



September 2009

Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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



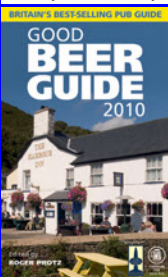
Another New Free House Opens

For the second month in a row we lead with a photo of a derelict pub that is about to spring back to life as a multi-beer free house. This time it's in Stockport and the pub in question is the **Magnet** on Wellington Road North, a short walk from the town centre. The pub has struggled, both with cask beer and as a pub, for some time now and has finally been sold off by Admiral Taverns.

The purchaser is a well known name on the Stockport real ale scene – Ian Watts who, with Steve Alexander, so spectacularly turned round the fortunes of the **Crown** on Heaton Lane.

If all goes according to plan (never guaranteed with pub and brewery projects in *Opening Times*' experience) the pub will re-open as a multi-beer free house by the end of this month. Its operation will be very similar to that of the **Crown**, (the pub will be run by the familiar team of Lee and Lesley Watts, and Sarah Bergin) thus offering the town's cask ale fans the prospect of a mini circuit, up and down the hill between the two pubs.

One exciting future development is the plan to install a micro-brewery in the pub's cellar. This is of course subject to planning permission but if it comes to pass it will form a permanent home for Sarah's Cellar Rat brewing operation. Look for a full report in *Opening Times* after the pub has opened.

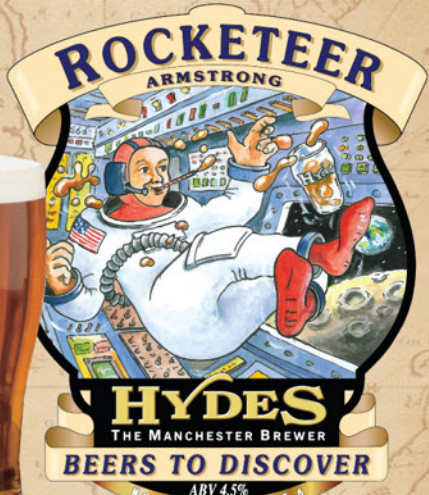



The 2010 edition of CAMRA's flagship publication, the Good Beer Guide, is launched this month. This is the 36th edition of what has become the country's premier guide to good pubs and good beer. We will be running a special feature next month. The cover price is £15.99 but CAMRA members can pick up a copy for just £11 at branch meetings in September.



As we say above pub and brewery projects rarely run to timetable. So it has proved with the **Black Lion** in Salford, featured last month. Additional work on the pub, including rewiring, has put the planned opening date back to mid-September.

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COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

Opening Times – Comment

Will any of our local breweries pick up an award at the Great British Beer Festival, we asked last month. Once again the North West in general, and Greater Manchester in particular, had thin pickings when the gongs were awarded. Hearty congratulations though to Bolton's Bank Top Brewery for winning silver in the mild category for their Dark Mild. Coming second to the beer that went on to win the overall Champion Beer of Britain award is nothing to be ashamed of.

The planned reopening of the Magnet on Wellington Road North is welcome news indeed. This will only cement Stockport's reputation as one of the best towns in the country for a combination of excellent traditional pubs and fine cask ales, all within easy walking distance.

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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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2009 We're in it!



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for September is the Swan With Two Necks on Princes Street, Stockport. John Clarke sings its praises.

WELL where do you start with a pub like the Swan With Two Necks? In many ways it ticks all of the boxes you would want in a classic town centre pub. Since late last year it has been run by Trigger and Pam Dean who have certainly made their mark on the place.

Let's start with the pub itself, the bricks and mortar. The Swan With Two Necks is a rare example of an almost intact inter-wars pub, having remained virtually unchanged since it was rebuilt in 1926, just before its purchase by Robinsons. Even some of the light fittings are original. This rare survival has gained the pub a place on CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors.



Inside there is the classic layout of drinking corridor-cum-lobby off which are a front vault, top lit lounge (arguably one of the best pub rooms in Stockport) and at the back a third room has been brought into use from what was private accommodation.

Outside at the back is a small but welcoming beer garden.

The pub had become a little careworn over the years but Trigger has restored and enhanced the pub – the front vault has been panelled to match the rest of the pub, the bar back has been restored and obtrusive Formica removed, and a splendid set of wooden handpumps have been installed.

On the beer front, the range has increased, too. The current Robinsons seasonal is always on sale alongside Unicorn, Hatters, Dark Hatters (Trigger was very keen to get this) and Double Hop. In the winter months a cask of Old Tom is often seen behind the bar, too. As you would expect, quality is also consistently good.

There have been a few false starts on the food front but this is now in the hands of the very capable Roy Weir who has been providing top notch food on the town's pub scene for some years now.

Busy during the day, the Swan With Two Necks is often quieter at night, in common with many of the town centre pubs. That certainly won't be the case on Thursday 24 September though when we present this very well deserved award.



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CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2009 We're in it!



A Weak Argument

CAMRA's call for duty to be scrapped on low-strength beers of 2.8% ABV and below was a predictable publicity ploy to coincide with the launch of the Great British Beer Festival. But I can't help thinking that this is a misguided idea that shows a failure to appreciate the realities of the beer market and panders to the current climate of anti-drink hysteria.

It is difficult to brew beers of such low strength with much flavour and character. Many of the old-style milds and boys' bitters were very bland, and were designed to be drunk in large quantities by industrial and agricultural workers wanting to restore fluid levels after a hard days' work. However, as society changed and people became more prosperous, they started switching to bitters which were more expensive, but had more taste and body. In the early 1990s, some of our local brewers introduced cheap "economy" bitters at around 3.2% ABV, such as Hydes' Billy Westwood and Boddingtons' Old Shilling. When well-kept, these could in fact be surprisingly tasty, but they never really took off in the marketplace and were dropped after a year or two.

People drinking in pubs are not generally motivated to choose cheaper drinks to save money, otherwise mild would still be all the rage, and it has to be recognised that one of the main reasons people drink beer is because it actually does contain alcohol. Ordering a cheap, weak beer is hardly a very "aspirational" choice in the pub and comes across much more as a distress purchase. If people want to cut their alcohol consumption they will tend to drink "less but better" rather than making a conscious decision to go for weaker drinks. And the idea that micro-brewers would be able to sell 2.8% beers for substantially less than stronger ones is misplaced anyway, as they benefit from Progressive Beer Duty and thus pay a greatly reduced rate of duty in the first place.

