

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
145

FREE

MAY 1996

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War of the Roses

Sources within the Scottish courage empire have told Opening Times that Websters 'Yorkshire' Bitter is being test brewed at the Royal Brewery in Moss Side writes *Jim Flynn*. We are told that these test brews have been distributed within the Scottish Courage-supplied estate in the Manchester and Stockport area.

This move has no doubt been prompted by the announced closure of Websters original brewery at Halifax although it had been thought that in order to retain the 'Yorkshire' tag, production would in fact be transferred to the John Smiths brewery at Tadcaster. A move to this side of the Pennines would seem to indicate a downgrading of what was once a flagship brand and also puts a question mark over the future of the two other Halifax brews, Wilsons Bitter and Websters Green Label. These latter two may be prime contenders for contracting out to other brewers and it is to be hoped that Wilsons Bitter would find its way back to Manchester, its spiritual home. Wilsons Mild, a beer on the verge of extinction - as last year's opening Times survey discovered - is already brewed by Morlands of Abingdon.

This will also be a first for the Moss Side brewery. This started life as the Red Tower Lager Brewery and has probably never before brewed cask beer in its entire life. This raises a few questions in itself - for example a cask racking line would need to be installed to put the beer into the barrels. No reports have been heard of such investment at Moss Side so is the beer being barrelled elsewhere or have other cask beers been produced in the past?

Will Websters from Lancashire still have the 'Yorkshire' label or is all the point of sale material to be changed? Will the beer improve? Can it get any worse? Answers on a postcard please....

**JOIN CAMRA NOW
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STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER
FESTIVAL FREE! (page 19)**

In MAY's OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Book Review	11
Misleading Dispense ..	3	Five Years Ago	12
Pub of The Month	4	High Peak News	12
Now you see it!	4	High Peak Pub	13
Letters	5	Curmudgeon	15
ONeills	5	Camra Calling	16
Stagger	6	Manchester Matters ...	17
Weetwood Focus	9	Pub News	18

All Change at Stalybridge Buffet

After years of trying to evict the long standing licensee from the famous Buffet Bar at Stalybridge Station, British Rail, or whatever today's operating company is called, have finally succeeded.

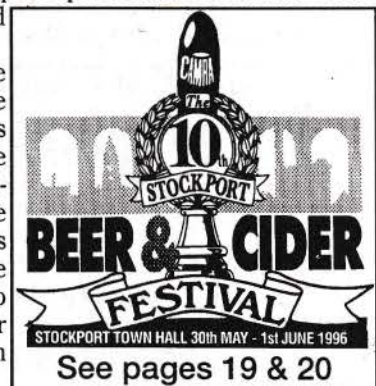
Regular callers will no doubt have noticed the dwindling beer range, and the often indifferent quality in recent years, but Ken Redfern will now be leaving by the twenty-seventh of this month. We hope that BR have the good sense not to do unto this buffet as they did unto the one on the opposite platform - flatten it. The fact that the whole station is being painted again, for the third time in as many years apparently, bodes well for the longevity of the buildings.

More hopefully, the best information suggests that a company with other station bar operations under its belt is going to take over straight away, hopefully preventing vandalism of the unique fittings. We thank Ken, and indeed his father and late mother before him for their efforts as custodians of this establishment. Both CAMRA and FOSS, the Friends of Stalybridge Station, will be keeping a weather eye on proceedings, as will the regulars. It is to be hoped that this gem can be resurrected to something approaching its former glory.

Award for Robbies

Frederics, Robinsons premium beer has won a major international award. The 5% golden ale received the Brewing Industry's International Bronze Medal at the organisations award ceremony in Harrogate last month. Frederics was selected from 59 entrants in 'category 3' for cask beers with a strength between 4.7 and 6%. The international judging panel was made up of representatives from breweries as far afield as Japan and the USA.

Launched in April 1994, the beer is named after the brewery's founder and was also introduced in bottle (sadly not bottle conditioned) last year. The award is a further success for Robinsons in these awards, made every two years, with Best Bitter amongst the honours in 1994.



OPENING TIMES 145

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973 (home) and (0161) 831 7222 x 3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!). Articles for publication can be submitted by e-mail to jclarke@opentime.u-net.com. Compuserve users can mail the deputy editor at 100662.12. Letters to the editor on otletter@opentime.u-net.com. All items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.

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Design and Origination by CPPR, a division of Connaught Technologies, (using Adobe PageMaker 5, Corel Draw 3.0, 4.0 and 5.0, Microsoft Word for Windows 6.0, and Wordperfect 5.2.). This edition was once again produced without recourse to any aspect of Microsoft Windows 95. Opening Times on-line is created in the ADSET text engine with testing in Hot-Metal Pro, Netscape 1.1n, 1.22b, and 2.0 and Air Mosaic. Downloadable pages in Adobe Acrobat format. Mcr. Office is located at: 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP.

Tel/Fax 0161 432 8384 E-mail 100662.12@compuserve.com
Opening Times On-Line is hosted by U-Net Ltd, Warrington
Opening Times is printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page: £25; 1/4 page: £40; 1/2 page: £70; Full page £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. (Rates current until December 31 1996. From April 1 we have been forced to increase our rates to reflect both an increase in circulation and moving to higher quality paper (with associated extra costs). On-line adverts are available at between £5 and £20.

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

After passionate debate at CAMRA's recent National Conference, a Stockport & South Manchester branch motion, tightening up the rules on misleading dispense was convincingly passed. As we make clear in OT this month, no pub serving keg beer or cider through a fake handpump will be considered for inclusion in any CAMRA guide.

The chief culprit is Bulmers who, via their Symonds subsidiary, market Scrumpy Jack. This is always a keg product. Bulmers preferred method of dispense is a fake handpump claiming that it has been dispensed via handpump for many years. They gloss over the fact that for most of that time Scrumpy Jack was a genuine 'real' cider, and Symonds was a small family-owned company. They claim "the badge on the front of the handpull clearly states Scrumpy Jack's credentials - it makes no claim to be a cask conditioned product". They just don't get it do they? The very fact that a handpump is used is claim enough. To pretend otherwise is disingenuous at best, and plain dishonest at worst.

Luckily many agree with CAMRA's view. These range from local brewers Robinsons, who have instructed Bulmers to install a short "handpump" fronting an obvious keg font, when their tenants take Scrumpy Jack (and even here there have been one or two lapses by Bulmers which Robinsons have had to put right) to the leading trade paper, *The Licensee and Morning Advertiser*, which had these words to say on the subject "deception does not sit comfortably with the modern-day tenet of 'customer care'". I couldn't have put it better myself.

★ ★ ★ ★

This month we extend a warm welcome to readers in the Macclesfield area. For some months Opening Times has gone into a small number of pubs in the town but now the local branch will be distributing us more widely. We hope you like what you see - if you don't write and tell us. Letters, news and views are always welcome.

