

# OPENING

CAMRA  
5000

No:  
125

# TIMES

SEPTEMBER 1994

OVER  
DISTRIBUTED

## West Coast Runs Aground

**F**ollowing the planned change of direction for West Coast Brewery, reported in OT recently, last month brought the shock news that the brewery had been placed into voluntary liquidation with debts rumoured to be in excess of £100,000. The brewery and its one tied house, the Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock are now in the hands of a receiver and for the time being both are continuing to trade although this is unlikely to remain the case unless a buyer can be found in the next 2-3 months.

The news of West Coast's problems was greeted with dismay by local drinkers for whom the brewery's products have become a by-word for quality. CAMRA's Liaison Officer with the brewery, Rhys Jones summed up what many felt when he told Opening Times: "This really is terrible news. It would be a tragedy for the Manchester drinking scene if these beers were to disappear." He also paid tribute to the expertise of West Coast's founder, Brendan Dobbin whose highly individual approach to his craft was admired throughout the country.

With the benefit of hindsight it is perhaps easy to see why things ultimately went wrong. Certainly the company appeared to be under-capitalised from the word go with the result that it often gave the impression of being run on a shoestring. If West Coast had gone for the national free-trade via beer agencies then it could arguable have sold much more beer. However, not only would this have involved a substantial capital outlay on casks but this was also a route that Brendan was not keen to take. However, picking over the entrails of West Coast will serve no purpose. For the time being the full range of beers is available to be enjoyed and we feel sure that local drinkers will be making the most of the time remaining. With luck the brewery may be sold as a



The possible demise of West Coast Brewery and its beers is, as Rhys Jones says, simply a tragedy for the local beer scene. It was Opening Times that first announced the arrival of West Coast and the first ever outlet for its beers was the 1989 Stockport Beer Festival when Guiltless Stout and ESB made such an impact. Since then we have closely followed the fortunes of Brendan Dobbin and his company - he did (still does, in fact) produce some of what is arguably the best beer in the country. Yakima Grande Pale Ale and Porter, Guiltless Stout and Old Soporific are classics of their type. Dobbins Dark Mild, Bitter, ESB and Ginger Beer all have enthusiastic followings. Let's just hope that a buyer can be found and these beers will remain with us for many years to come.

going concern, perhaps a white knight will emerge with a capital injection (as recently happened with Hull Brewery when that concern ran into difficulties). What you can bet on though is that we haven't heard the last of Brendan Dobbin - you just don't write off a brewer with such enthusiasm and a love of his craft.

### In September's OPENING TIMES

Pub of the Month .....	2	Stagger .....	12
Save Our Pubs .....	3	Rhythm & Booze .....	13
5 Years Ago .....	5	Carry Out .....	15
Editors View .....	5	High Peak News .....	16
Cheshire Pubs .....	6	Featured Pub .....	18
Letters .....	7	Curmudgeon .....	19
Festival Awards .....	9	Pub Grub .....	21
Buffet .....	10	Camra Calling .....	22



The Blue Bell is September's Cheshire Pub



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	<b>22</b>	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

# PUB of the Month September

**R**eddish cannot really be described as a beer drinkers' Mecca and yet in the relative desert of mediocrity you will find an oasis of excellence, the Thatched Tavern, the CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award winner for September.

Tucked away on Stanhope Street, the Thatched Tavern can be overlooked, hidden away as it is from the main roads through Reddish. Perhaps it is because of this that the pub has retained probably more traditional local character than any other pub in the area, with both a well-furnished lounge and a comfortable vault.

Sid and Ann Garfield came to the pub as relief managers six years ago, when the previous licensee left due to 'differences' with Tetley (and paradoxically just before he was to receive a Pub of the Month award himself - let's just hope that it's not some sort of jinx as far as this pub is concerned). Their stay was interrupted two years ago when the pub was seriously fire damaged and they were made redundant from their position as managers. Luckily, instead of throwing in the towel, they took over the pub on a lease. The improvements they have made since are dramatic.

The pub has been refurbished throughout, their beer garden is one of the best around and the outside of the pub is well-lit and welcoming. The beer itself, Tetley Mild and Bitter on handpump, is always well kept and was probably the best of the night on a recent Stagger in the area.

Come along on presentation night, Thursday 22nd September when you will find a very warm welcome in this great little pub. (Buses 42 from South Manchester and 203 from Stockport will take you there.)

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# SAVE OUR PUBS

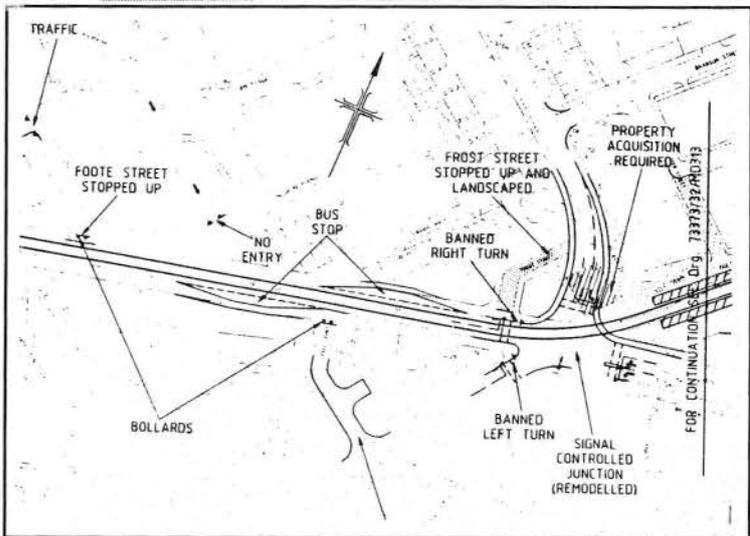


**C**ampaigners celebrating the reprieve of the three pubs originally threatened by the route of the proposed Metrolink extension to Ashton were brought down to earth with a bump last month. The realisation dawned that whilst the new route took the tram line away from the three pubs under threat, a fourth pub is now slated for demolition.

The new route is to be 'fully integrated with the design of a new junction proposed for the intersection of Beswick Street, Merrill Street and Every Street' in Ancoats. At present this site is unfortunately occupied by Banks's Mitchell Arms, a well-used locals pub.

A campaign to save the pub has been launched by the local North Manchester branch of CAMRA and has the full support of OT, which is more, it seems, than it has from the pub's licensee who, when approached about the new threat to his pub, apparently threw the local CAMRA man out. His misdemeanour? The threat to the pub was apparently mentioned within earshot of one of the customers. This upset mine host no end as, he allegedly explained, it had been his intention to keep the threat a secret. We are hoping for a more positive response from the planning authorities and the brewery.

Meanwhile no news about the Plough on Hyde Road. The Highways and Cleansing Committee have been approached with some new proposals and the City Engineers have been asked for their current thoughts about how they intend to reconcile the pub's Listed Building



status with the demolition the current plans would entail. No response had been received as we went to press.

## CENTRIC Buy-out

In a surprise move last month, Salisbury brewer Gibbs Mew bought out the Midlands-based Centric pub-owning company which has a substantial local presence.

Gibbs paid £12.8 million for Centric's 120-strong estate which is mainly based in the Midlands and the North-West. All the Centric pubs in the Opening Times area consist of ex-Bass houses and for the most part only sell keg beers, the Huntsman in Rusholme and the Prince of Wales in Openshaw for example, although one or two, notably the Church in Clayton, sell the real thing. By contrast Gibbs supplied real ale to all of their existing estate and it will be interesting to see if they try and do the same thing here. It also remains to be seen just how well their beers are received - the Good Beer Guide hardly falls over itself with enthusiastic recommendations for many of the brewery's products ('bland' is a word used more than once). Whilst the brewery will doubtless be keen to get its beers into the Centric estate as soon as possible there will presumably be a short delay while suitable distribution arrangements are worked out. More news when we have it.

\* The Centric purchase will not in fact be Gibbs Mew's first foray into the north - in 1962 they purchased the premises of the defunct Lancashire Clubs brewery at Barrowford with a view to producing keg beers for the northern clubs market although brewing ceased after two years for economic reasons. Let's hope they have more success this time.

## 1st Northwich Beerex

Northwich isn't a town renowned for its choice of beers but on the weekend of 16th/17th September, that's the place to be as the Central & North Cheshire branch of CAMRA - in conjunction with the local Rotary Clubs - present the first ever real ale festival to be held in the town.

There will be about 40 different beers available, including offerings from local brewers Coach House and Weetwood, together with a selection of ciders and perries. There will be food at all sessions plus a wide variety of entertainment.

The venue is the Memorial Hall and the opening hours are 7-11pm on Friday 16th and 12-4 and 7-11 on the Saturday. Entrance (which includes a commemorative glass) is £3 on the Friday, £1 Saturday lunch and £2 on Saturday night. CAMRA members get a free half pint on presentation of their membership cards.

Entrance is by programme only obtainable from Mark Enderby, 3 Brackley Street, Stockton Heath, Warrington, WA4 6DY (please enclose an A5 SAE, cheques should be made payable to "Northwich Beer Festival Account"). For more details phone 0925 602809.





## THE CREAM OF MANCHESTER.

Boddingtons Draught Bitter. Brewed at the Strangeways Brewery since 1778.



# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

SEPTEMBER '89

**C**oncern was expressed that the contract for the pub in Stockport's new station leisure complex had been awarded to Greenalls, who were to develop the site as one of their "Times Square" operations. To be named "Central Square", it would be the typical open plan, American-style theme bar, which CAMRA felt would almost certainly become a trouble spot, particularly in this location. There was also reference to the former unenviable reputation of pubs like the Puss in Boots and Ups 'n' Downs.

