

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
154

FREE

FEBRUARY 1997

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Pub of the Year 1996

There can only be one winner and after the usual close vote, the recipient of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's most prestigious award, Pub of the Year, is the Griffin Hotel, Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey. The Griffin has long been a favourite amongst local drinkers and first hit the headlines in the early 1980's during a spirited campaign to save the pub from demolition by owners Holts. That campaign was of course successful and the old pub with its wealth of carved wood and etched glass survives to this day, complete with modern extension completely in tune with the older part of the pub.

Despite the impressive interior, typical of many Holts houses, with the Griffin this was not in fact their doing. The pub was built in the early 19th century by the Thorniley family who had established a local brickworks in the 18th century (the grave of Isaac Thorniley is on a plot of land nearby). A small brewery operated behind the pub to supply it with beer and it all only came into Holts possession in 1922.

Today, licensees at the Griffin and recipients of our award are Bev and John Bonynghe who took over the pub about a year ago. They came from another Holts house, the Orion in Withington, which they had helped transform from a dismal keg-only Whitbread pub into a thriving locals pub which gained an entry into CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide. When they arrived at the Griffin it, too, had problems with variable beer and a declining reputation, having previously been amongst the top three performers in the Holts estate.

That is now all in the past - the pub has been thoroughly redecorated and as customers have returned barrelage is up 40% from when they took over. To be sure the superb quality Holts Mild and Bitter will have played their part in this but there are other attractions as well including a popular beer garden in summer, quiz nights, good value lunches and a positive welcome for disabled customers. With all this and more the pub has gone from strength to strength.

All this goes to show the importance of good licensees in making the difference between an average pub and one that really stands out. This thoroughly deserved award will be presented to Bev and John on the evening of Saturday 15th February when a memorable night is in prospect. JC/SB.



A Special Mention...

To the two runners up. First runner-up was the Coach & Horses at Belle Vue. Whilst the areas they serve are very different, like the Griffin, the Coach & Horses is the epitome of a community local. Serving amongst the best (some say the best) Robinsons beers around, this too was a pub in decline until it was rescued by the arrival of landlady Beryl Lavelle in February 1987. Now very much a family operation with Beryl backed up by husband Tom and daughter Margaret, the Coach & Horses is recognised as one of the finest in Manchester by those who appreciate traditional values.

The second runner-up is another fine community pub - the Unity on Wellington Road South in Stockport town centre. Another Robinsons house the Unity is in a spot - opposite the Grand Central complex - where it would be easy to seek to cash in with short-term gimmicks. Luckily licensees June and Peter Bennett, who took over from June's parents, realise that a good base of regulars is a much sounder way of securing a pub's long-term future. This coupled with top-notch beer make for an excellent pub which works well all round.

In FEBRUARY'S OPENING TIMES

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Planning is now well under way for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again supported by the Stockport Express Advertiser to whom many thanks. Thanks also to Ian Brookes of the Bakers Vaults for once again

agreeing to act as our licensee.

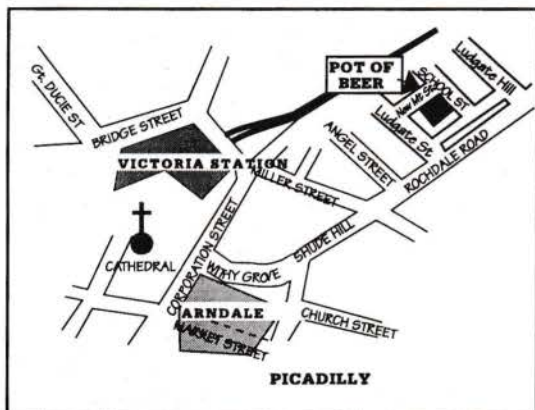
We will have our usual superb range of ales and stouts plus a huge array of traditional ciders and perries. All the usual attractions will be there - food, music, the tombola and the CAMRA shop plus souvenir glasses and T-shirts.

More in the coming months but for now just get those dates in your diaries - Thursday 29th - Saturday 31st May.

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

If this month's Opening Times can be said to have a theme, it must be one celebrating the continued strength of the British pub.

All around there are Jeremiahs variously predicting the death of the pub as we know it or bemoaning the inner-city as a pub-free wasteland. Both claims have the whiff of private agendas being pursued. They are certainly of little relevance to true campaigners for and believers in the continuing health of our pubs.

While there have indeed been serious losses in some parts of the Opening Times area and accepting that we must never be complacent, it remains the case that all around, and even in the most unpromising of area, pubs continue to thrive. Just look at Regional and local Pubs of the Year, and the runners up, very different pubs serving very different areas but all pillars of their respective communities. Our Pub of the Month and High Peak Branch's featured pub only emphasise this further. Look also at Rhys Jones' new series exposing the lie that inner city pubs are doomed. The Wilmslow Road corridor, running from the deepest inner-city to leafy suburbs, sees new pubs and bars either opening or mooted almost every month. And of course there is the triumphant re-birth of Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar.

There are some who seem to think that pub campaigning should consist of crying into their beer while looking back at the past through rose-tinted spectacles and bemoaning what has been lost. Opening Times rejects this. While we will continue to fight strongly to preserve what we have, we will also celebrate its continuing success and renewal. That is true pub campaigning.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973 (home) and (0161) 831 7222 x 3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!). Articles for publication can be submitted by e-mail to jclarke@opentime.u-net.com. Compuserve users can mail the deputy editor at 100662.12. Letters to the editor on otletter@opentime.u-net.com.

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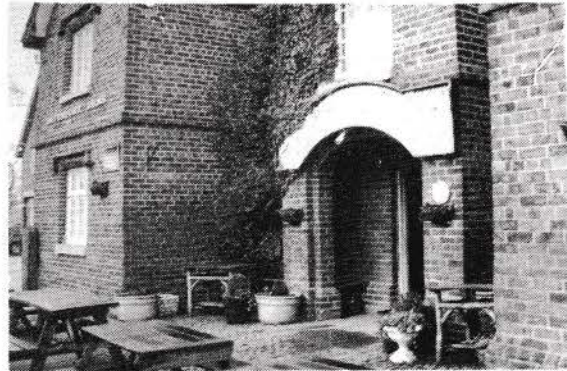
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Double Award for Davenport Arms

Saturday 22 February will see a unique double presentation at the Davenport Arms in Woodford. Following last year's award of the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year title, it went forward into the next stage of judging and has now won through as the 1997 Pub of the Year for CAMRA's Greater Manchester region.

Added to this, in the 1997 edition, the pub celebrates its tenth consecutive appearance in the Good Beer Guide. When you consider that the local branch of CAMRA can only put one-tenth of its real ale pubs in the guide, and each year there is a typical turnover of a third of the entries, this stands out as a very special achievement, which is shared by only a handful of other pubs in the area.

This double award is a tribute to both the quality of the pub itself and the standard of cellarman'ship over a long period of time. Not every pub manages to do justice to Robinson's beers, but this isn't a problem at the "Thief's Neck", which sets an example of how they can be kept in consistently good condition with the right amount of care and attention. The pub is very much a family affair, and these awards reflect the hard work and dedication of licensee Yvonne Hallworth, her sister Alison,



and their father John, who held the license before Yvonne and still plays a vital role in looking after the beer. The presentation will take place in the evening from about 8.30 onwards, so make sure you get there early, otherwise you may not be able to get in for the number of plaques, not to mention the customers! PE.

The Future for Britain's Drinkers

The next few months are likely to be dominated by the General Election and CAMRA has joined the fray by issuing its own manifesto. While CAMRA is strictly non party political, and will neither be standing or endorsing candidates nor recommending how individuals should vote, members all over the country will be quizzing candidates of all parties on a range of key policies regarding beer and pubs.

