

# OPENING TIMES

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Volume 18 Issue 10

OCTOBER 2002 No:222

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## BODDIES FOR THE CHOP?

**N**ews that Interbrew were moving some kegging operations from the Strangeways brewery with the loss of 68 jobs has caused a right old lather with predictions of the ultimate demise of the 225-year old brewing operation coming from numerous quarters.

In fact the prophets of doom are likely to be proved wrong, although no-one should be complacent enough to imagine that everything in the garden is rosy. Take the 68 job losses for a start – these are never good news but apart from that it is important to remember just what is and is not planned.

Firstly, no production is being moved from the brewery until 2004. Until then, all Boddingtons Bitter will continue to be made in Manchester. What will happen is that the keg versions will be trunked to plants in Salmesbury, Lancs and Magor, South Wales, for processing and packaging.

In 2004 all production of Boddingtons Bitter for kegging will transfer to Magor. This will leave Strangeways as a cask ale only brewery producing cask-conditioned Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers IPA and Flowers Original. Another dedicated cask ale brewery in the city is superficially good news. Announcing the plan, Interbrew's Stewart Gilliland said: "It is important to retain a cask operation within Interbrew UK and by specialising as a cask brewery, the Boddingtons site holds a unique position within our business.

"These changes will enable Boddingtons Brewery to concentrate on its strengths. Building on its heritage as a cask ale brewery, it will operate as our centre for cask ale brewing, delivering quality cask ale brands.

"We are committed to developing Boddingtons both in its heartland and nationally, and in all of its packaging formats."

Reassuring words? As things stand at the moment, no. Put bluntly, the removal of keg Boddingtons from Strangeways will reduce its brewing volumes to just 20% of capacity, that's just one day's work a week and not sufficient to keep the brewery viable. Add in claims that Interbrew's cellar staff have been briefed to persuade cask Boddingtons stockists to switch to keg, thus reducing cask volumes further, and its easy to conjure up a picture of closure just around the corner. Transport & General Workers' Union regional spokesman Franny Joyce summed up the fears: "We think the ultimate aim is to get out of cask beer altogether".

Well...perhaps not. Cask ale may or may not still be in decline (the figures for this year will make for interesting reading) but it's still a large market. And one of the biggest real ale brands of all may well be the saviour of Strangeways Brewery. Draught Bass. Yes, really. Draught Bass was one of the few former Bass beers retained by Interbrew when they sold most of that company's former operations to Coors. While the promised promotion and reinvigoration of the beer is a long time coming, it is still the biggest premium cask ale brand in the country, with 150,000 barrels produced each year.

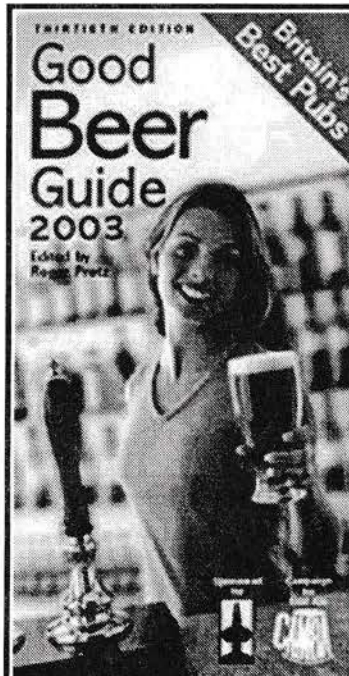
Some commentators have suggested that the closure of Strangeways could be accompanied by the transfer of the remaining cask ales to Burton. That theory has one tiny flaw – Interbrew doesn't actually own any breweries in Burton. Sure, Draught Bass is brewed there – by Coors on Interbrew's behalf.

In the trade there has been, and remains, strong speculation that when the Coors contract expires it won't be renewed and instead Interbrew will move the production of Bass elsewhere and brew it in-house. And just when does that contract expire? 2004 – now, there's a coincidence.

(See also editorial on page 2).

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**FULL DETAILS &  
REVIEW ON PAGE 9**

## OKTOBERFEST IN PARADISE

Paradise Brewery will be hosting an Oktober Beer Fest from 11-13 October, and unlike the famous Munich Oktoberfest, this one is actually in October.

Held at the brewery premises, next door to Wrenbury Station, a range of around 30 beers is promised plus some traditional ciders and the usual Paradise Brewery range. Enough to make this well worth a visit.

To help visitors from the Stockport and Manchester area, the indefatigable Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association has arranged with Wales & Borders Trains for the 11.33 Manchester-Cardiff express to stop specially at Wrenbury on Saturday 12 October. On the same day, a through service to Manchester will depart from Wrenbury at 17.05 (approx.). Both services will call at Stockport and Wilmslow.

This year there have been 935 arrivals at Wrenbury for various beer festivals and this one will certainly take the numbers well over the 1,000 mark. Travellers should note that on Saturday 12 October, Group Save tickets are available on Wales & Borders for small groups of three or four, who can travel for the price of two. These tickets are not available on Fridays, though.





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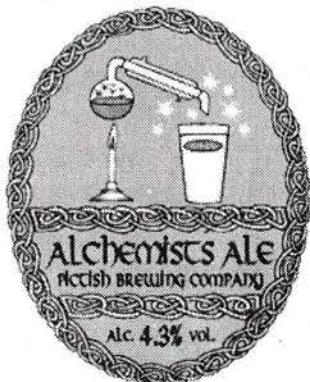
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## IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

News that Interbrew are to transfer most the production of Boddington's Bitter out of Manchester has caused shock waves in the city. Over the years the marketing of Boddingtons has linked it with Manchester to such an extent that the thought if it being brewed elsewhere is unthinkable to many people. Closure of the brewery in two year's time must be a real possibility, unless the brewing of other beers is moved there to boost production.

Let's remember, though, it's only the production of keg Boddies that is to be moved. Cask Boddies will remain a Manchester beer and it's interesting to see that 'Boddingtons Cask' is now actually being promoted as such. The message from all this is clear - if you want to help save Boddies - ask for cask. Every pint of smooth Boddies drunk puts Manchester jobs and the future of the brewery on the line.

If you care about Boddies beer and the future of the brewery, you won't touch a pint of the smooth stuff again. If your local only sells the smooth, then demand it gets cask back in. If it won't then go and drink somewhere that will. Every single Boddies drinker can play their part in this campaign. You really do have the power to make a difference here.

Boost cask Boddies, boost Manchester jobs, boost Manchester brewing. It's over to you.

*John Clarke*

Its interesting to see that a number of the more aggressively themed pub groups are getting into trouble - sadly currently for what appear to be the wrong reasons, Old Monk - which never really penetrated much further north than the Watford Gap, are being broken up, which means we will be spared the proliferation of the 'Springbok' sports bars for the moment. Whilst SAB (South African Breweries) is a major world player, they are not exactly known for memorable beers. A cool measure of Castle Lager might seem delightful on a 100°f day, but when cooler heads and temperatures prevail, its not up to much. And as to 'sporting' bars, the South African teams (with the exception of the soccer side) have never been held up as paragons of sportsmanship.

Pressure is mounting on Scottish & Newcastle to get out of pubs (from the remaining City idiots (sorry, analysts) who still have jobs). They now favour merging S&N's estate with Bass'(6Continents) remaining operation. One day management might realise that this 'pressure' is being raised just to provide some income for the city M&A teams who are a bit bereft at present. In case anyone sane at S&N is reading this - IT MAKES NO COMMERCIAL SENSE. NONE, WHATSOEVER. Oh, and the foreign flavour to OT this month will be short-lived, never fear.

*P.B. Hutchings*

## OPENING TIMES ISSUE 222

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**COPY DATE FOR THE NOVEMBER ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS OCTOBER 26**



## PUB OF THE MONTH OCTOBER 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		



**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA October Pub of the Month is the Rising Sun, Burnage Lane, Burnage. Built on the site of an old petrol station, the Rising Sun started life as the Milestone, one of the first pubs Banks's built in Manchester. In common with many of their early Manchester acquisitions, the brewery seemed to lose interest in the pub after a while, despite it being a large, well-designed building with a great deal of promise. Cask beer went and a clearly unsuitable licensee managed to drive away much of the pub's trade. Something had to be done, and it's all credit to Banks's that they did it.

A £480,000 revamp transformed the pub into a well-lit, spacious and more upmarket establishment with handpumps once again dispensing real ale. The vault was knocked through and the resulting pub is now a large, rambling one-room lounge with an emphasis on affordable all-day food and cask beers. There are three real ales on handpump - Banks's Original, Marston's Bitter and Pedigree.

Of course, no matter how good the refurbishment, it would be wasted money without the right licensee. Banks's are therefore lucky in having Paul Saxton running the show. Paul is a Burnage man who returned to the trade to take on the Rising Sun. That he is clearly the right man for the job is self-evident, the former locals are back and the pub is thriving again.

This well deserved award will be presented on Thursday, 24 October in what promises to be an excellent night out. JC Buses 166, 169 and 197 go right past the pub. It's only a short walk from Kingsway (down Grangethorpe Drive) which is well served with buses, and Mauldeth Road Station is also close by.

*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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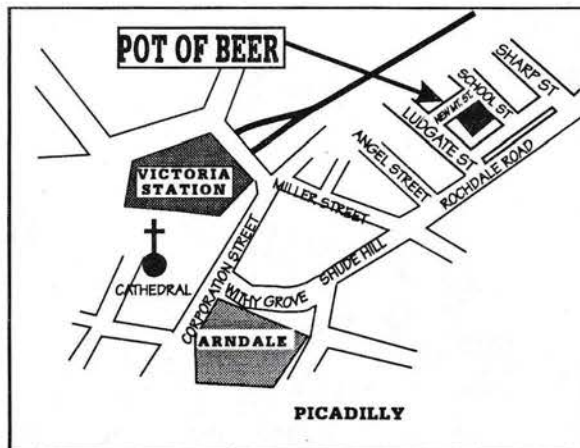
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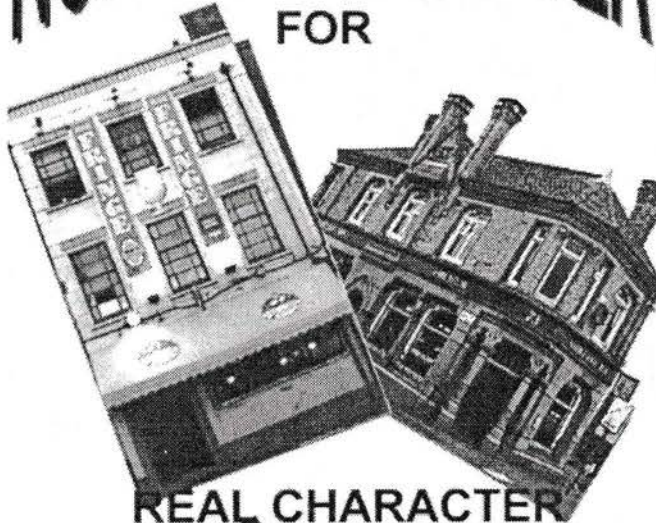
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# STAGGER

with John Clarke

## Rainy Night In Edgeley

**T**he night we chose for this Stagger must have been one of the wettest of the summer but despite this, a good crowd turned out at the first port of call – the *Alexandra* on Northgate Road.

