

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
151

FREE

NOVEMBER 1996

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Euro-sense at last

In an outbreak of common sense, the two threats to pubs, breweries and beer posed by the European Commission look to have been forestalled.

The review of the tie, which if abolished could threaten the existence of many local brewers, has been put off for two years. The paper signalling the launch of the review won't be published until the end of this year and the Eurocrats have given themselves until 1999 to decide how to reform the tie, if at all. In addition the competition Commissioner has indicated that he is looking for eventual reform rather than outright abolition.

News of the delay has been greeted with mixed feelings by Britain's brewers: they want the right result, but they also want the whole business over with.

CAMRA welcomed the stay of execution. Campaigns Manager Stephen Cox said: "This was inevitable, given that the commission clearly cannot conduct its investigation, report, and get the proposals accepted in the time now left. We remain committed to the principle of the tie."

The Government has also indicated its strong adherence to the tied house system.

In another welcome move, the European Commission has delayed by one month its threat of action on Britain's guest beer rule. The commission agreed to put off issuing the "reasoned opinion" setting out why it believes the guest ale rule discriminates against European brewers after a meeting with the European Brewers Association and the Department of Trade & Industry.

At the meeting, it was argued that cask-conditioned beers ('real ales') are not purely a British phenomenon, and that many French, Belgian and even German brewers were entitled to seek to exploit the guest beer rule.

CAMRA has again welcomed the latest moves as it is clear now that the commission accepts in principle that an anything goes guest beer policy would be unworkable and undesirable.

The Commission has attempted to clarify its position in a statement, claiming that its intention was to extend choice and that opposition was based on certain misunderstandings.

"From the outset, the commission has made it very clear that it considers the promotion of access to tied pubs for draught beer from small breweries via the guest beer provisions to be a valid policy that it has no intention of undermining," it said. They went on to say that they do not want the UK guest beer rules opened to all-comers and want the preferential treatment of small brewers to continue.

CAMRA's Stephen Cox said: "If there is a suggestion which is both workable and a genuine improvement in consumer choice we would welcome it."

Local Brewery & Beer News

Hydes' have slightly modified the recipe for their Mild. No longer using caramel, but now using Chocolate Malt for colour and flavouring has resulted in the beer becoming darker and slightly less sweet. Customers seem to like the idea as sales are said to have increased by nearly 50%.

You may remember Billy Westwood's Bitter, their session beer which was very well received by customers. As a result, this is due to re-appear in November and may now be a permanent addition to the range. Expected price is to be £1.15. Hopefully, this will not hit the sales of mild quite as badly as it did last time. Finally, consideration is now being given to 4X Anvil Strong which was relaunched last winter. Although a final decision has not yet been made, it is hoped that this beer will again be available this winter, but possibly not until the new year. **KE.**

Bank Top

The latest offering from Bolton's Bank Top Brewery was viewed at the beer festival at the town's Howcroft Inn in mid-October. Described as "a ruby-red beer", it had a full and satisfying taste of good-quality malt, while retaining a sharp hoppy edge in the finish. Named Cliffhanger at its appearance, after festival bar manager Cliff Burgess, this 4.5% beer deserves to make a real impact on the local guest beer scene. Look out also for a dark beer from Bank Top over the winter, building on the success of last year's Smokestack Lightning. **RPJ.**

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CIDER SPECIAL



OPENING TIMES CIDER & PERRY REVIEW PAGES 10-12

POT OF BEER

36 NEW MOUNT ST

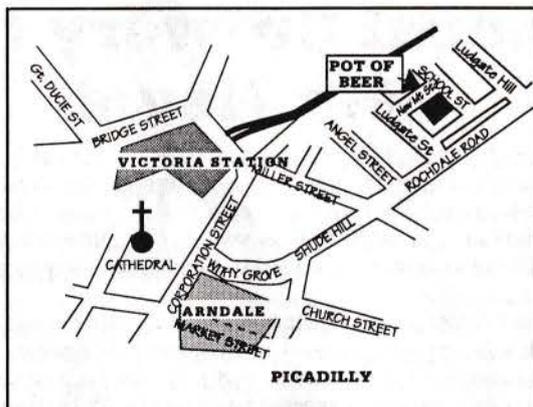
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

As you will see from our front page, there is for once good news from Brussels. Not only has the threat to the tie been put back a couple of years, the noises being made would seem to indicate that it will emerge intact, albeit somewhat modified.

