

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

# OPENING CAMRA

No:  
117

## TIMES

JANUARY 1994

STILL  
FREE

# BUDGET BLUES

Just as we went to press last month Chancellor Kenneth Clarke presented his first budget. CAMRA nationally and the brewing industry had been lobbying hard for a reduction in beer duty to combat both:

★ the threat to the industry posed by cheap foreign imports, mainly from France where beer duty is but a fraction of that over here

★ the continued decline in the pub trade, believed largely to be caused by the high price of beer.

The Chancellor responded by freezing duty - given the current state of the public finances that was about the best that could realistically be expected. Whether this will be enough to stop the rot remains to be seen. It is however worth pausing for a moment to consider just why beer is so expensive in some parts of the country. To be sure taxation plays its part but even when this is stripped out the price of a pint has still risen by far more than the rate of inflation in recent years. More to the point, that is just the average increase. Many of our local brewers have kept their rises to very low levels while the national combines have jacked up their prices remorselessly. Indeed, the cynical may even suggest that the whole duty reduction campaign was a clever ploy to divert at least part of the blame for the desperate state of some pubs from where it really belongs - at the feet of those brewers who:

★ screw their tenants and leaseholders with punitive rents

★ encourage drinking at home with the promotion of so-called "draught" beer in a can

★ increase their pub prices way above the inflation rate year after year

Actions speak louder than words and it will be interesting to see just how the brewers who led the campaign to get beer duty slashed now proceed. Will they help their suffering licensees by reviewing pub rents downwards? Will they actively promote drinking in the pub rather than at home? Most tellingly of all, will they put up

their prices? Local brewers Joseph Holt, whose main problem is keeping up with demands rather than filling their pubs, have shown the way - in November their beer went up by 1p a pint. Others should take note. Opening Times will be monitoring brewery price increases in 1994 and perhaps then we will know the truth. Was the recent campaign a serious attempt to address the catastrophic decline in trade faced by some pubs....or was it just a cynical attempt to divert public attention from those who are really to blame?

## Familiar Face?



## Wrong Side of the Bar?

see page 3

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# PUB of the Month January

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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The first Pub of the Month award of the New Year goes to a tucked-away inn in wooded surroundings overlooking a brook. But we've not broken with precedent by giving the award to a country pub somebody found on holiday, for the pub in question is just yards from busy Hyde Road in Gorton. As many readers will have guessed, it's the Vale Cottage on Kirk Street.

So often, the best pubs have a long family tradition. No surprise, then, that landlady Anita Almond has been at the Vale Cottage since 1970, with the licence under her own

name since March last year. The cellar is in the capable hands of Anita's son Christopher, whose wife Sharon - "a tower of strength", says Anita - completes their hard-working family team.

Another reliable pointer to a really good pub is attention to detail and service. This is a notable characteristic of the Vale Cottage - so much so that, even when "Opening Times" called to check the details for this piece, Anita's eyes were ever alert and scanning the pub, and she would excuse herself every so often to clear glasses or attend to some other detail. And it's thanks to the high standard with which the pub is run that the place possesses an atmosphere of quality and good behaviour, though with none of the snobbery of more pretentious establishments.

As for the beer, the pub's status as a Wilson house long made this its least interesting feature. Now, though, Christopher's arrival in the cellar, together with the rights conferred under the Beer Supply Orders, have led to the Courage beers being joined by a number of guests - most usually, nowadays, Marstons Pedigree and Taylors Landlord, always in good condition and at a fair price.

So join us and the friendly Gorton locals as we present Anita and her family with the year's first Pub of the Month award on Thursday 27th January. An excellent evening is in prospect - the presentation itself will take place around 9.30pm, but it might be worth getting there early to be sure of a seat!

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# Sun Inn



Although it is well out of our circulation area, we make no apologies for reporting on the latest Boddington PubCo "Ale House", namely the Sun Inn on Mill Lane, Macclesfield.

Licensee is former Stockport & South Manchester stalwart John Hutchinson. The pub had become pretty run down in recent years but the PubCo have done it up in style, even to the extent of installing new etched windows.

The pub is a cosy two-roofter with a real fire in both vault and lounge. Dark wood panelling and traditional furniture complete the effect. Six cask ales plus a traditional cider are available and on recent visits the beer has been in fine form. Macclesfield has needed a pub like this for a long time and it deserves to succeed. Indeed, much like buses where you wait for one and then two arrive together, Macc is in fact about to get a second multi-beer freehouse just around the corner from the Sun in the shape of the Railway View on Byrons Lane which is due to open on New Year's Eve. With the two freehouses, two Holts pubs, Vaux at the Bull & Gate, guest beers at the Waters Green Tavern and, of course, the classic Castle, Macclesfield is now worth a visit by the interested drinker - look for a detailed report on the town later this year.

# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JANUARY 1989

There was a reminder of the dates of the Stockport Beer Festival, even though it was still a few months ahead. There was also a reassurance that the Festival would go ahead, properly licensed this year, after the disastrous shut-down last year, due to an unfortunate misunderstanding over the licence.

Websters/Wilsons seemed to have come to their senses, and many of their Open House bars were being turned back into proper pubs - Tops in Heaton Moor had just gone back to being the Moor Top. But Greenalls were still pressing on with some "grotesque" conversions - the Kenilworth in Cheadle Hulme had the usual bright lights and shining chrome, but there was also a wall of TV sets playing pop videos. Bouncers were required on the door to sift through the prospective customers. But to be fair to Greenalls, there was also a report of the re-opening of the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury, which had been keg only for a number of years - the promised real ale turned up in the form of Greenalls and Davenport's Bitters, and the "inter war years" style of the refurbishment was voted a major improvement on the old decor.

OG or ABV? headed an article drawing attention to the coming change in the law regarding beer labelling. OG (Original Gravity) is the reading taken, before fermentation, of the amount of fermentable material in the brew - it is the figure that Customs officers use to calculate what tax must be paid on the beer. ABV (Alcohol by Volume) is the strength of the finished product, which will let the drinker know exactly what to expect from his pint. Original Gravity was only really an indication of the finished strength, which could be changed according to the degree of fermentation. Three brews were used to show how confusion can arise :- Boddington's Bitter OG 1034; Holts Bitter OG 1039; Robinsons Best Bitter OG 1042. Holts is actually the strongest, followed by Boddingtons, and although Robinsons has the highest OG, it is marginally the weakest of the three.

A final comment on that much quoted bench mark, "the price of a pint". Holts imposed their annual price increase in early December - the 2p. rise brought the managed house price of bitter to 70p. (Holts in 1993 still haven't yet broken the pound barrier - if you are not a Holts drinker, try to remember how long it is since beer in your local pub was less than £1 a pint.)

