

FEBRUARY 2007



Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

NUMBER 270

COVERING THE CITIES OF MANCHESTER & SALFORD, STOCKPORT, TAMESIDE, TRAFFORD, N.E. CHESHIRE & MACCLESFIELD

Railway is Local Pub of the Year

Second Win for Popular Pub

The Railway on Portwood, the flagship outlet for the Porter Brewing Company of Rossendale, has been voted Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2007.

The past year has been something of a roller coaster ride for this popular local – originally threatened with closure and then gaining a last-minute, three year reprieve, it now joins the small select band of pubs that have won this prestigious award twice.

Indeed not only has the Railway been local Pub of the Year, it has also gone on to win the Greater Manchester title and be a runner-up in the national Pub of the Year contest.

The current incumbent, Martin Wood, has continued, and arguably surpassed, the high standards set by his predecessors. Perhaps less extrovert than those who have gone before him, Martin nevertheless has maintained the Railway as one of the highlights of the Stockport pub scene.

The pub's wide ranging appeal is well-known. Whatever your tipple there will be something for you. The beer lover is truly spoiled for choice. The full range of the Porter Brewing Company beers is the obvious highlight the stunningly bitter house beer, Railway Sleeper, the two Porter signature beers Sunshine and Pitch Porter and various specials. There is a regular guest mild and at weekends three guest beers from micro-brewers far and wide add to the range.

The cask range is supported by a large range of foreign bottled beers, principally from Belgium and Germany but with highlights from other countries too. There is also a changing guest cask cider. Foreign beers are on draught and for those with a taste for something stronger, small but perfectly formed ranges of Scottish single malts and Irish whiskeys are available, too.

While the pub will close in the next few years it is clearly going out on a high. Join us as we present this very well-deserved award to the Railway on Saturday 17th February.



The award-winning Railway – enjoy it while it lasts

The Armoury is Runner-Up



The very close runner-up in the voting was the Armoury on Shaw Heath, Stockport, a popular Robinson's pub that is perhaps the classic community local.

Landlady Sheila Barlow has run this, her first, very popular community pub for two years. Sheila has previous experience of bar work, but husband 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.

The commitment to quality shines through in every aspect of the operation at the Armoury. Its success gives the lie to those pub pundits who say this type of pub has no future.

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Recent CAMRA Awards



Above – Branch Chair Mark McConachie presents the December Pub of the Month Award to the Davenport Arms, Woodford.
 Below – the January Award is presented to the Grapes, Hazel Grove by Joint Membership Secretary Chris Wainwright (left)



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OT – COMMENT...

Congratulations to both our Pub of the Year winner, the Railway on Portwood, and the very close runner-up, the Armoury, Shaw Heath.

While both are ostensibly very different pubs, one being a multi-beer pub run by a micro-brewer and the other what might be termed a 'mild and bitter' local run by a larger family brewer, they do share one important characteristic.

In their own separate ways they have a very strong sense of community, catering exceptionally well to their, quite different, customer bases. It is therefore fitting that the winning pub will be presented with its award on February 17th, which heralds the start of the CAMRA-led Community Pubs Week.

This initiative is designed to get people to use and enjoy their community locals more often. Of course the chances are that if you are reading this you will already appreciate the virtues of good pubs and good beer but it remains a sobering fact that over 26 pubs close each month and many of these are community locals. Luckily it is the independent brewers, like Porters and Robinsons, who are keeping the tradition alive. Too many of those pubs that fall into the hands of the pub companies are not so lucky – witness our continuing reports of devastation of the pub-company dominated landscape in East Manchester. In that part of the city we are rapidly reaching the stage where the only remaining pubs are those owned by or supplied by the independent brewers. A clearer example of the results of pub company greed you could not wish to see.

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!



Of the dozen or so pubs that crowd the streets of Wilmslow Road in Didsbury one pub in particular has stood out from the others. While many come from all over south Manchester and places further afield for, say, the cocktails at the Pitcher & Piano, the **Dog and Partridge** is one of those worth being sought out by real ale fans.

Featuring regulars Tim Taylor Landlord and Theakston's Bitter, the Dog and Partridge also introduces many enjoyable guest ales to locals, students, and the odd Hen/Stag Party.

Rick and Jo Brooks have been in charge of the pub since 1999 and this February coincidentally marks their 8th anniversary at the Dog and Partridge. In accepting the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branch Pub of the Month award, Rick wanted to thank his staff for all of their hard work and dedication over the busy festive months. Indeed, it is the efficiency of the staff and dedication to providing a good atmosphere that has contributed to this award.

The landlords also deserve credit for their earnest selection of real ales which have recently included beers from Hopback, St Austell, Caledonian, Fullers, and Cains breweries. The four guest ales are listed on a chalk board to the right of the bar which helps drinkers make an informed choice with a beer they may never have sampled or even seen. There is another chalkboard to the left that contains a more detailed description of a featured guest ale to introduce drinkers to real ale terms and beer types.

The pub itself looks to have been stripped bare years ago, making it look more Wild West than Didsbury Village. There is a second entrance on cobbled Warburton Street to allow for easy access to the pumps if the pub gets crowded. Large tables are good for big groups that get there early.

The Dog and Partridge is at 667 Wilmslow Road. Its location is convenient for buses from the city centre, Chorlton, Stockport and Reddish. These include the 23, 23A, 42, 42A, 142, 157, 171, 196 and 370. The pub has a late license and is open until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Two screens provide plenty of sports action, including the up-coming RBS Six Nations Rugby. There is a quiz night on Mondays. **SL**

National Winter Ales Festival

Last month's National Winter Ales Festival, held at the New Century Hall in Manchester, turned out to be a great success, despite the best efforts of the weather.

Turnout was marginally down on the previous year at just over 6,400, despite a significant drop on Thursday night when public transport more or less ground to a halt because of the bad weather.

By the close of play on Saturday night many beers had sold out although there remained enough variety available, of both UK and foreign beers, to make a late visit a still very enjoyable event.



Crowds enjoy themselves at the festival

Thin Pickings in Championship

The one disappointment for local drinkers was the thin pickings for the North West in the contest for the Champion Winter Beer of Britain. Indeed, apart from the ever-reliable Old Tom from Robinson's, the region had no other beers in the finals. This is an astonishing state of affairs given the wealth of top-class strong milds, old ales, stouts, porters and barley wines our local brewers make.

Green Jack Brewery's Ripper was named as the supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2007. The 8.5% ABV barley wine, brewed in Lowestoft, was described as "A light coloured beer brewed as a homage to Belgian trappist ales, with sweet notes and a strong hoppy flavour."

At the announcement, Steve Prescott, Organiser of the National Winter Ales Festival congratulated Green Jack on its victory. He said, "It's great to see a barley wine win the competition yet again. I sincerely hope people will be inspired to try this fantastic beer style on the back of Green Jack's victory".

On hearing the news, Green Jack Head Brewer Tim Dunford said: "This is absolutely incredible. All my life it has been my ambition to win a national award for my beers and I can't believe it has happened."

