

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING CAMRA

No:
150

FREE

TIMES

OCTOBER 1996

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FREE EVERY MONTH

"The Real Ale of Manchester"

Each year CAMRA stages a Day of Action in September and this year the theme was quality, driving home the message that what we need is not necessarily more real ale, but better real ale.

Two issues were pushed -

★ The promotion of tasty and distinctive real ales above the bland mouthwash all too often foisted on the pubgoer

★ The need for high standards of cellar skills in the pub trade.

One local brewer has been making particular strides in both directions over the past 18 months and so the three branches of CAMRA that cover the City of Manchester made a 'Quality Award' to Hydes' Anvil in a presentation at the brewery late last month. The citation was for

'dedication to quality in traditional draught beer' and recognised Hydes' efforts over a wide area, from the introduction of seasonal beers to cellar training for licensees.

Receiving the award, Hydes' MD Adam Hyde explained that the company's aim was to become "not the cream of Manchester or even the double cream, but simply 'the Real Ale of Manchester'" "To this end there is a continuing emphasis on quality throughout the company's operations right the way through from using the highest quality ingredients, having up to date plant (the latest investment has been in high-tech fermentation controllers to ensure consistency of brew) and committed people. To emphasise the brewery's continuous efforts and attention to detail, Adam used the occasion to announce that Hydes had recommenced using their own pure Manchester well water instead of treated mains water.

Hydes have also taken the initiative by holding regular cellar



Manchester CAMRA celebrates Hydes Anvil. From Left, Keith Egerton (Trafford & Hulme), Rhys Jones, (Chairman Stockport & Sth Mcr), Hydes MD Adam Hyde and Paul Mason, (Chairman North Mcr CAMRA)

training sessions for new and existing licensees. This initiative has been launched by deputy head brewer Stewart Thompson and training manager Charles Cook and will set a unified minimum standard across all Hydes outlets on all aspects of beer quality and preparation.

On the beer front, the commitment to quality and variety continues. The improvement in the brewery's mainstream beers, Mild, Light and Bitter, is already well documented and the programme of seasonal ales continues, although the summer beer, IPA, barely lasted past August Bank Holiday. Good though it was, it seems policy dictated the acceleration of the seasonal beer programme and hopefully an autumn special will be with us shortly. The reappearance of Billy Westwood's Bitter, the runaway success from earlier in the year is also strongly rumoured.

There are improvements, too, at one of Hydes' relatively few "flagship" pubs, the Grey Horse on Portland Street in the City Centre. The tenancy has been awarded to Lil Duffy, a licensee of many years' experience who has wasted no time in getting to grips with the pub. The green interior is no more - an improvement in itself - and the beer quality is now tip top. Another major change is that the pub now opens all day seven days a week, having previously closed on Sundays.

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**CAMRA'S 1997 NATIONAL
GOOD BEER GUIDE
IS NOW AVAILABLE**
- DETAILS PAGES 12 - 13



OPENING TIMES 150

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THE HINDS HEAD

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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1994

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Last month saw a Day of Action by CAMRA taking 'quality' as its theme. This is a long overdue initiative because bland and boring real ale is undoubtedly a real problem for the Campaign. It would be a hollow victory for CAMRA if every pub in the country had handpumps but the majority were selling the likes of Flowers and Websters. But bland mass-market real ales are only part of the problem.

The real enemy of real ale is a bad pint of the stuff. Nothing is more likely to put off the casual real ale drinker than two or three successive pints of warm cloudy rubbish. While keeping good quality real ale isn't that difficult it remains sadly the case that some licensees just don't seem prepared to make the effort - and resent it when this is pointed out. In the long gone days when beer was a cheap commodity this 'pay up, sup up and shut up' attitude on the part of some publicans was perhaps understandable. Today when the price of beer is approaching luxury goods status in some pubs that just won't wash.

But it's not just some publicans who are at fault. CAMRA itself must take some share of the blame. Looking at past issues of the Good Beer Guide you could form the impression that in some parts of the country the quality of a pub is judged by how many handpumps are on the bar. It is a rare pub that can sustain nine or ten beers on tip top form - the consistently excellent Crown on Heaton Lane and the Beer House in Manchester are two of the exceptions which prove the rule. For most pubs the message must be quality and not quantity.

John Clarke

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OPENING TIMES WORLD WIDE WEB
PAGES ON: <http://www.u-net.com/camramcr/>
(The New Look Opening Times pages will be launched in late October)

CAMRA HQ WORLD WIDE WEB
PAGES ON: <http://www.camra.org.uk>

Pot O' Beer



After a long period of closure, the Harp & Shamrock on New Mount Street in the City Centre (just off Rochdale Road between the Marble Arch and Beerhouse) has come back to life as the Pot of Beer.

Manager is David Cooper who is running the pub on behalf of new owners Ward Taverns of Ashton-under-Lyne (their other pub is Williams freehouse in Ashton itself). David used to run Williams and saw the potential of the pub during a six-month stint as relief manager at the nearby Marble Arch. Peter and Wanda Ward agreed and also saw the at the pub was small enough to take on and renovate themselves - Peter is an engineer by profession so all of the structural and other work could be done 'in-house'. During their 7 years in the trade they have tended to buy pubs like this which are trading badly and in need of refurbishment. "We like to do it the hard way" laughs Wanda. Despite a major overhaul, the pub is essentially unchanged in layout but now boasts exposed timber and brick surfaces in keeping with its mission as an alehouse. Six draught beers are sold - three on handpump and three from an ingenious stillage behind the bar (only the front of the casks are visible as they are stored in a temperature controlled room behind the bar). On opening night, the handpumps dispensed Boddingtons Bitter, Marstons Pedigree and Robinsons Dark (yes, really!) Mild, while Morlands Old Speckled Hen, Robinsons Frederics and Wild Redhead were available on gravity. The Dark Mild and the Boddingtons are likely to be permanent while the other beers will change with an emphasis on guests from in and around the north west.

Future plans include the introduction of food at lunchtimes and early evening (when the kitchen is ready) and reflecting Wanda's family background they hope to introduce some Polish dishes to the menu. Next summer should also see the opening of a beer garden.

Well placed between the Marble and the Beer House, and an attractive pub in its own right, the Pot of Beer deserves major success and despite the nearby competition looks set to get it. If you've not been yet, get there soon. The pub is open from midday to 11pm Mondays to Saturdays and is closed on Sundays. JC.

Charity Corner

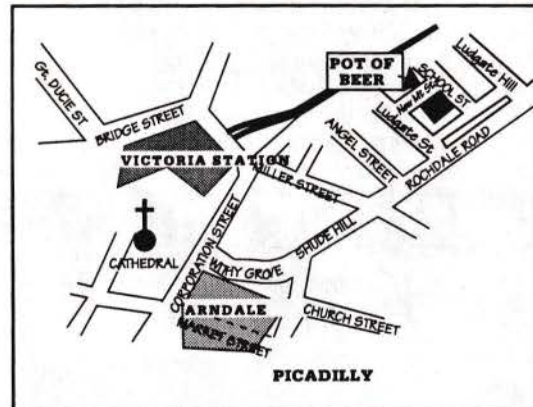
Congratulations to the Crown in Gorton, which over August Bank Holiday managed to raise over £1000 towards a local children's pantomime and play facilities through a varied programme embracing face-painting, bouncy castle, disco, karaoke, and lots more. We're sure the Crown isn't the only place that has this sort of thing, but for a monthly publication it can often be difficult to get the details in advance. So, licensees (and other pub-based charity organisers) - please let us know!

POT OF BEER

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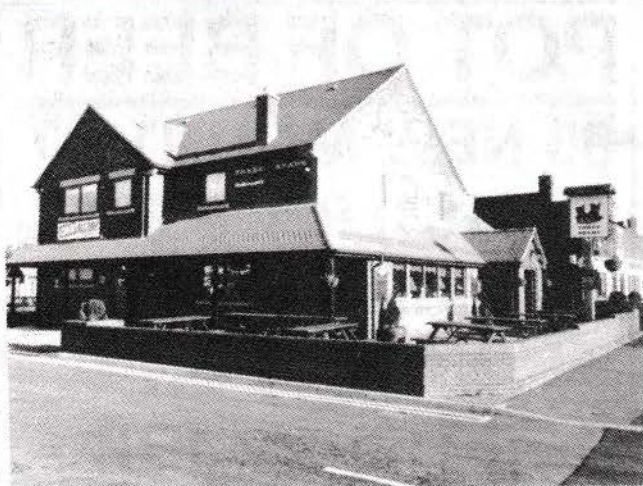
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Pub Of The Month

OCTOBER

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

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for October is the Three Bears on Jackson's Lane, Hazel Grove. Opened in Spring 1994 on a site which had been owned by Robinson's for many years, the Three Bears is unusual for a newly-built pub in being a fairly modest size. The interior is divided up into three distinct areas around the central bar, giving a cosy and comfortable atmosphere.

Licenseses Kath and Dave Bailey have been there since the start, and have worked hard to establish a friendly pub that is welcoming to all age groups and combines a strong local following with attracting customers from a wide area. It's open all day seven days a week and is rarely less than busy. The Robinson's beers - Frederics and Hartleys XB as well as Hatters Mild and Best Bitter - are consistently good, and there's a wide range of high-quality home-made food. It's also one of the very few pubs in the area using oversize glasses for handpumped beers.

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The Three Bears shows how a modern pub need not be a soulless barn, but can be genuinely appealing and characterful, and most of that is down to the commitment and involvement of the licenseses. The presentation will be on Thursday 24 October from about 8.00pm onwards - make sure you get there early, as it's not a big place, so it's sure to be standing room only.

Robbies Recruitment



Local brewers Frederic Robinson last month launched an initiative to mark CAMRA's 25th anniversary this year.

In a move described as "both welcome and generous" by CAMRA representatives, a recruitment campaign for our organisation was launched throughout the company's tied estate. Specially printed membership forms made available to every pub enabled those joining to obtain a voucher for a pint of Robbies at 1971 prices, that's about £1 off. In addition new members would receive a copy of Robinsons' guide to all their pubs. Our picture shows representatives of North Manchester and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA launching the membership drive with Dennis Robinson (centre).

