

# OPENING TIMES

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EVERY MONTH

CAMRA NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR - December 1995

## Brewers' Retreat on Full Measure

In an astonishing about face the Brewers Association has recommended the use of oversize lined glasses for the dispense of some beers. The move has been hailed by CAMRA as a major breakthrough in the full-pint war and the Campaign is now demanding that the brewers go the whole hog and admit that a pint should be a pint - their current guidelines, dating from 1993 when the government went back on its promise to activate Section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act which defined a pint as a pint of liquid, excluding the head, state that a pint may consist of 95% of liquid with a reasonable head and that top ups should be given 'with good grace'.

At the time the government advised local trading standards officers that they could expect the courts to attach "considerable weight" to the Brewers Association guidelines. Recent prosecutions for short measure have shown that to be fantasy, with the courts relying on case law and virtually ignoring the guidelines.

The new approach says "should bar staff have any difficulty in serving any beer with a head in a standard brim measure glass so as to provide a measure with a minimum of 95% liquid, consideration should be given to serving that product in a line measure glass." Whilst the Association would not elaborate on which beers it had in mind, it seems pretty clear they have in mind 'northern' beers, such as Boddies Bitter, which in many parts of the country are sold with an inch of foam on top. Irish stouts are also often served with an enormous collar of foam too.

When it was proposed to legislate for full measure, the Brewers Association went bananas, claiming that a wholesale change to lined glasses could cost up to £35 million, the price of beer would go up (now there's a thing) and handpumps would be ripped out of bars across the country. All baloney, of course and now shown up for as much by the U-turn. Not that the Association sees this as a retreat. A spokesman told CAMRA:

I don't see this as a retreat. There are people who wish to have their beer in a different style of glass and we are just trying to find a simple way of giving people what they want".

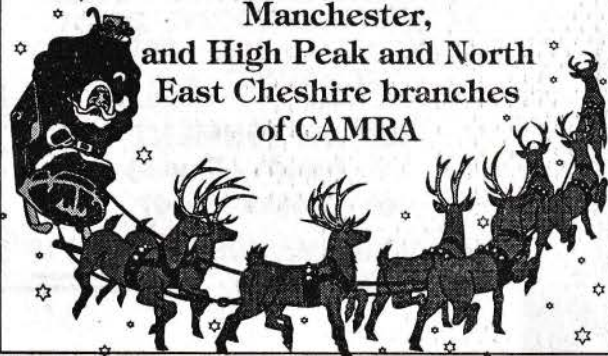
What we want is full measure every time. And there is certainly a "simple way" of giving us this. Introduce lined glasses in every pub for every pint and put paid to short measure once and for all.

*\*Believe it or not, while there remains confusion over short measure, the law is quite clear on OVER-measure. For 70 years it's been a specific licensing offence with fines of up to £500. The government has now announced that this ridiculous piece of legislation is finally to be repealed. "Prosecutions for the.....offence have been rare and it's an absolute nonsense that this offence remains on the statute book" said Home Office minister Timothy Kirkhope.*

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**A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR  
TO ALL OUR READERS,  
•ADVERTISERS, CONTRIBUTORS  
AND DISTRIBUTORS  
• FROM ALL AT OPENING TIMES  
and Stockport & South  
Manchester,  
and High Peak and North  
East Cheshire branches  
of CAMRA**





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# Pub Of The Month DECEMBER

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for December is the Jolly Crofter on Castle Street, Edgeley. A few years ago, those few words would never have appeared in *Opening Times* since at that time the Crofter was a very troubled pub with an unpleasant reputation. It had been a text-book example of decline. A succession of licensees had proved increasingly incapable of dealing with the pub and bringing some order to the way it was run. When the pub wasn't going through one of its increasing periods of closure it was a place to avoid. Even a change of ownership from Grand Met to Vaux failed to stop the rot.

The pub seemed doomed to become another closure statistic. And then Jane and Roy Conlon arrived on the scene. Considering this was their first pub, taking on the Jolly Crofter was a brave move. However, considerable investment in the pub's fabric and a firm approach to the way it was run have transformed both the pub and its fortunes.

The Jolly Crofter is now a place where the casual caller can feel unthreatened. The pub is busy and lively - it will always be

a lively pub, but it's none the worse for that, and charity work has seen the Crofter at the forefront of the revival of Edgeley's annual Pram Race. There's just one cask beer, Vaux Samson, but it's usually in tip top condition.

A pub that seemed doomed to failure and closure has been brought back from the dead and is now a positive asset to the local pub scene. All this is down to the hard work, determination, and, yes, courage of Jane and Roy. All are welcome for what should be a memorable night when we present the award on Thursday 21st December.

**WORLD WIDE WEB PAGES ON**  
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**quiz night (Wed)**

**CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1995**

## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The partial retreat on full-measure by the Brewers Association is good news indeed. For years now CAMRA has said that a pint should be just that, a pint of liquid. Yet this simple, common-sense proposition makes the big brewers go pale. Now why should that be?

Margins are tight. Beer sales are at best stagnant. The bigger brewers are driven by the bottom line. In a word money. We hear many tales of this brewer or that suggesting their managed houses should, for example, squeeze say 160 pints out of each 144 pint barrel. And how do they perform this feat? Simple, when your pint is poured into a brim-measure glass there is quite a bit of overflow, particularly if the beer is lively and, like me, you ask for a top-up. Where does the overflow beer go? Into the drip-tray. And where do the drip-tray contents go? Into a steel bucket. And where do the contents of the bucket end up?

It would be grossly unfair to suggest that this practice is widespread, but even if it goes on in just one pub, that's one too many.

However, notwithstanding the occasional bad practice of unscrupulous publicans, sometimes egged on by over zealous area managers, there is also the question of fairness. If you buy a dozen eggs you don't come up against the Egg Producers guidelines that a dozen eggs should be a minimum of 11. If they tried that on there would be uproar. Not to mention prosecutions by Trading Standards officials. But somehow beer is different. The Brewers Association says that a pint need only be 95% liquid. The rest is the head. That's largely fresh air. The whole proposition is a nonsense. Section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act thought so too until the government repealed it. The Brewers Association retreat is the first battle won. But there's a long way to go yet.

And in the meantime? If you get a short measure, ask for a top-up. If you don't get one, get angry. Take time out to pen a few letters - to the Trading Standards Dept at your local Town Hall. To the brewery. To your MP. We've got the buggers on the run, let's keep up the pressure.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Having got that off my chest, all that now remains is for me to wish all our readers, advertisers, writers and distributors the merriest Christmas and the happiest New Year. 1995 was a great year for Opening Times and we couldn't have done it without you.

*John Clarke*

## The Carousel Turns

The Carousel in South Reddish has always been in the fortunate position of having no competition for a half mile radius and yet despite this (or perhaps because of it) the pub has consistently failed to take the opportunity to shine.

Scottish Courage have now decided to spend some money on the place turning it into a 'Steak & Ale' pub. Externally the major difference is the flowers, both on the flat roof and in pots surrounding what appears to be a mini beer garden/patio for the summer months. Inside at first sight little appears to have changed either, apart from a fairly standard refurbishment. The pool table is still there, as is the dartboard. On the bar, however, there are now handpumps dispensing Theakstons XB, John Smiths Bitter and, shock horror, Theakstons Mild. All this from a pub which over the years has struggled to sell the real stuff and has had long periods with no cask ales sold at all. Unfortunately they go and spoil it by promoting 'traditional ales' including their new nitrokeg Theakstons Best Bitter which could truthfully be described as cold and tasteless but certainly not 'traditional'. The atmosphere of the pub has also changed due, possibly, to the increasing emphasis on food. There is also the promise of live entertainment with blues on Saturdays and other music on Wednesdays.

Altogether a considerable improvement, particularly on the beer side, but one is still left to wonder whether the music, pool and darts will sit easily with the new 'Steak and Ale' theme.



Howard and Clare wish all their friends  
and customers a Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year



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Marstons Pedigree; Tetley Imperial

**Jolly Crofter**  
**Castle Street, Edgeley**

Merry Christmas to all our customers

from Jane, Roy and all the staff



**Vaux Samson on handpump**

**Pub of the Month December 1995**



# THE CREAM OF MANCHESTER.

Boddingtons Draught Bitter. Brewed at the Strangeways Brewery since 1778.



## Crown, Cheadle



Just after the last Opening Times went to press, the Crown in Cheadle re-opened after a month's closure during which it underwent an £85,000 refit.

This much needed investment has resulted in something that actually looks like a pub rather than a box with a bar in the corner which is really all the old style Crown was. The layout is still the same but is now split up into a number of areas by partitions, floor tiling and, at the back, a raised area. The decor is pretty much standard 'traditional' but it's none the worse for that. The 'old style' bar fittings, lighting and decor seem to work quite well here in what was previously a fairly soulless pub which in its latter days went under the local nickname of the 'Chapel of Rest'!

