

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA

No:
106

FEBRUARY 1993

STILL
FREE



Pub of the Year - BLOSSOMS

After a vigorous debate in which it was a pity that any of the leading contenders had to lose, the much sought after Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year award has been won by the Blossoms on Buxton Road, Heaviley.

Long a favourite with Stockport drinkers, the Blossoms has narrowly missed this ultimate accolade twice in the past, but this year it turned out to be third time lucky for this superb traditional Robinsons house.

Over the past year the pub has undergone a major refurbishment which has seen the installation of new toilets and a new bar, but apart from that about all else that has been done is a thorough redecoration which, given some of the criticisms that have been directed at Robinsons over their refurbishment schemes in the past, is a remarkable result - achieved through the involvement at all stages of licensee Barbara Mounkley and sons Richard and Simon.

Of course, a good pub is more than just bricks and mortar - a good crowd, good beer and above all a good licensee are what counts, and the Blossoms scores on all points. The presence of the pub in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for 15 consecutive years says it all about the beer and, in the shape of Barbara Mounkley with sons Simon and Richard, the Blossoms can boast one of the ablest pub 'teams' in town.

As for the crowd, well come down and see for yourselves on the presentation night, Friday 5th March when we will be celebrating not only the presentation of this richly deserved award but also Barbara's birthday which falls on the same day! The pub is easily accessible, being about a 12 minute walk from Stockport station and in addition most of the A6 buses will drop you outside.



Whitbread Axe Sheffield

In a shock announcement last month, Whitbread announced the closure of their Sheffield Brewery, thus bringing to an end over 130 years of brewing on the site and the loss of 186 jobs.

Once again the poor old MMC report carries the can with a Whitbread spokesman explaining "we were operating in a highly competitive market in the aftermath of the beer orders and these changes are necessary to enable us to maintain our position as one of the most efficient producersof beer in this country."

The closure plan certainly took the workforce by surprise as it was only four and a half years ago that a new £1.5 million cask racking plant was unveiled on the site, and indeed, the growth of interest in cask ales coupled with the brewery's role as a cask operation seemed to offer it a reasonably secure future.

CAMRA has condemned the closure decision with campaigns manager Steve Cox describing the move as "very short sighted." He added; "This makes no sense and is another attack on local choice. Whitbread's brewing division made a 16% return on capital last year. There is no way that their financial situation forces them to close this brewery. Furthermore any cost savings will not be passed on to drinkers."

(continued on page 2)

In FEBRUARY'S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	2	Re-planning	10
Burtonwood Expand	3	Peak Pub News	12
Stockport Festival	3	High Peak Pub	13
Letters	4	Prize Grid	13
Editor's View	4	Camra Calling	14
New Brew News	5	Black Country	15
Stagger	6	Manchester Matters ..	17
5 Years Ago	8	Pub News	19



PUB of the Month

February

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Mention to anybody that you are going to Didsbury for a drink and they are likely to remark "Oh, you mean the Royal Oak, I've been there, it's brilliant". Such is the reputation of the Royal Oak and of its charismatic licensee, Arthur Gosling, that it is known throughout Greater Manchester and beyond. It is hardly surprising, then, that this month, the Royal Oak in Didsbury has been awarded the CAMRA Pub of the Month.

Most good pubs manage to get one or two of the important things right. If you're lucky that will include good beer and good food. The Royal Oak gets just about everything right which might explain its immense popularity. Good atmosphere, fast efficient service (no matter how busy), a unique but traditional bar, infamous cheese lunches (Arthur was the first!), good beer and Arthur himself. The Royal Oak without Arthur would be like cheese on toast without cheese, boring and not the same thing at all.

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The pub itself is staunchly traditional with a multi-roomed layout and two bars. So popular is the pub that waitress service is available at busy times, a very rare sight nowadays. Also worth noting are Arthur's huge collections of porcelain spirit vats and boxing/music hall posters, possibly the largest in the country.

As if this were not enough, when the award is presented, the Royal Oak will be selling one of Marstons new range of guest beers complementing its existing range of Banks's Mild, Burton Bitter and Pedigree. All the ingredients are in place for an excellent night on Thursday 25th February, so why not come and join us? Expect the Royal Oak to be PACKED on the presentation night so get there VERY early if you want a seat.

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Whitbread Axe Sheffield....cont

Six cask ales are currently produced at Sheffield and it is doubtful if they will all survive. The decision has already been taken to transfer the production of Trophy to the Castle Eden brewery, thereby further securing the future of a plant that was long tipped for closure itself. As for the others, it is doubtful that Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter or Chesters Bitter will survive. Chesters Mild continues to have a market and production of this too might go to Castle Eden. The main problem for Whitbread must be what to do with the Higsons brands. They are contracted to produce these for the Boddington PubCo for the next 2½ years but it's difficult to see where they can be brewed. The Cheltenham plant already has capacity problems and Salisbury is not geared to the production of cask ales. If they have any sense Whitbread will approach Cains of Liverpool to contract brew the beers for them. This would, of course, be the supreme irony as Cains occupies the original Higsons brewery closed down by Whitbread.

Burtonwood Expand

Following our report last month, we have now been able to obtain an up to date list of the pubs that local brewers Burtonwood purchased from Tetleys and Greenalls.

The only ones in the Stockport and South Manchester area are the Gladstone on Hillgate (and not the Pack Horse as we erroneously reported last time) and the Cock o'th North, Portway, Wythenshawe. In the city centre, the Wheatsheaf on Oak Street has also gone over.

There are one or two in the High Peak branch area, including the Old Oak at Tintwistle, the Talbot in Stalybridge, the Royal Oak in Chapel-en-le-Frith. In addition there are five in Macclesfield (Chestergate, Ivy House, Wharf Inn, Crompton Road Tavern and Britannia) plus one, the Red Lion, in Bollington. All in all a varied collection but a welcome addition to the area nonetheless.

Some Harsh Words

In our Stagger article last month, some harsh words were said about the new bar in the Blossoms, and in particular it was suggested that the brewery build a bar out of decent wood with proper brass fittings.

We have subsequently heard from Mr Peter Robinson, the brewery Chairman, who tells us: "The old bar, which had a solid mahogany top, with a brush grained softwood tongue and grooved boarded front, was supported on a frame of rough sawn painted Deal. Most of the Back Bar was taken up by the old three pump Beer Engine around which softwood painted shelving had surfaces covered with Fablon.

