

# Opening Times



STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

No. 65 SEPTEMBER

## TROUBLE BREWING

**T**ROUBLE BREWING. That was CAMRA's reaction on hearing that the contract for the public house to be included in Stockport's new Station leisure complex had been awarded to semi-national brewer Greenalls, who intend to develop the site as one of their 'Times Square' operations.

To be named 'Central Square', the pub will follow its namesakes elsewhere and be developed as an open-plan, 'American-style' theme bar, which, according to CAMRA, is just what the town doesn't need.

"A pub of this type, in this particular location, is bound to become a trouble spot", explained local spokesman Paul Braidley. "The pub is bound to attract mainly young drinkers especially when you bear in mind the planned nearby nightclub and bowling alley. Have the licensing authorities forgotten so soon the former unenviable reputations of pubs like the Puss in Boots or the Ups n' Downs?"

Opening Times agrees, the pub in what is meant to be Stockport's leisure showpiece should be one that the whole community can feel welcome in, not just the budding lager louts.

And why Oh why did it have to be Greenalls? Surely the brewer to develop pub on the town's premier site should have been local brewer Robinsons, or failing that at least another of the local Manchester firms.

## METROLINK — ROUND 1 TO CAMRA

**M**ANY READERS may have seen the 'Evening News' report of 25th July which, headed "Shudehill joy but not at pub" implied the demolition of the Castle & Falcon was now certain.

This was misleading, indeed at the August 10th Planning Committee meeting of Manchester City Council, the pub was officially reprieved, and it's hoped that it should be open again in the relatively near future - CAMRA is to approach the former owners, Burtonwood to see whether they would be willing to take it on again (following the CPO, the pub is in fact currently owned by the Passenger Transport Authority.)

Attention now shifts to the Coach & Horses whose future is still uncertain, and where the application for listed building status has unfortunately been rejected. Council leader Graham Stringer has given a commitment to "do everything we can" to save the pub and, following CAMRA's successful petition which eventually attracted some 2300 names, concerned drinkers are urged to keep the momentum going by writing to the Lord Mayor, c/o the Town Hall, to oppose the needless demolition of this excellent pub.

Events are moving fast and we will bring you more news when we have it.



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OR RETURN IT TO THE HOLDER

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Tetley Mild & Bitter  
Burton Ale



BY IAN SAUNDERS

**O**UR LAST trip into Cheshire for this year and to the Smoker, a Robinsons house in Plumley.

Named after a famous racehorse, this 400-year old pub has a thatched roof and a cobbled frontage. Inside the walls are decorated with military paraphernalia and there are open fires for the winter months.

As usual we selected our food from the bar-menu and kicked off with the soup of the day which was chicken and asparagus (95p). It was delicious - it was served with a roll and butter and arrived "smoke"-ing hot.

The main meals started at £2.75 and went up to about £6.50 for steak. I had Chicken Tikka with Rice which was very good but could have done with just a touch more sauce.

Another member of our party had the Gammon and Pineapple which was served with chips and peas and proved to be a filling and satisfying meal. The third member of the party tried the chilli which came with rice in quite a sizeable portion. It was well prepared but "could have been a little better". Other main dishes included home-made pies, curry, lasagne and fresh plaice. A sweet trolley was also available.

So, a varied and moderately priced selection of bar food (including sandwiches) and well worth popping in if you're in the area. The Smoker is easy to find, it's on the A556 towards Northwich and Chester, 2½ miles from M6 Junction 19; Telephone 056 581 2338.

**Phil and Dot**

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Owd Rodger on draught  
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## GORTON RUSHCART

**F**ANCY a bit of thinly disguised paganism in Gorton? If so, come and see the Gorton Rushcart Procession on Saturday, 16th September. This Pennine folk tradition supposedly derives from the practice of bearing rushes to cover earthen church floors in winter, but seems likely to have deeper links with the pagan rebirth and fertility myths of mumming and the Morris.

This is the tenth year of Gorton's 'revivalist' rushbearing, ably organised by Gorton Morris Dancers, so a particularly large turnout can be expected. During the afternoon the procession manages to visit most of Gorton (not least the pubs), but particularly good vantage points are the Suburban at Gorton Cross and the Waggon & Horses on Hyde Road.

