

Opening Times



STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA No. 35 MARCH 1987

IT'S A CON!

By Humphrey Higgins.

More and more instances are coming to light of the disgraceful practice of dispensing keg beer through handpumps - and it's a deliberate attempt by the big brewers to con the consumer.

A new 'handpump' is now on the market and it threatens to undo CAMRA's work in establishing the handpull as the unmistakable sign of real ale.

The Keating universal dispenser looks like a good honest handpump - it isn't

It can dispense lager, cider or keg beer, it is designed to operate with all known forms of supply pressure - say the manufacturers "whilst visibly displaying all the characteristics of the beer engine."



They go on - "The unit uses a standard hydraulic valve to provide the simulated 'pull' action while a pneumatic valve controls the product flow" Encased in a mahogany plinth, complete with handles 'in conventional shapes' it is available in clamp-on or cabinet versions.

A rival manufacturer, concerned that the development will tarnish the handpump's image, commented: "They ought to spell Keating with a Ch...."

Breweries reported to be interested include Whitbread and Wilsons.

Locally Greenall Whitley continue to fake it by serving keg beer through handpumps - a notable example being the Elizabethan in Heaton Moor.

CAMRA will demand that the Advertising Standards Authority be scrapped in favour of a body with some teeth that will take firm action to outlaw this practice - we will not stand by and let the breweries con the consumer with their dirty tricks.

FESTIVAL BULLETIN

As you read this the beer orders should be rolling in and next month we'll be rolling out the barrels for Stockport's First Beer Festival at the College of Technology, Wellington Road South from the 23rd to the 25th of April.

With over 30 different beers from all over the British Isles to choose from - together with a range of Traditional Farmhouse Cider and Perry it's going to be an event to remember (albeit hazily!).

Our thanks go to the Stockport Express/Advertiser for their help in producing the Festival logo which will soon be springing up throughout the town.

Have you considered an outing to the Festival from your pub? Already the Manchester Arms (Alright it's only 250 yards away) are planning a morning drive to the event, stopping for breakfast at the chippy on the way!!!

With a mystery beer competition, Camra stall, tombola, special offers for new members it's an event not to miss.



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CHILDRENS' ROOM.

A HAVEN IN THE SHOPPING PRECINCT!



PUB of the YEAR 1986!
THE CROWN, HEATON LN.

As mentioned briefly last month, the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year award for 1986 has been won by the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport - the first time the award has gone to a Boddingtons House.

A winner of the Pub of the Month award in July, the Crown is a fine old pub retaining a traditional multi-roomed layout which having already had an impressive refurbishment outside is to receive the benefits of a sensitive interior re-vamp in April.

The voting this year was very close but what clinched it for many was the way in which licensees Jim and Alice Knight have, in just two years, rescued the pub from possible closure and turned it into the thriving local that we can all enjoy today. Boddingtons Mild and Bitter are both dispensed from handpumps and are always on fine form, and will doubtless be sampled at length on the presentation night, Tuesday, March 10th., when a good time should be had by all.

WAGGONS ROLL

The Waggon & Horses (Holts), Hyde Road, Gorton, was selected for the 1987 Good Beer Guide for the first time in its life; early in 1987, though, it was briefly closed after the departure of former licensee John Egan. Happily, though, the Waggon was swiftly taken over by Robert Higgins, first as relief but expecting by the time this appears to be permanent manager of this splendid no nonsense pub. The change of Landlord at the Waggon means that it can't be considered for the 1988 Good Beer Guide - we must insist on a good track record, with no exceptions - but early experience suggests that an excellent pint can still be enjoyed at the Waggon.

The Castlewood

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Pub Meals .. Lunch Mon - Sat. 11.30-2pm

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SAMUEL WEBSTER



WILSONS

Jim and Alice welcome you to
The Crown
 HEATON LN., STOCKPORT
PUB of the YEAR 1986

HANDPULLED MILD and BITTER BEERS



Boddingtons'



CAMRA CALLING

Two important events in the local Branch calendar this month; on Tuesday the 10th., we have our Annual Pub of the Year Award at the Crown, Heaton Lane (see opposite) kick-off at about 8 pm. The Branch meeting is well worth attending this time as we pick our entries for the 1988 Good Beer Guide. Date of the meeting is Thursday, 12th., 8pm at the Egerton Arms, St. Petersgate, Stockport, (upstairs room.)

