



# Opening

TIMES

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

NUMBER 280

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

# Under Threat?



**S**tockport Council has published the plans for the so-called Bridgefield scheme. While bringing welcome regeneration to parts of the town centre, as currently set out it also appears to threaten the future of two of the town's more traditional locals, the Tiviot on Tiviot Dale and the Swan With Two Necks on Princes Street. Both of these are excellent well-run pubs catering for loyal bands of regulars and passing shoppers alike. The Tiviot has been run by the same family for many years while the Swan With Two Necks has recently been listed Grade II, as being of architectural or historic significance. In point of fact it boasts an extremely rare interior for the late 1920s with an abundance of wood panelling and an exceptional top-lit smoke room.

It is claimed that the Bridgefield scheme will "integrate into the social, cultural and historical fabric of Stockport". How ironic then that this may be achieved by the destruction of two prime examples of the town's traditional pub culture, one of which is a listed historic building. The fight is on.



## The Winter Warmer Wobble

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# Pub OF THE Month AWARD




**THE Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for December is The Cheadle Hulme on Station Road, Cheadle Hulme.**

This large Holts house has been run for the last few years by Sharon McCann along with her efficient staff. Sharon's husband Terry looks after the beer. There are many pubs in Cheadle Hulme, but few have any sort of community feel, but this is an exception, with a loyal band of regulars and a regular quiz on Thursdays together with live music on Tuesdays.

The Cheadle Hulme does serve good food but not at the expense of being a traditional pub. It is split into three areas; a traditional vault with a dartboard, a comfortable lounge area and an open space with larger tables, particularly suited to dining. Outside is a semi-enclosed courtyard with some tables to soak up the sun in summer, there are also additional tables next to the car park.

Holts Bitter and Mild are always available from handpump and Holt's seasonal beer is usually available, too. The quality of the Holts Mild is of particular note.

Located right next to Cheadle Hulme railway station, it is very useful if you just miss the train and have to wait for the next one. The main entrance faces the station and there is also an entrance to the Vault up steps from Station Road and another from the car park which is located away from the road.

So why not come along after the Christmas festivities and join us for the presentation on Thursday 27th December from 8.00pm. **PF**

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# OT – COMMENT...

Let's be clear. No-one is saying that the proposed redevelopment of Stockport Town Centre is a bad thing per se. No-one is saying that this is not a part of town that could benefit from some investment. However the devil, as ever, is in the detail and some of the detail here is very unwelcome indeed.

Traditional community pubs, like the Swan With Two Necks and the Tiviot are valuable and dwindling social resources. It one of the strengths of the Stockport pub scene that it is still blessed with a good number of such pubs and has thereby avoided most of the late night problems associated with town centres up and down the country. Eroding this stock of traditional locals must surely be storing up problems for the future.

The Swan With Two Necks is a particularly important pub. It boasts an almost intact inter-wars interior and as such is a very rare survivor. It appears on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pubs and has recently been listed Grade II as being of historic importance.

So – let's put a marker down. *Opening Times* will fight any threat to these two pubs. If it involves forcing unwelcome public enquiries then so be it. Let's hope that common sense prevails.

\*\*\*\*\*

That though is for the future. The festive season is upon us and I hope that all of our contributors, advertisers and readers have a happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year. Best wishes to everyone – and my personal thanks for your continued support .

# 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. 7,000 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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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
- Salford:** 0161 925 1346
- Tameside:** 0161 342 8355
- Trafford:** 0161 912 2274
- Derbyshire:** 08456 058 058
- Cheshire:** 0845 11 32 500

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**Spy in the Pub**

It's always been part of the law that bar staff must not serve customers who are drunk, and over the years I've occasionally seen this put into practice, usually by a quiet word in the ear along the lines of "I'm sorry, I think you've had enough already" rather than taking a confrontational approach. Yes, people do sometimes get drunk from visiting pubs and bars, but they do exactly the same in their own and other people's houses, where there is no legal restraint on consumption. The best way of preventing drunkenness is to encourage people to recognise when they have had enough.

However, in what has the potential to be a major threat to the pub trade, the Home Office have put funding in place for a national campaign, running from November, to plant undercover cops in pubs to catch staff serving drunks. A pilot project has already started in Blackpool after police claimed they had seen drunks being served. Should they witness a punter being served who, in their opinion, is drunk, they have powers to issue £80 on-the-spot fines to staff and call for a review of the pub's licence.

A big problem, though, is that the authorities are not providing any clear definition of what constitutes being "drunk". Clearly it can't be based simply on quantity, because one man may be perfectly capable of drinking ten pints and scarcely appearing merry while another could be staggering around after three. And might such a test be biased against women, who become intoxicated faster by virtue of their smaller internal organs?

**Humourless**

It has to be accepted that most people go to pubs to drink alcohol, and alcohol does have an effect on you. By the end of a typical evening, nobody in a local pub apart from Des the designated driver will be stone cold sober or anything like it. If people are simply a bit loud and boisterous, tell a few off-colour jokes, or decide to have a sing-song, then they may be merry but they're not in the accepted sense of the word "drunk". They will almost always apologise and tone it down a bit if asked to by the licensee, but some humourless individual not used to pubs could easily take exception to their behaviour.

If someone is obviously staggering about and incapable of coherent speech, then clearly they should not be served. But, short of that, alcoholic drinks are legal products and pubs are selling them for consumption by adults who are old enough to take responsibility for their own actions.

Now it might be argued that these powers are only likely to be used to target circuit bars, and traditional pubs have nothing to fear. But if the powers exist, they can be used, and most locals by the end of the evening have at least a few customers whom some po-faced official could easily decide were drunk. Realistically, only the stuffiest rural dining pubs have no need to worry. It is an especial concern over the festive season when many pubgoers may feel inclined to let their hair down a bit more than normal.

And why should the government once again be targeting pubs when it is becoming abundantly clear that the main causes of alcohol-related problems in society are discounting and lack of adherence to age restrictions in the off-trade?

