



OPENING TIMES



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MAY 2001 No:205

6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

COUNTRY PUBS NEED YOU - NOW! Peak District and Cheshire Pubs Need Your Custom

We all know that the countryside is being very hard hit by the foot and mouth epidemic, but it isn't only agriculture that is suffering. Foot and mouth is costing the pub and brewing industry more than a million pounds a day - and several pubs have already called it a day.

Many rural businesses rely on visitors to keep them viable, and they just aren't coming, due to the widespread misconception that the whole of the countryside is off limits. Large numbers of pubs are now struggling to keep their heads above water; even local trade has dried up due to a reluctance of farmers and their families to risk spreading the disease by moving off their farms.

The simple truth, though, is that by and large, there is nothing to stop any of us from going out o the country to enjoy our favourite pubs there. It's really only areas away from public roads to which access is being denied and any restrictions are clearly signposted. Read any notices, follow their instructions and you won't do any harm. If you're concerned that you may not be able to go where you want why not ring the pub first? If we don't support country pubs now then inevitable there will me more closures than the handful so far reported. And when foot and mouth becomes a distant memory, so will some of our pubs.

So please, after you have read this, make a conscious effort to work a visit to the countryside - especially to visit a pub - into your leisure plans soon. And try to make it a regular event - our hard-pressed rural licensees need to see more of us, don't let them down.

Where to Get Information

A website has been set up to give information on where people can go in the countryside and advice on how to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease.

The Government's Rural Task Force has developed www.openbritain.gov.uk and has links to the sites of all the major tourism organisations and agencies..

Pubs and attraction operators can now update their entries by emailing information to the British Tourism Authority at update@bta.org.uk . Details of attractions and events in England are available on the English Tourism Council's Hotline: 0870 241 5659. Information is also given on the Government's help line: 08456 071071.

See also Editorial, page 2

STOCKPORT'S 15th **Beer and Cider Festival** News



21st MAY, 1st & 2nd JUNE 2001

We are now well and truly in the run-up to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express.

The entertainment is booked, the glasses and T-shirts ordered, the license obtained (many thanks to Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks for being our licensee) and, most importantly, the beer and cider order has been worked out. As usual Opening Times is taking this opportunity to bring you just a small taster of the many beers on offer. There really will be something for every taste, whether you like mild, bitter, stout or strong ales. There will be up to **eight** milds available from the classic Moorhouses Black Cat, the superb Phoenix Monkey Town Mild, Wentworth's Gun Park Dark and the Unusually named Enlli from Anglesey's Bragdy Ynys Mon.

Lovers of bitter will be well catered for with no less than **55** standard and premium bitters available during the course of the Festival. Roosters Brewery will again be brewing a Festival Special for us and this will have to compete with heavyweight contenders such as Passageway, Marble, Kelham Island, Phoenix and Swale, whose stunning India Summer Pale Ale makes a welcome return. Among many highlights for lovers of the hop will be Durham White Velvet, the excellent Wentworth WPA, Pictish Brewers Gold and the ever-reliable Yates's Bitter.

Old favourites returning this year include Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Hopback Summer Lightning which will be joined by festival newcomers Alcazar from Nottingham who are sending four beers including the quaintly named Nottingham Nog. This will be one of **10** stouts and porters which include Beartown Polar Eclipse, Cambrinus Lamp Oil Porter, and, a stunning beer this, Wentworth Oatmeal Stout.. There will also be **11** special beers including the new Ginger Marble, two excellent wheat beers from Salopian, Puzzle and Jigsaw, and no less than four beers from Heather Ales. Last years festival wiiner, Fraoch Heather Ale, will be joined by Kelpie, an organic bitter with seaweed (it tastes great - honest!), Alba, a beer with spruce tips, and Meadow Wheat which, we believe, it the first commercial beer brewed with Scottish-grown hops

Bringing up the rear we also have **8** strong ales and this year there are some real treats here. Robinson's Old Tom is a firm favourite of course but others to try include Hydes XXX which has been maturing for six months, Moor Old Freddy Walker at a powerful 7.3 per cent and this year's brain cell killer, the 10 per cent Mogadog from Bullmastiff Brewery

So, something for everyone. Do remember, though, that not all beers will be on at the same time and one or two may not even arrive (although we usually have an acceptable alternative if that happens).

You can also visit the Festival Website at:
www.stockportfestival.fsnet.co.uk

IN MAY'S OPENING TIMES

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Stockport and South Manchester is very much an urban area, so many readers may be surprised by our item on rural pubs. Readers in the High Peak and Macclesfield CAMRA branch areas may have a different perspective, however.

Despite the Peak District being foot and mouth free, and there being few cases in Cheshire, the rural pubs in these areas will all be suffering to a greater or lesser extent. And we can all do something about this. Derbyshire and Cheshire have a wealth of pubs serving excellent real ales and delicious food - many of us know this from past experience. Well, now is the time to repeat those experiences. Country pubs are accessible, open for business and will greet you with open arms. The weather's improving, and the nights are drawing out - what more reason do you need for a drive (or bus or train ride) out to the country. If every one of Opening Times' 10,000-plus readers made just one visit, just think of what a difference that would make.

This month we also include a few words of explanation about Cask Marque, mostly in that organisation's own words. We need to stress that despite having similar aims in the area of beer quality, Cask Marque and CAMRA are very separate. Indeed we have our points of difference (the question if the ideal minimum temperature for cask beer has been a particularly vexed question) but overall we welcome the organisation as being the first ever industry initiative to address the issue of cask ale quality.

Of course, we also recognise that a licensee does not need Cask Marque accreditation to serve good cask beer. Indeed, many local publicans already serve first class beer as a matter of personal pride (see, for example, this month's Mild Stagger). On the other side of the coin, publicans should note that Cask Marque accreditation does not mean instant entry in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide.

John Clarke

Among the depressing news of pub sales, brewery closures etc. was the gem that some 800 former Bass pubs are to be tied by their new owner to beer from... Scottish & Newcastle. So more of the utterly ghastly Kronenbourg 1664 will spread like a plague through the land. This particular chemical nastiness is even worse than the 'bog standard' Kronenbourg (ie NOT '1664' premium) sold in France, and that is one of the worst tasting lager-style beers in the world. I mean, if you were looking to badge-brew a lager, you might think of the Czech republic, or even Germany, but hardly France, as the place to start. But even more interesting, Caffreys is to be weakened. Apparently this nitrokeg abomination is too 'strong' (according to Bass/Interbrew research) for the misguided punters who drink it. It gives them hangovers. Sounds to me like the brewery asked a research firm to justify a cut in gravity (and thereby duty) but with no price fall to go with it. So the same misguided punters will now pay £2 + a lot for a 4.2% beer, rather than 5%. (nb the very unpleasant Caffreys hangover largely results from the additives, as if you drink a proper, pure 5% German Beer, in exactly the same volume, the results next day are far less unpleasant!)

P.B. Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 205

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). 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).

Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 23!

PUB OF THE MONTH MAY 2001

M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
	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			



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month Award for May 2001 goes to the Armoury, Shaw Heath, Stockport.

Outwardly a plain and unassuming pub, inside is a rare, unspoilt inter-wars interior little changed since the pub was restyled about 75 years ago. The traditional multi-roomed interior includes a bright, comfortable lounge, a rear snug, very much devoted to darts, a lobby-cum-hall, with its own bar counter, and possibly the best vault in town. Look closely at the interior glasswork and you will spot evidence of the pub's former owners, Bell & Co, taken over by Robinson's over 50 years ago.

That's not to say that the pub is a soulless museum piece. There has been some change (the old off-sales was incorporated into the lounge a couple of years ago) and above all, it remains a friendly, thriving local with the accent firmly on beer, much appreciated by the mature clientele. Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters Mild are often accompanied by a small cask of Old Tom stillaged on the vault bar counter, and all are of top quality. So much so, that the pub has become something of a fixture in the Good Beer Guide in recent years.

Of course, behind every good pub you get a good licensee, and the Armoury is very lucky to have Ian Bailey at the helm. Aply assisted by son Nathan, Ian has kept the Armoury focussed on what it does best, and ensured a friendly, relaxed atmosphere, when one or two other pubs in the Edgeley/Shaw Heath area look to have lost their way a little in recent years.

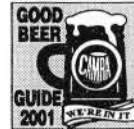
In short, the Armoury is everything a good traditional local should be, as visitors will find out if they come along to the presentation of this well deserved award on Thursday 24 May, from 8.00pm onwards. JC.

