

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:
138

OPENING TIMES



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EVERY MONTH

CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR - October 1995

New Threat to Tie

CAMRA Branches and regional brewers are being urged to join forces to fight a possible double-cross from the European Commission over the tied house system. The warning is that officials in charge of the review of Britain's block exemption from the Treaty of Rome - the rule which permits British brewers to tie their pubs - could be preparing a behind-the-scenes stitch-up.

The 'block exemption' is due for renewal in 1997 and the European Commission will begin work next year on a review of the tie. Until now it had been thought that the exemption would be allowed to continue, though a ceiling based on beer production might be imposed, so that large brewers producing so many million barrels a year would no longer be able to tie pubs.

But now the future of the tie is in doubt. The Germans are leading the charge. Based on a totally different beer market with 1300 producers and no national brewers, they are demanding that the British tie must go.

The result would be catastrophic. Regional brewers, the backbone of the real ale revival, would be wiped out. They survive today in a market where the Big Four nationals control 83% of the beer market, as a result of their ability to brew beer for their tied outlets. A 'free market' in beer would in reality mean a market more and more dominated by the national giants, who would gobble up the pubs released by the regionals through deep discounting and cheap loans.

The brewing industry is already gearing up for the fight: the Independent Family Brewers of Britain has been up and running for more than two years, with saving the tie as its main objective, and now the British Beer Club has been formed to bring the industry closer to MEPs.

CAMRA will be preparing a submission to the European Commission to be presented at a strategic moment. But that does not mean we can just sit back and await events. All CAMRA members and every Opening Times reader who cares about quality and choice in the beer market can take action. Lobby your MPs and MEPs to support the tie and oppose any moves by the European Commission to abolish it. The fight starts now.



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's yet another instant Irish theme pub from the Magic Pub Co, winners of one of this year's Pub Vandalism Awards. See our feature article on page 3

Allied Shake-up

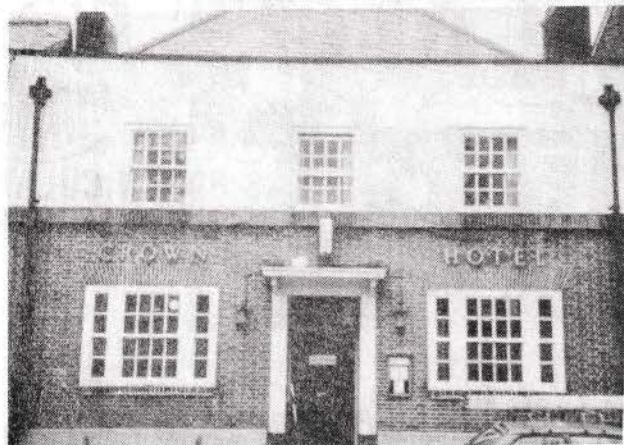
It's all change at the Tetley PubCo - it's been abolished! In a major shake-up, national brewer and pub operator Allied Domecq has completely reshaped its 4000 strong pub business. The previous four retailing companies, Tetleys in the north, Ansell's in the Midlands plus Ind Coope and Taylor Walker covering the south east and London have been replaced by just two operating companies for the entire estate.

Allied Domecq Inns will deal with the more normal run of pubs while Allied Domecq will take charge of the more prominent 'branded' operations such as the Big Steak, Scruffy Murphys and Firkin operations. Inns will be headed by current Tetley PubCo boss John McKeown, which is good news - on last year's CAMRA/Tetley pub tour he came across as very much a pub man with a sensible and down to earth approach. It remains to be seen whether this will be the case with 'Leisure' which will be run by Ansell's current MD Martin Grant. Of all the former operating companies, Ansell's attracted much criticism, from both within and outside the industry, for going 'Firkin mad', seemingly wishing to convert every street corner local into some theme pub or other. Whether these excesses will now spread to the national scene remains to be seen.

The Tetley huntsman won't be disappearing from our pubs, though. Allied Domecq confirm that most of the pubs up and down the country will be keeping their old signing and traditional livery.

In OCTOBER'S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	2	Rhythm & Booze	14
Pub Vandalism Awards	3	Farmers Arms	16
Letters	5	Curmudgeon	17
Editors View	5	5 Years Ago	17
Stagger	6	High Peak News	20
Brewery News	8	Camra Calling	22
Festival Frolics	10	Manchester Matters ...	22
Good Beer Guide	12	Pub News	23



Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Pub Of The Month OCTOBER

The first edition of the Stockport Pub Guide 'Viaducts & Vaults' described the Crown, Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, as a 'good solid multi-roomed local, boasting the only vault and the only real mild on the Moor'. That was over four years ago, and from the Crown's point of view this remains thankfully true. In the intervening years Peter and Carmel Belfield have carried on the tradition of a super local. More recently the Crown has been described as the best pub never to have been Pub of the Month, and this is now rectified.

The vault now boasts four dart teams, including mixed and ladies teams. During Peter's management the traditional local atmosphere has been maintained, in a friendly pub welcoming drinkers of all ages and status.

Viaducts & Vaults listed the Crown as selling Boddingtons Bitter and Mild on handpump and in recent years the mild particularly has been consistently good. There is no pumpclip to advertise the mild (there wasn't in 1991!) but you can count

on it being available. In recent months Peter has also introduced guest beers, not just from the Whitbread list, but also from the more interesting Ogden Wade list. Hopefully Peter will have an interesting guest beer alongside some decent Boddingtons Mild and Bitter, so that we can celebrate the Pub of the Month presentation to Peter and Carmel on Thursday 19th October.

This may be a last chance to enjoy this splendid local in its present form as the Boddington Pub Company is threatening a re-design which can only have serious implications for the whole ambience of the Crown.

A good gathering is expected for what will otherwise be an enjoyable evening, so get there early to join us.

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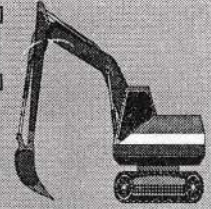
ENTERTAINMENT

BLUES BANDS FOLK MUSIC
WEDNESDAYS - QUIZ NIGHT

CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1995



PUB VANDALISM AWARDS 1995



After a fallow year in 1994 when no awards were made, this year our judges were, sadly, almost spoilt for choice. The past 12 months have been characterised by the continued closure of pubs in and around Manchester City Centre, with most inner-city areas seeing the loss of one or two locals. The trend has even extended to the City Centre itself with the loss of two particularly well-liked pubs. Pub closures, though, tend to be insidious affairs, apart from one or two high-profile losses, it tends to simply be a case of 'well, that's just another one gone'. However, the winner of our major award this year is anything but low-profile.

The other trend this year has been the explosion of Irish theme pubs. The success of O'Sheas on Whitworth Street seems to have sparked off this trend and suddenly everyone was at it - O'Sheas Two, Tetley's two Scruffy Murphys, BodPubCo's Durty Nellies, MacNally's Irish Sports Pub litter the Wilmslow Road corridor. Some - the Scruffy Murphy's and O'Sheas in particular - have been well executed new pubs in their own right. And then we have this year's winner.

Just Magic

Step forward the Magic Pub Co, winner of our Plastic Leprechaun Award, for jumping on the bandwagon with the silliest names, the most junk thrown around and the most blatant attempt to cash in on a theme while it's still a money spinning proposition. Travelling into Manchester down the A6 you can't have failed to miss these - the Midway became Biddy Mulligans, the Crown - O'Reillys Tavern and in the City Centre, Seftons Bar is now Paddy's Rat & Carrot while the Rising Sun has become Paddy's Wig. Sawdust on the floors, 'bric-a-brac' everywhere and gaudy green and orange signing makes these pubs stand out like a sore thumb.

In fairness to Magic all these pubs were badly in need of investment, and they would doubtless argue that that they are now trading much more successfully than before. No-one would deny that and in addition one or two have been welcome real ale gains. But surely, these pubs could have been brought back to life in a way that demonstrated more of a long-term commitment. What happens when the Irish theme is no longer a money spinner? Will all the bric-a-brac and plastic signs still be there in five or six years? If so, just what sort of sight will they present? Are Magic prepared to continue renewing these pubs as the novelty wears off or will they once again become the sad run-down establishments they were before. It would be nice to be told.

Off Your Trolley

This year there are also two worthy runners-up. First is our beloved caring, sharing Co-op who win our 'Off Your Shopping Trolley' Award for pulling the rug from underneath those campaigning to save the Market Centre and the Sportsmans, the last remaining pub on Market Street. Their timely surrender of the lease to Tesco, who will now build a much needed (not!) new supermarket, brought the traders fight to an untimely end. The sad state of the pub, awaiting demolition is shown (right).