The Crown is open all permitted hours and food is served until 6.00pm each day. The licensees are Bonnie Lee and Philip Ridyard who come from the Oddfellows in Hyde, a pub they took from nowhere to Good Beer Guide status so we can also expect great things on the beer front. The standard beers are Hydes Mild and Bitter which are joined by Light, unless a seasonal beer is available (and, yes, the pub will be selling XXXX for the winter season). All beers are served by electric metered dispense so full measures are guaranteed.

Trade is well up so far, although one or two of the old regulars had problems with the changes they, too, are now starting to come back. Definitely a pub to watch and well worth a visit.



The new look at the Crown in Cheadle

## Belting Lonsdale

The Roundhouse on Belmont Way, for many years one of the town's least impressive pubs, looks set fair for a new lease of life when it re-opened with a new name, The Lonsdale, on Friday 1st December.

The pub has been completely gutted and all the old plastic tat and chrome has been replaced by a traditional look with lots of wood, brass and comfortable seating. In charge are Norah Berry and Paula Flanagan who took on the pub after an approach by Scottish Courage who saw the need to re-establish the pub as a community local. They have had considerable experience in the local trade so Norah is confident that she knows what the locals want and, given the pub's history, is also keen to stress that it will be run with a firm hand.

The pub does in fact have a discreet boxing theme with various pictures and posters adorning the walls (and, of course, hence the pub's name). It is intended that there will be major support for local boxing and Thai boxing clubs will also be holding their meetings there.

Cask beers will be Websters Bitter and Green Label plus one other yet to be decided. In addition food will be available



from 12-4 every day, mainly served in a raised dining area to the right of the main entrance. Opening hours will be 12-4 and 7-11 Monday to Saturday and all day Sunday.

The Lonsdale is well placed to capitalise on trade from the surrounding area and given both the investment by the brewery and the undoubted commitment of Norah and Paula stands more than a fair chance of succeeding. Well worth a visit.

## Viaducts & Vaults II

Five years ago Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, in conjunction with our colleagues in High Peak, produced a celebration of Stockport's pubs entitled "Viaducts & Vaults". This was met with critical acclaim winning the coveted Local Beer Guide of the Year Award and sold out in 4 months.

We are following up this tremendous success with Viaducts & Vaults II. Like the first guide it will be in A5 format with a glossy cover and illustrated throughout with photographs.

With the interest in real ale having grown so significantly in the last few years we are increasing our print run to two thousand copies.

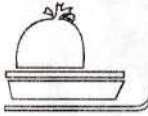
Advertising is now available at the following rates:  
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If you are interested in your company advertising in this guide to the pubs in one of the most prosperous areas in the North of England then write to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport. SK4 5EQ. Remember buyers will refer to this guide for years to come and will share it among their family and friends.

# STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

**D**efying superstition, we chose Friday the 13th of October to meet in the Wellington on Hyde Road, with the aim of staggering in the general direction of Gorton Cross. In an example of the diverse nature of today's pub trade, the Wellington is run by the people who produce our venerable contemporary "Club and Pub News". For forty years and more, "CPN" has been charting the fortunes of Manchester's pub and club artistes, and while some of the acts they feature would have me asking to leave any pub in which they appeared, you can't but admire their sustained dedication to the scene. Sadly, though, we found the pub itself a dismal joint. Poorly lit, poorly patronised, and with upholstery which had seen better days, it offered little incentive to stay. Five national brewers beers are available on handpump, though, (probably wisely) not all were available tonight. I drank an incredibly average pint of Boddingtons Bitter; Chesters Mild was considered to be very slightly better. The impression of all-round mediocrity was neatly rounded off by the presence of keg Cidermaster cider on a fake handpump. Passing the Junction and the Dolphin (both



currently closed), we came upon the Aces, a modern estate pub in Clowes Street. The front door was closed, but a side entrance revealed a large one-room interior though with distinct vault and lounge "sides". The once extensive beer range has been rationalised, presumably in the light of demand, to just Boddingtons and Holts bitters, and, much to the pub's credit, "handpumped" Scrumpy Jack cider has been removed. Intrigued by the presence of lamb's heart on the chalked lunchtime menu (much patronised I understand, by staff at ICL's nearby site), we enjoyed above average Holts, which would have been even better had it been served at ale rather than lager temperature.

Pausing only to confirm that the evening's second Wellington, on Clowes Street, owned by Centric Inns (an offshoot of the Gibbs Mew brewery in far-off Salisbury), still sells only keg beers, mainly from Scottish & Newcastle, we entered the Birch Arms, set back from the new road. This was the most brightly lit pub we had been in so far, though the walls were strangely bereft of decoration. A side table held the remains of a buffet (as it had done, curiously, on my last visit to the pub). The handpumped real ales were John Smiths Bitter and Ruddles Bitter. At £1.36 a pint, these were to be the most expensive beers of the night (Londoners, read it and weep). Sadly, though, high price does not guarantee high quality, and both were considered to be below average. That said, the Birch, although modernised, is an attractive enough pub with some potential.

Next, it was across to the Gorton Arms (Banks's), where, as expected, no real ale was on sale (though the pub had at least made some progress since my last visit there when only cans had been available!). We beat a hasty retreat to the 8.30 rendezvous, the Crown on Vallance Close, an old pub serving modern housing in the angle between Gorton Lane and Belle Vue Street. A one-room pub but with good division of space, this was several streets ahead of anything we had experienced earlier in the evening. The pub was clean, bright, and well cared for; the staff smiled and were friendly and efficient; the artistically arranged pile of polished pennies behind the bar positively glistened. The handpumped beers are Boddingtons Bitter, which we found average, and Chesters Mild, which turned out to be the best beer of the night. This was a true haven of warmth and comfort, in which it was noticeable that a clear majority of customers were drinking the excellent mild.

Along Gorton Lane, at the Steelworks the Worthington Best Bitter indicated by pumpclip was not available, so we

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SOUTH MANCHESTER  
**REPORTER**

continued to the Vulcan (or the "Monkey"), a small traditional pub on a corner site. Of the to well-contrasted rooms, we chose the vault. This is clearly a room where games are much to the fore; the pool table (sensibly sited at one end of the room) was well used, and wall charts illustrated 2- and 3 - dart finishes. There were also some interesting line drawings of local scenes. All in all, a splendid traditional vault, buzzing as any vault should on a Friday night (though some might have found it a touch smoky). The handpumped beers are Wilsons Mild and Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter. Nobody tried the Boddingtons; the Wilsons Bitter was thought to be average; but the mild (now brewed by Morlands of Abingdon) was very much better.



Further along Gorton Lane and across to the Gardeners Arms. This Whitbread pub, as for some time past, sported a "For Sale" sign, but was evidently being run with enthusiasm, and came across as a good solid local. Handpumped beers were Chesters Mild and Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter; we all tried the Mild, which was very nearly as good as in the Crown - praise indeed.

Next, still on Gorton Lane, came the Angel, a Greenalls' pub (consisting of a modernised lounge and a more traditional vault, this has a similar lay-out to the Vulcan). Once again we chose the vault, which turned out to be considerably quieter than the Vulcan's. There was a friendly welcome, though, and the absence of pool players was a blessing as the centrally situated table sterilises much of the room's space when in use. The one real ale was Tetley Bitter. This was somewhat above average.

We were now within sight of Gorton Cross, from where three roads beckoned. We chose to finish at Robinson's Plough, the glories of whose traditional architecture, furnishings and decor have been celebrated so frequently in these pages that I need hardly repeat them here. Busy and bubbling with conversation, it offered electric-pump Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter; none of us tried the mild, and sadly the Bitter rated no more than average on this occasion, leaving us to muse on the unreliability of a brew which at its best is one of Britain's classic beers.

As usual, this article only represents the opinions of one group of people on one evening and can't be taken as a definitive and unbiased guide to the pubs visited.



## EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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## Hatton Arms Update

In the "Cheshire Pubs" article in August's "Opening Times" we mentioned the Hatton Arms near Warrington, and expressed regret that an otherwise excellent pub was compromised by the presence of a fake handpump dispensing keg Scrumpy Jack.

We are pleased to report that this has now been replaced by the honest half-height fixed variety, so the pub can now be recommended without reservation. It's one of the nicest country pubs in Cheshire, with a cosy, multi-roomed interior, real fires and appetising home-made food. The licensees are local people with a strong commitment both to the village community and to running a proper traditional pub. The beer may only be Greenalls, but you're unlikely to find it better kept anywhere else.