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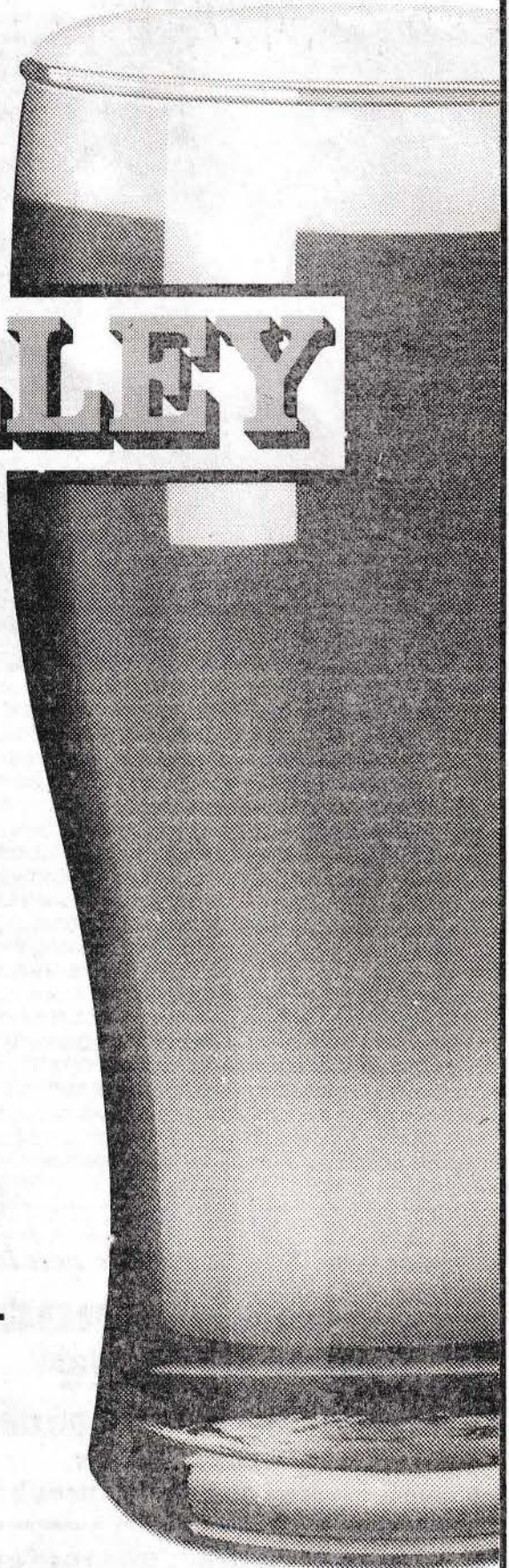
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# LOCALLEY

**TETLEY  
BITTER**

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# OPENING TIMES

## LETTERS



From Pete Soane:

Last Friday (14th December) I visited the Woolpack on Brinksway and ordered a pint of Morlands Old Speckled Hen which was the current guest beer. Mine was the first pint of the day so as usual the barmaid pulled a pint off first then served me the next one. I let it settle for a while and then picked up the glass.

The beer was slightly cloudy, a fact which I commented upon, not knowing that Robert, the landlord, was standing behind me. Without a word he removed the offending pint and pulled another which again was slightly cloudy. This, too, was taken away and another pint was pulled but again it was cloudy.

Robert then disappeared into the cellar and spent the next few minutes among his barrels. When he returned he took the Speckled Hen off, saying that the barrel had been knocked and replaced it with another guest which was crystal clear.

Finally, to the point. If only a few more landlords were as keen on beer quality as Robert, Gillian and his staff then the world and the local drinking scene would be a much better place.

(I'll drink to that - Ed.)

From Richard Hough:

I have recently encountered a growing trend for bar staff to expect a tip with every drink they serve. If I have the money, and the inclination, and I am served in a friendly, professional manner, with a good pint, I may tip the bar staff. But when they short-change me by ten or twenty pence, and deposit this into their tips glass, I really do object. However it is very difficult to complain because you are made to look like a skinflint. There are pubs where all tips go to one of the various charity boxes that can be found on the bar. These are far more deserving causes than cheeky bar staff, and I will gladly put my small change towards them. But I believe that tips should be given at the customer's discretion, and not be expected by bar staff. [skinflints of the world unite, that's what I say to such goings on - ed.]

From K Hartly:

I am amazed at your lack of attention to the Jolly Crofter, Edgeley. It may only have one cask ale on sale, but it is the best pint in and around Edgeley let alone in any other Vaux pub in the area.

It is a nice atmosphere, cosy and very pleasant since the new tenant took over but you only seem to mention in your paper the much troubled pub it had been. I have drunk in this pub for years so go and do it proud and give it a mention as it is the In place in Edgeley.

[no sooner said than done, there's a review this issue - ed.]

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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

It is, I suppose, traditional at this time of year to both reflect on the previous 12 months and also look forward and perhaps predict what the coming year may have in store.

Looking back over the previous 12 issues of Opening Times, it seems that we have spent most of the time both pointing out and campaigning against the threat to various pubs. As 'Save our Pubs' shows this month, many of these campaigns are still on-going and we remain optimistic that at least some of those threatened pubs can be saved. One pub it is too late to save, of course, is Tommy Ducks. It will be a long time before Greenalls shameful conduct in this affair will be either forgotten or forgiven. To conclude and underline 12 months of campaigning on this we will be presenting a richly-deserved Pub Vandalism award to Greenalls on the anniversary of the pub's demolition in February. More about that next month.

It's not all been doom and gloom, though. New pubs have opened, notably Holts Old Monkey in the City Centre and Bass's Woodstock in Didsbury. Holts purchase of the Orion in Withington has also been welcome as has the transformation of the Crown, Heaton Lane, by the Boddington PubCo. The move to real ale also continues with more and more pubs turning to the real thing - the transformation of the drinking scene in Reddish as reported this month by Jim Flynn illustrates this in a nutshell.

And for 1994? Well, the trend to real ale looks set to continue unabated and hopefully some of the few remaining keg-only pubs will see the light and offer their customers cask beers. As we move slowly out of recession the fortunes of our remaining pubs should pick up and hopefully we will see a slowdown to the closures of the past couple of years. We can certainly expect to see at least one new pub in 1994 when Robinsons Three Bears on Jacksons Lane, Hazel Grove, opens its doors. Let's also hope that common sense rears its ugly head where beer duty is concerned - the standstill in the last budget was only the first step in the right direction. Although is the big brewers really are concerned about being priced out of the market by cheap foreign imports, it will be interesting to see just how much restraint they offer when they consider their own price increases.