Built around 1902, this large Robinson's pub is a listed building, and it's easy to see why. The interior is almost completely intact with a wealth of tiling, etched and stained glass. The rear snug, separated from the main lobby by a mahogany and stained glass screen is a particularly fine room. Perversely we chose what is perhaps the most spartan room – the rear lounge – but this didn't spoil our enjoyment of the very good Cumbria Way, on handpump alongside Best Bitter. The latter was less favourably received, though, being generally considered below par.

The rain eased off as we left and made our way down Northgate Road to the *Gardeners Arms*. This ex-Wilsons pub has had a very chequered history in recent years, at one time getting through a licensee about every six weeks. It's much more settled now, and to my eyes looked better than it's done for years. The old Wilson's signage remains outside and within the altered interior still contains some nice 1930s panelling. There's a lounge and vault and both were bright, clean and comfortable. The two handpumped beers were Boddingtons Bitter and Flowers IPA and both were thought to be above average without being exceptional – which is about as good as you're going to get with these two particular beers in most pubs anyway.

The rain set in again as we made our way to the *Woolpack* on Brinksway. This multi-award winning pub never disappoints and has been in the capable hands of Bob Dickinson for a good few years now. His sure hand shows in all aspects of the very professional operation here. The range usually consists of three regular beers, often from a national brewer (when we called these were Theakstons Best and Cool Cask plus Courage Directors) and two guests, tonight St Austell Tribute and Barnsley Umpires Finger. We all tried the St Austell and opinions varied from above average to very good indeed. One of our party detected pear drop notes in the taste and was rightly slapped down.

The rain had abated to just torrential as we made our way up the hill and down Grenville Street to the *Royal Oak*. The Hollywood on Bloom Street would have made a useful stopping off point but it no longer sells cask beer, despite being a busy pub. No such problems in the Oak where large quantities of Holt's Bitter are dispensed to an appreciative crowd. This is another pub that has come on by leaps and bounds in recent years, lively and friendly, clean and comfy, it really does seem to be very well run. There's also a greater emphasis on lunchtime food and the new beer garden is a treat, although not tonight! One of our party thought the Holt's too cold although the rest disagreed and found it a very enjoyable pint indeed.

After leaving the Oak it's keg hell for a while, with no cask beer in the Prince Albert, Bobby Peel, Pineapple or Jolly Crofter. Add in a closed Windsors and it's a pretty depressing experience for the cask ale lover. However at the end of Castle Street another oasis beckons in the form of the *Grapes*. This is a basic two-room boozier in the very best sense of the word with a settled, mature clientele who appreciate the pub's simple qualities. Dave and Sandra George have been there for over 20 years now and this welcome continuity only adds to the pub's appeal. It's another Robbies house with Hatters and Best Bitter on handpump – both were very well received and proved to be two of the most consistently good beers of the night.

**COPY DATE FOR THE NOVEMBER ISSUE  
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Real ale came thick and fast now. First up was the **Blue Bell** on King Street West. This imposing pub has been the subject of an impressive restoration over recent years with features made of many elements of the old Victorian pub. A lot of money has been well spent on the three rooms and lobby, most recently financed by Holt's I suspect, for while this pub may to all intents and purposes look like a Holt's tied house, it is in fact a free house. Yes, really. Holt's Bitter is the beer on handpump and while it was thought to be above average, it didn't set anyone's taste buds alight. Just around the corner is the **Church**. When we called it was under temporary management and was very quiet for a Friday night. Robinson's Best Bitter was on handpump and was very much below par. Happily for the Church, it's now been taken on by keen licensees who are determined to restore the pub's reputation - "No Drugs" signs now abound. The beer is vastly better too, and with Hatters joining the Best Bitter as well. Well worth a visit, it deserves support. Across the road is the **Greyhound**, with its strange new veranda at the front. Inside it's pleasant enough but to be honest this pub seems to have struggled since the days of Irene Morris and for me it still doesn't seem to have found a role. There was only one cask beer when we called, Boddingtons Bitter on handpump, and I'm sorry to say it's a toss up whether this or the Robbies in the Church was the worst of the night. Inevitably, the final port of call was **Ye Olde Vic** on Chatham Street, a pub run in irrepressible style by Steve Brannan. From the armoured personnel carrier parked outside to the list of Steve's failed tasks on the wall within (painting the outside of the pub features prominently, although one wall has now had a coat of paint) mark this pub out as a one-off. A welcome is always guaranteed at what was the first pub in town to offer guest beers, and which is still doing the business with four or five ever-changing guests. There's real cider, too - although at this stage in the proceedings none of our party felt brave enough to try it. The beers were from Everards, Greene King, Osset and York Brewery and all rated good or better - the best beer of the night, in fact. And so ended a wet and interesting night. Of course this report can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and so can't be taken as a once and for all judgement of the pubs or their beers - the very best pubs can have off nights (and vice-versa, of course!). Despite too many losses to keg, the pubs of Edgeley still offer a rewarding experience for the cask beer enthusiast with something for all tastes in both pubs and beer. Try some yourself and see what you think.



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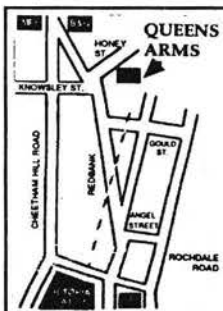
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**EAST MANCHESTER BLUES**

Football fan Mark Charnley checks out the prospects for  
real ale near the new stadium

**A**s a Manchester City supporter, I thought it was time  
to carry out some reconnaissance around the area of  
the City of Manchester Stadium, as we will be playing there  
next season.

With the euphoria of the Commonwealth Games having passed by  
I felt the pubs would be back to normal. You could therefore treat  
this as an update of the Stagger in the October and December 2001  
issues of Opening Times as well as the Guide to the Pubs of  
Sporting Manchester in this July's issue.

Having taken the afternoon off work, I met up with my intrepid  
colleague in the **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street. Our route was  
planned over a good pint of Adnams Bitter.

We set off to the Ashton Canal and walked up the towpath to Beswick  
Street and the **Mitchell Arms** for a decent Banks's Bitter and  
friendly bar staff. We then cut through to Bradford Road and in to the  
**Bradford** for on-form Holt's Mild. The Bitter was also available  
although we were informed that the 'Baton' pump was out of use.

Now for a long walk without any (real) beer. Up Bradford Road to  
the **Stadium** (formerly Cricketers) - keg. Cut through New  
Viaduct Street to Rowsley Street to the former **Lees** Britannia,  
which was in the full throes of conversion to **Summerbees** - no  
sign of what may be on sale yet.

We then crossed Ashton New Road and on to Albert Street to the  
**Corner Shop** and **Townley** - both keg. Round the corner on to  
Grey Mare Lane to the **Queen Vic**, **Crossroads** and **Mary D's**  
**Beamish Bar** - all keg.

So we carried on along Ashton New Road and across Alan Turing  
Way to the **Derby Arms** and the **Sir Humphrey Cheetham** -  
both keg. Fortunately the next establishment was Holt's **Grove**,  
mild and bitter on handpump as well as smooth mild. We opted for  
handpumped mild and it was in good nick.

We set off next down Clayton Lane passing the **Blue Moon**  
(formerly the Church) and the **Bridge** - both keg. We arrived at  
the **Fox** which was selling Cain's Mild last October. The pump was  
on the bar with the Cain's clip. Unfortunately the barmaid advised  
us it was not available and tried to serve us with a keg alternative.  
Admittedly, she was trying to be helpful but we made our excuses  
and left. Whether or not we were unlucky on the day I do not know,  
but it is a fair walk to be disappointed, so beware.

So, back up to Ashton New Road, to the **Strawberry Duck** on  
Crabtree Lane, selling Holt's Bitter and sandwiches which bol-  
stered us for the walk back down the canal to the City Centre. My  
friend caught his train home while I called in the **Castle** on Oldham  
Street prior to Catching my train.

All I can say about this excursion is thank goodness for Joseph  
Holt (and Banks's) but I can see me spending most of my time  
before matches in the City Centre. I will say, though, that every-  
one was friendly and as usual the Holt's pubs were fairly busy for  
a midweek afternoon.

Next month....Opening Times continues its visit to  
Europe with reports on Prague and Bamberg.  
Closer to home, we take a look at Congleton,  
fast becoming a Beer Paradise, the return of Ken's  
Kitchen...and much more!

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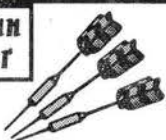


A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB



# Stockie on The che

By John Taylor



**O**ne season wonder or not? That is the question that was being asked about Reddish WMC, champions of the Stockport Licensed Houses Super League. Well, we were about to find out.

In Week 9 of the fixtures, they entertained the Royal Mortar who had looked unbeatable earlier in the season, but beaten they were as the champs came up with the right answers and stormed into a 4-1 lead and both points. The winning quartet on the night were Vic Clegg, who went in legs of 20 & 13 darts, including a maximum score; Mark Turner then levelled things up (20 & 19), but the come-back was short-lived as firstly Pete Say Snr won in 18 & 16, followed by Brad Clegg (18 & 22) and Neil Hunter (18 & 19) won the match for Reddish. Darryl Fitton (17 & 13) and Roly Mellor (15 & 23) won the last two for the Hillgate side to make the score line respectable.