Greenalls are reported to have cut some corners with planning regulations in converting the neighbouring cottages into a restaurant, but you would never know to look at it now. The restaurant area is very pleasant in itself and scarcely impinges on the rest of the pub. The Hatton Arms can be found on the B5356 just west of the A49 near junction 10 of the M56. <Chead1>The Bridge Inn

Steve and Kay Durkin from the Bridge Inn, Georges Road, Heaton Norris have now moved on to another Robinsons pub, the Gardeners Arms on Stockport Road in their home town of Denton. They did a good job in running this characterful pub, a little off the beaten track, always offering a warm welcome and a well-kept pint. We wish them well in their new venture and hope their successors will maintain the same standards.

Arthur and all  
the staff from the  
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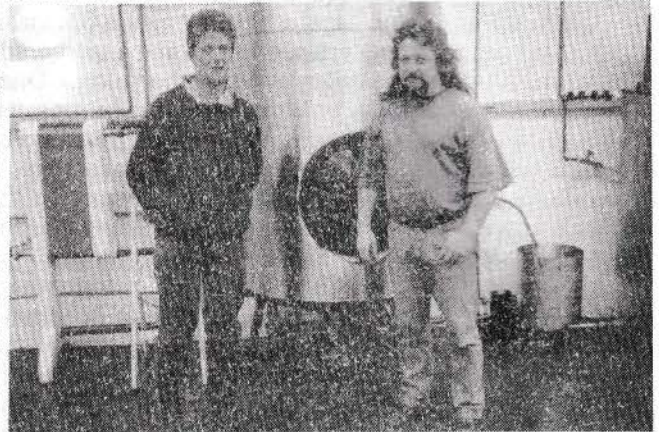
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## BANK TOP BREWERY

Brewing has returned to Bolton after a 25-year gap with the opening of the Bank Top Brewery on Back Lane, just round the corner from the Howcroft just above the Town Centre.

The brewery is the baby of John Feeney and Barney Fallon who, after an 18-month struggle with red tape, launched at the recent beer festival held at the Howcroft. The brewery is a 5-barrel plant and was installed by the Yorkshire-based Marston Moor Brewery, who have also offered invaluable advice on the brewing process. Not that either John or Barney are novices - former truck driver John and expapermaker Barney also have 15 years home-brewing experience behind them.



*Barney and John at Bank Top Brewery*

It's pure beer too, brewed with just malt, hops and yeast. The hops are Styrian Goldings and Challenger varieties with additional dry-hopping with Challengers. Unusually for micro-brewers they are also happy to reveal the source of their yeast which is supplied by Thwaites.

Two beers were brewed at the outset, Bridge Bitter (3.8%ABV) and Samuel Crompton's Ale (4.2%) and these will by now have been joined by Fred's Cap at 4% - the pumpclip

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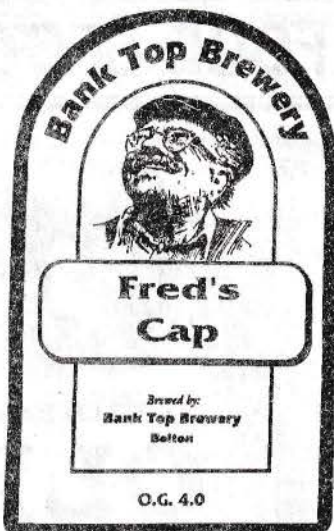




for the latter featuring local personality Fred Dibnah. The main characteristic of the beers is their drinkability - smooth, easy-drinking but at the same time full of flavour. Unsurprisingly, demand has been high so far and they have sold everything they've brewed. Bank Top has also won its first award being voted Beer of the Festival at the Howcroft event.

Future brews will include a porter or stout but definitely in the pipeline is a 5-5.2% ABV Christmas brew, Santa's Claws.

This is certainly a welcome venture and news appears to be spreading - when OT called John and Barney were puzzling over a parcel from a beer spotter in Berkshire who had sent them a plastic bottle in the post with a request that it be filled and sent back for sampling! Pubs nearer to home wanting to stock Bank Top beers should phone the brewery on 01204 528865.



## Greenalls

Greenalls are testing a new beer in 30 pubs across their estate. Festival Bitter is being brewed by Tetleys in Warrington and will retail at 99p a pint. The only Stockport outlet is the Sir Robert Peel in Edgeley, but when OT called we couldn't try it since the pub had sold out. This is because the 30 pubs involved in the trial will only be getting one barrel a week for the sixth month duration of the trial.

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Cheque payable to Opening Times for £2.50 for 6 issues. Write to John Tune, 4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport SK3 0JP Tel: 0161 477 8363

## Hydes

As we reported last month, Hydes have now re-launched their famous XXXX strong ale.

At a reception at the brewery, Hydes Anvil MD Adam Hyde not only formally launched the beer but also gave us a brief insight into its history. The first record of a beer of this name is in 1922 when it was brewed to a gravity of 1055 degrees although for most of its life it was rather stronger at 1068. Local drinkers may remember it as a powerful 8-9% brew and there was some initial pressure from the company chairman to retain this strength if the beer was to be reintroduced, but some persuasion has seen it revert to its more traditional strength of 1068og/6.8%ABV, and it must be said that it still has all the taste and body of its stronger predecessor, although the lower strength makes it more drinkable and means it can be brought in at a more acceptable price.

Head Brewer Alan Mackie filled us in with some of the technical details - the malt is all Maris Otter (the classic brewing malt) with 5% of the mash being crystal malt for colour. Hops are Fuggles and the beer has 30 units of bitterness, thus avoiding the cloying sweetness that some beers of this strength can have.

XXXX will retail at 95-97p a half and local outlets will include the Anvil, Wythenshawe; Friendship, Fallowfield; Horse & Farrier and Prince of Wales, Gatley; Pineapple, Gorton; Osborne House, Rusholme; High Grove, Gatley and the Crown in Cheadle. As we went to press details of outlets in Manchester City Centre and the rest of Stockport weren't available - more next month.



Hydes MD Adam Hyde (right) and Head Brewer Allan Mackie (left) toast the launch of XXXX with local CAMRA members

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## Festive Fun and Seasonal Cheer

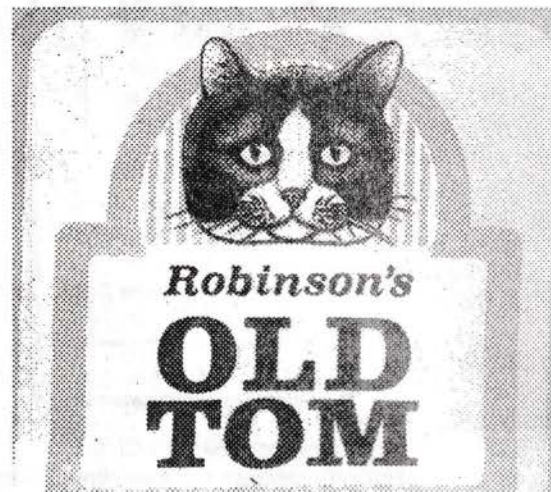
Food to line the stomach and drinks to warm the heart.

As is traditional at this time of year, Opening Times brings you a variety of festive recipes for food and drink. Some you may want to try at home, some are perhaps only for the adventurous.

December's Opening Times just wouldn't be the same without our recipe for Robinsons Old Tom Cake. All you need is:

4oz butter; 4oz sugar; 1 cup dried mixed fruit; 1 bottle Old Tom; 2 cups plain flour; 1 level teaspoon bicarb. Soda; 1 level teaspoon mixed spice.

Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 4, 180 degrees C/350 degrees F. Softer/melt the butter in a saucepan and add the sugar, soda and mixed spice. Stir well and then add the flour and Old Tom, stirring all the time. Boil and stir for 3 minutes and then add the mixed fruit. Transfer to a 1lb loaf tin and bake for 70 minutes in the centre of the oven. Test occasionally with a skewer - if it comes out clean, the cake is done. The cake can be eaten both cold, spread with butter, or warm with cream or custard as a pudding.

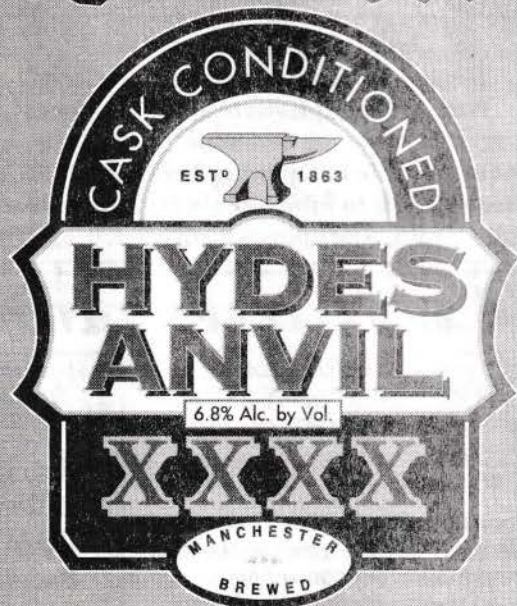


Another pudding long associated with the use of beer is Christmas Pudding. If you fancy making one yourself, why not try Opening Times' special recipe. You will need: 8oz fresh breadcrumbs; 6oz brown sugar; 6oz currants; 8oz seeded raisins; 6oz sultanas; 1oz mixed peel; 8oz shredded suet (vegetarian or otherwise); 1/2 teaspoon salt; 1 teaspoon mixed spice; grated rind one lemon; 1/2 tablespoon lemon juice; 2 eggs, beaten; 1/4 pint milk; 1/2 pint stout (Titanic would do nicely).

