

NOVEMBER 2008

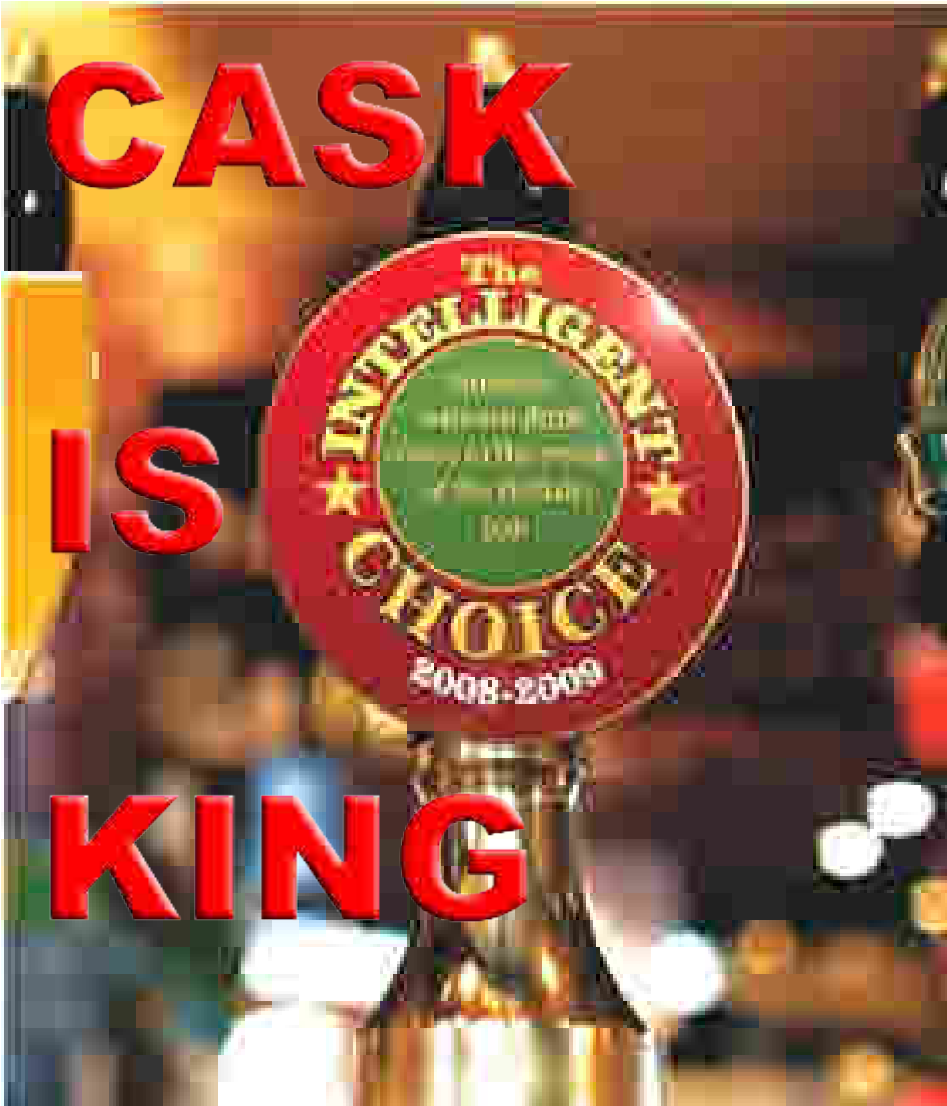


Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

Inside this Month...



Stockport's famous Arden Arms has been named the Manchester Food & Drink Festival Pub of the Year. Read more in Stockport Supping on page 5. Other Opening Times outlets in the running were the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport; Bar Fringe and the Marble Arch, Manchester.



Pictish Brewery's Alchemists Ale was another Food & Drink Festival award winner, picking up the prize for the "Best Beer Brewed in Greater Manchester", with Bank Top Brewery winning the "People's Pint" award. Read more in Brewery News on page 9.

THE pub industry might be going through an annus horribilis but cask ale has been the superstar performer. Real ale is doing better at keeping customers satisfied than any other beer or lager category, finds the Intelligent Choice 2008 report.

Cask ale is growing its share of the total beer market, finds the report which is prepared by the Why Handpull group, which includes CAMRA, beer quality specialists Cask Marque, the Society of Independent Brewers and family brewers.

Overall, cask shows only a slight marginal decline of 1.3 per cent in volume, and only about 0.3 per cent in value.

This compares to a total beer market decline of eight per cent, and means cask ale is doing better than not only keg and smoothflow ales, but also standard and premium lagers.

Regional and local brewers are weathering the credit crunch as 70 per cent of the volume loss in cask ale can be attributed to the four multinationals that dominate the British market, which continue to withdraw from investment in the sector.

"Local and regional brewers are showing value growth of almost two per cent. This clearly demonstrates that where brewers are investing in cask ale, it is showing unmistakable signs of growth," says report author Pete Brown.



