

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING



No:
166

FREE

TIMES

6,500 CIRCULATED
FREE EVERY MONTH

FEBRUARY 1998



Pub of the Year 1997



A nailbiting result saw Manchester's Grey Horse narrowly beat Stockport's Railway for the prestigious Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year award.

Nominations and voting took place at the January meeting of the local branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, where all the 12 Pubs of the Month for 1997 ran off for the champion Pub of the Year. Despite the presence of several likely candidates, the final voting was between the Grey Horse, Portland Street, Manchester, the July Pub of the Month, and the Railway, Great Portwood Street, Stockport, the May winner.

It couldn't have been closer, reflecting the high quality of each pub, with branch members evenly split between both. There can, though, be only one winner and after considerable agonising, Branch Chairman Rhys Jones used his casting vote to clinch it for the Grey Horse. Reflecting later on what was clearly one of the most difficult decisions in his period of office, Rhys told Opening Times: "It was a desperately difficult decision, and I felt terrible about disappointing everybody connected with the Railway". He went on "The Grey Horse and the Railway are two superb pubs, and each has been greatly improved under its present licensees; in the end I felt the extra 'buzz' conferred by a city-centre location just shaded it for the Grey Horse by the narrowest of margins."

Celebrating the good news are Grey Horse licensees Lil and Noel Duffy who took over the pub in 1996 and began rescuing it from a noticeable period of decline. First job was to improve the appearance of the place by doing away with the lurid green walls - not very appropriate for one of the smallest pubs in Manchester - and a tacky mock 'art deco' pot shelf, replacing them with décor and fittings of a more traditional nature.

They got the beer right, too, for such is the quality of the handpumped Hydes' Anvil Mild and Bitter that the pub has gained a place in CAMRA's 1998 Good Beer Guide. Under Lil and Noel's expert handling, the Grey Horse has in fact become one of the few genuine community pubs in the City Centre offering a welcome for all in a friendly unassuming atmosphere.

The warmth of the welcome will no doubt be much in evidence on the night of Thursday 5 March when this well-deserved award will be presented.



...And Railway is Runner-Up

A special mention has to be made of the runner-up, the Railway on Great Portwood Street, Stockport.

Emerging from the wreckage of the closed-down Byrons, for many people the Railway, the third tied house of Porter's Brewery, has come to sum up everything that pubs and beer should be about. Since opening in September 1996 this pub has taken the local beer drinking scene by storm. It has built up a fiercely loyal band of regulars attracted by both the traditional values embodied in the able way the pub is run by Paul and Bev Stanyer and also the high quality of the beer sold.

There's no keg cider or stout on sale, and keg lager sells in only the tiniest amounts. Instead the pub majors on the wide and competitively priced range of Porters ales and is also a rare local outlet for traditional cider. There are no slot machines, no juke box and most certainly no pouring back beer to the cask - look for the filter displayed in the pub and marked 'RIP 1996'. Instead there's good ale, good food and a great atmosphere. One of the best pubs in town and a 'must' for visitors.



Make a date in your diary now! Stockport's 12th Annual Beer Fest will be held in the Town Hall from May 28 - 30 and this year will host the National Cider & Perry Championship! - More details inside on page 11

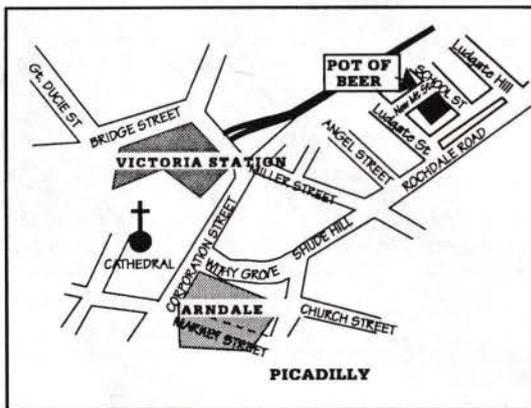
In FEBRUARY'S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	3	Five Years Ago	9
Cambrinus Craft	4	Peak Pub	10
Letters	5	Sunny Buxton	11
Stagger	6	Focus	13
Brewery News	7	Camra Calling	14
Protect Pubs	8	Manchester Matters ...	15
Curmudgeon	9	Pub News	15

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- ✓ SELECTION OF WINES & MALT WHISKIES



FOOD NOW AVAILABLE
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MONDAY - FRIDAY!

OPENING TIMES 166

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. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.

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PHOENIX BREWERY

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TEL: 01706 627009



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Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.



BANTAM
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BEST BITTER
Tawny coloured, with a hint of sweetness in the full bitter palate. A fresh but dry hop finish.



OLD OAK
Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, fruity and dry.



THIRSTY MOON
Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight malteness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.



BONNEVILLE
Light brown bitter. Malty character with a soft rounded hop balance.



DOUBLE DAGGER
Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its gravity would suggest.

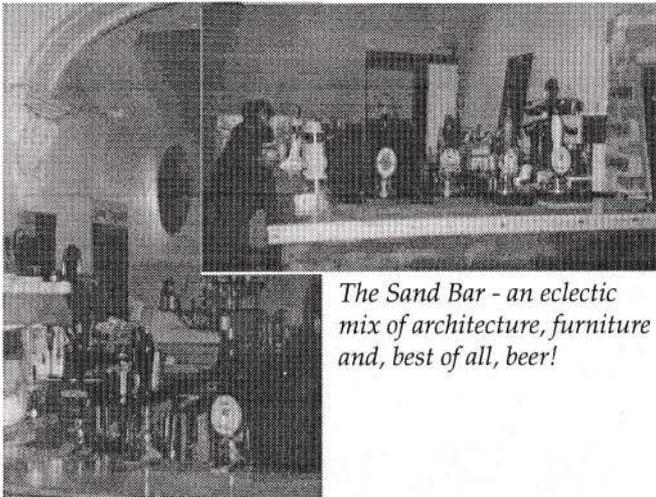
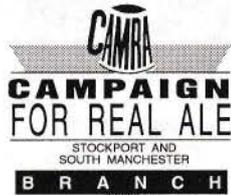


WOBBLY BOB
Lighter beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.

Pub Of The Month FEBRUARY 1998

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



The Sand Bar - an eclectic mix of architecture, furniture and, best of all, beer!

Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's Pub of the Month for February is really 'Bar of the Month' as the award goes to Sand Bar, Grosvenor Street, Manchester.

Occupying two adjoining Georgian townhouses, this two year old establishment thrives despite the neighbouring presence of large theme pubs on and around Oxford Road. The relaxed interior is furnished with an eclectic mix of chairs and tables and occupies a variety of different drinking areas decorated in mood enhancing colour schemes. There's a refreshingly different selection on the jukebox and there is often a DJ playing acid jazz or other mellow sounds.

There is an interesting and varied menu and the coffee, always available, is as real as the beer. Because, despite being very much a café bar, it is on the beer front that Sand Bar really stands out. Seven handpumps dispense up to six different beers including four guest beers, all from micro-brewers. A wide range of foreign beer is also sold both in bottle and on draught - there's always at least one German and one Belgian beer on tap, with De Koninck from Antwerp being the current offering.