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

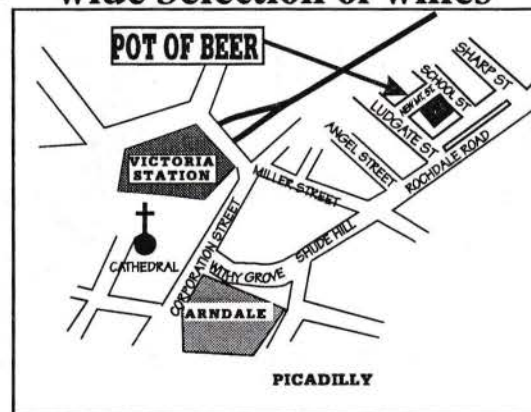
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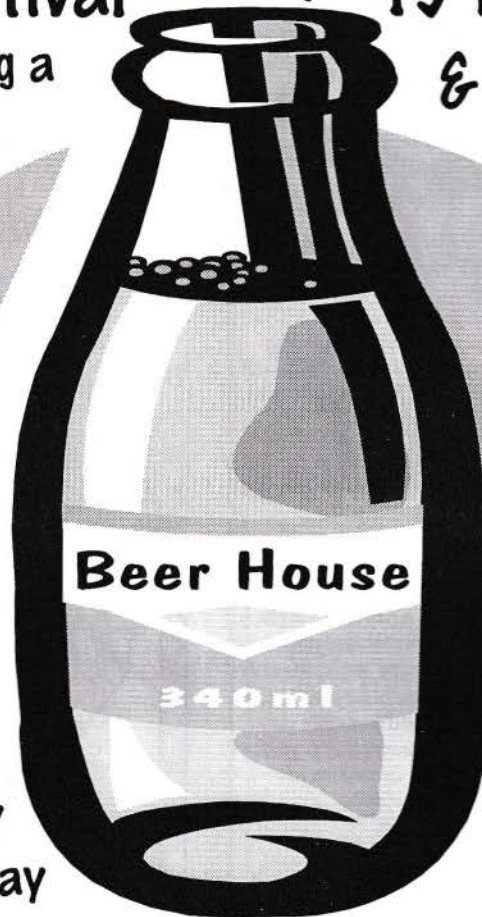
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STAGGER

with Richard Yates

Staggering Mildly

To help launch this year's Mild Challenge, we embarked on a Stagger with a difference, the aim being to visit a selection of Stockport pubs, enjoying a different cask mild in each.

Starting point was the current Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year, the **Nursery Inn** on Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Plenty has already been written about this superb 1930s pub with traditional lounges, vault, lobby and bowling green.



Suffice it to say that everything was just as you would expect it to be at this brilliant pub with excellent Hydes Mild (3.5% alcohol) on metered electric pump, thereby guaranteeing full pints into the bargain. Hydes Mild is in fact one of three mild ales produced by the brewery, the others being 'Welsh' mild, an extra-dark version made primarily for the company's small estate around Wrexham, and the more widely available Light and it was this that we were to try next. A short walk from the Nursery will bring you to the **Moss Rose** on Didsbury Road. Famously ugly on the outside (although a makeover may be in the pipeline), inside you will find inside, however, you will find a warm, comfortable, welcoming local, with a lively vault supporting numerous sports teams. Unusually, it boasts separate cellars for mild and bitter, underlining how seriously beer is taken here. Unsurprisingly, then, the Hydes Light (3.5%) was also on top form and much enjoyed by one and all.

From the Moss Rose we headed into the town centre and the **Crown** on Heaton Lane, where we were met with a choice of 10 cask ales. In keeping with the spirit of the evening, most of us stuck to mild (the Crown always features a guest mild) which on this occasion was Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild from the Beacon brewpub at Sedgley in the Black Country. The part of the industrial



West Midlands was once famous for its strong, sweetish milds, and this is a classic of the style, weighing in at an impressive 6 per cent alcohol. Licensee Graham Mascord had been nurturing the cask in his cellar for four weeks and the result was a wonderfully smooth and quaffable beer. Other beers tried included Deuchars IPA from Edinburgh's Caledonian Brewery and Hereford Pale Ale from the Wye Valley Brewery and these were also on top form.

Moving on our journey took us to the **Swan With Two Necks** on Princes Street, our first Robinson's pub of the night. This 1920's pub with its superb wood-panelled, multi-roomed interior is another pub which takes its beer seriously and planned to be stocking

the elusive Robinson's Dark Mild for the challenge. This hadn't arrived so it was Hatters Mild (3.3%) all round and again we found a beer on top form. Although this is a commonly found beer locally, Hatters Mild is another example of a light mild, a beer style which is quite rare nationally. The Swan sells a good range of Robinson's beers including the seasonals - Stockport's Arches was on when we called and again on form.

We then ambled down to **Winters** on Underbank to sample the Holt's Mild in the comfortable surroundings of the first floor lounge of this former jeweller's shop. The main feature of this listed building is the automaton clock on the upper outside wall and from the lounge it is fascinating to see its interior workings, with much whizzing and whirring when it strikes the hour. Keen licensees ensure that the beer is on form here and tonight was no exception with the dark, malty 3.3 per cent mild going down a treat.

Our final port of call was the **Railway** on Portwood, one of the five tied houses belonging to the Porter Brewing Company. The pub is once again in good hands, in the shape of manager Alex Lord, who runs what is really a flagship for the company and its beers. The full range of Porter beers is available (together with some 57 foreign bottled beers plus real cider) ranging from the 3.3% Dark Mild to the powerful Sunshine (5.3%). The mild is a true dark mild with a good roasty finish and most of us opted for this, finding another beer on top form. Being in the Railway, the Porter (5%) also had to be tried which again was rated very highly.

Thus ended a Stagger with a difference. Great beer in a selection of terrific pubs and if time had permitted we could have done more - a detour up King Street West would have netted us another guest mild in Ye Olde Vic and Greenalls in the Greyhound, and that's not to mention the numerous other Robinson's pubs with tip-top mild on the pumps. In some parts of the country mild is dead and buried, in Stockport at least, it is alive and well.



OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

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O OPENING TIMES

LETTERS

From Geoff Johnson, Stalybridge:

I would like to comment on the new Wetherspoon's (Lloyds) in the Printworks and a general area of concern about their guest beer policy.

First of all congratulations to Wetherspoon's on a well thought out development which is in keeping with the Printworks development, but manages to stand apart as a "proper pub". My concern is that I visited Lloyds last Monday at 5pm with a friend and ordered 2 pints of Cotleigh Osprey as displayed by pump clip. We were told by the young male behind the bar that the beer was not available as "the pipes were being cleaned". We promptly ordered 2 pints of the other available guest beer, Taylor's Landlord, and this beer refused to settle and was undrinkable. The member of staff gazed at them suspiciously when we returned them and reluctantly offered us alternatives - the ubiquitous Theakstons or Boddingtons.

After the Oldham festival on Saturday afternoon we visited the Oldham Wetherspoon's and were told that the guest beers were not available because (you guessed it) "the lines were being cleaned"!coincidence....I doubt it - not the ideal time to clean lines in the middle of a very busy Saturday afternoon! Following other "non availability" experiences in other Wetherspoon's outlets in the region (especially Moon-under-Water) this sets the seeds of doubt growing in my mind about 3 issues.

1. How come the true guest beers are so frequently not available yet there appears to be an endless supply of Boddingtons, Smiths, Theakstons etc?
2. Why do Wetherspoon's pubs steadfastly refuse to turn around or remove pump clips when beers are unavailable?
3. Given the co-incidence of the "line-cleaning" episodes, are the staff (who frequently appear ignorant of real ale anyway)

being asked to spin a line in order to cover the true situation? Interested to hear of any similar experiences out there - I'm sure there must be some!

On a different note, thought that you might like to know that Courtney & Co in Parsonage Gardens, Manchester is the somewhat unlikely venue for excellent Hardy & Hanson Kimberley Best Bitter and sometimes Classic - the latter at a reasonable £1.80. I'm told though that cask is not a big seller here, so get it while you can.

