

September 2013

Opening Times

The free local CAMRA magazine

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

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Pub of the Month

The Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for September is the Blossoms Hotel on the corner of Buxton Road and Bramhall Lane, writes Alex Keenleyside.

The award comes on the first anniversary of landlord John Goodhew taking over the tenancy of this flagship Robinsons pub and reflects the hard work and achievement of himself and his staff over this period.

This recently refurbished pub has three newly furnished rooms retaining the best of the previous features like bench seating and bringing in a new updated décor of interest to casual drinkers and pub historians alike. The first room boasts many reminders of the now defunct Bells Brewery, which sat on nearby Hempshaw Lane, from share certificates, posters and old newspaper articles. The other front room has an impressive display of pewter tankards against a backdrop of wallpaper designed with images of Robinson's bottled beers. The back room has many interesting photos of old Stockport and the brewery.

The pub hosts many events of interest to the local community, and at the time of publication will have enjoyed an acoustic performance by Tom Hingley, former singer with the Inspirial Carpets.

But it is the welcoming community feel, good food and an extensive range of beers that stand out in this Robinsons pub. The pub has six cask ales on offer from the Robinsons range in addition to a comprehensive craft beer menu of bottled beers from America, Belgium and Germany. If you are having difficulty choosing the pub offers three third of a pint tasters for the same price as a pint. The food menu has many pub classics and a Sunday roast all cooked fresh in the kitchen by John himself.

Well worth coming along for the presentation of the award on Thursday 26th September with the additional celebration of John's one year anniversary.



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

Editorial, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Beer Festivals

September sees that start of what is really beer festival season. A glance at the Beer Festival pages in *What's Brewing* (the monthly newspapers for members of CAMRA) sees an explosion of events up and down the country.

It's not just CAMRA that's in on the act either. This month and next sees three very different events. Later this month there is the third beer festival to be held in the spectacular surroundings of the Museum of Science and Industry. This is run by Trafford & Hulme CAMRA in association with the museum authorities and previous events have been a huge success. Get there early. The week before that is the non-CAMRA event at the Old Hall Hotel in Chinley. This is an essential date on many beer lovers' calendars. OT thinks that Friday afternoon is the best session for that one.

Next month there are two excellent non-CAMRA events. There is the well-established Didsbury Beer Festival (on which more next time). This takes place at the end of October and before that there is the second Independent Manchester Beer Convention at Victoria Baths in Longsight. This is one of the new wave of beer festival that focus on modern brewers (both UK and overseas) and offer craft cask and keg beers side by side. It's already gained a national reputation – great news for the region's beer scene.

Opening Times - Information

Opening Times is published 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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Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Alex Keenleyside, George Elmslie, Jerry Wicken, Andy Jenkinson, Mark McConachie, James Beeson, Steve Smith, Mike & Lyn Wawioroko, Karen Wainwright.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Your Local CAMRA Branches

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

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

High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC) www.hpneccamra.org.uk
Contact: Stewart Taylor 07907 714826; taylorshouse@supanet.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: John Ison 0161 962 7976 or enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Your Local CAMRA Events Non member events in blue

Saturday 7th – Day out in Leeds with Leeds Branch and visit to Leeds Brewery. Train from Piccadilly to arrive Leeds 11.30. Details from contact. (SSM)

Monday 9th – Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Otterspool, Marple. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 11th – Clifton & Pendlebury Crawl: Robin Hood, Manchester rd 7.30pm, then Golden Lion, Britannia, Newmarket and Lord Nelson. (NM)

Wednesday 11th – Trip to Hydes Brewery, 7.30pm. Limited spaces – contact social@thcamra.org.uk. (T&H)

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting: Gateway, Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury. Starts 8.15pm. Will include “Meet the Brewer” with Dunsicar Bridge Brewery. (SSM)

Saturday 14th – Altrincham Amble: 12 noon start at Station (subject to real ale availability). Check website for details. (T&H)

Saturday 14th – Champion Pub of Cheshire Award: Wharf Tavern, Macclesfield. From 2.00pm. (MEC)

Monday 16th – Pub of the Season & Heritage Award: Castle, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 18th – Branch Meeting: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 19th – City Centre Heritage Pub Presentations: 8pm Mr Thomas's Chop House then Briton's Protection and Peveril of the Peak. (T&H)

Friday 20th – Stagger: Didsbury East. 7.30pm Gateway, Wilmslow Road; 8.30pm Didsbury, Wilmslow Road. (SSM)

Saturday 21st – Quantum Brewery Visit: details from Phil Booton (details above) (NM)

Saturday 21st – Social at Old Hall Beer Festival, Whitehough nr Chinley. From 1.00pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 25th – Piccadilly Social: Jolly Angler, Great Ducie St 8.00pm; Piccadilly Tavern 9.00pm. (NM)

Thursday 26th – Pub of the Month Award presentation to the Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 26th – Saturday 28th – MOSI Beer & Cider Festival. Volunteers needed. See website. (T&H)

Wednesday 2nd October – Club Social: Eccles RUFC, Gorton St, Patricroft. From 7.30pm. (NM)

Saturday 5th – Visit to Blue Bee Brewery, Sheffield, to present Beer of Festival silver award. Details from and names to John Clarke (0161 477 1973 / stocam@btinternet.com). (SSM)

Saturday 5th – Visit to Offbeat Brewery, Crewe, to present North West Speciality Gold Award. (T&H)

Thursday 10th – **Branch AGM**, Flixton Conservative Club, Urmston. M41 5DF. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

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Hameldon Bitter

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As We Walked Out One Midsummer Evening

A Withington Stagger with Jerry Wicken



Our journey may have been less eventful and certainly shorter than that of Laurie Lee but it did start on Midsummer's Day. And as none of us plays the violin (as far as I know) we had to pay our own way through the evening. Our small but perfectly formed team met up at the first port of call, the **Old House At Home** (pictured below) on Burton Road, which unknown to us had undergone a refurbishment and had chosen 11:00 on this Midsummer's Day to reopen. It is a sound community pub offering food as well as a range of ales. It is to its particular credit that it survives on the food front given so many new bars and restaurants opening up both in Withington and further up Burton Road in West Didsbury.



On arrival we were faced with five pump clips promising IPA, Old Speckled Hen & Golden Hen from Greene King (Suffolk) and Betty Stogs from Skinners (Cornwall) and Nelsons Revenge from Woodforde's (Norfolk). Better not count the beer miles! Sadly, the last three named were not available and it was suggested that the pump clips be turned around so as not to mislead. Greene King IPA is, in my opinion, not the most exciting ale at the best of times. These were not the best of times. However, the Old Speckled Hen slipped down very nicely so it may be a little unfair to stand in judgment given the pub had just reopened. I should also point out that free wi-fi is also available as it is in all Greene King pubs and that there is a pleasant outdoor drinking/smoking area.

