

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA
FREE

No:
100

AUGUST 1992

East Mcr. Fights Back!



As the Barcelona Olympics draw attention to Manchester's Olympic bid, concern is growing in East Manchester that local people's interests should not be jeopardised by the major developments planned for the area. And in terms of this paper's concerns, that means - **SAVE OUR PUBS!** While the loss of certain pubs is inevitable, two pubs - the Britannia and the Little Bradford - both appeared to be threatened by no more than cosmetic landscaping schemes, and local people are saying firmly that it is simply not on to destroy longstanding local amenities for such trivial reasons.

The good news is that, as a direct result of CAMRA's intervention, it has been discovered that the "threat" to the Britannia was no more than the result of over-enthusiasm on the part of the artist drawing the plans and it has been confirmed that this pub is not now required for the developments.

The threat however remains to the Little Bradford on Ashton New Road, a pub that has won glowing reports in CAMRA local beer guides. CAMRA has submitted a detailed document to the planners urging that the pub be retained, although outline planning permission has been granted and the pub will go into the CPO process. Meanwhile owner and licensee Peter Hallam has sent in a petition signed by 150 of the pub's regulars - a convincing reply to those who would have you believe that the average East Manchester pub is frequented by three men and a dog.

Opening Times readers can help to save this pub. If you live in East Manchester, bend your local councillor's ear and ask what he or she is doing to save YOUR local amenities. If you live outside but use the pub, even if only occasionally, write to the Chief Planning Officer at the Town Hall to say you object to YOUR choice of beer and pub being diminished. If you don't know the pub at all, go and visit - you won't be disappointed - and then take similar action. (The Little Bradford is on Ashton New Road a couple of miles from the City Centre; bus routes are 216, 217 and 231-237). (see also editorial, on following page).



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On our front page this month we once again document the continuing threat to our local pub stock, and in particular the continuing devastation to the East Manchester drinking scene.

It is certainly true that due to the de-industrialisation and de-population of the area, some pubs had ceased to be viable but we are now rapidly reaching the stage where any more losses will begin to result in serious loss of amenities for the local population. How ironic then that the Eastlands development, heralding as it does a much needed and very welcome shot in the arm for this area, and which is intended to take place with as little disruption to the local population as possible, will be seeing off another half dozen of their pubs! Particularly galling is the threat to the Little Bradford due to be sacrificed for a patch of grass and a few shrubs. Insult was added to injury at the planning meeting to consider the proposals when a senior city councillor intimated to OT that the pub could be saved if some money was spent on it as the council didn't want an eyesore on the site! The pub is already well-kept but luckily owner Peter Hallam is prepared to spend more on the pub so hopefully it may yet escape. The fight isn't over yet and O.T. will certainly be in the forefront of the battle to save this fine little free house.

In last month's "Opening Times" we celebrated our independent brewers, the characterful beers they produce and the many excellent pubs where those beers can be enjoyed. However, we have heard one or two licensees of independent brewery pubs say that they never get a mention in the magazine. And up to a point, they're right. Inevitably we tend to report what's newsworthy, what has changed, and at many independents' pubs, nothing does change, because they keep up a consistently high standard, year in, year out. They serve distinctive, high-quality beers, at reasonable prices, usually including mild, in comfortable, welcoming and traditional surroundings. Even the licensees tend to change much less often than in big brewery pubs. They may not be able to offer

In the Editor's View

by John Clarke

exotic guest beers, but nobody could complain about lack of choice when they consider the range of independent brewery pubs in this area - Robinsons, Holts, Hydes, Lees, Marstons, Sam Smiths, Burtonwood, Banks's, Vaux and West Coast, to name but ten! Independent brewery pubs are the backbone of choice and quality in the beer market, and we salute all those hard-working licensees who otherwise never get a mention in our columns.



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100 Not Out!

You will have noticed that this is our 100th issue. It was difficult to imagine in June 1984 that in a few short years Opening Times would have changed so much in appearance and become the success it now is. Those who have helped with OT over the years are too numerous to mention, ranging as they do from those who write for it, those who distribute and, of course, our advertisers, without whose continuing support we could not continue. A few specific thanks are called for however, so take a bow - Paul Brown at printers Entwistle Paddon who helped with our first major relaunch in December 1985, Paul Hutchings who did the same in September 1991; Ian Brooks, now at the Bakers Vaults and formerly at the Manchester Arms, who has supported us from issue one; and, last but not least, Humphrey Higgins my predecessor in the editor's chair and the father of OT. To one and all, and of course you our readers many thanks, and here's to the next 100.

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.

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Contributors to this edition:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Rhys Jones, Phil Levison, Chris Stone, Sue Tittensor, Peter Soane, Stuart Ballantyne, Peter Edwardson, Gordon Riley, Stuart Jamieson.

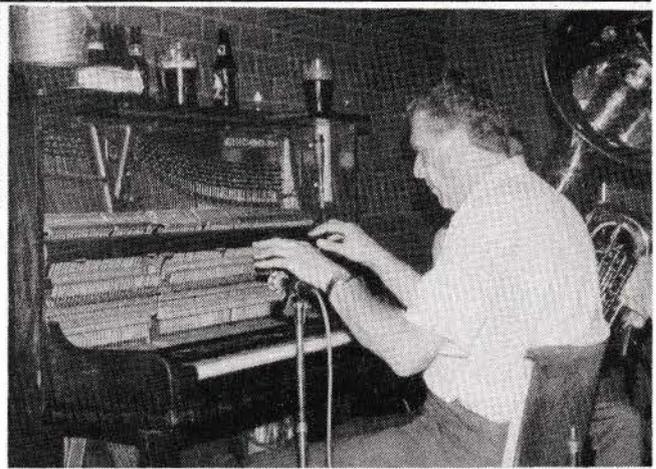
RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Chris Stone and Sue Tittensor

Didsbury Cricket Club has been a long-established venue for Jazz in the South Manchester area - in fact, the City Syncopaters have been playing a weekly residency there, in one format or another since October 1983. The Sunday evening performance is still going strong, though only a few of the original members remain, and the Cricket Club also hosts other residencies, namely the Harlem Hot Stompers (Fridays) and Mart Rodgers Manchester Jazz (Mondays).



When we arrived, fairly early, the band almost outnumbered the audience, but as the first set progressed, the numbers swelled to a respectable crowd in the small bar area. The City Syncopaters play Traditional Jazz (as opposed to Dixieland Jazz), which has its roots in black music. Indeed, many of the numbers covered with gusto were originally performed by Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver or a young Duke Ellington. Also among the varied repertoire were a few New Orleans-style numbers such as "Lily of the Valley", and a great song performed just by clarinet (Paul Groomhead), banjo (Stuart Penn) and saxophone (Dave Wright); The Saint Phillip Street Breakdown. The other mem-



Live Jazz at the Didsbury Cricket Club

bers of the 7-piece band are Tony Brown (drums), David Penn (piano), Alan Gee (trumpet) and usually Laurie Cooper (trombone). On the night of our visit, Derek, who was standing in as a special guest on the trombone, did an excellent job on vocals. Most of the numbers were instrumentals, but almost all of the band took to the microphone to sing at some point. During the introduction to one such song, David Penn commented "We have so many vocalists it's untrue!". "Yes, yes, totally untrue!" came the response from performers and audience alike. The atmosphere was very relaxed and friendly and the music deservedly well received by an enthusiastic audience. It was apparent that the final number was some sort of Syncopaters signature tune - we were the only ones not banging our glasses on the table at the appropriate times!

