

## UP AND AWAY

### National Survey Charts Soaraway Beer Prices

**C**amra has been monitoring the price of your pint since it was formed in 1971 and a regular national survey has been carried out since the early 1980's. The 1994 results were released at the end of June and key findings were:

- ★ Pub beer price rise 5% - twice the rate of inflation
- ★ Other drinks rise by much less than inflation
- ★ Beer singled out for price increases

Real ale prices rose 5% in the last year, with inflation at only 2.6%. But pub prices of soft drinks, wine and spirits rose by 1%, less than half the rate of inflation. CAMRA spokesman Mike Benner told *Opening Times* "Beer drinkers are bearing the brunt of pub price rises. There can be no reason for beer prices to be rising faster than those for other drinks."

As usual, the North West was the cheapest region for beer and London and the South East the priciest. Joseph Holts have also lost their crown as the cheapest pint in the land with Wickwar Brewery in Bristol selling their WPA at 88p in Avon beating Holts by just 2p. The most expensive pint found was £2.30 for a pint of strong ale in Surrey.

In common with previous years the independent brewers offered the best value for money and the survey also revealed the big brewers charging over the odds for their guest beers - a guest ale in a national pub averaged £1.51 compared to £1.42 for the same beers on their home ground. That's a 9p a pint 'surcharge' for the guest beer.

#### CAMRA also found that:

- ★ one in six pubs now run a regular happy hour or other promotion (so it can pay to shop around)
- ★ one in ten pubs is still breaking the law by not displaying a price list. This is an improvement over previous years. CAMRA believes that the offending pubs should now be prosecuted.

As if the results of CAMRA's survey weren't enough, national brewers Bass, Whitbread and Scottish & Newcastle all increased their prices by something like 5% last month. The rises only apply to pub prices, take-home packaged beer remains unchanged. At one fell swoop these brewers have both further tightened the screws on their long-suffering licensees, already struggling to maintain their trade in the face of increased home drinking, and more to the point, have effectively sabotaged their own campaign for a reduction in beer duty to stem the flood of cheap imports into the UK. This short-sighted action was widely condemned in the trade with trade organisations rapping the brewers for their 'betrayal' of the campaign. The big brewers action compares unfavourably with the approach of many independents: Vaux has hinted that it may not increase its prices when they are reviewed this month and Hydes have pledged to pass on any duty cut in full. Hydes MD, Adrian Hyde put it succinctly "We want to maintain the throughput in our pubs so we can invest and protect jobs."

## National Petition



Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA joined forces with Robinsons last month to help launch a national petition calling for British beer taxes to be reduced.

One third of the price of a pint of beer is made up by excise duty and VAT with British taxes six times higher than in France. The advent of the European single market at the end of 1992 has allowed holiday makers and day trippers to bring unlimited quantities of beer into the country from the continent.

The difference in tax has made a boot-leg trade in beer profitable. The brewers believed that one in every eight pints drunk at home is imported and that by the end of the decade some 10,000 pubs across the country could close as a result.

"All we are asking for as a level playing field on which to compete" said David Robinson. Whilst CAMRA was quite happy to support this initiative, it was unfortunate that Robinsons also chose June to increase their prices, albeit at a rate rather less than the nationals and for the first time in fifteen months.





# PUB of the Month July

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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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						

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The Stockport and South Manchester pub of the month for July is the Church in Cheadle Hulme, a fine pub located on the corner of Church Road and Ravenoak Road in the leafy suburb.

Externally the Church is a visually pleasing cottage-style building whose small facade belies its rather roomy interior. Inside it is a multi-roomed layout which rambles somewhat. But these qualities alone do not make a good pub. Superb Robinsons beers help a great deal; Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Frederics are all on offer. In addition fine food is available at lunch times and early evenings.

Exemplary service is a hallmark of the Church; even at busy times (and the place can get VERY busy) the keen bar staff ensure that no-one is kept waiting for long. The collection of used glasses and the emptying of ash trays are carried out swiftly and discreetly; many pubs could learn a thing or two from the Church.

But it is the hard work and commitment of the licensee that really makes a pub. Simon and Rosemary have been at the Church for nearly eight years now; they have made it what it is today, and now run one of the best pubs in the area in anyone's book. It is for these reasons that we are delighted to award them a well-deserved Pub of the Month for July. The presentation takes place on the 28th of this month. Everyone is, of course, welcome to join us for what promises to be a great night.

Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Paul Hutchings, Richard Hough, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Jim Flynn, Mark McConachie, Tony Wilkinson, Tim Jones, Frank Wood, Tom Lord

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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JULY '89

CAMRA carry out a national prices survey every year, and it's one of the most comprehensive in the country. The overall result confirmed the trend of recent years - Greater Manchester remains one of the cheapest areas to drink, and the Great Lager Rip-Off continues. So comparing the cheapest with the dearest, a standard bitter in the 1035 - 1040 band in this area was an incredible 28p cheaper than in Greater London (our average was 81p, a pint compared with their £1.09.) Ales and lagers were compared by strength and price - average price of 1030-1035 OG Mild in Manchester 79p, and similar strength lager 97p; Standard bitter 81p, lager 96p; Best Bitter 89p, lager £1.13p.

Many of the prices quoted were those of the local independent brewers - the prices charged by the "Big Six" brewers, even in a cheap area like this, tend to lead rather than follow the market. So the message was clear - Britain's independent brewers offer good value, and to celebrate, CAMRA drink to them on July 4th., which has become our own Independent's Day.

Robinson's range of beers at the Church, Edgeley, were joined by Hartley's XB, brewed at their Lake District subsidiary in Ulverston. It was thought that this 1040 OG premium beer was only available in about six of Robinson's houses. (Robinsons closed the Hartley brewery in 1991, and XB is now brewed in Stockport.)

There was news of 3 pubs that had re-opened after being closed for a major refurbishment -

The Sherwood on Wilmslow Road in Fallowfield was structurally very much as it was, apart from a new extension which had been added, and described as a "pizza house". Beer range had improved - Chesters Bitter, Trophy and Marstons Pedigree.

The Shady Oak in Redford Drive, Bramhall, had gained a conservatory, and the bar had been moved to the middle of the pub. "Interesting irregular space" had been created, with plenty of standing room and comfortable seating. There was a good range of beer, but distinctly pricey (as it was before.)

Finally, Boddington's unveiled the new look Locomotive on Ashton Old Road. The layout was unchanged, and the impressive tiling had been retained and enhanced. Unfortunately, during a six month closure before the refurbishment, the pub had been broken into, and old fireplaces and stained glass panels had been stolen. The pub has been renamed the Smithfield, after the nearby market, and the signwriters removed the distinctive "sky-boards" from the roof. All in all, Boddingtons were congratulated on making a major investment in the area - many other companies wouldn't have hesitated in closing the place for good.

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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Well, the big brewers have done it again. On the one hand they are indulging in hand-wringing about the flood of illicit imports into the UK, which are, apparently, threatening the very future of the public house as we know it. Breweries may close, they insist, thousands may be thrown out of work.

Some of this is undoubtedly true and that's why CAMRA has supported the national petition to reduce beer duty. The brewers, meanwhile will be doing their bit to protect their pubs and sales volumes. Actions, unfortunately speak louder than words and that is why the latest round of price increases has been greeted with anger by all those who really do care about our public house tradition.

Across the board price increase would have been bad enough but these have largely been restricted to the on-trade. Prices for take-home products remain unchanged. Considering it is the huge increase in drinking at home that is causing many pubs to suffer shows that the big brewers see the off-trade as the future. They are turning their backs on the pub and couldn't care less if they ruin trade for the regional and micro brewers in the process.

\* \* \* \* \*

I hope you all enjoy our cider feature this month. Although this area has no great tradition of cider drinking, there is a very real interest in traditional cider and perry, as evidenced by the record sales at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Those pubs that do sell the stuff usually have very healthy sales and with the growth of 'real ale' theme pubs, you would think that a cask of 'real' cider would nicely complement the traditional beer on sale. Some pubs, like the Crown in Stockport, do in fact do this, and very successfully. However in the 'bandwagon' real ale bars, it's a different story. We report elsewhere on Greenalls installation of keg Scrumpy Jack on handpump in the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury. We also understand that Whitbread are embarking on a policy of doing the same in their themed real ale pubs, Hogsheads, Ale Houses etc. More on this one next time.

