

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
111



JULY 1993



Double Whammy!

As well as putting up the price of a pint, some of the big brewers are also watering down their beer to save themselves money. These changes come on top of the recent budget increases which saw up to 5p going on the price of a pint.

It emerged last month that as the brewers embark on their annual round of price increases they are also reducing the strength of some of their beers, so hitting drinkers with a second hidden increase worth 3p on the average pint.

The decision to reduce the beer strength is being blamed on the new system of collecting beer duty which came into force on June 1st. Under the old system duty was paid on the amount of sugar in the beer before fermenting began, using the original gravity as a measure. That is now changed and duty is paid according to the strength of the beer as it leaves the brewery, the so-called "factory gate" method.

The new system was supposed to make no overall difference to the amount of money paid out by the brewers but some are claiming that this is not the case - with Bass, for example, putting its loss at £20million. Such claims have been rejected by the Customs & Excise who say it is not true that the brewers will 'lose millions' under the new system. Indeed the new system should benefit brewers as they are not penalised for conditioning the beer for long periods as they were before. Indeed the cash-flow benefits for the industry as a whole have been put at £200million!

This has cut no ice with Bass and Courage who have reduced the strength of a range of their beers. Amongst others, those affected include:

* Webster Yorkshire Bitter - **down** from 3.8% to 3.5% Alcohol by Volume (ABV)

* Wilsons Bitter - **down** from 3.8% to 3.5%

* Worthington Best Bitter - **down** from 3.8% to 3.6%

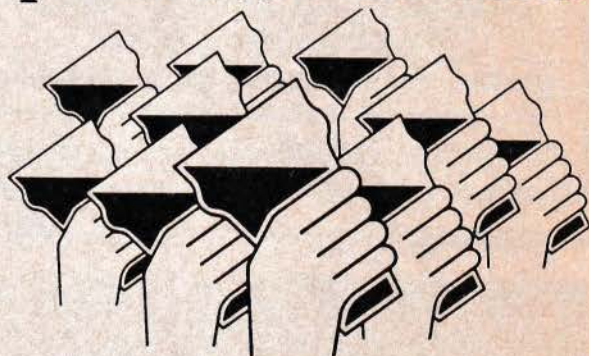
Lager drinkers are even worse hit with the likes of Holsten Pils dropping from 6% to 5.5% and Lamott dropping a full 1% from 6% to 5%

So far only Bass (who brew Worthington and Stones) and Courage (Websters, Wilsons, John Smiths) have announced wide scale reductions in beer strength. Carlsberg-Tetleys are looking at the system. Whitbread (who now own Boddingtons) have made it clear that they will **NOT** be reducing the alcohol content of their beers. Neither, as far as we are aware, will any of our local brewers - indeed, on a recent CAMRA visit, Hydes were keen to point out that the strength of their beers would be maintained.

To make matters worse, the brewers are also tinkering with the recipes of these weaker beers to increase the original gravity so that they will not lose flavour or gravity. In short this means that more malt sugars will be added to the beer but they won't be fermented out as much. With less alcohol and more sugar in the end product the beers will become sweeter and cloying and lose their refreshing hoppy character (not that that's been a feature of the likes of Websters in any event...).

July is the month when CAMRA promotes our local independent brewers and never has there been a better time to leave the nationals to their tawdry profiteering and drink the beers of our local brewers whose strength and quality can be relied upon.

Britain's Independent Brewers produce 750 real ales...



In JULY'S OPENING TIMES

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PUB of the Month

July

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	29	30	31

The Stockport and South Manchester Pub of the Month for July is the Manchester Arms on Wellington Road South, Stockport. Over the years this well-known and much loved pub has become something of an institution on the Stockport drinking scene. The exterior has been cleaned up recently while the interior retains its basic yet comfortable feel. The three rooms consist of a smallish vault with a television, a larger lively pool room which houses the juke box (famous for its no nonsense quality tunes) and a more comfortable yet simply furnished room.

The "M.A." is popular with workers from the GPO sorting office over the road, but is perhaps best recognised as the 'bikers pub' where this often shunned group of society are warmly welcomed. And a warm welcome is extended to everyone who enters, be they shoppers, students, hippies, bikers or pensioners (who enjoy a lively time!). All combine to create an atmosphere unique to Stockport's pubs: friendly, down-to-earth, boisterous and trouble free.

But perhaps the best advert for the place is the beer; it is consistently one of the finest pints of Robinsons you will find anywhere, due to the commitment of licensee Kim Bromley. The range includes Best Mild and Best Bitter, and Old Tom available usually all year round, all on handpump and all of high quality.

The result of all this is that the Manchester Arms is one of Stockport's most popular pubs, and deservedly so. The presentation will be on Thursday 22nd July when a good turnout is expected and a good night is guaranteed for everyone.

Irene and Staff welcome you to

The Greyhound

Bowden St., Edgeley

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
Theakstons Bitter
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A warm welcome guaranteed
CAMRA Pub of the Month May 1993

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

The big brewers seem to have a death wish, if not for themselves, then at least for their long-suffering publicans.

Not content with punitive leases, sky-high prices and the constant promotion of drinking at home, they are now watering down their beer! To hear the likes of Bass and Courage talk, you would think that the new system of collecting tax had been sprung on them overnight and furthermore, was specifically designed to make a killing at their expense. As is usually the case when the big boys start whining, this is all nonsense. All the brewers were in fact given a long lead-in to the new system and every effort was made to ensure that it was neutral in its overall effect. And that does seem to be the case - although averages are notoriously misleading, and especially so where the gravities of beers are concerned, it does seem that brewers would gain rather than lose from the new system.

The real reason why Bass and Courage are squealing and watering down their beer is because a fairer tax system means that the smaller brewers will no longer be disadvantaged by the wastage allowance of 6% allowed under the old system. It's not unknown for a smaller brewer to have a wastage rate of 10% so under the old system that brewer would be paying tax on beer it couldn't sell. By contrast, with all their hi-tech breweries, the nationals can limit wastage to 2-3% whilst continuing to benefit from the 6% allowance. These back-door gains were built into the big brewers profit structure and so once they went out of the window, some other way had to be found of making up the shortfall and, as usual, it's the drinker that carries the can. This cynical abuse of their dominant market position by these companies really does take your breath away. Sensible drinkers should now vote with their feet and shun these debased liquids in favour of the quality products offered by our local breweries.

Design and Origination by Heatonian Publishing,
8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP. 061 432 8384
Printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.

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OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. 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 x 3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.

The Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER
FREEHOUSE**

Guest Beers Weekly

TAYLORS

BATEMANS



WE'RE
IN THE
1998
GOOD BEER
GUIDE

Woodstock



Just in time to catch Opening Times press date, the Woodstock Tavern opened its doors as South Manchester's newest pub on June 30th.

Sited on Barlow Moor Road in West Didsbury, almost opposite the Barleycorn, this is a very impressive conversion of the old British Council Offices by Bass. Comparisons will inevitably be drawn with Banks' conversion of the Four in Hand last year and initial impressions seem to favour Bass.

Both are conversions of large Victorian houses and the Woodstock seems to stay truer to its origins than the Four in Hand, there is much more of a multi-roomed layout and the decor, while neo-Victorian, seems to have avoided the acres of bric-a-brac that so often bedevils this type of pub. An inspired touch has been the inclusion of the spacious first floor landing in the public drinking area - certainly on Opening night, when all of Didsbury seemed to have arrived just before Opening Times, this made for a quiet sanctuary from the hurly burly downstairs.

So, what about the beer? The blackboard behind the bar proclaims 'the widest range of real cask ales available', well, not quite, but for Bass a step in the right direction with handpumps dispensing Draught Bass, Worthington Best Bitter, Stones Bitter and a guest beer - Fullers London Pride on opening night. The Bass was £1.50 as was the Fullers, not cheap but not out of step with Didsbury, one of the most expensive areas of the city in which to drink.

There is in addition an extensive beer garden, sheltered from the road by a row of mature trees and this certainly seemed much appreciated by the opening night crowd. All in all the Woodstock is an impressive and welcome addition to the local scene, particularly so in a part of the city where pubs are relatively thin on the ground.