Next up were fifth placed Bobby Peel away. No problem, and a 6-1 victory, including a win for Vic Clegg who was last on and won with the best darts of the match (19 & 18). Week 11 was a bit more of a challenge as they played hosts to the Union Inn. Derby matches are usually very tight affairs and this was no exception as the visitors stormed into a 2-0 lead through Brian Adshead and Barry Riley. The Club came back with captain Jeff Pearson and Pete Day Jnr, only for the Union to take game five with Steve Maurice in fine form. Pete Day Snr then levelled things up again. The final pairing of Vic Clegg and Dave Adshead stood at one leg each, last leg of the evening coming up. Clegg is on 20, Adshead needs 56 for the match, on the wire and misses. Clegg one dart and it's all over. He's won in legs of 18 & 19, but more importantly it's two more points, brilliant tension and sixty tons or over in the match. Well done to both teams for providing great entertainment.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In Week 8, the Mortar entertained the Union and once again it was a 4-3 score line and revenge to the home team who had been beaten three times by their opponents last season. Best of the night came from Darryl Fitton with legs of 13 & 16, including two 180s, and Chris North (13 & 18). For the visitors Dave Adshead won in 20 & 17, John McArdle and Tony O'Shea who both missed the Reddish match won with two legs of 20 darts.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The shock of the season to date came in Week 11 as North Reddish WMC celebrated a 6-1 home thrashing of the Royal Mortar. This was an outstanding result with the Reddish heroes being Paul Yates (22 & 17), John Sainsbury, Steve Needham (26 & 16), Ken Harter, Chris Hopwood and Vic Blockley. In reply it was just Darryl Fitton again (15 & 17) and another two 180s, which makes it eight for the season. Hopwood had an outshot of 116 in his win over Lancashire county star Kevin Weir. That defeat now leaves the champs four points clear at the top of the table.

★ ★ ★

In the second round of the team knock-out there were wins for holders the Mortar, last year's runners-up the Union, Reddish WMC, the Magnet, Club Leisure, Copperfields 'A', the Salisbury, who are the only Premier side left in the competition, and the Royal Oak. The draw for the quarter-finals due to be played on the evening of Tuesday 29 October is as follows: Salisbury Club-v-Magnet, Royal Mortar-v-Club Leisure, Union Inn-v-Royal Oak, Copperfields 'A'-v-Reddish WMC.

In the national team knock-out, Stockport lost 5-4 in the final to a Yorkshire side which was full of county players. They had earlier beaten sides from Glamorgan and Somerset on the day to reach the grand final. Well done to all of the players on a great effort.

★ ★

Tony O'Shea recently lost in the final of the Dutch Open, a competition that was televised all over Europe. En-route he had beaten English International Shaun Greatbach from Cambridge, ex-world champions John 'Boy' Walton and Ray Barneveld in front of his own fans. He lost to the current World Champion, Australian Tony David. Those ranking points mean that O'Shea is now ranked fifth in the world.



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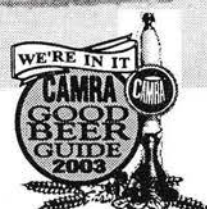
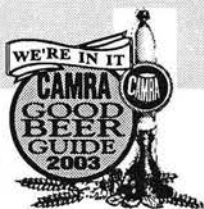
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## BIGGEST & BEST EVER GOOD BEER GUIDE

Celebrating 30 years of campaigning for  
good pubs and good beer

**T**he 30<sup>th</sup> Good Beer Guide was launched by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, last month. Edited by long-standing CAMRA stalwart and beer expert Roger Protz, the 2003 edition promises to be one of the best ever and in beer drinking circles is the publishing event of the year.

The 2003 edition of the Good Beer Guide offers a whole new reading and drinking experience for lovers of real ale. It is also the biggest-ever edition of CAMRA's market leading pub guide which has now sold over one million copies since it was launched in 1974. The Good Beer Guide is more than just a pub guide. Britain's longest-running and best-selling guide has 5,000 of Britain's best pubs for real ale. But for beer lovers it also gives up-to-date information on the country's beers and breweries. It's compiled by 65,000 dedicated volunteers in the Campaign for Real Ale. There are no fees for listings, and very pub is checked many times a year. The Guide offers:

★ The best pubs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man that serve cask-conditioned real ale in tip-top condition.

★ Full details of beer, food, entertainment, family facilities, history and architecture for the pub entries

★ The unique Breweries section that lists all the breweries – micro, regional and national – the produce cask beer, with tasting notes compiled by CAMRA-trained tasting teams. There's also information about beers suitable for vegetarians and vegans, as well as the growing number of organic beers. The Guide lists new breweries, closed breweries, mergers and takeovers, and keeps track of the new powerful pub groups.

There are also a number of special features. Roger Protz gives a no-punches pulled analysis of the state of the brewing industry, with particular emphasis on the new breed of pub companies and how they are distorting the market. Other major features include:

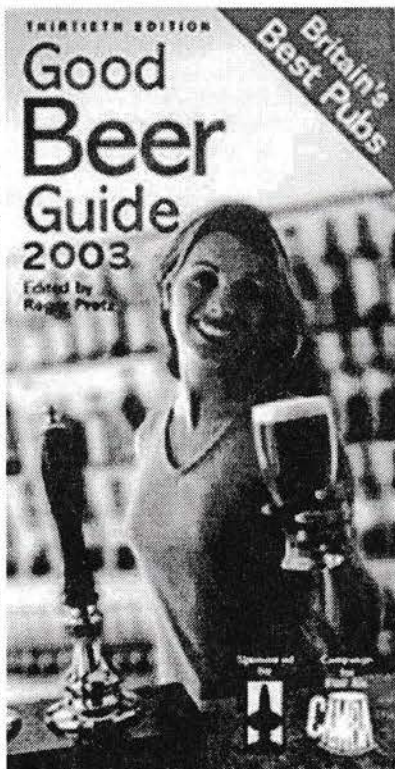
★ Terry Jones of Monty Python on why CAMRA and the Good Beer Guide play a vital role in Britain today.

★ Internationally acclaimed beer expert Michael Jackson on how craft brewers in Britain and the United States have brought flavour and character back to beer.

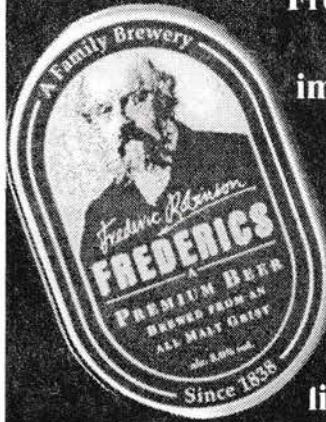
★ Award-winning writer Jeff Evans on the campaign to save our country pubs

There is also CAMRA's listing of pubs of special importance that must be saved for the nation, the top prize-winning beers of the year and beer festivals to visit throughout the country.

Fancy a pint? Don't leave home without the Good Beer Guide! Get yours for £12.99 (post and packing free) from: Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK2 5XA. Make cheques payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester'.



## Robinson's COMPETITION



Frederics Premium Beer has the immediate stamp of a quality ale. Brewed from an all-British malt grist and traditional hop varieties, this light golden beer is packed with flavour.

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John McGirr of Day Green was the winner of our July competition and receives a Robinson's umbrella and T-shirt.

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

1. In what year did the Company begin brewing beer?
2. What is the ABV of Frederics's *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

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!  
JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 23) & DRINK REAL ALE**





### Real Beer Week

**R**eal Beer Week ran from Monday 30 September until Sunday 6 October, and followed on from the success of Cask Ale Week last year. The week aimed to promote the 33 members of the Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB) and to introduce many new customers to the joys of Real Beer. In the North West, six of the family brewers – Holts, Hydes', JW Lees, Robinson's, Thwaites and Jennings – combined force to support Real Beer Week and create greater awareness of the diversity and choice of real beers available in the region. A joint event was held at Manchester's Ape & Apple on Tuesday 1 October, attended by head brewers, directors and executives of all six companies. The various head brewers lined up to describe the beers available on the day:



**Holt's** Keith Sheard introduced the new seasonal, Thunderholt. This moreish 4.5% beer utilises a high proportion of dark crystal malt to give a pronounced liquorice character to the beer, which also uses Challenger hops in the brew. Definitely a more successful beer than the two Baton varieties brewed to mark the Commonwealth Games. From **Lees** Giles Dennis introduced their new seasonal, Ruddy Glow, another 4.5% beer with plenty of crystal malt to produce a hint of liquorice, although not as pronounced as in the Thunderholt. It's a well balanced beer using Target hops for bitterness and Styrian Goldings for aroma.

Chris Hellin from **Robinson's** was next, introducing Coopers Bell, reprised from last year. This quenching beer is an all-malt brew using 85% pale ale malt, 3% crystal malt and 11% wheat malt. Goldings hops are used throughout, both early and late in the brewing process and also in the dry hopping where 4 ounces are added to each cask. The last of the Manchester brewers was Hydes' **Paul Jefferies** with the new Autumn Goldings, also at 4.5%. Paul told OT that he thought this was one of his favourite of the Hydes craft ales. Again there's crystal malt used in the brew which is hopped with Goldings and Early Bird Goldings varieties which give an appealing marmalade note to the beer's taste.

All six companies present displayed a huge enthusiasm for their cask ales. No wonder that as the national total of cask ales sales declines, many of the IFBB companies are bucking this trend and their combined sales now account for some 50% of the cask ale market

### Robbies Go Stateside

Robinson's and the American, Wisconsin-based Capital Brewery have agreed a deal to export their specially brewed British beer to the USA over the next 12 months. The contract has been more than a year in the making during which time Robinson's has developed two new ales, Northern Glory and Double Hop, for export. Robinson's will also be shipping out their award-winning Old Tom in the near future.



The two new beers will be shipped out in 500ml bottles. Northern Glory is a 4.4% traditionally brewed bitter that is "warm, welcoming and full of character". It uses a blend of pale, dark and roasted barley and wheat malts to produce a light oak colour. It has already appeared here in cask form as Stadium Bitter and will return next year under its real name.

