

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH?

BY PETER EDWARDSON

MANY canned and bottled beers are now sold in half litre (500ml) containers. Pour one of these into a standard brim measure pint glass, and the result is a "pint" that, while obviously a little short, would take a brave man to return to the bar for a top-up at 10.30 on a busy Friday night. Yet 500ml is a full 12% short of a pint, so you would only be getting 88p worth of beer for every £1 you pay over the bar. Where do you think the remaining 12p ends up? Not in the charity box, that's for sure.

Of course, a well-run pub will not serve such short measures, and will be careful to top-up pints where necessary. But even if they succeed in serving a pint with a head only $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep (and drinkers round here won't accept flat beer), the measure is still 5% short. The fact is, it's absolutely impossible to serve a full pint of beer, with a decent head, in a brim measure glass.

Many pubs use electric metered pumps and oversize glasses, so you are sure of getting a full pint, and generally pay no extra for the privilege. In this area they include all Banks's, most Hydes, many Robinsons and a few Boddingtons. However, in the past few years there has been a trend to replace electric meters with handpumps, particularly in Boddingtons pubs but also in some Robinsons. Fine, you might say, many drinkers prefer handpumped beer. The problem is, inevitably at the same time the oversize glasses are replaced by brim measures, resulting in an instant improvement in the profit margin of at least 5%. It's impossible to believe this side effect never entered the brewers' heads.

It may be nice to see handpumps on the bar, but I for one would certainly prefer a full pint from an electric pump to 90% of one from a handpump. And now a small number of mainly Robinsons pubs are switching from meters to free-flow electric pumps and doing the same thing, which could be seen at the worst of both worlds.

Surely it would be preferable if every pub used oversize glasses, and so the drinker would be sure of getting a square deal. There is no reason why this should kill off handpumps - if lined glasses are used, it is a simple matter to pull a pint very close to the measure

without the benefit of a meter. Quite a few pubs around the country do this even today. Another benefit of oversize glasses is that, by eliminating spillage, they remove the temptation for the small minority of unscrupulous licensees to return beer from drip trays to the cask.

In fact, legislation was passed in the late 1970s which laid down that a pint of beer did not include the head, and entitled drinkers to ask for a top-up. It also, indeed, made the use of oversize glasses mandatory - but this point required a government order to make it effective, which for some inexplicable reason has never been carried out. No public demand, or something like that. The government could still implement it tomorrow, without any new legislation. If you believe that your pint should equal a pint, why not write to your MP and show him that the demand is there for them to do just that.

NEXT STOP OPENSHAW

IF you enjoyed Stockport Beer Festival then the next date for your diary must be the weekend of 25/26 October when CAMRA will be running the first Openshaw Beer Festival. This will be at Openshaw College, just off Ashton Old Road and will feature up to 25 different real ales, plus cider & perry, food, entertainment and all the usual festival attractions. We are also hoping to promote trips to the festival from local pubs - check future issues of Opening Times for more details.

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THE MOSS ROSE

WE are sorry to see the departure of Rick and Beryl Wilson from the Moss Rose, Heaton Norris. They moved into the pub, which previously had a very poor reputation, about eighteen months ago, and put in a tremendous effort to make it a place where anyone would be happy to go for a drink.

We thought they were succeeding, but apparently Hydes Brewery did not feel they were building up the trade quickly enough - not an easy feat in a recession - and gave them their marching orders, against the wishes of the regulars, who wanted them to stay. We would expect better from a local independent brewery such as Hydes, and we hope they do not allow the pub to revert to its former disreputable character in a short-sighted attempt to boost sales.

Rick and Beryl ran an excellent pub, with consistently good beer, and, had they stayed, the Moss Rose would have been a strong contender for a Pub of the Month award later in the year. We wish them success in whatever new venture they go into.

NEW FREEHOUSE

STOCKPORT looks as though it will soon be getting another real ale freehouse, specialising in a range of cask beers plus, possibly real cider as well (no Scrumpy Jack here, thank you very much). Whilst we are not at liberty to reveal full details at the moment, we can say that the project is at an advanced stage and should also see the revitalisation of one of the currently less-appealing pubs near the town centre.

With luck we should be able to bring you more details next month.

JUNE

2	9	16	23	30
3	10	17	24	
4	11	18	25	
5	12	19	26	
6	13	20	27	
7	14	21	28	
1	8	15	22	29

PUB OF THE MONTH

PUB of the Month for June is the **Railway** on Manshaw Road, Openshaw.

The Railway has been in the capable hands of Barry and Margaret Wilson since June 1990. The pub has lost none of the warmth and character that made it popular in recent years, and with Barry's cellarman'ship, the beer has been consistently good for some time. Holts Mild and Bitter are available at prices we don't believe can be beaten in the Stockport & South Manchester branch area.

There has been talk recently of the brewery refurbishing the premises, but at the time of writing, nothing further has materialised. Holts have been provided with a photograph of the old wrought-iron lamp that used to hang over the door and was such a well known feature. Whether they will find the cash to have this replaced, we can only speculate.

Come along and join us on Thursday, 27th June when we pay tribute to an excellent local. A splendid time is guaranteed for all.

POSTSCRIPT: we are now on the run-in to the First Openshaw Beer Festival. Any readers who live, work or drink in East Manchester are welcome to join CAMRA at or before the festival, to get a close look at what we do. If sufficient locals join us, we would expect this to be reflected in more Pub of the Month awards being given to the many excellent pubs in this part of the city. These awards are arrived at democratically at our branch meetings - join us and have your say!

