

November 2012

Opening

TIMES

THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE

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

Cask Ale Booms – see page 18
New Brewery for Manchester -
see page 15

**OVER 600 OF THE
FINEST ALES SOLD
NATIONALLY AT
J D WETHERSPOON**
FEATURING GREAT ALES SUCH AS



BRITAIN'S NO.1 SUPPORTER OF MICROBREWERIES

**THE MANCHESTER
& COUNTY**
49 PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 236 9206

THE MOON UNDER WATER
68-74 DEANS GATE, MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 834 5882

THE PARAMOUNT
33-35 OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 233 1820

THE WATERHOUSE
67-71 PRINCESS STREET,
MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 200 5380

**THE FORD
MADOX BROWN**
OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 256 6660

THE SEVEN STARS
THE PRINTWORKS,
MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 817 2980

MARDI GRAS
THE ORIENT,
TRAFFORD CENTRE,
MANCHESTER
TEL: 0161 629 2130

Subject to local licensing restrictions and availability at participating free houses.

wetherspoon



**Proud to be a CAMRA National
Pub of the Year 2008 finalist**



The Crown Inn, Heaton Lane

*16 Handpumps
Real Cider Guest Lagers Foreign Beers
Lunches Served
12 - 3pm Monday - Friday
Special Occasions Catered For*

*Folk & Acoustic night
every Tuesday from 8.30 pm*

Come along and have a sing or strum

Open every day from Noon

<http://thecrowninn.uk.com/>

The Railway

Avenue Street, Portwood, Stockport



15 handpumps serving beers from
Pennine Outstanding and
Moorhouses plus Pictish Brewers
Gold at all times

Changing guest mild and three
additional guest beers at weekend

Changing guest cider

Large range of foreign bottled beers

Open 12-11 Monday to Saturday;
12-10.30 Sundays

Pub of the Month

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Vale Cottage on Kirk Street in Gorton.

When the pub closed in the summer of 2011 many people thought that was that. Another victim of a dispute between a licensee and the pub's owners (Enterprise Inns in this case) had bitten the dust. With the track record of closed pub-chain establishments, the prospects of re-opening looked bleak, when along came knights in shining armour, Geoff and Tina. Who re-opened the pub in early November.

What swayed them? They already knew of the homely atmosphere and friendly staff and clientele. In fact the staff are so dedicated that Lesley, Ria, Carole, Kath, Janet, Nora, Debora and not forgetting Rita the cleaner have not missed a shift between them over the past year. Many clubs and groups meet here, a recent capture is the Gorton MCFC supporters who meet every Wednesday. The first and third Mondays of the month sees acoustic jam nights along with occasional visits by Morris dancers and bell ringers. Coupled with delivering good home cooked meals and excellent beer what more does a pub need?

So why are we bestowing this honour on Geoff and Tina? They have rescued a pub that could have so easily have remained boarded for years, or even been demolished. Now, after serving an excellent pint of Taylor's Landlord, usually one of the Witches from Moorhouses and a changing guest, they have a thriving pub. All this enthusiasm and commitment has resulted in Enterprise putting their hands in their pockets and doing up the outside of the building.

How do you find the Vale Cottage? You need to know which footpath to take off Hyde Road, Gorton. With your back to the Waggon and Horses, take the country footpath to the right of the butterfly garden and orchard. Traverse the Gore Brook, part of Gorton's Heritage area, and the Vale Cottage can be glimpsed through the trees. When approached this way you can understand their strap-line — The country pub in the city.

Busses 201, 204 and 205 will get you there from Manchester (with 206 daytime only) while 203 travels between Manchester and Stockport.

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



Proud Sponsors Of
PUB OF THE MONTH!

NEW CATALOGUE OUT NOW!

STEPHENSON'S
Supporting The Catering Trade Since 1868

Buy Online:
stephensons.com

Visit The Largest Catering
Cash & Carry In the North!
Next to the Alma Lodge on the A6

telephone:
0161 483 6256

disposables · cleaning · crockery · glassware · bar & kitchen equipment · cutlery

The Magnet Freehouse

51 WELLINGTON ROAD NORTH, STOCKPORT SK4 1HJ

13 real ales from breweries near and far

Ever-changing range of bottled beers

we're open..
4-11pm Mon-Weds, 12-11pm Thurs-Sun

WWW.THEMAGNETFREEHOUSE.CO.UK

Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Cask on the Up

This year's Cask Report confirms the trends apparent in recent years. Cask Ale in 2011 was in actual growth. That's not just declining at a lower rate than the rest of the beer market but actually growing overall. Cask ale has also overtaken keg beers as a percentage of total beer sales. All good news and we cover it in more depth elsewhere.

However it's not all rosy. The last time cask beer underwent something of a boom, in the 1980s, it became an almost essential part of the drinks offering in what seemed like every pub. Although some CAMRA diehards might hail that as something of a triumph, it wasn't. Cask ale needs commitment from the licensee, and a willingness on the part of the pub's customers to drink it. The first can often encourage the second.

However what we saw then, and what we may be starting to see now, is cask appearing in pubs where it is not well presented and where it clearly has low sales. The worst advert for cask beer is bad cask beer so while every new cask outlet may superficially be a cause for celebration, it is quality that that counts – and that beats quantity every time.

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.

News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address – 45, Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. Phone 0161 477 1973. E-mail – stocam@btinternet.com. Advertising rates on request.

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

Subscriptions – available at £11.00 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to Opening Times). Apply to David Sharpe, 1 Chiltern Drive, Woodsmoor, Stockport, SK2 7BE. Tel 0161 483 3708

Copy Date for the December issue is Friday 9 November

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Mike Rose, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Tony Icke.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Opening Times 338 - Contents

Pub of the Month - Vale Cottage	Page 3
Stager - Hazel Grove	Page 7
National Winter Ales Festival / Minimum Pricing	Page 8
Curmudgeon	Page 9
Speciality Beers of Britain	Page 10
Beer of the Festival Awards	Page 10
Pub News	Page 11
Brewery News / Winter Warmer Wander	Page 15
High Peak News	Page 17
The Cask Report	Page 18

Your Local CAMRA Branches

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

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

Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517; mikewrose@gmail.com

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

Wednesday 7th – Social: Salford Arms, Chapel Street, Salford. From 8pm. (NM)

Thursday 8th – Liverpool Road Social: Commercial Hotel 8pm; Castlefield Hotel 8.45pm; The Wharf 9.30pm; Deansgate 10.15pm. (TRH)

Thursday 8th – Branch Meeting & New Faces Social: includes Meet the Brewers from Privateer and Ringway Breweries plus buffet. Railway, Wellington Rd North, Stockport. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 10th – Local Cider of the Festival presentation to Mad Hatters Cider: Railway, Portwood, Stockport. From 8pm (SSM)

Monday 12th – Branch Meeting at Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNEC)

Monday 12th – Meeting with William Robinson (joint MD Robinsons brewery): Red Lion, Lower Withington, SK11 9EA. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 14th – Most Improved Pub Award: Eagle, Collier Street. Salford. Starts 8pm (NM)

Thursday 15th – Branch AGM: New Lloyds Hotel, Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton. Guest Speaker John Clarke. Hot pot supper. Starts 8pm (TRH)

Friday 16th – Cheadle Hulme Stagger: Start Hesketh 7.30; Governor's House 8.30. (SSM)

Tuesday 20th – New Faces Social & Meet the Brewer: Oddest, Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton. A chance to meet the staff of Conwy Brewery. Starts 7.30pm (TRH)

Wednesday 21st – Branch Meeting: Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month Award: Vale Cottage, Gorton. From 8pm (SSM)

Friday/Saturday 23rd/24th – Chorlton Challenge. All Chorlton's real ale pubs and bars in one go! Details from contact. (TRH)

Saturday 24th – Social: Union Club Beer Festival, Alderley Edge. From 7.30pm. (MEC)

Saturday 24th – Beer of Festival Silver Award to Peerless Brewery. Details from John Clarke – 0161 477 1973

Sunday 25th – Regional Cider Meeting: Waterhouse, Princess St, Manchester M2. Starts 1pm. (All)

Tuesday 27th – Preliminary Good Beer Guide selection meeting: Cotton Tree, Bollington. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 28th – Campaigning Crawl: English Lounge, High St, 7.30pm; Sinclair's, Exchange St, 8pm; Mitre, 8.15pm; Old Wellington, 8.45pm; Crown & Anchor, 9.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 29th – Broadheath Social: Railway 8pm; Navigation 9pm; Old packet House 10pm. (TRH)

Sunday 2nd – Cider Circuit Awards afternoon: Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde. From 2pm. (All)

Wednesday 5th December – AGM: Beartown tap, Congleton. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

A fabulous
festival of
medieval
merriment!



