

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

NO 85

MAY 1991

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA
FREE

TIME CALLED ON HANDPUMP CON

FOR many years now, CAMRA has been campaigning against the practice in some pubs of serving keg beers and ciders through fake handpumps. The number of pubs locally serving keg beers in this way is thankfully small, unfortunately the number playing the same trick with keg cider is on the increase.

Vigorous campaigning including a boycott from all CAMRA events has forced West country cidemaker Long Ashton to stop selling keg on handpump. The spotlight now turns to two other ciders increasingly served in the same misleading way, Addlestomes and Scrumpy Jack - and nowhere more than in the North West, where new outlets for keg Scrumpy Jack on handpump seem to appear every week.

Let's be clear. Symonds' Scrumpy Jack is a gassy keg cider; though available via a standard keg bar mounting, it is being promoted to licensees as best sold via the fake handpump system, presumably to make it look traditional.

The cider, and the fake handpumps, are now available to all Grand Metropolitan (Websters/Wilsons) pubs in the North West, reportedly with attractive incentives for licensees who put it in. But, before grabbing the goodies, licensees should think twice - and remember that they are no longer tied



to their brewery for cider.

There really can be no excuse for practicing this deception, and make no mistake that is what it is. Ask any pub-goer what they understand by the sight of a handpump on the bar and the answer will almost invariably be the same - real ale (or cider). Indeed many drinkers, mistakenly, think real ale can be served by no other means. Not only is the handpump in many ways the image of CAMRA's success, it should also be a guarantee to drinkers that they will receive a traditional, cask-conditioned product. We will not stand idly by and see our image and drinkers expectations exploited by those who are so keen to put marketing hype before quality of the product.

Our policy is clear: CAMRA branches should not include a pub in the Good Beer Guide or any local guide if it sells keg beer or cider by misleading methods. Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA applies that policy without exception.

Licensees are now on notice: if you put Scrumpy Jack on handpump, it's goodbye Good Beer Guide, goodbye local pub guides, goodbye Pub of the Month - goodbye to trade that could be worth thousands in a year. Is it really worth it for a freebie from the brewery?

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MAY

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6	13	20	27	...
7	14	21	28	...
8	15	22	29	...
9	16	23	30	...
10	17	24	31	...
11	18	25		

**PUB OF
THE MONTH**

FOR the coveted Pub of the Month award for May 1991, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA have chosen the **Travellers Call**, Hyde Road, West Gorton.

Described in CAMRA's local pub guide "Ale of Two Cities" as "arguably the most unspoilt pub on Hyde Road", the Travellers sums up the old-fashioned small urban local. Consisting of just two rooms, a narrow front vault and a perhaps unexpected smoke room at the back, this down-to-earth pub is a reminder of the old Manchester.

Sadly, nothing lasts forever, and this splendid survivor is set to succumb in 1995 to the Hyde Road widening scheme. That's why, well before the end, CAMRA is presenting this award to make the pub's special qualities known to a wider public. The award particularly reflects the hard work of popular licensees Larry and Margaret Mason, who since taking over in October 1989 have increased trade very considerably in what is still, until the bulldozers arrive, a very heavily pubbed district. Join them, along with a host of regulars and CAMRA members, for the presentation night on Thursday 23rd May, when a great night out can be looked forward to.

NB The Travellers is easily accessible from central Stockport and most parts of Manchester. Hyde Road buses (203 from Stockport, 211 etc) stop almost outside, and within easy reach are Belle Vue station and more buses including 53,169, 171, 188, giving access to the whole of south and east Manchester.

KINGS ARMS CHANGES

AT the Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock, prices have, as everywhere, reflected the impact of the Budget. However, while some of the speciality beers have increased in price (Guiltless Stout is now £1.20, Yakima Grande Pale Ale and Porter £1.30), the price of North County Bitter has actually gone down - the 2p reduction must make this beer, now at 90p in the Kings, one of the great bargains of Manchester drinking outside the Holts estate.

The back room of the Kings has also been renovated, with the installation of beer lines to new handpumps enabling a full bar service in this room. Licensee Simon Finch now also assures us that the ales in the pub are now dispensed by conventional means rather than the original nitrogen dispense system.