## Xperience the Xceptional!

Hydes Anvil Brewery are proud to introduce an exceptional craft ale. **XXXX** is a full bodied Winter Ale brewed to an original 1960's recipe with an ABV of 6.8%. It is sweet in character with a smooth honey finish, making this an Xcellent "Winter Warmer".

*A Craft Ale for Christmas - Only from Hydes*



**Contact: Eric Scott, Free Trade Department**

Hydes Anvil Brewery Ltd, 46 Moss Lane West, Manchester M15 5PH. Tel: 0161 226 1317



## The Sun Inn, Rhewl, Llangollen. OS 178 448

Situated on a hill 3 miles west and 900 feet above Llangollen, is this unspoilt Drovers' Pub. To get to it take the A542 out of Llangollen, turning off at the signpost marked Chainbridge on to an unmarked road for just over two miles.

The pub has been a licensed premises since the 14th century when it was a Drover's Inn on the route from Corwen and Ruthin towards Oswestry, Shrewsbury and beyond. The pub still retains its stone floors and its original layout. A special games room is provided behind the pub in a prefabricated building. A car park for around 15 cars is available, otherwise it is roadside parking.

Because of its situation within the Dee Valley there are some magnificent views from the car park and area surrounding the pub, and it has gained a reputation with hikers and hill walkers. The pub is owned by a local landowner and is managed on his behalf by Alun Williams, who has been in place for the last two years. It has regularly appeared in the Good Beer Guide and was the Chester and South Clwyd branch's Pub of the Year for 1994.

This is one of a handful of pubs within Clwyd to feature Welsh Beers, a beer from Dyffryn Clwyd or Felinfoel is regularly featured together with Worthington Best Bitter and there is normally a guest beer from one of the larger micro's such as Wye Valley or Woods. The quality is always good, and although the pub is off the beaten track it attracts customers from far and wide even in the winter months. It can sell up to two to three guest beers per week.

The pub also has a thriving food trade, and is gaining a reputation for food - simply cooked and wholesome - but it also pulls out some surprises. It is best to phone first at weekends, if making that special journey, but if you are prepared to wait you will normally get served if calling in on the off chance. Children are allowed in the lounge area if dining.

There is regular entertainment at weekends, but on other nights do not be surprised if the pub bursts into song, this is an area renowned for its famous Choirs, and many of their members are regular patrons of the Sun. The pub also has both a Ladies' and Men's Darts Team. This is one pub which will be a regular on your calling list once visited - a friendly, well-run country local with a warm welcome. Three miles further on is another Good Beer Guide pub - the Grouse (J.W. Lees) at Carrog, another pub worthy of a visit.

Next month David Hughes turns his gaze to the  
Lyn Y Mawn, at Brynford, Holywell

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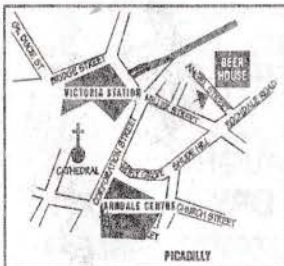
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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

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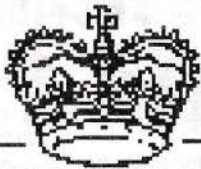
Keith would like to thank all his customers old and new for all their support this year.



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# RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Richard Hough

Tuesday evening.....something stirs in central Stockport. The hub of the local live scene is undoubtedly the Market Place with up to six pubs within walking distance of one another, offering some form of entertainment. The variety of beers, the choice of pubs and the differing styles of music mean there should be something for everyone, and the area can get surprisingly busy. What's more, it's all free.

We'll start at the Arden Arms on Millgate, which plays host to the Why Worry folk club once a month. I mention this first for a few reasons: it IS only once a month; it has been noted in these pages before; and it is an excellent evening and is often extremely popular (helped, no doubt by the exceptionally good Robinsons ales). If you are tempted I recommend getting there early.

Head up the hill to the Bull's Head for more Robinsons, and one of the longer established acts on the Stockport circuit - Atlanta Roots. Advertised as "classic R'n'B" this is one of many fine bands to play the Bulls. One particular week saw the mouth-watering talent of Modest Bill and the Bigheads (Monday), Pete McClaine and the Clan (Wednesday) and the Soul Bandits (Thursday) - wow.

For a change of scene and a reduction in tempo, drop down the steps to the Three Shires Wine Bar on Underbank. Modern jazz is the order of the day courtesy of the Hartley and Hyde players, with Tetley Bitter as the tippie. A full review can be found in Opening Times from earlier this year. More jazz can be had at the Bakers Vaults back on the Market Place. This time it was the Steve Moore Trio at the helm, an engaging combination including xylophone, double bass, drums and piano, with Robinsons Best Bitter and Mild to accompany. The Bakers is perhaps the most prolific pub for live stuff at the moment with music six nights a week. Choose from Decision, SMT, Ossie the Zappero, the Removal Men (an absolute institution locally), the Harols Salisbury Quartet or Perfect Strangers in one week alone.

Phil Welcomes You To The

## Arden Arms

MILLGATE, STOCKPORT

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The Boar's Head across the way is where to go if you want trouble-free blues. Acropolis Now, a resident three-piece, having been doin' their thing for a year at the Boar's; I happened to be at the birthday gig. Now that Sam Smiths have axed Museum Ale from their range, the sole cask beer available is Old Brewery Bitter. On this particular night it was no more than average. The Chancellor's Budget earlier in the day means it will stay at £1.10 a pint, and one of the cheapest pints in Stockport.

The rear music room was decorated with balloons, and the band were decked in bow-ties and smart trousers, But music matters more, and in the last twelve months they have built up quite a following - no mean feat considering they only really play the the Boar's Head. No two sets are the same as they are always looking to try out new songs. A Yardbirds influence is detectable, but the band are proud to be able to defy pigeon-holing. A rootsy, heart-felt "Route 66" was well appreciated by the regular crowd. "Jennifer Lied" was altogether different - wonderful soulful pop delivered with feeling.

Acropolis Now consist of Richard Mayes on LV and guitar, Ronnie Poole on bass and additional vocals and Brendan Day on drums. Ronnie has previously played with John Cooper Clarke and Billy J.Kramer amongst others, while Brendan's formidable efforts include playing with the celebrated Steve Gibbons Band for some ten years, plus playing in around ten other bands at the latest count! Much of their own material, though, is written by Richie. A Bass AND drum solo in the same song made Richie chuckle, and by now they were dropping neatly into the groove. "So much better than last week!" quipped Brendan. Ronnie took the vocals and Richie's guitar

squealed in appreciation. Toes tapped, heads nodded, but more importantly everyone was smiling. The guest female vocalist did a splended version of "Walking in Memphis" that absolutely shat on Cher's interpretation. After a rousing rendition of "Caledonia" they descended into self-indulgent power-blues to end the first set.

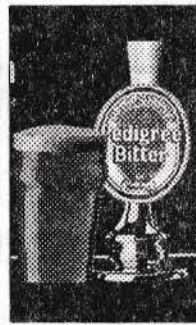
Off came the bow-ties, out came the attitude and it was business for sure as we enjoyed some hard-core blues-rock for a while. Wonderful! Hocker met Hendrix for the first time as the last bell rang. A party atmosphere prevailed as the 'crops belted out "Cocaine" with some aplomb. After numerous requests the crowd were treated to a very cheesy version of "Honky Tonk Women" and Ronnie couldn't resist a bit of slap. Then followed a BIG Brendan drum solo that put me in mind of Cozy Powell. What a superb climax to a splendid evening! Check out Stockport on Tuesdays for the best gig in town.

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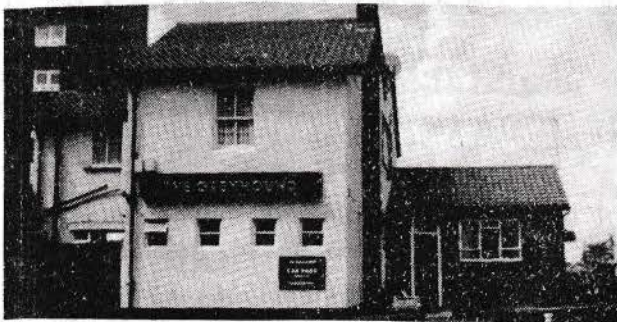
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## Via Fossa

Friday 10th November saw the Boddington Pub Co finally lose its independence and become part of the Greenalls Group. The day before Boddies went out in style with the spectacular launch of their extraordinary new pub, Via Fossa, on Canal Street in the City Centre.



