



OPENING TIMES



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JANUARY 2003 No:225

6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

'NATIONAL PUBS WEEK'

CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale, will be launching a new initiative - National Pubs Week - on 22nd February to encourage everybody to visit and show support for their local pub throughout this week. We want to encourage infrequent pub-goers to go to the pub in Pubs Week. The slogan is "There's a pub for everyone" and it's an opportunity to celebrate the enormous range and variety of British pubs.

Over 20 pubs close every month in Britain, with the majority of these being rural community pubs. CAMRA, with the support of a number of breweries and pub companies, will launch National Pubs Week by issuing posters, leaflets and beer mats to pubs around Britain.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns said "The variety of different pubs to choose from in Britain is unique and something we should all be very proud about. It is important that with so many community pubs closing every month we encourage both regular and infrequent pubs goers to visit their pubs in National Pubs Week. Pubs can offer great food, beer and a perfect environment to socialise with friends."

Benner continued "CAMRA's recent market research shows that over 80% of people prefer community and local pubs to town themed bars. This is a week to celebrate all pubs, especially those that offer the local community a place to socialise and those that are based in more rural locations." CAMRA will also be announcing their prestigious National Pub of the Year winner in National Pubs Week. Last year's winner was our very own Nursery Inn, Heaton Norris, This was a rare victory for a pub in an urban location as the majority of previous winners have been rural free houses.

Tony Jerome, CAMRA's Press Manager said, "It will be interesting to see which type of pub will win the National Pub of the Year award this year. The Blisland Inn from the small Cornish village of Blisland, won the award in 2001 but a town community pub, The Nursery Inn, won last year's award. This just goes to show the diversity of great pubs we have around Britain. We will also be issuing a wide range of positive stories to the media to support the launch of the first ever National Pubs Week. These interesting pub stories will hopefully give the excellent British pubs the boost they need and fully deserve."

So what will YOU be able to do in this week?

☆ Why not take time out to visit some of the area's classic heritage pubs? Look out for our guide to these in next month's Opening Times.

☆ The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month Award will be presented to the High Grove, Silverdale Road, Gatley on Thursday 27 February. Why not also take the chance to call in at some of the other excellent pubs in East Manchester - this month's Stagger gives details of some handy nearby pubs.

☆ The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year Award will be presented on Saturday 1 March. Look for details of the winning pub in next month's Opening Times.

It is estimated that there are approximately 65,000 pubs in Britain and CAMRA hope as many pubs as possible will get behind National Pubs Week by displaying specially designed posters, leaflets and beer mats and coming up with innovative pub promotions to attract more customers. For more information on the campaign visit www.camra.org.uk or call the CAMRA Campaigns team on 01727 867201.



Beartown Brewery's latest pub opened on 6 December and looks set to make a real impact on the South Manchester drinking scene.

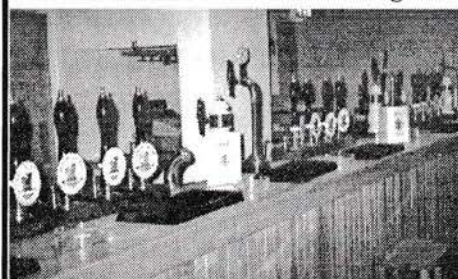
Sited in Fallowfield at the junction of Moseley Road and Wilmslow Road, Bruin's occupies the site of the former Bamboo café and a neighbouring phone shop and while hoping for a substantial student market, also aims to attract all manner of discriminating drinkers with the familiar Beartown combination of quality cask ales and foreign beers.

The pub, or bar as it is perhaps better described, is one large open-plan room distinguished by clean lines and a stylish American ash bar counter dominated by no less than 16 handpumps. There is plenty of seating but also ample space for vertical drinking as is expected in this type of venue. If there could be any criticism it is that the bare walls do make for a rather stark appearance, although no doubt this will change as the bar beds in.

Managers are Australian Dani Nash and her partner Mark Thorp, both of whom come to Bruin's with plenty of licensed trade experience behind them, Mark at the Red Lion in Withington and the Plough, Heaton Moor, and Dani at Heaton Moor's Blue Cat café bar. They certainly seem to have the right approach for this very new type of venture for Beartown Brewery.

When OT called, the 16 handpumps were dispensing four Beartown beers - Kodiak Gold, Bruin's Ruin, Bearskinful and Polar Eclipse, all sold at the usual low prices (the powerful Polar Eclipse was just £1.60) which should be a hit with the student trade. The Ginger and Wheat beers were also due to become permanent additions to the range with the rest of the Beartown portfolio rotated as and when.

Food is sensibly being restricted to bar snacks and this year will see the introduction of acoustic nights. All in all a very welcome addition to the local drinking scene. The next few



weeks, with the post-Christmas return of the students, will be crucial, but Bruin's deserves every success and seems set fair to achieve that.

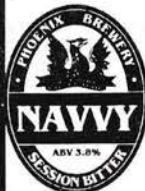
IN JANUARY'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	CAMRA Calling	12
Pub of the Month	3	5 Years Ago	13
Stagger	6	Curmudgeon	13
Pub Grub	7	High Peak News	14
Five Go Mad	8	Pub News	17
Stockie on the Oche	9	Letters	18
Brewery News	10	Manchester Matters	19



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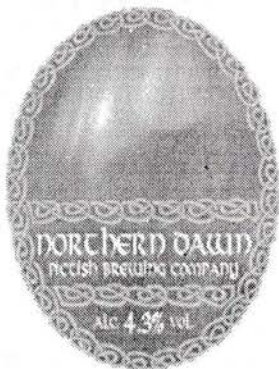
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COPY DATE FOR FEBRUARY IS JANUARY 30

IN THE EDITORS' VIEW..

This time last year we were celebrating the Nursery's success in the national Pub of the Year contest. This year the deadline for judging has been extended to 31 January with the results due to be announced in CAMRA's National Pubs Week, which starts on 22 February, so we'll all be on tenterhooks a little longer.

Here at OT we are all certainly rooting for the Railway, Portwood, which is one of the four finalists. But even if it doesn't win, what a tribute this is for the local pub scene to produce two national finalists in consecutive years. This in itself is an achievement unprecedented in the history of the competition. By the time you read this, we will have selected our local Pub of the Year for 2003, which will carry our banner in the next contest. Which pub will this be? Well, you'll just have to read next month's Opening Times to find out.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Predicting trends in the licensed trade is notoriously difficult, but one thing that stood out last year was the contrast between the difficulties in the 'high street' sector and the continuing health of the community pub trade. Added to that there are strong signs that the decline of cask ale is coming to an end, with most of our local micro brewers and all of our family brewers in robust health. 2003 could well be a turning point in favour of real pubs and real beer.

So, on that upbeat note, let us wish everyone connected with Opening Times, be they contributors, distributors, advertisers or readers a very happy and prosperous New Year.

★ ★ ★

A very small apology: avid readers of Opening Times will be aware that the current publication did not reach pubs until just after the middle of the month. We are aware of certain mutterings of "it's late", "scandalous" and even "lazy b*****s" from the frenzied masses. Well, as *regular* readers will know, we *always* publish later in January - the logistics of getting an issue together in the immediate hours after new year is beyond a volunteer staff. So just to be consistent, we are going to come out at a similar time in February as well!

Look for issue 226 from Valentine's day...

John Clarke

P.B. Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 225

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).

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OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 26cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

PUB OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2003

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 Pub of the Month for January is the Mawson, Kincardine Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock.

The pub scene in South Manchester can roughly be divided into two, especially in the inner city area. The dividing line is Upper Brook Street, running south from the City Centre. To the west is Oxford Road and Wilmslow Road, awash with pubs and bars, many of them offering cask beer. To the east pubs are few and far between, and few of those sell cask beer. However in this pub and beer desert, there is one oasis.

This is the Mawson, on Kincardine Road, just off Brunswick Street near its junction with Upper Brook Street. Standing along amidst much redevelopment, the Mawson dates from the 1920s, perhaps a little earlier, and has appears to have altered very little since then. There's a lobby with three rooms off, all with original fittings in a warm oak, even the original bar shutters with brass grilles are still there. The cosy welcoming feel is increased by the red and gold décor.

This is a true community pub with a wide range of regulars from both the neighbouring housing estates plus staff and students from the University just across the road. For the past eight years the pub has been run by Rita and Tony Morris and it's a tribute to their stewardship of the Mawson that it has managed to avoid the problems that have plagued, and indeed seen off, other pubs in the area in recent years. It remains a safe, welcoming haven for all, both regulars and new visitors.

Naturally, there's good beer to be had, too. Three beers are available on handpump - Tetley Mild and Bitter (one of the few mild outlets in the area) together with a permanent guest - Coach House Dick Turpin.

The Mawson would be a good pub wherever it was sited, here, though, its survival and traditional qualities mark it out as something very special indeed. This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 30th January from 8.00pm.

The Mawson is well served by public transport. Buses 50 run down Upper Brook Street at regular intervals and it's only a short walk down Brunswick Street from the A6/Hyde Road junction which is well supplied with buses.

