

JUNE 2009

Open
TIMES

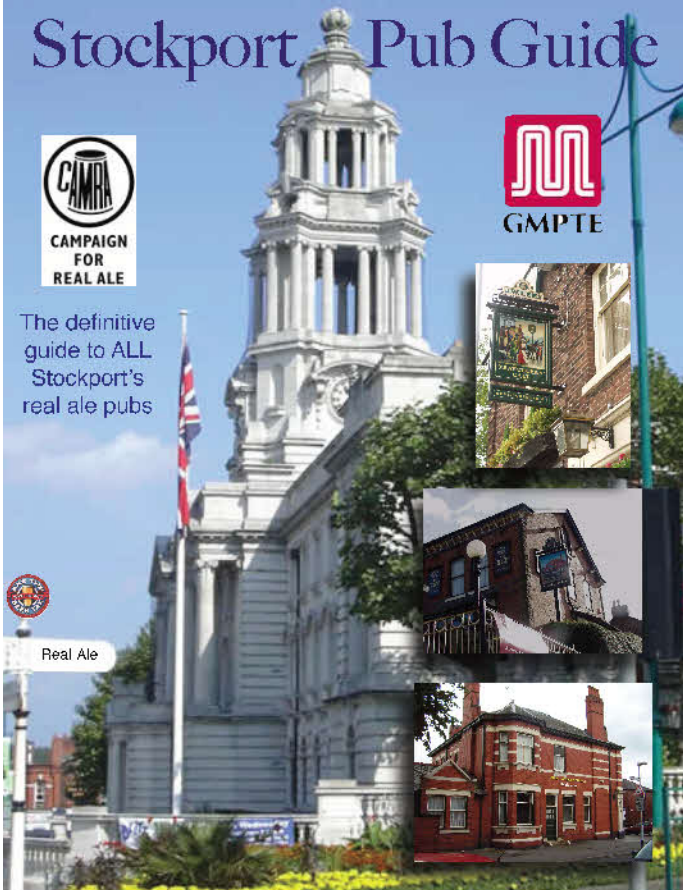
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THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

Stockport Pub Guide



The definitive guide to ALL Stockport's real ale pubs



VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 4



Coming Soon

A stalwart team of CAMRA Stockport and South Manchester branch members have, since last September been putting together a new version of *Viaducts and Vaults*, the Stockport Pub Guide. It will be launched at the Stockport Beer Festival at the end of May 2009. Remarkably, the cover price remains at £4.95, the same price as *Viaducts and Vaults 3* that was published in 2003.

The new version is even better value as, unlike previous ones, it is in full colour, and is longer, having 112 pages instead of 96. This version is packed from cover to cover with, not only a list and description of every pub in the Borough of Stockport, but many informative articles. These range on subjects like mild, porter, cider and perry, a wealth of historical information about Stockport, including Beers and Breweries, Pub Preservation, Famous people of Stockport, and even a history of Strawberry Recording Studios. Plus there are Railway Crawls, and throughout the guide, information on how to get to each pub by public transport and in most cases a map showing the location.

This book is a must for visitors and residents alike. Not only will you learn more about the public houses but you will have an invaluable source of information that might even help with the children's homework!

Preparations are now well under way for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. The 23rd annual event will again take place at Edgley Park, the home of Stockport County and Sale Sharks. We have increased both the beer and cider orders this year, given the record attendance last time. The cider order hadn't been finalised as we went to press but look out for cider and perry from new English cider maker Swallowfields and rising Welsh star Gwynt y Ddraig. There is a preview of the beer range on page 11 while on page 17 we feature Stockport Cerebral Palsy Society, this year's chosen Festival Charity.

Two more local Pubs of the Year have been announced. The Trafford & Hulme CAMRA winner is the Knott Bar on Deansgate in Manchester. See page 14 for more on this. The North Manchester CAMRA winner is the ever-popular New Oxford on Bexley Square in Salford. Congratulations to both pubs which will now go forward to the Greater Manchester Pub of the Year contest.





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Pub OF THE Month AWARD



For 15 years George and Elaine Wood have been taking good care of the Grapes in Hazel Grove, the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for May.

From the outside there is very little to distinguish it from any other Robinson's pub on the A6. But once you step inside there is a world of difference. You are greeted with an immediate and warm welcome from both sides of the bar as soon as you walk in the door, as staff and customers alike greet you.

Although it is a very old building, the Grapes has a homely, well maintained feeling yet still retains its classic layout. A large vault runs from front to back on the left side of the building and is home to the pub's only official team (darts) and all their trophies. The central bar separates the vault from the three-roomed lounge. The rear room features images of old Hazel Grove, but other pictures of local cricket and football teams through the years also look down upon you.

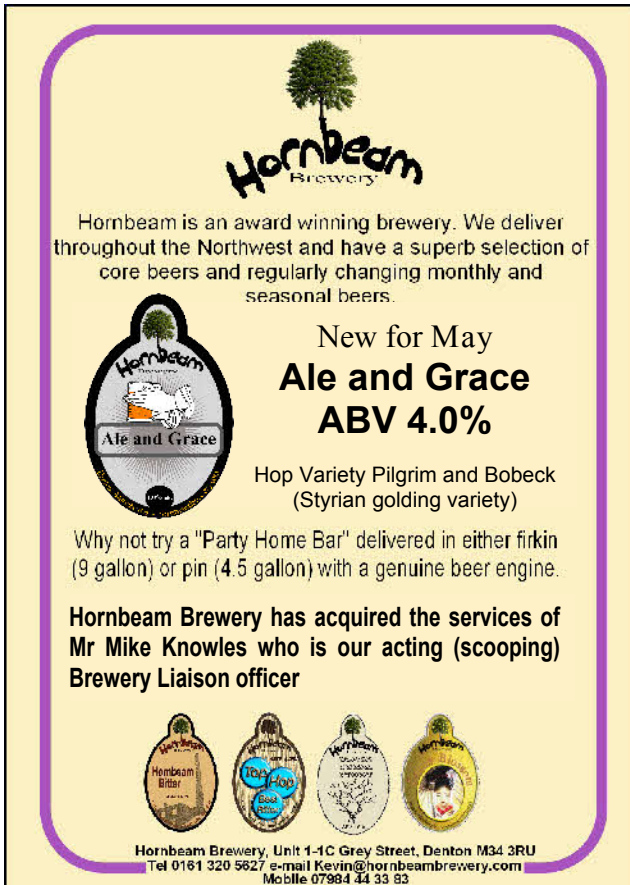
The front room is a little more private if you don't want to be too involved with the chat and banter with the locals in the main bar area. But it's the bar that is the heart of the pub and where most people gather.

George has maintained and decorated the building by his own hand to a degree and has just finished a complete redecoration of the interior. If you are one of those people who judge a pub by its toilets, the Grapes will definitely pass any inspection.

In the two years since the last time this award landed here, George and Elaine have faced and overcome various challenges such as the introduction of the smoking ban. The already popular patio at the back was the perfect place to put a shelter. Before you know it, one is erected and in service. By the time you read this Elaine's efforts with the patio's flower tubs will be in full bloom – a real credit in these credit crunched times. Even the recession brings a wry smile to George's face, as he knows his competitively priced beers will keep his regulars coming back to moan about "the current economic crisis" at his bar!

The beer selection is limited to Robinsons Unicorn and Hatters. But they are consistently served in excellent condition. You won't find any menus and ketchup bottles though. There is no food sold, they stand or fall on the beer quality. Once again George is supporting the Mild Magic trail currently under way in the Opening Times coverage area. If you haven't got your sticker yet - hurry up there is still a little time left.

