

THREAT REMAINS

OUR REPORT last month on the threat to the Briton's Protection in Central Manchester caused a few ruffled feathers with owners Tetley hotly denying that they plan to build a hotel on land next to the pub. Regional Marketing Manager, Richard Nieto did however confirm that some alterations are planned: "We do plan to build a courtyard conservatory and there will be interior refurbishment, but the traditional character of the pub will remain."

He did also admit that a manager was to be installed simply because the company wanted all the pub's profits for itself saying "We have a duty to our shareholders, and as areas change through development so pubs have a better trading opportunity. It would be remiss of the company not to look at the situation and realise the full retail value of its trading potential." All of which is cold comfort to tenants Terry Larsen and Peter Barrett who have been told that they will have to be out in six to nine months, although that deadline might be extended.

In other words, behind all the brewery PR waffle all we have is another example of a hardworking tenant being kicked in the teeth by the money-grubbing, bottom-line mentality that seems to be gripping much of the brewing industry these days.

Meanwhile, the MetroLink saga grinds on with both the Coach & Horses and Castle & Falcon still threatened. Despite having been refused permission to demolish the Castle, the PTE do not appear to have given up on the building, in a letter of 21st November, CAMRA was told that it was still the PTE's intention to carry out a detailed survey to see if the building had to be demolished to construct Metrolink. We are seeking urgent clarification of the position. The Coach & Horses meanwhile soldiers on, and at the time of writing was still open. It seems that there are some unresolved issues concerning the alignment of the Metrolink tracks in the Piccadilly Station area and until these are resolved no decision can be made about the pub.

The North West Civic Trust and SAVE Britain's Heritage have meanwhile joined those opposing the demolition of the Coach. Clearly the weight of opinion is in favour of keeping the pub, it remains to be seen if this is enough.

TROUBLE SPOT

MANCHESTER'S yuppie suburb of Didbury continues to be plagued by weekend violence. An incident before Christmas was so bad, involving apparently 20 youths brawling in the street, that local licensees have now set up a local 'Pubwatch' scheme whereby local pubs notify each other of potential trouble-makers in the area. Such a scheme has been operating successfully in neighbouring Withington for some time.

Opinion seems to be that much of the trouble stems from the clientele of Squires, formerly the Old Grey Horse. The pub has of course been a fun pub or theme pub for years but its latest incarnation, one of the increasingly discredited 'Open House' pubs, seems to have brought matters to a head by attracting a particularly unruly element which is in turn affecting many of the other local pubs. Without doubt the pub's management is doing all that it can in difficult conditions but, as has been said elsewhere, Squires is basically "the wrong pub in the wrong place".

Whitbread have had similar problems with the nearby Midland which seem to have been cured by its conversion back into a proper pub with lounge and vault. Sooner or later the big brewers will get CAMRA's message that so-called fun pubs are anything but for those living, and drinking, nearby. Until they do, Grand Met should at least do the decent thing and either close Squires down or convert it back into a proper local.

**Tom & Betty Burke
welcome you to**

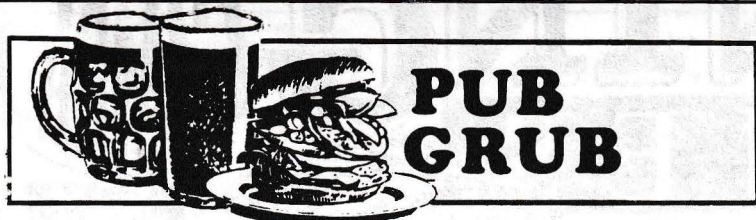
→ The Grove Inn ←

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BY JOHN CLARKE

THE LAST remaining keg outlet in Didsbury, the appropriately named **Didsbury**, underwent something of a transformation before Christmas following a change of control from one arm of Grand Met (Berni Inns) to another (Clifton Inns). There is not usually much in a name these days but the change has brought about a distinct change of emphasis - the place is no longer essentially a restaurant with a bar attached but is now a proper pub albeit still with an emphasis on food.

The change was accompanied by a major refurbishment which has resulted in a pleasant multi-level pub decorated in fairly standard but nevertheless easy on the eye style of the type adopted by most of the major brewers these days when they lapse into traditional pub mode.

The alterations have also brought about a real ale gain in the shape of Ruddles Bitter and County along with the ever present (and always bland) Websters Yorkshire Bitter. The 'Didsbury Effect' can be seen in the prices though, the standard strength Ruddles Bitter is £1.04 a pint, albeit a well kept one.

Food is available in both the upstairs restaurant where a reasonable £7.95 will get you a 3-course meal from the carvery, and also downstairs where 'Tavern Fayre' is available from a centrally placed food counter. The main meals are all in the £2.75-£2.95 range and include chili, curry, lamb casserole, braised steak and similar dishes. Accompaniments include rice, chips, roast potatoes and peas as appropriate. I tried the curry and my companion the braised steak. Both proved good value, filling meals and we were unable to avail ourselves

of the sweets available, Mandarin Cheesecake or Chocolate Fudge Cake, both at £1.30. Other dishes were available to order - Scampi plus two vegetarian dishes, Chili and Lasagne, all at £3.50. In these days when more and more people no longer eat meat it was disappointing to see that not only was a vegetarian dish not on the main menu but also that such dishes were somewhat more expensive than the rest.

