

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



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FREE

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JULY 1999

FEEDING FRENZY!

Closures and Take-Overs Continue

The upheavals that are gripping the brewing industry continue unabated with more takeovers and closures announced last month. Just as we went to press the Vaux Brewery in Sunderland and its sister plant, Ward's of Sheffield, both closed with the loss of 700 jobs and several beer brands. Abbot Ale brewers Greene King announced an agreed takeover bid for Old Speckled Hen company, Morlands of Abingdon. A move which will see the closure of Morlands brewery and the loss, not only of the Morlands bitters but also conceivably the Ruddles beers, too.

No sooner had that been announced than reports surfaced that Wolverhampton & Dudley were considering a rival bid. Whitbread and Punch Taverns are engaged in an auction for the Allied Domecq pub estate (they trade locally as Tetley and also own the Firkin chain). Mitchells of Lancaster have announced they are to quit brewing, due to a collapse in sales of cask beer and national statistics showed real ale sale to have dropped by about one-third in just four years.

To read all of this you would think that independent brewers and real ale had had their day. The business pages of the press are full of doom and gloom stories about the decline of real ale sales and the demise of family and regional brewers. But behind the headlines, a rather different picture emerges. Many of the independent brewers are rising to the challenge of today's market and are doing just fine. Stories from around the country that you probably didn't read, because they don't fit it with lazy financial journalists preconceived ideas, include:

Fuller's of London - profits up 21%

Gale's of Hampshire - profits up 13%

Taylor's of Keighley - output up, spending £150,000 on new brewing equipment

There are similar stories from all around the country. Many micro brewers are bursting at the seams, and locally all of our family brewers are investing heavily in both their pubs and beer brands. It's all really down to commitment and investment. Just compare Mitchells, who have thrown in the towel, to Hydes' who are booming. Mitchells have 92 pubs yet can only supply them with 5000 barrels of cask beer a year - that's just over a barrel per week per pub. Hyde's have about two-thirds the number of pubs and yet produce about three times as much cask beer! It's uninspired management, dreary beers and unwise pub purchases that have brought Mitchells down, not a decline in cask beer sales.

We are tired of hearing half-truths about the regional brewing sector when many independent brewers are announcing increases in real ale sales, profit increases and investment plans. Their growth demonstrates that sticking to what you are good at pays dividends, but being influenced by the strategies of the national companies leaves you out in the cold. The big four brewers have stopped promoting their real ales and have manufactured its decline at the national level, but there are always two sides to a story. Despite the latest official figures, which indicate a decline, real ale remains central to the success of many family and regional breweries. It's up to independent brewers to save the day for real ale.

STOP PRESS... As we went to print, the Allied Domecq board formally recommended the lower Whitbread offer to their shareholders - calling the Bass/Punch bid 'complex' and slower to have effect. Whitbread shares climbed on the news - and Bass shares fell.

Festival Fun



Despite a drop in attendance, this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival was judged a great success by all those attending, and beer and cider sales held up very well. It looks as though everyone who came arrived sooner, stayed longer and drank more!

We report on the back page on the Beer of the Festival results and also the National Cider & Perry Championship. It also seemed appropriate at a celebration of real ale to present Hyde's Tony Phillips with his Cask Champion Award, and our photo shows Festival Organiser Jim Flynn doing the honours.

Competition Time

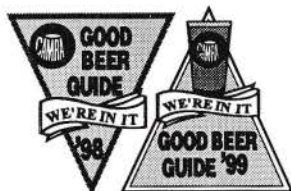
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- see page 8!

In JULY'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Cobdens Opens	9
Pub of the Month	3	High Peak News	11
Stagger	5	Gothic Bar	11
Curmudgeon	7	Camra Calling	13
Five Years Ago	7	Manchester Matters ...	15
Brewery News	8	Pub News	15
Competition	8	Westons Best	16
Letters	9	Beers of the Festival ..	16

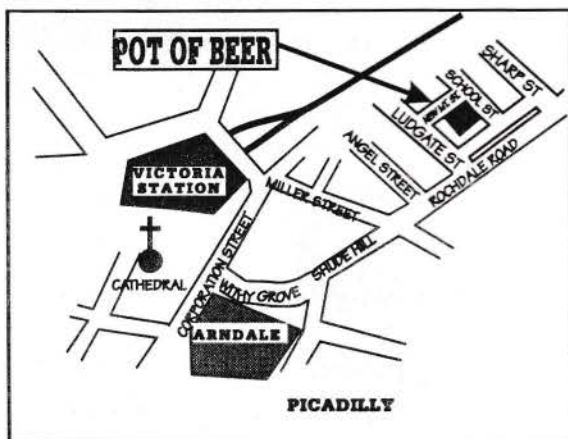
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Once again the media are regaling us with stories about the decline in real ale sales. Reading their words, you would think that the game was up and real ale was on its deathbed.

Of course, it's not. Indeed there's still a huge demand for it and those brewers who invest in quality products are reporting increased sales and profits. Admittedly some local brewers have experienced a decline in their cask ales but even then this has been a fraction of the national, headline figure.

So, where are these national figures coming from? They come from the Brewers & Licensed Retailers Association, an organisation dominated by the national brewers and their puppet pub companies. And it is true to say that in the pubs of these concerns, there has been a huge drop in cask ale sales. And why? Well, that's a simple question to answer - many of these pubs aren't supplied with the stuff, and those cask beers that are on offer are dull, dreary beers, often poorly kept and overpriced. Hardly the way to keep drinkers clamouring for more. Compare and contrast the beers and pubs of the regional, local and micro-brewers. The beer is cheaper, tastier and usually (although some brewers have some way to go on this front) better kept. The secret can be summed up in one word - quality. Those brewers who pursue this relentlessly, both in the brewhouse and in their pubs, will succeed and prosper. Hence the downfall of the Lancaster family brewer, Mitchells. They are stopping brewing because they can only brew cask beer and the market for this has collapsed, they say. Well, up to a point. Many Mitchells beers are dull, uninspiring brown liquids. They have hugely expanded their tied estate by buying cast-off pubs from Thwaites where Mitchells beers went down like a lead balloon. What Mitchells really should admit, is that there just happens to be no demand for their particular cask beers in their particular pubs. A salutary lesson for those local brewers tempted to rest on their laurels. Let's hope that it isn't lost on them.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 183

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editors: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973; Paul Hutchings, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport Cheshire, SK4 2NP. ☎ & Fax (0161) 432 8384. News, articles and letters welcome. All editorial items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or preferably ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!) or via e-mail to johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or in CorelDraw 3.5 or 7 (*.cdr) format or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). Letters to the editor on otletter@opentime.u-net.com. All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

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Pub Of The Month

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

JULY
1999



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for July is Fletcher Moss in Didsbury.

