

# OPENING TIMES



No:  
120

APRIL 1994

STILL  
FREE

## PLOUGH DIGS IN Pub Listing Causes Road Scheme Headache

**T**he Plough on Hyde Road, threatened with demolition from a road-widening scheme, has been listed as a building of special architectural or historical interest.

Pub campaigners welcomed the statutory protection of this important building, long threatened with demolition. Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Campaign Officer Rhys Jones told *Opening Times* "This is welcome news indeed. It is something many of us have been working for for a long time. Let's hope the planners think again and in particular give serious thought to the proposals to physically move the pub to a new site."

The listing description is awash with technical architectural terms, referring to 'foliated consoles' on the bar and the 'debased Jacobean style' bar back but at the end of the day this proves the point that CAMRA and others have been making for so long; this is a rare unspoilt pub which must be saved at all costs. Not only for its historic detail but also because it's not some antiseptic museum piece but a thriving working pub enjoyed by the local people.

While pub campaigners were celebrating, planners in the City Engineers department were wondering what to do next. We understand that it is virtually unknown for a building affected by a road scheme to be listed at such an advanced stage in the planning process. The road widening and improvement scheme, which no-one denies is needed, will still go ahead - but how to accommodate the Plough? Special permission will now have to be obtained to knock it down, and the planners know that CAMRA and others will be queuing up to object to that. Surely now the only option is to bow to the opinion of both public and experts alike and recognise that this is a building that must be preserved - an investigation has already shown that it will be possible to move the pub so what are we waiting for?

★ While the Plough fights on, the destruction of Manchester's pubs continues. The long-closed Waggon & Horses in Longsight was finally demolished last month while the Little Bradford is closed & awaiting demolition.



The 8th  
Stockport  
**BEER & CIDER**  
FESTIVAL  
2ND-4TH  
JUNE  
1994  
Campaign  
for Real Ale

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL

Preparations for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express Advertiser, are gathering speed and this month we take a look at what is planned on the entertainment front.

One of the complaints made to the organisers after last year's event concerned the volume of some of the bands. We asked Entertainments Manager Rob Lea what went wrong last year and how it was going to be put right. He explained that the main problem was having the bar and the bands in the one room, inevitable with the move from the two-room venue at the Masonic Guildhall to the Town Hall.

"It was just a question of finding the right balance and unfortunately we didn't always get it right last year." Rob told us but assured us that this was now in hand. "This year the accent is on variety. For example on Thursday night we have Harmony Hounds featuring American dance music from the 20's and 30's, Friday night sees Caxixi, a 12 piece Latin band, perhaps the

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### In APRIL'S OPENING TIMES

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# PUB of the Month April

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**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for April goes to the Hinds Head in Heaton Chapel. A new pub, built on the Manchester Road site of the infamous Poco a Poco Casino, this Whitbread house won a Stockport Civic Society award for its architectural enhancement of the area. Inside, the pub has essentially one room although this is broken up into notably separate areas.

A small restaurant area is housed in the conservatory and the well-tended gardens are popular with the crowds on summer evenings.

When Alan Preston and his wife June took over the pub just a few months after it had been built, they not only had to contend with the bad feeling from the local residents who had

campaigned to prevent the pub being built, but also the extremely high prices introduced when the pub opened and which had driven away many potential customers.

As a tenant Alan had more freedom and he set about reducing the prices and promoting real ales. These days the range runs to Chesters Mild and Bitter, Castle Eden Ale, Marstons Pedigree plus a guest beer. Initially the latter was restricted to the Whitbread in-house list but increasingly guest beers from other independent brewers have featured.

However the Hinds Head has largely been a success due to the efforts, enterprise and personal qualities of Alan Preston himself, a man of empathy, generosity and integrity. And how are Whitbread rewarding his success at the pub? They are taking legal action to remove Alan and his family in order to replace him with a manager. His sin, it seems, has been to make the pub too successful and his punishment is to be the loss of his livelihood. All this despite Whitbread's assurances to the licensing authorities and the local residents that the pub would be a tenancy when they initially applied for the licence. Yet another hard working licensee sacrificed on the altar of corporate greed.

Turn up on Thursday April 28th, support Alan and June, and show Whitbread what you think of their actions. Alan promises that cask beers will be £1 a pint and the guest beer will be from an independent brewer. Be there!

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## Beer Festival (cont...)

largest band ever to appear at the festival. Their blend of salsas, sambas and other South American rhythms should provide a lively but relaxing background for the Friday night crowd. On Saturday night we have Right Band Wrong Planet whose R'n'B style music is by now traditional at the festival." Rob added that lunchtime crowds would be entertained by a traditional pianist on Friday and on



Saturday by the ever-popular Pete Farrow, well-known on the local entertainment scene. Rob was confident that this line-up would offer something for everyone, even those who just came for a quiet drink. "Many people come for a drink and don't want to be deafened while others come to enjoy the beer but also want to be entertained. We're confident that this year we've got the balance right." We'll certainly drink to that!



### THE HINDS HEAD

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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1994



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## 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

APRIL '89

The Monopolies Commission probe into the brewing industry published its findings just before Opening Times went to press. If, as seemed likely, its recommendations were implemented in full, then the British brewing industry was in for its biggest shake-up since the flood of mergers and takeovers in the 1960's. Limiting brewers to 2000 pubs would mean that 22,000 pubs would come onto the market. Several forms of tie were to be outlawed or abolished, and a tenant would be able to sell at least one guest beer; and a sliding scale of duty would be introduced to help the small brewers. All in all, it seemed that the smaller regional and local brewers were pleased with the report, as were the micro-brewers, because their access to the free trade would be improved. If they were properly implemented, the proposals in the report would mean better pubs and better beer.

Whitbread had been mentioned before as one of the worst culprits among the major brewers, when it came to charging over-the-top prices. Comparing the price of Pedigree in a group of free houses, Marston's pubs and Whitbread pubs, Whitbread showed a mark-up from the wholesale price of 55% to 74%, whilst the free houses and Marston's pubs showed figures of 44% to 52%. As an example, the Marble Arch was charging 95p, whilst Whitbread's Heald Green Hotel was charging £1.16.

The refurbished Queens Head (Turner's Vaults) on Stockport's Underbank, re-opened - the work should have taken 5 months, but there was so much to be done that it actually took 14 months. Quite major demolition work had taken place, yet at first glance the pub appeared to be virtually unaltered, apart from having been repainted. So full marks to Sam Smith's for a really excellent job, retaining the character of an extremely interesting old pub.

There was further news of two new beers: Tetley Dark Mild, recently test marketed, did well enough to be retained as a permanent addition to the range & Thomas Greenall's Original was due to be launched just after press date.

Manchester had lost one of its lager-free pubs now that Robinson's Tatton Arms at Moss Nook had acquired keg pumps for lager, Guinness and Wheelwright low alcohol beer. However, it was reported that the traditional Best Mild and Best Bitter were as good as ever.