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

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

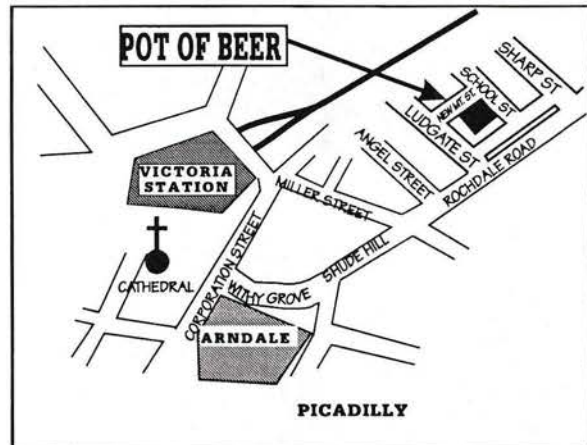


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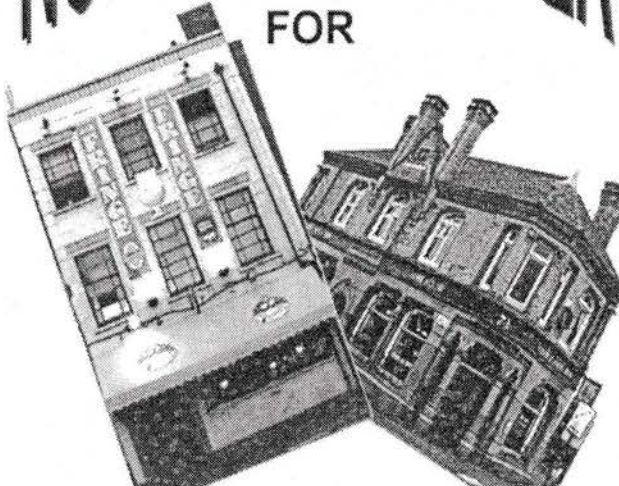
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WITH REAL
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REAL CHARACTER
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BAR FRINGE &
THE MARBLE ARCH

WINTER FAYRE

Pete Soane has been researching some tasty seasonal dishes – all made with beer or cider, of course!
Prime Old Strong Casserole With Dumplings

This recipe serves 4-6 depending on size of appetite

Ingredients

For the casserole:

1½lbs braising/stewing steak
2oz seasoned flour
2oz lard
2 chopped onions
6 sliced carrots
8oz chopped celery
8oz chopped swede
8oz chopped turnip
3 tablespoon tomato puree
Pinch grated nutmeg

1 bouquet garni
Salt & pepper
2 large tomatoes, chopped
1 chopped clove of garlic
1 beef stock cube
2 level dessertspoons soft brown sugar
½ pint Tolly Cobbold Old Strong Ale (or similar strong-ish ale)

For the Dumplings:

4oz self-raising flour
pinch of salt
2oz shredded suet

Method

1. Cut meat into bite-sized pieces, trimming off fat, and toss in seasoned flour.
2. Gently fry the onions in lard until soft then add the meat and fry lightly until it is browned.
3. Stir in tomato puree, seasonings and the sugar, then add the remaining vegetables.
4. Stir in the ale and the crumbled stock cube.
5. Cover and cook in the oven at gas mark 3 (170C/325F) for approximately 3½ hours or until the meat is tender.
6. Prepare the dumplings by combining all the ingredients together and then bind with water to make an elastic dough. Divide this into 6 equal portions and shape into dumplings. Add to the top of the casserole half an hour before the end of cooking time.

Eat and Enjoy! (With thanks to Tollemache & Cobbold Brewery Ltd)

Lyn's Kenford Kidneys

Ingredients

4 Lamb's Kidneys
2oz butter
1 onion, chopped
2 carrots, diced
2 leeks, chopped
2 sticks celery, chopped
1oz flour

¼ pint cider
¼ pint brown stock (use a cube if you want)
Pinch mixed herbs
Parsley for garnish

Method

1. Skin and halve the kidneys. Brown in the butter and set aside.
 2. Add the onions, carrots, leeks and celery and fry gently until soft.
 3. Add the flour and brown
 4. Sir in the cider and stock, stirring until smooth and then bring to the boil.
 5. Add the kidneys and herbs and simmer for 20 minutes.
- Serve sprinkled with parsley. Try this dish with simple boiled potatoes or crusty bread. (With thanks to the Barnsley Ale Report)

Portered Stilton Crock

Prepare this 2-3 weeks before required.

Ingredients

8oz mature Blue Stilton
1oz chopped walnuts
1oz sliced chestnut mushrooms

9oz unsalted butter
Approx. 2 tablespoons of porter

Method

1. Roughly grate the Stilton into a bowl and stir in the walnuts.
2. Sauté the sliced mushrooms in half the butter until soft and add to the bowl.
3. Stir in enough porter to bind the mixture and pack into a china tankard.
4. Melt the remaining butter and pour over the top to seal.
5. Refrigerate for 2-3 weeks. (With thanks to Susan Nowak and What's Brewing).



...is currently
busy with
another

project, but would like to recommend....

January 23 onwards - Rare beers & Breweries festival at the Smithfield Hotel on Swan Street Manchester. The list is amazing, many of the featured breweries being less than six months old. Unmissable.
January 30 - February 1 Bent & Bongs (Atherton) Beer Festival. Advert with details on page 10. Probably the only chance this year to drink proper German micro-brewed beer on gravity as well as a sumptuous range of winter beers and old favourites, leavened with some new beers.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER! CAMRA calls for unity to revive beer market

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is calling on Britain's brewers to work together on a joint campaign to boost the beer market's ailing fortunes.

CAMRA believes the long decline both in cask ales and the overall market can be reversed by building on the current trend towards generic promotions.

Among the many generic campaigns currently running are CAMRA's "Ask if it's Cask", the Coors-Independent Family Brewers of Britain "Beer Naturally" initiative, the IFBB's "Real Beer Week", and Greene King's "Beer To Dine For".

CAMRA's call for action follows evaluation of the third phase of Ask If It's Cask, which starred the 4,000-year-old Goddess of Beer, Ninkasi. Research showed that 12-15 million people were exposed to phase three, either through the media or Ninkasi beer mats and posters - a huge strike rate, given its tiny budget.

CAMRA Head of Campaigns Mike Benner said: "With Ask If It's Cask CAMRA has shown what can be done with very low budgets. Imagine what we could achieve if we act together. Now we need to bring brewers and trade associations together for a co-ordinated generic campaign for beer."

Mr Benner said the first step should be a conference of key players to report on the progress of the current campaigns and draw on their individual strengths to create a single generic promotion.

"We need to act collectively or the public will get confused about the many messages from too many different campaigns," he said. "It is essential that we agree a way to promote beer as a wholesome, natural and stylish choice."

"CAMRA would support a generic campaign for all beer types because we think it will build a platform for further promotion of real ale as the crème de la crème. Ask if It's Cask has exceeded our wildest dreams, with high levels of public recognition due to the support of over 10,000 pubs and plenty of extremely positive media coverage."

"It sets a precedent for generic campaigns and could be used as a model for a properly funded and co-ordinated initiative across the industry."

The extent of the industry's concern over shrinking sales was highlighted by Coors Brewers chief executive Peter Kendall, who told a conference organised by trade newspaper *The Publican* that consumption had dwindled by seven million barrels in 20 years. Warning that the traditional British pub would die if the decline were not halted, he urged the industry to take a lead from the wine trade.

"Pubs will hold their position at the centre of British leisure only if they stock beers that surprise and delight," he said.

WAYNE'S WALDORF AWARD

Pictured (right) is Wayne Nuttall, licensee of the Waldorf in Gore St., Manchester City Centre, holding his well deserved pub of the month award for December 2002, awarded on a busy and convivial night the week before Christmas, that showed just how good his beer, and the pub is!

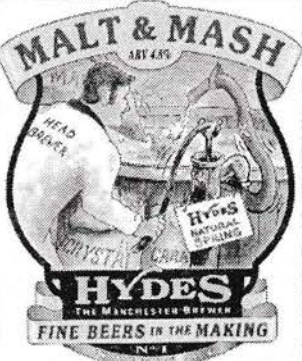


HYDES

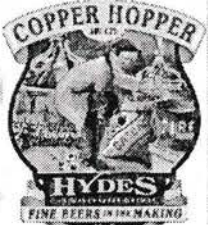
Craft Ales 2003

"Fine Beers in the Making"

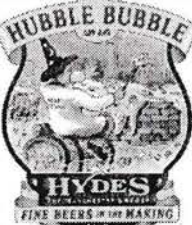
Hydes of Manchester, famed for producing great beers in the best tradition, introduce their new Craft Ale portfolio for 2003. This year's "Fine Beer in the Making" theme takes a reflective and entertaining look at the skilled art of brewing and provides a humorous insight into the machinations and creativity involved in the brewing process from yesteryear. We start with the Malt & Mash, go hot footed to the Copper, conjure up some magic at fermentation, taking care to stay on the rails with Rack n' Ruin before seeking a fruity reward just before we take to the horses and romp across the finishing line. As one would expect from our "Fine Beers in the Making" range each Craft Ale is made using only the finest hops & premium malts to produce a range that you and your customers will want to enjoy time & time again.




ABV 4.8%
No. 1 in the series Jan - Feb




ABV 4.2%
No. 2 Mar - Apr




ABV 4.4%
No. 3 May - Jun



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No. 4 Jul - Aug



ABV 4.5%
No. 5 Sep - Oct



ABV 5.0%
No. 6 Nov - Dec

For more details of Hydes Craft Ale range for 2003
Tel: 0161 226 1317
 Available nationally from The Beer Seller and other leading Wholesalers

STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

Six of the Best or East Manchester By Minibus

With the exception of Gorton, the suburban pubs of East Manchester now offer very little in the way of cask beer. Thus, the days of enjoyable crawls through the districts of Beswick, Clayton, Ardwick and Openshaw are now, unfortunately, gone. We have lost a number of pubs over the years to such things as redevelopment, population shifts, the inner ring-road, the Commonwealth Games and so on. These losses, coupled with pubs switching to keg / smooth beers, mean that the few remaining gems are now widely scattered. The purpose of this minibus crawl is to enable us to visit some of these remaining, special pubs in one evening at a fairly leisurely pace so that we can savour them at their best. I would imagine that with enough planning, one could do the same pubs in an evening by public transport albeit in a different order (I've given bus numbers from the city after each pub name for those who may wish to emulate us). Enough of the preamble, let's get to the pubs...