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Pub OF THE Month AWARD



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Railway on Portwood, Stockport.

The Avenue Street pub has been a serial award winner over the years, picking up Pub of the Month, Pub of the Year and Regional Pub of the Year awards. In addition it even made runner-up in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition.

Manager Sue Hitchen and her partner Vince clearly had some hard acts to follow when they took over in March 2007.

Luckily they have risen to the challenge in fine style, buoyed by their 14 years' experience in the licensed trade. Some of those years were in fact spent working for Dave Porter, of the former Porter Brewing Company, in some of his other pubs, where they gained an enviable reputation for beer quality.

Of course Dave Porter sold his brewery business and recipes to Geoff Oliver, who now trades as Pennine Ales. Luckily Sue and Vince stayed on, ensuring some welcome continuity.

While the Railway is no architectural gem it is a pub that manages to do many things well not least in the beer selection. The full Pennine range is available on hand pump alongside Pictish Brewery's Brewer's Gold, a changing guest mild and, at the weekend three guest beers that are sold from 7pm on Friday until they run out. Quality is high and the pub has a seemingly permanent place in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide

There is a great range of foreign beer too, plus a changing guest cider. In fact Sue is something of a cider fan and for the past two years has run a cider and perry festival at the pub, something that now seems set to be an annual event.

The pub itself has recently been redecorated and always looks smart and clean. It sets its stall out well to appeal to both its loyal crowd of regulars along with passing trade, often from the Peel Centre shops across the road.

While the Railway has won many awards before this is the first under Sue's tenure. It is both long overdue and well deserved. There have been, and continue to be, concerns over the pub's long term future (at present there are no plans for the site as far as we know) but while Sue and Vince remain there you feel that all will be well.

This well deserved award will be presented on the evening of Thursday 27 November from 8pm. It's bound to be a busy night so get their early if you want a seat. **JC.**

The Railway is well served by public transport with buses 330 and 325 stopping almost outside the door.

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 CAMRA Pub of the Year 2008**



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COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

Opening Times – Comment

As you will see this issue of *Opening Times* is a little thin. Apologies for this but editorial holidays fell on some inconvenient weekends in our production cycle. We are however planning a bumper Christmas edition so look out for that – in the pubs from 12 December at the latest if all goes to plan. Next year also sees the 25th Anniversary of *Opening Times*. We have one or two things in mind for this and hopefully I will be able to let you know more next time.

Last Month's Best Beer Brewed in Greater Manchester competition and beer festival were very successful with no fewer than 18 of the region's breweries taking part. Next year we have some ideas on how to take this forward and also try and get all of the local brewers on board. Thanks to everyone who helped and also Phil Jones and his team at the Food & Drink Festival for running with the idea and helping it happen.

Opening Times - Information

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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:

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

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Stagger

Didsbury with Jerry Wicken

AS England was rounding off the summer with a one-day series against South Africa, we too had played a three day game at the Stockport Beer Festival and followed it with the stamina and concentration required of the Great British Beer Festival Test Match. We were now down to the limited overs version: a quick fire assault on five Didsbury pubs.

A late August day/nighter started in the **Gateway** on the corner of Wilmslow Road in East Didsbury where the skipper was ready to talk tactics. I waded in with a pint of Hydes'



Original but the Captain steadied the ship with a half. It might only be a short match but somebody might have to bat through the innings. The

delivery from the only two staff trying to serve three bars was a trifle slow but an appeal by one of our team about the quality of his pint was answered in the affirmative and a new pint was poured.

The venue is a large roadhouse type with big screen, dart board and pool table. It has a public bar, a large main room with a stage for karaoke and live acts and a quieter back room. The beer was marked average by the whole team and it was disappointing that none of the other Hydes' beers were on sale.

The **Bell House** serves no real ale; neither does the **Parrswood Hotel** so our next venue was The Didsbury. Running between wickets probably wasn't the team's strong point but we were up with the pace as the floodlights started to come on at our arrival.

The **Didsbury** is mainly food orientated but always keeps a decent range of ales. This evening was unusually quiet on the food front

perhaps because of holidays. The North Yorkshire Brewery's Flying Herbert had flown but the second appeal of the night to the third umpire got the pint



changed to Old Peculier. The team were musing as to why dark, strong ale usually associated with roaring fires and damp socks should be a guest ale during August. It only scored a little above average. The Daleside Blonde did better, thought by those who tried it to be refreshing though not exceptional.

As we neared the halfway point of the innings we headed in leisurely fashion to the **Famous Crown**. A pub that styles itself 'famous' is, I feel, always heading for a fall but there was no denying its popularity on this warmish August evening. The pub has a couple of big screens in its one large bar along with pictures of old Didsbury. Although only a single room by definition there are enough tables away from the TV as well

as an outside drinking area to give the pub a more traditional feel. The beers tried were Spitfire and Bombardier (both quite pricey even by Didsbury standards) but neither was on sparkling form. Nobody tried the Old Speckled Hen and whilst we applauded the tenacity and possibly legendary sales skills of the Old Peculier salesman ("Yeah, you bet love – it's an absolute must have beer for August") it went untried. We had reached the stage of our innings where we were prodding forward without the necessary brio required to complete the match so we skipped across the road to the **Royal Oak**, 'famous' in the best possible way for its cheese and pate lunches and old music hall posters; and which for decades has been a Didsbury institution.