Fletcher Moss may be better known to many Opening Times readers under its previous guise as the Albert, a pub which had perhaps struggles to realise its full potential. However all this changed when Ken Mallion took over some three or so years ago. He was determined to make changes and restore the pub's fortunes - most noticeable was the immediate and dramatic drop in beer prices. His job was not made any easier with the closure of the adjoining Healds dairy, its demolition, and the rebuilding of the whole site.

It was clear that the pub would benefit from sympathetic refurbishment and during October and November last year the Albert underwent a transformation, reopening as Fletcher Moss to considerable local acclaim. Many breweries would have taken the opportunity to gut the place and turn it into some sort of bistro/wine bar/eatery. Hydes' chose the more sensible and practical option of retaining it as a community pub for local people. Consequently the pub's focus remains as it was before - excelling in being a good local selling quality cask conditioned beers from one of our local independent breweries.

The refurbishment itself was tastefully carried out, retaining much of the character of the old Albert. The extension at the back is in keeping with the rest of the pub and provides much needed additional space. What strikes visitors to Fletcher Moss is that the new part of the pub is every bit as popular as the old part, and this is testimony to the success of the renovation.

So it is in recognition of hard work by Ken and his staff in keeping top-quality Hydes' ales over the last few years (sometimes under less than ideal trading conditions), together with Hydes' well-thought out renovation of a characterful local pub that we present the award. Why not join CAMRA for the presentation on the evening of 22 July? A great night is in prospect. **SB.**

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 183:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Ken Birch, Tim Jones, Mark McConachie, John Tune, Stuart Ballantyne, Peter Edwardson, Paul Staney.

Opening Times 184 (August) will be available from the end of July. The summer issues' delivery dates vary due to holidays.

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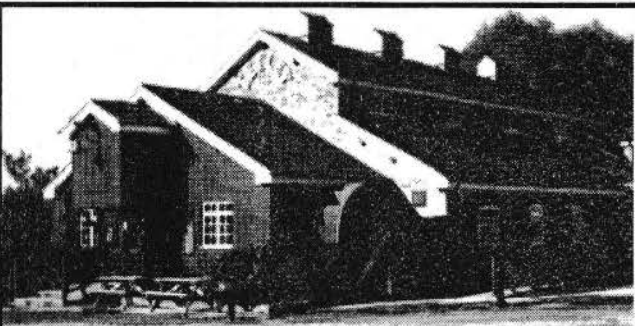
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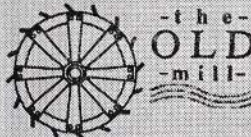
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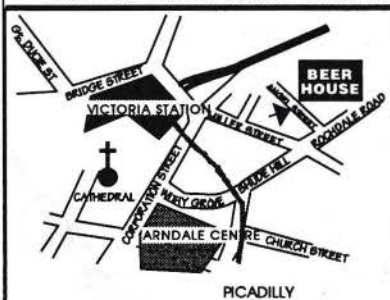
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STAGGER

with John Clarke

Pub Hell in Ardwick

The 'ABC' Stagger, covering the inner city districts of Ardwick, Brunswick and Chorlton-on-Medlock, has been a long-standing crawl - run periodically for ten years or more. This is a report of the last ever ABC Stagger for, as you will see, large parts of it have been laid waste by closure, demolition and the onward march of nitrokeg through the inner city areas.

The starting point was the **Seven Stars** on Ashton Old Road. Once surrounded by other pubs, this Holt's house now stands alone, nearby buildings exhibiting signs of decay and blight. Once a largely unspoilt gem, Holt's ruined the pub's character several years ago with the addition of a large, ill-thought out extension to the lounge. Now the pub is looking decidedly shabby and it was sad to see that several of the superb etched windows that survived the refurbishment have since been broken. Still, at least real ale is available, in the form of handpumped mild and bitter and Holt's usual low prices. Only the bitter was tried and it wasn't very good, really.

Our spirits weren't lifted by what followed. Turning right outside the pub, we passed the empty site that was the **General Birch** and noted that the **Old House at Home** was now the offices of a car rental company. At the corner of Chancellor Lane we were able to reflect how the road into the city now went through the old offices of Yates's Castle Brewery (the brewery itself having been demolished many years ago). Turning left to our next destination, the **King's Head**, we made a slight detour to look at the still standing offices of the old Chesters' Brewery. The old brewery was knocked down over 30 years ago and new developments now cover the site. Opposite the King's Head is the site of the **Steam Engine** - once a fine little local, latterly a fire-gutted shell, and now a car park.

At least the King's Head seemed to be thriving. It's a well-maintained pub (although the décor in the lounge is perhaps a little over-fussy) and there was a sizeable and lively early evening crowd in both the lounge and the well-used vault. There are just two cask beers on sale, John Smiths Bitter and Theakstons Bitter. The latter was in fine form, and markedly better than the Holt's in the Seven Stars.

Leaving the King's Head we faced a dilemma. Heading left to Higher Ardwick promised little as the **Union** (Burtonwood) has been keg - only for some time and has now been joined in this sorry state by the **Park** (also Burtonwood). So, it was straight on to Hyde Road and Devonshire Street to see what the pubs down there had to offer.

Very little as it turned out. Hyde Road was a sorry sight indeed. The **Bulls Head**, **Wellington** and **City Gates** (all ex-Whitbread) are all closed and in varying states of dereliction; indeed it's difficult to see what it keeping the City Gates upright! Across the road is the **Star**. An impressive old Wilson's fascia greets you but the pub was bought, and subsequently resold, by Banks's some years ago. We knew it was keg so decided to take at face value the crude hand-written note of the door - "This pub now operate a members only scheme" - and move on elsewhere. This side of Hyde Road used to be dominated by the 'Fort Ardwick' flats. These, along with the keg-only **Ardwick Empire** (Greenalls) have now been flattened, to be replaced by low-rise housing association houses and flats. Behind them however, the **Grey Mare** survives. Once a Boddingtons pub, and a brief spell selling Holt's, the Grey Mare is now a free house, albeit one with no real ale. It's pleasantly shabby and is clearly serving its local community well with posters advertising all sorts of events.

