range of foreign beers, both in bottle and on draught, the Railway has something for everyone.

Closure is likely to take place next February, although Dave says that a further few months trading may be possible if he can successfully negotiate with the developers. Given the pub's rather poor structural condition he is not optimistic that this will be possible.

Recognising the fierce loyalty of the many people who use the pub, Dave Porter has tried to find a local replacement. Potential targets have included the former Stanley Arms, TJ's Bar and the Woolpack. All have fallen through for a variety of reasons.

Closure may also see the end of Porter Brewing Company. Once the Railway goes, the plan is to sell the other Porter Brewing pub, the Griffin in Haslingden, home of the brewery itself. Having said that Dave says that his heart and soul is in brewing and he won't be away for long. Brewing in an industrial unit may therefore be a possibility and Porter's excellent beers continue. The pity is that locally we will have nowhere to enjoy them.

Out and About in Bramhall

I decided to check out the pubs of Bramhall one sunny late-summer afternoon. As a quest for cask ale it was a dire task, especially in Bramhall centre. Both **Beluga Cafe Bar** and **Graze** (formerly Bramhalls) on Bramhall La Sth sold only keg beer; a new bar appears to have opened in the shopping parade, it's called Joga Bonito, but serves only the fizz. The

former Victoria, now **Orange Tree**, on Ack Lane does sell cask beer in the form of Greene King IPA, but of course it was my luck that the cask had yet to settle! It looked most pleasant so I'll have to go back to sample it another time.

I don't recall the name of the bar that was on Moss Lane, but it matters little as it has now grown into a very swish looking restaurant called Piccolino's. I decided to cut my losses and head back to Bramhall Park, passing on the way the County Hotel (Bramhall Lane South), this at one time had a cask ale bar... Get off the bus at Bramhall Bridge, go up Fir Road past the shops and you find Bramhall's cask ale mecca, the **Ladybrook**. Yes, this large 'Roadhouse', mock-Tudor former Boddingtons house has what is probably the most extensive range of cask beers you'll encounter in the any pub in the south of the borough! There are five beers on here - Boddies, Well's Bombardier, Fuller's London Pride, Bateman's Valiant, and Harvest Moon (no brewery name mentioned on this one). Prices are pretty steep, £2.37 for some beers, but quality was good, so there must be demand. The Ladybrook has quite an emphasis on food, but being such a large pub it can accommodate all preferences quite easily. The building was moderately opened-out some years ago losing a wonderful Billiard Room in the process. Now it is three rooms, one non-smoking, each with original fireplace, much use is made of exposed beams and rafters, but altogether it offers a most pleasant experience. Worth a visit.

On the Fred Perry Way and on Redford Drive on the New House Farm estate is the 70's built **Shady Oak**. At one time a Tetley house that had an interesting guest beer policy, it is part of a small shopping area. I would describe it as being multi-level and having many areas in which to drink or dine (appears to shift a fair-few meals); it seems to appeal to those who like sports TV, but that is usually restricted to a part of the pub only. Good mix of folk were in when I called with everything in order and being well-run. The beers? Thwaites Bitter, Old Speckled Hen, and Greene King Abbot.

Next up was the **Bromale** on West Park Road over near to Bramhall Park. This was selling Moorhouses Pride of Pendle (£2.15), but upon asking the landlady, she told me that two other beers usually make up the offering, so I missed out on the Theakstons Best and Jennings Cumberland. It has the look of a 60's building with a quite a dark interior of two rooms separated by one of those "Greenalls type" bars - the type that has back-lit leaded glass above the counter. So, there's a vault and a panelled lounge in which one of the seating dividers has a delightful leaded screen above it. It depicts an image of Bramhall Hall with the coats of arms of the families to either side..

Leaving the Bromale, continue past Adswold tip on Tenement Lane (unlit, but metalled) you get to Ladybridge Road in Cheadle Hulme in 15 minutes. So, a look in to the **March Hare** was called for. It's still really a dining pub for families, and nothing much has changed compared to prior visits. Only one beer on, Bass at £2.25. Into Adswold next, and the **Greyhound**. Redecorated and looking quite tidy; many pictures of atmospheric weather conditions and many by the Glaswegian artist Jack Vettriano. Beers were Tetley Bitter and Bombardier. Good to see they are giving cask beer a try. My ramble ended at the nearby **Cross Keys** (Hydes), a good looking building with a great bowling green to the rear. Hydes Mild and Bitter are sold, but the bitter I sampled was unimpressive.