The general shape of the Bar Counter follows almost exactly the shape and form of the original bar. The new bar has a textured formica counter top, the bar front is formed of oak faced plywood with solid oak vertical mouldings planted on. The whole of the bar carcass is constructed from formica faced blockboard to comply with Environmental Health standards.

The bar is furnished with genuine brass leaning and foot rails on brass brackets and an old oak pot shelf hangs over the bar on brass rods."

Clearly, we were wrong to suggest otherwise and Opening Times offers its apologies to all concerned.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival '93



This year's 7th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will be bigger and better than ever before. More beer, including special festival brews and launches from a number of breweries, more cider, the largest range of perry in the North West!, Entertainment each evening, products, tombola, food, and a very good time. Book your diaries now. (We will be covering the festival in more depth over the next few issues).

REGIONAL DIARY - FEBRUARY

Regional Meeting Wed 10 February, Kings Arms, Chorlton on Medlock 8pm

Great North Western Beer & Cider Festival - Working Party Meeting - Sun 14th February, Malt & Hops Bar, Swan Hotel, Bolton 12 noon.



Royal Oak

Didsbury

CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH
FEBRUARY 1993

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MARSTONS BEERS THAT WILL
BE ON SALE FROM
1ST FEBRUARY 1993

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

So, Whitbread are to close yet another brewery, this time the old Tennants plant in Sheffield, the originators as it happens of Whitbread's (formerly Tennants) Gold Label Barley Wine.

An illustrious past, however, is not allowed to stand in the way of the ever frantic drives for cost cutting and "efficiency" of the major brewers, savings which it goes without saying will not be passed on to the drinker. And, of course, the poor old MMC report is again roped in when it comes to apportioning the blame - surely the big brewers can't extract any more mileage out of that, you would think.

Whitbread's record on the brewery closure front has been really appalling over recent years, indeed it is

indictment enough to simply point out that of the six cask beers brewed at Sheffield, no less than five bear the names of closed breweries - Chesters, Higsons and Bentleys. If truth be told none of these beers, with the possible exception of Chesters Mild, amounts to much and it will be interesting to see where they now all end up - we will of course keep our readers up-dated on this.

On a brighter note, Opening Times congratulates Barbara Mounkley and all at the Blossoms on winning Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA's Pub of the Year award. It's third time lucky for the Blossoms and as such the award could be said to be well overdue. The presentation will be on Barbara's birthday on 5th March so a double celebration is in prospect - I know as many people as possible will want to be there so turn up early if you want a seat.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

from: Jim Bracken

Dear Sir,

Once again, I write to congratulate Phil and all at the Flea & Firkin for organising another excellent beer festival. This time, it was the largest ever held in a pub - indeed the widest choice of beers ever available in Manchester. The range of about 120 beers was astonishing, and, despite the fact that the Flea is now owned by Allied Breweries, the majority of the beers were from small and micro-breweries. All were in fine form, and reasonably priced for their respective strengths.

An especially good selection of Stouts and Porters was available, offering the opportunity to compare the wide variety of tastes and flavours of this increasingly popular beer style. Each one of them put 'draught' Guinness to shame!

Although not organised by CAMRA, the campaigning value of such an event should not be underestimated. This pub is patronised by large numbers of students and other young people, members of a generation which the big brewers have cynically attempted to manipulate and brainwash into drinking gassy, overpriced, fake lagers, by means of multi-million pound advertising. The Flea Beer Festival offered them an opportunity to discover the quality and distinctive tastes of the real ales from brewers who can't afford mega-buck marketing but do know how to produce good beer.

Although well supported by Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA members - and a contingent from Merseyside - it is a great pity that more members from other Manchester branches did not make the effort to attend this excellent event.

Well done Flea & Firkin! Here's to the next one!

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New Brew News



The Chester and North Wales areas seem to be on the verge of a veritable explosion of new breweries.

The Plassey Brewery near Wrexham is quite well established, of course, and last year this was joined by Barry's Brewery at the Bryn Arms (pictured) near Blaenau Festiniog. These are now to be joined by a brewery at the Manod freehouse in Blaenau itself; the Dyffryn Clwyd brewery sited in the old Buttermarket in Denbigh and the Henfryn Brewing Company near Rhyl. The latter is almost ready and we understand that the others should be on stream in April.

We have less information about those in the Chester area. It has been rumoured for some time that the Chester Mill Euro Hotel in the city centre is to commence brewing but nothing has emerged so far. In addition we have heard a report of a brewery at the back of the Royal Oak in Kelsall. Lastly, a recent report in the trade press featured the Tring Brewery in Hertfordshire, one of which's partners also installs micro-breweries, the latest being "on a farm at Wheatwood near Chester". If any of our readers have information on any of these concerns, even if it is just to confirm that the report is unfounded, it will be gratefully received. More news when we have it.

Tetley Beerfests

This month sees a host of beer festivals being run at Tetley Walker pubs in the area. These events are becoming increasingly popular and offer customers a chance to try up to 25 different beers from around the country - not all from the Allied Breweries (or should it now be Carlsberg-Tetley?) stable, but also from a host of independent firms, both large and small.

Those pubs taking part are the Old Mill in Cheadle (see advert in this issue), the City Arms on Kennedy Street in the City Centre (1st-20th) - see advert, the Barleycorn in West Didsbury (12th-28th) and the Square Albert on Albert Square (12th-28th). Well worth a visit. The Bank on Moseley Street is planning an event in early April.

In our "Letter from Anglesey" last month we reported that the licensee of the Sidings in Levenshulme had placed a licence application for a property near Holyhead. We are told that this was in fact not on behalf of the Smithies but a relative; more to the point we are delighted to confirm that Graham and Jean have no intention whatsoever of leaving the Sidings. Welcome news indeed, and apologies if we gave the wrong impression.



**PUB OF THE YEAR
PREVIOUS WINNER**

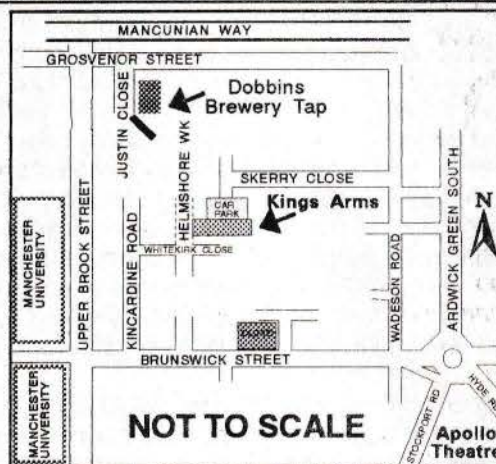
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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

Moss Side on a damp November night is perhaps not the most edifying of places but nevertheless, the Claremont on Claremont Road was a welcome place to start a stagger. This is a Holts pub after all, and a traditional and vibrant one at that. We sat in the main bar area which has three rooms off, including a well-used vault, and tried the handpumped mild and bitter. The bitter was good, but the mild was thought to be lacking its normal bitter taste. Well worth a visit, though.

