

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



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Issue 11

FREE

TIMES

NOVEMBER 1998

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Fresh Call for Full Pints

CAMRA the Campaign for Real Ale has renewed its calls for laws to protect drinkers from short measures in pubs. The announcement follows the news that major pub chain Wetherspoons has removed oversized lined glasses from its pubs.

Mike Benner, Head of campaign, said, "We are disappointed at Wetherspoons's decision to axe lined glasses as the company has tried to lead the industry in the right direction. The news clearly indicates a need for proper legislation to stop drinkers being ripped off. Wetherspoons pubs will no longer be a guaranteed safe haven from short measures."

Legislation would mean all pubs would have to serve full pints and companies would be operating on a level playing field. Wetherspoons have claimed that complaints in their pubs have gone up since they introduced lined glasses. If this is true, it proves drinkers do care about this and that they are confused. Legislation that clarifies what constitutes a pint is the only way forward. A pint should be 100% liquid, nothing less will give drinkers a fair deal.

Naturally the usual licensed trade dinosaurs were quick to gloat at the Wetherspoons decision, although the smiles were soon wiped away by a court ruling last month. In a historic judgement, two Court of Appeal judges ruled that a pint of beer must be a full pint. The judges insisted a pint must be a pint during a High Court appeal by Allied Domecq against a Bradford magistrates ruling who had found it guilty of supplying short measure to two trading standards officers at a Bradford pub.

Blowing a hole in licensed trade guideline that a top-up should be given when asked, Lord Justice Sedley said: "If a foaming head resulted in less than a pint of beer being served, then an offence had automatically been committed. If a pint is not supplied there is no onus on the customer to ask for a full measure before an offence is committed."

This new ruling makes it clear that licensees must serve a full pint. They can no longer pour a pint, place it on the bar and wait to see if the customer asks them for a top up. That's against the law for the onus is clearly on the licensee to serve a full pint.

And that's not just our view. Bradford trading standards divisional commander Paul Cooper spoke those words. Licensees everywhere would do well to commit them to memory.

More Pubs Up For Grabs

Greenalls Join Big Sell-off

Following last month's news of the Vaux and Marston's pub disposals, another 1400 pubs now have the for-sale sign on them following Greenalls' confirmation that it is in talks to sell its entire Inn Partnership division.

Inn Partnership was founded in the early 1990s to develop a new type of franchised pubs, involving a partnership between Greenalls and licensees and has resulted in a rash of various concepts such as "Porter's Ale Houses" becoming widespread in the Greenalls estate, which includes all the former Boddington pubs. However, not only does the estate cover some 860 franchise pubs but an additional 540 tenancies and news of the pending sale has caused shock waves amongst licensees.

Greenalls have put a £400 million price tag on the business and says the pubs are attracting a lot of interest from potential buyers, although City analysts have suggested that they will be lucky to get the asking price which amounts to about £285,000 per pub. Various potential buyers have been named, including pub companies Enterprise Inns and Punch Taverns, although a management buyout appears to be the front runner. This would at least have the benefit of guaranteeing some measure of continuity for the pubs concerned.

Winter Ales Festival

Planning is now well advanced for the revived Manchester Beer Festival, to be held at the Upper Campfield Market, off Deansgate in the City Centre, from 21-23 January next year. As you may have read, this will incorporate CAMRA's National Winter Ales Championship, an event previously held in Glasgow.

This is the winter equivalent of the Champion Beer of Britain contest held annually in August at the Great British Beer

Festival in London, and enables stouts, porters, barley wines and old ales to compete on a more level playing field. That's not to say there won't be plenty of other beer styles to try - the festival will feature a full range of milds, bitters, premium and strong ales not only

from the north west but from far and wide. There will be a cider and perry bar and a large foreign beer stand featuring many Belgian and German seasonal beers (we hear the Opening Times' very own Beer Monster may be helping organise this so lovers of continental beers will certainly be in for a treat). In addition there will be the usual range of side stalls that festival goers expect, souvenir t-shirts, glasses, and membership-offers. Beat those new year blues and get back into the festive spirit! Those important dates again - Thursday 21 - Saturday 23 January 1999.

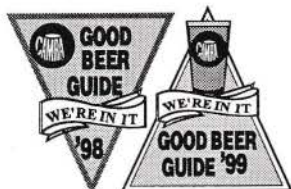


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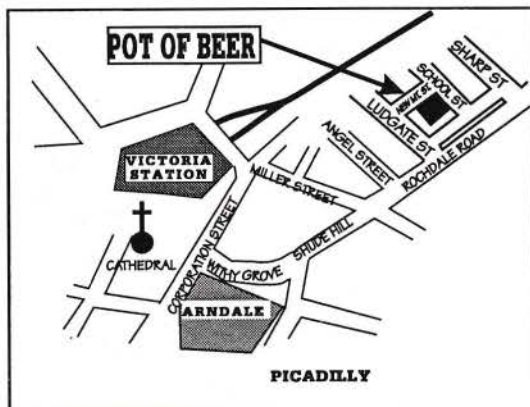
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Oh how they smirked when Wetherspoons dropped lined glasses. "We told you so", gloated the usual licensed trade suspects. Publicans' organisations, the big brewers and the Licensee newspaper were almost beside themselves with glee. Leave it to voluntary codes of practice and self regulation. Most customers prefer a head on their beer and, if they don't, they can always ask for a top-up. The usual self-satisfied tosh. One licensee, writing in *The Licensee* even re-hashed the old argument that full measure would mean handpumps being ripped out everywhere. They just don't learn, do they? Luckily, the gloating was short-lived. Not only was there the Court of Appeal ruling that a pint must be a pint of liquid – and top-ups must be given *without asking* if a short-measure offence is not to be committed – but the Government has made it quite clear that it fully intends to enforce full-measure legislation. The Department of Trade has publicly accepted that drinkers are not getting a fair deal and its lawyers are currently examining all the options available. Hopefully we will see action in the New Year.

Meanwhile support for the status quo is slowly draining away, despite special pleading by the rip-off merchants. Wetherspoons boss Tim Martin fully accepts that is it "morally right to supply a full pint" but feels that until there is legislation his company must compete with its competitors on a level playing field. The national brewers, too, are quietly withdrawing their opposition to the idea of legislation.

Let's be quite clear. Many licensees do their best to serve a full measure. Offers of top-ups, freely given, are becoming more commonplace. However a minority remain who seem to specialise in short-measure, a problem made more acute by the spread of 'smooth' beers which customers have been educated to expect come complete with a large dollop of foam on top. They claim, in effect, that the cost of serving full pints would put them out of business. So be it. The trade is well rid of them.

John Clarke

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OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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Pub Of The Month NOVEMBER 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 November is the Mawson, Chorlton-on-Medlock.

A fine example of an early 20th century pub, roughly 80 years old, the interior of the Mawson is largely unchanged with a central bar serving three separate rooms and a lobby area. All the rooms have wooden panelling with one serving as a vault. It is in many ways a remarkable survivor and, perhaps more than most, gives the lie to those who say that inner city pubs are doomed and unwelcoming.

The Mawson thrives and a varied clientele drawn from the local estate and the university, mix in a friendly atmosphere. Two cask ales, Tetley Mild and Bitter, are served in tip-top form. A refreshing change to the wave of keg smooth that is engulfing too many local pubs and another example of how a well-run pub can buck the trends predicted by the doom merchants. Of course, every good pub needs good licensees, and the Mawson is lucky to have Rita and Tony at the helm for the past four years, moving to the Mawson from the Weaste in Salford and who have maintained the pubs traditions of good beer and a warm welcome.

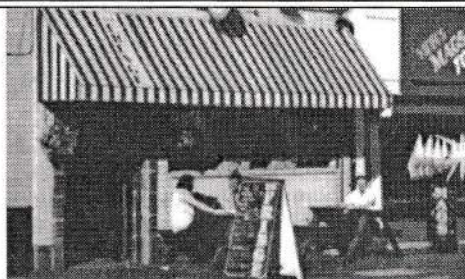
The presentation will be made on Thursday 26 November when an excellent evening is guaranteed.

The Mawson is on Francis Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, set back off Brunswick St near its junction with Upper Brook Street. It is incredibly easy to reach by public transport - the 192 from Stockport will drop you off at the Apollo from where it is a short walk down Brunswick St. The 50 will drop you a couple of minutes walk from the pub and all Wilmslow road buses will drop you off at the University Union from where it is a short walk down from the other end of Brunswick Street

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

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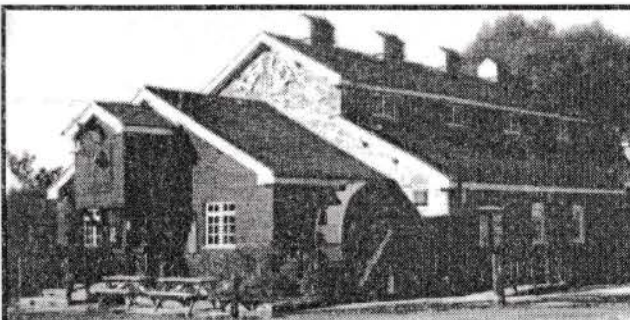


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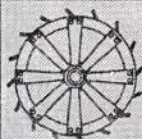
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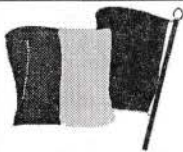
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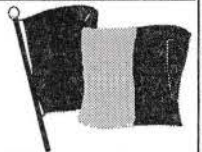
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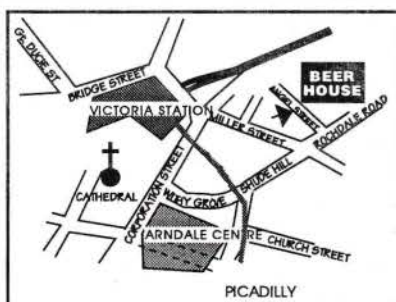


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STAGGER

with Richard Cleverley

I arrived in Cheadle in good time for this Stagger, so began with some good-value fish and chips from the chip shop on Wilmslow Road.

