

OPENING TIMES



No:
134

5,500 CIRCULATED
EVERY MONTH

JUNE 1995 - CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR

Battle Stations on the New Keg Threat

CAMRA has declared war on the new nitro-keg beers, describing them as the biggest threat to cask ale since the days of Watneys Red. These new beers are making rapid inroads on the bars of pubs and clubs and generally take two forms - either well-known bitter brands, Boddies, Theakstons and John Smith are common examples, or the new-wave of Irish Ales.

While the big brewers seem content to blur the edges between nitro-keg beers - served by a mixture of nitrogen and carbon dioxide - and cask ale, drinkers should be under no illusion. Nitro beers are keg beers, pasteurised, dead and filtered. They are poor excuses for real ale.

This new 'mixed gas' dispense simply makes keg beers a bit less fizzy and attempts to ape the condition and presentation of real ale. One buzzword often used is 'smooth'. Smooth means little to the discerning beer drinker and more usually means 'bland'. Brewers are convincing publicans and conning the public into believing that 'smoothness' is the way forward in much the same way as they did in the 1960's when they tried to convince us cask beer had no future and keg beer was the way forward. A bit like telling someone there is no difference between a Kraft cheese slice and a piece of mature Cheddar. They were wrong then and they are wrong now.

If it is as good as real ale why make it? Why don't the brewers just continue to make the cask beers we want? The reason is that it is simply keg beer with a new sales gimmick. What makes it even more dangerous is that by using the brand names of well-established cask ales some drinkers may find themselves misled into buying something they don't want. Pub blackboards have been seen lumping nitro-beers like Caffreys together with proper cask beers under the heading of 'Real Ales'. It is only a

matter of time before someone oversteps the mark and Trading Standards become involved.

In the meantime drinkers should be on their guard. Do not let ill-informed bar staff or dodgy advertising practices fool you, or others, into drinking keg beer by another name.

Seeing Red over Green Bullet

Late last month Whitbread wheeled out their latest 'Single Varietal Hop Beer'. Following up the well received Scarlet Lady this is a 5.2% beer from the Castle Eden Brewery in County Durham. The name? Green Bullet.

Now, as aficionados of Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery will recall, this was the name of the stunningly hoppy house beer that West Coast brewed for the Crown on Heaton Lane. The beer Whitbread sells everywhere sounds like 'overtly' beer Brendan's was'n't, described as 'not highly' beer 'hopped'. However it may be received on the national stage, local beer drink-ers will surely regard a lightly-hopped and malty 'Green Bullet' as a joke.



Not seeing the joke, and who can blame him, is Brendan Dobbin who has gone nuclear over this. Phone lines to Whitbread have hummed and m'learned friends have been consulted. More to the point, just to show what real Green Bullet should taste like, Brendan was hoping to brew a batch at the end of May, using the plant at the Millgate brew-pub in Failsworth. With luck by the time you read this you might have been able to sample 'Dobbins Original Green Bullet' at Stockport Beer Festival.

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PUB of the Month JUNE

Visitors to Didsbury may well be forgiven for thinking that they had arrived in some busy touristy town in Derbyshire or the lake district as most pubs seem to cater either for students or affluent businessmen and wealthier residents. Finding a genuine back street corner boozer used by the locals of Didsbury is not easy as there are only one or maybe two examples in the whole village.

The Station, Didsbury, has been one of CAMRA's long standing favourite pubs, but in recent years a number of short lived managers have passed through ensuring the pub did not attain the same heights of few years ago. All this changed with the arrival of John and Margret Hemming who's hard work and attention to detail has revitalised the pubs fortunes.

The Station does not offer loud music, karaoke, fruit machines or other gimmicks. For one reason there is just not enough room for them as the pub consists only of three small rooms. For another reason the locals would certainly not appreciate it and I am sure that John and Margret would be left in no doubt as to their views on this subject. Four cask conditioned ales are regularly on sale at the Station, Batemans Mild, Marstons Bitter, Pedigree, and Marstons own guest beer (on a recent visit this was New Season Bitter), all kept in first class condition by John.

The date for the presentation is Thursday 22nd June when the pub is expected to be bursting at the seams. Lets hope that the weather is warm and dry so that the overflow may use the small drinking area outside. Why not join us for what will be a most enjoyable evening ?



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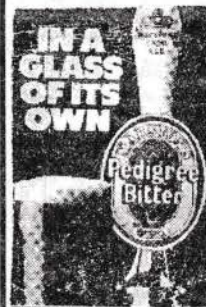
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OPENING TIMES JUNE 1995

SAVE OUR PUBS



After several months of inactivity, several of the pub campaigns that we have featured over the past years have all suddenly come to a head.

First the good news - the Hyde Road scheme, as proposed, has been dropped, thus gaining a breathing space for the remaining threatened pubs, most importantly the Plough and Travellers Call.

We're not completely out of the woods yet, though. Although Councillor Inchbold, the former head of the Highways and Cleansing Committee suggested that it was unlikely the Plough would be affected by any future work, Sinclair McLeod, the City Engineer was not so positive.

The idea now is to look for improvements to dangerous junctions and for pedestrians. He tells us "both these topics need to be addressed at the junction between Wellington Street and Hyde Road where the Plough public house is sited". Until further reviews are carried out he is "unable to comment on the potential effect on the Plough".

However it looks as though the tide could have turned in the pub's favour. It is after all a listed building, thanks to CAMRA's involvement, and the city authorities must know that any application for permission to knock it down would attract many objections and involve a potentially lengthy appeal process.

While there is light at the end of the tunnel for Hyde Road, it's the end of the road for two City Centre pubs. First to go on 10th June is the Swinging Sporrán on Sackville Street, reputedly to be turned into a university bookshop. Licensee Cliff Thornton was busy looking for somewhere else to live as we went to press and in philosophical mood commented "We've danced to the music and now it's time to pay the fiddler". We understand that there may be legal constraints preventing Cliff from commenting further but we hope to see him resurface soon on the local pub scene.

June's other casualty is the Sportsmans on Market Street. Last night is June 25th and landlord Brian MacCausland is going down with all flags flying - literally. The VE day bunting and flags are staying up until the bitter end. Like Cliff at the Sporrán, Brian is also hoping to stay in the local licensed trade. They both take our best wishes with them.

APOLOGY

The Royal Oak, Didsbury

Last month's front page ('Arthur to Quit?') caused ructions as it seems that most of it was rather wide of the mark, despite being printed in good faith.

In particular we can confirm that Marstons are most definitely **not** pressurising Arthur Gosling to retire and nor have they suggested that he install fruit machines - this being entirely the prerogative of the tenant in any event. Furthermore the pub's rent has remained unchanged since the fire.

Clearly wires got seriously crossed - red faces all round and apologies for any embarrassment and inconvenience caused.

Hyde Road The Reaction

When a scheme which in its essentials is half a century old is cancelled, a bit of cynicism is understandable, writes Rhys Jones. Nevertheless, when *Opening Times* called at a couple of the reprieved pubs shortly after the announcement, relief was evident among licensees and drinkers alike.

At Robinsons listed Plough, landlord Bob Voigt, always one of the area's more thoughtful licensees, linked the decision to wider changes in transport policy, saying "it was always bound to happen because of the change of policy on roadbuilding". More controversially, Bob identified an Olympic angle to the issue: "The only thing that kept it going was the Olympic bid - and that was a waste of money". On a practical note, he hoped the removal of planning blight would clear the way for a much needed upgrade to the toilets. An enthusiastic crowd of regulars in the vault echoed his delight that the pub was saved.

Closer towards town at the Travellers' Call (Hydes), the story was the same. On OT's first visit after the news broke, licensees Tony and Helen Dunn were enjoying a well-earned holiday, but reliefs Keith and Nora Taylor, while hinting that the news was not entirely unexpected, spoke for all when they said how pleased they were that this smashing little pub had been saved. Back from holiday, Tony and Helen were predictably delighted, with Tony commenting "It's particularly good news coming so soon after the Pub of the Month award".

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IN THE EDITORS VIEW.

News of the Courage takeover by Scottish and Newcastle came through as we went to press. As we predicted in April's OT this is likely to lead to carnage in the industry with brewery closures, job losses, and beer brands being axed. Look for our in depth report next month. Until then just consider these words:

"We consider that the loss of the independence of one of the major suppliers to the market would reduce consumer choice and competition, and thus be detrimental to the public interest..."

Not CAMRA's words but Scottish & Newcastle's when Courage tried to take THEM over in 1989. Quite. Just what, one wonders, has changed.

