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TIMES



October 2012

Opening

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30 Not Out – see page 13

Also in this issue – win great prizes on our
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Pub of the Month



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for October is Joshua Brooks on Princess Street in Manchester City Centre.

Until about 18 months ago, this would have been a surprising choice for a CAMRA award. Little or no cask beer had been sold since the pub opened in the mid-1990s and it was more of a club than a pub. There's still a lively club in the basement which hosts a variety of music nights and even theatre. However hand in hand with the refurbishment downstairs, came a new look for the pub premises on the ground floor with a more pubby feel and an greater emphasis on the beer.

"Real Ale" says the sign on the wall and indeed there is. There are six handpumps on the bar which dispense an ever changing range of guest beers and these are far from what you might call "the usual suspects". New beers from new micro breweries around the country vie for bar space with more familiar names.

Asked what he aims to stock, enthusiastic manager Jon Turner simply says "whatever seems exciting". Jon has been at Joshua Brooks for

about four and a half years now and has overseen its transformation into something of an unsung gem on the City Centre cask beer scene.

And it's not only with cask beers that the transformation has taken place. The fridges behind the bar feature bottles from the USA and closer to home including beers from RedWillow and Thornbridge, and even the keg range is not what you might expect with always on draft American beer sold along with Black Isle Stout which has ousted Guinness.

There is a good food offer including Pieminister Pies, and CAMRA members can join the Joshua Brooks Club and pay just £2.50 a pint on Fridays. All well worth celebrating and join us when we do this and present our award on Tuesday 23 October.

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Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

It's Cider Time

Welcome to Cider & Perry Month. This is the time of year when the nation's craft cider makers are busily pressing their apple and pear juice. This will spend the next few months maturing and fermenting to produce the increasingly wide range of traditional ciders and perries that add interest to the bars of more and more pubs.

With record sales at beer festivals, and more pubs selling the real thing, it seems that real cider and perry's day has come. Why not take part in our cider circuit – you'll visit a wide range of great pubs and bars, and get a chance to sample some fantastic drinks.

This month we also celebrate the launch of the 2013 Good Beer Guide. Look out for the Good Beer Guide logo on many of our adverts this month – these signify pubs that are in the new Guide and are all worth a visit.

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. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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Trading Standards – for complaints about short measure pints etc contact Consumer Direct (North West). Consumer Direct works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can email Consumer Direct using a secure email system on their website (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk) which also provides advice, fact sheets and model letters on a range of consumer rights. Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06

Copy Date for the November issue is Friday 12 October

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – Nursery manager Simon Wetton celebrates the pub's 30th consecutive Good Beer Guide entry

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Your Local CAMRA Branches

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM) www.ssmcamra.org.uk
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356; mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk

North Manchester (NM) www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk
Contact: Phil Booton 0161 957 7148 (daytimes); phbooton@hotmail.com

High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC) www.hpneccamra.org.uk
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Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC) www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk
Contact: Tony Icke 01625861833; bicke@madasafish.com

Trafford & Hulme (TRH) www.thcamra.org.uk
Contact: enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Your Local CAMRA Events

Local CAMRA branches organise regular events in pubs across the region. Members of other branches and the general public are welcome to attend all events except some branch business meetings (call/email the branch contact if in doubt). Organising branch shown in brackets.

Monday 8th - Branch Meeting, Royal, Hayfield. Andrew Bingham MP in attendance. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNEC)

Wednesday 10th - Social: Union Tavern, Liverpool St, Salford. Starts 8.00pm (NM)

Thursday 11th - Presentation of NW Region Speciality Beer Award to Marble Brewery. Brewery tours from 7.00pm; presentation 8.30pm. (TRH)

Thursday 11th - Branch Meeting & Cider Tasting: Olde Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. Cider Tasting £5 per head. (SSM)

Saturday 13th - Regional Meeting: Park Tavern, Macclesfield. Starts 1.00pm (MEC)

Monday 15th - Joint Social with North Manchester Branch - "Alleys, passageways and backdoors" crawl. Details on website. (TRH)

Monday 15th - Holmes Chapel Social: start Old Red Lion 8.00pm and then George & Dragon. (MEC)

Tuesday 16th - Visit to Blackjack Brewery to present "Best Newcomer" Award from Stockport Beer Festival. Meet Marble Arch 7.00pm - walk to brewery 7.30pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 17th - Branch Meeting: Ducie Bridge, Corporation St, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm (NM)

Friday 19th - Manchester City Centre Stagger: Bulls Head, London Rd 7.30pm; Kro Piccadilly 8.30pm. (SSM)

Saturday 20th - 10 years in Good Beer Guide presentation: Star, Back Hope St, Higher Broughton. From 1.30pm. (NM)

Tuesday 23rd - Pub of the Month presentation to Joshua Brooks, Princess St. From 8.00pm (SSM)

Wednesday 24th - Cider Month Crawl: Marble Arch 7.30pm; Angel 8.00pm; Bar Fringe 8.45pm; Crown & Kettle 9.15pm; City 9.45pm, Castle 10.15pm. (NM)

Monday 29th - Joint Social with South Cheshire Branch: Old Hall, Sandbach (8.00pm) then Lower Chequer. (MEC)

Wednesday 31st - Halloween Night in Atherton: Old Izaaks 7.30pm; Jolly Nailor 8.00pm; Pendle Witch 9.00pm. (NM)

Thursday 1st November - 10 years in the Good Beer Guide presentation to The Knott, Deansgate. From 7.30pm. (TRH)

Wednesday 7th November - Social: Salford Arms, Chapel St, Salford. Starts 8.00pm. (NM)



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Stagger

Stockport Market Place with Alex Keenleyside

On a wet cool May evening, the only reminder we were in late spring or the approach of summer was the lateness of dusk as we began our monthly pursuit of cask-conditioned enlightenment in the **Calverts Court**.



This is a spacious Wetherspoons pub named after a family that ran a cabinet making firm and the Beehive Inn on the site in the late 19th Century. The pub is kept smart and clean and geared towards dining by the layout of tables. The Calverts offers a wide selection of ales and other choice drinks at reasonable prices. The establishment was starting to get busier with people beginning their night helped along by friendly and quick service. I enjoyed a Moorhouses White Witch, one of the guest ales, and found it a delicious well kept pint which correlated to the consensus of my fellow drinkers who between us all had managed to sample most of the cask offerings.