John Clarke

COPY DATE FOR JUNE ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES - MAY 23

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Misleading Dispense

- CAMRA's Policy

Misleading dispense - specifically the sale of keg beer or keg cider by handpump - has been frequently mentioned in these columns, and regular readers know that pubs using such methods are not eligible for inclusion in selective CAMRA pub guides or for accolades such as Pub of the Month. While this has been policy locally, CAMRA's national policy, whilst strongly discouraging the inclusion of such pubs in (for example) the Good Beer Guide, has allowed them to go in if an "overriding campaigning reason" could be identified - for example, if the pub sold the only decent beer in a wide area.

Following a decision by CAMRA's National Conference held recently in Portsmouth, however, this exemption has been withdrawn; from now on, ALL pubs using misleading dispense are ineligible for Good Beer Guide or selective local guides. The message to licensees is now simple and clear: misleading dispense disqualifies - there are no exceptions. Naturally, the point of all this is not to remove otherwise deserving pubs from the Good Beer Guide. Rather, the aim is to remove misleading dispense systems from the pubs by putting the power and prestige of CAMRA's flagship publication behind the campaign for honesty and integrity in trading. Locally, it is already the case that hardly any pubs of real merit use misleading dispense systems. We hope that CAMRA's firmer and clearer new policy will consign them nationwide to the status of a mere historical curiosity. RPJ.

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As mentioned elsewhere, it is the policy of Robinsons to serve Scrumpy Jack through a stub keg font - nothing wrong with that. It is the full size fake handpump that is objected to. Please note also that 'Old Hazy' on handpump is a genuine traditional cider.

Pub Of The Month MAY 1996

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for May 1996 goes to Copperfields Bar on Adswood Lane West. Those who have only seen the bar and not ventured through the doors will consider this an odd choice, it is after all essentially the rear extension to the Southlands Hotel. Venture through the doors however and you will encounter a traditional pub atmosphere which belies the mere 3 1/2 years that the place has been in existence.

The success of, and the traditional values so apparent at, Copperfields can be put down to the hard work and commitment of licensee and owner Stuart Driver who runs the bar in conjunction with his parents Ken and Marion. Stuart has some 17 years experience in the licensed trade and he and his father have owned numerous freehouses between them, the last being the New Inn at Castleton, Rochdale, which was bought by Robinsons.

Stuart and his father bought the Southlands Hotel five years ago but, as Stuart told OT, he loves the pub atmosphere so much that he decided to add a pub onto the building. What you have is just one room, a dark panelled lounge, with the bar at one end. However, by running an unashamedly tight ship, "to ensure a good atmosphere and good customers", Stuart has succeeded in creating one of the most welcoming pubs around. Not only does the pub succeed on atmosphere, it also scores on value for money. This runs from the extensive menu (12 oz T-bone steak for £6.95, for example) to the beer. Five cask ales are normally sold and the range at present includes Wilsons Mild, John Smiths Bitter (99p a pint), Boddies Bitter (£1.15), Robbies Best (£1.24) and Marstons Pedigree. This year Stuart also plans to make the beer range more interesting with the introduction of guest ales - a large party from the pub will be heading for Stockport Beer Festival for inspiration!

Five darts teams and a pool team testify to how much Copperfields has become a well-used community local. It succeeds where many older pubs fail dismally. It is this success which our Pub of the Month award celebrates and the presentation night, Thursday 23rd May, promises to be a night to remember. Get there early to ensure a seat. Bus 13 from Stockport Bus Station will drop you nearby.

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Tut 'n' Shive Changes

The Chapel House Tut 'n' Shive, Heaton Chapel is to see some changes. The pub is to become a 'Tavern Venue' targeting a younger customer group and sales of alcopops with high profit margins. The range of beers is being reduced and in early April some of the handpumps had already been taken out. There might be some advantage in reduction in choice in that the remaining beers should turn over more quickly and a more consistent pint should be available, though the beers will only be from the Whitbread range. Live music will be a highlight with bands on Thursday and Sunday and another live act on Saturday night.

Well Done Bob!

Congratulations to Bob Dickinson at the *Woolpack*, Brinksway, Stockport. Bob has received a master cellarman certificate from Matthew Brown, the local trading arm of Scottish Courage. Bob was presented with his certificate at an awards evening held in the Matthew Brow HQ at Chorley and this is now proudly displayed in the pub.

4



Now You See It... Now, You Don't

Could the tidal wave of 'Irish' bars be receding? Bass this month bring us O'Neills in Didsbury but in Manchester City Centre it's a slightly different story.

The Magic Pub Co (ignominious winners of our Plastic Leprechaun Award last year) have gone into full reverse. The Rising Sun, a pub since 1734, suffered the indignity of becoming "Paddy's Wig - The Irish Pub" Now, as if by 'magic' it's the Rising Sun again. Displaying the long-term commitment to their pubs which we have come to expect from Magic, operations manager Mike Ward explained "We called it Paddy's Wig because we were doing Irish theme bars...in the retail business, if you don't follow trends you miss out." In a similar move, Paddy's Rat & Carrot while still retaining the name has also lost its "The Irish Pub" epithet.



O PENING TIMES

LETTERS



From Mark Self:

I am writing regarding the 'arse end of a fox' which resides in the Crown Inn, Openshaw, which was mentioned in March's Stagger. "Arfur" as he is formally know is so called as he is simply half a fox. He was acquired from the Isle of Man in the summer of 1993 when a group of the locals went over to watch Manchester City play in the pre-season Isle of Man football festival. He was brought "home" as a souvenir of the trip; he was relocated from a hotel in Douglas.

From Stuart Ballantyne:

I would like to reply to Peter Edwardson's comments in April's OT re walking the tightrope between being a pub and being a restaurant.

If Peter is saying that he has been unable to find examples of good quality food served in pubs in this area, then I don't think he has looked hard enough. In this area we are fortunate to have a number of pubs that sell both good beer and restaurant quality food. Has he for example dined at the Hinds Head in Heaton Chapel or at the Cheadle Hulme in Cheadle Hulme, to name just two?

Nor should he forget one important point. It is likely that the reason why so many pubs now sell food is one of economics, rather than because the licensee chooses to sell food. Selling food can make the difference between a pub becoming an economic failure and making a comfortable profit.

A similar statement could be made for most restaurants. Licensed restaurants are able to offer greater choice than unlicensed restaurants as they can also offer alcohol to accompany meals. Most diners would prefer to be able to choose whether or not to have a bottle of wine or a glass of beer to accompany their meal rather than to be given no choice at all. In short, pub/restaurants are here to stay because that seems to be what most people want. If everyone liked pubs selling only drinks, then the explosion in the number of pubs selling food would not have happened as they would not have been viable. I would not like to live in Peter's world of drink-only pubs and food-only restaurants. For one thing the walk to my local pub would be much further and much more depressing. I would be bound to pass many boarded up and abandoned pubs that were formerly thriving. Once at my destination I would be offered a much reduced choice of beers from a much depleted number of breweries probably at much inflated prices.

