

**O**  
CAMRA  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE  
**TIMES**

February 2011

# Opening

THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

In association with



## Magnet is Local Pub of the Year 2011

more on page 11



Another Successful National Winter Ales  
Festival – but will it be Manchester’s last?  
More on page 13

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CAMRA  
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REAL ALE





The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for February is the Navigation at the top of Lancashire Hill in Stockport. Stuart Ballantyne went along.



It is almost ten years since Congleton's Beartown Brewery took on the lease of the Navigation. Luckily it is not owned by some faceless pub company but by the neighbouring Nelstrop's flour mill which towers over the white painted pub.

Beartown have had a variety of managers and tenants in that time and today it is run by Barry Harvey and Deborah Smith who have been there since November 2008. In that time they have turned around its fortunes by working hard, employing good staff and selling great beer.

Typically the beers on sale will include Beartown Kodiak Gold, Bearskinful, Bruins Ruin and Bear Ass. Barry also stocks a rotating guest beer which happened to be Beartown Ginger Ale when I visited.

The Navigation is a great community pub where friendly banter is the order of the day and where local people of all ages meet to discuss the finer points in life. The pub even has its own football team which meets regularly before and after games. The combination of an adult community pub, local rapport, good beer, friendly staff, great regulars and a good 'crack' have ensured that trade has increased to the extent that Barry is now looking to introduce an extra hand pump.

There was recent completely unfounded gossip in the area that the Navigation was closing and Barry and Deborah were upset enough to put notices around the area to quash this rumour. Opening Times fully support the couple not least because it is very important that the pub continues to thrive because of late the Heaton Norris area has been blighted with pub closures. The list of closures is as long as your arm so any pub that has survived in this area has to be doing something special.

Barry and Deborah have turned around a pub that had lost its way into a pub that is now one of the very best locals in the area. So great is the improvement, that the award of CAMRA pub of the month is now long overdue.

So why not join CAMRA to celebrate the award which will be presented to Barry and Deborah on Thursday 24th February. The celebrations will begin from about 8:00pm. Make sure that you arrive early because the pub is bound to be busy.



The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 140 years. Check out their advert on this page.

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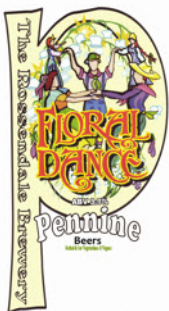
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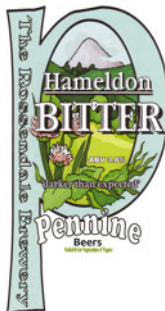


*The Griffin Inn, 84-86, Hud Rake,  
Haslingden, Rossendale, Lanc's BB4 5AF  
Contact Geoff or Shane on: 01706 21 40 21*



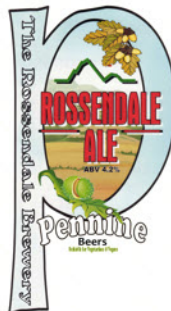
**Floral Dance**  
3.6%

A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!



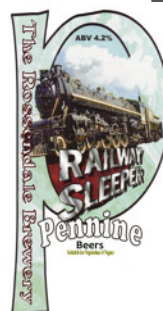
**Hameldon Bitter**  
3.8%

An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.



**Rossendale Ale**  
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**Railway Sleeper**  
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**Pitch Porter**  
5%

A full bodied, rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and an obvious roast barley dominance.



**Sunshine**  
5.3%

A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy.

**Our ales can all be sampled at The Griffin, Haslingden;  
The Railway, Portwood Stockport or The Sportsman, Hyde.**



## COMMENT, NOTES & CONTENTS

### Opening Times – Comment

Well, the National Winter Ales Festival has come and gone. Possibly gone for good – but we'll know more on that score in early March. Suffice it to say that if this year's event was a swansong for the Greater Manchester branches of CAMRA then we went out in some style. Bigger and better than ever said the poster and it certainly was.

All credit to organisers Graham Donning and Peter Alexander and their large team for something of a triumph. Something of a triumph, too, for Marble Brewery and their silver placing in the Champion Winter Beer competition. Well done to all concerned. Meanwhile the local pub and beer scene goes from strength to strength (despite the continuing closure of marginal, largely non-cask pubs). Manchester's Port Street Beer House could be something of a landmark, I think, while new breweries are imminent at both the Poynton Royal British Legion and in central Stockport, where the Quantum Brewery will be with us before long. It's going to be an interesting year.

### 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. 7,200 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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**Copy Date for the March issue is Saturday 12 February.**

**Contributors to this issue:** John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Andy Jenkinson, Dave Hallows, Jim Flynn, Mike Rose, Mark McConachie, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Dave Burston, Stuart Ballantyne.

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# What's On

## Your guide to CAMRA events across the region

Local CAMRA branches organise regular events in pubs across the region – members of other branches & general public are welcome to attend except some Branch business meetings (contact branch contact if in doubt). Organising branch in brackets.

### February

**Thursday 10th** – Social: Pendle Witch, Warburton Place, Atherton. From 8pm. (NM)

**Saturday 12th** – Handforth Pub Crawl including Bull's Head, Freemasons and Railway. (MEC)

**Monday 14th** – February Branch Meeting and Spring Pub of the Season Award: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

**Friday 18th** – Cale Green & Higher Hillgate Stagger: 7.30pm Adswold Hotel, Adswold Lane West; 8.30 Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley (SSM)

**Thursday 17th** – Ashton-on-Mersey Social: 8pm Plough; 9.30pm Buck (TRH)

**Saturday 19th** – Trip to Outstanding Brewery, Bury. Meet 1pm at Art Picture House (Wetherspoons); 2pm at the brewery. Cost is £10 for brewery trip. Book with Roger Wood or contact branch. (TRH)

**Thursday 24th** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Navigation, Heaton Norris. From 8pm. (SSM)

### March

**Tuesday 1st** – Two pub City Centre social: Castle Hotel, Oldham St, 8pm; Wheatsheaf, Oak St, 9pm. (NM)

**Friday 4th** – Mild Magic Stagger: 7.30pm Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris; 8.30 Navigation, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris (top Lancashire Hill) (SSM)

