

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:168

Volume 14
Issue 4

OPENING TIMES

APRIL 1998



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FREE

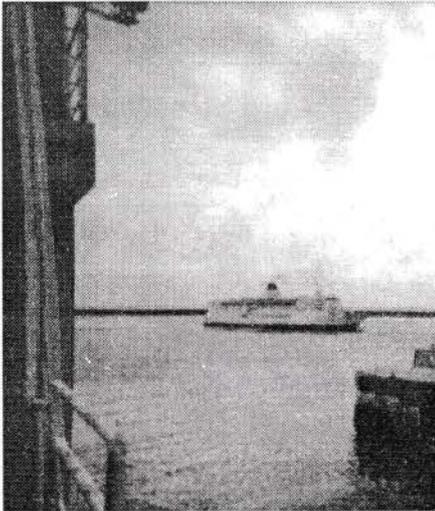
A Gift for French Brewers

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has vowed to continue its campaign for fair beer duty for British drinkers. The announcement followed the Chancellor's decision to increase excise duty on beer by one penny from January 1999. This will mean the price of a pint will rise by two pence, or more.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns, said, "This increase is very bad news for drinkers who are still reeling from the penny on a pint announced in the last Budget. The French brewers and Calais beer warehouses will be celebrating in style, while British publicans and beer lovers pick up the tab. Gordon Brown has offered no support for the 900,000 British jobs supported by the beer and pubs industry. Millions of pints of cheap French beer will continue to flood our shores."

13% of beer brewed in France is now brought over to the UK by personal shoppers and smugglers. Without substantial duty cuts, the level of cross-border shopping for beer is predicted to increase from 1 in 20 pints today to one in five by 2006.

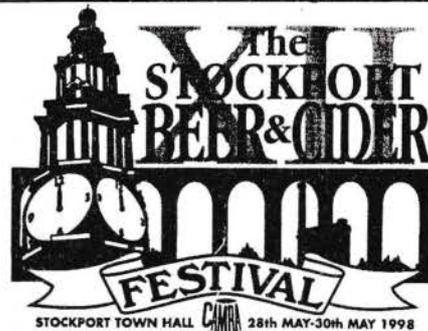
Mike Benner added, "Pubs are closing directly as a result of high beer tax. Smuggling and related criminal activity are on the increase and



More 'Booze Cruisers' returning to Dover

the social problems related to the uncontrolled purchase of alcohol can only get worse. The Chancellor has ignored the evidence that a cut in duty would benefit the industry, consumers and the government within two years."

While it is true that the Budget saw a freeze on spirits duty, this will do little to ease the plight of our pubs. 60% of the turnover of an average pub is beer with spirits only accounting for a small fraction of that. CAMRA will continue to campaign for beer duty to be reduced to the European average in order to revitalise this important British industry.



Be A Brewer For A Day!

In Our Easy To Enter Competition

Ever fancied trying your hand at brewing? Well here's your chance. Opening Times has teamed up with Manchester's Footage & Firkin brewery and Stockport Beer & Cider Festival to offer three great prizes:

- ★ Help out with the brewing process for a day at the Firkin Brewery
- ★ Free entry for two to Thursday night at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival
- ★ Pull a ceremonial 'first pint' at the Beer Festival

What do you have to do? It couldn't be easier! The Festival Beer Managers have commissioned a special Festival Mild from the Footage & Firkin Brewery but they need a name for it - and that's where you come in. Just suggest a name for this new beer and if you are the first drawn out of the hat then you and a friend will be able to spend a day at the Firkin Brewery (which can be a Saturday for those working in the week) helping with the brewing process, hard work but fun! Not only that but you will both get complimentary tickets for the first night of Stockport Beer Festival and be invited to pull a ceremonial first pint of the new beer.

Send your suggestions to: Mild Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. The closing date for the competition is Thursday 30th April and the winner will be announced in the next issue of Opening Times.

And don't forget those important dates - Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will be held at Stockport Town Hall from May 28-30.

In APRIL's Amazing Bumper Issue of OPENING TIMES

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THE MAD MAY EXPERIENCE

or "They SHOOT Scratchers, Don't they?"



FIVE BEER FESTIVALS AND 200 NEW BEERS IN THE MONTH OF MAY



1. OPENING TIME - THE MAY DAY HOLIDAY FESTIVAL
THURSDAY APRIL 30 - MONDAY (BANK HOLIDAY) MAY 4
40 BEERS UPSTAIRS AND DOWN

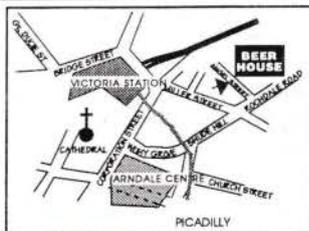
2. THE BEER & CIDER EXPERIENCE
FRIDAY 8 - SUNDAY MAY 10
AT LEAST FIVE EXTRA CIDERS & PERRIES JOIN
30 NEW BEERS FOR YOUR DELECTATION

3. YET ANOTHER FESTIVAL - GET CASKED & BOTTLED
AT THE BELGIAN EXPERIENCE FRIDAY 15 - SUNDAY 17 MAY
30 NEW CASK ALES ARE COMPLEMENTED BY AN
EXTENSIVE RANGE OF BOTTLED BELGIANS!

4. SPRING BANK HOLIDAY MEGA FESTIVAL
THURSDAY 21 - MONDAY (BANK HOLIDAY) 25 MAY
40 MORE NEW BEERS PRESENTED ON TWO FLOORS

5. THE "AND FINALLY..." FESTIVAL
FRIDAY 29 - SUNDAY 31 MAY
30 MORE NEW CASK BEERS UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS
ALL FESTIVAL BEERS £1 A PINT ON SUNDAY 31 MAY!

OTHER NEW BEERS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE BAR EVERY WEEKDAY.
SPECIAL FESTIVAL ALE (ALL MONTH) WILL BE BREWED BY SAL AND
IDY AT SHUGBOROUGH - A SORT OF CRAZY, HOPPY, PREMIUM BITTER.
MORE DETAILS NEXT MONTH OF FOOD, BBQ'S AND ENTERTAINMENT.



ONLY AT
The BEER
HOUSE

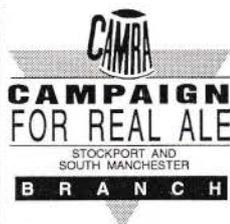


BRITISH BEERMAT COLLECTORS SOC SALE
(PUMP CLIPS, TOO) SAT APRIL 25. 12 NOON

Angel Street, (0161)
Manchester 839 7019

Pub Of The Month APRIL 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	29	30		



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April is the Osborne House, Victory Street, Rusholme, a Hyde's Anvil house selling Mild, Bitter and seasonal beers on handpump.

Recently refurbished at a cost of £50,000, the new-look Osborne is a vast improvement on the old pub with a new-look bar and tiled floor area in place, along with stripped brick walls, a games room to your right and, to your left, new seating installed and old fireplaces opened up. All credit to Hydies' Anvil for investing and showing continuing commitment to their smaller, traditional locals such as this.

Running the operation are licensees Val and Bill Williams, whose first pub this is. They have been at the Osborne for 18 months now and the refurbishment is just part of their efforts to turn the fortunes of the pub round. There are now active football and darts teams, both ladies and mens. Quality cask ales complete the picture at this traditional community local whose success gives the lie to those who continually proclaim that the back-street beer drinkers pub has no future.

There will in fact be a darts match taking place on the night of the presentation, Thursday 23rd April, so get there early if you want a seat.

Victory Street is just off Wilmslow Road in the centre of Rusholme. The easiest route is to turn down Claremont Road and then go left at the Lord Lyon, continuing until the very end, the pub is on the right. Vast numbers of buses use the Wilmslow Road

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

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 168:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Peter Edwardson, The Beer Monster™, John Hutchinson, Mark Jones, Jim Bowden, Brian Kemp, Brian Carey, Mark McConachie, John Reek, Jim Fox, Frank Wood



MARBLE BITTER

4%

MARBLE I.P.A.

4.6%

TOTALLY MARBLED

5%

DOBBER STRONG

6.5%

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BREWERY**

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TEL: 0161 819 2694

ALSO ON SALE AT:

BAR ONE & TWO

WILBRAHAM ROAD, CHORLTON

MANCHESTER

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COPY DATE FOR MAY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS APRIL 24

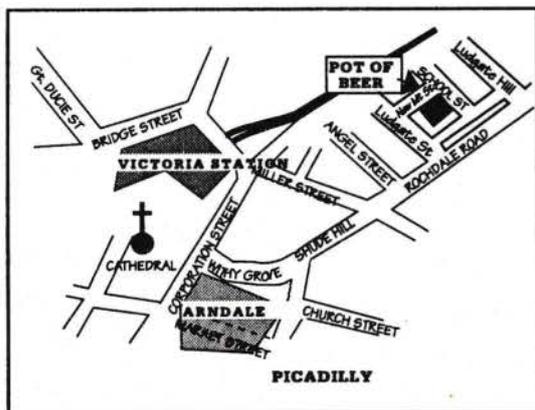
POT OF BEER

**36 NEW MOUNT ST
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- ✓ **ROBINSONS DARK MILD**
- ✓ **HOEGAARDEN WHEAT BEER**
- ✓ **TRADITIONAL CIDER**
- ✓ **SELECTION OF WINES & MALT WHISKIES**



4



**FOOD NOW AVAILABLE
12 - 2 pm,
MONDAY - FRIDAY!**

On Your Marques

Q. How can we stop the decline in cask ale?

A. Improve the quality at the point of dispense.

In the December issue we reported on the launch of the Cask Marque scheme which aimed to improve the quality of the real ale in Britain's pubs. Here scheme organiser Paul Nunny explains the background to and workings of the new scheme. Over the last two years cask ale sales have been in a double-digit decline. Before we can attempt to rectify this situation we need to understand some of the reasons behind this trend. Let me suggest a few to add to your own opinions:

Cask ale sales and loyalty have suffered due to a number of warm summers (blame global warming).