CAMRA believes that the diversity and vitality of Britain's beer and pub culture is an important part of British heritage. That diversity is under threat. But CAMRA is determined that drinkers in the future will be able to enjoy a choice of good beers, at reasonable prices, from a variety of good pubs.

"The brewing and pub retailing industries support 900,000 jobs and the majority of the public uses pubs." CAMRA Campaigns Manager Stephen Cox told *Opening Times*. "Decent beer and decent pubs are part of our way of life - but our choice of both could drastically decline in the next few years without decisive action."

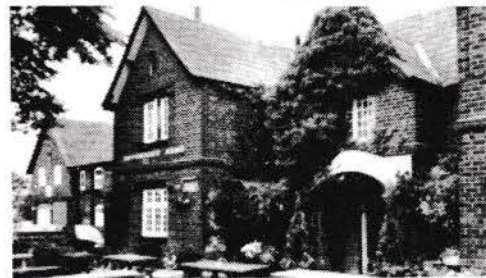
CAMRA proposals include:

- ★ A drastic cut in beer tax, to protect the British pub against unfair competition from lower taxed French beer. This would be self-financing and would not affect other forms of tax.
- ★ A radical reform of licensing, allowing pubs more freedom in opening hours, and less bureaucracy when licensees want to admit families.
- ★ Immediate intervention against brewery mergers to defend competition and choice - the proposed Bass take-over of Carlsberg Tetley will give one brewer 40% of the market.
- ★ Outlawing short measure in our pubs.
- ★ Action to defend pubs through reforms of licensing, planning, and the rates system

Finally, CAMRA wants the traditional British tied house retained - with measures to improve the position of tenants - and the guest beer law protected from European interference, and extended to pub retailers currently exempt.

Copies of the CAMRA Manifesto are available from CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 4LW (Tel 01727 867201) and details can be found at the CAMRA Internet site: <http://www.camra.org.uk>

DAVENPORT ARMS (THIEF'S NECK), Woodford



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COPY DATE FOR MARCH ISSUE IS FEBRUARY 21



Pub Of The Month FEBRUARY

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 Pub of the Month award for February has been won by the Station in Didsbury. This much-loved little pub has been run very successfully over the past couple of years by Saxon and Gary Barton, former assistant managers at the nearby Red Lion in Withington. Whilst at the Red Lion, the pub gained entry into the national Good Beer Guide, apparently as a consequence not entirely disassociated with Gary and Saxon's efforts behind the bar and in the cellar. Unlike some other pubs in Didsbury, the Station is very much a "locals" pub where pub games such as darts and dominoes are actively pursued. Enthusiasm can sometimes abound but whilst the language in the pub can be colourful, it is always good natured and the pub is none the worse for it.

Speaking of colour, the Station is also one of the prettiest pubs in the area and in spring and summer it is bedecked with hanging baskets of flowers. Visitors to the pub could easily be forgiven for thinking they had stumbled upon a picturesque village pub in the heart of the countryside. Inside, pictures of old Didsbury and railway memorabilia (much of it donated by the locals themselves) both feature, reinforcing the pub's traditional image.

On the beer front, the Station sells the full range of Marston's beers including the current Head Brewers Choice guest beers, together with Batemans Mild. As you would expect from someone with Gary's track record, all the beers are kept and served in superb condition.

Some time ago CAMRA made their now famous quote about the Station - "it may not be the largest pub in Didsbury but it's the one with the biggest heart". Against all odds, this is every bit as true today as it was when first mooted. Why not come along and join us for the presentation on Thursday 27 February when a great time will no doubt be had by one and all. **SB.**

The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

Local Festivals

Two CAMRA Beer festivals are on the agenda for local drinkers next month. First off the blocks is the 10th Wigan Beer Festival which will be held at the Mill on The Pier from 6 - 8 March. There will be forty beers, plus traditional ciders and bottled beers. Beer from the All Nations Brew-Pub is promised.

More good news is that Bolton branch have revived the old Great North Western Beer & Cider Festival - which will take place a brand new venue - Bolton Excel Sports Hall, Lower Bridgement Street, Bolton from 19-22 March. A good range of beers and ciders will be available and Bank Top Brewery are due to launch a brand new beer there.

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Peter Robinson, Chairman Frederic Robinson Ltd:
In the November edition of Opening Times I see that Peter Barnes is still wittering on about the small alteration that we carried out at the Albion, Penny Meadow. He is entitled to his views, but the fact of the matter is, he appears to be in a minority of one. This alteration, as I have explained previously, was done at the request of our tenant, and has been much appreciated by his customers, so I am told.

It is no good Peter Barnes going on blaming the Brewery: it was the people who know and understand the Albion who wanted this small alteration doing.

Not content with carrying on about the Albion, he then starts on the Buck & Hawthorn. Has he been asleep for the last 41/2 years? The alteration to which he refers at the Buck & Hawthorn was carried out in 1992, and great care was taken to retain much of what was there, again to the delight of the then licensee and his customers.

At the rate Peter Barnes is going on, he will soon wake up to the fact that we rebuilt the Flower Pot at Macclesfield and the Bleeding Wolf at Scholar Green in the late 1930's! I wonder what he will have to say about those two houses.

From Ron Elder:

I seem to have touched a raw nerve with my letter on CAMRA's involvement with Cider/Perry in the December Opening Times! It is unfortunate that Rhys Jones should think it offensive to state a viewpoint contrary to his own. I fully accept his right to campaign for cider, but he must accept that there are opposing views and I am simply trying to bring other issues to the fore. He has missed the main point of my argument which is that cider and perry are predominantly southern drinks, and the majority of people in the north are more interested in the availability and quality of real ale.

Incidentally, I also enjoy an occasional glass of real cider, and wish Rhys Jones happy supping at his favourite tippie.

From Ian Muldoon, Kensite Services Ltd:

Re Ralph Warrington's December article: Dearth of the Beermat.

We were moved by Ralph's personal crusade for the beermat and wish to offer our full(-bladdered) support.

We too know the problem: Kensite supplies many outdoor exhibitions and special events - where the beer tents always show a dearth of mats.

Fearing that Ralph may be depleting his own stocks (and since he also seems to offer a free roving distribution service) we enclose a pack of our own dripmats. Please feel free to use and enjoy. Yours in the fight for an endangered species!

(I'll make sure Ralph gets your mats - ed.)

Call to Scrap Bass-Tetley Merger

CAMRA last month released its submission on the proposed Bass-Tetley merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. CAMRA argues that the proposed take-over will mean higher prices and less choice for customers, as well as threatening the future of breweries in Alloa, Burton and Yorkshire. CAMRA wants the merger blocked.

If the take-over goes ahead Bass will have almost 40% of production and the top two companies, Bass and Scottish Courage, will be a duopoly with around 70% of the market. CAMRA's Stephen Cox has called the enquiry the "Last Chance Saloon of competition policy. "If this merger is permitted then just about any two brewers in Britain will be allowed to merge, with devastating effects on choice and competition", he said.

CAMRA expects higher prices because:

- ☆ in the long run there will be fewer brewers, less choice of suppliers and less effective competition
- ☆ many smaller retailers will receive worse terms of supply and CAMRA expects less choice because
- ☆ local brands will be axed and breweries closed
- ☆ competing brands within the portfolio will be removed
- ☆ increased domination by the national brewers and national branding will severely affect regional and local competition - there will be significant local monopolies.

Scotland is a good case in point - the take-over would give Bass 51% of the market and Bass and Scottish Courage would have 95% of the market between them. Closer to home parts of the North West would also suffer - Scottish Courage already encompass Matthew Brown, Theakstons, John Smiths, Wilsons and Websters, and the merged Bass would then account for Bass, Stones, Worthington, Walkers, Tetley and not forgetting the contract-brewed Greenalls Mild, Bitter and Original!

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STAGGER

with Paul Felton

November's crawl took place on Friday 15th, around the many delights of Heaton Norris.

