

**STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA**

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA FREE

NOVEMBER 1991

**No:
91**

Times Please, Gentlemen!

by Peter Edwardson



The Nurse Inn - Heaton Norris, one of Hydes Pubs displaying full opening information



When pubs were given the chance to open all day in 1988, many people hailed it as the dawn of a new era of freedom and choice for the pub customer. However, the reality has not turned out to be quite as expected. Most pubs have probably altered their hours to some extent, even if it's only an extra hour on Friday afternoons. But the other side of the coin is that many pubs have also taken the opportunity to close at slack periods, such as Monday lunchtimes, or to open later in the evenings.

There's nothing wrong with that as such, and CAMRA would be the last people to try to force pubs to stay open all day if there was no trade. The problem is that, all too often, the customer is completely left in the dark as to when the pub is actually open. Opening hours have become one of Britain's best-kept secrets. In the old days, when most pubs opened pretty standard hours, it didn't matter too much - but now it most certainly does.

The Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA has recently surveyed 200 local pubs to see whether

they display their hours outside, where customers can see them if the pub's shut. The results make appalling reading. Of the total only 25, or 13% actually displayed their full hours. Another 14, or 7%, made some statement such as "Longer Hours Here", but didn't give details. And a staggering 161, or 80%, gave customers no indication whatsoever of when they opened.

(continued on page 3)

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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA



Mike and Lynne Belsham of the Stanley Arms, Newbridge Lane, pictured on the night of the launch of their two 'house' milds, Stanley and Ollie's. The beers are brewed exclusively for the Stanley Arms by Ryburn Brewery.

PUB of the Month November

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November 1991 is the Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, Stockport.

The Stanley Arms has had a chequered history in recent times and a few years ago the thought of it getting such an award would have been laughable. For many years it was a run down Wilsons pub with run down beer. This was followed by an admittedly quite good refurbishment which also saw the pub signed as the first Websters house in Stockport. Still it struggled and eventually closed, seemingly for good until it was rescued from dereliction by present owner Mike Belsham. Once again, though, disaster struck with a serious fire in the pub just days after Mike completed the purchase.

This would be enough to put many people off but Mike, now ably assisted by wife Lynne, has persevered and is finally beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel. The fire at least enabled the pub to be refurbished to a high standard which makes good use of the unusual split-level layout. The, frankly, unimaginative Scottish & Newcastle range of beers has been jettisoned in favour of what is arguably the most enterprising array of beers in Stockport. The regular beers are from Dent and Ryburn breweries (including two specially brewed house milds from the latter) and these are complemented by guests from all over the country which Mike usually picks up himself - so you are likely to get the full range from many interesting micro-breweries appearing on the bar.

With this range of beers quality can be a problem but Mike sensibly orders all of his beers in small 9-gallon containers which ensures that most of the beers are usually top-notch. The Stanley also scores on price - Ryburn bitter is 96p and another regular, Dent Bitter, is £1.06 as are one or two other beers. The policy is simple - if Mike gets a discount it's passed on to the customer.

All in all this is a pub that is doing a lot right and deserves bringing to a wider audience. That will certainly be the case on Thursday 28th when a good turnout from both CAMRA and the locals is expected for what should be an evening to remember.

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OPENING TIMES NOVEMBER 1991

Times Please, Gentlemen! (cont...)

The best showing was that of Burtonwood, where 100% of an admittedly small sample had a full display of hours. Close behind were Hydes and Banks's, both of whom had a very creditable 75% success rate. After that there was a large gap to Bass, the best of the big brewers, with 27%, closely followed by Whitbread, with 18% and Grand Met (Wilson/Websters), with 17%. These are not good results,

but even so that some of the are taking the ously and making of an ef-

The only owners with any displaying their Tetleys and tons, with a each. The list of those with 100% tion includes such as John



they show big brewers issue seri- ing some- fort.

other pub- pubs at all hours were Bodd- ing- paltry one shame of no informa- both giants Smiths and

Greenalls, and independents such as Marstons, Belhaven, Sam Smiths and Holts. In many areas free houses give the customer better choice and service, but not on this point, as we didn't find a single one displaying its hours.

Unchallenged winners of the wooden spoon, however, are Stockport's local independent brewers Robinsons. Our survey included no less than 39 of their pubs, and not one of these gave customers any indication whatsoever when they were open. This is a pathetic showing of which they should be deeply ashamed. Robinsons should be taking action to put this right NOW.

