

## BODDIES GO FOR GUESTS!

**T**HE Boddington Pub Co is all set to offer its tenants and managers a choice of guest beers in addition to the Boddingtons/Higsons and OB products currently available.

By taking this course of action they will be stealing a march on many of their local competitors: the National Brewers don't release their tenants from the tie until 1st May and as far as we know none of the other local brewers are contemplating a similar course of action.

A company source has confirmed to us that discussions are currently taking place with a number of potential suppliers, although exact details are being kept under wraps for the time being. There will be no question of pubs being forced to take a guest but they will be there should the licensee believe local trading conditions would make the introduction of another beer a realistic proposal.

The company are, it seems, anxious to exploit their position as one of the biggest non-brewing pub chains in the country and, within the confines of their supply agreement with Whitbread, seem determined to shop around for the best deal. Not that this will necessarily mean the best deal for the drinker - the import of other beers could spell the end for some of the current house beers, OB and Higsons milds looking particularly vulnerable. The policy has in fact probably already claimed its first victim in the not insubstantial shape of Higsons Brewery - see our report on page 2.

Meanwhile on the national front, the intentions of some of the major brewers are becoming more clear. Bass, who seem determined to go along with the new rules with as much bad grace as possible, have announced that their tenants will be able to select from a list of brewery supplied and approved guest beers, and whilst it is accepted that the tenants have complete freedom to pick whatever guest they want, Bass have 'advised' them to stick with the brewery list. Tetleys are also planning something along these lines we think and whilst they are staying tight-lipped for the present, they have indicated that they will not be adopting the Bass approach. As May 1st approaches we will be bringing you more news of what you can expect to happen in your local.



This is the logo which will soon be appearing on posters all over town as the countdown to the Fourth Stockport Beer Festival gets underway. This year the event will be bigger and better than ever. We have a new venue at Stockport Masonic Hall on the A6 which has over twice the capacity of the College. Of course we will also be having a lot more beer - more next month.

## The Robin Hood

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## FEBRUARY

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

## PUB OF THE MONTH

**P**UB OF THE MONTH for February 1990 is the **Strawberry Duck** on Crabtree Lane, Clayton.

If you are looking for a pub which has risen from literally nothing into a thriving local, then you need look no further than the Strawberry Duck. A run-down Wilsons house which was finally abandoned by the brewery and closed down it was rescued in 1984 by David McConville and his wife Julie who purchased the pub free of tie. Inevitably, trade was slow to pick up at first but has now reached the level where an extension to the pub has become necessary. The new area will serve as both a function room and also another drinking area at the weekend. In the middle of last year Dave decided to hand over the day to day running of the pub to a manager, Arthur, who lives over the pub with wife Ann.

The standard beer range at the pub is Holts Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter and Websters Green Label, all well kept. Lately however these have been joined by guest beers appearing at regular intervals, the latest being Clark's Hammerhead.

Two guest beers are planned for the presentation evening on Thursday, 22nd February. The pub is easily reached from Manchester by taking one of the Ashton New Road buses, Crabtree Lane is the right-hand turn immediately before the bingo hall next to Mayne's garage.

## HIGSONS AXE

**'T**HEY 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..."

So we reported in November's OT when Whitbread announced the purchase of Boddingtons' brewing interests. Well, we didn't have long to wait as early last month Whitbread announced that the Liverpool brewery would close by July, with production going to Sheffield. The aim is to match the flavour of Higson's beers at Sheffield, although past experience shows that attempts to reproduce beers elsewhere never work - look at the so-called Wilsons we now get from Halifax.

Whitbread point out that the brewery was operating at less than half capacity, and much of that was Kaltenberg Lager. This being so then the future of the plant wasn't helped by the decision of the Boddington Pub Co to axe Kaltenberg as its in-house lager and instead go for Heineken and Castlemaine XXXX, brewed by Whitbread and Allied respectively. It has to be asked whether the brewery would have had much of a future under Boddington's ownership - indeed it's beginning to be apparent that one of the 'benefits' of the sale is that Boddingtons have got someone else to do their dirty work for them.

