

OPENING TIMES

JANUARY 1992

CAMRA
FREE

FULL MEASURE ! and not before time

Over many years, "Opening Times" has campaigned against short measures in pubs. In June of last year our lead article, entitled "Are You Getting Enough?", highlighted the fact that, in pubs using brim measure pint glasses, drinkers were typically receiving at least 5% less than what they had paid for, in many cases much more. A recent report from the Institute of Trading Standards Administration estimated that drinkers were being short-changed to the tune of £225 million a year.

Now, after intense pressure from CAMRA members and drinkers up and down the country, the Government has announced its intention of implementing Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act, which requires a pint of beer to be a pint of liquid, excluding the head. All pubs will have to use oversize, lined glasses. The exact timing of the move has not yet been decided, but it is likely to be brought in during the Spring of 1992.

"Opening Times" broadly welcomes this move. It will at last end the long-running problem of short measures, and ensure that every drinker gets a full pint without having to ask for a top-up, which is often not practical. A welcome side-effect is that, by eliminating spillage, it will remove the temptation for the small minority of unscrupulous licensees to return beer from drip trays to the cask.

Unfortunately, the change will almost certainly be used as an excuse for higher beer prices, and the Brewers' Society have admitted as much. Their argument is an interesting one - that the prices currently charged assume that the head is part of the pint, and will have to rise if the Government insists on full measures. This is tantamount to admitting that pubs have been cheating the drinker by serving short measures over all these years.

Around here, many pubs already use lined glasses, and there is no evidence that they charge higher prices than those using brim measures. In particular, the Robinsons estate contains many examples of both, and there is no noticeable price differential between brim



The oversize glasses in use at those pubs with electric pumps - in this case The Nursey Inn, Heaton Norris, already deliver a full pint from a metered dispense, - large glass on left - which won't all fit at the time of pouring, (with the head) into a 'normal' pint pot - represented here by one of Camra's own festival glasses! The excess is shown in the smaller glass.

and lined pints. A small number of breweries, notably Banks's and Hydes, deserve praise for having insisted on the use of oversize glasses in the majority of their pubs, even when it wasn't a legal requirement. They tend to offer pretty good value, too. *(continued on page 3)*

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PUB of the Month January



Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
			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	31	

The first Pub of the month award for 1992 goes to the Sir Robert Peel, Castle Street, Edgeley, Stockport. The 'Bobby Peel' was for many years a Wilsons pub, coming into the hands of Greenalls in 1980 as a result of the pub swaps that were in fashion at that time. The pub in those days was rather different to the pub as it is now - unusually a complete internal re-arrangement actually worked to give the spacious yet homely and comfortable pub that we have today.

Kath, John and staff
welcome you to the
Sir Robert Peel

Castle Street
Edgeley

Greenalls and Stones Bitter
- lunchtime food -

Already a comfortable and popular boozier, the arrival of John and Kath Parkin in 1990 saw the Bobby Peel really take off and it must now stand as one of the most improved pubs in Stockport over the past two years. Under John's supervision, the pub has thrived in every respect - the well-used vault is the home to many sports and games teams, on the lounge side, pub food has really taken off with daily specials complementing the traditional fare on offer. Food is also available on Wednesday evenings and on Sundays from 12 - 7.00pm.

The cask beers are Greenalls Mild and Bitter with Stones Bitter as a permanent guest. Beers from the new Coach House Brewery would also doubtless go well, but the Greenalls currently seem reluctant to supply them here.

The end result of all this hard work is one of the most attractive and well-used pubs in Castle Street - an area where there is much competition. The fact that the Bobby Peel is usually full speaks volumes for its quality.

The presentation will be on Thursday 23rd January when the many regulars will be joined by a host of CAMRA members to present this well deserved award.

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OPENING TIMES JANUARY 1992

FULL MEASURE ! and not before time

(continued from page 1)

In the past few years, we have seen a large number of pubs, particularly Greenalls and Boddingtons, but also a few Robinsons, convert from metered dispense to handpumps or free-flow electrics, and at the same time replace their lined glasses with brim measures. Accepting the brewers' argument, you might have expected this to lead to lower beer prices, but certainly no savings were ever passed on to the drinker.

The brewers also claim that the change in legislation will mean a high cost in replacing existing glasses. Since the average pub glass has a life of only a few months, bringing forward the cost of buying new ones is hardly a great hardship.

The conclusion must be that, while there is a very limited amount of truth in the suggestion that the change may lead to higher beer prices because it cuts into pubs' margins, the only reason those margins were so high in the first place was because drinkers were not being given a square deal.

A few drinkers have expressed concern that the change will reduce the availability of real ale by encouraging the replacement of handpumps by electric meters. There is no reason why this should be so. Handpumps have become such a powerful symbol of real ale that brewers will be very reluctant to rip them out and throw away that image. Even now, many pubs up and down the country seem to have no problem in serving handpumped beer into lined glasses. On the other hand, in this area drinkers are already used to being served real ale through electric pumps and are sophisticated enough to tell it apart from keg.

CAMRA will act to expose any unjustified price increases, and will campaign to ensure that no real ale is lost through this change and that electric pump cows clearly indicate whether beer is cask or keg.

Salisbury Plain Deceitful

The Salisbury in Manchester City Centre is the latest addition to the List of Shame of pubs selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on a handpump as if it were traditional. Like all such fads, this product is a nine-day wonder; faced with CAMRA's ban on promotion of any pub using fake handpumps, for beer or cider, licensees are voting with their pumps and refusing Scrumpy Jack.

