

OPENING TIMES



No:
121

MAY 1994

STILL
FREE

ROYAL OAK BLITZED

Many readers will have read of the fire at the Royal Oak in Didsbury. Opening Times' Rob Lea was on the scene early the next morning and brings us this report.

In the early hours of Wednesday April 27, not long after locking up for the night, Arthur Gosling - landlord of the Royal Oak, Didsbury - was disturbed by what he took to be intruders downstairs in his pub. What he actually heard, from his first floor living quarters, was the sound of crackling furniture as fire raged through the bar below.

Beaten back by the heat and smoke, Arthur was forced to make his escape by climbing out onto the flat roof at the rear of the building, where he was rescued by the fire brigade, who had been alerted by the landlord of the Crown, across the road.

By the morning, as the village came to life, the residents were greeted by the sight of singed tables and chairs stacked up on the pavement outside their most famous local, while round the side of the pub, the charred remains of a window frame lay ready for a skip.

The mood was one of shock and disbelief, as people, peering through the doorway into the blackened interior where the acrid, smoke-laden air caught the back of the throat, realised the full horror of the event.

Inside, a visibly shaken Arthur clutched a mug of coffee (courtesy of a kind neighbour) as he related his escape and mourned over the disaster before him. As you walk into the pub the small room to the right seems relatively intact, though smoke damaged. The same goes, more or less, for the small area to the right of the bar (near the gents). But, as you walk into the pub, it is the area to the left (front and back) that has borne the brunt of the fire.

Arthur walked into this main bar area, flaked paint and bits of masonry from the ceiling crunching underfoot, eyeing the scorched walls where he had hung his precious collection of old theatre bills - some of which were over 200 years old - now reduced to ashes on the floor.

On the charred shelves above the bar counter, covered in soot and ashes, stood his antique ceramic spirit barrels. Some *continued on page 3*



DOUBLE WHAMMY HITS ROMPER

Popular licensee Harry Curran is threatening to quit his pub if a dispute with the airport authorities is not settled soon. The pub in question is the Boddington PubCo's Romper at Ringway, in many ways a classic country pub and a national Good Beer Guide regular.

Most of his custom, particularly at lunchtime and early evening came from the airport staff who previously had an easy walk to the pub through the cargo depot. Easy that is until recently appointed Airport Authority Cargo Manager David Officer decided to instal a locked gate and so effectively block off access. The result is a dramatic drop in trade, down anything from 3 to 5 barrels of beer a week, which now threatens to make the pub unviable.

The airport authorities have given various reasons for the erection of the gate, all of which have so far proved spurious: ★ they alleged that the Romper's customers' cars were blocking an access road in the cargo depot. Fact - the cars all *continued on page 2*

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The 8th
Stockport
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JUNE
1994
STOCKPORT TOWN HALL



PUB of the Month

May

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

There are still a few people who go to Rusholme simply for an Asian meal, having drunk expensive - and often poor - beer beforehand in other parts of the city. Let's not forget, though, that Rusholme was one of Manchester's historic neighbourhoods long before the recent influx of students gave the area its present character.

Where, then, are Rusholme's local pubs? Well, we think the Albert on Walmer Street, tucked away off Wilmslow Road near the Shere Khan restaurant, fits the bill admirably. Though altered over the years, it retains the split between the vault and room that marks out a good community pub, and there's always a friendly welcome and a very good pint of Hydes Bitter. Though all are welcome, there's a strong Irish atmosphere, particularly when it comes to supporting the Republic's soccer team. Join us, then, to present Jim and Sheila Callaghan with their very well-deserved "Pub of the Month" award for May 1994, which will be presented on Thursday 26th May, starting around 8pm. After all, isn't it time you went to Rusholme for a drink?

Tom Thumb's

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Romper Threat from page 1

belong to airport employees and Harry tells us that since the installation of the gate the number of cars parked on the cargo depot side has, if anything, increased.

★ they alleged that the gate was necessary to cut down on crime in the area. Fact - according to the airport police the level of crime around the cargo depot is minimal and possibly less than anywhere else in the complex. In any event on the lane at the other end of the depot there is no gate or any form of barrier to prevent intruders gaining access. The airport authorities seem unconcerned about this however.

Ever willing to negotiate, Harry has proposed a compromise - the installation of a small personnel gate in the main gate which he would undertake to open in the morning and close at night. As we went to press three weeks had passed by since Harry made this proposal and he was still waiting for a reply.

He's not the only one objecting either. He has collected a petition with over 600 signatures and about 90% of these are airport staff. This dispute could be resolved by the application of a little common sense and goodwill on the airport's part. Both seem sadly lacking at the moment. Perhaps someone in authority will knock a few heads together and get things moving before it's too late for both the Romper and the airport's tattered reputation amongst the pub's users. Harry reckons he can hang on for about another month after which he may simply be unable to afford to stay on.

★ As if the Romper didn't have enough to cope with at the airport, trade has also been hit by nearby roadworks. A traffic light system has been installed at the end of the road leading to the pub which in itself makes access more difficult. In addition there is also the lane widening project on the M56. Luckily, there is light at the end of the tunnel here as work on the eastbound side, which has most effect on the pub's trade, will be over in the next 4-6 weeks.

We did ask the airport press officer for their comments, but they were only able to say that matters were still being considered.

Royal Oak Blitzed from page 1

of these had shattered with the intensity of the heat, while below these were a row of soot encrusted glasses. Plaster and light fittings hung lamely from the ceiling and cracks were visible across the fine etched windows.

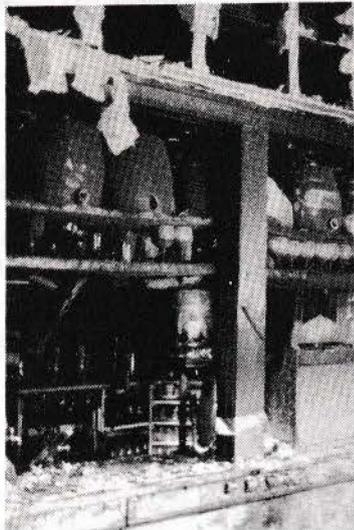
A brewery representative was taking photos (disc film hastily bought nearby) and talking to a contractor. After some weak jokes about warm beer and smoked cheese to try to lighten the situation, he then said "We'll have to start from scratch".

Although it will never be the same, lets hope the pub is soon restored sympathetically to something like its former glory.

It was reported that Arthur wasn't sure if he had the will to start again. Naturally, he is very, very upset, and we offer the sympathy of the whole branch, and would wish to lend any support and help.

