

Opening Times



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

No. 58 FEBRUARY 1989

PRIDE IN THEIR PUB

The committee of the Social Club at the Red Lion, Cheadle, recently convened possibly their most important meeting ever - for they started what could be a fight, not perhaps for the pub's very existence, but certainly for its heart and soul.

The Red Lion's licensee retires in April, and naturally there's been concern over the future. Recently, rumours have begun to circulate that the pub will be leased by Playmaster Leisure, a division of Hazel Grove Music, based opposite the pub; Hazel Grove already do considerable business with Robinsons as Playmaster lease four of their pubs.

The Red Lion is a superb example of a community pub, with active darts, football and rugby teams, a good cross-section of ages including many families, and last but not least the elusive Robinsons 'ordinary' Bitter. The regulars want to keep it that way - and they've already collected 329 signatures to oppose any harmful alterations. While they don't oppose sensible upgrading, such as perhaps an inside toilet block, they're adamant they won't stand for anything other than a traditional games-playing local of the sort they've got now.

So, what would Playmaster do with it? Well, they are not saying (indeed there has so far been no confirmation that they are to lease it although correspondence from the brewery does indicate they are considering this). Hazel Grove Music directors were invited to the Social Club's

meeting but declined to attend. However, with the company HQ just across the road, people do talk, and it seems the talk's been of book-cases, carpets ("no rugs"), catering and an upmarket "ambience" - copies of Country Life on the tables have even been mentioned.

Not only are the regulars objecting to the loss of the pub they know in favour of a place where you'd feel uncomfortable dropping in in overalls after work - local residents unconnected with the pub are also unhappy. Most of Stockport Rd in Cheadle has parking problems, and the Red Lion's stretch is as bad as anywhere; if the pub was to start attracting car-borne customers from far afield there'd be serious access problems for the adjacent church and Bullock's Coach Depot.

Cheadle Civic Society are also firmly on the side of the locals - they see the feared development as diluting the character of the village community and attracting undesirables. Of course, Playmaster will say that a plush upmarket establishment will be calm and untroubled, evoking the timeless serenity of the classic inn; but surely we all know by now that the lager lout springs not from the old-style local but from the pre-packed, superficially smart "venue" - and will not be put off by a few square yards of Laura Ashley wallpaper! At least one Playmaster Leisure-run pub, the Puss in Boots in Offerton, has long endured a depressing reputation for violence.

You'll be hearing a lot about the Red Lion campaign in the coming months. They have CAMRA's full support and we'll give them all the help we can.

Finally, a story. It was suggested at the meeting that Playmaster (or indeed Robinsons) might be forced by the magistrates to build inside toilets and then take the opportunity less welcome alterations. "OK", went up the cry, "we've plenty of builders here - we'll collect the money and build the toilets for them." If I was planning to knock the Red Lion about, that sort of determination would make me think again.

- Rhys Jones



ROBIN HOOD

Buxton Rd., High Lane

NOW OPEN FOR:

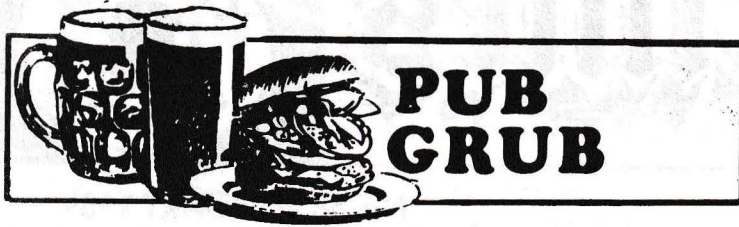
Breakfast, Lunches, Evg. Meals

Weekend Meals Fri., Sat.; Sunday Lunch

Parties Catered For

Robinsons Fine Ales





By Alex Panesh

January's Pub of the Month is the subject of our foray into the area's gastric delights.

Ye Olde Woolpack has had a somewhat chequered history in recent years (see last issue) but Bob and Gill have worked hard to restore pride, style and consistency to the old place. They will have to do something about the lumpy cushions in the back room though - like calling them a feature perhaps!

There is a wide ranging menu from a variety of sandwiches (95p) to full blown meals like Beef Curry (£2.25) or Homemade Steak & Kidney Pie (£2.10).

We had both - the beef curry could have been better; it always, on tasting, threatened to burst into full 'bum burner' flavour but never quite made it. The portion of rice served was small given the size of the portion of curry.

The Steak & Kidney Pie, though, was superb, packed full of meat and flavour with a generous portion of piping hot real chips complementing the main dish.

The food was accompanied by handpumped Theakstons Bitter and Vaux Samson, both of which were in fine form.

Given the quality of the beers and of the food, it seemed a pity that there were very few people in at lunchtime, perhaps the position near Brinksway Bridge deters some from stopping but it is certainly worth a visit.

Last, a request - I'm running short of ideas for places to visit which serve decent food. If your local fits the bill then let me know c/o the ed.

DARK SECRETS

We recently unmasked the identity of Hydes "extra" mild. It's long been known that Hydes used extra caramel to produce a darker brew for a few outlets - notably the Dutton behind Victoria Station, plus some in the Wrexham area. It had been thought that Best Mild - now restyled Anvil Light - was the base for this, but not so - it's Anvil Mild, the darker of the two milds to start with, to which the caramel is added. Our thanks to Hydes' Sales Director Charles Cook for putting us right.

Meanwhile, Robinsons Dark Best Mild is on its last legs. Again this is simply the product of adding caramel to the 'ordinary' Best Mild. It does produce a distinctively different beer though. It's now only found in two pubs - the Old Pack Horse in Chapel-en-le-Frith and the Red Lion at Lower Withington, near Macclesfield.

