

# OPENING



# TIMES

STILL  
FREE

No:  
115

NOVEMBER 1993

# CLIMB DOWN!

At the end of last month the Government did what many of us had been expecting and back-tracked on its pre-election promise to enforce the legislation that states a pint of beer should be just that - a pint of liquid with the head extra.

The rules are laid down in Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act which has been around for a long time, during most of which period CAMRA has been campaigning to have them formally introduced. Just before the last election it seemed that the end of the tunnel was in sight when it was announced that from April 1994 Section 43 would come into force. It was thought that the two-year lead in would give all brewers and publicans affected plenty of time to adapt to the change.

How wrong they were. Instead of accepting with a good grace, the big brewers and their mouth-piece, the Brewers Society, greeted the news in the same manner that they have taken to all advances in consumer protection - the end of the world as we know it, prices would rise, pubs would go out of business.....you get the picture.

There followed a campaign based largely on half-truths and downright lies in which

★ they claimed that millions would have to be spent on ripping out handpumps and replacing them with electric meters

★ WRONG - a full pint can just as easily be pulled using handpumps. Even the brewers accepted this last year when a low-key announcement was made that handpumps would probably be staying after all

★ they claimed that millions would be spent on having to change over to over-sized glasses with a pint line.

★ WRONG - the rate of turnover in a pub's glasses is such that they could all have been replaced with no



The glass on the left is a full metered pint including a head, in a 24oz oversize glass, the apparently similar glass on the right is a 'government' pint in a brim measure glass. The amount you are being defrauded is in the half-pint glass shown.

additional costs over the two years allowed.

★ they claimed up to 7p would go on a pint to pay for all of this

★ WRONG - as we have demonstrated there were no major additional costs involved

Sadly, but not unsurprisingly, the Government has bought this line in its entirety and has now dumped its previous commitment. Steve Cox, CAMRA's Campaigns Manager summed it up nicely :

"We have a Government which devalued the pound sterling now devaluing the pint measure".

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# PUB of the Month November

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	<b>25</b>	26	27
28	29	30				

The winner of the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for November is the Swinging Sporan on Sackville Street in the City Centre. To many of those who know the Sporan only by reputation rather than by actually experiencing the pub, this will come as a surprising choice. Architecturally uninspired, often noisy with rock music, and busy with students and bikers playing pool in a smoky atmosphere, this is a pub far-removed from the CAMRA stereotype.

Not only does this show how wrong stereo-typed assumptions can be but also does little justice to what is in fact a well-run pub serving well-kept real ales to a clientele who many would tend to assume were confirmed lager drinkers (more stereo-

typing!). The strength of the public house tradition is its very diversity, and there is just as much room for pubs like the Sporan as there are unspoilt country inns and town centre freehouses in CAMRA's recognition of what makes a good pub.

Regular readers will, however, know that there is rather more to the story of the Swinging Sporan than that. For over a year now, we have been documenting the fight of licensee Cliff Thornton to keep hold of both his livelihood and his home in the face of machinations by both Scottish and Newcastle (who lease the pub) and the UMIST authorities (who own it) to get him out and turn the pub, it is alleged into offices with a staff club in the cellar. Cliff's fight continues and it is just as much to show our solidarity with him in this as it is to acknowledge a well-run pub with good beer that we will be presenting our pub of the month award at about 8.30pm on Thursday 25th.

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# PUB grub



As you may be aware, we are only a couple of months away from Christmas and thoughts of where to hold your annual "works" Christmas lunch will possibly be in the forefront of CAMRA members minds. If you've considered the Stockport area as a venue, why not go down to the George & Dragon, on London Road, Hazel Grove. At £4.95 for a three course Christmas lunch this is excellent value judging from a recent lunch-time trip there.

It was evident the pub was very much geared to promoting its lunchtime menus. Daily specials were on offer (which also included a pudding) at only £3.45. This consisted of a Lancashire hotpot, roll and Manchester tart and custard. I opted for this whilst my companions had roast beef and Yorkshire pudding with vegetables at £2.95 and a large French crusty roll filled with prawns and Marie Rose also at £2.95. In addition there were a selection of other meals such as bar-b-q's, burgers, salads, sandwiches, soup & roll and various side orders.

For those of you with children a family Sunday lunch was available with the traditional roast and three veg at £2.00 for the under 12's, plus a free ice cream to boot. It was also noted on the events board, that on certain weeks various activities were to be held. Thursday evenings saw a pop quiz, Saturday afternoon between the hours of 2-4, free chips and gravy and Sundays (no time specified) surprise entertainment.

On the beer front, there were five on offer; Old Speckled Hen, Old Dam Buster, Timothy Taylors Landlord, Boddingtons and Batemans, the first three of which I understood from my companions were of a good standard and reasonably priced. It was pointed out to me that the licensee who under a previous brewery had sold keg beer had now risen to the challenge of successfully switching to making cask beers available. It is unusual, I believe, for someone to make such a transition.

For those cider drinkers alas, only a limited choice was on offer as well as the usual mixers and non-alcoholic drinks. The service, though not fast, was reasonable considering only two staff were on duty when we arrived, and one of those was taking food orders.

Decor wise, the George & Dragon has appeal with beams and a rustic appearance. There was a large bar area and there were plenty of tables, well spaced out for mothers with push-chairs (two of which were in at the time). However the various fruit machines and other modern equipment conflicted with the pub's attempt to provide an 'olde worlde' atmosphere. All in all though, it was clean, attractive and excellent value with good parking facilities provided. It's well worth a visit.

*Marie Lingard*



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## 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **NOVEMBER '88**

LOUTS LASH LAGER was the front page headline; and newspaper headlines such as "Government Minister condemns Lager Louts", and "Lager Louts terrorise Town" must have given the big brewers something to think about, because they have spent millions of pounds over the years on TV advertising, trying to convince us all that the trendy, sophisticated adult drink is bland British lager. But people have suddenly realised that the lager drinkers, so called "style conscious youth", very often turn out to be the trouble makers, with their fights and mindless vandalism.

The inevitable comparison followed by referring to the behaviour of almost 30,000 people who visited CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Leeds over a period of 5 days - there was not one violent incident. Perhaps the brewers realise that the writing is on the wall - over the top pubs like the Far Pavilions in Stockport, and the Gamebird in Cheadle Heath were being turned back into proper pubs.

There was an item about the threat to Wilsons beers and pubs, with widespread changes reported since the closure of the Newton Heath brewery. Nearly three-quarters of the hundred or so pubs in the area have had some change in the range of beers, such as loss of Mild and introduction of Websters and Ruddles. It is the traditional tenanted pubs that should be expected to retain their Wilson's identity, but these are likely to be completely phased out in favour of the "Inntrepreneur" leasehold scheme.

