

JUNE 2008

# Opening

TIMES

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

## MORE LOCAL

## WINNERS



Top, the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham; below, the New Oxford

Manchester entry – the ever impressive **Crown** on Heaton Lane. The result should be announced in the autumn.

**T**wo more local CAMRA branches have chosen their Pubs of the Year for 2008. These will now go forward into the Greater Manchester Regional Pub of the Year contest, the first stage in the search for CAMRA's next National Pub of the Year.

Trafford & Hulme Branch recently voted the **Old Market Tavern** in Altrincham as its Pub of the Year.

Since licensee John Glover took on a "hands on" approach to running the pub, and looking after the cask ales, the Old Market Tavern has become the branch's premier real ale outlet. The ever changing range of guest cask beers is now supplemented by an increasing range of bottled beers. When Janet Glover, the manageress, was told of the award she was naturally thrilled. The award night will take place on Saturday 21 June starting at 8pm.

The North Manchester Branch Pub of Year is in fact the current Regional title holder, the **New Oxford** in Bexley Square, Salford.

The New Oxford, enjoying its first year in CAMRA's flagship national Good Beer Guide, has very quickly built up an excellent reputation for the large range of cask ales and foreign beers, both bottled and draught. Good honest pub food is also a feature of the impressive offering here. Regular beer festivals are also a feature of the pub – the next one, featuring 30 cask ales, was due to take place from 5 to 8 June, just as this issue of *Opening Times* was scheduled to be published. The award will be presented on Wednesday 8 July from 8.00pm

Run with aplomb by Tim Flynn and Paulette Scanlon, together with their knowledgeable and friendly staff, the New Oxford is clearly looking to make it two in a row.

The regional competition this year promises to be one of the hardest fought ever with numerous strong contenders, not least the Stockport & South

### Chorlton Beer Festival - 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Following the success of the previous three years' festivals, St Clements Church have enrolled Trafford and Hulme Branch of CAMRA to ensure the quality and range of the beers continue to develop. Although T&H have been instrumental in organising, managing and serving the beer for the previous festivals, this is the first time that the relationship has become official, meaning that the event has now hit the CAMRA diary.

The beer list currently has offerings from a number of local breweries as well as some favourites from further afield. The main local contenders are from Millstone, Pictish, Phoenix, Bazens', Beartown, Dunham Massey, Hydes and Marble, while Yorkshire offers Elland and York, Wales has Facers and Purple Moose. Also expected are a range of 20 ciders and 600 bottles of Belgian beer. The strength of the cask ale is expected to fall between the 3.5% of Cadair Idris and 6.1% of Wobbly Bob, with a choice of anything from pale hoppy beers to full bodied stouts. Make sure you get those important dates in your diary now. More details next time or check the T&H website at [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)

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# COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

## Opening Times – Comment

THIS issue of *Opening Times* was completed before Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. We will have a full review next time. It was however promising to be a great event – the weather was looking good and some quite rare beers were in prospect. I hope to have met plenty of OT readers there.

This year's contest for the regional Pub of the Year looks like it will be quite a contest with many of the eight branches in the Greater Manchester Region submitting entries. The three we know about to date – the Crown, Stockport; the Old Market Tavern, Altrincham and the New Oxford in Salford are all excellent pubs so judging will be very difficult. May the best pub win!

## Opening Times - 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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Postal subscriptions are available at £6 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to *Opening Times*). Apply to John Tune, 4 Sandown Rd, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, SK3 0JF.

**Trading Standards** – problems in pubs should normally be resolved by a quiet word with the licensee. However sometimes it may be necessary to take it further. These are the local contacts:

<b>Stockport</b>	0845 644 4301	<b>Trafford</b>	0161 9122274
<b>Manchester</b>	0161 234 1555	<b>Derbyshire</b>	08456 058058
<b>Salford</b>	0161 925 1346	<b>Cheshire</b>	0845 1132500
<b>Tameside</b>	0161 342 8355		

**Copy Date for the July issue is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June.**

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**THE Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June 2008 is the Bulls Head on London Road in Manchester.**

This is one of only four pubs selling cask ale on the A6 between Manchester and Stockport. It is the first real ale outlet you come to when travelling into the City after leaving Longsight. And thankfully it is of a high order too.

The Bulls Head was formerly a Burtonwood pub but is now owned by Marstons. Run by Keith William & Mui Heng it attracts a constant stream of custom from passengers using Piccadilly Station, which is on the opposite corner. Its proximity to that station also means it serves as the starting point for many a discerning drinker's night out in the City. That is not to say it doesn't have its regular customers because it does. There is a growing number of "apartment dwellers" in the area – of whom not all are of the Champagne and strawberries ilk. It is just close enough to the campus to attract some students bent on fine ale in traditional pub surroundings.

The building, which dates from 1894 dominates the corner of London Road and Granby Row and is directly opposite Piccadilly Station's taxi rank. A one-room establishment with a semi circular bar on the wall opposite the main entrance and there is a small snug under the staircase. The large open wooden floor area strikes the eye upon entering allowing plenty of standing space for those busy weekend nights. Around the periphery are tables and bench seating. There is the usual scattering of pictures of old Manchester adorning the walls. It is also reputed to be haunted.

