

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
141

5,500 CIRCULATED
EVERY MONTH

JANUARY 1996 - HAPPY NEW YEAR

Guinness Gets Real?

Cask conditioned Guinness? Not quite, but the company's giant Park Royal keg plant in London is about to produce the first real ale in its 60-year history. Harwood's Porter is a 5.2% brew which will be launched in March as one of Carlsberg-Tetley's Tapsters Choice guest ales. The draught Guinness produced at Park Royal has always been keg, although the bottled version was 'live' - with a sediment of yeast in each bottle, although many people didn't notice.

The new beer is named after Ralph Harwood, a London publican who is credited with inventing Porter in the 1720s but Guinness are at present reluctant to talk about it. Spokesman Jeremy Probert told CAMRA's Ted Bruning: "We are still in the process of finalising Harwood's and we don't want to talk about it until we are good and ready. What we are working towards is a launch date in late January or February."

He went on to say that the company are always looking for new products and Harwood's was part of this strategy. The company would not be drawn, however on whether Harwood's was a forerunner for a cask-conditioned version of Guinness.

★ While developments at Guinness are good news indeed, on the other side of the coin new "Irish" keg ales continue to hit the market. Possibly the most ludicrous is Wexford Irish Ale brewed in...Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. Where else?!

But Swinging Sporran Goes Keg

As reported last month, the Swinging Sporran, Sackville St., City Centre was due to re-open in December. Well, re-open it did, as the Retro Bar, but the new-look "Sporran" piles insult upon injury to those who new and loved the old pub.

The story of how tenant Cliff Thornton fought to protect his livelihood and his home has been well-documented in these pages. We were told that the building was no longer to be a pub, the UMIST authorities wanted it for a variety of uses, including a private club in the basement. So keen were UMIST to get their hands on the building that they served notice on the leaseholders - Scottish Courage - who put up surprisingly little resistance. Indeed they, too, were keen to get Cliff out and last year he finally gave up the unequal struggle.

But, lo and behold! It's now open again. As a pub. Run by? Yup, Scottish Courage. Only this time they have installed a manager thus ensuring that the profits go to them and not a tenant. So far, so shabby, but there's worse to come.

The Sporrans was noted for the quality of its cask ales. So much so that just before Cliff quit the pub had been selected as an

entry for the 1996 Good Beer Guide. So the new place cashes in on that tradition with a range of real ales? No chance - it a retro-grade step this new student haunt is all keg.

Lovers of good beer and fair play will give this shameful travesty a wide berth.

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Yes, it's coming round again! This year Stockport sees the 10th Beer and Cider Festival, back in the Town Hall. As ever we aim to make it the biggest and best Festival yet. Planning is well under way, and further details will be published in Opening Times over the coming months.



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Pub Of The Month JANUARY

Follow the A6 south until you cross the border of "old Stockport" and stop at the Travellers Call, the local CAMRA branch's Pub of the Month for January. You will encounter a welcoming, friendly local with a varied, friendly clientele. Three distinct areas are served by a central bar, in one of the more memorable pubs on the Robinson's estate, and arguably the best pub in Great Moor. Plenty of nautical bric-a-brac adorns the walls, with around 180 bells also providing appeal (pun intended). There is a fine collection of miniature spirit barrels, and a fish-tank full of bits' gives food for thought! On the bar you can choose from Best

Bitter or Hatters Mild, and the Travellers is one of the few Robbies pubs to offer Old Tom all year round, usually by gravity dispense from a cask stillaged on the bar. There is also a fine array of single malt whiskies to peruse.

If the weather's fine, make sure you try the beer garden; with sets of traffic lights, a giant red bell and phone box choc-full of telephones, it is certainly interesting. But a good pub needs something else, and this is provided by licensees David and Anita, whose commitment over their last seven years tenure at the pub has already seen them earn one Pub of the Month award. Their work for local charities (helped, of course by the locals) needs a mention, but it is for their running of a super local that they richly deserve the award. All are welcome on Thursday 25 January when we present it to David and Anita on what promises to be a most excellent night.



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CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1995

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OLD ALES

Winter Warmers by John Clarke

January and February are often the coldest months of the year and what better way is there to ward off the winter chills than with a warming glass of old ale or barley wine? It is becoming fashionable for brewers big and small to brew seasonal and special beers but winter ales are no new fad. On the contrary, potent warming ales like these have been part of our brewing heritage since time immemorial. In celebration of this venerable brewing style, *Opening Times* will be looking at those available locally, this month concentrating on those produced within Greater Manchester.

Robinsons

Perhaps the most venerable of our local winter warmers is Robinsons **Old Tom**, for many the classic barley wine. The brewery can trace the history of this beer back to 1899 and, presumably apart from the war years, it has been brewed continually ever since. It's an all malt brew (some strong ales are boosted by brewing sugars) using the Halcyon and Pipkin varieties. The hops are Goldings and Northdown. The end result is a powerful dark barley wine with an original gravity of 1080 and an alcohol content of 8.5% without almost any hint of sweetness but a rich warming aftertaste. Old Tom is available both in bottle and on draught, all the year round. The bottled version is filtered and pasteurised, losing something in the process (Robinsons would surely be on to a winner with a bottle conditioned version...) but on draught it is magnificent. If you can find it, that is. A small cask of Old Tom on the bar used to be a common sight in Robinsons pubs in the winter months but over the years many of these have discontinued the practice - possibly because the temperature fluctuations of a beer stillaged on the bar would have done nothing for its quality. Some 36 pubs currently take the beer on draught and locally these include in Stockport the Arden Arms; Blossoms; Crown, Great Moor; Manchester Arms; Tiviot together with the Davenport Arms, Woodford; The Navigation and the Railway, both Woodley and the Railway, Romiley. In the City of Manchester there is but one sole outlet - the ever reliable Castle on Oldham Street.

