

UNICORN



From strength to strength

The first half of 2006 has seen a major expansion in the Company's activities both around the estate and at the Unicorn Packaging Centre, underlining our commitment to meeting the challenges of the 21st Century.



Prince William

A total of 15 new houses have been acquired, spread right across our trading area. The first of these purchases was the Boot Inn, in the beautiful Eskdale Valley in the Lake District. This was followed by five more houses in Cumbria, including two in Keswick - the Lake Road Inn and the Pack Horse - together with the Crown and Cushion, Appleby; the Lane End, Hayton and the Red Dragon, Kirby Lonsdale.

Nearer our heartland, we bought the Swan, Wybunbury; the Horse Shoe, Kingsley; the Leigh Arms, Little Leigh and the White Swan, Great Sutton - all in Cheshire. In Stoke on Trent we purchased the Gardeners Arms, Brown Lees and in Lancashire we have acquired Ye Olde Withy Tree, Bamber Bridge and the Prince William, Dalton - the latter including a lovely cricket ground.



Garddfon

The expansion has also incorporated North Wales with the purchase of another waterside pub, the Garddfon Inn, at Port Dinorwic, and the Royal Madoc, in Tremadoc.

Perpetual motion

A new era began on 30th May with the start of night shifts at the Unicorn Packaging Centre creating a round-the-clock operation in several departments to meet growing demand for contract bottling.

A continual process now begins at 7am each Monday carrying through to 11pm the following Thursday. On Fridays there is just a single daytime shift. As a result of the enhanced flexibility provided by the new system, capacity for bottling has been significantly increased.

In gearing up for the added productivity, the Company has taken on an additional workforce of 15 and converted three temporary contracts to permanent posts. The new team is led by Night Shift Co-ordinator Dave Atherton who oversees two Engineers, two Laboratory Technicians, two warehouse team members and 11 staff in the tank room and bottling hall.

"It is reassuring to see that sustained growth for bottling has been brought about through planning and hard work and, at a time when many other brewers are cutting costs and shedding staff, we are bucking the trend," said Mr Oliver.

The introduction of the night shift is just the latest in a long line of developments at UPC. Four years ago, for example, £2m was invested in plant alone and the future of the twilight shift has been stabilised as a result of increased demand for bottling over the last year or so.

At the time of the last major capital investment there Mr David described it as, *"an investment in job security as well as one that will move us forward in our ability to meet ever-changing customer expectations"*.

These proved prophetic words for, as demand from both new and existing clientele continued to escalate, UPC proved equal to the challenge. Innovations such as the high-speed, pressure-sensitive labeller commissioned last year and the addition of warehouse and distribution facilities for some contract customers enabled us to increase the volume and scope of our operations.

Despite this, however, UPC had once again reached capacity and so the bold move of working through the night was seen as the best way of keeping faith with the positive philosophy which has underpinned the site since its inception. In the dynamic world of



Night shift adds strength and flexibility

packaging, the only certainty is that new challenges, new ideas and new demands by customers will continue to arise. It will be up to us to respond positively.

The packaging operation has also produced some consequential benefit for the Brewery. Some contract customers commission us to brew their brands as well as bottling or kegging them.

It was back on 14th November 1973 that work began on the construction of UPC. The fact that, three decades on, it is busier than ever is testament to both the Company's progressive philosophy and the dedication of the staff who work there.

Pint Size

New look



XB is the latest in the list of brands to receive a design makeover, following the path of the Company's other success stories.

The new branding sees the design retain links with its traditional Lakeland heritage as it keeps the distinctive green and gold colours as well as its respected Hartleys name. Naturally the beer has remained unchanged and is still brewed to the recipe originated by Eric Simpson as Head Brewer in 1949.

New territory for Old Tom

Following a trade fair in Italy it took a beer buyer from Denmark just one day to contact the Brewery and then fly to the UK and place his first export order for Old Tom.

No doubt he was swayed by the winter warmer's unparalleled pedigree but a recent series of high profile competition wins and a steady flow of positive press coverage can only have helped the process.