Outside, spotlights focussed on the red carpet and performing jugglers and fire-eaters. Inside model agency staff circulated with free wine while tireless bar staff struggled to keep up with demands for (free) beer from a glittering throng including be-chained civic dignitaries, a truck-load of Coronation Street celebrities, a clutch of drag-queens from the 'Gay Village' and the by now almost obligatory Gladiator, as well as a host of lesser freeloaders including your humble editor. A Roman band marched through the pub (Via Fossa is apparently a Latin approximation of Canal Street) and PubCo MD Derek Wade arrived in a white stretch limo- much to the disappointment of one of the model agency girls who craned her neck when the limo pulled up and was subsequently heard to express her dismay that "it was just some old geezer who got out!"

Glitz and hype aside, though, what's it like? Well, it's certainly different. Some £1.5 million has been spent on acquiring and converting the former premises of the Houseproud Curtain Co. The upper floors have been leased to a housing association while the pub straddles the ground floor and basement. Straddles is the word since there are in fact seven different levels and four bars, although only the main one opposite the entrance sells cask beer.

The architectural antiques supplied by In-Situ of Old Trafford have been assembled to create something that best resembles a licensed church with a host of nooks, crannies, balconies and stairways. This is the brainchild of designer Frank Ennis, who has designed a variety of bars throughout Europe and has also been working on an Irish brewpub where none other than Brendan Dobbin has acted as brewing consultant. Despite the host of ornate and unusual architectural features there is also the familiar bric-a-brac- old pots, books etc, which you've seen a hundred times before. There's also an old bike nailed to the wall and even Frank Ennis himself could offer no good reason why it should be there.

Food is served all day and the pub has a late license on Fridays and Saturdays. The three cask beers are Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers IPA and Marstons Pedigree. Boddies Bitter is £1.50 a pint and all other prices follow.

As an exercise in high-camp gothic kitsch it takes some beating, certainly Manchester has nowhere quite like it. It has already proved very popular with the city's gay community (although it is by no means an exclusively gay bar) and no doubt the success of Via Fossa will encourage other brewers and pubchains to target the so-called 'pink pound'.

*\*Indeed, moves in this direction may have already started - the building next door is the subject of a licensing application to become the 'Picture and Piano Bar and Gallery' while the building on the end of the row is set to become 'Bar Bouska'.*



## Not so Great Exhibition

**T**his year's hot summer and the relentless rise of Caffrey's have put a critical spotlight on the issue of beer quality. Will this mean that the tide which has been running strongly for the past twenty years in favour of the "beer exhibition" pub is finally going to turn?

The concept originally came about because of the severe lack of choice. For example, in Birmingham in the mid-seventies, there were only seven real ales available within the entire city boundaries, and one of those in only six pubs. Enterprising free trade licensees decided to stick ten independent brewery beers on the bar, and not surprisingly were rapidly swamped with customers. Before long, the big brewers were jumping on the bandwagon, and next thing they were imposing "Tut 'n Shives" and the like as a marketing concept on pubs where there was no real dedication to beer.

But quality has always been the Achilles heel of the beer exhibition. Looking after ten different beers properly must inevitably require more effort than looking after three, especially when you've never had some of those beers in your cellar before. Some licensees have the necessary skill and commitment, but many don't. And with the best will in the world, there will be times when the trade is slack and the beer remains in the pipes for too long. Even in the best-run exhibition pubs, the quality won't be so consistently good throughout the opening hours as in a three-beer independent brewery tied house with the same standard of cellarmanship.

They also encourage fragmentation of the market. One of the factors making the British pub special has always been that it caters for a wide cross-section of society. Now, though, we are seeing pubs being targeted towards narrow groups - the family dining pub, the kiddies' fun pub, and the serious beer drinkers' pub. The more people who care about beer who drink in the multi-beer "freehouse", the fewer there are to complain when their local switches over to nitrokeg. And is it fair on a community to turn its local into a Tut 'n Shive which puts nine-tenths of the population off?

I don't say that a beer exhibition can't be a good pub too, and you're welcome to believe that your favourite falls into that category. But there really isn't room for more than one or two in each big town. The concept has been vastly overdone, and there are too many now which do the cause of good beer and good pubs no favours. Certainly no CAMRA branch today should be holding them up as an example for the general run of pubs to follow - but will any have the courage to tell "enterprising" licensees frankly that they have too many handpumps on the bar?

## Drink-Drive Confusion

This Christmas we will as usual receive numerous exhortations not to drink and drive. A simple slogan for a straightforward message, you might think, and I too would certainly want to discourage anyone from behaving illegally or irresponsibly. But do you know what it really means? Does it mean "make sure you obey the law on drinking and driving"? If so, why not say that instead? And if it means something else, then what? And who decided it?

Surely it would greatly help the cause of road safety if drivers were given a clear, consistent and unambiguous message from all quarters that "don't drink and drive" means "stay within the law", and not something else entirely, which isn't spelt out and has no legal standing.

## 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

DECEMBER '90

**T**he "Special Christmas Issue" had a red masthead, including Santa himself, and inside were the usual pages of Christmas Greetings from licensees, an item on home brewed Winter Ales, and recipes for mulled ale and Old Tom cake.

The front page story was not so seasonal - with its headline "OFF THE RAILS", it told the story of Stalybridge Station Buffet, "one of the most unusual and characterful pubs in the country", which had come under threat because British Rail were offering the Station buildings for lease as a development opportunity. CAMRA promised a vigorous campaign to stop "the crazy scheme"

An increasingly popular brew from Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery in Chorlton-on-Medlock had been named Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. To forestall any possible objections from the well-known Californian micro brewery, Sierra Nevada, who also produce a Pale Ale, the Manchester brew had been renamed Yakima Grande (a mountain peak in the Sierra Nevada!) The West Coast Brewery also announced a special Christmas brew, Yuletide Ale, described as dark and hoppy with an OG of 1030, which is about the strength of Old Tom. Priced at £1 per half pint, it was expensive compared with similar brews from other local breweries.

Bass revealed their long-term plans - their intention to stay in both brewing and retailing, so under the terms of the Monopolies & Mergers Commission, a substantial slimming down of their tied estate was called for. This was likely to involve the disposal of almost 3000 pubs, and it seemed that many in the Stockport & South Manchester area would be involved.

Scottish & Newcastle announced the closure of Matthew Brown of Blackburn, which was described as the most fought-over brewery in modern history, even though a firm promise had been given in 1985 to keep the brewery in operation. The actual phrase they used then was that the Blackburn plant was "sacrosanct for continued brewing purposes."

Although the Monopolies & Mergers Commission had ruled that the proposed merger of pubs and brewery interests by Grand Met. and Courage was NOT in the public interest, (see last month's Five Years Ago) the Government had nevertheless given the go-ahead to the scheme, subject to some rather complicated conditions. Several thousand pubs would be freed from the tie, but they could not be re-tied at a later date, nor could they be loan-tied. This would mean the prospect of many new free houses appearing, which looked like extremely good news for the small independent brewers.

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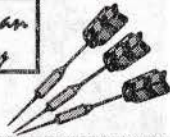
Ian & Christine

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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

# Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



It is a rare occasion indeed when Harp Lager merits a mention within the pages of this publication. But I'm afraid that there is no way around it.

Together with Publican magazine, the licensee trade paper, the above-mentioned company is joint sponsor of the National Darts Pub of the Year Amateur Darts competition. The finals will be held at Quaffers on November 18th. Regional winners of the eight qualifying heats will be in Bredbury ion that day.

Over 700 pubs from around the country entered the competition which has proved a huge success, despite the fact that a lot of Harp has been drunk. Apparently six kegs of the stuff had been drunk at the Bedford regional final. Oh, well, grudging praise where it is due I suppose. At least Harp are putting something back into the traditional pub game.

What a pity, though, that national publicity for the final states that Quaffers is in Didsbury!

★ ★ ★

A tournament with a more local flavour, makes a welcome return to the Bobby Peel in Castle Street, Edgeley. The 1995 Teletaxis Individual Open has heats taking place each Friday until Christmas. At the time of writing heat one has just taken place, with Barry Riley from the Nicholson Arms claiming a place in the final.

A field of 24 of the best local players including Gill Moul, lined up for that opening heat. All of them with their eyes firmly set on Darryl Fitton's title.

Anyone wishing to enter the tournament can do so by simply turning up at the Bobby Peel on Friday night. Toe the oche at 8.30pm. Registration is just £2, and all heat winners are guaranteed a share of the prize money.

Cheshire's first county match since relegation from the Premier Division, resulted in a victory over Warwickshire. In their wisdom, the BDO have de-regionalised all divisions, so Cheshire face long journeys to Gwent, Hertfordshire and Surrey. Luckily the match scheduled against Dorset is a home fixture.

