



# OPENING TIMES



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## FULL PINT FARCE

**"I thoroughly applaud his campaign to make sure that the British pint is a good, honest pint." – Tony Blair, June 1997**

**T**rade Secretary Patricia Hewitt has announced plans to break the Government's repeated promises, and manifesto commitment, to introduce full-pint legislation, *writes Ted Bruning*. Instead, she aims to enshrine in law industry guidelines recommending that every pint need only be 95 per cent liquid.

She says that publicans caught serving short pints would face fines of up to £1,000 and the loss of their licences.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has reacted with outrage to legislation which would allow publicans – especially big managed house companies which cynically budget to get 76 pints or more out of a 72-pint cask – to continue ripping off consumers. Head of Campaigns Mike Benner accused the DTI of bowing to big business.

"The Government has been promising a full pint since 1997 and now appears to be sticking two fingers up to Britain's 15 million beer drinkers by proposing to make it legal to serve a pint that is five per cent short," he said.

"This is despite the fact that realistic proposals already exist for a 100 per cent liquid pint law."

He said the Government's decision to ditch the existing proposals had been announced even though current industry self-regulation had failed – a quarter of pints surveyed by CAMRA were short of the industry's 95 per cent guidelines. Research showed that over 80 per cent of adults thought a pint should be 100 per cent liquid, and the DTI had received complaints and support for a full pint law from over 9,000 consumers

CAMRA is urging a mass protest against Ms Hewitt's proposal. The deadline for consultation is 1 July and in the meantime Mike Benner and CAMRA's National Chairman Dave Goodwin are seeking an urgent meeting with consumer affairs minister Melanie Johnson. CAMRA's Campaigns Department is seeking to build a united front among consumer rights groups and the trading standards community to head off the DTI's plans.

"We will...tighten legislation to ensure consumers are protected from small measures and get a full pint" – *Labour Party website*. The words "...and get a full pint" have now been deleted.



### Making Music

Details of the entertainment on offer at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, have now been released and we are able to bring you this exclusive preview. Along with some well established Festival favourites, this year we are bringing you some bands new to the event, all well-established professional musicians and sure to make the event go with a swing. On Thursday night A Few Good Men return to this year's festival. Unfortunately last year due to the beer running out they did not have a chance to show their full worth, so this year they are to appear on our opening night. Their music reflects their own original songs as well as cover songs. The Friday unchtime session will be in the hands of the **Mighty Wurlitzer**, always a very popular session with the young and old. The entertainment for Friday evening will be that of **The Purple Gang**. One of their legendary singles was 'Granny Takes A Trip'. They have supported big name bands including Pink Floyd, T. Rex, David Bowie, Slade and Jimi Hendrix. Friday night is always our busiest session so arrive early to hear this band. Saturday lunchtime is our quiet drinkers session which has proved so popular in recent years. Festival-goers should note that from **8.30pm every night** the family Room will be the quiet room for those who want to drink away from the hustle and bustle of the main hall. This proved so popular last year we aim to double the size of the room this time round. On Saturday night **The Winchesters** make a welcome return to this year's festival. This band are guaranteed to make the evening go with a swing. Quite a show band, they have been a huge success on their previous Festival outings – with good music and interesting beers and ciders, why not make this your party night? Next month we preview some of the highlights from the beer, cider and perry on offer – and there are certainly some treats in store! Don't forget those important diary dates – May 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> June at Stockport Town Hall.

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**IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..**

The Government's announcement that is to abandon election pledge to legislate for full pints has produced pretty predictable reactions. There has been much wailing and gnashing of teeth on the part of us CAMRA folk which the licensed trade, particularly in the shape of the *Morning Advertiser* and *The Publican* have been jubilant at the outbreak of 'common sense'. While it may be heresy to say this, I suspect that both consumers' (entirely justifiable) outrage and the trade's jubilation are likely to prove misplaced, and largely for the same reasons.

The current situation is that there are voluntary guidelines whereby you should get at least 95% liquid beer in your glass and a top-up should be given with good grace if requested. There is however no legal entitlement to any of this and, in busy town and city centre bars short measure is commonplace. Smooth beers and stouts frequently have a thick foaming head, which can sit atop no more than 90% liquid at best. Cask ales are often similarly dispensed, particularly in those pubs with a high turnover of relatively inexperienced staff. That's now all going by the board. In future 95% becomes the legal minimum. Top-ups will be a legal right. Has the trade (which supports these proposals) given any thought as to how all this is to be enforced? Armed at last with a legal definition of what is and isn't a short measure, Trading Standards officers will be on the prowl. So, how can your average pub avoid prosecution? Unless we are to be faced with the absurdity of glasses with a 95% line, bar staff will have to be instructed to make sure that each and every pint is effectively a brim measure with just a small collar of foam. Given that a brim-measure pint glass does in fact hold a little more than 20 fluid ounces, this would to all intents and purposes result in as near as damn it that elusive 100% liquid pint. So, where does that leave your average pint of smooth or, for that matter those pubs whose regulars like a good thick head on their beer, cask or keg? Profit margins on the former are about to evaporate while the latter will only be able to keep their customers happy by investing in oversize glasses. Licensed trade militants may think they have won the battle - perhaps they have, but it could well be consumers who turn out to have won the war.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

You will see there's lots about Mild in this issue. With the launch of our Mild Challenge this is a good chance try some of these excellent beers if you're not already a fan. Our thanks go to both the Stockport Express for once again sponsoring this event and or the record number of pubs who have supported it by taking part.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Finally - apologies to the Crescent in Salford. Gremlins last month managed to get their next beer festival as running from Thursday 2 May to Friday 6 May. The festival does in fact run until Monday 6 May (and is always worth a visit or two, by the way).

*John Clarke*

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





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## PUB OF THE MONTH APRIL 2002

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 April 2002 is the Ash, Manchester Road on the Heaton Chapel/Norris border.

Three or four years ago, if you had walked into the Ash you would have seen very few customers, a pub that was in desperate need of a serious makeover and, behind the scenes, a kitchen that had been condemned by Environmental Health. This was the desperate situation that Jayne and Bryan Hall faced when they came into the pub two and a half years ago and took over the lease with the owners, Unique Pub Company.

Close on half a million pounds later, the Ash is a different place altogether after a root and branch refurbishment. Largely open-plan, the pub is now comfortably furnished with a dining area, vault area with pool and large screen TV for football and a sizeable function room to the rear. There is entertainment every Thursday and Friday night, it boasts one of the area's top darts teams and it has become very popular for its food.

The date on the ornate exterior proclaims the pub to have been built in 1901 but there has been a pub on this site for hundreds of years. At the back is what is now probably one of the best pub gardens in Stockport.

Having previously run the Grapes in Heaton Norris, where they also won a Pub of the Month award, Jayne and Bryan have not only reversed years of under-investment but have turned round a moribund soulless pub into a thriving local. Along with the redevelopment has come real ale again with Boddingtons Bitter and at least one guest beer on handpump.

So come along on Thursday 25 April to celebrate the rebirth of the Ash through the dedication of two highly professional licensees. There will be two guest beers on the night plus an extension until midnight. Can't afford to miss it, can you? JF.

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

### OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 26cm. 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.



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### The National Scene

Cask Ale Week is to be renamed Real Beer Week. The event, which was launched last year, celebrates Britain's heritage of cask ales produced by family-owned brewers. The event is organised by the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, representing 33 companies that account for some 50% of the country's cask ale production and own just under 5,000 pubs. Planned for the autumn, the week-long event will offer customers the chance to "try before they buy" as part of an attempt to widen the appeal of real ale. Opening Times will bring you news of events in the north west as it becomes available.

Coors Brewers has confirmed that 320 jobs are to go by the end of the year following the closure of the former Mitchells & Butlers brewery at Cape Hill in Birmingham. No cask ale is produced at the brewery with 70% of production devoted to bottled Bass Ale (a brand owned by Interbrew which will now have to find a home for it). Coors have guaranteed the future of its three remaining breweries at Burton, Tadcaster and Alton, Hants.

### Local Family Brewers

Apart from their regular seasonal beers, there are another two brews in the pipeline from **Robinson's**. Following the deserved success of Cumbria Way, initially brewed for the Hartleys estate, next month will see the launch of a new beer aimed at the company's Welsh pubs. Snowdon Bitter will be a 4% ABV beer, a touch darker than Robinson's standard beers, full-bodied and with some citrus notes in the finish. Readers won't have to travel to Wales to try it though, as a cask has been ordered for Stockport Beer Festival.