A front page advert announced the re-opening of the Kings Arms, Chorlton-on-Medlock - Manchester's newest brewery - polypins of real ale from 55p. a pint - brewery visits by appointment, Saturdays at 11am - a sad contrast to this issue's front page story.

A planning committee meeting of Manchester City Council officially reprieved the Castle & Falcon (off Shudehill), but following the compulsory purchase order there was the rather odd position of it actually belonging to the Passenger Transport Authority. CAMRA's plan was to see if Burtonwood were prepared to take it on again. But the future of the Coach & Horses seemed uncertain, as the application for listed building status had been rejected.

The Manor House on Wilmslow Road, Withington reopened after what had been described as a complete refurbishment, and transformation - but when Opening Times paid a visit, the overall impression was that it was simply a bigger version of what had been there before. The bar had been substantially extended, and there was a new "cottagey" extension at the rear. (The real transformation took place when the Golden Lion became the Manor House - this was over 10 years ago when Withington had three lions - Golden, Red and White.)

The Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, which had the dubious distinction of being Stockport's only signed Webster's house, had finally been sold. It then caught fire, and remained closed and boarded, with no signs of life. It looked destined to become another candidate for Stockport's growing list of "Lost locals". (But without a crystal ball, who was to know that it was soon to become a free house, with probably the most imaginative selection of beers in the area.)

## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Recent letters in both the trade press and these pages have made similar points, namely that CAMRA should stick to its original aims and simply concern itself with beer quality. The authors of these letters are usually complaining about some 'non-beer' criticism that CAMRA has made. Pub refurbishments for example.

Let's make this quite clear. Whilst the trigger for the formation of CAMRA was the sea of keg beer that was threatening to swamp the country, we have never been, and never will be, such a single issue organisation. As the only pub-goers consumer group we have found that it is impossible to divorce the enjoyment of traditional beers from the surroundings in which they are served, the prices at which they are sold and the ingredients that go into them to name but three. The issues of food, music and children in pubs are other issues which are part of the pub-going experience and can have a bearing on how much you enjoy your pint.

By ignoring these we would be failing in our duty to local pub-goers and we make no apology for continuing to comment on a wide range of issues.

And another thing. Another whinging letter in the trade press caught my eye. This was from the licensees of a southern pub which apparently sold a wide range of cask beers but had been virtually ignored by the local CAMRA branch. Surely, they wondered, this wasn't because, as they had heard, the pub also sold Scrumpy Jack? Perhaps the local CAMRA branch should have been a little more direct and to avoid any element of doubt hereabouts let me say where Opening Times stands on this. If any licensee wants to sell Scrumpy Jack that is a business decision that he or she must make. Bulmers supply 3 different fount heads for the stuff, a standard keg box, a one-third height stubby plastic pump with a standard keg switch behind, and a full sized FAKE handpump, which when pulled back activates an internal switch and dispenses the keg cider. If Scrumpy Jack - or any other keg beer or cider for that matter - is sold through a fake handpump then that pub cannot expect any favourable mention in these pages nor can they expect any local CAMRA award nor will they appear in any local or national CAMRA guide. And it doesn't matter how many real ales are sold (or how cheap they are).

*John Clarke*

**Copy Deadline for Next Issue - 23 September**

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# CHEESHIRE PUBS

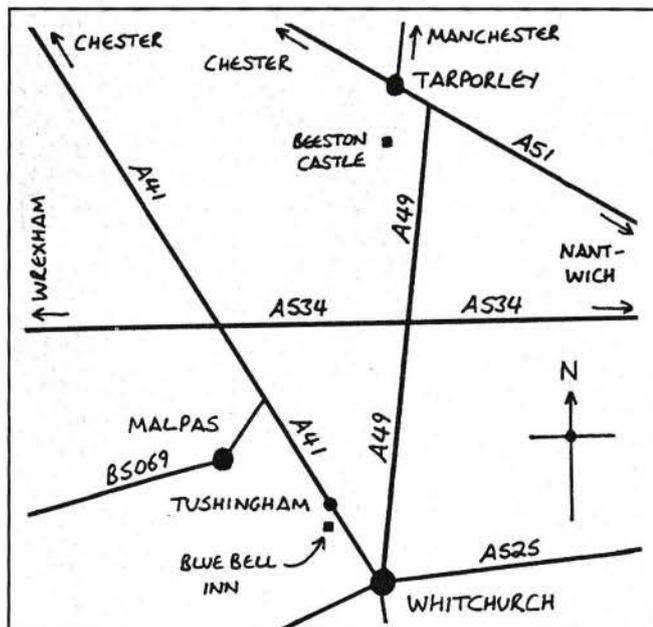
by Peter Edwardson

## The Blue Bell at Tushingham

**Y**ou may well wonder where Tushingham is, as it's scarcely the best-known place in Cheshire. Tucked away in the far south-west of the county, it's little more than a cluster of scattered farmsteads, including the intriguingly-named "Land of Canaan". There's nothing to attract the visitor apart from rural tranquillity - and one of Cheshire's finest and most distinguished pubs.

The actual location is marked on the OS map as "Bell o'th'Hill", about four miles north of Whitchurch, where the A41 to Chester bypasses a twisting section of the old main road. Approaching from the south, you can actually see the Blue Bell from the new road, but from the north you have to turn right where Bell o'th'Hill is signposted. Originally dating from the 17th century, the pub is an imposing whitewashed building, obviously much altered over the years, but still with a half-timbered upper storey and a projecting timbered porch. While not exactly neglected, the exterior would benefit from a little smartening-up and the fading Greenalls pub sign doesn't exactly encourage the passer-by to venture inside.

The struggle with the latch on the heavy oak door might deter you too, but once you've negotiated it and turned right into the main bar you'll know it's been worth it. There's a huge inglenook fireplace, a wealth of genuinely ancient beams, and a haphazard mix of benches, sofas and Windsor chairs. Two plainer but still characterful rooms with hatch serveries open off on the right beyond the bar counter. In the main bar, a plaque on the wall tells the story of how the pub is haunted by a ghostly duck, which sounds fascinating until you actually read it! It's also good to see a pub with CAMRA membership forms on display.



For many years it was a Greenalls tied house, but in 1992 it was sold off into the free trade and taken over by an American landlord and Russian landlady, a very unusual post Cold War combination, especially for rural Cheshire. The Greenalls beers were evicted and replaced by the local products of Hanby Ales, which the landlord collects himself from the brewery about fifteen miles away at Wem in Shropshire. Drawwell Bitter and the strong Treacleminer are both available, together with other guest beers from time to time. On our visit the Drawwell was excellent, the Treacleminer pretty good too, and it's hardly surprising that the pub made its first entry into the Good Beer Guide this year.

If you think the beer's good, just wait until you try the food. There's a fairly comprehensive menu, almost entirely using fresh local produce, ranging from sandwiches to Cumberland sausage and curries, and a specials blackboard too. The prices are what you'd expect for a country pub like this, with most main courses about £5, but when you see the portions they become amazingly cheap. Pride of place on our visit went to the garlic and lime chicken, which for £5.50 offered half of a seriously hefty chicken and a dish full of vegetables in proportion. The quality was on a par with the quantity too. Someone on an adjoining table had the "large local trout", which admittedly was £6.50, but in size was more like a "local whale". You;s have trouble dieting in Tushingham - the landlord warns people to think twice before ordering three courses. Meals are available both lunchtime and evening, and the weekday opening hours are a fairly standard 12-3 and 6-11.

The Blue Bell isn't perfect - they could do with replacing the Greenalls sign, and they ought to keep the main bar clear of children. But in terms of quality beer, food and atmosphere it stands far above the vast majority of pubs, and it's a superb example of how to run a free house of genuine, idiosyncratic character. If you're not careful you may catch the sharp end of the landlord's wit too! They obviously attract quite a few people for the food, but there's a good local atmosphere as well and thankfully it hasn't yet become the resort of the "dining set" - hopefully the slight tinge of scruffiness will continue to deter them.

The south-west corner of Cheshire includes some of the county's most beautiful scenery around the Peckforton hills, and you can visit the twin castles of Beeston and Peckforton and the gardens of Cholmondeley Castle, once time has been called at lunchtime. It may be the best part of 50 miles away, but when you can combine these tourist attractions with a visit to the Blue Bell, what's stopping you?

# OPENING TIMES LETTERS



**From : May Bange, Licensee, Grey Horse, Manchester**  
 Re "Grey Horse Knackered" - Contrary to the belief of one small minded little man, the grey horse is alive and kicking.

Mr Flynn should stick to what CAMRA was originally intended for, i.e. to campaign for real ale, and not stick his nose where it is not wanted.

He has not even got his facts right. He states everything seems out of place, whereas the only thing out of place is himself, because the regulars here all appreciate what we have done, and it is their opinion that counts.

Fact 1 - Hydes did not refurbish the pub, my husband and I did, because we felt it was in desperate need of it. Mr Flynn might like drinking in dark and dismal places, but I don't like living in one.

Fact 2 - It would look rather silly with huge beams in, as the pub is only small.

Fact 3 - The stained glass canopy was made as a one off, and again, not by Hydes.

Fact 4 - The only thing done to the bar was new panels and top, it is still the same shape and has not been moved.

The only thing out of place was Mr. Flynn, it's people like him that give CAMRA a bad name.

I have had a good relationship with CAMRA over the years but if this is what it is stooping to, then I don't think I want to know.

Had I known Mr Flynn was an interior designer, I might have asked his advice, but now knowing his taste he would probably have painted everything black ("the way it was.")