Our first drop-off was in Openshaw, the Oddfellows (buses 219 - 221) on Abbey Hey Lane. This is a two-room, terraced street-corner Boddingtons house that sells Boddingtons Bitter as its sole offering. Much of the pub's original floorplan still remains, as too do some of the marvellous etched windows that add so much character to an old pub. A small, comfortable lounge decorated with film star photos of yore is separated from the vault by the bar; the vault has a dartboard and various team sports photos as decor. All in all a pleasant and, seemingly, well-run pub that appeals to a broad audience (there were quite a few people in for a fairly early hour). The beer proved to be more than satisfactory too, I am pleased to note.

A very short walk (no need for the minibus here) away on Ashton Old Road lies Whitbread's **Albion** (buses 219 - 221). A largish house this, split longitudinally along the bar to give a vault / pool room to your left, and a reasonably plush lounge to your right; both were very quiet for eight o'clock it has to be said. Perhaps the

attraction was to be had later in the evening, as a karaoke-cum-disco was being set up as we enjoyed our beers. The beers were Boddingtons Bitter and Holts Bitter served to us by two most friendly and attractive ladies who made us most welcome with their good humour and charm. The Boddies was adjudged to be on a par with that in the Oddies, whilst the Holts was well thought of too. With the Albion doing Holts, this makes up for the loss of this beer from Holt's Pack Horse (now closed), and the nearby Lord Raglan. A ten minute walk east (or jump on to the minibus) will get you to

Holt's Railway on Manshaw Road, Higher Openshaw (it's those buses 219-221 again). A spruce-up had obviously taken place (did they know we were coming?), as the pub looked magnificent, both externally and within. I have never seen the pub look so

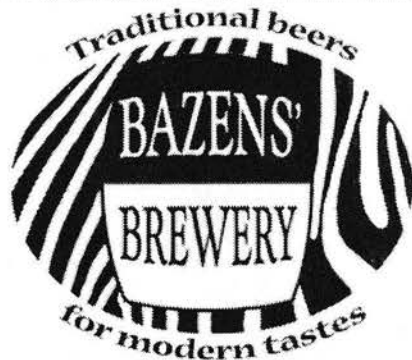


clean and bright; very well decorated, surely Holt's at its best! There were few people in though; do they know what they are missing? Three rooms, front vault with dartboard, front lounge and a long back snug; couple this with three beers from Holts - Mild, Bitter and seasonal, Thunderholt. For once, the bitter went untried as we all plumped for the dark beers. The mild proved to be very tasty, whilst the Thunderholt was positively drooled over by some of our party (one of whom dislikes most Holts beers). Given more time, I'm sure we could have happily made an evening of it there. Over to Ashton New Road next and the **Strawberry Duck** on Crabtree Lane (buses 216, 231-237), look for Mayne's bus garage. This is a free house set hard by Lock 13 of the Ashton Canal, extended and re-fitted a couple of years back to be, probably, the plushiest and coolest (the trendiest, if you will) pub in all of Clayton, if not all of east Manchester. Once a traditional boozier, now very much a melange of trad at the front of house / bar area, and cool at the much extended rear with its high, exposed roof and leather sofa-ed interior. A very impressive setup indeed and not what you might expect of a pub in the area; perhaps this was the draw, as the pub was the busiest we had experienced so far, and being enjoyed by a good cross-section of the community. Holts Bitter is the lone cask beer and was on truly splendid form, romping away with the Beer of the Stagger title. One of our party almost scored it as a maximum, such was the pleasure it gave.

Walking west for five minutes along the New Road should easily bring one to Holt's **Grove Inn** (buses 216-7, 231-237). This is a two-room standalone house close to the junction of Clayton Lane, very tidily kept. On previous visits we have found the pub to be as warm with eager chatter and much drink being consumed, but tonight there was plenty of room to spread yourself out; why so? As we were offered the choice of lounge, right or vault, left, we chose the latter in which to recline. This is a good sized room with bench seating aplenty, done out in trad style with enough football memorabilia and darting trophies to interest the eyes of any tired toper. Here too is displayed a thing unique to any pub in Clayton, a World War I Roll of Honour citing local men who had given the ultimate for their King and country during the 'Great War' of 1914-18. I only know of one other such pub war memorial in Manchester, and that, too, is within a Holt's house - the Duke of Wellington in Higher Blackley. Any OT readers know of other pub war memorials in the area? The beers, by the way, were a very reasonable Holt Mild and an even tastier Holt Bitter.

Returning to the bus for the last time as we were on our way to Beswick and the **Seven Stars** (Holt) on Ashton Old Road (buses 219-221). Once again the offering was Holt Mild and Bitter; the former went untried as we all plumped for the bitter; and a most agreeable choice it turned out to be. The Seven Stars is a large brick and terracotta street corner house that was extended in the eighties by the addition of a side lounge and car parking. This was to accommodate the then large number of people who made it their local. Sadly, custom has dwindled with the clearance of the surrounding housing - it now stands alone alongside the old Co-op building. It lives on, though, ready to host the new property dwellers that will soon arrive; it should get some business from Manchester City fans too when the new stadium opens later this year. I await its return to those thriving, bustling days.

Six different pubs, all splendid in their own way; and not a bad pint in any of them. Beer choice was somewhat limited, so if you do not like Boddies nor Holts, you're stuffed! For a change, you may wish to pop into the Forrester's Arms in Openshaw as they do Robbies beers.



- Santa's Reinbeer 4.3%
- Wass Ale 4.6% (available January)
- Pacific Bitter 3.8%
- Flatbac 4.2%
- Best Bitter/Flying Zebra 4.5%
- Freshers' Special 5.5%
- Black Pig Mild 3.6%
- Knowles' Porter 5.2%

Permanent outlets include The King's Arms, Bloom St, Salford and The Albert Vaults, Chapel St, Salford

Tel: 0161 743 9121

email: enquiries@bazensbrewery.co.uk
www.bazensbrewery.co.uk



The Knott, Deansgate, Manchester

The Knott ("part of the Marble Beers Group") has had several incarnations since the former railway arch was cleverly built into and out from to form a bar. Most of these were ultimately unsuccessful 'style bars' serving nothing in the way of decent beer. Its takeover, initially by John Henley of Bar Fringe fame, heralded a welcome change of direction as "Knott Fringe Bar" and the subsequent merger between the Bar Fringe and Marble Beers operations has really seen the bar find its feet (and another minor name change) under the expert management of Paul Knox-Roberts and Marble director Jan Whitehead.

Externally the Knott looks to be quite small but the rambling interior is surprisingly spacious with the added attraction of a first floor balcony for al fresco drinking in the summer months. The furnishings and décor are eclectic - chunky wooden tables and chairs alternate with comfy chairs and sofas (and even a chaise long for the really decadent), a wall is decorated with continental beer posters - but all come together to create a welcoming and comfortable refuge from the traffic of Deansgate outside.

The Knott has always been strong on the beer front but late last year a brand new food operation was launched following the introduction of new catering facilities. Indeed the kitchen is essentially an extension of the bar and the food is prepared in full view of the customers - an admirable development.

So, what of the food on offer? When I called, it was 'between menus' - the special Christmas menu had finished and a new full menu was about to be introduced. This meant that the choice available may have been slightly restricted but never the less was more than adequate for any discerning diner. The small but perfectly formed menu included Leek & Potato Soup (£2.50), Halloumi Kebabs (£5.25, and a firm favourite, I'm told), Rib-eye Steak with White & Black Puddings (£6.25), Steak Club Sandwich with horseradish mayo (£5.25) and Roast Red Peppers, Cherry Tomatoes, Spinach and Goats Cheese (£5.25).

Well, it had to be the rib-eye steak and I wasn't disappointed. Stacked up in the modern fashion was a generous slice of steak, medium-rare as requested, two generous rounds of top-quality black pudding, several slices of rich and spicy white pudding and, beneath, wilted spinach and sautéed new potatoes. The garnish was cherry tomatoes and, if I'm not mistaken, a touch of balsamic vinegar. A well-constructed and thought-out dish, superbly presented. There were no puddings in evidence but, to be honest, I'd have struggled to cope with one.

To wash down this excellent food, there is quite a bewildering array of beery delights on offer. There are currently four cask ales available, two from the Marble stable, Manchester Bitter and the wonderful Ginger Marble, and two guests - Pictish Porter and Hop Back Crop Circle. Paul told me he would like to install a fifth pump if possible. Alongside this is an excellent range of German and Belgian beers, both on draught and in bottle. The excellent Antoon from De Koninck of Antwerp was on draught alongside, Hoegaarden, Budvar and Krombacher. On the bottled front, a highlight has to be Saison Dupont in 75cl bottles - but hurry as there were only four left when I called in early January and it's unlikely to be restocked due to unaccountably slow sales. Real cider and perry, supplied by the estimable John Reek of Merrylegs, is now available, too - Broome Farm Perry when I called. Highly recommended. JC.

Food is available at The Knott every day from 12 noon to 8.00pm. Phone 0161 839 9229.



CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 225:
John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levsion, Mark McConachie, Phil Booton, Frank Wood, Pete Soane, Peter Edwardson, Chris Walkden, John Taylor, Jim Flynn, Stewart Revell.



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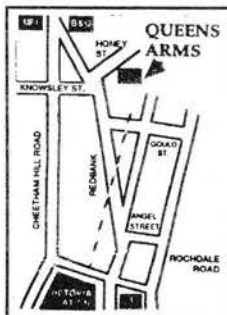
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FIVE GO MAD IN BELGIUM

A return visit by the (in)famous five to the excellent winter beer festival at Essen in Belgium ten days before Christmas provided an opportunity to have a look at a few other places. This is a report on the latest changes we encountered. For details of the Essen festival see my article in Opening Times (February 2002) or What's Brewing (December 2002).

