

December 2011

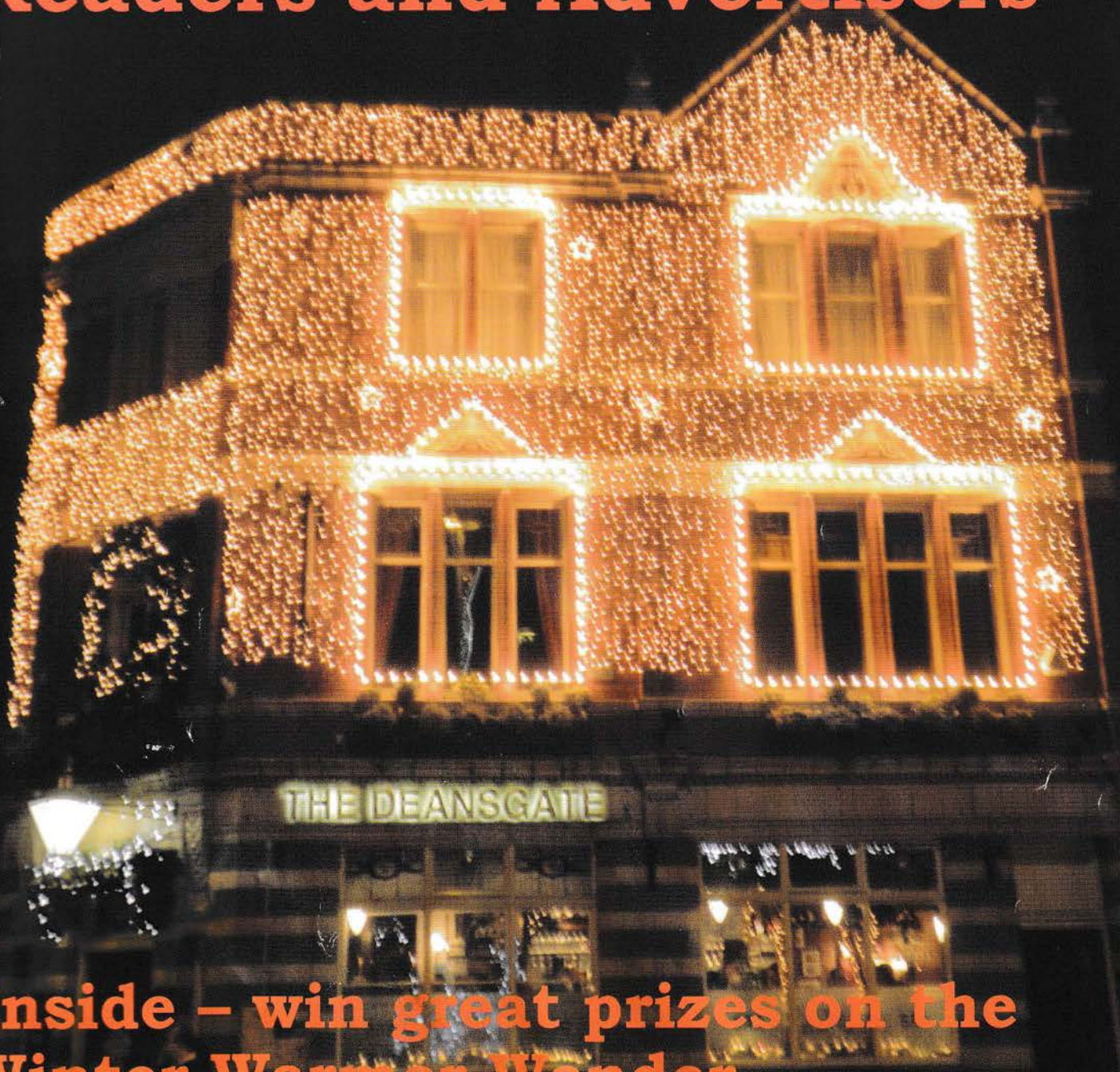
O
TIMES



Opening
THE FREE CAMRA REGIONAL MAGAZINE

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

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Readers and Advertisers**



**Inside – win great prizes on the
Winter Warmer Wander.
Full details on page 15**



Regional Pub of the Year 2011

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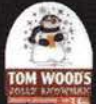


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Pub OF THE Month AWARD



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for December 2011 is the Paramount on Oxford Street in Manchester City Centre. Jim Flynn reports.



THIS very busy Wetherspoons pub while buzzing with conversation and life has a more relaxed ambiance than the frenetic atmosphere found in many other city centre pubs. Around the walls are old photos of theatres and cinemas from Manchester's old theatre land in the vicinity of the pub (from which it derives its name) and aptly it is very handy today for many modern day venues. The pub is extremely pro CAMRA supporting all our local campaigns such as Mild Magic and the Winter Warmer Wander but it takes more than all this no doubt positive stuff however to make a pub of the month.

So what has led to this award and what makes the Paramount different from many other Wetherspoon's pubs? The answer is clear; what really gives it an edge is the passion the managers and staff have for their cask beers. When early in 2006 real ale enthusiasts Mark and Natalie Hodgson moved from the Wye Bridge House in Buxton to take over as the management team at the Paramount they set about improving the cask beer sales and they have succeeded in a massive way, making the pub a Good Beer Guide fixture for the last four editions.

Gone are the days when you can't find anybody behind the bar who knows anything about the beers on sale, its staff are well trained and customer orientated. Above all, although the number and variety of beers (and now ciders) available has increased considerably over the years, the quality is always of the highest standard. It always has beers from local micros as well as ales from further afield, all in excellent condition and all at Wetherspoon's bargain prices. Mention a new up and coming beer to Mark and lo and behold the next day one of his team is on the phone endeavouring to bring it to the pub.

The December Pub of the Month is always a very lively and very popular affair lodged as it is between Christmas and New Year when most people are off work. So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented on Thursday, 29 December when, I am sure, a great night will be enjoyed by all. Come down and take this opportunity to congratulate Mark, Natalie and their staff for all their efforts in ensuring that the Paramount has continued to be such a beacon of excellence.


The pub is only a short walk from Piccadilly Gardens and two minutes from Oxford Road station and the St Peter's Square tram stop so there's no excuse, come on down on the 29th!

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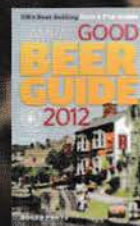
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Comment, Notes & Contents

What's On

Opening Times – Comment

All of the Greater Manchester CAMRA branches are now gearing up for what has become one of the main events of the local CAMRA year – the National Winter Ales Festival. It is back at the Sheridan Suite, and is planned to be bigger and better than ever. We will have more details in the next issue but this month do take time to check out details of the very deserving festival charity on page 23.

Once again we are launching our popular Winter Warmer Wander put together by local CAMRA members Margaret O'Brien and Dave Platt – many thanks to them for their hard work. There are 40 pubs taking part this time and we have a great range of prizes to be won so please give it a go over the holiday season.

Finally can I just send the warmest of seasonal greetings to everyone involved with *Opening Times* – our contributors, distributors, production and distribution team, advertisers and most of all, to you our readers. Have a great Christmas – and we'll see you again in January.

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 January issue Saturday 17th December

Font cover – the Deansgate pub in Manchester gets in the festival spirit

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Mike Rose, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Mark McConachie, Tony Icke, Jim Flynn, Andy Sullivan, Heather Airlie, Rhys Jones, Sophie Cunningham

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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.

December

Thursday 8th – Branch Christmas Party at Hydes Brewery. Limited numbers – book with chair@thcamra.org (TRH)

Saturday 10th – Manchester Christmas Markets and crawl – details to be confirmed (MEC)

Saturday 10th – Branch Christmas Social: Marple Cricket Club, Bowden Lane, Marple. Details from Branch Contact (HHPNC)

Monday 12th – Brew Dog "Meet the Brewer" night at The Brew House, Altrincham. Limited tickets - £7 per head. Trashy Blonde on cask. (TRH)

Tuesday 13th – Sale Social: Bulls Head 8pm; Ryan's Bar 8.45; Bank 9.15; Railway 9.45; finish King's Ransom. (TRH)

Wednesday 14th – Christmas Meal – Railway, Mobberley. Starts 7.30pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 14th – 20 years in Good Beer Guide presentation to Lamb Hotel, Church St, Eccles. From 8pm. (NM)

Friday 16th – Annual Hillgate Christmas Crawl: 7.00pm Queens Head, Underbank; 8pm Red Bull, Hillgate. Finish in Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. (SSM)

Thursday 22nd – 25 Years in Good Beer Guide presentation to the Davenport Arms, Woodford. From 8pm. (SSM)

Tuesday 27th – Post Christmas Social – Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Tuesday 27th – Winter Pub of the Season presentation and Christmas Social: Beech, Beech Road, Chorlton. From 7pm. (TRH)

Wednesday 28th – Salford Social: Black Lion, Chapel St 8pm; New Oxford, Bexley Sq 9pm. (NM)

Thursday 29th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Paramount, Oxford Street, Manchester. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Your Local CAMRA Branches:

SSM – Stockport & South Manchester	www.ssmcamra.org.uk
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356, mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk	
NM – North Manchester	www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk
Contact: Dave Hallows 07983 944992, davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk	
HPNC – High Peak & North Cheshire	www.hpneccamra.org.uk
Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517. mikewrose@gmail.com	
MEC – Macclesfield & East Cheshire	www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk
Contact Tony Icke 01625 861833, contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk	
TRH – Trafford & Hulme	www.thcamra.org.uk
Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976, enquiries@thcamra.org.uk	

CAMRA Branch Business Meetings

Monday 5th December – AGM: Park Lane Tavern, Macclesfield. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Thursday 8th December – Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Includes Winter Quiz. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 21st December – Millstone, Thomas St, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm (NM)

Thursday 5th January – Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Bootle St, Manchester. Starts 8pm. (TRH)

Thursday 12th January – Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. **Includes voting for 2012 Pub of the Year.** Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

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Stagger.....