En route to our next destination we met Tony, a CAMRA member from Farnborough, Hants who was in Manchester for the Inn Signs convention. I doubt there are many pubs like Holt's **Orion** in deepest Hampshire. Holt's have carried out many refits to their estate though the 'O' as it is popularly known has not been included. Originally a Whitbread house, Holt's took over the pub in 1993 and little has changed in the layout. There is a vault, a lounge and a small pub garden in rear. It is a real local, the likes of which are closing down all over the country. The only beer on offer was the Bitter which all agreed was a decent pint. It was a little sad to see the pub half empty at 8pm on a Friday night as in years past it was usually busy. Perhaps I'll be optimistic and say it was half full.



One further member joined us at the **Victoria**, a traditional local on Wilmslow Road, which I am pleased to report was busy with an eclectic crowd of locals and students, old and young. Years ago this was a multi-roomed local with waiter service; although the walls have come down and the waiters are long vanished, there are still very distinct areas allowing for darts, pool, dominoes as well as unobtrusive music and plenty of chat. There is also an outside patio area. The refurbishment has been excellent and I noticed particularly that the pub seemed lighter. The welcome and service are also first rate and the range of ales, was extensive. Hydes Original, Owd Oak and 1863 share bar space with two from the Beer Studio – Venetian Red and Golden Ochre. And if that was not enough we could have chosen Theakston's XB, Moles' Elmo Fire, Stone Cutter from Limestone Brewery and Heel Stone from Stonehenge Ales. Between us we tried only three of the ales, Venetian Red, Golden Ochre and Stone Cutter. All were considered very good to excellent.

Wilmslow Road, Withington now is home to a number of other pubs and bars, none of them with real ale. To our knowledge, the Ramshackle and Fuel Bar never have had, Solomon Grundy has in the past but no longer whilst Bar 461 has 'Well loved Real Ales' etched into its window. 'Well Loved' may be subjective but 'real ale' is not. We entered the bar, bouncer on door, but were met with blank looks when real ale was mentioned to the bar staff. In contrast to the Victoria, Bar 461 was nearly empty at 9pm although this was probably nothing to do with the lack of real ale (we guess it's perhaps more of a late night venue). We now understand that the reference to "real ale" is being removed however. Which brings me to the Albert Inn which was an Irish pub decades before they were manufactured: never served or advertised real ale to my knowledge but still a thriving local with regular live music. (*Ed: Was it a Wilsons pub?*)

Walking south towards Didsbury we came to the **Turnpike** which is on the CAMRA Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors owing to its original 1960s décor. Ever an enthusiastic welcome the Turnpike offers just the Samuel Smiths Old Brewery Bitter on draught which

was well received by one and all. Built in 1963 the pub has two rooms, a small smoking area in rear and a new 'swinging' pub sign out front. The pub was moderately busy with, once again, a mix of locals and students, the latter no doubt taking advantage of one of the cheapest beers in Manchester. The manager explained that during the week there are two darts teams and a quiz night and all are welcome.



Lastly but certainly not leastly we arrived at the **Red Lion**. This has been a pub since the 17th Century and whilst the interior has been changed, the front bars still have low beams very much reminiscent of a Jacobean tavern. (Not that I'm quite old enough to *remember* those times but I'm sure you get my drift.) There are boards at one of the entrances which have old photos, some history and local community information and are worth checking out. In addition to the bars at the front there are other rooms as you move through the pub. The bar runs round three sides of a rectangle serving all rooms. Service is brisk and friendly. There is also a conservatory, beer gardens (front and rear) and crown green bowling during the summer. There is a decent range of ales from the Marston stable: Pedigree, which was not tried, Marston's bitter which was a bit lack-lustre and Ringwood's Lovely Warne and Wychwood's White Wych both of which scored well. The pub, I'm pleased to report, was very busy inside and out and was a fine end to our stagger.



It was generally agreed that the beers tasted in the Victoria were the best of the night but have a go yourselves. This was a small easily managed stagger and these local pubs all deserve our support.

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Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season

For those about to rock!

Yes indeed, Trafford & Hulme branch has chosen the Salisbury as their Autumn 2013 Pub of the Season, writes Andy Jenkinson. Situated just off Oxford Road, at the bottom of the station steps, this "alternative" may not be to everyone's taste but their passion for real ale cannot be denied.

By the time you read this they will have just been awarded the regional InnServe Best Cellar Award 2013; this is in recognition of the high standards of cellarmanship and dispense. John Rowlinson, the landlord for 10 years, is justly proud and said that they were now through to the national competition, and he paid tribute to Matt Muszynsky and his small team who look after the cellar. They have seen an increase in the demand for real ale to the extent that they have added two more handpumps to the existing half dozen - these extra pumps will be used at peak times. They currently have four permanent beers, namely Theakston's Old Peculier, Caledonian 80/-, Golden XPA and Courage Directors, the extra handpumps will, when in use, house their ever-changing guest ales.

One of the recent innovations is the Gig Goers discount scheme, where upon showing a valid concert ticket for one of the main Manchester venues i.e. Arena, Ritz, Apollo etc you can get 50p off a pint of cask ale and of course card carrying CAMRA members can also get the discount. The Salisbury is open from noon everyday and closes at 1am (2am Friday and Saturday). Food is available during the day, but at the time of writing this was suspended due to the kitchen having a refit.

Although this is a rock oriented pub (the jukebox is acclaimed to be the best in Manchester) you don't have to be sporting long hair, piercings and tattoos to enjoy the place and the staff are always welcoming, the atmosphere is vibrant and friendly. The clientele is a mixed bag which varies during the day, from business types to students to rockers young and old. So dust down those leathers and join us on October 17th from 7.30pm to celebrate The Sal's achievement.



MOSI Festival Preview



As confirmed in last month's *Opening Times*, the 3rd MOSI Real Ale Festival runs from Thursday 26 to Saturday 28 September. Once again the festival will feature three bars nestled between the

steam and water engines in the Museum of Science and Industry's Power Hall.

As a museum MOSI celebrates the inventions and discoveries that fuelled the Industrial Revolution across the north of England. The festival cask bar

is following in the same mould and will feature 90 of the very best beers from across the North - from Crewe to Newcastle via Lancashire and Yorkshire. As Manchester was at the heart of the industrial revolution there will of course be plenty of beers from the ever growing plethora of micro-breweries surrounding our great city. Local newcomers to the festival include Stockport's Fool Hardy Ales who will have their first single hop beer, a 4.5% easy drinking golden ale called Rain Dance, on the bar alongside one of the area's newest breweries - Glossop's Mouselow Farm. They will be joined by more established local favourites including Rochdale's Pictish, and Bury's Outstanding Beers.



