

SEPTEMBER 2007



# Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

NUMBER 277

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

## Crowds Flock to Earls Court



THE BEST PUBS IN BRITAIN

### GOOD BEER GUIDE 2008



The 30th Anniversary of the Great British Beer Festival was a roaring success, with tens of thousands of drinkers attending Earls Court. The festival kicked off on Tuesday August 7th with CAMRA Chairman Paula Waters releasing 1,000 balloons into the skies of London. Later that day the Champion Beer of Britain 2007 was announced to be Hobson's Mild from Hobson's Brewery in Shropshire (our inset photo above shows the lucky brewers with their award). There were, sadly, thin pickings for North West brewers with the sole awards going to the George Wright Brewery of Rainford, gaining a Silver in the Best Bitter class for Pipedream (4.3%) and Liverpool's Wapping Brewery winning a Bronze in the Bottle Conditioned Beer class for Baltic Gold.

CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "What a great week for real ale, the brewers, and for the thousands of people who came down to enjoy and support Britain's best beer. The massive success of the Great British Beer Festival over 30 years is testament to the dedication and hard work of the hundreds of volunteers who make this event possible."

The 2008 edition of CAMRA's flagship publication, the Good Beer Guide, is launched on 12 September. This is the 35th edition of what has become the country's premier guide to good pubs and good beer, and we will be running a special feature next month. The cover price is £14.99 but CAMRA members can pick up a copy for just £9.50 at Branch Meetings in September, October and November.

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*Traditional Beers for Modern Tastes*



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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



**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for September is the Thatched House on Churchgate, Stockport.**

Over the years the pub has had numerous owners, mainly Wilson's and the ill-fated Vaux Breweries, and various incarnations but in recent years has settled down in its role as Stockport's premier rock pub. Not perhaps the clichéd 'CAMRA pub' to the casual observer but not only does the pub excel on the music front it has in recent years become increasingly impressive with its range of beer and cider.

The pub has always been a cask ale outlet but it was with the arrival of licensee Lisa Crouch and her partner Alex Hammond in April 2004 that really signalled a major improvement.

Since then there have been steady additions to the beer range, including an enhanced range of over 25 bottled beers (some bottle conditioned but all interesting)

The regular beers are Boddingtons Bitter and Black Sheep Bitter and these are accompanied by an ever-changing range of guest beers sourced from the surprisingly extensive Punch Taverns list. Quality is such that the pub has become a regular in the national Good Beer Guide. Not only that but Lisa is a cider and perry fan and so, alongside regular Weston's Old Rosie, you will often find guest ciders and perries (sometimes one of each) supplied by John Reek's Merrylegs Cider, a name well-known to cider fans.

It would be easy to concentrate on the music side of things here and just offer a couple of bog standard national beers, cask or otherwise. To offer such a wide range of interesting drinks as well as maintaining a vibrant music policy shows real commitment (as well as being hard work!).

It was for this commitment that Lisa and Alex gained their first Pub of the Month award just two years ago. They are still going strong and it is in recognition of this continued hard work that a second award is being presented.

The presentation night is Thursday 27th September from 8.00pm. **JC**

**Found the pub.  
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**Septembury Festival – New Venue**

Bury Round Table's Beer Festival is a fantastic social event now in its second year.

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The new venue is Bury Sports Club on Radcliffe Road, Bury (turn right off Manchester Road at the crossroads immediately pass Holy Cross College). Bus 135 will take you there. The festival is open on Friday 14th (5-11) and Saturday 15th – noon-11). There's a website at [www.bury109.com](http://www.bury109.com).

# OT – COMMENT...

## Spinning the Statistics

The old adage that there are “lies, damned lies and statistics” is never truer than when the national press covers problems caused by so-called “binge drinking”.

They were at it again early last month, displaying a scandalous disregard for the facts, preferring instead shock horror stories and headlines.

Raging headlines resulted from the findings at just one London hospital which reported a rise in alcohol-fuelled violence late at night. Lost in the uproar that followed were the words of one senior London police officer who said it was wrong to make a case on the findings from one hospital that was not necessarily typical of even the rest of London let alone the rest of the country. Indeed as Government ministers later made clear, these results have **not** been reflected elsewhere.

The press also went to town on crime figures it claimed showed alcohol-fuelled crime figures rising in the first full year of relaxed licensing laws, with a particular jump in the hours after midnight. But the figures actually showed serious violent crimes, woundings, assaults and criminal damage cases between 6pm and 6am were up just 0.74 per cent. There had been a “surge” of 22 per cent in the number of such cases between 3am and 6am since pubs and clubs stayed open later, the papers claimed – but the actual number of cases was tiny, and had risen by fewer than five per police force per week. The average police station probably saw one extra case a fortnight.