Winter

Sat 15th & Sun 16th
December, 2012

Stockport Victorian Market Hall

Wassale

-  Winter Ales,
Ciders and Meads
-  Hearty Hog Roast
-  Perfect Pies
-  Medieval Minstrels
and Players

Advance tickets only, £10 per session
exchanged for a 'Flagon' and two
£3 beers or cider on arrival

Available from **High Peak Beer Co.**
Unit 25a, Stockport Victorian Market Hall
(Card payment facilities now available)
and Stockport Tourist Information Centre
Staircase House, 30 Market Place.
e-mail: tickets@winterwassale.co.uk
Tel: 07730 034326

Session 1 Saturday 15th December
7.00pm til 12.00am (midnight)
Medieval Fancy Dress Competition
For the Lord and Lady of the Wassale
Lots of prizes to be won.

Session 2 Sunday 16th December
11.00am to 4.00pm
Family day with children's entertainers
and Old Father Christmas.
(children free of charge)

Session 3 Sunday 16th December
6.00pm to 11.00pm
'Jest for Laughs' Court Jesters
Fancy dress competition - more prizes
to be won!

Winter
Wassale
2012



High Peak Beer
Promotions Event

 STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

@winterwassale  Winter Wassale

Over 300 beers

including foreign beers plus cider and perry

WEDNESDAY
23RD JANUARY

5.00PM-10.30PM

ADMISSION **£2**

(£1 Discount for Concessions, NUS,
OAP's & Forces, all with ID)

THURSDAY
24TH JANUARY

12.00-10.30PM

ADMISSION **£2**

(£1 Discount for Concessions, NUS,
OAP's & Forces, all with ID)

FRIDAY
25TH JANUARY

12.00-10.30PM

ADMISSION

Until 4.30pm **£3** After 4.30pm **£5**

SATURDAY
26TH JANUARY

12.00-10.30PM

ADMISSION

All Day **£5**



Organised by



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

In Association with

CityLife
co.uk

CO-SPONSORED BY

**Manchester
Evening News**

**AT THE SHERIDAN SUITE,
OLDHAM ROAD, MANCHESTER M40 8EA**

**FREE to CAMRA members
Wednesday and Thursday
£1 DISCOUNT other times**



**ONLY 15 minutes walk or 5 mins bus ride
from the City - £2 return fare on First Bus**

Over 18's only except Saturday afternoon when families most welcome
For further information visit: www.alefestival.org.uk

**ACORN
BREWERY**



**OF
BARNSELY**

**This leaflet is sponsored
by Acorn Brewery**

SUPPORTING



Stagger

Hazel Grove to Heaviley with Peter Edwardson

On a dry but unseasonably cool evening, July's Stagger was one of the longer ones, taking us about one and a half miles down the A6 from Hazel Grove through Great Moor to Heaviley. All the pubs visited were on the main road. We began at the **Anchor** in Hazel Grove, a Robinson's pub very near to two others that have recently closed, the Grove and the Woodman.

It's a four-square, white-painted pub, with the bar against the back wall and the interior somewhat opened out but still retaining the feel of four distinct areas which once would have been separate rooms. There was plenty of comfortable seating and everything seemed spick-and-span and well cared for. As befits the name, there was a fair amount of nautical memorabilia on the walls. Although early in the evening, it was already quite busy with a lively, bustling atmosphere. 1892 (formerly Hatters Mild) and Unicorn were available, dispensed via the now very rare free-flow electric pumps, that for the latter still being branded as "Best Bitter". The Unicorn was good; the 1892 falling a little short but still above average.

A short walk then took us to the **Phoenix** on the corner of Bramhall Moor Lane. A long, low building with mock half-timbering, this was once a Whitbread pub called the George & Dragon but has now passed into the hands of Greene King. The interior comprises two bar areas along the front and a more food-oriented lounge in an extension at the rear. The beer range was Greene King IPA, Old Golden Hen and Old Speckled Hen and Thwaites Wainwright. We had the Old Golden Hen and the Wainwright, both of which unfortunately were distinctly lacklustre, lacking in condition and too warm, suggesting they may have been the first pulled through that evening. Despite this, the pub was quite busy, with a generally youngish clientele, so were obviously doing something right.

Passing the entrance to Stepping Hill Hospital brought us to the **Crown** in Great Moor, a large Robinson's pub in the Edwardian style set back from the road behind a cobbled forecourt. Like so many others in the brewery's estate, it has been opened up a little over the years but retains something of a multi-roomed feel, with four distinct areas around the central bar plus

some seating in the main lobby running from front to back. It was fairly busy, but we were able to find some seats in the cosy front room on the right. Five beers were available – 1892, Unicorn, the rare Dark Hatters and Double Hop were all above average without being particularly remarkable, with the Double Hop perhaps slightly shading it – and Cumbria Way, which was not sampled.

We next crossed the road to the **Traveller's Call**, a much smaller and more intimate Robinson's pub with four rooms around the central bar. It comfortably outdoes the Anchor in the amount of nautical artefacts, with bells, portholes, ship's instruments and knots in abundance, and everything in shipshape condition. It was fairly busy, but we were still able to find a seat. 1892 and Unicorn were both well above average, the 1892 being slightly the better. It was felt to be a little early in the evening to sample the Old Tom.

Crossing back to the west side of the road brought us to the **Dog & Partridge**, which in the past has always seemed the least impressive of the three Great Moor pubs, a record that was maintained tonight. Externally it's quite an imposing four-bay redbrick building, with an original central core to which wings have been added on either side at a later date. The interior retains much of its original layout of five or six separate rooms, but many years ago the upper half of most of the walls was removed. Since my last visit, one of the internal walls had been completely removed, and it has received what to my eye is a rather inappropriate refurbishment, with bare floorboards and odd beige upholstery which surely is going to show the dirt. It was also the least busy pub so far, with two of the six "rooms" in darkness. Robinson's again, with 1892 being good, but sadly both Crusoe and Dizzy Blonde distinctly disappointing. Unicorn was not tried.

Next came by far the longest walk of the evening, about fifteen minutes from Great Moor into Heaviley and the **Duke of York**. This white-painted pub is joined on to the end of a terrace of shops and stands at a slight angle to the road. Internally it is not unlike the Dog & Partridge used to be, with the upper half of internal walls removed but still much dark

wood in evidence and plenty of comfortable seating. It was busy, with a younger clientele than the three Great Moor pubs. Robinson's Unicorn was the sole cask beer. Unfortunately it was rather tired and lacking in condition, possibly due to low turnover.

A short walk then took us to the **Bamford Arms** on the corner of Nangreave Road, a large free-standing Beefeater restaurant with attached Premier Inn. The ground floor has a spacious hotel-style bar area with a variety of comfortable seating areas. It took several minutes for the barmaid to appear out of the back, but when she did we were served with Black Sheep Bitter, which was rather disappointing, and Marston's Pedigree, which was fairly good.