**From : Peter Barnes**

I was surprised by the vehement tone of Jim Flynn's letter about the changes to the Grey Horse in July Opening Times. It is after all a fairly ordinary redecoration of a fairly ordinary pub interior and, I would have thought, nothing to make a fuss about one way or the other.

However, having now seen the results of this refurbishment, I want to say that I feel it is an improvement. I am not a fan of mock timber frame walls or modern brass bar fittings but, on the other hand, the licensee has fairly skilfully eased the perceived bottleneck area in front of the bar and made the interior more intimate by planting bits of wood on the ceiling. And he has achieved this without making any structural alterations.

I much prefer the truly unspoilt interior of the Circus a few doors away (which is a whole series of bottlenecks) and I would really like to see all the walls put back in the Grey Horse so it could be like it was originally but the present scheme is quite acceptable for now.

**From : C.M. Oates**

Re: 'G.H. Knackered' As one who has frequented the Grey Horse since the early '80s, I consider myself to be a little more informed than your correspondent "J.F." Indeed, after reading his trash in the July Opening Times, I wonder when he last visited this pub.

Point one - Under the previous tenants I would hardly call the Grey Horse a refuge:- the landlady insisted on the (taped) music being played as loud as possible. Protests from the customers and the barstaff were to no avail, the music must not be turned down. At most times, conversation was nigh on impossible, even at lunchtime.

Point Two - O.K., the Hydes beers served in the Grey Horse were superb, until about two years ago, that is when the licensee learned that competition was on its way in the form of what we now know as the Old Monkey. It was then that the Grey Horse simply went down the pan, i.e. the licensee gave up the ghost. The mild/bitter were, on most occasions undrinkable, the pub itself, and the beer served therein, were an absolute disgrace to the brewery.

Point Three - The so called "new bar" follows exactly the same lines as the old, decrepit hardboard affair that passed as a bar previously. The fact that "J.F." gives this as the only 'plus' to the revamped pub, convinces me that he has not even visited the place for many a month. What makes his entire piece so laughable, is that he slags the brewery for the changes.

Point Four - As I stated earlier, the mild/bitter were frequently of a totally unacceptable standard from 1992 - mid 1994. The quality of the beers served since the new licensees took over has improved 100%. I find **no** mention **whatsoever** of the beer quality in "J.F.'s" report. This alone astonishes and dismays me. I have always thought that CAMRA fought for 'Real Ale', served in pristine condition, in a decent, friendly atmosphere, (e.g. Grey Horse since May '94).

I also believed that what I read in OT was fact. I now feel ashamed to admit that I am a member of CAMRA after reading such garbage. "J.F." has done neither your branch nor CAMRA any favours. I cannot speak for the new licensees of the Grey Horse, but personally I doubt whether your branch has made a good impression them. Don't forget, you need the goodwill and tolerance of the licensees to get anywhere at all. The fact that the mild and bitter are now consistently amongst the best in Manchester is worthy of a mention surely.

And, just as an aside, as "J.F." is such an expert on "bog standards", perhaps he could let us know when, prior to the new licensees taking the Grey Horse on, he last saw a towel and soap in the gents, let alone toilet paper. Little things like this can make all the difference to the casual visitor.



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continued on page 8

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## O PENING TIMES

*For goodness sake, stick to the cause, (i.e. Real Ale). If a pub serves good beer say so. I'm not interested in the colour of the walls, nor the type of bar that it's served upon, like most drinkers I go to a pub for the beer, if it's good I'll stay, if it's bad I go elsewhere. Simple as that.*

**Paul Hutchings, Branch Pub Survey Officer adds:**

*Whilst I am far from convinced by the refurb, I am nowhere near as upset as Jim Flynn! - the Pub undeniably needed at least a coat of paint. It is a bit too early to aver things like "consistently...best" about the beer under the new licensees. Scores for the beer quality did collapse between 1992 & 1994, resulting in its exit from the Good Beer Guide, and it is to be hoped this trend will be reversed. So far, recent surveys have produced a fairly mixed crop of results, but the trend is upward. Good luck to the new licensee in any case, and lets hope the improved quality is maintained.*

**From : Andy Whitley**

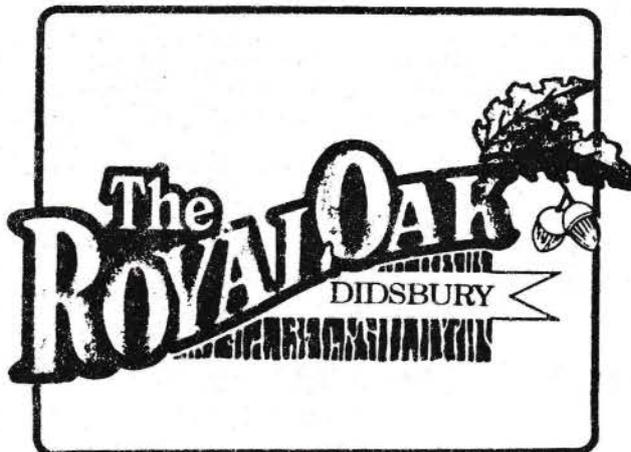
*Whilst perusing "Opening Times" I noticed the remarks made by "Curmudgeon" regarding the regrettable practice of Southern Irish landlords in overcharging for half a pint. Sadly, I must confirm that this is far from unknown in Ulster as well. I was with a party on holiday there recently and we noticed that although the price of a pint of Guinness averaged out at 30 bob, all too often we were charged 80p per half.*

*Unlike the south however, proper draught beer can be found in the guise of Bass and Theakston's in a few outlets. Quality is surprisingly high, the Theakston's Bitter certainly benefits from the journey over the water; the resultant pint is far less sugary than is prevalent in many pubs here. The price is around the same as for Guinness.*

*The credit for getting the breweries interested in promoting the proper stuff in Northern Ireland must go to the local CAMRA branch under its Chairman, Mark Hutchinson. Mark & Co have battled tirelessly in the uphill battle against big brewer apathy and the local monstrous monopoly of Guinness and Bass, with their keg oriented financial interests. N.I. must be the last great beer desert in Britain and probably the last place where CAMRA members campaign at a pace reminiscent of the 1970's and early '80s!*

**From : Richard Hough**

*Could you tell me why fragmentation occurs in the head of some beers, most notably Hydes but more commonly Robinson's? It only happens from time to time, and there is obviously nothing wrong with the beer. I have heard it is to do with excess (harmless) yeast levels in the brew.*



# Festival Awards



**A**ugust saw the first presentation of the Beer & Cider awards from Stockport Beer Festival when a party from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA travelled to Haslingden to present Dave Porter with his certificate for Beer of the Festival.

All the Porter's beers were available for sampling, including the new dry Stout and the one-off Celebration, brewed to mark Dave's wedding in July (and which came out at a powerful 7.1%ABV). Thanks go to Dave for his hospitality and our picture shows a delighted Dave Porter with his certificate.

## and at GBBF

CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival last month was a runaway success with attendance records broken and 1200 new members recruited, bringing the national total to 45000. A highlight of the festival is the Champion Beer of Britain contest and this year North West gained some of the honours.

In the mild category, Warrington's Coach House Brewery gained a second place with their Gunpowder Strong Mild and scooped two first places - Post Horn winning the strong bitter contest and Blunderbuss Porter romping home in the stout and porter category. Robinsons also scored well with Old Tom coming second in the barley wine group, a category it has won in the past. Category winners go forward to finals for the Champion Beer of Britain and again Coach House did well with Blunderbuss Porter runner up to the eventual winner and 1994 Champion Beer of Britain, Taylors Landlord. Congratulations all round.

**De Olde Vic** Chatham St.  
Edgeley

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Guest Beers Weekly

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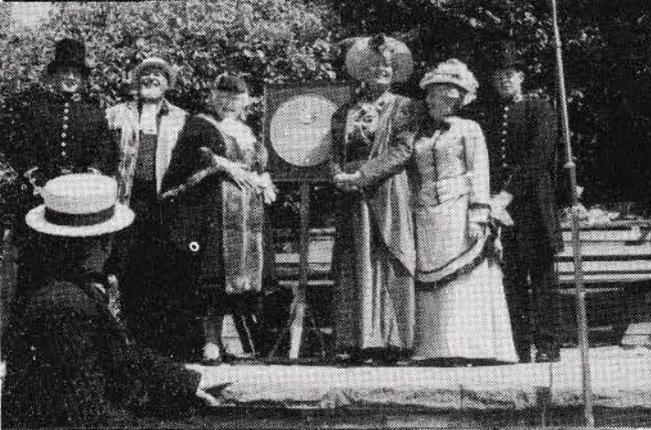
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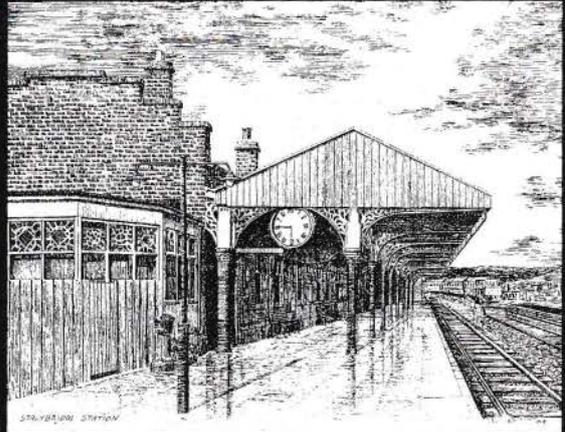
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## A Late Victorian Gem



## Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar

## Buffet Business

**T**he campaign to save the unique buffet bar at Stalybridge station continues while owners BR (or is it Railtrack these days?) continue to win booby prizes on the PR front.