**JULY IS INDEPENDENTS MONTH -
JOIN CAMRA DURING JULY WITH
THE SPECIAL OFFER DRIP MATS
IN INDEPENDENT OWNED PUBS
FOR ONLY £8**

**PLEASE NOTE COPY DATE FOR
AUGUST ISSUE - FRIDAY 16 JULY**

INTRODUCING DOBBINS

DARK MILD	OG 1032
BEST BITTER	OG 1038
ESB	OG 1060
YAKIMA GRANDE	
PALE ALE	OG 1050
& PORTER	OG 1050
KANGAROO 4X	OG 1042
GINGER BEER	OG 1050
OLD SOPORIFIC	OG 1084

**DOBBINS
GUILTLESS STOUT OG 1039**

BREWED IN MANCHESTER

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JULY IS INDEPENDENTS MONTH

July is the month when CAMRA traditionally give extra support to Independent Breweries - encouraging the public to drink beer produced by breweries other than the 'big five', and to drink in Independent Brewery pubs.

In this branch area, there are two Independent breweries - Robinsons and West Coast. Robinsons is a very traditional family owned company that has been producing excellent beer for generations. So why not make a point of popping into a couple of Robbys houses this month.

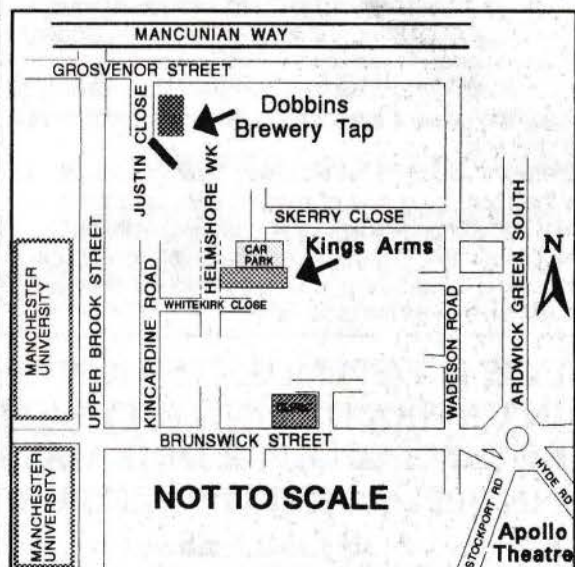
West Coast is very much the smaller of our two local breweries. Run by Stockport dwelling Brendan Dobbin, the brewery is located under the Kings Arms in Chorlton on Medlock, with parts of the plant now a couple of hundred yards away in what was the King Billy.

West Coast is a major triumph for Dobbin. Despite its size, it produces a range of beers that would put many very large concerns to shame. Bitter, an excellent mild, porter and stout are all available. Certain of the beers are seasonal - the new Kangaroo 4X, for example, is envisaged as a summer brew, whilst others such as the incredibly strong Old Soporific, is very much a winter beer. Big Heavy Jimmy, by the way, has NOT been discontinued, as erroneously reported in the last OT, but will return later in the year. The best place to try the full range of beers is the Kings Arms - see map, but various of Dobbins brews are available in the free houses in the area.

During July, CAMRA are offering membership at only £8 via the special drip mats in Independent pubs. If you have any difficulty finding one, contact our membership team at the address on page 18.



**PUB OF THE YEAR
PREVIOUS WINNER**



The King's Arms



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CHORLTON ON MEDLOCK
**IT'S ONLY DIFFICULT TO
FIND THE FIRST TIME!**

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LAST TUESDAY OF MONTH**

HOME OF DOBBINS FINE BEERS

*Best Bitter
Dark Mild
Extra Special Bitter
Yakima Grande Porter
Ginger Beer
Guiltless Stout*

Great Beers at Low Prices

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

OPENING TIMES

LETTERS



From: Rhys Jones

Tony Wilkinson (letters, June) enquires as to the last Stockport outlet to sell both Robinsons "ordinary" bitter and Dark Best Mild. The answer, without doubt, is Stockport Beer Festival (as it was then called), where in the early years both beers found a ready market. Naturally, no other Robinsons beers were sold, as they are widely available in the town's pubs.

Perhaps it is once again time for the Festival to bring these two fine beers to the attention of a wider public.

From: Ian Kershaw

I'm responding to your invitation to write to *Opening Times* about the issue of live music at the Beer Festival.

This year's Beer Festival was a splendid event - congratulations all round - as far as the beer was concerned. However, excellent though the beer was, the music was intolerable. Since it was so loud that communication was impossible - I couldn't make myself understood to one of the barmen, nor understand his reply - my friends and I were forced to stand in the foyer as the only place which was reasonably music free. We were not alone!! The prospect of that horrendous din was sufficient to deter me and others from going back on the following two evenings. I doubt that most people going to the Beer Festival go on account of fifth-rate music at mega decibels! If you can't dispense with the music altogether, please put it on just one night and advertise the fact so that those who want a pint in peace and quiet, and want to be able to talk to their friends without shouting themselves hoarse, are able to avoid that night.

From: The Station Regulars, The Station, Ashton-under-Lyne

Our visit to the Stockport Beer Festival on Friday evening was a great disappointment. The new venue was great, the range of beers copious and the atmosphere friendly.

That is until the rock band assailed us with their cacophony, destroying any possibility of civilised conversation. We and many others left as the group were about to start their second session. (The same could be said of the 1991 Blackburn Festival). Why, when CAMRA decries the use of juke boxes and loud machines in pubs, does it inflict this torture on the unsuspecting?

Do other readers agree or are we just getting senile?

(Editors note - The above letters reflect feedback we also received at the festival itself. Without the two-room layout we had at the Masonic Hall, the volume of the entertainment was always going to be something that needed careful attention and it is clear that this year many feel that we did not get the balance right, especially on Thursday (which was the day that spawned the largest number of complaints). In addition there does seem to be a demand for a 'quiet night'. I feel sure that next year's festival will take these concerns fully into account.)

From: Alex Mitchell, The Junction Inn, Audenshaw

Three years ago we took over the tenancy of the Victoria, Hyde Road, West Gorton. It was in a sorry state, run down, with very few customers, yet you had regular mentions of the previous incumbent in your organ, even down to his proud boast that his new pub (which has subsequently closed) was staying a "Boddies free zone". No mention was made of us.

You mentioned an adjacent pub, which, unfortunately, had to discontinue Chesters Mild, because of lack of sales. We were selling 2 to 3 barrels of Chester's Mild a week. No mention was made of us.

You mentioned an adjacent pub which couldn't get anybody to play their organ so they got a piano, but unfortunately they had no one to play this either. We were running sing-a-long and party nights and packing customers in. No mention was made of us.

We put on Marston's Pedigree as a guest beer, No mention was made of us.

Eventually we got a mention in your "directory" which said we sold Chester's Mild & Bitter. No mention was made of Boddies bitter, which we had sold for over two years. We were reckoned by the cognoscenti to have the "best pint of Boddies in the area", so much so, that the bar staff from Stockport CAMRA's favourite local pub, drank in the Victoria.

Finally, we left the Victoria and took over the Junction, Audenshaw. We had hoped that we were outwith the remit of "Opening Times" - no such luck! Your brief few lines in last month's issue contained some inaccuracies and a measure of cynicism which made us wish you still weren't mentioning us. For the record:-

Our address is Whitehead Street, Audenshaw, (which incidentally is a lovely cobbled street in a quiet setting, just off Guide Lane, not just "beneath the main road, but handy for Guide Bridge Station").

Both the Speckled Hen and the Timothy Taylor's Landlord are priced at £1.48 (a bargain if ever there was).

We have three guest beers, one of which we change regularly, to date we have had Flowers IPA, Porter and Hartleys XB, we hope to have Wadsworth 6X shortly. All have been ordered through Whitbreads and with the active help and encouragement of our business development manager.

Finally, as to the "(apparently) permanent guest beers", even your much favoured, many different beers pubs, wouldn't keep a guest beer if it wasn't selling.

What is it with you people? Has your hatred of the brewery turned you against all things Whitbread? I think it's put up or shut up time, either you refuse Whitbread's Boddies advertisement in your magazine (your biggest advertiser), or you give us Whitbread licensees who care about our beer, who care about our customers and who care about our pubs, a fair crack of the whip.