Exports to Finland and Sweden have also been secured which all help to widen Old Tom's market territory.

Prize winners

Congratulations go to Yvonne Hallworth of the Davenport Arms, Woodford on winning the trip to the El Coto Winery in Spain's Rioja region. Yvonne's ticket was picked out from the free draw that was open to all tenants, managers and free trade customers.

Six runners up, who each receive a magnum of El Coto Crianza Rioja are:- Richard Bevan, Whitchaff Inn, Rawtenstall; Metcalf Moore, The Grapes, Bamford; Francisco Rosina, King William, Wilmslow; Alan Smith, Egerton Arms, Astbury; Mary Rearden, Gazelle Hotel, Menai Bridge and Tony Gray, The Outgate, Ambleside.

Food for thought

Profitability is being optimised across the estate as a growing number of tenancies join the Company's Group Purchasing Scheme – providing significant discounts off food supplies.

Since the last edition of *Unicorn*, access to significant discounts off ambient, dry goods have been negotiated. In some cases tenants can now save a substantial 50% off 75 of their highest use, core items and Woodward Food Services have also agreed to a 35% discount off all their other list prices.

These special savings are only open to Robinson's licensees who sign up to the deal, which costs just £50 per supplier category. To start saving speak to Mr Paul or your District Manager.

The very successful Group Purchasing Scheme is set for expansion with dairy products being next on the menu.

SEIZE EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Knowing what makes your customers tick is one thing, but putting it into practice is a totally different challenge.

For Craig and Melanie Thorpe opportunity beckoned in October 2003 as they had recently given up a leased pub and were on the lookout for their next move. For them the timing was right to take on the tenancy of the Gilpin Bridge Inn at Levens which was close to their home of 15 years.

"We approached the challenge by looking at it as a self-financing investment," explains Craig. *"We knew the area and its trade well and believed that we could bring in enough additional revenue to fund substantial inward investment."*

At that stage the couple had identified that there was considerable scope for families to be included among their clientele and so quickly set about providing an appropriate environment. The building blocks for success were soon put in place with children's menus becoming a permanent fixture. In addition an outdoor play area proved a popular facility while also standing as a roadside beacon, saying to all passing trade that the Gilpin Bridge Inn had a family-friendly policy.

Within three years Craig and Melanie's simple but effective steps have funded the development of their restaurant and 10 en suite letting rooms. The house has since been awarded three diamonds by the AA and the couple are preparing for their busiest season yet.

Similarly at the Cross Keys Hotel, Milnthorpe, with its eight en suite letting rooms, Ian and Sandra Mills have latched on to the benefits of earning a star rating from the local tourist board.



Star performers – Sandra and Ian Mills

As Ian explained, without the all-important stars the Cross Keys was not being included in the tourist board's listings and enquiries

for accommodation were being passed to his competitors.

In response the couple have made continual improvements to their business and been among the first to earn two stars from the new rating system that was introduced this year. *"It has been a case of setting high standards across the board and then sticking to them,"* Ian explains. As a result of their efforts Ian and Sandra can now see the benefits in every aspect of the business from occupancy levels to their wet and dry sales.



B&B is valuable business for Keith and Marion Marland

Tenants Keith and Marion Marland see their house differently and prefer to think of it as three streams of income under one roof. At the Crown & Mitre, Chinley they talk about their food, drink and accommodation as separate enterprises, which each support and complement the others.

For example a rolling programme of live entertainment, karaoke and quizzes is in place to keep their bar busy. But late on Saturday evenings when peckish customers could drift away, the couple bring out the food. *"We charge just one pound per head to keep it simple and cover our costs but as a payback we keep on selling beer,"* Keith says.

Catering, though, has come into its own as the couple have looked at all options available to them. *"It's not just a case of providing for our bar customers and B&B guests,"* Keith explains. *"We deliver bacon and sausage sandwiches to local businesses and regularly welcome parties of up to 70 into our function room for all kinds of gatherings. We are also starting to draw in the passing ramblers and bikers at the weekend by promoting ourselves with two large A boards outside the door."*

In summing up, then, the underlying message is to seize every opportunity and do the job well!

