

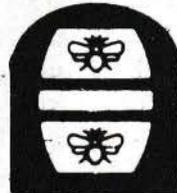
# BODDIE BLOW

GREATER Manchester's pub-goers were left with a bitter taste in their mouths last month by the shock decision of Boddingtons to turn their backs on 136 years of tradition and sell their breweries to Whitbread for £54 million.

Although some have linked the move with the MMC report into the brewing industry, the decision to sell was taken over 12 months ago with several companies showing an interest (we are reliably informed that Wolverhampton & Dudley was one) and the Whitbread bid finally receiving Board approval, not because it was the highest in cash terms but because it apparently offered the best all-round deal.

The main points of the deal are:

- Whitbread to buy Boddington's breweries, brand names and existing stocks for £54 million.
- Boddingtons keep control of their 500+ pubs and free trade outlets.
- Boddingtons will enter a renewable 5-year supply agreement with Whitbread to purchase a minimum of 75% of their current beer volume from the now Whitbread-run breweries. The remaining 25%, it would seem, can either be made up by further purchases of Boddingtons branded beers or give the company the opportunity of entering the guest beer market.



Although both companies are keen to promote the deal as the best thing since sliced bread the truth behind all the hype is that we will soon be seeing a re-run of a familiar story: closures, lost jobs and reduced choice.

As far as we can gather from reading between the lines of the trade press and also talking to a senior Whitbread source, it looks like we can expect the following:

- Higsons brewery in Liverpool will either close or be sold, possibly to an overseas lager company. The production of Higsons beers will be transferred, possibly at first to Manchester.
- The three (or is it two?) milds currently produced will be rationalised down to one or may vanish altogether. The possibility of Boddies pubs selling Chesters Mild has already been floated.
- Strangeways will become a one beer brewery producing Boddingtons Bitter and nothing else. What have been described to us as the 'marginal brands' (OB and Higsons) will either be brewed elsewhere in the Whitbread empire (OB from Cheltenham?) or axed, we are told that Whitbread will not promote these beers but will produce them as long as there is a demand, and we've all heard that one before.

And what about the 'new' Boddingtons. They are apparently are to become a 'hospitality group' with 4 divisions covering pubs, hotels & restaurants, wholesaling and retirement homes. The pub division is committed to 'developing and repositioning' its estate, ie tarting up the pubs and jacking up the prices, bad news for the customer. It's also bad news for the licensees, several long-standing tenants have been given notice so that their pubs can be turned over to management and so make more money for the company.

What a tragedy that a company that once represented all that was best about beers and brewing in Manchester should have come to this.

COMMENT: Page 3  
THREAT TO CHESTERS?: Page 3

## The Nursery Inn

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# 07. COMMENT

**I**T IS, of course, very easy to paint Whitbreads as the villains of the piece when considering the Boddingtons fiasco. To be sure they have an appalling track record, having closed down every brewery they have previously taken over in the North West, and look as though they are set to repeat the procedure with Higsons of Liverpool, but on this occasion the blame lies elsewhere.

The responsibility for the blackest day on the Manchester brewing scene for many years must be laid at the door of the Boddington's boardroom and nowhere else.

It all started to go wrong, of course, several years ago with the departure from the board of most of the Boddington family and their replacement by a variety of big business whiz kids culminating last year with the kicking up-stairs of Ewart Boddington to the post of non-executive company 'President' and his replacement as chairman by Denis Cassidy, more at home selling ladies knickers in BHS than beer to Manchester drinkers.

The truth is that Boddingtons have been terrified of a takeover for years and in attempting to fend this off by growing bigger through the purchase of other breweries, wine wholesalers, old folks homes and god knows what else, they have resembled nothing more than a beached whale thrashing about wildly and with nowhere to go.

It is doubtful that this is the end of the story. At the company's EGM to approve the deal, Denis Cassidy spoke of the brave new world of the 1990's leisure industry and how the breweries were little more than a lame duck as far as the company was concerned. What he didn't mention was the growth of national pub-owning chains such as Control Securities (often mentioned here) and Midsummer Leisure, who actually talked about bidding for Boddingtons a couple of years ago. Most of these new companies have already picked up a brewery, what they want now is more outlets, and what a tempting prize the new-look Boddingtons must be, over 500 pubs and virtually debt-free.

It would be ironic indeed if the Boddingtons shareholders who approved this deal had traded a lame duck for a sitting duck.

**CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION**



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**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

## CHESTERS FOR CHOP?

**W**E UNDERSTAND that Whitbread are to launch a new cask bitter for the North of England from their Sheffield brewery early in the new year. Taken in conjunction with their Boddingtons purchase this must throw a big question mark over the future of Chesters Bitter.

Chesters, we are told, was brought in as a rival to Boddingtons Bitter. It has however failed to attract any brand loyalty, as far as we can see and anyway, Whitbread now own the Boddingtons brand.

So, with Boddies tucked under their belts and a new beer from Sheffield, it looks like one bitter too many and the obvious candidate for the axe must be Chesters, even a senior Whitbread source we spoke to didn't have much good to say about it.

