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TIMES

JUNE 1994

DUTY WAR HOTS UP

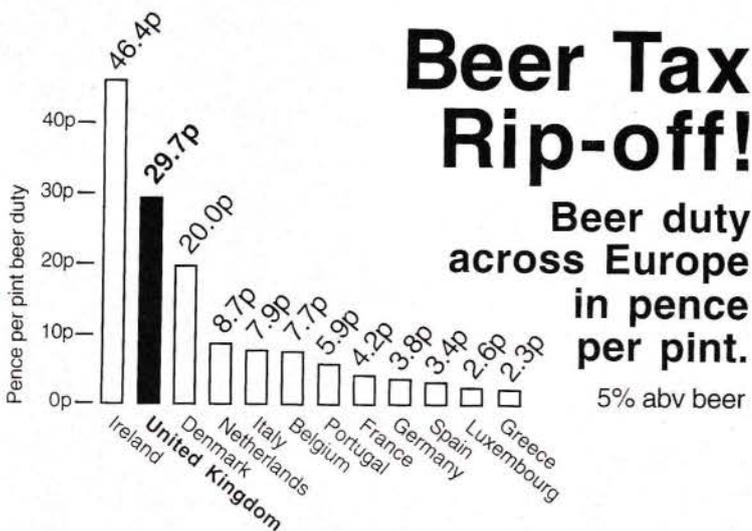
This month sees the European elections and CAMRA has joined the fray by issuing its manifesto for Europe.

The manifesto is calling for the retention of the tie for independent brewers and wants the 1997 Euro-probe into the tie to look at the marketing abuses by larger brewing companies across the continent.

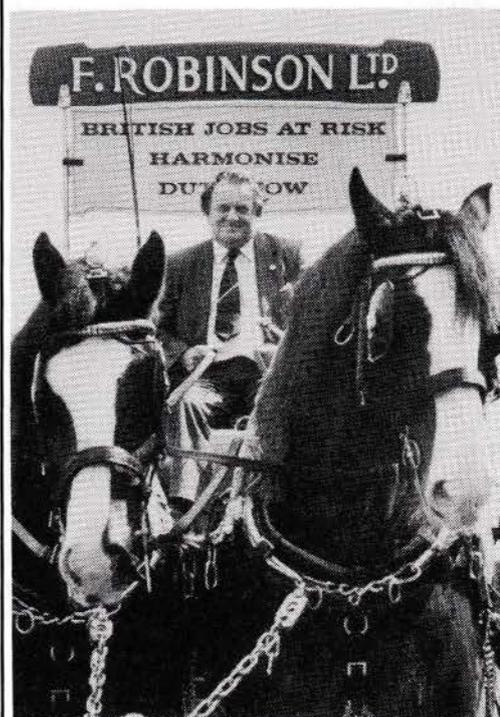
More to the point, however, the Manifesto calls for drinks duties across Europe to be harmonised. At present beer drinkers in Britain pay an astonishing 21p a pint more than drinkers in the Netherlands and 26p a pint more than drinkers in France. It is this yawning gap in beer duty which has led to the explosion of "personal" imports by Channel hoppers, a problem which is bound to increase with the opening of the Channel Tunnel.

The danger from this trade is one which is shared by CAMRA and brewers alike. The beer currently being brought into the country by holidaymakers, opportunists and bootleggers taking advantage of lower continental beer taxes is equivalent to the output of 18 independent breweries. Local brewers Robinsons recently joined 17 other independent family brewers in a protest through Dover. 18 vintage vehicles and horse-drawn drays paraded through the town to illustrate the brewing heritage Britain stands to lose if nothing is done. "It will not be long before we see breweries closing" Peter Robinson told Opening Times.

To highlight the matter further CAMRA will be joining forces with Robinsons to bring the problem home to local drinkers.



Robinsons Fight Back



Peter Robinson, chairman of Stockport's independent family brewery, Frederic Robinson Ltd. and vice chairman of the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, leads the industry-wide protest against excessive beer tax. The Robinsons shire horse team set off to take their place in the parade of 18 horse drawn drays and vintage delivery vehicles through Dover, on May 17.

Due to an immense number of letters, certain items including some regular features, have been held over til next month

A FULL GUIDE TO THE CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 3

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

Due to the immense amount of correspondence we have received over the past few weeks, the letters pages have been moved forward. The Pub of the Month feature can be found on the centre pages!

From : Peter Barnes

Why on earth do we not have any organised Beer and Pub Heritage Tours in the Manchester area?

There are weekend beer breaks in the Black Country, Burton upon Trent, Sheffield and more recently Liverpool, usually organised by civic authorities with input from CAMRA. Manchester should be leading the field with such events.

We have a wonderful collection of independent, family-owned breweries and up-and-coming micro breweries and also the best concentration of traditional pubs outside London. Our beers are cheaper than anywhere else, we have some excellent beer festivals throughout the year, almost every known pub in Greater Manchester is documented in a beer guide or at least in a local listing of pubs..... I could go on.

The problem is that Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Visitor and Convention Bureau consider they have more important things to do and, despite repeated requests, they will not take up the idea.

Do any of your readers know of a travel firm or coach company who would be interested in organising and promoting Beer Tours, incorporating a brewery visit and tours of some of our famous pubs? CAMRA could provide contacts, devise pub tours etc and would obviously want to have some input into the planning. Any ideas on how to progress this please to:

Peter Barnes, CAMRA Publicity Officer, Greater Manchester, 12, Ellesmere Road, Eccles, Manchester M30 9FH Phone 061 789 2323 (home).

From : Alan Taylor, Licensee, Sun in September

Thank you for the copies of OT (April) which we received on Saturday 16th April, these are always well received and well read by myself and my customers. Why, however do they take so long to reach us? Read down the diary of events and half are history.

Now I refer to the article on page 17 - "Watch that Gas". Aspirators have been in use in the trade for years to "maintain" the blanket of Co2 over the beer that has been initially produced by the second fermentation which is the secret of real ale. Pubs up and down the country that proudly display their CAMRA awards on Beer Guide entries have also been using aspirators for years.

I could take your correspondent to a pub that has been a CAMRA "Pub of the Year" where the cellar is open to the view of customers and is in fact the landlord's pride and joy, and every one of his 8 or so beers plus his ciders are "under aspirator". Barrie Pepper was once challenged to spot the difference between a freshly conditioned beer and one that had been under aspirator for a number of days and he couldn't. To state that the use of an aspirator will debar any CAMRA award or entry in a Beer Guide is a pint of old dog's bollocks. THE STAGGER

Eleven pubs in 4 hours, not bad going. Not many pubs are bursting at the seams at 7pm on a Friday, some go home for tea. All present - how many? Who would you serve first, old Frank or Tom who want a pint of bitter, or 10 or 12 people who can't decide whether to have half a pint of Coach house droppings or half a pint of Taylor Landlord armpits. And after 11 pubs - at 10.59pm can you tell the difference? And I bet you

all asked for a top up. Is it all a matter of taste?

Anyway thank you once again for a good magazine which keeps my regulars amused trying to find the most unusual name for a drop of ale.

You and yours are always welcome to try our Nut Brown Grot, Samuel Smiths Old Brewery Bitter drawn from the Oak Cask Without Aspirator, always £1.11 per pint, 56p per half pint.

Blessings of your heart, you drink good beer. (Shakespeare) hic!

From : Jim Bracken

I was interested to read the piece in "New Brew News" (Opening Times April 94) regarding Scottish & Newcastle's plans to launch a cask version of their Exhibition.

Few of your readers will have had the opportunity to sample 'Cask Ex' ten years ago, when, as mentioned in the article, this was last tried. But I did, and a very fine tasty pint it was.

By chance, at the time of its launch (December 1983) I was working in the Tyneside area, and I was invited by the local CAMRA branch to join them at the 'official launch' of the product at the Newcastle brewery.

We were very lavishly entertained, with a huge buffet, a cask of Exhibition to sample, and free point of sale material to take with us. We were also treated to a viewing of the video explaining how the product was to be marketed. At the end of the video we told the S & N men - politely - that if they carried out their proposed marketing strategy, the product would be doomed to failure.

