

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:
113

OPENING

TIMES

SEPTEMBER 1993

CAMRA

STILL
FREE

MORE PUBS FACE AXE



All the furore in the local press about plans for the second runway at Manchester Airport has concentrated on the immediate environmental problems this may cause - tucked away in future plans for the area, however, is a scheme to take over the village of Ringway and replace it with a giant fuel depot. Amongst other buildings to go would be the village pub - the well liked Romper.

The development is some way off yet and may not take place until the early years of the next century, although the proposals are likely to encounter stiff opposition when they are formally brought forward (not least from CAMRA). From the plans so far published, it looks as though the pub is towards the edge of the development so common sense may yet be brought to bear.

Of more immediate threat is a proposed road scheme in Stockport. Following our report last month about the inner relief road, we now learn that a proposal under active discussion is one to widen the approach roads to the Greek Street roundabout. Such a development would certainly see off the Armoury and could also threaten the Swan and, conceivably, the Grapes. We are trying to obtain more information about this scheme and will bring more news when we have it.

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SPORRAN LATEST

We have reported in the past how UMIST and Scottish & Newcastle are in cahoots to repossess the Swinging Sporan in central Manchester to turn it into offices and a staff club (which S&N would then supply with beer...). Well, things are now getting really silly as UMIST have served S&N with a notice detailing numerous violations of the lease and demanding that they be put right and also asking for compensation.

Amongst the complaints is one to the effect that "the activities of the occupant are a constant nuisance to the landlord..." The occupant is of course licensee Cliff Thornton who is battling to keep his livelihood and his home in the face of overwhelming pressure from S&N to get out. No doubt UMIST do find the thwarting of their scheme a nuisance - others may take a different view.

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PUB of the Month September



Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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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		

The CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month Award for September goes to a much liked local pub - the Crown, Hillgate, Stockport. More affectionately known as the 'Corner Cupboard', the story of the Crown in recent years is a familiar one - a locals pub in seemingly terminal decline under the uncaring auspices of one of our national brewers rescued by an independent brewer and brought back to life by hardworking licensees.

LITTLE JACK HORNER

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The villains of the piece here are Grand Met whose unrealistic attempts to impose an Inntrepeneur lease saw the departure of long-standing tenant Brian Cumston (and so ending his family's 80 year tenure at the pub) and a spiral of decline set in under a succession of temporary licensees. Luckily the Crown was among the block of local pubs bought by Sunderland independent brewers Vaux - a company that obviously cares for its pubs and can offer a range of quality real ales. This was followed up in December 1992 by the arrival behind the bar of Debbie and Jack Parrott.

Although this was Debbie and Jack's first pub, they had a wealth of experience in the local licensed trade including 14 years as stewards at the Armoury Drill Hall. This experience was brought to bear as they set about restoring the pub's fortunes and they have been rewarded by the sight of many of the old customers returning and, indeed, the pub now is much as it was in its heyday before Inntrepeneur loomed large - a simple two-roomed pub, few frills but a superb atmosphere and tasty pints of Vaux Bitter and Thorne Mild on handpump.

Join us as we award Debbie and Jack for restoring the fortunes of this classic street corner local on Thursday 23rd September - it's not the biggest pub so get there early if you want a seat!

news in brief...news in brief...news

We have reports that Bass are spreading their wings with the beer range at the newly-opened **Woodstock** in West Didsbury. Up to 10 different cask beers have been reported on sale at the same time. This was unconfirmed as we went to press - more news next month.

This month also sees a slight shuffling of the pack of local Hydes licensees. Mr Pannell of the Denmark, Moss Lane East, moves to take up the Friendship on Wilmslow Road. He replaces Mrs Batley and son Chris who move to take on the Pineapple in Gorton. This move was despite a petition organised by regulars and presented to the brewery.



If you've been to Cheadle recently, you can't have escaped noticing the Cheadle Cafe Bar on the corner of Gatley Road and Wilmslow Road. Since opening approximately eight months ago, this establishment has become very popular, despite competition from numerous other drinking haunts within the village.

Why then has the Cheadle Cafe Bar become so successful? The reason for this may lie in the fact that it is not classed as a public house but as a cafe bar. It is therefore not restricted by the usual opening times observed by the majority of public houses, and its manager has the freedom to serve meals all day. Typical opening times consist of weekdays, 11am to 11.30pm and Sunday 10am to 10.30pm.

Another reason for its success may be due to the varied and interesting menu on offer. Unlike the ubiquitous chicken curry, chilli con carne, etc. found on most pub menus, the menu at the Cheadle Cafe Bar is completely different. The menu offers an unusual choice of starters, for example chilli tacos and mushroom and nut fettucini, and a mix of unique cold and hot meal selections. The menu at week-ends and in the evenings is different from that available at lunchtimes.

Of particular interest on the cold meal side is the Deli Bar where a large number of salads ingredients, cold meats and home made breads can be mixed to produce a meal of personal choice. My partner on the day did exactly this by choosing a combination of tuna fish, cheddar cheese, farmhouse bread, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, tomato relish and a hard boiled egg. A high protein meal and each individually priced article added up to the reasonable price of £3.00.

Hot meals are also available. Examples include, all day brunch £3.85, Steak Baguette £3.95, choice of omelettes from £2.15. I chose the latter with chips, again at a reasonable price of £2.75. I also ordered a starter of prawns and chicory, but due to some confusion with the waiter this course arrived after my main meal! Apologies given and I made comments on the excellent quality of the back to front lunch.

There were three real ales on offer and each one sampled was good. They consisted of Burton Ale, Robinsons Best bitter and Tetley's Bitter. The former was the most inspiring and the Robinsons Best bitter was of a better quality than the Tetley's. Lagers, bottled drinks, wines and spirits were also available.

By now you may be thinking that the Cheadle Cafe Bar offers an excellent choice of food and drink, but what about the atmosphere of the place? Well the room is lavishly decorated with Victorian India artefacts, e.g. numerous ornate vases and bowls displayed on lofty shelves around the perimeter of the interior. A spacious, well seated and table area encompasses a central large bar area. There are occasional raised areas in corners containing tables and chairs for diners. The non-smoking areas were quite prominent.

If you would like a lunchtime with a different style to the usual "PUB LUNCH" culture then the Cheadle Cafe Bar is the place to go. If I see any CAMRA member there when I visit the place I promise them a free pint. (Ha! - ed.)

CAMRA Pub Hunt

CAMRA's Pub Treasure Hunt to celebrate our rich heritage of independent brewers took place on Saturday 3rd July. Ten eager and thirsty teams assembled at Manchester's Beer House to be set on a trail comprising eight pubs and twenty four clues. Despite a strong challenge from South Manchester CAMRA's "Funky Monkey's Hangmen", the coveted trophy - well, OK, three bottles of West Coast Brewery beer - was won by "Dick and Puppet" (don't ask), otherwise known as Roger Hall and Mark McConochie of CAMRA's North Manchester branch. Having triumphed through a mixture of pub knowledge, erudition, and sheer bluff, it was the least Roger and Mark could do to agree to set questions next year. July 2nd 1994, when this year's winners will bring you an even more brain challenging and footslogging event. Thanks to all our contestants (even our wooden-spoonists Shrewsbury Town Supporters!), and special thanks to Pete at the Beer House for use of the room and for the splendid chilli afterwards.

