

OPENING TIMES

SEPTEMBER 1992

CAMRA FREE

No:
101

Don't Be Conned by the CAN!

Over the years, the major brewers have tried, and failed, to foist many dubious products and marketing concepts on the British drinking public. At first it was keg beer (Watneys Red et al), but we all know what happened to that. Next came a variety of insipid and overpriced 'lagers' but now the market for standard lagers is in decline as drinkers seek out products with more quality and tradition. The same trend has seen off the welter of over-priced and, frequently, quite disgusting no- and low-alcohol beers and lagers which were promoted like crazy just a couple of years ago.

And what is the latest ruse? Two of the few growth areas in the drinking scene are cask conditioned beers and the take home trade so why not aim for the best of both worlds and try and convince drinkers they can drink pub-style beer (by which they mean cask beer) at home. Real ale in a can was born...except, of course, that there can be no such thing although the national brewers are doing their damndest to blur the edges.

Just look at some of the advertising - Bass is shown being drawn from a handpump into a can; Whitbread have run an advertisement claiming that Boddingtons from a can "looked and tasted like beer from a cask"; artwork on cans of "draught" Bass and Courage Directors Bitter feature handpumps and wax lyrical about recreating the experience of traditional draught beers.

Not that any of this is intended to deceive of course. Those responsible throw up their hands in horror at the very idea. Take Courage public affairs manager David Jones - "People often believe the word draught means cask conditioned and it doesn't...draught is a method of dispense....the reason we can justify the use of the word draught is that....we actually replicate the taste and appearance of the draught dispensed product..." - Mike Dowell of Whitbread "When you pour Boddingtons...from the can it looks and drinks identical to the product in the pub and we feel that's a close enough association to call it draught." Not only is this playing with words, many drinkers would conclude that if these two gentlemen really can't tell the difference between the two products (and we must, of course, take them at their word) then they have seriously deficient taste buds. And it is playing with words - no-one is saying that draught means real ale but what the term does mean to the vast majority of people (including those who compile the Oxford English Dictionary) is beer drawn from a barrel and served over a pub bar. It is also the case that most of the beers being presented in this way are, when served on draught, cask conditioned. So if the brewers maintain that what



you get in a can is the same as what you get in the pub they are, by association implying that what you get in a can is the same as cask conditioned pub beer.

It isn't. Cask beer matures and conditions in the pub cellar. Canned beer is filtered, pasteurised and pressurised. To suggest the two types of beer are the same is an attempt to hoodwink the drinking public. As CAMRA's Campaigns Manager Stephen Cox said "Supermarkets cannot sell 'fresh peas in a can', so why should brewers get away with calling their cans 'draught'. Well one reason is that the Advertising Standards Authority is one of the most toothless watchdogs in the country and has refused to condemn these misleading claims. Some progress is however being made on the Trading Standards front with local authority officers in Burton-on-Trent investigating a selection of products to see if claims made on the cans are misleading the public. They are seeking meetings with directors of Bass and Ind Coope to discuss the situation following complaints.

Opening Times will keep track of progress and also highlight some of the more ludicrous claims being made. In the meantime discerning drinkers should give these products a wide berth.

see also Editorial - and tasting notes P4-5.

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PUB of the Month September

"A pub to treasure, this multi-roomed street-corner local comes close to epitomising CAMRA's ideals". So opens the description of the Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heavily in "Viaducts and Vaults", CAMRA's award winning guide to Stockport's pubs. In recognition of this continuing tradition, the Blossoms has been voted Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for September - the first pub to gain this prestigious award for the third time.

The pub is firmly traditional in almost every way and particularly noteworthy is the interior with quadrant bar serving a tile-floored lobby and three rooms off - a smoke room at the rear with a superb carved oak fireplace, simply furnished vault at the front, while the front room opposite, like all rooms with stained glass windows, has become the pool room. All the more remarkable that, given their track record with some other pubs, this has all emerged unscathed from a refurbishment by brewers Robinsons which has seen the installation of inside toilets and a thorough redecoration of the entire pub.

Also praiseworthy is the refurbishment and retention of the upstairs meeting room which, apart from being used by several local organisations also hosts a well-regarded folk club on Saturday nights.

Robinsons Best Mild, Best Bitter and Old Tom are all available on handpump and such is their consistent quality that, with the publication of the 1993 edition in October, the Blossoms will have notched up 15 consecutive entries in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide - no mean achievement by any standards, but all the more so in this area where many good pubs vie for inclusion each year.

Of course, behind every good pub is a good licensee and the Blossoms in Barbara Mounkley, ably assisted by sons Simon and Richard has of the very best. Not only does Barbara run a very good pub indeed, she also finds time for extensive charity work for the Licensed Victuallers National Homes - one of the major charities of the licensed trade.

This well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 24th September when many CAMRA members will be present to celebrate Barbara's success. The Blossoms is easily accessible, being just a ten minute walk from Stockport Station and in addition any 192 or other A6 bus will drop you outside.

Kath, John and staff welcome you to the **Sir Robert Peel**

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and BOOZE



CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE
SOUTH MANCHESTER
BRANCH

PUB OF THE YEAR 1992

By Chris Stone and Sue Tittensor

The Blossoms Hotel features as this month's Pub of the Month, and so we thought it might be fitting to pay a visit to the Folk Club, which is held upstairs every Saturday evening. We had no idea what to expect, but as luck would have it, the evening in question was rather an all star occasion. The evening was a charity show, in aid of Christies' hospital, with an entrance fee (\$1.50) and a nice buffet provided in the interval. Because of this, the regular performers were supplemented by lots of guests, who crossed the whole spectrum of folk music.

We joined midway through the evening and were immediately struck by the transformation of the function room. The decor is lovely (a bit pink for some perhaps) but Robinsons have definitely excelled themselves and we eagerly await the completion of the bar area downstairs.

Anyway, enough of the decor. As we entered through the smoky haze we could see the silhouette of a man and his acoustic guitar, accompanied by the audience, including one enthusiastic member who was playing the "matchbox". Like most of the other performers, Tony Parker is a regular at the club. Next up on stage was Pete Roberts, one of the Club's organisers, who got everybody singing with his version of "The Boxer". The accent is most definitely on audience participation - join in if you know the words and hum if you don't. After a couple of tunes, which most of the regulars joined in for the choruses, Pete introduced the next guest, Johnathon Guest, who, as he put it, was brave enough to play without the aid of props, that is, without a guitar. Johnathon sang rousing versions of old sea shanties and "Old Browns Girl" which really got the audience singing. Next came Anne Gallagher, who sang tales of the Lancashire mills and then Tom Quillian who sang, accompanied by his guitar, and recited poetry.

We were recognised as being newcomers to the Folk club, and during the interval Pete Roberts asked me if I sang. "Only if you want to empty the place quickly." I replied. He laughed and said that anyone was welcome up on stage. All the guests had started off nervous and hesitant, but the support from the audience had created a friendly atmosphere which brought out the best in everybody.