The idea was for the supporters of the Buffet, now collectively known as the Friends of Stalybridge Station or FOSS for short, to erect a blue plaque celebrating the buffet bar which has been in continuous licensed use since the station was rebuilt in 1885. The wording reads 'This Victorian buffet bar is unique and is authentic in every detail since being rebuilt in 1885'.

Innocent enough you might think. Oh no! British Rail, displaying the sensitivity with which they have conducted themselves throughout this whole sorry affair, at the last minute refused permission for the plaque to be fixed to the wall. Apparently they contemplate the buildings being leased for some other use, a

*Inset - Councillor Eileen Shorrocks unveils the plaque presented by FOSS, main picture - The New Foss Leaflet. (Foss can be contacted on (061) 339 0724)*

hairdressers has been mentioned for heavens sake, in which case the plaque would be 'inappropriate'. BR speak for embarrassing, we think.

However, not to be deterred, the ceremony took place at the old Town Hall site in Stalybridge, which is like an amphitheatre. Leading councillors and the local MP took part and many invitees entered into the spirit of the occasion and wore period dress. The local brass band performed as did the Stalybridge Station buskers. The whole party subsequently retired to the buffet, newly spring-cleaned for the occasion, where the festivities were rounded off by the copious consumption of some of the wide selection of traditional beers for which the buffet has become famous.

And the plaque? Well that now occupies pride of place **inside** the buffet for all visitors to see.

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Brewers of  
Traditional  
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good taste



## Time for Change

**T**he liberalisation of Sunday shopping, which took effect on 28th August, has once again highlighted the need for further change in our outdated licensing laws. In particular many shops will now be opening until 4.00pm on Sundays but pub doors will remain firmly shut at 3.00. Shoppers will be denied the chance of a late afternoon drink and overseas tourists will continue to shake their heads in disbelief.

Our current licensing hours are widely considered to be an anachronism, certainly they do not reflect the changing social conditions of the 1990s. Largely dating from the First World War they are rooted in the past and ripe for revision. However, despite the self-proclaimed radicalism of the present government, recent changes have reflected only gradual, incremental change rather than radical revision. Evening closing has been extended to 11pm throughout the week and the afternoon break has been scrapped. An extra hour was also added (by accident) to Sunday opening hours.

The Government do have plans to launch a consultative Green Paper in the autumn, but what will this propose and will it go far enough? Whitehall hints suggest that proposed reforms will include all day opening on Sunday together with midnight extensions on Friday and Saturday but even these measures would soon be overtaken by further demands for greater reform to bring this country's drinking regime more into line with that of our European counterparts. CAMRA locally believes that the time is now right for more fundamental reform. In particular we would like to see:

- \* Permitted hours extended - 10.30am-midnight
- \* Licensing magistrates should have limited discretion to restrict opening hours where local objections are made. Each case should be heard on its merits.
- \* Applications for late night licenses could be made for any on-licensed premises for any number of hours. Again, each case to be heard on its merits.
- \* Late night licenses should no longer be dependent on either the availability of food or entertainment.
- \* Pubs and clubs to be treated the same way for both permitted and late night licenses.
- \* The grounds for refusing restaurant licenses should remain as should the restriction on serving alcohol.
- \* Sunday hours should be the same as for any other day.

There would be benefits from such a package. Pubs and clubs wouldn't all be turving their customers out onto the

street at the same time - the current situation where crowds spill out between 11 and 12 or after 2.00am is considered to be one of the driving forces behind late night trouble. There should be a general reduction in alcohol related disorder as a more relaxed approach to drinking becomes the norm - no more 'doubling up' at last orders, for example. More people in our town and city centres late at night will highlight the often inadequate public transport at those times - it wouldn't be long before enterprising bus companies started to correct that, leading to a generally safer and more secure late night environment.

Doubtless there will be opposition. Vested interests such as licensees and employees groups, for example, although it should be remembered that recommendations are for permitted **not** compulsory hours. Licensed premises, within permitted hours, would remain free to decide exactly when and for how long they opened. The anti-alcohol lobby would also have their say but here the Scottish experience, where pub hours are already considerably more liberal than in England and Wales, shows that increased drunkenness is the one thing that **doesn't** come in with licensing reforms.

When many pubs are struggling to survive they need all the help they can get in tailoring their trade to the needs and wishes of their customers. At the moment they are shackled by a licensing regime introduced almost 80 years ago. Change must not be delayed. The time for change is now.

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**Theakstons Bitter**

**guest beers changed weekly**

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**CAMRA Pub of the Month May 1993**

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

# STAGGER

with Chris Stone

**T**he Midsummer Stagger round Cheadle Hulme and Adswold began at the Cheadle Hulme, a Holts pub/restaurant close to the railway station. This is a large open plan pub, with a separate restaurant, which attracts a local clientele of mixed ages, offering the usual Holts value for money in this otherwise expensive drinking area of the branch. Both the mild and bitter (at under a pound!) were judged by our band of revellers to be good on this occasion.

A short walk brought us to the Old Mill, off Ladybridge Lane. This pub has in fact been recently built, from reclaimed building materials to give an effective old-world country feel, which is very popular, especially with younger customers, who are however expressly prohibited from using their mobile phones on the premises! Needless to say, therefore, we sat outside on the pleasant paved patio area. This Tetley house has recently become a 'Big Steak' pub, but the emphasis is still most definitely on beer, with, at the time of our Stagger, a 'strong ales' festival in progress. On offer were Ashvine Hop & Glory, Theakstons XB, Taylors Landlord, Everards Old Original and Batemans XXXB. The Ashvine and Batemans proved most popular, being considered in good form, whilst the house beer Tetley (usually present alongside Burton Ale) was considered average. Guest beer prices were more at the top end of our price scale, with the

Tetley bitter about 20p cheaper. Usually the six handpumps feature 4 changing guests and 2 beers from the Tetley stable.

Our next stop was the first of two local Clubs in the area. CAMRA has long promoted the cause of real ale inn Clubs, which though they may not always be open to the general public are still worthy of encouragement for maintaining the aims of CAMRA. Many such clubs may offer a pleasant surprise when visited. The **Ladybridge Residents Club** is open only to residents and guests, but has 3 real ales, one of which is a weekly changing guest, the permanent beer being Walkers best bitter. On our visit the guest was Mitchell's Lancaster Bomber, in very good form.

At the **Greyhound** on the junction of Ladybridge Road and Councillor Lane the Greenalls Bitter was thought to be average at best. As the atmosphere was also very smoky, and the pub itself uninspiring, we quickly moved on to the **Cross Keys Hotel**, on Adswold Road. This Hydes hostelry has a bowling green to the rear, which makes for a pleasant evening drink. Both the bitter and mild were considered average. Unfortunately I am not able to confirm this, as I experienced some difficulty in being served, despite the relatively empty bar. Eventually in frustration I gave up any attempt to drink. Perhaps the bar staff could have improved the visibility of their customers by removing the dirty glasses which lined the bar.

Nest stop was the **Wembley Hotel**, where there were three real ales on offer, Wilsons bitter and mild and Mitchells ESB. Opinions on the ESB were rather varied, but we were all surprised to hear from the licensee that he has one guest beer, which varies every few months. The pub is a huge 1930's masterpiece, with an interesting, ornate doorway. The interior has been opened up to give a rather unwelcoming cavernous feel. There are, however, some original features

## Sun in September

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MONDAY IS PIANO NIGHT  
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OPEN ALL DAY

remaining, including art deco tiling in the toilets and a beautiful leaded skylight dated 1936, with a sundial as its centrepiece, which is positioned over the bar.

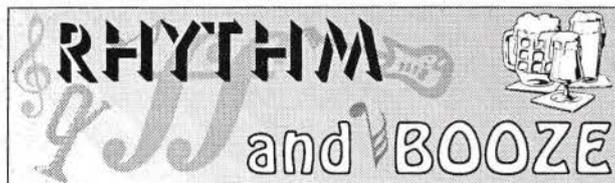
Nest stop was the **Adswood Hotel**. This is a large multi-roomed pub, with an equine theme, serving Robinsons best bitter and mild and bottled Worthington White Shield. The beer garden is a true garden, a delightful place to spend a summer evening, complete with children's play area, roses and an external clock. The bitter and mild were considered above average and we reluctantly left our open air seats to make for the next port of call.

The **Adswood Working Men's Club** was the second visit of the evening to a Club, which is however open to the public on payment of 30p per person. A bingo session was in full swing in the large lounge, so we attempted to go into the vault which was quieter, but unfortunately found it to be male only. Though we obviously stood out as strangers who were not familiar with the club rules (including standing at the bar) we

were made to feel welcome and encouraged to join in the game. The electrically dispensed Banks bitter and mild were considered average and above average respectively.

As there was one pub remaining to be sampled we took our leave and made our way the short distance to **Copperfields** - a hotel bar which has a lively atmosphere and 6 real ales. On our visit these were John Smiths Bitter, Worthington Best Bitter, Bass, Bass 4X Mild, Marstons Pedigree and Robinsons Best Bitter. All were tried and considered average to above average, and we were all happy to contemplate an evening of varied pubs, both in their atmosphere and in the variety of ales on offer.

I think I can speak for everyone when I say we had an enjoyable evening, containing a few surprises, but as always, the opinions expressed in this article purely reflect the experiences of a group of individual CAMRA members on one particular night, and we suggest you try these pubs for yourselves and see what you think.



by *Richard Hough*

**R**emember Echo and the Bunnymen? A sticky Sunday in July saw the return of Ian McCulloch and Will Sergeant in their new band, Electrafixion, at the Boardwalk. It is a keg-only venue situated almost below Deansgate station; without any hesitation I headed for some real ale before the gig.