The beer was to be sold 'in selected outlets' ALONGSIDE keg Exhibition, and at 2 pence a pint MORE than the fizzy version! (Beers then were around 50 pence a pint). We urged them to REPLACE the keg version with Cask Ex in the chosen outlets.

Of course they knew better, and paid no attention to our advice! The result? Cask Ex was withdrawn a few months later due to - you've guessed it - 'lack of demand'.

To my knowledge the 'selected outlets' included only three pubs in Newcastle itself. One of these was the Haymarket, where, on the occasions that I sampled it, it was on fine form. But, when ordering, you had to specify "Cask Ex" or you'd get keg if you simply requested 'A pint of Ex'. Added to this, it was obvious that the average Geordie drinker, weaned on years of gassed up chilled beers, was not going to pay more to sample an unknown quantity - and so it proved.

Whilst at Newcastle Brewery, we heard strong rumours that a cask-washing line had been purchased by John Smiths, who, after ten years of a keg only beer policy, were going to produce the real stuff again. Unlike S&N, their cask bitter REPLACED the keg version in the outlets they chose to put it in. It is now a 'market leader' amongst cask bitter brands.

I hope S&N will take note, and get it right this time!

(A copy of this letter has been sent to S&N.)

From : Petronella Ewing

I was sorry to see that your "Stockport Mild Challenge" requires those taking part to drink a pint in each pub. This will deter the many women who prefer to drink real ale in halves. Men with an eye on their swelling waistlines might also have been happier completing the trail on halves.

The rule also perpetuates the macho myth that the "real ale experience" can only fully be enjoyed by those consuming it in pints. CAMRA in the 1990's should know better than to give this outdated view any sustenance.

I hope that, if this kind of promotion is repeated next year, you will give people the option of drinking either a pint or half in line with their personal preference.

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

The threat that the flood of cheap imported beer means to our pub and brewery heritage cannot be overstated. It's easy to dismiss the problem as one particular to the South East, the are close to the Channel ports but, like ripples in a puddle, brewers further and further away from the 'front line' are now detecting problems. The answer is the harmonisation of Beer Duty across the European Union. That will do nothing to reduce the appeal of exotic foreign brews but it will at least give our local brewers a level playing field in terms of price.

The national brewers continue to shoot themselves in the foot however. While they are also vocal in their protests about foreign imports they have a strange way of tackling the problem - as we went to press most of the big brewers were in the process of announcing price rises well over the rate of inflation. It really does beg the question - do they

want to sell beer in their pubs or not? Or has the dogma of corporate greed become so entrenched that they cannot see beyond their balance sheets and the bottom line. We will be returning to this theme next month.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On a happier note, this month sees Opening Times celebrate its 10th anniversary. Thanks are due all round to those who write for and distribute OT. Particular thanks are due to all our advertisers without whose support OT would not be what it is today. I would also like to single out two people for a special thank-you. Firstly my predecessor and founding editor of Opening Times, Humphrey Higgins. Without his determination to make Opening Times succeed it is doubtful whether it would have got through those difficult early years. I would also like to thank our current production editor Paul Hutchings who has been responsible for the increasingly professional appearance of OT in recent years.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From : Rhys P. Jones

As the person who experienced the poor service reported in April's "Stagger", perhaps I may be permitted to reply to Colin Birchenall (Letters, May).

If I had not complained that night, I would have been served beer in a glass still dirty from a previous customer. When I did complain, I was met with rudeness and hostility, and only grudgingly was I eventually served (almost) full measure in a clean glass.

I am perfectly happy to accept that this was an exceptional occurrence for the pub concerned - indeed, had I believed otherwise, I would have reported the pub to the Environmental Health Officer first thing the next Monday morning. But to suggest that CAMRA - the only consumer group for people who use pubs - should dismiss such blatantly poor hygiene and service with no more than a shrug is frankly absurd.

After all, would Mr Birchenall be happy for his beer to be served in someone else's dirty glass?

From : Richard Hollingworth

Recent correspondence (Opening Times, May) concerning pub service leads me to select the following two pubs to 'compare and contrast'.

* The White Hart, Woodley has a slightly expensive, but well kept range of standard Bass beers, including one "Bassguest".

The service in this pub is usually first rate and an entirely justified award to this effect from the local Bass bigwigs hangs on the wall.

* The Crown Ale House, Stockport, none other than CAMRA Pub of the Year, has all those wonderful beers, but the service is generally poor - to the point of going elsewhere in my opinion. I have noticed that a number of other front line real ale pubs let their over-confidence about the beer lead to a mild contempt for anyone other than the local elite. CAMRA is primarily about beer, but service comes a close second in my book!

continued on page 5

Letters to the editor should be addressed to John Clarke, the Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St., Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. The views expressed are those of the individuals, not CAMRA either locally or nationally. Letters will be edited on grounds of decency or to comply with the prevailing laws of the land.

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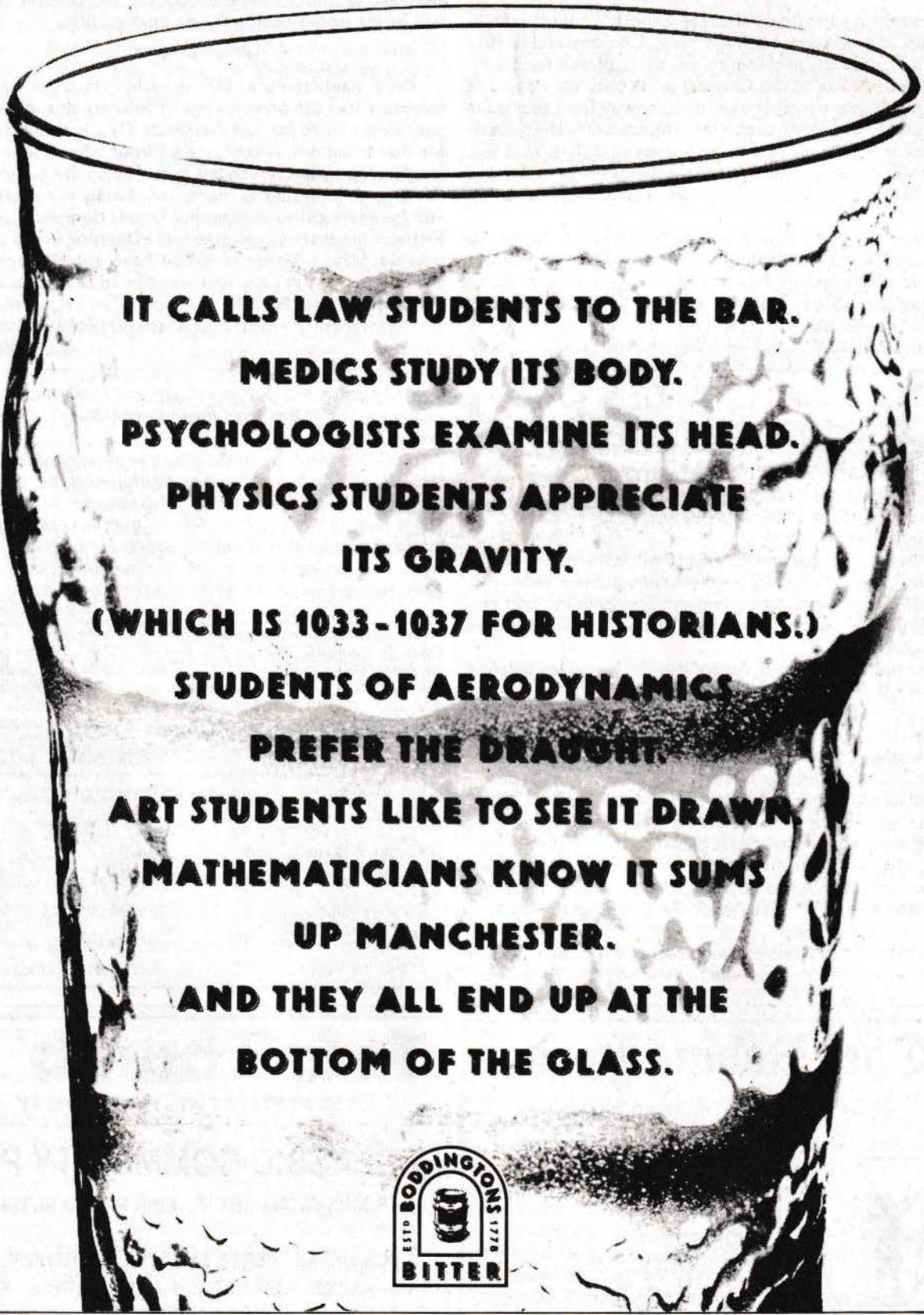
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AND THEY ALL END UP AT THE
BOTTOM OF THE GLASS.**



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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '89

This is the 10th anniversary edition of *Opening Times*, and as it had to be running for five years before "Five Years Ago" could start, this column now celebrates its fifth anniversary. There is reference elsewhere to what was in the first "Five Years Ago", which of course, is now ten years ago.