Singer-songwriter Kevin Bates took to the stage to introduce a bit of "R & B" to the evening with "Bright Lights, Big City", followed by a less raucous "One more cup of coffee for the Road", which the audience loved. He showed his versatility by later accompanying Chris Ward on the flute for some self-penned numbers. The two are from Altered Natives, a local band who make regular appearances at the club, and are playing at the Folk Club on September 26th - definitely worth a visit. If you can't manage to make that event, Altered Natives are also appearing at Band on the Wall in November. There was a final great version of "American Pie" before we were all ejected from the premises.

All in all, the standard of music was very high. There was a contrast of styles and material, but the emphasis of the evening was definitely on everyone enjoying themselves, rather than on polished performances. If you've a dusty acoustic guitar, and think you'd like to be on stage for a couple of songs, but are too shy, the folk club is the place to go.

The King's Arms

HELMSHORE WALK
CHORLTON ON MEDLOCK

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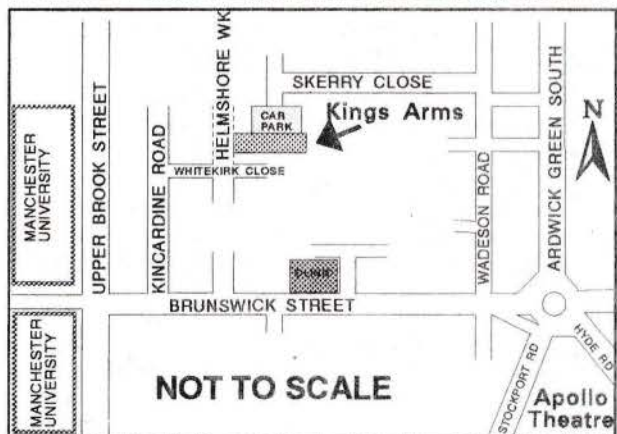
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MONDAY - TUESDAY - THURSDAY**



**WARNING: Excessive Intake of Alcohol is
NOT RECOMMENDED**

This month we highlight the practice of many of the major brewers in trying to persuade the public that it is possible to get "draught" beer out of a can. It's all nonsense of course and no doubt people will twig on to this sooner or later.

Until the bubble does burst however, the linguistic contortions of the brewery marketing men in trying to defend their dubious campaigns know no bounds. Despite their protestations, however, the message of these ads is simple enough: the beer in the can is the same as the beer in the pub; the beer in the pub is real ale so... what does that lead you to think about the beer in the can? Real ale? Forget it - these canned beers are about as 'real' as one of the last great marketing con-

cepts, Watneys Red Barrel. And we all know what happened to that, don't we?

Also featured this month is a major in-house cider and perry festival being run by six of the leading Manchester free houses. As far as we know this is the first time anything like this has been attempted anywhere in the UK and it deserves both success and support. Even if you're not a regular cider drinker do pop along to one of the participating pubs and try the odd half - you'll find it makes for a complete contrast to 'handpumped' Scrumpy Jack which is about as traditional as... yes, you guessed, Watneys Red Barrel - but even Watneys didn't have the cheek to sell that out of a fake handpump!

In the Editor's View

by John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Pete Soane

Recently I enjoyed a couple of pints of Ryedale Bitter at the Stanley Arms, Newbridge Lane, price £1.04 per pint. og 1042. From there I walked to the Grapes, Old Road, and tried Boddingtons Bitter, which was very good, however prices had risen to £1.16 per pint and the gravity was 1035.

How is it that a tiny brewery in Halifax can produce cheaper beer than a very large brewery run by an even larger national brewer (Whitbread) in nearby Manchester?

From: Rhys Jones

In his piece on the wonderful Yew Tree at Caudon (OT, August 1992), Peter Edwardson describes table skittles as a "very rare sight in this part of the world". If "this part of the world" is understood to be Manchester and Stockport, he is of course quite right; however, Caudon is in North Staffordshire, where skittles (the defining adjective is unnecessary) is the staple traditional pub game, played in most good pubs more often even than darts.

Peter also mentions public transport to the Yew Tree. The terminally lazy can, if they catch the 201 bus at 8.45am from Manchester, change at Leek to the local bus run by Boydon's of Winkhill which will take them, on Saturdays at least, to the pub door - they later have to walk off the beer by strolling down to Waterhouses, as there is no balancing return working. You can meet some interesting people on Boydon's buses - last time I caught one, the driver pointed out the Waterhouses Garage where the first agricultural muckspreader was built.

(Editors note - thanks, Rhys. The only local pub I can recall seeing table skittles in is the Bridge Inn on Georges Road, Stockport (opposite B&Q). Does anyone know of any others?

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SEPTEMBER

Guest Beers	Events (9pm except trips)
Chiltern Ale Chiltern Beechwood Old Nix That Jolly Roger Ale Jolly Roger Shipwrecked Hook Norton Mild Hook Norton Bitter Thwaites Craftsman	Sun 6th Room at the Back - Jam Singers welcome. Tues 8th Slurred Word Spectaculum - Songs, Items, Fun & Frivolity Thur 10th Moose Molloy Sat 12th Coach to Shrewsbury Beer Festival Tues 15th Slurred Word Thur 17th Altered Natives Sat 19th Dent Brewery in Settle/Carlisle Tues 22nd Slurred Word Thur 24th Wild Turkeys

♦ Subject to confirmation

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Steve & Dorothy

CANNY BEERS.... or Are They?

A great deal has been written about the way various canned 'draught' beers are promoted but what will be the deciding factor for many is what they actually taste like. Are they any better than 'normal' canned beers and do they live up to their promises, namely are they an acceptable substitute for a pint of real draught beer that you find in your local?

In the interests of research, Opening Times organised a controlled tasting of five of these products and invited five local beer aficionados to deliver judgement. Our panel comprised Alastair L. Walker, beer manager at Stockport Beer Festival; Angela Walker, beer festival organiser; Rhys P. Jones, beer festival cider manager and regular Opening Times contributor; Paul Felton, current Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branch Secretary and Peter Edwardson, former Branch Secretary. This is what they found:

Boddingtons Draughtflow Bitter

Sample price: £3.99 for a pack of four. Alcohol by Volume 3.8%
Produced by the Whitbread Beer Company and apparently the market leader in this sector.

ALW - finny smell but quite malty and not too fizzy. Not unpleasant for a canned beer.

AW - very metallic taste, but smooth. Quite bitter but more of a yeasty bitterness than a hoppy one.

RPJ - slight metallic harshness in the background.

PF - tastes like it's been standing too long and has lost its freshness.

PE - too sweet with a slightly cloying edge.

The panel also generally thought that that this was much blander than a good pint of the real thing.

Bass Draught Ale

Sample price: £3.69 for a pack of four. ABV 4.4%

Produced by Bass Brewers Ltd. The advertising for this one shows beer being drawn from a handpump into a can.

