

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES

No:
119

MARCH 1994

CAMRA
STILL
FREE

NEW THREAT TO LOCAL BREWERS

Having survived the merger madness of the 1960's and the keg revolution of the 1970's, our local brewers could once again be under threat.

Stockport brewers Robinsons, together with 37 other British brewers who have joined forces to form their own organisation, the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, have produced a report warning of a threat to beers, pubs and breweries from a potential European Commission ruling.

In 1997 the Competition Division of the European Commission will review a Block Exemption which currently protects the rights of breweries to operate the tie obliging the pubs they own to stock the beers they brew.

The Independent Family Brewers argue that this system ensures choice and variety in both beers and pubs and that in countries where the tie is outlawed, consumer choice is largely reduced to a few dominant national brands.

When the Commission last looked at European brewing it declared the tied system to be 'anti-competitive' and the current exemption is in breach of Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome, a cornerstone of European Union policy. Furthermore all the rumours coming out of Brussels indicate that the block exemption will be either removed or seriously weakened in 1997. It has been suggested that the Commission will set a "brewing ceiling" - any company producing above a certain level will not be allowed to own pubs.

Peter Robinson, chairman of Robinsons and IFBB Executive member told us "We are calling for a continuation of the tie beyond the block exemption review in 1997. We believe this is vital to ensure that brewing in Britain is not reduced to simply selling products, but continues the tradition of producing great variety of excellent beers."

CAMRA is in full agreement. National Campaigns Manager Steve Cox welcomed the report. He said "The tied house system gives the customer a wide choice of locally brewed, distinctive beers at reasonable prices. Abolition of the tie would have a catastrophic effect on choice. Far from increasing competition, it would mean fewer beers and higher prices."

CAMRA fears weakening or abolishing the tie would give even greater power to the national brewers. They would loan-tie most outlets and beat off competition through deep discounts.

Peter Robinson sums up: "If the tie was prohibited, we anticipate that many breweries would cease to brew and jobs in the industry would be lost. The consumer choice of beers would be drastically reduced and many pubs would be forced to close. A vital part of Britain's brewing heritage would be lost."



STOCKPORT TOWN HALL

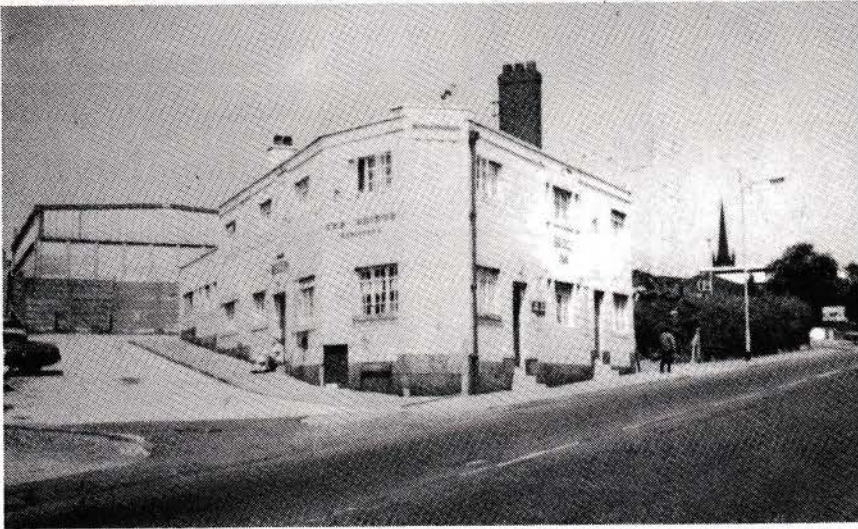
Preparations are now under way for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express/Advertiser.

Particular efforts have been made to avoid a repetition of some of the teething troubles which accompanied last year's move to the Town Hall which is this year's venue as well. One of the main complaints after the last festival was about the lack of hot food. Opening Times asked joint-organiser Jim Flynn what the problem was and what, if anything, was being done about it.

"There were one or two last minute mix-ups with the food last time", he agreed but stresses that this year would be very different. "Being very much aware of the complaints we received last time, a special effort has gone into making sure everything is just right on the food front this year" Jim told us. Quotes have been requested from a variety of outside caterers and the contract was due to be [placed as Opening Times went to press. "This year our customers can look forward to the type of food they have come to expect at Stockport Beer Festival - Chilli, curry, hot-pot and there will of course be vegetarian alternatives". We'll certainly drink to that!

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PUB of the Month March

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 & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for March 1994 is the Bridge Inn on Georges Road, Stockport.

Sited just opposite B&Q, the Bridge was for many years something of a backwater, quietly ticking over but at the same time gently declining. Indeed it is probably true to say that if the pub had been owned by one of the national brewers rather than Robinsons, it would have closed years ago.. Fortunately Robinsons are a family brewer with more concern for their tied estate and the Bridge hung on. A major change in its fortunes came in April last year when the pub was taken over by Lil Massey who, with husband Pete, has set about reviving its fortunes.

Lil rapidly set about stamping her own individual character on the pub - live music, lunchtime food and more unusual events courtesy of Pete who is heavily involved in Stockport Ghost Club, have seen the pub start to regain the popularity it rightly deserves. Lil is Dutch by birth and perhaps it is this influence that gives the pub the relaxed, easy going approach which so characterises continental drinking but is so rarely experienced here.

With its warm wood panelling, open fire and the only table skitties table in town, the Bridge always had the potential to be a good pub, under Lil's guidance it's becoming a great pub. As a reward for hard work paying off and an encouragement for the future this award is well deserved, Join us when Lil receives our Pub of the Month Award on Thursday 24th - a good night out is in store.

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

As you will see from our front page this month, it looks as though a new threat is hanging over many of our best-loved regional brewers, this time courtesy of the European Commission.

Make no mistake, the tie is vital to the future of many of these brewers. If it should go many well-known names will take the path trodden by Boddingtons and Greenalls and leave brewing completely. While tenants of these breweries may bemoan the fact that they are denied guest beers and at times perhaps find the paternal atmosphere of these companies difficult to accept, it remains true they are far better off than their counterparts in the national brewers estates.