Matters are made worse by the fact that much of the in- formation displayed was misleading. Many pubs had stick- ers saying "Open All Day Mon-Sat", but one was firmly shut on Saturday afternoon, another at 5.45 pm on a weekday, while a surveyor said of a third, "despite this, it's usually closed".

CAMRA believes that there is no excuse for any pub to fail to display its hours outside, and to open for at least the hours shown. It's a basic and vital piece of customer information that no other kind of business would feel it can ignore. Walk down the local High Street and you'll proba- bly find at least 90% of the shops displaying their opening hours - which tend to be far more standard and predict- able than those of pubs.

In today's climate of recession, it's hard to understand how pubs can feel they can afford to turn away business by keeping their hours a secret. In so many areas - full mea- sures and declaration of ingredients as well as this one - the licensed trade seems to be decades behind other business sectors. Clearly on the results of our survey, there's vast room for improvement in the way our local pubs tell their customers when they're open.

Come on, gentlemen, times....please!



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Traditional
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Beers

**Always in
good taste**

The Pub Vandalism Awards we dished out in September have certainly stirred things up.

Holts, showing the sensitive appreciation of their pub heritage that earned them the award in the first place, suggested that their award for the wrecking of the Seven Stars came from somebody with a "tillie fetish". This is the type of asinine comment that we expect from the national brewers and not from a company that prides itself on being a staunchly independent local concern.

A more surprising reaction came from Mrs Jackie Young, landlady of the Shakespeare - one of the pubs threatened by the Eastlands Stadium Project. Mrs Young is quite happy for her

In the Editor's View

by John Clarke

pub to be demolished and to be honest we can sympathise with her predicament. Whitbread in effect sold her a semi-derelict white elephant, as she has subsequently found to her cost - despite a \$60,000 refurbishment the pub has failed to take off. Understandably she wants out and makes the point that if a couple of pubs go it will make things easier for those that remain. Fair enough, but the point Mrs Young has missed is that if all these schemes go ahead there will be no pubs left in the area at all.

At the risk of ruffling even more feathers we can only say that inner-city Manchester has already lost more than enough pubs. We make no apologies for trying to save the few that remain.

OPENING TIMES

LETTERS

From L. M. Bruerton:

I have been working in Manchester for over two months now and by the time your November issue comes out I will probably be finished here. But for the benefit of other transient beer buffs and for possible future visits by myself, I would like to make a suggestion.

When I first arrived here I was delighted to find a number of beers I had never tried or heard of, i.e. Hydes, Lees and Holts, and immediately set about finding some. I was eventually successful but time available and, of course, the drink-drive laws meant that on occasions I was offered a product not quite in its prime and had to go home unsatisfied. Which leads to my suggestion.

In your Opening Times publication you have a regular feature "Stagger" in which the reader gets the benefit of your local knowledge and opinions. The "out-of-towner" like myself then spends a frustrating time trying to track down your best examples in complete ignorance of where a particular area is, let alone the actual street. A simple sketch map of the area with the principal routes marked would greatly assist in targetting a particular pub without having to quarter the area and finishing up blitzed before finding what one is looking for. The map could then be used again to remind me where I left the car the night before the morning after.

(Editor's note - hadn't heard of Holts? Shame on you! Seriously, though, the majority of our Stagger items are accompanied by a map. They are usually missing only when the area covered is too large to make a map practicable, although we are hoping to put this right in the future.)

From David Sheldon:

On two recent visits to Free Houses, one in Eccles and the other in Stockport, I was pleased to come across unfamiliar beers. Unfortunately, when asking where the beers hailed from, the bar staff were also unfamiliar with them. It would be a nice touch if publicans could ensure that their staff know what they were selling.

Following the controversy caused by the choice of cover for Viaducts and Vaults, perhaps I could suggest for the next edition a photo of one of our best pubs, The Woolpack, with another of our famous landmarks in the background. The title - Pyramids and Pubs of course!

(Editor's note - readers may be unaware that it has been suggested that the inclusion of A Boddington PubCo pub on the front cover and an ad for Boddingtons Bitter on the back could lead people to believe that Viaducts and Vaults was sponsored by Whitbread. We think that local drinkers have more sense than to believe such nonsense! Dave's suggestion about the follow-up is a good one, though, and I am sure it will be seriously considered at the time.)