Quite what modifications could be in the pipeline is anyone's guess but one reform that is needed is the extension of guest beer rights to the tenants of the various pub chains. It is ludicrous that a brewer with more than 2000 pubs must offer their tenants a right to a guest beer but a pub chain with 10,000 pubs could rigidly tie up every one! The guest beer provision looks reasonably safe as well. The European Commission have attacked "hysterical reports in the UK press" for misrepresenting their proposals although word from the inside indicates that it was the sheer scale of protest that made them think again. We seem to be heading for a classic European fudge, but as long as the proposals are workable and do not undermine the guest beer regime that we currently have then no doubt we could all live with them.

Also this month we are once again featuring cider and perry and make no apologies for doing so. These are rare and endangered drinks with a history dating back much longer than the beer we drink today. There are some short sighted people in CAMRA who suggest that we should have nothing to do with these drinks since we are the Campaign for Real Ale. The argument that we should stick to beer and beer alone is a bankrupt one with no merits. It is usually put forward by the brewers when we disagree with them about some non-beer related issue - pub refurbishments, for example. We are a campaigning consumer organisation for pub-goers. Yes we care about beer, passionately so, but equally we campaign on pub design and preservation, on prices, on the ingredients that go into your beer, and, yes, on cider and perry. Those who would rather we become a social drinking club handing out gongs to our favourite pubs should look elsewhere.

John Clarke

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.

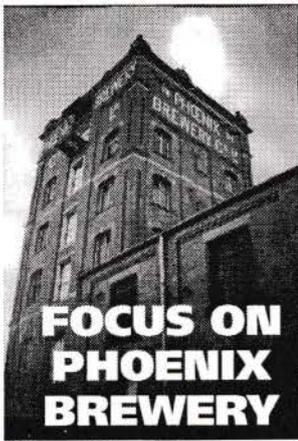
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FOCUS ON PHOENIX BREWERY

The Phoenix Brewery is one of the newest names on the local brewing scene but also one with a great deal of history behind it.

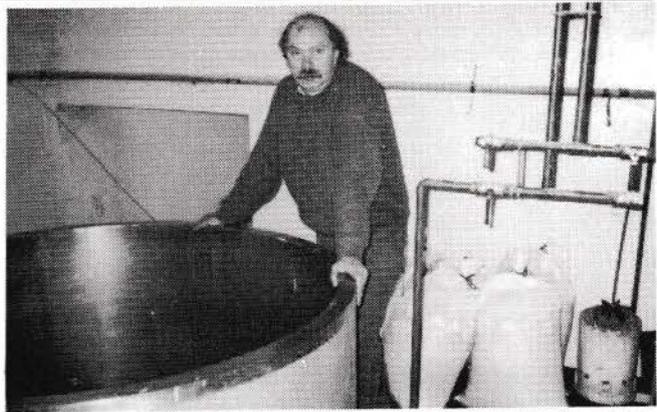
The original Phoenix brewery was founded in the mid-nineteenth century and traded successfully until 1939 when it was taken over by the Cornbrook brewery together with some 120 tied houses. Cornbrook eventually became part of Bass and little trace of their brewery remains. By contrast the old Phoenix brewery buildings still stand in Heywood and today are the home to a variety of small business including ...the Phoenix Brewery.

The 'new' Phoenix brewery was better known until recently as the Oak Brewery under which name it was founded by current owner and brewer Tony Allen in 1982. In those days it was based in Ellesmere Port on Merseyside and remained there for nine years until a desire for a location more central to the company's main trading areas in Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire brought the move to Heywood. Even then it was only by chance that Tony came across the old Phoenix Brewery buildings which, to his surprise were offered for sale by the then owner.

Tony himself has a career in brewing going back to when he left school at 16 and started working for Bass at the Hope Brewery in Sheffield, this was followed by training at Stones and eventually a move to the giant keg plant at Runcorn where he eventually became "bored silly" sitting in a control room all day. This was during the first micro-brewery explosion in the early eighties and after a three-month spell at the pioneering Penrhos Brewery in Herefordshire (sadly, no longer with us), Oak was set up in Ellesmere Port.