The Britons Protection was the first port of call. It is an ambient, atmospheric pub with plenty of tiling, dark wood and leaded windows; the rear room is a real gem. This was further enhanced by subtle lighting and soft background music. The beers on offer were Robbies Best Bitter, Potters Pride (which was a bit thin), Tetley Bitter (which wasn't too bad), Courage Directors and Jennings Bitter, a very nice pint. In addition, an impressive range of whiskies was available. Sever people destined for Electrafixion were also in. After a brief chat with some of them I nipped around the corner to Peveril of the Peak.

Here is a pub with so much character it spills outside; the exterior green tiling is fascinating. Inside it is a multi-roomed layout enclosed in a unique triangular building. The stained glass screen along and around the bar is genuine, and probably the best feature of this great little place. It is one of Manchester's best known pubs, and the beer too is rather special. A 'Courage Range' of Websters Bitter, Wilsons Bitter, Ruddles Best and Directors is well looked-after and well served, justifying its place in the GBG'94. Yet more gig-goers were in...

Past the door of the Boardwalk then, to the Pack Horse. The less said about this the better I'm afraid. Only Stones Bitter was available, and it was really pretty poor. The pub was absolutely empty, the first time I've ever seen that when a reasonable band have been at the Boardwalk. So I popped back to the Britons Protection for half a Directors, which was alright without being stunning. The best beer of the night was the Jennings, closely followed by the Wilsons from the Peveril. And the major disappointment was the lack of Chesters Mild from the City Road Inn. Since the only other beer available there was the rather drab Boddingtons Bitter, I left the pub without having a drink.

The Bunnymen were probably one of the most creative, most articulate, yet under-rated and highly outspoken bands to emerge from the post-punk boom, an era which spawned stars like Pete Dinklage, Ian McNabb and Julian Cope. Formed in Liverpool in 1978, they had some success in the charts, the high points of which included "The Cutter" in 1983 and a cover of the Door's "People are Strange" in 1988. Several critically acclaimed albums, (including the superb "Heaven up Here") found them an avid following, many of whom were back tonight. In the crowd I expected to see only 80's spiky hairdos and people draped in black. But what struck me was how positively normal the audience were. Some had obviously been following the Bunnymen since those early days, some were down out of curiosity, and a few were there because they have heard the recent stuff and know how good it is.

It's been a while since I was last in the Boardwalk. It used to be a completely black, pretty seedy place with a reputation for some fine gigs. These days it is a much lighter (and therefore apparently much larger) place which retains its reputation for some fine gigs. We look forward to the day it serves real beer.

The first band on, Silverplane, played jangly pop on guitars. It could be termed 'safe music' and it certainly didn't offend anyone. A fairly short set ended with "Wired"; the reception was a cool one (which must have helped the temperature). They remained distant from their audience at all times; there was no effort to get people involved or moving to the music. Although they could play well they weren't convincing. I think they would be better on vinyl (or CD of course) than live. I'm looking forward to hearing more from Silverplane in the future.

An expectant crowd awaited, getting hotter and hotter. Finally Electrafixion took to the stage. Where purple meets green you'll find Mac McCulloch. One girl was heard to say "Oo, he hasn't changed a bit." And it was true, he hadn't. The sound was unmistakable; the angst and the passion still bubbled under. The set included the powerful "Zephyr", while "It's My Time" harked back to the old days. Tonight Electrafixion didn't just give us a gig, they gave us a true performance. Will Sergeant, an introspective guitarist with a fringe to rival any floormop, and Mighty Mac doing what they do best - performing. After a half-hearted request for more, they obliged with "Bed of Nails". Thankfully there was no basking in the glory of bygone Bunnymen days. Electrafixion are a current band writing solid stuff for the '90s, with a live performance to match.

## Hopes of Duty Cut Rise

Treasury officials and MPs are to review liquor taxes following a new report suggesting duty-paid personal imports will capture 10% of the market by the year 2000.

Both the Treasury and the all-party Commons Treasury Committee are to report on the threat from duty-paid imports and illegal resales in time for the 29 November Budget.

The report "Cross-Border Shopping - a Pandora's Box for Government?" comes from consultancy London Economics.

It says cross-border shopping invalidates tax policy by reducing Governmental ability to raise extra revenue through increased duty and by limiting the deterrent effect of duty on harmful products.

There are also knock-on problems, says the report.

\* Loss of VAT, income tax and other revenue through damage to businesses.

\* Shoppers buying other goods as well as alcohol and tobacco on trips abroad causing more loss to UK traders.

\* Smuggling. The report says: "Large tax differentials between neighbouring countries have implications such as providing a fertile environment for crime."

"There is a real possibility that bootlegging is set to become a major issue in terms of incentives for crime."

It points out that cross-Channel ferry trips grew by 10% last year and highlights the significance of a big increase in traffic just before Christmas. And the traffic is set to increase unless something is done, warns the report.

"Current UK expenditure on alcohol in France is about £1 billion, or four per cent of total domestic expenditure on alcohol," it says. However if nothing is done, by the year 2000 over 10 per cent of UK expenditure on alcohol may take place in France."

It accepts excise revenue would fall if duty were cut, but says much of the loss would be clawed back through increased UK sales *articles on this page have previously appeared in What's Brewing*

and argues that the effect on jobs and hence taxes in production and distribution could offset the loss still further.

The report adds weight to the case put by the brewing industry because London Economics has a reputation for independence.

But one City analyst still doubted whether there would be a cut in duty in the Budget although a freeze seemed possible.

"The brewers have ruined their case with their own price rises," he said. "They seem to be living in dreamland and frankly, no-one has much sympathy for them."

## Hop Harvest Threat

Hop growers in Hereford and Worcestershire have accused the Ministry of Agriculture of giving foreign growers an advantage by holding up permission to use a new pesticide.

Midlands growers are being overwhelmed by aphids this year because their usual pesticide, Styrolane, is a soil drench which relies on rain to get it into the bine's roots - and rain is one thing they've been short of.

Styrolane, which is made in India, is also in very short supply.

Authorities in America and Germany, where hop growers have been faced with the same threat, have rushed through approval of the leaf spray Confidor - but in Britain MAFF can only say there'll be a decision on Confidor "soon".

That means Midlands growers face the prospect of having their cones either rendered unsaleable or at best dropped a grade thanks to aphid infestation while German and American hops, treated with a chemical still illegal in the UK, steal their market.

Paul Corbet of Malvern hop merchant Charles Faram said that Confidor was already approved in the UK as a seed-pelletiser for sugar beet and as a spray for salad vegetables destined to be eaten raw.

"It's been cleared for use as a spray for hops very quickly in Germany and the US and some of my growers face losing custom to a hop crop saved by a chemical which is illegal over here," he said.

"The hop crop starts about now. A bit of rain beforehand might wash some of the Styrolane which has already been sprayed into the vines to give some residual action.

"But yields may already be down because the aphids have attacked the leaves, and quality will be down if they are infesting the cones."

The aphids are affecting alpha and aroma hops equally, but Mr Corbet said what made the ban on Confidor even more dispiriting was that the market for native aroma varieties had been recovering particularly well.

A Ministry of Agriculture spokeswoman said that Confidor was approved for use on crops which were rotated, such as salad vegetables.

But hops were a permanent crop, and the possible effects of a build up of Confidor in the soil were as yet unknown.



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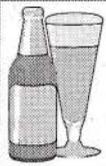
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# CARRY OUT



**T**his month we begin a new series in Opening Times looking at the take-home trade. To start with, though, we will be concentrating on those off-licenses and retailers who specialise in real ales and genuine continental imports.

For our first feature we venture to Chorlton where on Manchester Road you will find the appropriately named Marble Arch World Beers. This is run by Janet Whitehead and her partner Vance de Becheval, better known as the owner of Manchester's Marble Arch pub on Rochdale Road.

The Chorlton operation opened three years ago this month and has become well established as one of the places to go for something a bit different. World Beers generally specialises in continental beers with about 175 different beers available at any one time. Of these about 150 form a core stock with the balance rotating from month to month. When OT called the emphasis was very much on German beers with a good selection of Wheat beers available. At other times Belgian beers might major, it all depends on what is available and what sells. Certainly this slight element of unpredictability greatly adds to the appeal.

In their three years there, Janet and Vance have noticed that people are generally becoming more adventurous in their choice of beers, seeking out distinctive beers that they may first have tried on holiday. Wheat beers are proving extremely popular (a new cult drink in the making perhaps?) together with Budweiser Budvar from the Czech Republic. Belgian fruit beers are also making inroads, particularly with women customers it seems, (although those sold are the more accessible Timmermans and Belle Vue brands rather than the more acidic products which have yet to make any real appearance over here).

Lovers of UK beers are also catered for with some interesting bottle conditioned beers such as the superb Titanic Stout, Luxters Barn Ale and Merrimans Old Fart (a name from the past, yes, this is the old Robinwood operation re-established in Leeds). In addition two cask beers and two traditional ciders are always available on draught. Oak beers often alternate with others on a monthly basis. Traditional cider is also available in bottle.

Prices are pretty good with some bargains - Budvar at £1.09 for example and Marble Arch World Beers is certainly worth a visit and can be found at 57 Manchester Road, Chorlton (tel 881 9206). As a postscript, Janet and Vance have



been so encouraged by the response to their beers that a rather more ambitious project is in the pipeline. More next month.

## Head Brewer's Choice

Marston's are introducing a third run of their Head Brewer's Choice, starting on 12th September 1994, and available in 600 of their pubs and free trade outlets. First to appear will be Regimental Ale, 5.5%, a pale ale of the "India Pale Ale" style, followed by something completely different, Walnut Mild 3.6%.