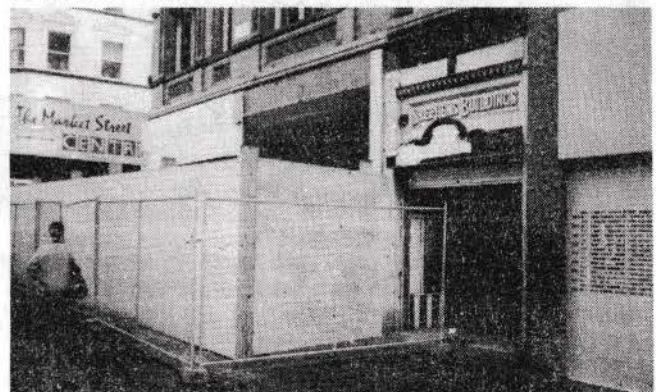
Writ & Bailiff

Across town, another pub met a swift demise this year. Licensee Cliff Thornton fought a long and determined battle to keep open the Swinging Sporrán on Sackville Street. He was up against the combined forces of UMIST, who own the building, and Scottish & Newcastle, who leased it from them. Stitched up, carved up and boarded up, the Sporrán now presents a sorry sight. Let's hope both UMIST and S&N have a place in their trophy cabinets for our 'Writ & Bailiff Memorial Shield'. Well done, one and all.

That's it for 1995. Here's looking to the next 12 months - will your local be tarted up, knocked down or otherwise messed around. If so it could feature when we present the Pub Vandalism Awards for 1996.

An early contender for next year's awards has already emerged! Some readers will recall CAMRA's vigorous campaign some years ago to prevent the demolition of two City Centre pubs - the Coach & Horses at Piccadilly and the Castle & Falcon off Shude Hill, two of the city's oldest pubs.

They were threatened by work for the Metrolink and subsequently passed into the hands of the Passenger Transport Authority who have subsequently let them quietly rot. GMPTE have now applied for permission to demolish the Castle & Falcon and landscape the site. CAMRA has objected and will be suggesting that a sensible alternative would be to transfer the pub for a nominal amount to a willing brewer who would then restore and re-open it. You will hear more on this one in the coming months.



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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The threat to our regional brewers and real ale traditions that is posed by the European Commission's look at the tie cannot be underestimated. If the tie goes then so will many of our regional brewers who may find it more profitable to simply run pubs than brew beer for them.

Just look at those countries which don't have a tie - France, Australia, the USA. Hardly known for the quality of their mainstream beers are they? To be sure, all three countries have experienced the micro-brewery boom, particularly the USA, but these are very small and isolated oases in deserts of lowest common denominator beers. If you don't want our brewing industry to go the same way - and since you're reading *Opening Times*, that is presumably the case, then you must take action NOW. Lobby your MP. Lobby your Euro MP. Let them know you want to keep choice and variety. Let them know that our unique brewing heritage must be preserved. Let them know the tie must be kept. And do it now.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

the address for letters is on page 2

Fruit Beers

From Peter Clarkson:

Having only come across the August edition of the marvelously readable and entertaining "*Opening Times*" recently, I feel compelled to respond to your comments on British brewers' attempts at 'fruit beers' as printed "In the Editor's View". Yes, some are totally disgusting (I agree, Bateman's 'Strawberry Fields' was horrible but I know others who liked it. Mind you, I don't think the licensee at the Brunswick in Derby will take it again, as it tainted the beer lines so much that it had to be replaced!)

I digress, anyway, other disgusting brews that come to mind are Whitbread's Colonel Pepper's Lemon Ale, which didn't really taste of lemons, and Brewery-on-Sea's (Lancing, Sussex) whose efforts at doing fruit beers have at times been laughable (e.g. a pear beer which was a mixture of perry and bitter!)

Despite this, the point is that it is wrong to sound like an old fashioned dinosaur saying this practice should be left to the Belgians. Have you tried all the 'noxious concoctions' to come to an informed opinion? I think such a description is too biased and generalised. Indeed, some brewers have produced some wonderful fruit beers (e.g. Sutton's Orangutang - an orange flavoured beer, Steampacket Fruit Beer, Brewery-on-Sea's Apple and Cinnamon etc).

Has the editor heard that variety is the spice of life? The article sounded like it was written by somebody who never ventures to try something more exotic than mild or bitter. Far from being a 'growing and unwelcome development', I believe different people like trying these novelty beers. Indeed, whether you like it or not the trend is here to stay. Similarly, does the editor believe British brewers should not try to brew wheat beers on the grounds that this is untraditional? Come on, get real, instead of bemoaning the fact fruit beers are "noxious concoctions", go on and try some.. Why not try Bateman's Yellow Belly, the beer you say is 'yeck'. It is very pleasant. It seems you're condemning it before you've tried it!

Which all goes to show that one man's noxious concoction is another's pleasant novelty beer, I suppose. The tradi-

This month we also launch our Pub Vandalism Awards. None were made last year and we thought things might be looking up. No such luck. Not only has the City Centre seen two important pub losses this year, the inner city also continues to lose pubs on a regular basis. And of course, this year has seen the return of the theme bar, with a vengeance. There has only been one theme - Irish. God knows whose idea this was, but brewers big and not so big are all leaping onto the bandwagon, the length and breadth of the country. When will the bubble burst, as it surely must? And what will the next flavour of the month be?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Finally, the on-line *Opening Times* is upon us (or very nearly). From October 20th you will be able to sample the delights of *Opening Times* from anywhere in the world. Next month our production editor Paul Hutchings promises a pull-out guide to the electronic version, but if you can't wait till then, more details can be found on page 22. I am apparently reduced to jclarke@opentime.u-net.com!

John Clarke

tional nature, or otherwise, isn't the problem, it's the end result which counts and as far as British fruit beers go, I have yet to find one that is remotely pleasant - yes, of course I have tried some - and when I do I will be the first to admit I'm wrong. Bateman's Yellow Belly? Yup, tried that as well - yech! - ed.)

Nitrokeg everywhere!

From George Drew:

Here's one for you! Actually overheard by myself at the bar of the Old Monkey:-
Hopeful Young Punter: "Have you got any Caffreys?". And this in a Joseph Holts house of all places!!!

The Griffin

From Manager, Griffin Hotel, Heaton Mersey

Re article in August's OT regarding the above pub.

May I point out that any entertainment including piped music is at the request of the patrons of the Griffin, 99.9% of the customers approve of this.

As in all pubs there are certain individuals who hide behind a mask of anonymity and cannot accept any change whatsoever. They are so self-centred they stick out like sore thumbs and as far as I am concerned are not worth talking to! By the way, there are five rooms in the Griffin, only two with music installed and only played at lunch until early doors. If you have the name and address of 'Conversation Lover' please send him a copy of my reply, I will gladly pay the postage.

I apologise for the lateness of my comments but I was on holiday when the August issue came out and have only just received a copy.

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STAGGER

with Paul Felton

The splendidly warm evening of 18 August saw our latest stagger around the many delights of Rusholme, accompanied all the way by the almost too tempting aromas of the local curry houses.

The initial meeting point was the Grafton on Grafton Street. This is a Holts pub, a replacement for an earlier building, serving (as almost ever in their pubs) the standard mild and bitter (and their equally standard very low prices). There's a vault with pool table on the right and a spacious lounge on the left, the latter seeming rather empty given the sparse 7pm trade. All our party had the bitter, and it was pretty good.

A short step down the same road is the **Bowling Green**, a Greenalls pub offering a substantial but perhaps unenterprising range of Greenalls own mild and bitter, and Stones and Tetley bitters. Notable features include the Manchester heritage display, a fine acid etched window in the door to the gents, and the fact that the pub was considerably more food-orientated than on my previous visits (considerably more sauce bottles than customers at that time). All tried one of the Greenalls beers, the above-average bitter being the preferred choice.

The **Whitworth** is a Marstons pub with a very attractive exterior on Moss Lane East. Sadly the old vault has gone (it was the space immediately on your right as you walk through the door) but on a happier note the fake handpump for keg Scrumpy Jack cider also appears to be no more. The pub opens out on a lover level to a reversed 'B' shape lounge, but why is it that I always expect the back room to be larger than it ever is? Bitter was £1.40, Pedigree £1.60 (unfortunately no Marstons seasonal ales were available); all had the bitter, which was rather good.