Heading back to Devonshire Street and down to the A6, the McDonald's on the corner occupies the site of the **Devonshire** (Wilsons) while to the left the **Spinning Jenny** (formerly the **Cock & Bull**) hasn't sold real ale during its entire existence. So, it was right to the **Apsley Cottage**. Slap bang next to the Apollo, this pub was resolutely keg when every pub around was selling real ale. Paradoxically, it is now one of the few cask beer outlets in the area. It's only John Smiths Bitter but it was a reasonable enough pint and despite there being no other customers, the atmosphere was pleasant and relaxed. It's a pub which does most of its trade before and after concerts at the Apollo and tonight was probably no exception as one Vonda Shepherd was in concert. Wondering just who exactly Vonda Shepherd was, we made our way to our next meeting point, the **Church** on Ardwick Green. En route we saw a new bar had opened on Higher Ardwick. Occupying what looks

like former church premises, the **Gaelic Bar** is unsurprisingly an Irish theme bar, very well appointed, but with no real ale.

The Church has had a variety of owners over the years and has consequently sold many different cask beers. Now its Boddingtons Bitter only and even that isn't always available. Given the grim liquid that issued from the handpump tonight, the future of cask ale here must be in grave doubt, which is a shame as the pub itself is very pleasant and comfortable with a vaguely country feel to it.

Across the road, the **George & Dragon** is closed and boarded and in the estate to the rear the **King's Arms**, once the home of the lamented West Coast Brewery, is a vandalised ruin. Luckily a walk down Brunswick Street brought us to the oasis that is the **Mawson** on Kincardine Road. A superbly traditional Tetley pub with its multi-roomed interior intact and immaculately kept. As ever there was a good crowd and a great atmosphere, in stark contrast to virtually every other pub so far visited. Tetley Mild and Bitter were on handpump, and both in good condition with the bitter some of the best I have ever tasted there.

It was a wrench to leave, particularly as the next two pubs, the **Tilted Falcon** (Banks's) and the **Plymouth Grove** (Boddingtons) were both keg. Gems like the Mawson apart, Upper Brook Street seems to form some sort of boundary. On the one side there is a wasteland of keg, closed or demolished pubs. On the other it's 'student land' and all the pubs thrive and sell cask beer. Cross from Brunswick Street to Grafton Street and there are three alone. First up is the **Bowling Green** a Greenalls pub now trading as a 'Porters Ale House'. Basically this means there is lots of natural wood and plenty of old signs on the walls. It's all very pleasant though, albeit not very imaginative or original. Three cask beers were on sale - Tetley Bitter, 'Porters Ale House Bitter' and Cain's Bitter. We all opted for the latter and found it to be fairly average.

Next is Holt's **Grafton**. A new pub that has had to be extended, such is its popularity. It's a typical Holt's new-build with a large lounge and spacious vault, both well-used by a mixed crowd of locals, students and hospital workers (it's right next to the MRI). Both Mild and Bitter are on handpump and while the bitter was fine, the mild was really below par and easily the worst beer of the night.

Just round the corner on Wilmslow Road is a **Hogshead**, one of the Whitbread-run real ale pubs. This type of pub tends to fall into two categories, those whose managers sell a range of cask beers because that's their job, and those who do so not only because it's their job but also because they have an interest in the subject. This Hogshead is one of the latter so we were able to finish the night on some very good beer indeed, Rooster's Cream and Titanic Bitter - both on sparkling form. So, we finished on a high note and while we may have caught some of the pubs on a bad night the sad fact remains that through a whole swathe of inner city Manchester there is now precious little real ale and few of the pubs that remain could be described as thriving. There is a whole generation growing up in this area where the pub going culture is effectively dead and CAMRA's message utterly irrelevant. Defeatism or realism? That is a question many of us must now sit back and effectively address.

Footnote - just before this issue of *Opening Times* went to press, Manchester City Council published the Lower Beswick Compulsory Purchase Order which includes the **Seven Stars**. Another nail in the coffin for inner city pubgoing?

Players Wanted!

The Stockport & District Log End Mixed League are looking for new teams for the winter season which starts in September. Each team needs four women members and three men. All interested parties should contact Carole Jones on 0161 477 3071, after 6.00pm.



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CURMUDGEON



...But Most Of It has Been

Last month's article was headed "It Hasn't Been All Bad", and looked at the positive developments during my legal drinking career, so the vitriol bottle took a rest. Now, of course, it's full to overflowing. So what are the worst things that have happened in the past 22 years? (And yes, some of these partly contradict what I said last month).

★ **Beer Spotters** do nothing to promote good real ale. They couldn't care less about quality. For God's sake, they put the stuff in plastic bottles, take it home and swap it with each other! Too many micro breweries waste their efforts in producing spotters' specials rather than quality beers with a long-term appeal. And too many people's energy and enthusiasm goes into spotting rather than campaigning for beer and pubs.

★ **Designer Bottles.** Why are so many young people willing to spend £2.50 on a half-pint bottle of bland muck such as Budweiser or Fosters Ice? And then neck it from the bottle as if their table manners had been frozen at the age of two? There can be no other consumer market where so much overpriced, worthless product is palmed off on people. And the stuff is an insult to the many high-quality, authentic lagers that are available.

★ **Destruction of Pub Interiors.** Far too many traditional interiors of real character and quality have been swept away in the name of progress and convenience, when all they needed was new upholstery and a lick of paint. If you remember, say, the George on Mersey Square in Stockport as it was, and go in now, you will weep. You can put real ale back in a keg pub, but a historic interior is lost forever. And why do pub designers today seem to insist on making pubs as uncomfortable as possible, and in particular removing all fixed seating?

★ **Drink-Driving.** The hysterical and exaggerated campaign of misinformation on this subject is slowly destroying the British pub, even without a reduction in the limit. Of course people should not drive when drunk or significantly impaired by alcohol, but to claim that they represent any meaningful kind of danger after only a couple of drinks flies in the face of the facts. It may be politically incorrect to say so, but law-abiding car-borne drinkers put money in the tills of most pubs in Britain and are vital to at least a third. It's the pub-going that dare not speak its name. Without moderate and lawful drink-driving, tens of thousands of pubs would be no more. And the refusal of the authorities even to acknowledge the "morning after" issue and the injustice it causes is a disgrace.

★ **High Prices.** When I was a lad, draught in the pub was the cheapest beer you could get. Today, it's at least 50% more expensive than beer from the off-licence, and twice the price if your tippie is premium lager, and that's without considering cross-Channel imports. People may not choose between pubs on the basis of price, but it sure as hell affects how much in total they drink in pubs. This is one of the key reasons - along with the one above - why so many pubs are struggling and closing.

★ **Loss of Independent Brewers.** We have lost Oldham, Higsons, Matthew Brown, Yates & Jackson, Home, Simpkins, Davenport's, Border and, most recently, Ward's, Vaux and Mitchell's. It is incredibly sad and unnecessary. Their beers are lost forever, their once distinctive pubs now sell the same national brands, and in many cases no real ale at all. A gaggle of tiny micros is scant consolation.