With some reluctance, we left the Claremont and walked down the road to the **Beehive**, a two-roomed modern estate pub. The notice on the door proclaimed "no drugs, children or dogs allowed". None applied to us so we went in and ordered the Hydes bitter. We had previously been told that the mild was keg but were assured by the bar staff that this was no longer the case, so this had to be sampled as well. Both beers were on the bland side and one of the party was heard to suggest that the bitter has a slight taste of honey (an unintended pun). Perhaps it was the beer or perhaps the pub, but the Beehive wasn't nearly so busy as the Claremont, and we reduced the clientele still further by proceeding on our way.

After a short trek, past the now-closed Robin Hood, we arrived at the **Denmark** on Moss Lane East. This, too, is a modern Hydes pub, but there the similarity with the Beehive ends. Whilst the latter was a square box of a building, the Denmark is octagonal with a central bar. There is much use of exposed brick and wood which, with the high-beamed ceiling, gives a Scandinavian feel to the place (pun number 2? - ed.) The beers, bitter and mild, were found to have more flavour too.

Heading down Moss Lane towards Wilmslow Road, we came to the **Whitworth**, a Marstons pub on the edge of the main student area. Refurbished and opened out in the last year, the front and back bars are now only divided by a small set of steps. The front room is very pleasant with old posters and newspapers on the walls. Reflecting the younger clien-



tele, perhaps, a notice in the toilet proclaimed "To all drug users, **** off somewhere else" (!) Three cask beers were available - Marstons Bitter (which we found to be average), Pedigree (not tried) and Owd Roger, which was declared good by the two brave souls who tried it.

Straight down Wilmslow Road now through the centre of Rusholme, past Mr. Macs Bar and Disco (keg Whitbread) and the first of the Bass keg pubs, the Clarence. The smells from the restaurants were very tempting but more pubs called.

Just off Wilmslow Road on Walmer Street is the **Albert**, a multi-roomed Hydes pub with a largely Irish clientele. The pub isn't exactly an architectural gem, but it does have bags of character. Hydes bitter was the only cask beer available and this was well above average.

We moved on to the **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove, a three-roomed local with photos of stars of the sixties on the walls (hands up who remembers Milli?). With its tiled entrance and subdued lighting, this is better than many Greenalls pubs. We had hoped that one of the Coach House beers might be available, but this proved not to be the case. The cask beers were in fact Greenalls Bitter and Original, and again, both were above average.

The next stage of the stagger was a fruitless search for real ale in three Bass pubs, all of which turned out to be keg - the **Birch Villa**, the **Huntsman** and the **Lord Lyon**. None of these are particularly characterful pubs but are nevertheless a sad indictment of Bass's attitude to cask ale and consumer choice in this area. Why have Hydes, Marstons, Holts and even Greenalls, managed to successfully sell real ale when Bass can't? Admittedly the Birch Villa was a close call, as it

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had recently been selling Worthington Best Bitter on handpump, but the "experiment" had failed two days before our visit.

The **Sherwood**, a Whitbread pub on Claremont Road, was our next port of call. This is typical of many Whitbread pubs - open plan with loud wallpaper and loud music trying to compensate for a lack of atmosphere. The Boddingtons Bitter, the only real ale on sale, proved to be the worst beer of the night.

Hurrying on, we walked down Victory Street to the **Gardeners Arms** where an Irish Country Band was in full swing. Surprisingly, the pub was relatively empty for a Friday night. There was nothing special about either the vault, the modernised lounge, or the beer (Greenalls Bitter on handpump). We therefore crossed the road to our ultimate destination, the **Osborne House**, the only Good Beer Guide listed pub of

the night. It's easy to see why. Despite a fairly bland modernisation, this back street local has an excellent friendly atmosphere. The beer was good, too. Opinions about the bitter ranged from average to very good, and the mild was also better than average. A good place to finish an interesting and varied night.

Of course, this article can be no more than a snapshot of all the pubs on one particular night and so should in no way be taken as a definitive statement on either the pubs themselves or the beer they sell. As ever Opening Times readers are invited to try them for themselves and see how much they (dis)agree.

Farmers Arms Refurb

The refurbishment of the **Farmers Arms** in Northenden was completed in December after some \$65,000 had been spent on the pub, including \$9,000 on the cellar. Inevitably, there has been some minor opening out of the pub with the corridor at the rear being integrated into the pub proper.

The **Farmers** is certainly a pusher place with the three main areas of the pub and the bar itself having all been done out in dark wood and the walls well covered with the usual tasteful pictures. The one area not carpeted is the vault area at the front of the pub which also has leather upholstery. Unfortunately, the only way to get a game of darts is still in the clubroom at the back. Overall, the general effect however is very positive and on a summer's evening it will still be possible to have a drink watching a game of bowls on the well tended green behind the pub.

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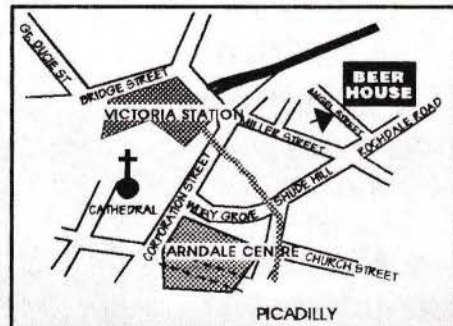
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

FEBRUARY '88

BODDIES AXE OLDHAM was the headline - once again CAMRA's predictions regarding the future of Oldham Brewery, following the five year guarantee given by Boddingtons, had proved to be well founded. "Opening Times", amongst others, had been accused by Boddingtons of being charlatans for daring to suggest that they had no intention of continuing brewing at Oldham for the foreseeable future. However, the position was now clear - 200 jobs were to go, and then the brewery would be closed later in the year. This, unfortunately, was yet another example of CAMRA's view that all takeovers ultimately lead to "rationalisation" in the name of efficiency.

