

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
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5,500 CIRCULATED
EVERY MONTH

MARCH 1996

Fight Rages Over Imperial

The battle to save the Imperial Hotel from demolition continues. Last month we highlighted how this important pub, intimately connected with the birth of both Manchester United and the Professional Footballers Association was threatened with demolition for what has been described as 'a virtual lay-by for a hotel'. This month the battle comes to a head when the planning application is heard by the Central Manchester Development Corporation. In secret.

Yes, the March 8th meeting is not open to the public. This is despite the torrent of objections from amenity bodies and the public alike. The fact that the Planning Application will be held in secret suggests that elements within the Development Corporation realise that a mistake may have been made and perhaps there is chance that sense will yet prevail. This would be at least partial atonement for the scandalous neglect of the Imperial, which despite its listed status has been allowed to fall into dereliction while owned by the Development Corporation itself. A body which trumpets its achievement elsewhere has been content to let this historic building almost fall down.

Their actions became even more of a mystery last month when it emerged that brewers Joseph Holt have made approached to the CMDC with a view to buying and restoring the pub. Their enquiries have met with a wall of silence. Just why is this?

Equally odd has been the reaction of Manchester United. The question of the Imperial was discussed at a board meeting of the club and while they acknowledge the part the pub has played in their history, Chairman Martin Edwards has written that the club just don't feel they can comment on the current plans. Why on earth not? Luckily the PFA are not so spineless and have objected to the proposals.

A petition was started at the Castlefield Beer Festival and will be presented prior to the Development Corporation meeting, or at the meeting if the draconian secrecy is relaxed. In the final days of their existence will the Development Corporation listen to the people of Manchester or will they bow down to narrow commercial interests.. Despite all their good work, will they let one final act of vandalism be their epitaph?

CAMRA is 25 this month
Details of our Special
Birthday Membership Offer
on page 19

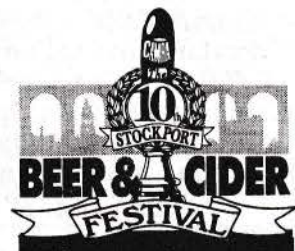
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Stockport Beer Festival

Got those dates in your diary yet? May 30th-June 1st sees the biggest free-house in town open. The 10th Stockport Beer Festival will be the biggest and best yet. 1800 gallons of beer. 250 gallons of traditional cider and perry. Top line entertainment (more on that next month) and the return of Heilbronn Hour.

Yes, on Friday lunch-time from 11.30-12.30 there will again be 30p off all beers. What more could you want? It's one not to miss, so make sure you don't!



OPENING TIMES 143

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Our story last month concerning the proposed demolition of the Imperial Hotel caused a storm of protest. Manchester's new civic society and other amenity bodies rushed to object to these scandalous plans and we now await the results of the Development Corporations secret deliberations. It is ironic that one of the movers behind the scheme is So What Arts, the Simply Red management company - Mick Hucknall is a well-known United fan and yet he is associated with a scheme to tear down a vital part of the club's history.

The defence put up by the company so far is the usual tripe. "The pub can't be saved", they bleat. And then give the game away by their acknowledgement that its restoration would be 'uneconomic'. What they mean is - yes, it could be saved but we aren't prepared to spend the money it needs.

The whole affair stinks. The Development Corporation let the pub virtually fall down. They ignore representations from a local brewer to but the pub. Manchester United feel they can't comment on the plans. And the application will be heard in secret. Conspiracy theorists would have a field day although in all likelihood what we are seeing is probably no more than a monumental cock-up by all concerned.

★ ★ ★ ★

This month sees the end of an era. In Didsbury, Arthur Gosling finally retires from the Royal Oak. Both he and the pub have become local institutions. His successor intends, wisely, to change nothing. Even so Arthur will be a hard act to follow and we wish him well in his retirement. In Stockport, the Stanley Arms has shut. Not an institution like the Royal Oak, but in his time there Mike Belsham has done more than his bit for the micro-brewing industry giving a boost to the likes of Dent and Ryburn (the latter were only brewing once a month until Mike came on the scene) and in his time being a by-word for the exotic and new in the beer world. He moves to the Bulkeley Arms and we wish him all the best.

John Clarke

The Davenport Arms

(Thief's Neck) Woodford
PUB OF THE YEAR 1995



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End of an Era

After a lifetime in the trade and 29 years in the same pub, Arthur Gosling retires from the Royal Oak, Didsbury at the end of this month.

In his years there, the Royal Oak really has become an institution, and Arthur something of a legend in his own lifetime. The Royal Oak has featured in just about every pub guide going and is nationally famous for its cheese lunches.

The whole pub smacks of the individuality that a long serving licensee brings - the personal collections of pot spirit barrels and theatrical memorabilia are just as much part of the pub as the excellent mild and bitter. Not that the pub is some museum piece, it is a living breathing centre of its community, packed at every session, and attracting all walks of life. It even triumphantly survived a devastating fire to emerge as good as ever.

Does Arthur have any regrets? "Not really, the trade has been very good to me and so have Marstons. I'm just looking forward to my retirement." The brewery certainly appreciate what Arthur has achieved at the pub as they are marking his departure by paying for a week's holiday in Cyprus for Arthur and his wife.

OT asked Arthur what he felt he had achieved at the Royal Oak. "I have tried to keep it as traditional as possible just in case some bright spark at a brewery wants to open an English theme pub, then they'll know where to look. After all, they are bound to run out of other themes sooner or later."

With that typical "Arthurism" we sign off. After retirement he and his wife will be living in Cheadle so I am sure many readers of OT will bump into them at some time or other. The trade has lost a larger than life figure and he will be sorely missed.

New licensee at the Royal Oak is Vince Crolla from the nearby Albert. We hear that Vince has let it be known it will be business as usual with no changes planned.

Bhurlpore Beer Fest

The Bhurlpore Inn is at Aston in deepest Cheshire. It featured in OT last year and is a winner of the CAMRA South Cheshire Pub of the Year Award. Despite the location it specialises in rare and interesting guest beers, with usually nine on at a time. From 27th to 31st of this month though, the range will increase to 40 when the pub holds its first beer festival which will also feature the pub's 1000th guest beer.

Although in the heart of Cheshire, the Bhurlpore is only a 12 minute walk from Wrenbury Station which is served by local trains on the Crewe-Shrewsbury line. It's a request stop - you have to tell the train conductor you want to get off there and, coming back, put your hand out to signal to the driver you want to get on. Travelling from Manchester you would normally have to change at Crewe but on Saturday 30th March, the Crewe and Shrewsbury Passengers' Association has arranged for the 11.33 from Manchester (11.43 from Stockport) to Cardiff train to stop at Wrenbury. For returning festival-goers, an express to Stockport and Manchester will stop at Wrenbury at 17.05. Cheap day fares will be £8.70 from Manchester and £8.40 from Stockport. There is a discount of 25% available for parties of 10 or more travelling together (phone 0345 125625 for details).

The Bhurlpore is an excellent pub, selling over 150 bottled beers, 50 single malt whiskies and superb food, for those who tire of the real ales on sale. A good day out is promised for all those who go along.

Stanley Shock

In a shock move, Stockport's Stanley Arms closed, possibly for good, at the end of last month.

Since re-opening as a freehouse in December 1989, the Stanley had, for much of the time, pioneered beer from micro-brewers and at one time was a by-word for innovation with 'beer spotters' travelling many miles to sample the latest new brew that Mike Belsham had sourced. For several years the pub also acted as an unofficial brewery tap for Ryburn Brewery in Sowerby Bridge and before that was a regular outlet for Dent Brewery beers.