★ ★ ★

Giant brewery mergers apart, one of the biggest threats to real ale and so, ultimately, consumer choice, is the insidious growth of nitro-keg beers. Beneath the marketing hype bear in mind that one word. KEG. These beers are the Watneys Red Barrel of the 1990's. Double Diamond without the fizz. They are canned beers on draught. After spending millions trying to convince people they can drink a pub pint at home, they have now turned about-face and are in effect flogging take-away beer in the pub. Surely what most discerning drinkers go to the pub for is a pint of proper traditional draught beer. Don't be conned.

And finally, this OT will come after Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is done and dusted. I hope all OT readers who dropped in had a good time and good beer. A full report next month.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From :Tom Lord

As the writer of both the Marple review and the Vanishing Tap Room articles in the March edition I feel that out of courtesy I must provide a reply to B.K.Lane's letter in the last edition of Opening Times.

Looking first at the Vanishing Tap Room article. I am by no means suggesting that the Crown should have a waiter service and that the lack of such is a shortcoming. In fact I agree with B.K.Lane that in this present day and age a waiter service would not be viable for the vast majority of pubs.

The old tap room in the Crown referred to in the article disappeared along with the waiter service in 1977 when the then landlord retired and a new licensee took over. The article was merely intended to describe the attributes of a good

traditional tap-room. In addition to these attributes the old tap-room in the Crown just happened to have a waiter service and I merely pointed this out in passing as it seemed to be an unusual feature among local pubs at the time.

Turning to the Marple review, it was intended to briefly say what beers were available in the centre of Marple and to highlight the restricted choice there. Then to mention a few pubs a little further afield which (with one exception) offered amongst them a different choice of beers from those normally found in the immediate area; particularly regular guest beers. This was the reason that the Crown, along with other pubs on the fringes of Marple was omitted.

The Travellers Call was included simply because I was going to try and feature it in the April edition of Opening Times but would not have completed the article in time. It will therefore feature in a later issue, as will the Crown, along with other deserving local pubs. The article was not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the pubs in the area.

Sporting Chance

Sponsorship of sport these days can be big business. Mega-buck deals can lend a life-line to some companies; indeed it is reputed that one insurance firm makes more from its involvement with motor racing each year than from insurance. So what of the drinks industry, and more specifically of real ale's flirtation with the big boys?

Scottish & Newcastle sponsors England's current football league champions (Blackburn) and our deserving wannabee champs (Newcastle), with the same brand - alas McEwan's Lager. The 1995 England World Cup Rugby Union team is supported by Scrumpy Jack (oh, woe etc). [The Scotland team is backed by a whisky distiller]. And Labatts is (or at least was) the biggest drinks sponsor in Formula One (winners don't Drink and Drive etc.)

Indeed the only two refuges for real ale sponsorship in sport seem to be English Rugby (the Courage League as opposed to the Heineken League in Wales) and the English cricket team. They have the backing of Britain's biggest selling beer, Tetley Bitter, and when they compete for the Ashes they face the Castlemaine XXXX sponsored Australian team. Both Tetley and Castlemaine fall under the Allied-Domecq umbrella.

While neither real ale, nor sport in general, is in serious decline I fancy a decent marriage between the two will reap untold rewards.

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STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Our April Stagger took us to the Stockport suburb of Offerton, starting at the furthest point out from Stockport, the erstwhile Golden Hind. This former Chef & Brewer pub now belongs to the Magic Pub Company and had just been refurbished and renamed as the Hungry Horse. We didn't expect very much here, but in fact were favourably surprised - the renovation had been fairly tastefully done and had produced a comfortable interior with plenty of wood in evidence, although perhaps a surfeit of mirrors. Indeed it seemed better than it had ever been either as the Golden Hind or in its short-lived incarnation as Drakes. The beer range was the standard Magic Pub selection of Websters Green Label, at a notably cheap 89p, and Boddingtons Bitter and Draught Bass at more normal prices. The Boddies was about average, the Websters a little better, while no-one tried the Bass.

The next port of call was the **Strawberry Gardens**, another former Chef & Brewer pub, but in this case now belonging to Scottish & Newcastle. From the road it appears to be a small cottage-type pub, and it retains a small vault and an excellent little snug at the front, but at the rear it has been much extended in an open-plan format, with a rather congested bar area between the two parts. There's also a large and attractive garden area to the rear. S & N's ownership was reflected in the presence of Theakstons Best Bitter, the quality of which was disappointing; we didn't try the Websters Bitter which was also on sale.

We then cut through the back streets to reach the **White House** on Hemphaw Lane. This pub had recently been in the news as the licensee had spent a lot of his own money in turning an adjacent patch of waste ground into a playground, only to be told by the council that he had to pay a further hefty charge as he hadn't got planning permission. It was unusual to see in this Intrepeneur pub the full range of Halifax-brewed beer on sale - Wilsons and Websters Bitters, Green Label and Wilsons Mild, although this is in

fact now brewed by Morland at Abingdon. We all tried the Wilsons Mild, which was a bit above average but didn't really meet our expectations. Our eyes were drawn by a particularly fetching blonde barmaid, but, even so, when the "entertainment" started up - a singer with backing tapes - we didn't need much encouragement to move on to the next pub.

The **Fingerpost**, on the junction of Hemphaw Lane and Dialstone Lane is an impressive red-brick pub with almost enough rooms for there to be one for every day of the week. Maybe it's let down by some of the detailing, but it's still an excellent example of the traditional pub, with a traditional outside gents too. The bar was crowded with people attending some kind of function, but we were able to find a seat in one of the snugs. The beers available were Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, dispensed by electric meters into oversize glasses, always a plus point. The mild was pretty good, the Bitter falling a little short though still above average.

The **Gardeners Arms**, in the acute angle between Banks Lane and Offerton Lane, was probably the busiest pub of the night. We fought our way through the lounge and managed to find a seat in the vault. For many years a Boddingtons pub, the signs of their ownership had now been removed, and we suspected it may have been sold on into the ownership of one of the pub chains. Boddingtons Mild and Bitter were still available, both a little above average, alongside Flowers Original, which we didn't try, and Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter, opinions on which varied between reasonable and very poor.



When I wrote up this pub crawl, nine years ago, "Opening Times" received a stinging letter from Tony Ball, the licensee of the **Emigration**, complaining that I had suggested his pub fell marginally short of being the best pub in the known universe. Well, I'm sorry Mr Ball, but it still isn't. Not a bad place though, opened out by Robinsons in their usual style but retaining three separate areas and plenty of comfortable seating. Best Bitter was quite good, Hatters Mild a little above average. Full measures are served into oversize glasses.

Greenalls **Victoria**, just down the road on the other side of Hall Street, was noticeably quieter than either of the two previous pubs, maybe due to the temporary absence of the usual guest beers. Even so, the Greenalls Mild and Bitter were both pretty good, and among the best beers of the night. Stones Bitter was also available. The pub itself is a neat two-roomer with a good contrast between lounge and vault.





The Victoria

As a number of the party needed to catch buses home, we then headed back towards the centre of Stockport, and made our final call at the **Waterloo** on Waterloo Road. This pub seems to have an oddly reversed layout, with the lounge in what you'd expect to be the vault and vice versa. All the same, it's a good local, obviously doing a thriving trade on Friday night, and perhaps unjustly neglected in comparison



The Waterloo

with other pubs nearer the centre of town. Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were both above average. Like the other two Robbies pubs on this crawl, electric pumps and oversize glasses were used. To my mind, this is a major point in their favour, and hopefully they won't succumb to the trend to convert to handpumps and go over to brim measure glasses at the same time.

To sum up, an interesting selection of pubs, most of which you'd be quite happy to have as your local, but none which really justify the trip out from the centre of Stockport for the drinker coming in from another area. As always, the opinions expressed are only those of a group of CAMRA members on one particular night - why not try the pubs for yourself and see if you agree?

That Damn Nitrokeg

I have to confess, writes *Ralph Warrington*, that I have always been in favour of people exercising a choice when it comes to their drinking. Naturally I would prefer that people at least tried, and preferably drank regularly, quality real ales, but if they are determined to drink lager or whatever, that's fine, any profit to the publican helps keep pubs open for the rest of us.

There has now been a definite shift in my attitude. Having spent the last three months helping to put together a pub guide for Tameside (to be launched at the Canal Festival in early July - sneaky plug), and having visited dozens of pubs which I would not normally go near, I was surprised and disappointed to observe the rapidity with which nitrokeg beers have taken hold.

From first seeing Caffreys in the latter half of last year, there are now versions of "draught in a con (sorry can)" Boddingtons bitter, Theakstons bitter and unbelievably Welsh bitter from Scottish and Newcastle Breweries! I have never seen advertising or even point of display material for these products yet they are spreading rapidly. The most often overheard description for these beers when being inquired about by the pubgoer is "they're just like handpumped stuff but smoother" or something similar, and mainly from bar staff. I have tried them, and yes they are less fizzy than standard keg, and they are smooth, as smooth as water, which is hardly surprising as they are incredibly BLAND. At least with Double Diamond you could pretend the harsh metallic edge was bitterness, but these nitrokegs have practically no discernible flavour characteristics.