THE STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL

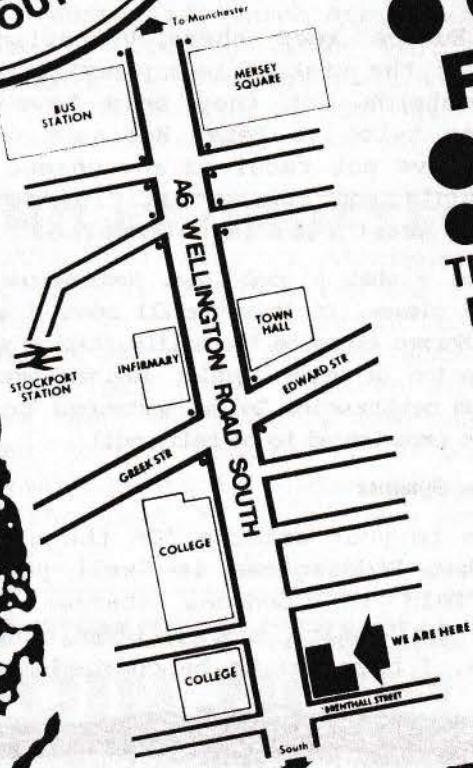


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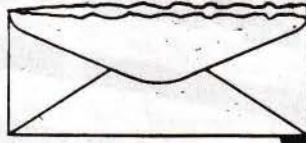
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LETTERS

From Roy Cottam:

Could you please try to ensure that your advertisers do not tell "distortions of the truth". I have just returned from a special journey to the Royal Oak, 729 Wilmslow Road, after seeing in Opening Times no.83 "Marstons No3 Special Dark Mild", obviously used to conjure up images of Sarah Hughes, Youngers, Theakstons O.P etc. It turned out to be ordinary, fairly bland usual mild. At first the bar staff didn't know what I was talking about, so I mentioned your paper. The landlord then almost whispered to the barmaid, "Oh, it's just that mild tap."

(Editor's note: the beer on sale is, we think, Marstons Border Mild. Marstons did in fact once brew a 'No.3 Mild', licensee Arthur Gosling apparently prefers to continue with the name, although the brewery clearly does not.)

From Doreen Gittins:

I read your 'Opening Times' with much interest. I appreciate the fact that the magazine is beer orientated but have you ever done a survey on toilet facilities?

For 25 years I have been a customer at the Queens Arms, Cheadle; it's an old fashioned very friendly pub, fact a real family pub. But, oh, the ladies toilets. They are outside, which is terrible in bad weather, but also quite dangerous as the way is paved with cobbles and also, as there is a large garden at the rear, any weirdo could be peeping or hanging about. Surely by now all toilets should be inside. I am on the Queens' Ladies Darts team and all other pubs we visit have indoor facilities. It's so degrading when we entertain at home games for these visitors.

Andy and Eunice keep these Victorian water closets clean, and at the risk of being sexist the men's toilets are also outside but they only have short stays. I have written twice to Peter Robinson (letters 10 years apart) but have not received any change in this situation. Why don't you run an article/competition for the pub with the worst (in)convenience?

(Editor's note - what a good idea. Nominations to the address on the back page please. If it was still open, I suspect the gents in the Coach & Horses opposite Piccadilly Station would win hands down - the combination of utter squalor and the extractor fan from the kitchen of the neighbouring Indian Restaurant produced an atmosphere that had to be experienced to be believed!)

From George Symes:

In response to your article 'On the up and up', I must disagree that Boddingtons is "well past the £1 mark". The Smithfield in Openshaw charges 99p for Boddies Bitter in the vault, and in the other Boddies pubs in Openshaw, I have yet to be charged more than £1.02.



NEW PUB GUIDE

A BRAND new publication, "Viaducts and Vaults" will be launched at the Stockport Beer Festival on 30th May. With 112 pages packed with glowing prose, wonderful photographs, excellent line drawings and splendid maps, this guide is essential reading for all pub-users in this area. At only £2.95 this is a lot of book for the money. A selection of the best pubs are featured in detail, with the rest listed. Buy your copy at the Festival or ring Jim Flynn on 061 432 1816.

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- Thomas Caxton

"I wish I could write like that"
- William Shakespeare

"Worth buying for the cover alone. The photography is brilliant"
- David Bailey

MUSICIANS WANTED

NOW that planning is underway for the Openshaw Beer Festival, we're on the look out for entertainers for the two evening sessions. If you wish to be considered, or if you wish to suggest a band, let us know. Preference will be given to locally based musicians. The dates are expected to be 25th & 26th October at Openshaw College.

STANLEY'S GUESTS

A NOTHER local freehouse to introduce a changing range of guest beers is the **Stanley Arms** on Newbridge Lane, Stockport. Owner Mike Belsham tells us that since their introduction he has been getting through up to 7 different guests a week. Particularly pleasing is the reception given to guest milds which are proving very popular. Just as Opening Times went to press, Mike was hoping to have the full range of Kimberley beers from Nottingham on sale - a first for Stockport (and amongst the editor's favourites).