Tom Thumb's

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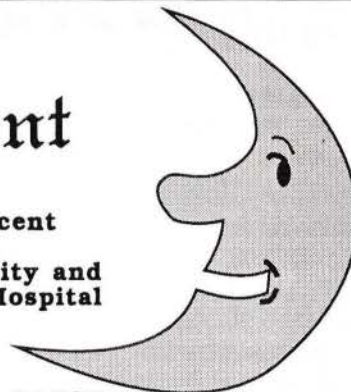
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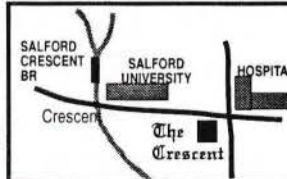


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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Jim Flynn

I read with interest each month the somewhat eccentric views of your columnist 'Curmudgeon'.

Whilst on holiday recently my thoughts turned to his June article which I can only describe as virulently anti-family. This man cannot possibly have ever traipsed around a town with three kids in tow, unsuccessfully looking for a pub with a decent pint and a halfway reasonable family room as I did in Whitstable, Kent, this year. I can only surmise that in reality Curmudgeon harks nostalgically back to the days when the man of the family left the children with the "little wife" and went down to the pub with a clear conscience.

Increasingly those days are going despite the attitudes of old fashioned backwoodsmen like Curmudgeon and if pubs are going to survive they must care for their potential customers given this changed reality. CAMRA has accepted the reality isn't men like Curmudgeon sticking their heads in the sand.

From: Richard Hough

Recently I have noticed a worrying trend in several pubs. A fine pint of ale is often served straight into a red hot glass fresh from the dishwasher. Not only does this warm up a carefully kept beer, but on occasion the glass itself may crack.

This practice is most prevalent with new or inexperienced bar staff, or, when I ask for my favourite 'pint in a dimple pot please'. If licensees can take the trouble to keep a decent pint in the cellar, why can't they serve that same decent pint to the customer at the bar? (Answers on a postcard please - ed.)

From: Councillor Sheila Bailey (Lab., Edgeley)

I refer to the article in last month's edition regarding a possible inner relief route involving King Street West, Edgeley.

I would like to express my total opposition to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. I do not believe we need any more road building in this area of Stockport.
2. Edgeley has enough problems from the nearby football stadium and increasing the volume of traffic in the area would only add to these.
3. It would necessitate the demolition of some long-standing local landmarks (including several popular local pubs), not to mention some residential properties.
4. It would effectively cut off Edgeley from the Station and Town Centre.
5. It would increase the amount of pollution in the area from traffic fumes, particularly affecting residents in the York Street flats.
6. Finally, before we think of building any more roads we should vastly improve the state of many of the ones we already have.

Whilst this proposal is not going to be put forward in the immediate future, it is being discussed. That is why I am making my position quite clear at the outset.

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Pub Gardens

by Tom Lord

Did you frequent any pubs with beer gardens this summer? What more pleasant pastime can there be than sitting in a pub beer garden in the cool of the evening enjoying a few pints among the trees, flowers and grassy bits!

Even the normal perils of a beer garden such as noisy kids; hard benches which numb your bum; gnats, flies, wasps and moths, not to mention bird muck, all fade into insignificance as you relax towards the end of a fraught day with a few well chosen pints.

This is an idyllic picture and certainly many pubs do have proper spacious beer gardens worthy of the name, but in these days when every other pub, be it rural, urban or city location seems to have a notice proclaiming 'Beer Garden at Rear' - just what are you to expect?

In some instances it is just as well that the beer garden is in the rear so that you can't see it before you go in the pub!

Most rural pubs have the space to make a good job of a beer garden provided it is well kept and maintained. Often the main problem with rural beer gardens are the rural animals which regard it as their domain. Geese and ducks generally are no problem, sheep and even cattle can be tolerated. No, the only serious menace are goats. Lovable, inquisitive creatures whose only faults are their persistence and the fact that they will eat bloody anything! You cannot get rid of them! In the main though, rural beer gardens are excellent places to enjoy the few good summer days we get; and there are some excellent examples in our area, particularly in the Peak District and Cheshire.

Closing in on the City Centres, next comes the urban beer garden; all the better if attached to one of the dwindling number of bowling greens. Smaller than its rural counterpart it can be quite pleasant, provided it is well away from the car park! Sitting on a piece of grass next to the car park is not my idea of a beer garden.

It is in built-up and city areas where often the 'beer garden' notice should be renamed 'beer-yard'. There are some honourable exceptions to this and some small really good and imaginative beer gardens do exist in town and city centres (try the Station in Ashton on Warrington Street to see what can be done). At least one local pub in Stockport has been honest enough to term its outdoor drinking area the "Beer Yarden"!

Often the term 'outdoor drinking area' is far more descriptive since the small flagged patio or cobbled yard and odd potted geranium does not a garden make.

So please, if we are to have beer gardens, large or small, let's make them worthwhile. After all, the dictionary defines 'garden' as 'a piece of ground partly grassed used for growing flowers and fruit and as a place of recreation'.



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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Hot on the heels of last month's expose of the threat to many of our pubs comes news of more schemes in the pipeline threatening yet more locals. In the past the main area of concern has been the inner-city and depressed East Manchester - the latest threats to emerge now run from central Stockport to rural Ringway - the message must be clear; no matter how safe you think your pub is, don't take it for granted - you can bet your bottom dollar that someone, somewhere would be only too pleased to turn it into a shop, house, petrol station, road junction or, if its a Greenalls house, a heap of rubble.

Greenalls are of course a recipient of one of our Pub Vandalism awards this year and never has one been so richly deserved. The sad news is that their deviousness seems to have paid off - as we went to press came news that they had finally been granted planning permission to erect a nine-storey office block on the site of Tommy Ducks.

Of course, it's not all doom and gloom. There are at present three pubs under construction in the Stockport & South Manchester area - in the City Centre Holt's Old Monkey is due to open before Christmas and The Reverend Joshua Brooks opens this month. In Hazel Grove, construction is proceeding on the new Robinsons pub on Jacksons Lane and this should open early next year - while these can hardly replace all those that have been lost it does give the lie to the theory that the public house is in terminal decline.