Smooth beers are stiffer competition than the previous keg beers. Too many cask ales in outlets to maintain quality especially with declining throughputs. A consumer with changing habits - prefers cooler drinks and more adventurous in his or her choice.

Four brewers, all with a strong cask ale tradition, (Adnams, Greene King, Marstons and Morlands) formed a working party to consider all these issues and to look at how this decline could be halted. A survey was commissioned to examine the quality of the ale in the glass. The country was split into four areas, North, South, East and West, and 1,000 outlets were visited by trained inspectors. The results were very interesting. In 23% of the outlets, inspectors would not buy another pint.

The number of handpumps contributed to the failure of 54% of those outlets - there was a marked decline in quality in houses with four or more pumps 20% of the samples were outside temperature specification.

Independent free trade were marginally the worst performers and, regionally, in the South and South West. Poor quality covered all types of pubs whether they be locals, food houses or super pubs. Hence the birth of Cask Marque which has the objective to improve the quality of cask ale at the point of dispense, by awarding a nationally recognised and respected Marque to the Licensee, when quality standards have been met.

The scheme will require licensees to apply to be accredited and involves a team of assessors who will be geographically based visiting outlets before making the award. The award is to the licensee and not the pub and they will need to be reinspected if they move to a new outlet. Testing will be unannounced and carried out a minimum of twice a year.

A pilot scheme is in place to run in the first half of this year and includes the founder members as well as Whitbread, Carlsberg-Tetley, Fullers, McMullens, Mansfield, Vaux and Jennings. 1,100 outlets will be nominated and we have invited a few of the large pub groups to participate, including Wetherspoons and Enterprise Inns who have given both the financial commitment and their full support. The first awards were due to be made last month. Once the pilot scheme has been assessed we will then open the Cask Marque to the whole industry - both retailers and brewers.

The scheme costs money, which is equally funded by both the retailer and the brewer. It, therefore, needs to give a benefit. To the retailer it: Sets definitive standards to measure the quality of his cask ales. Cask ale is seen as a measure of the overall quality of an outlet. It is an inexpensive, efficient and objective way of auditing quality. Better housekeeping reduces beer wastage.

Plaque sends a message of quality to customers.

Grows consumer traffic - therefore profit.

To the consumer the benefits are:

Highlights licensees who serve good cask ale

Grows confidence in the consumers choice of outlet

Consumers can comment on the quality of the beer by writing to Cask Marque

Improves volume, thus preserves choice. Anybody requiring more information should apply in writing to: Paul Nunny, Hillands, Stratford Road, Dedham, Colchester, Essex, CO7 6HN.



STOCKPORT



BEER & CIDER

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- Stockport's Biggest Pub
- Beer from £1 a pint every session
- Britain's Champion Cider judged Saturday
- Over 100 different beers, ciders and perries

THURSDAY

Evening:

5.30pm-11.00pm

Admission: £1.50

Entertainment:

Kings of Swing

FRIDAY

Lunch:

11.30am-3.30pm

Admission: Free

Entertainment:

The Humdingers

Evening:

5.30pm-11.00pm

Admission: £3.00

Entertainment:

Biggles Wartime Band

SATURDAY

Lunch:

11.30am-4.00pm

Admission: £1.00

Quiet Session

Evening:

6.30pm-11.00pm

Admission: £1.50

Entertainment:

Rocky Mountain Ploughboys

FREE ENTRY

to CAMRA MEMBERS

FAMILY ROOM

UNTIL 9.00PM

HOT FOOD

ALL SESSIONS

Sponsored by *Stockport Express Advertiser*

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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The Gardeners Arms

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Tel. (0161) 480 3288

Dave and Julie invite you to try their cask conditioned
Holts and John Smiths Bitters

Bingo every Tuesday night Mon. - Thurs. 6-11pm
D.J. & Quiz every Thursday Fri., Sat. 12 - 11pm
Friday night is Karaoke night Sun. 12 - 10.30pm
Live Cabaret Saturday night
D.J. and Bingo Sunday night

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- ★ Bowling Parties & Function Room.
- ★ Egon Ronay Guide, AA Best of British Gd
- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

Hydes
Anvil Ales

Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

What Is Real Ale?

Opening Times is full of references to 'real ale', 'keg' and 'nitro-keg'. It's easy to take it for granted that everyone knows what these mean but of course that is not necessarily so. To put everyone in the picture, Jim Fox gives a quick run through...

Cask conditioned beer is what CAMRA justifiably calls real ale. When the brewing process is completed the beer still containing sufficient yeast and sugars for some more fermentation is poured into barrels, or as brewers prefer to call it, racked into casks. The cask is then sealed, often after a handful of hops have been added for extra aroma (dry hopping is the brewers' term), and delivered to the pub cellar.

In the pub cellar the beer continues to ferment and come into condition. It gains more flavour in this process and its condition improves. With the aid of finings, which are normally added shortly before the cask leaves the brewery, the yeast slowly sinks to the bottom leaving clear beer with plenty of flavour and condition ready for serving.

To achieve this clearing and get the best possible natural condition the cellar staff in the pub put in a lot of effort aided with various venting tools, spiles, and patience. The beer having completed its secondary conditioning is then ready to be served. This can either be straight from the cask, via a handpump or electric pump (as in many Robinson's and Hydes' pubs). Because air is drawn into the cask to replace the beer as it is served, reactions can and do take place, and the beer will lose its condition and start to 'go off' if it is not served within a couple of days or so.

Keg beer is processed before it leaves the brewery. It is normally filtered to remove all traces of yeast and pasteurised to make sure that any remaining yeast is killed off so that no more conditioning can take place. It is a dead product that cannot gain the extra flavours that real ale does during its time in the cask. The kegs are sealed in the brewery and the beer has to be forced out using carbon dioxide gas pressure. This gives the beer too much condition making it fizzy and as it has not had the chance to mature properly it is often fairly sweet and with little character. However, for the unskilled cellar staff it is wonderful, as the only skill required to serve it is to attach the gas supply. It also has a much longer shelf life than real ale. Most lagers sold in the UK are served by this process.

A refinement on keg beer is the nitro-keg version. Here the beer



goes through a similar process as keg beer except that it is dispensed using a mixed gas system of nitrogen and carbon dioxide. Consequently the beer is less fizzy, tastes smoother than keg beer and has a large creamy head. This beer is consistent, but as with other keg products lacks the range of

flavours that cask conditioned beers have. Because of the large head produced as the nitrogen bubbles out of the beer it is often difficult to get a full measure. Nitro-keg beers are often given names that contain terms such as 'smooth' or 'cream'. They can probably be best summed up as 'consistent but boring'.



Don't worry - its an
OVERSIZED Glass!

OPENING TIMES

LETTERS



From Rhys Jones, Chairman Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA:

Your e-mail correspondent (Letters, March) asks why a tie was not declared in the Pub of the Year vote.

First of all, let me say that I reject entirely the apparent implication that the Grey Horse couldn't even conceivably have deserved to win the award outright - those who attended the presentation at the Grey Horse, one of the finest CAMRA evenings in recent memory, will have seen for themselves what a worthy winner the pub is. Nevertheless, the question why a tie wasn't considered is a legitimate one, and the answer is simple: neither I nor anyone else at the meeting had the presence of mind to suggest it as a possibility. I therefore used my casting vote in favour of the pub for which, in my judgement, the better case was made out on the night

The licensees of the Railway, who run a superb pub, are more than entitled to be disappointed at losing by such a cruelly narrow margin. Their dignity in defeat has been impressive. I could wish that others had followed their example.

From Vince Fitzgerald:

In case anyone is wondering, no it was not me who sent in that letter (e-mail, last month), though I am in full agreement with what was written.

I have been saying much the same for several years, as everybody who knows me will testify. I will not go over what has already been written with the exception of the 'Pub of the Year' award. Why could it not have gone to both pubs, it's not as if it's not been done before elsewhere. You only have to look at when there was one year when the National award went to two pubs. I'll say no more on the matter.

From Roger Wood:

Sorry to wash dirty linen in public.

In reply to your correspondent in March's OT, his picture of North Manchester CAMRA members supping their Holt's and never getting outside Eccles is an inaccurate one. In fact Eccles gets an abysmal coverage of its pubs considering its Holt's pubs are tourist attractions, and the branch seem to enjoy putting in the Good Beer Guide non-Holt's alternatives such as the Queens in Patricroft with its vastly inferior Boddingtons.

As far as a common selection of city centre pubs for all branches is concerned, this was proposed by North Manchester branch who have seven pubs in the city centre on allocation.

The two other branches rejected the proposal to pool their Good Beer Guide allocation into a common pool but I think this will be an excellent idea.

From Paul Hutchings:

Can I be alone in wondering what our esteemed Chancellor of the Exchequer is playing at? Whilst I have every wish to respect Opening Times 'Apolitical' stance - the disparity between his treatment of Spirits (no rise for another year, again) and beer - another knee jerk rise of 1p (or 3-4p when the brewers and the management groups add their mark-up - "vital to protect the margins" we are told by their scrofulous accountants) is unsupportable whatever political party you belong to. It is, in fact EXACTLY the same policy the Tories had for the last 'n' years.

