



OPENING TIMES



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7,200 CIRCULATED THIS MONTH

FREE

WATCHDOG SLAMS 95% PINT PLAN Hewitt 'fudge' will mean even more problems

Britain's top trading standards officer has blown a hole in Government plans to legalise the 95 per cent pint. And he says that far from ending the short-pint rip-off, the Trade Department proposal - which is a U-turn on years of New Labour promises - would make matters worse.

Chris Howell, the Trading Standards Institute's lead officer on weights and measures, says the plan to allow a 95 per cent legal minimum would lead to the unscrupulous minority of publicans regularly offering their customers at best a 92 per cent pint - because, he says, magistrates would regard prosecutions for minor shortfalls as "trivial". "It boils down to prosecution tolerances," said Mr Howell. "The police don't prosecute people doing 31 in a 30mph zone because the courts would complain they were being choked with trivial cases.

"We have our prosecution tolerance too, and by the time you add that in you are talking about licensees only being prosecuted for pints that are 7-8 per cent short."

Mr Howell said the TSI backed CAMRA's call for pints to average 100 per cent over a series of visits.

"We would like Patricia Hewitt to revert to the Government's previous commitment to a full pint," he said.

He added that the number of pints tested short had risen from 20 per cent to 50 per cent in 20 years.

"This has largely been a question of presentation," he said. "The industry likes to present pints with an attractive collar of foam. But if you want to serve beer with a big head you can't do it in a brim measure."

More Confident

Mr Howell joined a delegation including CAMRA Head of Campaigns Mike Benner that met consumer affairs minister Melanie Johnson last month.

Mr Benner said he left the meeting more confident than he went in. "We raised the prosecution tolerance argument and also argued that if publicans were allowed to serve short pints, that's what some of them would do," he said.

"The DTI said customers wouldn't accept being served pints of flatter beers and lagers which were obviously short measures.

"But we already have experience of nitrokegs being designed to generate deep heads on short pints. And we know lagers can and will be formulated to have a deeper head, while swan-necks and sparklers can be used to create a deep head on beers such as Fuller's London Pride which traditionally don't have one."

and he added: "We feel our concerns have been taken seriously and I am slightly more confident that the current proposals are not entirely set in stone. But drinkers and pub-goers must keep up the pressure by writing to their MPs and the DTI.

This article by Ted Bruning first appeared in What's Brewing, the monthly paper of the Campaign for Real Ale.

SOFT WORDS TURNETH AWAY WRATH

The Quiet Woman Inn, Earl Sterndale

This year the Quiet Woman Inn has been voted unanimously by High Peak And North East Cheshire Branch as its "Pub Of The Year". Located in the depths of deepest Derbyshire lies the village of Earl Sterndale where The Quiet Woman Inn has stood since 1675.




It is a two room pub with low ceilings and original oak beams with plenty of atmosphere and a homely cottage feel. The Quiet Woman is very much a community local where everyone really does know each other. The pub also sells eggs, postcards of the pub as well as books by local poet Tom Wise. On a Sunday there is live traditional folk music played by local musicians which only adds to the country atmosphere. Landlord Ken Mellor has been at the helm of this former Marstons freehouse for 12 years which he runs with his wife. There are five handpumps with a variety of beers on offer. Marstons Bitter and Pedigree are the mainstays along with Mansfield Cask Dark Mild. Recent guests have included Timothy Taylor's Landlord as well as beers from Brains, Slaters and Wytchwood. Ken is an expert at looking after his beer and on the occasions High Peak Branch has visited the pub the beer has always been on top form. The presentation of the "Pub of the Year" to the Quiet Woman Inn will be made on the evening of Saturday July 27th. High Peak Branch will be running a mini-bus to the pub and will also be calling in on some other hostleries in the area. For details and to reserve your seat please contact Frank Wood on 01457 865426.


The pub can be reached using public transport by getting a train from Manchester Piccadilly to Buxton and then getting the bus (442 - Ashbourne) to Earl Sterndale (journey takes 12 minutes). AF

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

This month we welcome thousands of visitors to the north west as Manchester hosts the Commonwealth Games. If you are one of those visitors I hope you enjoy your stay in our city and perhaps also take time to sample some of our hospitality. Having visited many other cities myself, I know how easy it is to find a bad bar - hopefully the short pub guide we have produced in this issue of Opening Times will guide you to some of the better pubs Manchester has to offer. Not every pub listed will appeal to every visitor but I feel sure we listed something for everyone.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And now it's time to hang my head in shame. Last month I dismissed Boddington's Commonwealth Ale as lacklustre. I'd obviously tried it in the wrong pubs so, following Cityman's advice I hot-footed it to Sam's Chop House. I take it all back - properly looked after this is a great beer. So, another gripe - why discontinue it after the Games? It's worth keeping on permanently - what about it?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Finally a note of controversy. This month we publish a letter complaining about the price of cider in a local pub. This led me to think - does price really matter? CAMRA has certainly never successfully got to grips with this issue and people patronise those pubs they find affordable. If you are a regular at an "expensive" pub then that's a choice you have made and presumably you go there for other reasons than the price of a pint. I know I do. We are of course very lucky locally in that there are many good pubs serving excellent beer at very keen prices; no-one has to "trade down" in terms of quality to make pub-going affordable (and that's not the case in other parts of the country). Which brings me back to where I came in - does price matter? Letters to the usual address please.

John Clarke

In a month that sees good news in the probable rescue of CAIN's in Liverpool, the general trend towards consolidation in the industry moves on apace. Tolly Cobbold (great name, but recently less impressive beer) goes to Ridley's with the Ipswich brewery closing. After Brakspears made noises about leaving brewing they are now considered 'in play' and at least two predators are circling. Scottish & Newcastle, after announcing a surge in profits announce that they are looking to sell 1,500 pubs, to concentrate on brewing (and presumably to purchase some other foreign brewer to add to their portfolio of "world brands"). On the one hand it appears that first choice is to sell the pubs to a Scottish bank, but then continue to manage them, to ensure an outlet for their beer. Apparently this is vastly different from securitisation, but you could have fooled me. There will inevitably be a "churn" (offloading several hundred of the worst performers) but with so many pubs failing - look at the 'To Let' signs proliferating around Manchester - it is difficult to see who would buy them. Interestingly, 'losing' the pubs would make S&N more interesting to an even bigger international predator....

P.B. Hutchings

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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 CD-R, 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 19!

PUB OF THE MONTH JULY 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	31			



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for July is the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport.

This long-time keg only ex-Wilsons pub was acquired by Congleton's Beartown Brewery in December last year and almost overnight transformed itself into one of the foremost cask ale outlets in the town. Everything about the pub has been improved. It has been thoroughly cleaned and a welcome (and much needed) redecoration has made the Navigation a relaxing, comfortable place in which to drink. – probably for the first time in years.

This transformation would be impressive in itself, but it is in the range of beers on offer that the pub really scores. In less than a week, the standard keg range (including beers, lagers and stouts) and the usual boring bottles were all ditched. In came six cask ales from Beartown Brewery. Bearskinful and Kodiak Gold are permanent bitter and the superb stout, Polar Eclipse, is the third permanent beer. The rest of the Beartown range rotates among the other handpumps – and such is the demand that a seventh pump is to be installed. Prices are keen too, with the beer either £1.50 or £1.60 a pint depending on strength. The only other draught beers are two imported German lagers and these are supplemented by a bottled range of Belgian and German beers.

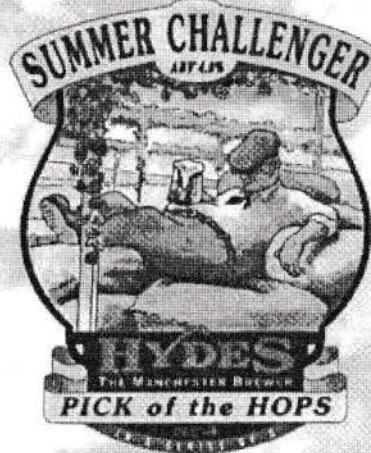
Real cider has also been successfully introduced – three are always available, either brought up straight from the cellar but with one now in handpump.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the right people behind the bar and in Angella Lindsay, Beartown have been very lucky indeed. Angella has run the pub with impressive efficiency – firmly dealing with any troublesome customers but offering a warm welcome to the many new faces the pub has seen. Mention also needs to be made of daughter Chantal who is a regular face behind the bar, and whose efficiency and charm have won over many of the regulars old and new.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 25 July when a full house is expected. Get there early if you want a seat. *The Navigation is well served by public transport. In particular bus 203 will drop you very close.*

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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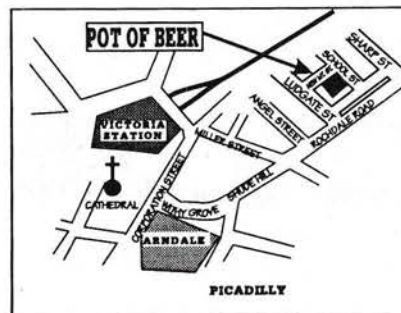
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STAGGER

with Paul Moss

Hazel Grove (South)

This month's Stagger started at the Rising Sun, the large landmark pub which marks the southern end of Hazel Grove, and we found it already busy at 7.30 on this Friday evening. The modern-style interior is low-ceilinged and essentially open-plan, though broken up into distinct areas around the central bar; there is a large lounge on the right, and a small pool room on the left. The pub is generously-endowed with televisions, though the sound had been turned down in favour of the music system. John Smiths Cask (with Extra Smooth inevitably also available) and Courage Directors were joined on handpump by two guests: Everards Terra Firma and Gales Hampshire Glory. I enjoyed the Everards, although one of my colleagues was less enthusiastic. The John Smiths was thought to be quite good, whilst the one staggerer who tried the Gales found it in good condition but an acquired taste. The Directors went unsampled.