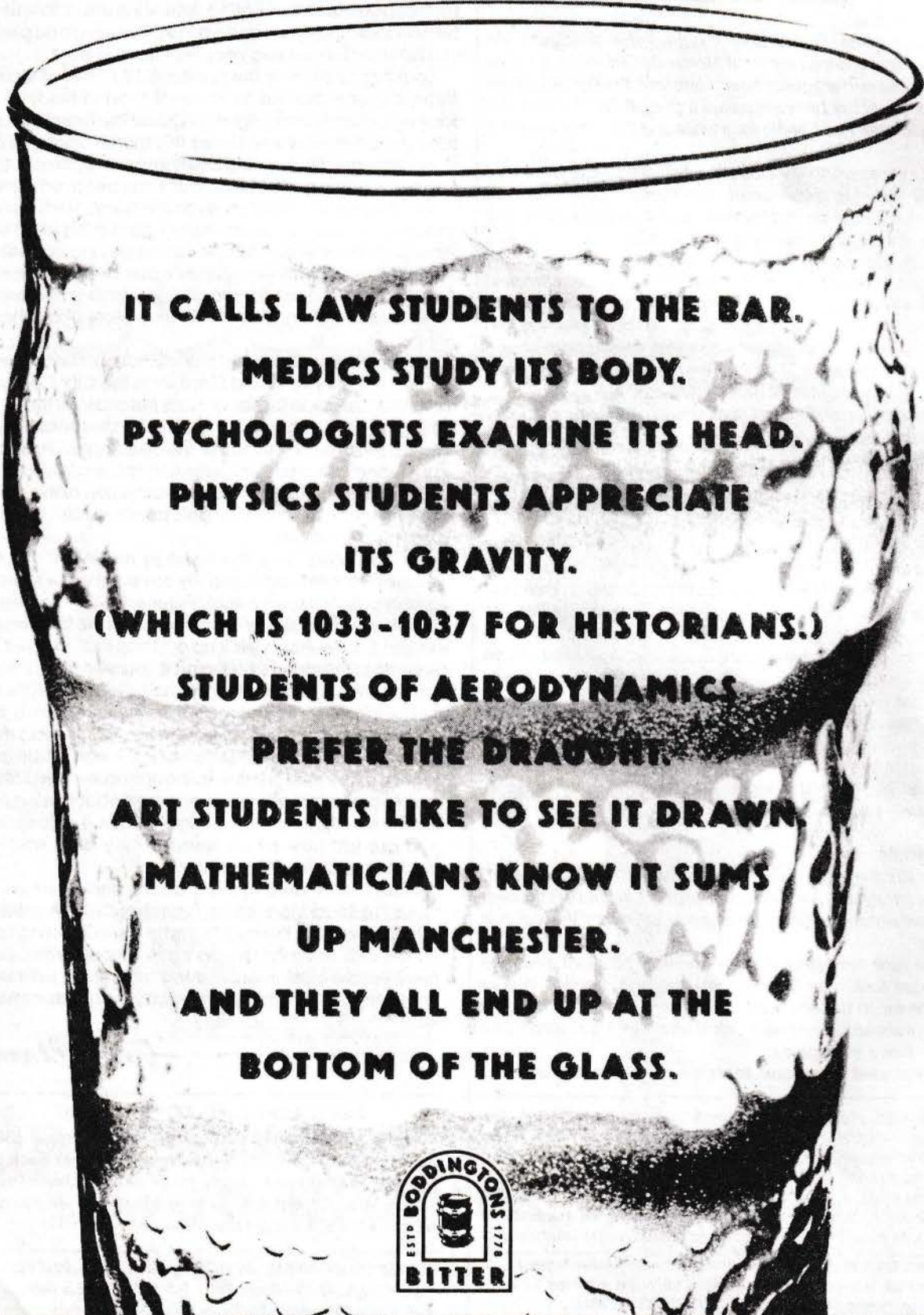
Finally, 1994 sees two important anniversaries - the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA celebrates its 20th anniversary this month and in June Opening Times is 10 years old. To all those who have helped with Opening Times over the past year, to our contributors, printers and advertisers may I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year.

*John Clarke*

### EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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**IT CALLS LAW STUDENTS TO THE BAR.  
MEDICS STUDY ITS BODY.  
PSYCHOLOGISTS EXAMINE ITS HEAD.  
PHYSICS STUDENTS APPRECIATE  
ITS GRAVITY.  
(WHICH IS 1033-1037 FOR HISTORIANS.)  
STUDENTS OF AERODYNAMICS  
PREFER THE DRAUGHT.  
ART STUDENTS LIKE TO SEE IT DRAWN.  
MATHEMATICIANS KNOW IT SUMS  
UP MANCHESTER.  
AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE  
BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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# RHYTHM and BOOZE

How was 1993 for you? Good? Bad? Forgettable? Unforgettable? The best yet? Musically, we saw several milestones achieved. Take That became the first band ever to enter the chart at number 1 with three singles. Mr Blobby became the first artist (artist? -ed) to go back to number 1 after dropping to number 2. Meat Loaf got to the top for the first time in his 14-year career.

But what of live music, and more specifically, of those bands reviewed in Opening Times? Smokey Hand are still going strong, oozing the rock 'n' roll spirit which is so essential to the future of music. These boys improve with each gig, so catch them in '94. Right Band Wrng Planet (should that be Right Band Wrong Diet?) are virtually full time, gigging most nights. They are still masterful but the set is getting a little stilted with a lack of new material being showcased. Krel remain the space cadet citizens of planet Mewzik, and to their credit are frequently seen doing benefit gigs for a variety of worthy causes. Chaps with a conscience as well as ability. Take it easy, lads. Chill.

Not-so-chill 999 have been around since '77 (where were you in...?) and still put most so-called bands half their age to shame with their manic live performance and big noise. To prove punk is not dead, I recently saw the Grand-daddies of Punk Rock, the UK Subs, again at the Witchwood in Ashton, and I just give thanks that some people will go barmy in the cause of having a good time. I did. The Timekeepers are good folk. They will be back together, all being well, in about a year. In the meantime, the two who have remained this side of the equator are in another band called the Major Clangers. It is a short-term project with a rather more trad-folk base. They cover the odd Timekeepers number but they are more of a four-person backing band group than a number of individuals who can each shine. It is an interesting, if unpolished, result.

Earthwood, quoted in these pages as 'the name to watch' and as being 'Good, very good' have split up, for reasons unknown. Ah well, that's life. They WERE good. On a better note, the all-day blues jam at the Roadhouse in November raised several hundred pounds for Christies, and introduced many to some new, inventive bands. It was a great day, and good for the Roadhouse, which (at last) has had a sell-out when the Fall played a four-night stint recently. The supports, Harvey's Rabbit and Cleveland were equally fine.

That's about it for now, but here's to '94 and who knows what it may bring. I guarantee that some of it will be brill.

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### The ROYAL OAK

DIDSBURY

# STAGGER

with Paul Felton

Our latest extravaganza was something of a departure: firstly in that it took place on a Saturday night, and secondly in that we ventured out of the branch area and into Manchester city centre, to visit several of the better pubs that the area has to offer.

Our first port of call was the **Sportsman**, Lees' subterranean bar on (under?) Market Street. It's a small one room pub, loud, busy and smoky. At 7.30 on this evening night it was full of people slightly the worse for wear, whose singing was battling gamely against the overloud muzak - though they may have been singing the same song, it was just difficult to tell... Only Lees bitter was available in cask form, at £1.25 a pint, and it was pretty good (although a black mark has to be put against the excessive length of time it took to change a barrel).

Bass' **sH.R. Fletcher's** on St Mary's Gate (just off Deansgate by the side of Kendal's) might be better known to some as the Gemstone. It has been refurbished and reopened in November in the livery of the Highgate Brewery (Highgate, in Walsall, being the smallest of Bass's breweries, until recently brewing only mild). Numerous beers were on sale, both from Bass (Highgate Mild - renamed 'dark' for extra street cred - and bitter, Worthington best bitter and others, and from some of the more obvious independents (Fullers, Youngs and on this occasion Wadworth 6X). Prices, while not cheap, were not too bad for the places location, the Highgate beers being £1.28 and £1.38, the Wadworths £1.54, and the beer wasn't bad either. If a couple of faults might be mentioned: the decor has in places been deliberately made to look 'aged', and merely manages to look pretty silly; and the attitude and ability of the bar staff with regard to the topping up of short measures were a little lacking.

Holt's **Crown & Anchor** on Cateaton Street was purchased from Whitbread a couple of years ago (formerly Chester's Pie and Ale House, the price of beer dropped by 28p when Holt's took it over. Recently doubled in area and turned split-level by the addition of a downstairs lounge, it's in many respects a typical Holt's pub: basic, noisy (perhaps the television is a little too loud) and busy: it also has a rare street corner door. It's a favourite haunt of your writer, who has found it to serve a consistently excellent pint, and the

quality of the beer on this evening merely reflected that.