And Finally....

I was dismayed to learn that the **Greyhound** in Edgeley no longer sells cask beer. What a come down from the days when Irene Morris made this a must-visit pub for the real ale drinker, with a range of exceptionally kept cask beers that sold in quantity. What can have gone wrong?

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Scottish & Newcastle are reported to have bought the **Bulls Head** in Hayfield and it is re opening soon (probably by the time this edition hits the pubs).

On top of the rumour last month of a Wetherspoons in Glossop which is still being much discussed in the town, some more concrete news. The **Norfolk Arms** is in the centre of the town and is a pub that real ale drinkers have walked straight past for a decade or more as it has sold only keg, smooth flow and the latest fads in brightly coloured bottled beers to attract a mainly young crowd. Well, it has suddenly become the talk of the town as Holts have bought it with plans to gut it and refurbish it to its true potential, work to be completed by the end of the year. Exciting times. It will certainly give a few pubs in the town some rivalry with prices encouraging real ale drinkers to add another pub to their walkabout.

The **Old General** in Dukinfield has Shaws available on a regular basis, their only outlet in their home town.

A walk up Manchester Road in bottom Mossley found the **Friendship** (Pubmaster), selling Jennings Cumberland Ale and Boddingtons Bitter on handpump. Continuing up towards the station, the **Best O'Brass** has no real ale, and neither does the **Commercial**. However, the **Britannia** (Good Beer Guide 2006 and 2007) has six handpumps. Marston's Best Bitter is the regular ale, with either Marston's Pedigree or Old Empire accompanying it. On my visit, the guests were Draught Bass, Brains Rev James, Shepherd Neame Bishops Finger and Jennings Crag Rat.

Leaving here I walked up towards Greenfield for a quarter of a mile to the **Woodend Tavern** which is also trying hard to push real ale, with Millstone Grainstorm, Greenfield Heron and Delph Donkey representing their policy of pushing the local micro's. Shaws also have their beers from time to time..

A very long climb up to top Mossley followed, over the railway bridge and up a cobbled path and what must be Mossley's steepest street. We bypassed Thwaites' **Church Inn** which appeared to have two of their beers on handpump, for the **Rising Sun**. Black Sheep Bitter, Archers Village, Greenfield Heron and Shaws Golden Globe was a good choice. Shaws appears there as a regular due to the presence of brewer Neil - it is his local! The views from here are stunning, looking straight across the valley to the Pots and Pans monument - arguably the best view from any High Peak Branch pub.

News of the **Centurion** in Gamesley, a long standing Hydes pub from it being built as an estate pub in around 1970. They have discontinued real ale due to lack of demand.

In Guide Bridge, the **Hooley Hill** is for sale (free of tie Tenancy). The **Jolly Hatters** in Haughton Green also is signed "Leashold business for sale" and down at Crown Point, Denton the **Red Lion** says "Tenancy Opportunity". Continuing the bad news, the **Sparrows** in Gladstone Street Glossop, is for sale. My guess is that it will be sold as a house as trade has been steadily getting poorer in recent years.

Finally, a quick report about the **Sportsman Beer Festival** in Hyde. A small compact and friendly little festival, with around 15 beers, trade was steady in the new function room at the pub. My personal favourites were the Glotts Hop from Howard Town, the Shaws Marynka, made from hops brought back from the Branch trip to Poperinge and the Millstone True Grit. Plassey Dragons Breath, at 6% was also very moreish, perhaps the reason I had a slow start the following morning!!