Hydes' **Albert** on Walmer Street is the only pub on the stagger which will appear in the new Good Beer Guide, and it certainly deserves the accolade. There's nothing particularly special to it inside, just pool table, small vault area and lounge, but it's the atmosphere and the beer that make it such a good pub. Unlike the numerous ersatz versions currently on the market (Magic Pub Co. please note), this is a genuine Irish pub, run by and frequented by Irish people, serving what is generally reckoned to be an extremely good pint of Guinness - and please, no letters about "but it's not a patch on what you get in Ireland..." One cask beer is available, Hydes bitter: it was easily up to its usual very high standards and was comfortably the best beer we tried that evening.

We had expected to find that Bass's **Clarence** on Wilmslow Road would be keg; it has been for some time. But no! There was now a handpump, so in we went. The single cask beer on sale, Worthington best bitter, is one of those lack-lustre all-purpose national brands designed to offend only those who ask for a characterful pint. What can I say? It was mind-numbingly average. More impressive was the remarkably bad service which I encountered. Given the combined reasoning of a ten-or-more pub stagger and the beer available, three halves were ordered. The barmaid seemed to believe that the serving of anything less than pints was beneath her. Now normally, a short measure of Worthington BB would be acceptable, provided it wasn't taking the proverbial too much, would not be a problem (less to have to drink), but given the barmaid's attitude, I just had to ask for a top-up (childish, I know, but sometimes you have to do these things). Anyway, the top-up

was grudgingly provided, but this was somewhat marred by half the extra beer being lost when the glasses were placed a little too firmly back onto the bar. Just the sort of thing to have people flocking back to pubs, what?

Next was the **Sherwood** on Claremont Road, a functional Whitbread pub with back pool room and front lounge. Presumably some kind of Rusholme bush telegraph had informed the bar staff of our difficulties in the Clarence, for the barman who served one of my colleagues appeared to be trying to outdo the barmaid in the previous pub. Handpumps proclaimed that two cask bitters were available, Boddingtons and Trophy. A half of Boddingtons was ordered, but there was none available. Trophy was then ordered, with a gesture towards the handpump. Unfortunately keg Trophy was also on sale, and notwithstanding the indication to the contrary, this was what was provided. When the keg Trophy was turned down, the barman asked what he was to do with the half in his hand; someone had to pay for it. When my colleague informed him that he would not be that person, the barman proceeded to ignore him, and went on to the next customer. So we left.

And Finally

The **Gardener's Arms** on Victory Street (up Claremont Road, turn left at the keg Lord Lyon) used to be the second of three Greenalls pubs on this crawl; though still badged as such, it sold distinctively average Wilsons bitter. On previous visits, the Gardeners had always appeared to be thriving; tonight there weren't anywhere near as many customers. Perhaps the absentees had difficulty in coping with the fact that the predominantly country and Irish DJ threw in the occasional curve-ball such as the Ronettes.

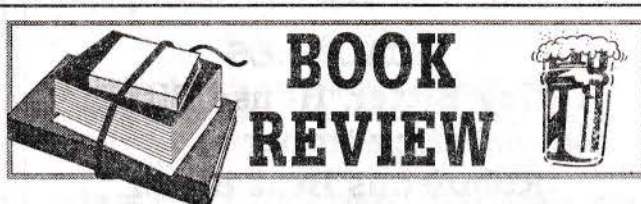
The **Osborne House** is just a few yards further along Victory Street, the second of the two Hydes pubs visited on the night and a welcoming place for which I've always had a soft spot. Essentially it's all one room with a bar in the middle, but it's divided well enough into several distinct areas. Three beers were on sale: mild which was average, bitter which was poor and on the turn (can happen anywhere, of course) and some rather pleasant Summer Ale (one of Hydes seasonal beers).

Before reaching our final resting place of the evening quick visits revealed two more keg pubs, both on Wilmslow Road. Hardy's Wall (formerly the Birch Villa) supposedly does sell cask beers, but on this occasion all pump clips were turned round (a politeness that would have been welcome at the Sherwood); the Huntsman has long been keg and still is.

So our final port of call was the **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove, another Greenalls pub and probably the best building of the evening. This is a place of some character, with its Groves & Whitnall etched windows testifying to former ownership, its

fine lobby tiling, and its several contrasting drinking areas. The range of beers available is perhaps the only let down, for Greenalls and Tetley bitters were on sale. Everyone went for the Tetleys, which was above average.

As always, the opinions expressed are only those of a group of CAMRA members on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or their beers - why not try the pubs for yourselves and see if you (dis)agree?



Pubs of Central Manchester

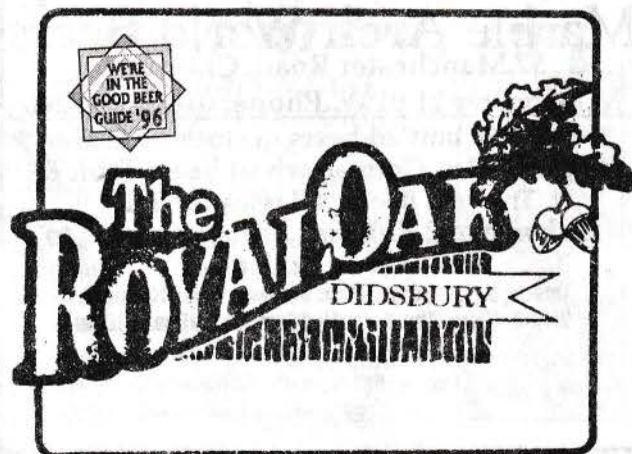
S.J. Littler, Concept Publishing & Promotions, unpaginated, £2.50

This may well be the first pub guide to be put on sale in a clear plastic wrapper. If the intention is to deter browsers, this is both effective and wise on the publishers' part; for to browse is to discover that the book is not worth buying.

The contents consists of one page each on some 60 pubs, and appears in the main to consist of the pub's own advertising copy, frequently incorporating the pub's logo or other artwork. Occasionally, superficially researched historical anecdotes appear within grey panels; apart from a scrappy, sloppily written page of introduction, these seem to be the only contributions from the book's ostensible author. What we are offered is an advertising freesheet - unfortunately, however, it isn't free.

The pubs selected are in the main second-raters, which only makes more risible the praise lavished on them - since when, for example, has the Brunswick on Piccadilly had "a definite country pub feel....intimate little cubby-holes reminiscent of so many country taverns"? While a handful of first-rate establishments are included (the Circus Tavern and the City Arms, for example) there are only two independent brewers' pubs (neither owned by a Manchester brewer), and not one genuine freehouse with an unfettered choice of beers. The book's one good point is a clear and well-drawn map.

Worryingly, the flysheet threatens five further titles in series with this lamentable publication. Don't encourage them - if you see this book, keep your money in your pocket and spend it instead on a couple of decent pints.



Tom Thumb's

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Broughton/Whim

The biggest news to break on the local micro-brewery front is the purchase of Scotland's Broughton Brewery by none other than Giles Litchfield, owner of Whim Ales. Giles has spent the last two months in the Scottish Borders with his new acquisition which is to be run entirely separately from Whim. We understand that the Broughton beers will continue, although the ABV of Oat Malt Stout and Merlin will be increased. Closer to home, Whim have introduced a new premium beer, Hells Mouth (named after a beach in Wales!) at 1059og and 6.5%ABV. This is a typically well-attenuated Whim beer but with lots of body to boot. Should be yet another winner.

Salopian

Shropshire's newest micro is not perhaps as new as it might seem, for it's run by Martin Barry formerly of Snowdonia Brewery, along with his partner Mandy Evans. Though Shropshire has of late become fertile territory for micro-breweries, this is, perhaps surprisingly, the first brewery to operate in the county town of Shrewsbury for nearly 30 years. The Salopian Brewery is situated in a former dairy in the south-west of the town, close to the main hospital, the dairy's shop now being re-used as a brewery shop.

Though small amounts had been sold previously, the brewery's effective launch was at Shrewsbury Real Ale Festival in early September, when the beers sold so well that the only one 'OT' had a chance to sample was Salopian Bitter (3.5%ABV), a splendidly crisp and hoppy session bitter with more than a hint of the old Snowdonia Brewery's Mely Moelwyn. The only beer avowedly inherited from Snowdonia is Choir Porter (4.5%), while the other permanent beers are Minsterley Ale (4.5%), Ironbridge Stout (5%), and a malty Shropshire Spires Strong Bitter (5%). Promised for the future (perhaps as one-offs - though if they catch on who knows?) are a wheat beer, a ginger wheat beer, and a lemon bitter.

