

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA

No:
110

JUNE 1993

STILL
FREE

Cop Out!

A review of the Governments Beer Orders by a committee of MPs has been slammed as "flat and as weak as an old pint" by CAMRA Campaigns Manager Steve Cox.

The Beer Orders followed the MMC report into the brewing industry and led to

★ tenants and leaseholders of national brewers pubs being allowed to stock a guest beer

★ the national brewers having to sell off free from the tie half the pubs they owned over a 2000 limit.

The aim was to free up the beer market, help smaller brewers improve customer choice and lead to lower prices. Despite these high hopes, little progress has been made. Whilst it is true that some aspects of consumer choice have improved and the guest beer legislation has been moderately successful, the four years since the report have also seen:

* pub prices up by more than inflation

* the big brewers actually tightening their grip on beer production.

* the eviction of thousands of hard working pub tenants and the introduction of draconian leases

* the freeing up of pubs from the tie sidestepped by the creation of new pub owning companies, tied to the original brewery

None of which seems to have concerned the MPs unduly - who appear to have swallowed the big brewers' line throughout. They ignore the sweetheart tie ups between the brewers and the new pub companies and come down against any further changes to the tie. They ignore the fact that the Beer Orders neither forced the sale of any pubs nor forced the introduction of leases, saying that the brewers had 'no reasonable alternative course of action', adding limply that 'in a number of instances their conduct could have been more sympathetic towards their tenants.' They ignore wide scale demands for a sliding scale of beer duty which would help the smaller brewers and is widespread in Europe, citing "complexity" and "distorting effects" on the market.

Steve Cox stormed "The committee has washed its hands of the problems in the industry. It has sided with the big brewers over their disgraceful eviction of tenants. They wanted justice, not limp expressions of sympathy."

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SAVE OUR PUBS

While the fight continues to save two of East Manchester's threatened pubs, we learn that even more could be facing the axe!

Of the two ongoing campaigns, this month sees the start of the public consultation exercise into the planned Hyde Road widening scheme and CAMRA intends to have as much input here as possible. We have targeted the Plough as the pub to save and will be presenting the petition gathered at the pub to the planning authorities.

Over at the Little Bradford on Ashton New Road, there have been few developments although we have now received notice that a public enquiry is to be held into the Compulsory Purchase Order and, again, CAMRA will be making its presence felt.

The new threat is also connected with the Olympic Bid in the shape of the proposed Metrolink extension via Eastlands to Ashton. Although we have not yet seen the plans we are told that one option would take the route through two pubs in Clayton - Whitbread's Sir Humphrey Cheetham and Holt's Grove. If this is the case then we will have another battle on our hands as these are two pubs East Manchester can ill afford to lose. More news when we have it.

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PUB of the Month June



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

Set in the midst of the Heaton Mersey conservation area, around Vale Close, and almost certainly the oldest pub in Stockport, The Crown is perhaps long overdue for an award to recognise what a high class establishment it is. Long standing tenants Peter and Judith Whitney preside over a fine comfortable and very busy pub, that serves one of the most consistently good pints of Robinsons Best Bitter and Mild in Stockport.

A little towards Stockport along Didsbury Road from the Griffin, the Crown too was extended by the brewery a few years ago. In a rolling programme of works that at the time seemed interminable, the layout of much of the building was changed, only the front bar emerging relatively unchanged - extended with a small seating area at the end. At the same time, a second bar was

put in, and a dining area created. This is used to serve food at lunchtimes and early evening, after which the pub reverts to being just that. Although there were the usual grumbles about the extensions, they are not obtrusive, and the pub has lost none of its essential character, and gained some much needed space.

The pub is also justly famous for its food. This ranges from toasted sandwiches (available at lunchtime) to first class restaurant standard meals, and the pub, in the early evenings, has been one of the very best places to eat in Stockport. The chef and food have picked up several well-merited awards, and lunchtime food ranges from the simple to the exotic, and from fillers to excellent full meals.

Incredibly popular in the late evenings, the Crown attracts a cosmopolitan mix of locals, workers from the Industrial estate and professionals. Usually noisy with conversation, you can guarantee a good crack when the Pub of the Month award is presented on Wednesday 30th June at around 9pm.

Irene and Staff welcome you to

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Fine beers
in classic
surroundings



CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 1993

BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL BREAKS RECORDS

Record attendances (4034 visitors) and record amounts of beer, cider and perry were drunk at the festival earlier this month. The larger fire limit on the Town Hall ballroom kept the size of the queue down on Friday.

It is likely that next year's festival will move dates, possibly to September, but the organisers will keep you informed through the pages of Opening Times. A special thank you to all the volunteers, the Town Hall staff and the sponsor, the Stockport Express Advertiser.

Overall Champion Beer of the festival was Snowdonia Brewery's Mel-y-Moelwyn, an excellent light, hoppy bitter. Banks and Taylor's Black Bat was second. Top mild was Taylor's Dark Mild, with Snowdonia's Choir Porter winning its category. Last year saw Dennis Gwatkin's Perry (on its first public showing) win Perry of the festival - this year his perry came second to his uncle's delightful drink (Browning's), but keeping it in the family, this year he swept up the Cider of the festival award, on the first showing of his Cider in Stockport, with last year's winner, Westons coming second.

We hope next year's event will be even bigger. There is a debate raging at the moment about whether there should be one evening without live music (probably Thursday). Why not write to Opening Times and express your views?

PUB HUNT

Longstanding CAMRA members may recall the Stockport pub treasure hunts we ran some years ago. This year Manchester drinkers get a chance to take part, as we run a 'pub hunt' in central Manchester. Teams are invited from pubs and groups of drinkers - there will be a small entry charge, prizes, and proceeds go to a licensed victuallers charity.

Teams (1,2 or 3) may pre register by phoning Rhys Jones (231 6465 [h] or 228 2141 x 86027 [w]), otherwise just turn up at the starting point - The Beer House, off Rochdale Road between noon and 1pm Sat 3rd July. After an entertaining if frustrating day, entries will be marked at about 9pm. All featured pubs sell independent brewers ales - celebrate Independents' Day with CAMRA.