And the new beer? It is to be a session bitter and will be the revival of an old brewery name. Whitbread aren't saying which but the smart money's on Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter.



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Good Beer Guide 1990

NOVEMBER	
5	12 19 26
6	13 20 27
7	14 21 28
1	8 15 22 29
2	9 16 <b>23</b> 30
3	10 17 24
4	11 18 25

# PUB OF THE MONTH

The Pub of the Month award for November goes to the **Prince of Wales**, Church Road, Gatley.

The Prince of Wales would not look out of place in the heart of the country, with its whitewashed walls and dark-wood beamed interior. It's easy to imagine, over a quiet pint, the days when Gatley was a true village before it was absorbed by Stockport's urban sprawl.

Sometimes, and unfairly, overshadowed by the more centrally placed Horse & Farrier, The Prince of Wales is in the capable hands of Brian and Margaret Hayward who not only serve their Hydes Mild and Bitter at a consistently high quality, but also offer good value lunch-time meals.

The Prince of Wales is in fact a classic village inn and in view of this and the hard work and dedication of Brian and Margaret this is a well deserved award. Join us on the presentation night, **Thursday, 23rd November**, when a warm welcome will be guaranteed.

## WHITE WELCOME

**C**HANGES in store for Boddington's White Hart in Cheadle. The new landlords, Neil and Susan Ward, moved in at the beginning of October - their previous 'house' was the Illawalla Country Club, in Poulton-le-Fylde, and this is their first experience of real ale. The White House is to be refurbished, with some internal redesign of the layout, and a new kitchen servery. The work was due to start at the end of October and last until mid-December; it is hoped that the pub will remain open during this period.



**T**HIS month we take in a suburban pub on the High Street in Cheadle. The **Vine** is a Grand Met pub under what was their Pennine Hosts banner.

The choice of lunchtime food is quite wide-ranging varying from ready to serve meals to those cooked to order. Prices for the ready to serve meals were in the £2.15 to £2.45 range. From these I was originally intending to try the Steak & Kidney Pie but at the last minute chose the Chicken Casserole which not only turned out to be very tasty but was also a good value for money portion. Accompaniments were from a choice of vegetables and either chips or jacket or croquette potatoes.

The cooked to order menu included Haddock, Scampi or Plaice and in addition there were a variety of Ploughmans Lunches at £1.50.

There was also a tempting selection of sweets from which I chose Hot Chocolate Fudge Cake at 85p which again proved good value. The other desserts were similarly priced.

Two cask beers are available to wash all this down, Wilsons Bitter which is recommended and the ubiquitous Websters Yorkshire Bitter which isn't.

Overall, the Vine offers good value, tasty food with a reasonable variety on offer to suit all tastes and is well worth a visit if you're in the area.

You will have read here of CAMRA's fight to save Manchester's historic Castle & Falcon and Coach & Horses public houses. The Castle has been reprieved but the Coach & Horses is still threatened. Join our campaign to save this pub - complete the enclosed post card and post it today.

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MARSTONS  
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# HOME BREW

BY ALASTAIR WALKER

This is the first in a series on home brewing which will deal with the importance of the individual ingredients as well as the actual brewing methods. Anyone who is already a regular home brewer, or is seriously considering becoming one, is strongly advised to seek out a reliable home brew supplier, since they tend to be much cheaper than the national chain stores, and always have much more knowledge and experience.

For obvious reasons, I will be mainly talking about real ale, although other types of beer will occasionally be mentioned. The views and opinions expressed are largely my own, accumulated during more than a decade of home brewing. As such they may vary from the preferences and opinions of other home brewers.

I have visited more than 50 breweries, both in Britain and Europe, from tiny micro-breweries in an out-house of a pub yard, to vast computerised modern factories of the big brewers. The only common factor that links them all is that there is no consensus of opinion regarding the importance of the different ingredients and methods that go into the brewing of beer. For example, some professional brewers consider the yeast to be absolutely vital and will go to great trouble to maintain their own strain for decades whilst others change their yeast every week, obtaining fresh supplies from various sources.

## WATER

The major constituent of all beers is of course water, known in the brewing industry as liquor. Many breweries (including Robinsons) still use the water from their own underground wells. Other breweries are happy to use town water from the mains supply, after some chemical adjustment. Well water tends to be much more consistent in quality and purity than town water, but of course the average home brewer does not have access to a private well. If you are concerned about the quality of your tap water, you can usually obtain a certificate of analysis from your local water authority. Your tap water purity can be improved by passing it through filtration or de-ionising units which are now available relatively cheaply.

Before the advent of modern chemical analysis, brewers were more or less at the mercy of the type of water in the location of the brewery. In the last century, it was generally agreed that the finest water for brewing pale

ale (basically a dry premium bitter) was at Burton-on-Trent. This type of water was considered to be so desirable that many brewers actually closed down and moved lock, stock and barrel to Burton, to make use of the town's water. In hindsight, we know that the major desirable constituents of Burton water are gypsum (calcium sulphate) and epsom salts (magnesium sulphate). Neither of these salts are beneficial to milds or brown ales, which are much better when brewed from soft water. Similarly, Irish dry stouts do not require them, but do benefit from the presence of chalk (calcium carbonate). All of these additives are generally available from your home brew shop. Certain beer recipes also recommend the addition of table salt (sodium chloride), at the rate of about a half-teaspoon per five gallons, to stouts and milds, although I personally have not found this to make much difference to the final beer.