But to return to 5 years ago - the front page headline was "MMC - The Going Gets Tough." Apparently Robinson's had written to all their tenants implying that they could be out of a job if the MMC report was adopted - they were urged to write to their MP, and to advise the brewery when they had done so. Inevitably, the story reached the national press, but it was thought that Robinson's had behaved no worse than many other brewers who seemed to be getting increasingly hysterical in their attempts to discredit the MMC report.

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From : Nigel Pitman, Licensee, The Nelson, Stockport
As a hard working licensee who has been associated with the trade for some twenty years it gets me to read a publication that is supposedly fighting for more traditional outlets dispensing ale by traditional methods, constantly condemning the very people who are trying their hardest to make it happen.

If Paul Felton had been writing his April issue *Stagger* review for *Private Eye* instead of *Opening Times* he would no doubt be on the end of one or two libel actions by now. As would the letter writer Max S'eist, had he been brave enough to put his real name at the head of his letter. It was interesting to see that the best beer on the *Stagger* was found at a themed managed house owned by one of the big six brewers!! Neither Paul nor Max have had anything complimentary to say and if they have such an awful time when they visit pubs then perhaps they should consider another more exciting pastime - moonwalking maybe?

Come on *Opening Times*, there are Ubiquitous Free house owners, Landlords, Tenants and Managers giving their all, often under very difficult circumstances, so that you, the customer, can enjoy yourself - give them a chance because the majority of them certainly deserve it.

I myself am the manager of a successful busy Stockport town pub being one of the Managed House Estate owned by Scottish & Newcastle. No doubt you at O.T. still refer to my owners as Grand Met as you erroneously quoted in your March issue. I, and I am sure a great many other managers, would like to see O.T. adopt a fairer view of the managed house trade.

No doubt you at O.T. will shake your heads and say it would be like admitting women into the Pavilion at Lords. After all we only sell millions of pints of ubiquitous beer at ubiquitous prices in, yes you've guessed it, ubiquitous pubs. I predict the next brewer to gain the ubiquitous label will be Theakstons once its products are rolled out into the now vast Scottish & Newcastle estate. You campaign for more real ale produced by regional brewers to be made more readily available and when that happens you then condemn it, as was Marstons Pedigree in your April report of the Shady Oak.

I could continue at great length commenting on articles - a

The *Stagger* was headed Stockport Re-visited - issue No. 1 of *Opening Times* in June 1984 contained details of a Stockport pub crawl - so this was a re-run to see how the pubs looked 5 years later. The Arden Arms and Boar's Head were little changed, but the Bull's Head had been opened out into a one room lounge. The Castlewood and the King's Head - little change, but the Buck & Dog had gone; very caustic remarks about what Robinson's had done to the Royal Oak opposite the brewery, but full marks to Sam Smith's for the sensitive refurbishment of the Queen's Head (Turner's Vaults). Prices in 1984 averaged about 65p. for a pint of bitter, and about 20p more in 1989.

The King's Arms, Chorlton-on-Medlock was open for business, but with some finishing touches still required to the vault area. Mild, Bitter, and Extra Special Bitter were available on handpump, with Guiltless Stout and a range of Coaster lagers being served through continental style taps. There was also a very clear map to help find the pub as it had already got the reputation of being difficult to find. (Later pub adverts said "It's only difficult to find the first time.")

lot of them excellent - that I have read in your News letters over the years. I could also make comments about some of the more dubious beer keeping practices I have seen going on in some of your more highly regarded Pubs of the Month - bad practices don't only happen in Managed Houses. But to continue in this way would only mean me coming down to your level.

Incidentally what happened to Richard Hough's monthly contribution to the letters page? I did so miss his views of the trade this month. Perhaps we are to assume that Richard is to Michael Jackson as Max S'eist is to Janet Jackson. Both of the same but never seen at the same time!

(Richard Hough and Max S'eist are not the same person - ed.)

From : Peter Edwardson

Does "Opening Times" believe wholeheartedly in full measures or not? The campaigning theme at this year's Stockport Beer Festival is to be "lined glasses guarantee full pints". The government's shameful U-turn on the implementation of Section 43 was one of the major sources of indignation at CAMRA's National Conference in April.

Yet when our leading local independent brewery, Robinson's, opens a brand new pub, the Three Bears in Hazel Grove, equipping it from the start with lined oversize glasses, "Opening Times" prints a write-up without even mentioning the fact, something I would have thought was a prime campaigning opportunity. Frankly, I'm puzzled.

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RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

It is the early 1980's and Madness are taking the British music scene by storm. Riding high on the crest of a wave it appears they can do no wrong. Their first twenty singles all made the Top 20 on their first release, a unique achievement that still stands. Now, in 1994, they return to the Witchwood in Ashton to relive those heady days. Or do they? They look like 'em, they sound like 'em, but it ain't Madness. Quite. One Step Behind are a seven-piece bunch from London who pay tribute to the Nutty Boys of Camden Town. And pretty good they turn out to be. Some tribute bands are merely poor rip-offs of genuine stars, but to the untrained eye, these boys ARE Madness.

The Witchwood is both a great pub and a decent music venue, where the customers create a very special atmosphere unique to this place: vibrant, lively, friendly, Witchwood. Up to nine beers are on offer at any one time. The Directors was in fine form, the Theakstons both smooth and flavoursome. The Holts Bitter, the most expensive I've ever had it (a whopping £1.10 a pint!) was very nice, while the pick of the bunch was undoubtedly Road Riders Dominator from the Phoenix Brewery, which was exquisite. Having been suitably impressed at the bar I turned my attention to the main event.



One Step Behind are a tight, together band who tonight ran through "Complete Madness" with one or two excep-

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tions. The tunes, the moves, the hats, shades, suits, it was all there, but they lacked the off-the-cuff Cockney humour that was central to Madness and provided much of their appeal. But only the best groups deserve a decent tribute band such as this, and Madness are indeed one of the worthiest. Back then they were primarily a singles band, as illustrated tonight: "Our House" to "Grey Day", "My Girl" through "Embarrassment" to "House of Fun". But what struck me was that Madness wrote virtually all their own stuff, inspired by personal events or British life. As singer-songwriters they will always be better than someone else doing Madness covers.

Although One Step Behind gave it their all, and couldn't have done anything else, they still fell short of the high standard set by the originals. The crowd paid testimony to this fact; skin-heads and rudies (and the Stockport Crusaders S.C.) are the most discerning audience I have ever come across. They won't dance to anything unless it is top-notch. And they didn't. But I for one thoroughly enjoyed the memories of the old times, even though it is unlikely that Suggs in his prime would have got the words to "Our House" wrong. Still, it beats Madness at G-Mex for twenty-two quid. As long as the legacy of Madness lives on, One Step Behind will remain just that. But only just.

* * * * *

UMIST Union are staging a Homeless Benefit gig on Friday 3rd June. The superb RDF are headlining, with manic folk crusty rockers Diggers' Cry supporting. It promises to be a great event with side shows, stalls and the like included. The bar boasts six real ales at reasonable prices, some of which will be knocked down to £1 a pint for the night. It will be well worth getting along to in its own right, but make an effort for the benefit of those less fortunate than you.