Perhaps the pub had lost its way a little in recent times but still it managed to offer an extensive range of brews from the Steampacket Brewery and the Commercial Brewery in Keighley. Not that this is the end of the line in the trade for Mike and Lynn Belshaw. They are moving to the Bulkeley Arms on Brinksway.

The Bulkeley is to have a much needed major refurbishment and re-opens on 13th March with a new look. Real Ale will be restored and although the pub is tied to Whitbread, as Mike says "They do 27 different beers so we'll still have a bit to go at!" A report on the new-look Bulkeley Arms will appear in next month's Opening Times.

Tap and Spile

Manchester City Centre should soon be graced by the opening of its first Tap and Spile, in line with the groups national expansion programme. Located near the free house triangle, it should offer another interesting range of beers. Although a conversion of a in some ways interesting pub, it promises to add rather than detract from the citys pub stock. More next month.

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From : Roger Wood

I note that Curmudgeon is pleased that Greenwich Mean Time has been retained. Had Central European Time been adopted there would have been a big boost during the summer months to the licensed trade as a result of the extra hour's daylight in the evenings.

Families with children could enjoy the lighter and warmer evenings in beer gardens and outdoor areas, bringing much needed extra trade. It would also help those who want to escape smoky and sometimes crowded pubs for a drink in the fresh air.

From : Rhys P Jones

While I'm sure Brian Carey knows all there is to know about darts in Stockport, he blundered badly in stating (OT, Feb) that the Manchester dartboard "does not figure prominently in our area". Though no darter myself, I can assure him that this challenging board sees regular and enthusiastic use, both competitive and social, at dozens of pubs across East Manchester, and occasionally beyond.

Indeed, it would be good to see an occasional update from the world of Manchester-board darts in the pages of OT. Any volunteers?

From : Dave Sheldon

The Old Mill, Cheadle Hulme, charges £1.62 for all guest beers (there are usually four on at any one time).

Whilst this may be acceptable for 5%+ beers, and rather expensive for 4% to 5% beers, £1.62 for Robinsons Old Stockport Bitter (3.5%) and Jennings Dark Mild (3.1%) must be the worst example of over-pricing in our area.

From : Peter Edwardson

Lovers of Sam Smith's bottled beers who are up in arms at their recent price increase in pubs will be pleased to know that both Strong Pale Ale and Strong Brown Ale were available for only £1.25 per 550 ml bottle in the Bottle Stop on Acres Lane in Bramhall last time I called. This is 60p less than the new pub price, and 20 or 30p less than in supermarkets, and there's 5p back on the bottle too! Well worth a detour on your way to Tesco at Handforth Dean.

From : Dave Sheldon

In the February edition of *Opening Times*, editor John Clarke appeals to readers to save the Imperial Hotel. John would like us to send letters to the Town Hall Planning Dept., lobby councillors and, in his words, "get angry".

"Get real" is my response. Who does he expect to finance the saving of the Imperial - Manchester City Council, Man. United FC, the Lottery Commission?

The Imperial has been closed for a very long time, surely anyone who wanted to save it would have shown some interest by now.

After demolishing the Imperial, perhaps the Joshua Hoyle Hotel Co bulldozer would be good enough to pop over the road and do the same to that other eyesore, the Coach & Horses!

It would be great to have a few pints in a bustling Imperial, catch a steam-hauled train to Warwick Road and then spend the afternoon crushed and swaying in the Stretford end, but time does not stand still.

CAMRA would be better championing the cause of those pubs still open and worth fighting for, rather than those which are long closed and which the silent majority would rather see demolished.

From: S.P.Rattrey

With reference to the letter from John Hopkin in February's issue page 5. It is quite correct that the pub IS called the "LAMP" and was called "THECOMMERCIAL" and was known locally as the "RED LAMP" at one time but it certainly is NOT in HAYFIELD it is actually in HADFIELD quite a different place, and some miles apart.

Pub of Month Cancelled

The March Pub of the Month award was due to be presented to Jim and Betty Ollerenshaw of the Crown, Valence Close, Gorton. Jim and Betty have been at the Crown for some six years and have used the experience gained in a lengthy career in the trade to make the Crown into an object lesson in how to run a fine community pub with the highest standards in an inner-city area. Sadly, though, their well-deserved retirement has come about earlier than expected; by the time you read this, they will be enjoying a well-earned rest at home in Heald Green (not too far from the Griffin...). Regretfully, therefore, March's Pub of the Month award is cancelled.

Jim and Betty's successors come from the Talbot in Fallowfield, where a major refurbishment is afoot. They take over a fine pub, and CAMRA wishes them all success in raising it to even greater heights.

*Normally when a "first choice" Pub of the Month falls by the wayside, the runner-up in the voting steps up to take its place. This time, though, March's runner-up went straight on to win April's award. But more of that next time....

Letters to the Editor should be sent to *Opening Times*, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD or via e-mail to otletter@opentime.u-net.com

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The Davenport Arms, Woodford - Pub of the Year presentation Saturday 16 March

STAGGER

with David Hanson

Seven o'clock saw a dedicated contingent of drinkers meet at **The Smithfield** on Ashton Old Road, Openshaw. The name reflects the near by New Smithfield Market, a site originally occupied by Bayer Peacock Locomotive works and Gorton Engine shed, hence **The Smithfield** former name of **Locomotive**. Boddingtons bitter was the only beer on offer, and every one rated it very highly. **The Smithfield** is a classic street corner pub in the traditional two roomed style. The vault is basic and functional and does not appear to have changed in years. This speaks well of recent alterations, which have not spoiled its character. The notice board announced a lively selection of darts, cribbage, dominoes and football, although one team didn't have a result entered after October! Having eavesdropped on the conversation in the vault, I would warn any visitors from the Antipodes to be wary, because what a local vouched to do to Australian bums brought tears to our eyes! An unusual collection of pot/china pigs over the bar gave one of our number a clue to the identity of the landlady. Consultation confirmed his suspicion that the licensee used to keep the **High Bank**, our next but one port of call.

Coming out of **The Smithfield** we turned right into Cornwall Street to check on the **Napoleon**. Though lights were seen inside, the doors were resoundingly gated, so we can not report on the state of play.

Turning left into Ogden Lane brought the modern built **High Bank** into sight. Its two rooms are separated by a central bar, which

having only a doorway between them, effectively divides the pub into two. We elected for the lounge, which was occupied by a solitary customer, whereas the vault was well populated. Only Boddingtons bitter was on offer, and was of good quality. A collection of toby jugs were displayed behind the bar, keeping up the tradition of china decorations. A prominent stage took up a large amount of the centre of the room, ready for Charlie McIntosh to perform later in the evening.

A few yards up the road, a quick reconnaissance was made into the **Royal Oak**, a Bank's pub, which unfortunately had no real ale on offer.

Passing the boarded up and derelict **Wrexham Inn**, we returned to Ashton Old Road, and an average pint of Greenall Whiteleys bitter in the **Pack Horse**. The architecture is very 30's, with curved metal window frames and ocean liner style bar and again two rooms with dividing bar. Many of the windows looked original as they still had G & W etched into them. An interesting set of hand-written house rules were pinned up next to the bar. As the minimum penalty was a broken leg, we decided not to question their authority! As we were leaving, we spied speakers etc. being set up in the lounge, so entertainment was planned for later.