**Friday 4th** – Congleton Pub Crawl (finishing at Beer Festival) (MEC)

**Saturday 5th** – Pub of the Year presentation to the Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport. From 8pm (SSM)

### Your Local CAMRA Branches:

**SSM: Stockport & South Manchester** [www.ssmcamra.org.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.org.uk)

Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356, [mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk](mailto:mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk)

**NM – North Manchester** [www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk](http://www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk)

Contact: Dave Hallows 07983 94492, [davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk)

**HPNC – High Peak & North Cheshire** [www.hpneccamra.org.uk](http://www.hpneccamra.org.uk)

Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517, [mikewrose@gmail.com](mailto:mikewrose@gmail.com)

**MEC – Macclesfield & East Cheshire** [www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

Contact Tony Icke 01625 861833, [contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

**TRH – Trafford & Hulme** [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)

Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976, [enquiries@thcamra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thcamra.org.uk)

### CAMRA Branch Business Meetings

**Thursday 10th** – Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport. **Selections for 2012 Good Beer Guide will be made at this meeting.** Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Monday 14th** – Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar - held in conjunction with Pub of the Season Award- see above. (HPNC)

**Wednesday 16th** - New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

**Wednesday 23rd** - Good Beer Guide 2012 Selection meeting & vote: Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 7pm. (NM)

**Thursday 24th** – Volunteer, Cross St, Sale. Good Beer Guide selection meeting – your chance to vote for Good Beer Guide 2012. All members welcome. Starts 8pm. (TRH)

# Bottle Shop Now Open at Hornbeam Brewery.



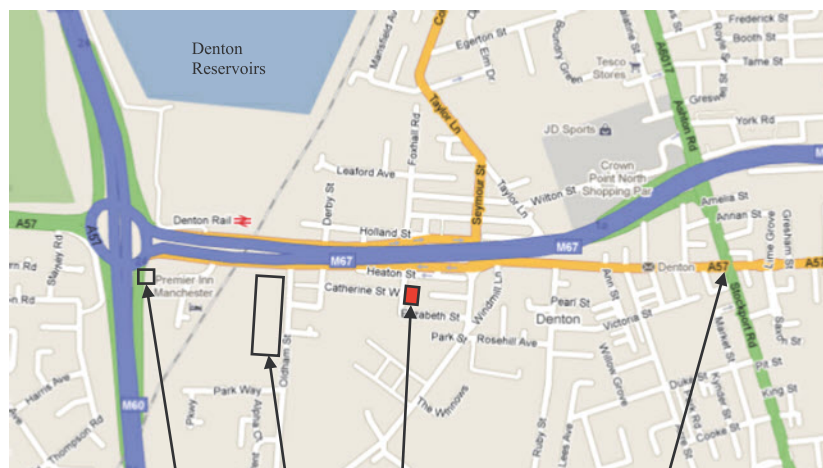
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### Opening Times

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# Stagger...

## Withington With Dave Burston

This stagger was a bit shorter than usual, with only five real-ale pubs. It ought to have been six or seven, but shortly before the day of the stagger we found out that the **Cotton Tree** on Cotton Lane had recently closed and was to be demolished (see December's OT). This, plus the lack of cask ale in one of the bars that formerly sold it, reduced the number of pubs we sampled the beers in to five.

The starting-point was the **Old House at Home** on Burton Road, an L-shaped pub with the older leg of the L containing the bar and the newer leg largely given over to food tables. A sign outside announces that food is served every day until 9 pm, so there was quite a food emphasis amongst the other clientele when we met there at 7.30, but in spite of this the pub has the feel of a community local, and there was still plenty of room for drinkers in the older end of the pub, where we sat. We sampled the two beers on offer, Greene King IPA and the same brewery's St Edmunds (a golden beer). There were also three hand-pumps not in use, with clips turned round for those other GK regulars Old Speckled Hen and Abbot and for a guest beer. Most of us sampled the St Edmunds and found it OK to good; the one person who tried the IPA found it just OK.

The theme of the night that emerged was the memory of some closed and demolished pubs, all lost in the last 20 years, even in this relatively prosperous area of Manchester. I've already mentioned the Cotton Tree, and on the way to the second pub we passed a reminder of another lost pub, The **Waterloo Hotel**, demolished in the 1990s to make way for a housing development called Brigadier Close. A plaque at the entrance to the Close explains that it is named after a famous greyhound, Brigadier, who belonged to the owner of the pub in the late 19th century and won the Waterloo Cup.



The next pub still standing was **The Orion**. This is a street-corner Holts house, with a fairly basic lounge bar and a small separate vault at the side with its own entrance. On previous staggers this pub has gained a reputation for being - shall we say - a bit too lively for comfort? Tonight though the lounge bar was relatively quiet, except for some piped music playing fairly loud but not uncomfortably

so. The beers available were Holts Bitter (£1.96) and Thunder Holt (£1.50): the bitter, which was changed when we arrived, was fairly good, but the Thunder Holt, even at that price, was deemed a little tired.

Cutting through the back streets of Withington, we passed the site of the former Katy Daly's (not much lamented) on Copson Street, and headed for the main road, Wilmslow Road, where we briefly checked out the **Albert** pub and **Fuel** café-bar - both still resolutely keg-only. This led us to probably the best pub of the night, the **Victoria**. This Hydes house had a major refurbishment in August 2010, turning it into one of Hydes' flagship cask ale houses, with up to eight hand-pumped beers on at any one time. Tonight we were not disappointed, finding three Hydes beers (Original Bitter, Owd Oak and Vic's Fix) and four guests: Marble Brew W90, Wadworth Swordfish, Fuller's Chiswick Bitter and Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted. No one tried the Hydes Bitter or the 6% Vic's Fix (a house beer), but all the others were tried and rated pretty good to very good, the most popular being the Marble beer.