Martin Barry's prowess as a brewer was proved at Snowdonia Brewery, even if that brave venture was eventually brought down by financial problems stemming largely from its unsuitable premises and remote if stunningly beautiful loca-

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tion. Without these handicaps, Salopian Brewery should be able to make a major impact with beers most of which (freehouse licensees please note) match the North-Western demand for a dry hoppy pint. We wish them well.

Passageway

It was just 12 months ago that Opening Times reported on the opening of Liverpool's Passageway Brewery. Recently Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA paid them a visit and found the brewery going at full tilt.



Passageway's Steve Dugmore and Phil Burke under the watchful eye of St Arnold, the patron saint of brewers

Situated in the Queens Dock Commercial Centre (not too far from Cains Brewery Tap), Passageway is becoming something of an institution among Liverpool drinkers and indeed, those further afield who appreciate their distinctive, well-brewed ales. The First beer, St Arnold (a dark, 5% full-flavoured ale) has now been joined by Redemption and Dockers Hook.

Redemption is a 4.5% beer with 30% Rye used in the brew which can at times produce a slightly cloudy pint. Local drinkers are divided as to whether the beer is better cloudy or clear! Dockers Hook is a 3.6% session beer which again has the distinctive Passageway taste. Those familiar with the beers of Belgium will instantly recognise the Belgian characteristics of the beer both in aroma and taste. They won't be wrong as the yeast for Passageway beer comes from a very well-known and old-established Belgian brewer (rumoured to be the Chimay Monastery brewery....)

Plans for the future include an 8% version of St Arnold for Christmas. This is intended to be a primarily bottle-conditioned beer, although we feel sure some will make its way out on draught.

Beartown

Another newcomer doing well is the Beartown Brewery at Congleton. The hot summer caused a few problems with temperature control in the brewery but these have now been put right. The initial beer, Beartown Premium, has been joined by the weaker (3.8%ABV) Ambeardextrous, first produced for a local club which wanted a weaker beer but now available to the free trade generally. The brewery is also hoping to produce a 5%ABV beer in the next few months.

Weetwood

A similar beer is about to be launched by Weetwood brewery at Tarporley. Oasthouse Gold a 5% golden hoppy beer should come out at the beginning of November. The brewery itself is brewing close to capacity and has established a number of regular outlets in the Chester area.

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Festival Frolics

The nights are drawing in, the student grants are being paid, it can only mean one thing - boom time for CAMRA beer festivals! While for some reason most of the Manchester region's festivals are held in the first half of the year, nationally October sees off a strong challenge from May's bank holidays to emerge as the most-festivalled month, and the festivities increasingly spill over into November and even beyond.

If you're reading OT early enough, October 5th (Thursday) to 7th (Saturday) sees a festival at the Civic Hall in Holmfirth, near Huddersfield. This is a pleasant venue for a smallish festival, generally boasting a well-chosen range of real ales, and a less hectic atmosphere than some larger festivals. It's easy to get to (3 trains an hour Piccadilly-Huddersfield, frequent buses from there) and opens all day on the Saturday (evenings only Thursday and Friday).

The next weekend (Thursday 12th to Sunday 15th) it's Scunthorpe's turn, with a festival at the Baths Hall. This is Scunthorpe's second festival, after a debut last year which I understand was very well received. Again, it's easy to get to (the hourly Airport - Piccadilly - Cleethorpes trains call at Scunthorpe); note, however, that evening sessions don't open till 7. (There's no Thursday lunchtime session, and Sunday is a "drinking-up" session from noon to 5pm.)

It's the weekend of the 21st, though, when things really go mad, with major festivals at Cardiff, Stoke-on-Trent, Nottingham and Kendal (and that's only the ones readily accessible from the Manchester area). You really are spoilt for choice, but

my advice would be: go to Cardiff for a fine choice of cider, to Stoke for their famous foreign beer bars, to Nottingham for an all-round well-run festival, or to Kendal for the special atmosphere of the old Whitwell Mark brewery, now an arts centre.

The last weekend of October (to say nothing of pub festivals at Bolton's Howcroft and Ashton-under-Lyne's Witchwood) brings three CAMRA events of interest to us locally. Wakefield Town Hall hosts the 5th Beer Spotters' Convention, otherwise known as Wakefield Beer Festival - unless you are of the fraternity don't expect to have heard of most of the beers on sale. Note that Wakefield is a ticket event - details on 01924 - 378435. The same weekend's Port Sunlight Festival on the Wirral is, I understand, another ticket event (details on 0151 691 0174); an attraction here is the expected presence of beers from the new Salopian Brewery (see micros feature this month). Perhaps the pick of the bunch, however, is Denbigh Beer Festival, held in the Town Hall of this attractive North Wales market town. "North Wales's Friendly Festival" is not just a slogan - it's a fact. Expect a great atmosphere and a great range of beers showcasing Wales's increasingly exciting small-brewing scene. Getting there is easy - hourly trains (I support either the 09.17 or 10.17 from Piccadilly to Rhyl) half-hourly buses from outside Rhyl station.

And there are still festivals to keep away the gloom of November. From the 1st (Wednesday) to the 4th (Saturday), try King George's Hall at Blackburn (near the Station) for the East Lancashire Beer Festival, a splendid event with real sarsaparilla on draught if you tire of beer and cider! The following weekend sees a rare autumnal Manchester festival - Bury Beer Festival at the Met, very close to the Metrolink station. This is one with a "quiet" session on the Friday (quiet

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EVEN THE BEST HAS TO CHANGE OCCASIONALLY

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meaning no entertainment - it'll be very busy!), and for those who suffered last year, I'm assured the Holts' Singing Drayman has not been re-engaged! In a very welcome development, Bury this year has a dedicated cider bar with enhanced range.

The next festival of note stretches for more than a week, from Friday 17th to Sunday 26th November. This is the unique Mid Wales Beer Festival at Llanwrtyd Wells, held not in a dedicated venue but spread across the pubs of this tiny but delightful Breconshire town! Featuring mountain-biking and rambling events (not compulsory!) with beer stillaged at checkpoints en route, this is really not to be missed. Day trips by train are possible, giving over 6 hours drinking time, on Mondays to Fridays, or accommodation details can be had from "Mr. Llanwrtyd" Gordon Green on 01591 - 610236.

Finally, a mention for one of London's longest established festivals - 'Pig's Ear' at Stratford Town Hall from November 28th (Tuesday) to December 2nd (Saturday). The Town Hall is a splendid venue, and Stratford, though emphatically East End, is accessible from virtually anywhere in London - it'll even have direct trains to Paris and Brussels if lobbying local councillors get their way! A good one to combine with Christmas shopping - I'd recommend a curry in Brick Lane, site of the old Trumans brewery and East London's answer to Rusholme (Liverpool Street or Aldgate East tube).

Hayfield Beerex

For the third year running, the Royal Hotel at Hayfield will be staging its popular 'Octoberfest' this year from 6th to 8th. Royal licensee, Colin Hazeldean, tells us that this year's festival will feature over 30 different beers, mostly from micro-breweries all over the country although this year there will be a special emphasis on local and northern producers, and some new breweries which are striving to establish themselves. The range includes Whim Hartington Bitter and Special, Richard Cobdens Bitter (plus a special festival brew from Cobdens) and the excellent Ambeardextrous from Beartown Brewery in Congleton.

There will be live entertainment with Willi Messerschmitt's Bierhaus Band on the Friday evening, the Octoberfest Jazz Band on Saturday night and Eric's Royal Traditional Jazz Band on Sunday afternoon. Hot food will also be available throughout - and the Royal is gaining an enviable reputation in this field, too. Opening Hours are Friday 7-11, Saturday 11-11 and Sunday 12-10. For more details phone the pub on 01663 742721. Bus 358 from Stockport will get you there, with the last bus back at 11.40 on Friday and Saturday and 11.30 on Sunday.

Oxnoble a Shell



September saw "work" start in earnest on the long promised 'refurbishment' of the Oxnoble on Liverpool Road, Castlefield. Drastic is the only word - not only has the roof and top storey been removed but the rest of the building looks to have been reduced to a shell.

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GOOD BEER GUIDE

Throw out the old, bring in the new....the 1996 Good Beer Guide is published this month and is bigger and better than ever.