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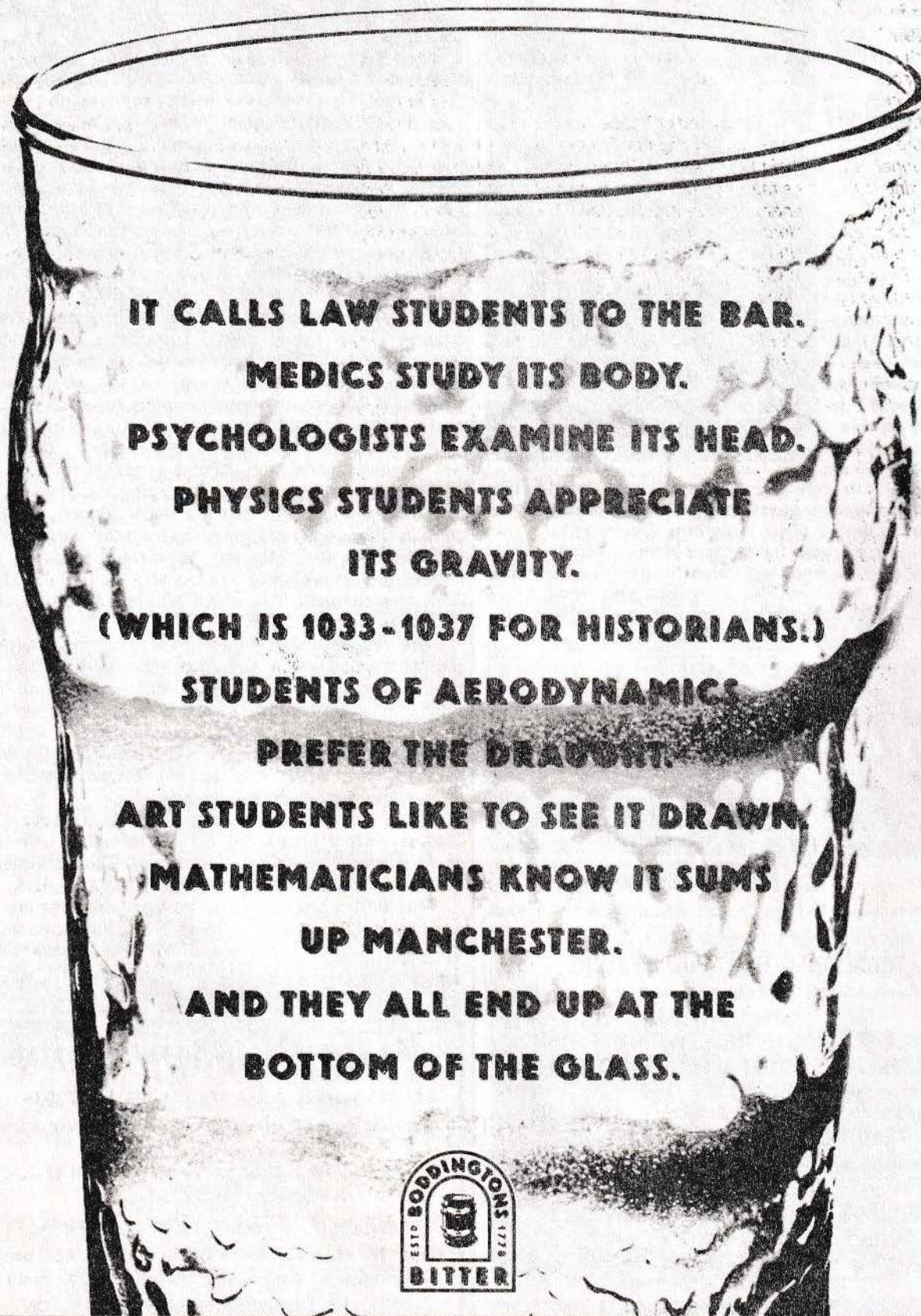
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**PHYSICS STUDENTS APPRECIATE**

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**(WHICH IS 1033-1037 FOR HISTORIANS.)**

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**PREFER THE DRAUGHT.**

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**BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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# OPENING TIMES LETTERS



**From Peter Wadsworth**

One year has now passed since the brutal nocturnal demolition of Manchester City Centre's most famous public house - Tommy Duck's.

A paltry fine of £1500 was imposed on the perpetrators but I think more should be done, so, bearing in mind the fact that Peter Greenall is also chairman of Aintree Race Course, yes I am referring to the same man who turned up at midnight and paid off the staff with tenners from his back pocket. The same man who didn't tell the cleaner who turned up on that Sunday morning to be faced with the prospect of cleaning up a huge pile of rubble. The same man who didn't tell the Sunday lunchtime staff who ended up in a local wine bar crying into their drinks and the same man who forced the pub's cat to seek alternative accommodation at the nearby Briton's Protection later the same day (it was renamed Tommy!).

So, remembering last year's Grand National fiasco, maybe Peter Greenall ought to be accredited with the invention of another rhyming slang which would rival the world famous Cockney version, you know...up the apples and pears, stairs. Maybe it would become known as the Greenall Whitley Land Rhyming Slang. So, the next time you see a horse race being badly run, the next time you see something break down or fall down or get knocked down (particularly in the middle of the night), you will be able to turn to your companion and say "Look at that. It's been Tommy Ducked...F\*\*\*\*\*!"

**From Anthony Dodd**

I read Opening Times each month and enjoy the news in it.

I read the Tommy Ducks article and agree it was disgusting, especially as Greenalls did the same thing to the Red Lion in Hazel Grove.

Now I have a picture of Tommy Ducks in 1980, but does anyone remember some of the pubs gone in Manchester which I took pictures of? They are : The New Boars Head, Withy Grove, Bay Horse (Tetleys) - Corporation Street, Douglas Hotel and Swan Hotel - Fennel Street, the Kensington, Newton Street and the magnificent building of the Oxford, Oxford Street, just by the Palace Theatre.

**From Billy Potter, Scarborough**

May I, through the columns of your local branch magazine, extend an invitation to all CAMRA members in the Stockport area.

As I am sure most of the CAMRA members among your readers are aware, this year the CAMRA AGM is to be held at the Spa Conference Centre in Scarborough on 23rd/24th April.

As Scarborough is my home town I can confidently say that it truly is the jewel of the Yorkshire coast, with many fine hostelries and plentiful cheap accommodation.

Amongst the many beers on offer locally we have Tetleys (of course), Camerons, Youngers and Bass, as well as some of the smaller independent offerings such as Malton and Whitby's Own. We even have a "Tap and Spile" now, if that is to your tastes.

I have been a regular visitor to Stockport for some years now, and a regular helper at the famous Stockport Beer Festival. I have made many friends over there and it is with pleasure that I can now return the compliment and say to all Stockport beer lovers - "git yersens ower 'ere and sup a few wi' us!"

You won't find us Yorkshiremen and women wanting in many departments, including hospitality. Cheers!

**From Jim Bowden,**

**Secretary Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch of Camra.**

Having obtained a copy of January's issue of Opening Times our branch takes exception to the article regarding the Sun Inn in Macclesfield on Page 3.

The remark we take exception to is that Macclesfield is now a place worth visiting when it always was. Just because we have now got two new free houses, two Holts pubs and some Vaux ones it does not mean that the variety was no good before. I list the beers that are obtainable in Macclesfield apart from those near the Railway Station: Robinsons, Marstons, Banks's, Boddingtons, Ind Coope Burton, Tetleys, Burtonwood, Stones, Greenalls, Bass, Theakstons, Coachhouse.

There are many small excellent back street locals most of which will be unknown to your members and a considerable number have guest beers.

**From Max S'eist**

Recent writings in Opening Times about closed pubs at lunchtime set me thinking. Surely the main cause of the demise of lunchtime drinking is women in pubs.

Have you ever sat in the bar and watched people coming into a pub at lunchtime? Women will invariably make a beeline for the menu with never a glance at the handpump. From my observations most women will not even partake of a drop of the best but usually drink diet coke or some other fizzy concoction. To my mind this "sanitising" of lunchtime drinking has had an influence on men who nowadays feel almost guilty about having a lunchtime session without food.