<b>SEPTEMBER</b>			
3	10	17	24
4	11	18	25
5	12	19	26
6	13	20	27
7	14	21	28
1	8	15	22
2	9	16	23
			30

# PUB OF THE MONTH

**T**HE PUB of the Month award for September goes to the **Sun & Castle**, Middle Hillgate, Stockport.

The Sun & Castle is a big 1930's pub with one of the best unspoilt pub interiors in Greater Manchester - vault, snug and lounge in traditional layout with an abundance of polished wood and leaded glass. But a good interior doesn't guarantee a good pub, and for many years the Sun & Castle was avoided on CAMRA's famous Hillgate Crawl because it sold only keg beers.

In 1988 all this changed. Following pressure from this branch, Tetleys installed real ale in the shape of Tetley Bitter and Jennings Bitter and just before Christmas Dave and Yvonne Farnsworth moved in from the Good Beer Guide listed Duke of Edinburgh in Bradford. Since then Dave has maintained a very high standard of cellar-manship and the pub is to appear in the 1990 Good Beer Guide. He has pressed the brewery to install cask mild but they have refused it in containers smaller than 18 gallons.

The Sun & Castle shows how the addition of real ale and real licensees can transform what was previously just a superb interior into a superb pub. Why not come along and see for yourself at the presentation night on **Thursday, 28th September?**

**CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION**



**JOIN NOW!**

**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

# BIG; BAD JOHN?

**J**OHAN SMITH'S **George & Dragon**, Ardwick, now has handpumps for bitter alongside the keg dispensers. On a visit soon after they were spotted, the conversation went some thing like this:

**CAMRA:** "Pint of bitter from the handpump please"

**Barman:** "Sorry, it's not on till tomorrow"

**CAMRA:** "OK, I'll come back when it's on - I'll have a bottle of Guinness now please."

**Barman,** looks puzzled, "This and this" - points to handpump and keg fount - "are just the same stuff you know."

**CAMRA:** "You're surely not telling me that this" - touches handpump - "is keg?"

**Barman:** "Yes, they're both keg."

It's not yet clear whether that particular barman simply didn't know what he was talking about, or whether the George & Dragon really is practicing the shoddy, old-hat, 'fake hand-pump' deception. Either way, best advice seems to be to give the place a wide berth until they both know themselves, and tell customers honestly, exactly what they're selling

# CARNIVAL TIME

**I**T'S **Castlefield Carnival Time** again on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th September and as usual will be having a stall.

The Carnival is held amongst the award winning museums of the Castlefield Urban Heritage Park on Liverpool Road (off Deansgate) in Manchester City Centre and hopes to attract over 100,000 people to enjoy not only the museums but also the numerous stalls, sideshows and entertainers in the surrounding streets.

The CAMRA stall will be selling a full range of books and products for the beer drinker, so, come along and see us there.

**YE OLDE WOOLPACK**



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Guest Beers Weekly

MARSTONS      BATEMANS

TAYLORS      TETLEYS



# STAGGER

BY: PETER EDWARDSON - HOT NIGHT IN EDGELEY

WE KICKED off at the **Bulkeley Arms** at the top of Brinksway, a large four-square brick-built pub, renovated inside in typical 60s style and now looking rather faded. Boddingtons Mild and Bitter were available on electric pump, and both were judged well above average. For my money this was the best beer of the night - cool, tasty and well conditioned - although overall the Grapes at the end of the crawl was thought slightly better.

A short walk up Northgate Road brought us to the **Gardeners Arms**, another big pub, Wilsons this time, with good tilework in the entrance to the vault and extensive wood panelling in the lounge. Most of us tried the Wilsons Bitter which was definitely below average, while the one person who chose Websters Yorkshire Bitter thought it poor. We had thought that this pub was serving keg mild by handpump, but one half was tried and judged almost certainly real, on account of it being cloudy and quite undrinkable. Keg beer may be pretty unpleasant,

but it's almost never cloudy.