Back round the corner, on the High Street next to Pizza Express, was our first stop, the **Crown**, one of two Hydes' pubs to be visited during the evening. The pub is larger than the narrow frontage suggests, opening out at the back. The modern etched glass windows and tiled floor in the front section give it a bright and clean feel. Bitter, Mild, Light and Hydes' seasonal beer (at the time this was 'Berry Good Ale') were all available. No-one sampled the Berry Good, but the regular beers were above average to good, with the Bitter most appreciated. One member of the party unable to offer an opinion on the beer was its youngest - Nancy, aged only a few months.

Next stop was café bar **Carpe Diem**, Gatley Road, ex-Cheadle Café Bar, ex-video shop, ex-?? (answers to the editor!). Here, the décor was of more interest than the beer, the only cask offering being Tetley's Bitter. A mixture of bare boards, Latin phrases, exposed ducting, homely red settees, and tables with numbers stencilled on them, gives the makeovers of TV's 'Changing Rooms' a run for its money. A pub/bar not much to my liking, but of course "it all depends" (our Latin expert's translation of 'Totum dependant') what you like. The beer? Oh yes! Opinion varies between average and slightly below.

Across the road to the **White Hart**, a prominent landmark beside the Tudor parish church. This historic pub is set off well by the York stone flags on the pavement outside. Inside, an island bar serves a number of inter-connecting areas. Some older features remain, including tiling in the entrance lobby and etched windows. Already busy before 8pm, the pub has Boddington's Bitter. Unanimously, this was judged to be of average quality.

Next stop was the **Vine**, an ex-Intreprenuer outlet. Apparently the place is much improved on how it once was. It is now a pleasant, if unexceptional pub, offering the exceptionally unexceptional Webster's Bitter. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was considered average.

Our second Hydes' house, the **Old Star Inn**, was next. No children here, so Nancy will have to wait a few years to try this one. The prices are keen, and are well advertised too, with prominent price clips on the pumps. This is a comfortable, traditional pub with a separate vault. Mild, Light and Bitter were all available. All were well received, with Mild coming out top as good, Bitter above average to good, Light above average. One of my favourite pubs of the evening.

Slightly behind schedule we hastened to the 8.30 meeting point, the **Red Lion** (the fire damaged Royal Oak still being closed at this time) on Stockport Road. Selling Robinson's beers, but operated by Greenalls, this pub was busy with a mainly young clientele. Still, there was no loud music and most people were drinking from glasses, not bottles! Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were both a little above average. A clip for Old Stockport was spotted across the bar but it was turned round.

Next port of call was the Henry's Table outlet, the **Ashlea**, on Manchester Road. The small of food was still pervasive at 9.10pm. The layout is typical of the chain, with different levels and some areas reserved for drinkers. The one cask beer on sale, Boddington's Bitter, was rated a touch above average. "The quintessence of averageness", mused one imbiber. "Just beer", opined another, unimpressed.

Back on the High Street, we entered the **George & Dragon**. An imposing old coaching inn with a notable, grand arched entry to the stable yard (now a beer garden), this pub was uncomfortably humid inside. The mild evening (presaging the 1998 late-September mine "heatwave") allowed us to sit outside, where we sampled Greenalls Bitter, a bit above average, and Tetley's Bitter, where opinion was split between somewhat below average and a touch above. Possibly two different barrels were in use at the same time. We retraced our steps along Stockport Road to the **Queen's Arms**,

another Robinson's house. The pleasant jumble of different sized rooms gives this pub great character. Serving Best Bitter, Old Stockport and Hatters Mild from lined oversized glasses, this is a pub worth going out of your way to visit. Not least so for the beer, overall the best of the night. We rated all three good to very good, the Old Stockport being on particular fine form, in my judgement. Our final pub, also Robinson's, was the **Printer's Arms**. Modernised with a rear conservatory and outside drinking area, this pub offers Hatters Mild and Best Bitter in comfortable surroundings. The bitter was rated of good beer guide standard, the mild just a shade below. At this point the remaining company spent some time reminiscing, no doubt prompted by the reminder that this pub saw the founding of the local CAMRA branch "all those years ago". So ended an enjoyable evening. While the main party headed for the number 11 bus toward Stockport, I headed back for the other world of north Manchester, which I safely reached with thanks to R Bullock, UK North and especially Metrolink. It's a crawl well worth doing, so give it a try and see how far you disagree with our findings, which of course are only an impression of how we found the pubs and their beers on a particular night.

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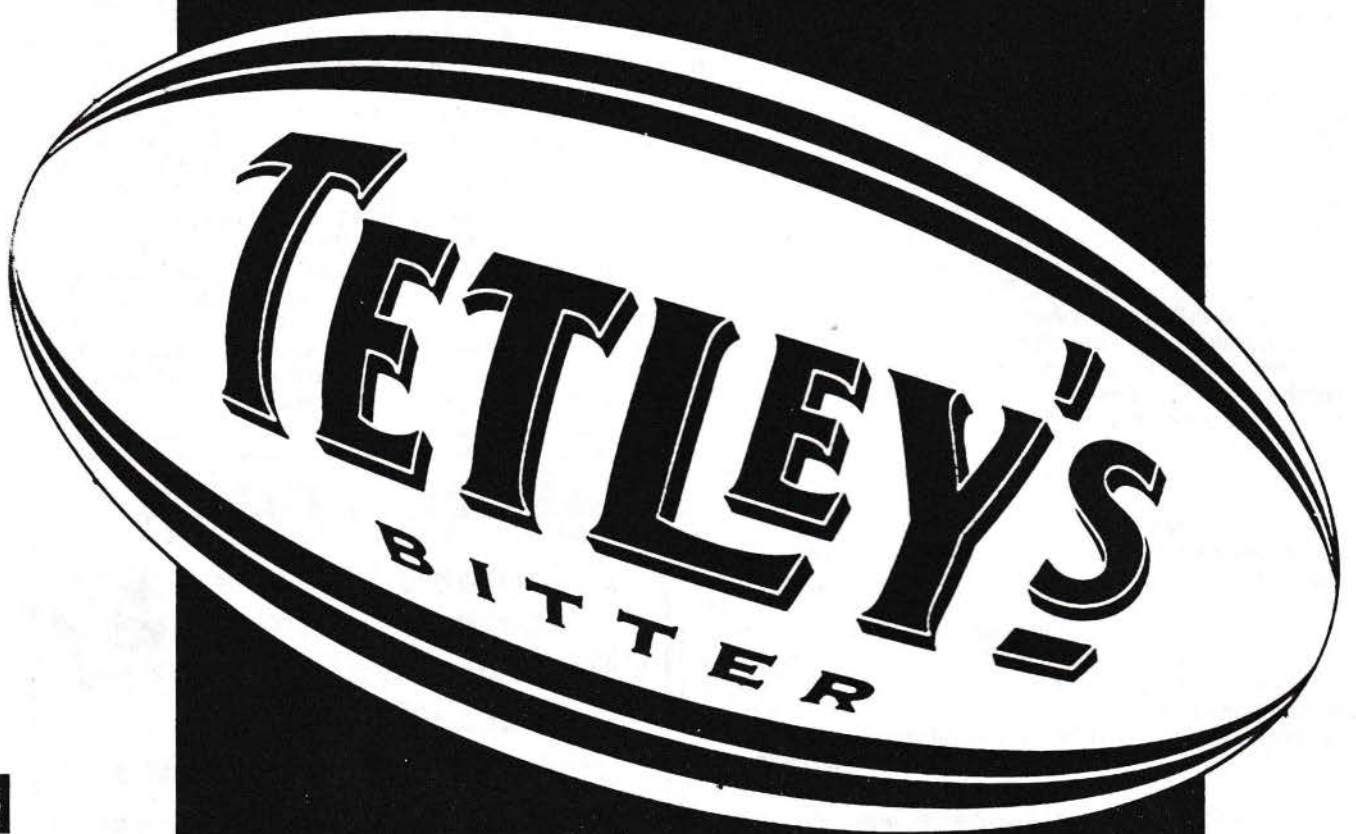
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The Hogshead & Haemorrhoid

In the Seventies, lovers of traditional pubs were often critical of refurbishments that replaced wooden settles and tiled floors with red dralon benches and thick carpeting. These features may have lacked character, but at least they had the benefit of being comfortable, unlike the current trend which seems intent on making pubs as unwelcoming as possible to anyone who wants to sit down. I was struck by this recently in what must once have been a magnificent high-ceilinged room, where the floor had been stripped back to the bare wood, and the wall benches ripped out. In their place were just a handful of hard chairs and some of those stupid high-level posing tables. It had no character and wasn't even a pleasant place to be.