So come along for the presentation on Monday 25th May at 8.00pm and sample the atmosphere for yourself. The Grapes is in the middle of Hazel Grove (SK7 4DQ), on the bend in the A6 served by the 192 bus and just four minutes walk from the rail station. *Chris Wainwright*



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Mobile 07984 44 33 83



COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

Opening Times – Comment

Last month's Local Pubs Week initiative seems to have struck a chord with Stockport Council. The Tourism department have asked to get together with CAMRA to see how we can promote the town's excellent traditional pub scene. A very welcome development so watch this space.

I hope everyone will make a special effort to come to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Last year's crowd was a record and while we don't know if that will be repeated this time around, the beer and cider orders have both been increased to the biggest ever, just to make sure there is enough to go round. This will also be a chance to pick up your copy of the brand new Stockport Pub Guide, the first for five years, and the best looking yet.

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 £7 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		

Copy Date for the June issue is Saturday 9 May

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Opening Times 298 - Contents

Pub of the Month	2	Manchester Matters	12
High Peak Pub News	4	T&H Pub of the Year	14
Peak Practice	5	Mild Magic	15
Stagger	7	Brewery News	16
Curmudgeon	8	Festival Charity	17
Stockport Supping	9	Letters	17
OT Birthday Beer	11	CAMRA Walking Club	17
Festival Beer Preview	11	CAMRA Calling	18

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High Peak PUB NEWS

WITH FRANK WOOD

Shaws Brewery of Dukinfield brought out a special beer to commemorate Glossop North End football club reaching the semi-finals of the FA Vase in March. Named G.N.E Bitter, it sold well in outlets in central Glossop in the weeks leading up to the semi, including the Star, Labour Club, Conservative Club, Partington Club and the Moon & Sixpence.

After the club reached the final by beating Chelfont St Peters from North of London, over two legs in early April, plans were afoot to do another special brew, called GNE Wembley Ale. Both the **Star** and the brewery are making donations to the club. I could do a report here on the excellent beers I had down in Buckinghamshire on my stopover at Chelfont the other week, but doubt it would be of much interest in this column. However, the Greyhound and the Wagon & Horses came top with some good quality real ales from Brakspears, Fullers and other breweries from that area.

Back in Glossop, the fans and players base has been the **Friendship**, near to the ground, where the Robinsons Unicorn has been in great condition as ever.

Jamie Moon left the **Royal Oak** in Strines in early March. The Robinsons pub has been taken on by Eileen & Bill Brophy who also run the Robinsons pub of the same name in New Mills.

In Hyde, the **Red Lion** has a Pugh & Co auction sign up outside, though it is still currently open. At the **Sportsman**, since landlord Geoff Oliver returned to the helm of his pub, the beers have excelled. A full range of six Pennine beers are available with Moorhouses Black Cat, Plassey Bitter, Pictish Brewers Gold and a guest making up the impressive range. The clientele has improved considerably and the Cuban food is of a great quality as members of the Branch would agree after a recent social evening there that included a meal.

A new real ale outlet opened in Buxton. **Nats Cafe**, on Market Street, just off the Market Place in Higher Buxton had Kelham Island Pale Rider, a beer by Storm and a guest when a member called in early in April.

In Mossley, **Roaches Lock** on Manchester Road, shut now for several months, is rumoured to be changing its trade to an Indian restaurant, in the same way that the **Buckton Castle** at Millbrook a couple of miles away, did a few months back.

The **Crown** on Market Street in Hyde (Robinsons) is closed up and boarded. Also in Hyde, the **Gardeners** on Lumn Lane (no real ale) is also shut and boarded and across the road, the **Globe** is the same, though this is more long-term, having been in that state for some 12 months now. However, Hyde still has much going for it, and I sampled beers in the **Cheshire Ring** (Beartown), **Queens** (Holts) and the **Sportsman** (Pennine) whilst delivering the Mild Trail packs in mid-April, as well as the **Cotton Bale** (Wetherspoons) and had an excellent afternoon's drinking.

Rumours that the **Wheatshaf** in Old Glossop is re-opening seem to have some credibility as the Greek Taverna that opened 4 years ago, when the pub shut, seems to be no longer trading and there have been some comings and goings in the past few days as I have passed on my way home. The trio of Old Glossop pubs always had a lot of rivalry, the **Bulls Head** coming out on top in recent years, with its excellent Robinsons beers and authentic Rusholme curries. The **Queens**, further down the road has had mixed fortunes but three pubs again, all selling real ale, is a healthy sign in this conservation area of the town.

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Robin Wignall's Monthly Peak District Round-up

In a recent Buxton Advertiser, Tom Levitt, MP for High Peak acknowledged that he had been inundated with campaign cards, and CAMRA members who sent them will have received his reply which is in the same tone as the press article.

Our MP is keen to support pubs and realises that they have an important social and community function. He is hoping to persuade his political masters to review the automatic annual rise in alcohol taxation, and to reduce taxation on draught beer compared to bottles and cans which tend to be the cut price supermarket corner of the market. By the time you read this, Budget Day will have passed and any changes for better or worse will have been implemented. Let us hope the changes are for the better, for as Tom Levitt concludes his press article, 'British pubs deserve to survive.'

Certainly running a pub continues to be a tenuous business. I have had a report that the **Pack Horse** at Hayfield was closed in mid March, whilst the **Navigation** in Whaley Bridge also seems to be closed.

It is good to see those pubs that can easily access guest beers, especially from microbreweries, doing so. A late March visit to the **Old Hall** at Whitehough near Chinley found Storm Red Mist and Howard Town Wren's Nest. I just missed Thornbridge Ashford, 'a New World Brown Ale,' though the Red Mist was a good one to try.

The **Navigation** at Buxworth also had Wren's Nest, and this alongside Dark Peak. This is a popular regular beer for the moment, being a dangerously drinkable 6.4% brew. Marston's licensees have a range of beers from the various breweries of the Marston's empire as well as guest beers from other breweries. Ever good at taking up the range is the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge, where often 8 beers are available across a range of styles, and of course in good form. As trade is bedding in, the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee is accessing some of the more interesting beers. Wychwood Paddy's Stout was alongside Jennings' Cumberland and Snecklifter and Marston's Bitter when I called at the end of March.

At both the **Navigation**, Buxworth and the **Shady Oak** a mark is being made with food, and both pubs had successful days on Mothering Sunday back in March.

The **Cock** in Whaley Bridge is spreading its wings, and following work on the kitchen is expecting to start serving food during April. A start will be made at lunchtime and early evening Monday to Friday and through the day on Saturday and Sunday. Food will range from sandwich snacks to full meals. Food can be washed down with very well kept Unicorn and Hatters and currently Double Hop.

Confirming my article in this column in February, the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale is open every day from noon. A decent pint of Black Sheep Bitter is the sole cask ale, but better to have one pump in operation with decent beer, than to have three beers not selling. Treats at the **Soldier Dick** include Thursday Curry Night from 17.30 onwards. £4.95 buys curry, rice, naan bread and a pint.

Ahead of the Mild Challenge the **Board** at the Horwich End end of Whaley Bridge was selling Robinson's Hatters in very good condition. A good pint of Hatters also features in the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge. Dark Hatters from Robinson's was available in fine form at the **Crossings** in Furness Vale. Coach House Gunpowder Mild is in good form at the **Dog and Partridge** at Bridgemont. All six hand pumps were in use when I called here in early April. At the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge Jennings' Dark Mild will be available and is always my first drink when I call in there. Mild Challenge visitors will certainly find some good beer to try in the area, for the other three pubs involved in Mild Magic will be sourcing guest milds, including some from microbreweries.