Make no mistake, there is clear evidence that the fire was a savage, deliberate and pre-meditated arson attack. It would be a terrible tragedy to think that a disgusting yobbish attack would cause a man of Arthur's character to consider retiring earlier than planned. Arthur's decision, whichever way it goes, will, of course, be respected, but we certainly hope that a Gosling, rather than a phoenix, rises once more out of these ashes.

Late note: A man has been arrested and charged in connection with the fire at the Royal Oak. In an unrelated incident, Stockport's Brookfield was also firebombed in April. At the time of going to press, the Brookfield was closed for business.



Festival T-Shirts & Sweatshirts

Get your Beer & Cider Festival T-Shirts & Sweatshirts before the rest - be one step in front of the crowd. Once again a variety of colours and sizes of t-shirts are available: Black (M,L,XL); Navy (L,XL); Yellow (L,XL); Sky Blue (L); Green (XL). Sweatshirts are Black XL only. T-Shirts are £4.49 and Sweatshirts £6.99. Please send your cheques payable to Stockport Beer Festival, to Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire. (nb if you live outside Stockport & South Manchester please add 50p per item for postage).

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MAY '89

There was more news of the area's newest brewery, based at the King's Arms on Helmsore Walk in Chorlton-on-Medlock. The West Coast Brewery is the brainchild of Brendan Dobbin, who helped set up the Hilden Brewery in Northern Ireland a few years ago. The whole of the brewing operation takes place in the pub's cellar, and no less than nine beers will be produced - three ales, a stout, and five lagers. Although the pub is not scheduled to open until early May, two of the beers have already put in an appearance at the Stockport Beer Festival.

Manchester's Light Rapid Transport scheme could spell the end of two fine pubs - the Castle & Falcon, Bradshaw Street, and the better known Coach & Horses on London Road. There is a scheme to move the cellar of the Castle & Falcon, which would avoid the pub's demolition, but licensee Bill Reilly of the Coach & Horses is willing to take the compensation available under the Compulsory Purchase Order. CAMRA is opposing the demolition of the pubs, so that future generations may have the chance to enjoy them. If the protests fail, both pubs are expected to cease trading at the end of May.

The big brewers have been falling over themselves in the past month to discredit the Monopolies Commission report which could result in the dismemberment of the empires they have so ruthlessly built up over the past thirty years. Bass have warned their northern tenants that the entire estate might have to be sold, and that no more money was to be spent on the pubs, apart from essential repairs. Whitbread's chairman Sam Whitbread said that his employees are "very angry" about the report - "To many of them, a business built up by them, their fathers and their grandfathers is in danger of being destroyed." Fine words from a man whose company has, over the past decade, closed 10 breweries and thrown their workers on the scrap-heap.

Higson's Bitter has now gone from the George in Mersey Square, as it doesn't sell well enough to empty an 18 gallon cask before it goes off; and at the Crown just round the corner, the Higson's pump was broken. At that time the George and the Crown might have been described as two rather ordinary Boddington pubs. (But now, of course, the Crown has changed dramatically, and has just celebrated its award as the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch "Pub of the Year.")

The Robin Hood

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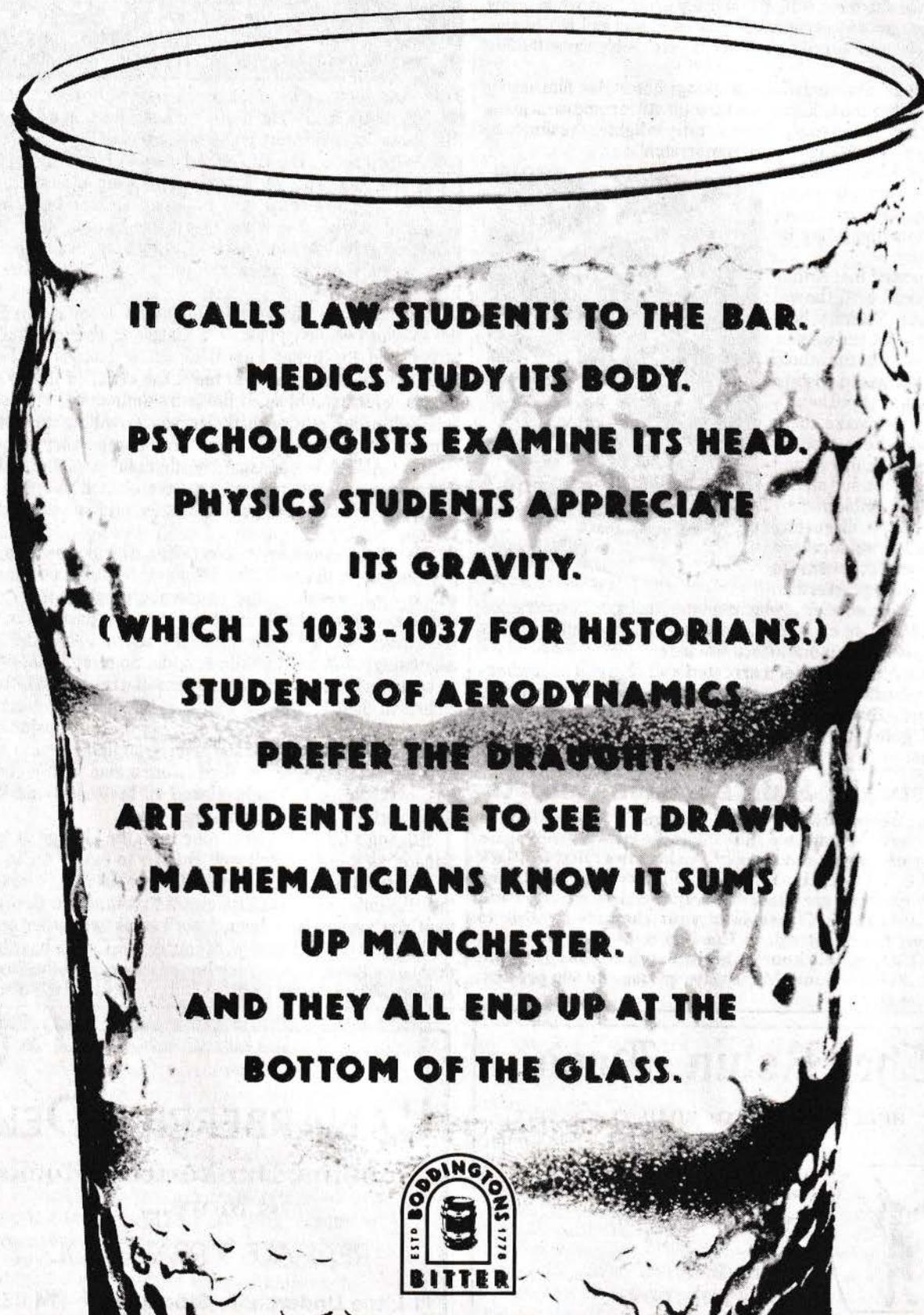
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MATHEMATICIANS KNOW IT SUMS
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**AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE
BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Like many readers of *Opening Times*, I was shocked to hear of the fire at the Royal Oak in Didsbury.