We began at the **Bridge** on Georges Road, just down from B&Q. This is a good little Robinsons pub which boasts a small quadrant bar, a pool area and an attractive long lounge with wall seating and a coal fire (and, good grief, table skittles!). Bitter was good, the Hatters Mild average. The main problem for the Bridge seems to be its lack of a catchment area from which to draw its customers; old pictures show it surrounded by houses, which with the development of the motorway seems to have now all gone. A quick check of **Dillon's Whistling Jig** on Wellington Road North proved that, as thought, it sold no real ale. But just a word about the name. If like me, you thought that its name was another in the line of invented Irish theme names (like Biddy Mulligan's in Levenshulme), then you owe a grovelling apology to the licensee, for the name above the door reads 'Erick Padraic Dillon'. It only goes to show.

The **Magnet**, just north along the A6, is a curious pub. It has a vault on the left, but the lounge appears to have been extended by being knocked through into neighbouring rooms, and so has a rather fragmented three-part feel to it. Remarkably, for a pub which I for one have never seen that busy (though my visits have tended to be early in the evening) it offered five beers: Holts, Wilsons and Websters Bitters, 'Theakston XB Mild' (not too sure what that is) and also Wilsons Mild (though not advertised as being on sale on its chalk boards). Call us predictable, but we all had the Holts at £1.15, and it was quite good.

Greenall's **Railway** is again a little further north, this time just across the main road. It's a comfortable multi-room pub with much railwayana, two lounges and a vault/pool room at the rear. The many RSJs visible suggest that numerous walls have been removed to enlarge the current rooms. Three beers were on sale: Greenalls Mild was on handpump in the left-hand lounge only, Greenalls Bitter in the right-hand room only, Boddingtons Bitter in both (surprise). The Greenalls Bitter was not particularly good, but the mild and Boddingtons were okay. Special mention should go to an efficient if hard-pressed barmaid.

While I had visited (and heavily criticised in this very magazine) the pub in its previous incarnation as the **Roundhouse**, this was my first visit to the **Lonsdale** on Belmont Way. It has to be said that it does appear to be an improvement: it looked cleaner, and the service was better. Unfortunately, the Boddingtons Bitter didn't even manage to scrape into the average category, while the Websters Green Label was downright poor. There was also a pumpclip for Websters Bitter, but that had been turned round and was not on sale. To accentuate the negative, it was the one and only pub all evening which laboured under the misapprehension that November 15 somehow meant that Christmas decorations should already be up; and we were forced to have one of those conversations which consisted mostly of misunder-

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☎ 429

0549

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Heaton Lane, Stockport

stood shouting, caused by the excessive volume of a karaoke version of "Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life". So we did, and left quickly.

The **Silver Jubilee** off Belmont Way was the second Robinsons pub of the evening, and the first to offer Old Stockport (at a very reasonable £1.10) as well as the more usual Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. There's a marked contrast between the more basic vault and the smarter lounge. At least one wall of the lounge is all windows, and everything is in complimentary shades of blue except for a gloriously clashing carpet. Most tried the Old Stockport, which was okay, the Best Bitter being marginally better.

The **Grey Horse** on Old Road was the second and final Greenalls pub of the night. It has two rooms, the lounge being considerably larger than the vault, low-lit and low-ceilinged, with some interesting stained glass above the bar. It was noticeable how busy the place was; two people commented that they had never seen it so full. The Greenalls Bitter was below average.

Reaching Boddingtons' **Three Crowns** on Manchester Road seemed to take forever. It has a separate lounge and vault (good to see so many pubs on the crawl retaining the distinction). Both bitter and mild were available, as was Old Henry at a good £1.08 a pint. While the Boddies Bitter was only average, the Old Henry went down quite well. Apologies for the rather lacklustre description, but your writer's attention was drawn away from beer and pubs by an argument about 'what is good music', which I'm sure all will agree is an infinitely more important topic of conversation. The **Navigation** on Lancashire Hill, yet again, had separate vault and lounge areas. The lounge was particularly attractive, with plush seating, dark wood and even a vase of flowers on the bar. Two Websters beers were available, Bitter and Green Label: both were poor. Perhaps a half of stout might have been a better idea. The bright idea of sampling a half of nitro keg Boddingtons (purely as a matter of research) was definitely NOT a better idea; even bland cask beer was infinitely better than that nasty glop (good word, glop).

The **Nicholsons Arms** on Penny Lane was the only Stockport pub to make it into the very first edition of the Good Beer Guide all those years ago. No-one knows how or why it was chosen, so if anyone can enlighten us please write to Opening Times. It's a very seventies design, with (again) two rooms. (The vault was open but obviously not in use.) The lounge was dimly lit and sparsely populated. A Robinsons pub, both Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were available, and both were very average. Perhaps the brewery spending some money on the pub might be in order.

Saving the best till last, the final pub was the **Grapes**, back on Old Road. A fire a few years back resulted in an extensive refurbishment, maintaining its traditional two-room atmosphere of vault and more comfortable lounge, itself split into two, at the front around the bar and some more seating at the rear. While a Boddingtons pub, everyone went for the guest beer, Robinsons Best Bitter, which was rather good. Interestingly, it was better than in any of the three Robbies houses visited earlier in the evening. Well worth a visit.

Of course this article can only present what one group of drinkers found on one particular night and cannot therefore be taken as a once and for all judgement of either the pubs or their beers. As ever, why not try them yourself and see how much you (dis)agree.

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The Buffet Bar Is Back

The famous Refreshment Rooms on Stalybridge Railway Station are re-born after a five year campaign



One of Greater Manchester's most well known and liked pubs re-opened on the 16th of January, after five years of dedicated campaigning, initiated by, and always involving, Greater Manchester CAMRA members. The Refreshment Rooms on Platform 1 of Stalybridge BR Station, known universally as the Buffet Bar, is one of only two intact surviving station buffets from the Victorian era, and has graced many past copies of the Good Beer Guide, due to the unique setting and ambience, coupled with a usually excellent range of beer.

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Despite a history stretching back to the last re-building of the platform buildings in 1885, and despite the high regard that the establishment was held in by the regulars and locals, including many CAMRA members and others who travelled from all over the UK, and indeed from overseas, to visit the Buffet Bar and sample the beer and the atmosphere, it transpired that British Rail were advertising the buildings, including the bar for redevelopment. Feeling less than enthusiastic about losing one of the country's premier pubs to a Wine Bar/Bistro conversion, particularly as this transient style had disappeared with the Yuppies who were the intended custom, the High Peak and North East Cheshire CAMRA Branch initiated a campaign to save the Buffet Bar, commencing with a petition, and very soon attracting help from other branches as well as drinkers, the local community and politicians.

A drawn out campaign, during which the petition gained many thousand signatures, plus affidavits from abroad, secured a temporary reprieve, no doubt associated with the imminent breaking up of BR's operating divisions leading up to privatisation, and a watching brief was established, but not before the famous station clock, Joyce (named after the maker on the face) was removed to the National Railway Museum at York. While attempts were being made to secure a return for Joyce, or a replacement, BR again initiated proceedings to remove the long standing Licencee, Ken Redfern, from the premises, and a fresh campaign took up the challenge. The Friends of Stalybridge Station (FOSS) was formed, from a wider spectrum of interested parties than the previous CAMRA led campaign, and a large publicity and fund raising effort ensued, including the running of a steam hauled special to Llandudno, complete with Victorian attired tourist, waved off from the platform by the Town Cryer of Tameside, Barry McQueen. Additionally an original brass band cassette recording was produced, with a specially commissioned piece, and played by the local

Stalybridge Band, the oldest civilian Brass Band in the world, alongside the usual T-shirts etc.