Next event is Monday 16th., when we have a joint social with our neighbours, the Trafford and Hulme Branch, at the Horse and Jockey, Chorlton Green. As usual we start 8-30 - 9pm. On the following Friday (20th.) there's the monthly crawl and this time we take in part of Hyde Road, starting at 7pm in the Star in Ardwick, the 8-30 meeting point being the Travellers Call, almost opposite Belle Vue.

On Monday 23rd the social will be at the Waterloo, Withington, recently refurbished by our old sparring partners, Pennine Hosts and on Thursday, 26th., it's Pub of the Month at the Tatton Arms, Moss Nook. Transport will be laid on for this one, so please get in touch.

Last, but not least, we see March out with a social on the 30th., at the Prince Albert, Castle Street, Edgeley.

As usual if you want more details about any of thre above please 'phone me, John Clarke, on 831 7222 ext. 307 during the day or 477 1973 at night.

PUB OF THE MONTH

Frequently the Pub of the month Award is given to a landlord for improving the standard of the beer or the pub but the March award is different as it is being presented to Alex & Marie Bell of the Tatton Arms, Moss Nook for consistency. They have been at the pub for fifteen years and have been in every Good Beer Guide since 1975 which only emphasises the high quality of the Robinsons Best Bitter and Best Mild and the superb way they have kept their pub over the years.

The Tatton Arms itself is a classic multi-roomed pub, 17th., century in origin with wooden beams and panelling. It also boasts a beautiful carved wooden fireplace in the bar area which in the winter sports a log fire. Very convenient for the Airport (it's on Trenchard Road, off Ringway Road) many of the clientelle are discerning airport workers and flight crews.

So come along on 26th., March, Alex is promising food will be laid on, the beer will be on its usual top form and an excellent time will be had by all.

OLD GARRATT

In January's Edition we gave details of Boddingtons refurbishment of the Old Garrat in Central Manchester and you may recall that we expressed some concern as to whether the full range of beers would survive since Boddingtons Bitter was accounting for about 95% of the sales. We're now pleased to report that all beers are now selling well and the quality of all four (Boddingtons, Higsons and Oldham bitter and Higsons mild) are being maintained at a high level. The Oldham Bitter was particularly good on a recent visit.

OUT OF STEAM?

We understand that in the slack trading period just after Christmas, Greenalls instructed the manager of the keg-only Locomotive, West Gorton, that the pub should shut midweek, opening only Friday-Monday inclusive. No doubt this saved a bit on heating & lighting but it seems an odd way to treat your regulars --perhaps trade would buck up if they put proper beer in?

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PUBS FOR SALE

One or two pubs in our area are up for grabs, so all budding licensees now's the time to invest!

Least promising must be the long closed Dolphin, Clowes St., West Gorton. As a Marstons house the pub actually made it into the Good Beer Guide once but it became very run down and the agents are merely inviting offers - think twice before going above a fiver!

Not too far away the Circus, Stockport Road is available with a £135,000 price tag and at that price is likely to remain so as, we suspect, is the Napoleon Inn, Cornwall Street going for a mere £110,000. Best of the bunch is the Kings Head, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick which is going for £65,000 by Greenalls, who are keeping the pub open until a buyer is found. The pubs prospects will be improved by the 5 landscaped car-parking areas that the Council have planned for nearby land.

STAGGER

TOPPING ROUND TOWN - THE CITY CENTRE CRAWL -
By Stuart Ballantyne.

A large group assembled in the Coach & Horses on London Road for the start of this month's Stagger of Manchester City Centre.

The expression 'basic traditional city centre boozier' sums up the Coach & Horses, as what it may lack in refinement and internal decoration, it more than makes up for in beer quality & hospitality. On sale was Timothy Taylors Landlord, Saxon Cross, Boddingtons & Tetley Bitter. We were not surprised to find that each beer tried was scored consistently 'very good'.