**Surge? Hardly a ripple in a beer glass.**

## 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:

<b>Stockport:</b>	0845 644 4301
<b>Manchester:</b>	0161 234 1555
<b>Salford:</b>	0161 925 1346
<b>Tameside:</b>	0161 342 8355
<b>Trafford:</b>	0161 912 2274
<b>Derbyshire:</b>	08456 058 058
<b>Cheshire:</b>	0845 11 32 500

**Copy Date for the October issue is Saturday 8th September**

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### Heald Green & Cheadle Hulme with Jim Flynn

A small group of us set out on a showery night in June for what was an historic stagger, the last one before the smoking ban came down and we took an interest in the arrangements for the change as we went.

We met in the new **Griffin** following its multi million pound refurbishment where despite this level of investment customers were smoking away seemingly oblivious to the revolution which was about to occur. The outside veranda presumably built for the task ahead was empty but there was hardly a seat left in the lounge or vault even at this relatively early point in the evening. The Griffin has never been an architectural gem but Holts have certainly made a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and with a significant part of the pub turned into a restaurant area there is an obvious attempt to widen its appeal. Most of us decided to try the seasonal beer from Holts, 'Nuts and Holts' and found it in good condition albeit a little thin. A minority tried the Mild and considered it well above average but the Bitter was not tasted this time.



Having left the Griffin we turn off our main course to go down Wilmslow Road to an even more recently refurbished pub and real ale gain, the **Cheadle Royal**. This is in the leisure complex next to Cheadle Royal and like the Travel Inn next door it is built of that very pale pink breeze block so loved by designers of such modern complexes. Having said that following the refurb it does seem a step up from similar establishments (including the **Micker Brook** on Councillor Lane, which we give a miss later on the stagger). While this is largely an eatery there is plenty of space inside for those who just want to come for a drink. We tried both the Boddies and the Greene King Abbott Ale and found both to be in pretty good condition.

Back on our main track down Turves Road we proceeded to the **Ryecroft Arms** which despite the absence of any signage from the brewery is a Hydes' house. It could have been a bad night but it was comparatively empty compared with other pubs and I wondered out loud whether it had attained the success expected of it by Hydes'. We sat outside alone and tried the Original which was in reasonable condition and the Hydes seasonal, 'Golden Brown' which was of a similar standard, although again like its Holts counterpart a little thin. A number of us wanted to try the Owd Oak but despite the pump clip facing us we were told it wasn't on.

Into Cheadle Hulme proper now and again we deviate off the straight and narrow by going down Cheadle Road to the **Kenilworth** which used to be a John Barrass pub but now according to the genial licensee is a leased pub outside the chain. The pub has an interesting plaque outside giving a potted history of Cheadle Hulme while inside the place is clearly has a focus on the younger end of the market without being a 'kiddies' pub. It is large and open plan with a number of TVs competing with the music and to the rear a garden where presumably the smokers will retire to in due course. We stayed inside and had the beer of the night, Adams Broadside, and the Tetley Bitter which received more mixed reviews.

Next stop was the **March Hare** off Ladybridge Road. Next to a brook, this used to be called the Old Mill and although built in the last couple of decades or so it could easily be mistaken for a former mill. Since it has become part of the Vintage Inns chain and changed its name it has developed into much more of a dining pub and seems to have lost something in atmosphere as

a result. There was only one beer available, Bass, which was in reasonable nick although a little thin. We spent our time inside lamenting the decline of a once great beer.

Further down Ladybridge Lane at the junction with Councillor Lane is the **Greyhound**, an open plan pub with low ceilings and an emphasis on television sports. We grabbed our Tetley Bitters and went to sit near the pool tables, mainly to avoid the disco at the other end of the pub. Looking around one gets the sense that the place perhaps needs more investment as it is beginning to have a tired feeling about it. Unfortunately the beer was even more that way inclined with the worst reaction from our group all night.

Over the crossroads on Adswold Road was the second Hydes' pub of the night, the **Cross Keys**. Well appointed with a lounge, a vault and a bowling green to the rear, which in the gloom of the night did not seem to be in regular use. If this is the case it is sad to see a community resource such as this go to waste.



We went in the vault again mainly to avoid the karaoke (we are beginning to sound like old fogies but I always think that karaoke is one those activities you either participate in or give a wide berth to). Before catching our late buses home we tried both the Mild and the Bitter and found both to be of more than acceptable quality.

Overall a stagger which can be perhaps commended for the general variety of beer available but which was lacking at times on the quality front.

### Really Nice Beer at Royal Hotel

Dave Ball has sold his "Really Nice Beer Company" to David Ash, owner of the Royal Hotel in Hayfield, and two of his colleagues. More on this next time but in the meantime look out for the Royal's Beer Festival over the first weekend in October. Up to 40 beers will be available at any one time including milds, stouts and porters, along with real cider and perry. One for the diary we think.

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## Priced Out

A recent report by a Conservative Party study group recommended a 7p a pint tax increase on beer (which would probably end up as at least 20p at the bar) with the proceeds going to fund treatment programmes for problem drinkers. Something tells me that is unlikely to be a vote-winner.

