

April 2013



TIMES

Opening

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Pub of the Month

The Sun in September, Burnage



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for April 2013 has been won by the Sun in September, Burnage Lane, Burnage.

With a passing resemblance to an Alpine villa, the Sun in September seems somewhat incongruous in Burnage. Perhaps more at home in Switzerland or Austria, the impressive grounds to the front with mature trees and well-tended lawns lead you to the entrance. The reasons for this are contained in the history of the building. It was built in 1847 as a family home by Elizabeth Watts, the local landowner's daughter, modelled on the chalets she saw during her honeymoon in the Alps.

Time has moved on and it is now of course a Sam Smith's pub. Many older readers will remember when it was strangely given an Indian Raj theme, but thankfully following a more recent refurbishment, much of the original house is now open to be seen and the pub is definitely all the better for it. A large amount of the credit for this is down to the current licensees, Carole and Alan Taylor, who have nurtured the pub with care and attention for 20 years. In these days of pub closures plus the rapid turnover of licensees in the trade it is great to be able to acknowledge and reward their amazing fortitude and zeal which has continued to ensure that the Sun in September is a highly successful and respected close knit community pub.

Whatever time you go in the place buzzes with conversation and in the evenings it can get really busy. It is simply a really great pub and the level of custom reflects this. Equally good is the one cask ale, Old Brewery Bitter, Sam Smith's only cask beer, which is always on fine form and of course being Sam Smith's at a very affordable price!

So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented to Carole, Alan and their staff on Thursday, 25th April when, I am sure, a great night will be enjoyed by all. Take this opportunity to find out why their large band of loyal regulars so rate this pub and if you get a chance have a chat to Carole about the pub history, she has a fascinating tale to tell.



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

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Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Mild Magic

Once again we are launching our Mild Magic scheme, this year with 102 pubs taking part. We think this makes it the biggest single promotion of mild ale in the country – a fact which speaks volumes for the greater survival of cask mild in this part of the country than elsewhere.

Please do take part and support both the participating pubs and also those brewers who have stuck with cask mild when others have abandoned it. Some brewers produce it all year round, while some just produce it occasionally, often for CAMRA's "Mild Month" of May. However be they regular or seasonal brews, all are worth seeking out and trying.

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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E-mail – stocam@btinternet.com. Phone 0161 477 1973
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

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front Cover – The Baum. Inset Simon and Heidi with their award.

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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

Events open to all

Thursday 4th – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern or Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

Friday 5th & 6th – New Mills Beer Festival: Chalkers Snooker Club, New Mills, Newtown. (HPNC) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Saturday 6th – Informal social at New Mills Beer Festival. From 12 noon. (SSM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Saturday 6th – Branch Trip to Bolton Beer Festival. (T&H)
[Beer Festival open to all.](#)

Monday 8th – Branch Meeting: Wharf Tavern, Caroline Street, Stalybridge. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 10th – Social: Park Hotel, Monton Road, Eccles. From 8pm. (NM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Thursday 11th – Great Bridgewater Street Social: Rain Bar 8pm; City Road Inn 8.45pm; Britons Protection 9.30pm; Peveril of the Peak 10pm; finish at the Bishopsgate. (T&H) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Thursday 11th – Branch Meeting and AGM: Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Friday 12th – Mild Magic in Didsbury: 7.30pm Gateway, East Didsbury; Milson Rhodes 8.30pm. (SSM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Tuesday 16th – Spring Pub of the Season Award: Old Packet House, Navigation Road, Altrincham. From 8pm. (T&H) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Wednesday 17th – Salford Crawl: 7.30pm Black Lion, Chapel Street; 8.30pm Mark Addy; 9.30pm Egerton Arms. (NM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Friday 19th – North Stockport & Portwood Stagger: 7.30pm Park Inn, Newbridge Lane; 8.30pm Railway, Avenue Street. (SSM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Tuesday 23rd – St George's Day Trip to Poynton. Details from branch contact. (MEC)

Tuesday 23rd – Meet the Brewer: Brightside Brewery at Oddest, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. (T&H) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Wednesday 24th – Branch Meeting: Bridgewater Hotel, Barton Road, Worsley. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 25th – Pub of the Month presentation to Sun in September, Burnage. From 8pm. (SSM) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Thursday 25th – "Studentville" Social: Ducie Arms 8pm; Old Abbey 9pm; Courtyard 10pm; finish Odder. (T&H) [Open to all, welcome along.](#)

Thursday 2nd May – Branch Meeting: Moorfield, Marsland Road, Sale. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

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STOCKPORT

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2013

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4TH MAY**

**SUNDAY
5TH MAY**

Stockport Victorian Market Hall

SESSION 1

Saturday 4th May 7.00pm til 12.00am (midnight)

DANDYS AND DAMES FANCY DRESS (optional)

SESSION 2

Sunday 5th May 11.00am til 4.00pm

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Whats On

Monday

Big Screen Movie Night 8pm
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Tuesday

Bluegrass Folk Music -9pm

Wednesday

Alternate weeks Jam Night and
Wine Down Wednesday Club 9pm

Thursday

Classic Vinyl Dj Night 9pm
Northern Soul, Motown, Indie

Friday

Beer and Spirit Promotions

Saturdays

Big Screen Sky Live Sports and Music events
etc

Sunday

Afternoon -Charity Cheese Board 4pm
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Curmudgeon

Pricing Drinkers Back into the Pub?

Some people in the drinks trade such as Greene King boss Rooney Anand seem to have got the idea that minimum alcohol pricing would be a way of redressing the balance between on- and off-trade consumption and encouraging people back into pubs. However, Tim Martin of Wetherspoon's was closer to the mark when he described minimum pricing as "utter bollocks, basically."

In practice it's hard to see how it would generate a single extra customer for pubs. For a start, it's fairly obvious that if you increase the price of A, but leave B the same, it doesn't make B any cheaper, or give people any more money to spend on it. Perhaps it might lead the odd person to go back to B because A is no longer such an irresistible bargain, but on the other hand it will increase costs overall and potentially lead people to cut back on B. It certainly won't put any more money in anyone's pocket apart from brewers and retailers.

In a survey carried out by YouGov, 39% of respondents said that minimum pricing would lead to them drinking less in pubs and bars, while fewer than 1% said they would drink more. Another poll by ComRes showed below 20% support for the plan amongst the population as a whole, so it can't exactly be said to command broad popular support.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding minimum pricing concerns problem drinkers downing dirt-cheap white cider, super lagers, budget vodka and the like. While it would undoubtedly raise the price of their favoured tittle, is it really going to persuade them to start using pubs instead? And would the pubs want them anyway? On the other hand, before discounting, the price of most mainstream branded alcoholic drinks is already 45p or more a unit, so it will make no difference whatsoever. Obviously it would affect the price of some products that are being discounted, but even so they would still be markedly cheaper than the equivalent in pubs. No doubt it would to a small extent cut overall consumption, but people aren't suddenly going to stop "pre-loading" because the price of a bottle of cheap vodka has gone up from £10 to £12.

The reasons for the long-term decline of the on-trade relative to the off-trade lie in a variety of social changes over the years that go well beyond price alone. If you want a drink, it isn't a simple either/or choice as to whether to have it at home or in the pub – you need an actual occasion to prompt you to visit the pub. Even if beer was a pound a pint, pubs wouldn't be doing anything like the trade they were thirty years ago, especially at lunchtimes.