Egon's top ten

The Bulls Head at Ashford earned national adulation in November when Egon Ronay listed the house in his 2006 guide to the best restaurants and gastropubs in the UK.

Under the expert stewardship of tenants Carl and Debbie Shaw the house achieved a coveted top-ten ranking in the publication's listing of gastropubs across the country.

For the first time the world-famous food critic included gourmet watering holes in his guide in recognition of the dramatic shift in British eating habits in recent years.

The judging made a clear definition as to what constituted a gastropub with frequent changes to the menu, fresh food, high standards, cask ale, house wine and a traditional bar being among the essential criteria.

For the Bulls Head qualification for the publication came when one of the guide's mystery shoppers dropped in earlier this year. "He was clearly impressed by the experience and singled out our Cuvée Jean Paul house wine as being exceptional," says Debbie.

For everybody at the Derbyshire pub it is a well-earned reward for the work which is invested on a daily basis while the listing is also recognition of Carl's skill in the kitchen which, as in so many pubs, is much smaller than that of a restaurant.



Debbie and Carl read their rave review

This most recent recognition brought with it national media coverage. But before that the Bulls Head had been named as one of the top 10 places to have lunch by the BBC Good Food Magazine and it was also singled out by the Times Travel Magazine as one of their best places to eat.

All this good news goes to show that with the solid foundation of good beer, good training, ambition and enthusiasm, nothing stands in the way of Robinson's licensees from being ranked among the best in the business.

SALES AID PROFITS

This year I am pleased to report record profits before taxation of £14.595 million, which is by far the highest level of profits the Company has ever reported, says Mr Peter. The underlying trading profit for the year was, in fact, little changed on previous years, despite the increased costs we incurred with the introduction of the Licensing Act, the additional funding made towards the Company pension scheme and higher energy costs which, in total, have cost around £1 million.

Three factors - the sale of shares in Jennings Bros, the sale of sites, and the introduction of new pension rules - contributed around £9.4 million towards reported profits which is why the underlying levels of trading profit are little changed.

Tied Trade

While a significant number of acquisitions were made, our ability to carry out alterations and improvements to existing houses was badly hampered by the amount of time that the architectural staff had to spend on the new Licensing Act. Nevertheless, we did complete three major alterations with The Plough, Whitegate; The Windmill, Tabley and the Glyn-y-Weddwl, Llanbedrog all having conservatory style dining areas added.

Corporate Identity

The new image will take time to complete but is already being well received. We look forward to it being recognised as the sign of Brewing Excellence wherever it appears.

Production and Sales

A major additional labelling facility has helped us to attract several new contract bottling customers. We have also used this technology for the re-branding of bottled Old Tom which, together with a new bottle that was largely developed in-house, has resulted in a dramatic transformation of the brand.

The Wards brand has been added to our portfolio. It is mainly for our free trade and the initial uptake has been very positive.

Regulations

We continue to be plagued by costly regulatory matters. This year, for example, saw us complete the re-routing of the Brewery's entire effluent system to allow for continuous monitoring.

As always, my thanks, and those of my fellow directors, go to all those who have contributed to the continued success of the Company.

RED LION NETS TOP SPOT IN SEAFOOD WEEK

Seafood Week in October provided the perfect back-drop for The Red Lion, High Lane to show off as licensee Salvador Gomez and his team got behind the national promotion.

With Salvador's daughter Natalie, chefs Guillermo Hermida and Keith Hoey and restaurant manager Manolo Vigario, the team enthusiastically embraced the chance to do what they do best by promoting their seafood menu.

"We already had a pretty good reputation for our seafood but for the week-long promotion we bought in some less well-known fish and, with the chefs' creativity, were able to offer an even wider choice of dishes," said Natalie.

Added to that Salvador created his own series of posters to promote the Red Lion's special offerings while Manolo made sure that every diner knew exactly what was on the menu that week.