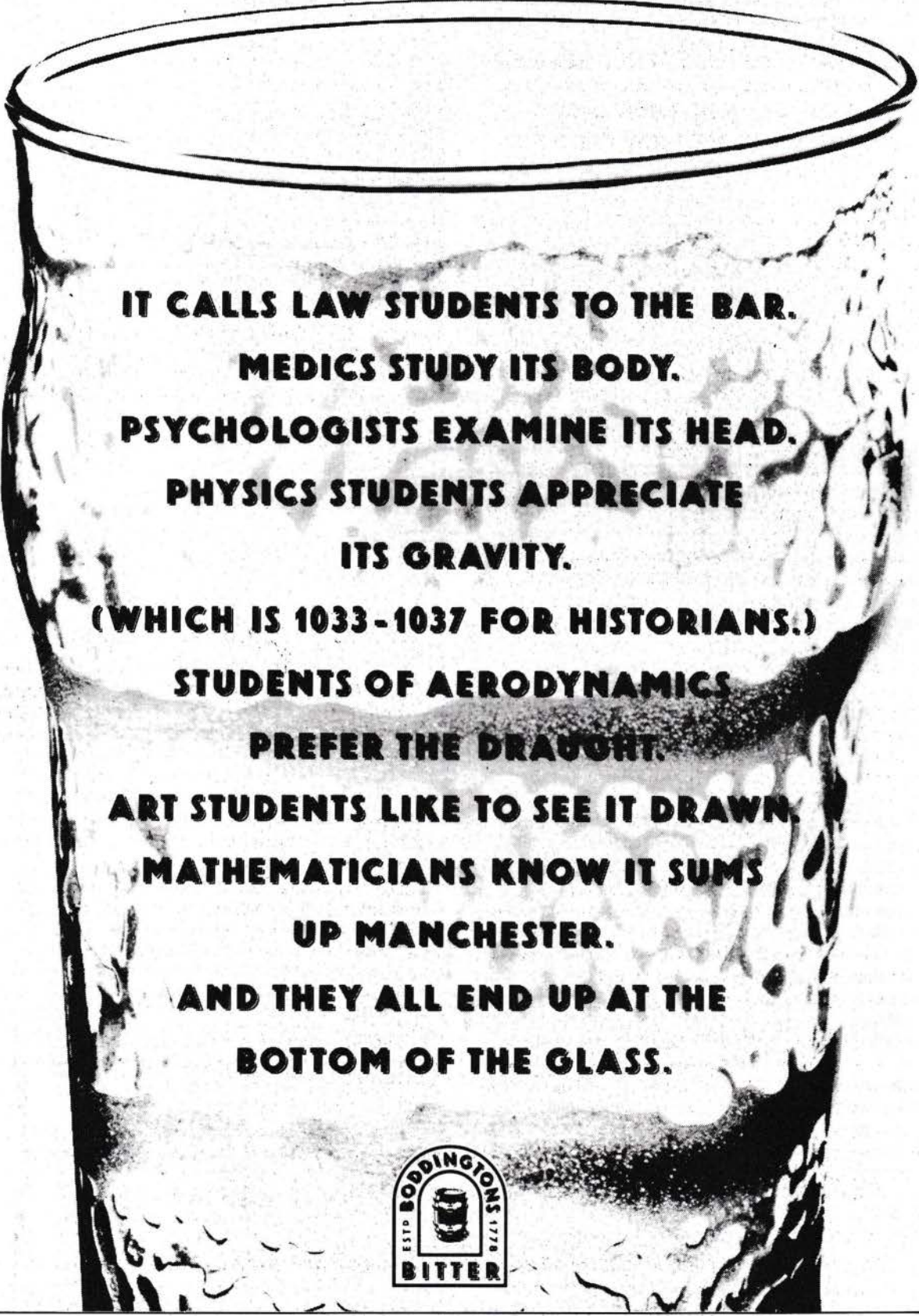
*John Clarke*

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# OPENING TIMES

## LETTERS



**From : Rhys P Jones**

"It will not be long before we see breweries closing," Peter Robinson told *Opening Times* (OT, June). This cannot, I take it, be the same Peter Robinson who closed Hartleys brewery of Ulverston in 1991.

**From : Richard Hough**

I seem to be forever moaning but it could be that there is still much to moan about. I get quite annoyed when bar staff plonk drinks on the bar causing them to spill all over the place. My request that the lost beer is replaced by more from the pump is usually met with a nasty glance from such people. Sometimes a hostile response is forthcoming, and a top-up followed by plonk-splash.

Although clumsy, unprofessional bar staff are annoying, they can be tolerated more than ungracious, discourteous, unprofessional bar staff. There is no real solution to this problem, but could it give a little more weight to the argument in favour of oversize glasses?

**From : K. Rampley, 39 Meadway, Hough Green, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8XT**

I wonder if any readers can help me? I have a small collection of beer festival glasses. I am trying to add to these (much rarer) glasses with pub names on them. So far I have one from the Crown, Heaton Mersey, given to me by the licensee.

Having tried an ad. in *What's Brewing* without any success, I should appreciate any information on any pubs which still have such glasses, with a view to possibly acquiring such, over a period of time. Can anyone help?

**From : Peter Edwardson**

Your June issue includes a letter from Nigel Pitman, the licensee of the Nelson in Stockport, containing a series of criticisms both of "*Opening Times*" and CAMRA in general. But does he really know everything there is to know about running a pub?

The recent Stockport Beer & Cider Festival closed from 3-5 pm on Friday and 4-6 pm on Saturday. The Nelson is the nearest pub to the Festival venue, and indeed the only one visible from the main entrance. Yet did he open his pub during these times? No chance! If he'd persuaded S & N to let him have a couple of moderately interesting guest beers, and some real cider, he could have cleaned up. As it was, he was happy to let a lot of free-spending and well-behaved customers walk straight past his door.

**From : Peter B Robinson (Frederic Robinson Ltd)**

I must correct Mr. Mullineaux' interpretation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission interpretation of "Market Share." What Mr Mullineaux did not say in his letter was that a holding of 25% of the pubs in any licensing district is deemed to be a monopoly, not 25% in one town or village.

Marple is only a small part of the Stockport licensing district, where Robinsons have well below 25% of the pubs. You can go anywhere in the country and find towns and villages where the local brewer, whether he be family controlled, regional or even national, has a large percentage of the pubs, but that is not a monopoly, it is a natural result of the local brewer in the past buying houses close to his town.

I suspect that Mr Mullineaux' interpretation of the Marple

area is rather wider than mine, because we have not got 17 pubs in the immediate Marple area, but perhaps he had enjoyed a few pints of our premium bitter, Frederics, which affected his ability to differentiate our pubs from others!

Support independent family brewers Mr Mullineaux in their efforts to keep the tie, because if you do not you could find your only choice is between national brewers products, and not the wide choice which exists in Marple at present.

**From : Richard Horrell, Regional Sales Manager, The Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries PLC**

I note with interest the June edition of *Opening Times*, charting 10 successful years and your comments about our company. You will have noted I hope that we have now increased our estate substantially in the north west, opening a number of prestige Managed Houses in the Manchester area serving, as always, traditional ales.

In brand terms one of our most noteworthy changes in the last ten years has been the acquisition of Camerons Brewery in Hartlepool. We now sell on hand pull Camerons Strongarm in a number of Houses in the Manchester area. This is quite literally a Ruby Red Bitter of 4% ABV. This is a very different type of bitter and I recommend it to your members when they call at our Houses.

**From : Richard Hough**

It's nice to see Robinsons keeping up with the times. First, the Best Bitter pump-clip/beer mat was given a new, fresher image. Then Frederic's was introduced. A cracking 5% premium beer any brewer would be proud of. This is where the growth market lies at the moment, so it's great to see a brewery respond to consumer demand, with proper backing and promotion. And more recently Best Mild has been rebadged Hatters Mild in honour of the Stockport County lads who've done us so proud this season. Despite all the image and so on, the real attraction of Robinsons, as should be the case with any decent brewery, is the beer. It remains as good today as its always been. Here's to the future and more continued success!

Letters to the editor should be addressed to John Clarke, the Editor, *Opening Times*, 45 Bulkeley St., Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. The views expressed are those of the individuals, not CAMRA either locally or nationally. Letters will be edited on grounds of decency or to comply with the prevailing laws of the land.

### Deadline for August Issue - 21 July

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# SAVE OUR PUBS



**F**or once there is some good news to report. After protests organised by CAMRA and others, the GMPTE have re-routed the proposed Metrolink line to Ashton and it will now avoid the three threatened pubs - the Auld Land Syne in Ancoats and the Sir Humphrey Chetham and Grove in Clayton. There were rumours (given undue prominence in a certain publication) that the revised plans would however involve the demolition of the Snipe, a Robinsons house in Audenshaw. As High Peak CAMRA's Tim Jones reports in his Pub News column, this is not in fact the case and the pub looks safe.

Not such good news in the rest of East Manchester. On Greenside Street in Openshaw, the Drop Forge has been vandalised and burnt out while in Gorton we hear rumours that the City Engineers are to adopt a very imaginative solution to the problem posed by the listed building status of the Plough on Hyde Road. Yup, they are going to apply for listed building consent to knock it down. It looks like we, and they, still have a fight on their hands.

Lastly on the pub front, readers will recall our report about the Romper at Ringway where trade has been decimated by the erection of a gate at the cargo terminal which effectively cut off the pub from its airport staff customers. Licensee Harry Curran tells us that a make or break meeting with the airport authorities is imminent. A full report next month.



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## West Coast Changes

In a change of direction that highlights the pressures on small-scale brewers, Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery and its Kings Arms pub in Chorlton-on-Medlock have been put on the market. This reflects the difficulty the brewery has found in retaining outlets for its beer in the face of heavy discounting by the big brewers. The intention is to concentrate on the increasingly important bottling side of the business, acquiring a new site to brew bottled beers for direct public sale, although it is envisaged that existing outlets will continue to be supplied with draught beer.

Clearly, the timetable of these developments is somewhat indefinite at present. While wishing Brendan Dobbin and operations manager Peter Mosley all the very best in their restructured venture, we fervently hope that as many as possible of the draught beers will survive and remain regularly available. Over the past five years, West Coast has brought fresh life and fresh thinking to the Manchester brewing scene, producing some of the best and most innovative beers anywhere in the country - they are quite simply too good to lose.

## Beer Wars

Locally based wholesaling chain Licensed Wholesale Consortium Company (LWCC) have found themselves at the centre of a controversy following the introduction of two house beers named after purchasing director Robin Gray.