There was a decent range of beers. Whilst on this occasion we ignored the Pedigree, we kept the scoreboard ticking over with the well received Burton Bitter and Wychwood Bewitched. The other Wychwood offering, the appropriately named Hoggy's Nightwatchman, received only average scores from those who tried it. Although many of us felt at home in an institution we still had work to do and a few runs to make at our last official stop, the **Dog And Partridge**.

The D&P is nearly always at capacity on a Friday night and this was no exception. The TVs were reflecting our own efforts,

and for once people were watching the screens as England forced home their advantage and spun South Africa out. We too had to complete our innings in the best possible fashion and elegantly picked off the winning runs in the forms of Thwaites Lancaster Blonde, the ubiquitous (but none



worse for that) Tim Taylor Landlord, and despite the beer miles, the St Austell Tribute which scored as high as any on the night. We left for another innings, the Jennings Cumberland, Flowers Bitter, Theakstons Bitter and the googly which failed to fool us in the guise of Old Rosie Scrumpy. As we tucked in to the free monkey nuts and admired the large array of beers on offer we could only wonder how the Old Peculier salesman had finally met his match. With victory ours, stumps were drawn and we retired to the pavilion, in this instance, the **Fletcher Moss**.

This is a personal favourite, not just because it keeps a good



range of Hydes' beers in great quality. The staff are well informed and you are rarely kept waiting even when, like tonight, it is busy. Mostly, though it is the

atmosphere. When you go through the door all you can hear is the sound of people having conversations. No music, no TV, just chat. Although essentially open plan i.e. there are no doors, there are distinct drinking areas including an outside area for smokers at the back. Old photos again adorn the walls and we could sit and reflect on bygone days with pints of the Hydes' seasonal Bells and Whistles, the Owd Oak and a guest – Bateman's Summer Swallow. They all scored very well but our numbers were too few to give a beer of the night award. Time and weariness prevented us sampling the Jekyll's Gold and the Original Bitter.

Though the evening was short on numbers and short on pubs we still managed to try a good range of ales from all over the country.



FIRST it's hearty congratulations to Steve King and Joe Quinn at the **Arden Arms**, Millgate, for winning the Pub of the Year title in this year's Manchester Food & Drink Awards. It was second time lucky for the Arden as it was also nominated last year.

Steve was over the moon: "When they read out our name it was exhilarating; it is a great achievement", he told me. The quality of the operation has been lauded in these pages before (it was a Pub of the Month not so long



ago) and I'm delighted this excellent pub has achieved wider recognition. There's always a great pint of Robbies on tap and the food is second to none. A great pub run by great people.

I should also mention the **Crown** on Heaton Lane, which was also nominated. Commiserations there but at least they can take consolation in the CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year Award.

The **Oddfellows** at Mellor has a new licensee - Richard Kitchingman who took over the pub on 9 September. Richard spent 20 years working in the printing industry but a love of fine wines and real ales led him to the Oddfellows where he worked



for four months as a manager before taking over the reins himself.

Three cask beers feature with regulars Copper Dragon Golden Pippin and Adnams Best being joined by an ever-changing guest beer. The guests tend to be well-known and reliable brews such as

Black Sheep Bitter, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Fullers London Pride. Richard is very committed to his beers and this showed through in the quality when I called.

There's good food, too, from 12-3pm and 6-9pm Tuesday to Saturday and from 12-6pm on Sundays. Worth a visit.

Bar 65 that was formerly The Vines in Cheadle, has been taken over by the landlord of the George and Dragon. It has a suitable cellar but no handpumps. The landlord would like to put real ale on but is not receiving any co-operation from Punch Taverns. I hear. Given that cask beer is one of the few growth areas in the pub trade you do have to wonder at the mentality of the people putting obstacles in this way. The **George and Dragon** apparently has real ale on at weekends in the form of Bombardier and one other changing beer. It was keg-only when I called one Thursday night.

There are new licensees at the **Grey Horse** in Reddish - Mike and Karen Murden who have been with Holts for a while, previously at the Silver Well in Wigan. The beer has improved and Holt's seasonal will be on with the Mild and Bitter. They also now stock the full range of Holt's bottled beers. Meanwhile the **Reddish Vale** is now closed and boarded up. The **Cosmopolitan** (ex Three Crowns and The Venue) in Heaton Norris has re-opened but there is still a for sale sign up outside.

The **Nursery**, Heaton Norris is the latest Hydes pub to host a beer festival. These events seem to have struck a chord with the customers of the pubs where they have been held – the Nursery bash is from 7 to 9 November.