Our aim was to head north up the A6 towards the centre of the Grove, and this brought us next to the Bull's Head on the corner of Torkington Road. A sign outside promised a "wide range of hand-pulled beers", which proved to consist solely of handpumped John Smiths. Inside, the pub has long-since been opened out and extended, and is now basically one room, in which we found loud music, low lighting and a young clientele. The majority of us rated the beer as comfortably above average.

It was Robinson's all the way from here on - all our remaining pubs were tied houses serving Best Bitter and Hatters - and our first sample was at the White Hart. The interior struck us as the epitome of a Robinson's 1970s refurbishment - opened out, archways, cream-painted walls and beaten copper tables - although the walled beer garden at the back is a less typical feature. Initially, the

only background noise was the buzz of conversation. As we sampled the beers (which, unusually, were served by free-flow electric dispense - and, admirably, with oversized lined glasses for half pints), this was replaced by folk music from the jukebox. Those of us who drank the mild all enjoyed it; opinions of the bitter ranged from average to good.

Further north and across the road again now to the Grapes, a cosy, busy pub with two rooms off the bar area. The front room was full, so we took our drinks (from metered electric dispense this time) into the back room. A combination of dark wood and white paint here gives a half-timbered effect, and, curiously, there is a fish tank set into one of the walls. The other prominent feature is rather incongruous beaten-copper flue above a gas fire. Both beers were tried, the bitter being rated good with the mild not far behind.

Next door is the Three Tunnes. Here, there are two front rooms (we noticed small stained-glass windows in one of them) and, past the bar and its handpumps, a large vault at the back where we could see darts being played and a trophy cabinet on the wall. As with a number of pubs in the Stockport area, there is still an outside gents toilet. The furnishing in the Three Tunnes is basic: the only soft furnishings are the leather-effect bench seats in the front rooms, and the tables are variously of formica, melamine and plain wood. Only one of the party drank the bitter, which he thought good, whilst the rest of us enjoyed a decent drop of mild.

Next call was the Cock Hotel opposite Commercial Road. Here, there is a central bar, adorned with fairy lights and surrounded by an impressive black and white tiled floor. There are three rooms off this, and we also noticed two adjacent doors, bearing the numbers 7 and 8, which we speculated may indicate the presence of letting rooms in times gone by. Tonight, the rear lounge was given over to a very loud disco, so we occupied the small Commercial Room - so described by its etched glass windows - in a vain attempt to escape the noise. Those who tried the bitter thought it average, while the mild drinkers rated their beer rather higher.

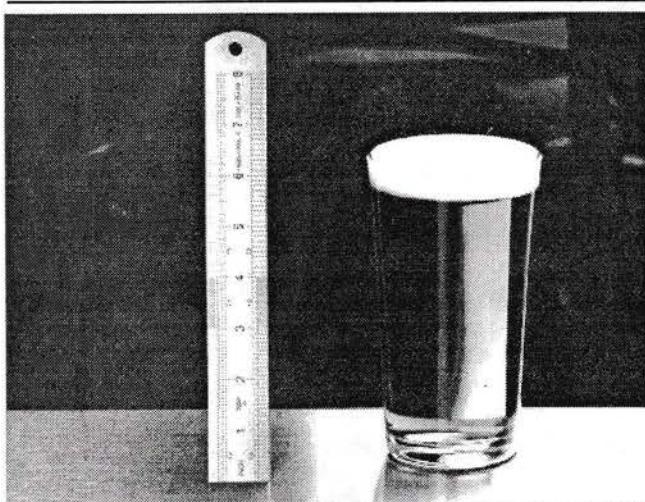
Crossing the A6 a final time, we doubled back a few yards to the Bird in Hand. This small establishment has a long lounge on the right, which this evening was home to Karaoke. Possibly for this reason, the small area in front of the bar on the left was absolutely packed with people. The walls and every available surface were also packed - with all sorts of tankards, plates and other nick-knacks, mostly in lovingly polished copper or brass. Ignoring the (fake) handpump with the pumpclip offering Liebfraumilch, we stayed with the Real Ale with the mild again preferred to the bitter. Deciding to make the next stop our last - there are too many pubs in Hazel Grove to visit them all comfortably in one evening - we walked a few hundred yards up Commercial Road to the imposing Royal Oak. The bar was immediately in front of us as we entered. This is decorated with an impressive collection of ceramic water jugs, and also serves a non-smoking lounge reached via a door on our right. We stayed where we were, though, in a capacious high-ceilinged lounge beyond which we could see a large games room containing two pool tables. Perhaps the most striking feature is the oak staircase leading to the upstairs quarters. Although the pub was bustling, we had no difficulty finding a seat to relax and enjoy arguably the best Hatters of the evening. So ended an enjoyable night when no really unsatisfactory beer was encountered at all. Indeed the general high quality of the Robinson's beers does show that the brewery's increasing emphasis on quality in recent years is starting to pay off where it matters - in the pubs. You do wish, though, that even just one of the many Robinson's pubs in Hazel Grove would show a little more enterprise and perhaps stock the seasonal beers or even Frederics.

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!
JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 19) & DRINK REAL ALE**

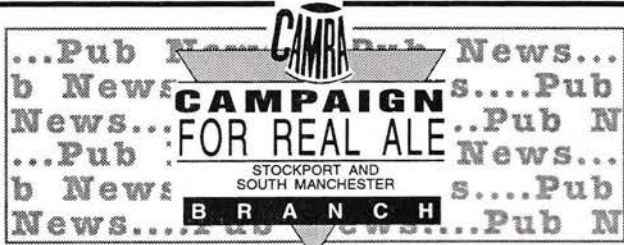
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**REMEMBER!
IF IN DOUBT -
ASK IF IT'S CASK**



Railway reprieved! Yes - good news about the Railway, Portwood, Stockport. While the demolition threat remains (and the pub will certainly be coming done at some stage), this has been deferred for at least two years or so. Porter Brewing Co now intends to spend some more money on the pub with, for example, a new carpet. This is good news for the town's real ale scene in which Porter's ales are a valued part.

The White lion on Underbank has been refurbished in café bar style with lots of comfy chas and sofas. It's now branded as a 'Shotz' outlet and with a name like that it hardly needs saying that there's no real ale. Nor is there any cask beer in the nearby Bridge Street Wine Bar (previously Briarly's etc etc). The handpumps remain but appear to be disused

Laurel Pub Co is reviewing the futures of the Hogshead chain and hasn't ruled out scrapping it. Describing the chain as "schizophrenic", Laurel is conducting a review due to be completed by the end of July. Communications Director Maureen Heffernan said: "The sites are very different to each other. We've tried to bring some uniformity but we feel the whole chain needs a proper review."

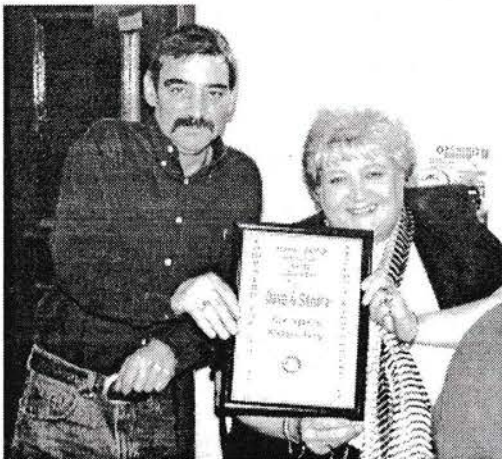
"Some of the sites are performing well and some pubs which are not performing well are on extremely good high street sites. Nothing has been discounted pending on the outcome of the review."

Real ale has made a welcome return to the Bromale in Bramhall in the shape of a changing guest beer.

After a few years' break, cask mild has returned to the Thatched Tavern in Reddish. Tetley Dark Mild is now on sale at this popular local and not only is it good to see the real thing back in the area, but the beer itself is something of a rarity in the Stockport area.

The recently installed licensees at the Red Lion, Cheadle have been shunted to The Beech Tree Heald Green/Handforth. The owner of the Red Lion in High lane has taken over the tenancy of its Cheadle namesake and intends to bring it to the same standard.

CAMRA PRESENTATION



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National News

Cain's Saved! Cains has been sold to Gardener Shaw, a Midlands based drinks distribution company run by the Disanga brothers. They plan to move their base to Liverpool and will continue the brewery, pubs and beers but some jobs are under review. The reported aim is to expand all aspects of the Cain's business, both in terms of the tied estate and availability of the beers.

Wolves & Dudley, who trade locally under the Banks's and Marston's banners, are making some 'outside' guest beers available to their pubs. In forthcoming months these are to be: July: Bateman XXXB and Brakspear Special; August: Jennings Cocker Hoop and McMullen Best Bitter; September: Archers Golden and Batemans Combined Harvest.

Coors are to rebrand Worthington Best Bitter. The 3.6% brew will now be known as Worthington's Cask Ale and will get a shiny new green and gold pumpclip. Nothing else about this frankly ordinary beer will change.

Coors are also entering the draught wheat beer market with the introduction into the UK of Korenwolf from the Gulpener Brewery of the Netherlands. Also available in bottles, this hazy 5% beer is brewed from a combination of four grains (wheat, barley, spelt and rye) and is perhaps a little darker and dryer than the average wheat beer.

Ipswich Brewery Tolly Cobbold have been taken over by Essex family brewer Ridleys. The 279-year old Cliff Brewery in Ipswich will close (and is apparently already the subject of a planning application to convert it into flats) with the production of Tolly Original transferring to Ridleys. None of the other Tolly beers are expected to survive.