The dangers of drinking and driving always receive extra publicity during the festive season, although obviously the problem is with us all the year round. This publicity had resulted in an upsurge in the sales of non- and low-alcoholic beers (dubbed by the trade as NABLABS) with an estimated consumption of one and a half million pints a week. Barbican was described as the brand leader, with a comparative newcomer Kaliber from Guinness, rapidly gaining popularity. Attention was drawn to the fact that both these products contained not more than 0.05% alcohol by volume, whilst a lot of the new low alcohol beers starting to appear could contain as much as 0.9% alcohol by volume. So the advice was, check the label.

The price of beer is always good for discussion, and there was reference to some prices getting close to those charged in the London area. The Hinds Head, Heaton Chapel, had Castle Eden at 98p. and Chesters Bitter and Mild for an extorniate(sic) 88p. The newly opened Mill, Cheadle Hulme was selling Tetley Bitter at 90p. when a Tetley price increase raised it to 93p. Back to normality, good old Holts was available at their newly built Sidings in Levenshulme at "under 70p".

There had been so many re-openings and renovations over the Christmas period that there just hadn't been an opportunity to cover them all. One of the main events was the re-opening of the former Weavers Arms on Angel Street as the Beer House, with what was described as a standard range of Holts, Matthew Brown and Theakston, with guest beers and ciders expected from time to time. Real ale gains were reported from the City Road Inn, Place Next Door, and Bank, and two new outlets that had started trading were the Old Steam Brewery in York Street and Dicey Reillys in Levenshulme.

Good Beer Guide '93

Need a boost early in 1993? Why not treat yourself to a copy of the Beer Drinkers Bible - the Good Beer Guide. The 1993 edition is packed with information about pubs, beers and breweries, and is excellent value at only £7.99. Send your cheque made payable to CAMRA, Stockport & South Manchester, to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5EG

LOCALLEY



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Re-planning Our Communities 'The Way Forward'

by Ian Finlay

The December issue of *Opening Times* highlighted "The pub and the community" and the role of the pub within Manchester, the "emerging Olympic City". This article seeks to further debate and carry forward the issues outlined in that article.

In our fast altering world where so many changes have taken place of an environmental, social and particularly economic nature, the pub is, and still remains a stabilizing facility and influence within local communities. People say "familiarity breeds contempt", but in almost every respect the reverse holds true for a proper local. At the present time, perhaps as never more so in living memory, people need the emotional stability of "their watering hole". The intimacy of pubs, their intrinsic qualities, the locals who frequent them, and the character of their internal spaces all "gel together" to make a magical mix which provides very basic reassurances to us all as human beings, qualities which are difficult to pin down and define, and yet so easily destroyed by the ball and chain, and so hard to re-capture with new build solutions or re-vamped internal conversions.

It is staggering to remember that over the last 25 years in central Manchester over 60 pubs have been lost, including some of the more important older public houses which the City contained. Others have been so disfigured internally as to render them "impotent" with the destruction of their former glories, fixtures and fittings. As we move forward into the "caring 90's" the question which such action raises, and the challenge which is thrown down, is how such mistakes can be avoided in the future in order that people can retain a sense of belonging, commitment, and above all a feeling of happiness within their local areas and the City in which they live.

The way forward to improve local areas for the better must be through consultation with the people who live in those areas. Given all the horrendous mistakes made in the 60's and the 70's, when people were swayed by the rhetoric from politicians, planners and architects, that improvement plans would improve their environments and lives, we now



'Locals' meet to talk about how plans affect their pub

live in a society which is far more articulate and aware environmentally. What is missing, are the mechanisms by which local people can have a say in how their areas ought to be improved, and clearly the role of local pubs within such areas is a central issue to their positive future.

What is required is a proper process whereby local communities, local politicians, planners, architects, and breweries can consult and work together to establish the best guidelines and ideas by which such areas ought to be improved, including the local pubs. Such a process would be much more pro-active than the current re-active situation where local groups have to fight proposals which adversely threaten and affect their communities, including their pubs, from detrimental change, demolition, and ruin. The 60's and the 70's clearly show that by not consulting local people, building schemes were created which not only destroyed communities and created immense social problems, but have also been horrendously expensive in economic terms to rectify. We see around us great swathes of the City being rebuilt only 20 years after the original communities were knocked down for a "brave new future".

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One major aspect, perhaps which ironically favours consultation with local people is the decline in the economy. In the past there has too often been the assumption that existing buildings could be swept away, including best loved locals, in the name of change because the money was there to achieve it, without any question as to whether the existing facilities ought to have been retained because people like them, and for the benefit of future generations.

There are a number of interesting and important new initiatives which are now being developed which are addressing how important buildings within local communities ought to be preserved for people's benefit. One such is currently being undertaken by Birmingham City Council where under new guidelines the major consideration for planners will be the impact the loss of a pub will have on the social life of people living nearby. If there are no nearby pubs or similar facilities in the area around a threatened pub, then a planning proposal involving the loss of an outlet will be resisted. Birmingham are not alone in taking a strong stance to ensure the importance of local pubs in communities. Norwich are another City where planning officials are concerned about the loss of pubs and the adverse effects this will have on the character, vitality, and decline in standards of services for local people and visitors.

Our Country, by nature, tends to be parochial, yet why can't Manchester learn from the examples elsewhere. Whereas the decline in the economy may well be the "best protector" of the local environment, ironically in Manchester at the present time, the Olympic Proposals are once again allowing the "ball and chain ethic", the wholesale demolition and change to local areas to again become prevalent and hold sway. Only when major money is available can such wholesale change be contemplated.

And yet by now, given the mistakes of the recent past, and the fact that people are now far more environmentally aware than before, their views on their City, their local areas, and the pubs which they frequent ought to be and have to be taken into account. CAMRA have designated 1993 as the Year of the Pub with a policy to highlight the importance of community inns and taverns, and to campaign against their loss. Manchester, it would seem, has still to wake up to this reality. Barcelona gained as much respect and stature from the culture of its city as from the Olympic facilities and Games themselves. The experience of going to the Olympics in Barcelona was implicitly entwined with the culture

and vitality of the City itself. How can Manchester best address this challenge and the "gauntlet" that has been thrown down by Barcelona.

One key way is to be proud of its reputation as the "Real Ale Capital of Britain". To reinforce this for the people living in Manchester and those thousands of visitors who will come in the future, whether the Olympics are secured or not, the bigger celebrated and the more modest local pubs which are all part of the City's heritage must be retained and preserved at all costs. All key agencies must work together to determine the way in which local areas will be appropriately altered in the future, in a way that takes into account the requirements, needs and views of local people. In the case of pubs, forums ought to be established between the breweries concerned, the regulars, members of CAMRA, local planners, and the breweries architects to discuss and debate the best way in which such pubs could be improved, changed or left entirely alone. Breweries have to realize that to ignore the views and needs of the regulars may result in the economic failure of that pub. Times are hard, people will desert and stay away from pubs where the familiarity and qualities which made them attractive have been destroyed. The way forward in the future is through consultation and fine tuning, and not through wholesale changes.