I live in an area where the water is soft and would recommend the following water treatments for people with a similar supply. The quantities refer to a typical 5 gallon brew size, and should be added to the water before starting to brew:

- Bitter, Light & Pale Ales - 1 teaspoon gypsum and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon epsom salts.
- Strong Ale, Barley Wine, Mild, Brown Ale and Sweet Stout - none
- Irish Dry Stout - 1 tspn precipitated salt.

Unfortunately for people who live in hard water areas, the brewing of certain styles of beer requires fairly involved pre-preparation of the water. This normally means boiling the water for at least 15 minutes to precipitate the unwanted salts to the bottom. When cool, the water can then be carefully poured or siphoned off, and the same materials added as mentioned above. The exception to this rule is dry Irish stout, where the water can be used without boiling or the addition of chalk. A short cut to boiling is to add one teaspoon of flaked calcium chloride to the water, which is much less time-consuming but does not give as good results as the former method.

How can you tell if your water is hard or not? If the inside of your kettle is coated with scale, then your water is obviously very hard. If there is no scale, boil some water in a pan for 20 minutes - if a white deposit appears then your water is moderately hard and will require pre-treatment. If you never encounter scale or deposits your water is soft.

Although beer can be brewed without making any adjustments at all to the water, these beers tend to be very inferior to those resulting from properly treated water.

Next Month - MALT & MASHING

# JOHN SMITHS

**L**AST year we reported that John Smiths were planning to refurbish the Railway in West Didsbury - currently a marvellously unspoilt pub - and install real ale at the same time. Since then there has been a distinct lack of progress - the brewery now tells us that there has been a major delay with the alterations, but that it is still the intention to go ahead, and put in real ale, as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, things are moving faster in other parts of John Smith's estate. Hard on the heels of the arrival of cask John Smith's Bitter at the George & Dragon, Ardwick, comes the news that Courage Directors is to be added to the range and may well be in the pub by the time you read this. They are also planning to put real ale into Tom Thumbs in Edgeley within the next few months. This means that the day is in sight when 100% of John Smith's tied houses in the Stockport & South Manchester branch area will serve real ale - a far cry from the state of affairs 3 years ago when none did.

# STUFF THIS GREAT BASS

**B**ASS, Britain's biggest brewer, obviously believes that it's big enough to ignore the wishes of the Greater Manchester drinker. Of all the brewers that supply the county on any scale, Bass are alone in their almost total disregard of traditional beer.

In Stockport, almost 20% of the pubs that continue to deny their customers a choice and only offer keg beers are Bass houses. One, the Hope in Heaton Norris, was due to go 'real' two years ago under a promised mass conversion of pubs to cask beer. We're still waiting.

In September CAMRA wrote to Bass North West bringing to their attention the plight of the Bulls Head and Reddish Vale in North Reddish, an area which has seen all the other keg outlets convert to cask in recent years. The landlords of both have expressed an interest in selling cask beer and there's obviously a demand for it locally. Such is their regard for the customer they haven't even replied.

## UP FOR GRABS

A variety of pubs in inner-city Manchester came on to the market last month: Whitbread are offering for sale the **Steam Engine** in Ardwick and the **King William IV** in Chorlton-on-Medlock, while just off Hyde Road the **Imperial** on Birch St, currently a free house is on offer for an optimistic £135,000. Greenalls are offering 10 year leases with no tie on 6 pubs in the Ardwick and Hulme areas.

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# STAGGER

BY: STUART BALLANTYNE

This month's visit to Heaton Norris started at the **Bridge Inn**, opposite B&Q on Georges Road. The drab white tiled exterior of the Bridge hides a pleasant and interesting pub. The pub is unusual in that it is a long narrow building set at an angle to the road with the only small bar set in the corner. The main lounge contains a table skittles game, common in the Potteries but uncommon in this area. Robinsons Best Bitter (85p) was the only cask beer on sale which we rated between average and good. Do give the Bridge Inn a try as it is a much underrated and often overlooked pub.

Up Georges Road to Wellington Road North and a right turn down the hill brought us to the next two pubs. Whitbread's **Midland Hotel** is a partially opened out multi-roomed pub which again looks better inside than out; the original half-tiled walls inside are particularly attractive. It was good to see a guest beer here, albeit from the same brewery stable, in the form of Strong Country Bitter (92p) complement-

-ing the Chesters Bitter. Not surprisingly everyone opted for the Strong's which was thought to be of above average quality although one of our party did complain of the short measure he had been given.

Nearby, just up Wellington Road is the **Magnet**. The pub is something of a 'rabbit warren' with seemingly rooms off everywhere including a sunken pool room where the players looked to be on the wrong side of 18. The Websters Bitter was thought to be poor and the Wilsons Bitter little better. This is a great shame as the pub is a long standing real ale outlet from the days when the keg revolution was at its strongest.