With its position only a few minutes walk from East Didsbury railway station, and the major bus route of the A34, the Cricket Club makes for a very pleasant venue for a drink and some excellent music - well worth the £2 admission fee charged. Unfortunately the beer on this occasion was not up to the high standard of the music, with the Draught Bass being only average and the Stones rather less so. But don't take our word for it - go along yourselves. A date to mark in your diary - four sessions of jazz at the Cricket Club from 4th-6th September when special guests will be appearing.

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AUGUST 1992**



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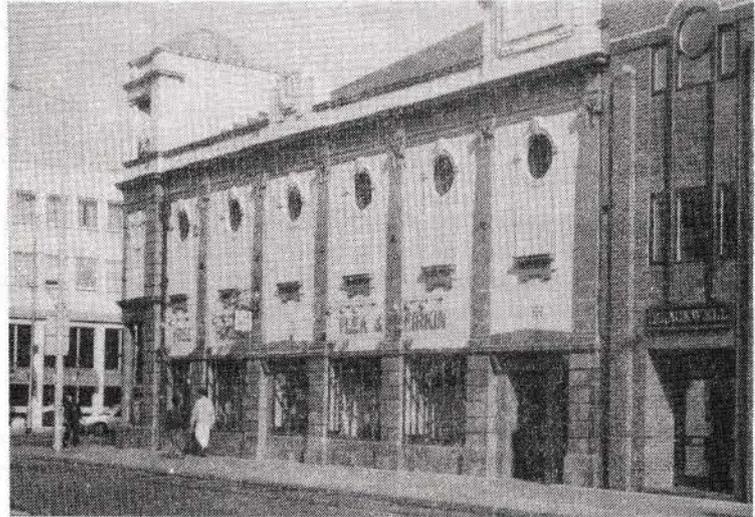
PUB of the Month August

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

Since Phil Meah and his wife, Stella took over the Flea & Firkin, just under two years ago, a pub that had no real direction has been transformed, and now goes from strength to strength. The quality and variety they provide has earned them a well merited Pub of the Month award for August.

Situated in the heart of 'studentland', on the corner of Oxford Road and Grosvenor Street, it is within a few hundred yards of all three Manchester Universities (the Poly having become the Metropolitan University of Manchester). As such, the pub tends to be busier in term time! Built originally as a cinema (The Grosvenor Picture Palace, as can be seen from the external carvings) and subsequently used as the Riley Snooker Hall, this listed building was in process of becoming the latest addition to David Bruce's brew-pub chain when the group was sold. After more sales, the remaining 12 pubs in the chain were bought by Allied breweries and began trading as the Firkin group.

Because of the volume of trade, the main house beers - though properly (full-mash) brewed, were stored in tanks under a light CO2 gas blanket, and thus fell foul of CAMRAs stringent requirements on dispense method. During Phil's stewardship, and the reign of Chris Lewis as Brewer, a bewildering variety of cask ales have been produced, and the tanks are now covered with inert nitrogen, rather than CO2 - and - pending the eventual report of CAMRAs Technical Committee, all the beer dispense is now approved. The pub itself is a giant, high ceilinged single room, but redolent with interesting features and atmosphere. Live music is presented every night during term, good wholesome food is served at lunchtimes, and the range of beers brewed on the premises is excellent. The pub can get very



busy at weekends, so be warned. Service is always polite and efficient, and Phil is always at pains to point out that any pub, and especially one of this size, is successful only because there is a good team, rather than one or two individuals.

The pub held two hugely successful in-pub beer festivals earlier in the year, with a range of over 50 beers on offer, and a number of traditional ciders. There are hopes of similar events in the future. If you have yet to try one of Manchesters smaller, more interesting breweries, or even if you are a regular, come along on Thursday 27th August (8 - 8.30pm), and join us for what is sure to be a memorable evening.

Great British Beer Festival

London has once again survived The Great British Beer Festival, held this year at the Grand Hall in Olympia. Vast quantities of Beer were consumed over the 5 day festival, and a very unusual (though rather expensive) range of foods was on offer, including Japanese Noodles, Mexican Burritos, Indian food prepared as you waited, and spiced German sausages, as well as more traditional British fare. Pending a fuller report in the next issue, the "European Beer Festival of the Year" was undoubtedly a success, but once again (and somewhat unsurprisingly - it is AUGUST - after all) the hot and humid weather did nothing to help the beer quality. Of the beers I tried, whilst none were actually poor, most were very far short of tip-top quality and all were distinctly warm, despite CAMRA deploying a Heath-Robinsonish beer cooling system that seemed to need more supporting equipment than the RAF in the Gulf War. PBH

Pub In The Peak

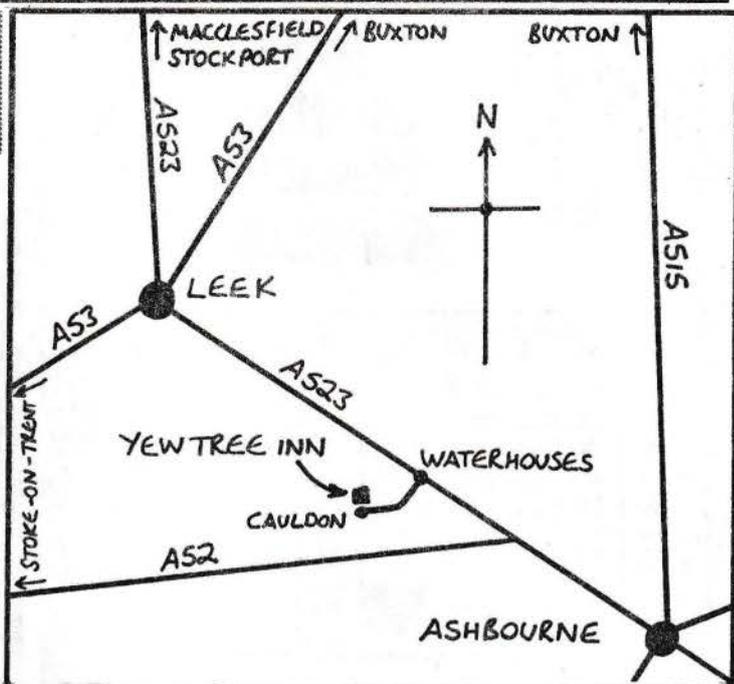
by Peter Edwardson

It's easy to dismiss collections of things in pubs - you know, banknotes, matchboxes and the like - as old hat redolent of stuffy 1950's pub guides. However, not all pub collections are the same. On the southern fringes of the Peak District, between Leek and Ashbourne, is a pub which, while an excellent pub in its own right, contains a collection of artefacts so unique and remarkable that it makes it one of the most memorable in the country. That pub is the Yew Tree at Caudon.

Whichever way you choose to come to Caudon, the approach is singularly unpromising, through a wasteland of limestone quarries and cement works. But at the heart of the village is an oasis of calm and greenery where the old, sandstone pub stands back from the road, shaded by the ancient yew tree from which it takes its name. Both pub and tree date back to the late 17th century.