We doubled back downhill to the **Woolpack**, sold off by Greenalls as uneconomic, but now building up trade and reputation as a free house, and the venue for a popular folk night on Thursdays. The pub has a vault and two lounge areas served from a central bar. Most of us tried the Vaux Samson, a rare beer for the area, which was comfortably above average, as was the Theakstons Best Bitter; nobody tried the Marstons Pedigree.

Next came the **Hollywood** on Bloom St, reached by a short but stiff climb. This is a huge pub converted from a private house and run by Clifton Inns (as Pennine Hosts have now become). For one of their pubs it's surprisingly good, with a choice of spacious high-ceilinged rooms little spoilt by modernisation. Four cask beers were available - Wilsons Bitter and Websters Choice were thought slightly above average, Websters Bitter below average (is this lamentable beer ever anything but?) and the Wilsons Mild was not sampled.

Returning to Northgate Road, we came to the **Alexandra**, an impressive red-brick Edwardian building which has an unspoilt multi-roomed interior, and has so far escaped heavy-handed 'Robinsonisation'. Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter were available on electric pump. The bitter was acceptable enough but the mild was vinegary and undrinkable - while the pints were changed willingly for bitter, there was no sign of the beer being removed from sale.

On now to Castle Street, the final leg of the crawl, where the pubs come thick and fast. First was the **Royal Oak**, a rather nondescript Wilsons pub with a mock-Tudor interior, where the Wilsons Mild and Bitter were both below average. Next came the **Prince Albert**, Wilsons Again, a small basic two-room pub which was quiet even at 9.30pm on a Friday. The beer was a little better - bitter average, mild better still.

No shortage of customers at Greenalls' **Sir Robert Peel**, where it was standing room only. This is certainly one of the better pubs on Castle Street, with a spacious comfortable lounge, which perhaps helps explain its popularity. Greenalls Mild, very rare in cask form in Stockport - was found to be above average, while, the bitter was distinctly good, the best beer since the Bulkeley Arms.

After this we plumbed the depths of **Sports**, formerly the Windsor Castle, totally revamped a few years ago in chrome and neon to appeal to trendy high-spending lager drinkers, but now visibly coming apart at the seams and populated at 10pm on Friday by a handful of elderly drunks. Surely the time is long overdue for Pennine Hosts to rescue this pub from what is looking like terminal decline. Surprisingly perhaps, the Wilsons Bitter was above average;

ESTD  1867  
**BURTONWOOD**  
**BREWERY**



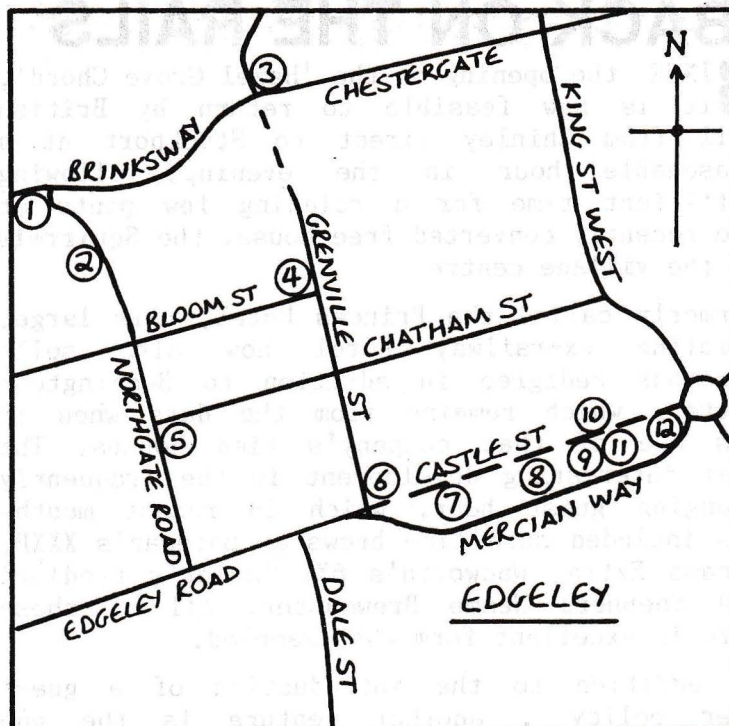
**A FAMILY TRADITION  
 OF FINE BREWING**

nobody tried the Websters which was also on offer.