★ **Nitrokeg.** It took us all by surprise when keg came back from the grave in the ghoulish form of nitro. It really is horrible stuff, far worse than traditional keg or tank beers. Yet it has been encouraged by the obscurantism of real ale supporters and the fact that too many pints of real ale are still downright poor, so that many actively seek it out. The irony is that without real ale it would not exist, because it is basically a sixth-rate imitation of real ale pulled through an ultra-tight sparkler.

★ **Short Measures.** In the past twenty years, there has been a dramatic reduction in the use of oversize glasses, which has been a disaster for full pints and has put millions into the pockets of brewers and licensees. Despite its theoretical support for full measures, CAMRA has in effect connived at this process by encouraging the replacement of electric meters with handpumps. At two successive general elections, the winning party has promised to legislate for full measures, and then lost its nerve or its interest afterwards.

★ **The Anti-Drink Lobby.** While drinkers have gained new freedoms, the general tenor of media comment about alcoholic drinks has become increasingly negative. There is a constant drip-feed of alarmist health warnings, and many organisations now take a dim view of even very light drinking amongst their employees. There must be a serious danger of a legislative backlash in the next twenty years.

★ **Too Many Beers.** Nobody can keep real ale consistently well, however busy their pub, if they have ten or twelve different beers on the bar. That includes numerous Good Beer Guide listed pubs. Those who insist that particular pubs manage to pull it off are looking at them through rose-tinted spectacles. While beer buffs may be willing to risk a bad pint or two for the chance of getting a brilliant one, the broad mass of beer drinkers aren't. That's why they're turning to nitro...

5 Years Ago

JULY '94

by Phil Levison

The front page covered that ever recurring subject - the price of beer. Prices had been monitored by CAMRA since 1971, and a regular national survey had been carried out since the early 1980's. Results for 1994 showed that beer prices had risen by 5% (twice the rate of inflation), whilst other drinks had risen by much less than the rate of inflation.

The North West had once again turned out to be the cheapest region for beer, with London and the South East being the priciest. There was a special mention for Bass, Whitbread and S&N, whose prices had risen by 5%, just during the previous month. To complete the front page, it was reported that the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA had joined forces with Robinson's to help launch a national petition calling for British beer taxes to be reduced.

Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery and its Kings Arms pub in Chorlton-on-Medlock had been put on the market. This was a reflection on the difficulty the brewery had found in retaining outlets for its beer in the face of heavy discounting by the big brewers. The intention was to concentrate on the increasingly important bottling side of the business, acquiring a new site to brew bottled beers for direct public sale, although it was envisaged that existing outlets would continue to be supplied with draught beer.

There was an item on a controversial subject that is always cropping up - how much is safe to drink? It quoted the current limit of 21 units a week (say 10½ pints of standard bitter). There was also a reference to what was described as "an authoritative and long-term study" by a Danish professor, who suggested that 69 units was quite acceptable (that's almost 35 pints) and he mentioned that beer soaked up aluminium, which is linked with ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. The only trouble could be that you might have a long wait to find out if it was working.

O'Sheas was reported to be settling in nicely, in the premises formerly occupied by the Lancaster Tavern on Whitworth Street (Manchester City Centre). This was the second Irish themed bar in the City Centre, with Mulligan's already well-established on Southgate near Kendal's. Allied-Lyons were also reported as planning a national chain of "Scruffy Murphy's" and a flood of mock-Irish bars followed in the next few years.

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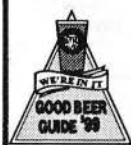
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Sat 11 - 1**



Burtonwood have been running a successful guest beer scheme in their pubs this year, and have now announced the beer to feature until the end of the year. This month sees Usher's Founders Ale (4.5%) on the bars, followed by Riddleys EXS (4.3%) in August and Charles Wells Bombardier (4.3%) in September. October sees the welcome return of Burtonwood's own Buccaneer (5.2%) and in November Bateman's XXXB (4.8%) will be available. And December? - this will be decided early in November and will be the beer that has been voted most popular from the others available during the year.

The expansionist Mansfield brewery has just announced the doubling of its trading area to include the north west. They have appointed local surveyors Chestertons to help them find suitable pubs and sites for development as part of a £30 million expansion plan. Currently Mansfield beers mainly appear in the free trade, usually disguised as the various 'Grays' beers that regularly pop up as guest beers, but now a local tied estate is to be built up, too

The local Bridgewater Brewery has now started test-brewing at its new permanent home on Salford's Chapel Street, although the bulk of the beer continues to be produced at the Old Pint Pot for the time being. The latest beer to be produced was Stephen's Special Bitter (SSB) in honour of Stephen Lowe, the new Bishop of Hulme. This 4.9 per cent brew, red in colour and well-hopped, was very well received by all accounts. In the pipeline is a Millennium beer which will be a 'double strong porter', essentially a 10% ABV version of Delph Porter. "More like an imperial Russian stout" says Ken Birch. At the other end of the spectrum, a lower strength version of the popular Blondie is also to be produced.



Phoenix Brewery are continuing with their successful range of 'Monkey' beers. The popular Monkey Town Mild, runner-up Beer of the Festival at Stockport, has been brewed and will be available as you read this. July also sees Monkey Puzzle (4.5%) followed by Cheeky Monkey (4.2%) in August and Powder Monkey (ABV undecided) in September. All these will feature the crisp hop character that has made the range so popular and which stems from the use of one particular American hop, the identity of which Phoenix's Tony Allen is keeping to himself!

Hydes' bring out a new craft beer this month. The successful, and excellent, Ruby Ratchets Ebony is to be succeeded by Centenary Ale, a 4.5 per cent beer brewed to mark the company's 100 years at the Queens Brewery in Moss Side. Look out for it, and also the new premium bitter to be introduced in the next couple of months.

In next month's larger Opening Times (this issue is shorter due to staff holidays) the return of Wayfarer and the Beer Monster in Germany (together with an analysis of current brewing trends), reviews of the CAMRA Good Food & Beer Bed & Breakfast Guides and lots more....

Competition Time

Your chance to win a gallon of Porter's Porter
Our thanks to Paul Stanyer, licensee of The Railway, Portwood, for both devising this competition and sponsoring the prize. He promises that there are more to come, too! Entries to Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 24th July please. The first correct entry drawn out of the bag will win a gallon of the prize-winning Porter's Porter from The Railway. Answers and the winner's name will appear in the next issue of Opening Times.