The closure will have little impact locally as Higsons beers were rarely available, but on Merseyside they are losing their last brewery and up to 45 jobs, a sad legacy from what used to call itself 'Manchester's favourite brewer'.

**B**Y **B** We reported in November's Opening Times that Whitbread were planning a new cask bitter for the North of England, to be produced at their Sheffield brewery. We can now reveal that, as predicted, it is to be a reformulation of **Bentley's Yorkshire Bitter**, and the beer has already been on test market where it has apparently been favourably received. Whitbread expect that this, together with the availability of Boddingtons to their pubs will spell the end, not only of Chesters Bitter but also cask Trophy. Will they be missed?

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# FLEXIBLE HOURS: REVOLUTION OR DAMP SQUIB?

Peter Edwardson reports .....

**N**OW that flexible licensing hours have been with us for over a year, a nationwide CAMRA survey of over 750 pubs gives the opportunity to review what changes have really taken place on the ground.

The level of interest from licensees has been very high - over 80% have tried some form of changed or extended hours, and only 7% have judged the experiment a failure and gone back to their old hours. More than 25% of pubs have tried opening all day Monday to Saturday, while another 20% have tried opening on one or both of Friday and Saturday. Virtually all licensees who have made some change have taken an extra hour or half-hour on Sunday lunchtime. In general pubs in towns and cities have been more willing to change their hours, probably because they have more passing trade on foot.

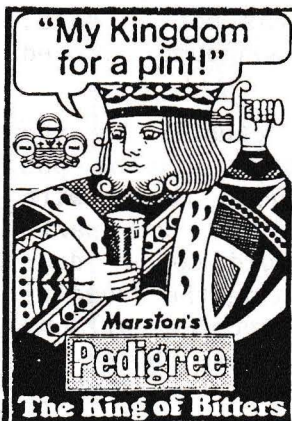
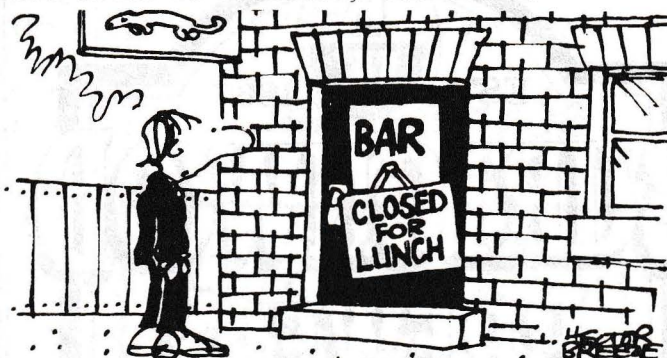
Flexible hours are good for trade, with over half the pubs reporting an increase in business from their new hours. However, if anything, drunkenness and rowdiness have decreased in the view of licensees, as drinking becomes less frantic and more leisurely. This follows a similar pattern to the experience in Scotland when flexible hours came in a few years ago, and directly contradicts some of the dire warnings made by the anti-drink lobby. Many clubs have reported a drop in sales as their customers are tempted away by pubs staying open all day, so across the board there may well have been no significant increase at all in alcohol consumption.

The most disappointing aspect is the low proportion of licensees actually displaying their opening hours. Greater Manchester was

especially bad, with only 1 in 5 pubs displaying hours outside, and a similar number posting them inside, which is better than nothing but only just. Pub customers deserve better information than this. At opposite ends of the scale, local brewers Hydes and Grand Met offshoot Chef & Brewer have set a good example by producing standard durable plaques showing opening hours which are placed by the side of pub doors. Why can't the other brewers follow suit?