The pub is one of the most famous in Manchester and its legendary cheese lunches have brought the pub national recognition. A classic pub in many ways, not least for its redoubtable licensee Arthur Gosling who has our sincere best wishes at this dreadful time. Words cannot express the sense of outrage and disgust that those of us who know the Royal Oak felt at this act of mindless destruction.

Let's just hope that it is not too long before we once again see Arthur ruling the roost behind the packed bar of this superb pub.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From : Rhys P. Jones

In your coverage of the listing of the Plough in Gorton, you say "no-one denies" the A57 dual-carriageway scheme is needed. I beg to differ. While campaigners against the Plough's demolition have of necessity had to accept the road scheme as a given, a fundamental analysis would ask why many millions of pounds are being spent on a road that is only seriously congested for two brief periods in the day. It would then consider the effect on local people of having a near-motorway-standard road driven through their district centre, and - crucially - ask why no public transport alternative has been considered.

From : Colin Birchenall

Upon recently reading your "Stagger" column in the April edition of *Opening Times* I would like to pose one question - **What does the acronym CAMRA stand for?** Call me ignorant, but I was under the impression that it stood for the Campaign for Real Ale. The reason for my query is the comments made about the Tut 'n' Shive, Heaton Chapel. The controversy over the decor of the pub has been well documented in the pages of OT, and whilst not condoning what Whitbread have done I feel saddened by your blinkered attitude to what is a very lively pub with an excellent choice of superb beers. The said article was an insult to the barstaff, who incidentally are but for one night always pleasant and efficient, yet the writer felt '**Saddened**' to report that the beer was the best they had tasted all night! How anyone can stagger into a pub after drinking in ten others and pass reasonable comments on it is beyond me, to be frank I found the comments "piss poor". The whole of the article paid little attention to the quality of the beers available in the pubs visited and more on how the barstaff were dressed, the type of carpet that was fitted and what they sold in the gents and ladies toilets!! So what does CAMRA stand for? Campaign for Breath Freshener in Toilets? Campaign for nice clocks above the bar? - Doesn't sound the same does it.

Come on CAMRA stop being petty and let's deal with the real issue ALE!!!

As I was going to write a letter myself, I respond on the Editors behalf: On more than one occasion I have experienced similar problems in the pub, BUT on the night before the last OT was distributed, I visited the pub and was greeted by exemplary, efficient and courteous service, and good ale. The pub has come on by leaps and bounds under Martin, but a good evening in any pub can frequently be ruined by shoddy or rude service and whereas the writer may have seemed obsessed, improvements often come after complaint! - PBH (Production Editor)

The story of the Romper and the cargo terminal security gate shows the airport authorities in a very bad light. Apart from David Officer, cargo terminal manager, it is difficult to find anyone who is happy with the present situation. Conspiracy theorists will point to the fact that the airport has long-term plans to acquire the Romper for a fuel depot and, if it is trading badly or, perish the thought, closed, then the price they have to pay will be so much lower. I do not believe that we are dealing with anything so devious here. What we have is more cock-up than conspiracy. Everyone involved must know that a mistake has been made and if the price of resolving the problem is loss of face then so be it. Common sense and compromise can settle this business but while this sad story grinds on it is giving a whole new definition to the term 'officers mess'!

John Clarke

From : Anne T Smoker

Strike a light! No, please don't. But if you have to smoke (and some people evidently do), could you please refrain (polite request) from blowing smoke all over me and my pint? And another thing. When you have finished your ciggie, could you please extinguish it? - that means "put it out" by the way. Don't leave it burning quietly to itself, with the resultant smoke wafting gently over me. When I finish a pint, I don't leave the dregs in the bottom of the glass and tip it over other customers, so why should you get away with troubling others with the remnants of your pastime? Apart from being rather un-pleasant for the majority of people who don't smoke, I also regard this as the height of bad manners.

From : G.N.Mullineux

CAMRA is supporting the campaign mounted by the smaller brewers to preserve the tied house system. In general I think CAMRA is right in this, as it is better to have 30 or 40 small brewers than half a dozen national giants. However, don't get carried away by your support for these so-called "family brewers". They may be controlled by a family, but they are still very big business and they have the same monopolistic urges as their big brothers.

To take Robinsons as an example, I have nothing against this beer, but I do object when I can get very little else. There are about 26 pubs in the Marple area, and of these 17 are tied to Robinsons. The Monopolies Commission defines a market share of over 25% as monopolistic - Robinsons have a 65% share in Marple. Nationally they may be insignificant, but locally they have far too dominant an influence. I drink locally, not nationally.

Incidentally, despite its name, I can recommend the Number 12 Wine Bar in Marple. It buys real ale from genuinely small brewers and offers a different choice each week.

Due to a drastic shortage of space some letters appear next month

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LOST PUB NAMES OF MANCHESTER

by Peter
Edwardson



I was recently looking through a list of pubs lost in Central Manchester over the past twenty-five years, which included such wonderfully evocative names as the Exile of Erin, the Fatted Calf and the Gog & Magog. They certainly don't name pubs like that any more, and this brought home to me how our rich stock of pub names is another part of our pub heritage which is steadily being eroded.

Pub names can certainly take you down some fascinating historical byways. Until the early seventies there was a pub in Stockport named the **Kossuth**, after the 19th century Hungarian revolutionary who was exiled to Britain and became something of a folk hero - not exactly a name that now trips off every schoolchild's lips. We still have a **Garibaldi** in Gorton, named after a rather better known 19th century freedom fighter - but to name a modern pub after **Nelson Mandela**, who if anything is held in greater respect than either of his last-century counterparts, would seem terribly po-faced and politically correct.

There are still plenty of **Trafalgars** and **Waterloos** about, and a few **Almas** too, but the best warlike allusion must undoubtedly be the **Chesapeake & Shannon** at Todmorden, commemorating a little-known engagement between British and American frigates in the war of 1812.

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A few years ago there was a trend to replace perfectly respectable pub names with ones ending in "s" to give a vaguely transatlantic feel in a misguided attempt to appeal to the youth market. This led to the **Moor Top** becoming **Tops** and the **Golden Hind, Drakes**, among others. In a similar vein, what better way could there be of giving the **Egerton Arms** the kiss of death than renaming it **Porky Pig's Pie Shop**?