All you have to do is identify the following (mainly local-ish) pub names. For example, if "Track Path" is Railway", what are:
Crucified Openers, Royal Hat & Mooring, A place for young children perhaps, A rolling stone doesn't get this with a county's emblem, A suit for babies, Strange gentlemen, Climate ladles, Rig & Pullers, Cur & Mallard, Charles Windsor, Carey on fire, Azure Ben

OPENING TIMES LETTERS



From John Hickman, Malaga:

As an 'ex-pat' living here in Spain, I came across an article about a new 'micro' opening in Malaga (half an hour away on the local train, 235 pts return). Anyway, on my day off I thought I'd give it a try - I don't visit Malaga much, it's a bit like Manchester, busy and bustling with loads of traffic. The bar took a bit of finding. I was standing outside the main doors asking directions! It was about 1pm and there were only half a dozen punters in at the time (most of the shops and offices close for siesta about 1.30-2.00pm). Anyway I ordered a beer which has a slightly cloudy appearance, similar to a wheat beer. It was slightly on the bland taste for my palate but on the whole after supping normal Spanish lager for four years, quite pleasant. It's not very strong by Spanish standards at 4.2%.

Monica and I left Burnage over four years ago to live in Spain and loved it (except the beer!). We used to sup in the Cheadle, Stockport and Heaton Mersey area. Our locals were the Griff and Sun in September. I miss a good pint of Sammy Smiths or Josephs. We watched Malaga get promoted to the Premiership and a day later City went up; not a bad year overall. We still get the odd Opening Times people bring over to keep in touch. Keep up the good work.

(The new bar is called "Malta Microcerveceria" and is located in Calle Puerto near the Malaga Law Courts ('Palacio de la Justicia') - ed.)

Cobdens

After a long period of closure, Robinson's reopened Stockport's Manchester Arms last month, although old regulars would be hard put to recognise the place once (and, perhaps, if...) they got past the door.

The old pub has been transformed at doubtless great cost (the brewery are keeping the figures to themselves but you're probably looking at a couple of hundred thousand as a bare minimum) into Cobdens, arguably Stockport's first café bar.

Comparisons with the old "M.A." are pretty pointless really, but for the record, the old vault is now a comfortable seating area while the bar counter itself is to the left and occupies what was formerly the pool room. The pub has been extended backwards and the bar area leads into what is officially a conservatory but is really more of a glazed room as it forms an integral part of the pub rather than being an add-on at the side or back. Behind this is a small raised area, with DJ booth, and a mirrored wall which makes the place look twice the size. Doors lead off the glazed area to a balcony overlooking the new park, on the former cinema site next door.

The fixtures, fittings and décor are all very stylish and contemporary - apart from the bar counter which is in dark wood and of traditional design, despite which it does not seem remotely out of place. Money has obviously been spent and, it has to be said, to very good effect.

The bar is dominated by chrome pillar taps dispensing a variety of keg products and Old Stockport ('real smooth' 3.5% ABV, £1.80 a pint), but there are also two handpumps for Best Bitter (cask conditioned, 4.2% ABV, £1.60 a pint - as ever, if you want value and taste 'ask for cask') and quality has been very good so far. This is to be expected with experienced licensees like Simon and Sarah Parry who come to Cobdens from the Junction at Mottram and St Tudwals in Abersoch.

Food, from an impressive menu, is available all day from 12 noon with substantial meals available until 3pm Mondays to Saturdays with lighter snacks thereafter and all day Sundays. A late licence has been applied for which will see the pub opening until 1am most nights.

It is anticipated that the clientele will change throughout the day, with diners at lunchtime, a more traditional early evening trade and a 'venue' crowd later in the evening. Robinson's are keen to emphasise that they are not aiming for youth trade but want a more sophisticated customer base, and hence there will be some pretty stringent dress restrictions during the evenings later in the week. Hmm - this is almost the complete reversal of the regime that applied at the old Manchester Arms, which, despite its extreme grottness, always remained remarkably trouble free. It will be interesting to see if the sophisticated clientele of Cobdens are equally well behaved.

However, while it is easy to carp over details such as this, it has to be said that the old pub had reached a state where something drastic needed to be done and Robinson's are to be congratulated for grasping the nettle and carrying out this major conversion with style and aplomb. Not everyone will like Cobdens, indeed many traditionalists, both CAMRA and otherwise, will hate it with a vengeance. However with the increased fragmentation of today's licensed trade there is clearly a place for this type of bar, and one which is not only well-executed but also sells cask beer, and good quality cask at that, to a largely youthful clientele it be welcomed. Recommended.

JC.

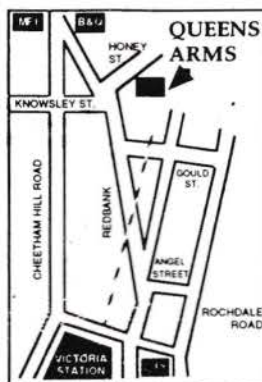
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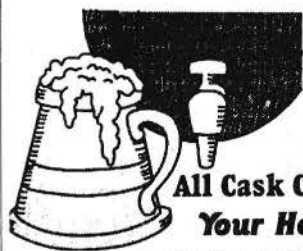
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10

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The Festival starts Thursday 15th July at 5pm
and is open every day until Sunday 18th July.

Ring the Albion on 01254 238585 for beer list and
public transport details.

27th-29th August 1999

High Peak & N E Cheshire Branch of CAMRA

2nd Real Ale Bar

at Glossop Rugby Club Competitions
Festival Weekend

Hargate Hill Lane, Charlesworth, Glossop

Fri 27th August - 19.00-23.00

Sat 28th August - 12.00-23.00

Sun 29th August - 12.00-22.30

Approx **20** different Beers & Ciders

Evening Entertainment

Catering Available Camping Facilities Available

Rugby Knockout Competition

on Sunday Afternoon

Free daytime Admission

Small charge for evening session

- CAMRA members 1/2 price

Contacts: T Lord 0161 427 7099

F Wood 01457 865426

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE CAMRA

In Glossop - the **Queens Arms** in Old Glossop has been bought by the landlord of the **Wheatsheaf** up the road. There is now a range of beers available. At the time this information was passed on, the range was **Barnsley Bitter**, **Grays Premium**, **Jennings Cumberland Ale**, and **Hancock HB**, all on handpump. There is talk that a 'guest beer' may make an appearance in the future.

Over in Disley, there are rumours that the **Rams Head** has been sold to a small Manchester-based pub owing group. More news at a later date...if there is any.

In Hyde, the **Hare & Hounds** on Werneth Low - more an eatery than a pub in recent years - now has a guest beer alongside the **Boddingtons Bitter**. At the time of the visit, this was the excellent **Caledonian Golden Promise**.

Nearby in Newton, the **George & Dragon** (keg) is advertising a 10-year tenancy for sale - there was also some mention of looking for someone "to invest" in the pub. Well, my money is staying in my beer fund!

