



# OPENING TIMES



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FREE

## WATERS GREEN PUNCHED



**I**n an act of what can only be termed breathtaking stupidity, Punch Taverns have taken steps to restrict the beer range at the Waters Green Tavern, one of the best pubs for cask beer in Macclesfield.

The ever-changing range of guest beers made the pub a magnet, not just for "real ale buffs" but ordinary drinkers who came to appreciate the range of quality beers, served in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

The atmosphere's still the same – and it will remain so while the pub is run by Brian and Tracey McDermott. The beer range however, will now be something of a shadow of its former self. And why is that? Because Punch Taverns, eyes firmly fixed to the bottom line (no doubt ever conscious of the debt mountain they are carrying) have forced Brian to sign a new agreement which restricts him to just one, that's right, one, guest beer (sourced by him) at any one time.

There will still be a range of good beers available as the 'regulars' will include classics like Taylor's Landlord. They will come at a price though. Punch boss Hugh Osmond has already gone on record as saying that he makes money by buying beer cheaply and selling it on at a high profit - hence a 5p a pint price rise has effectively been forced on Brian by the high prices he now has to pay for his beer.

It really is an indictment of a huge company like Punch that it has no room in its operations for well-run specialist pubs like the Waters Green. Is it greed? Possibly. But more than this it shows an astonishing lack of knowledge of the businesses that it has acquired over the years. Nothing illustrates this better than the insistence that the pubs tried Boddingtons Bitter. "It's a brand leader" was the mantra – oblivious to the fact that most of the Waters Green regulars would rather have their toenails pulled out than drink 'the cream of Manchester'. Unsurprisingly it flopped dismally. The Waters Green is still a good pub and deserves the support of every Opening Times reader. At the same time they may wish to voice their concerns – so why not drop a line to Punch Group chief Hugh Osmond, c/o The Punch Pub Company, Lincoln House, Fradley Park, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 8RZ.

## WHITBREAD QUITS THE PUB TRADE

**O**ne of Britain's oldest brewers is to turn its back on 250 years of history with the sale of its 3,000 pubs.

Whitbread, which last year sold its beer brands and breweries to Interbrew for over £400 million, has announced that it plans to put its pubs up for sale. It will concentrate instead on leisure and restaurant interests, such as Pizza Hut, and hotel chains Marriott and Travel Inns. Whitbread's branded pub-restaurant chains, Beef-eater and Brewer's Fayre, will not be included in the sale – locally that encompasses such outlets as the Micker Brook in Cheadle and the Bamford Arms in Heaviley.

The decision follows last year's humiliating defeat in the battle for Allied-Domecq's 3,500 pubs, which went to Punch Taverns, heavily backed by Bass, for over £2 billion. The pub sale is seen as a move to restore investor confidence in the battered giant, with up to 75 per cent of the estimated £1.5 billion proceeds being returned to shareholders.

Whitbread chief executive David Thomas said the fate of the pubs would be announced in the spring. The company does not rule out the piecemeal sale of the estate, and Mr Thomas said: "We have a list of people who have expressed an interest in the business, and it's the largest list I've ever seen."

Although the sale announcement was not unexpected, CAMRA concerns focus on two key areas.

The first is the future of Whitbread's Hogshead chain of town-centre alehouses, which is a major customer for regional and small independent brewers and cidermakers. While some of these outlets can be mediocre, in the hands of the right licensee they can be impressive outlets – the examples in Didsbury and on High Street in the City Centre, for example.

The second is the fate of the guest ale right introduced by the Beer Orders 10 years ago. Since the sale of the Bass and Allied leased estates, Whitbread tenants have been almost the last licensees to have the right to stock guest ales. While some licensees, such as Alan Preston at the Hinds Head, are secure to some extent with a 20-year lease under their belts, many others may have no such protection. Even Alan may have problems, because the beers he selects from the "Whitbread List" may not be available from the equivalent range of a new purchaser - the limited cask offerings of Punch Taverns & the various Nomura-owned groups make grim reading... Boddingtons, Bass, Theakstons... 'key' brands of poor quality and very little else. The pressure will now be on the Government to look again at the question of guest ale rights for pubco tenants, but frankly, don't hold your breath expecting government action. Another issue will again be the fate of the three remaining brewpubs in the Whitbread estate, including Manchester's Lass O' Gowrie. Following the brewery sale to Interbrew, Whitbread gave assurances that brewing would continue at these sites, but now all bets must be off, at least in the long-term.

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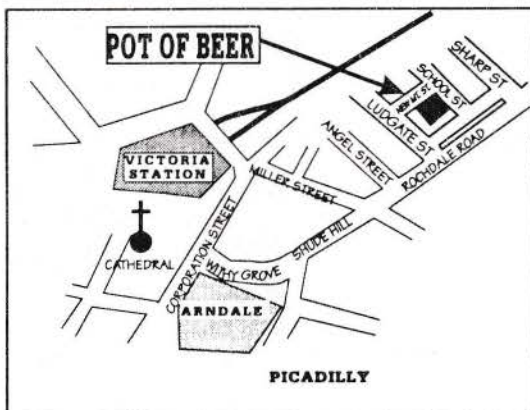


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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The antics of Punch Taverns in their dealings with Brian McDermott and the Waters Green Tavern really do beggar belief.

There they are with a successful business run by an enterprising licensee. So what do they do - the very thing which could undermine that success. And the sad thing is they probably don't have a clue what they have done.

Brainwashed by 'national brands' and 'market leaders', the people at Punch seem incapable of understanding that there are some people out here in the real world who wouldn't wash their dogs in certain 'market leaders'. Yes, even people who actually consider 'national brands' as a reason to avoid pubs not attract them in. There are even people out here who like beers with a lingering aftertaste! Sadly such 'eccentricities' are not part of the world view of the people from Punch.

But let's not be too harsh - after all you can only pity someone like the Punch person who on being told by Brian McDermott that he wanted to stock Landlord, came out with the deathless phrase, "Who brews that?"

You couldn't make it up.

*John Clarke*

### Who will buy....My Wonderful Pub Estate?

Who indeed? In the last weeks a truly unwholesome number of pubs have been put on the market. First was Bass, offering part (all) of their estate, with about 800 out of the 2000 immediately on offer. Then, with unseemly haste, Whitbread put their 2000 pubs on sale (and two 'indicative' offers are already in play from Nomura and the dreaded Alchemy partners). If this isn't enough, Wolverhampton & Dudley, who have clearly given up the fight to stay independent, have placed their 585 tenanted pub estate on the market. Is that it?...No. The last remaining British brewer of any size, ScotCo (Scottish/Newcastle/Courage) have sold 600+ tenancies to a Scottish bank (who plan to sell them on almost at once). Enough, already!

*P.B. Hutchings*

## OPENING TIMES ISSUE 199

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**Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 19!**





## PUB OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2000

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		



**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport.

The Swan With Two Necks has long been one of Stockport's classic pubs, with a superbly unspoiled inter-war interior, with the extensive wood panelling making for a particularly warm and welcoming atmosphere. The top-lit smoke room is arguably one of the best pub rooms in Stockport. It also happens to be owned by Robinson's, our local family brewer.



Despite these plusses, for many years, the pub seemed something of a backwater. It was pleasant enough and the beer was OK, but there was clearly a great deal of unrealised potential. All that changed in December last year with the arrival of Paul and Bev Stanyer, who took on the tenancy after managing the Railway on Portwood since that pub opened as a Porter's house.

The changes that Paul and Bev brought to the 'Swan' weren't revolutionary, but are a classic example of how small things can make a difference – tea and coffee are served all day, red wine is available for those who want it, the pub now opens all day every day, apart from Sundays when the doors close at 4.00pm, and Bev's simple but well considered and genuinely home-cooked menu caters for the extensive lunchtime trade that is the pub's mainstay (try the lasagne made with Old Tom). Unsurprisingly, business has boomed.

And the beer? The range has been extended and the pub is now one of the local flagships for Robinson's beers. Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and the elusive Frederics are the regulars, and these are joined by the new seasonal beers. Hopefully Old Tom will also be on draught for the winter months. The quality is invariably tip-top – Paul's track record at the Railway and his initial weeks at the Swan were enough to secure the pub's entry in the 2001 Good Beer Guide.

For breathing new life into a classic pub and displaying an unwavering commitment to quality at every level make this a very well deserved award. The presentation will be on Wednesday, 22 November when a memorable night is in prospect (particularly if the Old Tom's on by then!). JC.