(Editors note - this letter came with the instruction that it should be printed in full or not at all. For the record, all letters to OT are printed in full. Several points are made: Alex seems aggrieved that his previous pub had no mention in these pages. I think it is worth pointing out that OT is put together by a team of volunteers and whilst we do try to keep up to date with the happenings in the pubs in our area this is not always possible. If any licensee thinks that there is something about his or her pub that merits a mention in these pages they are always welcome to get in touch and we will do our best. He also quibbles with the detail of our article - fair enough, but I think the broad detail was accurate enough. As to the closing comments, well, I don't think Alex can have been reading OT all that closely as our policy has always been to take as we find. If a pub or brewery is doing something right, we will say so; if they are not, then that will get a mention as well! Take, for example, the Hat & Feathers on Mason Street which has received very favourable mention in these pages and is a Whitbread pub to boot, and which just happens to be selling Taylors Landlord at £1.20 a pint which really is "a bargain if ever there was one".)

From: John Cunningham

I was very disappointed on visiting the Hogs Head in Altrincham, when my girlfriend and I called in for a pint.

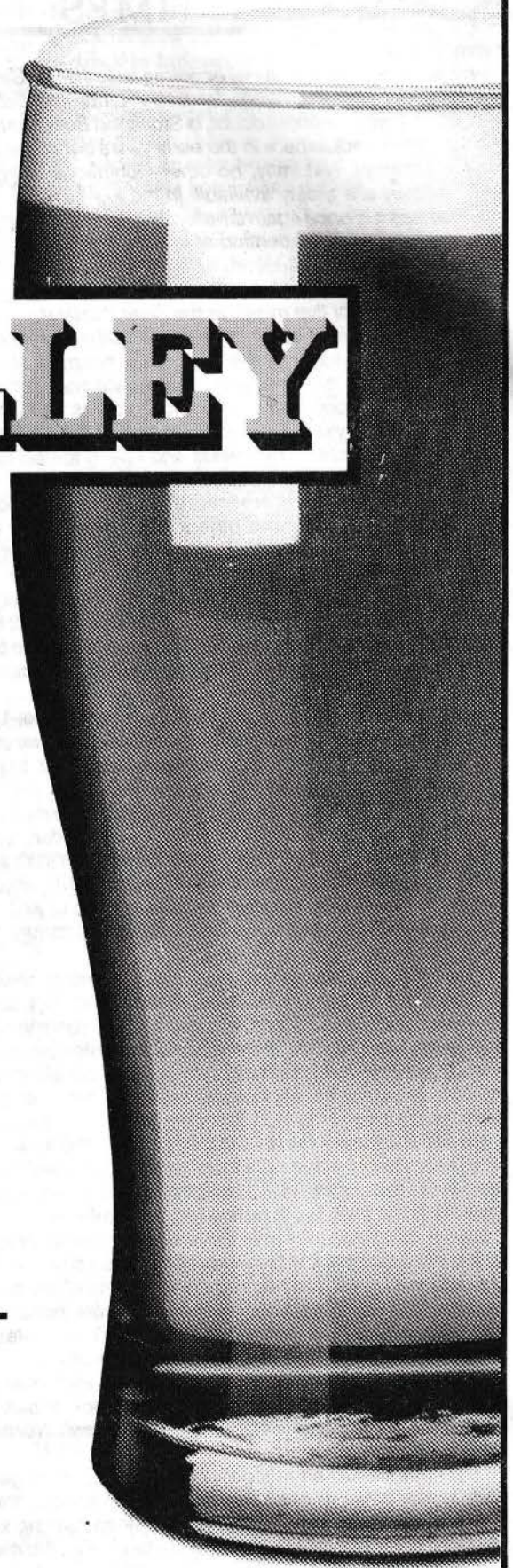
Whilst in work I wear a suit and tie etc, so in my spare time I like to wear jeans, trainers and a baseball cap (casual but smart). On entering the pub the manager looked up and down at me and told me I could not wear my cap inside the pub! Being the manager of a real ale outlet myself I was surprised he would treat his customers this way. I wonder if anyone else has experienced such bizarre rules (which I think he invented there and then on the spot!)

(Editors note - John is the manager of Busbys at Terminal 2 and tells us that they are now running a "real Ale Hour" between 6-7pm when Tetley Bitter and Draught Bass are only £1 a pint.)

LOCALLEY

**TETLEY
BITTER**

**BRITAIN'S BEST
LOVED BITTER**



STAGGER

with Paul Felton

The rainy day of 28 May gave way to a dry and pleasant evening as our hardy band of veterans embarked on the 'ABC' crawl, a tour of hosterries in Ardwick, Brunswick and Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Our first port of call was the **King's Head** on Chancellor Lane, formerly a Matthew Brown / Scottish & Newcastle house, now Grand Met. It's a reasonable enough two room affair, with a pool table in the vault. Three beers were available: Websters Yorkshire bitter, John Smiths bitter and Courage Directors. The John Smiths was warm, poor and overpriced at a remarkable 68p for a half; the Directors was a comparatively reasonable 70p a half, and tasted far better.

The **Union** on Higher Ardwick is one of the clutch of pubs bought off Grand Met by Burtonwood. The Union has always been a splendid little pub in search of good beer, and now it has found it; witness its pub of the month award in January 1993. Add to this two good rooms, a friendly atmosphere, top ups to your pint from a little jug, and what more could you want? On this occasion, however, no mild was available; bitter was £1.16 and okay.

The **Church** on Ardwick Green is something of a contrast. Your writer found it not an uplifting place in which to drink - several areas, but nothing much of character. Two beers were available (a third, Websters Green Label (!?) was coming the following Tuesday) Websters Yorkshire Bitter and Courage Directors. Only Directors was tried, suffering in comparison with the King's Head, being more expensive and of lesser quality.

The **Park** on Parkside Street is another recent Burtonwood acquisition, this time from Whitbread. On my only previous visit the Chesters mild had been excellent, and this standard was found still to be the case on this evening (despite higher prices than the Union). Bitter was good at £1.21, mild very good at £1.18. This is a good local, consisting of two small rooms (though there was a karaoke machine in the lounge on the night of our visit). But why was there a quarter of an onion on the window sill?

The **George & Dragon** is on Ardwick Green. A John Smiths pub with hints of Irishness about it, it has no separate rooms as such, but numerous divided areas formed by knocking through walls and putting in archways. The flock wallpaper is more than compensated for by an attractive run of small chest-high mirrors around the walls. Only John Smiths bitter was available, at £1.21 it was okay.

The **King's Arms** on Helmshore Walk has been mentioned often in these pages, being the home of Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery. For those who have not been, it's a two-room pub in the middle of a housing estate, well-patronised by both locals and beer tourists. Of the myriad of beers available, we tried only mild and bitter, both of which were okay, with the mild being slightly preferred.

The **Mawson** on Francis Street, just off Kincardine Road, is a classic Tetleys pub, one of your writer's favourite interiors of any pub. An unpromising box from the outside, go through the doors and you're confronted with a wonderful array of leaded windows and wood panelling, and a choice of three rooms and a lobby. Bitter was £1.20, but all tried the mild at £1.15, which was quite good.

Banks's Falcon, on Kincardine Road, has been rechristened the **Tilted Falcon** after recent remedial work to its foundations (caused by the fact that it had been built on an old graveyard and was falling down). The pub itself is just an estate pub, nothing special: on the evening in question there was a disco in progress. Four beers were available: Banks's mild and bitter, Hansons bitter and, on handpump, at £1.38 Camerons Strongarm (the brewery now owned by Banks's of course). The first three were keg and whilst this is mentioned at the base of the new pump cowlts, there is surely a case for making the message more prominent.

The **Plymouth Grove**, on (surprisingly enough) Plymouth Grove, gave us further problems. It's a large lounge type pub, with electric pumps for Boddingtons mild and bitter. The barmaid was asked as to whether the beers were cask or keg: "no", she replied "it's Boddingtons dark bitter." The pump did in fact say 'cask conditioned', so we rather dubiously tried it, and received a liquid which tasted of beer: little else could be said of it.

The **Bowling Green** was enlivened by the entertainment, a gentleman who appeared to be in the process of trying to annihilate both his guitar and a set of rather good songs written by other people, though quite a lot of people liked him; but I digress. The pub itself is an unremarkable two room Greenalls house, popular with students. Stones bitter was poor, but the Greenalls bitter was pretty good.

We ended our walk at the **Grafton**, on Grafton Street. This is a Holt's pub, (at least) the second on the site, which received an extension a couple of years ago. It's got a large lounge and smaller vault with pool table, and serves mild and bitter at Holt's traditionally ridiculously low prices. Both beers were in good form, as is often the case.

Once again a varying array of pubs and beers were experienced on the night but remember this article can only present a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or their beers. As ever try them yourselves and see what you think.

