

APRIL 2008

# Opening

TIMES THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

## CASK BOUNCES BACK

**AFTER** years of headline figures predicting the imminent demise of cask conditioned beer, or real ale as it is popularly known, it seems that cask is now returning to growth.

The latest figures show that real ale losses are now running at less than 3%, and this is almost entirely driven by the continuing decline of the national cask ale brands such as Tetleys and John Smiths. Many dedicated cask ale brewers are seeing a growth in volumes, a trend particularly noticeable in the micro-brewing sector where impressive sales increases are being recorded.

The trends are such that the overall cask ale market is now predicted to be in growth again within the next 12 months as the national brands are finally eclipsed by locally made, quality cask ales. See article on page 11 for more.



WE are now on the home straight for the 22nd Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, the Festival will take place at Edgley Park from 29 - 31 May.

The beer and cider orders are being finalised and we are delighted to announce that Marble Brewery will be brewing this year's Festival Special. A preview of the entertainment is on pages 12 and 13.



THE Mild Challenge is back this year – with a new name and a greater spread of pubs, notably with more Holt's houses taking part. It's also easier to take part as you only need to visit 12 pubs to win a prize.

We have also tied in more closely with CAMRA's "May Mild Month" with a later start and finish. Thanks also to the Didsbury pub for sponsoring this year's event. More on page 9.



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# COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

## Opening Times – Comment

AS we report this month, cask ale looks as though it is finally emerging from the long years of decline. Certainly many licensees I have spoken to are saying that cask ale sales were one of the few bright spots in what was a generally dismal 2007. There is certainly something in the air and cask is starting to appear in venues that took it out years ago - a prime example of this is the bar at the Castlefield Hotel on Liverpool Road. We must be careful though – last time there was a “dash for cask” it ended up in all sorts of pubs and bars that shouldn't have sold it and quality invariably suffered. I am hopeful that this time those lessons have been learned. It does seem that the growth is being taken forward by licensees with a real passion for cask – and a realisation that quality is vital. Similarly, the growth is being supplied by brewers who actually care about their beers and don't regard them as industrial brands. It could be the start of a virtuous circle – the next 12 months will be very interesting.

## Opening Times - Information

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*Beer Festival 24 - 27 April*





**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April is the Didsbury on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury.**

Part of the Chef & Brewer chain, the Didsbury remains a traditional pub with not only the expected emphasis on food but an equal commitment to quality cask beers.

Externally this is an imposing building on an important corner site, and has quite a bit of history to it. There are records of a pub here as far back as 1644 when an inn known as the Ring O'Bells occupied the site.

The open space at the front of the pub was once Didsbury village green and so the pub has historically been at the centre of local life. A fair was held once a year with booths and side shows and on Guy Fawkes night a bonfire was lit with much drinking and merriment. On the 28th January, 1793 the effigy of Tom Paine, author of 'The Rights of Man' was burned as the local gentry took fright following the French Revolution. There is more on the pub's excellent website at [www.thedidsbury.co.uk](http://www.thedidsbury.co.uk).

It's rather more sedate these days, with locals and visitors alike concentrating their efforts on enjoying the excellent food and drink on offer here.

Inside the pub is essentially open-plan but it is skilfully divided up with a number of separate areas and levels creating a cosy, rambling feel to the place, all enhanced by the rustic décor.

Being a Chef & Brewer pub, there is a big emphasis on food with an excellent menu including monthly specials and a fish board. Beer could easily be an afterthought, and for many years it was. However landlord and landlady Paul and Paula Johnson are as equally concerned to offer a quality cask beer range, as they are to sell top notch food. This quality is reflected by the fact that the pub has gained the coveted Cask Marque award.

The cask ale range is extensive with Taylor's Landlord and Caledonian Deuchars IPA among the regular beers alongside organic beers from the North Yorkshire Brewery, including house beer Didsbury Ale. Two beer festivals are run each year, one throughout April and the same again in November. Conveniently, this means that the festival (which features an enhanced range of guest beers) will still be on when this very well deserved award is presented on Thursday 24th April **MO'B**

*The Didsbury is very accessible by public transport. From Stockport services 23, 42 and 370 will drop you close by. The pub is also served by all Wilmslow Road buses.*

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**Gatley and Cheadle Village with John Sutcliffe**

IT WAS a wet and windy night but undaunted a hardy bunch met at the **Prince of Wales** at Gatley Green. Peter and Laura who keep this delightful, friendly house were on holiday at the time of our visit which might account for the light mild hand pump dispensing Hydes Owd Oak dark mild; the other beer on offer being Original Bitter. There are three interlinked rooms with low ceilings and beams, a dart board and table games and reasonably priced lunchtime food. At 7.30 the pub was comfortably full, in contrast to The Red Lion across the green that had no real ale and only two customers gracing its lacklustre interior.



Next door to the Price of Wales is the **Gothic**, a converted chapel with high ceiling and gallery, exposed roof trusses and bar front decorated with Edwardian tiles. The beers on offer were all from Cains, the Liverpool brewery and included a good mild, Bitter, 2008 and Formidable Ale. On the Friday night of our visit there were a reasonable number of customers and I imagine there will be more on the first Friday of the month when there is a 60-70s Motown and Soul music night, and on Saturday Disco nights, and Wednesday quiz nights.



A short walk brought us to the **Horse and Farrier**, a popular Hydes' Heritage pub with lots of linked spaces, nooks and crannies and real fireplaces but no fires. 19thC photographs show the horse drawn tram outside at the front. Beers were well kept Hydes 1863, Original Bitter, Jekyll's Gold, and A'dleyweisse a superb wheat beer from Townhouse Brewery. There was a beer festival scheduled here for 14th March.

**Stockport & South Manchester  
CAMRA Pub of the Year 2008**



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A 10 minute walk brought us to the **White Hart**; an old coaching inn next to St Mary's Parish Church in Cheadle, with a large rear car park. At the time of our visit there was only Greene King IPA but Boddingtons Bitter is normally on in this pleasant, well run pub.

Bypassing Weavers, that had no real ale, we crossed High Street to the **Crown**, possibly once converted from a shop. Here in a crowded, lively atmosphere with live music from a lady singer, most of us went for the Hydes Original Bitter or the very acceptable All Gate's Hannibal Nectar. Hydes Mild and Greene King Abbot Ale were also available.



Bar 65 had no real ale so we continued to the newly decorated Hydes **Star** that still has its former name Old Star in the glass of the windows. Although the Original Bitter was a little better than average, the Light was a bit disappointing for a pub displaying the Cask Marque logo. There is still a small vault but it was not in use. The landlord Ian sponsors three darts teams, junior, senior and vets football teams and there are dominoes and cribbage.

A slight detour under the bridge into Manchester Road took us to the **Ashlea** that some may remember as the Railway many years ago. Here there was a good choice of quality beers, unusual for a place that is noted for its food, served from noon until 10 p.m. We sampled the North Yorkshire Brewing Company Archbishop Lees Organic Ruby Ale and Adnam's Broadblade and they scored well. This is a comfortable old brick pub on split levels with parking to the rear.

Back on High Street the George and Dragon is between landlords, and had no real ale. Our final destination was the



**Royal Oak.** Once again jazz style live music created a lively scene in an otherwise traditional thirties brick pub. There is a more Spartan but quieter games room with table top football and darts board. The only beer was Robinson's Unicorn but most people found this quite acceptable.

Overall there was an interesting variety of establishments, with a range of perhaps not outstanding but good quality beers. Well worth the effort.

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**T**HE big news this month is the reopening of the **White Lion** in Disley. Great things are promised here – see the separate article for full details. Also in Disley the **Mousetrap** has been refurbished and has new licensees. On the last visit our members from that area of the branch report that Wells & Youngs Bombardier is the sole beer on sale at present.