Of course it was a great opportunity for the chefs to show off their skills but at the end of the week Salvador put together a comprehensive presentation for the organisers of the national promotion. Figures clearly showed that not just seafood sales but overall turnover had risen that week. In addition Salvador's presentation included



(L-R) Natalie, Manolo and Guillermo net the top seafood prize

recipes and photos which won top spot for the Red Lion among entries from the Robinson's estate.

Congratulations go to the whole team and especially to head chef Guillermo who earned a place on a Rick Stein cookery weekend. Runners-up in the competition, the Royal Ship Hotel, Dolgellau and the St Tudwalls, Abersoch, were awarded cinema tickets and a weekend break for two respectively. All three houses were awarded chef's jackets and certificates.

SEAFOOD WEEK 2006 6 - 13 OCTOBER

Meet the maintenance team



First point of contact - Paul (L), Elaine and Darren

Darren Molloy and Paul Kilkeny have taken on the newly created roles of Building Services Supervisor and Building Surveyor respectively.

Along with administrative support from Elaine Loxam, an established member of the architects department, the new team have been given the brief of looking after the maintenance issues of the property estate administered from Stockport.

Darren, who has been a painter with the Company for a number of years, has been promoted to take on the role of coordinating ongoing maintenance issues as they arise and organising the Company's own painters and joiners to carry out the work. Meanwhile Paul, who is new to the Company, will be overseeing a scheduled programme of maintenance work and drafting in the appropriate external contractors as required.

The new team adds strength and flexibility to the architects department and should now be considered as the first port of call for all maintenance issues, except for further north where John Bell and his team keep up the good work of looking after our estate in Cumbria.

UNDER PRESSURE

High on the moors above Macclesfield, running a busy pub with a 100-cover catering operation and two bars can be a challenging job under any circumstances. But from time to time nature takes its toll and then it can be all hands to the pump just to keep the business turning over.

The Cat & Fiddle at Wildbournclough has no mains water supply, relying instead on a 210-foot deep bore hole to meet its daily needs. So when the water almost stopped flowing in March, time was of the essence to rectify the problem.

Recognising the urgency of the situation Chief Architect Tom O'Shea Brown wasted no time in calling in the experts to clean and scour the six-inch diameter bore that over time had become blocked by mineral deposits from the water. As could be expected, though, the job had its complications and it was not until a temporary roadway had been laid across the soft ground that a specialist vehicle could even access the head to begin the clean-out operation.

"In all it took just six days from me recognising the problem to the work being completed and a high-quality natural water supply being restored," said licensee Guy Danner. "It's a testament to what can be achieved when the pressure is on."



An expert crew keeps the water flowing at the Cat & Fiddle

The heat is on

New fire regulations will come into force in England and Wales from 1st October 2006. This piece of legislation is called the *Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order*. It is important to be aware that from that date forward responsibility for fire safety will be transferred from fire officers to tenants and the Company.

Compliance with the order is a legal obligation and the Company has appointed a project team to ensure that a Fire Risk Assessment is completed at every house in order to ensure that it meets current fire safety legislation. It is anticipated that the whole programme will take three years to complete.

This is important work that has been arranged by the Company on behalf of its tenants. In each case the cost of the assessment and a proportion of any necessary work that is identified, such as the installation of fire alarm systems or emergency lighting, will be recharged to the Company's tenants.

The work is already underway and District Managers will be able to advise on the timetable for assessments as the work progresses throughout the estate.

Plan for the ban

With one year to go before the curtain comes down on smoking in public places, now is the time to think seriously about the way forward. Like it or not the ban will come into play next summer and smoking in pubs will be a thing of the past.

Although there will be an opportunity to make provision for outdoor smokers, for example with an all-weather covered area, the Government has yet to define exactly what will be permissible.

No doubt the new regime will take some getting used to but at the same time new opportunities will be created.

For example, if the location is right, why not build on your business by offering a café service? After all, pubs are usually more spacious than cafes, staff have the right skills and the fixtures and fittings are already in place. Historically the smoky environment may not have been right for this type of operation but that is going to change.

Over the coming months a series of road shows will address the ways in which the issues around the smoking ban can be tackled. Full details will be provided once the dates and locations are confirmed.