LITTLE JACK HORNER

28 LORD STREET, STOCKPORT



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VAUX DOUBLE MAXIM,
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HOME-COOKED FOOD
MON-FRI LUNCH

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TO 10PM

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- ★ Traditionally Brewed Hydes's Anvil Ales
- ★ Good Home Cooked Food Served Daily
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- ★ Bowling Parties and function room.
- ★ Egon Ronay 1993 - MLC Guide

Hydes
Anvil Ales

Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

Pub In The Peak

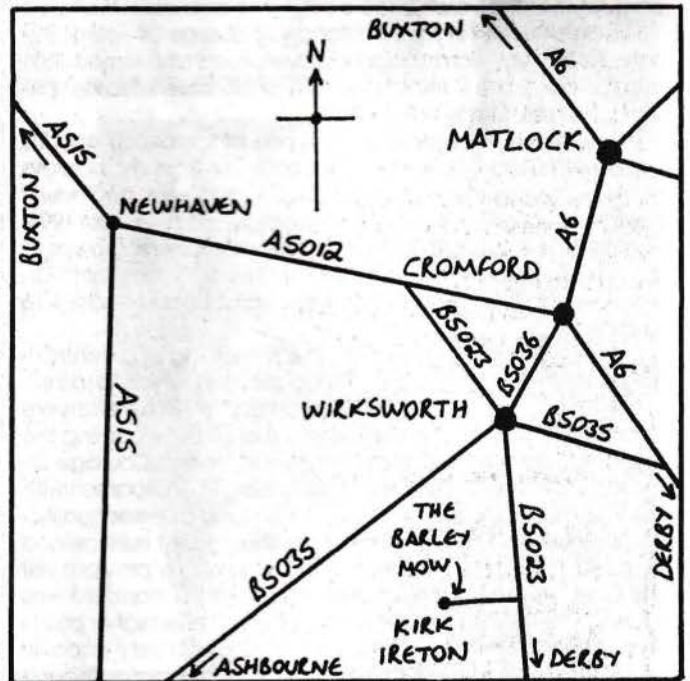
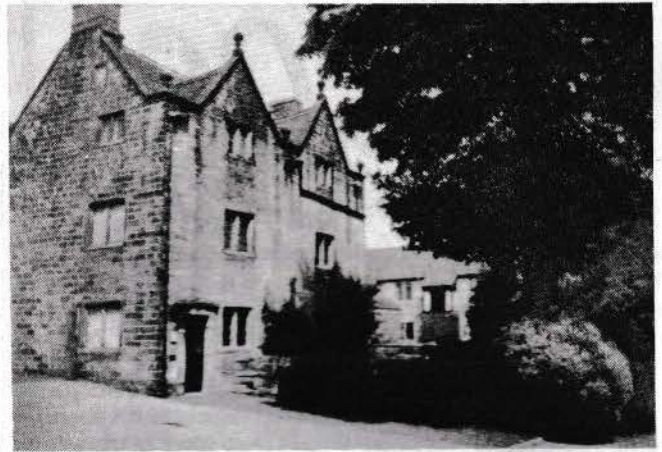
by Peter Edwardson

The village of Kirk Ireton lies in attractive, rolling, wooded countryside in the Ecclesbourne valley on the southern fringes of the Peak District. The town of Wirksworth, a few miles to the north, is built of the grey limestone typical of the area, but at Kirk Ireton the local building material is a honey-coloured gritstone giving the village an almost Cotswold air. This small, sleepy place is an appropriate setting (although rather an unexpected one) for what must be one of the finest and most unspoilt country pubs not only in the Peak District but in the whole of England which, what is more, is not some low-roofed cottage alehouse but an imposing Jacobean manor house. That pub is the Barley Mow.

Kirk Ireton is reached by taking the B5023 south from Wirksworth in the direction of Derby, and then turning right after about three miles. The road ascends the main village street, and the Barley Mow stands on the right near the top. It's easily missed - there's only a small, plain sign on the tree outside, and the building itself, with impressive, stone-built frontage and two tall gables, doesn't immediately strike you as a pub.

Entering through the small door on the extreme left, you immediately find yourself in one of the most marvellous pub rooms in the country, with its low beams, quarry-tiled floor, huge black open fireplace, slate-topped tables, bench seats around the walls and small hatchway bar in the far corner. The twentieth century has scarcely made any inroads here. There are two further rooms of similar character, one at the back with more quarry tiles, and one at the front with a parquet floor and French window opening out into the small garden between the pub and the road. In winter, with a fire blazing in the grate, it is a delightfully warm and cosy retreat: in summer, insulated by those thick stone walls, it can remain at little above cellar temperature, ideal for the beer, but maybe a shock to the system of the unwary caller.

The beer is as exceptional as the pub, in terms of both range and method of presentation. There's no cellar, and the casks are stillaged on a stone shelf behind the bar, with beer dispensed by gravity. The range varies a little over time, but on a recent visit there were five real ales available, all at very reasonable prices - Hook Norton Bitter and Old Hooky, Marstons Pedigree, Courage Directors and Taylors Landlord, together with traditional Thatchers cider. The local favourite seems to be Pedigree, which you may see being served from the jug, but on



that occasion the Hook Norton Bitter was particularly good - this is a beer which seems well suited to being served by gravity in an unspoilt country pub. In recent years, although the quality of the beer has been well up to standard, the landlady has asked to be excluded from the "Good Beer Guide", so it can't be emphasised too much that visiting parties should treat the pub with respect.

The Barley Mow isn't the place to go for an elaborate meal, as food is limited to a selection of rolls at an amazing 40p each - two of these provide a very substantial snack for less than a pound. If you are in need of a hot meal a number of nearby pubs can meet your requirements, including the Olde Gate at Brassington which was the subject of one of these articles last year. Nor is it the place for an all-day drinking session, as opening hours are restricted too - only 12-2 and 7-11 - so it's best to make sure you don't arrive too late.

While we're not aware of any imminent changes, how long a pub such as the Barley Mow can continue to hold the twentieth century at bay is anyone's guess. It may seem quite a long way away, but Kirk Ireton is in fact only about forty miles from Stockport through some of the most varied and beautiful scenery in Britain. If you've never experienced the place, there's no excuse for not paying a visit as soon as possible.

Thatched House

The Thatched House on Church-gate, Stockport has had a chequered history in recent years with a number of licensees coming and going in rapid succession.

Better times seemed on the way when the former Grand Met pub was bought by Sunderland brewers Vaux and those prospects have been further increased by the arrival of Neville Doe and Bryan Allred in early June.

Both come with experience in the licensed and catering trade - Neville is a qualified head chef (and worked for a time at the nearby Old Rectory) while Bryan has many years experience in the trade, latterly as cellarman at the Pomona in Gorton where he was responsible for the range of guest beers introduced there.

The pub needed a thorough clean up and redecoration when they moved in and this was accomplished in record time, mainly due to the assistance of local bikers - Bryan and his girlfriend are bikers both - and in the medium term more drastic alterations are planned which will involve moving the bar to its old position to the rear of the pub at the left and revamping both the lounge and vault, not least to remove the tacky 'wood' panelling in the latter and fake beams in the former. A catering kitchen is also to be added to enable a full range of food to be offered.

Of more immediate interest is the beer range with no less than five cask beers on handpump - Thome Mild, Vaux Bitter, Samson, ESB and Double Maxim. At the time of writing the keg Vaux Light was also on 'handpump' but we are assured that this was purely a temporary arrangement and should have been



eliminated by the time you read this. The pub is now open all permitted hours and also offers a variety of discounts - for example 20p off everything for pensioners from Monday to Friday 11-4. All in all this is now a pub worth visiting and we wish Bryan and Neville every success.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: David Thomas

Would it be possible for your excellent and informative articles on local pubs to include a caveat on those where teenage disco music assaults the ears, so that mature beer drinkers can avoid them like the plague?

(Editors note - David signs off "CAMPIP" - the Campaign for Peace in Pubs! We'll see what we can do...)

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Vaux Samson	£1.20pt
Vaux Bitter	£1.15pt
Double Maxim	£1.30pt
Thorn's Dark Mild	£1.05pt

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JULY '88

TIME PLEASE was the heading of the front page of issue No. 51. But this was not the end of drinking time, but time for action. Action on the problems of drunkenness, and the violence that too often seems to go with it. Several likely causes of the problem were pin-pointed:-

Lager advertising aimed at the affluent 18 - 25 age group, thought to be likely to attract a much younger, and therefore under age group. The higher strength lagers being introduced only make things worse - CAMRA calls for a total ban on TV and Radio alcohol advertising.