Across the road was the **Pineapple**, a former Wilsons pub which had just reopened under the Belhaven banner. In its Wilsons days it had been a small basic boisterous one-room pub, and we found that little had changed except the beer range. Sadly only keg Belhaven beer was available (it can be excellent in real form) but Tetley Mild and Bitter were on sale on handpump, the mild being above average while the bitter was a little below. Prize for the most disgusting sight of the night went to the fat barman serving with his shirt unbuttoned exposing a vast acreage of wobbling flesh.

On to the **Jolly Crofter**, another unmemorable Wilsons pub where the mild and bitter were equally average. Then, last but certainly not least, we came to the **Grapes**, a lively little two-roomed Robinsons pub right at the Stockport end of Castle Street. The lounge was in the midst of redecoration and looked a little bare and bright, but we were able to find a welcome seat at the back. The Grapes has been a regular in the Good Beer Guide for a number of years, and even on this hot, humid night, the quality of the beer did not disappoint, the mild being thought well above average, and the bitter very good. It must be said that much of Castle Street is a pub crawl undertaken more for research than for enjoyment, but the Grapes makes an honourable exception as a pub which would stand out even where the competition was much stiffer.

Hot weather is always a severe test of cellar-manship, as not only does beer need to be kept cool, it is also much more prone to go off if not looked after carefully. Real Ale is meant to be kept and served at a natural cellar temperature of about 55°F, not at room temperature, and on a hot day should taste noticeably cool. On the evidence of one hot night's pub crawl in Edgeley, not all the licensees were up to the challenge, although this showed up in a lot of very average beer, rather than downright bad pints. As always the views expressed here are not meant to be a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or the beer but simply reflect what we found on the night.



**KEY:** 1- BULKELEY ARMS, 2- GARDENERS ARMS, 3- WOOLPACK, 4- HOLLYWOOD, 5- ALEXANDRA, 6- ROYAL OAK, 7- PRINCE ALBERT, 8- SIR ROBERT PEEL, 9- SPORTS, 10- PINEAPPLE, 11- JOLLY CROFTER, 12- GRAPES

## The Nursery Inn

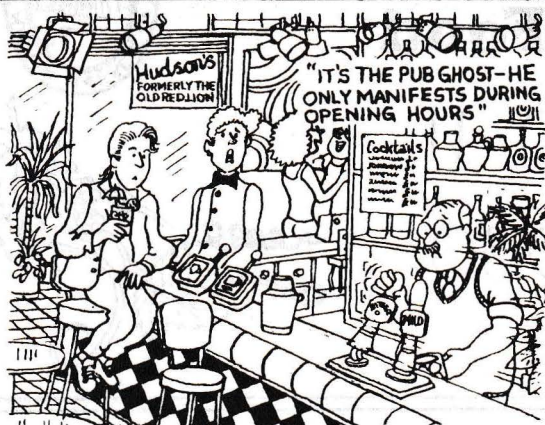
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Beers

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## BACK ON THE RAILS

SINCE the opening of the 'Hazel Grove Chord', it is now feasible to return by British Rail from Chinley direct to Stockport at a reasonable hour in the evening, allowing sufficient time for a relaxing few pints at the recently converted free house, the **Squirrels** in the village centre.

Formerly called the Princes Hotel, this large, rambling ex-railway hotel now also sells Marstons Pedigree in addition to Boddingtons Bitter, which remains from the days when it was one of that company's tied houses. The most interesting development is the frequently changing guest beer, which in recent months has included such fine brews as Bateman's XXXB, Adnams Extra, Wadworth's 6X, Taylor's Landlord and Shepherd Neame Brewmaster. All of these were in excellent form when sampled.

In addition to the introduction of a guest beer policy, another feature is the pub Rotweiler which is adept at opening packets of dry-roasted peanuts, and does not look like it would welcome any assistance in doing so.