After this positive start to our stagger around the historic (15th Century) Stockport marketplace we popped into the **Egerton Arms** just across the road. This pub has recently enjoyed a refurbishment to create a pleasant and much improved and brighter space for customers. Uninterested bar staff didn't bode well for the offer and the one cask pump of Greene King IPA was not exactly on form. Whilst the pub did offer those customers that tried it their money back and without argument it was sad to see it still on sale to the public as we left. The pub sadly

had seemingly no interest in changing the barrel or taking the soured beer off sale, so onward we went in hope of better offerings.

At the **Bakers Vaults**, a Robinsons pub with a



bohemian mix of the traditional and the contemporary we found an altogether better experience. The pub had Unicorn, 1892 and a pump clip for Dizzy Blonde that wasn't available on the evening. A band was practising for later on offering those that enjoy a loud rock band a promising evening of banging tunes and a decent pint to slip down with it. Not a pub for conversation but it all depends on what you're after. The design of the pub is one of a central bar, with seating around it; a design that doesn't appear ideal for a band but ourselves and the rest of the customers enjoyed it nevertheless. If music is your thing, this is an enjoyable and lively venue.

Next stop the **Boars Head**, a Sam Smiths with one



cask offering, Old Brewery Bitter, offered at the usual bargain Sam Smiths prices and on decent form. The pub has multiple rooms and was on this evening its usual busy bustling self. A traditional working man's boozier in the heart of the market it enjoys the custom of market traders and shoppers. In parts it's well worn but I confess to finding that part of its charm. It's a friendly pub and seems never short of custom. A feature for the visitor to take note is the toilet graffiti, the best of the evening, an example of writing on pub toilet walls that is done neither for critical acclaim, nor financial rewards and thus one could argue making it the purest form of art.

The next two pubs on the Stagger provided a bit of a disappointment. Neither the **Pack Horse** and **Old Rectory** sold cask beer.



A short walk and onto Millgate, we entered the **Arden Arms**, a regular award winner and entry into the Good Beer Guide. The wide range of Robinsons ales were considered by all to be on good form in what is arguably one of the best pubs of the market. We just managed to get a table in the larger of the two rooms of a pub enjoying a busy and convivial evening. In the pub on the same evening were a group of smartly dressed gentleman with identical ties of the Oldman 32; a group that used to work at Oldham brewery, closed by Boddingtons in 1982 though Robinsons have owned the brand since 2006 and produce OB Bitter as a keg beer.



With that we decided to end the stagger with a visit to the **Railway** in Portwood. A multi beer pub with 13 cask pumps and a wide range of beers from Belgium, Germany and the rest of the world. The Railway may be a familiar retreat but it made for a pleasing end to the evening. My pint of Outstanding Blonde lived up to its name and the consensus was the beers tried were on good form.

To reflect on the stagger, it was a mixed bag with some great pubs and sadly some disappointments. Comparing a Friday night around the market with previous years the overall area appears much quieter than it has been with many pubs and bars no longer trading: Bambooza, Sam's Bar, the Bull's Head and Thatched House. The better pubs are still trading well and offer a warm welcome in busy surroundings. However as always, the evening was but one night in May so why not check the pubs out for yourself.

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Pub of the Season

The Hillary Step, Whalley Range

The Trafford & Hulme Branch Pub Of The Season for Autumn 2012 is The Hillary Step on Upper Chorlton Road, Whalley Range

The pub achieved brief notoriety when it first opened in 2004 by being Manchester's first non-smoking pub. Although the change in the law three years later removed its unique selling point, the pub has continued to go from strength to strength, so much so that earlier this year, it almost doubled its seating area with a large extension being added to the rear and the bar extended.



Prior to the Hillary Step, drinkers in Whalley Range had to journey to the Whalley right at the northern end of Upper Chorlton Road or south to neighbouring Chorlton. Set in a short row of shops a few hundred yards from the junction with Seymour Grove, the Hilary was neighbour to well regarded Italian restaurant Palmiro which had been established in 2000. The two venues gave new life to the area and were soon joined by Jam Street Café. Palmiro was sold in early 2010 and is now the home to Nip & Tipple, the three bars now making this short strip a viable alternative to Chorlton's more intensive scene.

Like many good pubs, the key to the Hillary Step's success is keeping things simple. The interior décor is clean and contemporary with bench seating at tables in the ground level front section. Steps take you up to the bar which sits in what is now the centre of the pub with the bright new extension beyond being furnished with a mixture of comfortable sofas and more traditional tables and chairs. To the front of the pub is a large alfresco area with triangular picnic tables.



Six handpulls grace the bar with one dedicated to beers from Bakewell's Thornbridge brewery and one to those from Phoenix of Heywood. One will often have a beer from Thwaites, most usually the ever popular Wainwright while the remaining pumps host an ever changing range of guests from a mixture of microbreweries such as Dunham Massey, Prospect, Abbeydale, Dark Star, Hawkshead and Saltaire. Most recently they have succeeded in becoming a regular outlet for Rochdale's multi-award winning Pictish, a brewery whose success allows them the freedom to only supply carefully selected outlets.

The proximity of Chorlton's many pubs and bars selling cask ale has often led to cask ale fans overlooking the excellent range available a couple more stops up the no 86 bus route (or a short walk from Firwood Metrolink station). Slowly but surely the Hillary Step has made itself difficult to ignore through a good range and consistent quality. It has inspired the neighbouring bars to also increase the quality and range of the ales they serve. It is part recognition of years of hard work and part recognition of the positive influence on the local pub scene that has earned them this Pub Of The Season Award.

Regional Pub of the Year

The Baum, Toad Lane, Rochdale

The Greater Manchester CAMRA Pub Of The Year 2012 is The Baum, Toad Lane, Rochdale. Runner up in the competition was Costello's Bar on Goose Green, Altrincham with the White Lion in Leigh coming third.

