

Opening Times



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

JANUARY '88

No. 45

BUY IT - SHUT IT!

By Humphrey Higgins.

1987 has been a disastrous year for the real ale drinker as both Big 7 & Independents alike have subjected us to a further rash of take-overs and brewery closures. Greenall Whitley are to shut the Wem Brewery, Whitbread are to shut Wethereds in Marlow and Chesters in Salford, Greene King have shut Rayments in Essex, Buckleys in Wales have gone under, Ma Pardoes Home Brew Pub has gone to Hoskins and the year ended with the fall of Matthew Brown - taken over by Scottish & Newcastle after a fierce battle to remain independent.

1988 promises no respite - Elders have a stake of at least 5% in Greene King, New Zealander Ron Brierley has built up a holding of 6% in Scottish & Newcastle and it is well known in the City that Grand Met. (owners of Wbster/Wilsons) could be under threat from the USA. How much time is left for Oldham Brewery now that the five year guarantee given by Boddingtons, themselves a recent recipient of a bid, is coming to a close? The home-brew pubs and micro-breweries, whose emergence over the past few years has been like a breath of fresh air in the Brewing Industry, are going down like nine-pins.

No Company, large or small, are safe from the predators that stalk the trade.

In many ways we are back where we started when the take-over trails of the '60s & early '70s brought CAMRA into being and it is to the present takeover trail that CAMRA will focus on during the coming year.

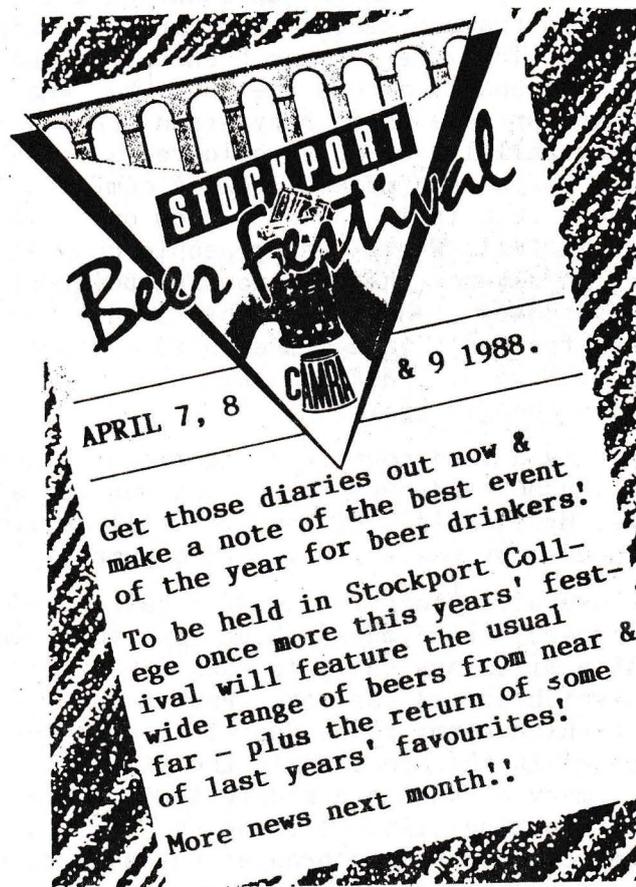
More than ever CAMRA needs the support of real ale drinkers everywhere before we are all left to sink in a giant sea of fizz and lager.

WELCOME

This month we welcome many new readers to 'Opening Times' as, thanks to our advertisers, we are able to increase our print run and increase the number of outlets that take the paper.

We hope that our new readers will enjoy the paper and we welcome letter, articles, or any comments of interest or criticism. You'll find the editorial address on the back page but meanwhile welcome once more and have a very happy and prosperous New Year!

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OPEN THE GATE

After renovations which seemed to go on for most of '87, Hydes Gateway, Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury can now be appreciated in its new form. This impressive inter-war pub, formerly untouched & a little shabby, has been transformed, as the pink neon sign outside suggests. The interior has been gutted and a new bar runs diagonally across the pub. What was once the lounge sports a white baby grand piano & a revolving mirror ball lit by multi-coloured spotlights. Everywhere there is a marked lack of comfortable seating, meaning that it is standing room only before the pub is half full. Where twenty people could sit in comfort on a bench there is now an apologetic table with half a dozen high stools. This is not due to lack of money for the fittings are solid & expensive, meaning that we will have to wait many years before the pub is changed again.