Kingsway

Holts have recently completed a three-month refurbishment of the Kingsway in Levenshulme and it has to be said that the end result is very impressive.

The ground floor has basically been gutted and the dreary old Berni Inn-style layout swept away to be replaced by a fine traditional pub. A central bar now serves three separate rooms - a large, well-appointed vault; a comfortable, spacious lounge and another lounge area which leads on to the restaurant. The decor and furnishings are comfortable and traditional in the best sense of the word, no tacky mock-Victoriana here! As we went to press the upstairs function room was also being completely refurbished.



Licensesee Bob Whittaker is delighted. In his five years at the pub it has had four owners and Holts are the only ones who have spent any real money on the place. He therefore hopes to expand operations with the introduction of pub grub and bar snacks for those who don't want a full restaurant meal. The function room continues to be well-used for wedding receptions and the like.

Holts Mild and Bitter are available on handpump at the brewer's usual knock-down prices (and while we are sure no OT readers would actually drink it, did you know that Holts lagers are also ridiculously cheap - Diamond is 5% and £1.20, incredible).

The Kingsway is open all day (from 11.30am) Monday to Saturday and all permitted hours on Sunday.

OPENING TIMES

LETTERS



From Stuart Davies and Simon James:

CAMRA formed in 1971 with the aim of promoting "beer brewed in the traditional style, from traditional ingredients by traditional processes and served in traditional ways."

In the seventies and early eighties the movement had a strong, youthful, fun loving membership, but in recent years has been described by some as "beer anoraks". Why has this been? Perhaps the answer lies in the disinterest by branch members in change.

The youth of today enjoy drinking in contemporary surroundings or "trendy bars", drinking overpriced "premium" bottled beers of poor quality. Why do they do this? Possibly because of the lack of choice of real ale. There is no reason why CAMRA should not promote real ale in these bars, the interest is there, proved by the success of Sand Bar, Grosvenor Street and Bar/Bar 2, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, but it seems the "trendy bar" is deemed a no-go area for many branch members.

If CAMRA continues to ignore potential membership from the young, it risks not only becoming an insignificant, powerless group which the big brewers will ignore, putting us back in the same position as 25 years ago, but at worst, extinction.

Think back to how things have changed over the past twenty-five years and what the future holds in store. **MOVE FORWARDS, DO NOT STAGNATE.**

From Frank Wood:

No doubt many an eyebrow was raised at the reference in your September issue to the proposed "disciplining" of a regular contributor to and distributor of *Opening Times*. As the so called "informant", I am equally intrigued having also learnt of my fate when reading the magazine.

The editor will, of course, be aware that all pub news is submitted by the branch and that all contributions are discussed at branch level. I am happy to accept that, where a mistake has been made, it should be rectified and unreservedly endorse the spirit of the apology given. I do however query the necessity to attribute the mistake to a contributor who, it will be noted, was not directly credited with the article in the August edition. All reputable newspapers and periodicals accept mistakes made by the contributor as those of the publication - to do otherwise, in my opinion serves merely to dilute the apology and bring the integrity of the magazine into question.

That said, perhaps the editor can now satisfy the readers curiosity and state by who's authority and by which means, my punishment is to be administered!!!

The *Opening Times* Editorial Committee have been convened and a suitable form of punishment will be decided upon. All will be revealed in the next issue (our Bavarian member has been muttering the word "shot", but this is generally considered marginally extreme). - Ed

From Glen Geldard (Ye Old Vic):

Re *Ye Olde Vic*, Chatham Street, Edgeley. I was interested to see that I was included in an item in the latest copy of *Opening Times*, but was disappointed that was not the full story and was a little negative as to the future of the establishment. This is especially disappointing when in most issues you are bemoaning the demise of hostelrys that in some cases are only just viable.

Thus, I enclose some information that will enable you to publish more positive reports, because as a fellow drinker where ale and ale houses are a special interest - I can only assure you that establishments I own have only gained from my involvement.

With regard to the *Olde Vic*, I intend to promote as wide a range of real ales as the customer volumes allow and the manageress I have in mind for the premises has over 10 years experience in handling real ales and should be a worthy successor to the lovely Kay who I agree has done a sterling job in the pub. I hope to build on the success of Kay's earlier days, not destroy the business.

Whilst grateful for any publicity, I hope that there will be

positive and encouraging comments when I am included. **(This is certainly good news about the Vic - when Glen has taken over OT will be running a feature on the Vic)**

From Steve Sharples:

What a great magazine, the best I've seen in a long time. But can I raise two points?

One of the things that irritates me, and a lot of others, more than anything is people talking about money. In a restaurant review, we have all seen it "I had mushy peas (£1) and my friend has steak and chips (£1.50). In Mark McConachie's column "Stagger" he has fallen in to the same trap "Lees Mild and Bitter (£1.06 and £1.10)" is a point in case. Is this in 'happy hour', a special promo, on a night when beer is cheap or is it the pubs normal price?

Does the price really matter? I say not. Why? Because most people will go in to a pub not just because the price of the beer is £1.06 a pint but for a whole list of reasons; where the pub is, do they like the decor, is it friendly, does it sell the beer they drink and like, is it their sort of pub? The list is endless.

So a request please leave the prices out of your columns.

The second point is more important.

We all know that CAMRA supports real ale and "Opening Times" is about real ale pubs but CAMRA is also a member and a supporter of EBCU and "Opening Times" carries ads for European beers. It came as a surprise to read in Rhys Jones's column that "Praguefive sells no real ale" correct, but any one reading that would assume wrongly that the bar just sold keg beer. What does it sell? Beers on draught include Hoegaarden White and Staropramen at a price that is cheaper than most other pubs in the area. In bottle beer from Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic, Holland and many other countries.

Most of the beers that I saw rated 3 or 4 stars in Michael Jackson's new *Pocket Beer Book*.

Praguefive might not sell real ale but my god does it sell some wonderful beers.

The Gladstone

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We reported in August that the Gladstone on Hillgate, Stockport, was set to re-open under new management. A progress report is overdue.



The new licensee is Paul Cunningham who is helped by his girlfriend Alex Marshall. Paul reports that trade has so far been quite acceptable if a little varied with busy weeks almost alternating with quiet ones. Why the pub should be quiet is a mystery. The classic 1920's interior gleams and sparkles under Paul's loving care, as does the beer! Three cask beers are sold, Burtonwood Mild, Bitter and Buccaneer, a premium 5.2% golden beer which has always had a good market in the Gladstone. Paul is struggling to turn over the mild, though even with small 9-gallon containers. This was a problem encountered by Paul's predecessor Keith Sutton and it could be that the mild will be replaced by other Burtonwood cask beers on a rotational basis.

The long-term aim is to get a proper catering kitchen but at the moment food is restricted to pies at lunchtime, although the 'pie and a pint' combination is proving very popular. Tea and coffee is available as well, and this is much appreciated by Saturday lunchtime shoppers. If you've not been yet, get down there. The pub is open 12-3 and 5-11 Monday to Friday and all day at weekends from 12 noon.

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5

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STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Our August Stagger took us around Didsbury on the very hot and humid night of August 16th. We started off at the **Gateway**, an imposing 1930's roadhouse prominently situated on Kingsway. Photos inside showed the magnificent Art Deco interior of the original pub, but sadly most of this was swept away in a refurbishment a few years ago after it had been allowed to become rather down at heel. We had hoped to find Hydes' latest seasonal beer, IPA, but it wasn't available, and the clip for its predecessor, Billy Westwood's, was still on the font about a month after it had been discontinued. Hydes Mild and Bitter were on sale, dispensed by electric pumps into oversize glasses (the only examples of either feature during the evening), and both were above average, if nothing out of the ordinary.

Crossing Kingsway, our next call was the **Parrswood** on Parrswood Road, another big inter-war pub that has been extensively altered inside. Going through the front door into the cavernous lounge you are confronted by a huge pair of twisted imitation marble columns. The badly-sited pool table near the door had thankfully been removed since a previous visit. The beer range included the increasingly rare Boddingtons Mild along side Boddingtons Bitter, both of which were reasonable enough; Theakstons Bitter wasn't tried.

We then cut through the campus of the Metropolitan University to the **Didsbury** on Didsbury Road next to the Fletcher Moss gardens. This seems undecided whether it's a "Country Carvery" eating house or a young people's pub, although the loud music suggested the latter was winning tonight. Real ales available were Websters Bitter, which we didn't try, and John Smiths Bitter, Theakstons Bitter and Courage Directors, all of which were warm and distinctly below average. We noticed a customer sitting at the bar precariously perched on a stool jammed on top of another one turned upside down, and speculated how long it would be before he ended up flat on his back on the floor.



The **Olde Cock** next door is a pub which has been converted by Whitbread to an alehouse. It's another spacious, knocked-through pub with more of a student clientele than the previous three. We had heard reports that the beer range had been reduced since the arrival of a new licensee, but there still seemed to be a choice of eight or ten real ales, including independent brewery beers alongside the usual Whitbread range, although regrettably the traditional cider had disappeared. Most of us went for the Hop Back Summer Lightning, which turned out to be the second-best beer of the night. A few were tempted by Whitbread's Triple Hop - one of their seasonal beers - thinking it might be particularly hoppy, but in fact, following the usual Whitbread policy, the three different hops had been used very sparingly and it was only just above average.

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We continued into the centre of Didsbury village and the **Royal Oak**, the first pub of the evening to have a crowd of drinkers on the pavement outside, as well as a throng inside, which made it difficult to appreciate the renowned qualities of the multi-roomed interior. In terms of beer quality, this pub has often seemed to be a victim of its own success, with the beer turning over too quickly to have time to condition properly, and this certainly seemed to be the case tonight, when the Batemans Mild and Marston's Pedigree were frankly disappointing, and the Double Amber, Marston's latest Head Brewer's Choice, only just above average. The one lucky person who tried the Marston's Bitter found it extremely good. We spotted that the insidious tide of nitrokeg had now reached the Royal Oak in the shape of Marston's Smooth Keg. We doubled back a short way and fought our way through another crowd on the pavement into Greenalls' **Crown**, where we did at least manage to find a seat inside. Although it has been much extended, this pub still retains a number of separate areas and has an attractive tiled floor around the bar. The Greenalls Bitter was about average, the Original slightly better, and Tetley Bitter wasn't tried. Perhaps some more imaginative guest beers would go down well here.