A special feature on the bar yet to make an appearance in Manchester will be Mallard, a beer brewed on the Yorkshire coast by Wold Top Brewery for MOSI's sister museum - York's National Railway Museum. Rarely available in cask as most of it is sold in bottles at the NRM, 'Mallard' (4.0% ABV) is a

refreshing, easy drinking beer produced using predominantly home grown barley, Goldings, Cascade and Bramling Cross hops and pure, chalk filtered water from the brewery's own borehole. Representing the ship building heritage of the North East of England will be Jarrow Brewery, whose golden ale Rivet Catcher is named after a symbolic tradesman from Tyneside's ship yards.

Bury's Brightside Brewery is producing a special ale to launch celebrations of MOSI's 30th anniversary which will take place in 2014. To be called simply 'MOSI 30', details of the brew are under wraps until it is launched at the festival but since they broke onto the scene a couple of years ago, Brightside have yet to disappoint. 'MOSI 30' will be joined by their 4.8% IPA Maverick and Underworld Porter, the pump clip for which features the pit head gear from Snibston Coal Mine in Coalville, Leicestershire.

As well as the cask ales, there will be a separate Cider Bar offering a choice of 25 traditional ciders and perries. For the more continental minded, the foreign beers bar will have an extensive range of bottles representing other traditional beer styles from across Europe.



The festival opens at 5pm, on Thursday evening with what last year was a quieter session. Those visitors wanting to avoid the queues on Friday night might want to consider coming along on Thursday. The Friday session also opens at 5pm while on Saturday the festival is open from midday. There will be 25 per cent more beer than last year so there should be plenty to last through to the evening. Entry is £5 with a £1 discount for CAMRA members and other concessions.

For more info and updates please see www.thcamra.org.uk/mosi or follow @MOSIAleFest on twitter. Visitors to the museum please note that the Power Hall will close to the public at 2pm on Thursday and will be closed all day Friday & Saturday.

mosi

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Fri 27 Sep: 5pm–10.30pm

Sat 28 Sep: 12noon–9.30pm

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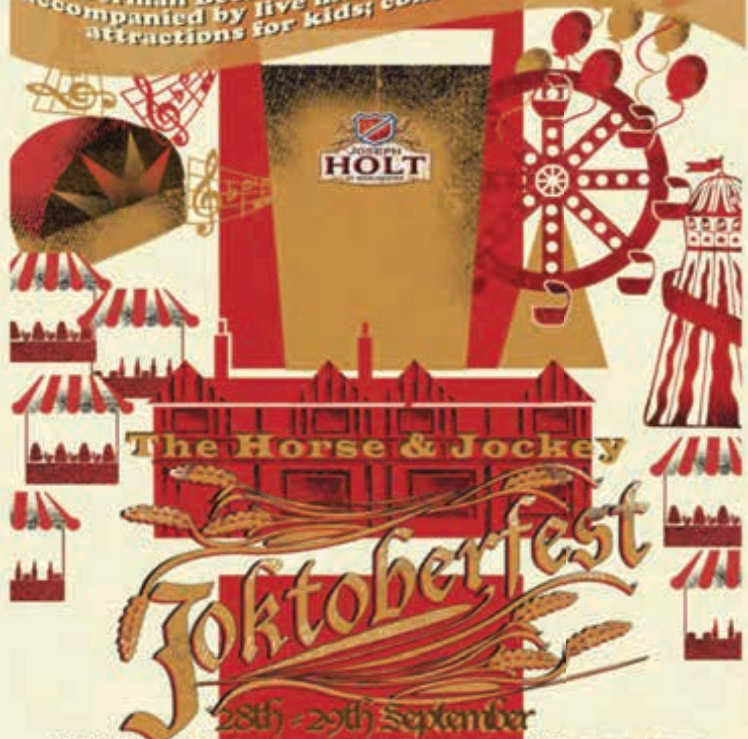


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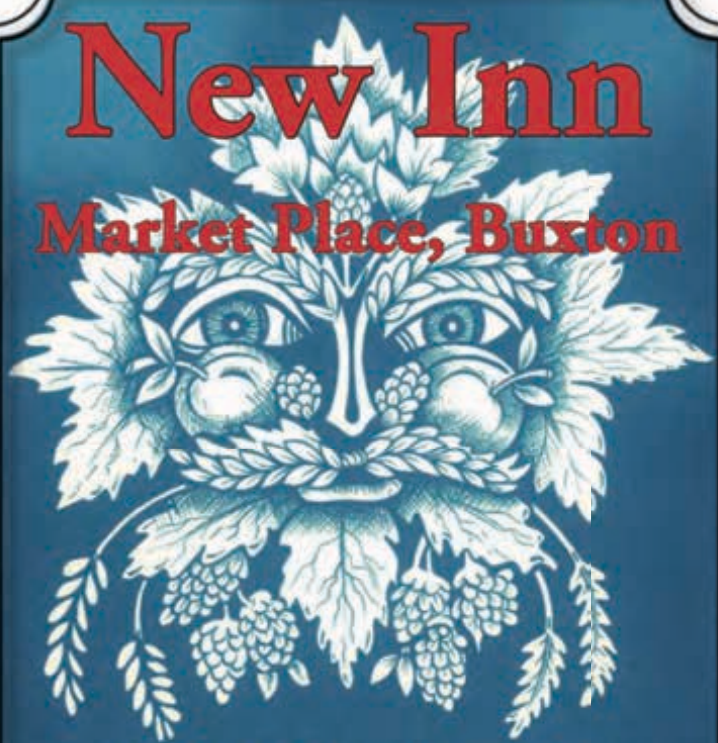
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for more information

High Peak Pub Scene

Tom Lord & Robin Wignall with News and Views

Tim Jones

We are sorry to report that Tim Jones, a former Chairman of the High Peak and North-East Cheshire Branch, has died after a long battle with cancer. Tim was aged 53, and our condolences go out to his wife Cath and son Stan.

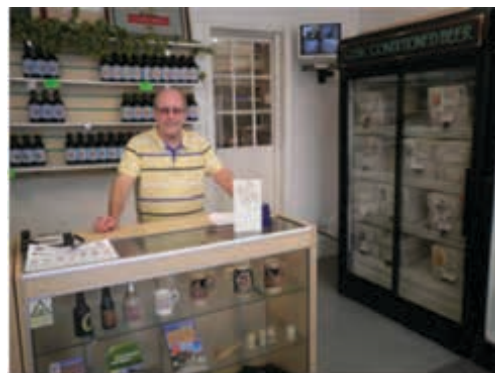
Tim was a dedicated Chairman and CAMRA member. He was a very jovial character who always had a ready laugh and was highly regarded by all who came into contact with him. He will be sadly missed by all of his CAMRA friends and colleagues.