At 5% Double Hop is brewed with East Kent Golding hops. The beer has a refreshing and complex palate that gives a balance of hop flavour and bitterness. By using a blend of pale, crystal barley and wheat malts, a rich golden bitter is produced with a crisp dry roasted malt finish. A cask version will appear in the new year when it replaces Samuel Oldknow in the seasonal beer programme.

### Micro Magic

As usual, our local micro brewers continue to produce a range of interesting beers...

**Marble Brewery** – is about to reintroduce Chocolate Heavy for the winter season. Always a welcome sight on the bar at the various Marble outlets, this strong (5.5%) beer might well be tweaked a little this time round.



**Boggart Hole Clough** – two new beers in the pipeline for this month. A session beer called, perhaps a little unimaginatively, Session Ale, at 3.8% will be followed by Cinder, a 5% ruby coloured ale, with coffee notes and a floral taste or, as brewer Mark Dade put it, "bloody gorgeous"!

**Leyden** – have two new beers in the pipeline. Brewer Brendan Leyden is using up some malt stocks to create a 4.5% dryish "out and out" porter. The beer, as yet unnamed, will feature at the Hare & Hounds beer festival on 25 October. Also available there will be another new beer, possibly brewed with honey, and possibly called Nangreaves Nectar.

**Porter Brewing Co** – this month sees the return of the superb Porter's Stout. Bone dry and dangerously drinkable at 5.5%. Raspberry No.4 has also made a return visit and was much enjoyed when the Greater Manchester Pub



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of the Year Award was presented to Porter's Railway in Stockport at the beginning of the month.



**Pictish** - Rochdale's ever-reliable Pictish Brewery has a brand new beer out this month.

This is Alchemists Ale, a 4.3% straw coloured ale with "crisp malt flavours and a robust hoppy finish". Certainly one to look out for. Will we also see a return of the excellent Samhain Stout this year?

**The LAB** - on a recent visit landlord Peter Wood had just put on a new brew. Old Stans Amber Ale (4.2%) is a malty, fruity brew, named after Lowes Arms regular Stan Phillips, who died 2 months ago. He lived in a farm locally and owned the land around the area of the Lowes. He was 93. Coming round again as well as the normal brews, in the coming weeks, will be Jet Amber Mild, not actually brewed since the Stockport Mild Trail, but a beer that went well at that time.



**Sarah's Hop House** - still going strong. See this month's letters column on page 20.



**Phoenix** - as ever, Tony Allen's award-winning brewery has a whole raft of new beers out. Last Leaf is a 4.5% autumn ale, well-balance with a predominantly hop finish; Firecracker is 4.7%, light brown with a lingering hoppy finish; Riprap, 4.1%, is pale with lots of hop everywhere - OT remembers this beer from last year and it really is superb; Spooky Brew (4.7%) and Uncle Fester (4.5%) are two more old favourites coming back, and at the end of this month the hoppy Flash Flood (4.1%) will also be out. Phoenix are also celebrating getting a big order from Wetherspoons for the gold medal-winning Navy which will be going into JDW outlets nationwide.

## BAZEN'S BREWERY



**R**ichard Bazens is well-known on the local brewing scene, having helped set up the lamented Bridgewater Brewery and subsequently moving to work as brewer at Tony Allen's highly regarded Phoenix Brewery in Heywood. Now, for the second time in his career, he has set up on his own. The original Bazens's Brewery was a short-lived affair, operating from Trafford Park in the early 1980s. This time around he is in partnership with wife Jude and operates from a unit on the small, pleasant Agecroft Enterprise Park in Swinton.

Three sites were checked out before the Swinton premises became available, including one just behind the Crescent in Salford (what a brewery tap that would have made!). The brewing kit, from Brewing Solutions in Oldham, was bought in July and the first brew was in mid-August with about 4 1/4 barrels per brew coming from the nominal 5-barrel plant.

It's certainly a contrast to the slightly shambolic appearance of Bridgewater. Here gleaming stainless steel vessels are neatly arranged in a surprisingly spacious unit. There's still a slight Heath Robinson aspect, though - the cask storage unit is cooled by a fan and radiator from an old Vauxhall Cavalier! Another interesting feature of the plant is the control on the mash tun which regulated the vigour of the boil - this can be slowed down to retain more hop character in the beer, which promises some interesting developments in the future. Ingredients are pretty standard for the micro sector. The malt is primarily Maris Otter from Fawcetts, supplemented by some lager malt, crystal malt and a little torrieffied wheat for head retention. Hops are primarily Fuggles along with Goldings, Styrian Goldings, Green Bullet and Pacific Hallertau (the latter two from New Zealand) and, for the Flatbac, some American Cascade. The yeast comes from Hydes'.

Enough of the technicalities, what about the beer? Two have been produced so far - a session beer brewed to an original Bridgewater recipe, at 3.8% and Flatbac at 4.2%. The latter is based on the Bridgewater American Blond recipe but uses New Zealand hops. The beer is named after a musical instrument played by Richard and which is depicted on the attractive pump clip designed, as are all the clips, by Jude.

Forthcoming beers include Bazens' Best Bitter, a 4.5% premium brew, and Rees's Resurrection, a 5.2% porter based on the former, award-winning, Bridgewater Delph Porter recipe. Also planned for the next couple of months are a 5.5% ale aimed at the student market. This interesting beer will have a traditional English malt grist (along the lines of Fullers ESB) combined with the hop profile of the old American



## ADVERTISING IN THE 2003 STOCKPORT PUB GUIDE

This will be the third edition of Camra's Guide to Stockport Pubs, 'Viaducts and Vaults'- The first two each won awards and sold out and we are very confident that our new edition will be equally as successful. This edition will be published in early June 2003 with a print run of 2000 copies.

Advertising in the Guide will enable businesses in and around Stockport to promote their company within their local core market at highly competitive rates. Each reader will use the book time and time again bringing the companies who advertise and their products to mind each time. In order to maintain the integrity of the Guide no advertisements can be accepted from pubs.

If you are interested please ring Jim Flynn on: 0161 432 1816 (evenings) or write to him at: 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, SM 5EG.

Closing date for advertising copy is the end of November 2002.

Blond. The name is planned to be Freshers Special, with the tag line "After Two Pints You'll Talk Like One". Another planned beer out soon should be a 3.7% dark mild, planned to go into two or three pubs as a house mild. Planned for next year is a lager and a wheat beer. Opinions of the beers have been uniformly high and many local free houses have taken them, including the Crescent, Albert Vaults and Kings Arms in Salford and the Crown in Stockport. Definitely worth seeking out.



JC. Bazens's Brewery is at Unit 22, Agecroft Enterprise Park, Agecroft Road, Swinton, M27 8UW. Phone 0161 743 9121. E-mail: enquiries@bazensbrewery.co.uk.

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11



CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE





### BeerMonster™ Abroad

So the long-mooted, and much doubted, BeerMonster™/CAMRA trip to Franconia, the Alps and the Oktoberfest finally happened. Over half the original party dropped out, making the visit more a reconnaissance-en-force rather than an invasion, and the flooding meant that the Kelheim/Weltenberg diversion had to be postponed, but as a preparation for a larger trip in 2004, it was a distinct success. Next month the Franconian (The North West Bit of Bavaria) leg of the trip, and especially Bamberg, will be detailed. Given that space is currently at a premium, I will limit this article to the latter stages of the trip - based at Tegernsee (house brewery of the National Winter Ales Festival Foreign Beer Bar) with a few trips into Munich. This year's Oktoberfest will be remembered for one thing - snow during the first week. (Only, indeed a sprinkling in Munich, but quite a lot more in Augsburg, seen on the way down). The earliest snow for 62 years in fact. Didn't make much of an impact on those of us rugged-ised by the UK (or insulated in the first-class compartment of an ICE train!).

Every year, people tell me the Oktoberfest is getting more commercial. Sadly, every year, they are also right. In 2003, even in the first week, finding an unreserved table even in early afternoon, in an 'unfashionable' tent, is becoming problematic. Acres of tables have company-based reservations. Fair do's, if they don't turn up on time, they speedily become 'unreserved', but it is getting to the point that seats will soon be pre-ordered only. Not good. Prices? Surprisingly reasonable - a litre Maß of 6% beer for little less than the price of (two) pint(s) of German beer in Manchester. All in all, its still well worth a visit, but do it in the next couple of years. Beers: Best 2003 Oktoberfest Bier - Paulaner. (Well that's a surprise....not!) Most Improved Bier - Once again - Spaten.

### If You Pray For It - It may come

Thinking of Manchester, now I'm back, I am currently counting the days to the return of the German/European Christmas Market in Albert Square. I have been praying, assiduously, for the return of the Paulaner/Thurn & Taxis beer Tent. Over the last 12 months or so, a couple of fonts have appeared in City Centre Pubs, claiming to dispense genuine Munich Lowenbrau. I have to admit to having my doubts. The initial launch was indeed brewed in Munich but was the 'export' variety, not quite to the German Purity Standard, and brewed primarily for the USA. Nevertheless it went down well. The really GOOD news is that it went down SO well, that Carlsberg Tetley (the importers) have now jumped up a gear, and imported the 5.2% Original Munchner Helles that you would expect to get in a Munich bar. Its pretty good, even if Lowenbrau is the lesser of the Big Six Munich beers - AND its available year round. Knott Fringe on Deansgate and Centro on Tib St are good places to sample it. (I am still praying for a Paulaner Christmas, however).

### UMIST Beerex

Every year, UMIST hold a Beer Festival to support their Rag Week. This year, its on from 23 to 26 October. There are fifty odd real ales (and a promise of 18 imported beers, 8 ciders plus spirits). See ad on next page for opening times. The beer range looks good, with quite a few cask ales rarely seen in the pubs, and if previous years efforts are anything to go by, it should be hugely enjoyable. After a touch of Friggin in the Rigging, and a little Shaft Bender, I may see the need for some Snake Catcher. We shall see.

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It does indeed sound a tad grandiloquent, but given that it was brewed by Gebrdr. Michel Mahrs of Bamberg, to celebrate to 1000th anniversary of the crowning of Holy Roman Emperor Heinrich 2 in Bamberg, in September 1002, perhaps that's alright.