Keith has been the licensee for two years now and stocks up to five cask ales in excellent condition, which are chosen from the Marston's guest ale list. Regularly on the bar are Jennings Cumberland Bitter & Marston's Pedigree. Other regular visitors are from the Wychwood and York Breweries. The bar manager and cellar man is David Cobain and if he looks familiar to you that's because for many years he was the skill behind the good beers at the Britons Protection on Great Bridgewater Street. It must be an influence he brought from the BP that results in the fine selection of Malt Whiskies that can be found here.

Food, including daily homemade specials, is served lunchtimes Monday to Saturday 12.00-2.30pm, Sunday 12.00-4 pm and evenings Monday to Thursday 5.00-8.30 pm. There is a quiz night every Tuesday at 9pm.

Combining this with the warm welcome you would expect from a well run pub and the opportunity for an interesting chat with one of the regular or not so regular customers at the bar, makes this pub well deserving for the award. The presentation is on Thursday 26th June 2008 from 8pm. Get there early to get a seat. **CW**

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## Openshaw with Dave Hanson

THIS evening's stagger started in the rambling expanse of the **Railway** on Manshaw Road. Outside you are greeted by a large (ex gas?) lamp, lording it over the door plus several tables for outside drinking. Inside, you pass rooms to left and right to be greeted by the bar and a further opened out room to the rear. Continuing rearward reveals a beer garden. Being a Holt's house, frequented by a multitude of local characters, the Bitter sells well and is always available. A notice announced that draught mild was returning a few days after our visit so, as we couldn't wait until then, we drank an acceptable pint of bitter.



Knowing what faced us along Ashton Old Road we were reluctant to venture forth, but duty called and off we set. As we approached the **Grove** we caught

a whiff of paint and we wondered if the Queen was due to visit as the premises were being re-decorated. If she does drop in she will be disappointed as there is no real ale, so on we sped.

Passing the grassed over location of the recently demolished **Crown** we approached **CK's**. This interesting Victorian building stands back from the road with what may well be a coach road in front. Inside the high ceilings and glorious plasterwork gives the impression of a gentlemen's club. Though it previously sold Banks's beers no real ale was available on this visit. Onwards.

Sadly the **Albion** had just closed and was boarded up, not due to poor trading but because of a compulsory purchase order in connection with the redevelopment of Openshaw. Across Ashton Old Road and a little way down Abbey Hey Lane we entered the **Oddfellows**. Again this establishment used to sell cask but unfortunately not on this occasion. Back on Ashton Old Road the **Halfway House/Clock Tower/whatever** was closed and boarded, no real ale was sold so no great loss. In contrast the **Concert** on Fairfield Road used to sell real ale, but it is also closed and boarded.

Entering the **Lord Raglan** we at last spied handpumps on the bar. Though not a Holt's house their bitter was on sale. Due to an imprecise order of "a pint of Holts" one of our party was served with Holts Smooth (yes it does exist!) by



mistake. Though not an outstanding pint, any real ale was becoming a rarity. The Raglan had also been re-decorated and was bright and cheerful. That old moniker of "basic, street corner boozier" adequately describes this pub, and it's none the worse for that.

Next door but one we entered the **Forrester's Arms**, a former Kay's Atlas house, but now owned by Robinsons. Again the rooms had been decorated (maybe the Queen really had been in the area) and had a modern, minimalist appearance, complemented by contemporary paintings on the wall. Formerly consisting of two rooms with the bar in the middle it has been

partially opened out. We sampled the bitter, which was sadly well below expectations and not up to the standard we would expect from a Robinson's tied house.

Heading off down Ogden Lane we found the **Royal Oak** closed with no signs of life inside. The establishment was in good repair and not boarded so maybe it was a temporary closure. A little further along we came upon the **High Bank** which was open and lively



with people but unfortunately it serves no real ale. Returning to Ashton Old Road we observed that the **Pack Horse** was not trading as a pub, but as an African shop and restaurant. Unfortunately the council had not realised this as no application for change of use had been received according to the local paper!

Facing a long walk to our next port of call we hopped onto a bus and travelled to the **Seven Stars**. Until recently the Seven Stars stood lonely in an area of demolished terraced housing but is now surrounded by modern apartment/town houses. This Holt's house has also been refurbished but unfortunately it had not brought in the customers. Mild and Bitter were both available, both being adequate but not outstanding, the bitter being rated the better (but by the person who had only sampled Holt's smooth up to that point!). In order to catch the next bus we quickly finished our beers.

We had the misfortune of witnessing a prime example of binge drinking on our bus journey. A young girl was giving a heroic demonstration of pavement pizzas by liberally decorating the insides of the bus with the (ex)contents of her stomach. Thankfully the journey was short.

Our penultimate destination, the **Queen Anne**, appeared to have bucked the trend. Having just changed owner, this previously keg only establishment proudly announced "Real Ale" on a sandwich board outside. "Hurray!" we all cried as we rushed in to witness this change of ethos. Oh how we were disappointed! When we asked for the real ale we were pointed at the smooth beers. We tried explaining what we were after but the only response was puzzled looks. Never mind, we moved on.

Finally we arrived at the **Legh Arms**, Branch Pub of the Year for 2005. No shortage of draught beers here, with Moorhouse's Black Cat, Hydes St Georges and the house beer Blue also supplied by Moorhouses.