"Well people like them because they are easy to drink" has been the usual reply from those who I have asked why they drink it. Personally I spend my hard earned cash on beer because I enjoy the distinctive and complex tastes which abound in good real ales, and stimulate the palate in a satisfying manner. To deliberately avoid engaging the senses by drinking such bland rubbish seems to me about as logical as anaesthetizing your genitals before making love - mustn't over-stimulate now must we?

Tom Thumb's

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The Harrington Arms, Gawsworth

A few miles south of Macclesfield on the Congleton Road (A536), the village of Gawsworth must be one of the most picturesque spots in Cheshire. The tree-shaded waters of a small mere reflect the church, the black-and-white Old Hall and the Georgian New Hall.

You might expect the pub in such a location to have been turned into a food emporium catering for hordes of tourists, but luckily nothing of that sort has happened to the Harrington Arms, and Gawsworth is fortunate to have a pub that still reflects its historical character so well.

It stands about a quarter of a mile from the church on a quiet lane now bypassed by the main road. It's a tall, three-storey red brick building dating back at least a couple of hundred years by the look of it, set back behind a small cobbled area.

Apparently the interior received some modernisation a few years back, but apart from the toilets, which obviously belong to the twentieth century you'd never know. If it was better before, it must have been absolutely amazing, because even now it would be difficult to find a pub in the whole of Cheshire that makes fewer concessions to the modern age.



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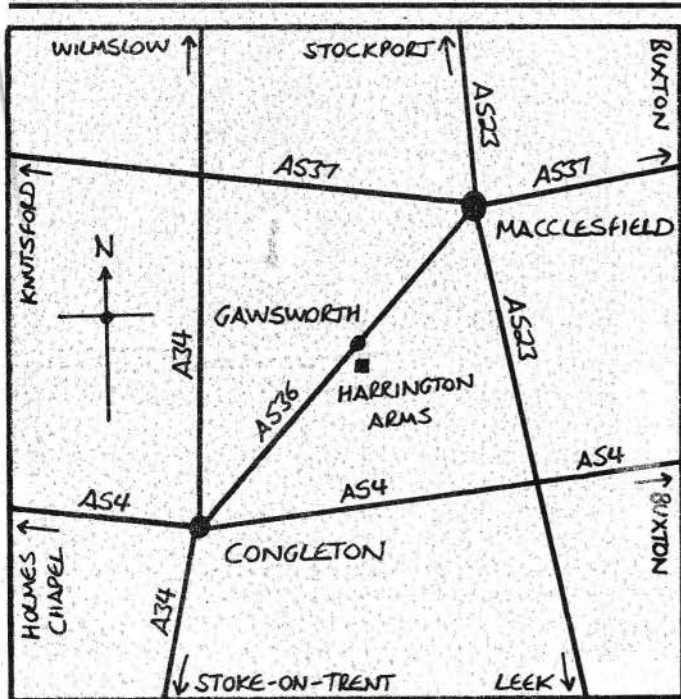
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The central door leads into a corridor with rooms opening off on both sides, identified by numbers on their doors. On the left is

No.5, the main public room, with a tiled floor, old settles, scrubbed-top tables and ancient oak beams. The bar area, little more than a corridor by the counter, is to the right, and beyond this is the marvellous No. 3 room, a tiny snug with old easy chairs and its own little hatch through to the bar.

There's none of that new-fangled nonsense about swan necks and tight sparklers in the Harrington Arms - in fact, there are no sparklers at all. Your pint mug is put on the drip tray and the beer pulled down from a height of six inches or so, producing a substantial but loose head. Many would say that's the best way to bring out the flavour of the beer, and on our visit the Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were certainly both in excellent condition.

None of that food nonsense, either, because beyond a packet of crisps there isn't any. Of course nowadays many country pubs depend on their food trade, and it doesn't do to be too sniffy about it, but it's still rather refreshing to find one where people go just to drink and chat rather than to eat meals. If you are hungry, there are plenty of nearby pubs serving food - we were very well catered for at the Church House at Buglawton just north of Congleton, another Robinsons house.

Well-behaved children may be admitted into the left-hand room, but the Harrington Arms isn't really the place for family excursions. Instead just enjoy a quiet pint while savouring the atmosphere of what pubs used to be like before big business and mass catering got hold of them - and only twenty miles from the centre of Manchester.

Board of it All

Ah! We remember. The scrape of chalk on a board to set your teeth on edge. Such happy memories of our childhood schooling. But now, while schools prefer dry-wipe boards and marker-pens, pubs are picking up on the chalk-board thing. While it can in some cases be very informative, for instance next beers on offer at a free-house, or what the chef's specials are on the menu, some pubs are abusing the idea.

It is rare these days to go into a recently refurbished Whitbread pub without seeing blackboards of some description. And the so-called 'concept ale-houses' are the worst. "Down the Hatch" on the bar hatch, "Deep End of the Pool" over the pool table and the cringe-worthy "Duck or Grouse" chalked onto the fake beams are some of the worst. But the "thoughts for the day" at the George & Dragon, Hazel Grove beggar parallel. For instance "Why is there only one Monopolies and Mergers Commission?" Ugh! And

it's all done in that daft pseudo chalk-board writing, and not the best possible taste.

The Beer Engine (formerly the Crown & Anchor, Hilton Street, Manchester) is another culprit. "If vampires can't look in the mirror, why was Dracula's parting always so perfect?" The phrase "Go away with all haste" springs to mind. But these are innocent bystanders when it comes to some. Wrong information and bad grammar really take the, er, biscuit. "Laydiz" and "Jents" at the Tut'n'Shiv, Heaton Chapel were bad enough, but who has ever heard of a beer called "Old Spec". A rough marriage of Morland's 'Old Speckled Hen' and Theakston's 'Old Peculier (or 'Old Pec') would taste rather worse than either, I would suggest, and when we get to 'Batman's XXXB' it's time to go elsewhere for an 'e'.

In truth while a blackboard has its place in the pub, and indeed can be very useful due to the fact that the information can be kept very up to date, wonky, jokey, or just plain silly chalk-boards threaten to belittle real ale, good pubs and normal drinkers.

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The Nursery

It is all too rare these days to find a good pub which serves good food, so when the Nursery on Green Lane in Heaton Norris was recommended we hurried down with healthy appetites. The Good Beer Guide 1995 specifically mentions the food; things were looking promising when, as we approached, we were greeted by the chink of cutlery and the aroma of home-cooking emanating from the open windows.

It must be mentioned at this stage that the research (eating and drinking) was done on two separate occasions. What follows is an amalgamation of the two. It was a glorious hot, sunny day when we dropped in (both times) and the first beer to be sampled was Hydes Mild. It represents good value at £1.17 for a 3.5% beer, and the quality was good too. It is the ideal thirst-quenching beer on a day as hot as this, we decided to sit outside to take full advantage of the sunshine and sit by the fine bowling green.

The borders were being clipped and trimmed as we began our meal. The day's special starter, pate and toast with salad garnish, looked pretty good; £1.95 was not unreasonable. Several chaps were testing their skill on the green as we tucked in. The white and brown toast was still warm when it arrived (waitress service at the Nursery, you know...) and the only complaint was the rather basic salad: lettuce, one slice of



cucumber and tired tomato. The garlic mushrooms with salad garnish and spicy dip was fine. But better was the Hydes Bitter (3.8%ABV) which was really rather good.

Woods zipped across the green, and planes unzipped the sky. I'd plumped for the £3.75 Cumberland platter, while my companion (SB), after toying with the idea of fried haddock or plaice, discovered fresh plaice on the special menu. The fish dish was served with peas, cauliflower, green beans and new potatoes. The food was hot and the plate was hot, as was the sunshine. The Cumberland Platter consisted of own-recipe sausages (very good), jacket potato, Branston Pickle, pickled onions, garnish and hot bread. When it arrived we had a dollop of coleslaw and potato salad too. It was a really hearty feed, although the Branston was perhaps surplus to requirements.

It is strange how little the bowlers were drinking compared to the diners. Unperturbed, we tried the Victory. The Nursery is one of a handful of Hydes pubs to have had a handpump

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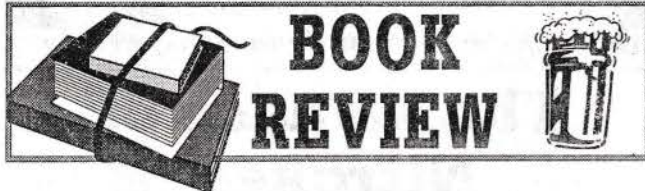
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NON-CAMRA MEMBERS WELCOME

specially installed for this premium beer; we are told it will become a permanent feature in these pubs (perhaps under a different name) in the near future. It was very good, and a welcome addition to the range, even though it is not typical of Hydes' beers. Interestingly, the other beers are served by electric dispense into oversize glasses, while the Victory is handpumped into brim measures.