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(formerly the Sandpiper)

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RUDDLES BEST BITTER
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12-3 : 7-10.30 Sun.

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WILMSLOW ROAD, DIDSBUURY

- TRY THE HOUSE SPECIALITY -

**Marstons No.3
Special
Dark Mild**

HANDPUMP CON: LATEST UPDATE

LAST month's Opening Times blast against the growing practice of pubs installing fake handpumps to serve keg Scrumpy Jack cider produced widespread coverage in both the local and national press.

Apart from the tired old claim made about any criticised product - that distribution is booming (which is hardly surprising in the case of Scrumpy Jack where licensees are being offered generous incentives to put it in), Grand Met unwittingly gave the game away by explaining that they had taken the advice of both legal experts and trading standards officers before installing the pumps.

Taken legal advice? Now, how many brewers or pub owners, which is now all that Grand Met really is, consider it necessary to take legal advice before launching a new product in their houses? Surely if there was no chance of the drinking public being deceived by these fake handpumps there would have been no need to obtain the clearance of trading standards officers before embarking on the launch. However, Websters and Wilsons licensees who install Scrumpy Jack served in this way should still think twice - not only are they saying goodbye to any form of recognition or award that may come their way from CAMRA, it is a fact that the law on this point has never been tested and indeed, many trading standards officers take a distinctly dim view of this misleading practice. Sooner or later a test case will come before the courts and licensees should ask themselves - will Grand Met pay your costs if you're the one who is successfully prosecuted?

These handpumps are a con and Grand Met know it. Discerning drinkers should vote with their feet.

MORE TO AVOID

DESPITE CAMRA's blacklist of the stuff, a few pubs are still installing keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump. Three recent sittings in Stockport Town Centre are the Bowling Green, the Imperial and the Thatched House. Of the three, the Bowling Green is perhaps the most laughable. Having sold nothing but keg beers for many years, it's the place where CAMRA was once memorably told "you'll have to go a long way to find real ale round here" - and indeed it must have been all of 100 yards to the nearest outlet. We look forward to the Bowling Green getting REAL handpumps serving REAL beer (and cider); treat the recently installed fake with the contempt it deserves.

On this point, sincere apologies are due to the Cornerhouse cinema/gallery complex outside Oxford Road Station, accused last month of selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump. It hasn't, doesn't and - we sincerely hope - won't be doing; regrettably pressure of time precluded the checking of information which subsequently turned out to be incorrect.

WEST COAST NEWS

BRENDAN Dobbin's West Coast Brewery at the Kings Arms, Chorlton-on-Medlock, has produced its strongest beer yet. At 10% ABV, Old Soporific bottled barley wine seems likely to live up to its name; mercifully, though, its fresh clean taste avoids the cloying nature of so many beers of this strength. On sale at the Kings Arms, the beer is also available to the free trade - the Beer House, Rochdale Road, was an early customer.

Meanwhile, Yellow Mountain Chinese-style lager has made an appearance on draught (well, keg actually, it's a lager after all) - at the recently extended Browns No.1 Bar in Heywood.

Tom & Betty Burke
welcome you to
— The Grove Inn —

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PUB IN THE PEAK

A New Summer Series

— This Month —

THE FOX INN, Brookbottom

HARD to find, but worth the effort" is a cliché often used in pub descriptions, but there can be few pubs of which this is more true than the Fox at Brookbottom near New Mills. On the map, it's only a mile from New Mills town centre, but on the ground it seems a different world, a tiny hamlet of stone-built cottages perched in a fold of the hills high up above the valley of the Goyt. The only access by car is along a narrow road from New Mills which runs on a ledge on the hillside and gives spectacular views over the valley. The pub can also be reached on foot by a steep track up from Strines station on the Piccadilly-New Mills line.

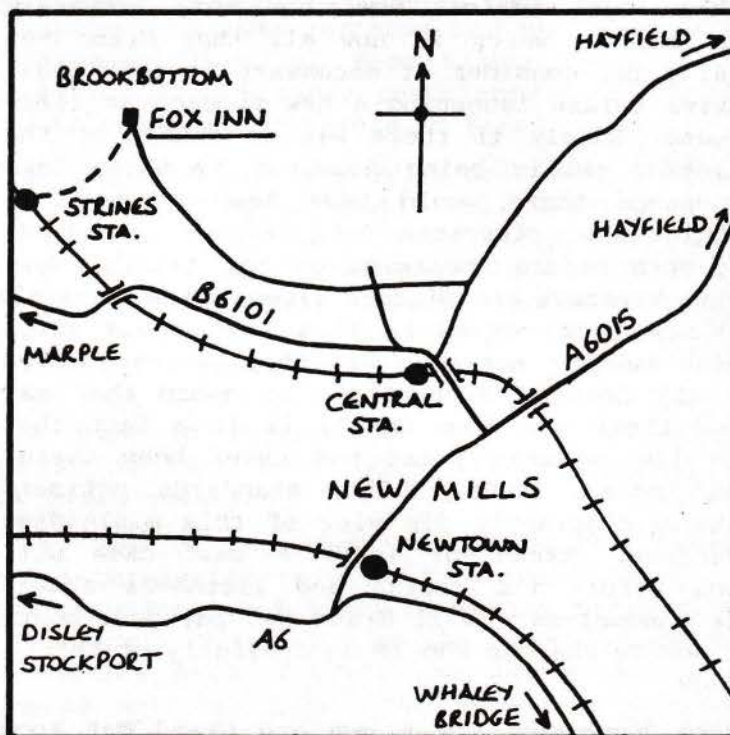
The setting alone is enough reason for a visit to the Fox, but the pub isn't half bad either. The road suddenly drops down to a low building of cream-washed stone. On the left as you go in is the lounge, where there is a good traditional atmosphere with a variety of antique chairs, benches and tables, a piano and a large open fireplace sporting an unusual collection of anvils, lasts and flatirons on the hearth. Beyond the lounge is the bar servery in a small passageway of its own, while on the right is a plainer area with a pool table and some chairs and tables. Well-behaved children will be admitted to all areas apart from the bar servery. While the pub has been opened out a little in the past, it still has an old-fashioned, multi-roomed feel.