The second Bass pub of the evening, the **Unicorn** on Church Street, is a classic, surely one of Manchester's best pub interiors. Wood panelling and etched glass abound, from the central bar to the small side areas. Its clientele is mainly of the more mature kind, who appreciate its somewhat less frenetic atmosphere. Draught Bass, Stones bitter and Worthington best bitter were available, but the guest beer was off on our visit. The Stones was probably as good as it's going to get on this side of the Pennines (why is it that it's never as tasty over here as it is in Yorkshire?); the Draught Bass was very good.

The **Castle** on Oldham Street is the only Robinsons house in the city centre, and it's another excellent pub. The small front room is particularly notable for its ornate bar front, and there's also a small lounge and, right at the back, a pool



room which doubles as concert venue. Virtually the full range of Robbie's beer is available, best mild, ordinary and best bitters and Old Tom. While one brave individual hit the Old Tom, most people understandingly went for the rare ordinary bitter: both beers were good.

Confusingly, our next venue was another **Crown & Anchor**, this time a Whitbread pub on Hilton Street, near Piccadilly; one room in a reversed 'L' shape, comfortably furnished but rather open plan at the bottom of the 'L'. In addition to the usual Whitbread stuff (Chesters mild and bitter etc.) it's also long sold guest beers, and so Thwaites bitter and Tim Taylor Landlord were available. Perhaps unsurprisingly, everyone went for the Taylors, which was splendid.

The only disappointment of the evening was to be found at our proposed finishing point, Hydes' **Jolly Angler** on Ducie Street; we arrived there at around 10.30 to find the place already closed for the night. Despite this unforeseen setback, if you haven't been there before you really ought to try: it is a superb little place.

So instead of the Angler we wandered on to the **White House** on Great Ancoats Street, the only free house of the evening, a small vault contrasting with a larger, high-ceilinged lounge. Holts bitter is a regular, and on this evening Hanby Drawwell bitter from Wem in Shropshire was a guest beer. Both were in good nick, the only problem being the loudness of the band which was playing in the lounge. So that marked the official end of the crawl, although some (fool?) hardy souls went on to the **Roadhouse** on Newton Street for some live music and some more beer. Okay, so the crawl was somewhat stage-managed, and the pubs visited were carefully selected in advance, but not a bad pint was had in any of the seven pubs, and each can be much recommended.

De Olde Vic

Chatham St.  
Edgeley

STOCKPORT'S PREMIER  
FREEHOUSE

Guest Beers Weekly

TAYLORS  
MARSTONS



BATEMANS



# New Brew News

The past year has seen the new brewery revolution gather steam with more and more small breweries coming on stream. In the first of two articles, Opening Times reviews those currently operating in and around Greater Manchester.

**West Coast:** based in Chorlton-on-Medlock, this is one of our oldest established new-wave brewers. An end-of-year phone call revealed that it is very much business as usual. Outlets are increasing and the reception of Green Bullet in the Crown, Stockport, has been very pleasing. The New Year will see all of West Coast beers available in bottle with Best Bitter and Guiltless Stout being presented as "bottled draught beer" whereby the beer is bottled after conditioning at the brewery without first being filtered or pasteurised. Both should be available soon.

**Flea & Firkin:** at our other local micro-brewery, no new products are planned as the seven beers currently produced are considered enough to be going on with. Full Mash Magical Mild will be reappearing at the start of the new University term. Sales of the recently introduced Sinful Stout are said to be going "extremely well".

**McGuinness:** based in Rochdale, this is the newest of the local micros. Five beers are now produced - a mild was introduced in the autumn and at the end of November Special Reserve was added to the range. This is a mid-brown beer at 4%ABV and is selling well. The Tommy Todds Porter is also selling "extremely well" and this, together with the Special Reserve, is to be entered in the International Brewing Exhibition at Burton-on-Trent on Feb 16th.

**Oak:** now based at the Phoenix Brewery in Heywood following the move from Ellesmere Port, their products are seen widely in the local free trade. No new products are in the immediate pipeline, although March will see the introduction of the appropriately named March Hare which should come in at about the 4% range (details have still to be finalised). The popular Midsummer Madness will also be making a comeback in 1994, but you will have to wait until June 1st for that.

**Coach House:** just over the border in Warrington, Coach House have gone from strength to strength since their foundation in 1991 with production reaching an all-time record in the fortnight before Christmas. January 25th will see the launch of Auld Sleekit, a special 1055og beer for Burns Night. Due to agency tie-ups a lot of this will be finding its way to Scotland (obviously) and, more unusually, Kent. Rumours that the company is to acquire a tied house are wide of the mark as no steps have been taken in that direction.

**Weetwood:** based on a pig farm near Kelsall, Weetwood only opened last year and, for the time being, are sticking with the one beer, Best Cask Bitter. The brewery is approaching capacity, which must be good news for such a new venture. The aim for 1994 is to get more outlets in the Manchester area.

Whilst next month's article will feature the breweries in neighbouring counties, mention needs to be made of Ryburn, which, although based in Sowerby Bridge, has been virtually a local brewer, mainly due to its close association with the Stanley Arms in Stockport. As reported last month, Ryburn now have their very own pub, the Rams Head in Sowerby Bridge (and well worth a visit) where a new-ish beer, Luddite, a 5% dark brew, can be tried. This year's Winter Warmer is stronger at 6.5%ABV and will be available, almost exclusively, at the Stanley Arms.

Another brewer familiar to readers of Opening Times is

Drew Marsh, formerly licensee of the Squirrels at Chinley and now trading as the **High Peak Brewing Co.** Drew brews his beers at Lloyds of Ingleby which is in the south of Derbyshire and as he is based in Chinley, the beers are only brewed occasionally. Bagmans Bitter was the first, distinctive, beer and this has been followed up by Cracken, a 5.9% dark beer which was very tasty when tried at the Stanley Arms before Christmas. Drew is planning a session beer, at about 3.5%ABV, for early 1994.

Next month our round-up will cover neighbouring areas including reports on the brand new brewery at Whim Farm near Hartington and imminent new ventures in North Wales, Merseyside and Lancashire.

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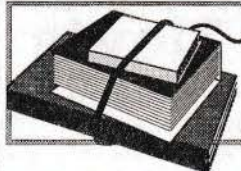
## WINTER ALES FESTIVAL NOW ON!

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## BOOK REVIEW



Kirklees Pub Guide, edited by Mark Davies, CAMRA Kirklees Branch, 92 pages, £2.95

Only a short hop away on the M62 or through Standedge Tunnel, Kirklees - or in English, Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Batley and the surrounding towns and villages - is, I suspect, unknown territory to many "Opening Times" readers. Yet it contains a wealth of interesting pubs serving a wide range of beers, including those from the district's two small breweries.

CAMRA's new guide to Kirklees lists and describes every real ale pub in the district, and usefully includes an alphabetical index of pubs. As a thoughtful foreword points out, only 13% of Kirklees pubs now sell no real ale, and perhaps in a future edition it would be worth including them in the listings as a spur to conversion. As it stands, however, only two "keg" pubs get a mention, each with a full-page article on its history - an unexplained and I think ill-judged decision.