(The answer to 1 seems to be that guests are only available in 9's and are frequently singletons, whereas back-ups of regular beers are on stillage. 2 - I'm afraid that nearly every CAMRA member has complained about this policy at some time or another, this is a big mistake on Tim Martin's part I feel. ed(2))

From Bob Bromley, Lancing, West Sussex:

I am rather shocked at the correspondence regarding 'full pints'. Peter Edwardson's letter was a bit strong but the sentiments expressed are sound. I go back far enough to recall the days when most real ale in the Midlands and Yorkshire was dispensed from metered pumps into oversize glasses. Nowadays it is a pleasant surprise to receive a pint with a proper head in an oversize glass. I think Lloyd Roberts misses the point when he says a top-up can be requested. I do not want my pint to be brimful and it always causes a little friction when a top-up is requested in situations where there is a significant short measure on offer. When food is bought loose and is priced by weight the customer is always offered 'just over' so that they don't feel cheated. Why can't beer sales be the same?

From Mrs Lynn Peach, The Woodman, Hazel Grove:

I write with reference to Opening Times March 2001, number 203. I refer particularly to the Stagger article.

On this particular evening amongst others you visited The Woodman.

The Woodman was described as being rather different from the Anchor, which is next door, which is a fair comment. It was this point in the article where the fair comments stopped and 'other sorts' of comments began. Take for example:

1. "...rambling interior", the pub is hardly large enough to be described as rambling! An inaccurate statement!
2. "...something lacking", what exactly is lacking? An inconclusive statement!
3. "...bit stark and was certainly rather shabby". Stark???????? Shabby????????!!!!!! The pub is beautifully decorated and many pictures and interesting ornaments collected from the world over adorn the corner shelves and the walls. A rude statement!

4. Thankfully as an afterthought you remembered to mention the whole point of the exercise - the beer! This you complimented "...the Best Bitter was one of the best pints of the night". An exact statement!

Your comments about the interior of the pub are unfounded and entirely inaccurate. I invite you to revisit this pub to admire the decorations, taste another pint of delicious Best Bitter and then retract your statement in a further edition of Opening Times!

(Oh dear. We do make clear that the Stagger articles simply reflect the impressions gained on just one visit on one night but perhaps a return visit is in order. Now, where's that tin hat...? - ed (1))

Letters to Opening Times are welcome by post to:
The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD or via the internet to
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It's not often that a local pub wins a national award for its food (although there are a good few that could) so news that the Caledonia in Ashton had gained second place in the National Steak Pie of the Year competition led your correspondent to make immediate arrangements for a visit. Thus it was on a warm Spring day that I found myself on the 12.56 train from Victoria for the brief 10-minute journey to Ashton. There are of course also numerous bus services to this Tameside town but whether you arrive by train or bus Warrington Street is close by. Turning down the street and heading past the bustling market, the unmistakable signage of a Robinson's pub could be spotted ahead and this was my destination.

Alan and Louise Heal have had the pub for many years now, and it was not that long ago that the pub benefited from a major refurbishment which also saw the creation of several letting bedrooms and an excellent outdoor drinking area at the rear, thus enabling the pub to realise its full potential. The drinking area is nicely split up and furnished in a traditional style, including a no-smoking area. Arriving fairly late in the proceedings, the pub was extremely busy and initially I struggled to find a seat before gaining a welcome berth at a table in the 'snug' area.

The beer's good here, too, with Hatters Mild and Best Bitter joined by Frederics (the Caledonia has stocked this beer since it was first brewed) and the current seasonal - Stockport's Arches on this occasion.

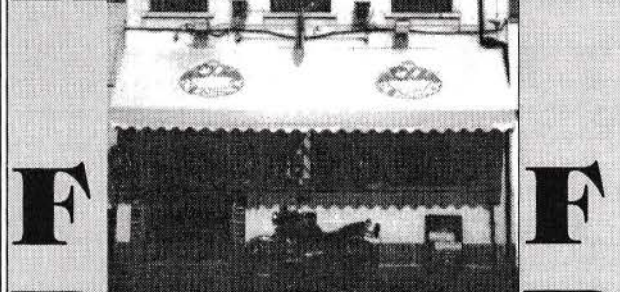
Settling down with a superb malty, dry pint of 'Arches' I studied the extensive menu. At first glance you might think this is standard pub fare, with sections devoted, for example, to curries, toasties and burgers. This would be a mistake, though - from previous experience of the food here, I know that what might sound ordinary on the menu is in fact something rather special on the plate. Despite the many tempting items on offer (all very reasonably priced, by the way - the most you'll pay is £4.25) there was only one choice - the prize-winning Steak & Ale Hotpot. And what a treat this proved to be! It consists of several layers: on the bottom steak braised in a rich ale sauce with carrots and onion, then lean rashers of bacon, black pudding, all topped by sliced potatoes smothered in melted cheese. Perhaps an unlikely combination to some, but it worked extremely well and, with a buttered barm plus a serving of red cabbage on the side, it proved to be a very filling dish indeed. So much so that I had to forgo one of the tasty pud's (a snip at £1.75). The only question I have is - how on earth did this only come second? As you may have gathered, the Caledonia comes highly recommended and is well worth a visit. JC.

The Caledonia is at 13 Warrington Street, Ashton. Phone 0161 339 7177. Food is served from 11.30-2.30 Monday to Saturday and from 12.-3.00 on Sunday when a 3 course special is available in addition to the usual menu. There is also a different evening menu from 5.00pm Tuesday to Saturday (until 7.00pm Tuesday - Thursday and 8.00pm Friday and Saturday).

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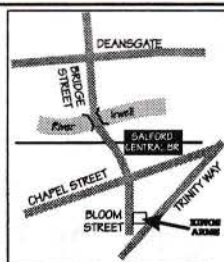
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from mid-February



BREWERY NEWS

The long-running saga of Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries took another turn last month. The West Midlands based company, which trades locally as Banks's and Marston's, rejected two takeover approaches (but left the door open) and announced a survival plan to stay independent. Basically this involves closing the Mansfield Brewery (which has brewed, and indeed may still produce, one or two of the 'Grays' beers that appear locally) and selling the Cameron's Brewery in Hartlepool to the good folk at Castle Eden who would then sell their own brewery for redevelopment. Phew! In addition, the Pitcher & Piano pub chain would also be sold off. We have two of those, one in the City Centre and the other in Didsbury; their main claim to fame is selling Marston's Pedigree at some daft price like £2.50 a pint. Informed opinion, though, is that Wolves *will* be taken over and is likely to have bitten the dust as an independent company by the end of the year. (Since this was written, the two predators have become one, with Mr Breare's consortium pulling out. The blood should be seeping out of Wolves' gates before May is out. Ed(2))

Closer to home, our local brewers continue to roll out their seasonal beers, with three out this month. Robinson's have produced their Young Tom (4%) which may or may not be a weaker version of Old Tom. It's certainly not as dark but does have some of the richness of its venerable stablemate, although it's in no way cloying and is very 'sessionable'. Hydes' entrant is 'The Usual' a 4.4 per cent bitter while Lees

have produced a mild for May. This is Moonlight Oak at 3.7 per cent and is described as having a 'mouth-watering full flavour'. Holt's, of course, buck the trend but are still playing silly buggers at the Railway in West Didsbury with their handpumped 'cask smooth'. It's allegedly selling well but a couple of lengthy spells at the bar have failed to see a single pint dispensed...

The local micros are also still producing the goods. Time pressures have prevented the mega round-up promised last time (it will definitely appear next month) but one or two new brews have been brought to our attention. Pictish have produced Black Diamond, another mild for May. This is 3.5 per cent and is described as rich and full-bodied. The Leyden Brewery at Nangreaves, north of Bury have two new beers out - Chameleon is a very pale and hoppy bitter at 3.9 per cent while Picador is a 4 per cent oatmeal stout. Leyden beers appear regularly in the local free trade and can often be seen at both the Crown and Olde Vic in



The Old Glove Works

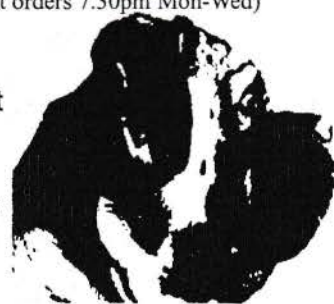
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Stockport. In addition the Lord Raglan pub, where the brewery is based, will be running a beer festival from 15 June to 1 July and the brewery will be producing no less than four new beers for this.



The Marble Brewery has reintroduced its ginger beer. Ginger Marble is a slightly cloudy brew, lightly hopped but with a subtle underlying spiciness which comes through with a strong ginger finish. This is in fact Marble brewer James Campbell's second attempt at a ginger beer - during production of the first he was ably(?) assisted by your very own Ed(1) and you will therefore not be surprised to learn that the finished product was undrinkable!