It is also suggested that this change in the marketplace is something that has been brought about as part of a deliberate policy by the major supermarkets. However, in reality, while they may be able to tweak customer preferences to a limited extent, supermarkets can only sell what people want to buy. They are, by and large, responding to consumer demand, not creating it out of thin air. If they really could manipulate the market to the extent that is claimed, then they would have discovered the Holy Grail of business.

Minimum pricing would also set a precedent for government regulation of drink prices that it would be naïve to assume would never be extended in some way to pubs. It is short-sighted in the extreme for one section of the drinks trade to seek a temporary advantage from what is essentially an anti-drink measure. In the words of Winston Churchill, "an appeaser is one who feeds the crocodile hoping it will eat him last." Anyone with an interest in alcoholic drinks as producer, retailer or consumer who feels any sneaking sympathy with minimum pricing should reflect long and hard on that proposition.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com



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Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season

The Old Packet House, Broadheath



Trafford & Hulme branch have voted the Old Packet House, Navigation Road, Broadheath as their Pub Of The Season for Spring 2013. Built in the 1770s the Old Packet House was the second stopping place on the journey, by boat or barge, from Manchester to Runcorn along the Bridgewater Canal, providing shelter for passengers and storage facilities for packages for dispatch or collection. It is now run, since June 2004, by the father and daughter team of Terry and Claire Hardman. The pub is now a cheery and welcoming local serving two cask ales, Little Bollington from Dunham Massey and Golden Best from Timothy Taylor.

It's very much a locals' pub. Terry, Claire and their staff work hard to support the local community with charity events, karaoke every Friday, live music on occasional Saturdays and Quiz Nights on Monday where you might even meet Quizmaster Basil (pictured right). When not performing this role he is happy to be the pub dog and accept any amount of fussing.

Food is served daily from noon until 3pm and for those wishing to stay over there are four en-suite bedrooms at reasonable rates for B&B. Once again, the Old Packet House has joined Mild Magic so please come along and honour Terry & Claire with your presence when they receive their award on Tuesday 16th April from 8pm and collect your Mild Magic sticker whilst you are there.



Chorlton Beer Festival 2013

The dates for the 9th Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival have been confirmed as Friday 5th and Saturday 6th of July 2013. Once again, Trafford & Hulme CAMRA will pack St. Clement's Church on Edge Lane with over 80 beers and 50 ciders. The festival will also be hosting the North West round of the Champion Speciality Beer Of Britain competition for the second year running. More details can be found at www.thcamra.org.uk/chorlton. You can also follow the festival on Twitter @chorlbeerfest and on facebook at www.facebook.com/ChorltonBeerFestival.



Flixton & Urmston Part 2

George Elmslie continues his report

Last month, Trafford and Hulme branch took a trip from Flixton to Urmston via Flixton Road. To complete the set, a few weeks later we set out to repeat the journey, but this time taking in the northern part of the area.

On a bright sunny Saturday morning we alighted from the 256 bus opposite the **Railway Tavern** on Irlam Road, a two-storey building with a patio area set up for alfresco drinking out front. Inside was a real treat for the traditionalist: open fires in each room, no telly, and darts, dominoes and cards the popular choice for games. We were in Sam Smiths land here: a pint for under two pounds and a choice of Old Brewery Bitter or, well that's it actually, but a decent pint none the less. A classic feature of the entrance hall was a serving hatch presumably for off sales, a practice not as common now as in bygone days. The walls were adorned with old pictures of the Ship Canal and the rail network which serviced it, hence the name.

The beauty of this survey was the regular buses passing all our featured targets, so on to another bus (15) and a few stops away we got off near the **Fox and Hounds**, a large pub set in its own grounds with a beer garden off to one side, not many customers at that time but a full menu on offer. Deuchars IPA was the cask offering and all agreed it passed muster.



Another short hop on the bus (15 or 245) took us to the **Bent Brook**, part of Greene King's Hungry Horse chain. However, we were disappointed as there was no real ale to be had - there was a handpump and we were informed there was ale in the cellar but to link up the two required access to the cellar, the key of which was with the manager who was not on the premises. Rather than await her return, we moved on.



Doubling back on ourselves our next stop was at the **Nags Head**, where we confirmed previous reports that there was no real ale. Back on the bus now and to the promised land of the Trafford Centre. First up was the **Mardi Gras**, a JD Wetherspoon pub slap bang in the middle of this consumer frenzy on the edge of the Orient Food Court. Split over two levels, the pub was very busy on a Saturday as you would expect. Greene King Abbot and Ruddles were joined by a guest ale - on this occasion Roadrunner from Mobblerley Fine Ales. Not the best selection but they kept us going through the duds on our quest for a drop of the real stuff.

Off we set across the pedestrian-unfriendly service roads surrounding the shopping behemoth to the **Swinging Bridge**, a Table Table chain pub-restaurant with adjacent Premier Inn. The bar has a handpump and may serve real ale occasionally but just as we had found on a previous trip, just not today! Our reward for these endeavours was the final stop on the official survey, the splendidly named **Castle in the Air**, the Wetherspoons at the base of the Chill Factor indoor ski centre. It's a large space, even by the standards of the brand, with a glass wall along one side. Plenty of ale here to sample among which were the Inveralmond Ossian and Coach House Cheshire Gold.

Without doubt a good survey, that showed up the good and the bad; it is just a shame that we weren't joined by more members from the area.

the Mark Addy

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MONDAY CLOSED**

High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

High Peak Pub News

With Frank Wood

Local member Simon Miller has been checking out the pubs now accessible by tram following the opening of the Droylsden line. Pubs to look in are as follows:

Clayton Hall stop:

The Grove, 652 Ashton New Road, Clayton. Located 200 yards back from the stop. Joseph Holt's beers.

Edge Lane stop:

Halfway House, 435 Manchester Road, Droylsden. Joseph Holt's again, opposite the tram stop.

The Buxton, 339 Manchester Road, Droylsden. Free House selling two cask beers (one being Black Sheep).

Cemetery Road stop:

Jolly Carter, 231 Manchester Road, Droylsden. 50 yards from tram stop walking back. One guest beer (opens at 4pm weekdays).

Droylsden stop:

Fitzroy Club, Durham Street, Droylsden. 500 yards from stop, on Fairfield Road. Two guest beers (Thwaites Wainwright has been one of late).

Beehive, 145 Market Place, Droylsden. Been selling real ale for some two years. Normally a local beer is on offer. It is also the only cask pub selling food on weekdays.

Kings Head, 169 Market Street, Droylsden. Joseph Holt's pub in CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2013. Just across road from Beehive.

Bush, 120 Moorside Street, Droylsden. Thwaites pub selling three cask beers. Some 15 minutes' walk from the tram stop, heading towards Daisy Nook.

Other News

Three notable pubs went under the hammer last month in the Tameside area. These were: the **Pack Horse** at Ashworth Lane, Mottram; the **Sportsman** on Mottram Road, Stalybridge; and the **Cotton Tree** on Markham Road, Newton, Hyde.

The latest beer from Worth Brewery (based at **Poynton British Legion**) is Bombay Mix at 4.2%. We hear that Paul Hession's son is now brewing the beers due to Paul's recent illness (from which we wish him a full recovery). Elsewhere in Poynton, the **Bulls Head** is now free from tie which adds to the local cask ale choice (already given a lift by the opening of Wetherspoons' **Kingfisher**).