The 'Pudding Club' featured rather uninspiring choices: Black Forest Gateau, sherry trifle, apple pie and custard, ice cream etc and the prices ranged from £1.00 to £1.80. We declined, besides which we're watching our weight here at Opening Times.... However, if you like decent grub, try the Nursery, where quality counts, for beer, and for food.



BOOK REVIEW

A Century of British Brewers

The Brewery History Society,
152pp, £8.99

This is the long awaited follow-up to Norman Barber's "Where Have All The Breweries Gone?" a pioneering publication which attempted to chart the history of Britain's breweries from 1900 to the mid-1980s.

As might be expected with a first attempt at a project of this magnitude, "Where Have All The Breweries Gone" was to some extent incomplete and contained numerous errors and inconsistencies. It was also noticeable that information about certain areas (eg Greater Manchester) was rather more complete than others.

Since then much more information has come to light - and indeed interest in brewery history has continued to grow, mirrored by the increase in membership of the Brewery History Society itself. This has now been consolidated in "A Century of British Brewers" which aims to be a definitive record of brewery history between 1890 and 1990.

The book is certainly an impressive piece of work and clearly reflects both the hard work and dedication of Norman Barber and his editorial team at the Brewery History Society. Unlike its predecessor it includes home-brew pubs and also covers the Republic of Ireland. There is a triple index of brewing towns, brewers and breweries to help the reader track down a particular brewing concern.

The book is essentially a list although that doesn't do justice to the wealth of information contained. The text is also broken up by reproductions of old bottle labels, and pages of photographs - there is a particularly evocative one of the old Royal Oak Brewery off Hillgate. In short not only is this an essential work of reference for anyone with an interest in brewing history it is also an interesting book to dip into for 15 minutes or so. Highly recommended.

"A Century of British Brewers" is available by post from *The Brewery History Society Bookshop, Long High Top, Heptonstall, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks, HX7 7PF. (Tel 01422 844437)* Cheques should be made payable to the Brewery History Society.

Heald Green News

The Heald Green Hotel, by the station, now has an extended range of beers including Whitbread's "one-off" beers and guests such as Batemans XB. Whilst not cheap (£1.60 for Batemans), they are nevertheless welcome.

The Beech Tree also has an extended range, boasting Chesters Mild and Bitter, Trophy, Boddingtons Bitter, Castle Eden Ale and Pedigree; however it blots its copy-book by selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on "handpump".

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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

New Brew News

Scottish & Newcastle have really delved into the history books to name two new cask beers to be launched this year.

Appearing this month will be Lightfoot Ale. This will be a very pale, hoppy beer at 3.7%ABV and comes from the Theakstons Brewery at Masham and is named after the neighbouring brewery taken over and closed by Theakstons in 1919.

Even more obscure is the name of the other beer to be launched in August. This comes from S&N's Edinburgh brewery and is a 4.7% golden beer called Raeburn's Edinburgh Ale. This appears to derive from an old Edinburgh concern taken over in 1913 by a company (Robert Younger) which S&N took over in 1961.

Beneath all this fake tradition, let's hope the beers are some good, the S&N range could certainly do with some pepping up beyond tagging on such lacklustre beers as Websters following their merger with Courage.

Cobdens On Stream

After last months report of the launch of the first Stockport Brewed Richard Cobdens beer (the bitter continues to be brewed at Moorhouses), being launched at the Station in Ashton VE Day festival, a third beer was launched this week at the Stockport Beer Festival. The brewery is now up and running, and the Porter should soon be available. The Premier at Stockport was a stronger formulation than that launched at Ashton.



A thoughtful Mr Perkins in the new Stockport Brewery

The Menace of Nitrokeg

"Smooth as silk" says Jack Dee, "totally devoid of taste" says me (sic!). John Smiths new 'smooth' John Smiths is like a bland watered down version of the original. Yuk! But this is heavily promoted 'Branded' Nitrokeg beer, and for a while it will succeed.

Nitrokeg (where, like Guinness, the beer is 'carbonated' with a mixture of Co2 and Nitrogen) is Keg Beer. The Enemy. Caffreys, Macardles, Killkeny. Keg. They are dead things, like canned soup with a creamy head. John Smiths is only the latest in a long line.

Lager sales started to decline (fizzy rubbish, no matter how well promoted, is fizzy rubbish), so the breweries came out with 'dry beers', with the aftertaste (read taste) removed to produce flavour-free fizzy liquid. This caught on but only as a fad. Currently it is 'Ice beers' - a little more flavour, but basically tasteless stronger fizzy liquid. This though, is only available in bottled form (attempts at draught versions tasted exactly the same as the discredited metallic fizzy lagers). The big brewers needed something to catch the youth market, so they came up with NitroKeg. As smooth as improved draught Guinness - no texture - and little or no taste. Just a bland beeriness, no subtle (or overpowering) hop flavour, no deep dry (or sweet) maltiness, no "fruit", "chocolate", "coffee" notes. Just dull 'beeriness', and alcohol. But with the power of the advertising industry behind it it represents the biggest threat CAMRA has faced in a generation.

That most of them are 'Irish' will change - this like Canadian Lagers (probably the WORST beers in the world) - is a fad. That breweries are looking to increase market share in a declining market is no surprise, and that youngsters and gullible oldsters used to buying pound-a-bottle mineral water from a foreign tap seem to enjoy paying for tasteless liquids is no great surprise.

There is a battle going on about 'draught' beer in a can (by definition it cannot be) and this is the same stuff (in 88 pint cans). This beer really does taste just as bad in the pub as it does out of the supermarket fridge. It can only encourage home consumption as it catches on, and will lead to yet more pub closures. **JOIN US AND STOP IT NOW! SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL! DRINK REAL ALE AND BOYCOTT NITROKEG BEERS.**



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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak. Needless to say members of both branches are welcome at each other's events!

Diary	June 95	June 95	To Do
	<p>Thursday 8 Monthly branch meeting at the Friendship, Hyde Road, Gorton (upstairs room). Meeting starts at 8.00pm</p> <p>Monday 12 Social Three Crowns, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p>Friday 16 Stagger, Abbey Hey, meet Vale Cottage, Gorton 7.00pm, 8.30 Hamlet, Falmer Street.</p> <p>Sunday 18 Manchester Pub Walk. Meet 11.30am East Didsbury Station. Distance 7 miles - there will be stops for refreshment en route!</p> <p>Monday 19 Social, Welcome, Rusholme Grove, Rusholme. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p>Thursday 22 Pub of the Month presentation to the Station, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury (see article on page 2).</p> <p>Monday 26 Social, Prince of Wales, The Green, Gatley. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p>Saturday 1 July CAMRA Independents Day Treasure Hunt. Meet 12 noon, Beerhouse, Rochdale Road.</p>	<p>Monday 3 Social, Thirsty Scholar, off Oxford Rd (next to the Station), Manchester. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p><i>High Peak Branch covers Romiley, Marple, Bredbury, Woodley and all points north. They have notified Opening Times of the following events.</i></p> <p>Monday 12 Branch AGM, Prince of Wales, Glossop. This starts at 8.00pm and all branch members should make every effort to attend.</p> <p>Saturday 17 Chester Day Out. Contact Frank Wood on 01457 865426.</p> <p>Monday 19 Tameside Beer Tent Organising Committee meeting, Oddfellows, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p>Monday 26 Beer Tent Committee, Andrew Arms, Compstall. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p>Monday 3 July Monthly branch meeting, Duke of York, Romiley. Aim to get there for 8.30.</p>	<p>Address</p> <p>Numbered</p> <p>Anniversary</p> <p>CAMRA 93</p> <p>Partner</p>

FORTHCOMING BEER FESTIVALS



June 1-3 Stockport Beer Festival, Town Hall.

June 21 - 24: East Lancs Beer Festival at a new venue - Accrington Town Hall (100 yards Bus Station). Open Wed 6-11, Thurs - Sat 12-3 & 6-11. 45 Beers, tankard, foreign beer & ciders. Entertainment Sat Eve.

July 7-9 High Peak & NE Cheshire Beer Tent at Tameside Canal Festival, Portland Basis, Ashton. Fri 7-11, Sat 12 - 5, 7.30 - 11, Sun 12 - 5. 30 Beers plus ciders.