Robin Wignall's monthly roundup of news and happenings on the Peak District pub scene

It is difficult not to be concerned about the future of the Thomas Hardy Burtonwood Brewery in Warrington. When W & D bought the estate the giant did only buy the pubs and not the brewery. There was a supply agreement but this has been cancelled as reported in *Mersey Ale* in June. Mersey Ale is Liverpool's equivalent of *Opening Times*. For those pubs still taking Burtonwood Bitter, the beer is now brewed at Banks's Brewery. Ex-Burtonwood pubs to which I make occasional visits have dispensed with Burtonwood Bitter altogether. The main reason seems to be falling quality and falling sales. One could look for ulterior motives at W & D, but their record with component brewers like Jennings, which they do promote, and with guest beers, gives them the benefit of the doubt at the moment. However customer choice has been eroded. Hopefully W & D management will continue to support Jennings nationally, one of its fief breweries, as well as guest beers such as Youngs and Hopback.

The former Burtonwood pubs in the Peak tend to have Marston's Bitter, Pedigree and a guest/seasonal beer. The **Bakers** in Buxton and the **Royal Oak** in Chapel-en-le-Frith fall into this category. A recent call into the **George** in Hayfield found Jennings Cumberland as the only real ale. A very pleasant surprise.

Another late August call was to the **Queen's Arms** in Taddington after the village's well dressing related Taddington Lanes hilly road race. Black Sheep Bitter and Marston's Bitter were available, but more interesting was Agar's Ale 3.9%. Is this a new brewery or is it brewed for the Buxton drinks wholesaler, Agar? It was certainly a good brew.

Ward's Bitter is now available at the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge, and is selling well, whilst a mid September visit to the Shepherds found Jenning's Crag Rat and Shepherd Neame Bishop's Finger as guests.

Following the departure of Cliff and Wendy Trelfa from the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge, Jenny Morris has taken over the pub and we wish her the best of luck in her new venture. Snacks are available for the hungry and Jenny hopes to provide a fuller menu in the course of time. For the thirsty, Black Sheep Bitter replaces Greene King IPA, and sadly Tetley Dark Mild, on very good form when I called, is to be replaced by guest beers. Jenny blames falling sales, which is a pity as the Mild in the Goyt has been many people's favourite in recent Mild Challenges.

The **Navigation** in Whaley Bridge has Black Sheep bitter as a regular beer whilst the latest guest is Deuchar's IPA. Good news here is that a lager font is to go to be replaced by a hand pump for another guest real ale.

The **Navigation** at Buxworth has had Bradfield Farmer's Brown Cow 4.2% as a guest beer. This was an interesting brown ale (unsurprisingly!). It reminded me of at least one of the products of the former Steam Packet Brewery in Knottingley.

At the **Dog & Partridge** in Bridgemont a mid September guest was Coach House Postlethwaite's 4.6%, presumably a seasonal. This had been preceded by Innkeeper's. It is good to see the Coach House beers appearing in the Peak District.

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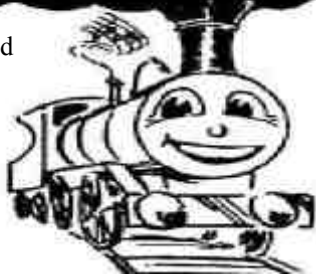
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Shaws Brewery, Dukinfield



Shaws Brewery was founded in 1856, when licensee William Shaw bought an empty brewery on Park Road, Dukinfield. The concern prospered under family ownership until 1941 at which point it was bought and closed by John Smiths Tadcaster Brewery. And that, you would have thought, would have been the end of the brewery.

Luckily, that is not the case and today it is still possible to sample Shaws ales, brewed on part of the old premises, that still stand, largely unused, on Park Road.

This happy turn of events is down to the efforts of Phil Windsor and Neil Hay. Phil is the owner of Windsor Fabrications that occupies the former bottling plant (which was also used as stables). Keen on his beer, Phil re-established Shaws Brewery in 2002, engaging the services of CAMRA member and keen home brewer Neil Hay as head brewer.

The plant was manufactured by Phil (who has since gone on to supply cask washing and other equipment to other micro brewers) and Neil has since gone on to produce a wide range of beers.

Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA was lucky enough to pay a visit to the brewery in September, when we were treated to a tour and potted history, and well catered for with an excellent chilli and generous sampling of the beers. Our photo below shows (l-r) CAMRA Liaison Officer Frank Wood, Neil Hay and Phil Windsor with the brewing kit in the background.