Our next call was just across the road. The **Railway**, a former Wilsons pub, is now a Greenalls house. Greenalls Bitter was the only cask beer on sale, and was only considered to be of average quality. Although still multi-roomed with two lounges and vault, the RSJs on the ceiling pointed to extensive knocking about over the years. Sunday lunches are available here at a very reasonable £2.50.

Ignoring the **Hope** (keg Bass), we turned right into Belmont Way to find Robinsons **Silver Jubilee**. This modern pub has a front bar complete with pool tables and an impressive range of trophies. The rear lounge had piped music and a 'set' for the Friday night artist due on later in the evening. Large french windows lead from the lounge to the extremely pleasant beer garden. Best Bitter was thought to be above average with the Best Mild being voted the best drink of the night so far being very good indeed. The Silver Jubilee is a good example of its type, a locals pub catering for all age groups and serving beer in good condition

Crossing Belmont Way we came to the **Roundhouse**, a modern circular Grand Met 'Open House'. Only Websters Bitter was available on our visit and this was given a unanimous thumbs down. The cheap pub decor was beginning to look tatty, and the gents toilets tattier still where customers appeared to have punched holes in the walls. If you happen to be disabled your life will be made unnecessarily difficult here as there are flights of steps everywhere, both inside and out. The worst pub of the night so far, by a long way.

Our next call was the **Grey Horse** on Old Rd. a former Boddingtons pub now owned by Greenalls and selling Thomas Greenalls Original (£1) and Greenalls Bitter. The licensee has been here for 15 years and his experience showed, for example in the way our beer was topped up without having to ask. Somehow the neatly laid out lounge with its red and dark brown decor, heavily embossed wallpaper and regimented seating seemed oppressive although the stained glass panels over the bar were an unusual and

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 OF FINE BREWING**

attractive feature. A curtain can be drawn between the two halves of the room, creating a useful area for meeting and functions. The beer was quite good with the Original being slightly preferred to the Bitter. The mild is keg.

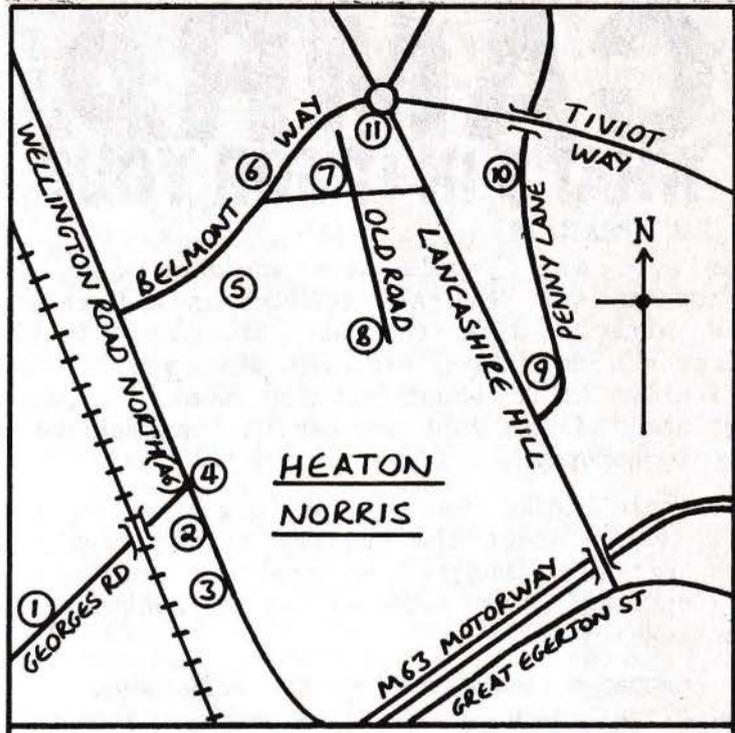
Just down the road is the **Grapes Hotel**, a much altered Boddingtons pub. In the 1820's this pub in fact started life as a parsonage before being licensed. On our visit there seemed to be a problem with the mild and a number of our group complained that its condition was very poor, almost undrinkable. On request this was changed, its replacement being so much better it was considered very good indeed. The bitter was also better than average for Boddingtons. If you can get to the Grapes at lunchtime, Monday to Friday, there is a special offer of 10p off a pint between 12 and 3pm.

Our next stop was the **Nicholsons Arms** on the corner of Nicholson St and Lancashire Hill. This is another large modern estate pub which can boast a good panoramic view of the Mersey Valley. The beer wasn't as good as the view unfortunately, the Robinsons Best Bitter was only average and the mild considered no better than poor.

Turning left we walked up Penny Lane to the **Nip Inn**, another large modern pub not dissimilar to the Nicholsons Arms. There is live music on Fridays and Sundays, and tonight was country music night which gave the place more the feel of a working mans club than a pub. It was encouraging to see a large notice advising that top ups would be provided if the free flow pumps dispensed less than the obligatory half or full pint measure although we had no problems on that score. No problems with the beer either with both mild and bitter well above average.