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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

This column isn't solely about pub rock. It is about combining quality live music with real ale. Fifteen years to the day after the tortured Ian Curtis took his own life, Manchester played host to a rather interesting gig. For the princely sum of nought pence you could have seen the Stranglers! Live! at HMV music store on Market Street, as a precursor to their gig at the Academy. With a bit of time to kill I decided to decline the company of shoppers, pigeons and homeless, and the celebrated banjo player (today with an electric ukulele, no less) and I made my way smartly to the Sportsmans. It felt strange descending those steps for what might be the last time; the pub is due to close this month to make way for a Tesco's development.

This intimate one-roomer, and Manchester's only windowless pub, was festooned with bunting and Union Flags (they only become Jacks when at sea). A pint of Lees Bitter, the single cask beer available, was ordered without further ado. £1.25 for a pint as close as you can get to the city centre is, for anyone, a bargain. As ever, it took a while to settle, but when it did it was as clear as a bell. The characteristic Lees tang was there in abundance, and the beer slipped down a treat. The main topic of conversation from the mixed bag of customers (from scruffs to suits to bald-as-a-coots) was the imminent



closure of the Sportsmans, and the gaping void it would leave, both in terms of pubs in the vicinity and as a social centre. You (used to) get some truly fascinating characters in the pub, and beer and conversation flowed freely. Despite what some may say, I have had some great times in the Sportsmans, and I shall certainly shed a tear when it goes.

The men in black...were back. We warmed up (well, stood around) to a good hour of Stranglers classics and a whole bunch of stuff from their new album "About Time". I glanced down at the racks of CDs in front of me and found myself looking at "Rattus Norvegicus" and "Raven". Weird, eh? The token half-dozen punks trundled in - remember 'No More Heroes' from '77? - no doubt Jet and the boys would have been pleased to see them. Hugh Cornwell has long-since left the band, but they don't rely on a lead to lead them. The opening shot was predictable enough - "We only came to do some shopping", and then they launched into "Golden Brown". After 13 years it still sounded as good as ever. This was followed with "Golden Boy", no messin', no fuss rock.

Security staff had a brief argument with the punks along the lines of "You shouldn't be drinking cans of Special Brew in here"...I refrained from extolling the virtues of real ale.

The unmistakable Stranglers sound was there, but how they had aged! Mind you they started this 25, yes 25 years ago. Musically they couldn't be faulted (and I should hope not too) but they hardly got the crowd excited. "Still Life" and "Promised Land" followed and we clapped politely. Bec and Helen were also within inches of these revered musical masters; they commented that it was a disappointing, if refined, performance. They ended nicely with "Sinister".

So, would I buy the album? Yes. And will I be at the Academy to see them? Nope. I'm sorry to say that while they were worth a watch, they're not what they used to be. But we all knew we were in the presence of Hugh-less, but not clueless, musical heroes. Aggressive, yet cool.



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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1994



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Waiting in Holyhead

The question has often been asked "Where do you go for a pint when waiting for the Irish ferry?" Whilst there are 25 pubs in Holyhead, only 9 serve cask ale, and two of those are far enough out of town to make it a taxi job.

Look over to the left as you walk up the Station approach - Ansell's Edinburgh Castle (Tetley Bitter and Ansell's Mild) is just a couple of minutes away, and Burtonwood's Boston (Mild and Bitter) is on the way - originally Ansell's, this used to be a long standing Good Beer Guide entry. If you're feeling energetic, keep going along London Road, away from the Boston, to the Prince of Wales, with Greenall's Bitter.

As an alternative, there is an elevated walkway from the Station towards the Town Centre - just across the road are 4 buildings in a row - three pubs and a chip-shop. The New Harbour (formerly Blossoms) and the Dublin Packet are both Ansell's keg - the Packet has a new handpump, and the clip says Addlestons Cask Conditioned Cider, but the licensee says the brewery haven't sent him any yet. Next door is John Willie Lees Holland Inn, with handpumped Mild and Bitter, converted from keg only a couple of months ago.

Continuing into the Town Centre, the 79 is on the right just before you get to the pedestrianised area. It's a Scottish & Newcastle "free house", with Theakstons XB or maybe Boddingtons, and a changing guest beer - this is the only entry for Holyhead in this year's CAMRA Good Beer Guide. Now walk through the pedestrianised area, and past the George - another regular entry in earlier CAMRA days. A banner outside says "Under New Management" - they've replaced the cask beer with keg. Keep going, past the Skerries and Gleeson's, to the Stanley with Tetley Bitter. A bit further on is Burtonwood's



Dublin beckons...but how do you cope with Holyhead?

Albert, although the Forshaw's isn't always available - the brewery are supposed to be installing new cooling equipment.

Now the two more distant pubs:-

The Boathouse (formerly Scimitar), a slightly upmarket free house which could have any two of Magnet, Courage Director's, Ruddles County, or Younger's IPA.

Y Ddraig Goch (Red Dragon) with draught Bass - a very roomy place, could have been a club - one of the Centric pub group.

Finally, a comment on licensing hours - Edinburgh Castle, Stanley and Boathouse are open all day. The 79, perhaps surprisingly, sticks mainly to the old hours, with 7pm evening opening, including Saturdays.

PL



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- ★ WIN FREE BEER ★



STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

15

Boddies' Blow For Tenants

Brewing giant Whitbread has taken advantage of the OFT whitewash to prepare a massive discount drive on Boddington.

The brewery has slapped a staggering £13.53 a barrel increase on the free trade list-price of its flagship brand - that's 10p a pint over the bar.

Whitbread claims other brewers have forced it into the discount war, and says that it doesn't believe the full increase will be reflected in retail increases because of the big discounts it is offering.

But the rise has earned widespread condemnation amid fears that Whitbread may have wrecked the industry's campaign for a cut in duty in the next Budget.

CAMRA Campaigns Manager Stephen Cox said "The Chancellor may well take the view that if Whitbread can afford to slap this sort of increase on, it can afford to survive cross-border shopping."

And Tony Payne of the Federation of Licensed Victuallers Associations said: "Whitbread has shot itself in the foot. It goes cap in hand to the Chancellor about excise duty - and then this happens."

There are also fears that the increase to lessees, not yet published, will reflect the increasing discounts offered to the free trade.

Scottish Brewers - S&N in Scotland - has also increased prices, with a 4-5p rise on some draught beers, the sixth rise in just two years.

The Scottish Licensed Trade Association forecasts that the take-home trade's share of the market will have risen to more than 30% by the end of the century.

The increases come hard on the heels of a National Consumer Council report condemning the failure of watchdogs such as the Monopolies Commission to stop the big brewers abusing their position.

NCC Chairwoman Lady Wilcox said: "Time and again our competition regulators have failed consumers. Beer drinkers still face a very limited choice and high prices."

CAMRA's national price survey is due out next month.

Praise For Disability Campaign

CAMRA's bid to win better access to pubs for disabled people has been praised by one of the most influential voices in the licensed trade press.

Kate Oppenheim, editor of *Publican*, said she had firsthand experience of the obstacles facing disabled people after spending a chilly evening in a pub garden because trying to get her friend's wheelchair over a doorstep and through two sets of swinging doors was more than either of them could face.

"Perhaps we should have made a huge fuss, demanding that the licensee hold doors open and help us in," said Ms Oppenheim. "But like most people, we just wanted a quiet drink and a chat. Often publicans say they can't welcome people in wheelchairs because they don't have the space or the facilities. But where there's a will there's usually a way.."

CAMRA's disability campaign has also been welcomed by Scope, formerly the Spastics Society, which said it could not praise CAMRA enough.

A survey conducted by Scope found that 22 per cent of a sample of 1,500 wheelchair users had been refused service in a pub.

The charity's Martine Brent said: "People think disabled people are a nuisance and view them as a problem rather than as extra income."

"But a shopping centre survey has shown that disabled people spend more than average and often bring a carer with them."

Alan Stewart, north-east regional co-ordinator of CAMRA's disability working group is currently working on a register of pubs in the region with a negative attitude towards the disabled.

"Too many pubs still treat disabled people as outcasts," said Mr Stewart, a former chef who is disabled himself. "Not enough consideration is given to their needs, yet they still like to get out and spend their money having a pint or two like anyone else."

Mr Stewart singled out the Sir John Fitzgerald chain as particularly welcoming to the disabled.

Other companies singled out for their positive attitude to disablement include Ansells, Wolverhampton & Dudley, Brakspear's and Bateman's.

These articles are reprinted from *What's Brewing*, the CAMRA national members monthly newspaper. To get your copy - all you need to do is join CAMRA - see membership form on page 23



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CURMUDGEON

I recently read an interview with David Thompson, the Managing Director of Banks's, in which he said that this country was seriously over-pubbed, and that 10,000 pubs would have to close by the end of the decade. Now I think that's a very questionable proposition - I can't, for example, bring to mind a single area of housing built this century that has enough pubs.