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

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**T**RAFFORD & Hulme Branch are pleased to announce that the Pub of the Season for Winter is "The Bar" on Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. The presentation will take place on Thursday 31st January 2008, meeting at 8pm.

"Relaxed" was the buzz word when I asked for comments about The Bar. From the "snug" feel in front of the open fire to the street café exterior "relaxed" was the main criteria. Newly redecorated, the seating ranges from settees to pews, to suit your mood and company.

The owner, Vance De Becheval, has been involved with The Bar for 16 years and the manager, Jenny Pearson for three years, with a six month stint at the sister pub, The Knott on Deansgate. Specialising in beers from around the world and local ales, the draught beers have proved to be more popular than bottled, but Jenny is very keen to maintain a good and regular supply of bottled beers for those who prefer them. A new innovation is to stock bottles of Marble Brewery's "Tawny" for home consumption, one of the few outlets in Chorlton. House draught ales are from Marble Brewery, with regular guest beers sourced from Phoenix and Pictish breweries. Other guest beers are obtained specifically from local breweries, in the same way that the food produce is sourced from local suppliers, reflected in the recipes for the specials menu selection.

In conjunction with the Knott, The Bar holds a number of festivals throughout the year, with 25 beers from local breweries. Such is the interest in the festivals that they will become a regular feature, possibly occurring on a quarterly basis. Often available is JP Best, recently awarded Best Beer Brewed in Greater Manchester at Manchester Food and Drink Festival. Since the smoking ban and the more recent redecoration, The Bar has seen business develop and grow. New customers have arrived and adopted the place, adding more character to that provided by the regulars. The pavement drinking area is still being developed, with a cast iron canopy being erected shortly. An extensive food menu and relaxed atmosphere has attracted people of all ages, with wet sales echoing that enthusiasm.

Jenny was keen to deny any worries of competition from the new bars opening in Chorlton, believing them to bring in new customers rather than taking existing ones away. She pointed out that some of them had taken ideas from the Bar, a real compliment.

The Bar is one of the few pubs in the area that open late and this seems to have meant that people are staying to relax longer, rather than rushing in at last orders. Closing times remain 12 midnight on Thursday, 12-30am on Friday and Saturday. Food is served from 12 midday to 8pm and there are plans to serve special snacks from 8pm to 10-30pm. These might include stuffed peppers, cheese and biscuits and savoury platters. There are also special nights, Monday being steak night – 2 steaks and a bottle of wine for £19.95, Tuesday is the Tea Party – home-made cake and coffee for £3.50, Friday special – a one-pot meal, bread and butter for £5. Monday night is also quiz night with a theme, including complimentary canapés for all teams.

*Heather Airlie*



**T**HE front page carried several stories dealing with local beers and personalities, and the main headline "Quality Counts" referred to Robinson's pubs and brewery celebrating first class beer.

This was the fifth year that Robinson's held their Bar & Cellar Competition and, remarkably, four of the five award winners were from the Marple area. That year's winning pub was the Ring O'Bells, with a score of 296 out of 300, which included a 100% score for beer quality. After the awards had been presented there was a further special prize for Robinson's brewery – the Cask Champion Award, which goes to the organisation, pub or brewery which had made a particular impact on cask beer in the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch area.

\*\*\*\*\*

Still on awards, the Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham was the new *City Life* Pub of the Year, and this item also mentioned the "Four Corners" Beer Festival, consisting of the Queens, Pot of Beer, Marble Arch and the Beer House. It's a sad thought that looking back from 2007, the Pot of Beer and the Beer House are no longer with us.

\*\*\*\*\*

National Beer Notes carried an item on Gales, a dedicated cask ale brewer and traditional pub owner, which had produced a healthy set of results, including a 10.5% increase in brewing volumes. But at the end of 2005 Fullers had announced an agreed acquisition of Gales, and by the end of March 2006, all brewing had ceased at the Horndean site.

\*\*\*\*\*

There were two major developments reported by Hydes. The Horse & Farrier in Gatley had reopened after a two month refurbishment, and there was to be slightly more emphasis on food. The pub was now one of Hydes' new Heritage Inns, and there would soon be another one in Cheadle Hulme. The Manchester brewers had bought Millington Hall on Station Road, a planning application had been made, and from the scale of the work planned it would be well into 2003 before it opened for business.

\*\*\*\*\*

Drinkers had been aware that many of the existing licensing laws originated from the First World War, almost 90 years previously. The problem had been that the effectiveness of the munitions factories had been undermined by drunkenness among the workers. The proposed reform of licensing law had been announced in the Queen's Speech and there was no doubt that British pubgoers would be looking forward to a more flexible approach to pub opening hours from the summer of 2004.

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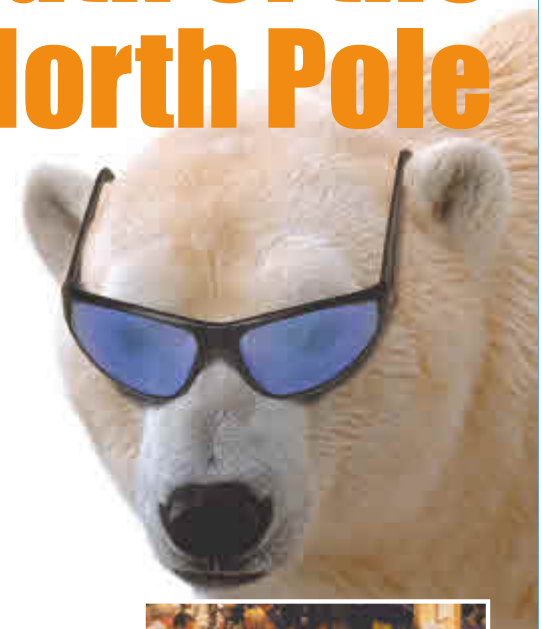
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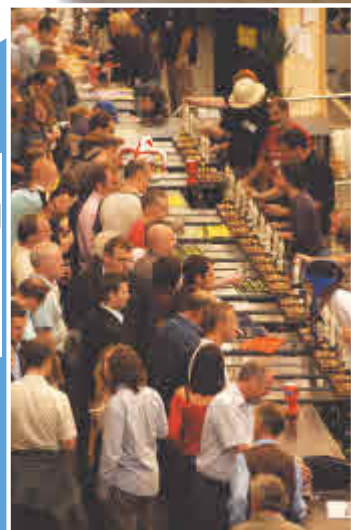
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# High Peak

## PUB NEWS

WITH FRANK WOOD

### New In New Mills

IT may have become a cliché but a local pub for local people is just how the new tenants describe the Rock Tavern at New Mills. Of course everybody is welcome but for Rick Cummings and Toni Judge being in the centre of their community and involved with local people is just what running a public house is all about.