Lees

Lees produce not one but two powerful ales - **Moonraker** and **Vintage Harvest Ale**. Moonraker has been around for very many years and is another classic barley wine. Another all-malt brew using the classic Maris Otter variety (many brewers say this is *the* malt to use) and the hops are East Kent Goldings. Not quite as powerful as Old Tom, Moonraker still packs a punch at a gravity of 1073 and 7.5% alcohol. Again this is a beer without much residual sweetness but is finely balanced with malt and hops and the warming aftertaste you would expect. Moonraker is produced all year round, about every six weeks with most of the production going into cask although you are perhaps more likely to find it in bottle. The bottled version is a processed beer (another bottle conditioning opportunity missed?) but the draught version, if you can track it down, is excellent. Tracking it down is likely to be the problem as only 15 pubs take the draught version, none in the *Opening Times* area. Outlets include the Cross Keys, Uppermill; Golden Pheasant, Plumley; Greyhound, Royton and the Junction Inn, Denshaw.

Vintage Harvest Ale is the newcomer, making its first appearance in 1986. It is brewed once a year in October using the first malt and hops of the new harvest. Seasonal beers such as this were once commonplace and indeed in recent years have started to make some thing of a comeback and Lees take some pride in the fact they were the pioneers in this welcome revival. Again using Maris Otter malt and East Kent Goldings hops, this is not a beer to be trifled with - the gravity is 1120 and the alcohol content a massive 11.5%. It is in fact becoming something of a cult - 'Beer Hunter' Michael Jackson recently carried out a tasting of various years' brews for the *Independent*. Each year's brew will of course be slightly different and although it is a processed beer in bottle the high alcohol content enable it to mature with the passage of time. Of course it really needs to be tried in draught, cask conditioned form and there is only one regular outlet for

that (well, since last year anyway) - Stockport Beer and Cider Festival. Two 18-gallon barrels of the 1995 vintage are maturing in the brewery as you read this but you'll have to wait until the end of May to try it!

Hydes Anvil

In last month's *Opening Times* we recorded the welcome return of Hydes strong ale, **Anvil XXXX** after a few years gap when it was sadly missing from the local strong ale scene. The beer has been brewed on and off since 1922 at a variety of strengths starting with a gravity of 1055, rising to 1068 and, after its relaunch in the late seventies rising to 1080+ (that's 8-9% ABV). It is now back to 6.8% and like its competitors is an all-malt brew using Maris Otter with the hop variety being Fuggles. Despite the lower strength, XXXX has all the taste and body of its predecessor and has been very well received. A second batch has been brewed and distributed and if demand continues more will follow. Hopefully the beer will also make an annual appearance. The beer is only available on draught and many local pubs have taken it including the Anvil, Benchill; Crown and Star, both Cheadle; High Grove, Horse & Farrier, Prince of Wales, all Gatley; Victoria, Withington; Friendship, Fallowfield; Pineapple, Gorton; Nursery and Moss Rose, Heaton Norris; Farmers Arms, Burnage and the Jolly Angler in the City Centre.

Holts

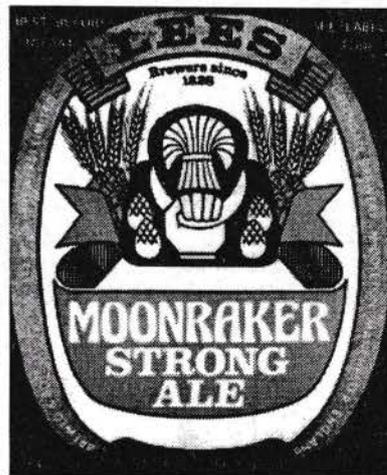
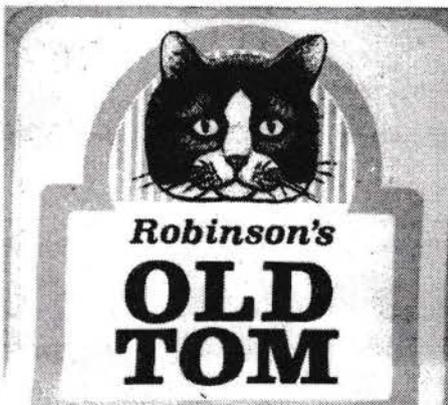
Holts, of course, are the odd ones out. They *do* produce a strong ale, **Sixex**, and this is generally only available in nip bottles. In the winter of 1994/95 they actually produced a draught version but made no public announcement of the fact, provided little or no point-of-sale material (not even a pumpclip!) and only made it available in 22-gallon barrels. Considering this is a 6%ABV beer that is a lot for a pub to sell before it goes off. In point of fact only half a dozen or so pubs took part in what was officially termed an 'experiment' and results appear to have been mixed since this time Holts announced that the promotion of Sixex would not take the form of a draught version but two bottles would be available for £1. However, word reached us that a small amount was once again to be put into cask but as we went to press we heard that this could now not be the case.

Oak

A relative newcomer to the Manchester brewing scene, Tony Allen founded his Oak brewery at Ellesmere Port in 1982, moving to the old Phoenix Brewery in Heywood in 1991. There are no tied houses but over 100 free trade outlets are supplied and as such Oak beers are often found in local pubs. Two seasonal ales are produced, **Oak Porter** and **Humbug**. The Porter, 1050og/5%ABV has been around the longest of the two and is a superb example of the style with a rich roast malt taste and long satisfying finish. Only two brews were produced this year, so catch it if you can. Overtaking Porter in the popularity stakes is Humbug, a more recent, and powerful introduction. 1064og and 7% alcohol, this beer avoids the sweet cloying character that can sometimes be found in beers of this strength, particularly those from the smaller breweries. Oak beers are all-malt brews, mainly the Halcyon variety. Mention should also be made of another year round brew from Oak, **Wobbly Bob**. At 6.5%ABV this has become something of a cult beer. Malty and fruity in taste but still with strong hop character, this is a favourite in the local free trade.