First published in 1974, over 50,000 copies are sold each year and the Guide has become part of the established publishing calendar alongside the likes of Whitaker's Almanac, Wisden and Who's Who, making an excellent birthday or Christmas present.

The strength of the Guide is that it simply focuses on the quality of beer in pubs. Pretty obvious, you may say, but it is worth comparing the Campaign's flagship publication with other pub guides. There is no shortage of books that rave about the boeuf bourguignon or well-chilled chardonnay in pubs frequented by the Range Rover and oiled jacket brigade. Beer has a walk-on part in these guides. In the GBG it is the heart and soul. In short, no beer, no Good Beer Guide.

The Guide is based on a simple philosophy: if a licensee cares about the quality of the ale in the cellar, loves and cherishes it, then everything else in the pub falls into place. A publican who cares about his or her ale is unlikely to sell poor food or tolerate tatty bars and smelly toilets.

Editor Jeff Evans is not naive after masterminding six editions of the Guide, but believes the philosophy holds true. "Not every pub that sells good beer will necessarily be a good pub" he told OT, "but it will have certain qualities that will make it worth visiting."

The Guide has grown enormously in recent years. The 1995 Guide had a record 528 pages and this year a further 18 pages have been added, primarily due to the number of new breweries. The breweries section, together with an index of most of their products, is just one

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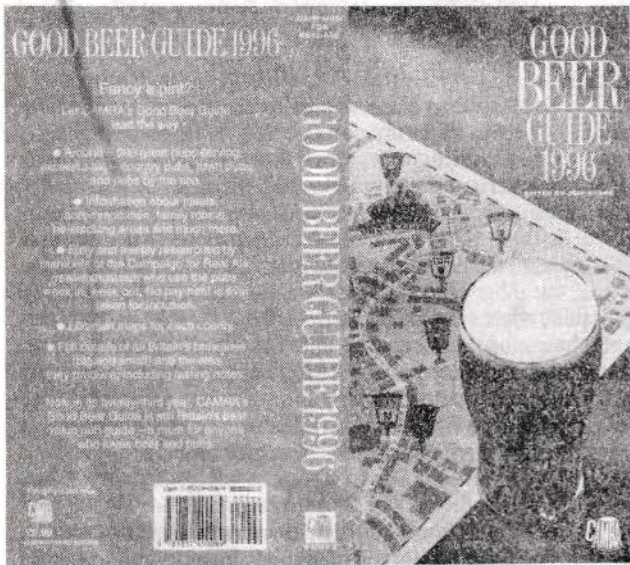
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GOOD BEER GUIDE 1988 - 1996

1996



of three sections in the guide. The main one, of course, is that devoted to the pubs, chosen on the quality of the ale they serve. Around 5,000 pubs are included arranged county by county, in all parts of the UK with county maps to help locate each pub. Entries give details of the real ales served, plus information about general facilities such as family rooms, no-smoking areas, accommodation and meals. The Good Beer Guide is therefore also one of the leading pub guidebooks, ideal for holidaymakers and business people as well as beer enthusiasts.

The third section is given over to pub groups, companies which do not brew but which are becoming increasingly important as they absorb many of the country's pubs.

The last word must go to Jeff Evans. "You can't rely on a year-old Guide. There are 57 new breweries this year and a third of the pubs get changed every year.

Order your copy now by simply sending a cheque for £9.99 (post and packing is free), made payable to CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Branch, to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.

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RHYTHM



and BOOZE

By Richard Hough

Early in September, Manchester's venues opened their doors to a wealth of talent for the City Live extravaganza, sponsored by Boddingtons. More than 50 acts appeared at 15 locations across the city over four days.

On the Saturday three bands were due to play at the Head of Steam as part of 'In the Fringe' which showcased unsigned acts. The pub itself is situated beneath Deansgate Rail Station and it follows the theme of the other Heads of Steam nationally. Plenty of railway memorabilia adorns the walls, much of this is for sale, and you can also purchase model trains and 'Head' promotional items if you fancy. It has been tastefully decorated but it is a large place and I wondered if the bands would cope, particularly as my previous visits had found it lacking customers. When I arrived a deafening sound-check was in progress, luckily there was no need to ask for a top-up!

TWIST

Four funk-rock girls from Oxford, with more than a little attitude. A charismatic LV/guitarist with cropped ginger hair, another on vocals and guitar, one on bass and one on drums - a tried and tested line-up which worked well here too. They blended nicely for their third song, "Leather", a chunky up-beat number.

They'd brought several friends along, who knew the lyrics to many of the songs. Twist are self-assured, good performers who encouraged us to have a dance. "Walk" was a good slice of (dare I say it) Britpop. The ending on 'Blue' should perhaps have faded rather



than cut-off, but now we're getting picky. They finished with "Blurred", an up-tempo rock'n'roller. Small girls with big hearts and definitely a big noise. Let's hope its the start of great things for both Twist and the Head of Steam

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The next band, by complete contrast, were crap. Four female vocalists plus one on keyboards, and a couple of blokes backing, one on keyboards/sequencer and one on drums. Short skirts or tight trousers, low necklines, great (?) to look at but lacking any talent except they could mime to other people's charty-dancey rubbish. Commercial clubland rather than real talent seeking a deal. Success for this lot (if any) is going to be VERY short-lived. Chance then to check out the beers.

A whole range of beers is available, at eminently reasonable prices. On this particular night we could choose from Hydes Mild (£1.12), Hydes Bitter (£1.19), Stones Best Bitter (£1.09), Batemans XXXB was a rather steeper £1.69 (sharp intake) but rather good. Compare though Holts Bitter (4.0%ABV, £1.07) to Banks's Bitter (3.8%, £1.35) for an anomaly as bad as the second "act". There were no complaints about quality, with all the beers in good condition, although some were a little cold. Shepherd Neame's Master Brew, at £1.29 was considered best of the night.

Also on offer was Biddenden's traditional cider. I'm not sure whether this is a permanent guest or one of a range of real ciders the Head of Steam is putting on, but lovers of the apple juice should take note!

By now lots (I mean LOTS) of people were in. Not only are the **Candyskins** happening noise-merchants from Oxford, but they know Twist! Wow, Rock 'N'Roll! Three, yes three gee-tuarists, the magic drummer and the coolest bassist for miles. Ear drums aren't safe when these boys are out, causing damage. The catchy "Mrs. Hoover" was well received, while "Car Crash" was slightly reminiscent of Gene's recent stuff. Then came a complete change of style with the disjointed, punk-influenced "No No No No". And no In The City gig would be complete without a riff from that very same Jam song. "Get On" finished the night on a high, loud note.

Apart from a minor blip in the middle, it was a most successful gig and the sort of thing others should perhaps try to emulate. I wasn't the only one to have a good time.



cool bass from Candyskins

Cider Seminar

On Saturday 4 Nov, from 11.30am till 5pm, the Beer House on Angel Street in Manchester is the venue for the second in a series of seminars on cider and perry organised by CAMRA's Apple Committee. The focus will be on exploring more effective ways of campaigning to improve availability and choice of real cider and perry in our pubs. There will also be a session on promoting cider at beer festivals, and the producer's perspective will be provided by a talk from Jim Franklin of Little Hereford whose ciders and perries are always popular when they appear locally. All CAMRA members will be warmly welcomed.



The Old Woolpack



Brinksway



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Farmers Arms

Last month saw the opening of the latest tied house, the Farmers Arms on Burnage Lane, Burnage.

Hydes look to have spent a considerable amount of money transforming this semi-derelict former Greenalls house into what can only be described as a good solid traditional local. It's a straightforward two-roomer with a large split level lounge on the left and a spacious bright vault on the right. Indeed the vault is particularly impressive with clearly defined areas for darts and pool and a good basic feel to it. The lounge is decorated in the usual way - lots of paisley patterns and dark wood, although it's none the worse for that.

New licensee is Alan Bentham and a definite effort is being made to shake off the pub's former troubled reputation, discos and the like are out, darts knock-outs are in. With pleasant, comfortable surroundings and Hydes Mild and Bitter on elec-



tric pump (metered dispense, so full measures guaranteed), the Farmers is now a real asset to the local pub scene and we wish it well.



Strange but...True?

The brewers have come out with some strange excuses for price rises in the past but one we have yet to hear is 'blame it on the Chinese'. And yet, just for once, they might be telling the truth.

Apparently, the People's Republic has developed such a taste for beer that their breweries are scouring the world for barley malt to meet the ever growing demand.