But, assuming that he is correct, why on earth are the brewers spending millions of pounds up and down the country adding extensions and conservatories to their pubs like there's no tomorrow? Wouldn't they be better off just leaving the money in the bank, or even using it to cut beer prices?

The real reason is that extending some pubs and neglecting others turns the statement that we're over-pubbed into a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's the same old lie that has been used by both commercial and public sector organisations for many years, that by concentrating your operations into fewer but supposedly better outlets, you give the public an improved service. It isn't true for hospitals or post offices, and it certainly isn't true for pubs. It's all about saving money and increasing profits, not giving customers a better deal.

Given the choice, most of us would prefer to drink in small cosy pubs rather than big soulless barns, no matter how many "facilities" they may have. Britain may have enough drinking space in its pubs, but in terms of numbers, it has 10,000 too few, not too many.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There has been some discussion in the local press about an incident in which elderly people with learning disabilities were asked to leave the Vale Cottage in Gorton. On the basis of what I have read, I have to say that I believe the staff of the Vale Cottage were probably in the wrong: it is one thing to bar people for unacceptable behaviour, but another entirely to prejudice those who have learning disabilities and exclude them purely on those grounds. I have often seen mentally disabled people in the company of family or carers enjoying a visit to a pub and causing no offence to anybody.

Is it right, though, to single out the Vale Cottage for criticism in this way? Would the people attending the Day Resource Unit in Gorton have received a warmer welcome in other nearby pubs? Have the staff of the unit made any attempt to take them there? We should not be too quick to condemn the Vale Cottage in isolation without knowing the answers to these questions. This form of prejudice is widespread in society and is certainly not confined to one pub.

Could it even be that the care workers chose the Vale Cottage on the grounds that, being a less boisterous pub than some of its neighbours, it was the one in the area where they felt they at least stood a chance of not being turned away?

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '90

The front page headline was "A messy business". This was all about the Cellar-Hy Beer Conservator, a device being offered to local licensees, and intended to assist the return of "safe" waste beer to your pint - basically waste beer was kept in a storage unit, and then slowly fed into the beer which was being drawn off from a fresh cask. CAMRA had long opposed the return of ANY beer to the cask, and after talking to the firm marketing the device, the intention was to seek the views of local brewers, and of the Environmental Health Department.

Now that tenants of the five national breweries could stock a guest beer of their own choice, it seemed that only a handful of licensees were taking advantage of their new found freedom. However, the Park Hotel in New Bridge Lane, Stockport was quickly off the mark with Holts Bitter at 82p a pint, and it sold extremely well, which is not surprising, as its only competitor was Websters Yorkshire Bitter at 90p. The marketing men from Halifax were not at all happy with the situation, and it was suggested that perhaps value for money was a concept that they had not come across before.

The story of the fight put up by the locals to prevent the Red Lion in Cheadle from being turned into something more akin to a licensed restaurant has been dealt with from time to time in this column. When Robinson's decided to lease it to Playmaster Leisure, it seemed that its fate was sealed. Now that it had re-opened, the former locals worst fears had come to pass - uniformed bar staff, wine lists, "bouncers", and prices at least 10% higher than neighbouring pubs. But perhaps, looking on the bright side, it was those nearby pubs that had benefitted, as the locals had voted with their feet, and taken their custom elsewhere. The Red Lion had been left to the out-of-town yuppies for whom it had evidently been designed.

Finally three items from the back page, giving news of refurbishments :-

The Railway, Cheadle, to be converted by Boddingtons into one of their Henry's Table eateries.

Parrswood Hotel - Boddingtons again. Work expected to last for 8 weeks, with the pub closed for the final 2 weeks.

Crown, Didsbury, (Greenalls) closed for major refurbishment.

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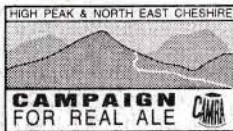
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High Peak Featured Pub JUNE

The Inn on the Green (The Crown Inn, Hawk Green)

The Crown Inn at Hawk Green, Marple is a pub with a chequered history to say the least.

Its origins date back to 1837, when a beer-house was "To be let". In 1842 the farm/beer house was owned by one Aaron Eccles and the beer was brewed on the premises. The pub rapidly established itself among the Hawk Green farming community and this was further expanded by the developing canal trade.

At the turn of the century, the Crown was still a free-house. In 1913 the pub was up for sale again at the Warren Bulkeley in Stockport and was bought by Bens Brewery for £3200 including stables, piggeries and out buildings.

With the new owners came the most memorable of landlords Jabez Shaw who banned all gambling and led his customers in hymn singing, a practice which continued well after Shaw left. Alterations to the Crown have been extensive over the years. The first major alterations were carried out in 1937. When Wilfred Wolstenholme came in 1958 from running the Romper, the Crown was a typical, cosy village pub with a tap-room, best room and a panelled snug, catering for a handful of locals. Beer turnover must have been very low. When Mr Wolstenholme left in 1977 major alterations took place, the pub was never to be the same.

High quality catering was introduced, the old hand pumps ripped out and electric pumps installed, although this was reversed later with new handpumps going in. The adjoining stables were also incorporated into the pub building.

The Crown Inn is currently in the latest Good Beer Guide and had been in the guide for many years, despite many internal branch wranglings, other factors taking precedence over consistently good beer.

No longer a "spit and sawdust" pub - with a vastly changed clientele, the phrase "wall to wall crummet" springing to mind. The bottom line is, the Crown Inn is a busy, lively Robinsons local and long may it prosper.

Stuart Jamieson

Pub Review Disley and Kettleshulme

This month we take a look at two of the areas of Cheshire covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire Branch; these areas being Disley and the less well known hamlet of Kettleshulme.

Looking at Disley first, it does not provide an over-exciting range of beers but nevertheless for a relatively small village the choice is not bad. The pubs are found strung out along the A6 main road and on the road over to Macclesfield.

Taking them in Alphabetical order:

Albert, Vaux - usually Samson (H) - but occasionally other Vaux beers also.

Crescent, Robinsons Best Bitter (H), Hatters Mild (H)

Dandy Cock, Robinsons Best Bitter (H), Hatters Mild (H), Hartleys XB (H), Old Tom - winter only (G)

Moorside Hotel, Higher Disley - Ramblers Bar, Courage Directors (H), Ruddles Bitter (H)

Ploughboy, Vaux Samson (H), Wards Bitter (H)

Rams Head (recently become a Hungry Horse Bar!) Draught Bass, Boddingtons Bitter, Theakstons Bitter, Websters Green Label - all (H)

White Horse, Robinsons Best Bitter, Hatters Mild (H) + (E)

White Lion, (Grand Met) Websters Yorkshire Bitter (H), Boddingtons Bitter (H)

Mousetrap, Websters Yorkshire Bitter (H), Boddingtons Bitter (H)

Moving on to Kettleshulme, some people may ask 'Well, where is it?' It lies on the Whaley Bridge to Macclesfield via Rainow road, about 3 miles out of Whaley Bridge. There are two pubs in the village:-

Bulls Head, Free House - Boddingtons Bitter plus usually an interesting guest beer. **Note - at the time of writing this fine little pub is unfortunately up for sale.**

Swan, Marstons Burton Bitter (H)

Next month - High Lane and Poynton.



Not a great deal of news this month but to compensate there is the Beer Tent at the Canals Festival but more of that elsewhere.

In Marple, Grays bitter seems to be doing the rounds. This Mansfield brewed beer (distributed by Finlater and Mackay) appeared in the *Jolly Sailor*, which seems to be doing well with its guest beers and also the **Conservative Club**.

In Disley (see also review of pubs in Disley and Kettleshulme), a new licensee arrived at the **Dandy Cock**. In fact a celebrity in the form of a famous goalkeeper whose feats at a Wembley Cup Final are still remembered locally. OK so Robin Simpson was playing in the Leek Town vs Telford match, but how many footballers can say they played in a bona fide final at HQ? The previous incumbent of the Dandy has taken over at the **Oddfellows in Mellor**. This is the fine stone pub between Marple Bridge and New Mills which has had a chequered history in recent years. It is a superb pub and we wish him well in this venture.

Also in Disley, the **Rams Head/Hungry Horse** is causing some controversy. This pub is a listed building and as such is protected from the whims of colour blind marketing men. So imagine the consternation locally when the aesthetically-challenged corporate colour scheme was implemented. The plans to convert the stables into a real ale bar are now under heavy fire from irate locals who are endeavouring to use this as a lever to get the building returned to its former appearance. Lets hope both plans succeed, it would be a shame to end up with a gaudy keg only pub!

By way of a footnote the **Gun Inn**, Hollingworth has now reopened. Much altered and concentrating on food according to early reports.