Welcome

This month we welcome many new readers to Opening Times. Over the past two months we have increased our circulation to over 3000 copies a month - so making 'OT' the North West's number 1 pub mag. Opening Times is produced on an entirely voluntary basis by members of the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Articles, letters, moans and groans are all welcome at the editorial address: 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. If you would like to get more involved in our activities, why not join the Campaign - you will find a membership form on the back page.

Olden Brews

This month *Opening Times* brings you the first in an occasional series looking at the area's former breweries. We kick off with one of the larger concerns to have disappeared over the years - Bell & Co.

Halfway down Hemphshaw Lane in Stockport is a dyeworks which, until recently bore the name of Bell & Co. This is all that remains of the Hemphshaw Brook Brewery which was originally built across the road in 1835 by one Avery Fletcher. The brewery began trading in 1836 using water from 'one of the purest springs in the Kingdom' and when the brewhouse was extended in the following year it was one of the largest outside Manchester having cost £4000 to build.

In 1844 Avery Fletcher was listed as a Victualler and builder and a few years later the brewery was in the hands of John Fletcher and James Cartwright, trustees who disposed of it by means of a lottery. Control was subsequently assumed by Joseph Smith and Henry Bell and from an initial output of 22 barrels per week, the business prospered until in 1872 Joseph Smith retired and the company became Bell & Co. Henry Bell died in 1889 and the business was carried on by his sons Henry, Alfred and Thomas together with a Captain George Fearn.

The company continued to prosper and in 1909 a new bottling plant was built which enabled Bells to produce the newly popular beers free from sediment (paradoxically beers with sediment are more sought after these days, with Worthington White Shield and some Bottled Guinness being the only widely available examples). The First World War took its toll, not only because many men were away but due to the introduction of licensing hours and increased beer duties. By 1918 the average gravity was down to 1030 and duty had doubled to 50/- six times its pre-war level.

The post-war years saw a gradual recovery and in 1930 a brand new brewery was opened across the road from the old site, and this is the building which still stands today. Well water was used for both brewing and cask/bottle washing and the up to date equipment was able to wash 1400 bottles or 150 casks per hour. The latest type of malt mill was installed and the beer fermented in slate vessels.

The depression of the 1930's hit profits but by 1941 they had recovered to £92,000. However, the following year Henry Bell, the last of the family, died. Before the war there had been discussions about a possible merger with another Stockport firm - Clarke's Reddish Brewery, but these came to a halt with the outbreak of war. However in January 1949 Robinsons made an



offer for the shares of the company which "was so attractive that the Board felt they must place it before the shareholders." It was suggested at the time that "as it was an offer for the shares it was likely that the firm would maintain its identity as a local brewing concern albeit with a change of directorate". Well, we've all heard that one before and it just goes to show that such bland reassurances are nothing new in the brewing industry. The purchase was completed on 25th March 1949 and Bell's beers are but a distant memory. The ghost of Bell & Co does linger on, however. The company has never been wound up and to this day it continues as a property owner with many of the old Bells pubs on its books.

Evidence of Bell's ownership can still be seen on such pubs as the Alexandra, Edgeley; the Blossoms, Heaviley and the Armoury, Shaw Heath. There are particularly fine old posters in the Three Tuns, Hazel Grove and the Blossoms, the example in the latter being shown in our photograph, above.

By Peter Soane.

Ancoats Free House

Just outside our core circulation area, Ancoats looks to be about to gain a new freehouse in the shape of the Crown, Old Mill Street. Closed and boarded for a year or two, the Crown could yet revive under a sensible licensee. Prospective landlord Geoff Prendergast certainly has the right ideas about beer (cask ale suppliers mooted include Burtonwood, Holts, Thwaites and West Coast) and we wish him every success. Geoff hopes to open in mid-November; watch this space for further details.