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord



Geoff Oliver, owner of Rossendale Ales, has opened an off licence in Glossop. The **Little Beer Shop** is at 11 Norfolk Street, almost next door to the popular Star Inn. Geoff told *OT* he wanted to bottle his beers and the thought of opening an off licence had been on his mind for some time. As he already owned the premises, which had been vacant for 18 months, the Little Beer Shop seemed a logical solution.



All of the Rossendale beers are available on draught to take away (dispensed bag in box style from temperature controlled cabinets), and this has proved very popular in the short time the shop has been open. Geoff also plans to build up a range of bottled beers from the UK (the full Rossendale range is also available in bottle), Europe and further afield. The Little Beer Shop

is open from 4.00pm to 10.00pm Monday to Friday, and 12noon to 10pm at weekends.

We understand that **Tintwistle Conservative Club** now has Mouselow Farm beers from Hadfield, and it is reported that in Glossop the **Moon and Sixpence** has now reopened, albeit with restricted opening hours.

Out in Buxton, **Nat's Kitchen**, just off the Market Square has also reopened, and that the Buxton Brewery Tap will be open very shortly.

In Gee Cross, Hyde the **Buxton Inn** now has Buxton Inn Ale as one of its guest beers.

Royal Beer Festival

Pub beer festivals come and go but some have real staying power. The **Royal Hotel** in Hayfield will be staging its 21st annual festival from 11 to 13 October. There will be 30-plus cask ales and ciders, food and entertainment. The list will feature beers from across the UK but with an emphasis on local brewers, such as Happy Valley in Bollington. Well worth a visit and easy to get to by bus as well (the 358 will get you there from Stockport).

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Our local weekly newspaper, the *Buxton Advertiser*, is currently doing a good job of giving updates on pub news. The re-opening of the **Duke of York** at Burbage, Buxton, as **The Duke**, has been reported. It is good to see that Punch have worked to restore and refurbish the Duke into what should be a good community local. As an aside it is also good to see that Punch are spending money, often several £100K, on their Peak District pubs, but one wonders how a company reportedly in dire financial straits, can afford such largesse. Perhaps best not to ask.

Hot off the press is the news that the **New Inn** on Buxton Market Place has re-opened after closure and a decent refurbishment. In addition to the regular Robinsons range the pub is also to offer guest beers sourced from Titanic Brewery. Hopefully more on this next time. Not all the news is good however, as there is a report of the impending closure of the White Hart on Dyehouse Lane in New Mills, as the current tenants have handed in their notice.

The summer months bring the welcome round of carnivals, festivals and well dressings in the Peak District. Best Decorated Pub is often a competitive category. In Chapel en le Frith the **Roebuck** won the prize, whilst Chapel's **New Inn** was second with a fine commemoration of

the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the railway line from Whaley Bridge to Chapel. **Pride of the Peaks** came first in New Mills and the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge. These events really show community pubs at their best, with management, staff and often regulars helping with the success of the day.

More on awards as the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale has won the Pub of the Year Award from *Pubs 'R' Down to Us*. This is an odd publication, originating in Buxton, which ploughs its own furrow, but does in its own way promote good pubs and good beer. Landlord Mike Nelson keeps a range of good and often unusual beers. Well done Mike.

A visit to the **Norfolk Arms** in Marple Bridge found beers from RedWillow, Hornbeam, Kelham Island and Black Jack. Sensibly priced food is also available. Well worth a visit.

The beginning of July saw the Dove Holes Beer & Jazz Festival with main selection of beers in the marquee. There was some good live music to entertain. Beers were good as well. Mainly two breweries were represented, Morton from Essington, Staffordshire, and Buxton Brewery. There was also an early offering from Frank Wood's new Mouselow Farm Brewery, and one from Healey's Brewery at the Wellington Inn at Loppergath in South Lakeland. This was an enjoyable Treacle Mild. In the end choices are down to personal palate, but Buxton SPA and Moor Top were my pick of the beers. This was the 22nd year of this event and it is always worth a visit. Look out for number 23 on the first



weekend of July next year.

By the time you read this the August Bank Holiday beer festivals will have gone, but the Beer and Cider Festival takes place at the Old Hall, Whitehough, Chinley over the week end of 20-22 September. A big range of beers and ciders will be augmented by food and live music. Chinley has an hourly train service on Saturday, but only two hourly, roughly, in the week and on Sunday. A roughly 2 hourly bus service links Chinley with Chapel and Whaley Bridge, not Sunday. The walk from Whaley takes up to 30 minutes and rather less from the 199 bus stop at Bridgemont. However you get there, do try to be there.

Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Dog & Partridge



When Stuart Driver (now owner of The Fairway on Hillgate) left the Dog and Partridge (Great Moor) some time ago, he proved to be a hard act to follow. A number of licensees came and went, and the Robinsons "Lease Available" sign was on show more often than not.

All that has now changed with the arrival of Jason and Kerry Stead about three months ago. Prominent advertising appeared on the pub ahead of its re-opening following a short period of preparatory refurbishment, and this gave a clear indication that things were going to change. Further advertising outside the pub since then has kept local residents, and passers-by on the A6, up to date with planned music events and other attractions. Jason and Kerry are already well experienced in the licensed trade, having run the Ploughboy at Disley for the last five years.

Great emphasis has been placed on the availability of food from the start. A good menu is available all day until early evening, and themed curry and steak evenings are in the pipeline.

A good range of Robinsons cask ales is being maintained, currently available are Trooper, Unicorn, 1892, and Hop Circle (summer seasonal). At a recent visit, only the Hop Circle was tried, it was in excellent condition!

Jason has restored the Tuesday night quiz, which had fallen by the wayside during the recent "fallow" period, and it's proving very popular. More TV screens have been installed in the pub so that more live sport will be available, and there are regular music events at weekends, both live acts and karaoke. The pub is also confirming its reputation as a fine community pub by hosting family events such as christening parties,.

It's very encouraging to see that this long-established pub is finally getting back on track!

Midland

After two years as tenant of the Midland, Wellington Road North, Stockport, Mark Hayter has now purchased the pub from Enterprise Inns

and so the pub is now the town's latest free house.