Obviously basic economics teaches us that if you increase the price of alcohol it will tend to reduce overall consumption. However, that reduction wouldn't be distributed evenly across the board. Budget-conscious drinkers such as pensioners may feel forced to cut down, and those for whom a drink is an occasional treat may decide it is no longer worth it. On the other hand, those with a genuine drink problem are likely to scrimp on other expenses, while many of those causing trouble in town centres at weekends are young people with a high disposable income who will scarcely notice the difference. Higher prices will also encourage more people to shun the controlled, socialised environment of the pub in favour of drinking cheaper booze from the supermarket at home. Raising prices may cut average alcohol consumption, but it won't necessarily cut alcohol problems.

The UK already has some of the highest alcohol taxation in Europe and is by no means at the top of the consumption league. Countries with lower taxation often seem to deal with alcohol in a more civilised manner. This suggests that the causes of the problems people complain about lie much more in our general social attitudes to drinking. Matters are being made worse not so much by low prices as by the current tendency towards the demonisation of alcohol, which deters the regular, moderate drinking that is the key to keeping the "demon drink" in its place, but ironically encourages many to adopt an "all or nothing" approach.

## When is a Pub not a Pub?

Award-winning pub company Brunning & Price are bringing their estate much closer to Manchester with the acquisition of Sutton Hall near Macclesfield which they are currently in the process of refurbishing.

From time to time pubs owned by B&P have been featured in "Opening Times", and they deserve praise for their sensitive renovations, their promotion of real ales from local micro-breweries and the extensive use of fresh local ingredients on their menus. But it has to be said that the ambience of their establishments is basically that of an upmarket rustic restaurant, rather than the traditional pub whose primary purpose was for people to gather and socialise over a drink or two. Would you really expect a pub to offer a menu including "fennel pesto" and "sweet basil and ginger dressing" and featuring main courses around £15?

Obviously pubs have to tailor what they offer to the people who are likely to visit them, and a Brunning & Price house is never going to be the place for the working man to go for a bacon buttie and a few games of darts and doms. But there must come a point when the relentless drive to take pubs upmarket and concentrate more and more on dining means that an establishment can no longer in any meaningful sense be regarded as a pub as it used to be understood.

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

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2002

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A passion to keep their local pub alive and thriving has triggered a change of career for two men from Furness Vale who have taken over as tenants of the **Crossings**. Peter Rothwell and David Ridgers have lived in the village for the past seven years and when they heard that the previous tenant had decided to move on they opted to take on the pub themselves.

Peter explained: "This is a proper village pub and the centre of our community, and that's the way want to keep it. We think that the best people to do that are those who care and have a real interest in the way that it's run, which is why we chose to take it on."



Both Peter and David have come from a background as NHS nursing managers and have had the full support of their fellow locals since moving into the Robinson's house.

"Initially we closed the doors for three days to give us time to put our personal mark on the pub. During that time friends, neighbours and customers came in to help us decorate, which demonstrates what a tight-knit community Furness Vale is and how important the village pub is to us all," said Peter.

"Getting the quality right is very important both to us and the business. That is why we have introduced new seasonal beers to give our customers a wider and more varied choice and we will be cooking the food ourselves."

### More News from the Area

**The White Lion** in Disley, on the A6, going towards New Mills, has re-introduced real ale, with Black Sheep, Old Speckled Hen and Taylors Landlord the beers offered.

News from the **George** in Buxton. The June Beer Festival was a sell out, with an international fiddle convention being held also in the pub over the June weekend. Also in June, the beer festival at the **Boundary** was going well when I visited on the Thursday and Friday, though it had next to no publicity, with very few CAMRA members aware of it, and no advertisement in Opening Times.

In Chapel-en-le-Frith, I visited the **Memorial** (formerly the Memorial Club) over the May Bank Holiday, for their first beer festival. It had been closed for 18 months until April and has been sold privately and re-opened as a pub. Jackie and her daughter Natalie are managers and have introduced three real ales at all times on the bar. It opens 12-12 each and every day, with the extensive food menu available from 12-9pm. A separate restaurant away from the bar, welcomes children sharing meals and the owners are currently working on the beer garden, with a separate lean-to for smokers. All in all, a plus for Chapel, with live music on Friday and Saturday evenings. For the beer festival, there were 21 beers available in addition to those on the bar and things were going well on my visit. We wish them well.

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Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of news from the Peak

**D**uring a recent visit to the Lake District I picked up a copy of *Furness Inn-Quirer*, the quarterly newsletter of the Furness Branch of CAMRA, covering the area around Barrow and a chunk of South Lakes. The main theme of the editorial bemoaned the lack of choice of beer in pubs owned by the big pub companies. Both Punch and Enterprise do have quite long beer lists, and some of the beers are interesting and unusual. The trouble is the pubcos slap on a huge add-on to licensees, which in turn has to be passed on to customers at the bar. I heard a story of a of an Enterprise licensee buying a firkin of a Howard Town Beer, through the pubco, and being charged £94 (presumably + VAT). The cask would have cost £48 +VAT direct from the Brewery.