At the **Globe**, Glossop, grandson Toby is now brewing some of the beers and their recent Ginger Beer has been proving popular. The town's long delayed Wetherspoons (to be called the **Smithy Fold**) is now due to open on May 21 (according to the company website).

The **Boundary** at Guide Bridge (pictured below) is selling Hornbeam beers fairly regularly and in Mossley, the **Best of Brass** now has cask, with two changing beers available.



In Old Glossop, the popular Thornbridge Hall Jaipur at 5.9%, a rarity for the area, now occupies its own regular handpump at the **Queens**, whilst **Glossop Labour Club** continues to have a Buxton Brewery beer on sale to supplement the Moorhouses Premier. In Hayfield, the **Royal** has three guest beers as a rule and on my visit on 6th March all three were Hornbeam beers. The **Royal Oak** on High Street, New Mills has Robinsons Unicorn, 1892 and the seasonal which in early March was Frederic's and was in good form but the nearby **Peveril of the Peak** only has a selection of bottled beers.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

The headline news is of course made by the winter beer and cider festival at the **Old Hall** and **Paper Mill** at Whitehough, Chinley during the last weekend in February. So a fortnight after the Old Hall received its 2012 Mild Magic Award for selling the most popular mild in pubs on the trail outside Stockport Borough, crowds gathered for the seasonal beer and cider festival. At least 70 beers were on the beer list, with more that did not make the list. As usual there was a selection from around the country with an emphasis on local products. Beers were found in the main bar, in the small room on the right of the main entrance, and across the road in the Paper Mill.

There was of course a good range of porters, stouts and other dark seasonal beers and for contrast the pale hoppy brews, as well as beers in between. Even with two afternoon visits, you can really only scratch the surface at a festival like this. However of the dark beers, those which stood out for me were RedWillow Smokeless, Titanic Last Porter Call and Corvedale St. George's Stout, from Shropshire. The pale hoppy palate cleansers to be noted included Richard Hough's Blue Bee Red White

and Blue, Quartz Extra Blonde and Shugborough Farmers Half, both from Staffordshire.

Ciders and perries were more numerous than the list suggested and were on sale at the back of the main building and over in the Paper Mill. A quick try at both Cornish Orchards Farmhouse Cider and Perry gave a pleasant sample. Of course as the Old Hall settles down post festival, two ciders on hand pump will be a continuing feature in the main bar. The next beer and cider festival at the Old Hall will be during the weekend of 20/21/22 September. There's something to look forward to.

A February dining visit to the **Church** at Chelmorton, a Good Beer Guide listed pub at the top of the main street in a village south of Buxton, made a worthwhile visit. Adnams Southwold Bitter is a regular here, though it is not more widely available in the Peak. It certainly made for good beer to accompany a good lunchtime meal.



The **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge (pictured above) does a good line in sensibly priced food, good food giving good old fashioned value. Food is available 12.30-2.30 and 4.30-7.30 Monday to Friday and 12.30-5.00 on Saturday. Beers to accompany food are from the list made available by Punch, and include the interesting beers on the Finest Cask List. By the time that you read this a new bi-monthly list will be in operation.

The **Printers** at Birch Vale is a good source for well kept beer from Storm Brewery. A range of these Macclesfield beers is often available. A recent well received guest was a 6.4% Big Bob's Pale Ale from Hornbeam. Who is Big Bob? Still with Storm, their beers are often available in the **Drum and Monkey** in Whaley Bridge, with Downpour as a recent example.

There are some pale hoppy beers brewed in the Marston's empire, for Banks's Sunbeam and Jennings' Cockerhoop were March delights in the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge.

On a sad note, I understand that the Crown & Mitre at New Smithy near Chinley is up for auction. The Robinson's estate could be reduced again.



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Beer Festival Entertainment

Stuart Ballantyne previews what's on this year

Thursday Night – The Casino Allstars

On Thursday the festival opens with the Casino Allstars: the UK's top Northern Soul band. The Allstars are a seven piece band which creates a sound that appeals to all who love to hear and dance to good music. Three of the original members, Paul Kidd, Brian Walker and Big Al, came up with the idea of



putting together the original band playing true Northern Soul covers from as far back as the Twisted Wheel and Wigan Casino which in their day were the biggest clubs in the country. With a mixture of male and female lead vocals along with harmonies rarely heard in bands today and backed by a band of talented musicians, the Allstars do not disappoint. The band comes complete with some of the coolest suits and retro clothing in the business. The Allstars recently returned to the Twisted Wheel as the first live band to play there for over 35 years. The music is uplifting and comes straight from the heart so it can only be truly performed with affection and commitment which is exactly what you get when watching The Casino Allstars. The Allstars put their heart and soul into all the songs that they perform. The buzz that this creates in the hall is truly infectious and it is a wonder to behold. The Casino Allstars come highly recommended to open the beer festival so come along and listen to them play! And er.... don't forget your dancing shoes!

Friday Lunch – Walthew House Steel Band

On Friday lunchtime the beer festival features the Walthew House Steel Band, from this year's beer festival charity. The majority of the band is actually visually impaired and so it must be very difficult for the musicians to perform to their



discerning audience. The band formed in 2009, as a result of the support of the North West Steel Band Association who generously donated the instruments. Since this time the group have gone on from strength to strength. Group leader Janice Turley told the beer festival 'the musicality of even the simplest pieces delights us and as the complexity of our repertoire grows we have started to include pieces from our favourite musicians. Arranging has become fun yet challenging'. With a strong ethos of 'fun' and a 'real quality sound' the Walthew House Steel Band is something unique, and by supporting one of Stockport's oldest charities you will be enabling the band's passion for music to continue.

Friday Night – Atlanta Soul

On Friday night the festival will provide music lovers with a real treat! Manchester's own Atlanta Soul band: one of the hottest soul/funk outfits in the country with an eight-piece line-up. Atlanta Soul play classic hits made famous by artists such as James Brown, Van Morrison, Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, and many other soul and R'n'B legends. Atlanta Soul have performed at numerous venues from Band on the Wall to the Queen Elizabeth Hall in Oldham. They have also appeared at the Heineken Music Festival in Roundhay Park, Leeds, where they played in

front of 70,000 people to great acclaim. The band has appeared alongside some of the music industry's greats such as Mike and the Mechanics, Big Country, Squeeze, Desmond Dekker, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Aswad, and many others. Atlanta Soul delivers exciting, vibrant sets with a passion, great musicianship and deep American Georgian soul. Miss their appearance and you will surely regret it!



Saturday Lunch - Brasswurst Bavarian Beer Band

On Saturday lunchtime the festival features, for the very first time, a traditional Bavarian brass band. Bringing a combination of Lederhosen, traditional Oompah tunes and a fresh sound to familiar pop classics, the Brasswurst Bavarian Beer Band has emerged as one of Manchester's most exciting alternative bands. As with most great ideas, the band was formed following discussions over a few pints of traditional beer. The band comprises a clarinettist and four brass playing friends, all of whom have an interest in traditional Bavarian music and drinking traditional beer! Individually, they are all professional musicians, having played with orchestras such as the Hallé and the BBC Philharmonic. They have also toured with the chart-topping Ting Tings. They now regularly perform to packed audiences all across the country. Dancing will be encouraged as will singing and drinking along to the music so bring your stein, fill it with beer and enjoy the real taste of Bavaria! Prost!