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ 477 1973 (home) 831 7222 x 3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.

De Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER
FREEHOUSE**
Guest Beers Weekly



TAYLORS
MARSTONS



BATEMANS

Bobby Peel

One of the most improved pubs in Stockport at the moment must be the Prince Albert on Castle Street in Edgeley.

The pub has been taken on by John and Kath Parkin from the nearby Bobby Peel who have already effected a transformation on what had previously been one of the town's twilight pubs. Not only has the outside been given a much needed lick of paint but inside the pub is now much more comfortable and welcoming with more seating in the lounge and a redecoration smartening the place up.

The former pool room was about to be converted into a kitchen as we went to press with the intention that there will be a similar food operation as is currently successfully run at the Bobby Peel.

Three cask beers are available, Wilsons Mild and Bitter - which on a recent sampling was as good a pint of either as you are likely to get these days - plus Stones Bitter. We wish John and Kath every success with this new venture.

Meanwhile back at the Bobby Peel changes are also in prospect with the construction of a fully fledged restaurant at the back of the pub. When complete this should see the main food operation moved out of the pub proper and represents a major investment by John in the Bobby Peel.

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John and Kath now welcome you to both the
Sir Robert Peel & Prince Albert

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Quizzes start 9.15. Excellent range of Beers.

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Excellent range of beers

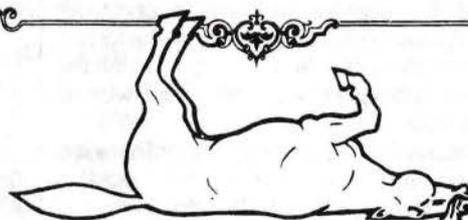
Stones Bitter, Wilsons Bitter, Wilsons Mild

Organist now being arranged for weekend singalongs

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ESB	OG 1060
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DOBBINS
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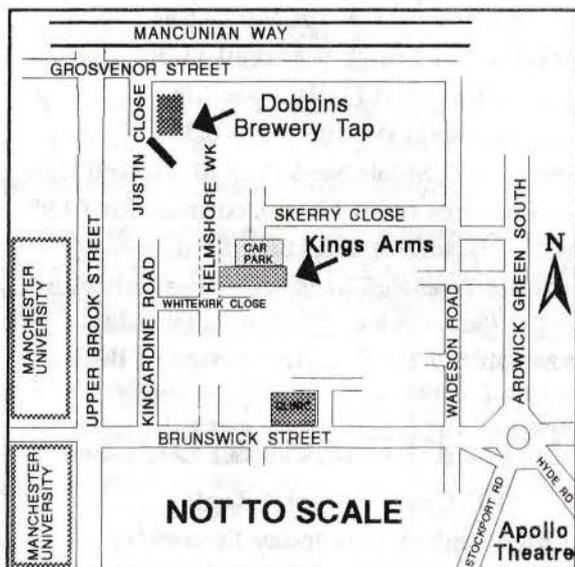
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Whilst CAMRA and Opening Times are strictly non-political, it has to be said that our Parliamentary representatives have not exactly covered themselves with glory this month.

The Agricultural Select Committee's report following their look at the operation of the Beer Orders is a cop-out of the first order. Ignoring the many problems that have arisen in the industry over the past few years, particularly the big brewers' blatant attempts to get round the Beer Orders and their disgraceful treatment of many loyal tenants, the MPs conclude that the brewers did their best under difficult circumstances and that "further intrusive and burdensome regulation of the

industry should be avoided". With their tightening grip on beer production, rocketing prices and pub leases with sky-high rents the big brewers must be laughing all the way to the bank...

Closer to home, the Tommy Ducks affair rumbles on and it must be said that the response to our letter concerning the House of Commons motion (or lack of it) by Stephen Day and Sir Tom Arnold beggars belief. Public anger and revulsion at Greenalls' action has been widespread and widely reported. Despite this Stephen Day was, at the end of April "unfamiliar" with the case. If Sir Tom Arnold's finger is as close to the local pulse as Stephen Day's it is perhaps wise that he chose not to reply. Those of our readers who wish to acquaint Mr Day with, or get Sir Tom to address, the facts, should write to them at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

O P E N I N G T I M E S L E T T E R S

From: Richard Hough

Could you please clarify the 'bottled Guinness' situation. Is bottled Guinness currently available in pubs and bars in England and Wales a bottle conditioned (ie real) beer?

Many of my cohorts, as well as myself, are confused by the situation. I hope you will be able to clarify this area.

(Editor's note - the short answer to your question is 'probably not'. Ignoring the growing trends to bottle conditioned beers, Guinness last year took the decision to phase out bottle-conditioned Guinness from England and Wales in favour of a 'pre-conditioned' (ie filtered and pasteurised) version. The real thing was due to be phased out this April although one or two pubs may have some left - either local freehouses who stocked up prior to the phase-out date or quiet pubs who only turned it over slowly. Doubtless Guinness will one day see the error of their ways and relaunch the real thing in a blaze of publicity and at a premium price.)

From Tony Wilkinson

It was good to see a plug in Opening Times for Robinson's Bitter. Its normal description of Ordinary Bitter does it a great disservice; it is a fine product.

There is a second outlet in the branch, since it has been a regular in Phillips Sports & Social Club (T'Hut) for most of the year. Other Robinson's cask beers which have been sold from time to time are Best Mild (Regular), Best Bitter, Hartleys XB, Old Tom and even Dark Best Mild.

Which was the last outlet in Stockport other than T'Hut to sell both Bitter and Dark Best Mild?

PLEASE NOTE COPY DATE FOR JULY ISSUE - THURSDAY 24 JUNE

From Jim Bracken

Having written twice before to O.T. congratulating the Flea & Firkin on its well run beer festivals, it gives me no pleasure this time to write a letter of criticism about their latest effort - the May holiday weekend festival. It was intentionally a smaller scale affair, but the range of beers was very unimaginative - certainly no 'winners' for the 'scratchers' - and it was exclusively bitters, with no milds or stouts or porters. Added to this, the condition of the beers was mediocre.