The beers are really Mansfield Old Bailey (4.8%) and Riding Bitter (3.6%) which are being marketed as "Grays Premium Bitter" and "Grays Landlords Best Bitter" respectively. The latter has, unsurprisingly, ruffled a few feathers over the Pennines in Keighley where Timothy Taylors have a long established reputation for their 4.3% Landlord. Taylors have accordingly demanded that the name 'Landlord' be dropped from the LWCC beer ....or else. Robin Gray doesn't think people will be confused, pointing out that the beers are of a different strength and the Gray's beer 'has a distinctive red and brass pump clip which features Godfrey, my prize winning Devon Bull.'

He may have a point, but on the other hand it's difficult to see any merit in perfectly good Mansfield beers masquerading as something else, particularly as the pump clips give no indication of the origin of the beers. Why not come clean and avoid all the hassle?

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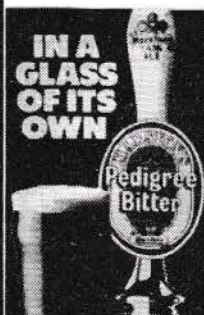
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# CHESHIRE PUBS

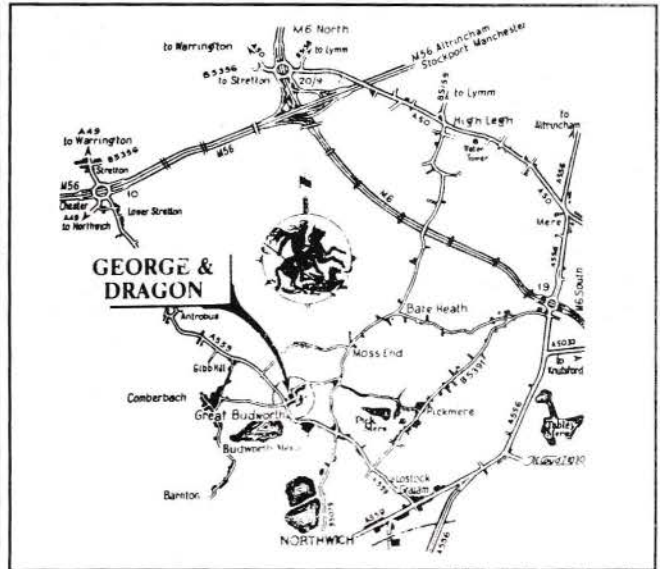
by Peter Edwardson

## The George & Dragon, Great Budworth

It's by no means a secret place, but it's not all that widely appreciated that Great Budworth, a few miles north-east of Northwich, is a strong contender for the title of the most attractive village in Cheshire. It's a very small place, with just one main street, lined by brick-and-timber cottages with twisted Tudor chimneys, climbing the hill to the magnificent sandstone church which is a landmark for miles around.

Opposite the church, as in all the best villages, is the village pub, the George & Dragon. It originally dates from 1722, and you might expect some kind of ancient, thatched, half-timbered inn, but in fact it was extensively remodelled in the inter-war period. Today it's an upstanding, four-square building with stone mullioned windows and a little tower above the main door.

The front door takes you into the main lounge bar, which probably hasn't changed much since the 1930's, and is an excellent example of a particular style of country pub interior. Wood panelling is much in evidence both on the walls and the bar front, there are plenty of beams, brasses adorn the wall and the upholstery is red and plush. In winter, real fires blaze in the impressive fireplaces at each side.



The lounge takes up the front half of the pub, and is basically all one room, although broken up by partitions into three or four distinct areas. There's also a spacious public bar at the rear which may appeal to those in search of a more local atmosphere or who don't want to sit next to diners.

It's a Tetley tied house, but alongside the staple Tetley Bitter has for some time also offered an adventurous choice of guest beers. On a recent visit these were Hopback Special from Salisbury and Pedwar Bawd (Four Thumbs) from Denbigh - it's particularly encouraging to see a big brewery pub serving guests from small independent breweries rather than some of the more widespread and predictable choices

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such as Pedigree and 6X. The beer quality is excellent and the pub has been a regular in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for the past ten years.

## Dog's Dinner

Late in the day, pub owners Greenalls have finally climbed aboard the 'real ale free-house' bandwagon with the conversion of the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury into the 'Dog & Partridge Beer House'.

The pub opened in its new guise on 16th June and Opening Times called the next day. The pub is nicely compartmentalised and the Highgate Mild was pretty good but apart from that it's hard to find much positive to say about the place. The decor you've seen before in virtually any similar style pub you care to mention, and in many cases it's been done better - Boddington PubCo's Ale Houses and Bass's H R Fletchers, for example. There are the by now obligatory chalked signs everywhere, but Whitbread do them better. The beer range is unimaginative, Adnams Bitter and Wadworths 6X are hardly the heights of exotica these days, although it was good to see a new outlet for Coach House beers. Some of the beers are sold directly from barrels stillaged behind the bar. The barrels have a variety of tubes going into them, some are undoubtedly in-cask coolers, but could one be for a gas blanket? This scarcely matters as there is also a 'handpump' on the bar dispensing keg Scrumpy Jack cider - concerned drinkers will therefore be giving the pub a wide berth anyway.

There is also a gimmick - the tables have dishes of peanuts in their shells, the idea being that you throw the shells on the floor where they are trampled in to season the wood. Yes, well. Greenalls are to be congratulated for finally grasping the nettle with this type of pub, it's just a shame that they've jumped on the bandwagon too late and largely got it wrong.

There's a comprehensive food menu, ranging from sandwiches to steaks, and home-made daily specials chalked up on a blackboard - on our visit the Pork in Cider was particularly good. Prices are very reasonable for a smart country pub, with most main courses under £5. Food is served every lunchtime and evening, and at busy times a separate upstairs dining room is also opened, where children are admitted.

Even though it's two hundred years younger than most of the ancient cottages in the village, the George & Dragon is wholly in place at the heart of Great Budworth, and it succeeds in attracting tourists and diners from a wide area while remaining a genuine village local too, a difficult balancing act which few do so well. Surprisingly, it's no more than half an hour's drive from Stockport and Manchester, and the pub, the village and the very attractive surrounding countryside all deserve to be better known around here.

## Grey Horse Knackered

Anyone who has despaired of the everchanging and increasingly garish decor of many City Centre pubs will have regarded the Grey Horse on Portland Street as a refuge. Unfortunately, thanks to their refurbishment, Hydes have succeeded in making a visit to the pub a far less pleasing experience.

Everything seems out of place, not least the mock (very mock) Tudor effect with thin pieces of wood stuck to the walls and ceiling and pretending to be beams. There is a fairly bog standard stained glass canopy above the bar with matching light fittings (do Hydes have a job lot of this stuff - they did something very similar at the Gateway in Parrswood) and to cap it all off the walls have been painted a sickly peppermint green. Yech'

On the plus side the new bar sensibly is angled away from the door, thus avoiding the bottleneck that was often a problem in the past. This was certainly needed, as was a lick of paint but by going over the top like this I suspect they will end up satisfying no-one - neither the pub-goer seeking a traditional pint in a traditional setting nor those after the bright lights and music.

Hydes artless efforts at the Grey Horse contrast woefully with the approach taken by Carlsberg-Tetley with the Circus (virtually) next door. This has been declared a heritage pub with the promise that the essential decor (and hence atmosphere) of the pub will remain unchanged for years to come.

JF

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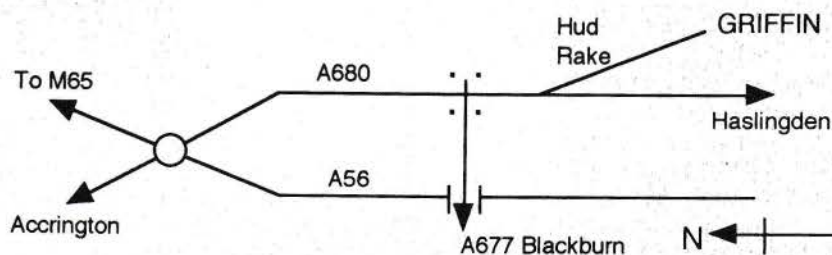
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# STAGGER

with Guest Beer Writer Mark McConachie

**I**t was a balmy Friday evening in late April when we ventured out on our stagger of Ladybarn and Fallowfield. Your writer was co-erced into doing this piece on the grounds that the column would, in some way, benefit from a fresh perspective. Well, here goes...

Our starting point was Robinson's **White Swan** on Green Lane. This large ex Kays Atlas Brewery house has that rare quality of 'quintessential pubness'. It retains much of its original multi-roomed layout and some nice tile and glasswork (particularly, a nice swan in the lobby). Of the two beers on sale - Robbies Best Bitter and Hartleys XB - we all plumped for the Best. It scored highly; surely a good sign for the rest of the evening? A handpump with Old Tom had the clip 'turned round' - we assumed it wasn't on sale. Also note the Best Mild (or should that be Hatters Mild?) has recently been dropped here. A beer garden is available outside, complete with a children's slide in the form of a large boot!