Shaws beers are notable for their pale hoppy character and clean refreshing finishes. Brewing uses top quality ingredients – Maris Otter pale ale malt from Fawcetts of Castleford and a variety of hop varieties, primarily from the UK but also using some from the USA. And the beers are well worth seeking out; Golden Globe (4.3%) takes up about 70% of sales but new beers appear at regular intervals. By the time this edition is out a cask conditioned lager called Shawhallion", (due to be brewed mid- October) will be on sale in the usual outlets.



This is the first of an occasional column called CHAPS On Tour. CHAPS is a loose grouping of Cheadle Hulme Ale PersonS who set out most weekends by public transport to visit pubs and beer festivals that can be reached from Stockport.

A Barrel of Fun

August Bank Holiday Saturday presented many opportunities to visit beer festivals and we decided to go to Hereford, taking advantage of the Arriva Wales and West Trains "4 for the price of 2" promotion. The journey was swift, taking just under 2 hours.

Hereford is not a real ale Mecca, having only three Good Beer Guide pubs, but one of them, the Barrels was holding its charity Beer Festival. The pub lies some 10 minutes walk from the station but a couple of minutes further up the road is another beery attraction - a Good Beer Guide-listed pub called the Victory. Not only does this pub have a bar made to look like a galleon, but it is also the home of the award winning Spinning Dog Brewery.



The Victory – home of Spinning Dog Brewery

Arriving in the pub we were a trifle disappointed to see only three beers available out of the eight handpumps - we were told that this was due to a particularly busy Friday night. Nevertheless, we sampled all three on offer including last year's SIBA West Supreme Champion, Hereford organic Bitter. All were in fine condition.

Jim Kenyon, the boss of the Spinning Dog Brewery appeared and offered an impromptu tour of the brewery which we were delighted to take up. Jim has a 10 barrel plant in premises to the rear of the pub. The layout is quite cramped and some of the conditioning tanks are outside, but are well lagged to protect from the vagaries of the temperature. The brewery is named after Cassie the pub dog (now sadly no more) which had a habit of spinning around; and many beers have dog related names - Mutley's Dark and Mutley's Revenge being just two. Before we left, Jim put on another beer, the nicely hoppy Top Dog, which we were asked to sample to see if it was ready. It certainly was and very nice it was too. This is a fine pub with an unusual interior, friendly people and last but not least fine beer. It is a "must visit" if you are in Hereford.

It was but a short stagger to the Barrels, the Beer Festival venue. This was the 19th August Bank Holiday Festival that the pub has organised, with all profits going to local charities. The pub used to be the location of the Wye Valley Brewery,

but this outgrew the premises and moved up the road to Stoke Lacy in 2002.



Festival Fun at the Barrels

Since our last visit, the festival layout had changed with the former brewery premises now being used for a long bar with 60 handpumps to complement the full range of Wye Valley beers available in the pub's normal bar. In the back yard, which incorporates part of the original city wall, a stage for live music had been set up and a local group were playing a very acceptable mix of country, jazz and blues. The music was to continue all weekend, culminating in the appearance of singer / songwriter John Otway on the Monday.

For the third year, SIBA held their Western Beer competition as part of the festival. Judging took place on the Friday and the winner was Purple Moose Snowdonia Ale. Second was Hanby Ales Shropshire Stout and third Goff's White Knight. Altogether 27 breweries were represented including the Ludlow Brewery which only started brewing in May. Their Ludlow Gold (4.2%) was excellent for a first attempt with a very bitter finish - yum, yum. Another new brewery was Offa's Dyke which is based near Oswestry. They started in February this year and they offered a pleasant wheat beer (4.1%) with the typical coriander and lemon taste.

The local Shoes Brewery, had provided their session bitter and a strong dark bitter at 6% as well as the formidable Farriers Ale at 15%. This was only available (in nips) by special request, so Carol requested one. She proclaimed it to be excellent and as we were all so anxious to try some, we eventually had to go back and get her another. This was very drinkable for its strength and left a lovely warm feeling in the back of the throat as it went down. Slightly less strong were the 13 ciders and 6 perries, mostly local, as well as many bottled conditioned beers from local breweries.