We crossed Wilmslow Road again to the **Albert**, Didsbury's only backstreet pub, tucked away behind the Royal Oak near the dairy. Some of the interior walls here have been removed over the years but it still has something of a multi-roomed feel, and wasn't quite as packed as the two before. We noted that the beer prices had come down noticeably since the previous licensee moved to the Royal Oak. Hydes' IPA was available here, and very nice it was too, as was the Bitter, although the Mild was not quite so good. This pub was converted from electric meter to handpumps a few years ago and unfortunately the oversize glasses were replaced by brim measures at the same time.

The **Nelson**, just around the corner of Barlow Moor Road, is nominally a Websters pub, but offers Holts Bitter as a guest beer, and not surprisingly we all plumped for this rather than Yorkshire Bitter. While it was pleasant enough, it fell well short of what this beer is capable of at its best, and was even a touch bland. This is a small pub, surprisingly shallow behind the road frontage, and was a little quieter than some of the others.



We decided to give **Squires** opposite a miss - life's too short to fight your way to the bar for a half of Websters - and continued to the **Dog & Partridge**, the second Greenalls' pub of the night, but in this case one that has been given the alehouse theme. It was difficult to work out what was on sale, as the blackboards seemed to advertise many more beers than were actually available on the pumps. We

mostly ended up with Thwaites Court Jester, which wasn't really up to much. A feature of this pub is that they provide peanuts in their shells, and encourage punters to throw the shells on the floor, creating a crunchy carpet underfoot. Whether this adds character or detracts from hygiene I leave it to you to decide.

The densest throng of the night, both inside and out, belonged to **O'Neills**, Bass' new Irish conversion from the unlamented Times Square, and getting served seemed a remote prospect. Had we got in, I suspect that Guinness rather than Worthington Best Bitter would have been the preferred order for many.

So we ended up at the **Station**, the small Marstons house at the north end of the village. Along with the **Albert**, this is one of the few Didsbury pubs that retains the feel of a genuine local, and with its small cosy rooms has a very pleasant atmosphere, making us feel much

more at home than in some of the previous pubs. The beer didn't disappoint either - Pedigree wasn't tried, but the Bateman's Mild and Marston's Bitter were both pretty good and the Summer Wheat Beer, a different Head Brewer's Choice from the Royal Oak, was excellent, and comfortably the best beer of the night.

As always, there are only the impressions of one group of people on a particular night. Why not go along yourself (preferably not on a Friday) and form your own opinions of the beer and the pubs?



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HYDES ANVIL ALES



BOOK REVIEW



City Life Cafe Bar, Restaurant and Pub Guide to Greater Manchester. Third edition.

Greater Manchester Publications Ltd. 146 pages, £3. The latest edition of this jaw-breakingly titled guide sticks to the tried and trusted format of its predecessors. While it's attractively produced, copiously illustrated, and a good read, this does mean that many of the niggles from previous years remain - there's no index, the maps are poorly thought out, there's too much name-dropping ("saw Eddie Shah here recently" - so what?), and there's a grotesque cultural cringe towards the cafe bar.

However, the pub selection is good, with East Manchester now represented in the shape of the Vale Cottage, though still with some surprising omissions, such as the City Centre's Old Monkey. The entries, whether for pubs, cafe bars, or restaurants, manage to give a good thumbnail sketch within a small compass. And there's a classic apology which deserves to be quoted in full: "Last year we quoted the landlady as saying 'We don't sell a lot of Frederics, it's farting ale!' This should have read 'fighting ale'".

This is, I think, primarily a book for eaters out, and works very well as such. It's good to see the region's pub culture given prominence in such a volume, and while CAMRA purists will doubtless have fun finding errors of fact or judgement, if you visited pubs solely on the basis of this guide you might miss some gems, but you wouldn't be led seriously astray. Recommended as a restaurant guide; worth a look as a pub guide.

RPJ.



This month sees a valedictory article by retiring Pub Grub writer Stuart Ballantyne and a taster from our new contributor John Purbrick. First - Stuart:

A few days ago I found myself in Scruffy Murphy's on Grosvenor Street in Manchester. In view of observations in OT about cask ale being withdrawn (which led to the spiking of my food review of the place), I was surprised to see cask conditioned Tetley bitter on sale. Just to make certain it was on and that it was cask conditioned, I ordered a pint, and yes, it was cask conditioned and very nice. As a result I have dug my food article out of the waste paper bin and made one or two small amendments to the original article to bring it up to date.

Like it or not, the theme pub now seems to be an on going and permanent feature of pub life. Such is the desperation of many breweries and pub owning chains to entice customers into their pubs, that they will consider introducing almost any theme, no matter how unsuitable or inappropriate. Over the years these themes have ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. Sadly far too many have fallen into the latter category rather than into the former.

I was a little surprised therefore to learn of a theme pub that was actually attracting favourable comments. My interest was further drawn when I learnt that it also claimed to sell authentic Irish food. I am of course talking about Scruffy Murphy's, the former plumbers merchant, now Irish theme pub on Grosvenor Street in Manchester. This sounded to me like an obvious dead ringer for a pub grub article, so a short time later I arranged to meet a friend there for a late afternoon/early evening meal.

A lot of money has obviously been spent on the conversion. Outside, it has the appearance of a bank of small shops with a pub in the middle. Inside, the pub has a central bar with dining area to the right hand side and other discrete partitioned off drinking areas to the front and left of the bar. To convey that traditional Irish image most of the furniture, fixtures and fittings are made predominantly of timber but with few concessions made to creature comfort (most of the seating is not upholstered). Pictures of Irish scenes adorn the walls together with Gaelic signs and the inevitable old advertising posters and prints promoting long since defunct and rare stouts and whiskeys. For those still unconvinced, this is accompanied by a stirring dose of Irish folk music to drive the whole package home. The menu has a distinct Irish flavour to it. Dishes include boxty's from £3-25 (traditional Irish potato pancakes with various fillings), ballybunnon £1-55 (Irish Cheddar with scallions), Irish lamb stew £3-85, and county Sligo style ham £3-95 (shank of ham cooked in a watercress stock). In addition, favourites such as all day breakfast £4-50, beef in Guinness £3-95, and various assorted starters and snacks are offered. At this point I ought to introduce a word of

caution, food is not always available all afternoon and into early evening - ring first to check before making a special trip. On the cask beer front, Tetley Bitter (£1-46) is the only real ale available but it was perfectly OK on this visit. Sunday to Thursday the Tetleys is discounted to £1-30 a pint.

My companion opted for an Irish coffee (£2-10) which served both as a superb aperitif and excellent insulation against the bitterly cold weather we knew we would face when we stepped outside.

I ordered a chicken and ham sauce boxty which was served with real (not packet) mashed potato (the champ) and a side salad of celery, peppers, cucumber and lettuce. The filling was thick and creamy with potatoes, ham, and mushrooms. In short an enjoyable light meal and far healthier than much of the food available in some of Manchester's other pubs.

My partner chose the beef in Guinness pie. This was served on a large round plate, accompanied by a generous helping of fresh (not frozen) veg including cabbage, carrots, peas and mashed potato. The pie topped with puff pastry contained sizeable chunks of beef cooked just right, tender, but not done to death. Whilst the Guinness was barely detectable (if at all), this did not detract from a refreshingly simple but enjoyable meal. There is no doubt that the Scruffy Murphy theme has a lot more going for it than most other pub themes. For a start it at least attempts to give you the impression that it is Irish with Irish cuisine, drinks, and Irish music. On the other hand it is still far removed from the traditional Irish bars that I have drunk in when visiting Ireland. No doubt OT readers are more than capable of making up their own minds!

"You're a chef, you're interested in beer, so why not write the pub grub feature" says Stuart Ballantyne. "OK, I'll give it a go". (Three months later - ed)

So, on a gorgeously sunny Monday in September my wife and I enter the Sir Robert Peel on Castle Street, Edgeley. It reminds me on this occasion very much of a village pub, and although it is 1.30pm there is still plenty of activity in the kitchen. On the wet side, first, I had a pint of Stones Bitter and it was better than I expected. Other cask beers are Greenalls Mild and Bitter. My wife (Janine) had Labatts so no comment required!

Food next, and Janine's first choice, Steak & Kidney, is unavailable so she goes for today's special, pork chop in a tomato and red pepper sauce at £2.95 and this comes served with chips, fresh carrots and cabbage. The menu, whilst not being overlong does offer a variety that is creditable for a pub of the Bobby Peel's size and my choice is Lamb Madras served with half rice and half chips for £2.25. It is piping hot and typical of the basic pub madras style. We both agreed that the meals offered good value and the portions were generous. Sweets are also available but pressure of time meant that we had to decline. So, if you're shopping in Edgeley, why not pop in and have an above par, excellent value lunch.



John's Tip

to improve the curry, serve fresh chips and use basmati or pilau rice.

8

Terry and Kath welcome you to the
Circus Tavern

Manchesters Smallest Pub
No Music, No Jukebox,
No draught Lager,
just Tetley Bitter
in a Great Atmosphere



A Tetley Heritage Pub
Portland Street, Manchester City Centre

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WELCOME YOU TO THE

TOM THUMB'S

54 KING STREET WEST, STOCKPORT
★ KARAOKE - WED, FRI, SAT ★
★ DARTS & POOL TEAMS -
both Mens & Ladies ★



My comments re the GBBF in the last issue raised a few eyebrows, and one or two useful suggestions. Hopefully I can get around to relevant symbols by next month, but now we also include ratings for cider/perry and.... security. Which brings us to Peterborough...