NEW HAND AT CROFTER

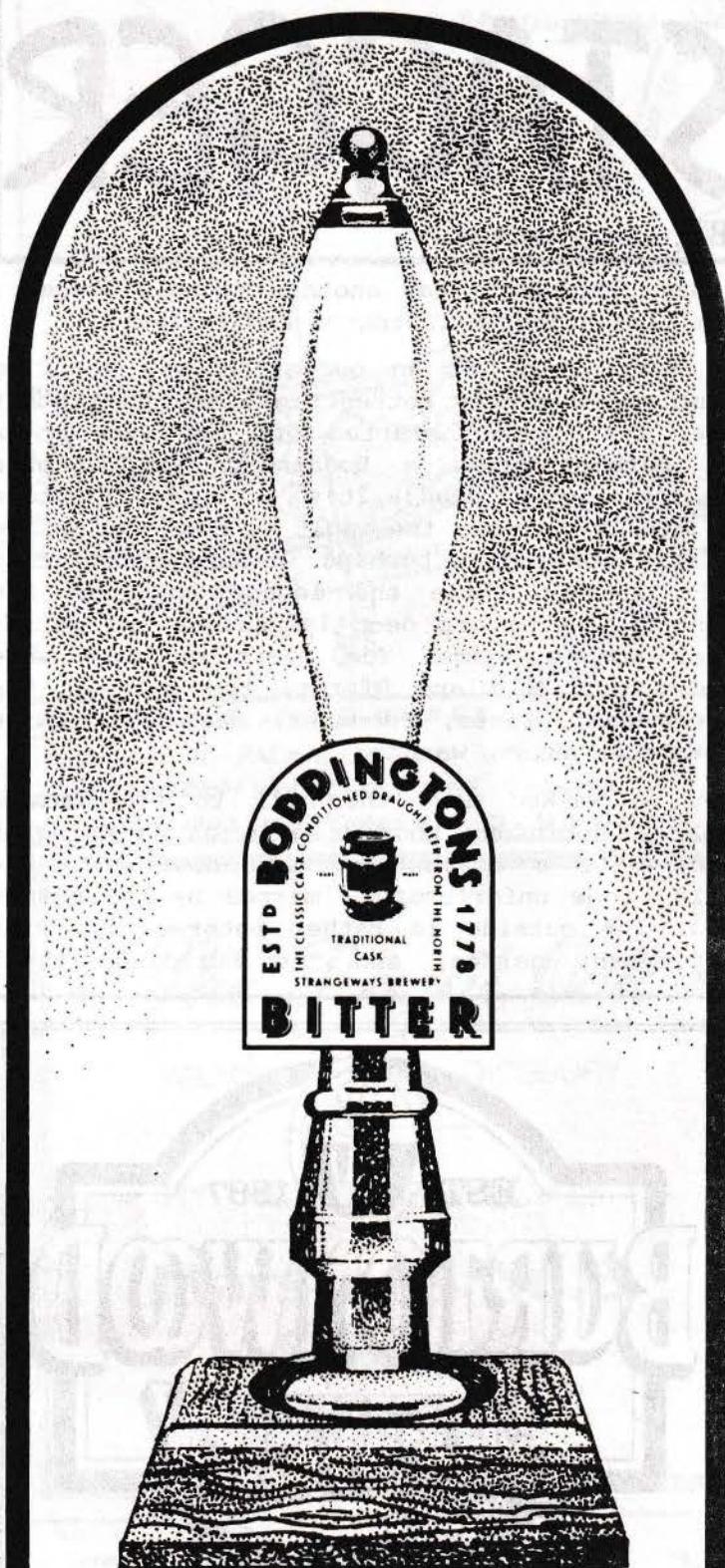
WE WELCOME another new face at Stockport's Jolly Crofter. This is a pub which has had about one licensee a year in the recent past but newcomer Reg Weston who, with partner Deborah Spare, has taken the pub on an Inntrepreneur lease. The pub has been considerably smartened up and Boddingtons Bitter remains on sale as a guest beer. We wish Reg, who is a local Edgeley lad himself, all the best in what some have found a difficult pub.

CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION



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BITTER**

STAGGER

BY: PAUL FELTON

Friday 22nd March saw another monthly Stagger, this time around Brinnington and Portwood.