What a splendid afternoon we had spent in Hereford but now it was time to leave for Leominster which is only 15 minutes away by train. We had been told to visit Mike at the Bell as he had once worked at the Barrels. After talking to Mike for a while, he reappeared with a present for Carol - two bottles of different vintage Shoes Farriers Ale which he said he would never drink himself.

Next we dropped in to the Black Horse just outside the centre. This used to be the home of the Dunn Plowman Brewery before it too outgrew its premises. Their beers are still served along with several others from microbrewers. I enjoyed the DP Brewhouse Bitter, a fine example of a refreshing session bitter at 3.8%. The final pub in Leominster was the Grape Vaults which was once a hard core cider house. Plenty of customers here for a Saturday night out and although the beer range was conservative, the quality was excellent. You can't go wrong with such favourites as Deuchars IPA and Banks's Original. And so it was back to the station for our train home which arrived in Stockport early, so ending a great day out.

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Quite a few bits and pieces for you this month. Firstly news of two cask ale losses and one rumoured loss that has luckily proved unfounded.

The two confirmed losses are **Monroes** on London Road where, to be honest the real ale has been hanging by a thread for some time. The other loss is **No.1 Lloyd Street**. This is in fact closed and has the builders in. One of the notices on the door says that the leaseholders have taken a peaceful repossession so I guess that spells the end of the Saddleworth Brewery involvement in the place.

The rumoured loss was the **Circus Tavern** on Portland Street. I can scotch that one I'm pleased to say. On a less welcome note I have seen an advert in the trade press for the lease of the pub. The price is £100,000 which strikes me as quite a lot of money for quite a small pub.

New Faces

I am getting good reports about the **Castle** on Oldham Street, now run by the late Kath Hayhurst's son Damien. There has been extensive cellar work resulting in much more consistent and, with all due respect to Kath, better beer. The pub is slowly being smartened up on a room by room basis and seems much more 'open', with both doors now regularly in use. I feel very confident about the future of this pub and Damien deserves a pat on the back for what he is doing there.

More news from the **Bank** on Mosley Street. New manager, Andrew Cash, took over in mid-October. He has come from the nearby Vine, and is seeking to increase the current offering of three cask ales to six, this is in line with the increased trade (for food and beer) at both lunchtimes and early evenings. On my visit, I encountered Woodfordes Nelson's Revenge; Thwaites Liberation; and Bateman's Autumn Fall. All of the beers are sourced from the wide range offered by the Beer Seller and laudably, they neither stock nor sell any alcopops, shots, shooters, or other nonsense-drinks.

New Oxford

I made another visit to the increasingly impressive **New Oxford** on Bexley Square, just off Chapel Street in Salford. Andrew Shepherd really is making huge efforts here with guest beers from some really obscure micros. When I called beers from Fyfe, Allgates and Magpie breweries were on sale. There's also a seriously impressive house beer from Northern Brewing. The pale and aromatically hoppy New Oxford Bitter (3.8%) is very moreish – one of the best house beers I have come across in fact.

There's a beer festival planned for the end of this month (24-26 November) when 15 extra beers will be on sale. This will include all sorts of new and rare beers plus one or two festival specials. Definitely a date for my diary and it should be in yours, too.

Other News

The Nelson in Didsbury is now benefiting from Enterprise Inns' collaboration with SIBA to supply more interesting beers from small independent breweries to their pubs. On a recent visit the Nelson was selling Moorhouses Black Cat mild and Jennings Cumberland Ale both at a very reasonable (for Didsbury) £1-95 a pint. So far both beers are selling well. Definitely worth a visit if you are in the area.

Recent CAMRA Awards

Over the past few weeks Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA have presented three awards to two local pubs.

On Thursday 28 September, the Legh Arms in Openshaw was presented with a double award. Not only did the pub gain the Pub of the Month Award for September, but it was also the recipient for serving the best pint of mild outside Stockport from the pubs taking part on this year's Mild Challenge. Our picture shows CAMRA's Adrian Palmer (left) presenting both awards to Dave, Tracey and (front) Leah from the Legh Arms.



