

● December 2012

Opening

Times THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE



Covering the cities of Manchester & Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

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see pages 25 & 27**

**Win prizes on the Winter Warmer Wander -
see page 15**

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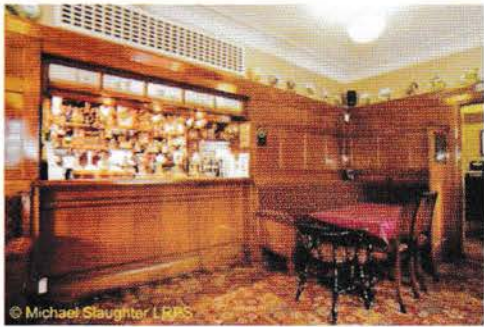
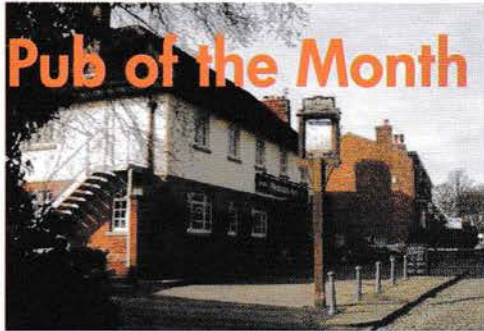
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for December 2012 has been awarded to the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris.

What can be said about this 1930s gem of a multi roomed pub that hasn't already been said before in these pages? Much has been written about the classic unspoilt structure and decor of the pub, the superb light oak panelling, the delightful windows decorated with horticultural images and the well manicured bowling green to the rear.

However any pub is more than just its decor and history. Its excellence is measured by the quality of its beer and the warmth of the welcome. On all these points the Nursery has scored extremely highly for many a decade. Despite being tucked away, it draws customers from miles around encouraged by the friendliness of the staff, and the quality of the Hydes beers and the guest ales. This has resulted in the longest record of continuous entries in the Good Beer Guide for the area with the pub achieving a remarkable 30 years in the guide with the publishing of the 2013 edition.

This incredible record is down to one family. Simon Wetton manages the pub and his sister Louise organises the lunchtime food. Simon took over the pub from his step father George whose tenure saw the pub being crowned CAMRA's National Pub of the Year in 2001. However Simon hasn't sat on his laurels and lived on past glories; he has promoted highly successful beer festivals, live music at weekends and regular quizzes while maintaining the excellence of the beer and the food.

The December Pub of the Month is always a lively and popular affair lodged as it is between Christmas and New Year. So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate not only the Pub of the Month Award but also an award to mark their 30 years in the Good Beer Guide? Both will be presented to Simon and his staff on Thursday, 27th December .

The pub is less than 10 minutes from the main 192 bus route (walk down Bowerfold Lane or Heaton Lane), 10 minutes from the 84 and 197 routes in Heaton Moor and the 22 stops within a 5 minutes walk of the door. Don't miss it! **JF**

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. Two bottom photos of this article courtesy Mick Slaughter.

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Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Festive Cheer

While Christmas looms large, the Greater Manchester CAMRA branches are all looking ahead to January and one of the main events of the local CAMRA year. The National Winter Ales Festival is back at the Sheridan Suite – look out for details in both this and next month's *Opening Times*. It is the last time the event will be held in Manchester as it's off to Derby in February 2014. The good news is that a replacement festival will be held in Manchester at around the same time as it is now but in a new, and iconic, venue. More on this in later issues.

Readers can get into the festive spirit by entering our Winter Warmer Wander. We have 40 pubs taking part and a great range of prizes so do give it a go.

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

Opening Times - Information

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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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
Contact: Geoff Williamson 01663 765634; disleygeoff@gmail.com

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

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

Your Local CAMRA Events

Friday 7th – Branch trip to Offbeat Brewery: a social at the brewery's open evening Firsty Friday. (T&H)

Saturday 8th – Christmas Social: Magnet, Wellington Rd North, Stockport (upstairs room). From 4pm – buffet at 6pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 13th – Branch meeting and Christmas Quiz: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 13th – Branch Christmas meal at the Sutton Hall. (MEC)

Monday 17th – Macclesfield Crawl: Starts 6.30pm at the Park Tavern. (MEC)

Wednesday 19th – Branch Meeting: Salford Arms, Bloom St/Chapel St, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Friday 21st – The famous annual Hillgate Stagger: start 7pm Queens Head, Little Underbank; 8.30 Waterloo, Waterloo Rd. Finish at the Blossoms. (SSM)

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month and 30 years in the Good Beer Guide awards: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. From 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 27th – Post Christmas Social: Waters Green Tavern. From 8pm. (MEC)

Friday 28th – Post Christmas Social: the Knott, Deansgate, Manchester. From 6pm. (T&H)

Friday 28th – Social/crawl in Manchester City Centre. Starts 12 noon at Marble Arch, Rochdale Road. (HPNC)

Wednesday 2nd January - Presentation of Neil Richardson Award to Union Tavern, Liverpool Sreet, Salford. From 8:00pm (NM).

Thursday 3rd January – Branch Meeting: Ape & Apple, John Dalton St, Manchester (upstairs dining room). Starts 8.15pm (T&H)

Sunday 6th – Bring your own ale curry night in Altrincham. Contact social@thcamra.org.uk to register (T&H)

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting including Pub of the Year vote: Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm (SSM).

Monday 14th – Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Labour Club, Acres Lane. Initial Good Beer Guide selection meeting so a good turn out needed please. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC).

Where space permits, non members are welcome at most of our social events. Get in touch with the listed contact to see if that's possible.

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Session 2 Sunday 16th December

11.00am to 4.00pm
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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



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Promotions Event

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Stagger

West Didsbury with Mark McConachie

We began our West Didsbury Stagger at the **Woodstock Arms** (pictured below) an Ember Inns pub on Barlow Moor Road. Formerly the home of the British Council, it was converted to pub use some years ago and is now a much cherished facility in an area with few pubs. A Victorian house with many original features preserved and well-tended gardens too. The luxuriously panelled upper floor is similar in area to the ground floor and is reached by a traditional hardwood staircase, wide enough to have a table and settee on the half landing. Tonight it was busy with drinkers and those dining too, with plenty of people enjoying the gardens. Service was attentive too, with the beer range being - Black Sheep Bitter; Sharps Doombar; Thwaites Wainwright; Ilkley Mary Jane; and Adnams Explorer. All beers were tried, yet we thought them to be of average quality.

Due to it being very busy with diners and drinkers, we took up a table outside where we ordered the Brightside Best Bitter, and Little Valley Dutch Courage beers from a most pleasant and smartly attired waitress. You'd expect to pay through the nose here, but at £3.20 a pint it is cheaper than others in this locale. The beers were all well received, and comfortably above average in score.



The next pub was a good walk away on Palatine Road, the **Four in Hand**. Another Victorian mansion conversion that occurred some years ago. Allegedly built as consulting rooms or a small hospital by a doctor, for his two daughters who failed to qualify; it was sold to Wolverhampton brewer Banks's and eventually became a large, multi-roomed public house, now under the Marstons name. It has a warm and comfortable 'L' shaped bar, with a lower level food area at the rear. This grand house is set in extensive grounds and does well from the food. Quite a plush affair with many folk taking advantage of the gardens when the weather is good. Normally does Marstons Burton Bitter, seasonal beers; and guest beers, but tonight there was none to be had as it was closing the day after for a full refurbishment. We await the results with interest.

Next was the middle part of Burton Road, to visit café bar, **Mary & Archie**. Opened in 2008 as the Silver Apples, then changed name in June 2011 to Mary & Archie (these are the names of the owner's parents). The interior is now blue and gold with little in the way of adornments apart from some flower prints and a variety of lampshades. An array of furniture styles provides for comfort in the narrow space. Much of the old ways remain with the cupcakes being available during the day, but now there is a full menu from noon till 9 daily. The cask is definitely selling, two beers are normally on, usually a beer from Dark Star, and a Marble or Hornbeam beer. No cask cider, but good bottled variants compliment a range of British and foreign bottled beers. Quirky, and a fun place to drink and socialise. Very busy inside and out, so we had to stand at the bar. Tonight there was only Hornbeam Citrus Temptation as the Dark Star had yet to settle, the quality was very good.