The combination of an out-of-the-way starting point and a pretty rotten night saw to it that fewer than normal started off the evening in the **Farmers Arms**, a Boddington PubCo house on Brinnington Road. It's a typical estate pub with two rooms: the vault is busy and active in its sports, but perhaps in need of sprucing up a little; while the lounge is large and open-plan, with art deco lampshades and artificial wooden beams. The beers on sale were Boddingtons Mild and Bitter; the mild at 94p (pre-budget prices, remember) was good, while the bitter at 98p wasn't.

Next we walked down the hill to the **Jack & Jill**, a Robinsons house, again on Brinnington Road, with a commanding view down into the valley (now unfortunately marred by the motorway). The outside is rather interesting, with a pleasant garden, and the building itself

curves slightly at the front. Inside is another two-roomed estate pub, with a busy vault connected by an unusual double door arrangement with the comfortable lounge. Best Mild was 97p and not at all bad; Best Bitter was £1 (a notably small price differential) and again perfectly acceptable.

The **Rifle Volunteer** on Carrington Street was quite a contrast with the previous two pubs, if only that it is small enough to have fitted into either of their lounges. While the exterior was rather attractive, it would be unfair to comment on the interior as it was in the middle of redecoration. We couldn't guess how it would re-appear, but at some time in the past it must have been a pub of some character with the remains of three separate rooms still visible. Two beers were available - Wilsons Bitter at 96p and the omnipresent Websters Yorkshire Bitter. All of us drank the Wilsons, which was OK.

The **Park**, on Newbridge Lane, is another Grand-Met house, serving Websters Yorkshire Bitter (at the comparatively low price of 95p); the Wilsons Special Mild is believed to be a keg beer served through a handpump, and although the pump clip is for cask mild, the price list on the bar does specify Special Mild. But of course the interesting feature of the Park is its guest beer, namely Holts Bitter at 86p, a 'triumph' for the MMC report. The pub itself is another two-room affair: a back vault with darts and pool, and a front lounge with a notably younger clientele. Back to the beer: the one person who tried the Websters grudgingly said that it was OK, but the rest of us had the Holts, which was good.

The **Midway**, also on Newbridge Lane, is a John Smiths house, and a current Good Beer Guide entry. It's a country style pub with a restaurant at the back and a disco/meeting room downstairs. The lounge has lots of brass and patterned plates, as befits its intended atmosphere but which is perhaps rather overdone. Three beers are served: John Smiths Bitter, Magnet at £1.06, which was well above average; and Courage Directors at £1.24, again above average.

The **Coach & Horses** on Lancaster Street was a pub that your writer, to his shame, did not know existed. A Boddington PubCo house, it was refurbished about a year ago (nothing major), and yet again we found art deco lampshades, with the air of some 1930's cinema. Interestingly, the lounge and vault were on the opposite sides of the pub to where they are at present, the result of a not-necessarily-for-the-better major refit some 15 years ago. Boddies Mild was 96p and Bitter 98p, both were good.

Next came the **Brinnington Inn** on Great Portwood Street, a Robinsons house and yet another two-room pub. The lounge was disappointing, but the



A FAMILY TRADITION
OF FINE BREWING

vault was bright, basic and by some way the most appealing room of the night so far. Even in terms of entertainment the vault was preferable - is there really any choice between boxing on Sky and an atrocious Karaoke? Best Mild was OK, but the Best Bitter was rather better.

The Old King is also on Great Portwood Street. A Bass pub serving Light, Stones Bitter and (as an unimaginative guest beer) Tetley Bitter. There is a choice of several different rooms: a vault, pool room, lounge and pleasant front snug. Particularly noteworthy is the impressive tilde fireplace in the pool room. The beers tried were the Light and Stones; unfortunately neither were on particularly good form that night.