The pub entries, the main substance of the book, are splendidly done - a recent field-test in Huddersfield proved them absolutely reliable, and they stretch to the occasional pleasingly enigmatic comment (what, I wonder, is a "worm-eater" at the Carriage House in Marsden?). Sharply reproduced photographs and snappy one-page features (mild, suggested pub crawls, the local canals) add welcome variety, though an opportunity was surely missed to promote the two local breweries - which simply appear in the main breweries listing along with independents from Burton to Sunderland. A clear if somewhat diagrammatic key map sensibly includes isolated pubs (there are plenty!) as well as towns and villages, and is backed up by good town maps. All in all, this is a very professional and well-produced guide which can be thoroughly recommended to anyone wishing to explore this interesting drinking area.

The guide is likely to be on sale at forthcoming CAMRA beer festivals (Atherton 27-29 January, Liverpool 3-5 February, Fleetwood 25-26 February). Otherwise, "Opening Times" can arrange supplies to order.

Just one final warning. Every guide to pubs or to anything else, is out of date as soon as published, so those attracted by the description of the Station Tavern on Huddersfield Station should note that this unusual venue - rather like a British Legion club with full public licence - has now lost all its real ale and acquired a fake "handpump" for keg cider. Avoid!

RPJ

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Hydes  
Anvil Ales  
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Traditional  
Cask  
Beers

Always in  
good taste

# SAVE OUR PUBS



## CAMRA's

### Social Event of the Year

Ever since the petitions for the Castle & Falcon and Coach & Horses were presented to the Lord Mayor of Manchester in the Autumn of 1989, a representative of the Greater Manchester Region of CAMRA branches, in the person of Peter Wadsworth, has also presented an annual Christmas gift. To wit, a copy of the next year's Good Beer Guide accompanied by a suitable card, usually showing a coach and horses.

Last year a copy of the Real Ale Guide to Metrolink was added and this year a bumper package of a card, a GBG for '94, a Metro Guide, a copy of an 18 year old guide to Manchester & Salford's pubs was topped off with a Tommy Ducks tee-shirt.

This year's meeting, held in the Lord Mayor's Chambers at the Town Hall was different in the fact that the Lady Mayoress was present for the first time; a very welcome addition. Peter enlightened his esteemed company that CAMRA was formed 22 years ago by 4 Salford lads, a brewery worker and three journalists. The Lord Mayor was not surprised by that as he had worked in the printing trade himself for 42 years! He added that his nearest pub was a keg Bass Charrington's house so he usually walked a bit further to the Bluebell, a Holt's pub where the beer was better and cheaper to boot.

The mood of the happy occasion changed dramatically when Peter introduced the subject of the brutal nocturnal demolition of Manchester City Centre's most famous public house, Tommy Ducks', by Greenalls earlier this year. The Lord Mayor appeared to be angry when reminded of this and indicated that he may attend CAMRA's intended Wake to commemorate the first anniversary (21 February 1994) of this tragic event.

The meeting continued with a discussion of CAMRA's attempts to convince the Central Manchester Visitor and Conference Bureaux that it would be a good idea to introduce a series of "Beer Weekends" in the City Centre. The intention would be to attract people from foreign parts (such as Birmingham and Belgium) to spend 2 days here and enjoy the largest choice of real ale which is always available here in Manchester, than anywhere else on this planet (unless you know different).

Seasonal Greetings were exchanged and the meeting concluded until next year.

### East Manchester Up-date

The surprise news at the end of 1993 was the decision by the Department of Transport to reject Manchester's application for funding for the Hyde Road scheme. We understand a further application will be made in late 1994. Whilst this means a bit of reprieve for pubs like the Travellers Call and the Plough, the decision has been attacked locally for

prolonging the uncertainty and planning blight that has dogged the area for so long. Meanwhile the City Engineers are still investigating the scheme to physically move the Plough to the new road alignment and their report is eagerly awaited. CAMRA has invited members of the Highways and Cleansing Committee to the pub in order that its historical importance can be discussed, but as yet this has not been taken up.

Further north, on Ashton New Road, everything seems to be in a state of limbo. Having lost the Olympic Bid, the City is now after the Commonwealth Games although it faces stiff competition from other cities in the UK and elsewhere. A decision is expected in February. The prospect of a Public Enquiry into the CPO served on the Little Bradford remains a possibility, although no date has yet been announced for this.

There also remains the question of the proposed Eastern extension to Metrolink which threatens several East Manchester pubs, notably the Grove and Sir Humphrey Chetham. The latest news we have on this is that the Passenger Transport Authority will be deciding this month on whether to proceed with the scheme and, if so, whether any changes are needed to the original route.

### Pub Vandalism

Readers will recall that last year Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA made two Pub Vandalism Awards. One to Greenalls for their demolition of Tommy Ducks and the other to Whitbread for their Tut'n'Shiv concept. We are aiming to present both of these in the next two months. Indeed, the first presentation will be on Wednesday January 19th when, at the request of the landlord, Whitbread receive their award at the Tut'n'Shiv (Chapel House) in Heaton Chapel. All are welcome to what should be an entertaining evening.

## George & Dragon

**At the end of last year, the George & Dragon in Cheadle had a major revamp. Stuart Ballantyne went to have a look and the end result....**

A typical and uninspiring Greenalls revamp. Greenalls are doing today what other breweries did ten years ago. An open-plan renovation with the familiar 'rustic' feel, complete with farmhouse kitchen style wooden furniture, the floor being part carpeted and part bare floorboards. None of the traditional fireplaces are used (for show only) and the walls are adorned with too many pictures. The ceiling (lowered some time ago) house the usual recessed spot-lights. The single large room is split into discernable drinking areas but these fail to convince that this is anything but a large open-plan pub. Greenalls, in common with one or two other companies I could name, have also brought in a truck-load of tacky pub 'bric-a-brac' and have proceeded to fill the pub with it - everywhere you look are books, tankards and empty bottles. Once you have seen one renovation of this type, you've seen them all.

The revamp has seen a conversion to real ale but with the uninspiring range of Greenalls Mild, Bitter and, as a 'guest', Stones Bitter, this is but a small step in the right direction. I tried all three and found them to be in acceptable condition without being outstanding. In any event, the predominantly young clientele seemed to be mainly drinking bottled and canned beers.

The only high point of the evening was when Coronation Street star Simon Gregson walked in (name dropper - ed.). He in any event seemed to be enjoying himself so I thought better than to trouble him. **SB**

# H.R. FLETCHER



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# CURMUDGEON

I have complained before in this column about how, for too many pubs, the liberalisation of licensing hours has actually led to shorter opening, not longer. No doubt many licensees would argue that they are only setting their hours to meet public demand. But I recently came across an example which proves how false this can be. In a busy town, not too far from here, an attractive pub with a good range of beers called time at 2pm on a Saturday. O.K., there was hardly anyone in the pub at the time, but that was probably because the punters knew it was about to close.

A hundred yards down the street, another pub, with arguably an inferior choice of beer, was packed out, and was still serving, and still full, after 3. One pub was being enterprising and meeting demand, the other was treating the public with contempt to pander to the licensee's convenience. He even had the cheek to display his stingy hours in the window (only 12-2 every lunchtime, and 7pm opening on Saturday) under the heading "Open for You"! Is it any wonder that fewer people are going to pubs if they can't get in when they do want a drink?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I recently received a "Guinness coin" through my door which entitled me to a free pint of Guinness in my local pub. While Draught Guinness isn't a real ale in the strict definition of the term it's still an excellent beer, and I certainly enjoyed

my free pint. But a quick glance at the price list made it clear why I don't drink it more often - while Hydes Bitter at 3.8%ABV was £1.21 a pint, Guinness, which is only 4.1%, was a whacking £1.68, dearer even than the "reassuringly expensive" Stella Artois, which is a full 5%. Might Guinness attract more customers by cutting the price rather than indulging in gimmicky promotions?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A few months ago, I mentioned the problem of the lack of beermats in managed pubs, giving the Woodstock in Didsbury as an example. Lo and behold, on a recent visit, mats had appeared on every table. How much more hygienic and civilised! And it just goes to show that people take notice of this column!