Continuing our occasional look at the worst of the verbally challenged on the beer and pub scene, this gem comes from an exhibition devoted to Manchester cafe bars at the RIBA Bookshop on Portland Street. There were many extravagant descriptions including this piece on Manto, the super-trendies hangout on Canal Street:

"Manto rises from a former single storey trade union headquarters to present an impressive steel frame and glass front to the Rochdale Canal. Manto is the stage in the urban theatre, its steel frame facade a proscenium, its balcony the gods, its clientele both players and audience.

Bricks, stone and rivetted joints in the steel echo Manchester's industrial heritage. The southern sunlight streams in through glass bricks and tall radiators to pick out the plaque from the original building embedded in the mosaic floor."

Old Stockport Ale

The branding and marketing frenzy at Robinsons continues apace. After the launch of the (excellent) Frederics strong ale, and the renaming of their Best Mild as 'Hatters Mild', it appears that the almost unobtainable Ordinary Bitter is now to be called 'Old Stockport Ale'. Fair enough, but can we see it in Stockport, please.

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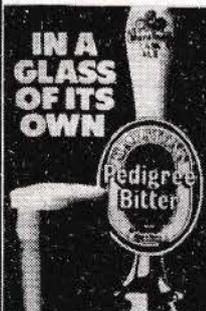
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CHESHIRE PUBS

by Peter Edwardson



The White Lion, Barthomley

Following our series on Pubs in the Peak, this year we are turning our attention to Cheshire. It's a heavily populated and prosperous county, which inevitably has led to the extensive modernisation of many of the traditional pubs. However, if you know where to look, a number of pubs of genuine character have managed to survive.

One of the finest of these is the White Lion at Barthomley, in the extreme south-east of the county a few miles east of Crewe. Barthomley is a tiny village consisting of no more than an impressive church and a few black-and-white cottages, set amidst lush, rolling farmland. It was the scene of a notorious massacre during the Civil War, but today it's very peaceful and feels well off the beaten track, despite being less than a mile from Junction 16 of the M6.

The White Lion stands right where the road forks in the centre of the village, opposite the church. It's an old half-timbered pub dating from 1614, looking every inch the part of the traditional Cheshire village pub. Inside there are three rooms - a fairly plain one with scrubbed-top tables immediately as you go in through the door, a cosy little snug at the side of the bar which feels almost like a private sitting room, and the main bar down a step to the left. This is a wonderful



place to drink, with its tiled floor, dark beams, old settles and blazing real fire if the weather's a bit chilly. There's nothing grand about it, and it's almost like drinking in the parlour of a modest, old fashioned farmhouse.

It's a Burtonwood tied house, offering the full range of their beers on handpump - Mild, Bitter, Forshaw's and Top Hat. The beer was in good form on our recent visit and the pub features in the current edition of CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide, as well as many previous editions.

Food is limited to substantial rolls and pasties. Those in need of a more substantial meal could call at the nearby Hawk at Haslington which serves a wide range of food every lunch-time and evening. For a rural pub that isn't an eating house, the White Lion's opening hours are unusually generous - all day Monday to Saturday, with the exception of Thursday when it doesn't open until 5.30pm. Another unusual feature for a rural pub in Cheshire is that bed and breakfast accommodation is available.

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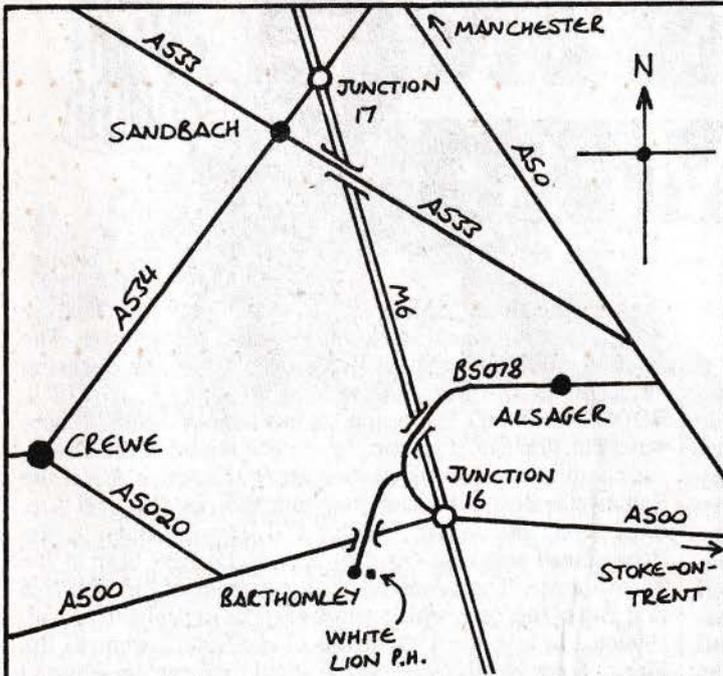
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**OF THE
YEAR**

JUNE GUEST ALES
Rossendale (Porters) Porter
Rossendale Mild
Lees Bitter
Hull Governors
Hull Mild
Wye Valley HPA
Batemans XB
Passageway



JUNE GUEST ALES
Burton Bridge Summer Ale
Orkney Raven Ale
Ashvine Old Stumper
Cains FA
D-DAY SPECIALS FROM:
Eldridge Pope
Whitbread (1943 recipe)
Coach House

Special Events at the Crown
MUSIC IN THE GARDEN
LIVE BANDS EACH SATURDAY



The aftermath of the "Silly Beer Festival" at the Marble Arch prompted me to thinking about the names given to beers. The beer fest itself was an indulgent celebration of beers with unusual or sometimes silly names - Flying Herbert, Crippledick, Dog's Bollocks and so on.

While many fine beers are called simply Bitter, or Best Mild, the reason I started drinking real ale wasn't the virtues of a cask conditioned beer or the tradition of English Ale, but the slightly weird names. When I ventured into a pub for the first time after my 18th birthday (?) Oh Yeah Ed. I was confronted with XXXX lager (what does it stand for I wonder), Guinness, some cider or other, and something called Wobbly Bob. I was intrigued and took delight in ordering "a pint of the Wobbly Bob please". Needless to say, I went on and up (or down, depending on your point of view) from there.

Indeed a name isn't everything but if it can persuade someone to try traditional cask ale, then it must be a good thing. A general rule of thumb is the weirder, the wonderfuller. It is rare for a strangely named beer to be a poor pint providing the landlord and cellarman are doing their job properly. All beer, obviously, will not be to everyone's taste (I'm not a fan of Bagmans Bitter or Vaux Samson), but it is still interesting and individual stuff.

The derivation of names for beers is a whole subject in itself but I often still think about that three-legged pub cat who introduced me to the world of real ale.

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The limited range of food means that the White Lion doesn't attract the eating-out set, and therefore has a refreshingly down-to-earth atmosphere. It's obviously a popular local, and also a magnet for walkers and bikers of both the pedal-powered and motorised varieties. You may have to disturb the pub cat from his nap in order to get a seat.

While Barthomley is some 35 miles away from Stockport and Manchester, it's easily accessible just off the M6 at Junction 16, and can be reached in 45 minutes by car. It should be stressed that, although many of these country pubs are difficult or impossible to get to by public transport, these articles are not meant as an incitement to drink and drive - if you do go by car, make sure you take an abstemious driver.

A hundred years ago, many Cheshire pubs must have been like the White Lion, but since then the likes of Greenalls have got to grips with them and filled them with wall-to-wall carpet and dralon, and today it's a rare survivor which is definitely not to be missed.

Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Paul Hutchings, Richard Hough, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Jim Flynn, John Tune, Robin Wignall, Peter Barnes, Brian Carey, Tim Jones, Frank Wood

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OPENING TIMES

1984 - 1994

CAMRA
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The original Opening Times was produced by the South Manchester branch of CAMRA in the mid '70's, and an item from a surviving copy dated September 1976 seemed strangely familiar - Robinson's had spoiled the Pineapple by ripping the vault out. Their Best Bitter was 25p., and you could get Boddington's Mild for a mere 18 1/2p. But that earlier version didn't survive for very long, and it was June 1984 before Opening Times appeared again. This time there were four pages, some months a colourful pink or yellow, typed laboriously on to stencils, and then rattled off on a duplicator - until September 1985 it was distributed with What's Doing. But since then it has enjoyed a completely separate, and successful existence, and it has always been free. It has improved in general appearance over the years what with the advent of word processors, desk top publishing and other so-called computerised techniques - a typical issue now contains 20 pages, with a print run of 5,000, and perhaps 30 adverts.

But what has been going on in the brewing industry in the last ten years? Nobody could have foreseen the changes that were to come, even rivalling the upsets caused by the flood of takeovers and mergers in the 50's, 60's and early 70's. It was the 1989 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Supply of Beer, leading to the DTI's Beer Orders, that really put the cat among the pigeons - but more of that later. There was another change that altered a lot of people's drinking habits, and that was the repeal of the 1914 Munitions Act (As Mersey Drinker described it) or perhaps more exactly the Licensing Act 1988. This permitted "all day" opening during the week, an extra hour at Sunday lunchtime, and an extra 10 minutes drinking-up time.

Let's take a closer look at what appeared in that first edition of Opening Times in June 1984. There was a welcome from the Editor, Humphrey Higgins, whose full title was Campaign Co-ordinator/Publicity Officer for the South Man-

chester Branch of CAMRA - it was over a year later that the branch was re-named Stockport & South Manchester. The front page story was about Boddington's, and the declining character of the beer, under the headline "BEAUTIFUL BODDIES? What's happened to the famous brew?" There was a pub crawl of Stockport, headed "A Round in the Town", and the prices are worth looking at. At the Arden Arms, the Robinson's Best Mild and Best Bitter were 62p. and 67p. respectively, whilst Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter at the Boar's Head was 59p. - said to be the cheapest beer in the Town Centre. There was an announcement of the branch's first Pub of the Year, which was the Griffin on Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey; the Pub of the Month award went to the Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. A small paragraph referred to the Longsight Inn, Redgate Lane (a Free House at the back of the Belle Vue site) where Banks's beers had just appeared. There were about another half dozen items of pub news, and four adverts, all for Stockport pubs - the George, Silver Jubilee, New Inn and Manchester Arms - and that was it.

Now, a look at how Opening Times has reported what has been going on since 1984, although without taking up a lot more space, this can be no more than a somewhat potted version.

First, the general brewing scene - locally, Boddington's closed Oldham Brewery after keeping it open for the promised five years, but the bigger shock came when they sold their breweries to Whitbread, and became a pub owning company. Robinson's closed Hartley's, and Whitbread closed the Chesters' Brewery in Salford. Wilson's merged with Webster's, brewing was concentrated in Halifax, and Wilson's Newton Heath brewery closed. The small Failsforth brewery closed but two new small breweries were established - the King's Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock and, not far away, the Flea & Firkin.

Going nationwide - Ruddles was taken over by Grand Metropolitan, who were later involved in the "infamous pubs for breweries swop" with Courage, who later sold Ruddles to Grolsch. Meanwhile, many of the ex Grand Met. and Courage pubs were amalgamated into Innpreneur Estates, who leased them on long contracts. These alterations, and many more to come, were the direct or indirect result of the Beer Orders, which required big reductions in the national brewers tied estates, and probably half of their directly tied pubs went to the new pub owning companies. Pubmaster and Greenalls are the largest of these new companies, with Boddington's not far down the list.

During the ten year period a whole string of breweries were lost - Border, Matthew Brown, Castletown, Crown, Davenport's, Higson's, Home, Rayment, Shipstone, Theakston, Yates & Jackson - all long established, and in the main completely independent and highly respected breweries that lost their individualities due to takeovers, mergers and closures, many of which came in for intense criticism from CAMRA.

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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		

Given the Olde Vic's trailblazing status as the original multi-ale free house in Stockport, we felt it appropriate that its award should share centre page prominence with OT's 10 year celebration.

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for June is Ye Olde Vic, on Chatham Street, Edgeley. These days exotic guest beers are almost the order of the day in many pubs and there are an increasing number of pubs devoted to selling beers from far and wide. Even the national brewers have jumped on the bandwagon.

Less than ten years ago it was a very different story and the Olde Vic's claim to fame is that it was the first pub in Stockport to offer a constantly changing range of guest beers as well as being the only outlet in town for the legendary Taylors Landlord. Fads and pubs come and go but over the years the Olde Vic has never wavered from its policy of serving a wide range of different beers, all on tip top form.

This is all down to the efforts of landlady Kay Ord, a genuine beer enthusiast whose commitment to quality and choice has made the Olde Vic one of the town's premier freehouses. It's seven years since Kay last received a pub of the month award. They haven't been easy years for the pub

trade and many pub's in the Olde Vic's position would doubtless have been content to seek the financial security of a brewery loan and the restrictions on choice that would go with it. The fact that the Olde Vic today offers five continually changing guest beers, some from extremely obscure breweries, is testimony enough to Kay's commitment to quality and choice. The commitment makes this second award to the Olde Vic a well deserved thank you to Kay for all her hard works over the years.

The award will be presented on Thursday June 23rd when there will doubtless be some particularly fine beers to titillate the tastebuds of all those present.

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

OPENING CAMRA
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Greenalls took over the small West Midlands brewer, Simpkins, and almost immediately closed it down - they closed Wem, and then announced later that they were to cease brewing altogether. Their Warrington brewery closed, but on the plus side, we gained a new small brewer on the site, the Coach House Brewing Company. Devenish was another major name to cease brewing.

Coming back nearer home again, there was the Hyde Road Improvement scheme, and proposals in the event of a successful Olympic bid, all of which were likely to lead to the demolition of pubs. Another storm of protest came from a different style of demolition - Greenalls flattened Tommy Ducks overnight, with no notice of any kind.

Many subjects have been discussed (and criticised) - Robinson's re-furbishment policy, and Pennine Hosts with their "Open House" and "Sports" concepts; Bass with their apparent lack of commitment to cask beer in the local pubs, and then the row over their canned beer with a picture of a handpump on the side (and it wasn't only Bass that were attempting the "con in a can"); Guinness's decision to axe their Original Stout, just when it seemed that bottle-conditioned beers were making a come back; the controversy over metered pumps, lined glasses, short measures and top-ups, and the stop-go implementation of Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act. There was, of course, some straightforward reporting as well e.g. the growth

continued on page 12

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continued from page 11

of Banks's in the North West, both with the re-opening of newly refurbished pubs, and the building of new ones in Longsight, Burnage, Cheadle and Trafford Bar. The progress of Metrolink, with possible demolitions, and the likely fate of the Stalybridge Station Buffet was closely followed.

There were informative articles on a wide variety of beer related subjects:- ingredients and additives; home brewing; winter ales and recipes; low alcohol; Belgian beers; cider, and a miscellany of regular features - Pub Grub, Pub of the Month, Pub of the Year, Stagger (and pub crawls in more distant locations), Rhythm & Booze, book reviews, local breweries, new breweries, and 5 years ago. Then there was the minutiae of the pub scene generally - refurbishments, new pubs, closures, change of licensee, new beers, guest beers (both appearing and disappearing).

All this has been appearing in Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's Opening Times, which has been under the editorship of John Clarke since May 1988. Most of the items have been written by the local branch members, but within the last couple of years or so, members of the neighbouring High Peak & North East Cheshire branch have been contributing with their local news and activities.

It might be said of any project that the first ten years are the worst - taking into account what has happened in the last 10 years, it would take somebody very brave indeed to forecast what is likely to happen in the next decade, taking us up to 2004 - how do you say that - two thousand and four, twenty o four, or even twenty four.