If the Salisbury wants to sell keg cider that's fine, as long as it's honestly labelled; if it wants to sell genuine traditional REAL cider, as it has done in the past, CAMRA will support it, not just in print but more importantly by drinking the stuff; however, as long as keg is passed off as the genuine article, the Salisbury is barred from any recognition or award from CAMRA.

COPY DATE FOR FEBRUARY ISSUE - 21st JANUARY

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

The King's Arms

HELMSHORE WALK
CHORLTON ON MEDLOCK

**IT'S ONLY DIFFICULT TO
FIND THE FIRST TIME!**

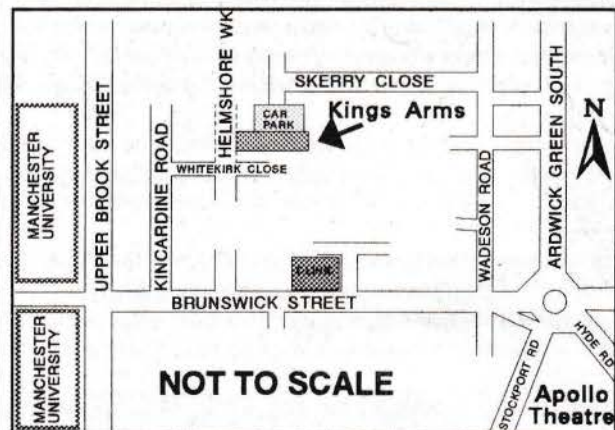
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**WARNING: Excessive Intake of Alcohol is
NOT RECOMMENDED**

So, 1992 is upon us and who knows what the New Year will bring. It will certainly be one of upheaval in the licensed trade as the November deadline looms, by which time the national brewers have to either sell or lease free of fee many thousands of their pubs. The final outcome of this is still far from clear - will we see a wave of new free houses, will the smaller regional and local brewers move to increase their estates or will it mean a wave of pub closures, particularly in the less profitable inner-city areas? A combination of all three is the most likely result and, of course, Opening Times will keep you up with developments.

One thing the New Year will see is an end to that thorny question - just what is a pint? The long overdue decision to implement is something that CAMRA and Trading Standards Officers have long been pushing for. The decision has met with a predictable chorus of complaint from both the Brewers Society and other Trade representatives. Their message has essentially been that we, the customers, although being charged for a pint in the past, have been

In the Editor's View

by John Clarke

getting say only 95% of that in beer and the rest in froth - if we want what we thought we were getting all along we will have to pay more for the privilege! Perhaps those same spokespeople would like to consider this: the introduction of lined glasses will of course largely eliminate drip-tray slops. Now, we all know that no licensee would ever admit to returning these to the barrel so, just think of all the savings that will be made from all that beer that at the moment is being poured down the sink at the end of every session...

And now a word for our new readers in Marple. Just to avoid any confusion, whilst Opening Times is produced by the Stockport and South Manchester branch of CAMRA, this does not in fact, geographically cover Marple (or Bredbury, Romiley and Woodley for that matter). If you live in those areas you are in the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch - we shall try and bring you details of their activities in our CAMRA Calling column each month.

However whether you live in Marple, Stockport or Manchester, join with all of us at Opening Times in raising your pints and toasting a happy and prosperous New Year.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Chris Coffey

Those members who are also in CAMRA are helping their fellow members in the Sons of the Desert, the Laurel & Hardy Appreciation Society, to celebrate Ollie's centenary in fine style on Saturday 18th January.

They are starting at twelve noon with a visit to the Kings Arms, home of the West Coast Brewery. There they will try the draught versions of the commissioned bottled beers brewed by Brendan Dobbin, Laurel Light and Hardy Heavy (based on Yakima Grande Pale Ale and Guiltless Stout).

They will then go to the Cornerhouse Cinema for a Saturday afternoon matinee of the Boys films. However, as the Flea and Firkin is en route and the Full Mash Magical Mild is only 75p a pint, some social absenteeism from the cinema is expected!

Catching a train from Oxford Road some time after 4, the Sons will descend upon the Stanley Arms in Stockport to enjoy the Stan's Mild and the Ollie's Mild as brewed by the Ryburn Brewery.

The beer adventures end at seven when they board a coach for the Big Centenary Banquet in Widnes.

Anyone who likes Laurel & Hardy is most welcome to join with the above tour. Good beer and good laughter is a good cocktail!

(Editor's note - thanks for the info, Chris. Anyone wanting more details can contact Chris on 832 2468 ext 7022 (day-time) or 0744 817130 (evenings and weekend).)

From: Robin Wignall

In reporting the Heaton Norris Stagger, Paul Fenton seemed confused by the handpumps at the Grey Horse, Old Road.

They are of course the infamous Greenall Whitley 'electric' handpumps introduced a few years ago. Movement of the handpump activates the electric pump. The ale at the Grey Horse is cask conditioned. The dispense is acceptable, though obviously not the most favourable.

From: R.E. Edwards

Further to my recent letter, which you published in the December issue.

You stated that you had not heard of the "Woodley Hall PubCo". I can furnish the following information. At present they own four pubs - the Shakespeare, Haughton Green; the Bowling Green, Crown Point, Denton; the Pack Horse, Mottram; and Centuries, Hattersley, and are negotiating the purchase of the Queens, Hyde town centre. Their headquarters are at Woodley Hall, Stockport Road, Hyde.

You also stated that Haughton Green is not in your area, if not, why not?