A head was popped around the door of the Wheatsheaf to see if it was serving any cask beer (it wasn't, despite the sign on the outside wall) and we then crossed the A6 for the final time to the **Blossoms**, a prominent early Victorian brick building in the sharp angle of the junction with Bramhall Lane. This pub has been designated by Robinson's as an "Ale Shrine" and the two former vault-style rooms at the front restyled into comfortable lounges with a traditional feel. Six beers were available on handpump – Crusoe and Unicorn were not tried, while 1892, Dizzy Blonde and the new limited-edition special Continental Blonde were all above average to good. The first pint of Cwrw Ddraig Aur to be pulled was unfortunately vinegary, but it was willingly changed and a new barrel put on, although the new brew was no more than average.

So ended an interesting evening with a good variety of pubs, although maybe one that might not appeal to someone who doesn't like Robinson's beer. There was plenty of beer that was pretty good and which you would have been happy to drink all night, but nothing that quite scaled the heights of "excellent" or "outstanding". As always, these are only the impressions of one group of people on one particular night – why not try the pubs for yourself and see what you think?

The Blossoms has gained new tenants since this visit. Below (left to right) the Anchor, Travellers Call and Blossoms.



National Winter Ales Festival 2013

The last National Winter Ales Festival to be held in Manchester will take place at the Venue (Sheridan Suite, Oldham Road) from the evening of Wednesday 23rd to Saturday 26th January 2013.

It will be **free** entry to CAMRA members on the Wednesday (5pm - 10:30pm) and all day Thursday (noon to 10:30pm) with a discount for the Friday and Saturday (again noon to 10:30pm). • Yet again more beer than ever before with a selection of over 300 varieties (Cask beer, Foreign beer, Cider, Perry and Real Ale in Bottles).

The event "kicks off" on Thursday morning with the judging of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain (CWBOB) competition as well as the Regional (North Western) Winter Beer Of Britain and is then followed by the Trade Session (both of these are invitees only). We then open the event to the public at 5pm and soon after the announcements will be made as to which Beer is the best winter Beer of Britain! • This is your very last chance as "locals" to attend this event as the National Winter Ales Festival is moving to Derby for 2014! • If you like your beers local then get yourselves there!

For those who like to attend more local beer festivals then fear not! The Branches of Greater Manchester have plans to hold a new Manchester Beer and Cider festival to replace it from 2014. The dates we are looking at are from Thursday 25th – Saturday 27th January 2014. • More news will follow!



The Deansgate



321 Deansgate, Manchester

4 cask beers including guest ales

Home cooked food every day 12 noon - 8pm

**Roof Bar
and Terrace**

**Function Room
for Hire**

Open 12 - 11 Sunday to Thursday

12 - 2am Friday & Saturday

Telephone 0161 839 5215

Minimum Pricing On Hold

The Scottish government has put plans to introduce minimum pricing on alcohol on hold as legal challenges against the move continue to mount. The Scottish government has confirmed it will not be introducing minimum pricing until legal action brought against it by drinks producers has been settled.

The decision means that the proposal, which was due to come into force in the spring of next year, has now been put on hold indefinitely with an introduction date several years away assuming the Scottish government beats legal challenges from drinks producers and European legal issues.

Minimum pricing was already hitting difficulties after the European Commission ruled last month that it was opposed to it on the grounds it broke free trade laws.

The Crown Inn

**98 Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor
Tel: 0161 432 5548**

Over 5 cask ales from SIBA range

Selection of lagers

Quiz every Thursday 9 pm

Entertainment last Saturday every month

Roast spuds 6 pm every Sunday

Great Atmosphere

Great People - Great Beer

All under one roof

The Award Winning

NEW OXFORD

*A warm welcome awaits you at this
2012 Good Beer Guide listed pub*

*7 Belgian & 4 German beers
on draught at all times*

Plus up to 16 Guest Ales

Two Guest Ciders

120 Belgian Bottled Beers

Food 12 - 4pm Monday to Friday

Open 12 noon - 12 midnight

www.thenewoxford.com

11 Bexley Square, Salford

(just off Chapel St)

Tel 0161 832 7082



Curmudgeon

Careless with the Facts

Back in September, the BBC screened an episode of “Panorama” entitled “Old, Drunk and Disorderly?”, taking a predictably hysterical line towards levels of drinking amongst older people, and presented by the erstwhile “thinking man’s crumpet” Joan Bakewell (incidentally a native of Stockport). The programme made the somewhat surprising claim, apparently based on research by Sheffield University, that imposing a minimum alcohol price of 50p per unit would, over a ten-year period, save the lives of no less than 50,000 older people in England. When the total of deaths wholly or mainly attributable to alcohol amongst all age groups is running at about 7,000 a year in England, such a figure is hard to believe, to say the least.

This was challenged by a member of the public and, after investigation, it turned out that the original figure had been overstated by more than four times. The actual figure, based on the research, was more like 11,500. This led to an embarrassing retraction on the BBC website, and Ms Bakewell being called back in to the studio to re-record the relevant sections of the programme for BBC iPlayer.

It doesn’t say much for the standards of journalistic rigour practised at the BBC nowadays that such a self-evidently questionable claim was allowed to pass without challenge. And, given that an error of this magnitude managed to get through the system of academic peer review, what credence can we give to any of the research produced by the University of Sheffield that is being used to support the case for minimum pricing?

Even 1,150 a year, which is a sixth of the total, seems a questionable figure. The truth is that, as it has never been tried, we simply do not know what the impact would be, and it is well-known that across-the-board reductions in average consumption are not necessarily reflected equally amongst all categories of drinkers. Alcohol consumption is already steadily falling year-on-year, and I would guess that, in practice, it would be hard to spot any significant variation from existing trends. This is also another example of a growing trend to portray the older generation as being irresponsible and criticising them whenever they have the temerity to actually enjoy themselves.

Real Beer, Real Counties

Local Stockport brewery Robinson’s have recently, as part of their rebranding exercise, adopted the identity of “Cheshire Family Brewers”. Some have jibbed at this, saying it is living in the past, and that Stockport was moved from Cheshire to Greater Manchester in 1974. However, it was never the intention of the 1974 local government reforms to change geography. As a spokesman for the Department of the Environment said at the time: “The new county boundaries are solely for the purpose of defining areas of local government. They are administrative areas, and will not alter the traditional boundaries of Counties, nor is it intended that the loyalties of people living in them will change.”

Since then, we have seen a whole raft of piecemeal reforms to the 1974 structure, which has resulted in a confusing and inconsistent mishmash of administrative areas with different statuses and levels of power. As argued by that admirable organisation, the Association of British Counties (www.abcounties.co.uk), “what we need is a fixed frame of popular geographical reference that is independent of the successive whims of local government reorganisation”. This happens in Northern Ireland, which has been divided into 26 unitary districts, but where people still continue to strongly identify themselves with its six traditional counties. So why can’t the same work in England?

Stockport, in geographical terms, is undisputably within the county of Cheshire, and long may it and its beers remain so!

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com



THE BOLLINGTON BREWING CO.

**COME AND SEE OUR
AWARD-WINNING BEERS
IN THEIR
NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT.**

**THE VALE
INN
BOLLINGTON**



**THE PARK
TAVERN
MACCLESFIELD**



BREWING PASSION
VALEINN.CO.UK | PARK-TAVERN.CO.UK

Speciality Beer of Britain North West Winners

Earlier this year the North West Round of the Champion Speciality Beer Of Britain competition was judged at Chorlton Beer Festival.

The winner was Manchester's own Marble Ginger. Pictured right is competition organiser Heather Airlie with Marble Head Brewer James Campbell at The Marble Arch



Silver also went to Greater Manchester - Dunham Massey Chocolate Cherry Mild. CAMRA Greater Manchester Regional Director Ralph Warrington, pictured right, presents to the award to Dunham Massey owner and head brewer John Costello in the hop garden of the brewery



The Bronze award was won by Lonesome Pine from Ulverston Brewery. The award was presented at the Ulverston Beer Festival.