Because of the add-on for unusual beers many licensees are reluctant to try what could be termed guest beers, simply on price grounds, concerned that their customers might not stump up the extra cash, with the result that beer is left and thrown away, at further expense. Some licensees are of course just reluctant to give something different a try. Even management at Robinson's brewery notes the reluctance of a majority of their licensees to try beers other than Hatters and Unicorn

However there is without doubt a demand for choice, and many licensees are keen to satisfy that demand. Those who take a realistic view of how many beers they can actually sell in good condition, do keep their customers happy.

In the Whaley Bridge area the Punch pubs tend to stick to what works. The **Goyt** successfully turns over four beers (see Peak Practice August 2007, though change Young's Special to Young's Bitter), whilst the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale has two out of four beers changing on a regular basis, and the **Navigation** in Whaley Bridge tends to have a guest beer at weekend in addition to the normal Black Sheep Bitter and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. Similar patterns emerge amongst the pubs in other estates and in the free trade, amongst the pubs where there are regularly changing guest beers. At the **Swan** in Kettleshulme, the **Navigation** in Buxworth, the **Dog & Partridge** in Bridgemont and the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge, many of the customers' favourite beers return at regular intervals, thus avoiding the problem highlighted by *Curmudgeon* in August OT, of too much ever changing choice.

Of course the big companies are responsible for inflated beer prices anyway, as highlighted by the various complaints in June/July Nottingham Drinker, which recently reached Whaley Bridge. Pubs in the Hardy & Hanson Kimberley estate have suffered significant price rises since the company was bought out by Greene King, a national brewer and supplier of national brands GK IPA and Abbot.

But of course what many customers really want is a choice of well kept, good quality beer, at sensible prices.

There are food bargains to be had in local pubs at the moment. Lunch for a Fiver is available at the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee from Monday to Thursday. Incidentally another treat here is the availability of hand pumped Thatcher's Heritage Cider, a very welcome gain in the area. The **Soldier Dick** has a main course mainly for £6.95 from 5p.m. to 7p.m. all week. A recent sampling of this offer found appetising meals and ample portions encouraging a return before too long.

And finally an update on imminent changes. The **Jodrell Arms** in Whaley Bridge has been closed since June after the departure of the previous licensee. Plans are afoot for a re-opening in early September, and I understand that real ale will be a feature. More information later. By the time you read this it is expected that the **Board Inn** at Whaley Bridge will have changed hands. Under the tenure of Martin Warham, the Board has been a Mild Challenge regular in the last three years, and both Hatters and Unicorn are invariably in decent form. Again more news later.



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### The Bunbury Arms, Stoak

The north-west corner of Cheshire between Chester and Ellesmere Port isn't exactly the most appealing part of the county, dominated by the Cheshire Oaks shopping centre, the Stanlow oil refinery and the M56/M53 junction complex. Yet tucked away amongst all this development is the surprisingly attractive hamlet of Stoak, with a cluster of old farmhouses and cottages situated close by the Shropshire Union canal. Fortunately it still retains its pub in the form of the Bunbury Arms.

It is a small, cottage-style pub in mellow red brick to match the character of the rest of the village, with a more modern extension in the same style added



on to one side. It is set back from the road behind an attractive beer garden, although as the weather when we visited was a mixture of sunshine and violent showers we were unable to take advantage of this.

There is still a small former vault in the original part of the pub, but the core is the modern extension, which is broken up by a number of pillars to provide a variety of intimate spaces. There is the usual mix of antique furniture and old photos on the walls that you come to expect in smart rural pubs. The emphasis is clearly on dining but this is still somewhere you would be happy to come just for a drink.

I remember the Bunbury Arms from the late 1970s as a Higson's house, then a rarity in that part of the world. Now I presume it belongs to some pub company although, as usual, the ownership is not made obvious. On our visit the beer range was Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Black Sheep Bitter and Weetwood Bitter and Blonde. It's always good to see pubs like this supporting local micro-breweries. We tried the two Weetwood beers which were both on excellent form. The Bunbury Arms is a regular in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide. For those who like that sort of thing, there was also an impressively long wine list with – commendably – virtually all the wines available by the glass, not just by the bottle.

There's a comprehensive printed menu backed up by a variety of specials on a blackboard. Snacks and sandwiches are around £5 with main courses starting at around £7.50 but going up in some cases into the £15 region. The pub was obviously very popular for meals. One minor criticism is that the staff were slow to remove specials from the blackboards once they had sold out, which caught us out over a couple of dishes.

We had Lasagne al Forno (£7.99), Double Pork Chop in Herefordshire Pear Cider (sic) Sauce (£10.39) and Thai King Prawn Curry (£10.99), all of which were excellent, with generous portions. Two of us could still find room for a sweet, with Lemon Curd Parfait (£4.39) and White Chocolate and Raspberry Tart (£3.99) matching the quality of the main courses.