Finally, over in Stalybridge, the **Friendship** is being refurbished by **Bridgewater Contracts**. Recently the original **Gartsides Brewery** tiles were revealed - it is doubtful if these will remain. The pub reopens in July.

Gothic Bar & Grill

The long-awaited re-opening of the former **Gatley Wine Bar** in its new guise as a **Cain's** pub finally came to pass on **Thursday 10th June** - and **Cain's** are to be heartily congratulated on a superb job of work. Readers will know that the **Liverpool** brewers actually took over the building last year and quickly installed a range of quality cask beers, both from their own stable and outside guests. However, it remained essentially **Gatley Wine Bar** with the addition of handpumps and clearly a thorough overhaul was needed for **Cain's** to stamp their impression on it - and this they have now done with a vengeance.

The initial plan was to turn the building into 'The Dispensary', mirroring their similarly named pubs on **Merseyside**. However it was instead decided to play up to the building's origins as a chapel when designing the new look and it does now have a vaguely ecclesiastical feel, albeit without the over the top kitschness which can so often typify this type of theming. The ceiling has been removed to reveal the original roof beams and the extra space has allowed for the introduction of a mezzanine drinking area over the entrance and also given the rest of the pub a light, airy feel. More space has been created by the slight repositioning of the bar, which is now further back and recessed into the wall. There's lots of natural wood, including a superb polished oak floor (which, we hear, was picked up for a song from a **Whitbread** pub that was being demolished). There are new stained glass windows at the sides but pride of place must go to the superb acid-etched windows at the front of the pub. Although brand new, they look as though they have been there for a century or more.



There are three handpumps on the front of the bar serving **Cain's Mild**, **Bitter** and **FA** with another two at the back dispensing one or two guest beers (depending on whether **Cain's** have a seasonal brew out). A slight minus is the loss of the real cider, which has now been replaced by **Thatcher's** keg. As you might expect from the name, **Gothic Bar & Grill** also features an extensive menu running from snacks to various steaks. Prices are reasonable, though, and the most you will pay is £5.95, with most items being well below that. Food is served every day from 12-3 and 5-7, although the pub itself is open all permitted hours.

The (temporary) licensee is **Barry McDonagh**, who has many years' experience in the trade and has worked for **Cain's** before and knows just what they want out of a pub in terms of both beer and clientele. It looks, though, that he and **Cain's** should have a major success on their hands. Highly recommended. **JC.**

The **Gothic Bar & Grill** is at 61a Church Rd, Gatley. Tel. 0161 428 9467.

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TEL: 01706 627009



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



BANTAM
Pale brown bitter. Slightly nutty, full flavoured beer.



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



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



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



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



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



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

11

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QUICK COOK!



"I wish to register
A COMPLAINT!"



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. Remember the point though: if you've paid good money for something which is sub-standard, then you've been swindled - so complain! So 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 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!"

Jo and Pat and the staff from the
NELSON INN
Didsbury

welcome all their customers old and new
Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

Websters & Holts

Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day

Tuesday night Karaoke
Discos Thursday and Sunday

- ★ **Be Sensible** - a tiny shortfall in volume isn't worth the fuss, but 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 that" or that old standby "no-one else has complained". Stand your ground. The law on "full measure" is currently something of a shambles - the head is legally part of your pint but the Brewers Society say that your pint should be 95% liquid and short measures should be topped up with good grace. Trading Standards officers may be prepared to take action if these guidelines are consistently flouted. Beer which is "off" 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 usually 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.

Local Trading Standards Contacts are:

Stockport - 0161 474 4248, Manchester - 0161 234 5600
Tameside - 0161 342 3477, Derbyshire - 01629 585858
Cheshire - 01244 602500, Trafford - 0161 912 2274

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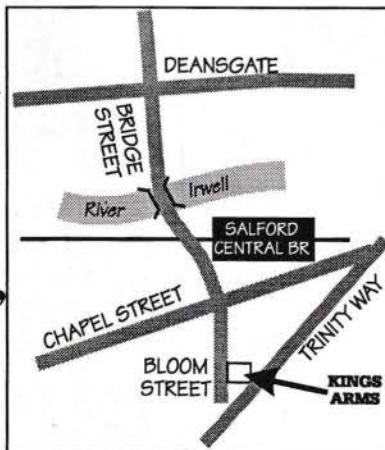
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a warm welcome from all
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CAMRA CALLING!

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

Diary

July 99

Saturday 10th - Trip to Bhurtpore Inn Beer Festival and early evening at the Rising Sun, Shraleay Brook. Minibus departs Royal Oak, Didsbury 10.15am; Crown, Heaton Lane 10.30. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177.

Monday 12th - Social: Albert, Walmer St, Rusholme. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 16th - Didsbury Stagger: meet 7.00pm Gateway, Kingsway; 8.30 Royal Oak, Wilmslow Rd.

Monday 19th - Hazel Grove Social: 9.00pm Grapes; 10.00pm Three Tunnes. Both London Rd.

Thursday 22nd - Pub of the Month presentation to Fletcher Moss, Didsbury. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 26th - Social: Old Monkey, Portland St, City Centre

Friday 30th - New members trip to Barge & Barrel, Elland (new-ish brewpub). Details from John Hutchinson on 434 7177. 'Old' members welcome too!

Saturday 31st - Inter-branch Barbecue, hosted by North Manchester Branch at Queens Arms, Honey St, Cheetham. 1.00pm onwards. All welcome - a good turnout please!

Monday 2nd August - Social: Crown, Didsbury Rd, Heaton Mersey. Starts 9.00pm.

July 99

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

Monday 12th - Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 17th - Trip to Derby/Chesterfield/Sheffield by rail. Details from Frank Wood (01457 865426) or Tom Lord (0161 427 7099).

Saturday 31st - Inter-branch Barbecue at Queens Arms, Honey St, Cheetham. 1.00pm onwards - a good turnout please!

Monday 2nd August - Committee Meeting, Lowes Arms, Hyde Rd, Denton. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 9th - Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

27th-29th August - **Advance Details:** 2nd Glossop Rugby Club Real Ale Bar. See separate advert for more details.

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following events (additional details from M Gammage on 01260 270064):

Saturday 10th - Macclesfield Crawl, phone for details

Monday 19th - Committee Meeting. Swan, Wilmslow. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 26th - Branch Meeting. Bluebell, Smallwood. Starts 8.00pm.