The second newcomer is Stadium Bitter, brewed to commemorate the Commonwealth Games and available from July onwards. Described as a full-bodied beer with a unique hop character, this 4.4% ABV brew will be darker than Old Stockport and slightly more bitter than Best Bitter. A similar product will also be available in bottle.

Last month's news about medal winners at the International Brewers Competition held at Burton-on-Trent, omitted to mention **Joseph Holt** who have gained a medal for their cask conditioned mild. Which medal, Gold, Silver or Bronze will only be announced at the prize ceremony to be held at the Guild Hall on April 14th. Everyone at the brewery is extremely pleased with this result, a spokesperson close to the Brewing team, was delighted with the result and said it did not matter just what the category of medal was. Even to receive a Bronze with the competition from all over the world was quite an achievement.

Meanwhile, the installation work, followed by commissioning of the new 30-Barrel plant is nearing completion. At the end of April, the first test brew is planned to see how the new equipment is functioning. The test Brew will be for internal use only, not being made available to the public.

The first brew that will be on sale via Holt's pubs is to be Baton Bitter, another brew to mark the Commonwealth Games. Apart from the name, we currently have no details about the specification.

There's also news from **Hydes'** who are to launch a new chain of 'prestige' pubs. Hydes Heritage Inns is the brainchild of new board member Stephen Kalton, who has something of a history with this kind of development. His previous company, Watling Street Inns, was behind outlets such as the Governor's House in Cheadle Hulme and before that he revamped a number of Robinson's houses - readers with *very* long memories will recall the battle to save the Red Lion in Cheadle from an unwelcome refurbishment by Playmaster Leisure. The first 'Heritage Inn' is the Coach & Four in Wilmslow, which was due to, reopen as we went to press. In common with future 'Heritage Inns', this will feature quality fixtures and fittings, period furniture and other décor, which featured in Watling Street outlets. There will be food, Hydes' cask ales and bottled beers. Future Hydes pubs to be similarly badged include the Bulls Head in Lymm and the Horse & Farrier, Gatley.

Further to our feature last month, Brooklyn Best from **Lees** is now in the pubs and has turned out very much to live up to expectations.

Belying it's 5% ABV, this is an easy beer to drink, combining a good body and lip-smacking hop bitterness which just demands a second pint. One to seek out, we think.

### Micro Magic

As ever, our local micro-brewers continue to come up with a range of new beers.

At Heywood, **Phoenix Brewery** have St George's Ale (ABV 4.3%) out in mid-April while at the end of the month (and running throughout May) theirs is the welcome return of Black Shadow (4%) and Mayflower (4.4%). Near neighbours, **Pictish** of Rochdale are also reprising a favourite from last year, the Strong (5%), pale gold and *very* bitter Maelstrom.

There are no new beers to report from Bolton's **Bank Top**, and there has been a temporary hitch in the two Commonwealth Games beers (Boneshaker and Spitting Feathers) we reported last month, although both are still expected to appear.

In Moston, **Boggart Hole Clough Brewery** is now producing a monthly special and for April this is Onyx Ale, a 4.9% light mild, brewed with our Mild Challenge in mind, so look out for it in those Challenge pubs offering guest milds. Boggart brewer Mark Dade tells us that, much to his surprise, the current biggest seller is the powerful Steaming Boggart. At 9% this isn't a beer to be trifled with (and 18 gallons have been ordered for Stockport Beer Festival!). The brewery is now bottling and Steaming Boggart is one of four beers that have been bottled so far, virtually all of which have been 'exported' to Yorkshire and the North East. Hopefully, the beers may also appear in Carringtons (Didsbury and Chorlton) - we'll let you know if they do.

Up in Nangreaves, the **Leyden Brewery** is producing Gold Rush, a 4% pale bitter which is selling very well. At the end of the month, Brendan Leyden will also be doing a beer swap with Bushy's Brewery on the Isle of Man, with 100 gallon going each way. Bushy's beers aren't seen over here that regularly so it will be good to have them making a appearance in the local free trade.

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5





# MANCHESTER MATTERS by City

The phone rings. "My name's Derek Adams and I'm phoning about your articles on pubs with signs saying they sold real ale when they don't." Yees...? "Well, mine's the other way round - when I put real ale in, I forgot to put up signs saying so!"

And so it proved to be. The pub in question is the former Bird in Hand on Oldham Road, Miles Platting. A former rough house, long since closed and boarded, the pub has now been reborn as the **Ace of Diamonds** and is now a very pleasant place to drink indeed.

Derek is in fact a demolition contractor with a yard at the back of the pub and he initially bought the place to knock it down. He was however persuaded that in the right hands it might actually have potential as a pub and, being very much a beer fan, he decided to have a go. It's been completely refitted and with strictly enforced over-25's only and no swearing policies Derek has also succeeded in making the Ace of Diamonds a safe and pleasant place to drink.

On the beer front there are three on handpump. Thwaites Bitter is the staple and this is accompanied by two changing beers from the Saddleworth Brewery at Uppermill - possibly the only regular outlet for these beers outside the Church Inn where they are brewed. When I've called these have been the new Jubilee Bitter (4.4% and very tasty) and the powerful (5.4%) Shaftbender, which is like a stout.

"I'm trying to turn it back into what I remember pubs being like," says Derek, and so far I'd say he's succeeded. The pub, which is open all day, is only a short bus ride (number 83) from Oldham Street and so is arguably the latest addition to the famous Northern Quarter crawl (and hence it's inclusion in this column).

### Other City News

In the City Centre we await the opening of the latest Wetherspoons this month. This is the **Waterhouse** on Princess Street and, given the building it occupies, it could perhaps be the best of their City Centre outlets. Of course, speculation has inevitably turned to what impact this will have on the neighbouring **City Arms** and **Vine**. Both major on lunchtime food but both are rather more expensive than your average Wetherspoon pub. Time will tell, I suppose.

Elsewhere there's not much to report in the City Centre. Cask beer (in the form of Kimberley Ales) looks to have gone from **Courtneys** on

Parsonage Gardens and an elaborate, but keg-only, Irish theme bar has opened in the Printworks (I won't dignify it with a name-check). Bass, or whoever they are today, have put the keg-only **Bar 5** and **Bar 10** up for sale. There's also an "All Enquiries" sign on the **Crown**, Deansgate which appears to be up for grabs again. In the right hands this ought to be a very successful pub indeed and it's something of a mystery to me why it keeps failing.

A pub most certainly not failing is the **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road - this is now open on Sundays and has also introduced a new food menu. I know from experience that the food here is always worth trying so another early visit looks to be on the cards.

### Out and About

Rumours of a new Wetherspoons in Fallowfield (in the development opposite Revolution) and they've also been looking at sites in Withington, apparently. No immediate developments, though.

I also paid a belated visit to Longsight and Levenshulme and found it a generally dispiriting experience. The **Bay Horse** remains keg and this has been joined by **O'Connors** which has reverted to its former name, the **Spring Bank Tavern**. By far and way the high spot in Longsight was the **Sir Edwin Chadwick**, one of my favourite Wetherspoon outlets. It's obviously very well run and for some reason manages to have a more pubby atmosphere than many Wetherspoon pubs. All the cask beers are just 99p, including the guests and the food is equally good value. Where else can you get a mixed grill for £4.49? Further south both the **Midway** and **Farmers Arms** are to let, but still open. The former had what appears to be a disused handpump for something called 'Clarinbridge Bitter' while the Farmers, which not long ago had a sign in the window advertising the presence of Lees Bitter, is also now all keg. As are the **Little Vic** and **Hennigans Bar**. The **Church** is the same, despite the presence of pumpclips suggesting otherwise.

The **Horseshoe**, which appears to have been recently redecorated (and very nice it looks too) still has real ale in the shape of John Smiths Cask. And a surprisingly tasty pint it was as well. However the **Railway** is both for sale and keg only while the **Union** was actually shut. There is however a glimmer of hope in the shape of the **Pack Horse**. Now run by the Levenshulme Pub Company, Holts Bitter has been installed. Admittedly this was a bit tired when I tried it but full marks for taking the plunge - let's all hope this is a success.

I couldn't take any more after that and headed home. Let's hope there's better news next time.



