

**STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA**

**No:
109**

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA
STILL FREE

MAY 1993

GO MILD IN MAY!

May, the month in which CAMRA traditionally encourages you to try a pint of mild is here again.

Mild is an often overlooked, vastly underrated drink and is probably the closest modern equivalent to traditional English Ale of the 15th century and, not so long ago, was the biggest selling type of beer in the country and indeed, in some parts, notably the West Midlands and South Wales, it still is.

There is also a relatively strong mild drinking tradition locally but, too often, we hear the cries of "It's not proper beer" or "It's only suitable for my Grandad". Not so. Mild is brewed like any other ale but with less hops and, often, a darker malt. It is therefore less bitter but is still full-flavoured and tasty. And why does grandad drink it? He's cleverer than he's given credit for - it's cheaper than many other drinks (despite often being more expensive to produce than over-priced lagers), and it's low in alcohol, important in these health-conscious times, so can be consumed in reasonable quantities without inducing a fierce hangover!

But what of mild for the local drinker? Almost all our local independent brewers produce at least one mild, Robinsons produce two and Hydes, three! This may come as a shock to some, but such is the stance taken by some of the bigger brewers, that they are willing to neglect mild in favour of more profitable beers. As such, while some brewers pubs virtually all offer mild, some are under threat and need seeking out - Boddingtons Mild, produced by Whitbread at their Strangeways Brewery, and Wilsons Mild, produced by Fosters Brewing at Halifax, are becoming increasingly difficult to find.

Apart from pubs supplied by our local brewers, virtually all of which sell mild in the Stockport & South Manchester area, the mild drinker can also choose from a variety of guest milds offered by the Woolpack on Brinksway, the George & Dragon in Hazel Grove, and the Crown on Heaton Lane. The Crown is also planning a special mild event in May when a variety of different brews should be available. Mention also needs to be made of the Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane which, apart from offering guest milds from time to time, also has two exclusive house milds brewed by the Ryburn Brewery of Sowerby Bridge.



Stockport Beer Festival - an excellent chance to sample a wide range of mild ales of different styles

If this wasn't enough, the Stockport Beer Festival at the beginning of June will be offering no less than 12 different milds from the likes of Taylors of Keighley, Harveys of Lewes, Goachers from Maidstone, Old Mill from Goole and McMullens from Hertford, to name but a few.

So, don't be bitter! Widen your horizons and go mild in May. You won't know what you're missing until you try it and, who knows, you might get hooked like my Grandad...

**STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL
AROUND 100 BEERS, CIDERS & PERRIES
JUNE 3 - 5, STOCKPORT TOWN HALL**

In MAY'S OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month	2	Rhythm & Booze	11
Editor's View	5	Stockport Festival	12
Letters	5	High Peak News	14
Stagger	6	Pub Games	15
George & Dragon	7	Manchester Matters .	17
Five Years Ago	8	CAMRA Calling	18
Pricey Hogshead	8	White Lion	19
Question	10	Pub News	20



PUB of the Month

May

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

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for May is the Greyhound on Bowden Street in Edgeley. Surrounded by blocks of flats, the Greyhound is essentially a locals pub which can easily be overlooked by a visitor to the area. Even if they found it, our visitor still might be put off by the unprepossessing 1960's exterior. However, it only takes a step through the doors to reveal what a fine traditional local this is.

For many years the pub was run by Eric and Nora Wright. They retired last year and were succeeded by Irene Morris who brought her lifetime's experience of the licensed trade to bear on the pub and set about trying to reverse the decline that had started to set in. Slowly but surely, the pub has come back to life and part and parcel of this have been major changes on the beer front. Out went the anonymous electric pumps and in came handpulls which serve not only the Boddies Mild and Bitter

of old but also Theakstons Bitter plus one, and sometimes two, reasonably priced guest beers - the latter proving particularly successful. The quality of the beer is high too, with Irene conditioning the Boddies for at least a week before it goes on sale with the result that it is like the sharp, hoppy pint that used to be commonplace in all Boddies pubs but which is now something of a rarity.

The award, then, is not only for Irene's commitment to quality real ales but also for her commitment to this fine traditional pub. The presentation will be on Thursday 27th May when an excellent night is guaranteed.

Irene and Staff welcome you to

The Greyhound

Bowden St., Edgeley

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
Theakstons Bitter
 guest beers changed weekly

A warm welcome guaranteed
CAMRA Pub of the Month May 1993

Kendlegate Wine Cellars Ltd.

164 Northgate Road, Edgeley. Tel: 477 3939

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Note: We operate under the Wholesale Licensing Regulations therefore minimum purchase is 24 bottles beer or 12 bottles wine/spirits, which can all be different.

Open: 8am - 5.30 pm Mon - Fri, 11 - 3pm Sat

CLOSED SUN. AND BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS

Teiophone orders accepted on a COD basis



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**STOCKPORT
BEER**

& CIDER FESTIVAL

3rd - 5th June 1993



STOCKPORT TOWN HALL 3 - 5 JUNE 1993

**NEARLY 100 BEERS
CIDERS & PERRIES**

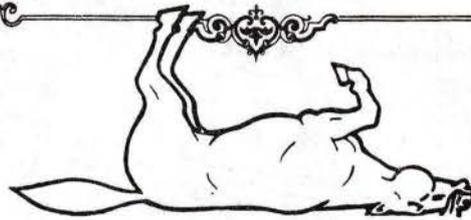
FOOD • LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

ADMISSION PRICE	DATE	OPENING HOURS	ENTERTAINMENT
£1.50	Thu 3 Jun	5 - 11pm	Stan Ellison Blues Band
FREE	Fri 4 Jun	11.30am - 3pm	Hartley & Hyde - Jazz Guitar
£2.50	Fri 4 Jun	5 - 11 pm	Rattle 'n Reel - Celtic Rock
50p	Sat 5 Jun	11.00 am - 4pm	Rob Gray's Little Big Band
£1.50	Sat 5 Jun	6 - 11pm	Champion Franny Eubanks & the Roach Band

INTRODUCING DOBBINS

DARK MILD	OG 1032
BEST BITTER	OG 1038
ESB	OG 1060
YAKIMA GRANDE	
PALE ALE	OG 1050
& PORTER	OG 1050
BIG HEAVY JIMMY	OG 1045
GINGER BEER	OG 1050
OLD SOPORIFIC	OG 1084

DOBBINS
GUILTLESS STOUT OG 1039



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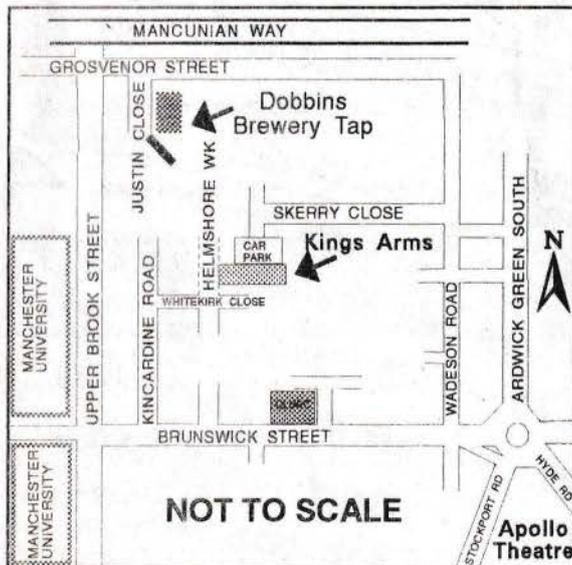
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FIND THE FIRST TIME!**

**LIVE MUSIC
LAST TUESDAY OF MONTH**

HOME OF DOBBINS FINE BEERS

*Best Bitter
Dark Mild
Extra Special Bitter
Yakima Grande Porter
Ginger Beer
Guiltless Stout*

Great Beers at Low Prices



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

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

This month our lead story highlights the delights of and the continuing threat to...mild. May has traditionally been the month in which we support mild and with this beer style disappearing at an ever faster rate, particularly from the pubs of the big brewers, we should all do our bit to save this important part of our brewing heritage. Not a particularly onerous task, as converts to the delights of mild drinking will tell you already - tasty, cheap and low in alcohol, all you could wish for in fact in these cost - and health-conscious times. The brewery marketing men won't tell you that, though - they are too concerned with pushing tasteless, expensive lagers. Join those in the know - try a pint of mild this month.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From George Drew

Dear Sir,

As an ex-employee of Groves & Whitnall Ltd (1953-54) - my first job - I was greatly interested in the comments about the various "C" ales in Pete Soane's article on the Openshaw Brewery.