When I first started drinking in the late 1960's, Sunday lunch especially was a time for a few beers at the local, perhaps a game of darts or cards while the good lady wife stayed at home and prepared the dinner. This arrangement worked very well as some time spent apart is no bad thing in a relationship. Nowadays, though, come Sunday morning it's out in the car, driving for miles looking for a suitable venue, spending a fortune on a meal washed down with low-alcohol gnat's p\*\*\* while the local stands forlorn and empty. Don't get me wrong, I've nothing against the fair sex but there's a time and place for everything and women in the pub at lunchtime ain't it.

**From Rhys Jones**

CSB's aim of "Decent Beer in Decent Pubs" (OT March) is laudable. But how about a decent level of information to the drinker? No CSB beer I have yet seen displays its brewery of origin - this is surely information drinkers are entitled to. As long as they continue to source from such excellent breweries as Freeminer, they surely have nothing to be ashamed of - so why not come clean? (Incidentally, similar strictures would seem to apply to Oak's Road Riders range of beers).

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## SAVE OUR PUBS



It's sad to see reported in March's Opening Times that the fight to save the Little Bradford has come to an end. On a happier note though the fight is still on to save the Swinging Sporrán on Sackville Street near UMIST.

Cliff is still very much in residence and ready to go the distance, despite the best efforts of UMIST and S & N. There have been a couple of developments since the last update. Firstly the pub and its rather eye-catching exterior are to be featured in a BBC drama, the filming of which takes place in early May. See it's not just me that likes the new paint job! Secondly, although it will actually take place first, UMIST have now entered the legal battle ground with very interesting results. Cliff and the brewers S&N are to appear in court, side by side, on the same charge of breach of contract. The court appearance is scheduled for the end of April, and it will be interesting to see what happens.

Continue to watch this space for news and updates as they occur. For anyone who has not yet visited the Swinging Sporrán, why not come along and join us on Monday 9th May when we will be holding a membership social from 9pm.

## Robbies Win Award



Local Brewers Robinsons have won a silver medal for their Best Bitter in the prestigious 1994 Brewing Industry International Awards.

The biennial competition was held in Burton-on-Trent under the auspices of Brewing Technology Services, a company owned by the Institute of Brewing, the Brewers Guild and the Allied Brewery Traders Association. There were more than 860 entries from 37 countries, covering all types of beer styles and strengths.

"Beer lovers in Stockport don't need telling which beer is best," a jubilant David Robinson, brewery production director, told Opening Times. "But recognition from a panel of 36 judges made up of professional brewers from all over the world is confirmation of what locals and we already know. Everyone concerned with the brewery can be immensely proud to be part of this success."

Robinsons Best Bitter was among 86 entries in the class for cask-conditioned beers between 3.9 and 4.6% alcohol by volume (ABV). It was the only cask beer from the North West to gain a medal.



# IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

News that the Plough on Hyde Road has been listed is welcome news indeed. In these days of increasing resistance to the effects of road schemes it would be good to think that common sense will now prevail and the pub will be saved.

Sadly common sense seems to be in short supply with those planning the brave new Manchester of the 21st century. The sight of the Little Bradford, boarded up and awaiting 'regeneration' into a patch of grass, says far more about the imagination and sensitivity of those planning our future than could a thousand words in these pages.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On a happier note you will see that this month we are launching our Stockport Mild Trail. If you picked up this copy of Opening Times in a Stockport pub it should have an entry card in it. If it didn't - or you get your OTs outside Stockport, then you can write to either the Mild Trail address in the centre pages or the Stockport Express Advertiser and they will send you one (don't forget to include a SAE). If you don't normally drink mild why not take this opportunity to take the plunge and have some fun at the same time?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lastly, I see the Chancellor Kenneth Clarke (no relation!) has been justifying this month's tax increases, saying that the average increase of £5.75 a week is no more than three pints of beer. That's almost £1.92 a pint by my reckoning. Obviously he's not a Holts drinker.....

*John Clarke*

pub news. . .coming next month

As we reported last month, the Prince Albert in Edgeley has undergone a major refurbishment. Indeed it was still in the throes of this as we went to press so our promised report will now be next month.

pub news. . .coming next month

Robinsons new pub in Hazel Grove, the Three Bears on Jacksons Lane is due to open its doors on April 11th. Opening Times will be there, of course.

## EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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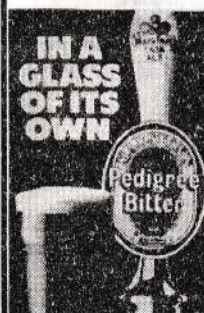
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# STAGGER

with Paul Felton

The cold evening of 18 February was the date for our latest selfless voyage of discovery, this time around the delights offered by Reddish. This has always been a crawl that your writer has managed to miss (not deliberately, he assures you); but he has heard dark rumours about a lack of decent beer and very, very long walks between pubs. So this was the evening to test his pre-conceptions.

We began in North Reddish at the Pomona on Reddish Lane (virtually on Hyde Road). It is signed outside as a Wilsons pub, but like many of that breed didn't sell the product. Instead, Websters Bitter and a guest beer of Theakstons bitter were on sale. The pub is large and has doubtless seen better days. It's split into three parts, with a games area & also a concert room. It was desperately quiet, even given that it was only 7pm. All present went for the Theakstons bitter (£1.30) - it wasn't very good. For all you Websters fans, the beer is available at a "special offer" price on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights: don't all rush at once.

The Bull's Head is around the same size as the Pomona, but much more plush (and much busier). There were separate entrances for vault and lounge, but the rooms did appear to connect all the way round; some felt that its most outstanding feature was its lounge fireplace. This Bass pub has been converted to real ale only recently, and the only cask beer on sale was Worthington best bitter at £1.22. However, after waiting some time to try it, as there

appeared to be just one, harassed barmaid working behind the bar, the beer was not really worth waiting for, being cold and insipid.

Next was the Railway, a Whitbread pub further south on Gorton Road. It's laid out in an 'H' shape, with a further room (probably the best, and the only one which is separate) taking up the 'bottom' of the H. Again, reasonably plush, with carpeted floor and a games room on the right with table football and the like. Three cask beers were available, Chesters mild (now brewed by Everards in Leicestershire), Chesters bitter (by Burtonwood in Cheshire) and the ubiquitous Boddingtons bitter. Chesters mild was 59p for a half and though only average (a little green people felt) it was still comfortably the best beer of the night so far. The Boddingtons was also average, whilst the Chesters bitter at 61p for a half, wasn't. One definite black mark - and the scourge of the real cider drinker: the fake handpump on the bar dispensing Scrumpy Jack.

The Reddish Vale, off down Longford Road West, is the other Bass pub in North Reddish, and another comparatively recent conversion to cask beer. Lounge and vault are separate; we went into the quieter lounge: at least, quieter in terms of customers to floor space, as a karaoke was just starting up. It was plush and pink, with fake flock wallpaper. Again, the single beer available was Worthington best bitter, which was served under a rather strange pricing policy: while a pint went for the reasonable price of 94p, a half was 57p. Regardless of these idiosyncracies, it wasn't very good.