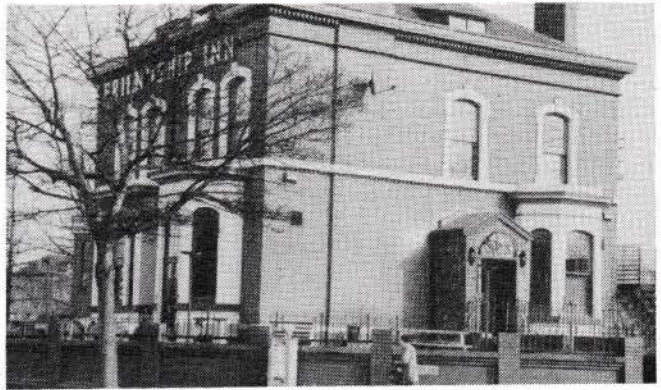
Next stop was the **Brewers Arms** on Ladybarn Lane. This is a Whitbread Cask Ale house and, to be frank, not a bad one either! Here the pub designers have avoided swathes of blackboards, junk, farm implements and other nonsense. A good many beers are on sale, mostly from the Whitbread range (Chesters, Boddies, Castle Eden, etc), and a couple of others - Pedigree and Old Speckled Hen on the night. Our party tried the Speckled Hen, which rated well, and Chesters Mild which was average. I wonder why we didn't take advantage of the 3 for 2 offer on Flowers IPA?

Across the road from the Brewers is a more 'conventional' Whitbread pub - the **Talbot**. For a long time this had been a keg-only establishment. Now, however, cask Boddies is on sale. I'm unsure of what sales it has, but when we ordered our halves it caused the barmaid some consternation for a time. To be fair though, when we received the beer it was about average for Boddies. This pub is also an outlet for the Irish Echo.

The **Derby Arms** was our next port of call. This is a small Websters pub selling Wilsons Bitter and Holts Bitter. Both beers were sampled with the Holts adjudged slightly better than the Wilsons. Some years ago this had been a two-room, split level pub, now it is simply a long room with the bar to one side. We thought a celebration of some sort was in progress during our time there - one gent had a 'mobcap' lampshade upon his head (didn't quite go with the reflective jacket though).

To get to the pub that followed involved a fairly long, but worthwhile, walk to Braemar Road; the result Greenalls **Old House at Home**. What you find is a comfortable, friendly local with vault and lounge. The pub caters for the local population as it is far enough away from Kingsway and Wilmslow Road for people not to venture there. The pub has at some time been modified but not brutally so. Greenalls Bitter is the only beer on sale - the general feeling was that it was a good example, one of the better beers we were to get.

Another longish walk brought us back to Wilmslow Road and Hydes' **Friendship Inn**. This is a fairly large pub whose bar dominates to create a U-shaped drinking area. There is no



vault, nor lounge. A god view is afforded of bustling Wilmslow Road from the capacious terrace, this idyllic scene marred only by a screaming banshee behind us. Metered dispense Hydes Light and Bitter were available and sampled - the Bitter scored very well (highest of the night as it turned out).

On next to **Yates**, just down the road. This is the ex-Fallowfield rail station building. A loud disco was in progress when we arrived. For a Friday night the large building made the number of customers seem small. The only escape from the noise was a side, 'token', non-smoking area. John Smiths and Stones were on sale, no one tried the Stones, the former was thought average.

Only a cockstride across the road was the **Sherwood**, a Whitbread pub-cum-pizzeria. Thankfully the noise was turned down here, but the pub was very full. The uninspiring beers were Boddies (average) and Castle Eden (virtually undrinkable). Better luck next time, eh?

Around the corner on Wilbraham Road was **Robinski's Wallet**. Here a selection of Courage/Grand Met beers were available, namely Websters, Ruddles Bitter and Directors. The Directors was thought to be fairly poor and the Websters only average (well, what else?) The prices here must surely have been the most expensive of the night. That said, the pub was packed to the gunwales with people, so too was the outside terrace.

Opposite Robinski's is another student haunt, the **Queen of Hearts**. This is a large ex-church building, converted into a drinking hall. The extensive grounds are also provided with tables for outside drinking (reminded me of a German Biergarten). Our party managed to discern that the pub sold Tetley Bitter but we couldn't get to the bar - the place was jam-packed!

Thus we walked a short distance up Wilmslow Road to our last pub (or so we thought) - **Route 236** (odd name, I wonder what the significance is?) This appeared to be a converted shop unit. It was very noisy, very full, sold Tetley Bitter, had door personnel (who let us inn) but again, we couldn't get to the bar - just think what we missed!

At this point the Stagger was officially over. However all were in agreement that we jump on a bus to Rusholme and have a last pint in the **Albert** (Hydes) on Walmer Street. Here we found sanity in the quiet and conviviality of this two-room street corner pub. The sole ale is Hydes Bitter (metered dispense) and this was found in excellent form, scoring the highest marks overall (outside of official Stagger area though). It is easy to see why this pub is so popular with beer this good. The Albert is another pub that sells the Irish Echo.

As ever this article can only reflect what we found on one particular night and shouldn't be taken as a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or their beers. Why not try them yourself and see how much you (dis)agree.



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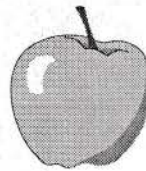
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**ON CIDER!**



This issue will come out just over a month after the 8th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. We hope that in addition to the many fine ales on offer, you also took the chance to sample some of the ciders and perries, perhaps the most endangered of our traditional drinks.

We have built up quite a following for these over the years but despite our success very few pubs, with one or two notable exceptions, have followed suit. While many brewers are keen to jump on the real ale bandwagon, traditional cider and perry, its pear equivalent, are forgotten. Small wonder then that both drinks, in their traditional form, are in serious danger of extinction, perry particularly so. That is today's threat but what we present here is a review of the long and illustrious history of these drinks. They have historical roots far deeper than today's popular premium bitters and lagers. I hope you enjoy our look back, and if it inspires you to seek out and find the real thing, you won't be disappointed.

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# Cider-Making in Herefordshire

by Rhys Jones

*'Midst fertile soil, Ledbury, Bromyard stand,  
Where apple, pear and hop enrich the land.*

(from "Herefordia" by James Henry James, 1861)

**I** focus on Herefordshire for two reasons. Not only is it my native county, but of the traditional cider-making districts, it is the most accessible from the Manchester area. By road, you can choose between the M6/M5 route for speed (roadworks permitting) and ease, or the A49 for interest and attractiveness. By rail, there's an hourly service from Stockport and Manchester.

Cidermaking in Herefordshire was originally practised in the large houses and farms. Cidermaking on the farm was not a commercial enterprise; very rarely, if ever, was cider sold to pubs or dealers. Instead, a daily allowance, generally of about half a gallon, formed part of the farmworker's weekly wage - this amount was doubled, sometimes even quadrupled, during haymaking.

Each group of labourers had their own drinking vessel, a small cup usually made from a hollowed out cow's horn, holding about a quarter of a pint. The year 1887 saw a law prohibiting the part payment of salary in this way. Though it lingered on illegally, its days were numbered, and it had died out completely by the Second World War; the workers increasingly preferred extra money to cider, while one farmer, explaining why he had stopped making cider in the early 1920's, was quoted thus: "Well I paid 'em to make it, and I paid 'em to drink it, and still the buggers weren't satisfied. So I stopped making it."

In the early Victorian era, cidermaking went through some lean times. However, with the industrial growth of Britain during the latter part of the 19th century, cities such as London and Birmingham and the industrial regions of South Wales and the West Midlands grew rapidly. Forward-thinking industrialists were quick to see the potential, the railways having made all these market areas accessible. Firms such as Cales of Ledbury, Pullings of Hereford, and Yeomans of Leominster were all established during the last thirty years of the 19th century, and are now all gone, Bulmers and Westons being the only companies surviving from that era. These companies bought their cider fruit from farmers, thus contributing to the decline of farm cidermaking.

Some of the companies even bought their own ciderhouses - a 1968 London pub guide describes Westons Cider Store in Maida Vale: "The cider is transported from Much Marcle, a Herefordshire village, in 60 to 70 gallon hogsheads and siphoned off into 40 gallon barrels which have now replaced the old 500 gallon oak vats Faith, Hope, Charity, Hardy and Conquest, that stood in the cellars till a year or two ago... rents are soaring, and it soon may no longer be possible to drink draught cider in the Harrow Road at 1s 6d a pint". After the Second World War, authorities tightened up on the issue and renewal of ciderhouse licences, and many licensees also stopped selling the drink.

Today, Bulmers, though not Hereford's biggest employer (an honour that goes to the makers of Chicken McNuggets), are still by far the county's (indeed the world's) largest cidermaker. Since the sad takeover of Symonds, the level of production that in the brewing industry might characterise the small family firm is represented only by Weston's. At the "micro" level, however, numerous producers flourish, albeit buffeted by the vagaries of weather and cropping and bureaucratic indifference (or worse) to their interests. Such producers include the relatively well-known, such as Dunkertons and Franklins; lesser-known names you may see at CAMRA festivals, such as Gwatin and Dewchurch; and an unknown number not heard of beyond their own parish, some of whom may actively discourage outside interest. (Duty is not levied on cider if less than 1500 gallons a year is made, so there is no requirement for small-scale makers to disclose their existence). At this level, cider-making is almost always integrated with the running of a farm, and it is a

pleasing thought that, albeit in vastly changed circumstances, the wheel may perhaps be turning back to the halcyon days of farm cider-making before the rise of industry.

Cider "tourists" should be sure to visit the Museum of Cider in Hereford (on the west side of the town near Sainsbury's). Though largely funded by Bulmers, it gives an admirably balanced account of cider-making in both farm and industrial modes, and also boasts its own distillery, whose potent, fruity product is available for sale. Walking towards the city centre from the Museum, you could do a lot worse than call at the Horse & Groom, whose unpretentious, wood-panelled bar dispenses occasional real ale and large quantities of Bulmers traditional cider.