ALW - a better smell than the Boddingtons, smells vaguely like Draught Bass. Tastes unpleasant and thin with a rough edge. Smells better than it tastes.

AW - Thin but you can taste the alcohol. Missing the distinctive "Burton" flavour.

RPJ - just sweet and sparkling; if it was cider it would be Woodpecker!

PF - tastes and smells nothing like the real thing. Quite nasty.

PE - vaguely reminiscent of Draught Bass but has an almost sickly taste. Quite fizzy.

Courage Draught Directors Bitter

Sample price: £4.25 for a pack of four. Alcohol by volume: 4.8%

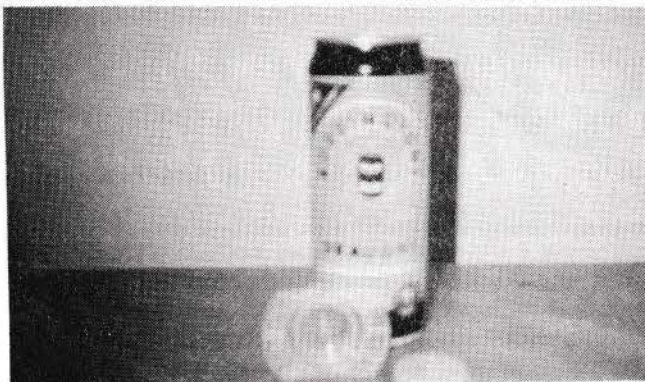
ALW - Smells like Directors after it had been 'cooked' but not too bad. Similar acidity to Draught Bass but malty as well. Good body for a canned beer.

AW - a fusty smell and you can smell the caramel in it. Not too bad though but it still has an underlying metallic taste. I was sick of it after a few sips.

RPJ - smells alright, like Directors ought to smell. Not a bad replica but would you want a pint of it?

PF - tastes like Directors. The most accurate start so far but it doesn't stay the distance.

PE - fuller bodied than the Bass with a fruity taste.



Guinness Draught Bitter

Sample price: £4.29 for a pack of four. Alcohol by volume: 4.4%

ALW - smells thin and cooked. Very harsh with an unpleasant mixture of flavours. Not particularly beery and leaves a powdery, dirty taste on the tongue. Very tinny.

AW - Oh, ugh! Smells awful. Quite smooth but not much substance and quite cloying. Doesn't have an unpleasant aftertaste - it starts poor but doesn't end up too bad.

RPJ - smells horrible, like washing up water. I think it tastes horrible, too. When can we go to the pub. Take it away!

PF - smells like strong sweet beer going off. The initial taste is quite nasty but it doesn't go down as bad as that. Not a lot there.

PE - strange sweet aroma. Sweet flavour and not tremendously beery. Cloying and heavy but thin at the same time. Odd flavour but not as dead-tasting as the Boddingtons.

Draught Beamish Stout

Sample Price: £3.95 for a pack of four. Alcohol by volume: 4.3%

ALW - smells quite roasty and stouty but with an almost antiseptic edge. Tastes a bit harsh and gritty and too thin for a stout but I could finish it. At least it has flavour.

AW - nice roasted smell but a tinny aftertaste. Smooth and quite dry. Quite pleasant on the whole. I'd drink that.

RPJ - the smell is OK but not much stout flavour. A very pleasant dark beer but doesn't taste like a stout. The only one with a proper aftertaste.

PF - smells like a stout and has a very bitter-sweet taste with a tinny background. It's quite reasonable and I could drink it.

PE - a stouty, roasty smell but a very tinny flavour. The finnyness would put me off. I've drunk Draught Guinness Stout in a can and that's better.

In the general discussion that followed there was a general consensus that none of the beers were like their draught counterparts and most weren't even close, although Peter thought the Directors came "within hailing distance" of pub beer. The most acceptable of those sampled was the Beamish although this was put down to the fact that even in the pub this is a processed beer. Angela made the point that she drinks beers because she likes hops and none of these beers had any hop character at all. Both she and Alastair were surprised at the variety of flavours ("although mainly unpleasant").

The much vaunted "gizmo" used in the likes of Boddingtons Draughtflow was considered a flop which produced lifeless beer with all of the condition concentrated in the head leaving none for the body of the pint.

All in all these beers were better than your average canned product but still not a patch on those pub beers they claimed to represent.

Letters for publication should be sent to: The Editor, 'Opening Times' 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD

Copy Deadline for contributions to the 102nd (October) issue of Opening Times, is Thursday 24 September

STAGGER

with Dawn & Duncan Geddes

Didsbury is a well-tryed but still very worthwhile Stagger with many pubs all within a relatively short distance of each other. The initial half dozen of us started out at the Gateway, a large tastefully decorated Hydes pub on Kingsway, East Didsbury. Formerly a classic 1930's 'Road House' the Gateway was refurbished some years ago now and has settled down to become a pleasing and comfortable local. The Hydes Bitter, good value at £1.12 a pint, was rated good as was the mild.

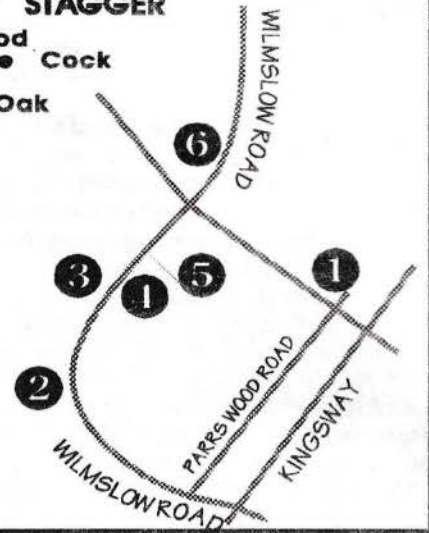
Next came a brisk walk to the **Parrswood** on Parrswood Road, a large Boddingtons house and, like the Gateway, another 1930's pub which has recently undergone major, and arguably less successful, refurbishment. The Tetleys sign by the door is something of a red herring as this beer is no longer sold. Having heard that the beer was up to 10p cheaper in the vault, and being skinflints to a man (and woman) we all plumped for the cheaper option which also had the benefit of taking us from the noise of the main bar. Four beers were available with Boddies Mild being OK but the bitter proved a bitter disappointment, being well below par. Of the two guest beers, John Smiths Bitter was slightly better than the Boddies and the other guest, Theakstons Bitter definitely above average. A general comment was made by the group about short measures.

Backtracking, and another stiff walk, brought us to **Ye Olde Cock**, a Whitbread pub on Wilmslow Road. Expectations were high of trying the new Whitbread Porter but this was not to be. However, amongst the beers on sale were Mitchells Bitter and Thwaites Bitter, both in good condition. The same couldn't be said of the Chesters Mild which was horrible - one wag commented that it could be put to better use as a furniture stripper! Speaking of furniture, we found the concept of using sloping-topped "library tables" in a pub an interesting one...