The Chinese demand has come about due to shortages in Australia, the normal supplier of the Chinese market, caused by droughts down under. This has led to an increased demand for British and European grain and prices have gone up as a result. National Farmers Union West Country spokesman Anthony Gibson told the trade paper Licensee "The Chinese haven't got enough malting barley of their own and they're after every grain they can get. Some of the prices being quoted are quite incredible."



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....Pub News Stop Press....

In Stockport, Byrons, on Great Portwood Street was 'closed until further notice' as we went to press.

Not too far away, the Kings Head, on Tiviot Dale now sells only Keg beers

....Pub News Stop Press....

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CURMUDGEON



I've always been a strong supporter of full measures in pubs, and found it pretty galling when the government backed down on plans to legislate on the issue, in the face of pressure from the brewers. I cheered when CAMRA declared itself firmly in favour of full measures and insisted that all beer festivals use oversize glasses.

So far, though, the full measures campaign has achieved precisely nothing on the ground. I'm not aware of a single pub in this area which has switched from brim to oversize glasses, and the number of pubs in Greater Manchester using oversize glasses with handpumps, rather than metered dispense, can be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Worse still, many within CAMRA (including, regrettably, this publication on occasions) have applauded the replacement of electric meters with handpumps, even when it meant replacing oversize glasses with brims at the same time, as it almost always has done.

I'm not too bothered whether my beer is dispensed by hand, electric, horse or tidal power, so long as it's real and it's good. But I am concerned that if I ask for a pint, I should get a pint and not nine-tenths of one. Probably 95% of the dwindling number of pubs in this country serving real ale in oversize glasses use electric meters. If CAMRA isn't prepared to give wholehearted support to all pubs already using oversize glasses, regardless of dispense method, then we might as well abandon the whole full measures campaign before wasting any more time and effort on it.

Behind the Times

Samuel Smiths have had a lot of bad publicity recently, but I doubt if many tears will be shed over the demise of Museum Ale. There are some beers that you can respect, but aren't to your own taste, but this was one in which I could see little merit and quite frankly found positively unpleasant, even though I'm a fan of Old Brewery Bitter. Sam's could do a lot worse than use the redundant hand-pumps to revive Tadcaster Bitter, an excellent 1036 OG beer much lighter and hoppier than OBB, which they brought out in the mid-eighties but withdrew again after less than a year, despite it winning many friends in this area.

Part of the problem was that they had reduced the gravity of OBB from 1041 to 1038 to compete on price with other brewer's ordinary bitters. With the introduction of Tadcaster, they could have restored OBB to its former strength, giving them a distinctive and contrasting pair of ordinary and premium bitters. The opportunity is still there, but when Sam's are clowning around promoting nitrokeg, you can't see them doing anything quite so sensible. In an era when more and more established brewers - even once-sleepy Hydes - are expanding their range and producing seasonal beers, Sam's one-beer real ale portfolio looks seriously behind the times.

Wine Snobbery

Last month, wine expert Jancis Robinson appeared on the cover of the "Radio Times" to promote her new ten-part TV series, "Jancis Robinson's Wine Course." There was also a sixteen-page pull-out in the magazine on the subject of wine. Nothing wrong with that at all - it's good to see alcoholic drinks of any kind getting some positive TV coverage.

But can you imagine for a second the BBC giving anywhere near the same amount of exposure to beer? This despite the fact that beer, not wine, is our national drink, we still spend more than twice as much on beer, and beer is at least the equal of wine both in the richness of its heritage and the variety of styles and processes. Despite all the progress which has been made in improving the appreciation of beer, the patronising, ill-informed snobbery still persists that wine is a subject worthy of serious study, while beer is fit for little more than throwing down the throats of yobboes.

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER 1990

Last month there was a brief reference to a Greenall's board meeting, believed to be held to discuss whether they would sell their breweries, and do what was described as a "Boddingtons" by becoming a pub owning chain. This month the story was confirmed - the country's largest regional brewer, with over 1700 pubs, was to abandon brewing completely, and close its two remaining plants at Nottingham and Warrington, with the loss of over 700 jobs. Greenalls were to retain ownership of their beer brands, which would be contract brewed for them by Allied at their Warrington and Burton-on-Trent breweries - it seemed to be doubtful whether the Wem brands would survive the changes.

The Flea & Firkin, the latest in a line of "Firkin" home brew pubs, (started by London entrepreneur David Bruce) opened for business in the old Grosvenor Picture House on Oxford Road, All Saints, right in the middle of student land, which virtually guaranteed success to the venture. One slight snag was the fact that the house beers (Scratch 1038; Grosvenor 1045; and Dogbolter 1060) in common with other "Firkin" houses, were served under a light blanket of carbon dioxide gas, which of course took them outside the definition of "real ale". By way of compensation however, Robinson's Best Mild was a permanent feature, together with a regular range of guests, all traditionally stored and served.

Whitbread staged a huge public relations jamboree at the Strangeways Brewery, with lavish hospitality, and 26 traditional beers to be sampled. There was a free buffet, entertainment, competitions, and even a framed print of the brewery to take home as a souvenir. The main message was that Whitbreads saw a great future for cask beer, with a forecast that just a few years ago appeared to be regarding real ale as more of an inconvenience than a growth market.

Holts had applied for planning permission to extend the Griffin in Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey - the application was for an extension on the car park side of the pub, to create another lounge with a porch and a new entrance, and extra cellar space underneath. There seemed to be no proposed changes to the existing layout.

Finally, an item of news from the back page - Hazel Grove looked set to get its umpteenth Robinson's pub within about 18 months or so, as it was learnt that after considerable effort, the brewery had finally obtained permission to develop its site on Jacksons Lane.

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Is the Price Right?

Peter Edwardson asks whether high prices are slowly killing the traditional pub.

A pub near me was, until recently, serving Boddingtons Bitter at £1 a pint, all the time. But, to be honest, it had little else going for it, and most folk (including me) were quite happy to pass it by and walk another 400 yards to somewhere else where they could find well-kept beer, in comfortable, clean and pleasant surroundings, even though a pint was £1.35.

Fighting high prices in pubs is difficult when most drinkers are not at all price-sensitive in choosing which pub to use. Even a dramatic price differential may not lure someone away from a pub where they like the beer, where they feel at home, and where their mates go. We all know incredibly successful pubs which charge well over the odds, and others, which may not be bad pubs at all, where the prices are low and so is the customer count. Even where there's a busy Holts pub charging 99p a pint, you can normally find another pub not too far away asking 35p more and doing very nicely - just look at the Griffin and the Crown in Heaton Mersey.

The brewers know this only too well, and year after year have jacked up prices in pubs by well over the rate of inflation. But, over time, it does affect people's drinking habits. They may not change their pub, but they go out later in the evening, they go less often, and they drink less when they do go. In the short term, it may improve profits, but in the long term it erodes the trading base of the pub. The brewers know this very well from their own private research, but they won't admit it because they have become addicted to the short-lived fix of price rises.

At the same time, the price gap between beer in the pub and in the off-trade has steadily widened. Take-home beer from supermar-

kets is nowadays rarely more than two-thirds the pub price and often, particularly if your tippie is standard lager, only half as much. And that's without crossing the Channel. It's hardly surprising that so many people are turning away from the pub for their regular day-to-day drinking, and maybe only going there a couple of times a week as a special occasion. The emptiness of so many pubs on lunchtimes and evenings early in the week is a depressing sight.

You have to wonder whether the people who run the breweries have taken leave of their senses in willingly handing over control of the sale of their products from their own outlets into the hands of the management of Tesco and Sainsbury, people well known for driving a hard bargain. Thirty years ago, the likes of Unilever and Kellogg's ruled the roost in the grocery trade. Now the boot is firmly on the other foot, that of the supermarket chains.

CAMRA works hard at carrying out national price surveys, and producing press releases showing how the big brewers are ripping you off. But on the ground campaigning against high prices has never met with much success. It's difficult to single out pubs which charge too much, when a reasonable price in Didsbury looks exorbitant only three miles away in Gorton. And CAMRA members themselves are too often willing to excuse - and pay - high prices for only mildly exotic beers in free houses, while at the same time decrying independent brewery tied pubs charging only a few pence more than the rest.

Excessive prices, though, are slowly killing the British pub, and specifically, they are killing the traditional local much more than the family eating house or the trendy weekend venue. The decline in pub-going will not be reversed unless there is a significant and permanent reduction in the differential between on and off trade. Must CAMRA accept that there is little it can do, or is it time to give the issue a higher profile and take a more militant stand on prices, even at the risk of antagonising some licensees who might have thought themselves our friends?