Planning for the long-term

Investing for the future remains a common theme for a number of tenants who have put in the hard work to secure long-term growth and profitability.

At the Shoulder of Mutton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, where partners Marjorie Conroy and Phil Faulkner took over in January, the pace of change has been rapid.

Cooperating with Mr William, Marjorie and Phil worked on a plan to dramatically alter the house. Internally a new look has been created by replacing old ceilings and wall coverings with clean lines and fresh plaster. New furniture and window blinds have been selected to complement the project which has worked well to deliver modern and comfortable public areas.

The project had the overriding brief to add profit to the Shoulder of Mutton, so attention has also been paid to the bar which has been renovated and had new dispensing equipment installed. As a result cask beer sales have substantially increased.

In addition, a raised stage has been incorporated with Marjorie and Phil putting in place a busy programme of entertainment to help bring custom to the house.

The couple have also launched a web site that lists all their latest promotions and entertainments. To back this up, Phil has linked three widescreen TVs to his own computer so that all the attractions and offers can be promoted throughout the pub.

Investment has also been made externally with the children's area benefiting from soft woodchips on the ground and bright paint finishes on the play equipment.

Another ambitious project to transform an



Attention to detail has added profit for Phil and Marjorie

established house has taken place at The Cock, Henbury. Senior Architectural Assistant Phill Ingham and Neil Robinson-Stanier worked with tenants Ronny and Elaine Barker to refurbish the public areas.



A first-class job for Ronnie and Elaine

The scheme has made good use of available space by providing an open dining room for their food trade as well as a cosy snug with feature fireplace for their drinkers.

Timber panelling lines the snug and is continued in the folding oak doors, with leaded glass, that can be extended to provide a comfortable private meeting room.

Throughout the project, which also included a new bar area and attractive sliding sash windows at the front of the house, Ronny and Elaine liaised closely with Phill and Mr Neil on the final design and finishing of the work.



Working to a budget - Vicky (L), Paul and Laura added the finishing touches

Also with input from Mr Neil has been the refurbishment of the Verdin Arms, Wimboldsley where the catering kitchen has been significantly developed and the public area decorated.

"We had all but grown out of our kitchen as it was and needed to take the next step forward to keep pace with the demand on dry trade," explained licensee Paul Buckley.

For Paul and his wife Vicky, architect Peter Carton came up with the solution of removing a wall to make better use of existing space. The project saw new flooring, wall cladding and a cooker canopy installed - all within the couple's budget.

In the public areas tasteful cosmetic detailing in the renewed carpet, modern furniture and soft furnishings have been enhanced by a new paint scheme that was applied by Paul, Vicky and Laura Sherwin, their full-time staff member.

A hands-on approach was also adopted by the brother-and-sister-team of Richard and Nicola Templeman at The Manners, Bakewell.

The pair took on the house on 9th January and quickly invested in a programme of refurbishment.

The interior is now tastefully furnished with new carpet and wood floor coverings, and a feature fireplace with tiled hearth sits neatly in the comfortable snug. As a focus to The Manners, Richard and Nicola have also acquired a large feature dining table that will seat eight, and added details to the dining area such as a dumb waiter that doubles up as a condiments cupboard.

Speed was also of the essence when *Coronation Street* star Beverley Callard took on the tenancy of the White Horse, Eccles with partner Jon McEwan last year.

Phase one of their work entailed a complete closure for three weeks while a major refurbishment was underway. Windows were replaced, new floor coverings and furniture installed, and the entire bar and lounge areas decorated in time for their opening night on 5th November.



Perfect presentation at the White Horse

Phase two got underway earlier this year as the couple got to grips with re-opening a restaurant at the house. The full refitting of the restaurant was signed off in April and has proved an overwhelming success. No doubt Beverley's background has played its part along with a recent feature in *OK* magazine.

The couple's passion for live entertainment, meanwhile, is reflected in a varied programme with everything from their very own *Eccles Factor* talent show to Sunday afternoon crooners.