Several drinking areas are available, from the comfy nooks to left and right as you enter from Ashton Old Road, passing the bar leads to a games area to the rear with a beer garden outside. In contrast to the other establishments visited the place was bustling with a karaoke session underway in the back. All the beers were sampled and were rated as excellent. What is so different at the Legh Arms that it is able to keep a good selection of beers and attract a host of customers? Whatever it is, it works!

This was a night of great contrasts. The main theme was closed and boarded pubs and establishments serving only keg/smooth beers. The sprinkling of real ale was welcome but much left a lot to be desired. This of course was just our experience on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement on the pubs and their beers. Hopefully some were caught on an off night.



Hydes Brewery have only a handful of pubs in High Peak Branch but earlier this year they paid £3 million to buy **Bamford Hall and the Bluebell Centre**, in three acres of land in Gee Cross, Hyde. The distinctive red brick hall was built in 1870 and had always been in private ownership until 2001 when some outbuildings were converted into a restaurant and coffee shop which was named the Bluebell Centre.

Managing director of Hydes, Chris Hopkins has stated that it will make a stunning pub and restaurant complex with great potential for events and functions in a really attractive setting. Interestingly, 60 out of the brewery's 75 pubs now serve food, which shows what direction this Manchester independent brewery is diversifying into. However, beer production is reported as being on the increase too, with a four fold increase last year, compared to the production they were doing in 2000.

On the downside, the **Church Inn** in Market Street, Hyde, a former well regarded Boddingtons pub in yesteryear, has changed its name to Route 66, and guess what?...there is no real ale in sight!

In bottom Mossley, **Roaches Lock** has stopped selling real ale, we believe because of general lack of interest in the product. However, all credit to the nearby **Woodend Tavern** which is setting up a marquee on the weekend of 25-27th July, to run a beer festival.

Up in top Mossley, the **Blazing Rag** is closed and up for sale while Nicole Porisse is now in charge at the **Church Inn** on Stockport Road, again in Mossley. The Thwaites range includes the seasonal specials.

The new Rail Ale Trail covering Huddersfield to Victoria Station in the city centre, has included three of our Branch pubs in the leaflet. Mentioned are the **Britannia** across from Mossley station, **Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar** and the **Ash Tree** (Wetherspoons) near to Ashton station

At the **Cheshire Ring** in Hyde, they are extending the opening hours on Monday to Wednesday. Previously opening at 4.00pm on those days, it will now open at 1.00pm. Apparently it is because the Aldi supermarket is opening at any time across the road, so more trade in these hours is envisaged. Also the very popular curry nights have been increased from twice a month on a Thursday, to every week due to their popularity.

I was quite impressed when I popped into the **Greyhound** in Bredbury for my "Wild for Mild" sticker last month. Really friendly licensees, a pristine pub and decent beer too. It is certainly worth calling into.

Other notable pubs that impressed me whilst on the trail in our Branch area were the **Chieftain** in Hadfield, the **Northumberland Arms** in Compstall (this is really a lovely place), **Crossings** at Furness Vale railway station, the **Friendship** in Glossop and the **Railway** at Whaley Bridge, pubs I get into only infrequently. The last four are all Robinsons and the Chieftain is a Hydes house.

Last month I reported that the **Little Mill Inn** in Rowarth was closed and for sale. This was out of date news, I'm afraid. Peter Jones from the pub tells us that the Little Mill in fact reopened on 11 March selling Marston's Pedigree, Banks's Bitter and three guest beers, all on handpump. Guests are sourced from micro brewers and have included beers from Vale, Coach House, Bradfield and Tom Woods breweries amongst others. The pub opens from about 11.30am each day and food is available seven days a week. Check out their website at [www.thelittlemill.co.uk](http://www.thelittlemill.co.uk). This is very good news and I look forward to dropping in soon.

Finally, the **Glossop Beer and Cider** festival is confirmed as being on 5th to 7th September again in a marquee at the rear of the Star (subject to budget approval). Hoping you will put it in your diary and make it the most successful event yet.

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A recent article in the Daily Telegraph Weekend supplement headlined 50 Great Pubs in England and Wales. Those chosen had merit in food or accommodation, and when you read the detail, the author was also interested in beer. This was one person's choice, however. How else could there be barely a handful of pubs in northern England? None of the 50 pubs lies in the *Opening Times* circulation area, but I am sure that local drinkers would find several blocks of 50 Great Pubs in this area alone.

A recent visit to Eskdale on the west side of the Lake District included repeat calls into the Good Beer Guide listed **Woolpack Inn** in Boot, which is home to the Hardknott Brewery. This pub and brewery show what can be done in tourist areas to provide beer drinkers with a choice of quality ales at sensible prices. The two barrel plant provides an ever changing range of beers. Light Pack was a 3.7% hoppy bitter, of which our walking group made short work. Woolpacker is a regular 3.9% brew, whilst Woolly Fusion had a hint of ginger. The Hardknott brews are supplemented by beers from other Cumbrian microbreweries. Keswick Thirst Rescue is a 3.7% bitter, brewed as an anniversary brew for the Keswick Mountain Rescue Team. Red Bull Terrier is a 4.8% malty brew from the Barnegates Brewery at the Drunken Duck in south Lakeland. Beer at the Woolpack is served in lined glasses so that you always get a full measure. Prices are sensible, especially for a tourist area, the 3.7% bitters going out at £2.20/£2.30, unlike some of the eye watering prices charged in some pubs. The Woolpack is definitely one to recommend if you get round to the remoter western parts of the Lake District.