It isn't only in the pursuit of trendiness that good old pub names have been lost. Camerons have won much praise for developing their chain of **Tap & Spile** real ale freehouses, but did they have to obliterate the identities of the pubs concerned in the process? Other pub chains claiming a traditional image have been responsible for the wholesale renaming of pubs as the **Hobgoblin** and the **Slug & Lettuce**. Whitbread at least deserve a smidgeon of praise for retaining some mention of the **Chapel House** alongside the **Tut & Shive** branding, even if the pub itself is an architectural disaster zone.

A more insidious trend is the replacement of some of the rarer and more individual names with ones which, while unexceptional, show far less character - often when an old pub is totally refurbished and the owners are trying to take it upmarket. So we see the **Angel & Elephant** in Appleton, Widnes, turned into the **Appleton Arms**, and likewise the **Raven** in Farndon, Cheshire become the **Farndon Arms**. On the A41 south of Whitchurch in Shropshire the somewhat sinister **Witch Ball** became the anodyne **Cherry Tree**, while one of the worst of all was the renaming of the robust and resonant **Bareknuckle Boys** near Holmfirth in West Yorkshire as the blandly bucolic **Shepherds's Rest**.

It's maybe more pardonable to rename a pub bearing the commonplace title of the **Station**, the **Railway** or the **Commercial**. So, for example, we have one at Mouldsworth in Cheshire which has become the unique and distinguished **Goshawk**, but you have to wonder how long it will be before that name in turn gives way to the **Mouldsworth Arms** or something similar.

When the brewers do have the opportunity to build a new pub the names given often seem to spring from the same source of inspiration that leads every new Barratt estate to have street names like "Badger Dene" and "Bramble Garth" (they don't give streets proper names like "Gas Street" any more, but that's another story). So we have the **Shady Oak** and the **Harvester**, which could be anywhere, the **Milestone**, simply named after the brewery logo, and the **Three Bears**, newly opened in Hazel Grove, which is faintly ludicrous. The better ones, which are few and far between, do have some kind of relevant local allusion, such as **Banks's Eight Towers** in Widnes, near the eight cooling towers of the Fiddler's Ferry power station.

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RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

The Soul Brothers play music from 'The Commitments' and 'The Blues Brothers'. Actually it is music The Commitments and The Blues Brothers have borrowed off other rather more established stars, but you know the sort of stuff to expect.

The Bromale was the venue, hidden away in the Parkside area of Bramhall. It can be a tricky pub to find first time round, but it is worth seeking out. A large comfortable lounge contrasts splendidly with a lively, more basic vault where darts, a pool table and television can be found. Three real ales are available on the bar; draught Bass, Stones Bitter and a constantly changing guest from the Bass Cask Masters collection. On this particular night the guest was Worthington Dark Mild, which was very pleasant indeed. Not that the other beers are at all bad; Simon Eason-Brookes, who ran Bramhalls Bar before taking over at the Bromale, is a bit of a real ale fan himself.

The band spent a fair while setting up the lighting and what seemed like miles of spaghetti cable before the familiar sound-check "One chew, one chew", while we sat in the dimness. The Soul Brothers are the brainchild of two chaps from Preston who play big band stuff in smaller venues that do not have a full music licence, and are therefore restricted to having no more than two on stage at once. One plays lead guitar, the other plays bass and both of them sing. They are accompanied by a taped backing track which they laid down themselves. This gives the music a tight feel throughout. "Soul Man" was the first offering, "Living in America" funkied it up, and "Knock on Wood" got half a dozen people up and grooving. Muddy Waters' "Hoochie Coochie Man" was in complete contrast, but was nevertheless performed with real feeling. There was rather more delicate blues in Fleetwood Mac's "Need Your Love So Bad", and the master, John Lee Hooker's "Boom Boom" was given the treatment complete with bottle of beer on the fretboard. The first set finished well with a slice of Janis Joplin.

The pub was still fairly empty at this stage, due no doubt to the excesses of the Easter weekend. The Bromale is a real community pub, where much is done for the local people, and charities benefit from their generosity. The previous weekend had seen a successful Easter fun-day at the pub, which possibly accounted for the low turn-out. Undeterred the band restarted, although twenty to eleven seems a little late to be starting a second set. We had Sweet Soul Music till the Midnight Hour, some Otis Redding classics and the Soul Brothers' version of the Blues Brothers' version of Booker T and the MGs' "Green Onions" (!). A poor cover of "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love" was the only low point of the evening, but you must experience the bad to appreciate the good (as with beer, pubs and the rest). These real Flip Flop Fly guys have created a niche in the market with, as yet, little competition. When it arrives, chances are The Soul Brothers will still come out on top.

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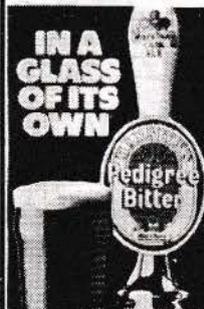
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STAGGER

with Duncan Geddes

A cold and very wet Friday evening was the occasion for the Openshaw Stagger, starting at the Smithfield (formerly the Locomotive) on Ashton Old Road. This is a pleasant Boddingtons pub which was refurbished in the mid-eighties but still retains its character, with an entrance corridor leading into the multi-roomed interior. The large back room is much more modern but still very pleasant, as was the Boddingtons bitter at a reasonable £1.18.

Quickly passing the Jive Inn (formerly the Napoleon) which serves keg Bass we turned into the **High Bank** on Ogden Lane, which is a fairly typical modern estate pub serving a reasonable pint of Boddingtons bitter at an equally reasonable £1.17 a pint. Our next call, also on Ogden Lane was the **Royal Oak** which looked like a very nice pub with interesting bric-a-brac. Unfortunately the Banks bitter and mild were both keg.

Next port of call was the **Pack Horse** on Ashton Old Road, a large split level pub with an out of tune karaoke machine! An average pint of Greenalls bitter was served at £1.24 per pint, but the guest Stones was unavailable.

Further along the road we discovered the **Wrexham** to be shut and boarded up, although there were some lights on inside. (Happily the pub is now open again). Onwards past the Prince of Wales owned by Centric and into the **Forresters Arms**, an ex-Kays pub as evidenced by the Atlas Ales sign

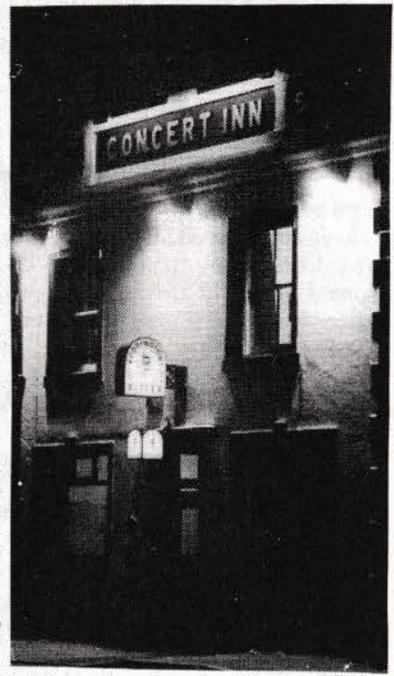
outside. Inside, it was a typical Robinsons open plan pub serving bitter and best bitter. We all jumped at the chance to sample the relatively rare bitter at a very reasonable £1.06 a pint.