Ladybarn, Fallowfield & Rusholme – with Mark McConachie

Our September Stagger began in the back streets of Ladybarn, at Robinson's monolithic **White Swan**. This multi-roomed old fashioned Robinson's local used to have a lovely etched glass and carved wood bar; now the signs of past glory only remain in the ceramic tiles and the Off-Sales sign etched in the glass outside. Little seems to have changed here with the passing of the years, and this is now one of Robinson's shabbier pubs. The furnishings and general decoration

around the bar and rooms could do with some investment.

The tiny Vault is now closed, and so too is one of the front rooms. They only sell Unicorn here now. Unfortunately this was a poor example tonight, perhaps because of lack of sales or promotion, but there you are.



Around the corner on Ladybarn Lane the **Brewers** remained closed but it is to re-open we are informed, else the area would have only the Swan, as the obscurely located **Old House at Home** closed for ever the previous month. Carrying on down Ladybarn Lane we passed the forlorn hanging sign of the former **Derby Arms**; the pub is still there, but now it is in use as flats. Our amble soon got us to Wilmslow Road, where we popped into the **Orange Grove**. Bare brick walls, sports TV screens, and a large bar divide the space up between a games area with pool table to the left, from its counterpart on the right which is more lounge-like. With a large garden to the front, and drinks and food offers, the place was busy with a mostly young crowd. Whilst the cider was Thatchers, the ales on offer were from Greene King - IPA, Abbot, and Old Speckled Hen. The Abbot went untried on this visit, the other two beers scored above average.

A couple of doors away is the **Great Central**. Opened in the mid-noughties as a Lloyds No.1 bar set beneath apartment accommodation, now a Wetherspoons. A large space has been made to appear more intimate by cleverly breaking the space up with columns, artefacts and good lighting. Although set fair-square in the middle of a student area, this seems to attract a wide range of customers. Five beers adomed the long bar - Greene King's Ruddles and Abbot were alongside Jennings Sneek Lifter, all of which went un-sampled, however the Ossett Yellow Mellow scored above average, as did a beer from the USA, Firestone Walker Red Nectar.

We then crossed the busy Wilmslow Road to the **Friendship**. An Impressive Victorian villa that was refurbished in 2011, the large horseshoe bar serves a variety of areas and can now accommodate 12 cask ales - offering the Hydes range, as well as varying guest beers. Beers going untried were Hydes 1863, Original Bitter,

Manchester's Finest, Peach Treat, and the seasonal ale - Thirst Aid, along with the powerful Phoenix Wobbly Bob. We did however try Marble Bitter, which scored very highly, whilst Bateman's Summer Swallow, and Keltek Majik were comfortably above average too. The range was almost like a mini-festival, many of which the pub hosts. The rear extension completed a few of years ago has created the space for provision of interesting and popular Oriental food, including takeaways.



Something Blu was still closed and boarded, whilst **Bar 43** was also closed. Meanwhile **Revolution** and **Baa Bar** were resolutely keg. **Twisted MCR** is the new name for what was Robinski's, it did sell Westons Organic cider at one time, however all real cider is now gone, and the bar staff told me the place was to shut in April 2012 for conversion to flats.

Crossing Moseley Road you reach **256 Wilmslow Road**, the erstwhile Queen of Hearts. This had just opened the week before as a new Hydes acquisition, and most impressive it was too! I liked the London Underground reference in the lobby which leads you into a very large former church hall. Around one side of the room is a mezzanine drinking space, opposite that is the long bar, whilst to the rear through some arches lies a pool and darts playing area.



To complement the inside, a most lavish exterior drinking area has been fashioned in the grounds. Quality furniture alongside fixed wooden seating will surely be a draw in the sunnier months. Hydes' have spent a considerable sum on the refurbishment here, so I hope it pays off for them. Beers on tap (served in heavy plastic tumblers) were Hydes Original Bitter, and Peach Treat - both on good form. My thanks must go to one of the door staff on the night who was most informative about the pub and work undertaken.

Next door is the former **Cheshire Cat**, also subjected to a makeover by Hydes, and re-named the **Sir Joseph Whitworth**. Here the range is tad wider than next door with Hydes Original Bitter, Manchester's Finest, Peach Treat, Thirst Aid, plus real cider. This one-time church annex is now a three room pub in a style somewhat reminiscent of a Gentlemen's club. The main high-ceilinged room is dominated by wallpaper that features a large floral print. The northern gable features a lovely leaded-glass window, whilst down a few steps leads you to a more intimate setting with a feature wall decorated from wooden cask-ends. All beers bar the Original were tried and found to be on very good form. Once again, a commendable job by Hydes.

Further on, **Trof**, **Font**, and **Corner Bar** were all trading still, yet none of them offered any cask beer (*but Font now sells Westons Cider on handpump: Ed*). I hopped on a bus to Platt Lane to get to **Hardy's Well** - formerly the Birch Villa, sited at the southern end of the so-called Curry Mile, noted for its poem writ large on the southern gable (this is by Lemn Sissay, a local poet). Inside this large, high-ceilinged, slightly care-worn, one roomed pub there is a cosmopolitan mix of locals and students. Tonight's beers were Taylor Landlord, which was almost the beer of the night, alongside a well thought of Copper Dragon BB, and Thwaites Wainwright. Weston's Old Rosie is the cider, and you can find entertainment



in the two pool tables and the real parrot behind the bar. Our photo shows barmaid Dorne with pub parrot Jo-Jo.

The **Huntsman**, a former rather basic Bass boozier was still closed with no sign of life. Thus, it was off the main thoroughfare and onto Walmer Street to find the **Albert**. A two roomed Hydes pub that has a lived-in feel to it yet is by no means shabby with every wall in the place shouting of the Emerald Isle. Whilst the sole offering of Hydes Original Bitter was better than average, the place no longer has the buzz and atmosphere of a decade ago.

We finished in the rejuvenated **Whitworth** by the park of that name. The paraphernalia around the neighbouring corner Shisha bar/restaurant means you could very easily miss the place. Inside the pub is on two levels, higher at the entrance, then down a step to the bottom level near the bar. Décor is minimal other than a number of mirrors set about the place, and lounge seating in the lower saloon area. A very neat outside area exists at the rear. Two cask ales are served now, the regular being Black Sheep BB, and tonight joined by Wells Eagle Bitter. Both were enjoyed, and scored above average. A fitting end to a lengthy crawl.

SSM CAMRA Pub of the Year 2010

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Drinking in the Atmosphere

ONE of the best things CAMRA has ever done is to produce the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors (<http://www.heritagepubs.org.uk/>), which lists just under 300 pubs across the country which have interiors that are still largely as built, or as remodelled before 1939. It is disappointing that less than 1% of all the pubs remaining in Britain fall into this category. Visiting one of these pubs is always something special, and it is good to see a place with such a sense of history still functioning as a modern business, as opposed to being preserved in aspic by the National Trust. While it is perfectly possible to have a dismal pub operation in a superb building – and I have come across one or two that left me distinctly underwhelmed – in general the unspoilt historic interiors add to the atmosphere and stick in the mind.

Over and above these, around the country there are still maybe a few thousand pubs that, while changed over the years, still present very much a traditional layout and atmosphere. A few examples from the local area would be the Griffin in Heaton Mersey, the Armoury in Edgeley and the Boar's Head on Stockport Market Place. Some may dismiss this as having an affection for outmoded "old men's pubs" that have no place in the modern world except as museum pieces, but in reality pubs were designed like this because they worked, and still usually provide a far better pubgoing experience than their more modern counterparts.

Until relatively recently, when new pubs were built they still generally conformed to the established norms of layout. For example, Holts' Sidings in Levenshulme is still recognisably a "proper" pub in the traditional mould. However, over the past couple of decades an entirely new design vocabulary has evolved for pubs and bars that throws all the traditional design concepts out of the window. The key features of this are:

- Very long bar counters dominating the space in which they are installed
- Wide circulatory spaces around the bar
- An interior comprising a sequence of free-form interconnecting areas rather than defined "rooms"
- Free-standing chairs and tables rather than fixed seating
- High ceilings
- A deliberate avoidance of warm textures and colours

While the success of their business model cannot be denied, Wetherspoons must be the single biggest offender in this regard. With few exceptions, their pubs are soulless, impersonal drinking barns largely devoid of pub "feel". In my view this is a conscious policy to make their establishments look as little as possible like old-style pubs. They have often been praised for their sensitive conversions of impressive buildings, but in general it's still just the standard Spoons layout and ambience and doesn't really gel with the surroundings. If you put a works canteen on the floor of a cathedral, it's still a works canteen.