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CURMUDGEON

In 1993 the level of road deaths in Britain fell to the lowest figure since records began in the 1930's, despite the fact that there is more traffic than ever before. Britain's roads are amongst the safest in the world. Even so, we still hear claims that alcohol is responsible for an epidemic of carnage on the roads, and that the way to stop this is to reduce the legal blood alcohol limit for driving to nil, or nearly nil. Apparently, opinion polls suggest that a large majority of people are in favour of such a move. But what would it really end up achieving?

Some zealots regard any argument short of the most extreme stance possible on the issue of drinking and driving as akin to promoting child abuse. Now I condemn unreservedly anyone who drives a car when drunk. But to tar with the same brush anyone who drives after one drink is to lose all sense of proportion.

Every week, millions of people drive to pubs, and drink alcohol, but stay well below the limit for driving. I'm not aware of any evidence that such people are responsible for mayhem on the roads. The real problem with drinking and driving is the hardcore minority who blatantly flout the current law. They are just as likely to drink in clubs, executive dining rooms or private houses as pubs. The challenge for the authorities should be to get through to them rather than to impose a blanket clampdown on everybody.

If people couldn't have even one drink in the pub, they probably wouldn't call in at all. Many people live on estates where they are beyond easy walking distance of a pub. Inevitably the trend towards drinking at home rather than in pubs would accelerate. Many pubs where most of the customers arrive by car would close, and those which remained would have to effectively become restaurants. It is

impossible to imagine that classic pubs such as the Romper at Ringway could survive in their current form, and that is not to suggest that any of their present customers is irresponsible about drinking and driving.

Alcohol takes time to pass through the system, so you can still have some in your bloodstream many hours after finishing drinking. With a near-nil limit, you could not contemplate having a drink until you knew that you would not have to drive again later that day, and you would have to restrict yourself severely in the evening if you would be driving first thing the next morning. Most adults drink some alcohol, and most adults drive, so most of the adult population, even if only very light drinkers, would have to monitor their drinking very closely in a way they simply don't need to now.

A near-nil blood alcohol limit would make little or no difference to road safety. But it would lead to the closure of thousands of pubs and force many responsible people to become virtual teetotallers. Is Prohibition by the back door the hidden agenda of the anti-drink campaigners who make such a hypocritical fuss about road safety?

Ironically, a near-nil alcohol limit could even make the real problem of drinking and driving worse. It would not deter the hard core who break the present law, and while most of those who currently drink and drive within the law would comply with it, a significant minority could decide that they might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, and end up drinking more. So we could end up with more drunken drivers, not less.



We all wish Arthur Gosling well and hope he will soon be installed back behind the bar at the Royal Oak in Didsbury. The Royal Oak is legendary for its swift and efficient service - perhaps during Arthur's regrettable enforced rest, The Boddington Pub Company could employ him as a consultant to pass on some of these qualities to the bar staff at a certain alehouse not a million miles from Stockport viaduct.

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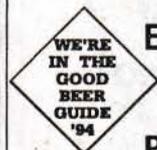
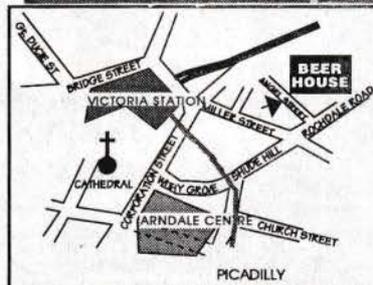
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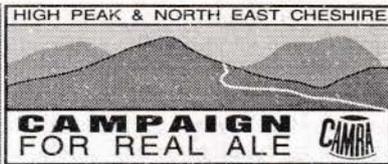
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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

...Pub Ne
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b News...
News...P



I've been asked to repeat some old pub news that I am sure was published some months back. But to be on the safe side....The Norfolk Arms in Marple Bridge, a long time keg only pub is now serving Boddingtons Bitter on hand pump. Thinking about it it is probably worth repeating. The Norfolk Arms in....

In Guide Bridge, Audenshaw The Boundary is again serving guest beers and two are regularly available on handpump. Also in the heart of Tameside (if there is such a place) The Strawberry Gardens, Droylsden - a Marstons house - is now serving the bitter on handpump (formerly on metered electric) and, much to your correspondent's surprise, Batemans Dark Mild. This is a welcome addition to the beers available in the Droylsden area and in Mild Month as well!

A recent (sparsely populated) pub crawl of Denton was a great success, apparently (Oh! What a give away) and in brief went as follows:- first stop, The Masons Arms, Robinsons. Best Bitter good, no Fredericks. The Chapel House (The Big Chap), Holts. Recently re-furb'd, Bitter excellent. Punch-up (crawlers not involved). The Jolly Hatters, Hydes. Bitter good (up-date on punch-up). Moving on, at an ever-reducing pace, The Gardeners, Robinsons, was the next port of call where Best Bitter was the chosen beverage. Was nobody

drinking mild? The Red Lion, Hydes. Long time GBG entry, more bitter. Finally at The Silver Spring Wadsworths was selected from the guest beers and was described as "as good as it gets" and followed by the much maligned (in this column anyway) Old Speckled Hen.

Now then, this is the bit I like. Rumours. The Gun Inn, Hollingworth (Tameside) is rumoured to be the target of Boddingtons PubCo. presumably for another (sigh) Henrys Table as it already has a reputation as a food oriented establishment.

In Disley, is The Rams Head to be the next acquisition of the owners of Sycamore, Birch Vale; the Pack Horse, Hayfield and the Rose & Crown at Tunstead Milton. Watch this space.

As the sun seems to be blessing us with its presence recently and the walking season is upon us a word should be said for a walk on Kinder Scout, taking in The Sportsman, on Kinder Road, Hayfield - where the Thwaites beer has been getting rave reviews from local members - obviously.

PS: If you think you sup a bit consider the feat of one of the regular attenders of the High Peak branch (yes there are some). He consumed his 1,163rd different traditional beer at the Station, (Ashton-under-Lyne) at the recent beer festival. All this since January 1993!

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

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BOOK REVIEW



Piers & Pints, CAMRA Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Branch, 104 pages, £3.75

This guide to real ale in the boroughs of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre covers the whole of the well-known holiday coast from Lytham up to Fleetwood but also some little-known and fascinating countryside inland as far as Garstang. It's the first full-scale CAMRA guide to be devoted entirely to this area, and as such is very welcome.

The guide uses the increasingly popular two-tier format, with the best pubs receiving extended description while only basic details are given for the rest. Sadly, these details are a bit too basic, with only the brewery or pub-owning group noted rather than a list of beers.

However, the full entries receive some of the lengthiest descriptions I've seen in CAMRA guides, linking historical detail with up-to-the-minute comment in fluent and readable essays that are not afraid to make sharp campaigning points where necessary. Photographs are lavishly provided (very nearly one per full entry) and in the main well reproduced, but there are a few codes to describe pub facilities (only meals, accommodation and family rooms are covered).

Blackpool Camra have produced a very creditable first effort. Don't forget to pack it along with the bucket and spade! Orders by post from Terry Gorst, 33 Melrose Avenue, Blackpool, FY3 7ES. Enclose a cheque for £4.75 including p&p (£3.75 for CAMRA members, quoting membership number) payable to CAMRA Blackpool Fylde & Wyre Branch.

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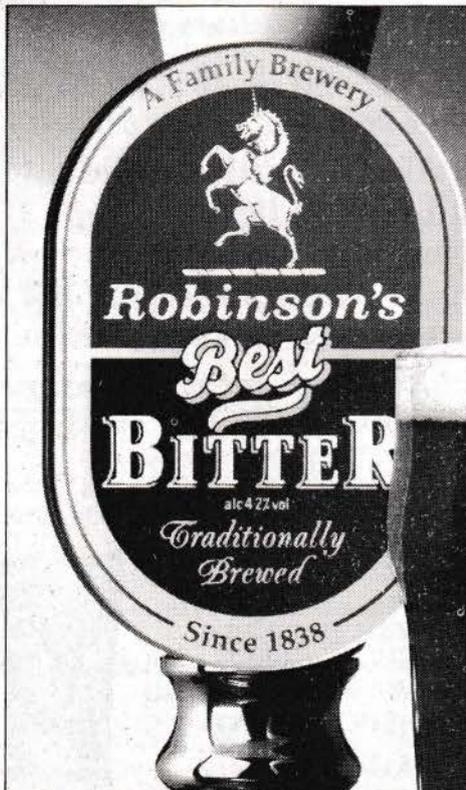
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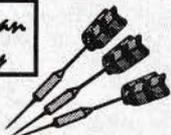


The
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West



Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Humour and the game of darts have always gone together. After a few drinks, even the most reticent of players become comedians. As a player who has suffered unmerciful barracking from his own team mates, never mind the opposition, I know what I'm talking about.