Next stop, the **Lord Raglan** on Ogden Lane served Wilsons bitter and mild, and Holts bitter. The mild was quite good, with the Holts being slightly better. An interesting pub with a fairly rare corner door into the vault. Unfortunately the visit was marred by the presence of Scruppy Jack on fake hand pump.

Our next stop and second meeting place of the evening was the **Concert** on Fairfield Road. A busy locals pub with a very nice pint of Boddingtons bitter our enjoyment of which was spoilt by an overloud jukebox.

The **Oddfellows** on Abbey Hey Lane provided our next refreshments. A pub with an island bar and interesting bric-a-brac. Boddingtons bitter and mild were both sampled and found to be quite good, though the mild bore a remarkable resemblance to Chesters Mild!

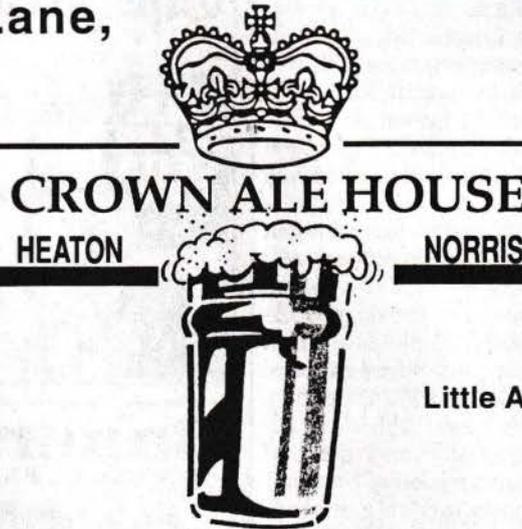
Back on to Ashton Old Road for the **Albion** which is a nice open plan pub with a crap disco! It is still possible to see where



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the original corridors would have been. We sampled Boddingtons bitter and Chesters mild, both of which were reasonably good.

Our trek along Ashton Old Road next brought us to the **Gransmoor** which is a huge Banks pub featuring a raised lounge area which resembles a concert room and which was almost entirely devoid of furniture. Bitter and mild were both found to be reasonable.

A short way along the road and into the **Crown** which is a modern estate pub, nicely done up inside with wood panelling. Boddingtons bitter and mild were reasonable, mild slightly more so.

The **Grove**, our penultimate call served Wilsons mild and bitter, John Smiths bitter and Boddingtons bitter. The pub had a bit of a strange layout with raised areas (on the TV were a team from Salford and a team from Bradford having a mud bath; or it could have been Rugby League!) Wilsons mild and bitter were both tried and found to be pretty good, especially the mild which is now brewed by Morlands of Abingdon.

Our final watering hole was the **Railway** on Manshaw Road, an excellent Holts pub right on the edge of our branch area. This is a Victorian pub with an interior which has not been subjected to 'modernisation' which is all too often the policy of some breweries these days. The walls were adorned with numerous paintings all depicting railway scenes except for one which was of a fish! The only beer available was Holts bitter which was very good. An excellent pub in which to finish an interesting and enjoyable stagger.

Looking back on the night, whilst it is fair to say that we had no really bad beer there was not a lot, with one or two notable exceptions, which stood out as being really good either. Openshaw does however still provide a huge array of pubs with something for every taste. This is despite the pub losses in recent years - when this series first started there were so many pubs to cover the 'Stagger' had to be undertaken in two parts! As ever, what is reported in this article can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement on either the pubs or their beers. Why not try them yourselves to see how much you (dis)agree?

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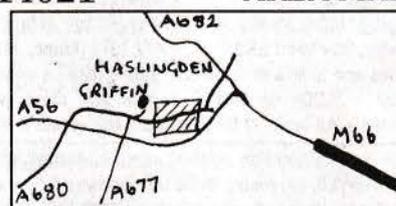
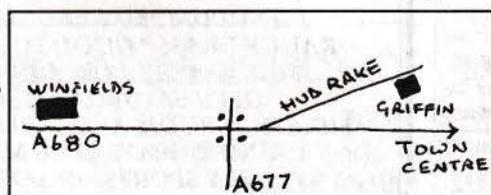
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AREA MAP

LOCAL MAP



Brewed on the premises by licensee David Porter

Of Porters Porter and Other Brews



The latest brewery to open in the North West is the Porter Brewing Company which trades as the Rossendale Brewery and is based at the Griffin Inn in Haslingden.

Behind that barrage of names is Dave Porter who bought the pub, a former free-house, in January and reopened it, after a six-month period of closure, on March 19th. The pub has been returned to its traditional roots and, whilst being largely open-plan, although with distinct areas, has no juke-box, pool table or one-armed bandits to detract from conversation and the enjoyment of Dave's beers.

In common with many of the new-wave brewers, Dave was a keen home-brewer and bought the pub with the aim of installing a brewery in the cellars. Dave hasn't gone blindly into the venture, though. He had obtained a thorough knowledge of the licensed trade by both working in a variety of brewers managed houses and studying on a specialised brewing course. In addition, he underwent a six-week apprenticeship with our own Brendan Dobbin at West Coast Brewery.

The result of this groundwork means that Dave has been able to approach the venture with confidence and, unusually, has launched with four beers. These range from an intense rich dark mild (3.3%ABV), a crisp hoppy bitter (3.8), Porter's Porter (5%) smooth and mellow with a hoppy aftertaste and the premium Porter's Sunshine (5.0%). The latter was Dave's first beer and when Opening Times called was the only one he wasn't completely happy with. It's currently a pale refreshing beer but Dave wants to tweak this to bring out much more of the hop character and make it 'one of the best beers in the country'. A fifth (4%) beer is also brewed exclusively for the Farmers Arms in Holmfirth.

The beers are all-malt and the hops, perhaps showing the Dobbin influence, come from around the world - Dave is currently



Photos: (Top) Brewer David Porter at the bar of the Griffin with a pint of porter - (Bottom) The Griffin Inn, Haslingden

using hops from Slovenia, New Zealand and the U.S.A. as well as British varieties. The brewery has a 20 barrel capacity although this is capable of expanding to 30 barrels should the need arise. Indeed two further beers are planned - a 6.5% Celebration (to mark Dave's wedding in July) and an 8% barley wine to be called JSB ('Jolly Strong Beer').