I remember Groves & Whitnall's "C" Ale very well, it was a strong mild in bottle and, to a limited extent, on draught. Although the bottle label bore the words "naturally matured", it was clearly (pun intended) brewery conditioned.

I remember being informed by no less a person than Mr J. W. Peer-Groves himself that the "C" was from the initial letter of the surname of the brewer who devised the recipe - a Mr Cunningham. What bearing, if any, this could have had on other brews of a similar name we can only speculate, but I seem to recall Mr Groves telling me that he (Mr Cunningham) hailed from an old Lancashire brewing family.

All the best and continued good wishes to Opening Times. (Editor's Note - thanks for the info George. Do any of our readers recall Openshaw Brewery's "C" Ale?)

From : David Sheldon

There was a time when to go on a pub crawl meant a visit to a number of pubs on the same night, but times they are a changing. The new definition of a pub crawl is to start the evening at one end of the bar and to try and drink one's way all along to the other end, such is the choice with the growing number of ale houses.

This week saw the opening of the Hogs Head in Manchester to join outlets such as the Beer House, Marble Arch and Queens Arms. Stockport has recently gained the Crown Ale House and White Lion to accompany the Stanley Arms, Old Vic and Woolpack. On a number of occasions I have visited the Beer House or Kings Arms on Bloom Street, Salford with friends on a pub crawl, only to find that with so many good beers on offer what's the point in going to another pub?

As far as I am concerned the more such ale houses the better, but I wonder what will become of some of the pubs not offering such a choice?

From Peter Edwardson

Recently, the Stockport & South Manchester area has seen a flood of new pseudo free houses opening up, sporting an array of handpumps and a selection of exotic brews. Great news for the real ale drinker, you may say. But is it really? How long will these places last? What kind of quality standard will they set? Are they really what the drinking public wants?

There certainly is some demand for beer exhibition type pubs, and the Boddington PubCo have gauged that demand very well by converting the Crown on Heaton Lane, right in

The news that Greenalls have been fined a derisory \$1500 for their scandalous demolition of Tommy Ducks is a suitably inglorious end to this whole grisly tale. Many Opening Times readers, who I know have been outraged by Greenalls behaviour, will be appalled by the fact that they have got off virtually scot free. This glaring hole in planning law needs closing, and the sooner the better.

Finally, this month we welcome two new contributors to Opening Times. Firstly, Brian Carey has penned the second of his darts columns and these will be appearing every other month from now on. Appearing monthly will be the caustic comments of "Curmudgeon" who I feel sure will be bound to have many of you reaching for your pen and paper before long - all letters received will be printed!

PLEASE NOTE COPY DATE FOR JUNE ISSUE - THURSDAY 20 MAY

Stockport Town Centre, into an "Ale House". This is by far the best of the recent crop. Whether Whitbread have been as wise in converting a suburban pub such as the Chapel House into a "Tut & Shive" is more doubtful. Will it just prove to be a marketing men's gimmick, to be swept away when the next refurb becomes due? And what a disgusting mess they've made of it too!

There is no escaping the fact that, the more real beers you sell, the harder it is to keep them all in good condition. The true test of good cellarmanship is not whether you can serve a good pint on Friday night, but whether it's still as good on Tuesday lunchtime. In some of these pubs, quality will inevitably be sacrificed for quantity, and their reputation will suffer.

It's also questionable just how many customers really want a range of exotic beers. Some do, but the majority of drinkers don't want to experiment, they're interested in a convivial atmosphere and beer of consistent quality at a fair price. That's why Holts pubs are always packed.

CAMRA must be careful not to give the impression that a pub with less than ten handpumps isn't worth visiting. The best pubs in the area, serving the most consistently good beer, always have been, and always will be, independent brewery locals tied to the likes of Robinsons, Holts and Hydes. The enduring quality of these pubs should not be overlooked in "Opening Times". I confidently expect that pubs such as the Blossoms and the Griffin will still be thriving when the "Tut & Shive" at the Chapel House is but a distant memory.

From Richard Hough

With regard to last month's article on 'Kids in Pubs', this certainly is a subject that arouses a lot of feeling whenever it is discussed. In response to the plans outlined by the Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, I see no reason why children should not be allowed in pubs until 8 o'clock if accompanied by an adult. It is important to educate children on aspects of alcohol - how to enjoy it, and the dangers of alcohol abuse, so that when they are old enough they can appreciate it rather than (mis)use it simply to get drunk.

Public houses should be just that: places for the public, and that includes children. And as television's Nick Ross observes in 'The Best Pubs for Families', children at their very worst are not nearly as bad as drunken lager louts. Furthermore, my experience of children misbehaving in pubs is extremely rare.

I disagree, however, with Kenneth Clarke's proposals for continental-style cafe bars. The very essence of the characterful British pub is under threat; just as cafe bars are part of the flavour of France, Belgium and other countries, the public house is distinctively British and must be preserved. What is really needed is a change in attitudes rather than a change in the places in which we drink.

STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Our March Stagger took us around a selection of pubs in Stockport town centre, avoiding the Market Place area to try a few which are maybe overlooked at times. This showed that, even without visiting the well-known honeypots, there is an excellent choice both of beer and of styles of pub to be found in the town centre. As always, the opinions expressed are purely those of a group of CAMRA members on one particular night - why not try the pubs for yourself to see if you agree?

We started off at the **Crown** on Heaton Lane, a famous Stockport landmark recently converted by the Boddington PubCo into an "Ale House" along the lines of the Kings Arms in Salford. This must be about the best of the recent batch of free house conversions, with a welcoming atmosphere and an enterprising range of well-kept beers, and has rapidly established itself as a favourite amongst local beer drinkers. We tried four beers of the nine or so available - Potters Pride, Exmoor Gold, Buckley's Reverend James and the brand-new Freeminer Speculation, all of which varied from good to excellent. My one quibble is the uncomfortable sticky plastic upholstery which the PubCo have chosen to use. This has now quite rightly become a thing of the past in cars, why not in pubs too?

We moved on up Heaton Lane to the **Pineapple**, a small Robinsons pub in the mould of the traditional local. Although altered over the years it retains a multi-roomed feel and is a comfortable place in which to drink, even if the fake beams and rough whitewash aren't quite the height of fashion in interior decor. The Best Mild was good, but opinions were more divided over the Best Bitter.

If the Pineapple was homely, the decor in the next pub, the Boddington PubCo's **George**, was totally over the top, a riot of wallpaper of different and clashing designs which adds up to an aesthetic gross-out. At least the giant stuffed fish suspended from the ceiling has now disappeared! Ten years ago this was a wonderful 1930's pub with magnificent wood panelling, but now the interior has been totally gutted and it is a design disaster, so much so that it won CAMRA's "Pub Vandalism Award" in 1992. It is obviously a favourite meeting place for the would-be fashionable young, and the average age of the customers seemed to be about eighteen and a quarter. Two



real ales were available, Boddingtons Bitter, which was below average, and a guest beer, Eldridge Pope Thomas Hardy from Dorchester, which was pretty good.

The next pub, Robinsons **Manchester Arms** on the A6, brought us back down to earth. Recently cleaned up outside, it remains as basic and lively as ever inside, populated by the usual mix of postmen, bikers and other assorted characters. The Best Mild and Best Bitter were both very good.

Around the corner is the **Little Jack Horner** on Wellington Street, a new acquisition by Vaux which has retained the right to sell guest beers, on this visit Batemans XXXB, which was very good. The misspelt guest beer list ("Batmans" etc.) caused much amusement. The other beers available, all from the Vaux stable, were Wards Bitter, also very good, Samson, not quite as good but still above average, and Double Maxim which was not tried. The pub itself is small, cosy and welcoming, with a sequence of interesting spaces on two levels.