Across the road is **Albert's Restaurant & Bar**. This began life as a Tetley pub, the Barleycorn which re-opened April 2010 as Alberts. About 80 per cent of the space inside is given over to restaurant tables. The other fifth, down the right side, is a bar with some comfy modern seating and some space to stand. There are two beers on, but advertised via a single chrome handpump at the far end of the bar. I am presuming that the beers are served from some hidden dispense as there is nothing really visible. Outside at the front, are two distinct terrace areas: the first (inner) one covered with restaurant tables and with a sign saying diners only (although they let people sit



there if the tables are not needed); the other one (nearer the road) is uncovered with standard outdoor tables for drinkers - in fact there's probably more space for drinking outside than there is in.

Missing out all of the other keg café bars on Burton Road (Velvet Hour, Folk, M Twenty, Drawing Room, One Lounge Bar, and Verso), got us to the **Railway** on Lapwing Lane. At one point this was a tiny, narrow John Smiths house that had become somewhat run-down. Taken over by Manchester brewer, Joseph Holt in the late 1990s, it was extended and transformed into a pleasant drinking house. Once again we found the atmosphere to be busy in here. Given the confines of the space, the layout has traditional elements with a modern, clean mushroom decor. The narrow entrance is flanked by two panelled rooms, a high-stool snug to the left for those wanting an intimate space, and a more open but screened lounge to the right. The bar is next, opposite that is another multi-panelled screened area with fireplace. Beyond all that is a more open lounge area where a TV can be viewed. Photos of old Didsbury provide added interest. The beers were Holt Mild, Bitter, IPA, and seasonal beer, Humdinger. All beers, bar the IPA were tried, all scored above average.



Right across the road was our final stop, the **Metropolitan**. Until being bought by the next door 'Nosebar' around 2000, this was the troubled Midland Hotel, a vast Grand Metropolitan house with a history of trouble, drugs and criminality. Converted at some expense to the Metropolitan pub and restaurant, it is West Didsbury's busiest pub by far. It was sold around mid-2008. To say that this is impressive would be a gross understatement. Progressing through the usually very crowded bar, there is a lofty restaurant with hammer beam roof trusses. Large outdoor drinking area, where it has also been extended into the former stables with an outside bar (with cask Landlord on offer too) for better weather. Food forms a large part of the offering here, and you can dine almost anywhere in the place. Although very busy, the service was its usual good efficiency. What we did notice though was with so many people in, it does become very loud. And that's only through people talking, not music or such. Three beers were Caledonian Deuchars IPA; Taylor Landlord; and Bass. All scored in the average to good range.

So only five pubs, quite a compact crawl. Good to see that all of the pubs were very busy on what was a warm evening.

the Mark Addy

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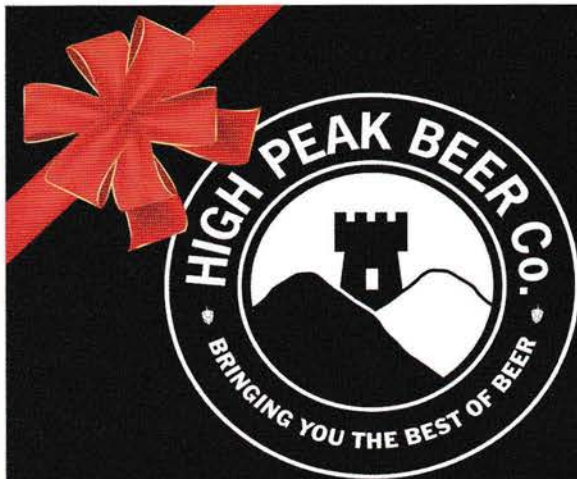
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Save Your Pint

Mass Lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 12 December.

Have you had a moan or two of late as to how the price of beer has increased over the last few years? Well speak to a CAMRA member and they will tell you that a major reason is a not so little thing called the beer duty escalator. Introduced under the last government this vicious little tax means that each year beer duty goes up by inflation plus 2%. This means that now a pint costing, say £3, almost £1 is VAT and excise duty.



CAMRA has been working hard with many parts of the beer industry and we have now exceeded 100,000 signatures on an e-petition calling on Government to remove the escalator - and the numbers continue to grow. This is only the 12th petition to reach this magic number, which led to a debate in Parliament, and we were delighted, when recently, a motion for the Government to conduct a thorough review of the economic and social impact of the escalator was passed.

But CAMRA believes this on its own may not be enough. The lobbying of individual MPs to get them on board will be key to achieving a turn around. To this end, a Day of Lobbying is being organised on 12th December to lobby as many MPs as possible. It is in all beer drinkers' interests to make as much noise as possible about this unfair tax, a tax that is contributing to over 12 pubs closing every week as people increasingly have to reduce the number of times they visit a pub due to financial pressures. **And it is not just real ale that is impacted - it is all beer: real beer, keg beer and lager.**

CAMRA is inviting everyone, whether you are a member or not, to join us on this very important day. You may be busy but this campaign is worth one day of your time to change the future. This is a also rare opportunity to see inside the Palace of Westminster and to see how it works. It really is impressive!

So what can you do? Register with CAMRA at www.saveyourpintlobby.co.uk or phone 01727 337 851 and arrange a meeting with your MP on 12th December. We have arranged an initial meeting at the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster, before taking the short walk to Parliament. CAMRA is coordinating attendance as there are restrictions on the number of people who can be in Parliament's lobby area at any one time.

For our area, the timings are: Arrive at Emmanuel Centre - 11am to 12 noon; Meet with MP - 12.30pm to 1.30pm

Afterwards, we will have a debrief, some free time to visit some pubs and then a rally at 4pm accompanied by some beer thanks to the support of Fuller's, Shepherd Neame and Wychwood.

This is a major opportunity to change beer tax so if you don't do anything else in the next six months, this should be it. Any queries, Emily Ryans, Campaigns Manager, will be available to help: emily.ryans@camra.org.uk; 01727 337 851.



Cider Awards

Winners from this year's Beer & Cider Festival

In the past couple of months members of Stockport & South Manchester Branch have been busy touring the country to present the cider and perry awards from this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

In October there was a trip to the West Country to visit the winners of the Cider and Perry of the Festival awards. First it was down to Street, near Glastonbury, and Hecks, winners of Cider of the Festival for their excellent Port Wine of Glastonbury. Festival cider manager Charlotte Bulmer is seen here presenting the award to Andrew and Chris Hecks.



Perry of the Festival was won by Kevin Minchew, one of the country's top perry makers and a renowned expert on cider and perry fruit. Sadly none of his winning perry, the single varietal Stinking Bishop, was available but some rather fine, five year old, whisky cask matured Moorcroft perry was. This has also been ordered for next year's festival! Charlotte is seen here presenting Kevin with his certificate.



The final award, for Best Local Cider, was presented closer to home - at the Railway, Portwood to be exact! Winners were Heaton Norris based Mad Hatters with their excellent Ding Dong. Here branch chairman John Clarke is shown presenting the award to Marysia Bossowski and Gordon Battersby (second right), along with branch cider representatives Mike Gilroy (centre) and Dave Preston (right).



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High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

High Peak Pub News

With Frank Wood

I called in the **Sportsman**, Kinder Road, Hayfield, recently and this hidden away Thwaites house had Thwaites Original and Wainwrights on sale as the staple beers alongside the seasonal Crafty Devil. Although a Friday evening, filming was taking place down in the village for a forthcoming drama and we had to battle our way past horses, soldiers and wartime cars on the way back to the village, where the Royal Beer Festival was our destination for the evening. As ever, there was a good choice of beers though the function room was being used as a dressing room for the cast, so was out of bounds. It's goodbye to landlord Dave Ash and his family, as the pub will have changed hands by the time this OT appears although Dave is staying on a while to train up the incoming people.