Another disappointment is that they have ceased brewing their MILD, which once sold at a price lower than Holts Mild, and also their excellent and tasty PREMIUM ENTIRE STOUT has bitten the dust, due, they say, to 'lack of demand'. (Where have we heard that one before!)

I would suggest that the Allied Breweries' accountants have been at work at the Flea - dull and dreary accountants who recoil in horror at the thought of low prices, distinctive and unusual beers, and initiative and enthusiasm on the part of the head brewer.

Now that Chris Lewis is gone, the 'Flea' is sadly a pale shadow of what it once was.

Thanks very much, Allied Breweries!

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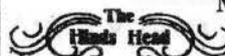
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STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

April's Stagger took an unusual form. It was the occasion of CAMRA's National Conference, this year held in Salford, and while the organising committee opted to leave the assembled hordes to their own devices, we as a local branch decided to show off to our visitors some of our more interesting pubs. So it was that a helpful and efficient driver ferried a coachload of serious drinkers - from Cumbria and Kent, Shropshire, Yorkshire, London plus a few of our own local members - round seven pubs in East Manchester.

We started at Lees **Britannia** in Beswick. Our numbers crowded the small vault, but we were quickly served (one member commented on "the landlady's" - actually the barmaid's - "brill right arm"!) with above average Bitter. Mild, unfortunately, was not on tonight. The pub's warm and friendly atmosphere worked its usual spell, and we were sorry to leave. It was at least pleasant to reflect that, despite the clearance work under way nearby, the pub is safe from Olympic developments.

Next was the **Little Bradford**, whose future is not yet assured. Again, service was praised, but one member noted "watch the

chairs" - surely we hadn't started falling over already? Boddington and Tetley Bitters were both above average, but Chesters Mild, which most of us drank, only mustered an "average" rating, though it was still perfectly acceptable.

Chesters Mild was a surprise addition at the next pub, the **Concert** in Openshaw, where it had recently been introduced. This time the beer was rated very good indeed, and in fact it turned out to be the best beer of the night. Boddingtons Bitter was also available, and was above average. The sensitive refurbishment of this excellent local was much appreciated. There was a less than sensitive welcome from the boisterous locals, especially for those who ventured into the vault, but it was all in good humour and taken in good part.

A less boisterous but still lively atmosphere awaited us at the **Hare & Hounds**, Abbey Hey. Unfortunately the guest beer which generally adds variety to Friday evenings here was missing. However the Boddingtons Bitter maintained the consistently above-average standard of the two previous pubs.

Now for some Robinsons, at the **Plough** on Hyde Road. As an unspoilt traditional pub this place really has star quality. One member of CAMRA's Furness branch, after contributing a lengthy written diatribe berating Robinsons, quite understandably, for closing his local brewery Hartley's, nevertheless felt obliged to concede "best pub of the night was the Plough". And the beer wasn't bad either, with both Mild and Best Bitter well above average, the Mild being marginally preferred.

More Robinson's now at the **Coach & Horses**, another very pleasant and unspoilt pub which has been saved from the Hyde Road widening scheme that still threatens the Plough. As usual, a friendly and relaxed atmosphere prevailed. Again, both Mild and Best Bitter were above average, though in this case the Bitter was judged to be the better of the two.

The night ended at Hyde's **Travellers Call**, where Hyde Road meets the new relief road. Long a favourite with local CAMRA members, the pub also greatly impressed our visitors. It was difficult indeed to tear ourselves away. Though the tremendous atmosphere and friendliness of the pub had much to do with that, just as important was the beer - above average Mild and very good Bitter which came within a whisker of being the best beer of the night.

So ended an unusual Stagger, with much greater numbers than usual and drawn from areas across the country. As ever, what's written above simply records the opinions of one group of drinkers on one particular night. To make up your own mind, visit the pubs - in the case of this Stagger, for which we had selected pubs with a good track record, they can all be highly recommended.

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Always in
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Pub In The Peak

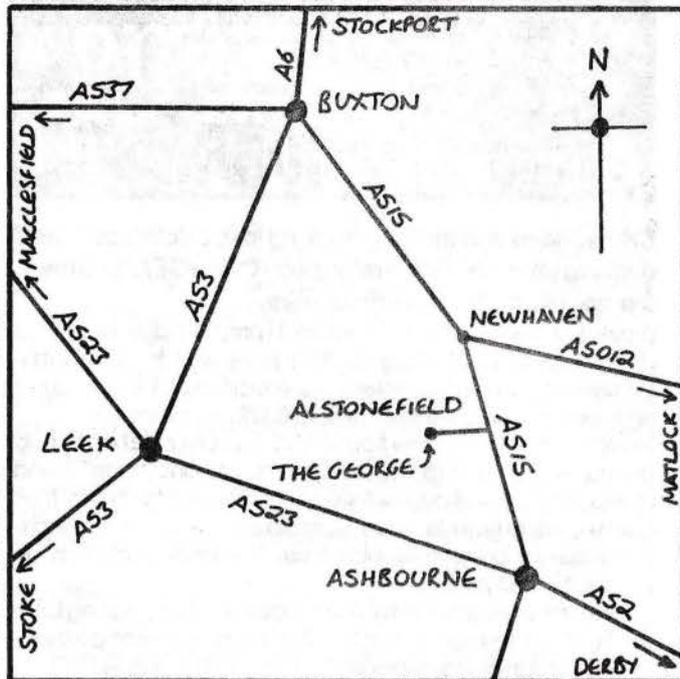
by Peter Edwardson

The village of Alstonefield stands over eight hundred feet above sea level in the beautiful countryside between Dovedale and the Manifold Valley, in the White Peak area a few miles north of Ashbourne. The old houses of pale grey stone cluster irregularly around the triangular green which lies at the centre of the village. Just to the south is the parish church, and facing it, as you would expect, the George, perhaps the Peak District's classic village green pub.