In summary, the Didsbury serves fairly standard middle of the road pub food but is none the worse for that as it is tasty, well presented and not unduly expensive given both the type of pub it is and the location. It's certainly worth a visit although it must be said that most hungry passing trade will continue down the road to the Royal Oak which is still serving up its phenomenally good value cheese and pat lunches.

NEW LOOK CONWAY

AFTER A relatively short closure, **Conway** in Cheadle Hulme has shed its 'Open House' tat and become a proper pub again with separate lounge and public bar.

There have been no major structural alterations but gone is the stainless steel and gaudy yellow paint and in its place is a comfortable relaxing pub in which to enjoy a drink. The lounge has a brown and green colour scheme with wood panelling much in evidence. The vault is equally comfortable and features two pool tables. There are four cask beers on offer - Wilsons Bitter, Ruddles Best Bitter, Websters Choice and Websters Yorkshire Bitter. In line with these changes the pub has changed its name back to the Conway.

As we reported in an earlier OT, the 'Open House' scheme lost Conways many customers and beer sales plummeted. Whether or not they all return only time will tell, but it is pleasing to hear that many locals who deserted the pub are coming back.

Phil and Dot

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# PUB OF THE MONTH

**G**ET OUT your new 1990 diaries now, and mark down Thursday, January 25th for a very special Pub of the Month award at the **King's Arms**, Helmshore Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock - or "Brendan's", as it's more simply known to many devotees.

Always first with the news, OT readers learnt in March of a new home-brew pub in the area, and by the end of the month, though the pub was not yet open, two of the beers were on sale - at Stockport Beer Festival'

The pub opened in mid-May, and proved an instant success with both locals and travelling beer drinkers. And in truth, while even with average beer this well-refurbished pub could show many inner-city locals a thing or two, the beer is without any doubt the main event.

Brendan Dobbin's drive and commitment to quality shine through, not just in the three ales and Guiltless Stout, but even in the two draught and two bottled lagers. And that's even before you start talking of the one-off 'special' beers like Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, where Brendan's zeal for authenticity really shows. In short, the King's Arms is a unique pub embodying, very successfully, a personal vision. Get there as often as you can - but particularly on Thursday 25th, when a splendid evening is in store.

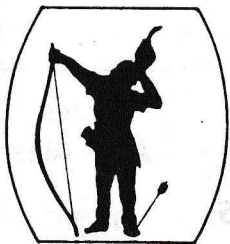
**Directions:** Catch any Hyde Road or Stockport Road bus to Ardwick Green - Kale St (alongside tyre warehouse) and Skerry Close take you to the rear of the pub. From the University precinct, approach via Kincardine Road (near the Mawson) and Whitekirk Close.

# DRAUGHT BASS SHOCK

**F**OR SEVERAL years the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA has been pressing Bass to improve on the dismally low proportion of their pubs in the area selling traditional beer. Our latest targets, as reported in November's Opening Times, were the **Bulls Head** and **Reddish Vale** in North Reddish. We have now received the surprise news that Draught Bass on handpump has been put on sale in both pubs. All other beers remain keg.

This is good news; not only is Draught Bass one of the best beers produced by the Big 6 (and these two pubs are the only outlets in the area for it) but also these conversions mean that all pubs in North Reddish now sell the real thing. The bad news is that as the beer is a little pricey (£1.02 a pint) and strong for the locality, where the preference seems to be for the cheaper session beers, it is selling slowly, particularly as little seems to be being done to promote it. Would Bass take such a low-key approach if they were putting a new lager in a pub?

The question must be whether this is an experiment designed to fail. At the nearby Pomona, the Ruddles County struggled and at the Fir Tree the landlord refused to take Burton Ale unless it was supplied in smaller 9-gallon containers. In other parts of the country CAMRA has long been familiar with the phenomenon of the lone handpump which appears on the bar of a Big 6 pub amongst a forest of keg dispensers but soon falls victim to a vicious circle of no promotion, low sales, inadequate turnover and poor condition. We hope Draught Bass finds a following in North Reddish, but Bass might have done better by taking a leaf out of John Smiths' book, starting by replacing the keg standard bitter with the real version, and then once it had established itself introducing stronger beers as Smiths have done with Magnet and Courage Directors.



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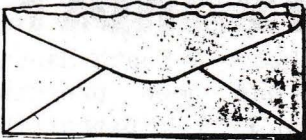
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Good Beer Guide 1990





## LETTERS

**From Rhys Jones:**

While the concern for the future of the Briton's Protection is in no doubt justified, I question the bald assertion (OT, Dec 89) that managers "do not as a rule make good stewards of our pub heritage". Certainly the tenant's stake in a pub can act as a powerful incentive to quality of service, however it can also have less desirable effects, as witness the generally higher prices charged in tenancies than in managed houses of the same brewery. And there is no reason why a similar incentive should not be provided to managers by linking their remuneration to the success of their pub - for example, it has been traditional for managers to retain profits from catering.