It's always been CAMRA's view that hours should be flexible to give licensees the choice of when to open to serve their own particular pattern of trade. No licensee should be criticised for keeping his pub shut if there aren't many customers about. But some licensees are conspicuously failing to exploit the opportunities which the new laws offer. A particularly bad example is Central Manchester, where most of the pubs still seem to shut their doors at 3 o'clock sharp on a Saturday afternoon, including many pubs on busy shopping streets. You can find a pub open after 3 if you know where to look, and those few people who actually want to drink all day no doubt will, but to the thirsty shopper at 4 o'clock it might prove very difficult.

What are these licensees afraid of? All the lager-swilling football hooligans will be safely inside Maine Road or Old Trafford in mid-afternoon. I find it difficult to understand why they choose to turn away so much lucrative trade which is obviously out there.



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# STAGGER

BY: RHYS JONES

A COLD November night saw us gather at the **Locomotive** - sorry, it's the **Smithfield** now - on Ashton Old Road. Once a pub of great character, though in need of heavy cleaning, the Loco has been refurbished, given a totally unnecessary new name, and in the process has lost a great deal of its atmosphere. However it must be said that if you'd not known the pub before, its present state is not unpleasing - try the vault, where the bench seating gives a tangible link with a simpler past. We enjoyed a fine pint of handpumped Boddington's Bitter, the pub's only cask beer.

Passing the **Napoleon**, still shut at 7.20, we made for the **High Bank**, a modern Boddington's two-roomer. The vault was remarkable for the extraordinary number of pigs behind the bar - mostly china, but including photographs, postcards and soft toys. Again the only cask beer in the house, handpumped Boddington's Bitter was above average but not as good as the Smithfield.

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Further up Ogden Lane is the **Royal Oak**, one of the pubs Banks's of Wolverhampton bought from Wilsons a few years ago. Considerably knocked about by Wilsons, the pub lacks much real character, but the vault is pleasant enough. Not so pleasant though, was the dispensing system used for the mild - despite the presence of a handpump, with clip, facing us as we entered, the mild was actually served from a keg pump further along the bar. Banks's record on "trading standards" issues is generally admirable, so this came as a surprise and disappointment, and it is much to be hoped that the brewery sort the matter out in the near future. The bitter, which was handpumped, was well above average.

Back to Ashton Old Road now, to Greenalls' **Pack Horse**. An uninspiring modernisation has at least left it still a two-room pub. Both Bitter and the recently introduced Thomas Greenall's Original, both on handpump, were above average, the Original being marginally preferred. The presence of keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump is a continuing black mark against the pub.

A little further out on the Old Road stands the **Prince of Wales**, a two-room Bass pub which is living proof that red flock wallpaper lives on! Handpumped Stones Bitter, the only cask beer, was below average.

The next pub was Boddington's **Wrexham**, an excellent multi-room local retaining a traditional atmosphere. There's some good tilework on both floor and walls. Once again there was only one cask beer, handpumped Boddington's Bitter. This was judged to be well above average.

On towards Higher Openshaw crossroads now, calling first at Robinsons **Forresters Arms**. The exterior of the pub sports a splendid tiled frieze recalling the long-vanished Kays Atlas Brewery. After that, the blandly modernised interior came as a disappointment - sadly not an uncommon experience in Robinsons houses. The mild drinkers among us, hoping for the traditional thing here, were disappointed for the handpumped Best Mild was not on sale. Best Bitter though, also on handpump, proved to be above average.

Scarcely a stagger away and actually on the crossroads is the **Lord Raglan**, a Wilsons pub consisting of vault and lounge, both with a notably welcoming atmosphere. It was particularly pleasing to see the old corner door of the vault still in use. Spurning the dreadful Websters, the pub offers handpumped Wilsons Bitter and (at last!) mild; both were above average.

Crossing to Fairfield Road we found Boddington's **Concert Inn**, which must be accounted the highlight of the night. Formerly very run down, it's been thoroughly spruced up inside and out (note the external lettering advertising just

"Ales & Stout" - the place had a beer only licence for many years), without compromise to its multi-room layout and traditional atmosphere; Boddingtons here sets an example to other brewers, and it's a shame that they themselves don't often produce such a high standard of refurbishment. Just to be in keeping, the beer was the best of the night as well, though (you've guessed it!) handpumped Boddington's Bitter was the only cask beer available.

