

OPENING TIMES

OCTOBER 1992

CAMRA
FREE

TWO PUBS UNDER THREAT



Two pubs, both very different and at virtually opposite ends of *Opening Times*' distribution area are facing similar threats to their future - both have popular licensees committed to serving real ale and both are under threat of losing their pubs as a result of the financial designs of others.

Not long ago we reported that cellarman Cliff Thornton was hoping to take on the licence of the *Swinging Sporan* in the City Centre. Well, he did, signing a six month lease in July, but even so it's possible he may not have a job for much longer, for in a tawdry backstairs deal UMIST, who own the freehold, are proposing to turn the building over to commercial use with a private staff club in the basement, and possibly a student union bar on the ground floor. We have been told by sources inside UMIST that in return Scottish and Newcastle breweries, who operate the pub, would be granted a multi-year supply agreement for all UMIST bars.

Cliff holds the licence on the pub for the next few years, but his tenancy, such as it is, would be due for renewal early in 1993. We hope that his fight to retain the pub, which is his home as well as his livelihood, is successful, as the pub is one of the few remaining dedicated rock-music venues in the city and is popular, especially at weekends with a varied clientele, not just the many students who frequent it.

In what is supposed to be the new "free" beer market, a deal like this frankly stinks. CAMRA is giving Cliff its full support in his fight to retain his popular and well-used pub (where the beer quality in recent months has been exemplary). To coincide with the new UMIST term, large numbers of protest postcards and leaflets will be distributed - look out for them or badger your usual CAMRA contact for more information.

The other licensee under threat is Drew Marsh of the *Squirrels* at Chinley. During his four-year tenure, at what had previously been a pub with an unsavoury reputation, Drew has built the *Squirrels* up into a veritable real ale oasis in the Peak District, serving an ever-changing and imaginative

range of real ales and ciders in comfortable and friendly surroundings. Drew holds the pub on a 25-year lease, signed in September 1988, with the pub's owner, David Cohen of Manchester-based Adan Geoffrey & Co Management Ltd. Unfortunately the lease provided for five-yearly rent reviews and in September last year the rent duly went up - by 50% from £20,000 to £30,000 a year!

However the recession has taken its toll and this, coupled with remedial work that is needed on the pub (a new roof, for example) means that Drew is simply unable to meet such heavy financial demands. Mr. Cohen, however, seems immune to Drew's pleas and continues to insist that unless the rent is paid on time, "the bank" will insist that action is taken. By "action" he means the repossession of the pub. Drew could buy the pub but the price being asked is in excess of £200,000, a doubtful figure given the amount of capital the pub needs spending on it.

What the end result of this will be is hard to say, but unless there is some flexibility somewhere, the *Squirrels* is going to end up closed and for sale, generating no income whatever and that certainly makes no sense at all.

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October's Pub of the Month award goes to the Griffin, Heaton Mersey. This extremely popular pub has been a social centre for longer than anyone cares to remember.

A Joseph Holt house, it serves excellent beer at what are today, unbelievable prices. As we went to press, the autumn round of brewery price increases was on the way, but there is little doubt that when the dust settles, Holts will still be far and away the cheapest beer.

Holts have just finished a major extension to the pub, and overall must be congratulated on their restraint, and the great lengths they have gone to - to match the original glass

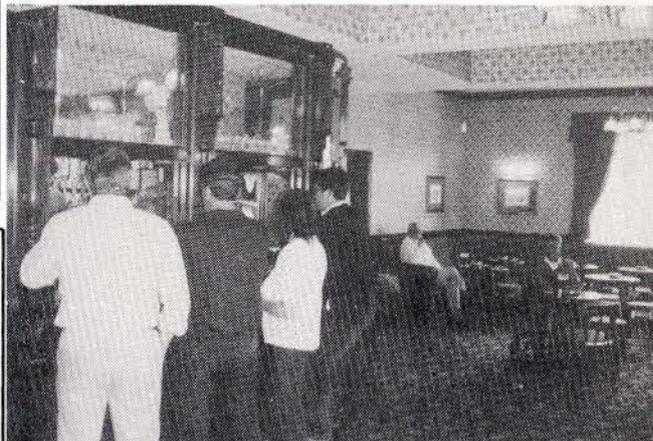
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PUB of the Month October

and wood features of the building. The pub retains its tremendous multi-roomed character, and one section has been turned into a no smoking room.

Bruce and Diane Davenport have had the pub for two years, presiding over the period of its (long delayed) extension, and during the period the pub has become even more popular.

The night is Thursday 22 October. Try to come along - a great night is guaranteed.



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PubCo Guest Beers

The Boddington PubCo have supplied us with a list of those local pubs that are taking part in their "Guest Beer Club". Unlike some publications, Opening Times usually avoids printing dreary lists of pubs, but this is one time when an exception deserves to be made.

Participating pubs in the Stockport and South Manchester and High Peak and North East Cheshire areas include: Black Lion, Stockport; Commercial, Hadfield; Crown Inn, Heaton Lane; Grapes, Heaton Norris; Hare & Hounds, Abbey Hey; Spinners, Hadfield; Lamb Inn, Dukinfield; Bulls Head, High Lane; Crown Inn, Bredbury; Greyhound, Edgeley; Oddfellows, Openshaw; Star Inn, Ashton.

Beers available as we went to press included, amongst others, Cains Formidable Ale, Lion Original Bitter, Eldridge Pope Royal Oak and Adnams Bitter. This is a welcome initiative on the part of the PubCo and deserves to succeed.

What Mcr. Brews Today...

Manchester's brew-pubs seem to be acting as something of a nursery for talent in the small brewery business. Major beneficiary currently is the Freeminer Brewery at Coleford in Gloucestershire's Royal Forest of Dean, recently set up (the brewery, not the forest) by Don Burgess, previously of West Coast Brewery, and Chris Lewis, formerly of the Flea and Firkin. While Freeminer's beers will obviously have to take account of local tastes, beer lovers from this part of the world will be looking for echoes of old favourites - perhaps Don's Ginger Beer or Chris's Premium Entire Stout. Meanwhile Don has also been involved in the setting-up of two home-brew pubs - the Farmers Arms at Apperley in Gloucestershire (very close to Hartland's Cider), with Sundown Heavy at an original gravity of 1045, and the Bryn Arms at Gellilydan, in the Vale of Ffestiniog in North Wales, where the delightfully named Mel y Moelwyn ("Moelwyn Honey") has an og of 1039.

RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Chris Stone and Sue Tittensor

The Castle on Oldham Street is the only Robinson's outlet in Manchester City Centre and has introduced weekly blues nights, which take place on Thursdays in the back room. Entrance is free and the room is large enough to comfortably house a band, fair sized audience and a pool table.

We visited the Castle, however, one Monday evening, to be "flies on the wall" for an unofficial performance, a practice session for one of the regular attractions, Stan Ellison's Blues Band.

Stan has been active on the Manchester music scene for many years, most recently fronting "Black Stan's Blues Band", who played a residency at the Gardener's Arms in Rusholme for five years. Now, however, rather than resorting to "Grecian 2000", Stan has dropped the "Black", and with a new line up, only completed during the last few months, has continued the tradition of fine rhythm and blues.

The four piece band consists of Stan (vocals, guitar, slide), Mike Holden (bass), Mark Smith (drums) and Gordon McGee (vocals, guitar), the most recent addition to the band.