This new design language removes any feeling of cosiness or intimacy and produces an atmosphere more akin to an airport lounge than a conventional pub. Unlike a shop, a pub is a place where, as well as buying goods, you are in effect buying time in a particular environment. No matter how good the food and drink on offer, if you don't feel "at home" you're not really going to enjoy yourself. And, even if the choice of beer is a bit limited, give me a proper pub any day with bench seating, geezers standing at the bar and one or two handpumps, over drinking some new-wave brew with an overpowering taste of tropical fruit while perched on a high, uncomfortable stool in somewhere resembling the interior of a warehouse.

Correction: In last month's column, I stated that Robinson's Dizzy Blonde was now outselling Unicorn. I was told this by a normally reliable source, and actually questioned it at the time, but was assured it was correct. However, following a recent presentation by David Bremner, Robinson's Marketing Director, it is clear that this is incorrect, and in fact Unicorn continues to outsell Dizzy Blonde by about 7 to 1, although sales of Dizzy Blonde are increasing. Apologies for any confusion this may have caused.



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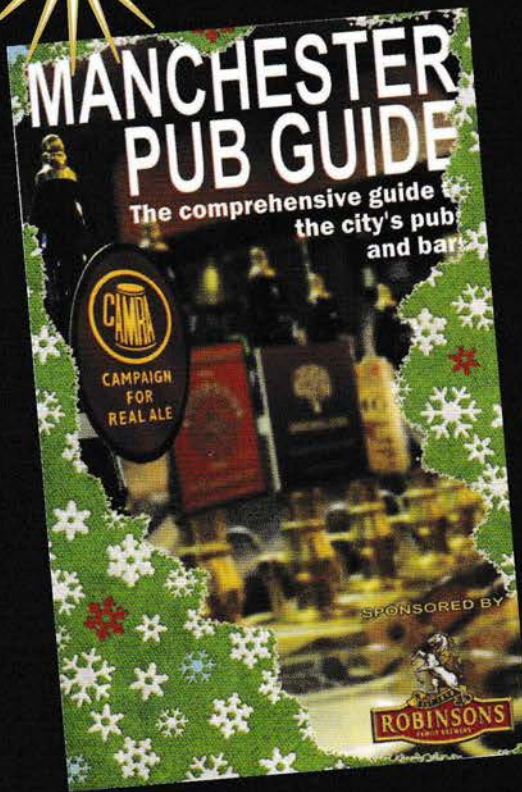
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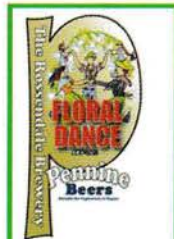


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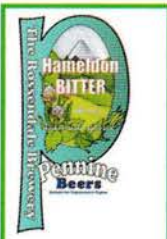
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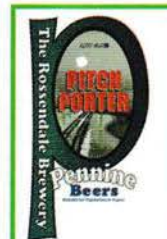
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Pub News

Oast House Opens

The big new opening over the past month has been the **Oast House** at Spinningfields in the City Centre. This is a development by Living Ventures that run eateries such as the Grill on the Alley and the Grill on New York Street as



well as the Gusto chain. This is their first venture into the pub market via a new subsidiary – the New World Pub Company. And yes, this really does look like an oast house, complete with dry stones walls and corrugated iron roof.

As you might expect there is quite an emphasis on food – complete with permanent outdoor barbeque – but what is a welcome surprise is the equal



emphasis on beer. This is perhaps unsurprising when you spot a familiar face behind the bar. Warren McCoubrey (formerly of the Marble Beer House) has taken a role as company Beer Guru (yes that really is his job title) and he has been given the job of sorting the beer range (cask and bottle) both here and in other Living Ventures outlets.

Thus the Oast House sells four cask beers. The range is technically fixed at Cumbrian Legendary Ales Langdale and Loweswater Gold, Thornbridge Jaipur and RedWillow Smokeless, although other cask ales may appear if supplies run low. In addition there is an impressive bottled selection featuring beers from the likes of Marble, RedWillow, Brew Dog, and JW Lees plus imports from Europe and the USA. Warren told OT that sales so far had been "unbelievable" with both cask and bottled ales selling in large quantities. A welcome addition to the City Centre and well worth a visit. More New World Pub Co outlets are in the pipeline so this could be the start of something big.

Trafford & Hulme News

Chorlton's **Nook Bar** on Wilbraham Road has re-introduced real cider with two ciders and a perry usually available. This range was

expanded to 10 for a mini cider and perry festival held in late November, unfortunately this was only confirmed just after the last Opening Times went to press. Down to the road, Chorlton's **Pi** was featured in a recent episode of Strictly Come Dancing - or to be more accurate one of its famous PieMinister pie and mash meals was. BBC staff descended on the bar to film part of a sketch involving Waterloo Road star Chelsea Healey.

The **Castle In The Air**, the JD Wetherspoon pub situated in the Chill Factor ski centre at Trafford Quays Leisure Village (next to the Trafford Centre) is trying to revitalise its cask ale selection. New manger Edd Clarke, formerly of The Bishop Blaize in Stretford, wants to expand the range from Wetherspoon's standard Ruddles and Abbot to include two guest ales, with an ultimate aim of having six ales available if sufficient demand can be built up. To encourage the cask sales, standard beers (less than 5%) have been reduced to 99p a pint with higher strengths (5 - 6.5%) at just £1.15. While the pub is certainly off the beaten track, it is only a five minute walk from the Trafford Centre bus station with its excellent transport links.

Flixton's **Church Inn** has undergone a refit. The pub is now branded as a John Barras pub, one of Punch Tavern's brands. Unfortunately the refit has removed some of the internal divisions and removed the classic Greenall Whitley etched mirrors from behind the bar leaving the pub with a bland corporate appearance. One handpump has also been removed, leaving the pub with three. Everards Tiger, a standard in this pub for many years remains, when OT called this was joined by Thwaites' Wainwright and Wells & Youngs' Bombardier.

Frankie's Bar on Higher Cambridge Street on the universities side of Hulme has unfortunately removed its one handpump. With its history as "Czech Bar", addition of Robinson's Unicorn earlier this year was a surprise move by the bar's new owner, part of an attempt to attract new customers. Would seem that in the current climate, the experiment has been unsuccessful for now. OT wishes the bar every success and hopes cask ale can make a re-appearance in future.

City News

Manchester's **Thirsty Scholar** re-opened in late October. The pub and its associated club **The Attic** is situated in the arches below Oxford Road railway station and had been forced to close for over four months while Network Rail carried out major works on the viaduct. Three handpumps for real ale remain along with one for traditional cider. In keeping with stable mates The Deansgate and Joshua Brooks, the main stays of the bar are from Thwaites brewery with guests sourced from a variety of micro-breweries.

The Good Beer Guide listed **Rising Sun** on Queen Street in the city centre is in the final

stages of planning a major refit due to take place in the New Year. The pub, whose location between Albert Square and Deansgate makes it a popular stopping point for visitors to the Christmas Markets, will gain a more traditional pub feel with wooden flooring extended throughout most of the pub, more seating, new toilets, a new back bar and an external refit with new signage. The pub is also the latest to join CAMRA's LocAle scheme, committing to stocking at least one beer brewed within 20 miles of the pub at all times. In the Rising Sun's case it will almost always be more than one with Mossley's Millstone Brewery and Phoenix of Heywood being preferred suppliers through the SIBA Direct Delivery Scheme.



While the **Oast House** and the **Black Lion** are two high profile additions to the city's real ale scene, two more establishments have also added cask ale to their offerings. Firstly the **Crown** on Fountain Street (just off Mosley Street) has introduced Boddington's Bitter (brewed locally at Hydes in Whalley Range) and Wychwood's Hobgoblin. Just as OT was going to press, we noticed a new A-board at the Northern Quarter's popular **Apotheca** proclaiming "All Hail The Ale - we now have real ale". This is testament to how the younger generation of drinkers have now embraced cask ale with no less than seven bars on trendy Thomas Street now stocking it. We will report further on Apotheca's offering in next month's issue.

A visit to the excellent **Blue Bell** in Levenshulme was useful in being able to chat with long-standing landlord, Mark Dunn. Still a very smart Sam Smith's house, having undergone a thorough and classy refurbishment around 2006. Now five years on, the pub will be redecorated in the new year. Truly at the heart of the community with a variety of groups using the pub to raise funds for community improvement projects and local campaigns such as the Marie Curie Gardens opposite the pub, and a new campaign to save a local bowling green. Food is served weekdays 12-2, supplemented by a well supported Sunday carvery. Well-kept and keenly priced Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter is always available, so get along to this gem on Barlow Road to see what you think. Meanwhile the news from the nearby **Horseshoe** on Chapel Street is not so good. The cask ale they once served has now gone, so this makes only three pubs selling cask beer out of the ten pubs still trading in Levenshulme (as the Golden Prague seems to be long closed). The other two cask outlets are both Holt's pubs - **Kingsway**, and **Sidings**.