The prospect of Websters and Ruddles in the Didsbury proved only too resistable and, passing on, we reached Didsbury Village and the first "posers palace" - the **Crown**. A few of us remembered the days when this was a traditional locals pub, much like the Station remains. Bitters from Greenalls and Stones were both available and were well received. The Greenalls Original was better still. This pub was also our next formal meeting place and our numbers swelled considerably at this point.

DIDSBURY STAGGER

- 1 Parrswood
- 2 Ye Olde Cock
- 3 Crown
- 4 Royal Oak
- 5 Albert
- 6 Station



Virtually opposite the Crown is the **Royal Oak**. This is a pub that is always full and tonight was no exception, even during the thunderstorm that evening, people were spilling onto the pavement. The crowd was more than compensated for by the excellent service at the bar - another trademark of this pub. The Marstons Bitter and (Banks's?) mild were average and, with one or two dissenting voices, the Pedigree was rated rather better.

Away from the crowds now, and up to the **Albert** for a breather. This is a thriving Hydes pub near the dairy, with the main lounge decorated with pictures of Hollywood stars. The Hydes Mild was OK, the bitter slightly less so. Time was now catching up and so, bypassing the Nelson, Squires, the Dog & Partridge and Times Square, we adjourned to the **Station**.

A tiny Marstons pub, the fortunes of the Station have been well documented in these pages. Something has certainly changed at the Station in recent times, with a definite tendency to serve the regulars at the expense of visitors being noted. The beer quality cannot be faulted, though, and both the Marstons Bitter and Pedigree were good pints. Even better was the Banks's Mild which was unanimously voted the best beer of the night.

An interesting evening was certainly had by all and Didsbury will undoubtedly remain a popular venue for a night out. Our comments merely reflect the pubs and beers we found on one particular night (17th July, to be precise) and shouldn't be taken as a once and for all judgement of either. As ever, why not try them yourself and make your own judgement.

Ye Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

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Guest Beers Weekly

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CAMRA CALLING!

This Opening Times should hit the streets just before the next branch meeting, which will be on Thursday 10th at the Coach & Horses, Belle Vue Street, Gorton (just off Hyde Road opposite the new cinema).

On Monday 14th September there is a social at the Flea and Firkin on Oxford Road and, like all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm. This is followed on Friday 18th by our Stagger which this month takes in Offerton. Always an interesting one this, with a lot of varied pubs and beers. We start at 7.00pm at the Golden Hind on Marple Road (bus 358 from Stockport Bus Station will drop you opposite) or you can join at 8.30 at the Strawberry Gardens on Offerton Lane.

On Monday 21st, the social is at the Griffin, Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey. Always a good pint of Holts here. The following Thursday, 24th, it's Pub of the Month at the Blossoms (see p2).

Festival Frolics

We know many OT readers are keen beer festival goers, and it's a while to wait before Stockport comes round again in the late spring, so here's a round-up of some of the festivals more or less accessible from the Manchester area between now and Christmas.

There's an annoying clash on 12th September, with festivals at Denbigh and Shrewsbury. Most interest will focus on Denbigh, with a new venue being tried out by the active and enthusiastic Vale of Clwyd branch of CAMRA - it's more accessible than you might think, with frequent (every 30 minutes) buses from Rhyl. Shrewsbury, though, is also a fine festival, and the late last train back from there (10.21pm) may tip the balance for some.

19th September sees Sheffield Beer Festival, handily situated in the Polytechnic (or is it a university now?) Student Union, just opposite the station. If you fancy something more obscure, there's also a very small scale event at the only village hall in Britain to be listed in the Good Beer Guide - at Appleton Thom, just south of Warrington. There may be a CAMRA trip to this one, or for independent travellers details can be had from Merseyside and Cheshire CAMRA contact Mark Enderby on 092562809.

On 26th September the splendid surroundings of Burton-on-Trent Town Hall host a splendid festival, the rambling nature of the building creating an atmosphere like a huge multi-roomed pub. The next weekend, 3rd October, brings simpler surroundings and a smaller-scale but extremely pleasant event at Holmfirth Civic Hall (served by frequent buses from Huddersfield) - they do a mean pie and peas if you like that sort of thing.

If you drink only beer, 10th October offers you little or nothing that's accessible from hereabouts, but cider drinkers should note the Apple Festival at National Trust property Erddig near Wrexham. Devoted to a celebration of the apple in all its aspects, this is not exclusively, or even primarily a drinking do, but there will be a small cider and perry bar with a good selection of drinks. The house and grounds are worth visiting in themselves, with a number of distinctive features (they are, for example, the home of the National Ivy Collection!)

An old CAMRA favourite follows on 17th October - Stoke Beer Festival, into its second decade and still going strong. Another splendid Town Hall is the venue here, but the big draw for many will be the superb range of foreign (particularly Belgian and Bavarian) bottled beers, which must be unrivalled amongst regional festivals.

The next Monday, 28th, the social is at the Union, Higher Ardwick (off the south end of Ardwick Green). Now selling Burtonwood beers. The next Opening Times will be out on 6th October, or thereabouts, and so mention should be given to the first social in that month on Monday 5th which will be at the Greyhound, Bowden Street, Edgeley.

If you want more details about any of the above or our activities in general, then please phone Dawn and Duncan Geddes on 445 0872.

Of course, if you live in the Marple, Romiley, Woodley or Bredbury areas you will fall under the High Peak branch of CAMRA. On 14th they will be holding their monthly meeting at the Hatters in Marple. Get there for 8.30pm. On Friday September 25th there will be a pub crawl of the Denton area which kicks off at the Jolly Hatters, Stockport Road at 8.00pm. For more information about High Peak activities please contact Geoff Willicmson on 0663 765634. Members of both branches are, of course, more than welcome to attend each other's events.

24th October brings a relative youngster on the festival scene in Cardiff. Its location at the Star Centre in the charmingly named inner-city district of Splott means there are plenty of good Brains pubs to explore as a change from the festival. On 31st October, it's a shorter journey, to Blackburn - will you dare to drink in Pendle Witch country on Hallowe'en? Also pencilled in for the last weekend of October is a beer festival in Keighley at the premises of the Commercial Brewing Co on Worth Way.

The first week in November will see a third in-Pub Beer Festival at The Flea & Firkin, on the corner of Grosvenor St and Oxford Road in Manchester, which although not a CAMRA Festival as such, is heavily supported by this and other regional branches. Towards the end of November, UMIST traditionally hold their rag-week Festival.

7th November brings us to the terminus of Metrolink - at Bury, a festival known for its exceedingly well-planned range of beers - expect to try plenty of new and/or rare beers here - but if attending evening sessions, do try to get there early. Since the previous venue is no longer available, the festival has moved back to Derby Hall in the town centre - very central, very accessible, but it will get crowded!