"Fun Pubs" often seem to attract trouble. They have been long condemned by CAMRA, who point out that the traditional pub, with its mix of ages does provide a much more controlled drinking environment.

Off-licence and supermarket selling has mushroomed in recent years - with brewers discounting their beers to supermarkets, some publicans can buy their cans more cheaply than from their own breweries. Because of the reduced control over who is buying alcohol, CAMRA calls for all "open shelf" selling of alcohol to be outlawed. (There seems to have been little change since 1988.)

Completion of the refurbishment of the Horse & Farrier in Gatley was reported - the style of alteration gave the feeling that nothing had changed, but almost everything had. The installation of Victorian style fireplaces should give a cosy atmosphere in winter, whilst sampling the excellent Hyde's Light & Bitter.

A new guest beer at the Coach and Horses, opposite Piccadilly Station, is Burton Bridge Festival Ale - delivered direct from the smallest and newest brewery in Burton-on-Trent, this rich, potent brew (OG1055) is competitively priced at 95p. a pint. (Sad that the Coach has long been closed, a victim of progress in the form of the new Metrolink rapid transport system.)

The first Holiday Ale of the summer season covered Stockport and Liverpool, the latter being described as the city that contains "some of the most spectacular pubs in the country" e.g. near neighbours Midland and Central Commercial opposite Central Station; the famous Vines, not far from Lime Street

Station; and last but certainly not least the Philharmonic, on Hope Street near the Philharmonic Hall. Compulsory visiting for any pub lover, but it was pointed out that it was only possible to scratch the surface with a city such as Liverpool. Go and explore for yourselves, you won't be disappointed.

In April 1988, it was reported that the Golden Lion on Hillgate had just had a change of licensee, the sixth in two years. He had now given up the ghost after only a couple of months, and the pub was closed again.

Sporran Saga

The saga of the Swinging Sporan continues, the latest play from Scottish & Newcastle being a doubling of the rent on the pub.

An interesting rule or guideline from Manchester City Council says that a building must look as if it serves the purpose for which it is intended i.e. the Sporan should look like a pub and not the corner part of the multi-storey car park! Licensee, Cliff has asked S & N to repaint the outside of the building but they refused on the grounds that he is a trespasser. Maybe we're missing something here, but if Cliff is regarded as a trespasser then how can S & N charge him rent, and why are they still supplying beer?!

Cliff has also asked S & N to change the signs from Youngers to Theakstons. This was also refused. The Sporan has not sold Youngers beers for at least three years, and a lot of passing trade must have been lost by people being put off by the Youngers signs.

Taking matters into their own hands, Cliff and his helpers have now painted the outside of the building an eye-catching multicoloured "mosaic". The Scotsman on the old sign has now been replaced by a new sign featuring a young lady's bum wearing threadbare jeans. This caused instant controversy. UMIST security complained to the police of obscene material being displayed. The police arrived on the doorstep and the conversation went something like:- Police "We've had a complaint about obscene pictures". Cliff "I assume you mean that" pointing to the sign. Police "Yes". Cliff "Well, is it obscene?" Police "No." Cliff "Well, what are you doing here then?"

If Cliff is forced to repaint the outside of the pub then the red bricks become green, the green ones blue etc. etc.

In Cliff's own words "The brewery has not had to deal with someone like me before!"

And so the fight continues and we will keep you posted of future developments.

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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival '93

The last Stockport Beer Festival was undoubtedly a success, enjoyed by most of those who attended. However, a move to a new venue is never entirely trouble-free and we have received comments about three things in particular:

Why no hot food? - the intention was to have hot food, as in previous years. Unfortunately there was a last minute hitch with the Town Hall Catering Staff which we were powerless to do anything about. Normal service with a range of hot food will be restored next year.

The music was too loud - there is also comment about this in this month's letters column. Generally, there was more adverse comment on Thursday. Certainly this is something which we are very aware of and which will have to be carefully controlled next time. There could well be a case for having a "quiet session" with either no music or something quieter in the background, much as we normally feature at lunchtimes.

Not enough choice on Friday night - our beer managers have to walk a tightrope when it comes to rationing the beer to ensure that there is a decent selection left for Saturday. This year we were caught off-guard by the large turn out on Thursday night which had a knock-on effect on Friday. Now that we have a better picture of what attendance will be like at the Town Hall we will plan accordingly next year. It will always be the case, however, that not all beers can be on at the same time, if beer quality is to be maintained.

If anyone does have any suggestions as to how the festival can be improved further do drop a line to Opening Times and they will be passed on to the organisers.

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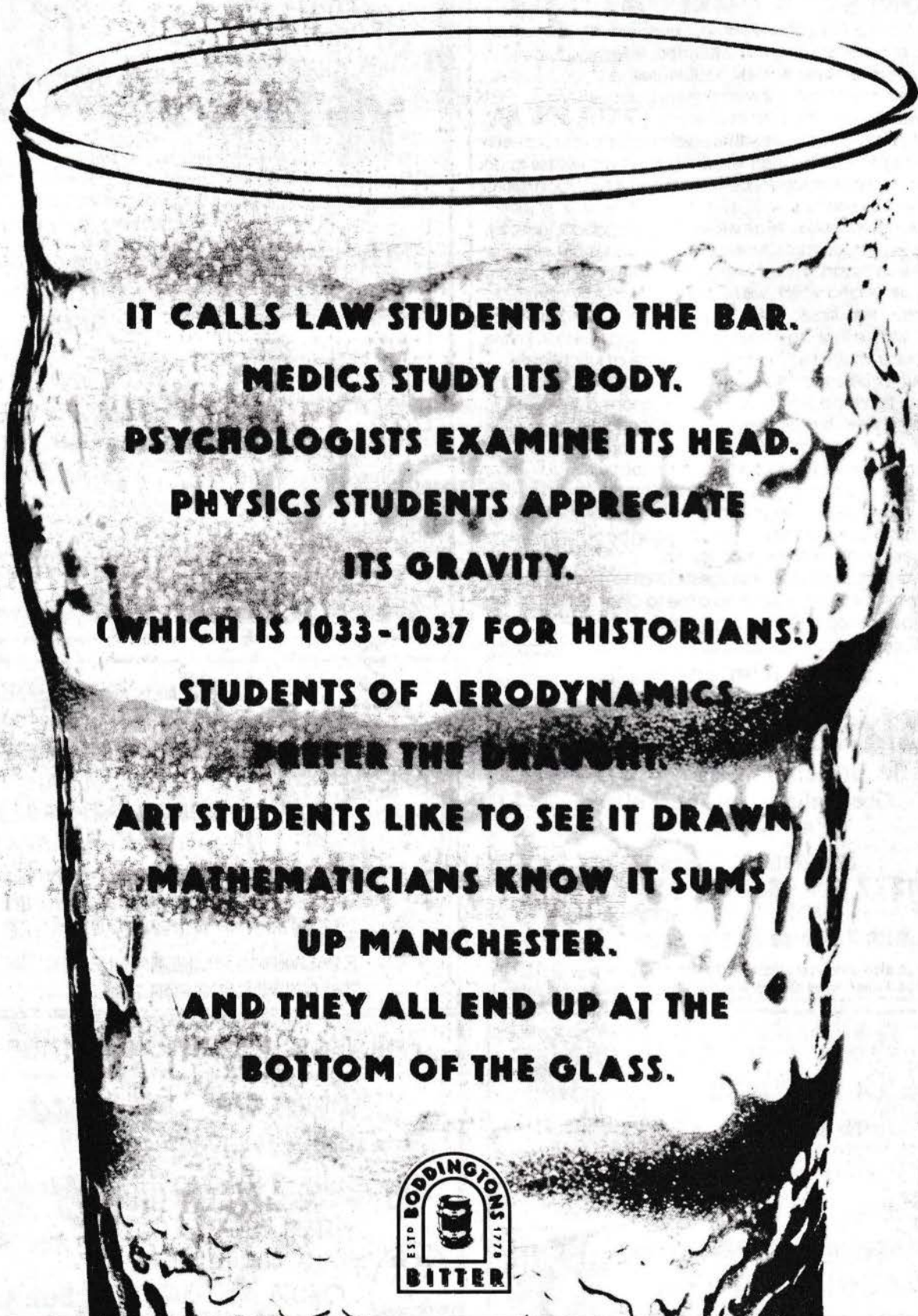
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**ART STUDENTS LIKE TO SEE IT DRAWN
MATHEMATICIANS KNOW IT SUMS
UP MANCHESTER.**

**AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE
BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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Boddingtons Draught Bitter. Brewed at the Strangeways Brewery since 1778.



RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Richard Hough

I thought I'd bring you something a little different this month on the live music scene. And it should be a bit special to lure me away from the final night of the Stockport Beer Festival. But it happened on a warm, sunny evening in early June, so I made my way to the Crown Ale House on Heaton Lane in Stockport. The pub, situated right beneath the viaduct, is one of the most highly regarded free houses in the area. It boasts ten superb beers plus one real cider, all in the capable hands of enthusiastic licensee Ken Birch.

The interior is a classic four-room layout which has been refurbished to a high standard. The beer garden at the back has been opened up in the last few weeks and has had a tidy up, but tonight it was transformed into a venue for live music.

Krel are "self-styled cyber-punk space rockers" who, despite all attempts, defy pigeon holing. The purpose-built stage, awash with psychedelic colours, lengths of netting and piping and assorted traffic signs, was most impressive. Then enter James, on stage for the first time ever. He treated us to half an hour of virtuoso didgeridoo playing as the sun set.

And then it was the turn of Krel. This four piece have been together for three years; they are less of a rock band and more of an audio visual experience. The beer garden was perfumed with the scent of joss sticks and the strobe lighting gave off interesting effects on the various shapes. Two of the band were resplendent in fluorescent face paint to complete the effect.

The music they play is music to soak up and be swept away by. Their major influences include the Hawkwind (who the band supported recently), early Pink Floyd, the Police and Black Sabbath, but they are also influenced by Punk rock. Around 120 people turned up, which was excellent considering there were no leaflets or posters produced. If you don't get to experience Krel live, a tape is available from M1 Music in Manchester, but they really have to be seen to be heard. But when you do see them, you too can get lost in music.

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This summer sees the fifth anniversary of the liberalisation of licensing hours, which was supposed to usher in a new, tourist-friendly era for Britain's pubs. But has it actually worked out like that?

The tiny minority of hardened boozers who really do want to drink all day have certainly benefited, as almost every town now has at least one pub which does open all day, every day. Many pubs have chosen to open all day on one or two days, or close later in the afternoon for the benefit of their regulars.

In general, however, what has happened is that pubs have taken advantage of their new-found freedom to actually open shorter hours, and close when trade is slack. We find them closing on some or all weekday lunchtimes, closing at 2 or 2.30 where previously they opened until 3, and opening later in the evening. What's more, they hardly ever tell you outside when they are actually open.

This is not a problem for locals, but it is a serious problem for the casual pub-goer, whether tourists, shoppers or just someone passing through a strange town and in need of a pint. Before the reform, we had a clear predictable system where you were prevented from drinking in the afternoon by the law of the land. Now, we have a confused, unpredictable state of affairs where you are kept from doing so by the whim of licensees, and can't even rely on pubs being open during the old permitted hours.

In hindsight, would it not have given the customer a better deal to keep the previous system of standardised hours, with a little liberalisation around the edges, and allow licensees the opportunity to apply to the licensing bench for all-day opening on one or more days if they wanted 't? At the very least, we should now have compulsory display of hours outside pubs, and there is no excuse for pubs not doing this voluntarily.

Whatever your views on the subject of Sunday trading, it is disturbing to see major retailers such as Tesco and Sainsbury's openly flouting the law and getting away with impunity. This is hardly going to encourage respect for the law. But what would be the result if a major pub-owning company decided to do the same and open its pubs on a Sunday afternoon? There certainly wouldn't be rioting in the streets, but there's little doubt that the law would come down on them like a ton of bricks. Do I detect double standards at work?

Featured Pub - Quiet Woman, Earl Sterndale
This month's featured pub is a long time favourite of the High Peak branch not just because it has served good real ale for years but because it is a classic country pub set in some of the most beautiful and impressive Derbyshire countryside.

Earl Sterndale is a small limestone village to the south east of Buxton just off the B 5053. It's close to the River Dove and surrounded by high hills.

The sign, which stands at the roadside, depicts a be-headed woman with the immortal adage beneath 'Soft Words Tumeth Away Wrath'. The woman is Chattering Chatteris, an early publican's wife whose constant nagging made her husband's life a misery. When she started talking in her sleep it was more than he could stand and he resolved the situation in one simple, if drastic, act.

The Quiet Woman, serving Marstons beers, is opposite the small village green and is a village pub in the true sense of the word. It's not thatched; it's not rose-covered and you won't find the small car park at the front full of executive cars. But what you will discover is a down to earth pub catering for its regulars and passers-by alike.

The small 16th-c building has a plain exterior but is full of character within. The small lobby leads directly to a low-beamed bar with open fire, tiled floor and busy serving area. Beyond the bar is a games room with pool table which is popular with the younger customers.

The range of beers has increased over the years and at present is: Banks's Mild, Marstons Bitter, Pedigree and Owd Roger all of which are invariably in good condition. These can be enjoyed in peace (there is no juke box) and accompanied by a sandwich or pie if solids are required.

The bar is well stocked with chocolate bars and crisps and local cheeses and eggs (bantam and duck as well as your run of the mill hens eggs) can be purchased from the bar.

The fact that elaborate meals are not available allows the pub to remain an integral part of the village and not become a weekend pub catering for people who only visit for the food; something that has happened to too many village pubs.

The Quiet Woman remains an important element in the life of the village, a place where people meet and meetings are held; the busy notice board is testament to its central role.

Having read this, you may visit the pub expecting something out of the ordinary and in a way it is. It is not elaborate nor is it the most photographed pub in England but it is a down to earth pub, an example of how the pub can be part of village life, something that is quickly becoming a rarity.

The Robin Hood

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PUB GAMES

BY TOM LORD



This month's two pub games are 'Blind Hughie' a dominoes game which is said to originate among Scottish miners, and 'Rings' a board game of many varieties once common around the U.K.

Blind Hughie

The game is played by any number from 2 to 5. Each player draws 5 dominoes and places them face down on the table. The first player takes the domino at the left of his row and places it in the middle of the table. The second player takes his left hand domino and if it matches the turned up one plays it in the normal way.

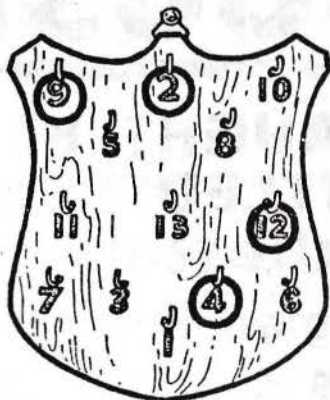
If it does not match the domino is returned face upwards at the right end of the player's row. Play carries on until someone gets rid of all their dominoes. If no player can dispose of all their dominoes the player with the lowest total of spots is the winner.

Rings

Rings is played on a wall-mounted board (same height as a dart board) with hooks each with a numerical value. Rubber rings are thrown from about 8 feet scoring the value of whichever hook is ringed. There are many variations of the game but the most popular is 151 up with each player having three rings to throw alternately.

Arthur Taylor in his book 'Pub Games' reports the reminiscences of an old gentleman who remembered players, who having completed the normal game could "throw five rings into a half pint glass from six feet; stand at one end of the bar and ring all the beer pump handles, and finish up ringing the small tap on the strong ale barrel.

Standard Rings Board



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CAMPAIGN
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Three pubs that seem to be under pressure in varying degrees; the Clarkes and Ring O Bells in Hyde - almost next door to each other, are both on the market. But in better shape than the Goyt in Whaley Bridge which is closed!

More news from the **Witchwood**, Ashton-under-Lyne. If you remember last month we reported that the licensee and owner John Dyson was faced with a tricky dilemma - drop Holts his most popular beer or lose precious (and welcome) deals from the national brewers. Sadly Holts has gone from the range. Let's hope things change for the better and Holts can again become a permanent feature in this fine free house.