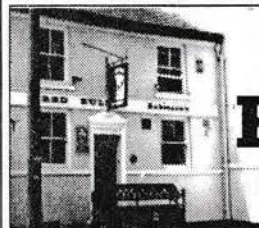
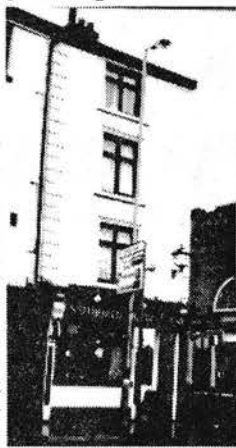
Mahrs is a glorious brew-pub, with chestnut-tree courtyard, and ancient drinking-rooms (not to mention the best Angus Steaks in Germany) and it brews a decent range of beers, standard Helles (dispensed on gravity from a wooden barrel) Ungespundetes (open fermented) Lager/Keller beer, and a seasonally changing range including an excellent wheat bock (strong). One-off beers, however are not a regular feature. Until now, Kaiser Heinrich - Ihr Bier (Heinrich's Beer) is an absolute delight. Using no less than four malts, this is a beer with only slight Hallertau hop-notes, but boasting the most subtle and successful malt blending I have ever seen in a beer. Bone dry, almost but not quite, arid. Fully attenuated to just over 6%, the complex malt flavours reveal themselves gulp by gulp. As a hop-fanatic, I did not dream that malt-dominant beer could be this good. Chocolate, malt loaf, rich barley, a hint of wheat - and was that a touch of smokiness? Normally I would now add that it would be available at the Foreign Beer Bar at Winter Ales. Sadly, there will probably be no Winter Ales Fest in Manchester this year. I am trying to get some in bottle and (better) in cask into Manchester before it runs out. I may not succeed. If not, you will have missed something VERY special. If I get some...watch this space.



**BeerMonster™ Pub of The Season**

Smithfield Hotel, Swan Street, Manchester

Yes it's come round to the time of year when I grant one of our occasional out-of-area awards. There was no summer award, due to clashes of dates and holidays (what should have been the 'Summer' Pub is very likely to become the 'Winter' Pub in December) but for keeping the flag of good and interesting beer flying proudly throughout various turmoils thereabout, I have no hesitation in naming the Smithfield as my Autumn Pub of the Season. With a small bar that is part of a flourishing small hotel, the Smithfield offers a constantly changing range of new and unusual micro-brewery beers. Even better, it hosts frequent small beer festivals, where not only the beers, but frequently the breweries as well are brand new. By a happy coincidence, the latest Smithfield Festival is slated to begin on October 24. The award will therefore be presented on Friday October 25 at about 8.30pm. Any hardened beer drinker will be made most welcome.



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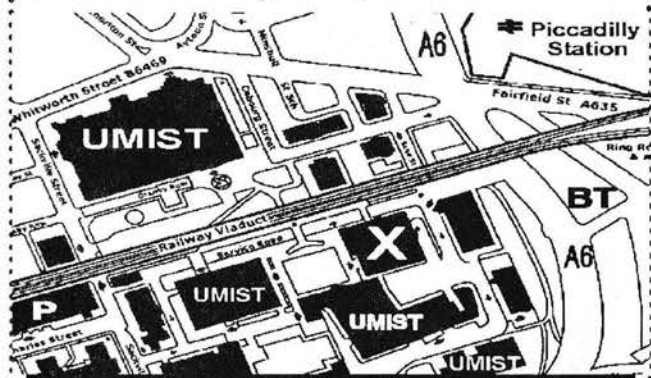


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# CAMRA CALLING!

## 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

### OCTOBER 2002

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup>-Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>** - Trip to present Cider and Perry of the Festival Awards..

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup>** - First planning meeting for 2003 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival: Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. From 8.15pm.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** - Stagger: East Manchester Minibus. Departs Crown, Heaton Lane 7.00pm. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 (after 6.00pm). First port of call will be the Oddfellows, Abbey Hey Lane for those wishing to join there.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup>** - Student recruitment/young persons social: Friendship, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield. Starts 8.30pm.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Rising Sun, Burnage. From 8.00pm.

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November** - Trip to Titanic Brewery, Burslem. Minibus departs Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.00pm. Book with Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759. **NB** no booking taken before September Branch Meeting.

*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 14<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: the Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

### OCTOBER 2002

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Train trip to Chester. Details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.

*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:*

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Joint Social with South Cheshire Branch at AP Club, Holmes Chapel (Beartown Beers). From 8.00pm.

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November** - Campaigning Meeting: Highwayman, Rainow. Starts 8.00pm

*Trafford & Hulme Branch covers Trafford Borough, Manchester west of the M56/Princess Parkway and a large part of the City Centre. They have notified us of the following events:*

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>** - Branch Silver Jubilee visit to Hydes' Brewery. Details from Neil Worthington or Dave Ward (Dave's number 0161 980 1170)

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm.



To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14



# CAINS

## BREWERY TOURS

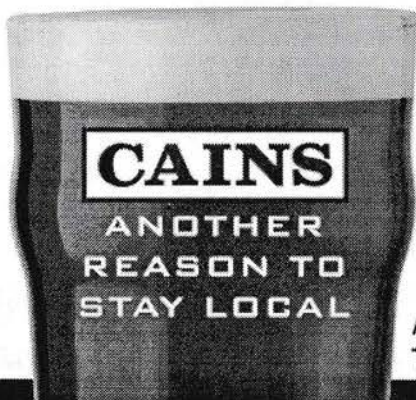
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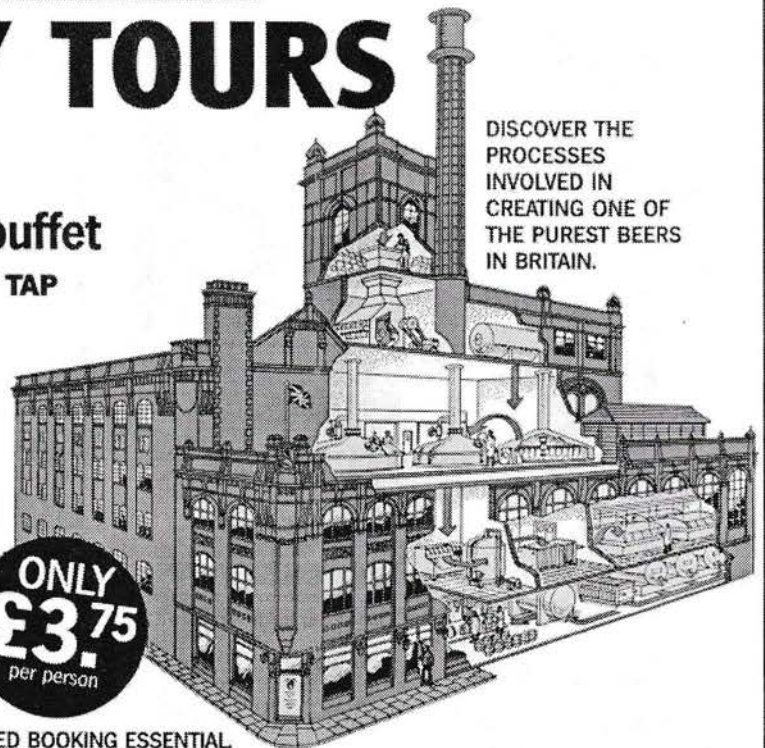
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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER '97

**T**he front page was shared by two headlines. "Black September - mayhem hits pubs and brewing", and "What a Shambles - 2".

The convulsions which had gripped the pub and beer trade over the past few years, had been followed that September by a series of shock announcements, all of which would be felt locally.

Carlsberg-Tetley was to close or sell three of their remaining breweries over the next two years. Probably Alloa and Wrexham would close (they had been under threat for some time), but the biggest surprise was that the giant Ind Coope brewery in Burton would also go, but in this case a sale to their next door neighbours Bass was on the cards.

This would enable Bass to concentrate their own production facilities, leading to likely closures in Cardiff, Sheffield and Tadcaster. It was also inevitable that some beers would be axed - the future of Burton Ale was in doubt, as were Walkers beers, and "Greenalls" beers, which would move from Burton to Leeds. As things have turned out, the Tadcaster brewery is still with us, as is Burton Ale, now brewed at Leeds, along with Greenalls Bitter. The Cardiff brewery was sold to Brains, Sheffield closed and Walkers beers did indeed get the chop.

★ ★ ★

Another shock - Morland's had bought Ruddles for their brands. The brewery was likely to close (it did) and meanwhile, Morland's Old Speckled Hen was head to head with Ruddles County. Morlands has of course subsequently been bought and closed by Greene King who still brew Speckled Hen and County at Bury St Edmunds. On the pubs front, Innpreneur Estates and Spring Inns had been off-loaded by joint owners Grand Metropolitan and Foster's Brewing to the Japanese investment bank, Nomura, making them the biggest independent operator in the country, with 5,400 outlets. There seemed to be little security ahead for the long suffering leaseholders who had seen several owners take over in recent years.

★ ★ ★ ★

After considering these sweeping country-wide changes, what was happening to the Shambles seemed almost parochial. The latest plan was to demolish the two pubs and rebuild them on their new site adjacent to Cateaton Street. The Old Wellington Inn is of genuine medieval construction, registered as a historical monument, and would be reassemble from the original pieces. But Sinclairs, a Grade 2 listed building, would be rebuilt from the original "wherever possible". The whole process was scheduled to take 48 weeks, so the pubs were expected to be in business again by September 1998. In the event it was December 1999 before the two pubs were once again open for business.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It was reported that Wetherspoon's had introduced oversized lined glasses into all of their pubs and without encountering any of the problems that the vested interests of the licensed trade had predicted in their increasingly hysterical campaign against full measure. "Full Measure" was one of those subjects which never seemed to go away, and to hammer home the message, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA had joined forces with Banks's Brewery to run a "full measure social" at the Four In Hand in Didsbury. But barely a year later, Wetherspoon's had withdrawn their oversized glasses - they said that complaints in their pubs had gone up since the new glasses had been introduced.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The long awaited Ape & Apple, Holt's new pub on John Dalton Street in the City Centre finally opened on October 2. It was in line with Holt's current house style - "plush, not to say luxurious, but without descending into neo-Victorian pastiche," It is like a rather larger, grander version of the Old Monkey on Portland Street, in both décor and layout.