*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 199:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Dave Hanson, Jim Flynn, Brian Carey, Tim Jones, Steve Bray, Frank Wood, John Tune, Ken Birch, Paul Stanyer, Pete Soane.

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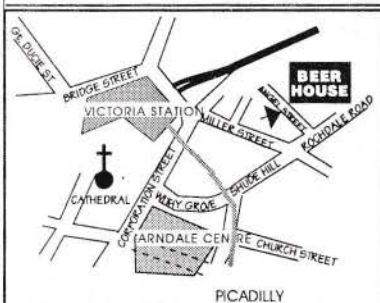
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4





# STAGGER

with Dave Hanson

## The Hyde Road Hike

**T**his evening's sojourn started on Hyde Road in the **Travellers Call**, appropriately a Hydes' house a few yards from the junction with Pottery Lane (the inner ring-road). The Travellers Call has undergone several changes in the past few years, both of licensee as well as decor. Alan and Janice Plimmer had only been in residence for seven weeks when we called although they are no newcomers to the licensed trade, having previously run the Junction a little further along Hyde Road, sadly now closed.

As locals and publicans, the Plimmer's are interested in the history of pubs along Hyde Road. To this end Manchester's picture library has been scoured for as many photos of hostelries as possible (sadly, the majority closed, boarded or bulldozed). These are to be mounted and displayed around the walls of the bar. Unfortunately there are several gaps, so if you have any photos, I'm sure Janice would be interested.

Away with the gloom, and back to the present. The Travellers Call could be described as the archetypal street corner pub. You enter into an L-shaped room, to the left is the main room, the vault, complete with bar, and in front of you is the lounge, which features a welcoming real open fire. Originally these two rooms, each with its own entrance, used to be separated by a screen, but it was removed a few years back. This has allowed the under-utilised lounge to become part of the body of the pub. The decoration is "interesting", including carpeting up to ceiling level on the outside walls (an attempt at insulation apparently). Clientele were mixed in age, and all those drinking real ale were thoroughly enjoying the excellent Hyde's bitter (the only draught ale on offer). Reluctantly we had to leave this very welcoming atmosphere and set off on our journey. Around the corner and along Birch Street and we approach the **Imperial**. Real ale was once available here, but sadly not today, nitro/keg only. Back to Hyde Road, and we poked our noses into the **Nags Head**. Sadly also devoid of real ale.

Never mind, this will allow more time in Robinson's excellent **Coach and Horses** on Belle Vue Street. **DISASTER!** What is this? The doors are closed and a "Tenancy to Let" sign up outside. Under Beryl Lavelle's stewardship the Coach and Horses was almost a permanent Good Beer Guide entry. Thankfully her successors maintained this quality, so what has happened? Hopefully Robinson's will find a landlord/lady (or should that be landperson?) who can continue this record, *and soon*.

We ignored the **Midland** (Bass and keg only) on our right and, taking a short diversion off Hyde Road onto Garratt Way (behind Kwik Save), we entered **The Pineapple**, our second Hydes' pub of the night. This could not be much more different from the Travellers Call if it tried, built in the 60's as part of the area's regeneration programme. By placing the bar in one corner, and the toilets in the opposite corner, the single large room is cleverly broken up into smaller units. Immediately to the right as you enter is the "vault", complete with pool table, while round the corner to the left is the "lounge". Lots of varnished wood is in evidence, including the roof's rafters, which are plainly on view. Is this an architectural nicety, or did they just forget to put the ceiling in! Though not packed (it was only 8.30pm) the Pineapple was busy with a lively mix of patrons. Beers on offer were Mild and Bitter, both rated well above average on our visit.

Back across Garratt Way towards Hyde Road lead us into the **Suburban** our only Lee's house this evening. As part of the regeneration a new lounge was successfully grafted onto the rear of the original pub, which is now the vault. From inside the joint between new and old is virtually invisible. The taste of Lee's beers tend to split people, some thinking it is nectar, others not. However, even the sceptics in our party agreed that the bitter sampled was certainly above average. Mild was on offer, but nobody tried it. The Suburban has also tried some of the Lee's special brews, but none was available this evening. On leaving, we made our way back to Hyde Road through the substantial thicket/copse/woodland which lies between the Suburban and Hyde Road. Warning: If you follow our footsteps at night, the "shortcut" through the trees is "interesting" in the dark as there is no street lighting.

A short walk along Hyde Road brought us to the **Plough**, our only Robinson's house. On entering we were faced with a substantial wooden door. Through this you enter a tiled hall, with a small serving hatch to the right, and two rooms to left and straight on. Instead of passing through the main door we went right into the main bar. The Plough is another pub which has had a new extension added, the difference being the date was in the 1890's (and it looks as though it has not been altered since!). Acres of Victorian plasterwork (sadly the chance to emphasised this by sympathetic painting has been missed) and woodwork are on view. Opening Times' editor burst forth with an orgasmic flurry of superlatives about the rich heritage embodied in this pub. Fixed wooden seating around the walls marks the Plough out as a "basic boozier". Interestingly there was, until recently, an off sales department complete with its own entrance and handpumps.

As we sat drinking our well kept pints of Robinson's mild and bitter the landlord removed the (London) dartboard and vanished into the back with it. Most unusual we thought, until he emerged clutching a still dripping log-end. This is the rare Manchester dartboard, which is not only much smaller in diameter than the standard board, but is made out of a solid plank of wood. <Lancashire accent on> Ee bah, non o' yor Suthen rubbish rand eer<accent off>.

Alas we had to move on, so travelling further along Hyde Road we arrived at the **Lord Nelson**, which on the outside at least purports to be a Wilson's house. Sadly neither Wilson's (or what is now passed off as Wilson's) nor any other real ale was available.

The diversion off Hyde Road to visit the **Vale Cottage** on Croft Bank is well worth making. An easy way is to cut down the ginnel immediately to the right of the Lord Nelson, which leads to the side door. The Vale Cottage is set in sylvan surroundings and had masses of hanging baskets and window boxes all around the outside, creating a country cottage feel. Inside the beams in the ceiling added to the rural feel. The pub overlooks the Gore Brook, and if you visit in daylight, the Arcadian view could be almost anywhere but the depths of Gorton. The place was very busy, so having obtained our pints of Webster's we retreated to a corner to savour them. And yes we did savour them, for these turned out to be the (joint) second best beer of the evening! If the Vale Cottage can turn Webster's into a pleasant pint, how do all the other pubs manage to ruin it? (I will admit to bias, as Webster's (or was it Ramsden's?) was what I cut my drinking teeth on, but that was in Yorkshire and a long time ago.)

Time was pressing, so out of the front door and back to Hyde Road. This can be accomplished by either re-tracing your steps past the Lord Nelson (streetlights) or taking the snicket straight outside the front door (darkness). In the light this is a pleasant walk through the woods (yes, it is quite a thicket) over the Gore Brook, unfortunately at night it was a semi-random wander between trees. Turn left along Hyde Road, passing the former site of Hyde Road railway station and you will soon see the **Friendship** on your right. This ex-Marston's house, now owned by Banks's, is a former Pub of The Month. This evening things were very quiet, in fact we more than doubled the clientele. Both Marston's bitter and Banks's mild were on offer, unfortunately both were below average. Internally the Friendship is divided into several rooms, and exhibits much wood panelling. To the right as you enter is the vault, complete with dartboard and proper dominoes tables. To the left is the main lounge, which sometimes has live entertainment. Past the bar and towards the back there are further drinking areas.

To reach our final port-of-call we backtracked towards Manchester along Hyde Road to reach the **Wagon and Horses**. This is a substantial Holt's house, with the vault on the left and lounge to the right. As would be expected at 10.30pm on a Friday evening the place was very busy, but service was fast and efficient as ever in a Holt's house. Mild and bitter were both available, with the bitter being judged (by the shortest of whiskers) the best beer of the night. The lounge must originally have been several smaller rooms, which have now been knocked together. Some of the dividing walls have been retained, so there are still a few nooks and crannies in which you can hide yourself. The vault is a single room, which on match days (or other sporting events) is dominated by a giant TV screen.

As people began to drift away for their various trains and buses I made my final few notes about the evening (pity they made no sense when I read them back the following day!). What a contrast to the Longsight-Levenshulme stagger, but a mile or so to the West. Real ale readily available, the majority of it well above average and no less than seven breweries represented. Making my way home, replete with ale, I thought back to the Travellers Call and the multitude of pubs shown in the old photos and reflected "This must have been a fearsome stagger a few years ago!"