Most Holt's pubs, including many of their very best ones, are run by managers. Can it seriously be argued that Holt's managers as a breed are heedless of their customers' needs or of our pub heritage?

Rather than reinforcing the increasingly outdated divisions between tenants and managers, CAMRA should be promoting excellence in the licensed trade in whichever branch it is found.

**I**T'S NOT very often that beer goes down in price these days, but that is what's happened at Sam Smiths **Boars Head** and **Turners Vaults** in Stockport. Aware of the competition from neighbouring Robinsons houses, much lobbying by the Boars Head manager has resulted in a 10p a pint reduction on both mild and Old Brewery bitter which now retails at 80p in the Boars. It's initially only for an experimental period, so buy now while stocks last!

# STANLEY ARMS

**A**S REPORTED last month, the **Stanley Arms** on Newbridge Lane opened as Stockport's latest freehouse on 6th December.

The pub has of course had a chequered history - for many years it was a badly run-down Wilsons pub before emerging, after quite an impressive refurbishment as Stockport's very first Websters house. The refurbishment seemed to do little for trade however and the pub was soon closed and up for sale. No sooner has new owner Mike Belsham bought it, than jinx struck again with much of the bar area being badly damaged by fire.

In many ways, the fire was no bad thing as Mike has been able to refurbish the entire pub to his specifications and it now looks better than it has done for many a long year. Decorated throughout in a pink and white colour scheme, the pub manages to be light and airy but also cosy and comfortable at the same time, helped by the interesting multi-level layout which incorporates a bare-boarded vaulted area and separate pool room.

The current range of beers includes two milds (Tetley and Matthew Brown) at 82p, Tetley Bitter (84p), Theakstons Bitter (86p) and Martsons Pedigree (£1.10) and all have been on good form so far. Some changes to the range are likely as the Tetley products could well be changed for Bass beers and the milds reduced to just one. Mike hasn't ruled out the possibility of guest beers once the pub becomes established but of course, it's early days yet. There is also an accent on food which is available not only at lunchtimes and early evenings but also for breakfast.

All in all, the Stanley Arms is a welcome addition to the Stockport pub scene and deserves much support and success.

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# XMAS SPECIALS

TWO UNUSUAL beers were available locally over the Christmas period - if your're lucky you still might be able to catch them.

Majestic Wine Warehouses are the sole importers of **Christmas Ale** produced by the Anchor Steam Brewery of San Francisco. Each year this beer is brewed to a different recipe and is eagerly sought out in the United States. This year's brew is a dark fruity beer at 5.8% ABV. It's only sold by the case consisting of 12 355ml bottles at £14.28, which works out at about £1.20 a bottle.



Majestic Wine Warehouses are largely based in London and the South east. The one branch in the North of England is in Stockport on Bramhall Lane, which is just off the A6, almost directly behind the Blossoms.

The other beer is a very different animal and comes from Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery in Chorlton-on-Medlock. To mark the 1st anniversary of her resignation, Brendan has produced **Edwina Currie Memorial Ale**, a 1040og bitter pale ale, which has already found its way into a variety of local freehouses (one of which had it marked up as 'Draught Currie'), and to make it really stand out Brendan has dyed it green! He did in fact intend it to be blue, but he couldn't find a suitable dye. It is nevertheless well worth trying should you come across it.

## NEW VIC

THE VICTORIA on Hall Street, Offerton, had a refit shortly before Christmas and has emerged much the better for it. The lounge seems much more spacious and comfortable, and is decorated and fitted out in the standard, but certainly not unpleasant, house-style that Greenall's adopt for many of their refurbishments these days. The vault is bright and functional and again decorated in the house style.

The beer range is also much improved, the Greenall's Mild and Bitter being joined by Davenport's Bitter and the premium Thomas Greenalls Original, all on handpump. Well worth a visit.

## BOOKSTALL

FOR THOSE of you with money to spend after Christmas, it's still not too late to buy CAMRA's latest publication, **Ale of Two Cities**, the first ever comprehensive guide to real ale in Manchester and Salford. Stocks are running out but it is still available, p&p free, for £2.95 from Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel. Also available is CAMRA's best selling 1990 Good Beer Guide, the essential reference book for all those interested in pubs and beer, it includes a directory of all beers brewed in the country plus a listing of 5000 of the best pubs and all for £6.95.

## SORRY PT I

A GREMLIN seems to have crept into some of our Christmas ads. At the **Bowling Green**, Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, landlady Shelagh is a bit miffed that we missed her name off the ad, sorry about that.

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# STAGGER

BY: IAN SAUNDERS

THIS month's stagger, in the City Centre, began amidst a downpour of rain. Nevertheless our spirits were not dampened as a rather soggy group congregated in the **Bulls Head** on London Road. This small, basic two-roomed boozier had two handpumped beers on offer, Burtonwood Mild and Bitter and both were considered to be well above average on our visit.