I made an effort to visit the **Chieftain** on Green Lane in Hadfield on 9th March and as always when I go in, I was very impressed with the ambience and the appearance of the pub. Four handpumped beers were available, Hydes Original, Hydes Owd Oak (Mild), Greene King Abbot and the seasonal Hydes beer, Trojan Horse, which I found in extremely good condition. It is a little out of the village centre but well worth seeking out, in the middle of an established housing estate built about 40 years ago.

Shaws will have a new beer doing the rounds by the time you read this article. It is Golden Perle at 4.3% and will be on sale in the normal outlets that take their beers. Incidentally beers from Shaws have been in very good form at the **Partington Club** on Henry Street in Glossop recently, as they have also in **Glossop Conservative Club**.

The **Royal Oak** on Sheffield Road in Glossop (bottom of the Snake Pass) recently had new licensees. However, they apparently decided it was not for them very early on, using the get-out clause that Punch Taverns had given in the contract. By the time you read this, it should be in new hands again. Just off from Glossop traffic lights, on High Street East, Robinsons Unicorn is reported to be on sale.

In Buxton, the **White Lion** has been acquired by Enterprise Inns. Russell Dalton is currently in charge since the **Gloveworks** in Glossop closed. Taylors Landlord and Greene King IPA are the regular beers with the guest being Copper Dragon Golden Pippin when our local members called in early in March. The pub is scheduled to close in October for a refurbishment.

Again in Buxton, the **Bakers Arms** on West Road is currently closed and up for sale. The **Queens** is selling Greene King IPA, and we believe that a planning application has been submitted for the George across from the Opera House, which appears to retain the pub but with more of a gastro feel. Talking of which, the **Beltane** on Hall Bank, currently in the Good Beer Guide, has been getting very good reviews for its food quality (three beers on offer).

The **Bulls Head** in Old Glossop has always had a reputation for good quality beer and food (they have operated an Indian food franchise for several years) and the latest seasonal beer from Robinsons, Tempus Fugit, has been in excellent condition on my two recent visits and that of other members.

The **Q Bar** in Stalybridge came third in the Northern Pub of the Year, awarded by Northern Hospitality, who are hosts to the Northern Restaurant and Bar event at the G-Mex. As it covers pubs from as far as Hull to Chester and the Scottish border, this is quite an accolade and we congratulate them on the award.

Finally, apologies to the **Sportsman** and the **Royal Oak** in Strines, when I was reflecting on the lack of choice of beer in Marple causing cask beer lovers who like to try alternative beers, travelling out to Hayfield, Glossop and Stockport among other places at weekends. The Sportsman is a long time good outlet for guest (and quality) beers, in fact it is a regular Good Beer Guide entry whilst the Royal Oak, ably run by Jamie Moon, is a lovely cosy pub that justifiably deserves equal mention in this column. Both are a very short bus ride on the hourly 358 bus out to New Mills or a 25 minute pleasant walk down the canal tow path from the centre of Marple, weather permitting.



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2002

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THE Winter edition of *Potters Bar*, the Potteries CAMRA branch newsletter had an article about pubs being re-opened, in their case in a venture between Titanic and Everard's breweries. The article commented, 'Isn't it nice to see someone taking a positive attitude to pubs and REOPENING them - in contrast to the cultural vandalism shown by too many of the major players in the pub ownership market.'

Well in Whaley Bridge knights in shining armour have arrived to eventually re-open the long closed **Jodrell Arms**. Jeremy Middleton and Nick Aldrich have bought the freehold to the Jodrell and are in the process of planning an appropriate development of this listed building. They are in it for the long term so that there will not be an instant re-opening. Because of the Jodrell's listed building status any work done has to have the approval of High Peak Borough Conservation Officers. Plans include the upgrading of accommodation to suit a 21st century hotel. A restaurant area will grow out of the function room. The rooms near the bar will be just that and will be available for bar meals, and for real ales which it is intended will be sourced from local microbreweries. This is all good news. Watch this column for updates as the story unfolds.

A recent visit to Disley found the Robinson's Hatters and Unicorn on good form at the **White Horse**, just up Buxton Old Road above the lights. Food is available most days, lunchtime and evening. Monday hours are 18.30 till late whilst other days are 11.30 till late. This pub makes a worthwhile visit, and I look forward to returning on Wild for Mild, if not before.

Further up the hill, the last pub on Buxton Old Road is the **Ploughboy**, still sporting a Pubmaster lantern, so presumably Punch owned. This local is mainly an L-shaped room, though there are signs of a previous multi-roomed version. Hydes' Boddingtons' Bitter was available at a sensible £2 a pint, and was worth the walk up the hill.

At the bottom of the hill in the village centre the **Mousetrap** was closed for refurbishment. I think this could be another freehold purchase. More information in the future.

I can't recall any previous visit to Disley's **White Lion**. As predicted in Frank Wood's High Peak News last month, the White Lion duly reopened in mid February, after an extension to the rear and a good refurbishment. Food also features in the new White Lion, but the biggest impact is seen at the bar, where up to eight real ales are available. Theakstons' Bitter, Jennings' Cumberland and Coach House Gunpowder Mild are regulars, whilst there are five ever changing guest beers, sourced from the Enterprise SIBA list. I had a good pint of Cottage Champflower on my visit. This venture certainly deserves to be successful, providing Disley with a range of choice for quality beers. For the sake of locals and visitors alike let's hope it is. Best wishes to the Zebra Pub Company.

Other good news this month is that the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee has reopened. Marston's have put a manager in, presumably on some sort of temporary basis. I have not yet had chance to get up to the Shady Oak, so more news next time. A Marston's seasonal beer available at the **Shepherds'** in Whaley Bridge, was Sun Bright. 3.8%. This is slightly paler than the ordinary Marston's Bitter and is a tad hoppier. It was of course in good form, as the beers in the Shepherds' invariably are.

At the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge food is now available 12.00 till 15.00 Tuesday till Sunday and the pub is now open as above. These are extra opening hours to the previous pattern of daytime closure except on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. More news on this next time.

Finally a follow up to Curmudgeon's comment about too many pies. (OT March 2008). The Cock in Whaley Bridge has a Pie Club. Paid for orders are taken up until Thursday, and are then delivered on Friday from a supplier in Macclesfield. Presently over 50 pies go through the process, to the satisfaction of all concerned!



### Out of the Box

**I**N the more prosperous parts of the area, the past few years have seen a number of new café-style bars opening up in former shop premises, which seem to be predominantly aimed at the younger end of the market. Their typically uncompromising four-square plan and lack of fixed furnishings to take the eye away from the profusion of right angles has led to them being dubbed "box bars".

Now these might be seen as introducing extra variety and competition into the licensed trade. However in the vast majority of cases they offer no cask beer or anything of interest on the bottled front, and their soulless, modernistic interiors are unlikely to appeal to the lover of proper pubs. A pub is either purpose built as such or evolves over time - it cannot be created overnight by putting a counter and a few glass-topped tables and steel-framed chairs into a featureless square room.

In fact all the box bars do is to further fragment the drinking scene and undermine the business of such conventional pubs as remain. With few exceptions they are in places where there are already pubs nearby, so it can hardly be argued that they are serving an unmet need. In view of this, rather than issuing new licences, might it be better for councils to suggest that those wishing to enter the trade take over some of the existing pubs that are closing?

### Free to Mislead

A couple of pubs near me have recently sprouted signs saying "Free House". On the face of it, this might tempt people in search of unusual beers, but in reality both pubs belong to large pub companies that decide which beers they can sell, so visitors are likely to be disappointed. In fact one of them is a chain dining pub that does not even offer any cask beer.

In the days when the vast majority of pubs were tied to brewers and only sold their products, the term "Free House" actually meant something, and in the 70s and 80s genuine free houses played a leading role in widening the range of beers available. However, as all the big brewers progressively sold their estates off to pub companies, the term has become increasingly devalued to the extent that it is now largely meaningless. Indeed, if you're looking for a quality pint you are often better off choosing an "Unfree House" that is tied to an independent brewer.