Standing Room Only

IN another area, I recently called in to a pub – more a bar really – that had been chosen by the local CAMRA branch as their Pub of the Year. There was a good range of mostly local real ales and a wide selection of interesting bottles, so you could understand why it won the award. But I was struck by just how little decent seating there was in the place. One section had a few high-level posing tables, another expansive, low-level sofas that allowed one to sit where five could normally be accommodated, and only the third a scattering of tables with loose chairs. If the pub had standard wall-mounted bench seating in all three areas it could probably cater for three times as many seated customers.

Surely the lack of seating must impact on trade – it baffles me why pub owners sacrifice capacity in this way in the interest of appearing trendy. Maybe late at night they are packed with standing customers and too many seats would get in the way. But, for most of the day, customers are likely to be looking for somewhere to sit, particularly if they want to eat as well as drink, and in this particular establishment could easily conclude there was no room even if there were only about four groups already in the place. Wetherspoons are another major offender on this score – many of their pubs have vast areas of floorspace with a few freestanding tables dotted around, and often don't seem busy even when all the tables are taken.

Curmudgeon Online:

www.curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com



CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is delighted to announce for the first time in its 38 year history that it has 100,000 members signed up to the organisation.

CAMRA is a not-for-profit, volunteer-led consumer organisation that campaigns for real ale and good community pubs. It was founded in 1971 by Michael Hardman, Jim Makin, Graham Lees and Bill Mellor, when an idea of a campaign arose whilst they were bemoaning the state of British beer and pubs whilst on holiday in Ireland.

Popularity for the then named 'Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale' quickly grew, and by the end of 1973 the organisation boasted 5,000 members. By 1974, the membership number had risen to 9,000 and the first branches had been formed of which there are over 200 today!

In 1976, CAMRA campaigned for breweries to reveal the OG's (Original Gravity) of their beers after they had initially refused. By testing the beers themselves, CAMRA published the OGs in the 1976 Good Beer Guide. It is now common practice for many breweries to promote the strength of the beer on promotional material and on pump-clips, helping consumers know what they are drinking.



Aside – the four founder members celebrate CAMRA's 10th birthday in 1981

The organisation's membership continued to grow following CAMRA's success to persuade breweries such as Bateman's of Lincolnshire not to close, despite some of the family wanting to sell up, and Fuller's to reverse their decision to stop brewing real ale.

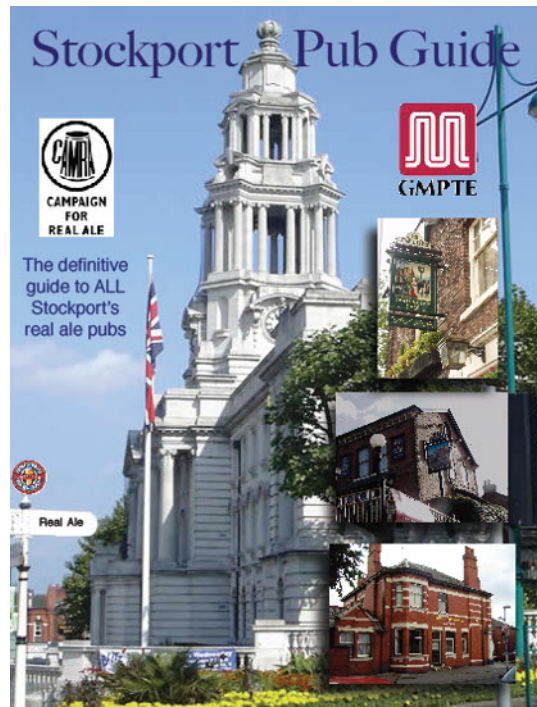
In more recent times CAMRA has been delighted to see responsible adults being given the option to go for a drink at a time that suits them. This decision was made following the campaign's support for the new licensing laws that now allow pubs to stay open beyond the traditional 11pm closing time and all day on Sunday.

There are now approximately 700 breweries in Britain brewing more than 2,500 different real ales. Many of the new breweries that have started since 2002 have benefitted from Progressive Beer Duty, which CAMRA campaigned for, giving small brewers tax relief to help set up and grow their business. The variety of real ales now available for consumers to enjoy is probably CAMRA's biggest success.

Reaching the 100,000 members milestone and achieving so many campaign successes over nearly four decades would not have been possible without the dedicated CAMRA volunteers. It is estimated that more than 5,000 CAMRA volunteers give up their time to organise over 150 CAMRA beer festivals a year, survey pubs, write and distribute local newsletters, manage local branch websites, organise petitions to save local pubs and breweries, present pubs with awards for good practice and sit on local and national committee... Plus much, much more!

100,000 members is a great achievement but there are plenty more campaigns to win and the 200,000 member milestone is CAMRA's next aim to give our organisation even more lobbying influence to campaign for consumer rights.

CAMRA would like to thank every member who has joined the organisation over the last 38 years! It couldn't have achieved so much without you.



VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 4

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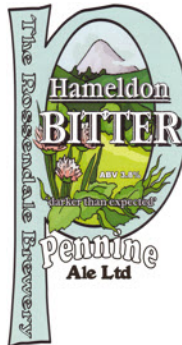
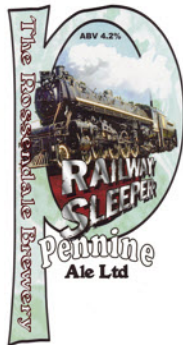
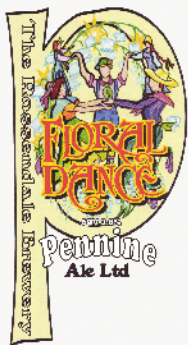
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Stagger

A wet night trekking through the avenues and alleyways of suburban Hazel Grove and Bramhall brought mixed fortunes as John Sutcliffe reports.

On a typical English summer night, I shook off my umbrella and entered the **Three Bears**, one of the more recent Robinson's houses being built around the early 1990's.

To digress on a historical note, the pub was actually built by Bell & Co, the old Stockport brewery taken over by Robinson's and which still exists as a pub owning company. The name follows the nursery rhyme theme that Robinsons used for several new pubs during this period.

