

MARCH 2007



Opening

TIMES

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

NUMBER 271

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

Best Beer In Manchester Major New Competition for Local Brewers



CELEBRATING TEN YEARS
**MANCHESTER
FOOD & DRINK
FESTIVAL 2007**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Evening News

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has gone into partnership with this year's Manchester Food & Drink Festival to stage a major new competition for Greater Manchester's cask ale brewers.

The Manchester Food and Drink Festival, the City's most hotly anticipated food event, is the largest and most high profile event of its kind in the UK. It is an 11 day celebration of everything that is excellent about food and drink in Greater Manchester. This year there will be a welcome focus on the county's dedicated cask ale producers – with over 20 independent breweries, ranging from the 'family four' of Robinson's, Hydes, JW Lees and Holts, to large micros and small pub breweries. Greater Manchester has a claim to be the national centre of independent brewing.

All the local cask ale brewers will be invited to take part in the event to be held in Albert Square on Friday October 12th. The public will be able to taste and vote on their favourite cask tippie and this will then be followed by a tasting of all the entered beers by specially invited judging panels. The winner will be announced that day and the winning brewer will be presented with their award at the Manchester Food & Drink Festival Gala Dinner and Awards evening held at the Town Hall.

Hopefully this will be the start of a process that puts Greater Manchester on the national map as the major independent brewing centre in the UK. While famous brewing towns such as Burton-on-Trent and Tadcaster may produce more volume of beer than Greater Manchester, it is our region that produces the greatest variety of cask beers than anywhere in the country. This has been the case for some time but for some reason no-one has seen fit to promote the fact. Hopefully the tie-up between CAMRA and Manchester Food & Drink Festival can kick start this process – we urge all our local brewers to rise to the occasion and do us proud.



Beers on sale at last year's Food & Drink Festival



Diary Dates

Preparations for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival are now well underway.

Over the next two months we will bring you details of the entertainment during the Festival and also highlights of the beer and cider order. Make a note of those important dates May 31 to June 2 at Edgeley Park.

Kath's Back

"Mother's back" Damien Smethurst told *Opening Times* when we called at the Castle, Oldham Street.

He has taken over the pub from his late mother, the legendary Kath Smethurst, who sadly died last year.

Kath had wanted her family to do something special in her memory after she died and when renowned Manchester mosaic artist Mark Kennedy suggested the idea of using her ashes in the grout of an artwork celebrating Kath, her family knew it was just the sort of thing she would have wanted.



Kath's image now adorns the bar of the Northern Quarter pub where she worked for 20 years – the Castle sells an incredible 9 Robinson's beers including the rare Dark Hatters and is well worth a visit.

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Traditional Beers for Modern Tastes



Doctor's Orders 4.3% (February - The Salford Series)
Centennial 4% (6th one-hay wonder)
Pacific Bitter 3.8% **Blue Bullet** 4.5%
Flatbac 4.2% (Beer of the Festival, Stockport 2003 & BIA-Bronze 2004)
eXSB 5.5% (Beer of the Festival, Great Harwood 2005)
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(Gold - Porters & Stouts, CB&B 2006, Silver - Porters & Stouts, SIBA North Beer Competition 2006)*

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* All beers subject to availability



Pub OF THE Month AWARD




The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month Award for March 2007 goes to the **Griffin** in Heaton Mersey. This four-square red-brick Joseph Holts pub is a well-known landmark on Didsbury Road. Dating from the early 19th century, it retains a rambling multi-roomed interior centred on a superb bar counter of carved wood and etched glass. Its popularity is such that a spacious, comfortable modern extension was added at the side about fifteen years ago, but this does not detract from the older parts and very much feels part of the pub. To the rear is a suprisingly large and secluded beer garden.

The beer range is Holts Mild, Bitter and seasonal beers, at their usual good value prices, and it must have one of the highest turnovers of real ale in the area, with the Bitter still being delivered in 54-gallon hogsheads. The Griffin has often featured in CAMRA's national "Good Beer Guide" and will make a welcome return in 2008. A wide range of good value lunchtime food is served and the pub is open all day seven days a week. There's a strong Manchester City following amongst the regulars and large screen sport features prominently, but the wide choice of rooms means you can always get away from it if not a fan. It was one of the first pubs in the area to introduce a no smoking room which has proved consistently popular.

Licenseses John and Bev Bonyngne have been there for over twelve years and have done an excellent job in creating a lively, welcoming atmosphere and ensuring the pub appeals to all age groups. It ticks over nicely throughout the day and is always standing room only later in the evening. The Griffin is an excellent example of a thriving community local that also draws customers from many miles around. The presentation night is on Thursday 22 March - make sure you get there early or you won't get a seat. **PE.**

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OT – COMMENT...

It gives me particular pleasure to welcome all our readers to the March issue of *Opening Times*. Twelve months ago, there was no March issue, nor an April or May issue come to that.

Without dwelling on the reasons for that unfortunate gap in publication, I really do think that OT has gone from strength to strength since our relaunch but we refuse to rest on our laurels and continue to seek ways of making it even better. My particular thanks to all our advertisers for their continued support over what has been something of a difficult year for us.

Our colleagues in North Manchester Branch have also had a difficult year. The tragic death of their editor, publisher and printer of their long established newsletter *What's Doing* caused it to cease publication. We have been pleased to help out but this is probably the last month that a North Manchester column will appear in OT. North Manchester CAMRA is launching a new magazine, the *Drinkers' Almanac* and this should appear very shortly. I wish it every success.