Now, I'm still (just about) nearer school age than pensionable age, but I do like a certain standard of creature comfort in pubs, rather than drinking in an environment that's about as accommodating as a sawmill. With the average age of the population increasing, pub operators are being very short-sighted if they turn their outlets into young people's ghettos. One of the keys to success in the future will be to tempt over-35s into the pub, and they won't do that unless there's plenty of seating. Even Wetherspoon's don't seem to have realised this - many of their pubs still seem half-empty when all the seats are taken, and would benefit from much more extensive fixed benches. Their new Cheadle Hulme branch even has a rash of the dreaded posing tables!

Something for the Weekend, Sir?

You walk into a pub, go up to the bar, and give a clear order of "Two pints of bitter, please." The barperson pulls the pints, puts them on the bar in front of you, gives you a quizzical look and asks "Is there anything else?" You bite your lip and reply "No, thank you," but inwardly you're thinking "If I'd wanted anything else I'd have asked you for it, you fool!" This seems to happen to me more and more often nowadays. Presumably this is something that comes out of a customer care manual, but it's distinctly irritating, particularly when it's blindingly obvious that you don't want anything else. Sometimes it almost seems to come across as a reproach that you don't want to order food or a gin and tonic. Bar staff should think carefully about the circumstances before asking questions, rather than just repeating them parrot fashion.

Not The Beer Talking

The BBC are currently running a ten-part series called "Vintners' Tales", presented by wine expert Jancis Robinson, featuring people from the world of wine, and the stories they have to tell. It's encouraging to see alcoholic drinks of any kind being portrayed in a positive way on TV, but it's hard to imagine a similar series of "Brewers' Tales" being broadcast, despite all the unique and fascinating characters in the brewing trade, and the fact that we spend as a nation more than twice as much on beer as wine. It's clear that our media still suffer from the ludicrous cultural cringe which considers imported wine a fit subject for serious appreciation, while our native beer is only good for lager louts and unsophisticated fuddy-duddies.

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

NOVEMBER '93

The whole of the front page was devoted to the Government's climb-down on its promises to enforce the legislation that stated that a pint of beer should be just that - a pint of liquid with the head extra. This was the famous (or infamous) Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act which had been around for a long time. There was an interesting photograph of a full metered pint, including a head, in a 24oz. oversize glass, alongside an apparently similar glass, which was a "government" pint in a brim measure glass - a third glass contained the beer of which the customer was being defrauded. Now, in 1998, Section 43 has still not been implemented.

On the inside pages, the whole of "In the Editor's View" was devoted to the same subject, and there was yet another item where some surprising statistics were revealed - a recent survey had found that 96 per cent of pints in Greater Manchester were seven pence short on average, whilst Stockport drinkers were being swindled by six pence per pint. This added up to a cool £200 million a year that drinkers were donating to the pockets of the brewers - and this was on top of the extortionate tax levied on beer in this country.

The Tommy Ducks affair had revealed the lack of protection afforded to those buildings that were either outside a designated conservation area or did not have the protection of listed status. But even then an owner of the most prestigious listed building could simply let it rot away if it suited his purpose. This had seemed to be the fate of the wonderful Crown & Kettle on Great Ancoats Street, which had slowly deteriorated under the ownership of first, Grand Metropolitan Estates, and subsequently Express Newspapers. The pub had been described as "a rare example of a Victorian Gothic style public house with an impressive interior, including wood panelling from the R100 airship, and ornate ceiling pendants." It actually dates back to the early 18th Century when it was the 'Iron Dish and Cob o' Coal'. Express Newspapers applied to demolish it and build another pub in its place! This was to be part of a plan to redevelop the whole area, but planners and heritage groups, (including CAMRA) suggested that the existing building should be incorporated into the scheme - the reply was "OK - but not yet." A similar fate seemed to have befallen the Coach & Horses near Piccadilly Station. Both buildings are still standing.

Finally, it was reported that Stockport postman Gordon Speight had completed an unusual marathon by having a drink in all 106 Holt's pubs. It also suggested that he would be off on his travels again, as Holt's had bought three more pubs, and in addition the Old Monkey was due to open before Christmas.

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Robbies Quality Scheme

In a welcome initiative, Robinson's have initiated a bar and cellar competition throughout their entire estate. All of their pub are automatically entered and are split into various areas. The top three winners from each area then go forward to a grand final. Judging covers not only cellar conditions but also the appearance of the bar and the quality of the beer sold. This should be an annual event which should hopefully lead to a general increase in quality across the estate. The winners of the inaugural competition will be announced by the end of the year.



Classic Bottle Now On Draught

Suffolk brewers Greene King, who have a local presence via the old Magic Pub Co outlets, will, for the first time ever, be introducing a draught cask version of their award winning bottled beer Strong Suffolk Vintage Ale - thanks to demand by customers up and down the country

Strong Suffolk was voted top of its class at this year's Brewing Industry International Awards. The resultant publicity generated so much interest that Greene King has been under pressure, both from consumers (and CAMRA in particular) and licensees, to introduce a cask version. Bowing to that pressure, the brewers have announced that Strong Suffolk Winter Ale will be available on draught as a seasonal ale from mid-November to the end of January.

The beer is the only one in this country whose main constituent, 5X, is matured in 100-barrel oak vats for two years before being blended with younger, fresher ale. "The result of this almost

unique method of maturation and blending is a beer that is dark, strong - six per cent ABV - fruity, oaky and very, very special", head brewer Alistair Heeley told Opening Times. "But because we can only brew limited quantities, for either cask or bottles, customers who want to try Strong Suffolk might be advised to do so sooner rather than later!"

The brewers have only two of the enormous oak vats needed for maturing the constituent 5X. Since the process of maturation takes at least two years, there is a limit to the quantity of Strong Suffolk that can be brewed. However, Greene King hopes to invest in the crafting of a third Strong Suffolk vat to enable them to keep pace with demand.

New Beers This Month

A whole rash of new and seasonal beers hit the market this month. Two were officially launched at the end of October. Hydes' used the 'Pub Bar EST' 1863 Business Show' at G-Mex to introduce their latest seasonal, Chill Blane, a dark strong ale at 5 per cent ABV. It is particularly easy drinking for its strength in the hoppy Hydes' house style with some fruitiness and roast flavours in the aftertaste.



Also out now is the latest guest ale from the Footage & Firkin. Witches Brew is a 4.8 per cent, smoky, spicy beer brewed using root liquorice. Opening Times attended a tasting session on 29 October and was very impressed. Unexpectedly, it's a pale beer with a very complex aftertaste with, indeed, hints of liquorice and spices and certainly falls into the 'dangerously drinkable' class.

DBA Premium Bitter

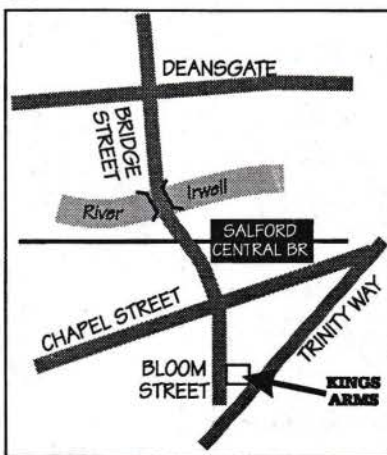
Joseph Holt have found a name for their forthcoming Premium Beer, which was test marketed in a number of Holts establishments three months ago. It is to be called DBA (for Derby Brewery) Premium bitter, and has a strength of 5%. It is due to make its appearance in the middle of November in about 50% of Holts' tied estate.



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BEER & CIDER
DISHES
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SNACK MEALS,
SANDWICHES**

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Bamberg Rauch
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(as recommended by
the Beer Monster!)
& **Augustiner** Weissbier

OPENING TIMES

LETTERS



From Les Jackson (via e-mail)

Further to your article on *The Kings Hall* (October 1998). I can confirm that Wetherspoons have indeed had a change of policy about using oversize glasses. The manager informed me that Wetherspoons expected to pour 5% extra beer into their oversize glasses on average. Recent tests had indicated that this figure was averaging 8% and Wetherspoons concluded that this was not acceptable hence the return to brim measure glasses. The company are more than happy to top up short measures on request. One small thing that irritates me with Wetherspoons is that when guest beers run out they will not turn the pump clips round thus advertising a guest ale that you may have liked to sample but can't. A small irritation I admit but one which is easily remedied.

From Paul Roberts (via e-mail)

I cannot understand the criticism levied by the Beer Monster at my letter which appeared in "Whats Doing" concerning the rip-off tactics of North Manchester Freehouses. I had always thought of BM as a kindred spirit, knowing he appreciated the lesser-known breweries and pubs in Bavaria and therefore appreciated quality and value (not to mention cleanliness and comfort). I have always found the quality in beer, comfort and hygiene vastly superior in London pubs to those in Manchester. Until a few years ago, prices in London were far higher than in Manchester - this was justified by the high costs of labour, land, premises, etc in the Capital and I therefore did not object to paying up to 50% more for a decent pint (and a full pint without that stupid layer of head that Northern pubs insist on dispensing) in decent surroundings. However in recent years the prices in Manchester Free houses have rocketed and those in London have risen in line with inflation. That has led to the situation which I highlighted in my letter to "Whats Doing". I object totally to a scruffy smoky GBG listed freehouse in a run down part of Manchester selling a 3.5% ABV beer at the pub's standard price of £1.80 a pint. This pub, much praised by CAMRA, is so dedicated to the real ale cause that it charges more for all its guest cask beers than it does for lager! The quality of the beer is that indifferent that even Jilly Goulden would be unable to identify the beer in a blind tasting. Another GBG listed freehouse a few yards away has somehow managed to escape the attention of the Environmental Health and remain open, despite openly pouring slops back - a practice CAMRA seems remarkably loathe to condemn.