Well and good to protect Scotch Whisky interests - AGAIN - but nothing except "more action against smuggling" for beer. Oh Yes? Pull the other one Gordon. Where was the extra money for more Customs & Excise officers to enforce this....er there wasn't any. Protection for SCOTTISH Whisky producers from a Scottish Chancellor (who favours the odd dram) and nothing for the beleaguered regional and micro (mainly ENGLISH) breweries. Independent Scotland can't come too soon - providing they take their horde of politicians with them.

1st OLD SUN INN beer festival

1ST-13TH APRIL 1998

25 PLUS ALES

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STAGGER

with Paul Hutchings

The February Stagger saw us undertake 'the long march' down Burnage Lane to cover the pubs in Burnage and Heaton Mersey. Although very different the pubs on Burnage Lane are very much community local pubs, catering to their neighbourhoods, and this was reflected in what we were to find. The tour begins at the *Milestone*, a Banks' house on Burnage lane. A modern two roomed pub, we met in the family-friendly lounge, though as a rule I tend to patronise the busy vault. Events to bring customers in were prominently advertised, unusually, early evening food is served, and the one real ale on offer, Banks' Bitter was quite reasonable. The handpumps (which included Strongarm) were removed in 1997. Be wary of the Banks' smoothflow which is often offered to the unwary asking for bitter!

A bit of a route march south then to the resolutely local *Victoria*. A huge range of participation events is offered during the week (it claims the best Karaoke in Burnage!!!), and the pleasant two roomer (bar at the front - comfortable lounge to the rear) is usually well patronised as it was on our visit. The Boddingtons bitter scored well above average.

A slightly lesser step (but at the chairman's rather speedy walking pace, a tough one) brings you to Hydes *Farmers Arms*. A recent conversion from Greenalls, and an excellent job. Open style vault and plusher lounge. A lively and friendly place and the beer was again better than average, though perhaps low for Hydes (in my experience its usually pretty good!)

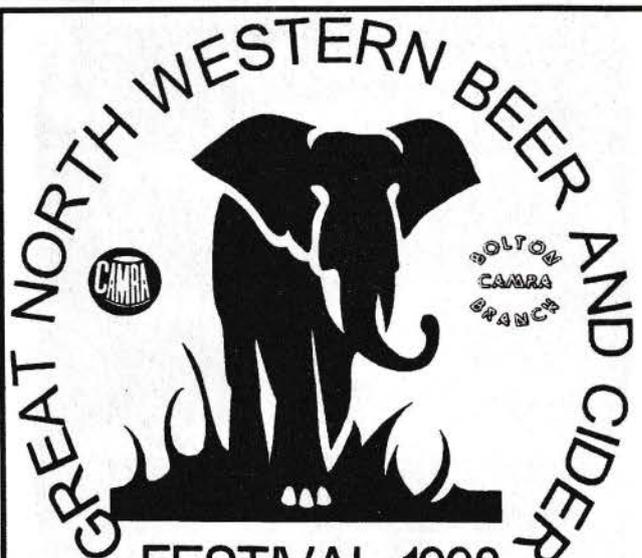


Leaving the Farmers arms we managed the short walk to Green End roundabout. Entering with trepidation the Green End (yet another pub boasting of its family friendliness), the group enjoined itself to depart without sampling any of the serried ranks of nitro keg and keg liquids on offer.

So, down south again, and to the *Albion*. A thoroughly excellent Hydes local, offering Bitter, Light and Hydes seasonal beer - in this case Billy Westwoods. All were tried, with Billy's scoring marginally the highest. All the scores for each beer were good. The Albion was redecorated very pleasantly in the not too distant past, but perhaps the 'laura ashley' cottage look of endless blending patters would be a bit much for some. The current trend in pub decorations is going back to simpler and plainer styles (for which a hearty horray!) but this is a very minor carp about what is really a smashing pub, as its popularity amply demonstrates. Definitely the best beer of the night so far. As the Albion was the mid point rendezvous we were able to enjoy a couple of pints, and thoroughly enjoyed they were too.

Off then to Sam Smiths *Sun in September*. The decor is now a lot more pub-like than the 'jewel in the crown' style it suffered when it opened. The pub boasts a busy and cosy vault, but most of the floor

8



FESTIVAL 1998

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full details and internet address next month



The Sun In September

space is dedicated to a comfortable lounge. Sam Smiths now only brew a single real ale - the Old Brewery Bitter. It scored consistently above average.

Another long stagger down to Didsbury Road to the **Dog and Partridge**. Some suspected that it might be keg only, but we were pleasantly surprised to find Boddingtons Bitter on sale - even if it scored only slightly above average. The pub was busy, and again this is a vibrant local serving its community.

The remaining three pubs were all up hill on Didsbury Road. **Holts Griffin** was determined to be the best finishing point, so we journeyed on to the **Frog and Railway** and the **Crown**. The former is a 'fun', busy place and was bursting with the trendy under 25s. There was, sadly, a fake keg Scrumpy Jack handpump on the bar because I have to say that but for one major irritation - appallingly short measure, even after a top up (though the staff were very busy to be fair) - the Greene King Abbot was for me the best beer of the night.

The **Crown** (Robinsons) is probably the oldest pub in Stockport, and less Robinsonised than most. Famous for its fabulous food it has always been reliable for decent beer - even when Robby's used to go funny in high summer. The older part of the pub is that nearest the road, and as expected it was busy. The beer was also on good form, with the bitter preferred to the mild.

And so - to the busiest pub of the night, Regional Pub of the Year - **The Griffin**. After a much needed extension was bedded in, and a slightly 'off' period a few years ago under previous licensees, the Griffin has bounced back to being one of the best pubs in the area. Hugely popular and a thoroughly excellent pint of Holts Bitter and Mild. The beer was voted the best of the night by popular acclaim (as usual, outvoted again!) and the group settled down to enjoy what was left of the evening.

As usual, this was only a snapshot on one night. The pubs deserve trying for themselves because indeed, none of these pubs is devoid of merit, and for community locals, a number take quite some beating. One word of advice though, if you're in the company of our erstwhile branch Chairman, don't get into a 'round' with him. He may always buy his corner, but he makes you run between pints!



Greater Manchester's latest brewery is likely to be in Golborne, where the Good Beer Guide listed Railway on the High Street has been granted planning permission for a small brewhouse. Initial details are sparse, but we hear that the first brew is likely to be called Sleeper.

Greenalls have commissioned four beers from Essex brewers Ridleys for their north west estate. The new beers of varying strengths will be on sale at outlets around Greater Manchester and Cheshire over the next four months. The beers will have regional names like Tatton Ale, Cheshire Cheese, Chester Rock and Greenalls Grand. Look out for them as Ridleys are a brewer of consistently good ales. Closer to home the Marble Brewery, based at the Marble Arch freehouse on Rochdale Road, is having to install two additional fermenters to keep up with demand such is the popularity of the beers. The new IPA has proved to be a clear winners and next in line is a 5% ABV porter which should appear this month.



BAR FRINGE

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23rd,
24th,
25th
MAY 1998



THE HINDS HEAD

Your hosts Alan and June Preston welcome you to enjoy our range of excellent

TRADITIONAL HAND PULLED BEERS

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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1997

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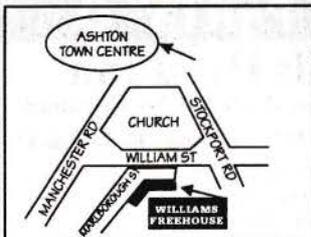


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**ALL REAL ALES
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MONDAY, TUESDAY
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Call in for a warm welcome and good service!

10

PAGE 14 THE BEER MONSTER

Has revisited Dublin for a Beer Festival!

THE SPORTSMAN

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**A GENUINE FREE HOUSE WITH
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25p OFF all
Draught Beers
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12 - 4pm



"I wish to register
A COMPLAINT!"



So begins the famous Monty Python "Dead Parrot" sketch, perhaps one of the most quoted of all time. John Cleese certainly had a point; often we have cause to complain. The Campaign for Real Ale was formed to complain, and went on to become the most successful consumer organisation in Europe. We certainly saved traditional beer, but the fight is far from over. Bad beer, adulterated beer and short measure still trouble us on occasion.

You, the customer, are in the front line and we all know it can be all too easy to do nothing; "I don't like to make a fuss"; "No-one else is complaining"; "Perhaps it's supposed to taste like this"; "I might get barred" - the excuses for inaction are endless. Remember the point though: if you've paid good money for something which is substandard, then you've been swindled - so complain!

Once you've decided to do something, the question remains, how? Opening Times offers a few words of advice and technical points:

★ **Be Polite** - if you create a conflict, you've lost. - the licensee has home advantage!

★ **Be Discreet** - no licensee wants to draw attention to a problem
★ **Be Reasonable** - if the beer has reached the end of the barrel, you can tell at once. The landlord may not be drinking and be unaware of this.

★ **Be Diplomatic** - "I think this might have gone" is less of an insult to the cellarman's craft than "this tastes foul!"

★ **Be Sensible** - a tiny shortfall in volume isn't worth the fuss, but perhaps nearly an inch is worth a polite request to "squeeze a drop more in".

★ **Be Decisive** - bad beer should be returned promptly. Struggling valiantly through 3/4 of a pint will undermine your case.

★ **Don't** - complain to an outside body (see below) without first trying to gain satisfaction in the pub.

★ **Don't** - accept the guff that "real ale is supposed to look like oxtail soup and taste like vinegar" or that old standby "no-one else has complained". Stand your ground.