Peterborough. Riverside, August 20-24

Largest beer festival under canvas.... Yes, well. Initial impression was good, with the beer laid out in two tents running off the 'entertainment' tent. But frankly this is a schizoid fest. At lunchtimes it IS a beer festival, and a pretty good one - large range of beer and reasonable cider selection (though rather sad foreign beer bar), beer quality pretty high (one phenolic infection noted), reasonable staffing levels. Friendly. In the evening though it is a music fest with beer. Big name bands (even I had heard of) and two ambulances in constant attendance. Whats Brewing reported the local paper as saying it was trouble free. Not in fact. Relatively trouble free, yes - indeed VERY trouble free for a music fest, but five cut heads in two nights is too much for me, frankly. Go at lunchtime (although it closes ridiculously early). In fact, its just too big for the branch to handle. Security, such as it is, is an outside firm. Didn't stop the food stalls being raided overnight though, did it! And as for protecting punters.... Oh yes, food. Discarded Thai food everywhere (and they looked and smelt even less clean than at GBBF), so stuck to safety first with Melbourne's excellent sausages again. Ratings: **Cost £££; Beer Range ★★★★★; Beer Quality ★★★★★; Cider ★★★★★; Food ★★★★★; Entertainment ★★★★★; Foreign Beer ★★★★★; Security ★★★★★; Campaigning Value ★★★★★; Programme ★★★★★; Overall ★★★★★**

Burton, Town Hall, 19-21 September

Consistently among the best of the smaller festivals. Pleasant layout in three rooms, and for its size an interesting range of beers, but with the emphasis on local brews (there are two schools of thought on this). Music/entertainment can be overwhelming because of the room size. Programme is quite good, with a reasonable amount of info, and council provided catering is poor. This year there was bread and cheese (sold without plates as takeaway from different stalls - so as not to conflict with the 'official' catering) which was totally brill but not signposted, so many ate poorly before finding the true delights. Foreign beer solely Bavarian (hurrah!) but a disappointment for Belgian/Czech beer lovers. Still, great selection. Beer quality fairly good even saturday lunch (use of cooling system). Signing should be improved. Ratings:

Cost £££; Beer Range ★★★★★; Beer Quality ★★★★★; Cider ★★★★★; Food ★★★★★; Entertainment ★★★★★; Foreign Beer ★★★★★; Security ★★★★★; Campaigning Value ★★★★★; Programme ★★★★★; Overall ★★★★★

Birmingham, Aston Guild of Students 26-28 September

New Festival, and very difficult to find, appalling signing, indeed even after getting into the venue I wasn't sure it was on. Programme a simple sheet. Beer range however, varied and (Fri Lunchtime) in good shape. Possibly 'cos the casks were nearly full! Very quiet (due to difficulty of finding it?). Very visible membership stand (big plus), cats protection (or something) but virtually nothing in the way of CAMRA products. Melbourne Sausages and crepes the ONLY food. Good but a choice is nice. Derek's fabulous Bavarian beers again. See above comments. Ratings

Cost ££; Beer Range ★★★★★; Beer Quality ★★★★★; Cider ★★★★★; Food ★★★★★; Entertainment ★★★★★; Foreign Beer ★★★★★; Security ★★★★★; Campaigning Value ★★★★★; Programme ★★★★★; Overall ★★★★★

Finally a word about the two regular local summer pub festivals - Beer House and Station, Ashton. Beer House in two rooms, stillage, cheese, barbie, good range. Very good at least 8.5/10.

Ashton. Wot, no marquee? Given that, it was fine and well worth attending, with a good range but having the staff chase down the cellar for individual pints that were on, but not on handpump was a right pain at busier times, and a lot of the beer was a tad green.

Robbies Goes U.S.

Robinsons have won their first major export contract with an order to supply bottled Frederics to Boston Beer Brands of Boston, Massachusetts. The 5%ABV beer, known as Frederics Premium Beer in the UK, will be branded "Frederic Robinson Premium Ale" for the American market.



Launched in bottle last year, Frederics is an all-malt brew (some of the other Robbies beers use brewing sugars) and uses top-class aroma hops. After brewing the beer is "dry hopped", a process involving adding extra hops to give the beer more flavour and hop character - rarely done for bottled beers. Frederics is of course named after the founder of the Unicorn Brewery and was first introduced as a cask conditioned beer and despite only limited availability in the tied estate has gone well in the free trade. This year it won a bronze medal in this year's Brewing Industry International Awards from an entry list of 59 similar strength products. Our picture shows brewery director Dennis Robinson with a bottle of 'export' Frederics.

Jo and Pat from the NELSON INN

Didsbury

invite you to try their
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Websters & Holts
Cheapest Beer In Didsbury
Open All Day
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(Tues) & Music Quiz (Thurs)

(Less £ and ☆ and more ★ the better). Next month: Keighley and Stoke (possibly Nottingham and Bedford) and more pub fests.

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER '91

Sales of real ale are booming - and that's official! This was the message on the front page, which quoted an authoritative survey by the Morning Advertiser, the licensed trade's daily newspaper. During the previous twelve months, cask beers had increased in popularity by 59% - by comparison, 30% of landlords thought that keg beers had taken a drop.

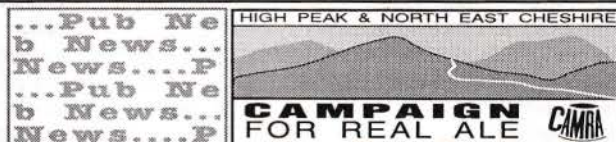
Even some of the big brewers had admitted that cask beers were the big growth area for the future, and both Courage and Whitbread had reported impressively increased sales for their traditional beers. Locally, many of the new-wave micro breweries were struggling to keep up with demand, and West Coast, Oak and Moorhouses had all had to take steps to increase their production. This boom in interest had also been reflected by an increased in CAMRA membership, which had passed the 30,000 mark for the first time in its 21-year history.

The October 1991 issue of Opening Times contained a "preview" programme for the Openshaw Beer & Cider Festival, dubbed the Octoberfest. There were brief details of the various beers, ciders and perries, also a map showing the venue, Openshaw College, and the opening hours and admission charges.

Last month had seen the appearance of a new cask beer in selected pubs run by the BodPub Co. This was "Old Shilling", a low gravity beer (3.1%) which had been specially commissioned by the Pub Co to sell at a value for money price, which would in effect compete with Holts. The beer cost 89p a pint, and with a price rise due from Holts, the beers were expected to be on a par, at least in price, if not in strength. Officially, "Old Shilling" had been specially brewed by "a regional brewer", but Opening Times understood it had been produced by Mansfield Brewery.

There was a rather off-beat item under the heading "Revenge of the Party 7". (It sounded as if this should have appeared on April 1st). Apparently, the latest pressure group to emerge on the pub scene was campaigning to "Free the Watney's Party Seven". It claimed that the Party Seven was "a great British institution", universally recognised as a free invitation to any party. There was, however, one small snag - Watney's had stopped brewing. Finally, several items of pub news:-

The Flea & Firkin at All Saints was brewing again, with a qualified professional brewer in charge; Banks's had bought a former children's home on Palatine Road, and were going to spend more than £1/2million recreating a Victorian tavern; Holt's Claremont on Claremont Road was being refurbished.



Previously the 'Steak Out' and 'CJ's', the *Trough* in Audenshaw has (thankfully) now reverted to its original name since a change of management.

The **Roaring Winds** at Bredbury Green, Romiley, has always been a pub best avoided by cask ale lovers, previously offering only keg beers. The Gibbs Mew acquisition of Centric Inns, the pub company which in turn had acquired the pub from Bass, has changed matters for the better. Now under new management, the 1960's built estate pub is currently selling Salisbury Best Bitter (4%ABV) at £1 a pint.

The **Oddfellows** in Hyde has now reopened after a period of closure, but remains in Vaux ownership.

The **Peaks** in New Mills now sports a guest beer (in addition to Websters Yorkshire Bitter). On a recent visit the beer on offer was Dovedale Bitter from the Black Bull Brewery at Fenny Bentley.


Rumour has it that the licensee at the Duke of York, Romiley, is soon to depart the pub to take up an appointment at Hebden Bridge. Watch this space!

Tameside News

Major Wild's Cafe Bar, which has opened in the premises of the former School House bar-restaurant on Stamford Square in Ashton, is the second branch of this locally based chain (the first is in Middleton). It shows many affinities with Wetherspoons - the surprisingly similar letter W logo, the open-plan look (though with wooden floors rather than Wetherspoons' favoured carpet, and the all-day food policy - but these do not extend to the policy on music, which is live some evenings, loud and recorded most of the rest of the time. It's good to see a place like this majoring on real ale, with four on handpump - Pedigree, Boddingtons Bitter, Worthington Bitter, and house beer "Major Wild's" from Phoenix (a very pleasant 5% brew at £1.59 a pint). While the location is arguably a little far from the centre to capture the youth market presumably targeted (the central-sounding Stamford Square is in fact halfway to Stalybridge), this is a well-conceived venture which is well worth a visit.

The last weekend of the month will also see two major in-house beer festivals at Ashton Pubs. Wetherspoon's Ash Tree will be participating in that group's national "Halloween Beer Thriller" from Wednesday 30th-Saturday 2nd with up to 30 guest ales including 10 brewed for the event. Meanwhile the Witchwood will be staging its annual beer festival from Thursday 31st-Sunday 3rd, also taking Halloween as its theme, for the second year running. This is in fact one of two annual beer festivals held at the pub and will feature the usual, and highly successful, combination of "Real Ale and Proper Music" Over 50 cask beers and ciders will be on offer and entertainment includes Stax Of Soul on 31st (admission £5), Tower Struck Down on 1st (£1) and on 2nd a Halloween Ball with the Cheatles (£2). Free festival programmes listing all beers will be available for personal collection from Friday 25th, or by post with advance ticket orders taken on 0161 343 3542.