It was, therefore, only a matter of time before someone was bright enough to latch on to the idea of combining the two on the printed page.

Fanzines have been around for some years in the worlds of football and pop music. Now darts joins the company with the publication of "CDO", self acclaimed as "Britain's No. 1 Darts and Humour Magazine. And a very good effort it is, too.

The problem facing the production team, led by Editor Duncan Glyn, is the eternal one facing any magazine. Just who to aim it at? A purely parochial approach would limit the potential readership; while more universal coverage would negate the intimacy of a fanzine.

That "CDO" has reached issue 4, shows that Duncan and his team have, at least to some extent, succeeded in the intentions. If it was going to fail, it would have disappeared after the first issue.

Duncan shows considerable forethought in not setting himself unattainable deadline dates. He hopes to bring out issue 5 "around September or October", and I will certainly be looking forward to it.

Issue 4's highspots include an interview with Iain Hopcroft, a local player who might not be too well known outside his own patch. An interview with Stockport players Darryl Fitton,

Tony O'Shea or Phil Kerr might be a good idea, Duncan. However, the articles headline "On the Oche" is one that rings a too familiar bell.

A list of the best selling records with a darting theme works well, too. Top of the charts is "Jockey Wilson Said" by Dexy's Midnight Runners.

There is a photograph of Tony Green, taken in the mid-eighties, complete with permed hair. That picture alone, is worth the cover price.

Perhaps the most interesting piece, though, is a two-part interview with TV commentator Sid Waddell. Like him or loathe him, and a straw poll taken unscientifically among local league players suggests the latter, he is known as the voice of TV darts. And his views on darts in general are worth consideration.

Anyone interested can obtain a copy for the small price of one pound, plus 25p postage from Duncan Kyle, 267 Burton Road, West Didsbury, Manchester M20 8WA.

* * * * *

Congratulations to Alan Roebuck's Cheshire County squad, who have won promotion to the Premier Division of the Inter-Counties League. The mouth watering prospect of games with Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and London lies ahead. Cheshire's strength in depth proved to be the reason for the Cestrians' success, for it was "B" team performances that enabled our lads and lasses to gain the coveted top spot.

It will enable Stockport's top players to show their abilities to a wider audience, and could lead to long awaited international appearances for the very best.



CIDER CORNER



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LOCAL HAUNTS

by Angela Conway

The Arden Arms

The Arden Arms, built in 1709 has an interior which reflects the character of an age gone by. With genuine antique furniture, grandfather clocks, and sash windows on the bar, it is a prime target for the attention of those interested in history and ghosts.

Regulars in the pub told me that the landlord in the 1960s was frequently touched by unseen hands. Mainly on the ground floor, the bar itself, he would feel hands grab his arm, as if someone was trying to get his attention. But on turning to face the culprit, there would be no one there. This could happen up to twice a week.

One lady said that whilst she was sat in the snug behind the bar, she felt a cat brush past her legs. Without thinking she bent down to stroke the moggie, and was surprised to find nothing there. There was just a split second between her feeling the cat, and turning to look, so it could not have had time to run off. Besides that, no one else in the pub had seen a cat, although it was pointed out that the previous landlord had owned a cat which regularly greeted customers in that manner.

More recently, the ghost seems to have spread out its antics to various parts of the pub, namely the stables and cellar. The two dogs in the pub rarely venture into the cellar, and when they do, they are said to stop abruptly and bark at a blank wall. Other events in the cellar include the pumps being turned off for both bitter and lager, and even a barrel being hurled across the floor!

Back in the bar area, poltergeist activity still seems to be continuing, things flying off the bar with no visible propellant, the stools being rearranged in the morning, doors opening and closing, and disembodied footsteps heard walking along the floor. The toilets do not even escape the attention of this phantom, as it is said that several people have been touched in both ladies and gents! Coupled to this, the corridor to the toilets has suffered from cold spots and mysterious draughts.

All of these things sound quite harmless, almost like the ghost playing a game to get attention. But on one occasion, a less than friendly action on the part of the ghost, seriously frightened several witnesses. On a warm Sunday afternoon, sort of Fete was being held to raise money for charity, with

one of the stalls being for children to have their faces painted.

The gentleman doing the painting was sat not too far away from the old stables, whose doors were wide open revealing an array of ironmongery and tools. Suddenly, the man was saw something fly past him, almost hitting him and the children around. He turned to see what it was, and was shocked to see items from the stables being flung outside by themselves! No one was hurt in this incident, but it seems rather more threatening than the activities in the pub itself.

Bearing this in mind Myself and three members of Stockport Ghost Society decided to investigate, and spent a rather cold night in the cellar. It was a very quiet night, apart from one incident at 1.20a.m. when we heard a loud crash from upstairs in the bar area. We were up there in seconds to investigate, and found that an ash tray had been thrown from a shelf about two metres across the floor. The only other people in the pub were upstairs and could not have caused it to move without us having seen them.

This is one of the few pubs that actually has activity in the bar area more frequently than other parts of the building, and just because we didn't encounter much doesn't mean that you won't!

Vale of Tears

Would you believe it, Bags have scored another own goal. The licensee of the Reddish Vale in Reddish decides to leave the pub (and apparently the trade). Within a week of the new relief manager taking over Bass take out the cask conditioned Worthington Best Bitter and replace it with keg, allegedly due to a request from the departing manager who, it is claimed, was not an enthusiast for real ale.

The relief manager, Pete Warhurst, had to admit to Opening Times that he was surprised at the decision and conceded that he was embarrassed at not being able to offer real ale. He told us he believed that there were more than sufficient sales to warrant cask Worthington Bitter.

It is not Pete Warhurst who should be embarrassed but Bass themselves. Why do they fail where all around them succeed? They should answer this question rather than opt out and deny their customers the choice of real ale in their pub.

Contemplate the fact that a Liverpool brewed ale can be purchased for 80p in Walkers Bar, Swan St, Mcr, whilst a Manchester brewed ale can be obtained for 132p in the Ship & Mitre, Dale St Liverpool (Mersey Drinker "Pub of the Year"). Yes we are talking Cains & Holts. Who said Liverpool was the poor relation?

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2nd - 6th August 1994

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Fri: 5pm - 10.30pm: £3.50 Sat: 11.30am - 10pm: £3

185,000 Pints!!

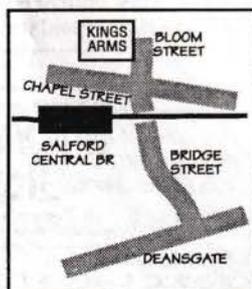
With 185,000 pints and nearly 500 real ales, ciders, perries and imported beers, a drinker could be forgiven for thinking he had come to heaven. The Great British Beer Festival which takes place in Olympia, London this August, boasts the biggest selection of draught beers under one roof in the world.

There are beers from all over Britain, from Scotland to Devon, plus beers from Czechoslovakia, USA and Belgium. There is something to suit everyone's taste and like all CAMRA beer festivals, this one uses over sized glasses to ensure that the purchaser gets a full measure, not a short pint.

But the Festival is more than just the beer with a Family Room with children's entertainment each lunchtime; live music every session ranging from classical music both sessions on Wednesday to Jazz with Eric Delaney on Saturday evening. Add on the craft stands, games and food and it promises to be an enjoyable and different time out for everyone. So why not pop along? The Festival opens on Tuesday evening 2nd August at 5pm and runs until Saturday 6th August with Saturday being an all day session. There are discounts for groups of 15 or over, contact A.Bridle 0272 248894.