It's come a long way since those early days and now employs five staff-Tony, a driver, two more brewing staff and, latest recruit, salesman Tom Kelly, until recently licensee at the Star in Glossop - with beer going to up to 200 outlets. These are all free trade but plans are afoot to build a pub on the brewery site, possibly next year to coincide with the proposed re-opening of the old railway line which runs close by (and the proposed new Heywood Station opposite the brewery).

Brewing capacity is 120 barrels a week and the Phoenix range now comprises eight regular beers plus 12 specials over the year - one of these, the succulent Oak Porter (5%) is out now, and well worth seeking out. Many of the pumpclips are adaptations of the old Phoenix Brewery labels. Mains water is used for the brewing subject to only slight treatment to make it more suitable and the malt is the Halcyon variety. A large range of hops are used, though, including Bramling Cross, Brewers Gold, Challenger, Progress, East Kent Goldings and Fuggles. A little wheat malt is used for head retention for some of the beers but has been taken out of the paler brews as there were clarity problems. Plans for the future include the introduction of bottled beers which even if not bottle conditioned will not, Tony emphasises, be pasteurised. Many of the breweries set up in the early eighties have long since passed into oblivion, only those which combined sound business practice with quality, well-crafted ales, have survived. Phoenix is one of those survivors and with its range of quality ales and Tony Allen's commitment to tradition, it is a worthy successor to the illustrious predecessor whose premises it occupies and whose name it shares.



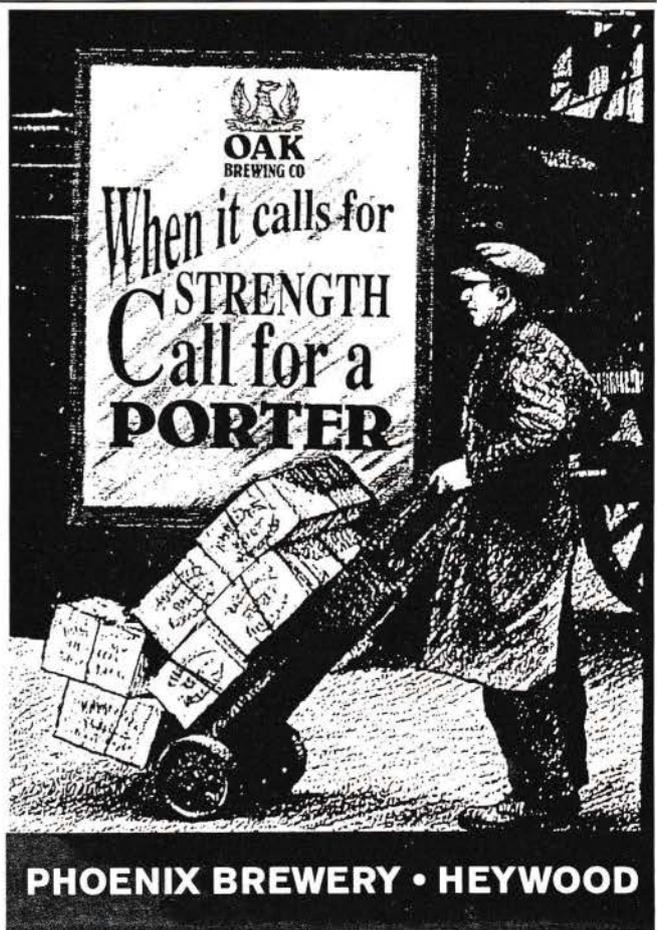
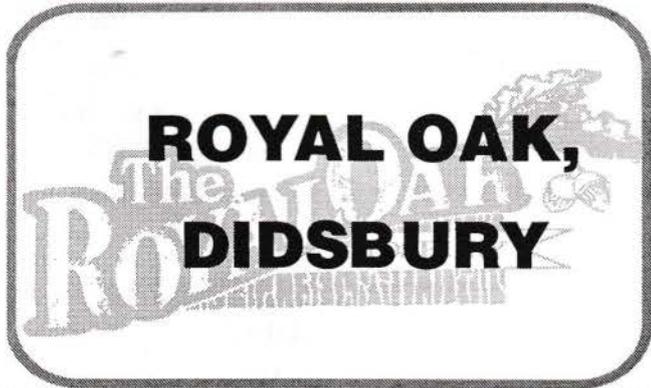
* The Phoenix Brewery is on Green Lane, Heywood. OL10 2EP. Tel 01706 627009. Those wanting to try the full range could do worse than go down to Sand Bar, Grosvenor Street, All Saints at the end of the month when a mini festival featuring all the Phoenix beers will be held. JC.