High Peak PUB NEWS WITH FRANK WOOD

Joshua Bradley, Gee Cross

THIS is a conversion of one of the big Victorian piles that used to be owned by a mill owner or the like, *writes Ralph Warrington*. The conversion is impressive and must have cost Hydes an absolute bomb. I'm pleased to say that they have kept a bar area and one of the big impressive rooms as a pub where there is no pressure to order food. The whole is semi-open plan, though the rooms feel separate and they have kept many of the architectural features. The garden and patio is immense and aimed squarely at families with animated millstones.

The beer was in top form, four Hydes beers on including the dark mild. The odd thing though was that other than the pump clips and beer mats, (they have had the sense to actually put these on the tables), there is no Hydes branding at all! The complex includes the Bluebell Centre which is next door but still attached to the ground plan. This has a cafe bar, full restaurant and meeting centre. Out of interest, the Tameside/Stockport boundary runs through the middle of the site! Well worth a visit and somewhere I will be keeping an eye on.

Bay Horse, Newton



THE Bay Horse at Newton is proving its place at the centre of the community as new licensees open their doors to a full house. The very welcome surprise for tenants Karen and Mark Calvert (*pictured, left, with brewery director Dennis Robinson*) came on their first Saturday as they took over as new licensees of the Robinson's pub.

Karen said: "We were absolutely inundated on the night and had to call on family and friends, and even some of the customers to help out

behind the bar and in the kitchen. It was a superb way for us to start out in a new career and we have to thank everybody who was there to support us."

Taking on the pub has been a long held ambition for the couple who have moved just the short distance from nearby Victoria Street to launch their new venture together.

"We have had to be patient until the tenancy became available, during which time I have worked as a bookkeeper and Mark as a builder, so we are now very happy to have achieved our ambition," said Karen. The couple are very keen for the pub to be known as a place where all are welcome, as well as home to the many groups including motorbikes, cars, scuba-diving, fishing and even the church who use it as a regular meeting place.

Sportsman, Hyde

Changes are afoot at the Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Licensees Pete and Greg Banks have departed the scene and after a temporary closure for a much needed redecoration and clean-up it was due to reopen on 24 October. Owner Geoff Oliver told us that the pub would be reopening as a Pennine Ales managed house. More next time.

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Last Leaf, Massacre, Porter, Snowbound,
Wobbly Bob, White Hurricane, Uncle Fester,
Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon

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BETTER BEER**

International Brewing Awards



1998

Wobbly Bob



2002

Navy



2002

Wobbly Bob



2004

Wobbly Bob



Robin Wignall's monthly round up of Peak Pub News

SOME weeks ago I called in the **Cock & Pheasant** at Bollington. Whilst there is an emphasis on food, of good quality and sensible price, this is also a Good Beer Guide listed pub, and on the evidence of a single visit, deservedly so. Copper Dragon is a regular and some national brands are available. Storm Downpour, locally brewed in Macclesfield, was a guest beer, and very enjoyable too.

The latest I have on the **Jodrell Arms** in Whaley Bridge is that following the involvement of a conservation architect, and consultations with the High Peak Borough Conservation Officer, plans have been submitted to the Borough Council, and planning permission is awaited for Jeremy Middleton's intended alterations and developments of this Grade 2 Listed building. Obviously more on this as news becomes available.

Further to last month's note about the **Board Inn** and the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge, Robinson's have indeed installed relief managers, whilst in each case new tenants are expected during November. At the Railway food has been available 12.00 to 17.00 except Monday, and a good pint of Dizzy Blonde was served when I called.

Elsewhere in the Robinson estate the **Crossings** at Furness Vale had Unicorn, Olympic Gold and Dizzy Blonde on a mid September visit. An innovation at the Crossings has been the introduction of Sunday Breakfast 10.00 till 12.00 (not the first Sunday of the month). This has proved popular with locals and of course many diners stay for lunchtime drinks.

My visits to the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge usually Robinson's Hatters in very good form, whilst the most recent call gave a chance for an early tasting of the newly available Spellbound, the latest seasonal beer from Robinson's. For tasting notes of this enjoyable beer see the back page of October's OT.

At the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge Tony Gunner has managed to get Punch to provide a fourth hand pump, restoring the status quo of 2 or 3 years ago. A late September visit found Tetley Dark Mild appearing again. Up to a couple or so years ago this was a permanent beer at the Goyt, and often featured as a favourite on the Mild Challenge. The beer was on good form and at the moment Tony intends to sell it on a recurring basis rather than as a permanent feature. Hopefully sales will make it worth while the Goyt returning to the Mild Challenge in 2009.

It is difficult to miss out a snippet on the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge as each visit brings a new surprise. During September delights included Evan Evans' Harvest Home 4.3% from Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire. The latest Marston's Classic Beer was also available; a Rye Beer brewed in fact at Jennings'. A call in early October found all 8 hand pumps in action. There are regular beers from the Marston's brewing empire including Jennings' and Brakspear/Wychwood breweries. Beers from Marston's guest list included Sharps Doom Bar, from Cornwall, Hook Norton Flagship, from Oxfordshire and North Yorkshire Cereal Killer, a wheat beer.