Our route east along Ashton Old Road took us past Centric Pub Co.'s **Prince of Wales**. What impression we made on the local I fear to think, for we pressed our eager faces against the windows, just as children do at Christmas. Unfortunately we must have been naughty, as our dreams of real ale being on offer in a Centric Pub was not fulfilled! Never mind!

Progress along Ashton Old Road in the direction of Hyde and you can not miss the **Forrester's Arms**. The exterior is magnificently clad in dark brow glazed tiles, which proclaims its heritage as a former Kays Atlas Brewery pub. Internally the two original rooms have been opened out into one, though still retaining their distinct characteristics at either side of the entrance. Unfortunately the Robinsons bitter on offer was below average, which is a shame for a previous Good Beer Guide entrant.

Across Ashton Old Road and a few yards down Fairfield Road brought us to our 8.30 meeting point in the **Concert Inn**. The Boddingtons bitter on offer was up to the **Concerts** excellent standards. If you know the **Concert** my description will never match your idea, but if you don't, here goes. A basic traditional two roomed pub, with lots of hard seats and wood panels in evidence. It doesn't look as though there have been alterations since Edwardian times (though, horror of horrors for the traditionalists, they have painted the interior, as paint splashes on the seats revealed). The small square open plan bar, which is surrounded by etched glass, sits in the middle of the building. Etched glass in the entrance doors still reveal the original functions of the rooms, Vault and Concert, and is complemented by the door of the Gentlemen's (sorry for the politically incorrect omission, but I did not check out the Ladies loo!). Our number had been swelled by two, both of whom seemed to have had epic bus journeys. This caused a lively discussion about the accuracy (or should it be fiction) of bus timetables. Oh well! Could have been worse, they could have been train spotters!

Having missed out the **Lord Raglan**, we corrected this on leaving the **Concert Inn**. The **Lord Raglan** is yet again a two roomed street corner pub, with a central bar area. The pub is situated on a major junction with, interestingly, the vault being the door facing the junction. Does this signify that the vault was originally/still is the main room? The vault was crowded, with a lively game of darts was in progress (London board unfortunately). The **Lord Raglan** is a Wilson's house, but also offers Holt's bitter as a guest beer. Wilson's mild was rated above average, but was just pipped by the Holt's, nobody having the Wilson's bitter.

Leaving the **Lord Raglan** we passed the boarded up **Halfway House** on our way to the **Albion** (visited on our Abbey Hay stagger). This time we surveyed the public bar, having visited the lounge on our previous visit. The notice proclaiming "No children on pool table" solicited much speculation as to the reason for this

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CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1995

ban. Do they keep kicking the balls? Or falling down the pockets? A probable reason is, at 20 pence per game, it's the only pool table in Manchester that the kids can afford to play on. There was a mixed clientele, and the **Albion** is obviously the centre of a community, as shown by the well used notice board. We were assured by a patron that they never have any trouble. The saying "once bitten, twice shy" was followed by our member who tried Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter on his previous visit! We all drank the Chester's mild, which was rated above average.

Our next port of call was **Hickeys**, which used to be called **Gandsmoor**. Originally this would have been a 3 or 4 roomed Victorian (?) pub, but has now been knocked into one, but retaining much of the dividing walls, giving three drinking areas. This allowed a (very loud) band to play in the deeper recesses of one "room", while allowing the others to remain (relatively) quiet. Someone compared the bands lead singer to Noddy Holden on heat! (*How does he know? Ed.*) Two handpumps graced the bar, one labelled Banks bitter, the other only having a Banks clip. This prompted us all to ask for the mild, which we guessed was being served from the second pump. What a disappointment, there was no mild on, BUT there was Bank's Smooth! The bitter was rated below average. The place was very busy with younger (well pre middle age, which is young in my books) people, and seemed to be popular.

Leaving **Hickeys** we headed along Ashton Old Road for a pint of above average Boddingtons in the **Crown**. This is another two roomer, and again we sampled the public bar. The pub has a boxing theme, displaying many posters, pictures, cups and shields. For an unknown reason the seats and tables were arranged in serried ranks (a bit like being at school!) and placed diagonally across the room. Equally unexplained was the arse end of a fox hanging out of a hole in the ceiling (*suggestions on a postcard to O.T. Ed.*)

Moving on to the **Grove** we were again faced with two doors. Was this another traditional two roomer? No! Whichever door you use you end up in the same room! Internally there is a confusion of partitioned off areas (original rooms?), some at different levels, all clustered around the bar. To the extreme right is a way through into an extension which looks like a video arcade, and is in complete contrast to the rest of the pub. It was heartening to see that most of the young men sat in the video arcade were drinking pints of beer and not clutching the ubiquitous badge of youth, a bottle of Bud. The beers on offer were: John Smiths bitter (well below average), Boddingtons bitter (not sampled), Wilson's bitter (less than average), Wilson's mild (average).

To find our final destination we turned left off Ashton Old Road into Manshaw Road to visit the **Railway Hotel**. This is a basic, no frills, multi-roomed ale house, so it comes as no surprised that it is a Holt's establishment. There is lots of etched glass in evidence and there appears to have been no "improvements" to the building since it was built. Unfortunately there was no mild available, the landlord says he can not sell enough to keep it in good condition, which is a better policy than selling a sub-standard product. We retired to the News Room, as announced by the etched glass door, having ordered our excellent bitter. A log end dart board was in evidence, but not in use when we entered. If you are looking for an example of the archetypal street corner boozier, then look no further than the **Railway Hotel**.

In conclusion our route took us through a good selection of no frills, street corner pubs. The range of beers on offer was not extensive, but still covered a fair spectrum.

Why not join us on our next outing to Ardwick, Brunswick and Chorlton on Medlock which is on Friday 22 March. You don't have to be a CAMRA member to come along, but beware of the membership secretary! "Why bother?" I hear you ask. It gives you a chance to visit pubs in foreign parts, allows you to sample a variety of real ales and to chat with a bunch of jolly -social drinkers.

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Designs on Rothwells

As we reported last month, Rothwells on Spring Gardens in Manchester City Centre was a winner in the national Pub Design Awards for 1995, run jointly by CAMRA and English Heritage.

For once the judges detected a few optimistic trends in pub design with an increasing number of pub companies appreciating the benefit of a lighter touch where pub interiors are concerned, although many are still ripping out old fittings and replacing them with stained tropical hardwoods, hay bales or plastic shamrocks. In a heartening number of cases, though, pub owners seem to have discovered the value of old fixtures, fittings and furniture, and the typical refurbishment of a few years ago where care was lavished on preserving historic exteriors while at the same time gutting the interior appears to be on the wane.

Not everything is rosy, though. Many good old pubs are still being ruined in "a quest for a Disneyland parody of the Olde English Pub" say the judges. They also point to many smaller pubs being ruined to fit marketing concepts "inappropriate for the building, the area and the clientele." Irish theme pubs are singled out for criticism with their "Irish" fittings and memorabilia as superficial as the 'traditional' pedigree of the 'Irish Ales' sold". What will be the next bright idea the judges ask "A Geordie pub? A Bosnian inn? An Anglo-Saxon drinking experience?"

That said it is hoped that the 1995 awards will provide a much-needed benchmark that will hopefully encourage all pub-owners to do the right thing by their pubs and by their drinkers. The winners represent a broad range of styles showing how diverse the British pub is. And the financial success of the winners underlines what CAMRA and conservation bodies have been saying - that a sympathetic approach to the country's pub stock makes business as well as aesthetic sense.