## NEW LOOK MANOR?

THE Manor House, Wilmslow Road, Withington re-opened in a blaze of publicity early last month, having undergone a "complete refurbishment which has transformed this popular pub". Well, that's what the publicity blurb said - when Opening Times paid a visit the overall impression was simply of a bigger version of what was there before. The bar has been substantially extended and there is a new rear extension with a rustic 'cottagey' feel to it. In short it's a pub that you'll either love or hate, and it must be admitted that it's a popular enough venue in the area.

Cask beers include Tetley Bitter, Jennings Bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale and, a new addition to the range, Marstons Pedigree. Manager Alan Butterworth hails from a long-standing Good Beer Guide listed pub in the Midlands so quality is usually high, although when we visited the beer was having what was hopefully a rare off-night.

## LIGHTS OUT

GREENALL'S former Mersey Lights on Princess Parkway, which has been closed for some time is finally to bite the dust - it is to be demolished by Texaco to make way for a filling station and restaurant.

# THE BEERHOUSE

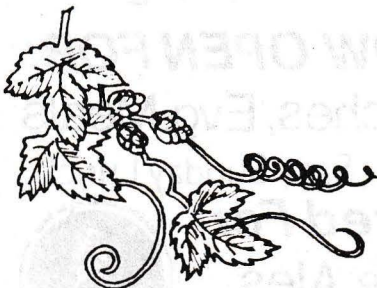
ANGEL ST., off ROCHDALE RD., M/CR

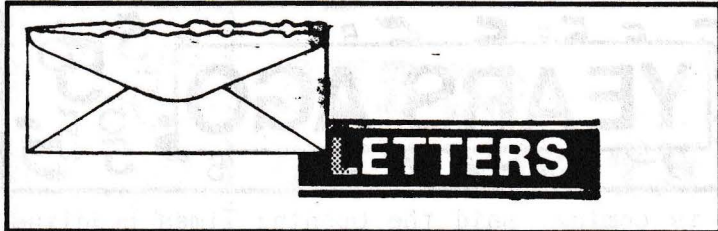
**Theakstons, Holts, Matthew  
Brown & Linfit Beers**

**Thatchers Traditional Cider  
Hot and Cold Food**

MON.-SAT. 11.30 - 11.

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





From Rhys Jones :

The piece (OT, August) on the Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road, lapsed from OT's usual standards of informed reporting and balanced comment.

The use of terms such as 'criminal vandalism' particularly in conjunction with the unbelievably crass 'Falling Stars?' headline, can only have led the casual reader to conclude that destruction is imminent. However, as I write in early August, there are no firm plans; the licensee is keen for as much as possible of the pub's traditional materials to be retained or re-used, and that any new work should be in keeping; and Holt's recent track record surely gives at least qualified grounds for optimism.

CAMRA members often get to hear of planned alterations to pubs, sometimes at a very early stage, and this information needs to be handled with care. For instance, I know that you, Sir, are aware of contemplated alterations to a pub in central Stockport which, if handled badly (some would say, if proceeded with at all), would be at least as damaging as your worst fears for the Seven Stars. Very properly you have refrained from making public this information until a clearer picture can be obtained of what the precise intentions are. Why was a similar courtesy not extended to the Seven Stars?

## COMING ON STRONG

THE 'Guest Beer Club' run by Whitbread in some of its pubs appears to be gaining in popularity - the **Midland**, Wellington Road North, Stockport, has now joined the **Hinds Head**, Heaton Chapel in offering a variety of brews from Whitbread's empire.