An information update on historic pubs shows that the Yellow Cat in Buxworth still stands as a private house. It may previously have been the Yellow Cap.

An unusual story from Chapel en le Frith appeared in the **Buxton Advertiser** in September. The **Memorial** pub has been closed by the Licensing Panel of High Peak Borough Council. Noise and anti social behaviour are cited. My visits were always at quieter times of day when a good choice of well kept beer at a sensible price was available. A pity that a potentially good pub should become a lost local.

In all the current doom and gloom it is good to finish on a bright note. I have heard whispers that a new micro-brewery is planned for the **Old Hall** at Whitehough near Chinley. Hopefully more on this next time.


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DIDSBURY is holding its first beer festival on 21 and 22 November. It's being held at the St Catherine's Club on School Lane and will feature around 50 beers from breweries in Manchester and the Lake District as well as ciders and perries. There will also be food, entertainment and festival merchandise including souvenir glasses.

The festival is running three sessions –7pm to 11pm on Friday, November 21, entry £3; and from 12pm to 5pm (£2) and 6pm to 11pm (£3) on Saturday, November 22. A limited number of tickets will be sold before the event and there will also be entry on the door. For more information on the event, tickets or sponsorship, log onto www.didsburybeerfestival.org.uk or contact Michael O'Hare on 07710 613987



The **Farmers Arms** on Longley Lane, Northenden, has another new licensee, Sara the previous holder has decided that rather than covering two pubs it would be easier to concentrate on the **Ladybrook** in Bramhall. Angela the award winning licensee from the **Horse & Jockey** on Chorlton Green moved in recently. Unfortunately some local criminals decided to welcome her by attacking 'Dobby' the diminutive barman as he was taking the weekly takings to the bank. Let's hope that this unwelcome attention doesn't put Angela off Northenden completely, especially as when we spoke recently she told me that she intended expanding the real ale range by bringing in Adnams Bitter, Old Speckled Hen, Timothy Taylors and various guests after discussions with the regulars. On the food front, Angela has had the menus revamped and introduced numerous offers.

In Salford the **Crescent** is settling down nicely under Cliffy and Will, with trade picking back up with the return of the students to the university. The refurbishment of the back room is almost complete and this will see live music every other Thursday. The "Lunar Lounge" music night was due to be relaunched on 1 November and will run on the first Saturday each month.

On the beer front the next festival will coincide with the National Winter Ales Festival and run for the whole of the festival week. The food hours have also been extended into the evenings on Tuesday to Friday when the kitchen will be open until 7.30pm (with the famous Wednesday night curries available from 5-8).

Down on Bexley Square the **New Oxford** is also booming. The Greater Manchester Belgian Beer Festival was an enormous success with an estimated 2,000-plus people attending over the weekend. The pub was cleared out of all Belgian beers both draught and bottled, as well as shifting over 40 nine-gallon casks of British beer. Needless to say another, even bigger, event is planned for next Spring. It's good to see an increase in traditional cider sales here too. The pub now has two real ciders on hand pump – Thatcher's Heritage and Cheddar Valley.

In a busy month, I did manage to call into the **Bank** on Mosley Street in the City Centre and chatted with Nicola Hamilton-Coburn, the overall manager for the past three months or so.

The pub is owned by Mitchells & Butlers and has been brought into their Nicholson's chain, which means a welcome emphasis on real ale. Six cask beers feature, three regulars (currently Fuller's London Pride, Greene King Abbot and Jennings Cumberland Ale) and three guests selected from the company's seasonal list and which change weekly. Tasting notes above the pumpclips encourage people to try the beers as do the tasting trays. There is good food, too. Well worth a visit.

FOR the second year running the Manchester Food & Drink Festival included an Ale Day where all of Greater Manchester's cask ale brewers were invited to submit a beer for the "Best Beer Brewed in Greater Manchester" competition. This year 18 of the county's 24 brewers took part with judging taking place on the afternoon of 10 October.

After three rounds of judging the beer to emerge victorious this year was **Pictish Alchemists Ale**, with **Phoenix Spotland Gold** in the runner-up position and **Greenfield Black 5** winning the bronze.

Pictish brewer Richard Sutton, who wasn't going to enter the contest this year, was suitably pleased when *Opening Times* caught up with him. "It really is an honour to be recognised by the Food & Drink Festival in this way" he told us. Alchemists Ale is a superb, 4.3% ABV premium bitter with a citrusy hoppiness throughout the initial taste and long finish, all underpinned by a pale ale malt backbone that gives the beer a good body.