THE RIGHT STRATEGY

Expansion into the vital free-trade sector continues to grow and the rewards of building trading relationships with wholesale distributors are proving that the strategy is right for the Company.

In the first half of this year these all-important routes to the market have provided national distribution channels for Robinson's own cask beers and the Wards cask beer that the Company now contract brews. In addition barbox.com - the online ordering portal - has provided access to over 12,000 of its subscribers while at the same time alliances with Coors and Waverly TBS have been strengthened.

Robinson's seasonal ales continue to provide six new sales platforms as they are launched through the year. Young Tom achieved particular success with 130 composite barrels going to JD Weatherspoon via East West Ales, a further 130 barrels were sold by Scottish & Newcastle and every one of Waverly TBS's depots listed the brand in April. As Unicorn went to press the free trade sales team were working hard to achieve even greater success for England's Champion, which has been well-timed to find a place at the bar as pubs and clubs throughout the country aim to make the most of World Cup fever.

Direct supply

The free trade team is maintaining a high level of service for the direct supply accounts they have worked hard to win, while new accounts are currently being secured at the rate of one per week. Of these 90% of customers take a smooth product and are predominantly from the club sector which represents good entrenched, sustainable business. In addition Fosters standard and superchilled lager was added to the portfolio in March quickly enabling nine new listings to be opened and providing a valuable ongoing route for growth.

Meanwhile penetration of the new South Yorkshire territory continues. Robinson's acquired the brewing, bottling, cask racking, kegging and distribution rights for Wards last November. By April, 36 new outlets had been secured, 90% of which are for Wards Smooth.

The indications show that the figures are on course to increase to 65 accounts in South Yorkshire by the end of this year.

WINES AND SPIRITS

uncorking the potential



Paul Quinn: Wines and Spirits Development Manager

The growth of the wines and spirits market continues as an upward trend that provides a range of opportunities for both the on and free trades.

To help tap into that market Paul Quinn has been promoted from Ulverston's Depot Supervisor to the newly-created Stockport-based position of Wines and Spirits Development Manager. Paul joined the Company in 1996 and has since developed his own passion for the subject and studied to gain an internationally recognised Wines and Spirits Education Trust Diploma. He is now ranked among the trade's top professionals.

He is already supporting the Company's free trade department and by regularly working with them on sales appointments, new business in the wines and spirits sector has been won.

Paul's enthusiasm is also available free of charge to every tenant and manager in the estate. He is on hand to advise on which brands sell, how to promote the product as well as on service and pricing. Overall his common sense advice is to select good wines that reflect your business and to pitch the pricing at a point that sells.

Although all houses are not the same, with distinct differences between wet and dry led operations, a number of licensees have taken up the opportunity to work with Paul to help maximise their business. Bob Ward at The Plough, Etruria, where food sales form the backbone of his well-established business, was among the first.

Paul and Bob identified a number of ways to build on The Plough's wines and spirits volumes, which included rebuilding the wine list to take the trend for New World wines into account. By following Paul's advice Bob is also regularly changing his house wine to maintain interest among regular customers.

"I'm confident in my own knowledge of beer but by sitting down with a well-qualified expert and looking at the wines that we sell I have picked up the kind of advice that I know is going to add to my bottom line," Bob says happily.



Bob Ward (R) is making the most of the service

If you would like to uncork the full potential of your wines and spirits trade then please contact Paul direct and see what he can do for you.

Tel: 0161 480 6571 ext 352

Mobile: 07798 586 395

Email: paul.quinn@frederic-robinson.co.uk

Making the most of it

As reported on page two, the Group Purchasing Scheme is delivering some great savings on food supplies. To fully exploit these benefits, though, it's worth thinking about some important seasonal marketing opportunities during the remainder of the year.

Whether it be Father's Day, Halloween or Christmas, there's still a host of occasions that offer the chance to promote both wet and dry trades. What's more, there's often some great supporting point-of-sale-material available - free of charge.

Catering efficiencies can also be enhanced by tapping into the latest deals on cooking wine, port and Madeira. These are all VAT and duty free, and provide substantial savings over their back-bar equivalents. A cost effective cooking brandy is also available.