The first impression is that there is an emphasis on food, with numbered tables and menus, in the one large room where dark timber contrasts with pale lemon walls with a touch of deep red ochre on one wall, echoed in the upholstered bench seats and dining chairs. The bar is divided between



drink servery and the popular carvery. Great for confirmed carnivores, with succulent ham, turkey or beef but with only Yorkshire pudding with vegetarian gravy and vegetables offered as an alternative, but there were two vegetarian options on the specials list.

The music was rather loud inside but at least no television screens. There is plenty of outdoor space and on a better evening one could enjoy the very pleasant veranda across the front with profuse hanging baskets.

The beer was an acceptable pint of Hatters, Unicorn or the guest beer: Robinsons Tit for Tat, better than average but not quite as good as the Hatters.



After a ten minute walk, mostly on pathways through leafy housing estates we crossed the river to the rear entrance of the **Shady Oak**. This is a large pub on Redford Drive, recently refurbished. The ales here scored

well and were Timothy Taylor Landlord and Thwaites Original, pretty much Good Beer Guide quality. There was also Greene King Abbot but no one tried this, and it may change in the near future because although the real ales sell well, this seems the least popular.

There are two levels and a number of young people were enjoying the live music and karaoke. There is a summer menu of fresh food served until the early evening. They do not open at lunchtime. We sat in the comfortable lounge area to the left of the front door, with leather sofas and chairs, light plastered walls and grey match boarding up to dado rail height.

Here the sound of the karaoke was quite loud but there are carpeted rooms on the other side of the bar that were a lot quieter.



Our next venue should have been the **Bromale** but this appeared to be closed (*but has since reopened with Theakston Bitter and Old Peculier on handpump – Ed*) so we moved to the **Ladybrook Hotel** where the beers were Boddingtons Bitter, Wells Bombardier, Greene King Abbot, and Titanic Mild, sampled by four people with not much better than average score but also an excellent well kept guest beer called Celt. Originally this was a Boddingtons pub but became Spirit Group

now managed by Punch. The staff were friendly and helpful.

At this stage of the stagger we divided our forces. I continued to the **Orange Tree** in Bramhall Village.

Former assistant manager, Tim Davis, informed us that having been acquired from Punch by J. W. Lees they will be closing soon for a complete alteration from largely food orientated to a more traditional house. They are already selling a good pint of Lees bitter.



Mark McConachie wrote the following description of the other group's visit to the **Jolly Sailor**.

Several others chose to end this Stagger in Davenport's only pub, the Jolly Sailor on Bramhall Lane. This is a large Victorian roadhouse, formerly part of the Daniel Clifton estate, now set amidst suburban housing. The Victorian aspect has long gone after a series of internal modifications down the years. It comprises a series of raised areas that drop away the nearer you get to the rear. All very comfortably done and neatly decorated as an L-shaped area around the bar.

It was bustling on our visit and a good sized outside area at the back is well used. Two cask beers were available, the Deuchars IPA went untried, whilst the Black Sheep Bitter was deemed to be a decent pint. A pleasant way to finish a Stagger. Buses 374 and 378 provide a half-hour service along Bramhall Lane.

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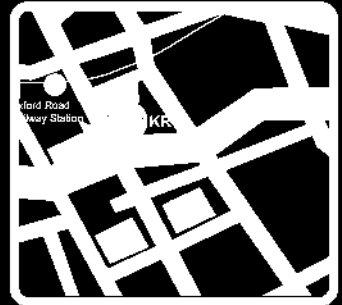


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Old Tom Hits Gold Again

Robinson's Old Tom has been crowned as the World's Best Ale.

The award came at the third annual World Beer Awards in which an international panel of judges tasted hundreds of beers of different styles from around the world. Style winners then went through to a blind tasting where top UK brewers voted Old Tom as the World's Best Ale.

During the multi-stage competition Old Tom also secured recognition as the World's Best Dark Ale, The World's Best Strong Ale and the Worlds Best Barley Wine.

The competition was run by *Beers of the World*, the international consumer beer magazine. The well deserved title is the latest accolade for the 8.5% ABV strong ale, which has aromas of dark fruit and a palate booming with ripe malt and hops followed by a deep port wine finish.

In recent years Robinson's Old Tom has also been named by CAMRA as Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain no less than three times at the National Winter Ales Festival.

John Robinson, brand development manager and the latest of the sixth generation of his family to join the company said: "To be judged against beers from around the globe and to be named as the best in so many categories is a huge success. Old Tom is certainly no stranger to winning awards having previously secured so many of the industry's most prestigious accolades. Everybody at Robinson's can be very proud of what we have achieved."



Silly Season Latest

Women and dogs are the targets of the latest marketing ploys.

Women in Manchester are set to become the latest guinea pigs in the battle to corner the "female" drinks market. It's Carlsberg's turn to launch a beer aimed squarely at the ladies. So, for the next 12 weeks, a number of bars will be trialling Eve, a 3.1% lightly sparkling beer that is described as being somewhere between a lager and a RTD (ready to drink – think WKD) product. It will be available in two flavours – passion fruit and lychee.

Apparently, (yet again) there is a growing demand for these products. Apparently there is nothing on the market that satisfies the designated demographic parameters. What is required is a light, sophisticated alternative. This 3.1% light, sophisticated alternative is brewed with the finest malt and, er, rice.

Instead of inflicting this stuff on an unsuspecting populace, Carlsberg should have come to CAMRA. As we have found through events held at local and national festivals, what women want in beer is much the same as men – tasty, well made and well kept products that don't patronise them or insult their intelligence. For more on this product and what women really want in their beer we heartily recommend Melissa Cole's beer blog at <http://girlsguidetobeer.blogspot.com/>.

Some innovations in beer just pass you by. So it was with dog beer, Yes, beer for dogs. Although apparently it's been available for a while, there is now a big marketing push to cash in on the "hot" summer.

According to Amy Laura Hepworth, marketing manager for Beaphar, "Dogs can become even more of the family as they enjoy a beer too." We can't argue with that. Six 33cl bottles of Dog Beer can be yours for £11.70. It's brewed with hops and barley but "with the alcohol and gas taken out, and a little meaty flavouring is added for ultimate palatability." Thanks are due to the excellent Bury-based Tyson's Beer Blog (<http://tysonsbeerblog.blogspot.com/>) for this story.