Pictured right are Brewery Liaison Officer Stephen Lewis, Trafford & Hulme Secretary Caroline O'Donnell with Anita Garnett and Paul Swan of Ulverston Brewery (alongside the statue of Laurel & Hardy outside of beer festival venue, Ulverston Coronation Hall)



Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season

The Trafford & Hulme Branch Pub of the Season for Autumn 2012 is The Hillary Step, Upper Chorlton Road, Whalley Range.

Pictured presenting the award is Trafford & Hulme Branch Vice-Chair Paul King, pub manager Simmi Sandhu and owner Rob Goater. The bar sells a varied range of cask ales with handpumps dedicated to beers from Thwaites, Phoenix and Thornbridge breweries as well as two further guest ale pumps. In addition there is a good range of bottled and draught continental beers.



Beer of the Festival Awards Blue Bee and Blackjack

Two further awards from the Stockport Beer Festival Beer of the Festival competition have been presented.

A very enjoyable trip to Sheffield involved visits to many of the exceptional free houses that the city has to offer, not least the Rutland Arms which also does a very nice line in food. The pub is also one of the principal outlets for Blue Bee Brewery, winner of the Beer of the Festival award.



First port of call was the brewery itself where Head Brewer Richard Hough had laid on some beers for the group to sample. Richard and his wife Kath then accompanied us on our city tour. Blue Bee have been asked to brew the special beer for next year's beer festival. Our picture shows Richard receiving the award for Nectar Pale from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA chairman John Clarke.

In mid-October we were closer to home when we paid a visit to Manchester's Blackjack Brewery, winner of the Best Newcomer award for the excellent Aces High IPA.

The brewery is based in a railway arch not far from the Marble Brewery and has really made a name for itself since launching earlier this year. A range of beers has been produced (look out for the excellent stout) and brewer Rob Hamilton is having trouble keeping up with demand. One of the two beers available for us to sample was a honey beer which was superbly balanced, managing to avoid the cloying sweetness that dogs some beers in that style.



Our picture shows Beer Festival Organiser Jim Flynn (left) presenting Rob Hamilton with his award.

New to CAMRA?

Trafford & Hulme branch are holding a special event to welcome new members to the CAMRA family.

Whether you are one of the 10,000 people who have joined CAMRA in the last 12 months or a long standing member who has never attended a meeting or social event, the branch would like to invite you to Chorlton's Oddest Bar on Tuesday 20th November. There will be a chance to meet other members of the branch including members of the committee and you can also learn more about the process of brewing real ale as the brewer from North Wales's Conwy Brewery will be in attendance.

New website for Gay Real Ale Drinkers

CAMRA's Lesbian and Gay Real Ale Drinker (LAGRAD) group have launched a new website for gay real ale fans in Greater Manchester. www.lagradmanchester.org features details of social events organised by the Greater Manchester LAGRAD group which was formed in August 2011. The group meets regularly at The Molly House in the city centre and organises a range of socials further afield which have included beer festival trips and even a pub crawl on the Manchester - Altrincham Metrolink line.

Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Fresh Pi

Pi (Chorlton) has a new sibling bar in Altrincham which opened on 12th October. Pi (Altrincham) is the third in the locally owned group which also has a bar in Liverpool's Mossley Hill district. The bar has taken over the former Brew House on Shaws Road which closed at the end of August.



All the bars in the Pi family share an extensive range of draught and bottled beers from around the world which are offered up in a regularly updated "Beer Bible". In Altrincham there are three cask ales, with regular Tatton Blonde being joined by regulars from varied brewers such as RedWillow, Acorn, Salamander. There are eight fonts serving world beers including America's Brooklyn Lager & Belgium's Blanche Des Bruxelles.

The bar is being managed by Ben Reynolds who was the original manager of Pi (Chorlton), taking it into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide in 2010 where it has stayed ever since. Ben moved to the suburbs of Liverpool two years ago to set up Pi (Rose Hill) quickly establishing it with real ale fans there and earning a listing in the new 2013 Good Beer Guide.

Alongside the extensive range of beers, Pi cook up simple but sumptuous pies from pie-makers-extraordinaire; Pie Minister. A selection of four pies from the extensive Pie-Minster range are available at any time, usually two of which will be vegetarian. Initially the bar is opening from 4pm to Midnight seven days a week to allow the finishing touches to be applied during the day. By the time you read this, the bar should be open all day but call to check before travelling.

Yet More for Chorlton

Despite there already being over 20 bars in the area, Opening Times can report that the area has seen no fewer than three new bars and restaurants open in the last couple of months.

Two new restaurant-bars have opened on the upper part of Manchester Road near Chorlton Leisure centre. At number 123 is **Bistro 1847**, a vegetarian and vegan restaurant which also

has a restaurant on Mosely Street in the city centre. A few doors down is **De Nada** on the site of the former Chopin bar which opened on October 5th. De Nada is much more of a bar with four hand pumps on the bar serving two ales from Lancaster Brewery and one each from Brightside and Boggart. The venue is small but has been tastefully decorated in a simple style. The bar specialises in South American dishes with reports of food quality being excellent.

The third new opening took place on 19th October. Going under the interesting moniker of **Morley Cheeks**, the latest addition to the Chorlton scene has taken over the former Argyles on Barlow Moor Road near the "four banks". The Reverend N Morley Cheek was the minister of St Clements Church between 1791 and 1805. The new bar has four shiny handpumps serving two ales from Thwaites and a guest which on opening night was Quantum Blackberry Stout. The fourth serves real cider from the Weston's stable. The bar has been tastefully redecorated giving a more modern look with a feeling of more space than its predecessor. Regular live music is planned.



In addition to these three new openings, The Tea Hive on Manchester Road near to Marble Beer House has also made an application for a premises licence.

The counter to these new openings is the closure of Scotts Hill Bar Restaurant, also on Manchester Road which only opened this summer replacing Charango. However, rather than being a loss to the area's bars, word on the Chorlton streets is that the bar has been taken over and will shortly join Common and Port Street Beer House as the latest addition to the "A Place Called Common" family to be known as the Beagle, OT understands).

Within the more established pubs and bars of Chorlton, **Oddest Bar** has refreshed its beer range and is now rotating new breweries including Blackjack, Crewe's Offbeat and Middleton's Wilson Potter alongside established favourites like Titanic, Hornbeam and Phoenix. **Electrik** bar have recommended their Sunday lunch service after a short down time while their kitchen was refurbished and extended. Down on Chorlton Green, The Bowling Green has replaced Wychwood Hobgoblin with Jennings Cumberland Ale. After a tentative start, cask ale has really taken

off at the **Bowling Green** with the Jennings featuring alongside Timothy Taylor's Landlord.

Stretford Revival

The real ale revival in the Stretford area continues with the addition of cask ale to the range of the **Quadrant** on Great Stone Road. The pub's location midway between Chorlton and Chester Road makes it popular with Manchester United fans avoiding the busier places nearer to the ground. The cask ale range is regularly changing having included Fullers London Pride, Sharp's Doombar and Greene King Old Speckled Hen since the handpump arrived in June. The pub will be closing for a refurbishment in November which will include the expansion of its dining area.

City News

One of the city centre's oldest pubs, The **Sawyers Arms** on Deansgate is currently closed for a long planned refit. The pub is being moved into owner Orchid Pub's "Pizza Bar & Kitchen" brand. Heaton Moor's Plough is already part of this portfolio with the main difference at the Plough being the menu offering a range of pizzas and burgers rather than more traditional pub fayre. Opening Times will report on whether the impact will be similarly minimal on the Sawyers.