CAMRA's tie up with the Manchester Food & Drink Festival represents a natural move for both organisations. We are delighted that this year's Festival will feature the superb craft beers brewed in the county – I hope all our local brewers will support this major initiative.

OT – INFORMATION

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,300 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth.

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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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Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, John Tune, Pete Farrand, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Tom Lord, Frank Wood, Peter Edwardson, Dave Hallows, Steve Smith, Phil Levison, Andy Jenkinson, Robin Wignall, Dave Sheldon, Jim Flynn, Clive Rushen, John O'Donnell, Jerry Wicken, Mark McConachie

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2002

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!



Fallowfield & Rusholme with Jerry Wicken

A wet and unseasonably mild November evening saw our motley crew assemble in the **White Swan** in Ladybarn. This multi-roomed old fashioned Robinson's local used to have a lovely etched glass and carved wood bar; now the signs of past glory only remain in the ceramic tiles and the off-sales sign etched in the glass outside. The beer (Robinson's Unicorn all round) scored consistently well among all the drinkers.

Pubs in this area seem to be faddish in their approach to real ale: the **Brewers Arms** Cask Ale House does not sell what it says on the label and the **Derby Arms** has closed. However, the **Ladybarn** now does serve draught beers. On our visit it only had Greene King IPA, of which the first pint out was over warm but changed without fuss. This suggests that it may not be that popular amongst the mainly young clientele. Bass is also apparently served from time to time. Bright walls and dim lighting in the large main bar with decks set up for music to come is clearly aiming at the younger market. However, the quite sophisticated food menu (served mainly in a separate room) and the comparatively high price of beer (£2.50 a pint) indicates an intention to attract a more up-market crowd.

Having said all that, the pub was pretty busy for early evening and beer quality was good. The pub, in a Victorian shell, has seen several incarnations over the years and it would be nice to think that in its present form it could cater for a variety of eating and drinking customers in the years to come.



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"Good ale, the true and proper drink of Englishmen. He is not deserving of the name of Englishman who speaketh against ale, that is good ale." Although George Borrow has an inn named for him and was a frequent visitor to hostleries, I doubt he ever crossed the threshold of the **Friendship Inn** in Fallowfield. And I shouldn't think that when he penned these words 150 years ago he would have foreseen that a campaign would have been necessary to save the Nation's favourite tippie. Fortunately, in an area dominated by creamflow and lager, the Friendship has for many years been serving fine ales. On our visit it was serving the full range of Hydes beers, those that were tried (Bitter, Jekyll's Gold and Stormtrooper) were deemed good, as well as two beers from Allgates Brewery of Wigan. Hasty Knoll (4.2%) and Napoleon's Retreat (3.9%), the latter scoring very highly and marked the beer of the night. From a real ale fan's viewpoint, it was also encouraging that a brewery which has been going for 163 years is also serving beers from a brewery established for less than 163 days! Although The Friendship was extended and refurbished in 2004, the pub still retains a good atmosphere encouraging a range of ages and tastes. I thought the service

behind the bar was top quality especially given the busy nature of the pub.

Our next stop along the Wilmslow Road was the **Great Central**, a cavernous Lloyds No. 1 Bar under the Wetherspoons umbrella. Wetherspoons is usually reliable on three counts. The beer is cheaper than the average in the area, there is a decent range of beers, and the music is loud. Great Central did not disappoint on any of these.

Nationwide, Wetherspoons seems to attract a wide range of customer. Here, when you throw in a number of TV screens and a table football machine, it is clear that the Company are aiming at a young market and (present company excepted) that is what they got. However, the service was good whatever your age and the beers we tried scored well; particularly the Abbot and the Stockport brewed Yummy Figgy Pudding from Three Rivers. The Pedigree had mixed reviews and there was also Weston's Cider which went untried. Despite all the strong local breweries we support, it is no bad thing in my opinion to have a pub promoting real ale aimed at young people.



Some bussed it and some walked but the next port of call for all our party was **Hardy's Well**. (We bypassed **Robinski's** which may have sold real ale, so an apology if this is the case but also is rumoured only to allow student entry. All of our party sadly would have failed the entrance exam). Hardy's Well has been called different names in its time (not all complimentary) but on this day it met with everyone's approval. The beer Timothy Taylor Landlord and the less common Golden Best both scored very well, the latter narrowly missing out on beer of the night. If there was a prize for pub of the night, however, it would have been a clear winner. It was lively but not packed (it is only one room but holds several separate areas) and housed a United Nations of drinkers enjoying each other's company. I remark on this only in retrospect as it seems a bit of a rarity. The combination of beer and pub was so good in fact, that many of us returned there for the last drink of the night.

Around the corner is the **Welcome** which has a new landlady. She is doing her training and hopes to offer real ale in the near future. The rest of Rusholme was disappointing. The **Clarence** was shut, what used to be the **Lord Lyon** is now a multi-cultural centre, the **Gardeners Arms** was shut, the **Huntsman** is keg only, the **Albert** had temporarily run out of real ale, and the **Sherwood** was closed and boarded. This left only the friendly **Osborne House** which might have been described as a typical Manchester back street local were there more such pubs still open to allow comparison! This was a Manchester City supporters' pub when the ground was only a few hundred yard away but though the stadium may have moved the allegiance still remains. The bar was an old-fashioned wooden type and the locals were enjoying their Friday karaoke. Hyde's Bitter and Mild were on the menu and whilst the bitter was disappointing, the mild was above average. The rain was teeming down outside and there's nothing like a good sing-song. Sadly, this **was** nothing like a good sing-song so it was back to Hardy's Well to usher in the new day. These are the opinions of one group of drinkers on one day in November. All the pubs we visited had something to offer so try them yourselves.