Stalybridge Circuit

Into Stalybridge now and the **Wharf Tavern** now has three real ales on offer. On my visit, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, Sharps Doom Bar and Marstons EPA were the beers though I believe that a Moorhouse's beer is regularly to be seen. On a bus trip to the Bridge on 3rd November, we started at the **Old Hunters Tavern (Robinson's)** on Acres Lane, as the **Organ** just a few yards away, sells no real ale. Unicorn, 1892 and Double Hop were on that evening at this 2013 Good Beer Guide pub, while further down the road, the **Stalybridge Labour Club** had Phoenix Flash Flood, Thwaites Guided Star and Everards Tiger.

At the **Society Rooms**, a much improved Wetherspoons these days, the beer festival was on and I tried the Cambridge Brewing Co. Heather Ale that night, and it was very tasty indeed, though my favourite beer of the current festival is without doubt, the Brouwerij't IJ Ijbok, at 6.0% and dangerously drinkable.

On to the **Old Fleece** which has of late sold Millstone beers. Alas that night, there was no real ale on, so off to the **White House**, a recent worthy High Peak Branch Pub of the Season. That night, Allgates Citra and Jennings Cumberland were the guests, with three Hydes beers also on sale. At Q, only Hydes bitter was on that night which is unusual for here. Final pub of the night then - the **Millpond** has reopened recently and is selling real ale too. A band was playing in the corner and there was a pleasant atmosphere in the room. On a previous visit, I drank beers from the Middleton brewery (Wilson Potter)

but tonight there were Millstone beers of Kirkstall. The Pale Ale from the latter was particularly enjoyable. The Sheffield Tap is worth visiting on its own or as part of a day in Sheffield when it makes a good start and/or finish to the day.

More News & Snippets

Over in Dukinfield, the **Angel** on King Street has started selling real ale along with good basic food. A rare appearance for Mitchell & Butlers Mild in our area, with Robinsons Dizzy Blonde and up to two other guests were available when OT called recently. I believe they have a connection with and the same loyalty card as the nearby **Astley Arms**. On Ashton Moss, the **Sheldon Arms'** joint managers Carolyn and Dave have won the "Manager of the Quarter" award from JW Lees.

In Hyde, the **Old Town House** on Mottram Road is gaining trade and I hear the Sunday lunches are extremely popular. At present, the Trust Inns pub has Theakstons Black Bull and Ringwood 49 as its cask beers and on the last Sunday in October they were both on good form.

In Buxton, the **Duke of York** at Burbage crossroads is to have a refurbishment by owners Punch Taverns after being closed since March. However, they are asking for people to "draw on local history and local references of Buxton" for inspiration to pick a new name. The person who wins will officially open the pub and win a meal for four. The closing date will have gone by the time this OT comes out.

Final snippets then, and in Droylsden the **Bush** has three Thwaites beers on, the **Buxton** on Manchester Road has Holts and Black Sheep (with Bombardier in bottles), the **Fitzroy Social Club** has two real ales (a Thwaites beer plus a Skinners on our branch member's visit). **Old Aldwynians Rugby Club** has three cask beers from Thwaites and the **Snipe** has Robinsons Unicorn. Add to that the **Kings Head** on Market Street (Holts and in the 2013 Good Beer Guide) the town is looking worthy of a visit. The **Queens** in Old Glossop usually has Holts Bitter, Robinsons Unicorn, Jennings Cumberland and Thwaites Wainwright as its four beers.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

A recent visit to the **Sheffield Tap** on Sheffield Station was as ever, a pleasure. Four beers from Thornbridge were accompanied by a range of guest beers including ales from Ilkley and

Robinson's Green Bullet was popular as a seasonal brew in both the **Crossings** at Furness Vale and the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge, and was certainly well worth trying. However those with long memories would have found it a rather different beer to the stunning Green Bullet from Brendan Dobbin's brewery in the early 1990's.

A quick call at the **Royal Oak** on Market Street. New Mills, found a good pint of 1892 alongside Unicorn and Green Bullet, see above. The Royal Oak is well worth a visit. Still with Robinson's, Hartley's XB has made a welcome return to the Crossings. This is probably my favourite regularly available beer. The **Railway** in Whaley Bridge is usually good for a decent pint of Unicorn and is often accompanied by Double Hop. The Railway is also making a name for itself with live music.

Beer festivals continued to feature into October. The Good Beer Guide listed **Royal** in Hayfield held its 20th annual festival, with beer from each of the ceremonial counties in England. There were also supplies of cider and perry. Beers enjoyed included McMullen AK, Six Bells Castle Bravo, and Truefit Erimus Pale. Gwynt y Ddraig Scrumpy was a decent taster.

The Oktoberfest at **Glossop Labour Club** was organised by Kazant Events. There was an emphasis on seasonal special bottled beers from Germany, but also a decent range of real ale, cider and perry. Beers from Buxton, Outstanding, Red Willow and Blue Bee made for some quality drinking. Look out for more Kazant Events events.

The **Drum & Monkey**, at the Horwich End end of Whaley Bridge, is putting its third hand pump to good use. Buxton Moor Top was a recent attraction, with Buxton Spa next up. Beers from Wincle are likely to follow. The Drum and Monkey serves food from Wednesday to Sunday, with Sunday roast and specials particularly popular.

There is also interesting beer choice at the **White Horse** at Horwich End traffic lights. The Punch Finest Cask list seems to have more originality about it these days, so unusual beers can be anticipated here. Pennine Brewery at Batley brew a Real Blonde, and this was on good form when tried recently.



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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond



Hope Springs Eternal

The Hope on Wellington Road North has never been a pub to offer much for the cask beer drinker. Apart from a brief flirtation with Draught Bass, it's been a real ale free zone for years. Pretty Hope-less you might say.

All that is about to change. The pub has been acquired by Martin Wood and Samantha Halfyard and will open its doors to the public under its new guise, after a refurbishment, in late January. Both Martin and Sam have been long time fans of the Hope's iconic looks, with its 'Hardys' Crown Ales' lettering and brewing history, that when they were back north-ward bound in April 2012 and realised the pub was up for sale, they knew exactly what they wanted to do.

Both Martin and Sam have worked within the pub trade for several years and achieved a fair bit along the way. Martin has 25 years under his belt winning CAMRA Pub of The Year three times at two different venues, and CAMRA Cider Pub of The Year once, amongst various other awards. Sam has seven years in the trade, working closely alongside Martin, but in parts doing relief work in her own right, as the pair would quite often manage more than one pub at a time.

Back in 2004 to 2007 Martin was running Porter's Railway in Portwood, Stockport where he gained an excellent reputation in the local area. It is also where Martin and Sam met and the chance to come back to work and live in the Stockport area was grasped with both hands, as the couple who have worked all over the UK have always had fond memories of working in Stockport.

The general plan for the Hope is not to rewrite history, or reinvent the wheel, just to run a great pub, with a great atmosphere and great beer. And there will be plenty of beer with 10 handpumped cask beers, plus foreign imports on draft alongside a large selection of bottled beers from around the world. Real cider will also be on handpump. The icing on the cake will be the in-house micro brewery.

The couple are under no illusions that it will be anything other than hard work and somewhat of a roller coaster ride at times, but they are more than up for the challenge and invite everyone to join them on their journey.

Fool Hardy Ales

Keeping the Hardys' Crown Ales lettering in mind from around the top of the Hope, Martin and Sam spent a long time considering names for their own Microbrewery being installed in the basement of the Hope. They toyed with the idea of simply calling it 'Hardys' Crown Ales', but felt they wanted something they could put their own stamp on.