Next month we will conclude with a look at winter warmers produced outside the county. Readers wanting copies of the lists of the Old Tom and/or Moonraker outlets should write with an SAE to the editorial address.

* thanks to Keith Egerton for additional material on Hydes





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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

1995 proved to be yet another lively year on the pub and beer scene. Greenalls bought Boddingtons, Allied Domeq announced the closure of the Warrington brewery, Scottish & Newcastle bought Courage and a plague of Irish theme bars descended upon us.

On the plus side, Hydes launched a range of seasonal beers as did Burtonwood. Both look set to continue on this theme in 1996. While the flood of pub closures in East Manchester has slowed to a trickle the City Centre and the Wilmslow Road corridor continue to boom with several new ventures and refurbishments. The City Centre saw two astonishing new pubs, The Moon Under Water on Deansgate and Via Fossa on Canal Street. 1996 should see several more openings in the "Gay Village" as the brewing industry chases the so-called 'pink pound'.

What else is in store for 1996? Certainly the micro-brewery boom looks set to continue. As we went to press news reached OT of another putative venture in Manchester if premises can be found. At the other end of the brewing spectrum, turmoil will be the order of the day. Will Allied Domeq get out of brewing? Will

Whitbread - one rumour has them selling their breweries and buying Greenalls and Vaux! What latest theme will blight our pubs? One thing's for sure it promises to be a bumpy ride.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Last month saw local politicians, and in particular Manchester City Council leader Graham Stringer railing against the loss of our local pub heritage. The renaming of Manchester's Rising Sun as Paddy's Wig seems to have been the catalyst for the outburst. Councillor Stringer's conversion to a defender of our pubs is welcome but wait - can this be the same Councillor Stringer whose planners:

★ knocked down the Little Bradford for a vitally important shrubbery

★ gave permission for Tesco's new supermarket thus sealing the fate of the Sportsmans, the last remaining pub on Market Street.

★ still threaten the listed Plough in Gorton with a road scheme which will never take place. I think we should be told.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And on that happy note, all that remains is for me to wish all of our readers, advertisers, contributors and distributors health, happiness and good beer in 1996.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Martin Sellars:

"There isn't really room for more than one or two (beer exhibition pubs) in each big town" (Curmudgeon, December). By my calculation, there are at least 14 such pubs within a 15 minute walk of the Cathedral: would Curmudgeon like to indicate which four of these deserve to survive?

From Dave Sheldon:

When Wetherspoons opened The Moon Under Water I was impressed. It is big and attractive, has lots of handpumps serving a good range of beers at competitive prices and reasonable meals are served until late. There is a large no-smoking area and the large number of staff mean prompt service of drinks and food, tables wiped clean and glasses promptly removed. If this was the future for pubs, I was sold on it.

Several visits later and standards have fallen considerably. The beer is served too cold, smoking is common in the no-smoking areas, particularly on busy nights, and an apparent reduction in staff numbers has led to very slow service even at quiet times.

Visiting Wetherspoons, Piccadilly four days after it opened, I found already that smokers were using the no-smoking area. The young lady behind the bar charged us the price of three halves of bitter for one half of bitter and one half of cleaning fluid. Although another member of staff put things right, this bar girl admitted she didn't know what bitter looked like as it was her first day.

Wetherspoons may have spent a lot of money on buildings and furnishings but that doesn't guarantee a good pub. Until service is improved, staff are properly trained, the beer is sold at the right temperature and a no-smoking area is just that, then the discerning drinker won't be lured away for long from the traditional values of his or her local.

From A Wilson:

It was nice to read about the refurbished Crown in your December columns. However it appears that while Hydes were promoting their XXXX beer on another page, you did not notice they omitted to mention the sale of the "winter warmer" at their other Cheadle outlet, The Star Inn. Our hosts here, Eric and Nora Ryder are the only tenants in the village and they work hard to consistently maintain lower prices. It really does seem

a shame that in the pre-Xmas launch of this new beer they did not get a mention; especially when they are selling this beer 5p cheaper than the prices advertised.

Hydes have a real advantage in having a tenancy and a managed house in such close proximity offering as they do different but complementary styles. I hope you will publish this letter to help redress a balance which previously existed.

(No slight was intended - the list of XXXX outlets Hydes provided before our copy date was incomplete, as we made clear in the article - ed)

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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

The *Farmers Arms* on Brinnington Road saw a small (select?) band of CAMRA members start the Brinnington and Portwood Stagger on a cool autumn evening. While the majority of the party sat drinking in the recently refurbished lounge, one of our number sat unknown to the rest in the vault, which he later described as being reminiscent of a working mens club. Owned by Boddington PubCo (or should that be Greenalls now?), the Farmers is unsurprisingly an estate pub with an unprepossessing exterior that conceals a welcoming, pleasant interior. Boddingtons Bitter (£1.26) and Mild (£1.18) were both above average.

Having managed to find each other, we went down the hill to Robinsons' *Jack & Jill*, another estate pub. The vault was dominated by a very large TV screen showing Sky Sport, and a pool table. We decided that the lounge was a better bet even though the furnishings were showing signs of wear and tear. It wasn't unpleasant, though, with the unusual feature of a *genuine* small library (others please note), and Hatters Mild being just about average, Best Bitter above average.

We left Brinnington to explore the delights of Portwood with the first stop the rather empty *Rifle Volunteer* on Carrington Road. The pub had not long since reopened after a short period of closure. It's an unusual pub, being almost triangular with the vault area surrounding the bar and two small lounge type rooms coming off it. The front one is very pleasant and you can look through a window to the back room

from which it is separated by what appears to be a wooden wall. The other distinguishing feature is that this is a Wilsons pub, yes, a Websters free zone. Wilsons Bitter at £1.28 a pint was the only cask beer and was found to be just about average.