Then another beer will appear every two weeks, until Christmas Beer 4.8% makes a welcome return early in December - it will be available for almost the whole of December this year, and into January 1995, when Winter Warmer 5.2% takes over. The run finally finishes towards the end of January with an Irish Stout 4.5%. Christmas Beer and Winter Warmer have both been included in previous runs, and another welcome re-appearance in this latest run is the "dangerously drinkable" Monk's Habit 5.5%.

## Greenalls Branch Out

Having taken their first faltering steps with a 'real ale' theme pub (the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury), Greenalls have now made more positive moves to open up the guest beer market in the rest of their tied estate.

Boosted by volume increases of up to 10% in their (Tetley brewed) house beers, the company has announced a list of 10 regional beers which will rotate as guests in its estate. Apart from guest beer list regulars like Morlands Old Speckled Hen and Greene King Abbot, some quite interesting beers are available including Adnams Extra, Smiles Exhibition and Gales. And more could be on the way as Greenalls have set up a 'New Product Forum' to select new beers which will first be test marketed in 60 'prime outlets' and if they are successful there will join the company's list.

So far so good, let's hope, though, that Greenalls don't fall into the trap of charging silly prices for these beers, time will tell whether common sense has prevailed on this score.

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE  
With **TIM JONES**  
**CAMPAIGN**  
FOR REAL ALE 

No beating about the bush this month, straight into the action. The Witchwood (Ashton-under-Lyne) is going strong under Gerald Maddens ownership. Its popularity is at such a high that it has recently been involved in filming. Hollywood, rather Granada, came to town last month filming for a new six-parter about prostitutes in Bradford (Yorks). The Witchwood's gable stars, carrying a sign directing people to Bradford Engineering Works. Who says I don't get close to the stars! Out of interest - the range of beers at the Witchwood is currently:- John Smiths, Flowers, Theakstons Best and XB, Directors and Bods Bitter plus two guests.

In Marple, the **Bowling Green** is still up for sale (despite all the recent publicity!). What has changed is the return of Holts Bitter. At last some variety in the Marple desert.

Back in Glossop the new music venue reported last month has opened. House of the Blues is currently serving Tetleys Bitter and Taylors Landlord. Definitely worth a visit.

Still in Glossop a snippet of information, the **Rose & Crown**, a Centric pub, has had a name (and image) change. It is now known as **Roxys** (good grief).

A bit of coming and going in Ashton U Lyne. The Theatre Tavern is closed for refurbishment and round the corner on Bentinck Street the Happy Shepherd has been renamed the Venue by new owners.

Still in Tameside, the **Rising Sun** on Manchester Road, Mossley appears to be the pub of the moment. Encouraging

reports have been received about the range and quality of the beers. The range has been increased and is: Taylors Landlord, Bentleys Yorkshire Bitter, and Bods Bitter along with two guest beers,

Back into Ashton U Lyne, the Junction on Mossley Road, a Robinsons pub is serving Frederics alongside Best, sorry Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. Still at the recommended £1.50 and in very good condition this is definitely a good deal.

Jumping across the branch area, in Buxton the **Sun Inn**, a Marstons outlet that has been taking the Brewer's Choice range is now taking Ebony permanently. This must mean that some of this range is being made available on a regular basis. It would be interesting to find out which of the plethora of brews (of varying success) have passed muster.

If what Opening Times hears is true then the award for barefaced cheek this month goes to the Norfolk in Glossop. The landlord has allegedly taken it upon himself to unilaterally award his pub the CAMRA "premier real ale outlet". The commemorative tee-shirt clad bar staff were more than a little taken aback when our man in Glossop informed them that they were nothing of the sort.

OT would like to categorically deny any CAMRA involvement in what appears to be a case of bold self publicity, especially as the beer sampled at the time was later described as "piss poor"!

**S&N** have managed to relieve themselves of the **Rams Head** in Disley, which has been bought by the Magic Pub Co, who are trying to drag some customers in by offering **Websters Green Label Bitter** at 89p a pint - which is all it's worth really. The management of the pub are keen to regenerate an interest in this pub which has great potential being in a superb position in the centre of the village, and which has extensive rooms and both large car park and beer garden. Unfortunately they haven't hit upon the idea of offering a range of interesting guest beers - which is what Disley has needed for some time now, but we live in hope.

The Sun on Guide Lane, Audenshaw (more or less opposite Robinsons' Old Pack Horse), is now a Matthew Brown house, with Horne Brewery's version of Matthew Brown Bitter, along with Theakstons Mild, Bitter and XB, all on handpumps.

On a recent visit, XB was unfortunately sub-standard, but a perfectly good pint of Theakstons Bitter (together with the appropriate change!) was cheerfully offered. Not too far away, the **Blue Pig** on Audenshaw Road, near the reservoirs, is now owned by the Magic Pub Company and offers their standard range of Websters Green Label, Boddingtons Bitter, and Draught Bass on handpump - a welcome gain for what had been a longstanding keg-only house.



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## Healthy Drinking Review

Evidence that a moderate alcohol intake may help prevent heart attacks is to be reviewed by a Government working group.

The working group, drawn from seven Government departments, will review the current "sensible drinking" guidelines.

The Department of Health said: "Recent scientific research, particularly into the effects of alcohol in preventing coronary disease, suggests the message should be looked at again."

The working group is seeking written evidence from interested organisations and individuals, to be submitted by 31 October to the Secretariat, Interdepartmental Working Group on the Sensible Drinking Message, Room 429, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 5UG.

## Not Welcome

On a recent visit to one of my less-than-local pubs I was slightly baffled by a notice on the door which said "No Travellers". On the first hand, anyone who had walked, cycled, driven, been driven or got public transport to the pub had travelled there. Yes, it was true, that despite travelling to the pub, they had been allowed in and got served! Obviously the notice could have read "No-one in shoes allowed" or "No-one with hair (or no hair) allowed". Or perhaps more simply "No-one allowed". No custom in this pub, thank-you very much!

Since travellers were obviously being made welcome, I pondered some more. It is obvious the notice was directed at so-called "New Age" so-called "Travellers", many of whom travel no further than the corner shop, the post-box and the pub in any given week. It seems that the notice (and therefore the pub) was trying to exclude a certain section of the community who have been loosely (and often wrongly) labelled as "the Travellers". It is a term which cannot be defined but basically comes down to appearance. Long hair may be common (but not universal), scruffy clothes may be worn (but not definitely), earrings perhaps (but perhaps not); in short you can't define a "Traveller", and you certainly can't assume that because a person dresses how they want to, and not how society says they should, that they are a cause of trouble.

It seems that this, and other, pubs feel threatened by people who look this way. But have they seriously asked themselves "Why?" I wonder. These people (if they can be classed as a unit) are a friendly, free-spending crowd who go out of their way to avoid trouble. Go to any pub where so-called 'down-dressers' frequent and you'll see what I mean.

However on the other side are the trouble-spots; they are easily recognisable by the flashing blue lights and sirens at closing time. Lager louts who can't hold their drink and are looking for a fight, but who like to wear a shirt and tie or posh frock for a social night out. Yet unbelievably these people are allowed in anywhere, every one a potential trouble-causer.

People, and especially publicans, should wise up to this fact. Rockers or 'crusties' are not a sign of trouble; indeed they are the reverse. They will do anything for a quiet life. On top of that, think how many real ale drinkers and appreciators like to get out of their work clothes and into something more casual for the evening.

The question must be asked: Can you define a 'traveller', and further can you genuinely identify them as a source of trouble? I think not.

Finally, just think how many pubs wouldn't exist today if it weren't for a travelling population. Coach-houses, inns, taverns and hostelries were set up to quench the thirst of weary travellers in the days before high-speed travel and station buffet-bars. They provide a vital part of our pub heritage, and their influence cannot be forgotten. In future I shall only drink where travellers are welcome; I shall drink in any pub I choose.

RH

## Beer Festival News

The Bolton (Great North Western) Festival has been on or off more times than I can remember, still nothing definite, at best a smaller Winter Ales fest in December. North Manchester, however are threatening a Festival early next year. Well there's a surprise. Watch this space!

The High Peak CAMRA branch contact is  
Ralph Warrington (061) 236 2131 (w) 0625 572221(h)

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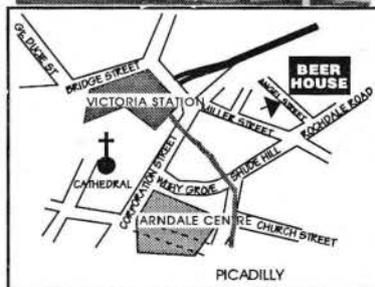
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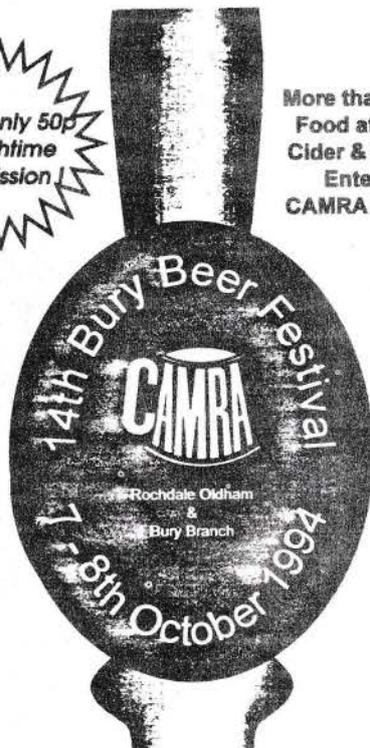
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## September Featured Pub

Featured pub this month in High Peak is the Board Inn at Whaley Bridge, a Robinsons house situated on the outskirts of the village, on the A6 road towards Chapel-en-le-Frith. Robinsons Hatters Mild and Best Bitter are of a high quality but it is the food side of the pub that is the main subject of this article. Several good reports have come in recently and three separate check outs have confirmed these reports.