The beer is Robinsons, Best Mild and Best Bitter on handpump, at prices cheaper than

many pubs in central Stockport. The Fox has appeared regularly in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide, including the current edition, so you should be sure of a well-kept pint.

Food is available lunchtimes and evenings, including Sundays. The menu wouldn't bring Egon Ronay rushing to the door, but there again many people would see that as a recommendation. There's a good variety of typical pub fare - sandwiches, toasties, ploughman's and hot dishes such as chili and scampi & chips (decent chips, too). The portions are ample and the prices reasonable, particularly for rural Derbyshire.

The Fox is not a pub you're likely to come across by chance, but it's only half an hour's drive from central Stockport and is definitely worth making the effort to seek out.



Phil Welcomes You To The

Arden Arms
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Robinsons Traditional Ales

BITTER, MILD, OLD TOM
ON DRAUGHT

Open All Day Fri./Sat.

BAR MEALS AVAILABLE

De Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

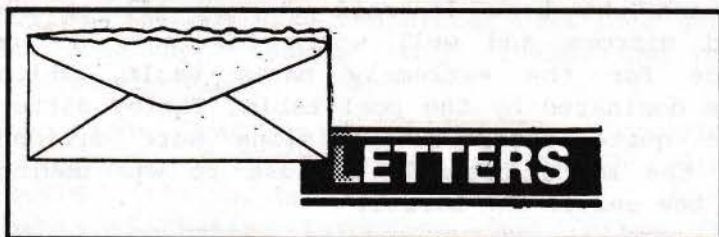
**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER
FREE HOUSE**

Guest Beers Weekly

MARSTONS
PEDIGREE

TAYLORS
LANDLORD





From George Symes:

I see a national advertising campaign by a large producer states "You can't get more pilsner than a Tennent's pilsner". I don't believe this substance is brewed in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

Isn't it about time this con by a national brewer was exposed for the misleading trickery that it is? Does the Advertising Standards Authority know? We should be told.

(They do now - ed.)

From Stephen Pitt:

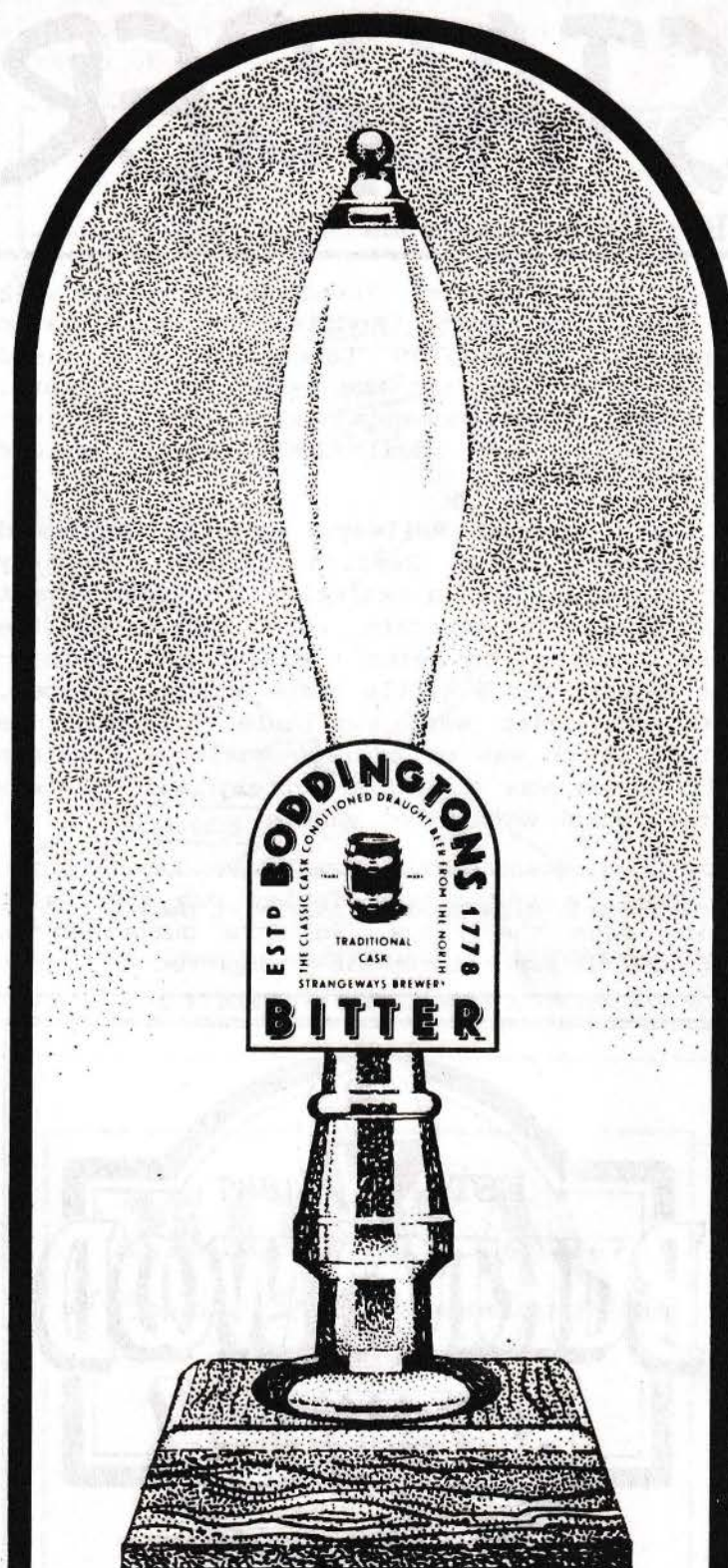
I often hear people complain about the prices in the South Manchester area. I thought you might like to hear about those in mid-Staffs. The following is a list of prices charged in a free house in Stafford, although there are normally only 5 beers on at any time. The beers are supplied by an agency run by an independent brewer, and are the prices that need to be charged for the typical mark-up required in the trade:

Titanic Premium	£1.25
Old Peculier	£1.65
Boddingtons Bitter	£1.23
Youngers No.3	£1.29
Castle Eden Ale	£1.37
Theakstons Best Bitter	£1.27
Jennings Bitter	£1.30
Theakstons XB	£1.39
Marstons Pedigree	£1.38
Taylor's Landlord	£1.47

Compare these to the price of Draught Bass in a tenanted pub of £1.26, and in a 'trendy managed house' of £1.36, and the respective price of a pint of 'draught' Guinness of £1.42/1.46.

All three pubs are well furnished and decorated and maintain 'the 'lounge bar price' throughout rather than having a separate vault price so it is difficult to compare to such as the Blossoms, a much more 'basic' pub selling Robinsons Best Bitter at £1.06. If the comparison is to 'Turners', is there any difference.

At times the difference in prices is often outweighed by the range of beers, and the surroundings. Surely there is room for both 'basic' vaults and up-market lounges. It would be terribly boring if all pubs were the same.



**THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER**



STAGGER

BY: PETER EDWARDSON

OUR April Stagger involved a long walk down from North Reddish through Heaton Chapel to the top of Lancashire Hill, less than half a mile from the centre of Stockport. As always, the comments made purely reflect the views of individual CAMRA members on one particular night.

We began at the **Railway**, a large Whitbread pub opposite North Reddish station. Recently refurbished, it has a basically open-plan layout with only one separate room remaining, the general impression being pleasant and comfortable enough, but a little bland and stereotyped. Three real ales were available - Boddingtons Bitter, which was of average quality, Chesters Mild, which was a little better, and Chesters Bitter, which we did not sample.

Moving on down Gorton Road, we reached the **Fir Tree**, a very large Tetley pub apparently dating from the 1930s. We were surprised to find the lounge closed at 7.30pm on a Friday

(those who knew it said it was all chrome and mirrors and well worth missing), so we made for the extremely basic vault, which was dominated by the pool table. Tetley Bitter was quite good, but opinions were divided on the mild, possibly because it was coming to the end of the barrel.

Another long walk brought us to the **Houldsworth**. Externally an impressive, tile-faced 1930s building, inside it has been much altered and opened out over the years, and retains little of its original character. The range of beers was the same as the Railway's - the Boddingtons Bitter and Chesters Mild were average, while the Chesters Bitter was rather below average and lacked any distinctive flavour.

Tucked away around the back of the Houldsworth, we found the **Thatched Tavern**, for my money the nicest pub of the evening. It's a traditional street-corner local with a pleasant, cosy lounge and a basic vault where there is a photograph of the pub in the last century when it really was thatched. The only improvement needed was perhaps a little redecoration. The Teley Mild and Bitter were both good; while we were drinking them we were interested to see Kevin Kennedy (Curly Watts from "Coronation Street") come into the pub - obviously a man who knows where to go in Reddish to escape the Newton & Ridley keg in the Rovers Return.

Heading now towards Heaton Chapel, we came to two pubs next door to each other on Broadstone Road. Robinsons' **Union** has an attractive exterior, but inside was opened up a few years ago in the brewery's standard fashion, although it is more broken up into separate areas than some. The Best Mild was average, while some of us found the Best Bitter to be distinctly poor. However, when returned to the bar, a new barrel was put on, and the replacement pints, offered very courteously, were fairly good.

The **Grey Horse** is a more imposing building than the Union, but inside has suffered much the same fate, having had numerous walls removed to create a big vault at the back and a big open-plan lounge at the front. The only real ale available was Boddingtons Bitter which we found to be a little above average.