In an area of Cheshire not overburdened with outstanding pubs, the Bunbury Arms stands out as somewhere with genuine character where that little bit of extra effort is made, and is well worth a visit for a meal. Stoak is signposted down a lane off the A5117 just west of M53 Junction 10, south of Ellesmere Port.



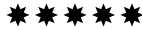


Opening Times archivist Phil Levison looks back...

**R**ailway is Regional Champion' was the main front page story. For the seventh consecutive year, the Regional Pub of the Year title for CAMRA in Greater Manchester had gone to a pub in the *Opening Times* area.

This time the award had gone to the pub in Avenue Street, Portwood, and it was a case of lightning striking twice, as the pub had also picked up the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year Award earlier in the year.

In fact, it had proved to be a double victory for pubs in the *Opening Times* area that year as the High Peak Pub of the Year, the Quiet Woman at Earl Sterndale had been voted the CAMRA East Midlands champion. So now the Railway and the Quiet Woman would go on to the "Super Regional" rounds of judging where, by chance, they would be in the same group as pubs in the West Midlands and North Wales.



**R**esults had been announced of what had been described as the biggest survey of UK pub beer prices. Whilst there were wide variations across UK regions, increases had generally been below the rate of inflation.

The results showed that the average price of a pint of real ale in a UK pub was £1.92, which compared with £2.11 for lager. The cheapest real ale in the North West was £1.69, which was 23 pence less than the national average. The most expensive beer in the country was in London with real ale at £2.12 a pint and lager £2.31.




**D**euchars IPA brewed by Caledonian in Edinburgh had been judged the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the recent Great British Beer Festival. It was the first time that a Scottish beer had ever won the title of Champion Beer of Britain, and it had been chosen as the overall winner from over 50 finalists in eight categories. As so often happens nowadays, the bulk of the other awards went to micro-breweries, with notable exceptions being Fullers and Brakspears.



**C**AMRA had launched a daring and powerful new campaign, to encourage women to try real cask ale, Britain's traditional pub drink. The campaign was in response to research into the nation's beer drinking habits released by CAMRA which highlighted how brewers had failed to attract women to beer. It featured a modern version of Ninkasi, the 4,000 year old Sumerian goddess of beer, and created a powerful image for real British beer.

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---

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---

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---

18 - 21 The Crescent  
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**Philip Finds His Forte**

At the age of 54 and with many years of working in the brewing industry under his belt one man from Marple is refusing to call it a day. A series of mergers and acquisitions between the big national brewers put Philip Hesford out of his job as an operations manager with some of the biggest names in the business. However, at the **Ring 'O' Bells** in Marple his skills are not being wasted by enterprising licensee Peter Clarke.



Dennis Robinson.

Recognising Philip's full potential, Peter invested in his friend and staff member and enrolled him on an intensive licensee training scheme at Robinson's Unicorn Brewery in Stockport. Although Philip was already well experienced in the art of serving beer, the course brought his skills fully up-to-date with current legislation and the necessary training and certificates that are required to work with food at the Ring'O' Bells. Pictured aside Philip receives his training certificate from

**More Changes**

There are also changes afoot at other local Robbies' houses. We reported in July on the impending closure of Robinson's "brewery tap", the **Spread Eagle** on Hillgate. Licensees Val and Noel Jones planned to leave in December but this has now been brought forward and they will now be taking over the **Grapes** on Castle Street in Edgeley – indeed they may well be there by the time you read this.

Across the road from the Spread Eagle, there are new faces at the **Royal Oak** on High Street where Mark and Gayle took over after Easter. Handpumps have been installed to dispense Hatters, Unicorn and also seasonal and other in-house Robinsons beers on a guest basis. The pub has also been given a welcome coat of paint inside and it is now resplendent in County's blue and white.

Ian Hazeldine has now left the **Crown** on Hillgate to take over at the **Stockport Arms**, St Petersgate. This has been a long standing real ale outlet, with Black Sheep Bitter on sale when I last called, and I am sure Ian will aim to build on this if he can.

I am also pleased to report that the **Greyhound** in Edgeley has returned to the real ale fold. I've not been in myself but I'm reliably told that Greene King Old Speckled Hen is now available on handpump. Across the road, the **Church**, still firmly keg-only, has its tenancy to let according to Robinson's website.

**Griffin Latest**



It seems that Holts have now changed tack over the **Griffin**, Heaton Mersey.

Faced with mass objections to their previous plans for the pub, they have now promised to fully consult with the regulars before bringing forward new plans. Why on earth they couldn't have done this in the first place, I just don't know.

Finally the **Crown**, Heaton Lane has now increased the number of handpumps to 16 – quality remains high across the board.



**Chorlton News and Views**

*(Thanks to Heather Airlie and Mark McConachie for help with this piece)*

A joint social in Chorlton with Trafford & Hulme and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branches provided an excellent opportunity to check out the current scene there.

It only seemed proper to start the evening at the **Famous Trevor Arms**, as the current landlord, Kevin Moores, is a former Stockport lad, having previously run Robinson's Waterloo.