*Steve, Johanne & Molly
welcome you to*

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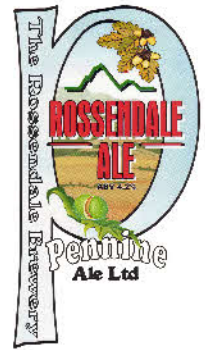
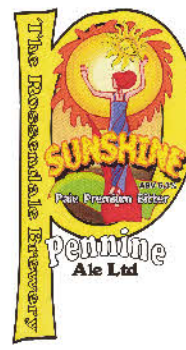
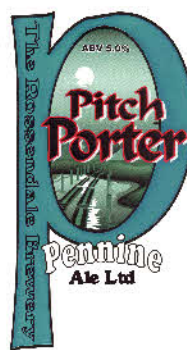
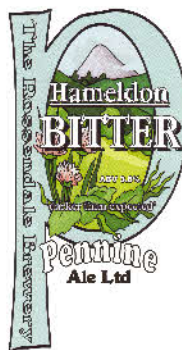
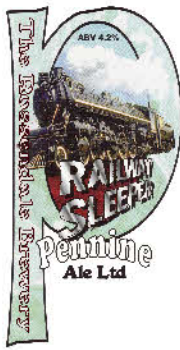
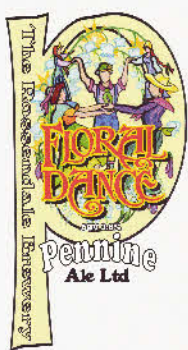
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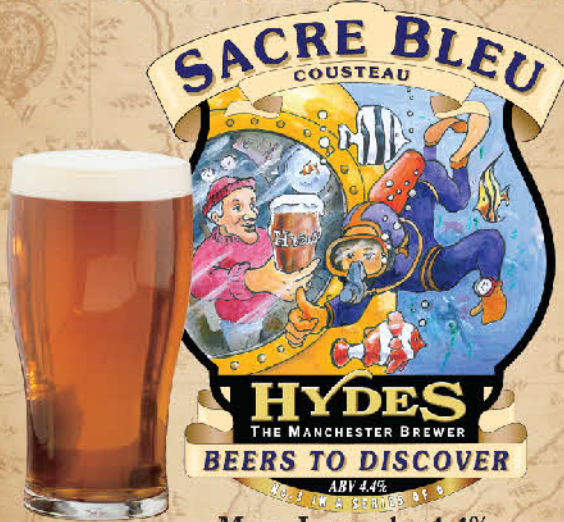
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Fallowfield & Rusholme with Jim Flynn

WE started our Stagger in familiar territory for me at my local when I first came to Manchester, the **White Swan** in Ladybarn, known by many thirty years ago as the 'mucky duck'. It is probably unfortunate in some ways that the place has hardly changed in all that time; in fact I am sure that some of the Formica topped tables in the front room where we sat alone were left over from that era.

The furnishings and general decoration around the bar and in one room that was open shouted out for investment from Robinsons but clearly the urgency of the need has not been heard back in Stockport. The one cask beer, Unicorn was in very good nick, probably just about the best beer of the night but it was disappointing that there were not more people around to enjoy it in what was once a really thriving buzzing local. It's time to wake up there at the Unicorn Brewery!

The lack of customers is even more amazing when you consider the current lack of competition, as round the corner the **Ladybarn** (aka the Talbot) was shut, the **Derby** is now residential accommodation despite the pub sign and the lacklustre **Brewers Arms** is keg despite a sign proclaiming it to be a 'Cask Ale House' (Trading Standards please note).

So on we walked on to Fallowfield and the **Great Central**, a large Wetherspoons pub under a new block of student flats. When you walk in you could not be anywhere else but a Wetherspoons, with all that is both good and bad about that statement. Being a new build and open plan the place lacks character despite the pictures on the pillars and walls portraying the area in the past. Having said that the Great Central is clearly thriving doing what Wetherspoons do best, providing an excellent value night out. The beer range has noticeably improved over recent months and the quality was also found to be more than up to scratch. We tried the Titanic Iceberg, Titanic New World and the Ruddles Best but the Abbot Ale was not sampled (the Marston's Pedigree had just gone off).

Across the road is the **Friendship** and here Hydes have shown



Robinsons the value of investing in a pub. The Friendship is a large, extended and very well furnished pub with wood panelling and sofas as well as standard pub seating. It has distinct drinking areas despite being planned around a

horseshoe bar. There is sport on the televisions but this is not intrusive and outside there are a considerable number of tables – where we sat with our beer. The pub was busy and it was good to see a mix of the age ranges in contrast to most bars in the area which rely almost exclusively on students for customers. The beer range was excellent with 1863, Jekyll's Gold, Original, Laugh and Titter and Spin Doctor from Hydes, a guest ale, which on that night was Daleside Old Legover and Weston's Old Rosie Cider. We found the beers we tried to be on good form.

The rest of the bars in the area are a sorry, gaudy lot; all keg and for the most part not nearly as busy as the two real ale pubs. Worthy of note however was that two of the bars, **Robinskis** and the **Cheshire Cat** have real cider available from Westons in

the form of their Organic and Old Rosie despite the absence of any cask beer.

So our next stop was in Rusholme at **Hardy's Well** just before

the start of the curry mile. Before you enter you notice the huge poem which dominates the wall facing the beer garden (I have since found out this is by Lemn Sissay, a local poet).



Inside this large, high ceilinged, slightly worn, one roomed pub there is a cosmopolitan mix of locals and students. It was moderately busy for a Friday night and we found the Lees Bitter and Taylor's Landlord in better than reasonable form (the Wells Bombardier was not tried).

We dodged from one side of Wilmslow Road to the other trying first the **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove (keg), then the depressing **Huntsman** (keg) and finally Hydes **Osborne House** on Victory Street which was regrettably shut. We ended up right in the heart of the Curry Mile at the **Albert**, a Hydes pub on Walmer Street, 20 yards or so from the main drag. This two roomed pub has a lived in feel to it but is by no means shabby with every wall in the place shouting of the Emerald Isle - from a large map of the country to photos of famous Irish playwrights and posters promoting the place and its drinks. Hydes Original is the only cask beer available and was again not a bad pint.

Wending our way to the end of the Curry Mile we found our way to the **Whitworth** hidden around the corner on Moss Lane East. Indeed such is the paraphernalia around the neighbouring corner bar/restaurant you could very easily miss the place. Inside the pub is on two levels and a large karaoke on the bottom level near the bar was loudly playing everything from ballads to swing music. We sat with one other customer in the higher level near the door and observed the minimalist décor other than a huge mirror precariously hanging from the wall above our seats. This is not a Hydes pub but the two cask beers were both from Hydes, Jekyll's Gold and Spin Doctor. The latter was better regarded than the former which regrettably was probably the only less than satisfactory pint of the night.



Across the road on Oxford Road is the **Ford Madox Brown** named after a famous Victorian painter whose works hang in the Manchester Art Gallery, and who lived around the corner in Victoria Park. Like the Great Central this Wetherspoons pub is built under a student hall of residence, opening in late 2007. Again it's open plan but there is a slightly cosier feeling to the place as unlike the Great Central you are not surrounded on two sides by glass. Again the customers were clearly voting with their feet because in contrast to its near neighbour the pub was busy. Three beers were tried, Spitting Feathers Devastation, Ruddles Best and Thwaites Lancaster Bomber with the former the best of a good bunch. A good end to a good night.

This is a stagger with plenty of variety in both the type of pubs to be visited and the beers themselves and with one exception on the night the beer was of good quality. A stagger to be recommended especially if combined with a curry on the way.

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Shock News for Drinkers

IN their latest statement of the bleeding obvious, the government have launched a publicity campaign to inform people of the number of calories in alcoholic drinks. Obviously they think nobody has ever heard of a beer gut. Apparently ministers are concerned that the average wine drinker now consumes around 2,000 calories from alcohol alone each month, something that hardly seems worth worrying about given that figure is less than a thirtieth of the typical monthly intake.