Nearer home work continues at the **Jodrell Arms** in Whaley Bridge, but the scale of the project means that this will continue for a number of months. New owners are as far as possible involving local contractors and suppliers in work being done. When the Jodrell does re-open a key aim will still be to use local suppliers, which importantly is expected to include beers from local microbreweries. Bits of history have been uncovered during stripping out work, including Wilson's beer mats from the 1950's, and menus from this period. On a fireplace was found a mock Wilson's chequerboard etched in cement by presumably 1950's workmen.



The **Navigation** in Whaley Bridge re-opened in April. Sue Bates has taken over the reins and is pleased with trade so far. Three beers will usually be available. Tetley Bitter will be the staple brew and when I called Charles Wells Bombardier and Black Sheep Bitter were available as guests. I had the latter and found it in good form. Opening hours at present are 4p.m. till late Mon. to Fri. and all day Sat. and Sun. The Navigation is potentially a good little local and I wish Sue every success in this venture. My Friday teatime call found a good gathering of customers, which augurs well for the future.

Local Robinson's houses continue to take the seasonal beers. Dizzy Blonde made a welcome return to the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge, where the **Railway** has had Top Tipple. This has also been at the **Crossings** at Furness Vale.

One of the best of the guests at the **Shepherds** was Wadworth Bishop's Tipple, a very good pale, hoppy 5% brew and dangerously drinkable.

Finally as this column goes to the editor, more good news, as the re-opening of the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge is imminent. Hopefully more on this positive news next time.



**The End of the Road?**

Eight years ago, pubgoers and licensees across the country breathed a profound sigh of relief when the government announced that they were not going to go ahead with the cut in the drink-drive limit that had been proposed a couple of years earlier. However, as I said at the time, there was no guarantee that the government would not return to the issue in the future, and so it has proved. Newspapers have reported that they are once again planning to reduce the limit from 80 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood to 50 mg (approximately the equivalent of a reduction from two pints of ordinary-strength beer to one) and that this change is likely to come in within eighteen months

There can be no doubt that this would result in a drastic reduction in the trade of pubs outside of urban centres and over a few years lead to many thousands of pub closures. The greatly diminished number of licensed premises that remained in out-of-town areas would become to all intents and purposes restaurants and lose their pub character. A pub is defined not by its architecture, but by the way it is used. Effectively, traditional pubs would survive only around major public transport hubs and in areas where there was enough trade within easy walking distance to sustain them. For many people, going to a pub other than to have a meal would become a complete irrelevance.

It would be naïve to assume that urban areas such as Greater Manchester would be unaffected, as even here large numbers of people visit pubs by car and on the fringes of the area there are many pubs with an overwhelmingly car-borne trade. It must also be borne in mind that over 70% of people in Greater Manchester travel to work by car and would have to be more circumspect about their alcohol consumption on weekday evenings to avoid the "morning-after" effect.

The present negative trends in the drinks market will be made worse, with drinking at home encouraged over the relatively controlled environment of the pub, and people further deterred from regular moderate drinking in favour of excessive consumption on the rare occasions when they know they will not be driving for a long time.

While this is presented as a safety measure, there is no guarantee that it will save a single life. The vast majority of those killed in accidents attributed to drink-driving are already well over the current limit and it is hard to see how a limit cut would have any effect on their behaviour. Conversely, as it is impossible to predict exactly what effect a given amount of drink will have on blood alcohol levels, those wishing to keep within the law are likely to play it safe and remain well below 80 mg, at which levels their driving is unlikely to be impaired much if at all. It will erode respect for the law and could even encourage some people to actually drink more before driving if they believe they are unlikely to be caught. Any limit is useless if it is not actually enforced.

The present government seems hell-bent on destroying the pub trade and has already inflicted savage blows in the form of the smoking ban and the swingeing increase in beer duty, resulting in pubs currently closing at an unprecedented rate. Across large swathes of the country, cutting the drink-drive limit is likely to finish the job.

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

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# Book Review



**Cumbria Real Ale Guide, CAMRA Cumbria Branches, 200pp, £4.95**

This latest edition of a now well-established title retains its familiar pocket-size format, but much else about the design has been changed. The first change that users

will notice is for me the least successful: while the wire-bound format means there's no spine to break and you can open the book out flat, the flap-style cover feels flimsy and unlikely to stand up well to repeated use – time will tell.

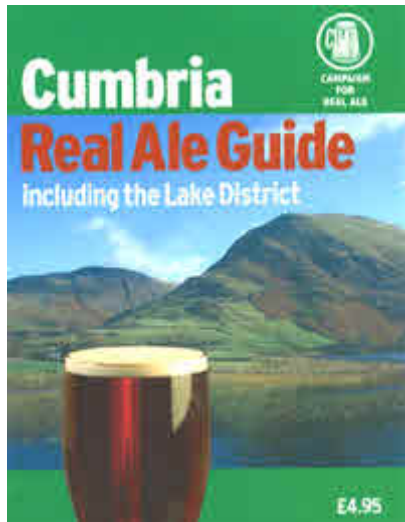
The appearance of the pages, however, has been transformed by the intelligent use of colour to distinguish between different areas of text, making the entries both easy to navigate and attractive to look at. The brewery section, now sensibly moved to the back of the book, is a model of its kind: each of the county's 23 breweries gets a full page encompassing comprehensive contact details, brief history, current overview, and detailed but no-nonsense tasting notes for both regular and seasonal beers.