All the pubs in Cheadle had been checked to see how they were making use of the new extended licensing hours. Some are open all day, and some had given it a try, but the old hours had returned in some instances. In general the new hours had been welcomed by the Cheadle landlords, and they all display their opening hours, which is by no means a universal practice.

Finally, Holiday Ale covered a trip to London, and the beer prices made very interesting reading. £1. to £1.20 seemed to be about the average, and cheapest pint of the day was 97p. for Fullers Chiswick Bitter at the Star Tavern, just off Belgrave Square. (Remember this was five years ago, and of course our famous Holt's still hasn't broken the pound barrier!)

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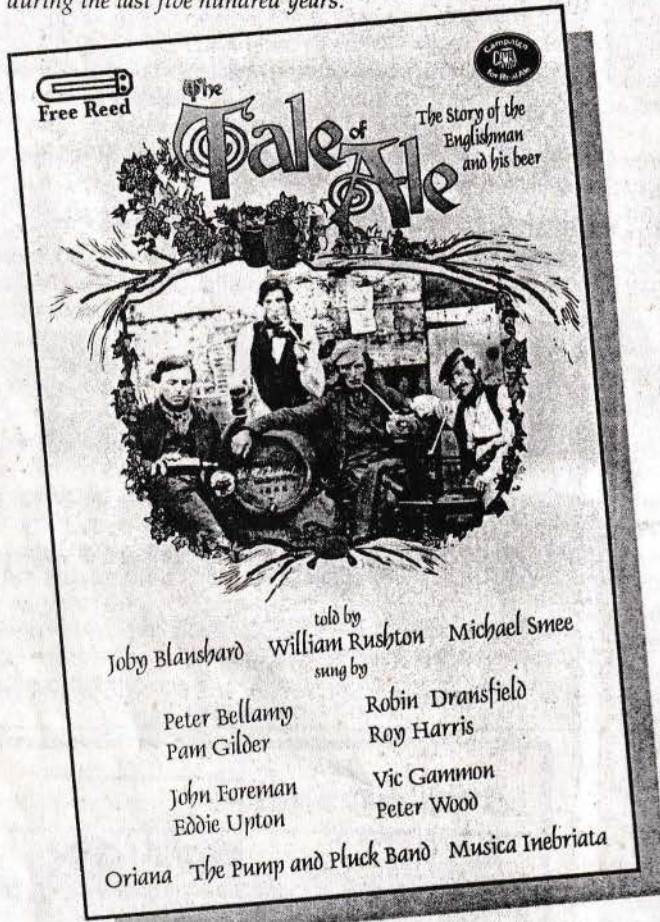
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# OPENING TIMES

## LETTERS



From: Richard Hough

Nothing annoys me more than bar staff going for a smoke break and standing at the bar hatch (or even worse, behind the bar) and blowing smoke all over me and my pint. I realise that you cannot escape smoke in a public house, but when people smoke at the point of sale, they are contravening hygiene regulations, and although it is difficult to take action, it puts me off going in that pub again. Furthermore it is extremely rare to see anyone wash their hands after smoking a cigarette and going back behind the bar, which is also a violation of the hygiene laws. I'd like to see licensees taking tough action against their staff who persist in this sort of behaviour.

## If You Want To Get A Head

The 'head' debate bubbles on. Following the government's apparent climb-down over lined glasses, drinkers will continue to be cheated and short-changed as the froth on their beer does NOT constitute part of the pint. A recent survey found that 96 per cent of pints in Greater Manchester were seven pence short on average. Stockport drinkers are being swindled by sixpence per pint. This adds up to a cool £200 million a year that drinkers are donating to the pockets of the brewers. And this is on top of the extortionate tax levied on beer in this country.

The whole argument stems from the debate: can the head on a pint be called part of that pint? You never see a pint of Guinness without its famous 'vicar's collar'. The truth is that Guinness should be served into a proper oversize Guinness glass so that the head can sit proud above the pint. In addition, if Strongbow, for instance, (which doesn't usually have a head) came anywhere below the top of a brim measure pint glass, the purchaser would feel cheated, and rightly so (and not just because they're drinking Strongbow...). Scientific tests have found that less than 1% of the head on a pint is made up of beer. So you could be paying anything up to 15 pence for air every time you buy a pint.

Now don't get me wrong. I like a **small** head on my pint, especially when nearly every pint you buy today is pulled through a sparkler to create a head. Indeed some drinkers regard the head as a vital part of their drink, and the whole appearance of the beer - head, clarity, colour, aroma - is as important to them as the taste. But for me anything above half an inch depth of foam ALWAYS requires a top-up, and a polite request to 'stick a drop more in' has never yet been refused. Fussy I may be, but don't I have a right to be when I'm giving so much money away? Your best bet for a fuller pint (until the government sees sense) will be to find a pub with oversized lined glasses, stick to your guns and stick to the line.

Richard Hough

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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

The government's abandonment of their pledge to enact Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act is a shameful climbdown brought about by pressure from the brewing industry.

The fact that their claims of doom, gloom and additional costs were palpably untrue predictably had little effect on a Government which seems unable to look beyond the bottom line.

Ironically, the Brewers Society, which has spent the last eighteen months telling us there is no problem with short measure (Trading Standards officers would suggest otherwise) are now introducing a voluntary 'code of practice' to the effect that a pint should be at least 95% liquid. Two things spring to mind - firstly, if there was no problem why the need for a code of practice in the first place? Secondly are we really supposed to be grateful that we can now expect to be ripped off by no more than 5% on every pint (that's 6p on a £1.25 pint).

All drinkers should now do two things:

1. If you go to a pub and get a short measure, ask for it to be topped up. If it's still short after that, ask for it to be topped up again. Those unscrupulous publicans who specialise in this type of thing, and the breweries that encourage them, must be made to learn that we will be short changed no longer.

2. Even if your short measure is topped up write to your MP (especially if he or she is from the government side) and ask what they intend to do to stop you being short-changed again.

It's time for drinkers to not only know but demand their rights.