10



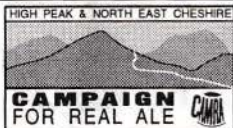
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October Featured Pub: Sportsman, Hyde

The Sportsman in Hyde is situated at 57 Mottram Road (A57) at the junction with Lumb Lane. It is a few minutes walk from the town centre and market place, and close to Hyde United football ground and Tameside Leisure Centre, and on the bus route between Hyde and Glossop.



The Sportsman is an imposing building originally built in 1835 in a distinctive architectural style. Externally it is largely unaltered from the original with a pleasantly sturdy brick and stone frontage. The original brewery owners were Threlfalls who later were taken over by Whitbread and latterly the pub served keg beer only for many years. In recent times it had cask Chesters Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter but things have now most definitely taken a turn for the better.

The pub has moved out of the Whitbread shadows and has become a genuine free house in the hands of Geoff and Carmel, who are the new licensees. Overnight the Whitbread beers disap-

peared and were replaced initially by Whim Ales' Hartington Bitter. Geoff now has three other beers alongside the Hartington, which at the time of writing were Magic Mushroom Mild, Black Bull Brewery Dovedale Bitter and Black Bull Special. Plassey Bitter (at just £1.25), Whim High Peak Pale Ale and Cains beers have also featured, all on handpump, and Geoff plans to operate a changing guest beer approach. The Sportsman is also the only pub in Hyde to sell traditional farmhouse cider, again on handpump. Regular in-house beer festivals also feature in future plans. The pub has a large interior which retains many of the original features including bench seating, a staircase with original wall tiling and the old room indicator used in waiter-service days. Might this be reinstated? One original feature which was hidden was revealed when the carpet in the bar area was removed and brought to light the original black and white mosaic tiled floor.


Both lounges are comfortable and the separate vault is down-to-earth enough to feel at home in, complete with log-end dartboard. The pub also has a meeting room available.

The Sportsman provides a considerably welcome addition to the range of beers in Hyde town centre. Whilst Hyde is not short of cask conditioned beers from a number of larger independent brewers and national brewers, what has been sadly lacking in the past is a pub able to serve a range of changing good-quality guest beers, particularly from smaller breweries without being tied to the products or limited guest beers of one brewery.

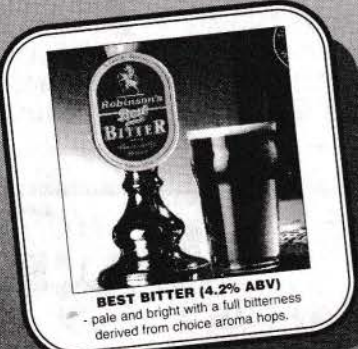
An increase in the variety and choice of cask conditioned beers can only be applauded and whilst everyone has their favourite beers to which they return time and again, there is a lot to be said for regularly visiting a pub where there is still an element of discovery and delight at the changing beers available for sampling.

The Sportsman will be able to provide this and is thoroughly deserving of support to achieve this objective. TL.

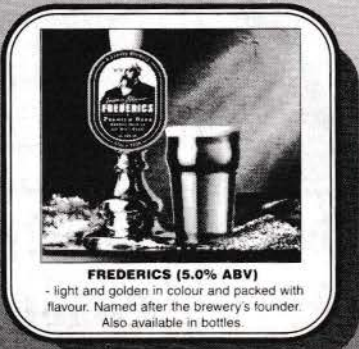
The Sportsman is at 57 Mottram Road, Hyde. Tel 0161 368 5000.




THE Robinson's COLLECTION




BEST BITTER (4.2% ABV)
- pale and bright with a full bitterness derived from choice aroma hops.




FREDERICS (5.0% ABV)
- light and golden in colour and packed with flavour. Named after the brewery's founder. Also available in bottles.




XB (4.0% ABV)
- a smooth bitter ale with a malty taste. First brewed in the Lake District.



HATTER'S MILD (3.3% ABV)
- brewed from quality malt and hops, it's the best cask conditioned, light mild around.



OLD STOCKPORT (3.5% ABV)
- rich golden body with a refreshingly hoppy taste and lightish alcohol content.



OLD TOM (8.5% ABV)
- smooth, dark and mellow. Brewed from a recipe almost as old as the brewery itself.

C H O I C E B E E R S

ROYAL OAK, DIDSBURY



Good Beer

Throw out the old, bring in the new...the 1997 Good Beer Guide is published this month and is bigger and better than ever. First published in 1974, over 50,000 copies are sold each year and the Guide has become part of the established publishing calendar alongside the likes of Whitaker's Almanac, Wisden and Who's Who, making an excellent birthday or Christmas present.

The strength of the Guide is that it simply focuses on the quality of beer in pubs. Compare this with other pub guides where beer has just a walk-on part. In the GBG it is the heart and soul. In short, no beer, no Good Beer Guide. It is based on a simple philosophy: if a licensee cares about the quality of the ale in the cellar, loves and cherishes it, then everything else in the pub falls into place. A publican who cares about his or her ale is unlikely to sell poor food or tolerate tatty bars and smelly toilets.

Editor Jeff Evans has been in the hot seat for seven editions now, but he's not resting on his laurels. This year the guide has redrawn county maps and separate listings highlighting each county's independent brewers. The brewery section also continues its remorseless expansion - last year 57 new breweries featured and they have been joined by an incredible 68 newcomers this year.

The breweries section is just one part of the guide, though. The main, one of course, is that devoted to the pubs, chosen on the quality of the ale they serve. Around 5000 are included and over one third of these change each year. This, coupled with the constant changes on the brewery front mean that you just can't rely on an old guide.

The GBG is more than just a guide, though. Each year there are a variety of articles on subjects relevant to the current state of the beer and pub scene. This year sees articles on the EU review of the tie, real cider, quality and conditioning of beer, and the increasing number of novelty beers from brewers big and small. This year CAMRA also uses the GBG to launch its National Inventory of historic pub interiors which must be preserved, there are over 200 of these and the list is produced in full, with numerous local pubs featuring.

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HEATON NORRIS,
STOCKPORT
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- ★ Beer Garden with Eating Area
- ★ Bowling Parties & Function Room.
- ★ Egon Ronay Guide, AA Best of British Gd
- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

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Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

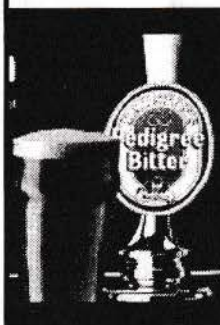
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good taste

12

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plus
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7 DAYS A WEEK
EVENING MEALS MON - THURS
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ON DRAUGHT
Open ALL DAY Fri. / Sat.
BAR MEALS AVAILABLE

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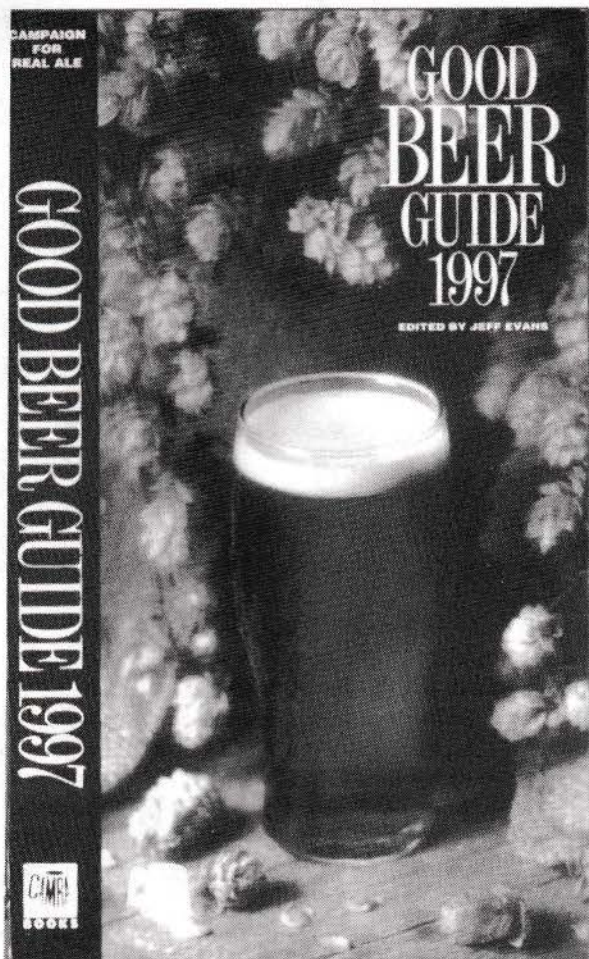
Belle Vue St., Gorton tel
(opposite Showcase Cinemas) 223 0440

Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and
Old Tom Ale are all on
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Robinsons Fine Ales



Guide '97



Order your copy now by simply sending a cheque for £10.99 (post and packing is free), made payable to CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Branch, to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.
REMEMBER, Viducts and Vaults 2 - THE New Guide to Stockport Pubs is also available from the same address for a mere £3.95 inc P & P.

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MARSTONS PEDIGREE
WEBSTERS YORKSHIRE BITTER
& the ever popular
THEAKSTONS XB

CAMRA PUB
OF THE MONTH
JANUARY 1994



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welcomes
you

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Graham &
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- REAL ALES BOODIES, PEDIGREE, CHESTERS MILD
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WARRINGTON ST. ASHTON-U-LYNE NEXT TO BYPASS

13



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Bowden Street, Edgeley
Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
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PLUS OCCASIONAL BREWS & REAL CIDERS*

14

WE DO NOT SELL A GUEST , WE SELL THE BEST!
PORTER'S PORTER ; BEER OF THE FESTIVAL
(STOCKPORT), 1994,1996
PORTER'S SUNSHINE BEER OF THE FESTIVAL
(BLACKBURN), 1994

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*Subject to availability.

Porter's Railway Builds Up Steam

As reported last month the Railway, formerly Byrons, on Great Portwood Street, opened on 13th last month as the Porter Brewing Co's third tied house.

At a preview on the previous night, the ceremonial first pint was pulled by the (teetotal!) lady Mayor of Stockport and since then the pub hasn't looked back, already carving out its own particular place on the local drinking scene.