Tetley's Fir Tree, a large roadhouse pub, is on the corner of Gorton Road and Longford Road West. The contrast between the two rooms was remarkable. The lounge was extended, dark and with a deafeningly loud disco; so we headed for the sanctuary of the vault. This was also noisy, but with conversation (remember that?), and was by some way the best room of the night so far. Brightly lit, with pool, darts and table football (obviously something of a North Reddish favourite). Three TV's showed two channels of sport (ice hockey and rugby league) and there's a rather nice clock above the bar. The only things out of place were the wooden venetian blinds on the windows. Only Tetley bitter was available (cask mild had been tried in the past but had not sold); it was okay.

Then we started on Reddish proper, as it were, with the Houldsworth on Houldsworth Square. A Whitbread pub with a rather impressive portico entrance, it has two contrasting rooms, with a wooden floored games room and a carpeted lounge with a small raised area and more subdued lighting. Chesters mild and Boddingtons bitter were available (it is believed that the latter is a



'Whitbread guest'); all tried the mild, which was rather good, and much better than in the Railway; your writer was served by a splendidly decked-out barman, complete with half-cummerbund and bow tie.

Tetley's Thatched Tavern on Stanhope Street was probably the best pub of the night. The lounge was comfortable, with a discrete number of brasses on the wall. The vault was split into two rooms, both extremely busy. Try to search out the picture in one of the vaults of when the Tavern really was thatched. Both mild and bitter

De Olde Vic Chatham St.  
Edgeley

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were good, with the mild being slightly preferred. Well worth a call.

The **Union** on Broadstone Lane was the only Robinsons pub of the evening; as with many of their pubs, separate rooms have long since fallen prey to the notorious 'Robinsonisation' with a rather sad attempt to create a separate 'vault' area by use of chest-high partitions and a dart board. Best mild and best bitter were available, both okay. Three things of note: a karaoke (by 'Mad Steve') was in session, which may appeal or appal; there can't be too many pubs with a golf championship (now in its fifth year); and for some bizarre reason the coke came out looking more like a half of Old Tom!

Boddington Pub Co's **Grey Horse** is just next door. Its most notable feature is perhaps its magnificent stone and brick exterior, shared by several Boddingtons pubs in the area (see the **Union** and **Polygon** in Levenshulme, for example). The front of the pub is a large lounge, and the back an equally large vault with pinball, pool etc. It was opened out around twenty years ago; Boddingtons probably



wish now that they'd left it with separate rooms. Along with the standard mild and bitter, a guest was available, namely Wadworth 6X from Devizes in Wiltshire. Now this is a beer seen frequently in free houses, all too often at too high a price and too low a quality. But it is an enterprising choice for a suburban tied house, and at a reasonable £1.40; all the party tried it, and rather good it was too. Doubtless our readers will be gratified to know that the ladies' sold hairspray.

Leaving Reddish, we finished up with two pubs in Heaton Chapel. The **George & Dragon** on Broadstone Road is a Boddington Pub Co. house, similar to the Grey Horse in that it has a splendid brick and stone exterior. There is a large lounge, very popular, in traditional Boddies plush, with a no-smoking area, but we found ourselves in the vault (only because it was the first door that presented itself). This was a fine little room, narrow, long and appallingly under-utilised. Interestingly, the only obvious door to the toilets led to men's only; while the ladies again sold hairspray, here the men were catered for as well, as breath freshener was on sale. Mild and bitter were available, both were not bad.

The **Tut n' Shive** on Manchester Road is the former Chapel House. It's a Whitbread Ale House, refurbished to the standard Whitbread T&S theme, with bizarre touches like the roof above the bar being covered with doors. For your writer, this was perhaps the most charming feature of a totally characterless place. With no offence meant to anyone fitting the description, it is what I would describe as a 'student' pub; aimed at the younger area of the market, with bare boards, rambling layout, illiterate signs all over the place. Still, it will doubtless soon change when Whitbread find the next 'theme' to which to convert their pubs. (three years, apparently - Ed). Faced with a deliberately poor refurbishment and winner of this Branch's Pub Vandalism Award! in a pub which once had a very poor reputation for violence, it is generally felt that the licensees are doing a good job and the beer is getting a good reputation. Perhaps, however, some of the staff need some retraining. The service appeared to be 'regulars first', but a colleague finally managed to

order two pints of Cains Superior Stout. The barmaid, unable to find any clean glasses, took two used ones, rinsed them under the tap and proceeded to fill them. One of the glasses was not acceptably cleaned and the barman on duty seemed to feel the complaint was unjustified. Both pints were short measures but a half pint glass was used to fill them in such a way as to cause the beer to slop over the counter. As my colleague so eloquently put it, "piss poor service". After all that, it almost saddens me to report that the Cains stout was for my colleague and myself the best beer of the night; Moorhouses Black Cat mild was also good. Prices, while not cheap, were not unreasonable given that it's a Whitbread pub.

Having said all this, it should be remembered that this article can only be a snapshot of what we found one particular night and it 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!

## Stockport LVA is 150 years old

The Stockport Licensed Victuallers Association celebrates its 150th Anniversary this month, with a Banquet at the Alma Lodge, on Wednesday 27th April. The LVA has generously extended, through its Chairman Ken Phillips, an invitation to CAMRA members and readers of Opening Times to join them in this celebration. Ticket details (price and availability) can be obtained from Dave Murphy, at The Fingerpost, 434 Hempshaw Lane, Offerton Tel: 480 4138. There will be a feature on 150 years of the LVA in the next issue.

*Irene and Staff welcome you to*

### **The Greyhound** Bowden St., Edgeley

**Boddingtons Mild & Bitter**  
**Theakstons Bitter**  
**guest beers changed weekly**

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**Steve & Dorothy**



# STOCKPORT MILD CHALLENGE

**W**e've teamed up with the Stockport Express Advertiser to bring you something new. Something YOU can take part in. A chance to visit new pubs and try some new beers. It's fun and it's easy. It's the Stockport Mild Challenge.

The Challenge runs from 18th April to 15th May inclusive and gives you a chance to get free entry to Stockport Beer Festival (or free beer there if you're a member of CAMRA) plus entry into a prize draw. There are tankards, sweatshirts and all sorts of prizes waiting to be won. This is something new for Stockport so, are you up to the Challenge?

## What YOU have to do

Firstly get a card. If you picked up this copy of Opening Times in Stockport there should be one in it. You can get one from any of the pubs taking part or write to the Mild Challenge address - 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG, enclosing a large SAE

When you buy a pint in one of the pubs taking part ask the bar staff to stamp your card - remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub.

When you've filled the card (you'll need 12 stamps from 12 different pubs) then send it to the Mild Challenge address. This will give you automatic entry into the prize draw. If you also want free entry to the Beer Festival don't forget to clip out the coupon and send that along with a stamped addressed envelope.

Happy Drinking!

## Why Mild?

**M**ild is one of the great survivors of our brewing tradition. For too long dogged by cloth-capped 'old man's drink' image, mild has all but disappeared in many parts of the country. Yet more and more people are turning to the delights of this underrated drink. It's tasty, several pints won't make you fall over and it's good value, often notably cheaper than a pint of bitter.

Stockport still has a strong mild drinking tradition with many pubs selling it. Just look at those on our list; they range from sedate country inns to boisterous town boozers. All these pubs, and more, sell mild. We think it's time to actively support this neglected part of our brewing tradition - and have a bit of fun at the same time. Those of you who already drink mild will know what a good drink it is. For those of you who don't, well, this is the chance to find out what you've been missing.