The interior has been opened up a little over the years, but retains three separate areas round the central bar, and a very traditional feel with genuine oak beams and every piece of furniture an antique. The general appearance of the place can best be described as pleasantly frayed at the edges.

Everywhere around the pub are items from the amazing collection which has been built up by the East family over the years. To list it all would take a book, and it's doubtful whether even they know everything that's there. There are several grandfather clocks, a penny-farthing, various old flintlocks and muskets, old beer bottles and breweriana, 1930's wireless sets to name but a few. You can



decide for yourself whether the Victorian "Acme Patent Dog Carrier" prominently displayed over the bar is genuine or not. The crowning glory is the collection of old Victorian music-making machines - polyphonions, symphoniums and pianolas - of which there must be at least a dozen. Most of them are in perfect working order and if you take along a few 2p pieces you can hear what they sound like. It certainly makes a change from a CD juke box!

The beer range is M & B Mild, Draught Bass and Burton Bridge XL, all served by handpump, and sold at very reasonable prices, in particular the Burton Bridge which on a recent visit was still under a pound a pint. The quality is consistently good and the pub appears regularly in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide. A selection of straightforward, good-value sandwiches and snacks is available at lunchtimes, but the Yew Tree is not a pub where eating takes pride of place over drinking and talking. It's far from being a stuffy museum-piece, and is well used by locals from the surrounding villages as well as tourists from further afield. Darts are played in the main bar and it's nice to find table skittles as well, a very rare sight in this part of the world. The atmosphere is fairly down-to-earth and the locals seem oblivious to the fact that they're drinking in a pub which contains far more of historical interest than many a stately home charging pounds for admission.

Inevitably, most visitors to the Yew Tree will arrive by car, and it's only about thirty-five miles from Stockport, so it can easily be reached in an hour via Macclesfield and Leek. The easiest way to find it is to turn right off the A523 at Ye Olde Crown in Waterhouses. For those with strong bladders, it can, however, also be reached by public transport by taking the 201 bus from Manchester and Stockport, which will drop you off in Waterhouses which is only a mile's walk from the pub. An interesting way of spending the afternoon after the pub has closed is to explore the course of the old Leek & Manifold light railway, which has now been turned into a cycle track and provides a picturesque and fairly level ride up the beautiful Manifold valley to Hulme End and Hartington. Bikes can be hired at Waterhouses by the side of the main road.

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YOUR HOSTS

Steve & Dorothy



by Stuart Ballantyne

As Opening Times readers, many of you will remember reading about the changes to the Griffin in Heaton Mersey. These changes were by and large to extend the pub adding a new bar and purpose built kitchen, and to, (at last) resurface the awful pot holed car park. The aim of our visit then, was to experience the Griffin's new features at the same time keeping our fingers crossed that the new had not compromised the genuine historic old parts of the pub.

Without a doubt, the new bar is the most impressive part of the extension, it is probably as close a copy to the original ornate wooden and etched glass victorian bar as it is possible to get with a limited budget. Holts "famous" team of French polishers have obviously been here and excelled. Less impressive though was the open plan design of the extension which contrasts with the multi roomed nature of the old pub and the way the new kitchen juts out into the new bar area.

On the menu today were snacks such as sandwiches £1.00, beefburger £1.00 and soup of the day £1.00, with main courses such as Ploughmans Lunch £2.75, Gammon & Pineapple £2.95, Griffin Grill £2.75, Chilli Con Carne £2.95, Vegetarian Lasagne £2.40, and Leek and Mushroom Crumble £2.95. I noted with some satisfaction that all the main courses were under £3.00.

I ordered Traditional Beef Pie (£1.95) whilst my partner ordered the Leek & Mushroom Crumble (£2.95). We retired to a front room to enjoy the Holts bitter (89p) and Holts Mild (84p) both in excellent condition. The next 45 minutes or so flew by when we were abruptly reminded of our food order when one of the barmaids announced "Sorry, the Leek and Mushroom Crumble's off!" Lesser persons would now have left but "No matter, Chilli con Carne please" was duly



The Griffin, Heaton Mersey

ordered to replace it. Fortunately this took only a further 10 minutes to appear, my meal being served at the same time.

My partner had definitely chosen the best meal as the Chilli con Carne was substantial, nice and hot, with plenty of beans. A good value basic meal. On the other hand my meal was in rather a sorry state, with a small portion of tired beef pie, a few tired peas and even fewer shrivelled up overcooked short chips. They looked so pitiful on my plate that I was moved to count them - there were just 17 chips!

Having waited so long we both heartily ate our meals. It was as we were on the point of leaving that the catering manageress (licensee's wife?) came over to us to apologise for the fiasco of the lunchtime meals. Apparently the chips had run out and the deep fat frier had broken. There had also been some confusion as to where diners were sitting. Profuse apologies were given and accepted.

Everyone of us at some time or other has a bad day, and unfortunately we seemed to have picked the Griffin's bad day to have a meal. Nevertheless there are obvious areas that should be improved immediately, such as how is it possible for a business that is geared for catering to run out of its most basic commodity 'chips' or to take up to 45 minutes to decide that a particular dish is 'off'? I can only presume that the problems we experienced on our visit were teething troubles and not (perish the thought) the norm!



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HEATONIAN MAGAZINE "PUB OF THE YEAR"

STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

A warm breezy midsummer's evening found us gathering in the *Waggon & Horses* on Hyde Road, for a stroll across Gorton from Hyde Road to Ashton Old Road. The *Waggon* will be well known to most readers, having been a Good Beer Guide regular for some years now. And the beer tonight certainly didn't disappoint - while the bitter was good, the real star was the stunningly good mild, which was to prove the best beer of the night. Should you for some reason need an excuse to visit the *Waggon*, try mid-September's annual Gorton R. cart procession - while H.Q. is the (also recommended) Suburban, the *Waggon* is an excellent vantage point for the dance, music and drinking.

Across the road lies the *Lord Nelson*, a Wilsons pub with the unusual choice of Bass Light as a guest beer. Externally an attractive cottage-style building, inside it's been thoroughly modernised as a relatively plush assemblage of interlinked areas. Of the two real ales available, none of us tried the *Websters Bitter* - but we all wished we had, for the Bass Light was poor indeed; of the beers we finished, it rated the worst of the night.

The beer we couldn't finish awaited us in the very next pub. Tucked away in the valley of the tiny Gore Brook, the *Vale Cottage's* charming setting is enhanced by tasteful decor to create an oasis of rural tranquillity in the midst of urban Gorton - a refreshing change indeed. What a shame then, that our half-pints of *Courage Directors* smelt of vinegar, tasted little better and were not fit to drink; while they were duly changed (and for above average Wilsons Bitter) this was not before the licensee had favoured us with his opinion that the beer was "in perfect condition"; and there seemed little doubt that this vile liquid would be served later in the evening to customers too timid or unsure to complain. (A greengrocer would never try to tell a customer that a bruised apple was the pick of the crop. Why do a minority of publicans insult their customers' perception and taste by describing obviously substandard beer as not just accept-



able but impeccable? But I digress.) We did not sample the *Websters*, but an exploratory half of the "handpumped" mild revealed it to be keg Wilsons Special Mild.