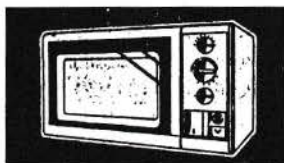
Thursday 29th - Robinsons Brewery Trip. Phone for details

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*Claire and Howard welcome all their friends
and customers*

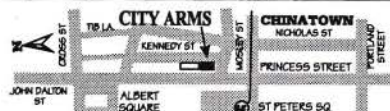
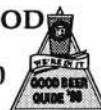
OUR JULY BEERS

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Nellie Dene;
Titanic Sun Deck;
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Kimberley Guinea Gold;
Brakespear Hooray
Henley; Hopback
Summer Lightning;
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Tanglefoof;
Orkney Northern
Lights;
Smiles Maiden Leg Over;
...etc...etc



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**8 HANDPUMPS
6 GUEST ALES**
LUNCHTIME FOOD
11.30-2.30
and 11.30 - 2.00
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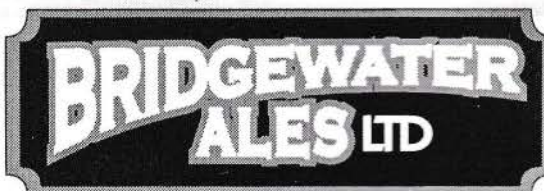
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5.2% ABV

Barton Ale

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Navigator*

3.8% ABV

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4.7% ABV

(American style Ale)

Available at Kings Arms, Albert Vaults, & Old Pint Pot, Salford,
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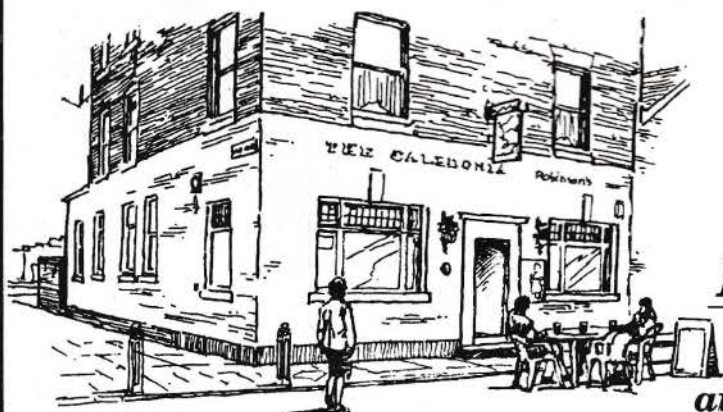
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Alan and Louise welcome you to the

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"The long-established comfortable pub"
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*Hatters Mild, Best Bitter
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Saturday, 12 - 3 Sundays and evenings 5-7 Tues-Thurs and 5-8 Fri and Sat

Try our 3 Course Sunday Roast Special for £6.95

Open all day Monday-Saturday, 12 - 4 and 7 - 10.30 Sundays

Telephone 0161 339 7177



MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Once again this month there are just a few low-key City centre openings to report, with the major developments still a month or so away, the good news is that real ale features for a change.

No real ale in **Linekers**, or more correctly "The World Famous Linekers" which occupies the basement premises on Cooper Street formerly known as Oscars. Very bog standard with not even any decent bottled beers worth trying, let alone anything on draught. A rather better bet is another cellar bar, **Renaissance**, previously the Brahms & Liszt on the corner of Brown Street and King Street. Quite a stylish refurbishment is accompanied by Tetley Bitter on handpump and a decent range of British and continental bottle beers - Jennings Cross Buttock, for example, is not your average café bar bottled beer!

It's also refreshing to report a couple of real ale gains. In the City Centre proper, the former Beer Trading Company on Mosley Street is now **Smiths Bar** and the banner outside proclaims 'Guest Real Ales'. Inside, nothing seems to have changed but lurking amongst the forest of keg taps on the bar is a solitary handpump dispensing beers from the 'Tapsters Choice' range - Thwaites Blooming Ale when I called. Further out in Ancoats, the **Cheshire Cheese** on Oldham Road is selling cask beer for the first time in years. John Smiths Bitter, Theakstons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree all feature in what is a commendable move. All credit to licensee who has moved here from the now-demolished **Nicklebys** on Dale Street.

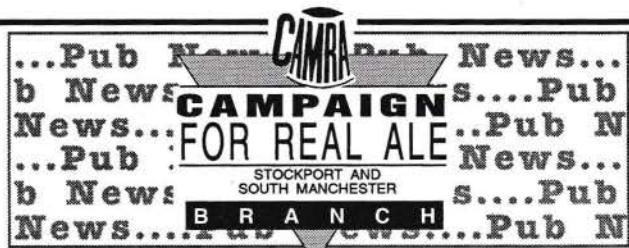
Local pub company Clarenbridge, has taken over some of the former Greene King outlets in the City with a consequent change in beer range. The **Rising Sun** on Queen Street now has Morlands Old Speckled Hen alongside Theakstons Bitter and, surprisingly Mild. **Paddys Goose** on Bloom Street meanwhile has Boddingtons Bitter, Wadworth 6X and Taylors Landlord. Following the demise of Vaux and Ward's, there will be changes, too, in the range at the **Crown** on Deansgate but I have not yet had the chance to check this out.

On the refurbishment and new pub front there is currently a hive of activity underway, with several openings in prospect for the next couple of months. First off the block should be the relocated **Shambles** pubs, the **Wellington** and **Sinclairs** which now have a provisional opening date of 27 July. August should see Lees open their **Rain Bar** on Great Bridgewater Street and Hydes' **Breeze Bar & Café** on Peter Street, where work was well underway as this article was penned. Further out in Longsight, work is now also proceeding on the new **Wetherspoons**, which should provide a much-needed kick up the backside for its neighbours. There is also building work underway in Didsbury where the new **Pitcher & Piano** on School Lane nears completion.

Under refurbishment at the moment is the **Wheatsheaf** on Oak Street which looks to have been completely knocked through and was having a new central bar installed when I passed. I understand that once work is finished here, the same contractors will be moving on to the **Shamrock** on Bengal Street in Ancoats. It would be nice to think that real ale will both remain in the Shamrock and reappear in the Wheatsheaf once work is complete but given Burtonwood's worrying reluctance to supply their more marginal pubs with the real thing (assuming the Burtonwood still own these two, that is), I'm not hopeful.

At least some inner-city pubs are showing some enterprise. At the **Britannia** on Rowsley Street, Beswick, the landlady is to have the kitchen improved to enable her to provide hot snacks, burgers, toasties etc. to the workers on the nearby stadium site. Let's hope they also find time to try some of the excellent Lees Mild and Bitter sold at what remains one of my favourite city pubs.