John Clarke

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Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Paul Hutchings, Richard Hough, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Marie Lingard, Tom Lord, Tim Jones, Frank Woods, Keith Egerton



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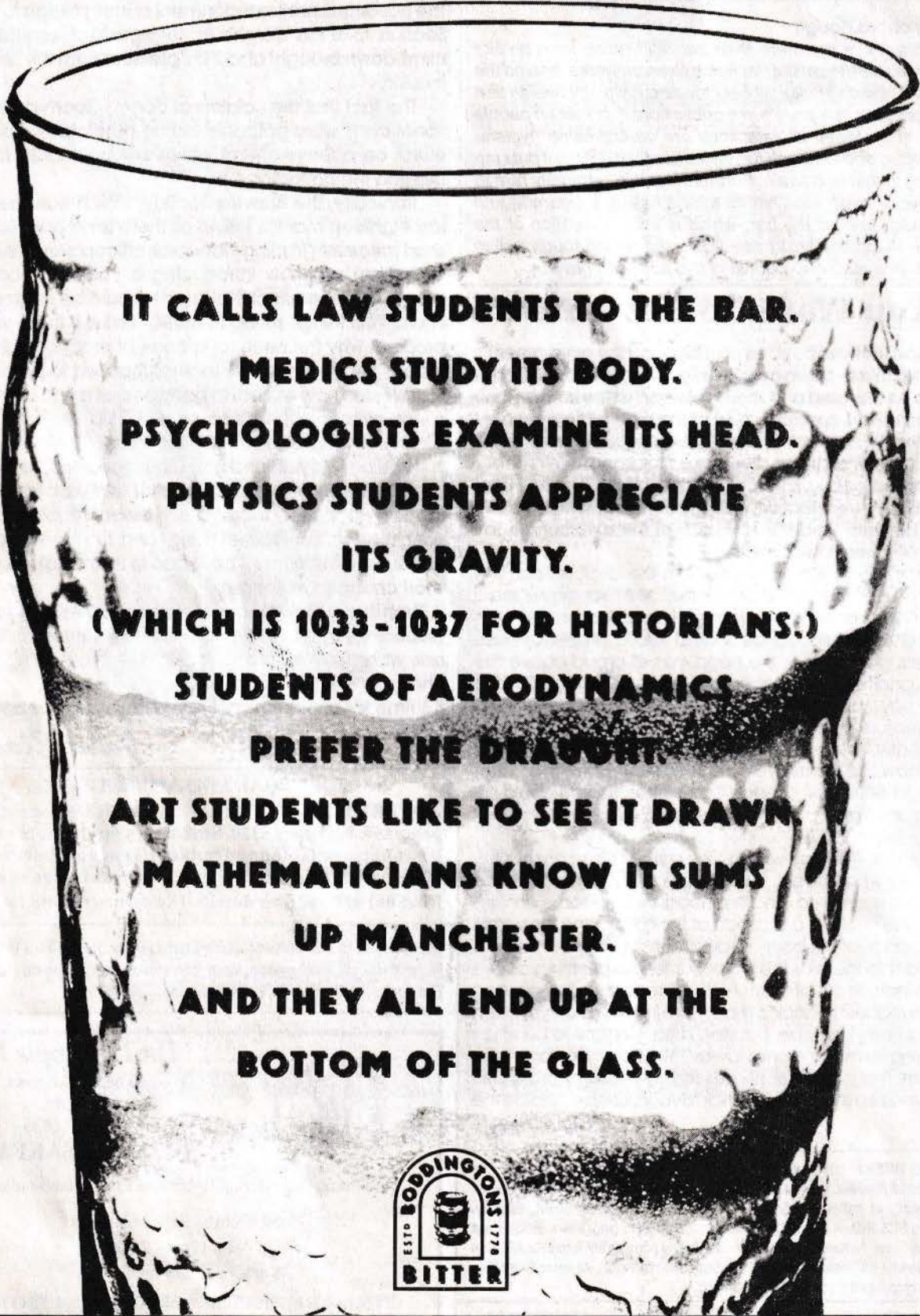
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PREFER THE DRAUGHT.  
ART STUDENTS LIKE TO SEE IT DRAWN.  
MATHEMATICIANS KNOW IT SUMS  
UP MANCHESTER.  
AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE  
BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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# RHYTHM and BOOZE

After toying with the idea of checking out the Market Place for live music one Wednesday, I decided to go for the alternative plan : Earthwood at the Nelson Tavern. This Grand Met managed house is popular with students from Stockport College nearby, and is often lively. Tonight it was bursting at the seams with people and atmosphere. The beers on offer were Courage Directors and John Smiths Bitter, which were both reasonable, and Websters Bitter, which was disappointing.

Earthwood are a three piece who ooze originality. The only melody comes from a twelve string acoustic guitar, ably handled by a shaven-headed dude. He also keeps the beat strong with a single bass drum. Percussion is provided by the sole female member, and a fine 'upstanding' performance it is too. The lead singer has great stage presence but his habit of baring his chest to all, thereby obscuring for most the rather impressive set up, was rather annoying. The Nelson is not a brilliant live venue but it does put on the occasional decent band. Earthwood are one of these. All the songs, almost all of which are self-penned, were very well received by the crowd. We were treated to a great light show and indoor fireworks which complemented the candles and fluorescence perfectly. The visual imagery stood up well alongside the mellow music. The experiments with blues and rock'n'roll worked less well, with the exception of a great version of "Not Fade Away". The set unfortunately became silted towards the end with songs dedicated to Stockport, an insistence to "see those hands.." and an inferior second helping of NFA. But by now the punters were too pissed to care, and were having a rocking good time. Nevertheless it is my prediction of the year for the name to watch. Earthwood are good. Very good. *Richard Hough*

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# STAGGER

with John Clarke

## West Didsbury and Withington

I was looking forward to this particular stagger as it featured pubs which I had visited either rarely or not at all. One of these was our meeting point, the **Barleycorn** on Barlow Moor Road which I had frequently passed but never entered.

The Barleycorn was in fact refurbished last year and is in a style which you've seen a hundred times before - open-plan with lots of raised areas and alcoves, masses of mock-Victoriana and dimly lit. Five cask beers were available - Tetley Bitter and Dark Mild, Burton Ale, Jennings Bitter and Marstons Pedigree, none of which were much to write home about.

Just across the road is the **Woodstock**, a successful conversion of the old British Council HQ by Bass. For me, this works extremely well, conveying a genuine country-house feel without lapsing into the kitsch or twee. The Victorian tat has been kept to the minimum as well. The three handpumped Bass beers - Worthington Best Bitter, Stones Bitter and Draught Bass - are usually accompanied by a guest beer, Youngs Special on this occasion. The Bass and Youngs were tried and both got rave reviews, indeed this turned out to be some of the best beer of the night. I foolishly tried a new bottled beer - William Bass Distinction Ale (5.1%ABV, £1.46) which was anything but distinctive, possibly due to it being served too cold.

A short walk down Burton Road took us to the **Midland** on the corner of Lapwing Lane. For a long time this pub was troubled by a combination of drugs and violence and strenuous efforts have been made to clean it up in recent years. It's basically open-plan and uninspiring but not unpleasant although looking a little frayed at the edges. Four cask beers were on handpump - Boddies Bitter, Pedigree, Flowers Original and Morlands Old Speckled Hen. The Boddies was no more than OK whilst the Morlands was quite highly thought of. We didn't sample the Pedigree, the Flowers or the fifth 'handpulled' product - keg Scrumpy Jack Cider. Black marks all round for that piece of deception.