Although such scares are easy to dismiss, the problem is that they add to the steady drip feed of negative perceptions of alcohol. Committed drinkers won't be too bothered, but those who are keen to "do the right thing" and follow official advice may be swayed, even though they probably don't drink enough in the first place for it to be a problem. It is yet another small step towards the denormalisation of alcohol in society. It may also backfire by encouraging some people, figure-conscious young women in particular, to skip on eating properly so they can still enjoy a boozy night out.

Pale and Interesting?

I WAS recently taken to task for describing Greene King IPA as a "weak, bland beer". This was in the specific context of arguing that selling it in Wetherspoon's at 99p a pint wasn't going to cause chaos on the streets. However, in a sense it's true – at 3.6% ABV it is down towards the bottom end of the strength range of "ordinary bitters" (although there's nothing wrong with beers of moderate strength) and, while many might describe its flavour as "subtle" it cannot be claimed to offer an in-your-face taste explosion.

Having said that, it can be a good beer when looked after properly, and it shouldn't be forgotten that a few years ago it won the standard bitter class in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain contest. The problem is that, like many widely-distributed beers, it often finds its way into pubs where it isn't looked after very well and this inevitably colours public perceptions. If you try it in its East Anglian heartland you will come across some very palatable pints. It also has a distinctive bitter-sweet character, almost with a hint of sourness, something that seems much more at home in Suffolk than in the North-West.

Open All Day?

A FAIR number of pubs advertise the fact that they are "Open All Day". Despite this, I've often seen them with their doors closed well after noon. Since 24-hour drinking is now theoretically possible, the claim is questionable anyway. But, if it means anything, it should mean that they are open all the hours that were permitted before the liberalisation of licensing laws, which around here should mean they throw open their doors promptly at 11 am Monday to Saturday. A pub that does not open until noon is not "Open All Day". "Open All Afternoon" would be a more accurate slogan.

Given that the opening hours of pubs vary far more widely than those of shops, it is a continuing disgrace that so few display their hours outside. Even if you were passing and didn't go in on that occasion, knowing when a pub was open could save you a wasted journey on another day, or encourage you to visit if it was open when others in the area weren't. It's especially important if pubs close on particular days of the week, or don't open some lunchtimes.



Not a huge amount of news for you this month but I do have one or two snippets.

Town Centre News



I had expected to report the closure of the **Pack Horse** on Stockport Market Place but I am pleased to report that in late April the pub was happily still open and trading. I'm not sure who is running the pub at the moment or what its long term prospects

are. Enjoy it while you can.

Nearby the **Bulls Head** is due to reopen on 7 May and having spoken to the new team it sounds as though the pub will be in safe hands. I will be calling in and will bring you a full report next time.

Not much else to report from the town centre this time except to note that **SK One** on St Petersgate, surely the ultimate missed opportunity, appears to be well and truly closed down.

Real Ale Gain

As predicted in our March issue, the **Heaton Chapel** on Wellington Road North has converted to cask beer, another success in the ongoing A6 campaign.



Although attached to a restaurant and hotel, those just drinking are welcome. The single room is broken up creating nooks and crannies and the soft furnishings give a casual feeling. On the walls are framed enlarged seaside postcards and stills from comedy programmes and films.

The beers on my visit were Thwaites Bitter and Lancaster Bomber and in the cellar still settling was Taylor's Landlord. The Bitter was £2.20 per pint which for this type of establishment wasn't too bad. Another win for the A6 campaign. I wonder when the Manchester licensees will wise up, although given the current rate of closures there won't be that many left soon.

Nearby the **Hope** has had a lot of interest in their Draught Bass since the news appeared in OT including a group who came up from Sandbach to sample the beer (potential advertisers please note the power of OT!).



In Reddish the **Grey Horse** is now down to the one cask beer, Holts Bitter. Meanwhile **Cosmopolitan** in Heaton Norris has shut again. If this pub was a cat it would have used up its nine lives. I know it's heretical in CAMRA circles to say this but will somebody just put this awful pub out of its misery.

In the Suburbs

I visited the **Ryecroft** in Cheadle Hulme and checked out their beer. Although they have three hand pumps facing the door and two more at the end of the bar, there are in fact only two beers. One is Hydes Original Bitter. There is also a changing guest beer, which was Morland Original Bitter from the Greene King stable. I only tried the Hydes and this was perfectly acceptable. The landlord said he has tried Hydes guest beers but finds that a genuine alternative sells better and he has a list of future beers on a chalkboard in the porch. There was a good crowd in with plenty of people eating

Calling at the **Shady Oak**, Bramhall, I spoke to the landlady and barman. The beers were Greene King Abbot, Thwaites Original Bitter and Timothy Taylor Landlord. According to the barman, the Abbot and Thwaites are the best sellers and they are going to discontinue the Landlord and have a changing guest beer instead. The pub has also started doing food since the fairly recent refit.

Winters

Ange and Trevor have settled in at the town centre Holt's pub, **Winters** on Underbank. They took control in January and since that time they have brought it up to their demanding standards. Food has been introduced at lunchtimes Tuesday to Friday 12-3; Saturday 12-4, featuring favourites such as liver & onions, lasagne, and a range of hot and cold sandwiches. The hot food is served upstairs in the splendid dining room.

Beer quality is up as is trade, with Holt's bitter being the big seller. The mild has been dropped as demand for it was weak. Customers of old have returned, and bar staff from the Swan have joined Ange too. The future looks good

NORTH MANCHESTER BRANCH INDEPENDENTS DAY TREASURE HUNT

The North Manchester branch would like to invite any members from across Greater Manchester to the 17th Annual Independents Day Treasure Hunt, on 4th July 2009.

If you've not done it before - the Treasure Hunt combines a pub crawl with a pub quiz, and offers the chance to tour interesting pubs around central Manchester and prove how clever you are while doing so.

Your team – 2-5 people (and please come along even if it's just you – there are always teams that could use another brain!) will need to be at the **Crown & Kettle**, corner of Oldham Street and Great Ancoats Street, Manchester M4 5FE, between 11am (doors open) and 12:30. Entries are £1 per person. Teams get a short quiz to find the names of the pubs to be visited during the day.

You then tour these pubs, enjoying beers from local and other independent breweries, while answering questions in each pub. Return to the starting point by 7:30 pm for food and to find out who's won. The winners receive beer tokens, the ceremonial shield, and hopefully will take on the challenge of setting the 2010 Treasure Hunt.

Whether or not you know Manchester's pubs, this is a great opportunity to visit some you might not have found on your own.

Any questions, email us at idth@sky.com - hopefully we'll see you on the 4th.

- Mike, Dee, JJ, Neil and Julie, 2009 Treasure Hunt setters

Don't Forget St Trinian's Night....

Saturday night at this year's Stockport Beer Festival is St Trinian's night! Dig out your old school uniform and raise money for charity. Prizes for the best dressed boys and girls! Detention for latecomers.

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No offers, no coupons, no competition (sorry).



To mark the 25th Birthday Year of Opening Times we are commissioning a series of commemorative beers from local breweries, one per month (although one or two "extras" are also likely). Each month we will be featuring the brewery producing the beer and also tell you a bit about the beer itself. The fifth in the series comes from Marble Brewery.

About the Brewery

The Marble Brewery opened in 1997 at the rear of the Marble Arch pub on Rochdale Road in Manchester. The 5-barrel plant was installed by Brendan Dobbin, famous brewing consultant and former owner of Manchester's West Coast Brewery.

In 2000 the decision was taken to move over to entirely organic production and shortly thereafter ex-Firkin brewer James Campbell arrived to assume the head brewer role. At the time the range of organic ingredients was quite limited but over the years many more have become available and this has enabled Marble to build up an enviable portfolio of beers.