The following pubs are taking part:

**Bramhall:** Bromale;  
**Bredbury:** Arden Arms;  
**Cheadle:** Crown, Queens Arms, Printers Arms, Star Inn;  
**Cheadle Hulme:**

Cheadle Huime, Church, Old Mill; **Edgeley/Shaw Heath:** Comfortable Gill, Copperfields, Florist, Grapes, Greyhound, Prince Albert, Woolpack; **Gatley:** High Grove, Horse & Farrier, Prince of Wales; **Hazel Grove/Great Moor:** George & Dragon, Royal Oak, Three Tuns, Travellers Call; **Heald Green:** Griffin; **Heaton Chapel:** George & Dragon, Hinds Head, Tut & Shive; **Heaton Mersey:** Crown, Griffin; **Heaton Norris:** Bridge Inn, Moss Rose, Nursery; **High Lane:** Robin Hood; **Marple/Marple Bridge:** Pineapple, Travellers Call; **Reddish:** Grey Horse, Thatched Tavern; **Romiley:** Grey Horse; **Stockport:** Arden Arms, Bakers Vaults, Blossoms, Coach & Horses, Crown (Heaton Lane), Crown (Middle Hillgate), Manchester Arms, Pack Horse, Pineapple, Thatched House, Tiviot, Unity; **Strines:** Fox, Royal Oak, Sportsman; **Woodley:** Navigation, Railway.

Full Details of the pub locations and Milds available are printed on the challenge card.

Good Luck

Robinsons Best Mild, Hydes Mild, Highgate Dark, Molts Mild, Bass Mild XXXX, Kingstons Mild, Wilsons Mild, Anvil Light, Chester, Tetley Mild, Theakston Mild, Thorn Milk, Batemans Dark Mild

**STOCKPORT MILD CHALLENGE**

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Hydes  
Anvil Ales  
Brewers of  
Traditional  
Cask  
Beers

Always in  
good taste



# RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

Every Sunday evening a group of good friends meets at the Arden Arms in Stockport for an impromptu folk music session. The precise line-up may change from week to week but the idea each time is the same: to make merry music, enjoy fine beer and have a pleasant time.

There are no rules at this informal occasion. No set list, no PA, no special lighting, no encores, no promotion by posters or sale of T-shirts, and perhaps most importantly, no obligation on anyone's part; the public don't have to pay, and the musicians don't have to pander to anybody, especially management. Tradition and traditional values are more important here than crowd-pleasers or mega-bucks.

It is an evening of continuous music - if a beer break is needed by one member, there is no problem as they nip to the bar while the others continue. The accent is largely traditional Scottish or Irish, from ballads to lively jigs and reels, and the odd hornpipe may be thrown in. If they feel like it. The instruments are real instruments which have stood the test of time: banjo, acoustic guitar, penny whistle, recorder, bodhrun, cello ukelele. The beauty is that any of these may combine to produce a tune. It is often the improvisation by the unlikeliest of partners that produces the best music. One great attraction is the rough edges of a live performance that sees little practice and polish. The odd duff note may be heard but it is soon forgotten thanks to the enthusiasm of the players. You won't hear this performance on record or CD, or indeed ever again. Its uniqueness is its charm. You wonder

how many of the Waterboys, the Pogues or U2 started their musical life like this, or indeed how many hanker after this way of making proper music. The Saw Doctors are well known for playing this sort of stuff back in Ireland after selling out large venues in England.

The musicians' output is warmly appreciated by the Arden customers each week, and some return week after week. In addition make sure you get to the Arden on the last Tuesday of the month for the "Why Worry" folk club, which features the powerful haunting vocal talent of Holly Burton. Get there early though because it is a very popular night. The Arden Arms: where it's at for real folk in Stockport.

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Bushys Best Bitter



### APRIL GUEST ALES

Thwaites Daniels Hammer  
Taylors Landlord  
Little Avenham Arkwrights Ale  
Wadworth 6x  
Hexhamshire Whapweaze  
Hexhamshire Shire Bitter  
Oak Wobbly Bob

## Special Events at the Crown

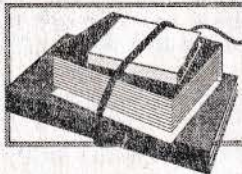
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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA





## BOOK REVIEW



Central Manchester Pubs, CAMRA North Manchester Branch, 56 pages, £2.95.

The first page of this new guide to the City Centre tells us, in the tone of smug self-congratulation which has become an unpleasant feature of Manchester life since the Olympic bid, that Manchester is such a stupendously wonderful city that it now deserves a pub guide. Nonsense! Anywhere with pubs needs a pub guide, and a guide this good is its own justification - for happily things get much better after page 1.

Every pub in the centre is listed, and those - the majority of course - that sell real ale have a note of opening hours, symbols for food, wheelchair access, accommodation, and no-smoking area, and a description. A firmer editorial hand might have made the descriptions more consistent in style and length - some quite ordinary places get what are almost mini-essays, while the consistently excellent Crown & Anchor on Cateaton Street is dismissed in a mere two and a half lines.

I was sorry to see not even a passing reference to clubs, music venues and other non-pub outlets - in particular, North Manchester's persistent failure to recognise that splendid place the Roadhouse stands as a leading mystery of modern-day Manchester drinking. The two-page spread on the City Centre's Asian cafes, though useful and well-researched, is surely less central to the book's purpose.

But enough carping. This smart, authoritative, and (as at the end of March) bang up-to-date guide is set to become a constant companion for me and I'm sure many other drinkers. An essential purchase, the guide should be widely available through CAMRA and in the better bookshops; otherwise, send a cheque for £3.50 to include postage (Cheques to CAMRA North Manchester - £2.50 if you're a CAMRA member, quoting membership number) to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley Manchester 6.

## Festival Fun

This month sees two major in-house beer festivals taking place at local free houses.

The first two weeks sees a 'Silly Beer' Festival at the Marble Arch on Rochdale Road in Manchester. Owner Vance de Becheval tells us that this will specialise in the many beers with daft or unusual names that are available nowadays. He makes the point that many of these odd names do in fact conceal some fine ales. So if you fancy a pint of Dogs Bollocks, for example, then this is for you.

May Day Bank Holiday weekend will see the third Spring Station Beer Festival at the Station freehouse on Warrington Street, Ashton. This starts on Thursday April 26th and runs to Monday May 2nd. As usual it will be held not only in the pub but also in a marquee fitted out with a bar and handpumps. Over 50 beers from the smaller independents, including a Station Festival Ale, will be available over the weekend. There will also be traditional cider and perry as well as some bottle-conditioned ales. Food, entertainment, souvenir glasses and T-shirts are also promised.

## The Shady Oak

Following our report a few months ago, it's good to see Thwaites Bitter reappearing as a regular beer at the Shady Oak, Bramhall alongside Tetley and Jennings Bitters and the ubiquitous Marstons Pedigree. The pub has also joined Tetleys' "Tapster's Choice" scheme which offers a rotating guest beer changing every fortnight. The first examples have been from the Carlsberg-Tetley stable, but a selection of about 20 is promised over time, including beers from independent breweries and a number of milds.

The pub also hopes to replace the Warrington version of Tetley Bitter with that brewed in Leeds, which is generally reckoned to be far superior and is rarely seen this side of the Pennines. Later in the year we understand that the Shady Oak will be designated a "Festival Alehouse" with extra handpumps being installed and a wider range of guest beers being offered.