CAMRA needs to vociferously communicate this message, in particular, to the relatively small group of people who are currently **without consultation** planning the changing face of Manchester, **our** Olympic City.

The time for such a stance is right now. If Manchester wants to compete on its own terms, to highlight its unique culture, in the way iBarcelona did, it needs to exert every influence and pressure to preserve its "public house and real ale image". CAMRA have an important role to play in this fight, and one major way would be for CAMRA to encourage breweries to establish discussive forums with regulars to determine the best way in which locals could be improved. The "Way Forward" will rely on joint effort, from CAMRA, from the breweries whose economic welfare depends on their pubs being well used, and the agencies working to re-determine the "future face of Manchester", but most importantly those local people and regulars, who if ignored, will determine by their absence, the future culture of this "Olympic City", as we move towards the year 2000. (Ian Finlay is an architect with Ian Finlay Associates, Paradise Wharf, Manchester.)

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CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE

First a correction from last months pub news. The Hanging Gate referred to was the one in Tunsted Milton and not as stated another of the same name situated somewhere above Macclesfield.

The **Spread Eagle** in Hatherlow has begun to serve guest beers alongside Boddingtons Bitter in recent weeks, with Brains Bitter making a welcome appearance. Hopefully this policy will become established increasing the variety available in the area.

Unfortunately this welcome addition has been balanced by a loss in the area. The **Railway** at Bredbury has apparently discontinued its guest beer policy. Gone are Holts and John Smiths bitters leaving only the uninspiring Websters Yorkshire Bitter.

More encouraging are plans for the refurbishment of the **Oddfellows** in Hyde. This recent acquisition by Vaux is in line for refurbishment in the near future which could well see the range of cask beers increase from three to five. At the moment the pub is selling a genuine German bottled Wheat Bier served in true continental style.....in its own special glass. The beer, if you are brave enough to ask for it by name, is Spatenfranziskaner!

The **Pineapple** in Marple is to undergo quite a major refurbishment. There are to be extensive redecorations to give a more up-market image and these are underway at the present time. The brewery have also agreed to extend and refurbish the bar, although it is likely to be a few months before this work gets underway.

The only outlet in Tameside for the range of Marstons beers launched under the Head Brewers Choice theme is the **Station** in Ashton. This is of course a free house and here the new brews will complement the two or three existing weekly guest beers.

The Robin Hood

HIGH LANE, BUXTON ROAD, STOCKPORT

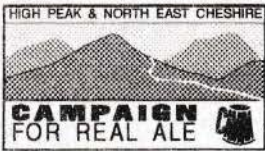
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OPENING TIMES FEBRUARY 1993



Featured Peak Pub

FEB
93

From the outside it looks normal enough. You may have seen it from the top deck of the Marple to Ashton bus - mock Cheshire magpie upper-storeyed. Nowadays the most controversial thing about it is whether it's actually in Marple Bridge or Compstall. But no pub in the Stockport area has quite such a colourful history.

In its heyday the Spring Gardens attracted 2,000 visitors on Bank Holidays. In the last century boat trips from Manchester stopped at Marple Aqueduct from where it was ten minutes walk to the pub.....and to its Pleasure Gardens. These gardens boasted two gooseberry avenues over 40 yards long with dining facilities for 200 under their shade. There were also walks in the woods and "domestic and foreign fowls and quadrupeds". There were monkeys bred in the gardens, a tightrope walker, foxes and apes, which often escaped from their cages and broke into local hen houses, sucking the eggs dry. With the coming of the train there were 1s.2d. returns from Manchester - possibly to hear the brass bands, see the alligators or peacocks, ride on the swing boats or watch Mademoiselle Bonari the human serpent and contortionist. There was, and still is, a bowling green which inevitably took the British Crown Green Bowling Association away from Blackpool as late as 1928. But the great days of "mechanical rides", acrobats and pigeon shoots were by then in the past and occasional great storms had seen the River Goyt claim large chunks of the grounds.

But local memories linger. A nonegenarian friend of mine tells me his grandfather as a child saw, I think, Jim Mace the world heavyweight boxing champion fight there. In 1888 it would appear Charlie Mitchell fought Jake Kilrain at the Spring Gardens. Their credentials were immaculate. They had fought a 4 round draw (with gloves) in Boston, Massachusetts in 1884 before a colossal crowd and both fought the great John L. Sullivan, Mitchell twice, once losing and once forcing a draw. The American Kilrain lost to John L. in the very last bare-knuckle championship bout - he was knocked out in the sixty-fifth round!

Do any ghosts haunt those long-gone gooseberry bowers? Who were the five fiddlers who sat athwart the giant Mellor Ox? Go and see the place for yourself for it's thriving again. There are four real ales on handpump (Boddington's, Webster's, Pedigree and John Smith's), a restaurant, boisterous games room and frequent Quiz Nights.

I am indebted for much of the material above to Jack Turnbull's excellent "Last Orders Please" - a history of Marple Pubs.

Drew's Back...

Friends of Drew Marsh, late and very much lamented licensee of the Squirrels, Chinley (see 'Save Our Pubs' - OT's passim) will be pleased to hear that he is back in the trade - albeit in a different role. Already a partner in a distributor for unusual micro-brewery products, the new venture has now aquired a Brewing plant in Burton-on-Trent and is about to start production of the strangely named "Mundane Ales". More next month.

£5 Prize Word Square

Hidden in the word square are 27 words connected with pubs, business and beer. Relax with your pint and see how many you can find. Send a completed grid to: The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. First correct solution out of the hat wins a fiver!

K	I	L	D	E	R	K	I	N	C	D	O	S
C	G	E	C	R	I	S	P	S	B	R	Q	E
A	L	E	L	S	N	O	T	S	R	A	M	D
N	S	S	A	B	A	R	L	E	Y	Y	O	Y
S	S	O	H	P	E	S	O	S	T	L	O	H
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D	A	R	O	T	S	C	T	O	K	S	P	N
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R	L	W	D	B	T	I	O	R	I	O	T	O
T	E	P	L	P	N	J	I	H	D	L	D	V
S	C	W	O	O	U	S	O	T	E	Y	D	E
C	L	V	E	O	P	M	S	D	R	A	C	R
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NEXT TO
BY-PASS

CAMRA CALLING!