I joined CAMRA within a few weeks of its foundation when it was based in Salford. In those days CAMRA did a useful job fighting for cask conditioned beer and against all odds beat off the tide of keg beers.

However nowadays CAMRA seems to consist mainly of "beer spotters" interested only in ticking off stupidly named one off

beers rather than encouraging the brewers to brew a couple of consistent good products rather than introduce specials every month. It would be better to have a couple of hundred excellent beers (available only in the region where they are brewed) in Britain rather than a few thousand at best mediocre products available across the UK. In the good old days when Fullers and Young's were only available in the South East, Timmy Taylor's and Theakstons only available in Yorkshire, Adnam's available only in East Anglia, etc., the quality of all these beers was far higher. If only we could revert away from expensive multi-beer Freehouses serving poor quality beers, back to the tied house with a choice of perfectly kept bitter, best bitter and mild, the drinking scene would be much better.

From Peter Edwardson, Stockport:

The Beer Monster paints an appealing picture of micro-brewers steadily eroding the market share of the industry giants, and I'm sure we'd all like to see Bass and Scottish Courage get a pasting. But he knows as well as I do that, in the real world. That just isn't going to happen. The micros account for maybe 2% of the overall beer market, and 10% of that for real ale. They would be doing remarkably well to double that, but it would still leave them with only a marginal position. In twenty-five years, no micro has remotely approached "doing a Wetherspoons", who have come from nowhere to have a market value greater than any regional brewer, and I suspect that few of them would really want to.

The big brewers would not stand idly by if the micros, or indeed the smaller regionals, started making serious inroads into their trade. They would fight back by introducing new products designed to win back some of their lost customers. This is what the major brewers are starting to do in America, and what our own Big Six did in the early 80s by producing badge-brewed beers with the identities of defunct breweries. The fact that these brands are now being discontinued, and the big pub operators are taking real ale out of pubs, suggests that they don't perceive much of a threat at the moment. The challenge for us in CAMRA today is how to turn that trend around.

New Brewery This Month

More news on the new Bollin Brewing Company of Macclesfield. The first thing to report is that it has undergone a name change and is now known as Storm Brewing. The first test brew was racked into casks on Saturday 24 October and a second trial brew was imminent as we went to press. This first beer is to be named Ale Force and is described as a golden brown, moderately hoppy beer at 4.2 per cent ABV. With a little luck it may make its initial appearance at the Stalybridge Station Beer Festival later this month. Opening Times hopes to visit the brewery this month - look for our full report in the next issue.

Stop Press: Castle Eden Brewery has been saved. A management buyout announced at the end of last month means that brewing will continue at the characterful north-eastern brewery. More details next month.

THE RAILWAY, PORTWOOD

Six Beers available from the Porter Brewing Co. Ltd.

Including the Railway's Exclusive Beer:-

Railway Sleeper



THE RAILWAY, 1 AVENUE STREET (Off Gt PORTWOOD STREET), STOCKPORT (0161) 429 6062

'Country Born And Brewed'? Not Likely!

Keep Ruddles In Rutland

CAMRA, The campaign for Real Ale, today challenged Morland's to come clean over Ruddles. The Oxfordshire brewer is set to close Ruddles Brewery in Langham in the next few weeks, shifting production of Rutland's finest to Abingdon.

"We regard Morland's efforts to re-launch the Ruddles brands as an insult to beer drinkers and a prime example of misleading the public," said Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of campaigns, in response to the launch of a new advertising campaign for Ruddles. The new ads claim that the beers are "country born and brewed," but the intention is to brew them in the heart of Abingdon.

Mike Benner added, "I suspect that market research about the Ruddles brands has demonstrated that drinkers value their rural Rutland heritage. Morland is cashing in on this, but is deceiving drinkers."

Taste Mismatch and Broken Promises

Morland has announced that it has extended the deadline for the closure of the Langham site, as it has not completed matching trials to brew Ruddles in Abingdon. Mike Benner said, "We doubt that they will ever match the beers perfectly; the most crucial ingredient, water, is different. Ruddles brewed away from its Rutland homeland will never be the same." In addition Ruddles County has been spotted on sale in supermarkets with a reduced alcohol by volume content. 'Original' County has an ABV of 4.9%, the new version is 4.7%. This must cast doubts on Assurances given to CAMRA by Morland's management that the beer will not change. How can they maintain that pledge if the alcohol content has been lowered? Clearly, the beer will not taste the same.

CAMRA's battle to persuade Morland to keep the Ruddles brewery open continues.

Trafford Centre

After all the hype, Trafford's great shopping mall in Dimplington is now open for business. It's a large and impressive piece of architecture, it's very disabled-friendly, and has its own bus station served by buses from all around Greater Manchester. Existing town and city centres are obviously worried about the impact on their trade. However, in Manchester, Stockport or Macclesfield, you can always escape from the rigours of shopping by nipping into a local pub for a rest and a pint. What, then, does the Trafford Centre offer weary customers? A 20-screen cinema, a bowling alley, restaurants, fast-food outlets...and bars. Time to investigate.

The bus journey from Stockport took one hour, I entered through Debenhams' and walked the full length to the 'Village' area. Spotting a delicatessen/wine bar called Belinskis, selling wine and beer, I called in...ouch!

Standard size bottles of Becks, Bud and Clausterhaler £2, wine £4 a glass (only £3 a glass for house wine). Welcome to Dimplington! All the bars and restaurants are in the 'Orient' section with the famous chameleon ceiling. Walking round you see Boddingtons and John Smiths nitro-keg alongside the usual lagers. There is only one oasis for the real ale drinker.

'Argo' café/restaurant on the first floor of the 'Orient' sells Hoegaarden wheat beer, served traditionally cloudy, with an optional slice of lemon, at £2.80 a pint...double ouch!

These were the findings on my first visit. Things may change, possibly even improve but, while local traders may be worried, local licensees shouldn't lose any sleep. MW.

Supermarket Sweep for Armchair drinkers

CAMRA Launches New Guide To "Real Ale in a Bottle"

CAMRA has published the first edition of the Good Bottled Beer Guide, a new sister publication to the best-selling Good Beer guide which focuses on draught real ales. The huge increase in the number of bottled beers now available in supermarkets and off-licenses has left drinkers somewhat bewildered. This new Guide should be by the side of any armchair drinker - novice or hardened enthusiast.

"Bottle-conditioned beers are real ales in a bottle", explained author Jeff Evans, eight times editor of the Good Beer Guide. "They contain yeast and continue to ferment and mature in the bottle just as real ales ferment and mature in the cask at the pub. The great thing about them is that they allow you to drink real ale in the comfort of your own home."

The Good Bottled Beer Guide profiles all bottle-conditioned beers currently available in the UK, and contains features on how bottle-conditioned beers are brewed, the history of bottled beers, how to buy, keep and serve bottle-conditioned beers and how to spot foreign real ales.

When CAMRA was founded in 1971 there were only five regularly produced bottle-conditioned beers on sale, now there are well over 150, most of them produced by very popular regional breweries and microbreweries.

Publicans Take to the Bottle

Under recent changes to the guest beer law, tenants on national brewers' pubs can now sell a bottle-conditioned beer of their own choosing, in addition to a draught guest beer and the pub's regular ales. As the bottles usually carry a long shelf life, there's not much risk of being left with surplus stock or the beer going bad before selling out. It's a win-win opportunity for Britain's publicans.

Jeff Evans concludes "Just think, how a pub selling bland national brews would be enlivened by stocking champion beers like Fullers 1845, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Marston's Oyster Stout, or a world classic beer like Thomas Hardy's Ale or Gale's Prize Old Ale." The Good Bottled Beer Guide by Jeff Evans (hardback) is published by CAMRA Books, priced £9.99. Copies are available from bookshops or direct from CAMRA (post-free) on 01727 867201.

New At Ash

The Ash on Manchester Road, Heaton Norris has new owners and new licensees. Beckvale Ltd, who are based in Bradford, have bought the pub together with a number of others locally, including the Gardeners Arms, Edgeley; Jolly Sailor and Hare & Hounds, Marple, and the Greyhound in Handforth.

Albert and Beverley Lowe have taken over as licensees, this being their first time in the licensed trade. You have to admire their fortitude, as the Ash has been in decline for the last few years with deteriorating beer quality, décor in desperate need of refurbishment, and an apparent lack of cleaners driving customers away. On a recent visit it was good to see the pub looking clean and tidy again. It is obvious though that Beckvale need to put some serious investment into the pub if it is to be turned round, and with currently only Boddingtons Bitter on handpump, the beer range needs addressing, too.

It is good, however, to report some positive developments, though. Food will be restored after Christmas and the cellar, at least, will be getting some investment. Albert and Beverley have certainly taken quite a job on, but the pub undoubtedly has potential and we wish them well in their endeavours to realise it. JF.



Nationally, last month was fairly busy on the festival scene. Things will quiet down now until the show gets on the road in January with the National Winter Ales Festival (21-23). This has moved down from Glasgow and joined forces with the proposed Manchester Festival to make for a truly enticing extravaganza. Closer in date are Winter Ales festivals at Stalybridge Buffet from 19-22 November, and a week later the 'Real Lancashire' Festival at the Beer House.