Mike & Chris  
welcome you to the

# Kings Arms

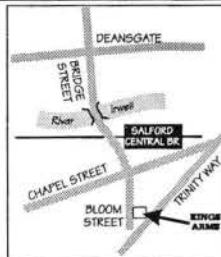
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## LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From: Peter Edwardson, Secretary Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA:

In your editorial in the October edition of "OT" you refer to "the administrative heart of Stockport CAMRA's Branch Committee neglecting to retain a copy of the proofs" of the 2001 Good Beer Guide entries, with the result that you did not have a list of all the pubs included.

It has never been the practice to take copies of the proofs due to the limited turnaround time available. However, as a full list of all the selected entries was contained in the minutes of February's branch meeting, a copy of which is retained by me, there was no need to do so. The information would have been readily available had it occurred to either of the editors (one of whom lives within five minutes' walk of my house) to ask me. It is regrettable that you should choose to air this matter in an editorial without first discussing it with me or any of the other Branch officers. You should always think long and hard before washing CAMRA's dirty linen in public, especially if the dirty linen in question turns out to be your own.

Ed (1), the Branch Chairman wishes to apologise to Mr Edwardson, for the offence caused, and wishes Ed(2) to refrain from long winded replies. Ed(2), however wishes to point out the following facts. Opening Times is now the largest circulation monthly regional CAMRA magazine, and covers many areas outside the immediate branch. I was well aware, as was Ed(1) of the pubs selected in February by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, so there was no need whatsoever to consult Peter's minutes. It was for pubs in Trafford & Hulme, High Peak, Central & South(ish) Manchester outside the branch area that I required the info. None of this, of course is anything to do with Peter's responsibilities to his local branch. Up to last year, however, a copy of the proofs (which cover all of Greater Manchester) WAS always made available to me, usually through the offices of the Branch Chairman (who I included in my phrase 'administrative heart'). Last year a copy of the relevant Good Beer Guide materialised before we went to print with the Good Beer Guide Feature in Opening Times, so there was no problem. I am sorry if Peter is upset, but there is plenty of time for a copy to be made - I can do one at home if required, and as Peter so rightly says, I live but five minutes away. Perhaps the positive upshot of all this is that next year this farrago will be borne in mind. I am delighted to confirm that all the unpaid local committee members, including Peter, do a fine job, and they must all be thanked for the hard work and (unpaid) time they contribute. The apology in the editorial was directed (in a tongue-in-cheek humorous tone) at the Opening Times advertisers who were not featured due to our lack of information. I'm afraid Peter has never understood my sense of humour, and clearly missed the point, which was not aimed at any individual. So, Peter, sorry for the offence inadvertently given. Ed(2)

From Bert Salmon, via e-mail:

I always look forward to Ken's column - October's was one of his best ever! - the cherry beer sauce was spectacular. I recently purchased a terracotta hen brick from a car boot sale



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and was wondering if he has any beer-related recipes which could be used with it. If he has I would be most interested.

From Mathew Chapman, via e-mail

After reading the e-mail from "Concerned Drinker" (Opening Times No. 198) I felt very surprised. Are there two Hogsheads on High Street? The Hogshead I drink in regularly, and by that I mean between 2 and 5 nights a week, rarely serves a bad pint, always has more than one member of staff on duty and certainly doesn't charge London prices. All pubs occasionally serve a bad beer, but I find it hard to believe that a complaint would not receive an immediate response. Some bar staff might not have the experience to deal with "Concerned"'s complaint, but a polite request to see the manager would surely have solved his problem (and as the manager lives on the premises he is almost always available) The Hogshead on High Street is one of the best city centre pubs in Manchester because of its reasonable prices, friendly and hard working staff and the approachable manager. I hope that "Concerned" never has to drink in London, as he would surely be shocked and distressed by the quality of service and cost of his pint. The beer in the High Street Hogshead was certainly fine on my last two visits, but £2.10+ for beer is, sadly, in line with the prices I, at least, tend to pay in London. Ed(2)



The Arden Arms (Millgate, Stockport) is a classic pub by any definition. Apart from a sensitive alteration to bring an old kitchen into public use, this Grade II listed building has remained essentially unchanged for 150 years or more. So it was with considerable sadness that local drinkers watched as the pub entered a spiral of decline, culminating in the eviction of one set of tenants by Robinson's. Happily those days are now firmly in the past and the pub has been restored to its former glory - a much used cliché which just happens to be true in the case of the Arden Arms

Those responsible for this transformation are Joe Quinn and Steve King who took over the pub in late 1999. They made an immediate start with a thorough redecoration and spruce up, and followed this with a comprehensive programme of restoration which has now sees the pub gleam and sparkle much as it did during its heyday under the long-term tenancy of Jack May. Joe and Steve made their names when they owned That Café in Levenshulme, which became something of a gastronomic oasis under their tenure. Not surprisingly then, a food operation formed part of their plans for the Arden Arms, and this has now come on stream. It has not been feasible to go for something on the same scale as That Café, but the same attention to detail and the highest quality is evident in the rather sophisticated menu now available.

Sandwiches are £3.25 and include Roast Beef with Mustard Mayo, or Roast Peppers, Feta Cheese and Pesto in the range of seven fillings. Home made soup is £2.25 or you can have this in a combo with a sandwich for a fiver. There are a range of hot sandwiches as well, some on regular bread and others on ciabatta, and these include fillings like Roasted Peppers & Mozzarella (£3.25) or Minted Lamb Steak (£4.25). All Day Breakfasts can be had for £4.25 or £5.50 for the Premium, including smoked salmon; there is also an interesting range of side orders and nibbles. The highlight, though, are the daily specials. At the moment these are the same each day and include Grilled Sirloin, mixed peppercorn sauce and new potatoes (£5.95), Mushroom and Red Wine Lasagne (£3.75), Fillet of Smoked Trout and Mixed Salad (£4.25). I chose the sausage, mash and caramelised onions at £4.25, and wasn't disappointed. Succulent butchers sausages, creamy mash and a huge heap sweet, brown onions made for a filling and satisfying dish, made all the more enjoyable it must be said by the excellent background music. There's a soul boy at large in the Arden Arms and today, unless I'm much mistaken, Soul Survivors 2 was being played. I finished my main course to Tony Clarke's 'Landslide' and pudding, Hot Fudge Sundae (£2.75 and worth every penny) arrived to the accompaniment of 'The Contours' fabulous 'Baby Hit And Run'.

The beer was superb, too. Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters Mild are on handpump and the quality these days is second to none.

Joe and Steve tell me that trade, particularly at lunchtimes, is building steadily. I'm not surprised - Stockport is blessed with more than its share of good pubs and many serve good food too but the quality both of what's on the plate and how it looks make the Arden Arms really stand out. If you've not tried it yet, it's a must; if you have you'll know what I mean and almost certainly be going back.

JC.

The Arden Arms is at 23 Millgate Stockport and serves lunch every day between noon and 2.30pm. Phone 0161 480 2185.



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**Vultures Circle Wolves**

After months of hoping the circling predators would go away, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries (WDB) has now announced a 'strategic review' that could result in part or all of the company's business being put up for sale. This really does look like the end-game for the Wolverhampton-based regional giant with eventual dismemberment being the most likely outcome.

While the breweries in Wolverhampton and Burton (the former Marston's plant) look safe, it is highly likely that the other two breweries - the recently acquired Mansfield Brewery and Cameron's in Hartlepool are now doomed. The tied estate is likely to end up with one or more pub companies, Wolves have now announced that their tenanted estate (580+ pubs) is to be sold - Pubmaster and two other groups including 'bank' owned pub companies have already let their interest become known. What this means for the future of local WDB pubs such as the Station and Royal Oak in Didsbury and the Red Lion in Withington is unclear. This saga still has some way to run before the outcome is known and we await developments with interest.

**Cloudy Marbles**

The Marble Brewery's new range of wholly organic and vegan beers was officially launched on 10 October at the Bar in Chorlton, as part of the Chorlton-based 'fringe' to the Manchester Food & Drink Festival.