The Silver award went to Fuller's London Porter and the Bronze to Orkney Skullsplitter.

The category winners were:

Old Ales & Strong Mild Category

Gold - B&T: Black Dragon Mild (Bedfordshire)
Silver - Orkney: Dark Island (Orkney)
Bronze - Rudgate: Ruby Mild (North Yorkshire)

Stouts & Porters

Gold - Fuller's: London Porter (London)
Silver - Cairngorm: Black Gold (Aviemore, Highlands)
Bronze - St Peter's: Old Style Porter (Suffolk)

Barley Wines

Gold - Orkney: Skullsplitter (Orkney)
Silver - Green Jack: Ripper (Lowestoft, Suffolk)
Bronze - Durham: Benedictus (Co Durham)



A Weak Selection

Some years ago a lot of fuss was made over NABLAs or No-Alcohol/Low-Alcohol Beers. These were touted as a major growth category in the drinks market that would appeal to people wanting the taste and character of beer without the unwanted side effects. With people becoming ever more health-conscious, they would be a sure-fire winner. Anyone remember Robinson's Wheelwright? In the event, none of this happened, and after a brief flurry of attention they reverted to a niche in the market as a distress purchase for drivers. The fact that many of them were markedly lacking in flavour didn't help matters, but even had they been much more palatable it's doubtful whether many people would have chosen them on their own merits.

Now Carling are approaching this market from a slightly different angle with the launch of Carling C2. This is a 2% ABV version of standard Carling that is billed as "a proper lager expertly brewed to 2%, with all the great taste you'd expect from a Carling and the crisp, refreshing lager bite perfect for drinking ice cold with mates." (sic) Obviously there is an unspoken subtext here that this is a beer that drivers can sink a few pints of without falling foul of the breathalyser, although political correctness prevents that being said openly. But the clear implication of the advertising is that this is a beer that can be enjoyed while keeping a relatively clear head – and possibly benefiting your health as well.

I may be proved wrong, but I suspect this venture is doomed to failure too. The fact that a beer is weaker than its competitors is never going to be a positive selling point. Surely a better way to encourage a more moderate and less incapacitating approach to beer drinking would be to promote beers in the traditional "session beer" category of around 3.6% ABV in preference to premium brews of 5% or above. Beers in this range can have a surprising amount of body and character but in recent years have been neglected by brewers in favour of the more profitable higher strength products.

Only the Strong

And sometimes it seems to be getting increasingly difficult to find those session beers at all. On a couple of occasions recently, I've visited pubs owned by pub companies that had been recommended for their cask beer, only to find there was nothing available much below 5% ABV. The mainstream bitter, if there was one, was keg John Smith's or Worthington Smooth. Regardless of how unusual or well-kept the real ales are many drinkers who for whatever reason only want a sub-4% beer will end up taking their custom elsewhere.

As real ale needs a decent turnover to keep it in good condition, surely it makes sense for a pub to have its best-selling ale available in cask form. What is more, at a time when the licensed trade is coming under the spotlight over the alleged promotion of irresponsible drinking, to have a range consisting only of high-strength beers does not give a good impression. It also puts across the image of real ale as an expensive, specialist product rather than an everyday drink. While you wouldn't go out of your way for brews such as Tetley Bitter or Greene King IPA, offering them as regular beers would be far better than nothing.

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Cask Marque Award

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Osborne House, Rusholme
Great Central, Fallowfield
Friendship Inn, Fallowfield
The Hillary Step, Whalley Range
Pineapple, Gorton
Albion, Burnage
Sam's Chop House, Manchester
City Arms, Manchester
The Waterhouse, Manchester
All Bar One, Manchester
Rising Sun, Manchester
Fletcher Moss, Didsbury
Victoria Hotel, Withington
Dog & Partridge, Didsbury
Gateway, East Didsbury
Sedge Lynn, Chorlton
Old Wellington, Manchester
Moon Under Water, Manchester
The Bishop Blaze, Stretford
King's Ransom, Sale
J P Joule, Sale
Old Plough Hotel, Sale
Bank at Sale, Sale
Loves Arms, Denton
Red Lion, Denton
English Lounge, Manchester
Lloyds No 1, Manchester
Tim Bobbin, Urmston
Ash Tree, Ashton U Lyne
Calverts Court, Stockport
Poachers Inn, Bollington
Hanging Gate, Macclesfield

Porters Ale House, Macclesfield
Jar Bar, Macclesfield
Society Rooms, Macclesfield
Cotton Bale, Hyde
Society Rooms, Stalybridge
Stalybridge Buffet Bar, Stalybridge
White House, Stalybridge
Q Bar, Stalybridge
Angel Inn, Dukinfield
Wye Bridge Inn, Buxton
Bamford Arms, Stockport
Pack Horse, Hayfield
Farmers Arms, Stockport
Four Heaton, Heaton Norris
Nursery Inn, Heaton Norris
Duke of York, Romiley
Hare & Hounds, Marple
Bulls Head Hotel, High Lane
Crown, Cheadle
Old Star Inn, Cheadle
Prince of Wales, Gatley
High Grove, Gatley
Kings Hall, Cheadle Hulme
Cross Keys, Cheadle Hulme
Ryecroft, Cheadle Hulme
John Millington, Cheadle Hulme
Horse & Farrier, Gatley
Governor's House, Cheadle H'lme
Bollin Fee, Wilmslow
Coach and Four, Wilmslow
Quarry Bank, Timperley
King George, Hale
Corbens, Hale Barns
Bear's Paw, Knutsford
Cross Keys Hotel, Knutsford



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Railway is Local Pub of the Year, was the main front page headline, and whilst there could only be one winner, the Davenport Arms at Woodford made a strong showing to become runner-up.

Known to many as the Thief's Neck, this classic country pub was a previous winner of the award in 1995. Following the success of the Nursery as CAMRA's national Pub of the Year for 2001, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA had chosen the Railway, Portwood to carry the torch in the 2002 competition.

Boddington's Bitter had finally been withdrawn from the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. It had been an incongruous national brand amongst the ever-changing guest beers, and sales had dwindled to a trickle. The pub's customers were so eager to see the back of the stuff, two of them bought the last few pints and had poured them down the sink. The replacement permanent house beer was Jennings Bitter.

There was an early advert for the 16th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2002, once again to be held in the Town Hall ballroom, but the National Cider & Perry Championship would not be included. There was also an invitation to licensees to take part in the Mild Challenge, if they had not previously done so.

The Nursery had found itself at the centre of a veritable media circus after the news broke of the pub's victory as CAMRA's national Pub of the Year. Licensees George and Sue Lindsay found themselves almost under siege with requests for press, radio and television interviews. The award was presented by CAMRA's national chairman Dave Goodwin, but as it was made on a Tuesday lunchtime many members and pub regulars could not be present. So Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA arranged a second presentation at a more accessible time.