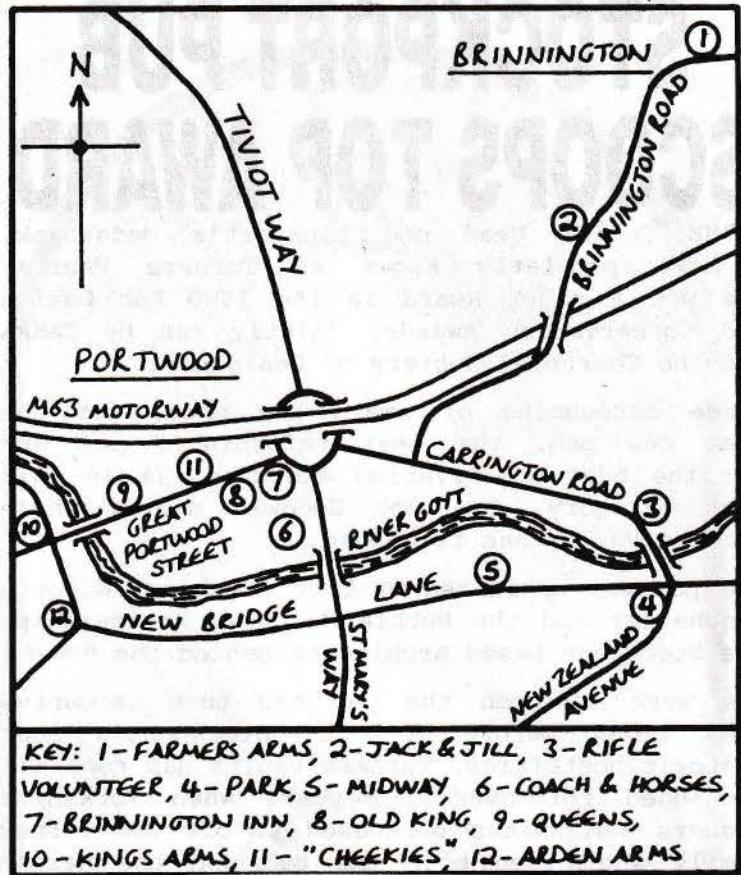
The Queens is yet another Robbies house on Great Portwood Street. It had changed considerably since my last visit, from a perfectly reasonable pub into a typical 'Robinsonisation'. It's all pretty poor now, with everything knocked through and out into one large room, with 'plush' furnishing, irrelevant railway artefacts and NO SOUL (precious few customers, either). The one chink of light has been the retention of the dartboard. The beer, Best Mild and Best Bitter, was OK.

The Kings Arms was the third Boddington PubCo house of the night, and by some way the poorest. The vault seating was attractive with wooden backs, but there were more fake beams, over-bright walls and over-dark wood. On Friday night at 10.30 there were just 4 people in the pub beside ourselves. On a positive note, the beer wasn't bad.

Only half the party had ventured to the Kings Arms, for the others were more intrepid souls and headed for Cheekies, a pub which has often been in the local press of late. Tonight our party was unfortunate enough to run into a drag act of dubious talent, but that just seemed to sum the pub up. The beers available were Websters Yorkshire Bitter and Ruddles County: everyone had the Ruddles which was average.

Sanity was restored at the Arden Arms on Millgate, current local CAMRA Pub of the Year and Good Beer Guide entry. A much-loved classic pub, multi-roomed and with that rare thing in a Robinsons house - alterations which have improved the pub. The Best Mild was something of a disappointment but the Best Bitter and Old Tom were both good.

So ended another interesting and varied Stagger. Do please remember that even the best pubs can have an 'off night' and our the comments in this article simply reflect what one group of drinkers found on one particular night and should not be taken as a once and for all judgement on the pubs or their beers. As ever, the solution is to try them yourself and see what you think.



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STOCKPORT PUB SCOOPS TOP AWARD

THE Queens Head on Stockport's Underbank, more popularly known as Turners Vaults, has won a major award in the 1990 Pub Design and Conservation Awards, jointly run by CAMRA and the Chartered Society of Designers.

Three categories of award are made, for the best new pub, the best refurbished pub and for the best conservation exercise. It is this last category, the Joe Goodwin award, where Turners Vaults has triumphed.

The pub was nominated by both Stockport & South Manchester and the Hubble Matthews Partnership, the Stockport based architects behind the scheme.

The work done on the pub has been recounted many times before. One of Stockport's most historic hostelleries, Turners Vaults had remained unchanged for over 100 years when Yorkshire brewers Sam Smiths purchased it off the Turner Family who owned both the pub and the neighbouring wine merchants. The pub was in an advanced state of decay by that time and the work involved not only gutting the main part of the building but also the demolition and rebuilding from cellar level of the rear rooms.

Many companies would have taken this opportunity to knock through all the rooms and so create a more open-plan drinking area but to their eternal credit, Sam Smiths appreciated the nature of the pub and faithfully restored it to something like its former glory (small but necessary structural changes in no way detract from the overall restoration). The end result is a pub which is arguably of national importance in terms of its fabric, structure and layout and locally is a damn fine place to drink. Congratulations to all concerned.

NOT SO GRAND

LAST month saw the opening of Grand Central Square, the Greenalls' pub in Stockport's new leisure precinct whilst the pub is everything it was expected to be, it must be judged a lost opportunity to act as a local showcase.