Once again there is a varied social calendar this month. On Monday 8th there will be a social at the Crown on Hillgate, Stockport. As with all Monday socials this starts at 9.00pm. Later in the same week on Thursday 11th we will be having our monthly meeting, this time at the Blossoms. An important meeting this, as we will be selecting entries for the 1994 Good Beer Guide.

The social on 15th is at the Kings Head, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick and this is followed two days later on Wednesday 17th with a visit to Boddingtons Brewery. Meet at the Dutton on Park Street (behind the brewery) at 6.45 or at the Brewery gates at 7.00pm. A busy week comes to a close on Friday 19th with a Stagger, this time covering Hazel Grove and Heaviley. We start at the Grove, Hazel Grove at 7.00pm or you can join at the Crown at 8.30. Both are on the A6.

The next week is just as hectic with a social at the Crown Heaton Lane, Stockport on Monday 22nd, swiftly followed by Pub of the Month at the Royal Oak, Didsbury on Thursday 25th. This week is rounded off on Saturday 27th with an awayday to Fleetwood Beer Festival. We will be catching the Blackpool train which leaves Stockport at 9.50 and Oxford Road at about 10.00.

March is a little quieter, starting with a social on Monday 1st at the Four in Hand, West Didsbury (corner Lapwing Lane and Palatine Road). Friday 5th is a major event however, as we will be presenting our Pub of the Year award to the Blossoms. Finally on Monday 8th, the social will be at the Stanley Arms, Newbridge Lane, Stockport.

If you wish to book for the Boddingtons trip or want more information about our activities in general, then contact the branch Social Secretaries, Dawn and Duncan Geddes on 445 0872.

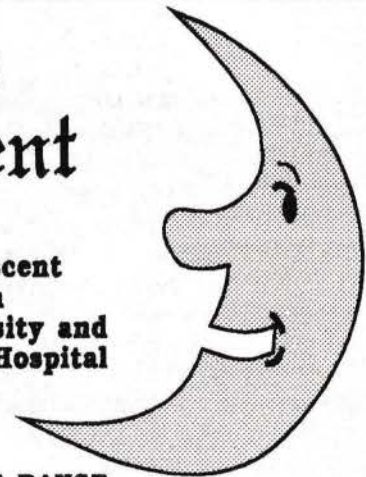
If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and Marple areas, you fall in the area covered by the High Peak branch. They will be having two events this month. On Friday 12th February there is a weekend trip to Newcastle (phone contact for details) and on Monday 15th there will be the monthly meeting, this time at the Crown in Glossop. This will also be a selection meeting for the 1994 Good Beer Guide, Aim to get there for about 8.30pm. The contact for High Peak is Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634. Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each others events.



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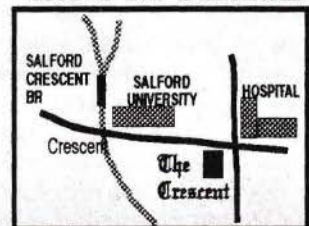


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Real Ciders
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* Bar Billiards *
* Pub Games ***



Black Country Trip

On Saturday 16 January, some 25 CAMRA members had the pleasure of an excellent pub crawl of the Black Country by G.M. coach. Organised by Ken Birch, the coach picked up in Stockport, Salford, Sale and Altrincham, before heading south via the M6 to the delights of one of the few areas that can rival Greater Manchester for a range of fine quality beers from small breweries.

Our first port of call - at 11.30am was the **Cross Guns** in Wednesfield. In the 1993 G.B.G. this is listed as serving the range of beers from Allied's, Holt, Plant and Deakin subsidiary. However, to everyone's surprise, it had become a free house a year ago and was selling Becksider Dark Mild, from Keighley's Commercial Brewery, alongside the incredibly potent Jolly Roger Winter Wobbler from Worcester. At 11% ABV, this was not exactly a beer to start a pub crawl with! It is the beer that CADD (Campaign Against Drunk Driving) tried to ban. Even though none of us was driving, nobody was brave enough to sample it, and Becksidiers were ordered. The landlord hastily put two more beers on (our arrival had caught him unawares) in the form of Sam Smiths O.B.B. and Mauldens Black Adder. The pub is about to go back to being a tied house, and the locals were to hold a 'wake' for the end of the guest beers that very evening.

Although the beers were on good form, none of us were happy with the prices. £1.40 for Becksider (3.5ABV) and Blackadder (5.3ABV) at £1.70, were felt to be over the top.

Our next pub was the Holden's Brewery Tap - the **Park** at Woodsetton. Nestling in the shadow of the brewery, 'Home of the Original Black Country Beers', this excellent pub offered the full range of Holden's beers, all in fine fettle, and at much more acceptable prices - Mild £1.00, Stout £1.02, Bitter £1.06, Special £1.28 and a distinctive new beer - Lucy B. Bitter £1.16. This latter beer was named in honour of Lucy Blanche Holden, a former licensee of the pub.

We continued to nearby Sedgeley, to visit the famous **Beacon** home brew pub, where Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild is produced. This is a classic and beautifully restored Victorian ale house, spotlessly clean throughout, with a snug, smoke room and tap room, all served by various hatches from a panelled central bar. A conservatory like a mini-Kew Gardens is a recent addition. Here, we were given a tour of the tower brewery, established in 1921. Brewing ceased in 1957 but was re-commenced in 1987, to produce the powerful Ruby Mild to an original recipe. Here a batch of their other beer - Sedgeley Surprise was being brewed in the unique tiled open copper. We were not able to sample any of this. The previous brew was in the cellar, but was 'not ready' yet. It had been there a week, but it is not served until undergoing a two week secondary fermentation (3-4 weeks in the case of Ruby Mild). Other brewers look to your laurels! For its strength - 5.8ABV, the Ruby Mild was reasonably priced at £1.34.

CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION



JOIN NOW!

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Our next port of call was Brierley Hill. Here we visited the **Bell**, where we sampled H.P.D. Entire on good form at £1.10 a pint. Unfortunately, the rare winter ale, Deakins Downfall, had just come to the end of the barrel.

Then it was a short walk up the hill to the **Vine**, better known as the Bull and Bladder, the Batham's Brewery Tap. With its quotation from Shakespeare's 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' - 'Blessings of your heart, you brew good ale' on the exterior, this is one of Britain's most famous pubs. It also serves one of Britain's few remaining 'under a pound a pint' beers - Batham's Mild at 98p, alongside the tasty and distinctive straw coloured bitter, 4.5ABV at £1.16p (after a recent annual price increase).