Bhurtpore Beerex

Further to our article last month, the first beer festival at the Bhurtpore Inn at Aston in deepest Cheshire was a roaring success. The range of beers available was first rate and it is almost certain that another festival will take place next year. Certainly licensee Simon George was very pleased with the event and is enthusiastic about a repeat performance.

John Cresswell, Chairman of the Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers Association is also celebrating a success with large numbers attending the festival by train. "The usage figures for Wrenbury station on the Saturday must have gone through the roof" he tells us. In view of the numbers using the station it seems likely that similar arrangements for rail users will be made next year. *With summer approaching it is easy to make a trip from the Manchester area to Wrenbury and making the short walk from the station to the Bhurtpore at Aston. With 9 real ales (plus traditional cider) on offer, a trip to the Bhurtpore is always worthwhile, and you will be helping to maintain the local rail passenger service.

O'Neill's...oh Really!



O'Neills on Wilmslow Road, Didsbury (formerly Times Square) reopened on Thursday 18th April. As the name suggests, this is yet another Irish theme bar, this time from Bass who have opened numerous "O'Neills" around the country.

The layout and appearance are somewhat different from the unlamented Times Square. There is now a central island bar which serves on the right a series of alcoves and snugs and on the left a more open plan area with a small stage to accommodate the (Irish) musicians who play nightly. In common with most of these 'Irish' bars there has been an attempt to create the cosy homely feel that is identified with the Irish pub and, again in common with most of the others, this largely succeeds. The overall finish is rather more rough-hewn than some of the competition with (very) basic wooden tables, chunky - and not so comfortable - chairs, flags on the floor and an artificially aged look to much of the paintwork and walls. There is also a large quantity of the usual junky bric-a-brac scattered around the place, although the clothes lines, complete with pegs (!), which criss-cross the pub are perhaps a little over the top, and almost certainly have a limited life-span.

Just two cask beers are on offer - Draught Bass and Worthington Best Bitter, both at £1.50 a pint and both no better than average when OT has called. The Guinness hasn't been too bad, though. One feature of the old Times Square was a ridiculous dress code enforced after 8.00pm (and if you didn't come up to scratch and were already in the pub at the appointed hour you were asked to leave!) The sheer stupidity of this is illustrated by the fact the people can now come and go wearing more or less what they want. It's amazing what a change of name will do! You can't miss O'Neills as it's painted a lurid bright blue. An odd colour for an Irish bar you might think - until you notice that it is located directly beneath Didsbury Conservative Club.

5

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STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

A cold March evening found us gathering in the **Kings Head** on Chancellor Lane, Ardwick. Though largely a lunchtime pub, it still held a smattering of after-work customers in each of the two rooms. The only real ale on offer was John Smiths Bitter, which while not outstanding, was on perfectly decent form. A straightforward boozier, this, with pool and television in the vault, copper-topped tables and dimmer lighting in the lounge.

Round the corner on Higher Ardwick, the **Union**, beckoned. This too consists of two rooms, but the presence of a 'drinking corridor' on the lounge side has the effect of focusing the pub on the serving area and creating a much cosier atmosphere. Perhaps this was why the pub was vastly busier than its predecessor. It's a Burtonwood pub selling only draught bitter in cask, which was of more acceptable quality. The numerous trophies displayed behind the bar reinforced the impression of a good local. It was good, too, to run into some former regulars of the Kings Arms on Helmsshore Walk.

There was more Burtonwood to drink in the **Park**, on Parkside Street. Yet again, a two-room pub, though as we entered the lounge was in darkness and there was only one other customer in the vault. Things did start to liven up a bit, though, and we were able to appreciate a very plain and simple, rather old-fashioned, but clearly well-kept pub. Once again, a well-filled trophy cabinet gave evidence of a good local, and tables with integral cribbage boards



The Union

were also a pleasing touch. No interior designer has been near this place for decades, and long may their absence continue! As for the beer (once again bitter only), it turned out to be, albeit by a whisker, the best of the night.

Very close to the Park is the **Church** on Ardwick Green (which constitutes the park in question). This place had interior designers in a big way during its Host Group days (it's now run by Labatt), and they did it no favours at all. Formerly a two-room pub with a distinctly upmarket atmosphere for its location, it's now enlarged, characterless and bland - though credit is due for the neatly trimmed hedge at the front. The one real ale, Boddingtons Bitter, was perfectly acceptable though far from outstanding.

Our paths now diverged, with some holding that our route led us to the **George & Dragon** on the other side of Ardwick Green, while a sub-group running some minutes behind elected to travel via the **Cleveland**, the only building on Wilson Street and situated amongst an expanse of grass. The George & Dragon has since around Christmas been offering Holts Bitter on handpump alongside the standard John Smiths Bitter. Not surprisingly, Holts was our unanimous choice. While clearly above average, it was not quite up to the highest standards this beer is capable of (though the brewery may perhaps be more to blame for this than the licensee - variable Holts has not been rare of late). Formerly a multi-room pub, the George & Dragon has been considerably knocked about over the years. Thankfully, much of the wood panelling, with inset mirror glazing, has survived, and nowadays forms the pub's most attractive feature. Those who visited the Cleveland reported it as unchanged - "the ultimate no-frills pub", as one remarked. Acceptable quality Tetley bitter was on sale.

Reunited in the **Mawson**, we enjoyed the traditional multi-room atmosphere of what was unquestionably the evening's most characterful pub. With three separate rooms plus a decent-sized drinking space adjacent to the serving area, this pub has something for everybody, and illustrates to perfection the virtues of the multi-room layout. We sat in the room on the left, watched over by bound volumes of "History Today". Karaoke was threatened for later, but in a pub this good I could even manage to put up with that. The Tetley Bitter was as good as almost anything we'd had so far, but unfortunately the mild was little more than average.

Pausing only to discover that the **Tilted Falcon** was selling no real ale (a temporary aberration, according to the staff), we made our way to the **Plymouth Grove**. With its imposing tower (a legacy of its previous existence as Ardwick Town Hall), this pub dominates the district. Internally, however, it's had a thorough makeover. While it's good that the vault has been retained, the lounge strikes me as rather too Laura Ashley for Ardwick, though it's undeniably well done of its kind. The only real ale is electric-pumped Boddingtons Bitter, which most of us thought not as good as the Boddies we'd had at the Church.