They even thought about basing the name around the word 'Hope', but after a lot of deliberation, and many names later, the pair settled on 'Fool Hardy Ales'.

All the design work for the new brewery has been created by Martin himself, as with his previous design background, he knew exactly how he wanted to market 'Fool Hardy Ales'. Martin has also designed pump clips, brewery leaflets, bar runners, glassware and so on for many other breweries including Porter Brewing Co, Staffordshire Brewery, Naylor's Brewery and Craddock's Brewery but to name a few.

Blossoms Blooms

After what seemed an eternity, Robinsons have finally got themselves a tenant for the Blossoms on Buxton Road, Heaviley. It seems to have been worth the wait as John Goodhew, who took over on 26 September with his business partner Lee Holt, has plans to really put the pub back on the



local map. Big strides have already been made in that direction.

John (pictured above), who hails from Hertfordshire, has around eight years experience in the licensed trade around the country (he also has an interest in Bar 461 in Withington) but this is his first really traditional pub. It is however a move he has wanted to make; "I was really lucky to get this and love the pub" he told us.

The Blossoms was of course substantially, and very successfully, refurbished by Robinsons so John and Lee have not had to make any structural or decorative changes. What they have brought though is an enterprising ethos and a huge level of commitment.

Thus the upstairs room is now used for live music, traditional board games are available and the third Tuesday of the month sees a popular knitting club gather. Traditional pub food is sold from Tuesday to Sunday between 12 and 7.30pm. On December 14 a "Christmas Spectacular" is planned where a £5 ticket will get you mulled wines, food and music.

And let's not forget the beer. The Blossoms currently offers seven cask ales – six on handpump and a small pin of Old Tom on the bar. John tells us the beer has been selling very well – indeed demand for the new seasonal Tom & Berry has been so high that he is one of the few pubs taking this beer in 18-gallon containers.

It all looks good. If you've not been to the Blossoms for a while, take a trip down there, you won't be disappointed.



Stalybridge – All Change!

There are changes in the air at Stalybridge where two of the town's famous pubs have changed hands.

Following the sad death of owner John Hesketh the Buffet Bar has a new owner. It's in very safe hands though, as it has been purchased by Mike Field who also owns the West Riding Licensed Refreshment Rooms at Dewsbury Station and the Sportsman pub and micro-brewery in Huddersfield.

It's been all go since he took over. The main bar has been decorated, the bar top resurfaced and 10 new handpumps have been installed. The heating in the bar (and the lounge) has been increased and some new shelves put up. While the kitchen has been refitted there are no plans to alter the menu so lovers of the famous black peas can relax. The toilets have also been

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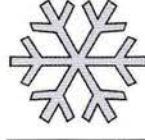
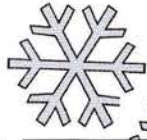
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Winter Warmer Wander






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1. Railway Avenue St Portwood SK1 2BZ	2. Magnet Wellington Rd North Stockport SK4 1HJ	3. Crown Heaton Lane Stockport SK4 1AR	4. Blossoms 2 Buxton Rd Heaviley SK2 6NU	5. Hinds Head Manchester Rd Heaton Chapel SK4 2RB
6. Arden Arms Millgate Stockport SK1 2LX	7. Ashlea 14 Manchester Rd Cheadle SK8 2NP	8. Crown 81 High St Cheadle SK8 1AA	9. Nursery 258 Green Lane Heaton Norris SK4 2NA	10. Olde Woolpack 70 Brinksway Stockport SK3 0BY
11. Victoria 438 Wilmslow Rd Withington M20 3BW	12. The Parlour 66 Beech Rd Chorlton M4 1LE	13. Horse & Jockey 9 The Green Chorlton M21 9HS	14. Elektrik 358 Wilbraham Rd Chorlton M21 0AE	15. Pi 99 Manchester Rd Chorlton M21 9GA
16. Marble Beer Hse 57 Manchester Rd Chorlton M21 9PW	17. Royal Oak 729 Wilmslow Rd Didsbury M20 6WF	18. Fletcher Moss 1 William St. Didsbury M20 6RQ	19. Milson Rhodes School Lane Disbury M20 6RD	20. Gateway 882 Wilmslow Rd East Didsbury M20 5PG
21. Ford M'd'x Brown Wilmslow Park Rusholme M13 9NG	22. Marble Arch Rochdale Rd Manchester M4 4HY	23. 57 Thomas St Manchester M4 1NA	24. Castle 66 Oldham Street Manchester M4 1LE	25. Paramount 33-35 Oxford Street Manchester M1 4BH
26. The Mark Addy Stanley St Salford M3 5EJ	27. Micro Bar Arndale Market High St Manchester	28. Friendship 352-353 Wilmslow Rd Fallowfield M14 6XS	29. Sir J Whitworth 256 Wilmslow Rd Fallowfield M14 6LB	30. New Oxford Bexley Square Salford M3 6DB
31. Cheshire Ring 72 Manchester Rd Hyde SK14 2BJ	32. Waterhouse 67-71 Princess St Manchester M2 4EG	33. The Wharf 6 Slate Wharf Castlefield M15 4ST	34. Joshua Brooks 106 Princess St Manchester M1 6NG	35. Navigation 1 Manchester RD Heaton Norris Sk4 1 TY
36. Swan w / 2 Necks 36 Princes St Stockport Sk1 1RY	37. Calverts Court 13 St Petersgate Stockport SK1 1 EB	38. Tiviot 8 Tiviot Dale Stockport SK1 1TA	39. Sedge Lynn 21a Manchester RD Chorlton M21 9PN	40. Bulls Head 84 London Rd Manchester M1 2PN

This month we are once again running the Winter Warmer Wander, our annual celebration of festive beers to bring you a little winter cheer across the Christmas and New Year season, and on into the cold nights of January. Like the Mild Challenge and the Cider Circuit, this is the chance for you to visit some new pubs and try some new beers. This year we have lots of great prizes and lots of ways to win them...

What you need to do...

-  Buy at least half a pint of cask conditioned stout, porter, old ale, barley wine (or if none are available any other premium beer at 4.5% ABV or greater).
-  Get the pub to put a sticker on its entry below (if they can't find a sticker, just get a signature).
-  Get 15 stickers and you will win two bottles of beer plus a ticket for the National Winter Ales Festival.
-  25 stickers will get you two tickets for the National Winter Ales Festival and a special WWW t-shirt.
-  Visit all 40 pubs and you will win 2 bottles of beer, two tickets for the National Winter Ales Festival, a special WWW t-shirt and entry into a draw for prizes including a hamper of assorted beers, a meal for four, a meal for two (meals kindly donated by the Hinds Head, Heaton Chapel. Bottles for hamper kindly donated by Corin Bland of High Peak Beer Co).

The Winter Warmer Wander runs from Saturday 1 December to Sunday 13 January.

Completed forms need to be with Dave Platt, 138 Broom Lane, Levenshulme, M19 3LJ by 16 January (so we can post tickets in time).

M E R R Y

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C H R I S T M A S

Pub & Brewery News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Stalybridge – All Change!

Continued from page 13

Behind the scenes the cellar has had a new floor and been completely refitted. The beer will remain mainly local, essentially from Huddersfield and across the Greater Manchester area. Thornbridge and Marble will appear more often, Taylor's Landlord and a session beer from the Sportsman Brewery will be regulars as will be a mild and a dark beer, all covering a range of strengths. Eight of the handpumps will be for beer with the other two dedicated to real ciders, one from Pure North.

Sam Smith will continue to be the manager ably assisted by Caz and Julie. Sylvia has stayed on to help them all get the hang of things for which they are very grateful. She has said she'd like to retire but just when she'll pull that last pint no one knows! The same meetings and the regular music also remain, which is another welcome sign of continuity.