There is a food counter but certainly the place is not the out-and-out catery that was feared at one time. Hydes Mild & Bitter are still available, now dispensed by new style electric pumps.

The overall effect is one of a half-baked and unsuccessful trendiness, about five years out of date. Half a mile down the road Banks's Station is a new pub which offers far more genuine pub atmosphere, a fact which seems to be appreciated by most of the yuppies in the area, while the clientele of the Gateway, many of whom are middle-aged or elderly, stand about looking distinctly uneasy. It is a pity that Hydes could not have brought the same regard for tradition that they show in brewing their excellent beer to renovating the Gateway. REal beer is best sold in real pubs.

Hydes can renovate pubs thoughtfully if they try. The Wheatsheaf at Agden on the A56 between Altrincham and Lymm is an excellent job with a very congenial, pubby atmosphere - well worth a visit if you are in that area.



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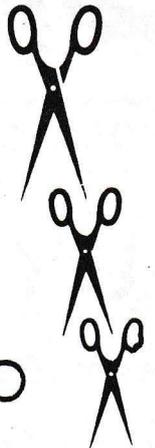


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REAL ALE IN CENTRAL & SOUTH MANCHESTER.

Update No. 4.

In Levenshulme Holts' Sidings on Broom Lane has opened selling handpumped mild & bitter Run by licensees Graham & Joan Smithers, it a two-bar pub with an extra arched 'snug' extension off the lounge & boasts a hanging sign which owes less to the erstwhile Great Central Railway than to the works of the Revd. William Audrey! (Joseph the Drunken Engine, perhaps?) Sadly though, this real ale gain is balanced by the removal of the handpump in the **Park Inn**, Bradford & the closure of the **Smithfield Vaults** in the City Centre.

In Ardwick the **Cleveland** has dropped Websters Bitter & put Wilsons mild back on hand pump, while the **Napoleon** in Openshaw has also dropped Websters Bitter. The **Why Not?** in Bradford has re-introduced handpumped Boddingtons Bitter while 2 Greenalls pubs provide a contrasting picture of mild - the **Crown**, Didsbury has dropped it & the **Angel**, Gorton has re-introduced it on handpump. Readers are recommended to try the Angels' Mild - it needs more than just the landlord & your correspondent to drink it to maintain top quality!

3 pubs have changed their method of dispense from electric to hand - Boddies **Victoria**, Burnage, Wilsons **Lord Nelson**, Gorton & Greenalls **Welcome**, Rusholme (bitter & Original - mild is keg). Finally in the City Centre Holts Bitter is no longer sold at the **Ancoats** where the beers listed under Chesters should read Tetley; **Gullivers** has dropped Moonraker & the Banks's at the **White House** is Black Country Bitter, not Banks's.

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CAMRA CALLING!

We start the New Year with a social at the **Gorton Arms**, Gorton Lane, West Gorton on the **11th.**, kick-off 9pm. This is followed on the **13th.**, by an evening trip to **Moorhouses Brewery** in Burnley. The trip was fully booked at the time of writing but feel free to get in touch to see if a vacancy has arisen.

Next day, **Thursday 14th.**, see our monthly Branch Meeting, this time in Stockport at the **Pack Horse**, Market Place. We have a guest speaker - Jonathan Cope, Brands Manager of Tetley-Walker, rearranged from last November. He is still promising us 'exciting news' so it should be an interesting night. Kick-off 8pm.

Monday 18th., sees a social at the **Red Lion**, Stockport Road, Cheadle, again from 9pm & this is followed on **Friday 22nd.** by our monthly **Stagger**, this time West Didsbury & Withington. We start at the **Midland**, Lapwing Lane at 7-30 and meet at the **Victoria**, Wilmslow Road at 8-30, then back-track through Withington Village.

The following **Monday 28th.**, we have a social at the **Romper**, Pinfold Lane, Ringway, and

on **Thursday, 28th.**, it's Pub of the Month at the **EGerton ARms**, St. Petersgate, Stockport.

Into February now - on **Monday 1st.**, there's a social at the **Armoury**, Shaw Heath, Stockport. On **Wednesday 4th.**, we have a trip to **Mansfield Brewery** - coach departs Mauldeth Kingsway at 4-45; Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport 5pm and the Bulls Head, Hazel Grove at 5-20. We leave Mansfield at 10-30. Cost is £5.00 per head and there was plenty of room left at the time of writing.

If you want any more information please 'phone me, John Clarke, on 831 7222 ext. 3411 (day) or 477 1973 (Night).