### The Bingers' Budget

DESPITE extensive lobbying from both CAMRA and the British Beer & Pub Association, Alastair Darling chose to raise the level of beer duty by a swingeing 6% above the rate of inflation and promised a further 2% above inflation rises in the coming years. This will widen the gap between pub prices and the off-trade yet more and accelerate the current rate of pub closures. It will exacerbate uncontrolled problem drinking and penalise the moderate, responsible drinker. We already have one of the highest levels of alcohol taxation in Europe, and increasing it even more will only serve to encourage both legal imports and smuggling. Truly a black day for the British pub.

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



# BIG IN BATTERSEA

[www.marblebeers.com](http://www.marblebeers.com)





**F**ollowing the success of last year's Mild Challenge we have once again teamed up with the Didsbury pub to bring you "Wild for Mild", and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield.

The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new

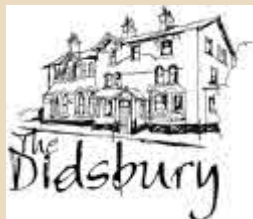
pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.

The Challenge runs from Saturday 26 April to Friday 23 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2008 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival.

We are also again featuring the **Mild Challenge Extra** – visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special "Wild for Mild" t-shirt

Enter the **Mild Challenge Super** by getting stamps from 24 different pubs in 24 different areas you get a free "Wild for Mild" polo shirt, and you will be entered into a prize draw to be "Brewer for the Day" at Manchester's Marble Brewery

To complete **Mild Challenge Ultra**, send in cards containing a stamp from every participating pub, you will also receive a free, special-edition, embroidered Polo shirt, and again go into the "Brewer for the Day" draw. Otherwise, only one entry per person please.



This year we are also especially grateful to Robinson's for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how the famous Hatters is brewed.

This year we are again asking all participants to vote for their favourite pint of mild and the pub in which it was served – the winning pub will be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award in recognition of their efforts. Finally, many thanks to The Didsbury pub (852 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury) for sponsoring this year's event.

Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL

- When you buy a pint or a half of cask mild in one of the pubs taking part, ask the bar staff to stamp your card. Remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub.
- When you've filled the card (you'll need 12 different stamps from 12 different pubs) send it to the Mild Challenge address on the card and, after our closing date, we will send off your prizes.

Simple isn't it? Happy Drinking.

## WILD FOR MILD - THE PUBS

These are the pubs taking part in this year's "Wild for Mild" – they cover a wide area so everyone should be able to take part:

**Adswood:** Adswood Hotel; **Altrincham:** Old Market Tavern; **Bredbury:** Greyhound; **Bridgemont:** Dog & Partridge; **Burnage:** Albion; **Cheadle:** Crown; Star; Queens Arms; **Cheadle Hulme:** Cheadle Hulme; Church Inn; **Clayton:** Grove Inn; **Compstall:** Andrew Arms; Northumberland Arms; **Denton:** Red Lion; Chapel House; Masons Arms; **Didsbury:** Fletcher Moss; Didsbury; **Disley:** Dandy Cock; White Horse; White Lion; **Droylsden:** Halfway House; **Fallowfield:** Friendship; **Furness Vale:** Crossings; **Gatley:** Gothic; Horse & Farrier; Prince of Wales; High Grove; **Glossop:** Friendship; **Gorton:** Plough; Waggon & Horses; **Great Moor:** Crown; Dog & Partridge; **Hadfield:** Chieftain; **Hazel Grove:** Grove; Royal Oak; Grapes; Three Tunnes; **Heald Green:** Griffin; **Heaton Norris:** Silver Jubilee; Four Heaton; Nursery; **Heaviley:** Blossoms; **High Lane:** Royal Oak; **Hyde:** Queens; Cheshire Ring; Sportsman; **Longsight:** New Victoria; **Manchester City Centre:** Marble Arch; Ape & Apple; Old Monkey; Grey Horse; Crown & Anchor; **Marple:** Hatters; Navigation; **Marple (Rose Hill):** Railway; **Mellor:** Royal Oak; **Moss Nook:** Tatton Arms; **New Mills:** Masons Arms; **Old Glossop:** Bulls Head; **Openshaw:** Legh Arms; **Portwood:** Railway; **Reddish:** Three Rivers Club; Thatched Tavern; **Rusholme:** Osborne House; **Salford:** Crescent; New Oxford; **Shaw Heath:** Armoury; **Stalybridge:** Station Buffet Bar; **Stockport Centre:** Arden Arms; Tiviot; Bakers Vaults; Sun & Castle; Crown; Pineapple; Royal Oak; **Whaley Bridge:** Board Inn; Railway; Shepherds Arms; Cock Inn; **Withington:** Victoria; **Woodford:** Davenport Arms; **Wythenshawe:** Airport Hotel.



## MILD – WHO BREWS WHAT

**WHILE** the National Brewers seem to have virtually turned their backs on cask mild, our local companies still produce the real thing. Robinson's in fact still produce two milds and Hydres three! Here we give a run-down on the milds you can expect to find on this year's Challenge. In addition a number of pubs will be offering a variety of guest milds during the Challenge.

**3 Rivers Delta Dark** (4.8% ABV) – tasty dark mild brewed for May. **Beartown Ambeardextrous** (3.5%) – dark, rich and full flavoured. **Beartown Black Bear** (5%) – strong mild with roast and malt flavours and a mellow finish. **Cains Dark Mild** (3.2%) – smooth, dry and roasty. **Coach House Gunpowder Mild** (3.8%) – full bodied and roasty with a malty aroma and full finish. **Holt Mild** (3.2%) – very dark with complex taste. **Hydes Light/1863** (3.7%) – refreshing and fruity with a dry finish. **Hydes Mild** (3.5%) – dark and dry. **Hydes Owd Oak** (3.5%) – very dark mild with rich taste. **Jennings Dark Mild** (3.1%) – dark, malty and roasty. **Marble** (6%) – new strong mild being brewed for May. **Moorhouse's Black Cat** (3.4%) – dark and fruity with lingering taste. **Oakwell Old Tom** (3.4%) – dark and smooth **Robinson's Hatters** (3.2%) – refreshingly dry and malty. **Dark Hatters** (3.2%) – dark and fruity. **Tetley Dark Mild** (3.2%) – good session mild with fruity taste.



WITH the notable exception of the **Melville**, Stretford has been something of a cask ale desert for years now. There has however been a new and very welcome development.

The **Cock** on Chester Road now displays a banner declaring that the pub is "Now Fully Reopened Selling Great Cask Beers". And so it is.



The man behind the transformation of the pub's beer offering is John Rogers, or "Johnno" to many of his friends at his last pub – the Marble Arch, where he brought a great deal of professionalism and enthusiasm to the pub.

He is very excited at being back in the trade and expressed a hope that he could turn the

ailing pub around. He recognises that that this could be an uphill struggle and that Stretford folk are not automatic converts when it comes to real ale.

The pub certainly looks as though it has not had a penny spent on it for years but there remain some impressive features – a revolving door, some remaining stained glass and an extremely impressive mirrored bar back.

When *Opening Times* called there were three cask beers on the bar – Taylor's Golden Best, Deuchars IPA and Black Sheep Bitter. Other beers sold have included Copper Dragon Black Gold and Crouch Vale Brewers Gold., The Taylor's, the only beer tried, was fine and it was good to see a top-up offered without asking. Also impressive was the way the cask ale is being promoted with full descriptions of each beer taped to the base of each handpump. This is a welcome, and brave, venture that deserves to succeed. We hope that local cask ale drinkers will give it every support.

### More Local News

THE Trafford & Hulme CAMRA **Pub of the Season** Award for Spring is the Volunteer on Cross Street in Sale. This up and coming pub usually serves Holts Mild, Bitter and the seasonal. The award to this Holt's house will be made on Thursday 17th April from 8pm. Do come and join us. We hope to have an article and photograph next time.