The latest from the Stalybridge Campaign. A group has recently been formed - Friends of Stalybridge Station - which is presently campaigning vigorously on many fronts to save not only the buffet (CAMRA's main interest) but all the station buildings. T-shirts are being printed, postcards are being produced and stickers stuck. It is good to see renewed vigour from areas other than CAMRA (the local branch is still very much involved as a member of FOSS which meets at the buffet every Wednesday at 6.00pm). Let's hope good news will be forthcoming.

The **Oddfellows** on Ridling Lane, Hyde, held a Vaux Beer Festival from 25th June to 4th July. This was both to mark British Pub Week and to showcase the wide range of Vaux Beer available and, of course, to let the locals try something just that little bit different. An extra four handpumps were installed for the event which, in what was described as a major coup, managed to lay on a supply of Vaux's Durham Cathedral Celebration Ale, specially brewed to mark the 900th anniversary of the Cathedral and normally only available in the North East.

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Pub Conservation

There was an item about pubs and conservation on BBC North West Tonight on Tuesday 18th May. It reported on the large number of pubs in the north west currently under threat of demolition or loss of character through unsympathetic alterations. The BBC interest was sparked by a pamphlet entitled 'An Endangered Species?', which received widespread press coverage in May. The pamphlet has been produced by Debbie Hickey and Jacqui Norwood, two students at Manchester Metropolitan University and is a very readable explanation of why we should protect pubs and how to go about it. It very succinctly covers the role of pressure groups like CAMRA and the Victorian Society in advising and advocating for change. The booklet is available from Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport. Please send 9" x 6" SAE plus 50p.

Midsummer Madness

In-house beer festivals are very much the fashion these days and the latest is the 'Midsummer Madness' event which takes place at the Marble Arch on Rochdale Road from 1st - 17th of this month. Over 50 different beers will be available over the festival with at least 20 on at any time. The choice is impressive and includes not only the full Oak range (including the launch of their new premium ale, Midsummer Madness) but a wide range from around the country including such rarities as Titanic Stout, Dunn Ploughman Shirehorse, Arundel Bitter and Eastwood Bitter. These will feature alongside old favourites such as Batemans Victory Ale and Taylors Golden Best.

Certainly one to catch, the Marble is open normal pub hours but do note that it is closed on Sunday lunchtime.

Who Owns Ruddles?

In the early days of the Real Ale revolution, Ruddles was a revered name in beer drinking circles. Their strong ale, Ruddles County, achieved near cult-status.

However, the Ruddle family sold out to Grand Met who in turn sold their breweries to Courage who, in turn, sold the Ruddles brewery to Dutch independent brewers, Grolsch. So, that's clear then - Grolsch own Ruddles but supply the beer to Courage who in turn supply it to the pubs.

Or do they? In the circular issued by Courage announcing that they were watering down their beer (or "making minor adjustments to the alcohol declared content" as they coyly put it), among Courage's brands were listed Ruddles County and Ruddles Best. The two beers were apparently to drop from 5% and 3.8% to 4.9 and 3.7. When this anomaly was pointed out by beer writer Roger Protz, the brewers got most uppity - Grolsch insisting that they are nothing to do with Courage and more to the point, the beers have always been declared at 4.9 and 3.7!

So, just who does brew Ruddles? And who decides how strong it is to be? Answers on a postcard please...

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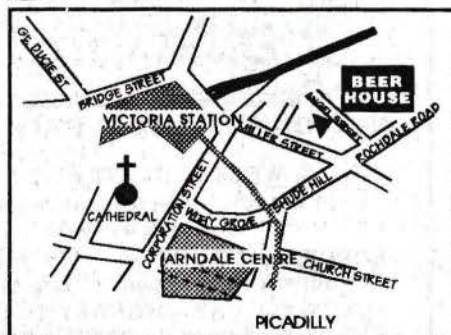
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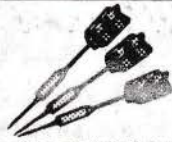


**IN THE
1993
GOOD
BEER
GUIDE**

**ANGEL ST. MCR.
☎ 061 839 7019**



Fistfull of Arrows



A new piece of silverware will be adorning the display at the Magnet on Wellington Road North. The men's dart team are the new holders of the Stockport Licensed Houses Knock-Out Cup.

The Heaton Norris men beat Edgeley's Blue Bell in a closely contested final. At 3-0 up, Magnet seemed to have the game sewn up. But the Premier 'B' division side had other ideas against their Super League opposition. Trevor Goddard, who blasted in a 15 dart leg, and Steve Needham both pulled back games for the giant killers.

The hero of the hour, though, was one of Stockport's top players, Mick Roberts, who safely saw Magnet home.

Although neutrals might have liked to see a victory for the team from the lower division, there can be no denying that Magnet deserved the trophy. On the way to the final they disposed of Dilke 'A', Dilke 'B' and the otherwise unbeaten Cale Green, arguably the best three sides in the area.

The Stockport town team, playing out of Cale Green SC, are going all out to retain their Greater Manchester Super League title. At the time of going to press they have played three matches and come away with three convincing victories.

Heywood were the first team to come under the cosh. Cheadle Social Club's John Hollins celebrated his Cheshire county call-up, to set Stockport on the road to a 6-1 win. John won in straight legs, in 16, 19 and 21 darts.

Wigan were the next side to suffer at Stockport's hands. Super darts from Tony O'Shea (17, 14, 20), Darryl Fitton (18, 19, 20) and John Hollins who scored two maximums in taking his game in 13, 14 and 13 arrows, were the stars.

Not to be outdone, though, was Andy Wright who put away three big kills. His first game was won in 15 darts, killing 100; the second, again in 15, this time with a 116 out-shot; followed by the big 146 to take the game in 18. The final result - Wigan 2, Stockport 5.

The first home game of the season saw a strong Swinton side kicked into touch. The first game on the oche, between Darryl Fitton and Ian Wroe for the visitors, proved to be as good a contest as you are likely to see. Darryl took the first leg in only 12 darts, hitting a maximum along the way. Ian fought back with a superb outshot to take the second leg in 15 arrows. Not to be outdone, Darryl killed 124, only to see Wroe equalise in the fourth in 24.

The experienced Fitton showed his class by taking the deciding leg in 19, with yet another big outshot, this time 116. John Hollins contributed 11 ten plusses, and Tony O'Shea had a 14 dart leg as the side romped home 6-1.

There won't be many who will be betting against Stockport taking the title again.

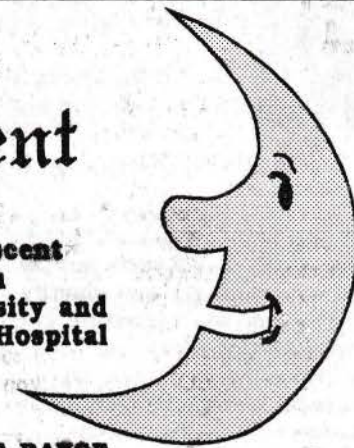
It certainly has been Tony O'Shea's year, so far. The Dilke Sports man was named player of the month by "Darts World" magazine. Added to which he took the Stockport individual title for the second year running.

Held at the Bobby Peel, Tony took out Mick Roberts and Darryl Fitton to reach the final. His opponent in the big one was Cheshire colleague Mark Cairney, who saw off challenges from John Hollins and Timperley's Dave Peploe.

Anyone with darts news or views can contact me on 061 432 9518.

Brian Carey

The Crescent



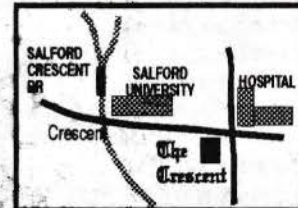
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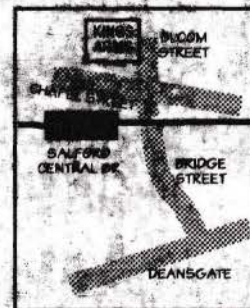
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MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

The Harp and Shamrock in the City Centre is reportedly closed. While the pub in recent years has perhaps not reached the heights it achieved in the days when it was one of the city's real ale flagships (and when Marston's, its owning brewery, was a beer you would travel far to seek out), its name still touches a chord with Manchester drinkers, and we must hope the closure turns out to be merely temporary.

This was of course the case at Chorlton-on-Medlock's Falcon, now named the Tilted Falcon in reference to the structural underpinning that was carried out; the mild beer is now keg, but Camerons Strongarm has arrived on handpump. In common with most Banks's pubs it has also undergone "Operation Dazzle", a faintly absurd name for a programme of beer dispense replacement; contrary to CAMRA visitors' initial impressions, the new electric pump mountings do still indicate "cask conditioned" (real) or "brewery conditioned" (keg) - look at the very base of the font.