John Clarke

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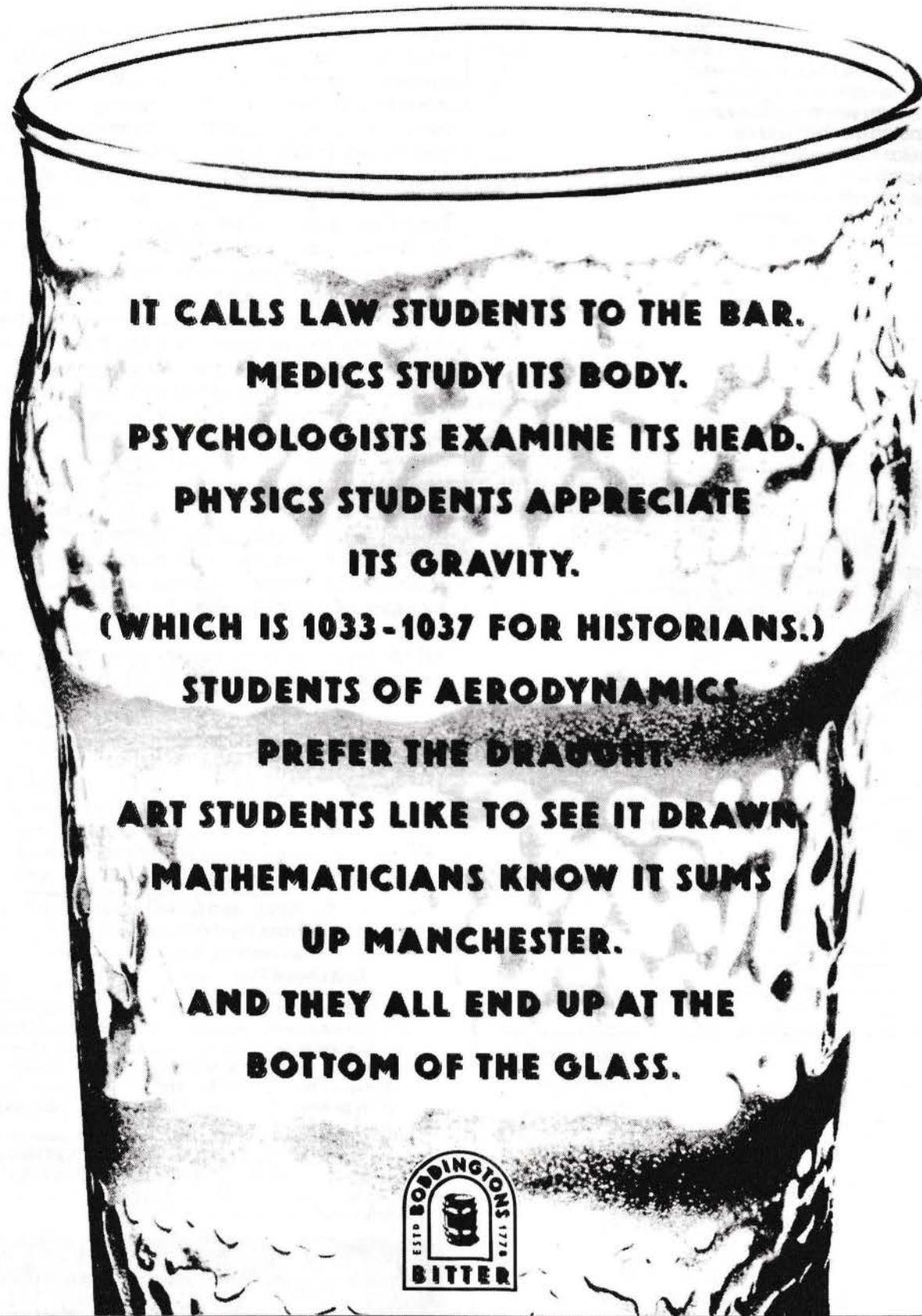
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RHYTHM and BOOZE

After two and a half years together, folk band The Timekeepers have played their last gig; the Olde Cock in Didsbury was the venue for the special party. The pub is a large Whitbread Free House on Wilmslow Road in East Didsbury. The main front area has low ceilings and a boarded floor, which gives it a traditional feel, while more comfortable carpeted areas can be found to the rear.

The bar boasts around ten real ales. On the night these included some from the Whitbread stable alongside such delights as Preston Dark Mild (which was very nice), Nix Wincott's THAT (which was reasonable) and favourites like Pendle Witches Brew and Jennings Cumberland Ale. However, a word of warning about the prices which, in common with many other pubs in Didsbury, are approaching London standards.



The Timekeepers draw on a wide variety of influences, including Jethro Tull, the Waterboys, The Pogues and The Saw Doctors. These favourites were interspersed with various traditional songs and plenty of their own material. The highlight of the first set was "Africa Trade" with Mark and Sarah in perfect harmony on flutes. As they finished the pub was getting very busy, so we had a bit of a wait at the bar before the second set began with "Folk on 45", a light-hearted romp through some old classics. After Ian, the bodhrun player, had scooped his flakes, Rick (on guitar) and Sarah (on vocals) treated us to a haunting duet, and the Bakers Dozen from Stockport were rewarded with "Thirteen went to Wrexham". By now everyone was in party mood, the beer was flowing nicely and so were the band. Ian donned his wig, we had "Whisky in the Jar" and the evening finished with an a capella version of "Hard Times". The Timekeepers will be sadly missed by those of us who have grown to love them, but we wish Sarah and Rick all the best when they go to Australia. *Richard Hough*

stop press... stop press...

Watch out this month for Jabez Clegg, The Sequel - despite doubts sometimes raised about the quality and range of beers available at Jabez, the project has undoubtedly succeeded in what it set out to do, so much so that a similar venture is now in the pipeline. This time the conversion is of the old printers on the corner of Charles Street in Central Manchester, which opens as The Reverend Joshua Brooks (yet another character from the novel 'Manchester Man' as was Jabez himself) on 24th of this month. This should bring a welcome breath of competition to the nearby Lass O'Gowrie - judging by the crowds at the Lass there is certainly enough custom to go round. Assuming the opening stays at 24th, next month's Opening Times should include a full review.

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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

It was a warm July evening when a small band gathered in the Red Lion, Gatley, to commence our crawl around the village and neighbouring Northenden.

For pub lovers the Red Lion is perhaps not the most auspicious of starting places - it is one of those bland identikit Whitbread pubs that can't make up its mind whether it is a restaurant or a pub and consequently fails to succeed at either. Two cask beers were tried, Boddingtons Bitter at £1.27 and Marstons Pedigree at £1.48 and both were merely average with the Boddingtons the preferred of the two.

It wasn't difficult to tear ourselves away and so we headed across Gatley Green to the Prince of Wales, a far superior place altogether. This is a long country-style pub with several rooms and low-beamed ceilings. Unfortunately had the feeling the management was not as tight as it could have been with full ashtrays at only 7.15 in the evening. The visit was marred for me by my drink being knocked over by a woman who subsequently decided that a suggestion that she replace it was a slight on her femininity. Owing to this attack of bad manners I was unable to comment on the beer but my colleagues found the Hydes Mild (£1.09) and Bitter (£1.17) to be above average.

Just around the corner from the Prince of Wales is the Gatley Wine Bar. Architecturally this is a fairly undistinguished and functional building - we sat outside and found the handpumped Tetley Bitter (£1.17) to have a soapy aftertaste and the Greenalls Original (£1.27) to taste like an unusual stout...

This was not the place for a seasoned beer drinker and we quickly made our way down Church Road to the Horse & Farrier. This busy former coaching house with its impressive Tudor-style exterior and multi-roomed interior is a definite classic which is well worth a visit. The Hydes Light (£1.13) was found to be the best beer of the evening so far and the Bitter (£1.20) was above average.

Resisting the temptation to stay we commenced our trek to Northenden. After 20 minutes we turned on to Royle Green Road and approached the Jolly Carter through the front patio overgrown with weeds. The Boddington PubCo

house is a featureless two-roomed pub which obviously didn't get a character implant during its recent refurbishment. It was 90% empty at 8.30pm on a Friday night. The disco which started up played 'I will survive' and we all wondered how the pub did. All that having been said, the Boddingtons Bitter (£1.20) was found by all to be above average.

We moved on past the Spread Eagle (still keg Greenalls) down Boat Lane to the Tatton Arms in its pleasant setting on the banks of the Mersey. This is a large, bland pub with a family room, a beer garden, and unfortunately keg Scrumpy Jack cider on handpump. Also on handpump were three real ales: John Smiths Bitter (£1.38) which we found to be average; Websters Yorkshire Bitter (£1.38) which nobody bothered with; and Ruddles Bitter (£1.42) which was quite good.