6



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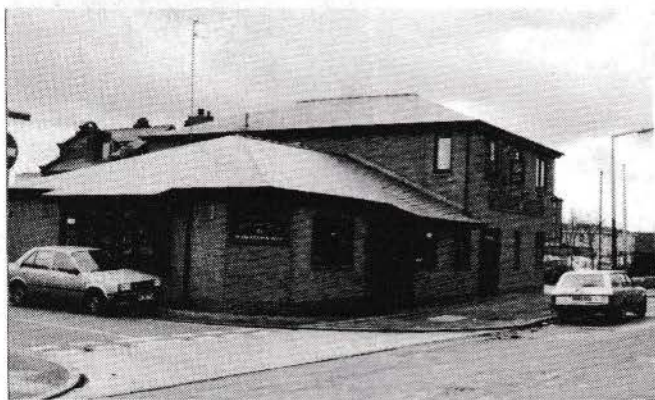
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CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1995

Next port of call was the **Bowling Green** on Grafton Street. Another two-roomer, with the lunchtime menu prominent in the lounge. It was good to see newspapers put out in the lounge for customers' use. Here we had the choice of no fewer than four real ales - Greenalls Mild and Bitter, Tetley Bitter, Stones Bitter. None of us tried the Stones, but sadly the others turned out to be average or little better - Tetleys was least enjoyed, while the mild came off best. Cutting down to just one cask bitter, while keeping cask mild, would surely do wonders for the beer quality here.

Our last call, the **Grafton**, has just one cask bitter and one mild from Holts, whose pub this is, and the beer here was certainly considerably better than in the Bowling Green. Even here, though, the bitter wasn't as good as we thought it could have been, underlining the worries about this brew's current variability that had struck us in the George & Dragon. The mild, by contrast, came much closer to expectation, and narrowly challenged the Burtonwood in the Park as best beer of the night. The pub itself, a



The Grafton

well-designed modern affair with good contrast between vault and lounge and admirable disabled facilities, was quieter than I'd have expected on a Friday night (and end of term, too!), but clearly remains a thoroughly well-run house.

So ended an evening where, if none of the beer touched greatness, all was at least acceptable, and we enjoyed a variety of unassuming but well-run pubs. If you believe the conventional wisdom, all the pubs we visited on the Stagger should be staring extinction in the face - they're in "demographically unfavourable locations" and hardly any of them boasts a "major food operation"! Their mere survival should give the Jeremiahs pause for thought - their generally high standards are cause for rejoicing.

Of course, all this was just how one small group of us found the pubs on one particular evening. Nothing beats finding out for yourself - give the pubs a go, and see whether you agree with us.

Wetherspoon News

Ashton-under-Lyne's branch of the rapidly expanding Wetherspoon chain - to be known as the Ash Tree, and situated on Wellington Road - is due to open on June 27th. Next in line in the Manchester area is Wigan, where a Wetherspoons is due to open in the Market Place in September. Middleton is also rumoured as a possible site for this fast expanding chain.

New Brewery for Salford

Greater Manchester's newest brewery comes on stream this month. This is sited in the *Old Pint Pot*, formerly called the Adelphi Riverside, and sited on the Crescent, Salford. Test brews permitting, the launch is scheduled for May 23rd. A full report next month.

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5

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Focus On Weetwood

Drive through the centre of Cheshire and you will see on the map, sandwiched between the A51 and A54, an area known as Weetwood Common, a stretch of flat countryside dotted with farms and isolated cottages. One of these farms is Weetwood Grange, which now operates as an equestrian centre and on the surface perhaps offers little of interest to the beer drinker. Appearances can be deceptive, though. Behind the farmhouse is a large old barn which is now the home of Weetwood Ales who have been supplying their full-bodied country ales to a small but appreciative audience for three years now. The brewery is essentially a two-man operation run by ex-pig farmer Roger Langford and his business partner, former Greenalls brewer Adrian Slater. The initial inspiration for the project was Roger's - who got the idea while fishing at Traquair House in Scotland. Traquair is famous for the small brewery rescued from dereliction by the former Laird, Peter Maxwell-Stuart, in the 1960s and after seeing the brewery in operation. "Any fool can do that!" he thought. He goes on, "I was just in the process of selling the pigs up and thought I would try brewing. I spoke to Dave Smith (a well-known brewing consultant) and priced up a 5-barrel plant". Unfortunately Roger couldn't finance the project alone and was well aware that he had no brewing experience ("but plenty of sampling experience!"). Greenalls had just closed their Warrington brewery and he was put in touch with Adrian, who has degrees in brewing and engineering, and Weetwood Ales was born.

The custom-built 5-barrel brewery was installed on the ground floor of the aforementioned barn, and presents a very professional appearance. The brewery was launched in March 1993 with Weetwood Best Bitter (og1040.5, ABV 3.8%), which is still the main seller, subsequently joined by the premium Old Dog



Adrian Slater (left) and Roger Langford toast their Weetwood Ales



(og1046.5, ABV 4.5% - and named in honour of Roger's former sheepdog) and later last year Oast House Gold (ABV 5%) was introduced to make up the trio of beers which Weetwood intend to stick with for the time being. All the beers are notably full-bodied but at the same time remain crisp and quenching. The Best Bitter was enjoyed at length when OT called and proved to be a superb session ale. Clean, dry and fruity it contrasted well with the fuller-bodied Old Dog which is fruitier but still with Weetwood's characteristic dry lingering aftertaste.

The malt includes a range of Pale Ale, Chocolate and Crystal varieties and also includes a high percentage of Wheat Malt - 5% in the Best Bitter and Old Dog, and a surprising 20% in the Oast House Gold which is intended to be a summertime quencher. Challenger hops are used and the beers are late-hopped with Goldings. Goldings are used throughout in the Oast House Gold. While the finished products can be conditioned for 5/6 days at the brewery, Adrian believes "the best place for beer to condition is in the cellar" and licensees are advised to stillage the beer for 3-4 days before serving.

While the beers are rarely seen in the Opening Times area, Weetwood do have 15-20 regular outlets including the Swan, Tarpoley; Wilbraham Arms, Nantwich; The Mill and Telford's Warehouse in Chester and Rolands Bar in Frodsham. Although a couple of regular outlets have recently been lost (including the high-profile Bear & Billet in Chester which has closed) and the free trade is proving increasingly competitive, Roger and Adrian remain optimistic for the future. Certainly, if beer sold on quality alone they would be brewing flat-out. Beers to look out for and enjoy.

*Weetwood Ales can be contacted on 01829 752377



9

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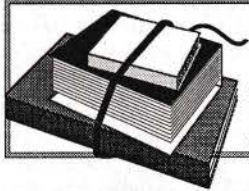
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BOOK REVIEW



Real Beer in Sheffield: published by Sheffield Newspapers Ltd. 62 pages, £2.00

Perhaps because of the expanse of Peak District rising between, folk from Manchester and Stockport seem seldom to think of Sheffield as a drinking destination. However, the city holds numerous excellent (and plenty more so-so) pubs selling real ale, and they are all brought together in this handy-sized guide.

Though it's published by the local newspaper (and sponsored by Stones, the local branch of Bass), the pub and beer descriptions are all by Sheffield CAMRA, and only the real ale pubs are included.

With over 400 pubs to cram in, the pages are packed with print, but the terse descriptions manage to convey the essentials of each pub. And the facilities offered are identified by an exceedingly full list of two-letter codes covering everything from lined glasses to shove-ha'penny. The listings are broken up by interesting articles on various aspects of the city's pubs, though a contents list would have been useful to locate these.