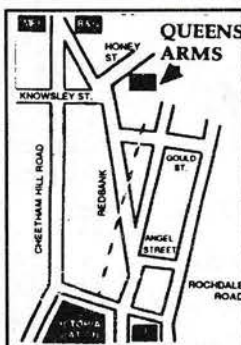
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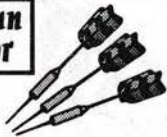


A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB



# Stockie on The che

By John Taylor



**A**s we enter the final stages of this season's Stockport Licensed Houses Darts and Crib Leagues, nerves are starting to set in.

After two great wins last month, Reddish WMC narrowly won their next two matches 4-3 against sides in the bottom half of the table. First up were the Sidings who were finally beaten with late wins by captain Jeff Pearson with legs of 20 & 25 and his third 180 of the season, and Dave Beckett (22 & 23). The following week they won at home on the final leg of the match against the Nursery Inn, and that was after the visitors had been 2-0 up, with Andy Proctor in great form going out in 20 & 19. Jeff Pearson was again the saviour for Reddish winning in 20 & 24; prior to that he had been supported by Mick Allen who hit two legs of 20 darts and Pete Day Snr (20 & 21). If this team goes on and lifts this year's Super League title it will of course be very well deserved, but it's safe to say that they won't be one of the great championship sides that have entertained Stockport vaults over the years. One thing this side has got is seven very good players and an excellent belief in themselves; that whatever happens they will always find four winners on the night. They were very unlucky to suffer their only two defeats this season, against their biggest rivals - present champions Royal Mortar and their predecessors the Ash Hotel, whose team previously played out of the Nicholsons Arms.

The Mortar also won on the final leg of their match against the league's fourth placed team, the Magnet. The two Petes, Woodin and Connolly, had earlier put the champs 2-0 up, but the Heaton Norris side hit back with wins for Geoff Millward, Derek Higgins and Tommy Cooper (24 & 20). Tony Daniels then levelled the scores and the final pairing saw Darryl Fitton take on the Magnet's Dave Tracey. Darryl took the first leg in 14 darts and also hit his

sixth 180 of the season; Dave hit back going one better in 13 darts; Darryl then won the final leg in a nail-biting 24 darts, and more importantly two league points.

The Ash Hotel's great escape came in deepest Brinnington, at the Jack & Jill. The visitors went 3-0 up with wins for Dave Adshead (23 & 22), Gary Townley and John McArdle, but then the Jack hit back through Mark Smith, Pete Sim-Mutch (19 & 23) and young Mark Matthews, who took the scalp of Cheshire player Paul Yates, to level the scores at 3-3. It was left to Brinnington old boy Ray Matthews (23 & 26) and a 180 to win it for the Ash.

At the other end of the table, the Royal Oak seem destined for at least one season in the Premier Division, with just six matches left they are four points adrift at the bottom of the league. As to who will be relegated with them is anyone's guess, with just eight points separating the next seven teams. The Super League table is as follows:

Team	Pld	Won	Pts	Crib
Royal Mortar	20	18	36	33
Reddish WMC	20	18	36	26
Ash Hotel	20	17	34	31
Magnet	20	15	30	30
Bobby Peel	20	14	28	28
Printers Arms	20	11	22	37
Nth Reddish WMC	20	8	16	29
Club Leisure	20	7	14	26
Wembley	20	6	12	34
Nursery Inn	20	6	12	29
Moss Rose	20	6	12	28
Jack & Jill	20	6	12	27
Sidings	20	5	10	27
Royal Oak	20	3	6	35

Hot off the press - the Royal Mortar defeated Reddish WMC 4-3 in the semi-final of the team knock-out. Details of that match and the other semi between the Ash and the Bobby Peel to follow in May. Well, that's it for another month. See you soon - *John Taylor*

## OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Dave Nunn, Hazel Grove

The first letter published in OT is potentially libellous. The words ALL and HAZEL GROVE were never used in my 'pondlife' letter last year. The letter was intended to comment on racist dialog heard frequently in pubs in Stockport and beyond. There was some perverse idea that because I frequented certain pubs I was writing about those regulars. Almost all have listened to my point of view and a few hand shakes have been exchanged.

The Brown's comments were designed to raise awareness of the class of real ale.

Comprehension of English is required. Please read.

Letters to Opening Times are welcome: The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD or [johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com](mailto:johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com)

## The Waters Green Tavern



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Ever Changing Guest Beers including: Phoenix, Roosters, Oakham, Abbeydale, Pictish and many more...

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10 Cask Ales Always Available including  
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Plus 8 guests including a mild

*Erdinger on Draught, Liefmans Kriek  
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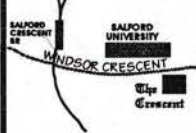
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# Robinson's COMPETITION



**BEST BITTER**  
Pale and bright  
with a full bitterness  
derived from choice  
aroma hops

In the first of our series of monthly competitions, we're offering you the chance to win a copy of *The History of Robinson's Brewery*, a superb full colour hardback book charting the development of the Stockport Company, signed by the three current directors.

To enter, all you have to do is answer the following two questions.

1. To what ABV is Best Bitter brewed?
2. What is Robinson's seasonal beer for March and April?

**Robinson's**

Send your answers by the end of the month to: Robinson's Competition, BHA, 94 Churchgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1YJ

Or by fax to 0161 477 0809  
or e-mail [info@barryhook.com](mailto:info@barryhook.com)  
Normal competition rules apply

# MILD STAGGER

with John Clarke

## Going Mild In Stockport

This month's Stagger is a crawl with a difference. Reflecting the Mild theme of this issue and looking forward to the Mild Challenge, this is a tour round some classic local pubs with the aim of trying a different mild in each one. So, here we go... If you're going to start a pub crawl anywhere, it might as well be in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year and so there was a good turnout at the **Nursery**, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Regular readers of OT will be now be very familiar with this classic, unspoilt, multi-roomed 1930's gem. Even at 7.30 in the evening the pub was busy. Four Hydes beers are sold - Jekyll's Gold and the current craft ale (Styrian Spring at the time of our visit) on handpump together with Bitter and Mild on metered electric dispense. Of course, **Hydes Mild** (ABV 3.5%) was the beer here - a mid-brown beer with a malty aroma and taste followed by a dry finish. As you might expect it was on fine form.

From there it's only a short (ish) walk downhill to the **Moss Rose** on Didsbury Road. Architecturally a million miles from the Nursery, it's been described as the ugliest pub in Stockport. That may be, but inside it's a thriving, well-run local with an excellent atmosphere. The beer's good too - Hydes' again this time Bitter and Light, both on electric pumps. **Light** (ABV 3.5%) is another mild from Hydes and, as its name suggests, is a pale session beer with a good malt-hop balance.

A longer walk now to the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. This multi-beer freehouse is now a firm favourite on the Stockport pub scene. It retains much of its Victorian multi-roomed layout, complete with no-smoking room, and is also making a name for itself as something of a live music venue. For many, though, the main draw is the constantly changing range of guest beers - up to 10 at a time and all invariably on top form. There are pumps dedicated to beers from Whim, Bank Top, Phoenix and Pictish breweries and another reserved for a mild. Tonight this was **B&T Shefford Dark** (ABV 3.8%) from Bedfordshire. This is a well-balanced beer with a sweetish, roast malt aftertaste and, like the two previous pubs, was rated very highly indeed.

You can't do a pub crawl in Stockport without meeting Robinson's and so from the Crown it was just across the road to the **Pineapple**. A comfortable, locals' pub, the Pineapple feels as though it should be tucked away in the suburbs, but here it is, just off Mersey Square. It's surprisingly big, too, with two lounge areas and a large games room at the back. Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters are on electric pumps and in addition Cumbria Way was on handpump. Robinson's have recently dropped the 'mild' tag from **Hatters** (ABV 3.3%) but it's still the same beer - another light mild with a refreshing dry, malty flavour and aftertaste. It's an excellent example of the style so let's all hope the slight name change leads to an upswing in sales.

If this Stagger had been run a few weeks later, the next stop would have been the **Swan With Two Necks** on Princes Street. Another popular Robbies pub and another 1930's gem - and for the duration of the Mild Challenge selling the rare **Robinson's Dark Mild** (ABV 3.3%). This is Hatters darkened with caramel and is only regularly sold in a handful of pubs. The caramel lends a sweeter, richer dimension to the beer, which is extremely more-ish.