Family Brewers



Holts have now rolled out their new Baton Bitter, brewed at mark the Commonwealth Games (although they are not allowed to say so). There are two versions of this beer; Baton Bitter is 3.6% and will retail at £1.20 a pint in managed houses. It's paler and lighter bodied than the usual Holts Bitter. Opinions seem to be divided, some finding it a tasty, refreshing beer while other consider it rather wishy-washy. There is also a stronger version, Baton Gold at 4.3%, which will retail at £1.28 in managed pubs. Those outlets taking the stronger version in the Opening Times area include: Crown & Anchor, Old Monkey, Ape & Apple Manchester City Centre; Railway, West Didsbury; Griffin, Heaton Mersey; Cock O' Budworth, Great Budworth. One or two Holts pubs have shown a reluctance to sell handpumped mild, preferring to offer just the smooth version. The brewery has now written to all pub managers stating that the company policy is that customers should always be offered a choice. The tied trade director at Holts was somewhat puzzled why only smooth mild was being offered in some pubs; the handpumped version is the preferred mild, with smooth available to those who like it that way. Also out this month are (don't mention the Games) Stadium Bitter from Robinson's and Sprinter from Lees. Both promise to be quenching summery ales, as does Hydes latest craft beer, Summer Challenger, a non-sport themed ale brewed using Challenger hops.

Micro Magic

Pictish (Rochdale) - the latest seasonal for July is Siren, a welcome return of this 4.1% clear wheat beer, naturally spicy augmented with coriander seeds and orange peel. You can now read all about the brewery on the Pictish website at www.pictish-brewing.co.uk.



Phoenix (Heywood) - as ever Phoenix has a number of new beers out this month - watch out for Midsummer Madness, Tennis Elbow and Sticky Wicket, all making a reappearance from previous years. Phoenix White Monk has deservedly picked up an award, having been voted Beer of the Festival at Yapton Beer Festival. Two new sales reps have also joined the brewery: in mid-March Matt Jackson joined from the Blackpool Brewery and in April Liz Cowpe arrived from Cains.

Bank Top Brewery (Bolton) - is too busy moving to have any new beers out this month. The new building has been finished and the aim now is to brew a sufficient stock of beer to tide them over the moving period. The aim is to be in the new premises by the end of July.



Bazens' Brewery (Salford) - the premises behind the Crescent fell through. Luckily a unit has now been acquired on Agecroft Industrial Park and the aim is to have the first beers out in early August.

Leyden (Nangreaves) - the beer festival at the Lord Raglan last month was a huge success with 70-80 beers sold over the two-week event. Brendan Leyden has been approached by Bury FC supporters group, Forever Bury, to brew a 4.5%-ish bottle beer which they propose selling over the internet. The suggested name is "Forever Buried".

Shaws Brewery (Dukinfield) - there has been good local press coverage and as we went to press the sixth brew of Shaws Best Bitter was going through. The recipe is still being slightly tweaked and for now the brewery is concentrating on just the one beer with the aim of getting it accepted on a more or less permanent basis in



Dave and Sue Welcome You To

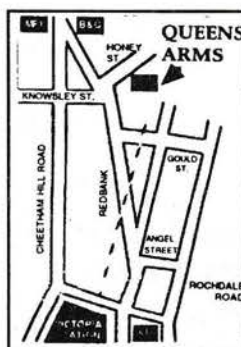
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A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB



local pubs. A recent sampling found it to be on excellent form.



Porter (Haslingden) – the next new beer is to be a return of the powerful Celebration at 7%+plus. The beer has already been brewed and was maturing in the brewery as we went to press. Dave Porter is also giving serious consideration to produce another fruit beer. As before this is likely to be a raspberry variant of Rossendale.

Boggart Hole Clough (Moston) – this enterprising brewer has three new beer out this month, covering a whole spectrum of strengths. Excalibur is a 3.4% light gold session ale; Special Branch weighs in at 5% and is “a unique blend of malt and hops with a long lasting fruity aroma and taste”; top of the tree, so to speak, is Boggart Hole, a powerful 7.1% ale, slightly sweet but easy to drink. This has been brewed for Bar Fringe’s beer festival this month, and the festival will be the only Manchester outlet for the beer.

Sarah’s Hop House (Golborne) - The Railway has been sold to a company called Province, who wants to turn the pub into a restaurant. The Railway is closed but the Brewery remains open for business. The Brewery is a separate building situated on the pub car park. The reason given for selling the pub was that it was taking up time which should have been spent with the Brewery.

Beartown (Congleton) – the last deliveries of Strawberry (4.5%) have now been made, with two casks heading for Stockport’s Navigation. No other new beers are planned for the immediate future, although the Beartown range is already very extensive. They continue to look for other outlets and are extremely pleased with the continues success of the Navigation, Stockport.



BREWERY PROFILE: ABBEYDALE

Travel 30 miles due east of Stockport and you come to Sheffield, once a hot-bed of the brewing industry, boasting such famous names as Tennants’, Gilmour’s, Hope and the Whitbread Exchange Brewery. Since 1999, with the closure of both Stones and Ward’s, Sheffield’s brewing scene has become concentrated in the hands of a few micros. One of these is Abbeydale, based in the south of the city. 1996 former Kelham Island brewer Patrick Morton set up this brand new brewery using plant acquired from the short-lived Leaking Boot brewery in Grimsby. Incidentally, Patrick’s brewing partner at Kelham, James Birkett, now runs the rather excellent New Barrack Tavern just up the road. Within six months of starting up, Patrick picked up the Beer of the Festival award at Sheffield Beer Festival with Abbeydale Moonshine. Since then things have gone from strength to strength, with a regular range of 6 beers plus a couple of seasonals at any one time as well as occasional one-offs and specials. Abbeydale’s signature beers are very pale in colour and tremendously hoppy (but not too bitter) as a result of generous amounts of North American hops being used.

They range from Matins at 3.6% ABV, through Moonshine (4.3%), Absolution (5.3%) to the awesome Last Rites barley wine, weighing in at 11%. The current seasonal specials are Illumination, a 4.8% premium bitter in an IPA style, and the black and hoppy 4.2% Vespers - look out for the rather bizarre pump-clip.

Patrick first got into brewing when, as a student, he found himself with rather a lot of time on his hands and not a lot of money; full-mash home-brewing was a way to combine these two factors and end up with something palatable to drink! His love affair with the craft continued until a chance of circumstances led to him being contacted by Dave Wickett at Kelham Island with the offer of a career; the rest, as they say, is history. He has plans for the future, including some expansion, and the (distant) prospect of bottling. For now it is hoped that Abbeydale’s beers will be seen on a more regular basis in the Stockport and Manchester areas. To try them, why not ask your local free-house licensee to contact the brewery on (0114) 281 2712. **RH.**

**COPY DATE FOR THE AUGUST ISSUE
OF OPENING TIMES IS JULY 26**



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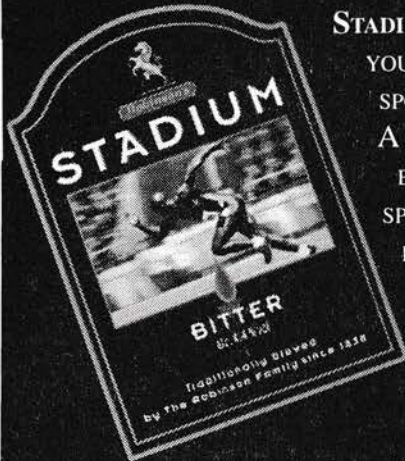
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Robinson's

COMPETITION



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An old favourite with a new look is the prize in this month's competition as we offer you the chance to win a tray of Best Bitter in newly redesigned cans.

Richard Hough of Sheffield, meanwhile, receives a Robinson's fleece after winning the May quiz.



To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is answer the following two questions.

1. To what ABV is Stadium Bitter brewed?
2. Which Robinson's beer refers to a former Stockport industry?

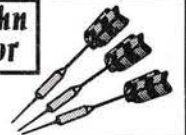
Send your answers by the end of the month to: Robinson's Competition, BHA, 94 Churchgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1YJ

Or by fax to 0161 477-0809
or e-mail info@barryhook.com
Normal competition rules apply

NEXT OT WILL BE NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL AFTER AUGUST 14 (DUE TO Great British Beer Festival)

Stockie The che

By John Taylor



Well, the World Cup is over for another four years and as much as I love football, having dark mild on my cornflakes each morning took some getting used to. But as one thing ends another starts, and so to another season of Super League Darts.

The opening fixtures only caused one shock and that was the Magnet, who had finished fourth in the league last season, going down 5-2 at home to the newly promoted Copperfields 'B' - and this was after the visitors had found themselves two down. Stuart Driver started the revival, going out in legs of 21 & 18, including a 126 outshot. Seve Ridgeway (19 & 22), Dave Wild (20 & 19), Mick Ellis (26 & 25) and Paul Holland (27 & 24) completed a remarkable first Super League win for the Cale Green side.

Champions Reddish WMC had no such problems as they beat North Reddish WMC 5-2. Wins for Mick Allen (18 & 16), Pete Day jnr (22 & 16), Vic Clegg (15 & 29) and a 101 outshot, and Brad Clegg (21 & 24) overpowered the visitors who had Paul Yates winning with legs of 23 & 14, including a 180.

Knock-out winners Royal Mortar entertained Chorlton side Club Leisure and sent them packing with a 7-0 defeat. This was a powerful display by the Hillgate team, who hit 33 tons or over between them. This included five 180s, two of them for Darryl Fitton who went out in 18 & 16. Star of the show, though, was Kevin Weir who won in legs of 16 & 13 darts and an average of 34.55. Another winner and playing his first match for the Mortar was Mark Turner, an up and coming star who went out in 20 & 21, and who the week before had become the Stockport Licensed Houses Individual Champion for 2002, beating his new team mate Kevin Weir in the final 4-3, with wining legs of 21/17/17 and 20 - and this was after had had been 3-1 down.

As normal at the end of a season, some teams move on to pastures new and this year was no exception. It was a big surprise to some people, though, when the team from the Ash Hotel split up, the majority moving to the Union Inn in Reddish. This really causes me travelling problems, having to walk up that hill on Broadstone Road, although it's not too bad rolling home. Anyway, in the first match the 'Reddish Roamers' were at home to the Nursery Inn and won 6-1, with best darts of the night being thrown by Andy Wright (16 & 21) and Gary Townley (24 & 16). Martyn Beck for the visitors won in 26 & 21.