Round the corner is the *Park*, by far the busiest and most lively pub on the entire Stagger. The vault was as busy as the lounge and was dominated by an impressive trophy cabinet. Also in the lounge was some very artistic chalk sign writing which told us that this was happy hour (well, hour and a half!). The Wilsons and Websters Bitters were £1.02 and £1.20 respectively but to a man we all went for the Holts Bitter which was well above average. It should also be noted that the keg Scruppy Jack cider was no longer on handpump, it's good to see more and more pubs turning down the chance of conning the public in that way. As we left, we noticed a large amount of broken glass outside - the one negative thing about the place.

Next stop, 100 metres down the road, is the *Midway*. This backs on to the river and it has always struck me as demanding a more rural setting with its one room dominated by brasses and other country-style artefacts. Unfortunately on our visit, and in contrast with the previous pub, the place was a little lifeless. At the rear is a restaurant/function room and in the cellar a more basic function room. The beer range is extensive - Wilsons Mild (£1.28), John Smiths Bitter, Magnet (£1.40), Directors Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter. Unfortunately none of the beers we tried was above average (we didn't try the Boddies) and the Mild was well below. Perhaps a reduction in the range might improve the quality.

Further down Newbridge Lane is the *Stanley Arms*. This is a pub which seems to attract extreme views and I have to admit to being more of a detractor than a fan. The plus point must be the most extensive range of beers in Stockport but unfortunately at times this can also mean that quality suffers, especially at quiet times of the week. Although this was a Friday night there seemed to be more real ales on the bar than customers drinking the stuff. Most of us chose the Nearys Stout from Commercial Brewery, Keighley which was definitely the best beer of the night. A minority drank the unfortunately named Blow Job from Steampacket Brewery. I was told by a drinker of this beer that he was 'not satisfied'. I presume he meant the beer... (no smut please - ed). Having drunk up we left past the variety of TV sets and posters advertising the twice-weekly strippers. Retracing our steps over the river we came to the *Coach & Horses* a BodPubCo house just off St Mary's Way. This is a well run, well maintained, friendly two-roomed pub and if, like me, you like traditional pubs, then this is the place for you. As one of our more literary members put it "like a bright stone on sullen ground", (Shakespeare, I think). On electric pumps (with oversized glasses in use) were Boddingtons Mild, Bitter and Old Henry. The mild and bitter were well above average and I must say our visit was enjoyed by all. (At the time of our visit we heard that the landlord's wife was seriously ill and it is very sad to note that she has subsequently died - our condolences).

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With some reluctance we moved round the corner to the **Brinnington Inn**, a small Robinsons pub on Great Portwood Street. The lounge had karaoke so we plumped for the vault which, while basic, had an interesting picture montage of old Stockport on the wall. The Best Bitter was above average but the Hatters Mild was slightly below.

Next door to the Brinnington Inn is the **Old King**, a four roomed pub seemingly sitting in the grounds of Toys R Us. We sat in the lounge with its beams, brasses and white plaster, an effect which I'm never sure works in a brick-built urban pub but others like it. The other rooms are the snug, the pool room, with two tables and a rather unusual fireplace, and a vault which I feel is one of the more characterful in the area with its boxing pictures. The beers were Bass, Stones Bitter and Worthington Best Bitter. With the exception of the latter which was not tried, we found them more than reasonable. Worth a pint while the kids go and pick their birthday presents.

Finally we traipsed past the rather sad Byrons and on to the **Queens**, a pub which has been subjected to the full rigours of the Robinsons architecture team. In other words it is essentially one big room. The music was rather loud and so we purchased our beer (electric pumps and oversize glasses) and found a corner. The Hatters Mild was slightly below average and the Best Bitter somewhat better. At this point I departed for home while my colleagues sought sanctuary in the Arden Arms.

As ever the comments in the article can only reflect what we found on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement on the pubs or their beers. Why not try them yourself to see how much you (dis)agree.

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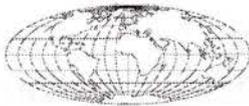
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Wetherspoons 2

Following its successful entry into Manchester with the **Moon Under Water** on Deansgate, the London-based Wetherspoon organisation opened a second Manchester pub on 5th December.

Simply called 'Wetherspoons', this is a £1 million conversion of the former Halfords store on Piccadilly and follows the standard Wetherspoon formula of no music, no pool tables, food all day and a range of cask beers including Youngers Scotch Bitter at 99p a pint and, interestingly, Cains Mild and Bitter. There will also be a regular guest beer.

Despite the accent on service and comfort, it has to be said that this version of Wetherspoons is a bit of a let down. Perhaps it is unfair to compare it with its spectacular sister establishment on Deansgate but for £1 million you would have thought that the company would have come up with a more inspiring design than a large square lounge with a bar down one side which is all it essentially is.

Similarly with the no-smoking area. A nice idea but since it simply consists of the back third of the pub, marked by no more than a hanging sign, it is difficult to see how they intend to stop smoke wafting down - on the pre-opening night there was the ridiculous sight of a table placed directly under the sign, the smokers on one side, in the smoking area, and the non-smokers on the other.

Funnily enough in London, where most of the company's ventures are based, the system works fairly well, but Mancunians are well known to view 'DONT' signs as a red (or blue) rag to a bull.

Having said all that, the pub is undoubtedly proving a success, it's certainly been busy every time OT has passed by, and the company will doubtless be looking for more sites in the region - an outlet in Tameside has already been mooted.

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **JANUARY '91**

"DEMOLITION DERBY" was the front page headline, and there was a lot of detail about the City Council's tortuously named "City of Manchester (Intermediate Ring Road Stage 2 - Pottery Lane to Oldham Road) Compulsory Purchase Order 1990." Before it had appeared there had been concern about what would happen to some of the pubs of East Manchester, and the position was only made worse by the CPO. Robinson's Horseshoe and the Traveller's Call had gone, and there was concern over the future of no less than another 10 pubs - the Star, Nags Head, Unicorn, Victoria, Cheshire Hunt, Park, Alexandra, Duke of Edinburgh, Grey Mare, and Star. Full details were given in how and when to lodge objections to the CPO.

