

WE'RE No. 1! (AND NUMBER 2!)

LOCAL brews scooped two major awards in CAMRA'S prestigious Champion Beer of Britain competition, the finals of which were held at the Great British Beer Festival in the first week of August.

The beers were split into five sections according to strength and style, with a further category for new breweries. It was in this latter section that Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery scored a notable success with a worthy second place for his premium Sierra Nevada Pale Ale - a particularly impressive achievement when it is remembered that the brewery has been in operation for less than 18 months. Brendan is certainly delighted with his success and told Opening Times "I'm very pleased, and particularly appreciate the help and support from CAMRA in Stockport and Manchester".

In the past, winners have enjoyed a boost in sales and Brendan will be hoping for this with Sierra Nevada, which has already been making a name for itself in the local free trade. As a bonus, we also understand that Brendan will be brewing Sierra Nevada Stout and Porter in the coming months.

West Coast's achievement was surpassed, however, by local brewers Robinsons who not only won the Strong Ale category with their Old Tom but also came third in the overall Championship. Brewing Director David Robinson was on holiday at the time and only learned of the award through the press! He

expressed his delight, telling us that he was "absolutely thrilled, as are all the brewing staff".

He recognised that the scope for increased free trade sales for a beer like Old Tom are limited, but nevertheless it is possible that enterprising freetraders and national brewery tenants may give it some thought in the winter months.

Particularly noteworthy was the success of Old Tom which is relatively unknown in national terms, against such famous products as Theakstons Old Peculier.

The other winners were:

Mild & Light Bitter - Harveys Pale Ale, from Lewes, Sussex.

Standard Bitter - Adnams Bitter from Southwold, Suffolk.

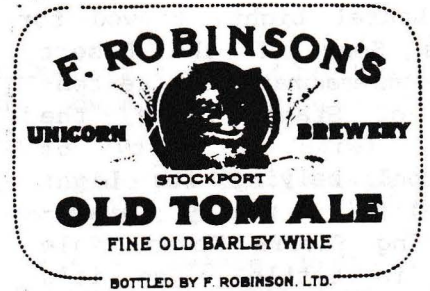
Best Bitter - Taylors Landlord from Keighley

Special Bitter - Ind Coope Burton Ale from Burton

New Brewery - Woodfordes Wherry Best from Norfolk

The Champion Beer of Britain was Burton Ale with Taylors Landlord in second place and Old Tom third.

The finalists were nominated by CAMRA members throughout the country and were judged by a panel of 32 including journalists, brewers and beer writers.



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Plus news and views on all the local pub and beer scene.

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**The Plough
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— Fine Ales —

Good Home-Cooked

— Meals —

*** BY GRAHAM THE CHEF ***



480 3833

A ROYAL GUEST

YET another local pub has taken the plunge in the guest beer market. The latest to join the trailblazers is the **Royal Oak** on Castle Street, Edgeley, Stockport which has added Holts Bitter, no less, to its range. Retailing at 86p a pint, it easily undercuts the Grand Met beers on offer and appears to be selling well. We hope that all local Opening Times readers will call in and give this venture the support it deserves.

LIGHT FANTASTIC

THE latest bottled beer from Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery in Chorlton-on-Medlock is Laurel Light. Brewed for Laurel and Hardy fans Sons of the Desert to commemorate the centenary of Stan's birth, the beer (with a hefty 6% alcohol belying its Light name) is really award-winning Sierra Nevada Pale Ale in bottle - so it's likely to be worth drinking as well as collecting!



Brendan tells us that he is also discontinuing production of his light North County Mild in favour of the dark Dobbins Mild - sales of the light beer were down to just 9 pints a week which meant that quality just could not be maintained.

VANISHING MILD

ANOTHER beer in danger of disappearing seems to be Wilsons Mild. A recent survey of Stockport's pubs for CAMRA'S Stockport pub guide to be published next year, revealed that in just four years the number of outlets for this beer had decreased from 35 to 15. We have said before that Grand Met want to phase this beer out, and now it seems we have some proof, particularly as other brewers' mild outlets have remained virtually unchanged.

SEPTEMBER

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

PUB OF THE MONTH

OUR award for September goes to one of our splendid East Manchester pubs, the **Oddfellows Arms**, Abbey Hey Lane, Openshaw.

The pub is prospering in the able hands of licensee Irene Keefe who has been in charge for about 18 months. The Oddfellows is a no-nonsense drinking pub with at present no food or live music, but is by no means a spit and sawdust joint. The building was renovated in recent years and Boddingtons managed to produce a very good result; some stained glass and lots of polished wood and brass, but nothing patently over the top. They get through around a dozen barrels of consistently good Boddingtons Bitter a week, and to its credit in a traditionally bitter drinking area, sells about a barrel of mild as well. Although this has usually been Boddingtons, this has recently been replaced by Chesters Mild.

The Oddfellows certainly deserves the award: a traditional pub with three separate rooms and a good local atmosphere. Come along on Thursday 27th September and see for yourself - while you're there, as well as enjoying the beer, why not come and talk to the CAMRA members present about increasing our presence in this part of town?