We stayed in Antwerp and noted some worrying developments in the city. The **Stamineeke** (23 Vlasmarkt) is closed and up for sale and faces an uncertain future. This was a small bar with a friendly welcome and a large range of beers. **Aux Armes de Tirlemont** (29 Eiermarkt), the famous leaning cafe next to the Hilton Hotel, was also closed. The ominous notice on the door proclaimed "gesloten van ???". If neither bar reopens it will represent a significant loss to the Antwerp drinking scene. Additionally the **Kleine Kous** (25 Oude Koormarkt) remains closed. The excellent Winter version of De Koninck at 6.5% ABV was widely available (and was noted on sale nearer to home in the Crescent over Xmas!) My particular recommendations for Antwerp bars are **Quinten Matsijs** (17 Moriaanstraat), the **Oud Arsenal** (4 Maria Pijpelinxstraat) and the old faithful **Waagstuk** (20 Stadswaag). A day in Brugge (or Bruges if you prefer) offered the chance of returning to some old favourites and also sampling some of the new entries in the latest edition of Tim Webb's Good Beer Guide to Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. The in-house brewpub, the **Brugse Bierkaai** (9 Nieuwstraat) has beers brewed to new recipes, including a fruit beer, Biagra [sic] and a Kerstbier. To be honest the beers were very ordinary. Camra members receive a free beer if they purchase a sample taster of all the beers. The ever-reliable **Erasmus** (35 Wollestraat) had no fewer than five Christmas beers on draught, including Dupont's Avec les bons voeux de la brasserie. Some of us enjoyed food here also. Highly recommended. Other popular bars in the city are the **Brugs Beertje** (5 Kemelstraat), which tends to get very busy - a lot of beers, including new and rare brews from the local Regenboog brewery; **Zolder**, a cellar bar at 53 Vlamingstraat; and the **Garre** (1 De Garre).

Of the new recommendations we tried **Kuppe** (19 Kuiperstraat), a nice bar with 100 pretty common beers on the (expensive) list and **Bargehuis** (2 Bargeweg), near the station. There was a private party on here and service was slow and inexpert. A reasonable list but I think we caught them at a bad time. Lack of time (and capacity!) didn't allow a visit to the **Ovene** (6 Braambergstraat) but this looked an interesting place from outside.

In Brussels we spent most of the day at the **Bier Circus** (89 Rue de L'Enseignement). This has reduced its list considerably since my last visit in August, but still has the widest range in the city centre. Another bar well worth visiting is **LopLop** (29 Rue d'Ecuyer), which is owned by a former British army officer and featured two Malheur beers on draught. Be warned that these are 10% and 12% ABV (as some of our party found out!!) Very good (albeit expensive) list in an establishment only a few yards off the Grand Place, with a warm welcome for visiting beer tourists. Not far away is **Bier Tempel** (56 Grasmarkt), a shop selling a wide range of bottles and glasses and ideal for those last minute take home presents.

One other place we travelled to was St Niklaas, 25km southwest of Antwerp. This is a relatively undistinguished Belgian city, but it does have one outstanding bar. This is **Tropical** (1 Hospitalstraat). A large open fish tank greets one on entering this clean and smart street corner bar. The beer list comes complete with reproductions of the bottle labels and includes such rarities as Sinpalsken, Achilles and Slaapmutske, plus a good range of traditional gueuzes and krieks. Excellent service and the widest selection of croques I have ever seen complete the picture. Highly recommended. Other recent news is that the Oud Beersel gueuze blender in Beersel, near Brussels, has closed and is for sale. This is a sad loss. Their basic local cafe at 228 Laarheidestraat has to be seen to be believed and their dry, cidery lambic and gueuze are among the most authentic of the style.

Phil Booton - with help from Mark, John, Steve, Adrian.

**JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 19)
 & DRINK REAL ALE**

Stockie on The che

By John Taylor



First and foremost, I hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year, and didn't consume too much real ale. Remember your liver! It tastes great with onions! Anyway, back to the New Year and the Stockport Licensed Houses Super League is set up nicely for an exciting finale, with just four fixtures remaining until the end of the present season. Champions Reddish WMC are still sitting pretty in top spot, but only just, after suffering a recent defeat in the League after 43 consecutive wins - a winning sequence that stretched back to October 2001. What made it worse was that they lost out to their nearest rivals, the Royal Mortar. The victory included master dartsman Darryl Fitton going out in world class legs of 14 and 13 darts. They now find themselves just two points behind the leaders, with the four final matches for Reddish all against teams in the top six.

★ ★ ★ ★

In the week preceding the champion's defeat, the top two played each other in the team knock-out semi-final and on this occasion they came out on top, and this was after they had found themselves 3-1 down. Embassy World finalist Darryl Fitton had started the ball rolling for the Mortar with two legs of 15 darts, and when the Lancashire stars Kevin Weir and John Hollins won games three and four, you would not have bet against the Hillgate side finishing the match off. But it didn't work out like that, and Reddish reached their first ever final thanks to Mick Allen, Vic Clegg, Dave Beckett and young Brad Clegg having the honour of winning the match and extracting revenge for last season's semi-final defeat to the same opposition.

So, the holders went out, but how would last year's runners-up face up? That team was the Union Inn who had played out of the Ash Hotel last term, and they were up against the Magnet. The Union had gone into this fixture on the back of two league defeats against the Printers Arms and great rivals the Mortar. The record of these players over the last 10 years was that they had never lost three on the bounce, so as you can see, the Magnet had no chance of winning!

The Union took first blood through Cheshire player Andy Wright. Martin James then quickly levelled things up. England International and Embassy World finalist Tony O'Shea then put the Reddish side in front again with legs of 19 & 14 and a maximum, but back came the Magnet again with John Beswick winning, including an outshot of 113. Dave Adshead then made it 3-2 to put the Union in front for the third time. Dave Tracey with the aid of a 180 then won his game for the Magnet by two nail biting legs to one over Ray Matthews. It was left to hero of the hour Frank Guest to take out game seven and win a great match for the Magnet, putting them in the final on 11 February at the Royal Mortar. Two semi-finals produced 92 tons or over, and the Union lads were left to re-write the record books after a disastrous December had seen them drop out of both competitions.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Back to the league and bottom placed team The Jack & Jill are just one more defeat away from returning to the Premier Division after two seasons in the top flight. It's still no clearer as to who will be joining them, with only two points separating the next six teams. The highest number of points gained by a team who have been relegated presently stands at 14 and, with four games to go, the Nursery, Printers and Copperfields 'A' have 12, while the Royal Oak, Gregg St and Club Leisure are all on 14 points. Just one win from any of those sides could mean all the difference when the season ends on 28 January. It could even go to a play-off.

Important wins in the last month include Club Leisure beating the Nursery 4-3 and the Printers Arms seeing off the challenge of third placed team the Union Inn. This was a week after the Printers had also beaten the Bobby Peel, so two great wins for the Cheadle side. Club Leisure also won at the Jack & Jill 7-0; Greg Street beat the Nursery 5-2 away; and the Mortar beat the Union 5-2, with Kevin Weir hitting two 180s. The Nursery got back to winning ways when they took out the Copperfields 'A' 4-3, and finally the Royal Oak had an important 4-3 win over North Reddish WMC.

★ ★ ★ ★

So, it's all to play for at both ends of the table, and we also have the World Finals of both competitions in early January. Keep your fingers crossed and, who knows, by the time you read this Stockport may have its own darts World Champion. Well, it's that time again - see you soon.

Steve, Johanne, Molly & sometimes Jess welcome you to

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9





Family Favourites

All four of our local family brewers have new beers out this month. Is this a first?

Robinson's latest seasonal ale is the long-awaited Double Hop, a pale 5% ABV premium bitter. The beer has been available in bottled form for some time and promises to be excellent on draught, with a clean, crisp flavour.



Hydes launch the fist in their 2003 craft ale programme, this year based on a theme of "Fine Beers in the Making", which takes a look at various stages in the brewing process. The first off is Malt & Mash, a 4.8% russet coloured beer brewed with a combination of Pale Ale, Cara and Crystal malts.

J W Lees have also announced their 2003 seasonal ale programme which, as before, combines the return of old favourites with some brand new offerings. For January/February there's a new beer, Two-faced Janus, a 4.2% bitter brewed with modern hop varieties.



This will be followed by Brooklyn Best in March/April, a welcome return for the bitter 5% American-style pale ale using American hops in the brew to give a full-bodied bitterness – when introduced last year this became one of the best-selling of Lees' seasonal beers. May/June has another new beer, 1828 Anniversary Ale, brewed to celebrate Lees' 175th anniversary. This 4.6% beer is described as 'deliciously malty'. The popular 4.2% Scorcher is back for July/August with another new beer for September/October. This is Razzamatazz, a 4.4% beer brewed with a combination of British and American hops. Finally, the year ends with another welcome return of the excellent Plum Pudding for November/December. His rich, dark beer with a hint of fruit is now well-established as Lees winter seasonal.

Holts' latest seasonal beer will be on sale at the end of January. This is Blackwell, a 4.4% beer brewed using Cascade hops and of a colour somewhere between nor-

mal bitter and Thunderholt. In another startling move, Holts now also have a website. This can be found at www.joseph-holt.com.

Micro Magic

As ever, the local micros have a plethora of new beers out this month.

Pictish Brewery is repeating last year's popular January special. Northern Dawn is a 4.3%



deep amber coloured beer with a malty taste and a bitter finish.



Phoenix at Heywood have the popular Jovian out again at the end of the month and Massacre will be back for St Valentines Day. Phoenix's Tony Allen tells us that business is booming and the brewery is brewing flat out. There are also limited stocks of the two winter specials Humbug (7% and Golden Glow (6.5%) still at the brewery. These have been kept back for longer maturation and will be released to the trade in the coming weeks.