October saw the Bolton Beer Festival at the Howcroft, a two week festival at the Smithfield Hotel on Swan Street, and a mini Belgian and German beer bash at Sand Bar. In a foreshortened column I can only give them a brief overview. The marquee based Bolton Beer Festival, at the Howcroft Inn is becoming something of an annual pilgrimage. On the Saturday afternoon, the appalling weather kept the numbers down but there was a colossal range of beer - about 200 seemed to have turned up from a projected 210 or so, and even after the festival had been open three evenings, condition was acceptable to excellent in the ones I tried. Considering also that this is primarily a charity do, prices were quite fair (except for the food which almost inevitably seems to be a rip-off). The promised Paulaner did indeed show up at the Sand Bar, along with the various Belgian Wit beers. Very good they were too, though personally I think much of this bar's fine product range is totally wasted on Students. The Smithfield's two week bash was also well worth visiting. As well as rotating through handpumps, beers from the cellar were available in jugs. Tried quite a few and none disappointed.

I cannot let this issue go by without passing comment on our letters column. I certainly seem to be rattling a few cages. It means I must be doing my job!

**The Beer Monster's British Beer of the Month:
Glentworth Courts 183 (3.9%) abv**

Featured as a special brew for the Bolton Festival, I suspect more of this is out there under different names! Look for a light tawny and very dry and hoppy Glentworth brew of 3.9%. (Trying any of her (yes) other beers is unlikely to disappoint).

Foreign Beer of the Month:

Hell (Banska Stiavnica) Slovakian Beer 4.9% abv

Light dry and full-flavoured, it claims to be filtered through Gold (this being the gold ore in the mountains above the aquifer from which its water (or liquor) comes). 'Hell' or light is the traditional gold miners' greeting apparently. The brewery was founded in 1473 by those sensible chaps the Knights Templar. You can (therefor appropriately) find this in the Temple of Convenience, the converted gents loo off to the West side of Oxford Road, more or less opposite the Odeon. (Although the bar does not sell any real ale it is well worth a visit for the er.. ambience, as well as the fairly interesting bottled selection).



PUB OF THE SEASON

The Winter 1998 Pub of the Season award by Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch has been won by the Waters Green Tavern. This is the second pub to get the recently inaugurated award, the first winner being the Swettenham Arms, Swettenham, which received the award for Autumn last August.

The Waters Green is noted for offering the widest choice of real ales in Macclesfield and all in top condition. There are usually four ever-changing guest beers, all from independent, and frequently micro-brewers together with regular beer Mansfield Brewery's Riding Bitter. The pub also recently hosted a successful Scottish Beer Festival featuring 30 new beers or beers rarely seen this far south. Brian himself is a strong supporter of CAMRA and when not serving in the pub can often be seen supporting local festivals and researching the beers available. The pubs itself is centrally located, just opposite Macclesfield railway station and well placed for a tour of the town. It is equally well placed for those wishing to attend the presentation night on Thursday 19 November when Brian will receive this much-deserved award at about 8.00pm. SF.



Irene and Staff welcome you to
The Greyhound



**Bowden Street, Edgeley
Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
and ever changing Guest Beers**

**Museum E,
Phoenix Thirsty Moon,
Tisbury Real Nut Ale,
Beartown Bear Ale,
Kitchen Gobbling Gooseberry**

★ OPEN ALL DAY ★

SKY SPORTS TV



**CAMRA Pub of the Month
March 1997**



11

ARMOURY INN SHAW HEATH



**BEST BITTER, HATTERS MILD,
OLD TOM**

Snacks Available

**OPEN ALL PERMITTED
HOURS EVERY DAY**

(including Saturdays & Sundays)



Robinsons Traditional Ales

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation From

£17.50 - (Evening Meals if required)

Free Meeting Room Available

For 20 - 40 people



Whilst covering the Good Beer Guide Silver Selection Passport Trail, this involved a trip to the pleasant village of Tarpорley. Situated on the A51 about midway between Nantwich and Chester, the village dates back to the 13th Century, although the pubs arrived a little later. It's a picturesque little place with a plethora of quaint shops and pubs centred along the High Street.

The first port of call, in order to visit the pub which has featured in every edition of the Good Beer Guide, was Robinson's splendid **Rising Sun**, a brick-built building covered with hanging baskets and climbing plants. Inside it is a cosy retreat, with split-level rooms and low beams. On entering note the coloured, stencilled glass panel and an old black-leaded kitchen range to the left. Step down into what appears to be the main area for diners and there is excellent food to be had from the main menu, with additional daily

specials chalked up on a blackboard. Around the other side of the L-shaped bar is a back room mainly for drinking and with a television in one corner, fruit machine in the other. Truly a country village pub. The beers, handpulled, are Best Bitter and Hatters Mild.

Next it was on to the **Swan Hotel**, a large Edwardian building and decidedly an upmarket hostelry with the accent on comfort and hospitality. Like the Rising Sun, there was an impressive display of window boxes. It is privately owned offering accommodation and fine food; bangers and mash may well set you back seven quid! There are separate drinking areas with front and rear bar. We are told it is the home of the Tarpорley Hunt, which has the distinction of being the oldest in Britain. There are several guest ales on handpump, including Taylor's Landlord.

Moving on a short distance, there are another two pubs in close proximity to each other. One is the **Foresters**, which has wood panelling and leaded windows but a generally modernised interior. There is a separate lounge, with an area set aside for diners, and a vault, although both rooms have televisions. Leather button-back seating and beaten copper-topped tables add to the cosy and friendly atmosphere. The handpulled ales are Greenalls Mild, Bitter and a guest beer.

Finally, there is the **Crown**. This is a former tenement dwelling, dating from the 19th Century, which has been extensively renovated, resulting in a white building with a mock-rustic interior. The lounge has twee sayings on the beams and bric-a-brac abounds. The central brick bar serves all the rooms including a games area with piped music. There is also a conservatory and outside drinking area. There is food available both lunchtimes and evenings from the 'Keepers Choice' menu and accommodation is also available. Handpumped real ales are Boddingtons Bitter and Tetley Bitter.

Getting there: Allow a couple of hours to complete the journey. North West Trains from Manchester usually operate via Stockport to Crewe. Return fare £7.20 with trains running about every half-hour. From Crewe (railway station or town centre) catch the Arriva Midlands North bus service C84, return fare £3.30 with buses at 30 minutes past every hour. There is a bus stop almost outside the Rising Sun. To visit the other pubs, walk back towards Crewe, each one is on the High Street on the same side of the road. On the opposite side catch the bus back (35 minutes past the hour). Crewe is also a good place to stop off for a while. There are plenty of good pubs including the Albion, Mill Street; British Lion, Nantwich Road; and the Crown, Earle Street.

THE CASTLE

OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
NOW SERVING THE **COMPLETE**
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!

Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
Hatters Mild, Dark Mild,
Frederics, Old Tom and Hartleys

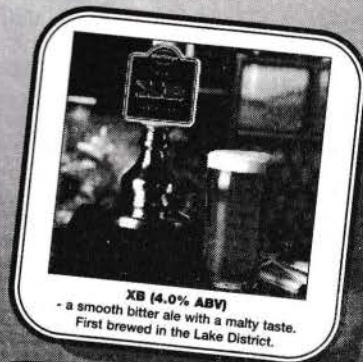
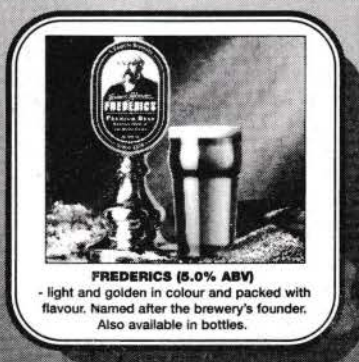
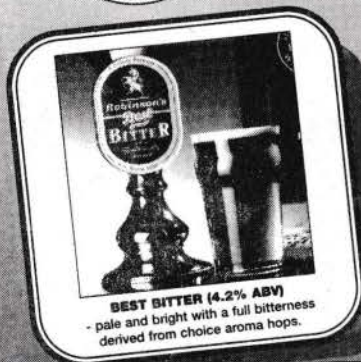
A WARM WELCOME
AND FINE BEER IN
A CLASSIC PUB



12



THE Robinson's COLLECTION



C H O I C E B E E R S



This month we welcome a new regular feature in Opening Times. While beer and cider are primarily for drinking, they have also had a role in the kitchen as a cooking ingredient for many years. Each month trained chef Ken Birch will be bringing you a different recipe using beer or cider to add that extra special touch. Starting this month with an old favourite...

Real Ale Pie

The basic recipe can be altered to suit individual needs. If small individual pies are your choice, then use short crust pastry. Because of the extra pastry, the filling should be enough for 8-10 portions. If however a larger, single pie is to be cooked, then for ease use puff pastry. Depending on the cook's generosity, 6-8 portions can be expected. The choice of ales is personal, based on the experience I have gained through cooking this dish over a two-year period, at least once a week. The two ale method gives best results, however it is more time consuming, and using only Old Peculier the result is still highly rich and satisfying.