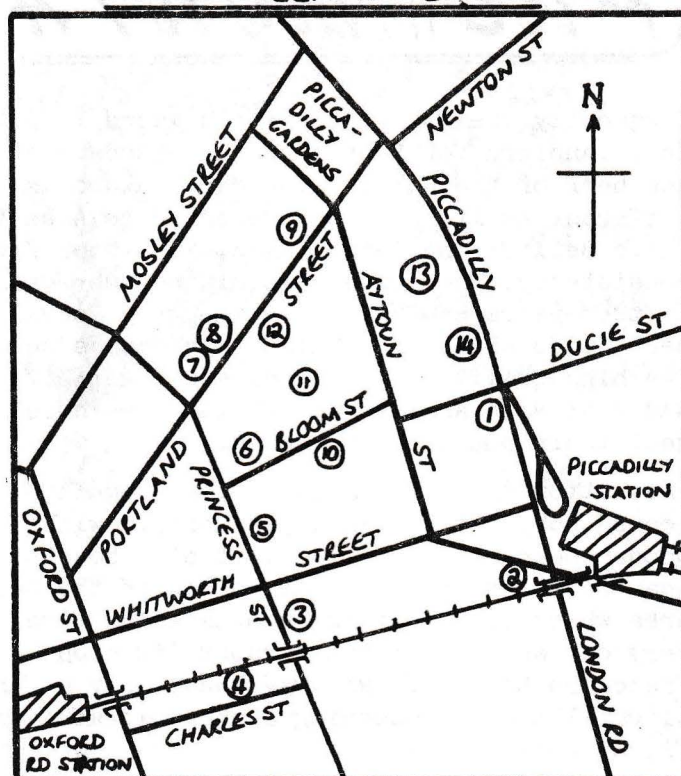
Further down London Road now to the Bulls Head with Burtonwood Bitter, Mild & JBA. Both the Bitter & JBA scored average but unfortunately the same could not be said for the mild which was overconditioned and sour - so much so that it had to be returned to the bar and replaced.

The New Union was next on Princess Street. Formerly one of the more neglected pubs in the City Centre, it was transformed about a year ago into a pleasant modern open plan pub, with raised seating areas. Burtonwood Beers again. the bitter scoring average while the mild was slightly better thought of than in the last pub.

Next a change of brew as we moved onto the Old Garrat, on the corner of Princess St., and Granby Row. The pub has recently been completely revamped by Boddingtons to serve as their City Centre flagship, providing the full range of Boddingtons Group cask beers - Boddingtons, Higsons & Oldham Bitter and Higsons Mild. Each bitter was in very good condition, particularly the Oldham which scored near maximum marks; whilst the mild was also above average. The pub has lost the vault and is now one large room decorated traditionally with wood panelling.

A short walk brought us to the Lass O Gowrie - a Whitbread home-brew house, albeit malt extract. As usual in term time the pub was very busy and we had a struggle to get in and get served. The brewery is visible beneath the pub via a glass case. Both LOG 42 & LOG 35 were on sale, the 42 was considered good but the 35 only average. As I do not like being pinned to the wall drinking we left and went on to the New

THE CITY CENTRE CRAWL



KEY: 1. COACH & HORSES. 2. BULLS HEAD. 3. OLD GARRATT. 4. LASS O'GOWRIE. 5. NEW UNION. 6. NEW YORK. 7. CIRCUS. 8. GREY HORSE. 9. PORTLAND BAR. 10. PADDY'S GOOSE. 11. CHURCHILL. 12. THOMPSONS ARMS. 13. WALDORF. 14. IMPERIAL.

Thank goodness, it's back.

Now you can try a taste of J.B.A. Premium bitter - the beer that became a legend in its own time.

Originally brewed at the Almond family brewery in Wigan, this superb full-bodied beer captures the full flavour of a bygone era.

J.B.A. Premium bitter is now being brewed again in the time-honoured tradition, allowing you to enjoy a taste of the past again.

Welcome home.



Brewed by Burtonwood Brewery

York on Bloom St. It should be pointed out that the pub has a predominately Gay clientele but in the interest of the Campaign for Real Ale we pressed on undeterred. Not too long ago the New York was extended into the adjoining building creating old and new halves of the pub. Avoid the new side of the New York as it serves only keg beer. The old side has pictures of film stars and pop stars adorning the walls, and a very loud juke box. Wilsons & Websters Yorkshire bitter are available and the Wilsons was in good condition.