NEW FOREST

Though completed some months now, the refurbishment of Robinsons' Forresters near Higher Openshaw crossroads has escaped notice in Opening Times.

Formerly a decaying and ill-cared for establishment, the pub in its new essentially one-room guise (there is a games area, identified by the lack of carpet, but the pooltable effectively fills it) somehow seems a lot smaller.

Whilst lacking any real imagination (usually the hallmark of a refurbished Robinsons Pub), the new look must be counted an improvement on what went before, and there are two undoubted plus factors - first, the attractive exterior tiling remains, and secondly, the prices (76p for Best Bitter) would be just a memory for drinkers in the brewery's Stockport base.



The Red Lion WITHINGTON

LUNCH 7 DAYS A WEEK
ALSO MON.-FRI. 5.30-8.00

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Pedigree and Bitter

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Burton Bitter

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TRADITIONAL HAND PULLED BEERS
Vaux, Theakstons & Ruddles County



FEBRUARY

. 5	12	19	26	...
. 6	13	20	27	...
. 7	14	21	28	...
1	8	15	22	...
2	9	16	23	...
3	10	17	24	...
4	11	18	25	...

PUB OF The MONTH

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for February 1989 goes to the Greyhound on Bowden St., Edgeley, Stockport.

The pub itself was one of the last to be built by the old Clarke's Brewery of Reddish prior to their takeover by Boddingtons and dates from about 1960 when the Bowden St/York St area was redeveloped. From the outside it is very much a pub of its era and a stranger to the area might dismiss it as another boring estate pub - how wrong they would be! The words 'thriving' and 'vibrant' are much overused when describing pubs these days but both sum up the Greyhound to a tee.

This is a pub for relaxing in and having a good time, ably run by licensees Eric and Nora Wright who will be celebrating 5 years in the pub in July (after previous 5 year stints at the Nip Inn off Lancashire Hill and the Victoria in Bramhall). Come and celebrate with us however on the presentation night, February 23rd.

FRESH FIELDS

The Fallowfield on Wilbraham Road has finally had a much needed refurbishment, but how much of an improvement is it? Paul Thompson reports...

"Now that the pub has had some money spent on it, it is certainly a lot smarter but I feel that a better job could have been done.

The pub has kept the same basic layout and has been decorated in the style which dictates that if there is a couple of spare feet of wall a picture will be hung on it. Large sofas have replaced some of the chairs and the juke box with its large Irish selection has been replaced by a CD juke box featuring 80's rock albums. In short the pub has apparently been redesigned to appeal to a particular range of customers who don't particularly live in the area and have never used it before.

Handpumped Wilsons Bitter remains and is joined by Websters Bitter and Ruddles County. On my visit there was no Ruddles and I was charged 84p for a pint of Wilsons which tasted odd and looked like mud.

Perhaps the saddest thing is the loss of cask Wilsons Mild, a beer which is becoming harder and harder to find in traditional form. It certainly has more character than any of the standard bitters produced by Websters but at this rate it surely can't be long before it goes the same way as Wilsons Newton Heath Brewery and another part of Britain's brewing heritage will have gone forever.



TETLEY ON TRIAL

The new Tetley Dark Mild reported recently in these pages is on test market until the end of March. Unfortunately there are no outlets in the Opening Times circulation area, but if you want to try it, it's on sale at the Smiths Arms in Ancoats and the Roebuck in Chapel-en-le-Frith.

Bakers Vaults

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

FINE ROBINSONS ALES

superb cuisine

including traditional
Sunday Lunch



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Evening meals available, children welcome lunchtime & early evening.

"WHATS ON IN OUR CONCERT ROOM"

Alternate Tuesdays: FOLK

Wednesday: 9.30 Live Entertainment

Thursday: 9.00 p.m. POP MUSIC QUIZ

PRIZE OF CHAMPERS

Friday & Saturday: LIVE BANDS

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HAPPY HOUR 5.30 - 7.00 MON - FRI

Open 11 - 11 Monday to Saturday, Food 10 - 7.30

SO WHAT'S NEW?

The late Sir John Betjeman, former Poet Laureate and connoisseur of churches, stations and Victorian architecture in general, would not normally be considered to have been a supporter of CAMRA. However the following extract in favour of old inns suggests that he might well have supported the aims of the Campaign's Pub Preservation Group:

Enterprising brewers, backing culture for all they are worth, have turned the old inns into "pubs" and "locals". They have made a virtue of the solemn drinking of their chemicals. They have had Izal and porcelain put in the gents, and made the bar similar to it, save that they have added little tables and a counter. Sawdust and oil lamp or engraved glass and gas light, all the subtle distinction between private, jug and bottle, public and saloon, are being merged into the cleanly classlessness of the road-house. The local crudely-painted inn sign is replaced by the standardised sign with the big brewer's name. And inside, the old photographs of local teams and the framed picture from *Pears' Annual* are put in the dust bin, the walls are painted a light biscuit colour and reproductions of favourite artists of a brewers' publicity board are hung in their place.

Pp 3 & 4, *First and Last Loves* by John Betjeman
First published 1952 John Murray
Latest edition 1987 Century Hutchinson & National Trust

If the loss of the multi-roomed traditional inn, the archetypal public house was bemoaned almost

forty years ago, how much more dramatic the loss must have been in the last twenty years. movements such as the 'Red Revolution', theme pubs, Pennine Hosts and their 'Open Houses' have all sought to destroy architectural heritage. Locally Robinsons are guilty on this score with many of their refurbishments.