Saturday Night – Dana Dixon

On Saturday night the festival provides visitors with the real treat of an authentic Texan, Chicago and west coast of America blues band. Dana Dixon is regarded as one of the best female blues harmonica players in the world; her gravelly voice has been likened by some to the blues' great artists - Koko Taylor, Big Mama Thornton, Maggie Bell and Janis Joplin to name but a few. Dana has a raw voice but it is a voice that she controls to near perfection. The blues press have placed much emphasis on Dana's powerful vocals and harmonica skills, gaining her fantastic reviews from British and overseas press for both the band's recorded work and their excellent live performances. In 2001 the band was chosen to represent Britain at the International Blues Challenge held in Memphis USA which led to them being invited to play on stage at BB King's club on Beale Street in Memphis. The band has played at practically every major blues festival in Britain and Ireland, and has performed in blues venues up and down the UK, Europe and the USA including sell out shows for four consecutive years at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. A Saturday night visit to Stockport Beer & Cider festival is a **must**. In the meantime check out the band's critically acclaimed albums "Boogie Woman" and "Old, New, Borrowed and Blue".



Stagger

A Walk on the Mild Side with David Hanson

This year's Mild Stagger took place on the evening of one of our national Celtic patron saints; yes it was St. David's day. Will the brewing industry have risen to the occasion and produced a plethora of daffodil yellow beers (or even dragon red) we pondered. Alas and alack, unlike March 17th, there was not one mention of the Welsh hero so we had to console ourselves with the milds on offer.



We started in the ever-popular **Railway**, Avenue Street, Portwood, where we were surprised to find not one, but two milds on offer. Most of the party started with a pint of Phoenix Monkeytown Mild, a very dark traditional mild which was enjoyed by the group. Sarah Hughes Ruby Mild, again dark (and at 6%, nearer to mild's 19th century strength) was tried by one brave soul, and was wisely only ordered as a half. The array of handpumps on offer beckoned, but as this was a mild stagger we were honour-bound to leave.

Back along Great Portwood Street and left under Asda brought us to our next port of call, the **Arden Arms**. The interior of the Arden is a time capsule of a real old fashioned local, lots of wood panelling, friendly staff and chatting locals. Being a Robinson's house, the only mild on offer was their 1892 (or Hatters as it was known or Best Mild to the diehards!). This was the first of the lighter milds we tried and was viewed with scepticism by one of our multitude, but rated as pretty good overall. As we arrived at 8pm, food was no longer being served so we easily found seating on the built-in wooden benches in the Millgate Room (if you visit during the day, this room is reserved for diners). Having downed our dose of olde worlde nostalgia we departed for the 8:30pm meeting point.

As we entered the **Tiviot**, around the corner on Tiviot Dale, our numbers were swollen by one. When entering, don't rush to get to the beers and take a look at the mosaic floor tiles announcing Tiviot Hotel. Another little-changed pub, it preserves its original multi-roomed interior, with tap room to the left, lounge to the right and dining room to the rear.

Another Robinson's house, beers available were 1892, Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde. We all repaired to the front lounge and savoured our drinks, whereupon a debate ensued over the differences of the 1892 here as compared to the Arden, the result being a score draw. The pub was reasonably busy for an evening in the notoriously quiet Stockport town centre.

We left the Tiviot and made a bee-line for our next objective, the **Swan with Two Necks** on Princes Street. Because of a lack of passing trade in the evenings (the Swan does excellent dinnertime meals trade) we wondered whether it would be open. As we approached, outside seating was noted with relief – we were going to get in. The Swan keeps both of Robinson's milds, 1892 and 1892 Dark, a caramel-rich, dark ale, so we anticipated a real treat. The rug was pulled out from under our feet when the bar staff announced that both were past their best and not on sale! Disappointing for us, but good to see that Trigger, the landlord, is not prepared to sell ale which is not up to standard. Never mind, out came the back-up plan, and off we went to the George.



The **George**, on the corner of Wellington Road and Heaton Lane, has had its ups and downs and ups again over the years. I will reveal my antiquity by saying I remember when the George was a rare non-Merseyside outlet for Liverpool's Higson's Brewery. After many years under the wing of a pub company they closed it, for good we assumed. Like a phoenix it re-opened and now offers not one but four ales from the Taylor's stable (go on, admit it, you didn't know they did more than Landlord). We struck lucky and they had on offer both Golden Best, a very light golden ale, and Dark Mild. Everyone ordered a half of both so we could settle down for a good comparison. Alas, they were served so cold that little taste could initially be discerned but once they warmed they were perfectly acceptable.

Then it was around the corner onto Heaton Lane and into the **Pineapple** for yet another pint of Robinson's 1892. Though not surrounded by any housing and in the heart of the town centre, the Pineapple still attracts a good evening crowd and has the feel of a true local. The eclectic decorations, consisting of

plates brought back from around the world by its customers, are a definite talking point. Along with the 1892, Unicorn and Cumbria Way were also offered. Shamefully one of our party tried the latter as 1892 was not to their liking; never mind, that is the fascination of real ale and one man's mild is another man's poison (to butcher a well known saying!).



We navigated across the road and entered (just) the ever popular (and crowded) **Crown** further along Heaton Lane just under the viaduct (or more correctly viaducts, as I am informed it is two viaducts built side by side). The Crown keeps a mild on at all times, with a stout and even a porter being nearly always available, too. Today's offering was Copper Dragon's Black Gold, a deliciously moreish dark mild and a classic of the style. What has not been said about the Crown? Not much, so I will say no more than if you haven't visited, you have not lived. Our party diffused to all corners of the pub to absorb the convivial atmosphere, whereupon I met two old mates and got into conversation (see I said you would get a mention). When we were ready to depart a quick round-up and we were on our way.

It was up the hill of Wellington Road North, passing the **Midland** which only sells cask bitter, not mild, and on to the **Magnet**. Milds are often available here, but not on a permanent basis, so we entered with trepidation. Unfortunately, although several dark beers were on sale, none was a mild. The **Railway** across the road also sells mild on an occasional basis, but again, not tonight. Continuing north we called into the **Hope**, in the hope of finding a mild. Again, we were unfortunately without luck but Martin Wood is looking to add a mild to his in-house Fool Hardy Brewery's portfolio. As time was running out we stayed in the Hope and strayed from our mission by drinking the darkest beer available.

This perambulation around a selection of pubs revealed a mixed bag of milds. Robinson's houses proved to be reliable outlets, but of the multi-ale houses only two dedicate one of their eight-plus pumps permanently to a mild. Why not introduce yourself to the delights of mild by taking part in Mild Magic?

Mild Magic 2013

Visit Pubs, Drink Beer, Win Prizes

According to the media mild is a dying beer style. We beg to differ. After excellent enthusiasm from the pubs (and club) across the Opening Times area we have an amazing 102 on this year's challenge. In fact, to (mis) quote Coleridge, here in the North West it is "Mild, mild everywhere and plenty of it to drink"!

So what are we asking you to do?

First enter a participating pub (see below right) and pick up a card. Second, buy a cask mild (pint or half) and ask the bar staff to put a sticker on your card. Third, drink the mild and enjoy its taste. Fourth, enter a different participating pub; check below as this may influence your choice of pub. Repeat from step two (no need for a new card) until you have filled the card. NB Check the times of pub opening hours, especially if you are making a special journey.