Bank Top – has produced a new beer at the request of the Lord Mayor of Bolton. This is the 5% Celebration Ale to mark 750 years of Bolton Charter and was due to go



on sale on 17 January. While it will be darker than is usual for a Bank Top beer, it is brewed with Cascade hops to give a moreish bitterness. Bank Top's John Feeney tells us that the brewery move has gone well and he, too, is brewing flat out at the moment.

Whim Ales – Hartington-based Whim are always popular in the local free trade and have started producing one or two additional beers. Currently available is Stout Jenny, a 4.7% stout brewed with oats to give a silky full finish and using Jenny, a new variety of hedgerow hops. The superb Cascade, using guess which hops, is also to be brewed again in the next few weeks.

Boggart Hole Clough – the Moston micro usually has a couple of new beers out and this month is no exception. Pitch Black is a 4.1% stout (as you may have guessed) and also in the pipeline is Winter Sun a light coloured 4.6% bitter beer.

Bazens Brewery – continues to go great guns. The New Year ale, Wass Ale, a 4.5% medium-brown fruit bitter has sold well and the plan now is to produce a monthly special which may loosely based



on an astrological theme. The Kings Arms (Bloom St, Salford) continues to be a regular outlet for Bazens beers and they also sell well at the Waters Green in Macclesfield and the new Trackside in Bury where a 9-gallon cask of Pacific Bitter sold out in three hours. Indeed, business is such that the brewery has almost outgrown its current premises, so...

New Kids on the Block

Bazens are to move premises to a new site in Knoll Street in Broughton. They are to share premises and plant with a new micro brewery which is to be set up by David Facer who is currently the head brewer at Boddingtons Strangeways Brewery. David is currently sourcing some plant and the plan is that the two brewers will brew and sell their beers on an alternate basis. Each will use their own yeast strain so a degree of care will have to be taken in what is being billed as one of the first co-operative micros in the country. Bazens is hoping to make the move in March or April and in the meantime David Facer will be carrying out some test brews on the existing Bazens plant. More news when we have it.



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Another new entrant is **Leek Brewing Company**, a new microbrewery is now up and running in Leek. Run by Adrian Cork the brewery was installed by David Porter (of Railway, Portwood fame). It is a 4 and a half-barrel plant and is situated at Bridge End on the outskirts of the Staffordshire town. The first brew, Staffordshire Bitter (4.0), a hoppy and fruity beer, is now available. A stronger bitter (St Edward's Ale) is planned. A regular outlet for the beers will be the Bull's Head on St Edward Street, Leek. But the Staffordshire Bitter should be available in the Porters Railway in Stockport in the next few weeks and is also expected to appear at the Smithfield beer festival later this month (starts Thursday 23rd). One interesting fact is that the yeast comes from Joseph Holt! A brewery to look out for, judging by the promise of the first brew.

National Notes

Boddington's is launching a 'quality promise' campaign, that will provide drinkers with their money back if they feel the pint they order was nothing other than 'gorgeous'. The brand has also introduced a new look pump handle, to stand out from rivals.

★ ★ ★ ★

Giant Belgian brewer Interbrew is taking global banking firm HSBC to court regarding use of the slogan "The world's local bank". Interbrew is claiming that such a phrase is too similar to its own tagline "The World's local brewer", unveiled in 1999. The brewer says that it has copyrighted the phrase, and thus will challenge anyone that uses something similar.

★ ★

The Licensing Bill is currently progressing through the House of Lords. Both the Tories and Lib Dems are in general terms supporting the Bill. There are attempts by some Peers to amend the Bill to give local authorities greater powers to refuse licences and to charge unlimited fees. CAMRA is lobbying against both of these proposed amendments as they would open the door to excessive costs for licensees and would lead to some local authorities imposing draconian licensing regimes.

★ ★ ★

The Government has now revoked the Beer Orders, CAMRA believes this was a mistake as while largely no longer relevant, the Beer Orders did provide an important safety net for choice and also acted as a powerful disincentive to any large brewer or pub chain considering vertical integration (ie both brewing beer and owning pubs).

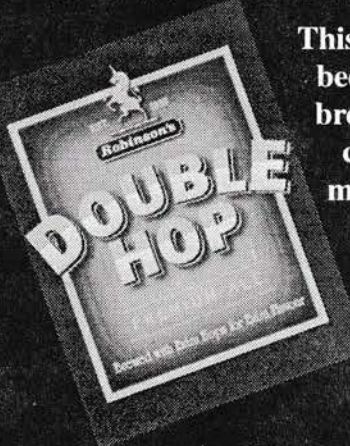
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Government has yet to announce whether it is going to force through its 95% pint proposals. CAMRA had expected them to force through the measure last June and the fact that they have not shows that they have been persuaded to reconsider the proposal.

★ ★

The European Commission is again considering proposing legislation to extend ingredients listing to alcoholic drinks. A draft proposal is expected towards the end of this year. The proposal would then need support from the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. On the last three occasions such legislation has been introduced it has been blocked at the Council by the wine producing nations.

Robinson's COMPETITION



This rich golden bitter beer is traditionally brewed to provide a crisp dry roasted malt finish, while its refreshing palate provides an interesting mixture of hop flavour and hop bitterness.

Get 2003 off to a great start by winning a tray of Double Hop, the seasonal ale for January and February, in our latest competition. Congratulations to Graham Lloyd of Poynton who receives a tray of Old Tom after winning our November competition.



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

1. To what abv is Double Hop brewed?
2. To which country is Double Hop being exported?
3. What will be the seasonal beer for March and April?

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

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!
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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER



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 - Challenge Super (Sweatshirt) for 36 pubs, in 12 areas
 - Challenge Ultra (Pewter Tankard) for all of the pubs
- Contact Mark McConachie
0161 429 9356 for details.

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

JANUARY 2003

Thursday 16th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. NB - Pub of the Year 2002 will be chosen at this meeting.

Monday 20th - Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Working Party meeting: Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm.

Friday 24th - South Manchester Minibus Stagger depart Crown, Heaton Lane 7.00pm; calling at Crown, Northenden 7.30pm; Griffin, Heald Green 9.00. Book with Paul Formby (0161 612 0759 - after 6.0pm) or John Clarke (0161 477 1973)

Saturday 25th - Minibus to National Winter Ales Festival. Departs Crown, Heaton Lane 9.00am. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973

Monday 27th - Social: Bruins, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 30th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Mawson, Kincardine Road (off Brunswick St), Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Saturday 1st February - Birthday celebrations of branch stalwart Robin Wignall : Railway, Portwood, Stockport 3.30-6pm. Food will be available.

Tuesday 4th - Committee Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. NB -

Good Beer Guide 2004 pre-selection will be made at this meeting - all welcome to come along and have an input.

Thursday 13th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

NB - Good Beer Guide 2002 final selections will be made at this meeting. All urged to attend, please.

JANUARY 2003

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 13th - Branch Meeting; Queens, Old Glossop. Starts 8.30pm

Saturday 25th - Rail 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:

Monday 20th - AGM and Campaigning Meeting: Beartown Tap, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm. **Will all members please try and attend this important meeting.**

Tuesday 11th February - Wilmslow Pub Crawl: 7.30 King William; 8.00 Swan; 8.30 Lloyd's No 1; 9.00 Hogshead; 10.00 Coach & Four.

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

Thursday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting: The Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

Wednesday 22nd - Survey/social in Chorlton: Beech 7.30pm, Trevor Arms 8.30pm, The Bar 9.30pm.

Saturday 25th - Minibus to Burton Winter Ales Festival (contact Joan 962 2396 for details)

Thursday 6th February, Monthly Branch Meeting: The Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

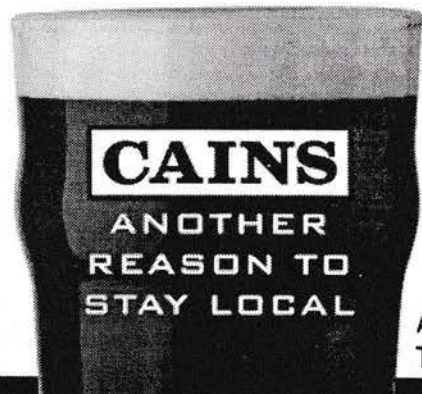


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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JANUARY '98

The Griffin in Heaton Mersey had been announced as CAMRA's Greater Manchester Pub of the Year, having progressed to take this prestigious title after being selected as Stockport & South Manchester branch's Pub of the Year. This was the second year running that the local branch's selection had gone on to win the regional award.

★ ★ ★

There was another subject headlined on the front page - "Full pints on the way!" It had been considered an early Christmas present for drinkers when MP Dennis Turner's private members' bill demanding a full pint successfully passed its second reading in the House of Commons - the next stage would be consideration by a standing committee. Lined "oversize glasses, stamped brim measure glasses, the whole subject is something of a minefield. A reader of CAMRA's paper, *What's Brewing*, recently pointed out that an Act of Parliament in 1700 required all drinking vessels to be marked with their capacity, and innkeepers would be fined if they didn't serve a full measure. Eighteenth century legislation notwithstanding, Dennis Turner's Bill ultimately fell and we are still waiting for the thorny issue of short measure to be sensibly tackled by the Government.

★ ★ ★ ★

An extremely pessimistic headline announced "Bass Chops White Shield" - the final batch of Worthington White Shield, the biggest selling bottle-conditioned beer in the country, had already been brewed. White Shield had never really recovered from a revamp in the early 1990s, when a different yeast strain was used for conditioning in the bottle. Bass claimed that sales of the beer were declining by 40% a year, and an original production of 12,000 barrels a year had dropped to 1,000 barrels. But Bass said they were considering a regional brewer to produce the beer under licence. This regional brewer turned out to be the ultimately ill-fated King & Barnes. Now, in 2003, Worthington White Shield is back at Burton, being produced by the Museum Brewing Company, based at the Bass Museum.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Government was considering resurrecting the issue of whether pubs should be able to open an extra hour on Friday and Saturday evenings. CAMRA believed that they should in fact, and indeed wanted them to be able to open when they pleased, but with some local control over problem pubs. Now, five years later, the Government's Licensing Bill has been published, and its main provision will be the abolition of nationally determined permitted hours, which, it is hoped, will put an end to the closing time scrum in town and city centres.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

To finish, one or two items of local news:

☉ The 1997 Stockport Mild Challenge was one of the most successful to date, with 57 entrants qualifying for a special t-shirt after managing to drink in 12 different districts.