Obviously, there must be change, and hopefully progress. Obviously society's expectations change, but it is difficult to believe that the average drinker really wants to drink in some of the tasteless to appalling pub conversions given to us by incompetent and unfeeling architects. An example of the appalling would be the televisual horror at the Kenilworth reported last month in *Opening Times*. Some Alterations and modernisations are for the good and these the campaign should applaud, so that brewers and architects know what is acceptable. By the same account brewers cannot complain if their worst efforts of plastic and garishness are attacked.

John Betjeman was not against change, but he was opposed to lack of taste, loss of local identity, and standardisation. Forty years on these remain justifiable complaints, not only about many pubs, but also about the beer they sell.

- Robin Wignall

THE BEERHOUSE

ANGEL ST., off ROCHDALE RD., M/CR

**Theakstons, Holts, Matthew
Brown & Linfit Beers**

Thatchers Traditional Cider

Hot and Cold Food

MON.-SAT. 11.30 - 11.

SUN. 12.-3., 7.-10.30



ALL SYSTEMS GO!

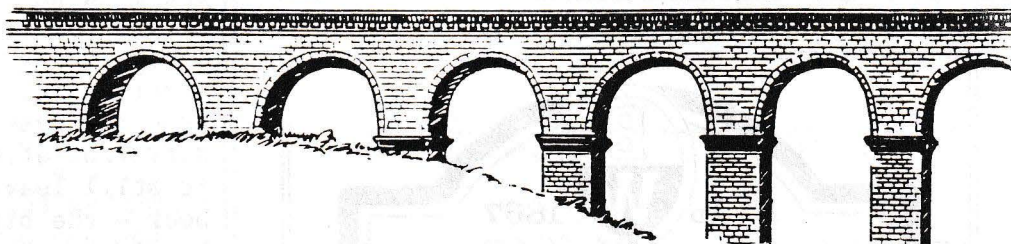
Yes, it's all systems go for Stockport's 3rd Beer Festival which will be held in the main refectory at Stockport College at the end of March - get those dates in your diary now!

Opening Times has been taking a look behind the scenes and speaking to some of those involved. Firstly we spoke to organiser Rhys Jones, would there be a repeat of last year's problems, we wondered. "No, this year we are applying for our own licence with the help of Kay Ord at Ye Olde Vic. Those intending to visit us this year can rest assured that they will be able to get in and sample the fine range of beers on offer"

So, what will be on offer? Beer Manager, Stan Chlebicki has given us a sneak preview of some of the beers he hopes to get. Whatever your taste there will be something for you - mild drinkers are catered for with brews from Donnington, Brains and the rare Robbies Dark amongst others. There will be 11 bitters including Big Lamp of Newcastle, Yates of Cumbria plus favourites such as Oakhill and Hartleys. Those preferring something a little stronger will have 12 to choose from including Taylors Landlord, Titanic, Batemans and Brains while strong ales will feature such as Enochs Hammer, Archers Headbanger and others. Sounds good - more next month!



THE 3RD STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL CAMRA 89 30 MARCH to 1 APRIL



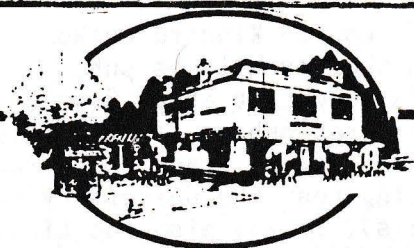
BACK ON TOP?

Another of Pennine Hosts disastrous "Open House" conversions, "Tops" in Heaton Moor, has now been turned back into some thing that is recognisable as a pub, and has reverted to its old name, the Moor Top.

The pub is still basically one large lounge bar, but broken up by the raised seating areas that seem to be the current trend in pub renovations. The decor is fairly restrained and tasteful with good use made of wood features, although some may find the juke-box is too loud and the fruit machines and television screens too prominent.

Three real ales are available on handpump - Websters Yorkshire Bitter, Ruddles Best Bitter and County. The lack of Wilsons is regrettable and adds weight to the view that Grand Met intend to phase this beer out.

To sum up, a great improvement on "Tops" but Pennine Hosts still have a long way to go to produce something that will appeal to the lover of traditional pubs.



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Home Cooked Bar Meals

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Tuesday to Friday 6 till 8pm

Sunday Lunch 12 till 3pm

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STAGGER

Friday 4th November saw 14 of us take a minibus tour around the Banks's pubs in the Stockport & South Manchester branch area. Banks's, the Wolverhampton part of Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, has bought up and/or built 8 pubs in the area over the past few years.

The first call was at the Gransmoor on Ashton Old Road in Openshaw. It was one of the first batch of pubs Banks's bought from Wilsons some 3-4 years ago. At first it was turned into a semi fun-pub, fortunately Banks's saw the error of their ways and converted it back. It's a place with pleasant decor although the high ceilings made the scarcity of customers (it was only about 7.30) seem even worse. Cask beers were Banks's mild (78p) and bitter (83p) - the Hansons bitter is keg. While the only sample of mild was left unfinished we were pleasantly surprised at the quality of the bitter. We also noticed that opening hours had remained unchanged

and might have been reduced.

Nearby is the Royal Oak on Ogden Lane, a more recent purchase from Wilsons where little had changed (even Wilsons ashtrays were still in use). Much to our surprise the beer (mild 75, bitter 80) was served via handpumps, the only pub visited where this was the case as it is very much brewery policy to install electric pumps in their pubs. The vault was basic and bright with a loud jukebox. The bitter here was rather disappointing but the mild got some rave reviews particularly from your writer.