Across the road is the **Railway**. Small, characterful and for years keg-only. A quick look round the door revealed a real ale gain in the shape of two handpumps dispensing Websters Yorkshire Bitter. However, we were pushed for time and the bland Yorkshire brew, no matter how well kept, was no good reason to delay further so we pressed on to the **Old House at Home**. Another open-plan Whitbread pub but comfy and sociable nonetheless. The two handpumped beers were Boddies plus Castle Eden Ale which suffered from being served too cold. Another Scrumpy Jack outlet, but this time on proper keg dispense, as it should always be.

Next up was the **Waterloo**. There has been a long campaign to save this Grand Met pub from demolition and whilst the last public enquiry resulted in victory for the local campaigners, there must still be a question mark over its future. Certainly when we called there was the definite impression of a pub eking out its last days. The two cask beers were Wilsons Mild and Bitter, a rare example of a Websters-free zone in a Grand Met pub. The bitter was OK but most of us went for the mild, much improved since it was contracted out to Morlands brewery in Abingdon. The improvement was certainly in evidence tonight - everyone who tried it thought it good or better.

Across the road to the **Orion**, and what a contrast. Recently bought by Holts, the pub was packed. Holts briefly closed the pub for redecoration and they have done a pleasant enough job although there was still a Whitbread feel to the place. Nothing Whitbread-ish about the beer though. Holts mild and bitter at their usual rock-bottom prices and high quality. Indeed it was with difficulty we dragged ourselves away, especially as the next pub in prospect was the **Withington Ale House**.

This is part of the Chef & Brewer chain recently bought by Scottish & Newcastle and it must be said that this pub, for one, certainly needs some money spending on it to bring it up to scratch. It was certainly busy enough, though. As to the beers there were three on handpump namely Courage Directors, John Smiths Bitter and Ruddles County. Opinions on the Directors varied from good to poor, the John Smiths - average and the County - horrible. We swiftly moved on.

Backtracking slightly, we passed the Turnpike (keg Sam Smiths) and squeezed ourselves into the vault of the **Red Lion**. This pub is apparently Marstons biggest volume outlet and it's easy to see why. The vault was crowded and the rest of the large pub was packed out. The three regular beers, Marstons Bitter, Pedigree and Banks's Mild, were supplemented by one of the Marstons Head Brewers Choice

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special beers - Copper Ale. Most of us tried this and found it to be very good apart from one who thought it less than average. The other beer tried was the mild which again was good.

The Manor House was closed for refurbishment so we returned to the centre of the village and the **Albert**. Another Grand Met pub serving only Wilsons Mild and Bitter (indeed the pump clips were real museum pieces). Both were tried and were reasonably well thought of without being anything special. The pub itself had a good lively atmosphere and would perhaps have been a good place to finish. However we pressed on to...

The **Victoria**, a Hydes house in the throes of refurbishment. Looking at the unrefurbished bits we could see that this was certainly needed. The two beers, mild and bitter, were electrically dispensed - we all tried the bitter and whilst it was OK that was about all that could be said for it. I, for one, have had much better beer here in the past. Our enjoyment was also marred by a low-flying drunk attempting to steal the beer of one of our party.

And that was that. An interesting night with an astonishing variety of pubs and beers varying in quality from excellent to frankly disgusting. Having said that, it should be remembered that this article can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and shouldn't be taken as a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or their beers. As ever, the only solution is to try them yourself and see how much you (dis)agree!

### **IDLE GOSSIP OR BAD BUSINESS ?**

Rumour of an unpleasant nature. It is alleged that a couple of pubs in the student area of Manchester have developed the habit of sending Boddingtons Bitter through their premium beer labelled handpumps. We are sure that NONE of the breweries would be too pleased should this turn out to be true. If you have any accurate info on this, ring the editor (in confidence) to discuss the matter.

*Irene and Staff welcome you to*

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# SAVE OUR PUBS



## Metrolink Moves

The campaign to save three pubs - the Auld Lang Syne in Ancoats plus the Grove and Sir Humphrey Chetham in Clayton - from demolition climaxed last month with the presentation of petitions from the threatened pubs to transport chief Councillor Jack Flanagan.

The pubs are threatened by the proposed Metrolink extension to Ashton and the petitions, organised by CAMRA, are part of the consultation exercise currently taking place. Representations have also been made by brewers Holts and Whitbread, who own the two Clayton pubs. An alternative route to take the line behind the pubs has been identified and there are some grounds for optimism that the planning authorities will adopt this.

Certainly East Manchester can ill afford to lose these pubs. As CAMRA's Peter Wadsworth told us "Whilst CAMRA welcomes investment in public transport we are saddened by the loss of traditional public houses for so many reasons, and hope that the Metrolink planners will consider other alternatives."



Councillor Jack Flanagan, of the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority, receives a petition to save three East Manchester public houses from demolition to make way for the route of the Metrolink extension to Eastlands and Ashton-under-Lyne. It was presented by Councillor William Egerton. In the photograph are Mrs Anne McArt and Mr John McArt, licensees of the Grove Inn, Ashton New Road, and Mrs Margaret Kavanagh, licensee of the Auld Lang Syne pub in Pollard Street. Also pictured is Peter Wadsworth of CAMRA. The other pub affected by the proposals is the Sir Humphrey Chetham.

Councillor Flanagan gave his word that the petitions would be very seriously considered before any final conclusions were reached about the alignment of the new route. Opening Times is monitoring the situation and will bring you more news when we have it.

154  
Heaton  
Lane  
Stockport



061  
429  
0549

## CROWN ALE HOUSE

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NORRIS

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WONDERFUL  
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SUPREME  
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Beer Jolais Nouveau & Winter Ales Festival

## Crumbling Crown

The Tommy Ducks affair revealed the lack of protection afforded to buildings which are either outside a designated conservation area or do not have the protection of listed status. However, even then an owner of even the most prestigious listed building can simply let it rot away if it suits his purpose.

This seems to be the fate of the wonderful Crown & Kettle on Great Ancoats Street which has slowly deteriorated under the ownership of, first, Grand Metropolitan Estates and subsequently Express Newspapers.

Those who recall the pub in its heyday will remember a rare example of a Victorian Gothic style public house with an impressive interior including wood panelling from the R100 Airship and ornate ceiling pendants. In point of fact, it dates back to the early 18th century when it was the Iron Dish and Cob O'Coal.

None of this has cut much ice with Express Newspapers who applied to demolish it - and build another pub in its place! This was part of a scheme to redevelop the entire area but the planners and local heritage groups (including CAMRA) have asked them to find a way of incorporating the existing building into the scheme. The response has been "OK" (so far, so good) "But not yet" - which means the building could face yet more years of decay. A similar fate seems to have befallen the Coach & Horses near Piccadilly Station which now seems to be in a very sorry state.

Pubs are disappearing all the time for many reasons but this is where the line must be drawn. At present all the owners have to do is wait for the building to become unsafe (or even fall down!) and for local people to get used to the idea. Let's not give them that satisfaction.