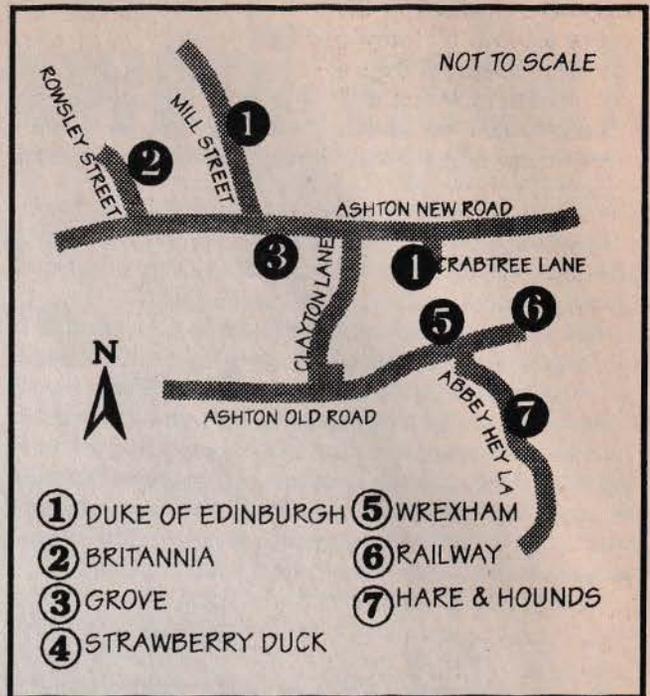
STAGGER

with Paul Felton

Our stagger for the month of September saw a group of us take one of our occasional minibus trips round the delights of East Manchester.

We started off at the **DUKE OF EDINBURGH**, on Mill Street in Bradford, a massive Tetley pub, easily findable as it sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb among the wastelands in front of it. It has many rooms, including a separate vault, a comfortable front lounge and an upstairs meeting room.

Only one cask beer was available, Tetley Bitter, and rather good it was too. Unfortunately the Duke of Edinburgh is due to go what seems to be the way of all pubs in that part of the city - it is due to be demolished to make way for a road-widening scheme. Is this perhaps some covert attempt by the council to limit drinking in Manchester?



And our next pub is also threatened - the **BRITANNIA** on Rowsley Street, in Beswick, just off Ashton New Road. This time, however, it is not a road-widening scheme that will cause demolition, but instead a plan



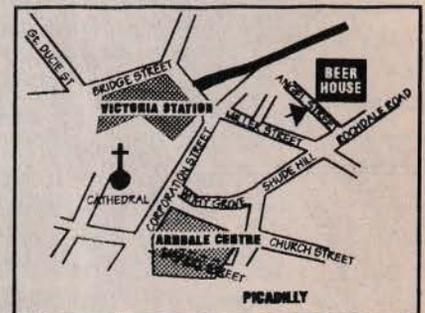
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HOT AND COLD FOOD

OPENING TIMES NOVEMBER 1991

to build a stadium for the mythical 2000 Olympics (as if there wasn't plenty of other room in that sadly desolate area of the city). But enough of this: the Britannia is a splendid, 2-roomed Lees pub, taken over several years ago from Greenalls, who could not make a go of it. Now it's thriving, serving good beer (mild and bitter), and is well worth a visit.

As far as we know, the **GROVE** on Ashton New Road is NOT threatened by anything. It's a Holt's pub, split between spartan vault (complete with television and war memorial on the wall) and lounge. The beers, mild and bitter, at their normally wonderful cheap prices, were fine. Sorry that there's not much else to say, but it's a good honest local.

The **STRAWBERRY DUCK** is on Crabtree Lane in Clayton. It's a free house, serving Boddingtons bitter, Holts mild and bitter, and often a guest beer (on the night it was the fine Mitchells bitter, from Lancaster, at a very competitive 98p; unfortunately it had run out, and no one had had the courtesy to remove it from the list of beers available). The place is rather plush, and has been extended recently: a good job, too, as it was very busy on the evening of our visit. While the Boddingtons was a little iffy, both the Holts beers were quite good.

Next was Boddington Pub Co's **WREXHAM**, on Ashton Old Road just west of the Openshaw crossroads: to our surprise, a 'For Sale' sign hung on the wall. It's a splendid little three-roomed pub, a room on the left, a tiled corridor and small back seating area, and a rather good vault on the right. One word of warning however: mind the step down into the gents' immediately after opening the door. It might easily catch you out, even when stone-cold sober. With the recent disappearance of the keg Oldham mild, the only beer available was Boddingtons bitter, which was okay.