REAL THATCH?

Soon it will not only be the name which is traditional at the Thatched Tavern in Reddish, as Tetleys cask Bitter on handpump is to be installed in this previously keg-only pub.

It is the second of Tetleys' two pubs in Reddish to go real - the Fir Tree having been converted in 1986 at the same time as being extensively altered.

The Thatched Tavern is a very pleasant small two-roomed corner local, and once real ale has returned will be well worth a visit. It is on Stanhope St., tucked away behind the Houldsworth Arms, just off Reddish Road.

HAGGIS AND ALE?

The Swinging Sporan, Sackville St., Manchester reopened last month now boasting Youngers Scotch Bitter on handpumps. The one main bar area is decorated in dark wood with various animal heads on the wall and it still retains the night club side which also has real ale. Beer, in the main bar, was 80p a pint and food is also available. Refrigeration problems meant that the beer was too cold but once the teething problems are overcome the pub/club should be a great success. Well worth a visit.

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PIGS EAR NO. 2

The Pig & Ballbearing on Hyde Road has opened - but not as planned. As reported last month the licence which Boddingtons' applied for was beer-only so they trotted back to the Licensing Magistrates to apply for an extension. Contrary to their expectations this was refused! They are to try again! The bar is fitted out with a forest of pseudo-continental metal fonts most of which serve lager although the odd one is labelled "Higsons Mild" or "Boddingtons Bitter". Whatever the label, all the beer's keg, though to their credit they don't deceive by using fake handpumps or advertising "traditional beer" (although, regrettably, their opening night poster did sport a handpump). 'Opening Times' advises all Gorton drinkers to wear either jeans or trainers (or both) if they are real ale drinkers - these items of clothing are not allowed in the Pig & Ball-Bearing!!

WAGGONS ROLL!

As promised, the alterations at Holts Waggon & Horses on Hyde Road, Gorton, were finished (apart from the odd detail) in time for Christmas. In the new-look Waggon, a central bar serves both lounge and vault areas, both of which are carpeted throughout; opening off the lounge is a capacious and comfortable 'snug', while the pub is rounded off by a pool room at the rear (still being fitted out as we went to press). To complement the improvements inside, the pub's acquired an exterior hanging sign - a piece of pub tradition that's generally sadly neglected in this area. The only loss are the photographs of the Pope and the Royal Family, both of which have apparently been 'claimed' by people connected with the pub.

HEARD IN THE MOTEL: English tourists in America returning to their rooms with six packs of mediocre U.S. 'Beer'. American gentleman: "I suppose if this was England those cans would be warm."
English Tourist: "If this was England they would have beer in them".



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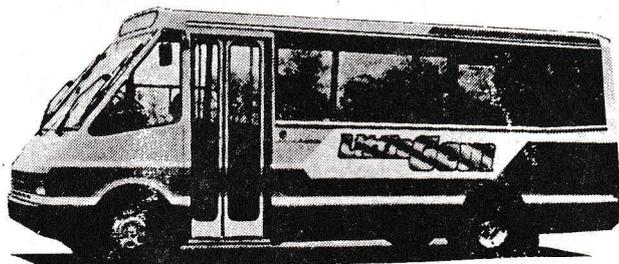
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THE PHANTOM BOUNCER

Regulars turning up at the Bakers Vaults, Market Place, Stockport on the night of December 11th., were surprised to find an, albeit scruffy, 'bouncer' on the door. Surprise turned to dismay when it was discovered that anyone in denim couldn't get in - that would take care of about 75% of the pubs custom!

None were more surprised, in fact, than licensees Ian & Dot Brookes who knew nothing about it and were aghast when one of their regulars complained about the difficulty in getting in. By then the mystery figure had disappeared without a trace - who he was no-one knows. Rumours suggest mischievously that he might have been employed by a rival licensee!

Seriously, Ian & Dot wish to make it known that they knew nothing about this & hope no-one was disappointed and turned away.

Copies of the 1988 Good Beer Guide are still available for £5.95 (inc. P&P). Send your cheque/PO, payable to Camra, Stockport & South Manchester, to Jim Flynn, 66, Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

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WE'VE NOT ONLY GOT THE ANSWERS

WE'VE GOT THE QUESTIONS TOO

??
 ???

PROSPECTS FOR '88?

1987 has seen Holts opening a new pub in South Manchester, Yates much heralded arrival in Stockport, albeit selling no real beer, (and another outlet in South Manchester promised), Hydes spending vast sums of money on their tied estate, Banks's looking for further outlets, Tetleys opening a new pub - the list is seemingly endless.