Ingredients

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3lb braising steak | 6 medium or 4 large bayleaves |
| 3 lambs' kidneys or 1 pig's kidney (optional) | 2 teaspoons ground black pepper |
| 2 medium onions, finely chopped | 2 cloves garlic |
| 2 oz flour | 1 dessert spoon salt |
| 1½ pints Theakston Old Peculier or 1 pint Taylor's Landlord and ½ pint Old Peculier | 6-10 dashes Worcestershire Sauce (optional) |
| 3 tablespoons mild paprika | 1 cup gravy made with one dessertspoon granules or powder (Oxo original works well) |
| 6 cloves | Short crust or puff pastry (home-made or frozen) |
| 2 teaspoons tomato puree | |

Method

1. Dice and trim the braising steak into 1-inch cubes. If using kidney, cut into ¼ inch pieces (and be sure to remove the white core).
2. Peel and slice the garlic; spread the salt on a chopping board and chop the garlic in the salt; finally, crush the chopped garlic into the salt using the base of a knife.
3. If using the two-beer method, transfer rapidly between two vessels to degas it. Then place the meat in the beer and leave for 10 minutes (if you are making your own pastry, this could be a good time to do so).
4. Take a large pan (preferably a flame-proof casserole) and gently heat enough oil to cover the bottom to a depth of 1/8 inch; add the onions and fry gently until golden.
5. Drain the meat from the ale (keeping the beer for later) then, increasing the heat, add the meat to the pan and fry, stirring all the time, until the meat is sealed. About 2-3 minutes.
6. Stir in the paprika, black pepper, cloves and bay leaf.
7. Add the flour, stirring continuously, until the meat is covered and keep frying until the flour is brown.
8. Mix in the tomato puree, garlic and Worcestershire sauce.
9. Add the made up gravy and stir well in.
10. Then gradually add one pint of ale until a sauce the consistency of single cream is achieved. Dilute with water if it is too thick.
11. Simmer until just bubbling, stirring all the time.
12. If using a flame-proof casserole this can then be placed straight in the oven, otherwise transfer the mixture to a pre-heated oven dish. Cook at gas mark 5, 175F, for 2½ hours, stirring every 45 minutes, adding a little of the remaining ½ pint of ale each time.
13. Roll out the pastry. If making individual pies, line the pie dishes and bake blind for 10-12 minutes at gas 7, 425F. Then leave to cool for 20 minutes. Then fill with meat and sauce, cover with pastry cap, brush with egg wash (that's one egg whisked with a little milk) and return to oven for a further 15 minutes or until golden.
14. If making a larger pie, add the filling to the pie dish, cover with pastry top and bake at gas 7, 425F for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, brush with egg wash and return to the oven for a further 7-10 minutes, or until golden.

Served with boiled potatoes and green beans. A good best bitter makes an ideal accompaniment to this. Taylor's Landlord, Adnams Broadside or something similar can be recommended.

Ken Birch is the chef at the King's Arms, Bloom Street Salford. Meals are available there 12-2.30 Monday to Saturday and 5.30-7pm Thursday and Friday.

THE SPORTSMAN

57 MOTTRAM ROAD, HYDE
Geoff and Carmel Welcome You To



A GENUINE FREE HOUSE WITH EVER CHANGING REAL ALES AND TRADITIONAL CIDER

Regular Beers include Hartington Bitter, Plassey Bitter, Taylors Landlord and Magic Mushroom Mild and ever-changing guest beers



Easy Public
Transport Connections
Food Now Available
Tel: (0161) 368 5000

25p OFF all
Draught Beers
Sunday
12 - 4pm

13

ATTENTION ALL FREE HOUSES!

Following the huge success of award winning Plassey Bitter and Cwru Tudno at The Sportsman, Hyde, Geoff is now able to offer all Plassey products at realistic prices with free delivery to selected other Publicans (who would be willing to take it regularly) in the Stockport, Tameside. High Peak and Greater Manchester areas only.

Please ring Geoff on:-
0161 368 5000, fax 0161 366 1365.



"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.

14

★ **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)

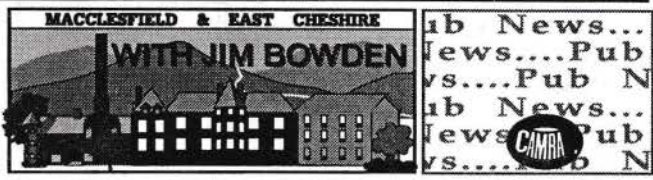
The Environmental Health Officer (for sour beer or unhygienic practices)

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,
Tameside - 0161 912 4585, Cheshire (for Macclesfield
Borough) - 01260 285500, Derbyshire (for Glossop,
Buxton etc.) - 01629 585858, Trafford - 0161 912 4585**



After 27 years in the trade Margaret & Roland Smith have called time at the Castle, Macclesfield. Before serving 12 years at the Castle they also ran three other pubs - The Lord Byron on Chapel Street, The Railway View on Byrons Lane and the Three Pigeons on Little Street.

The Beatles used to call at the Castle for a drink before playing at the El Rio dance hall round the corner. The new landlord is Nick Wood who has come from the Travellers Rest and we wish him well.

The landlady of the Harrington Arms, Gawsworth, Margery Bayley who has been at the pub since the war died on Monday the 12th October. This pub, owned by Robinsons, is a farm pub and a full description can be found in the new Cheshire Good Beer Guide. **The Chester Road Tavern, Macclesfield, a Greenalls pub also has Stones Bitter and Marstons Pedigree as permanent guests.** The Kings Head, Chestergate, Macclesfield, also a Greenalls pub is being extended and details as to what form the pub will take are not yet known.

The Bulls Head at Broken Cross, Macclesfield, seems to have dispensed with guest beers and only serves Tetleys bitter by handpump. The guest beers have been replaced by Nitro Kegs.



In Audenshaw the Pack Horse no longer has Frederics and the Queens (Greenalls) and Mechanics (Thwaites) are both all keg. Down the road at Guide Bridge, the Bridge now has John Smiths alongside the Boddingtons.

In Hyde, the Albion is now all keg as is the Jolly Crofter. The Queens has dropped Bass and has just Boddingtons and Chesters Mild. The White Lion (Robinson's and in the Good Beer Guide) is now offering the Best Bitter at cellar temperature or chilled (not the new smooth). Apparently sales are about 50:50.

A bit of old brewery news - the last vestige of Henry Shaw's Brewery has disappeared with the demolition of the office buildings on Park Road, Dukinfield.

Finally, I would like to comment on a piece of news in this column last month. A number of branch members from Marple noted the move of the current tenants of the Horsfield Arms to the Railway, at Rose Hill. The move was somewhat disparagingly described as "a challenge". Anyone who knows the Railway will know it has been a well run and well patronised pub over the years. The current landlord is leaving after many years behind the bar (a long-term illness being one of the contributing reasons).

Whilst I'm sure last month's contribution was not intended to offend perhaps good luck should have been wished to both old and new tenants. Something local branch members do.

Geoff Williamson adds: the Beehive, Albion Road, New Mills, which has been up for sale for some time, recently changed hands. At the time of writing the pub is closed for refurbishment and redecoration. The new owner is a local businessman who has recently carried out a splendid refurbishment of the business premises located on the adjacent corner, so we have high hopes of a quality and sympathetic improvement. A manager will be installed to run the Beehive on reopening but no information is yet available on the likely beers on offer. Our best wishes go the Chris and John, the previous owners/licensees who will hopefully be enjoying a well-deserved retirement on a canal boat somewhere.

Tameside Travels (3)

Mark McConachie continues his journey round the pubs of Tameside and this month hits Ashton. On the bright side there is one conversion to cask, but thirteen losses to keg/smooth and two closures...

I promised you Ashton this month, and here it is... I begin at the east end of town where the Ring o'Bells (Gibbs Mew) has gone keg, whilst the nearby Venue on Bentinck St (also Gibbs) is closed and boarded. Down on to Stamford St and the King William IV (Bass/free) has handpulls showing Bass but when asked, I was told the beer had not been sold for months. The same is true across the street at the Red Lion (Greenalls) where cask Boddies and S&N beers have been lost. Continuing along, Hudsons is boarded up, the Spread Eagle has kicked out the cask in favour of smooth; Pinkies Café Bar (part of Blues club) has added London Pride (and at £1 a pint during part of the day) to its Boddies and Worthy range, and the Burlington has gone from a keg Vaux pub to being a ScotCo pub selling Holts bitter and keg Lees bitter. The Star Inn (BodPubCo) has ousted Boddies to go the smooth route and across the street, K's Bar is keg, however the Foresters Call (Bass) has a bargain pound-a-pint deal on cask Thwaites bitter. Robinson's Caledonia is receiving a very thorough internal rebuilding, the plans on display show that three drinking rooms will be available with the bar to be on the right side; the beer range is still Hatters, Best and, the rare, Frederics. Hatters and Best are available through full-measure meters at the excellent Prince of Orange next to the bus station - I could not think of a more pleasant way to while away twenty minutes or so while waiting for a bus.

Further west, John Smith's Feathers has gone over to smooth, whilst opposite, Dr Browns (Greenalls?) is selling Boddies. If you want café bars, well Ashton has lots of them and has added a few more to that number with Revolution, Gallery Bar and Bar One - all stylish and all keg. Come on you café bar owners, be truly stylish and stock a tasty cask beer for your discerning clientele. Out of town in Cockbrook, the Lamb is selling cask and smooth J Smiths, the Wellington (Bass) is keg and opposite, at Major Wilds, the range is Worthy and Boddies bitters. Meanwhile at the Sycamore (Robinson's), one of the rooms has been given over to the Sycamore Indian Restaurant - it looks excellent and the food is keenly priced, too; I hope it does well.