Across the road, the **Solomon Grundy** café-bar once had a cask offering, but sadly it seems to have deserted the fold in recent months, although the hand-pump is still present on the bar so there's always hope for a revival. As we walked back south down Wilmslow Road, past the vacant site where the cinema used to be, we came to the imposing Grade 2 listed building that used to be the **White Lion** (and for a while the Withington Ale House), boarded up for several years now, and destined to be turned into flats with a Sainsburys Local below. So, ironically, alcohol will be sold there again, but this time for consumption strictly off the premises.

The penultimate pub on the stagger was the **Turnpike**, which was recently added to CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors by virtue of its unspoilt 1960s interior - see December's OT for more details. It's a classic two-room pub layout with the public bar on the left and the lounge on the



right. Both rooms have impressive fireplaces and there is a padded bar counter in the lounge, where we sat while we sampled the beer and chatted with the landlord, a cask ale enthusiast. As this is a Sam Smith's house, only one cask beer was available, their Old Brewery Bitter, but at £1.46 this was the cheapest beer of the night and was rated pretty good. Until about a year ago, only the keg version was available here, so it is to the landlord's credit that the conversion was made.

And so to the **Red Lion**, the oldest pub in Withington (also grade 2 listed) and the final one on our stagger. There were once three Lions in the village: the White Lion has already been mentioned, and there was also a Golden Lion a little further down the road (renamed the Manor House for a while); this was demolished several years ago and its site is still awaiting redevelopment - yet another reminder of a recently lost pub. Anyway, back to the Red Lion. From the outside, this looks like a typical old village pub. The inside, however, I have heard described as 'soulless', which I think is a bit harsh. If you enter from the front, as we did, rather than from the car park, you still get an impression of how it must have been once, with low beams, a small bar and small rooms



to the right and left, although the right-hand one has been opened out somewhat. But venture further in, and you find yourself in a large open-plan space with several TV screens (switched off on this occasion), split-level seating areas and a larger L-shaped bar. An equally large conservatory at the back completes the layout inside, but behind the pub there is also a bowling green with extensive outdoor seating around it, making this a very popular pub in summer. This being a November evening, though, we took our places in the small room to the left at the front and sampled the beers, which were Marston's Burton Bitter, Marston's Pedigree, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Jennings Cumberland. All were on reasonably good form, with the Hobgoblin getting the highest scores.

And so ended another stagger. All the pubs on it could probably be described as community locals, with the possible exception of the Red Lion, which is also a destination pub, but does have its share of regulars too. The best beer of the night was in the Victoria, but the standard was pretty good throughout. But, as always, these are only the impressions and opinions of a small group of people on one night of the year, so it's up to you to try these pubs and see what you think.

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### Schooner to be Launched

**T**HE government has announced that, following a consultation, they are going to permit the use of two-thirds pint measures, often referred to as "schooners", in pubs and bars. While it is currently legal to serve a third of a pint "nip", it isn't legal to put two in the same glass. This apparently innocuous move has led to a wave of ill-informed and prejudiced comment.

It's not going to lead to the demise of the pint, as there will be no requirement to drop pints, and the pint will undoubtedly remain as the standard beer measure in pubs. It won't result in higher prices, as pubs will continue to price beer by the pint and presumably price smaller measures pro-rata as they currently do with halves. It isn't a bureaucratic imposition, as it is in fact allowing something that was previously illegal, so it is a measure of liberalisation. Far from representing creeping metrication, it doesn't correspond to any standard metric measure and indeed reinforces the traditional system by introducing a brand new Imperial size. And no pub or bar will be forced to offer schooners if they don't want to.

It's easy to foresee this new measure being taken up enthusiastically by specialist beer pubs, which may have several stronger beers on tap, and where customers will want to sample a wide range of brews. But its potential appeal will spread much wider than that, to women, drivers and indeed anyone who just wants to have "a beer" but for whom a pint on that occasion is too much. While some women are happy to drink pints, many others find pint glasses inelegant and unwieldy. On the other hand, for drinkers of both sexes, half-pints often just seem too small and have an image of being something of a distress purchase.

This is a sensible move to give drinkers more choice and it would be a shame if it ended up running onto the rocks because of pigheaded resistance to change.

### Not My Round

**G**OVERNMENT adviser Richard Thaler, co-author of the influential book "Nudge", has suggested that, to try to discourage "binge-drinking", people shouldn't buy drinks in rounds if they're going to have more than a couple, but instead groups should set up a tab and settle it at the end of the evening. While the round-buying system may occasionally pressurise people into drinking more than they ideally want to, I can't honestly see it as a major factor in increasing overall consumption, and if anything may just as easily lead to a party drinking at the pace of the slowest. Few ordinary pubs are likely to be willing to set up a tab anyway, and even if they did it would tend to lead to arguments at closing time over who had drunk what, not to mention being completely unsuited to visiting a number of pubs in the course of an evening.

This is yet another example of pointing the finger at pubs when they certainly can't be held exclusively responsible for our supposed drink-related problems. It's a naïve, Puritanical throwback to the days of Lloyd George in the First World War, when the "treating" of others was outlawed, even to the extent of banning a husband buying one for his wife. Buying rounds of drinks is a friendly and sociable custom that maximises the efficiency of bar service and is something that has become an integral part of British pub culture.

Curmudgeon Online: [www.curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com](http://www.curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com)

[www.bollingtonbrewing.co.uk](http://www.bollingtonbrewing.co.uk)

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# Pub News

Openings and closures are in the news this month, starting with....

## Port Street Beer House

THIS eagerly awaited City Centre pub opened its doors to the public on Thursday 27 January and has proved to be an immediate hit.

Taking its inspiration from Leeds' North Bar and London's Rake, the **Port Street Beer House** is the brainchild of the team behind the increasingly busy **Common** on Edge Street in the Northern Quarter but will operate on a much bigger scale.

Situated just around the corner

from former cask ale flagship the **Crown & Anchor** (Hilton Street) and a few minutes from Manchester icon the **Jolly Angler** (Great Ducie Street) the **Port Street Beer House** will drag the Northern Quarter's burgeoning beer scene a few hundred yards south - but it will be worth the journey.