In the remaining fixtures, the old Wembley team, who are now known as Copperfields 'A' won 4-3 against the Royal Oak, with Trevor Jones winning in 19 & 27 and a 180. The other promoted team who want to be known as Gregg Street WMC, even though they play at the same venue as the reigning champions, well they lost 4-3 away at the Printers Arms. Derek Elliot went out in 22 & 23 and a 180 for the Cheadle team, while star of the show went to George Pike (19 & 22) for the visitors. Finally, the Bobby Peel won at home 6-1 against a much depleted Jack & Jill side. Mick Cooney (18 & 25) and a 180 won for the Edgeley boys, while captain Dennis Kidd (21 & 26) won for the J&J, beating Capper who was making a guest appearance, apparently.

Local darts took an upturn recently when the Cheshire County darts team were promoted to the top league next season. Their final fixture produced a fine 19-17 away win at Middlesex, with good performances by local players Mick Haynes, Brian Derbyshire, Andy Wright, Paul Yates and Tony O'Shea, who won the final pairing in 16/15 & 15 darts, including a 101 outshot and a match average of 30.73. Bring on the Lancashire and London superstars. Another success was for Stockport playing in the Cheshire Super League. This team were the northern league champions and beat a team from Stoke in the Cheshire final. So, once more a team from this town will be playing in the national finals to be held later in the year. Well done to all concerned.

Well, it's that time again. See you soon - John Taylor

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OPENING SUMMER • TIMES • 2002



GUIDE TO THE PUBS OF SPORTING MANCHESTER

WELCOME TO MANCHESTER'S SUMMER OF SPORT

Welcome to Manchester. We hope you enjoy your stay in our city and perhaps also find time to sample some of our local hospitality. To help you in this onerous task, we in CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, have produced this brief pub guide for most of the central Games venues.

A number of other good City Centre pubs have also been flagged up for you to enjoy.

We have done this because Manchester is now in fact one of the great brewing cities of the UK. While lacking the high profile of towns like Burton and Tadcaster, here in Manchester is the highest concentration of family owned breweries in the UK. Years ago every town in the country had its local brewery but few remain. Here we have four – Holt's, Hydes, Lees and Robinson's. They all produce distinctive, high quality beers that are worth seeking out. Add to that the large number of local "micro-brewers" which have sprung up in recent years and Manchester really is something special for the beer lover.

A couple of words of explanation:

Vaults – this is a local word that means public bar, that part of the pub which is usually more plainly furnished and where pub games are played. Historically the beer was a little cheaper as well although those days are largely a thing of the past.

Electric Pumps – to many people, the handpump is synonymous with traditional cask conditioned beer. However, locally many brewers have used electric dispense and while electric pumps are slowly disappearing they can still be encountered. Robinson's and Hydes' in particular still have pubs with electric pumps.

So – enjoy our pubs, enjoy our beer – and have fun!



SPORT CITY



Athletics, Rugby 7's, Track Cycling, Squash, Table Tennis

Comprising the City of Manchester Stadium, National Cycling Centre, National Squash Center, Indoor Tennis Centre and to be enhanced by a Sports Academy and sports injury clinic, the recent developments at Eastlands comprise the greatest concentration of major sporting venues in the country. Jewel in the crown is the £110 million City of Manchester Stadium, completed on time and on budget – and for less than has already been spent on the various Wembley projects. After the Games, Manchester City will move here from Maine Road for the start of the 2003 season. Sport City has spearheaded the regeneration of this area, but sadly this arrived too late to save most of the pubs. Consequently pubs are thin on the ground, and those serving traditional beer are even rarer.

Grove Inn

652A Ashton New Rd (jct. Clayton Ln)
Open: 12-5, 7-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-5, 7-10.30 (Sun)
Beer: **Holts Bitter** (handpump)
Food: None

Closest Holt's outlet to the Stadium. A pub in the traditional Manchester style, two rooms – lounge and vault (bar). Caters to a mature clientele – take a look at the trophy collection in the vault. If you want to try some Holts in a different environment, look in to the Strawberry Duck on Crabtree Lane, a little further east.

Mitchell Arms

Every St, Ancoats (jct. Beswick S)
Open: 12-5, 7-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-5, 7-10.30 (Sun)
Beer: **Banks's Original, Bitter** (electric pumps)
Food: None

Very much *the* pub in this part of Ancoats and probably the nearest real ale to the Stadium. A two-room no-nonsense house run with a firm hand. Comprises homely lounge and a football-racing-friendly vault (bar). The Banks's beers are very keenly priced.

Pictured: Left - Holt's Grove Inn - traditional (and cheap!) beer and below - Banks's Mitchell Arms



Worth a visit

On Rowsley Street next to the Stadium complex lies the former Britannia a tiny pub previously owned by JW Lees. Now sold into the free trade it has been bought by Manchester City stalwart Mike Summerbee who is converting it into Summerbees. Due to open in time for the Games but no details of what, if any, cask beers are likely to be available at the time of going to press.



OPENING TIMES 2002



GUIDE TO THE PUBS OF SPORTING MANCHESTER

BELLE VUE REGIONAL HOCKEY CENTRE



Hockey

The nominated venue for the hockey is Belle Vue Leisure Centre. The centre has undergone a £3 million redevelopment to include hockey pitches, international standard badminton courts and a cricket academy. As part of the new English Institute of Sport, after the Games this venue will be a regional Performance Centre for both hockey and badminton.

This area has seen much redevelopment over the years and is close to the site of the former Belle Vue funfair and zoo, both now closed. To the north on Hyde Road (A57) a number of good pubs survive, however.



Travellers Call

521 Hyde Road
 Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 Sun.
 Beer: **Hydes Bitter** (handpump)
 Food: None

Towards Manchester along Hyde Road, opposite the new cinema complex. This small pub offers a taste of the old urban Manchester, small-scale pub, now largely a thing of the past. A friendly no-nonsense pub which always has a warm welcome.

Plough Hotel

927 Hyde Road
 Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 Sun.
 Beer: **Robinson's Hatters and Best Bitter** (handpump)
 Food: None

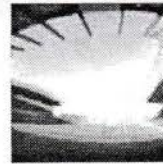
In the opposite direction, heading out of the city. A classic, late-Victorian pub interior, little changed and listed as being of historic interest. The heart of the pub is the lively vault (bar) with parquet floor and bench seating.

Worth a visit

Two other pubs on Hyde Road are also worth a look. Close to the Travellers is the Coach & Horses, another Robinson's pub with a good vault. Further out from the Plough is the Waggon & Horses, a large, loud pub owned by Holts brewery and with beer at their trademark low prices.

PLEASE NOTE: This guide to pubs in parts of the Manchester area has been produced by local members of the Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) Ltd. It has no connection, either directly or indirectly with the organisers of the Commonwealth Games 2002 or the event itself, and neither the guide, nor the recommendation of individual pubs within it have been in any way endorsed by the Games or any organisation connected with it.

The recommendations in this Guide are those of individual members of CAMRA and by implication those of its publisher, the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA only, as of 06/07/2002.



G-MEX INTERNATIONAL CO

Gymnastics, Jud

The old Central Station finally closed its doors in 196 park, the new G-Mex exhibition centre opened its do exhibitions and the World Table Tennis Championship is linked to G-Mex at the rear and opened in 2001. Situated in the City Centre, there are many good pubs and bar cask beers, but those that do tend to be very good indeed. All of

Britons Protection

50 Great Bridgewater St (corner Lower Mosley St)
 Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Tetley Bitter, Jennings Bitter, Robinson's Best Bitter, Guest Beer** (handpump)
 Food: 12-2.30 (every day)

Quite small but lavishly decorated. The vault (bar) at the front has a striking maroon and gold plaster ceiling. The back rooms, reached via a tiled corridor, retain original stained glass, doors and fireplaces. Interesting food.

Knott Fringe

374 Deansgate (underneath railway arches)
 Open: 12-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 Sun.

Beer: **Marble Brewery Beers, Guests (Phoneix and Boggart Hole Clough)** (handpump)
 Food: 12-8 (Light snacks and simple full meals)

Eclectic bar with a large single, complex shaped room downstairs and small balcony/patio upstairs. Comfortable with excellent range of continental beers (bottled and draught) to go with cask beers. Can be quite loud and busy in the evenings, but definitely one of Deansgates more civilized venues.

The Ox

71 Liverpool Rd (opp. Air & Space Museum)
 Open: 11.30-11 (Mon-Sat) 12-10.30 Sun

Beer: **Taylor's Landlord, Boddingtons, Tetley Bitter, Guests** (handpump)
 Food: 12-3 & (5.30 - 10 Mon - Thu) (5.30 - 11 Fri - Sat)

Manchester's first gastro-pub, the ground floor has the feel of an upmarket pub rather than a smart cafe or restaurant and a constantly changing range of guest beer complements the regular Taylors and Boddies. The food is indeed good. Good Accomodation at reasonable prices

Peveril of the Peak

127 Great Bridgewater St (corner Chepstow St)
 Open: 12-3, 5.30-11 (Mon-Fri), 7-11 (Sat), 7-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Marston's Pedigree, Tetley Bitter, Well's Bombardier, Guest Beer** (handpump)
 Food: 12-2 (Mon-Fri)

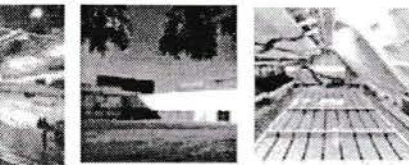
A superb tiled exterior, together with woodwork and stained glass in the bar make this pub, named after a historic coach service, classic gem. It is listed as being of historic importance. Almost triangular in shape, this distinctive pub should not be missed

Rain Bar

80 Great Bridgewater St (junction Chepstow St)
 Open: 11-11 (Mon-Thur), 11-12 midnight (Fri, Sat), 12-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Lees GB Mild, Bitter, Moonraker, Seasonal Beers**

Food: 11am-30 minutes before close (every day)
 A former umbrella factory boldly and imaginatively converted into a pub by local brewer JW Lees in 1999. The ground floor is fairly traditional with much wood and a stone floor; or the first floor is a cafe bar with views of the canal. Good outdoor drinking areas, too.