For the city's premier cider pub, though, you need to continue through High Town, Hereford's handsome central market place (whose market hall, the Butter Market, deserves more than a glance during trading hours) to the Sun on St Owen Street. Though recent, reasonably tasteful alterations have raised the profile of beer here, the pub, the last in the city to have an oak cask of cider behind the bar, remains essentially a cider-drinkers' haven, and it is still not uncommon to look around and see not a glass that does not contain Bulmers Traditional. Outside Hereford, notable cider pubs include the Stag at Ross-on-Wye, dispensing Bulmers and repartee in welcoming, down-to-earth surroundings (and opening at 10am on the dot!) and, just over the Welsh border, the Three Tuns at Hay-on-Wye, a splendidly old-fashioned little place with an extensive range of Westons ciders. Mention must also be made of the "Big Apple" weekends run by the Women's Institutes of the villages around Marcle Ridge, between Hereford and Ledbury. Held three or four times a year, these are a celebration of the apple in all its aspects, with a varying range of events including orchard walks, cidemakers' open days, music and poetry - an outstanding example of rural enterprise and small-scale tourism.

Cider, then, remains very much part of the fabric of Herefordshire life. As in so many fields, the best, though sometimes chanced on unexpectedly, generally has to be sought out. The rewards, however, amply justify the effort.

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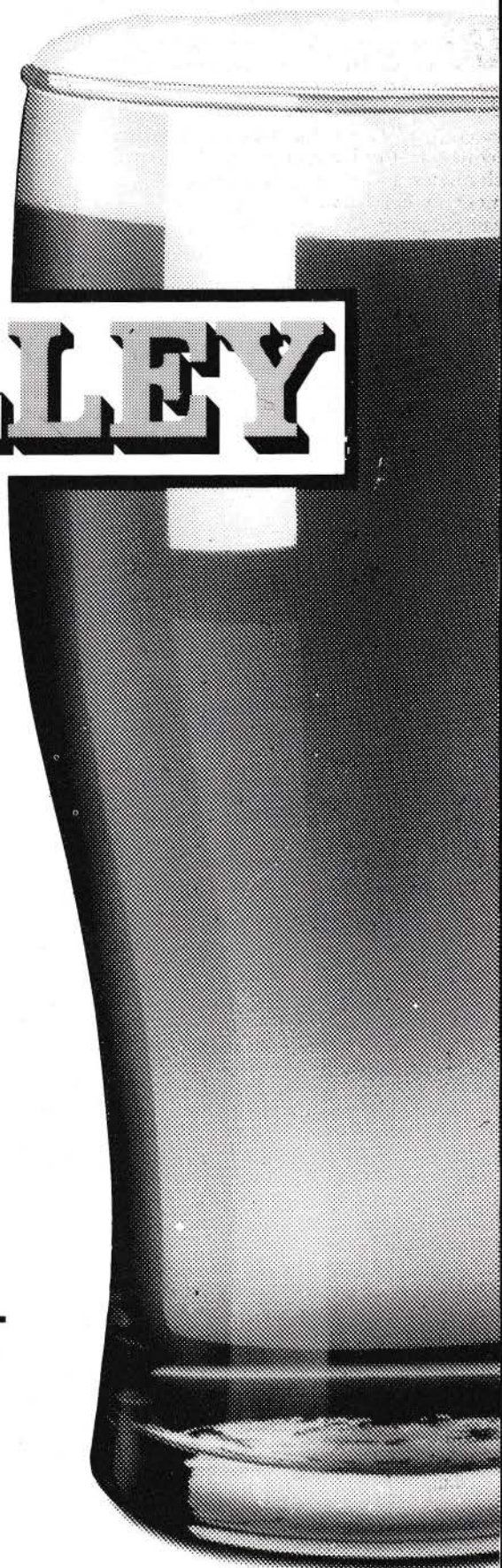
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# Cider Campaigners

by Sarah Hicks

**W**hilst researching articles, information, displays etc for CAMRA it has become obvious to me that the traditional drinks cider and perry, have aroused fervour in the past as well as the present. Even across hundreds of years (back to the time when s's look like f's) some of these pioneers of cider and perry stand out as people of great character and charm. (I must confess a little disappointment in being, so far, unable to find any great women campaigners of the past). And so I'd like to introduce readers to some of these worthy gentlemen.

## St Teilo (Sixth century)

I must mention St Teilo, not only is he Welsh but he is traditionally credited with introducing cider-making to the French! This Welsh monk was making cider in Wales in the sixth century. He also found time to make a journey to visit Bishop Samson in Normandy, which must have been a great voyage at the time. He took apple trees with him and, together with the Bishop, planted a great orchard "Arboretum Teliavi et Samsonis". The remains of this orchard could still be seen in the twelfth century.

## John Scudamore (1600 - 1671)

John, first Viscount Scudamore was from the cider-making county of Herefordshire. He was also the British Ambassador to France 1635 - 1639. As befits a Herefordshire cider enthusiast he took advantage of his time abroad to study French cider-making, including visiting many Normandy orchards. The famous "Norman" types of cider apple were originally introduced into England by John Scudamore, including Strawberry Norman and White Norman. This group of apples are still widely grown today and newer varieties have been developed e.g. Bulmer's Norman.

On his return to his estate at Holme Lacy he devoted the rest of his life to the improvement of cider apple trees and cider-making. The classic apple Hereford Redstreak was a 'wilding' (i.e. a wild hedgerow tree) discovered by him. He did much research into the best methods for maturing vintage cider and perry and had a special 'repository' built for this purpose, on his estate. At a time when most men of his class were more interested in imported wines from places like France, Portugal and Madeira, his great interest in, and contribution to cider and perry are all the more outstanding.

## John Phillips (seventeenth century)

This gentleman was a contemporary of John Scudamore. He has left us his remarkable work 'Cyder'. This is an epic poem - all about cider: some two hundred pages about cider-making, cider apples and orchards and, above all, the dire threat of pernicious foreign drinks, such as beer or wine - and all in verse.

Almost every other nationality comes in for a right racist pasting from John Phillips about their national attributes and, especially, their drinking habits. He was in no doubt - the only drink for Britons was British cider (and we hope, perry).

He ends his epic:-

*".....Where're the British spread  
Triumphant banners, or their fame has reach'd  
Diffusive, to the utmost bounds of this  
Wide universe, Silurian cider bourne  
Shall please all tastes, and triumph o'er the vine."*

## John Worlidge (Seventeenth century)

"Vinetum Britannicum or a Treatise of Cider" by John Worlidge, Gentleman (why are so many cider enthusiasts called John?) was published in around 1690.

This is probably the greatest book ever written on cider and perry. The range of topics covered is vast - from choosing fruit varieties, planting and managing an orchard, rootstocks and grafting, cider-making, troubleshooting and what to eat with cider and perry (virtually anything!) to suitable additives and home remedies, including some for hangovers.

As additions to cider he recommends, amongst other things, ginger, juniper, cloves, cinnamon, currant juice, wormwood (!),

raspberries, mulberries, blackberries and elderberries.

Another piece of advice, possibly of use; "You may be confident that an apple eaten after supper depresseth all offensive vapours".

It is little items such as this that shine through all the scholarly detail and show the fascinating and humorous man he must have been. There are many anecdotes scattered through the text to help hold the reader's attention. In one of these he describes a competition, held by yet another cidery John, John Evelyn, author of the first Pomona (published 1664). It was a tasting held by the London Guild of Vintners to decide which was better; Hereford Redstreak cider or the best French and Spanish wines. The vintners voted, by a large majority, in favour of the cider.

As well as his splendid book, John Worlidge was the inventor of the modern cider mill. Before this apples and pears were crushed using mill-stones. The mills in common use today are of the same design as invented by Worlidge.

## Thomas Andrew Knight (Eighteenth century)

Thomas Andrew Knight was a country squire living in Herefordshire. He had been educated at Ludlow and Balliol College, Oxford and has been called the "Father of modern scientific Pomology".

He was the first to produce new varieties of fruit by controlled crossing between carefully selected parents. Knight realised that the quality of a cider or perry is determined mainly by the vintage quality of the fruit and devoted much of his time to searching for better vintage pears. In his opinion the best one he ever found was the "Holmer". This he discovered growing in a hedge in the parish of Holmore. Today this pear is still recommended for planting.

## C. W. Radcliffe Cooke MP (Nineteenth century)

Radcliffe Cook was MP for Hereford. He regarded cider and perry as the "natural wines of the country". He never missed an opportunity to support his favourite cause and soon became known as the "Minister for Cider". He maintained a spirited correspondence with 'The Times' on this subject. He campaigned successfully against a proposed Government Tax on cider and perry - we could have done with him on our side during the current threat of increased duty by the European Community!

He wrote many articles, including regular contributions to "The Field" and some of them were gathered together in "A Book about Cider and Perry", published in 1898.

C.W. Radcliffe Cooke was, above all, a great promoter of perry and it is apt that his Herefordshire estate "The Hellens" is remembered in the classic perry pear Hellen's Early, which he himself selected as worthy of further propagation.