# BOOK REVIEW

by JC

**Good Pub Food, third edition by Susan Nowak. CAMRA Books. Softback, 448 pages, £9.95.**

In the days when more and more people are eating out in pubs, and indeed when more and more pubs are turning to the food trade as an economic lifeline, it is little wonder that Good Pub Food has been one of CAMRA's more successful ventures into the publishing field.

Now into its third edition, the guide sticks to the successful format of the previous editions, laid out in an easy to follow county order with clear and meticulous descriptions of the several hundred pubs listed. Valuable guidance is given as to when food is served although, as the author points out, she has sensibly avoided listing precise hours as these are apt to change. This is no problem as the telephone number for each pub is also included. The reasonably user-friendly maps at the back also make this a valuable book for anyone planning a break away.

However, any book such as this stands or falls on the quality of its entries and I decided on a field test during a recent visit to Suffolk. My base, Ipswich, had no entries although a day out in Southwold revealed the Crown Hotel recommended. The local Suffolk Real Ale guide pointed to an upmarket hotel with a classic drinkers bar at the back and indeed, Ms Nowak also indicates a pub 'where they take the bar menu as seriously as the restaurant's'. Sadly the two bars referred to were not the same - Ms Nowak's being an extremely upmarket lounge where the manicured accents of the customers ("Don't do that Tabitha, go and sit with mummy") were matched by those of the bar staff ("Will that be an 'ice and a slice' with that one, sir?"). I ordered a pint of Adnams Bitter (£1.50) and studied the menu - not cheap with most main courses at about £8. Admittedly the food looked very good indeed - and so it should at that price, but there were no tables available and service seemed slow. I therefore drank up and took the short walk down the street to the Lord Nelson - a pub with a real **pub** atmosphere, where both the food (ham, egg and chips £4-ish) and the beer (£1.32) were markedly cheaper.

And that really sums up what is wrong with this book. In some areas there is a notable paucity of entries - nothing for Ipswich, only one in Liverpool and of the nine in Greater Manchester, six are from the Stockport/South Manchester area. It is inconceivable that this is a true reflection on the availability of good pub food in these areas, so what is going wrong? As for those pubs that do make it, whilst many are undoubtedly real pubs serving value for money food, there are too many that aren't and don't. Nobody expects or wants second rate food in a pub but at the same time this guide would work better, and arguably be of more use to more people, if it placed slightly more emphasis on what could, for want of a better term, be described as 'good plain food, well cooked' rather than be too easily beguiled by the likes of 'sauteed herring roes with lime and garlic' and their stablemates.


**Real Ale in Clwyd, edited by David Hughes, CAMRA Clwyd Branches, 68 pages.**

Too often rushed through on the expressway or the Holyhead boat train, Clwyd is a county with much to offer, for both general visitor and serious drinker. That overworked phrase "county of contrasts" is in place here: from Brymbo's desolate steelworks, through the hot dogs and candyfloss of Rhyl, to the bleak Welsh-speaking uplands of Mynydd Hiraethog, this is a nation in microcosm, and there's a pub to suit every environment.

The new CAMRA guide to Clwyd brings together every pub in the county that serves real ale. It's a delight to see the increase in their numbers since the previous North Wales guide, now something of a museum piece, though there are some black spots - that extraordinary village Rhosllanerchrugog, for example, has shrunk from six real ale pubs to just two. Nevertheless there is a real ale revival to celebrate here, and the guide makes a good job of doing that, with a special mention of the resurgence of small-scale brewing in North Wales.

The pub entries are in the terse style of the Good Beer Guide rather than the discursive manner now favoured by many local guides. However they are admirably frank - I liked the description of the Holywell pub which was "recently redecorated (allegedly)" - and give a good impression of the pubs. The maps, while perhaps lacking in polish, are well-conceived and easy to use, and full marks for the generous provision of town plans - 11 in all. Altogether a very attractive and useful guide.

"Real Ale in Clwyd" is likely to be on sale at local CAMRA beer festivals. Otherwise, send a cheque for £3, plus a 36p stamp, payable to CAMRA Clwyd Branches to David Hughes, 22 Hafan Deg, Holway, Holywell, Clwyd, CH8 7DB **RJ**



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# BEER BORES

An occasional series featuring the worst of the verbally challenged.

Phil Levison reports that back in 1976 Tetleys Drum Bitter won an award as Britain's Supreme Champion Beer. These days the competition to win is CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain, this year Adnams Extra took the laurels. The victory of this excellent beer prompted the following piece of purple prose from one Mark Dorber, writing in London Drinker, the CAMRA magazine for the capital. Mark is the cellarman of the White Horse pub down there and having first tried Adnams Bitter in the cellar he then moved on to the Extra:

"However, even I was not prepared for the beauty of its younger sister. Her appeal eclipsed all others in the cellar. Bursting with condition the Extra hissed out of the tap charming a tasting glass with its chime. A deep collar of fob formed and the beer dawned amber. Churning beer became calm, clear, star bright. Perfume of hop filled the air, resinous, like a hike through a forest of Sitka spruce. The Kilkeny Fuggle in the hopback had given of its best.

The flavour was solid, sweet malt cut with green fruit bitterness and a hint of grapefruit. A long, tangy mouthful ebbing away to the salty dryness of an Adnam's finish. The clarity of the flavours was startling. The integration of sweet and bitter, fruit and dry a revelation. Power, balance, harmony, satisfaction."

## Tetley Keg is Best

Back in 1976, the Sunday Mirror organised a competition to find Britain's Supreme Champion Bitter - and the winner? Tetley Drum Bitter, a keg beer brewed in Leeds.

A panel of judges was drawn from every part of the country, and included 5 lay members as well as a very impressive assembly of head brewers and directors representing local associations of the Brewers' Society. (Brains, Courage, Guinness, Matthew Brown, Vaux, Devenish, Tetley, Charringtons, Greenalls and many others.) The Supreme Champion was chosen in a drink-off between the winners of the best cask-conditioned and brewery conditioned bitters in Britain. The runner-up, incidentally, was Courage Directors.

The section on Best National Bitter produced one or two surprises as well:

OG 1030 - 1037	1. Burtonwood Best Bitter	23p (per pint)
	2. Whitbread Trophy	25p
OG 1038 - 1043	1. Bass	25p
	2. Banks's Bitter	22p
OG 1044 - 1054	1. Courage Directors	27p
	2. Watney's Fined Bitter	32 - 33p

A local success was Robinson's in the Best Northern Bitter class - their Best Bitter was runner-up to Bass (OG1040)

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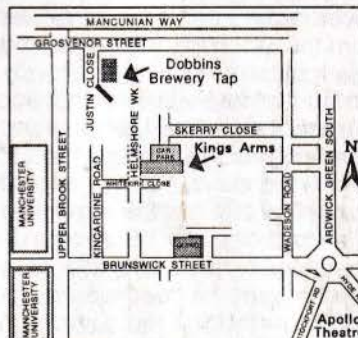
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TO  
SCALE

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# CURMUDGEON

1993 has seen customs barriers come down within the EEC, producing a flood of cheap beer coming into Britain from hypermarkets in France, where the rate of duty on beer is only one-sixth that in this country. It is estimated that personal imports now make up nearly a tenth of the beer drunk in this country, and are costing the government £200 million a year in lost duty. They also threaten the future of the U.K.'s brewing industry, and especially the pub trade. Inevitably this has led to a chorus of demands that Kenneth Clarke cut beer duty in his November budget, to bring it down closer to continental levels.