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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

MANCHESTER MATTERS by Rhys Jones

In a month dominated by Stockport Beer Festival, we still have a full agenda for those who can stand the pace.

The first post-festival event is a social on Monday 6th June which will be at the Hare & Hounds, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton. In common with all Monday socials, this starts at 9.00pm. The same week sees the monthly branch meeting, this time at the Plough on Hyde Road, Gorton. We are delighted to have David Robinson along as our guest speaker. The 203 bus from Stockport will drop you outside and the 169 from South Manchester will also take you close.

The social on Monday 13th was due to be at the Royal Oak in Didsbury. This is of course currently closed following last month's fire and we will be at the Olde Cock instead. On Wednesday 15th there is a trip to the Griffin Inn at Haslingden, home of Porter's Brewery. The minibus will leave the Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.00pm. Phone Paul Felton on 442 3143 to book a place. A busy week ends two days later with the monthly Stagger. Quite a long one, this, as it covers Cheadle Hulme and Adswold. We meet at 7.00pm in the Cheadle Hulme (right next to the station) and at 8.30 we will be in the Cross Keys on Adswold Road.

On Monday 20th the social is at the Gladstone on Hillgate, Stockport. Thursday 23rd is when we present our Pub of the Month award to Ye Olde Vic (see page 2). Just two more socials to finish with - on Monday 27th we are at the Grey Horse, Portland Street in the City Centre and on July 4th, the Red Lion, Church Road, Gatley.

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Marple or Woodley areas you fall under the High Peak and NE Cheshire branch of the Campaign. On June 10th there will be a social crawl in Stalybridge starting at 'Q' (just down from the station) at 8.00pm. On Monday June 13th it's the High Peak AGM at the Duke of York, Romiley. Aim to get there by 8.30. All High Peak members should make every effort to attend this important meeting. Lastly, on July 3rd, Frank Wood will be leading another Real Ale Ramble. This kicks off at 9.45am at New Mills Bus Terminal.

NB on July 8th, 9th and 10th High Peak branch will also be running their ever-popular beer tent at the Tameside Canals Festival which takes place at the Portland Basin, Ashton (see advert for further details).

Fallowfield's last keg-only pub, the Talbot at the junction of Mauldeth Road and Ladybarn Lane, has seen the light and installed handpumped Boddingtons Bitter. Nearby, the White Swan (Robinsons) no longer sells mild but has Stockport-brewed "Hartleys" XB on handpump.

Despite my scepticism, O'Shea's (formerly the Lancaster Tavern) in the City Centre opened on time last month. It's been given a rather less full-blooded Irish treatment than I expected - while the dining area is "Parnell's Corner", much of the decor would feel at home in any pub refurbishment anywhere - and when I called, the largely student clientele was not much different from the Lancaster of old. No doubt, though, the place comes into its own for frequent live entertainment sessions. On the beer front, the Tetley Bitter handpump is dwarfed by huge founts for keg Guinness (British brewed but with the Irish gas mix for smoothness) and keg Kilkenny Special Ale from Guinness subsidiary Smithwicks.

In East Manchester, the Pomona in Gorton is closed, though probably not for good, while the latest beer sighted at the Mosley in Beswick was some rather good Lees Bitter. Good to see this place returning to a local independent's product after a succession of frankly uninteresting national beers.

Apologies to the Halfway House at Openshaw, which is actually subtitled the CASK (not Cork) and Bottle - my handwriting was to blame! I've also heard that some of the prices have come down since my comments were written. Elsewhere in the Whitbread Empire, the Haxby in Gorton (Ryder Brow) is now all keg. Another of Hyde Road's closed pubs has passed into history - the Victoria succumbed to the demolition squad shortly before the Spring Bank Holiday.

Oscar's, the winebar/restaurant complex on Cooper Street in the City Centre, has returned to the real ale fold selling "Gray's Landlord's Best Bitter" (3.6%ABV) on handpump. Grays, you say - surely not the Essex brewery that closed in the early 70's? Well, I doubt it. The small print on the pumpclip refers to wine and spirit merchants Findlater & Mackie, so it's presumably a "house beer" for them; unconfirmed rumour suggests the source as Mansfield Brewery. **Finally, congratulations to Cliff & Linda at the Swinging Sporrán on their forthcoming nuptials - to be held, I understand, in exotic parts.**

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APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT122)

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.

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I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £12 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

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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





A pub which looks set for a change in its fortunes is Porky Pigs Pie Shop on St Petersgate, Stockport. Since September last year it has been in the capable hands of Star Davenport and Lee Threlfall who have set about improving the pub's somewhat troubled image. They have



succeeded, too, and the pub is once again a pleasant place to linger over a pint or two (John Smiths Bitter and Boddies Bitter are on handpump). While the weekend trade is holding up, Star and Lee tell us that they would like to be busier during the week - given the proximity of the busy Market Place it certainly ought to be part of that circuit, particularly if live music is introduced. Hopefully the pub will also be refurbished but this depends on the successful outcome of negotiations between Anchor Inns and Taverns, for whom Star and Lee are running the pub, and Grand Met. To signal the change of image, it is hoped to also change the pub's name, back to the Egerton Arms. Certainly Opening Times wishes Star and Lee every success with this, their first pub. If you're passing, why not drop in and say hello over a pint.

As we went to press the Victoria in Bramhall was closed for a massive refurbishment which was to last 6 weeks in total. There have been several attempts to revamp this pub in the past, let's hope this one succeeds! Also in Bramhall the Shady Oak will be holding a beer festival at the start of this month featuring some 20-30 different beers.

To many people's surprise (including the editor's - egg on face situation -) the *Pineapple*, Castle Street, Edgeley, reopened last month - as a pub! Tetley mild and bitter are available on handpump.

At the *George & Dragon*, Hazel Grove we welcome new licensees Derek & Sylvia Blamire who took over the pub at the beginning of May. Their previous pub was the Beechwood in Blackburn and Derek is looking forward to a lengthy stay at his new pub. Very much a cask ale fan he is looking forward to getting guest beers from far and wide.

A reliable source reports that the premises of Harrison & Killey, plumbers' merchants of Grosvenor Street near

the Flea & Firkin, have been acquired for conversion into yet another student pub. Look out for work going on between now and October - meanwhile watch this space for further details.

At Holts *Seven Stars* on Ashton Old Road, Ardwick, we welcome new licensee Douglas Byrne, who on first impression seems to have improved both the beer and the trade (cause and effect?) in a pub which remains attractive despite an unsympathetic refurbishment a few years back.

Recent arrivals at the *George & Dragon*, Heaton Chapel are Terry and Penny Moores. They have made the short move from the *Dog & Partridge* in Heaton Mersey. Terry has plans for 2 guest beers, and some of these will be found outside the Boddington list. During National Pub Week in June Terry will be running a 'Guess the Guest Beer' competition, with a firkin of real ale as a prize. At present the *George & Dragon* has Mixed and Ladies' Darts Teams, and Terry is hoping that the men's team may be reformed. A snooker table is available upstairs to members of the snooker club. A once a week sing-along will also enliven proceedings.

After years of promises from Sam Smith the *Bluebell* in Levenshulme has gone real with Old Brewery Bitter now on handpump with the appointment of the new licensee John Kitching, an ex-Boddingtons man.

The *Navigation* on Lancashire Hill has a new licensee Peter Berry who has moved from the Midland on the A6. The first change has been the introduction of breakfasts.

Busby's *Real Ale Bar* in the arrivals hall at the airport Terminal Two is introducing a guest beer which will change monthly. The beer chosen for May is Inde Coope Burton Ale, this adds to the currently available Tetley bitter and Draught Bass. There are also changes planned to make the bar more like a local pub, including reducing the prices (The prices are currently reduced to £1 a pint 6-7, Mon - Fri.) These changes require permission from the airport.

Coming Soon.... CAMRA Beer Tent at the Tameside Canals Festival

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Saturday 9 July (12 - 5pm & 7.30 - 11pm)
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