Next, a surprise in store as we ventured, with trepidation, to **Monroes** (formerly the Nip and Tipple). From the outside it looks like a trendy wine bar, but inside it's a fairly standard Whitbread conversion with the usual fixtures and fittings and raised seating areas around the perimeter of the pub. The 'Marilyn Monroe' theme was not overdone and flags, plastic plants and a Wurlitzer jukebox added to the decoration. The real surprise lay behind the bar with three real ales on sale, Chesters Mild and Bitter and the stronger Pompey Royal which was selling at the same price as the Chesters Bitter (90p). Also, there were no keg beers on sale which

is unusual for a Whitbread house. Yet another surprise was that the pub had a comfortable public bar as well. Everyone chose Pompey Royal as it is a rarely seen beer locally and it was considered to be on good form.

Encouraged, we set off for another Whitbread house, the **Waldorf** on Gore Street. After admiring the welcoming mosaic floor of the lobby, we went inside to discover a plethora of office workers. Fighting our way to the central, semi-circular bar, we found Chesters Mild and Bitter plus Marstons Pedigree on offer. The Mild and Pedigree were both above average whilst the Chesters Bitter was its usual indifferent self. The pub itself was decorated in mock 1920's style with plywood much used to create the effect. Security was in evidence, although fairly unobtrusive, in the form of both a video camera and a bouncer.

The rain had died down by the time we ventured on to Portland Street and to two of the smallest pubs in town. The **Grey Horse** is a small one-roomer dating back to 1916. There are photographs of old Manchester in abundance and there's always a cosy, friendly atmosphere in this pub. The outside gents features some particularly amusing graffiti. The beers are Hydes Mild and Bitter and both were thought to be on good form with the Mild being marginally preferred. Anvil Strong, the winter warmer hadn't arrived when we paid our visit but should be available as you read this.

Moving next door to an even smaller pub, the **Circus**, where the bar is only big enough for two handpumps, both dispensing Tetley Bitter, and a few bottles. The two rooms leading from the bar add to the character of the pub which, despite its size, attracts a great deal of custom. The beer was considered by many to be the best of the night.

Squeezing our way out of the door, across Portland Street and to the **Rembrandt** on Sackville Street. This one-roomed pub is decorated in a "trendy" style and has hi-energy disco music emanating from the strategically placed loud-speakers. The number of mustachioed males clad in leather jackets and caps suggested that the clientele of this pub is largely drawn from the gay community. However, we managed to restrain ourselves from leaping into a chorus of 'YMCA' as we sipped our electrically dispensed Lees Mild and Bitter. Both beers were above average in quality. More bouncers were on duty here.

Due to communications difficulties in the Rembrandt (partly due to indecision, partly because of the Weather Girls "It's Raining Men" blaring out of the jukebox), this reporter failed to appear at the next pub which was the **New Union** on Princess Street. This was modernised a few years ago into a comfortable

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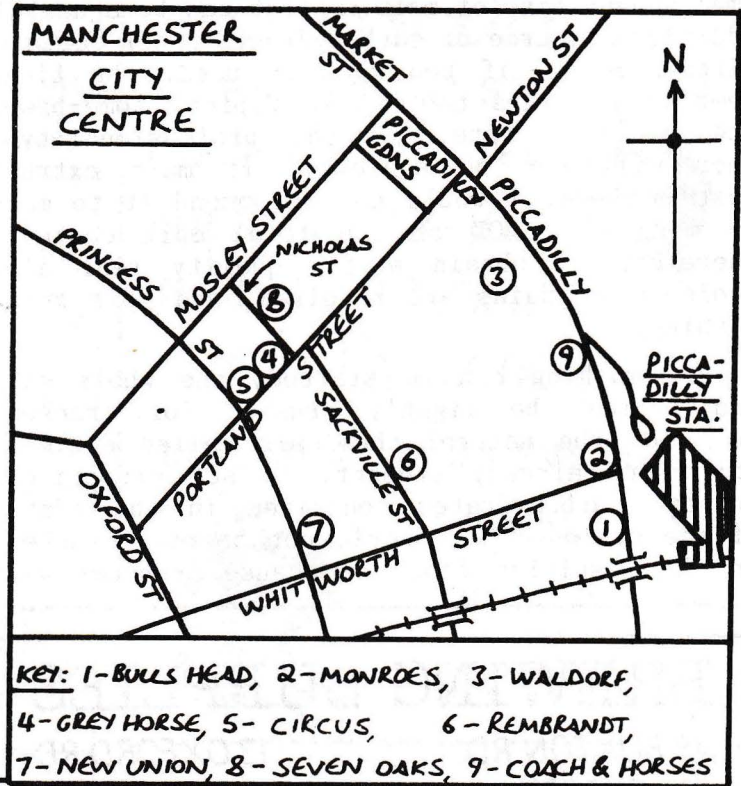
open-plan pub. Like the Rembrandt, the Union attracts a largely gay clientele including, apparently, on this occasion, a transvestite - but he could have shaved his beard off. The beers on offer were handpumped Burtonwood Mild and Bitter of which the Mild was generally preferred.