Pondering missed opportunities, (for the *Vale Cottage* could so easily be a really fine pub), we made our way to the *Cotton Tree*. This Wilsons pub retains a conventional two-room layout with an extra "overflow" area off the lounge. It's also kept its etched windows. Though a number of beers have been tried in recent times, the current range is *Websters Bitter* and *Green Label* and *Boddingtons Bitter*. While *Websters Bitter* once again went untasted, *Green Label* was average, but the *Boddingtons* was notably good.

The next pub, *Boddington Pub Company's Royal Oak*, lies almost opposite. While substantially altered, it largely retains the ethos of the old-style *Boddingtons* alehouse. Though technically one room, the contrast between bustling vault and quieter dralon-seated lounge is immediately obvious. Beer, as for years past, is *Boddingtons Bitter* only, and it was good - we just gave it the edge over the *Cotton Tree*.

One of the evenings longer walks now, to the *Prince of Wales*. This has been modernised by *Whitbread* in a very characterless fashion. There's nothing particularly wrong with it, but equally there's nothing that would tempt you to

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good taste

step out of your way to visit the place. A lone handpump holds its own amongst a row of taps for lager, Poacher low-gravity keg bitter, and the rest - but for below-average Chesters Bitter, is it really worth it?

Further along Abbey Hey Lane is, (surprise) the **Abbey Hey**, a large Bass house which ranked as the most unspoilt traditional pub so far, with a choice of four rooms, a good tiled floor in the lobby, and a lively atmosphere. Of the two real ales, no-one tried Bass Light, but Stones Bitter was comfortably above average - if it introduced a good independent brewer's beer this could be one of the best pubs in Gorton.

Our next port of call has introduced independent beer in a big way, for the **Hamlet** has been bought by Sunderland's independent brewery Vaux. The beer range is now Vaux Bitter and Samson, and as well as the former Wilsons/Websters range, the hated "handpumped keg" Scrumpy Jack Cider also seems to have disappeared. Unfortunately Samson was off this evening, and we found the Vaux Bitter no more than average - probably evidence of a somewhat lacklustre beer rather than any deficiencies in cellarwork.

Next came a pub often celebrated as a classic - the Boddington Pub Company's **Hare & Hounds**. As usual, its traditional three-room layout and bubbling, friendly atmosphere adapted well to a busy Friday night. The Boddingtons Bitter was as good as ever, which is very good. Chesters Mild was only average, but in a pub which has never sold much mild it's good to see the effort made to retain the beer in traditional form.

Crossing the railway, we finished within sight of Ashton Old Road in another of Boddingtons' pleasanter houses, the **Oddfellows**. Though it's much more modernised than the Hare and Hounds, the division of the pub into distinct areas does work well. Both mild and bitter were very good - in fact the bitter was rated the second best beer of the night. A very pleasant end to a mixed but interesting evening.

Please remember that these comments are simply the views of a small group of people on one particular evening. In particular, we do hope that those aspects we had to criticise were indeed one-off aberrations. We have no wish to criticise hard-pressed licensees gratuitously; simply, we speak as we find. As ever, the best advice is - try the pub for yourself!

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**THE CLASSIC
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CONDITIONED
BITTER**

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

Issue No. 1 of Opening Times first saw the light of day in June 1984, but it was very different from the 100th issue that you are now reading. There follows a brief history, giving more details of those early days and how things have changed over the years; also a brief look at some former headlines and features, and a final reference to the "original" Opening Times from the mid 70's.

During late '83/early 84, it was found that "What's Doing", the Manchester beer drinkers monthly magazine, seemed reluctant to publish items covering the South Manchester branch area. So early in 1984, Humphrey Higgins suggested the branch's own newsheet to be included with "What's Doing". A single sheet insert was costed at £9 per 1000, and the original plan was to produce it every other month for a trial run of three issues.

Members provided items for this new South Manchester newsletter, to be known as Opening Times, and the final draft of the first issue was eventually circulated at a Committee meeting, when Humphrey was congratulated on his good work. The total cost has been £10.32, which was paid for by adverts.

Until September '85, Opening Times was provided free with What's Doing, but then What's Doing reverted to "North Manchester only". Since then Opening Times has enjoyed a completely separate, and highly successful existence -and it's still free.

During Opening Times' first year, some issues were printed on coloured paper, and not particularly well presented, but it has improved steadily to its present form, with very presentable art work, half tone illustrations, and occasionally, a splash of colour in the heading. The first Editor, Humphrey Higgins had the satisfaction of seeing the new baby grow in to an extremely healthy infant, and it was May '88 when the present Editor, John Clarke, took over.

Although originally described as a Pub Newsheet, (which of course it still is) there has always been a strong campaigning element to Opening Times, on both local and national issues. The very first headline was BEAUTIFUL BODDIES? followed by a criticism of the beer's lack of distinctive character, compared with 10 years ago. Next month it was ROBBIES RAPE -this was critical comment on Robinson's modernisation policy. Later Boddington headlines have been BODDYSNATCHERS (the acquisition of Higsons), BODDIES AXE OLDHAM, and BODDIE BLOW – was after the announcement that the breweries were to be sold to Whitbread

On a national level, Websters/Wilsons/Watneys captured the headlines a few times – GROTNEYS RIDES AGAIN was a reminder the disparaging nickname that Watneys had been given for their excesses of a few years ago. A RUDDLES SHAME lamented the fact that Ruddles, a famous independent regional ale brewer, had fallen into the clutches of Grand Metropolitan - both the inevitable result that mass production and mass distribution ruined the distinctive character of the beers.

Bass was another of the major brewers to come in for criticism - during three successive months the headlines told the story - STUFF THIS GREAT BASS followed by BASS TO GET IT RIGHT, and finally BASS GET IT WRONG. Greenall's policies came under attack with SINKING OF SIMPKISS - they bought this small independent and highly respected West Midlands brewery and promptly closed it down.

Of course it hasn't all been critical - BANKS'S PROGRESS reported that the Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries beers were becoming increasingly available in the area, and DIDSBURY'S CROWN was quite complimentary to Greenalls for this pub refurbishment. POUND A PINT and THE PRICE IS RIGHT were just two headlines that appeared after CAMRA has produced its figures for the annual country-wide survey of prices.

Some features have appeared in virtually every issue of Opening Times-Pub of the Month is one example and there does tend to be a pub crawl every month. A Round in the Town was the original local pub crawl (later to become the Stagger) sometimes supplemented by Round Britain Drinker, and there were even a few Round Europe Drinkers as well. Out of Town was another thinly disguised pub crawl that appeared occasionally together with Holiday Ale,

Readers letters appear regularly. often from distant parts of the country, particularly if there have been comments on their own district - circulation must be a lot wider than realised. Numerically, it was recently increased from 2500 to 3350.

Pub of the Year makes its annual appearance, as do the Pub Vandalism Awards in which CAMRA speaks out on demolitions and "ruinations". There are always comments on the regular countrywide prices survey, which nearly always names the North West as the cheapest, place to drink.

Winter Ales crop up in season. and other series appearing have included Old Breweries. New Breweries. Home Brew, Pub - Grub, and a recent newcomer Rhythm and Booze. Amongst this variety of features appear the news items which cover every facet of the local drinking scene.

Practically everything appearing in Opening Times is written by members of the Stockport and South Manchester branch of CAMRA. whose names appear among the pages. There are some pseudonyms - Jock Stroller may perhaps be recognisable, but who was Theakston Cat you may wonder.