☉ Real cider was still selling well at the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury, but down the road at the Royal Oak, the locals were up in arms following a threat to the flock wallpaper, which was likely to be changed in the next refurbishment.



A Price Worth Paying?

Much of the coverage of the government's proposed licensing reforms has focused on the possibility of greatly extended opening hours for pubs. But when you look into it more deeply there are so many negative aspects that you have to wonder whether, on balance, pubs and drinkers would be better off without it.

☆ control of licensing will be transferred from impartial magistrates to local authorities, opening up the possibility of bureaucratic delay, inconsistent decisions and political interference

☆ the cost of applying for a licence is almost certain to increase substantially

☆ licensees of even the smallest and most basic pubs will need to draw up "operating plans" detailing every aspect of their business which will be scrutinised by licensing authorities

☆ the formal consultation of residents over licensing decisions will lead to the hours of pubs in residential areas becoming a political battleground - and it is usually a minority of joyless Nimbys with too much time on their hands who are most vocal on such matters. There is no guarantee that pubs will even be allowed to keep their current hours. The community local may become an endangered species.

☆ a special licence will be needed for all music performances, even just one bloke with an acoustic guitar, which is likely to greatly reduce the amount of live music in pubs

☆ the concept of drinking-up time will be abolished, meaning that pubs will have to apply for longer hours just to cover their current pattern of trading, and it will not be clear to customers when is the latest time they can expect to be served.

☆ while closing times may well be much later, it is highly likely that pubs will be encouraged to apply policies of no admission after a certain hour, to prevent rowdy pub-crawling gangs roaming the streets in the small hours. The picture of the shiftworker popping in to Wetherspoon's for a couple of pints at half past three in the morning is unlikely to be reflected in reality

☆ the general presumption against admitting children to bars will be removed, so that children can be admitted to all areas of pubs, at all times, unless a licensee risks being labelled as churlish by taking a positive decision to exclude them. In theory it will even be possible for unaccompanied children to be admitted to pubs for food and soft drinks, although it's hard to see licensees being keen on that idea. Of course the possibility of pubs being allowed to stay open after 11pm is a good thing. But when a supposed move of liberalisation comes from a government that, on issues from pistol shooting to trial by jury, has shown that it has hardly a liberal bone in its body, you have to view it with considerable scepticism. In the words of Stuart Neame, of Kent independent family brewers Shepherd Neame, "Talk of longer opening hours is just spin to divert us from the Government's real objective - to subject pubs to tight political control".

Anyone who dismisses these concerns as mere carping should remember the Beer Orders, which many were convinced would open up a new era of freedom and choice, but ultimately proved disastrous for traditional pubs and beer. As these reforms may well turn out to be.

13



Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

r u < 26 ?

CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale)

Under-26 Regional Event

CAMRA U-26 2-Way Social

Friday 7th February

8pm RAIN BAR (Gt. Bridgewater St., Manchester)

11pm til late CAFE BAR CENTRO (Tib St.)

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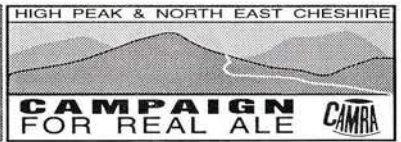
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Both the Peaks Hotel and the Crescent, opposite each other in the centre of New Mills, have been closed in recent weeks after Enterprise hiked up the licensees rent to a level which made them both put in their Notices.

The Devonshire at Ashwood Dale, on the A6 Buxton to Bakewell road has been sold by auction by Robinson's and reached £85,000. It is not known if it is to remain a pub but seems unlikely since it has been shut quite a while and was closed because of lack of trade. Doom and gloom in Haughton Green where the Shakespeare on Mancunian Road, shut for four years, seems to be falling into disrepair and now looks like it is unlikely to open again. Auction signs have been and gone at the former Wilsons pub a few times but all is looking lost. Also in Haughton Green, the Old Dog has metal shutters up and a sign "To let. Enterprise Inns".

Down in Denton at Crown Point crossroads, the Pinnacle also has shut, again Enterprise Inns.

Over in Marple the Jolly Sailor, shut for a few years now, has an active group "Jolly Well save it" campaigning to stop it being pulled down. Our Branch chairman tells us there is a preservation order on the frontal stone mounting steps and the Jolly is reputedly the oldest building in Marple.

When Christine Adames first worked behind the bar of the Crown & Mitre, Chinley, she could not have known that 15 years later she was to take over as licensee of this Robinson's pub.



Christine with Director Dennis Robinson

"It is only in the last few years, since my family have grown up, that I decided to put my experience to good use and take on a pub of my own" says Christine. A new bar has already been installed and Christine reports an increase in business since she took over. "By the summer I want to introduce bed and breakfast and I also plan to extend the menu to include traditional home cooked dishes. Congratulations are due to the Caledonia in Ashton which has now won three consecutive awards for the pub's excellent garden. This comes on top of four consecutive entries in the Good Beer Guide. The Caledonia is an excellent oasis

The Waters Green Tavern



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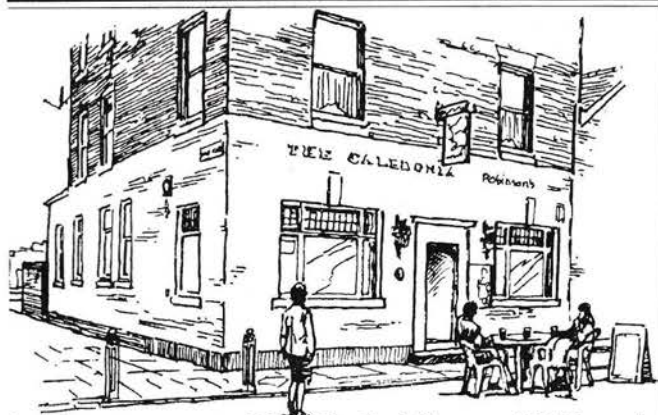
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Happy New Year from Brian and Tracey
 Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch
This is not a free house

14





in Ashton town centre and sells the full range of Robinson's ales – the Snowdon was on particularly fine form when OT called recently.

On another positive note, the Lamp at Bankbottom, Hadfield has reopened (again Enterprise Inns) and has been completely gutted inside and refurbished with a new bar and wooden floor. When I called in on 23 December, two handpumps were in operation, with Tetleys Bitter and Theakstons Bitter on (I was told) but the pumpclips had not yet arrived!. The Tetleys did taste like Tetleys, so maybe things will get sorted out soon. Just up the road from here, a new licensee took over the Spinners a few weeks before Christmas. Alan O'Neill, a local man, but it is not known what beers are on sale.

Finally, just out of the Branch area, in Bradwell down the Hope Valley, the former Valley Lodge, has reopened as the Shoulder of Mutton (its original name). It was the East Midland Pub of the Year some years back when run by an enthusiastic landlord Reg, and with always six beers on in good condition, gained a fair reputation with surrounding branches of CAMRA. Lets hope for its success again this time round.

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15



The Caledonia Hotel

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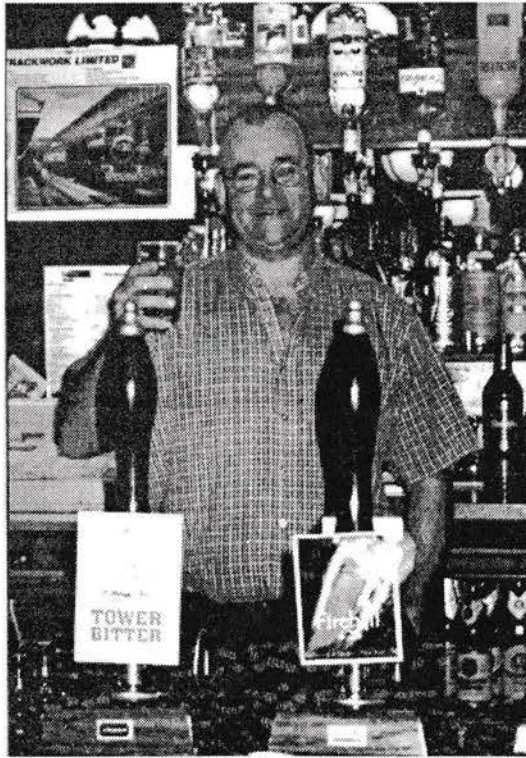
TRACKSIDE STEAMS AHEAD

OK, so it's way out of the Opening Times area and we've nicked the heading for this article from *What's Doing* but no excuses for featuring this excellent new addition to the Greater Manchester real ale scene.

The Trackside continues what has become something of a trend (at least up here in t'North) of excellent real ale outlets on railway stations. Not that this is any ordinary station, though. The Trackside is on the platform of Bury Bolton Street station, the HQ of the East Lancs Railway (ELR), which runs steam trains up the valley to Rawtenstall.

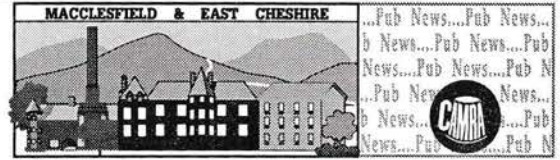
The man behind this is Martin Jones who also (for the time being at least) runs the Rose & Crown freehouse, also in Bury. Pubmaster own the Rose & Crown and are restricting the number of beers Martin can sell there. He has therefore upped sticks and taken a totally free-of-tie tenancy with the ELR (although he still also has the Rose & Crown pending the end of his notice period there).