Opening Times reported last month of extensive refurbishment going on at the **Four In Hand**, West Didsbury. We can now report that the refurbished pub is due to open on 12th November. The refurbished pub will retain much the same internal layout as before but will have a new outside area, a childrens playground and an extended kitchen.



Following the retirement of long-time licensee, Keith from the **Bulls Head** (Marstons) in Manchester, his replacement is Paula who is keen to maintain the pub to the same degree. One thing she is happy to see though is the beer range increase from the current five, to six. A new handpull will be installed to accommodate this. This is likely to be used for guest beers.

More Pub News on page 14

THE BEER SHOP

13 KINGSLEIGH ROAD, HEATON MOOR



The Beer Shop is now fully open until 22:00 every night for on and off sales. Check the website for future events following the successful "Meet the Brewer" with Toby Mackenzie of RedWillow. Tutored tastings and more Meet the Brewer events are planned for the new year. Visit www.ukbeershop.com or call 0161 947 9338 for updated information.

OPENING HOURS: 4-10PM MONDAY TO THURSDAY; 2-10PM FRIDAY; 12-10PM SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

the
**Mark
Addy**

**HOME OF ENGLISH FOOD
AND REAL CASK ALES**

Banks of the Irwell,

**Opposite Peoples History Museum
Stanley Street, Salford M3 5EJ**

Phone : 01618324080

www.markaddy.co.uk



PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP TEL. 01706 627009

Best Bitter, Old Oak, Navy, Double Dagger,
Monkeytown Mild, Arizona, White Monk,
Pale Moonlight, Midsummer Madness, Bantam,
White Monk, Black Shadow, March Hare,
May Fly, Sticky Wicket, Double Gold,
Flash Flood, Black Bee, White Tornado,
Last Leaf, Massacre, Porter, Snowbound,
Wobbly Bob, White Hurricane, Uncle Fester,
Christmas Kiss, Humbug, Tyke, Thirsty Moon

**MORE CHOICE
BETTER BEER**

International Brewing Awards



1998

Wobbly Bob



2002

Navy



2002

Wobbly Bob



2004

Wobbly Bob

the Vale Cottage

"The Country Pub In Town"



Timothy Taylors & Moorhouses Ales
Plus Weekly Guest and Seasonal Ales.



Acoustic Jam Nights
1st & 3rd Monday of each month



Fine Home Cooked
Food Available &
Traditional Sunday Roast

Sunday to Friday Lunchtime 12.00 - 2.30pm
Monday to Thursday Evenings 7.00 - 8.30pm



1 CROFT BANK, GORTON, MANCHESTER, M18 8WH. TEL: 0161 230 7347

?

General Knowledge Quiz
Tuesday From 9pm



Legendary Music Quiz
Thursday From 9pm

Opening Times:

Mon - Sat
12.00 - 4pm / 7.00 - 11pm
Sunday
12.00 - 11.00pm

The Cheadle Hulme

47 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 7AA
Tel: 0161 485 4706

We have four Joseph Holt's Beers and
three changing Guest Ales

Carvery and Full Menu

Monday to Saturday

Carvery 12:00-20:00 Full Menu 12:00-20:45

2 main courses for only £10.50

Sunday

Carvery & Full Menu 12:00 - 20:00

2 main courses for only £12.50

Quiz every Thursday night

Live Entertainment - last Saturday of month



The Waters Green



96 Waters Green,
Macclesfield,
Cheshire SK11 6LH
Tel 01625 422653

Ever Changing Guest Beers including:

Fyne Ales, Town House, Buxton, Pictish,
Hawkshead, Oakham
and many more.

Your Hosts, Brian and Tracey

Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

This **is** not a free house

Cheshire Line Tavern

Proud to be included in The Good Beer Guide



We serve a range of
Marston's Quality
Cask Ales

Food served daily
from 12noon
~ British Beef Always! ~

Manchester Road, Cheadle, SK8 2NZ. 0161 428 3352

ELECTRIK

publicsocialhousecafebar

Some good reasons to come in for a pint:

Acorn
Boggart
Blue Monkey
Copper Dragon
Dunham Massey
Concrete Cow
Fuzzy Duck
Hawkshead
Hornbeam
Ilkley
Ludlow
Montys
Ossett
Phoenix
Prospect
Riverhead
Rossendale
Mallinsons

Real Cider and Scrumpy from
Bristol, Devon & the New Forest.
Freshly prepared food to order
CAMRA pub of the season
& the coffee is very good too..

Electrik, 559 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton.
www.electrikbar.co.uk

Pub News Extra

Rectory Remains Real

"Neither the Pack Horse and Old Rectory sold cask beer" we confidently said in last month's Stagger write up of the pubs around Stockport Market Place. Well no, actually. While the Pack Horse does indeed offer no cask beer, that's not the case at the Rectory. In fact two cask beers are normally sold, recently Wells Bombardier and Black Sheep Bitter. Previous manager John Ditchburn kept a good pint of the real stuff and the current managers still continue to follow in his wake whereas many restaurant chains of this ilk are unadventurous and serve nothing but keg beer. Apologies.



Fairway Opens

The Fairway (the former Robinson's house, the Flying Dutchman) on Higher Hillgate in Stockport opened on Saturday October 13th. The owners are Stuart and Emma Driver. Stuart has had pubs in the past including the New Inn at Castleton (Rochdale),



Copperfields Bar/ Southlands Hotel in Adswold, and most recently the Dog & Partridge at Great Moor. Seeing as how being a tenant of a pub company or brewer was so expensive, he decided to purchase the Flying Dutchman to enable him to have full control over costs, beer choice and such.

For people familiar with the old Dutchman, the layout of the new pub will seem fairly similar, but Stuart assures us that under the surface a great deal of change has taken place - indeed there are entirely new toilets, a new kitchen, new fitted and upholstered bench seating, new décor and lighting, plus an upgraded outside smoking / drinking area. All of the glazing has been changed too, and the cellar facilities upgraded.

Four or five handpulled beers should be available. On opening these were Millstone Vale Mill and 3 Shires (both at an eminently reasonable £2.20 a pint), Wychwood Hobgoblin and Black Sheep Best. Quantum Brewery is just around the corner so it would be good to see some of their beers available, too. Obviously, trade will determine how the beer range fares, because with success the range and variety will grow.

Lunches will be reinstated, and Stuart tells us there may be entertainment on weekend nights. With the loss of so many pubs on Hillgate (including, of late, the former Bowling Green being converted to flats), this is really great news, that a quality operator has put investment and cask ale back into the area. You may ask why the name change to Fairway? Well, although Stuart does enjoy a game of golf (Driver, Fairway, geddit?), well that is not the reason for the name. His father suggested Fair Play, but that was deemed unsuitable, so Fairway was chosen instead. A new name for a pub given a fresh start.

Tinkling the Ivories

Beryl Cosgrove, the landlady at the **Star & Garter** on Higher Hillgate, Stockport has had a piano installed and she is looking for a pianist with a view to starting a "sing-a-long" evening. If you can "tinkle the ivories" or indeed know someone who can, call in and give it a go! The piano has been tuned in readiness...



The George
15 Wellington Road North
Stockport SK4 1AF

Sun - Wed: 10am till 12pm
Thurs - Sat 10am till 2am

sky SPORTS HD 1
sky SPORTS HD 2
sky SPORTS HD 3
sky SPORTS NEWS HD

sky 3D

ESPN

SPECIAL OFFER: MON - WED
GOLDEN BEST / DARK MILD £1.85
LANDLORD £2.20

More News On Page 16

Brewery News

Local Family and Micro-Brewery Updates

Privateer Sets Sail

Manchester's newest brewery has a great address – it's on Temperance Street. With an address like that you know you just want it to succeed. And that seems pretty certain as owner Matt Jervis is a man with a plan for the success of his new Privateer Brewery which brewed its first beer in mid-October.