A few of the venues that will host games events in summer 2002

ENTRE & CONVENTION CENTRE



Weightlifting

and after many years of dereliction and use as a car park in 1986. Since then it has housed pop concerts, etc. The purpose-built International Conference Centre

is nearby. Not all of Manchester's new breed of café bars stock our selections are within easy walking distance of both venues.

White Lion

43 Liverpool Rd (opp. Air & Space Museum)

Open: 11.30-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 Sun

Beer: Taylors Landlord, Tetley Bitter, Phoenix Beer (rotating) Guest Beers (handpump)

Food: 12-9 (6 on Sun) wide range of snacks and main meals

Constantly busy pub with outside drinking area almost in Roman Remains, L-shaped bar serving interesting guest beers and massive range of whiskies and cognac. Barge to Old Trafford on match days!

THE DRINKING QUARTER

Whilst the centre of Manchester is full of pubs, each part has developed its own character over the years. Deansgate is very much a young crowd circuit, Oxford Road attracts the student orientated market, and the 'aspirational' (run-down) Northern Quarter (N/4) has a fabulous concentration of different cask ales and genuine foreign beers.

A full description of all the pubs and their offerings is beyond the scope of this guide, but here are the edited highlights.

Castle Oldham Street, the one Robinsons pub that regularly sells all eight (or nine!) of their beers. **Centro Cafe Bar**, Tib Street, draught Belgian beer and a range of interesting micro-brewery cask ales in a modern atmosphere with a late licence. **Bar Fringe** on Swan Street with four cask ales, traditional cider and a huge range of draught and bottled Belgian beers (often with four different Belgian fruit beers on draught), **The Smithfield Hotel** further up Swan Street, specialising in obscure micro-brewery cask ales, with the traditional local **Burton Arms** next door with up to six cask beers from regional brewers. Off Rochdale Road, the **Beer House**, with new, and enthusiastic managers and still offering a wide selection of micro-brewed ales and a choice of traditional ciders, not far away on New Mount Street the excellent **Pot of Beer**, a small pub with an excellent ever changing beer range. A couple of hundred yards further down Rochdale Road, the **Marble Arch**, home of Manchester's wholly organic micro-brewery, with five of their beers in the pub (including a fabulous ginger beer) and three or four rare or new guest micro-brewed beers, and finally across the valley on Honey St (off Red Bank) the ever excellent **Queens Arms**, with yet another (different) range of excellent micro-brewed beers. And all within a half mile radius.

OPENING TIMES and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA extend their best wishes to all involved - organisers, volunteers, competitors and spectators - in the forthcoming 17th Commonwealth Games and hope a good time is had by all.

MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE

Apart from the pubs around the various venues, Manchester City Centre has a wealth of other pubs and bars, many of which will repay a visit. Unfortunately, space prevents us from doing them all the justice of a full listing but this brief round up should point you in the direction of those that really shouldn't be missed if you have the time.

Walking to and from the Stadium from the City Centre takes you close to two very well-known pubs. On Great Ducie Street lies the **Jolly Angler**, a small, basic Hydes' pub which always offer a warm welcome and usually stocks the excellent Hydes' craft beers alongside that brewery's Bitter. You should also call in at the **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street. This pub is undergoing a renaissance under new keen ownership. Four top-quality cask beers, including Taylor's Landlord, Fullers London pride and Adnam's Bitter are available. Food is keenly priced, imaginative and high quality.

Opposite the Piccadilly Station taxi rank is the **Bulls Head** on London Road. Very well-run and welcoming, this is a Burtonwood pubs selling Bitter, Top Hat and a guest beers, always in top condition. Probably the best pub in the immediate vicinity of the station.

Portland Street is one of the main arteries in the City Centre and the small terrace near the junction with Princess Street include no less than three pubs you should not miss. On the corner is the **Old Monkey**, a new-build pub owned by Holt's and offering mild and bitter on handpump. The ground floor has a lively vault-like feel while there is a quieter lounge upstairs. Next along is the **Circus Tavern**, an all-time classic. It's certainly the smallest pub in the City Centre (possibly in any city centre) with a tiny bar under the stairs, a drinking corridor and two rooms off. The intact survival of this 19th Century interior is remarkable and should be seen. Tetley Bitter is on handpump and not surprisingly the pub can get very busy. Last but not least

is the **Grey Horse**, another Hydes' house with both mild and bitter. Another tiny pub but this time opened out into one small room with a friendly 'local' atmosphere despite its city centre location.

If you get the chance, also check out **Fab Café**, further down Portland St, towards Oxford St, a basement science fiction theme bar often with a Hydes' beer on handpump. A **The Temple** on Oxford St (jct. Great Bridgewater St) the real ale comes in bottles, this tiny bar has been converted from an underground gents toilet!

Kennedy Street is just off Albert Square, and here you will find the **City Arms**, altered over the years it still has an interesting interior and offers a changing range of guest beers. From there it's not far to Cross Street, linking Albert Square with Exchange Square. About two-thirds of the way down is **Mr Thomas's Chop House**, another splendid 19th Century survivor with a spectacular tiled interior. Boddingtons Bitter and Taylor's Landlord are on handpump and the food, served until early evening is of the highest quality. The same people also run the basement **Sam's Chop House** which is close by on the corner of Chapel Walks and Back Pool Fold. The food here is served until about 9.30 and is very well-executed 'traditional British'. There's a house beer from the Coach House micro in Warrington as well as Boddingtons Bitter (and possibly their Commonwealth Ale, too) and Taylor's Landlord.

Apologies to those pubs not mentioned but of course, part of the fun is exploring yourself and finding that special pub that's just right for you. Happy drinking!



Manchester's showpiece Exchange Square features extensive outside drinking and is close to events held in the MEN Arena (see overpage)





AQUATICS CENTRE

Swimming, Diving, Synchronised Swimming

Opened in 2000, the Manchester Aquatics Centre is a brand new £32 million swimming pool complex. It is the only complex in the UK with two 50-metre pools as well as separate diving and leisure pools.

Virtually surrounded on all sides by various university buildings (Manchester boasts the highest student population in Europe), there are unsurprisingly many places to eat and drink within walking distance of the Aquatics Centre.

Kro Bar

325 Oxford Road

Open: 8.30am-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Boddingtons Bitter, Taylors Landlord, Theakston Cool Cask, Guest Beers** (handpump)

Food: 8.30am - late

Head south down Oxford Road to find this excellent modern bar housed in the 18th Century former HQ of Manchester Temperance Society. The décor and furnishings are modern and functional with a more traditional room upstairs. A good range of foreign bottled beer is also available. Opens early for food - alcohol not available until 11am.

Lass O'Gowrie

36 Charles St (off Oxford Rd near BBC)

Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Lass Ale, Black Sheep Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter, Old Speckled Hen, four guest beers** (handpump)

Food: 11-6 (Mon-Fri), 11-3 (Sat, Sun)

A striking tiled exterior greets the visitor, the interior is far more rustic however. The pub has its own micro-brewery (try the Lass Ale) which can be viewed in the cellar. Traditional cider is also sold. Attracts a varied clientele and can get very busy.

Sand Bar

120-124 Grosvenor St (off Oxford Rd)

Open: 12-11 (Mon-Fri), 6-11 (Sat), 6-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Phoenix Bantam, Guest Beers** (handpump)

Food: 12-4 (Mon-Fri)

Two old terraced properties converted to a bar some years ago. The bar on the right opened first and retains some original features. Often features exhibitions by local artists and attracts a mixed crowd from the University. Good foreign beer selection (esp. German) both on draught and in bottle.

Also worth a visit

Due to open in mid-July, Kro 2 lies on Oxford Road on the city side of the motorway flyover. Operated by the people behind Kro Bar this promises to be a similar operation with a slightly higher emphasis on food. A large, heated outdoor drinking area will be a big feature.



M.E.N. ARENA



Netball, Boxing

The Manchester Evening News Arena is the largest multi-purpose indoor entertainment and sports arena in Europe. It has played host to a variety of pop concerts and international sporting events ranging from basketball and ice hockey to boxing and netball. The netball and boxing (semi-finals & finals) competitions for the Games will be staged here.

The Arena is on the edge of the City Centre and within easy walking distance of the huge regeneration area which followed the 1996 bomb. The Cathedral Visitors Centre (in the heart of the old medieval Manchester), Cathedral Gardens and the spectacular Urbis Centre are all worth visiting. The famous Northern Quarter pubs are within easy reach. We also have some closer recommendations.

Crown & Anchor

42 Cateaton St

Open: 11-11 Mon - Sat, 12 - 10.30 Sundays

Beer: **Holts Bitter, Mild, Baton Gold** (handpump)

Food: Full menu 12-6 Mon-Sat, 12 - 4 Sunday

A hugely busy city centre pub, perhaps more true to Holt's roots and character than its other city-centre offerings. Opened out and nearly doubled in size a few years ago, it is now on two levels, the 'upper' being smarter and having a dining area. It attracts a mixed clientele and serves enormous quantities of the famously cheap beer.

Sinclairs Oyster Bar

2 Cathedral Gates

Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 Sun

Beer: **Sam Smiths Old Brewery Bitter**

Food: 12 - 8 Mon - Sat, 12-4 Sun (12-3 Cold Buffet)

The two Shambles pubs, Sinclairs and the Wellington, survived history, the Luftwaffe and 60's town planners to become the only extant part of pre-Victorian sectarian Manchester. Taken down after the IRA bomb they have been rebuilt some 200 years from their original site. Sinclairs is externally a new building, but much of the interior was retained, and the layout is very similar to the original. Always busy, there is much seating upstairs and in the courtyard outside. Good range of Sam Smiths bottled beers (which are widely exported).