If you intend to arrive by bus, all the Ashton Old Road services stop nearby, and Abbey Hey Lane is less than 200 yards up from the Ogden Lane/Fairfield Road traffic lights at the Halfway House.



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Arden Arms

MILLGATE, STOCKPORT

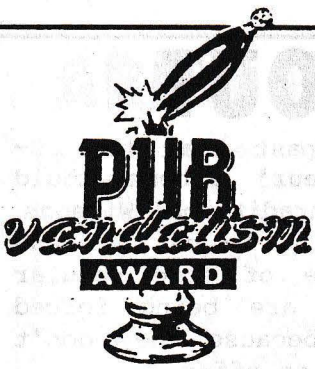
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ON DRAUGHT

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PUB VANDALISM AWARDS 1990



AFTER careful consideration of all contenders Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA have announced the first winners of their annual 'Pub Vandalism Awards'. These awards are designed to

highlight the continuing threat to the fabric of our pubs and the traditional local itself. Both winners could well prove controversial but equally both are considered prime examples of the way our pubs are likely to be threatened in the 1990's.

The first award, subtitled the "Chicken in a Basket Award", for the total eradication of a traditional local in favour of a yuppie-style eating haunt, goes to **Playmaster Leisure** for their work on the **Red Lion** in Cheadle. Despite a long-fought campaign by the (former) regulars, this superb example of a community local has been extended, refurbished and dragged upmarket in such a way that no trace of the old-style pub is left. To be sure, the 'old' Red Lion badly needed refurbishing - the toilets needed bringing inside and much work had to be done on the cellar. The pub was arguably shabby - what it had, though, can never be replaced - a strength of community spirit rarely seen in even the most traditional of pubs. Childrens parties, outings, charity fundraising, pub games, all played their part in creating a unique institution where young and old, well-off and not so well-off could all mix in an atmosphere of relaxed companionship. While the 'new' pub is smart, plush and comfortable, it is at the same time an essentially soulless place catering for upwardly mobile diners. Bouncers on the door at weekends and 10p on the beer have only added insult to injury.

The second award, for the most gratuitous and unnecessary alteration, goes to **Tetley-Walker**

for the **Sun & Castle** on Stockport's Hillgate. The **Sun & Castle** was rebuilt in the 1930's and despite some alterations, most notably the loss of the "Outdoor Dept", it retained many classic features of the period - superb leaded glass (in the windows, over the bar and, most notably, in the partition wall that formed the entrance corridor) and an abundance of light oak panelling. All this has been swept away in an attempt to return the pub to its Victorian roots, despite the fact that the pub as it now stands is no more than 60 years old. This has involved the removal of all the fine glass, the removal of a fine partition wall and in addition all the panelling has been stained mahogany.

True the pub remains a proper local and what has been done is not, in itself, offensive to the eye. Indeed there are many pubs where this type of change would be seen as a great improvement. With the **Sun & Castle**, however, it's simply the right refurbishment in very much the wrong pub. As a prime example of all too common attempts to 'Victorianise' virtually any pub built before 1970 and as one of the worst local losses of that increasingly endangered species, the classic 1930's pub, the award was felt to be well deserved.

Over the coming 12 months we will continue to monitor changes to the local pub scene - will Holts get a 'gong' for what they are currently doing to the Seven Stars? Will your local win an award? All will be revealed in 12 months time when we announce the Pub Vandalism Awards 1991.

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Billies Restaurant, Chorlton

FORCED OUT

WE have warned in the past that the 20-year lease 'Inntrepreneur' scheme could spell the end of many a traditional Wilsons local and this is now proving to be the case with the imminent departure of some popular licencees who, in effect, are being forced out of their pubs simply because they don't like the terms of the scheme on offer.

Grand Metropolitan, the ultimate owners of Wilsons, have declared their intention of converting all remaining tenancies by the end of the year and some well known pubs are now up for grabs as 'Licenced Business Retail Opportunities'. The saddest of all these must be the Crown on Hillgate, Stockport which with the departure of landlord Brian Cumston will sever a family connection with the pub going back over 80 years. The Crown is perhaps unique among Wilsons local estate with its traditional, unspoilt vault and quiet backroom where waitress service is still available. Any newcomer, who could well be paying a fancy rent and have stiff sales targets to meet (and swingeing penalties to pay if they are not met) will be sorely tempted to get as much money out of the place as possible - a one-room knock-through and a bar full of fancy lagers at fancy prices beckons. A sad day indeed for the Stockport pub scene.

WHAT A BUMMER!

IT IS, of course, the Inntrepreneur scheme that brought Cheekies to the Stockport pub scene. Now, CAMRA has come in for some stick in the local press for daring to suggest that a pub sign consisting of a pair of illuminated plastic buttocks might not be in the best of taste. We are, it seems, spoilsports for raising the slightest word of criticism...

What nonsense! No-one is criticising the people who have taken this pub on and who are doing their best to make a go of what was not the busiest of pubs in the past. We hope they succeed, certainly they deserve a pat on the back for being one of the few local pubs to take a guest beer but what positive effects they hope to get from this piece of tasteless tat masquerading as a pub sign is beyond us... unless of course it's all this free publicity.