The Rochdale pub is run by husband and wife Simon and Heidi Crompton whose team of around a dozen staff includes other members of their family. The pub has family values and a strong commitment to the local community at its heart. They welcome a wide variety of customers into their pub, be they office workers popping in for a drink after work, shoppers seeking a good value meal or cask ale fans looking to sample one of the ever changing range of cask ales and ciders. There is always a minimum of one beer from a local brewery and ingredients for their bar menu are sourced from local suppliers.



Tucked away on a small cobbled street on the north side of the town in the shadow of Rochdale Exchange shopping centre, the pub is next to the original Co-op store which today serves as the Pioneers Museum charting the birth of the Cooperative movement. Previously Morris's Hardware store, the pub first opened around 30 years ago, being extended into the building next door a few years later. Simon began working at The Baum in 1993, becoming owner in 2005, just as the couple's first child was born.

CAMRA Regional Director Ralph Warrington said "I am delighted to announce that the Baum is Greater Manchester's Regional CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2012. This is a fantastic pub that not only celebrates all that is best in traditional British cask beers, but is also a lynch pin of the local community. This is a great achievement by Simon and the team and a testament to their hard work at the Baum."

Baum Licensee Simon Crompton said "We are all very very pleased. The award is for our whole team who are the key to the pub's success. They are all trained in the cellar and are all very conscientious about knowing about the beers so they can advise our customers. To win this award is just great, every one of us is smiling."

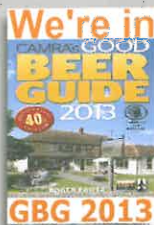
Ralph Warrington added "The pub now goes forward to be judged against the other fifteen regional UK winners to decide who will be crowned CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2012. To get to the last sixteen pubs in this competition really marks out the Baum as one of the very best".

They are equally delighted at runner-up Costello's Bar in Altrincham. The bar is the only tied outlet run by Dunham Massey Brewery, run by John Costello and his family for whom this is turning out to be quite a year. It was only in August when the brewery's Chocolate Cherry Mild was voted best speciality beer in the Champion Beer of Britain contest at the Great British Beer Festival.



This and other beers from the Dunham Massey range are always on sale at Costello's where a delighted manager Tony Gartland told Opening Times: "I am surprised and pleased. The most credit must go to John and Anthony for brewing such fantastic beers and to my staff for working hard at getting the bar to where it is now in just 2 years. I am delighted with this news and know that they all will be too. This is something to be proud of".

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Good Beer Guide 2013

"The definitive rundown of the best places in the UK to get a pint of real ale, from cosy country inns to upmarket style bars " – Time Out Magazine

The 2013 Good Beer Guide celebrates 40 editions and a landmark 1000 British breweries.

The *Good Beer Guide 2013* was launched on 13 September featuring listings for the 4,500 best real ale pubs nationwide. This 40th edition of the best-selling beer and pub guide also contains information on over 1000 breweries and brewing companies operating in the UK today. The Guide reports 158 new breweries have opened in the last 12 months alone, a record-shattering number and the highest annual total in the Guide's 40 year history, taking the total number of UK brewers in the Guide to 1009.

It is the first time since the 1930's that over 1000 breweries have been in commercial operation in the UK. This astounding figure is five times more breweries than there were in operation 30 years ago, four times more than there were 20 years ago, and more than twice as many as there were a decade ago!

The production of the *Good Beer Guide* is only possible thanks to the efforts of CAMRA's membership who exhaustively collate and evaluate every entry in the Guide and are constantly looking to promote great real ale and the pubs that serve it. This is illustrated this year by over 1000 new pub entries appearing in the Guide that were not listed last year.



When asked what made the pub listings so unique *Good Beer Guide* editor, Roger Protz (pictured left) said:

'One of the most under-publicised aspects of the Guide is that it is the result of constant pub surveying by CAMRA's dedicated members over the course of a year, so in many ways this fortieth anniversary is testament to the tireless work of countless unpaid volunteers across the country who give up their time

to champion great pubs, whether situated on a city centre high street, suburban street corner, or in a small hamlet. Everyone in the CAMRA

Publications team thanks the members and we're sure they will keep up the good work for the next edition and the 39 after that!'

With more pubs now stocking quality real ale than at any time since the 1970s, competition for places in the Guide gets tougher year on year but that hasn't stopped some pubs establishing themselves as regular entrants, none less so than the **Nursery** in Heaton Norris. The Hydes brewery pub first appeared in the *Good Beer Guide* in 1984 meaning it has now made it into 30 consecutive editions.

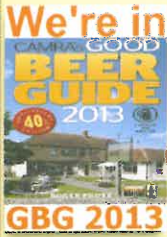
This Grade II listed building is an inter-wars classic and its original layout and fittings have earned it a place on CAMRA's National Inventory of Heritage Pubs. It's no museum piece though and remains a well-used community local and a fine example of what a pub should be – so much so that it was named CAMRA's National Pub Of The Year in 2000. Situated on a quiet suburban back street, the Nursery features quizzes, live music and excellent food to keep its customers more than happy.

Manager Simon Wetton commented; "I appreciate the recognition thanks, publicity like this doesn't come around very often. I remember the day we took over the Nursery and sampling the cloudy bitter! However within days the beer was spot on thanks to my mentor and step father George Lindsay who deserves most of the recognition for turning a back street local into a now famous pub".

Other pubs for which the 2013 guide marks a landmark include Bar Fringe on Swan Street, Manchester which is celebrating 15 consecutive years and The Knott on Deansgate which marks 10 years. Both bars were trendsetters in their respective areas of the city, leading the way with quality cask ales from the then infant micro-brewing scene and a range of imported beers many of which had never been seen in Manchester before.

Newcomers to the Guide include Port Street Beer House in the Manchester's Northern Quarter which despite being less than two years old has firmly established itself as a favourite with beer fans. With an almost unrivalled selection of beers from some of the most innovative and exciting brewers from the UK and across the world, Port Street attracts customers from across the country.