Wellington

4 Cathedral Gates

Open: 11-11 Mon-Sat, 12-10.30 Sun

Beer: **Bass** (handpump) plus occasional guest beers

Food: 11.30-9, 1st floor N/S, Smoking on ground floor

Whereas Sinclair's is a pub with food, the Wellington is much more food orientated, and is largely reconstructed from the original timbers. Large comfortable restaurant area on first floor. Shares Cathedral Yard courtyard seating with Sinclairs.

WYTHENSHAW FORUM



Boxing (Preliminaries)

Wythenshawe was largely developed between the wars and was seen as an answer to the huge slum housing problems that had developed in the inner city areas of Manchester. It was not however until 1969 that the foundation stone was laid for the Civic Centre and Forum. As well as hosting the preliminary boxing events, the Forum will also provide all boxing training facilities. A single practice hall with rings and equipment, together with the competition ring, will be located in the community hall.

Most of the pubs on the estate itself offer no traditional beer and all are modern, largely post-war buildings. There are more characterful pubs a little further afield

Airport Hotel

Ringway Road

Open: 7.30am-11pm (Mon-Sat), 7.30am-10.30pm (Sun).

Beer: **Robinson's Hatters, Best Bitter, XB** (handpump)

Food: 7.30am-2.30pm; 5-7pm (Mon-Fri), 7.30am-5pm (Sat, Sun)

A family friendly pub with a garden and play area. Literally in Manchester Airport, the garden extends into the surrounds of one of the taxi-ways. The large Runway Room is an excellent spot for plane spotting. The early start time for food is not a mistake - alcohol, though, is only available during permitted hours (from 11pm Mon-Sat, 12 noon Sun)

Tatton Arms

Trenchard Drive, Moss Nook (just off B5166, one mile from airport)

Open: 11-11 (Mon-Sat), 12-10.30 (Sun)

Beer: **Robinson's Hatters, Best Bitter** (electric pump)

Food: 12-3pm, every day

Old farmhouse and coaching house with fine 17th Century carved fire surround. Multi-roomed interior and beer garden where planes roar overhead. The beer is cask conditioned - don't be put off by the electric pumps. Children only permitted if they are dining.



Having been a bit under the weather recently, I've not had a great deal to report so the absence of the column has not been a serious problem. I expect to be back in August with a post-mortem on this year's Great British Beer Festival in Olympia (dates at the bottom of this page should you be inclined to go). I shall also visit Derby, which will have been and gone by the time most of you read this.

The Beer House - A Little Local Difficulty

Which brings me to the subject of the Beer House (*Angel St, Manchester, for those of you who still don't know*). I have refrained from getting overly excited about the doings and comings, and goings, and have waited for things to settle a bit. The background.....Premier Real Ale House in Manchester...much loved managers go off to run the Crescent in Salford....new manager a bit curmudgeonly....(actually this last bit is rot, Ian Casson was a very nice bloke, a great orderer and keeper of beer, but a bit quiet)....who then leaves, owner sells pub for personal reasons...Inspired Inns take it on, haven't a clue what to do with it...fails to fit in with their portfolio, is run by a management company (the people at the Centro) latterly handed on to another group (Airborne Inns) to run...etc. Well yes. Anyway, Yvonne left and can now be found at the Marble (where, thankfully, she is much happier) and the managers are now Jenny (a well known local face from the better days of the Hogshead) and Troll (yes, really)who have convinced their bosses to give them a little leeway. Anyway, the trad cider is back, the beer range, though it will never be what it was, has improved a lot. Food should be due back on within the next couple of weeks, so all-in-all things are looking up again. The funny thing is, throughout the period beer quality was seldom an issue (except when the customers almost all deserted). So its well worth a visit again - **so give it a try!** Sadly, time is nearly up for the Hogshead. Owners Laurel haven't a clue about running pubs away, but it is to be gutted (with all staff made redundant) later this summer. The likelihood of a decent pub with decent beer emerging at the end is about nil.

**Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2002
Glasses and T-shirts**

**Did you miss out on your 2002 Festival
Glass or T-shirt?**

Contact Jim or Janet Flynn on
0161 432 1816.

Items must be picked up at 66 Downham Rd,
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Glasses are £2 each (pint or half pint).

T-shirts £4.50 (NB - large blue, front logo only)

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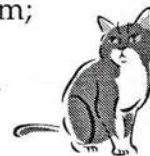
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Guest Beers**



CAMRA CALLING!

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

Diary

JULY 2002

Thursday 11th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 13th - Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Staff Party: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 19th - Edgeley Stagger: Meet Alexandra, Northgate Rd, 7.30pm; 8.30 Royal Oak, Castle Street.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport.

Saturday 3rd August - Minibus tour round National Inventory Pubs of the West Midlands (including Turf Tavern, Bloxwich; Vine, Wednesfield; Old Swan, Netherton; Shakespeare, Dudley and one or two in Digbeth including the Anchor) Depart Crown, Heaton Lane 10.30am. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm).

Thursday 8th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

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

Saturday 13th - Branch Meeting & AGM - Ramseys Bar, Burlington St, Bucton. Starts 2.30pm.

JULY 2002

Saturday 20th - Train trip to Derby. Details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099

Saturday 27th - Minibus survey to Branch southern borders, incl. Quiet Woman at Earl Sterndale. Details from Tom Lord.

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 22nd - Campaigning Meeting: railway, Handforth. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 5th August - Meal & Social: Crown, Lower Peover. Details from George Symes on 01565 653096.

The Trafford & Hulme Branch, covering the Borough of Trafford and that part of Manchester to the west of Princess Parkway, is being relaunched. The inaugural meeting of the 'new' Trafford & Hulme is:

Thursday 1st August - Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. **All branch members old and new invited - let's get the branch off to a flying new start.**



To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14

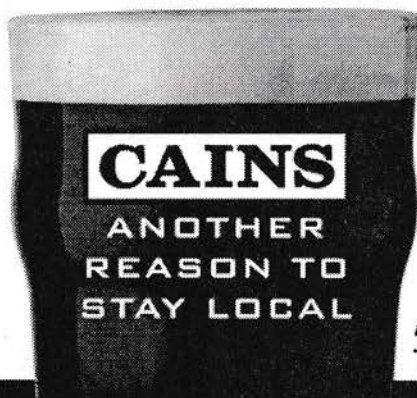


CAINS

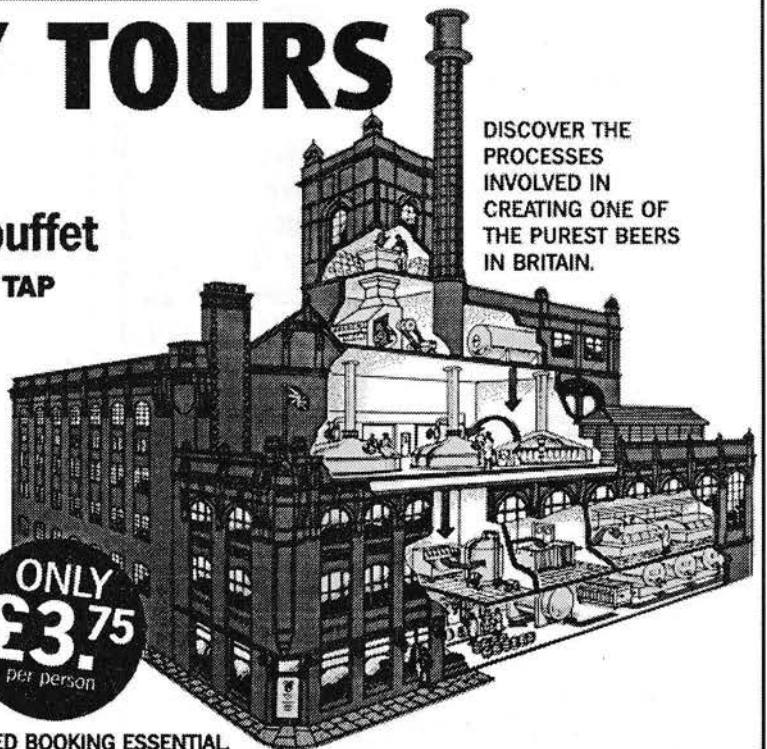
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JULY '97

"Full Measure At Last?" was the headline, and the controversial subject was once again in the news.

The Government had made a pre-election pledge to implement full-measure legislation, thus forcing pubs to serve beer in over-sized glasses with a pint line. Now it looked as if this was going to happen sooner rather than expected, as Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths had backed a private members bill ensuring full pints for pub customers. The Weights & Measures (Beer & Cider) Bill came from Wolverhampton Labour MP Dennis Turner, but as it was only 20th in the ballot there was really very little chance of it getting Parliamentary time - at least not in the then current session. We are, of course, still waiting.

The new President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, had rejected the proposed Bass-Tetley merger, which would have given over 40 per cent of the UK beer market to the combined giant, on the grounds that it was not in the interests of consumers or competition. The Monopolies & Mergers Commission had suggested that if Bass sold 19 per cent of its pub estate the deal could go through, but this was also rejected. Whilst this was good news, it was still hard to see how Carlsberg Tetley's brewing interests in the UK could remain independent, or intact, for long.

A new occasional series on Brew Pubs, mainly but not exclusively, in Greater Manchester, had made its first appearance in Opening Times. The featured pub was the Lass O' Gowrie on Charles Street in the City Centre. The Lass is actually one of the oldest established of the new-wave brew pubs, not only in the north west, but also nationally, as it started to brew in April 1983. Licensee and brewer was Noel 'Joe' Fylan, who had been there since day one. In fact, this had been Joe's first pub, although he had previously been a caretaker manager in Whitbread pubs some time previously. The beers were originally stored in and served from cellar tanks, but they were now racked into casks. The pub had been re-branded a Hogshead in 1996, which resulted in a minor refurbishment and an increase in the number of guest beers available. The pub has since been 'de-branded' and continues to offer a wide range of guest beers alongside revamped (and much improved) house beers.