Dating from the 18th century, the exterior has a pleasingly irregular appearance, with several windows of different sizes and a prominent glazed porch. The front door takes you into a stone-flagged, wood-panelled passageway leading through to the pub's own camp site at the rear.

On the left is a largish dining room without a bar, where children are admitted. Most drinkers, however, will feel more at home turning right into the main bar area, the heart of the pub, with its blazing open fire. A collection of assorted foreign bank notes are pinned to the low oak beam of the ceiling. The bar counter is relatively modern, with a rustic feel and casks inset into the front, but it doesn't detract from the atmosphere. Beyond the bar is a small, cosy snug. The walls throughout are covered with an impressively varied collection of artefacts and pictures far removed from the identikit stuff put up by brewery design departments.

For many years the George was an Ind Coope tied house, serving Burton Ale and either Ind Coope or Ansells bitters, and the impressive collection of Good Beer Guide stickers in the porch windows bears witness to the consistently high quality in which they were kept. More recently it has been sold off by Allied Breweries as part of their post-MMC disposal programme, passing into the hands of Burtonwood, and now selling Burtonwood Bitter and Forshaw's on handpump. The licensee has not changed, and on the evidence of a recent visit the beer is still up to Good Beer Guide standard.



There's a comprehensive menu of bar food, mainly falling into the category of straightforward and wholesome, which is ordered from the kitchen door and can be eaten either in the dining room or the main bar area. The prices are fairly reasonable for the locality, the main hot dishes all below £5 and various ploughman's for just over £3. Food is served every lunchtime and also most evenings.

In another part of the country, Alstonefield might be a quiet little place, well off the beaten track. Situated where it is, on summer weekends and bank holidays it inevitably becomes a magnet for both walkers and car-borne tourists. The George is unlikely to disappoint on such occasions, but it is probably best appreciated when the pace is not quite so hectic. It's not a pub where any one aspect is truly outstanding, but there's scarcely anything to find fault with, and everything blends together into a thoroughly satisfying whole.

GREENALLS CORNER



Last month we reported on a Parliamentary motion put down by a group of Manchester MPs condemning Greenalls actions in demolishing Tommy Ducks. We thought this should also be brought to the attention of the four Stockport MPs and so wrote urging them to support the motion. Their replies make for interesting reading:

Anne Coffey (Lab. Stockport) was "glad to see that CAMRA are campaigning on this issue" and described Greenalls action as "high handed". Ms Coffey also confirmed that she had now signed the motion. Andrew Bennett (Lab. Reddish & Denton) confirmed that he "totally" agreed with our comments and that he had also signed the motion.

Readers will of course know that the Tommy Ducks affair received widespread coverage in the local press and bearing this in mind we come to the reply from Stephen Day (Con. Cheadle) who, apparently, was "not familiar with the case" and as such was "not, therefore, at this stage willing to support the (motion)" although he undertook to consider its contents. Sir Tom Arnold (Con. Hazel Grove) didn't bother to reply.

Greenalls have, of course, achieved national notoriety following the Tommy Ducks affair and here in Manchester away from the rarified atmosphere of Westminster, many people are now avoiding Greenalls pubs, which is not difficult considering they have no pubs in the Good Beer Guide in Greater Manchester (apart from a couple in deepest Wigan). The Greenalls Group however also has many subsidiaries which are not such an obvious target as their pubs. Not many people will have the opportunity to boycott De Vere Hotels or the Belfry Golf Club but it is not so difficult to stay away from Cellar 5 off-licences, Millers Kitchens and Hudsons Restaurants...

Finally, not content with knocking down one of Manchester's landmark pubs, Greenalls are now putting up another two fingers to the city authorities by using the site as a car park without, as we went to press, permission to do so!

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '88

The big news was that at long, long last, Britain's outdated drinking laws were to be reformed - CHANGE AT LAST! was the headline. The alterations were:-

Weekday opening from 11am to 11pm.; Sunday lunchtime drinking to 3pm.; Drinking up time increased to 20 minutes; Stricter controls on drink sales in supermarkets; Clubs losing out on Sundays, being still restricted to 5 1/2 hours opening. Several comments came from CAMRA, such as "let each pub open according to its own circumstances and trade" - and strong criticism that pubs will still not be obliged to display their opening hours outside. Hope was also expressed that the more unscrupulous brewers wouldn't use the longer hours as an excuse to hoist prices.

There were comments on the practice of serving keg beer through handpumps, a problem that never seems to go away - mixed progress was reported :-

Wilsons - Keg Special Mild served through handpumps in several outlets.

Boddingtons - Increasing in the free trade, but the Railway in Cheadle has a handpump proclaiming Boddies Mild, whereas they only sell keg Oldham Mild from a less prominent dispenser. Whitbread - low alcohol White Label to be launched on draught, and although it is keg, they hope "licensees will sell it on handpump alongside traditional beer."

Greenalls - say the practice will be stopped, and want names of offending pubs. Gamebird and Elizabethan reported accordingly.

Nationally - could be some action. National Trading Standards have issued new guidelines to local officers, and have taken it up with the Brewers Society, NULV etc.

It was reported that the Titanic Brewery of Burslem, Stoke on Trent had run into financial difficulties, and was in the hands of a Receiver. It was to be sold as a going concern, and was still in operation supplying its one tied house, the Travellers Rest at Burslem. (Optimism must have been well founded - Titanic is going strong in 1993, with 150 free trade outlets and its own pub.)

Finally, a few items of pub news from the back page :- The long closed Dolphin, just off Hyde Road, West Gorton was said to be due to re-open. Time was when this former Marston's house was in the National Good Beer Guide.

The Hague, Brinksway, Stockport is being re-signed as the Woolpack - it will be the only regular Thwaites outlet in the Stockport area.

Taylor's Landlord is now a permanent resident at Ye Olde Vic, Stockport. Sales have "quintupled" - from one 18 gallon cask a week to five.

I wonder if anyone can help me...

I have a fully comprehensive, well researched, professionally produced, and original business plan for a new Microbrewery/Pub/Restaurant in East Cheshire.