Next, on to a pub much neglected in the past, mostly because it's difficult to find. The **Seven Oaks** is on Nicholas Street off Moseley Street. This is a basic single-roomed pub where the furnishing is not so over the top as in so many other Whitbread pubs. As always we received a warm welcome here and I was pleased to see that the pub was encouragingly busy. The beers are handpumped Chesters Mild and Bitter and both were considered average on our visit.

By this time our merry band had become somewhat dispersed but we regrouped in the last port of call, the **Coach & Horses** on London Road. Threatened by demolition, but still open and selling beer, this basic no-frills boozier doesn't offer luxury but it does have atmosphere. The small bar serves two rooms and there is a third room at the back. There is a largely Irish jukebox and a gents toilet that just has to be seen. The beers on offer were Taylors Landlord and Boddingtons Bitter both of which were on good form with Landlord scoring the

highest. Only one slight complaint is that, for a free house, the range of beers is not exactly extensive and hasn't been for some time. This is perhaps excusable at the moment since they still don't know if and when they are going to close.

And so ended an evening of vastly contrasting pubs and yet a consistently high standard of beer. But don't take our word for it, this article is after all simply a reflection of what we found on the night - why not try the pubs for yourself?



# THE BEERHOUSE

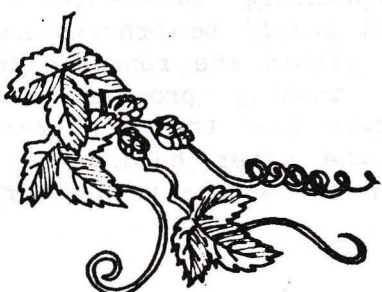
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# HOME BREW

BY ALASTAIR WALKER

**M**ANY home brewing recipes recommend the use of only malt extract when brewing beer. Since this material does not require the time-consuming stage of mashing, it might appear to be an attractive option. However, although small quantities of malt extract can be a useful additional source of carbohydrates under certain circumstances, if too much is used, the final beer will always taste like typical home-brew, and a first rate, smooth, professional-type beer will not be achieved. If malt extract must be used, I would not recommend it to make up more than 20% of the total malt content. Therefore to obtain a top quality real ale, whole malt grains are required, and this means mashing.

Before mashing can be started, the whole malt grains must be lightly crushed (or cracked) to allow the natural chemicals called enzymes, which are already present, to act effectively on the carbohydrates contained in the centre of the grains. They should not be over-crushed, or the resulting flour can cause problems with

beer that fails to clear. Also, if poor quality malt is used, it often contains large amount of nitrogen which can promote non-removable protein hazes in the final beer, particularly if it is exposed to very low temperatures. The easiest option is to purchase a good quality pre-crushed malt from your home-brew supplier. If this is not possible, you can crush the malt yourself by placing it in an electric blender for a few seconds or, more laboriously, in a hand mincer.

Ideally, when mashing, the crushed grain should be maintained at 62°-68°C (145°-155°F) for a period of 1½ to 2 hours. Three alternative vessels are commonly used for this purpose. The simplest is a large (at least 3 gallons) aluminium pan, over a low heat. This is the messiest and most labour intensive method requiring frequent measurement of the mashing temperature with a thermometer and constant stirring to prevent the wort from burning on the bottom of the pan. The second method is to use a 5-gallon, high-density plastic bin with a thermostatically controlled immersion heater suspended in it. Since the heater has only a small diameter, and can only be hung at a high position in the wort near the edge of the bin, to avoid the brewing bag containing the grain, this tends to result in uneven temperatures throughout the wort. The final method is to use a similar plastic bin, but with a thermostatically controlled heating element (similar to that in an electric kettle) built into the bottom of the bin giving a much more even temperature distribution. The best known of this type of bin is called a Bruheat Boiler and is readily available from good home brewing suppliers. Although initially expensive, the regular home brewer is well advised to purchase the third type of vessel for controlled mashing. An additional advantage is that the subsequent boiling and fermentation stages can also be carried out in this type of vessel.

The mashing volume should be between 2 to 3½ gallons to allow for efficient extraction of the desirable sugars from the malt grain into the wort. After treating the water as appropriate (see November's OT), heat it to 70°C, before gradually adding all of the grains (and adjuncts if applicable). If using a plastic bin, the grains should be enclosed in a nylon boiling bag (if possible, suspended from the rim of the bin, under the lid) or the tap will quickly become blocked when running off the finished wort. After adding the grain, the temperature will drop to approximately 62°C and should be brought back up to 65°C, and held within the range of 62°-68°C throughout the mashing process. Many home brewing books state that the malt grains should be added to the water before it is brought up to the desired mashing temperature

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However, although this technique is perfectly acceptable for successful mashing, I find that the wort takes much longer to reach mashing temperature compared with adding the grain after the water has reached 70°C as recommended above.

To maintain an even distribution of heat, the mash should be stirred every 15-20 minutes. When the mashing process is finished, run off the hot wort into your boiling vessel, or, if using the same vessel for boiling, simply withdraw the bag containing the grains. To extract the full amount of sugar from the spent malt grains, gently sprinkle them with hot water (preferably at the same temperature as the mash) to collect 4 gallons of wort, if using a 5-gallon bin for boiling, or less than this amount if your aluminium pan will not safely cope with this quantity when boiling.