There are nine handpumps. One of these will sell Websters Bitter (Scottish & Newcastle installed the beer lines) and the rest will sell an ever-changing of micro-brewery cask beers. Between opening on 13 December and OT's visit on 2 January some 49 different beers had already been sold, taken from the north of England. The stocking policy should prove quite interesting in fact. Every quar-



ter a different region of the country will be targeted with the aim of getting 4-6 beers from every micro in that area. Currently it's the North and next up will be Scotland, followed by Wales and the Midlands. A beer festival is also on the cards for later in the year. There's a good range of German bottled beers too. In fact Continental beers could be come something of a feature here - but on handpump! Martin is hoping to have 6-7 Swedish cask ales on sale at the end of this month and is also investigating real ale supplies from Brittany. Real cider should be available later in the year, too. The building started life as a café and there's still a good food operation, ranging from snacks to full meals, available 12-3 Monday-Thursday; 12-5 Friday and 10-5 Saturday and Sunday. The bar itself is open from 12 noon every day.

This combination of steam traction and real ale, coupled with Martin's obvious enthusiasm for quality ales, is likely to prove a runaway success with The Trackside becoming as well known a venue for discerning drinkers at Stalybridge Station Buffet and the West Riding Licensed Refreshment Rooms at Dewsbury. Get up there soon.



Real Ale Gain. Good news from the Throstle's Nest in Buglawton. This former keg-only pub owned by Punch Taverns has taken a turn for the better with the arrival of a new licensee. Russ Smith has added real ales in the form of Draught Bass and a rotating guest beer. Hydes Bitter, Everards Beacon and Old Speckled Hen have all been featured, and have sold well. This is a traditional local, with bar snacks available. Russ, you are doing the right thing: good luck!

The Daily Telegraph recently made an presentation to the best 'country-style' pub in England. The Harrington Arms in Gawsorth fought through to the last six, the actual winner being a pub in Somerset. This honour comes a no surprise to those of us who know and love this beautiful unspoilt inn.

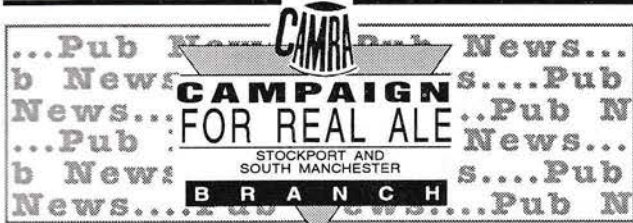
Customers at the Wild Boar in Wincle are set for a culinary treat as local couple Andrew and Carry Brown take over as tenants at this Robinson's pub. Central to their new venture is a first class menu of traditional country fare that includes



wild boar, beef and lamb reared on their own nearby farm/ "We've been farming at Lower Nabs Farm for years, and having run our own farm shop, up until the foot and mouth outbreak, we know that people in the area appreciate fresh local produce. At the Wild Boar we will be providing top class food and drink under one roof," explained Andrew. In addition to developing the menu, the couple have also extended their opening hours to begin at 11.00am each day except Tuesdays. "We want to realise the full potential of the pub so early in the new year we will be extending our bed and breakfast facilities to include five en-suite rooms," said Andrew who will also be using his skills to establish a camping and caravan site ready for the summer.

The Sun Inn in Macclesfield has a new landlord and was most welcoming when the local CAMRA branch visited. The range of beers was good as well, with two from the local Storm Brewery (Bitter Experience and Ale Force) as well as two from Slaters plus Kelham Island Gold and JW Lees. One of the Slaters beers was the excellent Monkey Magic dark mild, a beer style that is rare in Macclesfield these days.

The Henbury and Broken Cross Club on Fallibroome Road, near Macclesfield has made great strides under the stewardship of Kath and Tony Rodgers. The experience of having run a Good Beer Guide listed pub has obviously given them a feeling for traditional beer. They have taken a club that sold draught Bass occasionally, installed three handpumps and now sell a range of up to three cask beers. Storm Brewing beers have appeared, as have Robinson's and Greene King. The prices are low: £1.52 a pint reduced to £1 on Mondays. The club has been refurbished and features alive at most weekends. Tony is talking to the committee about the possibility of a beer festival, too.



OT called at the Ladybrook (Fir Road, Bramhall) expecting to find nothing but Boddies, and so was amazed to find three guest ales - Rosey Nosey, the current "Brakspear's" seasonal and another. The guests are of course from the S&N list that offers a monthly selection of four or five from regionals and larger micros. The licensee reckons they're going pretty well. We thought the place had more of a "pub" feel to it than we remembered from previous brief visits, and seemed to be ticking over nicely for a Monday evening.

Meanwhile the Victoria (Ack Lane, Bramhall) had had a complete makeover and is now the Orange Tree with an exterior now of whitewashed brick bearing the legend "Pub and dining rooms". The inside is light and airy, with pale and minimalist décor. The Orange Tree is clearly aimed at a rather more upmarket crowd than was the Vic. (For instance, a blackboard advertises bread & oils.) Food is a major part of the operation - the tables in one half of the pub are set out for dining - but the licensee (Amanda Dobbs, if memory serves) insists that the boundaries between diners and drinkers are flexible. This was borne out when our reporter visited again with a couple of friends late on Boxing Day. The obvious "pub" area was full, so we boldly sat at a table laid out for dining, whereupon a waitress just confirmed we were only drinking and cleared away the cutlery and wine glasses. Perhaps surprisingly, cask ale features, and to a rather more significant extent than at the Vic. Boddies is still there, but is joined by two guests. It seems Ms. Dobbs has a pretty free hand as to what these are, and she intends

to place some emphasis on local brews. On my first visit, the guests were Weetwood Eastgate Ale and (I think) Ambush Ale. Second time round, the latter had been replaced by Rosey Nosey. All in all, We've come away with a very favourable first impression - pleasant surroundings, friendly and attentive staff, and good beer. We just need to find an excuse to go and try the food...

Robinson's Old Tom has made a welcome return to the Tiviot. The formidable winter brew is, as usual, on sale straight from the cask, which sits proudly on the bar. The Tiviot has recently had a lick of paint and new carpets have been fitted throughout. Well worth a visit.



October's OT reported that the Vine on Cheadle High Street had been bought by Punch Taverns, and also raised the question of whether real ale was likely to appear. A visit just before Christmas revealed that there would definitely be cask ale, probably Tetley's and one or two guests. Also the place is due to close this month for an 8-week "knock through, right to the back".

Those rock and real ale enthusiasts may have been concerned that during early November the Thatched House appeared closed for a while. Now open again under the former licensee of the Bakers Vaults, the pub promises to have live music up to five evenings a week. It is good to see a rock venue selling decent beer.

COPY DATE FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JANUARY 30

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Dave Wragg (via e-mail):

I don't get out much, but whilst in my anorak at home I often retreat into a can of Somerfield Bavarian Wheat Beer. Am I committing a sin for which there is no absolution, or is it a live beer? But seriously, in a moment of extreme loneliness I tried to culture yeast from this beer and apparently succeeded. As a result I now have TWO friends. One a small beaker of growing yeast and the other a kindred anorak who lives round the corner. I contacted Somerfield customer services with this exciting news but failed to elicit confirmation - or denial. Does anybody at Camra care enough to pursue this further? Imagine the 'Real Ale in a Can' shock headlines in next months Opening Times....

I await your reply with the hope and enthusiasm of a small child waiting for Christmas.

(As this is a cloudy German wheat beer, there will be a suspension of yeast, but whether or not this could be described as 'can-conditioned' is a moot point - Ed(1))

From: Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth:

Sometimes what's left out is as significant as what's said, and this may have been the case with Cityman's praise (OT, December) for the refurbished Ducie Arms. The old Ducie was one of the best places in town to hear an informal Irish music session, and if this has been lost, as I fear from Cityman's description it may have been, any amount of lightly scumbled walls will be scant consolation.

Mind you, if the new licensing proposals go through unamended, we may all have to put up with a choice of mass-produced music or none at all, as a little-noticed provision seeks to impose onerous licensing conditions on live music, right down to an impromptu tin-whistle or fiddle player, while allowing thunderous discos or jukeboxes to continue unabated. I trust CAMRA will not be so flushed by its success in securing liberalised hours that it neglects to press for action to safeguard this important aspect of pub life.

From Upright Drinker (name and address supplied):

I thought I'd drop you a line about my experience in the Waterhouse on Christmas Eve.

Basically a work colleague was refused service for food because of my presence. When asked for an explanation I was told it was because I was drunk, I was on my 3rd pint and had not visited the bar since ordering the first round. I left the pub so that my colleague could order his food and returned to the office where none of my colleagues were of the opinion that I was in a drunken state. Being somewhat mystified at this refusal of service I decided to return to the pub on departure from work to get a written statement from the manager. The young blonde bespectacled duty manageress wrote the following:-

"Was refused service because seen to have to much to drink. Because of swaying and general slights of drunken influences" She also went on to say that I had become "Offensive(her spelling) argumentive and rude". All I had done was asked politely for a written explanation as to why service was refused. Obviously what can be gleaned from this is that when visiting this

establishment one should sit down like a sour faced curmudgeon as any sign of movement when standing will be interpreted as "swaying" or "drunken influences" and service refused.

Also I think a valid point would be that Wetherspoons should be employing more mature and experienced management staff, especially in a establishment like this which is populated in the main by more mature drinkers than some of their other establishments.

From Stewart Revell, CAMRA Liaison Officer with Joseph Holt: Regarding the comments by 'Cityman' in December issue of Opening Times.

I must first of all stress that I am NOT a Spokesperson for Joseph Holt Brewery!!! The comments and views given, are from my observations and dealings with Holt's, and so probably represent their views on the 'tricky subject' of handpumped Holt's Blonde Lager.