Last but not least this month, Mark Dade's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery is to produce a second house beer for a bar in Manchester's Northern Quarter, this time for Bar Fringe on Swan Street. The beer is to be called Jack's Nasty Face (just don't ask) and is described as a 4 per cent porter-type beer but of a lighter colour than is normal for the style. The beer will apparently be served from a carved, rustic-style handpump. (It tastes more like a strong, rich mild than a Porter, the pumpclip is as described, and the beer is the Beer Monster's joint beer of the month (see page 15 for more details) - ed(2).)



It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death of Sid Garfield, who with wife Ann had just moved out of the *Thatched Tavern* in Reddish. Sid and Ann had rescued the *Thatched* after a serious fire almost caused the closure of the pub, and worked very hard to preserve it as a classic street-corner local. In 1994 CAMRA recognised their efforts by presenting Sid and Ann a Pub of the Month Award. We offer our condolences to Sid's family and friends.

It is a welcome thought to Eamon O'Neil who is the new licensee at the *Thatched* who tells us that he intends to promote cask ale in the pub. Eamon has been in the licensed trade for many years, latterly at St Benedict's Club in Gorton which serves cask ales too.

In a rare move, Robinson's have closed down the *Bridge Inn* on Georges Road, Stockport. Despite the nearby B&Q and with a light industrial estate, the pub has struggled to find custom in recent years so the closure, whilst sad isn't exactly surprising. It is up for sale, though, so perhaps some entrepreneur or small brewer will be able to take it on and hopefully make a go of the place.

The Red Lion in Gatley has reinstated real ale in the form of handpumped Marston's Pedigree. This welcome return to the fold means that all of Gatley's pubs once again sell real ale (mind you since three of the other four are owned by Hydes' and the other by Cain's, that's hardly surprising).

In Edgeley, the *Gardeners Arms* on Northgate Road has reopened after a major refurbishment. Boddingtons Bitter and Flowers IPA are on handpump in what is now a freehouse. Last month's High Peak Pub News item about the Whitley Nab in Glossop prompted a phone call from landlord Steve Finch. Apparently the signs advertising CAMRA recommended beers' pre-date his arrival in the pub. Indeed after three rapid changes of area manager, it seems no-one can remember who put them up!

Pub operators are lining up for discarded pub 'brands' from the former Whitbread tied estate, and it's the Hogshead chain which is reportedly attracting the most interest. Nightclub operator Luminar is said to be preparing a bid for the 140-strong chain and if successful is planning to rebrand the pubs either as Chicago Rock Café or Jumpin' Jaks. If this comes to pass, it seems inevitable that the wide range of cask beers currently sold in these pubs will be a thing of the past.



Robinson's

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT

Variety is the spice of life and drinkers can look forward to a range of special ales from Frederic Robinson Ltd. The Stockport brewer now has a portfolio of six seasonal ales in place. The ales are brewed using traditional methods and the finest ingredients, offering drinkers the chance to try something a little different. Each ale is available for a two-month period and is specially brewed to suit the time of year.

Launched last summer as part of Robinson's commitment to real ale, each of the seasonals has its own distinctive pump clip. They are available at many Robinson's houses as well as some free houses. And with a range of flavours on offer throughout the year, there is sure to be a brew to suit every palate. The ales, and their seasons, are as follows:

YOUNG TOM - MAY AND JUNE

Young Tom retains all the unique flavours and aromas associated with its famous elder, the 8.5% ABV Old Tom. But, with a 4% ABV, Young Tom is more acceptable to those drinkers of all ages who prefer pints to halves.

It is a dark rich beer with aromas of dark fruit and a palate that is much lighter than Old Tom, but which has a balance of ripe malt and peppery hops and a subtle port wine finish to suit younger tastes.

WHISTLING WILL - JULY AND AUGUST

On a long, hot summer's day, Whistling Will is just the thing for quenching the thirst.

Named after a famous Stockport eccentric, and with an ABV of 4%, it is brewed from the finest ingredients to give it a beautifully smooth, clean and refreshing palate, which allows its sweet and fruity character to shine through.

COOPERS BELL - SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

A tribute to George Cooper, Stockport's Bellman circa 1865, this fully bitter Autumn ale has a strength of 4% ABV. Its distinctive malty character is complemented by a pleasant hop aroma derived from the addition of choicest hops late in the brewing process.

ROBIN BITTER - NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

A unique seasonal ale brewed at 4.5% ABV especially for the dark months of November and December. This is a rich, dark full-bodied bitter with a distinctive roasted malt character complemented by the vague hint of liquorice. A unique blend of flavours resulting in a deeply satisfying finish.

SAMUEL OLDKNOW - JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

Celebrate the New Year in fine style with a pint of Samuel Oldknow, which has been brewed with the exhausted post Christmas palate in mind. The ale, which takes its name from a famous Stockport philanthropist, has an ABV of 3.5% and revives an old Cheshire tradition of using oats in the brewing process.

STOCKPORT'S ARCHES - MARCH AND APRIL

Stockport's Arches, 4% ABV, is named after the largest viaduct in England. As the dark winter nights fade into the memory with the arrival of spring, Stockport's Arches is just the way to mark the occasion.

An interesting blend of barely, wheat and roasted malts has resulted in a dark, rich, full-bodied bitter beer that has a distinctive burnt chocolate malt flavour followed by a crisp and dry long finish.

The result is a pale, crisp, hoppy beer with a soft and wholesome character that is complemented by the generous addition of the choicest Goldings dry hops in cask.

This space is sponsored by Frederic Robinson Ltd.



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THE CASK MARQUE LOW-DOWN

The Who and What of this independent organisation



Some readers may have spotted that the 2001 Good Beer Guide bears the legend 'sponsored by Cask Marque' and it is almost certainly the case that the connection between CAMRA and Cask Marque is unclear in many people's minds. The two are in fact entirely separate organisations. CAMRA is a nation-wide consumer group with 60,000 members. Cask Marque is primarily funded by the brewing industry itself. Its aim though, to improve the quality of cask ale, is one shared by both organisations. Locally, they have made little impact as few of the brewery or pub companies which trade in the OT area have signed up to the scheme, Cains Brewery and Wetherspoon's being perhaps the sole representatives. However, Hydes' have now joined the scheme with the result that 'Cask Marque' will start appearing on more local pubs. Cask Marque have therefore supplied the following background article:

"The Cask Marque Trust was formed in 1997 to improve the quality of cask ale in the glass by making an award to the licensee when defined standards were met. Research and subsequent inspections have shown that one in three pints served to customers were of poor quality - being out of specification in either temperature, appearance, aroma or taste.

"The Cask Marque Trust has been successful in raising awareness of the importance of cask ale quality. More and more licensees are aware of the need to use 'best practice' in cellar skills (which includes no filtering back), and brewers have started to invest heavily in dispense equipment to keep ale cool from cellar to glass, thus ensuring a refreshing pint in the summer and winter.

"We now have over 1,500 licensees with the award. Remember - the award is made to the licensee and not the pub as it is his or her skills which produce the 'perfect pint'. To gain the award, the licensee is subject to two unannounced inspections from a qualified Assessor, and each beer on sale must pass examination. Once accredited, the licensee has two further inspections a year and Cask Marque reserves the right to additional random visits.

"You can identify a Cask Marque licensee by the plaque fixed to the outside of the premises, and the annual framed certificate displayed inside the pub. Awareness of the Cask Marque logo is being created by:

- ★ The issue of 17 free regional guides.
- ★ The Cask Marque Website, www.cask-marque.co.uk showing the Cask Marque licensees, their pubs and a map on how to find the establishment. Through the Website, comments and recommendations can be e-mailed to our organisation.
- ★ Cask Marque sponsorship of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide.
- ★ Attending CAMRA Regional Meetings, and having a presence at the CAMRA Great British Beer Festival at Olympia.
- ★ Actively supporting the Guild of British Beer Writers, whose prime purpose is to highlight to the consumer press all that is good about cask ale.

"For many pubs, cask ale is a way of differentiating themselves from other establishments in their area. The outlet can become renowned for its beer quality and link this to a good selection of cask ales, and the licensee can develop a loyal following from his or her customers. Frequently it is the cask ale drinker who decides where a group should drink, and this brings a host of new customers to the establishment.