It is good, too, to see blackboards being used to inform and not as flashy gimmicks.

Behind every successful pub is a good licensee, and Sand Bar is no exception. Manager Richard Smith is very much a beer enthusiast, with previous experience at Bar in Chorlton, who is very keen to support local micro-brewers. A keen Phoenix fan, that brewery's Bantam Bitter is the house beer and Richard makes a point of running through the entire range from the brewery, including every seasonal special. There will in fact be an 'extra' special for Pub of the Month as Richard has commissioned a one-off just for the night.

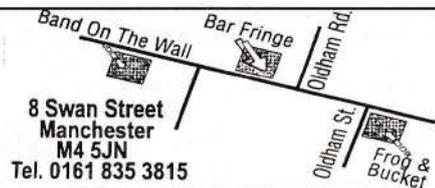
It's very much a team effort, though, with Richard supported by cellarman Rob and Donna behind the bar. Richard, Donna and Rob will be presented with this well-deserved award on Thursday 26 February on what promises to be a unique and hugely enjoyable night.

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

BAR FRINGE

Draught Hoegaarden, Liefmans Kreik & Leffe Blond in Traditionally Chilled Brewery Glasses, Draught Kulmbach and Handpumped British Ale including changing Guest from Bank Top and Handpumped traditional Gloucester

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3

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Holts and John Smiths Bitters

Bingo every Tuesday night

D.J. & Quiz every Thursday Mon. - Thurs. 6-11pm

Friday night is Kareoke night Fri., Sat. 12 - 11pm

Live Cabaret Saturday night Sun. 12 - 10.30pm

D.J. and Bingo Sunday night

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- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

Hydes
Anvil Ales
Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

Cheadle Changes

The former Cheadle Café Bar reopened on 4 December as Carpe Diem, 'Bar Extraordinaire' in what is perhaps one of the more pointless image changes in recent times.

When the Café Bar opened a few years ago, Opening Times caused raised eyebrows in the trade press by lavishing praise in the concept. And indeed, it was praise well-earned as the Café Bar was stylish, plush and comfortable with a pleasant atmosphere of relaxed intimacy. It served decent beer, to boot. All this has now been swept away and replaced by a very different animal. Essentially, it has been stripped out with much exposed brickwork, girders and air-conditioning ducts. In a largely open-plan format, there's a polished bare wooden floor and plain chairs and tables around the edges with large empty spaces, presumably designed for the evening venue crowd (complete with suitably loud jukebox).

The emphasis seems to be on food and wine with the three handpumped beers almost an afterthought. These are Tetley Bitter, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Ind Coope Burton Ale, none have been up to much when OT called. They're not cheap either - Tetleys at a post-budget £1.70 with the others priced to match. Local wags have suggested that 'Carpe Diem' could be Latin for 'crappy dive'! It's nothing of the sort, of course, but not a patch on what went before. Across the road, the White Hart has also been trying to reinvent itself. Press advertising has claimed that outside it looks like a pub, but inside it's a bar. Complete cobblers, of course - it's still very much a pub inside, too, with the only nod in the direction of its 'bar' status being some particularly silly pillar taps for the keg beers. The rest of the pub has been done up in a very traditional manner and is cosy, comfortable and plush - everything that Carpe Diem isn't, in fact. There's only one cask beer, Boddingtons Bitter, and while better than the offerings across the road, still wasn't brilliant when OT called. Oh, and it's also now branded as a 'Main Place Inn' which, presumably, is yet another of the concepts that Greenalls are scattering across their estate like confetti.

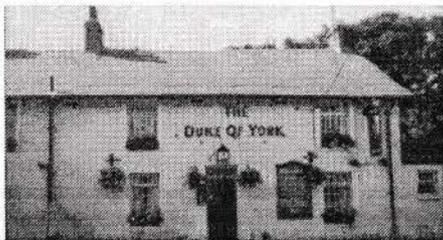
Speaking of Greenalls, their George & Dragon on Cheadle Green was closed for extensive refurbishment as went to press. It will be interesting to see what Greenalls have in mind for this listed former coaching inn. A full review will follow its reopening.

4

KEN & ANGIE WELCOME YOU TO



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Come and Join Us and Try Our Food and Ale

Find Us in the Good Food Guide & Good Beer Guide



Spotlight on Cambrinus Craft Brewery

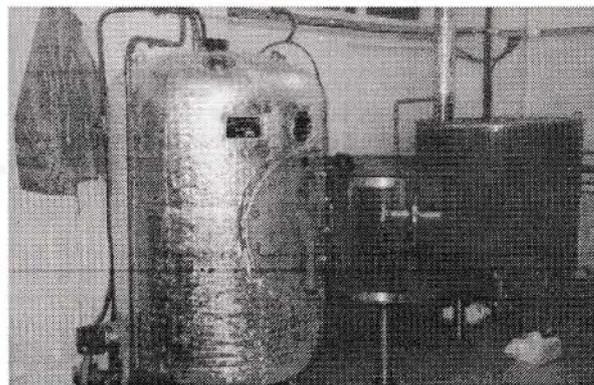
Better known for its big game, Knowsley country park near Liverpool is now home to one of the region's newest brewers.

Former merchant seaman John Aspinall set up his Cambrinus Craft Brewery in July last year and now supplies his beer to about 40 local outlets including the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport and the Beer House in Manchester.

In common with many new-wave brewers, John was for many years a keen home-brewer, shore leave permitting, of course! With the continued contraction of the merchant fleet, John was offered and took redundancy, deciding to try and turn his erstwhile hobby into something more permanent, and lucrative.

Suitable premises had already been found, mainly as a result of an earlier plan to brew commercially on a part-time basis only during spells of leave. Such an operation would necessarily mean that the brewing plant would have to be left unattended for long spells and so security was essential. A gated private estate seemed ideal so contact was made with the Knowsley estate manager and John Aspinall became one of the few brewers to be the tenant of the aristocracy, Lord Derby to be precise.

The brewery is housed in buildings that are in fact part of a working farm. It occupies two large rooms, one of which houses the shiny new five-barrel plant, obtained for the most part from the Bitter End at Cockermouth in the Lake District.



This has been used to produce six beers to date, all of which are all-malt brews. Five of these have been pale beers, in ascending order of strength, Renaissance 3.3 per cent ABV, Restorance 3.6, Deliverance 4.2, Dominance 5.5 and the powerful Celebrance 6.5. The similarity in the names is explained by the fact that after his first beer, Deliverance, took off it seemed logical to follow the 'ance' theme throughout. That pattern has been broken by the latest brew, however. This, also John's first dark beer, is a five per cent porter by the name of Lamp Oil. It is a rich but drinkable brew full of the roasty flavours typical of the style balanced with a welcome hoppy dryness.