The North Manchester Report

North Manchester consists of Ancoats, Cheetham & Cheetham Hill, Crumpsall, Blackley, Miles Platting, Newton Heath & Moston and in the main is mostly made up of Holt's houses, though Burtonwood (mostly all keg now), Wolves & Lees still feature. Also, a smattering of pub chains and a Scottish & Newcastle house - in Blackley, the eatery **Three Arrows**, which usually has Boddies Bitter, Well's Bombardier & Greene King's Old Speckled Hen on.

By far the best house is the **Golden Lion** (Holt's) on Old Market St in the former Blackley village. Change of publican here - Bob Jazz has left to work in the brewery to be taken over by Petra. The pub remains popular for its top-notch bitter.

Arguably, in second place, is the community pub in **Charlestown** of the same name. A Lees house, in the last year has lost its real mild in favour of the smooth. This is a tendency that is getting more common in the Lees estate. It's a pity here, as it did sell and was in good form. The cask bitter is popular and on form on last visit, though, here too, the Smooth Bitter is available.

Near to the Golden Lion, there's another Holt's house, so close one can easily overlook it and a good pub and pleasant vault; known for it stuffed fox behind the bar (definitely not for the squeamish or devoted animal lover!) On Old Middleton Road, there's the former Wilson's **New White Lion**. Back in 2005 the pub was closed and boarded-up and looked like another one gone forever. Then the Shannon family took over and put in a lot of money in the pub and, for a time, 'tried' to serve real ale. Unfortunately, this was mainly of the undrinkable variety and it had gone back to keg on my last visit. But, at least the pub is there and hasn't looked better in years.

In Crumpsall, the **Old House at Home** on Bottomley Rise is still there and has been done up outside, due to a new private housing estate near-by. I believe the Webster's Yorkshire Bitter on handpull is still there in the vault. Nearby, The Lees **Imperial** went years ago as it just didn't get the right tenant in. The **Millstone** on Blackley New Road, now Wolves, and, of course, what was a decent pint of cask Burtonwood Bitter, has long gone.

On the down side (or is it?) the **Clough** in Higher Blackley by the high rise flats has been bulldozed. The **Pikefold** (Ex-Bass) and forever keg is in the process of being turned into a day nursery. I hear the **Parkview** has re-opened again, as it was up for offers, so there's always a chance of a real ale. In Crab Village, Blackley, The **Pleasant** (Robbies) hangs on, as does the **Flying Horse**, where I hear rumours of Grey's Bitter on handpull. I get there and it's not on, as is the norm. Last time the bank of handpumps had vanished. But further up, the **Duke of Wellington** is doing well as an estate pub.

In Cheetham Hill, awhile ago a pub re-opened (the **Robin Hood**) after being an Iranian restaurant. Now it is the **New Robin Hood**. No real ale and has a handwritten sign declaring 'Shoplifters not allowed'. Over the road the **Empress** is long gone, after a short time as an Avebury Taverns pub. For an even shorter period it served a hazy pint of Lees bitter. On Hanlon St, the **Egerton** (Holt's) hangs on, but it's soon to be curtains to the **Crumpsall Hotel** (Holt's) on Cheetham Hill Rd, after a long tussle with the council by the brewery, to make way for a shopping development. Word has it that as part of the development, Cheetham Hill will get its own Wetherspoon! But it is going to take another 2-3 years, so don't hold your breath.



Remember the Castle

From Damien Smethurst, the Castle, Oldham Street:

I write with regard the most recent issue of Opening Times, more specifically the article on page 17 with regards the Northern Quarter area and the Smithfield Hotel. To quote the article:

*Some shock news surfaced recently, with a for sale notice appearing outside the **Smithfield** on Swan Street...What with the present state of the **Beer House** and the decline in real ales at the **Queens Arms**, Honey Street, the area seem to be losing it's footing in the cask ale stakes. Thankfully we still have the **Crown & Kettle** and the **Fringe**.*

I wish to take issue with this article for the following reason. Whilst, quite rightly in my opinion, bemoaning the loss of such institutions as the Beer House and Queens Arms on the real ale trail, you completely fail to mention two other stalwarts in the area, in the Marble Arch, not only a stalwart on the scene but also, of course, a pub that brews its own beer, and, of course, my own pub, the Castle Hotel on Oldham Street.

It is annoying enough when reading such an article to find that I have been completely ignored/forgotten, it is even worse to find this article right next to my advert in the magazine! If you know of any other Robinsons pubs anywhere selling a total of NINE Robinsons beers, please advise me as I believe I am the only one with such a range.

Also, as the only Robinsons outlet in the city centre, it would be nice to get a mention in a Stockport based publication.

Whilst we are all hoping that the Smithfield Hotel will continue to be a real ale pub when it is eventually sold, it should be noted that there is not quite the dearth of real ale in the area that your article would have people believe. If some sort of mention of this oversight could be made in the next issue it would be greatly appreciated.