Despite formidable support, the Buffet closed in summer 1996, and Ken lost not only his livelihood but his home also. However, strenuous efforts were made to lobby the fractured estates bodies within the former BR to secure a sympathetic new tenant. This effort was rewarded when it was announced that out of the Campaign's favoured choices, Mike Field from the West Riding Buffet Bar at Dewsbury, Dave Connor the landlord of the GBG listed Q and White House pubs in Stalybridge and Sylvia Wood and John Hesketh of the well known Station in Ashton Under Lyne; the latter couple had got the tenancy.

After much hacking through red tape at the remains of BR's estates department, now several parts of Railtrack and other companies, and the source of a few grey hairs for John and Sylvia, the original Buffet Bar has been thoroughly restored and redecorated, with all the remaining original features intact, including the conservatory and the marble bar. A restrained colour scheme has been put in and commendably, the tempta-



tion to fill the place with mock Victoriana has been studiously avoided. The original fireplace, which puts out far more heat than would be considered possible for such a size of fire, is in place and was glowing away cheerily on opening night. In fact the only noticable changes, other than the disappearance of the omnipresent Christmas decorations, is the appearance of a doorway next to the fire, where the Piano used to be.

Eight new handpumps now grace the bar with Wadworth 6X and Flowers IPA always available initially, plus upto six guest beers, depending upon trade. At the opening, each was in use, with a good range of strengths and styles available, and with beers from the smaller independant breweries to the fore. A real cider will once again be available, Crones reserve being the choice for the re-opening, and it is hoped that the famous selection of foreign bottled beers will make a return in the future.

The former accommodation, originally the Station Master's Office and Ladies First Class Waiting Room, have been converted into much needed extra area, and it is to the credit of both the licencees and the builders and decorators that the integration of these areas is almost seamless, though the latter room is yet to be fully completed. Another welcome feature is the provision of inside toilets, negating the need to walk down the platform at regular intervals, always a challenge in winter! These are housed in the first room behind the new internal door, the Gents WC being a station original. This room is decorated and furnished in similar style to the main room, and has it's own bar counter and even a sideboard to complement the tables.

The last room, still awaiting a suitable fireplace, is the only one to be wallpapered, and will be used as a dining and function room, as well as extra space on busy nights. The Folk Club, which has been run for the past twenty one years plus by Jim Schofield will also be making use of the back room on Saturday nights, and it is hoped that "name" guest artists will be appearing at least once a month, now that the space and facilities are in place.



At a well attended opening night, the formal re-opening of the Buffet Bar was performed by The Worshipful, The Mayor of Tameside Mike Ballagher, who is also the signalman at the nearby Signal Box, when not on council duty. The whole place was packed to the gunwhales from the minute the doors were thrown back, yet despite the crush, and the wait for beer, the whole event was one of good humour and was deemed to be a roaring success, and I am sure that all visitors, old and new will have similar feelings upon their visits to the bar. This was a positive campaigning outcome, particularly for CAMRA, and the restoration of a fine establishment to Stalybridge, Greater Manchester and the UK. Long may it remain open.

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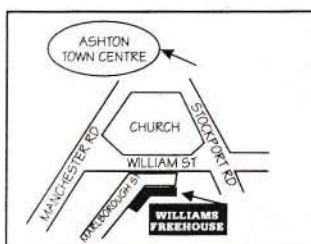


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Creative Job Creation

When Bass announced their alleged creation of 7,000 new jobs, it was splashed across the media in glowing terms. But you have to take news like that with several large pinches of salt, particularly since this is the same employee-friendly company which was planning to sack up to 2,000 people if its take-over of Carlsberg-Tetley had gone through.

Most of these new jobs were supposed to be in its managed house division, in theme bars, family dining outlets and other enticing concepts. Now, there might be some truth in the story if the pub trade was booming, but it clearly isn't, partly because greedy companies like Bass are busy pricing pubs out of the market. As far as I can see, a lot of pubs are struggling, trade is often slack, and the proportion of the drinks market going to the take-home trade is steadily growing.

If Bass manage to tempt more people to eat out rather than at home, there might be a few jobs to be gained. But the vast majority of those 7,000 jobs will come at the expense of people working in small tenanted pubs and free houses, and I know where I'd prefer to do my drinking. Bass' claims of job creation are just as spurious as those made for the new superstores along the A34, which, as predicted, have ravaged local centres for miles around.

How Free is Duty-Free?

The other side of the same coin is shown by the equally misleading claims that huge numbers of jobs will be lost when duty-free sales are ended within the European Union. If people don't really want all that duty-free perfume, fags and booze, then they'll save their money and be able to spend it on something more useful. If they do want it, they'll buy it somewhere else, and that could be to the benefit of their local traders. Who knows, some of it might even end up going over the bars of local pubs. I have no sympathy whatsoever for airport operators, who have a monopoly position and exploit it for all it's worth. Have you ever come across anything cheap in an airport outside the duty-free shop? And how good are the duty-free prices when you add back the duty?

Wasting Police Time

In a 48-hour pre-Christmas blitz, Strathclyde police breathalysed a grand total of 14,548 motorists. Out of all these, there were only 22 positive results, or less than one-sixth of one percent. This was hailed as a great success by "road safety" campaigners, and in a sense it was, as it demonstrates very clearly how the overwhelming majority of the population abide by this particular law.

But, given that so very few offenders were caught, can we really believe that this was an effective use of police manpower? It must be one of the easiest forms of police work ever devised, requiring no special skill, planning or courage whatsoever, and judged a success even if you almost completely fail to find any lawbreakers.

While the police were busy harassing innocent motorists, the burglars, rapists, muggers and drug-pushers of Strathclyde must have been having a field day. As these figures underline, the drink-driving problem is one of a small hard-core minority, and, rather than this scatter-gun approach, the proper police response should surely be a much more closely targeted one.

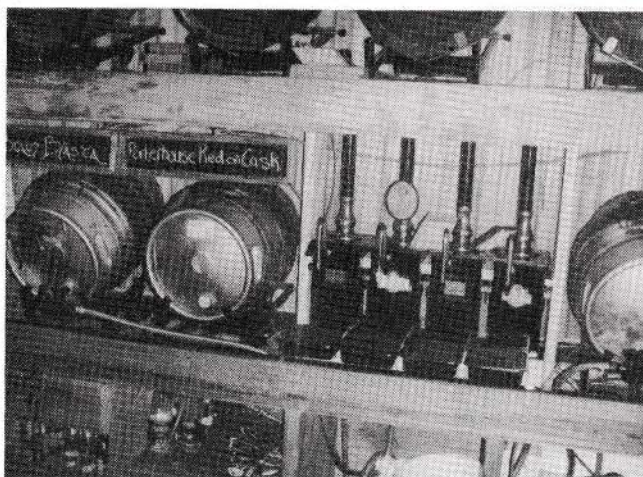


...Gets Real in Dublin

Eagle eyed CAMRA members may have noticed our national monthly 'What's Brewing' sporting a tiny notice to the effect that real ale is now available in Dublin. Determined to get to the bottom of this, the Beer Monster jumped a plane to sample a pint of the plain (urg!).

And jolly good it is too. As the accompanying photo shows, there is now a recognisable four handpump stillage at the Porterhouse brewery in Parliament Street (just South of the Liffey 5 minutes along Temple Bar). A limited amount of the excellent but usually nitrokeg output is now cask conditioned, the Porterhouse Red (a TRUE Irish style Ale which actually has FLAVOUR), the 7% Winter Ale An Brain Blaster, and the Wrasslers XXXX Stout, brewed to a wexford recipe beloved by a certain Michael Collins, have been offered recently. At least two cask beers should always be available. Probe coolers are used to bring the temperature down to what the Irish customer is more used to (a bit like Wetherspoons!), but after a couple of minutes in the hand, they taste just fine. Incidentally, the Plain Porter (in my opinion clearly their best beer) and Oyster Stout are also available, though on mixed gas dispense, as well as a humungous and frequently changing range of lagers and other speciality beers.