The lack of maps is a disappointment. There are no area maps at all, not even for the City Centre, and the centre-spread general map is well-nigh useless, giving the impression of having been imported from another publication - it identifies only a minority of the districts used for the listings, while extending to Derbyshire towns outside the city boundary which the book does not cover.

Even mapless, though, this is a workmanlike and readable guide to an interesting city. Recommended. RPJ.

Thatched House

Interesting developments at the *Thatched House*, the pub above Stockport Market ("a bit left of the flight path, a touch north of the Rottweiler" according to landlady Amanda) where a guest beer goes on sale every Friday night - and usually sells out the same night. Jennings Snecklifter, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Maclays Wallace have all gone down well. They're putting the finishing touches to the beer garden as well for a "leisurely Sunday afternoon BBQ, and bar". Live bands on Friday and Saturday as well. Worth a visit.

The Nursery Inn

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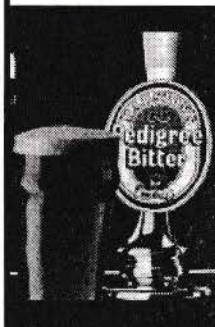
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Websters & Holts
Cheapest Beer In Didsbury
Open All Day

Come and Try our Quiz nights
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MAY '91

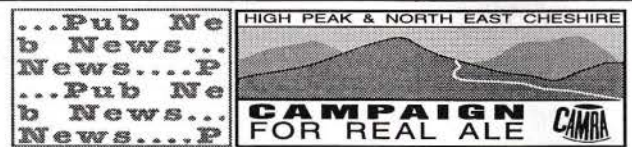
One of CAMRA's ongoing problems has always been the fake handpump - this involves the practice in some pubs of serving keg beers and ciders through what appear to be handpumps, thus giving the impression that a "real"/natural/cask conditioned product is being dispensed. Opening Times 85 carried a front page article which drew attention to the fact that there were few local pubs serving keg beer in this way, but the number playing the same trick with keg cider was on the increase. Two offenders in particular were mentioned, Addlestons and Scrumpy Jack, but there was also news of vigorous campaigning having been successful in forcing west country cidemaker Long Aston to stop selling their keg product through handpump.

It had only been a few months since the Queen's Head on Stockport's Underbank (more popularly known as Turners Vaults) had received the branch's Pub of the Month Award. Now came news that the pub had won a major award in the 1990 Pub Design and Conservation Awards, jointly run by CAMRA and the Chartered Society of Designers. There were three categories - best new pub, best refurbished pub and best conservation exercise. It was the last category, the Joe Goodwin Award, where Turners Vaults had triumphed. It had been nominated by Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA, and the Hubble Matthews Partnership, the Stockport Architects behind the scheme.

There was more news of the Kings Arms, Chorlton-on-Medlock - there had been some price increases following the budget (Guiltless Stout up to £1.20, Yakima Grande Pale Ale £1.30) but North County Bitter had actually gone down by 2p to 90p, which was described as "one of the great bargains of Manchester drinking outside the Holts estate". What was probably even more welcome news to many CAMRA members was that "conventional dispense" at the pub had been introduced to replace the original nitrogen system.

Next - a reminder of the passage of time (or even *deja vu*) - a brand new publication "Viaducts & Vaults" was to be launched at the Stockport Beer Festival on 30th May 1991.

Finally, another cliché - nothing stays the same forever. The Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, Stockport, had introduced a changing range of guest beers, and was getting through seven different guests a week. Owner Mike Belsham was hoping to have the full range of Kimberley beers from Nottingham on sale. This was reported as "a first for Stockport (and among the editor's favourites)".



The **Spring Tavern**, Wooley Bridge, Glossop, now has Federation beers on handpump - on a recent visit their Buchanans Original was in good form.

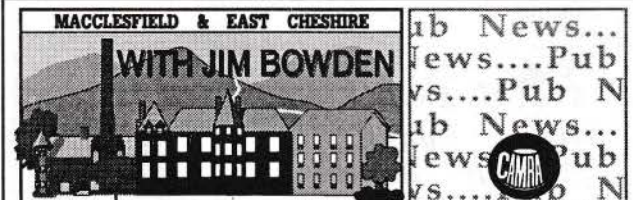
In **Hayfield**, the *Kinder Lodge* - which currently serves Tetley Bitter and Burton Ale on handpump will be getting a "guest" from the Tapsters Choice range.

The **Barge** in Stalybridge (formerly the Stone Jug) is being refurbished and the **Wellington** is also having work carried out to improve the accommodation

The **Anchor** in Hadfield (Vaux) re-opened on 29th March after a £30,000 rebuild. Beers available on the opening night included Wards Bitter, Vaux Samson and Vaux Mild, which should be the regular range.

Reg Davies of the **Valley Lodge** in Bradwell is hosting a Spring Bank Holiday Beer Festival with 40+ beers on offer over the weekend 26-28th May. Reg has accommodation available for the dedicated drinker and he can fix up any surplus bookings in the village at guest houses. Regular trains stop nearby on the Hope Valley Manchester-Sheffield line.

The **Shoulder of Mutton**, Broadbottom, has closed with rumours of bank foreclosure spreading round the village.



A new landlord is at the **Bull & Gate**, Waters Green, Macclesfield. He is the son of the ex-landlord of the Evening Star, Dennis Brooke.


Mansfield beers are guests at the **Church House**, Sutton and the **Prince Albert**, Newton Street, Macclesfield.

The **Durham Ox**, a Vaux pub in Macclesfield, is closed for the time being. The **Vale**, Bollington seems to be closed permanently.

The **Angel** at Knutsford has become the branch's third Holts pub. They are certainly going up-market!


12


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Your hosts *Lorraine & Steve James*

Heaton Lane, Stockport

High Peak Featured Pub MAY 96



The White Hart, Newton

The White Hart is a pub which we have been meaning to feature for a while, but have just never got round to. The White Hart opened its doors in 1830 to slake the thirst of the nearby Carr Field and Bailey Field cotton mills. Its proximity was no accident, it was built by the mill owners as part of their housing plan to keep the workforce both close to the job and tied to its owners as much as possible. The pub was sold to Bell & Co in 1914, and eventually passed into Robinsons hands upon their acquisition of the former concern in 1949. The pub has so far escaped the dubious attention of that stylistically challenged grouping loosely known as the Robinsons Interior Design Team, (carpets in - character out). In fact the layout has hardly changed since 1830, with a snug at the rear, still with open grate, a public bar which acts as the games room, with comfortably spartan bench seating and an amazing collection of photographs of good times past. The gem, though, is the front parlour with a superb fireplace and cosy feel. Both the latter mentioned rooms are reached by doorways (doors still in place), unusually at an angle. Unique in Hyde is the side bar mounting of the draught beer heads. No pumps are on the bar, it is far too small, (and has a rather tacky hardboard portico over it), all the keg and electric dispense heads are down the left hand side, rather as one fondly imagines the smaller gravity casks would have been laid out in times past. The longer you stay, the more details you see. The White Hart has been in the same family since 1960 and has long had a staunch regular support. The present crew of regulars are genuinely friendly and enjoy the White Hart as the centre of the local community, and long may it remain so. RW.