With a little practice, the mashing process becomes much easier, and is not nearly as complicated as it sounds. In addition, if you get through this stage, the subsequent processes in making real ale are much less laborious and intricate.

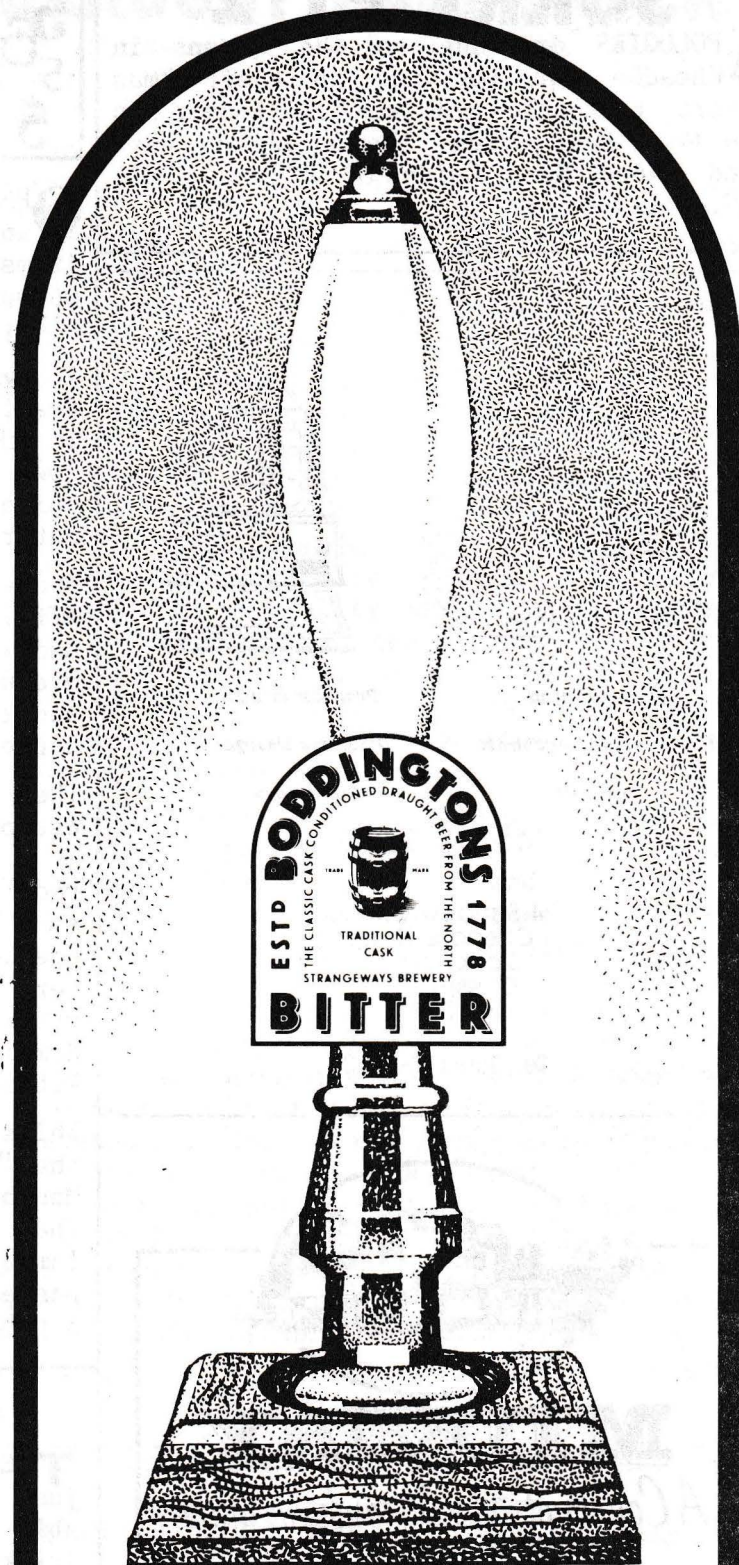
Next Month - Boiling

## CASTLE KEG

THE LATEST of the disastrous 'Open House' theme pubs to see the writing on the wall and convert back into something like a genuine pub again is what was one of the worst - Sports in Edgeley reopened just before Christmas under its former name of the Windsor Castle.

As we reported some months ago, Sports was literally falling apart and we understand that some £50,000 has been spent in restoring the pub to something like its former appearance. Whilst that may sound like a lot of money it has to be asked whether it was enough. True the pub looks better than it's done for a long time but closer examination reveals that the reinstated panelling and fittings look distinctly on the cheap side. Having said that the pub is now a pleasant two roomer with a spacious, traditional vault and roomy, comfortable lounge with an accent on lunchtime food.

It would be nice to conclude by saying that the pub was worth a visit but sadly for lovers of traditional beer it has nothing to offer as incredibly the conversion to a traditional pub has been accompanied by the removal of cask beer, with only keg now on offer. Even when Sports was at its worst, it still sold a surprisingly good pint of handpumped Wilsons Bitter. As it is the Windsor Castle joins the handful of Stockport pubs that deny their customers a traditional pint. Let's hope that this is soon put right as this latest attempt to revitalise this difficult pub is an otherwise brave venture that deserves to succeed.