We heard excellent versions of Hendrix's "Red House", and Muddy Waters' "King Bee" in addition to a few less likely numbers, such as "I heard it through the Grapevine" and "Midnight Hour". It was interesting to be witness to the opinions of the band; which songs were favourites, and which tracks the various members were dissatisfied with.

Surprisingly, concern was expressed about "King Bee" - but we thought it sounded great - best song in the set in fact! It was also an eye-opener to observe the professionalism with which the band were prepared to vary styles or arrangements and so on, or to experiment with various endings to a song to achieve the desired effect. It just goes to show the amount of care and pride which goes into the finished performance. This article will have gone to press before the next performance of Stan Collins Blues Band at the Castle (October 8th), but on the basis of our sneak preview, we would recommend that you pay a visit. Incidentally, if you can't make it on October 8th, the band are also appearing on October 29th and occasionally play at the Kings Arms, Salford (phone the pub for details).



The licensee at the Castle will be pleased to tell you the gig list between now and Christmas (now that's commitment!) but briefly the schedule for the remainder of October is as follows: On October 15th the Roach Twins Blues band will be appearing. This is a new line up, following the spirit of the old Roach twins band. Rumour has it, however, that the split has resulted in the formation of 2 excellent bands (the other being "Right Band, wrong Planet") so a visit to see either band is a must. Victor Brox completes the picture for October with an appearance on 22nd. The other point to note was that we were treated to Robinsons Bitter, in addition to Best Bitter, Best Mild and Old Tom.

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FREE ENTRY TO CAMRA CARD CARRYING MEMBERS



SUPPORTING EAST LANCs HOSPICE

In the Editor's View

by John Clarke



As you read the pages of this month's Opening Times, you will see story after story detailing the many and varied threats to our pubs - financial pressures, urban decay, insensitive redevelopment, inappropriate refurbishments, all play their part in the decline and, in some cases, the death, of our public houses. It is a grim story and at the moment a happy ending is difficult to foresee. For sure we in CAMRA will do our best to fight the worst excesses and indeed there have been some victories; some battles are still being fought, but all too often, especially in those areas badly affected by the recession, pub after pub is closing. Just compare the prosperous southern suburbs of Manchester where scarcely a pub has been lost in living memory, with East Manchester where hardly a month goes by without another closure or demolition reported.

The time has come to call a halt to this wanton destruction of one of this country's greatest assets and traditions.

On a happier note, cask ales continue to boom and this month we have been able to bring news of an initiative by the Boddington PubCo in offering a range of guest beers via their "Guest Beer Club". This is a welcome initiative that deserves every support - if you live near one of the participating pubs call in and try a pint of something different.

THE MARBLE ARCH

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OCTOBER

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O PENING TIMES

from: Peter Edwardson

Dear Sir,

While I would not greatly dissent from the conclusions of your tasting panel on "draught" beer in cans, your coverage of the issue shows up CAMRA's curiously ambivalent stance towards packaged beers in general.

It is easy to get the impression from CAMRA's public pronouncements that the organisation is basically "against" packaged beer. In reality, it isn't as clear-cut as that. Only the most diehard CAMRA purist would argue that any packaged beer which doesn't enjoy a secondary fermentation in the bottle is an utterly worthless product. It is official CAMRA policy to promote the survival of "distinctive bottled beers" - which includes many that are filtered and pasteurised. The local CAMRA branch gives out bottles of brewery-conditioned beer as raffle prizes, and most CAMRA members would privately admit that a well-made, flavoursome beer, brewed from traditional ingredients, still has much to be said for it, even if it's in a bottle.

The result is that, while CAMRA is often very derogatory towards packaged beers in general, on the ground it is quite prepared to give house-room to many specific examples, which have been processed in exactly the same way. This is not a coherent or sustainable policy position. The time has come for CAMRA openly to adopt a more broad-minded stance and admit that packaged beer has its place in the scheme of things and that, just like draught beer, it encompasses a vast range from excellent to awful.

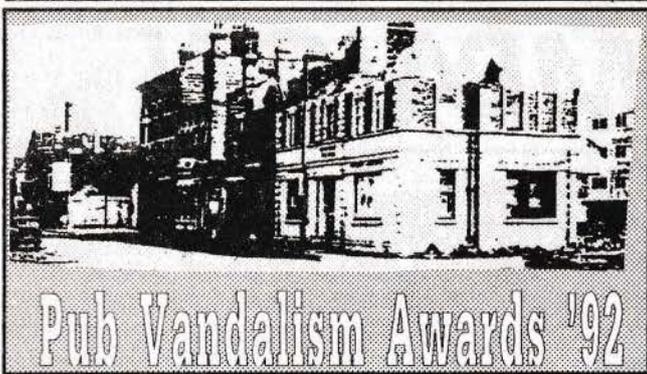
It is even questionable whether there is any firm foundation for a blanket condemnation of cans. Many people may prefer bottles to cans on aesthetic or environmental grounds, but I would very much doubt whether, with the coating technologies used today, it is possible in a blind tasting reliably to tell canned beers apart from their bottled equivalents. If this is the case, is the view that bottles are O.K., but cans are not, anything more than an irrational prejudice?

As you point out, for a long time there has been a general trend away from drinking in the pub and towards drinking at home. The brewers may have had a hand in this, by inflating pub prices and by doing pubs up to be tacky and unwelcoming, but there are lots of other factors at work - the rise of the video recorder and reduced social acceptability of drinking and driving, to name but two. The good pub can still prosper, but many of the ordinary ones now find it a real struggle.

If more people are drinking at home, then enterprising brewers will naturally look at expanding the range of products offered to that market. So-called "draught" canned beer is only a part of that process. The range of independent brewery beers now available in local supermarkets in packaged versions would be the envy of many a free house - Banks's Mild, Sam Smith's Old Brewery, Cains Bitter, Wadworth's 6X, Greene King Abbot, Hook Norton Old Hooky, Shepherd Neame Bishop's Finger, to give but a few examples, all beers widely recognised as being of high quality in cask form.

No filtered, pasteurised packaged beer is ever going to taste as good as a well-kept "real" pint in the pub, and drinkers recognise that, they aren't as daft as CAMRA sometimes makes out. But drinking at home is a fact of life, whether CAMRA likes it or not, and all packaged beer is not the same. By buying these products in preference to Tartan or Skol, drinkers are exercising a discerning consumer choice, and one which has been influenced by the work CAMRA has done in educating the drinking public. Nobody is being conned, and the availability of such beers increases both choice and quality in the market.

Surely even the CAMRA diehards would not want to adopt such a dog-in-the-manger attitude as to say "if you won't drink your Abbot on draught in the pub where it belongs, then you shouldn't drink it at all." Or would they?



Once again the time of year has arrived when we take stock of our pubs and let fly with a few brickbats as we bring you the Pub Vandalism Awards for 1992.

This year was a particularly difficult one for our judges as in general our pub stock has been treated reasonably well, although East Manchester continues to haemorrhage pubs at a frightening rate. There were however two clear winners for this year's booby prizes of the pub world.