Apart from Stockport's very own Robinsons, Greater Manchester has several local breweries, and even the Boddington PubCo, who could surely have been approached to participate in this development. Perhaps even a consortium of local brewers could have been assembled if the project was too much for one. We could then have had a pub which might not only have had some local roots, it would probably have also featured some of the cask-conditioned real ales for which this area is famous.

But no, instead we have a glitzy fun-bar run by Warrington based Greenalls who don't even offer a drop of the real thing for discerning local drinkers. Who was responsible for this decision we don't know. What we do know is - you blew it!



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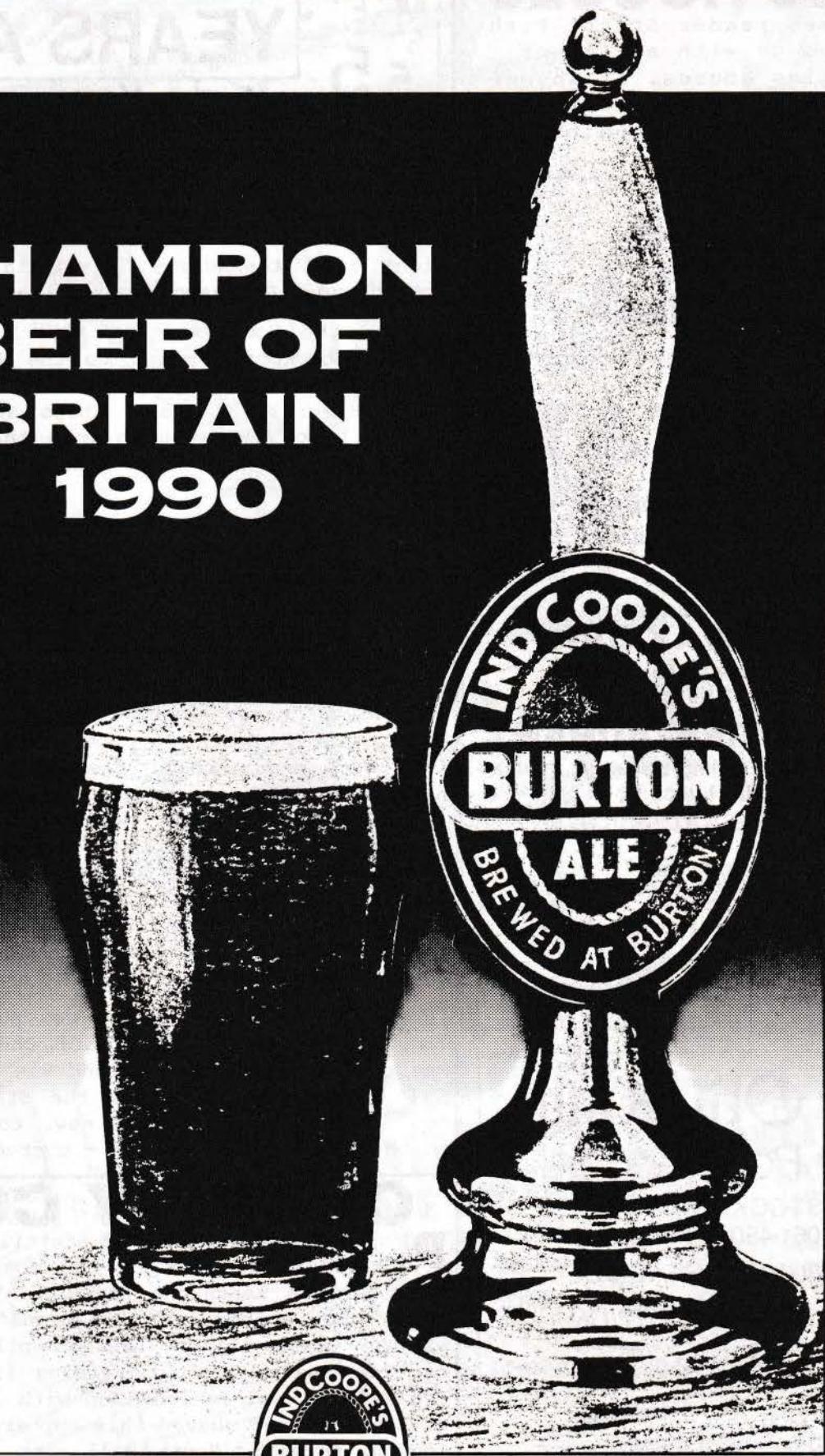
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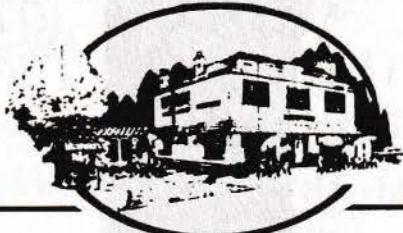
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HYDES HOUSES

Opening Times reader Stuart Fish has supplied us with a list of all Hydes ties houses. If anyone would like a copy, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the address on the back page.