SKY HIGH PRICE HEIST

A common gripe is the price of your pint - we should all be grateful that we don't live in Brighton where pub prices have gone through the roof and are heading into orbit. Visitors to the town for CAMRA's national beer festival could enjoy a local Manchester favourite, Robinsons Best Bitter, which one local free-house was offering, the price?...A mere £1.46 a pint. The cheapest beer in town was mild from local independent, Gales, and that was £1.16!

The Red Lion

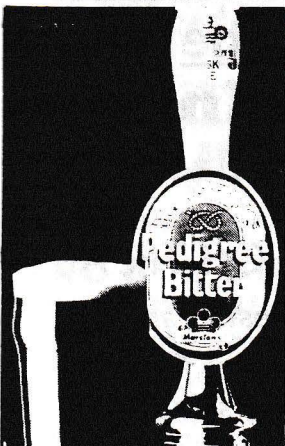
WITHINGTON

Mon.-Fri 11.-11

Handpulled Marstons

Pedigree and Burton

Best Bitter



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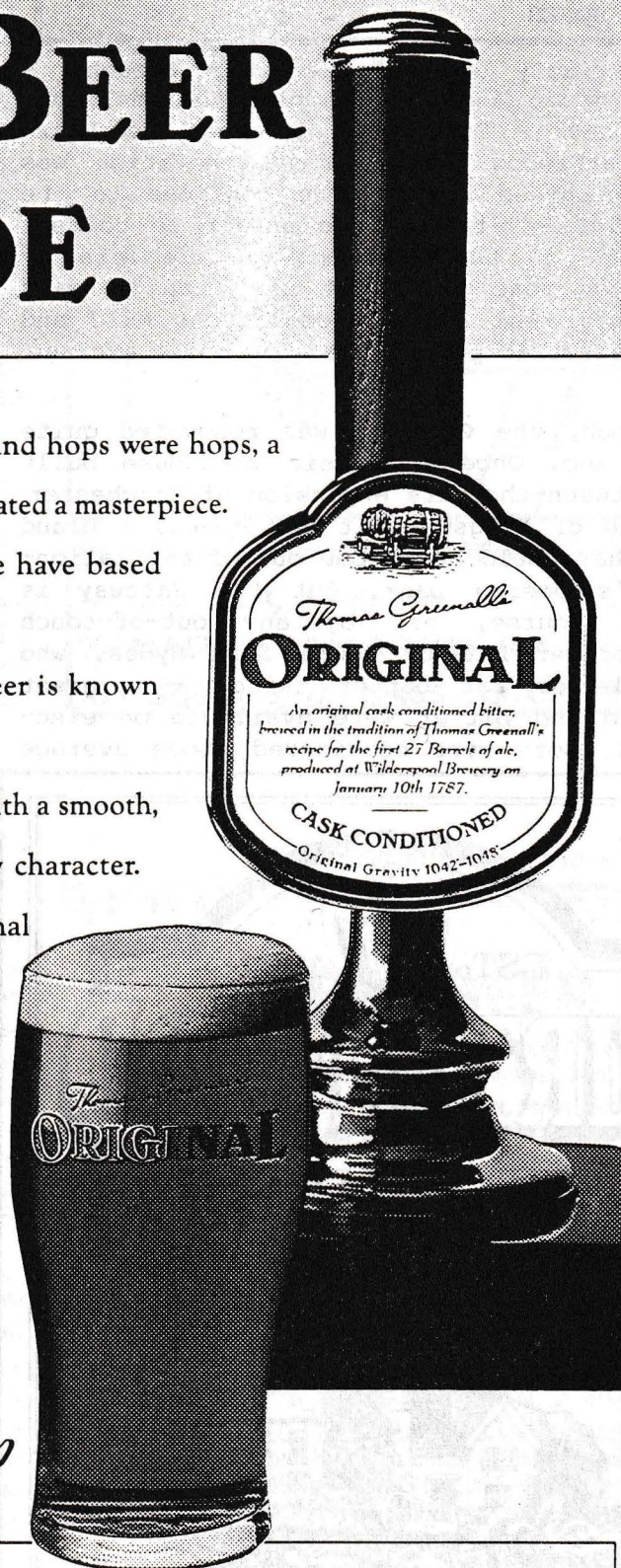
Hardly surprising, then, that this beer is known as Thomas Greenall's Original.

It's a strong, dark, full bodied bitter with a smooth, rounded flavour and a distinctive hoppy character.

Because Thomas Greenall's Original needs careful handling you won't find it everywhere. Only in those public houses where the licensee's cellarmanship is proven beyond question.

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Thomas Greenall's
ORIGINAL
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RAILWAY, 74/76 Wellington Road North. GREYHOUND, Ladybridge Road, Cheadle Hulme.
(All above outlets in Stockport).

TOMMY DUCKS, 8/12 East Street. PACK HORSE, 359/361 Deansgate. PACK HORSE, 1135 Ashton Old Road, Openshaw.
WELCOME INN, 2 Hyth Road, Didsbury. CROWN, 770 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury.

DOG & PARTRIDGE, 665/7 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury. QUEENS ARMS, 72 Guide Lane, Denton.