After the sad passing of one of the longest running pub landlords in the UK, Richard Grainger of the **Wharf Tavern** in Stalybridge, the pub has now been taken over by his son Terry. This family run pub which has been a "beerhouse" since 1850 and was granted a full licence



in 1960 is looking to welcome more visitors. It has three real ales which change regularly and is situated on the side of the Huddersfield canal just five minutes from the centre of Stalybridge. It has a great function room for meetings, weddings, clubs and music events and also has accommodation available. One of the music nights is blues/rock night every Friday and Terry the landlord is open to suggestions to help keep the pub going - his father wanted to bring in new visitors to Stalybridge as part of the town's campaign to increase footfall in the town.

Chorlton Changes

The big news from Chorlton this month is the sale of the **Horse & Jockey** to local family brewers Joseph Holt. This really was an unexpected bolt from the blue and there were of course immediate concerns for the fate of the on-site **Bootleg Brewery**.

It seems Holts made Horse & Jockey owner an offer he couldn't refuse but the good news is that there are likely to be few changes made. There is unlikely to be any corporate branding and, apart from the appearance of Holts Bitter on one of the handpumps, the beer stocking policy will continue, including beers from Bootleg, which will continue in operation. It would seem that Holts will be using this as something of a learning curve for themselves, and of course the magic that Peter and his team worked here could be replicated in some of Holt's other pubs.



We asked Peter for some final thoughts and he told us "I very much enjoyed my time at the Jockey, and the challenge of transforming a run-down former Pubco managed house into a great freehouse. I hope Joseph Holt take good care of it!" As for his future plans, he is unsure, but if anyone knows of another pub that could benefit from a "Horse & Jockey" makeover you know who to ask!

Beagle Barks



The latest venture from the folks behind Common and Port Street Beer House is a foray to deepest Chorlton, where the **Beagle** now occupies the Barlow Moor Road premises of Charango.

The interior has been substantially and impressively remodelled with an upper area dedicated to dining, while the new bar is to the left facing across the pub, with extensive seating and what, in the summer months,

promises to be an excellent outdoor drinking area. Neutral walls, stylish prints and potted plants add to the very stylish feel.

The food comes courtesy of the famed Aumbry in Rochdale and is first class although the menu and food offering will evolve as the Beagle finds its feet and establishes its customer base.

On the beer front, this is largely drawn from new UK micros, such as Quantum, RedWillow and Summer Wine. The house cask session ale, Beagle Best (3.8%) is from Quantum while the house keg pale ale, Beagle Pale, is from Summer Wine Brewery. There are five handpumps on the bar, four for cask ales and one for cider. There are 10 keg fonts set into the tiled wall behind the bar. There is also an extensive bottled beer menu including UK beers from RedWillow, Kernel, Thornbridge, Summer Wine and Camden breweries. The foreign range includes beers from Germany and Belgium, with some excellent lambics. Check out the website at www.beaglesabout.com. Well worth a visit we think.

Marble Latest

Recent Marble beers have included **Magic** (3.3%) brewed with the chaps at Magic Rock. It was a pale beer mashed with lots of oats and Galaxy Hops. Even by Marble standards it was very highly hopped. **Quantum Physics** (7%) was brewed with Jay from Quantum. The season was right for Green Hop collaboration. 20kg of UK First Gold hops went in to the copper as well as whole cone Citra. It's a great piece of experimentation that the brewers feel went rather well.

You may also catch **Reddish Ale** (4.8%). 25kg of Cara Red malt went into the grist for a full flavoured malt base. The punchy hop profile similar of the Best (4.3%) but more so cut in to an interesting venture of the Marble brewing team. Colin Stronge may have done the run around a few brewers in the Manchester area recently experimenting with Crystal Rye malt but returned to his Mancunian brewing home to spend the day with James to brew a Rye PA...(at least it's not a Black PA). This is the most heavily hopped beer Marble have produced since accounting records began so its something a bit special. **Campbell & Stronge** is the name 6.4% is the weight. Rather lovely OT thought when supping a pint (well, why not, it's almost Christmas)

There is also a collaboration with Buxton Brewery in the pipeline. Something Black... and hoppy. To call it an IPA would be wrong, to call it a Porter would be wrong but it's aimed at 'Black IPA' country. However they challenge anyone to spot that name when it comes out. Christmas Eve at the Marble Arch will also see the annual launch of Port Stout, only this year it will be **Stouter Port Stout**. Yum.

Stockport gets a bit of Oompah!

Pub & Brewery News Extra

The 29th and 30th September saw Stockport's Victorian Market Hall transformed into a German Beer Hall for Stocktoberfest, complete with 50 different German Beers, Bratwurst, Pretzels and of course the obligatory Oompah Band.



The event, organized by Corin Bland and Laura Shiers who run High Peak Beer Promotions, certainly captured the imagination of Stockport with the Saturday night completely sold out with over a month to go before the event.

That imagination was clearly on display in the queue judging by the number of people arriving in fancy dress, with everything from the traditional Lederhosen and Dirndls, to Albert Einstein, Jurgen Klinsmann and even a Wolf making an appearance. Despite a late start to the event, due to a protest from one of the market traders, revellers were soon into the swing of things with Stein glasses swaying to the sounds of the traditional 'Ein Prozet' Bavarian drinking song.



It wasn't just Stein's being raised at Stocktoberfest either. The event aimed to raise money for local sight and hearing impaired charity Walthew House and it certainly achieved that with £1300 collected over the two days. Kathryn Sheldon, their Fundraising Manager stated 'We were absolutely delighted with the amount we raised. There was a great atmosphere and everyone was very generous. We'd like to thank Stocktoberfest for giving us this opportunity and also our sponsor The Railway pub on Wellington Road and Bookers Cash and Carry for sponsoring some of our refreshments'.

Corin stated 'for our first event we feel that on the whole it was a great success, the feedback we had both on the night and subsequently has been really positive with repeated calls to hold the event again. Facebook and Twitter were buzzing with people saying what a good time they had and how the event was what the Market Place and Stockport needed. In fact one party who came to Stocktoberfest has already booked over 50 tickets for our next event!

The next event referred to is the Winter Wassale which according to the poster will be 'a fabulous festival of medieval merriment' with winter ales, ciders, meads, hog roasts and pies. The dates are December 15th and 16th and you can get your tickets by contacting High Peak Beer Promotions on 07730 034326 or e-mail tickets @winterwassale.co.uk.

Baum on the March

Just before we went to press came the news that the Greater Manchester Regional Pub of the Year, the **Baum** on Toad Lane in Rochdale, is one of the four finalists in CAMRA's national Pub of the Year competition. Heidi Compton, the pub's co-owner told OT 'We are ecstatic to hear this news of our success. We are one of the only traditional family pubs in our area, and are all about getting involved in the community. We ensure all our staff are well-trained and part of a big family here, and our emphasis is on buying and supporting local, independent producers - from our food to our beer.'

The other finalists are the Bridge End Inn in Ruabon, near Wrexham; the Conqueror Ale House in Ramsgate and the Tom Copley Tavern in Spreyton, Devon

Stockport's **Quantum Brewery** has a few seasonal specials in the pipeline this month. A new house beer for the Waterhouse in Manchester City Centre will be a 5.7% spiced stout and should be available in the pub right up to Christmas. Look out also for the new American Light (3.6%) which is just bursting with American hop varieties - Columbus, Summit and Chinook all feature. The beer has been dry hopped, too. The powerful SK" (at 8.3%, is this a "double IPA"?) and is hugely hopped. Look out for its in Manchester bars such as Font, Joshua Brooks and Port Street Beer House. Brewer Jay Krause is also planning a new single hop IPA using a new British variety called Flyer which exhibits the citrus notes commonly found in new world hops.

QUANTUM BREWING CO.