The next actual stop was after a walk up Lancashire Hill to the latest addition to the Stockport real ale scene. This is the Beartown Brewery-owned **Navigation**. In the short space of time since it was bought by the Congleton brewer, this pub has become a firm favourite with locals and itinerant cask ale lovers alike. There are always six cask ales on offer, rotating throughout Beartown's extensive range. This includes two milds, one of which is always on sale. The weaker of the two is **Ambeardextrous** (ABV 3.5%) a dark, rich ale which belies its relatively low strength. A rather different proposition is **Black Bear** (ABV 5%), a dark brown beer

8





with roast and malt flavours leading to a mellow, sweetish finish – and which just goes to prove that ‘mild’ doesn’t always mean ‘weak’. It was Black Bear we had tonight, and again it was a beer at the top of its form.

Another walk now, downhill thankfully, to the **Railway** on Great Portwood Street. Another micro-brewery tied house, this time belonging to the Porter Brewing Co of Haslingden. Another Pub of the Year, too, having just been voted local CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2002. It sells the full range of beers produced by eponymous brewer Dave Porter, and enthusiastic licensee Alex Lord ensures quality remains high. There are up to eight cask beers on sale here but the beer of choice was **Porter Dark Mild** (ABV 3.3%), a true dark mild with a slight maltiness and a good hint of roast in the finish. It was so good, we had to stay for another and finish the night here.

There are few parts of the country where a Stagger such as this would be possible, so endangered is traditional cask-conditioned mild. In Stockport, though, this was just the tip of the iceberg, with many other pubs selling the beer. It would easy to be complacent and that’s where the danger lies. Mild sales continue to decline – it really is a case of ‘use it or lose it’, or perhaps that should be ‘drink it or sink it’.

### Buxton Jubilee CAMRA Beerfest

Friday 17th May 1900 - 2400,

Saturday 18th 1200 - 1700, & 1900 - 1am

Pitch Marquee, Buxton Football Club Ground, Silverlands, Buxton

Live band on each night with music until 1130pm

£7 ENTRY FOR EVENING SESSIONS

(includes 2 drinks, engraved glass, band)

£1.50 ENTRY TO SAT AFTERNOON SESSION -

childrens fairground rides, brassband, burgers, football games ( world cup fever time ), etc..

All proceeds in aid of local charities & BFC youth teams.

**OVER 20 DIFFERENT REAL ALES.....**

Jayne & Bryan welcome you to

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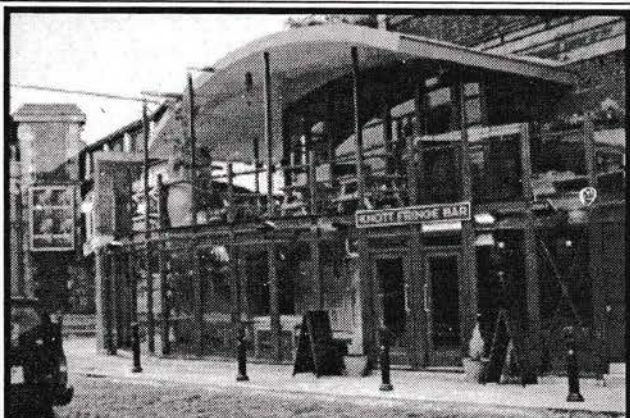
☆ *Entertainment Every Thursday & Friday night*

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LOCAL CAMRA PUB of the Month APRIL 2002



Fine Cask Ales including Boddingtons and Ever Changing Guest Beers



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**IT'S NOT BAR FRINGE - IT'S KNOTT FRINGE BAR**

The Uniquely Civilized Bar on Deansgate

(underneath the Railway Arches)

5 Handpumps: Beers From Phoenix, Boggart Hole, Marble Brewery & Regional Guests

PLUS

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**Food Served 12 - 8**





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UP TO  
**60** ALES



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RECENT BREWS  
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*always available*

**NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION**

# STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER Mild CHALLENGE 2002

Following the success of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with a few other pubs further afield. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.

The Challenge runs from Sunday 6 April to Sunday 12 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2002 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival.

We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Extra - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially engraved pewter tankard.

This year we are also especially grateful to Robinson's for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how the famous Hatters is made. Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can use the version printed on pages 12 & 13 of this issue of Opening Times. Additionally you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 39 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9EL

When you buy a pint or a half of cask mild in one of the pubs taking part, ask the bar staff to stamp your card. Remember, though, you can only get one stamp from each pub.

When you've filled the card (you'll need 12 different stamps from 12 different pubs) send it to the Mild Challenge address on the card and, after our closing date, we will send off your prizes.

**Simple isn't it? Happy Drinking!**

## DIDSBURY DOINGS

New licensees at the Royal Oak in Didsbury are Hazel and Robert Long, who have come from the Carter's Arms in Sale. They have some fifteen years experience in the licensing trade with the last eight years spent running Banks's / Marstons pubs. Their plans for the pub are business as usual but Banks's bitter is to be dropped due to poor sales, background music is to be introduced to give the pub a more convivial atmosphere at quiet times, and Sky sports on television is to be introduced for major sporting events. The next guest beer to go on will be Morrells Graduate a 4.8% ABV beer now brewed by the Thomas Hardy Burtonwood brewery in Dorchester, Devon.

Nearby at the Fletcher Moss in Didsbury the assistant manager Lesley Clayton is to become the licensee of her own pub. Hydes brewery have offered her management of the Vine Inn in Nantwich, she takes over from Monday 22 April. We wish her and her husband well in their new venture.

The former Griffiths DIY shop in Didsbury that Wetherspoons attempted to buy to turn into a pub (but were refused permission by the local magistrates) now looks set to become an M & S food store.





STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER

# Mild CHALLENGE

2002

## WHO BREWS WHAT

**W**hile the national brewers seem to have virtually turned their backs on good cask mild, our local companies still produce the real thing. Robinson's in fact still produce two, and Hydes' three! Here is a run-down on most of the milds available in the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge area with the alcohol by volume in brackets. Those marked\* are available on the Challenge:

**Robinson's:** Hatters\* (ABV 3.3%) - a light mild with a refreshing dry, malty flavour.

**Dark Best Mild\*:** Hatters Mild with added caramel. Fruity, malty and a rare find - although two Challenge pubs (Swan With Two Necks, Stockport and Castle, City Centre) sell it.

**Hydes':** Mild\* (ABV 3.5%) - dark and dry, an all malt brew.

**'Welsh' Mild** - an even darker version of standard mild. Very rare outside Hydes' Welsh estate.

**Light\*** (ABV 3.7%) - lightly hopped session beer. Refreshing and fruity with a dry finish.

**Holt's:** Mild\* (ABV 3.2%) - very dark with a complex taste. Very bitter for a mild with a long and satisfying aftertaste.

**Lees:** GB Mild\* (ABV 3.5%) - malty and fruity with a dry, malty aftertaste.

**Porter:** Dark Mild\* (ABV 3.3%) - rich and full-bodied with a roasty aftertaste. Available at the Railway, Portwood.

**Beartown:** Ambeardextrous\* (ABV 3.5%) - dark, rich and full-flavoured.

**Black Bear\*** (ABV 5%) - a rare strong mild with roast and malt flavours and a mellow finish.

Available at the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport.

**The LAB:** Jet Amber\* (ABV 3.6%) - a brand new beer brewed specially for the Challenge. Should be deep red with biscuity malt taste and slight hop character. Available at the Lowes Arms, Denton.

**Whim:** Magic Mushroom Mild\* (ABV 3.8%) - well balanced with a complex mix of flavours and a sweet finish.

**Cains:** Dark Mild (ABV 3.2%) - smooth, dry and roasty. A superb drink when on form.

**Banks's:** Mild\* (ABV 3.5%) - often sold as plain "Banks's" or "Banks's Original". Amber coloured and well-balanced.

**Moorhouses:** Black Cat\* (ABV 3.4%) - dark and fruit with a bitter, roasty character that lingers in the aftertaste. A former *Champion Beer of Britain*. Available at the Sportsman, Hyde.

**Marble:** Uncut Amber\* (ABV 4.7%) - Strong and roasty with a biscuity malt character. The only organic mild on the Challenge. Available at the Marble Arch, Rochdale Road.

**Greene King:** XX Dark Mild\* (ABV 3%) - smooth and sweetish with a bitter aftertaste. A rare visitor from Suffolk, available in the Smithfield, City Centre.