Two local breweries were celebrating success in the recent CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival. Robinson's scored twice with Old Tom being runner-up in the barley wine category and winning bronze in the supreme championship. These were the latest in a long line of awards for the classic strong ale. Congleton's Beartown Brewery won a bronze for Black Bear in the Strong Mild/Old Ale class. The previous national award picked up by Beartown was for Kodiak Gold at the Great British Beer Festival in 2000.

Other brewery news concerned Joseph Holts, who were said to be working themselves up to fever pitch to produce a really wonderful first brew for the promised series of specials. Twelve different types of malted barley had been ordered, so that a suitable combination could be found for the trials. The strength and name of the brew was not known – it might be out the following month or it could be later. No details were available of how the beer would be marketed or advertised. It could even be word of mouth and perhaps a poster in the pub.



Ladybarn Losses

If you thought that the cask beer and pub situation was woeful in East Manchester, well it seems to have hit areas like Ladybarn and Rusholme too. A recent Stagger there uncovered quite a number of losses. In Ladybarn, the **Derby** has changed its use to a house, whilst the **Brewers Arms** on Ladybarn Lane has dropped cask Tetley to go keg. Up the road in Fallowfield, apart from the **Great Central** and **Friendship** (now doing two guest beers alongside the Hydes), all of the other pubs and bars are keg. Beartown's **Bruins** looks to be shut for good, but surprisingly, **Robinski's** on Wilbraham Road was apparently selling cask Thwaites. I needed to ask though as there was no pumpclip nor any other advertising. How are you to sell a product if it's not clear it's available!

The real shock came when we rumbled into Rusholme. A mere three pubs - **Hardys Well**, **Osborne** and **Albert** sell the real McCoy. The **Welcome** was on keg beer when I called - a once characterful pub, and one I always looked forward to going in to. The good news is that cask may be on its way back - I hope to get in before penning next month's column to see if real ale has returned. All of the others are closed, have changed use or are for sale. Closed are the **Huntsman**, **Sherwood Inn** and **Gardeners** with various tempting offers for financial/building speculators. The other two have changed their uses - the **Clarence** is advertised to become an Indo-Chinese restaurant, whilst the **Lord Lyon** (late Nelson) is now a Youth Community Centre.

Of the remaining cask pubs, I have to say that I was surprised by just how very good **Hardys Well** is these days. It has the atmosphere of a proper community local, full of people of all ages and races having a great time. Not only that but the two, very acceptable, cask beers were Taylor's Landlord and Golden Best. I shall certainly be going back.

New Openings

Strolling from the Knott Bar, I noticed that Galvins on Deansgate now styles itself as "**The Deansgate**". A major rebuilding job has seen the pub transformed into a very sophisticated looking drinking establishment - quality fittings, fireplaces: the Gentlemens Club look really. One of the bar staff told me that they'd moved the pub upmarket to garner trade from the recently opened Hilton Hotel next door. Three cask beers were on - Theakstons Bitter and XB, plus Courage Directors, although I think there may be some rotation with other beers. I shall return.

The new '**Odder**' bar on Oxford Road, Mcr (opposite BBC) is open. This new bar from the same people as '**Odd**' Thomas Street, N/4, replaces the previous ZumeBa.

Reports on it have been mixed - some thinking it rather plain and uninteresting. I quite like it, though. At least there is cask beer, and often from the likes of Marble Brewery, too. You do have to pay a premium price, though.

More from East Manchester

Out on my travels for the excellent Stout and Old Ale Trail, I noticed that the **Blue Moon** (see Dec 2006 OT) in Clayton has now been demolished. When I popped in for a pint to the **Legh Arms** in Openshaw, this was confirmed to me by licensee Dave Britnell. He also confirmed that the nearby **Victoria** was indeed still trading, but had no cask beer. Thanks to Dave for the information, and for the genuine

hospitality shown to me and fellow traveller, Steve Smith. His beers are Moorhouses Black Cat, Blue, and the powerful Owd Ale (ABV 5.9%). This latter beer may outlast the period of the Old Ale Trail as it has proven very popular with the locals.

New Face in Baguley



Gaynor receives her training certificate from director Dennis Robinson.

For Gaynor Simmons taking over as licensee of the **Gardeners Arms**, Baguley really does feel like coming home. Gaynor, originally from the north Manchester area, helped run the Robinson's house for over a decade before latterly spending four years at a free house in Suffolk.

"Having a pub in a beautiful rural area was a lot of fun - but I'm really glad to be back at the Gardeners," said Gaynor. "I love the place and see returning here as an exciting challenge for me."

This year has seen Gaynor notch up 25 years in the licensed trade and she is aiming to use this wealth of knowledge and experience to build upon the pub's reputation as a friendly local. As part of her plans she hopes to introduce light bar snacks to complement Robinson's portfolio of cask-conditioned ales, a disc jockey for Saturday nights and barbecues during the summer.

One key aim for Gaynor is to find a way of accommodating smokers at the pub once the ban comes into effect this summer. "Around 90% of my customers smoke so I have to ensure that they can still enjoy a cigarette with their drinks after the new law is introduced," she said.

From the Marble Vaults

Changes have been afoot at the **Marble Arch** where there is now a new management team in place. The new bar management team now consists of Warren McCoubrey, well known in Marble circles, from the Marble Beer House in Chorlton running the show, assisted by Peter, late of Mr Thomas's Chop House.

New brews (or more correctly variations on existing ones) in the pipeline include a bottled version of Ginger Marble brewed to a higher strength (about 6% ABV) and containing additional spices.. This may even find its way onto the bar, if we're lucky, as a nine gallon cask has been put aside.. Also, the regular bottled versions of Chocolate and Lagonda IPA continue to be produced apace.

A new brew kit is also in the pipeline. Believed to be a 16 barrel plant and too big for the back room at the present brewery, so it looks like new premises for this one, possibly on the south side of the city. Don't despair though as brewing will still continue at the pub.

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Last year's Cider Circuit was a great success with more than twice as many entries as the previous year. We are therefore planning another event this October with, hopefully more pubs taking part and also making it even easier to win a prize.

The prizes were presented by Rhys Jones, of CAMRA's national cider committee, at a celebratory afternoon at the **Cheshire Ring** in Hyde on 3 December. Our photo shows Rhys (*right*) with some of the lucky winners. Our thanks to Wayne at the Cheshire Ring for hosting the event and also to John Reek of **Merrylegs Cider** for sponsoring the main prize.

On the cider front, two new outlets are in prospect. The **New Oxford** in Salford has already sold some cask cider and may well be introducing it permanently later this year. Real cider is also set to return to the **Old Market Tavern** in Altrincham. Apart from some Wetherspoon's outlets, this will be the first real cider outlet in the Borough of Trafford.



Sad news from Belgium where Michael Slaghmuylder of Slaghmuylder Brewery at Ninove, died suddenly and unexpectedly in late November.

The brewery, an endearing mixture of working brewery, museum and junk shop, is firmly family controlled and its future is not threatened by this sad event.



The brewery makes a range of top class lagers with superb hop character along with the Witkap range of Abbey beers, which are among the highest regarded in Belgium. Look out too for the stout-like Ambiorix,

perhaps the brewery's best kept secret. These are regularly available at the **Belgian Belly** in Chorlton.