Denton's **Hornbeam Brewery** has brought back the hoppy 3.9% Champagne Ale for the winter. This hoppy beer uses Nelson Sauvin and Chinook varieties. Another festival beer to look out for is Old Santa (4.6%) brewed with crystal rye, wheat and malt and hopped with Motueka, Bravo and Bramling Cross. The brewery has also revamped its website which now includes an online shop. Check it out at www.hornbeambrewery.com.



Rob Hamilton's **Blackjack Brewery** is also in a festive mood. There's a big Regal Stout in the pipeline (at 7.5% Rob doesn't think it's quite strong enough to be called "Imperial"). A collaboration with the people behind the Odd Bar chain is planned - and Jack Frost will be a sessionable brown ale with a fair whack of hops. Rob would also like to make a spiced ale but us so busy he may run out of time.

Matt Jervis's new **Privateer Brewery** now has three beers available. All the beers are named after old privateer ships and the first one out was Dainty Blonde (4.2%), which made its debut at a Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA meeting in November and was very well received. Also out are Roebuck, a 3.8% amber ale and the latest is Dark Revenge at 4.5%, which is secretly a dark mild.



The same meeting, at the Railway on Wellington Road North, was also attended by Paul Alderson from **Ringway Brewery** in North Reddish. He told us that the 3.8% session was going great guns with plenty of repeat orders. It is certainly a tasty drop of beer. Next up from Ringway could be a stout or porter.

The fellows at **Outstanding Brewery** are delighted to have seen their Halloween Ale (4.2% ABV) awarded the joint beer of the festival at the recent Bury Beer Festival. Halloween Ale was initially brewed for Whitefield Halloween Festival and contains Ginger, cinnamon and treacle. The beer was intended to be a one off brew, but due to its popularity it may make further appearances. The brewery has recently released a limited batch new beer called Monkey Gone To Heaven. They tell us "as with the name, which is based on a Darwinian/Creationist paradox, the beer is self-contradictory". It is an Oktoberfest lager style/ale hybrid which weighs in at a warming 6.2%. The beer will initially be brewed on an occasional basis and supplied to a limited number of customers. Finally, due to a continuing increase in demand for their beers, the brewery has just had two new 2400 litre fermenting vessels delivered which will increase brewing capacity and should help to satisfy their thirsty customers.

In Didsbury, the **Four in Hand** reopened in late November. It has had a name change and is now called the **Greenfinch**. An early visit saw the pub selling Jennings Cumberland Ale, Marston's Pedigree and Wychwood Hobgoblin on handpump. There is more of an emphasis on food and all of the television screens have gone, and overall the refit has given the place a brighter and cleaner feel. Nearby what was Verso is now the **Terrace Bar & Grill** - no news yet of the beer offering, if any.

the Vale Cottage

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2002

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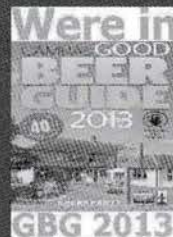


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plus
Seasonal Cask Ales

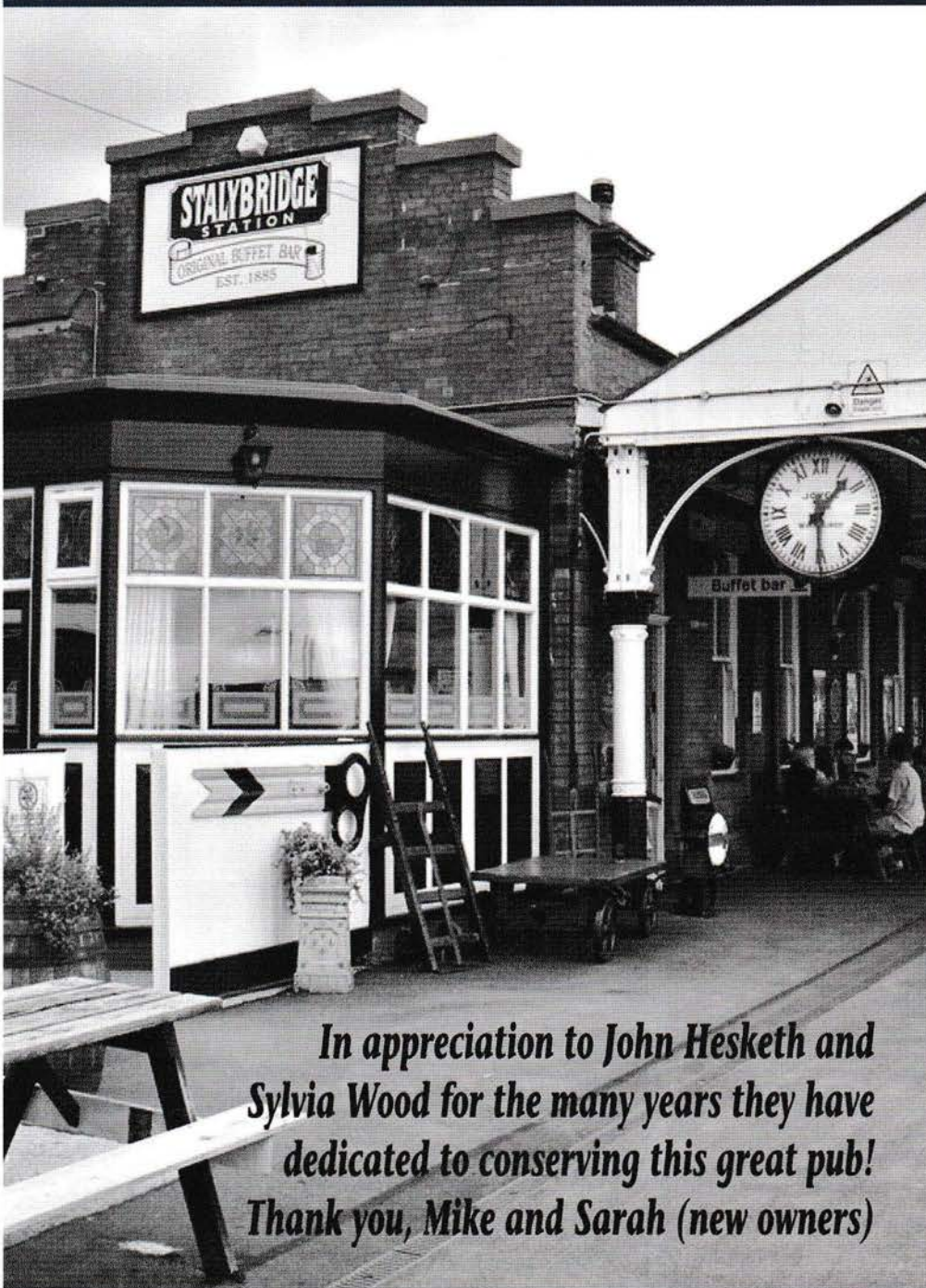
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Curmudgeon

Responsible Reductions?

Back in 2009, I predicted that we were likely to see the government aim to “persuade” brewers to voluntarily reduce the strength of widely-available beers in the interest of public health. And, while I take no pleasure from successful crystal ball gazing, so it has come to pass, with the government announcing a “Responsibility Deal” earlier this year with the major drinks manufacturers in which they undertook to take one billion alcohol units out of the market by 2015.

So far, we have seen the strength of several top-selling premium lagers such as Stella Artois and Carlsberg Export reduced from 5.0% to 4.8%, and that of canned and bottled Strongbow from 5.3% to 5.0%. Although perhaps done for different reasons, a number of well-known cask beers such as Bombardier and Batemans XXXB have also had their strength cut.

This has been described by the House of Commons health select committee as no more than a token gesture. Maybe it is, but in a competitive market there must come a point when such strength reductions start to encounter consumer resistance, especially if not everyone moves at once. Drinkers are not stupid, and in reaction to such moves there is every likelihood that they will start to drink more to compensate, or switch to other beers where the strength has not been cut, or even transfer their allegiance to other drinks categories.

It's also predictably disappointing how the focus of strength reductions is always placed on beer and cider, never on wine or spirits. Indeed, with spirits, EU law prevents them being sold at below 37.5% ABV.