The Marie Pub Co is probably a name that few opening Times readers will be familiar with, and yet it had been making a growing mark on the local pub scene. The man behind it was Nigel Eastwood, licensee of the Park on Newbridge Lane, Stockport, which he had taken over with his mother in December 1992, and this was their first pub. Sadly, his mother had died in January 1997, and the company had been named in her memory. The other pubs that the company had gradually acquired were the White Lion at Disley, the Whitton Chimes, Northwich; and the Ducie Bridge in Manchester, opposite the CIS building. More potential outlets were in the pipeline, and the ultimate aim was to have 10 pubs. The Marie Pub Co went into liquidation in 1999.



You Gotta do Drunk

In an attempt to reduce the recent tide of public order problems caused by so-called binge drinking, the Portman Group, the industry-funded body that aims to promote the responsible use of alcohol, has launched a campaign under the slogan "If You Do Drink, Don't Do Drunk". Fair enough, but it completely misses the point that a key reason for "doing drunk" is that the opportunities for people to "do drink" have been steadily whittled away, so it's hardly surprising they want to cut loose when they do get the chance.

Employers increasingly frown on their workers enjoying even a single drink at lunchtimes, but it goes far beyond that to the extent that the combination of any quantity of alcohol with responsible activity is deemed unacceptable. Regular, moderate drinking is stigmatised, while gross drunkenness is seen as a legitimate leisure pursuit. The office worker who ostentatiously sips bottled water during the day, but then goes out and has ten pints of Stella on Friday night, is regarded much more positively than his colleague who has a couple of pints of bitter in the pub round the corner each lunchtime. "Work hard and play hard", not "moderation in all things", is the motto for our times.

Obviously no official publicity campaign extolling the virtues of the swift half, or saying "the world's a better place after a couple of pints", is likely to be forthcoming. All we can look for is that social changes will over time reduce the attractiveness of heavy drinking to the young, as the talkies did in the 1930s, and rock'n'roll and coffee bars in the 1950s, and hope that process will not drag down many traditional pubs in its wake.

Don't Be Shy

Walking around a popular tourist town, I was struck by the way many pubs sell themselves short in trying to attract customers. They may have looked welcoming enough, but there was nothing at all to indicate what kind of food and drink they sold.

In the past, when most pubs belonged to specific breweries, their ownership gave them a clear identity. Not only did you know what beer was on offer inside, but you also had a good idea about what kind of pub to expect, as most brewers had a distinctive house style that ran through their estates. Now that so many are in the hands of faceless pub companies, there's nothing outside to tell one from another. While it would be a waste of time to display "Punch Taverns" or "Enterprise Inns", a listing of the major beer brands on offer would surely be extremely useful.

Pubs also fall down in failing to display menus outside, particularly when there is plenty of passing trade on foot. Many people don't appreciate the wide range of good value food on offer in pubs, and seeing a particular dish on a menu may make the difference between crossing the threshold and going elsewhere. When traditional pubs face such strong competition from branded bar and restaurant chains, they really should not be hiding their light under a bushel.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

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OPENING TIMES IS JULY 26**



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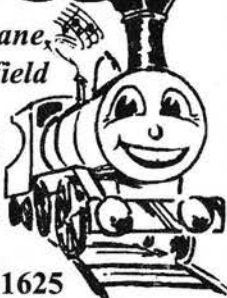
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HIGH PEAK PUB WALK

Frank Wood reports on this year's festivities...

This year's High Peak Branch Walk was held on 22 June, the beneficiaries of the event this year being Tameside & Glossop MIND & Stockport MIND. As I arrived at the starting point, the Royal Hotel in Hayfield, I was surprised to find the early arrivals were feeding the ducks in the River Sett opposite. Enough of that I thought, as I shunted them into the pub sharpish!

The choice at the Royal today was Tetley Imperial (very hoppy), York Brideshead, Tetleys Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, John Smiths Bitter or the beer that most of us tried, Bargates Cracker (4%) brewed at the Drunken Duck pub in the Lake District and a rare beer round these parts. It was not disappointing, being extremely hoppy and rich. This was helped down by the kindness of the landlord who provided us with trays of buttered toast, to see us on our way.

Around 11.10am, after a photo call, we set off down the Sett Valley Trail to walk just under 3 miles to our next pub, the **Pack Horse**, on Mellor Road, New Mills. (Note: the first four pubs are in the current Good Beer Guide). Here we had a choice of Tetley Bitter, Hop Back Crop Circle, Slaters Hot Shot Lager beer or Hanby Cascade. Most of us went for the Cascade and Crop Circle, which were reported as being on good form. From here, a 1.4 mile walk took us to the **Oddfellows** at Mellor, where once again we had a good choice. For some years now, the Oddfellows has been a rare local outlet for Adnams Bitter but this was joined today by the Adnams Jubilee (4.3%), a very full flavoured bitter which most of us had rather than the other choices of Flowers IPA and Marstons Pedigree. Seats outside held most of us and it was a shame we had to walk on, though within 40 minutes we had arrived at the **Little Mill** at Rowarth, where we again sat out at the front of this remote country pub. Robinson's Young Tom, Banks's Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Cameron's Strongarm were our choices here, with one pump turned the other way, most of us plumping for the Cameron's as it is also a rare beer in our area, albeit a regular beer at the Little Mill.

From here, we walked our longest stretch of the day, over Cown Edge to Charlesworth, some 3.5 miles, where we visited the **George & Dragon**, under a new licensee since the previous Monday, local Peter Atherton, who had been a bar man at the pub for the past 13 years. Robbies Mild and Bitter were passed as normal tasting beers from the Stockport brewer and off we went to the **Centurian**, just on the Gamesley estate, a Hydes pub where Mild and Bitter were on good form. (It was noted that the Hydes Black was on a pump clip on the third handpump and three of our walkers plumped for this, only to get it served from a keg pump further across the bar).

Next port of call came after a slog uphill to Mottram and the **White Hart**, where to our surprise, there were two dark milds available, Moorhouses Black Cat, the regular mild, but with Born to be Mild alongside it as a guest from Eastwood and Saunders Brewery in West Yorkshire. (We had the advantage of knowing that this particular barrel came down through the Standedge Canal Tunnel a few weeks ago on its way to Stalybridge Canal Festival Beer Tent but it was one that we never tapped or vented, and sold on. However, its journey had done it no harm and I admit it was the first pub en route where I had an extra half!! Phoenix Bantam Bitter, Taylor's Landlord and Plassey Bitter were also on, and Geoff the landlord as usual made us most welcome, offering to make us some food, though by now time was getting on and we had some way to go yet so we declined his offer. (Here we met up again with the walker who caught the bus from Charlesworth but we will not embarrass him by naming names).

Up over Matley Moor now and a tricky walk down to the **Rising Moon** on Matley Lane, mainly due to the paths not being walked much around these parts and so beginning to get overgrown in parts. The Rising Moon served a more than acceptable pint of Robinson's Bitter (no-one tried the mild) and then we were on the final 1.32 miles, down through parkland into Stalybridge, and the **Labour Club** on Acres Lane. Tonight's choice was Wells Bombardier, Everards Original, Abbot Ale and Boddingtons. To my knowledge we all drank the first two only and they were both on form. A hearty sized Meat and Potato Pie, with accompanying red cabbage and beetroot, and sandwiches were an excellent end to a pleasant day's walking and drinking - and hopefully a good fund raising day for the charity.

A nice touch at the end when we paid for our food en-bloc, a very reasonable £25, club secretary Colin Hamilton brought the money back to the tables saying it was their way of appreciation of our cause that they would not charge us, so the £25 was added to the charity money as a donation from the Club.

Note: we walked a total of 15.26 miles and consumed around ten pints each and three plates of meat & potato pie. Roll on next year walk when once again we will use it to do a survey of branch pubs, which as far as today's were judged, found them all in good form.

16

CAMRA
 CAMPAIGN
 FOR
 REAL ALE

...Pub Ne
b News...
News...P
...Pub Ne
b News...
News...P



Buxton Fringe Bitter, a special festival beer from Kelham Island Brewery in Sheffield, will be available exclusively at The Bakers Arms, Buxton during the annual Fringe Festival, which runs from the 5th - 21st of July. Suggestions are that it will be a light summery beer, around 3.8% and sold at £1.80 per pint. There will also be a beer festival held over the last weekend of the festival on the 19th - 21st July. Remember to check the guide for opening times, as they do not open on Saturday afternoons. The pub's opening hours are: Opening hours are 12-2, 6-11 Mon-Thu; 4-11 Fri; 7-11 Sat; 12-3 7-10:30 Sun.

Customers at the Vine Tavern in Birch Vale can expect a high quality of service following the arrival of Garry and Amanda Chadwick as the new tenants of the Robinson's pub. After many years as committee member and entertainments officer at a local club, Garry has much experience of bar work. Amanda, meanwhile, knows all about the importance of customer service following her previous job as a supermarket supervisor. Garry is delighted to be running a pub of his own, as he explained. "I'm a very sociable person and having a tenancy is something that has appealed to me for many years. The Vine Tavern was always the place we wanted - it is a traditional local with a very friendly atmosphere. We decided to wait until our son Shaun was a little older before changing careers - and this seems like the right time."

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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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Jim Flynn, Organiser Stockport Beer & Cider Festival: I would like to use the pages of *Opening Times* to thank all those who helped at the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, especially the organising committee who put such a large amount of work on over the months leading up to the Festival. I would also thank the Town Hall staff and our sponsors who helped make the Festival the success it was.

Thanks also to the staff of the Bishop Blaize for helping us out with emergency supplies of cask closure corks during the Sunday morning take-down session.

This year, despite the Jubilee and the World Cup, nearly 4,000 people came through the doors and hopefully enjoyed themselves, which is what it is all about. My final thanks is to all those loyal festival goers without whose support all our efforts would have been wasted.

From Melanie Jaques, Community Fundraiser, St Ann's Hospice:

Thank you so much for all your support towards St Ann's Hospice through the Stockport Beer Festival 2002. We were delighted to have been able to be involved for the third year running, and we are thrilled to have raised over £2,000 from the festival. We were all pleased with the amount of support we received from the CAMRA crew, and those attending. It is such an enjoyable event! I very much hope it was a success for you too, and there was not too much beer and cider left over!