Well primed for our arrival, Kevin had Caledonian's seasonal, Top Banana, Hydes seasonal Golden Brown, and the group's favourite, Tribute, plus the standard Boddington's Bitter. All the guest beers were pronounced good enough to stop, however, we were on a time schedule so forced ourselves to move on to the Beech.



Having been in the Good Beer Guide for 12 consecutive years, the **Beech** is now under new management. Despite limited experience in the trade, the new landlord continues to ensure not just the beer range remains impressive, but also the quality. Nearby **Marmalade**, a newish café bar, offers two hand pulled ales at the weekend.

A swift half in the **Lloyds** brought us to **Abode**, a mirror image of the adjacent **Bar** in many ways. I chatted to Tom Desantis who has been managing the bar for some six months now. I got the impression that he is keener on his cask ales than are many of the customers so all credit to him for persevering. Hydes Original is a regular and in addition there are one or two guests with Bazens' Flatbac being a very good seller. This is well worth supporting and I for one will certainly be back.



Variable quality Tetley bitter has been sampled in the new bar, **Argyles**, on Barlow Moor Road. Meanwhile on Manchester Road opposite the Unicorn Grocery, is **Pi**. This occupies the former premises of Idaho. Internally, little has altered since that time.

Two cask ales are offered though - Bank Top Flat Cap, and Bazens' Pacific, both at £2.50, these compliment a decent range of foreign draught and bottled beers. Diverse pies too, are sold for an affordable £4; they offer interesting flavour combinations too. Food served till about 9pm.

Three other Chorlton highlights need a mention, of course. Next to Abode on Wilbraham Road is **Bar**, a long-standing outlet for Marble Brewery beers – good food here, too. Marble Brewery don't own **Bar** but they do own the **Marble Beer House** on Manchester Road. This features Marble beers plus a couple of guests, always in top condition. I was interested to learn that the smoking ban has had no discernible effect on what was always one of Chorlton's smokiest pubs.

Last let's not forget the **Belgian Belly**, opposite the Lloyds on Wilbraham Road. It's possible to pop in for a beer now, of course, and the range never disappoints. I have been particularly impressed by three beers from a new Belgian brewery, Brasserie de la Senne – Zinnebir (6%) is spicy and typically Belgian but the other two, both at 4.5% ABV are brewed in a more British style. Stouterik is a dry stout but the real star is the wonderfully hoppy Taras Bulba.

**The Crescent and other news**

The future of the **Crescent** seems to be secure now, despite the circulation of lots of silly rumours. The pub is now managed by Gerrard McIntyre and Ayesha Clarke. They currently work for outgoing owner Andy Davies but will transfer to the new owners in due course.

Gerrard worked with the legendary Idy and Sal for over two years and apart from one or two tweaks it's very much business as usual with guest beers and periodic beer festivals continuing to feature prominently. The new owners also realise the value of the Crescent and no changes are planned, although the rest of the building may be turned into student accommodation in due course.

It's always cause for concern when a famous pub changes hands but I think we can all breathe easily when it comes to the Crescent.

Real ale has finally gone from Ardwick. The last two known outlets, the **Apsley Cottage** next to the Apollo and the **Church** on Ardwick Green have now removed their cask beer. There are new people at the Church who, I understand, are unsure about cask ale so have decided to take it out. Hopefully this will be only temporary but I'm not optimistic.

There is better news in Northenden where real ale now seems well established at the **Farmers Arms**. I understand that Theakstons Mild is available and new handpumps have been installed to expand the cask beer range. Next month a brief Wythenshawe survey amongst other things – don't hold your breath.



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# Brewery NEWS...

## New Micro for Peak District

The latest micro brewery to come on stream locally is not your usual new brewery. It only makes two beers, both with the same name, and neither of them can be classed as real ale.

So why is it getting column space here? Well, the beers produced by the new **Taddington Brewery** are in fact astonishingly good, authentic Czech-style lagers that knock into a cocked hat most lagers either made or imported into the UK.



The man behind the brewery is fluent Czech speaker Richard Hand who picked up both the language and his brewing skills after spending a year living in Brno and Olomouc in the Czech province of Moravia.

The brewery is situated in the former malting house of Joshua Lingard's brewery at Blackwell Hall. Lingard's brewery lasted until the early years of the 20th Century and so brewing has now returned to the Taddington area after a gap of about 100 years.

The new brewery specialises in brewing unpasteurised lagers under the Moravka name using special lager malt, lager yeast and hops from Zatec in northern Bohemia. After 10 days in the fermenters the beers are lagered for a minimum of 30 days before being transferred to 30 litre kegs.

The two versions of Moravka are at 4.4% and 5% ABV. Both are clean, quaffable and hoppy beers. The 5 per cent version was particularly impressive when tried with plenty of body and huge hop character. We must stress that this isn't real ale but those readers who enjoy imported German and Czech beers are likely to find Moravka hugely enjoyable.

## Family Favourites

The local family brewers have some new beers out this month in their seasonal programmes.