Rothwells was joint winner in the Best Conversion to Pub Use category and was praised for being "splendidly converted ... into a lavishly appointed city pub." While many old features have been utilised at the same time "those new features that have been inserted are generally in the spirit of the building: not culled straight from a pub design manual, but boldly individual and distinctly contemporary..". It is worth pointing out the beer's good too, with Marstons Pedigree, Best Bitter and Owd Roger complemented by Batemans Mild and a beer from the Head Brewers Choice range. This well-deserved award was presented on February 12th and of course OT was there to record the event for posterity as our picture shows.



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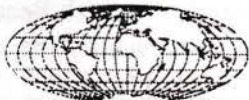
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A German Interlude with Tom Lord

At a High Peak CAMRA branch meeting early last year we were discussing where to go for the annual foreign trip. Several countries were mentioned and then someone said 'how about a return to Bavaria?' It was pointed out that Bavaria is a large place, and proficient drinkers though we were, we could not cover it in a week. Could he be more specific? As soon as the town of Bamberg was mentioned the matter was settled and people began dreaming of a return to the home of Rauchbier and the six home-brew pubs of the town.

Several months later, eight of us piled off the train, headed for the booked bed and breakfast at the Cafe Graupner (good reasonably priced accommodation right in the middle of Bamberg), dumped our luggage and made for the Brauerei Griefenklaue and the Schlenkerla to renew memories and tastebuds.

This was the start of a brilliant beer drinking week. We had decided to keep Bamberg and its home-brew pubs for evening drinking and during the day to explore the surrounding countryside to see what we could find. Using Graham Lees' beer guide to Munich & Bavaria as a source plus information from locals, we began to travel the area in search of the rarer and hopefully unknown brews. We achieved both these objectives.

Different beers every day; different breweries and pubs every day, always with the spice of not knowing what you might find in the next village. Hartmann Brau in Wurgau for example, not in a guide that we could find, but the pub and its brew house were spotted from a bus with the aid of a small local guide book casually picked up in another home-brew pub, the Drei Kronen in nearby Memmelsdorf. How many more small village breweries are lying undiscovered in this magical area for beer drinkers?

The beer styles available consist in the main of Pils, Helles, Vollbier, Kellerbier and speciality types such as Rauchbier (with a

smoky palate - not to some people's taste but for those who like it, it is a delicious treat particularly straight from a barrel chocked up on the bar).

Many of the small home-brew pubs produce their own specialities. An example of this is 'Stoffla' brewed at the Drei Kronen - another acquired taste.

The Kellerbier, from St Georgen Brau in Buttenheim was for many the highlight of the week. Dramatically hoppy - a truly wonderful beer. Some would describe Buttenheim as a one-horse village - bit it would be a one-horse village with a difference; two breweries side-by-side in a village the size of Compstall. This is not uncommon in this area of Germany.

For me, the best was the home brew Kellerbier from the Mahrs Brau, in Bamberg, drunk under the horse chestnut trees in the old cobbled courtyard outside what must be one of the most timeless home-brew pubs in Europe. What a place - brilliant!

A word of warning, 'the Ruhetag'. The 'day of rest' that all German drinking places fall prey to. Graham Lees' guide does give an indication as to which day of the week the place is closed for the 'Ruhetag'. Beware, it is a rough guide; though obviously accurate at the time of printing. We found pubs which were open on the indicated closed day and those which were closed when they were not supposed to be, including one which had a notice pinned to the door 'Gone to Majorca - back in a fortnight!' An advance phone call is useful.

Opening hours do seem to be erratic, at the whim of the licensee. For example, we arrived at a pub on the edge of Bayreuth at 1.00pm to find the landlady closing up. However she promptly postponed her trip into town to open up again, just for us, so we could get our share of the quite rare Glenk beers. The opposite can apply, however. At a home-brew pub in Forchheim with a 1.00pm Sunday lunchtime closing (yes, this is true!) we were refused beer at 12.45pm. Happily the other home-brew pubs down the road looked after us quite nicely.

This is such an interesting area for beer exploration that many other varied visits are possible for the future and looking further north the former East Germany, especially on the border areas with Bavaria, must surely be worth some exploration and research. Good beer brewing does not stop at borders.

As a postscript to foreign beer trips it does make you realise that many British beers at their best can stand up and be counted among the world's finest. Foreign trips allow you to make the comparison; and yes, there are poor quality foreign beers. As in Britain you have to search for the best and protect them. You always underestimate what you have at home. But whatever, don't take it for granted - you are luckier than most of the world's drinking population.

Now the branch debate starts about where to go in 1996. Any suggestions?

10

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The Hungry Horse

The name the 'Magic Pub Company' has cropped up several times in Opening Times due largely to their recent pub acquisitions from the Pennine Host group and CAMRA's obvious concern as to what implications this will have for drinkers locally. At the time, some of these pubs were trading well below their potential and most of them cried out for an injection of new ideas, a more traditional pub image and a more interesting beer range. In short more astute market awareness backed up by the confidence and capital to make it work was required. A fresh image was desperately needed.

The Hungry Horse in Cheadle Heath (formally Farmers) is now one of a chain of similar pubs in greater Manchester that is trying to offer something a little different to tempt pub goers back. As the name might suggest, the emphasis is on food, in fact some very large portions of food if you opt for their 'big plate special'.

The pub is split into two distinct areas, the restaurant bar area at the front and the lounge area behind (entrance on Edgeley road). As seems to happen all too often nowadays the interior decor is overdone, with too many mirrors, fishing nets, and silly little wall lights. Whilst the overall impression is cluttered (one of my fellow diners described it as 'like a junk shop') overall it is still an improvement on what went before.

The Hungry Horse has a standard range of four cask beers on sale, Websters Green Label (99p), Boddingtons Bitter (135p), Banks's Bitter (135p) and Draught Bass (140p). Over the course of our meal we tried all four beers with the tasteless Websters achieving a dismal poor rating, Boddies average, Banks's a credible good, and Draught Bass disappointing below average. The consensus on the Bass was that it was 'green' and lacking in conditioning. Licensees who sell a good pint of Bass have confided to me that in order to get the best from Bass it must be conditioned in the cellar for around two weeks. Any less than this and the quality of your pint is compromised.

There is a large menu with everything ranging from assorted big six baps (from £2-70) to vegetable & pasta bake (£3-95), crispy half chicken (£3-95) and lasagne (£3-95). However the house speciality, big plate specials, are served on enormous eighteen inch oval plates and are match enough even for those of us with appetites to challenge Desperate Dan. These include good cod almighty (£3-95), an enormous piece of cod around 18

inches in length and served with fries, carrots and peas, 20oz rump steak (£8-45) also with fries, carrots and peas, and Hungry Horse mixed grill (£6-95) comprising of rump steak, pork chop, lamb chop, gammon, lambs liver, sausage, eggs, tomato, carrots, peas and fries! Undaunted, we ordered mixed grill, 10oz peppered steak (£5-85 - steak prices are discounted by £1 Mondays to Thursdays) and cheesy tuna mornay (£3-95).

The steak was served in a cream and peppercorn sauce with petit pois, carrots and chips. The meat was medium to well done and married well with the good, hot peppercorn sauce. Meals like this would benefit with something to cut through the fat on the meat (such as onions) but despite this omission the meal still generated a very good and excellent value for money verdict.

If size is something that impresses you then you cannot fail to be impressed by the Hungry Horse mixed grill as it filled the huge plate. Good quality mixed grills are rare as it is difficult to ensure that all the various meats are properly cooked (not done to death) and everything is served hot. Whilst the veg was not fresh (possibly tinned or frozen), again this meal represented good value and produced a highly recommended verdict.