Finally on to our last pub of the evening, the **Tiviot** at the bottom of Lancashire Hill in the town centre. In contrast with the Nip Inn, the Tiviot can best be described as a small no-frills traditional boozier. Both Robinsons Best Bitter and Best Mild were on good form on our visit, the mild above average and the bitter better still. The Tiviot is also Stockport's only entry in the national Beer, Bed & Breakfast Guide, being particularly renowned for its hearty breakfasts which are guaranteed to set anyone up for the day.

As ever, the comments in this article simply reflect what we found on the night and should in no way be taken as a once and for all judgement on the pubs or their beer. Why not pay them a visit and decide for yourself.



KEY: 1-BRIDGE, 2-MAGNET, 3-MIDLAND, 4-RAILWAY, 5-SILVER JUBILEE, 6-ROUNDHOUSE, 7-GREY MARE, 8-GRAPES, 9-NICHOLSONS ARMS, 10-NIP INN, 11-NAVIGATION

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# CAMRA

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

BY PAUL BRAIDLEY

I am sure many people have wondered what the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is all about. This article aims to make things a little clearer and also explain why you should seriously think about joining what has been described as the most successful consumer movement in Europe.

In simple terms we are an organisation who care deeply about the quality of the beer and pubs in this country. We are the only group to represent the pub-goer as a consumer on a national level.

The campaign was founded in 1971 when both traditional beers and the small independent brewers that produced them were threatened with extinction in the face of the nationally promoted keg beers of the 'Big 6' national brewers. The fact that the likes of Watneys Red and Whitbread Tankard (the pint that thought it was a quart) are no longer with us and indeed that the term 'real ale' has entered common usage are testimony to our success. The campaign wasn't founded just to fight for real ale however. Contrary to the views held by some in the pub trade, we have from the outset been a broadly based consumer group concerned not only with what you are drinking but also where and when you can drink it.

Recent years have brought successes on other fronts: the reform of the licensing laws to enable pubs to respond better to their customers wishes and the recommendations of the MMC report to open up the monopolies enjoyed by the Big 6 have both been hailed by CAMRA as important steps in the right direction and in part can be directly linked to 18 years intensive lobbying by the Campaign at both local and

national level. CAMRA has also created the climate in the industry which has seen the establishment of over 140 new breweries and home brew pubs over the past decade, cask beer is more widely available than at any time since the early 1960's. It is easy to think that that the battle is won, unfortunately this is far from the truth; despite the advances made since 1971 there remains much to do -

**PRICES:** In the Manchester area we are lucky to have so many independent breweries who help keep the price of your pint competitive. However, unless you are sitting in a Holts pub, your pint will still have cost you over 80p, perhaps over 90p or even more. The fact is that the price of a pint has well outstripped the level of inflation in recent years, see this month's '5 Years Ago' article just that short time ago the average price of a pint locally was only 65p. As usual the prices of the National Brewers lead rather than follow the market. CAMRA continues to expose profiteering of both brewers and pubs.

**LAGER:** Where the big brewers failed with the likes of Watneys Red they hope to succeed with the likes of Fosters. British brewed lager is in fact a con. Weak, gassy and overpriced (the MMC found that the cost of producing lager was little different from that of traditional beers yet it costs at least 10p a pint more) lager represents the biggest threat to our traditional pint today - one of the reasons put forward by Boddingtons for their sell out was that they couldn't compete in the lager market. The lager drinker deserves a better product at a better price, the beer drinker needs to know that the future of his or her pint is secure.

**NAB/LABS:** That's no and low alcohol beers to you and me. Social pressures have dictated the growth of these beers. Nothing wrong in that but why pay so much for them when even the brewers themselves admit that many are not that good. There is also the question of what goes into these beers. A CAMRA survey

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last year found that a series of potentially harmful additives were being used in some, such as E150, E223, E224 and E405 (yummy eh?). As we become more concerned about our health we should know what goes into our beer and CAMRA is campaigning for full ingredient listing of all beers to be made compulsory.

**TAKEOVERS:** In the 1960's the brewing industry was decimated by a bout of 'merger mania' which reduced the number of brewery companies by over 50% and saw the growth of the big national concerns. In recent years takeovers and closures have again reared their ugly heads, in Greater Manchester we have seen the loss of Wilsons, Chesters and Oldham. It has been estimated that if takeovers continue at their present rate then by the end of the century there will be none of the old established independent brewers left. It is the independents that give us our distinctive, quality beers at cheaper prices. CAMRA will continue the fight to protect and promote our independent brewers.

**PUBS UNDER THREAT:** The traditional British pub is under threat as never before. Whilst some of the more silly theme bars are a thing of the past, many threats remain. Pubs are being turned into cafe bars, eating houses and funpubs catering to just one section of the community, ignoring the fact that the pub's traditional strength comes from the fact that it should appeal to all, young and old alike. 'Market Segmentation' as it is called threatens to ghetto-ise our pubs, open-plan fun pubs with their undercurrents of violence ever-present for the teenage lager drinkers, mock-Victorian gin palaces for the over-50's. CAMRA is fighting to preserve the traditional pub as an essential part of our heritage.