Out and About in Gatley

A recent wander through Gatley and chatting to licensees uncovered a few things. First off was Carol at the **Gothic**. She told me that things are going very well at this smallish Cains outlet. She and popular barmaid, Jan, are now selling five cask beers - Cains mild, bitter, FA, and 2008 plus as a guest Theakstons Old Peculier. The pub has received welcome recognition on the Cains website for the Mild Challenge award it picked-up in 2006.

Down the road at Hydes' **Horse and Farrier**, the management couple of nearly two years, Sharon and Mark Henry are now selling at least four beers - Hydes Light (1863), bitter, Jekylls Gold and the seasonal. Although I say seasonal, if two seasonals overlap, and they're in condition, then both will appear on the bar. Thus it was that I saw Stormtrooper and Yule Be Back side-by-side. The Horse and Farrier is now Number Two in the Hydes estate re sales barrelage - they do six 36 gallon casks of bitter per week alone!

The pub is to be re-decorated in the early new year and will then go entirely No Smoking come April, pre-empting the Smoke Ban due to be applied in July. Smokers needn't worry though as accommodation is being made for them. With some degree of bias Mark reckons it is "the best pub in the village". It certainly has a very generous clientele who recently raised over £9000 for St Annes Hospice, on top of other charity fund-raising ventures. I'd say Gatley is well worth a look-see.

Hillgate Highlights

As usual, the annual Hillgate Stagger brought its share of highs and lows.

The two low points, I'm sorry to say, came early on in the form of the beer in **Winters** and the **Royal Oak**. I didn't enjoy either and in fact for me the Hatters in the Royal Oak was the worst beer of the night - and this in a pub just across the road from the brewery itself. Elsewhere the beer was perhaps of a generally higher quality that I have experienced on this 'Stagger' for several years.

The **Bishop Blaize** is now being run by Jean Taylor and usually features a beer from what we must now call the Marstons stable. Tonight it was the slightly malty Jennings Redbreast in most acceptable form.

I understand that the **Red Bull** may have changed hands by now. The tenancy is shown as available to let on the brewery website and there are also plans to extend the pub into the neighbouring building. A decent drop of beer on the night, though.

At the **Crown**, Ian Hazeldine is still mine host (despite an earlier report here to the contrary - apologies for that, Ian) and still plugging away with the real ale, alternating Theakstons and Black Sheep bitters.

Sue McIntyre has also taken on a second pub, and now runs the **Star & Garter** with her husband, who has fond memories of the pub, having worked at the nearby Christie hatworks. Hatters and Unicorn are the beers and were on good form.

There has been a change of range at the **Bowling Green** on Charles Street where cask Boddingtons Bitter has been replaced with Theakstons and very good it was too.

Perhaps one of the most welcome developments is the return of the **Wheatsheaf** to the real ale fold. I could never understand why cask beer was taken out here as it always

seemed to sell well. Anyway, now its back in the form of Theakstons Bitter.

Marple & Hawk Green News

In Marple, the **Hare & Hounds**, Dooley Lane is really doing well. Hydes brewery is very pleased with the efforts of Robert and Sam, as food sales now exceed the capacity. Drinks-wise, sales of Hydes bitter are so buoyant that they are now using 36 gallon casks for dispense. The bar always stocks Jekylls and the seasonal too as demand is so strong.

Becoming the new tenant of the **Crown** at Hawk Green represents a major step up from Murray Hill's first spell at the pub - he gained early experience of the licensed trade when, as a teenager, he washed pots at The Robinson's house!

Since then he has worked at The Crown for a number of licensees as well as running bars in locations ranging from Bradford, West Yorkshire to Phoenix, Arizona in the USA.

"This has been my local for many of my years and I have a good concept of what I want to do," he said. Murray added that one of his priorities will be to develop the house's food trade to take full advantage of its 45-cover restaurant.

"The smoking ban that comes into force next year makes this a good time for diners to really enjoy their meals in a smoke free environment," he said. Murray's business-building plans also include live entertainment in the form of disc jockeys and karaoke nights and the continuation of the pub's thriving golf society.



Murray Hill (right) receiving his training certificate from Paul Robinson.

Change at the Pack Horse

The **Pack Horse**, just off the Market Place changed hands late last year. Out goes Pauline O'Sullivan, a stalwart of some nineteen years at the pub (and for the first seven of those, she also had a hand in running the Gladstone, now Bishop Blaize). She is retiring to her home in Offerton; I wish her well. In come Debbie Mooney and husband.

Regular drinkers at the Arden Arms will recognise Debbie's cheery and youthful face from her time there as a barmaid; she learnt valuable lessons whilst there under the expert gaze of Joe Quinn and Steve King. As it is her first pub, Debbie is not going to tinker too much with a successful formula, so the beers of Tetley bitter and Copper Dragon Best will stay, and may even be joined by Tetley Dark Mild if demand is there. The lunchtime food and hotpots will be continued too. To help out, Debbie's father-in-law Frank will be doing most of the cellar work. The future of the Pack Horse looks to be in safe hands.

And finally... Talking to Simon Parry of the **Three Shires**, he tells me that there are now four handpumps on the bar. Copper Dragon IPA is a permanent feature and this is accompanied by three changing guests. More next time.

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After reporting that the **Howard Arms** and the **Moon & Sixpence**, both in Glossop Town centre, now dedicate a handpump to Howard Town beers on a permanent basis last month. The **Lantern Pike** in Little Hayfield and **Glossop Rugby Club** at Hargate Hill, Charlesworth are the two latest outlets to do the same. The Rugby Club's opening hours are a little restricted during the week, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8pm (training nights!) but it opens from Friday evenings at weekends and for Rugby fans, there is a match on one of the pitches each Saturday.

Good Beer Guide entry the **Crown** on Victoria Street in Glossop, has long had a note in its description as having the lowest beer prices for miles around (currently £1.23/pint). Now it has a rival, as Ron Brookes at the **Globe** has a beer from his Globe Brewery, Northern Lights (3.4%), on regularly at the grand price of £1.20. A light coloured, hoppy beer, it is predictably very popular.

The **Wrens Nest**, in Glossop, formerly a Brewers Fayre, and relatively new pub only opened around 18 months ago, has been bought by Mitchell & Butlers. It re-opened on 27 November as a "Sam Baxters" pub. This also affects the Branch's other former Brewers Fayre pub, the **Ashton Moss** at Ashton.

Out to Bamford

The **Yorkshire Bridge** Inn at Bamford, over the Snake pass is a pub I have not ventured in for many a year, but the opportunity came recently, even if it was just for a half and a toilet stop. I was pleasantly surprised at the beers lined up, though I was aware it was a free house.