The Porterhouse has got to the stage of being well worth a visit to Dublin on its own, because the beers are truly outstanding, but I have been prevailed upon to present my renowned (and updated) southside/central Dublin Guinness crawl in the next issue, for those planning a visit. I will also be reporting on the Dublin Brewing Company, another new 'craft' brewery (no additives) producing an excellent but sadly nitrokeg pale IPA called Becketts. A few festivals over here are getting it in cask form, so watch out for it!



Bank Top brewery are due to launch a new beer at next months Bolton Beer Festival. as yet unnamed, this pale beer is to be around 4.2% ABV and is brewed solely using Firstgold dwarf hop.

Porters brewery launched Young Tom last month. This is a one-off brewed to celebrate the birth of Dave Porters first child, Tom. A mid-brown beer with a hoppy taste and dry finish, coming in at about 4.2%. It was very well recieved. Due to demand from festivals (including Stockport) Dave Porter is to rebrew his winter ale, Sleighed, this month. After three months maturation in cask, this should be on sale at the Stockport Beer Festival and promises to be a treat indeed.

EST 1863 As readers will know, Hydes Anvil 4X appeared again this winter and sales were described as satisfactory, by the brewery. Billy Westwoods bitter was still on sale as OT went to press and again good sales are reported, although at not quite the levels previously reached. Rumours abound that Anvil Smooth nitrokeg is about to be launched although the brewery is mainiaining a strict "no comment" position. Another straw in the wind - an unmarked nitrokeg font has also been spotted in the sample room at Robinsons. What can this mean?

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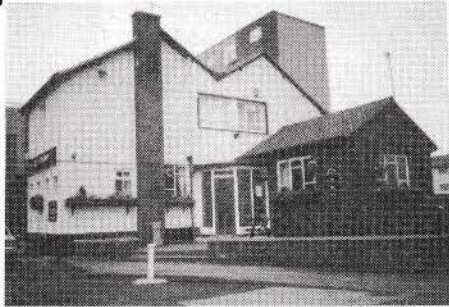


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Beer Award for Local Writer

Opening Times isn't the only source of information for local beer drinkers - indeed, pre-dating OT and still going strong is 'Mild and Bitter' the weekly beer column written by John Turrell for the South Manchester Reporter. John was one of the original founders of the paper 18 years ago and his column has appeared almost without a break since November 1978. This



long career has now been capped by John winning the Regional Writer of the Year Award presented by the British Guild of Beer Writers.

Out of a record number of entries for the Guild's awards, his regular columns were judged to be an outstanding contribution to both local newspaper and licensed trade journalism, and the award is also recognition of the enormous body of work he has produced consistently over this long time.

John was presented with the award, and also an engraved tankard, at the Beer Writers Guild Annual Banquet, held in the City of London on Thursday 5 December.

Opening Times would like to add its heartiest congratulations to this doyen of the south Manchester beer scene. Our picture shows John and his trophy outside the newspaper offices. JC.

Tie Probe Delayed

The tied house system is safe until 1999 following a decision by the European Commission on 22 January to give a two-year extension to its investigation of the British pub.

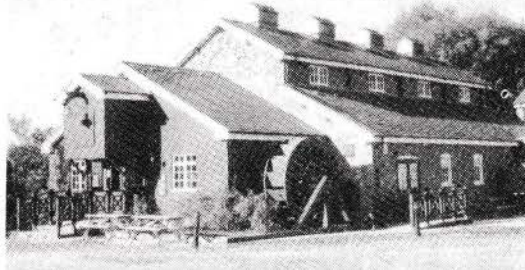
The Commissioner for Competition, Karel Van Miert, launched a "green paper" discussion document last month on competition and exemptions from the Treaty of Rome. At the same time he said the investigation into the tie would continue for a further two years.

The discussion paper outlines four alternatives including leaving the current system as it is or excluding brewers with a small market share. None would result in the complete ending of the beer tie. MEP Simon Murphy, secretary of the British Beer Club in the European Parliament, said: "What is clear is that family brewers are small players and in no danger of losing the tie which means so much to their survival. If there is any change the only brewers affected will be the big players."

However, CAMRA has warned that the extension should not lead to complacency. The Commission has been shaken by the level of opposition to both the threat to the tie and the guest beer policy.

It has faced delegations from regional brewers, licensees and CAMRA. But if the pressure is not maintained the Commission could still bow to the opponents of the tie among other EU members, with the Germans leading the charge.

The key argument put forward by the Campaign - which will be reinforced as the commission probe continues - is that the banning of the tie would lead to less choice and fewer brands. CAMRA's Campaigns Manager Steve Cox commented: "So far so good - but vigilance and further campaigning will be vital to ensure the tie stays intact in 1999."



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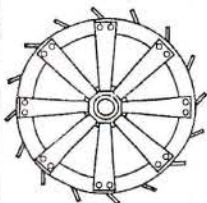
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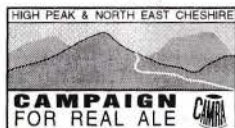
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February Featured Pub:

The Railway in Woodley.

Just a few years ago the Railway was a rather neglected and anonymous roadside pub owned by Bass. Obviously, they had spent little or no money on the pub for quite some time and consequently they must have been keen to off-load the pub when they were slimming down their estate.

Local real ale aficionados were hoping (in vain) that Holts might show an interest. In the event, however, Robbings turned out to be the buyers. I had visions of a standard Robbings conversion, but to be fair, even that would have been a vast improvement. To their credit, however, the brewery did an excellent job on the pub. Rather than the one room, cream interior and orange light bulbs finish, Robbings kept the original layout including a superb original tap room and a comfortable lounge bar. The brewery also installed a dedicated licensee who decided to serve both mild and bitter through handpumps, rather than the conventional electric dispense method. This is almost invariably a god sign (it cannot be just a coincidence that most of the Robbings pubs which appear in the Good Beer Guide use handpumps to serve their beers.)

The Railway now attracts a loyal and regular clientele despite the fact that it does not stand out particularly well, unlike the imposing Navigation, another Robbings house just a few doors down the road. Nevertheless it is well worth looking out for. If you do not know the area well, just aim for the old railway bridge which spans the road. The Railway is also a handy stop off for canal and towpath users - the Peak Forest Canal is just a couple of minutes walk away. Bus no. 330 from Stockport passes the pub. **BZ.**

Lynne and Andrew ☎ 445 4405

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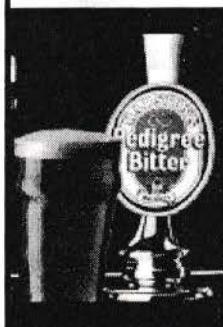
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COPY DATE FOR MARCH ISSUE IS 21st FEBRUARY 1997

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

FEBRUARY '92

"Pub of the Year 1992" was the front page headline, above two pictures of the King's Arms Hotel, Chorlton-on-Medlock, which has won the much sought-after title, voted for each year by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA. One picture showed quite an imposing two storey building, with the date 1908 high up above the name, whilst the second picture showed an almost equally imposing Simon Finch, in position behind the row of seven handpumps.

Still on the award theme, the Pub of the Month award had gone to the Hare & Hounds on Abbey Hey Lane in Gorton - a pub which had been described in the recent East Manchester Pub Guide as one of the friendliest in the area. It was a good example of a three-roomed traditional pub with a tiled corridor, and with one of the few beer gardens in the area. Handpumped Boddington's Bitter of a consistently high standard was another attraction.

The previous November had seen the opening of Jabez Clegg, just off Oxford road, opposite the University Union, and now, barely three months later, Phase II was due to open on February 7th. This was an enormous old church hall, which had been converted into two large rooms by inserting a floor halfway up the walls. With the enlargement of the premises, the beer range was also to be extended, there was to be live music every day, food all day, a night club and part licensed until 2am.