Dave does in fact hail from these parts (his parents live in Marple) and we hope to feature the full range of his beers at Stockport Beer Festival. In the meantime if you want to visit the pub it's on Hud Rake in Haslingden and both the pub and brewery can be contacted on 0706 214021.

New Brew News

Martin Kelly, licensee of the Tut 'n' Shive, has kindly provided some information about new Whitbread beers due to appear this year.

They are all to be single-varietal hop beers with 'individual qualities'. The first is available from 3rd May to 17th June and goes under the name 'Glorious Goldings'. The beer is designed to demonstrate the smell and taste of the Golding hop, and will retail at £1.50 a pint (as will all beers in this range).

The second will be brewed by a guest brewer (Hugh Ryman) at the Castle Eden brewery in County Durham and will be available from 27th June to 12th August. This time the hop variety will be Saaz or Styrian hops and it is hoped that this will produce a light, aromatic and refreshing beer.

Also planned is a fiftieth D-Day anniversary brew. This will be a 4.5% beer and again will sell at £1.50 a pint. The intention here is to use similar (and possibly the same) ingredients which were used to brew a Whitbread Pale Ale available at the time of the D-Day landings.

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At the *Harp & Shamrock* in the City Centre we welcome new licensee Elizabeth Bowman who took over the pub late last month. This Marstons house used to be a drinkers favourite but in recent years has been overshadowed by the nearby Beer House and Marble Arch. This is a great shame as the Harp is a terrific little pub and deserves support. It's on New Mount Street, just off Rochdale Road and ideally sited between the two free houses mentioned. If you're in the area do take time out to drop in and have a pint or two.

In Stockport, the *Pineapple* in Edgeley is subject to a planning application to turn it into a shop and is unlikely ever to reopen as a public house. Whilst it was never the best pub in Edgeley it was one of the few remaining mid-terraced pubs left in the town and for that alone it is perhaps regrettable to see it go.

The *Staff of Life* in Openshaw (long keg, latterly Control Securities, formerly Wilsons) is now firmly and, we guess, irrevocably closed.

A much improved pub of late is the *Anchor* in Hazel Grove. Following the departure of the previous licensee for sunnier climes (Teneriffe apparently) the pub has now been taken on by Jan and David Garner. A four week period of closure saw the pub cleaned up and the disposal of much of the nautical tat which had festooned the place (the toilets are no longer labelled 'Jack Tars' and 'Jenny Wrens'). The result is a slightly plain but comfortable pub which should become a very pleasant place to have a drink as it beds in. Robbies Best Mild and Best Bitter are available on electric pump - the bitter was particularly good when Opening Times called.

In High Lane, Burtonwood's *Royal Oak* has a new licensee in the person of Peter Able. We wish him all the best.

The *Grey Horse* in Reddish is currently selling Boddingtons Bitter at £1 a pint. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the loss of cask mild and the removal of the guest beer.

The *Station* at Cheadle re-opened on Thursday March 24th after a major refit costing in excess of £150,000. Stuart Ballantyne went to see where the money went. The pub layout remains unchanged and still sells Banks's Bitter (£1.33), Camerons Strongarm (£1.46) and keg Banks's Mild (the way to tell whether the beer is keg or not is to look at the base of the electric pump - if it says "traditionally brewed" it is real ale, if it is blank it is keg).

All the furnishings have been removed and the pub redecorated throughout. It is very 'plush' with even more memorabilia than before. For example, the bar footrail is a piece of railway track cut and welded into the shape of the bar but by far the worst feature is the model train behind the bar. Every five minutes or so this chugs its way from one end of the bar to the other. This is so irritating that I feel sure that before long someone will throw something at it in a fit of rage. On my visit (day 2 after reopening) the beer was OK but not exceptional. As you would expect, meals continue to feature heavily in the pub's portfolio.

Work is now underway on the extension to the *White Hart* at Cheadle. The pub is open as usual.

At *Little Jack Horners* on Wellington Street, Stockport, we pay a belated welcome to new-(ish) licensees Paul and Christine Roberts whose first pub this is, although previous experience was gained working at the *Victoria* in Offerton. Three cask beers are available on handpump - Vaux Mild and Samson plus Wards Bitter all of which have been of a consistently high quality - our reporter hasn't had a bad pint yet! The pub is also maintaining, and indeed improving on, its previous reputation for lunchtime food with a particularly noticeable pick-up on Friday lunchtimes. Paul tells us that trade has recently been extremely good so it looks like word is spreading.



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CURMUDGEON



Ten or fifteen years ago I was always struck when visiting West Yorkshire how the beer was served with a very tight, creamy head, and beer and head took a long time to separate. Now this style of presentation, with the associated long "swan neck" pump nozzles, has become widespread on this side of the Pennines and has even spread to many of the big brewers' pubs in the South of England where a flat pint was once the norm.

Now I like a head on my beer too, but to my mind swan necks take this too far and are often used to mask the deficiencies of beer which is past its best. You can get a beautiful-looking pint with a thick creamy head which underneath is as flat as a pancake and tastes of nothing. It's almost as if the publicans are deliberately trying to dish up real ale that tastes like the appalling "draught beer in cans". You can pull a pint with a perfectly good head using a conventional short-necked pump and an adjustable sparkler and leave much more of the life and flavour in the beer.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I recently read an ill-informed condemnation of CAMRA as a group of "fearsome beards and anoraks". Now just what is it about anoraks that causes the word to be used as a term of abuse? It has almost become a synonym for "nerd". Anyone who has an intelligent interest that doesn't involve galvanic twitching in a nightclub or kicking a ball around a muddy field is likely to be condemned as an "anorak" and

banished from normal society. If you're out and about birdwatching or trainspotting you need clothing that keeps you warm and dry and has plenty of pockets to put things in - you really would be a nerd if you went on the Cumbrian fells in an Armani suit.

Compare the anorak wearer to those boneheaded Geordie lads who go round the Bigg Market in Newcastle in January wearing nothing warmer than a short-sleeved shirt, to show that they are real hard men and not puffs. When they're in their fifties and crippled with bronchitis perhaps they will look back on their misspent youth and conclude that perhaps wearing an anorak might not have been such a bad idea after all.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The way smokers are persecuted in pubs nowadays, it sometimes seems that you're more likely to find someone smoking behind the bar than on the customers' side. We're all familiar with the charade of the barperson standing in the hatchway with a fag in the ashtray, thus pretending that they're not really behind the bar at all. Recently, though, I've seen more than one example of blatant lighting up while serving. Some licensees really need to get a grip on their staff - few things can give the casual customer a worse impression.