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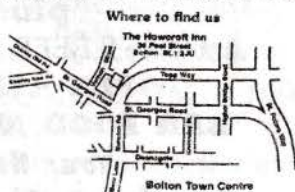
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New Kids on the Block

by John Clarke

Fallowfield has the largest student population in Europe? Did you know that? The local pub operators certainly do as last month saw a rash of refurbishments in the area in preparation for the new term

The Sherwood has now become Buchanans whose theme in the ads is, perhaps accurately, described as Scottish with attitude. The decor is certainly odd with lots of tartan but in a very modern idiom with much of the furniture and fittings having an almost avant garde 1990's feel. Most of it is perhaps too dimly lit, apart from the former Pizza Hut which is now some sort of eatery offering 'McCurries' and similar nonsense. Many will hate it but for me it did seem to work in a funny sort of way. Beers are Boddingtons Bitter, Fuggles Imperial and Buchanans Special from the Federation Brewery on Tyneside (and very palatable too, when OT called).

The Queen of Hearts, the other half of the Fallowfield Scruffy Murphys, has had a much needed refurbishment and here the theme seems to be 'back to basics' with plain brick walls, plain wood and scaffolding and girders much in evidence. This probably makes it sound a lot worse than it actually is - it's obviously designed as a no-frills student drinking hall and on those terms it carries it off pretty well. Cask ales are Tetley Bitter, Imperial and the new Samuel Allsop Stout. Unfortunately it blots its copybook by also selling Addlestons 'Cask Conditioned Cider'. Cask conditioned it may be but it is almost invariably sold under gas pressure so, black marks to the Queen of Hearts until they stop that one.

Finally on this stretch, the Withington Ale House also claims to be 'newly refurbished'. All they've done, really, is to give it a lick of paint and a general spruce up. It was certainly



needed, indeed there was probably a case here for rather more drastic surgery. However, Scottish Courage seem to have plumped for the student beer hall formula and will doubtless pack the place out as a result. Cask beers are Theakstons Bitter and XB plus, unusually, McEwans 80/-.

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WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN CAMRA
FOR REAL ALE

Most of the news this month is in or around the Glossop area. The Roebuck (Centric) - Stones Bitter (h) is closed at the moment after the landlord decided enough was enough. However it will re-open in a few weeks with a new licensee. The other Centric pub, Roxy's Fun Bar, formerly the Rose & Crown is also closed. After doing well initially it appears to have lost its "charm" in recent months.

The Glossop Blues Bar which has sported Tetley's Bitter (h) since it opened will now have another beer on handpump available....Tetley's Imperial.

Finally in Glossop the Prince of Wales (Marstons) has dropped the brewers choice range of beers due to lack of interest. It would appear that the Pedigree is the No.1 choice in this particular bit of High Peak.

In Marple Bridge, the Norfolk a long time keg only haunt has now added John Smiths Bitter (h) to the regular Boddingtons Bitter (h). Things are looking up indeed!

The Bees Knees, in New Mills is undergoing refurbishment at the moment. Not much of interest there you may think, however the name of long (if not illustrious) standing is going to be changed. Another pub name from hell bites the dust!

Miles away in sunny Dukinfield, the Globe Hotel is currently being extended. This would appear to be for private accommodation and whether this will afford more bar space in this already popular pub remains to be seen.



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High Lane Review

By Tom Lord

This month we feature the half-a-dozen pubs strung out along the A6 through the village of High Lane, between Hazel Grove and Disley.

Starting from the Hazel Grove end, the first of these pubs is the Robin Hood, a Robinsons pub with Hatters Mild and Best Bitter on electric pumps. It is a pleasant and comfortable pub with a good lounge and games area. One of its best features is a separate dining room (no vinegar bottles on the tables in the lounge area!), serving good meals at lunchtime and early evening. Bar snacks are also available. Ample parking and a beer garden complete the pub's facilities, and being on the A6 it makes sense to welcome coach parties as the pub does.

Moving on up the road we come to the Royal Oak, a Burtonwood pub which adds a welcome variety to the beers of High Lane. Currently it has handpumped Bitter and the new strong ale, Buccaneer, a real rarity for the area. The attractive stone built pub has a beer garden and outdoor tables, together with a children's play area, and food is available. The interior has been nicely renovated with an attractive wooden back fitting to the bar. All in all, a very pleasant pub to relax and drink in.

Next comes the Horseshoe on the corner of Windlehurst Road and the A6 right in the middle of the village. Robinsons Best Bitter and Hatters Mild here on electric pumps. It is an open plan pub with a nice small room to the right as you enter. Again meals feature at lunchtime and early evening.

Cross the road and a hundred yards further on by the bridge over the Macclesfield Canal you come to the Bulls Head. The emphasis here is of a local. It is a Boddington pub with Bitter and at the time of writing, Whitbread Pompey Royal, which again adds variety to High Lane. It is an attractive, well-maintained building with some nice etched windows. A comfortable, welcoming local with a good tap/games room on the left as you enter, the pub also has a beer garden by the canal and serves lunchtime meals.

Further up the road is the Dog & Partridge, a Whitbread Brewers Fayre establishment with Boddingtons Bitter and Flowers Original on handpump. The emphasis here is firmly on meals, with a pleasant atmosphere in which to eat.

Up the road we come to the last pub, the Red Lion. This is certainly a hotel-style pub with accommodation available; breakfasts and meals throughout the day. The beer is Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter on electric pumps. The pub is comfortable, well-appointed and has a pleasant atmosphere.

So that's it, High Lane in a nutshell, with the accent on Robinsons beers (with a little variety provided by some of the pubs) and eating out. Next area to review - Poynton.

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Steve & Dorothy

LOCAL HAUNTS



by Pete Massey

At the time of the Civil Wars in England, 'Stopworth' (as Stockport was then known) was held by a garrison of Parliamentary forces from Manchester. They were busy times with 'high up' people having their heads chopped courtesy of Judge Bradshaw from Marple (and lesser mortals being either ducked, hanged or burnt at the stake for being found in possession of toads). Prince Rupert came along and after a smart conflict, carried the 'towne' at the point of a sword. There was one fatality (a familiar theme in Stockport's history) who met his fate in a skirmish on Chestergate and is interred somewhere in the vicinity.

In 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie charged through with his tartan clad army of 18th century bikers. They charged up Hillgate and southwards to conquer the English, returning not long afterwards having encountered the Duke of Cumberland's men somewhere in Staffordshire. Upon discovering the fact that the wily townsfolk had meanwhile blown up their only means of retreat across the Mersey, they vented their frustrations on the locals, aided by excesses in various taverns. They were on the point of hanging the town's unfortunate keepers of the archives for not telling them where the Crown Jewels were kept when a sighting of the advancing Duke of Cumberland's men obliged them to leg it waist deep across the Mersey and back to Culloden.

On Churchgate there is a building dating back to the beginning of the 17th century, known now as the Thatched House pub. It was originally the Thatched Tavern and Stockport's first infirmary as well as an orphanage, although there is some doubt as to whether it ever had a thatched roof. Few other buildings in Stockport house such spirits, past and present, as this hostelry - beats TV and there's usually some dangerous brew or other on draught.

There are more stories than space permits but Dr James Briscall (1751-1814) set up Stockport's first infirmary at the Thatched in what was formerly a coaching house and beneath the cellars lies the original mortuary. Steps can be seen leading to the sealed off vaults below and in one corner of the cellar the sealing is not quite perfect and the Essence of That Which Once Was seeps up into the Present. Doctor Briscall has been seen in his 'high hat' at the end of the bar near the toilets - not 'sitting', just 'there' and people are often spilling their drinks after being shoved by 'unseen forces' in the area leading to the mortuary steps. Then there's the story of the three stout hearted bikers being reduced to gibbering wrecks after witnessing the phantom lady.

There will be an 'Event' in Hillgate this month, on Halloween, a sort of 'gothic rave' at some secret site. Details only from the Thatched, Sun & Castle and Gladstone. Until next time, sweet dreams....

JOIN CAMRA NOW TO FIGHT THE NITROKEG MENACE!

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

Pub Spirits and Things That Go Bump in the Night

In recent editions of 'Opening Times' a regular column called 'Local Haunts' has appeared.

If this has whetted your appetite for ghost stories or you have a tale to tell yourself, then take the opportunity to visit the 'Stockport Ghost Society' every first Wednesday at the Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport - starting time 8pm.