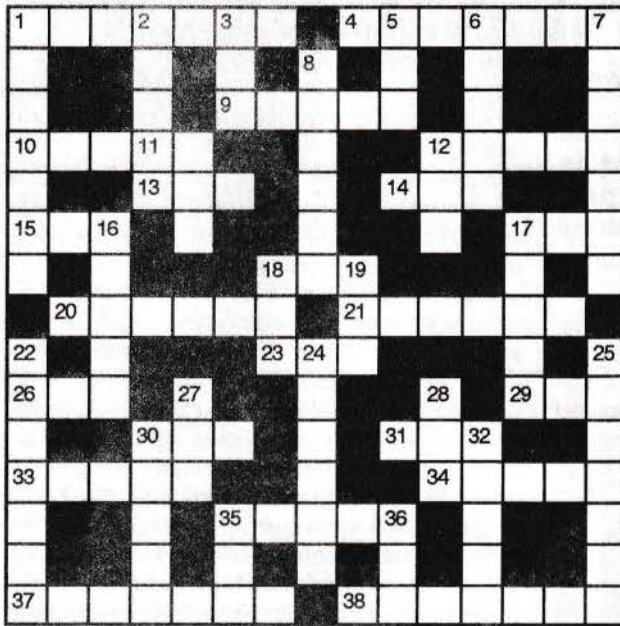
You have in the past held Staggers at Crown Point, Denton. Haughton Green is two miles nearer to your base at Stockport. Hoping you will reconsider and increase your circulation to include Haughton Green. There are ten public houses and a Conservative Club in the area.

(Editor's note - thanks for the additional information about the Woodley Hall PubCo. Haughton Green falls in the area covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA - for more details about their activities please contact Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634. There are no plans to extend the distribution of Opening Times to the Haughton Green area at present.)

Letters for publication should be sent to 'Opening Times' 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD

O.T. £5 PRIZE CROSSWORD

Entries to address on foot of page 4 by 31st January, please.



- 6. Town centre "gem"
- 7. Marple pub
- 8. Half way house
- 11. Hat
- 12. To confuse
- 16. Canteen
- 17. Under the Viaduct
- 18. Moist
- 19. Greek letter
- 22. Pub for plants
- 24. Brewery on the Wash
- 25. Ringway pub
- 27. Wield
- 28. Room
- 30. Extra
- 32. West....Brewery
- 35. Understand
- 36. Measure of spirits

ACROSS

- 1. Newton's service
- 4. Little Mill here
- 10. Umpires call
- 12. Grassland
- 13....Hill Inn, Britain's Highest pub.
- 14. You know this
- 15. Public house
- 17. Transport
- 18. ...Valley Brewery
- 20. Sun and
- 21. Stockport pub
- 23. Brewed
- 26. Singular prefix

- 29. Born
- 30. A of CAMRA
- 31. Protective garment
- 33. Bramhall oak...
- 34. ...Mellor variety
- 35. Type of beer
- 37. Language
- 38. Cheadle pub

DOWN


- 1. Holts have two in V & V
- 2. Public. tap
- 3. Cask
- 5. Miners ale



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Edgeley

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Hydes Anvil Ales

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STAGGER

with Angela Walker

Stagger departs from our usual style this month, as we embark upon a motorised adventure around the outer regions of the Branch area. To follow our path you would need to recruit a friendly and teetotal driver, or follow our example and hire a minibus for the evening and invite a group of friends.

We visited an excellent selection of "real" pubs. They share factors which the big brewers (and often our own independent brewer) fail to realise people like about pubs. Each has its own unique character, developed



and cherished over many years; they have different rooms catering for different tastes; are simply furnished using warm materials such as well worn wood and have a cosy, welcoming atmosphere that can never be reproduced by a brewery interior designer.

We were first released off the minibus to quench our thirst at the **Davenport Arms**, known to many as the **Thief's Neck** (on the A5102 at Woodford: Bus 157 from Manchester via Cheadle). This is a true traditional redbrick, Cheshire country pub which has slowly been surrounded by the stockbroker belt. As a result, the carpark often boasts many executive vehicles, but do not be put off by this, as this excellent pub welcomes all. You can enjoy your pint of Robinsons mild or bitter in any one of several rooms - the (often crowded) lounge, a cosy snug (no-smoking), or, if you prefer a game of darts, move into the vault. On a cold night there are welcoming real fires. The beers were judged to be above average on the night.

No time to dally, and onto the minibus for a journey deeper into Cheshire. Through Wilmslow, then onto the A538 Altrincham Rd, and a right turn after the airport tunnel takes you to the **Red Lion/Romper**. This old farmhouse building is in sharp contrast to the high technology of Ringway which surrounds it, but is an ever popular retreat in all seasons. In winter, there is a real fire to help you soak up the atmosphere over a pint of Boddingtons mild or bitter, or draught Bass. The main lounge is furnished with well worn wooden settles and tables, and antique bric-a-brac. Look out for the collection of old biplane (Avro?) photographs. The pub retains a vault where darts can be played in a no frills basic bar. Most of the party drank the mild, which was deemed to be average on the night - though one member expressed disappointment that Boddies mild is but a shadow of its former self - or the Draught Bass which was quite good.

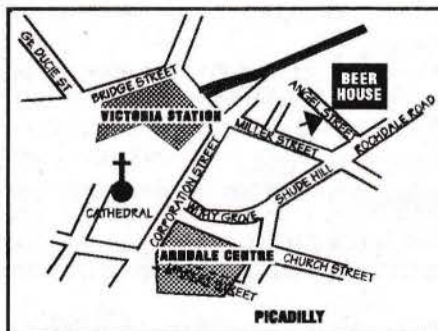


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DOBBINS BEST BITTER	4.0% ABV

and eight other British ales.....