And, if the powers-that-be do not think the brewers have gone far enough, there must be a real risk in the future that we will see further tiers of higher beer duty introduced, probably kicking in at a level well below 5%, and also the government setting the drinks industry a year-on-year target for a reduction in the average strength of beer and cider sold in the UK. Within a few years, we may be left with little choice but to drink weak and watery beers.

Which People's Pint?

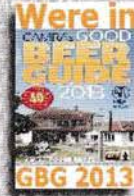
From October 1st last year, the duty on beers of 2.8% ABV or below was halved, in an attempt to encourage the production and consumption of lower-strength brews. This was trumpeted by some who really should have known better as ushering in the era of the “People's Pint” – low gravity, refreshing beers sold at an affordable price.

However, on the ground very little has happened. A few existing products have been reduced in strength to take advantage of the lower rate, most notably Skol lager which was already only 3.0%. Some of the larger brewers have launched new bottled ales, but in general these have either been dismally thin or had an unpleasant gloopy texture stemming from arrested fermentation. There has been virtually nothing in the real ale market, where shelf life is a serious issue. The less alcohol in a beer, the quicker it will go off, which is not ideal for products where demand is low anyway.

In fact, the brewer who seems to have taken this most seriously is Samuel Smith, who have reduced the strength of their keg dark and light milds, and Alpine lager, to 2.8%, and are selling them at a bargain price in their pubs. Indeed, these must be the cheapest regularly-priced draught beers in the country. No doubt they appeal to a particular cost-conscious market, but there's little evidence of other brewers or pub operators following suit.

Those championing this measure seem to have missed the point that one of the reasons people drink beer is actually that it contains alcohol, and also that alcohol is an essential part of the character of a beer. It is extremely difficult to produce a beer with much appeal to the tastebuds at such a low strength, and few will choose a poor product solely because it is cheap.

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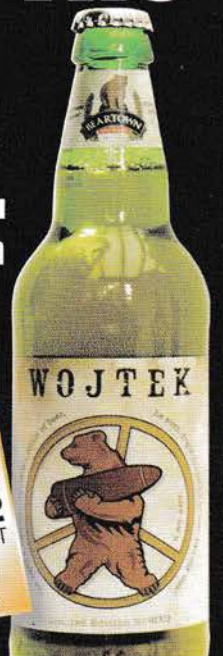


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Letters to the Editor

Two views on "new wave" keg beers

From Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel:

I write in response to your interview with Hawkshead MD, Alex Brodie and the reference made to so called 'craft keg'. As loath as I am to provide this marketing concept with the oxygen of publicity I do feel the need to respond, not in reference to Alex, whose brewery I hold in the highest regard, but to the article itself.

Keg beer itself was first promoted in the 1960s by the larger brewers (remember Tartan, Trophy and Red Barrel) because it saved them from worrying about quality (it was too cold and fizzy to notice) or training cellar staff and was highly profitable. The British drinker was only saved from having no choice but to drink this appalling stuff by the actions of the Campaign for **Real Ale** (CAMRA). The fact that Watneys Red Barrel and its ilk are now regarded with disdain and draft keg beer sales have been in decline for years at least in part is because the Campaign for **Real Ale** then did not pull its punches, with drinkers being famously informed to avoid Watneys 'like the plague' in the 1974 first edition of the Good Beer Guide.

Over the year brewers have made various attempts to halt the decline. Some years ago we saw the introduction of 'nitro keg' which was marketed as keg that didn't really taste like keg and now we have the concept of 'craft keg'. How does this differ from standard rubbish keg you will ask? Well the advocates tell us that it is a quality product whatever that means (to prove it they charge a quality price!) brewed by 'artisans' which may or may not be keg beer in the strictest sense. This is utter rot of course as the whole concept if it ever had any merit has been utterly devalued by the fact that the ranks of these so called artisans has been joined by multinational companies like Coors who have jumped on this latest bandwagon. The term has become all things to all (marketing) men, at best meaningless and at worst extremely misleading.

Of course I expect brewers to ride the latest marketing wave in the industry, after all they rightly are in this to sell their products but I certainly don't expect the Campaign for **Real Ale** to provide them with assistance. Unlike the founders of the Campaign we seem to be frightened to take on this latest threat to cask beer in case we upset anybody or cause a fall out with the brewers. Instead we can be found at times running around like headless chickens confused about which way to turn. We have to remember we are a consumer organisation and that the Campaign for Real Ale is a campaign not just a jolly pub goers club. Quite simply either a beer is real ale which should be supported as such, albeit not uncritically or it is not and should be ignored or even castigated. I would hope that Opening Times will in future drop the 'craft keg' and call keg beer simply 'keg' in whatever form it is marketed (treating it with disapproval rather than tacit acquiescence) and promote real ale in all its forms. Let's put campaigning for real ale back into CAMRA and if we upset a few people so be it!

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From Paul Thompson, Didsbury:

There seems to be two distinct types of real ale brewing companies. Typically the older, traditional brewer will produce a supping bitter, a stronger bitter and possibly a mild, a winter warmer and a range of seasonal beers, many of which will be very similar to their bitters. The newer brewer will produce a very wide range of beers in brewing style, colour, alcoholic strength and taste, quite possibly using foreign hops and maybe even fruit.

People who prefer beer from the older, traditional brewers can be quite taken aback when presented with beers brewed by the newer brewers. As an example of this, at a Hawkshead Meet The Brewer evening someone thought that there was something wrong with a particular beer. The Hawkshead representative stated that this was how the beer was supposed to taste. I thought this beer was great but the person who'd raised the complaint thought that the beer had too many hops in it!

Where does the new range of keg beers fit in here? When I drink Thornbridge Jaipur on keg I think that it is a good, refreshing, moreish beer. I prefer the cask version of this beer as it's not so cold, not as gassy and has a more rewarding, more subtle taste. However I prefer Thornbridge Jaipur on keg to any beer I've drunk in the last few years from any of these older, traditional breweries: Robinsons, Hydes, Lees, Holts, Marstons and Greene King. For me, Thornbridge Jaipur on keg has got a far more pleasing taste.

I believe that the new wave of keg beer is good for cask beer as this new wave of beers is seen as being cool and trendy. Once non-serious beer drinkers are converted to this style of beer it's only a matter of time before they realise that the cask version of Thornbridge Jaipur tastes even better than the keg version & real ale will gain more converts.

I do have some reservations about the new wave of keg beer; for example I'm not happy that Brewdog seems to have stopped making cask beer. However I'm consoled that Brewdog know how to brew tasty real ale, and sooner or later they are bound to start brewing it again. I sometimes wonder if some of the older, traditional brewers know how to brew really tasty beer.

Two contrasting takes there on what is often called "craft keg" (although some of it isn't really keg beer at all). While Opening Times will not be actively promoting these beers, on the occasions it is necessary to mention them we won't be attacking them either – which is in line with the guidance from CAMRA centrally. This also chimes with the words of one of CAMRA's founders, Michael Hardman, who commented last year that when CAMRA was formed it was with the aim of not actually campaigning against anything but for real ale. Ed.

North Manchester CAMRA Most Improved Pub

This year's award went to the **Eagle** on Collier Street in Salford. Ester Mayler is seen here receiving the award from North Manchester Chairman Phil Pearson.



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

Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes

 <p>Floral Dance 3.8%</p> <p>A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!</p>	 <p>Hameldon Bitter 3.8%</p> <p>An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.</p>	 <p>Glen Top Bitter 4.0%</p> <p>A citrusy, full bodied, pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.</p>	 <p>Rossendale Ale 4.2%</p> <p>A malty aroma leads to a complex, malt dominated flavour, supported by a dry, increasingly bitter finish.</p>	 <p>Halo Pale 4.5%</p> <p>A citrusy, pale ale brewed with Cascade aroma hops, finishing with a slightly bitter aftertaste.</p>	 <p>Pitch Porter 5%</p> <p>A full bodied, rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and obvious roast barley dominance.</p>	 <p>Sunshine 5.3%</p> <p>A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy.</p>
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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
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National Winter Ales 2013

Festival Organiser Graham Donning with a look back and a taste of what is to come.