As in previous editions, only the real ale pubs are listed, and regrettably there is no index of pubs. Known real ale clubs are included in the main listings; where non-members are admitted this is stated, otherwise users are cautioned to check their eligibility before visiting! The pub and club descriptions are something of a mixed bag, ranging from the terse "traditional town centre pub" to lengthy and informative paragraphs. Of course, there is more to say about some pubs than others, but the fact that the superb Prince of Wales at Foxfield is dispatched in a mere two lines surely argues for a more interventionist editorial policy and a more consistent style. (Admittedly, the two lines do include the fully justified comment "a must to visit"!)

Similarly, a surprisingly high proportion of the descriptions are unchanged from the previous edition of 2005.

Apart from the brewery section already mentioned, campaigning and other editorial matter is sparse. The maps are well-conceived and attractive; with a full-colour five-section county map backed up by admirably clear plans of all the major towns (though a wider selection of minor roads could usefully have been included on the county map).

Much care has clearly been expended on making this one of the most attractive guides produced by CAMRA, a good-value package from which many commercial publishers could learn a lot. Despite my strictures on certain aspects of the pub entries, this is a book you really must have if you intend to visit Cumbria any time soon – and once you have a copy, you will find a visit hard to resist! Highly recommended. **RPJ**




# PUB Grub




So far in the relaunched Pub Grub we have featured pubs that haven't previously had a mention for their pub food. This has been deliberate. However this month we return to a tried and tested favourite, the Arden Arms in Stockport.

As you will deduce from the illustration above (and taken from the pub's excellent website at [www.arden-arms.co.uk](http://www.arden-arms.co.uk)), this is a pub with some history to it. Today's Arden Arms was built in 1815 and it was bought by Robinson's Brewery. In 1908 they set about the first and last major 'modernisation' of the pub. It remains more or less unchanged to this day. Historical features abound, inside and out, with perhaps the most famous the small snug only accessed by walking through the bar.

The pub had its ups and downs following the retirement of long-time tenant Jack May in the late 1980s but in 1999 it was taken over by Joe Quinn and Steve King, who remain there to this day. They have restored the pub's fortunes in grand style, winning an armful of CAMRA awards in the process.

A regular in the Good Beer Guide, the beers available include Hatters, Unicorn, Double Hop plus the current seasonal. A small cask of Old Tom often appears on the bar in the winter months.

However, apart from the superb interior and good beer, the Arden has also made its name as a fine place to eat, offering food of restaurant quality at pub prices.

The Lunch Menu comprises home-made Soup of the Day (in bowls or cups) and sandwiches, both hot and cold, along with side orders and salads.



This is complemented with a specials menus and a selection of home-made puds.

My Sunday lunch party picked and mixed between the Specials Menu and, from the Lunchtime Menu, the excellent value Soup & Sandwich combo at £5, the soup today being a colourful and flavoursome butternut squash and sweet potato combination.

From the Specials menu, roast topside of beef came with an enormous Yorkshire pudding, roast and mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables, all nicely lubricated with a red wine gravy. A filling plateful at £7.95. However for me and several others, the star of the show was the Fish Stew at £8.95. A large and filling bowlful of tuna, salmon, haddock, tiger prawns and green lip mussels came in a rich tomato and herb sauce – absolutely top class.

The short but perfectly formed Dessert Menu included such delights as Whisky & Marmalade Sponge Pudding at £3.75 but today it was the cheese and biscuits at £4.75 that beckoned. Ideal for sharing, this comprised generous portions of stilton, cheddar and brie, a pile of crisp biscuits, apple chutney and fresh grapes. Perfect with a second pint of Top Tiddle.

Food is served at the Arden Arms from 12-2.30 Monday to Friday and 12-4 on Saturdays and Sundays. Worth a special journey. **JC**

**National Winter Ales Festival Alive and Well**

Following Steve Prescott's announcement to stand down as organiser of the National Winter Ales Festival (NWF) following yet another successful event, the hunt was on to find a willing replacement. One has been found! Graham Donning, long time activist for CAMRA in the Furness Branch in Cumbria, put his name forward. As Graham says, "No sooner had I thrown my hat into the ring, before you know it, hey presto, or should I say Prescott, I am it."

Graham retired from his Civil Service career in February 2006 and following his decision to not stand for re-election as a local Labour Councillor from May 2008 he decided to retire, not to the country, as most sensible people would, but to the City, in fact the City of Salford. Graham has been active in CAMRA for many years attending many CAMRA AGMs (as he still calls them!) and other National events. Having decided to move to Salford and seeing the roll of Organiser of the NWF become vacant he decided that it was time to get back involved again. He had stood down as Chair of the Furness Branch in March 2008 so he felt he had had enough time away from CAMRA activity!