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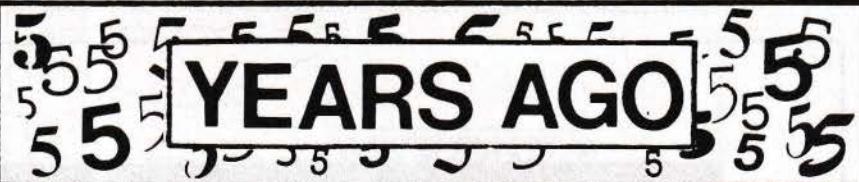
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THE front page story in May 1986 concerned the Union on Broadstone Road in Reddish. Robinson's were at long last going to start the refurbishment, but as the tenant was unable to pay the £12,000 required, he had to go. It caused speculation that other tenants might find themselves in similar situations in pubs coming under Robinson's modernisation programme.

Pub of the Month was the New Inn on Wellington Road South, Stockport (close to the Town Hall). There was also an advert for the pub, which was offering a "Spring-time Special" - Pie & Chips and a pint for £1.25. You're lucky to get much more than a packet of crisps with your pint for £1.25 nowadays, after the last round of price increases.

Attention was drawn to the absence of real ale (and the price of keg - £1!) at the new G-Mex Exhibition Centre in Manchester - most people knew it as the old Central Station. This lack of the real stuff was surprising, because there were no less than seven Greater Manchester breweries to choose from, as well as a number of other excellent breweries in the North West. That magnificent seven has now been reduced to five - Holts, Hydes, Lees, Robinsons and Boddingtons, although the last mentioned should now be properly described as Whitbreads (the other four, of course, are still fiercely independent). The two local breweries that have closed were Oldham (taken over by a still-independent Boddingtons and then closed) and Failsworth (one of the new small brewers that ran into cash-flow problems). We are, of course, now back up to seven with the West Coast Brewery in Chorlton-on-Medlock and the recent move of the Oak Brewery from Ellesmere Port to Heywood.

There was reference to two new pubs which Banks's were converting/building. The old Cheadle railway station was due to open in July, and was to be called "Buffers End" - wrong - it became the Station at Cheadle. The one in Burnage was brand new, to open in August, and to be called the Milestone - correct.

The Old King

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PUBS are well known as fertile ground for charity donations, and one of the most generous lately has been Banks's Longsight at Belle Vue, which has raised £2500 for Booth Hall Childrens's Hospital. As well as the usual things such as piles of pennies and a car boot sale, the fundraising included a "Mad Easter Egg Raffle" and finished up with licensee Richard Jones having his head shaved (his appearance is slowly returning to normal). Booth Hall also did well out of some other local pubs, in particular the Ducie Arms in Longsight - others please copy.

Back at the Longsight, Richard is thinking of starting a local table football league. Licensees or games teams from other pubs with a table should contact Richard at the Longsight to sort something out.



MANCHESTER MATTERS

BY RHYS JONES

JUST one real ale gain this month - the **Old House at Home** on Burton Road in Withington is now selling Boddingtons Bitter and Castle Eden Ale on handpump. Worth a call for locally rare Castle Eden, even if Boddies is nowadays seen on every street corner. To prove the point, handpumped Boddingtons Bitter has gone into two more Wilsons pubs, the **Mitre** in the City Centre and the **Hamlet** in Gorton. The Hamlet now also sells Websters Bitter on handpump in place of Wilsons, and has taken the very unwise step (see story elsewhere) of installing keg Scrumpy Jack cider on a fake handpump. Another recent Scrumpy Jack offender, which really ought to know better, is the **Corner-house** cinema/gallery complex on Oxford Road. Finally, Greenalls' two recent real ale conversions in Levenshulme, the **Church** and the **Wheatsheaf**, have both added handpumped Stones Bitter.

The **Lancaster** on Stockport Road, Longsight, is now owned by Vaux; Wilsons beers are replaced on handpump by Vaux Samson and Wards Mild (sold under the old Darleys name). The beer's well kept, it's a rare brew for the area, and the pub is friendly, making it the sort of place that could well be considered for a Pub of the Month award. Sadly, though, it's another that sells keg Scrumpy Jack on handpump, and will not be eligible for any award while that is the case.