It's an impressive conversion of old commercial premises with the well stocked bar on the ground floor and a spacious "saloon" upstairs. The décor is a pleasing mix of modern and traditional. The presence of some fixed seating will please the traditionalists while the use of refurbished G-Plan furniture adds a pleasing retro touch.

However it's what's on (and behind) the bar that is key here. Pride of place goes to the five handpumps – three are respectively reserved for the products of Thornbridge, Dark Star and Prospect breweries while the other two will feature changing guest beers. Thus on opening night customers were faced with the choice of Prospect Hop Vine, Thornbridge Chiron, Brew Dog 5amSaint, Acorn Gorlovka and Dark Star MM Special Porter.

These are accompanied by 14 "craft keg" beers on tap which run the gamut from locally brewed Moravka lager to German wheat beer and American specialities (Sierra Nevada have two pumps – one for their classic Pale Ale and the other dubbed 'Sierra Nevada Guest').

On top of that there is the bottled range. Currently this runs to 70 varieties and will increase to 150. The accent is likely to be on American imports but there are also to be beers from Europe (Italian micros are already represented) and the UK.

Food is currently crisps and nuts but a fuller menu will follow once the kitchen is ready.



Opening hours are 4pm-midnight Monday to Friday, and 12-12 Saturday and Sunday.

Make no mistake this is a major development on the Manchester beer scene. It might not be for every pub goer out there but for those drinkers (and there are a rapidly growing number) who appreciate the whole concept of "craft beer" from both the UK and around the world, it will be a magnet.

## More City Openings

WHILE something of a buzz was developing around the Port Street Beer House, there have been two other significant additions to the City Centre's cask ale scene.

Firstly, behind a fairly anonymous door at 50A Bridge Street, a flight of stone steps will take you down to the two while tiled rooms that make up the **Gas Lamp**.

The cellar of the old Wood Street Mission has been carefully restored with huge fireplaces, exposed joists and archways all adding to the character of what has something of the feel of an American speakeasy from the Prohibition period. It's a project by Nick Greenhalgh, who used to manage the Northern Quarter's Bay House, and Ryan Thomas, who owns the Art of Tea, and they seem to have a success on their hands. It's certainly been busy every time OT has called.

On the beer front there is a small but well chosen range of bottled beers (including Watou's Wit, arguably the best wheat beer made in Belgium) along with currently one handpump selling a changing guest beer (Boggart's Ray of Sunshine last time we called in) but sales of cask have proved so successful that two more handpumps are to go in shortly. Well worth a visit.

Meanwhile across town, the Gay Village has spawned a new, and rather impressive, bar-cum-pub. This is the **Molly House** on Richmond Street (just around the corner from the Rembrandt). There has been a bar in the basement of this building for some years but now the ground and upper floors have also been taken into use as licensed premises.

Upstairs at the Molly House is a venue called 'The Bordello' but the beery interest is on the ground floor 'Tea Room'. While you can indeed have tea and cakes if you wish, there



is plenty on the bar of interest for the beer drinker.

There are no fewer than five handpumps on the bar – one dispenses Caledonian Deuchars IPA, one is for a cask Westons cider and the other three sell beers from Beartown Brewery – Black Bear, Ginger Bear and Kodiak Gold. It certainly seems to be selling, too, as condition has been very good on the couple of times that OT has called.

## Ye Olde Woolpack

STOCKPORT also had a very welcome reopening last year – **Ye Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway, a pub that many had written off as a permanent closure.

After a few false starts *Opening Times* finally dropped in last

month and chatted with owner Mike Quinn. This really is a good news story as the pub is now going great guns. The former lunchtime trade from the nearby Co-op Bank has been fully restored (and with the tempting and well-priced menu with both set dishes and daily specials, that is hardly surprising) but more importantly, the pub is building a significant evening trade, something that eluded it in the past.

Of note is the Monday Cider Club when the wide range of ciders and perries is sold at a reduced price, and a series of promotions with Pure Radio. This will involve a series of themed live music nights at the pub on Sundays that will then be edited and broadcast on Mondays.

Of course the wide range of cider and perry is the pub's USP, and is proving extremely popular, with traditional yet accessible offerings from Broadoak and Gwynt y Ddraig making up the range (with free tasters for cider newcomers). Beer drinkers aren't overlooked though. The four handpumps are to increase in number to seven and Mike is confident that interest in and turnover of the cask is more than sufficient to justify this move. When we called the cask beers were from Rossendale and Moorhouses, with guests from Bank Top and Titanic to come.

It's great to see this pub up and running again, and proving such an instant success. With Mike it's always a case of onwards and upwards so we are sure there will be even further developments in the pipeline. Highly recommended.





# The Magnet - Local Pub of the Year 2011

## Hare & Hounds on Top

LICENSEE Guy Marsh at the Hare and Hounds, Marple Bridge has come out on top having won the award for Robinsons' best kept bar and cellar in a closely contested competition. Customers packed the pub at Mill Brow to see him receive his award.

With a total score of 300 points to play for Guy secured a hugely impressive 296%. This builds on his award credentials of having come third in 2009 and being named as most improved in 2008. In the final round of judging there were just two points between the top three contestants. But with the dedicated team at the Hare and Hounds putting in a near perfect performance they just pipped the opposition to the post.



On the night Guy said: "Winning this competition is a real coup for us. I would like to thank my team of staff for the tremendous work they do and our customers for all of their support."

As part of the well attended evening a presentation was made to Guy by Director Oliver Robinson who said: "The competition is all about raising standards and demonstrating why cask conditioned ale is the only sector of growth in the beer industry. Guy and his staff have excelled in this challenge with a beautiful pub where customers show their appreciation for good food and drink."

## Now for the Bad News

DESPITE our welcome news of new pubs and reopenings, the local pub trade continues to be hit by closures and demolitions. However in common with recent trends the closures remain concentrated in pubs that have either sold little or no cask ales.