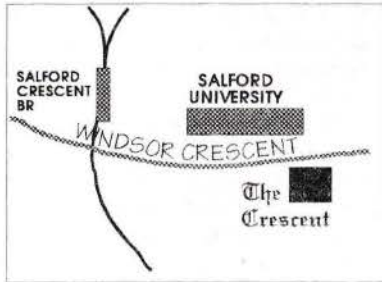
The autumn season comes to an end with beer by the seaside, in Llandudno on 14th November. Another venue change here, to the no doubt opulent surroundings of the Grand Hotel. A fairly young festival this, but very friendly - it's also one of the few places you can reliably drink Plassey beers apart from the brewery, and Plassey's Cwrw Tudno, first brewed for the festival, must be one of the great strong pale ales.

All dates quoted are the Saturday of the festival concerned - however all except Erddig and (I think) Appleton Thom are open on the Friday, and a good many also open earlier in the week. The information given has been compiled from a variety of sources and may be subject to change if circumstances dictate - your CAMRA contact should be able to give more detailed guidance nearer the time.

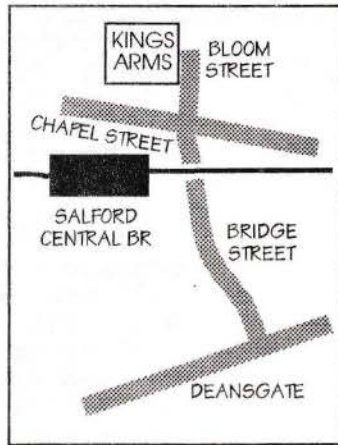
The FREE MINERS Cometh

Messrs Burgess and Lewis, formerly Head Brewers at The West Coast Brewery and the Flea and Firkin Brewery, are very close to producing the first commercial brew from their interesting new venture, the FREE MINER Brewery in the Forest of Dean. We will have more next issue, following a visit at the end of this month. Initially at least one bitter is being produced, with other brews planned including a "Deep Shaff" Stout at Christmas. We have every expectation of very high quality beers.

The Crescent, Salford



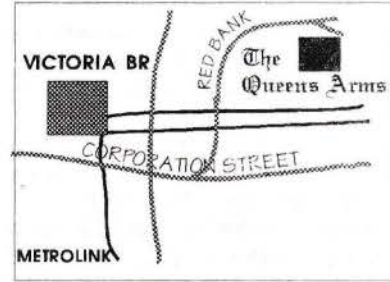
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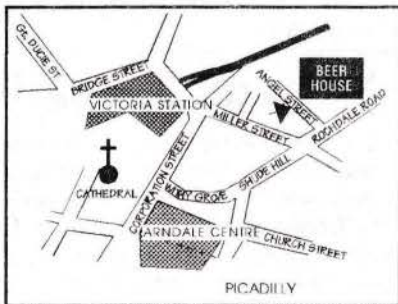
MANCHESTER CIDER & PERRY FESTIVAL

SEP 17 - OCT 3

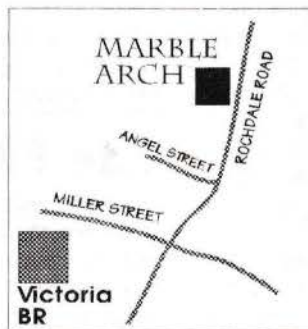
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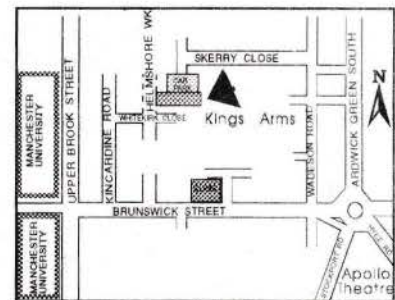
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Traditional Free House

The King's Arms Chorlton-on-Medlock

Great Beers and Good Food at
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Pub of Year



Manchester Cider & Perry Festival

In a bold experiment, starting in the middle of the month, the "Big 6" Freehouses in Manchester have banded together to offer us the 1st Manchester Cider And Perry Festival. Each of the 6 pubs will be serving a range of traditional cider and perries, with (it is hoped) almost no duplication of drinks between the pubs.

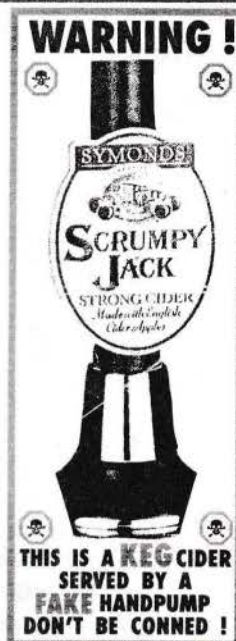
Simon Finch at the Kings Arms, Chorlton on Medlock, is intending to promote a number of very obscure ciders, produced in extremely small quantities. At the others a wide range of names, some well known from the Great North Western and Stockport Beer Festivals, others well so will be proffered for the discerning consumer. Both for Cider afficianadoes and those less experienced, this festival will be a rare treat. It will also offer a chance for those pub goers who rarely see traditional ciders to try a variety and for those (shame on you!) who have yet to discover the merits of the real thing, a good chance.

So give the likes of fizzy, keg Scrumpy Jack a miss for a few weeks and enjoy the fruits of the CiderMakers craft in 6 very good pubs.

The list of Ciders to be available was still being finalised as we went to press, but **hopefully** a festival guide with the complete list will be available in **all** the pubs. Some of the ones promised so far are, Long Ashton - Kingston Black, Dry and Perry; Lyne Down - Dry, Medium & Perry; Minschew - Dry; Montgomerie - Medium Dry; Naish - Dry; Rich - Medium Dry, Sweet; Richards - Perry; Riddle - Dry; Sepham Farm - Medium; September - Dry; Stoff - Sweet; Theobalds - Medium; Bollhays - Perry; Broom Farm - Dry; Cowhill - Dry; Dewchurch - Dry; Ely - Dry; Franklin - Medium Dry; Great Oak - Dry; Heck - Dry, Medium; Hopper - Dry; Jones - Dry; Lanes.



*When You
Know
What's Real
&
What's Not -
You **DON'T**
Drink
Scrumpy Jack*



"When you know what's what, and what's not", say the billboards, flaunting their deceitful handpump for Symonds' keg Scrumpy Jack cider. Well, Symonds' parent company Bulmers obviously realise their shareholders and staff DO know what's what. The company's annual report, released in late July, is full of glowing references to the sales success of Scrumpy Jack (which it oddly describes as "not receiving substantial advertising support"), and the stuff is pictured more than once - but only the bottled variety is shown, and there's not a mention of fake handpumps!

When you know what's real, and what's not - DON'T DRINK SCRUMPY JACK!