So, step forward the Boddington Pub Co for the well-earned Creeping Death award, made for a decade of persistent effort in eradicating every trace of the original character of the George in Stockport's Mersey Square. To be fair the damage isn't all down to the PubCo as the work was started by the then independent brewers, Higsons, but it is only in Boddingtons' hands that what was once one of the finest 1930's pubs in the North of England has been turned into the ghastly neo-Victorian pastiche that we have today. They've had two goes at it though, but the latest scheme, unveiled earlier this year, finally went completely over the top and, not content with wrecking the inside, the clean inter-war years of the outside have also been done over with a selection of totally inappropriate awnings, lamps and coloured glass. Well done lads, if the Pope ever wants the Sistine Chapel whitewashed we'll put him in touch...

Last year we broke new ground by giving an award to a non-pub-owning body and this year's other winner is in the same category. The recipient of our Bomber Harris Urban Blight award is none other than the Central Manchester Development Corporation who have done anything but develop the important "gateway" site into the City Centre opposite Piccadilly Station approach. As if this wasn't bad



enough, they have in the process cast a pall over two of Manchester's most historic pubs. The plight of the Coach & Horses, one of the few original Georgian buildings left in the city has been well documented in these pages, but now the dead hand of the CMDC has spread to the Imperial, the pub where the meeting to form Manchester United from the Newton Heath club was held all those years ago.

Whilst the Corporation has done much commendable work elsewhere, they seem to have little or no idea about this important site and, given its prominence - every visitor to the city from the south will come face to face with this dereliction - the lack of action here really is a betrayal of everything they were set up to promote. For an example of Pub Vandalism by sheer neglect this case is pretty hard to beat.

And this concludes this year's awards. Our judges however remain vigilant and if your local is closed, gutted or knocked down then it too could feature in the Pub Vandalism Awards of 1993.

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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

Pub In The Peak

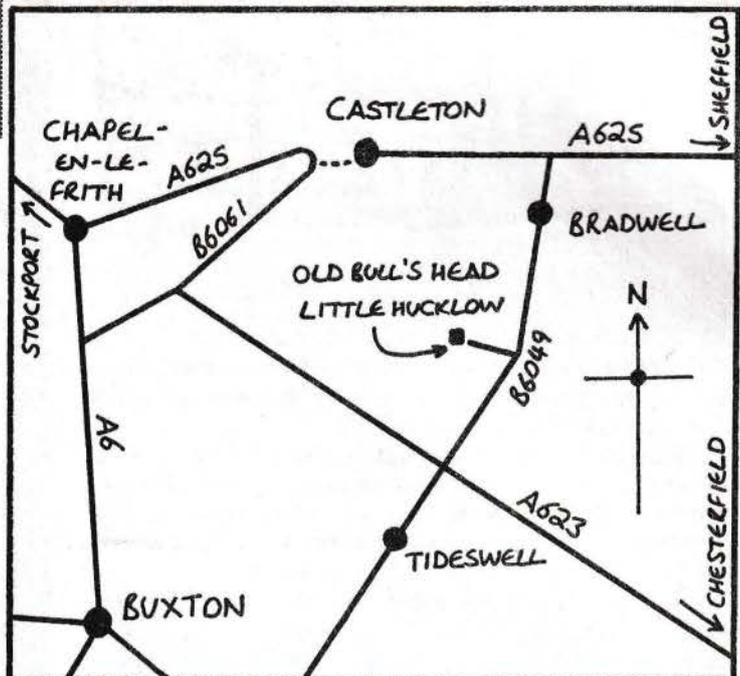
by Peter Edwardson

The Old Bull's Head has justly been described as a "connoisseur's pub" Superficially, you may wonder what is so special about a pub which only serves one real ale which is widely available elsewhere in the area, and only offers a limited range of cold food. The Old Bull's Head, however, grows on you the more you visit it, and for many people it sums up the traditional character of the Peak District more than any other pub.

Little Hucklow is just off the B6049 between Tideswell and Bradwell, and the Bull's Head is signposted from the main road. It is superbly situated at the foot of the tiny, stone-built village, looking across the valley to Hucklow Edge and Abney Moor, where gliders of both "hang" and conventional varieties can be seen on a clear day.

The gardens on both sides of the road are a riot of colour in Spring and Summer and are also home to a number of old agricultural implements including millstones, cheese-presses and a horse-drawn plough. This theme is continued on the white-painted walls of the pub, which are festooned with an amazing variety of rakes, picks, shovels and other paraphernalia of farming and lead-mining, all picked out in black.

The interior consists of two small, cosy, oak-beamed rooms, the first of which has a glass case containing a selection of locally-mined geological specimens. The bar, which is little more than a small hole cut through the two-foot thick wall, is found in the room further from the door. A less usual note is struck by the collection of African carvings which even extend as far as the unusual handpumps. Needless to say, real fires burn in the grates in cold weather, and horse-brasses cover the walls. Everything is spotlessly clean and shiny.



In recent times the Old Bull's Head has only ever sold one draught beer, a sensible policy as the low turnover outside peak times would make it difficult to keep any more in good condition, a lesson too many other pubs in tourist areas fail to learn. For some years that beer was Winkle's Saxon Cross from nearby Buxton, but when Winkle's stopped brewing the pub switched to Ward's Best Bitter from Sheffield. The licensee explains that this was then probably the nearest thing left to a genuinely local brew. Whenever I have visited, I have found this distinctive, malty beer in excellent condition, and the pub has appeared in many editions of CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide.

Food is limited to cold snacks such as sandwiches and ploughman's lunches. While these are of high quality and good value, if you feel in need of something more warming and substantial, excellent bar meals can be found at several pubs within a few miles, notably the George at Tideswell and the Old Bowling Green at Bradwell. In winter, lunchtime visits must be confined to weekends, as the pub does not open from Monday to Friday.

The Old Bull's Head is a smart, professionally run pub - it's not one of those places stuck in a timewarp where nothing has changed since the thirties, including the dust on the mantelpiece. While there must be some doubt how much longer an unspoilt, traditional drinkers' pub can survive in such an isolated country location, people were probably saying the same kind of thing twenty-five years ago, and it's still going strong today. It's certain that there can be few better places to take refuge on a cold winter's day, with the massive walls keeping the wind out, a roaring fire warming you up on the outside while a pint or two of Ward's bring a pleasant glow inside.

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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



For this month's Opening Times we decided to experience the food in a pub that is for many a South Manchester drinking institution - the Red Lion at Withington.

Just over 12 months ago Marstons had a "big do" to celebrate the opening of the new conservatory along with other improvements. The restaurant/dining area were one of the major improvements at this time and, as the pub features in the latest CAMRA guide to Pub food, a visit seemed overdue.

Prices of the main meals were all around the £3 mark and included Roast Pork with Apple Sauce (£3.40), Pork Masala (£3.20), Lamb Curry (£3.10) and Marstons Country Pie, also £3.10. Smaller meals could be had for less than £3 - a hot meat roll at £2.20 and Pizza at £2.95. £2.95 also brings a selection of children's meals, mainly of the chicken nuggets and chips variety. There was also a well-used salad bar for those favouring more healthy eating.

I chose Chicken in Pommay Sauce (£3.40) which came with a choice of roast potatoes, boiled potatoes or rice. I went for the roast and was duly served with a generous portion of four from what seemed to be a special oven just for roast spuds! Along with a good piece of chicken and two adequate portions of vegetables (peas and carrots - perhaps a little unimaginative) this made for a substantial and good value meal. The Pommay Sauce was particularly good, with lots of onion. My partner tried the Marstons Country Pie and again this was a substantial meal - even more so as it came with five roast potatoes. Despite a minor quibble that one of these was overcooked, he soon emptied his plate.