Matt comes to brewing from a long background in the pub trade, having run pubs and bars in Newcastle and Yorkshire. He was planning to buy his own pub in Wakefield but when this fell through he turned his mind to brewing beer rather than just selling it across a bar.

The plant (a 6.5 barrel copper and a 10 barrel mash tun) comes from the Madcap Brewery in Annan which has downsized, and brewing is carried out by Peter Curran who comes with a considerable amount of experience, including a stint at Moorhouses. Matt says his own role is that of "dogsbody".

The first beer is Amber at 3.8%. Like all of the planned beers it uses only American hops. Other core range beer will be Blond at 4.2% and Dark at 4.5%

Matt has plenty of ideas as to when and where his beer might be sold. Events involving beer, music and other attractions (some of which will include restored steam engines, another of Matt's interests) are being considered. He even has his eye on an export market including sales to Malaysia and China. It will certainly be interesting to see how this new concern develops. Beer should be ready for sale by the time you read this – Matt can be contacted on 07969 771102. One to watch.

Ringway Update

Beers from Paul Alderson's Ringway Brewery in Reddish are now out in the trade. Opening Times encountered Ringway Best in the Crown (Heaton Lane, Stockport) and was impressed by this well balanced copper ale with a good bitter finish. However it seems that it's the

3.8% Ringway Session that is proving to be the real hit. It seems to be selling out fast whenever it goes on sale Beer Festivals in Nottingham and Oxford have been supplied and this month Ringway beers will appear at Didsbury and Bury Beer Festivals.



Paul tells us there have been numerous requests for bottled beer so both Best and Session will be available in bottle in time for Christmas.

Quantum Collaboration

Colin Stronge, formerly of Marble Brewery and now head brewer at the Black Isle Brewery near Inverness, was back brewing locally last month.

His first stop was at Stockport's Quantum Brewery where he joined owner and brewer Jay Krause to make SK2. This is a follow up to last year's powerful SK1 (which featured in cask at this year's Stockport Beer Festival). SK2 will be about 8% (or so) and is a big, hoppy double IPA type of beer. Generously hopped with five varieties (Summit, Kohatu, Chinook, Cascade and Bramling Cross) the beer will appear in four versions. The "neat" version will be available in a few weeks. There will also be three barrel aged versions – white wine cask, red wine cask and whisky cask. One has been reserved for next year's Stockport Beer Festival!

Pictured here (left to right) are Colin, Jay, James Marsh and Claudia Ash (from Port St Beer House) who helped with the brew.



As this was written, Colin was due to be back in Manchester for collaborations with Blackjack and Marble breweries.

Still they come

Martin Wood who used to run the Railway, Portwood, is back in town. He's buying his first pub in Stockport to run as a free house. It will also have a brewery installed. More next time.

Winter Warmers

Trails and Festivals

Next month we will be launching our popular Winter Warmer Wander. We have yet to finalise the list of pubs taking part but here are the bulk of them. Full details will appear in the December issue:

Marble Arch, 57 Thomas Street, Waterhouse, Paramount, Castle, Micro Bar, The Wharf, Mark Addy, New Oxford, Cheshire Ring, Old Woolpack, Nursery, Navigation, Victoria (Withington), Royal Oak (Didsbury), Fletcher Moss, Milson Rhodes, Crown (Cheadle), Ashlea, Blossoms, Gateway, Arden Arms, Hinds Head, Magnet, Crown (Heaton Lane), Swan With Two Necks, Railway (Portwood), Calverts Court, Tiviot, Marble Beer House, Sedge Lynn, Friendship (Fallowfield), Sir Joseph Whitworth, Ford Madox Brown, Elektrik, Horse & Jockey (Chorlton), Parlour, Pi (Chorlton)

This year's Winter Warmer Wander is being sponsored by Robinson's Old Tom.



Winter Festivals

Of course the big one is the National Winter Ales Festival next January. There will be lots more about that in the next two issues of Opening Times.

To get you in the mood there are two festive events in mid-December. The weekend of Friday 14 to Sunday 16 December will feature two seasonal events.



The Railway, Portwood, will be staging its first ever Winter Beer Festival on Friday and Saturday. Landlady Sue Hitchens tells us that she plans to have eight festive beers on sale alongside the regular handpumped range (which may also have a festive feel, too).

On the Saturday and Sunday will see the Winter Wassail take place in Stockport's Market Hall. All sorts of festive goodies and events are planned for this, including mulled beer and cider.

THE CRESCENT



18-21 The Crescent, Salford, Lanc

www.thecrescentsalford.co.uk

0161 736 5600



**CURRY NIGHT EVERY THURSDAY 1700-2000
CHOOSE UPTO 3 CURRIES FOR £5.00**

Up to 9 Real Ales available

Up to 4 Real Ciders

Quiz night every Monday night for 21.30

Acoustic Night Thursdays

Car park & beer garden
to the rear of the building



Opening Hours:
12.00 – 23.00 every day

News Extra (2)

More From Manchester

In Withington, the **Victoria** (Hydes) has had a change at the helm. Out goes Mark Burns to be replaced by a temporary manager. The beer range including the guests will be maintained, so look out for further changes.

Barry from the city-centre **Circus Tavern** gave us a call to say that the cask offering in the pub has been doubled! Joining Tetley Bitter on the tiny quadrant bar comes Robinson's Dizzy Blonde. Barry is doing this to give customers increased choice. Although space is really at a premium, the friendly waiting staff guide you to a seat (the waitress service really is a godsend here) in either the front room or back room (with TV). Both rooms are plastered with hundreds of photos of footballers, boxers, comics and celebrities who have frequented the pub over the years. The back room's particular focus is on football material. Give a go, and see what you think.



O'Neills in Didsbury now has cask ale, usually Thwaites Wainwright and Sharps Doombar. A shrine to all things Celtic, with the flags on the ceiling, the recipes for Irish favourites writ large on the walls, and the historic references at every turn. The Temple Bar it is not, but then it is not pretending to be. As a casual drinking or dining experience this is perfect for that Irish-lite flavour, and indeed that is what sets it apart from its Didsbury neighbours. Essentially one large room with wooden screens that divide the areas, it is comfortable and welcoming. There is a stage area to the left that is used for weekend entertainment.

All Change at the Salford Arms

It's been keg for years and at times not the most welcoming pub. The good news is that has all changed and the Salford Arms is now back in the cask beer mainstream. A five man team (Ken, Chris, James, Tom and Jonathan) took over in mid-August and wasted no time is taking the pub by the scruff of the neck and giving it the shake up it needed.

The bar operation is headed up by Tom Taylor (pictured right) who comes from a three year stint at the Angel on the other side of town. With that pedigree it is no surprise that Tom is a cask ale fan and so wasted no time in returning the pub to the real ale fold. Up to four ever changing guest beers are now sold and the range has included beers from the likes of Kelham Island, Phoenix, Cheshire Brewhouse, Blackjack, Pictish and Abbeydale. Tom told OT that the cask beer is selling well (and quality has certainly been spot on when we have called) and as trade increases the plan is to increase the number of beers sold.



Tom's brother Jonathan runs the kitchen and a well thought out menu is available from 1pm to 9pm every day except Tuesdays. The home made nachos come with a strong recommendation from your editor.

The pub has been thoroughly redecorated, and is furnished with an eclectic mix of sofas and fixed seating. There is a notably nice line in bric-a-brac, with some old records fixed to the walls an attractive feature.

The Salford Arms is on the corner of Chapel Street and Bloom Street in Salford (close to Salford Central station) and on numerous bus route from Shudehill and Piccadilly. It is open from 1pm to 11pm Mondays to Saturdays with a 10.30pm closing on Sundays. Well worth a visit.

Wojtek - The World's Best Bear, Now The World's Best Beer.