There are interesting developments afoot in Altrincham. The people behind the **Dranke Centrale** are in the process of opening a new cellar bar on Greenwood Street. The "Mort Subite" is planned to feature about 250 foreign beers including approximately 140 from Belgium and 40 from the Netherlands. Hopefully we will be able to let you have a full report next time.

In Flixton, the **Red Lion** on Irlam Road is selling only keg beers, despite a sign on the wall proclaiming cask ales. The **Fox & Hounds** on Woodsend Road has had beer from Dunham Massey Brewery on sale, in addition to Fullers London Pride and Greene King's Ruddles County. The **Rope & Anchor** in Dunham Massey, a former Boddingtons House is closed and boarded.

A drop in at the **Bricklayers** in Altrincham revealed a fine pint of Greene King's Old Speckled Hen followed by a Caledonian Deuchars at the **Orange Tree**. The Orange Tree is planning a St. George's Day mini-beer festival commencing Friday 18 April until Sunday 20th. Beer selection had yet to be decided as we went to press, but there should be seven or eight ales of a patriotic theme to choose from. The **Old Market Tavern** had a good selection, particularly from Bank Top but seems to have stopped doing draught cider.

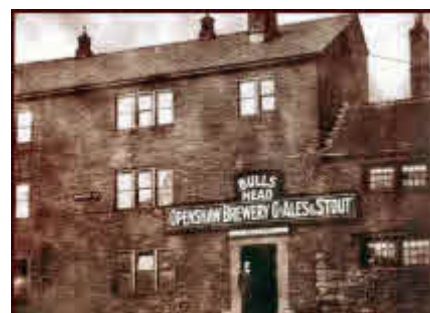
### The Bulls Head, Old Glossop

*Richard Chanin visits a favourite local ...*

ON travelling out of Glossop along Norfolk Street, towards the Woodhead Pass (B6105), it would be easy to miss the original town, which today is called 'Old Glossop'.

Turning right along Church Street the more modern housing rapidly gives way to 16th & 17th century cottages and on approaching the Well Gate there lies what is surely not only Glossop's oldest pub but one of its oldest buildings – the Bull's Head.

Parts of the building date from the 16th century; notably the games room, which overlooks the Old Cross, where from 1290 until the mid 19th century the market and annual fair were held.



Other notable sights from outside the front of the pub include Glossop Parish Church, the Old Bailiff's House (circa 1680) still with a window stopped up to avoid window tax, and to the north Shire Hill.

Inside low oak beams and stone mullioned windows blend well with a genuine décor that transports your thoughts back to a time when cotton was king and steam had only just arrived.

At the time of this visit Paul & Barbara the licensees had three hand pulled beers on offer from the Robinson's range: Hatter's, Old Stockport and Unicorn in addition to Old Tom on gravity. In addition to excellent ale the Bull's Head is renowned for the full Indian menu on offer prepared by 'Rusholme' chefs from 5pm onwards (reservations are recommended at busy times).

Many walkers choose Old Glossop as their access point to open country and trek along the northern flank of Shire Hill up Shelf Brook to Doctor's Gate where the old Roman road



crosses the Pennine Way. Who can blame them? Old Glossop offers a charming old setting with good food and excellent beer.

The Bull's Head is a good community pub loved by local people but also known by many visitors from outside the area. A place that keeps its tradition but responds to new demands. A place that offers good beer, good food and with friendly bar staff. A place we all wish was near where we live. A place that deserves our support.

*The Bull's Head is on Church Street in Old Glossop; telephone 01457 853291.*



## CASK ALE BOUNCING BACK



LICENSED trade experts and analysts have been predicting the terminal decline of cask beer for years now. Indeed if some of them were to be believed, there would be no future in the style at all.

Luckily however there are fewer things less reliable in this world than licensed trade surveys and predictions. Just as the "next big thing" usually turns out to be a dud, reports of cask ale's death have proved a little premature.

Last year's terrible summer coupled with the effects of the smoking ban badly hit the trade of many pubs. However while sales of keg lagers and such like were falling off a cliff, cask ale sales proved remarkably resilient. Demand for local beers in particular seems to be on a roll and the interest shown by licensees is increasing all the time.

Consumer and market trends are converging to make cask the 'intelligent choice' for beer retailers and this was all brought together in last years report called, appropriately, *The Intelligent Choice*, and prepared by a unique alliance of industry and consumer groups.



Written by independent author Pete Brown and jointly published by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, the Society of Independent Brewers, the Cask Marque Trust and the Why Handpull

group, the report paints a bright picture of Britain's iconic, traditional and world famous tippie.

Most notably, *The Intelligent Choice* presents evidence to dispel gloomy predictions that the cask ale market is in permanent decline.

Pete Brown said: "How can cask ale be suffering this way when we have more brewers in the UK than at any one point in the last 50 years, many of whom are reporting soaring sales?"

"The number of pubs stocking cask ale is increasing, while consumer group CAMRA is boasting record membership and bumper attendances at its beer festivals.

"We feel we have overwhelming evidence to challenge the doom and gloom merchants outside of the trade that take one look at market data and conclude the British beer industry is in steep terminal decline."

The report suggests that the top-line five percent decline in the ale market gives a misleading impression since most of the losses come from the 'big four' multinational brewers. They dominate the UK beer market and account for 56 percent of the total ale market, but are systematically withdrawing support from their cask brands. At the same time, where regional and local brewers are enthusiastically supporting their ales the market is seeing strong volume and growth. In fact, independent and local brewers are growing by an average of 7.5 percent year on year.

This is good news for those pubs still selling cask which are starting to have a real selling point that their keg-only competitors lack. You can drink lager and keg out of a can at home in front of the TV. You can only get cask in the pub.

Picture above taken from *MerseyAle*, the award winning magazine produced by *Liverpool & Districts CAMRA*.



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SENGER

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## RECENT CAMRA AWARDS

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for January was the Arden Arms on Millgate, Stockport. Many thanks to all involved. Pictured below are Steve King and Joe Quinn with their certificate.



The Pub of the Month for February went to another Robinson's pub, the Queens Arms in Cheadle. Our photo shows (l-r) Brian Hall, Brian Stokes and Tracy Halliwell with their award.



The Winter Warmer Wobble was won by local CAMRA member Phil Booton, recently elected as Chairman of North Manchester CAMRA. Our photo shows Phil (front) receiving his prize from Wobble co-organiser Dave Platt.





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# FESTIVAL ENTERTAINMENT

## A run down of the bands appearing at this year's Beer Festival

As usual apart from the great range of beer, cider and perry, their will also be some great bands for you to enjoy in our separate music room. We've asked Festival Entertainment Manager Stuart Ballantyne to give us a taste of what's on offer this year....

### Thursday Night - Treebeard

The festival opens with the return of an immensely popular band from last year, Treebeard. The bands is from Sheffield, and are regulars on the beer festival circuit, describing their style as 'Heavy Wood'. The band are not exactly 'new kids on the block'



having been formed in 1968 by Haze and World Turtle brothers Chris & Paul McMahon plus Paul Chisnell, Gordon Walker and Chris Jellis. They have recently been joined by Ceri Ashton on flute.

The band play their own original material together with a selection of rock, pop and folk songs in their own unique way. The breadth of the band's material is huge ranging from 'The Devil came Down to Georgia', made famous by Charlie Daniels to 'Layla' by Eric Clapton and 'Babylon' by David Gray. Should you prefer rockier numbers then you won't be disappointed either with tracks like 'Coz I love you' by Slade and 'Ace Of Spades' by Motorhead included as part of their set. More recent material includes covers of songs like 'The Drugs Don't Work' by the Verve and 'Don't Get Me Wrong' by the Pretenders.

Above all, Treebeard are a fun band to watch. Their sets are brilliantly executed, with terrific audience interaction all the way through. The great thing about Treebeard is that you never know what is coming next. All the members of the band are skilful musicians and what's more they really know how to entertain a crowd.