HOT AND COLD FOOD



Back on the bus and across to Moss Nook to the **Tatton Arms**, another splendid pub. As you enter the pub you are immediately struck by the wealth of dark oak panelling, which is especially ornate around the large fireplace. The wood extends around the bar area and down into the alcoves creating a warm, cosy feel along with the subtle lighting. There are several rooms to choose to sit in (if it's not too crowded - as this pub is very popular), the room at the far end is a modern extension and as such is much bigger, often hosting concert nights. This is a pub which can cater for all tastes, so do yourself a favour and visit it. As a Robynson's house, this is the rose between many thorns, and I hope it gets permanently overlooked by the Robynson's architect. The beer was deemed above average by most of the party.

We moved onto the more modern **High Grove** selling Hydes bitter and light - both in better than average condition on this occasion. This a modern (probably '50s) estate pub with a local clientele. As such it had one large, bright, open plan lounge wrapped around the bar with some comfy looking sofas at one end.

At Gatley we continued drinking Hydes beers by visiting two hostelrys here which both serve it. First, the **Prince of Wales** a pub of considerable age, given away by its low ceilings and doorways. It is a bustling local with a good atmosphere, has separate drinking areas and although obviously modernised over the years, still manages to retain an air of antiquity. The mild was thought to be in average condition, but those drinking the bitter voted it as good.

At the main Gatley cross-roads, the **Horse and Farrier** was our last port of call. This has been a CAMRA pub of the month on several occasions as it is a traditional pub that although modernised has kept its decor in character with its age. There is an abundance of stained glass and dark wood around the pub, and distinct drinking areas compartmentalising the place. The low ceilings and subtle lighting give a cosy feel. Although the pub was not too crowded on our visit, the service at the bar was very slow, and it took some of us a long time to get a pint. Having said that, once it arrived it was good - thought to be the best pint of the night.

Although you could not visit all these pubs on one night using public transport, they are accessible and well worth that special trip to seek them out. Most of these inns are living history, and what better way to study it than over a pint? The views expressed in this review do not constitute any kind of 'definite' opinion but merely reflect the views of the individuals on the night in question.

THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER

CAMRA CALLING!

Yet again we have a wide social programme for the coming month with something for everyone.

On Friday 10th there is a minibus trip around some of the best pubs in East Manchester. These are always enjoyable and interesting trips - the minibus departs from the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport at 7.30pm. Call Tracey for details or to book your seat.

The following Monday, 13th, there will be a social at the Crown, High Street, Cheadle. As with all Monday Socials, this starts at 9.00pm. Thursday 16th sees the monthly branch meeting which this time will be at the Victoria, Wilmslow Road, Withington (in the upstairs room). The following night is our monthly Stagger - this time in Hazel Grove. We start at the Rising Sun at 7.00pm or you can join us at the Grapes at 8.30. Both pubs are on London Road.(A6).

On Sunday 19th we will be meeting for an informal Sunday Lunch at the Bakers Vaults in Stockport Market Place. The food is always excellent here and afterwards there will be a chance to visit some of the excellent pubs nearby. Meet at noon in the Bakers. The following night there is a social at the Lancaster, Stockport Road, Longsight.

Thursday 23rd sees Pub of the Month the Sir Robert Peel, Castle Street, Edgeley (see page 2) and on Monday 27th the social will be at the Royal Oak, Commercial Road, Hazel Grove. The last event in January is a brewery visit to the Coach House Brewery in Warrington. The coach leaves the Crown, Heaton Lane at 6.30pm and numbers are limited so please phone to book a seat as soon as possible.

Just two events in February to finish off with - on Monday 3rd there is a social at the Tiviot, Tiviot Dale, Stockport and on Friday 7th there is another minibus pub-crawl. This one is around some of the best Holts in North Manchester (mainly Prestwich and Whitefield). This is bound to be popular so please phone to book your seat. We will leave the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.15.

For more details please phone Tracey on 061 456 6354.

If you live in the Marple area, you will fall in the area covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of the Campaign and as a new service to our new readers we will also be bringing you details of their activities from now on. On 13th January there will be a branch meeting at the Bush in Hyde from about 8.30 onwards. For more details, phone Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634.

The Stanley Arms
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Full Details in February Issue of Opening Times!

T'Hut - Philips Sport & Social

In about 1975 a section of the then MULLARD SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB was formed with the intention of making a bowling green on the football pitch in front of the factory in Bramhall Moor Lane in Hazel Grove.

By the time the green was opened in July 1979 Balfour Beatty were putting the finishing touches to roads and drainage systems for the Industrial Park on the adjacent open fields. A redundant site hut was donated, which was erected by members and refurbished with help from John Smith's.

The Club was opened in November 1980, but has been replaced since then in sections by a brick built structure. The keg chillers were superceded by a temperature controlled beer store but the keg beer remained.

A recent issue of CAMRA CALLING, the information sheet for members of Stockport & Sth. Mcr. CAMRA, asking for info on all private licensed clubs in the area selling real ale, coincided with a request from the club Chairman for suggested beers for a real ale bar at a Midsummer Eve Barbeque.

Nine gallons of Batemans Mild, Fullers London Pride, and Oak Double Dagger were ordered and installed on the bottle shelving. On the day, the casks were tapped and a lunch time quality control session was carried out. All three were in top form and were priced at 90p, £1 and £1.10 respectively.

On the night, London Pride sold out as did seven gallons each of Batemans and the Double Dagger. The following Monday all three were still in immaculate condition (two pints of clear London Pride were lovingly squeezed out of the empty cask). The regulars were still drinking the keg Stones and Tetley. Eventually only two pints of mild and six pints of Double Dagger were poured away.

The real ale experiment had succeeded and at the next committee meeting the decision to go to a monthly real ale night (the final Friday of the month) was taken. Fullers of Chiswick provided a handpump and once more nine gallons of London Pride sold out in the evening. Since October the sales of the cask beer has steadily risen from one to four nine gallons per week, and the 'Sold Out' pump clip is a thing of the past.