Pictish Brewery continues to brew at full speed with a combination of new specials and returning favourites. The unusual Agave (brewed with Agave syrup) will be coming back as will the superb bitter IPA, Blue Moon (6%). The special for November is the malty/hoppy Z-Rod (4.8%) and look out, too, for Samhain Stout (5%) brewed for Halloween. Pictish Porter (4.4%) is also back for the winter season and at the other end of the spectrum the single hop beers continue with Glacier (4.1%).



This year the Food & Drink Festival's ale even ran over two days and throughout the mini beer festival customers were asked to vote for their favourite beer, the winner winning the "Peoples' Pint" Award. This was won by **Bank Top Pavilion Pale Ale** with **Pictish Alchemists** runner-up and third place taken by **Prospect Brewery's Silver Tally**.

Bank Top's Dave Sweeney was another happy brewer telling us that he was "absolutely thrilled" to win the award. Pavilion Pale Ale, a pale and hoppy wonder brewed with pale ale malt, pale crystal malt and Cascade hops comes in at 4.5% and is one of Dave's favourite beers.

The award was a timely one and something of a parting gift for brewery founder John Feeny who finally retires from the brewery this month to spend time travelling in the USA. A special beer Route 66 Retirement Road (5%) has been brewed to mark his departure.

The **Dunham Massey Brewery** goes from strength to strength with two new Beer Festival Awards to add to their previous four, all within the first year since the brewery opened. The recent Awards were at Sheffield: Overall Champion of the Festival for the Milk Stout (4.2%) and Surrey Oaks: Third Prize for Dunham Stout (4.2%). New out is Treacle Treat (4.1%) for Halloween and Bonfire Night. A dark bitter enhanced with a hint of treacle. Back on the scene is the formidable Winter Warmer (6.6%).

The **Millstone Brewery** is celebrating its 5th Birthday this month and to mark the occasion a special beer is to be produced. This is Three Shires Extra a 5% ABV version of Three Shires, the first beer ever produced by Millstone. Congratulations to Jon and Nick for five very successful years.

Stockport's **3 Rivers Brewery** has produced a smoked malt ale called Old Smokey. This should be available by the time you read this. The excellent Yummy Figgy Pudding is also to be produced this month and will be available until the end of January.

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No Sign of the Inn

IN one of the most ludicrous examples of anti-alcohol political correctness I have yet seen, Wiltshire County Council have joined forces with the Highways Agency to compel the removal of roadside direction signs pointing to pubs off the A303 trunk road, on the grounds that they may act as an incentive to drink-driving.

Do they really think that long-distance drivers on seeing one of these signs will pull off the main road, have a skinful at the Dog & Duck and then return to the highways to cause carnage? The idea that in practice they will act as any kind of incentive to drink-drive offending is simply incredible. To be consistent, are they going to also demand the removal of signs pointing to any other establishment with an alcohol licence, such as hotels or restaurants, not to mention supermarkets? And will pubs already situated by the roadside have to remove all advertising material?

Nowadays, most country pubs derive a large part of their income from food, to the extent of some having become to all intents and purposes restaurants. For the vast majority of drivers, these signs say one thing: "Here is somewhere to stop for food and take a break". There is no compulsion to have any alcohol at all, and most pubs will offer a far wider range of soft drinks than motorway service areas or roadside diners, plus better food and a more relaxing atmosphere. And the point must also be made that drinking alcohol before driving is still permitted in this country so long as you do not exceed the prescribed legal limit. This is a nonsensical overreaction only too typical of current official hysteria about alcohol, and represents another small, subtle nail in the coffin of the British pub.

No Hiding Place

IN a recent issue of "Opening Times", the editor said that he didn't believe well-run pubs had anything to fear from the smoking ban or the credit crunch. Now I can see what he's getting at, but I couldn't help thinking it was a rather complacent comment. Over the past year or so, the pub trade has taken a battering from the two factors he mentioned, and if the total amount of trade drops obviously it is going to be the less well run and appealing outlets that suffer most.

However, pubs cannot simply be divided between good and bad, and in reality there are a huge mass between the two extremes that provide a decent enough service to their customers but are never going to be places you'd travel miles to visit. And it's not only the obvious no-hopers that have shut their doors forever, but large numbers in this middle ground too. Indeed I could mention one pub not too far from here that appeared in the Good Beer Guide for a number of years up to and including the 2008 edition – so presumably counting as one of the four thousand best in the country – but has now been closed and boarded for more than a year.

We need to be quite clear about this – it may well be the case that Pub A has closed rather than Pub B because it was worse run, but the overall reason why so many pubs have closed recently is because the total demand for pubs has fallen. In the past, plenty of pubs seemed to thrive despite offering poor standards of beer and service, but those days have long passed. Sadly, even being well above average on many fronts is no longer a guarantee of survival.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.org.uk

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Trafford & Hulme PUB NEWS

Chorlton Big Day Out

On Saturday 29th November Trafford & Hulme is organising a social around Chorlton that will particularly appeal to the Under 30's. Meeting at the **Hillary Step** at 1pm the day will then continue as a walk around the many real ale pubs of Chorlton.