(We do of course hold the Castle in high regard and no slight was intended – Ed)

Green Issues

From David Thornhill, Chair, Nottinghamshire Transport 2000:

Thanks to Curmudgeon in the January issue of OT for introducing the subject of 'beer miles'.

It is curious how seemingly disparate groups often have much in common and in Nottingham the local Transport 2000 group is working with Nottingham CAMRA on this issue of 'beer miles', as it could be a very useful campaigning tool.

Alas Curmudgeon does seem to get somewhat confused towards the end of his piece however, although asking the difficult questions is important. Allow me to respond.

"... all beer festivals predominantly feature beers from no more than 20 or 30 miles around." To this question you can couple the question of is drinking a guest beer from two hundred miles away ethical?

I do not see this as a problem. Nobody is suggesting that we stop eating bananas because they do not grow in Salford! There will always be a place for food/drink that is well-travelled. However, I would suggest Tesco or whoever offers a CHOICE of, say, apples, with a wide selection of British grown apples available alongside those from South Africa. It

is no different with beer and one of the joys of beer is the variety, but give the consumer a choice.

"... supporting brewing foreign brands under licence in UK rather than trucking the authentic product halfway across Europe."

I worry Curmudgeon is a secret Stella drinker! Within the context of 'beer miles' I'm not sure this is a valid question. How many drinkers know where their beer is brewed and I suspect many believe their Stella is hand crafted in Belgium. They are being conned. CAMRA should be campaigning vigorously against this deceit of marketing 'brands' backed by multi-million pound advertising budgets.

Drinkers need to be better informed about the origins and authenticity of their pint of beer so they can make informed choices and it is important that pubs offer 'choice'. For every Stella drinker that is prompted to question what he is drinking and is directed towards a locally brewed real ale then CAMRA really is getting somewhere.

With the current media interest in Climate Change, never has there been a better time for CAMRA to use 'beer miles' to support their local breweries and to question the dominance of the mega-corporations. Yes, there will be some difficult questions along the way, but this campaign could work!

Give Odder A Chance

From R Moyle, Rusholme

The New Openings paragraph in Manchester Matters (*Opening Times*, Feb) should have appeared in the Curmudgeon column. Clearly your reporter barely stepped inside the "rather plain and interesting" front door having totally missed the larger first floor bar, full of uniquely interesting and electric paraphernalia as well as more cask ale served usually in prime nick.

Incidentally "the same people as Odd Bar, Thomas Street" is actually Cleo Farman, a young woman who seems to be setting new benchmarks in the Manchester bar scene, with her service standards and other initiatives. Come on, don't be sloppy, give Odder a proper coat of looking at!

(A further visit is clearly needed – Ed)

Beer Masters – A Real Ale Tasting Contest

Ever tried to impress your mates by your beer tasting skills in a premier pub or at a CAMRA beer festival? Now is the chance for the real buff or wannabe to put this to the ultimate test. 'Beer Masters' is a real ale tasting knockout competition under the flag of CAMRA Greater Manchester Region and hosted at CAMRA Oldham Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham on Sat 31 March, 12.30 for a 1pm start. There'll be 3 knockout rounds where entrants will fill in a beer tasting sheet to score on flavour, finish, body and aroma. Identify the temperature, clarity, head, carbonation, and mouth feel and beer style. Then come up with your own tasting note giving colour, flavour, aftertaste, and aroma and commenting on character and/or whether the beer is distinctive, including any negative flavours. Contestants need to book in advance, incentives in this prestige event is that each who enter will get a FREE half of beer in a clean glass, water biscuits will be provided to clean the palate, a CAMRA plaque to the winner and prizes.

The object is to impress a panel of expert judges on your beer tasting skills. On the panel will be brewers to include from Bazens', Hyde's, Marble and Phoenix breweries with a CAMRA Chair. Contestants have to be prepared to drink most beer colours and styles for a chance to get into the final round when each of the last four will, in turn, be interviewed by the panel about the beer being tasted. The one who impresses the most earns the title of CAMRA Greater Manchester Region's 1st Beer Master 2007! Event will finish around 3pm. Open to all who book. Contact: Dave Hallows (Event Organiser) Email: davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 07983944992 Write to: 42, Broomfield Drive, Cheetham Hill, Manchester M8 9EE



Not so much news for you this month – while there's been quite a lot going on in Manchester, the Stockport pub scene has been fairly quiet. Apologies to the **Three Shires** – I planned to pay a special visit for this issue and have failed. Definitely next time!

New Faces at Crown, Heaton Mersey

New licensees have taken on the **Crown** (Robinsons), Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey. Mike and Tracy Ashworth arrive from a four and a half year stint at the Royal Oak in Mellor (the one with the Thai restaurant), where they achieved everything they had set out to do, including runner-up at last year's Robinson's Bar and Cellar competition. They needed a bigger challenge, and a bigger pub.

Changes have already taken place and cellar improvements have been made to immediate good effect. Hatters Mild is back on the bar after a long absence, this joins Unicorn and will shortly be accompanied by one of the seasonal beers, or Wards, or OB Bitter, to give folk an ample choice. Work on replacing the bar with one of a more traditional style, and on re-vamping the room is scheduled to begin in April. This should give the place a more 'pubby feel'.