Staggering around Stalybridge

Stalybridge is a familiar station stop for the thousands of travellers who make their way each year between Yorkshire and Manchester.

For a small town of its size, it must have some of the best pubs and ranges of beer in the locality. Apart from the usual national brews it is possible to sample the likes of Robinsons, Marstons, Burtonwood, Wilsons and Lees alongside more exotic delights from around the country.

The following superb pub crawl of less than 1/4 mile, based on the station, should satisfy even the most hard-to-please drinker.

Obviously the starting point for any crawl of Stalybridge is the renowned **Station Buffet Bar** situated on Platform 1. A plaque on the wall outside states that it has remained "unique and authentic in detail since 1885". The inside is a real gem, featuring a marble-topped bar and unspoilt fixtures and fittings that hark back to the heyday of steam. Various railway memorabilia adorn the walls. This genuine Victorian bar doubtless helped inspire projects such as the West Riding in Dewsbury and the 'Head of Steam' chain. 3 or 4 beers are available on handpump, often of the more unusual variety. The bar is currently under threat of redevelopment, so visit it soon!

Turn right outside the station under the railway bridge and you will immediately find the **Q INN** set back on the right. A tiny one-roomed pub with overflow drinking upstairs, the bar features an open fire together with Marstons Pedigree, London Pride and 2 or 3 other varying guests.

This pub is particularly cosy in the depths of winter whilst sat around the fire.

Next-door-but-one is the **Rose & Crown**. A Good Beer Guide pub, this is a friendly community 'local' typical of many in the North West. The unusually wide range of beers from the Vaux stable include Vaux bitter, Mild, ESB, Samson and sometimes Wards bitter.

A hike of some 100 yards (!) now to the **Old Fleece**. This traditional two-roomed pub might not have the most inspired range of beers, but the bustling atmosphere is understandable in the clamour to sample the always well-kept John Smiths at only 95p a pint and Boddingtons at £1 a pint.

A further 1/2 minute walk to probably the best pub of them all **The White House**. Another Good Beer Guide pub, the White House is always busy although you can usually find a retreat in one of the separate rooms and drinking areas. Owned by the same manager of the 'Q' Inn, Marstons beers, including the Head Brewers Choice, appear alongside several ever-changing guests. A huge range of malt whiskies and unusual bottled beers are also on offer. The food is good value too and pies and rolls are available at all times. The White house is everything you could ask of a traditional pub.

The longest walk of all now. About 150 yards, past the bus station and the bingo hall, you will find the **Talbot** tucked away on the left. This large former Tetley pub now sells Burtonwood bitter in a mainly unspoiled multi-roomed environment.

This concludes the stagger. Anyone hungry by now could sample a curry from the restaurants and take-aways en route or maybe call for fish and chips or a kebab. This should just leave time for a swift half back in the Station Buffet before the train back home.



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Drinking large amounts of the foaming liquid in smoke-filled rooms, whilst enjoyable, is not conducive to living a long and healthy life. So, with this in mind, why not combine your beer sampling with some gentle exercise? Although jogging, swimming and cycling are all excellent ways of keeping fit, walking is probably best combined with drinking.



An interesting walk can be had through Central Stockport taking in some excellent pubs and some surprisingly pleasant scenery. A good starting point is the **Woolpack**, Brinksway, right by the river but unfortunately overlooked by Stockport's answer to Canary Wharf, the Blue Pyramid. Ignore this monstrosity (still empty) and enjoy a pint in the Woolpack, a comfortable pub with three separate rooms and a lobby area next to the bar. Marstons Pedigree, Theakstons Bitter and Tetley Bitter, a guest bitter and mild are on offer in this Good Beer Guide regular.

Leaving the Woolpack turn right and walk down the steps by the river, under the bridge and towards Stockport. This is a pleasant ten minute stroll to the next pub the **Crown** on Heaton Lane. Along the way ducks can be seen in the once filthy Mersey, I counted over twenty on this short stretch once and even a heron has been spotted. Walk up the steps and the Crown can be seen across the road. This is a multi-roomed Boddingtons Pub Co. house with an ever changing range of guest beers, continental bottled beers and another G.B.G. pub, it was also recently the local CAMRA branch Pub of the Year.

Turn left on leaving the Crown, walk under the Viaduct, the largest brick built structure in Europe across the busy A6 and onto Princes Street. To the right is Stockport's main shopping

centre Merseyway, undergoing a major refurbishment at the moment, but of more interest to the beer drinker is the **Swan with Two Necks** opposite Woolworths. This pub sells local brewer Robinsons Bitter and Mild and is a long narrow house of considerable character. The unspoilt traditional interior dates from the 1920's and has a small front vault, central bar, a snug and a room at the rear linked by a corridor. There is plenty of light oak panelling and the top-lit snug, panelled on all four walls, is one of the finest pub rooms in Stockport.

The **Tiviot** is the next pub, at the end of Princes Street, another Robinsons house with a vault and three separate rooms, one with table football. There is always a relaxed atmosphere in this comfortable house, a refuge from the crowds of shoppers outside.

Turn left on leaving the Tiviot then left again hurrying past Sainsbury's then turn right at Asda and one of Stockport's best known pubs the **Arden Arms** is on the right. This Grade II listed building survived the building of Asda's car park and deserves to be called "a gem". The pub, again Robinsons, has many unusual features including a black and white tiled floor in the bar area, an island bar with Georgian wood and glass, etched glass windows, traditional oak fittings and a unique snug, access to which can only be gained by walking through the bar area.

The next pub on our short walk is the **Stanley Arms** on Newbridge Lane which is directly opposite the Arden Arms. Walking down Newbridge Lane the Stanley is on the right, opposite a large open grass area with mature trees and shrubs in the background. The Stanley Arms has an unusual split level interior, and is a genuine free house with a wide range of ever-changing beers, although there are usually some Steam Packet beers on. Seats and tables are usually set outside and this is a pleasant place to enjoy a pint or two. Although only a few minutes walk from the town centre the peace and quiet here is noticeable.

Carrying on down Newbridge Lane the River Goyt can be seen on the left and the **Midway**, our next pub, overlooks the river. The Midway does in fact have the feel of a country pub surrounded by trees and with seating outside - there is also a small terrace at the rear of the pub. John Smiths beers and Courage Directors (rare for the Stockport area) are on sale here.

And finally, a little further down the road, is the **Park** by the traffic lights, a multi-roomed pub selling Websters Bitter but with Holts Bitter as a permanent guest.

So there you have it, eight pubs each different from the other selling a wide range of beers from all over the country in completely contrasting surroundings. This is our pub heritage, if you want to keep it, then use it!

Pete Soane

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LOCAL HAUNTS

by Pete Massey

At the beginning of Hillgate is one of Stockport's old coaching inns - the White Lion, which tells many stories. In those days, husbands could rid themselves of tiresome wives by bringing them, bound, to the junction of Hillgate and Underbank, and sell them to any interested traveller staying at any one of the taverns. If she wasn't sellable, the simple expedient of being led through the town with the head clamped in the 'scolds bridle' was often the outcome of an afternoons mulling over a few quarts of ale - those were the days!

For many years, at the White Lion, there have been reports of a lady in white carrying a money box. I wondered if she might have some connection with the above local practices. So, taking with me all the necessities (pen, notepad, twig of hazel, garlic etc) I set off to meet the present curators of the White Lion - Mike and Michelle, both of whom I'd met before and found to be very nice people, like you and me.

I've known the White Lion in its many forms over the years and had no doubt that there would be restless spirits about. Over a few jars from diverse casks of splendidly named ales, Mike told me some interesting stories. Mike is not from Stockport and is unaware of much local history but he, too, spoke of seeing a lady in white carrying a money box. He spoke, too, of items of little consequence disappearing from amongst items of far greater consequence.

★ ★ ★

My favourite stories are about the cellars, they always are. There are many tunnels connecting the cellars of the pubs around the market area in Stockport which, hopefully I might get round to in another local haunts. These tunnels go back many years, unmapped and often inaccessible. However, it may be possible to arrange some visits if sufficient people are interested. Just think what those cellars and tunnels might contain, and what has already been discovered, as I'll tell you in other stories.

★ ★ ★

Back to the White Lion. In the large cellar is a particularly old door that leads into one of those tunnels and which is bricked up. At one end the room is used for storage, 'Put simply', Mike said, 'the door's got a life of its own.' I knew exactly what he meant. There was a door like that at the Bridge Inn and each night, when locking up, I had to try to 'outwit' it. This is a common feature of old doors in stories of the paranormal; the oldest door I've come across in my experiences dated from 1260 and that was some door! A cross between 'Stargate' and 'House on Haunted Hill'!