An ideal premises has been identified, finished to an exceptionally high standard, and is available.

The current business has a turnover of around £200,000 and is trading unprofitably.

No additional expertise is required, as I have all the training and knowledge necessary: I can produce real ale for sale at £1.00 per pint, and still make 60% gross profit, even after VAT and duty.

The business has potential sales of £400,000 per year, which I estimate would make a net profit before tax of over £80,000.

I am very close - all I need is £40,000 in exchange for a majority shareholding.

Has anyone got any ideas?

If so, please ring Dave Robinson on 061 976 3783.

I must act quickly -

these premises will not be available for long.

The Red Lion WILMSLOW RD WITHINGTON

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For this month's pub grub article we travelled into Stockport to visit the Little Jack Homer, a pub of great character and enormous potential, but which to date has not received the recognition it deserves. I had heard that following its change from Wilsons to Vaux, the beer had improved and that the meals were generous and reasonably priced. This then looked to be a good candidate for a pub grub article.

The Little Jack Homer is on Wellington Street (off the A6 and opposite McDonalds) in Stockport. If you drive there please note that the pub has no car park and that parking can be difficult nearby. Although the pub is invariably quieter than its neighbours in the nearby town centre and on the busy Wellington Road South, this is not necessarily a bad thing as the pub is not huge and great crowds would ruin the homely cosy feel of the place. The beers on sale included Wards bitter, Vaux Samson, Double Maxim, and today's rotating guest beer, Jennings Snecklifter.

I chose the Wards bitter whilst my partner chose the Samson, both we decided were in good condition and very pleasant on such a warm day. As the food is served in the rear bar, we made our way there and sat at one of several tables obviously reserved for diners as they were draped with neat tablecloths. The menu on a board behind the bar included home made Steak & Kidney Pie, Chicken Curry with rice and chips, Lasagne, and Chilli con Carne all at £2.80, assorted barm cakes with ham, cheese or steak from £1.00, beefburgers and cheeseburgers with chips from £1.65, and jacket potatoes with various

fillings from £2.80. For vegetarians, in addition to the almost universal but uninspiring cheese options you could order, two, two and a half ounce spicy bean burgers for £2.40. Tea, coffee and ice cream were also available for those that wanted it.

My partner ordered the Chicken Curry with rice and chips whilst I ordered Steak and Kidney Pie. My pie was served with mixed vegetables, chips and gravy, with extra gravy on offer via the jug on the hot plate should I want it. Both meals were generous helpings and of good quality although the chips could have been described as 'a little overcooked and hard' for my taste. The Chicken curry in particular contained lots of chicken which is rare for meals priced at under £3.00 in the Stockport area.

To wash down our meal we ordered a second drink (well it was Friday and a very hot day). The Snecklifter was in good condition whilst the Double Maxim was even better. This rounded off a pleasant meal particularly well.

To conclude, I am pleased to be able to confirm that the reports I have heard from other people about the improvements in the Little Jack Homer seem well justified. Next time you are in Stockport either for a meal or just for a drink, why not give the Little Jack Homer a try?

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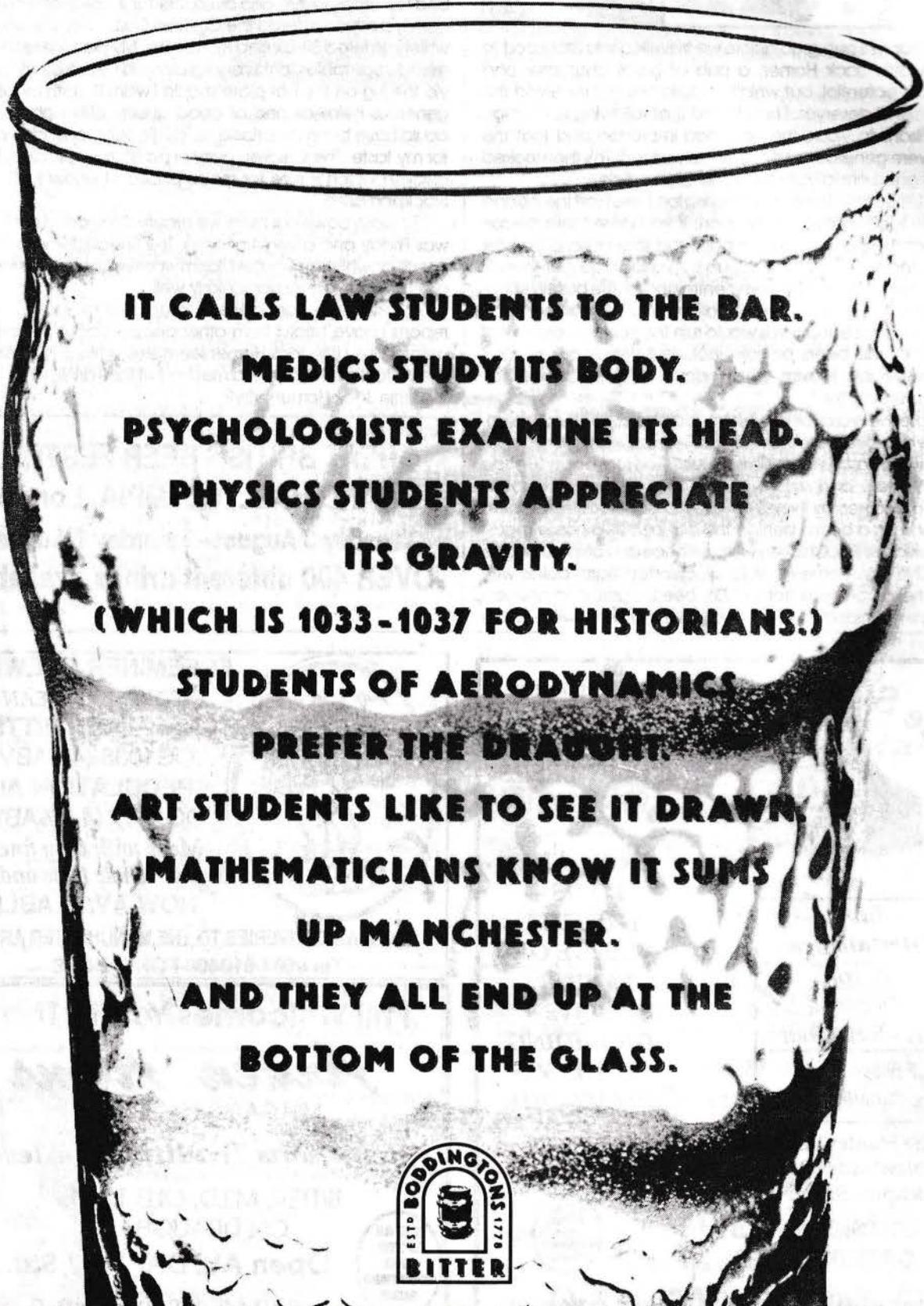
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AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE
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RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Richard Hough