Retracing our steps we went to the Crown - a classic and vibrant small two-roomed local which was as full as the Jolly Carter had been empty. Despite the fact that the place was packed, the service was first class. Many of us asked for the Theakstons Bitter but were told it was no longer available (whether this is permanent or not the bar staff didn't know). However the Boddingtons Bitter (£1.16) was the best beer of the night and the Mild (£1.09) was above average to good.

With some reluctance we proceeded down past the Police Station to the Church. A large open-plan Tetley pub with a central island bar. Hardly an unspoilt gem with raised drinking areas and two pool tables, the beer didn't inspire either - Tetley Bitter and Robinsons Best Bitter were both £1.28 and both very average. A few years ago rumours circulated that Holts were to buy this pub - what a difference that would have made!

Our final port of call was the Farmers Arms on Longley Lane which had undergone a refurbishment since the last Stagger. Although slightly larger and more opened out as a result it is still essentially a cosy and lively local. At the rear is a well-used bowling green and club house. Indeed if we had arrived earlier we would have been able to sit and watch a game. As it was we sat inside drinking our Greenalls Bitter (£1.28) which was good and Stones Bitter (also £1.28) - not as good as the Greenalls but still above average.

So once again we came to the end of a Stagger which saw a wide variety of pubs. Not such a wide variety of beer but with nothing really poor and one or two outstanding highlights. Of course this article can only reflect what we found on one particular Friday night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement of the pubs or their beers - why not try them yourselves and see what you think?

Ye Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

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Guest Beers Weekly

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IN THE
1993
GOOD BEER
GUIDE

TAYLORS



BATEMANS



MORE CHOICE

Flushed with the success of their 'Head Brewers Choice' range of special brews, Marstons are set to repeat the exercise and head brewer Paul Payley has developed a further 8 new beers for participating pubs.

The second range is due to be launched on September 6th, with each beer being available at participating outlets for a fortnight only. Local pubs taking part include the Station and Royal Oak, Didsbury, Red Lion, Withington and the Welcome in Rusholme.

At the time of going to press we didn't have full details of the range but it will apparently include such exotically named brews as Hop Pickers Delight and Monks Habit plus a porter.

Smile Please...

You're on Candid Camera

by Tony Wilkinson

Jonathan Routh, the presenter of the ITV programme "Candid Camera" was also famous for writing a slim volume singing the praises of fine examples of sanitary art. But what is happening nowadays to the good loos of Stockport & South Manchester, or just the average loos for that matter?

To the French, the public loo was such an important institution that Gabriel Chevalier wrote a comedy "Clochemerle" (televised some years ago) based on the classic cast iron "pissoir". There was even a similar structure in Denholme near Halifax but that was demolished to extend a car park in the 1960's - a mindless piece of destruction even for that time.

Stockport seems to have more than its fair share of super-loos, but how long will they last? The refurbishment of the Blossoms has left us with the 'lantern light' of the old outside gents but without the attendant pleasures. Apparently safe is the famous 'for thin gentlemen only' room in Turners Vaults (with its legendary 'Compacto' brand urinal) but that was locked on a recent visit. But what price the survival of the outside gents at the Red Lion on Hillgate or the Thiefs Neck in Woodford - one of Stockport's unsung classics and where in the town can you find better polished copper pipes (always the sign of a good pub - ed.)

There is also an unfortunate and increasing tendency for upmarket public loos to be vandalised and subsequently closed, and it can be a desperate walk home from anywhere but the closest of locals. Men now have to suffer similar deprivations that women have had to suffer for years, so "smile, you might be on Candid Camera!".

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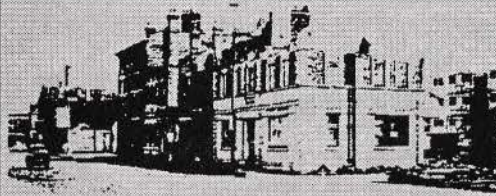
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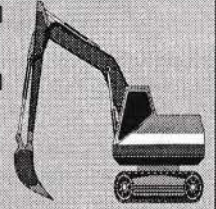
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PUB VANDALISM AWARDS 1993



Once again the time of year has arrived when we take stock of our pubs and let fly with a few brickbats as we bring you the Pub Vandalism Awards for 1993.

Last year we reported a difficult time for our judges as the area's pub stock had been treated reasonably well - no such problems this time around, we're sorry to say! Threats to our pubs seem to be coming from all directions as we reported in the last issue and of course this month more problems are highlighted. As ever one of the main features of the past year, again (!) has been the continuing loss of pubs in East Manchester but despite this, two clear winners have once again emerged.

Our first presentation, the House of Horrors Revisited Award, goes to our old friends Whitbread for their "Tut 'n Shive" concept. There seems to be a little gremlin which every 10 years or so burrows into the mind of Whitbread's pub designers who then proceed to inflict hideous themes on selected pubs. In the early 1980's it was House of Horrors Mkl, characterised by raised drinking areas, acres of cheap neo-Victorian tat and particularly vile bric-a-brac such as wickerwork frogs nailed at random to the walls. After a decade of relative sanity we have Mark II - gone is the Victoriana and kitsch tat - in its place we have what are little more than licensed building sites liberally scattered with inane chalk signs. Paradoxically though, many of these pubs do a lot right on the beer front, bringing welcome choice and quality to the areas in which they are located - certainly our local example in Heaton Chapel scores heavily on both of these points but surely this could have been done without sending in the wrecking crew! Presumably in 10 years time we will have gone a stage further to Mark III which on current trends will probably involve demolishing the pub completely and dispensing the beer from a Portacabin installed on the rubble!

Speaking of rubble, this brings us neatly to our second award. This however, is a very special presentation. This year our judges present the first Lifetime Achievement Pub Vandalism Award to Greenall Group PLC who are also admitted as founder members of the Pub Vandalism Hall of Infamy. Not content with spending twenty years cutting a swathe through the brewing industry of the Midlands and the North West (around 10 breweries closed since 1969) they have crowned this achievement by the demolition of two landmark pubs - Tommy Ducks in the City Centre and the Red Lion in Hazel Grove. The story of the former has been told at length in these pages but suffice it to say that any company that can demolish an apparently thriving pub in the early hours of a Sunday morning in complete violation of Building Regulations and then go on to use the site as a car park without first obtaining planning permission to do so is in a league of its own when it comes to Pub Vandalism.

It is doubtful whether any other organisation will show such dedication to the cause of Pub Vandalism as Greenalls, but they're bound to try and we will be waiting in the wings with our Pub Vandalism Awards - will it be **your** local that features in the 1994 awards...?



Tommy Ducks - August 1993



The Red Lion - August 1993

New Guidelines For Historic Pubs

As part of our ongoing campaign to save the best of the country's remaining traditional pubs, CAMRA, in conjunction with English Heritage, is attempting to draw up revised guidelines for the listing of historic buildings to take into account the special qualities of public houses. A major report on this is expected later in the year but in the meantime we can report an initial success.

Concerned at the possible threat to the Railway, Broadheath, nr Altrincham, on the retirement of the current licensee, local CAMRA member Peter Barnes applied to have the building spot-listed. The application was successful and the building was listed on 21st July. The listing specification comments on the 'rare example of an unaltered modest interior to a small public house, retaining room divisions and original bar and bar-room fittings.'

We understand that the Boddington PubCo are to turn this into another of their 'Ale House' pubs and this should ensure that the Railway's essential character is retained in the process.

CAINS ON TAP

Cains is a familiar sight in the local free trade and guest beer market. Readers may know that this is brewed in the old Higsons plant at Liverpool and that the company has no tied estate of its own. This has now been remedied by the re-opening of the brewery tap at the end of July.