Maris Otter malt is used throughout, with this being the sole variety in Deliverance and Dominance. Other beers use small amounts of crystal, amber, and wheat malt. Hops are the Fuggles and Goldings varieties. The plan is to bring out more beers using different hop varieties as the brewery develops.

And the name? That comes from a book, "Curiosities of Ale and Beer" that John read many years ago. Already a keen home brewer, he resolved to use the name if he ever came to own a brewery. And so it has come to pass. Look out for Aspinall's beer in the free trade, they're certainly worth a pint or three.

Aspinall's Cambrinus Craft Brewery is at Home Farm, Knowsley Park, Knowsley, Liverpool, L34 4AQ It can be contacted on 0151 546 2226.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Geoff Johnson:

I was disappointed to read in the latest "What's Brewing" that CAMRA are unlikely to run a Beer Tent at this year's Tameside Canals Festival, apparently because of falling demand.

This event has always been one of the main events of the drinking year in my diary, not only because of the unique location and atmosphere, but also because of the precision and skill with which the local branch run the event - an expertise acquired over more than 20 years.

Over recent years, I have attended the festival for both the Saturday and Sunday lunchtime sessions and the tent has always been busy - indeed it is only a couple of years ago that it ran dry and emergency supplies had to be shipped in from Thomas McGuinness! On that evidence and the fact that Tameside Council are currently expanding the Portland Basin site and increasing facilities, the decision seems peculiar to say the least. It also seems at odds with the CAMRA policy of maintaining tradition.

I accept that some sessions may be better patronised than others - in which case isn't a sensitive review of opening hours all that is required?

I am naturally disappointed that CAMRA are seemingly allowing yet another part of our heritage to disappear. Personally I find it difficult to believe that there is no place for a beer tent at the event - I wonder if one of our more enterprising free houses in the locality could be encouraged to step in and fill the breach?

From John Cardwell (via the Internet)

I am disappointed that the Old Cock Inn no longer provides live music on a Thursday night. It was a brilliant venue, though it didn't seem to draw the crowds. I wonder if this was because of the lack of advertising.

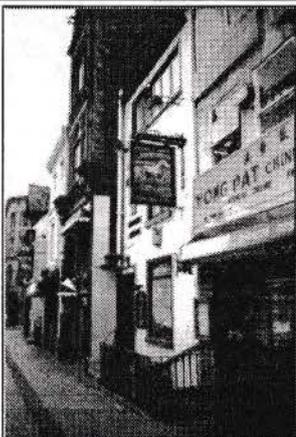
I have been searching for live music in Manchester pubs for some time and wondered if you could bring back the Rythm n Booze feature from several years ago.

Stockport appears to be the place to go, but surely there must be more in Manchester than O'Sheas, The Star an Garter, Band on the Wall, The Beaton Track and the Firkin.

Maybe support from you, would help pubs like the Old Cock Inn to at least break even.

We would dearly like to revive the Rythm & Booze feature. How about volunteering? If John won't do it himself, surely there is someone out there with an eclectic taste in live music and (preferably) a camera! - Ed.

Letters via e-mail are welcome: otletter@opentime.u-net.com



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Amongst our February Guest Beers will be: Hoskins, Batemans Horny Devil, Nessies Monster Mash (Tomintoul), Caledonian Conan Doyle, Ash Vine Hop & Glory, Tomintoul Grand Slam - and watch out for the full Frederic Robinson Experience - last week in Feb

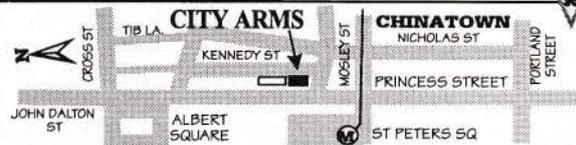
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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1997
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STAGGER

with Guest Beer Writer Mark McConachie

A mild evening in late November saw us start our, now annual, East Manchester Stagger of selected pubs by means of a minibus.

Our first port of call was Hydes' **Travellers Call** on Hyde Road, West Gorton. The pub is a roadside terrace amidst a mix of fairly shabby looking rundown properties. Have no fear of the Travellers, however, for it is tidy, small and welcoming with two rooms – a back snug, which in practice is little used, and the warm looking, yellowed front vault. Spartan and clean, fine beers on offer too – all on electric metered pumps – Hydes Mild, Bitter and Billy Westwoods. Whilst the latter low-gravity offering went untried, the mild was good, the bitter excellent.

Into the minibus and further up Hyde Road to the **Friendship**. This is a three-room thirties Marston's house not far from the entrance to Debdale Park. A short corridor leads to the bar and large lounge-concert room; a quality vault is to your right, adorned with Man. City photos; at the back lies a gem of a panelled snug with barrel seats. Three beers were available, Marston's Bitter, Banks's Mild and Batemans Mild. The bitter was not sampled, the Banks's was well liked, the Batemans just more so.

Across to Abbey Hey next, to Boddingtons (Greenalls) **Hare & Hounds** on Abbey Hey Lane. Here we tried both beers – Boddies Bitter and Greenalls Festival – both rated well. The pub, too, rated well, having just been redecorated and in places modified in a restrained fashion. Three rooms lie off the tiled corridor – vault, now no longer an entirely separate room; smoke room now resplendent in red and blue together with a new panelled fireplace. The rear snug has also had the treatment – very smart. It really has

raised the pub up a notch or two in the smart stakes from its former guise as a good honest boozier.

Back towards town next and the **Seven Stars**, Ashton Old Road, Ardwick. An imposing Victorian edifice owned by Holts and modified some years previously to enlarge the lounge. On our call this was host to a guitarist singer; we opted to sit in the quieter vault. A third room is available at the rear – this being a darts area. Holts Mild and Bitter were available and sampled. The mild scored well, the bitter did not. Our people found it to be very harsh – a tad green perhaps?

Back into the minibus and over to the **Strawberry Duck**, Crabtree Lane, Clayton. This is a decent canalside pub just off Ashton New Road. Advertising itself as a free house, it used to sell beers from Failsworth, it has now reverted to Holts Bitter and Boddies. Everyone went for the Joey's and we weren't disappointed. Nor did the pub disappoint us as it had been thoroughly redecorated in a very, very pleasing style. The layout of the pub is unchanged but a decorative screen divider by the entrance now subtly breaks up the big lounge. I thought the place looked better than it has for years – a real winner. Get down there and be impressed.

Staying in Clayton and on the 'new' road saw us next in Holt's **Grove** – a good, down to earth two-room pub with an interesting war memorial in the vault. The vault was in fact very busy with enthusiastic drinkers, the lounge was a good deal quieter so we did get to sit down. There is something about the Grove that always feels right and tonight was no exception. Although Holt's Mild was available we all plumped for the bitter and it was very agreeable. Our final pub was further down towards the city – J W Lees' **Britannia** on Rowsley Street. This is a tidy small corner house at the end of an otherwise deserted street. It was good to see that it was still lively despite all of the changes that have taken place around it. We settled down in the L-shaped vault with our GB Milds and Bitters. They were judged well – the mild above average, the bitter just grabbing the beer of the night title.