CARTERS ARMS, 209 Stockport Road, Denton.

(All above outlets in Manchester).

STAGGER

BY: RHYS JONES

A WARM drizzly summer's evening brought a large group out to sample the delights of Didsbury. First of all was the **Parrs Wood** on Parrswood Road, where renovation was still in progress so we were confined to the vault. Obviously it would be unfair to comment on the pub, as the work may be complete by the time you read this, but what can be said is that both real ales - Boddingtons Mild and Bitter on electric pumps - were of above average quality.

Our next pub, the **Gateway**, was renovated quite some time ago. Once a classic roadhouse built for the between-the-wars expansion of Manchester either side of Kingsway, it now sports a bland interior that could have come out of any national brewer's design pack. But the Gateway is owned, of course, not by any out-of-touch national brewer but by local firm Hydes, who are capable of far better things - a great shame. Mild and bitter were available on electric pumps. Both were considered above average

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BURTONWOOD
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**A FAMILY TRADITION
OF FINE BREWING**

with the bitter being marginally preferred.

Our next call, the **Didsbury** on Wilmslow Road by Fletcher Moss, really is owned by a national brewer, Grand Metropolitan - and it showed, not least in the prices, Ruddles on handpump cost £1.14 for Bitter and £1.28 for County! Perhaps the management justify the prices by reference to the heating costs, for the place was so grossly over-heated as to be quite uncomfortable. In any event, the display rack advertising Grand Met account cards was only too relevant. That said, those who opted for Ruddles County found it the best pint so far - Ruddles Bitter, though, was below average. There was also Websters Bitter on handpump, which nobody tried.

Just round the corner stands the **Old Cock**, a Whitbread pub. Though considerably altered, it does seem to have more pub character than the Didsbury. A range of Whitbread and Whitbread-linked beers is sold. Flowers Original, the current Whitbread "guest beer" was rated marginally above average, Marstons Pedigree did considerably better than that, but most of us decided to try the recently introduced Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter. Sadly, this proved to be below average - the consensus was that this was an intrinsically bland beer probably being kept as well as it could be.

Passing the **Crown**, still closed for renovations on our visit, we squeezed into the packed **Royal Oak**, enjoyed the usual rapid and efficient service, and made a hasty exit to the pavement outside. It has to be said that Friday evening is not the best time to visit to Royal Oak, but the crowds that frequent it are testimony to its excellence. The beer was pretty good too, with Marstons Mild, Bitter and Pedigree all scoring well above average.

Tucked away down a side street we found the **Albert**. Though considerably altered over the years, this Hydes pub still retains a local atmosphere, that no doubt to its somewhat secluded location. Photos of stars of stage and screen dominate the decor. The beers were Hydes Mild and Bitter on electric pumps and both were above average, indeed better than their counterparts at the Gateway. However we reckoned the bitter, at £1, was probably the most expensive Hydes in Greater Manchester.

From here down the cobbled back way to the **Dog & Partridge** on Wilmslow Road. The fairly recent open-plan renovation was seen as an improvement at the time and seems to be wearing well - as far as we could see through the crowds! Beers on handpump are Greenalls Bitter and Original plus the now Nottingham-brewed Davenports Bitter. All were above average, with hairs breadth decisions making Original the favourite, followed by Greenalls Bitter then Davenports.

Next to the **Nelson**, just off the crossroads on Barlow Moor Road. I'd always found the two bars

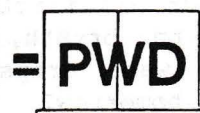
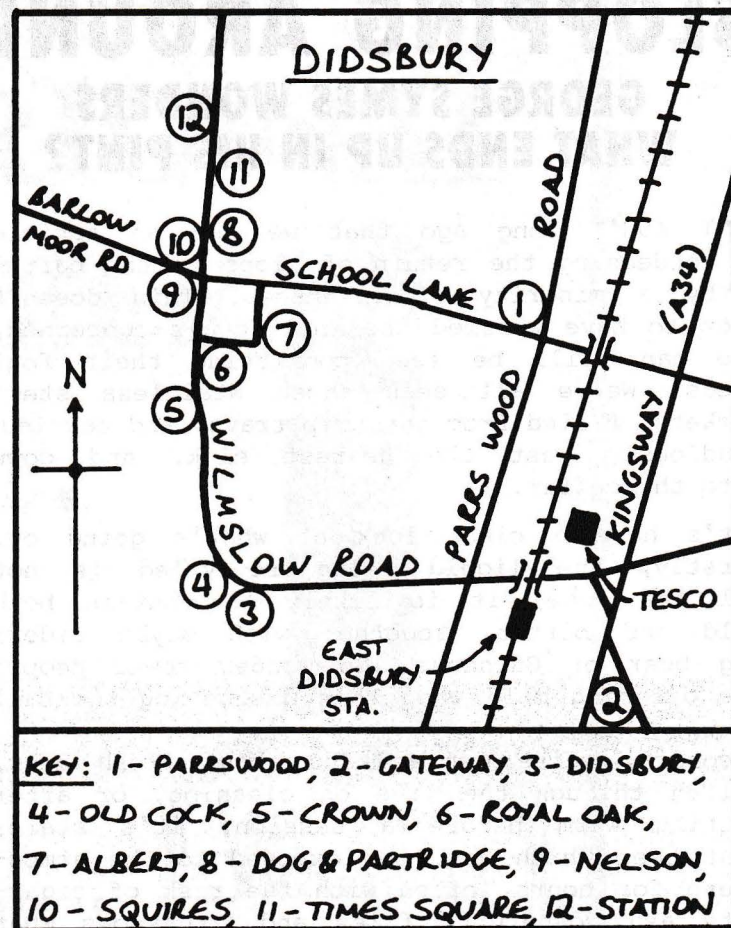
in the pub's original layout poky and ill-laid-out, so was glad to see the one room conversion. Others were less certain but agreed that the place retained a pub atmosphere. Beers on hand-pump are Websters Bitter and Choice plus Ruddles Bitter. And Choice was the best choice, gaining a comfortably above-average rating; Ruddles was only average, while the Websters was frankly (if unsurprisingly) below par.