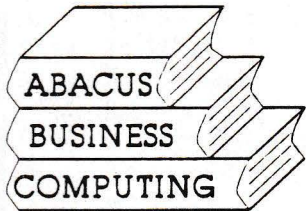


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# SORRY PT 2

Apologies are due to the Queens in Cheadle for implying in their Xmas advert that the pub was no longer in the Good Beer Guide. The Ad should have read "Good Beer Guide 87-90" not "87, 88". Sorry.



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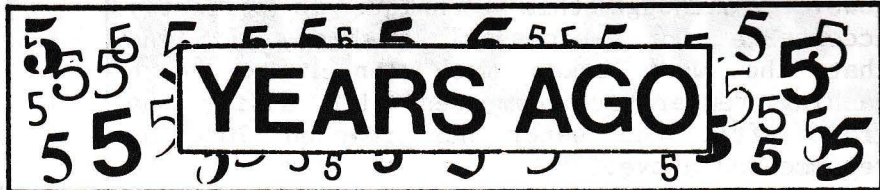
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OPENING Times had appeared twice in December 1984, and this must have used up most of the newsworthy items, or else it was the excesses of the festive season that had resulted in January 1985 being rather a slim issue.

It was reported that the **Why Not** (now the Little Bradford) on Ashton New Road was to have an addition in the form of a Boeing 707, complete with control tower and other airfield accessories. It received quite wide publicity at the time, but it just never materialised.

There was an item on a Wilsons pub, the **Falcon**, (just off Plymouth Grove), which had been bought by Banks's and changed over to their products and livery almost overnight. Many of the locals were taken by surprise, and even Wilsons didn't seem to be too sure what had happened.

The annual Christmas crawl of Hillgate, a long established CAMRA feature, was reported in some detail - it was claimed to be the first time it had been recorded in print. Whilst there have obviously been some changes in the pubs in the last five years, many are still substantially the good boozers they always were - probably the main exception is the last mentioned "excellent **Royal Oak**" which has since been demolished and rebuilt, to re-emerge as a rather bland Robinson's pub.

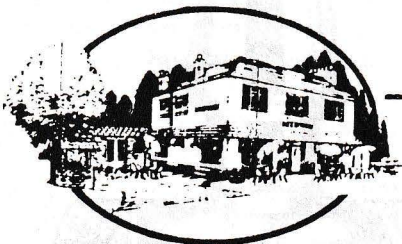
Whilst the Hillgate Crawl was "Around in the Town", the "Round Britain Drinker" item featured a trip from Manchester to Anglesey, with some 35 pubs on the route. That number has now been about halved, but this is largely due to the road improvements which have bypassed many of the pubs - in fact now you only pass 5 pubs and you're on Anglesey.

## CHEADLE ROUND UP

THE REFURBISHMENT of the **White Hart** was completed just before Christmas and customers were therefore able to enjoy the festive season without having to drink in what had in effect been a licensed building site. The new-look pub is pleasantly spacious with three separate well-defined lounge areas. Boddingtons Mild and Bitter are on sale through handpumps.

Around the corner, it looks as though the long predicted conversion of the **Railway** into a Henry's Table eaterie is imminent as a planning application to alter the pub and extend it into two adjoining cottages has been submitted by Village Inns, the Boddingtons subsidiary which runs the Henry's Table operation.

No more news of developments at the threatened **Red Lion** where despite numerous planning refusals, Playmaster Leisure still seem intent on drastic alterations. Rumours that the pub was to revert to a traditional tenancy appear unfounded.



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# MANCHESTER MATTERS

**F**IRST of all, apologies to the **Church** on Ardwick Green North, which was inadvertently omitted from the recently published "Ale of Two Cities"; it's still there, and still selling Websters Bitter & Choice and Wilsons Mild & Bitter on handpumps.

As the Eighties closed, the City Centre got the Christmas present any beer-drinker would dream of - a new Holts pub. It's the **Crown & Cushion** on Corporation Street, selling hand-pumped mild and bitter in the pleasantly refurbished surroundings of a former Whitbread pub, boasting what could be the only compact disc jukebox in Holts' tied estate. As their only City Centre tied house it deserves to prosper, and is conveniently situated on the route between the Rochdale Road freehouses, the **Harp & Shamrock**, and the **Queens Arms** in Cheetham. Just one niggle - they really ought to display their opening hours outside. This column's first visit, shortly after 6 on a Saturday evening, found the place closed, and insult was added to injury by the prominent window posters proclaiming "we are now open". This very welcome outlet in the City Centre is balanced by the removal of real ale from **Nickleby's** (Control Securities strike again) and the closure of the **Bridge Inn**.