Companies such as Robinsons, Hydes, Holts and Lees remain the backbone of our brewing heritage and for this reason their campaign to save the tie will have the fullest support in these pages.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We understand that Greenalls were keen that our Pub Vandalism presentation on the site of Tommy Ducks did not take place. Instead of running away, they should be apologising to the people of Manchester for their disgraceful actions in demolishing this City Centre landmark.

Readers may recall that when the pub was knocked down, Greenalls justified their actions on the grounds of 'Structural faults'. They never said just what these were. Some two years previously, however, they spent in excess of £200,000 renovating and refurbishing the pub, odd isn't it that there was no sign of those structural faults then? Could it be that the only 'structural faults' were those that CAMRA and others were finding in their application to knock down the pub and replace it with an office block? To coin a phrase, you might think that, we couldn't possibly comment!

John Clarke

ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready for the Stockport Mild Challenge? This is your chance to support cask mild, that most traditional of drinks, and win prizes into the bargain. All you will have to do is drink twelve pints of mild in twelve different pubs over one month and you will get free entry to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival plus an entry in a grand prize draw for tankards, sweatshirts and lots of other prizes. About 60 pubs in Stockport will be taking part and the challenge runs from 18th April to 15th May. Full details next month.

Are you up to the challenge?

FOR THE MILD CHALLENGE

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **MARCH '89**

Brewing was set to return to Chorlton-on-Medlock after an absence of 65 years since the old Taylors Eagle Brewery in Greenheys shut in 1924. The perhaps unlikely venue for the new venture was to be the Kings Arms on Helmsshore Walk - an original Victorian pub which somehow managed to escape the wholesale demolition of the area in the 1960's - this is not far from Brunswick Street and the Mancunian Way, and the pub is completely hidden away amongst the new housing blocks which followed the old houses that had been swept away. No more details were available, not even the owner's name or what beers were planned. The pub had been closed for a year, and was now being gutted in preparation for the new occupation.

There was more information on the Stockport Beer Festival, running from 31st March to 1st April. There was yet another reassurance that the previous year's problem over the licence had been well and truly sorted out. Two of the beers would be firsts for Greater Manchester - Maclay's Stout and Caledonian Porter, fine dark Scottish beers. Still on the dark theme, Linfit English Guineas Stout would be available, also the ever popular Timothy Taylor's Porter; and, of course, good food and entertainment.

Still on Festivals, there was reference to the forthcoming Great North Western Beer Festival to be held at Bolton in mid-April. There was also a review of a new recommended guide - "Beer in Bolton", which no doubt has been planned to be on sale at the Festival.

Back in the summer, Opening Times had run a competition in conjunction with Boddingtons, with various questions on brewing, and some with a particular Boddington's slant. The results were announced, and 10 Boddington's Parker pens went to successful contestants, but the overall winner, with 50 pints of Boddingtons Bitter, was Alastair Walker of New Mills. Finally, some general news in brief :- The famous West Midlands home-brew pub, Ma Pardoes, had been sold to Hoskins Brewery of Leicester. Crown Brewery of Pontyclun had transferred all their brewing operations to Buckley's plant at Llanelli. Control Securities, a company run by an Asian entrepreneur Nazmu Virani, had just bought 100+ pubs from Wilsons and other Grand Met. companies.

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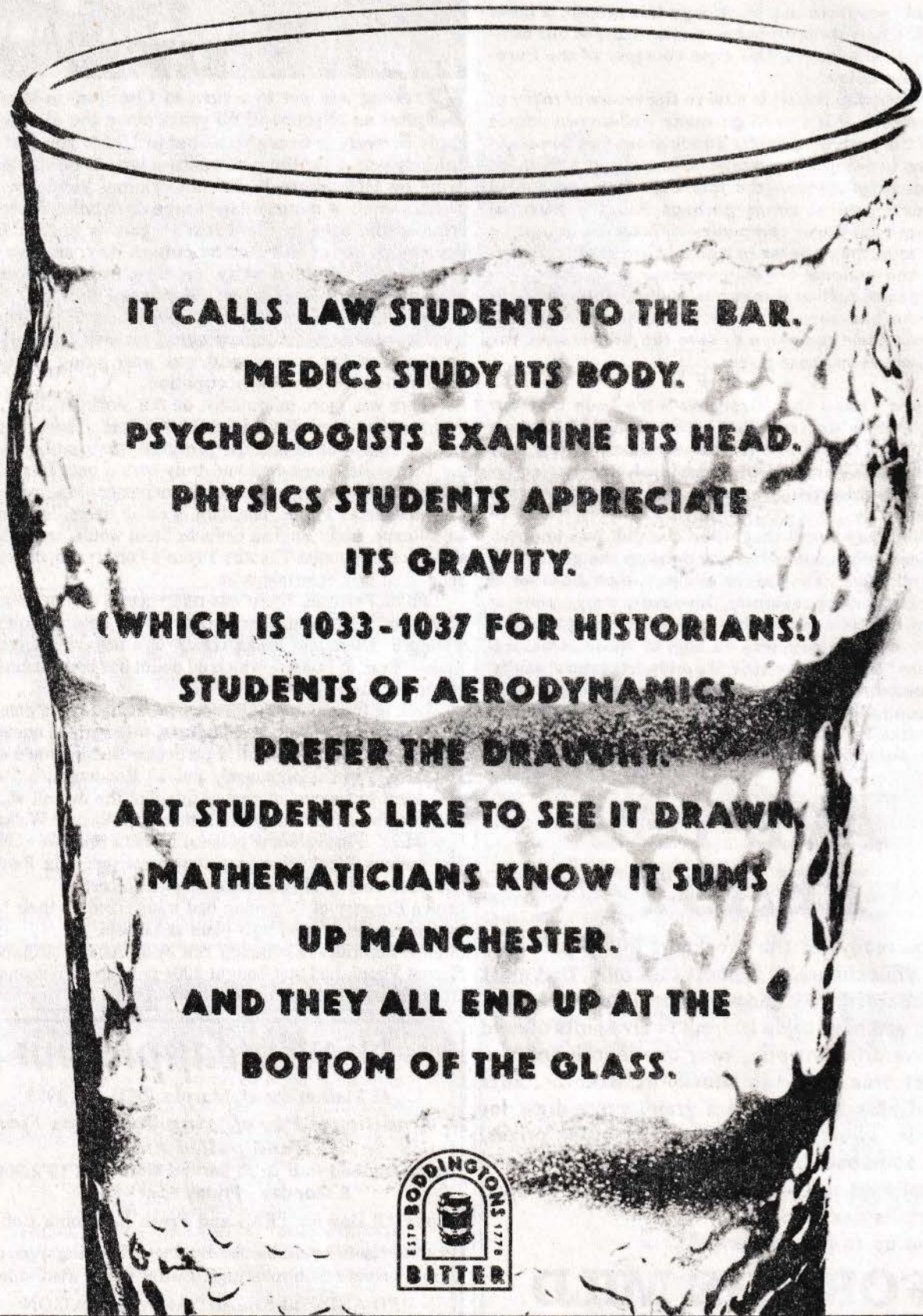
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BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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OPENING TIMES