Food is being continued, with the current trad-cum-bistro menu being pared-down to include more traditional pub-grub favourites - fish and chips, curries, braised steak, lasagne, steaks, and so on. Prices for mains are a very reasonable £6.95 and upwards. Food times are 12 - 2.30; 6 - 9 Tue to Sat, and 12 - 6 on Sundays. The pub hours are 12 - 11 Sun - Thu; 12 - 12 Fri and Sat. Give the Crown a go, it's a place on the up. Even the locals are praising the beer quality.

More Changes

There are changes afoot at the **Kings Head**, Tiviot Date where licensee Brian Morris left suddenly in mid-February. There were new people in as this was written and although no real ale was available at the time, I am given to understand that it will be back.

In North Reddish, the **Railway** has now bitten the dust after several years in the twilight zone. It is to be converted into flats, I am told.



Residential conversion also awaits the former **Windsor Castle** in Edgeley. The long-closed pub has been bought by Nevins Properties and is currently fenced off awaiting its fate. Nearby, the former **Blue Bell** remains derelict and is becoming an increasing eyesore.

Staying in Edgeley, **Ye Olde Vic** is currently undergoing a gentle refurbishment. The seats have been reupholstered and the pub is being redecorated. The bric-a-brac remains at this characterful pub.

THE SPORTSMAN

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Cask Marque Award

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| 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 | Bamford Arms, Stockport |
| The Waterhouse, Manchester | Pack Horse, Hayfield |
| All Bar One, Manchester | Farmers Arms, Stockport |
| Rising Sun, Manchester | Four Heaton, 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 |
| Loves Arms, Denton | Horse & Farrier, Gatley |
| Red Lion, Denton | Governor's House, Cheadle Hlme |
| 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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Brewery NEWS...

Not much room this month – apologies to those breweries we don't feature. Normal service will be resumed in April.

Family Favourites

Last month **Robinson's** launched the first of their revamped range of seasonal beers. Dark Horse 'bitter' is in fact a delicious, smooth roasty stout. Early reports are that it has, justifiably, been very well received and quite rightly so. Producing a beer like this was something of a leap in the dark (no pun intended) for Robbies and they are to be congratulated for taking the plunge. Dark Horse will be available until the end of April so there's plenty of time to enjoy it.

Hydes craft ale for March and April is Vertigo (4.2% ABV), an amber beer brewed with Challenger hops and crystal malt. Look out for this in local Hydes houses.

Cain's beer for March is Creamy Stout (4.1% ABV), described as a smooth and rich beer brewed with chocolate malt. Should be available in the Gothic in Gatley.

Micro Magic

Last month we mentioned the forthcoming **Hornbeam Brewery** and we have now had the chance to catch up with the man behind it.

Kevin Rothwell is a supply teacher with a long-standing interest in home brewing, so much so that he has in fact converted the dining room at his Romiley home into a small brewery! He explains that Mrs Rothwell is very understanding.

Plans for the Hornbeam Brewery have been formulating since May last year and are about to come to fruition. Most of the brewing kit has already been sourced (only a hot liquor tank needs to be bought) and Kevin is currently looking round for premises. It is likely that he will be taking an industrial unit in Hyde, and so will become the town's first commercial brewery since the old Creese's Brewery closed in 1929.

One beer, Winterlong, has already been brewed at 3 Rivers (where Mike Hitchen has given invaluable advice and assistance) and this appeared last month at local festivals and in the Crown, Heaton Lane. More beers will appear when the brewery launches – and the plan is to be brewing by the beginning of May. Current future beers include a Pale Ale at 3.8-3.9% ABV and 'Hop Hornbeam' at 4%.

We asked Kevin how he came by the brewery name and he explained that the hornbeam has a long association with brewing and anyway, he liked the name!

This is an exciting new venture – look out for future updates in OT.

A quick canter round some of our other micros now...

Bazens' - the 'Salford Series' is shaping up nicely, The third brew in the series, Sparked Out, will be out this month and marks the former Agecroft Power Station that closed on 31 March 1993.

Marble are producing their Stout this month, and is a very tasty brew, indeed (and is in fact Port Stout minus the port). We hear a 6% version of the Ginger Marble will be produced for bottling.

3 Rivers – another stout for you, this one being Suitably Irish, and also look out for Bunny Boiler (4.5% ABV) the 'maiden brew' from Andrew.

Phoenix – we mentioned last month the range of specials produced by Phoenix for the National Winter Ales Festival. Here they are – did you get them all? Owt New (4%), Allus On (4.3%), Owt Ont Gantry (4.7%), Gizza Nutha (5%), Summat Sup (4.4%), Ay Up Chuck (4.2%), Gone Downt Pan (4.4%), What Sup (4.4%), Spike's Got Lost (4.3%) and Monkey Town Wild (6%). The few we tried were very good indeed – as you would expect from this accomplished brewery.

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A brief trip to the little visited **Tintwistle Liberal Club** in Tintwistle on the A628, as you approach the Woodhead Pass, recently found me spending the entire evening there, drinking Jennings Cumberland Ale which was in very good condition. Also a regular on the bar is Banks's Original - a good show for such a little club. It was good to see such a dedication to cask ale (note, the steward of twelve years, John Seddon, formerly kept the Good Beer Guide listed, at the time, Duke of York in Romiley).

The **Old Oak**, just a few yards away in the village, has re-opened but alas without any real ale present.