There has clearly been some tweaking of the beers since the initial tasting at the Marble Arch, reported in September's OT. N/4 (or Chorlton Hazy) and Cloudy Marble were both clean, refreshing beers while the Uncut Amber (previously Amber Kitchen Ale) was a distinct improvement, although some feel that it may have lost some of its distinctiveness. Old Lag, the name given to the 5% premium bitter, was enjoyably bitter and a perfectly acceptable replacement for the Liberty IPA. All four beers were hazy, to a greater or lesser extent, rather than cloudy and should have little difficulty in gaining widespread acceptance (although a recent encounter with the same beers at the Marble Arch was less satisfactory, finding them more cloudy and less distinctive). Somewhat cloudier was the Chocolate Heavy (5.5%, and a beer originally earmarked for the 'Old Lag' appellation). This is an enjoyable beer, currently brewed using organic cocoa powder, but which should get even better when brewer Mark Dade is able to use organic chocolate malt instead.

The launch of these beers is a brave move, which can only be applauded, and deserves to succeed. Mark Dade told OT that the five beers were brewed using just two types of organic malt and one hop variety, Hallertau, albeit from two sources, in Germany and New Zealand. To produce a high quality, varied range from such limited resources really is a tribute to Mark's skill - it will be fascinating to see what he comes up with when more organic ingredients become available.

**Family Seasonals**

The next range of seasonal beers from our local family brewers is out this month, and all have a suitably wintry feel. Lees are producing Plum Pudding, a 4.8 per cent rich, dark beer "brewed with a hint of fruit especially for the festive season". Lees' seasonal beers have been very impressive this year so this should be one to look out for. As ever, Rain Bar (Great Bridgewater Street, City Centre) will be a guaranteed outlet.

Hydes' are also in festive mode with Rocket Fuel, another dark beer, this time at 5 per cent. This is being brewed using roasted and black malts "to provide masses of strength and flavour for those cold winter evenings". Not all of Hydes' pubs take their seasonals but the Nursery (Green Lane, Heaton Norris) will certainly have the beer.





Robinson's are following up the hugely successful Coopers Bell with the festive Robin Bitter. This comes in at 4.5 per cent and is described as rich, dark and full-bodied "with a distinctive roasted malt character complimented by the vague hint of liquorice". More and more Robbies pubs are taking these beers - the Caledonia (Warrington Street, Ashton, the Swan With Two Necks (Princes Street, Stockport) and the Castle Hotel (Oldham Street, Manchester) are guaranteed outlets. The follow up for January and February will be Samuel Oldknow, which we understand may be a 3.5 per cent dark mild-style beer. Robinson's tell us that the introduction of these seasonal beers has led to an increase in cask ale sales. While Hatters Mild and Best Bitter have taken a dip in some outlets, overall there has been no impact on mainstream sales, with the seasonals seeming to attract converts from lager and Guinness drinkers. Good news indeed. The Robinson's annual Bar & Cellar competition is also approaching its conclusion and we hope to have details of the winners next month.



**Micro Matters**

As ever, our local micro brewers continue to produce a stream of one-offs and specials of the highest quality.

November's special from Pictish Brewery is Golden Gauntlet, a 4 per cent beer brewed with 30% rye malt. It will be slightly darker than the popular Brewers Gold and, as we have come to expect from Pictish, it will also be 'quite bitter'. The superb Pictish Porter is also back in production for the winter season. Brewer 'Sooty' Sutton tells us that he is to produce a second beer exclusively for the Crown Inn at Bacup, this time a 5 per cent IPA-style beer.

Phoenix Brewery continues to produce the goods. OT recently tried 'Rip Rap', a stunningly good hoppy premium bitter. Navy (3.8 per cent) is now a permanent addition to the range - and is a fixture on the bar of the Kings Arms (Bloom Street, Salford) alongside Pictish Brewers Gold. Out this month are Snowbound (4.3) and Flash Flood (4.1). Also due out as we went to press was an as yet unnamed exceptionally dark 4.8 per cent beer which has been brewed with large amounts of black malt (our lips are sealed as to how this came about!). Meanwhile, it's 'nearly there' for the Altrincham Brewing Company. Once the paperwork is completed, Dave Ward can start brewing on the new plant installed at the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham. As we went to press the plan was to begin brewing in early November and launch on 11th with, hopefully, a mild, a bitter and a porter. If all goes according to plan we'll have a full report next month.

**And Then You Go And Spoil It All By Doing Something Stupid Like...**

Cool Cask in a can. Yes, that's right - after winning plaudits for a very welcome attempt to boost the cask ale market with their new 'Cool Cask' Theakstons Bitter, Scottish Courage are now muddying the waters, and throwing away the goodwill generated, by brining out a canned version of the same product. Not only that but the publicity material seems deliberately designed to blur the edges between the handpulled cask beer and the processed canned version. It bumbles on about getting the same taste of cask beer at home and even the packaging sales very close to the wind, with the words 'Theakstons' and 'Cool Cask' to the fore and separated in small lettering with the words 'all the taste of'. CAMRA nationally has accused Scottish Courage of betrayal following the canned beer's launch. Head of Campaigns, Mike Benner, said "This is very disappointing. How can it be real ale? At the time of Cool Cask's launch we felt very positive about Scottish Courage's activities. Now we feel somewhat betrayed by a claim that the canned version will taste the same as the cask version."

"Its launch in a can destroys the very uniqueness that makes the original so special. All the efforts of brewers to develop a cask conditioned beer that, through its consistency, and low temperature, will appeal to many, has been destroyed." It also goes without saying that the very fact that Scottish Courage are able to make these claims about the canned version speaks volumes about the intrinsic qualities, or lack of them (!), of the cask product itself.



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# Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



**F**or as long as I have been reporting on darts (almost ten years), I have been covering the exploits of Tony O'Shea. For that length of time - and longer - the Stockport based darts player has been knocking on the door of the big time. Myself, and others, have been calling on the powers that be to award Tony a chance at international level. So far all these calls have fallen on deaf ears. But recently Tony has taken the bull by the horns and has started to travel the world in order to gain the necessary recognition. A trip to Norway saw Tony reach the final of the Men's Pairs in the Norwegian Open. Tony's partner was Rochdale's Les Fitton, who has really made a big impact in the last couple of years. Les has already won his England cap, and appeared on BBC in the Embassy World Professional, on Sky in the World Matchplay and Eurosport in the World Masters in the last twelve months. In a thrilling final, Tony and Les went down to Ian Eames and teenager Matthew Chapman, losing by 3 legs to 5. It was a pretty strong field with international players like Nick Gedney, Robbie Widdows, England captain Martin Adams, current World Master Andy Fordham, former World champion Steve Beaton and Belgian international Erik Clarys all falling by the wayside. It brings Tony that one step closer to achieving his ambition and hitting the big time. This column will support him all the way. Good luck Tony!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Talking of Les Fitton, he is becoming quite a partner to Stockport players. After partnering O'Shea in Norway, he will be competing for the Men's Pairs title at the Embassy Gold Cup in Stoke with his Lancashire county team-mate Darryl Fitton (no relation) as his

partner. Let's hope that they meet with similar success. Incidentally Ronnie Baxter will represent Lancashire in the Men's singles, while Lisa Stephens will represent the Red Rose in the Ladies' singles and partner Flo Bell in the Pairs. Our own Gill Ball (paired with former international Jane Stubbs) will represent Cheshire in the Pairs. The county's other representatives will be Gary Welding; Lorraine Abley and Phil Merryweather and Steve Roberts. Favourite to take the titles will be Ronnie Baxter (Lancs) or Shayne Burgess (London) in the Men's competition. The women's title should be a tight call, with Crissy Howat (Cumbria), Mandy Solomons (London) and Trina Gulliver (Warwickshire) all in the frame. I would not bet against the two Fittons in the men's pairs, but they are likely to find a challenge from the Yorkshire pairing of Denis Hickling and John Walton. Gill and Jane can expect a tough time in the ladies pairs with Gulliver and Jackson (Warwicks), Geaney and Littler (Somerset), Dyer and Wright (Middlesex) and Howat and Johnson (Cumbria) all strong pairings.

Ladies darts is getting very exciting at the moment. For the first time there will be a Women's World Championship at the Embassy next January. However, only four players will be competing! The three leading ranked female players will automatically qualify, plus one who will emerge from a qualifying competition. The nature of the women's games means that Crissy Howat, Trina Gulliver and leading Dutch player Francis Hoenselaar are already guaranteed a semi final appearance. It is not before time that the women have a World championship, but surely a four player tournament is not giving the women's game the respect it deserves.