For Toni, New Mills has always been home and she will no doubt be recognised by some customers as having been a sergeant and prominent figure in the Army Cadet Force. Rick meanwhile, has his own notoriety as an established musician and songwriter with overseas tours under his belt as well as having been featured on radio thanks to the late John Peel.

Customers of the Rock Tavern may not have noticed the smooth transition of licensees however, as Keith and Cecilia Hickson retired and Toni and Rick seamlessly took over the helm. Toni said: "We were already customers when Keith and Cecilia announced their retirement and for the past few months we have worked alongside them, and they taught us a great deal before we took on our first pub."

### Buxton News

IN Buxton, the **George**, selected for Good Beer Guide 2008, closed in mid October, it is now confirmed that the tenants of the flats above the pub have all been given their notice and the building has been acquired by a company that are turning the entire building into a hotel. However, Storm Brewery beers, that were very heavily represented at the George, have begun to appear on a regular basis at the **Swan**, beyond the market place, in the top end of Buxton.

The **Wye Bridge House** (Wetherspoons) in Buxton, surely one of the best in the group that does not get a regular place in Good Beer Guide, had ten handpumps on when I called in on November 1st, the first day of the Beer Festival. It was very hard to try anything else however, when Brouerij Anker from Belgium had their Anker Blond on sale at £1.49 (the standard price for all the beers) for a 5.5% terrific pint

### Glossop News

IN Glossop, the **Norfolk Arms** re-opens on December 6th as a Holt's house, with accommodation, food and a complete Holt's style refurbishment. More on this next month.

The **Globe** brew pub, down Glossop High Street West, is impressing with their Comet, a 4.3% very light coloured beer that has reached consistency, probably the best seller in the pub. These days the beers brewed here are of a good standard and are popular with the locals.

The **Sparrows** in Glossop, on Gladstone Street, is currently looking like it is being prepared for re-opening and the local rumour is that the same people who operate what was the **Moulders Arms** on Hyde Road, Hyde, are the new owners.

Finally, **Glossop Labour Club** whose committee are staunch fans of their only ale on sale, Moorhouses Premium, has tried Howard Town beers recently for their busy periods.

The **Last Orders** on Victoria Street, also in Glossop, is also to close and reopen in a new guise. This follows the purchase of the pub's owners, Honeycomb Leisure, by Cains Brewery of Liverpool.

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2002

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

**E**ARLY in October the Hayfield Beer Festival at the **Royal** in Hayfield seemed to be a success, with 30+ beers to go at in the pub and out in the marquee, and all in good form. A Sunday afternoon visit was well rewarded. Attendances had been good on Friday and Saturday, but below expectation on Sunday. The new timetable for the 358 Bus and extensive road works north of Marple and between New Mills Newtown and Disley, may well have deterred potential customers. This is a good festival and worth looking out for next year.

Business sections in the broadsheets have devoted much space to the possible takeover of Scottish & Newcastle, with interest being shown by Carlsberg and/or Heineken. It would be easy to laugh at the posturing by spokespersons from the companies concerned, but the bean counters pay no regard to customers. It would be easy to be totally disinterested, as S & N no longer produces real ale. However they do have an interest in the Caledonian Brewery, which does brew real ale, and at the last count they own Bulmer's, which does still produce some real cider. Customer choice is again under threat. The status of S & N Pub Enterprises, the S & N leased pubs group, would also need clarifying in a take over, as again customers could be affected. Your favourite local could be sold down the river.

### More Pub News

**W**HICH leads onto pubs known to be to let in the High Peak area. 'Lease this pub' says the sign on the **Jodrell Arms** in Whaley Bridge. The owner is of course S & N Pub Enterprises, who despite the sign have in fact now put the pub up for sale. Yours for offers over £500,000....

The **Shady Oak** at Fernilee is to let, as Marston's have taken a short-term view about its future. Tim Hughes has been in the pub for nearly a year and has worked hard to make it a viable concern. The reward for his effort is an imposed and unrealistic rent. Here the bean counters don't go for organic growth but greedily go for instant cash in the bank. This is not good for continuity in the Shady Oak, which needs a much more measured approach.

The **Mousetrap** in Disley at the foot of Buxton Old Road is to let. No other information at the moment.

Confirming last month's news, John Oliver is moving on from the **Shepherds'** in Whaley Bridge. Interviews for a successor were held in late October/early November, but no news at the present. At the beginning of November John was still producing the goods with very good Marston's Bitter and guests including Thwaites' Lancaster Bomber, Hydes' Jekyll's Gold and Wranghams' Grand Old Duke. Wranghams' appears to be like Red Brick, a nom de plume for one off brews from Marstons' and/or Banks's.

Your correspondent managed a European visit as part of Charlie Hughes' Belgian jaunt from the **Railway**, Portwood. Highlights included a brewery visit in the village of Watou, and sessions at the Karakterbierenfestival at Poperinge. Here there was a good range of beers from mainly west Flanders breweries. At the festival a chat with a local journalist/photographer produced a group photograph and article in Het Laatste Nieuws, the local Flemish language daily newspaper. The fame of the Railway on Portwood has spread abroad.