It was a warm, overcast May evening in central Stockport and a great night was in prospect; Right Band Wrong Planet were playing at the Bulls Head on the market place. But before I reached my destination I noticed that the Imperial on St Petersgate had at last reopened, so I detoured in (just for a quick half, you understand) to find the place much improved after the redecoration.

So to The Bulls Head. A sprinkling of customers were present as the band started at 9.15, tonight reduced to a six-piece but still eager to groove. A short way into the set a familiar chap walks in, "unpacks his sax" and twenty seconds later we're back to the full seven. If blues is your bag, Right Band Wrong Planet are for you. The wholly original set (not for cover-lovers!) ranges in style from out and out sleazy jazz to jump-jive but always stays faithful to its blues base. With haunting harmonica, the melody picked out by sax and guitar, and some fine fretless bass there is something here for everyone.

The first set ended at 10 with "Blood in His Pocket", with Coco the sax player and John on bombard (a Breton wind instrument) trading 'blows'. By now the pub was slowly filling up. The pub itself, one of a clutch around the market place, is pleasant enough without being outstanding. The beers on offer were Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter (which were both average) and Old Tom (which wasn't tried).

The second set included "Crawling King Snake", intense blues'n'roots as well as the lads' cheeky Northern humour in "Chip Ahoy" and "It's not the Meat it's the Motion". RBWP thrive on being just a bit different; when was the last time you saw bagpipes in a blues band, for instance? They ended, quite fittingly, with "Drunk Again" and when Jolly Gerald had brought the pot round we left, contented, after another night of great music. You can catch up with Right Band Wrong Planet every other Tuesday at the Bulls Head, and they also play regularly at the Kings Arms, Salford. Don't miss them!

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There has been a lot of discussion recently about Kenneth Clarke's plan to allow children into the bars of pubs. The one group who don't seem to have been consulted are children themselves. Do children clamour to be let into pubs? No chance! They don't want to be palmed off with a Coke and told to sit still and keep quiet while their elders swill beer and discuss County's promotion chances or the merits of Norman Lamont.

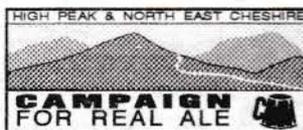
The real supporters of this change are parents who are too lazy and selfish to look after their children properly. They conjure up images of happy, convivial family meals. The reality, all too often, will be that children will be dragged unwillingly into pubs and allowed to run around inadequately supervised and bored while their irresponsible parents enjoy a few drinks. That is not pro-family, it is anti-children.

It is argued that pubs will have the choice whether to apply for a "Children's Certificate." In practice, very few licensees will be sufficiently confident about their trade to turn away a potential source of business, and risk being branded as anti-family.

Another danger is that the experience of being bored in pubs will turn young people off the idea of going to the pub for life. In the past, each generation has rediscovered the delights of the pub for itself when reaching the age of eighteen, give or take a couple of years. In the future they will have seen too much of pubs already, and won't have liked it.

There is a case to be made for a limited reform of the law, to allow well-behaved children accompanied by adults into the bar of a pub to eat a meal, provided that the pub has another, separate bar where children are not admitted. Anything more is likely to prove harmful to children and disastrous to pubs. If we are not careful, allowing children large-scale access to bars risks destroying the British pub as we know it in a generation.

John Major showed his ignorance about our national drink when he recently expressed the sentiment that, despite Maastricht, Britain would still be the country of warm beer in fifty years' time. Hopefully it isn't now - any warm beer should be sent straight back to the bar! Someone ought to tell him that real ale should be kept at a cellar temperature of about 13C/55F, which will taste pleasantly cool on a hot day, but not over-chilled. Mind you, he always gives me the impression of being a half of lager man, so what would you expect him to know?



HIGH PEAK FEATURED PUB Hare & Hounds, Simmondley

Simmondley village, just outside Glossop, plays host to June's Pub of the Month for High Peak branch. Appropriately too, for on the weekend of 19th-20th June the pub, The Hare & Hounds, holds its third annual Simmondley Beer Festival. Since landlord Don Grundy took over, the Hare has gone from strength to strength and has been established as one of the locality's best drinking and eating houses...and it has made 1993 and 1994 selection in the Good Beer Guide.

The Hare & Hounds has a long history. Prior to 1837, it was a textile mill. By mid-1839, its new owner had successfully applied for a beer licence and for many years it was supplied by Glossop brewer Robinsons of Whitfield. The pub's illustrious history is compiled in a free history brochure available from the landlord, on request.

Available are Tetley Dark Mild, Tetley Bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale and, as given prominence on a blackboard behind the bar, a regular guest beer, changed as each barrel is used. On my visit on May 16th, Cotleigh Old Buzzard was an excellent form.

The food, too, is highly recommended with an extensive sandwich menu of more than 30, a main menu which changes daily, sweets and children's menu.