In early December the rotating guest policy (thirty different beers already) was added to when Robinsons were given the opportunity to compete with the existing keg beers. They provided a second hand pump and the experiment was widened with Old Tom, Robinsons Dark Best Mild, and Ordinary Bitter. Cask? Of course!

The whole activity has not been without difficulties. Obviously the cellar work is more complicated, and there is Cask Beer education to be carried out, but the whole exercise is good positive campaigning.

One satisfied customer is already hoping to introduce cask beer to his cricket club during the summer.

New Castle & Falcon Club

The Castle & Falcon Club opened in mid-November at 15 Dantzig Street, less than a stone's throw from the old Castle & Falcon pub on Bradshaw Street in the City Centre.

Indeed, it is being run by the same people (licensee Norma Heaney) and already many of the former regulars have returned. The stained glass windows and the swinging sign from the old pub will shortly be gracing the interior of the club, to improve that 'home from home' look, and the current, anonymous (bright pink) exterior is to be signed with Burtonwoods blue and gold colours.

Traditional beers, handpumped, are Burtonwood Mild, Best Bitter and James Forshaw's Bitter. The future of the old pub itself remains in doubt as the cellars were built beneath an adjacent warehouse, since demolished to make way for Metrolink.

RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Chris Stone and Sue Tittensor

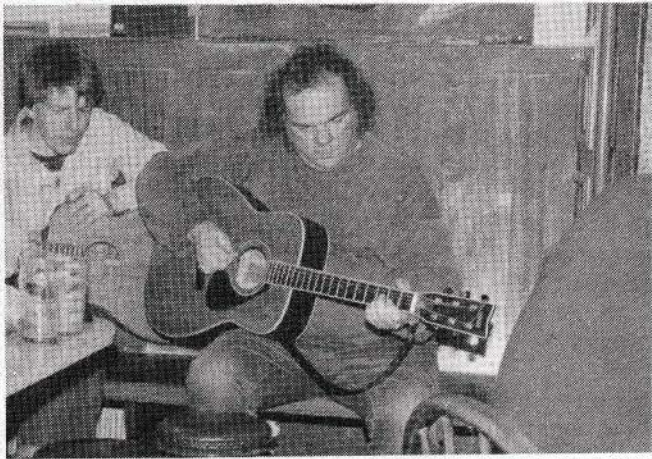
The Arden Arms was voted the 1990 Pub of the Year by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA and is this month's selection for Rhythm and Booze.

The Arden is a shining example of a traditional town centre local, which has been sensitively refurbished and provides a cosy atmosphere in which to enjoy excellent examples of Robinsons beers. Live music on Saturday and Sunday evenings make a splendid pub complete.

On alternate Saturdays, drinkers are entertained by Pete Farrow, who must be one of Stockport's best known musicians. When not performing, he is frequently seen without his acoustic guitar and mandolin listening to other bands in the area. Pete plays a varied mixture of folk/rock/blues, interspersed with jokes and tales which create a relaxed, off the cuff atmosphere and provoke a very good audience response. Any one at the Saturday afternoon session of last year's Stockport Beer Festival, or at the recent Openshaw Octoberfest will remember the well-deserved rapturous applause in response to Pete's marvellous set. From "Blowin' in the Wind" to blues instrumentals, this one-man-band is a kind of Bob Dylan-meets-Jasper Carrott. Usually he finishes off the set with a medley of songs - every classic that you can think of and a few that you can't.

Also on Saturdays are Fools Wisdom, a folk duet, with 6 and 12-string acoustic guitars, who sing gentle melodies and ballads from their large repertoire of folk classics. There is no fancy playing, but plenty of pleasant harmonies and the tunes roll along with the occasional tambourine accompaniment in the audience.

Sundays at the Arden feature a trio of accomplished musicians who have no collective name, but who have built up a firm reputation in their home town of Macclesfield (where they play on Fridays at the Castle and Thursdays at the George). The line-up at these venues varies from week to week, but at the Arden Arms consists of Suzie Sullivan (tin whistle, bazouki and bodhran), Steve Bryant (tenor banjo and mandolin) and Rick Carlton (acoustic guitar). The trio play traditional Irish music to a very high standard, and the jigs, reels and hornpipes have the audience foot tapping



and clapping long before last orders. The band are often joined by other musical members of the audience, and on the occasion of our visit were joined by Pete Farrow, who performed an extraordinary version of "Wild Thing", and Moira who eloquently sang "The Spinning Wheel" - not a dry eye in the house! All of this was played without amplification to an audience who appreciated the talent and musicianship of the performers.

Rick can also be seen at a new residency at the Bakers Vaults where the Timekeepers play on Wednesdays. So, if you're into acoustic music expertly played, with a spot of humour thrown in, visit the Arden Arms one weekend.



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A Mother in Law, please! Porky Pig's Pie Shop

Tony Wilkinson reflects on times past.

In the 'Good Old Days' before CAMRA and Keg Beers were invented, folklore has it that we were surrounded by myriads of great beers brewed by local breweries long closed. Alas that was far from the truth. Most of the older cask beers were pretty bland efforts. In fact many of them still remain, maybe cost reduced as well but not much worse for the experience, still on sale, and still bland.

The average drinker in those days had several ploys to attempt to put a bit of flavour into the offerings. Mixed drinks were much more common then and there were numerous names for these concoctions. Anarf Anarf Anarf was in some parts of the south what a Yorkshireman would call half o' mixed (5 fluid ounces of mild mixed with 5 fluid ounces of bitter), and a Mother-in-Law was Old and Bitter. What else?