Down the road in Hadfield, the **Victoria** on Brosscroft, only now has Thwaites Bitter on cask and the nearby **New Lamp** continues to have three beers on cask, often including Wells & Youngs Bombardier and Greene King Abbott.

Up the road in Padfield, the **Peels Arms** rarely gets the praise it deserves. As well as having excellent food, they have three cask ales on sale, Theakstons Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and a regularly changing guest beer which is usually a reasonably interesting choice.

Greene King IPA is the cask beer at the **Marple Tavern** in Marple and over in Hyde, the **Church** on Market Street, once a prominent Boddingtons pub, has now been re-designed as an Irish bar.

In Little Hayfield, the **Lantern Pike** continues to sell Howard Town beers on one handpump, alongside Taylor's Landlord, Black Sheep Bitter and Old Peculier though the latter has been on sale just seasonally, we believe.

At the **Royal** in Hayfield village, Howard Town seem to have taken over a permanent pump with often two Hydres beers and three guest beers.

Over in Furness Vale, the **Soldier Dick** now advertises on High Peak Radio regularly that they have a different guest beer every week alongside the usual cask ales.

Finally at the **Old General** in Dukinfield, Shaws have a beer named Blue Moon on the bar regularly, to suit the Man City fans who use the pub.

I am still trying to get a slot on a Thursday evening to visit the **Bike and Hound** near Hyde bus station to check out the weekly Thursday evening topless barmaid but have still not quite made it due to other commitments. Real ale is still available here I believe. Who is going to volunteer to report back to me for next month?

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!



Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of doings in the Peak District

Twenty-ish years ago when Boddington's was still a family brewer, (just, with the likes of Whitbread already having a significant shareholding) the Company took the step of putting out distribution to a contractor. At that time it was TNT, which was then part of the Rupert Murdoch empire, if my memory serves. At the time there was a story that TNT draymen could not handle hogsheads of bitter and so Boddington's stopped sending out bitter in 54 gallon barrels. These days TNT belongs, I gather to the Dutch Post Office. I know not whether the firm is still involved in beer distribution.

However, who delivers your beer? is a good question. In the old days breweries owned their own drays, which were clearly badged, and were part of the brewing industry tradition. These days the dray may well be owned by a logistics company, logistics being the buzz word for transport and delivery.

A recent dray outside the **Jodrell Arms** in Whaley Bridge was badged Kühne & Nagel, so presumably Scottish & Newcastle contracts out distribution to this German sounding company. Perhaps more interesting is the use of EXEL by some companies. EXEL is now owned by DHL, which is itself a subsidiary of Deutsche Post, the German Post Office! Perhaps licensees receiving their beer via EXEL should check their barrels for German postage stamps.

In early December I called in the recently re-opened **Rams Head** in Disley. The décor was pleasing after a good refurbishment and refurnishing. Service was commendably courteous and attentive, signs of good staff training, and the food was good. The one real ale was Timothy Taylor's Landlord which was in decent form, though its price at £2.60 a pint, and that presumably before any New Year increase, was a bit OTT for TTL. Ah well we can't have everything.

A recent freebie glossy magazine is issue no.1, Spring 2007 of Buxton Lifestyle. Quality wise it reminds me of Cheshire Life, Derbyshire Life etc., though it does not have the quantity. Amongst the adverts for houses, furniture and so on were three articles of note. The **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale is featured. A relatively new licensee, Maz Shaw has enhanced the pub's reputation as a dining establishment. Her predecessor had made some efforts to resurrect real ale after many years of the pub being keg only, but without success. However, real ales have gone from strength to strength since Maz and her Bar/Cellar manager Dominic Hickman took over. When I called, Black Sheep Bitter, Draught Bass, Taylor's Landlord and Everard's Tiger were available. The Landlord was really good. The Soldier Dick is Cask Marque accredited. A small beer festival was held last October and a repeat is planned for later this year. The Soldier Dick shows that with knowledgeable and enthusiastic management cask conditioned beer can be a success. This is a commendable real ale gain.

Goyt Wines gets an article in Buxton Lifestyle, including a mention of its place in CAMRA's Good Bottled Beer Guide.

A third article features the **Crewe and Harpur Arms** at Longnor, south of Buxton. Again food dominates the article but I was taken by a bit of history. In the mid 19th century Longnor was a thriving market town with 15 pubs. But its Market town status declined and today only 4 pubs remain. The phenomenon of the lost local is not just recent.

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“All Out War!” was the front page headline, followed by “CAMRA challenges Blair to end rip-off Britain’s short pint scandal.”

A new law to put an end to the country’s biggest consumer rip-off had been promised by Labour before the 1997 General Election. The Labour Party’s web site still stated “We will tighten legislation to ensure customers are protected from short measures, and get a full pint.” New research showed 89.4% of pints were less than 100% liquid, 27.7% fell short of the industry’s 95% guideline and pubs that already served 100% liquid pints charged 14p a pint less on average than pubs that did not.

There was surprising news from Joseph Holt – to cope with expected demand for its new range of seasonal beers, a brand new micro-brewery was being installed at its Empire Street site. The new plant had the flexibility for 10-barrel test brews as well as bigger production runs.

The Lowes Arms, Hyde Road, Denton, was to take part in that year’s Mild Challenge. Expansion and progress at the LAB micro-brewery was continuing steadily. Two fermenters had been bought from Blackpool Brewery, which would increase capacity to 10 barrels a week, and also help increase the range of beers brewed.