LETTERS



From Ray Plunkett:

Bryan at the Cheadle Hulme (my local) was spouting out that he had a mention in the Feb edition of *Opening Times*, and threw over the issue for me to read. More interestingly I read the article on Pub of the Month, the Crown at Northenden. What a coincidence!

Reference in your report stated 'until 1978 it was at the end of a row of terraced houses'. The last house adjacent to the Crown was in fact No 17 Ford Lane.

This was occupied for about 15 years, prior to compulsory purchase for the building of the Police Station, by my very close Auntie Lil and Uncle Harold (Swinton). They were very much then part of the local community, as your article points out. Now both passed away, their life is recorded in the grounds of St Wilfred's Church opposite.

My memory of those times is of a bustling local heard through the wall of the pub into the small front room lounge of No 17. The 14 inch black and white telly was on full volume when it got late on in the evening and there was no chance of going to bed till after throwing out time at the Crown next door. I'm sure a big hammer could have provided private access between the two properties. Auntie Lil loved her milk stout. Each evening the two yard trip, often in carpet slippers, between adjacent doors would be greeted by a shout of 'the usual Lil'. Only ever partaking of the nightcap in moderation, she was respected, well known and very much part of the local village scene.

I don't know the landlord's name from those 30-odd years ago however the friendliness still sticks. The beer to me at that time was just something in a glass, same as the Tatton Arms, The Church, Jolly Carter and all the other watering holes in Northenden which as a youth you had to try out, didn't you.

Happy memories. Great to see the Crown is still going strong - may just pop in on the 24th for the award night for old times sake. Let's face it, I spent years next door to the place.

From Rhys Jones:

The dress restrictions imposed by a minority of allegedly "public" houses, never remotely justifiable, seem to be getting even sillier. The other day I passed a wine bar in Wolverhampton which announced "no jeans, leathers, trainers or hats"! What next - restrictions on the colour of your socks?

From George Drew:

To anyone who reads *Opening Times* with any frequency it is quite clear that the regular contributors, including the editor, have a great penchant for curry. How often it is that we read of a Stagger or even just a lone pub visit which just has to be followed by the delights of a nearby curry house.

From what I have gathered over the years "*Opening Times*" is supposed to be about beer, breweries, pubs and things closely related such as in all fairness food which is sold in pubs. That subject is well "catered for" in the article "Pub Grub".

So why oh why do we have the constant reminder of the delights (ugh) of curry? - reaching as it did a low point with a half page article about the damn stuff (*Opening Times*, Feb.).

Believe it or not, there are a lot of people besides me who can't abide the thought, let alone the taste or stink of curry, but we certainly don't expect constant reminders of the magnificence of fish and chips or boiled beef and carrots!!!

(Editor's note - whilst George may have a point, the fact does remain that for many people, the enjoyment of a good curry is a part of their drinking experience, and we do try to cater for everyone. Does anyone else have strong views on this?).

From 'A Lover of the Truth':

I am very concerned about inaccuracy in your article on new breweries in February's edition. I refer of course to the piece about the Titanic Brewery. I agree wholeheartedly that Titanic beers are excellent and indeed, I would highly recommend their pub, the Bull's Head, which is close to the brewery. However, to describe the location of the brewery as 'Burslem near Stoke' is like saying Manchester is near Hulme. Burslem is the Mother of the Five Towns, the Jewel in the Crown of the Potteries and the home of the football league's premier team, Port Vale. Stoke is a grub...

(That's enough of that, I think. I gather the author of this letter is quite a fan of Port Vale, a condition which is still sadly beyond the reaches of medical science. - ED.)

From Richard Hough:

Recently I ventured into a Grand Met Chef & Brewer pub, and to my astonishment my change was accompanied by a till receipt. For heaven's sake! Other customers in the pub were equally unimpressed by the little slips of paper which littered the bar and floor, and over-ran every ashtray. What the idea is behind this I cannot think. If the beer nears the end of the barrel and dips in quality as a result, is the receipt to prove that the beer was bought in that particular pub on that day, and wasn't smuggled in from another establishment? The mind boggles.

Apart from the obvious deterrent on drinking there again (I don't want a receipt every time I order a pint, thank you), the extra admin involved must incur some cost. You don't have to be a genius to work out how these costs will be recovered...

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Paul Hutchings, Richard Hough, Phil Levison, Pete Massey, Tony Wilkinson, Tom Lord, Frank Wood, Pete Soane, Tim Jones, Paul Felton

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SAVE OUR PUBS



The past couple of months have seen the high-profile presentation of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's 1993 Pub Vandalism Awards. The re-action of the recipients was very different.

The first presentation was at the Tut n'Shiv in Heaton Chapel. Whilst the actual presentation was a result of an invitation from licensee Martin Kelly, the real recipient was Whitbread itself, and not just for Stockport's Tut n'Shiv but for Tut n'Shives everywhere (and there are quite a few, believe it or not).



Tut 'n' Shiv takes the award in good part.....

Whitbread tried to laugh the whole thing off, claiming the award was given in a light-hearted manner. Whilst it is true that Martin and Cathy Kelly made sure everyone enjoyed themselves on the night, and indeed run what is in many respects a very good pub, the serious side of the award mustn't be overlooked. Much as Whitbread would wish otherwise.