Crossing again at the lights, we came back to earth with a bump in the wide and noisy open spaces of Chesters' **Halfway House**. Mind you, both traditional beers (mild and bitter on handpump) were rated above average, which is quite an achievement for Chesters.


We stayed on Chesters in our next call, the **Albion**. This, though, is still a proper pub, with vault and lounge, both busy. Again Chesters Mild and Bitter were available on handpump. Neither was as good as its counterpart at the Halfway, with the mild being rated frankly below average. A shame, for as a pub, the Albion seemed to us to be far the better of the two.

It was now time for our final call, the **Oddfellows** at the north end of Abbey Hey Lane. This is another good multi-roomed Boddingtons local preserving traditional values. The last half-hour found it at its thriving best, but we did manage to find seats. Both mild and bitter were on handpump and both were well above average, the mild - always good here in my experience - being marginally preferred. To sum up, a good pub in which to end the night - and handy for buses as well.

Of course, the comments made simply reflect what we found on the crawl (we may have caught some pubs on a bad night - the chance any customer takes). That said, the superiority of the Boddingtons beers sampled in nearly half the pubs visited to the products of the national brewers, not least Whitbread (chesters), was a theme that ran through the night. It's impossible not to fear for the future of Boddingtons now that the brewery is owned by Whitbread.



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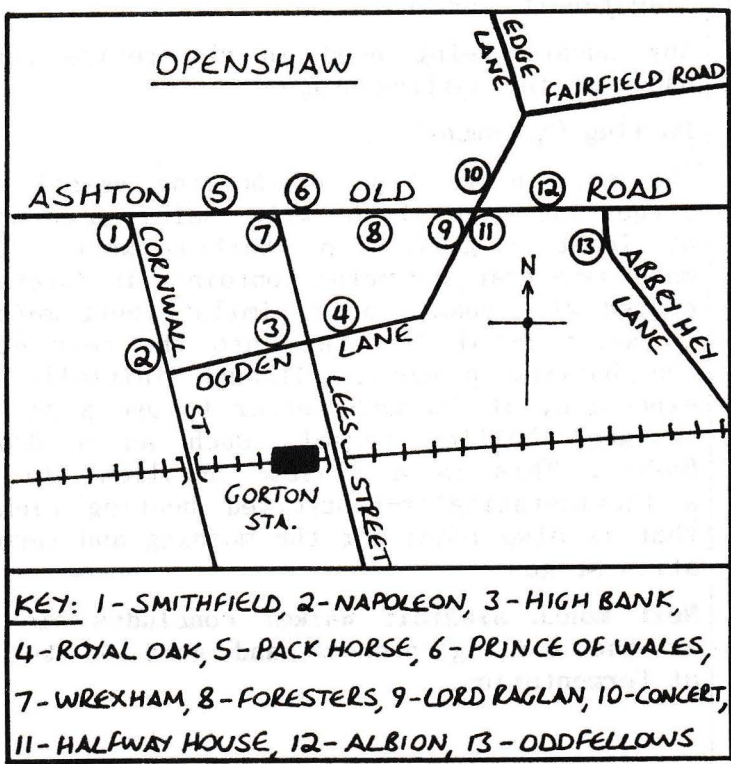
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# HOME BREW

BY ALASTAIR WALKER

This Month - Hops and Boiling

**A**LE, the original, traditional, British alcoholic drink, was an unhopped, fermented malt liquor, which may also have been flavoured with herbs such as Rosemary, Ground Ivy or Nettles. In the 14th Century, hops were introduced from the continent and the resulting drink known as beer. Initially, a great deal of resistance to this 'pernicious weed' was put up by traditionalists but eventually the refreshing bitterness and fruitiness imparted to beer by the hop led to its widespread acceptance, to the extent that unhopped ale is no longer brewed.