In comparison with the mixed grill the cheesy tuna mornay looked tiny beside it. Containing pasta shells and sweetcorn the tuna was served in a creamy mustard sauce, with mozzarella cheese, garlic bread and the obligatory side salad. Whilst pleasant, it did not generate quite the enthusiasm that the other meals had but was non the less very acceptable.

The magic pub company have achieved a good conversion with the Hungry Horse managing to walk the difficult tightrope between pub and restaurant. On the plus side the food is good and excellent value for money, but on the minus side the beer range is uninspiring. If after dining out you are the sort of person who finishes their meal and still feels hungry, then a big plate special at the Hungry Horse might just suit.

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MARCH '91

The front page carried news of the campaign to save Stalybridge Station from the developers. CAMRA had met BR's Estate Surveyor, who stressed that BR had a completely open mind about the way forward, and if licensee Ken Redfern put in a bid to lease part of the buildings, it would receive serious attention. However, BR would insist that a degree of work, both internal and external was carried out - the amount involved could probably only be raised by Ken taking a brewery loan, which he would rightly refuse to do. Ideally BR should ditch their plans, renovate the buildings themselves, and grant Ken a lease so that he could carry on as before. Readers were invited to support the campaign by sending BR the postcard that was enclosed.

When Greenalls had announced their intention to get out of brewing, one of the issues criticised was the rather lack lustre range of guest beers that they intended to make available to their tied houses viz: Tetley Bitter and Stones Bitter. Things looked set to improve however, when they announced they would be taking 2000 barrels a year from the new Warrington based Coach House Brewery, which was due to start production in May.

A brew under the name of Spitfire had started to appear in the local free trade. It had been produced by the Kent brewers Shepherd Neame to mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, with a donation of £10 to the RAF Benevolent Fund for

every barrel sold - the final total raised was the magnificent sum of £27,811! (Although it was originally intended to be only a commemorative special, Spitfire proved so popular that it is still being produced today, in 1996.)

The month's "Stagger" covered Withington, and readers who know the area can check on the changes that have taken place since then. It started on Barlow Moor Road, West Didsbury, with the Barleycorn, (Allied Breweries) serving Tetley Bitter, Burton Ale, and the seasonal Walkers Winter Warmer. Then followed in this order:- Midland (Whitbread) Boddington Bitter; Marston's Pedigree; Railway (John Smiths) No real ale; Old House at Home (Whitbread) No real ale; Waterloo (Wilson's) Webster's Bitter; Wilson's Bitter; Orion (Whitbread) No real ale; Berties (Whitbread) Chester's Bitter; Trophy; Victoria (Hydes) Mild & Bitter; Albert (Wilson's) Wilson's Bitter; Withington Ale House (Wilson's) Wilson's Bitter; Webster's Choice; Turnpike (Sam Smiths) No real ale; Red Lion (Marstons) Bitter and Pedigree; Cotton Tree (Greenalls) Bitter & Original; Manor House (Allied Breweries) Tetley Bitter; Burton Ale.

Spencers Ales

Guest beers are becoming more common in our pubs. Some are supplied by the owning brewery and some come from the bigger wholesalers. The unsung heroes of the guest beer market are the small independent agents who will travel wide and far to get their customers something new, often providing a door to door, or should that be brewery to pub, service. One such operator is Phil Spencer of Openshaw.

Operating from his home address, Phil has been operating as a beer agency for some 2 1/2 years now, having been made redundant from local wholesalers Coopers of Glossop when they were taken over by Mitchells Brewery. Making use of his contacts while at Coopers he established that a one-man operation would be viable and has made steady progress since. In common with many one-man operations Phil sources beer from one end of the country to another (guest beers at the Olde Vic, Stockport, one of his long-standing customers have recently been from Bridgewater in Somerset and Berwick-on-Tweed!), driving down to the breweries in his van and delivering to the pubs on his return. He is particularly proud of the fact that he can guarantee fresh beer - some of the bigger outfits sometimes have beer hanging around in depots for lengthy periods of time.

So far this isn't a particularly uncommon picture. What does single Phil Spencer out, though, is his policy of commissioning his own beers from a variety of micro-brewers. They are sold under the Wolstenholme label and have become a familiar sight in local freehouses in recent years. Not that these are the breweries own beers sold under a different label - Phil provides a profile of what he wants (colour, flavour, strength) and the beers are specially brewed for him. This is good for Phil's trade and also good for the brewers - he takes 5-7 barrels a time and pays cash up front. Brewers used so far include the likes of Ryburn, Daleside, McGuinness, Banks & Taylor, Marston Moor and Rudgate. Next in the pipeline is Wolstenholme Oast House brewed by Beartown in Congleton. It's a 4.2% bitter with a Holts-like aftertaste and is available from this month.

It's not all been plain sailing - there was some trouble with vandalism to his van before Christmas but Phil is looking ahead with confidence. The Wolstenholme brews are available throughout the country, thanks to a couple of reciprocal trading deals, and his agency has clients throughout the area. So what's next? "I'd like my own pub" says Phil, "just look at the range of beers I could put on"

Phil Spencer can be contacted on 0161 231 3572

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High Peak Featured Pub

MARCH 96 by Geoff Williamson

The Dandy Cock, Disley

The pub nestles alongside the busy A6, which it pre-dates, and is situated in the centre of the village. The building is reputed to date from about 1740 and the pub's name originates from a previous association with cock-fighting - the pit used for this purpose can still be seen alongside the pub. The double fronted rendered exterior brandishes the unmistakable Robinson's livery. The interior has been altered in the past, but has little changed in recent years. The central bar divides the pub into two, isolating the restaurant from the drinking area almost so completely as if they were separate rooms. The small lounge bar is the most endearing part of the pub, with its deep bay window overlooking the centre of the village, its comforting open fire during the winter and its many adornments of pictures, brasses, ornaments and mirrors.

Jon Greenwood and his partner Gill, have only recently taken over the tenancy of "The Dandy", but are well-known to regulars as Jon has served under previous licensees as bar manager for several years. In addition to Robinsons Best Bitter and Hatters Mild, Old Stockport Bitter is also available and is currently on sale at £1 a pint between 5 and 7pm on weekdays. Food has always formed an important part of the pub's attraction over the years, and an extensive menu is available featuring a wide range of styles to suit all, from soup and bread, and other reasonably priced bar snacks, to a full a la carte menu, specials are changed regularly and displayed on a wall-mounted blackboard. The new chef who joins the pub this month, although recently in Whaley Bridge, originates from New Zealand, and this is sure to be reflected in a varied menu.

The hills around Disley provide ideal walking country with Lyme Park, the Gritstone Trail, the Goyt Valley etc all on the doorstep. A circular walk provides an ideal opportunity to sample the local pubs like "The Dandy" on your return and before heading for home via the regular train and bus services which connect Disley to Stockport and Manchester, making the area easily accessible.

*The High Peak & North East Cheshire
Branch Contact is Ralph Warrington
(0161 368 3624 (h) 0161 439 7502 (fax))*

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...Pub Ne
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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE



The Caledonia in Ashton-under-Lyne town centre now has Frederics on handpump alongside Robinsons Best Bitter and Hatters Mild. In a town centre largely dominated by brash theme bars, the survival of this traditional local is worthy of celebration, and it's well worth calling in en route to the Station.