But hang on a minute. This country currently has a £50 billion budget deficit and the prospect is of tax increases, not tax cuts. The money for a cut in beer duty wouldn't come out of thin air. It would have to be paid for somehow - by VAT on newspapers, or public transport, or children's clothes, or by abandoning any thought of a U-turn on VAT on fuel. How many drinkers can honestly say they believe lower duty should take priority over those things?

A move towards harmonisation of duty rates must come eventually, but that time isn't now. All it is reasonable to ask is that Kenneth Clarke shows he appreciates the problem by not putting it up any further. When there is money for tax cuts, then beer duty should be at the head of the queue.

In the meantime, why aren't the brewers doing more to combat the threat by cutting their own profit margins, rather

than constantly increasing pub prices by more than the rate of inflation? The big pub-owners in the South-East such as Whitbread, Allied Breweries and Grand Met should be implementing Holts-type pricing policies in their pubs, rather than bleating to the government to defend their fat mark-ups.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I was disgusted to read recently that Andrew Thomas, the chief executive of Greenalls, had been given an award as North-West Businessman of the Year. Apparently this was in recognition of his achievement in transforming the company from a regional brewery to a national pub and drinks retailer. Is that really anything to applaud - shutting breweries, throwing workers on the dole and reducing consumer choice? It seems to me about as appropriate as the Ghengis Khan Award for urban regeneration.

Greenalls, of course, have won a far more fitting trophy this year - CAMRA's Pub Vandalism Award, given particularly in relation to their shameful demolition of Tommy Ducks in Manchester, for which they were subsequently convicted and fined. It is a sad reflection of the state of business ethics in this country when we are asked to celebrate the achievements of companies which blatantly pursue their objectives by such unlawful means.

**PLEASE NOTE: COPY DATE FOR DECEMBER OPENING TIMES IS FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER**



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PUB**

**NOV  
93**

*This month Frank Wood features the Bakers Arms on West Road, Buxton.*

A small, detached two-roomed pub, attractive both inside and out, the vine growing outside makes it look more like a country inn than a town pub. Inside there is a pleasant vault and a small, characterful lounge, more of a snug really, which makes the Bakers a rare pub of character in the Buxton area.

Since landlord Mark took over three years ago, it has appeared in the Good Beer Guide twice, including the new 1994 edition. The standard ales are Ind Coope Burton Ale and Tetley Bitter together with guest beers - the locals have a great liking for the various ales from the Burton Bridge Brewery although on a recent visit Charles Wells Eagle Bitter was also in fine form. Food is not regularly available apart from sandwiches at lunchtime which are popular with local businessmen. The Bakers is also an extremely sporty pub with two football teams, a cricket team, darts, dominoes and a regular following for the televised football.

As author of this article it is personally my regular stop-off choice in the area, in what I find is usually a disappointing town for beer. Recent activity, though, shows that the rather narrow choice in the town is improving with the Bulls Head at Fairfield and the Swan, just around the corner from the Bakers, leading the way in the quality of their beer. The Bulls Head is being much talked about since a change of licensee in the summer - the pub is now taking the Marstons Head Brewers Choice range and the Swan also has a guest beer.

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## Station Porters Festival

One of the highlights of the coming month is likely to be the Station Porters Beer Festival at the Station Hotel, Warrington Street, Ashton.

The pub was originally built in the 1840's to serve the nearby (and long-closed) station although it subsequently fell empty for seven years and only re-opened in 1979 since when it has gone from strength to strength. Latterly there have been a series of beer festivals held in a marquee next to the pub although this is possibly the most ambitious yet.

Concentrating on Stouts, Porters and Winter Ales, there are about 30 stouts and porters plus half a dozen strong ales in the programme (as well as one or two bitters) almost certainly the biggest concentration of these dark beers at any one time. As well as old favourites such as Oak Porter and Coach House's Blunderbuss Old Porter there are new beers like Deep Shaft Stout from Freeminer Brewery and a new porter from Marstons; there is Goachers Porter from Kent and Sir Henry's Porter from Elgoods of Wisbech. The stronger beers include Hanby's Cackle Warmer and Old Genie from Big Lamp.

There will be a range of bottled beers, food and a prize draw. The event runs from 11th - 18th November and promises to be memorable.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM ON PAGE 19**



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News...P



The Clarendon, on Market Street in Hyde has been transformed into a Whitbread Real Ale House and is now known as the Pump House. The interior has been "rusticised" but little else has been altered. The range of beers in the first few weeks has changed to a certain degree; Taylors Landlord, Boddingtons Bitter and Hartleys XB (in a cask behind the bar) have been ever present and the following beers have made "guest appearances" Flowers IPA, Castle Eden, Brains Bitter, Old Speckled Hen (G) and Jennings Cumberland Bitter and Sneek Lifter. Keg Scrumpy Jack is served on fake handpump! Although the majority of these are from the Whitbread stable the range is very welcome in this Robinsons/Boddingtons dominated area.

Also in Hyde and as reported in last month's Opening Times, the **Royal Albert** by the bus station looks to be being prepared for a return to the trade. It is being refurbished extensively and it looks as though this long-closed hostelry will be opening in the near future.

**The King Bill IV**, Talbot Road, Newton, a Centric pub is displaying Theakstons Bitter and XB and Boddies on handpumps. But be warned these are not being used at present and the beer is keg.

In Denton, the **Silver Spring** is currently selling Owd Dambuster and the appropriately named Old Speckled Hen (as it is appearing like a rash as a guest beer!) alongside the regular range.

In Stalybridge, Rosies Bar, huddled beneath the railway bridge on Rassbottom Street has reopened and is selling Marstons Beers including the Brewers range and Theakstons. Finally, Boddingtons are planning an Ale House in Glossop the location not having been divulged as yet but the Glossop locals have been having fun guessing. The current favourite is the big Surrey but we'll have to wait for the official word. A clue could be gained from the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. Rumour has it that the future manager is filling in for Ken Birch when he's on holiday.

**At the Swann, just behind the Market Place in Buxton, a guest beer is often now served. On a recent visit, Adnams Extra was on alongside the standard Tetley Bitter. A third beer, with a pump clip simply stating "House Beer", was found to be a blend of Innkeepers Special Reserve and Coach House Best Bitter. Apparently it is on offer in a number of Tetley houses - and it's cheaper than the Tetley Bitter!**

Marstons have taken their beers into the Hope Valley by acquiring the **Anglers Rest** at Bamford, widening the choice in an area that is predominantly Bass beers with only a touch of Wards down the road at the **Derwent**.