Half a mile further on into Heaton Chapel, and there was a marked increase in the population density in the pubs - the **George & Dragon**, although a very big pub, was heaving. It's an impressive Edwardian building occupying a prominent corner site, built as a showpiece by the former Clarke's brewery just down the road in South Reddish, which was taken over by Boddingtons in 1962. Inside it has been renovated in an unusually attractive modern style, but still has a multi-roomed layout with vault, snug and two separate lounge areas.

ESTD **B W** 1867
BURTONWOOD
BREWERY



**A FAMILY TRADITION
OF FINE BREWING**

The Boddingtons Mild and Bitter were both good, the mild by a narrow margin being the best beer of the night.

The **Hinds Head** on Manchester Road provided a complete contrast in style. A modern building, outside it's an appealing pastiche of an old fashioned Cheshire farmhouse, but inside it's just a standard open-plan Whitbread pub whose layout bears little relation to the exterior design. Chesters Mild and Bitter were available, but most of us tried the Castle Eden Ale, very rare in Stockport, which was quite good. Marstons Pedigree was also on sale as a guest beer (supplied through Whitbread, not a genuine one), which we found to be a little above average - not so much so, though, as the price, a whacking £1.36 a pint.

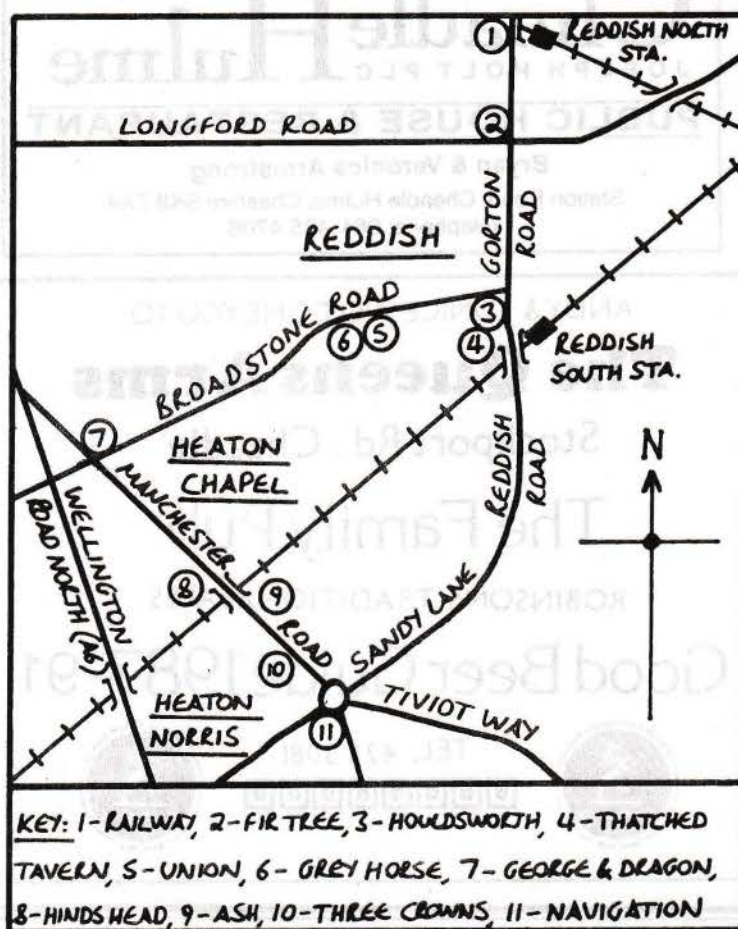
Over the railway bridge was the **Ash**, a Grand Met pub, yet another imposing building with a bland, much-altered interior, here dominated by red in both the seats and lighting. Back in 1986 when we did this Stagger, we were lamenting the recent loss of a distinctive hexagonal handpump stand, and that (or its absence) was still the most interesting feature we could find to discuss. Wilsons Mild and Bitter, and Ruddles Bitter, were all no better than average; nobody tried the Websters Bitter.

Next we paused briefly at the **Three Crowns**, a modern Boddingtons pub which offered more distinctly average beer - mild and bitter - in an atmosphere reminiscent of a down-market social club. We sought refuge in the rather spartan vault from live entertainment in full swing in the lounge.

Finally, we reached our destination, the **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill. Few people probably realise that the name derives from the old canal that once branched off the Ashton Canal to run through Gorton and Reddish to reach this point. The pub has been more or less totally reconstructed but still retains a fairly traditional, multi-roomed layout. A guest beer was available here, our first genuine one of the night, albeit nothing more exotic than Boddingtons Bitter, which was rather better than in the Three Crowns. The other real ale was Websters Bitter, which your writer tried in the interests of research, and found to be well kept, but unfortunately lacking any discernable flavour whatsoever.

So ended a Stagger which, with the honourable exceptions of the Thatched Tavern and the George & Dragon, and the beer at the Hinds Head, if not the pub, was disappointingly lacklustre in terms of both beer and pubs. It can't be coincidental that the representation of independent breweries was very sparse - only the one Robinsons pub, and that not one of their best. Fortunately Reddish drinkers are served by the 203 bus, which in one direction reaches the varied delights of central Stockport, and

in the other passes Holts, Hydes, Lees and Robinsons and Marstons pubs in a one-mile stretch of Hyde Road.



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COVERED CAR PARK (under the Viaduct via Gas St.)

BODDINGTONS BEERS

CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH AWARD WINNER
and featured on the cover of "VIADUCTS AND VAULTS"

VIADUCTS AND VAULTS

LAUNCHED last month at the Stockport Beer Festival, Viaducts and Vaults is the first ever CAMRA guide to the pubs of Stockport.