LITTLE JACK HORNER

28 LORD STREET, STOCKPORT



VAUX SAMSON,
VAUX DOUBLE MAXIM,
WARDS BITTER

CONTINUOUS RANGE OF GUEST BEERS
HOME-COOKED FOOD
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BAR SNACKS AVAILABLE EVERY DAY
TO 10PM

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Hydes
Anvil Ales

Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

We now doubled back to the **Unity** on the A6, a small Robinsons pub which has been converted to one room in typical brewery style, but even so is still a pleasant and comfortable place to drink. During the day this is another pub well-used by postmen; at night it is obviously benefiting from the new Grand Central complex across the road, and on this Friday was packed, the busiest pub of the night. The Best Bitter was well above average, the Best Mild a little better still.

Heading towards the Market Place past the Imperial, closed on this occasion, although hopefully not permanently, we reached the **Stockport Arms** on St Petersgate. This has one of Stockport's nicer modern pub interiors, with an interesting mix of spaces, including a vault area, around a central bar. Unfortunately the beer choice - nothing but Greenalls Bitter - did not do it justice, even though this was fairly good. It also gets a black mark for deceiving the public by selling keg Scrumpy Jack cider on a fake handpump.

Most of us were driven out of the regrettably named **Porky Pig's Pie Shop** by a solid wall of disco music, but the few brave (or deaf) souls who ventured inside reported average Websters Bitter and a distinct reluctance to serve Wilsons. One even had a pork pie! While there were bouncers on the door, it is worth noting that a sensible policy was being applied and people were not being excluded purely because of the clothes they were wearing.

We zigzagged back to Mersey Square and the **Chestergate Tavern**, another pub with a reputation for live music and appealing to young people, but on this occasion surprisingly quiet. The choice of real ales was hardly inspiring - Wilsons Bitter, which was about average, and Websters Bitter which was in reasonable condition, but as usual something of a flavour-free zone. The friendly and good-humoured service was worth noting.

Next came the **Swan with Two Necks**, a small Robinsons pub on the pedestrianised part of Princes Street. This has what is arguably central Stockport's third best pub interior (after the Queens Head and the Arden Arms), largely unspoilt since the 1920's, with extensive light oak panelling and a superb skylit snug at the back. We found the Best Bitter good, the Best Mild a little better still.

Our penultimate call was the **Tiviot** on Tiviot Dale, similar to the Pineapple in that it has been altered over the years with the removal of a few walls, but retains a multi-roomed feel. It's a friendly pub with a reputation for consistently good beer, which perhaps tends to be undeservedly overshadowed by other town centre pubs. The Best Bitter was pretty good, about on a par with that in the Swan, while the Best Mild was very good indeed. It seemed to be the case in all the Robinsons pubs visited on this night that the Best Mild was the better of the two beers.

We ended up at the **Hole i' th' Wall** on Bridge Street Brow, recently acquired by Vaux, who have changed the name from the Castlewood to what the locals have always called it anyway. It has two bars on different levels, the upper one mainly used for food at lunchtimes, and only the lower one being open at night. As with all the other local pubs bought from Grand Met by Vaux, the beer range has shown a distinct improvement, and the new owners seem much more committed to maintaining the pub's character. The real beers available were Darleys Mild, Vaux Bitter and Vaux Samson, all of which were fairly good.

As is always the case with Staggers, this article represents what a single group of drinkers found on a single night. It is a snap-shot only, and should in no way be considered a definitive statement of general beer quality.

George & Dragon



As last Months O.T. went to press the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel re-opened after a major refurbishment of the best room. (The vault was done out last autumn, and remained open during the latest alterations),

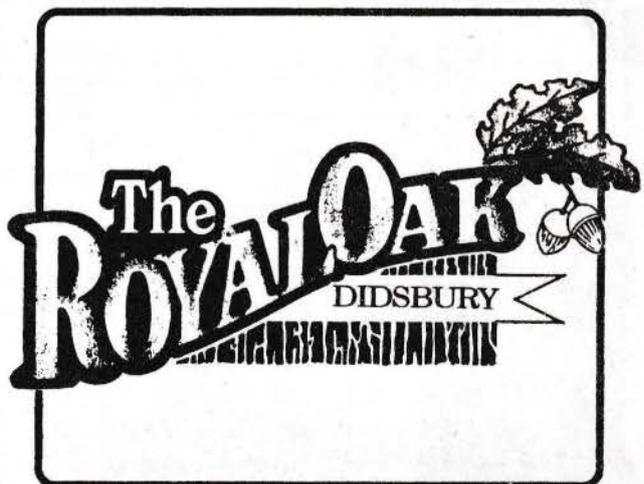
The new look George & Dragon has a lot to recommend it, and whilst there are obvious trademarks of BodPubCo architects, they are not over the top.

The bar area and its shelving have been enlarged with lots of dark wood in evidence. The main room is now split-level with cast iron railings and new furnishings. A new and very welcome feature is a large No Smoking room. Landlord Dave Richardson explains that this is a commitment to the smoke free room, and not just the token gesture which a smaller room would have been. This no smoking room is also split level. As in the main room, pinks and blues are in evidence in the subdued and reasonably tasteful new furnishings. There is also a Victorian style tiled fireplace.

Also retained is the small TV room which serves as the trophy room for a local football club.

At re-opening beers available were Boddingtons Mild £1.17, Bitter £1.24, Marstons Pedigree £1.40 and Banks & Taylor SOD £1.45. The first three are seen as fixtures, the B&T SOD as part of a changing programme of guest beers. Dave Richardson plans a beer festival for sometime during the summer. Home made pub food is available Mon-Fri lunch.

All in all a decent refurbishment which restored faith in pub architects, and seems to be welcomed by regulars and visitors alike.



5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MAY '88

WE'RE SORRY said the front page headline. The Second Stockport Beer Festival had to close down on Friday lunchtime - the police called to make a routine check and discovered that the licence was restaurant only. So not only had the previous year's festival been "illegal", but the college authorities has been running a Staff Association bar on the same basis. It was apologies all round, particularly to pubs and groups that had organised coach trips to the Festival. Thanks were due to the establishments that had taken some of the unsold beer, in particular Ye Olde Vic, the Beerhouse and the Bottle Stop.

There was a paragraph headed Time for Change - the progress of the licensing reform bill was being monitored as it made its way through Parliament. The House of Lords made two amendments, accepted by the Government.

1. Licensed supermarkets can start selling alcohol at 8 am (it was previously 8.30).

2. Sunday afternoon opening extended to 3 pm - this came as something of a surprise, but it still depends on how the House of Commons votes.

There was a spate of buying and selling pubs - 50 Websters/Wilsons had in effect been put out to the highest bidder. They had been bought by Heron International, in conjunction with Control Securities - but 17 of the pubs in and around the Greater Manchester area had been sold on to Wolverhampton based Banks's. The poor licensees didn't know what was happening.

The Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport re-opened after refurbishment with an extended beer range - Higsons having joined the Boddies products, with possibly Oldham bitter if all goes well. (Compare that increased beer range with what has happened after the very recent refurbishment - about a dozen beers are now on offer, many from the new micro-breweries, and coming from situations as diverse as Orkney, Isle of Man, and the South of England).

Still on refurbishments - there were comments on the refurbishment policy of Pennine Hosts (the managed arm of Websters/Wilsons) in particular the "Open Hose" themes, which were described as "rather garish, and now looking more than a little worn" Although Hosts were reluctant to admit it, CAMRA

was talking commercial sense when it said that the success of such pubs would be short lived, and that the well refurbished traditional pub would turn out to be a far better investment.

Boddingtons, described as Manchester's self-styled favourite brewery, unveiled their profits for 1987 - the City of London analysts thought that the figures were a great disappointment, showing little change on the previous year's figures.

Finally, there was news of another local brewery, Robinsons, gearing up for their 150th anniversary celebrations, with the introduction of a range of sports and leisure wear, all carrying the anniversary logo. Full details were given in leaflets available at most of their pubs.

Pricey Hogshead

Following considerable activity by Whitbread in developing specialist ale houses, their highest profile project yet opened in Central Manchester on April 20th.