A good night out was had by all and I hope you will get to visit at least some of the pubs mentioned.

6



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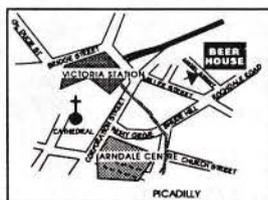
40 Scary Spring Ales

Upstairs & Downstairs

ALL DAY FOOD - ALL DAY OPENING

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- GOOD FOOD - Vegetarians welcome



BREWERY NEWS

Hydies' Anvil have announced a revamped programme of seasonal beers with one due to appear every two months during 1998. Details are as follows:

March/April will see the introduction of **Rampant Ram**, a 4.3 percent premium ale brewed with Pudge Fuggle bittering and aroma hops along with Maris Otter and crystal malts to give a malty fullness and tawny colour.

May/June - the beer will be **Mad Ferret**, a 5 percent brown ale, strongly primed with rich cane ESTD 1863 sugar and hopped with Fuggles.

July/August - **Maris Gold**, a 4 percent pale, lightly bittered beer with Styrian Goldings hops added late in the brewing process. An all malt (Maris Otter) brew.

September/October - the autumn offering is **Berry Good Ale**, a berry red, full flavoured all malt ale with the addition of seasonal berry juice to add colour and a dryness to the palate. 4.5 percent. November/December - the new winter warmer is the 5 percent **Chill Blane**, brewed with pale ale and chocolate malts to produce a full bodied, satisfying beer.

January/February - 1999 is seen in with **Ruby Ratchet's Porter**, strong for the style at 5.3 percent. Brewed with Maris Otter malt and roasted barley to give a complex palate.

This imaginative scheme certainly helps cement Hydies' growing reputation as one of the most innovative of the area's old family brewers. OT will of course review each beer as it is rolled out.

Also producing new beers is the region's newest brewer. The Marble Brewery has already supplemented its standard Marble



Bitter and premium Totally Marbled with a winter special, the 6.5 percent Dobber, and a new permanent addition, IPA at 4.6 percent. This latter is an intensely hoppy beer and bears more than a passing resemblance to the much-missed West Coast Yakima Grande Pale

Ale. Next in line is a porter and brewer Mark Dade says his ultimate aim is for a range of seven beers.

Robbies Dream Team

Supporters of Stockport County will be able to choose the best all-time team and win a VIP day out at a home match or one of twenty other prizes when they buy a pint of Robbies Best Bitter. Robinson's, whose best-selling beer is the name on the club shirts, is running a County 'All-Time Dream Team' competition.

The competition, which will require fans to pick the best 11 from 40 players, past and present, was launched at the team's home game against QPR on 31 January. With long-serving stalwarts from as far back as 1900 to choose from, Best Bitter drinkers will have until the end of February to make their selections.

County experts including Peter Gardner, a former Manchester Evening News reporter, Ray Drake, who played for the club in the fifties, and Ian Lancashire, a fan for more than 40 years will judge the competition.

Included on the list are current defenders Mike Flynn and Jim Gannon as well as Lee Todd and Paul Jones from last season's promotion winning side who have moved to Southampton with former boss Dave Jones.

Entry forms are available at most pubs in the area that sell Robinson's Best Bitter.

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CAMRA Pub of the Month
March 1997



7

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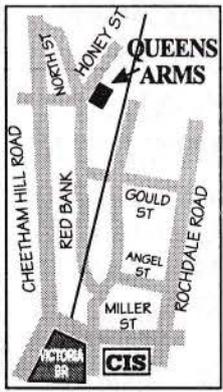


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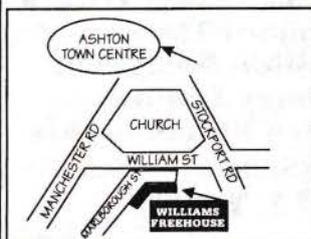
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has been squeezed by the Evil Editor again, Munich environs next month...

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Protected Pubs

by Peter Barnes

Many fine buildings which people take for granted have actually survived through the intervention of conservation bodies, and pubs are no exception.

In Manchester City Centre for example, Liverpool Road Station, the Albert Memorial, Parrs Bank (now the Athenaeum pub), Albert Hall and the Mechanics Institute are still with us only because of some vigorous campaigning to draw attention to their architectural and historic merits and to prevent demolition or a slow decline into dereliction.

The best protection for a pub is for it to become statutorily 'listed'. Pubs that have been protected in recent years include the following:

Plough, Gorton (listed 1994) had been blighted for decades by the Hyde Road Improvement scheme. Consequently, Robinson's had not tried to 'improve' it and the Victorian interior is still intact. If the road widening plane are ever resurrected there is now a strong case for a re-design to avoid the pub.

Railway, Broadheath (listed 1994) is now thriving. Without listing protection it would definitely have been flattened and become part of the car park for the adjacent retail park. It has recently been successfully extended into former living areas. There is direct access from the retail park. It has gained Holts beers and all the original interior has been saved and enhanced.

Alexandra, Edgeley (listed 1994) was rumoured to be in line for an extensive refurbishment until English Heritage stepped into the breach. Now the fine Art Nouveau wall tiling and decorative glass and timber screens and bar front, not to speak of the splendid arrangement of five rooms, are all saved for posterity.

Swan & Railway, Wigan (listed 1995) had been sold to a leisure company and was about to be turned into another Irish theme bar. The close working relationship between CAMRA and English Heritage helped to expedite procedures and the pub was listed before any harm could be done. It is still a Good Beer Guide pub and its character is protected.

The most recent success concerns a wonderful pub interior in Lancashire. The **Victoria, Great Harwood** (listed December 1997) has been put on the market by Scottish Courage. It was already 'in the pipeline' for listing. English Heritage responded quickly and it is now safeguarded no matter who the new owners will be.

These pubs are the most obvious cases. There are numerous examples of once vulnerable interiors, now listed, which would probably have become victims of the interior design brigade (or the Managing Director's wife!) at some stage, if they had not been protected.

So much for the good news. The system did not work as well in the past and even these days it is possible for some pubs to slip through the net. Classic pub interiors which almost certainly could have been protected if the bulldozers of the interior designers had not got there first include **Tallow Tub, Salford** (demolished 1992), **Roebuck Hotel, Urmston** (radically altered 1990), **Duke of Edinburgh, Bradford** (demolished 1992) and the **Wrexham, Openshaw** (demolished 1997). Occasionally, even when a pub is listed, it cannot withstand the financial and corporate muscle of big business and entrepreneurial local government, as we know to our cost in Manchester City Centre. R.I.P. - **Imperial** (1997), **Wellington** (1998), **Sinclair's** (1998).