In Bredbury the **Cherry Tree** is closed and for sale / to let. No cask beer has been sold there for years. A late in the day conversion has been unable to save the **Ash** in Heaton Chapel from closure. This is permanent we understand and the pub faces demolition - a variety of rumours abound as to what use the site will be put.



Not yet closed but destined for the chop if the proposed Sainsbury's development comes off are the **Queens** and the **Railway**, Portwood. The Queens is a Robinsons house and of course the Railway is a long time favourite of local beer (and cider) fans. Licensee Sue Hitchen is however very upbeat - not only is there no formal planning permission in place yet but she is very confident indeed that she will find a replacement pub within walking distance of the Railway. Watch this space.

In North Reddish the long closed **Bulls Head** has been knocked down. This now leaves the **Fir Tree** as the last pub trading in that part of town. Last on the bad news front - last December's Hillgate Stagger dropped into the **Bowling Green** on Charles Street and discovered that cask beer was no longer on sale. This has been a long time real ale outlet so the loss of the cask is something of a mystery.

## But It's Not all Doom and Gloom

Two closed pubs have new owners. In Stockport town centre the **Thatched House** on Churchgate has been sold at auction. We don't know who has bought it but we are told that it will reopen as a pub. The new owners of the **George & Dragon** in Cheadle are the Dornier Pub Company who will be spending a fair amount on the pub. No news yet of when it is planned to reopen but we think there is a good chance that cask ale may feature when it does.

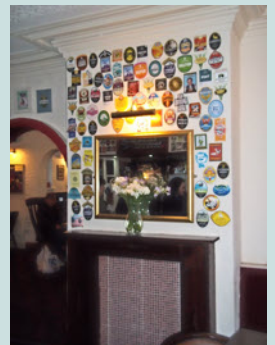
Finally, in Manchester City Centre **Alibi** on Oxford Street (formerly the Varsity) has been rebranded as a Smith & Jones outlet by owners Barracuda. This has brought cask ale in its wake - more next time.

## Triumph for Local Free House

THERE is always a strong field when it comes to the vote for the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year. The winner is selected from the 12 previous Pubs of the Month and with such a large number of excellent pubs in the area even getting to that stage can be a hard fought battle. This year however there was a clear winner - the Magnet on Wellington Road North, Stockport.

So, why such a conclusive win? Let's go back to Friday 13 2009. This might not be the most auspicious date on which to open a pub but this seems to have been the exception that proves the rule. This was the date that the Magnet became a multi-beer free house and since then it has not looked back, becoming a firm favourite amongst the town's cask ale fans.

The Magnet was a former Wilson's pub that had drifted into pub company ownership and over the years gave the impression of slightly losing its way. Real ale was still sold but the choice and quality often disappointed - at least to those who called in on various Staggers over the years. So, news that it had been bought by Ian Watts who along with former business partner Steve Alexander had established his reputation at the nearby Crown on Heaton Lane, was greeted with much excitement and expectation.



Suffice it to say that since opening day those expectations have been more than fulfilled. The pub is run by Lesley and Lee Watts along with Sarah Bergin, of Cellar Rat fame. There are 13 cask beers on handpump along with a changing real cider on the 14th pump. In the cabinets behind the bar is a small, but growing, range of bottled beers from Germany, Belgium and the USA, with some real gems among them - check out the Anchor and Flying Dog beers amongst others..

The pub remains a work in progress. The latest development was the opening of the upstairs function room last autumn - the high class finish and real fire has already made it a popular venue for meetings and socials. Comedy nights are also being planned. Outside is an excellent decked area that will come into its own in the summer.



Still to come are the catering kitchen which will enable the pub to sell lunchtime food, and a brewery in the cellar, which will be the home of both Cellar Rat and Flightpath ales. Both of these will be in place by the end of the year.

This award will be presented on the night of Saturday 5 March when a good turnout is certain. The Magnet is on the main A6 so is well served by buses, notably the 192.

## Royal Oak, Didsbury is Runner-Up

WHILE there can only be one winner, this year's runner-up is an iconic South Manchester pub - the Royal Oak on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury.

As our Pub of the Month article put it, this pub is famous for its cheese and pate lunches, great beer and a rather eventful history. These days the pub is in the capable hands of Jim Garrow and Karen Fletcher whose expert touch has seen this Marston's house regain its old glories. Marston's Bitter remains the best seller and is accompanied by Pedigree and other beers from the Marston's range.





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# National Winter Ales Review and Round-Up



# Peveril of the Peak 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Award



## Crowds Flock to Sheridan Suite

LAST month's National Winter Ales Festival proved to be another huge success. Hosted by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, and held at Manchester's Sheridan Suite, a record crowd of almost 8,500 people flocked down Oldham Road to sample the huge range of beers on offer.

There were rave reviews from many attendees from both the brewing industry and general public alike. Typical was the following from Sue Chandler who journeyed from Worcester:

*We enjoyed the experience so very much – Thank You. We saw the festival promoted in our local CAMRA publication for Worcestershire called Pint Taken. Very glad we decided to visit Manchester from Great Malvern. We stayed at the Old Trafford Lodge by the cricket ground. Looking forward to next year already. The ales we tried were wonderful. Many thanks again to all involved.*

The highlight of the Festival is of course the judging for the Champion Winter Beer of Britain, announced on Wednesday afternoon. There were four preliminary judging panels covering Old Ales & Strong Milds, Stout, Porter and Strong Ale & Barley Wine. And the winners of these individual categories were:

**Old Ale / Strong Mild** – Marble Chocolate

**Stout** - Hop Back Entire Stout

**Porter** - Dow Bridge Praetorian Porter

**Strong Ale / Barley Wine** – Holdens Old Ale

These went on to the final judging and the winning beer was Hop Back Entire Stout with Chocolate Marble in a very creditable second place. The 4.5% ABV Entire Stout from Salisbury based Hop Back Brewery is described in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as "a rich, dark stout with a strong roasted malt flavour and a long, sweet and malty aftertaste. A beer suitable for vegans" Steve Wright, Hop Back Brewing Director and Head Brewer (pictured right) elated to hear of the brewery's success. He said:



*"This is obviously fantastic news! Entire Stout has been a very successful beer for the brewery in both draught and bottle-conditioned form and to win this national CAMRA award will only encourage more real ale lovers to give it a try. We now look forward to Champion Beer of Britain competition in August."*

The Marble team (pictured right – head brewer James Campbell, owner Jan Rodgers and brewer Colin Stronge) were equally pleased as this is the highest award won by Marble Brewery. "We're over the moon", James told Opening Times. "We all just went along for a drink and came away with a gong! It's just great news."