On 7 October, the Vale Cottage in Gorton picked up another award, this time as CAMRA's Regional Pub of the Year Award for Greater Manchester. Our photo shows Stockport & South Manchester Chairman Mark McConachie (right) presenting the certificate to landlord John Smith.



Events Coming Up

There are two major events for your diary over the winter months.

First *Opening Times* will be running a new promotion over December and January. This is a **Stout, Porter and Old Ale Trail**. Full details will appear in next month's *Opening Times* but there will be 30 pubs taking part in this new promotion and there will be over six weeks to cover all of them. Just the thing for the festive season and the cold winter days.

Next is the **National Winter Ales Festival** returning to the New Century Hall from 17 to 20 January. The past two events have been hugely popular with an unrivalled selection of winter beers. Make this an essential diary date.



Cider & Perry of the Festival Awards

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has something of a reputation for its range of cider and perry. In fact the cider: beer ratio is the highest of any festival in the country, we think. The awards for Cider and Perry of the Festival are also much appreciated by their recipients. A small party from the branch travelled to cider county last month to present the lucky winners with their certificates.

Gregg's Pit Cider of Much Marcell in Herefordshire (also home to mighty Westons) scooped both awards last year but this time had to just settle for one. Their Thorn Perry won the top award and our picture shows Cider Bar Manager Charlotte Bulmer presenting the certificate to James Marsden and Helen Woodman of Gregg's Pit.



Cider of the Festival was won by a new maker. Steve Burson of Harechurch Cider is a third generation makers but the first to produce commercially, having started up about two years ago. His dry cider won the top award and he is seen here getting his award from Charlotte



Steve told us that he has recently discovered some exceptionally rare Flaky Bark perry pear trees and will be making a single varietal perry from the juice this year. One to look out for at Stockport next year we think.

Finally congratulations to local cider distributor John Reek, trading as Merrylegs Cider, for being joint winner of CAMRA's Pomona Award. We hope to have an interview and feature in the next issue.



Greene King Axe Hardy & Hansons

To no-one's great surprise, Greene King have announced that Nottingham's Hardy & Hansons brewery – purchased in September after the family shareholders voted to sell their heritage down the river – is to close by the end of the year. One or two of the beers are to be brewed at the Greene King Brewery in Bury St Edmunds, primarily Olde Trip (a sort of strong mild), smooth dark and, perhaps, the bitter. We think the chances of the bitter surviving very long are remote indeed and soon the entire estate will be awash with the decidedly less impressive Greene King IPA.

There are just three Hardy & Hansons pubs in the *Opening Times* area – the Governor's House in Cheadle Hulme, the King's Ransome in Sale and the John Gilbert in Worsley. Get there while you can to enjoy these fine, and soon to be defunct, beers.

Top Award for Howard Town

Glossop's Howard Town Brewery is celebrating winning a top regional beer award. The Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) held its Beer of the Midlands Championship at last month's Nottingham Beer Festival. Wren's Nest (4.2%) not only won the Best Bitter class but was also voted overall champion.

This is excellent news for the brewery and really marks its recovery from the disastrous fire earlier this year. Howard Town's Les Dove tells us that sales are now back to pre-fire levels with new outlets being gained all the time.

A recent new beer was Wellgates P A, a 4% ABV version of Glotts Hop (5%). This has gone so well that the entire brew has sold out. In the pipeline is Robin's Nest, a 5.2% Christmas beer with a dark ruby colour and a rich taste.

Family Favourites

Quite a few new beers out from our local family brewers this month.

Holts – the next seasonal is 1849, a tasty 4.5% ale, usually available in bottle. This replaces the current Humdinger.

Hydes – the craft ale for November and December is Stormtrooper (5%), taking Star Wars as its inspiration. 'Dark and delicious, strong and moreish' says the brewery. The 4.6% Yule Be Back will also be returning for the Christmas period.

JW Lees – the current seasonal is the excellent Plum Pudding (4.5%) – a rich tasty beer with a hint of fruit. This has been extremely good in recent years and is well worth seeking out.