Returning to more parochial matters to finish, the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge was undergoing another refurbishment and redecoration in early November. Also construction work was underway on a platform for a smoking shelter down the side of the pub by the railings on Reservoir Road. Apart from the closed Jodrell, the Railway is the first pub that visitors by train to Whaley Bridge come to.

# Vale Cottage Inn

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## Recent CAMRA Awards

Top - Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Cider Manager Charlotte Bulmer presents the Perry of the Festival Award to Hecks for their Hendre Huffcap. Centre, Ralph Owen receives his Cider of the Festival Award for 4Bs.



Below - CAMRA Greater Manchester Regional Director Ralph Warrington presents the Regional Pub of the Year Award to Tim Flynn and Paulette Scanlon of the New Oxford.



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# The Winter Warmer Wobble.....

This month we are once again running our "Stout, Porter & Old Ale Trail", renamed and slightly revamped to place a bit more emphasis on seasonal beers

Like the well-established Mild Challenge and the increasingly popular Cider Circuit, this is the chance for you to visit some new pubs and try some new beers.

Winter is the time for stronger and darker beers and that is what we are focussing on this time. So, a bit about these seasonal beer styles, and what you can expect to encounter...

**Porter** was a London style that turned the brewing industry upside down early in the 18th century. Restrictions on making roasted malts in Britain during World War One led to the demise of Porter and Stout but in recent years, smaller craft brewers in Britain have rekindled an interest in the style. Look for profound dark and roasted malt character with espresso or cappuccino coffee, liquorice and molasses, all underscored by hefty hop bitterness. Porters are complex in flavour, range from 4% to 6.5% and are typically black or dark brown; the darkness comes from the use of dark malts unlike stouts which use roasted malted barley. **Stouts** can be dry or sweet and range from 4% to 8% ABV.

**Old Ale** is a style has re-emerged in recent years, due primarily to the fame of Theakston's Old Peculier, Gale's Prize Old Ale and Thomas Hardy's Ale. Old Ales, contrary to expectation, do not have to be especially strong: they can be no more than 4% alcohol, though the Gale's and O'Hanlon's versions are considerably stronger. Neither do

they have to be dark: Old Ale can be pale and burst with lush sappy malt, tart fruit and spicy hop notes. Darker versions will have a more profound malt character with powerful hints of roasted grain. The hallmark of the style remains a lengthy period of maturation, often in bottle rather than bulk vessels. Old Ales typically range from 4% to 6.5%.

**Barley Wine** has to be strong. The biggest-selling Barley Wine for years was Whitbread's 10.9% Gold Label, now available only in cans. Bass's No 1 Barley Wine (10.5%) is occasionally brewed in Burton-on-Trent. Fuller's Vintage Ale (8.5%) is a bottle-conditioned version of its Golden Pride. The local classic, though, is Robinson's Old Tom (8.5%).

## Rules

You need to have a least a 1/2 pint of one of cask stout, porter or old ale (4.5% ABV or greater) to have a sticker placed on this page. Do 15 different pubs to win a bottle of stout, porter or old ale. Do all 30 pubs to be entered in the big draw for a special hamper of stouts, porters and old ales. This challenge runs from Sunday the 15th December 2006 to Thursday 31st January 2007 so you have plenty of time. We will only accept signatures if the pub runs out of stickers. The completed form has to be sent to David Platt before Sunday 4th February. The address is 138 Broom Lane, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3LJ

Name .....

Address .....

.....Tel.....

Fletcher Moss William Street DIDSBURY M20 6RQ <b>Guest</b>	Dog & Partridge Wilmslow Road DIDSBURY M20 6RA <b>Guest</b>	Didsbury Wilmslow Road DIDSBURY M20 2SE <b>Guest</b>	Marble Arch Rochdale Road MANCHESTER M4 4HY <b>Guest</b>	Bar Fringe Swan St MANCHESTER M4 5JN <b>Guest</b>
Rain Bar Great Bridgewater St MANCHESTER M1 5JG <b>Moonraker</b>	City Arms Kennedy St. MANCHESTER M2 4BQ <b>Guest</b>	Lass O'Gowrie Charles St MANCHESTER M1 7DB <b>Guest</b>	Paramount Oxford Street MANCHESTER M1 4BH <b>Guest</b>	Crown Heaton Lane STOCKPORT SK4 1AR <b>Guest</b>
Crown Buxton Road STOCKPORT SK2 7BY <b>Old Tom</b>	Ye Olde Vic Chatham St STOCKPORT SK3 9ED <b>Guest</b>	Armoury Shaw Heath STOCKPORT SK3 8BD <b>Old Tom</b>	Railway Avenue Street STOCKPORT, SK1 2BZ <b>Stout / Porter</b>	Blossoms Buxton Road STOCKPORT SK2 6NU <b>Old Tom</b>
Travellers Call Buxton Road STOCKPORT SK2 7NL <b>Old Tom</b>	Calverts Court St. Petersgate STOCKPORT SK1 1EB <b>Guest</b>	Arden Arms Millgate STOCKPORT SK1 2LX <b>Old Tom</b>	3 Rivers Club Greg Street REDDISH SK5 7BR <b>Guest</b>	Friendship Wilmslow Road FALLOWFIELD M14 6XS <b>Seasonal</b>
Lowes Arms Hyde Road DENTON M34 3FF <b>Seasonal</b>	Horse & Farrier Gatley Road GATLEY SK8 4AB <b>Seasonal</b>	Cheshire Ring Manchester Road HYDE SK14 2BJ <b>Guest</b>	Sportsman Wilbraham Road HYDE SK14 2NN <b>Guest</b>	New Oxford Bexley Square SALFORD M3 6DB <b>Guest</b>
Crescent The Crescent SALFORD M5 4PF <b>Guest</b>	Navigation Manchester Road HEATON NORRIS SK4 1TY <b>Guest</b>	Nursery Green Lane HEATON NORRIS SK4 2NA <b>Seasonal</b>	Prince of Wales Mill Street GLOSSOP SK13 8PT <b>Guest</b>	Star Inn Howard Street GLOSSOP SK13 7DD <b>Guest</b>

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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!**



Mike and Lyn Wawiorko with a local round-up

**I** CALLED in at the **Railway View** beer festival over summer and found that this fairly small pub can sustain 6-7 beers in fine condition. There were about 20 to choose from over the weekend. This was nothing out of the ordinary, as a couple of other visits have found an excellent choice. One is a house bitter brewed by Weetwood, but the others are constantly changing and selected from independent breweries. About a mile south of the station, the garden signed 'Platform 1' overlooks the main line from Manchester to London or Birmingham.