What is the deal? If you fill a card with stickers from 12 different pubs you will have completed **Mild Magic** which entitles you to free entry to, or (for CAMRA members) a pint of mild, at the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2013. Being slightly more adventurous and visiting pubs in 12 areas is **Mild Magic Extra** and gains you a Mild Magic t-shirt as well as the entry ticket/pint of mild.

Mild Magic Super is a little more challenging - get stickers from 24 pubs, each in a different area, and you receive an eye-catching 'Mild Magic' polo shirt plus an extra Festival entry ticket/pint. Now the stakes are rising. **Mild Magic Ultra** requires stickers from 48 pubs from a minimum of 36 different areas. For this you will receive a special edition Mild Magician sweatshirt, four Festival entry tickets/pints and be included in a draw to be "Brewer for the Day" at Stockport's own Quantum Brewery.

Still up for a challenge? Why not weave some magic and become a **Mild Master Magician**. Obtain a sticker from every participating pub and you receive the enhanced Mild Master Package of a special edition Mild Master Magician Fleece, six Festival entry tickets/pints and entry into the 'Brewer for the Day' draw.

Each garment will be embroidered with the fabulous new logo designed by Joseph Bailey, a graphics and interactive media student at Newcastle-Under-Lyme College. Thanks Joe, and we hope you enjoy your prize of a VIP package for two at the Festival.

How long do I have to complete all this? Mild Magic runs from Friday 12th April to Sunday 19th May inclusive. To get you off to a flying start why not join us on Friday 12th April for a 42 bus route stagger, starting in the Gateway, East Didsbury, at 7:30pm or catch up at the Milson Rhodes in Didsbury at 8:30pm. We will be travelling down the 42 bus route into Manchester calling at all Mild Magic pubs en route.

What do I do when I have finished Mild Magic? Simply send your card(s) to the organiser (details on card) no later than 25th May and your tickets (entry or beer) will be sent out by return post. In mid June you will be invited along to a presentation day where your beautifully embroidered shirts will be distributed.

To add even more interest, everyone participating is invited to vote for two pubs in which they were served the best mild, one in the Stockport MBC area and the other outside Stockport. The two winning pubs will then be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award and participants are invited to attend these award evenings.



We are also especially grateful to Hydes for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 12 pulled out will win a visit to their new brewery situated near Media City in Salford.

Such is the success (and fame?) of Mild Magic that Moorhouse's of Burnley have agreed to be our sponsor. Our grateful thanks to them! Moorhouses brew some excellent beer, especially the multi-award winning Black Cat, and distribute it throughout the North West and, via distributors, to much of Britain. Find out more about them at www.moorhouses.co.uk.



If you haven't taken part before, you must have a go this time; it's great fun and it's so easy - you only need to visit 12 pubs over a five week period. It's an excellent chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and win some great prizes while voting with your feet in favour of Britain's proud brewing heritage. Please give our campaign to preserve cask conditioned Mild in this area your support!

The Mild Magic Pubs

ADSWOOD Cross Keys; **ALL SAINTS** Sandbar; **ALTRINCHAM** Costello's Bar; **BROADHEATH** Old Packet House; **CASTLEFIELD** Wharf; **CHEADLE** Cheshire Line, Crown, Red Lion; **CHEADLE HULME** Cheadle Hulme, Church Inn, Kings Hall; **CHORLTON** Oddest, Sedge Lynn; **CHORLTON GREEN** Horse & Jockey, Beech; **COMPSTALL** Northumberland Arms; **DIDSBURY** Fletcher Moss, Milson Rhodes, Railway; **DISLEY** White Lion; **EDGELEY** Olde Woolpack; **FALLOWFIELD** Friendship Inn; **FURNESS VALE** Crossings, Soldier Dick; **GATLEY** Horse & Farrier; **GORTON** Vale Cottage, Waggon and Horses; **GREAT MOOR** Travellers Call; **HAUGHTON GREEN** Chapel House; **HAZEL GROVE** Grapes, Three Tunnes, Wilfred Wood; **HEALD GREEN** Griffin; **HEATON CHAPEL** Hinds Head; **HEATON MERSEY** Crown, Griffin; **HEATON MOOR** Crown; **HEATON NORRIS** Hope, Magnet, Navigation, Nursery Inn, Railway; **HEAVILEY** Blossoms; **HIGH LANE** Royal Oak; **HYDE** Queens, Sportsman, Cheshire Ring, Cotton Bale; **LEVENSHULME** Sidings; **MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE** Ape and Apple, Bulls Head, City Arms, Crown & Anchor, Grey Horse, Marble Arch, Micro Bar, Moon Under Water, Old Monkey, Paramount, Rain Bar, Rising Sun, Waterhouse; **MARPLE** Navigation, Railway, Ring O' Bells; **MARPLE BRIDGE** Hare & Hounds, Royal Scot, Windsor Castle; **NEW MILLS** Masons Arms; **NEW MILLS NEWTOWN** Chalkers Snooker Club; **OFFERTON** Finger Post; **OLD TRAFFORD** Bishop Blaize; **OTTERSPOOL** Hare & Hounds; **PARRS WOOD** Gateway; **PORTWOOD** Railway; **POYNTON** Kingfisher; **RUSHOLME** Ford Madox Brown; **SALE** JP Joule, Plough Hotel, Volunteer; **SALFORD** New Oxford, Salford Arms; **SHAW HEATH** Armoury; **STALYBRIDGE** Society Rooms, Station Buffet Bar; **STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE** Arden Arms, Bakers Vaults, Calverts Court, Crown, George, Pineapple, Railway, Red Bull, Swan with Two Necks, Tiviot, Waterloo; **STRINES** Royal Oak; **TIMPERLEY** Quarry Bank; **WHALEY BRIDGE** Shepherds Arms; **WHITEHOUGH** Old Hall; **WITHINGTON** Victoria; **WOODFORD** Davenport Arms.

Note - many of these area will be subdivided on the card to make it easier for you to complete Mild Magic Extra, Super, Ultra and Master Magician.



Pennine



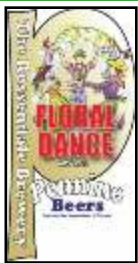
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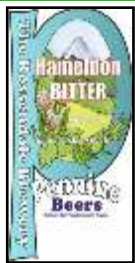
Contacts - Office: 0333 210 4021; Geoff: 07816 912 794; Robin: 07709 874 783

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.



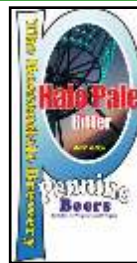
Glen Top Bitter
4.0%

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!

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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Heald Green



OT went to Heald Green to see how work was progressing on the new Greene King pub to be built just off Styal Road in Moss Nook. Well, the site is fenced off, but nothing as yet is happening. Having established that, it was off to the seldom visited **Beech Tree** at Outwood (pictured above). This has been advertising that it now sold cask ale, and indeed it did; a tasty drop of Sharp's Doom Bar was had for £2.60. Although the lounge had a handpump for Old Speckled Hen, this didn't seem to be on. The Beech Tree is a comfortably appointed estate pub. There's a separate vault to the left with a large drop-down TV screen, darts area and pool table. A large open fire completes the setting, with wall decor related to football and boxing. The right hand part is a nicely fitted-out lounge with a small snug area off it and a small stage area too. Filled barm-cakes provide affordable sustenance.