Due to unforeseen circumstances the  
**Christmas Greeting**  
was omitted from the last edition of Opening Times  
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## Reddish Rallies

1993 was the year when there was the greatest improvement in the Reddish pub and beer scene for decades, writes Jim Flynn. The year started with three keg-only pubs, namely the Bulls Head, Reddish Vale and the Carousel. All now serve real ale which means that every pub in the area offers cask-conditioned beer.

However, the improvement doesn't stop there as the range of beers has also seen gains. In the centre of Reddish, the Grey Horse has led the way with regular guest beers and even the Houldsworth has experimented with guests, albeit from the Whitbread range. Yards over the border into Gorton, the Pomona has been relaunched endeavouring to attract the motocycling fraternity and successfully introducing guest beers.



Just over into the Heaton's the George & Dragon, the Hinds Head and the Navigation have all been pushing guest beers. At the Ash on Manchester Road even more enterprise has been shown with Holts Bitter being sold very successfully (could it be the quality of the product or the price of \$1.06 a pint?). You never know, perhaps the days of catching the 203 into the centre of Stockport in search of decent beer have gone forever.

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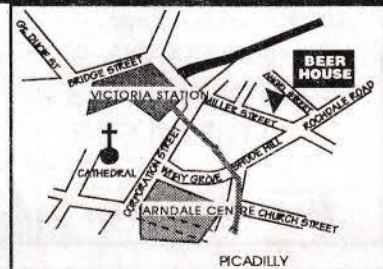
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# THE BEER HOUSE





## High Peak

### Featured Pub

The Bulls Head at Tintwistle is worthy of recommendation and we feature it as this month's article.

From the village centre it is five minutes walk up Old Road and on dark, cold evenings the large, attractive fireplace with the fire crackling away is a welcoming sight. Antique oak furniture and settles all add to the atmosphere; oak beams and panelling, the head of a highland cow and a history of the pub complete with a list of all the landlords back to 1593 are all of interest. Next door at John Marshall's smithy, now part of the pub, Dick Turpin used to have his horses shod when he regularly passed on the turnpike road. Elephants were regularly stabled on their way to Belle Vue at what in those days was a prominent coaching house.

In more recent times, Gartsides sold their hostelry to the Welcome Brewery at Oldham. Three years later Hope & Anchor of Sheffield took it over, prior to them amalgamating with Charringtons.

On my research visit in early November, the usual four beers were on sale - Bass XXXX mild, Bass Light, Tetley Bitter and Draught Bass. An additional pump has a rotating beer, on my last two visits there were Taylors Landlord and Worthington Best Bitter.

If going for a meal, there is a fair choice every night of the week, with starters and sweets, all home cooked by the landlady and her assistant and our party were impressed enough to say we would dine there again. There are two more pubs and two clubs all within a couple of minutes walk.

### Fringe Featured Pub (Sheffield Branch)

On 17th September a celebration evening was held at the Valley Lodge, Bradwell in the Hope Valley. The pub won CAMRA Pub of the Year for the East Midlands Region (which covers an area from Derbyshire to the Lincolnshire coast, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire).

Formerly the Shoulder of Mutton, built in 1937 to replace an earlier inn of the same name, it was taken over and re-named by the present landlords, Reg and Angie Davies. With several years experience running pubs in the Lancashire area, Reg introduced an adventurous guest beer policy as seen by the rows of pumpclips around the pub. Wards Bitter and Stones Bitter are the regular ales.

As well as sandwiches, there is a full range of English fare as well as Indian and Italian cuisine and vegetarian dishes. There is a large car park and outside seating, from which can be seen the antics of the 60 or so pub resident free-flying budgerigars which are kept in a big cage covering a large section of the pub roof and which fly over to the nearby trees - beer and budgies is an unusual combination.

The Valley Lodge can be reached by following the signs to Bradwell off the Bamford to Castleton Road and a weekend walk in this area finds the ideal terminus for lunch.

## Mine's a Pint

While we are filling our cars with litres of petrol, queuing in supermarkets for kilos of sugar, and paying for them with pounds and (ever-diminishing) new pence, one standard will remain: the Imperial Pint. Defined as the eighth part of a gallon, it contains 34.659 cubic inches. It has for centuries been the standard measure for serving drinks in licensed premises (although the gallon was not standardised in this country until 1824), and it looks set to continue for a very long time yet.

But why, when our fellow Europeans are drinking litres of beer (and fractions thereof), do we still staunchly favour the Pint? Firstly, it is a pleasant amount to hold. The most commonly available glass in our pubs, the brim-measure straight pint, when full of liquid, feels comfortable in the hand, without being too cumbersome.

Secondly, the pint can be subdivided into other convenient units for drinks. The half pint for people with a lower liquid capacity, or for drinks not suitable in such a large volume as a pint. The nip, or third of a pint, is perfect to sample a beer, or for straight winter ales or barley wines, which cannot be quaffed at will. The quarter-pint, or gill, is not a common measure, but everyone will be familiar with the standard spirit measure of one sixth of a gill; there are consequentially 24 optic units to a pint.

Finally, of course, the pint is a pleasant amount to drink. How better to relax after a hard day at work than over a pint?

As an interesting note, do you know where the name "pint" comes from? The French pinte comes from the Latin picea which means 'painted' or 'marked', like the measuring vessel from which pints were originally poured. *RH*



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Whitbread's real ale house on Market Street in Hyde, formerly the Clarendon, is not called the Pump House, as we previously reported, but the Beer Engine. There's a decent if conventional range of beers and the keg Scrumpy Jack cider "handpump" now appears to dispense Woodpecker. While this is still technically misleading, nobody with any drinking experience would see Woodpecker as anything other than a keg cider, so we can chalk up yet another victory for CAMRA's campaign for honest dispense methods - what Bulmers think about this dilution of their carefully nurtured brand image for Scrumpy Jack (or indeed Woodpecker) is anybody's guess!

Unarguably a good pint of Taylors Landlord in the Romper, Marple Ridge, in mid-December, but somewhat a bit of a shock at £1.78, when two separate Glossop pubs had charged £1.34 and £1.38 respectively in the same weekend. Still, down the lane at the Sportsman in Strines, Mitchells ESB, Bitter, and Eldridge Pope Blackdown Porter (£1.38) made amends in curtailing the shock in what is a much better 1994 Good Beer Guide choice than the former!

## The Shady Oak

The Shady Oak on Redford Drive in Bramhall re-opened at the end of November after six weeks' closure for refurbishment. There have been no major visible structural changes, just a general smartening-up and an increase in the seating area, but behind the scenes there have been extensive improvements to kitchen and cellar facilities. The television has been moved from the passageway by the bar counter but this remains a congested area even when most of the pub is empty.

The beer range has now been restricted to beers supplied through Tetleys' standard list, namely Tetley Bitter and Imperial, Jennings Bitter and Marstons Pedigree. It's disappointing to see that the previous best seller, Thwaites Bitter, the last vestige of the pub's one-time incarnation as a free house, has now disappeared. Hopefully guest beers along the lines of the Old Mill in Cheadle Hulme will be introduced before too long.