As well as the national judging, the festival's customers were asked to vote for their favourite beer and cider. The 'People's Choice' for Beer of the Festival was won by Kitty Wilkinson, a superb chocolate and vanilla stout produced by the Liverpool Organic Brewery. This only just beat Matron's Delight, a fantastic 8% ABV imperial stout from Bury's Outstanding Brewery, and brewed in conjunction with Festival Staffing Officer Margaret Corlett (don't worry if you missed that, we have a cask reserved for Stockport Beer Festival). On the cider bar, the winner was Westcroft Janet's Jungle Juice, a serial award winner these days.

So, here's to next year. But where will it be held? Derby CAMRA have also bid to stage the Festival – CAMRA's National Executive will be making its decision in the first weekend of March.

## Forty Not-Out for Nancy

TUESDAY 25th January saw landlady Nancy Swanick rack up 40 years tenure at The Peveril of The Peak, Great Bridgewater Street (initially with her late husband Thomas, more recently ably assisted by son Maurice). CAMRA marked this unique occasion with a special presentation evening.

The pub was filled with a mixture of regulars, CAMRA members from across the region and a large contingent of the Swanick family who flew in from Ireland especially for the occasion. In the Peveril's historic and unspoiled multi-room interior things were a little hectic as all & sundry tried to squeeze into the pub's "back room" for a view of the presentations.

The evening kicked off with the presentation of Trafford & Hulme branch's Winter Pub Of The Season award to cellarman Maurice before moving on to the main event.



Branch chair Beverley Gobbett holding the mirror

Branch chair Beverley Gobbett holding the mirror

To mark Nancy's 25th Anniversary in 1996 she was presented with a silver salver by the brewery. For the 40th, CAMRA wanted to go one better so commissioned CAMRA member Colin "The Pewterscribe" Lilley to produce a hand engraved pub mirror. From the depths of his workshop he found a vintage 1954 shield shaped mirror, perfect for a pub approaching two hundred years old, and set to work.

The result was a stunning piece of work that left Nancy & Maurice speechless. A line drawing of the pub engraved from the rear dominates the centre of the mirror, with the inscription below reading "Presented to Theresa Swanick to commemorate forty years as Licensee of The Peveril of the Peak". Theresa is of course Nancy's Sunday name, the name on the licence and the name over the door.

The result was a stunning piece of work that left Nancy & Maurice speechless. A line drawing of the pub engraved from the rear dominates the centre of the mirror, with the inscription below reading "Presented to Theresa Swanick to commemorate forty years as Licensee of The Peveril of the Peak". Theresa is of course Nancy's Sunday name, the name on the licence and the name over the door.

Trafford & Hulme branch would like to thank the other branches of CAMRA Greater Manchester for the assistance with the project.

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# High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood with Pubs News from High Peak & North East Cheshire CAMRA plus Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of the Peak District Pub scene

## High Peak Pub News With Frank Wood

The **Royal Oak** at the bottom of the Snake Pass at Glossop, added a fourth hand pump over the Christmas period. The line up now is Taylor's Landlord, Tetley Bitter, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Wells Bombardier. Black Sheep was previously one of three but is no longer featuring.

In Stalybridge, the **White House** re-opened recently and reports have come in that the Hydes pub has been refurbished by the brewery. Also guest beers are available and in the opening few weeks, beers from Allgates have been seen, Youngs Winter Ale has been the strong beer and plans are to try Marble beers among others alongside the staple Hydes

I called in the **Lounge** in Stalybridge, a place often missed by real ale drinkers, in mid January and as usual they were offering one real ale. However, expecting Thwaites Lancaster Bomber as normal, they had Taylor Landlord on offer. The barman confirmed that enough is sold to keep it in good condition and as usual I found that to be the case. Competing with Wetherspoons Society Rooms across the road, the beer is on sale at a competitive £1.85 pint.

At the **Rising Sun** on Manchester Road Mossley, ten hand pumps were all in use on my visit on 9th January. Local beers by Millstone, Shaws and Howard Town are in evidence here but I chose to try two pints of Brains Rev James on this occasion and it was in cracking form.

At the **Railway** in Greenfield on the same day, Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Wells Bombardier, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin and Millstone Tiger Rut were the four beers on sale. The Millstone, as a favourite of mine, was tried to much satisfaction. The pub was packed, with lots watching televised football. An added attraction on a Sunday afternoon is a Charity cheese board, with many cheeses to try on crackers, with donations in a pot for the chosen charity.

Note that on that day, the **Church Inn** further back towards the centre of Mossley remained firmly shut, so we called in at the **Stamford Arms** at Heyheads, where Nicole, the licensee from the Church has moved. Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, Wainwright and Thwaites Original were the three beers on sale, the Bomber being on very good form. Plenty of customers here as well, to show that well run, clean pubs offering a good selection of beers are still a great attraction despite the recent price rises.

In the **Kinder Lodge** at Hayfield, Taylors Bitter, unusual for the area, is still on sale. When I called in, there were only two beers in evidence, the other being Brains Rev James, and it was very good.

In Little Hayfield on New Years day, Taylors Landlord was joined by Hartington Bitter. Usually a beer from Howard Town is also on sale on the third handpump.

In the **Beehive** in New Mills, Storm beers are still the beers on offer, Ale Force and Hurricane Hubert on 4th January when we visited. The **Masons Arms** also in New Mills sells Unicorn, Hatters and Dizzy Blonde, which appears to be a favourite in there. **Chalkers Snooker Club**, in New Mills Newtown (near to the station of the same name), Theakstons Mild and Bitter were joined by Wychwood Yo Ho Ho (can't you tell it was just after Christmas!).