The former Byrons has been transferred into a comfortable traditional, one room local with no pool table, juke box or fruit machines. Instead the emphasis is on good ale to be enjoyed in good company, with emphasis very much on the beer. On entering the pub a bank of six handpumps greet the visitor. Five of these are devoted to the standard Porters range - Mild, Bitter, Rossendale Ale, Sunshine and Porter. The sixth will sell one-offs (currently Timmy's Ginger Beer) and, from mid-October a traditional cider. Licensee Paul Stanyer is particularly keen to emphasis that absolutely nothing is poured back



into his casks - the redundant equipment for filtering back has pride of place on a shelf to the left as you go in. Foreign beer aficionados are also catered for with a range of bottled German wheat beers. Mid-October will also see the introduction of food, initially at lunchtimes and possibly in the early evening. It will all be genuinely home-made and include soups, lasagne and pies etc. plus real chips. "Quality pub grub" is the stated aim. Clearly it's early days yet but the Railway looks set fair to be a both a successful venture for the Porter Brewing Co and a welcome, top-notch addition to the local drinking scene for the rest of us. The pub is open all day, every day from 12 noon.

There's a Dud About....

The advert elsewhere on this page serves as a timely reminder that Christmas tends to be the peak season for forged banknotes, in pubs and bars. This year there seem to be more about than ever, already, so to all customers and publicans alike the message is check your notes carefully. The idea of being able to rent (rather than buy outright) a device might prove popular with organisations that run beer festivals. Hmm, don't we know someone who does that....

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TEN GLORIOUS YEARS!
STOCKPORT CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 1995**

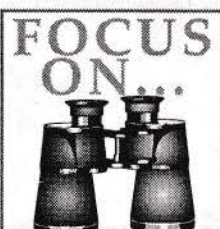
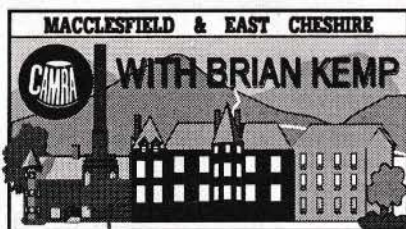
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Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch



The Lord Byron, Chapel St, Macclesfield

Having established my proletarian credentials with my comments on Prestbury Village in the last issue of OT, I was suitably chastened by Jim, our branch secretary, last Sunday lunchtime when he said "You shouldn't keep featuring posh pubs in OT all the time!" And you know, he was quite right! So this month let's look at the Lord Byron on the corner of Chapel Street and St George's Street in Macclesfield town centre.

'Posh' is an epithet you certainly could not apply to the Lord Byron. It is not a pub for impressing wives and/or girlfriends! Not, that is, unless they are particularly enlightened. It is a 'theme pub' of the only type which I like. It's theme is one that the big breweries and pub companies have singularly failed to capture.

That theme is that it is an ordinary backstreet working-class local that sells decent beer at a sensible price, is run by a friendly landlord, and has civilised real people as customers who are willing to discuss the affairs of the day with anybody who feels that way inclined.

A significant number of those customers (yours truly included) decamped to it from the Evening Star around the corner a couple of years ago as a result of Marstons apparent inane policy decision that a brewery's objective should not be to make money by selling large quantities of beer but by charging extortionate rents for their properties. They drove out a good landlord from a solvent pub and installed a series of tenants and managers who rapidly succeeded in reducing sales to next to nothing. But I digress!

The Lord Byron is a Robinsons tenanted pub that sells just cask-conditioned Best Bitter on handpump. If you are not familiar with our town-centre it could take a bit of finding since it is locked in a maze of back streets many of which are blocked off as part of a challenging traffic management scheme. If on foot the best advice is to walk south from Park Green down Mill Lane and turn right up Chapel Street next to the Sun Inn. It is about 100 yards up the hill on the left. It is only about five

minutes walk from the railway station for anyone planning a Macclesfield pub crawl. However if you are in a car you are on your own as Chapel Street is 'No Entry' from this direction. Architecturally there is little to say. It is a typical brick-built corner terrace building in amongst a lot of terraced cottages. Inside there is a main bar approached through a doorway on the right, a small room with pool table on the left, and a larger lounge area straight ahead. Also there is an off-sales serving counter onto the street.

It is the sort of pub you could go into wearing either overalls or a business suit with no fear of embarrassment on either count. A limited selection of filled barm cakes are available at lunchtime and possibly in the evening as well if there are any left from earlier in the day. Interestingly, it still has an operational push-button bell system for calling table service as discovered by the aforementioned Jim some time ago when he was fiddling with it.

What makes the Lord Byron so special is its ordinariness. Pubs like it are becoming ever rarer these days as the marketing man and accountants of the large breweries and pub companies tramp on rough-shod through our national stock of pubs, closing small but profitable locals and creating one characterless fun-palace after another.

I imagine it has survived in its present state by virtue of Robinsons reluctance to spend money on any of their tied estate unless it is going to greatly enhance their financial return. The Franklin Inn on Steeple Street is another good example of this policy. Still it keeps the rents and prices down, so don't knock it!

A few years ago BBC TV used the street around here for some of their location filming of a drama series starring Jonathon Pryce called something like "Mr Wroe's Virgins". I can't imagine what the BBC luvvies would have thought of the Lord Byron.

Opening hours are a trifle eccentric. From Monday to Thursday it only opens in the evening, on Friday from 2-11pm, on Saturday from 12-3.30 and then again in the evening, and standard Sunday hours.

If you have not already realised it. I like the Lord Byron and I reckon you will, too - if you like unpretentious ordinary relaxed pubs that sell decent beer. It's worth trying to find!

16

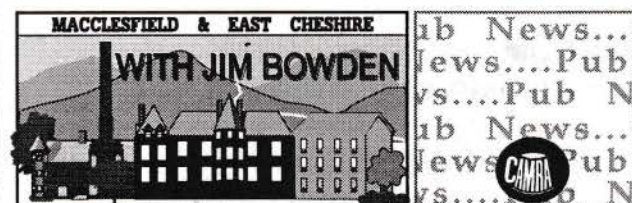
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After a long period just having Robinsons Best Bitter, the **British Flag** at Coare Street, Macclesfield now has Robinsons Hatters Mild. Both were in excellent condition when last sampled.

The *Spinners*, Bollington, has now re-opened as an open plan pub serving along with Boddingtons Bitter, Draught Bass and Castle Eden Ale.

The **Castle**, Churchwallgate, Macclesfield, an ex-Greenalls pub, now serves Theakstons Bitter and Dark Mild plus a guest beer.

The *Bull & Gate*, Waters Green, Macclesfield, was closed as we went to press.

CHEESHIRE PUBS

by Peter Edwardson

Rowland's Bar, Frodsham

Back in the late seventies, when I lived in the area, I used to do a fair bit of drinking in and around Frodsham. One pub we always avoided was the Drover's Arms, a dismal keg Whitbread establishment. Since then, it has closed down and been reincarnated as a free house called Rowland's Bar, in which guise it has appeared in the Good Beer Guide for several years now. Spurred on by numerous recommendations, we went along to see for ourselves what it was like.

Frodsham stands on the main road midway between Warrington and Chester. Although the locals refer to it as a village, it is really more of a small market town, with a wide tree-lined main street flanked by a number of Georgian buildings. Church Street runs up from the main street towards the parish church, and Rowland's Bar stands on the left just past the railway bridge. Frodsham is easily accessible by train from Manchester Piccadilly by changing at Warrington Bank Quay. Originally built in the last century as the railway goods office, the pub is a slightly odd-looking free-standing building, narrow but deep, with the gable end facing the right-hand wall, bench seats along the front window and a small raised seating area at the rear. There's also an upstairs bistro. The bar has the usual blackboards advertising forthcoming real ales and speciality bottled beers.

The beer range includes Boddingtons Bitter and Weetwood Best Bitter as regular beers, together with four varying guest beers, which on our visit included Adnams Broadside, Buckleys Best, Cains FA and Coach House Combine Harvester. Traditional cider is also available. The prices are reasonable by free house standards, and the Weetwood at £1.34 may well be the cheapest beer in the area. We found the quality very good and fully justifying the pub's standing in the Good Beer Guide. The list of beers to come was very tempting and included the intriguingly-named Bishop's Platypus Gold. The pub organises occasional festivals which feature many rare beers and are a great favourite with the beer-spotters, although where they put all the casks and people, I'm not sure.

Bar food consists of a selection of sandwiches together with a short menu of six or seven hot specials, all for around £5 or less. Those we tried were interesting and imaginative and very good indeed. This is the way to do pub food, rather than a long list of standardised frozen dishes all with chips and peas. The lack of puddings was however a disappointment to those with a sweet tooth. More elaborate meals can be eaten in the upstairs restaurant.

Rowland's Bar almost certainly offers both the best bar food and the best beer - for both choice and quality - in Frodsham, and for those reasons it's well worth a visit. However, a major drawback is the severe lack of seating. It's a small enough place to start with, and half its length, opposite the bar counter, is given over to a standing area with a wall shelf and a few high stools. It would be difficult to fit in more than about twenty people sitting at tables. So



Unspoilt interior at the Ring O' Bells

if I lived nearby, while I'd probably call in fairly regularly, I'd choose somewhere rather more comfortable as my "local".

The most prominent and well-known pub in Frodsham is the Bear's paw, an imposing gabled Jacobean inn built of the local red sandstone and standing right on the main road junction in the town centre. Little of the original interior remains, but there's plenty of room and plenty of seating, and it does offer guest beers alongside the usual Greenalls range. Sam Smiths' Golden Lion immediately opposite is also worth a look. Undoubtedly the best pub interior in Frodsham, though, belongs to the Ring o'Bells which, logically enough, stands opposite the parish church about half a mile south of the town centre. It's a low, whitewashed, cottage-type pub with a cobbled frontage, decorated with hanging baskets in summer. Inside there are five small rooms, including a traditional tap-room, around a high wood-panelled central bar. There are low beams, old high-backed settles, plenty of genuine antiques and an imposing fireplace with an inglenook. The beer range of Greenalls Bitter and Original won't excite the "scratchers", but you'll get a decent pint, and the connoisseur of pubs will find plenty to appreciate.