The imposing Duke Of Edinburgh

The **RAILWAY** in Fairfield on Ashton Old Road, this time east of the Openshaw crossroads, was our second Holt's pub of the night. It's another multi-roomed affair, a recent branch Pub of the Month, with a large back room and smaller areas off to the left and right at the front of the pub. As usual with Holt's pubs, both the mild and bitter were available, and both were good, with the mild being slightly preferred.

Last (and certainly not least) was the **HARE AND HOUNDS** on Abbey Hey Lane in Abbey Hey. It's another Boddington PubCo house, and another traditional multi-roomed one at that, with a vault on the right, a rather fine little room on the left, and a much larger back room. The only beer available, as with so many Boddingtons pubs in the Openshaw area (such as the excellent Concert on the Openshaw crossroads), was Boddingtons bitter, which was good: if it's Boddies mild that you want around there, try the Oddfellows. As always, the views expressed are those of the group on the night in question, so don't take our word for it - try the pubs yourselves.

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RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Chris Stone and Sue Tittensor

This month, the venue for our musical revue is the Flea and Firkin, on Oxford Road, close to the City Centre. The 'Flea' is the most recently opened addition to the chain of Firkin pubs, originally the brainchild of David Bruce and now up for sale again following a variety of recent owners.

Centred mostly in London, these home-brew pubs have gone from strength to strength, although the Flea has had a far from smooth run, the most notable hiccup being the water supply, or lack of it, which prevented brewing for some time. Also a word of warning - the three home-brewed beers are not strictly 'real ale' as they are stored in tanks under a blanket of carbon dioxide. However, the pub also features guest beers which are 'real' enough, and on our visit these were Robinsons Old Tom and Theakstons XB.

Situated amidst the grandeur of the old Grosvenor Cinema, the pub lies between UMIST and University of Manchester and so caters primarily for students. From the outside the green and white tiled exterior is immaculate, whilst the high-ceilinged single-room interior is very well executed. The walls are covered with old movie memorabilia, and seating is on wooden pews.

The Flea advertises free live music every night of the week, and on the Tuesday when we visited a respectably large audience awaited "Mad Dog". This turned out to be a two-piece outfit, comprising Matt Walklate (vocals, harmonica, semi-acoustic guitar) and Andy Jones (electric guitar). The band described their set as improvised and spontaneous, modestly adding that the best music could be heard at the weekends, when the two play with a full band. They regarded these midweek appearances as a practice session for the serious business at the weekends. Despite this rather low-key introduction, we were very impressed with their style of R'n'B/Soul/Rock, and thought that the duo performed excellent versions of numbers by Jimmy Reed and Ry Cooder, together with more soulful songs by Eric Clapton and Sam Cooke. Everything was given a very individual, professional style and we thought the standard of the performance was very high, especially when in the middle of a harmonica solo, Matt's guitar strap broke and the guitar crashed onto the bare floorboards! Undeterred, the pair continued until a suitable point in the number before he retrieved it and continued to play. Mad Dog play regularly at the Flea (Tuesdays) and make other appearances. Andy Jones, who hails from the North East, previously played with the Blues Burglars.



Following this very impressive performance, we took advice and returned to the Flea on Saturday evening. Expected five-piece band, we were a little disappointed - another duo - Mad with another Dog. We were quite willing to leave the standard would be as high as previously, the room was like the proverbial sardine can, and when we squeezed our way to the bar, the queue was at least 10 minutes long. After 10 minutes, by which

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about to faint from heat exhaustion, we decided to go elsewhere for a quiet pint or two!

Two evenings a week, the musical flavour at the Flea is Irish, so we paid another visit to see the Quiet Men, who appear on Sundays. The duo (vocals with accordian and guitar) played lively jigs and slow ballads, but were definitely not "quiet". We feel that the Quiet Men were perhaps less professional than one might have expected and this was reflected in the reduced numbers and enthusiasm of the audience.

All in all, well worth a visit. If a seat is a requirement, we suggest that weekends be avoided but early in the week should provide first class entertainment in a bustling atmospheric pub. However, beware! Scratch (og1037) is the cheapest beer available and sells at £1.25 a pint, so if you fancy a few drinks don't forget your credit card.

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BITTER

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The Good Beer Guide 1992

11

CAMRA launches its new 1992 Good Beer Guide at the start of the celebration of its 21st anniversary.

Campaign Director Dave Goodwin said at the regional launch at the Robert Cain Brewery in Liverpool "The Campaign was started by four North West journalists 21 years ago. It had its roots in an area which is still famous for its quality ales brewed by independent brewers."