Formerly managed Holts house the **Three Crowns** on Mill Lane now has tenants Wendy and Dave. Holts Bitter is joined by a second Holts ale, on our visit an enjoyable Joey's bitter. The real mild pump sat idle, but we hope it will soon be back in use. It's a smart and comfortable local with lots of pub teams including skittles. There's a large lounge with music on Friday nights, thoughts of more music on Saturday, and a Sunday quiz. Across the road the **Sun** has regulars Bombardier and Jennings Cumberland ale together with guest Summer Lightning when we called in.

## Chapel Street

**U**P on Chapel St. the **Lord Byron** is a popular four-roomed pub with Unicorn and a second Robinson's ale, on this occasion the seasonal Flash Harry. It's handy for the Little Theatre. There are bar snacks until 6 and a fair sized beer garden with heating for winter smokers. It's a traditional corner local with lots of teams and also a non-traditional Wii. Unfortunately, the **Peel Arms** remains closed with Thwaites trying to find a new landlord. During the summer a brewery manager reopened it for a few weeks to assess its potential, but sadly this formerly popular corner local may be no more like the Evening Star and White Swan nearby.

The **Ivy House** on Park Lane could be on its way back to success with new landlords Lisa and Darren bringing back real ale, a choice from W&D / Marstons, and starting to rebuild its reputation. With two pool tables, football, pool and darts teams and plans for quizzes, music and karaoke nights there's always plenty going on. Also on Park Lane, the **Park Tavern** offers Robinson's Unicorn. Inside there's a large lounge and an area with pool table, and outside a good sized yard with shelter. It's a pub big on sports TV with plenty of Man Utd memorabilia, and despite this some City fans to banter with. I couldn't raise a smile or cheer for Macc Town. Nearby, the **Blueberry** with enjoyable Banks's Bitter is another lively pub on the edge of the town centre. Cosy and comfortable, it has darts, pool and ladies and mens football teams, together with the occasional live music or quiz.

## Jolly Sailor

**A**LONG Sunderland Street the **Jolly Sailor** moves from strength to strength. The reliably good Bass will be joined by two additional hand pumps by the time you read this. Initial plans are to add Young's Special as a regular together with a guest. Around Christmas a strong ale such as Young's Winter Warmer or Bateman's Rosey Nosey will be available. Reputedly haunted, the inside has been completely redecorated. Overnight twin rooms are available at £55 including breakfasts. That's a tremendous price for the town centre and handy for public transport right next to the bus and rail stations. Glen and Sarah are particularly proud of sourcing their food fresh from local markets and abattoirs. There are no bought in frozen or packet meals. There's plenty going on with live music Friday to Sunday evenings, a family history night and pool teams, with plans to recruit a darts team next year.





## Reddish & Heaton Chapel with John Clarke

WHAT is it about Reddish? Or more to the point, what is it about Reddish pubs? With one or two notable exceptions they have, over the years, been a pretty uninspiring bunch. Well, that's certainly true for the lover of cask beer and to be honest that remains the case, by and large.

One highlight used to be the **Pomona** on Gorton Road, although that pub is strictly in Manchester and in any event has been closed and increasingly derelict for years now. It will certainly never reopen as a pub as far as I can see.

Heading south it's a pretty grim state of affairs. The **Bulls Head** is closed and boarded – but even when it was open it has hardly ever sold real ale. Apart that is from a bizarre and disastrous experiment with Draught Bass several years ago. The **Reddish Vale** on Longford Road West took part in the same ill-fated trial and while open it has long since reverted to its keg-only status. Also keg for years was the **Railway** on Gorton Road but that, too, is now closed and destined for conversion to other use.

And so it was that this Stagger started at the **Fir Tree**, again on Gorton Road. This, too, has had an on-off relationship with cask beer but it is once again back in the real ale fold. However after this visit I'm not sure whether or not this is a good thing. The solitary handpump is in the vault and when I arrived half a dozen other Staggerers were already ensconced in the corner, all nursing glasses of a murky looking fluid that was apparently Wells Bombardier. I decided to pass. This is a shame, as the pub itself is well used and the vault had a lively atmosphere and good pubby feel.



*The Fir Tree – Real Ale Gain*

Walking down to Houldsworth Square and the next pub is the Spartan and barn-like **Houldsworth**. This again hasn't sold real ale for years and seems to have been "For Sale" for almost as long. It wasn't our night as the **Thatched Tavern** on Stanhope Street, normally a reliable outlet for a decent pint of cask beer, was closed and undergoing a refurbishment. Cask beer is now back, though with Tetley Dark Mild and John Smiths Bitter on handpump.

Luckily relief was in sight. One of the few oases in the Reddish drinking scene is the **3 Rivers Club** off Greg Street. A warm welcome and a decent drop of beer are always guaranteed here. Tonight was no exception with four 3 Rivers beers on handpump – Julie's Pride, Manchester IPA, GMT and Hilary Gold. None of us tried the Julie's Pride but the other three were greatly appreciated with the Hilary Gold perhaps the favourite. There's also a good range of bottled foreign beers to tickle your fancy too. Add in a great atmosphere and we struggled to leave. But leave we had to do tear ourselves away.