**Thwaites:** Best Mild (ABV 3.3%) - rich and dark with a smooth malty flavour and a pleasant, slightly bitter finish.

**Timothy Taylors:** Golden Best (ABV 3.5%) - clean tasting and refreshing with a hoppy, bitter finish. A frequent free trade guest beer.

**Coach House:** Gunpowder Strong Mild (ABV 3.8%) - full bodied and roasty with a malty aroma and full finish. Another free trade regular.

**Carlsberg Tetley:** Tetley Dark Mild (ABV 3.2%) - fruity and dark. Less distinctive than it was.

**Tetley Mild** (ABV 3.3%) - well-balanced taste of malt and caramel with good bitterness.

**Greenalls Mild\*** (ABV 3.3%) - hugely improved; rich, slightly sweet and fairly full-bodied

**Scottish Courage:** Theakstons Mild Ale (ABV 3.5%) - rich and smooth with a creamy body.

**Websters Green Label** (ABV 3.2%) - thin and bland. Often sold as a 'budget' bitter.

In addition several pubs on the Mild Challenge will be offering a variety of guest milds during the Challenge.

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**The Unique Belgian Brown Bar in Manchesters N/4**

**OVER 50 BELGIAN BEERS**  
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**Draught Hoegaarden**  
at £2.50/pint  
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OPEN FROM 12 EVERY DAY

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**11**  
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

GOOD BEER GUIDE 2002



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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER  
**Mild**  
 CHALLENGE  
**2002**

**MILD - THE FACTS**

**What it is, and why you should drink it**

**T**his beer is without doubt a "red list" species in danger of extinction. Yet if it were to disappear from our pubs it would be a great shame. Even though it may be seen as a beer without 'street cred', and the one you may have been warned off early in your drinking career because of what unscrupulous publicans might be putting into it. Not least because it was usually dark coloured and would therefore conceal the evidence from view!

Today breweries tend to brew a wide range of bitters and, tacked on at the end, a solitary mild. It wasn't always like that. Before the Second World War, many breweries would have a 'family' of milds, of various strengths and styles, which ran in tandem with a similar range of bitters. Indeed mild was the biggest selling draught beer style for many years: in 1959 it accounted for over 40 per cent of beer brewed. Twenty years later it was down to ten per cent, and today it is just a fraction of that.

Initially this steep decline was largely the result of selective advertising on bitter beers, but until the late 1970s most brewers produced at least one mild. Its last strongholds are now the Midlands and here in the North West, although even in parts of Greater Manchester you will have to look long and hard to find it.

Its popularity here was perhaps typified by Chesters' "Fighting Mild", as it was endearingly known. Once a delicious dark mild, so dark that the first time you walked into a pub selling it, you would be convinced everyone was drinking draught Guinness. Its reputation lingers on but as it once typified mild's popularity, it also mirrors its decline - the beer was discontinued in cask form in 2000.

Unlike in many parts of the country, all our local brewers still produce cask mild today, and this includes a good number of our micros, too. Robinson's still produce two, and Hydes' three! Elsewhere, many breweries today produce only very small amounts of cask mild, some just as a seasonal beer, or none at all where its popularity has diminished through a vicious circle of no promotion, restricted availability and hence declining demand.

Mild beers in good condition are deliciously tasty and come in a host of varieties. Many are dark in colour but some, like Robinson's Hatters are as lightly coloured as a bitter beer. Some are light and hoppy and others rich and high in gravity - it's a mistake to think of mild as being a weak beer and although many of today's examples are low in alcohol, in times gone by milds of five or six per cent alcohol were commonplace. In fact there are still over 100 milds brewed nationwide.

Mild beers are normally characterised by being brewed with less hops than bitter beers and often use darker malts, or sometimes more sugar or caramel, to give their typical dark colour. They are generally light and easy to drink, and usually being lower in alcohol, make an ideal lunchtime pint. They are also some of the best value beers around. So next time you pop out for a pint - make yours mild. You won't be disappointed.

**NEED TO COMPLAIN?**

**If you experience problems in a pub, please first try to sort it out tactfully with the licensee, but if you need to take it further:-**

**Local Trading Standards Contacts are:**

**Stockport - 0161 474 4248, Manchester - 0161 234 5600**

**Tameside - 0161 342 3477, Derbyshire - 01629 585858**

**Cheshire - 01244 602500, Trafford - 0161 912 2274**



**THE HINDS HEAD**

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**Bar open all day Sunday  
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**Full Menu, Specials and Traditional  
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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month Oct 2000

**MANCHESTER ROAD, HEATON CHAPEL  
 STOCKPORT, TEL 0161 431 9301**

*Recommended in CAMRA's New Pub Food Guide*



**NEXT ISSUE AVAILABLE FROM MAY 10**



**MILD CHALLENGE RULES**

- 1) When you buy a pint (or a half pint) of cask conditioned mild in a pub supporting the challenge, get this card stamped by a member of the bar staff.
- 2) Only one stamp from each participating pub.
- 3) When this card has stamps from 12 pubs complete the section below and send it to 'Mild Challenge' 39 Fox Street, STOCKPORT, SK3 9EL, by 14th May 2002; it will be included in the Grand Draw (to be drawn at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival). There are numerous great prizes including 10 trips around Robinsons Brewery where you can see how Robinsons Hatters and Hatters Dark being brewed!
- 4) You will be entitled to a free ticket to the 2002 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 30th May - 1st June. (Camra members get two free pints of mild instead) NB if you want a free entry ticket (or two free pints), please enclose a **stamped, self-addressed envelope**. Tickets will be posted by 18th May, 2002.
- 5) To join the **Mild Challenge Extra** get stamps from 12 different pubs in 12 different areas and you will receive a free 'Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge T-shirt'.
- 6) If you are brave enough (or daft enough?) to send in cards containing a stamp from every participating pub, you will also receive a free, special edition pewter tankard. Otherwise only one card per person please.
- 7) The Mild Challenge runs from 6th April to 12th May 2002 inclusive. All prizes distributed at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8) The Organisers decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered in to.

This year you can win four pints of mild at the festival by coming up with a slogan of no more than eight words on why you drink mild (NB Entry into the Mild Challenge does NOT require you complete this). The winning slogan will appear on next year's Mild Challenge T-shirt. The winning slogan will be announced at the Festival.

I drink mild because .....

**Complete for the Grand Draw**

Name .....

Address .....

..... Post Code .....

Signature ..... Tel. No. (H) ..... (W) .....

Camra Membership No. (if applicable).....

- I wish to enter the 'Mild Challenge Extra' and claim my free T-shirt
- I enclose a SAE for my Stockport Beer & Cider Festival ticket (or two free pints)
- I am interested in joining the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)

SEND TO: 'MILD CHALLENGE' 39 FOX STREET, STOCKPORT, SK3 9EL



**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE  
STOCKPORT &  
MANCHESTER  
MILD CHALLENGE**


**(NB Only one stamp per pub- see overleaf for rules)**

Fill this card with stamps from 12 different pubs and you will receive a free ticket to the 2002 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival and entry into a Grand Draw- First Prizes - visits to Robinsons Brewery & Sampling Room!