A half-mile walk brings you to Holt's **Griffin**. This was still doing plenty of trade in both food and ale. The beer range is Holt Mild, Bitter, and IPA. Another short walk away was Hydes' **Ryecroft Arms**, in Cheadle Hulme. This was quite busy with people watching football on TV. It retains the modern look that followed a makeover some years ago. A limited lunch menu is now available, whilst the beer range has been pared down to Original Bitter, and the seasonal beer Stowaway (this is in their "Nautical and Nice" range).

Stockport Bits & Pieces

Following new signage and some redecoration, the **Park Inn** on Newbridge Lane reopened on 22 February in the names of Sue and Dean Bell, who in times gone by ran the Cheshire Cat in Brinnington. On handpumps were Bombardier and John Smiths Cask (rarely seen in Stockport). Sue tells us she plans to have five

handpumps – four from the Enterprise Inns list and one for beers from a local micro brewery. She is also looking for an "old" photo of the pub. If anyone can assist please contact OT.

On a recent visit to the **George** in Mersey Square, a near full range of Taylor's beers were on sale with Golden Best, Dark Mild, Landlord and Boltmaker on handpump. Also on handpump was Black Dragon Cider.

Around & About

Over in West Didsbury, **Folk Café Bar** is doing well with cask beer in the form of Brightside The Beast, and another beer, usually Porter. Folk began life as a Polish deli. It then became fully licensed in May 2009. For a long time it was a bar and café that stuck with keg beer, happily that changed in January 2013 when it converted to cask beer. This is a very relaxed and competently-run bar in which one could easily idle away many hours. With this and a varied menu, consisting of modern British fare and Greek meze, this place could go far.

The **Oast House**, Spinningfields, has scooped an award for Best New Site at the annual The



Publican Awards. Organised by the industry newspaper The Publican's Morning Advertiser, the awards celebrate all aspects of the pub industry with the winners going through a rigorous judging process. The Oast House opened in September 2011, the first pub operated by the Living Ventures restaurant chain. Although originally intended to be a temporary addition to Spinningfields, the success of the pub has recently led to the company applying for and being granted planning permission to make the Oast House permanent.

In Altrincham, **Barrington's Bar and Hotel** at the junction of Stamford New Road and Stamford Street has had a reorganisation of its bar. The back bar now offers a pool table while the long established single Holts Bitter handpump has been moved to the front bar and is about to be joined by a second pump offering a guest ale. The hotel offers 12 letting rooms.

The **Faulkners Arms** on Stamford New Road has joined the increasing number of pubs under

the stewardship of local licensee Chris Cocks and his wife Julia. After taking on the Bulls Head in Sale less than two years ago, Chris went on to add the Temple Inn in Sale to his portfolio before rescuing Altrincham's Bricklayers Arms from closure last year. In each case the couple have employed a simple formula of offering good service in a welcoming atmosphere with a regular programme of events to attract customers. Opening Times wishes them every success with the Faulkners.

Opening Times understands that the long derelict former **Waggon & Horses** pub on Cross Street, Sale is due to be demolished and replaced by houses and flats. The pub which closed over 10 years ago still retains many of its fittings but has been left to rot for years to the point where the building has become damaged.

Chorlton

JD Wetherspoon's **Sedge Lynn** on Manchester Road has often been overshadowed by other less modest local bars when it comes to their cask ale offering. However since manager Leanne Kempthorne took over in 2012, the Sedge is quietly fighting back with as many as six guest ales joining four regular beers (including Moorhouses Blonde Witch and Phoenix Wobbly Bob). The most recent addition to their range is their first house ale which they have commissioned from one of the best of the recent crop of new local micro-breweries, Brightside Brewery of Bury. Rather than go for a simple standard bitter or golden ale, the new beer named Pot Black is a rich dark mild at 4.2%, the high end of the mild strength range. Pot Black should be available throughout Manchester Mild Magic.



Opening Times reported a few months ago that the local Font chain was eyeing up a venue in the Chorlton area. By the time you read this, it is expected that **Font Chorlton** will have opened in the former Iguana Bar at the top end of Manchester Road. Its city centre pub lives a double life selling cocktails to students while offering a range of cask ales and three traditional ciders.

Continued on page 18...

Pub News

Continued from page 17

The Chorlton outlet will continue to offer cocktails but is expected to have much more of a focus on beer.

Given the intense competition to entice cask-drinking customers in the area, Opening Times was extremely surprised to hear grumblings from customers at one of the longest established bars, the **Marble Beer House**, that they had been refused a taster of a beer before ordering. However after making a few enquiries, it was confirmed that this indeed was the new policy of the award-winning bar. It is of course at the management's discretion whether to offer tasters but CAMRA has long believed in "try before you buy" being key to encouraging new customers to cask ale and actively encourages tasters at its own festivals. For a brewery-owned bar to refuse to let new customers try the increasingly varied range of beers on offer from Marble while surrounded by competitors with no such qualms seems a risky business decision.

The addition of Font will mean Chorlton's Manchester Road can legitimately claim to have equalled the long established Wilbraham Road "strip" of six quality cask ale selling bars from Dulcimer to Oddest. Font will join the existing The Beagle, Sedge Lynn, Marble Beer House, Pi and DeNada to makes the Manchester Road strip the equal of its neighbour.

However, the Wilbraham Road bars are not throwing in the towel yet. Early in March, there was a new name on the strip when "The Nook" morphed into **The Nook and Cranny**. While the name may only be a slight variation, the small bar near Chorlton's Metrolink station has been transformed inside.



Gone are the last remnants of the old Moroccan theme, replaced with dark wood panelling on the walls and a new layout. Two new booths on the right hand side give a refuge for those that want a little privacy, while the remainder is more open plan with free standing tables and chairs. Part of the rationale behind this is that the furniture is re-arranged twice a week to provide an area for live music with a wide range of artists already having graced the space and a full programme booked in. The downstairs room is now permanently open offering more space on busy nights. On the beer front, the bar has done a deal with one of the newest breweries in the area to provide a permanent house beer. Privateer Brewery, based close to the Mancunian Way in the city centre, will have RoeNook near permanently on the bar while the second pump will offer a guest from other local micros. When Opening Times called, we sampled a Best Bitter from another relative newcomer, Stockport's Ringway Brewery.

The **Elektrik Ale Experiment** have launched the third beer in their range of house ales. Livewire, a 5.0% full bodied amber ale, joins Bright Spark Pale Ale and Blackout XO Stout. Like its stablemates, the brew comes from Bollington's Happy Valley Brewery - regular readers of OT will recall the brewery report in last month's issue reporting that the brewery was working on an experimental new beer! Dave Hughes from Happy Valley told Opening Times that the new beer was packed with New Zealand Nelson Sauvin and American Summit hops and it certainly does have plenty of hop flavour about it but is smooth and surprisingly easy drinking for its strength. The three exclusive Elektrik Ale Experiment beers will rotate around Elektrik's five handpumps amongst the permanent Wainwright and various guests.