Sam Smith's Price Freeze

In these days of ever increasing price rises, good news is hard to come by. However, Yorkshire independent brewer Sam Smiths is doing its best to relieve the gloom by announcing a freeze on its prices until August 1993.

This would be good news in itself but is even more remarkable when you consider that this brewery has not increased its prices (apart from excise duty increases) since August 1990. The question has already been asked - if one brewer can do this, why can't others?

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

SEPTEMBER 1987

The front page drew attention to the plight of the new small breweries scattered around the country. Whilst more than 200 had been set up since 1974, over 60 had failed. One of the reasons is that 46% of the countries pubs are in the hands of the Big 7 Breweries, and the bulk of the remainder belong to the established independents. So a new small brewery finds it very difficult to get established, because the pubs that are tied cannot sell the new beers. But what about the Free Trade? The problem here is that many of the so-called "Free Houses" are in fact tied to a big brewer in return for a loan.

The small brewers are handicapped in other ways - they pay full beer duty, unlike some of their Continental equivalents who enjoy a sliding scale system. In Denmark, for instance, there is a 25% reduction on the first 200 hectolitres produced in any one year. (That's about 1220 barrels.) The Monopolies Commission are investigating the beer industry, and CAMRA have made a submission containing a number of recommendations, including this question of beer duty, as well as numbers of pubs owned by any one brewer, and the availability of guest beers. (But who could have foreseen the massive shake-up of the brewing industry that was to follow the Monopolies Commission report, and now, in September 1992, it hasn't yet settled down.)

Pub Grub paid a visit to the Station at Cheadle, which opened about a year ago, after being closed down as a station in 1967. It's now described as "one of Banks's more up-market pubs....and the menu is correspondingly impressive." It sounds like an interesting menu, with main dishes mostly priced around £2.50, and generally thought to be good value. The sweets however at 80p. were thought to be "a little over-priced." Summing up, though, "excellent food in comfortable surroundings, and well worth a visit." The Pub of the Month was Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley - originally a Wilsons house, it re-opened as a Free House around 1983. Underlining what was said in the first item on this page - "The Olde Vic is the only Free House in the Branch area to offer guest beers."

4 snippets from the back page : -Parrswood, East Didsbury to be refurbished; Church, Northenden has OB Mild in place of Boddingtons Mild; Midway, Stockport is expecting to get Courage Directors; Royals, Wythenshawe has Webster's Choice.



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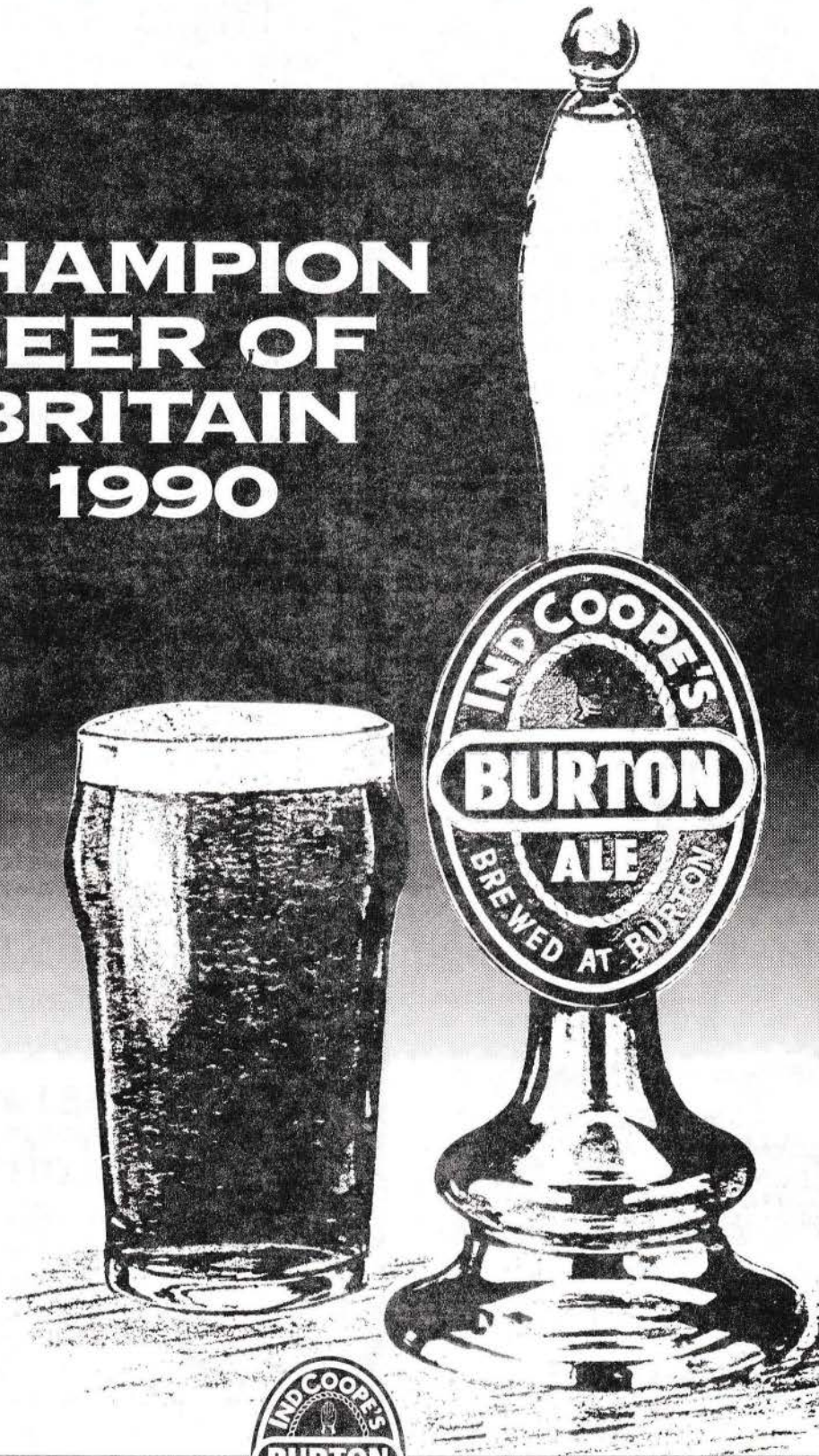
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CHAMPION BEER OF BRITAIN 1990



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BURTON BREWED

BURTON ALE

High Peak Quiz

Here are twelve questions about beer matters with a few 'local' questions about boozing in Marple, Bredbury and Romiley, to test your knowledge. Answers upside down at the foot of the page.

1. Which local pub is nicknamed the 'piggy' or pig muck?
2. How many gallons does a kilderkin hold?
3. What is the maximum fine for drinking after time?
4. To what plant family does the 'hop' belong?
5. Which local pub, at the turn of the century was noted for having 'pleasure, amusement and zoo grounds' at the rear?
6. What was the 'Romper' on Marple Ridge previously known as?
7. What kind of pub game is 'slosh'?
8. In terms of beer barrel size what comes after a 'hogshead' and how many gallons does it hold?
9. Name two local pubs in Bredbury, Romiley and Marple which still have bowling greens?
10. Cider is made from apples. From what is 'perry' made?
11. What was the drink 'porter' originally called?
12. Which brewery had as its trademark a black and yellow chequerboard?