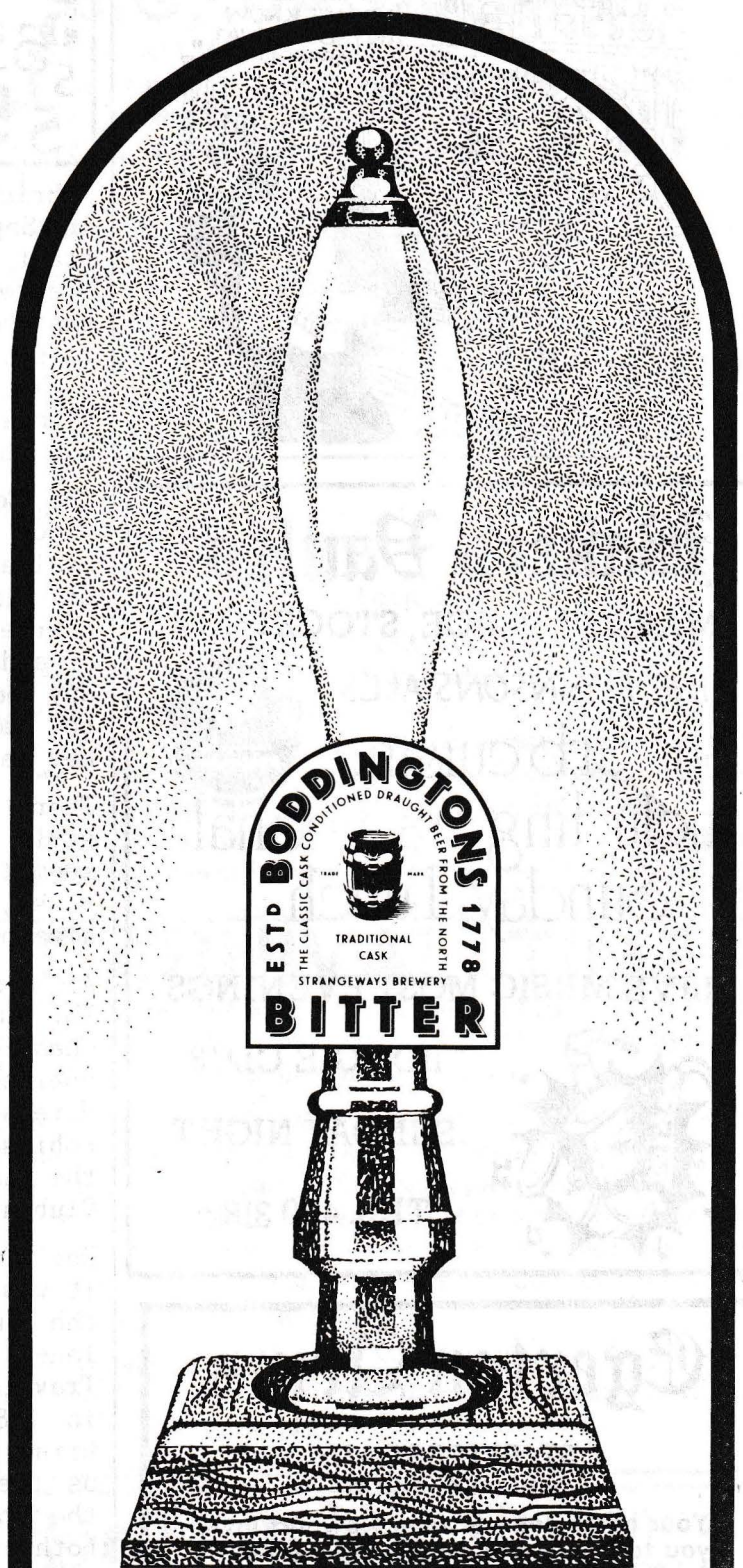
As we went to press, both were offering Strong's Country Bitter, a full-bodied 1037og beer from Whitbread's Cheltenham Brewery. Drinker's should however disregard the, shall we say, artistic licence employed in the publicity material which waxes lyrical about the brewing traditions of Hampshire - in common with many of Whitbread's local breweries, the old Strong's plant in Romsey was closed several years ago.

**CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION**

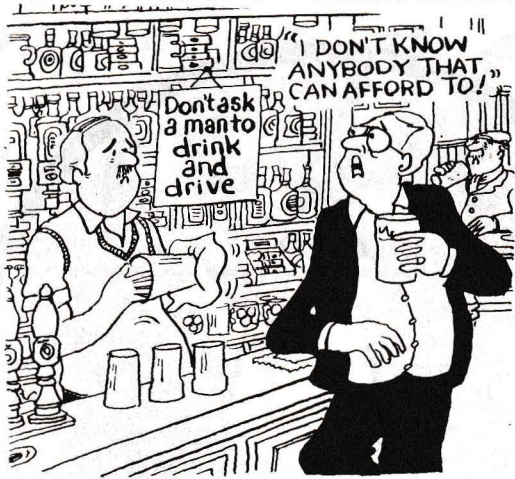


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**BITTER**



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Evening meals available, children welcome  
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### "WHATS ON IN OUR CONCERT ROOM"

Wednesday: Live Entertainment

Thursday: Live Professional Jazz/Funk 9.00pm

Friday & Saturday: LIVE BANDS

Sunday: Happy Hour 9 - 10.00pm & Members Draw

Parties catered for - function room available.

HAPPY HOUR 5.30 - 7.00 MON - FRI

Open 11 - 11 Monday to Saturday, Food 12 - 7.30

## YEARS AGO

'Christmas is coming' said the Opening Times headline in September 1984 - but it was suggesting an early start to the festive season with a visit to the Greater Manchester Beer Festival in November. This was really something of an occasion as it was the first joint effort by local CAMRA branches for quite a few years. It seems that the various branches have always preferred to 'go it alone', and run their own very successful festivals on an annual basis.

The **Coach & Horses** on London Road got a new Burton-wood sign their beer was added to those already available at the pub. The new sign looked a bit out of place on the outside of the building, which of course is very old, but it has always has something of a derelict look about it. It really doesn't look any better today, but we are now waiting anxiously to see whether it will survive the coming of the new Metrolink Rapid Transit system.

There was news of Allied's **Gold Cross Lager**, a new style brew, said to be cask-conditioned, but it didn't seem to appeal to lager drinkers or to beer drinkers - so, inevitably it seemed, it was starting to disappear from the pubs which stocked it.

A 'new brew for the area' was reported - Hartleys XB. Its first appearance in the branch area was at Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club, alongside the Robinsons (who of course own Hartleys Brewery of Ulverston, Cumbria). It has obviously not been Robinsons policy to introduce more Hartleys into the area, as it has now gone from the Conservative Club and is now only available at the **Church**, Edgeley.

One door shuts and another one opens - this time it was two Wilsons pubs that had fallen into the "unprofitable" category: the **Crabtree**, Crabtree lane, Openshaw was closed and boarded up, the **Travellers Call**, Ashton Old Road, closed earlier in 1984 was due to open again as a free house. To bring this story up-to-date - the Crabtree reopens as the **Strawberry Duck**, and sells **Holts** and **Boddies**, the **Travellers Call** is now a **Tetley** 'free house', both are still going strong.

## NEW HEAD AT QUEENS

**A**LAN JOHNSON is the new landlord at the **Queens Head** Underbank, Stockport. Although arriving on 10th June as a relief manager only, Alan is not sure how long the relief stint might be, and says in fact that he could be there for some time. It would certainly be a relief to see this excellent, characterful town centre pub, recently re-opened and tastefully refurbished, settle down to some steady management. Alan is already making changes, introducing lunchtime food; hot toasties and open sandwiches from 12-2.30. The Queen's Head is Alan's first pub with Sam Smiths coming over from relief work with Boddingtons in Chester, he's now closer to his home town of Manchester.





# CAMRA CALLING!

**O**UR TWO main events this time come at the end of the month - on **Saturday, 23rd**, there is a trip to the **Severn Valley Railway**, one of the best preserved Steam Railways in the country - with lots of pubs en route. WE will be travelling by train to Kidderminster where a connection is made for the Severn Valley Line. Our visit also coincides with a steam gala day, which means there will be even more to see and do than usual. The train will be leaving Stockport at about 9.00am. We need to book in advance, however so please phone as soon as possible if you're interested.

The other main event is on **Friday, 29th** when we are running a coach to **Tetleys Brewery in Leeds**. The coach will be leaving the Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport at 5.30pm. Again, please phone for details.