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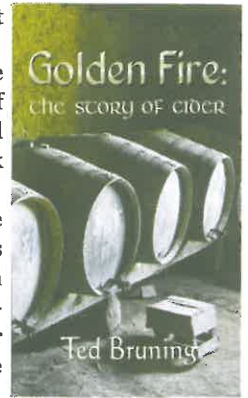
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Book Review

Golden Fire: the Story of Cider, Ted Bruning

This book presents itself as "the first attempt...at a narrative history of cider."

As an established licensed trade journalist, much-missed former editor of CAMRA's newspaper *What's Brewing*, and major contributor to CAMRA's 2009 book *Cider*, Ted Bruning comes well equipped to the task. As the author admits, however, the paucity of sources leaves many gaps which it is difficult to bridge except by supposition. Even the terminology lays traps, with the Anglo-Saxon word *beor* translatable variously as beer or cider. It's generally believed that the Normans introduced large-scale cider making, not to mention numerous apple varieties, to these islands, but Bruning finds little evidence, and sees early cider making as an activity largely confined to the estates of the nobility, constrained as it was by the need for the expensive technology of a press. It was not until the 17th and 18th centuries that cider really began to take off, aided by the agricultural revolution and the writings of such pioneers as John Evelyn. At one stage cider might almost have become Britain's national drink, and it may have been the highly intensive nature of grain cultivation in the arable east of England that denied it that status. Cider and perry, by contrast, were, by-products of a relatively low-intensity mixed farming enterprise.



After the agricultural revolution, of course, came the industrial revolution, and here again cider was late to the party, the first hydraulic press not being installed until 1870 (by William Gaymer in Norfolk). Bruning is especially good on the new spirit of scientific and technological improvement abroad in the early 20th century, and makes a plausible case for the early 1920s as a golden age of cider drinking. World War II, however, brought rationing and labour shortages, and was succeeded by a period of poor harvests and austerity (sound familiar?) in which a shortage of investment capital meant producers struggled to build a national market.

Before long, the brewing industry was to be transformed by the first of many waves of merger and acquisition, and the cidemakers were to find themselves largely surrendering their independence. This was to mark a shift in the nature of the industry and its products, from a tradition akin to that of fine wine to a view of cider as simple "commodity" drink perhaps best epitomised by Strongbow, introduced in 1960.

Ted Bruning guides us through these developments with a sure hand, the more so in the more recent periods for which better records exist, and takes us through the ups and downs of the modern period up to the current and continuing revival of craft cider. While celebrating the diversity of the current craft scene and drawing attention to many of its luminaries (though curiously there is no mention of Mike Johnson of Ross-on-Wye Cider, whose mentoring activities have been a key influence), he adds a cautionary note in referring to the lack of profile and "organised infrastructure" in craft cidemaking.

This book can be thoroughly recommended as a brief guide to cider's history by an author thoroughly committed to its survival and prosperity as a drink of quality. It might usefully have incorporated more on such topics as the development of cidemaking machinery, but it could be argued that is a topic for another book. And while the author has an enviably fluent style, some well-chosen illustrations would have helped speed the tale along.

Privately produced, the book may not be widely available at bookshops, but can be had from the admirable Beer Inn Print (beerinnprint.co.uk) – and Amazon will even do you a Kindle edition. **RPJ**

The Cider Circuit



This month we are offering you the chance to win a 36 pint "box" of cider as we re-run our Cider Circuit. Not only that but it is once again very easy indeed to win a prize. All you have to do is visit our participating pubs and buy a pint or a half of traditional cider or perry, and then get the bar staff to put a sticker on the pub's entry on the form below. Get 12 stickers and you will win a large bottle of traditional cider or perry. Get a sticker from all participating pubs and you will not only get a bottle of cider or perry but you will also be entered into the draw for the 36-pint box. We hope to have some other cider and perry prizes, too.

The Cider Circuit runs from Saturday 6 October to Sunday 11 November. Completed forms should be sent to; Cider Circuit, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9HD to arrive no later than Saturday 17 November. If you are entering the grand draw, make sure you specify whether you would prefer dry, medium or sweet cider. **Please make sure you include your name, address, telephone no. and email address so we can contact you.** All the prizes will be presented at a special cider afternoon to be held at the Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde on Sunday 2 December from 2pm onwards.

Dulcimer 567 Wilbraham Rd Chorlton M21 0SD	Pi 99 Manchester Rd Chorlton M21 9GA	Elektrik 550 Wilbraham Rd Chorlton M21 0AE	Marble Beer House 57 Manchester Rd Chorlton M21 0PW	Costello's Bar 18 Goose Green Altrincham WA14 1DW
Old Market Tavern Old Market Place Altrincham WA14 4DN	The Font 7-9 Wakefield St Manchester M1 5NP	City Arms 46-48 Kennedy St Manchester M2 4BQ	Knott Bar 374 Deansgate Manchester M3 4LY	Castle Hotel 66 Oldham St Manchester M4 1LE
Crown & Kettle 2 Oldham Rd Manchester M4 5FE	Marble Arch 73 Rochdale Rd Manchester M4 4HY	Friendship 353 Wilmslow Rd Fallowfield M14 6XS	Angel 6 Angel St Manchester M4 4BQ	Micro Bar Arndale Market High St Manchester
Bar Fringe 8 Swan St Manchester M4 5JN	New Oxford Bexley Square Salford M3 6DB	Cheshire Ring 72 Manchester Rd Hyde SK14 2BJ	Magnet 51 Well'ton Rd Nth Stockport SK4 1HJ	Crown 154 Heaton Lane Stockport SK4 1AR
Railway 1 Avenue St Stockport SK1 2BZ	Ye Olde Woolpack 70 Brinksway Stockport SK3 0BY	Swan with 2 Necks 36 Princes St Stockport SK1 1RY	Star Inn 2 Howard St Glossop SK13 7DD	Globe 144 High St West Glossop SK13 8HJ
White House Water St Stalybridge SK15 2 AG	Waters Green Tavern Waters Green Macclesfield SK11 6LH	Park Tavern 158 Park Lane Macclesfield SK11 6UB	The Macc 1 Mill Green Macclesfield SK11 7PE	Oddest 414-416 Wilbraham Rd Chorlton M21 0SD

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High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

High Peak Pub News

With Frank Wood

A pub in Hadfield near Glossop that shut last year, the **Masons Arms** on Station Road, has recently been the subject of a heated public meeting in the village. Not because of opposition to it closing as a pub - it had sold no real ale for many a year and the pub was frequently visited by the police towards the end of its days - the uproar has been because Tesco intend to turn it into one of their stores. The village however, has several mini markets already, which have given good service to the village, not to mention three newsagents and a branch of the well known Mettricks butchers. They will all be under increased pressure if it happens and there may well be closures.