## Ingredients

The amount of hops required for a particular beer is between  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 ounce per gallon, and is dependent on the strength of the beer, ie the greater the amount of malt, the greater amount of hops required to balance the maltiness. For instance, mild and light bitters (up to 1040og) would require 2-3 oz of hops per 5-gallon brew, but premium bitter and old ale would need 3-5 oz per 5 gallons. The degree of bitterness of the final beer can be increased

by increasing the quantity of hops per unit volume, or by using a different variety of hop with a higher bitterness rating. The bitterness rating is more or less a measure of the alpha acid content of the hop and can range from 3.5% to 9.5% depending on the variety.

Although continental hops tend to have higher bitterness ratings than British hops, they do not contain the same quantities of constituents that impart the well-rounded fruitiness gained from good quality British hops. Therefore I would not recommend the use of European hops (eg Hallertau, Saaz) in greater quantities than  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 oz per 5 gallons. The following varieties of hops might be encountered at a good quality home brew supplier:-

**Low Bitterness** - Fuggles

**Medium Bitterness** - Kent Goldings, Whitbread Goldings, Bramling Cross

**High Bitterness** - Challenger, Northern Brewer, Bullion.

It is perfectly acceptable (and commercially quite common) to mix different varieties of hop in the same brew. For instance:-

**Mild** - 2oz Fuggles,  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz Goldings

**Bitter** - 2oz Goldings, 1oz Northern Brewer

**Strong Bitter** - 1oz Goldings, 2oz Challenger,  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz Bullion

**Old Ale** - 2oz Northern Brewer, 2oz Challenger

Although hop oils and compressed (pelletised) hops are commonly available, I would only advocate the use of whole hops, since oils and extracts are extremely concentrated, making it very easy to use too much, resulting in excessive bitterness, whereas problems with mushiness and lack of clarity can be encountered with pelletised hops (which incidentally, look like rabbit food!).

Any sugars being used in the recipe can be added at the boiling stage.

## Boiling Equipment

The most basic type of boiling vessel is a large saucepan which will safely accommodate at least 3 gallons of boiling wort. Please make sure that any metal container is internally coated with enamel or a similar inert material to avoid metal leaching into the beer during the boiling process. Although initially more expensive, it is much better to use a purpose-designed boiling vessel, such as a Bruheat Boiler. This is a plastic 5-gallon bin with a thermostatically-controlled heating element, that is also ideal for the mashing and fermentation stages

Next month Alastair Walker concludes his look at the boiling process and goes on to look at fermentation.

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## LETTERS

From T.J., Didsbury:

In reply to Rhys Jones letter: in Didsbury, Withington and Fallowfield, the 'norm' is reversed, managed houses charge more than tenancies selling the same beer.

From Malcolm Nicholls, Marketing Director, Tetley Walker:

I was disappointed to read your article on the Briton's Protection, particularly as no thought seems to have been made to check the story with us before publication. The facts are that we have never had any intention of building a hotel on the site; the objective is to maintain and enhance the quality and character of the pub as it is now. Tetley Walker is in the pub business and does not run hotels.

The scale of developments planned for the area around the pub means that we would be failing in our duty to shareholders if we did not attempt to transfer the pub to management, but we are keen that the tenant stays in the pub, given his proven ability to run it successfully, and are discussing the situation with him currently. In no circumstances will the tenant be "removed".