As a result he has set about revamping the pub's cask beer offer. The number of handpumps is being increased from three to five, although they won't all be in use at the same time, except at weekends. Beers are being sourced via Carlsberg which features 42 regular beers and 16 monthly specials. Greene King IPA (popular with the pub's customers) will appear frequently as will the rarely seen Tetley Mild. Other beers will come from micro breweries – when OT called an excellent pint of Jarrow Brewery Rivet Catcher was to be had while Wharfbank Brewery's Celtic Red was "coming soon".

Mark also plans to run a series of brewery trips – there has already been a successful visit to Spitting Feathers Brewery near Chester.

It's well worth a visit to lend support. The Midland is open from 12 noon until 11 pm every day (which extends to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays if the pub is busy).

Fletcher Moss

Jane and Martin Devlin are the new(ish) licensees of the Fletcher Moss in Didsbury and, together with Hydes Brewery, have introduced some changes to this popular local.

Set off the "main drag" on Albert Hall Street, the Fletcher Moss has always had a bit more of a "local" feel than some of the Wilmslow Road pubs and the changes have enhanced that. There's a smart new beer garden at the back of the pub and the adjacent conservatory has been turned into more of a traditional pub room, with new fittings and a redecoration.

For the first time in many years there is now food available, too. You can choose between a cheese board, a pate board, a cold pie platter and other offerings in a similar vein. It all looks very appetising and is reasonably priced at under £6.

The beer range features both Hydes beers and guest ales. When OT called there was a choice

of Hydes Original Manchester's Finest, Beer Studio Winsome Blonds, Geeves Gunwale Dance and Three Castle Longbarrow (the latter being a very tasty pint). Gwynt y Ddraig Farmhouse Scrumpy was also available. Worth dropping by – the pub is also very close to the new Didsbury Village tram stop by the way. Pictured below are the new beer garden and "conservatory" bar.



Soup Kitchen

The recent Cider Festival at the Soup Kitchen (Spear Street, off Stevenson Square) in Manchester's Northern Quarter proved to be a huge success.

OT spoke to manager Matt Kay who explained that all six draught ciders had sold out and in addition a range of Breton ciders from northern France has also gone well – so much so that these are to be kept on as part of the Soup Kitchen's regular offer, alongside a traditional draught cider.

This popular bar and canteen also has six cask beers regularly available and these are drawn from micro breweries. As part of the run-up to International Beer Day in August (no, we hadn't heard of it either) Soup Kitchen hosted a North West challenge featuring six of the best cask ales from around the region. There were some real heavyweights present so RedWillow Brewery will no doubt be very pleased that their Wreckless won the public vote.

Continued on P23

Real Ale? Really?

Over the years Opening Times has from time to time highlighted local pubs which advertise that they sell real ale but in point of fact do not do so. We thought we'd put a stop to this sort of thing but we've obviously taken our eyes off the ball as a handful of pubs are at it again.

We just looked at the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branch area and found six outlets advertising "cask beers" or "real ale" but did not appear to sell any at all, and indeed hadn't done for some considerable time.

Now, cask beer is one of the few good news stories in the licensed trade these days as it continues to gain market share. It has been shown that a decent cask offer can drive trade (providing selling the stuff goes hand in hand with a commitment to quality, but that's another story). Many pubs make a true effort in this respect and we in CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, think it's a bit rich for pubs to lure potential customers by advertising cask beer (or real ale) but not actually go to the trouble of serving it across the bar.

We approached all six outlets. Two have removed the offending signs and one pub is actively trying to get supplies of cask beers. Three however seem reluctant to mend their ways, offering a variety of excuses for the misleading signage.

First up is the **Wheatsheaf** on Higher Hillgate, Stockport. This pub hasn't sold cask beer for a couple of years or so now (although it has done so in the past). Nevertheless it continues to advertise "cask ales" outside. Not only that, but the pub has also included the claim in advertising material. They blame "the brewery" for both the signage and the advertising. In fact the pub is not owned by a brewery but Punch Taverns and the usual terms of a Punch lease leave outside decoration and the placing of adverts to the leaseholder.



The next pub is also in Stockport and is the **Full Shilling** on Tiviot Dale. This pub advertises "real ales" on both outside signage and in the windows. We've called in twice and have been told that the cask beer had run out the day before and more beer was settling in the cellar. We've seen no cask beer on sale here for at least 18 months. It would be good to think that we've just been unlucky on our visits but we doubt that anyone can be that unlucky.



The third pub is the **Pineapple** in Gorton. Once again the blame has been placed at the feet of "the brewery" which in this case is Hydes. Given that the pub did sell cask beers it may be that they have not yet got round to updating the admittedly shabby signage. We are making enquiries to make sure that Hydes do in fact still own the pub and, if so, whether they will be removing these misleading signs.



However the Wheatsheaf and the Full Shilling seem unrepentant and, we feel, have just fobbed us off when we have approached them. With some reluctance we have therefore reported these two pubs to the local Trading Standards office (as we warned them we might have to). We'll let you know what happens next. (Note the information in this article was correct at the time we went to press).

Record Breaker



The Oast House (Spinningfields, Manchester) is the new holder of the world record for the largest beer tasting (and naturally, OT was a participant).

The previous record was held by Biergilde BNB at Arcen in the Netherlands with 267 participants. However that record was shattered in Manchester on 7 August when 322 drinkers assembled in the courtyard outside the Oast House and were guided through three beers by Living Ventures Beer Guru (yes, that really is his job title) Warren McCoubrey under the eagle eye of Jack Brockbank from the Guinness Book of World Records.

The three beers sampled came from Heywood's Phoenix Brewery and were West Coast IPA, Arizona and the iconic Wobbly Bob – and rather fine they were too. Pictured above (left to right) are Matt Jackson (Phoenix Brewery), Warren McCoubrey, Jennifer Stuart (Oast House), Jack Brockbank, Stephen Oscroft (Phoenix Brewery).

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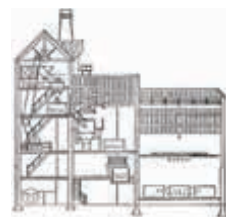


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Brewery News

Micro, Regional and Family Brewers



Windle

In the world's most prestigious beer competition, which attracted hundreds of entries from 33 countries the Windle Beer Company has secured a top award. A panel of judges including retailers, importers, publicans, brewers, writers and flavour analysts singled out the Windle beer as being among the best in the world.



When the results were announced, the medal in the closely contested India Pale Ale (IPA) category was awarded to Windle's Mr Mullins when the results of the International Beer Challenge 2013 were announced. To secure the title the bottle conditioned 4.8% ABV beer, which is described as refreshing and fruity with citrus notes, beat off competition from established brewing nations including Belgium and Germany. Like all of Windle's beers Mr Mullins takes its name from a real life local character.

Pictured above – Dave Mullins (left) celebrates with Windle Head Brewer Giles Meadows.