### Friday Night - The Micradotts



On Friday night the festival features a new band to the festival, the popular maximum noise, new wave style three piece band, the Micradotts. Their set ranges from songs from the Small Faces, the Sex Pistols, and the Jam to numbers

from the Killers, the Kaiser Chiefs, the Who, and Elvis. If you like a quiet night in then this band is probably not for you. But if you like a fun, loud, in your face band then the Micradotts might just suit.

The band is based in Oldham and Stockport and has been busy playing the Northwest's various venues for several years. The Micradotts regularly play at the UK's biggest independent biker festival at the Farmyard and at Stockport Market Place's

August Bank Holiday Roughley's Bike Show. The band has also played gigs for XFM Radio and NADB (National Association of Disabled Bikers), and has been busy building quite a reputation for itself as a must see act in and around the Northwest.

The band's sets may be noisy, high energy and exciting so please come prepared. The Micradotts are an opportunity to relive your youth, so don't miss them.

### Saturday Afternoon - The Winchesters

On Saturday lunchtime the Winchesters make a welcome return to Stockport Beer and Cider Festival.

The band has a long pedigree having been formed in 1991 and over the years they have entertained audiences throughout Europe with their eclectic, goodtime mix of Blues, Western Swing, Rock 'n' Roll and Country. At all times the band's performances are laced with their uniquely crazy presentation making the Winchesters a great favourite of audiences both young and old.

Their crazy antics have earned the band the nick name of the 'Crackpot Kings'. Following a six year break in which the band members all participated in other projects, the Winchesters are now back in business. They will perform many of their well-loved songs together with classics from their seven albums repertoire. The Winchesters really are a fun band that should not be missed as an afternoon of musical mayhem is guaranteed!



### Saturday Night - The Stumble

This year festival visitors are in for a real musical treat on Saturday night as we feature the internationally famous, brilliantly tight blues band, the Stumble. Originating from Glasgow, but now based in Preston this six piece band plays vintage blues from masters such as Ike Turner, Freddie King, and Elmore James.

The band is lead by the Canadian born guitar ace Colin Black, ably supported by the sensational gritty vocals of Paul Melville and deep throbbing sax solos from Simon Antony on his big, black baritone sax and tenor sax. Completing the band are Jon Spencer on guitar, Dave Heath on bass and Boyd Tonner on drums.



The whole ethos of the band is stylish classic blues played in a masterful sophisticated way quite unlike any other band. The band's depth and style is enormous, ranging from legendary classic numbers to their own polished gutsy tracks delivered with a punch that will knock you over. The Stumble take their music by the scruff of the neck and deliver it in such a way as to make you want more and more.

Some of you reading this might remember the tremendous reception that Connie Lush received a few years ago when she played Stockport Beer Festival. Well, the Stumble play the same professional circuit as Connie. If you liked Connie then you will certainly like the Stumble and if you miss the gig this year then you will definitely live to regret it.

Check out the bands latest CD 'The World is Tough' on Star Jam Music records.



George Elmslie of Trafford and Hulme Branch was in touch with a survey of some of the Oxford Road pubs. This inspired me to check out a few other pubs further down Wilmslow Road. First though, this is what George had to report...

### Oxford Road Rock n' Stroll

Some familiar haunts down and near Oxford Road were given the once over by the Trafford and Hulme branch one Thursday night late in February.

First call was at **Senger**, formerly Greens renamed for copyright reasons I do believe and the sharper among you will have noticed the re-arrangement of the letters in the name. I say it was a first visit I mean of course by the branch en-masse as I am sure many have passed this way since the opening some six months ago or so.



On to the establishment itself, the owner is John Henley, known also for his ownership of Bar Fringe in the Northern Quarter. The appearance of his new bar, though, is very different, being a large open space with a high ceiling

and an open kitchen at the far corner of the room. There were four ales on sale and the usual array of continental lagers and bottled beers that customers of the Bar Fringe would recognize.

Disappointingly the arrival of our bunch, some half a dozen strong, doubled the clientele that night, the preference for this area frequented in large numbers by students is for loudish music, sometimes live, Senger by comparison was an oasis of peace and quiet. Menus were on the tables with classy looking meals and snacks on offer, judging by the aroma from the kitchen pretty tasty too. I sampled the Allgates Mild at Heart and found it to be excellent.

The remainder of the evening was spent sampling the beers of the **Font**, **Thirsty Scholar** and the **Salisbury**, another bar just along the road from Senger the Scu 2 bar had no real ale and we left with the bewildering comment by a member of the bar staff 'sorry lads, this is a student bar!' thereby implying that students don't drink the stuff.

Earlier in the evening I popped my head into the **Thirsty Scholar** and was delighted to see three Copper Dragon pumps on the bar. However when we came back later this was reduced to one, busy night maybe, but the remaining beer was the splendid Black Gold. I hope it lasted the night as the majority of the live acts seemed to be Irish folk types and a drop of a cask black beer would go down well no doubt.

The **Font**, a split level bar usually has at least two real ales tonight it was the Millstone True Grit I plumped for, a good pint normally but a little on the chilled side for my liking. If you find the right spot a conversation can be carried out without raising your voice too much but a D.J. was just setting up so we drank up and left.

The evening was rounded off at the **Salisbury** with two ales on, Theakston Best and Everards Pitch Black. This bar is adorned with rock memorabilia on the walls and ceilings and is known as a staging post for a night out at the nearby rockworld.

Bars not visited on the night were the Grand Central and Odder bar, the former was rumoured to have no real ale and on the night had a band playing as well, the latter had two hand pumps visible.

As I said this led me to Wilmslow Road myself and in particular the pubs of Rusholme. Real ale is thin on the ground here these days but there are one or two reliable outlets. Of course, Hydes' two pubs, the **Albert** and the **Osborne House** can be relied upon to sell some decent cask. But of the rest there are just two outlets, **Hardys Well** and the **Whitworth**.

Hardy's Well is a pub I have enjoyed every time I have called and this time I managed to speak with licensee Clive Mason (*pictures below behind the bar at Hardy's Well*) who has had the pub for about five and a half years now.

I mentioned to him how I had been struck by what a huge cross section of the local community used the pub and he told me this was something he had set out to do. Clive looks on the pub as a 'student friendly community local', and it has to be said that this approach certainly seems to work here.



Cask beers are a feature here with three usually available. When I called there were two regulars, Taylor's Landlord and the rarely seen Websters Bitter, plus a guest, Wells Bombardier. There's also Westons Organic Cider in bottle. Clive told me that while trade had taken a bit of a dip due to the smoking ban, his cask sales had proved the most resilient. Well worth a visit.

As you will see from the outside of the pub, it once belonged to the long-vanished Hardy's Crown Brewery in Hulme. They owned two other pubs in Rusholme. One is the **Huntsman**, a keg-only basic boozier, and the other was the **Clarence**, now converted into something called Village.

At the other end of Rusholme is the other cask outlet – the **Whitworth** on Moss Lane East. I think this is a pub that needs a little TLC. No problems with the beer though. One of the four handpumps had the clip turned round while the others dispensed Hydes Original and Trojan Horse plus Coach House St Patrick's Leprechaun Ale. I tried this and found it very enjoyable.

### More on Chorlton

Latest additions to the Chorlton real ale scene are **Revise** on Wilbraham Road advertising cask ale with Bombardier, Ruddle's County, Thwaite's Bomber being recent offerings, also **Bar Forty Eight**, near to the precinct has two hand pumps serving Brewers Gold from Crouch Vale, last year's Great British Beer Festival Champion Beer and Thwaite's Double Century.

After a gap of several years, real ale has reappeared in the **Horse and Jockey** in Chorlton Green. It has three hand pumps, serving Well's Bombardier, Black Sheep Bitter and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. The **Trevor** has had a very tasty Wickwar Rite Flanker, amongst others, and has just been awarded the Beautiful Beer Gold Award. This indicates good quality bottled beers and lagers as well as cellarmanship. Hydes seasonal, called Trojan Horse, is malty and sweet and is currently available in **The Abode**.