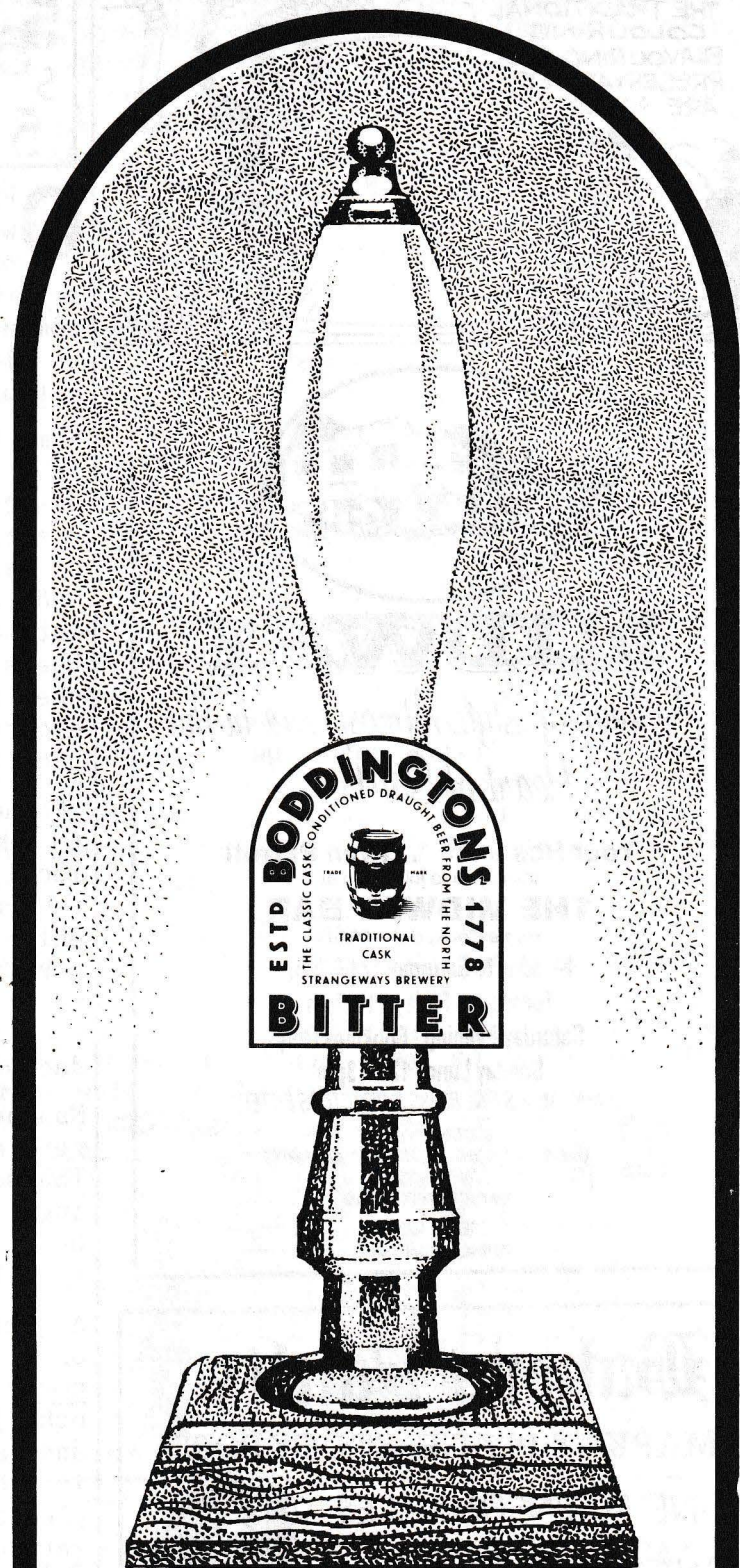
Your sweeping comments about the undesirability of managers as opposed to tenants do grave disservice to many committed managers; the most recent of many CAMRA awards won by Tetley Walker have gone to the Philharmonic in Liverpool, which is a managed house.

Tetley Walker has always been keen to discuss issues of interest and concern with CAMRA as I am sure our liaison officers will agree, but I have to say that our relationship is not helped by inaccurate articles such as your recent one.

## GONE FISHING

The **Longsight** on Kirkmanshulme Lane, Belle Vue, has recently started fishing trips on Sunday mornings, starting around 7am for a full morning's fishing before returning to the pub for opening time. All comers are welcome, and there's spare tackle available if you don't have your own - best to contact licensee Rick in advance for this.