Robinsons

Trooper continues on its way to world domination. We hear that the new brewhouse is almost at capacity due to the worldwide demand for this premium (4.8%) beer brewed in conjunction with Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson. OT can testify to the popularity of the beer overseas – we were recently at a beer festival in Ghent, Belgium, where bottled Trooper was one of the 110 beers on offer (and one of only three from the UK – the others being Fuller's 1845 and something from BrewDog). Despite selling at €1.50 for just 15cl (that's just under one third of a pint) it was one of the first beers to sell out.

Trooper is also driving trade on the Robinsons estate – the company has released figures showing that those pubs that stock Trooper have beer sales 14 per cent ahead of those that don't.

However, other Robinsons beers are available, as they say, and there is a new seasonal out this month. Dizzy's Dark Side (4%) is a dark oak coloured sister to the popular Dizzy Blonde and is described as having "a full roast malt flavour balanced by a clean crisp hop character with floral and grapefruit aromas".

Whaley Bridge Brewery

We've finally caught up with Mike Wilde and had a chat about his new Whaley Bridge Brewery (well we've exchanged emails).

He currently has four ales in his portfolio. Hockerley Old Ale (4%), is a ruby ale named after Hockerley Hall, Whaley Bridge, and has "a hint of treacle and hoppy top end using a blend of British aroma hops". Bugsworth Ale (4.2%) is an amber ale named after Buxworth, using the original spelling of Bugsworth, where "a blend of aroma hops, this time British and Slovenian, make an easy drinking session ale". Goyt Valley Gold (4.4%) is described as a "pale ale using only finest pale malt with a blend of English bittering and Slovenian aroma hops. Well balanced, refreshing with a hint of honey". The latest ale which is proving very popular is Wyoming APA (4.8%) where a "blend of wheat and malt gives a real depth of flavour mixed with American and Slovenian aroma hops". "Very moreish" says Mike.



Mike tells us his aim is to name his ales where possible after local names and places. The four ales described above will remain as the core range and he will develop more as he grows. He came into brewing starting on kits and his interest in making things from scratch took over – for 30 years he was a specialist ceramic restorer and restored the world's finest and rarest antique pottery and porcelain.

However brewing is now full time. Mike is totally self taught and is now building a kit to do at least one barrel per week. Whaley Bridge beers appear regularly at the Drum & Monkey Whaley Bridge, the Old Hall Whitehough, the Swan Kettle Hulme and several others. Wyoming will be on at the Drum & Monkey beer festival in late September and hopefully the Old Hall Whitehough, in mid September.

Cheadle Hulme Ale

The Bank Holiday beer festival at the Cheadle Hulme pub saw the debut of Off the Wood (4%) from "Cheadle Hulme Ale". This led to speculation that this might come from the long rumoured in-house brewery. OT dropped in to get the low down from licensee (and putative brewer) Dave Wood.



He told us that the beer was in fact brewed at

Holts on their test kit by Lloyd Reece, one of the Holt's brewers. The beer was trunked down to the Cheadle Hulme where it was racked into casks – just two nine gallon barrels were produced. The in-house brewery has yet to be installed although tentative plans are for a one barrel kit to be installed in the room above the vault from where it will be fed into the cellar for casking. Only four nine-gallon casks will be produced per brew which would give the opportunity for some bespoke house beers.

So what was the beer like? Very good indeed. It's a balanced (in a good way) mid-brown beer with a good and lingering hop bitterness and a drying finish. Eminently drinkable in fact and if this is what we can expect from the pub's brewery when (hopefully not "if") it is installed than it should be quite an attraction and yet another reason to visit what is already a very good pub.

Ringway Brewery

North Reddish's Ringway Brewery has produced a fourth beer. This is a single hop brew using the Bramling Cross variety. It's a pale session beer and is 4% ABV. Ringway's Paul Alderson is also celebrating being asked to supply five casks of his excellent Session to the Strangers Bar in the House of Commons in November. Our elected representatives are in for a treat we think.

Brewery Shorts

Manchester's **Black Jack Brewery** has a couple of new beers which may be out now. There's a German-style dark wheat beer at 5.8% (unnamed as we went to press) and also a collaboration with London-based Weird Beard Brewery. This is likely to be a Belgian-style witbier.



A short walk away at **Marble Brewery** the team behind October's IndyManBeerCon (of which much more next time) went along to make a special beer for the event in conjunction with Marble Head Brewer James Campbell. This is to be a "Farmhouse IPA", a strong (7%) and hoppy beer made using Belgian "saison" yeast. The hops used were Centennial, Citra, Columbus and Amarillo so we should be in for a treat. Pictured above is the IMBC team and James (left).

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Sale West & Ashton-on-Mersey

George Elmslie checks out the pub scene

While Sale town centre offers a wide choice of well known pubs, the offering in the area to the west of Washway Road including the village of Ashton on Mersey is less well known.

Our survey started some way from Ashton-on-Mersey in Sale West on the edge of the Racecourse Estate, so called as a number of the local roads are named after our most famous tracks. Just in case you didn't know where you were there is a stone set on a grass verge with the location carved on it.

Nearby is the **Brigadier** (pictured top right), a Holts pub in the low rise style of the neighbouring estate and consisting of a lounge with a vault at the back. The vault was quite lively on our visit with the lounge fairly empty by comparison. The Brigadier is now the only pub serving this area - just five years ago there were another two others both of which are now sadly closed: The Lively Lobster is now a Nisa Local and the Huntsman a Londis supermarket. Sue, the tenant at the Brigadier was the last manageress of the Huntsman so is very much part of the community. She was happy to chat to us, pointing out that generations of families come to the Brigadier, which she believes adds to the overall ambience of the place. There was only one cask ale on offer, Holts Bitter, but it was in good form.



A good 15-20 minute walk took us to the **Mersey Farm**, part of the Table Table chain with the almost obligatory adjacent Premier Inn. A car based pre-survey survey earlier that day had found the pub serving Sharp's Doom Bar in addition to the regular Cumberland Ale. However, returning in the evening able to sample, the Doom Bar was no more so we sipped a coldish Cumberland in the identikit surroundings of what could easily be a hotel lounge. The bar here is one of the biggest I have seen for this sort of place and the two hand pumps look rather lonely; however we should be grateful they have made an effort with cask.



We headed back to the centre of Ashton on Mersey to the always-busy **Old Plough**, a Hydes flagship pub offering no fewer than six cask ales. Multi roomed and on different levels with large dining areas, the pub also has a spacious car park and beer garden to the rear. At the business end, alongside the three brewery standards of Manchester Finest, Original and 1863 Light Mild were three guests - Hydes current seasonal Frayed Knot, Golden Ochre from Hydes' Beer Studio label and Moberley Fine Ales Barnbuster. There was sadly not enough time to taste them all but you could

while away most of an evening here alone or in company.