The pub - seemingly built into the brewery in Stanhope Street but believed to have been on the site earlier and built around, had been closed by previous owners Higsons and had fallen into some disrepair.

It has now been handsomely refitted in traditional style, the walls adorned with much Liverpool brewing memorabilia and in addition to the full range of Cains beers (Mild, Bitter and Formidable Ale) will be offering two changing guest beers which on opening night comprised Oak Wobly Bob and Moorhouses Pendle Witches Brew.

The tap is expected to be open all permitted hours and food should be available once things are up and running. The pub is a comfortable 12-15 minutes walk from Lime Street station via Renshaw Street, Berry Street, St. George St and Parliament Street and is a couple of minutes from both the handsome Anglican Cathedral and Liverpool's excellent Chinatown eating area.

Last month Cains also won a major deal to supply beers to Whitbread pubs throughout the North West. The deal will initially see Cains beers stocked in the free trade and selected managed pubs although in the long term there are plans to include them on the lists available to tenanted pubs (although it should be noted that any Whitbread tenant wanting Cains now does have the right to stock it as a guest beer whether it is on the 'brewery list' or not).

The Thatched House

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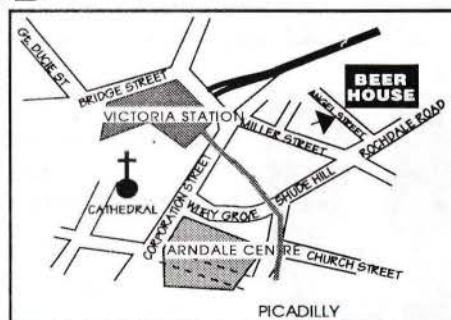
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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

SEPTEMBER '88

The whole of the front page was devoted to the way Grand Metropolitan was shuffling its beers and breweries, the main headline being CHOICE CHOPPED. This, of course, was a reference to Webster's Choice, and the signs were that it looked likely to be withdrawn and replaced by Ruddles County, which was 5 degrees stronger and some ten pence dearer than Choice.

The earlier merger of Wilsons and Websters had already brought about the closure of the Newton Heath brewery, resulting in Wilsons being brewed at the Webster brewery in Halifax. Now it seemed that there was a question mark over the future of Wilsons, and several pointers were quoted:-

- * A managed house where Wilsons, Websters and Ruddles were available, but Bitter drinkers were not offered the Wilsons.
- * A tenant selling Wilsons and Websters being told he could only have Ruddles if the Wilsons went.* Little advertising of Wilsons, compared with Websters and Ruddles - an old method of creating "no demand" before axing a beer.

There were reports on two pubs where alterations had been completed, and two where alterations were imminent:- **The Station**, Didsbury, where there had been fears that it would be spoiled. But these fears proved to be completely unfounded, "as a smarter and roomier version of the pub is now evident, without its unique character being compromised....the range of beers is unchanged, with Marstons Burton Bitter, Pedigree and Mild all available." **The Victoria**, Burnage Lane - a much needed re-decoration and uplift, with enhanced food facilities. **The Parrswood**, Didsbury - vault to be retained and enlarged, and food facilities to be improved - to be open for Christmas. **Junction**, Cheadle Hulme - closing for renovations from October until about Easter next year.

Geoff Corfield, who has acted as consultant to several of the small new-wave breweries, had some interesting comments to make under the heading "More breweries please." He was referring to the statement "Let's keep our 56 independent breweries safe from takeovers and closures." What Geoff wants to see is not just 56 independent breweries, but more, and he doubts whether those 56 want to be particularly "free and safe from takeovers." For every Ruddles or Oldham that goes, he wants a Ringwood or Old Mill to replace it. (It seems that Geoff got his wish, because CAMRA's current Good Beer Guide lists some 175 independent breweries, as well as over 50 brew pubs.)



Reading through Egon Ronay's pub guide recently (strictly in the interests of research) I was struck by how often the phrase "dining pub" cropped up. This sums up so much that has gone wrong with the serving of food in pubs, when it is so often allowed to dominate to the extent that the bar becomes basically a restaurant and loses any appeal for drinkers.

Some CAMRA members can be contemptuous about any food in pubs, and you can understand why when visiting one of Egon Ronay's "dining pubs", with their exorbitant prices, chintzy little tablecloths, wine lists and pretentious menus with "starters" and the like. How many people have a starter with a pub lunch, I ask you?

But food and beer have always gone together in pubs, and nowadays few country pubs would survive without serving meals of some kind. Even CAMRA members need to eat at times, and what better surroundings to do so than a pub? The best pub food should be unpretentious, good value for money, show a little imagination and not be allowed to overwhelm the pub's atmosphere as a drinking place. It's a difficult balancing act - some pubs succeed, but not enough.



One of the glories of our pub food - and one of its staples - should be plain bread and cheese, commonly referred to as a Ploughman's Lunch. Yet how often does this apparently simple meal turn out desperately disappointing? The basic ingredients couldn't be easier - a large chunk of crusty bread, large chunk of proper cheese, generous helping of pickles and, if you must, for appearance's sake, a little serving of salad in the corner of the plate.

But how often do pubs live up to this? Stale white rolls are all too common, as are sweaty pieces of the cheapest supermarket "Mild Argentinian Cheddar", even in places such as Cheshire and Wensleydale where you might expect something better. Sometimes you get on your plate little more than the dissected contents of a small cheese salad roll, sold for twice the price.

The pub which shows how it should be done is, of course, the Royal Oak in Didsbury. Admittedly it isn't perfect, as it's very mean with pickles and doesn't serve lunches at weekends. But most other pubs would be doing far better than they are now if they offered half the portions and a quarter of the choice for the same price.

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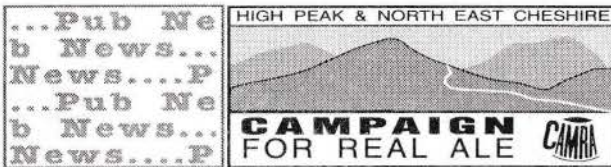
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The Bowling Green in Marple has a guest/house beer from Coach House. This is called Penny Row for reasons we do not yet know.

In Disley, the Plough Boys new landlady formerly ran the Duke of York in Romiley. It's a Vaux house serving Wards Bitter and Samson on handpump.

The Royal Oak in High Lane, recently refurbished. This long time GBG entry (until recently) is reported to be serving Burtonwood Top Hat, the long-time keg strong beer, on handpump.

The Fairways, a magnificent Victorian house on Manchester Road in Audenshaw, recently refurbished and converted into a restaurant with real ale cellar bar has been sold having closed a few months ago. It is not open yet and rumours abound. There will be more news when we have it.

The Whiteley Nab at Glossop often changes its choice of Vaux/Wards Ales and is currently selling Vaux Double Maxim, an ale rarely seen in High Peak branch. In the first two weeks, 72 gallons went and the landlord is considering giving it an extended run.

Not so many years ago Bass had a monopoly of Glossop pubs but slowly things have changed with Bass houses being sold to Thwaites, S & N, Whitbread and Tetleys. Only four remained - until early August when the Royal Oak, which stands at the bottom of the Snake Pass, was an-

nounced as being sold to Hydes. Hydes already own pubs at Gamesley and Hadfield and now have pushed that further three miles eastwards in what is likely to be its most easterly pub.