The south of England drinker was frequently driven to mixing bottled and cask beer to put a bit of life into a totally flat mild or bitter. This practice has even evolved into the total fallacy that Gravity dispense beer is flat and that hand pumped beer is not. It is amazing that the vast majority of drinkers subscribe to this point of view! Brown and mild, light and bitter, and light and mild all fall into this category. The more discerning drinkers even had a variation on this, the Mild and Light for MIFS (Mild in first) who wanted to make sure that everything they were paying for ended up in the glass and not the slop tray.

Brewers had been a bit slow in reacting to the real ale renaissance but in the last few years dozens of beers with fabulous flavours and even more fabulous names have been made widely available. May their mash tuns never leak. Some of these beers have become almost legendary, to such an extent that practices like adding caramel to a beer to change its flavour or colour has been regarded as a retrograde step.

Will the very recent revival of Old ales and their kin lead to a parallel revival of Old and Mild, and Old and Bitter? An Exmoor Tom has already been sighted, being half Exmoor Ale and half Robinsons Old Tom. What next? A Flying Herberts Fart is offered for the most interesting suggestion received.



As reported last month, Stockport's Egerton Arms on St Petersgate has been transformed into the unusually named Porky Pig's Pie Shop. Despite the bizarre name, the new-look pub is definitely an improvement on what was there before. The work carried out has essentially been modest in the sense that there have been no drastic alterations.

What has happened, however, is that the entire pub, both inside and out, has been given a much needed clean-up and redecoration, which has restored it to something like the Egerton Arms of old. It would have been nice to see the magnificent etched windows replaced, but doubtless the cost proved prohibitive.

Naturally, there is an accent on pub food, although a glance at the menu when Opening Times called just after Christmas did not show pies that much in evidence. The 'pig' theme inside, has also been carried out with commendable restraint, something all too rare these days. Beers available are Ruddles Bitter, Websters Bitter, Wilsons Bitter and, unusually, Wilsons Mild. Ruddles was 65p a half, so it doesn't come cheap. Well worth a visit though.



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OLD ALES

This month we conclude our look at the many seasonal old ales and barley wines available at this time of year. Last time we concentrated on those brewed locally in Greater Manchester and now we'll consider those from further afield.

Despite the, usually justified, criticisms directed at the national brewers for their tendencies to go for the lowest common denominator in terms of the taste and character of their products, they do still produce some quite distinctive strong ales. Only one of these is regularly available on draught and that is Walkers Winter Warmer from the Tetley-Walker brewery at Warrington. This 1060og/5.8%ABV beer is available from November to January each year and is a smooth, dark and sweet winter ale with a strong fruity flavour. Primarily brewed for the Peter Walker estate, it has become more widely available in recent years and can usually be found in the Barleycorn, West Didsbury.

The two other products of the national brewers worth a mention are available in bottle only but are much more widely available. Perhaps the most common, and certainly a classic of its type is Whitbread's Gold Label Barley Wine. Originally brewed by Tennant Bros. of Sheffield (the label in fact still bears that long forgotten company's crest), this weighs in at a hefty 10.9%ABV and is claimed by Whitbread to be the biggest selling barley wine in Britain. A smooth drinking but warming beer, this should be treated with caution. The bottled version, incidentally, is filtered but **not** pasteurised. The other national heavy-weight is from Bass in the form of their No.1 Barley Wine. This has an alcohol content of about 9% and again is a pale, smooth, warming beer. Not as widely available as Gold Label, but certainly worth looking out for. Bass were in fact persuaded to rack off a cask for this year's Burton-on-Trent Beer Festival where it was sold in 1/3 pint measures and made for a memorable drink.

Also occasionally available in cask form (again usually for beer festivals) is the normally bottle-only Banks's Imperial Old Ale. Again a pale beer this has an original gravity of 1098 with an alcohol content to match. Again

a smooth, easy drinking beer this, too, should be treated with care. The rest of the seasonal ales which appear locally have two things in common - they are invariably on draught and come from the many new-wave micro-breweries which have been set up in the past decade. They are primarily exclusive to the free trade and space precludes covering all but a representative sample.

Moorhouses Brewery at Burnley is a much respected new brewery, famed particularly for its premium ale, Pendle Witches Brew. They do however produce a range of fine beers which includes Owd Ale a 1065/6.4% seasonal beer. Very dark and sweet with a dry finish. The Robinwood Brewery at Todmorden also produces a fine range of beers, one of which - Old Fart - is well on the way to achieving cult status. Their seasonal beer is not overstrong and takes the form of a Porter (1042/4.2%). This is dark and smooth with a slightly nutty flavour.

To the south of the area, the Titanic Brewery at Stoke is another respected new brewery whose products often feature at Stockport Beer Festival. Their Seasonal offering is the aptly named Wreckage a 1080/7.6% winter ale. This was on sale at Stockport's Olde Vic just before Christmas and proved to be yet another pale, smooth dangerously drinkable beer. On sale alongside the Wreckage was another seasonal brew - Christmas Cracker from Woods brewery at Wistanstow in Shropshire. This dark, ruby winter beer is brewed only in November and December to an original gravity of 1060(6%ABV). A similar beer (same gravity, ABV5.6%) is the aptly named Red Nose Reinbeer from the Cotleigh Brewery of Wiveliscombe, Somerset, which has also appeared in the local free trade this year.

This concludes our look at just a few of the increasing number of festive ales produced around the country. The number produced is increasing all the time as more and more brewers come to appreciate the market for this particular aspect of their art. A word of warning, though. These are strong beers in every sense of the word - don't even think of indulging if you're driving.