Situated in the former Bensons on High Street, the Hogshead Ale House has been thoroughly refurbished in a bare-boards style rather reminiscent of the Wilsons "Ale Houses" of the mid-80s - it's their second pub locally (after the former Unicorn, Altrincham) to bear the Hogshead branding, though several in the London area are already so designated. Eight handpumped beers are backed up by four more on gravity in a "chilled store" as at Hazel Grove's George & Dragon - while this dispense method coped admirably on a chilly April evening, it remains to be seen how the beer will turn out on a sweaty Friday night in July. On opening night, nearly half the beers were from Whitbread, with most of the rest coming from Banks & Taylor of Shefford and Coach House of Warrington, though a free-range Old Speckled Hen from Morland of Abingdon also found its way in. Prices are unsurprisingly ferocious, with Coach House Post Horn (5.2%ABV) at £1.80 - a cool 30p more than the Marble Arch charges for this beer. Six days later, the pub was down to three beers - all in the on bar cooler, and all from Coach House - and a little on the warm side. Due to 'demand' all the others were off - though there were apparently more beers settling in the cellar. In common with a number of its 'Cask Ale House' cousins, there were chalkboards about the beers with no prices on them. If strong but unexceptional beers are £1.80 (indeed the staff seemed to want to charge £1.80 for ALL guest beers, of whatever strength, that day) then the only real difference between the London orientated Hogshead chain and the 'Cask Ale House' is that whilst the latter is a tad expensive, the former has brought ridiculous London prices to Manchester.

The Red Lion WILMSLOW RD WITHINGTON

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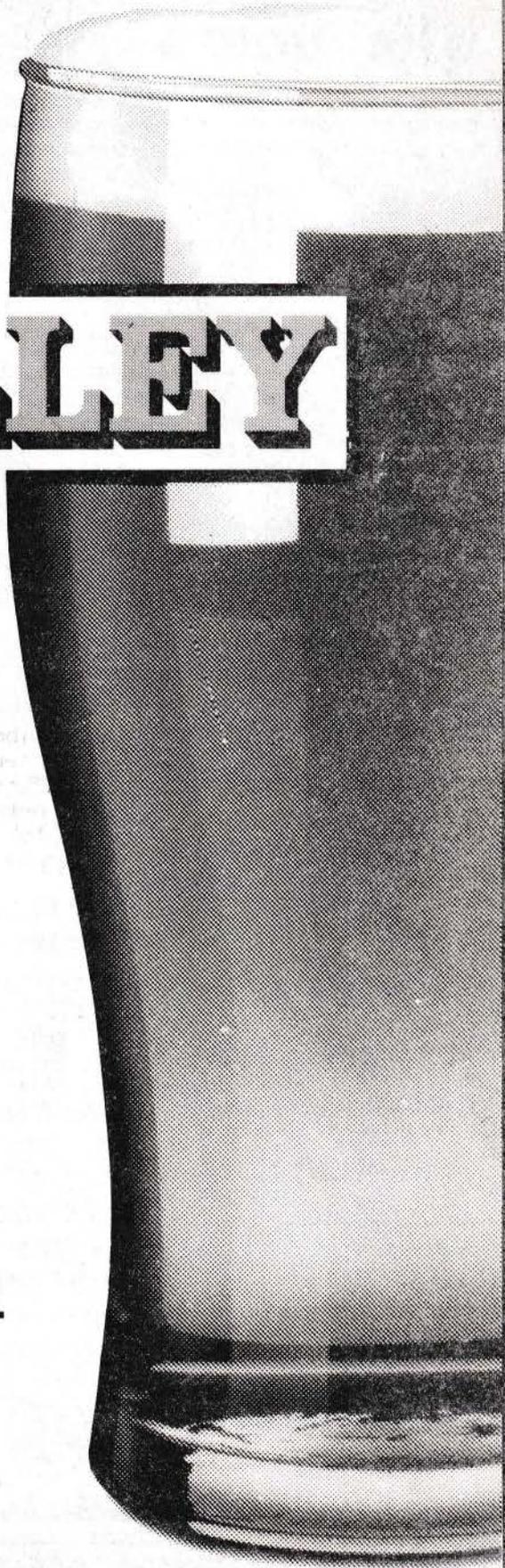
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Questions in The House



People are still talking about Greenall's shameful act of demolishing the famous Tommy Ducks in February. Manchester MP Alf Morris questioned Environment Minister Tom Baldry about demolition controls. The Government's reply was that control of demolition is meant to be selective and that buildings like Tommy Ducks fall through the cracks (with the aid of a one ton ball and chain). Something wrong there.

In a parallel move a group of six local labour MPs attempted to introduce an early day motion about the demolition of Tommy Ducks Public House:

"That this house notes with great concern that Greenalls Group plc, acting like philistines, have demolished Manchester's famous public house Tommy Duck's, thus depriving the city of a part of its heritage and achieving what Adolf Hitler's Luftwaffe failed to do during the wartime blitz on Manchester; condemns the off-handed decision to demolish the pub during the night and without adequate consultation with Manchester City Council's Planning Department; and requests the Secretary of State for the Environment to take all necessary steps to rectify the ambiguity in the planning powers of local authorities to enable them to bring to task vandals like the Greenall Group plc."

Greenalls have also been taken to task about the more recent demolition of the 200 year old Red Lion in Hazel Grove. They are obviously after winning the 20th Century, Northern Hemisphere Pub Vandalism Award.



Manchester's listings magazine **City Life** have followed Opening Times in suggesting a boycott of Greenalls pubs. As they point out, over 40 years at about £4000 per drinker in lost revenue, it should cost them millions.

Although attention is correctly focused on Greenall's pub destruction tendencies, in fact in the past they have been better known for destroying small breweries all over the North of England and the Midlands: Groves & Whitnall, Magee Marshall, John Sumner, Simpkins, Wem, Davenport, Shipstones. This is equivalent to losing Manchester's four remaining independent breweries (Holts, Hydes, Lees, Robinsons) twice over! This "Greenalls Tour of Destruction" lament can be displayed on your person by wearing a CAMRA produced T shirt also featuring Tommy Ducks that was. The T shirts come in three sizes, various colours and can be purchased at CAMRA beer festivals or from Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, £4.95 each.

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RHYTHM and BOOZE



By Richard Hough

On the 14th April I found myself in the middle of Stockport, when I noticed a poster for local lads Smokey Hand, live at the George on the A6 that very night. I ventured in with some trepidation and immediately my worst fears were confirmed. The guest beer was off and the bar staff informed me that the band had phoned to say one of them was ill. I decided to stay for a token pint of Boddingtons Bitter, which was merely average, and endure the loud juke-box and awful Victoriana decor. No sooner had I sampled the beer than in trooped the band, (almost) fully fit and ready to go. Things were looking up! After a quick furniture shuffle to accommodate the equipment, we were off. And just to make my day, Mansfield Brewery's Old Baily appeared which, in common with recent guest beers at the George, was very good.

Smokey Hand are a four-piece consisting of bass guitar, drums, lead guitar and vocals, who deliver a raw sound in the finest rock 'n' roll tradition. With a twelve song set that included covers of Elvis' "Guitar Man", the inevitable "Paint it Black" and a blistering version of the Who's "My Generation", alongside many of their self-penned numbers (including the ever-popular "Hairy Fish" and bluesy "Gold Digger"), the whole pub was rocking by the end of the night. Despite it not being the best live music venue in Stockport, the band made the best of the mediocre acoustics, and although it was not a classic performance it was a good taste of what they can achieve. In terms of selling themselves the band are less concerned with their appearance than their music (a refreshing state of affairs in this age of image-conscious fashion victims) and therefore tend to combine well musically on stage.

If you want to catch Smokey Hand live (and they come highly recommended) they play frequently in the Stockport area on the pub circuit and I for one shall be there next time. Who says rock 'n' roll's dead?