Finally across the road to the **Buck** which is part of Mitchell & Butler's Ember Inn brand offering the usual features of this chain - sofas, high tables and chairs as well as large dining areas. It was close to 11pm by the time we reached the pub (which is open until 12) so there were plenty of seats to be had late on a Thursday. The cask on offer consisted of some standard fare, Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen plus a Banks's seasonal ale called Sunbeam. Most of the party plumped for the latter and judged it not a bad way to finish the survey.

In the Doghouse



Newsagents' shelves are groaning with magazines on all kinds of subjects, but there's a marked absence of any dealing with pubs and beer. However, I've recently come across the independently-produced "Doghouse" which is described as "a quarterly print magazine about British pubs: a love-letter to bar stools and fixed settles: discovering & celebrating history, architecture, stories from the bar, the mystery of the cellars below and the ghosts that rattle around upstairs."

It's an attractive A4-sized publication on high quality paper, smooth but not over-glossy, with a clean, elegant design featuring many magnificent full-page or double-spread photographs.

There are many positive references to traditional beer and cider but it is mainly focused on pubs rather than beer. It's basically divided into two halves. The first features general articles about pub life and culture including, in the latest issue, anecdotes from a pub regular and licensee, a long piece about cask-making centred on Hereford Casks of Stoke Edith in the Herefordshire countryside, and an opinion piece about children in pubs which is likely to spark lively debate.

The second half then features specific pubs, taking the approach of starting from a particular town and looking at around ten pubs within a twenty-mile radius. In this issue it is Cheltenham and there is a long

article about the Adam & Eve, a classic backstreet Arkell's pub. It also features others, such as the Red Lion at Ampney St Peter, the Daneway Inn at Sapperton and the Five Mile House at Duntisbourne Abbots, all illustrated with high-quality interior and exterior photos that really make you want to pay the pubs a visit.

I particularly enjoyed the description of the Three Kings at Hanley Castle in Worcestershire – "one of the last of that old generation of English drinking houses, where the barbarous tide of ruthless sanitisation and garish incivility is held at bay, for now", and where "a collection of old boys hold court, huddled around the fire of a winter's eve, swapping the same old stories, but who will strike up a conversation with visitors at the drop of a hat."

The editorial team are based in Shropshire and so far the focus has been very much on the broader West Midlands area, with the three previous issues being centred on Ludlow, Stourbridge and Hay-on-Wye. The fifth will be looking at Rhayader and Mid-Wales – home to some true unspoilt classics – and maybe they could then turn their attention to Staffordshire and pubs like the Anchor at High Offley and the Red Lion at Dayhills.

The emphasis is firmly on the traditional end of the pub spectrum, and you won't find any trendy urban craft beer bars within its pages. But these are the kind of pubs that are intimately bound in with our history and culture, which hopefully will still be there to be enjoyed when the hipsters have moved on to another fad.

At £4.99 for each issue it's not cheap, but that's the kind of price glossy magazines sell for nowadays, and this is one you will keep and return to again and again rather than just reading once and throwing into the recycling. It might also be a good idea for pubs to get a copy to stick in their magazine rack for their customers to read and talk about. It can be ordered from the publishers' website at www.doghousemagazine.co.uk.

Peter Edwardson

Around Macclesfield

With Mike & Lyn Wawioroko

Around Macclesfield we have lots of good news about our community locals and town centre pubs. The **Bruce** on Crompton Road near the College now offers up to four cask beers, with a great selection of Rudgate Ruby Mild, Lancaster Blonde, Robinson's Unicorn and Trooper when we visited. The **Brewers** now has another beer alongside its stalwart Storm Ale, on this occasion Marstons Pedigree as well as an enjoyable PGA. It is a pub with several teams playing pool, darts and 6-a-side football and it holds a quiz on Sundays.



In town, the **Wharf**, the current Macclesfield CAMRA pub of the year, has a fine selection of beers of varying styles and strengths. Bands feature on Friday and Saturday evenings. Beer quality at the **Macc** continues at its high standard. We particularly enjoyed Magic Rock Rapture and the house beer Red Willow Macclesfield Bitter. This is another pub where bands play regularly. We continue to be impressed by **4 Park Green's** craft beers from Hydes spin-off brewery, The Beer Studio. Burnt Sienna is a wonderful example full of satisfying flavours and after tastes.



Wetherspoon's **Society Rooms** has been chosen as one of the pubs to launch their national beer festival. The event on Wednesday 16th October will see a 'Meet the Brewer' evening with around half a dozen breweries in attendance. Confirmed breweries so far are Limestone, Hawkshead, Mobberley and Wincle. There's good news that beer prices are expected to be coming down to £1.89 during August and should be £1.79 for the festival. The pub organises trips to local breweries with trips to Moorhouses, Beartown, Mobberley, Limestone and Titanic either confirmed or being planned for this autumn. Look for details in the pub.

Broken Cross

The **Broken Cross Club** is refurbishing its lounge with a new bar already in place and new carpets, curtains and furniture expected by the time you read this. The bar has three hand pumps, with two usually in use, offering an often surprising selection of beers. Recently we've found Channel Isle Liberation Ale and Hardy & Hanson's LBW golden ale and very enjoyable they were. The club has a large function room available for hire on Fridays with artists appearing each Saturday. Activities include snooker, pool, darts, poker, bingo and a book swap.

The **Bulls Head** darts team is celebrating winning their local league. The pub usually offers two beers with Cask Marque accreditation. We sampled Old Speckled Hen and Young's Bitter. There's a popular quiz on Thursdays and live music on the last Saturday of each month. New window boxes full of flowers have brightened up the front of the pub.

Across Broken Cross roundabout, the **Pack Horse's** landlord is proud of growing his trade in real ale from scarcely turning over one cask at a time to a choice of two midweek and three at weekends. Most ale is from the Punch Finest list, with regulars often choosing their favourite beer. Triple fff Moondance was particularly good. The pub has 11 and 5-a-side football teams, pool, darts, card games, a shove ha'penny board and Sports TV. For fun, a netball tournament was recently run in the car park.



Curmudgeon

A Pint of Two Halves

Recently there seems to have been a rise in the practice of pubs charging more for a half than exactly 50% of the price of a pint, something that for many years has been commonplace in Ireland. Many drinkers find this irritating, especially given that the growth in the number of rare and one-off beers means that drinking halves is a lot more common than it used to be.