The much maligned Courage/Grand Met pubs for breweries swap was continuing to have its effect on the brewing scene,

both nationally and locally. It looked as if Ruddles, with its Best Bitter and flagship County would be sold to the Dutch family brewers Grolsch, whilst locally, the premium Webster's Choice had been axed. Its future had always been threatened by Ruddles County, and following the swap there was a competitor much closer to home in the shape of the vastly superior John Smith's Magnet Ale.

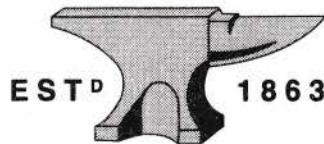
Finally, there was an interesting item headed Guest Ales and Breweries, describing how the two local pub owning chains, Boddington's and Greenall's, seemed to be taking markedly different approaches to the guest ale market. The BodPubCo had made Ind Coope Burton Ale and John Smith's Bitter available to their tenancies, and were to introduce a guest beer scheme with the help of the Boddington subsidiary, Liquid Assets. Cains and Old shilling were also available, which resulted in a total of nine different bitters available to tenants. Greenall's, whilst claiming to be the largest free house chain in the country, were only offering the standard range of Greenall's Mild, Bitter and/or Original, with perhaps the exciting option of Stones Bitter as a guest. Although about 60 of Greenall's managed houses were taking a range of beers from the new Coach House Brewery, and about 30 Merseyside pubs were to take Cains, this was still considered a dismal effort from a company with a total of over 1000 pubs in the North West.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 24cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate. Please note: Sizes are the same for Stockport beer Festival Programme. Advertising Rates are detailed on page 2.

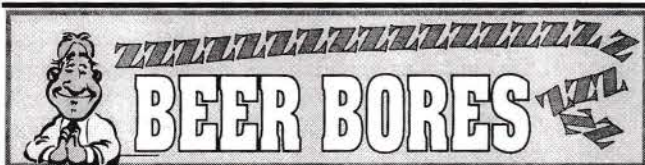
14

THE TRUE TASTE OF THE NORTH!



HYDES ANVIL ALES

BREWERS OF EXCEPTIONAL SEASONAL BEERS AND CRAFT ALES



BEER BORES

The latest offering in our highly occasional series featuring the verbally challenged comes from a press release issued prior to the launch of Mash & Air (reviewed last month). It is almost beyond parody....

"The working brewery is highly visibly and is presented in such a way that the consumer feels he or she has taken part in the production process. The emphasis upon the feminine is important as Peyton (*the owner*) has deliberately moved away from the dark, male dominated drinking houses normally associated with the North to introduce a recreational space which is positively "female friendly". As has always been the norm with wines, the beers will be presented in stylish glasses with tasting notes. Production will be overseen by Alastair Hook...Here, Hook explains the MASH philosophy:

'The beers at Mash will have your senses working overtime. Our range of beers will represent the unfettered freedom of an open brewing philosophy. Aromatic malts will give us coffee, chocolate, almonds and pepper; the yeast will lend a silky lace of vanilla, cream, restrained fruit. The hops will offer lemon, lime and oranges...flower and the fragrances of freshly mown meadows....' Obviously before the advent of Mash we in the grim north didn't know what we were missing, or then again...

It is only fair to point out two facts to readers. (1) none of the beers brewed at Mash are 'real ales' since they are served under a mixed gas dispense system. (2) the beers could fairly be termed 'craft beers' and after a peculiar start, the 'blackcurrant porter' is much improved in colour and flavour and January's special mash 'IPA' was a pleasantly hoppy if hazy brew, but all the beer is served VERY cold, though the gas pressure is not as horribly high as in Caffreys.

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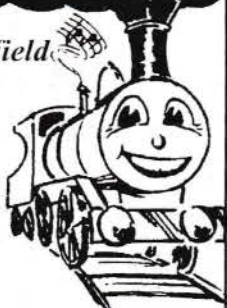
☆ QUIZZES ☆

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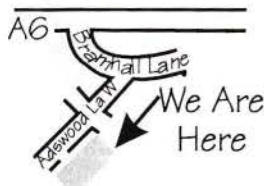
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FOOD LUNCHTIMES &
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...Pub Ne
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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE CAMRA

"Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated". The Wellington in Hyde was recently reported to be closed with a planning approval for residential use. Well the pub is open again, this time as a "free house" with "Bass" sneaking on to the sign. Let's hope this current incarnation gets the trade to make it permanent.

In Strines, the other pub - Robinson's Royal Oak has again changed hands. It is only a few short months since the last change of landlord - about the same time as the Sportsman up the road welcomed new owners.

In Broadbottom, the Station opened again over Christmas after being closed for some time. First reports indicated nothing outstanding (couldn't even recall what beer was served - although there may be other reasons for that!). Also in Broadbottom, the Cheshire Cheese has recently become one of the more enterprising pubs in the area. The range has increased to include Thwaites Mild, Bitter and the seasonal offering plus a guest and Peter Yates Bitter at £1 a pint. But that is not all, at weekends a premium strength beer is available at £1 a pint. Oh yes, and a guest traditional cider is available on handpump.

Over in Audenshaw, Whitbread have obtained planning approval to build a "Family 2000" pub on Manchester Road, near the Trough. Amongst the many delights on offer will be a "teenagers' loft" where soft drinks will be sold. Ye Gods!

Rhys Jones adds: at Robinsons' Dog & Partridge, Ashton Road, Denton, we welcome new licensees Michael and Alison Depledge. This is their first pub for ex-steeplejack Michael and his wife Alison who works for Intercity West Coast, and was one of the handful of pubs that sold Old Stockport Bitter way back when it was just called Robinsons "ordinary" Bitter. As it turns out, this is one of Michael's favourite beers, so maintaining quality will be top priority, along with some welcome redecoration in their first weeks there. Worth a call.

STOCKPORT PUB GUIDE VIADUCTS & VAULTS 2 IS NOW AVAILABLE

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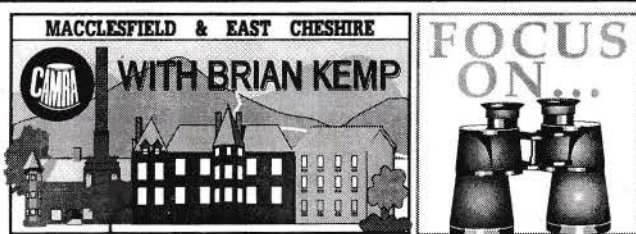
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Stockport & South Manchester

Name: _____

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Please send to: Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 5EG



The Angel Hotel, King Street, Knutsford

When it was first reported at a Macclesfield Branch meeting last autumn that Holt's had bought a pub in Knutsford, the news was greeted by a stunned silence shortly followed by cries of disbelief. But whisper it quietly, it's true! And they have completely refurbished it at, I imagine, considerable expense and it's magnificent.

I have just been there for lunch and I am lost in admiration for what they have achieved in converting an uninspiring Greenall's pub into a gem that is surely worth a CAMRA pub refurbishment award of the highest order.

The Angel Hotel, Knutsford is easily accessible from South Manchester as it is only a short walk from Knutsford railway station. Turn left out of the station down Adams Hill, then left up King Street under the railway bridge, then at the other end of King Street on the left hand side on the corner of Minshull Street you will find the Angel. What was a drab-looking town centre pub is now an imposing hostelry advertising bed and breakfast accommodation and a function room. The pub was closed for at least three months while the work was carried out but it re-opened at the beginning of December.