## H.E. Durham (Early Twentieth Century)

Herbert Edward Durham was a great expert on perry pears. An FRCS (Cantab), he originally specialised in tropical medicine, but ill-health forced his return to Britain from Africa. Africa's loss was perry's gain! At Cambridge he had been friendly with E.F. Bulmer and after renewing this friendship he joined the family firm - H.P. Bulmer - as Director of Research. He was interested not only in pomology and orcharding, but also in technical problems in perry-making. I am particularly endeared to him (as a microbiologist) on discovering him to be the inventor of the Durham tube - a wonderfully simple and effective little device for measuring fermentation. It is still used routinely in microbiological testing and I have used Durham tubes many times.

He undertook a massive survey of the perry pears of Herefordshire, visiting most of the farms in the area by horse. Lead labels he placed on trees can still be found, in good condition, throughout the West Midlands. The object of the survey was to sort out the confusion caused by one variety of pear being known by different names in different districts. He stressed the importance of the shape of a tree's growth as a diagnostic feature. As a result of his field studies he established, at Bulmer's nurseries, a reference collection of some forty of the best varieties of perry pears.

Without the excellent work of these pioneers of the past, I doubt whether there would have been any need for CAMRA to take up the cudgels, as cider and perry would probably have died out many years ago. So next time you raise a glass of Britain's traditional drink, have one in their memory.



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## CURMUDGEON



**J**uly is traditionally the month when CAMRA celebrates our independent breweries. Today the independent sector is under threat from European Union competition legislation which may outlaw the tied house system. This has led to the welcome creation of the IFBB - the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, a trade association for the established independent brewers, with 38 members, including local brewers Holts, Hydes, Lees and Robinsons and others all over the country from St Austell in Cornwall to Batemans in Lincolnshire and Maclays in Scotland. While remaining members of the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, the old Brewers' Society, the family brewers have recognised that they have distinctly different interests from the industry giants.

The members of the IFBB, almost without exception, have long traditions of brewing high-quality real ale, and produce many, if not most, of the country's finest beers, beers too numerous to list here, with a depth, complexity and consistency of character which cannot be achieved overnight. They also have well-established tied estates including hundreds of classic pubs, and the link between the beer and particular styles of pub gives an added dimension to the drinking experience. You can't taste Holt's without thinking of raw, smoky Mancunian boozers, or Brakspear's without bringing to mind basic thatched alehouses hidden away in the Chiltern beechwoods.



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It's no exaggeration to say that the independent brewery tied house lies at the heart of real ale drinking in this country. Without the independent brewers, who often displayed a curmudgeonly refusal to go along with the new-fangled ways of keg beer, real ale would probably have died out in Britain. No doubt, if the tie had to go, many of the independents' beers and pubs would survive, but they would never be quite the same again. To sacrifice this historic link on the altar of competition policy would be a tragedy we would regret for generations.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Local independent brewers Robinson's deserve congratulation for their enterprise on introducing their excellent new 5% ABV premium bitter Frederics. But aren't they pushing their luck a bit with their pricing policy for it? Even after the recent price increase, in Robbies' pubs, the Best Bitter (4.2% ABV) is normally no more than about 125p a pint, and Best Mild (3.2%) 8 or 10p cheaper. From this, you might expect Frederics to be 135 or 140, but in fact you can't find it anywhere for less than 150p, and it can be 160. That might be just about acceptable for an exotic guest beer in the Crown or the Olde Vic, but it remains to be seen how it will go down in the long term in the average Robbies' local. How much Museum Ale do Sam Smiths sell when it's 30p a pint dearer than Old Brewery Bitter?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The current edition of the "Good Beer Guide" lists 14 pubs in Liverpool city centre, only one of which is not shown as opening at least from 12 noon to 11 pm. Monday to Saturday (and since the publication of the Guide, the one exception, the Ship & Mitre, has also come into line). In contrast, Central Manchester has seven entries, of which only two (the Beer House and the City Arms) offer the same

facility, while of the nine in central Stockport, again only two (the Grapes and the Manchester Arms) open all day every day. Admittedly, in Liverpool the recession has bitten harder, and pubs can't afford to turn customers away. Even so, it's quite clear where the pubs show a greater commitment to serving the public.

## Lax Lager

You won't find much lager mentioned in the pages of Opening Times but just for once we are making an exception.

Stockport is well known as a centre for Lacrosse and some years ago one of Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA's members was Joe Gold, the American coach of the English Lacrosse team. This month sees the World Lacrosse Championships staged locally and Joe is back with the USA team. He is also involved in the micro-brewing industry in the States and has combined his two interests to produce Lax Lager for US fans of the sport. It's not available in the UK at the moment, although we feel sure that a small quantity will be making its way across the Atlantic for the world championships...

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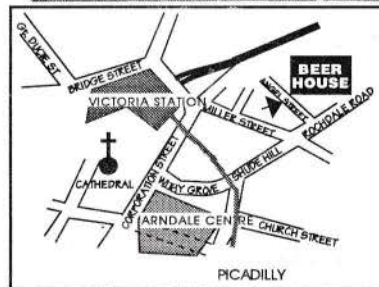
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## How Much is Too Much?

Over the years drinkers have been bombarded with advice on just how much it is 'safe' to drink each week. The current limit is 21 'units' a week, that's about ten and a half pints of standard bitter.

The fact that the 'safe' limit has varied somewhat over the years adds little to the credibility of some of the advice offered. Doubts are not cleared by the almost hysterical way that some of the data has been presented and the thinly-veiled prohibitionist tendencies of some of the organisations concerned with alcohol abuse.

Previously accepted wisdom is now in danger of being blown out of the water by recent research. It has already been accepted that a modest intake of red wine can be beneficial as it absorbs cholesterol but beer it seems not only raises the spirits but may stop wrinkles and may protect against Alzheimer's disease.

An authoritative and long-term study by Professor Thorkild Sorensen of the Copenhagen Institute of Preventive Medicine has found that the death rate for those who drink up to 69 units a week is the same as that for teetotallers. That's almost 35 pints. The study also shows that beer can soak up aluminium which has been linked to ageing and Alzheimer's disease. Separate studies in the UK, at Keele University, have also shown that this is because beer is rich in silicon which both counters the aluminium and also helps fight ageing and illness.

Now we have all seen people who really do have an alcohol problem and for whom a safe limit is probably zero, let alone 35 pints a week. It's also doubtful whether anyone would feel on top form drinking that amount regularly and its effect on

the pocket doesn't bear thinking about. Nevertheless, what these studies do show is that the doom and gloom merchants, as is so often the case, have got it wrong. If you stray above ten and a half pints a week you are not on the slippery slope to an early grave but instead you could well be laying the foundations for a merry old age.

## Stockport Mild Trail

Many thanks to the many Opening Times readers who started the Stockport Mild Challenge trail and congratulations to those who completed it.

All those who 'rose' successfully to the challenge had their completed cards entered into the Grand Draw which was drawn at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. We are very grateful to Robinsons and Hydes who contributed some of the prizes. The lucky winners are as follows :-

**Inscribed Pewter Tankard:** Mr M. Lynch - Gee Cross, Mr C Walkden - Cheadle Hulme, Mr M Charnley - Eccles, Mr G Duncan - Heaton Chapel, Mr B Nichols - South Reddish; **Hydes Tie:** Mr R Lea - Didsbury, Mr C Davies - Poynton, Mr M Wystyrk - Heaton Chapel; **CAMRA Sweatshirt:** Mr B Jones - Moston, Mr A Freeman - Cheadle, Mr J Houston - Withington, Mr A Thomas - Brinnington, Mr P Coghlan - Davenport, Mr D Lowe - Gatley; **Robinsons Sweatshirt:** Mr J Timms - Adswold, Mr P Griffiths - Heaton Chapel, Mr N Kellett - Cheadle, Mrs M Freeman - Cheadle, Mr S Laycock - Cheadle Hulme, Mr G Thomas - Levenshulme.

If you are a winner please contact Jim Flynn on 432 1816 (between 7 and 8 pm) to arrange collection of your prize. Without the backing of our sponsors, the Stockport Express Advertiser and licensees of all the participating pubs the challenge wouldn't have been possible so thanks to them also.

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## Stockport Beer & Cider Fest

Thanks are due all round to everyone who made the 8th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival such a success. The feedback we have received points to it being the best yet. All those who helped know who they are but this is the place to thank you our customers for your continued support. After all, if no-one came to drink the beer, there wouldn't be a festival. Thanks also to Ken Birch of the Crown, Heaton Lane, for acting as our licensee. Ken unfortunately spent festival week hobbling about with his foot in plaster following an unfortunate encounter with a cask of Dobbins Green Bullet in the Crown's cellar!

The Beer and Cider of the Festival contest saw both some of last year's winners taking the honours again but also two new brewers almost sweeping the board.

In the cider and perry section the Gwatkin/Browning axis was again victorious with Dennis Gwatkin's cider voted best of the festival and his uncle Bryan Browning taking the perry category. This year, however, supreme champion in the cider/perry class was Bryan Browning. As Dennis was overall champion last year, family honours are now even.

It was the Beer of the Festival contest that provided the real drama. Best Old Ale was, for the second year running, Banks & Taylor's Black Bat, which certainly has quite a following with the festival crowd. The winner of the Best Mild, Best Premium Bitter and Best Stout/Porter was Porters Brewing of Haslingden with their Porters Mild, Porters Sunshine and Porters Porter. A newcomer also took the Best Bitter title which went to Whim Ales' Hartington Bitter. Whim is also another newcomer, having started only late last year. Overall Beer of the Festival was Porter's Porter. Our hearty congratulations go to all the winners and particularly Dave Porter for his virtual clean sweep.