"Twenty one years on, mass advertised keg beers are a thing of the past and interest in cask conditioned ale has never been greater as can be seen from CAMRA's record membership of over 30,000."

"CAMRA has been influential in many ways. Not only were we responsible for the disappearance of many keg beers but we also created the public awareness which allowed cask conditioned beers and traditional brewers to survive and thrive. Many new small breweries have come

into existence and with CAMRA support, a few breweries such as Cain's in Liverpool are back in production."

"The biggest threat to the survival of independent breweries and the wide variety of ales they produce continues to be from the national brewers. With their heavily promoted national brands they are still trying to dominate the trade and squeeze the smaller brewer out of existence."

"The Good Beer Guide will guide its readers to where the best and greatest variety of quality beers can be found."

The 1992 Good Beer Guide, CAMRA's flagship publication, features no less than 185 breweries, plus over 50 pubs which brew their own beer. In contrast to the gloomy days of 1971 when real ale was becoming so hard to find, there are now 900 different traditional beers in this country.

The Good Beer Guide costs £7.99.

Ann Gives Up Fight

The battle over the Station at Didsbury has been fought to what can best be described as an honourable draw.

The bad news is that licensee Ann Wigglesworth leaves in the middle of this month to take over the tenancy of the Marstons Arms at Royton. Whilst naturally saddened to see her family's 32-year connection with the Station come to an end, Ann is looking forward to taking over the new pub, relieved that the months of uncertainty are over.

The good news is that Marstons have finally seen sense as to how the Station should be run. There is to be a permanent long-term manager installed (rather than the succession of trainees first mooted) and the company are taking pains to see that the right person for the job is selected. No changes are planned at the Station either - the staff are being kept on and the brewery have even resisted the temptation to put the prices up. If the Station had to change hands (and we could argue over that one for a long time) then this is about the best that could be hoped for. We wish Ann every success in her new pub.

CAINS Wins Top Award

The Champion Bitter of Britain award for 1991 has been won by Cains Traditional Bitter from the Robert Cain Brewery in Liverpool.

This prestigious award from CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, was presented at the brewery by Campaign Director, Dave Goodwin.

The judging took place at The Great British Beer Festival which was held in London during August.

Mr. Goodwin said "This is a truly remarkable achievement for a brewery which wasn't even brewing cask conditioned beer this time last year."

"The success of this new beer in the pubs of Merseyside and further afield proves that there is still a demand for good quality distinctive beers. The brewery were not afraid of producing a beer that might not be to everybody's taste rather than compromise with a bland characterless beer which would offend no one."

"The quality of this beer has now received national recognition and the brewery's courage in producing a distinctive bitter beer for the local palate is now rewarded with this well deserved award."

The Olde Woolpack

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

NOVEMBER 1986

The front page of "Opening Times" in November 1986 covered two main topics - the scarcity of Bass cask beers, and price lists in pubs.

Nearly 90% of Stockport's pubs sell traditional beer, and over the whole of South Manchester the figure is still 60%, but for Bass, the proportion that sell cask conditioned beers is a pathetic 25% - and this is from the brewery which for years has advertised its commitment to traditional beer. No wonder one of Bass's well known slogans has been twisted round to read "Stuff this great Bass" (A recent surprise sighting for draught Bass was alongside the Boddington's Mild and Bitter at the Romper near Manchester Airport.)

Pubs are legally obliged to display prices, yet for some strange reason this is one aspect of the law that about one third of our pubs seem to ignore. Both the Trading Standards Department and the LVA expressed surprise at the number breaking the law, but if anything the position is probably even worse. How many times have you seen a price list alongside the till, for the benefit of staff - you, the drinker, should be able to read it from where you're standing at the bar. (The Unity, opposite Stockport Station approach, gets full marks on this score in 1991.)

Chester's Big Lamp on Hillgate re-opened after the fire - a much more traditional lay-out emerged, with the bar moved to the centre of the pub, and hand-pumped Chester's Mild and Bitter joined by cask Trophy. (At a recent visit, the last mentioned had been replaced by Flowers IPA.)