The introduction of a range of cask ales to a wider public is to be welcomed. The Tut n'Shiv certainly does well in this field. However, so do many other Whitbread cask beer pubs, various Ale Houses, Hogsheads and other sundry 'branded' chains. Only the Tut n'Shives look like building sites though. By trading through such blatant gimmicks Whitbread give the impression that the range of beers sold in these pubs are not evidence of their conversion to the cask ale cause but rather they see cask ales as the latest money-spinning bandwagon to jump on.

Greenalls, meanwhile, maintained a lofty silence when a large crowd of CAMRA members commemorated the anniversary of the demolition of Tommy Ducks. The date was 21st February and at 12.30pm Greenalls were symbolically presented with a Golden Bulldozer on the site of the pub, demolished exactly twelve months earlier. They knew of the event and this was their last chance to admit they got it wrong. Arrogant to the last, they had neither the guts to turn up nor the grace to apologise to the people of Manchester. With this attitude they are sure to feature in the Pub Vandalism Awards again before long.

In a sad end to a long campaign, the Little Bradford in Bradford is to close in mid-March, licensees Peter and Aline Hallam having accepted compensation under the Compulsory Purchase Order. Their decision, taken with regret but with a sad realisation of their circumstances, no doubt also stemmed partly from the stress of fighting to keep the pub open amidst the planning blight cast by the failed Olympic bid.



After, no doubt, a well-earned rest, Peter is to seek other business opportunities outside the licensed trade. Both he and Aline are to be congratulated on running a fine pub against heavy odds.

A possible replacement exists for the Little Bradford in the shape of Beswick House, the old rectory the other side of Ashton New Road and closer to the City Centre. The City Council has applied for a licence for this building, but whether a financial package can be put together to enable it to open as a pub seems dubious at present. As so often, a much-needed community facility can be bulldozed in short order, while its replacement remains mere airy promises. The public authorities - not to mention the Olympic and Commonwealth Games bid committees, the slightest criticism of whom is apparently seen as politically incorrect in this blinkered and parochial city of ours - emerge with scant credit from this sorry saga.



...more than can be said of Greenalls, conspicuous by their absence

News is reaching us of an insidious threat to the future of the Romper, the well-liked pub at Ringway. A full report next month.

UPCOMING BEER FESTIVALS

Wigan March 3-5th (Thurs Sat) Mill on The Pier
 Thurs 5-11, Fri 12-3 & 5.30-11, Sat 12-4 & 7-11
 Oldham March 18-20th (Fri-Sun) Werneth Park
 Music Room Fri 6-11, Sat 11-4 & 6-11, Sun 12-3
 Rhyl, April April 28-30 (Thu-Sat) Town Hall
 Thu 6-11, Fri 6-11, Sat 12-4 & 6-11

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LOCAL HAUNTS

by Pete Massey

Over the many years I've been involved with haunted premises, one of the causes of psychic activity (hauntings) is due to the fabric or structure of the building being disturbed - usually termed 'refurbishment' in the case of pubs. Another main cause is when there is 'psychic tension' i.e. strong emotional traumas being experienced between those living in the building.

When the situations above are both occurring at the same moment in time, then the spirit or the 'atmosphere' of the building becomes disturbed, which (particularly for pubs) interact with any previous traumas from the past on a psychic level, resulting in various phenomena.

This article was to have been about a well known pub in the centre of Stockport, which for middle aged hippies like me holds fond memories. The pub had a cellar bar called "The Bird in the Gilded Cage" and I'm sure many reading this article will remember that name with its famous smoky atmosphere Edgar Winter & Cream. Unfortunately I've not yet been able to follow up some interesting initial research. With a bit of luck I should have a nice story for the next issue of Opening Times.

Meanwhile - round about the time of the Bird in the Gilded Cage and next door to the Black Lion on Middle Hillgate was another place of far out music where Pink Floyd and Hendrix played once - it was very popular and loud.

This place was known as The Tabernacle (later Sergeant Peppers) and was a converted Congregational Church dating back to 1706. It was also a cemetery and then, as to this very day, those that had once been interred there had not been disinterred and soon became disturbed. So they mysteriously burnt the place down.

I imagine many of them would have been regulars of the pubs on Hillgate - particularly the Black Lion and Waterloo. Today, it's the stretch of green land between the Waterloo and the Black Lion.

Apparently planning permission has been given for an office block to be built on the site. Hands up everyone who's seen Poltergeist T. There will be a few disturbed bones and eternal rests when work starts and it could be interesting to see what manner of manifestation may occur at those two pubs.

Meanwhile, some years later, the scene shifts to another pub - namely the Railway on the A6 where, amongst the regulars, was a married couple who'd been going there for years. They always sat in their favourite place in the corner seat of the main room, the arch on the wall where the seat used to be can still be seen.

As is the way of all things she passed away and he still continued to visit the pub. The time came for the usual refurbishment. The retiring landlord at that time had been doing himself a nice little earner at his own business in his spare time and had built up sufficient work and funds to obtain business premises and equipment somewhere else in Stockport and was to take up his new situation the week the refurbishment started.

On the last night of his tenancy work had started on refurbishment, he was cleaning up in the cellar at some time past midnight. As he came up from the cellar into the bar area, he saw the figure of a woman walking through the pub. He came out from the bar to follow her and ask what she was doing in the pub after closing time only to find no sign of anyone anywhere.

The next day the tenancy changed and he moved into his new business premises and a new life.

That night his business went up in smoke and he lost everything.

Meanwhile - same pub, some years later (about 4 or 5 years ago) a reputable witness informed me (not at that time knowing anything of the above story) that one night, after midnight, being one of the bar staff he had been cleaning the cellar. As he came up the cellar steps into the bar area he noticed the figure of a woman walking through the pub. Again, she was nowhere to be seen when he went into the room.

The next evening he recounted the story to the then landlord, who, in turn, told him his story of the previous landlord. Sitting near them was an old man who had been listening to them. "Excuse me" he asked "Could you tell me what the lady looked like?" and a description of the lady was given him. The old man cried and he

reached into his pocket. He took out a wallet and produced a photograph. "That was my wife" he said, showing them the photo.

If you find these stories of interest and wish to find out about many other hauntings (even do a bit of ghost-busting yourself or make contact with aliens) then look for our Ad. in this issue of O.T.

Till next time - pleasant dreams!