As a warning of what this may incorporate, the following is a brief resume of the relevant pubs, some or all of which may be visited on the day. Get your walking boots on and be ready for a challenge!



Abode presents as a contemporary bar for a mix of ages and has a regular guest ale from a local brewery.

Argyles is a different set up, although as many new bars is set in an ex-shopfront. Booths are the theme in the main bar, then opening up into a lounge towards the beer

garden. With two hand pumps, the choice of beers usually is a surprise.

Bar 4 Eighty has one hand pump and is conveniently situated next to the precinct.

A large JW Lees pub, **Lloyds** serves their award-winning bitter and seasonal ales in a sympathetic modern re-vamp of a Victorian environment.

Marble Beer House was converted from a real ale off licence some years ago and has now a well established clientele. Serving a selection of beers from Marble Brewery, it also stocks a number of guest ales from local breweries as well as a good choice of bottled beers.

Pi café bar with a great mix of traditional and modern does sell excellent gourmet pies as well as a selection of local beers from its three hand pumps

Sedge Lynn, a Wetherspoon's pub tastefully converted from a snooker hall, provides a good range of beers at reasonable price.

Spread Eagle is a traditional large Holt's establishment serving your value pint.



The Bar has a modern twist on the traditional pub, with separate areas and differing styles of seating to suit. As an outlet for Marble Beers, it also offers a selection of beers from other local breweries along with a good selection of foreign bottled and draught beers.

The Nook has a slightly Moroccan theme with a single hand pump serving a reasonable pint of varying bitters.

The **Famous Trevor Arms** is one of the oldest drinking establishments in Chorlton. A long-time haunt of United fans, it has four hand pumps, the regular being Boddingtons, with a varying range on the others.

Horse and Jockey based on Chorlton Green, this pub has had resurgence in real ale, currently having three hand pumps. Always popular with the younger crowd.

The Beech has long been a favourite with real ale drinkers and still offers a selection of 5 or 6 ales despite a falling off in popularity.

Anyone still standing could also take a walk across the Mersey to **Jackson's Boat**, where Landord and Speckled Hen are the regular beers.

Steamhouse Festival @ Urmston Station

The event will be called the 'Steamhouse Christmas Festival' and will be held in a large Marquee at the side of the pub. Available will be up to 10 cask beers from Hydes, Bazens' and Dunham with representatives from the breweries in attendance and up to 10 draught Foreign beers from Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Czech Rep. plus some bottles. More details in the ad at the bottom of the next column.

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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 01625 425734*

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8pm.

Friday 21st – Hyde Road Stagger: starts 7.30pm Travellers Call; 8.30pm Pineapple.

Saturday 22nd – Informal Social at Didsbury Beer Festival, St Catherine's Social Club, School Lane. From 12 noon.

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation to Railway, Portwood, Stockport. From 8pm.

Thursday 11th December – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Includes Christmas Quiz. Starts 8.00pm

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

Monday 17th – Autumn Pub of the Season Award – Bollin Fee, Swan St. Wilmslow. 8pm.

Monday 1st December – AGM & Campaigning Meeting: Congleton Leisure Centre. Starts 8pm.

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 13th – City Centre Survey: Font Bar, New Wakefield St 7.15pm; Salisbury 8pm; Peveril of the Peak, Gt Bridgewater St 8.45; finish at Knott Bar.

Thursday 20th – Stretford Social: meet Green Windmill, Stretford Arndale 8pm.

Saturday 29th – Chorlton Survey: meet 1pm, Hillary Step, Upper Chorlton Road.

The **High Peak & North East Cheshire** Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple, Tameside and Derbyshire from Glossop to Buxton. *Branch Contact – Mike Rose 07986 458517. mikewrose@btinternet.com*

Monday 10th – Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar.. Starts 8.30pm.

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*

Saturday 8th – Heritage Pub Minibus Crawl: starts Marble Arch then Nursery, Heaton Norris; Arden Arms, Stockport; Stalybridge Station Buffet; Plough, Gorton. Return to Marble at about 7pm.

Wednesday 12th – Social: Crescent, Salford. Starts 8pm.

Wednesday 19th – Branch Meeting & AGM: upstairs room, Unicorn, Church St, Manchester. Starts 8pm prompt. **All members please attend this important meeting.**

Wednesday 26th – Social: Morning Star, Manchester Road, Wardley. From 8pm.

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Join CAMRA Today..

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to: **Mark McConachie, CAMRA Membership, 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL. Tel 0161 429 9356.** Alternatively you can join online at www.camra.org.uk.