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All members are invited to participate in our packed line-up of socials - at least two events per week: Brewery visits (with plenty of sampling time); Curry Crawls; minibus trips inside and outside the Manchester area; Staggers and Pubs of the Month are all forthcoming events. So why not become a member of the most successful consumer pressure group in Europe. There has never been a better time to join -

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Preparations for the Stockport Festival are well under way. There will be at least three (and probably four) ales unique to the festival. As usual there will be a mixture of Milds, Stouts & Porters, Bitters, Premium Bitters and a few very Strong Ales. We are well known for our range of traditional ciders - and as usual we will be featuring the widest range of perries available in the North of England. There will be live entertainment on each evening of the festival, and we are holding entry, souvenir glass and beer prices to last years levels. No Budget increases here!

The Festival takes place from the evening of Thursday 3rd June to Saturday 5th, open lunchtime on Friday and Saturday, and each evening. There is live entertainment at each session - see the advert on page 3 for details.

Among the beers that will be featured this year will be Lees Moonraker, Owd Abusive, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Topsy Turvey; Old Slug, Dragon Head, Edwin Taylor's, Ryburn, Dent and Shropshire Stouts, at least seven porters, twenty three premium bitters, twenty five or so bitters, and an extensive range of milds to include Taylors, Moorhouses, Harveys, Old Mill, Shefford, Hanby and Maclays and quite enough strong ales! All in all there should be something for even the most discerning tastes, and a few beers, that are new to Stockport (and haven't even made it to the Stanley Arms!!!)

Why not take the opportunity to join CAMRA now - and get into the Festival Free of Charge! Additionally, you could take advantage of free admission (for members) to other local CAMRA festivals such as the two other local-ish CAMRA festivals of note will follow in May - the first Winsford Heart of England festival, 6-7 May at the Civic Hall. (£3.50 entrance by ticket from Mark Enderby on 0925 602809), and the first Frodsham Beer Festival 28/9 May at Frodsham Community Centre (Fluin Lane, Frodsham) with a promised 25 new (less than one year old) breweries featured out of over 40 beers. This is five minutes walk from Frodsham Station. A 'spotters' delight! Entrance by advance ticket only (£2.50 - £1 discount on door to CAMRA members) from Matt Rowland (0928 33361) or selected Real Ale pubs in Manchester.



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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



Bass Go Real ▲

Opening Times has been pretty scathing about the commitment shown by Bass to real ale in their local pubs, i.e. none whatsoever. However, all that could be starting to change.

Following our last broadside, we had a phone call from local area manager Mike Rowlands who told us that as far as his area (roughly South Manchester, East Manchester and Tameside) was concerned, all the managed houses bar two - the Clarence, Rusholme and the Four in Hand, Hattersley, are now selling cask ale, mainly in the form of Worthington Bitter.

This welcome development has seen real ale return to the Birch Villa in Rusholme, after a short-lived experiment last year, and go into pubs like the Midland in Gorton which have been keg for years. We have already reported the re-introduction of real ale into the Bulls Head and Reddish Vale in North Reddish and Mike tells us that sales are going well in both pubs.

It's not all good news, though. Some of the leasehold pubs in Mike's area such as the Lord Lyon and Huntsman in Rusholme remain resolutely keg, as indeed do many of the pubs under

the control of his 'oppo' who covers Stockport. One Stockport Bass outlet which is going for real ale in a big way, though, is "Bramhalls" in Bramhall village. We reported in our March Stagger that the pub sold three real ales in the form of Worthington Bitter, Stones Bitter and Bass. These have now been joined by a rotating guest beer under Bass Taverns North West "Cask Beer Initiative". This kicked off on 1st April with Youngs Special which, licensee Simon Eason-Brookes tells us, was a roaring success and quickly sold out. Guest beers for May include Brew XI from M&B in Birmingham, Youngs Bitter, Cains Bitter and Fullers London Pride. Other local pubs in the scheme include the George & Dragon in Wilmslow and the Unicorn in the City Centre.

These are certainly welcome developments by Bass and we will continue to press for the availability of real ale to be both consolidated and extended in their local tied estate.

In closing, readers may also recall that in our March Stagger we also mentioned the price of a soft drink in Bramhalls, with our driver being charged £1.28 for the orange squash - Simon tells us that this was due to an error on the computerised till and the correct price is 74p!



One of the saddest items in the news recently was the case of Jeffrey Sullivan, the railway guard and magistrate who lost his job and his position on the bench because he had drunk three pints of beer before starting his turn of duty and was therefore over the "legal limit" for driving.

There is no dispute that the British Rail regulations do state that for any member of staff to be over this limit constitutes gross misconduct and just cause for dismissal. However, Mr Sullivan was not driving a train and there was no suggestion that he was incapable of performing his duties. In the circumstances his fate, although correct by the book, seems harsh.

It is more worrying that this regulation applies to any member of British Rail staff, whether or not they are responsible for the safety of the public, even the tea-maker or the toilet cleaner. It is one thing to set a limit (which is a very small amount of alcohol indeed) for an activity such as driving which requires concentration and is potentially dangerous. It is another entirely to imply that anyone over this very low limit is incapable of any form of rational action. Yet this view seems to be spreading through society with disturbing speed. Will more and more employers start breath-testing their workers?

One wonders what this country's fate would have been in the Second World War if Winston Churchill had been made to take a breath test before his turns of duty.

Copperfields

Hidden away on Adswold Road West, Cale Green, almost opposite the Adswold Hotel, you may be surprised to come across Copperfield's, a real ale bar and restaurant attached to the rear of the Southlands Hotel. Open since December, this little known place is growing in popularity all the time. Being the public bar of a hotel, the interior is predictably smart, the large single room is well lit but lacks any real character.

The service is smart, efficient and friendly, but the main reason for visiting Copperfield's is the outstanding value. The five real ales on offer include Wilsons Original Mild at 99pence, John Smiths Bitter, also at a bargain 99pence and three beers retailing at an unbelievable £1.10 a pint: John Smiths Magnet, Ruddles Best Bitter and Marstons Pedigree. Three of these were tried; while the mild was described as being bland and uninspiring (predictably, perhaps), the Magnet and Pedigree were perfectly OK.

Don't just visit Copperfields for the good value beers though. The restaurant has a growing reputation for quality food at astonishing value: soup of the day, roll and butter, 60pence; homebaked lasagne £1.80; 8oz sirloin steak £3.50 and 12oz T-Bone steak an excellent £4.60. In addition there are live acts on Saturdays and the place also contains a splendid Wurlitzer juke-box which is never too loud.

All in all, Copperfields is a welcome addition to the local drinking scene.

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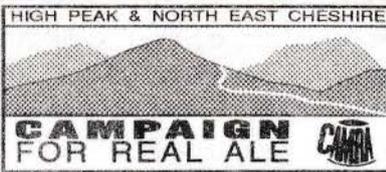
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BED & BREAKFAST



...Pub Ne
b News...
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Following last month's lead article on Stalybridge Station Buffet, it is good to report that the Buffet remains open for the time being. A meeting between licensee Ken Redfern and representatives from Thwaites and British Rail saw some modest progress. BR have now released the lease which, we are told, Thwaites are looking at. If all goes well this could be the salvation of this almost legendary drinking establishment. More news when we have it.

Over in Dove Holes, the **Railway Inn**, the nearest Kimberley pub to Stockport, is now closed. Apparently trade had dropped to the level where the brewery simply had to close it down.

One or two Tameside pubs are taking part in Bass's Cask Ale Promotion. This sees a weekly guest beer on offer in addition to the regular Bass range. Those taking part include the **Apethorn** and the **Jolly Carter** in Hyde, **The Peaks** in Ashton and, just over the border in Derbyshire, the **Howard Arms** in Glossop.

Two Vaux acquisitions in Disley have also come to light with the Sunderland brewers taking on both the **Albert Hotel** and the **Ploughboy**.

Robby's Ordinary

Not so many Robinsons drinkers know that the brewery produces two bitters - the widely available **Best Bitter** and the more elusive 'Ordinary' Bitter. The latter is a drink well worth seeking out, and makes for a cheaper and lower-strength (3.5%ABV) alternative to **Robbies Best**. For those who drink at mid-day it's an ideal lunchtime pint.