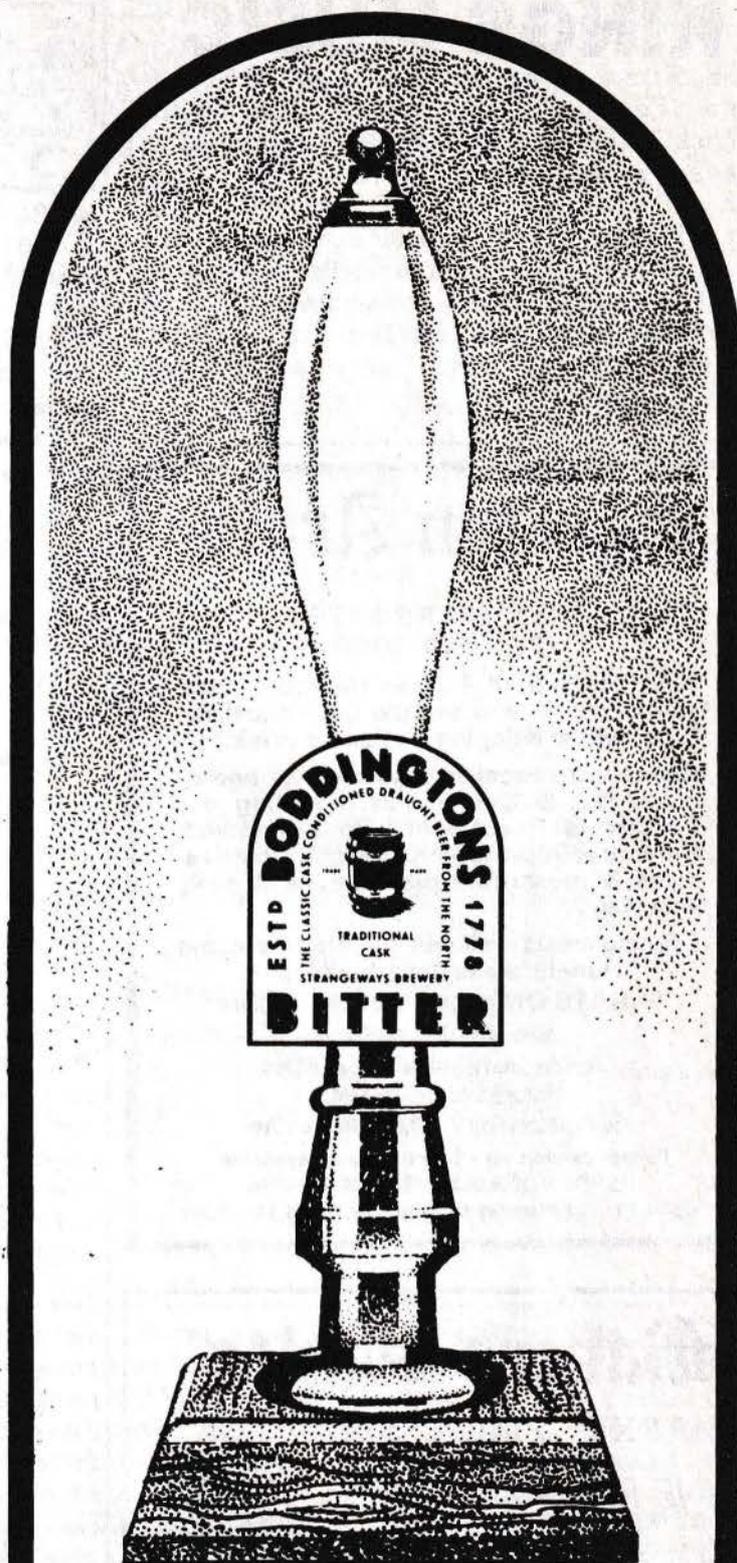
It should be quite obvious from all this that CAMRA is not a drinking club of beer bores meeting in the back rooms of obscure pubs lamenting beers long-since vanished. We are, and will remain, an active, vigorous consumer group fighting for all that's best in pubs and beer. If you care about your pint, then please join us - the normal subscription is £9 a year, for this month only it will only cost you £7. As an extra special offer Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA is running a special membership promotion night on Monday 13th at the Railway, Pottery Lane, Ashburys when the first 10 new members from within the branch's area will be able to join for just £2 only. Join the fight for better beer, join CAMRA, you won't regret it. Cheers!

**CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION**



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**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**



**THE CLASSIC**  
**CASK**  
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**BITTER**

## KINGS MUSIC

THE Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock now features live music on Wednesday nights. The evening works on 'session' lines - musicians turn up and play for a pint or two. Traditional folk, not least Irish, predominates (banjo hero Sully, of Stockport Beer Festival was spotted there recently), but musicians of all styles are welcome - even the pub piano gets played from time to time!