Although much effort has been put into identifying pubs worthy of listing in the last few years, it is well worth keeping a look out for further candidates. The English Heritage criteria are continually evolving. Pubs dating from the period 1931 to 1939 are particularly fertile ground because the listing process is just beginning to consider buildings of that age. The concept of 'architectural merit' can encompass quite basic pubs which are nevertheless rare and distinctive if they are unaltered. Don't take them for granted. If you want a second opinion or assistance with a listing application please contact the author, c/o *Opening Times*.



Facts, Not Hysteria

There have been many media reports that drink-drive figures over Christmas were markedly worse than last year, lending support to calls for the introduction of even tougher laws. But the actual statistics tell a rather different story. The following figures were reported in the "Manchester Evening News" on 6 January and are therefore not amongst Vic Reeves' 88.2 per cent of statistics that are made up on the spot.

In the 1996 Christmas campaign, 133,679 breath tests were carried out across the country, with 1,155 positive results and refusals, 0.86 per cent. The equivalent figures in 1997 were 199,804 tests, and 1,125 positive results and refusals, or 0.56 per cent. So in fact, despite the higher number of tests, there was an absolute fall in the number of failures, and a 35 per cent improvement in the proportion of drivers found to be breaking the law.

You could be forgiven for thinking that this news should be presented with guarded optimism as representing a positive trend. But obviously the powers-that-be are not going to let the facts stand in the way of the agenda they are pursuing. And one hopes that all of the 198,679 innocent motorists who have been hindered from going about their lawful business feel that their time was well spent and that this was an appropriate use of scarce police resources.

The Furnace & Firkin?

The days of cold, draughty pubs are now, by and large, a thing of the past. But there seems to be an increasing trend to err in the opposite direction. Obviously pubs should be warm and cosy, but you shouldn't be greeted with a wave of stifling heat when you walk in off the street. Licensees should also remember that a crowd of alcohol-fuelled people generate quite a lot of heat of their own, so they can turn the radiators down a bit once the pub is full. There's a pub near me that I go in quite a bit because the beer's good, but I and my companions always feel that it's just that little bit too hot to be comfortable.

There's really no need to heat pubs beyond about 68 to 70 degrees F. Licensees would do their customers a favour, and cut their fuel bills too, if they installed thermometers and thermostats and made sure that their customers were pleasantly warm rather than melting. Who knows, they could even knock a penny or two off the price of a pint with the money they saved!

One Size Fits All

One of the many rip-offs commonly practised in motorway service areas is only to stock jumbo-sized bags of crisps, so if you want crisps, it's either that or nothing. The standard 30g bags which people buy most of the time are conspicuous by their absence. I was disappointed recently to see that this practice has spread to the pub trade, specifically in Banks's pubs, who really should know better. Now before you put green ink to paper and condemn this as hopelessly trivial, I know that it's far from the gravest issue confronting pubgoers, but it's a small symptom of an arrogant, "take it or leave it" attitude to customer service which shouldn't be allowed to flourish. After all, if they only sold beer in pints there would be plenty of complaints.

There are now 29 weeks till the Shambles (supposedly) reopens :) - ha! Probability Decreasing!

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

FEBRUARY '93

The front page headline was "Pub of the Year - Blossoms" - it had come close to winning twice in the past, but this year it had turned out to be third time lucky. The pub had undergone a major refurbishment, which had seen the installation of new toilets and a new bar, but apart from all that, all that had been done was a thorough redecoration. Considering the criticisms that Robinson's had received over their refurbishment schemes in the past, this remarkable result had been achieved through the involvement at all stages of licensee Barbara Mounkley and sons Richard and Simon.

Also on the front page was a much smaller headline of concern to ale drinkers everywhere - "Whitbread Axe Sheffield" - the closure of their Sheffield brewery had brought to an end over 130 years of brewing on the site, with the loss of 186 jobs. It took the workforce by surprise, particularly as it had been only 4½ years ago that a new £1.5 million cask racking plant had been installed, and the brewery's role as a cask operation had seemed to offer a reasonably secure future.

Tetley Walker had started running 2-3 week beer festivals at their pubs in the area. They were becoming increasingly popular, as they offered customers a chance to try up to twenty-five different beers from around the country - not all from the Allied Breweries stable, but also from a host of independent brewers, both large and small. Taking part were the Old Mill in Cheadle Hulme, also the City Arms and the Square Albert in central Manchester.

There was news of another regular presentation - the Pub of the Month award. This month it was to be the Royal Oak in Didsbury, a Marston's pub whose reputation had spread throughout Greater Manchester, and far beyond. Most pubs manage to get one or two important things right, but the Royal Oak had managed to get just about everything right. Good atmosphere, fast efficient service (no matter how busy), a unique but traditional bar, infamous cheese lunches, good beer, and a charismatic landlord, Arthur Gosling. Miscellaneous news items included: Marston's had launched Head Brewer's Choice, a new range of cask beers; Banks's falcon in Chorlton-on-Medlock was to close for several months for the foundations to be underpinned; the Crown on Heaton Lane was almost ready to re-open as a Boddington Pub Co "Ale House" - licensee Ken Birch thought there would be ten handpumps serving different beers.

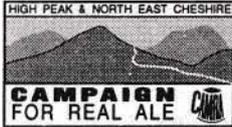
Help Save White Shield

In December Bass announced the axing of Worthington White Shield, the biggest selling bottle conditioned beer in the country. The market for bottle conditioned beers has shown an unprecedented growth in recent years, but despite this, Bass prefers to leave the market and concentrate on a few mega-brands.

White Shield is an India Pale Ale, a style perfected at Burton-on-Trent in the last century. Its loss marks a sad day for beer lovers. Help us save this distinctive beer!

We would like Bass to change their minds and continue to brew White Shield. Alternatively they could have it contract brewed by a smaller brewery. Either way it needs proper marketing support. You can help us by writing to Bass and letting them know how important the beer is to you. The aim is to let them know how many people care about the beer. We hope that if they get enough letters of protest, they may reconsider.

Write to: **Dr Tony Portno, Chairman,
Bass Breweries Ltd,
137 High Street
Burton-on-Trent
DE14 1JZ**



February Featured Pub: Dog & Pheasant, Ashton-u-Lyne

Less than half a mile from the Oldham boundary and Medlock Vale Country Park, the "Top Dog", as it is known locally (so as not to confuse it with the 'Bottom Dog' further down Oldham Road), has been in the Good Beer Guide since 1991 under the stewardship of Mark, licensee for 10 years.

Marston's, who own the pub, have recently completed an external refurbishment which presents this house in a fine way to travellers on the busy Ashton-Oldham road. However there is disagreement as to the exact type of bird in the clutches of the dog on the new pub sign!

Inside, the pub is of a compact layout, the bar serving two distinct areas on one side and a third on the other. A small snug on your left as you enter completes the cosy feel of the place.

A tenanted house, the 'Dog' sells Marston's Bitter, Pedigree,

Banks's Mild and a guest from the Head Brewer's Choice range to a predominantly mature clientele. A lot of the socialising is done standing by the bar served by the landlord and a willing coterie of female staff. Lunch and evening meals are excellent value at under five pounds for the main dish.