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# CURMUDGEON



In his excellent CAMRA Guide to the Best Pubs in Yorkshire, Barrie Pepper rightly praises the licensee of the Mother Shipton in Knaresborough for refusing to hand bottles over the bar. "Like me", Barrie writes, "he detests the obnoxious practice of drinking straight from the bottle. Ugh!" It's a great pity more pubs don't follow this licensee's example. A better way of missing the finer points of beer and revealing yourself as a right prat at the same time is hard to imagine - although most of the beers subjected to this kind of treatment are the likes of Budweiser and Sol where there's precious little character to spoil.

And maybe it's sexist and politically incorrect to say so, but I find most distasteful of all the sight of a young woman necking a bottle of Diamond White, "K" or some other high-strength rubbish which passes for designer cider, showing a complete lack of style and taste, and soon left with no sense either...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Something which perhaps doesn't even deserve being put into a glass is the recent wave of "dry" beers which seems to have spread here from the States, although thankfully they haven't got far beyond the trendy bars. Their main selling point seems to be that they lack the "unpleasant aftertaste" of

normal beers. Funny that, I thought beer was supposed to have an aftertaste, you know, malt, hops, that sort of thing. That's what's so enjoyable about it. Is dry beer really meant for people who at heart don't actually like beer?

The next transatlantic fad to hit us is apparently "clear beer", which looks pretty much like water and no doubt tastes like it too. Why do people bother? Wouldn't it be simpler just to dilute vodka down to 4% alcohol and drink that. But maybe that doesn't have quite the same posing value.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A beer which certainly has an aftertaste and a half is Joseph Holt's, and there are few places where it's kept in better nick than the Crown & Anchor on Cateaton Street in Manchester City Centre. So why on earth did I recently see an elderly man buying cans of Holt's bitter to pour into his pint pot, when the draught was so lipsmackingly good, and cheaper too? Some human behaviour you just can't fathom.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A word of praise for a change - three cheers to the production editor for finally changing "OT" over to a serif typeface. It makes the views expressed in this column appear even more authoritative than before!

## Welcome Idy & Sal

A hearty Opening Times welcome to Idy Phillips and her partner Sal, who have taken over the management of the Beer House in Manchester. Idy is already bringing some of her ideas into play, with half-price food on Monday lunchtime, free chip barns between 5 and 6 on Wednesdays, and low priced doubles of a range of single malts.

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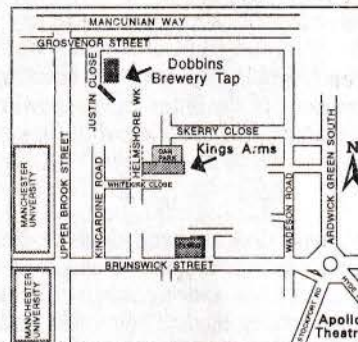
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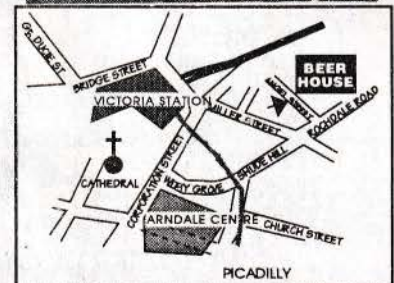
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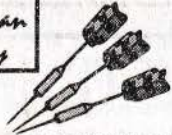


**SPRING BANK HOLIDAY BEER FESTIVAL**  
**FRIDAY APRIL 29 - MONDAY MAY 2**  
**41 CHAMPION BEERS OF 1993**



# Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



For the second season in a row Darryl Fitton finished at the top of the list of 180 scorers in the Stockport Licensed Houses League.

The Cale Green Social Club and Cheshire County player, who also turns out for the Star & Garter in the Central 501 League, scored eight maximums in the 16 match Super League season, against 10 out of 28 last term.

Not surprisingly his team, Cale Green, remained undefeated again, to retain their championship title.

Derek Higgins 11 darter against the Airport Hotel made certain that the Magnet man will receive the Least Darts Trophy.

Bobby Peel, who had a disappointing season, will gain some consolation in Phil Cook's 152 outshot gaining the highest kill award.

To give some indication of the high quality of Stockport's Super League, no less than 91 maximums were scored in the 72 matches by 42 players. When you consider that most pub players can go years without scoring the magic maximum, the high standard is readily seen.

After throwing it away in the previous season, the Crown Heaton Moor made sure of the Premier 'A' Division title. Star & Garter pressed them hard all season, but faltered at the final hurdles.

Paul Aspinall's 13 darter for Finger Post 'A' at the Star & Garter on the second week of the season was never bettered. Jimmy Worswick's (Star & Garter) three 180's was the best effort by any Premier 'A' Division player.

John Beswick was the star player in Premier 'B'. The Greg St WMC man went through the complete season without losing a single game. On top of that, he was the only player in any division to record a maximum 170 kill during the season.

Pete Webb from the Nursery took the honours for most 180's in that division, hitting four 180's - one of those coming in a 15 darter at the Comfortable Gill. Also on 15 darters were Greg St's John Carroll and rising young player Lee Richardson (Union, Reddish).

Lee also did very well to reach the final of the Manchester heat of the Red Dragon Youth Classic held at Reddish Leisure Centre. Lee only lost 3-2 to the eventual qualifier Dean Allsop, already a Derbyshire 'B' player.

The Bungalow pipped Hope Inn and the Gateway for the General Division title, by just a single point. Pineapple took the slip-up with some ease, twelve points ahead of second placed Romiley Libs. The Liberal Club will be pleased with their runner-up trophy, as it was their first season in the league.

Dave Stewart of bottom team Railway, hit a superb 147 outshot at the Finger Post. It was the biggest kill seen in General Division for over two years.

Finally, it was pleasing to see the Bridge receive March's "Pub of the Month" award. For the first time, the Georges Road hostelry will be entering a team in the Licensed Houses League, starting in the new season.

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Websters & Holts

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**BISHOPS:**

**HOT PORT, DEMERERA SUGAR, CLOVES**

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**HOT PORT, SPICED WITH CINAMMON  
AND GINGER AND LOTS MORE**



...Pub Ne  
b News...  
News...P  
...Pub Ne  
b News...  
News...P



**T**he Stamford Arms, Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge (on the Mossley/Stalybridge border) is now selling a rotating guest beer alongside the well-kept Draught Bass, Worthington, Stones and Light. In mid-March the current guest was Shepherd Neame Spitfire and others to be rotated include Everards Tiger, Morland Old Speckled Hen, Ruddles County and Youngs (ordinary) Bitter. The pub is a well run country-style pub adjacent to Stamford Golf Course. Significantly the landlord drinks his own Draught Bass. Approx 15 minutes walk from Mossley Station on the junction of Huddersfield Road and Staley Road.

The Chapel House on Stockport Road in Denton, formerly a Whitbread pub, opened in its new Holts ownership in late March. Holts Mild and Bitter are on handpump at the usual bargain prices. Whilst the decor is nothing to write home about, O.T's first visit found both beers in fine form and very keen service, with bar staff positively seeking out customers as at Didsbury's Royal Oak or the Church at Cheadle Hulme.

In Old Glossop, the Bulls Head, a new Robinsons outlet, has started to do pub food with a difference. The classic boozers night out, a few (!) beers followed by a curry can now be enjoyed in the comfort of the same venue. To avoid the run of the mill fare of baby in a basket with a side order of chips the licensees have gone into partnership with owners of a Rusholme restaurant and now offer a full Indian menu. Take away is also an option so last orders could become hectic. We just hope that the beer is not neglected as it is the precursor to such nights out.