Shady Oak Gains Mild

The Shady Oak in Bramhall now has Tetley Dark Mild as a permanent beer - the first time real mild has been sold in the pub on a permanent basis. Initial reports suggest that it is going down very well. However, car-borne visitors should be warned that they will now have to negotiate a particularly ferocious series of road humps, but don't be deterred, the pub is well worth the trouble to get there.



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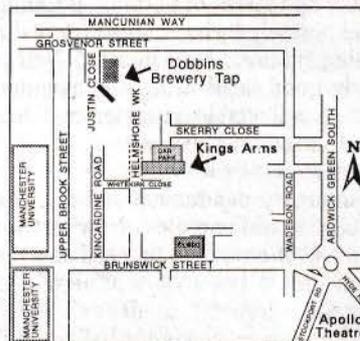
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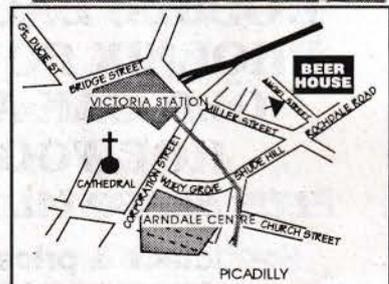
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EpiscopAle

Forget women's ordination, or the politics of poverty - the latest problem to assail the Church of England is the availability of Yakima Grande Pale Ale! West Coast Brewery recently received a letter from the Bishop of Leicester, bemoaning the fact that he was no longer able to buy the bottled pale ale he had grown to appreciate.

It seems a breakdown at West Coast's bottling line had led to a temporary loss of supply to the wholesaler concerned. We understand that His Grace's supply is likely to recommence in the near future - so look forward to some stirring sermons from the East Midlands.

G.R.A.W.

Glossop Real Ale Walkers (GRAW), were formed in March and have been out for six Sunday walks, mainly in the Park Peak area so far, taking in a variety of hostelry en route. Posters go up each Sunday evening in the Star Ale House and the Crown telling of the following Sunday's route and starting point. The Little Mill, Royal Hotel, Sportsman (Hayfield), Bulls Head, Star and Crown (Glossop) have been recent terminuses. On May 15th they amalgamate for the day with High Peak Branch of CAMRA for a joint walk starting at Hayfield Visitor Centre at 9.45am and taking in the Lantern Pike and Royal Hotel at the end.

For details of CAMRA activities in the High Peak and North East Cheshire area contact Ralph Warrington on 236 2131 [w] or 368 3624 [h].

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LOCALLEY

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Robbies Brew Up a Winner

April 19th saw the launch of Robinsons first new cask beer in a generation when Frederics, a 5% ABV premium ale was unveiled for public consumption.

The beer has been long in development and fills an obvious gap in the Robinsons range between Best Bitter (4.2%) and Old Tom (8%). Perhaps more importantly for Robinsons, Frederics not only gives their tied houses a beer to offer in the fast-growing premium ale market but also enables the company to perhaps market their name, and by extension their other beers, in the national free trade.

Production Director David Robinson was keen to stress the traditional nature of the new beer which is both brewed from an 'all malt grist' (in other words no other cereals such as wheat are used) and also uses genuine aroma hops of traditional varieties such as Goldings.

So, what's it like? For a start it's a pale beer, much paler than Best Bitter for instance. It is also a full bodied beer, described by some present at the launch as a 'satisfying pint', and, whilst you can tell it's a beer that packs a punch, it is nevertheless very drinkable. David Robinson was also keen to stress the hop character and whilst this wasn't so apparent in the samples Opening Times tried this was undoubtedly down to the beer being a bit too young - another three or four days in the cellar would have done it a little more justice.

Make no mistake, though, this is a quality beer which both deserves, and should easily achieve, much popularity. Robinsons expect the beer to retail at £1.50 a pint which is eminently reasonable for a beer of this strength these days. As to availability, it will be going in all their managed houses although there are only 15 of these (including locally the Dog & Partridge in Great Moor and the Jack & Jill in Brinnington) but many tenants have also shown a strong interest in the beer and should be stocking it. Frederics is available to all licensees who want it so if your local Robbies pub doesn't sell it badger the licensee to give it a go.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2 - 4 June

The Three Bears



After a 34-year gestation period, Robinsons latest pub, the Three Bears on Jacksons Lane in Hazel Grove opened its doors to the public on Monday April 11th.

Robinsons acquired the site in 1960 and after a couple of false starts work finally got under way in April 1993. Unusually for a new pub these days, the Three Bears is a modest building with essentially a one-room interior which has nevertheless been skilfully split up into a lounge and dining area. Several oak and decorative leaded glass screens further break up the interior to give a more cosy and intimate feel to the place. This is complemented by the decor which is best described as 'modern plush' - an improvement on the neo-Victoriana which seems to crop up everywhere these days.

Licensees are Kath and David Bailey who arrive from the George in Hyde with 20 years licensed trade experience behind them. There is quite an emphasis on food, which is available every lunchtime (including Sunday) and from 5 - 7.30 each evening. Despite this, the Three Bears is first and foremost a pub and judging from the crowds so far is set to be a deserved success. Electrically pumped Best Mild and Best Bitter are the draught beers - let's hope Frederics also makes an appearance (with luck it might even be in by the time you read this).

A Family Brewery

Robinson's

Best

BITTER

alc 4.2% vol

Traditionally Brewed

Since 1838

The Best in the North West

SILVER MEDAL WINNER 1994

THE BREWING INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Once again this month we have the usual wide spread of activities. By the time this issue of Opening Times comes out the first item on the agenda will be the monthly branch meeting which will be on Thursday 12th at the Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. The meeting starts at about 8.00pm. The following day, Friday 13th (now that's tempting fate!) sees a 'Royalty Trip' - a minibus tour around pubs with a royal theme. This promises to be an interesting night and if you want to book a place phone Paul Felton on 442 3143.

On Monday 16th the social is at the Griffin, Heaton Mersey. In common with all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm. Friday of that week (20th) sees the monthly Stagger which this time covers Heaton Norris. We start at the Bridge Inn, Georges Road at 7.00pm and will be at the Silver Jubilee on Belmont Way at 8.30.

The social on Monday 23rd is at the Comfortable Gill, King Street West, Stockport. The Pub of the Month for May is the Albert in Rusholme (Walmer St), a delightful Hydes local. Festivities will get under way between 8.00pm and 8.30pm. The 6th June social is at the Hare & Hounds, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton but most importantly from 2nd to 4th June it's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Held once more in the Town Hall Ballroom this is the social of the year. An event not to be missed under any circumstances - get those dates in your diary now!