*The Station ticket collectors fed up with The Station Master, + the Porters hogging all the gas light, have decided to present:*



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with **TIM JONES**  
**CAMPAIGN**  
FOR REAL ALE 

Not a great deal of news this month, we must all be going tee-total! Or there may just not be much news around? Anyway, enough of the excuses.

A rumour was recently circulating with regard to the **Gun Inn** in Hollingworth and how it was going to become a Bod.Pub Co. establishment. This has recently been confirmed by our man in the know, Mr Fred Woods.

On the same subject, **Fairfields** in Audenshaw, also a recent Bod.Pub Co. acquisition is nearing completion after an extensive refurbishment. It will be interesting to see just exactly what work has been carried out, it was after all a fine Victorian

house used as sets for period dramas before some passing entrepreneur uttered those fateful words...that'd make a nice conversion".

In this column recently it was mentioned that **Batemans Mild** had been spotted and supped in a **Marstons** house. Well this seemed to be old news and not the reputation-making scoop I'd hoped for. But if you are still interested, the **Dog & Pheasant**, Oldham Rd, Ashton-under-Lyne, the top dog, GBG listed, etc. has both Banks and Batemans milds on handpump alongside Marstons Bitter and Pedigree. When sampled all were in very good nick. Lucky old Nick I say. Also in **Ashton-under-Lyne** a small **Robinsons pub**, the **Snipe on Manchester Road** was rumoured to have been threatened by the revised proposals for **Metrolink**. Well, on examining the public consultation material supplied by the **GMPTC** it appears that the planners have bent over backwards to avoid the **Snipe** leaving it on something of an island between the improved road and the proposed track. Perhaps they have had enough of **CAMRA** telling them to change their proposals and have accepted the inevitable before the likes of our beloved editor start getting nasty?

It's all change at popular **Ashton freehouse**, the **Witchwood**. The pub is now owned by **Ashton-based Inventive Leisure Ltd** for whom the **Witchwood** is the first venture into the real ale scene. New licensee **Gerrard Madden** however assures us that nothing will change on the beer front as he has been given complete freedom to get his beers from whoever he wants - indeed if anything the range will improve. The music side is still under the wing of **Darren Poyzer** so no changes there either. Continuity like this is good news for one of the town's better pubs.

More news in next month's issue hopefully.

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## Magic Roundabout

Readers will recall that some months ago Grand Met sold their Chef and Brewer managed house chain to Scottish & Newcastle. At the time of sale it was made clear that S&N would subsequently have to dispose of about 750 pubs to meet government requirements on pub ownership. The first deal has now been struck with about 450 pubs being sold to a new outfit, the Magic Pub Company, owned by Michael Cannon, the former majority shareholder in Devenish (and who is reported to have made something like £26 million profit when that company was bought by Greenalls). Cannon immediately sold on 168 of the pubs to Canadian brewer Labatts who, with 520 pubs, are now the fourth largest pub retailer in the UK. Local pubs which have gone to the Magic PubCo include the Golden Hind, Offerton; Railway, Heaton Mersey; Dog & Partridge, High Lane; Farmers Arms, Cheadle Heath and Paddys Goose in the City Centre. Some £15 million has been set aside for the refurbishment of these pubs, many of which had become very run-down in

## Yorkabout *with Frank Wood*

There's nothing like an all-day walkabout in one of your favourite towns or cities and on June 11th I decided to catch up on happenings in York, a long time favourite place of mine to drink in.

Five minutes walk from the station found me and my colleagues at the Maltings - it used to be a mediocre Bass house called the Lendel, situated next to the bridge over the Ouse of the same name, that had been shut for a while. It was indeed an excellent place to start. Six beers rotate and we tried all six between us. Three from RCH Brewery Black Sheep Bitter, Gibbs Mews Chudley Bitter, and Franklins bitter. We found RCH's P.G. steam the best of all. After all the CAMRA campaigning (to no avail) at keeping the John Bull at Layerthorpe open (it is being demolished by the owner to build a new showroom for his Mazda garage across the road) then surely the Maltings must be a consolation of sorts for them.

We walked round the corner to the Other Tap and Spile still discussing the huge value-for-money food at the Maltings. Here we tried Daleside Bitter and Cropton Two Pints, again from a range of six beers. A friendly little place, again the beer in fine form. On to the Royal Oak in Goodramgate, an old favourite of mine where we chose Camerons Bitter ahead of the Burton Ale. Then on through the Bar, we soon reached the Tap and Spile. Bigger than the other, we had a choice of

ten beers here. I tried Steampacket Summer Lite and Nethergate Old Growler. A little further down the street, we sat outside the Brigadier Gerrard to sample a pint of Sam Smiths bitter before a taxi took us to the Spread Eagle at 98 Walmgate. Landlord Adrian bought me a pint of Timothy Taylor Landlord and we stopped here for around two and a half hours chatting to Adrian and his able long-serving barman Andy. They sell most Theakstons beers and usually have 2 guest beers as well. A good place to finish up the afternoon.

We could have well have called in any number of other excellent pubs in the city but we were more than happy with what we had covered.

recent years. Cannon has also indicated that many will be run on freehouse lines and to this end supply deals are being negotiated with a variety of national and larger regional brewers.

Scottish & Newcastle are also about to embark on a refurbishment programme for the pubs they have retained and local pubs to be included in phase I are the Salisbury in the City Centre: Bulls Head, Hazel Grove and the Jolly Sailor in Davenport, amongst others. We also hear that S&N are seeking to convert at least one of their local acquisitions into a 'T & J Bernard' free-house style operation. There of course remain in excess of 250 pubs to dispose of and it is rumoured

## Sound of Music

The Juke Box' is far from music to Tom Lord's ears. Picture the scene; there you are comfortably seated in the tap room or a quiet corner of the pub and your game of dominoes, darts or crib has reached a critical stage. Concentration is absolutely essential. Can you remember what cards have already been played; should you chance your arm with double-six? Your partner is depending on you.

Suddenly your concentration is shattered as the juke box speaker on the wall above your head bursts into life, with music which you have no wish to hear, selected by someone in a far-distant corner of the pub who wishes to inflict his or her choice of music on everyone in the place.

How many times in this situation have been uttered these words, "For Pete's sake turn the bloody thing down, I can't hear myself think!"

It is the compulsory aspect of juke-box music that annoys. Choice is non-existent in open plan pubs and even in multi-roomed pubs it is often piped into each room. You can't escape! Why is it that so many people think that you can't enjoy beer without the addition of background music.

For juke-box haters among you any pubs you find with good beer, no juke box, or a quiet room, then cherish them; they are few in number and getting rarer.

I particularly hate juke-boxes at Christmas when all the old 'favourites' appear yet again. I think the record was to hear Slade, John Lennon, Bing Crosby and Cliff Richard about twenty-five times in five different pubs inside three hours! How much can flesh and blood stand?

While there are pubs without juke-boxes I will survive and enjoy my beer among the sounds of music-free normal conversation and raucous laughter.

Is it asking too much for at least one room in a pub to be free of the infernal 'box on the wall.'

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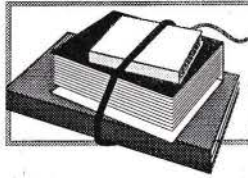
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# BOOK REVIEW



## Whitefield Pubs

by Glen Worth

'Whitefield Pubs' can best be described as a meticulously researched book by someone who obviously really cares about pubs and their history.

The author, Glen Worth, has dug into the archives in libraries, newspapers and breweries to come up with some fascinating facts and anecdotes about the 22 present day Whitefield pubs plus a further twelve that were lost in the 80 years between the 1880s and the 1950s. The level of detail is impressive with over 500 licensees' names and dates of tenancies including the district's first innkeeper of 1629. Despite the level of detail Glen has managed to avoid the temptation to turn the book into a 106 page academic thesis by including many human interest stories such as the one for the Bay Horse ('Spoil the Fight Inn') about the man who had 29 fights in the pub of which he won only one and drew another.

There is also a fascinating history of the various pub names. For example the Bulls Head apparently originates from the days of the Reformation when innkeepers whose pubs were called the 'Popes Head' had to change the name and many still loyal to Rome adopted the 'Bulls Head' after the papal 'bull' (an edict issued by the Pope).

With over 150 photographs, newspaper extracts and maps the book is very easy on the eye. Indeed it is difficult to

criticise this labour of love. Even Glen's habit of suddenly going off at a tangent is entertaining (the description of Robinsons taking over one pub includes a potted history of the unicorn (Robbies trademark) as a heraldic symbol. I personally don't know Whitefield or its pubs very well but found 'Whitefield Pubs' fascinating and stimulating. After reading the book, a trip to Whitefield is definitely called for. Glen must be applauded for not only researching and writing the book but also for having the determination to publish it himself. If you want a copy please send a cheque for £7.95 (payable to Stockport Beer Festival) to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport before 25th July.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Those of you who have taken an interest in Sigma Books 'Pub Walks' series will be pleased to note that in November 'Best Pub Walks in and around Manchester' will be published. If it is as good as the rest of the series it will be well worth the £6.95.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

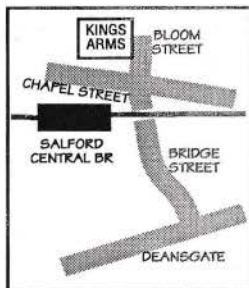
A couple of gremlins crept into our review of the Blackpool Pub Guide ('Piers & Pints') last month.