The Goyt nr. Whaley Bridge Station has re-opened and has Vaux Bitter and Samson on handpump. In the same town, however, Tetley's former New Inn is now an antique shop.



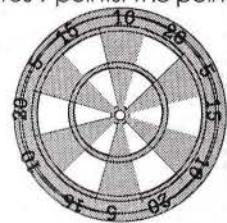
SUFFOLK FIVES is a darts game which is based on a 'fives' board as shown below.

Looks easy to score on with all these twenties but players usually throw from well outside the normal dart board range.

At least one player must be good at arithmetic. Anyone who is good at fives and threes dominoes should be good at this game.

To score, the total achieved by three arrows must be divisible by five e.g. a total of 45 - scores 9 points. The points scored are recorded on a crib board up to a total of 121 points which you must get exactly.

The game can be played on a normal dartboard but could take longer as scores not divisible by 5 would score nothing. You need a lot of patience.



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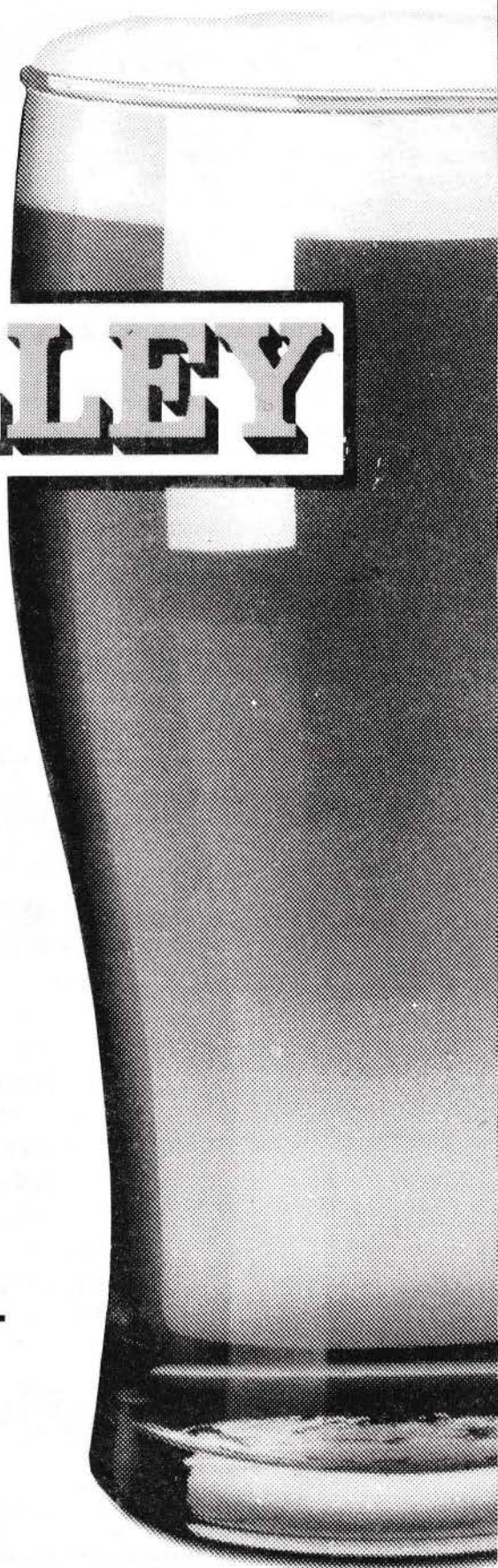
BAR MEALS AVAILABLE

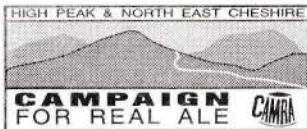


LOCALLEY

**TETLEY
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**BRITAIN'S BEST
LOVED BITTER**





**HIGH PEAK
FEATURED
PUB**

**SEP
93**

The Oddfellows, Kings Rd, Ashton-u-Lyne

The Oddfellows stands at the Junction of Kings Road and Alderley Street in a large residential area to the north of Ashton Town Centre and is a fine example of a traditional street corner local. Its main facade is red brick with bands of decorative tiling reminiscent of many pubs of this period, of which too few remain.

The pub, the reputed birth place of the NUM, dates from before 1830, now occupies three cottages, and is all that remains of a longer terrace.

Its impressive doorway leads into the bar, past a screen which originally served as an off-sales area and beyond to a tap room, a snug, a lounge and (off the lounge) 'Toms Bar' - a recent addition and non-smoking area.

The Oddies have been in the same family for three generations since Albert Lucus moved here from the Peels in Bury where he held the licence for Bury Brewery.

Present licensee John took over from his father Tom in 1984 and continued to serve excellent Robinsons Best Bitter and Best Mild as consecutive entries in the Good Beer Guides since 1977 testify.

But it's not just consistently good Robinsons that sets the Oddfellows apart, a warm welcome and an intimate, sociable atmosphere makes this a true local.

The traditional layout has been retained over the years (when did you last hear of a pub adding a room and not knocking them all into one?) The bar, which has a fine stained

glass front is the centre-piece to the pub. Radiating from the bar is a "tap" room with tiled floor, a snug - "The Vestry" - home to a fine collection of bad taste holiday gifts collected by the local intelligentsia and a comfortable lounge with "Toms Bar" beyond.

"Toms Bar", a small non-smoking lounge with its own section of the bar is decorated with RAF memorabilia - recalling John's father's time flying Spitfires.

In the pub guide "Traditional Pubs of Old Lancashire" Peter Barnes writes....*"If only every street corner pub was like the Oddfellows, then there would be no need for this guide. What makes the pub special is the intimate layout of spaces and small rooms with many original fittings and the unstinting approach to hospitality - nothing is too good for the customers."*

This sums up the Oddfellows perfectly.

The Oddfellows is the venue for a High Peak social on Wednesday 20th October when landlord John Lucus will be presented with a certificate for consecutive entries in the GBG since 1977. All are welcome. Come along for a good night out in a fine example of a traditional local.

ON TRACK

More news of the late autumn beer festival planned for the Station, Ashton. The 'Station Porters Festival' will commence on Thursday 11th November and last for one week. It will be an ambitious affair, held not only in the pub but also in a marquee, fitted out with a bar and handpumps.

Approximately 40 porters and winter warmers will be on draught throughout the week along with some collectable and very drinkable special bottled ales. Food will be available along with souvenir T-shirts and glasses. More news about the beer range nearer the time.

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coaches welcome by arrangement
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Pub In The Peak

by Peter Edwardson

Over the past three summers, we have featured ten of the best pubs in the Peak District in the "Pub in the Peak" series:

- 1991: Fox, Brookbottom, New Mills (Robinsons)
Squirrels, Chinley (Free House)
George, Tideswell (Hardys & Hansons)
Highwayman, Rainow (Thwaites)
- 1992: Olde Gate, Brassington (Marstons)
Yew Tree, Caudon (Free House)
Old Bull's Head, Little Hucklow (Free House)
- 1993: George, Alstonefield (Burtonwood)
Barlow Mow, Kirk Ireton (Free House)
Old Bowling Green, Bradwell (Free House)

All excellent pubs in their own way, and all still going strong, with the exception of the Squirrels, which, to be honest, I always thought might prove to be something of a nine days' wonder.

The Peak District is unusually well endowed with good pubs, and this selection can do no more than scratch the surface. What follows is a personal choice of ten more of the most memorable pubs which didn't quite make it to getting a full article, even though most would probably justify it. Inevitably there may have been some changes to beer ranges since I last visited these pubs.