Micro News

Once again apologies to those breweries we weren't able to contact for this month's news round.

Hornbeam Brewery – one new beer to look forward to this month. Pub Pilgrim (4% ABV) will be a pale hoppy beer using Beata (an experimental hop variety) and also Pilgrim hops. Next month look out for the new autumn-spring beer, Dark & Divine (4%) which will be available from October to April.

Phoenix – another very busy brewery so September is a quiet month on the new beer front, although Struggling Monkey (4.5%) is making a welcome return. The new (keg only) Strawberry Phoenix Fruits seems to have been a hit and Phoenix's Tony Allen is awaiting the delivery of more kegs to supply new accounts with this local competitor to Fruli.

Greenfield – again very busy keeping up with demand. A new account has been gained with the JD Wetherspoon chain and Greenfield also supply draught and bottled beer to the Retro Rail Tours. Demand is such that two new fermenters are being installed at the brewery. This month look out for Old Sag (4.4%).

Buxton Brewery – this new venture is now producing beers at the Leek Brewery while its own premises are brought on stream. Currently 1,000 litre batches of Buxton Spring Water are being transported down to Leek – not an easy job!



The first beer produced was **SPA (Special Pale Ale)** at 4.1% ABV described as a "light and refreshing, delicately hoppy ale. Ideal for summer drinking. It is loaded with late Cascade hops and has a delightful clean taste with a creamy mouth feel and nutty notes". This has sold well, in both bottles and cask, and has now been

followed by Buxton Blonde.

This interpretation of a classic beer style has been brewed with lager malt and a touch of wheat for a zesty character, and using Hersbrucker and Perle hops. Described as a refreshing continental style ale it was planned to have this available for the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Bank Top – this year there were thin pickings for our local brewers in the Champion Beer of Britain competition held last month at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival. However one local micro managed to come away with an honourable mention. Bolton's Bank Top Brewery



has, in *Opening Times'* opinion, always made one of the best milds in the country. It was therefore pleased to see this excellent beer gaining a silver award in the mild category.

The winner in the mild class, Rudgate Ruby Mild, from Yorkshire, went on to win the overall Champion Beer of Britain title so coming second to the eventual supreme champion is nothing to be ashamed of (even if the Bank Top mild is in our view a rather better beer!).

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PUB Grub



Louise Heal had a reputation for great pub food at the Caledonia in Ashton. After a four year break she and husband Alan have taken over the town's Oddfellows Arms. Can they repeat their success? John Clarke and Mark McConachie went to find out.

To be honest there are few real gems to be found in the Ashton pub scene. The Caledonian on Warrington Street was one of the stars, and it's still a good pub. It first made its name under Alan and Louise Heal but they departed for Cyprus almost five years ago now.

Another gem was the Oddfellows on the corner of King's Road and Alderley Street, about a 10 minute walk from the town centre. This had been run by the Lewis family for about 90 years until their tenancy of this Robinsons pub came to an end last year. In a neat turn of events the Heals have returned from Cyprus to take on the reins at the Oddies as it is affectionately known. You will have read all of this in last month's *Opening Times*.

Great food has been a feature of Louise and Alan's tenure of their pubs. While at the Cally Louise picked up several awards and has started in the same vein at the Oddies – she was runner-up in the Pub-Restaurant category in the Tameside Curry Chef of the Year competition for 2009.

The menu clearly had to be investigated – and to really put the pub through its paces I took with me Mark McConachie, a man not easily impressed by pub food.

The menu is extensive covering 'light bites', snacks, starters, puddings, 'traditional favourites' and 'spicy bites' – this latter features some of the award winning curries.

We both passed on starters and went straight to mains. Deciding to try something

spicy my choice was Caribbean Chicken (£4.95) while Mark, being more of a traditionalist went for Lambs Liver, Onion and Bacon Casserole (again £4.95).

The chicken came in an attractive bowl brimming with chicken breast chunks, onions, green peppers all in a very tasty pineapple and fresh ginger curry sauce. Accompaniments were a generous dressed salad and potato wedges (alternate choices being rice, chips, jacket potato, garlic bread or naan). This was great being spicy and lively but not overpoweringly hot.

Across the table the casserole also came in a bowl and accompaniments were mashed potato and vegetables (other options being chips or mushy peas). Mark showed signs of enthusiasm – praise indeed. "A satisfying plateful!" came the verdict, with the tasty liver meriting a special mention.

Only I had room for pudding, choosing lemon & ginger sponge and custard from a short but tempting list. This was seriously good – lots of custard, zingy lemon and chunks of crystallised ginger with light and tasty sponge.

The verdict? Exactly what we expected – high quality pub food at a fair price. Food is available at the Oddfellows on Tuesday to Friday evenings from 5-8pm; on Saturdays from 2-8pm and on Sundays from 1-5pm. Highly recommended.





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 ninth in the series comes from Rossendale Brewery of Haslingden.

About the Brewery

Rossendale Brewery was until recently known as Pennine Ales and before that Porter Brewing Co. Confused? Then read on.

When keen home brewer Dave Porter bought the Griffin Inn in Haslingden, he saw the possibility of founding a brewery there. The pub, complete with microbrewery, duly opened in 1994 and quickly expanded to supply an estate of five tied houses.

Both the beers and the pubs subsequently picked up an armful of awards, notably for the exceptional Porter's Porter and Sunshine.

As the years passed by Dave began to concentrate on his micro-brewery installation business (an area in which he is now something of an expert) and the tied estate reduced to the Griffin and Stockport's Railway. This led, in November 2007, to the sale of the two pubs, the brewery and most of the recipes to Geoff Oliver.

Geoff was also well known on the local pub scene having run a number of pubs in the Tameside area, notably the Sportsman on Mottram Road in Hyde. This pub thus became the third member of the renamed Pennine Ales tied estate.

Under Geoff's ownership, the beers have remained much the same, with the exception of Sunshine, where the hop rate has been slightly increased.