**Robinsons** latest seasonal beer is Flash Harry (4.1% ABV) and will be available until November. This is a copper red, autumn ale with a distinctive peachy fruit hop aroma. "This smooth rich beer has an interesting balance of biscuit and burnt toffee flavours, matched by a clean crisp bitterness" says the brewery.

**Hydes** also have a new craft ale out, too. This is Thriller (4.5%), a complex ale brewed with a combination of Perle, Cara and Crystal malts.



**Holts** new beer comes in two forms, both cask ale on draught and also a bottle conditioned version. This is Pioneer, made with hops of the same name, and will be 5% ABV on draught and 5.2% in the bottle. This is Holts first venture into the "real ale in a bottle" market and it will be interesting to see how it performs.

## Micro Magic

The local micro brewers have lots of new beers for you. As ever apologies to those we couldn't contact in time.

**Marble Brewery** – some interesting beers and promotions in the pipeline here. Campbell's Tawny (4.6% ABV) will be back in September and October will see a rebrew of Festival (4.4% ABV) to coincide with the Manchester Food & Drink Festival. The Marble Arch is planning numerous events to coincide with the Food & Drink Festival one of which is "The Marble Festival Dinner" held on Thursday 11 October in association with North West Fine Foods. This will comprise four courses of the very best locally-sourced produce, each matched with a Marble beer.

The price is £30 a head, booked in advance. Of particular note is the news that this meal will be the first public outing of Marble Decadence, an imperial stout (8-8.5% ABV) available in bottles only, and brewed to mark the brewery's 10th anniversary. *Opening Times* has had a sneak preview of this beer and can report that it is a superbly complex dry stout that is dangerously drinkable for its strength

**Pictish Brewery** has Staddlestone (4.5% ABV) back as the September special and also continues to produce a range of "single hop" beers. Cluster (4.1%) and Centennial (4.5%) came out late last month. Richard Sutton has also taken delivery of two New Zealand varieties, Nelson Sauvignon and Rawika, which will form the basis of two further beers- hopefully out later this month if time allows.

**Boggart Hole Clough** – always something new here. Recent beers include Jennie Lee's Hebden Hero, a 3.7% ABV pale bitter. This is named in honour of the brewery's driver who pulled a young girl out of a river at Hebden Bridge, and also Ruby Tuesday (3.8% ABV), a ruby red ale.

**3 Rivers** – the beer brewed to mark the Cask Champion Award presented by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, Lights CAMRA, Action (a 6% ABV version of the Manchester IPA) has sold so well that it may be re-brewed. The brewery is currently expanding to a 40-barrel brew length and may also install a bottling line.

**Hornbeam** – now seems to be going great guns. The re-brewed, and improved, versions of Hornbeam Bitter (3.8%) and Golden Wraith (5%) have proved very popular with repeat orders and also big orders from a beer agency. Top Hop has been reformulated and was being put into casks in late August. September may also see the first appearance of Black Coral Stout (4.5% ABV)



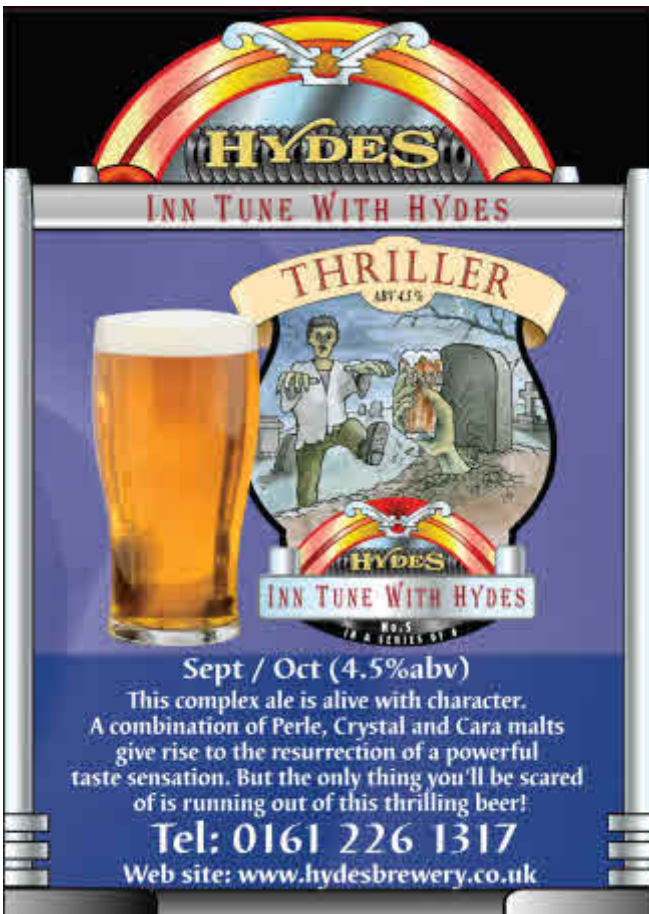
**Finally** – the region's newest brewery is the **Prospect Brewery** at Standish. Using a 5-barrel plant sourced from Bank Top Brewery, the first brew was put through in late August. More next time.