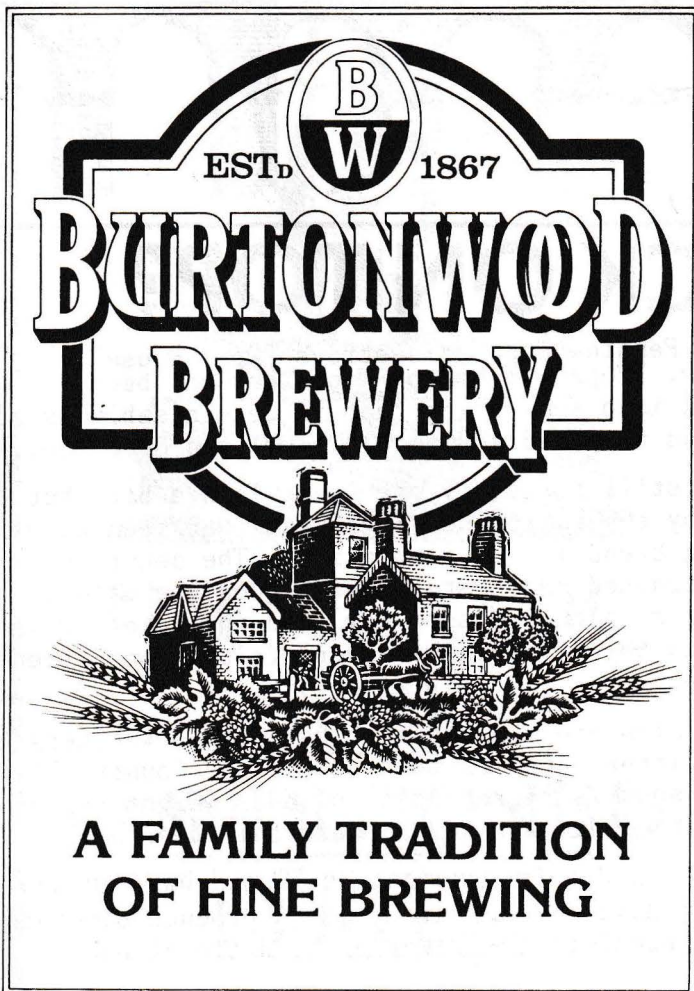
Next stop was the Gorton Arms on Gorton Lane, Gorton. Another ex-Wilson's house, formerly all keg and called the Gorton Brook. A much needed refurbishment by the new owners has left an interior more in keeping with the imposing building. Beers available were the standard mild and bitter at 74p and 79p - the landlord has a deliberate policy of charging vault prices throughout the pub. Both beers went down well enough with the mild being perhaps the more popular. The pub is open all day Saturday.

The Star at the Ardwick end of Hyde Rd is another former Wilsons pub. Dimly lit and set back from the road on the outside, it was dimly lit, pleasantly decorated and rather empty inside. Here only the bitter (80p) was cask conditioned. At a casual glance you would have thought that the mild was cask as well - a close inspection of the bar mounting does reveal that the beer is 'brewery conditioned'. Apart from this small inscription, the mounting is identical to that used for cask mild. While this attempt at differentiation is better than many breweries', it still leaves much to be desired. Back to the beer - the bitter received some varied responses but in general came out as acceptable.

Next came the Falcon on Kincardine Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock. Another ex-Wilson's pub, only opened in 1980, Banks's bought it about 3 or 4 years ago. It was the first pub so far to be in any way busy, and does a good trade both lunchtime and evening (being near the university and several hospitals). It was also the first pub which served cask Hansons (75p) as well as mild (74p) and bitter (79p). It is to be regretted that there never seemed to be any indication as to whether the Hansons was cask or not in any of the pubs visited. The Falcon has the biggest sales of Hansons of any in the area covered and this was reflected in the favourable response from our party, most of whom sampled it.

On to the Longsight on Kirkmanshulme Lane at Belle Vue. Many will remember the 'old' Longsight which formed part of the entrance to Belle Vue Gardens and Zoo. Previously selling keg John Smiths, the old pub was Banks's first acquisition in the area and was sadly soon demolished, the present pub opening round the corner in 1985.

The lounge is large, dimly lit and comparatively plush (although the artificial plants did appear to be wilted). The opening hours were again



**BURTONWOOD
BREWERY**

**A FAMILY TRADITION
OF FINE BREWING**

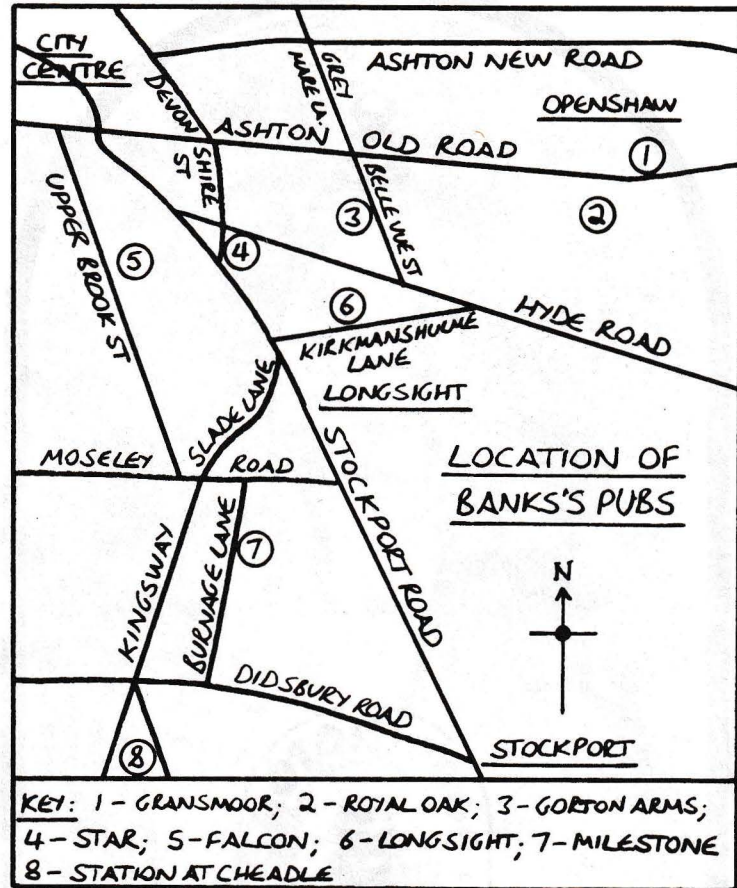
published (open all day Saturday, 3pm Sundays); again the Hansons was keg. Both bitter and mild were tried and both were perfectly acceptable.