Robinson's – lots to tell you about here. The seasonal for November/December is Robin Bitter (4.5%), one of the most successful of the seasonal beers to date – rich, dark and full-bodied with a hint of liquorice in the satisfying finish.

Following on from the successful reintroduction of Wards Bitter, Robinson's have bought the rights to another defunct brew, which is being brought back from the dead. Oldham Bitter will be launched in the trade from 13th of this month. The 3.8% beer will be targeted at the Robinson's Oldham estate plus the club and free trade in the town, although it will be available to all tenants, who will now have some 10 cask beers to choose from. More beers might be raised from the dead, too.

As Head Brewer Chris Hellin told *The Publican* trade paper:

"We've proved we can bring new life to old products, and there's a lot of potential for us. A lot of brands have disappeared around here and we can buy them and reintroduce them".

Micro Magic

Lots of new beers from our local micros. As ever, apologies to those we didn't manage to contact this time.

Bank Top – the latest beer is a special for the festival to be held at the Howcroft pub in Bolton. Trotter's Tipple (4.2%) is a pale, bitter beer.

Bazens' – The latest news from here is that the bottle-conditioned Knoll Street Porter, Salford Festival Ale, Flatbac and Blue Bullet are selling well. Bottled Blue Bullet has been available at Cromax, Manchester throughout October. The next 4% seasonal hop beer is being brewed using Centennial hops – and will be called Centennial (!) inspired by a film *The Sentinel*. The one after that will be Bullitt (using Green Bullet hops).

Boggart Hole Clough – always lots of new beers out and in the pipeline. Gargoyle's Gold (5.2%) is a golden and hoppy beer while Noir (4.5%) lives up to its name and is a very dark ale.

Greenfield – High & Dry (4.5%) is the latest beer, and is a light, hoppy brew. The brewery is now able to supply local Enterprise Inns pubs via a direct delivery scheme arranged by SIBA. This has given the company several local outlets.

Millstone – the new stout is sort of 'on hold'. It will still be produced but in a limited run for trialling in key accounts. The single 8-barrel batch was due to be brewed in early November. Also launched is the bottled version of Tiger Ruts (4%). This is exclusive to Love Saves The Day, a deli and fine food shop next to Deansgate Station, where it is simply labelled 'Beer'. This is well worth a visit as it is only one of two outlets for Millstone bottled beers. Lots of other interesting beers are sold, too.

Beer was launched at Love Saves The Day on 4 October when Jon and Nick from Millstone served samples direct from the cask, much to the appreciation of a large crowd of regular customers.



Pictish – Mandala (4.7%) was a new seasonal for October and was an enjoyably hoppy beer. Out for November is Z-Rod (4.8%), a strong, pale golden coloured ale with full malt flavours and a well balanced hoppy finish. Look out also for the 4.7% Cascade (pale and very hoppy) and the exceptional Samhain Stout (5%), both of which should be out this month.

Phoenix – lots of beers out in the run-up to Christmas. Rip Rap (4.1%) is an *Opening Times* favourite with superb hopping. Last Leaf is a fine autumn ale and the 4.1% Flash Flood is brewed solely with Cascade hops – "if you want to know what Cascade hops taste like then drink this" says Phoenix's Tony Allen.

3 Rivers – Stockport's only micro always has something interesting. All Hallows Ale (5.5%) was brewed for Halloween was in the style of a strong dark mild and should be out when you read this. Recommended.



Ructions in Belgium, where Inbev have run into serious problems with their plans to close the Hoegaarden Brewery.

Moving production from the Flemish speaking Hoegaarden to the French speaking Jupiler plant just asking for trouble in a country where language means so much. Apparently there has been a huge consumer backlash and Hoegaarden sales have slumped by a reported 60%. But that's not the end of Inbev's troubles. Flemish TV has reported that the closure has been postponed because the Jupiler brewery hasn't been able to match the beer. What a shambles. Belgian beer experts have also pointed out another flaw in the Hoegaarden closure plans. This, it turns out, is the only Inbev brewery in Belgium that can make bottle conditioned beers.