The beer is available to any Robinson tenant although not many of them choose to stock it. Those outlets in and around the Opening Times circulation area include:

The Dog & Partridge, Denton; Friendship, Romiley; New Inn, Chapel-en-le-Frith; Three Crowns, Hurdfield; Sportmans Rest, Bredbury; Castle, Oldham St, Manchester; New Inn, Dukinfield; Queens, Cheadle; Three Legs of Man, Salford.

Chapel-en-le-Frith must be unique, as another pub in the town, the **Old Packhorse**, sells the even rarer Robinsons **Dark Best Mild**, the only other outlet being the **Red Lion** at Lower Withington, Cheshire.

Beer Festivals

Two CAMRA festivals of note will follow in May - the first Winsford Heart of England festival, 6-7 May at the Civic Hall. (£3.50 entrance by ticket from Mark Enderby on 0925 602809), and the first Frodsham Beer Festival 28/9 May at Frodsham Community Centre (Fluin Lane, Frodsham) with a promised 25 new (less than one year old) breweries featured out of over 40 beers. This is five minutes walk from Frodsham Station. A 'spotters' delight! Entrance by advance ticket only (£2.50 - £1 discount on door to CAMRA members) from Matt Rowland (0928 33361) or selected Real Ale pubs in Manchester.



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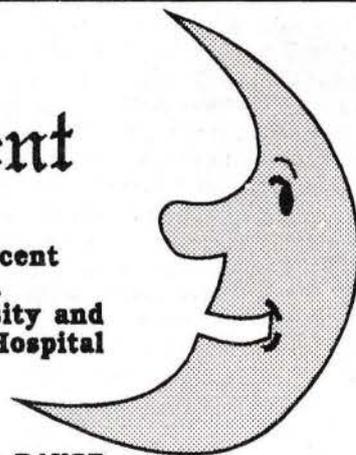


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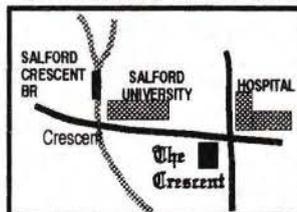


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PUB GAMES

BY TOM LORD



Games have for many years been part and parcel of everyday pub activity. Some games such as darts, dominoes and cards have stood the test of time and newer games such as pool have made an impact in recent years.

Sorry, but the writer does not consider fruit machines et al. pub games. Human v human is a pub game; human v computerised machine is not. It is a pastime. Pub games are often serious business, where a game of crib, for instance, can be treated as a matter of honour!

Many pub goers are familiar with the more widely known variants of cards, such as cribbage; darts and round the board and dominoes played as fives and threes. These and other common games can be found being played across the whole of the U.K.

Many games are regional. Perhaps the best example is nine pin skittles, common in the West Country. How I long for a pub round here which has a proper skittle alley. Even 'bar billiards' and 'devil-among-the tailors' can be hard to find in pubs in the North West but are common in other areas. It is difficult to say that there is a pub game specific to the North West which cannot be found in other areas of the country, except perhaps the log-end dartboard.

Games are often played on a more parochial than regional basis; the basic rules of a game can even differ from pub to pub! let alone from town to town. Who would hazard a bet that cribbage and certain domino games in Bolton are played in exactly the same way as in Stockport!

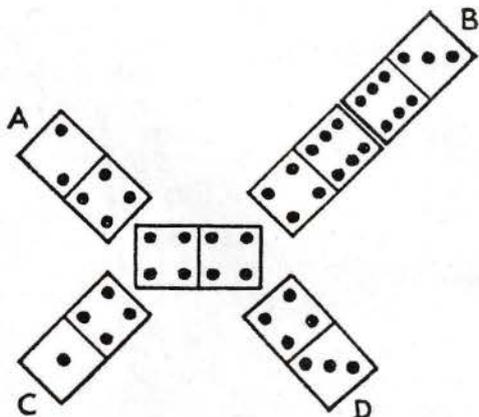
Some pub games are fading or have died altogether. When was the last time you saw a 'shove=halfpenny' board or a 'rings board' on the pub wall.

The object of this series of articles is to introduce you to some lesser known pub games and invite you to give them a try. You never know, you might enjoy them, and they make a refreshing change from the usual diet of better known pub games.

Here is a domino game to start off with. Each following month we will feature two lesser known, or almost dead pub games. Nothing strenuous; and who knows you may, by playing them, help to save an old and traditional pub game from extinction.

'SLOSH'

Slosh



Thought to have originated in the Glossop area, can also be known as 'Ends'.

The game uses a standard double six set of dominoes, and is played by four people (as individuals not pairs) on a cross layout as in the diagram shown.

Each player plays on his/her diagonal line only. Six dominoes are drawn by each player and four are left sleeping.

Double four starts the first game - double five the second game - double six the third - double blank the fourth etc.

If the required double is not drawn (i.e. it is sleeping) the dominoes are re-distributed until a player does draw the required double for that game. The game is played in a normal left-wise direction.

If a player cannot go on his/her line then the next player to the left can also go on, not only their own line, but also on the blocked players line, thus getting rid of two dominoes. If the second player is also blocked, then the third player may get rid of three dominoes, and a lucky fourth player might even clear four at one go.

The winner is the first player to clear all his/her dominoes.

Next month:- the games are 'Blind Hughie' and 'Rings'.

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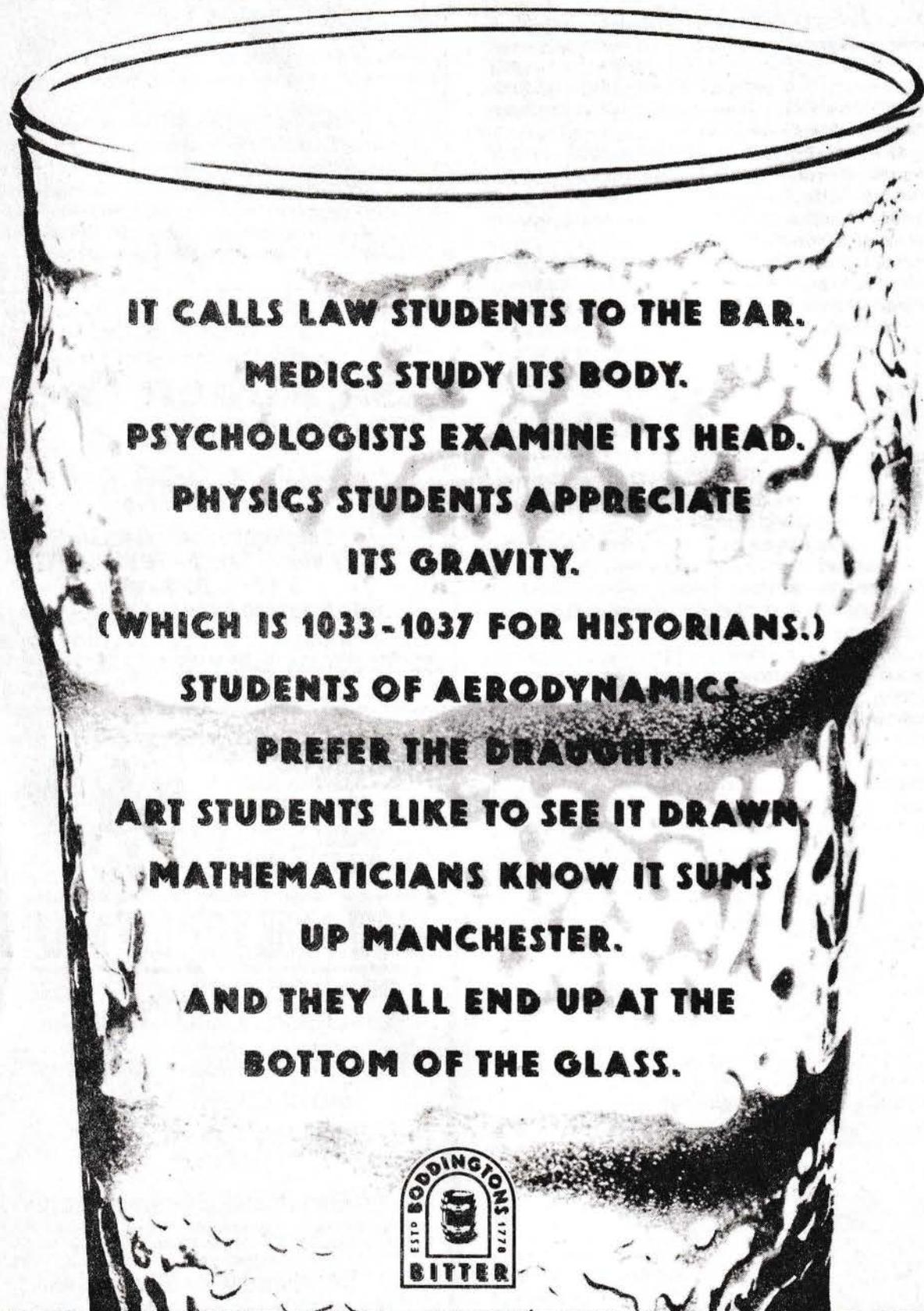
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BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.