The Milestone on Burnage Lane, Burnage is another new pub, this time built by Banks's themselves just over 2 years ago on the site of an old garage. There was some local opposition to the building of a pub on the site, because of the primary school situated next door and the pub was supposedly designed to fit in with the buildings around it. The lounge is pretty much in the same plush style as that in the Longsight; we however went into the vault - bright, stone-floored and with a curious 'island' of (plastic?) plants in the middle of the room. Hansons was again available in cask form (75p) along with mild and bitter (74, 79p). Most people tried one of the bitters, of which the Hansons was the more popular. We also noted the large difference between lounge and vault prices - bitter was 7p more in the lounge, mild 8p more. You pays your money, you takes your choice.

The final stop on our tour was to have been the Station off Manchesetr Road in Cheadle. It's an interesting pub, converted from the old Cheadle railway station which closed in the sixties. Unfortunately, arriving at just before 10.45, the bouncers on the door decided that we were not to go in. Although the pub was very busy, it was no more so than the Queens in Cheadle or the Griffin in Heaton Mersey to which members of our party then went - in contrast with the Station, both of these pubs were happy to accept our custom. Banks's like to claim, with some justification, that they are 'unspoilt by progress'. However the sight of the Station, full of apprentice yuppies and manned by bouncers making arbitrary decisions about who can and cannot enter what is supposedly a public house (the women in our group had no problems getting in) does give this something of a hollow ring.

A disappointing end to what was otherwise an enjoyable night. Banks's beers have a reputation for consistency and this was certainly demonstrated here, with one exception no really poor beer was tried all night, with honours of the evening going to the Falcon.

This article does of course only reflect what we found on the night and isn't meant to be a final judgement. All the pubs mentioned are worth a visit so why not try them and decide for yourself?



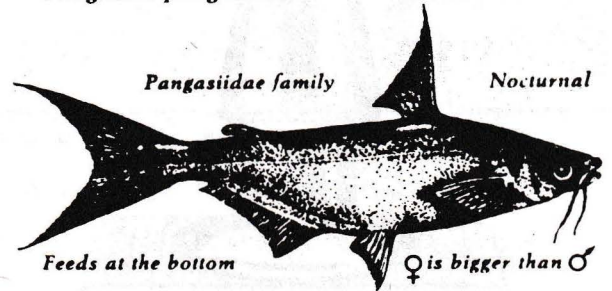
Pungas Catfish

Pangasius pangasius

No. 1 in a series

Pangasiidae family

Nocturnal



Range: Burma, Thailand, Java and India.

Habitat: Rivers and estuaries.

Size: Up to 4 feet.

Colour: Drab green fading to pale apricot underside. Yellow fin markings. Dark amber eyes.

Description: Fairly slender, flattened belly. Deeply forked tail. One pair of sensory barbels close to mouth. Feeds on detritus and invertebrates.