GEORGE, CASTLETON. Undoubtedly the best pub in this tourist-swamped village, tucked away up a side street, right



Cheshire Cheese, Hope. (next page - view from Barrel, Bretton)

The Witchwood Real Ale Bar
& Famous Concert Venue
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**WITCHWOOD
BEER FEST**

FRIDAY 8th / SATURDAY 9th /
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1993

The Witchwood, 152 Old St.
Ashton Under Lyne. ☎ 061 344 0321

below Peveril Castle. An ancient, cottage-style building, with two traditional bars extensively adorned with dark wood. Good food. Draught Bass and Stones Bitter on handpump; 1993 Good Beer Guide entry.

CHESHIRE CHEESE, HOPE. About a mile north of the village centre, on the road to Edale, parking rather awkward. A picturesque old stone pub with three small, cosy rooms including a vault. Good choice of food although a little pricey. Wards and Stones bitters.

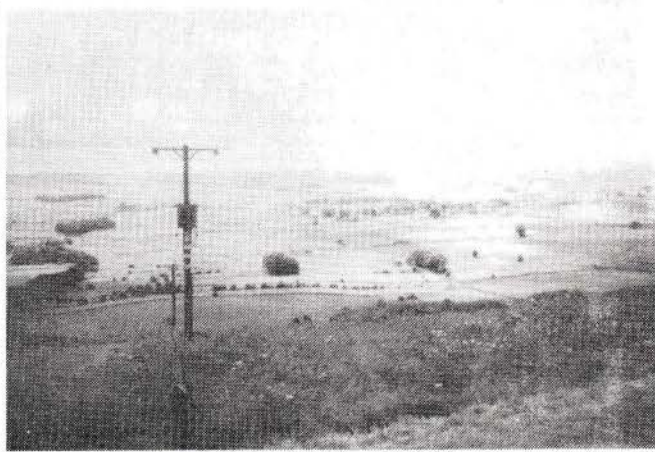
BARREL, BRETTON. Possibly the most spectacular situation of any pub in the Peak District, high on a ridge with views over the Hope Valley to the north and Eyam to the south. A long, narrow interior, knocked through a bit, but retaining considerable character. Comprehensive snack menu. Draught Bass on handpump. The meter-dispensed Stones is almost certainly not real.

BULL I'TH'THORN, HURDLOW. On the A515 south of Buxton. The heart of the pub is a medieval timbered hall with a wealth of oak beams and panelling, and a fascinating carving over the door. A wonderfully atmospheric place unfortunately a little let down by the modern accretions around it and the ordinary food. Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter on handpump.

JUG & GLASS, HARTINGTON. A few miles further south from the Bull i'th' Thorn, again on the A515. A cosy little pub in a bleak and isolated situation. One of the first free houses in the area to stock a variety of beers, and the range, including such as Marstons Pedigree, Ruddles County, Theakstons XB and Kimberley Bitter, hasn't moved on much since the late seventies. Nevertheless, there's a good choice and the quality is normally pretty good. The cellar can be seen through a glass viewing panel on the way to the Gents. Substantial food, but not cheap.

LATHKIL HOTEL, OVER HADDON. About three miles west of Bakewell. Another spectacular situation, with a marvellous view over Lathkill Dale. There's a small, wood-panelled bar on the right, but this is a pub which majors on food, served in the large dining room to the left. Wards Mild and Bitter, and Darleys Thorne Bitter. 1993 Good Beer Guide entry.

THREE STAGS HEADS, DARLEY BRIDGE. On the B5057 just west of the A6, north of Matlock. Stone-built village pub, over 250 years old, serving excellent Kimberley Mild, Bitter and Classic. 1993 Good Beer Guide entry. A little knocked through inside, but still full of character, with exceptionally low ceilings. Very pleasant garden opposite the pub.



JERVIS ARMS, ONECOTE. On the B5053, east of Leek. A comfortable free house with an attractive garden by the River Hamps, very popular for its excellent food. Beer range, including Draught Bass and Theakstons XB, mostly from the big breweries but may include something more exotic. 1993 Good Beer Guide entry.

BLACK LION, BUTTERTON. Off the B5053 about two miles north of the Jervis Arms. 18th century pub of great character in attractive village above the Manifold Valley. Four contrasting rooms with real fires and an impressive kitchen range. Good, rather upmarket food. Free house serving mainly S & N/Theakston beers.

DOLPHIN, DERBY. Queen Street, just north of city centre. Not really in the Peak District, but a wonderful pub nevertheless, one of my favourites in Derbyshire. Built in 1530, the same year as the Cathedral tower, the interior remains a warren of small, cosy rooms including a tiny snug and a room dedicated to memorabilia of the defunct Officers Brewery. Good value, straightforward yet still enterprising food. Bass beers, but a wide selection including Highgate Mild. 1993 Good Beer Guide entry.

So there you have it, a purely personal selection, ten very different pubs which should suit most tastes. If you have any experiences, good or bad, of the pubs we have featured in this series, or if you have come across any other memorable pubs in the Peak District which you would like to share with other readers of "Opening Times", why not write and let us know?

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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Once again Stockport & South Manchester branch has a wide variety of events planned for the coming month.

We start off on Thursday 9th with the monthly branch meeting and this will be held in the Albion, Burnage lane, Burnage. Easily accessible by buses 197 from Stockport and 169 from South Manchester, a good attendance is wanted at this new venue. The meeting starts at 8.00pm.

The next day we have our new members trip to the Thomas McGuinness Brewery in Rochdale. We'll be leaving Stockport at about 7.30pm - phone for details. On Monday 13th there is a two-way social in Cheadle Hulme starting at 9.00pm in the Church, Ravenoak Road and moving to the Cheadle Hulme, Station Road at 10.00.

The same week sees the monthly Stagger on Friday 17th. This time it's Brinnington and Portwood starting at 7.00pm at the Farmers Arms, Brinnington Road or you can join at 8.30 at the Park, Newbridge Lane.

On Monday 20th, the Social is at the Seven Oaks, Nicholas Street, Manchester and again, this starts at 9.00pm. This is followed on Thursday 23rd by our Pub of the Month presentation to the Crown on Hillgate (see feature on page 2). A busy week finishes on Saturday 25th with a trip to present the Beer of the Festival award to the Snowdonia Brewery which will also include a visit to the new micro-brewery in Denbigh plus the Denbigh Beer Festival. Hopefully there will also be a report on this one next month.

On Monday 27th the Social will be at the Gateway on Kingsway, East Didsbury, again from 9.00pm onwards. This is followed on Thursday 30th by a trip to Wards in Sheffield - we will be having to leave early (probably Stockport at 5.30) but if you are interested in this, or want details about any of the other social activities, then please phone Dawn on 4450872.

Finally two events in early October - on Monday 4th the social will be in the Prince Albert, Castle Street, Edgeley and on Friday 8th there will be a minibus trip around some of the best pubs in East Manchester - phone Dawn for details and to book a seat.

If you live in the Romiley, Marple, Bredbury and Woodley areas then you fall under the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA and they will be having their monthly meeting on Monday 13th at the Crown in Glossop - aim to get there by 8.30pm.

Other formal High Peak meetings in the pipeline are a committee meeting on 4th October at the Sportsman in Strines and on 11th October the branch meeting will be at the Dog & Partridge in Denton. For more details of High Peak activities phone Ralph Warrington on 2362131 (work). Members of both branches are of course welcome to attend each other's events.