Full but undaunted we couldn't resist asking about the desserts on offer. All were priced at £1.40 and included chocolate fudge cake, apple pie and cream, sherry trifle and coffee gateau. We chose the first two, despite my partner's concern for his waistline and good sized portions of appetising food were the order of the day.

With so much good food to distract us we had neglected our beer. This was immediately put to rights when my partner returned from the bar armed with a pint of Marston's Pedigree (£1.38) and a pint of Banks's Mild (£1.18). Not cheap but the quality was good. A minor point about the mild, though. The Red Lion used to sell Marstons Mercian Mild which was considerably cheaper than the Banks's now on offer.

Back in the dining area our enjoyment of the beer was rudely interrupted by the crashing noise of metal blinds coming down. "Last orders already?" I bleated in a fearful voice. "Don't worry", reassured my partner, "It's only the food bar closing at 2.00pm". What a relief!
by Keith Lingard

More Festivals!

Since the feature in last month's OT, a couple more events have come to notice to extend the autumn beer festival calendar. The week of 16th - 22nd November brings one of the most unusual and charming events of the drinking year, the Mid-Wales Beer Festival.

Most beer festivals take place in a hired hall or perhaps a marquee. Not Mid-Wales - for here the festival is spread around the four pubs in the tiny town of Llamwryd Wells, which vie with one another to present an exciting range of beers. The best range (and usually only real cider) tends to be at the Neuadd Arms - appropriately enough, for the festival is the brainchild of its inventive licensee - but the other three are usually worth more than a glance. Short breaks are available at pubs and guesthouses (phone the Neuadd Arms, 05913 236, for details) but a day visit is also perfectly feasible - a relatively civilised 8.36am departure from Manchester Piccadilly will give you nearly six hours in which the peerless scenery of the Irton Valley can be enjoyed, pint in hand.

The next weekend, 27th and 28th November - brings an abrupt contrast to the serenity of the land of the Red Kite - to the gritty urban landscape of the Black Country, where Netherton Arts Centre near Dudley is the venue for the annual Winter Ales Fair. A great variety of beers can be enjoyed here - most of them strong (though there are some lower gravity beers to help you last the pace), and a good number of them not normally on draught, not least the wonderful Banks's Imperial Old Ale. Don't leave Netherton without seeing the new statue in the town centre. It's a reasonably easy place to get to - catch the hourly train to Wolverhampton, then bus 126 to Dudley, then any of the several buses (last year I caught the 285) to Netherton. Don't forget that the main bus company in the West Midlands demands exact fare.

PS - the Llandudno festival which was planned for mid-November has now been postponed; it is hoped to hold an event there in the early spring.



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and try their

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HEATONIAN MAGAZINE "PUB OF THE YEAR"

STAGGER

with Paul Felton

The evening of Friday 21st August saw our resolute band of investigators venture out walking in Burnage and Heaton Mersey on our latest stagger.

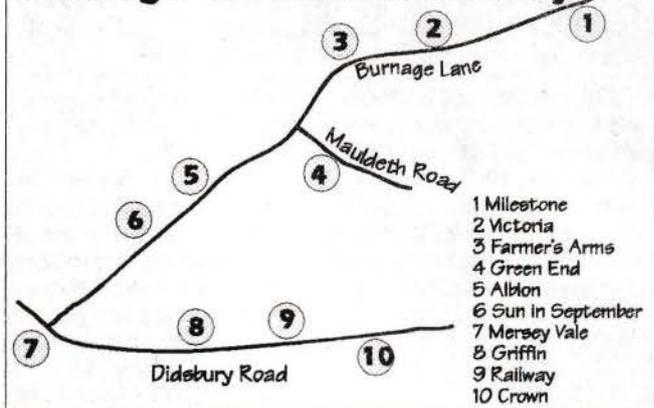
First call was the **Milestone** on Burnage Lane. This is a modern Banks' spub, very much in their house style. It has two rooms, a large vault with darts and pool, and a larger, comfortable split-level lounge. The only cask beer available here was the bitter. The mild is keg, but is served through the same type of electric pump as is the cask version; the only way to tell is that while Banks' cask beers have 'cask conditioned' on the pump, their keg beers say 'brewery conditioned'. The bitter was quite good, but the very large differential between vault and lounge prices should be noted - £1.13 and £1.20 respectively.

The **Victoria** is further south down Burnage Lane, a Boddington PubCo house with a vault and a large lounge (including a rather nice little snug area on the left as you go in). Unfortunately, Boddington's cheap bitter Old Shilling had disappeared, leaving Mild and Bitter (the latter at £1.16). While the beer was okay, the party was put off by one of the most appallingly blatant examples of smoking behind the bar (now against hygiene regulations, of course) we have seen: not just the normal practice of standing in the hatchway, but actually leaning over the handpumps to get to the ashtray! Disgraceful!

The **Farmer's Arms** is, again, further south on Burnage Lane. It's a comparatively recent conversion to real ale (Greenalls Bitter at £1.22 and Stones best bitter), and so it was a first visit here for many of the party. The lounge being shut restricted our choice of rooms (though a quick look in as we were leaving showed it to be quite reasonable), but the vault was pleasant enough, with comfortable seating at the front and a games area with pool table at the rear. The Greenalls was okay, the Stones was not.

The **Green End** is a large Whitbread pub on the corner of Burnage Lane and Mauldeth Road. It's split between vault and very large lounge, with a standard sort of plush decor

Burnage & Heaton Mersey



(you know the sort of Laura Ashley thing), with the added bonus of a massive bowling green out the back (an endangered species these days). The spirits of the party were temporarily raised by a poster advertising Whitbread's new and well-received porter, but, alas! (and predictably) this was not on sale. We were left with the choice of Boddingtons bitter at £1.18 or Chester's mild (there was a pump clip for Chester's bitter but it was not on). The Boddington's was merely average, but the stout-like Chester's mild was received with a great deal of enthusiasm.

The **Albion** is but a step away along Burnage Lane. It's a rather large Hyde's pub, done up quite well a few years ago. We went in the lounge, which was pleasant enough, if a little short of customers compared with the previous stagger around the area. Two beers were available, light at £1.04 and bitter at £1.10. Both were generally thought to be quite good, although the mild was very poorly received by one or two.

Further west along Burnage Lane (again!) is Samuel Smith's **Sun in September** (lovely name), a vault and lounge pub, supposedly decorated on a 'Raj' theme. Now the Sun has possibly the most pleasant gardens in South Manchester, but has never previously been able to get a licence for outside drinking; so it was a pleasant surprise that there were tables outside, and so we used them. The single beer available was Old Brewery Bitter at £1.11 (?I think), and it was fine. A few years ago Sam Smiths had a reputation of being committed to value for money, and this appears to have returned, for there was a notice stating that the price of OBB had been frozen for the next twelve months. It would be nice (if foolish) to think that other breweries might take note...