They'd like to know of suitable coarse fishing waters within, say, 30 miles of Manchester - any suggestions to the pub. In addition, other pubs with a fishing interest are invited to arrange friendly matches - phone Rick on 223 6470.



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PRESERVATIVES  
ARE ADDED



# 55 YEARS AGO

**O**PENING TIMES of February 1985 reported that Webster's beers from Halifax had started appearing on this side of the Pennines, and then, within a fairly short period of time, a new joint trading company with Wilsons was set up, brewing was transferred to Halifax, and Newton Heath Brewery was shut down - thus ending 150 years of brewing by Wilsons.

Some things never change - fake handpumps were reported in a couple of local Greenall's pubs, dispensing fizzy gassed beer. Other brewers have had a go at this practice from time to time - the handpump does seem to have almost magical pulling power (sorry). The odd thing is that Greenall's have fairly recently introduced a range of clearly labelled Cask Conditioned beers, including Thomas Greenall's Original - and the type of dispense? "Handpumps" that operate an electric pump in the cellar (although some of their pubs have real handpumps).

"Round Britain Drinker" reported a nostalgic visit to the Lancaster area, to sample Yates & Jackson's local brews, before the brewery closed following its take-over by Thwaites. Which just proves that it isn't only the brewing giants that commit the take-over atrocities and closures. Thwaites had always been revered as a good traditional brewery, but that image received a severe dent when they took over Yates & Jackson, and then announced the closure.

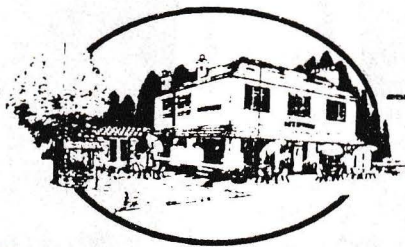
Manchester and Salford were making applications to get permitted hours extended to 11.00pm Monday to Thursday - licensees were reported to have mixed feelings about this. It seems strange how this odd half-hour aroused controversy, yet we have settled down to all day opening for over a year now.

A group of CAMRA members were guests of Pennine Hosts on a conducted tour of some of their pubs. CAMRA have never pulled punches when commenting on this (or any other) branch of the Grand Metropolitan organisation, and although some caustic comments were made, all in all it turned out to be a very interesting and pleasant evening. Probably it would be even more interesting now to retrace those steps, and see how things have changed in the comparatively short period of five years.

## SAIR INN VISIT

On Saturday, 24th February, Stockport Harriers are hiring a luxury coach (with toilet) to go to Leeds for the National Cross Country Championship, leaving Stockport Town Hall at 10am, arriving Leeds City Centre about 11.30/12.00, returning back at 5.00pm via the Sair Inn homebrew pub at Linthwaite for an early evening session from 6-8.30 than back to Stockport for about 9.30.

The cost is £6 including Irish Stew at the Sair. If anyone is interested they should contact Peter Powell, 53 Holly St, SK1 4DP (work tel 946 0348) by 19th Feb.



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# MANCHESTER MATTERS

**A** VERY quiet month it's been, with just one new outlet to report in the substantial shape of **Greens Cafe Bar**, occupying a former banking hall on the corner of York Street and Spring Gardens in the City Centre. The only real ale is Boddington's Bitter, on handpump at £1 a pint, but the opulent surroundings are worth a look if you're in that part of town - and at least they top it up without needing to be asked.

Our other news also comes from the more expensive end of the City Centre trade, where the **Abercrombie**, Bootle St., has dropped Castle Eden Ale (but continues to sell Marstons Pedigree at a price, £1.26, exceeding a good few cafe bars), while the **Shakespeare** has dropped Websters Choice in favour of handpumped Ruddles Bitter.

Just before we went to press we heard that the **Waggon & Horses** in Longsight was closed and boarded up. The former Good Beer Guide pub has become increasingly decrepit over the past few years and its closure is hardly a surprise. As one wag remarked, it's now almost bad enough for Control Securities to buy!