More Pub News on Page 22

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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

A flurry of news from Droylsden this month to open up. An area often in the past something of a beer desert, things appear to have brightened up of late with the latest news that the **Beehive** is selling Outstanding Brewery beers on cask and the **Buxton** is planning to extend the bar to house two more handpulls to add to the current rotating guest beer. Of course the **Halfway House** is a Joseph Holts pub and sells their beers. The **Haddon Hall** seems to be settling with Marston's EPA as their regular beer and the **Pig on the Wall** has Wells Bombardier on permanently. The **Kings Head** near to Droylsden Football Club, again serves Holts beers but has its monthly guest beer from another brewery on in the small room. The **White Hart** also has a rotating guest beer, and the **Bush**, a Thwaites house, sells the popular Wainwright, Nutty Black (mild) and Thwaites standard bitter. Finally, the **Railway** has a guest beer (Wells Bombardier) served in the vault. We also hear that the **Moss Tavern** has real ale but this has not yet been verified.

Over in Audenshaw, the **Snipe**, opposite the Snipe Retail Park, sells Robinsons beers and does food, whilst the **Fairfield** is selling Hornbeam beers.

In Ashton Under Lyne, the **Forresters Call** on Old Street, has a guest beer from either Hornbeam or Hydes, the **Beau Gest**, near to the bus station, has Black Sheep best as its lone beer, the **Caledonia** has at least two Robinsons beers on sale, the **Ash Tree** (Wetherspoons) has a good choice every time I visit but they are being rivalled by the **Engine Room** next door, a Smith & Jones pub who have four real ales on and food prices and choice to match their neighbours. The **Station** has at least one rotating beer on sale and the **Witchwood** four and sometimes five beers on sale at busy times.

In Glossop, the **Surrey Arms** (opposite the Crown on Victoria Street) has been refurbished and now is a real ale gain in the area, with Marston's England's Pride 4.5%, good value at £1.90. Also on sale is Greene King's Speckled Hen at £2.50. The **Globe** on High Street West, has a new beer out for winter. It's Globe Imperial Stout 5.8% and is highly rated by the regular custom so will be continued for the winter months.

In Stalybridge, the **Fleece** now has Millstone Tiger Rut on sale, we believe on a regular basis. On a walkabout of four branch members on Saturday 5th November, **Lounge**, opposite Wetherspoons **Society Rooms** still had Thwaites Lancaster Bomber at £1.90 pint and in good form. Next door to Wetherspoons, the **Lord Stamford** (ex Stop & Rest) has had a full refurbishment and looks very inviting, being busy on both occasions I have popped my head in since the

last OT. However, it has no real ale on sale, so we went from Lounge straight to Wetherspoons. **Legendz**, further down the road has also been refurbished and was fairly busy but we could spot no handpumps prominent.

Also in Stalybridge, the **Q** had Hydes Bright Spark, Hydes Original, Hydes Finest Premium Ale and Youngs Special on our visit, where the Tony Auton band was an added attraction. At the **Buffet Bar**, we lingered to drink some excellent Empire Spectrum at 4.3% whilst Roosters Last Stand also at 4.3% was fine too.

Chalkers in New Mills had Theakston's Best Bitter, Jennings Dark Mild and Marston's Pedigree on sale at our first Beer Festival meeting recently, all credit to them for having a permanent dark mild on sale. The **Printers Arms** at Thornsell had St Austell Bucket of Blood and Storm Bosley Cloud on a recent visit, the third handpump that is normally in use, had sold out earlier in the evening. At the **Kinder Lodge** in Hayfield, Taylors Best Bitter, Camerons Strongarm and Worthington Autumn Shield were the choice on an early November evening.

Finally, the **Prince of Wales** in Buxton, next to the Wye Bridge Wetherspoons, was closed as at the first week in November as was the **White Lion** hidden behind Spring Gardens pedestrian shopping street. Both these pubs are owned by Marstons but those on the spot are unsure whether it is permanent or temporary.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Beer festivals continued to make the headlines into October. The Beer tent at the Great Peak District Fair in Buxton in mid-October was blessed with superb weather, especially on the Saturday when the bar was busy. It was so busy that the beer ran out in the middle of Sunday afternoon. However that was not before your correspondent had been able to sample some of the excellent Derbyshire brewed ales available. Buxton Moor Top is a sharp bitter blonde. I also enjoyed Brampton Impy Dark from Chesterfield and Ashover Poets Tipple. The bar also had support from Hydes'.

Anthony Meynell's Oktoberfest at the **Duke of York** in Romiley was a sell out success. There were a dozen beers at the Festival bar in the marquee, and of course others to go at in the pub. There were also ciders and a comprehensive list of German bottled beers. Ossett Yorkshire Blonde made enjoyable easy drinking whilst Acorn Gorlovka Imperial Stout was perhaps the pick of the various stronger beers. The range of beers from a dozen microbreweries made for a good choice whilst the beer lasted. Plans are already afoot for next year's festival.

Good local news was the re-opening of the **Soldier Dick** (pictured below) in Furness Vale

in mid-October. Things look good for real ale with four hand pumps when I visited shortly after re-opening. Food was about to come on stream with local chef Katy heading the kitchen. Guest accommodation is also ready to be brought back into revenue earning use after a refurbishment. After a good decorate, clean and refurbish the **Soldier Dick** is geared up to local and tourist trade. Buxton line trains stop round the corner and the 199 and 61 buses stop at the door.



In mid-October beers on tap were Thwaites IPA and Wainwright, Coach House Dick Turpin and Copper Dragon Golden Pippin. There were also real ciders and a perry, sourced from the Natural Cider Co. Opening hours are from 12 till late each day, and new owner Mike Nelson envisages a bright future for this historic pub.

Marston's Beer Festival in early November saw all ten hand pumps in use at the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge. The twice yearly festivals see Marston's offer their licensee beers from other breweries for a few weeks. Beers at the Shepherds included Evan Evans Warrior, Wadworth Swordfish, St. Austell Trelawney, somewhat reminiscent of Tinnars in the 1990's, Batemans XXXB and Adnams Broadside, and there are more to come at this *Good Beer Guide* listed locals' local.

Up at the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee a more regular pattern of available beers seems to work. Marston's Bitter and Wychwood Hobgoblin are enhanced with one, often two beers from elsewhere in the Marston's brewing empire. Jennings Crag Rat and Biggest Liar have been recent visitors.

The three Punch pubs in Whaley Bridge try to access beers from the Finest Cask List. At the **White Horse** the regular Greene King IPA is served alongside one or two from the list. These have recently included WharfBank Harvest Moon and Caledonian Autumn Red. The **White Hart** usually serves Tetley Bitter, Young's Special and a guest beer from the list. The **Goyt** has some notable fixtures including Thwaites Wainwright and Molson Coors Sharp's Doom Bar, whilst other beers can be retained by popular demand. In all these pubs, customers are offered choice even if at the rather elevated Punch price.

Christmas starts with the Christmas Market at the **Old Hall** Whitehough, Chinley on 3 December, so Seasonal Greetings to everyone.

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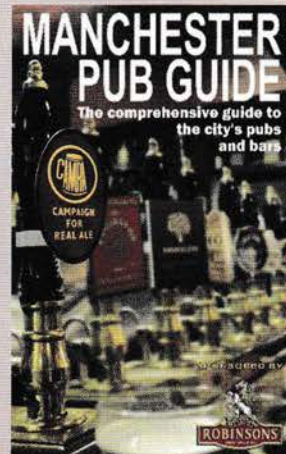
Book Review



Manchester Pub Guide, CAMRA, 112 pages, £4.99

FIVE years is a long time in today's pub scene, particularly in a major city, so this new CAMRA guide to Manchester's pubs, replacing one published in 2006, meets a real need, writes Rhys Jones.

Where the previous edition listed all the city centre pubs in alphabetical sequence, this time the decision has been taken to split the centre into seven zones covering such areas as Northern Quarter and Deansgate-Castlefield. This may take a short while to get used to, as you ponder which zone contains your favoured pub, but the admirably clear maps are a big help, and the guide is provided, as all guides should be, with an index. (Note however that the index does not include non-real-ale pubs and bars, which are simply listed zone by zone with minimal details). Beyond the centre (which for the guide's purposes extends south as far as All Saints and west to Salford Crescent), there's a generous selection of pubs along the Wilmslow Road corridor, and full coverage of Chorlton-cum-Hardy's ever-developing pub and bar scene.



The pub descriptions themselves are coherent and well-informed, and are broken up by a selection of colour photographs (principally exterior shots). Compared to some recent guides, this one is relatively light on editorial features, but those that are included take a fresh and interesting approach rather than simply dusting off well-used CAMRA clichés. I particularly enjoyed the seven-page piece on Manchester's historical and architectural features arranged as an extended pub crawl. A shame, though, that room could not be found to update the previous edition's piece on curry cafes, which could usefully have replaced the "Manchester in Three Days" pub crawl – the only weak article, this adds little to information presented elsewhere. (After all, if you split the centre into well-mapped mini-zones, pub crawls emerge naturally from the structure of the book).