Above, Dominic, James and Colin, the Marble brewing team

The brewing team has expanded, too, and now seems settled with James as head brewer along with Colin Stronge and Dominic Driscoll. All three have devised their own beers (notably in the occasional "brewers' competitions") and have collaborated on others, including this month's Birthday Beer for *Opening Times*.

Apart from supplying the Marble Arch, the brewery supplies another tied house, the Marble Beer House in Chorlton, and numerous free trade outlets, including Knott Bar at the end of Deansgate. Among other highlights of the Marble range include:

Pint (3.9%) – pale, aromatic and citrusy. Superbly refreshing and moreish.

Manchester Bitter (4.2%) – inspired by old-style Boddingtons, this pale yellow beer has a lasting bitterness.

Ginger Marble (4.5%) – intense and complex. The imperial standard ginger beer and a classic of the style.

Chocolate (5.5%) – rich, dark and chocolaty ale. Difficult to classify but dangerously drinkable.

About the Beer

This month's *Opening Times* beer is the first traditional dark mild produced by Marble. At 3.6%, the grain grist includes Maris Otter, black roast barley, chocolate malt, dark crystal malt, crystal malt, wheat malt and flaked barley. The hops used include Goldings, Bramling Cross, Pacific Gem and Admiral. The final gravity is 1013 which means there will be a touch of sweetness to the beer. Enjoy!

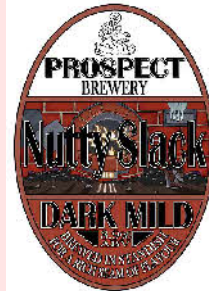


Beer Preview

Once again the Festival beer managers are working hard to bring you an exciting range of beers. As ever there will be some old favourites alongside beers brand new to the Festival.

As last year, the Festival special beer is being brewed by the highly regarded Marble Brewery on Rochdale Road. This year's beers will be something a little different, namely a 4.8% ABV honey beer which, according to Marble head brewer James Campbell, will be "dry as a bone" and include "lots of hops".

There will be up to 14 **Milds** available including the Marble *Opening Times* beer, the excellent Nutty Slack from Patsy Slevin's Prospect Brewery in Leigh, the tasty Naylor's Pinnacle Mild from Yorkshire and Cocodance, a mandarin and chocolate mild from Thornbridge



Bitter lovers will be well served with up to 38 standard bitters (up to 4.2% ABV) and 30 premium brews. Local favourites such as Phoenix, Hornbeam and Pictish will feature, including we hope the June *Opening Times* beer.

Alongside these will be a host of beers new to the Festival.

Among those to look out for are Yorkshire Pride and Hersbrucker from the Acorn Brewery in Barnsley; also from Yorkshire will be beers from Leeds Brewery and from the Summer Wine Brewery in Holmfirth. Dave Porter's Outstanding Brewery in Bury will also be supplying a range of beers including the superbly bitter SOS.

The range of **Special Beers** will be extended this year. Dunham Massey's award winning Chocolate Cherry Mild, which made its cask debut at last year's festival, will be back of course. There will be three beers from the Outstanding brewery including a spicy wheat beer, a smoked beer and a pilsner-style beer. There will be a wheat beer from Bollington, an elderflower beer from Prospect and something special from Cellar Rat.

Dark beers lovers will be well catered for with 14 **Stouts and Porters**. These will include a specially matured cask of Gorlovka from Acorn Brewery, the superb Bollington Oat Mill Stout, Outstanding Stout, which really does live up to its name, and the classic St Petersburg imperial stout from Thornbridge.



We always have a good selection of **Strong or Old Ales** and this year there will be up to 10 of them. These will include Oakham Attila, the current Champion Winter Beer of Britain, Robinson's Old Tom, the latest version of Marble's 1425 and from Cellar Rat an extra *Opening Times* beer. This should be an American style "imperial IPA", intensely hoppy and very strong.

Finally, **Foreign Beer**. We had a small amount of Belgian lambic beers last year and we *might* have some again. What we will have though are four beers from the Sierra Nevada Brewery in California. Just which ones these will be we don't yet know but what we do know is that they should be superb.

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2009 We're in it!



Since the last *Manchester Matters* was produced there have been two major reopenings in Manchester City Centre. Two very different offerings but both equally welcome.

Castle, Oldham Street

Last year's sudden closure of this well-known Northern Quarter watering hole was greeted by much wailing and gnashing of teeth. Instant nostalgia appeared to blind people to the fact that the pub had become increasingly squalid and the quality of the beer increasingly poor. Nevertheless the pub was undoubtedly well loved and its closure left a notable gap in the City Centre pub scene.



Happily it is now back having been taken on by the perhaps unlikely combination of Jonny Booth, formerly of the Temple of Convenience, and Rupert Hill, who played Jamie Baldwin in *Coronation Street*. The pub is very much a work in progress. The front bar and the middle room have been redecorated and now boast such touches as flowers and candles on the tables. Food is also available. Very much not reminiscent of the "old" Castle. Former regulars will however be reassured by the

continuing presence of the rather grotty carpet.

Sadly the iconic mosaic of former landlady Kath Smethurst (which famously included her ashes in the grouting) is also missing – her son Damien understandably took it with him when he left the pub. Less of a cause for regret is the absence of the incredibly horrible toilets – temporary replacements occupy the former back room until the refurbishment can be completed.

The beer range has sensibly been reduced and now features just six of the Robinson's range – when I called this comprised Hatters, Old Stockport, Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde, Cumbria Way and Old Tom. Quality was good, too. A welcome return and well worth a visit.

Microbar, Arndale Market

While the closure of the Castle caused widespread dismay I detected rather less distress when the Paradise Brewery Bar in the Arndale Market put up the shutters. The North Wales Brewery beers were never really my cup of tea, although I am sure others liked them well enough.



The good news is that it has been bought by Moston's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, a local micro that has made its name both as a beer distributor and a brewery. The bar has had a thorough makeover and now looks very smart and "pubby". Professional touches include bespoke beer mats and engraved glasses.

The new name reflects the beer stocking policy. There are five handpumps. One of these will stock a changing guest craft cider. The other four will feature two Boggart beers accompanied by two changing guests sourced from the many micro breweries around the country that Boggart deal with. Shortly after opening the range comprised Boggart Ray of Sunshine and Rum Porter with the guests being Yorkshire Dales Brewery Fremington Edge and Aston Brewery Heartlands Bitter. The draught range is completed with Kupperts Kolsch, which will be permanent.

One innovation will be the introduction of a "punters' pump". Customers will be able to vote from a list of potential guest beers and each week the most popular choice will go on sale.

Also of note is the bottled beer range. Many Boggart bottled beers will feature but alongside these is almost the complete range from Scottish cult brewery Brew Dog. The aim is to supplement with additional bottled beer from the 300-plus micro breweries that Boggart trade with. Expect some interesting offerings to appear.



The Microbar is open from 11am to 6pm Monday to Saturday and from 12 noon to 5pm on Sundays. An essential stop on the Manchester "circuit" I think.

South Side News

I called into the **Bowling Green** on Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock and was again impressed by the quality of the two guest beers. Hook Norton Hooky Gold was on fine form and it was a struggle to leave. However I had other places to visit.

There have been two long term keg-only Sam Smiths pubs. One, the **Blue Bell** in Levenshulme has now converted to cask. I am told this came after considerable pressure from the managers whose efforts have been justified by healthy sales, I am pleased to hear.

The other is the **Turnpike** on Wilmslow Road in Withington. Sadly this remains keg only so I sat nursing a half of Sam Smiths draught stout. Rather good it was too. What I did find impressive was the pub itself. To my admittedly untrained eye it appears to be a rare example of an intact pub from the 1960s.