Across the street now to **Squires**. Veterans of the Manchester drinking scene will know this place has had as many names as Whitbread have closed breweries, but it's doubtful whether any of the previous incarnations can have been as characterless and un-pub-like as this is. Loud and gaudy, it was only really starting to fill up as we left around 10, despite the hectic trade being done by its neighbours - is it even a success in terms of short-term profit? The handpumped Websters Bitter was comfortably the worst beer of the night.

In fact, for both pub and beer, Squires only challenger in a league table of the worst drinking in Didsbury was our next call, the nearby **Times Square**. Not too many of us got in here, the others either being discouraged by the crowds or voting with their feet. Very sensible too, for it was impossible to enjoy drinking poor Stones in what's no more than a box with a bar, tricked out with a few pathetic attempts to look trendy.

"Thank heavens for the **Station**", we said - and so it proved. It was busy of course - standing room only on the pavement. But the service was good - the refurbishment helps as it's made circulation easier through the pub - and the place just felt like a good local at a busy time, rather than the hard work some of the previous pubs had been. And the beer! The Pedigree was rated very good indeed - now admittedly only one person was drinking that, but both Mild and Burton Bitter, which many of us enjoyed, turned out better than any of the night's other beers. No wonder many people rate the Station as their favourite Didsbury pub.

So ended an evening in which with a few exceptions, notably the encouragingly good County in the Didsbury (but oh!, those prices), the best beers were enjoyed in the places with the best pub atmosphere. Perhaps there's a moral there. Anyway, since this article can only be a snapshot of what we found one summer's evening, why not try the pubs for yourself - but for your own sake, not on a Friday!



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- 'phone Derek "The Doc" Hayward-Shott or Andrew "Yogi" Baron at PWD to ARRANGE YOUR ESTIMATE AND VOUCHER.

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SLOPPING AROUND

GEORGE SYMES WONDERS WHAT ENDS UP IN HIS PINT?

IT ISN'T long ago that we ran an article condemning the return of slops to the barrel by a minority of licensees. This doesn't seem to have worried the individuals concerned, who can still be seen committing their foul deeds. We've all seen those stainless steel buckets, filled from the drip trays, and carried studiously past the nearest sink, and down into the cellar.

Let's have a clear look at what's going on. Firstly, the liquid being re-cycled is not all the same; it is likely to contain both mild and bitter, together with maybe cider, keg beer or Guinness. No wonder fewer people are drinking mild when this disgusting cocktail is added to it!

Secondly, we're not talking about fresh beer, pulled through the line on cleaning, or after getting warm before a session; it's stale, flat beer which has been exposed to the atmosphere for hours, often with the risk of cigarette ash, dandruff, flies and God knows what else falling into it. Thirdly, most of that beer got into the drip tray by running down the sides of a glass being filled; a glass quite possibly used by a drinker for his first and subsequent pints. What if he has bad breath, cold sores, flu - do you really want drops of his saliva ending up in your pint tomorrow?

What can you do about this vile and unhealthy practice?

- ☛ If you see it happening in your pub, let it be known that you disapprove
- ☛ Phone the brewery; they are likely to disapprove just as strongly.
- ☛ Persistent offenders should be reported

to your local Environmental Health Officer at the Town Hall; if the EHO can prove "risk of contamination", he may prosecute.

- ☛ Tell your friends, and let us know.
- ☛ If the offender refuses to mend his ways, tell him that you and your friends will be drinking elsewhere in future.

No-one should be asked to spend good money on an obviously inferior and possibly unhealthy product. These publicans are doing no-one any favours; they are cheating their customers, spoiling the carefully crafted products of the brewery, possibly breaking the law and doing the cause of well-kept traditional beer no good at all. Let's stamp it out; remember that as the consumer you have the ultimate power, use it!

(Editors note: I suspect that many of our readers will have strong views on this item, particularly those many licensees among our readership. Letters to the address on the back page please.)



De Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley
STOCKPORT'S PREMIER FREE HOUSE
Guest Beers Weekly

MARSTONS BATEMANS
TAYLORS TETLEYS



The Nursery Inn

GREEN LANE, HEATON NORRIS, STOCKPORT

- ★ Traditionally Brewed Hyde's Anvil Ales
- ★ Good Home Cooked Food Served Daily
- ★ We now cater Mon-Fri for families in our upstairs Dining Room which is also available for functions
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Hydes Anvil Ales

Brewers of Traditional Cask Beers

Always in good taste

ARMS IN SAFE HANDS

WE reported last month that new licensees were to take over the Manchester Arms, long an institution on the Stockport pub scene.

It's therefore a pleasure to welcome newcomers Kim and Bill Bromiley at the helm of this popular pub. Opening Times had a chance to chat to Kim and Bill and it certainly looks as though the 'M.A.' is in safe hands. Kim looks after the bar while Bill concentrates his efforts on the cellar but it is clear that this is very much a team effort and has the makings of a very successful one at that.

Although this is their first pub, both Kim and Bill have experience of the licenced trade through bar and relief work in pubs, and they certainly know what they have to do to keep on top of what could be a difficult pub. The pub itself has been redecorated and there are plans to reintroduce live music. The beer, sampled at the height of last month's heatwave was in excellent form and testified to Bill's keen cellarmanship. The Bromileys are keen to build up trade again following the period of closure, so do drop in if you're passing, you won't be disappointed.

FIZZY FLEA

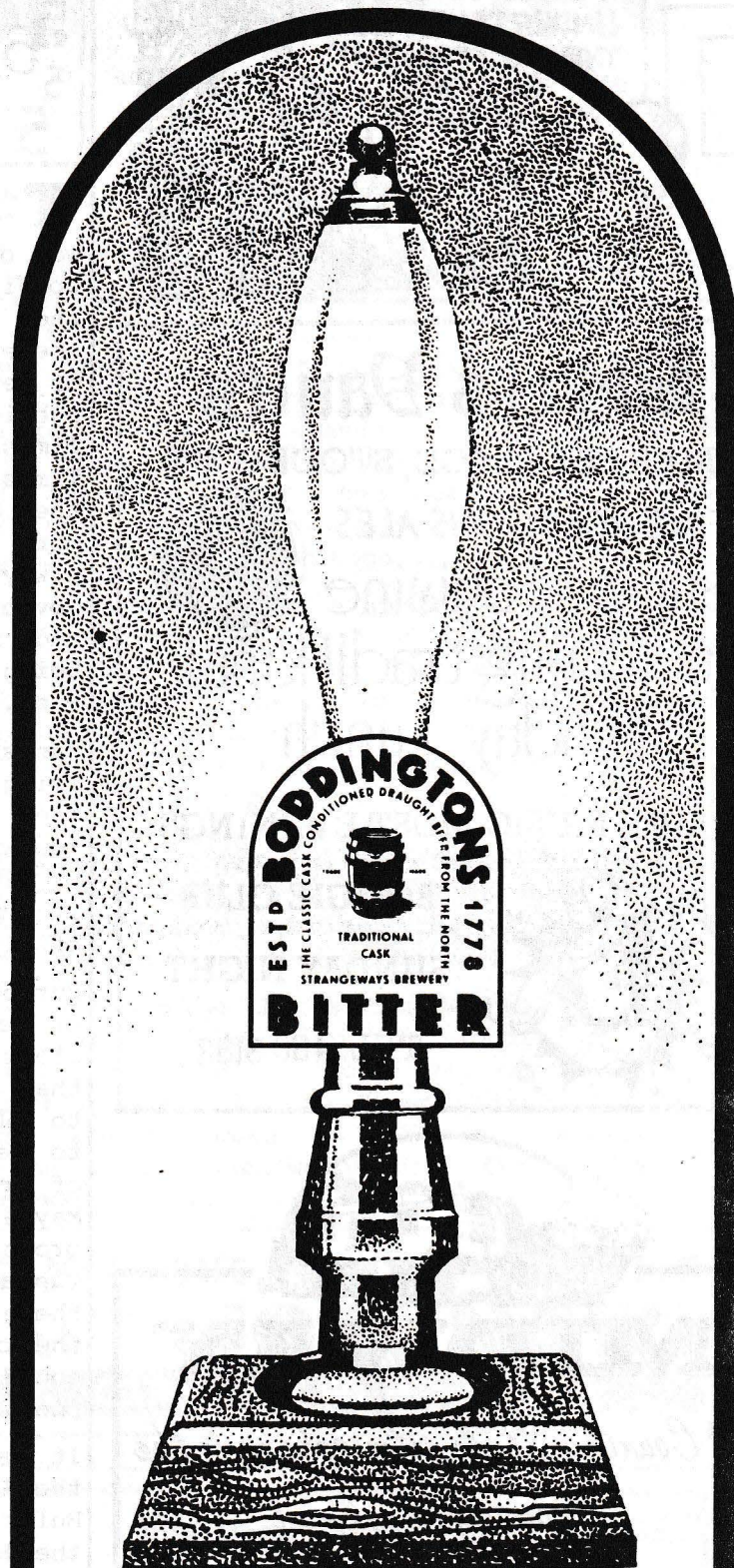
THIS month will see the opening of the latest brewery to hit the Manchester drinking scene. The Flea & Firkin, based in the old cinema on Oxford Road near the University, is the latest addition to the nationwide 'Firkin' chain, founded by businessman David Bruce in London.