Tameside Canals Fest

Despite poor weather - the beer tent again sold out this year! The final tally was 7500 pints of beer, 1100 pints of cider, sold in 15 hours of licensing time! A hearty well done to everyone concerned!

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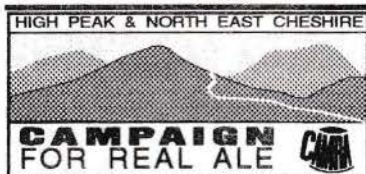
- * BREAKFASTS
- * LUNCHEONS
- * DINNERS
- * FUNCTIONS
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Answers 1. The Foresters Arms, Romiley; 2. 18 gallons; 3. 5400; 4. The stinging nettle family; 5. Spring Gardens, Compstall; 6. Farmers Arms. (It became the Romper in 1950); 7. Dominies.; 8. Puncture - 72 gallons; 9. George, Compstall; Romiley Arms and the Friendship (the writer cannot think of any others); 10. Pears; 11. Fentire; 12. Wilsons.



THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER



Pub of the Month

A stirring walk on a winter's night from the centre of Marple takes you past the church tower and the vicarage with the wind buffeting the tops of the trees and the rooks' nests. The telegraph wires as you press on over the Ridge past the sadly-macadamed Marple Quarry and down into a dip sheltered by banks and high walls. As the road sweeps down to the left shelter is at hand in the Romper.

Formerly three cottages (fittingly for the area, one was a farmhouse, the other two were hatters) the rather patrician Romper had a beer-only licence until 1949 and the car-park was a humble vegetable garden. Since 1950 there have been only three licensees and the Romper has always looked to be a goldmine - a free house in a lovely setting providing top-notch food for the car trade.

You can still sense the three cottages in the architectural rhythm of the pub starting from the new entrance (1967! and that dates the writer) climbing to the top lounge. Quite honestly beer never was the magnet for the Romper enthusiasts and there were many keg-only years but local greybeards may remember on the bar a solitary Tetley Bitter handpump enveloped by electrified boxes.

The latest landlord, Mel Stevens, has been there for five years and is a genuine real ale enthusiast. Familiar bar-clips advertise Taylors Landlord, Wadworth's 6X and Theakstons Old Peculiar but there is a masked stranger there as well - Romper Bitter. Mel is very coy about its true identity - "from a small brewery" is his only clue. Some have guessed at a far from small well-known brewery and some have thought the soubriquet hides a changing identity. See if you can unmask it.

The Romper was specialising in food when cold pork pies ruled the roost elsewhere. It still offers an excellent and varied menu but the balance is right these days and good well-kept beer is seen as central to a good pub. It never was the cheapest place to drink but only a churl would grudge those few pennies for such a setting.

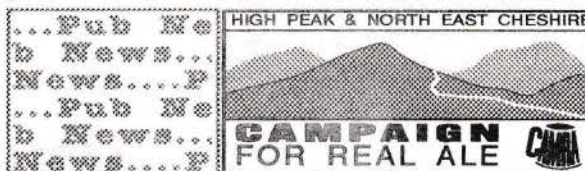
Out of Area...

From time to time we feature a pub which is part of High Peak and N.E. Cheshire Branch, but is just outside our area of Bredbury, Romiley and Marple.

This month we will look at the Fox Inn, Brookbottom, New Mills. The pub is in a secluded wooded hamlet, literally on the Derbyshire/Greater Manchester border. It can be difficult to find! Road access is via St. Marys Road, New Mills, turning left on to High Lea Road around the shoulder of the hill and down into Brookbottom hamlet. Foot access can also be made via Strines, following the road past the old print works and under the railway at Strines railway station. Fork right up the cart track through the wood to emerge by the side of the white-washed pub. Alternatively the pub can be reached by a pleasant walk over Mellor Golf Course from the Devonshire pub in Mellor.

The Fox serves Robinsons Mild and Bitter on handpump and has for pleasant weather a good outdoor drinking area. Good pub food is also served.

This is a good pub, off the beaten track with a truly rural atmosphere, and has featured in CAMRA's national Good Pub/Beer guide for many years.



The Commercial in Charlestown is another Vaux purchase and serves Wards Vaux BB or Samson on handpumps. The Lamb Inn in Dukinfield is to get a guest beer ... but the long time landlord is moving to the Wemeth in Gee Cross.

The new pub between Mossley and Ashton opened recently. The Hartshead Inn, a stone conversion and addition to (10% and 90% respectively) of Tongue bottom farm opened recently. A Whitbread Brewers Fayre pub in an excellent location with views across Ashton to Manchester has a heavy leaning to families and food. Draught Flowers IPA and Bodds Bitter are available in the 3 level bar.

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Tap Rooms

In a welcome move, Tetley Walker have announced that they intend to introduce public bars as part of refurbishment and new development schemes in their catering houses.

In a remarkable departure the company says that it wants to ensure that local trade is catered for when pubs are turned into essentially food establishments and to this end it is adopting a new policy aimed at ensuring that vault areas are retained in all such developments.

Development manager Roger Roberts explained "The feedback from our research clearly showed that ordinary drinkers felt they were second class customers in many of our catering pubs. They did not feel happy surrounded by families and other people who had simply come to a pub for a meal."

The new policy will be incorporated in all of Tetleys Porterhouse, Pantry Food and Big Steak Menu pubs under its control in the North West if and when circumstances allow. We hope this trend catches on with other operators - CAMRA has nothing against food in pubs, but ordinary drinkers should not feel wary of simply calling in these places for a pint.

West Coast News

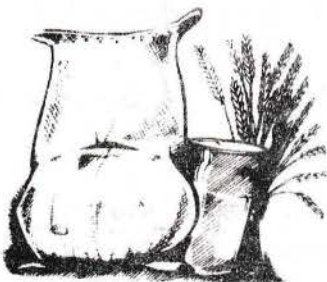
Soon to appear from West Coast Brewery is a bottled cider "Dobbins Orchard". Bottled at West Coast, the cider comes not from the fertile orchards of Chorlton-on-Medlock but from a small cider maker in Gloucestershire; the draught version will also be appearing in the Kings Arms from time to time as a change from Weston's.