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## 55 YEARS AGO

1984 was the year that Pennine Hosts started to make their impact on the local pub scene, and November Opening Times named three of their pubs that had closed for alterations. "Hosts" was Wilsons managed house division, the prefix indicating different parts of the country, and at first, strange new ideas were being publicised - Beer Factories, Cafe Bars, even Wholefood Fitness Centres. But it seemed that the North West was to be spared the worst of the excesses.

The **Salisbury** (near Oxford Road Station) was to retain its name and reopen as the **Salisbury Ale House**. The **Thompsons Arms**, (adjoining Chorlton St Bus Station) was due to reappear as a night-club, restaurant and Bistro and **Nelsons Ale House**, opposite Stockport Town Hall, was to be renamed simply the **Nelson**.

There was no doubt that many of the pubs listed for treatment were in need of refurbishment anyway, and there was another plus factor, a firm commitment to introduce real ale wherever cellar conditions were suitable.

There was an item on cheapest and dearest real ale in the branch area, and it looked as if there was a tie for dearest at 80p a pint. This was the price of the Draught Bass at the **George** in Stockport, and also the Boddingtons Bitter at the **Grand Hotel** in Manchester. The odd thing was that the Grand was also the cheapest, as the Boddingtons and Wilsons Bitters could be had for a mere 50p during Happy Hour. Just to refresh your memory on prices in those far-off days, 65p was about the average for a pint of bitter, except of course for Holt's which was around 60p, or possibly a bit less.

The Round Britain Drinker item covered a trip to Keighley, which was a day to remember for several reasons:- the Timothy Taylors beers that were sampled on their home ground, the visit to the unusual **Turkey Inn** at Goose Eye, and the trip on the steam railway (with Taylors in the buffet car). There are few details of the latter parts of the trip, largely because recollection had become hazy, but everyone enjoyed the day, everyone got home safely and everyone behaved themselves. Why, oh why does drinking now get such a bad press, even if it is attributed to "lager louts"?

## STRAWBERRY GUESTS FOR EVER

ANOTHER local free house to leap on the guest beer bandwagon is the **Strawberry Duck** on Crabtree Lane in Clayton. Recent weeks have seen beers such as Marstons Pedigree, Taylors Landlord and Theakstons Old Peculier alongside the Holts and Boddingtons regularly on sale. At the time of going to press, Moorhouses Pendle Witches Brew was due to make an appearance on Halloween!

The Strawberry Duck is easily accessible by bus down Ashton New Road (get off at Maynes Garage) and is well worth a visit.



# MANCHESTER MATTERS

People concerned with value for money will not be flocking to the City Centre's latest real ale outlet, **Courts** on High Street. This basement cafe bar, formerly Champers Wine Bar, has Marstons Pedigree on handpump - at £1.20 a pint. At least it's closed on Sundays, so they can only fleece you six days a week. Also in the City Centre, the Trafalgar is closed for refurbishment and the Portland Arms, mentioned briefly last month, has handpumped Tetley Mild alongside Bitter and Burton Ale.

In Ardwick the **Steam Engine** now has no real ale and is up for sale - perhaps, who knows, to Control Securities, whose recently acquired **Staff of Life** in Openshaw is now also all keg. To be fair though, Control have retained real ale at the **Cleveland** in Ardwick in the shape of handpumped Tetley Bitter - a good pint too when recently sampled. In Chorlton-on-Medlock, the **Old Steam Brewery** has switched its loan-tie from Grand Met to Tetleys, with handpumps for Bitter, Jennings Bitter, and Burton Ale - don't expect a cheap round though.

Finally, a round of applause for the **Blackstock** in Victoria Park, latterly Doctor Fosters, which has added handpumped Marstons Pedigree and Castle Eden Ale to its Chesters beers and seems to be making the long overdue switch from one of the most gimmicky of Whitbread's notorious "fun bars" back to being a proper pub.

**NOTE:** In last month's Manchester Matters we mentioned a pub, the **'Hat & Feathers'**, which on the basis of several visits did not appear to sell real ale on a regular basis, despite the presence of handpumps on the bar. We wish to make it clear that this was a reference to Chesters' Hat & Feathers on Mason St and **not** either Boddington's Hat & Feathers on Varley St off Oldham Rd or Greenall's Hat & Feathers in Newton Heath. Although both of these pubs are outside our distribution area we understand that Opening Times may have been taken into those pubs by regulars and we wish to apologise for any embarrassment caused.

Watch for a new free house opening in the Miles Platting area this month. The **Bird in Hand** on Oldham Road, a former Bass pub, will be a sister establishment to the Railway on Pottery Lane at Ashburys. Thwaites and Youngers will be the regular beers alongside a range of guests. Licensee is Malcolm Boocock a former railwayman and a longstanding fan of real ale. Malcolm hopes to have his CAMRA membership through by the time the pub opens.



# CAMRA CALLING!

November is a busy month to get you in training for the Festive Season to follow. The main events this month are:

**Monday 6th:** a minibus trip around some of the more outlying pubs in East Manchester. We will leave the Pineapple, Heaton Lane at 6.45pm and our first stop will be at the Waggon & Horses on Hyde Road at about 7.15 if you want to join us there.