Greenalls Brewery at Warrington was to close with the loss of 500 jobs, but looking on the bright side, a new small brewery was set to rise from the ashes of the old. This was the Coach House Brewing Company, which was to benefit from the expertise of no less than 3 of Greenalls former brewers. It was to be a sizeable operation for a new concern, and with a capacity to brew 300 barrels a week, and possible contracts with Greenalls and the BodPubCo, it looked to be well set for a flying start.

There was news of an existing small brewery - Brendan Dobbin's West Coast Brewery at Chorlton-on-Medlock. Capacity had been increased by an additional 15 barrel capacity maturation vessel, and at the same time the new bottling plant had come into use, located in an industrial unit in a converted mill on Hamilton Road, Longsight.

The Strawberry Duck in Clayton Road had re-opened after undergoing major alterations, which were also happily described as major improvements; and there was another positive change, this time in the beer range. Holt's Mild at 82p had replaced the Websters Green Label, which meant that there were no longer any Websters/Wilsons products in the pub.

Finally, a couple of pub losses that might possibly be described as "natural wastage":-

1. The Steam Engine outside Ardwick Station had become a cafe - it must have been one of the closest pubs to the original Chesters Brewery, which bought it in 1890.
2. The Openshaw Inn on Ashton Old Road had been repainted and refurbished, but sadly, it was to re-open as Offices/Showrooms.

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Overdraught Blows In

Amongst a flurry of pre-Christmas openings was the Overdraught in the City Centre. On the corner of Princess Street and Granby Row (and opposite the Old Garratt), Bass have converted the first floor of a former warehouse into a very stylish bar indeed.

The layout is simple and restrained with plain wooden furniture contrasting with the large slabs of primary/electric colours on the walls and ceiling. High tech lighting completes the effect. Interesting food is served during the day but in the evening the bar obviously aims for the younger pre-club crowd, as evidenced by the industrial strength speakers hanging from the ceiling.

Handpumps on the bar dispense Worthington Best Bitter, Stones, Bass and Fullers London Pride, the latter rather good when Opening Times called. Sadly there are a couple more handpumps which dispense keg Cidermaster Cider. Just when Bulmers are, at long last, starting to retreat from this deception with their keg Scrumpy Jack it remains a mystery why Bass are apparently happy to keep misleading their customers in this way. Perhaps they would like to tell us...

Turners Turnaround

In a surprise move, popular licensees David and Paula Harris are set to leave Stockport's Queens Head (aka Turners Vaults) at the end of this month.

They are moving to Premier House, the pub-restaurant division of Greenalls. A 13 week training period at the Fairview Inn, Rochdale will follow after which they get their own pub. It seems that after the Boddingtons take-over, Greenalls are to convert a number of prime sites into Millers Kitchen and Hudsons Steak House concepts and it is to one of these that David and Paula will be going.

Why the move? David tells us that they feel they have reached a peak at the Queens and need a new challenge. We will be sorry to see them go - in their 2 1/2 years in the pub they have gained a place in the national Good Beer Guide, were Pub of the Month in December 1994 and local Pub of the Year for 1994. They will be a hard act to follow but we understand consultations are taking place with Sam Smith's management to ensure the right people replace them. They go with Opening Times's best wishes for the future.

** the winner of the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year Award for 1995 will be announced in the next issue of Opening Times.*

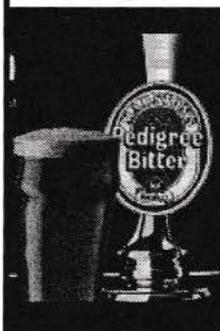
UpComing Beer Festivals

The 'Winter' Beer Festival Season is nigh, starting later this month with the Atherton and Tyldesley Festival (Bent & Bongs) (Jan 25-27) which while having a reputation for serving slightly overpriced beer (proceeds go to Round Table nominated charities) has been a very enjoyable bash for a number of years.

Advance notice needs to be given of a major festival pile-up in February.

A week after the inaugural Castlefield (Manchester) Festival at the Upper Campfield Market, Castlefield (entrance off Deansgate) on the 22-24th, with 150 beers and ciders (Advert on back Page and full details next month) which clashes with the popular Fleetwood festival there are Festivals (29 Feb - March 2) in Llandudno, Wigan (moved a long way forward - idiot pie-eaters) and the massive ticket only Bradford Festival (200 or so beers). Not only is this going to hit staffing levels, but many potential staff will want to visit all three, and therefore work at none. Mind you, it will mean a great mobile weekend for serious travelling drinkers!

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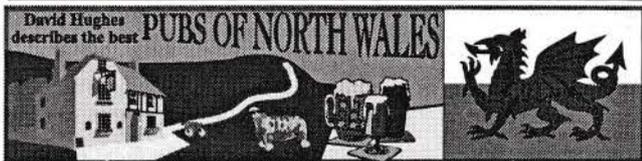
Paula and David would like to thank all their customers, friends and staff for help and support over the past two and a half years. Thanks for supporting us throughout the year, helping us to gain the CAMRA Pub of the Year award.

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The Llyn y Mawn, Brynford, Nr. Holywell

Next time you are travelling into North Wales along the A55 Expressway, two miles past the Little Chef at Halkyn look to your left and you will spot a Country Pub, the problem is that you have now passed CAMRA's Welsh Pub of the Year. To get there leave the A55 at the A5026 Holywell turnoff, travel 2 miles to the junction with the B5121 turning left up the hill for a mile after going under the A55 - the pub is on the right hand side.