We now moved on to one of my favourite City Centre pubs, the Circus Tavern on Portland Street. This small two roomed Tetley house is very popular and one of its notable features is its tiny bar, a quadrant of approx. three foot radius. Here there is no room for decorative lager pumps or even a mild pump - it's Bitter only and not surprisingly was very good, and so refuelled, we, literally, moved next door to the Old Grey Horse which offers the potent Hydes Anvil Strong and Hydes Mild and Bitter. A little more spacious than the Circus, this one roomer has lots of character and was crowded when we arrived. Both the mild and the strong were above average with the bitter slightly less well thought of.

Further down Portland Street towards the Bus Station we arrived at the Portland Bars. Of the two bars we chose the ground floor which could best be described as an upmarket trendy bar, with corresponding upmarket prices. At this stage of the evening vaca t seats were welcome while we tried the Ind Coope Burton Ale and Tetley Bitter. The Burton was given a good rating while the Tetley scored only average.

On now to Paddys Goose with Wilsons Bitter & Websters Choice. The Choice was undrinkable and some difficulty was experienced in having it changed, the bitter, however was good. Greenalls cask bitter in the next call, the

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The Tatton Arms

RINGWAY ROAD, MOSS NOOK

ROBINSONS FINE ALES

PUB of the MONTH

MARCH 1987

GOOD BEER GUIDE ENTRY 1975 -87

Churchill, which has recently been completely redecorated. The beer was thought to be average.

Then onto the Waldorf which was revamped last year after an initial attempt to sell it had failed. Chesters Mild, which rated good, and Chesters bitter, average, were available but the Trophy was not on.

Finally into the Imperial, a large comfortable house on London Road for Wilsons Bitter and mild, both of which came in with an average rating.

So we reached the end of a most enjoyable and variable evening. The City Centre is rich in good pubs with a wide range of beers available. Some are well worth searching out but don't be surprised to find changes in the beers or the pub - breweries seem to change their houses particularly quickly in the City.

As always the views on the pubs and the beers expressed in this article are purely those of individual members on one particular night.

LETTER. - From Mr. I.Fryer, Heaton Chapel.

Sir, In the 'Wet Walk' in a recent edition Mr. Coopers' observations contained criticism of the beers and decor in various pubs with one glaring example - the Comfortable Gill. Why was it necessary to single out this popular pub and raise a question as to the capabilities of the customers? In the many times I have visited the pub I have never seen a bus driver who would dream of going to work after drinking. It would seem to me that if Mr. Cooper spent less time looking at bus drivers & more time enjoying his well kept pint & perhaps enjoying a snack or talking to the varied clientele he would find it a little less 'unmemorable'.



By Andy Cooper.

Out of town this Month; in fact to the Southern extremities of Stockport, and the Davenport Arms, Woodford, known locally as the Thief's Neck.

This is an excellent Robbies country pub selling both Best Mild and Best Bitter, with both being usually of a very high quality, with food to match. The pub is located close to Woodford Airport, and the British Aerospace factory, and tends to get filled at lunchtime by, amongst others, executives from that establishment. As a result, it is sometimes easier and quicker to get served with food after 1.30 pm.

The menu consists primarily of the standard pub fayre, with various types of Ploughmans, of which more below, pies, fish etc., and a wide range of sandwiches and salads. A very popular choice are the steak barmcakes made with real steak, which are a very good value for money snack.

Prices tend to be low to middling, with most of the meals being served with the ubiquitous chips and veg. Examples are Meat Pie at £1.50, Meat and Potato Pie at £1.60, liver and onions at £1.50, and fresh fish at £2.45.

My companion plumped for Steak & Kidney, chips and veg at £1.95, which was both very tasty and plentiful. The meats were not accompanied by the usual pie, but were merely served with gravy.

I opted for one of the wide choices of Ploughmans lunch, all of which cost £1.80. There is

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a choice of 10 different cheeses to accompany the bread, salad and pickle, including such delights as Cheddar with Sweet Pickle, Stilton and so on. The quality and quantity again could not be faulted, and indeed on other visits to the pub, the food has always been of a similar standard.

All in all, whilst the Thief's Neck is somewhat away from the centre, the quality of the food and the beer, and indeed the pub itself, make it well worth seeking out. All these factors tend to mean that the pub gets crowded, particularly at weekend, when incidentally, food is still served, and in the summer. The pub also has a beer garden, which means it's well equipped for dealing with those with young families. Avoid at your peril!!

A MILD REVIVAL

For most of last year, the Gransmoor (Banks's) in Openshaw sold keg rather than traditional mil We didn't list it in our 'Update' feature as we hoped it was a temporary aberration, and so it has proved. As these words are being written the last of the keg is being cleared and trad. mild will be installed.