Out to the Penny Meadow area, where the Ladysmith (Wilson's) has dropped the Wilsons and Green Label in favour of Theakston BB; the Bowling Green (Bass) has succumbed to keg losing Worthy in the process, and the Lord Napier (Vaux) is down to just Vaux bitter (with Waggle Dance in winter) from a range that included Samson and Darley Mild. At the adjacent Albion (Robinson's), a certain amount of 'opening-out' seems to have taken place which I feel takes something away from the feel of the place.

In nearby Hurst, very little change seems to have taken place. I was very taken with Marstons Napoleon, an excellently run pub doing Banks's Mild and Marstons Bitter. Both John Smiths and Holt's continue to survive alongside smooth at the Hillgate (Wilson's). The nearby Canterbury has gone over to smooth John Smiths losing the cask version. Fittingly, half way up Whiteacre Rd is the Halfway House, which appears to have just finished a refurb. This has resulted in an extra room being added to the right of the lounge with a central bar dividing that and the vault. The Boddies has gone smooth, but two cask beers are offered now - John Smiths and Pedigree, most commendable. Around Hurst Cross, Gibbs Mew's Church is a cask convert with not just one cask beer, but two - Toby and Worthy; those same two beers are casualties at the Turnpike (Bass) to leave it keg along with fellow Bass house, the Peaks where Worthy has been lost; Marston's Lord Nelson has dropped Banks's Mild to leave just Marstons Bitter. Further north towards Alt, the Red House retains its John Smiths, but Peg's Tavern (Bass) has dropped Worthy and Stones to go keg and at Robinson's Broadoak Hotel in Smallshaw, Hartleys XB has now gone to leave Hatters and Best (a glimpse of Coronation Street actor, Bill Tarmy can also be had at times).

Lastly, on Mossley Road, the Cottage (Greenalls) has dropped Tetleys to leave just Greenalls bitter; Heroes of Waterloo is down to just John Smiths (losing the Courage Directors); Marston's Miners Arms retains Banks and Marstons bitter; the Odd Whim Inn (Wilson's) has rid itself of Websters and Boddies and replaced them with cask Tetley bitter; and Wilson's New Inn has gone keg meaning the loss of Websters and Holt's.

There has been so much news here, that Stalybridge will be featured next month.

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New England Brewing

Before I get into a discussion of New England breweries, I'd like to thank John Clarke, Stuart Ballantyne, and the rest of the group I met at the Royal Oak in Didsbury for their hospitality during my recent trip to England. This was one of my more memorable trips as I had the opportunity to take a tour through both the main and back roads of Yorkshire while having the pleasure of visiting a handful of breweries including the Black Sheep Brewery in Masham and the Cropton Brewery in Cropton. I look forward to meeting with all of you again.

I'm sure you're all surprised at the high number of breweries in Maine which totalled 28 at the time of my last article. That number has now risen to 29 with the addition of the Rocky Bay Brewing Company in Rockland. To understand the explosion of breweries in Maine, you have to realize that we had "only 18" in the state three short years ago.

Looking at things in a larger scale, New England has seen its fair share of growth as well. In the Summer of 1995 there were 54 breweries in the six state region. Presently, I count 134 which is an increase of 2 1/2 times over the previous total. They go from the very small to large with Samuel Adams taking the prize for the biggest. Samuel Adams, which some of you may be familiar with, is no longer considered a "microbrewery" by some of us beer aficionados. They have grown from a small regional brewery in the mid 80's to a national brewery that have their brews sold in almost every state in the United States.

At the other end of the spectrum is Tunbridge Brewing of Tunbridge, Vermont which produce only bottle conditioned products. I've heard that they do most of their brewing and bottling in their kitchen.

Not all breweries bottle their product; in fact each have their own targets and needs. Some are strict breweries which only keg or both keg and bottle. Others are brewpubs which sell their products in a pub like atmosphere while some promote themselves as an upscale restaurant which happen to brew and serve their product on the premises. As I mentioned before, Sea Dog has 3 individual brewpubs while at the same time sells their kegs and bottles to the general public. Of course a lot of it has to do with the amount of money one has to spend.

The problems facing Maine breweries are the same in all New England states. At first, each brewery figured they could take the country by storm by selling their beers in as many states as possible. This might have been a safe idea a few years back, but with all the new breweries popping up and trying to fill the shelves with their products, there's just not enough space to go around. In response to the recent growth of breweries and the shrinking amount of shelf space, many breweries are somewhat "circling the wagons" and are now concentrating on sales in their own region.

For example, my own Sea Dog Brewery had four sales reps and a few brokers that originally covered 17 states in 1996. With the sales force now down to one, it's smarter to concentrate on a smaller area such as Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. If I put all my efforts into a smaller area, we might be able to more than make up for the loss of sales in the other states.

New Hampshire, with a smaller number of breweries (17) than Maine has seen the number of breweries more than triple since the Summer of '96.

In addition to fighting with a few of my Maine competitors for shelf space in the state, I find myself battling a handful of New Hampshire breweries as well. In essence, I'm continually playing an away match and I have to work a little harder. With it's handful of brewpubs as well as full scale breweries, New Hampshire has come a long way in short amount of time. In fact, a national brewer recently purchased a controlling interest in a West coast brewery and decided to build a brewery in New Hampshire. You all know the stories of Scottish & Newcastle and others buying up the smaller breweries in the U.K. This time, Budweiser, the largest brewery in the U.S. bought a controlling interest in one of the most successful West Coast breweries, Red Hook of Seattle, Washington. Due to the overwhelming success of the microbrewery industry on the East coast, Budweiser built a state of the art brewery in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to take care of the Eastern part of the U.S. As you can see, the majority of us "smaller" breweries weren't too happy when the big boys decided they wanted to fish in our pond.

In both Maine & New Hampshire, all of my distributors are Anheuser-Busch (Budweiser) distributors and in 1997 I was faced with another competitor in my own back yard. Most other breweries felt the same way as the new brewery was computerized and backed with a large amount of cash. They were able to spend a lot more money than us and it cut into our sales. However, clouds sometimes have a silver lining. A/B's expectations have not been met and the brewery is way under capacity. The saga continues.....

Vermont is pretty much the same as consumers have seen about a three fold growth as the number of breweries have increased from 8 to 21 in only three years. Out of State breweries are finding that beer drinkers - although not loyal to a particular brand, tend to be more loyal to brands from their particular state. Like Maine, Vermont brewers are beginning to fine tune their efforts to a more regional flavor. Connecticut, a virtual brewing wasteland three years ago with only three breweries has jumped more than 7 times to 23, while Rhode Island with the same number of breweries as Connecticut have only added one bringing their total to four. Massachusetts, the highest populated state in New England also has the largest number of breweries with 40, jumping by 23 from a 1996 total of 17. Within a 20 mile radius of the city of Boston you will find 21 breweries and brewpub/restaurants. The largest, Samuel Adams is followed by Harpoon which opened about the same time during the mid-80's. Boston is a great city and many have found the time to visit and sample the product from the cities 11 local breweries.

If you're looking for information on brewing in New England and you have access to a computer, there is good news. Many breweries have web pages, and there are individual pages dedicated to each state. Here are a few that will help you with information on New England brewing:

Sea Dog Brewing - <http://www.seadogbrewing.com/> Maine Brewpubs - <http://pekel.uthscsa.edu/beer/brewpub/elsewhere/maine.html> Vermont Brewpubs - same as Maine. Change maine.html to ver.html Massachusetts Brewpubs: mass.html New Hampshire Brewpubs - nh.html Rhode Island Brewpubs - ri.html Connecticut Brewpubs - conn.html Real Beer Page - <http://realbeer.com/> Real Beer Page Links - <http://realbeer.com/rbp/rbp.tunnels.html> The Beer Info Source - <http://www.beerinfo.com/>

As you can see, there is a lot going on in the New England region. Who knows how long it will last? If you have any questions or are interested in visiting New England, please contact me at ewoodpk@ime.net

NEXT: Breweries On The East Coast

16

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Strong opposition from local residents has caused Allied Domecq to abandon plans to convert the Shady Oak in Bramhall into a "Mr Q's" pool lounge. This youth-oriented concept would clearly have been inappropriate for the pub's location in the middle of a large housing estate. New plans are now being drawn up which it is hoped will lead to a clearer separation between lounge and vault areas and allow the reintroduction of guest beers, which no doubt would give a much-needed boost to trade. The current beer range is Tetley and Boddingtons Bitters, the latter having recently replaced Marston's Pedigree.

Following last month's Beer Monster foreign beer recommendation, Richard Genders of the Bottle Stop (Ack Lane, Bramhall) phones to let us know that he has been selling Paulaner Oktoberfestbier both on draught and in bottle. Indeed, he has been selling all of the Oktoberfestbiers. If you hurry, there might be some left. He's now gearing up for the German winter and Christmas seasonals, too. Well worth a visit.

Hardly a month passes by without at least one local pub coming on to the market. Advertised last month were the Gorton Arms, Gorton (£65,000) and Turvilles, Stretford (£95,000). The latter is closed and boarded, a sorry state for what was once the old Cornbrook Brewery tap.