17

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**A GENUINE FREE HOUSE WITH
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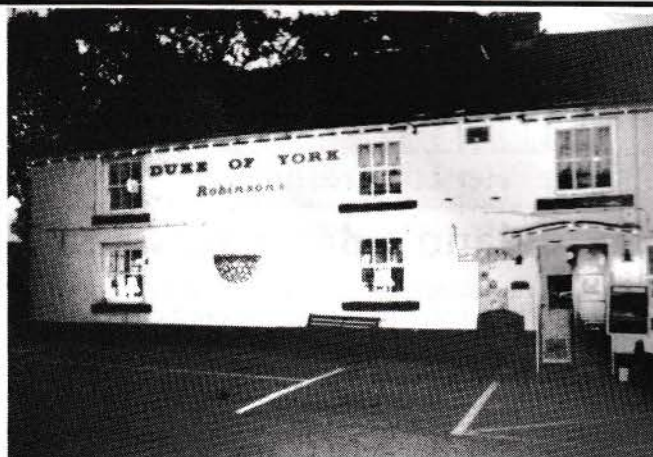
Pub In The Peak

The Duke of York, Flagg

Readers will be aware that we inadvertently stated that the Duke of York at Flagg was closed and for sale when in fact it was open and thriving. Apologies have been made and hatchets buried but the controversy prompted me to visit the pub. It's one I've been past many times but have never had the time to call in.

The village of Flagg lies off the A515 Buxton-Ashbourne road but the Duke of York in fact lies on the main road itself, strictly in the settlement of Pomeroy, a quite bleak, exposed part of Derbyshire up in the hills past Buxton. It is therefore appropriate that the pub sets itself out to present as much a contrast as possible to its sometimes inhospitable surroundings - indeed, its attractive exterior, lit up on a cold winters night was why it found its place on my list of pubs to visit.

The Duke of York was apparently built as a pub in about 1410 and, apart from a break of fifty years in the 16th century, has functioned as such ever since. Of course it has been much altered over that time having been extended into adjoining properties, so that it is now a long two-storey building. Inside there are three main areas - a pubby lounge on the left, a small carpeted lobby area straight ahead and to the right a 60 seat restaurant behind a plush ante-room comfortably furnished with sofas.



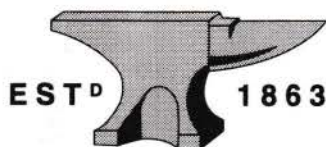
Low ceilings and traditional decor, combined with open fires makes for a warm, cosy atmosphere throughout. Just one cask beer is sold, Robinsons Best Bitter, but being in such a remote spot, the main emphasis is on passing trade high quality food. The menu is quite extensive running the whole gamut from steaks, grills, fish and salads. There are also starters and a range of sweets. In addition to this there are daily blackboard specials including a roast of the day. Most main dishes are in the £5-6 range and for this you will get a filling plateful of quality food.

The Duke of York is clearly a pub that has identified its trade and set out to cater for that trade extremely well. Definitely worth a visit.

** Winter opening hours are 11.45-2.00pm and 6-9.30pm. These may vary so phone in advance on 01298 83345.*

18

THE TRUE TASTE OF THE NORTH!



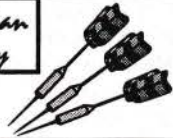
HYDES ANVIL ALES

BREWERS OF EXCEPTIONAL SEASONAL BEERS AND CRAFT ALES

STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA - OCTOBER 1996 - ISSUE 150

Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Two of the world's best dart players have been showing local players just how to play the game. Both John Lowe and Phil Taylor have been giving local players the chance to beat them in exhibition.

Lowe appeared at the Sir Robert Peel at the invitation of landlord John Parkin. Originally scheduled to face eight of the Bobby regulars, John accepted challenges from no less than 23. And he beat them all, although Dave Beckett gave him a run for his money. Phil Taylor brought his roadshow, complete with disco and singer, to the George and Dragon, Heaton Chapel. Landlord Terry Moores had compiled a list of fourteen victims, sorry, challengers, for the four times World Champion. Drawn out of the ubiquitous hat, the quirk of the draw saw mainly George & Dragon regulars in the first half. Simon Bleasby did well, hitting a 160 but could only watch as Taylor responded with a maximum. Phil also scored a 180 against Joe Hayes in the opening game, and nine 140's against the first eight challengers.

The strangeness of the draw saw the best players in the second half. It was a mark of Phil Taylor's professionalism that he noticeably picked up his game against these players, hitting four maximums and seven 140's in six games of 701.

Barry Riley was left with only 42 and Kevin Weir had darts at double 9 to win. But the pub was in uproar when Terry Moores himself was drawn to play the final game. Sportingly, Terry gave up his chance to play Phil, so that local hero Darryl Fitton could have a go at the champ. And with a 103 outshot, Darryl claimed the scalp of the World No. 1. It was a fabulous night's entertainment. The only disappointment was the turn out. Although well supported by the local dart team and the pubs regulars, the only visitors seemed to be the players who were down to play. If landlords are to be encouraged in bringing the top players to their premises, they must receive the support of dart fans. Otherwise, the best we can expect is karaoke. Heaven forbid.

★ ★ ★ ★

Tom Thumb are the champions of the Stockport Licensed House Super League. They claimed their title with matches to spare. At time of writing, the runner-up is undecided, with Nicholson Arms and the Sir Robert Peel the most likely candidates. The Wilmslow Flyer look to have the Premier Division title sewn up, with Dilke Sports likely to take second place. The Florist are General Division champs for the second time in three seasons. This time they will be hoping for a longer run in the Premier Division, given the relative success of last season's promoted side. Both the Moss Rose and the Blarney Stone achieved mid-table positions. The Gateway were runners-up in both the league and Slip-up competition. The latter was won by John Riley and Clive Orrell from the George & Dragon.

★ ★ ★ ★

Lovely to see that new licensees at the Gladstone and Portwood's Railway feel darts to be a necessary part of pub life. With Alan Roebuck installed at Hillgate's Crown and Pete Bellfield in at the Comfortable Gill, the most popular pub game is making a strong comeback.

SOUTHLANDS HOTEL & COPPERFIELDS BAR



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- ★ PUBLIC BAR
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5 Different Cask Ales FOOD LUNCHTIMES &
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Behind Closed Doors

Like most other big towns, Stockport has a problem with underage kids hanging around in parks and on street corners drinking alcohol and causing a nuisance. The council are now planning to combat this by introducing a blanket ban on the drinking of alcohol out of doors, something which seems to be gaining almost universal support.

But drinking outside isn't something confined to wayward teenagers - law-abiding adults have been known to do it as well. Drinkers spill out onto the pavement outside pubs on hot summer nights, families take a bottle of wine along for a picnic in the park, people watching a Sunday morning football match on a cold winter's day take a warming sip from a hip-flask. The supporters of a ban argue that there is no intention of cracking down on things like these, and the police will use their discretion.

But in that case, why outlaw them in the first place? A law which bans a whole range of activities, but depends on it not being applied in most cases, is likely to end up being held in complete disrepute. If it's left to the discretion of the police, can we trust them to apply it consistently and never to abuse that discretion? It also makes the very questionable assumption that drinking any alcohol at all is basically an undesirable activity best kept behind closed doors. If stricter controls are necessary (which I'm less than wholly convinced about), then surely they need to be much more closely targeted at the real problem areas, and make a clear distinction between the use and abuse of alcohol.

The Soft Option

Strictly in the interests of research, I recently sampled one of those new alcoholic lemonades. It wasn't an unpleasant drink, but what really struck me was that you couldn't tell it contained alcohol without reading the label on the bottle, even though most of these things have a higher ABV than ordinary-strength beers. The potential dangers are obvious - unsuspecting drivers being plied with the stuff in unmarked glasses as someone's idea of a joke, to name but one.

When I was learning to drink as a teenager, all the alcoholic drinks available were, to a greater or lesser extent, an acquired taste. You had to put up with something initially unpalatable to experience the effects of alcohol. Once you had acquired the taste, though, it was something from which you gained a lasting, mature pleasure. With these alcoholic "soft" drinks, young drinkers can have the effect while still enjoying the sweet and sickly taste of pop, leading to a prolonged infantilisation of their taste buds.


Like designer ciders, alcoholic soft drinks are a cynical marketing exercise directed at the young, and one likely to do serious long-term damage to the public standing of the drinks industry, for the sake of a quick buck.

By all means drink lemonade or Coke if your sole aim is to quench your thirst. But if you want to enjoy an alcoholic drink, get yourself something with a bit of heritage and quality about it, whether beer, wine or spirit. By making Hooper's Hooch, or whatever, your tippie of choice, you're declaring to the world not how cool you are, but how immature and gullible.

THE CASTLE
 OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
 NOW SERVING THE **COMPLETE**
 RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!
 Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
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 Hartleys

A WARM WELCOME
 AND FINE BEER IN
 A CLASSIC PUB





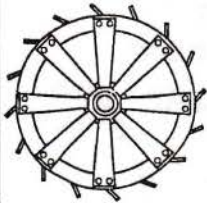
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 Choice
 TRADITIONAL "HANDPUMP" BEERS
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 9 HANDPUMPS - 6 GUEST ALES
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 CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
 HIGHEST QUALITY GUEST ALES



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 and Macclesfield. Members of all branches are welcome at each other's events!