Finally, remember that when the time comes to invest in the catering kitchen, bumper savings can be made on second-hand equipment from within Robinson's estate.

Please speak to your District Manager or Mr Paul for more details.

Still to
come in
2006

July - August



Sunny Jim
alc 3.8% vol

September - October



Lighthouse
alc 4.0% vol

November - December



Robin Bitter
alc 4.5% vol

New team in harness



Newcomers - Helen and Saracen

While the Company's re-branding process is equipping it to face future challenges, there is still a major role for a more traditional symbol of its values.

For the shire horse season is once again in full swing with Sportsman and new arrival Saracen participating in competitions, shows and other events around the country. While the show dray, trailer and box have all been repainted in the new corporate colours, the displays continue to provide a powerful visual reminder of Robinson's heritage.

Meanwhile head horseman John Walker and colleague Paul Greenwood have been joined full-time by Helen Taylor, who has spent periods working in the stables for several years. With the support of the Company, she has already gained her HGV Class II licence allowing her to help transport the horses. Helen certainly has an impressive family record for the job - her granddad used to work with shires alongside John's father.

Goodbye and a fond farewell

We would like to send our sincere condolences to the families and friends of a number of people closely associated with the Company who have sadly passed away in recent months.

Frank McLaughlin retired from his position of Unicorn Wine Shop Manager in 1984 after 12 years with us. It was with sorrow that we learnt that Frank had passed away in January.

Administration Clerk David Seager, who retired in 1994, sadly died on 21st February. Our deepest sympathies go to his family.

It was also with sadness that we learnt that Peter Benson, a former Wines and Spirits Foreman, and Drayman and Van Driver David Jones both passed away on 5th March. Peter and David retired in 1996 and 2001 respectively.

After 26 years of loyal service with the Company, William Rhodes retired as a Drayman in 1994.

With sorrow we must report that William passed away on 30th April.

Sadly we must also extend our condolences to the families and friends of a number of our tenants who have died recently.

Brian Connolly of the Cow and Calf, Romiley passed away in September last year.

We were also very sorry to learn of the death in February of John Downes of the Alexandra, Edgeley.

Janet Fisher, of the Saracens Head, Beddgelert, sadly passed away in March.

We are also very sorry to report the death of Pearl Stokes who had been tenant of the Star & Garter and Unity in Stockport and latterly The Barnfield at Macclesfield. Sadly Pearl passed away in March this year leaving behind her husband Trevor.

Looking the part



Lee Shalcross looks the part in the warehouse

With everything from trucks to beer matts currently getting a new look, the Company is also turning its attention to its most important asset - its staff.

New maroon and black uniforms are replacing the old blue at the Brewery and UPC and green at Ulverston. In addition the draymen will be seen in the smart new colours in every corner of the estate.

The design ties in with all the investment which is giving the Company a cohesive identity in all areas of its activity.

MAKING THE GRADE



Customer service at its best -
(L-R) Stacey, Christine and Lorna

Callers to the Sales Order Office can look forward to an even better service in future as the Company continues its policy of staff development.

The past year has seen Senior Sales Order Office Clerk Lorna Cheshire and Sales Order Office Clerks Stacey Boulton and Christine Hogg studying for an NVQ Level 3 in Customer Service. With the help of a monthly visit from a tutor, the team have been developing their practical skills in this vital frontline area.

Assessment was by both coursework and exams making the NVQ a major commitment for the three. Their dedication is sure to pay dividends, however, as they report their newly-acquired knowledge is already helping them in their day-to-day work.

Pilgrimage builds team spirit



On tour - Coach & Horses customers take to the slopes

Over the past three years the number of customers joining licensee David Cropper on his annual skiing trip to the Austrian Tyrol has soared from 28 to a whopping 61. The annual pilgrimage originally started out as a chance for David to combine a visit to his sister Millicent at her home in Lermoos with some well-earned relaxation on the snow covered slopes. These days, though, David is joined by a burgeoning party from the Coach & Horses, Timbersbrook who benefit from

he and Millicent's careful planning of the whole operation.