Remember that the law on "full measure" is currently something of a shambles. The head is legally part of your pint but the Brewers Society guidelines say that your pint should be 95% liquid and short measures should be topped up with good grace. Trading Standards officers may still be prepared to take action where these guidelines are consistently flouted.

Beer which tastes bad is "goods unfit for the purpose" under the Trades Description Act and you have a statutory right to redress. You could ask for your money back, but a replacement from another barrel is the best solution.

You should be able to read the price list without binoculars or a stepladder. What do you mean "what price list?"

If you **don't** get satisfaction from the licensee, contact:

The Trading Standards Officer (for consistent short measure or missing price list)

The Environmental Health Officer (for sour beer or unhygienic practices)

The Brewery/Pub Owner - (for poor beer in a tied house or poor customer service)

The local branch of CAMRA (who will certainly check up on any horror stories)

Luckily none of the above is relevant in most of the pubs in the Opening Times area. Normally we find a full measure of good beer served by polite staff in pleasant surroundings, and that any minor niggles are dealt with in a quick and friendly manner. With your help, that's how things will stay, and we hope that the occasion on which you have to "register a complaint" are as scarce as the famous dead "Norwegian Blue Parrot".

Local Trading Standards Contacts are:

Stockport - 0161 474 4248

Manchester - 0161 226 8283

LOOK OUT FOR VIADUCTS AND VAULTS 2.5 - THE INTERACTIVE STOCKPORT PUB GUIDE FOR SALE ON CD-ROM AT STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL



One Man's Meat

What is music to the ears of one person may be an unholy row to someone else, and that's why piped music in pubs can be such a controversial subject. To my mind, there's a lot to be said for the music-free quiet pub, and there are plenty of pubs where they just play the radio or have anodyne background music, which would be much improved by turning it off altogether. But it's unrealistic to expect that in every pub, because many city-centre pubs need the "instant atmosphere" that music gives, and it can't be denied that music does attract customers to pubs.

Sometimes the licensee plays his own choice, and that can be a good way of defining the mood of a pub. If one establishment plays jungle (or whatever is the flavour of the month on the dance floor) and another classical, then they probably won't share a single customer. But, on the other hand, it takes choice away from the customers, and if you're not careful you can end up limiting your potential market. While I enjoy classical music, I'm not convinced that it's really appropriate for pubs - but it can be an excellent way of keeping your establishment free of trouble.

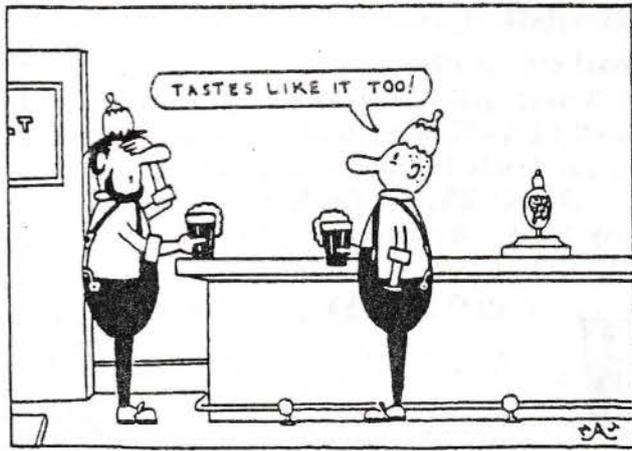
If you are going to have music, surely the best solution is to have a CD jukebox with a wide selection of different stuff - including a few classical ones. It's not good enough to have "Now That's What I Call Music" Volumes 14-37. There are, though, a number of points on which there's much room for improvement.

The bar staff should never be allowed to play the jukebox themselves, either with their own money or out of the till. If the customers want to sit in silence, then that should be respected. And, if they're prepared to pay for silence, then they should be allowed to do that too. That's a feature often requested, particularly by the older generation, but rarely if ever offered. You can imagine Harry Enfield's Old Gits taking great pleasure in forking out a few quid to inflict a couple of hours' silence on a kiddies pub on a Friday night. Also, why can't jukeboxes play the tracks in the order in which people have keyed them in? It's pretty irritating to select a few songs and then find they haven't been played by chucking-out time, while others have come up which were entered much later. And the machine ought to tell you how many tracks are in the pipeline so you know your song will come round before you leave.

Licensees could even try asking their customers what they would like to have on the jukebox, although listening to your customers is maybe rather too radical an idea. Next thing, they'll start asking for different beers!

And me? Well, I'm all in favour of quiet pubs, and there should be a damn sight more of them than there are. But music does have its place, and I certainly remember one occasion when I went into a strange city-centre pub, heard "More Than A Feeling" by Boston playing over the jukebox, and immediately felt at home...

MITCH



5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **APRIL '93**

Stalybridge Station Buffet had been one of Opening Times' longest running stories - about six months previously, it was in serious danger of closure. The front page headline five years ago was "End of the Line?", and the fate of the Buffet was "hanging in the balance". Although functioning as a genuine station buffet, it had always been privately run, and over the years had gained a reputation for the variety and quality of cask beers available.

Over two years previously, British Rail had announced plans to lease and redevelop the site, which cast a cloud over the future of the Buffet, with the probable eviction of licensee Ken Redfern who had lived there for 20 years. After much discussion, and a well-conducted campaign organised by the High Peak branch of CAMRA, it was decided to leave the bar unchanged. Now things had gone seriously wrong, and the Buffet looked like closing at the end of March - hence the "end of the line" headline. There was of course an eventual happy ending to the saga, and today the Buffet thrives once again in independent ownership.

Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke had invited proposals, which if implemented, would see a much more Continental approach to the British drinking scene. One of the plans outlined in the House of Commons was for children of all ages to be allowed into pubs up to 8pm, if accompanied by an adult.

Over the years, Bass had been strongly criticised by Opening Times for their half-hearted, and often non-existent commitment to real ale. But now they were trying a scheme that looked to be much more sensible. Worthington Best Bitter had been introduced at £1.18 a pint (this was in the two Bass pubs in Reddish, the Bull's Head and the Reddish Vale), and stamps were stuck on cards for every pint purchased. Once a card was full, it could be used to obtain goods from the "Worthington Best Bitter Collection".

There was an interesting item on the popularity of Holts. There had been two more local Vaux acquisitions - Byrons on Great Portwood Street, and the Horse & Jockey in Hazel Grove. The latter had retained the right to sell a guest beer, namely Holt's Bitter. In fact, the Holt's had proved so popular that the pub had not been able to sell a viable amount of Vaux. So there was the unusual sight of a pub signed by Wilson's, owned by Vaux, and selling only Holt's.

**There are now 21 weeks till the Shambles (supposedly) reopens :) - ha!
Given the current state of play -
Probability STILL Decreasing! (10% est.)**

© 1997 BY MARK A JONES

A Pint Too Far?

Does the road safety case for reducing the drink-driving limit really stand up? Peter Edwardson examines the issues

The government have now put forward their proposals to reduce the legal alcohol limit for drivers from 80mg to 50mg – or from approximately two pints of ordinary strength beer to one. They also want to combine this with mandatory driving bans for anyone caught exceeding the new, lower limit. Barring a major upset, these measures will probably be introduced within a matter of months. This will dramatically curtail the opportunities for people to visit pubs and drink real ale, and over time will no doubt lead to the closure of many thousands of pubs. But, however sad that may be, surely it is a price that has to be paid in order to give us safer roads?

When you look at the evidence, it isn't so clear-cut at all. The original breathalyser legislation and 80mg limit of 1967 were based on research by R F Borkenstein and others in 1964, which remains the only detailed large-scale study of the subject. This gives figures for the additional degree of risk incurred by drivers at various blood alcohol levels. Briefly, it concludes that, compared to a driver with a zero blood alcohol level, there is no additional risk whatsoever of a serious accident until the level exceeds 40mg. At 55mg, just above the proposed new limit, the risk is 1.2 times as great, at 75mg, 1.5 times and at 85mg, 1.9 times. So a driver who is just exceeding the current legal limit is still less than twice as likely to have an accident. The figure then rapidly increases to six times at 110mg and ten times at 150mg, giving support to setting a limit around the 80-100mg mark.

It must be remembered too, that the chances of having a serious accident in any one car journey are absolutely infinitesimal, and less than one-third of the chances of winning the jackpot on the National Lottery. Is that a reasonable basis on which to outlaw something? The government have admitted themselves that it will at best save a few tens of lives a year, and that is using statistics that, without any clear

basis, take a considerably less favourable view than those I have quoted, and also make an unfounded assumption that many people currently driving when above 80mg will change their behaviour.

But, many would say, surely anything that reduces road casualties, by however small an amount, is worth doing. However, in every case, the reduction of risk has to be weighed against the wider consequences, and to suggest otherwise is naïve. If, for example, the minimum driving age were to be increased from 17 to 21, it would almost certainly cut road casualties by considerably more than reducing the drink-driving limit. Yet there are powerful reasons in terms of fairness, individual freedom and the efficient functioning of the economy why we don't do this. There is no reason why the question of the drink-driving limit should be exempt from the same considerations. But, quite incredibly, the government's consultation document does not make a single reference to the potential effect on pubs – even though they paid compensation to gun clubs when they banned handguns.