"It therefore pays to invest in beer quality and - remember - cask ale is unique to the British pub. Let's all help preserve this institution."



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Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 23!

WHO will win the coveted awards as CAMRA's Cider and Perry of the year? There's only one place to find out - the



forthcoming Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Following the successful move of this prestigious competition from the Great British Beer Festival to a time of the year which best suits the product, we are hosting the event for the fourth time at the Town Hall during our Beer Festival.

A list of ciders and perries commonly available is being drawn up by APPLE, CAMRA's special cider and perry committee. This will now be whittled down and will form the bulk of our cider order. The total order will again be in the region of 250 gallons and will cover all spectrums of taste from the sweet to the very dry.

Final judging will be on Saturday 2nd June with the winners announced sometime during the afternoon session. Also to be announced at the same time is this year's winner of the Pomona Award, presented annually to that person or organisation that has done most to promote traditional cider and perry during the previous 12 months.

STOCKPORT CIDER

Yes, believe it or not, Stockport now has its very own cidemaker. Is this the first ever? The man behind the venture, Merrylegs Cider, is John Reek, already well known locally as a supplier of cider and perry. John has had an interest in making wine since his schooldays when he was inspired by his brother's home brew, which even though not quite at Taylor's Landlord standard, was still recognisable as beer. He has made wine with varying degrees of success and also tried his hand at full-mash brewing, some of which was quite good and some of which was fed to the slugs. So when the opportunity to buy some apple juice came up, it was too good an opportunity to miss, as John was already distributing real cider.

Merrylegs Stockport Triple S cider is made from around 70% cider apples and 30% dessert/cooking apples and is around 7-8% alcohol by volume. This year around 120 gallons were made and next year this may reach 200 as the first batch is nearly all gone. There is no concentrate, artificial sweetener, added water or chemicals used in the production of this cider which has appeared in several local pubs and has proved very popular.

RURAL LIFELINE

Victory in rate relief campaign for village pubs

The Government has recognised the importance of pubs as essential community amenities. CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is celebrating success in its campaign for mandatory rate relief to be extended to village pubs. Following a lengthy consultation, the Commons passed the order, at midnight on 2 April.

Sole pubs in settlements with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants and with a rateable value below £9000 will be able to claim a 50% reduction in business rates in line with village shops and post offices.

CAMRA research in 2000 showed that around twenty pubs are closing each month - many of them in rural areas. Many rural pubs are struggling to compete due to lack of investment from pub companies. The Government's original proposals suggested that rate relief should only apply to singly-owned village pubs. But following CAMRA's recommendations, the initiative will apply to all sole village pubs as the majority of these are tenanted or leased.

The Government estimates that over 8000 pubs will benefit from mandatory rate relief.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "This represents an important landmark for the pub industry in England. We have campaigned for several years for rural pubs to be regarded as essential community amenities in the same way as post offices and shops and the Government has finally listened. Pubs are often at the heart of small communities and are every bit as important as other amenities."

"It comes at a crucial time when many country pubs are suffering lost trade due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak. Rate relief will help, but we now need to see pub operators and brewers follow the Government's example and build long-term investment plans for marginal rural pubs."

Dave and Sue welcome you to

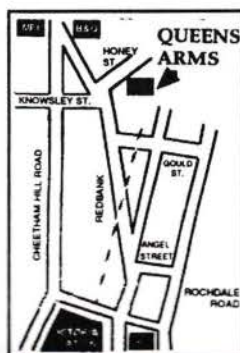
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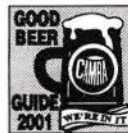


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BRITAIN TO CEASE BREWING BY 2020?

Consumers battle to save the Great British Pint

A study carried out by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has predicted that if recent trends persist, over 90% of the British brewing industry will be in the hands of just two global brewers producing a handful of lager brands by 2020.

CAMRA has launched the biggest generic promotion of beer for fifty years in its battle to save the great British pint. Following two years of fundraising, the consumer group is joining forces with dozens of real ale brewers and thousands of pubs to buck the trend and put real cask ales back on top. Hundreds of advertising billboards have been launched throughout the country supported by leaflets and posters in pubs. Prominent displays were to be found at Piccadilly, Victoria and Oxford Road stations.

The study reveals that over 130 regional and national beer brands have been axed since 1990. Excluding those brewed by the 350 very small brewers (which collectively have only 1% of the total beer market), there are about 250 beers still in regular production. If the trend continues it will take only 16 years to reduce the market to three or four mega beer brands. Thirty three medium sized or national breweries have closed since 1990. Over fifty breweries remain in operation, but CAMRA fears if trends persist, there will be nothing but global operators left by 2020.

The end of the great British pub?

CAMRA research in 2000 showed that twenty pubs a month were closing. This is approximately double the monthly closures only five years earlier. If that trend continues then by 2020 eighty pubs a month will be closing, and many consumers will be faced with the grim prospect of supping at home or visiting big themed bars in town centres.

In January this year nearly 1,000 pubs were put for sale by Bass and a further 3,000 by Whitbread. There is wide speculation that Scottish & Newcastle and Wolverhampton & Dudley may shortly put for sale signs on around 1,000 pubs each. Japanese investment bank Nomura last week bought 988 pubs from Bass and is speculated to be assessing the Whitbread estate. Purchase of the Whitbread estate would give Nomura a total of some 9000 pubs - nearly one in six of all the pubs in the country. CAMRA predicts that such a move would lead to other major operators like Enterprise Inns, Pubmaster and Punch Taverns seeking growth to maintain market share and power - further accelerating the loss of consumer choice.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "Consolidation in the pubs market means smaller brewers are not able to supply beer to such large estates. It therefore goes without saying that these brewers will be forced out of the market by their bigger competitors who can offer massive discounts and supply household name beers. That will lead to even less choice for Britain's 15 million beer drinkers."

But, it could be worse than that!

As consolidation in brewing and pub retailing continues the demise will accelerate. Belgian brewer Interbrew now has 32% of the British beer market following its acquisition of Bass Brewers and Whitbread Beer Company last year. If it is successful in overcoming Stephen Byers blockage of the Bass take over following its application for a judicial review, its discounting, marketing and distribution power may lead to big increases in market share. Other big brewers may respond aggressively to maintain market share through acquisitions, or may quit brewing altogether.

Mike Benner added, "The 'Ask if it's Cask' campaign is a consumer fight back against the disease caused by consolidation, closures, mergers and sell-offs in this great British

industry. We want to convince beer drinkers that nothing beats a pint of real cask ale in a local pub. If people start drinking the taste and shun big-brand marketing, the British beer market will be safe for future generations to enjoy."

The real ale market has been in decline since it peaked at 17.5% of the total beer market in 1994. It is now less than 10% as consumers are bombarded with global lager brands and smoothflow processed ales.

The 'Ask if it's Cask' campaign, launched on March 1st, is the biggest generic promotion of British beer since industry campaigns in the 1950s.

The campaign aims to get the message across that real cask ales meet the needs of modern cultured beer drinkers. CAMRA is urging drinkers to 'Ask if it's Cask' next time they visit the pub, in an attempt to get lager lovers and smoothflow drinkers to discover the taste of real ale.

Mr. Benner added, "The city's obsession with quick, high growth technology industries has eroded our brewing and pubs industry and led to the loss of thousands of pubs, hundreds of beer brands and dozens of long-standing breweries. 'Ask if its Cask' marks a momentous occasion when consumers, independent brewers and publicans across the land unite to fight back against city short-termism and mega-brand marketing. Before it's too late."

LANDMARKS IN CAMRA'S HISTORY



March 16th 1971 - The Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale founded by four young drinkers; Graham Lees, Mike Hardman, Bill Mellor and Jim Makin, from the North West when on holiday in Ireland.

1974 - First Good Beer Guide published by CAMRA; original edition withdrawn because of fear of prosecution over the comment on Watney's beers: "avoid like the plague".

1975 - Lord Michael Young, chairman of the National Consumers Council, describes CAMRA as "the most successful consumer organisation in Western Europe".

September 1975 - Britain's biggest festival of draught beer held at Covent Garden - the precursor to CAMRA's annual Great British Beer Festival. It is a sell-out event.

June 1979 - Watney's finally ends production of Watney's Red in the UK.

August 1988 - All day weekday opening introduced - a triumph after a long campaign by CAMRA.