A tour shirt for every member of the group helps galvanise team spirit and no doubt plays its part in building loyalty to the Coach & Horses.

The skiers are certainly a hardy bunch with broken ankles, concussion, fractures and sprains failing to dampen spirits over the years. Numbers look set to rise again for their next trip - meaning that David's wife Lynn will once again have to stay behind and hold the fort!

Out and About

Sweet revenge

There was a satisfying win for the crown green bowls team over Lady Bridge in the early stages of this year's Cheadle and Gatley League Division A campaign. It avenged a loss to the same opponents in the final match of the 2005 season which cost Robinson's the runners-up spot.

The fixture list certainly ensured a tough start this time round with Steve Thorneycroft's side suffering a narrow defeat to reigning champions Heald Green as well as losing to last year's runners-up, Northenden.

Recent club members Ron Fletcher and Alf Starkie, meanwhile, have quickly made their presence felt by winning an early season pairs competition.

Anyone interested in joining in should contact Graham Bratley at the Brewery or Stuart Furlong at UPC.

Stevie on target

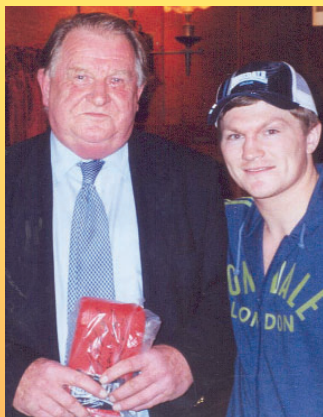
The latest ten-pin bowls singles tournament has been won by Stevie Vance from newcomers Bennett Verby. Team mate Phil Reed also put in an impressive performance to finish runner-up.

Malcolm Benison and Ryan Gallagher from Strike Force, meanwhile, were in fine form as they won the doubles competition.

The 2006 team competition is now underway with the Incredibles and Blaze of Glory setting the early pace.

Anyone interested in joining a team should contact either Phill Ingham or Craig Booth.

RICKY'S RECOGNITION



Mr Peter paid tribute to Ricky Hatton (R) at the New Inn

Hard-hitting boxer Ricky Hatton had his roots recognised when Mr Peter was invited to the New Inn at Matley, now kept by licensee Tommy Murtagh.

Not many people know that Ricky's boxing career started out with him as a youngster in the cellar of the pub where he lived with his family. Since then Ricky has punched his way to the top of his profession and one local resident wanted to see proper recognition of where it all began.

As a result Mr Peter was invited to unveil a plaque as a tribute to the boxing hero. Surrounded by Ricky's friends and family he said, "It is an honour to meet Ricky - his name will always be synonymous with the long and colourful history of the New Inn."

Cracking good ride

The power for painter Keith Burke to help raise £350 for Francis House was provided by his gleaming 1500cc Dyna Wide Glide in April.

Keith and his fellow members of Harley Davidson's Manchester Hatters Chapter braved the elements on a wet Sunday morning to ride from Stockport and personally deliver their gift to the children's hospice in Didsbury along with a presentation of Easter eggs.

It was just one of a regular series of charity rides that Keith will participate in this year with the highlight being a two-day national rally in July. There he will be raising funds for Mencap, the UK's leading learning disability charity, with the trusted support of his wife Myfanwy who will once again be riding pillion and navigating the route.



Harley rider Keith sets the pace for charity collections

WEDDED BLISS

Robinson's pubs have been the venue for countless stag and hen parties over the years. Now happy couples have the chance to take things a stage further following the arrival of John and Susan Egan at the Wynnstay Arms, Ruabon.

In a bid to build business, the pair have acquired civil wedding licences for both the house's restaurant and its larger function room which can comfortably seat 100 guests.

The idea already looks like being a winner with John reporting much interest and bookings as far ahead as 2008.

Moreover, after toasting their marriage with the finest ales around, newlyweds have one more treat to look forward to at the end of the day. For John and Susan have also undertaken a major refurbishment of the bridal suite - including the installation of a magnificent four-poster bed!