The brewery's eight barrel plant brews three or four times each week and brewing is now largely carried out by Shane Brown, who was trained in the brewers art by Geoff. The beers now also appear in the local free trade. Just one new beer has so far been added to the range, the wheat beer White Owl. The *Opening Times* beer will be the second.

Recently renamed as Rossendale Brewery the top selling beers are **Floral Dance (3.6%)**, pale, fruity and aromatic; **Sunshine (5.3%)**, a hoppy, bitter and dangerously drinkable golden ale; and **Rossendale Ale (4.2%)**, a traditional brown beer with a malty taste balanced by a dry and bitter finish.

About the Beer

This month's Birthday Beer will be only the second new beer that has been produced by Rossendale Brewery since it was taken over by Geoff Oliver.

Golden Halo will be a premium bitter at 4.4% ABV. Golden in colour it will have citrus notes and be well hopped with two American hop varieties – Cascade and Pacific Gem. Enjoy!



The merry-go-round of openings, closures and new licensees continues this month with numerous changes to report.

WELL the big, big news is the **Magnet** on Wellington Road North. It is planned to reopen by the end of this month so you won't be getting my report until the November issue. What I will say is that this is a major development for the town's cask ale scene and I can anticipate lots of shuttling up and down the hill between there and the **Crown**. By the way, congratulations to the Crown on being nominated in the Manchester Food & Drink Festival Pub of the Year awards.

In late July I visited some of the pubs round the Market area of Stockport to help with writing up a new ale trail leaflet that the Borough Council is publishing this month.

The reopened **Three Shires** does not serve real ale – no real surprise there, as I suggested last month. The **White Lion** is still closed, nothing new known apart from the inevitable rumours of a Wetherspoon interest which, I suspect, will come to nothing.

The **Pack Horse** now has a permanent landlord, a young man called Jake who is in partnership with Matt, the landlord of the Hope on the A6 that has had real ale for about 18 months now. There were four real ales on sale: Tetley Bitter, and three guests, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Hancock's HB and Black Sheep Bitter. The quality of the Copper Dragon and Hancocks was fairly good but as Jake has only been in for two weeks, I expect that there will be a certain amount of bedding in.



The **Boars Head** is under a new licensee, still Sam Smiths while the **Bakers Vaults** was busy and still has Jazz on Tuesday and with live music on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The **Bulls Head** was fairly quiet for a Friday night although trade is steadily growing. With seven very well kept Robinsons beers from Dizzy Blonde at one extreme to the Dark Hatters Mild, with its extra caramel and liquorice at the other, there is a good range. Not many pubs have two milds and I believe only the **Swan with Two Necks** and the Bulls Head have the dark mild in Stockport central area. Although very much a traditional pub, the Bulls Head is one of the few that does food in the evenings as well as at lunch time.

Late news, this but I am told that the **Red Lion** in High Lane is currently closed for a major refurbishment. I say "major" as the place apparently doesn't reopen until November.

The **Royal Oak** on Commercial Road in Hazel Grove has a new licensee, Lucy Fee, in her first cask pub. She has reopened the former 'non-smoking' lounge as a vault and is working hard to improve the beer quality. Lucy was previously at the **Wrights Arms** on Marple Road.

Some brief Cheadle news now. The main development, I think, is the closure and reported sale of the **George & Dragon**. I am told the pub closed its doors in late July and will be undergoing a major refurbishment before reopening. Meanwhile the **Old Vine** (its latest and possibly last name) is closed for reported conversion into a Greek restaurant. That's your lot this time – more next month.



Star, Glossop – Moves and Beer Festival

SURPRISE news this month is that the lease of the **Star** in Glossop is up for sale, having been advertised in the trade press.

John and Vivien did explore the possibility of buying the pub but Punch Group wanted silly money for the place, I understand. However, in the current market they do not envisage moving for at least a year, so it's business as usual at the Star right up to the day they leave! Ideally John and Vivien would like a pub where they can do good food as well as good ale. Their son is training to be a chef starting in September and it would be useful to him if they had a pub that had a trade kitchen

On a more upbeat note, after much wrangling with Punch the Star has been allowed to join the SIBA Direct Delivery Scheme, which is no mean feat. They have already tried beers from Greenfield and Bowland breweries, as well as continuing the pub's support for Glossop's Howard Town Brewery.

There will also be a beer festival at the Star from 25 to 27 September. The last event there was very enjoyable with a combination of beers on the bar and direct from the cask in the cellar.

Sportsman, Hyde – Beer Festival

ANOTHER pub planning a beer festival is the High Peak Pub of the Year for Greater Manchester, the **Sportsman** on Mottram Road in Hyde.

This will take place from 1 to 4 October and is designed to coincide with the Tameside Food & Drink Festival. This will be held in a marquee to be erected in the pub car park. There will be 25 beers alongside the 10-11 on hand pump on the pub's main bar.



Food will be available from the restaurant/pub kitchen. Apart from the all British beers, the theme for food and music will be Latino - with the help of the pub's Cuban restaurant staff. Check out the website for more details at: http://www.elcubalibre.co.uk/News_&_Events.php

Woodend, Mossley – New Menu


THE Woodend, Manchester Road, Mossley has a new chef. A new menu was introduced from 12th June. On the evening of 11th June the pub's new chef put on a display of his skills. A number of locals (and a few not-so-locals) turned up to sample his wares.

A selection of dishes were put out and the customers were invited to samples of each. Amongst the excellent range of starters were home-made fishcakes, crayfish, home-made pate, soft cheese on toast and black puddings. The main courses too were of high quality. Rib-eye steak, chops (both pork and lamb), pies (fish, chicken leek & ham, steak) and omelettes attracted particular comment. The pub obtains its meat from a local butcher.

Cask beer is provided. The Woodend tends to take local micro-breweries' products.

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1998

Wobbly Bob



2002

Navy



2002

Wobbly Bob



2004

Wobbly Bob



Openings, beer festivals and local history are featured in this month's Peak pub scene round-up by Robin Wignall

Following up the late news on last month's column, the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale did indeed re-open in July. It has been let as a tenancy, though the building still sports a For Sale sign. The new tenant carries on from her predecessor with one real ale, which in mid July was Hydes' Boddington's Bitter, in good enough form.