FREE T-SHIRT WHEN YOU ENTER THE MILD CHALLENGE EXTRA (see overleaf)

Sponsored by **Express**



# MILD CHALLENGE

## PUBS

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PUB</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>BEER</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>PUB</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>BEER</u>	
ADSWOOD	Adswood Hotel	Adswood La W	Robinson's Hatters	LANE ENDS	Travellers Call	Glossop Rd, Lane Ends	Robinson's Hatters	
	Cross Keys	Adswood Rd	Hydes Mild		MANCHESTER	Beer House	Angel St	Robinson's Hatters
BREDBURY	Arden Arms	Ashton Rd	Robinson's Hatters	CITY CENTRE		Castle Hotel	Oldham St	Robinson's Hatters & Dark
	Horsfield Arms	Ashton Rd	Robinson's Hatters		NORTH	Marble Arch	Rochdale Rd	Marble Uncut Amber
	Travellers Call	Stockport Rd	Lees GB Mild			Smithfield Hotel	Swan St	Greene King XX Mild
BURNAGE	Albion	Burnage La	Hydes Light	MANCHESTER	Crown & Anchor	Cateaton St	Holt Mild	
	Rising Sun	Burnage La	Banks's Mild		CITY CENTRE	Lass o'Gowrie	Charles St	Guest Mild
CHEADLE	Crown	High St	Hydes Mild	SOUTH		Rain Bar	Gt Bridgewater St	Lees GB Mild
	Olde Star	High St	Hydes Light		MARPLE	Hatters	Church La	Robinson's Hatters
CHEADLE HULME	Cheadle Hulme	Station Rd	Holt Mild	MARPLE ROSEH.		Navigation	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters
	Church Inn	Ravenoak Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Railway	Stockport Rd, Rose Hill	Robinson's Hatters	
CHORLTON	Marble Beer House	Manchester Rd	Marble Uncut Amber	MARPLE BRIDGE	Northumberland Arms	Compstall Rd	Robinson's Hatters	
COMPSTALL	Andrew Arms	George St	Robinson's Hatters		MELLOR	Royal Oak	Longhurst La	Robinson's Hatters
DANE BANK	Dane Bank	Windmill La	Robinson's Hatters	MOSS NOOK		Tatton Arms	Trenchard Dr	Robinson's Hatters
DENTON	Lowes Arms	Stockport Rd	LAB Jet Amber		MOTTRAM	White Hart	Market St	Moorhouse's Black Cat
	Red Lion	Crown Point	Hydes Mild	NEW MILLS		Masons Arms	High St	Robinson's Hatters
DENTON (HG)	Masons Arms	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters		OFFERTON	Emigration	Hall St	Robinson's Hatters
	DIDSBURY	Fletcher Moss	William St	Hydes Light		Fingerpost	Hempshaw La	Robinson's Hatters
EDGELEY	Gateway	Kingsway	Hydes Light	OPENSHAW	Victoria	Hall St	Greenalls Mild	
	Grapes	Castle St	Robinson's Hatters		PORTWOOD	Railway	Manshaw Rd	Holt Mild
	Olde Vic	Chatham St	Guest Mild			Railway	Avenue St	Porter's Dark Mild
GATLEY	Horse & Farrier	Gatley Rd	Hydes Mild	ROMILEY	Cow & Calf	School Brow	Robinson's Hatters	
	Prince of Wales	Gatley Green	Hydes Light		Railway	Stockport Rd	Robinson's Hatters	
GATLEY SOUTH	High Grove	Silverdale Rd	Hydes Light	RUSHOLME	Osborne House	Victory St	Hydes Mild	
	Friendship	Arundel St	Robinson's Hatters		SALFORD	Crescent	Crescent	Guest Mild
GLOSSOP	Old Glove Works	George St	Guest Mild	STALYBRIDGE		Pineapple	Kenworthy St	Robinson's Hatters
	Pineapple	Garrett Way	Hydes Light		Station Buffet Bar	Rassbottom St	Guest Mild	
	Plough	Hyde Rd	Robinson's Hatters	STOCKPORT	Arden Arms	Millgate	Robinson's Hatters	
Waggon & Horses	Hyde Rd	Holt Mild	CENTRE EAST		Red Bull	Middle Hillgate	Robinson's Hatters	
HAZEL GROVE	Bird in Hand	London Rd		Robinson's Hatters	STOCKPORT	Spread Eagle	Lower Hillgate	Robinson's Hatters
	EAST	Royal Oak	Robinson's Hatters	Tiviot		Tiviot Dale	Robinson's Hatters	
HAZEL GROVE	Woodman	London Rd	Robinson's Hatters	CENTRE	Nelson	Wellington Rd S	Guest Mild	
	Grapes	London Rd	Robinson's Hatters		STOCKPORT	Royal Mortar	Higher Hillgate	Robinson's Hatters
	WEST	Three Tunnes	London Rd	Robinson's Hatters		Unity	Wellington Rd S	Robinson's Hatters
HEATON NORRIS	Three Bears	Jacksons La	Robinson's Hatters	CENTRE WEST	Crown	Heaton La	Guest Mild	
	Navigation	Lancashire Hill	Beartown Ambeardextrous		Pineapple	Heaton La	Robinson's Hatters	
EAST	Silver Jubilee	Belmont Way	Robinson's Hatters	STRINES	Swan with Two Necks	Princes St	Robinson's Hatters & Dark	
HEATON NORRIS	Moss Rose	Didsbury Rd	Hydes Light		WITHINGTON	Royal Oak	Strines Rd	Robinson's Hatters
	WEST	Nursery	Green La	Hydes Mild		Victoria	Wilmslow Rd	Hydes Mild
HEAVILEY	Blossoms	Buxton Rd	Robinson's Hatters	WOODFORD	Davenport Arms	Chester Rd	Robinson's Hatters	
HIGH LANE	Horseshoe	Buxton Rd	Robinson's Hatters		WYTHENSHAW	Airport Hotel	Ringway Rd	Robinson's Hatters
HYDE	Sportsman	Mottram Rd	Moorhouse's Black Cat					

*Protect your Pint and Pub. Join CAMRA.*



# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

APRIL '97

**T**he front page story five years ago was a continuation of the previous month's burning question - the short measure scam, which had grown into a national row and an election issue.

A country-wide survey had discovered that 80% of pubs sold short measure pints, and local surveys had found that at least a quarter of pints were below the industry's own guideline, that a pint should be at least 95% liquid. Another disturbing factor had emerged - Trading Standards officers were not taking action because of legal uncertainty. Also there was widespread support for the introduction of lined glasses. Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act stated that a pint should be a pint of liquid with the head extra - but that section of the Act has never been made law. In fact the Tories had been threatening to implement it before the *previous* election.

\*\*\*\*\*

As long ago as August 1996, Bass had agreed to take control of Carlsberg-Tetley, but had run into a storm of protest from CAMRA and others who saw this as an unwelcome concentration in the industry, which would inevitably lead to higher prices and loss of jobs, beers and breweries. The latest news was that Bass was preparing to scrap its proposed merger with Carlsberg-Tetley due to the Monopolies Commission's conditions being too onerous to make the deal worthwhile.

\*\*\*\*\*

Greenall's were going through a shake-up of their managed pubs division, with 245 managed houses being transferred to the tenant-franchise estate, 153 being in the north. Local pubs affected included the Three Crowns, Heaton Norris and the Comfortable Gill, King Street West but probably the highest profile pub affected was the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport. This was the last of the Boddington Ale Houses to offer an unlimited range of independently sourced guest beers - it had become something of an institution on the local drinking scene, and a 'must' for visitors to the town. Happily, it remains so today.

\*\*\*\*\*

The "Carry Out" column highlighted the enormous growth in the interest in traditional beers, and also in the numbers produced. Until recently, this explosion in choice, diversity and quality had been restricted to the pub, and the rise in home drinking was largely the preserve of the national and bigger regional brewers. The big supermarket chains dominated this part of the market, but during the previous few years there had been a change here also. Alongside the endless rows of cans, more and more bottles were appearing, both from the UK and overseas, and there were also exotic imports from Belgium and Germany. These were competing with home-produced beers from the smallest micro-breweries, many of whose beers were bottle conditioned. A local survey had shown that most of the larger supermarkets had a fair selection, but a lot of the results were mixed, with different branches of the same chain varying in what they had on offer. Tesco was found to have the best selection, and they were in the throes of launching a range of 48 regional beers from 28 breweries.

\*\*\*\*\*

Finally, one item of news from Manchester City Centre - the Forgery & Firkin had opened in the premises of the former Bank on Mosley Street - perhaps Forgery was appropriate, as it was not a real brewpub (as all Firkins had once been), in fact its beers were being supplied by the Footage & Firkin at All Saints.

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# CURMUDGEON



## Cut and Run

I was sorry to hear that the McMullen family had decided to take the money and run by putting their long-established Hertfordshire brewery up for sale, together with its 135 pubs. While they didn't have the highest profile amongst the independent family brewers, their AK and Country Bitter were both good, enjoyable brews. The likely outcome must be that the brewery will close, the pubs will be sold off to one or more national pub companies, and the beers at best will linger on for a few years as licence-brewed shadows of their former selves. It will be the same story as with our local former Vaux pubs, many of which are now keg-only, while in the rest - with one or two honourable exceptions - you're lucky to find anything beyond cask Tetleys or Boddingtons.