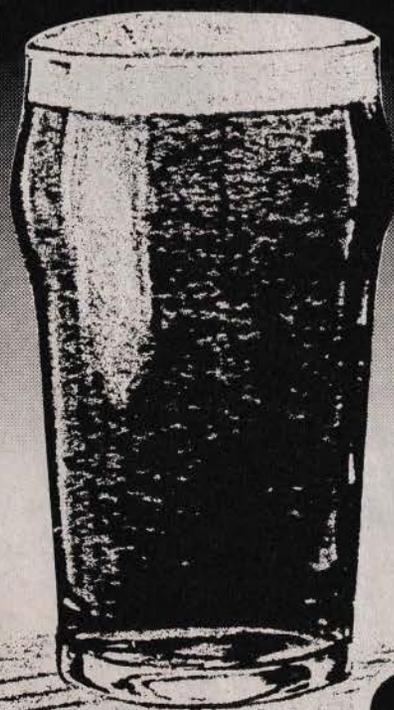
One of the snippets - Heard in a Holt's pub: "They ought to have a happy hour" - are some people never satisfied! (Holts in 1991 is still the best value for money, but readers may remember seeing details last month of a new beer with the low gravity of 3.1%ABV, from the Boddington Pub Co, retailing at 89p. for a pint.)

Robbies Heads South

Local drinkers who find themselves in London should stand a better chance of finding one of their favourite tipples following a supply deal between Robinsons and London wholesaler Brewers Dray.

Free trade sales manager Ian Welling said: "Although we have been represented in London for several years, the Brewers Dray deal should make our distribution more widespread." The sales push is being headed by Best Bitter, Best Mild and Old Tom - the only drawback is likely to be the price - twelve months ago Robbies Best Bitter was spotted on sale in a Brighton freehouse at a giveaway £1.49 a pint!

CHAMPION BEER OF BRITAIN 1990



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CAMRA CALLING!

A quieter month this, following the excesses last time and in view of the run-up to Christmas. We start on Friday 1st with a social for new members which will take the form of a minibus trip round some of the better country pubs to the north of Stockport. We depart from the Royal Oak in Didsbury at 7.00pm and the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport at 7.15pm. Call Tracey for details.

On Monday 4th there is a social at the Circus Tavern on Portland Street in central Manchester. Like all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm.

The following Monday the social is right at the other end of the branch area in Hazel Grove - the Cock at 9.00pm and the Grove at 10. Both are on London Road.

The branch meeting is on Thursday 14th and will be at the Coach & Horses, Hyde Road from 8.00pm onwards. Buses 53 from South Manchester and 203 from Stockport will drop you close by.

The following night it's Stagger time and once again we will be departing by minibus, this time to cover Woodford, Moss Nook, Ringway and Gatley. We leave the Royal Oak, Didsbury at 7.15 and the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.30. Phone Tracey to book.

On Monday 18th, the social will take the form of a brief visit to Winters on Underbank, Stockport followed by a more leisurely drink at the Pack Horse in the Market Place. Early arrivals will no doubt also make time to pop into Turners Vaults.

On Monday 25th the social is a two-way affair - 9.00pm at the Falcon, Kincardine Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock and 10.00pm at the Grafton on Grafton Street.

Finally, on Thursday 28th it's Pub of the Month at the Stanley Arms, Newbridge Lane, Stockport (see page 2).

For more details about any of the above, phone Tracey Clarke on 456 6354 (evenings).

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OPENING TIMES NOVEMBER 1991

MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

There's a useful real ale gain in Longsight, as the Ducie Arms on Stockport Road re-enters the fold with handpumped Boddingtons Bitter.

Worse news elsewhere in Longsight though - the Railway is up for sale and appears to be closed, while the Midway now sells only keg beer (as does the otherwise contrasting FG's Bar in the city centre). Also in Longsight, the Lancaster has dropped Wards Bitter, the Farmers Arms has added handpumped Chesters Mild, and the Bay Horse has switched to handpump dispense for both mild and bitter.

A few Gorton pubs have shuffled the pack of beer. The Hamlet no longer sells real Wilsons Bitter but does have Wilsons Mild on handpump; the Vale Cottage has dropped Websters Bitter in favour of handpumped Boddingtons Bitter; and the Cotton Tree has lost Ruddles County and Wilsons Bitter but gained the now rare Websters Green Label on handpump.