Another argument advanced in favour of reducing the limit is harmonising with other EU countries, many of which already have a 50mg limit. It is interesting, though, that harmonisation of penalties is not proposed at the same time. In virtually all of these countries, exceeding the limit will only attract a fine and penalty points, not a ban. In France, a 50mg alcohol level will attract three penalty points, and 80mg six, when twelve are needed for a ban. Even if a driver loses all 12 points through drink-related offences, they can attend a two-day alcohol rehabilitation course, get four of them back, and go on driving. Yet it is now suggested here that a mandatory one-year driving ban will apply to anyone found exceeding the 50mg limit, which would give Britain the most draconian drink-drive law in Western Europe. How can it be justified to deprive someone of their driving licence, and thus potentially their livelihood, for doing something which involves an additional risk factor of only 20%?

If there is no step-change in penalties at 80mg, then some people may take the view that they might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, and end up drinking four pints rather than two. The possibility of a ban is a powerful deterrent, but once a driver has crossed that threshold, an 18-month or two-year ban isn't much more of a deterrent than one year. Many others will also end up inadvertently being banned from driving for failing to appreciate how slowly alcohol is metabolised after having a few drinks at lunchtime or the night before. The government have dismissed graduated penalties as in some way condoning drink-driving, but surely the penalty must be proportionate to the offence. The fact that driving bans are not imposed for all speeding offences does not mean that we are condoning speeding – even though excessive speed is a factor in more than twice as many road deaths as excess alcohol.

It cannot be denied that there continues to be a serious problem with a hard core of motorists who continue to drive when well above 80mg, leading to some 500 road deaths a year. But those deaths and injuries are caused, in the vast majority of cases, by drivers who are two, three or four times above the present limit, people who are, to be blunt, pissed. Over half those currently convicted of drink-driving have blood alcohol levels above 150mg. It is this that is the real problem, and reducing the limit to 50mg will do nothing whatsoever to change their behaviour. It may well even be seen as legitimising it to some extent by eroding support for the law. Surely a far greater contribution to road safety would be made by targeting this hard core in a much more focused way than at present, rather than criminalising responsible and law-abiding citizens.

The conclusion must be that a reduction in the limit from 80mg to 50mg will do virtually nothing to reduce road casualties, and the price that will be paid in terms of closed pubs, ruined livelihoods, impoverished rural life and loss of individual liberty is totally out of proportion to the benefit. Those proposing it are guilty of obsessively trying to eradicate any form of risk, however tiny, while being completely blinkered to any wider considerations.

(I acknowledge my debt to articles by John Dodd and Brian Gregory for some of the statistics and points I have used. Any comments on the government's proposals should be sent to P H Openshaw, Road Safety Division, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Zone 2/13, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR)

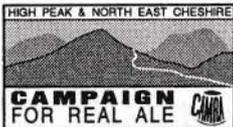
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 **Arene and Staff welcome you to**
The Greyhound



Bowden Street, Edgeley
Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
and ever changing Guest Beers
April 4th - Rebellion Zebedee,
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April 18th Phoenix Double Dagger,
April 25th - York Stonewall
May 2nd - Wychwood Dogs Bollocks
BINGO: MON & THURS afternoons SKY TV
★ **OPEN ALL DAY** ★
CAMRA Pub of the Month
March 1997



April Featured Pub:

Crown, Victoria Street, Glossop

Often, outsiders who are remembering Glossop pubs recollect that there are many that are street corner locals such as the Friendship and the Prince of Wales writes Frank Wood. But though these two have featured in the Good Beer Guide on numerous occasions, one, the Crown on Victoria Street, has been a regular entry now for some 14 years, with no sign of its reign coming to an end.

A five minute walk from the town centre, in the Whitfield area of Glossop, licensee Joyce Pilling along with husband Dave, has been managing the pub for some seven years and throughout they have kept a very consistent pint of Sam Smiths OBB, the only draught beer available. They did in fact win the Sam Smiths Cellar of the Year award in 1997, after being in the top three in the countrywide competition for the previous three years, and a commemorative plaque hangs above the bar.

Nothing much changes inside the pub, which I believe, is a Sam Smiths policy. A no smoking snug and a front snug cannot be seen from the bar, neither can the large games room where a large screen TV can be pulled down on football nights. Pool is played too and occasionally bands will perform on the small stage. Another popular night is the occasional 'drag' night when barman Pete (Petra on drag nights) entertains with music, jokes and a repertoire well worth going to see. There is a beer garden/yard to the rear of the pub but there is no car park, no food and no jukebox (background music plays) - it is just a plain drinkers' local. I doubt if any of the regulars would want it any other way.

The pub opens 11.30-3 and 5-11 Monday to Thursday but from Friday to Sunday it opens throughout the day. Anyone travelling on the 361 Glossopdale bus from Stockport can request a stop right outside, whilst other bus services and Glossop Station are only a 5-6 minute walk away.

THE 4th ACCRINGTON BEER FESTIVAL AT THE TOWN HALL ACCRINGTON



Family Facilities Afternoons And Evenings

Till 8.00pm

WED 24th June 6pm to 11pm
THURS 25th June 12 to 3 6pm to 11pm
FRI 26th June 12 to 4 6pm to 11pm
SAT 27th June ALL DAY

Free to CAMRA members and EBCU members except

Friday evening 50p

East Lancs CAMRA in conjunction with

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ASHTON-U-LYNE

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IN EXCESS OF
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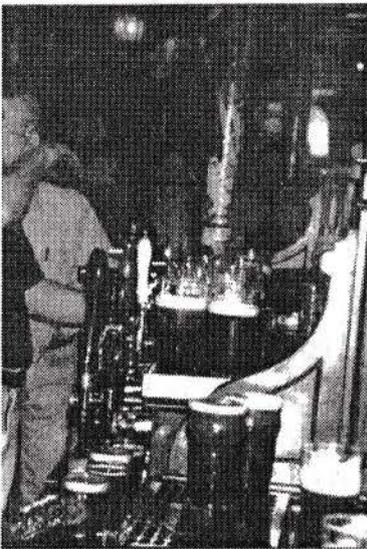
JAZZ on the platform

FOLK Saturday evening:
Stalybridge
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The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch Contact is Tom Lord
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at The Second All Ireland Independent Brewers Festival ... and a few Traditional Pint Houses

Time was, and not so long ago, when a trip to Dublin meant imbibing a very large quantity of a very dark liquid. The sort of 'non' real ale of which Michael Jackson (the Beer Writer not the other one) said "If all Beer was like this there would have been no need for CAMRA". Then along

came some brew pubs to make life more interesting - and promptly disappeared! The 'Second Wave' of Craft microbreweries are now coming to the fore in Ireland, to join Northern stalwart Hildens in the fight against the giant Guinness monopoly. These brewers are determined not to repeat others mistakes, and growth is slow but steady. There

NO COVER CHARGE The 2ND All Ireland Independent Brewers Festival 12th-17th MARCH

Whitewater Solstice	4.0%	Hilden Ale	4.0%
Glen Ale	4.2%	Special Reserve	4.6%
Best	3.7%	Fianans Gold	4.8%
Brew No 1	4.3%	Red	4.6%
Black Biddy	4.5%	Becketts Ale	4.4%
Red Biddy	5.2%	D'Arcy's Stout	4.2%
		Revolution Red Ale	4.2%

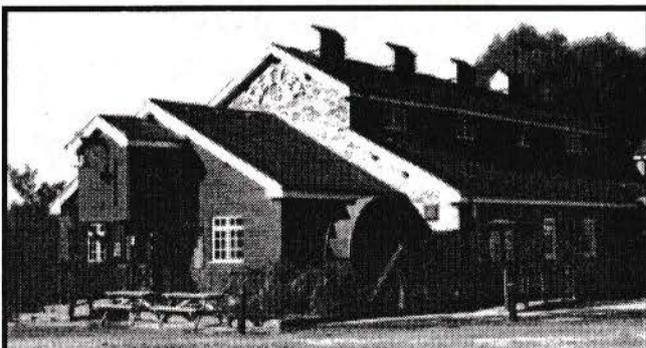
Drink a pint of each beer over 5 days and win a festival polo shirt! Telephone: 6798847

At The Porterhouse, Parliament Street Temple Bar, Dublins Only Pub Brewery

has been no real attempt to impose handpumps and temperature change along with an extension of choice and quality - for it was this level of culture shock that proved fatal last time!

Some beers (Hilden's, Whitewater and some of the Porterhouse brews) are real ales, and the stillage at the festival - nine casks and four handpumps was without doubt the largest Ireland has seen in a long time. The emphasis though - as with the newer 'craft' breweries in America is on quality and choice. All these beers are additive free. The quality is phenomenal - even getting past the mixed gas dispense.

The festival was held to coincide with the growing St. Patrick's weekend festival in Temple Bar in Dublin and it was very well attended. Although I did run into a number of the known 'CAMRA' faces - Michael Jackson had a book signing after all, probably the most pleasing aspect was just how many Dubliners were taking to the bewildering choice (23 beers on offer including the Porter-



Your hosts Jon & Judi invite you to

The Old Mill

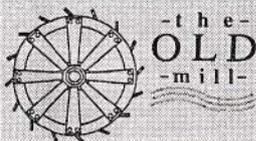
At least 10 different guest beers per week

Quiz night Tuesday & Thursday

Great food served daily till 10pm (32oz Steaks, sizzlers etc.)

Playstation evenings

SKY TV - 3 screens



Beer Festival commences 10th April - 102 Beers

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PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP.
TEL: 01706 627009

 HOPWOOD <small>Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.</small>	 BANTAM <small>Pale brown bitter, slightly nutty, full flavoured beer.</small>	 BEST BITTER <small>Tawny coloured, with a hint of sweetness in the full bitter palate. A fresh but dry hop finish.</small>
 OLD OAK <small>Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, fruity and dry.</small>	 THIRSTY MOON <small>Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight maltness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.</small>	 BONNEVILLE <small>Light brown bitter. Malty character with a soft rounded hop balance.</small>
 DOUBLE DAGGER <small>Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its gravity would suggest.</small>	 WOBBLY BOB <small>Amber beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.</small>	



Biggest Real Ale Stillage in Ireland for a Generation...or two!