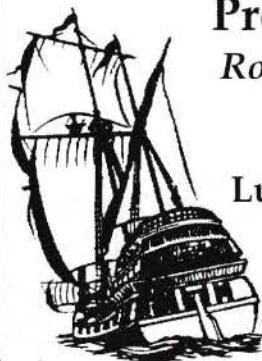
Essentially, the majority of the pub is open-plan but it has been done in such a way with substantial pillars and central open fires that the effect has been to create lots of small intimate eating and drinking areas with the atmosphere of a multi-roomed pub. The lounge area is all wood-panelled creating a grand country house feel. There is even a separate tap-room at the back which although uncarpeted would put many a pub's lounge bar to shame.

But good old Holt's have stuck by their principles! The beers on offer are their standard mild and bitter at their standard prices, viz. £1.02 for bitter, and they cater for clientele of all classes. When I was there having my usual sandwich I was flanked on one side by two genteel ladies of mature years enjoying a tray of sandwiches and a pot of tea, whilst on the other side were two Irish gentlemen, obviously of very limited means and clothing, who appeared to have come in for nothing more than a warm and a bowl of soup! There was an attractive lunchtime black-board menu at what appeared to be very reasonable prices. I guess it's available in the evening as well but I forgot to ask. You will not find many greater critics than me of tasteless, expensive pub refurbishments that do nothing more than destroy places but when you see the Angel it will make you weep even more for the ones that the big breweries have destroyed. The next time some smart-alec frilly-cuffed boy from a big brewery's marketing department tells you that his latest masterpiece/abortion is just what the customer is demanding these days, drag him to the Angel so that he can see the error of his ways.

I exhort you to go there soon so that you can see that I do not eulogise lightly! And if anybody in Holt's management team who was associated with this project reads this piece let me say "Congratulations!"

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Ye Olde Admiral Rodney Prestbury



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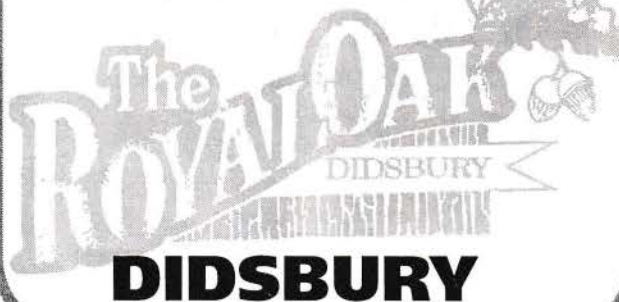
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ROYAL OAK



Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



On a cold Friday night, just before Christmas, the darting cognoscenti of Stockport found their way to the Sir Robert Peel in Edgeley.

There, under the watchful eye of landlord John Parkin and the venerable Jack Hyman, eight of the top dart players in Stockport lined up to compete for the "Teletaxis" 1996 championship.

These players had qualified for the right to compete for the title over eight weeks, each one having won a qualifying heat. And for the third time in four years, it was Tony O'Shea who was acclaimed a deserving winner.

Facing O'Shea in the final was his Cheshire County team-mate Dave Hackney. But it was Tony who struck the first blow, killing 106 to take the first leg of 501, in just 15 darts. Dave quickly levelled the best of 9 final, himself hitting a big outshot of 116 for a 24 arrow leg.

After that, it was all O'Shea. Tony finished off his opponent with superb games of 20, 15, 21 and a superb 12 to take the title, scoring two maximums along the way.


In the semi-final Tony beat Darryl Fitton after a classic game. O'Shea went into 2-0 lead in 19 and 14 darts, but could only watch and admire as Fitton hit back to win three legs on the bounce. Darryl's darts were a consistent 18, 15 and 18. Leg six went in favour of Tony in 19 to bring the scores back level. And it was he who took a nervous seventh leg in 25 darts to set up the final with Hackney. The game saw Darryl hitting three maximums, to Tony's one.

Dave Hackney reached the final with a 4-0 victory over left-hander Phil Kerr. Despite Phil seriously worrying the sixty segment with two 180's, it was Dave who found his doubles - finishing in 19, 28, 23 and 26 darts. The beaten quarter-finalists were Dave Adshead, Mark Cairney, Alan Riley and Paul Singer. For those who fancy their chances at competing at this level, there are two current opportunities available. Banks's Brewery are sponsoring a major event at Adswood Working Men's Club, beginning Thursday February 13 at 8.30pm. Saddled with the title of "Banks's Brewery Smooth Pour Trophy", the competition will run over eight heats, each heat winner going forward to the final. The eventual winner will receive a silver trophy and a prize of £200. All finalists are guaranteed prize money. Registration fee is £2 per player.

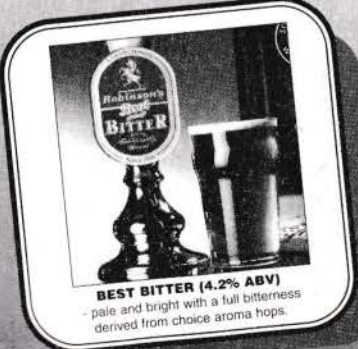
The 1919 Taxis event is already underway, with heats on Friday nights, leading to a final on March 14. £500 total prize money is up for grabs, so head down to the Grapes, Old Road, Heaton Norris for this one. Games get underway on Friday nights, on the oche for 8.30pm. Registration is the standard £2.

To finish on a personal note, most readers will have learned that the Stockport Messenger has closed. For the last four and a half years I was the darts correspondent. In that time I have found many friends in the world of local darts. There is no way that I could ever say goodbye to the greatest pub game in the world, and will stay involved.

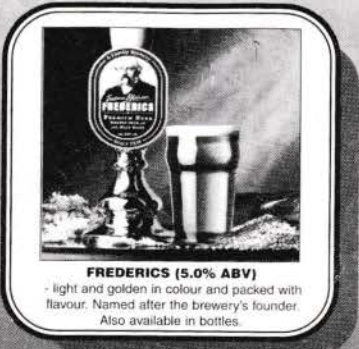
I would especially like to thank Mike Moran and John Parkin, from the Stockport Licensed Houses League, for their undying co-operation and loyalty to the game. My sincere good wishes also to Jack "Mr Darts" Hyman. Jack, who for many years has written about the game for the Stockport Express Advertiser, has been a constant source of information and friendship. Far from being rivals, we have been good friends. I look forward to working with him for many years to come.




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.




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- brewed from quality malt and hops, it's the best cask conditioned, light mild around.



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- 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

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

February 97

Monday 10th - Social, Crown, Heaton Moor Road. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 13th - Branch meeting at the Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport. **Selections for the 1998 Good Beer Guide will be made at this meeting. All members please try and attend.** Starts 8.00pm. **NOTE - DIFFERENT VENUE TO THAT SHOWN IN WHAT'S BREWING.**

Saturday 15th - Pub of the Year presentation to the Griffin, Heaton Mersey. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 17th - Social, Britannia, Rowsley St, Beswick. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 21st - Hazel Grove Stagger - starts Rising Sun 7.00pm. Three Tunnes at 8.30.

Saturday 22nd - minibus to Davenport Arms, Woodford for presentation night. Leaves Royal Oak, Didsbury 7.15; Crown, Heaton Lane 7.30. Book on 477 1973.

Monday 24th - Cheadle Social: Printers 9.00pm, Queens 10.00pm.

Thursday 27th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Station, Didsbury

Saturday 1st March - trip to Welsh Beer Festival at the Llyn-y-Mawn, Brynford nr Holywell. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.30am. Book on 477 1973.

February 97

Monday 3rd - City Centre Social: 9.00pm Old Monkey, 10.00pm Circus. Both on Portland Street.

High Peak Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

Friday 7th - Annual branch winter weekend away. Three days in Bristol, travel via group train ticket. Details from Tom Lord (427 7099[h], 837 4474[w]).

Monday 10th - Branch meeting at the Andrew Arms, Compstall. **Selections for the 1998 Good Beer Guide will be made at this meeting. All members please try and attend.** Starts 8.30pm.

Friday 21st - Minibus trip to Phoenix Brewery, Heywood. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

Saturday 8th March - Stockport Pub Crawl. Starts Railway, Gt Portwood St, 8.30pm. Finish in Crown, Heaton Lane.

Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow and Knutsford down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following event:

Monday 24th - Branch meeting at the Meridien, Bollington. Starts 8.00pm.

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18

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AT

Claire and Howard welcome all their
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**MANCHESTER'S
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FOOD 11.30-2.30 & 5-7 Mon-Fri
and 11.30 - 2.30 Saturday
CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
HIGHEST QUALITY GUEST ALES



MANCHESTER MATTERS

Inner City Booze

As it's been a quiet month for news, this month sees *Manchester Matters* devoted to the first of an occasional series: *Inner City Booze* will survey the pubs of a particular Manchester district, consider their recent history and present state, and perhaps offer some thoughts on their prospects. *Manchester news* this month appears amongst the regular news "briefs" elsewhere in *OT*.



by Rhys Jones

In Beswick and Bradford, we see Manchester's pubs in crisis. Beguiled by dreams of Olympic glory, the city's planners created a wilderness, and called it Eastlands, their tidy-minded demolitions (most notoriously of the Little Bradford) giving the coup de grace to districts already grievously wounded by the loss of their industrial base - for in contrast to the commerce and service industries that sustain most of the city, this was where Manchester dug coal and shaped metal. Today, though gleaming lamp-posts - there to impress Olympic delegates - stand above scarce-trodden pavements that would shame Piccadilly Gardens, by night a cold wind scours a broken community. Even the buses seem just to be passing through, for neither Beswick nor Bradford appears on the City Centre departure posters. If pubs can survive here, you feel, they can survive anywhere. And yet, survive they do. Of course, there have been grievous losses. Of the dozen real ale pubs listed for the two districts in 1990's "Ale of Two Cities", no fewer than eight are now demolished, not least the vast, forbidding but truly welcoming monolith of the Duke of Edinburgh.

But demolish as you will, you can't sweep away good ale and good pubs. The old Bradford labour Club is now a pub rejoicing in the name **Mary D's Beamish Bar**, with the accent on entertainment and cheap beer (Lees plus national brands). And a number of long-time keg pubs have embraced real beer in the nineties - the **Bradford Hotel** on Mill Street, the **Clock Face** on Wynne Close, and the **Townley** on Albert Street all sell various permutations of Whitbread real ales, and all are pleasant places to visit, with the Townley, with its recently added back room, perhaps the most successful of the three. The **Queen Victoria** on Grey Mare Lane, already a real ale pub in 1990, also maintains a busy trade in a no-nonsense atmosphere.

Add to this the presence of two well-known and excellent tied houses of the Manchester independent brewers - the **Seven Stars** (Holts) and the **Britannia** (Lees) and you have an area which many inhabitants of other cities might well envy. Indeed, only three of the area's remaining pubs - the **Mosley** on Ashton New Road, the **Crossroads**, also Ashton New Road, and the **Corner Shop** on Rylance Street - fail to offer real ale on a regular basis, and perhaps for that reason appear to be strictly locals' haunts (though I can't help feeling that, on its prominent corner site, the Mosley has potential for more).

So what of the future for Beswick and Bradford? It would perhaps be folly to predict unclouded prosperity for any of the area's pubs; yet there does seem a chance that, now the excess bequeathed by the industrial past has been removed, those that remain enjoy a stable customer base sufficient to ensure them a future. The greatest concern perhaps focuses on the Britannia, because of both its traditional character and its isolated location (it's nobody's local!). Yet with a conscientious licensee once again in place, and a seeming commitment from Lees brewer to sustain the place through the lean years, perhaps we dare hope that the Britannia survives to enjoy the good times when the new stadium eventually rises on the dusty plain once briefly earmarked as the fields of Olympus.

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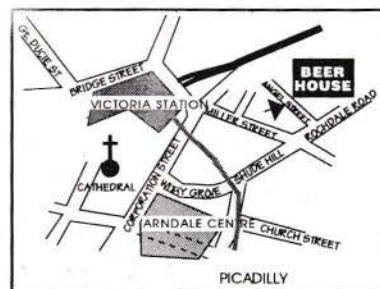
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SOMETHING FOR EVEN THE MOST DISCERNING TASTE



In a surprise move over the New Year, the mild at Banks's *Longsight*, Belle Vue, was removed and replaced by the "smooth" keg version. The switch - which seems entirely unjustified given the perfectly acceptable quality of the cask mild over the pub's 10-year trading history - casts further doubt on Banks's increasingly shaky reputation for a commitment to quality real ale. Unspoilt by Progress? Not in Manchester!

Disposed of by Burtonwood, the **Moulders Arms** in the City Centre (Heyrod Street, tucked away between Piccadilly Station and Piccadilly Village flats) now sells Theakstons Bitter and a guest (Moorhouses' Peter Yates Bitter has featured). Unchanged in layout and atmosphere, it still hosts Irish music from time to time and now boasts a short, keenly-priced lunch menu. Well worth a visit.

Tommy Duck's Whisky Bar in the City Centre has lost Tetley Bitter and Ruddles County; moreover cask John Smiths Bitter co-exists with "smooth" keg John Smiths, leaving Courage Directors as the sole cask-only beer. However, the quality of the cask beer remains good. Worse news at the *Overdraught* on Princess Street which no longer sells real ale.

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We have received a report that the **Oakley Manor Hotel** on Ravenoak Road in Cheadle Hulme is selling keg Thwaites bitter by handpump. While the bar only has a residential and restaurant licence and is therefore not open to the casual drinker, this is still likely to deceive anyone dining there or attending a function. It is particularly disappointing as the hotel is run by the same family who have the Church Inn just opposite, which has long enjoyed the reputation of a well-run pub, especially for its prompt service. The family involvement may have come to an end, though. The local press recently included a application for a full on-licence by Steve Kalton a local operator involved in both the eponymous Kalton Inns and the Yates Wine Lodge-owned Watling Street Inns. A new pub for Cheadle Hulme?

As previewed last month, January 14th saw a gala charity evening at the *Albert*, Walmer Street, Rusholme. Held in aid of the Rainbow Family Trust, a pile of pennies was pushed over by Coronation Street star Michael Levell, also featured was the all-Ireland cocktail shaking team (!) and an excellent music session - Irish of course. The amount raised is still to be announce but worthy of particular note are the pub's staff who donated their earnings that evening to the charity. Congratulations to Jim and Sheila Callaghan for an excellent night.

A licensing application for a Hogshead (the Whitbread ale house operation) has been submitted for one of the units to be built on the site of the old Didsbury station. Expect ructions as the local Civic Society objects. Still no news either on the location of the proposed Wetherspoons pub in the village. Yet another Hogshead is, we are told, planned for the 'student area' of Oxford Road in Manchester. This is to be a two storey pub, perhaps modelled on the one in Newcastle-under-lyne. It will however be a new build as the site is expected to be cleared before construction. Planned to open early next year.

Rumours abound that the **Alexandre Sports shop**, on the corner of Wilbraham Road and Wilmslow Road in Fallowfield, which is due to close, has been bought by Hale Leisure, the people behind *Jabez Clegg*, *Joshua Brooks* and *The Thirsty Scholar*. This would make sense as they have been on the look-out for an outlet in the area for some time now.

All change at the **Blossoms**, Stockport. Popular licensee Barbara Mounkley leaves in April and new tenants take over. These are a Mr and Mrs Owen - Mr Owen is currently bar/cellarman at the Cock in Hazel Grove. This move on the part of Robinsons has caused some dismay in the pub where it was hoped that Barbara's son Simon and his girlfriend would take over. Indeed the customers have got up a petition to protest at the brewery's decision. Simon also feels badly done by - while Robinsons allowed him to interview for the tenancy it was subsequently made clear that he had never really been in the frame. It does seem an unusual way to do business...



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(OT154)

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