On Glossop Road, the Rock Tavern has a new licensee who formerly ran the Norfolk in Marple Bridge. The beers available are Theakstons Best Bitter and Old Peculiar, both on hand pump.

We have more news of the Royal Albert next to the bus station. It has now re-opened and has been renamed The Carpenters. Well that's the good news, now the bad news... it's a keg only pub! Our informant, whose name we can supply on request, would have preferred to see an extension of the bus station!

## The Robin Hood

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Back in Dukinfield, the Angel on Kings Road is now serving Holts Bitter which along with John Smiths Bitter costs £1.05 a pint. We know what we'd choose.

The Boundary at Audenshaw, very close to Guide Bridge Station, was one of the earliest pubs to take advantage of the Guest Beer Law, selling Holts Bitter on handpump. Nowadays, though the Holts has gone, an impressive array of guest beers has taken its place, including such "exotic" (well, Yorkshire) micro-breweries as Lastingham and Rudgate. Sadly, though, we understand that Scrumpy Jack keg cider is still served here by a "handpump"; if the licensees want recognition by CAMRA (or by anybody else who doesn't want to be conned), they know what to do.

More, if incomplete, news of the pub owning group Royal Free Houses which has been getting the odd mention in the column recently. They own six outlets in the Glossop and Tameside area and four in the Rochdale, Oldham & Bury branch area. Now the incomplete bit. In Glossop the Moon & Sixpence (we preferred the old name, the Fleece) and the Junction are under their wing as are the Blazing Rag (good grief!) and Georges American Bar (oh no!) in Mossley. As reported previously the Globe (at last a sensible name) in Hyde is also a RFH pub. More news when our man in the know sobers up.

Last and not least the Hatters is in the news. After a good many years in charge licensee Sadie Davies is hanging up her apron and famed withering glance and retiring from the trade. In wishing her a happy and long retirement I would like to say that the Hatters is one of an increasingly rare species.... a traditional pub where beer and a good atmosphere are more important than "refurbishment" and passing trends. It is because the Hatters has been in the same family for so long (Sadie's husband was licensee before she took the reins) that it has remained a fine example of the traditional street corner local, a fact that has been appreciated by the regulars over the years. We must hope that the temptation to alter this gem of a pub is resisted by Robinsons and the new licensee so that the Hatters can carry on for years to come as a no nonsense local.

*There will be more on this subject next month.*

## Dull Spring from Bass

As we have reported in the past, giant brewers Bass have slowly woken up to the guest beer market and are now making a range of guest beers available to their licensees.

Whilst this is a welcome step in the right direction there is still some way to go. Recently unveiled was the 'Spring Collection' of 15 different ales available until June. Eight are brewed by Bass and some of the others are pretty unoriginal. Amongst those available are Worthington Best Bitter, Stones Bitter (yawn), Ruddles County, Robinsons Best Bitter, Toby Light (snore) and others.

Luckily there are also some very interesting beers on the list, Youngs Bitter and Shepherd Neame Spitfire are two excellent non-Bass beers and from in-house there is the fine Highgate Dark plus the rarely seen Worthington Dark and Hancock's HB, the latter two from Cardiff.

The Spring Collection remains available until June and should be seen in the more enterprising Bass pubs in the area, including both the Bromale and Bramhalls in Bramhall.



## Mr Thomas Chesters - Time To Move On

**B**y way of local TV news and press reports many of us are aware of the proposal of the Church Commissioners to exhume the remains of some 2500 people from the graveyard of the redundant St. Luke's Church on Cheetham Hill Road.

Presumably the remains will be re-interred at a public cemetery or cemeteries in the Manchester area. Obviously the Church authorities find this all very regrettable but, sadly, the land is required for a supermarket.

St. Luke's churchyard is, or should I say was intended to be, the last resting place of one of Manchester's most famous brewing sons, Mr. Thomas Chesters who died circa 1870.

I have been an imbiber long enough to remember those happy days when the name of Thomas Chesters was held in the same exalted esteem by good ale drinkers as that in which Joseph Holt is still held today.

Until a couple of years ago Mr Chesters' tombstone could easily be pointed out from the main road, surmounted as it was by a prominent obelisk. Like many of the other monuments, though, it eventually attracted the attention of vandals and the obelisk was toppled. Even so the base of the tombstone it still in situ and the faded inscription discernible.

For the first ninety or so years since his passing Mr Thomas Chesters did rest reasonably peacefully, but with the onset of the nineteen-sixties the rot set in with a venge-

ance! 1961 - Chesters Ardwick Brewery taken over by Threlfalls, 1966 - Ardwick Brewery closed and demolished, 1967 - Threlfalls-Chesters taken over by Whitbread. The Chesters' name lives on, but only in the guise of a not very best mild, and later on in the name of a wishy-washy bitter. By this time Thomas Chesters was no doubt turning uneasily beneath his obelisk, possibly also in anticipation of the bigger move to come!

There can be only one moral to all this "Uneasily rests a Brewer who wore the Crown".

## Watch That Gas!

Our attention has been drawn to a product being advertised in the trade - the 'Norgren BD-AVI Aspirating Valve'. Whilst this may sound like a surgical appliance to the uninitiated, it is in fact a variant on our old friend the cask breather.

Apparently designed for dispensing 'Traditional Ales' this device maintains a blanket of carbon dioxide gas over the beer, albeit at atmospheric pressure. Licensees are told that this device "meets the requirements of the most discerning Real Ale drinker". The makers also claim that it "conforms to the principles suggested by the most influential 'Real Ale' organisation in the UK". If by this they mean that it in some way has CAMRA approval then licensees are being misled. Any beer dispensed with the assistance of carbon dioxide gas, at atmospheric pressure or otherwise, is not real ale.

Whilst licensees will make up their own minds as to whether they want to buy this device they should be aware that its installation and use will debar them from any form of CAMRA award or entry in any CAMRA guide.

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].

A Family Brewery

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Since 1838

Traditionally Brewed

The  
*Best*  
in the  
North  
West

SILVER MEDAL  
WINNER 1964  
THE BREWING INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

The advertisement features a central image of a beer tap handle on the left and a glass of dark beer on the right. The tap handle is ornate with a unicorn logo and text including 'A Family Brewery', 'Robinson's Best BITTER', and 'Since 1838'. The glass is filled with a dark beer topped with a thick head of foam. To the right of the glass, the text 'The Best in the North West' is written in a stylized font. Below this, a circular logo for 'SILVER MEDAL WINNER 1964 THE BREWING INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL AWARDS' is displayed.



# CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Once again there is a full social diary this month starting on Saturday 9th with an awayday to York catching the 9.45am Scarborough train from Piccadilly. With a wealth of interesting pubs and historic sites this city is well worth a visit.

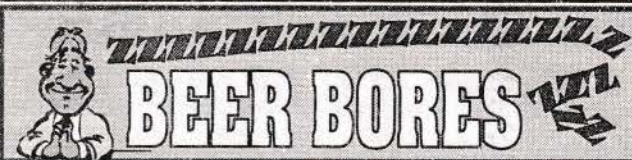
The first Monday Social this time is on 11th and is at the Pineapple which is on Garratt Way, just off Hyde Road. In common with all Monday Socials this starts at 9.00pm.

The monthly meeting is on Thursday 14th at the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. This is the branch AGM and all members should make every effort to attend please. There is another awayday on Saturday 16th, this time to Macclesfield. Details of the days itinerary can be obtained from Dawn on 445 0872.