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**STOCKPORT
BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL**



2 - 4 JUNE

New Brew News3

This month we complete our new year review of the new-wave brewers operating in and around Greater Manchester with a look at Merseyside, Lancashire and Derbyshire.

On Merseyside the main player so far is Robert Cain whose beer will be familiar to many readers of Opening Times. As we reported last month their range has been extended to include Superior Stout. Originally brewed for the Merseyside Beer Festival it now looks as though this is to be a permanent fixture. There are in addition two newcomers to the Blackpool scene:

Finch & Firkin: this is the latest addition to the Firkin chain represented in Manchester by the Flea & Firkin on Oxford Road. Unlike the Flea, brewing capacity is limited at the moment and so the range is the standard Firkin one of Dogbolter plus two lower gravity beers with local connotations, in this case Finch (og1036) and Wingspan (1043).

Passageway: the opening of this new brewery, originally to be sited in Everton and now at the Queens Dock, has been long awaited. The brewery is the brainchild of lab technician Steve Dugmore and chemistry teacher Phil Burke, keen homebrewers both, and the first trial brew was being put through at the end of February. Just one beer is planned to start with - St Arnold a 5%ABV old ale-style beer. Interestingly the beer will be brewed using yeast from the Chimay monastery brewery in Belgium although Steve and Phil are keen to emphasise that the beer is not intended to be 'Belgian style'. Apparently 80 outlets have agreed to take the beer so Passageway looks set for a flying start. We will try and bring you a fuller report when the brewery is in production.

Moving north now, Lancashire has a crop of micro-brewers:

Moorhouses: not really a new-wave brewer as the firm has been in operation in one form or another for over 100 years although it is only in recent years that cask ales have been produced. A small tied estate has been built up and late last year the brewery finally gained planning permission to erect a warehouse opposite thus enabling them to extend capacity and also avoiding the threatened move from their Burnley base.

Little Avenham: based behind Garstons bar in Preston, Little Avenham has been in operation since 1992. A range of very supple, and amusingly named, beers is produced including the likes of Pickled Priest (now reformulated and upped in strength to 4.3%ABV) and the top of the range Pierrepoints Last Drop (7%). The range is now up to 7 beers, Stockingfiller Porter (6.3%) was introduced for the Christmas trade but has proved so popular that production has continued and in mid-February two further 3.6% beers were added - Arkwrights Ale and Arkwrights Mild. All beers are going well and the brewery has been at virtual capacity almost since it started.

Preston (Atlas): Sadly, Preston's other brewer has become the first casualty of the local new brewers. We are told that production ceased in December and that all plant has now been removed from the brewery. Reportedly the owners are looking to recommence brewing in Blackburn but this is just hearsay at the moment. So, it's goodbye to the likes of Preston Pride and Atlas Really Strong Export Ale...

Lions Original: based in Burnley, Lions started in 1991 and continues to do well. Just two beers are produced at the moment - Original Bitter (4.1%ABV) and, for a local beer wholesalers, Uncle Jacks (4.4%). Owd Edgar, the 7% winter



ale wasn't brewed this year due to lack of demand. No new beers are in the pipeline at the moment.

Swinging down to Derbyshire now, Drew Marsh's High Peak Brewery has recently brought out Peak Pale Ale at 3.8%ABV - any other new brews will be reported in these pages. Last, but by no means least, there is Giles Litchfield's Whim Brewery at Hartington and a full report on that concern will be found elsewhere in this issue.

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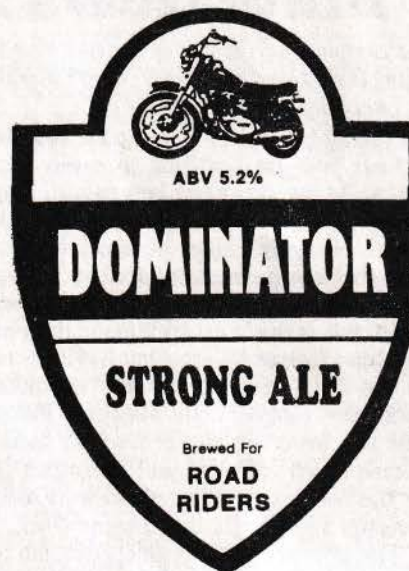
Last month saw the launch of a new range of beers from the Oak Brewery at Heywood, although the unwary drinker would never have guessed.

Illustrated with a motorbike and the legend 'brewed for Road Riders', Gold Star Bitter is the first of a monthly series of beers, all named after a variety of classic bikes.

Road Riders beers came about following an increase in capacity at Oak which followed the installation of a new boiler last year. Oak's Tony Allen told us that the beers not only gave him the opportunity to try out some new varieties of hops on the market but also to supply the apparently insatiable appetite of both the free trade and the 'scratchers' for new products. The use of a different name enabled new beers to be introduced on a temporary, monthly basis without diluting the image of Oak's already well-established range of beers.

Six beers are planned and, apart from the 4.2% Gold Star, include Bantam Bitter (3.5%), Commando Bitter (4.5%), Bonneville Bitter (4.8%), Dominator Strong Ale (5.2%) and, almost inevitably these days, a porter - Black Shadow (4%) which will in fact be the next one out, later this month.

Pubs interested in taking these beers should contact Oak on 0706 627009.



154 Heaton Lane,
Stockport

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MARCH GUEST ALES
Tomin Toul Stag
Aston Manor Old Deadly
Nene Valley Unison
CSB Cheshire Cat
CSB Golden Cat
Coach House Old Blunderbus
Pioneer Zulu



MARCH GUEST ALES
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Little Avenham Clog Dancer
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Thwaites Daniels Hammer
Hambleton Goldfields
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Yates Bitter

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RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

The Thatched House, the place above the market, provides another facet to the Central Stockport live music scene. Originally a Wilsons house, it is yet another pub that has seen a change for the better after Vaux took it on. It has picked up where the Egerton Arms left off (before it became Porky Pigs Pie Shop) - lively, biker friendly, people friendly, and rock music friendly. It features live music every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (and sometimes more) including, interestingly, real Cajun music.