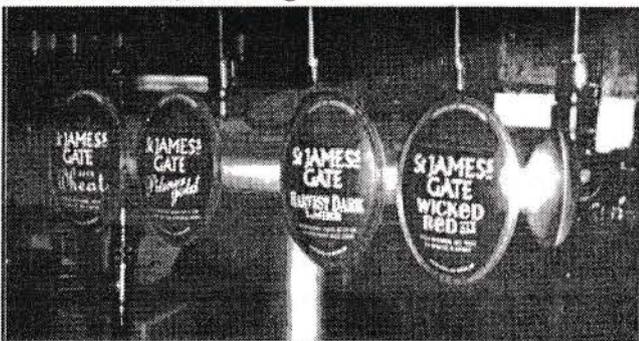
house's own. There was a free festival polo shirt for anyone drinking a pint of everything - well I was there for two sessions so it seemed reasonable....).

The festival was held at the Porterhouse brew-pub - which for those who have not yet made the trip is everything a brew-pub should be (the brewery itself was designed by Brendan Dobbin after all). Food is good and reasonably priced and available all day, live music (jazz and traditional while I was there) is now often found upstairs, and it stays open till 1am on Fridays. The beer too is always spot on. The only regular real-ale outlet in Dublin, usually two (though sometimes one or three) of their own beers are available on handpull. The Plain Porter (an accessible dark beer if ever there was one) has just won a major international award - to Guinness' delight - NOT! The Oyster Stout is slightly sweeter, but very popular whilst the old Cork recipe Wrasslers XXXX Stout is uncompromising - dry, black, even dryer and a tremendous beer. (Michael Collins thought so too, apparently, before he was shot!). The Bavarian style Hersbrucker is a wonderful lager, and amongst the numerous other beers there has to be something for everyone. Just across the river, Dublin Brewing are celebrating a contract with the Co-op, so you should see their vegetarian-friendly beers over here very soon. Good beer too, so that's good news.

As to beer of the festival? Well for me it was a toss-up between the Wrasslers and Black Biddy. Its now an established annual event so get over next year.

Interestingly, Guinness are more than a little concerned by this micro-brewing movement, and so for the first time in a generation have launched four new beers under the St. James' Gate (the Guinness Brewery name) banner. A red ale based on a Californian (Pete's Wicked) recipe, a wheat beer which is one of the strangest brews I have ever tasted and two lagers - a pilsner (which looks and tastes exactly like Guinness' Harp) and a Dark German Lager... Now THIS I wanted to try. I love dark Bavarian beers...but...sorry lads, try again. It is like Harp with a tad more colour in it, and so, still - a PALE lager. So gassy I was burping after a mouthful. I don't think the micros have much to worry about on this front.

As to the black stuff itself? Cold flow is being ignored in the pint houses, its cold enough already, after all. O'Donoghues (busy as ever - see picture on previous page) has expanded into the next building, and now has 'rooms' (more in a month or two). Toners was so busy I couldn't get through the door....and the best pint of Guinness? Still at John Mulligans!



Beer Festivals & Other Events

The recently re-opened Sun Inn in Buxton (praised in these pages), now running as a cask ale house, is presenting its first real ale festival from Wednesday 1 April to Monday 13, the final weekend being Easter.

Over 25 ales will be on sale, at least eight at a time, including several on gravity dispense. Unique one-off festival ales from Whim (Old Sun Buxton Bitter) and Marstons (Union Taps Festival Ale) will be available while stocks last. In addition all the Whim range will be on sale during the festival, plus Marstons Oyster Stout, making a rare appearance on draught. The rest of the festival ale line up will include brews from Bank Top, Bathams, Enville and Kitchen. Several cask ciders will be available plus the pub's range of foreign bottled beers.

The pub is also launching 'The Old Sun Inn Beer Club', a monthly event for those with a keen interest in beer, who would like to know more about ales 'and most importantly try a few!'. The first event was scheduled for Tuesday 31 March at 8pm when the guest was to be Paul Bailey, the Marstons Head Brewer who specifically chooses and brews the Head Brewers Choice range. Three examples were intended to be available and Paul would be explaining how the Head Brewers Choice is chosen and brewed. Look for a full report in the next issue. Future events are to include visits to Whim Brewery and Marstons at Burton-on-Trent. The Sun Inn can be contacted on 01298 23452.

The British Beermat Collectors Society will be meeting at the Beer House on Saturday 25th April at 12 noon. There will be a variety of events at the meeting including a swap shop, auction, charity raffle and pump clip sale. The Playing Card Society and Badge Collectors Society will also be in attendance. More details from Tom Corner on 01457 872022.

This month also sees the start of an eight-week beer festival at the Old Mill in Cheadle Hulme. Licensee Jon Laidlaw tells us that he expects to get through 102 guest beers over the duration of the festival, at the rate of 12 a week. Beers available will range from the well known to the obscure with beers from such micros as Quay, Cottage, O'Hanlons, Roosters, Butterknowle, Arundel and Grainstore to name but a few. Certainly worth a visit, or two, or three!

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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival

Arrangements are now well in hand for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express Advertiser.

As usual we have a first class line-up of entertainment for you starting on Thursday evening with the **Kings of Swing** a six-piece jazz band making their first Festival appearance. A local band fronted by Julie Flynn and including James Galway's brother George in the line-up, their mixture of jazzy sounds old and new will get the Festival off to a swinging start.

Friday lunchtime drinkers will be entertained by **The Humdingers** a trio playing traditional Irish tunes to pass the afternoon in style. For the big Friday night session we see a welcome return of last year's Saturday night band, **Biggles Wartime Band**. Good time jug-band music from these masters of the unusual in the vein of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band will help create a superb party atmosphere for what is traditionally our busiest night.

Saturday lunchtime is a first for the Festival - a quiet session for drinkers to enjoy their beer and chat. There will still be events on the stage though, with the announcement of CAMRA's national cider and perry champions plus the first ever presentation of the Pomona Award for services to traditional cider and perry. On Saturday night the **Rocky Mountain Ploughboys** take us out with a lively mixture of country, cajun and bluegrass music, ideal drinking music to end the Festival in style.

Entertainment Manager Lorraine Chlebicki told us "These bands make up a great array of music for this year's Festival, along with the beer and cider of course!"

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will be held in the Town Hall Ballroom from May 28-30.

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HYDES ANVIL



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and very moorish.

Look out for Mad Ferret
from the beginning of May

For details of Mad Ferret and other
ales in the craft seasonal ale programme,
call our hotline on 0161 226 1317

They're At It again!

Senior spokesmen from Bass last month continued what seems to be more and more a concerted campaign to talk down cask beer.

This time it's Bass Brewers production director Martin Thomas who has partly attributed licensees selling poor beer to an "irreversible" decline in cask beer sales. Speaking at the completion of the take-over of the former Carlsberg-Tetley brewery in Burton, he said customers tempted to try traditional ales were left unconvinced because quality was not consistent. "I am sad to see the quality of cask beer dispense. Talking very generally, it is driving people away from cask beer rather than towards it," he said. "Licensees generally are less interested in the engine room of the pub than they used to be."

Despite these concerns, Bass, perhaps significantly, are the one national brewer yet to sign up to the cask ale quality guarantee project, Cask Marque (discussed elsewhere in this issue). This is despite assertions that beer and dispense quality are at the top of its concerns. Perhaps it would be truer to say that cask beer and dispense quality are increasingly being marginalised in this company's list of priorities.

Caught In The Web

The Opening Times & Stockport & South Manchester branch website will be restored to its former glory this month, with links to CAMRA, other branches, the Beer Monster™ pages, and on-line pub & beer guides following in May. Full details and a map of the site will feature in next month's issue.

The site (Opening Times, both on-line and downloadable, local & regional CAMRA branch information, and guides to various drinking areas in the UK and abroad - and guides to upcoming CAMRA and pub Beer Festivals as they come available) are to be produced by a small team to spread the workload. Any interested branch member who wishes to PARTICIPATE in this effort and not merely criticise without being prepared to do regular work, is very welcome to contact me at pbh@opentime.u-net.com. We will try to keep most of the site as browser-neutral as possible. The pub guides (alas) will require IE 4.n until Netscape sort out a proper version of dynamic HTML.

Macclesfield BEER FESTIVAL

Early May sees the Macclesfield Beer festival running on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th. Now in its fourth consecutive year, this event run jointly by Macclesfield CAMRA and the local Round Table will feature 50 real ales plus cider over the two-day event.

The venue will be as before - Macclesfield Rugby Club on Priory Lane. Opening hours are 7pm to midnight on both days with a Saturday lunchtime session from noon to 3pm. Lunchtime admission is free and in the evenings this will be by ticket only and will cost £7.50, which includes commemorative glass, programme and the first pint (or equivalent). CAMRA members will get an extra pint included in that price. Tickets can be had from Mr C Burgess, The Hollies, 44 Drummond Way, Macclesfield, SK10 4XJ. Make any cheques payable to 'Macclesfield Beer Festival'.

CAMRA CONTACT IN MACCLESFIELD IS JIM BOWDEN

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

The refurbishment of the Clarence in Newton, Hyde is approaching completion and was scheduled to open in about 14 days as we went to press.

Another J D Wetherspoons in the offing, this time in Hyde where they have been granted a licence in respect of the old 'Thrifty' shops in the town centre.