Tuesday and Thursdays are the only nights when loud music (in the form of a quiz from 9.30pm) is allowed to intrude in what is otherwise a 'local' where people come to enjoy a good crack, good beer and company, hosted as it should be, by the landlord.

...Pub Ne
b News...
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In Hayfield, the Kinderlodge's guest beer policy is becoming increasingly interesting - McMullen's Gladstone was sampled recently. In Glossop, the Globe which recently had its handpumps removed has had them reinstated by the new landlord - they are serving Stones and Theakstons Best Bitter.

Over in Strines, the appearance of Robinson's Old Tom on gravity in the Sportsmans is rumoured to have been at the request of the future Mrs Beckham. I find this hard to believe as I've always seen 'Posh Spice' as more of a session drinker (only joking...no letters, please!).

In Hyde, a fair clutch of news items courtesy of an extended wander by our local enthusiast. The Crown & Cushion on Victoria Street has lost its cask mild and now only has best bitter. Be warned however, that if the cask version isn't specifically requested, smooth flow will be served. The Bay Horse (Robinson's) no longer serves cask mild with only Best Bitter available.

The Cheshire Cheese, Broadbottom, is now serving Hoegaarden on draught alongside various British real ales. This is at a reasonable £2.20.

The Talbot in Hyde - a Gibbs Mew Centric house - now serves Gibbs Mew Mild but don't get too enthusiastic as it's only keg! Finally, I would like to thank Rhys Jones (no relation) for his foray into Hyde last month, filling a yawning gap in High Peak news.

Ye Olde Admiral Rodney



Prestbury

Robinsons Hatters
Mild and Best Bitter
on handpump



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DOROTHY GOODBODDIES FAVOURITE HAUNT!
(Will she appear in person.)

AT LEAST A DOZEN EXCELLENT
BREWS starts March 18th

Sunny Days in Buxton

Marston's are to launch a new chain of 'freehouse' style operations under the 'Union Taps' brand, the first of which has opened in Buxton.

The Sun Inn has been transformed from a plain, fairly ordinary pub, into something quite special. Under the guidance of licensed trade consultant, and long-time CAMRA member, Paul Mason, the old pub has turned into something which, for many people, will represent the epitome of good pub design.

A large building, the 'old' Sun was surprisingly small inside with a bare vault and small lounge. The new-look pub makes full use of the available space, however. The bar has been moved back to create more room at the front of the pub and the back rooms have been brought into public use to create a warren of rooms and drinking spaces which look as though they have been there for all time. Particularly impressive is the new bar in a room at the rear-left which gives the impression of having been in-situ for a century or more.

In common with most pubs of this type there is a great deal of wood in evidence, with stripped wood screens, floors and furniture but even this somewhat cliched feature has here been executed with sufficient aplomb to take it out of the ordinary. This, combined with low, beamed ceilings and walls painted a deep terracotta creates warmth and intimacy few conversions of this nature achieve. There's a fair amount of bric-a-brac, but again this is relatively restrained and relevant - old photos of Buxton abound, as does a large number of nineteenth century Guinness bottles found in the pub's cellar during renovation.



When OT called the standard beers, Marston's Bitter and Pedigree, were supplemented by three guest beers, Whim Hartington Bitter and Magic Mushroom Mild plus Taylor's Landlord. A book of tasting notes indicated that future guests were likely to come from a whole range of family and micro-brewers, such as Adnams, Black Sheep and Hambleton, although one Whim beer will always be available in line with the new chain's policy of always stocking one beer from a chosen local micro-brewer. Hoegaarden from Belgium is also on draught and there is a small, well chosen collection of foreign bottled beers. Real cider in the form of Bulmer's Old Hazy complete the line-up. Mild and Hartington Bitter were tried and both were on the peak of their form, the Hartington perhaps the best ever tasted. Good to see oversize lined glasses in use, too.

So, what's the catch? Well, the pub did open amid some controversy, with some of the old locals claiming that they had been made unwelcome, and indeed there were few familiar faces amongst the generally affluent-looking clientele when OT called. And they will need to be affluent, because if there is anything wrong with the Sun, it's the pricing policy. Marston's Bitter is £1.70 and Pedigree £1.90, mild was £1.80 and the Hartington Bitter again £1.90. We daren't ask the price of the Landlord. Buxton has long needed a pub like this but it's not a town where pubs generally charge fancy prices for their beer and it would be a shame if this highly creditable venture were to fail for the sake of 20 pence on the price of a pint. Prices apart, though, the Sun Inn is highly recommended. Look out for an in-pub beer festival in the first 10 days of April, and the opening of similar ventures in Tamworth and, closer to home, Chester.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 1998

Cider drinkers are in for a double treat at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. First though, those important dates for your diary - May 28-30. The venue? Stockport Town Hall, as usual.

Apart from the usual wide array of traditional ciders and perries, the festival will be hosting the national Cider & Perry of the Year competition for CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. In the past, the contest has taken place at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival, held each August in London. However, cider and perry are not always at their best at that time of year, a problem brought into focus last year when quality problems resulted in a decision not to award a Cider of the Year title.

Paula Waters, chair of APPLE, CAMRA's cider committee, told Opening Times "May, when the cider is new, should be a better time than August. Paula also hoped that coming out from under the shadow of the Great British Beer Festival would ensure greater publicity for the competition - especially as it is being held here in the north-west, where traditional cider and perry should have curiosity value to the local media.

Apart from the usual Stockport order, there may also be many other ciders and perries present, albeit in small quantities, for judging purposes. Preliminary tastings will be held on the Thursday and Friday of the Festival with the finals being held on Saturday 30 May. Paula is hoping that one of the finals judges will be Tatton MP Martin Bell, who is a member of the Parliamentary All-Party Cider Group.

As well as Cider and Perry of the Year, the Festival will also see the inaugural presentation of the annual Pomona Award. This is a new award which will be presented by APPLE each year to the person or organisation who it feels has done most to promote traditional cider or perry during the previous 12 months.

Beer drinkers shouldn't worry, though. We will still be stocking our usual wide range of milds, bitter, premium ales, stouts, porters and strong ales. More details about these will feature in a forthcoming issue of Opening Times.

11



*MANCHESTER'S CITY LIFE
PUB OF THE YEAR 1993*

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**TIMOTHY TAYLORS LANDLORD, TAYLORS
BEST, TROPHY, BODDINGTONS BITTER,
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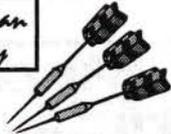
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Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Stockport and the surrounding area has over the years provided the dart world with a number of top players. Some come up quickly through the ranks of pub players, sparkle for a while, and then disappear from the game. The players who have continued success, though, are the ones who plug away, season after season, working on their game and slowly improving their averages and taking the highs and lows in their stride.

One such player, who has been around for years, is now beginning to reap the rewards that have long been predicted for him. Kevin Weir is well known amongst darts fans in the town. In the Stockport Licensed Houses League season just finished, he established what is probably a record by registering ten maximum 180's in the 22 week season.