For the beer festival, as usual Don has a marquee on the car park, with 16 Cask Conditioned Real Ales - with the aim of providing beers that are impossible to obtain locally. Examples this year are Riddleys Mild, and brews from Brains and Banks & Taylors. Foreign beers are also an attraction, with a carousel bar specially imported from Germany along with 'Umpha' music. Special festival glasses will also be available.

In addition, an all day barbecue and a 'Wines of the World' section complete what has been an excellent weekend for the last two years.

Anyone travelling by bus should disembark outside the Junction Inn some half a mile before reaching Glossop and head up Simmondley Lane for a ten minute walk. If travelling by train, several hosteries in Glossop town centre are recommended. The Prince of Wales has a range of Marstons Ales + Banks Mild, while on Victoria Street the Crown and the Surrey Arms, both GBG entries for 1994, are a short walk away.

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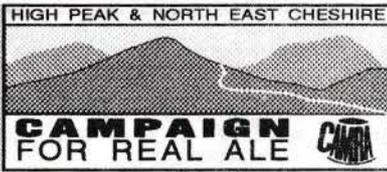


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Not a great deal of pub news this month:-

The Witchwood, in Ashton-under-Lyne and GBG entry, is currently considering leaving Holts Bitter out of its range of beers. Holts Bitter is by far and away the most popular but is under pressure from the Big Breweries deals on beer. The problem is that Holts will only supply in certain amounts - any reduction in volume means no Holts. But the quandary the landlord John Dyson is in is that to get the deals from the other breweries he has to sell certain quantities of their beers. Holts being so popular outsells other beers so to keep the range of cheap beer the pub currently boasts a decision has to be made. My choice would be keep Holts and have more unusual guests and a higher price. But then I'm one of those who likes Holtsa lot.

The Foresters Call, just along Old Street from the Witchwood, a recent Vaux acquisition, is closed again. The pub was being refurbished and almost immediately after the work was finished was extensively damaged by fire. It is currently being refurbished and should be re-opening soon.

Now for a more unusual night out, why not try the **Hunters**, a Robbies pub in Chisworth. The pub recently changed hands and has started having Turkish nights to encourage punters in larger numbers. This has been quite a success - the undoubted star attraction is the belly dancing - yes belly dancing! I understand that this is the genuine article and not half the darts team celebrating a rare win!!

The beer scene in Hayfield is undergoing a dramatic improvement with the introduction of "serious" guest beers in two local pubs. The **Waltzing Weasel** has long been a freehouse, albeit with a seemingly exclusive tie to Marstons, but is now offering a variety of other beers on a 'guest' basis. This has been joined by the **Royal** in the centre of the village which previously only offered beers from the **Courage** range.

Also majoring on the guest beer front is the **Navigation** at Buxworth which, apart from offering interesting and changing guests has the added bonus of Taylors Landlord which appears to be a more or less permanent fixture in the pub.

Simmondley Beer Fest

One of the more obscure and at the same time grandly named beer festivals in the local calendar must be the "Simmondley Village International Beer Festival" staged at the Hare & Hounds, Simmondley Village, Glossop.

This year's event will be on Saturday and Sunday 19th and 20th June and features such old favourites as Ringwood's Old Thumper and rarities such as Brains MA (a unique blend of their mild and bitter) together with a special "Simmondley Ale" brewed by Banks & Taylor of Shefford, Beds.

In total there will be over 16 real ales plus other beers from around the world which will be housed in a marquee next to the pub. An all day barbecue will provide solid refreshment and special festival glassed will be available. Definitely a date for the diary.

For more details of High Peak activities, phone Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634.

Canal Fest Beer Tent

Once again the High Peak branch are running their ever popular beer tent at the Tameside Canals Festival. The dates this year are 9th-11th July with opening hours as follows:

Friday 9th - 7.00 - 11.00pm

Sat 10th - 12.00 - 5.00 and 7.30 - 11.00

Sun 11th - 12.00 - 5.00 (while stocks last!)

The selection of traditional beers, ciders and perries is as varied as ever with an increased variety of beers from around the country including the likes of Big Lamp Bitter, Butterknowle Conciliation, Hambledon Stallion, Hop Back Summer Lightning and Morrell's Bitter.

There will be a small charge for entry to the festival site but apart from the beer tent there will be food, entertainment, music, narrow boats and craft stalls. Something for all the family in fact. For more information about the beer tent, contact Tom Lord on 427 7099.



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CAMRA CALLING!

June is a busy month for socials and we start on Monday 7th with a two-way social in Gorton meeting at the Friendship on Hyde Road at 9.00pm and moving on to the Pomona on Reddish Lane at 10.00. The same week sees the branch meeting on Thursday 10th, this month at the Hole i' th Wall (formerly the Castlewood) on Bridge Street Brow in Stockport. We hope to have a guest speaker from brewers Vaux.

On Monday 14th June, the social is at the Hat & Feathers on Mason Street in Central Manchester from 9.00pm onwards and the week ends on Friday 18th with a Stagger around Brinksway and Edgeley in Stockport. We meet at 7.00pm in the Gardeners Arms on Northgate Road or you can join at 8.30 in the Comfortable Gill on King Street West.

On Monday 21st the social is at the Brewers Arms, Ladybarn Lane, Ladybarn - perhaps the best of the local Whitbread Cask Ale House conversions. This is followed on Wednesday 24th with a visit to Hydes Brewery. There are limited places so phone Dawn and Duncan on 445 0872 to book.

Another Cask Ale House is the venue for the social on Monday 28th, this time it's the George & Dragon in Hazel Grove. The month finishes on Wednesday 30th with our Pub of the Month presentation to the Crown in Heaton Mersey (see article on page 2).

If you live in Bredbury, Romiley, Marple or Woodley you come under the High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA. On Monday 14th June they will be holding their AGM at the Andrew Arms, Compstall. If you are a High Peak member do please try and attend - aim to get there by 8.30. On Monday 28th there is a meeting for Ashton Canals Festival staff at the Station, Warrington Street, Ashton. If you want to work at the beer tent, please go along. For more details of High Peak activities, phone Geoff Williamson on 0663 765634.