**Monday 13th:** a special membership promotion night at the Railway, Pottery Lane, Ashburys. See the special membership feature for more details.

**Thursday 16th:** a trip to Boddingtons Brewery, where we may have an opportunity to talk to Boddies/Whitbread staff about the future in the hospitality suite after a look round the brewery.

**Friday 17th:** Openshaw Stagger meeting at the Smithfield, Ashton Old Road at 7.00pm and the Wrexham, also Ashton Old Road at 8.30.

**Tuesday 21st:** a visit to Clark's Brewery at Wakefield. The coach leaves the Pineapple, Heaton Lane at 5.30pm (NB a pick up point can be arranged in the South Manchester area if needed)

**Saturday 25th:** night out in Bolton. Trains leave Stockport at 18.18 and 18.34, Piccadilly at 18.27 and 18.43. Our first meeting point will be the York Hotel, Newport St. at 7-7.30pm

**Wednesday 29th:** Pub Hunt - a treasure hunt around some of Stockport's pubs. Lots of fun and prizes. Start 7.00pm Manchester Arms, Wellington Road. For more details phone Angela on 0663 43769, evening only.



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Handpulled Marstons Pedigree and Bitter

## Owd Rodger on draught Burton Best Bitter

## PUB NEWS



Tetley Dark Mild, introduced last year as a cask-only beer, has now spawned a keg variant, sighted recently at the **Little Bradford** on Ashton New Road. It should be stressed that the pub continues to sell Tetley-Walker's standard Mild on handpump and makes no attempt to present the Dark Mild as other than keg beer.

\*\*\*\*\*  
An East Manchester landmark disappeared last month as Tetley's **Rock Inn** on Hyde Road, closed in 1987, was bulldozed, seemingly to prevent the considerably vandalised building from becoming unsafe. The wrecker's ball took with it not just a fine pub with some particularly attractive tilework, but a lot of memories too.

\*\*\*\*\*  
The **R&M Delicatessen** on Burton Road, West Didsbury is selling an interesting range of bottled beers. Apart from a range of genuine German Pils, there is also available a naturally conditioned Belgian beer, Duvel. Although remarkably strong, this beer avoids the sickly sweet taste of many beers of a similar strength and is well worth trying.

\*\*\*\*\*  
As you may or may not know, so-called Draught Carlsberg is actually made in Northampton (exotic eh?), so it's about as likely to be a drinkable pint as you are to get a cup of decent tea in Denmark. However the original Copenhagen brewery produces some fine beers, and their famous Elephant Beer has just arrived at the **Railway** on Pottery Lane, Ashburys. At £1.20 a bottle it may sound expensive but it's not bad for an imported beer with a gravity of 1064° (7.1% abv). Again, well worth trying.

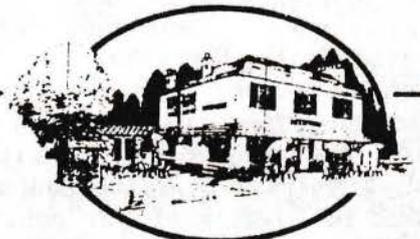
\*\*\*\*\*  
No sooner do we lay into Grand Met about the appalling state of some of their 'Open House' pubs, than they start to do them up (well, that's what we hope they're doing). As we went to press major work was underway at **Farmers**, Cheadle Heath, **Conways**, Cheadle Hulme and **Sports**, Edgeley. We have known for some time that the licensee of Conways has wanted to turn the place back into a proper pub and Sports appears to be going from one extreme to the other - chandeliers were being put in just prior to our press date. As for Farmers, who knows. We will bring you a full report on all three, hopefully next time.

\*\*\*\*\*  
After months of closure, the **Junction** in Cheadle Hulme will reopen with an imaginative new name - the Cheadle Hulme. Old regulars will not recognise the place as the interior has been totally ripped out to convert the place into a restaurant as well as a pub. More next month.

A change of licensee is imminent at the **Britannia**, Rowsley Street, Beswick, where Linda Thomas will soon be leaving both the pub and the trade. Linda has played a large part in building the pub up over the past few years culminating in its inclusion in the 1990 Good Beer Guide, and we wish her all the best for the future. Her successor (of whom more news when known) will have to keep up to the mark, as Linda will be living locally enough to keep a sharp eye on the place!

\*\*\*\*\*  
Currently available in those pubs participating in the Whitbread Guest Beer Club is Pompey Royal a 1043 OG premium bitter from the Fremlingham brewery in Faversham, Kent. It originated at the old Brickwood's brewery in Portsmouth but, surprise, surprise Whitbread shut it.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Contributors to this edition:** Kevin Wright, Charlotte Bulmer, Paul Braidley, Alastair Walker, Peter Edwardson, Jim Flynn, John Clarke, Stuart Ballantyne, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Paul Thompson, Angela Walker. **Copy Date for next issue** Friday 24th Nov., Publication 5th Dec.



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Opening Times is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA — the Campaign For Real Ale. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9WD. Tel: 477 1973 (home), 831 7222 ext. 3411 (work). News, articles and letters welcome. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.