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But some things never change - it contained a comment that Robinsons had spoiled the Pineapple by ripping the vault out. Prices have changed though - Boddingtons Mild was 18 1/2p. and Robinsons Best Bitter 25p. - and who can remember when Turners Vaults had Tetley Mild and Bitter on electric pumps? and what happened to Anna Greenhalgh, who was the Editor at that time?

So there you have it - 100 issues in just over eight years. it's a somewhat frightening thought that by the time the 200th. Issue appears, we shall all be enjoying the first summer of the 21st century - unless of course those predictions about the ozone layer, or the new Ice Age really come true...

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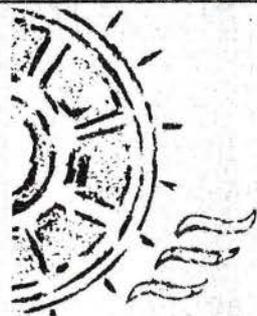
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by Phil Levison





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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

AUGUST 1987

The whole of the front page was taken up by Lager - The Truth. British brewed lagers are generally inferior to their continental namesakes, which are quite often not pasteurised or filtered, and served by the pressure created by their own natural conditioning. The British versions are normally pasteurised, filtered, re-carbonated and served by CO2 pressure from kegs through flash coolers, and are generally weaker than their Continental equivalents. Lager from the independent brewers tends to be stronger and cheaper than the Big 7 lagers, which have to be more highly priced to help pay for the huge amount spent on advertising. Overall, lager accounts for 43% of beer sales in 1987, and it's a sobering thought that it was only 1% in 1960. (But now, in 1992, it looks as if that growth is slowing down - Allied, Courage and Bass all reported this year that lager made up 55% of beer sales, Whitbread's figure was 51% and S. & N. an encouragingly "small" 40%. Figures from Publican Jan.92.)

Greenalls announced the imminent closure of Wern Brewery in Shropshire, with the redundancy of over 100 staff, and the loss of two beers, whilst Davenports at Birmingham were to take over brewing of the other two beers. (Other brewery closures were to follow, and in 1991 Greenalls and their subsidiaries ceased brewing altogether - much of their beer is now brewed by Allied.)

Last month we were rather singing the praises of Robinsons, but there were slightly less favourable comments this month, following a survey of the general public at the Stockport Beer Festival. Of the people who visited a Robinsons pub(s) regularly, a massive 80% said they would like the pub left as it is. 15.7% were in favour of "sensitive" alterations, retaining the traditional character, whilst the remaining 4.3% wanted their pub to be restructured in the current Robinson's fashion. So the only conclusion that can be drawn is that almost 96% of Robinsons drinkers (at the Festival) do **not** like what is being done to their pubs.

Tom & Betty Burke welcome you to

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The monthly Stagger covered Bramhall and district in a hired Little Gem minibus, and there follows a direct Then and Now comparison of beers available.

Shady Oak. THEN Thwaites, Tetley & Jennings Bitters, Inc Coope BURton Ale, Marstons Pedigree. NOW Boddingtons, Thwaites and Tetley Bitters and Marstons Pedigree. Bromale. THEN Stones Bitter and Toby Light. NOW Stones Bitter.

Ladybrook. THEN Boddingtons Mild & Bitter. NOW Boddingtons Mild & Bitter, Pitfield ESB. (A frequently changing guest beer is now available).

Victoria. THEN Boddingtons Mild & Bitter. NOW Boddingtons Mild & Bitter and Theakstons Best Bitter.

Davenport Arms.(Thief's Neck) THEN Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter. NOW Unchanged.

Smithy. THEN Wilsons Bitter and Websters Choice. NOW John Smiths Bitter and Websters Yorkshire Bitter.

Church Inn. THEN Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter. NOW Unchanged.

Junction. THEN Holts Mild & Bitter. NOW Beers unchanged but completely refurbished and renamed Cheadle Hulme.

So to draw the obvious conclusion, the independent breweries don't change their beer range, the big conglomerates do. (Now, in 1992, there are two more outlets to visit - Bramhalls, in Bramhall Village, with Worthington Best Bitter, Stones and Bass Cask Ale - it doesn't say Draught Bass on the pump clip, but it shows the strength as 4.4 ABV. Just up the road, the Bramhall Moat House has Tetley Bitter and Websters Yorkshire Bitter.)

West Coast Moves

Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery has just acquired its second tied house. This comes in the shape of the ex-Whitbread King William IV on Justin Close, Chorlton-on-Medlock, a short walk from the Kings Arms, current home of the brewery. We say current as the intention is to move the brewing operation and the bottling plant from the cramped cellars of the Kings Arms to the more spacious ground floor accommodation at the King William. The result of this will be the contraction of the drinking area at the new pub to something little more than 27 feet by 12. The anticipated date of opening was 1st August but the place was still a building site on that day. Opening should, however, take place during the currency of this issue of Opening Times.

The Robin Hood

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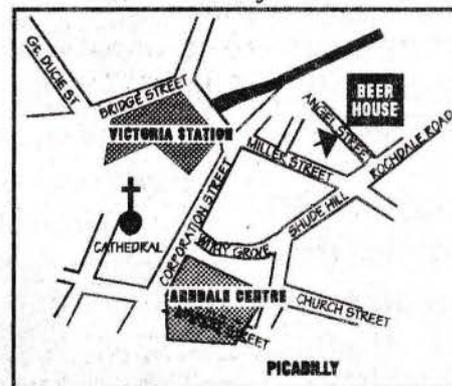
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CAMRA CALLING!

Once again there is a mixed bag this month, starting on Monday 10th with a two-way social in Chorlton-on-Medlock - 9.00pm in the Falcon and 10.00pm at the Grafton on Grafton Street. Later that week, on Thursday 13th, there is the monthly branch meeting and this will be held at the Blossoms, Buxton Road (A6), Heaviley, Stockport. We aim to start at about 8.00pm.

On Monday 17th the social is at the Crown (or Corner Cupboard) on Hillgate, Stockport. Once again there is a 9.00pm start. This week also sees our monthly Stagger, on Friday 21st. This time we are covering Burnage and Heaton Mersey, starting at the Milestone on Burnage Lane at 7.00pm or you can join at the Albion, also Burnage Lane, at 8.30. It's also a fair bet that our last port of call, should you fancy joining us for last orders, will be the Griffin on Didsbury Road.

The social on Monday 24th is at the Travellers Call, Hyde Road (almost opposite the cinemas) and on Thursday 27th it's Pub of the Month at the Flea & Firkin (see item on page 3).

Into September now and on Friday 4th there will be a minibus trip round that part of Stockport covered by the High Peak branch (Marple, Woodley, Romley etc). The minibus will leave the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.30pm and seats can be booked by phoning Tracey on 456 6354 or at any branch event. Lastly, for this time, on Monday 7th September there is a social at Little Jack Horners, Lord Street, Stockport (just off the A6 by the Unity.)

If you live in Marple, Woodley, Romley or Bredbury you will fall in the area dealt with by the High Peak branch of CAMRA and during August they will be holding their monthly meeting at the Old Clubhouse in Buxton on Monday 10th. The pub is just across from the Opera House and the meeting will start at about 8.30pm. On the social side, on August 21st there will be a crawl of Glossop starting at the George Hotel at 8.00pm. The pub is opposite the station.