The Llyn y Mawn in Brynford has been a pub since 1640 or before. It was at one time a Coach House but it is difficult to recognise this fact now. In recent times it was owned by the James Fox Brewery of Ewloe, Flintshire in the 30s and 40s; taken over by Burtonwood who ran the pub until selling it as Free of Tie in the middle 70s. It continued to sell Burtonwood beers up to 1989, when the then owner signed a deal with Courage and John Smith's became the only cask beer.

I first went into the pub in 1987 after refereeing a local football match; although cozy, the beers were not good quality and it could be called run down and dirty. I only visited it on a handful of occasions up to August 1993, in fact from 1991 to 1993 it was a place I avoided.

What a difference two years make! The pub can now be classed as my regular haunt although it is twelve miles away from my home. It has won numerous CAMRA awards including the Vale of Clwyd Pub of the Month three times, also it was Pub of the Year 1994, the Merseyside Marchers and North Wales Pub of the

Region and just recently it became CAMRA's first ever Welsh Pub of the Year. Landlord and owner Martin Jackson bought the pub in August 1993 after taking redundancy as a project manager with British Aerospace, Broughton, Chester. Together with his wife Pauline and son Bruce he runs a clean, efficient country pub where the enthusiasm is centred on beer and not food, although the pub has a growing reputation for this also.

Since opening, the Jacksons have steadily changed the pub; an extension was added earlier this year that blends in with the original structure, the bar has been modified within the original building (though not so you would notice), the beers have changed - gone is the bland John Smiths and in as the regular beer is Crown Buckley Best Bitter (incidentally the only regular outlet for this product in North Wales), two guest beers are regularly featured and most weeks some six or seven of these are featured, mostly around the 3.8% - 4.8% range. Since taking over the pub over 150 guest beers have appeared, but some beers make regular guest appearances because regular customers ask for them.

A word of warning at this point, if you are thinking of dropping by for a meal it may be wise to phone first and book - at weekends they are now booking three weeks in advance. Although I have not eaten at the pub, those who have praise the standard and the portions, the prices seem to be reasonable and are very comparable with similar establishments locally

The Llyn y Mawn is a pub that serves food and not a restaurant that serves beer states Martin Jackson. His philosophy is that food sales should never be more than 30% of the business. They do not serve Sunday lunches, or meals on Sunday evenings. Entertainment night is a Friday evening when live music of a general kind is featured. The pub also has two darts teams and is also involved in two quiz leagues - in fact it is a pub for all tastes.

JOIN CAMRA NOW - FORM ON PAGE 15

Llyn - y - Mawn Inn

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE CAMRA

After the complete absence of this column in December's issue (well apart from the Poynton up-date that was moved to its usual location) there is a veritable welter of news for the New Year.

Starting off in Tameside the big question is "will Ashton under Lyne be getting a Wetherspoons?" At the November Planning Committee an application for a 1399.5m sq (!) conversion of the Main Shopping Arcade on Wellington Road was approved. Wetherspoons would not be drawn when questioned simply saying that it is too soon for a definitive yes or no. According to the Pub Group they were investigating other related matters and a decision would be made when these were complete. They have recently applied for a licence and have been carrying out marketing exercises in the market area. Remember you read it first in O.T.

Also in Ashton the Station (free) has been celebrating its 1000th guest beer. Not a bad attempt in not much more than 3 years! The 1000th beer was "Morocca Ale", a 7% brew from Daleside Brewery in Harrogate. As it was just before Christmas the choice was quite fitting; a strong winter warmer with plenty of well balanced seasonal spice and heavy on the nutmeg. A great Christmas ale.

Elsewhere in the Borough the Church Hotel (Whitbread) Manchester Road, Droylsden is now fully open after extensive refurbishment and whilst there has been no internal examination the work to the exterior has smartened the pub up considerably and not damaged what has always been an attractive facade.

The Crown (Robinsons) Market Street, Hyde has its regular supply of Old Tom (as many others will, no doubt), which was in good form when sampled.

Continuing the footballing theme that seems to have run every so often, the Queen Adelaide, Gee Cross has a new landlord; Dave Saxon has given up his job as coach of Glossop FC in favour of pulling pints. Away from Tameside, in Mellor the Oddfellows, now a free house, is offering Marstons Pedigree and Banks's Mild on handpump and these are joined by a regular guest beer. Things are looking up for this attractive stone pub which was for a long time keg only, and in Romiley the Duke of York has swapped keg Winter Royal for the real thing on a permanent basis.

In Glossop the Roebuck, Whitfield has reopened after being shut for over 6 months and the Star has taken to having one handpump devoted to Timothy Taylor's beers with Landlord and Ram Tam (Landlord with caramel) being the most popular.

Nearby in Hadfield the Masons and the Lamb have started taking guest beers which are by all accounts good value for money and good news for local drinkers whilst over in Hayfield the Sportsman now has a guest beer to complement the Thwaites regulars.

Football again, but just out of the branch area, the Cheshire Cheese on Edale Road in Hope is now being run by Peter Eustace, a player with Sheffield Wednesday and West Ham who then went on to manage Orient. What is it with ex-footballers and the licensed trade?

At this point I had intended to announce the recipient of the annual award of HIGH PEAK MAN OF THE YEAR but for reasons of delicacy his name will not appear in this journal. Suffice it to say that the contents of his grand gesture recently tipped the voting overwhelmingly in his favour.

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High Peak Featured Pub

JANUARY 1996 by Tom Lord

This month we feature one of the High Peak branch area's best known and best loved pubs, the Royal in Hayfield.

Situated in the centre of the village, this is a large imposing stone-built hotel beside the local cricket pitch and the brook which flows down from Kinder Scout. When it was built in 1755 the building was a parsonage; it became the Shoulder of Mutton in the 19th century and was later renamed the Royal. It retains much of its original character and the exterior remains little changed. A building to stand the test of time and weather, and it has done both, particularly the latter, with Hayfield winters.