In this accomplished and professional volume, there is really little to criticise. In the keg listings, a contrast of font or colour would have made it easier to distinguish an establishment's name from its address. And at one or two points, a sharper editorial eye might have been of use (for example, handpumps do not "distribute" beer, as one entry has it – they dispense it). Overall, however, this is a well-thought-out, attractive, and user-friendly guide, one of the best of recent years. Even if (like me) you think you know Manchester reasonably well, this book will open your eyes and take you somewhere new. Very highly recommended. **RPJ**

The Manchester Pub Guide is available now for just £4.99 (£4.50 to CAMRA members). It is available from Waterstones Manchester Arndale, Chorlton Book shop and other good bookshops and also from selected pubs across the city. For mail order visit www.camragreatermanchester.org.uk or order by post as follows:

Cheques payable to "CAMRA Greater Manchester" for £4.99 ea (£4.50 CAMRA members). Add £1.00 postage and packing for first copy plus an additional 50p p&p for each additional copy (e.g. 2 copies £1.50, 3 copies £2).

Cheques should be sent to Manchester Pub Guide, 39 Fox Street, Stockport, SK3 9EL. Remember to include your name and address. CAMRA members should also include valid CAMRA membership number and branch.

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The Winter Warmer Wander

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What you need to do...

- Buy at least half a pint of cask conditioned stout, porter, old ale, barley wine (or if none are available any other premium beer at 4.5% ABV or greater)
- Get the pub to put a sticker on its entry below (if they can't find a sticker, just get a signature).
- Get 12 stickers and you will win two bottles of beer plus a ticket for the National Winter Ales Festival.
- 25 stickers will get you the 4 bottles of beer plus two tickets for the National Winter Ales Festival and a draw for a hamper of assorted beers
- Visit all 40 pubs and you will win 5 bottles of beer, three tickets for the National Winter Ales Festival and draw for prizes including a hamper of assorted beers, a meal for four, a meal for two (meals kindly donated by the Hinds Head, Heaton Chapel. Bottles for hamper kindly donated by Corin Bland of High Peak Beer Co)
- The Winter Warmer Wander runs from Friday 2 December to Friday 13 January.
- Completed forms need to be with Dave Platt, 138 Broom Lane, Levenshulme, M19 3LJ by 16 January (so we can post tickets in time)

Railway Avenue Street Stockport SK1 2BZ	Magnet 51 Wellington Road N Stockport SK4 1HJ	Crown Heaton Lane Stockport SK4 1AR	Blossoms 2 Buxton Road Heavley SK2 6NU	Hinds Head Manchester Road Heaton Chapel SK4 2RB
Arden Arms Millgate Stockport SK1 2LX	Ashlea 14 Manchester Road Cheadle SK8 2NP	Crown 81 High Street Cheadle SK8 1AA	Red Lion 83 Stockport Road Cheadle SK8 2AJ	Nursery 258 Green Lane Heaton Norris SK4 2NA
Olde Woolpack 70 Brinksway Stockport SK3 0BY	Crown 98 Heaton Moor Road Stockport SK4 4NZ	Victoria 438 Wilmslow Road Withington M20 3BW	The Parlour 66 Beech Road Chorlton M21 9EG	Horse & Jockey 9 The Green Chorlton M21 0AE
Elektrik 359 Wilbraham Road Chorlton M21 0AE	Pi 99 Manchester Road Chorlton M21 9GA	Marble Beer House 57 Manchester Road Chorlton M21 0UE	The Bar 533 Wilbraham Road Chorlton M21 0UE	Royal Oak 729 Wilmslow Road Didsbury M20 6WF
Fletcher Moss 1 William Street Didsbury M20 6RQ	Milson Rhodes School Lane Didsbury M20 6RD	The Didsbury 852 Wilmslow Road Didsbury M20 2SG	Ye Olde Cock 848 Wilmslow Road Didsbury M20 2RN	Gateway 882 Wilmslow Road East Didsbury M20 5PG
Ford Madox Brown Wilmslow Park Rusholme M13 9NG	Marble Arch Rochdale Road Manchester M4 4HY	57 Thomas Street Manchester M4 1NA	Bar Fringe Swan Street Manchester M4 5JN	Castle 66 Oldham Street Manchester M4 1LE
Paramount 33-35 Oxford Street Manchester M4 5JZ	The Mark Addy Stanley Road Salford M3 5EJ	Micro Bar Arndale Market High Street Manchester	Friendship 353 Wilmslow Road Fallowfield M14 6XS	Sir Joseph Whitworth 256 Wilmslow Road Fallowfield M14 6LB
Tim Bobbin 41 Flixton Road Urmston M41 5AN	Steamhouse Station Approach Urmston M41 9SB	New Oxford Bexley Square Salford M3 6DB	Cheshire Ring 72 Manchester Road Hyde SK14 2BJ	Sportsman 57 Mottram Road Hyde SK14 2NN

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Time for a Pub Games Revival

Geoff Dolan limbers up...

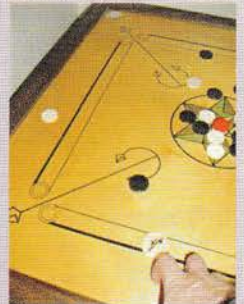
FOLLOWING CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Earl's Court in August 2011, World Darts champions Keith Deller and Adrian Lewis both stated their support for the return of traditional pub games to our pubs. The conclusions of a recent survey said that half the respondents were more likely to visit and revisit a pub if such facilities were available for free. With the countdown to our very own Olympics underway, will the New Year also see the spirit of competition spread to our pubs?

There are, of course, dice, cards and domino games that are associated with being played inside a pub, and there are many other games that are perfect for enjoying outdoors. Here I'll focus solely on indoor pub activity games. In the North West you can't help but feel cheated when you've been enticed into a premises by the hand painted sign outside advertising pub games, only to find no options other than the big three – standard London darts, a pool table or a bar football table. (the latter two requiring coin activation). But there are dozens of games that fall within the pub activity range.



Basically a pub game can be defined as a non-strenuous activity requiring just hand-eye coordination. This generally involves using various techniques to move one or more items to a targeted point e.g. darts to a required number, balls into a pocket, bowls to a jack, rings thrown onto hooks, coins thrown into a hole. The degree to which a pub game transforms from a relaxed social activity to serious competition is up to the participants. But it's not necessary to have dickie-bowed MCs saying 'best of order' and 'turn off your phones' to satisfy both requirements of relaxation and competition at the same time. In fact pub games are best when played within a social environment where a drink or two is no detriment to the playing but can actually enhance the enjoyment of the game.

Discounting the big three already mentioned then what sort of games are we talking about? From over 10 years experience of research and collecting from both Britain and abroad, the following far from exhaustive list are just some game possibilities that are available, and the venue requirements needed to play them.



Smaller tabletop (card table or slightly larger) – devils table skittles, crokinole, carrom, shove ha'penny, parlour bagatelles, puff billiards, toptafel skittles

Larger tabletop – tabletop bar billiards, Northern folding Bagatelle, Mississippi, sjoelbak, billard japonais, table bowls, passe trappe, squails, toque d'Or

Throwing area (roughly equivalent to darts) – Evesham quoits, rope quoits, caves quoits, board quoits, Yorkshire darts, Ipswich Fives darts, ring boards, corks skittles, Toad in the Hole, Penny Pitching, La Grenouille, American washer pitching, ladder golf, daddlums skittles table, palets discs pitching

Floor based - parlour carpet skittles, parlour carpet bowls, roll-a-ball, golf putting

Alternative games for a snooker table – snooker table bowls, boccette, 5 pin billiards, skittle pool, table petanque

Larger floor area (function room) – English Carpet Bowls, Scottish Carpet Bowls, Western skittle alley, Long Alley skittles, Kegel Alley skittles, floor shuffleboard, New Age Kurling, soft boules, cornhole, Ringing the Bull

All the above are easily portable and many can also be used outside when weather permits. There are also bulkier games (of similar dimensions to a pool table) that need to be permanently sited, such as full size bar billiards table, bagatelle table, bumper pool table,

shuffleboard table, Northamptonshire or Leicestershire hood skittles table.

If you live more than a few miles south of Greater Manchester you may already have access to one or more of the English games mentioned above or even participate in a league. Some games have their own world championships, such as crokinole in Canada. However, even in the so-called strongholds, games become threatened when properties change hands. It seems that only legislation can protect national treasures like skittle alleys from being ripped up to be replaced by dining areas.

So how can these traditional games establish themselves where they firmly belong – in the pub? If the premise is true that they will draw fresh custom, then it follows that they need to be used on a regular basis, perhaps within a league framework. It can be seen from regional examples that continued survival of a game is strengthened by a league structure. Traditionally this would depend on a number of venues all having the same single item of equipment e.g. a skittle alley. But what better way for an enterprising licensee to attract new custom than to become a venue for a league staging a number of different pub games? Instead of every pub in the league staging a league night for just two teams, every team in the league would compete at one pub per division. One-off nights are a good introduction to unfamiliar pub games – with competition similar to athletics' heptathlon or decathlon events. These can take the form of charity or fundraiser nights with the triple benefit of promoting pub games, aiding a cause and providing pub revenue all at the same time.