And finally, for something completely different - on Wednesday 23rd, the North Manchester Branch will be holding a committee meeting and social at the Crown, Heaton Lane. All local members will doubtless be made welcome.

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

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:

Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £5



MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

It was good to see at least one pub respond to last month's front page headline "Go Mild in May" by re-installing cask mild - the Imperial in West Gorton now has Chesters Mild on handpump, and initial sales are said to have been encouraging at this often overlooked little pub where a fine pint can be enjoyed. The same beer has also appeared on handpump at the Concert in Openshaw.

In the Centre, the Unicorn is one of the pubs taking part in Bass's guest beer scheme, though it should be noted that the range of guests is somewhat restricted - so far, with the very welcome exceptions of Youngs and Fullers, most of the breweries represented have been within the Bass group. The scheme is also in operation at the Crown on Booth Street, though the odd gap in supply has been noted here. Meanwhile at the Wheatsheaf Forshaws Bitter has joined the rest of the Burtonwood range on handpump in a pub which seems much improved since the return of the former licensee who had it in its Tetley days. Sadly, however, the City Road Inn is closed.

The Church in Ardwick has dropped Wilsons Bitter, and the Little Bradford in Bradford no longer sells Westons Old Rosie Cider as a result of inconsistent sales. Finally, there's an interesting reversal of brewery policy at Banks's Four in Hand in West Didsbury, where mild and bitter have been switched to handpumps, presumably to emphasise their cask-conditioned nature alongside the already handpumped Pedigree and Strongarm.

New Brew News

At the Flea & Firkin on Oxford Road both the Full Mash Magical Mild and the Entire Stout have been axed, apparently on the grounds of poor sales. We also understand that the brewer left suddenly in May (and is now at a brewery in Hampshire).

Over at Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery Big Heavy Jimmy, for many the most disappointing of the West Coast Beers, has been discontinued but in its place is the excellent Kangaroo 4X, a more typical West Coast product with plenty of hop flavour. It appears that the competition to find the most popular 'house' beer for the Crown, Heaton Lane has been won by Dobbins' 'Green Bullet', a particularly fine product.

Meanwhile the Whitbread Brewery in Sheffield is now closed. The 'Higsons' beers are now being produced at the Whitbread Brewery in Castle Eden whilst Chesters Mild and Bitter have been contracted out to other brewers - the bitter is now produced by Everards in Leicester while the mild is brewed closer to home by Burtonwood. No news at the moment of the new homes for Trophy or the unlamented Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter.

Lastly, the Marstons 'Head Brewers Choice' range of new beers have been a runaway success. Chestnut Ale, Harvest Ale and Stout are to be repeated together with a further two voted on by Marstons customers.

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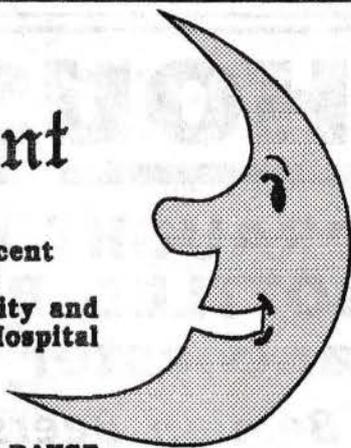
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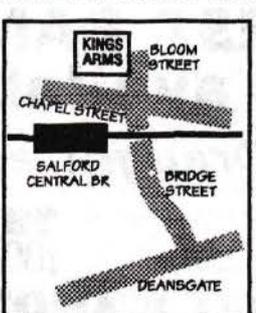


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Drinkers in East Manchester will be very sorry to learn that popular licensees Larry and Margaret Mason from the Travellers Call, West Gorton, will shortly be leaving, as Larry's doctor has advised him to cut down his workload. Their time at the Travellers, for many years known as one of the area's most unspoilt pubs, has been particularly marked by the genuinely welcoming and friendly atmosphere that has prevailed. To allow time for new licensees to be selected, they will probably not depart until mid to late June, and CAMRA members will surely gather to wish them farewell on or about their last night - ask for details at CAMRA meetings, or at the pub.

The Junction on Stelfox Lane in Audenshaw, located beneath the main road but handy for Guide Bridge station, now has new licensees who have introduced Morlands Old Speckled Hen and Taylors Landlord as (apparently) permanent guest beers at this attractive Whitbread pub. Old Speckled Hen is also reported as a permanent guest at Whitbread's Silver Springs on Ashton Road in Denton. In each case the guest beers are priced at around £1.50 per pint.

The Staff of Life on Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, is the latest Control Securifies pub to adopt their corporate livery - yes, it's boarded up. Nearby, Gorton Loco - originally a club, then briefly a freehouse - stands derelict and roofless.

A change of beer range is imminent at the Swan, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Vaux Samson is to go and in its place comes the rarer Vaux Double Maxim. This is a draught version of Vaux's bottled strong brown ale and is very palatable. The Swan is also due for redecoration shortly.

Not too far away at the Blue Bell, handpumped Stones Bitter has joined the Websters on handpump and was in particularly good form recently.

As predicted last month, the Imperial on St Petersgate, Stockport has indeed re-opened. The bad news is that it now joins Stockport's dwindling band of keg-only pubs...

By contrast a long-time keg outpost has installed the real thing. The Bowling Green on Charles Street, off Hillgate, now sells handpumped Websters Yorkshire Bitter.

In central Stockport, Porky Pigs Pie Shop is apparently to let on an Intrepreneur Lease and in Edgeley the lease of the Windsor Castle has been advertised in the local press.

Another nail went into East Manchester's drinking coffin last month with the demolition of the Duke of Edinburgh on Mill Street, Bradford. Closed for over a year now, the Duke held many memories - darts in the narrow vault, singsongs round the piano, and the coldest function room in the universe upstairs! The place was of its community, and utterly beyond the comprehension of those who presume to refashion our city for transient dreams of glory. It is at least pleasing to note that two former licensees of the Duke are prospering in the trade fairly locally - Pete Traynor at the Bulls Head in Moberley and Dave Farnworth at the Assheton Arms in Middleton.

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