Although the Shady Oak hasn't been turned into a restaurant, there's more emphasis on food, with a "Big Steak" bar food menu on offer, fairly reasonably priced, with main courses starting at under £4. There's now also a family dining area. While the changes have brought a general improvement in the pub, the jury remains out as to whether they are enough to attract customers from beyond the surrounding estate, particularly without guest beers.

**MORE**

... next month



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## Local Haunts - The Bridge Inn

by Pete Massey

It is a quarter past midnight. I'm sitting alone at the bar writing this article.

Everyone has gone, and all the lights are out, save the red bar lights. Our dog has just barked again at something that isn't there. I got up to investigate and caught the scent of a long-ago ladies talcum perfume.

I'm now back again at the bar with its famous 'cold spot' and 'hanging monkey' which upsets some spirits, where Mrs Bebb would stand, her head just visible over the bar in the snug. Drinking her Stout.

The landlady (Lil) & I were sitting late one night at the bar, everyone gone. There came two knocks from inside the fabric of the bar, and next door the pool table emptied itself of its balls.

Mrs Bebb was a regular at the Bridge, and lived just across the road. Her husband left her and her children were taken away. She hanged herself.

The Stockport Ghost Society is based at The Bridge and has regular interesting evenings discussing all aspects of the paranormal over a good pint and around a real fire. The Society is hosted by Martin Mills and Angela Conway who are authorities on local hauntings and have just produced their second book: - 'Ghosts and Ghosthunting in Stockport'. Meetings are held regularly - contact the pub to find out dates. Thanks to Grimley Fiendish and Revenante for being there, and hopefully we may have more tales of local haunts in future issues of OT.

## Bottled Brewers Choice

As well as producing a second range of Head Brewers Choice beers, Marstons are now also making some of these available in bottle. Launched on October 18th, the new bottled range consists of Albion Porter (4.4%ABV), Stout (4%), Union Mild (4%), India Export Pale Ale (5.5%) and, as a 'seasonal special,' Christmas Beer (4.8%).

They are being offered to most licensees with a suggested retail price of £1.38 for the first three and £1.48 for the Export and Christmas Beer. While these will doubtless be filtered and pasteurised products it is still good to see distinctive bottled beers making a comeback onto pub shelves.

## Old Mill Beer Festival

Once again real ale fans in the Cheadle Hulme area have been treated to a beer festival at the Old Mill.

This took place in the last week in October and featured approximately 25 beers with six of these available at any one time. Beers included ranged from the regular Old Mill Festival beers - Moorhouses Pendle Witches Brew, Oak Wobbly Bob - to the not so often seen Banks and Taylor Dragon Slayer and Nix Wincotts brew "That". The only mild on during the festival was Thwaites Mild - very good it was too - but it would have been nice to see a few more milds on during the festival.

As usual the festival was a great success and like everyone else in the area O.T. will be looking forward to the next one.

FOR THE TRADITIONALIST



FREDERIC ROBINSON LIMITED, UNICORN BREWERY, STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE SK1 1JJ. TEL: 061-480 6571.

# CAMRA CALLING!

## Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

We start off the New Year with a full programme of activities kicking off on Monday 10th with a social at the Royal Oak, Commercial Road, Hazel Grove. In common with all Monday socials this starts at 9.00pm.

This is in fact a hectic week with the branch meeting on Thursday 13th. This will be a busy meeting with both voting for Pub of the Year and, hopefully, a guest speaker. The venue is the Victoria on Burnage Lane. On Friday 14th we are having a 10-pin bowling night in Stockport, meeting at the Manchester Arms at 7.00pm. The next day marks the 20th anniversary of the branch and to mark this we will be having a celebration drink at the Printers in Cheadle, birthplace of the branch back in 1974. For details of any of these events, contact Dawn Geddes on 445 0872.

After a hectic week we wind down on Monday 17th with a social at the Imperial, Birch Street, West Gorton but it's back into the fray on Tuesday 18th with a visit to the new premises of the West Coast Brewery. As you may know this is now located in the old King William IV pub, on Justin Close, a couple of minutes walk from the Kings Arms. We meet at the brewery at 8.00pm and as places are limited to 25 phone Dawn to book. The following night we present our Pub Vandalism Award to the Tut'n'Shiv in Heaton Chapel (formerly the Chapel House, on the A6) and a busy week finishes on Friday 21st with our monthly Stagger, this time covering Longsight. We meet at 7.00pm in the Farmer's Arms on Stockport Road or you can join at 8.30 in the Longsight, Kirkmanshulme Lane (vault).

On Monday 24th the social is in the Old Monkey, Portland Street (City Centre), on Thursday 27th we make our Pub of

the Month presentation to the Vale Cottage (see article on Page 2) and on Sunday 30th there is a Curry Crawl in Rusholme. We meet at 12 noon in the Claremont, Claremont Road; 1.00pm in the Denmark on Moss Lane East and 2.00pm in the Whitworth, again Moss Lane East. After this we adjourn for a curry in a nearby emporium. A hectic month is brought to a close on Monday 31st with a social, this time in the Station, Manchester Road, Cheadle.

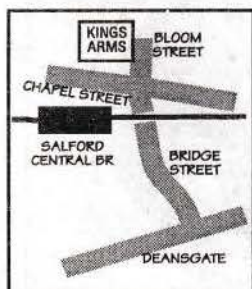
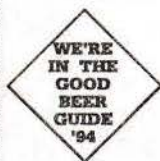
If you live in the Woodley, Romiley, Bredbury or Marple areas you fall under the High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch of the Campaign, and High Peak are also having a busy month. January 9th sees the third of the popular Sunday Strolls. This one starts at the Navigation Hotel, Buxworth at 9.45am. For more details phone Frank Wood on 0457 865426. On Monday 10th the Branch Meeting will be at the Buck & Hawthorn, Ashton. Aim to get there at about 8.30pm. On Saturday 22nd there is a presentation to the Shepherds Arms in Whaley Bridge to mark a long run in the Good Beer Guide. A coach will be run and for more details you should contact Tom Lord on either 427 7099(h) or 837 4474(w). Tom is also the person to contact for details of a weekend in Bath on February 11-13th. Members of both branches are of course more than welcome to attend each other's events.

## New Year Ramble

High Peak Branches latest ramble is a circular walk on Sunday January 9th starting at 9.45am at the Navigation Hotel, Buxworth canal basin. Previous rambles in the past few months have shown there is an interest in these events and it is planned to continue them as a permanent activity within the branch, perhaps at 3 month intervals, of course trying a pint en route!

## THE KINGS ARMS BLOOM STREET, SALFORD

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# MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

The pre-Christmas period saw a flurry of openings, some of which are reported elsewhere in this issue. One of the most surprising however must be the re-opening of the Queen Victoria on Grey Mare Lane, Beswick. Readers may recall that the pub had closed following a firebombing and given the fate of many local pubs, it seemed unlikely that it would ever re-open its doors. However, the Queen Vic is now open for business with Chesters and Trophy on handpump.

Last month's column did miss a pre-Christmas real ale gain at Kings Cafe Bar on Southgate in the City Centre. If you want to drink very ordinary handpumped Tetley Bitter at £1.65 a pint, this is the place for you. On the debit side, Boddington PubCo's Nag's Head in West Gorton has closed after a suspicious fire - it is however expected to re-open.