It is hardly an architectural gem, but the lively atmosphere makes up for this. There is pinball (advertising the top Stockport bands that play there), a proper rock juke-box, Sky telly, numerous pool and darts trophies above the bar, and the first cigar-vending machine I've seen in a pub. There is definitely a place for this sort of pub in Stockport, and the Thatched fills it very well. The fine central bar dispenses Vaux Samson, which is often far too astringent in taste for me, Vaux Double Maxim which was much more palatable, and Thorne Dark Mild, which despite almost no-one drinking it, was damned good. Service was a little slack when few people were in but it was a different place when full of people.

High praise for an outlet for local bands to show the public what they have to offer, rather than relying on name bands to pull a crowd. Long hair, leather, denim and attitude combine to conjure up Ermmm..., last seen playing the Big Burn Out at the Crown under the viaduct on a cold November evening last year. They were a little nervous as they came on stage but they soon warmed up, and most of the pub was taking an interest. They opened with a great variation on the snooker theme, called "Gang



Thuggery Bong", "Shivering in the Cold" gave us some good honest rock. The sound, both volume and quality, varied wildly from one part of the pub to another. There was a brief interlude as the LV got some water, then "Another One of These Days" brought us down a bit.

Never getting bogged down, Ermmm... showed their diversity with some funk-rock in the Chillis/Faith No More mode. I'd like to see the two guitarists do an acoustic set, because on some of the rockier numbers the vocals were all but drowned out. The first set culminated in a rip-roaring version of "Suffragette City"; the best of the night so far. They restarted with the Floyd-esque "New Age".

The second set flowed a lot better than the first, as did the beer. The pub became pretty smoky as the night wore on but the music improved, with the exception of the rather amateurish version of "Rain" from The Cult. And it was all over bar the shouting. Wooor! Moore! Wayhey! Yah! So they came back for one more, to the generous appreciation of the crowd. Overall it was a pretty good night, with enthusiasm shown by all concerned. Ermmm...yeh!



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Out on a Whim



BREWED AT HARTINGTON IN
The Derbyshire Dales

Of all the recent micro-breweries to come on stream, few can be more off the beaten track than Giles Litchfield's Whim Brewery on a hill overlooking Dovedale deep in the Derbyshire dales.

Giles has lived in Derbyshire all his life and for the past 12 years has worked for the family manufacturing business as well as farming, mainly sheep, at Whim Farm. In common with many of the new-wave brewers, Giles was already a keen home-brewer and this, coupled with the need to diversify, led to the establishment of Whim Brewery late last year. Work began converting redundant outbuildings at the farm in late September with the 10 barrel brewing plant supplied by Peter Gibson of Batley, West Yorks. Technical advice and commissioning of the plant was provided by former Samuel Smith brewer, David Smith of York, who now acts as an independent consultant to small breweries such as Whim.

Burtonised mains water is used in the all-malt brew with Northdown hops used in the coper and Styrian Goldings added for aroma. Giles describes himself as something of a hop enthusiast and in particular has been striving to create a beer reminiscent of Boddingtons Bitter circa 1979 when that beer was noted for its stunning bitterness. These characteristics are to be found in the current mainstay of production,



Hartington Bitter, a 3.8%ABV amber-coloured, heavily hopped beer. Paradoxically, though, when production commenced on 1st December, the first brew was something quite different - Black Christmas was a dark seasonal ale with an original gravity of 1058 and 6%ABV. Other beers in the range are Old Izaak a 4.8% dark bitter beer and, the latest addition to the range (the first brew was just fermenting when Opening Times visited) Whim Special, a 4.4% Best Bitter designed as a Burton-style strong pale ale.

Giles is keen to ensure that his beers are served at their peak and so conditions all the beers for a further two weeks after racking into barrels. This has certainly proved a success with the customers. Sales have exceeded expectations and there are now about 30 outlets for the beers with 6 or so pubs taking the beers on a regular basis. Among these are the Coach & Horses at Fenny Bentley, the Red Lion at Kniveton, Valley Lodge at Bradwell, Flying Childers at Stanton-in-the-Peak and the Red Lion at Litton. Despite the apparent remoteness of these pubs, local drinkers need not despair as Giles is planning a push to get into the Stockport and Manchester free trade.

The Whim Brewery is near Hartington in Derbyshire and can be contacted on 0298 84702.



Has anyone noticed the decline in lunchtime drinking? While town centre pubs serving food can still be busy, neighbourhood locals have become very quiet every lunchtime apart from Sundays. A number of pubs have even started closing weekday lunches, something hardly any did before the so-called "liberalisation" of licensing hours.

You might think that this has its good side, leading to fewer drunken drivers and snoozing, unproductive workers. But how many are going to drink more than a pint or two anyway? Isn't it really a sign of a subtle and corrosive change in society - the move from the pub being an integral part of daily life to a specific "destination venue" for a night out? It particularly annoys me when self-righteous people claim "Oh, I never drink at lunchtimes". Maybe this is because they're usually too hung over from the night before, but by taking this line they do nothing to help pubs.

Next time you have the chance, call in to the pub near your home or work for a lunchtime pint - it might become an enjoyable habit and save the pub at the same time.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A few drinkers of my acquaintance grumble about pubs using metered dispense spilling a bit of froth over the top and thereby serving short measures. In my view this point is greatly overdone - as froth is at least 90% air, the wastage of

beer is minimal, and the resulting measure would be more than acceptable if poured into a brim glass. But it does have some validity, particularly if the pub uses unlined oversize glasses. This can also mislead unwary customers into thinking that they have been given a seriously short pint. Despite this, for some reason the Brewers' Society recommend unlined glasses when metered dispense is used.

Wouldn't it make things clearer all round to use lined glasses all the time, whether with free-flow electrics, meters or handpumps? However, even if a pub does use unlined oversize glasses and spill a bit over the top, remember you'll still get more beer than in most pubs using brim measures.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Stockport Market Place is rightly renowned for the quality and variety of the pubs on or near it, and their vibrant live music scene. It also hosts a thriving street market, and the Market Hall itself has been impressively restored. But the condition of the other buildings around the Market Place, some of which, such as the Staircase Cafe, are of great historic interest, is an absolute disgrace to the town. The time is long overdue for the council to take a serious initiative to smarten up what should be Stockport's showpiece.

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THE BEER HOUSE





March Featured Pub

The Woodend Tavern, Mossley

The Woodend Tavern can be found on Manchester Road (A635) in bottom Mossley north of the town centre. It has had a chequered history in recent years.