**The Oxford, on Stockport Road, Guide Bridge, a Bass house, has had Lions Original Bitter at 99p recently (mid-October).**

**The Boundary, opposite Guide Bridge Station has replaced Holts Bitter with Oak Best in recent weeks.**

The **Grey Horse** on Stockport Road in Romiley, formerly a keg Bass pub, now sells Theakstons Mild, Bitter, XB and Old Peculiar and Youngers Scotch Bitter, all on handpump. This means that every pub in Romiley now sells real ale.

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# MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

Currently being hyped as the in place to drink in the City Centre is the newly opened Ducie Bar on the corner of Ducie Street and Peak Street. Its fancy Italian breads may be all very well, as are its extended hours (noon to 2 am six days, normal Sunday). However when I called the one handpumped beer, Boddingtons Bitter, was unavailable as "the barrel needs changing" and none of the staff showed any interest in finding anyone to perform this arduous task. The nearby Jolly Anglers has little to fear from competition such as this. In West Gorton, the Junction at the corner of Hyde Road and Clowes Street has re-opened, with Chesters Mild and Boddingtons Bitter on handpump.

Yates's on Wilmslow Road in Fallowfield, mentioned last month, has Stones Bitter on handpump as well as John Smiths Bitter and Websters, but still seems to need something something extra (a more imaginative beer range?) to pull in the business - when I called during Freshers' Week the place was almost deserted, while students by the score piled into nearby Robinski's Wallet and the Queen of Hearts. A Sunday visit might be rewarding though, for local Irish musicians Quare Crack provide the music on that day.

Back in the Centre, the Old Nag's Head now has Youngs Bitter on handpump as part of Greenalls deal with the famous Wandsworth firm, while the Lass o'Gowrie has replaced handpumped Bulmers cider with Biddenden. This is a response to Biddenden having won the Cider of the Year award through customer's choice at CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Exhibition earlier in the year, and while the cider isn't to my personal taste, I applaud the enterprise shown.

Finally, the current range at the Mosley in Beswick is Boddingtons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree, both on handpump.

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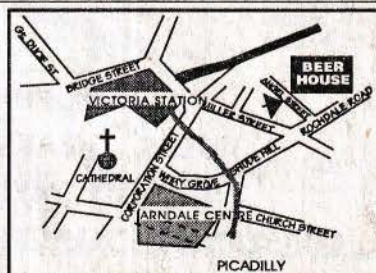
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# CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

We open this month by wishing a speedy recovery to Stockport & South Manchester Social Secretary Dawn Geddes and husband Duncan from their road accident last month. Opening Times knows that all local CAMRA members look forward to seeing them both again very soon.

As usual, however, we once again have a wide variety of social events this month. On Monday 8th there will be a social at the Plough, Heaton Moor. In common with all Monday socials this will start at 9.00pm. This heralds the start of a full week - on Thursday 11th there is the monthly meeting, this time at the Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport (upstairs room). We have a guest speaker at this meeting in the shape of Rick Cowan, the Marketing Director of Greenalls Inns! The next evening we are having a trip up to Ashton to visit the Station Porters Beer Festival at the Station Hotel on Warrington Street. We will be meeting at Stockport Bus Station at 7.00pm with a view to catching the 7.15 330 bus.

On Monday 15th the Social will be at the Flea & Firkin on Oxford Road. This week also sees a branch stall at the UMIST Beer Festival on 17th, 18th and 19th. Just to complicate matters, the 19th also sees a Stagger around Cheadle starting at the Cafe Bar at 7.00pm or you can join at 8.30 in the Star. Not content with all of this, the Portsmouth Branch will be visiting the West Coast Brewery on 20th and a small party from the branch will be joining them. Numbers are strictly limited and this particular trip may be full by the time you read this (but don't despair, there will be a formal branch trip to West Coast in January).

The Social on Monday 22nd is a little different in that it will also be the branch's recruitment night at the Crown on Heaton Lane. A quieter week is rounded off on Thursday 25th with our Pub of the Month presentation at the Swinging Sporrin in Central Manchester.

On Monday 29th the Social is a two-way affair starting in the Didsbury (Didsbury, where else?) at 9.00 and moving across to the Olde Cock at 10.00. The last event to record this time is on Monday 6th December with another two-way social, this time in Heaton Norris - 9.00pm at the Ash and 10.00 at the Hinds Head.

If you live in the Marple, Romiley, Woodley or Bredbury areas you will come under the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of the Campaign and High Peak have notified us of the following: the monthly meeting will be on 15th at the Bowling Green in Marple - aim to get there at about 8.30. On 17th there will be a trip to Cains Brewery and the contact for that is Tom Lord on 427 7099. Members of both branches are of course welcome to attend each other's events.

## West Coast News

At Chorlton-on-Medlock's now relocated West Coast Brewery, we welcome recent Heriot-Watt University brewing graduate Peter Mosley, who has taken over as Operations Director. The brewery tap at the new location remains closed, though efforts continue to be made to find a licensee for what could well become one of the premier flagship brew-pubs in these islands. "Base Camp" the Kings Arms on Helmshore Walk is now once again in the name of proprietor Brendan Dobbin, and is being capably run by new manager Paul.

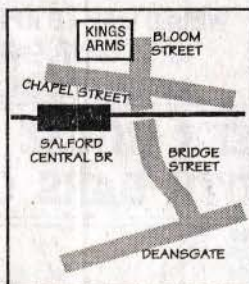
Meanwhile, Guiltless Stout achieved well-merited recognition at CAMRA's Portsmouth Beer Festival held in August, where it won both the Stout/Porter class and the overall Beer of the Festival award. Portsmouth CAMRA members will be visiting the brewery to present the award on Saturday November 20th.

In his role as consultant rather than brewer, Brendan Dobbin is currently engaged on the design and installation of the brewing plant for the latest in the Firkin chain of pubs. This will be in Liverpool, in what is currently the Brookhouse on Smithdown Road in Wavertree, and commissioning is expected in late November.

## THE KINGS ARMS BLOOM STREET, SALFORD

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# Come and Join Us

Sign up, sign up and join one of the world's most successful consumer groups.


November 1993 is CAMRA's recruitment month and we are looking to break the 40,000 members barrier for the first time in our history. We have been fighting for Britain's beer, pubs and breweries for 23 years, and though the Campaign is still booming, new blood is always needed.