In this area, we're lucky to have such a strong representation of good independent brewers with substantial tied estates, and enterprising free houses. But, across the country, while the best 5% of pubs are better than ever before on the beer front, in the majority of the pub stock independent brewers' real ales are becoming ever rarer, particularly as staple, everyday beers rather than overpriced guests. Sadly this is yet another nail in the coffin of high-quality traditional beer as a mainstream product.

## Outdoor Relief

In the centres of many major cities, there's a growing problem of people - mostly, but not entirely, men - relieving themselves in public after the pubs have closed. In some places it has become so bad that it's eroding the stonework of buildings. Manchester City Council are now proposing to tackle this by providing temporary outdoor urinals that remain below pavement level during the day but can be raised for use in the late evening, an initiative that apparently has been extremely successful in Amsterdam.

This has drawn a predictable wave of sanctimonious criticism that the council are only encouraging anti-social behaviour. But as long as people go out at weekends drinking beer in large quantities, the after-effects will be entirely predictable, and the choice is between taking action to alleviate the nuisance and simply sitting back and wringing your hands. The police have better things to do than rounding up the culprits, and only on Fantasy Island will post-pub crowds queue up to pay 20p a head to use a "Superloo".

Of course, to a large extent local councils have caused this problem themselves by closing down the vast majority of their public toilets, which once included many urinals that were open 24 hours a day and so could be used after the pubs had shut. And surely a better all-round solution would be to provide free, permanent facilities that were available to the general public during the daytime, rather than just for late-night revellers.

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

**COPY DATE FOR THE MAY 2002 ISSUE OF  
OPENING TIMES IS APRIL 26**

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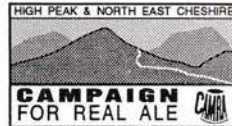
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## FEATURED PUB

The Ring O'Bells,  
Marple



Few people would claim that Robinson's are under-represented in Marple. Many think the Ring O'Bells is their most attractive house.

Situated smack on the Macclesfield Canal half-way up the long climb to the church, you only have to walk a yard or two from the front door to enjoy the famous view of the Canal Wharf with the Pennines framed through the Top Lock Bridge. It is an attractive prospect, skilfully lit on the outside, to anyone walking up Church Lane.

It has long been a claim of mine that the Ring O'Bells always seems to be pleasantly busy - never too quiet to be dispiriting and never too packed to deter. It was opened around 1834 to serve passing canal barges and many remember it in the 1960s and 1970s, with its wood panelling and brasses. Robinson's opened things out about 1980 and it was definitely one of their better efforts. They kept the Smoke Room and the Commercial Room with their attractive windows. Years ago these were the Spanish Room and the Italian Room. Hands up who remembers...and hands up who could tell the difference.

Eating is always important these days and the Ring O'Bells has a long and interesting menu. At night there's no sign of food after 8.30pm and the pub eases itself back to its comfortable drinking persona. Landlord Murray Johns is enthusiasm personified and, with his wife Marjorie, has been hauling in honours. They are actively involved in no fewer than eleven charities - local and national - and thirteen local societies meet there, including a local pub quiz team. A side room transforms itself into a darts room for match nights, and you can play crib competitively or for fun and, for the sadly shrinking number of enthusiasts, they even still play nine-card don.

There's lot's going for it then; good food and excellently kept Robinson's beer (always including a special), pleasant and interesting company and lovely surroundings, outside and in. RO.



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In Hayfield the Kinder Lodge has recently expanded its range of beers and now includes Black Sheep Bitter, Thwaites Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, Bass and Taylor's Landlord.

Also in the area the Lantern Pike is up for sale (again?) with a reserve of £350,000.

On the same lines the Globe in Glossop recently went to auction. It reached its reserve and was sold. No news of who to or its future. More news when we know some.

In Audenshaw, the Sun is advertising its licence for sale whilst over in Hyde the Gardeners on Lumb Road has been re-badged and now appears to be a Thwaites house. More news when we know some.

In Marple, Brambles Cafe Bar is up for sale. Some of the increasingly desperate Marple members see this as an ideal 'brown bar'. Any takers?

Further afield the Jug and Glass in Hartington Nether Quarter is up for sale complete with planning permission for an 80 bed hotel. Worth a call if checking out the area, or on the way to or back from the CAMRA recommended Church and Rising Sun out in Top Mossley. The Britannia is opposite the railway station and run by the Pyramid Pub Co. who moved in Phil & Allison Hobson 18 months ago. They had been learning the ropes as it were, by looking after the Good Beer Guide listed Star in Glossop when the landlord was away or having time off. A pub that was very run down has been rejuvenated since they moved there. Marstons Bitter and Pedigree are the draught beers on sale and they have introduced home cooked food (12-5.30 daily). This friendly local pub is shortly being refurbished by the pub co. after Phil & Allison committed themselves to stay for the foreseeable future.

Finally back round to Glossop some beer range news :- the Commercial on Sheffield Road boasts the following beers Green King Abbot, Castle Eden, Barnsley Bitter, Taylors Landlord and last (and least) Boddingtons Bitter. Up in Old Glossop the Queens has Black Sheep, Youngs Bitter, Pedigree, Wells Bombardier and Worthington Bitter (at least it's not smooth flow). The Snake Inn, which is just out of our area, has Wells Bombardier, Theakstons Bitter, Courage Directors and Hydes Jekylls Gold. Finally, finally Matteos is once again the Rock Tavern.

### OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or PC COMPATIBLE (NOT MAC) \*.eps, \*.tiff or \*.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up).



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The tenant of the Crag, Wildboardclough has bought the pub for what I'm told is a very reasonable price - so I suppose you can now call it a free house. Also, the Ship in Wincle is reported as being up for sale.

In Bollington, the Cotton Tree has yet another new manager and the Crown has two new pairs of tenants. It is to be hoped that both pubs could change from selling the usual national brand beers (Boddingtons, Tetley's etc.) and consider something a little more adventurous. This could be in their best interests considering their proximity to the Church House and the Poachers, which both sell an ever changing range of 3 to 4 beers each. Also in Bollington, the Lord Clyde has started selling the excellent Bollington Bitter from Storm Brewery.

In Macclesfield, the Fox and Grapes looks set to reopen with new licensees. In Walker Barn, the Setter Dog has been closed for a while but is also expected to reopen by the time we go to print.

Finally, the licensees at the Highwayman in Rainow have retired, having been there for more years than I can remember. This pub has the distinction of being the only recipient in the Macclesfield area of two awards for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide for 10 years.

### CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 216:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Jim Flynn, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, John Taylor, Rod Oliver, Tim Jones, Steve Bray, Lorraine York, Ted Bruning, Stewart Revell, Stuart Ballantyne, John Hutchinson,

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# CAMRA CALLING!

**Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries**  
Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Diary

**APRIL 2002**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> - Branch Meeting and AGM,** Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. **Will all members please attend this important meeting.**

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> - Social:** Lass O' Gowrie, Charles St, Manchester City Centre. 9.00pm onwards.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> - Didsbury Stagger:** 7.30 Station, Wilmslow Rd; 8.30 Nelson, Barlow Moor Rd.

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> - Pub of the Month** presentation to the Ash Hotel, Heaton Norris. From 8.00pm..

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May - Trip to West Yorkshire** Brewery plus visit to one or two local pubs. Back by mid-evening. Depart Crown, Heaton Lane 10.45am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm).

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

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> - Branch Meeting:** Station, Warrington Street, Ashton-u-Lyne. Starts 8.300pm

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> - Regional Meeting and AGM** hosted by High Peak Branch. Stalybridge Station Buffet - starts 8.00pm

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> - Pub Crawl of Hyde - meet Crown,** Market Street at 8.00pm.

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> - Train trip to Liverpool.** Details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099

**APRIL 2002**

*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:*

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> - Spring Pub of the Season** presentation to the Beartown Tap, Congleton. From 8.00pm.

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> - Campaigning Meeting:** Dog Inn, Peover Heath, nr Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm.

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May - Macclesfield Beer Festival,** at Macc Rugby Club. NB Lunch-time on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> is **free entry** and will include the Champion Beer of Cheshire announcement.