The price is £3.76 to all and not just CAMRA members. Having recently acquired a copy I can testify to its excellence. If you want one send a cheque for £3.75, made payable to CAMRA, to Terry Gorst, 32 Melrose Avenue, Layton, Blackpool, Lancs, FY3 7ES.

High Peak CAMRA's Frank Wood reports that the Spring Tavern, Woolley Bridge, near Glossop has changed to Scottish and Newcastle although the beers are drawn from their Matthew Brown range rather than the more common Theakstons. Frank also tells us that John Kirkham, licensee of the now 'real' Bluebell in Levenshulme was formerly at the Surrey Arms in Glossop where the quality of his ale earned a place in the national Good Beer Guide for 1992. Obviously one to watch.

## THE KINGS ARMS BLOOM STREET, SALFORD

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# CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

# MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Rhys Jones*

Once again we have a full CAMRA diary for July starting on Sunday 10th with an Awaysday to Windermere. It's an early start on the 9.15 train from Piccadilly. There is a social the next evening at the Halfway House in Openshaw, a recent Whitbread conversion to an 'Ale House' theme. In common with all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm.

The monthly meeting is on Thursday 14th at the Kings Arms, Helmshore Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock. We will have a guest speaker in the shape of either West Coast Brewery's Brendan Dobbin or Peter Moseley so all members should make every effort to come along. The following weekend there is a Rusholme 'curry crawl' on Sunday 17th kicking off at the Welcome on Rusholme Grove at noon. We will be at Osborne House on Victory Street at 1.00 and the Albert on Walmer Street at 2.00, the proceedings being rounded off with a curry.

On Monday 18th the social is at the Three Bears on Jacksons Lane, Hazel Grove and on Friday 22nd it's Stagger time again. This month we are covering Clayton starting in the Strawberry Duck on Crabtree Lane at 7.00 or you can join at 8.30 in the Grove, Ashton New Road. There should be a minibus there and back and if you want to book a seat phone Paul on 442 3143.

On Monday 25th the social will be at the Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton and on Thursday 28th we present the Pub of the Month Award to the Church in Cheadle Hulme.

Finally two August dates - on Monday 1st there is a social at the White Hart in Cheadle and on Wednesday 3rd we are paying a visit to Porters Brewery in Haslingden. Hopefully we will also be presenting Dave Porter with his award for Beer of the Festival, so it should be a memorable night. The minibus leaves the Royal Oak in Didsbury at 7.15 and the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.30. Phone Paul on 442 3143 if you want to book a seat.

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley or Marple areas, you fall in that part of Stockport covered by the High Peak and N.E. Cheshire branch of CAMRA. High Peak have notified us of the following events: on Saturday 16th July there will be a pub crawl in Dukinfield starting at 8.00pm at the Angel on King Street. Just one week later on Saturday 23rd, there will be a trip to Keighley and the Worth Valley

Just along from the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury, Greenalls' attempt at a specialist real ale pub described in detail elsewhere, Times Square on Wilmslow Road has returned to the real ale fold with handpumped Worthington Best Bitter.

In Northenden, the real ale at the Post House Hotel is now Courage Directors with a varying guest - prices reflect the fact that most customers are on expenses.

The Grey Mare in Ardwick (serving the houses that have replaced 'Fort Ardwick') has gained Coach House Coachmans Bitter and Whitbread Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter on handpump. In Gorton, the guest beer at the Vale Cottage is now subject to change. While Taylors Landlord still makes frequent appearances, such things as Cains Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier have also been tried. Not far off, the Friendship has gained Batemans Mild on handpump - while retaining its Banks's Mild. Both milds evidently sell well enough to maintain quality, and mild drinkers whose tastes are not known are asked to specify light or dark. The smoke room here has recently been extended into adjacent property, without compromising the character of this highly traditional and often overlooked pub.

Rumour variously associates either Whitbread or Tetley with the new student pub to be created from Harrison and Killey plumbers' merchants at All Saints. If Tetley, one wonders what the implications are for the other Tetley-linked pubs in studentland - notably the Flea and Firkin, which has traded poorly so far this year and is closing during the summer vacation for an eight week refurbishment. Tapping the same market, the people behind Jabez Clegg have reportedly bought a large and grand Victorian mansion in Fallowfield for conversion to a pub.

Steam Railway. Phone for details. Moving into August the monthly meeting will be on Monday 8th at the Tollemache in Mossley. Aim to get there for 8.30. Lastly on Friday 19th there will be a pub crawl of Romiley starting at 8.00pm at the Cherry Tree on Compstall Road. For more details about High Peak activities, phone Tim Jones on 371 9006(h) or 330 5555 ext 5252(w). Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each others events.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6

## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT123)

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*







This month sees the end of an era at the *Florist* on Shaw Heath, Stockport when Alan and Beryl Stanway retire after 22 years in the pub. The official leaving date is Monday 18th July although Alan and Beryl are planning a couple of low-key farewell 'do's' on Sundays 10th and 17th. We certainly wish them both well in their well-earned retirement. They will be succeeded by Betty and Mike Boylan who are moving the short distance from St Thomas's Social Club although this is their first pub and we wish them well.

Our bowling correspondent reports that **Withington Bowling Club** is a real ale oasis for Crown Green Bowlers. Selling Holts Bitter at 98p plus Robinsons Best and Boddies Bitter it is a welcome location for thirsty sportsmen. On a recent visit the Holts was on excellent form, a far cry from our reporter! Thirsty bowlers can also enjoy the **South Manchester British Legion** on Albert Road in Levenshulme which also sells three cask beers - Hydes Dark Mild at 94p, Bitter at £1.04 and Boddies at £1.08. Our correspondent reports that the Legion has a tricky green which is made no easier by the excellence of the beer or its prices.

The *Gladstone* on Hillgate, Stockport, has added Burtonwood Forshaws Bitter to sell alongside the standard Burtonwood brew. With the *Golden Lion* further up the street selling Top Hat, it is now possible to sample three out of the four Burtonwood beers within a short distance. Which will be the first to try the mild? Both the Gladstone and the Golden Lion are much improved pubs these days and are well worth a visit.

The other month we reported that the mild in the **Oddfellows** in Openshaw, although labelled as Boddingtons, tasted like Chesters. Landlord Joe O'Flaherty tells us that's because it was Chesters! (there had apparently been a mix-up with the pump clips). Joe has been in the Oddfellows just over six months and in the past four has trebled mild sales to three 18-gallon barrels a week. This is an excellent achievement in an area where mild has long been a difficult beer to sell.

There are new faces at the *Bowling Green* on Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock where Chris and Kevin Baldwin have taken over. Two signs of the new regime are the end of the Scrumpy Jack fake handpump con. This product is now only sold in bottles and the fake handpump is due to come out shortly. Even better news is the reintroduction of cask mild which is selling steadily.

The *Waggon & Horses* on the Heald Green/Handforth border has converted to cask conditioned beers and now proudly proclaims on a banner outside 'Superb Range of Cask Beers'. We can only assume those who put up the notice hadn't looked inside because if they had they would have been embarrassed to find only Greenalls Original, Theakstons Best Bitter and Stones Bitter. You wonder whether such 'exaggeration' is covered by the Trades Descriptions Act.



As reported in last month's Manchester Matters, O'Sheas is now up and running in the premises formerly occupied by the Lancaster tavern on Whitworth Street in the City Centre. A recent visit showed it to be doing well and settling in nicely. Tetley Bitter is the one cask beer available. This is the City Centre's second Irish themed bar, with Mulligans already well established on Southgate near Kendals. It's not likely to be the last, though. Allied-Lyons retailing (who own the pubs supplied by the Carlsberg-Tetley set-up) are planning a national chain of "Scruffy Murphy's" Irish theme bars. The first in the chain has already opened in Edinburgh and apparently has been a runaway success. Similar developments have been pencilled in for sites in Blackpool, Manchester, Leeds, Harrogate and Newcastle.

New licensee at the *Seven Stars*, Ashton Old Road, is Steve Heywood, not Douglas Byrne as reported last month. Apologies to all concerned.

## Victoria, Bramhall

After a major six-week refurbishment, the *Victoria* in Bramhall is open once more. It is virtually unrecognisable from the previous place, and can now justifiably lay claim to being the smartest pub in the Stockport area.

There is an abundance of polished woodwork and gleaming brass. Plenty of 'arty' objects adorn the walls and shelves without cluttering the place too much. Unfortunately this is offset by the Whitbread 'Cask Ale Blackboard'. In the Tut'n'Shives and Brewers Arms of this world it helps to provide an earthy feel, but at the *Victoria* it merely detracts from the comfortable up-market image.

The beers displayed on the board (and available at the bar of course) are Boddies Bitter, Flowers Original, Marstons Pedigree and Chesters Mild, a pretty uninspiring range from the Whitbread list. The loss of Theakstons Best is a shame, but the introduction of a cask conditioned mild is a great bonus. If only it had been Boddies again! However, of the 14 handpumps around the bar, only two dispense the mild, and they are not immediately obvious to someone entering the pub for the first time. Having said that, sales are reported to be going well. Not surprisingly Boddies Bitter remains the number one tippie.

An interesting purpose-built food counter can be found at the rear of the pub, along the lines of a deli. But the pub remains "wet with food", and not a licensed restaurant. The removal of the raised seating areas gives the impression of a much larger pub, but the vault area with the dart boards has stayed, now the poshest vault around. The pub will weather well with time, once the smell of varnish disappears, so if you like it plush, try the new-look *Victoria*.