Mid July found Jennings' seasonal beer Yan Tan Tethera at the **Shady Oak** in Fernilee. You can count on this being a decent pint, as ever at the Shady Oak. Craig also does a good trade in Sneckflitter. This stronger darker brew from Jennings' also sells well at the **Shepherds'** in Whaley Bridge.

At the **Board Inn** in Whaley Bridge Robert Lister may well have moved on to pastures new by the time this is published. Hopefully Robinson's will waste no time finding another relief manager, or better still a new tenant. A July visit found Robinson's Hatters in sparkling form. Successive licensees have kept good beer at the Board, and it has the makings of being a really good little pub.

Local rumour suggests that the **Navigation** in Whaley Bridge may have been sold as part of the Punch capitalisation project. More details as this story unfolds. This is another good local which deserves a brighter future. Without the Punch clutches this could be a reality.

The **Navigation** at Buxworth continues to source beers from microbreweries as well as from further afield. Howard Town beers from Glossop are regular features on the bar, with Milltown available in July.

Concluding last month's bit about pub history in Whaley Bridge with information drawn from a local publication, 'Whaley Bridge in the Nineteenth Century,' the pubs to the north and west of the Goyt come into focus. The township of Yeadsley cum Whaley does not appear to have been over endowed with public houses, with four identified in 1851 and only three by 1871, though this may be due to the difficulty of abstracting information from the source documents. However the Dog and Partridge at Bridgemont, the Soldier Dick at Furness Vale, the Railway and Jodrell at Whaley Bridge were all trading in the 1850s. Over time the Jodrell is thought to have carried more than one name. The railway from Stockport did not reach Whaley Bridge until 1857, so the Crossings, formerly Station at Furness Vale must post date 1857 as a pub adjoining the railway line. The Navigation in Whaley Bridge, currently closed see note above, enters the records in this mid 19th century period, but could be of earlier date given its proximity to the Peak Forest Canal. The Goyt is not mentioned in this period. And then whatever happened to the Royal Oak and the Quiet Woman?

The **Old Hall** at Whitehough near Chinley is of course noted for very good food and a good range of quality beer from local microbreweries. It has now entered the columns of the summer edition of *Cycling Plus* which features a cycle ride which starts and finishes at the Old Hall. The article also carries recommendations for use of the Old Hall for food and accommodation.

Whilst the financial depression still continues to bite, and to let and for sale notices still newly appear on pubs in the area, there are brighter signs around. There are some re-openings, there are some initiatives. By the time you read this the August Bank Holiday beer festivals at the Dog and Partridge, Bridgemont and the White Lion at Disley will have passed and hopefully been enjoyed by many, whilst September brings the Romiley Beer Festival at the Duke of York and the Old Hall Beer Festival at Whitehough. There are lots of good reasons to get out to enjoy a pint, or two, or more.



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Old Hall Beer Festival



Elsewhere in OT is an advert for the Beer and Cider Festival at the Old Hall at Whitehough, near Chinley. This charity event will run from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 September and will feature up to 40 beers and up to a dozen ciders / perries.

Thornbridge Brewery is sponsoring the event and they will have members of their team at the event to talk about their beers and brewing, and about their new brewery which comes on stream in early September.

Local charities are to benefit from the event, and these include local scouts and guides and other local youth projects.

Festival food will be available near to the festival beer, and local produce will reflect the Inn's growing reputation for Peak District cuisine. The beer will be stillaged in the 16th Century minstrel gallery, surely a first for a beer festival. About 22 breweries will be represented including top ranking operations like Thornbridge, Whim, Millstone, Pictish and Oakham amongst others.

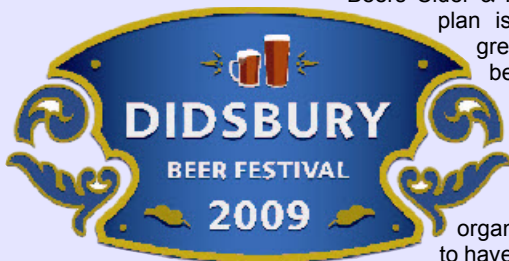
Entertainment will be provided by local bands and folk groups and will include turns by a local group of BBC Philharmonic Orchestra musicians.

A charity raffle is intended to enhance the £2K+ already raised by the Old Hall and its customers during 2009.

Getting there is manageable by public transport. Trains from Manchester and the east side of Stockport run roughly hourly, but check with Northern Rail Timetable booklet 23, and there are one or two fast trains calling at Stockport and then Chinley in the evening rush hour. Trains to Whaley Bridge run hourly throughout the day and should connect with the 189/190 bus up to teatime. The 189/190 Bowers bus links Whaley Bridge, Chinley, Chapel en le Frith and Buxton. It is an hourly service on Saturday, during the day till teatime. On Friday an hourly service becomes less regular in mid afternoon. There is no Sunday service for this bus.

It is but a short walk to the Old Hall from Chinley station, bus and train stops. The effort will be well worth while.

PLANNING is well underway for the 2nd Didsbury Beer Festival with the same venue; St Catherine's Club School Lane Didsbury; and the same theme 'Local and Lakeland Beers Cider & Perries.' The plan is to have a greater range of beers this time, with some new breweries included. The organisers hope to have more space available this time by use of extra marquees. This year's festival charities are St Ann's Hospice and Friends of Ghyll Head. There will also be additional opening session on the Thursday 29 October from 7 till 10:30pm (£2) then on the Friday 30th 6 pm till 11pm £4) and on Saturday 31 Oct.12 noon til 11pm (admission £2 before 5pm and £3 thereafter). See www.didsburybeerfestival.org.uk for further details



Cider Month Preview

October is CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month and *Opening Times* is arranging for several events to mark the occasion. Notably there's a plan to launch the month with a cider and perry themed meal at the Marble Arch on Thursday 1 October. Details were still being finalised as we went to press but anyone interested should contact John Clarke on 0161 477 1972. It's likely to be very popular and places will be strictly limited so book early!

Spoons Mancunian Festival

Several Manchester branches of the J D Wetherspoon chain are getting together to feature a Mancunian Beer Festival. It's going to run from Thursday 24th to Tuesday 29th September and the pubs involved are: Great Central, Ford Madox Brown (both on Wilmslow Road), Paramount (Oxford Street), Waterhouse (Princess Street), the Deansgate and the Piccadilly (you can work it out yourselves where these two are).