It presents a celebratory yet critical view of the public houses of the entire Borough, and is written by people who drink in them regularly - local members of the Campaign for Real Ale. Every pub in the Borough is listed - those that sell no real ale are identified and the cask beers sold at the others are listed in full.

80 of the best pubs, though, get no mere listing but an extended description - you will read of historical curiosities, architectural gems, or simply the subtler but no less valuable virtue of the "good old-fashioned local". Of course, no two people will come up with the same list of "best" pubs, but our criterion was simple - if we were visited by friends keen on good beer and good pubs, which ones would we take them to? The results may fuel a few arguments - they certainly did during the preparation of the guide - but such is the diversity of the local pubs that all pub-goers should find much to their liking within this book's covers.

Of course, there is much more than just a list of pubs - there are over 80 photographs and specially commissioned line drawings illustrating the local pub scene, and a full description of all the breweries regularly supplying Stockport with real ale, together with the beers available.

And still there's more - feature articles on British lager, real cider, good beers to drink at home, how to complain, mild beers, pub refurbishments, CAMRA and real ale. All this is topped off with some specially commissioned cartoons and you have a book which is required reading for every local pub-goer and which should have a place on every drinkers bookshelf.

At only £2.95 for 112 fact-filled pages, this is a lot of book for your money. Viaducts & Vaults will be available from all good bookshops and many local pubs. Alternatively, order your copy from Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG for only £3.25 including post and packing. Please Make cheques payable to: CAMRA Guide.



areas, three of which are completely separate. Families are welcome in the room on the left at the back. The pub also features in the towns music scene with Thursday folk and Saturday 'folk style' - these details may change however.

MANCHESTER ARMS 77

26 Wellington Road South (A6)
opposite Stockport Railway station
061-480-2852

11.00 - 11.00 Mon - Sat

Robinsons Best Mild

Robinsons Best Bitter

Robinsons Old Tom

♣ ♠ ♥ ♦

The "M.A." has long been known as one of Stockport's "character" pubs, not so much for its architectural merit as for its interesting social mix. Its location close to the town's Head Post Office brings it a good sprinkling

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G

excellent lunchtime food is made and prepared by the landlady; the chili along with real chips is highly recommended.

GRAPES 30

196 London Road (A6)
Near Hazel Grove Railway station;
192 and other A6 buses.

11.30 - 3.00, 5.30 - 11.00 Mon - Sat

Robinsons Best Mild

Robinsons Best Bitter

♣ ♠ ♥ ♦

Hazel Grove is a well-pubbed community, and almost all the pubs are owned by Robinson's; while this is one monopoly that CAMRA is unlikely to mount a major campaign against, it does make it difficult for the visitor to retain a clear mental picture of all the pubs. The Grapes, though, is one you should have no difficulty in remembering. Through the main door with its etched-glass bunch of grapes, turn left into the large and active vault (oddy la-

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32

COCK

120 London Road (A6)
192 and other A6 buses: 1/2 mile

FORESTERS ARMS
Werneth Road
Greave
Boddingtons Bitter

FRIENDSHIP
Stockport Road
Robinsons Best Mild
Robinsons Best Bitter

GREY HORSE
Stockport Road
NO REAL ALE

ROMILEY ARMS
Stockport Road
Boddingtons Bitter

STOCKDOVE
Compstall Road
Websters Bitter

ROWARTH

LITTLE MILL 68

Rowarth
From Marple Bridge follow the Mellor road for 2 1/2 miles turn left (sign-posted Rowarth), after 3/4 mile turn right at Moorfield Arms (sign-posted Rowarth and Little Mill).

OS 010890.

0663-743178 or 0663-746305

11.00 - 11.00 Mon - Sat

Hansons Bitter

Banks's Bitter

Robinsons Best Bitter

Guest beer
(one of: Batemans XXXB,
Ruddles County, Theakstons Old Peculier)

This interesting free house is situated in a beautiful wooded valley on the edge of the peak district. It is a large former mill with the mill stream running right by the building. Outside is a pleasant sitting area and across the lane are swings and a climbing

H
H
H



That's the trouble with space invader machines - they attract the wrong sort.

One of the specially commissioned cartoons from Viaducts & Vaults.

Bob & Trudie Welcome You To

HORSE & FARRIER GATLEY

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Steve & Dorothy**

A DRINKERS LAMENT

PETE SOANE LOOKS AT TIMES PAST

STARING gloomily into my pint of Boddingtons Bitter, price £1.08 (incidentally, why is Boddies £1.02, £1.06 and £1.08 in three different Stockport pubs less than half a mile apart?), I was reminded of an old brewery price list in a CAMRA home-brew book. This list is for Thomas Parsons, Lion Steam Brewery, Princes Risborough, around 1890. The prices are per 36-gallon barrel:

XXXX Strong Ale	56/-
XXX Lighter Ale	48/-
XX Mild Ale	36/-
XK Dinner Ale	42/-
X Kitchen Ale	28/-
T (at brewery not finding casks)	10/-
SKB (highly recommended)	40/-
KB " "	36/-
BA fine strong bitter	56/-
Stout very nutritious	56/-
Porter	36/-

Try finding a brewery today which supplies ten different cask beers plus a weak table beer for which you would take your own vessel to be filled. The BA Strong Bitter is £2.80 for 36 gallons which works out at 7.7p per gallon, less than 1p a pint; a sobering thought. The equivalent today would be about £1.40-£1.50 a pint. Show me to the nearest time machine.