Two Copper Dragon beers - the Challenger IPA was sampled and in good form, Black Sheep Bitter and Theakston's Old Peculiar. The pub has had yet more extensions recently, with the conservatory replaced by a much bigger one, and a new function room at the rear. Four rooms of this spacious multi-roomed roadside inn are non-smoking and one room's theme is of paintings of Lancaster Bombers that used to train for war at the nearby Ladybower reservoirs. Another has scenes of the valley in bygone days, one showing the viaducts being built and another the Ashopton church spire showing in the water after the valley was flooded following the construction of the reservoir. The pub has a heavy accent on food and has accommodation available.

Youth Hostels

I thought a recent article I read in *Triangle*, a periodic magazine sent out to YHA members, would be of interest to readers, particularly those of us in the *Opening Times* area who combine walking with drinking.

The YHA are actively encouraging the revival of selling regional beers at their hostels and the hostel that has the highest beer sales on the network is Hartington Youth Hostel, in the Peak District. They feature beers from Whim Brewery (Hartington) and Leatherbritches. In addition they stock bottled beers from Thornbridge Hall, Peak Ales and Leek Brewery among others.

Other hostels stocking draught beers are Gradbach Mill (Staffordshire/Derbyshire border), Ilam Hall (Peak District), Once Brewed (near Hadrians Wall), Ravenstor (Peak District) York, Canterbury, Cambridge, Bath and Arundel. Perhaps worth considering these if you are planning a weekend's walking in the Spring.



As last month's column went to the editor, came the news that the **Navigation** at Buxworth was to change hands. Over 15 years Alan and Linda Hall had built up a successful operation with beer, food and accommodation. An announcement in the Buxton Advertiser quotes that the Halls will 'miss the friendly banter and community spirit that prevails in the Navigation Inn.' True indeed of a smashing local which also welcomes visitors. All the best to Alan and Linda in their future.

The new licensee is John Wood. I called in, a week into his new regime and as one would expect so near to Christmas, there were no changes at the bar. Theakston's Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Taylor's Landlord continue as fixtures, whilst the guest beer was Gray's Lowry. Another call into the New Year found London Pride and Lancaster Blonde as guest beers. As a first impression the guest beer tradition certainly seems to be continuing.

A December visit to the **Goyt** found Tetley Bitter and Black Sheep Bitter available. Just before Christmas I found something of a renaissance at the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge. Several weeks earlier I had found no customers and no real ale one Friday teatime. This latest visit found a busy pub with a works/office Christmas do, and Tetley Bitter and Young's Special, the latter a relative bargain at £1.95, and in good form. Hopefully this sets the scene for an upturn in the fortunes of the White Horse. Elsewhere in the Punch estate in Whaley Bridge, Tetley Bitter and Wells Bombardier have been available at the **White Hart**, whilst the **Navigation** (W.B.) continues to access beers from the Punch special list including seasonals Everard's Sleigh Bells and Smiles' Nightglow. It is good to see Smiles' beers available in the area, (see also Shepherd's below). In the New Year Brain's Dark made a welcome re-appearance.

Whilst on mild, Coach House Gunpowder Mild continues on the bar and in good form at the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont.

In the Robinson's estate in Whaley Bridge, good Hatters can be found at the **Board**, whilst the **Cock** and the **Railway** had Old Tom on sale. At the Cock a pin was stillaged behind the bar and sold at £1 a nip.

In the W&D. estate a December visit found Jennings Bitter and Cumberland on in the former Jennings **Shady Oak** at Fernilee, where Tim Hughes is consolidating after taking over in November. Tim points out that the Shady Oak has a new telephone no. 01663 733621, important if booking meals or accommodation of course. Still with W&D. the **Shepherd's** in Whaley Bridge continues to access a good range of beers from the brewery list, with recent tempters including St. Austell Tribute, Smiles' Heritage, Adnam's Broadside and from Greater Manchester breweries, Lees Janus and Hyde's Jekyll's Gold.

In last month's column I painted a relatively gloomy picture about some of the local pubs in my home area, and certainly there continue to be concerns. My thoughts were echoed in a letter to the Daily Telegraph in late December entitled "Save our pubs", followed a few days later by an article "The English pub is in mortal danger." The headings make the contents perfectly clear. There are justifiable concerns, but there are still some good local pubs around. I hope the above article gives some good pointers. There needs to be a concern and a support for good community local pubs. A good local pub definitely deserves to benefit from the "use it" bit of "use it or lose it."

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Did you know that Mill Lane, in Macclesfield, Cheshire is the actual historical location of the Road to Damascus! I can see you now shaking your head in disbelief, your religious views shattered into smithereens writes *Ken Slater*. But I can verify that it is in a pub called the **Sun Inn** (Mill Lane, Macclesfield) whilst supping a pint of Robin Redbreast (4.5%) that a bolt of light filled with incredible concepts and perceptions engulfed my mind.

Having read several editions of *Opening Times* from cover to cover it has always fascinated me that despite the claim that this fine magazine covers the Macclesfield area no one has felt compelled to actually write anything about its drinking heritage. It was time that someone did and I decided that someone would be me. But, I needed a starting point, this was going to be my first article for a high ranking real ale magazine and I wanted to make an impression. As Macclesfield is a relatively small town compared to Stockport I thought it would be a bad idea to cram as many Macclesfield pubs in one article, I think that you don't really get the feel of a pub if you describe it in just one line. Therefore after mulling over I decided to begin with my very own local of locals, the one and only **Railway View** (Byron's Lane, which is just off London Road as you go towards, Macclesfield Town Football Club)

The Railway View is blessed with two real fires, one of which is contained in a stove like contraption that is almost guaranteed to lose you some weight if you dare to sit near it. The first thing you clap eyes on when entering the pub will be two pool players pitting their wits against each other in a titanic struggle between man and cue ball. Above them is a wide screen television, which is ideal for watching football matches from the safety of your seat. The pub is decorated with beer mats and bar clips from various decades a sure reminder of Sue and Graham Calvert's dedication to real ale. There is also a blackboard whereon is chalked the pronouncement of the many events that will take place over the coming months, such as Casino Royale Night, Hawaiian Night (the limbo competition is a must) and also a March beer festival (8 bar pumps and 16 real ales!!!!).

A stride across the slate floor and will you find yourself at the bar and what a bar it is. Six glistening... yep!! SIX ever changing, glistening bar pumps which pour the nectar of life such as Howard Town's -Monk (4%), Pure Gold (3.8%), Derwent Brewery - Whitwell & Mark Ale (4.4%), Titanic - Full Steam Ahead (4.4%), Archers - Barking (4.2%) and Moor House - Blond Witch (4.5%). It's enough to make you stand and stare in wonder at such a collection of fine throat refreshers. All of the beers are kept in superb condition and Monday nights (except bank holidays) the price of a pint is only £1.60. If you are one of those types who don't know their Arizona from their Hobgoblin there are resident experts (especially Mick) on site to guide you through the tough decisions that you will need to make when choosing your ale. As well as pool, The Railway has darts, dominoes and card games to entertain you and if you are really lucky 'Daddy Graham' may challenge you to a game of chess...all it needed was a swimming pool and the Olympics would have been held there. It is a great shame that this friendly great pub is not in the Good Beer Guide, an injustice if ever there was one, but with support from the real ale community Sue and Graham will get the recognition they both deserve and the Railway View will be included in the next edition. **KS**

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Brewery NEWS...