Next up was the **Union** on Broadstone Road. This Robinson's pub has often been reliable for a decent beer. Until tonight. I have since learned that the pub was "to let" when we called and I understand that a new tenant is on the way so that might explain what followed. The pub is bright and, while opened out, has plenty of cosy corners. The beer though, Robinson's Unicorn was the sole offering, was horrible. I couldn't finish mine and most of our party marked it down heavily although in fairness I should say that one member of our party thought it a good pint.

Almost next door the **Grey Horse** was also closed. The builders are now in, though, and the pub is due to open as a Holt's house next year.

## Heaton Chapel

A long trudge followed. A very long trudge. However we eventually arrived at the **George & Dragon** on Manchester Road.

This is a big former Boddington's pub – externally similar in style to the Grey Horse. Inside, it's big and bustling, with a good crowd filling the rambling multi-level interior. I really enjoyed this pub and the beer wasn't so bad either. There were two cask beers – Boddington's Bitter and a guest – tonight this was Smiles Rucking Good Ale. To be honest, the Boddington's was a bit ordinary (probably more a reflection on the beer than the way it was kept) but the Smiles was very enjoyable.



*Aside, the George & Dragon - good pub and good beer*

Further down Manchester Road is the **Hind's Head**. This new-ish pub has become something of

a local institution, largely down to the long-term licensee, the late Alan Preston. It's had a few ups and downs since he left but all seems well now. Again it was busy with a great atmosphere and a good crowd filling the multi-room style interior. I am told that a refurbishment will take place in the New Year.

The keen management stage regular promotions and for November and December I was told that the focus would be on cask beers. Tonight we tried two – Bass and Taylor's Landlord. I'm a long-time Bass fan but hadn't tried the beer since production was moved to Marston's brewery. I wasn't disappointed and it was a fine pint. The Landlord was also in great form and in fact turned out to be the best beer of the night.

It was back to form with the next two pubs, **The Ash** no longer sells real ale and nor does the **Venue** (formerly the Three Crowns). However the night was destined to end on a high point – the **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill.

Lot's has been written about this former local Pub of the Year, one of the tied houses owned by Beartown Brewery of Congleton. There are two comfortable rooms vault and lounge, the latter divided into two areas, and again there was a good pub atmosphere here. Long-time licensee Angella Lindsey was a welcome and reassuring face behind the bar and it was good to chat with her again – my visits here have been much too infrequent of late, something I must rectify. We tried four of the Beartown beers (Kodiak Gold, Bruin's Ruin, Bear Ass and Bearskinful) plus the guest beer, Burton Bridge Porter. Apart from the Kodiak Gold, normally on good form but rather uninspiring tonight, the rest of the beers were very good with little to choose between them. After the ups and down of the evening it was good to finish in a good pub with good beer.

So, what to make of all this? Obviously this write up can only reflect what one group of people found on one particular night. Why not try some yourself and see what you think?

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**A Merry Xmas to all our customers from Steve, Joe and staff**



# Tony Allen – Beer Pioneer

THE early 1980s were boom and bust years for the burgeoning micro-brewery industry. Many of the companies that started up at that time failed to last the course, three or four years being the typical lifespan.

Some however did flourish and prosper. 1982 was something of a vintage year with 26 new brewery start ups. Twelve remain today and among them are some famous names – Burton Bridge, Clarks, Moles, Mauldons, and RCH have all stood the test of time and their beers are often found in the local free trade. However there is one survivor from that year that has really made its mark on the local scene. In August 1982 Tony Allen opened his Oak Brewery on an industrial estate in Ellesmere Port. Nine years later he moved to a location more central to his growing free trade and the Phoenix Brewery, based in Heywood, was born. Few micros today can occupy such impressive premises, but more of that later.

## Early Days

LIKE many successful micro-brewers Tony started his career with a rather larger concern. In his case it was Bass where he spent 13 years working first at Sheffield and then, from 1973, at Runcorn.

It was in 1980 that he read an article by the late Richard Boston talking about the pioneering Penrhos Brewery in Herefordshire. Their stated aim was to make a small amount of top quality beer. "That sounds like a good idea", Tony recalls thinking and so he used to travel down there on his rest days from Bass, averaging about four days a month.

He recalls working on Penrhos Porter, one of the first revivals of what was by then an almost extinct style, when the brewery was visited by the famous Peter Austen, who helped set up many new wave brewers. "What are you doing?" asks Peter. "Making porter" comes the reply. "Oh, how do you do that?" asks Peter, who went on to make Ringwood Porter at his new brewery in Hampshire.



## Setting Up

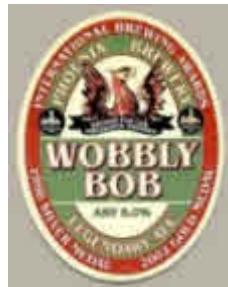
IN 1981 a round of redundancies at Bass prompted Tony to leave and initially spend three months full time at Penrhos. This led him to the perhaps inevitable conclusion that he could do something similar for himself. And so, Oak Brewery was born.

Living in Frodsham at the time, the search for suitable and not too distant premises began. Rejecting a former whale oil processing factory (complete with all its equipment!) in Runcorn, premises were found in Ellesmere Port.

Setting up in those days was rather different to today when a whole industry has grown up to support micro-brewers.

Tony recalls that the Customs office in Chester didn't even have a form to register a new brewery. Malt could only be bought by the ton (and had to be crushed by a local farmer) while hops came in huge pockets or half pockets.

A key to Oak's success was the intention to be as professional as possible from the start. So began nine successful years brewing such beers as Oak Best Bitter, Old Oak Ale and Double Dagger plus the powerful, and cult-ish, Wobbly Bob (6% ABV).



Above – the impressive old brewery premises. Below right, Tony Allen at the Phoenix Brewery. He is also a collector of breweriana and the sign above the door comes from the former Darleys Brewery

However as trade built up, the Oak Brewery premises were badly situated for the main trading area and in 1991 came the move to the old Phoenix Brewery premises in Heywood, prompting a name change from Oak Brewery.