There was an unexpected headline to Curmudgeon’s column – “In Praise of Lager”. One of the most distinctive features of the National Winter Ales Festival was the extensive foreign beer bar, which according to the Beer Monster, offered probably the widest selection of authentic German lagers anywhere in the world. There was no doubt that the best pale lagers from Germany and the Czech Republic were genuine world classics, which makes it all the more disappointing how so much taste-free rubbish was produced vaguely in the same style. It was particularly regrettable that no version of a foreign beer brewed under licence in the UK came remotely close to matching the character of the original.

There had been a change of licensee at the famous Circus Tavern on Portland Street, where George Archondogeorge had taken over from Steve Campbell at the end of January. Some changes were underway – the entire interior had been redecorated to the same colour scheme as the original. Handpumped Tetley Bitter would remain.

It had been reported that the Temple of Convenience, just off Oxford Street, was closed, apparently for good. In fact it had re-opened with the slightly shorter name of the Temple. There was still no draught real ale, but it was there in the form of Chimay, Duvel and Kwak in the cold cabinet, together with Erdinger Weisse and other interesting bottles. There used to be another underground watering hole, just a few yards further along Oxford Street. This was Manchester’s notorious Long Bar, the wartime haunt of servicemen and “ladies of the night” (or in common parlance a pick up joint). It was in the basement of the Gaumont cinema, now long-demolished, the site presently being occupied by a Cantonese restaurant and a multi-storey car park.



Divided We Fall

Before Christmas, the major supermarket chains were widely criticised for selling Stella Artois at a lower price than bottled water. If you look for discounts, it’s not difficult to buy lager to drink at home for a third of the price you would pay for the same brand in the pub. At the same time, many town centres are increasingly dominated by glitzy stand-up bars run by hard-nosed multiples who see profit to be made in peddling alcopops and shots to young people who know no better. Between these two trends, the rather more subtle charms of the traditional pub are increasingly being squeezed. Something must be done, the cry goes up.

But anyone concerned about the long-term health of the pub needs to be very careful before supporting any measures that aim to give it an advantage over other parts of the alcohol business. To most legislators, “the drinks trade” is a monolithic entity, and they draw no distinction between nice independent pubs and nasty supermarkets and multiples. In particular, there would be a strong risk that any rise in alcohol taxes above the rate of inflation would damage pubs by putting prices up even higher and encouraging people to drink at home. Imposing minimum pricing schemes could well affect Holts and Sam Smiths pubs. And putting new obstacles in the planning process could hit all kinds of outlets equally. Indeed, the traditional pub sector is, overall, less robust than its competitors and could end up suffering more from measures intended to help it.

Anti-drink campaigners would be laughing into their sarsaparilla at the sight of various sections of the alcohol industry at loggerheads with each other. Throughout history, “divide and rule” has often proved to be a highly effective strategy.

Keep Your Cool

You often read complaints in these columns about real ale being served too cold, but rarely do you hear of it being too warm. Yet my experience is totally the opposite. Now I think I have a good idea of a natural cellar temperature and I don’t believe I like my beer colder than that, but all too often I go into a pub and find myself presented with a pint that is frankly lukewarm. Perhaps I tend to visit pubs, particularly unfamiliar ones, more often at lunchtimes or early evenings when trade is likely to be slack. But in my experience tepid real ale is an all too common problem.

There are obvious steps that a lot more pubs could do to rectify this, most importantly installing line coolers so beer doesn’t warm up if left in the pipes for half an hour, and ensuring that they don’t stock more beers than they can turn over quickly enough. If you go in a pub and there are more handpumps than customers, you just know you’re probably going to get a warm ‘un. But most importantly pubs need to abandon the old-fashioned attitude that the beer will be fine once it’s been pulled through a bit, and the early doors customers will just have to suffer. Nowadays, when real ale is often over £2 a pint, there really is no excuse for not serving every single pint at the right temperature.



*Sue & Graham
welcome you*

8 Guest Beers

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Beers for the Season SPRING



This, the second in our series reviving the tradition of focussing on beers for each season of the year, brings us to Spring.

The most famous spring-time beers hail from Bavaria. Most well known of the Bavarian Spring beers is the Paulaner 'Salvator' Double Bock Bier (7.5%: Double Bock translates, roughly, as very strong). A wide variety of Bock (strong) and Double Bock beers are brewed across Europe for the spring: these are often referred to as Mai-Bock's (May-Beers), or in the Netherlands 'Lente Bok' (Lent beers, again alluding to early Christian origins). Indeed Amsterdam hosts an annual Meibok Festival featuring many seasonal specialities from Dutch and Belgian brewers along with one or two German beers thrown in for good measure!

In the UK there is little or no history of Spring beers although many brewers now produce a whole range of specials throughout the year.

In compiling our selection we have focussed on beers to match the variable weather – there are some stronger, warming brews but also some paler, hoppier beers, firmer and fuller-bodied than their summer counterparts but at the same time acknowledging that warmer days are on the way. As before, the Belgian entrants should be obtainable from the **Belgian Belly** in Chorlton.



Bazens' Blue Bullet (4.5% ABV). This is a light, pale and spicy ale brewed using Green Bullet hops from New Zealand. Fruity and refreshing, it's perfect for a balmy Spring day and is popular with lager and beer drinkers alike



Pictish Dolmen (4% ABV). The Pictish Brewery in Rochdale specialises in pale and very hoppy ales. This is an amber coloured ale with a delicate hop aroma, biscuity malt flavours and a lingering bitter finish. Available during March.