Nearby **Dulcimer** already has three house ales brewed by Outstanding Beers which rotate round its pumps along with ever changing guests. As a long time stockist of Thwaites beers, Dulcimer has been perfectly placed to benefit from the output of the new microbrewery at the Blackburn brewer and has recently been able to feature most, if not all, of the one off beers being produced on the pilot plant. These have included 13 Guns, a 5.5% hop monster that proved extremely popular at the National Winter Ales Festival, and the 7.2% Fallen Nun that went one better to scoop the Beer of The Festival award.



The emergence of such great beers from Thwaites has perfectly coincided with a new direction from Dulcimer management who are increasingly showcasing the up and coming local microbrewers such as First Chop Brewing Arm and Blackedge of Horwich. Building on their increasing reputation for quality ales, after a couple of years' hiatus, Dulcimer is holding a beer festival over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. Amongst the breweries already lined up at the festival is Tiny Rebel, a brewery from South Wales who despite roots fitting to their name have already built a national reputation for cutting-edge brewing.

In one final item of Chorlton news, it was only last month that Opening Times reported on the opening of **Jackalope** on Barlow Moor Road near the bus station. Ale sales are going so well at the new bar that just one month after opening they have already had to install a third hand pump to keep up with demand.

Mild Magic in Whaley Bridge

Four pubs in the Whaley Bridge area have registered for Mild Magic, the Mild Challenge, in 2013. They will provide participants with a good trip out. These southernmost pubs on the trail are well worth a visit in their own right, with a range of good beers and welcoming hospitality. To avoid wasted journeys some information about opening / closing hours may be helpful.

Shepherds, Whaley Bridge, 15.00 till late Monday to Friday. 12.00 Saturday and 14.00 Sunday till late.

Crossings, Furness Vale, 16.00 (but could be earlier) till late Monday to Thursday; Friday, Saturday and Sunday 12.00 till late.

Soldier Dick, Furness Vale, 12.00 till late daily.

Old Hall, Whitehough, Chinley, 12.00 till late daily.

These times could of course vary.

The Soldier Dick is new to Mild Magic. The others have become regulars. Some of the pubs will be new pubs for some people. All the pubs will look forward to seeing new faces, and returning ones.

Getting there - Bus 199 from Stockport stops at Furness Vale, and Whaley Bridge Station. Half hourly service during the day, hourly in the evening and on Sunday. Trans Peak stops at Furness Vale, every two hours until soon after tea. The 61 links Whaley Bridge with Glossop, Hayfield, New Mills and Buxton, hourly during the daytime, every day. The 190 links Whaley with Chinley, roughly every two hours until teatime, Monday to Saturday.



Getting there - Train Manchester — Buxton service, Northern timetable leaflet 20. Hourly through the day all week, to Furness Vale and Whaley Bridge, half hourly in the evening rush hour. Trains to Chinley, Northern timetable leaflet 23. Hourly on Saturday; less frequent in the week and on Sundays, but more trains in the rush hour.

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WATCH THIS SPACE!

Cider Pubs of the Year

Branch Contenders for the Regional Title



The local branches of CAMRA have now all announced their Cider Pub of the Year winners. All will now go forward to the competition to see which will be crowned as Greater Manchester Cider Pub of the Year.

Stockport & South Manchester Branch has the **Railway** on Avenue Street, Portwood, a

previous winner. The Railway was something of a pioneer for traditional cider and perry in Stockport and still sells an ever-changing guest cider or perry. The pub also hosts an annual cider and perry festival.



The Trafford & Hulme Cider Pub of the Year is the **Font** on New Wakefield Street in Manchester, which has now won for two years on the trot. This excellent City Centre bar (just by Oxford Road Station) only started selling traditional cider in 2011 and now sells four guest ciders and perries.

High Peak Branch has chosen the **White House** on Water Street in Stalybridge. This Hydes Brewery house complements its Hydes beers with a well balanced and intelligently chosen range of guest beers. Traditional cider complements the cask ale range.

The entrant from North Manchester CAMRA is **Bar Fringe** on Swan Street in the Northern Quarter. The Fringe has been a long-time supporter of traditional cider and perry with at least one always on sale. Last year the bar marked CAMRA's Cider & Perry Month with a cider festival.



Rochdale, Oldham & Bury CAMRA has chosen the **Trackside** in Bury. Based at Bolton Street Station, headquarters of the preserved East Lancs Railway, the Trackside offers a wide range of cask ales from around the country and these are always accompanied by a traditional cider or perry.

The **Bank Top Brewery Tap** is the choice of Bolton CAMRA. Since Bank Top brewery converted the former Carters Arms on Belmont Way into their first (and currently only) pub it hasn't looked back. Bank Top beer and guests are the mainstay but traditional cider still features and is popular with the customers here.

Wigan CAMRA have gone for the **Masons Arms** at Billinge as their Cider Pub of the Year. This free house has been run by the same family for over 200 years. Five cask beers are sold and these are accompanied by two guest ciders.



Finally, South East Lancs CAMRA have chosen the **Thomas Burke** on Leigh Road in Leigh. The JD Wetherspoon pub follows many others in the chain by offering traditional ciders alongside the customary range of cask beers with a range of 10 handpumps dispensing a changing range.

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Mild Magic needs

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For full details see page 15

Macclesfield CAMRA Alban Pearce

Pub of the Year

The Pub of the Year for Macclesfield and East Cheshire Branch is the Wharf on Brook Street, Macclesfield.

Within easy walk of the town centre, the Wharf (near Macclesfield marina) was purchased as a free house only 18 months ago. In this short time landlord Chris Stairm and his wife Jane have transformed this street corner pub. Chris is passionate about real ale, and now has five handpumps, with 'Wharf' bitter (the provenance of which is a closely guarded secret) and the four others. These usually feature a dark stout or porter, and often Locales - frequently from Macclesfield's RedWillow brewery as well as Happy Valley, and many others from Northern regions. There is also real cider and a wide selection of bottled beers, including a range of gluten free beers.



A true community local, the pub was packed pub full of CAMRA members, regulars and many friends and family there to celebrate the award with Chris, Jane and their team. Photo of the presentation above courtesy Andy Stairmand.

Alban Pearce was well known to many CAMRA members in Greater Manchester, as he had work at several local beer festivals, including Stockport. His death just before Christmas, while not unexpected (he had been ill for some time) was a great loss to his many friends and colleagues.

Although a resident of Bolton, Alban worked for many years at Salford University and was a regular in the nearby New Oxford. As well as British real ale, he loved Belgian beers, and had visited that country several times. The pub recently held a charity benefit night to remember Alban, which was attended by members of his family, work colleagues, CAMRA friends and pub regulars. Landlord Tim Flynn paid tribute to Alban in a well-received speech, and £500 was raised for The Christie hospital.



The pub now has a plaque dedicated to Alban's memory, which can be seen in the main bar, appropriately just under an advert for one of the most famous Belgian beers, Orval.

Fallowfield News

The saga of the **Orange Grove** rumbles on. The owners have applied to demolish the pub and we asked for an update from the City Council who told us "the proposals were considered by the Planning and Highways Committee at their meeting on 26 July 2012 and they were minded to approve the application, subject to the applicants entering into a Section 106 Agreement to contribute towards highways and parking improvements in the vicinity of the site. Discussions are still under way regarding the contribution and so the agreement has not yet been signed, which is why the application has not yet been determined. Once the agreement is signed, the applicants can receive their approval." Meanwhile the pub remains standing and trading. More news as we get it.