**Pi** now has three handpumps and looks to be ready to fit a fourth. Available were Bank Top Flat Cap, Bazen's 1868 and Coach house Blueberry Bitter, a reasonable spread. Also of note is that the late licence has come in so Pi is now open until 12-30 at weekends.

At the **Marble Beer House** recent additions are their own Tawny 4 (4.5%), Pictish Blue Moon and Bank Top Flat Cap. **Lloyds** presented a fine pint of Lees Bitter, but it was disappointing not to see the seasonal ale on offer. Sedge Lynn had a good range on, of particular note was Bateman's Hooker, another on the rugby theme. Look out for the next issue, where an update on forthcoming plans for the **Beech** is expected.





Contact Alan on  
07798571354 or  
email:  
alangent@alangent.com

Please note the last date  
for bookings is  
20/5/2008

## ENTERTAINING?

So are we, why not join us at  
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The basic package includes entry, 2 pints, and a meal and starts at just £7.50 per head. (Session prices vary). We can also include a Festival glass in the package for your guests to use and take away with them.

As if that wasn't enough there'll also be live entertainment at most sessions.

If you would like to know more about this year's event at Edgeley Park, Stockport and find out how CAMRA can boost your entertaining, contact Alan Gent.

*The Stockport Beer Festival, it was never going to be about prawn sandwiches was it?*

## Fox & Goose Inn, Hebden Bridge

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# Brewery NEWS...

## Robbies Round-up

There are one or two interesting developments at Robinsons this month.

Steve Holt has been appointed brand development manager for the company. A well respected and experienced figure in the drinks trade, Steve was a founder director of Cains Brewery and prior to that was Marketing and Commercial Director at the Mansfield Brewery Company. He has also helped Okells Brewery gain a UK presence.



Steve Holt said: "The new role is primarily one of marketing and business development for the brewery's packaged brands in both UK and export markets." Before taking on this role Holt had established a

brand development business for UK and imported beer brands known as Vertical Drinks. The Vertical drinks imported brands which include Sierra Nevada Pale Ale and Veltins Pilsner will be added to the Robinson's portfolio with immediate effect. Hopefully this will see these excellent beers appear in the Robinson's estate.

Not every brand or every product can claim to be a runaway success, but Dizzy Blonde, last year's summer seasonal from Robinson's has proved that it can be done. The beer is making a welcome return to the pub trade this year following an unprecedented success for it last year.

Commercial director Oliver Robinson explained: "Each year we brew a series of seasonal beers to complement our core portfolio and add extra variety. Dizzy Blonde was the brand we launched last summer and we had to increase production to keep track with demand."

"It's great news for everybody at Robinson's and based on the impressive track record we will re-launch Dizzy Blonde in April this year and keep it in production right through to October."

Also out this month, for a three month run, is the new seasonal Top Tiddle (3.9% ABV). This is described as a "traditional light, golden, bitter beer with aromas of citrus fruit and honey. This light refreshing beer has a round, sweet malt palate perfectly balanced by a clean crisp bitterness."



## Family Brewers

The other local family brewers also have seasonal beers available this month.

**Hydes** – continue with Trojan Horse (4.2% ABV), a well-balanced mid-brown beer that has made for easy and enjoyable drinking when tried.

**JW Lees** – also continuing with one of last month's beers, this being Spring Cheer (4.1%). We have not yet managed to track this one down.

**Cains** – have an increasing local presence thanks to their acquisition of the Honeycomb Leisure estate, and of course one of their original tied houses is Gothic in Gatley. The seasonal for April is IPA (4.7%), a pale golden hoppy beer with a citric taste and lots of bitterness. Look out for this in Gothic and the Market Tavern in Glossop.

## Micro Magic

As ever the local micro brewers have a wealth of new beers out and about. Again apologies to those brewers we didn't manage to contact this month.

**Bank Top** – Bolton's Bank Top Brewery always has a reliable range of beers – visit the Crown (Heaton Lane, Stockport) often enough and you will probably get the whole range on the dedicated Bank Top handpump. This month look out for St George's Ale at 4.1% ABV

**Boggart Hole Clough** – when we called in late March, brewer Mark Dade told us he was just brewing a new IPA. This pale 4.6% ABV beer is brewed using Cascade hops and is described as "very, very, very hoppy".

**3 Rivers** – Stockport's own micro seems to be firing on all cylinders at the moment. Bottled versions of Manchester IPA and Old Disreputable are now on sale in Waitrose and brewer/owner Mike Hitchen tells us that targets have been doubled with these. On the cask beer front this month sees the return of Harry Jacks (4.1% ABV)

**Pictish Brewery** – lots of tasty beers continue to emerge from Richard Sutton's Pictish Brewery in Rochdale. He has produced a new mild. This is Manc'y Mild (3.9% ABV) and is a very dark, rich beer. The range of single hop beers continues with Pacific Gem (5.4%) and Mortueka (4.5%) on the starting blocks in late March. Mortueka has been out before and it is an exceptionally fine ale. The monthly special for April sees the return of another corker. Maelstrom (5%) is a strong, pale golden coloured ale. "Full malt flavours lead to an intensely bitter finish and powerful hop aroma" says the brewery website.



**Millstone Brewery** – Jon and Nick continue to run to stand still. No sign yet of Millstone Stout but out this month is the next in the "Pubs" series. This is Pig n'Whistle, a 4.3% pale beer brewed with Ruaka hops from New Zealand. While there will be some sweetness to the palate this will be balanced by the trademark Millstone hoppiness.

**Marble** – lots of goodies in the pipeline here. If all goes to plan this month will see a amber coloured 6.5% IPA-style beer with a high degree of bitterness. In the pipeline for May is a strong 6% mild. Both of these should also be on sale at Stockport Beer Festival alongside the Marble brewed Festival Special (the general spec is 4-4.2%, pale and hoppy).

**Hornbeam Brewery** – Kevin Rothwell is gaining an increasing reputation for his beers, with the excellent Dark Domination Porter winning Beer of the Festival at the recent Leeds Beer Festival. Last month saw two new beers - Silver Moon Stout (4.3%) and Tears of Angels (4%), a blond bitter with a citrus / floral finish. Out in May are Malt Mountain (3.6%) a dark mild with a deep malt / biscuity body and a slight smoky finish, and California Steam Beer (4.4%) planned to be aggressively hopped and brewed with amber and rye malts.



**Phoenix** – while Tony Allen brews an extensive range of regular beers, brand new additions to the range are rarer. There's one out this month, though. It's a lower strength (3.9%) beer, pale and hoppy and made using Mount Hood and Brewers Gold hops. No final name had been decided when we called but the working title was "Deddopy". Also out this month is St George's Flag (4.7% ABV).

**Howard Town** – two new beers to look out for. The spring beer, Hope (4.1%) is back but with a new recipe using Saphir hops. For St George's day look out for Dragon's Nest (4.8%), a copper coloured beer with Challenger Hops.

**Greenfield** – the beers to look out for this month include Jinty (4.1%), a pale amber beer, and Hopped & Stoned, a 4.6% light and hoppy ale.





**Stockport**  
WITH CLIFTON BELL  
**Supping**



Community spirit and family values are the inspiration for Elaine and Luke Lee, the mother and son team who have taken over as tenants of the **Jack and Jill** at Brinnington. Keen to make an initial impact to mark the start of their new careers, the support of family members has been enlisted. Elaine explained: "We owe our thanks to everybody who has helped us make a start and particularly my brother, Ian for his tireless efforts to present the pub as a welcoming community venue."

For Elaine, taking on the Robinson's house marks a return to working behind the bar where she last served the customers 23-years ago.