The Didsbury in Didsbury has replaced Ruddles County with handpumped Courage Directors, and has also creditably got rid of the "handpumped" keg Scrumpy Jack cider (not even the "honest" keg version remains). In Gorton, the Lord Nelson has dropped Bass Light as its guest beer, substituting handpumped Worthington Best Bitter - still not the most exciting beer in the world, but on very good form when I called in just before Christmas.

The beer range appears to be narrowing at the City Arms in Central Manchester. When visited the week before Christmas, the pub had just Tetley Bitter, Jennings Bitter and Marstons Pedigree - no Moorhouses beers, and no Tetley Imperial (to accommodate which Moorhouses Pendle Witch was originally withdrawn). It's not known whether this reduction is permanent - let's hope not!

Finally, may I suggest a few New Year resolutions which Manchester's, shall we say, less exemplary licensees might adopt, to bring them up to the standard of the best.

1. If I have a guest beer, I'll make it an interesting one - not bloody Boddingtons again!
2. I will display a price list - for beer, not just food.
3. If my pub is open all day, I'll make sure tables are cleaned and ashtrays emptied regularly.
4. I will change sub-standard beer, or give a top-up, without making the customer feel like a troublemaker.

Simple points all - yet they make the difference between a pub you want to come back to, and one you wouldn't cross the street for. Happy New Year!

## City Update

While pub numbers in the inner-city continue to decline, the City Centre itself continues to be something of a growth area, particularly as far as cafe bars and their ilk are concerned.

The pre-Christmas period saw two such bars open their doors to the public. In the basement of Affleck's Palace on Oldham Street is IsoBar. Afflecks is already known as a hang-out for the seriously fashionable so it comes as no surprise that IsoBar is, as Channel 4 was once described, so trendy it makes your teeth peel. I mean, we are talking cool with a capital 'K'. Unfortunately, and unlike most of the competition, we are also talking no real ale with a capital 'N'.

A much better bet is Atlas which occupies the building on the road junction opposite Deansgate Station. More user-friendly than IsoBar, it is nevertheless still very highly 'designed'. The light wood panels covering the walls and high, vaulted ceiling give a seemingly unfinished look which contrasts with the high-tec bar, seating and other fittings. Food is served virtually all day along with a variety of hot and cold drinks, the latter including handpumped Tetley Bitter, Jennings Bitter and Burton Ale. It also serves one of the best cups of coffee in the City.

Although no-one would describe the Beer House as a Cafe Bar (not unless they'd had 16 too many, anyway, with this stage of the renovations completed it has certainly moved upmarket. Currently there are only twelve handpumps (there is on-off-on talk of two more), but these ALL serve traditional beers, the belgian stuff is now on electric dispense, and the cider is in the standard 'behind the bar on gravity ghetto. Pleasingly though, there seem to be three on most of the time. Although there is a creeping S&N-ness about the overall range, there has been a particularly good choice on recently, from Freeminer, Snowdonia and large numbers of hard-to-find micros. As to the refurb, well, its more comfortable, the bar is quite attractive - though they will have to raise the optic shelf - and apart from the customers and staff its nearly unrecognisable. The very high beer quality has been maintained, and if only the next phase can really mean new loos, it will become an utter gem!

**STOP PRESS** - The Conservatory on Bank Street in the City Centre (between St Ann's Square and Cross Street) has rejoined the real ale fold, with Whitbread Trophy on handpump.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6

### APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT117)

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: INDIVIDUAL £12  JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

**Chris Stone / Sue Tiffensor, 11 Twiningbrook Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, SK8 5PU**

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





After a long career in the local licensed trade, Eddie and Alwin Bradburn retired from the Grapes in Hazel Grove before Christmas. Readers with long memories will recall that before the Grapes, Eddie and Alwin ran the Royal Oak on Stockport's High Street in its more characterful days.

While Eddie and Alwin retire to Thornton, they are replaced by George and Elaine Wood who come to the Grapes after seven years at the Royal Mortar on Hillgate. It is also pleasing to note that George and Elaine are continuing the Grapes tradition of serving their handpumped beer into lined over-size glasses, thereby guaranteeing full measure. Others please note.

Back at the Royal Mortar, the new licensees are the daughter and son-in-law of George and Elaine, namely Jacqueline and Paul Byrne. All three couples have our best wishes in their new ventures.



At the Plough in Heaton Moor, Tetleys Imperial has unfortunately gone, replaced by everybody's favourite guest beer, Marstons Pedigree (a touch of irony there, folks - ed.). However, Jennings Bitter makes a welcome return after a few month's absence.

The traditional pre-Christmas Hillgate pub crawl brought findings of unsuspected handpumps. Those in the Sun & Castle and the Golden Lion serving respectively Lees Bitter and Burtonwood Top Hat, were welcome indeed, but the Pack Horse raised no goodwill for its "handpump" serving keg Scrumpy Jack cider. Must we say it again? We don't mind what keg products pubs sell, but if they try to pass them off as "real" they forfeit all CAMRA recognition.

On Great Portwood Street in Stockport, Vaux signs have appeared on Byrons. No sign of the brewery's beer inside though, where handpumped Tetley and Websters Bitters remain the order of the day. Not too far away, there is better news to report as the Old King has been selling Coach House beers on a guest basis. Innkeepers Special Reserve was available before Christmas at the very reasonable price of £1.10 a pint.

Just before Christmas the burnt-out remains of the Ardwick Empire, the keg-only pub that served the old Fort Ardwick flats was finally demolished. Also flattened is the "Manchester Frog & Firkin" (formerly the Locomotive) in West Gorton.

One of the latest pubs to come on the market is the famous Peveril of the Peak in the City Centre. The advert in the trade press described the much loved 'Pev' as "one of the city's finest public houses" and indeed it is. The pub is available leasehold for £125,000.

There has been a change in the beer range at the Copperfields on Adswold Lane East, Stockport. Out goes Magnet and Wilsons Mild. In comes Draught Bass, Bass XXXX Mild, Stones Bitter and Worthington Best Bitter. Maintaining the pub's value-for-money reputation, the latter is on sale for £1.10 a pint.

At the Ladybrook in Bramhall, the Boddies Mild is now keg.

## Jolly Crofter

If we were giving an award for the most improved pub in 1993, one of the strongest contenders would have to be the Jolly Crofter on Castle Street, Edgeley.

Local readers will know that for many years this was a 'difficult' pub with an unsavoury reputation which seemed to get through a different licensee every 6 months or so. Even its purchase by brewers Vaux didn't seem to stop the rot. The rot however has now not only been stopped but put into fast reverse by the arrival of Jane and Roy Colton.



Although this is their first pub, Jane and Roy have wasted no time in sorting the place out. The brewery put in a new bar and Jane and Roy dug deep into their own pockets to give the rest of the pub a much-needed refurbishment with the result that it now looks better than it has done for years. Add to that a determined, and successful policy of weeding out the more, shall we say difficult, of the previous customers, and the Crofter is now a pub where you can stay and linger rather than quickly pass by.

Just the one cask beer is sold at present in the form of Vaux Samson. This however has been on very good form when Opening Times has called. Future plans include the introduction of live music and even the resurrection of the Edgeley Pram Race which should be run from the pub next August. Taking on a pub like the Jolly Crofter was always going to be a gamble but Jane and Roy's hard work and determination look like paying off and we do wish them every success.