Ye Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER
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Guest Beers Weekly

WE'RE
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1993
GOOD BEER
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TAYLORS BATEMANS
MARSTONS



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Cask
Beers

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good taste

Next was the **Mersey Vale** on Didsbury Road, reached after either a fair walk or a short bus ride (cheats!). Formerly the Dog & Partridge, it's a single room, with little seating compared with a vast acreage of carpeting; no vault, therefore, but not the most comfortable of lounges. There was a John Smiths pump clip (reversed), which seems to indicate the end of the line here for Cain's and Theakston's bitters. The single beer actually on sale was Boddington's bitter, which was (generally) quite well received.

We then had to go through the traumatic experience of **PASSING THE GRIFFIN** to reach our next pub the **Railway** on Didsbury Road. It's a single bar GrandMet pub, with some strange ideas on decor (and in need of some refurbishment, I fear). Your correspondent was so enthralled by the choice of Websters Yorkshire Bitter and Ruddles best bitter that he found himself forced to plump for a half of 'keg' Beamish. While the stout was very nice, the cask ale was as standard and boring as we were probably expecting.

The penultimate port-of-call was Robinson's **Crown**, again on Didsbury Road. The main problem with the Crown, certainly on a Friday evening, is shoe-horning your way into the place (though once you do get in the service is pretty good, it has to be said). It's really all one room with partitions, but there is a distinct 'vault' area to go with the more plush lounge sections. Both Robinson's best bitter (£1.20) and best mild were available; the best bitter was by some way the better, although the best mild was palatable enough.

So we wended our weary way back to the **Griffin** on Didsbury Road; this is quite simply a **WONDERFUL** pub. Several rooms (including one which is no smoking), a splendid bar, and an excellent, large extension which has maintained the integrity not only of the actual bar but of the pub as a whole (a rare event, sadly). Above all, perhaps, the Griffin is a **Holt's** pub, serving mild at 84p and bitter at 89p. Both were on very good form. The Griffin is our Pub of the Month for October; the award will be presented on Thursday 22nd: come along!

So ended one of the longer crawls, notable this time round for just how consistently decent the beer was in virtually all the pubs we went into. Of course, the views in this article should not be taken as a once and for all judgement of either the pubs or the beers, they simply represent what we found on one particular night. As ever we suggest you try them yourselves and find out how much you disagree.



PUB OF THE YEAR 1992

The King's Arms

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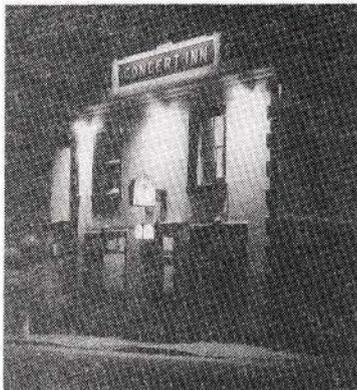


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GOOD BEER GUIDE '93

Twenty year old, but as fresh as ever, the Good Beer Guide bounces back onto the bookshelves this month.

The Guide has come a long way in its twenty years, from simple origins as a pub list for CAMRA members to its current status under editor Jeff Evans as an established feature of the annual publishing calendar.

Once again, the core of the book is devoted to CAMRA's unique county-by-county guide to the best beer pubs. 5,000 are featured, all freshly researched, with roughly one-third being new names to the Guide, or old favourites returning after a time in the beer wilderness.

The Breweries Section continue to grow, with more than 20 new brewery names to be found among the independents this time around.

With nationals and brew pubs completing the picture, the Good Beer Guide is the only publication to offer an annually updated review of the British brewing industry.

New this year is a separate section on Pubs Groups. As fledgling retail chains take over pubs discarded by national brewers, the Good Beer Guide explains just who are these new entrepreneurs, where they operate, the number of pubs they own and the beers they sell.

The Guide also tackles the Beer Orders and where they went wrong. It surveys the foreign bottled beer invasion, and exposes the difficulties faced by pub users with disabilities.

There's also a look back two decades to the birth of CAMRA's flagship publication.

With so much turmoil in the brewing industry, beer fans cannot afford to rely on last year's facts, especially as the Guide is still priced at only £7.99 - to order yours simply send a cheque for £7.99 (made payable to CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester) to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.

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GOOD
BEER
GUIDE

1987 - 1992

THE KINGS ARMS

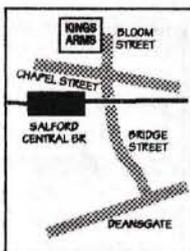
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER
1987

"What's in Your Pint?" was the question posed on the front page of this edition - every brewery supplying beer in the county was asked what additives were used in the brews. Generally speaking, the brewers were quite forthcoming in their replies, but inevitably, there were some exceptions. Bass "do not disclose their recipes"; Boddington's "do not wish to disclose the formulation"; and Chester's would not "divulge the ingredients."

Sam Smith's, Lees and Timothy Taylor's seem to be a pretty safe bet if you're looking for an additive free pint. Robinson's admitted to a "small proportion of flaked maize", but their Lake District subsidiary Hartley's replied that the information was confidential. Greenall's said "few adjuncts or additives", and John Smith's claimed "the genuine article" - neither of which tell us very much, of course. Finally, Hyde's referred to their policy for many years of "producing beer from the basic materials of water, hops, yeast and malt." But then, somewhat surprisingly, they went on to list the additives they use, with the order and the proportion in which they add them. The Editor offered to supply the list on request!

Chester's Pop Inn on Ashton Old Road celebrated its first birthday in August - events included a special evening for local senior citizens. (This was the experimental "non-alcoholic youth public house.")

The Gransmoor, also on Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, was reported to have been sold to a Blackpool based partnership. No further details, but it is thought that the pub will remain tied to Banks's beers. This is a pub that seemed to struggle to find its identity - first under Wilsons, and then when Banks's bought it. (When Banks's first appeared in the North-West in the mid-80's, it was very much a success story, whether it was an old Wilson's pub, or a brand new venture like the Milestone on Burnage Lane. The Gransmoor seems to be the exception.)

That occasional feature, Holiday Ale, covered Keighley and the Worth Valley Railway - Timothy Taylor's, Clark's, Trough, Goose Eye, are evocative words for CAMRA members. Even if you're not a steam buff, the railway trip can be almost dream-like - when did you ever see hand-pumps on the Inter-City?