Further out on Stockport Road, Tetley's **Springbank**, which has sported a plaque with an illustration of a handpump and the words "Traditional Ale" since before Christmas, still hasn't got any.



CAMRA CALLING!

A FAIRLY quiet month, this time. On Thursday 9th the branch meeting will be held in the Coach & Horses on Hyde Road. Business starts at about 8.00pm.

The following Sunday, 12th, we are having another lunchtime in the Rusholme area. We will be meeting in the Grafton Arms on Grafton St., Chorlton-on-Medlock at 12 noon or you can join at the Whitworth, Moss Lane East at 1.00pm or the Welcome, Rusholme Grove at 2.00. This will, of course, be followed by a curry.

The first of the Monday Socials is on 13th and will be a two-way social in Cheadle - 9.00pm in the Star and 10.00pm in the Royal Oak, both on High Street. Later in the week, Friday 17th, there is a Stagger in Openshaw starting at 7.00pm at the Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road, or you can join at the Smithfield, also Ashton Old Road, at 8.30pm.

The social on Monday 20th is at the Strawberry Duck, Crabtree Lane, Clayton. A minibus will run to this, departing from the Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport at 8.00pm. Phone for details. On Thursday 23rd it's Pub of the Month at the Travellers Call and on Monday 27th there is a social at the Queens Hotel, Portwood, Stockport. The month ends, of course, with the biggest social of all - Stockport Beer Festival - Be There!

For more details phone Angela Walker on 0663 743769 (evenings only) or Tracey Clarke on 456 6354 (evenings only).

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Control Securities' **Metropole** in Beswick is open again. Still, however, only keg beers are sold, in what appears to be a dark, cave-like and utterly uninviting atmosphere.

At the **Royal Oak** in Cheadle, a concerted effort is being made to bring the old vault back into use. This should be helped by the new doorway that has been constructed to connect directly with the rest of the pub - previously it was only accessible from either a separate outside door or through the gents toilet!

Still in Cheadle, there is still no sign as yet of the planned and much-needed refurbishment of Hydes' **Old Star**. Amongst other things, it is apparently intended to build a small conservatory on the back of the pub. Whilst yet another example of the "greenhouse effect" is often a bad thing, in this case anything which

adds to the appeal of what is currently an utterly characterless pub must be an improvement.

One or two changes to report in the Boddington PubCo estate. In central Manchester the **Royal Central**, formerly Cox's Bar has now ceased to be Henry's Table operation and it is hoped to try and return the pub to its more traditional roots. Meanwhile the **Old Garratt** has lost its Oldham Bitter due to poor sales. In Stockport, Theakstons Bitter has appeared in both the **Victoria** in Bramhall and the **Mersey Vale** on Didsbury Road. This pub is also one of two locally to be getting the new Cain's Bitter from the revived and now independently run former Higsons Brewery in Liverpool. The other lucky recipient of this fine new beer is the **Ladybrook** in Bramhall. Finally, the **George** in Mersey Square is to get a much needed redecoration at which time it is also expected that the misleading Higsons signs will be removed (the pub hasn't sold this beer for some time).

We reported last month that the **Greyhound** in Cheadle Heath had taken on Stones Bitter but at the same time had dropped Davenports. We are pleased to say that the Davenports has in fact been retained alongside the Stones.

In Manchester City Centre, **Greens** on York Street is now **Buchanans**. Nothing else appears to have changed apart from the introduction of Courage Directors Bitter alongside the Boddingtons Bitter already on sale.

Whitbread have put another clutch of local pubs on the market. Those currently up for sale include the **Star & Garter**, Fairfield St; the **Bradford Hotel**, Mill St, Bradford; the **Clock Face** and the **Lord Wolsey**, Openshaw; and the **Steelworks Tavern**, West Gorton.

The **Grey Horse**, Old Road, Heaton Norris now has Stones Bitter instead of Greenalls Original. This last beer has also gone completely from the **Railway**, Wellington Road North.

The cafe at the **Castlewood**, Bridge Street Brow, Stockport has now reopened and serves meals through from breakfast to afternoon tea, plus Sunday lunches.

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, George Symes, Rhys Jones, Paul Felton, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Peter Soane, Barry Pryme.

Copy date for next issue: 23rd May, publication, 4th June.

Letters, articles and comments are always welcome. Details of advertising rates are available from the address below.

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