Finally, news of an initiative in connection with the 1995 Good Beer Guide. In an "effort to emphasise Manchester's profile as a centre of excellence" for real ale pubs and improve selection procedure, North Manchester Branch is setting up a separate meeting to select pubs in its area of the city centre. All members of CAMRA with an interest in the City Centre will be welcomed to the meeting, whether members of a CAMRA branch or not. It is hoped that this will bring a wider experience and expertise into the selection process. The meeting's decision will be binding on the North Manchester branch who will have no power of veto. Further details of the meeting and of the selection methods and survey requirements will be published in due course.

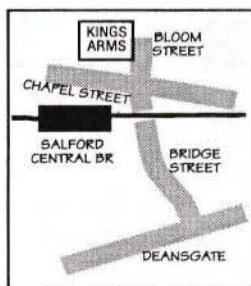
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CIDER CORNER



Most beer festivals these days run a "Beer of the Festival" award, and it's always pleasing when the award goes to a recently established producer. But when you run a "Cider & Perry of the Festival" award, you could end up presenting it to a producer you'd never previously heard of.

Right from its first year, Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has done its best to promote a wide range of cider and perry - they are incredibly popular, forming over 10% of the festival's sales (national pub average is around 5%), and are a revelation to drinkers who are often familiar only with lager-lookalike "designer" ciders. For last year's festival, it was decided to emphasise the little-known ciders of West Herefordshire; Good Cider Guides were consulted, and suppliers - notably cider specialist Jon Hallam - were set on the trail.

Came the day, and the cider delivery was missing one of the ciders ordered - but in its place was a small amount of a previously unheard-of perry from a farm in Herefordshire's remote Golden Valley. And what a perry! With fruit and tannin mingling under a veil of the most delicate smokiness, it required iron self-control on the part of the bar staff for any to be on sale to the public.

But sell it did, and despite limited stocks, saw off famous names to be voted "Cider & Perry of the Festival". So it was that Gwatkin's Perry, made by Dennis Gwatkin and his neighbour Laurence Benjamin at Abbey Dore, won a major award on the first occasion it had been sold outside its home village. Said cider bar manager Rhys Jones: "As a Herefordian, I'm delighted the prize has gone to Abbey Dore - as a campaigner I'm delighted the cider bar is encouraging new young producers in the same way as our friends on the beer bar" (the beer award at the 1992 festival went to well-known Manchester microbrewery West Coast).

Since then, winning's become something of a habit for Dennis Gwatkin. He won the dry cider class at Hereford Cider Museum's competition in the spring, and when Stockport 1993 came round it was his cider that won the overall "Cider & Perry of the Festival" award. And the winning

MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

Hard-hit West Gorton has suffered a further two pub closures - the Victoria, owing to lack of trade, and the Junction, which was firebombed last month. Further out on Hyde Road, the Pig & Ballbearing in Gorton has been renamed the Olympia (which may or may not seem like a good idea on 24th September); Boddingtons Bitter is still on handpump, but there's also a handpump advertising Lions Original Bitter - however when this was ordered recently, the barmaid replied: "I don't know why that's there - we've never sold that!"

At the Mosley in Beswick, following some technical problems which saw real ale briefly unavailable on occasions, the range now seems to have settled down to Chesters Mild and Boddingtons and Lees bitters, all on handpump.

In the City Centre, the range at the Salisbury is now Websters Bitter, John Smiths Bitter and Courage Directors on handpump, with handpumped Bulmers Cider (good - but £1.64 a pint!) still flanked by fake "handpumped" keg Scrumpy Jack. Still in the Centre, the Old Wellington has joined the list of Bass pubs selling a guest beer - and Bass's guest list generally seems to be getting more imaginative, with fewer of the "guests" from the group's own breweries. Can the day be coming when we can stop treating Bass's red triangle sign as a warning triangle and start seeing it as a welcome sign.

Finally, I was sorry to hear recently that the King's Head in Ardwick had bucked the trend by installing the aforementioned keg Scrumpy Jack cider on handpump. This is in many ways a very pleasant pub - what a shame it's disqualified itself from any form of CAMRA recognition or award!

perry? It was made by Brian Browning of Minsterworth near Gloucester - who just happens to be Dennis's uncle.

The message to festival organisers is simple; run a "Cider of the Festival" award, and you too could set an unknown cidemaker on the road to glory.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

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

Student Membership £5

I/We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

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

AGE: 18-21 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 Over 65

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

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

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

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Holts Bitter is now on sale at the Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport. The beer range in the Magnet has come in for more than its fair share of criticism in these pages in the past and it is therefore doubly welcome to be able to report this initiative.

On the subject of Holts, their newest pub, the **Old Monkey**, being built on the corner of Portland Street and Princess Street in the City Centre, continues to make progress with a pre-Christmas opening planned.

Meanwhile across the City, the **Hat & Feathers** on Mason Street has also added Holts Bitter to the range, retailing here at just £1 a pint.

Another new pub making progress is in Hazel Grove where Robynsons are finally developing their site on Jacksons Lane. We hear that it is due to open in Spring 1994.

Back to Manchester now, and we hear that the **Queen of Hearts**, the **Tetley Freehouse** on Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, has been bought by Bass who have leased the hotel part of the operation back to the original owners. No news yet of the new beer range.



Larry, recently retired from the **Travellers Call**

Larry and Margaret Mason left the **Travellers Call** in West Gorton on 25th August, and we wish them a long and happy retirement - including, no doubt, the odd visit to the Travellers. They are succeeded there by former milkman Tony Dunn; while this is Tony's first pub, his move to stronger drink has been backed up by a course at Hydes Brewery, and he is well placed to run the pub for what may, sadly, be its last year or two of life until the road comes through. Larry and Margaret's farewell party was just after OT's pressdate - but we feel sure everyone will have enjoyed themselves!

Following last month's Pub of the Month presentation to Little Jack Horners in Stockport comes the shock news that licensee Yvonne O'Connor is to give up the pub. Citing personal reasons, the pub's lease is now on the market with the fall-back position that it could revert to Vaux which would mean the end of the guest beers which Yvonne has pioneered so successfully.

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Good news for drinkers in Withington - one of their local pubs has been bought by the purveyors of Manchester's cheapest pint (you know who we mean). More next month.

Also on the expansion trail is local brewer **Burtonwood**. As we went to press it was announced that they were to add a further 31 pubs to their estate - 9 of these are Bass houses in the Midlands, the remaining 22 coming from Tetley Walker here in the North West. No news yet as to whether any of our local pubs are involved.

Rumours abound that **Grand Met** have put their Chef & Brewer managed house operation on the market with the likely buyers touted as Bass and Whitbread. Apart from 600 pubs on Innpreneur leases there are also about 1000 managed houses and the deal could see landmark pubs like the **Chestergate Tavern** in Stockport and the **Withington Ale House** changing hands. Whether the purchasers would maintain the supply agreement with **Courage** remains to be seen although Whitbread have indicated that they for one would - as they wouldn't have the capacity to supply such a large block of pubs themselves. Readers will recall that this is the same company that recently closed its **Sheffield** brewery with the loss of 200 jobs. Nuff said!

We featured the **Kings Head** in **Ardwick** in our July Stagger, reporting that a half of **John Smiths Bitter** had cost some 68p - the pub tells us that this must have been in error as **John Smiths Bitter** is in fact a quite reasonable £1.25 a pint and **Courage Directors** is at £1.40. We also mentioned that the **Kings** was a **GrandMet** pub - not so - it is a freehouse although at the moment only sells beers supplied by **Courage**.