One area where the women are certainly in front of the blokes is at Cheshire Super League level. It is a fact that Stockport has two teams in the Ladies section, whereas the men can only manage one. The venues also stand comparison. The girls play out of the Florist and Stockport Social Club, whilst the men have their home fixtures at the Bobby Peel! No further comment is needed.

BC



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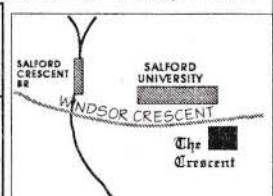
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**Afternoon Delight**

Earlier this year, the Beer Monster pointed out that many pubs that stay open all day are very quiet during the afternoon, and some of the people who go in them at that time are ones you'd prefer to avoid. However, the very fact that so many pubs are open in the afternoon represents a complete turnaround from the situation shortly after all-day opening was first permitted. A lot of pubs took the opportunity actually to open shorter hours, taking the view that if there was hardly anyone in between 2.30 and 3, or 5.30 and 7, there wasn't much point in opening then at all. Indeed, I remember writing a piece complaining that it was hard to find anywhere open in central Manchester or Stockport during the afternoon, especially on Saturdays.

This has steadily changed, as licensees found that, while there might not be much trade in the afternoon, in areas where there was a lot of competition they were losing business at other times by not being open. Even if you only found a pub shut on one occasion when you wanted to go there, it would damage the its reputation and make you less likely to call there again. This process has been accelerated by the opening of more and more outlets of the "superpub" chains, which all open all day. In fact, in a lot of town centre pubs, there's now a strong trade throughout the day, and the ones which are slack are those on the fringes that are more dependent on lunchtime trade from offices and don't have the pedestrian traffic past the door all day long.

When all-day opening was first introduced, there was a widespread fear that groups of hard-drinking men would go on all-day benders and end up causing mayhem. In practice, this just doesn't happen, apart perhaps in a few out-of-the-way social clubs and estate pubs. The ritual is to go out on Saturday night for a skinful, and not to spoil it by drinking too much earlier in the day. All-day opening has, overall, led to a more civilised drinking culture, with many pubs doing good business in the late afternoon, in a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere, and no evidence of large numbers of drunks staggering around in the early evening. The handful of people who do end up in that state would, even before, have been in the pub until 3 pm and queueing up outside at 5.30, and probably now drink no more than they used to. Oddly, being drunk in public may be socially acceptable at midnight, but it certainly isn't at 6 pm.

**Goodbye Portwood?**

I was sorry to hear that the Brinnington Inn, one of Stockport's unsung decent locals, had been sold to retail developers. This is yet another pub to close in the Portwood area, following in the footsteps of the Stanley Arms and the Coach & Horses, with a large question mark hanging over the Railway and, presumably, the Old King and the Queens too. Within a generation the area has been transformed from one of Stockport's most vibrant industrial and residential zones to what is basically a giant retail park.

But, by the mid-eighties, the area was run-down and largely derelict. While you may not be a fan of retail developments like the Peel Centre, they are undeniably popular. So the question must be asked whether it would really be better for Stockport if these shops were in an out-of-town location like Handforth Dean, rather than next door to the town centre where they can potentially bring more trade to the existing shops and pubs.

And I wonder whether a pub that catered more for the demands of visitors to the Peel Centre, offering all-day dining and family facilities, might actually do good business on that site. Towns have to move with the times, and so does the licensed trade.

Curmudgeon Online: [www.curmudgeon.co.uk](http://www.curmudgeon.co.uk)

**OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS**

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 25cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

**5 Years Ago**

by Phil Levison **NOVEMBER '95**

**N**o sooner had the previous month's Opening Times appeared, than the local brewing and pub scene was shaken to its foundations - it was a DOUBLE WHAMMY headline - "Allied axe Warrington while Greenall's grab Boddies." Carlsberg-Tetley were closing the site at Warrington - 240 jobs lost, and the end of 130 years of brewing at Dallam Lane. Next day, Greenall's announced an agreed bid for Boddington's - this would result in 500 job losses, and the closure of all existing Boddington Group offices.

The month's editorial comments included an apology for being (a) slightly late, (b) slightly short, (c) no internet guide, and (d) a bit rough round the edges. This was blamed on various flu bugs, viruses and bronchial infections which had attacked the production team, and even the laser printer and computer had their own sort of problems.

Burtonwood was the latest brewery to produce seasonal, or special edition ales. First in this Masterclass series was Almond's Original Stout 4.2%, followed by Tom Thumper 4.5%, and Hoppers' Bitter 4.2%. In the past, the beer range had always been somewhat limited, but after the completion of the new brewhouse in 1990, things had started to change. A cask version of Top Hat had appeared and it was followed by the popular Buccaneer 5.2%. The Burtonwood began to brew for Whitbread - Chesters Best Bitter and Oldham Brewery Mild were being produced.

A bit closer to home, there was more news of new beers - Hydes latest was Forge Ale, but what was probably more interesting was the possible re-introduction of XXXX Winter Warmer. Test brewing to the original recipe at 6.8% was in progress, but many remembered the 8% version, which was brewed for a much shorter time. Boddington's successful Export 5%, originally available only as a processed bottled beer, had finally made its appearance on draught, at the Parrswood in Didsbury. But it was keg, presumably aiming to compete with Caffreys. Because of a current demand for cask-conditioned, pale golden beers, it was thought that perhaps Whitbread had missed a golden (as it were) opportunity.

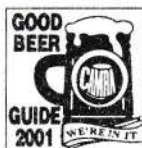
Finally, several City Centre items from "Manchester Matters". The first Rat & Parrot in the region had opened on the corner of Old Bank Street and Half Moon Street, in the premises of the former Barnaby Rudge steak house. It was perhaps more upmarket than the facetious name might have suggested.

Sinclair's dropped Museum Ale, for the very good reason that Sam Smith's stopped brewing it. (Today, Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter is relatively good value at £1.36 a pint, which compares with £2 for Draught Bass in the Wellington next door.)

The Harp & Shamrock, (now the Pot of Beer) just off Rochdale Road, was reported to be, perhaps courageously, selling Banks's Mild on handpump. Also, the pub was for sale.



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## HISTORY IN A GLASS – HOPS, CHICKENS & PURITANS

A Wry look at the History of British Drinking by Pete Soane (Part 3)

**T**he hop, *Humulus Lupulus* in Latin, may have been introduced into England by the Romans who cultivated it as a vegetable and ate the shoots as we eat asparagus today. Throughout the fifteenth century however, the noble hop, so essential in the making of beer, was despised and at times prohibited.

Although used in brewing before the Norman invasion, the marriage of Edward III to Phillipa, daughter of the Count of Holland, was responsible for the introduction of hops on a much larger scale. Hopped beer was imported into Britain at Winchelsea to satisfy the thirst of Flemish weavers encourage to settle here by Phillipa.

*"The Hop for his profit, it strengthen drink and it flavoureth malt; And being well brewed, long kept it will last, And drawing abide if ye draw not too fast."* Thomas Tusser (1520-1580)

Gradually prejudice against hopped beer began to lessen, but even in the eighteenth century some remote rural areas still clung to their unhopped ale. Beer (ie ale with hops) was for a long time considered a cold, thin drink while it was felt that ale was warm, sustaining and more wholesome.

Even a Frenchman was moved to comment in 1620, "While Englishmen drank ale they were strong, brawny and able men and could draw an arrow an ell (45 inches) long, but when they fell to wine and beer they were found to be impaired in the strength and age."

But for all that, hops were here to stay and in 1591 the export volume of just 20 breweries along the Thames was about 26,400 barrels, big business, which caused concern about the quantity of wood leaving the country.

As the Renaissance swept through Europe, new discoveries were being made and new heights reached in art, music, medicine and architecture – and in England men were trying to work out how to distil a chicken. Two acrimonious schools developed, one advocating throat slitting, the other neck wringing as the method of despatch prior to cutting the unfortunate creature into small pieces.

In the search for the ultimate elixir, *aurum potable*, the alchemist's laboratory bore a close resemblance to the distillery and even egg yolks, scorpions and worms were distilled. The water of life, *Aqua Vitae*, however was usually made from distilling the dregs from the brewer's mash tun.

In 1572 an Aqua Vitae house opened in barking and by 1584 three more houses were licensed in Salisbury. In London by 1600 as many as 200 houses were distilling and when the Admiralty decided that spirits' lack of bulk and long life were just what the navy needed, the industry really took off.

When William of Orange came to the throne in 1688, he brought with him a Dutchman's drink, gin. William, a Protestant, passed laws to encourage the distillation of gin in England, mainly to end the brandy trade with Catholic France. By 1751 gin consumption had reached over seven million gallons, one in four houses in London was a dram shop and most of the population was half-drunk.

Toward the end of the 16th Century an increasingly strident voice was being heard, that of the Puritan and although greed, sloth and other sins were attacked, drunkenness was their favourite target. "What immoderate drinking in every place! How they flock to the tavern! 'Tis now come to pass that he is no gentleman, a very milksop, that will not drink fir for no company...How they love a man that will be drunk, crown him and honour him for it."

Even the Royal court drank to excess, offending King Christian of Denmark while visiting James I in 1606. "Those whom I never could get to taste good liquor now follows the fashion and wallow in beastly delights. The ladies abandon sobriety and are seen to roll around in intoxication."

Queen Elizabeth, the previous monarch, and a drinker of great repute did not approve of such drunkenness. Asking why a visiting lord was late and hearing the reply, "I, faith, madam, drinking your majesty's health.", she replied, "So I thought, and I am sorry for it, for I never fare worse than when my health is drunk."

The Puritans complained that the number of alehouses was growing out of control. In 1585 Westminster should have had a maximum of 100 alehouses. By 1631 there were 550. During the reign of James I on a walk from Charing Cross to the Tower, one would find a tavern every 80 yards including such names as the Bear & Harrow, the Harry Head and the Shippe of War.

Even after the Civil War toasting remained an entrenched and

popular custom. In 1657, "We drink as if we were nothing but sponges to draw up moisture. Would to God this were only a masculine sin but it hath spread itself to both sexes, we among ourselves find a multitude of those intemperate sottish women, which will quaff with the most riotous, and give pledge for pledge and take of cup for cup. Oh, blemish of the nation, and affrightment to the very heavens."

The Puritans certainly had their work cut out but after the death of Cromwell and the Restoration the first coaching routes were opened and the great age of the tavern was about to begin...



Last weekend (19-22 Oct) saw a very successful N/4 World Tour Festival, with all the pubs contributing innovative beer and/or food menus, which I only had time to have the merest taste of. From a personal point of view the Beer Banquet and Tasting was highly successful and two points particularly pleased me – both involving experiments.

Firstly, I couldn't get any cherries or Rodenbach so the sweet course (Cherries Romanoff – using Port, cream and Rodenbach) looked doomed! However the Duchesse du Bourgoigne proved even more suitable and plums, raspberries and grapes combined to give me another new dish.

Secondly, I had been requested to get some Polish porter in and the Zywicc at 9.3% made a surprisingly apt accompaniment to the sweet: so this will be this month's simple dish.

Before I proceed, I would like to mention a second Beer Banquet on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November at 8.00pm at the Pot of Beer. Places are limited, so if you would like to attend please ring me Ken Birch on 0160 834 8579. Now the recipe:

### Ingredients – for 4 people

1 punnet dark plums  
6oz raspberries  
2 lbs grapes  
1 pint double cream  
1 x 25cl bottle Duchesse du Bourgoigne  
2-3 tablespoons caster sugar  
1 glass Port  
a little lemon juice

### Method

Halve and de-stone the plums and place in a large mixing bowl together with the grapes and raspberries. Squirt 4 to 5 drops of lemon juice over the fruit. Pour in the port and mix well. Then open the beer and leave for one hour – during which time you should place the bowl of fruit in a refrigerator. After 50 minutes start whipping the cream with a hand whisk, noting that whisking should be continuous. The cream should be able to stand in stiff peaks when the whisk is withdrawn. Take half the cream and using a large spoon gently combine it with the fruit, at the same time, and bit by bit, adding the beer. Place this mixture in a serving dish and gently smooth the rest of the cream on top.

Some of the grapes and raspberries could be saved for decoration and, as a final embellishment, a little of the cream could be mixed with red food colouring and topped on to the tips of the cream. Serve with Zywicc porter or Ceres stout – believe me it works! Zywicc Porter is available from Carringtons Angel St. Manchester 4 or the Polish Beer & Vodka Co, Manchester 19 Tel.. 443 3001 Duchesse du Bourgoigne is available at the Bar Fringe, Carringtons, or through Euro-Beer 23 New Mount Street M4 4DE Twel. 953 4063. Ceres Stout is available through Netto or ring Cains in Liverpool.

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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



## BREWING WAS A WAY OF LIFE

**I** have been very gratified with the comment and feedback I have received since the publication of my book "Brewing was a way of life" in 1999. This has further stimulated my mind into dwelling on the tremendous changes that have taken place in the brewing trade since I joined it in January 1948.

At the time there were well over 20 brewers trading in the Manchester area who were all members of the Manchester and District Brewers Society. The majority of these were situated in Manchester, Salford and Stockport. However, owing to mergers and takeovers there are only about four of them whose names would be known and recognised by the modern generation.

There was a lot of competition just after the second world war and in the 1950s but the trade was much friendlier in my view than it is today. Draught beer was of course all cask conditioned and racked in wooden casks. If you had a technical problem it was easy to pick up the phone and speak to your opposite number in another company for advice.

I know that during the 1939 war Chesters Brewery at Ardwick was in trouble with its yeast and asked if we could let them have some of ours which my father duly did as we had a special rapport with all the 'other' Hydes at Chesters as dealt with in my book. Then just after the war in 1949 when we were having problems with our yeast we decided to ask Chesters if we could have some of our own yeast back again. Our head brewer at the time, Richard Davies, sent me over to the Ardwick brewery as a young man to collect the yeast in a stainless steel barm can. Needless to say I wasn't allowed to return to Moss Side without a sampling session in the Brewer's office at Chesters. However when I did return to our brewery the new yeast strain was pitched straight away in to a brew of mild ale. Unfortunately this did not solve all our problems as the resulting brew tasted just like Chesters beer and was unacceptable to our customers. I am not criticising Chesters beer as after all they sold far more beer than we did, but nevertheless Chesters beer had a distinctive flavour which was different from most other Manchester beers in those days. If you liked their beers you probably wouldn't enjoy ours and vice versa.

There has been a lot of publicity comparatively recently in the press about William Hague and his consumption of 14 pints of beer a day whilst he had a holiday job as a youngster working on a brewer's dray. Well I think all breweries today are "dry" for obvious reasons but prior to the breathalyser there is no doubt that this sort of consumption was very much the norm in that particular job. Not at all easy to understand by those who are not beer drinkers or easy to defend. Times were very different, there was a lot less traffic and waggons didn't move very fast.

The first takeover bid I remember in our area was made by Wilsons Brewery of Newton Heath in 1949 when they absorbed Walker and Homfrays of Salford. This quite shattered people in the trade at the time as there had been a sort of moratorium on this sort of activity because of the war. A decade later in 1959 Charles Clore's bid for Watney Mann really did come as a big surprise and completely upset the industry. Although this bid was unsuccessful it was the catalyst for promoting consolidation in the brewing industry throughout the country. As I mentioned at the beginning this has resulted in the disappearance of many well known breweries in the Manchester area which is a great loss to all of us. From a national point of view, excluding microbrewers, there are now fewer breweries than ever and even less real choice.

It is important I think that local breweries like my own company continue to thrive. They do have a great future I am sure.

NEAL HYDE

Brewing Was a Way of Life

The Story of Hydes' Anvil Brewery by Neal Hyde  
ISBN 1-872424-76-7

Copies available through bookshops or direct from the publisher Bridge Books, 61 Park Avenue, Wrexham LL12 7AW at £9.99 plus postage and packing £1.50. Can also be obtained from Beer in Print, Long High Top, Heptonstall, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 7PF.

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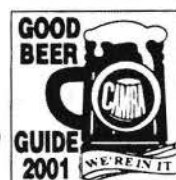
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CAMPAIGN  
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**T**his month's Desert Island choice comes from Jim Flynn, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA and Organiser of the annual Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Already armed with the current Good Beer Guide, the Champion Beer of Britain, Moorhouses Black Cat, and the Champion Winter Beer, Robinson's Old Tom, these are his five other choices: Having been asked to pick my Desert Island Beers by the editor, I found how indecisive I have become in my old age. After much deliberation, I have picked five beers that have had a real affect on my life as a beer drinker.

My first beer is the one that really switched me on to drinking real ale when I moved to Nottingham at the age of 18 to go to university. In the days when the campus bars sold nothing but keg Tartan Bitter, Nottingham itself was one of the last real ale havens. Local brewers Home, Shipstones and Hardy & Hansons owned most of the pubs, with the latter's Kimberley Ales being the best of all. **Kimberley Bitter**, which I first tasted at the Crown in Beeston changed my perspective on drinking and is still one of my favourites.

Having found that beer could actually have taste, and didn't have to make you bloated after a couple of pints, I needed to find the good stuff near where I lived outside term time. Walking across the fields from where we lived near Stoke-on-Trent, my brother and I found the Isaac Walton in Cresswell. The licensee was old codger whose idea of customer care was sitting in the corner with the ash from his cigarette almost dropping in his half-finished pint. The pub, in the back of beyond was always very popular. And why? Because he kept the best pint of **Burtonwood Bitter** I have ever tasted. It was at the Isaac Walton 25 years ago that I tasted my ultimate pint, and I will always thank the old codger in the corner for that. When he died the pub never recovered, and I am sorry to say Burtonwood Bitter is not half the beer it was then.

It was coming to Manchester that introduced me to mild. Which of the local milds to pick for my desert island? Robinson's Hatters Mild, my current favourite session beer; Hydes Light, before they lowered the gravity or Holt's Mild, before they forgot for a few years how to brew a decent pint? After much thought I have plumped for **Holt's Mild**, because its strong bitter taste enabled me to make the transition to mild. Holt's beers in the Eighties were worth walking past a half a dozen other brewers' pubs for, and the mild was a real unsung classic. In the Nineties they lost their way, and although in the last 18 months things have improved significantly, the mild is now good but still not that good.

My next beer is one of the first I really got into from the new micros, **Titanic Premium**. It was attending Stoke Beer Festival in the late Eighties that introduced me to this beer; and drinking it in the Bulls Head in Burslem before Port Vale matches confirmed my enthusiasm. Now brewed within earshot of Vale Park, as I sit on my desert island sipping my pint of Titanic Premium, I will remember the golden days of watching the Valiants when John Rudge took us to Wembley three times, and to within a couple of pints of a play-off place for the Premier League. Will those days ever return?

Finally up to date, my local is the Hinds Head in Heaton Chapel. The licensee Alan Preston is a really top bloke and his beer is top notch. Over the last 18 months or more the **Taylor's Landlord** has been superb here, so this beautifully hoppy, multi-award-winning beer is my final choice.

So those are my five choices. Ask me tomorrow and you could well get two or three different ones. I really do wish I could have found space for beer from Durham or Beartown or Hydes' or...

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## N/4 WORLDS TOUR - & QUIZ!

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Northern Quarter Festival - N/4 World Tour - was held. It featured many interesting and intriguing beers and events for both the frivolous and the serious imbibers. The Hogshead, High Street; The Castle, Oldham Street; Bar Centro, Tib Street; Bar Fringe and The Smithfield on Swan Street, together with the Rochdale Road pubs - The Beerhouse, The Pot of Beer and the Marble Arch; combined with the Queens Arms, Red Bank to provide a cornucopia of new British Ales. Add the German, Belgian, American and Polish beers to this and you can see that it would offer any hollow-legged, mega-thirsty, ale-crazed supper, a not un-Everest-like challenge. The most impressive aspect, to me, was the variety of food - with mussels, a hog roast, American and Czech food as well as my own humble beer banquet. The music, though, slightly less organised than it should have been (Those guilty know who they are!) A mystery beer competition was won by nobody - as nobody who handed forms in attended the draw at Bar Centro (4p.m. Sunday), so £50 was donated to the Leukaemia Fund at the Royal Childrens Hospital. However I did a quiz at the Pot of Beer, so anyone who would like to win a £10 selection of foreign beers - please send their entries to K. Birch, Pot of Beer, 36 New Mount Street, Manchester M4 4OE to arrive by Sat. 25<sup>th</sup> Nov - and please supply a contact Telephone number.

### QUIZ

1. What was the Pot of Beer called prior to 1996?
2. What was this pub's popular nickname? (For a bonus - tell us why this was)
3. What was the ORIGINAL brewery at the Marble Arch Called?
4. What links the Marble Arch with the Band on the Wall?
5. Who was the original landlord of the Beerhouse?
6. What was the name of the Hogshead before it changed?
7. Prior to closing in 1978, which brewery owned the Queens Arms?
8. What is unique (beer-wise) about the Castle Hotel?
9. Prior to becoming Bar Fringe, the pub was called Polars, but what was it called before that?

10. The Smithfield Hotel is a reversion to its old name - what was it called between times?



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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE

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**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE** CAMRA

Two local in-house beer festivals recently are said to have been huge successes. The annual Oktoberfest at the Royal in Hayfield had all but sold out by Sunday afternoon - late goers finding only three beers left by 3.00pm after a complete onslaught on the Saturday evening. Incidentally, the Royal has replaced Theakstons Best with Theakston Cool Cask and Kelham Island Bitter.

Just out of the High Peak Branch area but within walking distance, the Rambler Inn at Edale had their first ever Festival (two branch members walked over Kinder from Glossop on the Sunday morning and two walked over on Saturday and camped overnight). On the Friday night, Sheffield Branch made their Pub of the Season award and trade was steady all weekend. Again, stocks were on there way out by Sunday.

Over in Buxton, the Eagle, on the Market Place, reopened on 5 October after an extensive refurbishment by Hydes' brewery. Reports are that Hydes' Bitter and Jekylls Gold were the two beers on offer over the first two nights.

Into Tameside and the Junction Inn at Dukinfield closed its doors for the last time towards the end of September, having been sold by Robinson's for residential use.

The Bowling Green in Marple is still closed - with rumours in the town that it may well be demolished. Any updated news on this former Good Beer Guide listed pub will be published as we hear it.

At Geoff Oliver's sister pub to the award-winning Sportsman at Hyde, the White Hart in Mottram has been boosted of late by the Pack Horse over the road recently going all "smooth". Geoff is soon to relinquish his licence at the Sportsman in favour of his wife, Carmel, while he transfers up to the White Hart. There's no need to worry, though, as Geoff assures us that the cellar work at the Sportsman will still be done by manager Dave Dupree and himself.

The White House in Stalybridge has now closed for an extensive refurbishment. The pub should be open for Christmas and we'll let you have a full report in due course.

Another hugely successful in-house beer festival (it was actually more of an event than a festival) was Durham Week at Stalybridge Station Buffet. A huge range of beers from all the micros in Durham, but principally the products of the superb Durham Brewery, featured over the week long event - there were even bottle conditioned beers to take away. Congratulations to John and Sylvia for another memorable feast for the tastebuds.

Finally, another former Good Beer Guide pub that has been closed for some five months has reopened. The Whiteley Nab in Glossop, formerly a Vaux pub, at the bottom of Chunal Lane as you go out on the Hayfield road, reopened at the end of September but no reports as to the beer range yet.

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The 3 Pigeons in Macclesfield is now closed and has been boarded up. The block that it occupies has been purchased by Scottish & Newcastle and also contains The Kings Head. There have already been rumours about the Kings Head closing so with the closure of the Pigeons & the intervention of S & N this seems likely.

As previously reported Maxwells has been sold to a pub owning group and the former owners have now departed.

The Beartown Brewery Tap in Congleton is now selling guest beers in addition to the Beartown range. The first guests, all from Lichfield Brewery, went on sale on 2 October and comprised: Rupert the Beer 3.9%abv, Merry Monarch 4.3%abv Powder Cask 4.7%abv.

The Robin hood, Rainow has a new landlord, Nick Rowcliffe. He was left with very little stock, not even anything on stillage so it's emergency measures (Boddingtons) but he plans to put on Greenalls and Directors for the moment and possibly change the Boddies too.

The landlord at the Setter Dog has got his planning permission so is in the process of converting the barn across the road to live in (about 8 months). Definitely on is the opening of the upstairs of the pub as a sleeping barn, with 20 beds. Bookings are being taken from February to open in April. Trade has suffered from the motorbikes using the Buxton Road as a raceway and from the weather but is picking up now and the news is better for next year re the bikes. He claims to have also the very first of the new recipe Beaufort's from Storm in his cellar- we'll let you know!

The Meridian in Bollington is still closed however the metal shutters have now been removed and a new licensee is about to move in. It is expected that after some redecoration and cleaning the pub will be open again by the middle of November. The new landlord reckons that he is going to sell food, however considering the competition in Bollington it could be difficult for that venture to succeed, but we wish it well nonetheless.

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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

<p><b>NOVEMBER 2000</b></p> <p><b>Thursday 9th</b> - Monthly Branch Meeting: Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p><b>Monday 13th</b> - Social: Winters, Underbank, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p><b>Friday 17th</b> - Tour round Hydes' pubs. Depart Crown, Heaton Lane, 6.45pm. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177 or Stuart Ballantyne on 428 4114.</p> <p><b>Wednesday 22nd</b> - Pub of the Month presentation to Swan With Two Necks, Princess St, Stockport. 8.00pm onwards. <b>NB Change of date.</b></p> <p><b>Friday 24th</b> - West Didsbury &amp; Withington Stagger: 7.30pm Woodstock, Barlow Moor Rd; 8.30pm Old House At Home, Burton Rd.</p> <p><b>Monday 27th</b> - Social: Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, Manchester City Centre. 9.00pm.</p> <p><b>Thursday 7th December</b> - Monthly Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Ln, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p><i>The High Peak &amp; North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:</i></p> <p><b>Saturday 11th</b> - Droyslden Pub Crawl: starts Kings Arms, Market St, 8.30pm.</p>	<p><b>NOVEMBER 2000</b></p> <p><b>Monday 13th</b> - Monthly Branch Meeting: Station, Warrington St, Ashton. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p><b>Saturday 18th</b> - Eccles Pub Crawl: meet Lamb Inn, 6.30pm.</p> <p><b>Friday 24th</b> - Bury Beer Festival Social. Meet at Festival from 1.30pm.</p> <p><b>Saturday 9th December</b> - Provisional Date for High Peak Christmas Trip. Details from Tom Lord (0161 427 7099) or Frank Wood.</p> <p><i>Apart from Macclesfield &amp; Bollington, the Macclesfield &amp; East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:</i></p> <p><b>Monday 13th</b> - Committee Meeting: Bulls Head, Town Ln (off Alderley Rd), Mobberley. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p><b>Saturday 25th</b> - Buxton pub crawl. Details to be confirmed but should start at 8.00pm.</p> <p><b>Monday 27th</b> - Social: Swan, Station Rd, Holmes Chapel. Starts 8.00pm.</p> <p><b>Advance Notice: Branch AGM at The Baths, Green St, Macclesfield. Monday 22 January, 8.00pm.</b></p>
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*Dave and Sue welcome you to*

## THE QUEENS ARMS

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## Among Our NOVEMBER BEERS:

Elgoods Cambridge;  
Thwaites Scallywag;  
Brakspears PA; Everards  
Beacon, Triple Gold;  
Skinners Spriggan;  
Hampshire King Alfred,  
Wild Thing; Wychwood  
Wickerman, Hobgoblin;  
Nethgate Monks Habit;  
Yongs Special, Winter  
Warmer; Otter Ale;  
Batemans Winter Wellie;  
XXXB; King & Barnes  
Old Ale; Smiles Whisky  
Ale; Titanic First Class;  
Shepherd Neame Late  
Red ...  
... and many more





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THE CITY  
ARMS**

8 HANDPUMPS  
6 GUEST ALES  
LUNCHTIME FOOD



11.30-2.30  
Mon - Fri  
& 11.30 - 2.00  
Saturday

*Great Food from Our Menus & Specials Board*



# OPENING TIMES NOVEMBER COMPETITION

Sponsored by The Beer Seller

Last month's competition attracted a record number of entries from both near and far.

The breweries you were looking for were: Alchemy; York; Keltek; Kelham Island; Durham; Man In The Moon; Nethergate; Eccleshall; Leatherbritches and Swansea.

There were loads of goodies to win as well so this time we've decided to award two prizes. A Charles Wells pewter tankard and t-shirt have been won by Margaret Corlett of Newton Heath; and a Charles Wells sweatshirt has been won by Dawn Geddes of Withington. Congratulations to both. This month we have some more brewery related goodies, again kindly donated by the Beer Seller.

The competition has once again been set by Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks and this time you are just looking for breweries, all of which appear in the 2001 Good Beer Guide. As usual complete the grid in a clockwise spiral - we have given you the first letter.

Entries to OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 26 November please.



- (1) Even excellent in the Rother Valley (2 words)
- (2) Hobson shouts Oyez, Oyez to get this brew (2 words)
- (3) Has he got a red nose at Stonehenge?
- (4) Be one of these while the sun shines in Hook Norton.
- (5) Jamaican drink before endless feline will give you this Ridley beer!
- (6) The ref. will do this to start the game in Pembroke (2 words)
- (7) Edwards rock will light the way to Sutton!
- (8) Maybe Eric floaters at Gales (2 word anag)
- (9) Badgers Horn of Plenty?
- (10) Look at the state of phoenix!

1								2
			6					
5				10				
	8							
							9	
							7	
			4					3

## Join CAMRA Now!

There's Never been a better time!

Calling all Opening Times readers! As you may know, Opening Times is published by the Stockport and South Manchester branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. But what is CAMRA all about, how do we, the Campaign's local representatives, fit into the picture, and what's the point of being a member? Briefly, CAMRA has campaigned for many years, at a national and local level, for quality and choice for the British pubgoer. Locally, our campaigning activities are combined with a lively diary of social events.

### Best Ever Time To Join

If you're considering joining CAMRA then this is your chance! For the rest of this year we're offering £2 off full membership - that's a bargain £12 for your first year. And there's even better news if you're under 26 or a full-time student - concessionary membership is just £8. Not only that but as a CAMRA member you'll be able to buy the new 2001 Good Beer Guide from the Branch for just £7 - that's £4.99 off the cover price!

## STOP PRESS....STOP PRESS....STOP PRESS

Thank You!

Sue Price of the Queens Arms, Honey Street, Manchester has asked us to thank, on her behalf, everyone who took part in the recent charity pumpclip sale on September 9. The Francis House Children's Hospice benefited to the tune of £282.50. Well done

### Confusion Reigns!

Last year over the 'Millennium Festivities' - the government passed a statutory instrument allowing pubs to open when they wanted throughout the country, and this year....they forgot. Or rather they neglected to set things up in time for the mandatory consultation period. So its up to local magistrates again, and as both Christmas Eve and New Years Eve fall on Sundays, when its notoriously difficult to get extensions, many pubs may have to shut at 10.30. Another triumph for 'joined up government'.

## STOP PRESS....STOP PRESS....STOP PRESS

## SPECIAL OFFER - £2 REDUCTION!

### APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times199)

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

NAME(S) ..... DATE .....

ADDRESS .....

POSTCODE ..... Date of Birth .....

SIGNATURE ..... TELEPHONE NUMBER .....

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL  £12  JOINT MEMBERSHIP

UNDER 26 YRS or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £8

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £8

Paul Moss, 60 Adelaide Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1LU

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.







**B**

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**R**

# CAMRA 2001 NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL

Festival Open: (hours to be confirmed)

Thursday 18 January

5.30 - 10.30pm,

Friday 19 January,

12 - 4 & 5.30 - 10.30pm

Saturday 20 January

12 - 4 & 5.30 - 10.30pm

Admission:

£2 Thurs Eve, £3 Fri Eve,  
£1 Sat Eve, £2 Lunchtimes  
CAMRA members FREE  
at lunchtime & Sat Eve,  
£1 Thurs & Fri Eve



Upper Campfield Market, Deansgate,  
**MANCHESTER**

(4 minutes from Deansgate BR & G-Mex Tram stations)

National Champion Winter Ale Competition,  
**MASSIVE SELECTION OF  
BITTERS, WINTER WARMERS,  
OLD ALES, STOUTS & PORTERS  
AND OTHER REAL ALES**  
including many BRAND NEW beers  
**TRADITIONAL CIDERS & PERRIES**

Unique Foreign Beer Bar featuring:  
Draught Winter Beers from Germany, Ireland &  
the USA and an extensive bottled range from  
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**Extensive Range of excellent  
Hot & Cold Food at every session**

**18-20 JANUARY 2001  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

[www.camra.org.uk/site/natwinter/natwinter.htm](http://www.camra.org.uk/site/natwinter/natwinter.htm)

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