On the national scene, the merry-go-round of name changes and brand moves continues.

Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, who trade locally as both Banks's and Marstons have changed their name to...Marstons. In a way this makes sense as this is the better known name and has the stronger image on the beer front. No other changes are planned as a result of this move, they say.

Marstons as we must now call them remain on the acquisition trail and have just bought the southern-based Eldridge Pope pub company.

Scottish & Newcastle have announced that cask McEwans 80/- is to be discontinued as sales have reached a level whereby quality cannot be guaranteed. In a further move away from cask beers, the company has also sold the Courage brands to the new **Wells & Youngs** brewery. This has generally been hailed as a good move and may see these neglected beers promoted once more. The premium Courage Directors was once a regular sight in local pubs but in recent years has only been rarely seen.

Family Favourites

As usual there is news to report from the local family brewers.

Robinsons – this month sees the first of the eagerly anticipated new seasonals. First up, and available until the end of April is Dark Horse (4.3% ABV). The pumpclip calls it a bitter but it's really a stout. The official description is: "A dark stout-like bitter with aromas of roasted malt and dark chocolate. This rich, deeply satisfying beer has a palate reminiscent of burnt coffee and peppery hop and a robust after bitterness perfectly balanced by priming sweetness". However you describe it, it sounds pretty

good. Look out for it in local Robinsons pubs.

Hydes – the current seasonal is Jumpin' Jack (4.7% ABV), and very enjoyable it is, too. Many local Hydes pubs sell the seasonal beers. The Hydes rebranding programme continues with a name change for Hydes Dark Mild. This is now Owd Oak Dark – the beer remains the same but the imagery on the bar is much improved. This is a fine beer and anything that can be done to boost sales is to be welcomed.

Cains – have announced a range of seasonal beers for the coming year. This month they are producing an 8% ABV Bock Beer, available both on draught and in bottle (in fact the bottles will be available all year). The beer is brewed to German purity laws and uses Munich malt along with Saz and Hallertau hops.

Micro Magic

Time this month to catch up on some those of the local micros we have missed recently.

Bank Top – Port O'Call recently won a gold medal in the northern championships staged by SIBA (the society of small brewers). This beer also joins Flat Cap, Pavilion Pale Ale and (for a short time) Smokestack Lightning in bottle. A new beer

is Rainforest (4.3%), a pale ale brewed using three hop varieties.

Bazens' – have announced 'The Salford Series' of guest beers for 2007. Each monthly brew will mark milestones and events in the city's history. Out for January was Dirty Old Town, a balanced but hoppy 4.3% brew named after the song by Salford-born Ewan McCall. This month it's The Doctor's Orders marking Salford-born Christopher Eccleston's role in Dr Who.

Boggart Hole Clough – look out for Moonlight (5%), a pale, fruity and hoppy beer. Two more, unnamed, beers are also planned for February – one will be 4.9% and pale, the other 3.9% and dark.

Greenfield – Celebration (4%) is a golden bitter with hoppy undertones. Look out, too, for Greenfield Real Ale (4%), a ruby red beer with a slight chocolate aftertaste.

Howard Town – have increased capacity with a third fermenter installed. This is to meet increased demand – January was best ever month for sales of Howard Town beers, and this without using any wholesalers. A new regular beer is Monks Gold (4%) and look out for new design pumpclips, expected to appear during February. The brewery is also reported to be experimenting with bottling – possible bottles for April.

Leyden – the new beer here is Rammy Rocket (4.2%), described by brewer Brendan Leyden as "beautiful", this is a pale straw-coloured beer brewed using four hop varieties. This may become a permanent addition to the Leyden range and features an old Ramsbottom bus on the pumpclip.

Marble – Roadrider has been renamed Marble Best Bitter but otherwise remains unchanged. No new beers imminently but another run of bottled beers is in the pipeline.

Millstone – Millwright (4.6%), now one of the regulars, received silver in the premium bitter class at the recent SIBA (North) beer competition. A new session beer is being brewed throughout February; Vale Mill (3.9%), pale and hoppy, predominantly using Cascade hops.

Phoenix – celebrates its 25th anniversary this year (so look for a big Phoenix feature later in the year). The celebrations kicked off with the National Winter Ales Festival week when Tony Allen produced 10 new beers under the "One Fot Tickers" banner, each appearing in a different pub.

Pictish – brewer Richard Sutton continues to experiment with new single hop beers, and is currently using German hops. Perle (5.2%), pale and hoppy was due to come out at the end of January. More single hop beers will be in the pipeline. The February seasonal is Claymore (4.5%), a straw coloured beer with a spicy hop aroma.

Shaws – a pale and hoppy Pale Ale (4%) was about to come out as we went to press. Golden Globe remains the mainstay of production and sales

Three Rivers – bottled sales are going very well both at home and in the USA. Aquarian Ale (4%) is out this month and Suitably Irish (5.6%), a dry stout, will be back for St Patrick's night. The hoppy GMT Extra (5%) may also reappear.

And finally...it looks as though Stockport is about to get a new brewery. Kevin Rothwell's **Hornbeam Brewery** will probably be based in Romiley. Beers are current being brewed at 3 Rivers and in late January Winterlong, described as a dark bitter, at 4.5% ABV went on sale. This was a mid-brown, easy drinking beer that belied its strength. More news on this next time.



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During the quiet period after New Year one festival stands out...the Derby CAMRA 12th Night Winter Beer Festival. Travelling there from Stockport by train you have a choice of routes, via Crewe, Stoke or Sheffield. The latter was our choice as there are more trains.

On arrival in Derby we headed straight for the festival which is held in the Assembly Rooms on the Market Place. We joined a queue of very under age drinkers before noticing that we had entered by the door for the pantomime Peter Pan. Where is the beer festival we asked... "it's behind you" chorused the youngsters (I have made this bit up).

The venue was up some stairs, in the lobby area at the top was the place where you bought beer tokens and collected your glass. Also here was a large CAMRA stand and the cider and foreign beer sales. There was also a small charity bar with four cask ales. Beyond this area was the main hall which was very busy but we did manage to find an empty table and round up some chairs so that we could enjoy a relaxed afternoon's beer tasting.



There was one long bar with 29 handpumps. The organisers had divided the beer supply into three groups, each group containing a mix of milds, session beers, premium beers and winter warmers. This is a good idea as sometimes you can get to a beer festival on a Saturday afternoon and find that all of

the beers in one of these categories had been drunk by the Friday night session. Of the 29 beers now on 16 were 5% or stronger. Fortunately the festival glasses, which were one of the most attractive I have seen for some time, were lined to both a nip (a third of a pint) and a half pint. The advantage of being served a nip measure is that you can try a lot more of the stronger beers than if you were consuming halves or pints. The beer quality was excellent making this a great festival to kick off the New Year.