"Since putting my name forward and having been accepted by the National Executive I have been a bit busy! A Working Party has been set up and our first meeting was held on 31st May in Stockport. We have a logo in place, a web site is being organised and I have set up a Yahoo group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NWAF-CAMRA/>) for anybody who may be interested in keeping up to date. A series of dates for future meetings has been arranged and there is to be an open meeting on Saturday 5th July, 3pm in the Crescent, Salford. Any CAMRA member is welcome. We are also hoping to get as many local CAMRA members volunteering for this prestigious North Western event as possible, after all, CAMRA is nothing without them."

*Steve, Johanne & Molly  
welcome you to*

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STOCKPORT & SOUTH  
MANCHESTER PUB OF THE  
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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2008 We're in it!**



*Heather Airie's Monthly Round-up*

**Flixton Social**

DESPITE the trials and tribulations of the public transport system, a fair number made it up to Flixton and the first venue of the night, the **Railway Tavern**. A Sam Smiths pub, the price was right at £1.32 a pint and the beer on form. Originally a row of cottages, some enterprising chap spotted a market in the thirsty railway builders many years ago and opened up the pub. It has plenty of out door seating for the sunny days and smokers and a number of rooms to offer inside.

A short bus ride, or cycle for me, the **Fox and Hounds** has a very different feel, with a choice of three hand pulled beers, including the latest from Dunham Massey at 3.7% and Marston's Merrie Monk at 4.7%. Again good seating outside, it looks promising for the balmy evenings we are all looking forward to. Another bus ride, or cycle took us to the **Lord Nelson**. Unfortunately no seasonal ale available other than in bottles, but the mild and bitter were as expected. An earlier start would have allowed progression to the newly re-opened **Roebuck** or back up to a previous Pub of the Season winner, the **Church**, however on this occasion, time was called.

**Pub News in short**

THE **Bank** in Sale is up for sale, while the **Bulls Head** also in Sale is boarded up and up for lease. The **Old Cock** down the road in Stretford is also boarded up again. Although rumours suggest otherwise, no planning application been submitted yet for the **Railway** in Alty but it may have been acquired by a pub co. The **Butchers Arms**, Baguley has seen a serious robbery and may go up for Auction. The **Tatton Arms** has been sold by John Glover and may turn into a foodie-type pub.

*The Old Cock – closed after short flirtation with real ale*



Good news for Urmston as the **Roebuck** has reopened after a major refit to rectify fire damage. Apparently the beer price has risen alarmingly for Holts. New to real ale, **Revise**, Chorlton is up for sale, but the **Horse and Jockey** continues to serve three real ales and reports healthy turnover. The **Trevor Arms** has a new supplier and this has proved its worth in the recent range and quality of the beers.

**More on the Beech, Chorlton**

FOLLOWING last month's upbeat report there is more news from The Beech in Chorlton, unfortunately this is not so encouraging.

Despite Joanne's positive outlook, it seems her weekend crew are not able to uphold her intentions.

One of the long term regulars (and CAMRA member) was set upon by someone that had been barred by Joanne, but still allowed to be served by the duty manager. This incident was swiftly followed by another bout of trouble, apparently instigated by lads from the Nell Lane estate, and which required a posse of police to contain it. This had a knock-on (no pun intended) effect on the business not just in The Beech, but in the other pubs near by.

Although most people would love to see The Beech regain its place on the list of must-visit Chorlton pubs, I'm afraid there is some work to do yet.



I stopped off at the **Legh Arms** in Openshaw whilst doing "Wild for Mild" pubs. Licensees Dave and Tracy are doing well, and they have changed the beer range slightly. It is now Moorhouse's Black Cat and Blue, and Hydes seasonal ale. Blue remains the popular choice though.

In the city centre, new people have taken over at the **Old Monkey** (Holts). George and Jackie have been with Holts for six years with various stints at the **Ostrich**, **Welcome**, and **Garrett**



(Longsight), latterly they worked as relief managers at the **Seven Stars** in Beswick (which now too has new managers). The Monkey is their first city pub and they would like to capitalise on the upstairs eating area once they have

settled in and assessed trade. They hope to see the pub given a bit of a 'spuce-up' to broaden its appeal. Jackie comes from a family with many links to Holts, including her father, who was also a licensee for them.

A couple of doors down at the **Circus**, I must mention veteran licensee Alan Southgate. He works most Sundays in order to give 'Greek' George a rest. Alan has worked in numerous pubs across the city and east Manchester so should be a familiar face to many. Whilst mentioning the Circus, I have seen more trade adverts for the lease of this pub. This time the asking price is not £100,000 as before but instead "offers invited".

On a sadder note, I see that a number of pubs have closed their doors. The **Midway** in Longsight is boarded up (and is apparently due for conversion into an Indian restaurant), whilst in Ardwick the situation is bleaker still - the **Park** has been boarded for two months; the **Kings Head** appears to be mothballed; and the **Union Tavern** was firmly shut with some

windows having been put through at some point. In Levenshulme there are signs of life at the **Pack Horse** where the pub is being converted into a Czech bar and club.