Diary	October 96	October 96	To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 99 Planner
	Monday 7th - Social, Friendship, Hyde Road, Gorton. Starts 9.00pm.	Departs Royal Oak, Didsbury 7.00pm; Crown, Heaton Lane 7.15. Phone 477 1973 to book your place.	
	Thursday 10th - Monthly branch meeting, the Blossoms, London Road (A6), Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm.	Monday 4th November - City Centre Social - 9.00pm Grey Horse; 10.00 Old Monkey. Both on Portland Street.	
	Friday 11th - Gatley and Northenden Stagger. Starts 7.00pm, Red Lion, Church Road, Gatley or join 8.30 at the Jolly Carter, Royle Green Road, Northenden.	<i>High Peak branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:</i>	
	Monday 14th - Social, Lass O' Gowrie, Charles Street, Manchester City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.	Sunday 6th - Wood's Octoberfest Walk-hike starting at Hayfield information centre, 9.45am, and finishing at the Royal Hotel, Hayfield, where the annual October Beer Festival will be taking place.	
	Friday 18th-Sunday 20th - weekend away to present Cider and Perry awards from Stockport Beer Festival, also visiting Smiles and Cottage breweries. Trip full at press date.	Saturday 12th - Visit to various pubs in Macclesfield and Leek. The trip will be by the no.201 Manchester-Derby bus. Details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.	
	Monday 21st - Social, Union, Broadstone Road, Reddish. Starts 9.00pm	Monday 14th - Monthly branch meeting at the Duke of York, Romiley. Starts 8.30pm.	
	Thursday 24th - Pub of the month presentation to the Three Bears, Jackson's Lane, Hazel Grove. A minibus will run departing Royal Oak, Didsbury 8.00pm; Crown, Heaton Lane 8.15. Phone 477 1973 to book your seat.	<i>Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following event:</i>	
	Friday 25th - Opening Times review night and social at the Nursery, Heaton Norris. Open to all branch members, contributors and distributors. Starts about 8.00pm.	Monday 28th - Monthly branch meeting at the Franklin, Steeple Street, Macclesfield. Starts 7.30pm.	
	Monday 28th - Social, Ye Olde Cock, Didsbury. Starts 9.00pm.		
	Friday 1st November - Minibus trip round some of the better pubs in East Manchester.		

THE TRUTH MAY WELL BE OUT THERE ...



THE 1996 WITCHWOOD HALLOWEEN BEER FEST

OVER 50 TRAD ALES & SCRUMPTIOUS CIDERS

2 SEPERATE BARS (BOOZE BAR & VENUE BAR)

TOP OF THE RANGE LIVE BANDS

THURSDAY OCT 31st to SUNDAY NOV 3rd

LIVE STAGE LIVE STAGE LIVE STAGE

Thursday Oct 31st - STAX OF SOUL & THE SOUL REVIEW (£4adv/£5)
 Big Friday Nov 1st - TOWER STRUCK DOWN (£1)
 Saturday Nov 2nd - THE HALLOWEEN BALL with THE CHEATLES (£2)
 Sunday Nov 3rd (Lunch) - THE SUNDAY JAM (adm free)



... BUT I HOLD THE KEYS TO THE CELLAR!

The WITCHWOOD, 152 Old St. ASHTON UNDER LYNE. 0161 344 0321



Alan Preston at the *Hinds Head* in Heaton Chapel plans to install another bank of handpumps so that he can offer a permanent choice of six cask beers. New permanent additions to the range could include the likes of Fullers London Pride and Wadworths 6X. On the bar as we went to press was Whitbread's "Hob Nobs" brewed to mark the tenth anniversary of the biscuit of the same name. The name isn't the only thing the two products have in common - the beer includes the same rolled oats as the biscuit giving a sweetish beer with a refreshing dry finish. It has apparently proved very popular with workers from the McVities factory on the A6!

In North Reddish the *Railway* has now abandoned real ale and sells only keg 'smooth' Boddingtons.

There is better news in Burnage where good reports are coming in of the beer quality in the *Victoria* on Burnage Lane. It's good value, too, permanently on sale at £1.10 a pint.

A couple of developments in the Holts estate - the *Griffin* in Heaton Mersey is to be redecorated and generally spruced up while at the Orion we hear that a change of licensee could be in the offing.

Robinsons Dark Best Mild has been cropping up in the free trade with unaccustomed regularity and it has gone into at least one more Robbies pub - the *Castle* on Oldham Street in the City Centre, which is now probably unique in selling the entire 7 beer Robinsons cask range.

Good news to report that the *Sir Robert Peel* in Edgeley has stopped selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump. This generally excellent pub can now be heartily recommended once more.

The Wetherspoon organisation have revealed something of their expansion plans in the Manchester area. Some 11 sites have been or are about to be acquired. Areas earmarked for new Wetherspoons pubs include Sale, Didsbury and Wilmslow. Quite where the Didsbury site can be is anyone's guess...

The (Frog and) *Railway* in Heaton Mersey has dropped Theakstons Bitter in favour of handpumped Courage Directors. Most regrettably, the pub now also serves Scrumpy Jack cider by the misleading full-size "handpump"; as regular readers will be well aware, this cider is KEG.

Several changes at the *Crown*, Heaton Moor in the last few weeks. As predicted last month, Boddingtons Mild has gone, but its replacement Cains Mild was a pleasant surprise, and also a popular choice with customers. Manager Bill from Hadfield only had a brief stay before taking over a Marstons management in Glossop. Since then a relief manager filled the time before Ken and Sue Dixon formerly of the keg only Elizabethan, Heaton Moor took over the reins in mid-September. OT wishes them well in their move across the road. Then as OT went to press, the *Crown* was closed for its long threatened refurbishment. Let's hope Greenall PubCo make a sensible and sensitive job of any alterations to this fine locals' local.

Recent weeks have seen major cellar work at the *Gardeners Arms*, Northgate Road, Edgeley. This should mean that the pub is able to extend the range of beers available and also introduce a guest beer.

Halloween Beer
THRILLER
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 Wetherspoon's, 49 Piccadilly, Manchester. Tel: 0161 236 9206
 Ashton-Under-Lyne, The Ash Tree, Main Street, Wellington Road, Ashton-Under-Lyne. Tel: 0161 339 9670

MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

I'm delighted to welcome the triumphant resurrection of the Harp & Shamrock in the City Centre (New Mount Street) as the Pot of Beer. The pub is covered in detail elsewhere but suffice it to say that this is a major addition to the City drinking scene. Another City Centre reopening is the John Willie Lees, now trading once more (and, for all I know, still bizarrely prohibiting hats in the lounge) after the June bomb.

Another very welcome reopening in Gorton, where the Vulcan on Gorton Lane is open again after some months' closure following fire damage. It's still in the capable hands of Tony and Christine O'Mara, and retains its two-room layout, though with some tidying up and a well-judged redecoration removing the rather ham-fisted "fake beam" effect in the lounge. The beers are still the same, too - the rare Wilsons Mild (in superb form on opening night), partnered by Wilsons and Boddingtons bitters, all on handpump. It's great to see the place open again - and judging by the crowds when it reopened, plenty of people agree with me.

Just down the lane, the Steelworks now has a beer called "Grays Best Bitter" on handpump. Exactly what this is I'm not sure, but the other beers badged "Grays" which sometimes appear round the area are believed to be Mansfield beers re-named - could the Best Bitter perhaps be another incarnation of Matthew Brown Bitter, which Mansfield now brew?

There's bad news as well in East Manchester, though, as that splendid little pub the Concert in Openshaw is closed and boarded, future unknown. There is a real ale gain around the corner, though, where the Prince of Wales has handpumped Salisbury Bitter from Wiltshire brewers Gibbs Mew, who own the Centric chain to which the pub belongs. In Beswick, the "New" Honeycomb, which I reported reopened last month, didn't even see the month out, and is now closed and boarded once more.

In All Saints, the range at the Salutation is now Tetley Bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale, Marstons Pedigree, and Moorhouses Peter Yates Bitter. Sadly, though, the pub is selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on handpump (even though they very sensibly removed the similarly misleading Addlestons handpump some time ago). For a pub this good, with its great atmosphere and spontaneous music, to be pulling the keg-on-handpump trick is particularly saddening;

the practice is increasingly becoming the preserve of no-hope dives, and the Salutation could well be by some way the best Manchester pub to be perpetrating it. I expect better of the place. Nearby on Cavendish Street, Clynes should by now have sold its first pint of cask beer for many years, for handpumped Vaux Bitter was due to arrive in late September. It may co-exist with the keg version, at least in the early stages, so be sure to ask for cask, but don't miss the chance to visit this unspoilt, friendly and genuinely Irish pub.

Back to the City Centre now, and to fake Irishry. However Finnegan's Wake, as the Brunswick is now called, is at the tasteful end of the Irish theme bar spectrum. Floors are of quarry tiles and timber, there's not too much junk on the walls, there are piped Irish sounds in various styles, and a blackboard announces live bands. Food is served from 12 to 6, such things as Dublin Fry and Irish Stew - though I dispute that potato skins are an old Irish dish, even if they are topped with Irish cheddar! Plenty of keg stout will no doubt be sold (both Guinness and Beamish are available), but the keg dispensers (for both stout and ale) are relatively restrained and do not mimic handpump imagery - perhaps that's why the pint of Theakstons XB I tried was on such good form (Theakstons Bitter is also available on handpump). A themed chain outlet the place may be, but it's ten times better than the dismal old Brunswick. While in that part of town, you might like to check out the early October beer festival at the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street. With a different beer on every pump, plus stillaging within the pub, it should be a splendid event - ask the landlady about the interesting piece of Lancashire brewing memorabilia on the till (and yes, I do mean Lancashire). Nearly at Bonapartes on Piccadilly Station, Wadworths 6X has replaced Marstons Pedigree.

Finally, I cannot close without welcoming Dave and Sue Price at their new abode of the Queens in Cheetham. A recent visit found the place right back to top form, with some splendid beer being served, more good stuff waiting in the cellar, and a succession of interesting ciders (some very rare) to come as well. I would wish them the very best of luck, but I don't need to - these two make their own luck. Not surprisingly, their former pub, the Kings Arms in Salford is no longer what it was - but at least it's still open.

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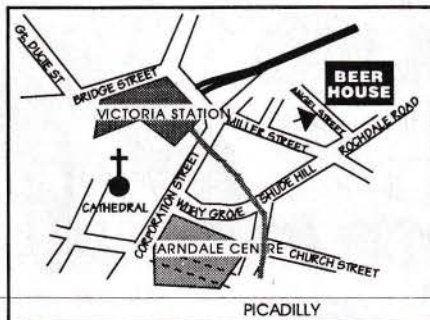
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