The future of the Wheatsheaf in Hyde looks uncertain and the building is now covered in scaffolding.

The Sportsman in Hyde has increased its beer range with the addition of Robinsons Best Bitter. All the other beers remain on tap, too.

Finally, apropos the recent piece on the Sun Inn, Buxton, the high pricing policy continues. Batemans Mild was recently spotted on sale there at £1.80 a pint!

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17

Corner Missing!
Money Off Voucher?

Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Publicity is the lifeblood of any cause. No matter how right the original conception of CAMRA was, if the founding fathers of the organisation had been shy in getting their point across to the press and public, then CAMRA would just have become yet another nondescript group forever spitting in the wind. Our pubs would be full of keg beer and real ale would have been a thing of the past. Happily, those who breathed life in the campaign, had the good sense to realise the importance of good PR. It seems, however, that the lesson has not always been learned in the world of Darts.

Whilst I was Dart correspondent for the *Stockport Messenger*, and also in the years that I have penned this series of articles for *Opening Times*, I have found that trying to get information from certain league secretaries as difficult as getting blood out of a stone (or getting into the Elizabethan in trainers). Of course, there are exceptions to this, most notably the *Stockport Licensed Houses League*. Mick Moran was always as regular as clockwork in feeding me with results sheets, league tables and information. Since he relinquished his position John Parkin (licensee of the Bobby Peel) and his committee have kept up the good job. Even with the dedication of individuals like this, it is getting increasingly difficult to get decent reports in the local press. Despite the fact that in Stockport alone there are thousands of registered players, the game receives scant coverage, despite the efforts of people like Jack Hyman in the *Stockport Express* and Bob Broadbent in the *Pink*. So now the Licensed Houses are taking the initiative themselves and bringing out their own magazine.

Wittily entitled "*The Stockie Oche*", the magazine will contain all

match results and up-to-date league tables from all eight divisions, with almost as much coverage of Mixed "C" Division matches as those from the Super League. County matches and other tournaments affecting local players will also be covered; as will short news snippets from the larger world of Darts. It is a brave venture that will cost the individuals who are setting it up a lot of time and money initially. It will only work if it receives the backing of the landlords, officials, supporters and, of course, players. They will be crying out for backing in the form of advertising and contributions. It will only work with help from everybody. And it deserves to succeed. Further details can be obtained by contacting either John Parkin at the Bobby Peel, or call me on 286 7762.

★ ★ ★

Paul Cumston emerged from the shadows of fellow Stopfordians Tony O'Shea and Mick Haynes when the Cheshire County squad made the long trip to Somerset for a Division Two Inter-Counties encounter. Star & Garter's Paul put in the best performance of the weekend in beating Glyn Watts 3-0 in 18, 20 and 15 darts. That 15 darter came with throws of 100 - 45 - 140 - 100 - 116 out shot. His average was 28.36 per dart. Although playing for the "B" side, that average was higher than any other player in the match, either "A" or "B". There were victories for O'Shea, Haynes and Gill Ball as well, but pride of place must go to Paul wonderful achievement. An "A" team place must be on the cards for him.

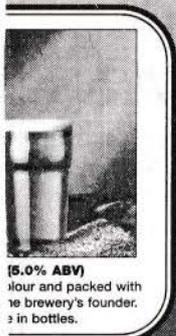
★ ★ ★

A scoop for *Opening Times*. In the March edition of *Darts World*, Sky TV and Radio 5 commentator John Gwynne reported on the fact that Bobby Peel Ladies would be playing in a men's division of the Licensed Houses League. The highly respected Gwynne admitted that he had discovered the information in the Manchester Metro News. And where had the Metro found the story? In the December of edition of *Opening Times*. Remember, you read it here first.

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**Corner Missing!
Money Off Voucher?**

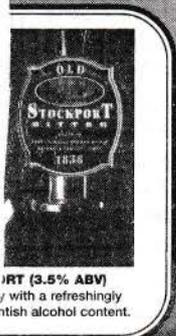
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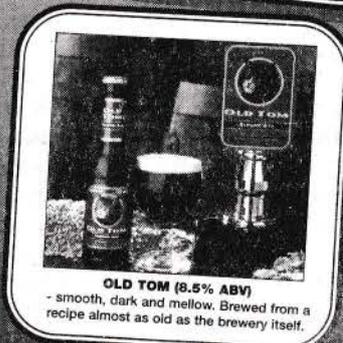
(5.0% ABV)
flour and packed with
the brewery's founder.
in bottles.



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

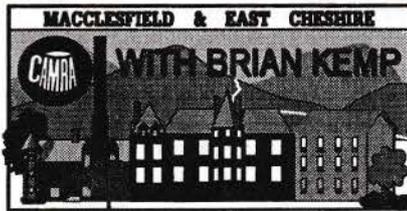


PORT (3.5% ABV)
with a refreshingly
ntish alcohol content.



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

B E E R S



When I agreed to start writing these pieces on the Macclesfield pub scene I did not want them to become bland sycophantic descriptions of branch members', or even my own, favourite locals so I am encouraged that eventually I seem to have started a little controversy. Firstly let me reply to John Tune's letter in a recent OT complaining that, after reading my article on the Nag's Head on Waters Green complimenting it on the greatly improved quality of its beer, he had been encouraged to go in and try a pint of mild only to find that it was keg. All I can say in my defence is that when I was in there I drank the bitter which was excellent and mistakenly assumed from the price list which listed mild that that would be OK as well. However if John went in and failed to notice that his beer was being dispensed from a keg Hartleys font, I don't think he can place all the blame on me!

Secondly, I understand that at a recent Macclesfield CAMRA branch meeting some criticism was conveyed from the current landlord of the Star Inn on London Road regarding my article a few months back about how Marstons had succeeded in reducing what was arguably the best and busiest pub in Macclesfield into a shadow of its former self. If he reads this I can assure him that I intended, and indeed made, no criticism of any of the licensees present, past, or future but was purely highlighting the brewery's ineptitude at managing its tied pub estate. If anything, recent reports in the local press, that they have applied for planning permission to demolish the pub and build in its place a new family eatery called 'The Corner House', would suggest that they have come to the same conclusion! As I mentioned in another recent article, they have also destroyed the trade at the Evening Star on James Street through their desire to make money from their property rather than encouraging beer sales. Brian Mitchell, the ex-landlord there, was certainly one of the best you will find anywhere.

Thirdly, some 18 months ago I featured the Lord Byron on Chapel Street. A working man's Robinson's pub of the first order, and commented with foreboding that they had plans for alterations. These have now been completed, although how it has taken so long defeats me! I know they have had to do major refurbishment work in the terraced cottage next door but the alterations in the pub itself are relatively modest, viz. new palatial toilets, an enlarged and more attractive bar, and a new carpet, but 18 months is ridiculous! I do not think it is unreasonable to suggest to Robinson's that in return for the patience and inconvenience shown and suffered by the landlord, Ken, and his regulars, that they mark the completion by sponsoring a celebration evening. Full marks to them though. Contrary to my original misgivings they have done a really good job!!

I remember a number of years ago returning with Jim from the AGM in Hull and stopping for refreshment at Robinson's Manners Hotel in Bakewell only to find the inside was like a building site, and according to the landlord had been like it for two years!! Perhaps the Byron should be grateful for small mercies.

I had been going to entertain you this month with a descriptive pub crawl around Waters Green but as I am probably already exceeding my editorial space perhaps I will save that for next time.

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Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
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Frederics, Old Tom and Hartleys

A WARM WELCOME
AND FINE BEER IN
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Bakers Vaults

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

Robinson's Fine Ales
superb cuisine
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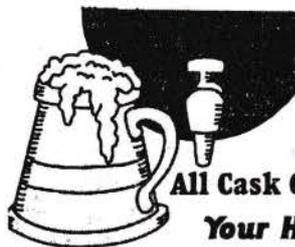


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Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day
Tuesday night Karaoke
Disco and Quiz Thursday and Sunday Disco

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

March 98

Monday 6th - Social: Union, Levenshulme. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting and AGM, Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. All members should attend.

Friday 17th - Rusholme Stagger: starts 7.00pm, Claremont, Claremont Road; 8.30pm Osborne, Victory Street.

Sunday 19th - Curry Crawl in Hyde. Meet 12 noon in Sportsman, Mottram Road.

Monday 20th - Social: Royal Oak, High Street, Cheadle. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 23rd - Pub of the Month presentation to the Osborne House, Victory St, Rusholme. 8.00pm onwards.

Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th - CAMRA AGM and National Conference, Edinburgh.

Monday 27th - Social: Travellers Call, Hyde Road, West Gorton. Starts 9.00pm.

High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the

March 98

following events:

Thursday 9th - Social: White House/Q Beer Festival

Tuesday 14th - Monthly Branch Meeting, Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 18th - Trip to West Yorkshire by train. Details from Frank Wood on 014578 65426.

Sunday 3rd May - Walk round Bleaklow. Details from Frank, as above.

Tuesday 5th - Committee and Social, Chapel House, Denton. Starts 8.30pm.

Friday 8th - Social: Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde.