The Phoenix Beer Range



- Hopwood ABV 3.5%
- Bantam ABV 3.5%
- Best Bitter ABV 3.9%
- Old Oak ABV 4.5%
- Thirsty Moon ABV 4.6%
- Bonneville Bitter ABV 4.8%
- Double Dagger ABV 5%
- Wobbly Bob ABV 6%

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JOIN CAMRA NOW -DISCOUNTED MEMBERSHIP FORM ON PAGE 20

Pub Of The Month NOVEMBER



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

The Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA Pub of the month award for November 1996 will be presented to Bev and John Bonyng of the Griffin Hotel, on Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey.

Bev and John are experienced licensees having moved from the Orion in Withington some nine months ago where they managed to transform the former keg-only pub into a thriving locals pub gaining not only a Pub of the Month award but also an entry in the national Good Beer Guide for 1996.

At the time they moved to the Griffin, the pub was selling less beer than the (much smaller) Orion, due in part to variable beer quality and a generally declining reputation - the Griffin had previously been among the top three performers in the Holts' estate. This quickly changed with Bev and John's arrival and as a result trade began to pick up. Now following a comprehensive redecoration and reupholstering, barrellage is up over 40% from the time they moved in and they are confident that greater things are yet to come!

With other attractions such as the beer garden in summer (where, incidentally, boules will be played from next summer), quiz nights on Thursdays, good value lunches and a positive welcome for disabled customers, the pub is set to go from strength to strength. At least I am sure that's what the pub's two official and one unofficial football team hope.

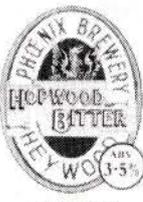
All this just goes to show how important a good licensee is in making the difference between an average pub and one that really stands out. Why not join us for the presentation on the night of Thursday 28th November when a great time and some excellent pints of Holts beer will be had by all.

The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

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PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP.
TEL: 01706 627009



HOPWOOD
Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.



BANTAM
Pale brown bitter. Slightly nutty, full flavoured beer.



BEST BITTER
Lowly coloured, with a hint of sweetness in the full bitter palate. A fresh but dry hop finish.



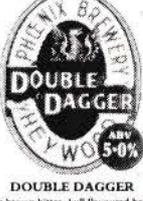
OLD OAK
Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is smoky, fruity and dry.



THIRSTY MOON
Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight maltiness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.



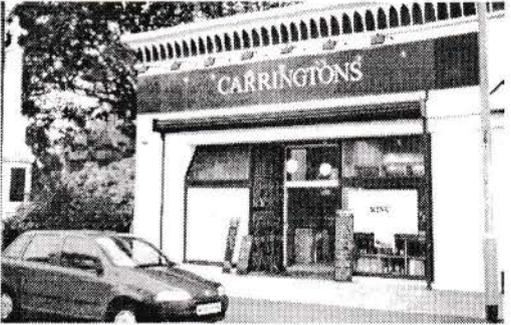
BONNEVILLE
Light brown bitter. Malty character with a soft rounded hop balance.



DOUBLE DAGGER
Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its gravity would suggest.



WOBBLY BOB
Amber beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.



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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Peter Barnes:

In 1988 CAMRA compiled a guide to 150 'Vintage Pubs' in Greater Manchester. During the past 8 years around 40 of these pubs have either been demolished or altered out of recognition and a further 40 or so have had their character seriously eroded by the type of piecemeal changes which gradually transform a pub from distinctiveness into mediocrity. The Albion, Ashton is a good exemplar of this process. Quoting from the description in the guide:

"The pub has had only three licensees during the past 36 years and obviously none have wanted to change the place apart from some alterations to the bar and some occasional judicious decorating. Even the toilets have the original tiling..... There is a smoke room, parlour, tap room and bar area, all with their own separate character."

The Albion was not like other pubs. It had character. One unusual, distinctive feature was the 3/4 height tiling all around the bar area, with plain tiles topped by an attractive geometrical pattern in metallic hues. A small portion remains on the left hand side as you enter.