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley or Marple areas you will come under the area covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA. High Peak have notified us of the following events for May: on Monday 16th the branch meeting will be held at the Royal in Hayfield. Into June and the branch will be holding a pub crawl of Stalybridge on 10th. This starts at 8.00pm at 'Q' which is on Ramsbottom Street, near to the station. Finally advance notice is given of the High Peak and North East Cheshire CAMRA AGM. This will be held on Monday 13th June and will be at the Duke of York in Romiley. The meeting will start at about 8.30 and all branch members are urged to attend this important meeting.

MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

In these hard times for East Manchester, it's good to see that two pubs have re-opened in Openshaw. The Wrexham has Boddingtons Bitter on handpump, and is much as it was. The Halfway House, however, has been done out in pseudo-rustic style complete with genuine log fire (for those summer evenings in Openshaw?) While retaining its name, it is subtitled Cork & Bottle, thus introducing yet another "brand" of Whitbread Ale House to the Manchester region. The inevitable Boddingtons Bitter is flanked on handpump by several guests, largely from Whitbread and its associates though the likes of Batemans and Cains have also been seen. Prices are more suited to the City Centre than to Openshaw (£1.40 for Batemans XB), and this aspect may have to be rethought if the pub is to thrive. Two more minus points - "handpumped" Adlestons cider is served by gas pressure; and bouncers are employed at weekends. Despite these blemishes, at least two cheers are in order for bringing a prominent pub back to life.

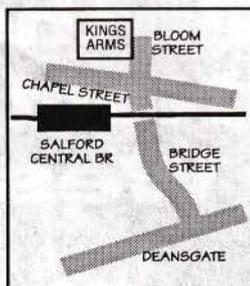
These welcome gains are offset by the loss through fire of the Folkestone in Clayton, and the temporary closure of the Lancaster Tavern in the City Centre. This is due for refurbishment as O'Shea's. The Dominion Hotel's attempt at a traditional Irish bar - though whether with traditional beer I know not. An opening date of May 9th has been quoted, though work did not appear to be well advanced by late April. The Imperial in West Gorton has gained Flowers IPA and Castle Eden Ale on handpump; the Bowling Green in Chorlton-on-Medlock has foolishly re-installed "handpumped" Scrumpy Jack cider which is KEG; and the latest in the procession of national brewers' beers to be seen at the Mosley in Beswick has been Whitbread's Benteleys "Yorkshire" Bitter (from Cheltenham!).

Hatter's Mild

As part of a general re-branding exercise, Robinsons are to rename their Best Mild as 'Hatters Mild'. The 3.3% ABV beer itself will not change.

THE KINGS ARMS BLOOM STREET, SALFORD

Dave and Sue Price welcome you to enjoy the fine range of beers, ciders and foods in Salford's Premier Ale House



13 HANDPUMPS
HOLTS, THEAKSTONS,
TIMOTHY TAYLORS
CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
GUEST BEERS & TRADITIONAL CIDERS

SPORTSMANS

62 Market Street (basement)

Manchester M1 1WP

Lees Bitter

Brian and Jill welcome you to our excellent downstairs Oasis in the City Centre

Home Cooked Tavern Fayre

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Traditional Sunday Lunch Carvery 12-3



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JOIN CAMRA NOW AND GET INTO STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL FREE!



As we have been reporting over previous months, preparations for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival are now well in hand and it's all systems go for the town's real ale extravaganza.

We will be having more beer than ever before with old favourites being joined by many beers new to the festival. These include beers from most of the new north and mid-Wales micro brewers, the new venture at Haslingden (report elsewhere in OT) plus Whim Ales from Derbyshire. Indeed we are hoping that Whim will be providing us with a special Festival Bitter. For lovers of dark beers we have also commissioned a special 5%ABV Festival Stout from Ryburn Brewery at Sowerby Bridge. With something like 70 ales to choose from ale lovers will be well catered for (and our bar managers



will aim to have at least 40 beers on at any one time - until we start to sell out at the end of the Festival that is!) Lovers of traditional cider and perry will also be catered for with our well established cider bar. This year our cider and perry order is bigger than ever with something like 250 gallons on sale.

There will be hot food and hot entertainment at all sessions (although following some problems last time, the latter will generally be a little quieter this year). There will be the usual CAMRA shop, tombola, souvenir glasses and T-shirts. And just a word about the glasses - these will be oversized with a pint line on them. Full measures guaranteed!

Once again we will also be supporting the Rainbow Trust - make sure you pay a visit to the charity stall - they'll have some beer on sale alongside a whole range of other products and you know it's a worthy cause.

Why not take the opportunity to join CAMRA now - and get into the Festival free of charge! Additionally you could take advantage of free or reduced admission to other local festivals.. One coming up is the second Frodsham Real Ale & Cider Festival on 27/28May at Frodsham Community Centre (Fluin Lane, Frodsham, a 5 minute walk from the station). This will feature at least 25 beers that have come out in the last year. The £3 entrance fee includes a commemorative glass and programme and CAMRA members get a £1 refund. Entrance is by advance ticket only from Matt Rowland (0928 733361 between 6-8pm).

DID YOU KNOW...

that you can get free entry to the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival by becoming a member of CAMRA, and if that isn't enough, you can also gain free or reduced price entry to every other CAMRA beer festival throughout the UK - currently well over 150 per year!

Details of these festivals and other social events, along with the latest brewery news are supplied in CAMRA's monthly newspaper 'What's Brewing' - delivered free to your door.

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

YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE !

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT121)

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



The 8th Stockport

BEER & CIDER



FESTIVAL

2ND-4TH
JUNE
1994

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL

WELLINGTON RD. SOUTH (EDWARD ST. ENTRANCE)

Over **70** DIFFERENT BEERS

Plus **250** GALLONS OF CIDER & PERRY

- HOT FOOD ALL SESSIONS
- SOUVENIR GLASSES & T-SHIRTS
- FAMILY ROOM UNTIL 8PM

ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY EVENING:
HARMONY HOUNDS
(1920's AMERICAN DANCE MUSIC)

FRIDAY LUNCH:
AT THE PIANO PAT NASH

FRIDAY NIGHT:
CAXIXI (LATIN SALSA)

SATURDAY LUNCH:
PETE FARROW

SATURDAY NIGHT:
RIGHT BAND, WRONG PLANET

OPENING TIMES

THURSDAY 2ND JUNE 5.30PM-11PM
FRIDAY 3RD JUNE 11.30AM-3PM 5PM-11PM
SATURDAY 4TH JUNE 11.30AM-4PM 6PM-11PM

ADMISSION CHARGES

THURSDAY: £1.50 FRIDAY LUNCH: FREE
FRIDAY EVENING: £2.50
SATURDAY LUNCH: 50p SATURDAY
EVENING: £1.50
FREE TO CAMRA MEMBERS

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