An extensive menu includes starters, main meals, sweets, vegetarian menus, children's menus, omelettes, salads, sandwiches with or without chips and salad, jacket potato choices, as well as a daily "specials board".

There are views up the Goyt valley. There is a pleasant blend in furnishings and decor. It is clean, friendly, certainly value for money and at one time a Good Beer Guide entry. Helpings are more than generous and relaxing music in the background makes for a pleasant lunch or family break.

Certainly very well worth a visit - I know three regular Opening Times readers from out of the area who now use it regularly.

## Keighley & Worth

High Peak branch picked a glorious Summer's day for a recent trip to Keighley and the Worth Valley Steam Railway.

After arriving at our destination, a pleasant couple of drinks were enjoyed in the GBG listed Boltmakers Arms, whose range of Timothy Taylor's beers were found most pleasant. Back to Keighley station, this time down the Worth Valley platform. Although we all embarked in small groups it was amazing that we all managed the same carriage - the buffet bar - where, just as though we were nearer home, Oak Best Bitter and Old Oak Ale were the handpulled beers we sampled while chugging down the line to Oxenhope. Several of our party sampled Oak Beer with black particles in it - the more brainless among us who continued to hang out of the window while travelling through Mytholmes Tunnel! Some of our party briefly got off at Oxenhope whilst the remainder were happy to miss the small railway museum in favour of their place near the bar.

At Haworth, we spent nearly three hours exploring both shops and pubs. I preferred the GBG Old Hall which sold Tetley Bitter and Taylors Golden Best; if only for the sizeable beer garden - the weather was marvellous. Up the road, the rest were eating in the Fleece, equally impressed with the three Taylors beers on offer. Further up, at the top of the main street, the Black Bull, White Lion and Kings Arms were just run of the mill, so we went back to Haworth Old Hall before leaving.

Back at Keighley we were all more than happy at the Grinning Rat, especially when sitting on the grass outside. I stuck to Kelham Island Pale Rider. Some of our group were waylaid here but onward the remainder went, to check out Dewsbury Station Buffet. Six beers were on offer here - nice place; not as basic as Stalybridge, money had been spent well and its situation, in the middle of town, was attracting young, trendy clientele obviously starting out on the town. Worth a drop off. My Blackbeard Dead Ringers were really good.

Back to Manchester then and those of us with a sizeable wait for a train nipped in to check out the Burtonwood in the Bull's Head before heading to our locals for last orders.

## CURMUDGEON



**E**arlier this year, Parliament came close to changing the law to allow gay sex at 16. Now the rights and wrongs of that issue are outside the remit of even this column, but it did raise the strange prospect of people being judged mature enough at 16 to decide whether to have gay sex, but not mature enough to have a drink in a pub. That strikes me as more than a little inconsistent. Has the time come to take a look at the minimum drinking age?

People may throw their hands up in horror at the prospect of encouraging underage drinking, but I know I was drinking in pubs at the age of 16, and you probably were too, and it never did us any harm. What right have we to try self-righteously to stop the next generation doing the same? A legal drinking age of 16 would encourage young people to learn to drink in a socially-controlled environment in the pub, where they are far more likely to adopt a responsible attitude towards alcohol. Is it better to have sixteen year olds in the pub with their families, or in a park with a four pack of Special Brew?

Significantly, those countries which have a low level of alcohol related social problems, such as France, Italy and Greece, tend to have a fairly relaxed attitude to young people drinking. In contrast, in most of Scandinavia, where people regularly drink themselves to death, a legal limit of 21 is rigorously enforced. Which model should Britain be following?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Have you ever seen drinkers in pubs swirling their beer around in the bottom of the glass and wondered just what they were trying to achieve? I first came across this phenomenon in Birmingham in the late 1970s. In many of the pubs there it had some point, because much of the beer was keg, and it had the result of releasing some of the CO2 dissolved in the beer, making it less gassy and at the same time restoring a better appearance to the head. But it's rare indeed to find over-conditioned cask beer - beer that's too flat is much more common, particularly if pulled through a 'swan-neck'. In the absence of excess CO2, all that swirling your beer round does is to give a very short-lived improvement to the head while making the beer even flatter than it was before. Do these folk see any purpose in what they're doing, or has it just become an automatic habit?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

An increasing number of pubs are now offering "Traditional Sunday Lunch". Nothing wrong with that, it's a popular meal and I'm sure they do very well out of it. But there is something wrong when, as happens all too often, they choose to serve nothing else on a Sunday. Does a strange metamorphosis come over people on a Sunday, so that while from Monday to Saturday they're eager to tuck in to curries, chillies, Chinese, pizzas, fish'n'chips, steak & kidney pie, ploughman's lunches and all the rest, on Sundays all they want is roast beef, Yorkshire pud, roast spuds and two veg? Somehow, I don't think so. Pubs which really believe in serving all their customers well offer a "Traditional Sunday Lunch" alongside their normal menu, not instead of it. While you may not regard Henry's Table restaurants as the height of pub cuisine, they certainly don't fall into that trap.

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# LOCALLEY

**TETLEY  
BITTER**

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on Woodstock's 25th Anniversary, our own Balding Hippy goes there...to eat?

This month Pub Grub visits a relative newcomer to the local pub scene in the form of the Woodstock Tavern on Barlow Moor Road in Didsbury. Recently this was converted from the old British Council Offices, prior to which it presumably was a large private house owned by one of the wealthier families of the day.

The pub is a huge stone Victorian edifice set back off the road in its own grounds. Its multiroomed layout still exists with the only concession to pub conversion being the removal of internal doors and the introduction of the bar. The pub still retains many original features, note the impressive leaded glass windows, the extensive wood panelling and original wrought iron fittings. The grand leather armchairs can finally convince you that you are drinking in something originating from a 'Cluedo' set.

The Woodstock is a Bass tavern selling both Bass beers and a changing range of guest beers. On sale today were Stones (1-34), Worthington (1-38), Draught Bass (1-44), Black Sheep (1-50), and Arkells BBB (1-50). Youngs Special was advertised as 'coming soon' and on noticing a Youngs Special handpump on the bar I asked if it was on. "Sorry" I was told "it's off - we've sold out"! Were they trying to tell me something? Blink in the Woodstock and you could miss the guest beer! We tried the Bass, Black Sheep and the Arkells and each was found to be quite drinkable.

Diners can choose from two menus for their meals, the permanent menu, a copy of which is on every table, and the chalk board showing today's specials. Food is available all day (from 12 to 8.30pm every day except Sunday where they take an hours break between 3 and 4pm. The permanent menu has much of the normal sort of stuff on it, from a basket of fries (75p), assorted 6oz burgers (from £2.75), club sandwiches (from £1.95), salads (from £3.95) to Woodstock specials (from £3.95). Woodstock specials are the familiar pub grub menu with dishes including currys, chillis, moussakas, gammon, beef pie, and battered cod.

By far the more interesting is the chalk board menu. On our visit there were some 15 or more interesting and unusual meals to choose from. These included pan fried brie topped with almonds, cranberry and toast (£4.45), avocado and prawn salad (£4.50), Tagliatelle napolitana and garlic bread (£3.95), and perrine pasta flora with garlic bread (£3.95). Also available were salami brie with warm french bread (£4.50), vegetarian pasticcio and garlic bread (£3.95). Tennessee

chicken with pilau rice and garlic bread (£4.75) and lamb and beef chilli burritos (£4.95).

The Woodstock has a resident chef and all meals are freshly cooked on the premises. I chose the Tennessee chicken while my partner went for the vegetarian Mexican chilli. The portions are large, my chicken was served with garlic pitta bread, pilau rice, chips and salad, and the chilli came with mushrooms, kidney beans, cauliflower, french beans, chips and pilau rice. The food was well presented and a refreshing change from the bog standard pub food available in many local pubs.

Finally I must mention the Woodstock's summer special offer - a punnet of strawberries for £18.50!!! Sounds expensive until you consider that it comes with a free bottle of champagne. Sadly, your poor Pub Grub writer has limited resources which mean that he was unable to take advantage of this special offer. I must remember to have a word with the OT editor - perhaps next time I could wangle a Pub Grub writers allowance...Recommended. SB

John and Janice welcome you to

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# CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

As usual there is the wide range of events in the pipeline for September kicking off on Thursday 8th with our monthly meeting which this time will be at the Coach & Horses, Belle Vue Street, Gorton (it's just opposite the cinema on Hyde Road) where we have a guest speaker from Tetley Walker. The meeting starts at 8.00pm.

On Monday 12th the social is at O'Shea's on Princess Street in the City Centre. In common with all Monday socials this starts at 9.00pm. The same week sees the monthly Stagger and this time we are in Didsbury starting at 7.00pm at the Gateway on Kingsway or you can join at the Royal Oak on Wilmslow Road at 8.30. The next day we were hoping to have a day out to Whim Brewery but due to transport difficulties this has been postponed until November.

On Monday 19th the social is at the Vulcan, Gorton Lane, Gorton and on Thursday 22nd we present our Pub of the

Month award to the Thatched Tavern in Reddish (see item on page 2). On Saturday 24th we do have a trip arranged - this one is to Denbigh Beer Festival. This trip will also include a look around the Denbigh Brewery and, en route, a visit to the Plassey Brewery near Wrexham. We will be leaving the Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.00am and leaving Denbigh at 9.30. If you want to book a seat phone John Clarke on 477 1973 or 831 7222 extn 3411.