By any standards this is a wonderful establishment, a classic ale-house. Open all day, many of us were tempted to stay for the rest of it!

We next visited the **Royal Oak** in New Bridge, near Tipton, a free house serving a range of beers from Coach House Brewery, Warrington among others, including Gunpowder Mild and the tasty Blunderbuss Porter.

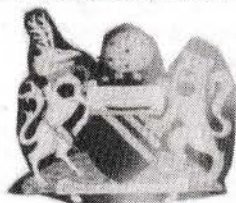
Then, by popular demand, our final port of call was a return to the Park at Woodsetton, before a fish and chip stop, and the return journey up the motorway to Manchester.

It was an excellent day, thoroughly enjoyed by all who went. I hope those who didn't join us will read this with regret!

Our thanks to Ken Birch - landlord of the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport - for single-handedly organising this event.

THE CITY ARMS

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Thomas Greenalls Original

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MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

As research gathers pace for the next edition of "Ale of Two Cities", CAMRA's pub and beer guide to Manchester and Salford, due out in April, a number of changes to City Centre pubs and bars have come to light. The changes to beer range are so numerous that you'll have to await the new edition for the latest line-up; it must be admitted, though, that most of them are so inconsequential (the odd widely available beer put on here, withdrawn there) that the highlights are soon told. They include another Vaux acquisition - the Royal George, with handpumped Bitter and Samson - and the presence of Taylors Landlord on handpump at the Land o' Cakes. A disappointment, though, to learn that Burtonwood Mild at the Bull's Head is now keg, despite the presence of a prominent pumpclip on the (now unused) handpump - don't be caught out!

Only one real ale gain in the Centre, as FG's Bar in the Dominion Hotel on Princess Street tries again with handpumped Tetley Bitter - however the keg variety is also available at 10p. a pint less ("only" £1.40), so this may well be another short-lived appearance. This has of course been the experience at so many of the Centre's "non-traditional" bars - of these, the Conservatory, Horts and Mama's (re-named the Captain's Bar) no longer sell real ale, the Top Cat Tavern is closed, and the Duke of Bridgewater is now a club. One conventional pub, the Cheshire Cheese, has also ceased selling real ale.

Outside the Centre, real ale returns to the Corner Shop on the corner of Orme Street and Rylance Street in Beswick, with handpumped Theakstons XB, and the re-opened Railway on Rona Walk in Longsight, with handpumped Boddingtons Bitter, while the Lord Raglan in Openshaw has gained handpumped Holts Bitter.

In a welcome move, Burtonwood have introduced real ale, handpumped mild and bitter, to the Clayton Arms on the corner of North Street and Clayton Street in Clayton.

Wilson's 'Drop Forge' in Clayton is closed, but not far away the Legh Arms on Ashton Old Road (corner of Dawnay

Street) has reopened with Boddingtons Bitter, Chesters Mild, and Whitbread Trophy on handpump. Meanwhile sightings of keg Scrumpy Jack cider on "handpump" continue to be reported, most recently at the Gold Cup in Longsight, the Didsbury in Didsbury, and the Midland in West Didsbury. Once again, customers are warned that Scrumpy Jack, whatever the dispense method may look like, is always and only a keg cider; licensees selling it by this misleading method are warned that they disqualify themselves from any form of CAMRA approval. (Bar mountings which make clear the product's keg nature are readily available, and are of course perfectly acceptable).

Finally, then, a welcome to two East Manchester pubs where the handpumps definitely do dispense the real thing (though beer this time, not cider). Centric Inns' Prince of Wales on Ashton Old Road (corner of Old Hall Street) in Openshaw, has handpumped Theakstons XB, while further out on the Old Road (at the corner of Club Street) the Crown is now a member of the Boddingtons Guest Beer Club - when I called, the "guest" handpump was dispensing excellent Jennings Snecklifter from Cockermonth at the bargain price of £1.06.

Two final highlights - the Park on Parkside Street in Ardwick is now selling Burtonwood, with mild and bitter on handpump, and congratulations to the Derby Arms in Fallowfield, which no longer sells Scrumpy Jack.



Letters for publication should be sent to:

The Editor, 'Opening Times'
45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD

Copy Deadline for contributions to the 107th (March) issue of Opening Times, is Friday 19 Feb

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Chris Stone / Sue Tittensor, 80 Bexhill Road, Davenport, Stockport, SK3 8UZ

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:
Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH





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Festival Frolics

Following on the Flea and Firkin's massive beer festival in January, it is the turn of Tetley Walker this month, with beer festivals in a number of their pubs, notably the Old Mill, Barleycorn & City Arms (see elsewhere in this issue).

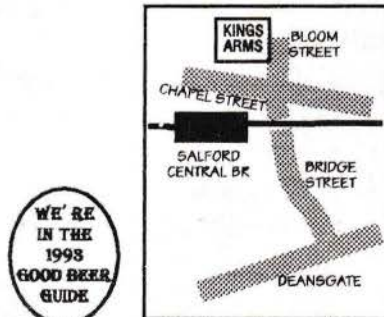
Talking of the Flea, from the first weekend in February, two of the side bar handpumps are to be dedicated to rare and unusual beers - of the kind difficult to get hold of in the free trade, and normally only encountered at beer festivals - on Sundays and Mondays. This is in addition to the 8 beers brewed on the premises and two guest beers.

On the local beer festival front, the first relatively close festival is at the Marine Hall, Fleetwood, February 26-8. March 18-20 sees the first regional festival, at Wigan Pier, always an enjoyable event (pies not compulsory). The following week it is Oldham's turn, on the Friday and Saturday, at the Werneth Park Music Rooms. April 21-4 sees the biggest festival in our region, at the Silverwell Street Sports Centre in Bolton, The Great North Western Beer & Cider Festival, only a 35 minute train ride from Stockport, and less from Manchester. This event runs from the Wednesday evening to the Saturday - so there are plenty of opportunities to go!

Rhyl follows the following Thursday, running until Saturday (Apr 29 - May 1), after which a hearty sigh of relief is drawn until Stockport's own festival, which this year runs from June 3-5, and will be in the Town Hall ballroom. (see article on page 3).