## The Brewery Today

THERE has been considerable investment at Phoenix Brewery in recent years, with a new malt store, fermenting vessels and conditioning tanks, although some equipment from the old Oak Brewery is still giving faithful service.

Production is around 100 barrels a week supplying 400-plus outlets with the large range of beers produced throughout the year. This comprises a core range along with many monthly specials, usually repeated on a yearly basis. Look out for the seasonal Christmas Kiss and Humbug in the coming weeks.

Additions to the range are occasional, the latest being Spotland Gold (4.1%) a crisp hoppy beer initially brewed to mark the centenary of Rochdale FC. Indeed, clean, hoppy blond beers are something of a Phoenix characteristic. Few "brown" beers are made apart from the now-legendary Wobbly Bob, but there are however quite a few very dark beers – ranging from the excellent Monkeytown Mild to the rich Phoenix Porter. A notable success has been Black Bee, a honey porter initially brewed as a one-off but now another regular.

## The Phoenix Brewery

FEW micros have premises as impressive as Phoenix, occupying as it does part of the old Phoenix Brewery premises, with the prominent tower still displaying the old (and new) company's name.

The old company was registered in 1874 and had something of a chequered history, going bankrupt three times. The last occasion was in 1939, when about 120 pubs were owned, prompting its purchase and closure by the Cornbrook Brewery of Old Trafford

The equipment was sold off to aid the war effort but the tower today remains an impressive sight both inside and out. Within everything is in place, apart from the various vessels – even painted signs denoting the hop rooms (pictured). The current brewery occupies the old maltings while the Victorian offices are being restored to be used for occasional functions. All in all Phoenix looks set fair for the next 25 years – we'll certainly drink to that, perhaps with a glass of Wobbly Bob!





**L**OTS of bits and pieces for you this month – as far as space permits. So without further ado...

The hoardings are down on the new Wetherspoons at Whitworth Park. I've not had chance to look inside, but it's called the **Ford Madox Brown** and is a Wetherspoons rather than a Lloyds. It opens on 17th December.

The scaffolding etc has also been removed from the old Clock Tower in Didsbury so that should be re-opening soon.

I have also been informed that when the **Woodstock**, Barlow Moor Road, Didsbury re-opens it will no longer be an Ember Inn. Apparently it's going to be a "Castle" which from description is one of those bizarre branding concepts - a chain made up of "individual" pubs. However, I am assured that there will be "plenty of real ale". Re-opening is due on 12th December.

**Openshaw Woes**

Sad news of the demolition in August of the **Crown** in Openshaw. This former Boddies house on Ashton Old Road closed some months ago for whatever reason. Our picture shows the neat grassed site next door to the nicely decorated **Grove** (no cask ale).



Up the road, the **Concert** is becoming increasingly derelict, whilst the **Tower** (former, Screwy Hewey's, former Halfway House) is firmly boarded up. The former **Prince of Wales** is now a restaurant, and the one-time Holts pub,

the **Pack Horse**, is now an African food store. All is not woe though, Holts is sold at the **Railway**, **Lord Raglan**, and **Albion**, whilst the **Forresters** does Robbies, and do not miss out on some great Moorhouses (Black Cat and house-beer, Blue) at the ever-reliable **Legh Arms**.

**Didsbury News**

I hear good things about the charity quiz at the **Fletcher Moss** in Didsbury. Held on the first Monday of every month, all proceeds go to Francis House and the winner wins a gallon of beer. Entry is £1 per player with usually four players a team.

Nearby, Andrea Chapman has returned to the (Famous) **Crown** following an absence due to family reasons. The pub is to be refurbished internally with a redecoration and new carpets and curtains etc. On a recent visit, cask beers on sale were Courage Directors, Wells Bombardier and Adnams Broadside.

**More Pieces**

It's always good to hear of a real ale gain. This time it's the **Christie Fields** near the corner of Princess Parkway and Barlow Moor Road. The pub was refurbished about four months ago and since then two handpumps have dispensed two out the following cask beers – Boddington's Bitter, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Hydes' Jekyll's Gold. This policy will continue for the foreseeable future.

A pub I must visit is the **Romper** at Ringway. The landlord is Jason Jennings and he has an impressive track record, winning a CAMRA Pub of the Season award, and being local Pub of the Year runner-up, at his previous pub in Bingley. He's keen on his cask and the two permanent beers, Boddington's Bitter and Taylor's Landlord are accompanied by guest beers – in early November I am told these comprised three organic beers from the North Yorkshire Brewery.

**F**IRST news of a pub opening. Cheadle Hulme is rapidly becoming on of the real ale stars of the Stockport pub scene and last month saw another venue swell the ranks of the cask beer outlets.

The **Penny Black**, a "Smith & Jones" branded outlet was opened by the Barracuda group in the former post sorting office on Warren Road. The pub has a Wetherspoons feel in terms of layout and finish although there are rather more plasma screens and louder music than you find in your average "Spoons". Unlike some of the other Barracuda outlets, the Smith & Jones pubs usually sell cask beer and this is true of the Penny Black. Two banks of three handpumps sell three cask beers – Wells Bombardier and Marston's Pedigree appear to be permanent while the third changes with both Brains Bitter and Caledonian Deuchars IPA having been spotted. I tried the Brains and it was pretty good.

Continuing my walk around Cheadle Hulme, I ventured into the **Governors House** having heard rumours of interesting



guest beers in the ex Hardy & Hanson now a Greene King pub. And it is true. I sampled an Old Mill Halloween Surprise (3.8%) - quite malty with hints of chocolate. Also on were Highgate Saddlers as well as H+H Bitter, GK IPA and

Old Speckled Hen. Boards on the bar gave tasting descriptions of these guest beers and they also noted that coming soon were beers from Wychwood, Otter, Wyre Piddle, Lees, Stonehenge and Sharps. Good news indeed.