Formerly a working man's club and basking in the glorious title Woodend Working Man's Club, the derelict stone building and surrounding land was bought by Mike and Gaynor Rigby some years ago with the original idea of selling it on to make a small residential development. Outline planning permission was gained but interest was limited given the doldrums the building trade was in. With no firm offers, Mike started to work at weekends, making the building weather proof.

It was about this time, when Mike still worked for B.T. that he hit on the idea of converting the building into a pub.

Being eligible to take early retirement and having invested a large sum of money into the project Mike decided to go for it.

The project was entirely privately funded, at considerable risk his bank manager informed him, with Mike undertaking a fair amount of the work himself.

But if you visit the pub (which opened in September last year) it will be obvious to you that the gamble and hard work has paid off.

The original stone building has been extended to accommodate toilets and entrance lobby on one side and a catering kitchen on the other and has been opened up to create one large well appointed lounge. A spacious car park provides ample space for car-borne trade which makes up a large percentage of the custom.

Enough of all this Estate Agent stuff, I hear you cry, what about the beer. Well this too is ambitious. Having done a deal with Marstons the range of beers started off with their Bitter, Pedigree and Brewers Choice with Robinsons Best Bitter on a fourth hand pump. The beer range has steadily increased and now includes Coach House Innkeepers Special Reserve (which replaced the Robinsons) with one guest (Wadsworths 6X at the time of the visit) and there is still one handpump free!

Food is an important element (a varied menu includes Indian dishes as well as the more familiar pub fare) as is informal entertainment which includes Jazz on Tuesday evenings and a 60's/70's evening on Thursdays.

Trade has exceeded the Rigby's expectations and there are plans to add a conservatory area in due course.

Let's hope that things continue to go well for Mike and Gaynor in this relatively new venture and that the Woodend Tavern becomes a regular stopping point for lovers of decent beer.

Gone but not forgotten...

Much sadness has been caused by the departure from the Beer House in Manchester to pastures new - actually the newest Boddington Pubco Cask Ale House, about to open in Oldham - of Pete Caton, cellarman and manager extraordinaire. He will be hard, if not impossible, to replace. Although the Beer House is a few hundred yards north of our branch area, Oldham is a lot further...boo hoo!

Production Notice

As you may have noticed, the typeface used in Opening Times has changed. Many months of thought and even a meeting were convened to discuss this. We hope, as it settles down, you won't dislike it too much. For those interested, body copy is now Century Old Style, Headlines are Serifa 55.

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Starting in Buxton, the **Queens Arms** (Bass) is offering Holts style bargains at the moment with M&B XI and Hancocks Bitter at 89p a pint.

In Hyde, the **Globe Inn** on Lumb Road (see last month's OT) is now known to be owned by pub owning chain Royal Free Houses which is based in Glossop. At the moment they are advertising for couples who fancy a go at running a pub. So if you want to sell beer in a free house and can think of better beers to sell than Websters Yorkshire Bitter and John Smiths Bitter (currently the range at the Globe) get in touch with RFH. I for one will be grateful for inspired beer selection.

Also in Hyde, on Throstle Bank Street (Newton) the **Bank Cottage** (John Smith) is closed and looking forlorn and the **Flowery Field** (also in Newton) is all keg. So you have been warned. Still with only 4 out of the 57 pubs in Hyde serving keg beer there is plenty to choose from. A port of call could be the **White Hart** (Robinsons), Old Road, Newton which, according to our man on the scene, is serving a rather good pint at present.

In Broadbottom, the '94 GBG listed **Griffin** is no longer serving the Coach House "Gibble-Gabble Bitter" a sad loss to the range.

For details of CAMRA activities in the High Peak and North East Cheshire area contact Ralph Warrington on 236 2131 [w] or 368 3624 [h].

In the same direction, but a bit further, the Commercial (Boddingtons) in Hadfield has welcomed a new landlord after the long serving incumbent left. An improvement in the beer has been noted!

Finally, in Dukinfield the **Old General** (Whitbread) on the junction of Crescent Road and Astley Street is one of a number of "Whitbread Pub Partnerships" (you and your unfeasibly large loan?) advertising for new licensees. Also on offer is the **Wheatsheaf** on Manchester Road, Hyde opposite B&Q (how do they do it...oh no wrong shop).

P.S. The **Beer Emporium** (sister pub of Witchwood, Ashton) at Union Street, Oldham are having a "British Summertime Begins" Beer Festival - mid-week Monday 28th March to Thurs 31st March. 20 beers from Independent Brewers and 9 regulars.

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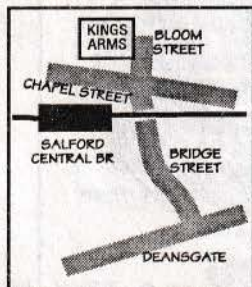
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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Once again there is a heavy social agenda this month starting on Monday 7th with a social at the Railway, Manshaw Road, Fairfield. In common with all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm. The same week sees the branch meeting on Thursday 10th. This will be at the Albion on Burnage Lane and our guest speaker will be Sue Dawson from the Victorian Society who will give a talk and slide show on Victorian pubs. The meeting starts at 8.00pm. On Friday 11th there is a trip for members new to the Campaign and this will take the form of a trip to the Sair Inn near Huddersfield. The Sair is of course the home of the Linfit Brewery and is always an enjoyable evening out. For details contact Chris or Sue on 486 9256.

The next week starts with a social on Monday 14th, this time at the George & Dragon in Cheadle. On Friday 18th it's Stagger time again, this month in Openshaw. We start at 7.00pm at the Smithfield on Ashton Old Road or you can join at 8.30 in the Concert on Fairfield Road (just off the main Openshaw crossroads). The next evening sees one of the main events of the year when we present our **Pub of the Year** award to the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. It will be a hectic night so get there early if you want a seat.

On Monday 21st the social will be at Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley and on 24th its Pub of the Month at the Bridge Inn on Georges Road (see article on page 2). On Sunday 27th there is one of our ever-popular curry crawls. The starting point is the Kings Arms, Helmsshore Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock at midday, moving on to the Grafton on Grafton Street for 1.00pm and the Whitworth on Moss Lane East for 2.00pm. This will all be followed by a curry in Rusholme.