Although Rusholme has recently lost two pubs for good (the **Gardeners** and the **Sherwood** have both now been converted to residential use), it is not all bad news for those wanting to drink cask beer. Two Hydes pubs, the **Albert** and **Osborne House**, provide Hydes Mild, Bitter and



Jekyll's Gold between them; the **Ford Madox Brown** (Wetherspoon) gives a choice of ales from Greene King, Marstons, and guests; **Hardy's Well** usually has two good beers from Yorkshire brewer Timothy Taylor; whilst the **Whitworth** normally sells Hydes Bitter and their seasonal offering. So, give them a go if you're in the area.



The Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Season for Summer 2008 is the Swan With Two Nicks at Little Bollington, Cheshire. The presentation will be made on Wednesday 16 July. More next time.

**Join CAMRA**  
See Page 14



From Peter & Susan Abell, The Royal Oak, High Lane:

Re Opening Times May edition. I invite you to amend the article under the heading 'High Peak Pub News' which states that The Royal Oak appears to be closed.

This is not the case, and The Royal Oak is open as usual providing a choice of four 'guest real ales' alongside the usual Marston's Burton Bitter. The beer garden at the rear of the property, complete with well-stocked fish pool, children's play area and bouncy castle is open at all times, and still proves hugely popular.

In addition to the full range of beers, we offer a wide choice of 'home cooked' meals at reasonable prices. The food on offer at The Royal Oak has featured recently in articles in both The Manchester Evening News and the Stockport Express.

A glance through the pages of recent issues of the Opening Times will show that we have been more than willing to participate in this year's Mild Challenge, as in previous years, and we have been only too pleased to welcome, and serve several of your 'bearded, shorts-wearing, ruck-sack carrying members' over the past few weeks to enjoy the 'Classic Dark Mild' on sale here.

(While the article was printed in good faith we really should have known that it was complete cobbles because, as Peter points out, the Royal Oak was a participant in this year's "Wild for Mild". Apologies all round - Ed.)



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# Leyden Brewery

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50 Real Ales  
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Friday 20 June  
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# Stockport Supping

WITH CLIFTON BELL

Travelling through Reddish on a Bank Holiday Monday, I called into the **Thatched Tavern** to see how things were going. Although quiet at the time, landlady Adele told me the pub had been very, very busy on the previous two evenings.



Three cask beers are on offer - Tetley Dark Mild; Boddingtons; and Wells Bombardier. The place appeared to be bright and tidily kept, it has a neat beer garden / yard for summer drinking. Worth a look.

Not far away is the recently reopened **Grey Horse** on Broadstone Road. New owners Joseph Holt have spent a considerable sum on the building putting right years of apparent neglect. If you were familiar with the pub, the layout will seem little altered; two rooms, a Vault to the left, and a large lounge to the right are both decorated in the new Holts character. This consists of muted mushroom tones, occasional artworks, striking light fittings, well-made furnishings, and many TV screens dotted around. The vault is spacious and has a pool table. A service corridor leads out to the garden, smoking area, and an enclosed play-area too. On the beer-front, there are three Holts beers on offer - Mild, Bitter, and seasonal ale. It appears as if they do not expect much demand for food, as the menu is limited to soup, toasties and such. However if the trade grows, it would not be surprising to see this element of the business expand along with it. This really is a great addition to the Reddish drinking scene, and I believe other local operators may have to up their game to match what is a very good pub.



## Cheadle & Gatley

A recent amble around Gatley and Cheadle revealed a few changes in beer range and such. At the **Prince of Wales** (Hydes) it was Mild and Bitter, whilst over at the **Horse & Farrier** the beers were Hydes 1863, Bitter and Jekyll's, but these were joined by two guest beers, one from Allgates of Wigan. The other Gatley house, the **Gothic**, was doing Cains Mild, Bitter, FA, 2008 and a guest beer.



Eastwards to Cheadle High Street found the **White Hart** doing Boddies and Greene King IPA; over the road the **Weavers** is now closed and boarded (and may be destined for non-pub use) and **Bar 65** (formerly the Vine, BarSh, et al) is on keg beer only, although real ale has been promised, I understand. A bustling **Crown**

was selling loads of Hydes Mild and Bitter, together with two guest beers. The quieter **Star** was doing a decent drop of Hydes 1863 and Bitter. The **George & Dragon** was selling Wells Bombardier and Hydes brewed Boddingtons cask in late April. Robinson's **Royal Oak** is down to just the Unicorn as there is not a good enough market for mild too. Finally, the **Ashlea** was doing two guest beers. So, it seems there is something for every taste at the moment in the two villages.

# Brewery NEWS...

ONE door closes and a new one opens. Last month we reported that the **Danetown Brewery**, based in the cellar of the Lowes Arms in Denton, had ceased to brew. There had been ongoing quality problems with some of the beers, mainly down to the plant rather than the beers themselves.

The good news is that the Danetown beers, and some of the old LAB brews, will be reappearing. Lowes Arms owner Peter Wood had arranged for the beers to be contract brewed by the nearby Hornbeam Brewery. The first of the contract brewed beer to appear has been Danetown's Valkyrie (4.2% ABV) - a mid-brown beer with a refreshing but not overpowering hoppiness coming from the use of Amarillo and Styrian Golding hop varieties, and a bitter aftertaste. Next up will be one of the old "LAB" beers, Broomstairs Bitter (4.3%). Pictured below are Peter Wood (*left*) and Hornbeam's Kevin Rothwell celebrating the success of the relaunched Valkyrie.