## CURMUDGEON



### Open All Day?

Looking round a well-pubbed town just before 12 noon, I noticed that most of the pubs still had their doors firmly shut. Many pubs advertise themselves as being "open all day", and yet fail to take advantage of the full permitted hours available to them, which allow them to serve alcohol from 11 am.

There is still a strange prejudice in this country against having a drink before the sun has crossed the yardarm, as if it's the first step on the road to ending up in the gutter twelve hours later. Yet many moderate, sensible drinkers, such as those taking a break from shopping, or wanting a pint before their lunch, may wish to use pubs before noon. Wetherspoon's are an honourable exception, as all their pubs open promptly at 11 am, and are often surprisingly busy well before noon, proving that the demand does exist.

### Closed for Lunch

One well known, and in many respects very good, local pub stays firmly shut at lunchtimes, seven days a week. That's fair enough if there's little trade to be had, and it gives the licensees the opportunity to combine running a pub with doing another job, which may be the key to survival for many smaller pubs.

But licensees shouldn't underestimate the amount of trade to be gained at lunchtimes. I mentioned above how many Wetherspoons were busy before noon, even those not in major town centres. Many retired people much prefer going to the pub at lunchtime rather than in the evening, and I've come across some pubs that are like a pensioners' social centre in the afternoon. People nowadays are less likely to work regular, 9-5 hours, so more working people will be around in the daytime. Also, new customers, especially those from outside the immediate area, are more likely to seek out pubs for the first time during the day.

Pubs must be careful that they don't start to deter potential customers by gaining a reputation for scarcely ever being open. One word of mouth report that "I went there and it was shut at half-past one" could put off a lot of people. And one person I was speaking to genuinely believed that the pub I referred to before had closed completely, as he had never found it open on several visits. Licensees might take that as a warning. There are also few pubs that would not benefit from displaying clearly outside exactly what hours they are open.

### The New Puritans

Twelve people from my workplace went out to the pub one Friday for someone's birthday. Apart from myself and one other, it was a round of ten Diet Cokes, including one for the person who was supposed to be celebrating. Anyone would think that a pint of bitter or a glass of wine would have them throwing up over the boss or copying their backsides on the photocopier. Is it any wonder that the licensed trade and the brewing industry are in such a bad way?

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

## The Nursery Inn



GREEN LANE,  
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- ★ Egon Ronay Guide, AA Best of British Gd
- ★ CAMRA Good Pub Food Guide
- ★ CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year 2001
- ★ CAMRA NATIONAL Pub of the Year



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Table Football, Pool

**Open ALL Permitted Hours**

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Geoff and Carmel Welcome You To

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PUB OF THE YEAR 1998 & 1999**



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WITH EVER CHANGING  
REAL ALES AND  
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Regular Beers include

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## The Queens Arms, Old Glossop.

The Queens Arms re-opened in mid-September, eight weeks after being a victim of the severe flash floods that hit the Glossop area. With a massive £100,000 insurance claim in, the pub actually got a mention in the Financial Times for the size of the claim. At the time of the flooding, the landlord Alan Osbourne feared it could take months before he and his wife Carol would be back in business. Everything was lost - cookers, fridges, carpets, fittings. The cellar was completely swamped and the pub itself was 4½ feet under water. As the fire brigade pumped it out, the levels kept the same with more water flooding in on its way towards Glossop town centre from the Bleaklow range of hills, high above Glossop. Structurally the pub was fine but, work from plumbers, electricians, decorators, carpet fitters, kitchen outfitters etc. meant the pub was totally renewed inside. Work was completed round the clock and may I add, in time for the launch of the Good Beer Guide, which the Queens is in this year for the first time, as an 'Inn Brief'. More about the pub will follow, as it will be featured in the High Peak Branch 'Featured Pub' write-up shortly.

## League of Gentlemen

With the third series of the League of Gentlemen currently showing on BBC2, with Hadfield becoming the fictional Royston Vasey, a convention has been arranged for Saturday 2nd November, two days after the last of the current six programmes.

People who visit the various League web sites join up to dress up as characters and visit the various locations in the Hadfield area. High Peak Branch's Frank Wood will be attending on this occasion and if any readers wish to join him, the day kicks off in the Masons Arms, Station Road, Hadfield (sorry: Royston Vasey) at 1pm. Obviously, if local CAMRA enthusiasts and readers turn up for the event, the local pubs such as the Palatine, which features on the opening of the show, would be of interest. Hopefully see you there.

## Royal Oak, Mellor

Locals at the Royal Oak in Mellor are in safe hands following the arrival of Mike Ashworth, the new licensee of the Robinson's house. He takes over the tenancy following the sad death of Les Smith, the previous tenant.

Mike had had a varied career, having spent 9½ years in the Metropolitan Police during which time he also took a sabbatical and spent time as a security advisor for the United Nations in New York. "During that time one of my jobs was to make security arrangements for George Bush Senior during his time as president. I also took the opportunity to meet lots of ordinary Americans by taking a job as a bar manager, which is where I made up my mind to run a pub of my one back here in England," he explained.

It took Mike and his partner Tracy Simpson, both originally from the Stockport area, five years to realise their ambition to take on a tenancy of their own, but they are confident that the Royal Oak has the right combination of friendly locals and a comfortable atmosphere that they have been looking for.

Certain aspects of the business, like the Royal Oak's well-known Indian restaurant, will remain unchanged but the couple plan to extend the pubs opening hours to offer an all-day service. They have already invested in a new kitchen and will soon offer lunch-time bar snacks and morning coffee.

## The Friendship, Glossop

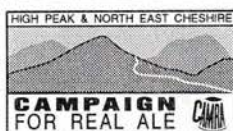
After several months of controversy, the Friendship, a GBG entry in Glossop, has won the fight to keep its beer garden and justly so in our opinion.

Last year, the rear garden was vastly improved by landlord Mike Howard, with new seating, flowerbeds, a raised drinking area and a barbeque site. All in all a smart transformation. However, one local resident in the vicinity complained to High Peak Council, resulting in the planning department getting involved in the issue. However, they concluded, after discussions with Mike, a keen CAMRA member and Robinson's brewery, that a new beer garden had not been created, as was alleged, the garden having been used as an outdoor drinking area for many years and was not breaking any planning regulations. Supporting letters came in from various parties, including a personal letter from the High Peak Council leader, Mr John Hallsworth.

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**NOVEMBER  
FEATURED PUB  
The Hatters Arms,  
Marple**

**F**or years the Hatters Arms was the pub in Marple that resisted any attempts at modernisation. It is a lovely bow windowed stone house on the end of a row of what really were hatters' cottages. It was tiny and for years had been kept ultra-traditional by its redoubtable landlady Sadie Davies. But the years roll by and after Sadie retired there were changes. Kitchens were fitted and the notorious ladies toilets were transformed. Despite an extension to one room it remains a snug and cosy pub with three small rooms running off the panelled bar. Outside there are window boxes and the whole effect is one of welcome. Landlord Mark Singleton and his wife Anita came to the Hatters after a 10-year apprenticeship at another Robinson's house, the Square & Compass in Darley Dale, Derbyshire. But both are Marple people and locals will remember Mark's father Ronnie (still in action behind the scenes at the pub) as the licensee of the Navigation in Marple from 1966 to 1991. That was the home of the Marple Prize Band and there's a brass band theme at the Hatters too, for Mark has played trombone since he was 12 and there are pictures of him as band mascot displayed in the Hatters. He is a qualified chef, trained at the High Peak Catering College, and the Hatters now caters for the first time, and is open all day seven days a week, with food at lunchtime and evenings until



9.00pm. Mark and Anita still feel that Robinson's beer is their mainstay; handpumps were never taken out and restored here and Robinson's Hatters, Best Bitter and seasonal beers are all served from the naturally chilled cellar.

One other claim to fame that the pub has, apart from its hatting affiliations, is that it is one of a handful of houses with a traditional bell-push service. In their determination to marry the new with the traditional, Mark and Anita have had them reinstated.

*High Peak Pub News ...continued from previous page*

**Chinley Changes**

Another Robinson's pub, the Crown and Mitre in Chinley, which had been run by the same landlord for 27 years until last year, has changed hands again. Apparently the people who took over last year greatly improved the beer quality, with new lines fitted, and brightened the place up a bit. Word is that the new landlady, who is local to the area, is planning to step up the food operations once she gets established. Our man who lives immediately behind the pub is reporting back to us for the next issue, so more on that next time. FW, JC

**Ye Olde Admiral Rodney**



**Prestbury  
Robinsons Hatters  
Mild and Best  
Bitter  
on handpump**



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12-2.30 Mon-Sat  
Peter and Gail  
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Alan and Louise and their staff welcome you to Ashton's most traditionally refurbished pub. A warm fire for the winter or sit and relax in the award winning 'Ashton in Bloom' patio garden for the summer.  
Good Beer Guide listed.

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and Hatters.**

**Award Winning Food.**



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Seasonal Guest Beers  
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Coopers Bell  
PLUS Snowdon Bitter  
Now on Sale**

**Robinson's Chef of the Year 1999/2000  
– second place and highly commended.  
British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2001 – second place.  
British Meat Steak Pie of the Year 2002 – runner up.**

**Luxury en-suite accommodation. Parking facilities for guests.**

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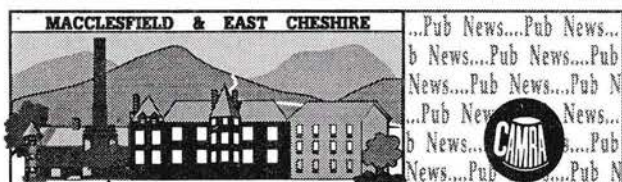
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**FRIDAY 8 TO SUNDAY 17 NOV**

18







A correspondent sampled Greenall's bitter at both the Railway in Mobberley and the Greyhound in Ashley recently. Both pints were in good condition but the taste is nothing special so perhaps its predicted demise won't be too much of a loss? The 'guest' at the Greyhound was only Marstons Pedigree - hope this isn't a permanent feature and that more interesting beers will return? A more recent visit seemed to suggest that the Pedigree is a regular beer, and a fourth hand-pump hosts a guest beer most of the time. I had the Lees Sprinter, but found it a little sharp for my taste. A new CAMRA member has been into the Dun Cow at Ollerton, between Knutsford and Chelford. He describes it as very pleasant, but aimed mainly at diners. He thought that you might feel a little uncomfortable if you were just in for a drink. Three cask ales seemed to be available, including Courage Directors and Marstons Pedigree. The food is good, and not too expensive. The range is good and it is all home-cooked.