On Monday 28th there is a three-way social in Manchester - the Lass O'Gowrie at 9.00pm, Rev Joshua Brooks (next door to the Lass) at 9.45 and moving on the Old Garratt on Granby Row for 10.15. That's about it for this month but please note that on Saturday 9th April the branch will be having an Adayday to York, catching the 9.45am Scarborough train from Piccadilly.

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Marple or Woodley areas you fall in the area covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of the campaign, and High Peak have

notified us of the following events - the monthly meeting will be on Monday 14th at the Crown in Glossop. Aim to get there for 8.30. On the following Monday (21st) there will be a planning meeting for the beer tent at this year's Ashton Canals Festival. This will be at the Oddfellows in Hyde.

On the social side, on Friday 18th there is an evening trip to Macclesfield (for details contact Ralph Warrington on 236 2131 [w] or 368 3624 [h]). On Saturday 26th there is a Good Beer Guide presentation at the Tollemache in Mossley, again contact Ralph for more details. Members of both branches are of course welcome to attend each others events.



Rhys Jones

Obviously not wanting to be left out, Taunton Cider has joined the other two of cider's Big Three companies in promoting a gassy, pressurised cider on a fake handpump as if it were the real thing.

Their version is called Cidermaster. Successor to a short-lived test-marketed product called Judge Jeffries, the product is not widely available at present those it has been seen as close to the "OT" catchment area as Huddersfield. It should be avoided wherever seen, and publicans thinking of stocking it are reminded that using the fake handpump debars them from any CAMRA recognition - a keg mounting is available to serve it honestly as what it is, a keg cider.

Pub On The Box

Manchester's favourite micro-brewery got a welcome media slot on 1st February when Granada's food and drink programme "The Main Ingredient" screened an item on West Coast Brewery. Whilst the programme's fast-paced style precluded much detail on the brewing process, Brendan Dobbin's individualistic approach to the business certainly came across. Amongst the comments on the beer from CAMRA members and other pub-goers, surely the most memorable came from well known Kings Arms regular George Sharp: "All my war pension goes on that beer!"

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT119)

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: INDIVIDUAL £12 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14
STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

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 £6



The Imperial in West Gorton is withdrawing Chesters Mild owing to insufficient sales. It is likely to be replaced by an additional (perhaps varying) draught bitter.

Admirable enterprise is evidently being shown at the bar of the Royal Northern College of Music where Fullers Chiswick Bitter was recently noted on handpump alongside the inevitable Boddingtons. Nearby at All Saints On the Eighth Day wholefood shop and cafe once more sells Dunkertons bottled ciders and perry.

The Dominion Hotel on Princess Street in the City Centre is to open an 'Irish theme pub' this month. Advertisements for staff require "a knowledge of Ireland and Irish traditions". Will this, by chance, extend to the sale of traditional stout and porter?

The Hole i'th Wall, near Stockport Market Place, has now replaced its Thorne Mild with Vaux Double Maxim. We understand that the long-awaited alterations may now be imminent.

The Station at Cheadle has Marstons Pedigree on handpump. Banks's Mild, however, has been keg here for some time (the way to tell is that the base of the font lacks the words 'cask conditioned'.) On a recent visit Bank's Bitter served teeth-chatteringly cold from the electric pump, nevertheless disclosed a wealth of flavour when allowed to reach an acceptable temperature.

At the George & Dragon, Hazel Grove, we learn that lager sales are now down to about a third of the total, compared to well in excess of 50% before the pub's conversion into a cask ale house. Boddies Bitter takes up another third with the balance being taken up by the guest beers - unless, that is, Taylors Landlord or Fullers London Pride are on the bar when "everybody seems to drink that"!

In the City Centre a For Sale sign has appeared on the Imperial on London Road. Who will be prepared to take this on, we wonder. Also for sale is the Pack Horse on Hillgate, Stockport.

As we went to press, the Prince Albert in Edgeley was in the throes of a massive refurbishment. A full report next time.

Although way out of Opening Times' normal area, itinerant drinkers will want to know that the Wellington Inn, the Sheffield free house run by ex-Wakefield CAMRA members Neil and Sheila Clarke, has now changed its name to the Cask and Cutler. This follows external renovations and improvements to get rid of the former tatty Whitbread image. The pub is located near the junction of Infirmity Road and Penistone Road (A61), North of the City Centre, about 5 minutes from the Fat Cat and 10 from the Tap & Spile.

"Decent Beer in Decent Pubs"

"Decent beer in decent pubs" is the aim of CSB. CSB? Local drinkers may have seen these initials appearing on pumpclips in freehouses around the area for some time now. So who or what is CSB? 'Crown Special Bitter' was the suggestion of one beer spotters newsletter. In fact the initials stand for Cheshire Specialised Beers and behind that you will find Bill Ashton, Phil Mason and Keith Sutton.

These are a group of friends who have come together to commission and sell beers to, well anyone who wants to take them. The concept was the initial idea of Bill Ashton who was a beer distributor and importer in the South before moving to Manchester. Indeed the CSB operation still includes the limited importation of some foreign beers although CSB's own beers are now the mainstay of the operation.



Eventually CSB would like a brewery of their own but for the time being beers are commissioned from existing micro-brewers such as Freeminer, based in the Forest of Dean. The first beer to appear was Cheshire Cat in November last year. At 3.8%ABV this intensely hoppy beer has become a regular feature in the local free trade and is usually available at the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. The popularity of the beer can be judged from the increase in production levels, starting out at 4-6 barrels and moving up to 11 for the last brew. Cheshire Cat was followed up by Cool Cat, 4.5% strong bitter and next in the pipeline is Golden Cat, a light, very hoppy bitter at about 4.5%ABV. Future brews will probably include a porter and a mild.

CSB are currently based in Cheadle Heath and can be contacted on 476 0401.

More From Sir Fon (Anglesey)

Further to Phil Levison's Letter from Anglesey in last month's issue, another Anglesey pub to do guest beers is the Old Bull's Head in Beaumaris. A historic coaching inn with a justly famed dining room and pretty damn good bar snacks, the Bull nevertheless retains a genuine pub atmosphere, and was selling excellent Wobbly Bob from Oak Brewery over Christmas.