JOIN CAMRA NOW - FORM ON PAGE 19

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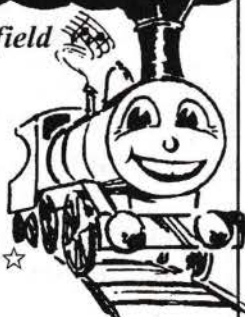
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Hydes

As readers will have seen from the ad in last month's OT, Hydes launched their latest seasonal beer late last month. Billy Westwoods Bitter has gone into much of the tied estate and looks to be the most successful of Hydes new beers to date. The first brew sold out in just four days and pubs have been re-ordering not one but three, four or even five barrels.

The success is a fitting tribute to, and would be much appreciated by Billy Westwood himself. He was the mashroom foreman at Hydes for many years. He started work at the brewery in 1902 aged 16 and retired some 52 years later in 1954. He was held in the very highest esteem at the brewery and he was the only person there allowed to wear a white bib and tucker uniform with a white jacket.



He taught brewing skills to Neal Hyde (the current Chairman), Chris Hyde (current Vice-Chairman) and their father Tommy Hyde. After his death the funeral cortege stopped in front of the brewery, the traffic was stopped and brewery employees who were all assembled there stood in silence for two minutes.

Billy's work would have been thirsty work so his beer is a light, clean, refreshing beer with a surprising degree of body and

flavour for a brew of this strength - 3.2% ABV. Its popularity is down not only to its superb drinkability but also its price. In the Hydes managed estate it will retail at just 99p a pint.

Stout Surprises

Some you win and some you lose. Out goes Carlsberg-Tetley's 'Samuel Allsops Stout', axed due to poor sales. Apparently one of the few pubs to sell it in any quantity was Manchester's City Arms. A superb dry stout, the disappearance of this beer is a minor tragedy. However, in comes "Murphy's Real Oyster Stout", the latest special brew from Whitbread. Oyster stout was a common-ish beer style before the war and Whitbread now claim to have 'recreated the distinctive silky smooth flavour' of the style. They're not wrong either as samplings so far have revealed this to be a rich luscious beer, smoothly drinkable at 5% ABV. And yes, it has got oysters in it. The equivalent of 100 a barrel, apparently. Quite where these are introduced in the brewing process and what the residue is like are things perhaps best not considered!

Beartown Birthday

Believe it or not, Congleton's Beartown Brewery is a year old this month. It was March last year that the brewery was launched with the 4.2% Premium Bitter, now renamed Bearskinful, followed by Ambeardextrous, an excellent, slightly smoky, 3.8% bitter and later last year Bruins Ruin (5%) made for a trio of successful brews. Certainly on a couple of visits OT has been very impressed by the set up and the quality of the beers.. Regular customers now include Congleton Town Football Club where beer consumption has soared since Beartown beers went on sale. Spencers Beer Agency has also commissioned one of their 'Wolstenholme' beers from Beartown and the specially brewed Oast House will be available by the time you read this.

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Copy Date for April Issue of Opening Times is March 22



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FOOD 11.30-2.30 & 5-7 Mon-Fri

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CURMUDGEON



Designer Rip-Off

CAMRA has often, and rightly, been heard to complain about the ever-increasing price of beer in the pub. We shouldn't let this blind our eyes, though, to the fact that, despite price rises, real ale is still by far the best value alcoholic drink on the bar.

Draught lager, for example, is normally at least 20p a pint more than ale of the same strength, and Guinness, which is no stronger than many ordinary bitters, is notoriously pricey. But the most extortionate prices in the pub must be those charged for all the half-pint bottles of trendy designer lagers which fill the fridges behind the bar. You're lucky to get much, if any, change from two quid for a half-pint, twice the price of the draught equivalents, which aren't cheap to start with.

It's not as if most of them are any good, either. Some are inferior British-brewed versions of beers which might be halfway decent on their home territory, like Stella Artois or Heineken Export. Others are inferior British-brewed versions of beers which are worthless anyway, like Budweiser, while some such as Ice Beer are modern designer inventions in which the concepts of quality and authenticity have no meaning. The people who drink this stuff really must have more money than sense. Does anyone honestly believe that it impresses others to be seen to be drinking overpriced rubbish?

Often, the only drinkable thing in the fridge is Beck's Bier - not, maybe, the best German beer, but nevertheless a very decent product, brewed according to the German "Reinheitsgebot" pure beer law, and every bottle imported rather than licence-brewed in Britain. It's no cheaper than all the rest, but if the only alternative is badly-kept Websters or Worthington I can occasionally be tempted to splash out.

Serious and Silly Brewers

Following my piece on beer exhibition pubs a few months ago, some people have asked where the micro-breweries would be without them.

Well, there might be rather fewer brewing four different beers with silly flavours every month, which would probably be no bad thing. But I don't believe that serious breweries can be happy to depend for their survival on selling inconsistently-kept beer hundreds of miles from home, where the punters don't get a chance of a repeat purchase.

Those micros which enjoy more than fleeting success build up a core of regular, loyal trade in their home regions. No decent micro has anything to fear from a few less handpumps - in fact they should encourage it as offering a better showcase for their products.

Three-Minute Pop

I'm informed by a beermat that Caffrey's takes an average of three minutes to settle. "What else this good only takes three minutes?" it asks. Well, for a start, how about any classic Motown song from the sixties?

Or indeed, moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, more or less anything else that isn't actively unpleasant and doesn't involve Caffrey's. Compiling a full list could easily take up a long and absorbing evening in the pub, over a few pints of proper beer like Holts, Hydes or Robinsons.



Hear Ye All! News of Forthcoming BEER FESTIVAL

In this year 1996AD the Festival of St George will be celebrated with a **GRAND BEER FESTIVAL** from Midday on Thursday April 18th to Evening's end on Sunday April 21st. The festivities will take place at a most reputable ale house within the Parish of Ashton-U-Lyne known as **THE WITCHWOOD** situated on Old St. 20+ **GUEST ALES** comprising of **TRADITIONAL CIDER, MILD & BITTER** will be served by *Lusty Wenches, Knights of The Realm & Court Jesters.* **LIVE ENTERTAINMENT** in the **GRAND HALL** will include performances by **MIKE HERON'S INCREDIBLE ACOUSTIC BAND** a Tribute to The Jam courtesy of **ENGLISH ROSE** a Most Entertaining Big Band **SOUL PARTY** hosted by **BLIND MELON CLARK & THE PINEAPPLE CHUNKS** & much Mirth, Music & Madness will be summoned by **BIGGLES WARTIME BAND.** Persons carrying **POX** or **PLAGUE** shall be refused admission & **STOCKS** will be erected for the benefit of anyone who treats the law of the land with contempt. 20th Century Communicators may call **0161** for more info & **FREE** programmes. **344 0321**

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THE KINGS ARMS

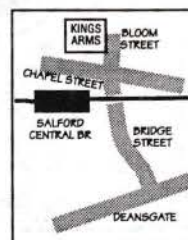
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Constantly Changing Range of Beers on 13 handpumps



10th OLDHAM Beer Festival (Weneth Park Music Rooms) 29 - 31 March - 35 ales

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!

March 96

Saturday 9th - trip to Marsden and Riverhead brewpub. Catch 10.55 train from Victoria.

Monday 11th - social, Blob Shop, High Street, Manchester City Centre. 9.00pm onwards.

Thursday 14th - Monthly branch meeting at the Friendship, Hyde Road, Gorton. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 16th - Pub of the Year presentation to the Davenport Arms, Woodford. Minibus departs Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.30pm. Phone 477 1973 to book.