Tom & Betty Burke welcome you to

- **The Grobe Inn** -

LONDON ROAD, HAZEL GROVE

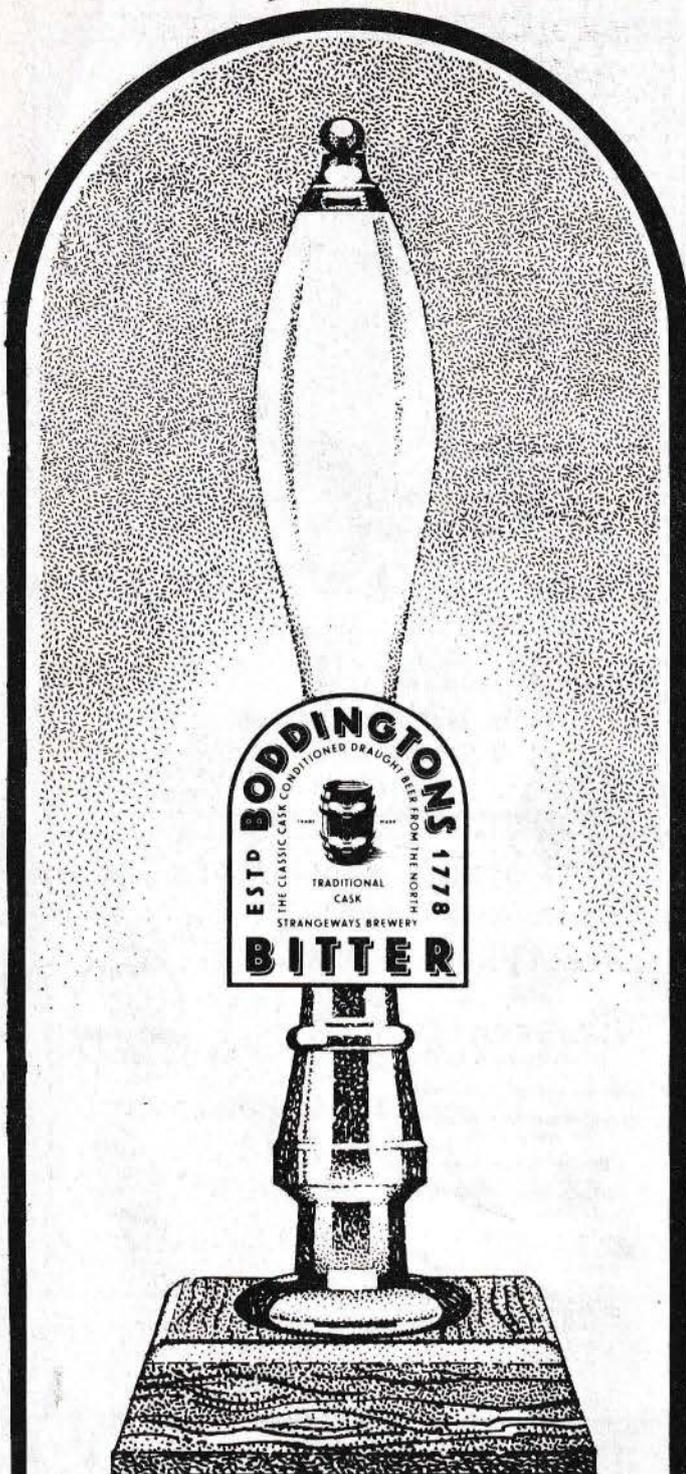
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OPENING TIMES OCTOBER 1992



THE CLASSIC
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Whitbread Porter

As many readers will know, Whitbread this year brewed at their Castle Eden brewery a porter in celebration of their 250 years of brewing (and, no doubt, around 249 years of brewery takeovers) (242 actually, the first was the Kings Head Brewhouse, London in 1750 - ed).

Although it received rave reviews, only two brews were made, and it seemed to have been merely a glorious one-off. Now, however, hope may be at hand. In a letter from the Marketing Director of the Whitbread Beer Company, North Manchester CAMRA member Jim Bracken has been told "we are now re-thinking our plans with a view to re-launching the beer as a winter ale, probably in January."

If they do this, they will need to take a closer look at which pubs the beer goes into. For this summer's launch, the beer went into pubs which, while perfectly decent houses, are not known for a keen interest in real ale, while pubs where real ale is an important feature, such as the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street, couldn't get a sniff of it. Cynics will wonder whether this was an experiment designed to fail.

WARNING!



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2nd - 25th October

— 1992 —

TETLEY

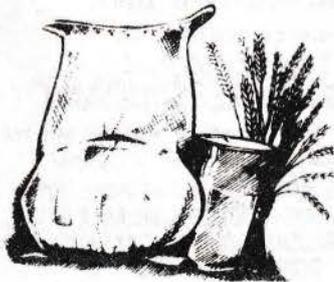


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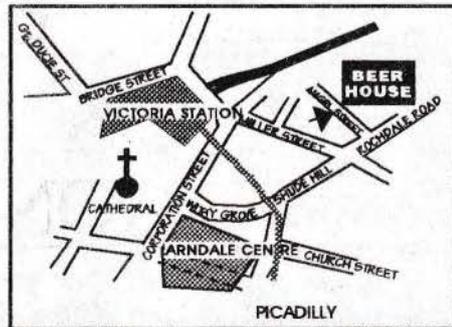
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Station Buffet Threatened

For the second time in twelve months the Buffet Bar on Stalybridge railway station is in serious danger of closure. Although the last campaign which was run by the Greater Manchester branches of CAMRA was adjudged to be a success, with British Rail backing off, the reverse side of the coin was that Ken Redfern had to sign a "standard" commercial lease. It has recently come to light that a property developer is interested in converting the entire station main building into a restaurant with offices above, and evicting Ken from his home of twenty two years. Although his lease still only exists in draft form, BR has progressively increased the rent to six times what it was under the old agreement. Any suggestion that BR was doing this as a financial lever to pauper the licensee out of the property would of course be an obvious slur on BR's integrity, and wholly without foundation.

The future existence of the Buffet Bar now rests on a knife edge. Recent visitors would have noticed that the usual range of interesting beers from all over the country has now shrunk to only a few easily available brews, (all still immaculately kept), and the range of foreign beers gives only a hint of what went before, as the money runs out feeding the bottomless coffers of BR. Though the rent has gone up, BR have made no improvements to the property, nor undertaken significant repairs or maintenance. If this situation remains then it is inevitable that the Buffet Bar will close, and close soon. Thus we will all be the poorer for the loss of an establishment which is the embodiment of all that a free house should be, stocking the products which CAMRA was formed to defend from extinction.

There is just the faintest glimmer of hope for the Buffet Bar, Thwaites of Blackburn have expressed an interest in taking over the lease of the property and have visited the premises for discussions with Ken. It appears that all went well, and that there is a chance that they will take the lease over. What still remains unclear is what level of tie to the brewery and its products will be demanded in return, and what changes to both the interior and exterior would occur. We would appreciate any information relating to the situation, in order to help us help keep the bar open. Any information should be routed to the contacts listed elsewhere in the magazine or anything urgent can be telephoned to: Ralph Warrington (High Peak Branch Pubs Information Officer) on 061 236 2131 Ext.320 (Work), or 061 368 3624 (Home).