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Graham &
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Byrons Lane, Macclesfield

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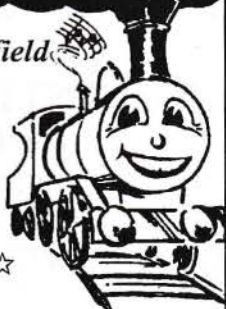
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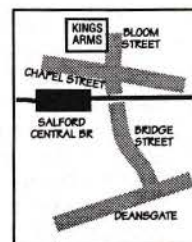


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The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch Contact is Ralph Warrington
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Home Brew

Tom Lord looks back

In today's beer drinking climate micro-breweries spring up (and fade occasionally) in such numbers that it is well nigh impossible to keep track of them all despite the best efforts of the national Good Beer Guide.

Long may this situation continue, for micro-breweries are the spice of drinking life. While the beers of the long-established independent brewers are well-known and appreciated, micro-breweries add the essential element of the unknown and discovery to the beer drinking world. There is always something new to sample.

However the micro/home brewery scene was not always so rosy and it is interesting to look back a mere twenty years to 1975 and the home brewers in production then.

The list below is taken from the 1975 Good Beer Guide and shows the six home brewers in the whole of the UK two of which produced just bottle-conditioned beers. This left only four cask beer producers. They were Mecca in the 1970s and the object of countless CAMRA branch trips. In twenty years the situation has changed dramatically and the range of choice expanded beyond the CAMRA member of the 1970s wildest dreams. It is interesting to speculate on the many reasons for this, but surely one of the main ones must be CAMRA's actual existence, and persistence over the last 25 years. CAMRA has helped to promote the right kind of drinking climate and provides a publicity channel second to none, to help micros survive and flourish. Surely this must be one of CAMRA's greatest benefits to real ale drinkers over the last twenty years and is evidenced by the tremendous range of beers now available from micros (and independent & national brewers). If you doubt it, just take another look at that list from 1975, and compare it to the number of micro-brewers in business today.

The home brewers

Mrs W. H. Lewis: All Nations, Coalport Road, Madeley, Salop (Tel Telford 585747). ● Excellent ale.
 Paul Layton: Miners Arms, Priddy, Somerset (Tel 217). Bottled beer only — a naturally conditioned brew called Own Ale.
 Doris Pardoe: Old Swan, High Street, Netheron, Dudley, West Midlands (Tel Dudley 53075). ○ A superb light beer, also sold at Mrs Pardoe's White Swan in Dudley.
 Geoffrey Richards: Blue Anchor, Coynage Hall Street, Helston, Cornwall. ○ □ Beers of exceptional strength.
 John Roberts: Three Tuns, Bishop's Castle, Salop (Tel 229). ○ ● Exalted beers.
 Traqueir House: Innerleithen, Peeblesshire, Scotland. □ Strong ale, brewed three or four times a year and bottled by Balhaven Brewery.

Poetry Corner

"In Praise of Maris Otter" by Martin Barry, owner of Salopian Brewery in Shrewsbury.

The humble farmer hardly knows
 What gifts the brewer he bestows.
 A grain so sweet by maltster charged
 Can lift the heart its friends enlarged.

To ferment madly six whole days;
 God is good, has greedy ways.
 Skim here and there with quite a stir,
 A chill was caught but no despair.

The brewer takes the water then
 And samples both to his own ken.
 He mashes well to his ideal,
 And fragrant wort does time reveal.

A rack was sought to stretch the beer;
 Making me wash casks this cold year!
 In truth 'tis snowing as I write;
 The barrels steam as well they might!

Readings taken, and written down
 On sheets that know no sleeping sounds.
 A sparge then hits those precious grains;
 The water gleans what scarce remains.

So into firkins it must go,
 This changed substance held so low.
 In several days, when moved again,
 The beer is proudly owned by then.

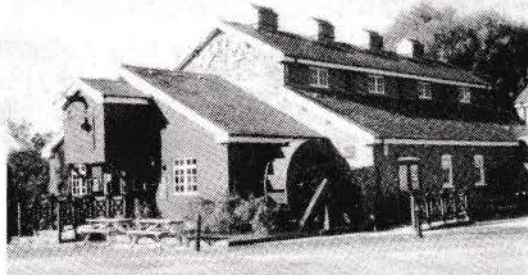
A boil brings trub and movement soon;
 Adding wolfplant makes whole this tune.
 To time this dance some Irish moss,
 More wolfplant, then a vat, no loss.

Drinkers do cheer to hear the name
 Of beers that proudly boast your fame.
 In vain do other brewers search
 For taste, as malt to malt they lurch.

To you, the loyal grain, I say,
 Don't change a bit, not by a day.
 If farmer wants his field to pay,
 Then Maris Otter will not play.

*Maris Otter is the classic variety of malting barley whose continued existence has been threatened by farmers planting inferior but higher yielding varieties.

14



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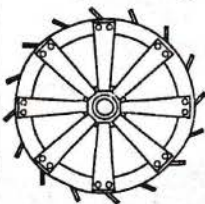
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Nitrokeg on the March

It may have made a slow start, but the march of real-to-nitrokeg conversions is now getting into its stride. For the first time in many years, the number of pubs selling real ale has started to decline. At first it was only the unappealing, marginal pubs which were switched over, places which you felt were no great loss, but now it's starting to affect prominent high-profile pubs too. For example, I was recently taken aback, on walking into a pub in Chester which had featured in the Good Beer Guide for many years, to find nothing but nitrokeg beers on the bar.

The ultimate aim of the big brewers is to make nitrokeg the standard beer which most people drink in most pubs - just as it was with "traditional" keg in the 60s and 70s. They won't kill real ale off, but they want to restrict it to being a low-volume, premium priced product consumed only in specialist alehouses. CAMRA has to start all over again convincing drinkers of the superior quality of real ale - something it has perhaps tended to take for granted.

In doing this, we must be careful not to be over-critical of the real ales we have. After all, four-fifths of the real ale drunk in this country is brewed by the big brewers, and that isn't going to change dramatically. Tetleys, Theakstons and John Smiths may not be the best beers in the world, but they're decent enough if kept properly, and a damn sight better than their nitrokeg equivalents. If we go about making blanket condemnations of these mass-market real ales, then why should we expect the general public to choose them in preference to nitrokeg? Dismissing the majority of real ale as not worth drinking simply lends support to the big brewers' nitrokeg agenda.

Pub In-Conveniences

They're probably the one facility that every pub customer uses at some time, yet the toilets seldom get either the attention or the investment they deserve.