THE KINGS ARMS BLOOM STREET, SALFORD

Dave and Sue Price welcome you to enjoy
the fine range of beers, ciders and foods
in Salford's Premier Ale House



13 HANDPUMPS

HOLTS, THEAKSTONS,

TIMOTHY TAYLORS

CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
GUEST BEERS & TRADITIONAL CIDERS

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CAMRA

**CAMPAIGN
 FOR REAL ALE**

STOCKPORT AND
 SOUTH MANCHESTER

B R A N C H

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The Coach & Horses, Portwood, has now added Cains Bitter on handpump. Formerly hidden from view, the pub can now be seen from St Mary's Way and is well worth a visit.

We reported last month that Greenalls were taking Youngs Bitter from London into some 50 of their pubs. One of the outlets is the Grey Horse on Old Road in Heaton Norris. Landlord John Price believes his is the first pub in the borough to sell Youngs Bitter on a regular basis and so far sales have been good. The pub also sells Greenalls Bitter and Original and, despite the new arrival, sales of these are holding up.

This month sees the launch of the "Head Brewer's Choice" range of new cask beers from Marstons, and we can confirm that as well as the Royal Oak in Didsbury, the beers will also be on sale at the Station, Didsbury and the Red Lion in Withington. Don't be surprised if they also appear at the Whitworth in Rusholme.

First off the blocks is Chestnut Ale at 5% ABV. This will be launched on 2nd February and will retail at about £1.60 a pint. Two weeks later this will be followed by Winter Warmer (5.2%, £1.65) and at the beginning of March by Luncheon Ale (2.5%, £1.15). The average price of the other beers is expected to be in the £1.30-£1.35 range.

Popular landlady Kath has left the Suburban in Gorton for one of J.W. Lees' most attractive pubs, the Greyhound in Royton, a frequent (and current) Good Beer Guide entry and blessed with a delightful, if hard-to-find becksides location. The Suburban is currently being run by Kath's cousin Mags, and appears to be upholding the high standards we have come to expect.



Time was when many Holts pubs had a somewhat grubby image, so it's pleasing to note that the Cheadle Hulme and its restaurant have been given a certificate of excellence by Stockport Environmental Health for the third year on the trot. This year only six establishments in the entire borough obtained a certificate. All this and an excellent pint as well.



The Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport was well into the throes of its refurbishment as we went to press, and very nice it should look too. The outside has been given a new lick of paint - see photo - and although the work on the inside has been cosmetic rather than structural, it has made a big - and positive improvement. It is still unclear just how many handpumps (and therefore different beers) the Crown will boast - 10 is the current best guess according to licensee Ken Birch. Three more, bringing the total up to eight are to be fitted as we go to press, and hopefully two more will be in at or around the time of the 'opening'. Its formal launch as a Boddington PubCo 'Ale House' is on February 9th - a full report next month.

The Brewers in Ladybarn will shortly be closing for a month or so to be converted into a Whitbread Cask Ale House. This will be one of a number of such pubs that Whitbread are opening nationwide, another forthcoming addition to the range being Bensons in the City Centre. The forerunner of these was the Olde Cock in Didsbury which has enjoyed deserved success since its conversion.

The Star on Pottery Lane, Gorton (keg Whitbread) closed in mid-December, another victim of the Intermediate Ring Road.

Whitbread's Victoria on Hyde Road in West Gorton has been bought, and the licensee is under notice to be out by mid-February. Local rumour suggests that the purchaser may be the just-opened Hotel Climat de France (we are not joking), which requires the land for a car park. If true, this is yet another example of the so-called economic regeneration of East Manchester being achieved at the expense of local businesses and amenities.

The Falcon (Banks's) in Chorlton-on-Medlock is to close shortly for a period of several months for the foundations to be underpinned.

We understand that the Kings Head, Tiviot Dale, Stockport is no longer owned by the Boddington PubCo, having been sold to fellow pub chain operator Paramount. Paramount is partially owned by Burtonwood although on a recent visit only Boddingtons Bitter was on sale.

The Bromale in Bramhall has added Worthington Best Bitter on handpump which now sells alongside Stones. The pub itself is very pleasant and well worth a visit. Worthington is also on handpump at Bramails in the village centre where it is alongside Stones and Draught Bass.



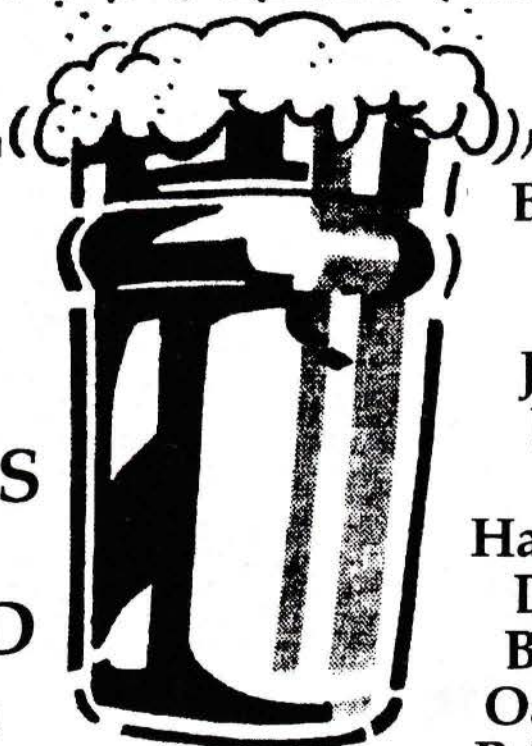
CROWN ALE HOUSE

HEATON

NORRIS

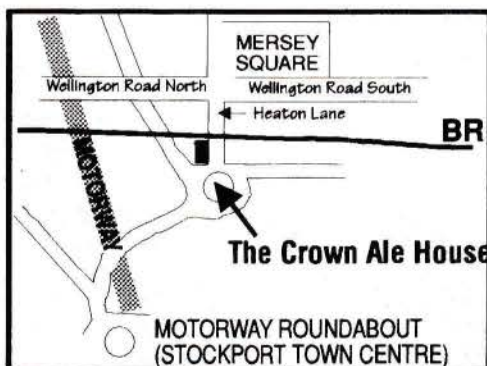
**10
HAND
PULLED
CASK ALES**

**HOT FOOD
12-2.00pm
SNACKS
always
available**



Beers Coming...

**Pitfield Mild,
Jennings Mild,
Burton Bridge
Festival Ale,
Hadrian Gladiator,
Dent Owd Tup,
Black Diamond,
Oak Wobbly Bob,
Prince Bishop Ale,
Hambleton
Stallion**



**STOCKPORT'S LATEST FREE HOUSE
OPENING 9th FEBRUARY
154 Heaton Lane, Stockport Tel: 429 0549**