Local player Tony O'Shea must have impressed the England selectors in that opening fixture. He left opponent Pete Brotherton standing in his three leg victory. In a text book game of darts Tony opened with a 140 and a maximum, hitting 77 in two darts for a 14 dart opener, with Brotherton still needing 233.

The second leg he hit another 140 and a 120, finishing with a 120 outshot against the darts. With the advantage of the arrows in the final leg Tony hit 100, 140, 95 and 92. 34 left him on double top, which he hit with his 16th throw. His average of 33.40 per dart was easily the best of the match.

The eventual result for the Men's A team was 7-5 in favour of the Cestrians, with the B team result the exact opposite.

Sue Hambleton (landlady of the Star & Garter) and Gill Moul were both victorious in their games for the Ladies A. Cheshire won both the girls' games 4-2.

★ ★ ★

Another landmark for Tony O'Shea came when the final points table for the Legrand WDF Europe Grand Prix was published. He finished a creditable joint 42nd. Although some way behind Mike Gregory, who finished top of the

table, Tony can feel pleased with his performance. It is a lot easier for professionals like Gregory, Martin Adams (6th) and Steve Beaton (9th) who have the time, and, more importantly, the sponsorship, to travel around Europe picking up ranking points.

★ ★ ★

GMR's new programme "Sports Extra" transmitted on a Friday night, promises to give air time to minority sports. There will be no football, rugby or cricket, but darts will feature regularly. I will be providing information for the programme, which is hosted by Tricia White. If you have any darts information which you would like me to pass on, then please phone me on 432 9518.

## Stay Safe

### Don't Drink and Drive this Xmas

As a reader of Opening Times you will know that alcohol is very much part of the world we live in. Have one drink too many and the only things that normally suffer are your head and stomach.

But combine driving with your drinking and you have a lethal cocktail which could have a lasting effect - on your own and other people's lives. Each year in Britain some 800 people die in road accidents involving drivers or motorcycle riders over the legal limit. Up to 19% of all drivers and riders killed are over the legal limit; and around 50% at night between the hours of 10pm and 4am.

The more you drink, the greater the problem. Just one drink will impair your driving performance. Twice the legal limit of alcohol in your blood and you are at least 30 times more likely to have an accident.

Contrary to popular opinion, alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the processes occurring in the brain and makes you less alert but at the same time gives you a strong but false sense of confidence. The more you drink, the more your brain is affected and the greater your chances of having an accident.

\* Alcohol slows down your reactions

\* Alcohol affects your judgement

\* Even one drink will affect your performance

Those who believe in sticking to beer or cider will stop them going over the limit are sadly mistaken. It's not the type of drink that's important, it's the TOTAL amount of alcohol it contains.

Alcohol takes effect quickly and wears off slowly. Once you've had a drink, there is nothing you can do to reduce the level of alcohol in your blood.

\* Exercise doesn't work

\* Nor black coffee

\* Nor medicines of any kind

\* Nor vitamins

The only thing that will reduce the level of alcohol in your blood is time. And a long time at that. The body gets rid of alcohol from the bloodstream at a very slow rate - equivalent to about half a pint of beer every hour. If you have been on a long or late drinking session, you might still be over the limit the morning after, or even at lunchtime.

### How to Avoid the Problem

\* Plan in advance. Take a minibus or taxi. Use public transport.

\* If you can't arrange a lift home, then fix up somewhere to stay.

\* If you are in a group decide among yourselves that whoever will be driving will not drink for the evening.

\* Drink soft drinks.

**Don't be a statistic this Christmas. Don't drink and drive. For once the cliché is right.**

**Drinking and driving really does wreck lives.**



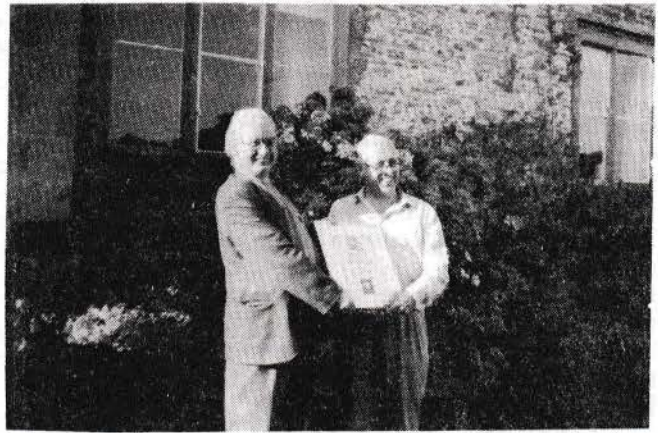
## Festival Winners One and All



Over the last couple of months, the winners in the Beer, Cider and Perry of the festival contest at the last Stockport Beer & Cider Festival have picked up their well deserved gongs. Our pictures show the lucky recipients.

Above: Joe, head brewer at Whim proudly displays the Beer of the Festival Award won by High Peak Porter

Top Right: Ivor Dunkerton receives his Cider of the Festival Award for Improved Kingston Black  
Right: Festival Cider Manager and Branch Chairman Rhys Jones presents the Perry of the Festival Award to Michael Roff of Westons



A Family Brewery

Robinson's  
*Best*  
**BITTER**  
alc 4.2% vol  
*Traditionally  
Brewed*  
Since 1838

**The  
Best  
in the  
North  
West**

SILVER MEDAL  
THE  
BREWING INDUSTRY  
INTERNATIONAL AWARDS  
WINNER 1994

The advertisement features a large, dark glass of beer with a thick head of foam in the foreground. In the background, a beer tap handle is visible, featuring the Robinson's Best Bitter logo. The logo includes a horse and rider emblem and the text 'Robinson's Best BITTER', 'alc 4.2% vol', 'Traditionally Brewed', and 'Since 1838'. To the right of the glass, the text 'The Best in the North West' is written in a stylized font. Below this text is a circular emblem that reads 'SILVER MEDAL', 'THE BREWING INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL AWARDS', and 'WINNER 1994'.



## Poynton Review

In the October edition I promised a pub review of Poynton and here it is. The pubs are well spread out and if you are aiming to cover them all in one night then transport is essential, or you could rely on the 191 Middlewood bus from Stockport.

Travelling down Macclesfield Road from Hazel Grove, the first pub is on the right hand side opposite Poynton Park and Pool. It is the Bulls Head. This is an attractive red brick building on the end of a terraced row. Inside it is small and cosy with much brass, jugs and plates on the walls. The beers were Boddingtons Bitter and Ushers Autumn Frenzy, both on handpump. This is probably the only true local, where people of all ages feel at home, in Central Poynton. Well worth a visit.

Pushing on towards Macclesfield, the next pub is also on the right. It is the keg-only Kingfisher Bar, where if you fancy ice-cold Stones Bitter at £1.62 a pint, then this is the place. It describes itself on the blackboard inside the entrance as a 'fun pub'. Enough said! Also beware the keg cider on the fake Scrumpy Jack handpump.

Carrying on down the road, on the left is the Vernon Arms. This is a Brewers Fayre establishment with the accent definitely on families and meals. It is ideal for both and has a good outdoor drinking/children's play area at the front. The beers are Whitbread Trophy, Boddingtons Bitter and the increasingly rare Boddingtons Mild, all on handpump. Congratulations for the mild (Midland in Marple Bridge please note!), although I find it strangely odd to get a receipt for a pint of mild!

Doubling back on to Park Lane, we come to the Farmers Arms, though any connection with farmers is long since past. The tarnished brass plaque on the wall outside indicates the pub is connected with or owned by Playmaster Leisure (in fact, due to a series of takeovers, this pub is now leased from Robinsons by the Boddington PubCo!) It appears to be the 'yoo' pub of Poynton. Beers are Robinsons Mild and Hartleys XB on electric pumps. The apparently redundant handpump at the end of the bar has no pumpclip.

There was now one pub left to visit, a fair walk away in Higher Poynton, so I decided on a slight detour to the Miners Arms in Wards End, just inside Adlington. A walk across the fields with the help of my map brought me out alongside the pub. I remember this pub from the days of my youth when it was a truly undiscovered rural pub. However it is now yet another eating establishment: very cosy, very efficient, good value meals, but just similar to thousands of others up and down the country. Interesting beer range, though - Boddingtons Bitter, Jennings Cockerhoop and Higsons Mild, all on handpump.

The last pub on the trip was the Bulls Head in Higher Poynton alongside the site of Higher Poynton railway station, on what is now the Middlewood Way linear park. A large red brick building seemingly out of place in a rural area, but a very good pub. The only other true local in the Poynton area. It has a comfortable lounge and a really good, first class, down to earth vault with the accent on games and sports, including devil-among-the-tailors. The beer is Boddingtons Bitter on handpump. The pub also has some nice etched windows.