Finally, on a circular walk to Hollinsclough recently, via Chrome Hill from Longnor, we just had to call in the **Quiet Woman** at Earl Sterndale on the way back. Marston's Bitter and Pedigree were on as ever. A dark mild is always on sale here, the landlord Ken says he moves two to three firkins a week, which is great for a village pub.

## Winter Pub of the Season

The **Sportsman** in Hyde was presented with High Peak Branch Winter Pub of the Season last night Pictured are landlord Geoff and his wife Cangui ... and me, as I was told it was my turn!!



The Sportsman offers seven beers from Pennine Brewery, with Moorhouses Black Cat Mild and Wainwrights from Thwaites also on sale permanently. Periodic guest beers often appear and a cask cider is also on sale. In addition the pub offers authentic Cuban dishes in its upstairs restaurant as well as bar snacks. It is back to its former glories these days, after Geoff and Cangui returned to run it themselves some eighteen months ago

## Peak Practice With Robin Wignall

The pre-Christmas dining round with various groups has the advantage of visiting pubs which get missed out at other times of the year.

A small group of us sampled the culinary delights of the **Old Hall** in Buxton, across the road from the Opera House. Good portions of sensibly priced food were washed down with

good Buxton Spa bitter. A Whim beer and Taylor's Landlord were also available. It is a few years since I have been in the Buxton Old Hall, and this December experience suggests that more frequent visits are in order.

The **Beehive** at Combs still provides one of the best big group dining experiences that I know. In mid-December, a walking group of nearly 50 diners held its Christmas meal there. Menu choices were pre-ordered to help efficiency. Food arrives well cooked and on warm plates. Service is slick and plentiful, so that the whole group is served without delay. Copper Dragon Golden Pippin was in very good form. Also available was Courage Directors, brewed these days at the Wells/Young's brewery at Bedford. The Beehive is well worth a visit. If intending dining booking is recommended, even if there are only two or three of you. The food at the **Shady Oak**, Fernilee, makes this Marston's, still badged Jennings', house well worth a visit. I quite often comment favourably on the beer range and quality at the Shady, and the food also goes down well.

The **Old Hall** at Whitehough, Chinley held a very successful Christmas Fair in December. There were stalls selling seasonal goods and local produce. The minstrel gallery was used for live entertainment, including Chapel en le Frith Male Voice Choir. On the beer front, the usual pale, hoppy brews faced stiff competition from winter and Christmas beers. These included Phoenix Snowbound, Abbeydale Winter and Thornbridge Merrie. This last is a 5.9% brew with the right balance, i.e. not too much, of herbs and spices. The next main event at the Old Hall is the Winter Festival at the end of February.

I unfortunately missed the Christmas Market at the **Dog & Partridge** at Bridgemont. Seasonal beers were available to accompany the various attractions. I did catch a good pint of Cottage Polar Express a few days later. This was pale, hoppy and much less malty than some Cottage beers.

Seasonal beers were of course to be found in several pubs during December. Robinson's Mr. Scrooge had reached the **Crossings** in Furness Vale in early December, whilst a pin of Old Tom was stillaged behind the bar at the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge. The **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge served Bateman's Rosey Nosey, the beer that comes with a flashing pump clip.

Thwaites of Blackburn have been working hard to get their beers to a wider audience beyond their tied estate. Thwaites Wainwright has been on the Punch Finest Cask list and has been available at the **White Horse** and **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge. Wainwright has also reached the Enterprise estate, being in good form at the Dog & Partridge at Bridgemont. All of which makes for some interesting drinking.

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# Brewery News

## Hydes Craft Ales

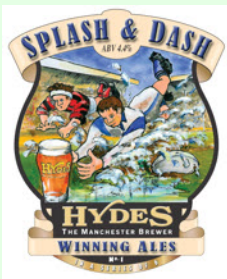
HYDES Brewery has announced its 2011 craft ale range which this year centres around sporting themes. The Brewery's 2011 Craft Ale range comprises of six distinctive quirkily named ales all produced under the headline 'Winning Ales from Hydes'. Each has an amusing, individually illustrated pump clip depicting different sports including rugby, horse racing, rowing and cricket.

The first in the series with an ABV of 4.4% is Splash & Dash, which has an image of a rugby player scoring a try with a pint of Hydes. This year's range follows hot on the heels of the success of the Circus themed range of 2010 which saw sales increase 12% year from last year.

David Safiruddin, Marketing Director at Hydes told *Opening Times* "Craft ales have seen a continued success in what has been another challenging year for the trade. Like many brewers we are seeing a pocket of buoyancy in the cask sector and undoubtedly customers enjoy trying new seasonal ales. This is our tenth consecutive quirky range, and as before we hope that they will add a bit of fun and interest to many a bar top around the country."

The Hydes Craft Ale Portfolio for 2011 consists of the following:

Jan – Feb 2011 Splash & Dash - ABV 4.4%  
Mar – Apr 2011 Amazing Grace - ABV 4.1%  
May – Jun 2011 Ship Shape - ABV 4.2%  
Jul – Aug 2011 Swift Delivery - ABV 4%  
Sep – Oct 2011 Thirst Aid - ABV 4.3%  
Nov – Dec 2011 Golden Drop - ABV 4.5%

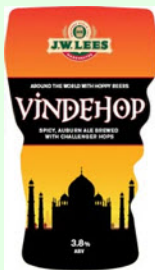


## Lees Seasonals

INSPIRED by Phileas Fogg, Head Brewer, Michael Lees-Jones, set out to create four new beers all brewed with strong hop characteristics with different hops from all over the world.

The range starts with Vindehop (3.8%), a new beer with Challenger, Bramling Cross and Perle brewed to accompany the spiciest of curries. This will be followed with Liberty (4.1%) brewed with Liberty and Mount Hood hops, from the USA.