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Boddingtons Draught Bitter. Brewed at the Strangeways Brewery since 1778.



MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

Two of this month's real ale gains are situated at transport gateways to the city. At the Airport's newly opened Terminal 2, Busby's Bar has Tetley Bitter and Bass on handpump, while at Piccadilly Station the Travellers Fare buffet-bar which has sold the wrong sort of beer probably ever since the station was remodelled in the sixties has now emerged as Bonaparte's. Still run by Travellers Fare, the ambience is now that of a carpeted bar rather than the former somewhat downmarket snack bar; it opens up at 7 am for breakfast, pub meals are available at lunchtime, while in the evening it functions purely as a pub. Handpumped beers are Websters Bitter, Bass, and Robinsons Best Bitter - prices are over the top though, with Robinsons at a hefty £1.55. While both these developments are welcome, something more enterprising would not have been out of place at either location - when will we see the first Tap and Spike at a high-profile Manchester location?

There's another new outlet for Robinsons Best Bitter in the Centre at the Castlefield Hotel on Liverpool Road, where it takes over the handpump previously used for Marstons Pedigree. It's not cheap here either, but £1.40 is probably just about acceptable for a hotel bar.

Out of town, the Falcon on Kincardine Road in Chorlton-on-Medlock reopened on April 5th, with Banks Mild and Bitter on electric pump, while Bass have installed handpumped Worthington Best Bitter at two previously keg-only pubs - the Midland at the corner of Hyde Road and Kirkmanshulme Lane in Gorton (Belle Vue), and the Birch Villa at the corner of Wilmslow Road and Dickenson Road in Rusholme. (At the Birch, there's also a keg font for Worthington, but the real stuff appears to be served to customers who don't specify).

In a month of real ale gains, one sad loss - the Dutton in the City Centre (behind Strangeways) no longer sells mild. This means that the rare Hydes Dark Mild is now unavailable in Manchester and survives only - presumably - in Hyde's handful of pubs in the hinterland of Wrexham.

Two Cheers For Terminal Two

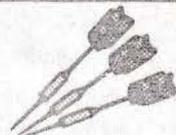


The newly opened Terminal Two at the Airport offers a welcoming sight for weary travellers, Busbys Real Ale Bar. After the impressive looking entrance - large sign announcing real ale and three barrels hanging over the door, what a disappointment to find only Tetley Bitter and Draught Bass available.

The location is also unlikely to encourage beer enthusiasts either. Busbys is hidden in a corner of the Arrivals Hall, at probably the least used part of the Terminal, although manager John Cunningham tells us that turnover has been good since opening night and over 70% of sales have been of cask beer.

Still, at least it is a start. So when can we expect to see a decent variety of beer in both Terminals 1 and 2, in usable positions for people travelling from the Airport - not just for those waiting friends arriving, Manchester Airport? After all, Heathrow has a Tap & Spile Free House in one of its terminals.

Fistfull of Arrows



Next time you decide to enjoy a quick game of darts in your favourite local watering hole, watch out! You could be breaking the EEC laws.

Yes, it's true. The powers-that-be who earn their corn by dishing out legislation on all kinds of topics of which they know little, are ready to tamper with that most traditional of pub sports.

Apparently, some big-wig in Brussels or Strasbourg, has decided that the game of darts should be classified as "unsafe in a public place". They believe that the standard dart, especially in the hands of someone who has partaken of alcoholic refreshment, is a dangerous weapon. Consequently, darts should be regarded as a "dangerous sport" and become liable to extra supervision.

I don't know about you, but I don't remember hearing about anyone suffering injury on the oche. Perhaps after a heavy defeat some misguided loser has planted one on his opponent, but I don't recall such an event. Perhaps some elderly player, of a standard similar to my own, has died of old age whilst trying to hit Double One to finish, but that's about it.

True, Eric Bristow reportedly suffered from an ailment known as "darteritis". But, to the best of my knowledge this is psychological. It was reported, not without some hilarity, in the tabloid press, but was quite a disturbing affliction for the player himself.

Bristow was unable to successfully "time" his release of the dart. Being a professional, it must have cost the man several thousands of pounds in prize money and he has never really performed to the standards he set in the eighties.

But this hardly compares to punch drunk ex-boxers or racing drivers who suffer lifelong scarring.

I suppose, in the wrong hands a dart could be used as a dangerous weapon, but so can a cricket bat or a croquet stick. That, though, is something of a red-herring.

Even the least expert darter can usually manage to at least hit the board, even if the treble twenty might remain an elusive target. I can hardly see that the casual drinker enjoying his pint in the corner of the bar is in danger of a stray arrow. True, there is often a bounce-out, but this generally falls along the line of the throw. In any case modern boards are designed to eliminate this rare occurrence.

If the worst came to the worst, there is always the soft tip dart, of course. This has recently been introduced, but requires a special board which has small holes to accommodate the projectile. Indeed, the British champion, Darryl Fitton is a local lad. But even Darryl would admit that the soft tip lacks a little something. It's rather like comparing keg beer to real ale.

Of course, like much that comes out of the EEC, it could all come to nothing. But, ominously, the British Sports and Allied Industries Federation, which looks after the interests of darts equipment Manufacturers, sees fit to monitor the situation.

We must wait and see.

Brian Carey

STOCKPORT FESTIVAL T-SHIRTS

Stay ahead of the Game! You can be seen wearing the T-shirt of Stockport Festival BEFORE it happens! Available in Kelly Green (M,L), Yellow (L,XL), Navy Blue (M, L, XL), Blue (L,XL) & Black (L,XL) for £4.95, they can be obtained by sending a cheque, payable to Stockport Beer Festival, to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG

CAMRA CALLING!

The first social of the month is on Monday 10th at the Davenport Arms, Woodford. Public transport to Woodford isn't so good in the evenings so a mini-bus will run, departing the Crown, Heaton Lane at 8.30pm. Phone Dawn or Duncan on 445 0872 if you want to book a space.

The following night we are running a New Members Social to the Titanic Brewery in Burslem, together with their nearby tied house. So, if you are new to the Campaign and fancy an interesting night out just give Dawn or Duncan a ring. A busy week also sees the branch meeting on Thursday 13th, this time at the Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton. The pub is easily accessible by buses 203 from Stockport and 169 from South Manchester.

On Monday 17th we hope to travel out to the Airport on the new rail link and perhaps take in the Airport Hotel and Busby Real Ale Bar in Terminal 2. Phone Dawn for more details.

On Friday 21st there is a weekend trip to Cardiff, taking in Brains Brewery. We will be leaving Stockport at about 10am and spending two nights B&B in Cardiff. There were a couple of places left at the time of writing so once again phone Dawn or Duncan if you're interested.

We recover on Monday 24th with a social at the Queens, Cheadle. This starts at 9.00pm, as do most Monday socials. On Thursday 27th it's Pub of the Month at the Greyhound in Edgeley (see feature on Page 2) and, in a crowded week, the very next night it's the monthly Stagger, this time Ardwick, Brunswick and Chorlton-on-Medlock. We start at 7.00pm at the Kings Head on Chancellor Lane or you can join at 8.30 at the Kings Arms, Helmsford Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Pausing for breath, we then rush headlong into Stockport Beer Festival at the Town Hall, which opens its doors at 5.30pm on Thursday 3rd June. This is the one social event that no-one should miss!