"Although it is quite a few years since I worked here, and as both Lee and I both live in Brinnington this is great opportunity for us to take on, and run a pub in the heart of our community. Of course we have our own ideas about how we want to involve people in the area, but we would also like them to come forwards to share their suggestions."

The **Olde Woolpack** in Edgeley has seen a few changes of late. An award-winner over the years, it is now owned and run by Andy Sinclair (the late pub founder, Bob Dickinson's, nephew). Now revitalised, it is really ticking all the right boxes. Two well-fitted lounges and a plainer vault surround the bar. The vault fixed seating has been removed to allow that room to have more of a focus on dining. Food is now to be served daily, noon till six with a carvery at weekends. This should have great appeal to locals and nearby businesses alike. The lounges will get new tables and chairs soon. Andy is keen on locally brewed cask beers; he is assisted at the bar and in the cellar by Leanne Parker. All of the pumps, beer lines and equipment were renewed in February to a high standard. Four handpumps now dispense a changing line-up of cask delights. Moorhouses Black Cat is usually available alongside beers from Hornbeam and beyond.

I may have given the impression the other month that the **Olde Vic** in Edgeley had become a sort of big screen sports bar. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, there is a big screen but this will be used solely for major sporting events. The pub remains a very traditional free house with five ever-changing guest beers.

Shock news from Cheadle Hulme. I hear that Hydes are to dispose of the **Rycroft** and it will cease to function as a pub. Indeed an application has been made to turn the building into sheltered accommodation. Truth be told, Hydes have struggled to find a role for this pub and on reflection I'm not all that surprised by this news.

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## The Royal Oak, Strines Road, Strines



**L**AST month's Curmudgeon regarding the idea that pub food will be the saviour of the British pub in the wake of the smoking ban, noting how many ventures haven't really got off the blocks reminded me of a small pub a short distance from me that has for many years managed to strike a perfect balance of what a good pub should be.

An outlet for good beer and a meeting place for friends and neighbours on one hand, and on the other a place where a hungry traveller can be fed with a non-pretentious home made meal in quiet and comfy surroundings. I am talking of The Royal Oak on Strines Road, just a short distance out of Marple on the road to New Mills. Here the Moon family are tenants of what can only be described as a country pub on a main road. Grace's home cooking has been side by side with her son Jamie's excellent beers from Robinson's Brewery. The one thing that strikes you as you enter is the lack of emphasis on meals.

Tables are not pre-laid for diners so as to discourage drinkers from taking a seat. Menus are kept on the windowsill and there is a small black board displaying the specials. That is not



to say any of the fare is not special. Many people call in for a drink and can't resist the urge to leave the pots and pans in the cupboard at home and dine in the pub. On a recent visit my wife and I decided to do just that. We browsed the menu at the bar and decided to eat in the back room.

A shared starter involved the Potato Wedges from the printed menu. When it arrived we were glad it was to share. Six large wedges, baked and roasted, topped with a very thick layer of grilled cheese. To the side of them was a simple but very fresh salad and a large pot of faintly garlicky mayo. Now one would be forgiven for heading straight to the bar for one of the three Robinson's fine beers to complement your meal. There is always Unicorn and Hatters available plus a third ever changing beer from the Robbies portfolio. However you should also check out Jamie's wine list of reasonably priced and very palatable wines from both old and new worlds.



## Pub Grub continued...

Our main courses arrived on properly warmed plates, a feature so overlooked at many other places. An 8oz sirloin locally sourced and in a pepper sauce, chunky homemade chips and fried mushrooms and a tomato. This sat opposite a plate overhanging with two large, juicy fillets of cod in a thin batter. There was only just enough room on the plate for a good dollop of mushy peas and some of the aforementioned chips. A plate of buttered bread also arrived, as did a dish of vegetables to share (which incidentally was not mentioned on the menu and we presume accompanied the steak). Other items on the menu include Lamb Henry, Poached Salmon with Hollandaise Sauce and Mushroom Stroganoff (v).

Stuffed as we were we just had to round it off with a dessert. The menu has a section headed "With Custard" and tempted me with things I haven't had since school. Jam roly-poly, Spotted Dick and more. But the call of the homemade Eccles Cake on the

specials was overpowering. So came the biggest Eccles Cake I have ever seen floating atop a bowl of proper, thick, tasty custard. The crisp glaze of the cake gave way to a fanfare of savoury flavours within. Whereas I had opted for a traditional pudding, my wife chose a more "sweet trolley" type of dish. Chocolate Orange, Gran Marnier Truffle Cake. The taste defies description. Terry's meets the liqueur shelf. Chocolate sponge with layers of liqueur laced truffle through it. Topped with candied peel and whipped cream.

On the menu, starters are between £2.75 and £4.25 and mains £5.95 to £9.90. Incredible value. Grace can show the rest a thing or two on how to offer good food at a price that doesn't cripple the wallet. **Chris Wainwright.**

*The Royal Oak is served by the 358 bus from Stockport. Meals are served Wednesday to Sunday, lunchtime and evening until 8pm. Debit/Credit cards NOT accepted. Phone for more info on 0161 427 6354.*

## THE WHITE LION - DISLEY



Above, left – right, Martin McKeown, Ray and Shena Calland

THE Disley real ale scene received a major boost in late February with the re-opening of the White Lion on Buxton Road.

This is the latest project of Ray and Shena Calland who, with business partner Martin McKeown have transformed the pub and look set fair to transform its fortunes, too.

Shena and Ray will be known to some *Opening Times* readers from their days at the Swan in Wilmslow and then Q and the White House in Stalybridge, where they established their real ale credentials.

The White Lion (known for having a zebra and not a lion on the pub sign) was on its last legs when they moved in during April last year. A series of ever changing managers had killed off the trade, few people passed through the doors until closure for refurbishment last October.

The pub has been refurbished and extended with a new extension and kitchen. The "modern traditional" furnishings and colour scheme work well and of note is the separate Dog Room for dogs and their well behaved owners. A real fire adds to the overall effect. The walls of the pub are adorned with artworks by local artists John Kimpton of Glossop and all are for sale - it is planned these will change regularly.

Food is served from 12 to 8pm, from Tuesday to Sunday. *Opening Times* gave the menu an early run through and was very impressed. The black pudding starter is superb but everything was good.

Shena and Ray are big cask ale fans and made their names for this at all of their previous pubs. The White Lion, however, is an Enterprise Inns house and so beers can be sourced using the SIBA Direct delivery scheme that allows local micros to deliver direct to pubs. Thus the three regular beers, Coach House Gunpowder Mild, Theakstons Best Bitter, Jennings Cumberland Ale, will be accompanied by five changing guests. On our visit these included Archers Bitter, Cottage Champflower, Thornbridge Lord Marples, Clark's No Angel and Stonehouse Buzzin. All in good nick, too, Highly recommended.

## WILD FOR MILD - IN WHALEY BRIDGE

SIX pubs in the Whaley Bridge area have registered for Wild for Mild, the Mild Challenge in 2008, and will provide participants with a good trip out. These southernmost pubs on the Challenge are well worth a visit in their own right, with a range of good beers and welcoming hospitality.

To avoid wasted journeys some information about opening/closing hours may be helpful.

**Dog & Partridge**, Bridgemont, opens at 11.00 but has a 15.00-17.00 close Mon-Thurs. though this can be flexible in favour of being open, open all day Fri., Sat. and Sun.

**Cock**, Whaley Bridge, open all day from about 11.00, till late.

**Board Inn**, Horwich End, Whaley Bridge, closed until 16.00, Mon-Fri., open all day at week-end.

**Crossings**, Furness Vale. Expects to be open Mon 16.30 till late. Tues, Wed & Thurs. 12.00- 14.30 and 16.30 till late. Fri., Sat. & Sun. 12.00 till late.

**Railway**, Whaley Bridge. Open from about noon, though can be earlier, till late.

**Shepherds' Arms**, Whaley Bridge. Mon.-Thurs. open 15.00 till late, Fri. 14.00 till late, and Sat. & Sun. 12.00 till late.