The interior retains much of the wainscoting and wood panelling which gives it a comfortable, coaching house atmosphere. The hotel has many amenities, including bed and breakfast accommodation; meals, in the bar or restaurant but both featuring imaginative well-prepared food, and a function room. There is also easy access for the disabled with a wheel-chair ramp on the front steps. Live music also features regularly here.

The Royal also has the accent firmly on cask conditioned beer with John Smiths Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, Coach House 'Kinder Fall Down' Bitter and at least two guest beers which change regularly. There are also occasional beer festivals organised at the pub, with a regular one each October.

All in all, the Royal sets out to cater for everybody (muddy hikers boots are not frowned upon!), an aim which it achieves to everyone's satisfaction.

(Whilst on the subject of Hayfield - also give the *George* (Burtonwood Bitter and Buccaneer) and the *Kinder Lodge* (Tetley Bitter and Ind Coope Burton Ale) a try. Both are excellent pubs which, together with the Royal, give the centre of Hayfield a decent range of beers and a trio of fine pubs.)

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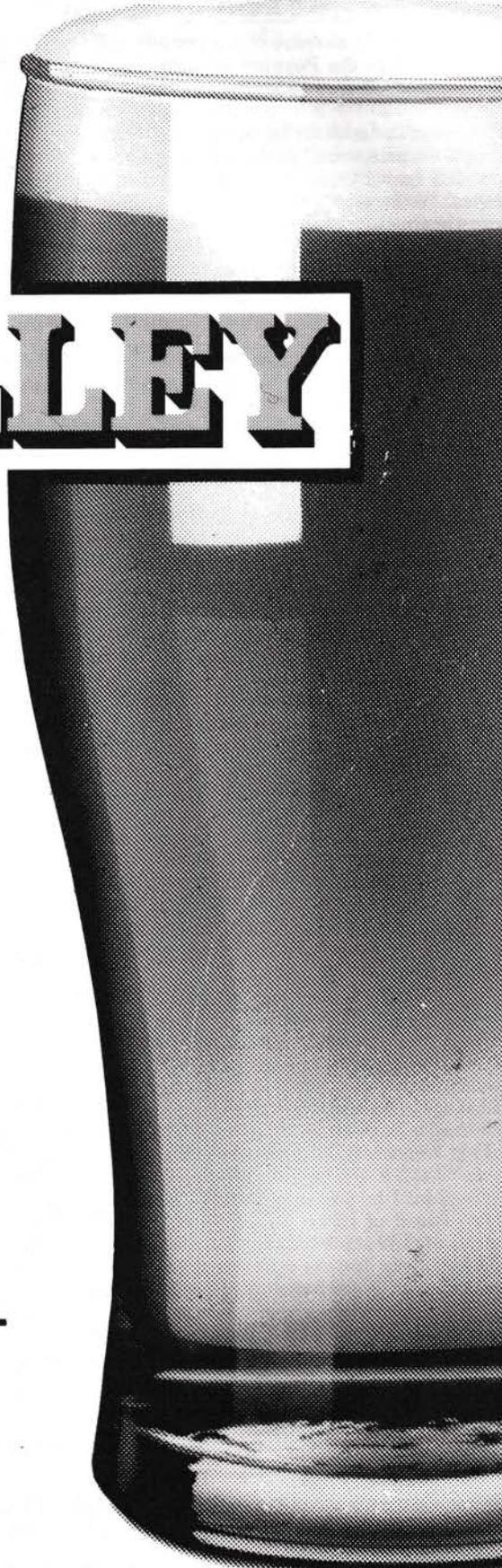
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More Beer, Less Chips

You're often told by the "quality" newspapers, in their food and drink or financial sections, that particular pub operators, or pubs in general, will have to put more and more emphasis on food in order to survive.

While this contains an element of truth, as a generalisation it shows a profound ignorance of the wider pub trade. Food does play a larger part in pub life than it did twenty years ago, and some pubs, presumably those frequented by expense-account journalists, have become dominated by food to the exclusion of all else. But thousands of pubs do a roaring trade without serving any food at all, while others make the effort to offer extensive menus, yet never get more than a handful of people dining.

Even the Royal Oak in Didsbury, featured in every pub food guide under the sun for its amazing cheese lunches, does no food at all in the evenings or at weekends, and yet is still packed out most of the time. Indeed many people deliberately seek out pubs without food because they don't want to drink in an atmosphere permeated by chip-fat. There's also a basic limitation to the demand for meals - you can go to the pub and have one drink, or six, depending on your mood, but, unless (naming no names) you're exceptionally greedy, you don't want more than one meal at a sitting.

In fact, in only a minority of pubs is food anything more than a sideline, and I suspect there isn't really much more scope for expansion in the pub food market - the obvious decline in lunchtime pubgoing must count against it, for a start. The crucial issue facing pubs today is how to protect and expand their wet trade, and in most cases selling more food isn't going to be the answer.

By Golly, it Does You Good - Official!

Much has been written about the government's belated but eminently sensible raising of the recommended maximum limits for sensible drinking. A key point about this announcement which may have been overlooked is the body-blow it deals to teetotalism.

For the medical evidence is now quite clear that, for all adults, regular moderate drinking is much better for your health than total abstinence. This is especially true for the over-forties. In fact, even though the risk to health slowly increases for people drinking over 28 units a week for men, or 21 for women, you have to drink at well over twice this level before the risk begins to exceed that from not drinking at all.

This leaves the anti-drink lobby looking pretty silly, because it's been proved that avoiding alcohol entirely is actively bad for you. It's not surprising that they reacted to the announcement with such howls of anguish. For a minority of drinkers, alcohol can cause serious problems. But, if groups campaigning on alcohol issues want to avoid being made a laughing stock, they must learn to distinguish between the few problem drinkers and the many moderate, sensible drinkers, rather than tarring everyone with the same outdated brush.