Those in the know have always recognised Weir's capability, and his current success has earned him a call-up for the Lancashire "B" side, where he joins other locally based players Steve Cusick and Sue Hambleton.

It is just a matter of time before Kevin gains wider recognition

As revealed in the December issue of Opening Times Joanne Prince will be leading an all female team into what was hitherto an almost all-male domain. I say, almost, because the Stockport Licensed Houses League has strong Women's and Mixed Leagues, as well as some very forceful female team secretaries in the Men's divisions. The difference is that Joanne's team - playing out of the Bobby Peel - will be competing in the General Division of the Men's section. Having played at General Division myself for several seasons, I predict that the women, some of whom have represented Cheshire, will do extremely well. This column will keep you informed of their progress.

The Fiftieth Anniversary Season of the Stockport Licensed Houses League has drawn to a close, with Nicholson's Arms taking the Super League title; Star & Garter were runners-up. The battle to stay in the top flight became something of a dog fight. A fine against the odds victory by Heaton Moor's Crown at Club Leisure ensured that they will enjoy at least another season with the big lads. Sadly Printers Arms and the Sidings are relegated to the Premier Division.

Promoted to the Super League are Romiley Liberal Club who finished as champions of the Premier. Just who joins them has not been decided as we go to press. Three teams share the points and are in the middle of round-robin to decide the eventual runners-up. Down to the General Division go Gateway after just one season and Nursery who should climb back quickly.

George & Dragon and Comfy Gill move from the congenial atmosphere of pure "pub" darts in the General Division, to the more serious competition of the Premier Division. Although the writer claims to be unbiased, as a founder member of the George & Dragon team, I send my congratulations. Though I can't help noticing the improvement they have shown since I stopped playing!

Recent successes for local lads and lassies included Darryl Fitton beating Ian Shuttleworth (Ulverston) 6-1 in the final of Vaux Individual at the Ship Inn in Salford and Tony O'Shea winning the Denton Open at Denton Cricket Club with a victory over Mark Holden (Middleton). Phil Kerr and Mark Cairney were members of the North West and North Wales team that won the Post Office National Darts title. Partnered by Pete Boughey, Tony O'Shea reached the last eight of the Embassy Gold Cup Pairs. Tony was representing Cheshire, as was Kath Conway who also was a quarter-finalist, with Caroline Roberts as partner. Star & Garter landlady Sue Hambleton also reached that stage, although she and Sue Corry were representing Lancashire.

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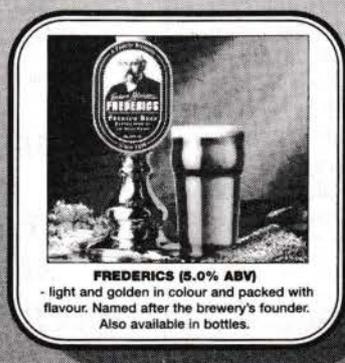
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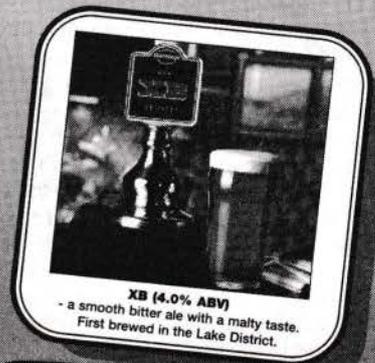
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- pale and bright with a full bitterness derived from choice aroma hops.



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.

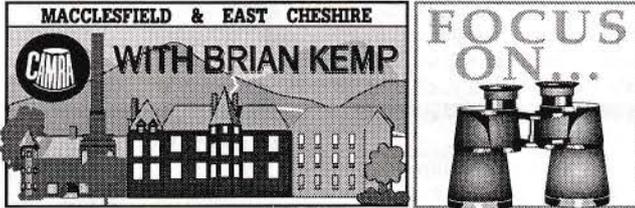


OLD STOCKPORT (3.5% ABV)
- rich golden body with a refreshingly hoppy taste and lightish alcohol content.



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

CHOICE BEERS



Chester Road Tavern, Macclesfield

I offer my apologies for the absence of Macclesfield pub articles over the last couple of months but I am afraid that the literary muses deserted me.

Finding something to say in an entertaining way about very ordinary pubs is not as easy as it seems. However having been stung into action by Jim, who was becoming increasingly desperate for copy, by the landlord of the Admiral Rodney in Prestbury, and by two regulars of the Chester Road Tav, Mick Corcoran and Martin Doyle, I thought that in deference to them I would offer for your consideration this month, the Chester Road Tavern.

Unsurprisingly it stands on Chester Road about 100 yards from the traffic lights at the bottom of Chestergate. It is a modest brick-built corner building but its unprepossessing exterior belies a splendid community pub of the first order. Traditionally regarded as a Greenalls pub, I suppose I should now say it is 'Boddington Greenalls' but I am afraid I am too politically incorrect to bother with such niceties.

You enter up some substantial steps into a short passageway that gives off to a pleasant lounge area on the right and a vault and the bar on your left, which houses the television popular with the locals for all sporting events. Further back on the right is a pool room whilst on the left of the bar is a snug. A lot of the dividing walls have leaded glass windows in them and the doorways are all large open arches creating a cross between a multi-roomed and open-plan layout that is very effective. Speaking purely personally, the furnishing is not really to my taste, being very much horse brasses and brass artefacts, but it is just the sort of thing plenty of perfectly normal ordinary people like so perhaps that is more a comment on me.

The beers, which are consistently excellent, are Greenalls Mild and Bitter, Stones Bitter and a regularly changed guest beer (recently Exmoor Exmas at £1.45) all on handpump. It is another of those few Macclesfield pubs, like the Boar Hound (featured a few months ago) that always seem to be busy. Sunday lunchtime is a particularly popular session.

The pub hosts the full range of pub sports teams and is a mecca for horse racing enthusiasts arranging a number of coach outings throughout the year to race meetings at Chester, Cheltenham, Worcester etc and further afield. I believe they also host Christmas events for local pensioners. It is open for most of the permitted hours, usually closing for a brief respite in the late afternoon/early evening and seems to offer filled rolls at most times.

If you are coming to Macclesfield from this direction (i.e. Knutsford) it is well worth a visit. If you do visit it is interesting to note that a few doors down towards the traffic lights is evidence of what used to be another pub in years gone by. The window of what is now a private house contains etched glass saying 'Butchers Arms'.

The Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre branch of CAMRA presents the

CAMRA

1998

FLEETWOOD BEER FESTIVAL

MARINE HALL, FLEETWOOD

OVER 50 BEERS

THURS 19 - Sat 21 Feb

Thurs 7.30pm - 11 (£1.50)

Fri & Sat 12 - 4 (£1) & 7 - 11 (£2)

CAMRA MEMBERS
FREE AT ALL SESSIONS

Live Music Fri & Sat Evns
Clive the Clown
(for the Kids) Sat Lunch

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NOW SERVING THE **COMPLETE**
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!
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Frederics, Old Tom and Hartleys

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AND FINE BEER IN
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Mild & Bitter

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BAR SNACKS AVAILABLE

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Didsbury

welcome all their customers old and new
Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

Websters & Holts
Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day
Tuesday night Karaoke
Disco and Quiz Thursday and Sunday Disco



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 98

Saturday 7th - Present Regional Pub of the Year award to the Griffin, Heaton Mersey. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 9th - Social: Red Lion, Wilmslow Road, Withington. Starts 9.00pm.