The Drovers at Allostock on the A50 south of Knutsford is a regular music venue but does not neglect the cask beers. A recent visit revealed one of the two variations of the new Holts beer, Baton Gold. This was the 4.3% ABV version and it tasted very palatable. I understand that a beer from Hop House was due next. Its companions on the hand pumps were Boddingtons and Pedigree, along with cask cider in the shape of Old Rosie, weighing in at a knee-trembling 7.3%. In the same evening's wandering, the Parkgate was visited. This is a lovely pub, inside and out, and has a good reputation for its food. Being a Sam Smith's pub, it has only one cask beer, the Old Brewery Bitter.

A little further west, the Crown in Lower Peover boasts six hand pumps dispensing real beers. One of these is usually a Cheshire microbrewery product, and on this occasion, Weetwood's Eastgate Ale was found to be on blisteringly good form.

The Ryles Arms, Sutton has an extension planned which will include two further hand-pumps- Mauldons plus Bass on when we last passed- haven't been in to try the beer recently- watch this space. We believe extensive developments are planned, with a new entrance, bar area and accommodation, but they are leaving the present area alone and want to retain

the appearance of the pub. Hydes bitter and 1744 from Burton on Trent were not bad but not outstanding. The focus is largely on dining with tables laid out with wineglasses etc, apart from the immediate bar area. The food was found acceptable.

At the Highwayman, Rainow, the new beer doing well, also the new restaurant venture. Haven't tried that yet but bar food good. Also in Rainow, the Rising Sun, the guest beer is often unusual and always good. Recent offerings- a Boggart Hole beer and Brakspears Organic (delicious- 5stars), Food popular, especially Monday evening Landlord's Choice- FREE food from 7 till it runs out- chilli was excellent, as were the Italian meatballs- guess who often doesn't have to cook on a Monday now?

In Macclesfield, the Waters Green never disappoints- certainly the Roosters Special was very welcome after a trip to the Highlands of Scotland where real beer is hard to find. I had Pictish Gold recently, and it was delightful. It has appeared regularly recently and goes down well too. Loved the Black Bee from Phoenix that's appeared a few times recently. If you only ever go in on the way home from work, find an excuse to drop in at lunch time- the home cooked food is good basic satisfying home cooked pub grub.

Just out of area- the Swan at Kettlethulme reports that the new Khean beer from Congleton is very popular- when we spoke he had got through 4 casks- putting one on at 6 and finishing by 10, with people who just wanted to try it coming back for more. Good beer range here, at least three on, often featuring two beers from the same brewery.

After a disappointing meal at a nameless pub, Bollington, I persuaded my female friends (none of whom drink beer, sadly, though I'm trying to convert them) to try the Hanging Gate, Higher Sutton. I already knew what I was having (the spinach and basil lasagne, really tasty) but several said they'd been told by others who'd been to try the fish and chips (which I endorsed). Rave reviews all round. Next time it's to be the Dog at Peover Heath- and that wasn't even my idea! So many of our local pubs provide not only good food but also a more relaxed atmosphere than a restaurant for a casual get together- and now I get to drink real ale as well. Good news in Bollington - The Vale, Adlington Rd re-opened as a pub on 21 September. This former Good Beer Guide regular has been closed for six years awaiting a suitable buyer. Now Tom Hall has bought it and is selling Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter, Everards Tiger and a guest (Spitfire when I called) all on handpump. More news on the Vale will be forthcoming later. Also in Bollington, Albert Hall at the Dog and Partridge has announced his impending retirement.

## COME & JOIN US!

An offer you can't refuse

Stockport South Manchester CAMRA has joined forces with Hydes Brewery to bring you one of the best ever CAMRA membership offers.

On Monday 21 October we will be hosting a special event at the Friendship, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield. Hydes have donated 18 gallons of beer for the night and it's there to be drunk - for free! To help drain the barrel we are running the following promotions:

- ★ If you are either a student or under 26 then just show us the evidence and if you are one of the first 50 people to do this you'll get a free pint. No strings attached!
- ★ If you join CAMRA on the night then you'll get two free pints regardless of your age
- ★ There will be a free-to-enter beer quiz with beer prizes
- ★ New members joining on the night will be able to pick up the brand new 2003 Good Beer Guide for just £8 - that's a massive £4.99 discount off the cover price.
- ★ Existing members will also get the discount by showing their membership card.

This great night kicks off at 8.00pm - look for the CAMRA stall in the pub and claim your free beer! And don't forget to join CAMRA at the same time - it's never been a better time to join and:

- ★ Get a discount on the entry to beer festivals
- ★ Get a discount on many CAMRA books and products
- ★ Get a free monthly newspaper, What's Brewing, with all the latest news and views on pubs and beer.
- ★ Get a chance to join in the active local CAMRA social scene. Get that date in your diary now - Monday, October 21, 8.00pm. Friendship, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield.

# BLOSSOMS

Your Hosts Neville, Margaret and Steve welcome all

**Delicious Hot & Cold food available  
Including Home-made Pies  
Steak & Kidney and Cheese & Onion  
Prepared by Wendy - ex-Wheatsheaf  
Tea Time Food - 5.30 till 7.30pm  
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**Specialising in Outside Catering For All Your Needs  
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LARGE FUNCTION ROOM FOR HIRE  
IDEAL FOR CHRISTENINGS,  
BEREAVEMENTS ETC**

*Serving the full range  
of Robinson's Ales*

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HEAVILEY ☎ 477 2397**





# OPENING TIMES LETTERS

(If true, this is disturbing news. All good pubs can have the odd off-night – was Ron just unlucky or have others had a similar experience there? – Ed(1))

**From P Heathcote, licensee of the Grove, Clayton:**  
I would like to reply to Dave Hallows (Opening Times, August) regarding handpumped mild at the Grove, Ashton New Road, Clayton.

This man needs to see an optician!! If he had bothered to walk round into the vault, he would have found smooth and handpumped mild being dispensed. The reason the handpump is not in the lounge is to stop people "helping themselves" as when only one member of staff is on, both bars cannot be observed. Handpumped mild is always dispensed at the Grove. I am the licensee and I would love to meet this man. (Hopefully Dave will call in. In fairness, though, under Mr Heathcote's predecessor handpumped mild was usually not available in fact – as OT discovered on more than one occasion – Ed(1))

**From Ron Young, Stockport:**  
This is a desperate plea from the heart!... for the sake of a once truly great local!

I regrettably left my old local "The Beech" in Chorlton ten months ago when I moved house to Stockport.

I heard from a drinking friend that it had since been refurbished and I arranged a reunion with him back at the Beech. I found the refurbishment to have been nicely done and the range of beers available still impressive.

I was, however, greatly disappointed with the poor standard of service and the unfriendly, inattentive attitude of the bar staff. My friend told me how this attitude and the unrestrained use of loud, foul-mouthed language throughout the pub had resolved him and others to seek another pub a few months earlier. He informed me that he only agreed to go back into the Beech to meet me!

All this greatly saddened me as this fine pub was CAMRA "Manchester Pub of the Year" just a few years ago! This current state of affairs is urgently screaming out for a firm management make-over to get it back in line - 'til then, I'm sad to say that I won't be going back.

**From Ron Elder, Edinburgh:**

I was saddened to read in the 'Manchester Matters' column in Opening Times 221 that the new 'English Lounge' on Manchester's High Street is only to sell English cask beers.

This parochial policy will deny the good people of Manchester the opportunity to sample many excellent cask ales produced in other parts of the British Isles. On page 6 of the same issue you list the top award winning beers in Britain, three of which, including the Supreme Champion Beer of Britain, will not be available to the future customers of this new pub because they are not brewed in England.

One hopes that sense will prevail and that this xenophobic attitude will be changed to allow non-English beers to be supped!

**From Sarah Parker, Sarah's Hophouse Brewery:**

After hearing yet another tale concerning my whereabouts and that of the brewery, I thought it time to put pen to paper and set the record straight once and for all. Sarah's Hophouse is alive and well in Cheshire! Contrary to popular belief, we have not moved to Australia, nor have we sold out to another brewer. The story so far... After six years as owner and licensee of the Railway in Golborne, I decided to go one step further and brew my own beer, to which end Sarah's Hophouse was born in February 2000. After a difficult first summer in which I had a major infection (not personally), which interrupted production for a couple of months, this was resolved and sales continued, thanks to my loyal customers who stood by me.

Unfortunately, as the business grew, my weight dropped. Was I ill? Sorry to disappoint local gossipmongers, but if they worked seven days in a brewery and seven nights in a busy pub, then they too would go from a rather overweight size 18 to a (and I say so myself) somewhat shapely size 10.

Weight loss however, was not the only result – tiredness and lack of concentration for either business also ensued, and so this year I took the decision to close the Railway and concentrate on the brewery.

Why close a successful business you might ask? I did try for a while just reducing the opening hours, but found that having been a licensee for the past 21 years I didn't have the same patience as when I first started, and so I took the decision to close the pub and use it as our house. With hindsight, I should have put a piece in the paper at that point, had I thought it would cause such consternation amongst the drinking population. So here ladies and gentlemen are the facts:

1. The Railway is now closed, but not delicensed.
2. Sarah's Hophouse is now back in full production after having ceased for a couple of months while new registration numbers were issued due to a split of businesses.
3. Both premises are up for sale, but not the brewery plant. If sold, then production will continue elsewhere – be sure, I will keep you informed.

PS – any brewers reading this who might be under the misapprehension that we have shut down and are therefore mistakenly using our casks will be forgiven providing they are returned forthwith. Any licensees who find they have any of our casks adorning their yards, we would appreciate a phone call (01942 728202) so that we may get them out of your way immediately. Our banding is red-black-red with Sarah's Hophouse clearly plated on the end.