The Cock, the Board and the Dog and Partridge are now regular Mild Challenge pubs, whilst the Shepherds' makes a welcome return to the Challenge this year. Both the Crossings and the Railway are new to the Mild Challenge and will be new pubs for many people. All the pubs will look forward to seeing new faces.

**Getting there.** Bus 199 from Stockport stops at Furness Vale, Bridgemont, Whaley Bridge Station and outside the Cock and then the Board. Half hourly service during the day, hourly service evenings and Sundays. Trans Peak stops at Furness Vale, buses every 2 hours from Manchester. and Stockport until soon after tea time. Train service to Furness Vale and to Whaley Bridge roughly hourly, augmented during evening peak period, from Stockport and Manchester. Hourly on Sunday, This is the Buxton service.

## More Manchester Matters

SHOCK news from Didsbury. We are told that the **Olde Cock** is to close. Owners Greene King are by all accounts set to convert the pub into one of their Loch Fyne restaurant chain. From the cask ale point of view, the pub has struggled for some years and has been eclipsed by the **Didsbury** next door.

Still in Didsbury, the former Clocktower has reopened as **Fugu**, which serves excellent and authentic Japanese food, but no real ale. Also remaining keg is the **Hogs Head** despite the presence of a solitary forlorn handpump on the bar.

# Macclesfield PUB NEWS

Mike Wawiorko reports...

## Macclesfield News

The **Crown** on Bond Street now sports a third hand pump. Black Sheep and (excellent) Bass are joined by a guest ale chosen by customers.

The **Plough** is now under new management with much improved beer quality. Regulars Flowers Original, Black Sheep Bitter and Tetleys Bitter are supplemented by a couple of guests from the Punch Finest list: Jennings Cumberland or Greene King IPA at my visit.

The **Jolly Sailor** still looks very smart from its refurbishment and has excellent Youngs Special, Bass and one or two other ales. The menu looks interesting and good value for money – must try eating there soon. The landlord and landlady were very supportive of real ale and CAMRA. A couple of years ago this was a completely 'bright' house with nothing to drink.

## Henbury Snippets

I called in at the **Blacksmiths** and found it is advertising 'Locale' Weetwood Best and Cheshire Cat blonde. Cheshire Cat pretty good, even though it had the taste of standing in the pipe a bit long. I complimented bar staff on stocking a Cheshire beer, especially bearing in mind the front cover.

The **Cock** has a new back garden keeping the old play area, but adding a boules rink, if rink is the correct word, covered smokers veranda and perhaps most important levelling out what was a steep flight of steps from the back door. A 'tropical garden' is planned for spring. The Robinson's Tempus Fugit was enjoyable. Regular events include Quiz Night Wednesday, Curry night Thursday and entertainment/Karaoke Saturday.

## Holly Bush, Bollington



Having weighed up all the options the **Holly Bush** at Bollington has come out as the number one choice for Adrian Walsh and Danielle Marshall to start out in business together.

Experienced head chef Adrian explained exactly what the couple had been looking for and why they chose the Holly Bush: "We wanted to develop a venue where I could use my skills in the kitchen and Danielle could use her experience to run the front of house operation."

The couple considered all the options of opening a restaurant or taking over an established business but the Holly Bush came out as their first choice for it's location, cost of starting the business and the support that they receive from Robinson's, the Stockport-based brewer.

"In our first few days of being here we have quickly made some changes having removed the pool table so that we can develop our food service," he said.

# 5 YEARS AGO

**P**UBS Week Makes The Headlines, was the headline for *Opening Times* April 2003. Well over 100 CAMRA branches mounted local activities and highlighted National Pubs Week in branch newsletters with a combined readership of over a quarter of a million. About 400,000 promotional beer mats and 200,000 posters were distributed, some by CAMRA branches, but many by brewers, wholesalers, pubcos and trade newspapers. Among the Campaign's industry partners were big names such as Punch Taverns, Enterprise Inns, Laurel, Unique, Scottish & Newcastle Retail, The Beer Seller, Cask Marque and Wolverhampton & Dudley.

Both the *Morning Advertiser* and *Publican* trade newspapers carried features and distributed posters to their readers. National and Regional media coverage meant the entire country was blanketed with National Pub Week publicity, and the message went round the globe with the BBC World Service.

\*\*\*\*\*

**C**AMRA had supported calls by the National Audit Office for a modernisation of Weights & Measures legislation to stop beer drinkers being served short measures in a pub. A report claimed that licensees were selling an extra 200 million pints of beer each year, above the amount they bought in, with a wholesale value of £130 million. CAMRA's own research showed that nine out of ten pints sold in British pubs were less than the industry's own guidelines of 95 per cent minimum liquid.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns & Communications said that it was clear that new legislation was needed to protect Britain's 15 million beer drinkers from short measures in pubs. The current system of self-regulation had failed, and customers were paying for beer they were not receiving. A law was needed to protect customers by defining a pint of beer and cider as 100 per cent liquid, making it an offence to serve short measures.

\*\*\*\*\*

**T**here was news of brewing, or lack of it, at the Lass O'Gowrie, just off Oxford Road, near the BBC. That year would have seen the 20th anniversary of brewing at the pub, making it one of the longest lasting of the "new wave" that set up in the first real ale revival in the early 1980s. Most of the beer produced had not been to everyone's taste, but recently some very tasty beer indeed had been produced. Lass Ale was still available at the bar (and it was a good pint), but apparently now it was being produced by Titanic Brewery. A good range of guest beers was still available.

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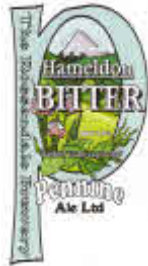
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Here is our monthly round-up of what's happening in the local CAMRA branches. Members of all branches are of course very welcome to attend each others' events.

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 10<sup>th</sup> April – Branch Meeting & AGM:** Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. From 8.00pm. **All please attend this important meeting.**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Openshaw & Ashton Old Rd Stagger: 7.30pm Railway Manshaw Road; 8.30 Lord Raglan, Ashton Old Rd

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month Award to the Didsbury, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury. From 8pm

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May** – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. **Guest Speaker Oliver Robinson.** Starts 8pm.

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

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Meeting: White Lion, Disley. 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 10<sup>th</sup>** – City Centre Social: 8pm Ape & Apple; 9pm The Bridge then on to the Deansgate.

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>** – Spring Pub of the Season Award to the Volunteer, Sale.

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May** – Branch Meeting. Ape & Apple, John Dalton St. Starts 8pm.

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Social in Flixton: Railway Tavern 8pm; Fox & Hounds 9pm.

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

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>** – Brewery trip to Spitting Feathers.

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 9<sup>th</sup>** – Atherton Crawl: 7.15 Letters Inn, Wigan Road, then Punch Bowl, Old Isaacs, Market St 9pm then Atherton Arms, Tyldesley Road to finish.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford. Starts 8pm.

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>** – St George's Day Crawl: John Gilbert, Worsley Brow 8.00pm; Bridgewater, Barton Rd 8.45pm; Barton Arms, Stable Fold 9.30pm.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Trip to Liverpool with Young Members Group – details from Dave Hallows.

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>** – Rochdale Canal Crawl: Jolly Angler, Ducie St 7.30pm; Rembrandt, Sackville St 8.30pm; then Peveril of the Peak, Rain Bar, Briton's Protection; the Knott, Deansgate to finish.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May** – National Mild Day Crawl: meet Marble Arch, Rochdale Road at 12 noon. Finish in Crescent about 6pm.

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TOP TIPPLE ABV 3.9%

Traditional light, golden, bitter beer with aromas of citrus fruit and honey.

This light refreshing beer has a round, sweet malt palate perfectly balanced

by a clean crisp bitterness.

ROBINSONS  
TOP  
TIPPLE

alc 3.9% vol



[www.frederic-robinson.com](http://www.frederic-robinson.com)