Better news from Hadfield however. Another pub that closed some time ago, the **Spinners Arms** on Hadfield Road, once a highly rated Boddingtons pub, is set to reopen. Local businessman Mark Coxon has been preparing it internally for a re-opening, possibly by the time these notes are out. Mark tells me that he will be selling real ale. As he is totally free of tie, expect some interesting local beers turning up there. A full report will follow after it opens.



During the August Bank Holiday weekend, another successful beer festival was held at the **White Lion** at Disley (pictured above). I called in and found it fairly active and the selection of beers very good. Also that weekend the **Hare & Hounds** at Otterspool (between Marple and Romiley) held their first festival; again a huge success. The other festival that used to happen in the area over that weekend was at the **Dog & Partridge** in Bridgemont near Whaley Bridge. Alas the pub has now closed and prospects of it reopening are in much doubt I believe.

Another **Hare & Hounds**, this time the one outside Stalybridge Celtic football ground, has now shut for good and re-opened as the Hawthorn Gallery. **Stalybridge Labour Club** is back to normal after last year's fire and when I visited recently there were three beers on sale. One will always be from Thwaites (Wainwrights) as the brewery has assisted greatly in

refurbishing the bar area and financially. Phoenix, Hornbeam, Moorhouses and Wadworths beers had been seen in the early couple of weeks. I tried the Thwaites Half Nelson which was superb.

The **White House** in Stalybridge now hosts a musical duo every second Thursday. Robin Sunflower and Danny Bromeley (from the Kyla Brox band) have teamed up together and create an easy listening sound that is chilled and conversation can still carry on round it. Worth a listen. The full Robin Sunflower band plays there on the last Friday in each month. The beers are good too, with five always on offer which include some interesting guests (Marble beers are very popular here). On my visit there were two from Hydes and three guests. They have also just started doing bar food, with very competitive prices.

Finally a mention to a local band I have seen twice recently called Featuring Stavros who are very good, with two brothers Loz & Nat Barnes on guitars. They played the Globe & the Moon and Sixpence during late August and have further local gigs lined up, and are worth seeing.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

The *Pint to Pint* article in Saturday Daily Telegraph has run features in the past year or so of a few pubs in the OT circulation area. These have included the **Ashton Arms** at Oldham, **King William IV**, Greenfield and a trio of everybody's favourites, **Stalybridge Station Buffet**, Stockport's **Crown**, Heaton Lane, and most recently, the **King's Arms** in Salford. The columnists will have their own criteria for the pubs they choose. Certainly one criterion must be the sale of good beer and in these cases they have chosen well.

Closed for a while for a good refurbishment, the former Board Inn in Whaley Bridge re-opened as the **Drum and Monkey** in early September. This is a job well done. A large carpeted area is traditionally and tastefully furnished. The bar area is stone floored, with contemporary bar stools, with foot rests, and large casks for tables. New owner Chris Bennett has certainly achieved a good balance with imaginative furnishing and decoration. Chris is grateful to William Robinson, of the former owning brewery, for his help when purchasing the freehold of the pub and in the setting up of the free house which is now the Drum and Monkey. The pub will be open from 4.30 till late Monday to Thursday with earlier opening on Fridays. Saturday and Sunday will see hours of noon till late.

On opening day beers were from the Marston's empire, Bitter, Pedigree and Wychwood Bountiful. Marston's Bitter was on good form when I called. It is planned that the third pump should be used for guest beers which are likely to be from local microbreweries. As I have noted before about this pub in its previous guise, it deserved to succeed. Let us hope that the Drum and Monkey takes off. Welcome and good luck to all concerned.

Another recent visit to the **Beehive** at Combs confirms its status as a good place to dine at on weekday lunchtimes. The Menu Rapide is very good value, and even at lunchtime booking is recommended. Beers are from the Marston's empire, Beehive Bitter from Brakspear/Wychwood, Pedigree and Banks's Fields of Gold on this visit. This last was a beer in good form and to my taste, if a bit pricey.

At the **White Horse**, Whaley Bridge, Phil Cottrell accesses beers from the Punch Finest Cask list. A recent choice was Butcombe Gold 4.4%, which was well worth trying. For many years Butcombe brewed only Butcombe Bitter, a very enjoyable beer, but more recently they have offered their drinkers a wider choice. Certainly drinkers at the White Horse have plenty to choose from.



A recent call at the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge found a good range of Robinsons beers. I missed Continental Blonde, but Dizzy Blonde was as ever worth trying. Round in the Black Brook Valley both the **Old Hall / Paper Mill** at Whitehough (pictured above) and the **Navigation** at Buxworth provided a range of Abbeydale beers during August, augmented with other fine products of course.

More info on the **White Lion** at Disley. About 40 beers were available during the weekend. They were a good geographical mix, and a good mix of styles. Of those tried, B&T Edwin Taylor's Stout, Cross Bay Sunset and Cotleigh Buzzard Dark, stand out. With other festivals around that weekend, the White Lion does remain one not to miss. Make a note for next year.

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Curmudgeon



A Pump too Far?

OPENING TIMES is a magazine produced by the local branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, and so obviously promoting the availability of real ale is one of its core aims. If a pub has put on real ale, that is naturally reported positively as a "gain", whereas if it has been removed, it is viewed negatively as a "loss". Any pub encountered on a "Stagger" serving only keg beers will be briefly dismissed as "no real ale". So it's not surprising that some pubs, feeling they may be missing out on publicity, have decided to put real ale on their bar where there was none before. If they can make a go of it, that's all to the good.

However, real ale isn't just like any other product – you can't just stock it and forget it. You have to take some degree of care to look after it properly, and it also needs a certain level of turnover to stop it going off. It's also, unlike in the past, no longer a matter of simply replacing keg bitter with cask bitter, as real ale brands are now very much distinct from keg. So you have to do one or both of persuading your existing drinkers to switch, and attracting new customers who want to drink it.