Derby is one of the best drinking locations in the country so, after the afternoon session had finished, last orders being at 4pm, we headed off to a couple of our favourite pubs. The Flowerpot on Chapel Street had 24 real ales on, 14 of these straight from the cask. All the beers tried were excellent. The Flowerpot is having a beer festival of their own from 29th March to 1st April and it will feature more than 100 new beers!

We headed back for the station where two of Derby's finest pubs, the Alexandra Hotel and the Brunswick Inn are located close together on Siddals Road and Station Approach respectively. Time was short now so I made do with a couple in the Alex whilst some of our party found time for a last one in The Brunswick.

The trains back to Stockport via Sheffield were running to time. With a 25 minute wait for the next Cheadle Hulme train there was time for a swift half in the Olde Vic on Edgeley. The place was packed with Sharks and Gloucester rugby fans, we managed to elbow our way to the bar where our order for halves was...well if you know Steve the landlord you can probably imagine the type of jovial greeting that we received!

Whether you are going to a beer festival or a tour around the city's pubs, Derby makes for a great day out.



King Street West and Edgeley with John Clarke

This Stagger takes in a huge variety of pubs and in many ways reflects the enormous diversity of the local pub scene in Stockport.

Our starting point was the **Pineapple** on Heaton Lane. This is an interesting pub insofar as it is a true community local but at the same time, it is to all intents and purposes, in the town centre. The crucial few yards from the A6 seem to make all the difference.

It was knocked about a bit a good few years ago now but retains a multi-roomed aspect and invariably serves up a good pint of Robinson's. Three were on handpump tonight - Hatters, Unicorn and the newer Wards Bitter. All three were well received but the general opinion was that the beer was not quite on its usual excellent form.

Next up was the newly invigorated **Crown**, just on the other side of the viaduct. To say that this pub has taken on a new lease of life under the new management team is something of an understatement. Redecorated, reinvigorated, real fires and real ales (14 available virtually all the time) just about sum the pub up. Oh, and now it's clean, too.

The result is that the crowds have come flocking back and it was busy, even at 8pm. The range of beers tried by our party said it all - Titanic Stout, Phoenix Thirsty Moon, Pictish Mandala, Facers DHB, Leyden Nanny Flyer, York Guzzler, Copper Dragon Black Gold and Golden Pippin, 3 Rivers GMT and Everards Tiger. Phew! Quality matched quantity with high opinions across the board. It was difficult to leave but more pubs beckoned.

On the corner of Chestergate is the site of Robinson's **Bridge Inn**, one of the few pubs in town where I never managed to get a decent pint. Nearby was our next destination, the **Comfortable Gill** on King Street West.

This popular pub has suffered something of a decline in recent years and indeed, had only just reopened after a prolonged period of closure. Hopefully trade will increase again (and I hear that guest beers may be on the way) but I have to say that on the night the pub was looking rather tired. A thorough going over seems to be needed. The sole real ale was handpumped Boddington's Bitter and unfortunately this didn't hit the spot with most of our quite large crowd, most rating it only average.

Pressing on uphill we passed the closed **Tom Thumbs**, in the throes of conversion into the Lost Monsoon Indian restaurant. This was one of the few other pubs in town where I never managed to get a decent pint and unlike the Bridge Inn, which had a certain amount of history to it, I certainly don't mourn its passing.

Onwards and upwards we passed the Olde Vic, saving it for later, and also the very large, and very closed, **Blue Bell**. I'm not sure what fate awaits this place (built by Daniel Clifton & Co, by the way, whose Royal Oak Brewery on Hillgate is about to be turned into flats). It seems to have been sold and I know that there were some impressive Victorian features surviving inside. It is however becoming increasingly derelict and its present appearance does this side of town no favours at all.

We needed a drink by now and luckily our next stop was the **Armoury** on Shaw Heath. The second excellent, Robinson's local of the night, the fact that the Armoury appears on the front cover of this issue as a very close runner-up in the local Pub of the Year contest says all you

need to know about it. Needless to say, the atmosphere was superb with a good crowd of regulars enjoying the handpumped Hatters and Unicorn. Again, needless to say, both were in fine form with little to choose between the two.



The third Robinson's community pub of the night beckoned next. This was the **Grapes** at the top of Castle Street. The pub has been refurbished since the retirement of long time incumbents Dave and Sandra George and I have to say that it looks very smart indeed.

This is a pub that seems to do most of its trade at lunchtimes and through the afternoons. It was therefore quieter than most we visited tonight. Two Robinson's beers were on handpump - Hatters and Unicorn (Best Mild and Best Bitter in old money). The mild was horrible but on being taken back to the bar a fresh cask was put on sale and this was much better. The bitter drew mixed reviews - most thought it was above average or better but some weren't keen at all.



So, to the final port of call, **Ye Olde Vic** on the corner of Chatham Street. What can you say about the Vic? Outside it may look a little worse for wear but inside there's a heart of gold. Run in irrepressible style by larger than life Steve Brannan and Johanne Quinn, this is another local institution. One of the smallest pubs in town (albeit housing one of the larger collections of bric-a-brac), the Vic can easily get full, although there is a tented overspill area outside at the back.

Another blazing fire and as usual five excellent guest beers. Tonight these comprised Dark Star Best Bitter, Simpkins Bitter, Salopian Hoppy Days plus beers from Ossett and Buffys. Quality was superb, as you might expect from this Good Beer Guide regular. A fine end to the night.

So, how to sum up? Three excellent community locals run by our local family brewer, two multi-beer free houses, one pub company house relaunching itself, one vacant site, one pub turned into something else and one closed and boarded. This perhaps sums up the modern pub scene in many towns up and down the country. While the closures are to be regretted it does seem that those that remain, provide they live and breathe quality, will survive and prosper.

THE ARMOURY

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A Tickle of Eccles

There's been something of a revamp at Robinson's **White Horse** in Eccles. Now it's up market with a restaurant. But, alas, Hatters Mild has been dropped, as with a growing number of houses within the Robbies estate. Still has good quality Unicorn Bitter, but Robbies Smooth Bitter has been introduced. In the town, the **Lamb** (Holt's) is a superb Edwardian pub, masses of original features of mahogany bar, etched glass, tiles, separate vault, three separate rooms in the lounge, as well as a room with a full-size snooker table. To top it all excellent pints of bitter and mild to be had. Further up, is the **Albert Edward** (Sam Smiths) The house has completely refurbished, both in and out, a couple of years ago with three separate rooms, all tastefully done in the late Edwardian style. The cheapest pint of bitter around and found on fine form on our last visit.

Could do Worse in Worsley

A merry band of CAMRA cohorts entered the, perhaps, most affluent area of Salford to experience the hostelries just before the festive season. For a long while, the area rarely featured the CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, but for the last couple of years things have been on the up.

First call was to the **Barton Arms** on Stable Fold. This modern-build up-market pub with good food, good beer and good atmosphere was decidedly well-populated. On the beer menu was Caledonian Santa's Little Helper, Taylor's Landlord, Black Sheep Best Bitter and Marston's Ashes Ale. A place to take the significant other and the aged parent, while, if younger, a good meeting point while on a date. An interesting point is that guest ales are voted for by customers from a list of 14 national or regional brewers.