Since 1988 the character has gradually been lost. About 1990 the parlour was unnecessarily sacrificed to provide catering facilities. Today, if you ask for food the response is "sorry, there is no call for it". Recently the smoke room has been compromised by partially opening it up, and in the process the attractive tiling has been destroyed.

A choice of drinking areas is a matter of social comfort to many people. Individual areas separated by walls allow a variety of activities to take place simultaneously without conflict. A pub's atmosphere owes as much to the layout and division of space as it does to decorative details.

Those responsible for what has happened to the Albion can rationalise the changes as much as they like but it doesn't alter the fact that the pub is now virtually indistinguishable from thousands of others. When pubs have to compete with so many other forms of leisure these days they cannot afford to lose their individuality. Pub owners might mistakenly perceive some temporary advantage in meddling with the fabric of the building but in the end they are just driving people away to other activities, including drinking cheap supermarket beer at home while watching a video.

The other 'Vintage Pubs' entry for Ashton was the Buck & Hawthorn. It had a lot of qualities and merited a long description in the guide. But the process of erosion has begun there also - the loss of the leaded glass screen to the toilet area and changes to the bar.

I don't necessarily blame the licensees for what is happening. They have a difficult job and many pressures are put on them. But a small, traditional, independent brewery like Robinsons, which inherited a particularly fine stock of distinctive pubs in the past from former breweries such as Bells, Kays and Schofields of Ashton, really ought to know better.

From Bob Maycock, licensee of the Rams Head, Disley:

I am writing in respect of two articles you have published in *Opening Times* which are totally inaccurate and damaging to the pubs in our village. Obviously your reporter is basing his articles on gossip rather than visiting the pubs to see what is actually going on in the village. I have it on good authority that your members rarely get further than the Dandy Cock.

In your last (September) newsletter you printed that the White Lion had been acquired by the Magic Pub Co who own the Rams Head, when this pub has actually been acquired by the Manchester Pub Co who have let it to a tenant. In addition you printed that my company were interested in acquiring the Albert Hotel which obviously has unsettled the new Vaux tenants who re-open on 28th October after their refurbishment.

In a previous issue you printed that upon visiting the Rams Head real ale bar, there was no real ale. Isn't Robinsons Best Bitter which you rave about, that I have sold for six months, real ale?

Don't get me wrong, I am a fan and supporter of CAMRA and it's obvious your members don't like branded, themed large operators within the ale business. However, can I just point out some facts:

1. Few pub operators can afford to offer the choice of products CAMRA fans expect, and when we opened our ale bar offering seven different real ales, we had £880 of waste in 30 days. Basically our customers prefer affordable draught-flow products and lagers.

2. While your reporters were listening to gossip why did they fail to notice that we were selling Robinsons Best at 99p a pint for the past 6 months and recently tried Dogs Bollix and Hobgoblin from the Beer Cellar's Cask Collection.

3. Currently we have London Pride which is a non-starter in our pub, Green Label, Bass and Robinsons Best in cask, but in keg we have

Boddingtons, John Smiths, Boddingtons Gold, Caffreys, two stouts and five lagers.

4. If we have it totally wrong why does our turnover probably exceed all the other pubs put together and having averaged eight 18's of Robinsons a week as a "guest", I've been invited to a corporate day out with the Robinson directors. The invite is not for keeping a 'bad' pint!

You are correct in saying that Greene King PLC now own Magic and within the month Greene King IPA will be introduced at £1.10 a pint. Finally, ask your reporters to check out our Gallon Club - we are the only pub who discount beer for regular drinkers.

I would hope that we should be working hard in hand to promote good beer and hope that we should communicate in the future. If I'd have been contacted openly I'd give you all the facts you need.

As I said before I've always supported CAMRA and prefer to be proactive for my customers then reactive. Why not visit us yourself, openly, and see what the Ram's Head is all about.

From Rhys Jones:

I'm sorry Steve Sharples (letters, October) thought my comments about Praguette ungenerous. They were, however, accurate.

The place does just sell keg beer - good stuff admittedly (for I am in no way as blinkered as the CAMRA pedants who think anything not cask-conditioned doesn't really exist), but keg. I drink Hoegaarden Witbier and other quality European beers with great enjoyment (despite usually wincing at the prices asked); nevertheless, the heart of the British beer-drinking tradition is cask-conditioned draught beer ("real ale"), and any pub that does not offer it (apart, perhaps, from a cider-only house where that is the local tradition) will find it hard to be taken seriously by knowledgeable drinkers.