So that's it, Poynton in a nutshell. If this had been 1970 I could have caught a train home from Higher Poynton station, but sadly no more. It's a long walk along the track-bed instead!

## High Peak Featured Pub - White House, Stalybridge

Now well established in the Good Beer Guide, having featured in each edition since 1989, this excellent pub has carved out a well deserved reputation for both its friendly atmosphere and the quality of its beers. Originally built as a woollen clothiers in 1729, the three storeys of the building are little altered, even to the extent that it may be presumed that some weaving or making up of clothing took place on the top floor which has more (and in their time, expensive), small windows than the lower floors. The building first entered the licensed trade in 1825 when it was converted to wine and spirit merchants by a local worthy by the name of Joseph Heap. The eponymous Heap's Vaults were sold and taken over by one Thomas Hyde in 1837 as an outlet for the beers he brewed in premises in nearby Caroline Street, and named the White House.

Little changed until 1918 when the pub was sold to the Salford Brewers Walker & Homfrays Ltd. They mustn't have like the pub as it was soon sold again, this time to J.W. Lees in 1921. The pub was last transferred to a Brewer in 1951, becoming part of the estate of B. Cunningham Ltd. Of Warrington. When the latter company was merged with Howcroft's Brewery Ltd. of Bolton, and wound up, the pub was sold into the free trade. William Stevenson, who owned the White House from 1972 onwards changed the name to the Laughing Cavalier, though the colourful regulars soon caused the pub to be known locally as the "Chuckling Puff".

The present owner and licensee, Dave Connor took over in 1983 and restored the original name. Though by then somewhat run-down, a good deal of effort was put into attracting trade, and this was much helped by the free-house status, allowing assorted real ales to be brought in from around the country. At any one time up to seven beers may be available, Marston and Thwaites bitters, plus Bateman's Mild and up to four guests. The pub has a strong local following, with loyal regulars, plus a Thursday night Folk Club and other events. Always on the lookout for something different, Dave has recently acquired a 1950s One Arm Bandit, as per seaside piers, which takes sixpenny pieces (available at the bar), and has a much more satisfying action than modern AWP machines, though they share the same reluctance to pay out.

Your beer may be enjoyed either at the bar, in the Parlour, in the front room or in the side room, alongside the pinball machines etc. A range of affordable meals are available, and for those who fancy a change some fifty malt whiskies are on offer alongside a range of foreign bottled beers. A historic pub, well worth a visit.

### The Old King Great Portwood St.

- STOCKPORT - 0161 480 6026

HANDPUMPED REAL ALE including

DRAUGHT BASS and Guest Beers

\* GOOD FOOD SELECTION

12- 2.30 MON - SUN and EVENINGS 6.30-9.30

and on request at other times

FUNCTION ROOM AVAILABLE FOR PARTIES AND

PRIVATE CLUB MEETINGS SKY SPORTS ON

SATELLITE - CHILDRENS PARTIES CATERED FOR

YOUR HOSTS Steve & Dorothy

# LOCAL HAUNTS

by Pete Massey

**N**o, as yet incomplete, history of the Haunted Hosteries of Hillgate would be complete without mention of the Star & Garter. Despite its interior and atmosphere (obviously inspired by the concept of the waiting room at Crewe Railway Station), it is a much older public house than it would appear.

A little, privately printed account of Hillgate entitled "Lights & Shades of Stockport" in the local Heritage Library describes the gin-sodden women and itinerant wastrels of earlier days who were the pub's regulars - long before the day of 'Last Orders, Please!'; when there were only 6 constables covering the whole of Stockport and there were many more inhabitants and public houses. (This, I always find a very ponderable point).

Those among you who are "afficionados" will understand (after some discreet enquiry) why the place is continuously plagued by the past. In the past couple of weeks, whilst writing this article, a hitherto stalwart citizen of the area still remains partially wit-less after encountering the 'old man with a beard' (more of whom space forbids). A young lady of my acquaintance who lived at the 'Star' when younger, and whose parents were the incumbents told me of 'arguments' that she would hear at night outside her bedroom door. After much of this, she decided one night to peep through her slightly ajar door and saw across the landing, at the top of the stairs, a man and woman in a costume of times past. There appeared to be some heated discussion as to the intended demise of the unfortunate resident of the room whose door the couple apparently vanished into.

There have been an interesting number of 'demises' at the 'Star' - the most famous being the infamous precursor to the James Bulger murder. In 1861 Stockport was described by one author as 'Dirty, swarming with squalid and neglected children - a warren of dark entries!' Two year old George Burgess was often in and around the 'Star', his nanny was a regular and lived just across the road. On Thursday 11th April 1861 little John was last seen playing with 2 other boys aged 'about eight years' outside the Star. The next day his body was found in Hemphshaw Brook (full details available - Heritage Library).

Now, the interesting bit of this story is that all the children of the 'Star's' incumbents, both past and present, speak of their 'Friend' who comes and plays with them sometimes - a "little girl". In them days little lads wore what we would call "frocks" and there was not the call for hairdressers like there is now, So, it's poor little George...

## The Waters Green Tavern



96 Waters Green,  
Macclesfield,  
Cheshire SK11 6LH  
Tel: 01625 22653

Ever Changing Guest Beers including:  
Clarks, Mansfield, Roosters,  
Enville, Hanby  
Your Hosts Brian and Tracey  
Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

## Hole I' Th' Wall

After a prolonged period of closure, the Hole I' Th' Wall, just off Stockport Market Place, re-opened at the beginning of November.

New licensee is Wayne Mottershead, formerly temporary tenant at Winters Wine Bar on Underbank. Wayne does in fact have quite a history of involvement in the catering and pub trade with 14 years as a chef, three at the Jolly Sailor in Marple and a stint with Holts, including three years at the Woodthorpe in Prestich, under his belt.

There has been major investment in the pub and the work took about 5 weeks in total. The layout is essentially unchanged although the decor is now in what can best be described as a 'distressed traditional' look, although it works very well and the pub certainly has a comfortable feel to it.

The beer is good, too, with Vaux Samson and Bitter the main beers with Wards Bitter also being tried out when OT called. Vaux Double Maxim has been tried but it just didn't sell. To maintain quality, all the beer is in small nine-gallon barrels.

Lunchtime food is served and entertainment includes Karaoke on Thursday nights and a DJ at weekends, when the pub gets very busy indeed. The pub is open all permitted hours every day and by the time you read this will have undergone one further change - it is due to be renamed Briarly's, after the family who used to own both the pub and the surrounding buildings in the 1750's.

This is a pub with a lot of potential but in recent years has suffered from a fatal lack of continuity. This looks set to end - Wayne has a six-year lease and, as he put it 'we are here to stay'.

## THE KINGS ARMS

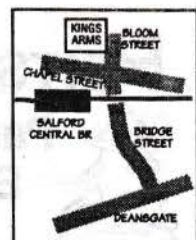
BLOOM STREET, SALFORD



Dave and Sue Price invite you to try the fine range of beer, cider and foods in Salford's Premier Free House




Constantly Changing Range of Beers on 13 handpumps



# 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!

December 95	December 95
<p><b>DECEMBER</b>  <b>Sun 10th</b> - Xmas shopping and curry in Bradford. Trains depart 10.15 and 11.15 from Victoria. Meet Ram's Revenge (corner Ivegate/Upper Millergate) 1.00pm.  <b>Mon 11th</b> - Social, Spread Eagle, Chorlton. Starts 9.00pm.  <b>Thu 14th</b> - Branch Meeting and Xmas Quiz. See What's Brewing for venue.  <b>Mon 18th</b> - Social, Manchester Arms, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.  <b>Thu 21st</b> - Pub of Month, Jolly Crofter, Castle Street, Edgeley.  <b>Fri 22nd</b> - Famous Hillgate Crawl. Starts 7.00 Turners Vaults, 8.30 Black Lion (vault)  <b>JANUARY</b>  <b>Fri 5th</b> - Brewery Visit, Blackmoor, Batley. Phone 477 1973 for details and to book.(cost £5 per head)  <b>Mon 8th</b> - Social, Crown, High Street, Cheadle. Starts 9.00pm.</p>	<p><b>High Peak branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and Marple and all points north. They have notified Opening Times of the following events:</b>  <b>Mon 11th</b> - monthly branch meeting, Duke of York, Romiley. Aim to get there by 8.30.  <b>Thurs 28th</b> - Social day in Manchester with Glossop crew. Start at Smithfield, Swan Street (bacon butties laid on so numbers required) then 12 noon at the Beer House. details from and names to Frank Wood on 01457 865426</p> 