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Bruges News

Le Trappiste Altrincham's famous specialist Belgian beer bar is re-locating to Belgium.

The Le Trappiste opened in 2002 and was formerly located on Greenwood Street before moving to Shaws Road in 2010. The bar quickly established itself as 'the most authentic Belgian style beer café in the country', an accolade bestowed upon it by The Good Beer Guide to Belgium. It was awarded the status of Ambassadeur d'Orval in 2010, by one of Belgium's Trappist Monasteries. One of only sixteen such bars in the UK.



Bar owner Martin Matthews told Opening Times that he was "very excited about the move and the challenge that lies ahead". He added that "for me it was a natural move, we were at the highest level in the UK, so the obvious direction to go was Belgium. There is a certain irony attached to the move, not only will we be offering specialist Belgian beers, but we will also be importing from some of the leading microbreweries in the UK, Holland, Germany, Scandinavia and the USA."



Due to open in spring 2013, Le Trappiste will offer a carefully selected regular menu of more than 100 specialist beers, including some international offerings. There will be a changing selection of 10 beers on tap from InBev, Troubadour, St Feuillien, Duvel-Moortgat, and Van Steenberge, complimented by two guest lines to accommodate appearances from

the likes of Struise, Verzet and Den Triest. Le Trappiste owner Martin Matthews proudly said "The Troubadour line will be the only permanent one in Brugge, and will be the only place to try their speciality beers, such as the current offering Troubadour Magma Sorachi Ace".

Le Trappiste has an international reputation and has already featured in articles in newspapers in Belgium and Australia; so much so that discussions have taken place with several Belgian breweries and Le Trappiste will be the first bar in Bruges to offer their beers with exclusivity. Martin added, "To have these breweries contact us offering to supply their beers on an exclusive basis is a real testament to our reputation and what we hope to achieve in Bruges or Brugge to be correct."



"Since the news was announced many of the bar's customers have been in touch with messages of support and many plan to visit once we open in April. The bar is located in a 13th Century cellar 300m from the main square the Grote Markt." Martin went on to say "Whilst we enjoyed our time in Altrincham and gained many friends, who we look forward to welcoming to Brugge, it was always the intention to move the bar to a bigger location, I feel that we have found the perfect location. Brugge is a UNESCO World Heritage site with over four million visitors a year, it is a haven for the good beer lover, CHEERS."

Le Trappiste Brugge is at 33 Kuipersstraat and will open daily from 4pm (except Monday when it will be closed).

Brewery News

All the latest from our local independent brewers

Robinsons

Having enjoyed huge success with “build a rocket boys”, the beer designed by Elbow, Robinson's hope to repeat that success with another musical tie-up. This time they've gone into partnership with legendary heavy rock group Iron Maiden to produce “Trooper”.

Real ale fan and history aficionado Bruce Dickinson, Maiden's vocalist (pictured), played a major role in developing the unique flavour of the beer, entailing ongoing visits to Robinson's brewery in Stockport. Dickinson's on-stage Union



Jack flag-waving military character is an iconic element of the band's live concerts and “The Trooper”, written by bassist Steve Harris, is one of Maiden's most popular songs and one of the highlights of any Maiden show.

Announcing the partnership, Oliver Robinson, Managing Director of Robinson's, said: “This collaboration - between two huge British success stories - makes for an ideal and natural match; Bruce Dickinson loves his real ale, and Robinson's Brewery is one of Britain's most established and respected independent family-owned brewers.”



And Bruce Dickinson added: “I'm a lifelong fan of traditional English ale; I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when we were asked to create our own beer. I have to say that I was very nervous: Robinson's are the only people I have had to audition for in 30 years. Their magic has been to create the alchemical wedding of flavour and texture that is Trooper. I love it.”

Oliver Robinson continued: “Trooper is a premium British ale with true depth of character and flavour. For more than thirty

years, the unmistakable icon of Eddie, the band's instantly-recognisable mascot, has adorned every album cover, T-shirt and poster - so it is fitting that Eddie will now adorn the cask pump clip and take centre stage on the bottle label of Trooper.”

Fans of both Iron Maiden and real ale can sign up to get news and updates on Trooper Premium British Beer from ironmaidenbeer.com, where bottles will be available to purchase by both UK and overseas customers from May 2013.

The beer itself comes in at 4.8% (4.7% in bottle) and is described as a “deep golden ale with a subtle hint of lemon” which comes from a blend of Bobec, Goldings and Cascade hops. The cask version of the beer will be available in selected Robinson's pubs.

Hydes

Following their move to Salford, Hyde's have launched a subsidiary brand called “The Beer Studio” with the aim of producing more experimental beers. The website (thebeerstudio.co.uk) includes a ‘Manifesto’ which declares:

“Located in Media City UK, close to Salford Quays, The Beer Studio is a brand new brewery - dedicated to experimentation and innovation in the brewing of cask ales.”

“We use the very latest varieties of hops and malt to create superb beers with flavours distinct from any you will have previously tasted.”

“Whilst many brewers may shy away from these new and innovative ingredients, we embrace them, in the confidence that our expert brewers can pioneer superb new cask beers, using our state of the art brewery to offer drinkers something truly unique.”

“By the time other brewers follow our lead in using new and exciting variations on ingredients, we will already have moved on, always staying ahead of the competition to constantly offer our drinkers a flavour of the future.”



Even allowing for the hype this sounds very promising. The first beer to appear has been Burnt Sienna (5%) which uses a new barley malt (propino) and a new hop which has no formal name as yet and goes by the designation of p08-6. And of course, the proof of the pudding is in the drinking, as it were - and those who have tried the beer have been very impressed. Others in the pipeline include Terre Rouge (4.4%), Golden Ochre (4.2%) and Venetian Red (4.7%).

TicketyBrew



The latest brewery in the region is the Salford-based TicketyBrew which fired up its mash tuns in early February. It has already made something of an impact.

The people behind TicketyBrew are Keri and Duncan Barton. Former actor Duncan is the brewer who, after 18 months of home-brewing, and having perfected his recipes, decided to upscale to a commercial operation. His five-barrel brewing kit came from Dave Porter although only 800 litres at a time have been brewed to date.



The reason for the limited brew lengths is that TicketyBrew is only producing bottled beers, one of a small number of new brewers to do this. The brewery has stalls at various local markets and OT caught up with Duncan at Stockport's craft market in mid-March (pictured above), and where we were able to try (and purchase) the two TicketyBrew beers.

Stronger of the two is Dubbel, (6.5%), a pretty impressive interpretation of the classic Belgian style. As with the Belgians, the beer includes candi-sugar in the grist and is made using a proper Belgian yeast for a truly authentic taste and flavour profile.

The second beer is Pale Ale at 5.5%. This also uses Belgian yeast which imparts a slight spiciness underpinning the superb hop character provided by Galena and Cascade varieties from the USA. Future additions to the range may include a Blonde and a Porter.

Apart from market stalls, TicketyBrew beers are appearing in numerous bars and beer shops including Bier Cell and Mort Subite in Altrincham, and in Manchester's Northern Quarter at the Crown & Kettle, Bay Horse and Art of Tea. The Kro chain will also be taking the beers as will Lounge One in Didsbury. Look out for them. The website is at www.ticketybrew.co.uk.

And still they come - next up: Six o'Clock Brewing Co. More on this in due course.

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