Following the sale of Boddingtons Brewery, a curious change has occurred at their brewery tap, the **Brewers Arms** - real mild and bitter are still sold in both bars, but the handpumps in the lounge have been replaced by electrics, while those in the vault remain. Across the City Centre, the **Waldorf** becomes the latest Whitbread pub to add handpumped Marstons Pedigree; this beer has also reached the



# CAMRA CALLING!

**O**PENING Times will be out later this month so the first event to mention is our social on Monday 15th at the Polygon, Barlow Road, Levenshulme. As with all Monday Socials, this starts at 9.00pm. This is followed on Wednesday 17th by a trip to Hartleys Brewery at Ulverston - this will be an all day trip so please phone for details.

Two days later on Friday 19th there is our monthly Stagger, this time Hazel Grove. WE meet at the Rising Sun at 7.00pm and will be in the Grapes at 8.30.

On Monday 22nd there is a social at the Armoury Shaw Heath, Stockport and this is followed on Thursday 25th by Pub of the Month at the Kings Arms, Chorlton-on-Medlock (see article on page 3). There is a social on 29th at the Horseshoe, Chapel St, Levenshulme and on Friday 2nd February we are running another minibus around some of the less accessible pubs in East Manchester. Again, phone for details.

If you want more information about any of the above, or our activities in general, phone me, Angela Walker, on 0663 43769, evenings only.

**Old Cock** in Didsbury, where cask mild has unfortunately been withdrawn.

Finally, at the **Welcome** in Rusholme, the "simulated" handpumps which had been in use for bitter - essentially electric switches with a very long handle - have been removed and both Bitter and Original are served by genuine handpumps.

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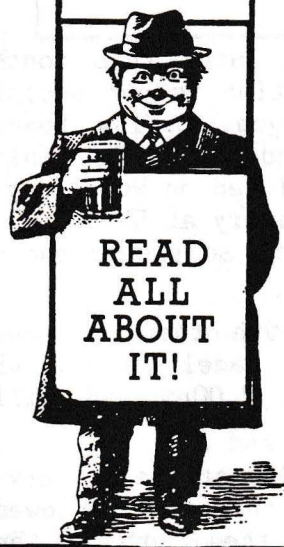
MARSTONS  
TAYLORS

BATEMANS  
TETLEYS





# PUB NEWS



Current range at the **Pack Horse** on Stockport's Hillgate is Chesters Mild, Boddingtons Bitter and Thwaites Bitter - the place seems to be well on the way to shedding the Whitbread influence and becoming a genuine freehouse. Devotees of Irish stout can try the Cork-brewed Beamish which, while admittedly keg, makes a tasty contrast to 'Draught' Guinness.

The **Bakers Vaults** on Stockport Market Place has spawned some very fancy new beer-pumps but fear not, Best Mild and Best Bitter are still "real", despite sharing bar mountings with the lager. The pub also retains its pre-eminence in lunchtime and early evening food (not one but **two** new chefs have recently been engaged), and in night-time music.

At the **Pineapple**, Belle Vue, we welcome new licensee Jeff Marshall. Jeff's no stranger to Hydes beers, as he moves from the well-thought-of **Osborne House** in Rusholme. We wish him all the best in his new surroundings.

**Francs**, formerly the Drovers Arms, on Ashton Old Road has reopened as the **Drover's Return**. Despite the more traditional name, the beer is still keg, dispensed through pseudo-continental fonts in an environment described by another local Whitbread licensee as "typical Whitbread...mirrors everywhere and very open-plan".

Another change on Stockport's Hillgate, as Dave Farnworth leaves Tetley's **Sun & Castle**, a new entry in this year's Good Beer Guide due to his hard work, for John Willie Lees' Assheton Arms in Middleton. Let's hope his successor at the Sun & Castle maintains the standard of beer in this fine pub.

Thomas Greenall's Original is now available at the **Stockport Arms** on St Petersgate, reasonably priced at £1.00 a pint, alongside Greenalls Bitter. Both beers are on electric "handpumps" but are "real" enough all the same. We can now confirm the suggestion in last month's Opening Times that this pub is no longer serving keg mild through one of those handpumps - now that this stain on its character has been removed it is worth paying a visit to this pleasant and cosy little pub if you're in central Stockport.

A rare piece of good planning news - we learn that late last year a plan to further extend the **Strawberry Gardens** in Offerton in the form of a conservatory and kitchen was thrown out by the Planning Dept.

Ruddles beers have disappeared from two Stockport outlets - both the **Wheatsheaf** on Higher Hillgate and the **Castlewood** on Bridge St Brow are now down to just Wilsons Bitter and Websters Bitter.

Due to supply problems, the **Woolpack** on Brinksway, Stockport has dropped Vaux Samson from its range, the replacement being Tetley Bitter which now joins the Theakstons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree on the bar. This year will also see the introduction of a weekly guest beer at the pub.

The **Vogue Wine Bar** and club has recently opened on Portland Street in the City Centre and is reportedly selling handpumped Tetley Bitter at £1 a pint.

Contributors to this edition: Jim Flynn, Rhys Jones, Peter Edwardson, John Clark, Ian Saunders, Alastair Walker, Phil Levison, Charlotte Bulmer, Pete Soane, Angela Walker, John Hutchinson.

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