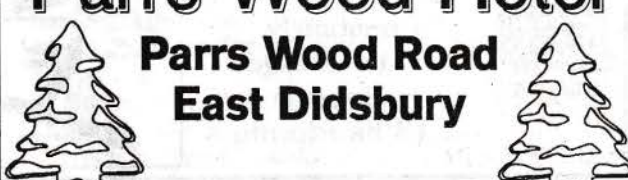
Pete and Jacquie at the  
**THREE TUNNES**  
 Hazel Grove  
 wish all their customers  
*a very Happy Christmas  
 and best wishes for the  
 New Year*  
 Robinsons Beers at their best

David, Anita and all the staff at the  
**Travellers Call,**  
 Stockport Road, Great Moor  
 wish all their customers  
 a very Merry Christmas  
 and a Happy New Year  
 Robinsons Best Ales



CAMRA Pub of the Month January 1996

Merry Christmas  
 and a happy New Year  
 to all our customers  
 from Jean and Martin  
 of the  
**Parrs Wood Hotel**  
 Parrs Wood Road  
 East Didsbury



*Merry Christmas  
 to all our customers  
 old and new  
 love*



Saxon & Gary  
 from the **Station** Didsbury  
 Marstons ales

# MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

**W**ell, the Boddington Pub Company certainly went out in style - for their latest extravaganza, Via Fossa on (and Latin for) Canal Street in the City Centre, was also their swansong, opening as it did on the company's last day of independent existence before the Greenalls takeover took effect. And extravagant it certainly

is, from its almost exclusively gay clientele to its multi-level layout, with decor suggesting a cross between a junkyard and a High Anglican church. Those not already put off will find little of interest on the beer front, the handpumps dispensing Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers Original and Marstons Pedigree.

Across on Oldham Street, there's more interesting beer on offer at new cellar bar the Shelter, with Wards Thorne Best Bitter and Wiggledance on handpump. However the £2 a pint price tag, along with the presence of Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump, means it cannot really be recommended, even if you can cope with the air-raid shelter theme. On Shudehill, it's good to see Smithfields open again, now with Banks's Bitter, Camerons Strongarm, and Marstons Pedigree on handpump. The Ducie Bridge, however, has been observed closed on a number of occasions, though this may not be permanent as there has been light upstairs.

In West Gorton the Nag's Head on Hyde Road has reopened after a brief closure, still with just Boddingtons Bitter on handpump. In Cornbrook, however, the Railway is now closed.

The stage-Irish conversions are still with us. In Openshaw, the Granmoor has become Hickey's. Done in a relatively restrained style, this is actually one of the better Irish conversions - I particularly like the rings board from Co.

Kildare ("All Ireland Champions 1986"). Handpumps dispense Banks's Mild and Bitter and Marstons Pedigree.

In Withington, the Celtic Bar (formerly Berties, and before that Pier One) has been renamed Katy Daly's and has lost its real ale.

There's a splendid riposte to all their their largely-fake Irishness, though, in the shape of Yates's Wine Lodge on High Street in the City Centre. Renamed the Blob Shop, it's essentially an attempt to trump Irish bars and cafe bars by creating an indigenous Mancunian theme. With authentic, or at least plausible, features such as queuing rails and seating booths, the place works very well. Blobs (£1.25) are of course much advertised, as are Yates's other branded products and a fearsome glass of "Hooch" (40% ABV "pure spirit"). On the beer front, handpumped Thwaites Bitter joins the Boddingtons and Stones previously sold, all three selling at £1 a pint at all times. Not surprisingly the prices help give the place a somewhat Holts-like ethos which is entirely in keeping with the theme. Also worthy of note is that food is advertised as available throughout opening hours - an admirable policy which I hope meets with the response it deserves. All in all, highly recommended.

Finally, Ganders Go South in the City Centre has replaced Marstons Bitter with handpumped Boddingtons Bitter; Pedigree and the current "Head Brewer's Choice" beer continue to be available.

**coming next month.....**

...an alternative view on the  
drink drive problem...

...more north welsh pubs...

...a look at other peoples beer pages  
on the Internet...

...a preview of the 1st Castlefield  
Beer Festival in Manchester to be  
held in February...

and ...A new look for Opening Times?

## 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 .....

ADDRESS .....  
.....

POSTCODE .....

SIGNATURE ..... TELEPHONE NUMBER(S) .....

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £12  JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

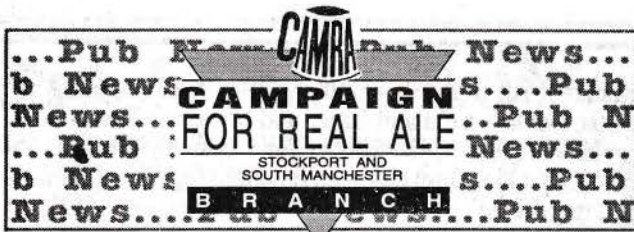
STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £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.*





The Egerton Arms on St Petersgate, Stockport, appeared to be in process of redecoration as we went to press. Also briefly closed was the Midland on Wellington Road North, now once again open. Speaking of which, the 'upstairs' part of Upstairs Downstairs in Mersey Square has also looked closed recently. Whilst it only sold keg beers, it was nonetheless an interesting pub with some character and history (older readers will remember it as the Top Wellington) and it would be a shame if its life as a licensed house has finally run its course.

Still in Stockport, the new look Yates' Wine Lodge on the Market Place opened its doors recently. The layout is exactly the same as before, but a general smartening up has done the place no harm. That said it is still Yates' and therefore won't appeal to all drinkers (and all are advised to avoid the colossally busy Friday and Saturday nights) but in the daytime it is very pleasant, serving a reasonable range of food at slightly below town-centre average prices. The beers (range of John Smiths Bitter, Boddies Bitter and Cains Bitter) can sometimes be a little tired in midweek, and as you'd expect, the Cains is generally the pick.

There's a new face at the Salisbury, just by Oxford Road station. This is Bob Bath who took over at the beginning of September after working for Tetleys for three years (including a stint at the Flea & Firkin). Apparently there were plans to do the pub up but Bob, sensibly, has persuaded Scottish Courage to leave it more or less as it is - a one room, bare board ale house which works a treat. Bob's aim is to run a good basic locals pub and with a customer base covering everything from old locals to goths and bikers he seems to be succeeding. The beer range is currently John Smiths Bitter (currently alternating with Websters but this is to cease), Courage Directors, Theakstons Best Bitter, XB and Old Peculier. Bob has also persuaded ScotCourage to let him take guest beers over the Christmas period, he is aiming for beers in the Old Peculier mould. Plans for the future include real cider, possibly Westons Old Rosie (and, yes, the keg Scrumpy Jack on fake handpump has gone) plus the conversion of the catering kitchen into a snug area. Bob seems the ideal licensee for this pub and we wish him well.

Whitbread have put more of their Manchester pubs on the market. Amongst the latest batch are the Bank of England, Ancoats; the Gold Cup, Chorlton-on-Medlock and the Junction, West Gorton. Prices are £50-£55,000. In Withington, the Waterloo on Burton Road, or at least its burnt out remains, were finally being bulldozed as we went to press. A sad end to a once fine boozier.

A new management team has arrived at the Chapel House Tut and Shive. Mick and Suzanne Deveney have moved across from the Tut and Shive in Radcliffe, and prior to that they managed the Tam O'Shanter in Little Bampton, Cumbria. Mick has catering qualifications and is looking forward to using his cooking ability for customers' benefit from Wednesday through to Sundays. Thursday will be live music night. On the beer front Mick hopes to build on the good work of Martin Kelly and to increase the range of guest beers in the New Year.

Plans have been approved for alterations to Robinson's Tiviot on Tiviot Dale in Stockport Town Centre. Inside toilets are to be built in the yard at the rear, and the right-hand back room is to be extended to include what is now a corridor. So far so good. However, the plans also appear to indicate that the rear snug is to be separated from this extended lounge area merely by some form of partition and step, thus losing its identity as an entirely separate room. If confirmed, this will be a serious loss to the individuality of this excellent town-centre local.

Steve and Kay Durkin from the Bridge Inn, Georges Road, Heaton Norris have now moved on to another Robinsons pub, the Gardeners Arms on Stockport Road in their home town of Denton. They did a good job in running this characterful pub, a little off the beaten track, always offering a warm welcome and a well-kept pint. We wish them well in their new venture and hope their successors will maintain the same standards.

## Sporran Still Swinging



No sooner had we written it off and marked its passing with a Pub Vandalism Award, than the Swinging Sporran on Sackville Street, City Centre, bursts back into life.

Re-opening was scheduled for December 4th but former regulars probably won't recognise it. The new name is the Retro Bar and it is being kitted out in basic fashion with an eye firmly fixed on the student market. Word is that if the place is a success then big money is available for a major refurb which would leave it looking something like the nearby Joshua Brookes.

No news of the beer range but, given the fact that it will still be operated by Scottish Courage, this can probably be guessed at. The licensee? - in a surprise move, this is said to be John Anderson, manager since day 1 of Jabez Clegg, possibly the ultimate student bar. More next month.