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**Closures and other news**

**S**OME good news first. Ron Barker, licensee of the **Travellers Call**, Great Moor. Has been in touch. He tells me that over the years they have raised £80,000 for charities. There was a presentation to Downs Syndrome on Saturday 24th November. Congratulations to all involved.

The **Lonsdale** on Belmont Way has now reopened after a period of closure but I have no news yet as to whether real ale is sold (but I can probably guess).

On Hillgate the builders are now in at both the **Black Lion** and the **Golden Lion**. Unfortunately this doesn't augur well as both of these long closed pubs are being converted to other use.

Better news at the **Red Bull** though – the builders are in here, too but this time it is to extend the pub into the vacant building next door. The pub still has its tenancy available, although I have heard of one interested party who would be just what this pub needs.

Less good news at another Robbies pub, though. The **Church** in Edgeley was closed and sealed with steel shutters as this was written. There appears to have been some sort of incident at this rare keg-only Robinson's outlet.

Nearby, the **Olde Vic** still does the business though. Five guest beers and a changing guest cider to boot make this an essential stop for locals and visitors alike. The latest addition is a large screen that will come into use for major sporting events. Rumours abound that Robinson's are to close down the **Star & Garter** on Hillgate. Don't believe them – the pub is to change hands though and the tenancy is being advertised on the brewery's website.



**Family Favourites**

**SOME** interesting seasonals out this month from our local family brewers.



**Robinson's** new beer, for one month only, is Mr Scrooge's Humbug Bitter (4.4%). This is described as a "mahogany coloured festive ale with aromas of roasted malt and fruity hop... a rich and complex palate of roasted malt and biscuit complimented by both lemon and blackcurrant fruit notes" So far Robinson's have scored some notable success with their seasonal beers this year and we understand that next year's programme may be equally

inventive. More, hopefully, next month.

**Hydes'** seasonal for November and December is Atomic, previewed last month. This has turned out to be a stunning beer - a wonderfully smooth and rich stout-like brew. One of the best new Hydes' beers for a long time, we think.

**Holt's** beer for December is Touchwood (4.2%) a premium ale with "a dramatic sweet burst of flavour". It is brewed from amber and ale malts combined with honey and using Willamette hops. The new Pioneer (5%) is also making waves with some reckoning it is the best beer to come out of Holts for years.

**Micro Magic**

SPACE prevents our usual comprehensive roundup. Apologies to those breweries we don't feature this time around.

**Bazens'** - Richard has now brewed the two Christmas beers - Santa's Reinbeer (4.3%) - one of the regular seasonal specials and Santa's Stout (4.5%) which is the first stout produced by Bazens'. The last of The Salford Series was available from the beginning of December – the competition entries to name the beer were to be judged as we went to press.

**Three Rivers** – still occupied with extending the brewery so not so many new beers out. However one to look forward to is Yummy Figgy Pudding (7.5%). This spicy festive ale is becoming something of a flagship beer for 3 Rivers and demand is higher than ever this year.

**Marble** – the bottled imperial stout, Decadence (8.2%) is finally released to the public this month. *Opening Times* has already tried this and can confirm we are all in for a treat. Also out will be the Port Stout (4.7%), traditionally released on Christmas Eve. Currently out is another dark beer, McKenna's Revised Porter (4.5%), the latest variant of the McKenna's Porter range.

In a significant move, Marble Brewery is also having to abandon its "organic only" policy. Rising costs of organic ingredients mean that in future Manchester Bitter will be non-organic. The rest of the regular beers will continue as before.

**Hornbeam Brewery** - out last month was Dark Domination (6%) a smooth rich but dangerously drinkable porter. The whole Hornbeam range is now on great form and demand is such that more casks have been ordered. Out for Christmas is Christmas Champagne Ale (4%) a pale beer brewed with grapes. Not your usual Christmas beer but bound to be interesting and well made.

**Porters** – after a slight delay now in the hands of Geoff Oliver. The brewery will be renamed Pennine Ales although the "Rossendale Brewery" tag will remain. No changes planned to beers although Porter's Porter will now become Pennine Porter. We hope to have an interview with Geoff in the next issue.



Atherton & Tyldesley Round Table  
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24th, 25th & 26th of January 2008  
**FORMBY HALL, ATHERTON**  
MAIN BENEFICIARIES:  
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Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup> January	6:00pm - 11:00pm	£4-00
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> January	5:00pm - 11:00pm	£6-00
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> January	12:00 noon - 4:00pm	£4-00
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> January	7:00pm - 11:00pm	£4-00

CAMRA members (proof required) £1-00 reduction on admission fee  
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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> December** – Branch Social and Xmas Quiz: Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8pm.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Launch of Winter Warmer Wobbler social. Meet Nursery, Green Lane at 5.00pm; 7.00pm Railway, Avenue Street

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup>** - Famous Hillgate Stagger: 7.00pm Queens Head, Little Underbank; 8.00pm Red Bull, Hillgate,

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Cheadle Hulme, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme. From 8.00pm.

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January** – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. **Pub of the Year to be chosen at this meeting.** Starts 8.00pm.

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

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Strines, Marple. Starts 8.30pm

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Christmas Social: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 7.00pm.

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup>** – Annual “Regain Your Sanity” mid-Christmas crawl in Manchester City Centre. Contact Tom Lord for route details.

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>** - Branch Xmas Social at Hydes Brewery. Limited numbers. £5 per head includes curry buffet. Book with Bev Rae on 07730 550428

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> January** – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, 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 17<sup>th</sup>** – Christmas Social: St Dusntan's Inn, Langley, from 8:00pm.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Post- Christmas Social: Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield, from 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>** – Double Social: Dean Brook Inn, St Mary's Rd, Moston 7.20; Railway, Dean Lane 9pm.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill. Starts 8.00pm

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January** - Queen's Arms, Patricroft, 8pm. Look in at Drop Inn, Park Inn, Monton, 9.30pm

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January** - Presentation of 'Neil Richardson Trophy 2008' to Stanley Arms, Liverpool Rd, Patricroft, 8pm

# 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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