Mike told me of a lady connected with the White Lion during his time there, who had come back to the pub after a Saturday afternoon's shopping. They went upstairs and unpacked their various plastic bags onto this long wooden dining table. Amongst the items was a small pair of child's shoes which had belonged to the daughter's little girl who had tragically died some time before. Suddenly, of their own volition, the shoes sped across the table to clatter on the floor at the other end of the room. Both ladies required much attention at the bar directly afterwards and the assistance of the regenera-

tive properties of a number of stiff brandies.

What spirits work in the premises of your local? I may come across them one night on one of my regular excursions into the realm of public spirits. The next local haunt will be an 'at last it can be revealed' article about what really went on at Little Jack Horner's by our 'man on the spot' - Mr G. Reader

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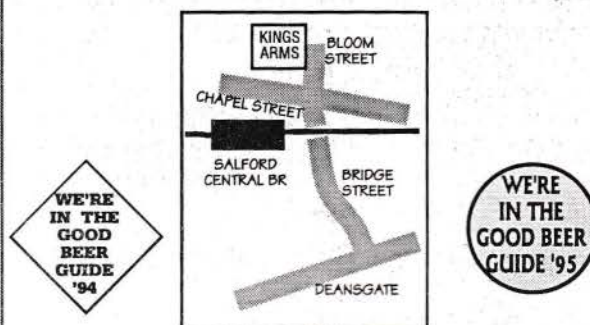


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MANCHESTER MATTERS

After a flurry of activity in the spring, things were rather quieter last month. However, the Magic Pub Company have not yet run out of sawdust and knick-knacks, and by the time you read this the Midway in Longsight may well have emerged from its cladding of scaffolding as Biddy Mulligan's, yet another mock-Irish pub. The irony is that the Midway already WAS an Irish pub, with a packed programme of mainly country'n'Irish entertainment; if, (as I hope) it succeeds in its new guise, you can't help feeling it'll be more by luck than judgment.



by Rhys Jones

In West Gorton, Whitbread's Junction is closed. Happily, however, the building is un-boarded and undamaged and it would appear that closure can be attributed to simple economics rather than to nefarious goings-on. A couple of doors away, the Dolphin is frequently closed in the evening, but does open during the day, generally closing around 8pm. In Chorlton-cum-Hardy, a long-standing keg redoubt has fallen with the introduction of handpumped Stones Bitter and Worthington Best Bitter at the Bowling Green on Chorlton Green.

Finally, congratulations to the Red Lion in Withington on being the North-West's first outlet for Symonds Old Hazy, the new traditional cider from Bulmers. I understand the cider is selling well; with a successful traditional product such as this now widely available, there can really be no further excuse for the keg-on-handpump con.

Tameside Canals Festival Beer Tent

It's coming up to July (where has the year gone!) and that means one thing to the active members of High Peak branch, a weekend of hard work. Yes the Beer Tent is back for its 18th year on the 7th, 8th and 9th (the sunny weekend).

The format is much the same as previous years (if it's working don't fix it!) with the beer tent taking centre stage on the main festival site. Located close to the Portland Basin the festival is in an area of fine industrial heritage and the dozens of narrow boats colourfully decked out create a unique setting.

A Festival of Dance will be taking place over the weekend with various styles on show including the ubiquitous Morris Dancers. But don't let that put you off. Only kidding. Get away from me with that hanky!

Right. Down to the important stuff. The Beer Tent will be open as follows:-

Friday 7th 7pm to 11.00
 Saturday 8th 12 noon to 5.30 and 7.30 to 11.00
 Sunday 9th 12 noon to 5.00 (or until beer runs out!)

There will be the usual selection of real ales and traditional ciders to complement the food available (not in beer tent) and help the live music go with a swing. Talking of swings there's plenty to keep children safely occupied and interested during the day so you don't need to start off thinking of excuses to give your better half.

The beer ranges from the familiar with the ever popular Hydes and Lees Bitters to the down right peculiar (sic) with Hexhamshire Whapweasel and brews such as Kelham Island Wheat Beer, Fullers IPA, Big Lamp Bitter and Wortley Earls Ale to name but a few in between. Of course these beers are subject to availability but if some aren't then others will take their place.

Please note that there is a charge to enter the main site in the evenings when entertainment is laid on.

Hope to see some of you there. By the way, if you are a CAMRA member and wish to help out please give Tim Jones a ring on 371 9006 or better still come to one of our meetings (soon).

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At the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport, Norah and Peter Berry are now tenants after spending the last twelve months managing the pub. Cask Federation Bitter is on sale at 98p a pint and Theakstons will soon be joining the range. Major changes are afoot at the Kenilworth, Cheadle Hulme. There is to be a complete refurbishment, costing over £400,000 which is intended to change the image of this pub which has at times had a troubled reputation. It will be a traditional house serving food and five cask ales - Greenalls Bitter and Original, Tetley Bitter, Theakstons Bitter and a guest from the Greenalls list. To complete the new look the pub is also likely to change its name. These all sound very positive developments - more news in due course.

The Wellington on Hyde Road has had a change of hands and is now run by the team who also produce the 'Club & Pub News' magazine. It's a virtually rebuilt Victorian pub with a few traces remaining of its former grandeur and still retains a vault. Current cask beers are Boddies Bitter, Tetley Bitter, Whitbread Trophy and Chesters Mild with other beers from Courage and S&N (which could turn out to be much the same thing if the merger goes through). The pub also seems to be majoring on entertainment which is apparently being very well received.

A recent look in at the Bridge, Chestergate, Stockport revealed the welcome return of cask mild. Hatters is now handpump dispensed alongside Robinsons Best Bitter.

After a long closure, the Gladstone on Lower Hillgate reopened on 26 May under the ministry of Ken Birch. This is an interesting multi-roomed 1930's style pub and Ken is planning to serve the full range of Burtonwood real ales - mild, bitter, James Forshaw's and Top Hat on handpump. It is also to be the first outlet in Stockport for the new Buccaneer Strong Ale (5.5%ABV). Ken and his business partner Keith Sutton will be familiar figures to Stockport's fans of good beer from their days at the Crown on Heaton Lane and we wish them every success in this welcome addition to the Hillgate crawl. Look out for their 'official' Opening Gala Night' on 23 June - starting at 7.30, but try it before - anyway

All being well the Head of Steam freehouse will be opening at Deansgate Station this month. Projected opening date is June 14th but the discovery of dry rot in the old Ministry nightclub building may set this back. Phone 236 6645 for the latest info. A review will follow.

Visitors to either of Manchester's Scruffy Murphys Irish pubs will be hard pressed to see the cask beer. It's there alright, both pubs sell Tetley Bitter, but the handpumps are unmarked which can only have a negative effect on sales. We put this to Tetleys and got a reply from Mike Wilson, the Operations Director of Tetley Pubco (West Region). Mike tells us that the standard Tetley pumpclips won't fit on the handpumps installed in Scruffy Murphys(!) but undeterred he is having customised pumpclips fitted just as soon as he can get them made. Incidentally, in last month's OT we wondered whether the lowish food prices in Scruffy Murphys would be repeated in their outlets outside student-land. The answer is apparently yes, the menu is standard throughout the chain. What will appear later in the year is an extra-cheap student menu - this will first feature in the Queen of Hearts in Fallowfield after its refurbishment later in the year and will almost certainly be extended to All Saints.

*The High Peak & North East Cheshire
 Branch Contact is Tim Jones
 (0161 371 9006 (h))*

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(OT134)

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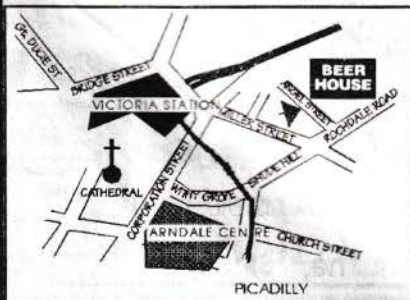
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PARTY OR MEETING ROOM AVAILABLE FREE

TRY OUR SUNDAY BREAKFAST 12 - 2.30
EVENING MEALS SERVED 5 - 7 THURS & FRI



**3 TRADITIONAL
CIDERS AVAILABLE
GOOD FOOD -
Vegetarians welcome**
**OPEN ALL DAY
MONDAY -
SATURDAY**
(12 - 3 & 7 - 10.30 Sun)

ALWAYS FEATURING

12 REAL ALES ON OFFER
BURTONWOOD BITTER,
THEAKSTONS XB,
& MOORHOUSES PENDLE
WITCH +9 EVER CHANGING
GUEST BEERS
INCLUDING A GUEST MILD

PLUS TRADITIONAL
CIDERS, DRAUGHT
BELGIAN KRIEK, LEFFE
BLONDE & IMPORTED
GERMAN & MANY OTHER
BOTTLED (especially)
BELGIAN BEERS

Lunchtime Food Served 7
Days A Week