For more details about Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA activities phone Tracey Clarke on 456 6354 and for High Peak contact Geoff Williams on 0663 765634. Of course, members of both branches are welcome to attend the other's events.

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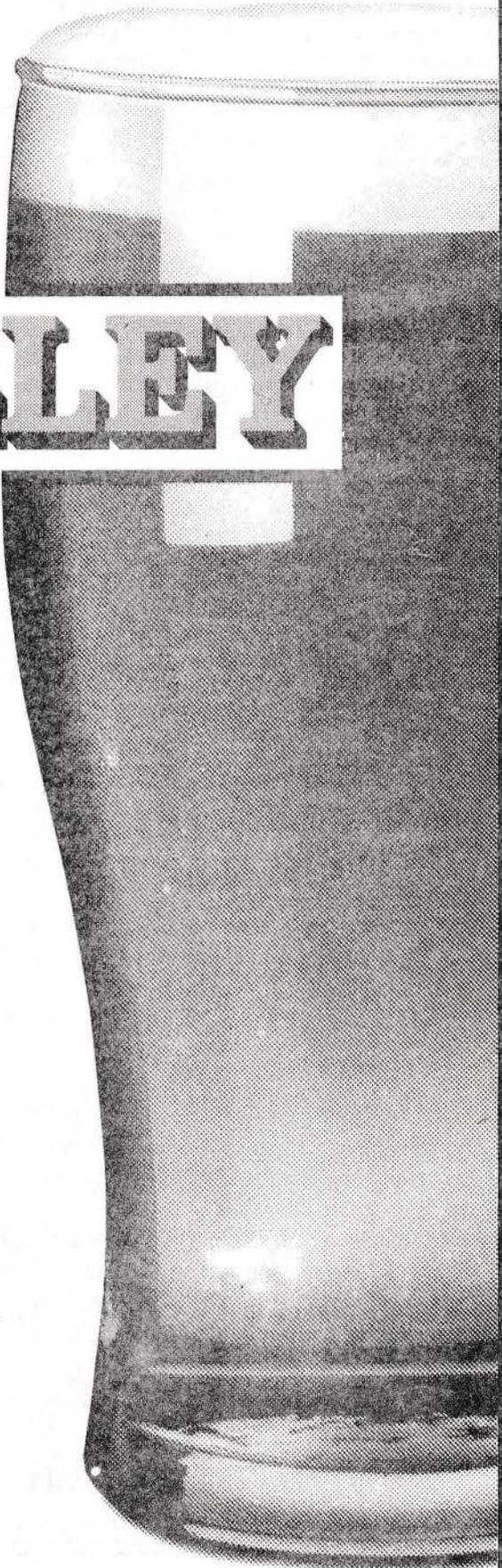
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Favouring Curry

Why is it that the majority of beer drinkers, seem to have the same enthusiasm for Indian food? Could it be that there is a chemical link, somewhere deep in the cerebrum that activates after drinking beer, to the need for the undoubtedly addictive flavours of curry. Certainly, many drinking sessions or pub crawls do tend to end up in the curry house.

However, you don't have to go out to enjoy good curry, great enjoyment can be had by making your own curries at home.

These days all Indian ingredients are available to create that authentic flavour, from the unique musty taste of leaf coriander to the crisp and soppy texture of okra and of course every spice you can think of.

Below is a superb recipe for making your own curry powder. This is the recipe of the wife of a British Army Officer based in Agra in 1904, although it was her grandmother's recipe dating back to 1870, making it over 120 years old. It is a superb combination of spices making the basis of many classic Indian dishes.

This recipe gives about 9ozs of curry powder. All measures are in heaped teaspoons: - 12 heaped teaspoons ground coriander seeds, 6 heaped teaspoons cumin seeds, 4 heaped teaspoons fenugreek seeds, 5 heaped teaspoons gram flour, 5 heaped teaspoons garlic powder, 4 heaped teaspoons paprika, 4 heaped teaspoons turmeric, 4 heaped teaspoons garam masala, 1 heaped teaspoon ground curry leaves (or bay leaves), 1 heaped teaspoon asafoetida, 1 heaped teaspoon ground ginger, 1 heaped teaspoon chilli powder, 1 heaped teaspoon yellow mustard powder, 1 heaped teaspoon ground black pepper.

Please try and obtain every spice in the recipe, it really is worth it. Roast and grind the first three spices (or simply dry fry until they turn light brown) and mix the whole lot together and store in airtight jars. Omit the last 4 ingredients for a very mild curry powder.

When using this curry powder, spoon out the desired amount and mix in a bowl with water to a runny paste. This is the Masala paste. Leave for 20 minutes before using, if the mixture becomes too dry, add more water to make it runny just prior to cooking. Stir fry with the oil or ghee until the oil and water separate (10 minutes). To go with the curry powder here is a quick, simple but delicious dish with its origins going back to the Moors.

Piri Piri Chicken (for 4)

1 1/2 lbs chicken breast (skinned and cubed), 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, 2 chopped garlic cloves, 2" piece of fresh ginger, 1/2 onion (peeled and chopped), 1/2 each of red, green and yellow pepper, 3 - 6 fresh green chillies (1 used 3 and it was HOT!), 2 tablespoons fresh coriander leaves, 2 fresh tomatoes.

Spices 1.(whole) 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, 1 teaspoon mustard seeds.

Spices 2.(ground) 1 teaspoon turmeric, 1 tablespoon curry powder (own).

1. Heat oil and fry spices No.1. Add garlic, ginger and onion for just 4 minutes.

2. Add spices No.2 and a tiny drop of water. Add peppers chillies and chicken. Fry for 10 minutes.

3. Add coriander leaves and tomatoes and stir fry for about 10 minutes, check that the chicken is cooked (cut a large piece in half). Serve at once, this dish loses its freshness if it stands around.

References from the "Curry Club" Book.

by Stuart Jamieson

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Called to the Bar



1992 marks a watershed in CAMRA's history - 21 years of campaigning to save Britain's unique cask ale and the breweries that produce them.

Called to the Bar is not an exercise in back-slapping but an analysis of the modern brewing, its past, present and future. Contributors include Michael Hardman, a founder member of the Campaign, on its origins, Christopher Hutt on the future of the pub, Michael Jackson on CAMRA's international impact, Ruth Nicholas on the lager boom, John Young on how Young's brewery stuck to real ale and Susan Nowak on the development of pub food. Plus many more contributors. The book shop price will be £9.99 but it is available to CAMRA members at the special offer price of £6.99.

● Mail order from CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans AL1 3BW. Cheques: CAMRA Ltd. Access/Visa orders: 0727 867201.

Edited by Tony Mills & Roger Protz

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE



More Vaux acquisitions to report - in Ashton, the Travellers Call and the Burlington (formerly John Smiths and Wilsons) have changed brew as indeed has the Oddfellows in Hyde (again ex-Wilsons). The Sunderland Brewers have also purchased the Goyt Inn, Whaley Bridge.

The Rose & Crown in Stalybridge (Vaux for some time) is undergoing a refurbishment. We understand this will involve the movement of the bar from the left to a more central location. Whilst the pub is a bit of a builders yard, the choice of handpumped beers has improved. On a recent visit, there were four handpumps with Samson, ESB and Wards available.