Locally in Stockport & South Manchester branch we pride ourselves on being one of the most active campaigning branches in the country, with a social side to match! If you want to join, or have been thinking about it, then now is the time as throughout November anyone who joins gets £2 off the normal rate. For just £8 you now get:

- \* Discounts on CAMRA products - including future Good Beer Guides
- \* What's Brewing - CAMRA's information packed monthly newspaper
- \* A free members handbook, plus a local handbook for Stockport & South Manchester members
- \* Reduced or free entrance to CAMRA beer festivals, including Stockport of course
- \* The chance to get involved in local campaigns to save local pubs
- \* A chance to go on brewery trips and other social events

In addition if you join at our special membership night at the Crown, Heaton Lane on Monday 22nd there will also be a chance to pick up a 1994 Good Beer Guide for just £5.50 (it's £8.99 in the shops) plus there will be a free pint for all those joining on the night.

If you can't make the Crown on 22nd, then just clip out the membership form below. If you want to buy a Good Beer Guide at the same time, then the address to send it is: Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport together with a cheque for £13.50 (membership £8, Guide £5.50) made payable to CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester.

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## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP SPECIAL OFFER (VALID UNTIL 30 NOVEMBER)

to take advantage of the membership/GBG offer tick here  and send with cheque for £13.50 (payable to CAMRA Stockport & Sth Mcr) to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Way, Heaton Chapel, Stockport. SK4 5EG

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) ..... DATE .....

ADDRESS .....

POSTCODE .....

SIGNATURE ..... TELEPHONE NUMBER(S) .....

I/We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: U.K.  £8  Joint membership £12

Student Membership £5

I/We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

Knowledge of the average age of our members would be helpful. The information need only be given if you wish.

AGE: 18-21  26-35  36-45  46-55  56-65  Over 65

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Limited) with this application form to:

**Chris Stone / Sue Tiffensor, 11 Twiningbrook Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, SK8 5PU**

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

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £5



...Pub News...  
**CAMRA**  
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 ...Pub News...  
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 ...Pub News...

Kendlegate Wine Cellars on Northgate Road, Edgeley are venturing into beer tastings. The tasting sessions will be held on the first Saturday of each month starting this month with "Fruit beers", followed by "Trappist Beers" in December and "English Beers" in January. The November session was due to be held on 6th featuring beers from Timmermans, Leifmans, De Troch and Lindemans together with Damson Beers from the Lakeland Brewery in Cumbria. The tastings will initially be held for a five month trial period after which the viability of the exercise will be assessed. Incidentally Kendlegate is now closed at weekends apart from the first Saturday when the tastings will be held between 12 and 3 pm.

At the Pack Horse in Stockport Market Place, landlady Pauline O'Sullivan and Cellarman Mike Reedy have just been presented with a Guild of Master Cellarmen Award for the quality of their Ind Coope Burton Ale. The pub is, of course, a former Good Beer Guide entry and Pub of the Month - apart from Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and Dark Mild are also sold. The pub recently sported signs advertising Weetwood Bitter from the new micro-brewery of the same name near Northwich. Unfortunately when Opening Times called this was unavailable and the signs have now disappeared.

Stockport postman, Gordon Speight recently completed an unusual marathon by visiting, and drinking in, all 106 Holts pubs. Among Gordon's favourites are the Black Dog at Belmont and the Ostrich, Prestwich. He will need to be off on his travels again as Holts have just bought another three pubs off Whitbread and in addition their Old Monkey in Manchester City Centre is due to open before Christmas - 7th December has been mentioned as a provisional opening date.

As mentioned in this month's Stagger there is a real ale gain to record in West Didsbury. Keg for many years, the Railway on Lapwing Lane has now returned to the fold although, sad to say, the only cask ale at the moment is Websters Yorkshire Bitter. The pub has also lost some of its character as a result of the old off-sales area at the front being knocked through into the rest of the pub.

At the Imperial in West Gorton we welcome new manager Ged O'Hare. "New" may be the wrong word though, as Ged is well known in the area, having been landlord of the nearby Dolphin in the days when that was a Marston's house listed in CAMRA's National Good Beer Guide. Since then Ged has put his skills to use at a number of Manchester pubs, most recently the (often underrated) Sportsman in the City Centre. While the range at the Imperial shrank to just Boddies Bitter for a while, recent experience shows that the pub sells enough to keep two or three real ales in good condition, and we look to Ged to build on past successes. More news when we have it.

Yvonne O'Connor is now back at the helm of the re-opened Little Jack Homers in Stockport, hopefully for good. It's good to see this fine little pub trading again and Yvonne has our best wishes for the future.

At the Crown on Hillgate, Stockport, Vaux Samson has been added to the existing range of Vaux Bitter and Thorne Mild.

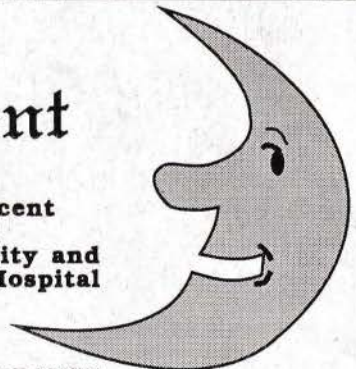
The Nip Inn on Penny Lane, Stockport has reopened with a new licensee in the shape of David Johns. The pub has had something of a chequered history of late since it was acquired from Boddingtons by pub chain Paramount a couple of years ago. It failed to work as a managed house which resulted in Paramount making the potentially fatal mistake of closing the pub for four months - the result? - all the old customers have drifted away and David, who has taken the pub on as a tenant has his work cut out to rebuild trade. Hailing from Arundel in Sussex it's his first pub to boot, although he has plenty of ideas to revitalise the place from the introduction of live music to guest beers. It's a pub which ought to succeed as there is little immediate competition and David certainly has our best wishes - more news when we have it.

New faces took over at the Gladstone on Hillgate, Stockport on 2nd September. Former Licensee Pat O'Sullivan has gone to join his wife at the Pack Horse on the Market Place and has been replaced by Helen Buckley and Steve Curry. It's their first pub but both come with lots of experience of the trade - Steve was a doorman for 11 years and Helen used to work behind the bar at... the Pack Horse. Whilst no structural alterations are planned to this excellent pub, there has been a thorough redecoration together with new seat covers etc and the place certainly seems much brighter and comfortable. Steve is keen on his beer and the handpumped Burtonwood Bitter was certainly on fine form when Opening Times called. He is also hoping to get cask Top Hat strong ale on the bar for the Christmas period. It's certainly good to see the Gladstone in such safe hands.

The Shady Oak on Redford Drive in Bramhall is currently closed for major refurbishment. The pub is planned to reopen at the end of November in time for the Christmas trade. Earlier rumours that it was to become a steakhouse have proved unfounded, and it is to stay a community pub, although with more emphasis on food. Changes include extending the kitchen and food servery, and providing better cellar facilities for keeping cask beer. It is hoped to offer guest beers along the lines of the Old Mill, Cheadle Hulme. We will of course bring you a full report on what the new-style pub is like once it reopens.

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