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JANUARY 1987

January 1987 was the third month in a row when Bass had made the front page of *Opening Times* - "Bass get it wrong" drew attention to the fact that traditional Bass beers had been expected in 100 North-west managed pubs, but there were only two alterations locally - Fobs Wine Bar in Didsbury, and the Hope Inn in Heaton Norris were both converted to traditional beers, but other areas with greater concentrations of Bass pubs saw no alterations whatsoever. There was preliminary notification of the first Stockport Beer Festival, due to take place in April.

Two of Boddie's major refurbishments opened in time to catch the Christmas trade. "Extremely tasteful" was the general opinion, but the loss of the vault in each case was regretted. The Old Garratt on Princess Street, (corner of Granby Row) introduced Higson and Oldham beers, as well as Boddies, but at the Victoria in Bramhall, renamed Victoria Tavern, it was still only Boddington's. In both pubs, though, hand-pumps had replaced the old "sliders" on the bar.

Boddington's also had a third refurbishment - the Dog and Partridge in Heaton Mersey, which re-opened as the Mersey Vale, and although it was quite a pleasant pub that emerged, once again the vault had been lost. (There was also a reminder of five year old pint prices 72p. for Mild and 74p. for Bitter.) There were a lot of pub alterations in that edition of *Opening Times* :- Holt's Seven Stars on Ashton Old Road attracted some very complimentary remarks, (which is more than recent alterations have done.)

Banks's Gransmoor further along Ashton Old Road was another one - this was actually the second, and much more subdued attempt - the first one was more on "House of Horrors" lines - there were all sorts of "artefacts" strung round the walls, each one containing a light which flashed in time to the music.

Finally, Robinson's Royal Oak, High Street, Stockport (opposite the Brewery.) There were no complimentary remarks for this one - the characterful old pub had been completely destroyed, and in its place came "featureless" rooms, and "antiseptic" lighting, also an extremely spacious "Gents". (No news of the "Ladies" though.)

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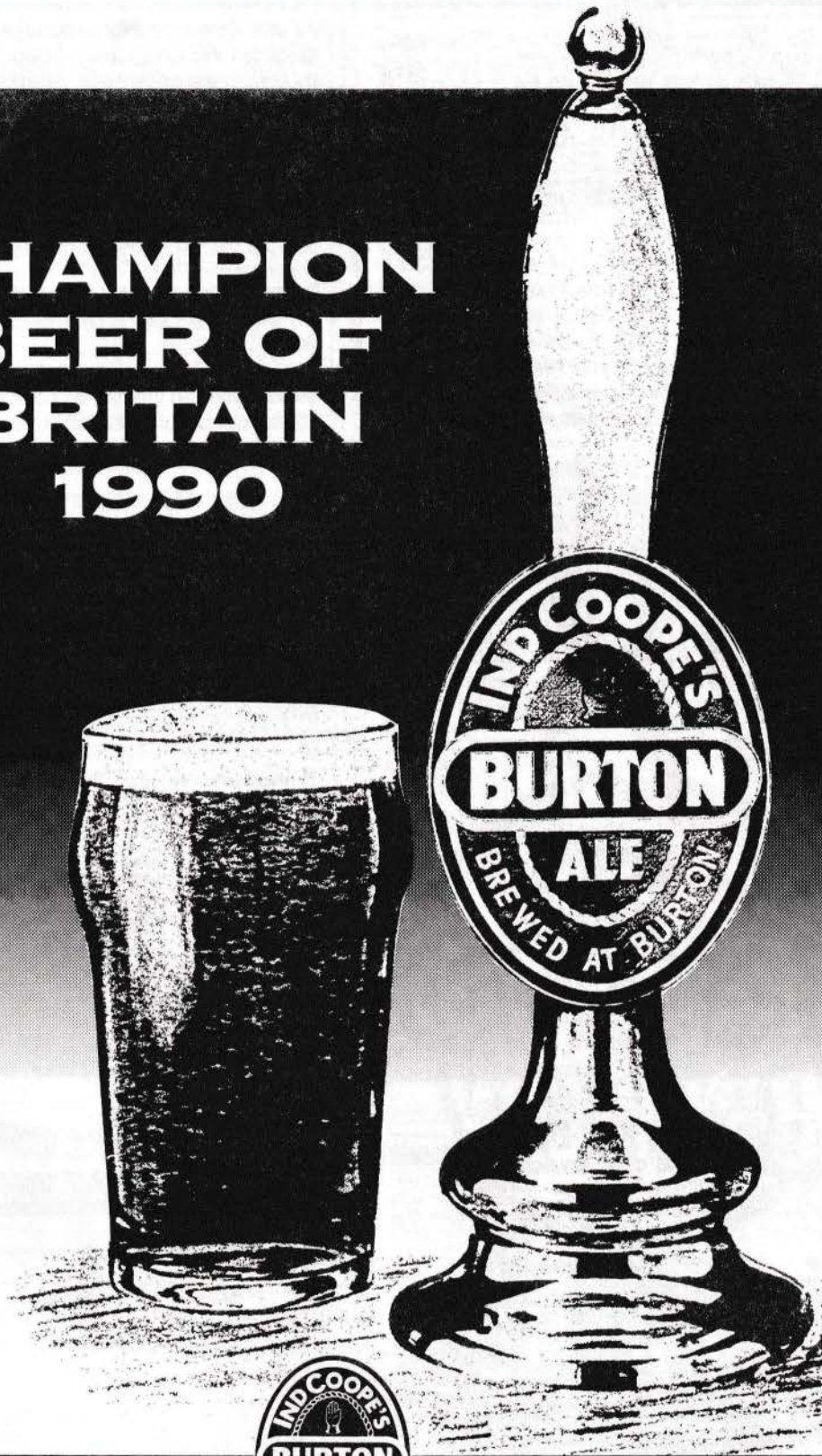
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The Crown Hotel, Heaton Moor (Boddies PubCo) now sells Inde Coope Burton Ale as a third real ale. The price seems reasonable, £1.18 in the vault, £1.22 in the lounge, and already has a good following with the first 4 kils going in under 3 days. Apparently premium lager drinkers are attracted to it, as well as are real ale aficionados. Sales of Boddies mild at the Crown have also doubled in the last few months.