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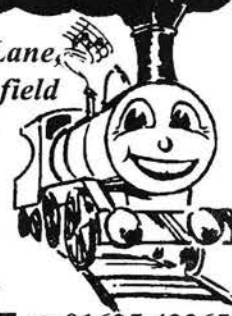
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## PRAGUE – OPEN FOR BUSINESS

**P**rague and Mark Twain have at least one thing in common – reports of their demise have been premature. *John Clarke reports.*

Television reports gave the impression of a city underwater, an exaggeration not appreciated by the locals who have seen their tourist trade plummet. A visit in glorious mid-September weather revealed that the city was very much open for business, for both beer tourists and the sightseeing kind. Only one relatively small area around one end of the Charles Bridge was out of action (but with the builders already hard at work) and the underground Metro system is out in the central areas (but the trams, including Metro replacement services are running as normal). Apart from that it's essentially business as usual.

The historic sights of this wonderful city have been well documented, and we certainly covered those comprehensively. Luckily, there was also time to seek out plenty of interesting places to drink. For this purpose, the city can neatly be divided into three: on one side of the Vltava river is the Castle district (Hradcany) and Lesser Town (Mala Strana) and on the other the Old Town (Stare Mesto) and New Town (Nove Mesto). A note on opening hours – these can be vague, to say the least. Most bars advertise their hours and while most are open by 11.00am, closing time can be infinitely variable, often depending on the level of trade at any given time after, say, 10.00pm.

### Hradcany & Mala Strana

This is the most unspoilt part of the city and today looks much the way it would have done 200 years ago. Dominated by Prague Castle and St Vitus' Cathedral, this part of the city is now the home of the Czech government and numerous foreign embassies. The spectacular baroque St Nicholas's Church is also a must-see. There is also a concentration of particularly good bars.

**U Cerneho Vola (The Black Ox), Loretanski namesti 1, Prague 1**  
On a quiet-ish square right up behind the castle (take the 22 tram to Pohorelec), this is a real Czech pub, arguably the last in what is a very touristy area. The building it occupies is very old and inside the leaded windows and beamed ceilings give the impression of a very old establishment. It has in fact only been a pub since 1962 and is full of locals, some of whom banded together in the early 1990s to stop a private buy-out, forming a co-operative to keep it a real pub. Plenty of tourists call in these days but it remains resolutely Czech – don't expect an English version of the menu (snacks only) here. The beers are the highly quaffable Kozel pale 12 (5%) and dark 10 (4.3%) from the Velke Popovice brewery. We speculated that these might be the unpasteurised versions, too.

**Klasterni Pivovar, Strahovske Nadvori 302, Prague 1**

As you walk down Pohorelec to the Black Ox, you will see to your left the towers and onion domes of the Strahov Monastery, home of two stunning baroque libraries, which are well worth seeing. In the grounds is one of the newer brew-pubs, the Klasterni Pivovar (or Monastery Brewery), established in 2001. At the other end of the spectrum to the Ox, this is aimed straight at the tourist trade, although the average tourist is likely to be laid low by the beers brewed on the premises. These are the St Norbert dark and light, two full-bodied but very drinkable beers. Dangerously so as, according to the brewer, the dark is 7% while the light is about 5.5%.

**Baracnicka rychta, Trziste 23, Prague 1**

One of the best, but also one of the most difficult to find. There are two ways of getting there – either take the alleyway at 13 Nerudova (roughly opposite the Italian embassy) or where Trziste appears to split into three opposite the US embassy, take the right hand path uphill. The name translates as 'the small homeowners association' and on the walls are copies of the old house rules and various committees, the last one in post from 1947 to 1952. There are two rooms – the lower seems to be used primarily for functions and also live music at night. The upper is a wood panelled room with intimate alcoves down one side and unusual copper light fittings – the whole place appears to emit a warm glow. More a locals bar at night, lunches seem to attract more of an ex-pat crowd which probably accounts for the bi-lingual menu. That fact that most of

these seem to be staff from the US embassy probably accounts for the huge portions! Either way it's top notch stuff. There are some unusual beers, too from the Svijansky Brewery in Northern Bohemia. Three are available, the pale Rytif 12 and the stronger Knize 13 and Karamel 13 – all very moreish and dangerously drinkable, particularly the Knize. "Old fashioned good times" says the bar listing in the *Prague Post*, and that just about sums it up.

**U Hrocha, Thunovska 10, Prague 1**

The old CAMRA guide to Prague recommends U Kocoura (Nerudova 2) which is OK in a basic sort of way. U Hrocha (the Hippo), though, is a better bet. U Kocoura is on the corner of Zamecka – turn up there and take the first right – you will see U Hrocha just down the street on the left. A true no nonsense local's pub, still serving at 11:30pm on a Sunday when most of the local competition had shut up shop and retired for the night. It looks like it's been around for ever, despite being just six years old. The beer is Pilsner Urquell 12 (4.4%) and food is available too. There are just two smallish rooms separated by a courtyard and it can get very busy. Café Life at Zamecka 3, by the way, is highly recommended as a place to eat.

**U Cerneho Orla, Ujezd 33, Prague 1**

Traditional and unspoilt the Black Eagle is a basic two-roomed pub with wooden bench seating, tile topped tables and marble floor. Walls show large murals of the black eagle and a barrel of beer with a knight in armour. Needless to say, no music, fruit machines, carpets or creature comforts, only the 'loud' buzz of conversation. Basic but good cheap food is served all day (English version of the menu is available). We tried sausages with rye bread and mustard, meat loaf (with boiled egg in the centre) with rye bread and mustard – hearty, filling and cheap. The beers are Staropramen 10 and Pilsner Urquell 12. Again, can get very crowded and smoky at peak times.

**St. Nicholas, Trziste 10, Prague 1**

A dimly lit cellar bar, useful as a late night haunt. Quite new and obviously so, it is however a very relaxing place to have a drink. Food and most of the beers are pretty standard fare apart from the bottled Black Drak from Starobrnno – a 5.5%, burnt porter-style beer. An ideal nightcap. *Next month – Stare Mesto and Nove Mesto*



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# MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

This has been a quiet month. Not only have there been few new developments, but also holidays have curtailed my wandering somewhat.

I did manage to pay a belated return visit to one of my favourite pubs – the **Kings Arms** on Bloom Street, Salford. It's now in the hands of another Mike – Mike Hays is running the place on behalf of owners Dorbiere who took back control after the previous regime finally imploded financially.

I must say that the pub looks better than it has done for some considerable time following a redecoration and clean-up. It's also slightly plainer, with less paintings on the walls and no carpets, but is none the worse for that. Four cask beers were on when I called, and I understand it's a regular outlet for the new Bazens' Brewery beers, indeed part of the launch celebrations are to be held there this month. Not only that but there's now a settled food operation between 12 and 2.30 plus a good Top 10-free jukebox. I'm cautiously optimistic that the pub is now set fair to regain its past glories, it certainly deserves to.

There only opening of note in the City Centre is the **English Lounge** on High Street. I gave this a brief preview last time and on appearance it's certainly lived up to that early promise, being an elegant and comfortable place to drink. One the beer front, well – I was told it was going to start with Boddies and two 'interesting' guests but when I called it was just Boddies and Pedigree, with a London Pride clip reversed (*Landlord and LP were on and very good when I called - Ed(2)*). No problems with the quality, though so hopefully things will develop as it becomes more established.

Not so far away, the new regime at the **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street continues to make its mark on the beer front. I've reported on this place before and it really should be on the itinerary of most dedicated cask ale drinkers. It's not one for the tickers, but the beer quality is uniformly high in my experience, with in particular some of the finest London Pride I have ever tasted.

And that's about it, apart from the latest stage in the decline of the once-proud Firkin chain. The **Forgery & Firkin** on Mosely Street retains its name but is now all keg with forlorn banks of disused handpumps on the bar. Meanwhile the old **Footage & Firkin** has now re-emerged from a refurbishment as an "It's A Scream" student outlet, again with no cask beer. It's enough to make you weep.

Lorraine and Mich Spencer are now settling in at the Church, Edgeley and have already made their presence felt. 'No Drugs Allowed' signs are prominent and this has, apparently, led to the departure of some of the pub's former customers. New customers are however calling at the pub on a regular basis and trade has started to pick up from its previous very low base. This has been helped in part by the introduction of Hatters – the return of cask mild has in itself attracted new custom. Mich is now looking to acquire two additional handpumps to extend the range even further. Will we see Old Tom this winter? After many years in the doldrums, the Church now appears to be on the up again and deserves every support. Well worth a visit.

Hydes' continues to expend and the good news is that they have bought the Conway in Cheadle Hulme. For years this pub has really struggled to find a role, but now it's in the hands of a local independent brewer things should improve. The current cask range is Hydes Bitter and the current seasonal, Autumn Goldings. We understand that a refurbishment is planned at some stage. We understand that Hydes are also in advanced negotiations for the purchase of another pub, possibly in a similar area to the Conway. Hopefully this will be finalised by the time the next OT is out.

Already under refurbishment is the **Horse & Farrier in Gatley**. Hydes have closed this for conversion into the second of their 'Heritage Inns'. Work should be completed in the next few weeks.

Sam Smith's have completed their refurbishment of the Boars Head in Stockport Market Place, and it has to be said this is a very impressive job of work. The main bar area remains in place but around it a series of small inter-connecting rooms have been installed, thus making the pub even more comfortable and intimate. The former music room at the back is now a comfortable lounge with its own bar counter and off from this double doors lead to a decked outside drinking area. The décor throughout is both comfortable and traditional. Old Brewery Bitter remains on handpump and has been in fine fettle when sampled recently. In common with most of Sam Smiths refurbishments these days, they have also removed their name from the outside of the pub – a very strange move. Highly recommended though, and well worth a visit.

Not a million miles away from the Boars Head, the **Bridge Street Wine Bar** (previously Briarly's, the Hole In The Wall and the Castlewood) is closed with a 'to let' sign in the window. Given its prominent position, someone really ought to be able to make a go of this place.

In Cheadle, the Vine has been bought by Punch Taverns. Is a traditional refurbishment and some decent cask ale too much to hope for? Probably, but we live in hope.



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:-

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