BOOK REVIEW

Michael Jackson's Pocket Beer Book, 3rd Edition, Mitchell Beazley, 176pp, £6.99

To mark the repeats of Michael Jackson's Channel 4 series "The Beer Hunter", there's a third edition of his pocket guide to the world's beers. Not to be confused with the same author's sumptuous (and bulky) "World Guide to Beer", this handy-sized book presents a quick reference to the key styles and brands of the main brewing nations.

The relative weight given to the various brewing nations seems sometimes to owe more to marketing considerations than to intrinsic interest (despite the mushrooming growth of its microbrewery sector, does the USA really deserve more than twice the space allotted to Belgium?), but in each country fair treatment is given to all the unmissable beers, and sometimes more than a few others. The German, Belgian and Dutch sections, along with North America and Australia, are enhanced by useful "where to drink" sections identifying leading brewpubs and speciality bars. Closer to home, while the book is insufficiently up-to-date to catch Greenalls' withdrawal from brewing, it's good to see a mention for Brendan Dobbins West Coast Brewery.

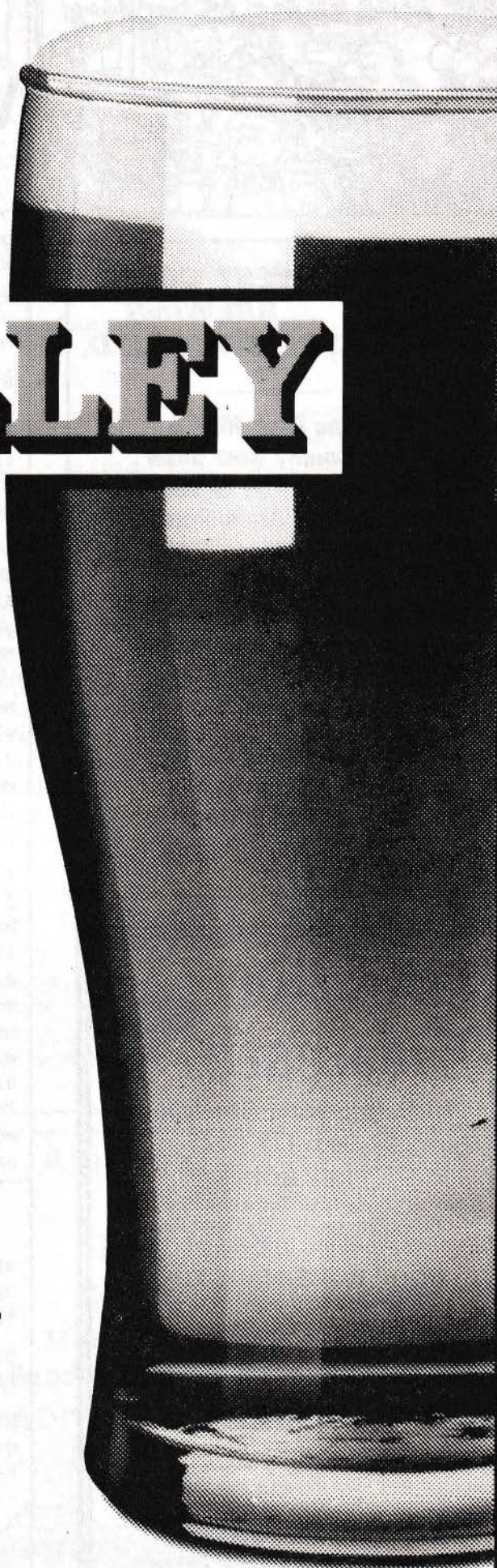
So, is it worth nearly £7 of your money? Well, if you're planning a trip to North America it's a must; in most of Northern Europe you will find it very helpful; but if you just want to sit at home and read

continued on page 12

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Next month we take a look at CAMRA's new guide to good pub food, a totally revised follow-up to the best selling first edition.





MANCHESTER MATTERS

BY RHYS JONES

IN the City Centre, the **Top Cat Tavern** on Hanging Ditch now serves handpumped John Smiths Bitter; it's to be hoped that this will revive the fortunes of a bar that's struggled for years to find an identity. There are further real ale gains at the **General Birch** on Ashton Old Road in Beswick, with handpumped Boddingtons Bitter, and the **New Victoria** on Stockport Road in Longsight (entrance at rear on Kingfisher Close), with Greenalls Bitter and Stones Bitter on handpump. Further out on Stockport Road, though, the closure of the **Crown** at the bottom of Slade Lane has now lasted several months and looks less and less likely to be temporary, while the **Grey Mare** in Beswick is permanently closed for certain - it's boarded up and awaiting demolition for the ring road. In Openshaw we have the unlooked-for sight of a Banks's pub, the **Royal Oak**, which now sells no real ale.

Two pubs have introduced handpumped Chesters Mild - the **White Lion** in the City Centre, where the beer makes a welcome return, and the **Imperial** in West Gorton, where it's the first fruits of the new licensees' promised review of the beer range. This beer is also the sole survivor of the former real ale range at the **Lord Wolseley** in Openshaw, where the Chesters Bitter and Trophy have been dumped in favour of handpumped Boddingtons Bitter. Still in Openshaw, the **Napoleon** has lost Ruddles Bitter, and Robinsons' **Forresters** sells no mild. In Beswick, the **Old House at Home**, which passed to Control Securites some time ago, sells handpumped Tetley Bitter in place of the former Webster/Wilson range.