**Regional Event**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April - Regional AGM and Social:** Stalybridge Station Buffet. Starts 8.0pm. All local CAMRA branches to send representatives, please



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18



## CAINS

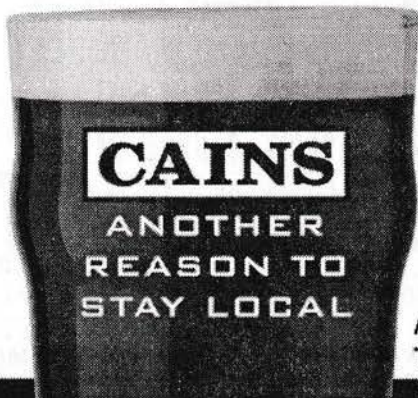
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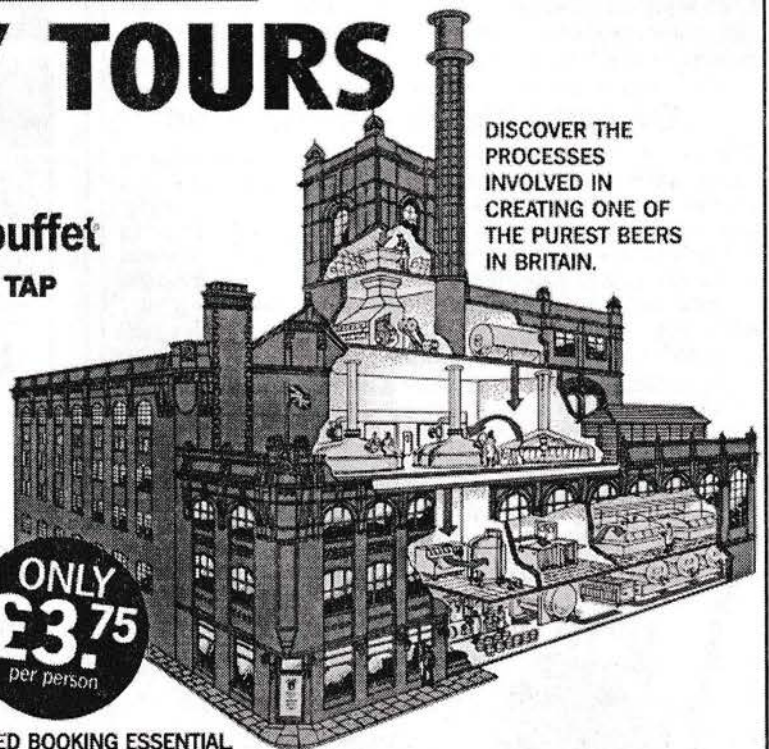
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Regular readers of this column will know that I am very much in two minds about Wetherspoons. Their better pubs (usually the ones in the hands of older and more experienced managers - who also happen to be real-ale enthusiasts) can be very good indeed, and the 'theme' of a decent range of products at very good prices, food until (nearly) closing time, and a policy of no piped music and no kids is clearly going to differentiate them, to some extent, from the mega-pub kiddie-bottle-bars that proliferate in our town and city centres.

Tim Martin (Wetherspoons's chief honcho)'s policy of opening in smaller areas (Longsight and Cheadle Hulme come to mind) are further to be applauded. The fact that Wetherspoons are now working more closely with small brewers organisations like SIBA to support micro-breweries on a longer term basis, whilst still holding regular beer fests are commendable. So what's the problem? Threefold, in my opinion. Firstly, all too many Wetherspoons degenerate into circuit-based zoos in the evening (Manchester City Centre branches and Stockport come to mind). Secondly, by using their giant buying power and economies of scale, Wetherspoons can offer decent daytime product at such low cost that all the traditional pub tenancies in a town centre look terribly expensive in comparison. Problem is, it's a false comparison, because when these traditional boozers go to the wall (and on a check this week, nine tenanted pubs in Stockport averaged 6 customers at 2 - 3pm to Wetherspoons 50+), the one remaining decent pub's prices will of course go up. It's a repeat of the destruction of Britain's motorbike industry. Great for the consumer in the short term but a disaster for choice and prices in the end. Worst of all though, Wetherspoons have now applied for children's certificates at every one of their pubs. Wall-to-wall pushchairs, bawling rugrats and screaming tweenies zooming between tables, injuring themselves and screeching. A "spokesperson" for JD's says it will all be in the best possible taste and the brats will be welcome "only if they are eating, their parents are eating, and they are well behaved." Oh yeah? Tell it to the marines. After spending upwards of thirty quid on food and booze, the child-centred fascists will not take kindly to being told to leave, and indeed we all know what happens when one asks politely of the averagely incompetent British parent to tell their obnoxious, spoiled little \*\*\*\*\* to behave. No, it's the beginning of the end for Wetherspoons offering a remotely civilized place to drink.

### BeerMonster™ Pub of the Season

It was promised to be a semi-regular award, so here is the first of 2002! Over the years the Marble Arch, on Rochdale Road in Manchester has endured a few sticky patches, but has usually been a decent pub in a magnificent building. During the last couple of years, since the establishment of the brewery in the back/cellar, it has blossomed, and gone from strength to strength. Under current brewer James Campbell, the brewery produces wholly organic/vegan beers, some of which (especially the ginger beer) are absolutely outstanding, none are anything but good. In the last few months, however, Phil Chapman (formerly Ian Casson's no.2 at the Beer House) has been cutting his teeth as manager, and his thirst for the unusual has seen a range of unusual and exotic guest beers on sale, in spanking good condition, to complement the excellent Marble beers. It is now nearly faultless as an establishment, and in recognition of Phil & James good work, building on the efforts of the previous management team, the Marble is the BeerMonster™'s Spring Pub. The award is due to be presented on Thursday 2 May at about 9pm. It promises to be a very good night indeed.



# 25 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

# APRIL '77

Regular Opening Times contributor Phil Levison joined CAMRA 25 years ago this month. He has unearthed a copy of *What's Brewing*, CAMRA's national monthly newspaper, from April 1977 and here briefly looks back on national and local issues a quarter of a century ago...

A copy of *What's Brewing* dated April 1977, somewhat yellowed with age, revealed that its main story, spreading over several pages, was the Food Standards Committee report on beer, which had recommended sweeping changes in information on labelling and dispense.

However, it was still a long way from becoming law, and there were fears that it could go the way of the Monopolies Commission report of 1968, and the Erroll Report of 1972 on licensing laws, both of which were still gathering dust on ministry shelves.

The centre point of the report was an "X" rating system which would appear on every beer pump and bottle. A single X would indicate an original gravity of less than 1035, XX would be OG 1035-1040.9, and so on up to XXXXX for beers over OG1062. It was admitted that 82% of beers would fall in X and XX categories. Beer should also be labelled "cask conditioned" or "bulk conditioned", and "pressure dispensed" or "drawn", and there should also be an indication of the percentage of malted barley used.

Following is a selection of typical items from the paper, some of them having a distinctly familiar ring:

- ◆ CAMRA's annual membership subscription had been held at £2 the previous years, but it had now gone up to £4.
- ◆ All 50,000 copies of the first print order of the 1977 Good Beer Guide had been sold (£1.40), and it was to be reprinted.
- ◆ Writer Richard Boston, and Monty Python star Terry Jones had plans to open a brewery at Penrhos Court, Kington, Herefordshire.
- ◆ A court had ruled 13 years previously that a pint of Guinness should include the head as part of the pint. But the Government Chief Whip maintained that the customer was entitled to a full pint without the head.
- ◆ David Pollard's latest outlet was the Windmill at Whitley Green, near Macclesfield. He had started work at Robinson's brewery when he was 17, and he was working at Threlfall's Cook Street brewery when it was taken over by Whitbread. He left to open a home-brew shop in Stockport, and then set up his own brewery at Reddish Vale in 1975.
- ◆ South Manchester Branch's next meeting was at the Gateway, East Didsbury, branch contact Martin Blamey. *What's Doing* was available, six issues for £1, from Roger Hall.
- ◆ Boddingtons's Bitter was on sale at the Victoria Station Bar at 30p a pint, but after talks with British Rail, it was reduced to 26p. A typical vault price was quoted as 22p, with mild sometimes as low as 19p.



## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (Opening Times 216)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by its rules.

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Apologies for missing some last month we experienced a few problems in getting hold of those promised!

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**WIN A FIRKIN OF THE MYSTERY BEER IF YOU CORRECTLY IDENTIFY IT! \***

\*In the case of 2 or more correct answers the judges will decide the winner on the tiebreak question..

The mystery beer that we had hidden in the flooded cellar at Centro has been replaced so the competition is from April 25<sup>th</sup> to April 28<sup>th</sup> -

Get your thinking caps on - its worth a guess!