In recent months, sadly, we have encountered a handful of previously keg-only pubs that have put real ale on, but haven't been succeeding on the above criteria. The beer offered has varied from extremely tired, through borderline "on-the-turn", to absolute vinegar. In the last case, it was handed back and a refund provided without question.

"Opening Times" is entirely within its rights to severely criticise licensees for not looking after their beer properly. But, if poor quality is entirely due to low or erratic turnover, does it maybe need to be accepted that some pubs, because of the profile of their trade, are never going to be fertile soil for real ale, and they should not be criticised too harshly for recognising that stocking it is simply not viable?

Sorry, This Beer's Off!

ON A TOUR of Scotland, some friends called in to a hotel in a remote location on the North-West coast. They were pleased to see a handpump on the bar, and so ordered a round of pints which they took outside to drink. However, apparently the beer was so vile that they just left it on the table and walked away. Given that they are not exactly a bunch of shrinking violets, I was surprised to hear that they hadn't gone back in and asked for it either to be changed or a refund given.

Admittedly, sometimes you feel that you just can't be bothered, particularly if the beer's only borderline returnable and it's somewhere you won't be going again. I have occasionally left near-full pints and walked away that in a familiar pub I would undoubtedly have returned with a comment like "sorry, but this really isn't on very good form today". After all, you're going out for a relaxing drink, not a confrontation.

But, to my mind, if beer is blatantly sour or murky, then really it's almost your duty to take it back and politely request that something should be done about it. British people are still too often unwilling to "make a fuss" or "cause a scene", and this reluctance to point out poor beer ultimately does the reputation of real ale no good. On several occasions I've seen people who really should know better struggling through seriously below-par pints that should have been sent straight back.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

(comments on these articles can be left on the website)

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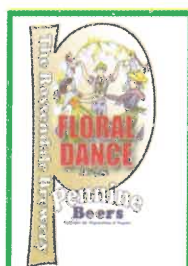
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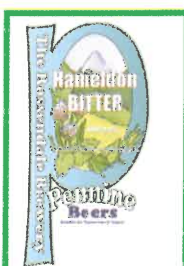
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Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes



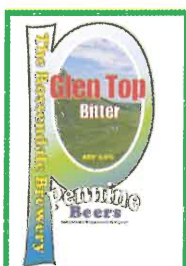
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A full bodied, rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and obvious roast barley dominance.



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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Rail Ale

For the first time in a number of years, passengers arriving or departing Manchester by rail can enjoy a cask conditioned ale at the station (as long as the station is Victoria). Two handpumps have been installed at the "Metro Bar" on the station concourse. While the venue with its ornate tiling and stained glass dome could have the potential to rival Newcastle's Centurion Bar or the Sheffield Tap if it was cleaned up a bit, the beer range needs a significant change if it were to rival the station bars of other major cities. The beers on sale at the Metro Bar have been Greene King Old Speckled hen and Greene King IPA.



City News

There has been a change of management at **Knott Bar** on Deansgate in the city centre. Former manager Tim Jackson left the pub in early September and is taking a break from the pub industry, telling OT before he left that he was looking forward to getting his weekends back. The pub, which has just been included in the Good Beer Guide for the 10th consecutive year, has been in the capable hands of assistant managers Mandy and Alex since Tim's departure. The pub's new manager is Simon Carroll who had previously spent nine years at the Oxford on Oxford Road near Manchester Royal Infirmary, he is due to start the job as Opening Times went to press.

Immediately across Deansgate from Knott is **Atlas**, a fairly unassuming fully glazed corner building. The bar is actually owned by Punch Taverns, the country's biggest pub owner who announced a £145,000 two week refurbishment of the bar during September. By the time you read this the bar should have re-opened with several major improvements and a new food menu. No news at time of going to press whether cask ale will feature.

Two new Northern Quarter outlets include cask beer in their offers. On Tariff Street (just around the corner from Port Street Beer House) the former Ten has reopened as **Kosmonaut**. There is a small but well put together bottled beer list – three Belgian Saisons (Dupont, Urthel and the atypical Silly), various Brooklyns and Anchors and some German stuff.

On the end of the bar is a handpump with a changing guest beer – Kelham Island Pale Rider when OT called.

At the other end of N4 the **Blue Pig** has opened on High Street. It's run by the Odd chain and alongside a nice line in food offers two changing guest cask beers, which so far have included ales from Lancaster, Phoenix and Hornbeam breweries.



Altrincham

There has been joy and heartbreak at Altrincham's **Wheatsheaf Coach House**. Rosie, one of the pub's Marmoset monkeys gave birth to two baby monkeys in mid September, only to lose one of them a day later due to complications arising from being dropped by one of the parents. Baby number two (pictured above) was reported to be doing well.

Also in Altrincham, real ale has returned to the **Station**, directly opposite Altrincham Interchange. The pub has just had a major refit including an extension to its kitchen. On re-opening after the refit, it was reported to be selling Caledonian Flying Scotsman.

In the Suburbs

Real ale has also returned to Hulme with Timothy Taylor's Landlord now being served at the **Three Legs of Man** on Stretford Road. The beer is on sale at £2.70 a pint and when OT called, the beer quality was fine. Following the re-appearance of cask ale in pubs further down the road in the Old Trafford and Stretford area (the **Robin Hood**, **Gorse Hill** and **Tollgate**) there is now almost a viable pub crawl all the way from Stretford Mall to the city centre.

It's great to see licensees having the courage to try cask ales in their pubs - finally putting pay to the old adage of "there's no demand for it mate".

The **Urmston Hotel** (you guessed it, in Urmston) has re-opened after a major refit which gives an increased prominence to dining at the pub. The pub has a new conservatory extension to the west end but is pleasing to see that the pub's traditional tap room known as "Danny's Vault" has been retained.

A new smoking shelter accessed from the Vault complements a second heated area to the west side. The children's play area to the rear has been refurbished. Four cask ales are now on the bar.