Back in the Centre, Taylors Golden Best has been absent from the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street of late, with Mitchells Fortress a handpumped replacement; the place does tend to ring the changes, so let's hope Golden Best has not gone for good. In Ardwick, the Church has gained Websters Green Label on handpump. In Gorton, the Friendship has dropped Pedigree; however a recent visit confirmed local reports of a greatly improved atmosphere in this sometimes overlooked pub, whose lounge has recently been extended to accommodate increased trade. Round the corner at the Pomona, the range on handpump is now Websters Bitter, John Smiths Bitter, Courage Directors and a (not always available) guest. Finally, yet another pub has taken out the deceitful "handpumped" keg Scrumpy Jack cider - congratulations to the Levenshulme, on the A6 in (where else?) Levenshulme.

CAMRA CALLING!

This month's activities kick off with the monthly branch meeting, this time in a new venue - the Seven Oaks, Nicholas Street in Manchester City Centre. Beers available are Boddies Bitter, Thwaites Bitter and Taylors Landlord. The meeting is on Thursday 8th and starts at 8.00pm.

Two days later on Saturday 10th we are having an 'awayday' to Macclesfield and Bollington leaving on the 11.34 bus from Stockport Bus Station. On Monday 12th there will be a social at the Grey Horse, Broadstone Road, Reddish. In common with most Monday Socials, this starts at 9.00pm.

Friday 16th sees the monthly Stagger and this time we are covering Gatley and Northenden. The starting point is the Red Lion, Church Road, Gatley at 7.00pm or you can join at 8.30 at the Jolly Carter, Royle Green Road, Northenden. The next Monday Social is on 19th and the venue is the Anvil, Greenwood Road, Wythenshawe. If there is enough interest we will provide a minibus - for details phone Dawn or Duncan on 445 0872.

Thursday 22nd is the night of our Pub of the Month presentation to the Manchester Arms in Stockport (see article on page 2) and the month ends with a social on Monday 26th at the Derby, Exbury Street, Ladybarn.

If you live in the Marple, Romiley, Woodley or Bredbury areas you fall under the High Peak and North East Cheshire Branch and they have given us advance notice of the following August events - on 16th the monthly branch meeting will be at the White Horse, Whaley Bridge - aim to get there for about 8.30pm. Before that, however, on 1st of the month there is a walk from Marple (meeting at the Navigation) to Strines (the Sportsman). For more details of High Peak activities contact Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634. Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each other's events.

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

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Work in progress at the Steelworks Tavern on Gorton Lane, Gorton - once, many years ago, the last outlet for Chesters traditional 'fighting' mild - looks on target for a mid-July opening by the new owners. Bass is likely to be the main supplying brewery; whether their real ales will be available is as yet unknown, but there are rumours of Holts Bitter also being on sale. More news when we have it.

The Whitworth in Rusholme has seen a change of licensee recently - Ray and Julia Morrissey arrived at the end of May, and with eleven years experience in the licensed trade, look set to continue the success built up by the previous landlord Steve over the last two years. Steve has gone to the Three Crowns in Oldham, another Marstons house. We wish them all well for the future.

At the Flea & Firkin a new beer has made its appearance. This is a low strength (2.5%ABV) Crammer Ale. The Flea also sells Westons Scrumpy on handpump.

Alterations at Stockport's Woolpack have resulted in a much more spacious vault following the removal of the interior porch on the side door. A new archway has also been constructed to give access to the vault from the lobby area of the main pub. The range of guest beers continues to feature successfully at the excellent pub.

Real ale in clubs - amongst recent sightings is Banks's Mild and Bitter at Adswold WMC and Websters Bitter at Cheadle Hulme British Legion.

Control Securities have recently put over 100 pubs on the market nationwide. Included are a clutch of local pubs - The Cleveland, Ardwick (£45,000); The Metropole, Beswick (£35,000); Nicklebys, City Centre (£120,000); Old House at Home, Openshaw (£75,000); Pineapple, Edgeley (£60,000); the Star Show Bar (formerly the Greens Arms), Clayton (£65,000) and the Victoria, Clayton (£60,000). Don't all rush at once...

A recent change at the Three Crowns, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris, sees Colin and Karen Whitworth taking over the management. They arrive at the Three Crowns after 12 months of relief work in the Boddingtons estate. Colin continues to keep Boddingtons Mild (113p) and Bitter (122p) (prices cheaper in

the vault). Lunchtime food is served with menu highlights appearing on the specials board. There is entertainment at weekends, including live turns on Saturday and Tuesday night is a regular quiz night.

Yet another pub in the area has seen a change of licensee recently. Bill Tomlinson and his wife Lorraine took over the George & Dragon in Hazel Grove on the 9th of June after a stint at the Blue Boar in Bolton. Meanwhile the old landlord Kevin has gone south to the Boat House in Shrewsbury. At the G & D a new menu has been introduced which complements the rustic feel of the pub, and a special house brew will be available imminently. Called Dragon's Revenge it is a 4.2% bitter brewed exclusively for the George and Dragon by Coach House in Warrington. In addition, British Pub week saw, amongst other events, a miniale festival held in the pub, emphasising this Cask Ale House's commitment to wide ranging quality ales. We wish Bill and Lorraine every success for the future.

Bridge Inn



The Bridge Inn on Georges Road is perhaps one of Stockport's most overlooked pubs, but that could now be set to change.

On 1st April the pub changed hands and is now run by new licensee Lil Massey. This is Lil's first pub although she has considerable experience in the licensed trade having worked at both the Florist and latterly the Bakers Vaults, apart from stints in bars as far apart as Holland and the USA!

Lil tells us that trade has started to pick up, encouraged no doubt by the various quiz nights, darts knock-outs and other events she has staged. In addition, and as you might expect with someone from the Bakers Vaults, live music is also a feature with Thursdays being a regular folk night.

Major work is also promised on the kitchen after which lunchtime food will be served to capitalise on trade from the surrounding works and B&Q over the road. In the meantime Lil is devoting all her attention to the beer (handpumped Mild and Best Bitter from Robinsons) and this was certainly in fine fettle when we called.

The Bridge Inn has always been one of Opening Times favourite pubs and it now looks set fair to achieve the popularity it richly deserves.

Tom Thumb's

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Early last month what had previously been "Ups N Downs" in the centre of Stockport opened its doors as a revamped 'Fun And Muzik' pub, called The Beez Neez. Aimed firmly at the younger market it offers little for the traditional drinker in the area, with (sometimes extremely) loud music, flashing lights and nothing more enterprising than keg Burtonwood (Bitter and Mild) and keg Stones on offer. Obviously no pub can cater for all tastes but the Beez Neez seems to be determined to put off any discerning drinker from ever entering. And they appear to be succeeding, so while the kids enjoy the fun and muzik there, I can nip off for a decent pint elsewhere...

Possibly at the Ladybrook in Bramhall where a recent refurbishment at this popular pub has been completed in a matter of weeks to leave the interior even smarter than before. It was a simple redecoration involving no structural changes and with the predominant colour changing from red to blue. The unique 'inglenook' area has sadly been lost, giving the main area a more open feel, and other changes have taken place in the vault, which now has more carpet than before, and rather jazzy striped wallpaper. But the two things for which the Ladybrook was perhaps best known have remained: the snooker room, which contains two full sized tables, and the popular dart boards in the vault area. In addition, food is now served in the evenings as well as midday, and sales are reported to be going well despite a rather slow start. Serving Boddies Mild and Bitter, as well as a rotating guest beer, sales of which continue to go well, it is now one of the smartest pubs in South Manchester, and well worth a visit if you are in the area.

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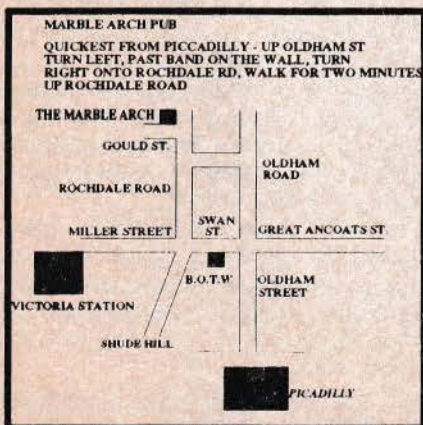
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