Seven Beers To Try This Spring



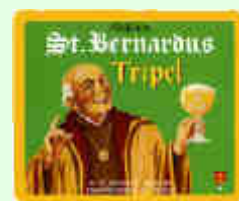
Abbeydale Brimstone (3.9% ABV). Like Pictish beers, those from Abbeydale are usually pale and hoppy with a notably clean finish. This is a well-balanced russet coloured beer with a hoppy character, good bitterness and a rounded finish.



De Dolle Brouwers Boskeun (8% ABV). Another classic from Esen, Flanders. Brewed to a differing recipe each year this is a delicious, heady beer. This Easter beer has Mauritian cane sugar and Mexican honey in the mash.



Brasserie Fantome Printemps (8% ABV). Brewer Dany Prignon is well known for using unusual ingredients in his beers. This one includes daffodils in the recipe! Light, fruity and champagne-like sold in 75cl bottles only.



Sint Bernardus Tripel (7.5% ABV). This award-winning Flemish brewery has reinvented itself in recent years with a new range of beers. This is a blonde, mellow-bitter bottled-conditioned beer that is often superb.



Beartown Black Bear (5% ABV). A dark ruby coloured, strong mild ale. Subtle roast and malt flavours fill the taste, with a mellow sweetish finish. Ideal for those cool Spring nights and a tremendous beer for mild drinkers.

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Seasonal**

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2007 We're in it!



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: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley.
Guest Speaker: Oliver Robinson from Robinson's Brewery.
Starts 8.00pm

Friday 16th – Chorlton-on-Medlock and University Stagger: Varsity, Oxford Rd 7.30pm; Bowling Green, Grafton St 8.30pm

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Griffin, Heaton Mersey. From 8.00pm

Thursday 29th – Social: Rampant Lion, Anson Rd, Rusholme (8.30) and then Albert, Walmer St (9pm)

Thursday 12th April – Branch AGM: Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8pm. All members please try and attend.

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: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. 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 8th – City Centre Survey: Mr Thomas's Chop House 8pm; Corbieres 8.45pm; then to Ape & Apple

Thursday 22nd – Sale Moor Survey: Carter Arms 8pm; Legh Arms 9pm (both Northenden Rd).

Thursday 5th April – Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. 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 – Campaigning meeting, mail-out session and talk on Punch Taverns. Stag's Head, Great Warford. Starts 8pm

Monday 2nd April – Wilmslow Pub Crawl. King William 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 14th – Good Beer Guide Award presentation: White Swan, Swinton, 8pm

Wednesday 21st – Branch Meeting & AGM: New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford. Starts 8pm

Wednesday 28th – Boothstown Survey: Greyhound 8pm, Royal Oak 9pm

Wednesday 4th April – Shaws Brewery Visit. £3 per head. Booking essential.

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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Quite a lot of news for you this month and not much room so some may be held over.

First some potential good news - the **Lord Nelson** on Hyde Road has been bought from private owners by Scottish & Newcastle. It's scheduled for a major 6-8 week refurbishment sometime in May, and after it reopens - the rumour is that real ale will feature. Currently the pub seems to be aimed at the younger market, so a change in target audience may also be on the cards.

More good news - Mitchell & Butlers do seem to be making a positive direction on the ale front. In their Ember Inns chain (including the **Woodstock** on Barlow Moor Road, Didsbury) they are running a "Cask Fresh" promotion that has seen the London Pride & Deuchars IPA replaced with all together more interesting brews. There's a monthly booklet out on all the tables listing the beers available during that month and while some are not that uncommon round here there are rarer ones (Woodstock had Mordue Geordie Pride recently). Reports so far indicate that the beers are selling well.

Andrew Cash, licensee of the **Bank**, Mosley Street, Manchester City Centre, tells me that a six-week beer festival started at the pub from Monday February 19th. This is an initiative from owner's Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) to pubs that demonstrate they can sell good quality ale and in quantity. So, on top of the standard Boddies there will be four to six differing beers on each week for the duration of the event. Andrew also told me that he hopes to get a space on the bar-back dedicated to advertising the current cask ale range. Again reports to date have been very positive. M&B are to be congratulated for these initiatives.



I also managed to chat to Keith Wylam at the **Bulls Head**, London Road, City Centre. This attractive pub is going great guns on the beer front with five beers regularly available – Marston's Pedigree and Jennings Cumberland Ale are permanent and these are supplemented by three guests from the Marston's Beer Co list, usually picked to provide a dark, an amber and a golden beer. There will be a beer festival from 23 to 26 March featuring eight additional beers including the likes of Elgood's Old Wag, Titanic Anchor and two from Springhead. One for the diary, I think.

There is also a beer festival at the **New Oxford** (Bexley Square, Salford) from 16-18 March, this one featuring 15 new beers including some rare Irish brews. The last festival at the New Oxford was a tremendous success and this will also be a "must attend" event.

And now the bad news. **Bar Centro** (Tib Street, City Centre) has to all intents and purpose dumped real ale. The handpumps were disused when I called. When I enquired what the problem was I was told that they need to make some alterations to the cellar to get it back up and running. When I asked when it would be done, I was told that there was no date and real ale would not be available "indefinitely". So there you go.

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