Wednesday 11th - Mild Trail and Old Tom certificate presentation at Robinson's Brewery. Apart from Mild Trail winners, numbers strictly limited. Phone John Clarke on 477 1973 for details.

Thursday 12th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. NB selection of entries for 1999 GBG will be made at this meeting. All please try and attend. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 16th - Hazel Grove Social: 9.00pm Grapes; 10.00pm Three Tuns, both London Road (A6)

Friday 20th - Burnage/Heaton Mersey Stagger. Starts 7.00 Milestone, Burnage Lane; 8.30 Albion, Burnage Lane.

Monday 23rd - Social: Circus Tavern, Great Portland Street, Manchester City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 26th - Pub of the Month Presentation to Sand Bar, Grosvenor Street, All Saints (off Oxford Road at Footage & Firkin).

Saturday 28th - Minibus trip to annual Beer Festival at Llyn-y-Mawn (North Wales Pub of the Year). Minibus departs Crown,

February 98

Heaton La, 11am. Book on 477 1973

Monday 2nd March - Edgeley Social: 9.00pm Grapes, Castle Street; 10.00 Armoury, Shaw Heath.

Thursday 5th - Branch Pub of the Year Presentation to the Grey Horse, Portland Street, Manchester. A good turnout please!

Monday 9th - Social: Smithfield, Ashton New Road, Openshaw. Starts 9.00pm. *High Peak Branch covers Marple, Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:*

Monday 16th - Branch Meeting, Bowling Green, Marple. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 28th - Branch social and survey trip to Buxton. Starts 8.00pm. Itinerary to be finalised - contact Frank Wood (014578 65426) for details.

Monday 2nd March - Committee Meeting, Church Inn, Millbrook, Stalybridge *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 events:*

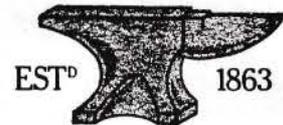
Tuesday 10th - Wilmslow crawl and survey for Cheshire Beer Guide. Starts 7.30 Riflemans, 9.00 Swan.

Monday 23rd - Branch Meeting, Egerton Arms, Astbury, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

To Do Address Name Date CAMRA 93 Planes



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MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

In a generally quiet month, it's good to see another of the City Centre's café bars selling real ale. Centro on Tib Street occupies the premises formerly known as Straight Eights, not far from the back door of the King, and is done out in an attractively minimalist style apart from a bench seat covered in very garish blue dralon. Handpumped Ruddles Bitter is reasonably priced at £1.50 a pint, and there's Hoegaarden and Leffe Blonde for Belgophiles, though the bottle selection doesn't look any great shakes.

This independent operation is certainly a lot more impressive than the latest offering from the Palace Hotel (in the old Refuge building), where Manchester's only Mongolian restaurant (truly) has been swept away to give us something called Copper Head Jack's. The concept has promise, for much money and effort has been expended on creating a theme bar dedicated to the brewing industry, and some of the artefacts are indeed of interest. But with no traditional beer to back up the concept, the whole thing ultimately seems more than a little contrived.

At the Blob Shop in the City Centre, handpumped Moorhouses' Peter Yates Bitter has replaced Thwaites; Boddingtons and Stones remain, in a pub whose transformation to "traditional Manchester" style seems to have brought great commercial success, to judge from a recent early evening visit which found standing room only in the pub's large main room.

There's much worse news, though, from a place that always had been a traditional Manchester pub - the Concert in Openshaw. It has, to be sure, re-opened, but that's the only good news about the place, for the characterful interior has been transformed into a bland single bar and the beer is "smooth" Tetley keg. To cap it all, the pub's exterior has been painted in a singularly unpleasant shade of (to be polite) mud-brown. Despite some unfortunate episodes in its recent history, the Concert has been one of my favourite old-style Manchester boozers over the years - it's a shame to see it now.

In Longsight, the Huntington (formerly the Mad Hatter) is now all keg following a minor refurbishment, though unfortunately "cask ales" continue to be advertised outside; and I'm told that the Parkside in Moss Side also no longer sells real ale. Finally, a brief word on the Union, Levenshulme, whose excellent refurbishment was reported in our last issue. That report speculated that the house "Union Jack Bitter" was perhaps a re-badged version of



Good news from Gorton. Tony Dunn, licensee of the Nags Head on Hyde Road, tells us that real ale will be available by the time you read this. Burtonwood Mild and Forshaws Bitter. Tony tells us that he will be seeing how these beers are received and may try others if need be.

Due to be unveiled as we went to press was the Slug & Lettuce on Canal Street in the City Centre, one of several chains operated by pub company Grosvenor Inns. A pre-opening glance through the windows indicates a café bar style set up with Theakstons Bitter, XB and Courage Directors on handpump. A review to follow.

Also about to re-open is the Crown in Didsbury after a thorough going-over by Greenalls. Previously a welcoming traditional style local, it remains to be seen if this image has been retained.

A new bar is set to open in Stockport Market Place. The run-down block next to the Boars Head had been very impressively restored and is to house 'Sams Bar'. It should be open before long and a review will follow. Not far away, though, there is no sign of any activity whatsoever at Winters on Underbank. Come on Holts, pull your fingers out and get to work!

Staying in Stockport, there is no start date yet for the major revamp of the Manchester Arms on Wellington Road South. We understand though, that the licensing magistrates have now given clearance for the work to proceed.

In Manchester, the Smithfield on Swan Street will be holding a beer festival this month. This will feature 20-30 beers including winter ales and new beers.

Rafferty's Irish Bar in Edgeley (previously the Windsor Castle, Sports, the Windsor Castle (again), and the Joseph Worrall) has yet another new name. It's now Jonjo Greene's Irish Bar. Apart from that little appears to have changed.

Miles out of the OT area, lies the Llyn-y-Mawn at Brynford, nr Holywell. It's been North Wales Pub of the Year several times and hosts an annual St David's Day beer festival. Sadly it's also now up for sale as the licensees have decided to retire. If you've not been there yet, get down as soon as you can.

Greenalls Festival. Not so, for Union Jack is advertised at an alcoholic strength of 3.8%, against Festival's 3.2% - I imagine it is in fact a variant of one of the medium-gravity brews produced by Carlsberg-Tetley for Greenalls.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 166)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

. POSTCODE Date of Birth

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £14 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £17

UNDER 26 YRS or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £8

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £8

Steve McCarley, 32 Howden Close, North Reddish, Stockport SK5 6XW

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:

Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH.



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