After the festival, we wind down on Monday 7th with a two-way social in Gorton - 9.00pm at the Friendship on Hyde Road and 10.00pm just round the corner at the Pomona.

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Marple or Woodley areas, you come under the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of the Campaign. On Sunday 9th May there will be a presentation marking 19 consecutive years in the Good Beer Guide of the Andrew Arms in Compstall. The festivities start at 8.30pm. High Peak will be having their monthly meeting on Monday 17th at the George in Hayfield. Aim to get there for 8.30pm. For more information about High Peak activities phone Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634. Members of both branches are of course welcome to attend each other's events.

New Brew News

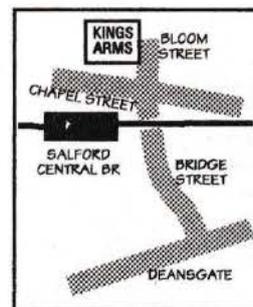
Brendan Dobbin's latest brainchild at West Coast Brewery, Kangaroo XXXX Pale Ale (4.2%ABV) went on sale in early April. Light in colour but retaining the brewery's customary hoppiness, it could be just the thing to fill the gap, identified by many observers, between West Coast's everyday beers and the brewery's stronger "specials". So far, two of the trial house beers for the Crown on Heaton Lane have been produced, the newest being KEE WEE Bitter, flavoured with New Zealand Hops. Back in February we also reported on a clutch of new brewerles that were in prospect for the Chester and North Wales areas. Of the North Wales ventures, no news about the Manod pub in Blaenau Ffestiniog which was reported to be considering brewing. The Henfryn Brewing Co near Rhyl has been put back but has instead taken a financial stake in Barry's Brewery at the Bryn Arms near Blaenau. This has led to an expansion in the beer range. Joining Mel-y-Moelwyn, the tremendous light bitter, and the stronger Snowden Ale is the new Choir Porter, which gets its beer festival preview at Rhyl as we go to press. Hopefully some will appear at Stockport Festival, this month. The Dyffryn Clwyd brewery has run into planning problems associated with the conversion of Denbigh's old Buttermarket into brewing premises.

The brewery that HAS come on stream is the Weetwood Brewery (not "Wheatwood" as we reported) which, apparently is on a pig farm near Kelsall. The first brew is a 3.9% ABV Best Cask Bitter and made its local debut at the Beer House Beer Festival over Easter, where it was very well received. The beer is a light hoppy brew with a dry finish and should go well in the local free trade.

Former Manchester Brewers Don Burgess and Chris Lewis keep on finding more northern outlets for their Forest of Dean (Freeminer) Brewery. Speculation Ale has been seen in the new ly converted White Lion in Stockport and both beers at Maxims in Bolton.

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BATEMANS

Town Centre Cask Ale House

The White Lion is the latest, and last, of the Stockport & South Manchester area's Whitbread "Cask Ale House" pubs to hit the local drinking scene and opened its doors on Thursday 25th March.

The White Lion, whilst occupying one of the oldest continually licensed sites in Stockport, has had a chequered history in recent years, gaining a fairly unsavoury reputation for teenage violence. Clearly, a change of image was needed and it has to be said that nothing could be further away from the old White Lion than its present incarnation.

Despite some ferocious broadsides in the local press, it must be said that the White Lion is most definitely **not** another Tut N' Shive like the ghastly Chapel House but simply represents a larger version of the Cask Ale House theme already successfully adopted at the Brewers in Fallowfield and the George & Dragon in Hazel Grove. Perhaps it is because of the sheer size of the place that this conversion is perhaps the least successful of the three in terms of overall effect but nevertheless this is a creditable attempt to retrieve the reputation of one of the more prominent pubs in the town centre.

The overall effect is the standard mock-rustic with lots of bare wood and brick and the by-now standard assortment of



unmatched furniture. There are half a dozen cask beers on sale, the ubiquitous Boddingtons and five other constantly changing guests.

We spoke to assistant manager Gary Fox, whose responsibilities also include looking after the beer, who told us that the hoped-for change of image seems to be working well with the pub starting to attract more serious beer drinkers. He believed that the customer base has been "turned upside down" and was delighted to report that since the reopening there had not been one incident of trouble. Although Boddingtons remains a big seller, the guest beers are going well including the guest mild that is always available (Jennings Dark when OT called, and very quaffable).

The one mistake so far has been the beer festival launched on opening night which was both badly presented and badly organised. We understand that valuable lessons have been learned from this and although another may be attempted in six months or so, it will be a smaller event and closer attention will be given to such important matters as beer temperature.

Any gripes? Well the main one, and this seems to be common in all of these "Ale Houses" is the notable absence of prices displayed for the guest beers - there are plenty of fancy chalk displays telling you everything else you need to know about the beers so why not include the price? The Crown on Heaton Lane manages it so why not the Whitbread pubs. The consistent failing of all three pubs in this respect would seem to indicate that it is company policy...perhaps if someone from Whitbread reads this they will get in touch and explain.

Pubs Fight On: Little Bradford & Plough

To coincide with the IOC visit to Manchester, the threatened Little Bradford pub on Ashton New Road has erected a couple of banners proclaiming the message "Olympics 2000 Yes, Demolish this Pub, No".

Readers may recall that the pub is scheduled to be replaced by a vital Olympic facility - namely a patch of grass with some trees on it! You might think that such a protest would be just a little newsworthy. Not in the eyes of the local press it isn't. Papers such as the Manchester Evening News are so obsessed with the bid that they have become little more than propaganda sheets for the Bid Committee. The only paper to show a flicker of interest was the Metro News which then unaccountably found it had no room for the story, despite a promise to run it the following week, Aline and Peter Hallam and their regulars are still waiting.



Meanwhile over at the Plough on Hyde Road, threatened by a plan to widen the road, there appears to be a stay of execution as we learn that the first phase of the development will run from Belle Vue to Ardwick Green and even this won't take place until October 1994. The scheme to save the pub by its physical relocation is also being looked at again.



A move by the former licensees of the Conway in Cheadle Hulme to the Silver Birch on Poundswick Lane, Wythenshawe, has seen real ale installed in this long-standing keg-only pub. The handpumped beers are Websters Yorkshire Bitter and Courage Directors Bitter. The cask ales are, apparently, proving more popular with the lunchtime trade than the evening locals, but nonetheless sales are encouraging.

Work is now under way on the new Bass pub in the former British Council premises on Barlow Moor Road in Didsbury. If nothing else, the setting should be impressive - the council have assured local residents that the many mature trees in the grounds are covered by preservation orders and must remain standing during and after the conversion.

Another pub where work is underway is the new Holts house in the City Centre. The former snack bar on the corner of Portland Street and Princess Street is now covered with scaffolding and we understand that the aim is to have the pub open by the end of the year.

The Red Lion in Hazel Grove has now been demolished by Greenalls, who seem to be making a habit of this sort of thing. At least this time they appear to have followed the correct procedures.

We reported in March that the Imperial on St Petersgate, Stockport had closed. That remained the case as we went to press, although the pub had been repainted so perhaps a re-opening is in prospect. More news when we have it.

The Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport is currently running a competition to find a house beer. For two months from 24th March four new brews are to be tried out with locals being asked to vote for their favourite. All votes for the winning beer will go into a draw for a gift pack of "breweriana". The first brew was "Boomerang Bitter" from West Coast, a 5%ABV beer with the hoppy intensity that has become the hallmark of that brewery.

Black marks for the Brookfield on Wellington Road South in Stockport which has installed Keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump.

Openshaw's most renamed pub, the Drovers on Ashton Old Road, has changed yet again. After a period as Francs, a bizarrely misbegotten pseudo-Parisian (very pseudo, not very Parisian) fun bar, it had seemed to be edging back to normality as the Drover's Return. Now, though, it's lurched back into gimmickry as Limits Bar. Real ale? Don't be silly! Wouldn't you think, though, that even Whitbread might have noticed that the pubs that survive and thrive in hard-pressed East Manchester are the ones that provide quality and value for money for a settled clientele?

HEARD AT THE BAR

Barman at the Church, Ardwick, a former Wilsons House: "Wilsons? Never heard of it".

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