The S.G.S. take all paranormal matters seriously, so nobody need feel embarrassed or intimidated. In fact all newcomers are welcome, whether you wish to take part in activities and discussions or just watch and listen. Sceptics are also welcome to exchange opinions.

The S.G.S. have guest speakers at regular intervals who put on a good show and for the real ale visitor, the biggest star is the Arden Arms itself.

As usual, the Arden Arms is in the national 'Good Beer Guide'. Excellent Robinsons served on handpumps and interesting decor, including the snug behind the bar.

So if you're interested in things that go bump in the night, come to a pub with plenty of spirit. If you don't like the meeting, you'll enjoy the beer!

THE KINGS ARMS

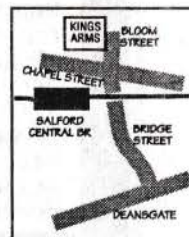
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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

MANCHESTER MATTERS

A brief column this month reflects a relatively quiet start to autumn. The month's only real ale gain has been the Farmers Arms on Burnage Lane in Burnage, now reopened as a Hydes pub, and sadly I have not been able to find the time before pressdate to give it the once-over. Details next month, unless our intrepid Editor dons the green eyeshade and beats me to the scoop. (done and dusted - ed.)



by Rhys Jones

In the City Centre, though the Hare & Hounds has gained handpumped Tetley Dark Mild, other news is bad. The Castlefield Hotel now sells only keg beers, and the Ducie Cafe Bar is closed, as indeed is the Horne nightclub complex of which it forms part. This is officially "for refurbishment", but rumour suggests intimidation by criminal elements may be involved. There's been concern over this for some time in certain circles within CAMRA, and while it strains credulity to attribute to intimidation the closure of struggling inner-city pubs whose dwindling takings no half-ambitious thug would cross the street for, in the case of a high-profile club-style venue it is sadly rather more plausible.

This is a sombre note on which to close. Perhaps the moral is that, while the new wave of clubs and cafe-bars may be the toast of Manchester's chattering classes, the straightforward neighbourhood local is likely to provide a rather more wholesome atmosphere.

OPENING TIMES ON THE INTERNET - 4 THE LAUNCH!

Opening Times' presence on the Internet becomes a reality this month.. The initial pages which feature this month's articles and some back data should be available for access from October 20th. There will also be a couple of additional previews of next month's feature material, the (somewhat) interactive letters page and the promised local Good Beer Guide feature. Gradually the content will be increased, but we do hope to have the fully downloadable version of the Printed OT available, and from next month this service will be available in advance of publication (from 1st November) whilst the printed edition staggers out from about the 4th. Oh yes, the address: [<http://www.u-net.com/camramcr/>] service available from October 20th. E-mails of encouragement can now be sent to the official letters page at otletter@opentime.u-net.com. Complaints to me at pbb@opentime.u-net.com! Warning, don't drink and surf!

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issues. Write to John Tune, 4 Sandown Road,

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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!

CAMRA CALLING!

October 95

Monday 9th - Two-way social in Chorlton-on-Medlock; 9.00pm Grafton, Grafton Street, 10.00 Mawson, Francis Street.

Thursday 12th - Monthly branch meeting, Friendship, Hyde Road, Gorton. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 13th - Stagger in Gorton Lane Area. Meet 7.00pm Wellington, Hyde Road; 8.30 Crown, Vallance Close.

Monday 16th - Social, Crown, Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Wednesday 18th - First planning meeting for 1996 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. 8.00pm, Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley.

Thursday 19th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Crown, Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor. See article on page 2.

Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd - presentation of cider and perry awards from Beer Festival. Weekend away in Herefordshire.

Monday 23rd - Social, Sun in September, Burnage Lane, Burnage. Starts 9.00pm.

Sunday 29th - Sunday Curry at Bulls Head, Glossop. Meet Star at 12 noon, curry at 2.00pm. Booking may be advisable so numbers to J Clarke on 477 1973 asap.

October 95

Monday 30th - Social in Hazel Grove; 9.00pm Grapes, 10.00 Three Tuns, both on London Road.

Monday 6th November - Social, Head of Steam, Deansgate Station, Manchester.

Wednesday 8th trip to Weetwood Brewery, Tarporley (poss late eve in Chester) Minibus 6.45 Royal Oak, Didsbury. 7pm Crown Heaton La. Book on 477 1973

High Peak branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have notified Opening Times of the following events:

Sunday 8th - Woods Walk. Meet at Hayfield Information Centre, end at Hayfield Beer Festival, Royal Hotel.

Monday 16th - Monthly branch meeting, The Squirrels, Chinley. Aim to get there by 8.30pm.

Saturday 21st - Trip to Porters Brewery. For details contact Frank Wood on 01457 865426

Regional Events

Saturday 4th November - Cider and Perry Seminar, Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester, 11.30am - 5pm. All Camra members welcome, details on Page 18

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

...Pub News... CAMRA Pub News...
 b News... CAMPAIGN s...Pub
 News... FOR REAL ALE ..Pub N
 ...Pub : STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER News...
 b News: BRANCH s...Pub
 News... Pub N

OT reports a number of changes in the Heaton. At the Three Crowns, Heaton Norris, Oldham Bitter has sadly been replaced as a guest beer. Old Henry takes its place on the bar, a 4.1% brew at present selling at the bargain price of £1. Landlord Gary Barlow is trying to give the Three Crowns a new direction as a centre for live music, with artists on Friday, Sunday and Monday. Perhaps the Three Crowns deserves a visit from Rhythm and Booze.

At the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel, Chesters Mild seems to have replaced Boddingtons Mild.

An imminent sad loss will be the departure of Kath and Martin Kelly from the Chapel House Tut'n'Shivie. Despite managing an architectural disaster and previous winner of the branch Pub Vandalism award, Kath and Martin have tried to give real ale drinkers an interesting range of well kept beers. Their efforts will be missed and the branch offers them best wishes in their new venture at the Big Window, shortly to be renamed J.J.Murphy's! (in Burnley). No music, good food and decent beer is to be the emphasis. Whither the Tut'n'Shivie?

A much bigger change seems planned for the BoddPubCo Crown, Heaton Moor. This is a fine multi-roomed local catering for all ages. It remains the only pub on the Moor with a vault (supporting four darts teams) and selling cask-conditioned mild. On a Monday in September 167 locals gathered to express their disquiet and to offer support to Carmel and Peter Belfield whose livelihood is threatened by the planned changes. These changes are understood to seriously alter the design of the pub, and to change the whole atmosphere of a welcoming local.

It's good to see investment in at least one inner-city pub, the Townley, tucked away in Beswick is to have a single-storey extension to form a lounge bar.

No doubt encouraged by the success of the Old Monkey, Holts have now applied for permission for yet another pub conversion in the City Centre. This time it's the former stationer's

shop and offices at 28-30 John Dalton Street that they have in their sights. The planning application to turn the building into a pub has been lodged and we await developments.



Last month we reported that the Barnaby Rudge steakhouse on Old Bank Street, just off St Anne's Square in the City Centre, was being thoroughly gutted. Well, work is now virtually complete and the Rat & Parrot has emerged from the debris. This is a Scottish Courage chain of 'cafe-pubs' - and is most definitely not to be confused with Magic Pub Co's Paddy's Rat & Carrot just a couple of hundred yards away. Four cask beers look to be in prospect - Theakstons Bitter and XB, John Smiths Bitter and Courage Directors. Opening was scheduled for 5th of this month - review to follow.

The Golden Lion on Hillgate, Stockport has changed its beer range. When OT called, Burtonwood Bitter had gone to be replaced with Burtonwood Mild, Forshaws, Top Hat and Bucaneer, all on handpump.

The Woolpack on Brinksway, Stockport is approaching quite a landmark - the 1000th guest beer will go on sale this month. Festivities to mark the occasion will include a 'Guess the Guest' competition with mystery beers and gallon of beer prizes. The fun starts on Monday 16th and runs for a week - worth a visit.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(OT138)

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

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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

Lorraine York, 54 Lime Grove, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 1PF

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.

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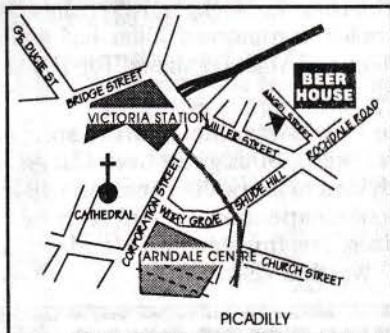
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