CAMRA CALLING!

WE travel to the City Centre for this month's first social - the Bulls Head on London Road on Monday 10th June. In common with all Monday socials this starts at 9.00pm. On the 13th the branch meeting will be at the Midway on Newbridge Lane, Stockport, starting at 8.00pm.

Another of the popular Sunday Lunch socials will be on Sunday 16th meeting at the Lancaster on Stockport Road, Ardwick at 12 noon, moving on to the Cleveland at 1.00pm and finishing at the Kings Arms, Helmsore Walk at 2.00. This will be followed by a curry in Rusholme. The following day there will be a social in the Crown, Stockport Road, Great Moor.

This month's Stagger is on Friday 21st and will cover Cheadle. We start at 7.00pm in the White Hart, High Street or you can join at 8.30 in the Ashlea, Manchester Road. On Monday 24th the social is at the Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton. This popular local is threatened by a road scheme, so do please try and attend - the 203 from Stockport will drop you outside.

Pub of the Month at the Railway, Openshaw is on Thursday 27th and, into July now, there is a social on Monday 1st at the Cheadle Hulme, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme - right next to the station, so getting there is easy.

For more details please contact Tracey Clarke on 061 456 6354 (evenings).



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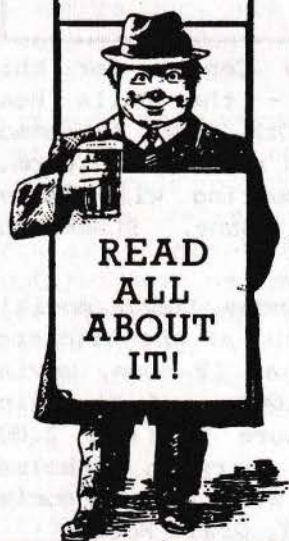
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PUB NEWS



The latest local pub to enter the guest beer stakes is the **Gardeners Arms** on Northgate Road, Edgeley, which has introduced electrically pumped Holts Bitter alongside the Wilsons Mild and Bitter usually sold. The handpumped Ruddles has been discontinued.

We bid farewell to Fred and Ann Fox of the Crescent, Beswick, who have taken over the **Gardeners Arms** in Rhodes - not the Greek Island, but the district between Heaton Park and Middleton, it's a Whitbread pub selling Boddingtons Bitter. Successors at the Crescent are not yet established; Fred and Ann will be a hard act to follow,

having built a once desperate pub into one of the best in the area, so let's hope Whitbread get it right.

The Bass Light at the **Old King** in Portwood, Stockport is now keg; Stones Bitter and Tetley Bitter continue to be sold on handpump.

The **Swinging Sporrán** on Sackville Street, just across from UMIST, is now being managed by Bob & Madeleine Gregory, late of the Railway at Ashburys. All three Theakstons beers - Best Bitter, XB and Old Peculier - are sold on handpump in good condition, and the place seems set for a long overdue revival in its fortunes. Those familiar with the Railway will not be surprised to learn that Bob and Madeleine are looking into the possibility of putting on guest beers and real cider, and possible even an in-pub beer festival. Known as a music venue (heavy rock being a speciality), the Sporrán has a late licence till 2am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. It's closed Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes, opening at 7pm on both days; that apart it's open all the hours God and the licensing magistrates send, and is well worth a visit.

Various branches of **Oddbins** now have a selection of Belgian bottle conditioned beers. As well as the more familiar Chimay and Duvel, they have Piraat (with a pirate on the label). Its pale golden colour belies its flavour and strength, 11.5%ABV, and at £1.25 for a 33cl. bottle, it seems a good buy.

In April we reported Hydes Bitter as a guest beer at the **Shady Oak** in Bramhall, and at 80p a pint as an introductory offer. This has now been replaced by Robinsons Best Bitter at £1.16 a pint - perhaps we missed the opening offer? Other beers available are Tetley Bitter, Thwaites Bitter and Marstons Pedigree.

New licensees at the **Sun in September** are Steve and Jill McCrae who have arrived there after a previous 5-week stint running the Green Dragon...in Stockton-on-Tees. The Sun is arguably one of the best pubs in the Burnage area and we wish Steve and Jill well in their new surroundings.

Congratulations to **Tom Thumbs**, King Street West, Stockport, for gaining an award for serving tip top Boddingtons Bitter in a brewery sponsored competition. The John Smiths Bitter here is usually pretty good, too and the pub is well worth a visit - look out for the good value Sunday lunches as well.

Greenalls appear to be following in the footsteps of Whitbread and disposing of some inner-city pubs, Locally, the **New Victoria** in Longsight (a recent real ale gain) is now on the market.

Contributors to this issue: Peter Edwardson, George Symes, Rhys Jones, Pete Soane, Phil Levison and John Hutchinson.

The copy date for the next issue is Friday 21st June with publication on Tuesday 2nd July.

Details of advertising rates and postal subscriptions are available from the address below.

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Opening Times is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA — the Campaign For Real Ale. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9WD. Tel: 477 1973 (home), 831 7222 ext. 3411 (work). News, articles and letters welcome. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.