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ISSUE 103
OCTOBER 22

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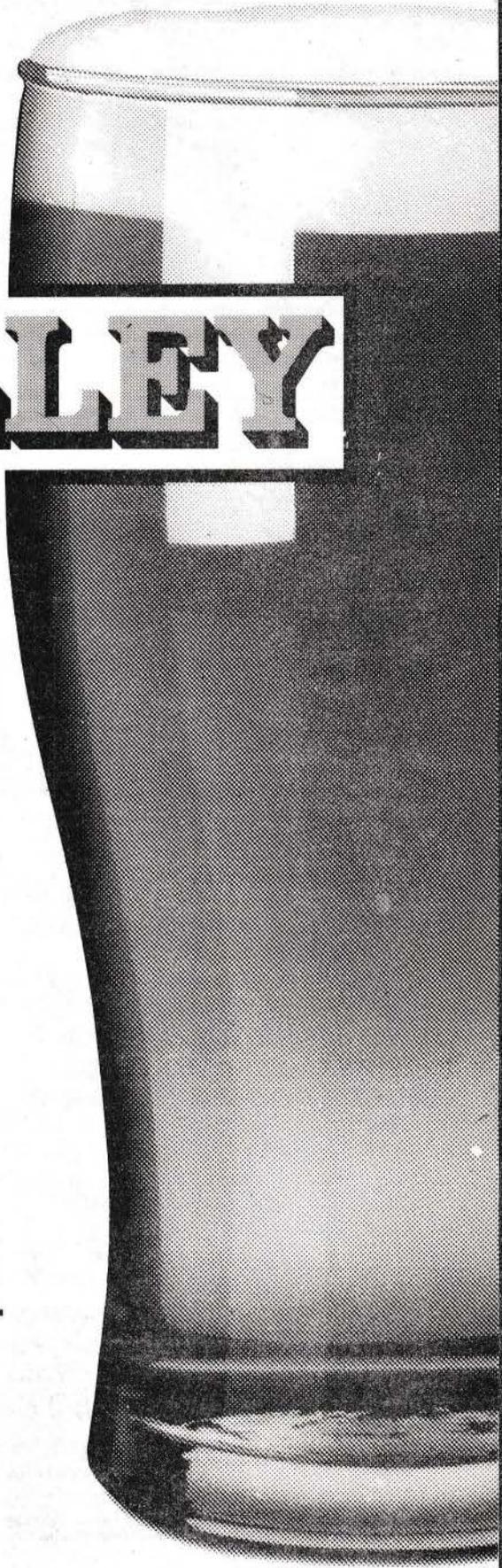
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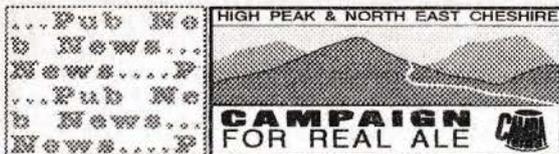
263 Newbridge Lane, Stockport



LOCALLEY

**TETLEY
BITTER**

**BRITAIN'S BEST
LOVED BITTER**



On the negative side the Fleece in Glossop (GBG 1992) has lost its music licence because of complaints from a neighbour. This seems a strange decision because a pub opposite that also has a music licence remains unaffected (apart from gaining the music-loving clientele who used to frequent the Fleece!!) More positively the Crown - also in Glossop - (GBG 1992) has announced that the price of O.B.B. is to remain at £1.04 for 12 months - this means that it has remained unchanged (except for budget rises) for almost 24 months.

The Prince of Wales (Glossop, again!) (former GBG entry) now has Banks's Mild on draught. A welcome gain in the area - but reflects the pressure on Marstons and Border milds as a result of the inter-brewery agreement between Marstons and Wolverhampton.

THE STATION

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061 427 3935 Car Park at rear.

PET HATES

Tom Lord Lets Rip

Not only can pub decor, layout, barbaric refurbishments; artefacts, furnishings et al, ruin a good pub and its atmosphere, but a lot also depends on the people who frequent the place, and of course the good old licensee.

Anything ever irritate you about pubs and the people you find in them? Things said or done, or habits which make you cringe, grind your teeth, bite your tongue, fight back or make a desperate dash for the door!

Well now is your chance to air your feelings. We would like to know about your pet pub people hates. Please keep it general - no personal vendettas please, no matter how you feel; and a bit of humour would not go amiss.

To start the ball rolling I will introduce you to a particular phrase becoming popular with bar persons, generally youthful ones, which is calculated to make me grip my pint pot (dimple variety please - no handle-less toothbrush mugs!) until my knuckles go white!

The scenario usually goes something like this :-

'Pint of mild please'

The pot is obtained and the beer dispensed. So far so good. Beer is placed on bar and money handed over. Change is taken from the till and placed in my outstretched palm. I now think that I am about to get away with it. Is the dread phrase about to be used? No such luck - here it comes!

The bar person, with switch on/switch off smile delivers the following words:-

'There you go now!'

Aagh - this is worse than 'Have a nice day!'

What does the phrase mean? Where am I going? Does the bar person know something I don't? Does it have a meaning?

One of my local pubs has two bar persons who can use this phrase to devastating effect, with almost perfect insincerity and condescension. Pint in hand I slink away feeling as though I have been patted on the head and given a lollipop.

The phrase seems to trip off the tongue of said barpersons, without them appearing to think about it. It must take hours of training to reach such automatic unthinking perfection.

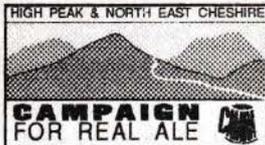
To relieve tragically affected bar persons how about a trained parrot on the bar squawking the phrase every few seconds. It's bound to coincide every now and then with the handing over of the change.

I swear that one day, having been subjected to the 'there you go now' treatment, I WILL retort "go where?" - I will, I will! But then again what the hell, is it worth the trouble or better to suffer in silence and hope eternally for a nice plain "thank you sir." and a genuine smile.

Well that's it for this month; so there you go now. Oh bloody hell!

PS - about that bar person switch off/switch on smile - well ...but no, let's save that one for later!

(Do you have any pet hates? Letters to the usual address please - ed.)



Pub of the Month

OCT
92

This month we feature the Andrew Arms in Compstall between Romiley and Marple Bridge. For the uninitiated we have included a map of the pub's location since it lies off the main road, tucked away in Compstall Village.

The pub used to be known as the Commercial and changed its name in 1970. The present name commemorates George Andrew, a 19th century local mill owner. The pub dates from the 1860's and is a sturdy, detached, stone building entirely in keeping with its surroundings, the stone cottages and chapel alongside (modern pub builders please take note!)

It was acquired by Robinsons from Bell's Brewery in 1949.

The Andrew Arms has been an unbroken regular entry in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide since the mid 1970's and deservedly so, as the many good beer guide window stickers testify.

The pub manages to combine a good, comfortable atmosphere in a cosy lounge with real fire - and a solid local feel, especially in the unpretentious vault. There is also an outside drinking area.

A hundred yards or so down the road is the Etherow Country Park. This is centred around the old Compstall Mill Lodge which is now used for fishing and boating, with wildlife and nature walks up the valley by the river Etherow. The pub is ideally placed for visitors to the Park.

The fact that the pub is one of the High Peak and North East Cheshire CAMRA Branch's longest serving Good Beer Guide entries speaks volumes for the consistency and quality of the handpumped Robinsons Best Mild and Bitter. To complement this the pub also has excellent value lunches seven days a week. All in all, the Andrews has the overriding quality of a good pub - you make return visits. Fact File Andrew Arms, George Street, Compstall tel. 061 427 2281

Fake Scrumpy Jack Handpumps Removed From Romiley

Following our recent articles on the Duke of York in Romiley, the licensee Mrs. Benson tells us that the fake handpump used to dispense keg Scrumpy Jack Cider has now been removed. This is a welcome move at this excellent local.

We reported in August that little had changed at the now-Vaux-owned Waggon & Horses (formerly the Woodley) in Woodley. Not so, Christine the landlady tells us that apart from the carpet (still 'Sports' but it will cost £6,000 to replace!) almost everything else has. Best news of all is the return of a genuine vault - what a refreshing change, as the advert says. The beer however is not yet 'Real' although Christine is hoping that it will be before long. We'll let you know when that happens.

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The Little Bradford on Ashton New Road now closes between 5 and 8 every day except Friday, having found that little trade is done during this early evening period. However, the pub is thriving outside these times with locals, passing trade and regular meetings, including the recently formed Openshaw and Beswick Friendly Society, a social club.