Two new "lounge bars" are planned for the South Manchester area. The 25 strong "Loungers" group has announced it is in negotiations to take on properties in Fallowfield and Didsbury. The Fallowfield outlet will be in the former Remedy/Bar XS on Wilmslow Road next to Sainsbury's. Only limited details have been provided on the Didsbury site, but the revelation that a 3000 square feet site is subject to change of use permission being granted would point to the former Pizza Hut unit which has stood empty for several months now. The group describe their bars as "informal, neighbourhood food led cafe/bars open all-day everyday where families, friends, and locals can come for a coffee, a drink, or something to eat in a relaxed comfortable environment". Reports are that at least some of the bars stock cask ale. The group has said it may be looking at up to 10 sites in Manchester as it expands.

In West Didsbury, Marston's **Four In Hand** which stands at the junction of Palatine Road and Lapwing Lane (opposite the forthcoming West Didsbury Metrolink station) was undergoing major building works as Opening Times went to press. Both the interior and extensive patio area had been completely ripped out and the entire site was fenced off. Banners outside were advertising for staff. No information was available as to when the pub will re-open or whether it will still be called the Four In Hand when it does - look out for news in next month's issue.



Chorlton's **Duffy's Bar** is organising a trip to York Races on Saturday 13th October. The bar's regular trips are becoming very popular, as Opening Times went to press they were expecting to fill a 49 seater coach and making contingency plans to add a second bus. The York trip follows on from the Duffy's Open Golf Day which was held at Chorlton Golf Club on Sunday 30th September.

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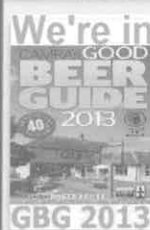
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Pub News Extra

Stockport latest and other news

The former Robinson's **Flying Dutchman** on Higher Hillgate will be re-opening as the **Fairway**. It will be free of tie, selling cask ales and ciders. It also promises to be providing food and entertainment too. The building was sold by Robinson's on 30 July and it had been closed for some months prior to that. As we went to press builders were at work giving the back yard a facelift; it is unclear as yet how the interior will look, but we suspect it will retain a traditional look



The new licensee at the **Union** in Reddish is Graham Crowther. This is his first pub although not his first entry in to the licensed trade as he has previously run a bar in Spain. It is good to see he has added a second handpump to sell a changing beer from the Robbies' portfolio alongside the regular Unicorn.

A swift visit to longstanding Good Beer Guide pub, the **Davenport Arms** at Woodford found it selling the new Robinson's seasonal beer - Green Bullet Pale Ale (4.4%). It drinks very well, and this is surely a beer that proves Robbies can brew hoppy beers. Very different from their core range of beers.

Meanwhile in nearby Bramhall, the **Victorian** (JW Lees) has had a change of name (formerly the New Victorian), a refurbishment, and a change of management. Former boss, Max Kalton has gone travelling, and in his place since mid-August comes award-winning Alan Warnock whose seven year career with Lees has seen him at the Elizabethan in Heaton Moor, Boat & Horses, Chadderton, and latterly the Lord Sheldon at Ashton Moss.



The refurbishment has been done with a light touch, with the emphasis on keeping the place very much a pub, rather than becoming a bar-restaurant. Décor is a modern green and mushroom colour-scheme with pictures of old cartoons, and maps wallpaper in parts of the ceiling features. The furniture has been re-upholstered throughout and is very much in keeping with the overall look - solid and traditional. A new gas fire has been fitted to add a focus and charm. Over the oval dining table by the curved window sits a vast chandelier (or spider lamp as Alan calls it), which is quite a thing to behold. Food is still a big thing too, with the chef offering a mix of the JW Lees house menu and his own bespoke dishes. Food is served daily from 11 till 9pm.

For those who enjoy drinking outside, the Victorian has a choice of three areas - a smart beer garden at the rear, the Courtyard smoking area to the side, and the front of the pub. A quiz now runs every Thursday, whilst a football team has also been formed. On the bar are now four JW Lees beers - Bitter and Brewers Dark are standard along with two seasonal ales. These were Top Brass, a 3.8% golden ale, and Supernova, a 3.5% dark ale with roast and chocolate notes. Also on the bar is cask cider in the form of the Governor (like the JW Lees' beer of the same name, this too has been created by chef-cum-celeb Marco Pierre-White especially for the Lees estate). Prices on cask have been lowered too, so you'll pay £2.75 for the Bitter, £3 for the seasonals. The outside décor of the building will be tackled next year it is hoped

Good news from Hazel Grove. The **Fiveways**, for years a non-cask Greenalls house and then a pubco outlet that dabbled with cask has been bought by Holt's Brewery. No news yet of the likely beer range but it is, we think, bound to be an improvement.

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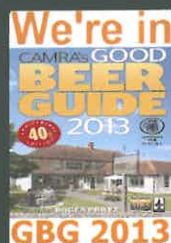


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Festivals Coming Up

The SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) Great Northern Beer Festival fast approaches and CAMRA with SIBA North (the largest of the SIBA Regions) are hosting a beer festival of some difference at the Mercure Hotel, Piccadilly Gardens (entrance on Portland Street). Different? It certainly is as all of the 250-plus beers will be served via any one of 64 hand pulls, every one of which will be fitted with a tight sparkler and served the way God intended them to be served - with a typical "Northern Head". Every fresh pint will be put into a fresh, clean glass.

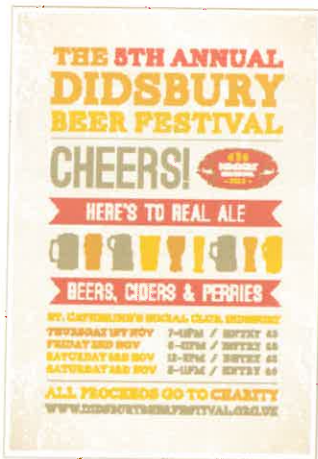


The event is open to the public after SIBA have judged the best beers from this Region in their eight categories. The winners of each category will then be judged against each other to decide the best beer in the Region. The winners of the categories will then go on to a further National SIBA Competition later on. There are some 150-plus brewer members of SIBA in this Region so the ranges will be awesome!

You may think that this would be an expensive event? Well no! Entry is a mere £3 (50p discount to CAMRA members) which includes a refundable deposit on a souvenir glass. Food will be available throughout as well as soft drinks and snacks. In addition for those who like their Ciders and Perries, there will also be a selection of those available as well! Plus there will be a selection of bottled beers (not all Real Ale in Bottle) as SIBA also run their bottled beer competition on the same day. The prices of the drinks will be very competitive!

Didsbury Beer Fest is Back

The SIBA event runs from 25 to 27 October. The following weekend sees the return of the popular Didsbury Beer Festival. Celebrating the fifth year of the Didsbury Beer Festival, the 2012 event will continue with the theme of local and regional ales. Since being awarded CAMRA's Cask Champion in 2008, Didsbury's Beer Fest has continued to showcase a great range of ales, ciders and perries and grown year on year. Last years over 4000 festival goers were welcomed.



This year's event will see extra space, over 150 beers and double the amount of the very popular, ciders and perries....and plenty of food. As in previous years, entertainment will be on the club stage and this year will include the Railway's (West Didsbury) favourites Matt and Alan's acoustic set on the Saturday afternoon and the festival regulars Swinging Affair on the Thursday to name but two of the featured band sessions. Early on Saturday afternoon session there will be a Meet the Brewer event (Happy Valley Brewery). The festival takes place at St Catherine's Social Club, School Lane, Didsbury. 1st to 3rd November. See the Ad in this issue of OT for more information and visit www.didsburybeerfestival.org.uk

At the **Railway** on Portwood, Stockport, landlady Sue Hitchen has decided against running the popular Cider & Perry Festival this year. However to compensate the pub will be running a winter ale festival in **te November or December.**

News in Brief

Stockport lost a little bit of its brewery history in August with the demolition of the old Bell's Brewery on Hempshaw Lane. Bell's was taken over by Robinson's way back in 1949 but the brewery remained in production until the 1960s. Echoes of Bell's ownership can be found in several local pubs – notably the internal glasswork at the **Armoury** on Shaw Heath,



Pub Shorts

On Hillgate in Stockport, the **Bishop Blaize** is now in use as offices. The building still appears to be up for sale though. Elsewhere in town the Peters Square Tavern on St Petersgate has reverted to its original name of the **Imperial**. Cask ale is now firmly back with three Thwaites beers on handpump – Nutty Black, Original and Wainwrights.

There's a new footpath between Hayfield and Little Hayfield which makes the short walk between the two villages a lot more pleasant and considerably safer than walking on the footpath on the main road. Hopefully it will encourage drinkers to include the **Lantern Pike** on their future Hayfield pub crawl itinerary, especially in the summer months. The Lantern Pike is one of only two pubs in the area in the Good Beer Guide but doesn't always see its fair share of pub crawlers so with a bit of luck the new footpath will encourage them to visit this excellent pub which sells a good pint of Taylor's Landlord alongside changing guest beers.



Pub Awards

Local pubs did well in the Great British Pub Awards run by licensed trade paper The Publican's Morning Advertiser.

The Best Newcomer Award went to the **Eagle & Child** in Ramsbottom while the Best Managed Pub was judged to be the **John Millington** in Cheadle Hulme. This is a well deserved accolade for manager Matt Abbott who has really made his mark on this Hydes house which has also gained a well-earned place in the new 2013 Good Beer Guide

Winner of the Best Live Music & Entertainment Pub was the **Lass O'Gowrie** on Charles Street in Manchester City Centre. Best news of all though was that this Greene King leased pub then went on to be voted Great British Pub of the Year. This is great news for leaseholder Gareth Kavanagh and pub manager Lisa Connor.



The judges praised the way the Lass had risen to the challenge from the loss of trade following the closure of the BBC building across the road. Lost trade has been replaced and the pub had gained a reputation as a venue for all manner of live events and activities. Many groups base themselves at the pub which has created a real community feel. In addition the judges commented favourably on the pub's cask ale and food offering. OT would also like to offer its congratulations to this excellent pub which is something of a City institution.

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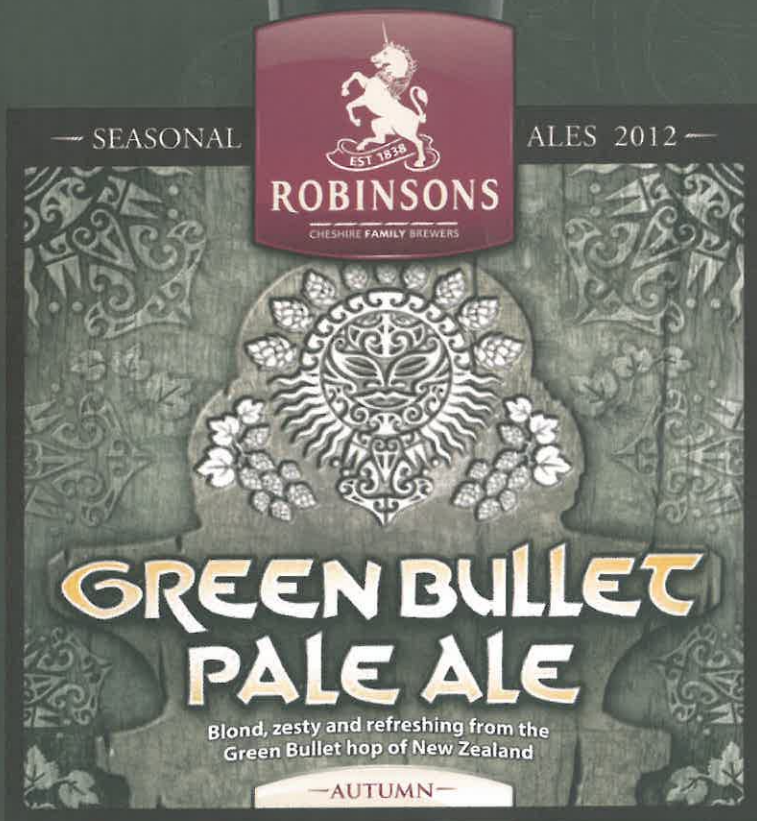
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