How often, in some pub that seems to be revamped every other year, do you "nip round the back" and find a scene unchanged since the 1950s? Although standards have improved, why is it still all too common to find no towels, no soap, no hot water, no lock on the door, no paper, no seat and even no lightbulb? (One pub on the last Hillgate crawl failed on all seven counts!). When the Victorians were famed for their magnificent loos, how come a pub such as the Plough in Heaton Moor, which has been decked out in lush Victoriana, has toilets so bleakly modern and functional? Why, when more and more women are using pubs and drinking beer, are there never enough cubicles in the Ladies? And what constipated planner at Marston's gave such a huge pub as the Hare & Hounds in Timperley just a single trap in the Gents', when the after-effects of Pedigree are so notorious? If pub operators want us to believe they are serious about improving standards, they must pay more attention to the final resting place of everything that passes over the bar.

Out of Condition

It's good to see the growing number of bottle-conditioned ales now available, including many from micro-breweries. However, a rigorous approach to quality control is needed if drinkers are to be convinced as to the superior character of "real ale in a bottle". Too many of those I have sampled have either completely or partially failed to condition, leaving a stagnant pool of brown liquid in the glass, and a distinct feeling of disappointment at having wasted £1.50 or more. Bottle-conditioned beer won't make any headway if it's a lottery whether you get a good one or a dud.

THE HINDS HEAD



THE HINDS HEAD

Your hosts Alan and June Preston invite you to call in and enjoy their friendly atmosphere and service

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Regular Guest Beer

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8 CASK ALES**

including Everards Old Original, Jennings Cumberland, Batemans Valiant and a seasonal beer from Morland

TRADITIONAL SUNDAY LUNCH £4.50 served from 12 till 5pm

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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1994

**MANCHESTER ROAD, HEATON CHAPEL
STOCKPORT, TEL 0161 431 9301**



Copy Date for June Issue of Opening Times is May 23

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 and Macclesfield. Members of all branches are welcome at each other's events!

Diary

May 96

Thursday 9th - Monthly branch meeting, Greyhound, Bowden Street, Edgeley (vault). Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 11th - Day out in Liverpool. Catch 10.30am bus from Chorlton Street Bus Station; 10.37 or 11.07 trains from Piccadilly. Meet Vines, Lime Street 1.00pm.

Monday 13th - Social, Buzby's Bar, Terminal 2, Manchester Airport. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 17th - Stagger in West Didsbury and Withington. Meet Woodstock, Barlow Moor Road 7.00pm; Orion, Burton Road, 8.30.

Monday 20th - Two-way social in Heaton Norris. Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way 9.00pm; Grey Horse, Old Road 10.00.

Thursday 23rd - Pub of the Month presentation to Copperfields, Adswold Lane West, Stockport.

Sunday 26th - Trip to Bentley Brook (Leatherbitches) Beer Festival. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 11.00am. Phone 477 1973 to book a seat.

Tuesday 28th - Sunday 2nd June - the setting-up, running and taking down of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. All members please try and help. All readers please come and drink!

Monday 3rd - Social, Crown, Heaton lane, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm

May 96

High Peak Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

Sunday 12th - Full day walking in Edale area. Contact Frank Wood (01457 865426) for details but trains will be Marple 9.59, Strines 10.03, New Mills (Central) 10.09.

Monday 13th - Monthly branch meeting at the Station, Ashton-u-Lyne. Starts 8.30pm

Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following events:

Friday 10th and Saturday 11th - Macclesfield Beer Festival at Macclesfield Rugby Club, run in conjunction with the Round Table.

Monday 20th - Monthly branch meeting at the Builders Arms, Mobberley Road, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm.

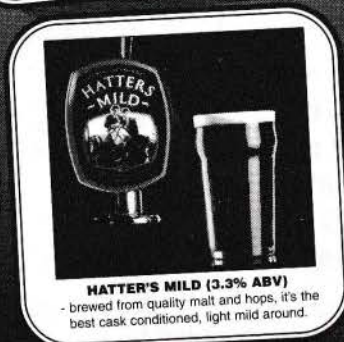
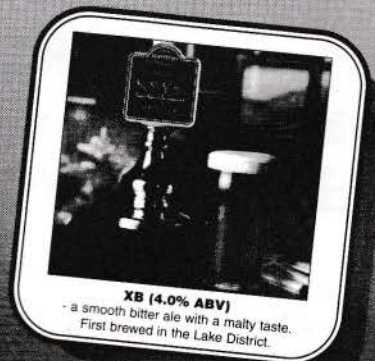
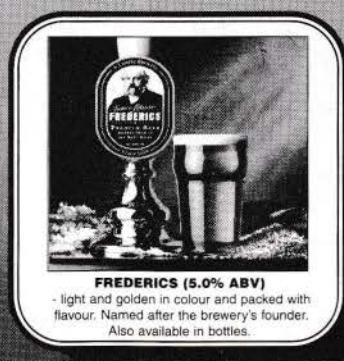
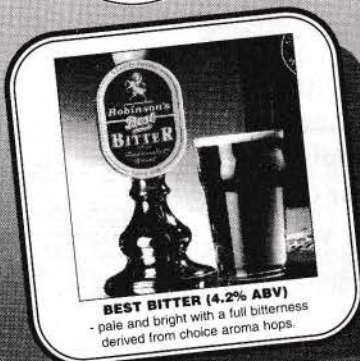
Saturday 15th June - Trip to Severn Valley Railway. Meet 8.30am, Waters Green Tavern, Macclesfield.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

16



THE Robinson's COLLECTION



C H O I C E B E E R S

MANCHESTER MATTERS

New bars continue to open in the City Centre. A new gimmick has been provided by **Revolution** on Oxford Road, just south of the station, which claims to be Manchester's first specialist vodka bar. The vodkas appear in the main to be variously flavoured versions of Absolut, but there are also handpumped beers - Boddingtons Bitter, John Smiths Bitter, and Marstons Pedigree. The Russian theme isn't too heavy-handed - this is no Boozy Boris's to set alongside Scruffy Murphy's - and the light and airy interior is a pleasant drinking environment.



by Rhys Jones

Another pleasant new bar, with a rather more homely feel - indeed it looks rather like a minimally converted terraced house - is **Sand Bar**, on Grosvenor Street in All Saints, just down from Scruffy Murphy's. An eclectic range of publications - from the Guardian, via Building design, to Spain's El Pais - is set out for customers to read as they sup handpumped Mitchells Original Bitter (rather good when I called, and good value at £1.30). And back in the Centre, **Praguefive** on Canal Street is the latest bar in the "gay village" - the real ale, Bass and Boddies Bitter on handpump, is on the downstairs bar.

Still in the Centre, the **Oxnoble**, was covered in these pages last month, but without mentioning the fake handpump for keg Cidermaster - this is so obscurely tucked away that both I and OT's editor, on separate visits, entirely failed to notice it! I'm told the management have now acknowledged CAMRA's concerns over the issue, and there's a reasonable expectation that the offending item will disappear. More seriously, REAL draught cider was absent from the Smithfield last time I called - soon to return, I trust. Finally in the Centre, the **Wheatsheaf** has added handpumped Forshaws Bitter and Buccaneer to its range of Burtonwood beers, and at very reasonable prices - Buccaneer is a super-bargain £1.30 for a 5.2% beer!