The usual reason given is that the overheads in terms of staff time and glass-washing are the same for a half as for a pint, and thus some kind of premium is justified. However, in general, pubs serve far more pints than halves, and the fact that they do sell a few halves is unlikely in practice to result in any measurable extra cost.

Cost should never be the sole factor in pricing – you also have to bear in mind consistency and what people feel happy to pay. The aim should be to establish a fair and reasonable pricing structure that covers your overheads without any anomalies. Pubs don't, for example, charge more for beer in the winter to cover the additional costs of heating and lighting.

While I'm never going to man any barricades about it, charging more for halves seems to me to be something that needlessly antagonises customers for little or no benefit to the pub. It's quite simply a bad business practice that has no place in an operation that depends so heavily on customer goodwill. Plus it's not hard to imagine the anti-drink lobby getting up in arms over effectively giving people a discount for drinking more.

The Customer is Always Rude

A couple of months ago there was a lot of discussion about a case where a Sainsbury's cashier refused to serve a customer who was busy talking on her mobile phone. This attracted a lot of public sympathy, and few would disagree that the customer's behaviour was rude and ill-mannered, something that the widespread use of mobile phones seems to have encouraged.

However, is it really the role of staff to make value judgments about the behaviour of customers, provided that they are not actually being abusive? Attitudes relating to what is and isn't acceptable have greatly changed over the years, and they should not be pulling people up for things simply because they don't approve. It could all too easily turn into a slippery slope where customers were being told off for eating, chewing gum, showing their underpants or wearing T-shirts with offensive slogans. A checkout operator – or a bar person – is acting as the representative of their employer and it is not their job to make up policy on the hoof. It may be a cause for regret, but in the real world businesses may suffer for turning away customers for a lack of manners.

On the other hand, if you're the licensee of a pub who is effectively running your own business, you are quite entitled to take the view of "my gaff, my rules" and ban anything you disapprove of so long as it's not discriminatory. In the past there were some pubs that imposed a forfeit on any customers who allowed a mobile phone to ring, but they have now become so ubiquitous in society that such an attitude would probably be counter-productive.

Reverse the roles, though, and there is no doubt that for a member of bar staff to be chatting on the phone while serving a customer is completely unprofessional and frankly indicates total contempt for those who ultimately pay their wages.

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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Mawson

The fate of this closed Chorlton-on-Medlock pubs continues to give cause for concern. The building has now had the signage removed and a notice on the door claims it is now “deemed to be a residential premise” despite there having been no apparent attempts to obtain formal permission for such a change of use. To highlight the threat to this Grade II listed building, which appears on CAMRA’s National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA made a “presentation” at the pub in August which gained widespread media attention courtesy of the BBC and the Manchester Evening News. The CAMRA team is pictured below outside the closed pub.



Pub Shorts

In Fallowfield, Greene King has finally been granted permission to demolish the **Orange Grove**. This follows the brewery agreeing to pay £30,000 plus fees towards “highways and parking” improvements. This well used pub is to be replaced by four shop units and two restaurant units (of which there is a clear shortage in the area...). Greene King has three years to implement the plan. Elsewhere in Fallowfield, the former **Bar XS** (the old station building), which was supposed to be becoming a ‘Loungers’, still has scaffolding all over it (since February), but has now been purchased by Sainsburys. Further north, **Trof Fallowfield** is no longer part of the Trof chain as it was sold in early July. Now named **Fallow** it remains much as before. No cask beer is envisaged as the management tell us there is insufficient cellar or bar space.

In Edgeley, Stockport, the **Gardener’s Arms** on Northgate Road has been put up for sale by JW Lees with an auction guide price of £200,000 to £300,000. We suspect that it will find few buyers as a pub so that’s probably another one gone. It is odd that Lees have struggled to make a go of this as their two other relatively recent Stockport acquisitions – the

Victorian in Bramhall and the **Elizabethan** in Heaton Moor – are both trading very successfully. Elsewhere in Edgeley, the currently closed **Greyhound** on Bowden Street has had the “For Sale” board removed, along with some of the other signage, so its fate remains uncertain.

In Manchester and Salford there is expansion news from the team behind the **Castle** (Oldham Street) and the **Eagle** (Collier Street). In Manchester they have announced the take over of **Gullivers** across the road from the Castle. It was due to close for a two week major refurbishment and will remain a Lees tenancy on reopening, showcasing that brewery’s beers. In Salford planning permission has been given for the terrace next to the Eagle to be converted into a music hall.

City News

As Opening Times went to press the **Lower Turks Head** on Shudehill in the city centre had just reopened after many years of closure and numerous reports of an imminent rebirth.



The building behind the beautiful tiled frontage has been completely restored in traditional style with much use bare brick heritage fittings. The central island bar also serves a wine bar called Scuttlers which has opened in the building next door. A selection of six cask ales is promised including two regulars from JW Lees and Cornwall’s St Austell. When OT called (admittedly the day after opening) just Taylor’s Landlord and Wychwood Hobgoblin were on sale.



Joseph Holt have given the **Ape & Apple** on John Dalton Street an extensive refurbishment and launched it as what the brewery has

deemed their first Cask Ale House (although we guess regulars at pubs like the Cheadle Hulme and the Horse & Jockey might take issue with this). There are twelve handpumps on the bar and when OT dropped in these were dispensing Holt’s Mild, Bitter, IPA and Two Hoots along with Beartown Bitter, Conwy Brewery Clogwyn Gold and a traditional cider, Weston’s Wyldwood.

The pub offers traditional pub grub throughout the day. A first for the Holts estate is the launch of a Cask Loyalty scheme, with drinkers collecting stamps on a collector’s card with the ninth pint of any cask ale being free on production of a completed card. The brewery has indicated that the concept is likely to be rolled out to other pubs in the estate.

Reports in the press suggest that **Jabez Clegg** in the centre of the Manchester University district has been put on the market for £2.5 million by owners Hale Leisure with planning permission already granted to convert most of the building into more student flats (clearly a massive shortage of them round the city - not been any built for days). The pub and the large upstairs club area has been a mainstay of many students’ lives in Manchester since it opened in the early 90s. Hale Leisure also operates the **Thirsty Scholar** in the archways underneath Oxford Road railway station, **Joshua Brooks** on Charles Street, and the **Deansgate**.



The **Waterhouse** on Princess Street is hosting the final of their regular Meet The Brewer nights for 2013 on Monday 23rd September. The visiting brewer will be Rob Hamilton of Black Jack Brewery. Black Jack has proved to be one of the big success stories of the last 18 months with its card game themed ales such as New Deal and Shuffled Deck becoming regulars on the bars of many free houses. As ever with the Waterhouse’s evenings, entry will be free but early arrival is recommended to get a seat. There will be a full range of Black Jack beers on the bar for the evening.



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