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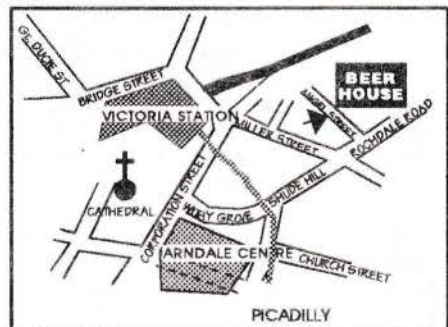
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MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

Though it was briefly mentioned last month, pride of place must go to the reborn King William IV in Chorlton-on-Medlock, now proudly re-styled "Dobbins Brewery" and shortly to house that very brewery along with its bottling plant. While work is continuing at the "King Billy" as these lines are written, the pub is gradually acquiring the full range of West Coast beers and is set to serve as a splendid shop window for the brewery.

While Dobbins Brewery brings a closed pub back to life, there are no fewer than three real ale gains to report in formerly keg pubs. By far the most long-awaited is the Springbank on Stockport Road in Longsight, where the handpump plaque outside had been joined - after over a year! - by handpumped Tetley Bitter inside. However this coincides with an open-plan refurbishment and a change in the pub's name to O'Connor's - I do hope some life remains in what has been, even in its keg days, easily the best pub atmosphere in Longsight. In West Gorton, the Aces on Clowes Street, which flirted with real Chesters Bitter from Salford a few years ago, has now undergone a more thorough-going conversion to real ale, with three handpumped beers - Boddingtons Bitter, Boddingtons OB Bitter, and (the star of the show) Holts Bitter. Finally, in Burnage the Farmers Arms on Burnage Lane has Greenalls Bitter and Stones Bitter on handpump. Fritzy's in Fallowfield is closed for refurbishment, while the Halfway House in Openshaw is closed but available for lease.

Most high-profiled Vaux acquisition so far is the Crown on Deansgate in the City Centre which has lost its Holts and John Smiths and now sells Wards Bitter and Vaux Samson on handpump. Elsewhere in the City Centre, the Crown on Fountain Street has gained handpumped Worthington Best Bitter, the Sir Ralph Abercrombie has lost Chesters Bitter, and the Star & Garter has lost Chesters Mild but gained Castle Eden Ale and Flowers Original.

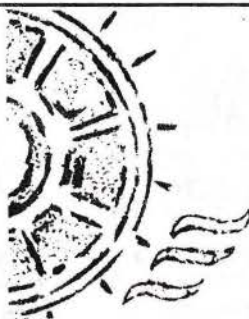
Pubs in the former Wilsons estate continue to try extra handpumped beers, with John Smiths bitter at the Fallowfield in Fallowfield and the Lord Raglan in Openshaw, and Tetley Bitter at the Pomona in Gorton. Also in Gorton, the Friendship has gained handpumped Marstons Pedigree. Mixed fortunes for Mansfield Brewery's Old Shilling in the Boddingtons estate, as the Nags Head in West Gorton installs it on handpump but the Victoria in Burnage loses it. Last, but by no means least, the Imperial in West Gorton has dropped Sam Smiths Old Brewery Bitter but replaced it by handpumped Mitchells Bitter, competitively priced at £1.05 for a very enterprising choice of brew.

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 Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ 477 1973 (home) 831 7222 x3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items ©CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.

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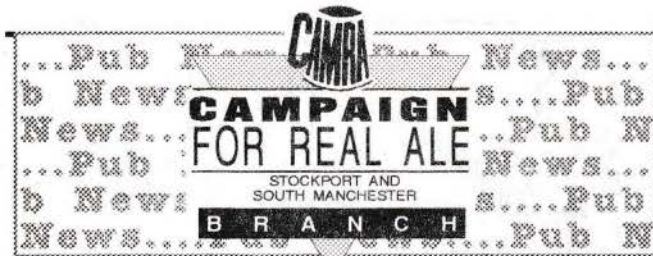
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At the Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock, the back room now boasts full-time bar service from its own full-length bar. The bar itself comes from West Coast Brewery's second tied house, the "King Billy" on Justin Close where it was surplus to requirements following the take up of much of the former bar area by the brewing and bottling plant. The days of queuing for a drink in the back room of the Kings are now over!

Alan Harvey, who owns both Harveys in Gatley and the Three Shires Wine Bar in central Stockport has been in touch with the good news that both establishments are now serving real ale. Apparently a new vertical stillage system developed by Tetleys has made this possible as previously the lack of cellar space had precluded the sale of cask beer (at the Three Shires the "cellar" is little more than a cupboard!) In Gatley the cask beers are Tetley Bitter and Burton Ale, although Greenalls Original has been tried successfully. Only Tetley Bitter is sold at the Three Shires, but sales there have trebled from one 18-gallon barrel a week to three. Yet more evidence of the increasing trend to cask beer and the death of keg.

Most appropriate name for an East Manchester pub these days must be the Wrecker's Ball. The latest pubs to be flattened were the General Birch on Ashton Old Road (previously closed and for sale) and the Crescent on Bell Crescent (previously closed following serious vandalism). Both pubs were owned by Whitbread - as was, until recently, the Steelworks Tavern on Gorton Lane, still standing but currently closed and boarded.

Yet more pub acquisitions by Sunderland brewers Vaux have come to light in Stockport. As we went to press their beers were on sale at the Thatched House, Chestergate (Vaux Bitter and Thome Dark Mild) and the Jolly Crofter in Edgeley. Also purchased is the Crown (or "Corner Cupboard") on Hillgate but, in common with the Castlewood, Vaux beers had not yet arrived as we went to press.

The Longsight at Belle Vue is now open all day (11.30am to 11.00pm) six days a week.

As we went to press the Old Garratt on Granby Row in the City Centre was in the throes of a major refurbishment, both inside and out. A peek through the windows reveals yet another neo-Victorian wonder about to unfold before our eyes (and this in a pub that was built less than 30 years ago!) More next time.

Two of the most opulent (some would say over the top) drinking establishments in Stockport opened recently. In the Market Place, the Boddington PubCo's Old Rectory, combines a Henry's Table Restaurant, overnight accommodation and a large public lounge in a \$2 million restoration of this listed building. Whilst not to everybody's taste it is certainly an impressive piece of work. Handpumped beers are Boddingtons Bitter and Courage Directors Bitter at a fairly opulent \$1.26 and \$1.44 respectively.

Meanwhile over in Offerton, the new look Puss in Boots on Nangreave Road has opened its doors. This pub is leased by Playmaster Leisure from Robinsons, in turn Playmaster are owned by the Boddington PubCo and there are some similarities in style between the two places. If anything the Puss in Boots is more fussy than the Old Rectory but that said, this is a valiant attempt to turn what was a trouble-plagued disco pub into something more upmarket. Whether this will be helped by the "smart dress only" policy at weekends remains to be seen - lager louts come in all guises these days. Beers on sale here are Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter, the latter at \$1.26 is probably the most you will pay for it in Stockport.



Good news in Didsbury where the \$1 pint has returned in the shape of Holts Bitter in the Lord Nelson. Didsbury has long been perhaps the most expensive part of the city in which to drink so this is welcome news indeed.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

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Tom Lorj, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH