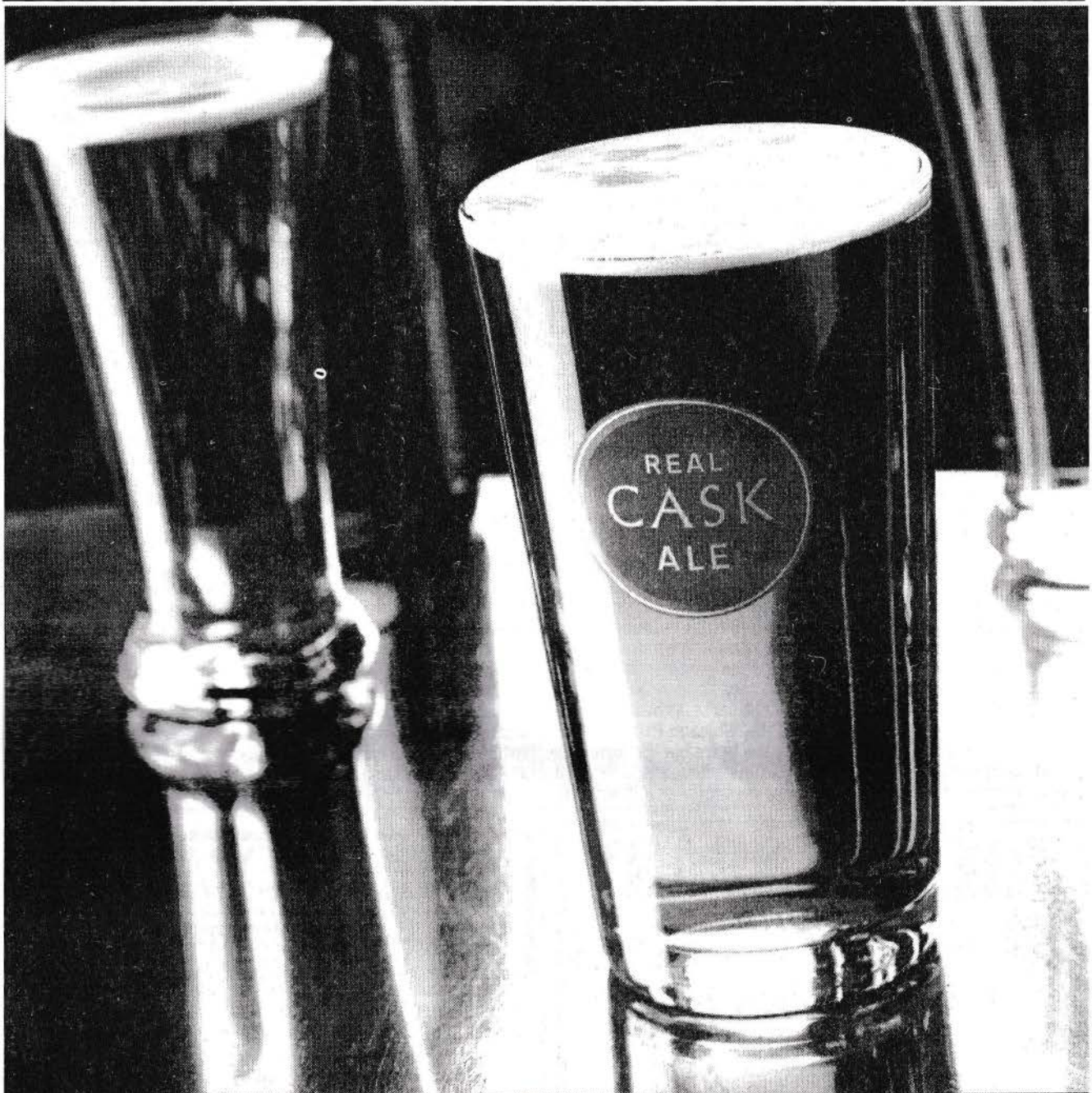
May 1990 - Guest beer provision introduced giving Britain's small brewers access to the tenanted and leased pubs of the national brewers.

March 2001 - CAMRA launches 'Ask if it's Cask' - the biggest generic promotion of real British beer for over 50 years.

During CAMRA's 30 years of existence over 500 new small breweries have been set up in the UK.

12





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Look....No Hands!

Elsewhere in this issue is mention of Nomura International sniffing around the 'Whitbread' pub estate, actually currently in the hands of Morgan Grenfell Investments. Nomura (a Japanese Bank) are currently Britain's biggest Landlord. I was a bit surprised by this news, because my impression was that Morgan Grenfell would securitise the leased properties (borrow against the forthcoming rental and beer supply incomes) and get rid of the managed houses only. Reports as we went to press, though, perhaps explain this. Guy Hands, the "evil" genius behind all Nomura's giant takeovers is apparently "off" by mutual consent, with his 60-strong team, to pastures new. Apparently over 20% of Nomura's capital is tied up in Guy's adventures (pubs, army housing, etc.) and with a major recession looming in Japan, this might not go down too well at home, so the bank is looking to trim its sails. This of course could mean that some of their 7,000 pubs might be up for sale. It probably also means that Guy is looking for pubs. The pity of it is, his group haven't the first inkling of how to run them.

Pig in a Poke

The Hogshead chain's future looks very problematic. Currently, Morgan Grenfell are letting the existing management run it. These are now 'born again' alemen and the Hogsheads are being turned back into proper pubs again. Prices are high, it must be admitted, because the bankers believe in 'sweating their assets' (increasing margins - prices - and profits to you and me). Indeed the financial pages have been full of rumours that 'Luminar' a night club operator is looking to buy them to expand the 'Chicago Rock Cafe' or 'Jumpin' Jaks' brands. I can't speak for the latter but the former is just about the worst, derivative, and pathetic excuse for a venue it has been my misfortune to visit. If they take over, they will strip out

real ale and sell bottles to kids on Friday and Saturday night - just like the other 200 identikit bars selling alcopops and chemical soup, already struggling to find enough clients in Manchester. There are only so many kids to go round. Wake up you dolts - the Hogsheads are the last 'branded' chain (other than Wetherspoons), with any appeal to over-30's drinkers (except for paedophiles). Butback to the Hogsheads as they stand, the upside is that a consistent effort is being made to maximise quality - certainly the High Street, Manchester and Altrincham versions are succeeding. Speaking of which all Greater Manchester CAMRA members are invited to a FREE buffet and tasting at the High Street Hogshead on Tuesday 5th March at 8pm. Alas, Ed(1) has a committee meeting so I will have to stand in. There will also be folk music, I gather.

Wetherspoons Festival

I missed it. My knee has been troubling me, so I was off my feet, but popped into the Wetherspoons in Piccadilly the following Monday, just in case, and was able to sample Fruh Kolsch (Cologne) and Kozel Dark Lager (Czech) for the princely sum of £1.29. Well done! Tip Top, etc. Considering 3 x 25cl glasses of Kolsch will set you back over 10 marks in Cologne (£3.30), that's value. Indeed I thought the Wetherspoons here was much improved, though in the view of one member of staff, many of the regular customers couldn't care less about taste or quality. "A pint of the cheapest," they cry - and probably slops would do. No wonder so many craft brewing micros are in trouble.

Other Pub Festivals

The Beer House festival, now a week long, went well, with some first class brews and excellent sausages. The Crescent's Bank Holiday bash was very good indeed, with some truly outstanding beers. The Smithfields beer range was, as ever, fascinating. Bank Holiday do's occurred at the Station Ashton, which with no marquee or side room stillage seemed a little uncertain, and the Stalybridge Buffer bar which was excellent but for the three handpumps in the back wasted on Leadmill beers (as was pointed out to me). Coming up is Stockport, and the (bank holiday) weekend before, festivals at the Beer House (which should offer an excellent range of draught German Beers and 35+ New British Ales) and two in Stalybridge, one at the station buffet (again!), the other at Q's Handy!



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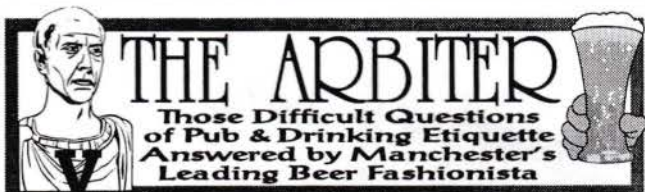
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Dear Arbiter, my friend sports a rather "full beard" and while supping pints, much of the froth sticks to this facial hair, and oftimes, the beer itself dribbles off and runs over my friend's shirt. It is all a bit unsightly. What do you recommend?

A. replies: Presuming you have already encouraged him (and I hope it's a him) to shave his beard off for a worthy charity, and failed, I see only four possibilities. (1) Buy him a suitably dark T-shirt for drinking and drink only in pubs with dark walls, dim light, few customers and that have handpumps without sparklers or better still that use gravity dispense. (2) Drug his drink with knock-out drops and drag him to the barbers (a stout or porter will best conceal the drug), they will know what to do. (DO NOT DO THIS! IT IS AN APPALLING & ILLEGAL SUGGESTION. ED(1&2)). (3) Grow a beard yourself, and likewise mumble incoherently at other pub-goers (but not in Stockport's estimable Woolpack). (4) Get a more suitable friend - though thinking about it, he's the only one you've got, you sad fellow.

Dear Arbiter, I have a friend who falls asleep over a pint in the pub. What should I do.

A. replies: It's you again, isn't it. And this 'friend' is like as not an invisible 6 ft rabbit - no, its YOU we are talking about. YOU are the one who dribbles and falls asleep in pubs. I bet you take a book in with you as well, probably a computer book too! Get a life. Buy a set of sample bottles, a big bag and a copy of Gobbs. Become what in 'beery terms' is called a 'scratcher' or 'ticker' or 'scooper'. Or go and write for What's Doing. You'll still be a social outcast, but for a cause!

Joint Cask Ales of the Month

Jack's Nasty Face (4.1sh% abv)

The brewer says its porter style but lighter, to me its a rich dark mild (the two styles meet in the middle). Meaty, chewy with hints of sweetness, fruit, caramel and a rounded drying finish. Very nice dark addition to the cask ale range at Bar Fringe on Swan Street, Manchester. Very moreish.

Rudgate Eric's Ale (4.5% abv)

I do tend to like Rudgate beers, but this one is a bit special. A mid brown beer with bags of malt, different flavours coming through continually. A light but pleasant nose and a finish that dries sharply to bitterness. Complex, rewarding and finely balanced. Tried at the Crescent's Bank Holiday Beer Festival.

Joint Foreign Beers of the Month

Kozel Dark Lager (3.8% abv)

I often find that the Kozel Pale Lager in bottles is a useful standby in some of those Wetherspoons that never have guest beers available. The dark lager - on sale during the festival at £1.29 was black, easy drinking, with a light, dark malty taste, and dry throughout. Rather like an excellent British dark mild. Hopefully Wetherspoons might get it again.

Fruh Kolsch (4.8% abv)

When I saw the leaflet I was stupified - at the price - £1.29/pint. I resigned myself to its not getting into Manchester but it did (albeit after the Wetherspoons Piccadilly festival finished). Top fermented, but looking for all the world like a lager, Kolsch is a refreshing delight, with bags of flavour and a significant though subtle hop finish. Very popular at National Winter Ales, as here served from the cask on bar, via gravity. Fine, fine, fine.

CALLING ALL CAMRA MEMBERS!

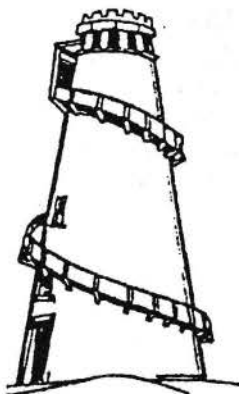
Andrew & the staff of the Hogshead, High St. Manchester would like to welcome you to a free buffet, with free tastings of 7 or 8 Moorhouses beers on Tuesday 5th June at 8pm.

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15



CAMRA FOR REAL ALE

OPENING TIMES MAY 2001 COMPETITION

The last Opening Times Competition (in February) was slightly different to the usual and attracted a good number of entries.

The rambling sentence you were looking for was: 'Drink Real Ale you know it make sense so join CAMRA today and support your local breweries and save your drink'. The winner is: Mr H Keogh of Queens Road, Cheetham. Congratulations!. This month we have some more brewery related items, again kindly donated by the Beer Seller.

This month's competition has once again been set by Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks and reverts to the normal competition format. So for all you who complain that the normal competition is too difficult,tough!

Complete the grid in a clockwise spiral. The last letter of an answer is the first letter of the next. We have given you the starting letter. All the breweries or beers can be found in the 2001 Good Beer Guide.

- 1) Turn base metal into gold at this Surrey Brewery?
- 2) Use this to dip your beer at Cambrinus.
- 3) Twisted Anorak Go! Hop it to Ventnor.
- 4) Spending too much on drink could give you one of these or a a Rebellion at the bank?
- 5) Sounds like they can everything at this Suffolk brewery!
- 6) Cover rocks in Suffolk no just the brewery
- 7) A cobbler on frog island? Hop it!
- 8) Stoning the reindeer from Hardy & Hansons (2 Words)

THE BEER SELLER

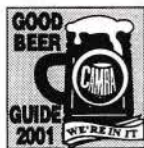


Sponsored by
The Beer Seller

1 A						2		
				6				
5			10					
	8					9	7	3
			4					

- 9) The Stallion will lead you to this North Yorkshire brewery
- 10) You will need one of these to find your way to Bridgewater

Send your entry to OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 24th May, please.



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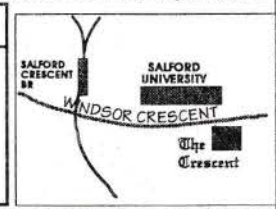
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Down In The Mouth

I was talking to someone recently who, while not denying the seriousness of the foot-and-mouth outbreak, did not see that it would affect his way of life in the slightest. Maybe not, but it has certainly been noticed by the many Greater Manchester residents who enjoy walking in the Lakes and the Peak District at weekends. And it should be a very serious concern to anyone with an interest in the future of pubs.

Last year it was widely reported that an average of six country pubs were closing every week, and I would not be surprised if that figure had doubled during the current epidemic. Many licensees who had been counting on a good spring to keep their heads above water will have seen their hopes dashed and their bars deserted, and will similarly be considering throwing in the towel. The devastation of livestock farming may go hand-in-hand with a cull of the rural pub stock.

We have even had the astounding sight – unthinkable just a few months earlier – of the government placing advertisements in the national press to encourage people to go out in their cars and visit country pubs. But it's hard to see such exhortations having much effect while off-road walking remains impossible over wide areas, and I'm sure it won't be too long before the usual political correctness reasserts itself.

You Just Can't Get The Staff

In the days when the Royal Oak in Didsbury was run by Arthur Gosling, the quality of the service was legendary. No sooner had you crossed the threshold then you would be spotted by one of a multitude of barmaids and asked what you wanted to drink. Few pubs could ever match that, and nowadays when there are so many pressures on costs, staffing levels inevitably come under the microscope.

However, there's a distinct risk that cutting back too far will prove to be a false economy. If you've ever studied statistics, you'll have come across queuing theory, and I must admit I never really understood it either. But one thing I do know is that if you reduce the number of servers, while the average waiting time may not increase that much, there will be a far greater rise in the maximum potential wait. A lone member of staff, no matter how conscientious they are, can only be overwhelmed by a sudden rush of customers. Over the years, I've walked out of a fair number of pubs after standing at the bar for several minutes, sometimes without even attracting the attention of the staff, let alone actually being served. Once a pub has gained a reputation for slow service, as one or two locally have in the past, it can be very difficult to shake off.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL
MAY 31st TO JUNE 2nd 2001
PUT THOSE DATES IN YOUR DIARY NOW!



Sources within the Scottish Courage empire had told Opening Times that Websters "Yorkshire" Bitter was being test brewed at the Royal Brewery in Moss Side. Also, these test brews had been distributed within the Scottish Courage-supplied estate in the Manchester and Stockport area. It seemed likely that the move had been prompted by the announced closure of Websters original brewery at Halifax, but it had been thought more likely that production would have been transferred to John Smith's brewery at Tadcaster, which would have enable the "Yorkshire" tag to have been retained. There was an inevitable question mark over the other two Halifax beers, Wilson's Bitter and Websters Green Label, and it had been hoped that Wilson's Bitter would have found its way back to Manchester, its spiritual home. Wilson's Mild had already been transferred to Morlands of Abingdon, and was thought to be on the verge of extinction. There was bad news about the famous Buffet Bar at Stalybridge Station – British Rail (or whatever the operating company was called) had finally succeeded, after years of trying, to evict the long-standing licensee, Ken Redfern. Regular callers had probably noticed the dwindling beer range, and often indifferent quality in recent years, and it was sincerely hoped that the Buffet Bar would not suffer the same fate as the one on the opposite platform, which had been unceremoniously flattened. There were hopes that a company with other station bar operations would take over, and thanks were due to Ken, and also his father and late mother before him, for their efforts as custodians of the establishment.