As far as Holt's are concerned the 'Blonde Lager' IS Cask Conditioned. It is their normal Brew of Keg lager but a few barrels are racked off prior to being filtered and pasteurised in the usual way, the bulk of it I believe, ends up as Keg Crystal Lager. Because it is racked off before being kegged etc, it has a slightly higher ABV. Holt's say that it is probably more than 90% 'Real' in CAMRA terms of definition. They do not claim it to be 'Real Ale' in any of their advertising for the product. Holt's say that it is "closer to being Real Ale than it is Keg".

When asked why they don't dispense it WITHOUT added gas, I am informed that it does not have the required taste or texture, it could be flat and not of the correct palate.

Of course using a Handpump to dispense Blonde lager does infringe on the CAMRA strict definition of what a handpump should be used for.

Holt's would be more than pleased to hear from ANYONE with an alternative method of dispense, (other than a handpump) that is NOT a Keg Font. They have hundreds of Keg Fonts, but say this product is NOT Keg, and therefore is more REAL than not and a Keg Font is inappropriate for Blonde Bier. (Because it is NOT Keg). Putting a Cask Conditioned beer through a Keg Font, although with added gas, is still not ideal, from Holt's point of view. They already have 2 Keg Lagers, Blonde Lager is not one of them.

PLEASE! A genuine request from Holt's....If anyone has any alternative suggestions for a method of dispense, let me know and I will most certainly pass them on to Holt's.

I wonder.....??? I wonder if any trails could be conducted with (say) the 'Railway' pub to establish if there is any difference with and without gas added? It's an interesting thought.....would sales of Blonde bier increase without gas OR would they diminish because it didn't taste right??? (Via the controversial handpump).

The above comments are from my experience with dealing Holt's over many years. I believe they represent their views on the subject. I apologise here and now, if I have interpreted anything to the contrary to that Company's policy. I have tried to express a 'Balanced view' on the subject.

Any answers should be directed to Holt's and not me personally! I will pass on any constructive comments to Joseph Holt Brewery. I do try to be as 'Neutral' as possible in any controversial topics on Blonde bier!

(While I don't wish to reopen old wounds, I must say I think Holt's are being a little disingenuous here. First let's remember no-one is suggesting that Blonde Bier is not cask conditioned. However while it may be cask conditioned it isn't real ale. Nor is it "more than 90% real" - it's not real at all since it falls at one of the most important legs of the definition - it's served with applied gas. It's exactly the same as Robinson's 'Real Smooth' - this is served via a font rather than a handpump because Robinson's are aware that to do otherwise would be misleading. They have been quite clear on this. What a shame that Holt's aren't similarly enlightened! And all this about not wanting to use a keg font since it's a cask beer is just a load of old tosh - they have it seems said they gas it up so it has the correct textures, taste or whatever - ie it has the characteristics of a smooth beer - so, if they want it to have the character of a smooth beer why don't they sell it like one? - Ed(1))



THE RAILWAY VIEW

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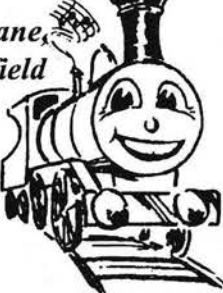
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Letters to Opening Times: The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD or johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com

MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

The big event over the past month has been the opening of *Bruin's* in Fallowfield – one of the most welcome additions to the South Manchester real ale scene for a long time.

I understand that this will be reviewed in more detail elsewhere in this issue, so I'll just content myself with saying that this really is a first class development with excellent cask beers. Together with the Friendship just down the road, this bit of Fallowfield has become something of a mini drinkers' mecca. Don't even think about visiting the neighbouring "It's A Scream" outlets, the former Robinski's Wallet and Queen of Hearts both used to offer some decent cask beer but those days are long gone.

City Centre News

Not there's much of it. The former Rat & Parrot on Old Bank Street has now become "The Colour Bar". After a promising start, with up to four cask beer available, including Old Peculier, the Rat had been keg for some time and its successor is no different. What is bizarre is that this is a joint venture with...Crown Paints. Yes, I know. Apparently it's decorated in a variety of colours from the Crown range and these will change every three months or so. Bonkers or what?

Paddys Goose in the city centre has been sold to Pubmaster; this former Clarinbridge house went together with the Rising Sun on Queen Street. A consequence of this move is that the Lees bitter appears to have disappeared from the bar; the other cask beers seem unaffected

I dropped into **Rain Bar**, after quite an absence, and found a new food counter occupying the space where my favourite seat used to be. At least the Lees Bitter was on it's usual exemplary form. I also paid an all too infrequent visit to the **Temple** (formerly the Temple of Convenience) on Oxford Street. There's no draught ale but the real beer lover will still find plenty to drink. There's a small Belgian selection, including Kwak, all three Chimay beers and both Leifman's Kriek and Frambozen, Erdinger and Shneider Weiss from Germany and, from the UK, bottle conditioned Coniston Bluebird. The bohemian crowd and very small scale of the place really do make for one of the better City Centre haunts. God knows where they put the DJ!

In the Suburbs

Following the excesses of Christmas, I found myself eager to leave the house on Boxing Day and head for Didsbury on one of the few buses to run that day. I was pleasantly surprised to find a new bar had opened on Wilmslow Road, the **Pear Tree** (a Barracuda pub, apparently), sited between the HogsHead and Caffe Uno. Of even greater surprise was the discovery of cask ale in there - two beers were on, Taylor Landlord and Robbies Robin Bitter, both at £2. The Pear Tree is a long, fairly narrow setup with a long bar to the left, stand-up area and raised, side seating with some booth-type areas behind that. Some walls are panelled, but three heavily-framed

mirrors and large-screen TV for sports appear to be the only decor. An evening visit will be called for to see what custom it attracts and whether the ale is faring well.

Also on Didsbury, Paul and Irene Saxton are from the **Rising Sun** in Burnage are to take on the lease of the **Station**. They are managers at the Rising Sun but here they will be their own bosses and be able to have a freer hand in the way the pub is run. Irene and Paul and transformed the fortunes of the Rising Sun and seem just the people the Station needs. No news yet as to their successors in Burnage.

On the Rusholme / Moss Side border I am told the former **Lord Lyon** is now closed and boarded. There's also a new face at the **Albert** on Walmer Street following the retirement last month of long-serving licensee Jim Callaghan. I'll try and pop in for next month's OT.

And so to Openshaw. I don't get out there as often as I should but I did manage a visit to the **Railway** on Manshaw Road last month. There are new faces behind the bar in the shape of Paul and Susan Robson who took over on 19 November. It's their first pub although ex-taxi driver Paul has had some bar experience. No major changes are planned to the pub although there will be a bit more going on – Paul and Susan have already introduced live entertainment on Saturday nights and a quiz on Sundays, and, as Paul explained, the multi-roomed layout of the pub means that those just wanting a drink and a chat can always find a quiet corner. Holt's Mild and Bitter are on handpump and on my visit the Bitter was some of the best I've had for some considerable time.

Further into town, the **Lord Raglan** on Ashton Old Road has reopened but sells no real ale. No such problems in the nearby **Forresters** where I had a decent glass of Robinson's Best Bitter (the only cask ale) in the usual lively atmosphere. Further down, I see that the 'For Sale' signs are now up on the closed and boarded **Pack Horse** (ex-Holt's) but the **Leigh Arms** and the **Queen Anne** are still trading. I've not been in either of these for donkey's year so an early return visit is on the cards.

And finally – following my sojourn in Wythenshawe last month, I learn that Joseph Holt have acquired the **Silver Birch** on Poundswick Lane from S&N Noble House. It has now been operating for several weeks, as a Holt's tied estate outlet, by Joyce & Denis Squires. Another one on the list to visit, I think.



SAD LOSS

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Ken Moon the licensee of the Royal Oak in Strines, Marple. Ken will be well remembered for the many years he spent as licensee at the Sportsman, also in Strines, before moving to the Royal Oak. He was well known in the local licensed trade and was a good friend and supporter of the local CAMRA branch. He will be sadly missed. Both the Sportsman and the Royal Oak featured regularly in CAMRA's National Good Beer Guide, a testament to Ken's skills in keeping beer and running a good pub. Our sympathies go to his wife Grace and son Jamie.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (Opening Times 225)

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

NAME (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

PARTNER (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE SIGNATURE

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO CAMRA

SINGLE £16 JOINT £19 UNDER 26 / OAP: SINGLE £9 JOINT (both must qualify) £12

Send To: Karen & Chris Wainwright, 173 Shearwater Rod, Offerton, Stockport SK2 5XA
(Marple & High Peak Area to: Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple SK6 6JH)



Café Bar Centro

74 Tib Street, Northern Quarter, Manchester Tel 0161 835 2863.

www.centrobar.co.uk.



Now that all of the festive frivolities are finally finished, and we trust everyone had a good time, its back to normal at Centro.

Range of Hand Pulled ales from local and not so local micro breweries. This month we've got Durham, Phoenix, Pictish, Spinning Dog, Bazens, Salamander and other regular contenders.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Happy hours.

Monday all day cask £1.50

Tuesday House wine at £5 a bottle

Wednesday Guinness £1.60 pint

Thursday Budweiser £1.60 pint

Friday- Budvar £1.60 pint

Saturday-Lowenbrau £1.60 pint

Sunday (from 9/2/03) 2 pint Hoegaarden at £4!!

Great selection of bottled beers, wines, spirits and ales from around the globe and just around the corner!

“ Centro stands out as a Café Bar with a difference” – The Good Beer Guide 2003.

Home cooked food (including vegetarian options)
in legendary portions available all day.



CAMRA U-26 2-Way Social - Friday 7th February
8pm RAIN BAR (Gt. Bridgewater St., Manchester) - 11pm til late CAFE BAR CENTRO
MEET BY CAMRA SIGN