The social on Monday 18th is at the Philips Sport & Social Club (Th'Hut) on Bramhall Moor Lane, Hazel Grove - our first ever social in a club so a good turnout please. There's another club social the following Monday. This one is at the BBC Club at New Broadcasting House on Oxford Road. We need names in advance for this one so if you want to turn up please let Dawn have your name by or at the branch AGM.

On Thursday 28th April we present our Pub of the Month Award to the Hinds Head in Heaton Chapel and the very next night is our monthly Stagger. This time it's Ladybarn and Fallowfield starting at 7.00pm at the White Swan on Green Street, Ladybarn. Alternatively you can join at the Friendship on Wilmslow Road at 8.30.

If you live in Bredbury, Romiley, Marple or Woodley you fall in the area covered by the High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA. High Peak have advised us that they will be holding their monthly meeting on Monday 18th April at the Cheshire Ring in Hyde. Aim to get there by about 8.30pm. Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each other's events.



The latest entrant in this occasional series featuring the worst of the verbally challenged comes from the estimable pen of wine writer Oz Clarke. Best known for his appearances with the formidable Jilly Goulden on BBC's Food and Drink, Oz also writes a drink column for the Daily Telegraph which, at the end of January, included a largely sensible review of Welsh breweries and their beers.

Until he came to Snowdonia, that is, and their superb Mel y Moelwyn Bitter, which readers may recall won beer of the festival at Stockport last year. The quality of the beer inspired this flight of fancy:

*"Mel y Moelwyn is a light beer but packed with fascinating flavours. The honey is there, and there's smoke and the dark sweet meat from next to a kipper's spine and then a great thwack of hops. Lovely stuff."*

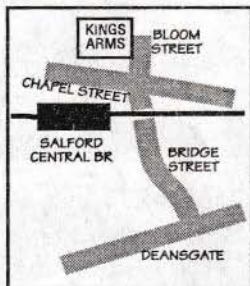
## PubCo Supply Deal

We hear that the Boddington PubCo have renegotiated their supply deal with Whitbread. The original agreement was due to run until 1995 but it seems that both parties were keen to renegotiate before then. Whilst the new agreement runs until 2000 it is, apparently, much less restrictive than the old one, thus giving the PubCo more scope on the guest beer front.

Let's hope that it's not long before their tenants who want to take guest ales are offered something rather more inspiring than the Whitbread Cask Ale Collection which is all they have to go on at the moment. Whilst this does include a few good beers it is also littered with such taste-free zones as Bentleys Bitter and West Country Pale Ale. The PubCo can certainly do better than that.

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by Keith Lingard

**W**hen was the last time you had sausages? Can't remember? Well, get down to the Hogshead, High Street in central Manchester - you'll be spoilt for choice.

In the corner of the pub is 'The Sausage Emporium' where sausage lovers can enjoy a veritable feast from the extensive menu. Not just your usual pork or beef here, this is sausage heaven with such delights as Manchester (made with ginger and cloves), Somerset (chopped apple and cider with sage), Samuel Pepys (pork with spinach and herbs) and Caribbean (pork and pineapple with ginger, coconut and chilli). In addition to the set menu there are also guest sausages - on my visit these included Chinese and Curry and Sultana. £2.50 will get you three of these together with mash and mushy peas. So far so good, but...when I arrived at only 1.00pm only a very restricted choice was available. An early lunchtime rush or the menu not being all it's cracked up to be? Who knows. What was available was pretty good - the Manchester sausage was excellent as was the curry and sultana, although this would be too spicy for some. I tried the Chinese which was also good with a tangy barbecued taste. It's just as well that the sausages were good as the accompaniments were less than average with hard peas and the mash giving the impression of coming from a packet rather than a potato.

Apart from the sausages there is a small selection of pretty standard pub fare - Scampi and Chips, Curry, Chilli, the usual stuff, all at £3.50. Sandwiches (including sausage) range from £1.50 to £2 and jacket spuds with a variety of fillings run from £1.25 to £2.05. One of us tried the jacket potato with baked beans. This came with cheese and a decent salad to make for a good value meal at £1.55.

Two desserts were on offer, Spotted Dick and Hot Chocolate Cake with cream. The latter was more like a chocolate



pudding and came with custard rather than cream but was nevertheless very tasty and the portion was generous.

Although the pub was busy we had no difficulty in getting a seat. The furniture is in an old chunky style to fit in with the 'old ale house' theme and complements the bare floorboards and wooden barrels on elevated shelving to give a basic, 'mock-rustic' feel to the pub.

Whilst this is a Whitbread pub - and it is their beers you see on the bar when you go in - there are in fact a large number of genuine guest beers. On my visit, these included such classics as Broughton Old Jock, Batemans Victory Ale, Jolly Roger Broadsword and Titanic Shipwrecked. It was interesting to note that the Boddingtons Bitter was similar in price to the higher gravity beers, such as the Shipwrecked - £1.65. Beer quality was uneven, whilst the Old Jock was excellent the Broadsword was under-conditioned and tasteless.

The general atmosphere was good - noisy and bustling as you would expect on a Friday lunchtime. Perhaps one or two more staff wouldn't go amiss as the lady serving the food seemed rather overwrought. A request for an extra plate to share the chocolate pudding was greeted with reluctance and begrudgingly met.

With a little more attention to detail the Hogshead would be an essential visit while in the City Centre. It's still worth a visit for the experience of 'a sausage with a difference' and some interesting guest beers.

## MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

The Britannia on Newton Street in the City Centre, closed for some time, has re-emerged as the Frog & Bucket (no Spoonerisms please), with Wilsons Mild, Websters Bitter, John Smiths Bitter and Courage Directors on handpump. On Friday and Saturday nights it hosts "alternative" comedy, with a door charge after 8.30. When I called I was pleased to note that my pint - not particularly short measure in the first place - was topped up without my asking.

On the cafe bar scene in the centre, Checkpoint Charlie has closed (reputedly owing huge amounts in rent), while Daniel's now rejoices in the name the Grinch, and its handpump dispenses Thwaites Bitter.

In Levenshulme, the Railway is now subtitled "Daly's Bar" in what seems to be a vague attempt to simulate a Dublin long bar (complete with Irish sport on the big screen!). The design does in fact work quite well, with numerous separate areas, but the only handpumped beer is now Boddingtons Bitter, though this was very good on my visit. The Old House at Home in Fallowfield has dropped Stones

Bitter, while the Mosley in Beswick was selling handpumped Worthington Best Bitter recently (though as regular readers will know, the real ale available changes frequently).

Finally, I'm sure OT readers will join me in wishing a very long and happy retirement to Tom and Jean Goldie, who leave Hyde's Grey Horse in the City Centre around the end of this month after 14 years tenancy (their predecessor, the redoubtable Olive, had been in the pub 32 years!). Despite the huge increase in choice of beer and emergence of different styles of pub in the City Centre during the years of their tenancy, the Grey Horse has remained a much-loved city centre meeting place. Their successor will have a hard act to follow.

**STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS**

On a recent visit to Openshaw the Wrexham appeared to be closed and boarded. On a happier note, the Pack Horse no longer has Scruppy Jack on "handpump". The Prince of Wales no longer sells real ale, but in a very interesting move, the Forresters Arms has replaced Robinsons mild with "ordinary" bitter. The Albion has dropped Chesters Bitter in favour of Boddingtons Bitter, with other Whitbread beers occasionally available - and don't ignore the Chesters Mild here. And out at the Grove on Ashton Old Road, handpumped John Smiths Bitter has joined the Wilsons (bitter and mild) and Boddingtons range.