Our two new Holts pubs seem to be prospering in early trading, both still showing the signs of their (somewhat different) previous incarnations - the **Kingsway** (junction of Kingsway and Moseley Road, Levenshulme) a Berni-style eating establishment, the **Pack Horse** (Ashton Old Road, Openshaw) a sometimes struggling street-corner Greenalls pub. Both now have mild and bitter on handpump at the usual low prices.

It's not all good news, though. The **Railway** on Chapman Street in Gorton is closed and boarded, while Banks's **Tilted Falcon** in Chorlton-on-Medlock has not been selling real ale recently. Bar staff have been heard to promise that cask beer will return, but given Banks's worrying degree of interest in 'smooth' nitro keg beers latterly, the proof will be in the drinking.

In Ardwick, Burtonwood's **Park** and **Union** have both dropped mild; the **Kings Head** no longer sells Courage Directors; and the **Church** has dropped Wilsons Bitter. In Chorlton-on-Medlock, Boddingtons Mild at the **Plymouth Grove** is now keg. But in Gorton, the **Cotton Tree** has Peter Yates Bitter, brewed by Moorhouses, on handpump.

Finally, I hear that the brewery at the **Flea & Firkin**, All Saints, is "closed for refurbishment" - an innocent sounding phrase, but what does it portend? The Flea was one of the first purpose-designed pubs for Manchester's huge student market but of late it's seemed stranded by the fickle tide of fashion. Why. I even saw the place advertising roast Sunday lunch the other day - and while a good Sunday roast (Welsh lamb for preference) is one of the finer things in life, it's never struck me as one of the Firkin chain's unique selling points. I await developments with interest.

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The *Conway* in Cheadle Hulme is about to have a long-awaited refurbishment. As this *Opening Times* is distributed, the much-needed external repainting should have commenced. The lounge is to have a general refurbishment but in the vault the bar and a pillar are to be moved to create more space. The beer range will be increased by the addition of the now-ubiquitous John Smiths Bitter.

The *Cotton Tree* on Cross Street, Gorton, is selling Peter Yates Bitter on handpump. The licensee tells us it is selling well but that supplies are erratic. Good for this pub trying something a bit different when most of its local competitors' idea of innovation is keg Caffreys.

Work has now been completed at the *Station*, Didsbury. In addition to a much-needed redecoration, there has been substantial cellar work to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. Last month we reported that the pub's opening hours were to be curtailed. This was only for the duration of the building work and the pub is once again open all permitted hours.

Bryn and Jo Rothwell, formerly of *Ye Olde Cock* in Didsbury have now moved to the Greaves Park, a new 'Brewers Fayre' just south of Lancaster. This was previously a country house and Whitbread have spent an enormous amount of money on

the conversion. This will be a promotion for Bryn and we wish him well. His place was been taken temporarily by Lewis Lawless and the permanent replacements are Lynne and Andrew Hasty from the *Farmers* at Darcy Lever.



At the *George & Dragon*, Heaton Chapel, happy hour is now an understatement. For the foreseeable future reduced prices on some lines operate from 11.00am-8.00pm Monday-Friday. For real ale drinkers, this means Boddingtons Bitter at £1.20 and Chesters' Mild at £1.10. So far this has produced a good customer response.

There are new licensees at the *Union* in Reddish, Jeff and Donna Schwarz who were previously at another Robinsons pub, the *Castle* in Oldham town centre. Jeff has already introduced Frederics on handpump (£1.50 a pint) and is hoping to convert the dispense of the Best Bitter and Hatters Mild to handpump in due course. The next few months should also see an internal redecoration of the pub.

COME TO THE ALL YEAR ROUND BEER FESTIVAL

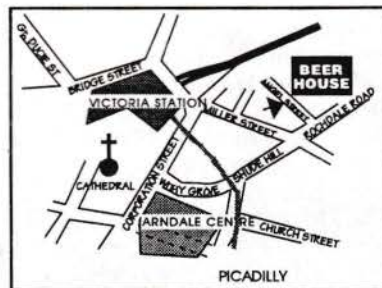
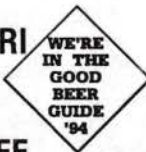
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As we have been reporting over previous months, preparations for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival are now well in hand and it's all systems go for the town's real ale extravaganza.

We will be having the usual wide range of beers with old favourites being joined by many beers new to the festival.

With something like 90 ales to choose from, ale lovers will be well catered for (and our bar managers will aim to have at least 40 beers on at any one time - until we start to sell out at the end of the festival that is!). Lovers of traditional cider and perry will also be catered for with our well established cider bar. This year we are ordering 250 gallons and aim to have one of the widest selections of any festival around.

There will be hot food and hot entertainment at all sessions, the usual CAMRA shop, tombola, souvenir glasses and T-shirts. And just a word about the glasses - these will be oversize with a pint line on them. Full measures guaranteed.

Once again we will be supporting the Rainbow Trust - make sure you pay a visit to the charity stall - they'll have beer and cider on sale alongside a range of other products, and its a very worthy cause.

FESTIVAL T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE NOW!

They are in grey or white, large or XL and cost £4.95. Available from Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel SK4 5EG

DID YOU KNOW

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

Details of these festivals and other social events, along with the latest brewery news are supplied in CAMRA's monthly newspaper 'What's Brewing' - delivered free to your door. All members are invited to participate in our packed line-up of socials - at least two events per week: brewery visits (with plenty of sampling time!), curry crawls, minibus trips inside and outside the area; awaydays by train; Staggers and Pubs of the Month are all forthcoming events. So why not become a member of the most successful consumer pressure group in Europe. There has never been a better time to join.

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19

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(OT145)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS
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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

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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.



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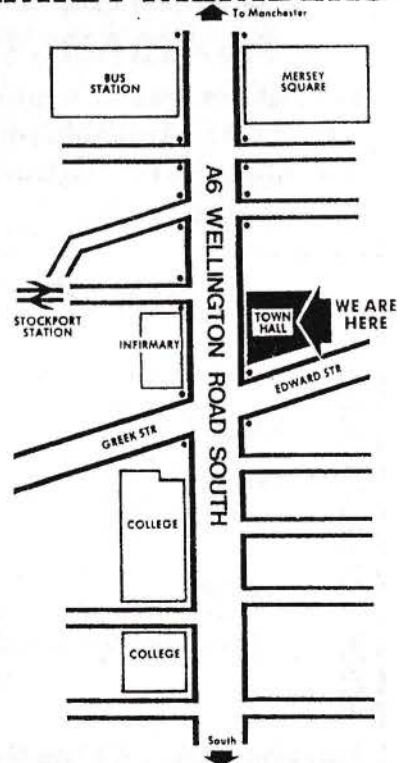
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