In January 2013 we will be holding the last National Winter Ales Festival (NWAFF) in Manchester. The event is being moved from Manchester to be held in Derby from 2014 for at least three years. I guess we will miss it!

The event was first held in Glasgow in 1997 (the winter of 1996/97 and 1997/98) and then moved into Manchester (the old Upper Campfield Market) where it was held for four years from 1999 to 2002.

It then moved to Burton on Trent for two years (The Old Town Hall in 2003 and 2004) and then returned to Manchester in 2005 where it was held for five years at the Co-operative's New Century Hall (NCH). Then in 2009 the "Management" of the Co-op decided that the NCH would no longer be available for public hire.

There followed a frantic search for an alternative venue to host the event and we found the Venue (Sheridan Suite, Oldham Road) but everybody said it was too far out of town, in a beer desert and wouldn't attract anybody to it. Lo and behold, how wrong they were. At the Venue the NWAFF continued to be a raging success with increased numbers and the layout of the event was much better than ever before – all on one level and a huge room.

Anyway, as they say, all water (or is it beer) under the bridge! The NWAFF 2013 fast approaches and we have, once again, an even larger range of beers for the public to enjoy with beers from all over the country and indeed the Republic of Ireland. We will have a range of beers from all members of "Project Venus" – a collective of Brewsters (female brewers) including the latest Brewster to join the group from St Helens just down the road. In addition we will have a good range of German and Belgian beers (draught as well as bottles) alongside some American beers and some Czech beers featuring a rare unfiltered version of Pilsner Urquell in draft and bottled form. With a range of Real Ale In A Bottle (RAIB) and a large selection of Ciders and Perries you couldn't ask for anything more!

As well as this there will be food provided by the Venue at a very reasonable price and it will be a mixture of standard English fare alongside some decent curries. There will be soft drinks available as well as some craft Dandelion & Burdock and Sarsaparilla (on the Cider Bar). With a very large car park available you could organise a bus from your local or, if travelling from the City, hop on one of the First buses that are offering a £2 return fare from Oldham Street to the Venue.

The event is open from Wednesday evening on the 23rd January till Saturday night on the 26th with FREE entry to CAMRA members on the Wednesday and Thursday and concessions at other times now is the time to join CAMRA!

And if you think it is all over, how wrong you can be! In 2014 we are already organising a Manchester Beer & Cider Festival that will take place in the Manchester Velodrome (home of the National Cycling Team and Team GB) to be held from Thursday 23rd January 2014 to Saturday 25th January 2014. Watch this space!

Next month's Opening Times will include a major feature on the National Winter Ales Festival including a preview of some of the beers on offer.



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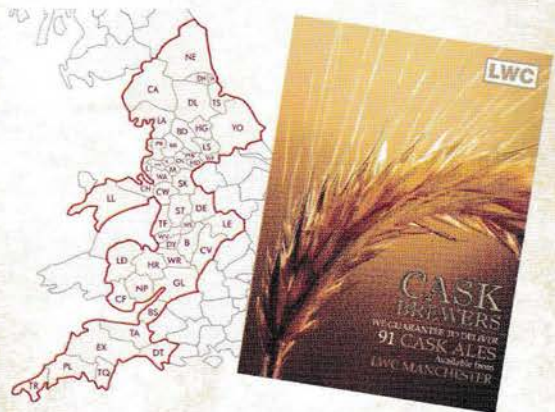
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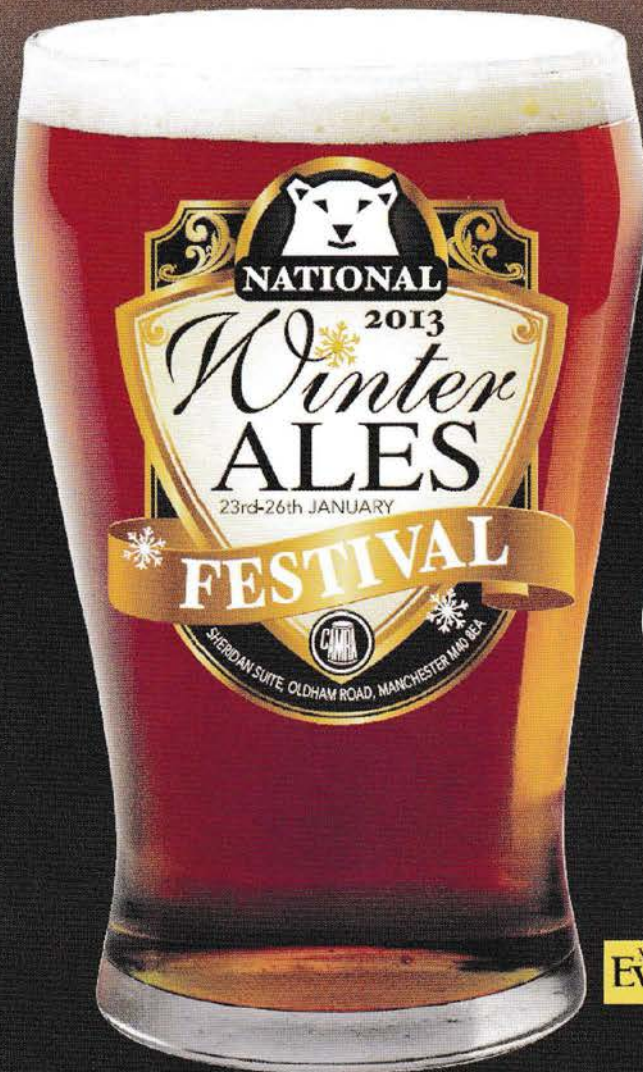
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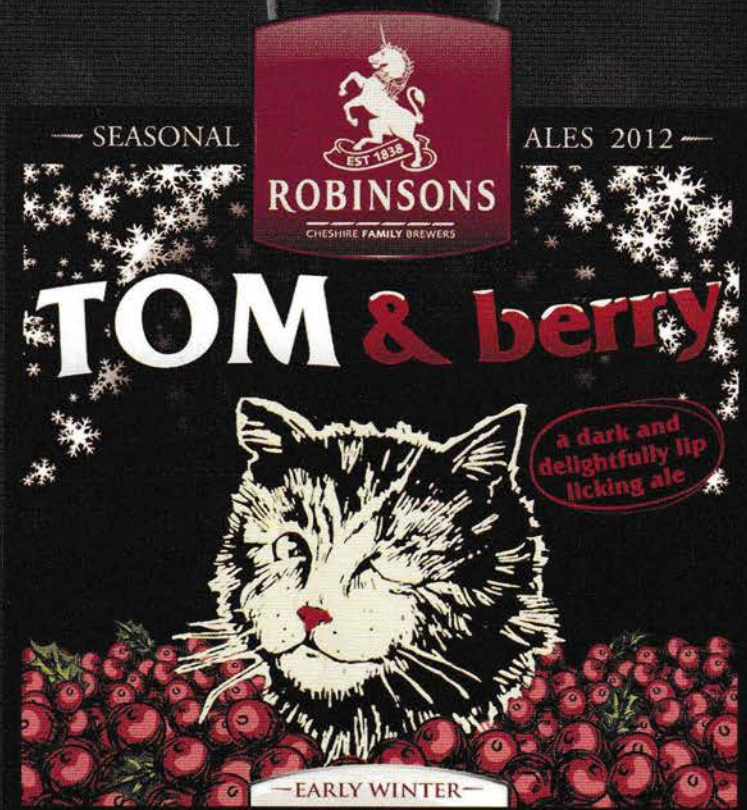


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