Heading to Didsbury I noticed that the long closed **Golden Lion** has finally bitten the dust and is now a cleared site. I also observed that closed and boarded **White Lion** now appears to be in the hand of developers and it struck me how many of the large landmark pubs are closing down.

Another large closed pub is the former **Squires** in Didsbury village. Now closed and shuttered, rumours abound. Punch may have sold it and, almost inevitably, Wetherspoons have allegedly been sniffing around the place.

Staying in the village, I have paid two recent visits to **Carringtons** off license and have been mightily impressed by the product range. Craft ciders and perries from both France and the UK (Ross-on-Wye and Olivers are noteworthy) have stood out, but the beer range has been pretty spectacular. I have managed to pick up rarities from Thornbridge (including all three variants of the Alliance barley wine), and Brew Dog amongst others.

I also keep hearing good things about the **Royal Oak**. This famous pub is still doing the business. The renowned cheese and pate lunches are also available between 6.30 and 8.30 on Monday nights. The pub is run by Kate and James Russell, *pictured above*, (along with some long serving bar staff) and they really are working hard with the pub. There was a very successful charity night in aid of Francis House held at the end of February raising £2,600 for the local charity.



Marston's Bitter and Pedigree are the permanent beers and these are accompanied by two guest beers, often from the Jennings range. Top notch quality, too.



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Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Year - The Knott, Deansgate



Scott Davies thought he had done well when he and his team were told that they had been named the **Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season, Spring 2009** but he was not expecting to be named the **Pub of the Year** for the branch as well.

This bar has been built into the railway arches at Deansgate, opposite the original Knott Mill station (now known as Deansgate station). This bar serves an excellent range of Marble beers and other local micros with the odd, very welcome and unusual micro beers from around the country.

Besides having a fantastic atmosphere, which is ever changing depending on the time and day of your visit, this bar does the most wonderful food. Their 'head of the kitchen' is Oz. A very talented and passionate man about his food, his team and his kitchen. The Knott hold a Epicurate evening every third Tuesday of the month, where for £10 per head you are treated to various delights by Oz and his team with beers matched up to the menu.

If Cask Conditioned beer is not really your scene, then you are also tempted by a range of cask and bottled foreign beers and ciders.

The branch will be presenting the Award on the evening of Wednesday 20th May from 8pm. Please come along and support Scott and his team and enjoy some treats from Oz too. Commiserations must also go to our two runners up who were the **City Arms**, Kennedy Street and the **Old Market Tavern**, Old Market Place, Altrincham (both pictured below). There was only one point between these two pubs showing just how close a competition it was this year for our Pub of the Year.



Mild Magic 2009

There is still time to take part in this year's "Mild Magic" Mild Challenge. It runs until 17 May and to win a prize you only need to drink a half pint of cask conditioned mild ale in 16 of the participating pubs.

These are the pubs taking part in this year's challenge – you should be able to pick up a card from any of them or apply to the Mild Magic address: 173 Shearwater Road, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5XA or cdwainwright@ntlworld.com



Bramhall: Ladybrook Hotel; **Bridgemont:** Dog & Partridge; **Broadbottom:** Cheshire Cheese; **Buxworth:** Navigation; **Cheadle:** Red Lion; **Cheadle Hulme:** Cheadle Hulme, Church Inn; **Chorlton:** Famous Trevor Arms, Pi; **Clayton:** Grove; **Compstall:** Northumberland Arms; **Denton:** Chapel House, Masons Arms; **Didsbury:** Fletcher Moss; **Disley:** White Lion; **Droylsden:** Halfway House; **Edgeley:** Grapes; **Fallowfield:** Grand Central; **Furness Vale:** Crossings; **Gatley:** Prince of Wales; **Glossop:** Norfolk; **Gorton:** Plough, Waggon & Horses; **Great Moor:** Crown, Travellers Call; **Hadfield:** Chieftain; **Hazel Grove West:** Grapes, Three Tunnes; **Heald Green:** Griffin;

Heaton Mersey: Griffin, Crown; **Heaton Moor:** Crown; **Heaton Norris:** Silver Jubilee, Navigation, Nursery; **Heaviley Blossoms:** Hyde; Queens, Cheshire Ring, Sportsman; **Longsight:** New Victoria; **Manchester City Centre:** Marble Arch, Ape & Apple, Smithfield Hotel, Old Monkey, Waterhouse, Crown & Anchor, Bulls Head (London Road), Paramount; **Marple:** Hatters, Navigation; **Marple (Rose Hill):** Railway; **Mellor:** Royal Oak; **Moss Nook:** Tatton Arms; **New Mills:** Masons Arms; **Portwood:** Railway; **Reddish:** 3 Rivers Club, Thatched Tavern; **Romiley:** Friendship; **Rusholme:** Ford Madox Brown; **Sale:** Volunteer; **Salford:** Crescent, New Oxford; **Shaw Heath:** Armoury, Florist; **Stalybridge:** Station Buffet Bar; **Stockport Town Centre:** Arden Arms, Waterloo, Bakers Vaults, Calverts Court, Red Bull, Sun & Castle, Crown, Pineapple, Swan With Two Necks, White Lion; **Timperley:** Timperley Taverners Club; **Whaley Bridge:** Board Inn, Goyt Inn, Shepherds Arms, Cock Inn; **Woodford:** Davenport Arms.

Mild Magic Launch



THE launch of Mild Magic 2009 at the 3 Rivers Brewery Club on Greg Street, in Reddish, was a magical event for the owners of Stockport's oldest micro brewery. "I was amazed at the support it received – truly overwhelmed" Mike Hitchen, Head Brewer of 3 Rivers told Opening Times.

"In addition to the regular Saturday afternoon crowd, people from CAMRA just kept arriving making it a real party atmosphere."

May is Mild Month for CAMRA and as part of a nationwide co-ordinated campaign to promote mild ales we here in the Stockport and Manchester area run Mild Magic every year. Of course we couldn't launch a Mild event without any Mild ale. So befitting such a strong campaign there was the equally strong Delta Dark from the brewery downstairs to help it along. The brewery is also home to Stockport's youngest micro too, Cellar Rat Brewing. Their beers can often be seen side by side on the club bar and will appear at the forthcoming Stockport Beer & Cider Festival at the end of May. The club is a private members club but anyone taking part in the Mild Magic 2009 is welcome to visit.

A Mild Evening in Stockport

HEATON Lane in the centre of Stockport was the starting point of this year's Mild Magic social. It is an annual outing where we visit some of Stockport's 'quieter' pubs on a notoriously quiet night of the week, Monday. The object of the social was to stride into the Mild Magic 2009 with all taste buds twitching.

No better place to start is the often overlooked gem of the **Pineapple**. Expertly kept Robinson's beers, friendly staff and a perfect pint of Mild to start off many peoples sticker card. Once we had all gathered and taken in at least one drink each we adjourned to our next port of call.

It was hard to tell as approaching if the **Swan with Two Necks** was actually open, but thankfully it was. Only two customers were at the bar so when a large crowd poured through the door the barman must have been delighted. Hatters Dark was the Mild here, a rare version of Robinson's standard mild. As the name suggests it is much darker than its stable mate and tastes a bit richer too. Our plan was to continue to the **White Lion** on the Underbanks but someone pointed out, it is not open for trade on Monday evenings.

So after we gathered for a moment or two outside the premises nearby formerly known as the **Three Shires** to lament

its passing and the loss of a Real Ale outlet for ever we marched onwards and upwards, literally, to the **Waterloo**. Not quite as quiet as the previous pubs but we did swell the numbers somewhat and relieved them of a couple of gallons of Hatters. Well kept beers in a well kept pub.