As you may well be aware through your previous support, it costs over £7.8 million to run the Hospice and over £5.6 million of this income must come from voluntary contributions. This is why we are so grateful to Stockport Beer Festival Committee for your continuous support. We are all very disappointed that we will not be working with you again next year, and if there is any chance to be chosen again we would be delighted! However, we are pleased to have benefited so well from Stockport CAMRA and the Beer Festivals over the past 3 years.

From Dave Porter and Alex Lord, Porter Brewing Co:

Re the coach shuttle from Stockport Beer Festival to the Railway. For all those who were waiting for a coach outside the Town Hall on Saturday lunchtime we both apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Unfortunately we had relied upon third parties to organise this shuttle who had no vested interest in the outcome, and when we realised that no action had been taken it was regrettably too late to make alternative arrangements. Significant effort had been made by the staff in both time and stock to ensure a welcome reception to the anticipated customers, which unfortunately were sadly missed.

(Even so, many customers and staff made their way to the Railway on Saturday afternoon, myself included, and can vouch for the superb atmosphere and hospitality which was a credit to all concerned - Ed(1))

From Stuart Hayward, Stockport:

I am writing to congratulate all the people responsible for the cider and perry stall at the Stockport Beer Festival. The variety, quality and condition of all the ciders and perries was quite remarkable. I was especially pleased that John Reek was allowed/invited to survey, research and provide all the award winning ciders and perries from the Reading national championships, and a few of his own.

I felt it was a fitting tribute that "Marsden's Revenge", in honour of the late Paul Marsden, was available at his and our home festival. This was typical of the growing number of cider drinkers in Stockport, from the died-in-the-wool 'experts' to the people who have either a half or a pint for the road after a few good beers. For some strange reason, quality cider in good condition in a good pub appears to be a huge attraction and a profitable asset for both licensees and customers alike.

The credit for this new growth in the popularity of real cider must go to the enlightened licensees in Stockport, particularly Alex Lord at the Railway and the wonderful Angella at the Navigation, who provide properly chilled cider both on draught and in bottles, at a very reasonable price.

This has been highlighted recently thanks both to the brilliantly run festival involving Charlotte Bulmer and Rhys Jones, and the massive efforts of John Reek. Merrylegs, as his business is known, has been remarkably ubiquitous, such that he often appears to be in two places at once. However that may be his brother who seems to be both chief taster and publicist rolled into one.

There are other excellent cider outlets in Stockport, especially the redoubtable Steve at Ye Olde Vic, whose handpumped Westons is a great addition to his wonderful beers.

CAMRA does have a dilemma to address in cider provision in the case of the Crown on Heaton Lane. This is a splendid purveyor of fine ales, with a fine atmosphere and a knowledgeable clientele. However, the cider provided is left on the bar of a warm pub with no method of cooling or conditioning. Various methods of cooling are available, from the copper coils of the Railway, the cellar/fridge method of the Navigation and the handpump of Ye Olde Vic.

To add to this quality issue, the 'price policy' of the Crown means that some ciders are on sale at £1.90 per half. The same price as a pint of mild. Other pubs serve pints or bottles of cider at a similar price per pint or bottle. Is this blatant profiteering, given that all the pubs mentioned have the same supplier, or a 'hand tied' brewery imposed policy decision? Whatever the case, I personally, as a reasonably dedicated cider drinker, cannot afford to pay such prices and very rarely now visit one of Stockport's best pubs.

I feel that this problem does no good for cider and should be looked at by the local CAMRA branch as a clear case of overcharging. I have voted with my feet and do not go in the Crown these days but I feel that Stockport CAMRA may have a role to play in this matter. I suggest that the Crown be excluded from the Pub of the Month/Year voting until the cider policy is revised.

Whilst this may appear petty, I feel that Stockport's excellent reputation for cider is scarred by this pricing policy and is not a good advertisement for the town.

(CAMRA has never managed to campaign successfully about price and at the end of the day market forces will determine whether any particular product is too expensive or not. The pros and cons of all pubs are discussed in the event of any Pub of the Month/Year nomination and let's not forget that the range and quality of the cask ales in the Crown is pretty much unbeatable - Ed(1))



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MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

In The Pipeline

This month sees the opening of two major new real outlets on the City scene.

Monday 15 is the scheduled opening date for the City's latest Wetherspoon's. This is the **Waterhouse** on Princess Street, an impressive-looking conversion of a row of late 18th Century, Grade II listed, townhouses. I've only been able to peer through the windows so far (the things I do for this column) but there appear to be a series of interlinked, and quite small, rooms, largely respecting the provenance of the building. It is of course somewhat ironic that these 18th Century buildings are to house a pub named after that great 19th Century architect, Alfred Waterhouse (he's the one who designed the Town Hall).

Just three days later on Thursday 18th should see the opening of **Kro 2**, in the ground floor extension of the National Computing Centre building on Oxford Road. I spoke to Kro's Martin Judge about the new operation and I must say it all sounds very impressive. There will be a slightly greater emphasis on food that is the case at Kro Bar, with a slight price rise to match. Indeed there will be a separate area specifically for diners. Star of the show, though, promises to be the huge outdoor drinking area running round the right hand side of the building and fronting Oxford Road. With large, stylish umbrellas and outdoor heaters, this could well be one of the places to see and be seen all year round. In typical Kro fashion, there will be a wide range of foreign beer, both in bottle and on draught, but pride of place will go to the bank of five or six handpumps dispensing a range of cask beers. A fuller report on both will appear next month.

Here & Now

Elsewhere in the City Centre, the first of several promised licensed outlets has now opened at the revamped ("all ready in time for the Commonwealth Games") Piccadilly Station. This is a **Yates's** (they aren't wine lodges any more) and while being perfectly well-designed and stylish, offer not one drop of cask ale. Considering this is at the gateway to one of the most important cask ale brewing cities in the UK, it's little short of a travesty that the only local beer on the bar is keg Boddingtons. Nought out of ten for imagination, there I think.

Just when you thought they were old hat, two new Irish bars have opened in recent weeks. On Lloyd Street, the former Barristers Bar is now **The Pogue**, "a taste of Eire". Apart from green furnishings and two prominent Guinness fonts, it doesn't seem all that obviously Irish - and that probably makes it more authentic that the Irish theme park bars that usually masquerade as the real thing over here. Which brings us neatly to **Galvins Irish Bar**, Hale Leisure's latest attempt to do something with the **Crown** on Deansgate. This company is usually pretty sure-footed with their operations but they do seem to have thrashed around a bit with the poor old Crown. Decked out in the usual 'Irish Bar' idiom, which means a fair amount of celtic "bric-a-brac" fixed to the walls and hanging from the ceiling, and mis-matched furniture, it is nevertheless a very congenial place for a drink, the absence of cask beer

being partially compensated by a very decent range of whiskey. There are two unused handpumps and I've heard that they are to be brought into use. I suspect that this means the usual free trade beers (Tetley/Pedigree/Directors etc. etc) - now, if Hale Leisure wanted to demonstrate a little flair they'd install a couple of cask ales from the Irish Republic - there are fair few around, usually of top quality, and quite easy to get hold of. How about it lads?

New Nags?

"Neglected with a passion", that's how new licensee Chris Rustage described the recent history of the **Nags Head** on Jacksons Row. A local business man, with numerous corporate interests decided he fancied running a pub for a change. Looking for a pub with potential and character he lighted upon the Nags Head, once a well known City Centre venue now fallen on very hard times. Chris has taken a long lease from Enterprise Inns and is spending some £150,000 in totally cleaning and revamping the place. He'd only been there ten days when I called and redecoration was well underway with the aim of making it look like new. He even intends to restore and open the roof garden - is this the only pub in Manchester with such a facility?

Astonishingly, the pub had even stopped serving food. Chris has now recruited a top chef who is currently drawing together a menu and food should once again be available from early August. On the beer front, Theakstons Cool Cask and XB are on handpump and while the cellar has been cleaned out, it still needs repainting and resealing. There's a familiar face behind the bar, too - Julie Stewart ("the best barmaid in Manchester") who has worked in several local pubs. The Nags Head certainly seems to be on a proper footing again - I'll certainly be dropping in more often, that's for sure.

Bits and Bobs

A recent visit to East Manchester revealed that both the **Polygon** in Levenshulme and the **Crown**, Valance Close, Gorton are now both keg only. The Crown had only been a marginal cask ale outlet for some time but the loss of the Polygon is quite a blow. Elsewhere in Levenshulme, the **Railway** on Stockport Road is firmly boarded up and up the road in Longsight, I'm told the **Springbank Tavern** is closed.

In Gorton again, and the **Royal Oak** on Cross Lane now sells John Smiths Cask - previously a strong Boddies outlet, this. Nearby the Vale Cottage seems to be dabbling with guest beers - on my last visit Boddington's Commonwealth Ale had just gone off, and Landlord had been available recently.

Speaking of **Commonwealth Ale**, I tried this in **Sam's Chop House** and found it to be excellent beer. Full-bodied, hoppy and with a good bitter finish, it's perhaps the best beer to come out of the Strangeways Brewery for a long time. I know Ed (1) wasn't keen but I can only assume he'd been drinking it in the wrong places (*you may well be right - no names, no pack drill - Ed(1)*).

After visiting **Galvins**, I also had a quick look at **Atlas**, which is now down to just Tetley Bitter after the shock sale to Punch Taverns. The owners stated aim was to concentrate on the nearby Atlas Deli but this, too has been sold. The buyers are the owners of Love saves The Day on Tib Street, and while much remains unchanged, there has been a marked reduction in the number of interesting bottled beers sold. Atlas itself was about to close for a major refit as these words were penned with work not due for completion until August. The **Sawyers Arms** on Deansgate has also had a fairly pointless, refit. Previously keg-only, nothing has changed.



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 219)

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