Still in Stalybridge, the White House is now serving Theakstons Mild - a welcome addition to the range available. Meanwhile at the Talbot (with a landlord of repute) things are at last moving on the guest beer front with Batemans Mild being available recently. On a sadder note we were all shocked to learn of landlord Bob Gregory's recent heart attack. As we went to press Bob was still in hospital and he has our best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery.

In Kettlethulme great strides have been made! 100% real ale. The two pubs both stock proper beer. The Bulls Head (1993 Good Beer Guide - Boddies and guest beers) has been joined by the Swan which now has Marstons Bitter on electric pump.

The Queens Arms in Old Glossop has changed from Bass to a Whitbread "free house".

The Railway, just underneath the railway bridge on Hyde Road, Woodley, has finally converted to Robinsons. The pub has a pleasant bustling atmosphere, particularly in the tap room and, fittingly, has some interesting railway memorabilia. There is only one real ale - handpumped Robinsons Best Bitter (on exceedingly good form when OT called) - mild is Three Shires keg. The pub is closed Monday-Thursday lunchtimes, opening 4-11 those days, but opens all day Friday and Saturday; Sunday hours are standard.

A little way back towards Stockport, the Woodley (previous incarnations include Sports and the Boot & Clogger) has been renamed the Waggon & Horses by new owners Vaux. Unfortunately Vaux have not managed to alter much else in this rather soulless establishment - it even retains its "Sports" carpet! Though served through free-flow electric fonts, Vaux Samson tasted cask-conditioned to the palate (that's tempting fate - ed.) - bar staff were unable to provide definitive guidance.

PS...Our item on handpumped keg Scrumpy Jack cider in the Duke of York, Romiley, brought a pained response from licensee Mrs. Benham, some of whose regulars had taken the wording of our piece to say that we were suggesting that she was a "lazy or uncaring licensee". Well, of course not, but the fact does remain that this pub is deceiving its customers with this fake handpump. Mrs. Benham, who is the manageress, told us that she would not serve keg beers in this way but at the end of the day had to sell what the owner wanted. Mrs B. was, however, instrumental in swapping the pub over from keg beer to the real thing, so why not do the same with the cider - or at the very least get rid of that **** handpump!

WARNING!

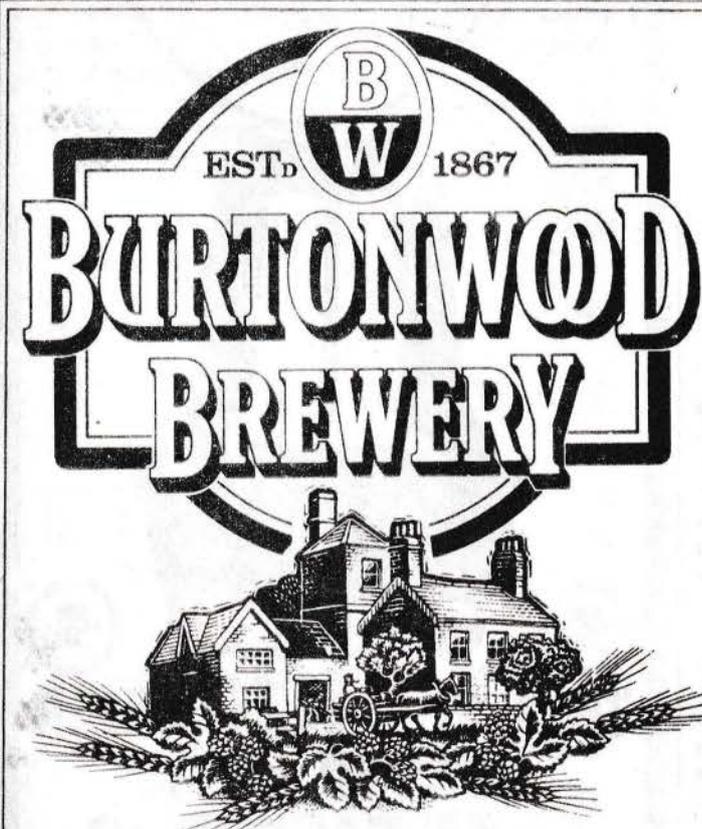


THIS IS A KEG CIDER SERVED BY A FAKE HANDPUMP DON'T BE CONNED!

Shadow Over the Oak

Plans to carry out another renovation at the Shady Oak, Redford Drive, Bramhall, have received a setback following complaints from some local residents about noise and disturbance. The police have imposed a ban on outside drinking and the pub has been forced to close at 10.30 pm on Fridays and Saturdays to reduce the impact of late-night revellers on nearby homes. A number of residents have even suggested that there is no need for a pub at all on the site, as it is not used by anyone actually living on the surrounding estate. This is rather hard to believe and other local residents and business people have countered with a petition in favour of the pub staying as it is.

One possibility is that owners Tetleys may turn the pub into a steakhouse, but it is hard to see how that will help solve the problems as, if successful, it will bring in even more outsiders. The Shady Oak fulfils a genuine need for people on the estate, for most of whom there is no other pub within walking distance, and it is to be hoped that a way can be found for it to continue as a proper local. While the location is perhaps unfortunate - it would be much better on the main route through the estate, rather than down a narrow residential road, that was the fault of the planners, not the brewery, and to leave such a large estate publess would be ludicrous, not to mention an encouragement to drinking and driving.



**BURTONWOOD
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Similar problems have recently been encountered at other pubs in the Bramhall area, so it is not unique to the Shady Oak. Much of the responsibility must be laid at the door of the brewers, who provide pubs with loud music, large circulating areas and a wide selection of high-strength lagers and ciders, and then innocently wonder why there is trouble. The Shady Oak has departed from that image by serving a range of 4 cask beers, and it is widely accepted that improving cask beer sales is one of the keys to developing a more responsible clientele. We hope Tetleys, together with licensee Phil Aked, can guide it further in the direction of an old-fashioned local, to help defuse the problems.

Boddies Go For Guests

The Boddington PubCo have finally unveiled details of their long awaited guest beer scheme. About 60 pubs out of the 450-strong estate have already joined the scheme but these have, locally at least, been mainly the larger managed houses such as the Ladybrook in Bramhall and the White Hart in Cheadle. Now however, the scheme is to be extended to the rest of the estate with the company hoping to have enrolled the bulk of its pubs by the autumn.

The aim is apparently to create a free house image with up to 40 different guest beers being made available through Boddington's wholesaling subsidiary, Liquid Assets. The range will change quarterly and it is expected that many of the new pubs on the scheme will just offer one guest beer at a time. This is however on top of the range currently available, which in this area means Boddies Mild and Bitter, Cains Bitter and Old Shilling, brewed to the PubCo's specification by Mansfield. The end result could mean some Boddies pubs will be offering a minimum of five cask beers - a mild, three session bitters and a premium bitter.

Licensees will be encouraged to change their guest beers on a regular basis and will receive updated lists of what is available. Tenants will also be encouraged to promote forthcoming guest beers to maintain interest in the scheme. In short the company hope to be offering one of the biggest range of cask ales in the country and see this as the coming to fruition of the free house image envisaged after the brewing operations were sold off and the company concentrated solely on retailing.

We don't yet have full details of which local pubs will be involved but understand that of the 55 PubCo tenancies in East Manchester and Stockport, some 16 will initially be joining the scheme and these include the Greyhound in Edgeley, the Black Lion, Stockport, the Lamb, Dukinfield and the Oddfellows, Openshaw. More news when we have it.