## RED WRECKERS!

No sooner do we report that there is nothing to report on the threatened **Red Lion** in Cheadle than the place is closed, surrounded by scaffolding and thoroughly gutted by Playmaster Leisure. Foundations have also been laid for what looks like an extension. We are told that the work is scheduled to take several months such is the extensive nature of the alterations. More news when we have it.



# CAMRA CALLING!

**F**OLLOWING January's hectic calendar, this month is fairly quiet on the social front.

The branch meeting is on Thursday 8th, and will be held at the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. We will be selecting the entries for the next national Good Beer Guide at this meeting so it will be a prompt 8.00pm start.

On Monday 12th there will be a social at the Crown, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury. As with all Monday Socials, this starts at 9.00pm. This is followed on Friday 16th with our monthly Stagger, this time covering Hyde Road. We start at 7.00pm at the Star, Ardwick and will be in the Unicorn at 8.30.

On Monday 16th there is a social at the Crown, Hillgate, Stockport and on Thursday 22nd we present our Pub of the Month award to the Strawberry Duck, Crabtree Lane, Clayton.

Just two more socials to finish off with. On Monday 26th we have a two-way social - 9.0pm at the Red Lion, Wilmslow Rd., Withington and 10.00pm at the Manor House, also Wilmslow Road. Finally on Monday 5th March the social will be at the Stanley Arms, Newbridge Lane, Stockport.

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

## CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION



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MARSTONS  
TAYLORS

BATEMANS  
TETLEYS



## PUB NEWS



The **Stanley Arms**, Newbridge Lane, Stockport is to be the first Stockport pub to sell beers from Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery. A handpump has been installed on the back bar for the exclusive use of these beers. Brendan tells us that he is hoping to supply the pub with up to 20 different beers over the next 12 months. Also appearing at the Stanley Arms as a regular beer will be Thwaites Bitter, again the Stanley will be its only Stockport outlet. Owner Mike Belsham also tells us that our report last time that the Tetley beers could be replaced by Bass products isn't quite right - Bass beers

may be appearing alongside the Tetley's. Lastly Marston's Pedigree is to go and be replaced by another product from the Whitbread stable (Higsons or OB would be nice).

The alterations at the **Arden Arms**, Millgate, will be finished by the time you read this and it has to be said that, for once, Robinsons really have done a first class job in incorporating the disused kitchen into the body of the pub. As we reported, a folding oak screen has been inserted into the wall dividing the former kitchen from the vault, creating either one large room or two smaller ones which can be used for meetings and functions as well as serving as a much needed extension to the drinking area on busy weekends. The attention to detail is remarkable with the screen surround and new dado rail in the ex-kitchen matching exactly the original door surrounds and rails in the rest of the pub. The bench seating in the vault has been restored and a new dartboard provided. Future plans include lifting the lobby carpet to reveal the old black and white tiled floor and the restoration of the extensive outbuildings and courtyard to form an outside drinking area. Landlord Phil tells us that his aim is to create a town-centre showpiece for Robinsons - it looks as though he will succeed.

The **Horseshoe** and the **Unicorn** on Hyde Road, West Gorton, threatened by Manchester's 'intermediate ring road', have survived into the 90's, but perhaps not for much longer. Government

funding has now been agreed for the road scheme, and construction - or rather demolition - is due to start in March.

Two new beers have recently emerged from Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery at the **Kings Arms** in Chorlton-on-Medlock. Most exclusive is undoubtedly Dobbin's Dark Mild, a 1032-gravity brew which will generally only be sold at the Kings Arms. But possibly even more eagerly awaited is the 'general release' of Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (1050og/5%ABV), the superb hoppy and aromatic beer whose one-off brews last year were a highlight drinking experience. Sierra will now be available at both the Kings Arms and in the free trade.

Quite a few people seem to have formed the view that the **Beer House** on Rochdale Road is closed. Whilst it is true that the pub is currently up for sale, it is still being run by Simon Finch and is open as usual. Guest beers recently have included the full ranges from the Bull Mastiff and Malton breweries.

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