So it seems that everything in the garden in Stockport and South Manchester is comparatively rosy - but is it?

Breweries spending huge sums of money usually means that they need to recoup this. CAMRA has seen recently that prices in Manchester City Centre have increased markedly over the last three years.

Stockport in particular is increasingly affluent. and breweries are not averse to taking advantage of wealth.

Could 1988 be the year of large price increases? WE must fight this possibility at all costs!!

LATE PUB NEWS:

Banks's Longsight at Belle Vue is due for a complete redecoration early this year. The interior layout has worn well & will not alter but we understand lamps will replace the present plants in the lounge window area!

JANUARY		PUB OF The MONTH
.	3 10 17 24 31	
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.	5 12 19 26 ...	
.	6 13 20 27 ...	
.	7 14 21 28 ...	
1	8 15 22 29 ...	
2	9 16 23 30 ...	

The Pub of the Month Award for January has been won by the **Egerton Arms**, St. Petersgate, Stockport. Under the energetic tenancy of John & Joan Newport, who formerly spent 7½ years at the Old Shambles in Manchester, the pub has gone from strength to strength since it re-opened just over two years ago.

Pleasantly and comfortably refurbished the Egerton boasts almost the full range of Webster/Wilsons beers- Wilsons Mild & Bitter & Websters Green Label and the high-gravity Choice - all on handpump. Only the ubiquitous Yorkshire Bitter is missing - and who's going to complain about that?!

There is an excellent food service both at lunchtime and early evenings and a wide range of live music is provided several night each week in the concert room. Together with pop quizzes, happy hours (including Sundays) and free draws there is always something going on at the Egerton to complement the excellence of the beers. The presentation night on January 28th., promises to be a good do, be there

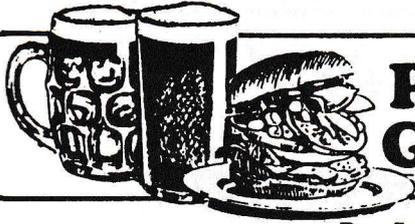
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PUB GRUB

By John Clarke.

No actual review this month, more a look at the past couple of years & how things seem to be moving in the future.

The first thing that needs to be said is that Pub Grub is here to stay, more & more public houses are catching on to this both as a means of boosting revenues in times of falling beer consumption and also satisfying a genuine public demand. Standard hours for pub food are usually 12 - 2-00 although this is likely to change following licencing reform - although to what extent it succeeds remains to be seen. Experiments with all day food particularly in the afternoon have not been a conspicuous success - Tetleys' 'Bank' in Central Manchester is often reported as losing money hand over fist - perhaps the absence of alcohol has something to do with it.

Few pubs serve food in the evenings or on Sundays although the excellent Bakers Vaults in Stockport

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MARTIN & SANDY

scores on both counts and the Royal Oak on High Street also serves Sunday Lunch (apologies to others not mentioned). There is also a discernible trend to higher quality, more fresh home-cooked and less reheated in the microwave - again the Bakers scores here along with the likes of the Egerton Arms (Stockport) and in Central Manchester the Marble Arch, Rochdale Road and the Queens Arms, Honey Street are both noteworthy. This is certainly welcome and I'll be looking out for more examples in 1988 - if you know a pub serving good food, don't keep it to yourself - please let 'Opening Times' in on the secret as well!

Apart from enterprising licensees, breweries have long recognised the money-spinning virtues of good food - most new pubs have a facility for food although it is disturbing when the pursuit of this sort of profit is at the expense of a pubs' character, witness the uproar over Boddies plans for the Cock in Worsley. Let's hope the happy balance that the likes of Banks's achieve become the norm other than the exception

Prices continue to rise and most pub grub is now in the £2 + region although there are many honourable exceptions to this - as a general rule though value for money is usually the rule rather than the exception although I've not yet come across any local house matching the Churchfield Tavern in West Bromwich - home-made shepherds pie, proper chips, two veg. & gravy all for £1.00!! I will personally buy a bottle of champagne to the first licensee in the 'O.T.' circulation area to match that on a regular basis!

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WINTER ALES



Whilst many people curse Winter as the season of short days, cold weather & high fuel bills the enlightened real ale drinker does not dread it to the same extent because with the freezing weather comes the availability

of Winter Ales - the warming strong drink that is guaranteed to keep out the cold.