Bruce sold out to a company, Midsummer Leisure, who in turn were take over by European Leisure who have decided that these pubs do not fit in with their business plans, so we have the odd situation that the Flea & Firkin will be up for sale before it's opened. We'll let you know who buys it, of course.

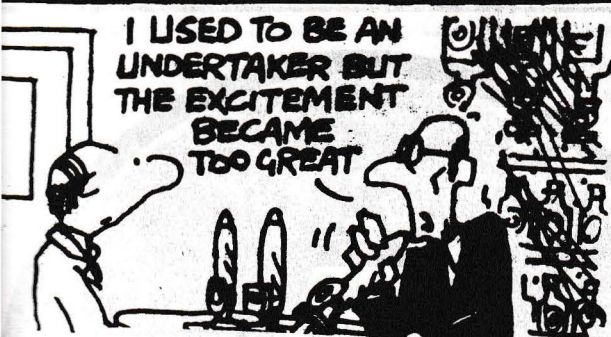
There will naturally be a blaze of publicity when the place opens but a word of warning - with just one or two exceptions, the house beers in these Firkin pubs are usually stored in tanks under a blanket of gas and are not therefore 'kosher' real ales, approach with caution.

BURY BEER

Lovers of Beer Festivals will want to note the 7th and 8th of December in their diaries as these are the dates of the forthcoming **Bury Beer Festival**, which this year is moving to a new, bigger venue - the Drill Hall which is just a 3 minute walk from the old Derby Hall venue. The local branch tell us that at the Drill Hall there will be no problems with entry and there will be ample room for everybody.



THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER



55 YEARS AGO

THE leading article in September 1985 concerned "Opening Times" and "Whats Doing" - the latter was described as a Manchester beer drinkers' magazine, Opening Times was distributed with it, and together they gave a fairly wide coverage of the local beer scene. However, Whats Doing had announced its intention of reverting to its original role as a North Manchester publication, so the writing was on the wall for Opening Times to go it alone. So, from the end of 1985, Opening Times was to be the only beer drinkers paper covering the South Manchester area, and although it became more widely available, it was still FREE - there had always been a charge for Whats Doing. To state the obvious, 5 years on, Opening Times is still FREE, and still going strong. (The cover price of Whats Doing has increased by one-third in the same period - ed.)

Banks's was in the news again - they had been advertising with a GMT bus painted in their colours, and then they started a small 'passport' type scheme. You could pick up an "On the House" card in any one of their 6 Greater Manchester pubs, and once you had it stamped in each pub you could claim a free pint of mild or bitter.

Burtonwood announced their first promotion for a number of years. The card listed all their pubs, and various items could be won according to the number of pubs that stamped the card, ranging from 10 for a T-shirt, to 50 for a wristwatch. No purchase was necessary to get a stamp on the card, and there were stories of draymen taking "fistfuls of cards" on their rounds. Maybe Burtonwood learnt a lesson - in two recent promotions, one involved picking a team for the World Cup and an England manager. The other was on a racing theme - you got a card with each pint (even though the card still said 'no purchase necessary') and you could win a day at the races, a gallon of beer, a pint, a half, or nothing.

It was reported that Pete and Margaret Traynor from the Duke of Edinburgh, Bradford, were moving to the Bulls Head at Mobberley. Branch members calling at the Bulls Head to say Hello might have been startled to see themselves on a photograph taken at the Pub of the Month celebration at the Duke of Edinburgh a few months earlier.

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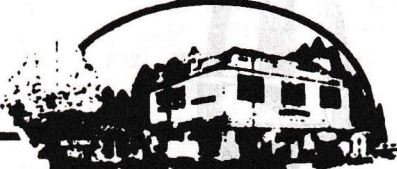
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GREENALLS TO GO WEST?

As we went to press, we heard that the long-running story as to whether or not Greenalls were to sell their breweries and do a Boddingtons by becoming a pub-owning chain, was about to be settled. A board meeting was scheduled for 30th August at which this was to be discussed and an announcement was to be made on 31st. By the time you read this, all will be revealed - we'll have our say next month.



MANCHESTER MATTERS

BY RHYS JONES

TWO more Whitbread pubs have installed Boddingtons Bitter on handpump, and both are real ale gains. The **Haxby** on Haxby Road in Gorton just has Boddies, but the **Park** on Parkside Street in Ardwick, which has had a seldom used handpump for ages but now has a new and evidently more committed licensee, also has Chesters Mild and Whitbread Trophy on handpump - keg versions of these two beers are also present, but recent visitors were served the real ale without having to insist. Not far away, the **Honeycomb** on Champion Walk in Beswick now has handpumped John Smith's Magnet. We also hear that the Y-Club - the new-look YMCA - on Liverpool Road in the City Centre has Marstons Pedigree on handpump.