Meanwhile **Hornbeam Brewery** continues to supply a stream of new and interesting beers. Two specials for Salford's New Oxford were Keith Moon Appreciation Bitter (4.2%) and Oliver Reed Appreciation Bitter (5%). Out as we went to press was Lemon Blossom (3.7%) a pale, delicately citrus beer using Sirachi hops, a new Japanese/American hybrid variety. Look out also for Owd Peg (4.2%) a pale and very hoppy beer made using Galena hops.

On the other side of the coin, comes to sad news that **Owl Brewery** of Oldham is brewing its last.

After 4½ years, owner Gordon Potts is calling it a day. He told *Opening Times* that the main reason for giving up was that at 58 he was finding it harder to run the brewery and trade had never reached the stage where he could employ someone to help out with the heavy work. The penultimate Owl beer was Swansong, a 5% ABV pale and hoppy beer. The very last brew will be Omega (4%), a golden ale. Gordon has our very best wishes for the future.



**Phoenix Brewery**, apart from supplying two excellent beers to Stockport Beer Festival, also got into the festival spirit by producing 10 one-off beers that were supplied to Stockport pubs for festival week. Reflecting the town's industrial heritage the beers were sold under the "Hats Off Fo't Tickers" banner and comprised Pork Pie Pale (3.9%), Urban Turban (4.1%), Finest Fedora (4.3%), Bowler Hat Brown (4.4%), Tasty Titfer (4.5%), Triple Tricorn (4.6%), Deerstalker Dark (4.7%), Tip Top Topper (4.7%), Triple Trilby (5%) and Rabbits Revenge (5.5%). Did you try them all?



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 12<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: The Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle Hulme. Starts 8.00pm

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>** – Stagger: Manchester City Centre West. Start 7.30pm Kro2, Oxford Road; 8.30, Lass O'Gowrie, Charles Street.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to Bulls Head, London Road, Manchester City Centre

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July** – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. **Guest Speaker – Mike Benner CAMRA Chief Executive.** Starts 9.00pm

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*

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>** – **Branch Meeting & AGM** – the Old General, Crescent Road, Dukinfield. Starts 1.00pm – to be followed by visit to Shaws Brewery. **Can all members please attend this important meeting**

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](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)*

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>** – Evening BBQ at Dunham Massey Brewery. Bring your own food for burning. From 7.30pm

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Ashton-on-Mersey survey: meet 8.00pm Brigadier, 8.45 Mersey Farm; 9.30 The Buck.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Pub of the Year Award night at Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** – Cheshire "Big Day Out". 12.30pm Wheatsheaf, Lymm Road; 1.15 pm Jolly Thresher, Lymm Road; 2pm Barn Owl followed by Ye Olde No.3, Swan With Two Nicks. Bus no.37 from Altrincham Interchange at 12.15pm

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

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June** – Campaigning Meeting: Lord Eldon, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Social at Belgian Bar in Leek. Possible minibus to be arranged.

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 11<sup>th</sup>** – Irlam two-pub social: 8pm Tiger Moth, Shallow Drive; 9pm Boat House, Ferry Road.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford. Starts 8.00pm.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Bury Crawl: 7.30 Dusty Miller, Crostons Rd; 8.30 Two Tubs, finish Rose & Crown

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July** – Joint Glossop Crawl with High Peak Branch. 18.49 train from Piccadilly; Market Tavern, Victoria St, 7.30; finish at Star.

# It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.



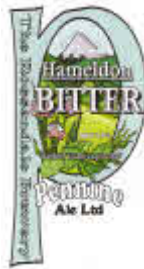
# Pennington Ale Ltd

## THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY

All of our beers will soon be available to the Free Trade.  
Landlords please try them at one of our pubs below: -



The Railway,  
1, Avenue Street,  
Portwood,  
Stockport  
0161 429 6062



The Sportsman,  
57, Mottram Road,  
Hyde,  
Cheshire  
0161 368 5000



The Griffin Inn  
(Site of our Rosendale Brewery),  
84-86, Hud Rake,  
Haslingden,  
Lancashire  
01706 21 40 21

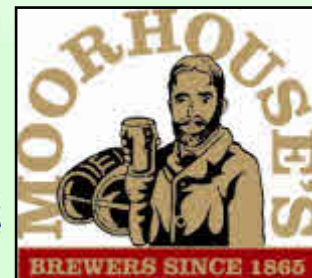
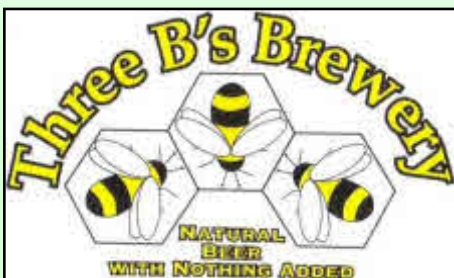


Contact Geoff Oliver  
01706 21 40 21



# wetherspoon

Supporting local breweries  
throughout the North West



a wider selection available at your local

# Wetherspoon



**April to October**

**DIZZY BLONDE** ABV 3.8%

Straw coloured Summer  
Ale with distinctive  
herbal or perfume like  
hop aroma.

This light refreshing beer  
has a clean zesty hop  
dominated palate  
complemented by a  
crisp dry finish.