Monday 18th - Social at the Railway View, Byrons Lane, Macclesfield. Catch 8.00pm train from Piccadilly.

Friday 22nd - ABC Stagger (Ardwick, Brunswick and Chorlton-on-Medlock). Starts 7.00pm Kings Head, Chancellor Lane or join at 8.30 at Mawson, Kincardine St (just off Brunswick Street).

Monday 25th - Social at Strawberry Duck, Crabtree Lane, Clayton. 9.00pm onwards.

March 96

Wednesday 27th - Pub of the Month CANCELLED DUE TO RETIREMENT OF LICENSEES.

Friday 29th - Minibus trip to Beer Festival at Bhurtpoor Inn, Aston. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 6.30. Phone 477 1973 to book a seat.

Monday 1st April - Two-way social: Railway, Wellington Rd North 9.00pm, Midland 10.00pm (both Stockport)

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

Monday 11th - Monthly branch meeting, the Crown, Glossop. Get there by 8.30pm.

Sunday 17th - Woods walk. Starts 9.00am at the Beehive, Looms. Circular 7 mile walk.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planer

The Best

in the North West

Steak & Ale II

Following the conversion of the Carousel in Reddish, Scottish Courage have rebadged and refurbished the Smithy in Cheadle Hulme as a Steak & Ale House.

Although at opposite ends of Stockport, both pubs are remarkably similar in that there was little competition and yet a spark appeared to be missing. Both date from the 1960s and both have large car parks. Unremarkably, therefore, the refurbishment both seem to have come from the same drawing board.

The Smithy is a bigger pub and it is pleasing to note it has kept its vault, dominated as before by pool tables. The popular children's play area has also been retained. The handpumped beers are Theakstons Mild, Best Bitter and XB plus Websters Yorkshire Bitter, presumably kept on to satisfy some locals (but for ho long?). Altogether an improvement with a special gold star for the introduction of cask mild. JF

Lass O'Gowrie

After a week's closure for refurbishment, the Lass O'Gowrie in the City Centre re-opened under the 'Hogshead' banner on Feb 12. The new designation means that in addition to the homebrewed beers, a wider range of guest beers will now be available in the pub, these included Fuggles Imperial and the new Murphy's Oyster Stout from Whitbread and Caledonian Brewery's Deuchars IPA. Another Whitbread beer, specially produced for the Hogshead chain will be a permanent fixture, this is the oddly named 'The Abroad Cooper', a potent 6.1% beer from the Cheltenham brewery. Old Hazy is the permanent cask cider, also on handpump.

The refurbishment has been largely cosmetic, involving a complete redecoration, new tiles on the floor near the bar and the installation of a new bar back. The bar has also been opened up at the front by the removal of the pot shelf. An air-conditioning system has also been installed.

The cellar brewery has also had some attention with all the fermenting vessels being re-clad. All the beers are now racked into barrels, and not served from cellar tanks, as before. Long time licensee Joe Fylan is also hoping to extend the brewing operation with the introduction of more different beers and special brews which will also hopefully be made available to other pubs.

This month sees a promotion for the Five Nations Championship with four of the participants being represented by their own guest beer - Murphys Oyster Stout, Caledonian 80/-, Brains Championship Ale and Flowers Original. Joe is thinking of brewing another himself for France!

The Lass O'Gowrie will this year have notched up 13 years as a brewpub, making it one of the oldest established micro-breweries in the region., all the more remarkable when you consider the fate of other brew-pubs set up by the national brewers - someone at Whitbread must have a soft spot for the place.

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DRAUGHT BASS and Guest Beers

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17



Irene and Staff welcome you to
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Bowden Street, Edgeley

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
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Guest Beers

changed weekly

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5th RHYL BEER FESTIVAL 25-27 APRIL - 40+ BEERS & CIDERS- RHYL TOWN HALL

MANCHESTER MATTERS

It's been another quiet month, with not even a new "Irish Theme" bar to report. (Mind you, on St Patrick's Day Lees are set to become the first of the Manchester independent breweries to jump on this particular show-bandwagon, in their home town of Middleton - I await the results with interest).



by Rhys Jones

However, one trend that hasn't gone away is that of pub closures in East Manchester, and the latest victim is the Birch Arms in Gorton, currently boarded up and on the market. With new housing behind it, one or two big employers nearby, and visible from the new Ring Road, the Birch probably has more potential than one or two of its immediate neighbours, and it would be good to see somebody take it on. Also in Gorton, the Royal Oak has Old Henry, from Whitbread's Castle Eden brewery on handpump.

In the City Centre, the Peveril of the Peak has for some time been selling a guest beer, with such brews as Moorhouses Pendle Witch ensuring that, as in days of yore, you can now again enjoy top quality ale here to complement the splendidly traditional surroundings. At the Smithfield, gravity-served Inch's cider was recently seen in place of the

handpumped Westons. At the Athenaeum, however, the beer engines have been out of use on at least some recent occasions, with "smooth" keg Tetleys offered as a less than acceptable replacement - order with care! Also, look out for Greenalls' new-look Pack Horse on Deansgate set to reopen on February 29th.

The Station, Didsbury

A somewhat belated but nonetheless warm welcome to Gary Barton and his fiancée Saxon-Louise (Sax) who have now officially taken over the managership of the Station in Didsbury.

Gary is no stranger to the area having worked at the Red Lion in Withington for five years, three and a half of which were as assistant manager. (In fact it was Gary who received the award when the Red Lion was voted Pub of the Month in January 1995.)

Gary and Sax are determined to maintain the character of the pub as a locals' favourite with a cosmopolitan feel complete with crib games, impromptu sing-alongs and darts - any new darts players would be particularly welcome!

The quality of the Marstons beers, including the range from Head Brewers Choice together with Batemans Dark Mild, is consistently good, resulting in an increase of regulars using the pub.

We wish them all the very best.

COPY DATE MARCH 22

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COME TO THE ALL YEAR ROUND BEER FESTIVAL

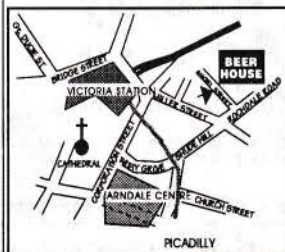
The Beer House **OPEN ALL DAY MON - SUN**

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REAL ALES ON OFFER including
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THEAKSTONS XB and BEST BITTER,
MOORHOUSES PENDLE WITCH +
8 EVER CHANGING GUEST BEERS
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PLUS A RANGE OF TRADITIONAL CIDERS,
DRAUGHT BELGIAN KRIEK, LEFFE BLONDE,
HOEGAARDEN & MANY BOTTLED BELGIAN and other
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Happy Birthday To Us



On March 16th we present our Pub of the Year Award to the Davenport Arms in Woodford. It also happens to be CAMRA's 25th birthday.

CAMRA has achieved a lot in its first 25 years - more than most people realise. Our biggest achievement has been in convincing the public to stand up for their tasty traditional real ales. In 1971 everyone was adamant that real ale would disappear, and be replaced by a handful of cold tasteless processed beers, produced by the national brewers. What changes you may think - in the 1970s we had Watneys Red, in the 1980's Fosters and in the 1990s it's Caffreys.

What's changed is that despite the blandishments of the big brewers, CAMRA has persuaded drinkers to insist on real ale, publicans to go back to stocking it, and brewers to continue producing it. There are independent brewers who were on the verge of quitting - we gave them a reason to continue. Brewing giant Watneys (remember them?) had given up brewing real ale altogether. Now just about every brewer has to brew real ale to survive.