On the other side of the motorway on Worsley Brow is another posh pub - the **John Gilbert**. It was until recently, the only Hardy & Hanson's brewery of Nottingham house for miles. Now part of the ever-increasing Greene King empire, it was a welcome surprise to see two Hardy & Hanson's ales still on with Kimberley Bitter and Old Trip (which was very tasty). A further two beers on sale were Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen. A reproduction stone olde-worlde kind of pub and quite busy, too. Behind the bar, they seemed to be doing some staff training at time of visit, as there were some very foamy short pints given at first, but these were quickly topped-up.

Doubling back into the village, last pub was the **Bridgewater** on Barton Rd. It's a massive pub with a very large bar serving nearly all the rooms. In fact it's nearly (but not quite) as big the bar at the Racecourse Hotel in Lower Kersal. Now under new management, there was Bank Top's Flat Cap and Bikes, Trikes & Beer, Greene King IPA and Phoenix Last Leaf. The beer was still good, but it was the quietest pub of the three and in need of some refurbishment inside.

Swinton & Pendlebury Beer Festival 2007

Event organiser, Daniel Bentham of Swinton Lions RLFC tells us that they are to hold their 2nd beer festival from 23-25 Feb.. Once again the venue will be 'The Folly' on Station Rd. Opening hours are Friday 1900-2300, Sat 1200-1700, 1800-2300, Sun 1200-1430. The plan is for a selection of 20 beers from further afield than last year. For more details contact Daniel on Daniel.bentham@ntlworld.com.

Salford

Some bad news here, as the **Crescent** has been put up for sale at £750,000 freehold, advertised in the trade paper the *Publican* and being described as a development opportunity. Again it's early days so the place may still have a long shelf life. Andy Davies, the owner, being close to retirement has decided to sell up in the wake of the impending regeneration of the area. Remember the What's Doing front page headline in September 1990 – *Crescent to Close? – proposing planning permission for the pub to be turned into offices*. Maybe the wheel has finally come full circle. Idy and Sal have spent several years looking after the bar side of things, but if the pub gets sold then they might also want to retire and leave the trade, although their tenancy runs until late next year.

Perhaps it's just as well the **New Oxford** and the **Kings Arms** continue to thrive. The New Oxford has just had a further six handpumps installed, making a total of ten in all. This was in preparation for the anticipated demand for beers during the National Winter Ales Festival. While the core range outside festival time will remain at four beers, the handpumps are in place to introduce more beers as trade increases.

The pub is now run by Tim Flynn and Paulette Scanlon who are passionate about beer quality and see great things for the pub. A new kitchen will herald the re-introduction of the food operation and there is now a small but extremely interesting foreign beer list, too. Real cider may be in the pipeline as well.



Tim & Paulette at the New Oxford

Northern Quarter

Some shock news surfaced recently, with a for sale notice appearing outside the **Smithfield** on Swan Street. It is early days yet but one wanders if this will survive as a pub, due to the close proximity of the **Burton Arms**. What with the present state of the **Beer House** and the decline in real ales at the **Queens Arms**, Honey Street, the area seems to be losing its footing in the cask ale stakes. Thankfully we still have the **Crown & Kettle** and the **Fringe**.

North Manchester

In Harpurhey, the **Golden Lion** on Rochdale Road has been partly demolished. Having been shut for a long period and a keg pub for years, it is still a sad end to a pub which probably boasted the first floodlit bowling green in north Manchester and sported some neat tiling at the front façade. Also in Harpurhey another building of note, Cintra Buildings has also bitten the dust. I remember as a kid in the fifties the Saturday matinee, as this was the local kinema or 'flea pit'. Although never incorporating a pub, it is a shame to see it gone.

Brian Kemp 1948 - 2006

On Friday 3rd November Brian Kemp collapsed and died.

Brian was an early member of CAMRA and a founder member of the Macclesfield and East Cheshire Branch in 1976. Brian was secretary of the Branch for the first nine years.


During this time the beer scene in the Macclesfield area was dominated by the big local brewers, Boddingtons, Robinsons, Greenalls and Marstons which together with other brewers made the area a beer drinkers' haven in both town and country at a time when the tide of keg beer was rising fast elsewhere.

In these early days the Branch produced several local guides, ran small beer festivals as well as enjoying social outings. Brian contributed in no small part to all these activities. He also wrote regular reports to the *Macclesfield Express* and articles in *Opening Times* and other publications of the period – in all of his writing he showed his enthusiasm for draught beer and the CAMRA cause.

Brian remained a supporter of the Campaign and the Branch for many years afterwards during leaner times and served as Chairman for some of this period.

Aside from CAMRA, Brian was a fine distance runner for Macclesfield Harriers and a long term supporter of Macclesfield Town FC – further examples of his dedication to what he did.

Brian married Gill and they have two sons. He had been ill for many years, but his death nevertheless came suddenly. His many friends will remember him as someone who repaid knowing well and will recall his dry humour and will smile. *Geoff Atkin, Macclesfield Branch Chairman 1978-1985*



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MILD CHALLENGE 2007

The Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge 2007
runs from 31st March to 6th May.

More details next month.



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 west. *Branch Contact – Pete Farrand 07786 283990*

Thursday 8th – Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. **NB – entries for Good Beer Guide 2008 will be chosen at this meeting.** Starts 8.00pm

Friday 16th – Cheadle East Stagger: 7.30pm Cheshire Line, Manchester Rd; 8.30pm Royal Oak, Stockport Road.

Saturday 17th - Pub of the Year Presentation to the Railway, Portwood. From 8.00pm

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Dog & Partridge, Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 3rd March - Stout, Porter & Old Ale Trail presentations: Crown, Heaton Lane. From 8.00pm

Thursday 8th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heavily. **Guest Speaker: Oliver Robinson from Robinson's Brewery.** Starts 8.00pm

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 12th – Branch Meeting: New Lamp, Hadfield, nr Glossop. Starts 8.15pm

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*

Thursday 15th – Altrincham Social: 8pm Unicorn; 9pm Faulknors Arms; 9.45pm The Bridge

Thursday 22nd – Good Beer Guide 2008 final selection meeting: Wheatsheaf, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Thursday 1st March – Branch Meeting: Timperley, Taverners Social Club, Park Rd, Timperley. Starts 8.00pm

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the **Macclesfield & East Cheshire** Branch covers a wide area from Knutsford to Congleton. *Branch Contact – Tony Icke 01625861833*

Monday 19th – Good Beer Guide 2008 selection meeting: Dolphin, Windmill St, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

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 14th – Good Beer Guide City Centre selection: Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 8.00pm

Wednesday 21st – Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill. Starts 8.00pm

Wednesday 28th – Good Beer Guide outside City Centre selection: Dutton, Park St, Manchester. Starts 8.00pm.

Wednesday 7th March - Peel Green & Patricroft Crawl: Grapes 7.30, Stanley Arms 8.30, Queens Arms 9.30

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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