The social on Monday 26th is at the Hole i'th' Wall, Bridge Street Brow, Stockport and, moving into October, the social on Monday 3rd is at the Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road.

If you live in the Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley or Marple areas then you fall under the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA and High Peak have notified us of the following events: on Sunday 11th there will be a walk in the Rainow area. For details of this phone Frank Wood on 0457 865426. On Monday 12th there will be the monthly meeting at the Crown in Hyde. Aim to get there for about 8.30. High Peak are also planning a trip to Ryburn Brewery at Sowerby Bridge, again phone Frank for details. For general details about High Peak activities, your contact is Tim Jones on 371 9006. Members of both branches are of course welcome to attend each other's events.

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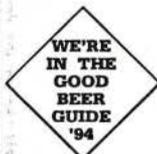
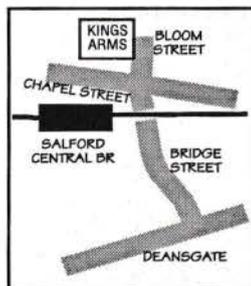
## Anglesey Ale

Late summer visitors to the island on the lookout for a good pub may like to know that the one year old Caernarfon and Anglesey branch of CAMRA have just had their very first presentation ceremony - Pub of the Season to the Ship at Red Wharf Bay.

Landlord Andrew Kenneally (23 years there, and the longest serving licensee on the island) provided two special guest beers from Bragdy Dyfryn Clwyd (Clwyd Valley Brewery), the new Denbigh micro-brewery: Druid 3.9%, and the oddly named Four Thumbs 4.8% (a monster from local Welsh folk lore). The award was much appreciated, as indeed was the beer.

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# MANCHESTER MATTERS

Three former Wilsons pubs all within a few minutes' stroll on Stockport Road - the Crown and the Midway in Longsight, and the Victoria which by virtue of its M19 postcode qualifies as being in Levenshulme - have been bought by the Magic Pub Company, a pub chain headed by Michael Cannon, former boss of South-Western pub chain (and former brewery) Devenish.



by Rhys Jones

All have installed real ale, with a standard handpumped range of Websters Green Label, Boddingtons Bitter, and Draught Bass. While this may not be the most exciting range in the world, these are very welcome gains - particularly the Victoria, hitherto one of the longest-standing keg-only pubs in the whole of Manchester. Paddy's Goose, Seftons and the Rising Sun in the City Centre are more Magic acquisitions and have the same range.

On the debit side, no less than three closures have come to notice - the Farmers Arms in Burnage, the Pack Horse in Openshaw, and the Burton Arms in the City Centre. Hopefully not all of these will turn out to be permanent. And very close to the Burton Arms, there's been a change of licensee at Walker's Bar - while the new incumbents intent to continue offering a range of beers, time will tell whether they maintain the variety, quality, and value that has made Walker's the most promising newcomer for years on the Manchester freehouse scene.

In Gorton, the Pomona on Reddish Lane reopened on 11th August, with Websters Green Label and John Smiths Bitter on handpump in largely unchanged surroundings. In Bradford, Boddingtons Bitter at the Bradford Hotel is keg, as is all the beer at Burtonwood's Clayton Arms in Clayton, despite the presence of handpumps with pumpclips.

While in Clayton, I must apologise to the Church Inn, which I mentioned last month as selling Tetleys - this was a blunder on my part, and the handpumped range remains Bass Light and Stones Bitter (although this pub is part of the Centric chain recently acquired by Salisbury brewers Gibbs Mew, so changes to the range may be afoot). What is true, however, is that Clayton has experienced a mini-revival of

mild. Tetley Dark Mild is on handpump at the Victoria, while handpumped Chesters Mild has arrived at three pubs - the Fox, the Derby Arms (which has also gained handpumped Trophy), and the Bridge (where keg mild regrettably remains alongside the cask).

The Flea & Firkin on Grosvenor Street in Manchester has reopened after the summer refurb. Not much has changed, but there has been a lick of paint, and removal of the general tat. Unfortunately when OT called the beer range was quite disappointing. Also a doorman has been installed in the evenings. Hopefully we'll see an upturn in trade when the new student term starts.

Last word this month must go to Openshaw, where I hear from an impeccable source that the Wrexham, which not so long ago looked set to close, has been selling a succession of beers, including, on what must have been a memorable occasion, the splendid High Force strong ale from the Butterknowle brewery in far-off Teesdale, at a bargain £1.40 for a 6.2% beer!

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### APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT125)

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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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





Further to our article about outside drinking (OT, August), Judith Whitney, landlady of the Crown, Heaton Mersey, phoned to tell us that the Crown, too, has a most attractive outdoor area. Sorry for the oversight. Judith also tells us that the Crown has recently been highly commended in a national curry competition sponsored by Uncle Ben's Rice. The Crown does have quite a reputation for its food and it is good to see this being recognised on a wider stage.

Expect to see some changes at the **Bulls Head** on Stockport Market Place this month when new licensee Janet Dixon takes over. Janet is the daughter of Ian and Dot Brookes at the nearby Bakers Vaults and we understand that Ian will be closely involved offering advice and guidance to Janet. Despite being in the same family, expect to see some lively competition between the pubs on the live music and food fronts.

Alison Philpot (assisted by Martin) has taken over the reins of *Walkers Hotel and Bar* on Swan Street, Manchester. There has been no change in the wide range of beers available at very reasonable prices. There has been a change in opening hours, they are now open all permitted hours and food is available from 8am Mon - Fri. The name will be changed soon to the Old Smithfield, the pub used to be called the Smithfield.

Greenall's *Harvester* in Offerton has been selling guest beers. Such respected names as Youngs, Gales and Smiles have featured of late.

There is a new management team at the *Three Crowns*, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris. Gary and Elsie Barlow have arrived from the Kings Head in Blackpool, a BoddPubCo Ale House. Gary is hoping to build up a market for guest beers after his experience in Blackpool. He has made a modest start with John Smiths Bitter at an offer price of £1.05. In the longer term Gary anticipates that a range of well kept beers will be the attraction.

Still on special offers, Boddingtons Bitter remains at £1 a pint (mid August) at the Grey Horse in Reddish, and a well kept pint too.

The *Victoria* in Bramhall appears to have replaced Chesters Mild with Robinsons Best Bitter.

*Copperfields Bar* at the rear of Southlands Hotel, Cale Green, now has eight handpumps on the bar. The full range is Ruddles County, Draught Bass, Robinsons Best Bitter, Bass XXXX Mild, Worthington Best, John Smiths Bitter and Marstons Pedigree all competitively priced. While a problem with cold beer now seems to have been overcome, large heads now seem to be rife. The eighth handpump? Keg Scrumpy Jack. Oh dear...

Farewell and the best of luck to Joe and Carol of Boddington PubCo's Oddfellows, Openshaw, who have moved to the same company's Waterloo on Oldham Road in Ashton-under-Lyne (originally an Oldham Brewery tied house). No news yet of their successors.

Meanwhile down at the *Ladybrook*, Boddies Bitter and a guest from the Whitbread list have been joined by Tetley Bitter which retails at £1.28 a pint, as does the Boddies.

If you call at the *Plough*, Hyde Road, Gorton, these days, you'll get a good pint of Robinsons - but that's not all! Step into the vault, and marvel at the rich, warm colours of the bar and the seating - the fruit of much hard work by licensee Bob Voight in stripping off the fairly horrible purple paint and re-varnishing the timber. To add even more to the authentic atmosphere, Bob, with his father's valued help, has restored a number of old Robinsons chairs (with the letter R in the backrest). These developments underpin the traditional values of this fine - and now architecturally listed - pub. Watch these pages for details of CAMRA's fight to ensure the *Plough* can continue to serve its community into the 21st century!

The *Golden Lion* on Hillgate, Stockport has discontinued Burtonwood Top Hat due to low sales. A good pint of Burtonwood Bitter is still to be had in the pub though.

Several Stockport pubs have sprouted banners proclaiming 'New Free House' and promoting a house bitter at 89p or 99p a pint. These are the *Chef & Brewer* pubs which Scottish & Newcastle flogged off to the Magic Pub Co and include the *Farmers Arms*, *Cheadle Heath* and the *Railway*, Heaton Mersey. The standard range in these pubs seems to consist of Draught Bass, Boddingtons Bitter and Websters Green Label and it is the latter which is the so-called house beer. Meanwhile the *Chef & Brewer* pubs that S&N has kept are virtually all taking Theakstons Bitter in addition to various beers from the Courage Brewing range (John Smiths, Wilsons, Websters etc). The Courage tie on these pubs expires next March and apparently S&N are monitoring sales of the Courage beers to see which will be retained after then.

In a surprise move, popular licensee Ken Birch left the *Crown*, Heaton Lane last month. No news about a permanent replacement yet although they will have a tough act to follow. Another popular licensee about to depart is Lil Massey at the *Bridge*, Georges Road. We understand that Lil will be leaving the trade and she takes with her our best wishes.

The *Victoria* in Offerton is one of the local Greenalls pubs taking part in the recently introduced guest beer scheme and by all accounts the different beers are selling well.



The *Bobby Peel* in Edgeley has long been something of a darts centre and that position is now being reinforced as the pub hosts the Teletaxis Individual Darts Knock-out which is running every Friday for 8 weeks from September 16th. There is a £2 entry fee and £500 in prize money. In addition, all entrants go into a free draw for two weeks in Torremolinos. The pub also has a new chef which has resulted in some particularly good food of late, as well.