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THE KINGS ARMS

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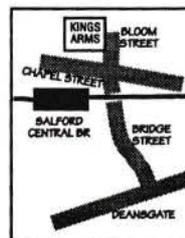


Dave and Sue Price invite you to try the
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Constantly
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Beers
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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak. Needless to say members of both branches are welcome at each other's events!

Monday 8th - Social, Crown, High St, Cheadle. Starts 9.00pm

Thursday 11th - Monthly branch meeting - Armoury
Saturday 13th - Branch Birthday Meal, Nursery, Heaton Norris. Guest speaker Adam Hyde, MD Hydes Anvil Brewery. Cost £6 per head. Phone John Clarke on 477 1973 to book.

Monday 15th - Social, Farmers Arms, Burnage Lane, Burnage. Starts 9.00pm

Friday 19th - Stagger in Higher Openshaw. Starts 7.00pm
 Smithfield, Ashton Old Road or join 8.30 at Concert, Fairfield Road

Monday 22nd - Social, Bridge Inn, Georges Road, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Travellers Call, Great Moor. See article on page 2.

Saturday 27th - day out in Shropshire visiting Hanby and Salopian breweries. Depart Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.00pm. Phone 477 1973 to book.

Monday 29th - Social, Grapes, Old Road, Heaton Norris. Starts 9.00pm.

High Peak branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley and all points north. They have notified Opening Times of the following events:

Saturday 13th - Social/survey - Ashford Dale/Buxton

Monday 15th - Monthly branch meeting, Horsfield Arms, Bredbury. Aim to get there by 8.30.

Sunday 21st - Woods Walk - a round trip from the Andrew Arms, Compstall starting 9.45am.

Friday 26th-Sunday 28th - weekend trip to Oxford. Interested parties should contact Tom Lord.



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MANCHESTER MATTERS



A colourful addition to the City Centre's stock of bars is the Overdraught on Princess Street, adjacent to Fifth Avenue nightclub. Bold primary hues decorate the light and airy neo-industrial interior with its plain timber furniture. The handpumped beers are Bass, Worthington Bitter, Stones Bitter and Fullers London Pride; unfortunately a further handpump dispenses Cidermaster keg cider, but that apart, the place has much to commend it.

by Rhys Jones

The handpumped cider at **Weatherspoons** on Piccadilly Gardens IS the genuine article (Westons First Quality), and complements a beer range of Theakstons Bitter and XB, Courage Directors, Marstons Pedigree, Youngers Scotch Bitter (at 99p), and a guest. The place itself, though, is something of a let-down after the magnificence of Deansgate's Moon under Water. It is essentially one large room furnished to lounge-bar standards, and seems to mark a reversion to the "airport lounge" pub style which has lost favour in recent years; on the credit side, some interesting snippets of local history can be gleaned from the information panels scattered about the walls. The rear third of the room is a non-smoking area, though with no physical separation it seems doubtful how effective this will be (on opening night, a builder who'd been connected with the fitting out spoke knowledgeably to me on the use of ventilation systems to create curtains of air to effect separation. We shall see). Though its unbeatably central location is bound to draw in the crowds, I was confirmed in my impression that Wetherspoon's success in London has more to do with the dire nature of much of the competition than with their own inherent virtues.

The **Smithfield** on Swan Street has for some time been building a reputation as one of the very best freehouses in the Manchester region. This can only be added to by the recent decision to sell handpumped cider from Westons - Old Rosie was the brand initially chosen, but other Westons ciders may appear from time to time (your correspondent has requested Special Vintage!)

Two pubs which closed last year reopened before Christmas but without their cask beer. In the case of the Ducie Cafe Bar, which closed as a result of the troubles of its parent nightclub, this is perhaps not too much of a surprise, but the matter of the Retro Bar - formerly the Swinging Sporrán - is a more serious one. When the Sporrán closed last summer in the face of loud protests from its customers, we were assured that the building was needed for the purposes of the adjacent UMIST

campus, as either a staff or a students' club (details varied slightly between different accounts). Yet a few months later, here it is again open as a pub, only with a new silly name and new silly beer (i.e. keg). Why could the successful and popular Swinging Sporrán not have been kept open with its skilled and enthusiastic licensee who knew his customers and catered well for their needs? UMIST and Scottish Courage have some serious questions to answer. Finally in the City Centre, the King has gained Tetley Imperial and Marstons Pedigree on handpump; however plans to transform it into an entertainment-led pub on the lines of its sister establishment the Frog & Bucket appear to be on hold, for the moment at least.

In Chorlton-cum-Hardy, the *Royal Oak* has taken to selling keg Scruppy Jack through a fake handpump. At the Lloyds, while the Scruppy Jack handpump has gone, that for Cidermaster remains. Let's hope they get rid of that one too, for the pub is now selling a quite enterprising range of guest beers, and it would be good to be able to recommend it more whole-heartedly. The **Horse & Jockey** in Chorlton has gained Theakstons Bitter and Courage Directors on handpump.

In West Gorton, the **Imperial** is selling a guest beer again. It's Peter Yates 1884 Bitter, brewed by Moorhouses primarily for Yates's Wine Lodges but also available through Yates's to other outlets, and is remarkable value at £1.15 for a 4.1% ABV beer. Outlets for Festival Bitter, brewed by Tetley Walker for Greenalls, include the Angel in Gorton, the Church in Levenshulme, and the Welcome in Rusholme. I sampled it at the Angel, where I found it to be on very good form. And finally, the **Wheatsheaf** in Levenshulme, formerly a Greenalls pub, is now run by an outfit called the Devonshire Pub Company. It's been attractively renovated, retaining its two-bar layout, and is much brighter and more attractive than before. On handpump are Theakstons Bitter and something called Old Tubthumper Bitter, about which the staff were unable to enlighten me. At £1.38, the Theakstons seems expensive for the area.

The Nursery Inn

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- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

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(0T141)

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NAME(S) DATE

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

STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

Lorraine York, 54 Lime Grove, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 1PF

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.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6