At the Crescent in Beswick we welcome new licensees Harry and Janet Duddy, formerly of the Gold Cup in Lonsight. Over the past few years the Crescent has been one of East Manchester's more improved pubs, and it is therefore something of a disappointment that the previous licensees, in place for only a number of months, have reportedly left the trade. We look to Harry and Janet to keep up standards at this potentially very good pub in the rebuilt estate; early visits have certainly met with a good pint of beer.

At the Three Crowns, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris (Boddies PubCo), Castle Eden Ale is no longer available though a new guest beer, yet to be decided, is promised. This is another local where mild sales have soared, trebling since the landlord Jon Boslem returned in September.

The Romper at Ringway has recently installed Ind Coope Burton Ale as a second guest beer, alongside the already established Draught Bass. Sales are not, however, as high as expected so Burton may be replaced in the near future by another premium ale. Burton Ale has also appeared at the Ladybrook in Bramhall, this time replacing Cains Bitter.


We understand that the extension to the Old Star in Cheadle will in fact be a restaurant area, and was due to open on January 6th.

Cask mild has gone from the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport. Cains Bitter and Boddies Bitter remain on sale.

Phase two of the Jabez Clegg project which we extensively featured last month is due to open on 7th February. This will also see the introduction of four constantly changing guest beers. Incidentally the pub gained its full licence on 5th December, thereby doing away with the membership scheme which had to be in force previously.

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OPENING TIMES JANUARY 1992

MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

Still a few of the pre-Christmas openings to catch up with, starting with the Lancaster Tavern on the corner of Whitworth Street and Princess Street in one of the City Centre's refurbished warehouse developments. Selling Tetley Bitter, Walkers Best Bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale and Jennings Bitter on handpump, on a pre-Christmas visit it was displaying a rare and creditable zeal to serve full measure, which coupled to a price of £1.05 for Jennings made for very good value by City Centre standards. The pub itself is airy and spacious with a nicely worked traditional decor. All in all a welcome addition to the City Centre drinking scene.

Just down on Princess Street, the former Cyprus Taverna has re-emerged as the Granby, with handpumped Boddingtons Bitter; the splendidly named Moose Malloy and Velma entertain on Thursdays! Together with the dramatic improvement in beer quality at the Swinging Sporan since Bob and Madeleine Gregory took over there last year, things are certainly looking up in a hitherto unpromising corner of the City Centre.

Another pre-Christmas opening was that of the refurbished Sawyers Arms on Deansgate. Having in the past endured sawmill and Indian Raj themes, the Sawyers has now been done out in the standard neo-Victorian kitsch so favoured by the national brewers these days. To be fair, though, the pub does now look better than it has done for many a long year and is making at least a reasonable attempt to recapture lost glories. It's a real ale gain to boot, albeit with the predictable range of Websters Yorkshire Bitter, Ruddles Bitter and County. Unlike the Lancaster, though, the pricing policy leaves something to be desired, to say the least - Ruddles Bitter is £1.34 a pint.

Not too far from the Sawyers there is yet another real ale gain, but unfortunately, despite its front page status in another publication the Old Nags Head on Jacksons

Row has chosen to install, alongside Greenalls Bitter and Original and Stones Bitter on genuine handpumps, KEG Scrumpy Jack cider on a FAKE handpump, a move which will not recommend it to principled drinkers.

On the debit side, two of the City Centre's "cafe bars" - Buchanans and Courts - appear to have fallen victim to the recession, while the Robin Hood in Moss Side did not have long to ponder its anomalous state as a keg Robinsons pub - it's closed and for sale.

Like much of this month's news, the beer changes are concentrated in the City Centre. At the City Arms, Tetley Dark Mild is now keg; the Vine next door has gained handpumped Boddingtons Bitter; at the Burton Arms the former Draught Bass handpump is now used for a varying guest beer (confusingly enough, Draught Bass has been one!); while the Royal Crown now sells no mild (not even keg) but does have handpumped "guest beers" - all, though, from Whitbread or its affiliates.

Finally, Pete at the Beer House (off Rochdale Road) would like to apologise to all those people who made the trip to drink the draught Belgian Trappist Beer he had been expecting. He was, in fact, let down by Beers from Belgium - the importer. He intends to make the trip to Belgium himself to put things right. In the meantime he's installed another three handpumps, bringing the pub's total to 18!

Pub Beer Festivals - Flea & Firkin

The Flea and Firkin (off Oxford Road in Manchester) are staging an ambitious 40 plus beer festival later this month (20 - 23 Jan). It is hoped that there will be Festival glasses, and among the highlights will be Chris's Wheat Beer, produced in the Flea's own brewery in the basement. A number of well known festival favourites are on the menu, as is cheap food, served all day. A good time is anticipated.

Stanley Arms

At a date to be announced in February, Mike Belsham of the Stanley Arms is organising his own in-house beer festival. Full details next month. In the interim, the Stanley will be offering two one-off brews on Jan 18, a 'Centenary Ale' of about 1065 og, and a special Stout, both brewed by Ryedale, in commemoration of the centenary of Oliver Hardy.

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ 477 1973 (home) 831 7222 x3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items ©CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. Design and Origination: Heatonian Publishing, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP. Printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.

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