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

Monday 27th - Monthly branch meeting at the Railway, Handforth. Starts 8.00pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner



Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers

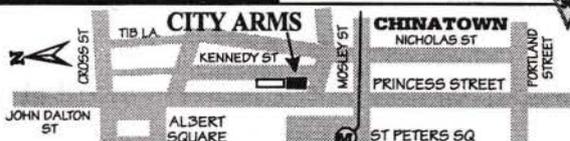
Kitchen Brewery Experience commences April 6th: Last Supper, Prissy Parsley, Tormented Turnip, Carrot Cruncher, Raisin Stout, Mothers Recipe, Magic Mango, Chefs Cut, Commis, Waitress, Huddersfield Wilsons Wobble Maker, Town Bitter and Huddersfield Pride

KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

8 HANDPUMPS
6 GUEST ALES

LUNCHTIME FOOD

11.30-2.30
and 11.30 - 2.00
Saturday



THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM



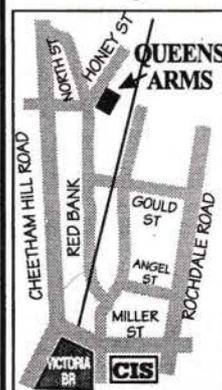
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Budvar
on Draught

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Taylor's Landlord, Phoenix Bantam and Constantly Changing Range of Beers Beer Garden & Children's Certificate

Quiz Night (Free) on Tuesdays (Cash Prizes) Food Every Day All Day
Open All Permitted Hours



MANCHESTER MATTERS

Another of East Manchester's fine old boozers now sells no beer worth the name. At the Smithfield (formerly the Locomotive) in Openshaw, "smooth" keg Boddingtons is now the rule - a crass decision by a newish licensee, and rewarded fittingly by a pub entirely empty of customers last time I called.



by Rhys Jones

Nonetheless, the trend to "smooth" Boddies is becoming seriously worrying - there are areas where cask Boddies Bitter is difficult or impossible to find - and I do wonder about the brand's long-term future in cask form. Granted, there are still pubs where real Boddies sells in impressive quantities, but all such pubs now have access to something at least as interesting to sell their customers. As the beer's branding increasingly eschews mention of its Manchester roots, could Boddies Bitter for the new millennium become just another taste-alike brew-it-anywhere keg?

At the Vulcan in Gorton, Boddies has been keg for some time, and they've now also withdrawn Wilson's Bitter. The good news, though, is that it's been replaced by Grays Bitter, an excellent beer brewed by Mansfield Brewery under contract for wholesalers LWCC. The elusive but excellent Wilson's Mild remains, and the Vulcan well deserves a visit. If you go into the vault, you may see posters referring to the pub as "Jonjo Greene's Vulcan", and indeed it now shares common management with Jonjo Greene's in Edgeley, behind Stockport station. I'm assured there are no plans to rename it, though (unless, perhaps, to its universal nickname the Monkey).

In West Gorton, the Nag's Head should be selling handpumped Burtonwood Bitter by the time you read this - and since licensee Tony Dunn has persuaded owners Paramount to transfer their price incentive from the "smooth" version to the cask, it'll be sold at an attractive £1.20 a pint. With Burtonwood Mild and Forshaws also on handpump, the Nag's must now be selling its best beer for many a long year. Nearby at the Travellers Call, the electric-pumped Light has joined Mild and Bitter - whether the pub will be able to sustain two milds long term remains to be seen, but all credit to them for trying.

In Rusholme, Soak Bar has closed after a brief and inglorious career which at no point involved the selling of cask beer. The pundits keep telling us that what Rusholme really needs is a café bar to visit before or after the obligatory curry - but the punters keep voting with their feet for the local pubs, and I reckon the

punters are right. Further into town at the Salutation in Chorlton-on-Medlock, the handpumped offer is now Tetley Bitter plus a guest or two (nothing terribly inspired - more likely to be Old Speckled Hen than the likes of Smiles still advertised on the walls). "Smooth" Tetley keg is also available, but you seem to get the cask without asking, and the keg-cider-on-handpump con is now long in the past here (as indeed it is in decent pubs Manchester-wide - consumer pressure works, when mediated through alert CAMRA branches!).

In the City Centre, the excellent but under-visited Moulders Arms, tucked away near Piccadilly Station, is now supplied by Hydes'; avoid the Smooth but try Light or Bitter on handpump. As forecast last month, the Royal Central Hotel is its new incarnation sells keg beers only; for reasons I neither know nor care about, it's now dubbed Baty's. There's better to come in the City Centre, though, as the Hogshead on Deansgate was due to open on 30 March. This



Whitbread chain of specialist real ale pubs has served Manchester well so far, with excellent ranges of real ale and a real cider both at the Lass O' Gowrie and, perhaps even more so, at their High Street flagship; so I look forward to great things from the Deansgate branch. The new Hogshead on Oxford Road near MRI and the University also looked close to completion when I passed in mid-March, and the one in the so-called 'Clock Tower' development in Didsbury isn't far behind.

Finally, the City Centre is to get Manchester's first All Bar One, in the old Norwich Union building on King Street. This Bass chain, while far from cheap, is in fact more attractive than many of their efforts - bare boards, wooden benches, and large tables create a more convivial atmosphere than the average café bar, and the food, while decent, doesn't get too much in the way of the drinking. But what of the beer policy? Draught Bass seems standard for the chain, and in London (where most of them are) is joined by the excellent Fullers London Pride. In the Sheffield branch, however, the "local beer" slot is filled by the sadly diminished Stones Bitter. What will they offer in Manchester? Whatever it is, it'll cost you!

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 168)

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.



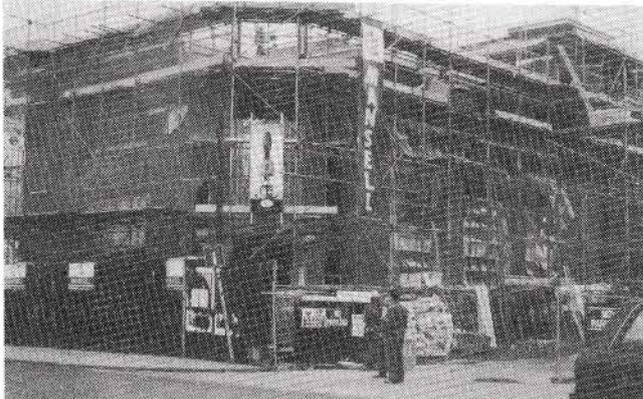


The Park on Newbridge Lane has been fully refurbished. "It looks great" says owner Nigel Eastwood, "come and have a look". Indeed we will – a full review next time but judging by the other Marie Pub Co refurbishments it should be pretty impressive.

The J D Wetherspoon organisation, owners of The Moon Under Water on Deansgate, are coming to Cheadle Hulme. A license has been granted enabling them to convert King's Hall Buildings, at 11-13 Station Road into a pub. Scheduled to open in June this will be a major addition to the local drinking scene and its competitive pricing policy, while causing no problems at the nearby Cheadle Hulme (Holt's) may give the pricier establishments in the village, such as the Governor's House, pause for thought.

Growing pub company Enterprise Inns have placed no less than 117 of their pubs on the market. Of these just 27 are in the north west with only four in and around the Opening Times area. These comprise the Cheshire Cheese, Ancoats, a one-time OT outlet, now closed and boarded, and yours for just £25,000. Rather more promising is the Dukinfield Arms, Dukinfield at £70,000. One of the few pubs at the Manchester end of Hyde Road still trading is the Wellington and this can be had for £50,000. The fourth presents a rare chance to get into the still-vibrant Stockport pub scene – the Sun & Castle on Hillgate must surely find an early buyer at £125,000.

22



With the imminent opening of the new Whitbread Hogshead pubs, it's all change for various local licensees in the company's estate. Running the new Deansgate operation will be the licensee from Boddington's Brewery Tap. The High Street operation will be under the care of Mick and Carol who come to this, their first pub, from 12 weeks training at the Preston Hogshead while Harold and Mike move from the High Street to the new Hogshead on Wilmslow Road near the MRI. The Didsbury pub is some way from completion but we hear that its licensee may be coming from the Pump & Truncheon in Liverpool.

The Park (Burtonwood) on Ardwick Green has undergone a thorough redecoration and now looks better than ever. The smart lounge leads on to a beautiful, fenced-off beer garden that should see some use for parties and barbecues. The vault has had the treatment, too – in two-tone pink! Licensee of nine years, Sue Condon said "...it caused a few comments

and raised eyebrows at first, but everyone loves it now". Although only selling one beer – Burtonwood Bitter, the pub is a credit to the area.



Staying in Ardwick, the Union (also Burtonwood) on Higher Ardwick has lost its tenants. They have moved to the Polygon (Greenalls) in Levenshulme. This is a much larger pub and managed too. New tenants local to the area have taken on the Union.

In Adswood, the Greyhound has undergone yet another revamp and now features another of Greenalls new concepts. Half of the pub is now badged 'The Clubhouse' which is really just a fancy name for a large vault-cum-games room. Its very bright and loud, even the supposedly 'traditional lounge' manages to be bright and loud, so clearly it won't appeal to everyone. It seems popular enough with the locals, though and the licensee is, by all accounts, sports mad and has been busy setting up pub teams for every sport and game imaginable. Food is served daily and cask beers include Greenalls Bitter and Marstons Pedigree. Greenalls was OK when OT visited.

We hear there could be progress at last on Winter's Wine Bar, Underbank, Stockport, which Holt's bought last year and have since done nothing with. Apparently the clock is being restored and the place could reopen as the town centre's first Holt's pub in the next couple of months.

Another pub looks set to come back from the dead. The Pack Horse on Hillgate, Stockport, is apparently to reopen after a long period of closure as an application for a license appeared in the Manchester Evening News at the end of March. More news when we get it.



Last, but by no means least, congratulations to Ian at the Bulls Head, London Road, Manchester. No sooner does he pick up a Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award than another gong heads his way. The Bulls Head has been declared regional winner in Burtonwood's Pub of the Year competition and will now go forward to the national finals.

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