Two Boddington PubCo houses in Stockport have introduced Robinsons Best Bitter as a guest beer. These are the Grapes in Heaton Norris and the Crown on Heaton Lane where the Stockport brew joins Cains Bitter and John Smiths Bitter to make three guests in total.

Still on the Boddington PubCo, handpumps have now been installed in the Greyhound in Edgeley, as promised - and very nice they look, too. Boddingtons Mild and Bitter have been joined by Theakstons Bitter in what could be the first of a range of guest beers.

The Plough, Shaw Heath, Stockport, has now added Marstons Pedigree to the current range of John Smiths and Wilsons Bitters. This fine little pub is easy to overlook but really is well worth a visit.

BURTONWOOD BREWERY

A FAMILY TRADITION OF FINE BREWING

Two City Centre pubs were on the market as we went to press - the Crown on Blackfriars Street and a long-time CAMRA favourite, Marston's Harp & Shamrock just off Rochdale Road. The latter is going for £95,000 and is perhaps somewhat optimistically described as occupying a prominent location in a busy commercial area. Oh, come on now!

Back in Stockport, we learn that Boddingtons Nip Inn on Penny Lane has been sold to Paramount Inns. In common with their other purchases expect Burtonwood Bitter to make an appearance alongside the Boddies.

Whither (or perhaps wither) the Lower Turk's Head, Shudehill? It's still "re-opening shortly", and still sports a Laura Davies Appeal poster in the window. At this rate Laura won't be able to book it for her 18th birthday do. The owner? No surprise - Control Securities!

MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Rhys Jones*

A couple of (fairly) recent openings in the City Centre are worth a look. On Whitworth Street West the Canal Cafe Bar has John Smiths Bitter and Ruddles County on handpump. This converted warehouse now houses a cavernous drinking space and doubles as a gallery of modern art. Not too far away, Dukes 92 on Castle Street (right at the end, by the canal - do not give up, it IS there!) sells Boddingtons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree on handpump. Another conversion, but with a lot more money and some flair expended on it, the end result is a comfortable but unstuffy ambience reminiscent of an upmarket continental bar. You do pay for it though - £1.60 for Pedigree! With more interesting beer and prices nearer the Mancunian norm, this place could be a winner.

In any event, I wish these newcomers better luck than four other City Centre pubs which are currently closed - the City on Oldham Street, the Millstone, Smithfields and the Vogue Cafe Bar. Also closed is the Lord Lyon in Rusholme.

A central pub whose future has been in doubt is the Ox noble, but it's fighting back by selling Holts Bitter on handpump. Holts has gone, though, from Yates on High Street, where the handpump has been taken over by John Smiths Bitter. Monroe's has lost Chesters Bitter but gained Boddingtons Bitter and Flowers IPA on handpump.

The Old House at Home on Fairfield Road in Droylsden is yet another Wilsons pub bought by Vaux. Information on what it sells would be welcome, as the place was closed (on a Sunday lunchtime!) when I attempted to visit. Finally, the Mansfield Old Shilling which was promised at the Nags Head in West Gorton never actually arrived - sorry! Stop Press - the Pomona in Gorton no longer sells Tetley Bitter.

REGIONAL DIARY - OCTOBER

Ale of 2 Cities (2) Meeting, Tues 13th October, Castle, Oldham Street, 8pm
 Regional Meeting Wed 14 October, Kings Arms, Chorlton on Medlock 8pm
 Salford AGM 93 Meeting, Mon 26 October, Castle, Oldham Street, 8pm

A minibus-full of branch stalwarts spent the last weekend in September down amongst the apples in the cider-country of Hereford. The ostensible purpose of the trip was to present the awards for Cider and Perry of the Festival - from the 6th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival to the respective winners.

On the way down to our resting place (Ross-on-Wye) we stopped briefly at the Wye Valley Brewery, in Hereford and were entertained and shown round the new plant by Peter Arnor, and then took our time sampling the excellent beers produced there. Thanks to Peter for his hospitality! (During the course of the trip we also popped our heads into two brew-pubs, the Jolly Roger in Hereford and the Farmers Arms in Apperley.) Apart from that - for most of us at least it was cider & perry all the way.

Michael Weston of Westons (winner of the Cider award with their Special Vintage) certainly put the boat out for us, and we were taken on a fascinating tour of the plant by John, a thoroughly knowledgeable employee (and scally-wag!). We also sampled the full range of their production - all from last year as the cider-making process for 1992 had only got under way four days before our visit. Westons were particularly pleased with the award, and our thanks to them for their tremendous generosity & hospitality.

The following day, Dennis Gwatkin was the recipient for his perry. This was in fact, the drink's first showing to CAMRA - where it walked off with the prize. It was gratifying to hear that this small farm producer will be increasing production this year.

A final highlight was the discovery of an unspoilt cider-pub in Hay-on-Wye, the Three Tuns (to which a return visit is planned in November). A great time was had by all the party, pictured at Westons. Who says CAMRA can't be fun!

CIDER CORNER



Pictured above is Dennis Gwatkin with Rhys Jones (Cider manager at Stockport) and the hands at Dennis' farm. The machine in the background is their hand-built travelling press.



CAMRA CALLING!

Once again the CAMRA social scene has something for everyone, starting with the monthly branch meeting which will be at the Midway, Newbridge Lane, Stockport on Thursday 8th October from 8.00pm onwards.

On Monday 12th there will be a social at the Parrswood, Parrswood Road, Didsbury. In common with all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm. This is followed on Friday 16th with a trip to Stoke Beer Festival. The coach will leave the Royal Oak, Didsbury at 5.15pm and the Crown, Heaton Lane at 5.30. Phone for further details.

The following Monday, 19th, the social will be at the Black Lion, Hillgate, Stockport and the following night will see the first planning meeting for the 1993 Stockport Beer Festival. This will be held at the Tiviot, Stockport from 8.00pm onwards. The week concludes on Thursday 22nd with the presentation of the Pub of the Month award to the Griffin, Heaton Mersey (see article on page 2).

On Monday 26th the social will be at Dobbins Brewery Tap (formerly the King William IV) Justin Close, Chorlton-on-Medlock and on Friday 30th it's Stagger time. This month it's a new route

- Gorton Lane. We start at 7.00pm at the Junction on Hyde Road and meet at 8.30 at the Gorton Arms, Gorton Lane. The very next day there is a minibus trip which will take in the Lion Original Brewery in Bumley and one or both (!) of the East Lancs and Keighley Beer Festivals. We depart from the Royal Oak, Didsbury at 8.30am and the Crown, Heaton Lane at 8.45. Once again, phone for more details.

Finally, just a couple of November events to mention - on Monday 2nd the Social will be at the Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport and on Friday 6th we are running one of our ever popular minibuses around some of the better pubs in East Manchester. We leave the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.00pm. Once again, please phone for details. Call Dawn or Duncan on 445 0872 for details of any of the above.

If you live in the Marple, Romiley, Woodley or Bredbury areas, you fall in the area covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA who will be holding their monthly meeting on Monday 12th at the George Hotel, Glossop. Aim to arrive by 8.30. There will also be a crawl of Stalybridge on Saturday 24th. This starts from the Station Buffet at 8.00pm. For details about any of High Peak branch activities please contact Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634. Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each others events.



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