As seen above, the type of games can vary to suit the venue space available and most can be stored away after use. They are also low maintenance with no electronic parts to go wrong. It's not necessary to take the risk of shelling out a small fortune on buying equipment – a dozen different, league-quality, tabletop games can be acquired for less than a thousand pounds. Hiring is an inexpensive option which can easily be covered by competition entry fees, especially where charitable events are concerned. It would also be in the best interest of breweries and Pubco's to promote a more complete and traditional pub experience for their visitors by sponsoring their premises in such initiatives.

I firmly believe that it is only the awareness of pub games that has been missing while the games themselves have been waiting to be rediscovered. Once licensees can see the advantages of providing traditional social activities then pub visitors will soon immerse themselves into the games. Can Olympic year be the time when the tumbling of skittles and the clunking of pitched discs once again become a fitting accompaniment to the enjoyment of a fine pint?

Cheshire Ring, Hyde

THIS Manchester Road pub continues to be one of the real stars of the Hyde pub scene. Already known for the wider range of Beartown Brewery beers and guests, landlord Wayne Taylor is now extending the foreign beer offering with an excellent range of Belgian and German beers.



When OT called Wayne was awaiting the installation of some new fridges but the Belgian range was already impressive including Slaapmutske Blond, Bruin and Tripel, Saison Dupont, St Feuillien Triple and good lambics from Lindemans (Cuvee Renee) and Cantillon. There will be a changing draught Belgian beer on tap, too. German beers include the full Weihenstephan range including the 7.7% Vitus.

The new Sunday lunches are worth a check-out too – roast Turkey, Topside of Beef and Leg of Lamb with "amazing gravy" are promised. Staying on pub grub, the Cheshire Ring also sells what are perhaps the best pies that OT has so far encountered – worth the journey for those alone.

B.B.C.T.

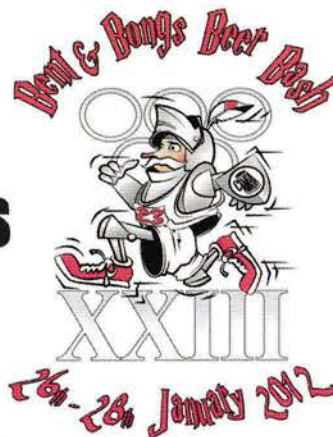
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The Hat Goes Forth

Andy Sullivan in search of a decent pint

IT'S a Wednesday evening around a half past four to five and my courage and copy dates have for once come into conjunction. On this, my last look at the provision of real ale outlets in Denton and Audenshaw, I'm taking a modest walk around Haughton Green which at one time would have objected most strongly to being considered as part of Denton rather than Denton and Haughton Green. First, however, as I alight from the 201 bus from Manchester at Christ Church Denton I'm going to take a look at **The Acres** on Acres Street, a short walk from Hyde Road.

The Acres is festooned with advertisements for some of the "usual suspects" of keg/smooth beer and when I had not gained entry to the pub on my previous expedition due to football related reasons I did note that I wasn't very hopeful of finding any cask. So it proves and it is such a shame that this rather handsome looking pub is hidden by this garish and vulgar advertising, a thing that is sadly all too common. There are two handpulls with pump-clips for Greene King IPA and Marston's Pedigree but neither are available tonight and there appeared no prospect of this situation changing in the near future. There are very few customers.

Having learned from my two previous "perambulations" that getting a pint of something worth drinking might be a challenge I've taken a small precaution in my route, this will become clear shortly. Leaving The Acres I turn left towards Town Lane then up to Stockport Road the right up to Two Trees Lane at Three Lane Ends where, for the present, I ignore the Masons and carry on up to the corner of Lancaster Road and take a gander at the **Cock Inn**. Now to my knowledge at least this pub has never sold real ale in the last 30 years or so, it is not open for business at a bit before five, but looking through the windows there is no evidence of real ale being on sale. So while I think the pub opens at five o'clock I'm not going to wait, and continue to walk up towards Mancunian Road, turn into it and am confronted with the sad sight of the **Mancunian Pub**, closed, forlorn and peppered with security notices.

Keeping going past the Mancunian I pass the site, on the left, of the Shakespeare long since demolished and replaced by flats. This was not, as I recall, a particularly sad loss! Passing the church and round the bend on Haughton Green Road on the right is the impressively sized **Jolly Hatters** (Top Jolly), a former Bass house. On entering a sparsely populated lounge I espy two handpulls with pump-clips offering Marston's Pedigree, asking for one I'm offered keg dark mild so I leave! On into the village proper and on the left there is the **Bay Horse** which looks a very traditional "flat cap and whippets" sort of boozery, but is definitely not like that inside and is quite busy, soft lighting and on the face of it nicely presented, but absolutely no real ale.

This trip is proving, as expected, less than satisfying for anyone with a real ale bent, but bear with me. From the Bay Horse and turning left through the rest of the village, past the **Old Dog** on the right, now a curry restaurant, Haughton Green Road joins the top of Two Trees Lane on the corner of which is what in my view should be an excellent prospect for a real ale outlet, but has had a bit of a chequered history of late. The **Top House** has been up for sale and auction recently and there is now evidence of some building work going on so we'll have to see what happens now.

Strolling down Two Trees Lane I speed up a bit as it starts to rain and on my right is the **Chapel House**, or Little Chap. A Robinsons outlet of real class, this pub is always absolutely spotless, beautifully presented and I've never known it any different. It does have a tendency towards being a bit of a "closed shop"



local, but there is warmth here and a very fine pint of Robbies Unicorn, I have two and exchange a few pleasantries with the locals.

Quite frankly I could have stayed there, but I am near concluding my early evening excursion and head back down to the **Masons** I passed by earlier. Another Robbies pub, it has a more modern bar feel than the traditional Chap and somewhat more up to date music, by about five decades actually, and also a TV on.



Why are TVs on when no one bothers watching them? I don't get it. This pub is a chatty one and all any of the dozen or so people in want to do is chinwag and sup. Again this is nicely presented and the only ale on offer is Unicorn which is very good and even better at two quid, bargain, but it is a happy hour. I have a couple of these and head home for tea.

It might seem strange, but I enjoyed this walk. It is an area I know well so there were no surprises for me and I intended to end at the Chap and Masons. Whilst neither would be attractive to me on a very regular basis they demonstrate that providing real ale can be done in very different environments with no detriment to the quality of the product. Both are deserving of support and are helpfully close to the 347,204, and 327 bus routes with others in close support. The Top Jolly has handpulls and may serve a real ale in future, one could hope for the same at the Acres.

I still haven't managed to squeeze in the Penny Farthing, but Frank Wood, whose pieces are regularly printed in Opening Times, has suggested that I do something on Ashton Under Lyne, so as well as keeping an eye out for any changes in Denton, Haughton Green and at least this end of Audenshaw I will venture into Ashton and pick up the Penny on the way. It's unfortunate it doesn't really fit into a walk, but it is next to the 345 bus route so isn't cut off either. I may even manage to get a few pictures in future.

SIBA Great Northern Beer Festival

The SIBA Great Northern Beer Festival, having had to move from the Palace Hotel to the Ramada in Piccadilly Gardens, was a raging success, writes *Graham Donning*.

Rather than the dribble of customers coming to last year's event we had about 3,500 people through the door over the two and half days. I believe this was achieved as a result of sensible door pricing policy, good advertising and a lot of hard work by CAMRA volunteers. Whilst the glass washing proved, once again, a logistical problem, this was overcome by the usual and steady approach from the volunteers. Thus ensuring the steady supply of fresh clean glasses into which was dispensed foaming, frothy ale in the distinct Northern fashion.

The judging event went well and the results are here:

http://www.siba.co.uk/events/?page_id=1362 and as can be seen some local breweries did very well with Marble and RedWillow, once again, bringing home the bacon! However, I was glad to see that my own favourite from Hawkshead Brewery won the day with the wonderful Windermere Pale, a 3.5% lip smacking hoppy thirst quencher! With hi-tech at last reaching the beer world, we were able to display constant messages about the beers on, coming on, winners and a Power Point of the setting up of the event, plus a couple of videos about ale in general as well as the SIBA "Proud of Beer" video.

Everybody agreed that the ale was all in good condition, kept by our own cellar team led by Bev Gobbett and her supporting cast, and at a good price (starting at £2 a pint) the ale really flowed. Plans are already in hand for a thunderous return next year!

No, It's Not Free!

OT was disappointed to hear that while the new Manchester Pub Guide has proven extremely popular with the area's drinkers, a small number have decided to help themselves without paying for their guide. If those who took copies from the bars of Parlour in Chorlton or The Vine on Kennedy Street in the city centre are reading this, kindly return them to the relevant pub or have the decency to go back in and hand over your £4.99 – still a bargain!

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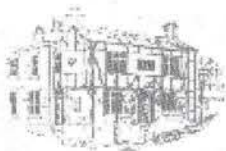
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Pub News Extra

The **John Millington** in Cheadle Hulme has a well established reputation for its food but now it is becoming equally known for the excellent cask ale range that is there to complement it.



This is down to the enthusiasm of manager and cask ale fan Matthew Abbott who has been there for just over a year now, joining the pub after a 10 year spell running the Varsity on Oxford Street in the City Centre. "A pub that does very good food should also do very good cask as well" is how he puts it and as the beer trade has increased so has the number of cask ales on offer. There are up to nine real ales on sale at weekends and apart from the regular Hydes beers (Original, Manchester's Finest and the current craft ale) guests come from a variety of local brewers with favourites being Allgates, Marble and Hornbeam. There are usually a couple of Marble beers each week (the excellent Lagonda Hop Trial No. 4 was on when OT called) and Hornbeam's Lemon Blossom and Black Coral Stout are firm favourites. Over the festive season there will be two special beers from Hydes – Rockin' Robin (4.5%) and Racey Rudolph (3.5%) and a Chocolate Ale from the increasingly impressive Allgates. Well worth a visit.

In recent months we have mentioned that the **Anchor** in Hazel Grove was due to close. We're not sure how this story came about but we can now say it is very definitely not true. Apologies to all concerned.

In Stockport, the **Crown** on Heaton Lane is currently basking in a superb write-up in CAMRA's new book "Great British Pubs" – review next month – and is also boasting a brand new paint job outside. The Crown must be one of the most attractive of Stockport's pubs and its appeal this year had been enhanced by the impressive floral displays outside. When the likes of Punch seem happy to inflict closed and boarded eyesores like the nearby George on the town, the Crown really is a credit to Steve, Tracy and their team.



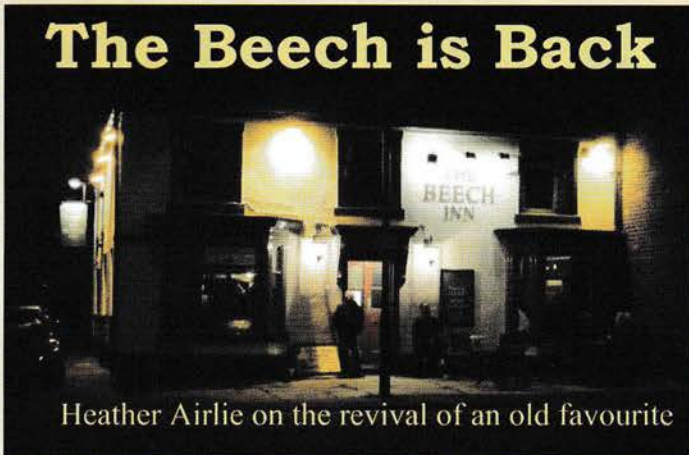
On Brinksway in Stockport, **Ye Olde Woolpack** celebrated its first birthday as a reopened free house on 22 November. The pub really has gone from strength to strength, notably with the huge range of ciders and perries, courtesy of landlord Mike Quinn's

Natural Cider Company, but also for the impressive and changing range of cask ales. The pub now boasts no fewer than 15 handpumps on the bar of which an astonishing 10 are for cider and perry. The remainder are reserved for an ever changing range of guest ales from micro brewers. With a great value for money food offering and varied entertainment, the Woolpack has developed into a real asset to the town's pub scene.

Stockport has also gained a new bar and beer shop. Dean Hilton's **Beer Shop** in Heaton Moor (13 Kingsleigh Road) opened its doors last month and promises to be a real asset to the area. All the beer (both draught and bottled) is available to take away but also for drinking on the premises. The range is impressive to say the least – at opening the draught selection included three RedWillow beers (Smokeless, Wreckless and the mighty Ageless) and Ossett's Yorkshire Blonds, while the bottled range covers all sorts of goods from both the USA and Europe. Well worth a visit.



The Beech is Back



Heather Airlie on the revival of an old favourite

WHAT a change a year can make! From moribund to thriving community pub is no easy task, but manager Chris Clish has pulled it off.

At its heyday in the nineties, the Beech on Beech Road was renowned for its real ales and had one of the best selections in Chorlton. Sadly in recent years the pub had become a shadow of its former self. However once Chris took over, things were quietly improved, starting with a thorough clean and the re-introduction of good quality, well kept ale. A veteran rugby player, he made it clear from the start that he would not tolerate unsociable behaviour and anyone looking for trouble would not be welcome.

While the juke box and slot machines were removed, live music was encouraged, with Irish music on Mondays and the folk club returning on Wednesday evenings. Cajun style can be found on the last Tuesday of the month with other eclectic choices smuggled in-between. One of the more unusual of these was when a classical string section had a drop-in session. It was so popular many talented musicians had to be turned away! Other entertainment has included Morris dancers, clog lessons and a troupe of female sword dancers!

Opening up for the craft fair on Saturday afternoons has encouraged a whole new set of customers. Chris commented he'd "never seen so many ladies in the pub!"

The beer range has been expanding too, with the regulars from Timothy Taylor, Golden Best, Landlord and Bitter, being joined by those from Copper Dragon such as Golden Pippin and Best Bitter. By the time this article is out he should have a further four handpumps to present new guest seasonal ales. To supplement the existing lagers he also plans to stock some speciality foreign bottled beers. All this and real cider too! On 15 December the range will be even more impressive, as the inaugural beer festival is to be held, with around 20 beers expected. This will be in conjunction with the Christmas Fair.

When he lived in Chorlton back in 1997, while The Beech had been thriving, Chris had no idea that he would have the opportunity to manage it himself. He has taken on the job and succeeded where others have failed. Trafford and Hulme Branch have great pleasure in being able to present the award for Pub of the Season on Tuesday 27 December, starting at 7pm. All are welcome, old customers and new, so come and join the celebration! The Beech is back!



The Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season for Autumn 2011 was the **Waterhouse** on Princess Street in Manchester City Centre. The award was presented on 1 November. Pictured (L-R) are duty manager and cellar man Adam Taylor, Manager Sarah Barker and Branch Chair Beverley Gobbett presenting the award

(background). The pub commissioned a beer especially for the event, with Adam travelling to Macclesfield's Red Willow brewery to brew Waterhouse Ale with Red Willow's Toby Mckenzie. The full brew run was bought by the pub so it really is an exclusive.

National Winter Ales Festival Charity

THE National Winter Ales Festival

Committee is continuing its support of Manchester based charity After Adoption as charity of the year for the Festival taking place in Manchester on

18-21 January 2012 at the Sheridan Suite. The Festival will be in its 16th year and attracts over 9,000 ale enthusiasts, offering a selection of over two hundred beers, real ales and ciders from Britain and all around the world.

As Sophie Cunningham, Senior Fundraiser at After Adoption says:

"We were so grateful for the support from CAMRA at the 2011 Festival, and we received such a warm response from visitors, raising a fantastic £4,500.

"We had great support from our volunteers, from local businesses and Enterprise Inns who generously sponsored our stall at the Festival. Being the Festival charity was a great honour and it brought the name and work of After Adoption to the attention of the thousands of people who attended.

"We are thrilled to be able to continue the partnership again this year in Manchester, our home city. We do hope visitors will come by our stall and say hello, and help us in raising even more in 2012, towards our work supporting those affected by adoption"

After Adoption works throughout England and Wales to help children and adults from all walks of life deal with the difference adoption brings to their lives.

The charity finds adoptive families for children currently in the care system through its Families that Last team, particularly for those children who are seen as harder to place: older children, children who need to be placed with brothers and sisters, and those with disabilities. The charity also provides support to adoptive families, young adopted people and adopted adults, as well as birth relatives of those who have been adopted.

After Adoption's work across the North West of England provides services in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales. They offer support and advice to adoptive families, as well as groups for adopted adults and young people.

After Adoption will have a stall at the Festival and this year will be holding a prize draw with a difference! Show your support and visit them to find out more about the fantastic work they do in the region and how you can get involved.

The charity is also looking for volunteers to help out at the Festival – if you would like to get involved please contact Sophie Cunningham at sophie.cunningham@afteradoption.org.uk or on 0161 830 2022.

For more information about After Adoption visit www.afteradoption.org.uk



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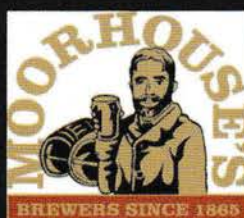
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Brewery News

Family Brewers Keep Tie

The Government ended uncertainty about the future of the tie as it pertains to the vertically integrated family brewers - that is - those family owned breweries such as Adnams, Robinsons, Hydes, Lees etc. that both brew, and own pubs which are tied to their beer.

In a response to the House of Commons Business,

Innovation and Skills Committee's tenth report of session 2010-2012 into pub companies, the Consumer Minister Edward Davey recognised the importance of the tie to the longevity of breweries and success of tenant licensees. It is instructive to my mind at least, that "During this long enquiry, successive Select Committees received no complaints about brewery tenancies." contrasts somewhat vividly with the complaints received about Pub Companies. Paul Wells speaking for the Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB) was pleased saying (among other things) "In my view, many family brewers will now increase investment into their pubs because of the support the Government has announced for the traditional brewery tenancy agreement and the beer tie."

All well and good but maybe now that this uncertainty has been removed, IFBB members who have not woken up to the beer revolution around them, in addition to tarting up their pubs, can turn their attention to more vibrant brewing in this new stable environment. It'll be a hollow victory indeed if they have stability for their tenants and future business, only to see it diminished by moribund beer ranges, dull brewing and a "we know best" attitude. As the Government and commercial logic forces PubCos to concede more choice for their lessees and micros offer more and more beery options, IFBB members cannot allow themselves to fall (further) behind the curve.

The beer market is at its most volatile for years. Innovation and experiment is all around. Beer drinkers are more and more discerning and demanding. This provides opportunity, but it also provides pitfalls. Let's see IFBB members rise to the challenge of the times.

(Thanks to Peter Alexander for the above comments - taken from his excellent Tandleman's Beer Blog - <http://tandlemanbeerblog.blogspot.com/>)

Marston's Branch Out

Reflecting the growing interest in beer styles and ingredients, super-regional Marston's has announced that next year it will be producing a monthly series of 4% single hop beers. They won't be variants on old British varieties

such as Fuggles and Goldings either but will also feature many new world varieties. As if to prove the point the first one up next month will be Wai-iti described as "a brand new hop variety from New Zealand, with intense citrus and sweet fruit character. Wai-iti means 'small water' in the local tongue and is a hugely distinctive addition to the world of beer". This will be followed in February by Galaxy, a hop already being used by many forward looking micros.

There are a fair number of Marston's supplied pubs in the Opening Times area (notably along Wilmslow Road in South Manchester and the excellent Bulls Head in the City Centre) so let's hope they all take the chance to feature what could be an exciting beer range.

Micro Brewery News

Following a tasting session with invited members from local branches of CAMRA, Chorlton's **Bootleg Brewery** (based at the Horse & Jockey pub) has settled on a new regular beer. While current regulars Contraband and Lawless will remain on the bar, Chorlton Pale Ale will also appear in rotation.

Winter ales are in development too, with a welcome return of the glorious stout, Black Widow. This will soon be joined by further dark beers. Cellar space continues to be a restrictive element for the brewery so just three hand pumps in the Horse and Jockey will be dedicated to supplying their beers alternately.

Marble Brewery is, as usual, busy with new beers. Christmas IPA is in the pipeline - this 6.5% beer will appear in both bottle and cask and has been generously hopped with Galaxy, Centennial and Citra. If you are lucky you may still catch Little Jim a beer brewed in collaboration with Leeds' North Bar. This is a 6.9% dark rye beer with a pronounced hop character. Bottled beers out this month include new brews of Decadence imperial stout, Special barley wine and the new Saison. Christmas Eve at the Marble Arch will see the traditional launch of cask Port Stout.

Phoenix Brewery has a range of festive seasonals out - Christmas Kiss, Snowbound, and the powerful 8% Humbug (matured at the brewery for three months prior to release) will all be hitting local bars anytime now.

Also look out for the latest in the now traditional line of "seasonal Phoenix cock-ups with dark malt". Brown Booty is a 4.6% strong brown ale. Phoenix's Tony Allen tells us that his brewery has something of a track record for this type of thing, where rather too much

dark malt (of one sort or another) is added to a standard beer, and which turns out to be something rather good. Previous hits have included Black Ice (should have been Snowbound), Extra Double Stout (should have been Porter) and the wonderful 7.5% Black As Your Hat (should have been Firecracker).

Poynton's **Worth Brewing** based at the Legion Club seems to be settling down well. The core range now comprises Red Acre (4% - a bright ruby red traditional bitter hopped with Bramling Cross), Blythes' Spirit (3.8% - a golden pale ale, very full flavoured and hopped with Summit), Anson (4% - very pale and hoppy using Nelson Sauvin hops) and Seam Cutter (4.2% - a stouty jet black beer using Galena hops). This latter was recently on spectacular form at the Railway on Wellington Road North, Stockport. Other outlets (apart from the Legion Club of course) include Stockport's Olde Vic and Olde Woolpack.

Stockport's very own micro **Shaws** (which also produces the **Quantum** range) continues to

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power ahead. The Quantum single hop IPA series continues with Willamette out at the end of October, Summit out at the moment and Stella coming soon. The core range for Quantum is settled at a dry hopped 3.8% bitter full of hop flavour and biscuit malts, the 4% porter, the IPA series and the AAA.

Jay at Quantum/Shaws tells us that he is just waiting on the bottle labels to be given the go ahead and bottled beers should be out early this month.

Staying in the festive mood, Jay has brewed a very limited run of an Imperial Stout for Christmas. This has been brewed at 8.6% and aged on fresh cranberries. A cask was on sale at the Magnet in Stockport late last month and proved to be dangerously drinkable. You may also catch this in the Port Street Beer House. A coffee version has also been made in tiny amounts but happily we think both versions will be made again. You should also be able to get Shaws and Quantum beer in the Waterhouse in Manchester which continues to champion local brewers.

Finally - congratulations to Macclesfield's **RedWillow Brewery** which has started to pick up some major awards. The pale and hoppy Wreckless (4.8%) not only won its category in the SIBA North Championship (held recently at their Great Northern Beer Festival in Manchester) but has also been voted Champion Beer of Cheshire. The experimental Faithless range continues - look out for the new Black IPA, it's a bit of a corker we think. Good news is that the RedWillow online shop should be up and running this month for bottle sales.

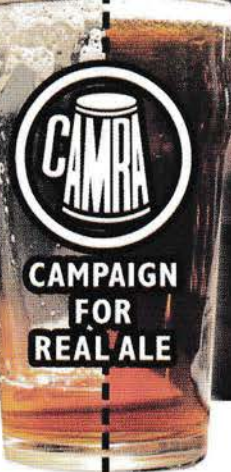


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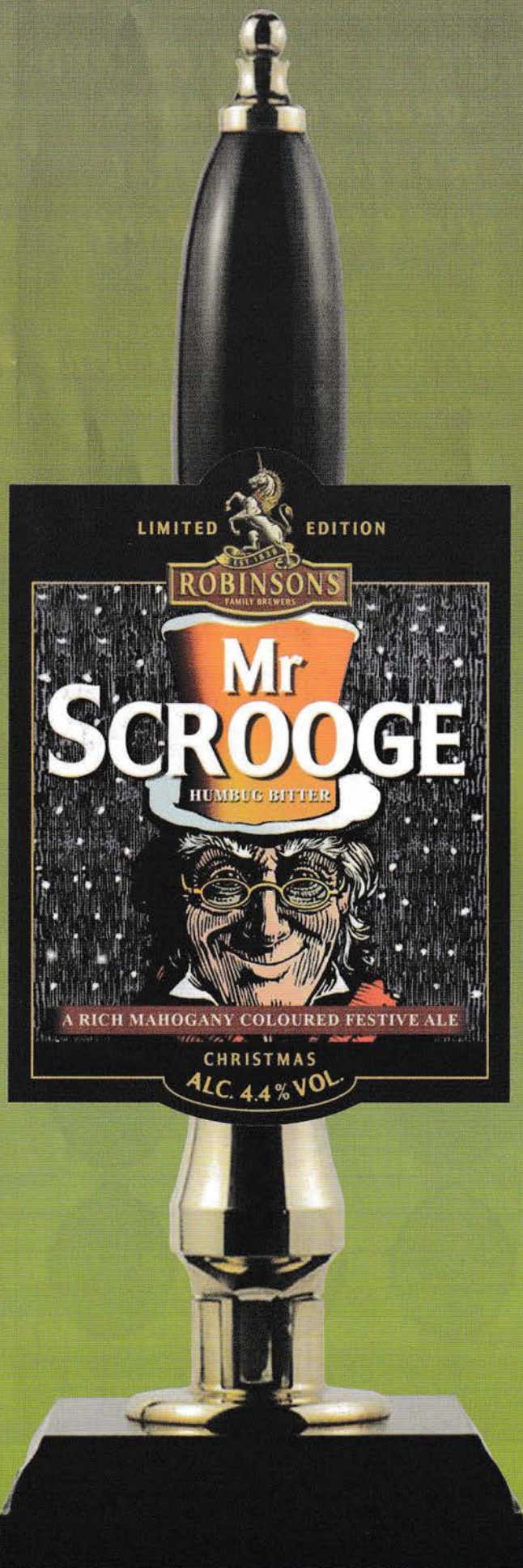


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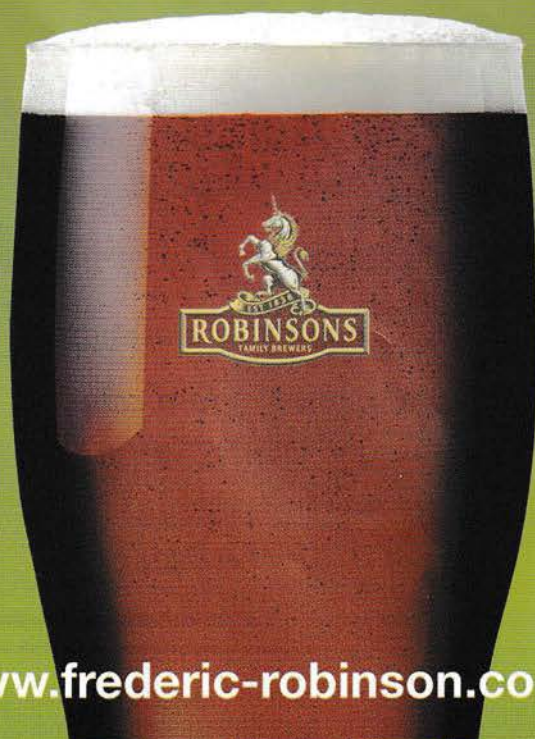
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