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At the Greyhound, Edgeley, we welcome new licensee Christine Elam who took over on 14 June. While Christine has been in the trade "for too many years to remember", this is her first 'real ale' pub, although she is rapidly learning the ropes from the cellarman and is keen to stress that it is very much business as usual on the guest beer front. In fact, her only remit from management company MRL who have taken on the pub, was that real ales and guest beers had to remain. Beer quality has certainly been very impressive when OT has called in. No major changes are planned for the moment, as Christine wants to get to know the pub and its regulars. Well, there has been one change - the beer has come down in price! Boddingtons Bitter has dropped by 4p, Greenalls Mild is down 13p and the guest beers are down by 30p, yes thirty pence. One rumour that Christine is keen to dispel is that she is only a temporary licensee. She is in fact looking forward to a long stay at the pub. We'll drink to that and wish Christine all the very best.

The Old King on Great Portwood Street is to get another change of licensee. Nigel Greetham has now left the pub and his permanent replacements were expected in early July. The pub was selling keg Stones only the last time OT called - let's hope that real ale makes a rapid reappearance under the new regime.

Having struggled to find a new tenant, Robinson's are now selling off the **Bridge Inn** on Chestergate. The pub is due to be auctioned off this month. It is rare for Robinson's to dispose of a pub and in this case it is a particularly poignant parting of the ways. Not only is it 100 years since Robinson's bought the pub, but their connections with it go back further still - a Mrs Lamb at the Bridge Inn was Frederic Robinson's very first customer when he started supplying pubs other than his own Unicorn Inn on Hillgate. It remains to be seen whether the building now has a viable future as a pub.

Following the Vaux and Ward's brewery closures, the local Vaux pubs now sell a variety of beers, all pretty uninspiring it has to be said. A quick check revealed Briarlys to have Tetley Bitter on handpump; the Wheatsheaf has Tetley Bitter and Marstons Pedigree and Little Jack Horners has Stones Bitter, Tetley Bitter and Worthington Best Bitter. Similar permutations can be expected at other local Vaux houses, including the Crown on Hillgate, which has reopened with a temporary licensee. These pubs have now all been sold on to Pubmaster, a large pub owning company, which does make quite a wide range of national and local beers available to its pubs so expect further changes before the beer range in these pubs settles down again.

Some late Macclesfield news - Holt's have changed the Three Crowns from a managed house to a tenancy. The only reported change so far is to the beer prices. Bitter has gone up by 4p a pint.

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

NEW ADVERTISING RATES (from March 31, 1999): 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 240mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. (Please note, as is our normal practice, we are holding advertising rates for all existing regular advertisers at the 1997/8 prices until January 2000. The current increase - for new advertisers only - takes effect from March 31 and is forced on us by pressures to increase the print run and the ever increasing cost of paper)

Weston's Is the 'Perry' Best

Double Victory in Top Cider & Perry Awards

One of the many highlights of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival was the judging for the National Cider & Perry Championships to decide the consumers' choice of the best in British ciders and perries.



The competition is organised by APPLE, the special campaigning group within CAMRA which is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of traditional ciders and perries, and was run locally by Opening Times co-editor, Paul Hutchings.

The judging panels were made up of cider makers, writers and enthusiasts, including local Stockport MP, Anne Coffey, and former Branch Chairman, Rhys Jones, recently appointed editor of the next CAMRA Guide to Real Cider.

Champion Perry of the Year 1999

Weston's Perry was awarded the top prize by the expert tasting panel. On hearing of the award, Colin Jones of Weston's said, "I'm gobsmacked, but very proud of our achievement in this important competition. We won first prize only two years ago, so this latest success just goes to show how quality can pay. I'm very pleased for the whole hardworking team here at Weston's."

The Second prize went to Minchew's Blakeney Red from Gloucestershire and Third to Heck's Medium Perry from Somerset.

Champion Cider of the Year 1999

Weston's came up trumps again when their Old Rosie was judged as the best cider in Britain. The judges claimed it was a perfectly balanced cider and typical of the fruit.

Paula Waters, APPLE Chairwoman, said, "This is great news for Herefordshire and Weston's have proven that producing top quality real ciders and perries can pay. I hope drinkers will be able to enjoy both winners at pubs across the land and not just locally."

The Second prize in the cider contest went to Gwatkin's Yarlinton Mill from Herefordshire and Third to Westcroft Janet's Jungle Juice from Somerset.

Second Pomona Award

Kevin Minchew of Minchew's Real Cider and Perry in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, is the winner of the special Pomona award which honours those who have best served traditional cider and perry. Chatting at the Festival cider bar as the award was announced, Kevin was stunned to hear his name read out. After recovering his composure, he told Opening Times, "I'm overwhelmed and had no idea I was being considered. It's a great feeling to know that my efforts have been recognised."

Kevin won the award for a number of reasons including his work with endangered pear trees. He has recently rediscovered an important perry pear variety that was thought to be extinct.

The People's Pints

Alongside the National Championships, the Festival also ran its own regular Cider and Perry of the Festival awards, voted on by customers and staff. While Weston's again featured strongly in the voting, the winners were those which had taken second place in the national event. Cider of the Festival was therefore Gwatkin's Yarlinton Mill and Perry of the Festival went to Minchew's Blakeney Red. Local branch members will be travelling down to the West Country in the autumn to present the awards.

Beers of the Festival

Local Micros Claim Top Awards

A highlight of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is the Beer of the Festival competition, voted on by festival customers and staff. This year the voting was particularly close in all categories, and closer still in the run-off for overall Festival Champion, with only a handful of votes separating the top places.



The winner in the Stout/Porter section, and overall Beer of the Festival, was the newly-established Bridgewater Brewery's Delph Porter. Up against heavyweight competition, notably former Festival champion Ironbridge Stout from Shrewsbury's Salopian Brewery, Delph Porter was a runaway success. Richard Bazen and Ken Birch of Bridgewater Brewery were stunned and delighted to hear of their success, so early in the brewery's history. "Cheers to every festival goer who voted for us", Richard told Opening Times.

Equally amazed was Phoenix Brewery's Tony Allen when told that his new Monkey Town Mild had won its category and was also runner up in the over championship. "Well, I'm flabbergasted" was all he could say at first, but went on to add that feedback about the brew had already been very positive.

Other category winners were Rooters Festival Special in the bitter class, Oakham Bishops Farewell (last year's overall winner) was champion premium bitter while Robinson's Old Tom was festival favourite in the Old Ales section. Particular thanks are due to Robinson's for also supplying a number of Old Tom T-shirts which were won by lucky Old Tom drinkers throughout the Festival.

Beers of the Festival

Mild - Monkey Town Mild, **Bitter** - Roosters Festival Special
Premium - Oakham Bishops Farewell, **Old Ale** - Old Tom
Stout/Porter and Overall champion - Bridgewater Delph Porter
Cider and Perry of the Festival
 Cider - Gwatkins Yarlinton Mill, Perry - Minchew's Blakeney Red

16

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times183)

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.

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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

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Paul Moss,

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.