There is of course our regular programme of events: the **Branch Meeting** will be on **Thursday, 14th** at the **Kings Arms, Helmsore Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock**, and **Pub of the Month** will be on **Thursday, 28th** at the **Sun & Castle, Middle Hillgate, Stockport**. Both events start at 8.00pm

The **Stagger** will be on **Friday, 22nd** and this month will be in **Stockport Town Centre**, kicking off at the **Unity, Wellington Road South** at **7.00pm** and meeting in the **Tiviot, Tiviot Dale** at **8.30**. There are also our usual Monday Socials which all start at 9.0pm - the **Green End, Burnage on 11th, the Strawberry Duck, Crabtree Lane, Clayton 18th, Waterloo off Hillgate 25th**, and on **October 2nd** the **Rampant Lion, Victoria Park**. For more details about any of these events or our other activities, please phone me, **Angela Walker** on 0663 43769, evenings only.



# MANCHESTER MATTERS

**T**HE CITY Centre has a new pub - or does it? Much hyped in the press, "**Dry 201**" opened its doors last month on Oldham Street. First impressions were good - opening hours posted out-side, even (wonder of wonders') a friendly "good evening" from the bouncers. Once inside, though, an unkempt individual (how had he got past the bouncers?) barked out "Sorry, this is a members club" - and fell strangely silent when asked how prospective members could join. (Not that it ought to matter, this column's reporter was wearing neither denim nor trainers) For the record, the handpumped beers appear to be Whitbread Castle Eden and Marstons Pedigree - but if they can't get their act together sufficiently to have a consistent and clear admissions policy, why bother? Elsewhere in the centre, the **Portland Bar** has closed as part of works to provide a new entrance to the Piccadilly Hotel; while this was much needed - the former urine-stinking passageway, shared with the shopping precinct, must have put many guests off a return visit - it seems a shame that a halfway decent pub had to go (the nightclub-style downstairs bar is still open, but it's keg).

Two East Manchester pubs have reopened - the **Nag's Head** on Hyde Road, West Gorton after a brief closure due to a fire, and still with just Boddingtons Bitter on handpump; the **Sherwood** on Statham Walk, Ardwick, after a more prolonged break and now in the hands of Control Securities, selling Tetley Bitter on handpump in what can only be described as an austere environment, inside and out. Finally, electric pumped Boddingtons Mild is now back on sale at the **Crown** in Northenden.

**PUB NEWS**



Higsons Bitter has been reintroduced at the **Crown**, Heaton Lane, Stockport and has been on good form when sampled recently. This flavoursome beer from Boddingtons' Liverpool subsidiary is, contrary to a previous report here, also still on sale at the **George**, Mersey Square.

Greenall's new premium beer, Thomas Greenall's Original, is no longer on sale at the **Railway**, Heaton Norris, but appears to be selling well at the nearby **Grey Horse** on Old Street, although the mild in this latter pub is now keg.

In Openshaw, the **Concert** on Fairfield Road is closed and boarded up, although we understand that Boddingtons have plans to reverse the decline of this once excellent little beerhouse.

Grand Met have finally managed to unload the long-closed **Stanley Arms** on Newbridge Lane, Stockport. The bad news is that the pub, which had the dubious distinction of being Stockport's only signed Websters house, then promptly caught fire; as we went to press the pub was still closed and boarded up with no signs of life. Another candidate perhaps for Stockport's growing list of 'lost locals'?

Wilson's Mild and Websters Choice have now disappeared from the **Malt Shovel**, Councillor Lane, Cheadle, where the range now consists of Wilson's Bitter, Websters Bitter and Ruddles Bitter.

The **Greens Arms**, Ashton New Road, Clayton, formerly a dismal Wilson's pub has been taken over by Control Securities and after an extensive, and much-needed refurbishment is to reopen as 'Pictures' (dear God) and will presumably then sell the usual Tetley/Belhaven range.

Brian O'Connor of the **Mawson**, Chorlton-on-Medlock, is now also license of the **Salutation**, Boundary Street West, near Manchester Polytechnic where real ale (Tetley) can be expected shortly. The Salutation is described in CAMRA's recent "Vintage Pubs" as a "cracking little pub...lots of lovely traditional and characterful features...three rooms...divided into intimate spaces..." Just as he has done at the Mawson, Brian seems set to revive this fine pub by bringing back the traditional beer it ought never to have lost

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