It was then a short walk to a place that needs little commentary to drinkers of the Stockport area. One that has supported the Mild Magic campaign in its many guises over the years. the **Blossoms** in Heaviley. A truly remarkable example of a pub that has not been messed with by unsympathetic ham fisted builders. The Hatters Mild here was superb too. One had to wonder if it really was Monday as the bar was busy, the back parlour was full and the front saloon was also populated.

Mindful that it was a 'school night' and folk were up for work in the morning we called an end to the official social but a clutch of drinkers went off to the **Florist** on Shaw Heath to obtain another sticker. A night dominated by Robinson's Mild it may have been and we make no apology. We went into some of Stockport's finest and historic pubs and drank some excellent pints from Stockport's oldest family brewer. Mild Magic 2009 is running until 17th May. It's not too late to make a start. Entry cards available from cdwainwright@ntlworld.com



Brewery NEWS

National News

Marston's are regarded by many as one of the new wave "national brewers". Having said that they now run five breweries, making and selling a lot of cask beer. They have had outlets in the *Opening Times* area for many years. The result of takeover activity in recent years means they are able to offer their pubs a wide range of in-house guest beers. Here's what they have out for May:



Merrie Monk (4.5%) is a return of an old faithful. It used to be just Pedigree with added caramel. Hopefully this time round it will be an entirely separate brew.

From the Wychwood Brewery in Oxfordshire comes **Rye Smile** (4.2%), a herby ale brewed using chocolate rye while from Ringwood in Hampshire look out for **Ringwood Seventy Eight** (4.2%), a golden refreshing beer brewed using Sovereign and Goldings hops. Described

as having "good malt feel in the mouth with a distinctive hoppy finish".

Finally, and closer to home, comes **Tom Fool** (4%) from the Jennings Brewery at Cockermouth in the Lake District. This is an all malt beer with a classic hop character.

Family Brewers

As we previewed last month, both **Robinsons** and **Hydes** have new seasonal beers out this month. **Robbies** offering is **Nosey Parker** (3.8%), a golden bitter with spicy hop aromas. **Hydes** meanwhile have **Sacre Bleu** (4.4%) an amber ale with a spicy and zesty aroma. **Holts** see the return of their honey beer, **Humdinger** (4%) brewed using Mexican honey.

Robinsons have also joined the ranks of the family brewers picking up pubs from the slow demise of **Punch Taverns**, who appear to have resorted to selling off the family silver to bolster their financial position. **Robbies** have picked up the **Dun Cow** at Ollerton, near Knutsford at a list price of £650,000. Currently under management with a reportedly uninspiring food offer, the pub will become a **Robinson's** tenancy with top notch food.

Micro Brewery News

Once again there is plenty of news from the local micro brewers. As ever there were some we were unable to contact so apologies to them.



Dunham Massey - How's this for enthusiasm! A group of keen members of the Woking CAMRA Branch recently travelled all the way from Surrey to present **John Costello** with two awards from their Beer Festival. His **Chocolate Cherry Mild**

was voted Beer of the Festival and Winner in the Mild Section. There was a great deal of interest in John's brewing methods and philosophy during the brewery tour which was followed by the presentations and sampling of **Big Tree Bitter** in the brewery shop. These Awards brought the tally in 2008 to eleven, including five for Beer of the Festival. The photo (by Val Heliwell) shows John receiving one of the awards from **Bob Southwell**, Woking Beer Festival Chairman.

Dunham have also produced another new beer. This is **Dunham Brown Ale** (5.1%), a strong, sweet and nutty beer.

Boggart Hole Clough - has produced a new dark mild at 3.3% ABV, based on a traditional old recipe. **Boggart's Mark Dade** tells us they are very pleased with the operation of their new **Micro Bar** in the **Arndale Centre**.

Millstone Brewery - still going strong. One of the pub series, "Ye Olde Vic" won beer of the festival at the recent **Oldham Beer Festival**. The very last of the pub series is **Coach & Horses** (4.1%), which will be a pale and hoppy beer. The hop varieties to be used had not been determined at the time of writing.

Leyden - one new beer is **Lancashire Fusilier** (3.6%) a pale and hoppy beer. The beer, which was originally brewed by **Leyden** about six years ago, has been reintroduced to mark the opening of a new museum.

Hornbeam Brewery - new this month is **Ale and Grace** (4%) brewed using **Bobek** (Styrian Golding variety) and **Pilgrim** hops. As ever with **Hornbeam**, the chances are that one or two other beers may also put in an appearance.

Greenfield - Look out for the return of **Summer Ice** (4.2%). **Greenfield** has also produced a 'Retro Rail Ale' which will be sold in bottled form on heritage rail tours, as will bottles of **Black 5**.

Howard Town - it was **Early Doors** in real life for actor **John Henshaw** when he joined a special party for a **Stockport** charity. John pulled a couple of pints at the event to celebrate the name change of the charity for people with sight or hearing loss from **Eyeline** to **Walthew House**.

And he toasted the historic occasion with a bottle or two of the charity's branded beer, **Viaduct Ale**, produced by **Howard Town**, which was unveiled for the first time on the celebration night held at the **Crown**, **Heaton Lane**, **Stockport**.

Joining the actor at the party was **Stockport** deputy mayor **Cllr Mike Wilson** and deputy mayoress **Jacqueline Hawkins**, publicans from other **Stockport** pubs, off-licence owners and **Walthew House** trustees, along with artist **Jackie Wagg** whose impressionistic painting of **Stockport viaduct** adorns the labels of the bottled beer. Several of her other paintings were exhibited at the party.

Viaduct ales is a range of five beers going from light to dark but with none being stronger than 4.2 per cent. It will be available on draught and in bottles at the **Crown**, **Majestic wine warehouse**, **The Bottle Stop** in **Cheadle Hulme** and **Bramhall Wines** in **Davenport**, along with other selected outlets. **Tony Hulme** at the brewery can be contacted on 01457 869800.

Howard Town are also experimenting with a pale chocolate beer at 4%. The first batch didn't go according to plan, though. As brewer **Tony Hulme** told us, the first batch turned out "as chocolate as something that isn't chocolate".

Marble Brewery - as we report right, **Marble** are producing the **Opening Times Birthday Beer** for May. **Mild of the Times** is a rich dark mild at 3.6% ABV. So successful have been the 1425 beers that a final recipe is being fixed and the beer, which will be given a proper name (possibly "Dobber") instead of a brew number, will become a semi-permanent addition to the range.

The barley wine, to be launched in bottled form in early December, has now been brewed and is cask maturing at the brewery. Currently 10.4%, priming and krausening should see this get up to about 10.7% before bottling. **Opening Times** managed to get a preview taste of a specially dry-hopped sample and can confirm that this will be a superb beer (it's pretty damn good now).

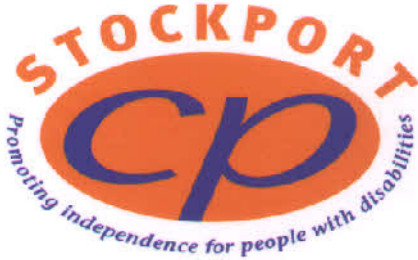
Marble have also confirmed that the **Imperial Stout**, **Decadence**, will also be back in time for Christmas. Like the, as yet un-named, barley wine this will be available in bottle only. **Opening Times** has already informally ordered a mixed case of the two.



Festival Charity - Stockport Cerebral Palsy Society

Staff at Stockport Cerebral Palsy Society were delighted to be informed that it had been selected to be the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival's charity for 2009, writes Rob Halsall.