Compare and contrast the Inbev approach to that of another multi-national brewer, our very own Scottish Courage. While they may make only bland products for the home market, they are doing right by the Belgians. In particular the Mort Subite lambic brewery is not only making its pretty good Oude Gueuze more widely available but it has also now brought out a proper sour Oude Kriek. This has received favourable reports across the board. Earlier this year, *Opening Times* was lucky enough to try the draught kriekenlambic on which the Oude Kriek is based and we can confirm that it is a very accomplished beer indeed.

Elsewhere, the Mortgaat Brewery, producers of the famed Duvel, have bought out the Achouffe Brewery. The plan, apparently is not to close the Achouffe plant to expand production and availability of the Achouffe beers.

Finally, local Belgian beer lovers should make a point of getting down to the **Belgian Belly** in Chorlton this December – Jason Barker tells us that he is expecting a bumper crop of Belgian Christmas specials this year including, of course, the wonderful Gouden Carolus Christmas. Mmm.

Late news from Buxton – don't miss the Beer Festival at the George. Running from 30 November to 3 December this promises to be a cracking event.

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Here is our monthly round-up of what's happening in the local CAMRA branches. Members of all branches are of course very welcome to attend each others' events.

The Stockport & South Manchester branch covers Stockport Borough apart from Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and Marple, plus that part of Manchester from the River Medlock in the north to the M56/Princess Parkway in the south. *Branch Contact – Pete Farrand 07786 283990*

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 15th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Armoury, Shaw Heath. From 8pm

Friday 17th – Fallowfield & Rusholme Stagger. Meet White Swan, Green St, 8.30; Friendship, Wilmslow Rd 8.30.

Saturday 18th – Informal lunchtime social at Bury Beer Festival. From 12 noon.

Tuesday 21st – Farewell to Hardy & Hansons Social: Governor's House, Cheadle Hulme. From 8pm

Thursday 7th December – Branch Meeting and Xmas Quiz: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. From 8pm

The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple, Tameside and Derbyshire from Glossop to Buxton. *Branch Contact – Tom Lord 0161 427 7099*

Monday 13th - Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet. Starts 8.30pm

Saturday 2nd December - Social at George, Buxton, beer festival. Meet 2pm and moving on to other pubs later.

The Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford, Manchester West of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. *Branch Contact – John Ison 0161 962 7976*

Tuesday 7th – Social at Kings Ransome, Sale. Last chance to try Hardy & Hansons. From 8pm

Friday 17th – Evening Social at Bury Beer Festival

Thursday 23rd – Sale Survey: 8pm Belmore Hotel, Brooklands Rd; 9.15pm Brooke, adjacent to Brooklands Metrolink station; 10pm Little B, Marsland Rd.

Thursday 7th December – Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8pm

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Knutfort to Congleton. *Branch Contact – Trevor Gammage 07802 645898*

Monday 6th – Holmes Chapel Crawl: meet George & Dragon 8pm

Monday 20th – Campaigning Meeting: Lord Elson, Knutsford. Starts 8pm

The North Manchester Branch covers The Northern Quarter and North East Manchester plus the City of Salford. *Branch Contact – Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

Wednesday 8th – Social & Newsletter Meeting; New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. Starts 8pm

Wednesday 15th - Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester City Centre. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 22nd - Eccles: White Horse 7.30pm; Lamb 8.30pm

Wednesday 29th - Allgates Brewery Visit (provisional)

Wednesday 6th December – City Centre: Castle 8pm; Crown & Kettle 9pm

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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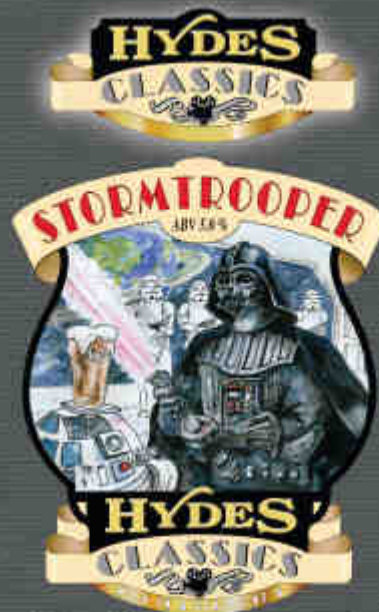
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