Beartown brewery have just won the accolade of 'The World's Best Pale Bitter'. Now available in cask and bottles.



beartownbrewery.co.uk
01260 299964



High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

September's local beer festivals tend to dominate this month's column. The **Swan** at Kettlethulme held its annual festival. Despite little publicity this was of course a success. Fine weather on the Saturday afternoon allowed a good crowd to gather outside in the pleasant September sunshine. There was a changing range of beer in the pub, with the main festival beers stillaged in an out building. A score and a half of beers, mainly from northern England tempted the palate, with a couple of ciders available from Snails' Bank and Gwynt y Ddraig. There were some darker beers, but the emphasis tended to be on paler brews. Of the beers that I sampled Leeds Yorkshire Gold and Marble Northern Quarter were my choices of beers of considerable merit. All the beers tried by a group of us were considered to be in good form. Look out for the Swan Festival in early



September next year.

The **Old Hall** at Whithough, Chinley, holds its main Beer and Cider Festival in September. This must be the biggest pub beer festival in northern England, if not the country. Well over 100 beers were available during the weekend and with more than two dozen ciders and perries to go at, there was certainly something for everybody's taste. Beers came from the Midlands and Northern England mainly, with a strong presence from local microbreweries. The beers were available at four bars, the main bar, the festival bar in the main building, the patio bar marquee, and across at the Paper Mill.

There were several darker beers to go at, with flavoured stouts and porters popular. Titanic Cappuccino Stout was available with or without chocolate sprinkles, and could even be had with Tia Maria coffee flavoured liqueur. And this at a real ale festival! This soon sold out on Saturday afternoon. Of course pale hoppy beers were in evidence and as to be expected were in good form. With so many to choose from even the keenest drinker could only scratch the surface. I enjoyed Prospect Nutty Slack as a dark mild, whilst paler products

worthy of note included Wood's Quaff, Red Willow Headless, Thornbridge Galaxia and Bollington Long Hop.

A recent discovery was **Rems Bar** in Chapel en le Frith. In a former guise this was the Chapel Bistro owned by Punch. Rems is run free of tie by a former tenant of the Royal Oak in Chapel. Marston's Bitter and Rems Ale are on sale. The latter is a house beer from the Happy Valley Brewery. Well worth a visit.

The **Shady Oak** at Fernilee always provides a decent pint of real ale. Marston's Bitter is the staple fare. Banks Fields of Gold was in good form on a September visit. This good beer has of course also been available at the **Shepherds Arms** in Whaley Bridge, along with Sunbeam and Brakspear Oxford Gold.

At the **Drum and Monkey**, formerly Board Inn, the plan to use the third hand pump for guest beers was coming to fruition in September with Happy Valley Sworn Secret and Little Rascal waiting in the cellar.

The range of beers available to Punch tenants seems to have increased. At the **White Hart** Arundel Trident, Adnams Topaz and Taylor's Landlord have been seen. Just as well kept have been Wolf Straw Dogs and Weetwood Cheshire Cat at the **Goyt**, both pubs in Whaley Bridge.

Finally a change of tenancy at the **Crossings** in Furness Vale. Peter and Lisa Stringfellow have moved on after a job well done keeping good real ale. In late September Pam and Ryan took over the tenancy. Pam has many years experience in the pub trade. No major changes are anticipated and food will be an addition fairly soon. When I called Unicorn and Green Bullet were available, the latter a really good drink. Welcome to Pam and Ryan, and every success in this new venture.



Hare & Hounds

By Tom Lord

This is another of our occasional articles on pubs in the High Peak and North-East Cheshire Branch area, and this time we are featuring the Hare and Hounds at Otterspool, near Chadkirk between Marple and Romiley.

The pub is situated on a bend in the road at the bottom of Dooley Lane alongside the river Goyt. It is handy for the Goyt Valley Way to and

from Stockport and up into Marple via Marple Dale.

There is definite evidence of licensed premises on the site since 1809. It is difficult to visualise now that attached to the pub on the Marple side, where the car park is now, was once a row of cottages. Their gardens were where the main road is now. The original main road is now left between the pub and the river.

For many years the pub belonged to Walker and Homfrays Brewery, then Wilsons, then a



free house and latterly passing in to the ownership of Hyde's Brewery.

Outside there is a pleasant drinking area and inside a good dining room and bar area which makes for a pleasant atmosphere to eat or drink or both. Currently it is a CAMRA National Good Beer Guide and Cask Marque pub and the beer available brings excellent variety to the area. Beers from Hydes and two or three regular changing guest beers are available plus real cider. Seasonal beer festivals are held, with the last one over August Bank Holiday featuring 23 different cask ales and cider.

Good quality food is served in a pleasant dining room and conservatory – Monday to Thursday 12.00 – 9.00 ; Friday and Saturday from 12.00 – 10.00 and Sundays 12.00 – 8.00. Mondays also features the 'Curry Club' and an enterprising 50p off cask ales.



Wednesday night features the regular pub quiz starting at 9.00pm, and each first Sunday evening in the month there is live music. All in all this is a pleasant pub in which to eat, drink and relax and well worth a visit.

Opening hours are Monday to Saturday 12.00 to 11.00 and Sundays 12 to 10.30.

How to get there: buses from Stockport, Marple, Mellor, Romiley and New Mills pass the top of Dooley Lane at the foot of Dan Bank, and a five minute walk down the hill brings you to the pub. Bus numbers 358, 375, 383, 384. For walkers the pub is 200 yards over the river bridge from the Goyt Valley Way.



Cask ale volumes grew in 2011 for the first time in 20 years, recording a 1.6 per cent uplift, says The Cask Report 2012-13, published last month.

Over the same period, cask also overtook keg as the most popular format for draught ale, increased its penetration of the pub market to 56%, and increased the frequency with which it is drunk by existing cask customers.

Report author Pete Brown says, "The Cask Report has been analysing the sector for six years now and while cask has been outperforming the beer market for most of them, this is the first full year of actual growth. Sales growth during a recession is an impressive achievement, doubly so against a background of declining overall beer volumes and a shrinking number of pubs.



"This excellent performance speaks volumes for the increasing popularity of cask among consumers, as well as a growing realisation among licensees that cask, as an 'only in pubs' drink, can help them drive footfall and sales. Pubs that sell cask are less likely to close than non-cask stockists – as witness cask's increasing share of the declining pub market."

Right range key to driving sales

Community, wet-led pubs still form the backbone of cask's distribution base, but it also increased its penetration in café bars and town centre circuit venues, demonstrating its growing appeal to younger drinkers.

For all pubs and bars, the key to a successful cask business lies in stocking the optimum number and styles of ales and promoting them effectively to encourage existing customers to drink more cask, and bring new drinkers into the category.

Brown says, "There is no magic 'formula' to tell licensees how many handpulls to put on the bar, or what they should be: it's dictated by their pub's location, style and customer base, which are all very individual.

"However, research tells us that, for most pubs that are serious about their cask ale, the choice isn't about whether to stock 'familiar' or 'unfamiliar' ales. Both have their place: even beer 'shrines' with a wide range would do well to have some nationally recognised brands on the bar and equally, any pub with more than two or three handpumps should be looking to introduce some less familiar brews, to appeal to more adventurous cask drinkers."

Celebrate

Brown says, "This year's Cask Report contains much to celebrate: actual volume growth for the first time in decades; continuing evidence of cask's ability to protect pubs from closure; an understanding of how the right range can drive sales and, perhaps most importantly, insights into how to convert three million current non-cask drinkers.

"Despite the decline in pubs and pub visits, cask is doing much more than hold its own. By taking the findings of The Cask Report and implementing them consistently and with commitment in their pub, licensees should be able to build a thriving cask business, offering our wonderful national drink to a growing number of enthusiastic customers for whom a glass of cask is an integral part of an enjoyable pub visit."

Is Keg still a threat?

While cask is clearly on the march, and keg in decline, one part of the non-cask sector seems to be undergoing something of a boom. This is the so-called "craft keg" market. What's that you may ask?