Next we move on with a detour that Phileas Fogg failed to make on his legendary world tour with the German inspired Hopmeister (3.6%) in time for the Oktoberfest and which is brewed with Willamette and Celeia hops before ending the year with Rising Sun (4%) and a new beer brewed with Galena and Brewer's Gold.



In addition to these four seasonal beers 2011 will mark the UK return after 100 years of Manchester Star at 6.5% ABV. Manchester Star has been exported to the USA by JW Lees over the last three years to great acclaim.

## Micro Brewery News

It's not quite all change at **Marble Brewery** but in December the brewery said goodbye to Dominic Driscoll who along with Colin Stronge and head brewer James Campbell made up the brewing team.

There was a small send off at the brewery attended by friends and fellow brewers. Pictured here (from left to right) are Colin, Joe Allsopp (Whim Brewery), Dominic, Janine Shorrock (Ashover Brewery), Slawek Minchkowski (Marble), James, and Richard Hough (Blue Beer Brewery)



Dom's parting brew was the 5.2% Driscoll's End, bursting with huge hoppy flavours. He is being replaced by Slawek (pictured above), Rich Andrew and Rob Hamilton, who are already familiar faces at the brewery and Marble Arch pub.

**Boggart Brewery** – continue to score a big success with the Micro Bar in the Arndale Market which, apart from Boggart and other guest cask ales, also sells an increasingly impressive range of bottled beers both from the UK and overseas. A recent cask beer from Boggart was Bitter Blue (5%) a pale and hoppy beer. At least one new beer was planned for February but details had yet to be finalised when we contacted the brewery.

**Hornbeam Brewery** – the shop at the brewery is proving very successful and Hornbeam are also aiming to getting their bottled beers listed by online retailer mybrewerytap.com. New for February will be an as yet unnamed 4% dark mild.

Chorlton's **Bootleg Brewery** still on a learning curve and so popular are the beers that they have run out a couple of times. For the time being they are sticking with three core beers before adding any more to the range. These are Contraband (4.5%) a pale, dry, hoppy, citrusy IPA style beer; Lawless (4.7%) - crystal malts make this beer slightly sweeter

on the palate and give it a darker, golden colour; and Black Market a 4.7% dark.

**Flightpath Ales** - January has been a hard month for Flightpath Ales but they are beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel



again. Having had two knock backs earlier this month they were able to offer three beers at the Bent 'n Bongs beer festival. 'Tornado', 'Harrier' and 'Defiant' ales were all sold out by Saturday lunchtime. The latter two were brewed with help from Flightpath's new friends at Limestone brewery in Stone. Brian and Valerie had good feedback from people they have never met before! They were even given a suggestion of a brewery who may offer them availability but would prefer to brew locally (so if anyone can help them out please contact Flightpath c/o the Magnet). Once the brewery is installed at the Magnet (hopefully by the end of March) there should be more news.

**Phoenix Brewery** in Heywood always has something interesting coming up. Not much new for February, although look out for Massacre (4.5%) and next month there will be March Hare (4.4%) and Shamrock (4.3%) to try.

Out in Mossley, **Millstone Brewery** is still very busy, so much so that nothing new is in the immediate pipeline. However a new beer, still in the design stage, is being planned for March.

Now – news of another new brewery for the area. At long last (there have been vague reports and rumours for some time), this month will see the **Worth Brewing Co** come on stream at Poynton Royal British Legion, making it one of the very few clubs in the country to have an on-site brewery. The only other one that comes to mind is that at the wonderfully named Concertina Band Club near Doncaster.

The five barrel plant was salvaged from the Tap 'n' Tin brewpub in Chatham, Kent where it had apparently lain unused since brewing ceased there in mid-2000. However Worth's head brewer to be Paul Hession tells us that it scrubbed up a treat and is now installed and ready to go.

The beer range is still in the development stage but Paul tells us that the aim will be to brew what the Legion's customers like to drink - which is accented to the pale and hoppy. Paul however likes fuller bodied beer so a full portfolio of brews is planned, although the brewery is likely to launch with two pale session beers in the 3.8% to 3.9% range. Sales won't be restricted to the club though so the beers should be out and about in the local free trade. OT will be paying Worth Brewing a visit when everything is up and running so look out for a full report in a future issue.

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# of Two Halves

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12/10

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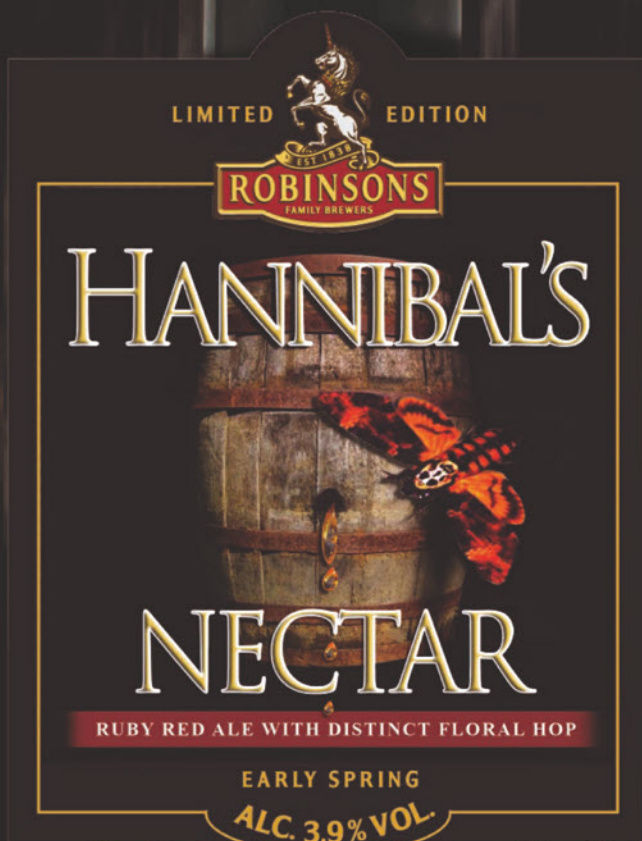
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