The Lord Nelson has dropped Wilsons Mild in favour of handpumped Bass "Toby" Light (possibly the area's most unexpected guest beer), while the Angel becomes perhaps the first Greenalls real ale pub to have no Greenalls real ale - the pub's only cask beer is now Stones. Nearby in West Gorton, the Imperial's trial of cask Chesters Mild has not met with success - Boddingtons Bitter is still on sale, however.

HEARD IN THE PUB...

CUSTOMER: (somewhat irritated by a group of students completely blocking the door, and paraphrasing an entry in the Student Pub Guide): "UMIST, A University, the only good thing about it is its proximity to the Swinging Sporan"

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For some while the Flea and Firkin at All Saints, while pulling in a substantial clientele, hasn't been well thought of by CAMRA because of the practice, common throughout the "Firkin" chain, of selling "draught" beer under a gas blanket.



The Flea and Firkin, All Saints

With the arrival of enthusiastic brewer Chris Lewis from the Phoenix and Firkin on Denmark Hill Railway Station, South London, things may be set to change a bit. While the main beers at the Flea will continue to be dispensed from the tank under pressure, Chris has access to a small stock of casks, and a Stout and a Ginger Beer (where did he get that idea?) have already made brief appearances in cask-conditioned form. Look out for a Yuletide Ale which is planned to celebrate the coming year by its OG of 1092. (Dispense fanciers should also notice that the gas used in the Flea's dispense system is now the Guinness-style 70:30 nitrogen/carbon dioxide, not the straight Co2 formerly

Finally, news from both the Chorltons. In Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Cains Bitter has been withdrawn from the Beech after a short trial. In Chorlton-on-Medlock, the Bowling Green once again sells no real mild.

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As we went to press the Egerton on St Petersgate Stockport, was closed for redecoration. This is a pub which has been struggling to find an identity since the departure of former host John Newport although the current licensees do seem to have been steadily moving it in the right direction. Let's hope for further improvements in this potentially excellent pub.

The White Lion on Liverpool Road in Manchester is apparently selling Cains Bitter as a guest beer while down the road, the public bar at the Castlefield Hotel/Y-Club has given up trying to sell real ale and the handpumps which previously dispensed Marstons Pedgree have been removed.

Another new licensee to welcome this month - at the Church in Edgeley, former hosts Roger and Jean Meredith have departed to warmer climes (Crete in fact!) and the pub has been taken over by Gladys Wilton. Although this is Gladys' first pub she has had previous bar experience at both the Armoury on Shaw Heath and as Bar Supervisor at the Village Hotel in Cheadle. The Church is an excellent little pub and we wish Gladys every success.

Rumours continue to circulate that Holts are interested in the Imperial on London Road, Manchester. This impressive building has been closed "for refurbishment" for some considerable time now although there have yet to be any signs of activity.

Not so far away, a pub that has changed hands is the Star & Garter on Fairfield Street which was a hive of activity as we went to press although we had no details of the new owners of this former Whitbread pub. Speaking of Whitbread, they are still trying to offload several other of their inner-city pubs with, amongst others, the Steelworks Tavern in Gorton and the King William IV in Chorlton-on-Medlock up for auction early this month.

In Cheadle refurbishment work is underway at two pubs. The Printers is having the bar moved backwards into what was part of the private quarters. This should help relieve congestion in the main bar area which could become unpleasantly crowded at times. The two rooms on the right should remain unchanged, we hope, but with Robinsons, who knows? Down the road at the Old Star, Hydes have also embarked on the much needed refurbishment of the pub which in recent years has become badly run down. We understand that both pubs could well end up with a conservatory of one form or another - yet another sign of the 'greenhouse effect'?

Following our report last month, the Windsor Castle in Edgeley has re-opened although it no longer sells real ale. Across the road, there have been some signs of life at the Pine-apple. The Control Securities-owned pub has been closed for some time now and doubts must remain as to whether it will re-open.

The Crown on Hillgate now sells Boddingtons Bitter as a guest beer. Speaking of Boddies, the Bulkeley Arms on Brinkway has now installed handpumps instead of the electric dispense. The Boddies Mild has reportedly been in particularly good form there of late.

We hear that the Strawberry Gardens in Offerton is now selling John Smiths Bitter alongside the Websters/Wilsons/Ruddles beers. This is the first case we know of locally where a beer from Courage's range has appeared in a GrandMet pub after the GrandMet/Courage pubs-for-breweries swap.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

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I/We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: U.K. £10 Joint membership £12

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