It has been pioneered by a small (but slowly growing) number of micro-brewers who experiment with all manner of ingredients and international beer styles. Unlike your common or garden keg beers these are different beasts. Unfiltered, unpasteurised and, if there is any force carbonation this is done at the brewery in conditioning tanks rather than being injected into the beer in the pub cellar. If done badly the beer can still be "cold and fizzy" and it's *always* sold at a premium (you might even say super premium price). It has been suggested that the average price is four thirds of an equivalent cask beer.

Is it going to take the country by storm? Is it a threat to cask? We think the answer is "no" on both counts. However it's out there so Opening Times' Alan Gent asked Alex Brodie, owner of the award-winning Hawkshead Brewery for his take on this thorny subject. Here's what he had to say:

"As a campaigner for cask ale all my drinking life (I joined CAMRA in 1973) who became a brewer specifically to brew real ale, I am not going to do anything to set back its revival.



"However the Campaign for Real Ale was, and should still be, all about choice. Michael

Hardman and friends founded CAMRA in 1971 to fight for our right to choose proper cask beer while the crazed keg marketeers of the sixties and seventies were trying to replace cask with keg, to kill cask.

"We beer drinkers won, CAMRA won, the regional breweries, who stuck with cask, won. There are now more than 900 breweries in the land, most brewing cask beer, most new. Cask is safe. The issue now is to protect the newly invigorated British brewing industry, big and small, including the remaining regionals – beer needs them, it needs their expertise, their resources, their skills and their pub estates.

"What matters is the quality of the beer not the manner of its dispense.... so long as there is choice. Cask ale drinkers can now drink local, not multi-national cask beer. New beers are now the most flavourful and exciting they have ever been. "Craft keg" from independent breweries gives local choice also to the drinkers of euro-fizz.

"The most positive development for beer is the number of young people now in the brewing industry (brewers and head brewers in their twenties and early thirties) and that is reflected in the growth of young drinkers interested in what I call proper beer, be it cask or keg.

"At Hawkshead we launched our keg Lakeland lager to offer an alternative to the big boys, and as an entry level beer which most definitely has seduced new drinkers to our cask beer. You ask is keg real ale? No of course not. (Nor incidentally are the likes of Budvar or most bottled beer.)

"Keg at a CAMRA beer festival? No. why should you. The clue is in the name. CAMRA is there to promote real ale. Full stop. Don't worry about keg. It is not a threat any more. It was only a threat when it was instead of rather than as well as cask.

Will keg dominate again? No not a chance. If there is choice, cask will win because generally it is the most flavourful and satisfying way to drink, certainly, in session volume. The real ale revolution is permanent. But there is still some way to go in promoting "proper beer" giving drinkers the choice of local or regional beer, well made, rather than industrial fizz or indifferent warm brownish beer, and keg has its place in that. (For example the only way to put local beer into many hotels and restaurants without cellars is via keg.)"

We will be interested to hear what Opening Times readers think about this – letters please. Download The Cask Report at www.caskreport.co.uk/



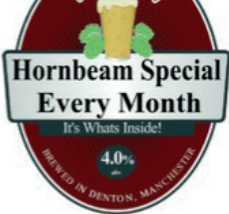
Hornbeam Brewery is an award winning Manchester based, craft micro-brewery producing distinctive high quality beers, full of flavour and character. We deliver throughout the Northwest and have a superb range of core beers and regularly changing monthly beers.

25% OFF
FIRST ORDER

Award Winning cask Ales

Home Bars

A favourite at the bar !



Hornbeam Brewery, Unit 1-1C Grey Street, Denton M34 3RU
Tel 0161 320 5627 Mobile 07984 44 33 83
E Mail: kevin@hornbeambrewery.com

Horse & Jockey

the inn on the green



9 The Green, Chorlton, M21 9HS
Tel: 0161 860 7794



The jewel in the crown of Chorlton's thriving real ale scene in an idyllic village green setting, dating back to 1512.



Resident, seasonal and one-off brews from our in-house 4 barrel microbrewery, complemented by a sublime selection of local and national guest ales in constant rotation. Over 40 whiskies, and over 30 Belgian, German and world beers.



British cooking at its best - food served all day every day in the pub, and every evening from 6pm (all day weekends) in our newly extended restaurant.

Penningine

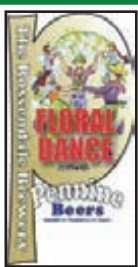
Pennine Ale (Rossendale) Ltd., 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden, Lanc's BB4 5AF

THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY

www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk

Contacts - Office: 0333 210 4021; Geoff: 07816 912 794; Robin: 07709 874 783

Meet our beers-Beer Tasting Notes



Floral Dance
3.8%

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



Hameldon Bitter
3.8%

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



Glen Top Bitter
4.0%

A citrusy, full bodied, pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.



Rossendale Ale
4.2%

A malty aroma leads to a complex, malt dominated flavour, supported by a dry, increasingly bitter finish.



Halo Pale
4.5%

A citrusy, pale ale brewed with Cascade aroma hops, finishing with a slightly bitter aftertaste.



Pitch Porter
5%

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



Sunshine
5.3%

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

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further info!

All of our beers can be sampled at: -
The Griffin, 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden, Lancashire BB4 5AF (Brewery Tap) - 01706 21 40 21
The Sportsman, 57, Mottram Road, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2NN - 0161 368 5000

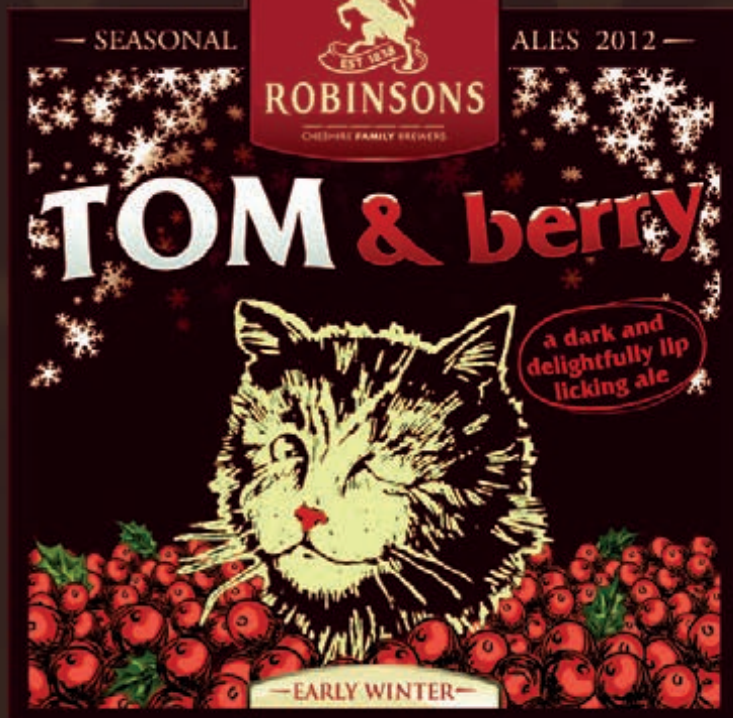
www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk

All of our beers are suitable for Vegetarians & Vegans.

TOM & BERRY

A mahogany coloured festive ale, ideal for the cold winter nights. This full bodied premium bitter has a rich and complex palate of roasted malt and biscuit, complimented by seasonal fruit and citrus notes.

Available throughout November & December



Hop Variety:
Goldings

1.3 UK Units

Alc. 4.6% Vol.

STYLE	FESTIVE ALE	ABV 4.6%
SEE	MAHOGANI	
SMELL	ROASTED MALT AND SEASONAL FRUIT	
TASTE	RICH, BISCUITY, FRUITY	
BITTER		
SWEET		



www.robinsonsbrewery.com