The next extraordinary thing has been seeing new people enter the business. Small brewers have sprung up, producing distinctive real ales aimed at discerning drinkers. Now there are over 300 new small brewers offering a wider choice. Locally we have Oak, Millgate, McGuinness, and Bank Top in Greater Manchester, and just over the border the likes of Coach House, Beartown and Whim have made names for themselves. It is these smaller companies which innovate, they have certainly been at the forefront of the revival of cask stouts and porters for example.

CAMRA has always sought to defend the traditional pub and here our success has been more patchy. While some pubs, like the Griffin in Heaton Mersey were saved from demolition, the pub scene in East Manchester has been devastated and battles still rage over pub such as

the Plough in Gorton and the Imperial in Manchester City Centre. Behind the scenes, though, we have encouraged the listing of pubs of historic interest and we have persuaded English Heritage to produce special guidelines for pubs.

CAMRA took the lead in giving customers information about their beer, we campaigned for sensible licensing hours, against high prices, and for guest beers. The fight continues on many of these fronts today.

Now customers see a range of real ales in their local and ask "What has CAMRA ever done for me?" Even when we tell them, they ask "Well OK, but why should I join?"

On the social side, we need only mention the 145 beer festivals we run every year. Locally there has just been one at Castlefield and throughout the year they are held in Oldham, Wigan, Ashton, Bury and of course, our very own successful event at Stockport, now in its tenth year. Local branches run lively social programmes, and we like to think that Stockport & South Manchester has one of the liveliest. Want to work at a festival or get in cheaper? Joining CAMRA allows you to do both.

Above all, we campaign. For better choice of beers, for better quality, full measure pints, to save your local from closure. Traditional beer is still under threat, many brewers are pushing the new "smooth" kegs for all they are worth. We don't want to see real ale become a highly priced speciality product, which only a few can afford. We don't want to see it confined to a minority of specialist pubs.

There is still much to be done and we need you to help us carry that campaign into the next century.

CAMRA membership is normally £12 a year. Until 30th April it will only be £10. There is a membership form below. Just clip it out and send it off. It will probably be the best £10 you've spent in a long time.

19

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP- OFFER

(0T143)

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~~ **£10** JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

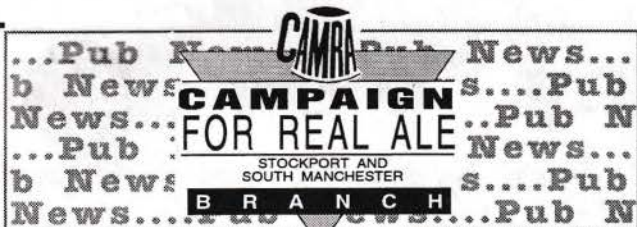
SPECIAL CAMRA BIRTHDAY PRICES STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

Lorraine York, 54 Lime Grove, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 1PF VALID IN MARCH ONLY

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.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6





An anonymous answerphone message took us to task for writing off the Harp & Shamrock in the City Centre. Our informant tells us that the pub has simply closed for 'redevelopment' and may well re-open. Anybody else know anything?

Pauline Maddocks has left the Thatched House, Stockport, leaving her partner Amanda Dawson in sole charge.

At Lees Britannia in Beswick, we welcome new licensee Dawn Normanton. After a period of some instability in the pub, Dawn aims to attract customers both old and new to this wonderfully traditional little boozier. At a recent CAMRA social, both mild and bitter were in cracking form.

We hear that the Old Roebuck in Altrincham has Taunton's keg Cidermaster on fake handpump - a shame to see this product, hitherto chiefly linked to Bass in our area, creeping into the former Wilsons estate. Needless to say, CAMRA recognition will elude the pub until this abuse ceases.

Rumours circulate that Holts are in negotiations to buy up to 10 pubs from Greenalls. It is suggested that some pubs in the package may not meet the brewery's requirements and be sold on. Holts are looking for large, potentially high-volume outlets, it is thought. Rumours that the Kingsway in Levenshulme is one of those under consideration are unconfirmed.

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One or two changes for the worse in the Edgeley area - the Hollywood on Bloom Street was down to just one cask beer when OT popped in recently, Theakstons Bitter, and a pretty indifferent pint at that. Down on Northgate Road, the Gardeners Arms no longer has Holts Bitter and is down to just Websters on handpump. Even worse was the position at the Bulkeley Arms on Brinkway where no real ale at all appeared to be on sale.

The Blue Bell on King Street West, Stockport, is a pub that's worth a visit. There seems to have been a conscious effort to either reverse or mitigate the worst of the alterations which have taken place here over the years. In particular the false ceiling in the lobby/bar area has been taken down and the Victorian mosaic floor uncovered. It is now possible to get an idea at least of what an impressive pub this must have been when it was built. On the beer front there is just one cask ale on sale - Wilsons Bitter.

Copperfields on Adswold Lane West has evolved into a superbly traditional pub, despite its unpromising architecture and layout. Robinsons Best Bitter is now permanently on sale at £1.20 a pint. Is this the cheapest Robbies in Stockport?

In a surprise move, the Head of Steam at Deansgate Station has closed. Owner Tony Brookes says that the concept hasn't worked at that particular location and the pub will re-open as the 'Rocket', a 'young persons live music venue'. With the benefit of hindsight, the Head of Steam was always going to have its work cut out. The concept, combining real ale and a railway theme is a clever one, Deansgate was the wrong station - others are at main stations, Euston, Huddersfield, Blackburn, but Deansgate is essentially a suburban station despite its City Centre location.

Whitbread continue their retreat from the inner city and have put another clutch of pubs on the market. Up for grabs this time are the Magpie in Ancoats; the Gold Cup, Chorlton-on-Medlock; the Ducie Arms, Longsight; and the Benchill, Wythenshawe.

Out in Macclesfield, the Bears Head on Mill Street re-opened last Christmas as the Filigree & Firkin. A typical Firkin pub with bare wooden floors, church pew seats and barrels for tables, this is a new concept for the town. The licensee is Donna Mayel who has won a Pub of the Year award twice in Exeter, her previous location. The beers are the standard Firkin range and are brewed at the Finch & Firkin in Liverpool. Here they are called Frilly Knickers (3.6% and £1.35), Silkworm (4.3% and £1.45) and the ever-present Dogbolter (5.6% and £1.70). Tetley Bitter is also available. On several recent visits the beers have been reported as on excellent form and the staff friendly and efficient.

The demise of cask conditioned Boddingtons Mild seems to have continued since the Greenalls take-over. One recent pub to drop cask mild is the Farmers Arms in Brinnington. This is a disappointment, particularly following the popularity of mild in the pub during last year's Mild Challenge.

The Midway, Newbridge Lane, Stockport, has dropped Courage Directors and replaced it with a guest ale. Not so far away, Byrons on Great Portwood Street is closed and boarded up. This tended to be a marginal pub in recent years and the closure is no great surprise.

Gateley Wine Bar is now all keg but with three excellent Hydres pubs in the area, local drinkers will still have no problem getting a drop of the real thing.

Cask mild is no longer available in the two Whitbread pubs in Reddish, the Houldsworth and the Railway. The last three pubs in the area still selling cask mild are the Thatched Tavern (Tetley), the Union (Robinsons) and the newly converted Carousel (Theakstons).

In Shaw Heath, the Plough has added another beer to the range. Moorhouses Pendle Witch was introduced as a guest beer over the Christmas period and proved so popular that it was kept on. When OT called it was more than acceptable condition.

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