The beer will be just £1.59 a pint (£1.39 if you are a CAMRA member - still time to join - see page 18) and the list includes the following:

Phoenix: Hopsack, West Coast IPA, Earthquake and one other to be confirmed.

Moorhouses: Pendle Witches Brew, Pride of Pendle, Black Panther (a stronger version of Black Cat) and one special brew specific to each pub.

Northern: Deep Dark Secret, Hit and Run and one special brew 'Spot On' bitter.

Betwixt: Sunlight, Red Rocks and Storr Cask Lager.

Tasting notes will be priced at 50p which will also be entry into a raffle with prizes in each pub. All money goes to Wetherspoon's nominated charity - CLIC (Cancer and Leukaemia in Childhood). Prizes include mini keg of Deep Dark Secret, Betwixt Carry case of glasses and bottles, a Moorhouses brewery tour and more TBC. Well worth spending an evening ambling around a few of these we think.



IT'S NOW all systems go for this year's Manchester Food & Drink Festival. As last time there will be a welcome focus on real ales from the plethora of breweries, big and small, across Greater Manchester.

The main arena for this is now back in Albert Square, after last year's not entirely successful foray out to Spinningfields. The event in Albert Square will run from 8 to 11 October and will include a cask ale bar run by Marble Brewery.

In addition there will be a re-run of last year's hugely successful Ale Day, where expert panels of judges select the "Best Beer Brewed in Greater Manchester". In 2007 this was won by Marble Brewery's JP Best while the 2008 award went to Pictish Brewery's Alchemists Ale. Who will strike it lucky this year?

This year the "Ale Day" tent will feature two beers from each participating brewery (and every brewery in Greater Manchester is being invited to take part) and be run as a small beer festival over Friday 9 (when the Ale Day judging will take place) and Saturday 10. The bars will be open from 11am to 8pm each day (or until the beer runs out on Saturday, whichever comes first). Members of the public will also be able to vote for their top beer and the resulting "People's Pint" winner will be announced on Saturday afternoon.

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From Mark Charnley:

Thought I should let you know that I went to the Marble Brewery for my 'Brewer for a Day' prize on Friday 7th August.

It was a slow start, James had forgotten I was coming and was doing paperwork prior to going on holiday.

He introduced me to Colin who took me to the site of the new brewery which was undergoing construction. I then helped him load the van to do some deliveries in Lancashire.

I also met Jan who owns the operation and had a chat about the new brewery and the proposed new bar in the Northern Quarter. She also told me to have my dinner and a couple of pints on the house.

Then down to the business of brewing with James. We were going to brew 'Manchester' but with a change to some of the hops. I was involved in the whole process. Cleaning equipment, mashing, hopping, stirring, lifting, milling, measuring - not necessarily in that order.

I had a very nice fish dinner as recommended by James washed down with a couple of pints as promised.

Peter Butler turned up in the afternoon to take some pictures, mainly involving hops and adding yeast to the fermenter.

All in all it was a very interesting day. I think I learnt more by actually being involved in the process than I have in the many brewery tours I have been on. So it was definitely worthwhile.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to take part.

If you are in touch with the brewery please pass on my thanks and regards. I did thank them on the day and also intended to e-mail them but there does not appear to be any contact details on the website.

Many thanks for Marble Brewery for letting us offer this prize – we are happy to pass on Mark's thanks for what was obviously a great day out. Ed

From Andrew Mayne, Heaton Mersey:

Customer enters Wetherspoon's Calvert's Court, St. Petersgate, orders beer and, about to sample the pint, proffers cash with '50p off pint of Real Ale' Coupon.

BARMAID: You can't get 50p off that beer.

CUSTOMER: Why not?

BARMAID: It's not on the special list. You've been told about it.

CUSTOMER: Sorry, nobody's told me. The coupon says '50p off a pint of real ale'. Doesn't that mean any real ale?

MANAGERESS: No. You've been told about this at CAMRA.

CUSTOMER: Nobody's told me about it. Perhaps I could have a pint of something on the list, then...

MANAGERESS: But you've already ordered something not on the list.

BARMAID: You've been told about this.

At this point, the dialogue began to take on a circular form, and a few minutes later the customer left the bar, resolved not to return to another Wetherspoon's 'pub'.

If anyone from Wetherspoons reads this can they get in touch with an explanation please? Ed.

**Join CAMRA
See page 18**



This month the focus is on Didsbury with new licensees, new developments and a new real ale outlet – the Fat Loaf rises to the occasion.

James Russell the licensee of the **Royal Oak**, Didsbury, has left to pursue different interests and the new licensee is Jim Garrow, ex licensee of Marston's Millstone pub in Macclesfield. Jim and his wife Karen have been licensees for many years, running the Millstone for the last twelve years and before that other Marston's and Bass pubs.

Yorkshireman Jim, he hails from Rotherham, took over running the pub on Thursday July 9. He is keen on real ale and is a Marston's Bitter drinker which should ensure that beer quality remains high. Immediate plans are to review cask beer sales to ensure that quality is maintained, possibly even reducing the number of cask beers on sale in order to speed up the turn over of cask to ensure the highest quality.



Having been in the trade many years Jim knows many Marston's licensees including one of his predecessors Rob and Hazel Long (now retired) who ran the Royal Oak very successfully several years ago.

After standing empty and boarded for six months, work on the "refurbishment" of the **Barleycorn**, West Didsbury, has started in earnest. I query "refurbishment" because in late July, they had basically knocked half of it down. Only the main central body was still standing - the rear extension is gone, the patio area is gone and levelled to the street level as is the rear car park.

I tried to find a planning application without success, but a bit of Googling revealed the plans for the site: £3million is being spent on the work and is not due to open Easter 2010 (although I had to use Google's cache to read the article). It will be "unashamedly a bar and not a pub" (the article says it will "have 170 covers" - i.e. it will be primarily a restaurant); it "will be a different look and feel to Dukes 92 and Albert's Shed but will have a similar menu".

And one final disappointing quote "I'd love to just be able to pour pints of Stella all day long, but with the sector being as it is, food has to be at the forefront." Sigh.