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PS - watch this space for a "Crown" Food & Beer Special coming in the Autumn

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

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

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Reddish & Heaton Chapel Stagger: 7.30pm Fir Tree, Gorton Rd; 8.30 3 Rivers Club, Greg Street

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to Thatched House, Churchgate, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>** – Beer of the Festival Presentation to Howard Town Brewery, Glossop. Meet at Old Star (next to station for departure at 1.30pm to arrive brewery 2.00pm).

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October** – Branch Meeting: Cheadle Hulme, Station Rd, Cheadle Hulme. From 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 10<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria Street, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm

**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. Branch website: www.thcamra.org.uk*

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>** – Manchester City Centre Social: Font Bar, New Wakefield St 8pm; Odder Bar, Oxford Rd 9pm

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>** - Meeting with Paul Jefferies at Hydes Brewery. Limited numbers – booking essential

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Sale Social: Volunteer, Washway Rd, 8pm; Ryans Bar 8.45; Railway 9pm

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October – Branch AGM: Timperley Taverners Social Club, Park Rd, Timperley. Starts 8pm. All members please try and attend this important meeting.**

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

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** – Campaigning Meeting: Egerton Arms, Chelford. Starts 8pm

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Autumn Pub of the Season Award: Cock & Pheasant, Bollington. 8.00pm.

**The North Manchester Branch** covers The Northern Quarter and North East Manchester plus the City of Salford. *Branch Contact – Dave Hallows 07983 944992. davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk*

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>** – Oxford Rd Crawl: Sand Bar, Grosvenor St. 8pm. Odder, Oxford Rd, 8.45; Font 9.15pm; Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, 10pm.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. Starts 8.00pm

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>** - Good Beer Guide & Long Service Award presentation to Union Tavern, Liverpool St, Salford, 8pm

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October** - Chapel St Crawl: Kings Arms, 7.30: Egerton, 8pm; New Oxford, 8.30pm; Crescent 9.30pm

# It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to: Karen & Chris Wainwright, CAMRA Membership, 173 Shearwater Road, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5XA. Alternatively you can join online at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).



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# Beers for the Season AUTUMN



**Rochefort 6 (7.5% ABV).** A 'Trappist Ale' made by Belgian monks. Just six monasteries now make their own beers, five in Belgium and one in the Netherlands. This beer is dark, dry and easy drinking.



**Brasserie de la Senne Stouterik (4.5% ABV).** Quite a low strength beer from this new Belgian brewery with an impressive track record to date. As its name suggests this is a dark, dry and eminently quaffable stout.



**Microbrouwerij Achilles Serafijn Donker (8% ABV).** A strong and spicy brown ale from a tiny Belgian brewery based in Flanders. Various types of roasted barley contribute to the complex palate



**Marble Brewery Ginger Marble (4.5% ABV).** Perhaps the ultimate alcoholic ginger beer. Spicy and warming but with enough hops to make you come back for more. Draught only but look out for the bottled-only 6% version.



**3 Rivers Brewery Old Disreputable (5.2% ABV).** A dark, powerful beer – available all year round but perfect for the cooler months. Distinctive coffee and chocolate traits and a lasting bitter finish. Very moreish for it's gravity.

## Seven Beers To Try This Autumn

We conclude our series featuring seasonal beers with a selection of brews suitable for autumn drinking. This is a time of year when the warm days of summer give way to the cooler winter months and seasonal beers need to reflect this change.

Historically this was the time of year when weak harvest ales were produced by many brewers. Today however the seasonal changes are rung in different way.

In Europe, a variety of Bock beers are produced and in the Netherlands many of these are showcased at the annual Bokbier Festival held in Amsterdam at the end of October. These beers are traditionally dark brown, malty and strong, typically at a strength of 6.5 per cent ABV.

In the UK, there is a trend for "green hop" beers typically made with the first of the season's hops and barley. The Talbot pub at Knightwick near Worcester stages a Green Hop Festival showcasing many such beers – usually 4.5 per cent(-ish) strength, pale and quenching. At the other extreme, local brewer JW Lees produces the famous Vintage Harvest Ale, an annual vintage at 11% and available in bottle only.

Our selection includes a combination of sturdy bitters, spicy strong ales, stouts and a warming ginger beer. The Belgian beers will be available from the Belgian Belly in Chorlton, apart from the Serfijn Donker – Stockport's Three Shires and Salford's New Oxford stock this.



**Copper Dragon Brewery Challenger IPA (4.4%).** A copper coloured beer with a full-bodied palate. Initial maltiness gives way to fruit, hops and a growing bitter, dry finish.



**Allgates Brewery Reverend Ray (4.6% ABV).** This new Wigan brewery has gained an enviable reputation for its large portfolio of beers. Reverend Ray is an amber/reddish ale – smooth and full-bodied with a hoppy finish.



**THE RAILWAY VIEW Macclesfield**

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