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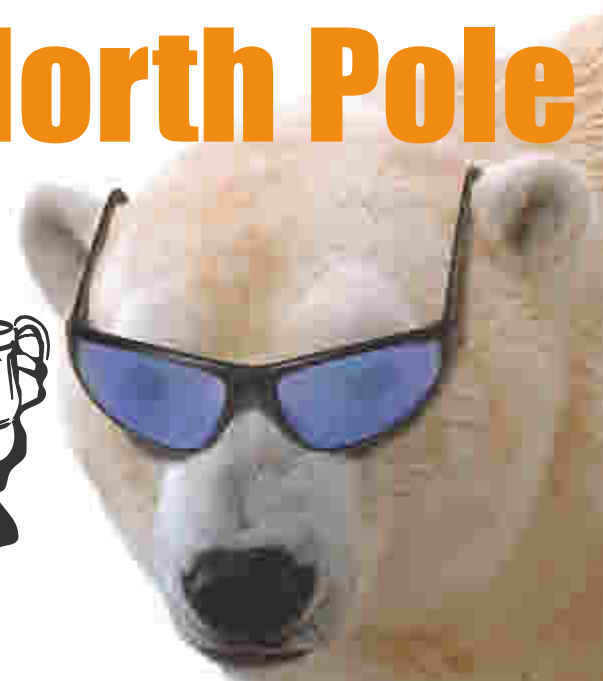
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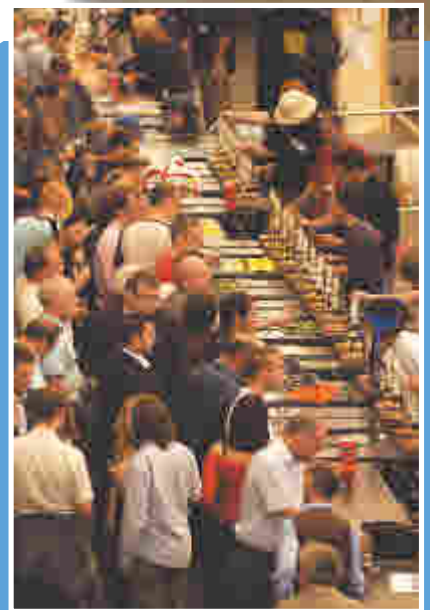
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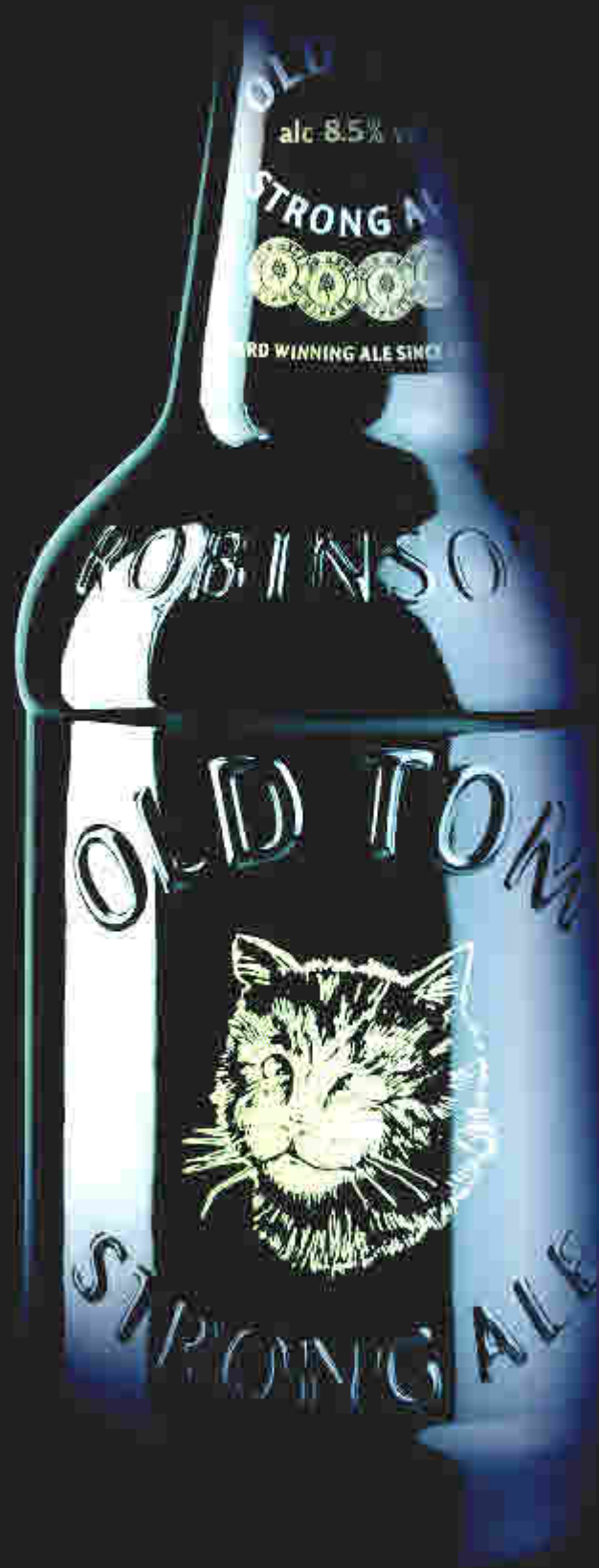
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