The report also mentions that Jim Ramsbottom is looking at opening in Chorlton

ASK Restaurants have bought the former **Fugu** (ex Squires) in Didsbury and will shortly reopen the pub as an Italian style restaurant called Zizzi. Whilst Zizzi will be licensed it is extremely unlikely that it will sell any cask beer as the only beer that it appears to sell is a mass produced Italian bottled beer. However wine drinkers are better catered for with a selection of red and white wines.

There is a far better choice of beers available on Didsbury Green where the recently reopened **Fat Loaf** is selling Timothy Taylor's Landlord at £2.85 a pint together with a number of Belgian and German bottled beers. The Fat Loaf serves everything from sandwiches (from £ 4-95) up to main meals (two courses for £ 13). It is open from 12 noon daily serving food until 6 pm and closing at 10 pm daily. The Fat Loaf is not open on Sundays.

Nearby, the **Didsbury** is planning to have a beer festival in November – more news nearer the time.

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 From... ry
Swan With
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 Princes... ing
 Street... Se... nal
 Stockport... B... s,
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 to... an... the  
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Please tick membership category:  
 Payment method: Cheque  Direct Debit

|                |     |     |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| Single         | £22 | £20 |
| Joint          | £27 | £25 |
| Under 26       | £16 | £14 |
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Signed   
 Date

Your membership will make a difference. For just £20 a year you can help our work to promote real ale, protect consumer rights and support pubs. Benefits include a monthly newspaper, quarterly magazine, free entrance to beer festivals and discounts on books and the Good Beer Guide. 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](http://www.camra.org.uk). CAMRA newsletter *Opening Times*

## Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

|                                         |                          |
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| To the Manager                          | Bank or Building Society |
| Address                                 |                          |
| Postcode                                |                          |
| Name(s) of Account Holder (s)           |                          |
| Bank or Building Society Account Number |                          |
| Branch Sort Code                        |                          |
| Reference Number                        |                          |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 2 6 1 2 9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Membership Number                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| Instructions to your Bank or Building Society                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Please pay CAMRA Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with CAMRA and, if so will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society. |
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| Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

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- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CAMRA will notify you 7 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

## CAMRA Calling - What's On In The Local CAMRA Branches

**Stockport & South Manchester**  
 Branch Contact: *Pete Farrand 01625 425734*  
[pete.farrand@googlemail.com](mailto:pete.farrand@googlemail.com)  
 Branch website: [www.ssmcamra.org.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.org.uk)

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. Starts 8pm.  
**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Edgeley Stagger: start Four Heatons, Didsbury Rd, 7.30pm; Alexandra, Northgate Rd, 8.30pm  
**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Swan With Two Necks, Princes Street, Stockport. From 8pm.  
**Thursday 1 October** – Cider & Perry month launch with themed meal at Marble Arch, Rochdale Rd, Manchester (provisional – details from John Clarke on 0161 477 1973).  
**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Grapes, London Road, Hazel Grove. Starts 8pm.

**High Peak & NE Cheshire**  
 Branch Contact: *Mike Rose 07986 458517*  
[mikewrose@gmail.com](mailto:mikewrose@gmail.com)

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup>** - EGM: Bull's Head, Poynton. Starts 8.30pm.  
**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** – Buxton Social: Ramsays Bar, Buckingham Hotel. Starts 8.30pm

**Trafford & Hulme**  
 Branch Contact: *John Ison 0161 962 7976*  
 Branch website: [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>** - Sale survey: meet 8pm, The Volunteer, Cross Street. 8.45pm Bulls Head, 9.20pm Ryans Bar, 10pm The Railway finish Kings Ransom.  
**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>** - Manchester survey: meet 8pm The Commercial, Liverpool Road, 8.45pm Castlefield Hotel, 9.20pm The Ox, 10pm Cask finish at The Knott, Deansgate.  
**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Liverpool social. Trains Depart Oxford Road 11.16am (11.18 Deansgate or 11.27 Urmston). Meeting 12.30pm The Dispensary, Renshaw Street, 14.30 Ye Cracke, Rice Street, 17.00 Thomas Rigby, Dale Street..

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>** - Branch trip to Keighley Beer Festival (details nearer the time).

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October** - Branch AGM. 8pm Timperley Taverners Social Club, Park Road, Timperley ( 5mins from Timperley Metrolink station). **All please try and attend this important meeting.**

**North Manchester**  
 Branch Contact: *Dave Hallows 07983 944992*  
[davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk)

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>** - 2-pub social: Crown & Anchor, Hilton St, 8pm, Castle, Oldham St, 9pm.  
**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>** - Branch meeting: Unicorn Hotel, Church St, M'cr City Centre. Starts 8pm.  
**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Chorlton Crawl: Dulcimer, Wilbraham Rd, 7.30, Sedge Lynn, Manchester Rd, 8.15, Marble Beer House, 8.45, Pi, 9.05, Jam St. Café, Upper Chorlton St, 9.45, Hillary Step, 10.15pm.  
**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>** - Visit to 'SeptemBuryfest' beer festival, Bury Sports Club, Radcliffe Rd, 1pm.  
**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>** - Sand Bar, Grosvenor St, 8pm, Kro2 beer festival, 8.45pm.  
**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October:** Cider Month Crawl, Marble Arch, Rochdale Rd, 7.30pm, Angel, 8.15, New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford, 9.15, Crescent, Salford, 10pm.

**Macclesfield & East Cheshire**  
 Branch Contact: *Tony Icke 01625 861833*  
[contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup>** – Campaigning meeting: George & Dragon, Holmes Chapel. Guest speaker is Oliver Robinson from Robinsons Brewery in Stockport. Starts 8pm.

## RECENT CAMRA AWARDS



High Peak's Phil Moss (left) presents Lorraine Connell, landlady of the Hunters Tavern, Stalybridge with the High Peak CAMRA Summer Pub of the season. Also on the picture is Raymond Bowles the cellar man

Below, North Manchester CAMRA Chairman Phil Booton (second left) presents the branch Pub of the Year Award to Tim, Paulette and Jean of the **New Oxford**, Bexley Square, Salford



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for May was presented to the **Grapes** in Hazel Grove. Local CAMRA committee member Chris Wainwright, left, is seen here presenting George and Elaine with their award.



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