In fact we felt honoured because there are so many deserving charities in Stockport. The Society was established in 1953 by carers of children who had cerebral palsy. Since then it has grown and diversified and we now support over 500 children and adults who have a range of physical and/or learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, mainly those with the most complex needs. However, we remain an independent charity and one that is still user-led as the majority of trustees are carers. We provide a wide range of services:



A day service for about 100 adults, most of whom are wheelchair users. They choose from a wide range of centre-based and community-based activities, e.g. cookery, arts and crafts, music, football. They also receive physiotherapy.

Leisure activities for over 150 children and adults. They include holiday play schemes, short activity holidays, after-school clubs, Duke of Edinburgh Award, weekly outdoor pursuits for children, and groups offering activities such as walking, canoeing, sailing and skiing for adults.

A Community Support service that provides one-to-one staffing support to children and adults in the home, enabling people who have disabilities to live increasingly independent lives. It also provides a sitting service for carers.

A residential care home with 12 long-stay places for adult residents who have complex needs and no possibility of living at home. A Volunteers Project. Almost all areas of the Society's work are supported by trained volunteers, currently numbering 150. We could not provide the range and quality of services we do without them, given the extent of one to one support that is needed.

A Disability Awareness Programme that operates in all Stockport primary schools, several high schools and organisations such as play schemes.

We are really looking forward to the festival. We are allocated a stand at which we will be selling cask beers [of course!] and hand-crafted jewellery. To date we have been promised a donation of beer from JW Lees and we are actively seeking two more donors. We are also permitted by the festival organisers to hold a raffle, make bucket collections...and anything else legal that we can dream up! As the festival is at Edgeley Park we are still hoping that Stockport County will put on an event for us. Our stand will be well staffed. One of the great things about The Society is the number of wonderful volunteers it attracts. Many are more than delighted to volunteer for this particular event! We even have a volunteer for the fancy dress element on the last night – some of them really are exhibitionists.

So, in anticipation...cheers! Visit our website at www.stockportcp.co.uk



From Paul Hurditch, The Star, Glossop:

In reply to Frank Wood's letter in the March issue, whilst accepting the point he is trying to make over the price of soft drinks, a pub is a business and not a service. If a particular pub is charging too much for a certain product customers will vote with their feet and wallets. Also, I think it is unfair to quote a particular landlord, especially one from a free house that brews its own beer and is in a position to make GPs that lessees and tenants can only dream of.

Anyway, thanks for mentioning the Star for the first time in many issues. Just a shame that it was about the price of lime & soda and not in relation to the 50-plus beers that have been on sale in the first two months of 2009. As mentioned we are a Punch lease and not a free house. Also in relation to your April column (*High Peak Pub News – ed.*) I take exception to your comment that the Roe Cross has "certainly the best choice of beers in the area at the moment." I refer you back to the 50-plus beers mentioned earlier, a copy of which I would be happy to supply you with. It would be nice to see High Peak Branch regulars more often so that we could discuss the issue of beer choice and pricing.

Whilst talking of High Peak Branch, can Frank or any of the members who attended the March meeting explain something to me? Why did you at the February meeting decide not to put a certain pub in the Good Beer Guide for 2010, and then at the March meeting put this same pub forward as the Derbyshire selection for Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year 2010? This appears to me and some of my customers as a very strange decision indeed. To my knowledge all pubs that have previously been named Pub of the Year have also been Good Beer Guide entries.

(I have passed a copy of this letter to Frank Wood and hopefully he will be in touch with the pub. Personally speaking, I always make a point of dropping into the Star on my all too infrequent visits to Glossop – Ed.)

CAMRA Walking Club

On Sunday 15th March the Walking Club for the CAMRA Greater Manchester Region held its first pub walk of the year, from the Railway, Greenfield to the Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar, writes Ken Birch.

The aim of the club is to involve members not active in their branch, as well as non-members of CAMRA, in a social activity and to learn more of the "fun" side of the Campaign.

This aim was achieved on this occasion with 10 non-active members, four non-members and only one semi-active (myself - it's me knees!) attending. Of the four non-members, three are almost certain to join at their next beer festival. Everyone showed engagement with the group with very positive suggestions about all aspects of CAMRA.

The Railway and the King William IV in Greenfield were followed by the Tollemache Arms, Britannia and Newbridge Inn, all close to the Huddersfield Canal in Mossley, before a final yomp to the newly renovated conservatory and welcoming pints in the renowned Buffet Bar. A total of two dozen or so real ales were quaffed until a well-behaved, but slightly over-lubricated party caught their trains to Manchester.

The next two walks are on Sunday May 17 and Sunday June 14. The first is from Lymm to Moore or Runcorn East (10.50 tram from St Peter's Square, 11.31 bus 38 from Altrincham to Lymm). The second is Radcliffe to Ringley then via the canal to Prestwich. Catch the Metrolink at 11am from Prestwich or 11.30am from Radcliffe. Details from Ken Birch on 0161 278 0126.



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*

Saturday 9th – Informal social at Macclesfield Beer Festival. From 12 noon.

Thursday 14th May – Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8pm. **Guest Speaker: Oliver Robinson – a good turnout, please**

Friday 22nd – Central Didsbury Stagger: meet 7.30pm Station; 8.30pm Dog & Partridge – both on Wilmslow Road.

Monday 25th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Grapes, Hazel Grove. From 8pm

Tuesday 26th – Sunday 31st – set up, run and take down **Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. All please attend and help.**

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*

Saturday 9th – Afternoon Social and Certificate Presentation to Swan Inn, Kettleshulme.

Monday 11th – Branch Meeting: White Lion, Disley. Starts 8pm
Thursday 21st – Social: Ramsay's Bar, Buckingham Hotel, Buxton. From 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*

Saturday 9th – Mild Magic Crawl. Meet 1pm at The Famous Trevor Arms, Beech Rd, Chorlton; 2pm Pi, Manchester Rd, Chorlton; 3.30pm at Ape & Apple, John Dalton St, Manchester; 4.30pm Waterhouse, Princess St, Manchester; 7pm the Volunteer, Cross St, Sale; 8pm Timperley Taverners Social Club, Park Rd, Timperley

Thursday 14th – Manchester City Centre survey. Meet 8pm Font Bar, New Wakefield St; 8.30pm Salutation; 9.30pm Royal Northern College of Music.

Wednesday 20th – Pub of the Year Award to The Knott, Deansgate, Manchester from 8pm.

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


Monday 18th – New Members Mild Crawl of Bollington. Details from contact.

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*

Thursday 14th – Social at The Crescent, Salford. From 8pm


Wednesday 20th – Branch Meeting: Unicorn, Church St, City Centre. Starts 8pm.

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



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 Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 3LW. Alternately you can join online at www.camra.org.uk.



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**THURSDAY
28TH MAY**

EVENING 5.30PM-11.00PM

LIVE MUSIC

CURRAGH SONS

ADMISSION £2



**FRIDAY
29TH MAY**

LUNCH 11.30AM-3.30PM

**QUIET DRINKING
SESSION**

ADMISSION FREE



EVENING
5.30PM-11.00PM
LIVE MUSIC

SOUL BANDITS

ADMISSION £4



**SATURDAY
30TH MAY**

LIVE MUSIC

A FESTIVAL OF MANCHESTER'S FINEST

LUNCH 11.30AM-4.00PM

- **PETE GOODE**
- **YE OLDE VIC BAND**
- **YES SIR!**

EVENING 6.30PM-11.00PM

- **CASUAL TIES**
- **BLUES BLASTERS**
- **THE WORDS**

ADMISSION £2 PER SESSION

SATURDAY EVENING

ST. TRINIANS FANCY DRESS (OPTIONAL) **GREAT PRIZES**

May and June

NOSEY PARKER ABV 3.8%

Traditional Harvest gold bitter with aromas of spicy hop and honey.

An interesting and complex beer with a malt and honey sweet palate matched by fruity overtones and complemented by a dry roasted or nutty finish.



Nosey Parker



alc 3.8 % vol