While it is commonplace for Bass and Whitbread pubs to go 'all smooth' these days, particularly those in backstreet locations, it is another matter entirely when a main street pub with a long cask ale history takes the same route. But, inexplicably, this is what has happened at the Sir Robert Peel on Castle Street, Edgeley. Even in the depths of the 'keg revolution' during the Seventies, the pub sold cask beer (Wilson's in those days) but now the handpumps are gone, to be replaced by a variety of 'smooth' dispensers. A sorry tale indeed.

"No bets are accepted on how long this situation will last" was last month's report on the Carousel in Reddish where the last remaining cask beer was Theakstons Mild. All bets are now off, as that, too, has now gone leaving the pub all keg. Laura Tomkinson, manager of the incredibly successful Winters on Underbank, Stockport, has asked us to point out that, contrary to last month's report, she is not married to her partner Brian. He is Brian Hughes, not Brian Tomkinson. Apologies to all concerned. At the Plough, Shaw Heath, after a spell selling at least one Mansfield-brewed Grays beer, the range on a recent visit was Boddingtons Bitter and Courage Directors. Not far away at the excellent Blossoms on Buxton Road, Old Tom has joined Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. It's sold straight from a barrel stillaged on the bar, too.

At the end of October, the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel (Greenalls, ex BodPubCo) was closed for refurbishment. Changes will include a larger vault, better use of the bar space and a dining area that will be an addition to the facilities, not the main feature. Landlord Terry Moores is confident that the changes will enhance the George & Dragon's status as a fine local's local, and his commitment to cask conditioned ale will continue. Re-opening is expected in early December.

The Crown in Northenden has reopened after weeks of closure, refurbished and with new licensees. The refurbishment, while comprehensive, has resulted in no real structural changes. There are however new carpet, tables and upholstery as well as improvements to the décor and the cellar. What hasn't changed is the usual excellent atmosphere and if anything the pub is busier than ever. Cask beers are Boddingtons Bitter and 'Strollers Bitter' at 99p a pint and which is apparently rebadged Greenalls Festival Bitter. This less than stunning product of the brewer's art is not

apparently selling well and possible replacements are being considered, including another of Greenalls contracted out beers, Davenport's. New licensees and managers are Gary and Monica Horner who are local people. We wish them well.

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



DOUBLE DAGGER
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WOBBLY BOB
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Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak, Macclesfield & Trafford & Hulme. Members of all branches are welcome at each other's events!

Diary

November 98

Monday 9th - Social: sidings, Broom lane, Levenshulme. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 12th - Branch Meeting: Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 13th - Trip to Red Lion brewpub near Accrington. Minibus leaves Royal Oak, Didsbury 6.45; Crown, Heaton Lane 7.00pm. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177

Monday 16th - Social: Woolpack, Brinkway, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 20th - Edgeley/Brinksway Stagger: 7.00pm Alexandra, Northgate Rd; 8.30 Comfortable Gill, King Street West.

Monday 23rd - Didsbury Social: 9.00pm Station; 10.00 Hogshead. Both Wilmslow Rd.

Thursday 26th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Mawson, Kincardine Rd, Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Monday 30th - Social: Farmers Arms, Northenden. Starts 9.00pm.

Monday 7th December - Brewer's talk: Holt's brewer Dick Venes at the Sidings, Broom lane, Levenshulme. Starts 8.00pm.

The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have notified us of the following events:

November 98

Monday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Royal Hotel, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm.

Friday 20th - Social night in Romiley. Meet Spread Eagle, Hatherlow 9.00pm. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

Sunday 6th December - Woods Walk. Contact Frank Wood for details.

Monday 7th - Committee Meeting: Kings Head, Manchester Rd, Droylsden. Starts 8.30.

Saturday 12th - Advance Notice: Christmas Do at the Sportsman, Hyde. Details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.

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

Sunday 15th - Lunchtime Social: Setter Dog, Walker Barn. Starts 12 noon.

Monday 16th - Committee Meeting: Queens Head Hotel, Biddulph Rd (opp. Railway station), Congleton.

Thursday 19th - Pub of the Season presentation to the Waters Green Tavern, Waters Green, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 23rd - Monthly Branch Meeting: Sun Inn, Mill Lane, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

To Do: Address Notepad Antwerp CAMRA 98 Planner

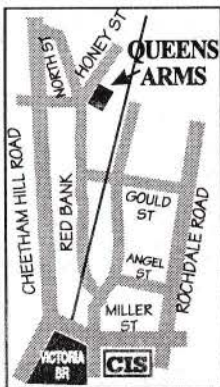
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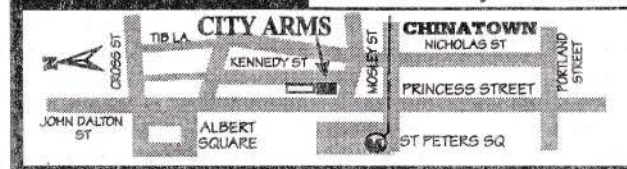
Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers
Coming in November (among others)

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

We start this month with a considerable amount of activity in the City Centre which has seen a heavier than usual flurry of openings and refurbishments although some of the more high profile changes are sadly marked by an absence of real ale.

Goose Flies In

Early October saw Bass bring their 'Goose & Granite' chain to Manchester with the Opening of the **Goose & Granite** on Piccadilly near the corner of Newton Street. This is a well-executed theme pub copy - the theme here being to replicate the Wetherspoons concept as closely as possible. It must be said that the overall finish of the Goose is very good and it looks a lot better than the nearby Wetherspoons, too.

The same formula is followed - cask beer, no music, value food, no smoking area and comfortable surroundings. Ales are Goose Ale (3.2%) at £1 and, according to several reports, pretty forgettable; Bass at a bargain £1.30; Boddingtons Bitter, Taylor's Landlord and a guest beer (London Pride on my visit). Full marks to the Goose for being positive and promoting cask beer. Bass's record of late in the North West has been lamentable. In sum, if you are a fan of Wetherspoons, Goose will not disappoint.

Openings in the Village

The Gay Village seems to be a source of constant change. No surprise then to see two new bars open in the area. On Canal Street **L'Abbaye** opened last month. This is a Belgian beer concept from Whitbread offering commercial Belgian brewers' products in a fancy setting. The same beers can be had at both Bar Fringe and Sand Bar. The difference here is that mussels and other such food is available, and the beers are considerably more expensive! Nearby on Bloom Street, **Berlin** was another October opening and comes courtesy of Hale Leisure (Jabez Clegg etc.). No real ale is sold, which seems a lost opportunity.

Elsewhere on Canal Street, the **Slug & Lettuce** has replaced the Theakston beers with two Grays beers and at Lees' **Rembrandt**, the beer range is down to just bitter after losing the GB Mild.

More City News

The **Mitre**, near the cathedral, has dropped cask beer in favour of smooth. The same story goes at Tetley's **Square Albert** with the loss of Tetley Bitter. Near St Ann's Square, on Old Bank Street, a new bar has opened. It is called **Bar 5**, is run by Bass and sells no real ale. Amongst Bass's other City Centre outlets, the **Crown** on Cooper Street has reopened after a refurbishment. Being a Bass outlet it now, almost inevitably, sells no cask beer. Real ale should remain in the **Unicorn** on Church Street when it reopens after its

refurbishment, though. On Dale Street, **Nickleby's** is now selling Boddingtons in the place of Tetley Bitter while out on Rochdale Road, **Captain's Bar** has become the Woodville Hotel and is selling cask Thwaites for £1.50. Another refurbishment under way as this was penned was at the **Sawyers Arms** on Deansgate which Scottish Courage are converting into one of their John Barras community-style pubs. More on this one next time.

Proprietor Frank Boardman continues the improvements at the **Lord Nelson** on Newton Street. Websters Green Label is held at 31 and considering the lengthy period of closure, the turnaround in trade is commendable. Features such as karaoke, talent contests and charity nights mean that it has fared better than nearby Tommy's Bar and the Royal George, both closed.

And now a plea for assistance. Any information of an historical nature is being sought about the **Hare & Hounds**, Shudehill. Information about the pub's history and that of Smithfield Market and environs would prove especially useful. Contact Maxine Doyle at the pub.

Out in the Suburbs

Another Scottish Courage 'John Barras' conversion is underway at the **Withington Ale House** on Wilmslow Road. The projected opening date is Monday 9 November so, more on this next time. Also due to open on the same day is the **Fletcher Moss**, formerly the Albert, in Didsbury. Once again, a report will follow.

At the **Orion** on Barlow Moor Road, Withington, new licensees Barbara and Michael took over on Monday 19 October. They hail from another Holt's house, the Ellesmere in Winton. When I called just before the changeover, while the beer was pretty good, the pub itself was looking very shabby. Let's hope Holt's spend some money on the place before too long. Another license change to report is at the **Friendship** in Fallowfield. A rather belated report it is, too, as Steve Thorpe took over in mid-July. Officially a relief manager, he is hoping to take over on a permanent basis before too long. The Friendship still continues to offer guest beers in addition to the usual Hydes' range.

The **Four in Hand** in West Didsbury is now selling the new chilled Cameron's Strongarm from a fancy metal handpump. Pretty good it was, too, when I called recently. The same, sadly, couldn't be said for the **Old House At Home** on Barlow Moor Road. Seven cask beers were on sale recently, and none of those tried were up to much.

Finally, a sight I never expected to see. The long-closed **Coach & Horses** on London Road, opposite Piccadilly Station, has presented a sorry picture for years, appearing on the verge of collapse. It's now got the builders in! What can be going on?

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 175

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APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times175)

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