CAMRA Shop

If you missed out on Stockport Beer Festival or just didn't get around to buying a T-shirt, don't worry as a few remain in stock. The price is £3.95 (including post and packing) and the sizes available are either Large (green or yellow) or Medium (yellow or navy blue). Send your order and cheque (made payable to Stockport Beer Festival) to: Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.



It is possible that Tetley's Thatched Tavern in Reddish may be bought by the licensee, in which case a wide variety of beer can be expected. This would also be a welcome addition to what has long been one of the poorer drinking areas of Stockport.

All-day catering has returned to the Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock; the emphasis is on spicy dishes with a Caribbean flavour, and to judge by the food served up to CAMRA members when Brendan Dobbin received his "Beer of the Festival" award from Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, it is of very high quality. Also at the Kings, the pub piano is now in use on Saturday, Sunday and Monday evenings, creating a splendidly relaxed atmosphere.

The Gardeners Arms in Offerton seems no longer to be serving Theakstons Bitter or Ind Coope Burton Ale, but has more than compensated for this by offering a changing selection of guest beers - good Brains SA was enjoyed at a recent CAMRA social. It's also another pub to have the handy notion of selling the Manchester Evening News.

Phil Levison's "Five Years ago" column last month asked "Who can remember when a pub last reduced the price of its beer?". Customers of the Travellers Call, West Gorton, should have no problem, for it's only a month or two since popular licensees Larry and Margaret Mason made themselves even more popular by cutting the price of beer. Hydes Mild is now a round pound a pint (down from £1.04), while Bitter is £1.06 (was £1.11).



If you don't already know the Travellers, why not visit on Monday 24th August, when CAMRA has an informal social there? At these prices, with fine beer in a classic pub, you can't go wrong!

As we went to press alterations were underway at the Puss in Boots, Nangreave Road, Stockport. The pub is now in effect leased from Robinsons by the Boddington PubCo who, we understand, are in the process of turning the place back into more of a traditional locals pub. More next month.



PUB OF THE YEAR 1992

The King's Arms

HELMSHORE WALK
CHORLTON ON MEDLOCK

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

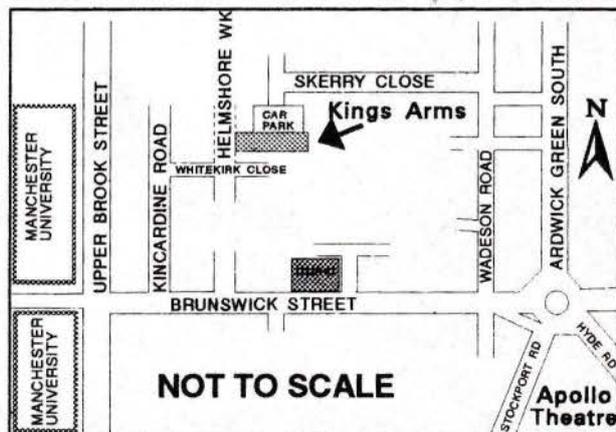
HOME OF DOBBINS FINE BEERS

Best Bitter
Dark Mild
Extra Special Bitter
Yakima Grande Porter
Ginger Beer

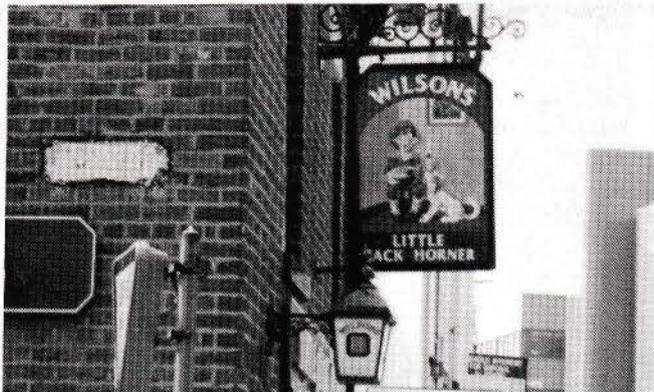
**Great Beers
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Draught German and Bottled Belgian and German Beers including: all five Trappist Monastic Beers, Liefmans Fruit Lambic Beers & Draught Ciders

**LIVE MUSIC
MONDAY - TUESDAY - THURSDAY**



WARNING: Excessive Intake of Alcohol is NOT RECOMMENDED



More Stockport pub acquisitions by Sunderland brewers Vaux have come to light. That company's products are already on sale at Little Jack Horner on Wellington Street - handpumped Wards Bitter and Vaux Samson - although under the terms of the lease, this pub has been allowed to keep its guest beer. The guest beer has however gone from the Castlewood in anticipation of the Vaux takeover and as we went to press the only beer on sale was Websters Bitter. The Vaux range will be particularly welcome in this well-placed pub.

Another Boddington PubCo house where the guest beers have really taken off is the Ladybrook in Bramhall. The ever-growing list has included the likes of Courage Directors, Felinfoel Double Dragon, Banks & Taylor, Pitfield, Taylors and Morlands, to name but a few. Plans are in hand to instal a special panel to display all the pump clips. Interestingly, the manager of the Ladybrook, Michael Connell, was once the brewer at the Studley micro-brewery in Warwickshire, as long ago as 1978, one of the very early of the "new wave" breweries.

The "8th Day" wholefood shop on Oxford Road, Manchester has gained a licence and is now selling a most interesting range of bottled beers and ciders. Among the beers on offer are two from the Ross brewing Co of Bristol who concentrate on bottle-conditioned (i.e. sedimented) beers. The two Ross beers available are Clifton Dark Ale (og1045/ABV4.5%) and the more unusual Saxon Strong Ale (1055/5.5%) which is, apparently, brewed to an authentic Saxon recipe and includes honey, apple juice and borage in the recipe, as well as the more usual malt and hops! Also noteworthy is Bottle Green Organic Original Porter (ABV5.5%), which the label assures us, is "brewed to an authentic 1850 recipe and using yeast cultured from a bottle of porter rescued from a ship sunk in 1825". No news yet as to who actually brews this excellent beer, which also has a sediment in the bottle. On the cider side, two classics were available when OT called - Dunkertons Dry Perry and Court Royal "single apple" cider. Drinks can either be bought to take away or taken through to be consumed with a meal at the adjacent wholefood restaurant.

New licensee of the Greyhound, Edgeley is Irene Morris who has taken over following the retirement of Eric and Nore Wright. Irene has spent all her life in the trade, previous pubs being the Lord Eldon, Knutsford, the Goyt Inn, Whaley Bridge and the Swan, Shaw Heath. Her experienced hand is already beginning to show with a pub pianist engaged for Tuesday nights and Bingo for the OAPs on Monday and Thursday afternoons. Irene also looks after the cellar herself and so far the beer quality has been second to none. Also on the beer



front here, it's worth noting that handpumps are shortly to be installed and a guest beer introduced. Irene has our best wishes for the future.

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.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

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

I/We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

Knowledge of the average age of our members would be helpful. The information need only be given if you wish.

AGE: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 Over 65

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Limited) with this application form to:

Chris Stone / Sue Tiffensor, 80 Bexhill Road, Davenport, Stockport, SK3 8UZ

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:
Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH