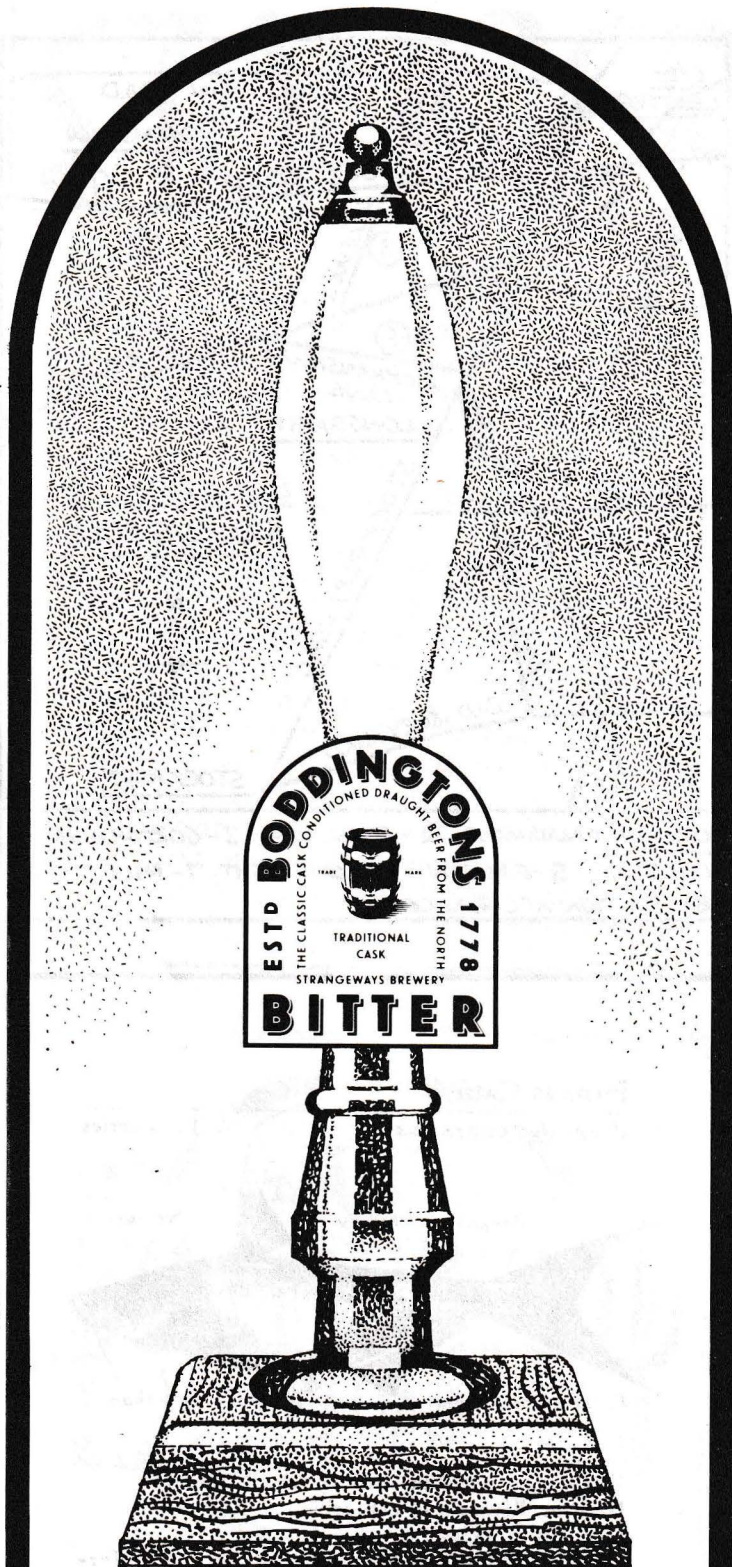
Its swimbladder, when dried, is called Long Saigon leaf.

This almost pure form of protein, in whole leaf form, is used by Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries to make 'finings' (q.v. Polynemus Sexifilis). These are used in the brewing of Banks's and Hanson's beers to ensure they are consistently 'bright' and clear.

Wolverhampton and Dudley are the only brewers who go to these lengths.

Their brewing methods remain unspoilt by progress.

JOIN  NOW



THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER

BEER BOOKSHELF

Only a few years ago, beer was definitely a second-class drink. Wine was worthy of connoisseurship but beer was just something you drank at the local pub. But increasingly that is changing, and people are recognising that beer is worth taking an interest in, and that it has a variety of styles and a heritage and tradition quite the equal of wine. The growth of CAMRA in this country is an example of this but it's been happening all over the world.

The man at the forefront of the new appreciation of beer is Michael Jackson, who has come to be regarded as the world's leading authority on the subject. He has now produced a new and thoroughly revised version of his "World Guide to Beer" which first came out about 10 years ago.

It's a weighty, large-format book lavishly illustrated throughout in both colour and black and white. It starts with a general description of the history of beer, the various styles and how they are brewed, before going on to deal with the beers of the world country by country. There are long chapters devoted to the three brewing nations with the most varied and interesting beers - Germany, Belgium and Britain.

The average British lager drinker would be amazed to read of the vast number of different types of beer brewed in Germany - which has almost half the total number of breweries in the world. While most of the beers of the rest of the world are broadly in the pilsener lager style, and our own standard lagers are some of the worst examples, this book shows that it's quite untrue that there is nothing else the other side of the Channel.

A constant theme all over the world is the concentration of brewery ownership into fewer and fewer hands accompanied by the growth of new micro-breweries and a revival of interest in traditional styles.

It might come as a shock to see beer flavours detailed in the same way as wine - Hydes drinkers may be surprised that their favourite bitter is "soft, clean and fruity, with a long hoppy finish. However, if you want to describe flavours you've got to do it somehow. Mr Jackson is a Yorkshireman which may account for the rather lukewarm praise given to the beers of the North-West which most beer drinkers agree include a number of British if not world classics.

But that's a minor quibble. The "New World Guide to Beer" is not cheap, at £15.95, but it's a magnificent book which will give lasting interest and pleasure, and hopefully prompt many adventurous tasting expeditions, because, of course, the true pleasure of beer lies in drinking it, not reading about it.

- Peter Edwardson

LETTERS...

From Peter Edwardson...

A brief reply to the points raised by two of your correspondents about my article on Pub food in December's Opening Times.

John Tune is quite right to give conservatism as a reason for the dullness of much pub food, but is it conservatism of customers or landlords? If Mancunians are such stick-in-the-muds when it comes to food, then why does the city bristle with Italian, Chinese and Indian restaurants?

But an imaginative menu doesn't necessarily have to be groaning with Malaysian specialities. Imagination can easily be applied to ordinary dishes too - it's the difference between a Ploughman's Lunch with Farmhouse Cheshire and one with an individual pack of polythene wrapped plastic Cheddar.

While there are a lot of pubs in the South of England with badly kept beer - and often over-priced pretentious food too - I have come across a fair number which manage to combine good beer and interesting food in a way that few Northern pubs can match. One way to do this and stay first and foremost a drinking pub is perhaps to put the emphasis on substantial snacks rather than formal meals.

Alex Panesh claims that his Pub Grub column seeks out only the best, but in the same month features a report on the Stockport Arms which helps to illustrate the point I was making. Now I quite like the Stockport Arms - it's cosy and comfortable, the food is good value and well presented, and the menu is one of the clearest I've seen. It's a good example that many other pubs would do well to copy, but basically it's just standard pub food done well and I don't think even the landlord would claim any more for it. It's not a pub you'd travel miles to eat in, it's just one which would serve a decent meal

if you happened to be shopping in Stockport. The best pubs should do better.

Could I also suggest to Alex that he includes accurate details in his column of when food is served. I was very disappointed after reading his mouthwatering report on the Sun in September to visit the pub on a Saturday lunchtime and find that no food was available. Like many other people, I work outside the area and can only eat in local pubs at weekends.

From Jim Flynn...

I was pleased to read your front page article rightfully castigating Greenall Whitley for their dubious practise of using fake handpumps in a number of pubs.

However, when I turned over the page, what do I read but an article lauding the merits of the Stockport Arms which is just such a Greenalls pub. In fact as well as serving keg mild through a fake handpump, this pub even manages to serve real bitter by the same method.

What is Opening Times playing at? Is it serious about being a campaigning paper? If so it should endeavour to protect the welfare of the consumer and not promote pubs which are trying to hoodwink the public.

(Editor's note: it is certainly not the practice of this paper to promote pubs selling keg beers from fake handpumps. The Stockport Arms slipped through the net - apologies.)

HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE BAR*HEARD AT THE

Customer (after several fruitless attempts by bar staff to produce a drinkable pint): "I'm sorry, I really can't drink this, it tastes awful. Can I have my money back please?"

Landlord (looking closely at the level of beer in the glass) : "But you've drunk some of it.."

Alan and June Preston
invite you to

**The
Hinds Head**

OPENING TIMES

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Sunday 12 noon-3 p.m./7 p.m.-10.30 p.m.

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★ OLD THUMPER ★ THEAKSTONS XB ★

WARSTEINER PILS ON TAP

OCCASIONAL BEERS —

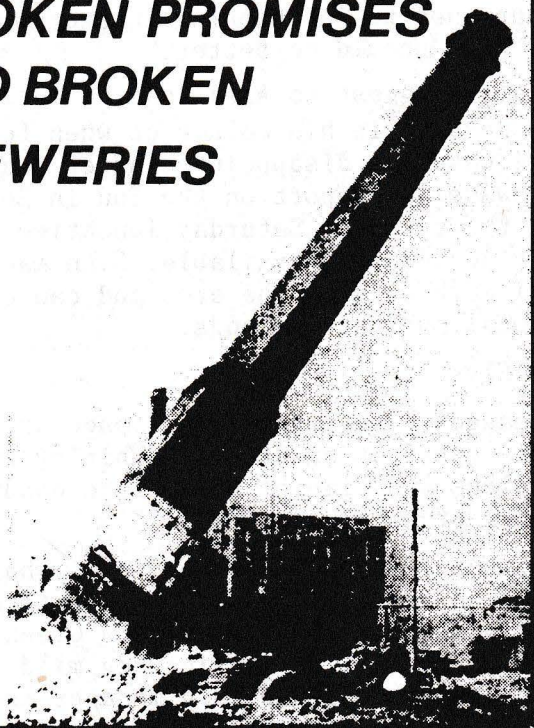
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BROKEN PROMISES AND BROKEN BREWERIES



Greenalls are rapidly emerging as the bad boys of the brewing industry in the North-West, paying little more than lip service to real ale in many areas, misleading their customers and showing an at times complete disregard for their employees welfare with a seemingly continuous programme of brewery closures.

Despite assurances that they would be

With the closure of Davenports, Greenalls will have closed no fewer than 7 breweries in the past 20 years. Those axed include:

- NORTHGATE BREWERY, CHESTER: closed 1969
- MAGEE MARSHALL, BOLTON: closed 1970
- GROVES & WHITNALL, SALFORD: closed 1972
- GREENALLS, ST. HELENS: closed approx 1974
- SIMPKISS, BRIERLEY HILL: closed 1985
- WEM BREWERY, SHROPSHIRE: closed 1988
- DAVENPORTS, BIRMINGHAM: closed 1989



withdrawn, the company persists in misleading their customers by serving keg beers through handpumps, a practice that CAMRA considers to be little more than a cynical attempt to cash in on the popularity of real ale without actually having to sell the stuff. As long ago as May 1988 we obtained an assurance from the brewery that the practice would have ceased by the end of the year, the brewery virtually admitting at the same time that the practice was misleading (Trading Standards Officers please note!). An extract of the letter is produced below:

We are planning to start the new cowl installation programme in June and transform the estate over to cows serving only brewery conditioned beer and hand pumps serving only cask conditioned beers by the end of the year.

... not all beer drinkers in the North West understand the term Cask Conditioned. They do associate "Real Ale" with hand pulls. Our policy is to "educate" beer drinkers by only using handpumps with Cask Conditioned ales plus informative pump clips and point of sale to let the Northwestern public see how much "real" Cask Conditioned ale Greenalls brew and sell.

Despite these fine words, and admittedly a couple of conversions back to real ale, fake handpumps serving keg beers remain - as we went to press the Stockport Arms and the Elisabethan in Heaton Moor were local offenders. Not only that but we are told that in the brewery's Warrington heartland more and more pubs are adopting this shameful practice. The assurances we were given are about as valid as those given to the employees of Davenports Brewery in Birmingham that their jobs were secure...

Yes, you've guessed, yet another brewery is being axed. Having done their worst with the industry locally in then early 1970's (see our chart, aside) Greenalls have latterly become the hatchet men of brewing in the Midlands. 150 years of brewing tradition at Davenports is being thrown away and production transferred to the Shipstones plant at Nottingham, how much longer before this too faces the chop. "Smile please, your'e in Greenall Whitley land" went the refrain. Today that sounds more and more like a sick joke.

JOIN  NOW



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited.
I/We agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S)

ADDRESS

Full/Husband & Wife Membership for one year £9.00

or Full/H & W overseas membership for one year £12.00

*Delete as appropriate

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Ltd) with this application form to T. Clarke, Flat 2, 2 Errwood Rd, Lovenshulme, Manchester M19 2PA



CAMRA CALLING!

Our first event this month is on Thursday 2nd February (note change of date from 3rd) to the home brew pub, the Staff of Life in Todmorden. We'll be paying a visit to the nearby Robinwood Brewery and sampling the ales brewed including the rude strong ale, Old Fart! En route we will be dropping in at a recently opened free house, the Tap & Spile in Rochdale. The bus will leave from the Pineapple on Heaton Lane at 6.00pm.

On Monday 6th there is a social at the Garratt (Holts) on Pink Bank Lane in Longsight. Like all Monday Socials, this starts at 9.00pm. The following night we have a trip to the Burtonwood Brewery, the coach departing the Pineapple at 6.30pm.

A full week is rounded off by the branch meeting on 9th. This month we meet at the Midway on Newbridge Lane in Stockport. We start at 8.00 pm and not only will we be choosing our 1988 Pub of the Year, there will also be a Beer/General Knowledge quiz (with prizes).

The social on Monday 13th this at the Davenport Arms, Woodford. This is followed on Friday 17th with a Stagger, this time in the Reddish area. We start at 7.00pm at the Fir Tree on Gorton Road and will be at the Grey Horse, Broadstone Rd at 8.30.

On Monday 20th the social is at the Folkestone, Folkestone Rd, Clayton. A minibus may be laid on from Stockport - phone for details. On Wednesday 22nd we are running a day trip to the Midlands. We will be visiting Banks's brewery maltings, the Holt, Plant and Deakin Brewery and the Sarah Hughes brewery. Phone Angela for



MANCHESTER MATTERS

Not much to report this month. In the City Centre, the White House has dropped Banks's ("Hansons") Black Country Bitter and Holts Mild while adding Marstons Mercian Mild and Thwaites Bitter on handpumps, with Marstons Owd Rodger on gravity. Also in the centre, the Waldorf on Gore St no longer has cask Trophy whilst the nearby Village adjoining Chorlton St Bus Station is a rare real ale loss, serving only keg beers.

In the suburbs, two rather different Wilsons pubs - the Drop Forge in Clayton and the Fallowfield in Fallowfield - have dropped cask mild and put in Websters Bitter on handpump; the Fallowfield also has handpumped Ruddles County

departure times.

The February Pub of the Month award will be presented to the Greyhound, Bowden St, Edgeley on Thursday 23rd after 8.00pm.

The last social of the month is on 27th when a minibus will take us several pubs to the south of the area including the Romper at Ringway, the Tatton at Moss Nook and the Airport Hotel.

Everyone is welcome to any or all of the above events - and bring a friend!

For details of the above or any other of our activities, phone Angela Walker on 0663 43769, evenings only.



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The real ale scene on Stockport's Hillgate continues to improve slowly. The most recent developments include the addition of Castle Eden Ale to the range at the Pack Horse which now offers 3 real ales, the others being Chesters Bitter and Trophy. Perhaps more important than that however is the return of the Golden Lion to the fold. After a brief keg-only spell, cask Burtonwood Bitter is again on sale, the mild remains keg - don't let the disused handpump, complete with pumpclip fool you!

A surprise development just before Christmas was the sudden departure of Don & Aline Cleary from the trade.

Well known as licensees of the Castlewood for several years they had latterly been at the helm of the much improved Thatched House on Churchgate. The pub has been taken on a trial basis by Ryburn Leisure Inns, a company with about 130 tenancies over the country. and is being run for them by manager Steve Tordoff.

While January's OT was at the printers Holts finally closed the Junction in Cheadle Hulme. According to the brewery this was prompted by a disturbance in the pub, a claim which has upset some of the former regulars who, whilst admitting that there was a minor incident rightly point out that the pub wasn't closed until the next day...at 8.30pm! Are Holts just using the 'fight' as an excuse to close the pub or is it true that the new relief manager's mother was attacked on the premises? Either way the pub is now unlikely to reopen for at least 6 months whilst major alterations are carried out.

A couple of changes to beer ranges noticed in the Portwood area recently the Park on Newbridge Lane now has Ruddles County alongside the Wilsons and Websters while the Old King on Great Portwood St has dropped Bass Special Bitter and now sells only Stones Bitter and Toby Light.

Grand Metropolitan, the company that owns Websters and Wilsons has announced a sell-off of yet another block of pubs. Last year they sold off 700 pubs nationwide and now these are to be joined by a further 152 which they expect to be purchased in blocks ranging from 5 to 27 pubs by regional brewers. We'll let you know if we find out any local pubs are affected. Meanwhile, and quite separately, the Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, Stockport is closed and up for sale.

After spending the 1970's taking them out, Boddington's now seem to be falling over themselves to reinstate handpumps to many of their pubs. recent new sightings include the Crown, Heaton Moor; the Three Crowns, Heaton Norris and the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel.

Robinsons put up their prices by 3-4p a pint on January 16th. The price rise has not been applied to keg Wheelwright Low Alcohol Beer which, on the brewery's own recommendation should now be selling at anything up to 13 or 14p a pint less than Best Bitter - watch for a forthcoming Opening Times survey to see how Robbies pubs are sticking to these guidelines.

Contributors to this edition: Rhys Jones, Alex Panesh, Paul Thompson, John Clarke, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Paul Felton, Angela Walker, Jim Flynn.

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