This boost to Britain's best kept beer secret - traditional mild - comes hot on the heels of the return of the real thing to Burtonwoods Golden Lion on Stockports' Hillgate. In each case the gain is doubly welcome because the pubs had been selling keg mild in a misleading fashion - in the Gransmoor through the standard counter mounting which carries the words 'cask-conditioned' while in the Golden Lion there was a handpump complete with pump clip advertising mild, but the cask beer was consistently unavailable.

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£2M PUBS PLAN

Whitbread Delamere Inns which is based in Salford and has about 170 houses in the Greater Manchester area have announced a plan to spend £2 Million on pub refurbishment.

This will, in all likelihood, involve ripping pubs apart and installing the latest 'theme', currently best described as instant Victorian with 1980s trimmings.

Now, there's nothing wrong with refurbishing pubs but surely it's best to spend with a view to the 'new' pub lasting say 10 to 20 years, that way money spent is a true investment and gives a pub a chance to acquire its own character. Whitbread don't appear to see it like this, preferring a programme of continually ripping apart the same pubs. Delamere General Manager, David Livingstone, summed up the policy: "By 1988 the whole of our estate will have been totally refurbished - and then the cycle will start again. Some of them may even be refurbished twice in that time span...."

When they throw money around like that, it's hardly surprising that Whitbread products are amongst the most expensive in the area, they've got to get the money back somehow!

NEW CROSS

The Cross Keys at Adswold is fully operative again after one of Hydes protracted refurbishments - quite major alterations go on behind screens while the pub stays open.

The pub is much larger now as they've knocked through into the off-licence next door. There's a central bar, but there are several well defined separate drinking areas, including a darts & television room, and there's even a 'library' with the usual 'real' fire. Good use has been made of wood panelling and coloured glass, and there are bay windows overlooking the bowling green at the back. A very pleasant refurbishment - and there's no juke-box.

HEARD AT THE BAR.

1) At a pub which had better remain anonymous: CAMRA member to licensee: "I've brought your 'Opening Times'"

Customer: "Give me one of them, I'd like to know what time this place is supposed to close."

2) In a pub on Portwood:

"I don't really drink a lot, I get pi**ed, but I don't really drink a lot."

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PUB NEWS!

Landlady Kay Ord, at the Olde Vic, Shaw Heath, Stockport, is promising the arrival of guest beers which should be on sale by the time you read this. Kay was keeping tight-lipped about what the beers were to be - a full report next month.

Wilsons are planning alterations at the Hamlet on Abbey Hey Lane involving the installation of a catering kitchen and some further opening up of the interior.

Following our earlier report on Bass conversions to cask beer, we are told that the Hope in Heaton Norris is NOT going 'real' - that brings the number of conversions to cask in the Stockport & South Manchester area down to one. Nice going Bass!!

In Manchester City Centre the New York has dropped cask mild and gained Websters Bitter, Paddy's Goose has gained handpumped Websters Choice, not always it seems at the peak of condition; and the White House has replaced Boddingtons by handpumped Hydes Bitter.

The Royal Oak, High Street, Stockport has added Old Tom to its range, on gravity and for the musically minded a piano has been spotted in the labyrinthine gents!

The George, Mersey Square has now closed for a period of some 12 weeks for refurbishment by Boddingtons - will Higsons still be available when it reopens?

Banks's Black Country Bitter in the Gransmoor, in Openshaw is keg - no surprise this - one Banks's manager was recently heard to estimate his sales of the beer as 'two or three pints a week'.

Hanky's out - the famed Buck & Dog, Stockport has now been razed to the ground and the same fate is taking place at the Three Tunnes on Hatton Street.

OWING TO PRESSURE OF SPACE IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION THE SECOND OF OUR NEW 'OUT OF TOWN' SERIES, FEATURING ECCLES, HAS HAD TO BE HELD OVER UNTIL NEXT MONTH.

Egerton Arms

ST. PETERSGATE

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SUNDAYS - Return of the

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with John Brett &

Norman Beaker



Contributors this Month: Andy Cooper, John Clarke, Humphrey Higgins, Rhys Jones, Stuart Ballantyne, Jim Flynn. Contact the Editor for details of Advertising.

OPENING TIMES

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