What exactly is Winter Ale, or Old Ale? Beers vary in strength depending on many things, such as the recipe, method of brewing, length of fermentation etc. etc. and the beers strength is measured in Original Gravity (O.G.) The higher the O.G. the stronger it is. Non alcoholic drinks have an O.G. of 1000, the same as water. If we progress up the scale, typically mild will have an O.G. of 1030-1035 (about the same as many of the lagers you see advertised on T.V.), ordinary bitters

1035-1040, strong bitters 1040-1070 & winter ales 1060-1100. Barley wines tend to overlap the gravity range of winter ales but most are Brewery conditioned. Treat the figures as a guide only - it is easy to find exceptions to the rule.

Due to the higher O.G. more duty is payable them than ordinary beers, and this is passed on to the customer reflecting the high price. Note the contrast here with lagers, where the high price charged & relatively low gravity mean big profits for the brewers which generates more advertising & higher sales.

An unfortunate consequence of the beers strength is the devastating effect it can sometimes have on the drinker! For this reason not all pubs are prepared to sell it, so you may have to go some way in search of that special brew.

Winter ales are available both in cask & bottle & whilst I prefer the cask version it is true that in some cases, where the cask is positioned on the bar, the constantly varying temperature has a less than beneficial effect. A word of warning - when trying winter ales - **DON'T DRIVE!!**

Below is a brief survey of winter ales available locally:

- Robinsons Old Tom** (Cask & Bottle O.G. 1074-1082) A rich, strong full-bodied beer.
- Lees Moonraker** (Cask & Bottle O.G. 1073) A smooth mellow bitter.
- Marstons Owd Rodger** (Bottle O.G. 1077-1082) Full-bodied sharp bitter.
- Hydes Anvil Strong** (Cask O.G. ?) Deceptively strong mellow bitter.
- Banks's Old Ale** (Bottle O.G. 1094-1102) Very sweet, fizzy, unmistakably strong.
- Whitbread Gold Label** (Bottle O.G. 1094-1102) Rich medium sweet, but fizzy.

Richard and Sue Genders

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PUB NEWS



Dacey Reillys in Levenshulme was due to open on the 16th., December. A look through the doors prior to opening revealed a tasteful conversion of the old bank & an array of handpumps sporting clips for Draught Bass, Stones Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter & Robinsons Best Bitter. More news next month.

 Planning permission has been requested to turn the Grove Snooker Club, Plymouth Grove/Richmond Grove, Longsight into a pub & convert the attached garage into a new snooker hall.

 Tetley-Walker have applied for permission to convert the property at 8-10 Palatine Road, Withington into a pub with extensive landscaped grounds. The plans reveal what will evidently be a country house theme with rooms designated 'The Study', The Lib-

rary' and the 'Garden' Room'.

 Whitbreads' Hinds Head in Heaton Chapel on the site of the old Poco-a-Poco club, opened on December 17th. The tenants are Margaret & Tony Nelson who won a Camra award during their tenancy of the Dunham Arms in Cheshire. With Chesters Mild & Bitter and Castle Eden the pub is very much a Cheshire Country Pub look-a-like and food is available both at lunchtime and evenings.

 To allay confusion: Greenall's Bitter at the Stockport Arms, St. Petersgate, Stockport, is real ale; but the mild, though served through a handpump, was still keg at years' end. It is possible this may change - watch this space.

 The Wheatsheaf on Stockports' Hillgate now has Websters Bitter plus the two Wilsons beers, all on handpump.

 Still in Stockport the mild at Wilsons Rifle Volunteer, Carrington Road, is now keg.

 Cheadle now boasts a new pub - the Old Mill, situated off Ladybridge Road behind the garden centre. The pub, so named because it's by a stream, is Tetleys' with handpumped bitter but keg mild. More next time.

 Holts Garratt on Pink Bank Lane, Longsight is set to be refurbished during the year - not before time!!

The Midway Hotel

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Plenty of news in Central Stockport where the still keg only Ups & Downs (Burtonwood) has re-opened. Also due to open just in time for the Christmas rush were the Stanley, NewBridge Lane - this Wilsons house has had the full treatment & we understand it is due to be signed up as a Websters House. Robinsons Flying Dutchman has had the full works - full report next month. Lastly a warm welcome to Mabel Reidy - of Rock House fame - who is now Manager at the Pack Horse, Market Place - venue for the January CAMRA meeting.

Contributors to this edition:
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OPENING TIMES
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