Also in the Centre, the **Dutton Arms** (listed under Cheetham in "Ale of Two Cities") now sells its beers by electric pump; CAMRA has no objection to that, but it's a shame that the mild on sale now seems to be the brewery's standard mild rather than the old Extra Dark, which apart from the Dutton is believed to be sold only in the old mining villages behind Wrexham. In a very welcome move, the **Crown** on Deansgate, for some time one of Manchester's better Wilsons pubs, has handpumped Holts Bitter under the "guest beer" law - why not check it out when you meet CAMRA at Castlefield Carnival? Sadly, though, the **Church** in Ardwick has finally lost its mild.

A couple of updates to recent issues: the **Gemstone** in the City Centre, previously reported as having replaced Stones by Bass, in fact has both beers on handpump; the **Swinging Sporrán** also in the centre, which we said had Theakstons

Bitter in place of Youngers Scotch, now also has Theakstons XB on handpump - and a good pint when recently sampled.

Finally, this column is delighted to propose a toast to Samantha Madeleine, bonny granddaughter of Bob and Madeleine Gregory of the Railway at Ashburys, who was slapped and vented on 16th August at an original gravity of 5lb 12oz.

STOP PRESS - we hear that the **Midland** in West Didsbury has reopened, though what, if any, real ales are sold is not known.

CAMRA CALLING

Again a full programme this month. The main events are:

Friday 7th: minibus trip to the Hollybush at Little Leigh, depart Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport at 7.30pm

Sat 15th/Sun 16th: stall at Castlefield Carnival, come and help or just chat.

Tuesday 18th: annual Treasure Hunt around Stockport pubs. Starts Manchester Arms, Wellington Road South at 7.00pm. Lots of fabulous prizes and great fun.

Friday 21st: Edgeley Stagger, meet 7.00pm at the Woolpack, Brinksway or join at 8.30 at Ye Olde Vic.

Thursday 27th: Pub of the Month at the Oddfellows, Openshaw (see page 2).

The branch meeting will be on 13th at the Blossoms, Buxton Road (A6), Heaviley, Stockport. CAMRA's National Chairman, John Cryne, will be present, so a good turnout please.

Monday Socials are at the Horse & Farrier (9.00pm) and Prince of Wales (10.00pm) in Gatley on 10th; Steelworks Tavern (9.00pm)/Vulcan (10.00pm), both Gorton Lane, Gorton on 17th; Unity, Wellington Road South, Stockport (9.00pm on) on 24th. For more details phone Ian on 445 5979.

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PUB NEWS



The promised refurbishment at the **Crown Hotel**, Heaton Moor Road, was recently completed. The Boddington PubCo have made what is essentially a decent job and the character of the Crown has been retained. The seating and furniture has been replaced, there has been a much needed redecoration and there are new floor-coverings throughout. Even the horrible plastic arch has been painted out but it cannot apparently be removed as it is part of the structure. Minor quibbles are the removal of the brass bar rail, which has rested many a weary leg, and the replacement of the old varnished hardwood shelving with stained plywood, surely a backward step. Overall, though, a tasteful, sensitive and sensible refurbishment.

Next door at the **Plough**, Robinsons Best Bitter is going well according to landlord Alan Parkinson. This beer has replaced Burton Ale which had insufficient throughput to guarantee

quality. Whilst Robinsons might seem a strange guest beer to have in Stockport, there quite literally isn't a Robinsons house within a mile of the Plough. Jennings Bitter also continues to justify its presence, and is a favourite for a core of regulars - it was certainly on good form on a recent visit.

Another pub to benefit from an much needed refurbishment is the **Crown** in Didsbury. The Crown has also been extended but, so seamless is the work, that the casual visitor would never know that the pub has been anything other than its present size. A welcome redecoration goes to make a very impressive job - let's just hope that the framed prints on the walls last longer than their predecessors (a characteristic of the 'old' Crown was the empty spaces where various items of the decor had 'walked'). The beer range is unchanged with Greenalls Bitter, Davenport's Bitter and the premium Thomas Greenalls Original, all on handpump.

A welcome addition to the local take-home trade is **Kendlegate Wine** on Northgate Road, Edgeley. Run by CAMRA-member Keith Egerton the shops stocks an impressive range of Belgian bottled beers and flagons of traditional cider. At the moment sales are wholesale only, which means you have to buy a case of 24 bottles (although they don't all have to be the same) but all being well Keith will be obtaining a full off licence this month which will not only allow customers to buy single bottles but will also enable the shop to sell real ales on draught - two handpumps are already in place for this. More next month.

Another pub to drop Burton Ale is the **Shady Oak** in Bramhall while over in Cheadle Hulme we learn that the **Conway** has dropped both Ruddles Bitter and Wilsons Bitter leaving just Websters Bitter and Choice available.

A consistently more varied range of guest beers is in prospect at Stockport's **Ye Olde Vic**. Landlady Kay Ord tells us that from the beginning of this month the only regular beers will be Taylors Landlord and Marstons Pedigree, which will be complemented by three guest beers each week and a monthly guest cider - currently available is James Whites from Suffolk.

Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, George Symes, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Robin Wignall, Martin Sellers.

Copy date for next issue: Friday 21st September, publication Tuesday 2nd October.

Details of advertising rates are available from the address below. If you have problems getting Opening Times each month why not take out a postal subscription? £1.25 will get you 6 issues (cheques made payable to Opening Times and sent to the address below).

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