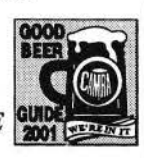
It was suggested that perhaps the tidal wave of "Irish" bars was receding. Although Bass had just opened a new O'Neill's in Didsbury, it was a slightly different story in Manchester City Centre. The Rising Sun, a pub since 1734, had already suffered the indignity of becoming "Paddy's Wig O- The Irish Pub", but suddenly, as if by magic, it had become the Rising Sun again. Also, Paddy's Rat & Carrot, while still retaining the name, had lost its "The Irish Pub" epithet.

There was a brief item on the "rapidly expanding" Wetherspoon chain – the Ash Tree in Ashton-under-Lyne was due to open, next in line was Wigan, and there was a rumour that Middleton would follow. The first beer festival at the Bhurtpore Inn at Aston in deepest Cheshire, had been reported as a "roaring success". Licensee Simon George had been very pleased with the event, and was very enthusiastic about a repeat performance.


Attention was once again drawn to "Misleading dispense" – or more specifically, the sale of keg beer or cider by handpump. Whilst local CAMRA policy had been for pubs using such methods to be ineligible for inclusion in CAMRA pub guides, the rules had been tightened up. following "passionate debate" at the recent National Conference, held in Portsmouth.



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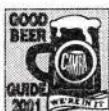
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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

There have been two major City Centre developments in the past few weeks, and basically it's a case of....

Goodbye and Hello

At the **Circus** on Great Portland Street, one of the country's classic city pubs, I would suggest, Terry and Kath Corless have finally retired after some 30-plus years at the pub. CAMRA members gathered to present them with a CAMRA mirror to mark this milestone and to express our thanks for the couple's hard work in running this city institution so well for so long.

The pub has been taken over by Steve Campbell who has had a varied career having at times been a 'bookie' and also assistant steward at St Anthony's Club in Wythenshawe. No changes are planned at the pub and we all wish Steve well in his new post. He's likely to get some ribbing though - it turns out he's a Blue whilst the Circus's Man Utd affiliations are well known!

It's also welcome back to another old face - **Sam's Chop House** on Chapel Walks has reopened after a gap of many years. It still occupies its traditional basement location although almost everything you see is new since the building was effectively gutted before reconstruction commenced. Having said that, it's a very impressive job that reeks of quality through and through, from the engraved polished granite slab as you enter to the impressively tiled dining room at the back. The rest of the place is a happy combination of polished wood, natural bricks, flagged floor and traditional decor in shades of cream and terracotta. There's even an upright piano and while you can't quite imagine a traditional pub pianist banging out the tunes (it's just not that sort of place), a little light 'dinner jazz' tinkling in the background would certainly fir the bill. It would also be nice to think that the impressive main fireplace will be brought into use at some stage.

There are separate bar and dining room menus and, given that the pub is run by the same folk who make such a good job of Mr Thomas's Chop House nearby, both are full of tempting offerings. There's cask beer, too. Two banks of handpumps dispense Taylor's Landlord, Boddingtons Bitter, Wadworth 6X and a house beer from Coach House, 'Victorian Chop House Bitter'. It's not cheap (Landlord £2.10 a pint) but somehow that doesn't seem too much for a pint in these surroundings. Some may disagree (one Leo King has already taken me to task about this) but at the end of the day you pays your money and takes your choice.

Other Changes

There is speculation that the long-closed **Swan With Two Necks** on Withy Grove may reopen following its sale by Wolves & Dudley to a firm of developers from Altrincham. It is believed that the company plans to rebuild the premises as a restaurant and bar, with offices and apartments upstairs. Given its location next to the Printworks, it should make a killing. I just can't understand why Wolves didn't do the job themselves.

Moving further afield, I am told that both **Ye Olde Cock** and the **Parrswood** in Didsbury have now reopened following their refurbishments. The Parrswood has been badged as a John Barras house and retains cask beer in the form of handpumped Boddies Bitter. I've not yet been to the Olde Cock but I do hear that the cask ale range has been reduced. I may pop in before penning next month's column.

Elsewhere in south Manchester, **Royals** (formerly the Royal Thorn) in Sharston is now a heap of rubble but on the plus side, the **Mauldeth** in Burnage has returned to the real ale fold with both Gray's Best Bitter and Theakston Best Bitter on handpump. Not a million miles away, though, the **Brewers Arms** on Ladybarn Lane is still promoting itself as a 'cask ale house, despite being all keg. Also all keg is the **Milestone** in Burnage, which has a new licensee in the form of Dee Markham-Jones who has moved there from the Moorside Farm in Swinton. I'm told that despite its all-keg status, some of the pumps are still marked 'cask conditioned'. If this is true

continued on next page...

More From The Arbiter Next Month...

60,000 & GOING STRONG

CAMRA welcomes
60,000th member at City
of York Beer Festival

CAMRA

the Campaign for Real Ale, Britain's only consumer group fighting for the rights of beer drinkers and pub goers welcomed their 60,000th member to its ranks at its City of York Beer Festival.

The 60,000th member was named as Laura Craft from St. John's College, York. Ms Craft signed up with her boyfriend, Jon-Paul Nellist, at the York Beer Festival. The 20 year old student teacher said "I'm really happy to have become CAMRA's 60,000th member and feel as though I have become a small part of their history." Laura even met her boyfriend at a previous beer festival and proves that not all ale drinkers have beards and woolly jumpers!

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns & Communications, said "Our membership has been growing since the 1980's and is at its highest level ever. The more members we have the better we can represent the interests of all Britain's beer drinkers and pub goers. Our campaigns reach out to Government, the media and other decision makers on issues as diverse as fair licensing laws, full pints and protection of community pubs"

CAMRA officers helped Laura celebrate her membership with a few pints of fine real ale. Mike Benner said "We welcomed Laura into the fold in the traditional CAMRA way - a few pints and a good few laughs!"

Manchester Matters...

then it needs putting right straight away or the Trading Standards people will be down on the place like a ton of bricks.

Further east it's all pretty depressing, I'm afraid. The Midland in Gorton is closed and boarded; in Abbey Hey both the Abbey Hey and the Hamlet on Abbey Hey Lane are advertising cask ales outside when none is available within, and while the Pomona in Gorton has reopened under new management it still sells no real ale.

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(TATOOS
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HATTERS MILD
SEASONAL ALES**

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COPY DATE FOR THE JUNE 2001 ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS MAY 24 2001



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

MAY 2001

Thursday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Royal Oak, High St, Cheadle. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 14th - Mild Challenge Ends. Get those cards completed by now!

Friday 18th - Manchester City Centre Stagger: meet 7.30pm Bulls Head, London Rd; 8.30pm Paddy's Goose, Bloom St (behind Chorlton St Bus Station).

Monday 21st - Social: Sir Edwin Chadwick, Stockport Rd, Longsight. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 24th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Armoury, Greek St, Stockport. From 8.00pm.

Tuesday 29th - Sunday 3rd June: the setting up, running and taking down of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Will all branch members try and lend a hand, even if it's just for a couple of hours or so.

Friday 8th June - Trip to Marble Brewery followed by Northern Quarter Social.

Thursday 14th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Tuesday 5th June - Free Buffet and Beer Sampling at the "Moorhouses Beer Festival": Hogshead, High St Manchester. Starts 8pm. All Greater Manchester CAMRA members invited.

MAY 2001

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

Tuesday 8th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Pineapple, Market St, Marple, Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 12th - Trip to Beartown Brewery, Congleton. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426

Saturday 26th - Social to Frodsham Beer Festival. Contact Frank Wood for details.

Monday 4th June - Committee Meeting, Lowes Arms, Denton. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 11th - Branch Meeting and AGM: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. **Will all branch members please make every effort to attend this important meeting.**

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

Friday 11th/Saturday 12th - Macclesfield Beer Festival, at the Rugby Club. Free entry Saturday lunchtime.

Saturday 19th - Congleton Mild Crawl. Meet Queens Head, opp. Rail Station at 12 noon.

Monday 21st - Business Meeting; George & Dragon, Holmes Chapel. Starts 8.00pm.

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Opening Times May 2001

Pages 23 & 24 are missing