From Jim Flynn:

It's quite a while since I read such ill-considered rubbish as I found in Steve Sharples' letter in last month's OT.

So price doesn't matter according to Steve. Well it does in my house! I'd rather pay £1.10 a pint instead of £1.50. One of the main causes of the decline in pub going has been the rapid increase in prices due to the greed of the brewers. If you want to see what happens when you ignore price then a trip to the South east is in order Steve. CAMRA must keep up the pressure on prices, as a consumer organisation, it can do nothing else.

Steve managed to cap this, however, with his apparent view that the campaign for Real Ale should applaud pubs that don't sell real ale. CAMRA is essentially about the preservation and growth of cask conditioned beer. The day it loses this essential objective is the day it loses my membership and no doubt thousands like me. However good the foreign beer in any pub, it must never be recommended or promoted by CAMRA or *Opening Times* unless it sells quality real ale.

From Phil Levison:

So, Steve Sharples thinks prices are unimportant - yet he refers to "beers...cheaper than most other pubs in the area." In my opinion, cost is a necessary part of practically everything in life - it always has been and I believe it always will be.

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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

It was a pleasant autumn night when a select band met at the Pomona on Reddish Road, Gorton, to commence the Reddish Stagger. Indeed, it was so select that I wasn't there! The Pomona is a well furnished pub which has always had a reputation for live entertainment in the sizeable concert room which runs at right angles to the main body of the pub. The side room, which I have always found the most pleasant place to sit, is now occupied by the pool table (the pub also boasts table football). My colleagues rated the Green Label at well below average and John Smiths Bitter average. No-one tried the Old Speckled Hen. I met up with the original stalwarts at the Bulls Head, over the border into Reddish, and was told my absence would not prevent me writing up the Stagger!. The Bulls Head is right on the border of Manchester, Stockport and Denton and is a suitably imposing land mark. The sizeable lounge and vault are both well turned-out and the pub is perhaps the most atmospheric in North Reddish (admittedly, the competition is not very stiff!). Only one real ale on so not surprisingly we all tried the Worthington Best Bitter which was found to be average.

Next stop was the Railway, by Reddish North station, or so we thought! In we went and out we came. It had gone keg. To think at one time this pub had three real ales, albeit from Whitbread. On we journeyed to the Fir Tree, a large 1930s estate pub. We went in the extensive lounge where a band was being set up and we found ourselves almost alone. For much of the day only the vault is open and we should really have gone in there. The lounge itself has a central bar and several separate seating areas. The only real ale was Tetley Bitter and this was cloudy. So, we sat amongst the books in the raised "library" area, listening to the loud music and waiting for our replacement beers. Unfortunately they turned out not to be worth the wait. We decided that the Reddish Vale would probably still be all keg so we set off for central Reddish and the Houldsworth, a large white-tiled Whitbread pub. This was the busiest pub so far and we decided to sit in the games room-cum-vault, complete with two pool tables, electronic games, loud music and youthful clientele. Boddingtons Bitter was the only real ale and it was reasonable enough.

I have to say that by this stage I was beginning to feel quite depressed by both the standard of the pubs and the beer since I had joined the Stagger. What a relief, therefore, to walk into the Thatched Tavern. At last, a decent pub with a decent pint. Perhaps because it is hidden away on Stanhope Street, or perhaps because it is relatively small, Tetleys have largely left it alone. This has allowed the licensees to turn the place into a really cracking street corner local with separate lounge and vault. Almost uniquely now in Reddish, the Thatched serves cask mild (Tetley) and this was well above average. The bitter was also good -indeed the beer was amongst the best of the night. With some reluctance we moved back to Broadstone Road and the Union. Many years ago, I was a regular in the place when it was probably the best pub in the area. Then Robinsons ripped it apart and I would suspect have regretted it ever since. The place has lost atmosphere and although it is still quite popular, looking around on the night of our visit it seems to have lost customers. Of course, I could be accused of nostalgia and it must be said the licensee seems to be making an effort with the place (since our visit, though, I am told that he is leaving). Frederics had recently been tried but, along with the Hatters Mild, it had disappeared leaving Best Bitter as the sole real ale. This was just above average. Come on Robinsons, do something with the place. Please!

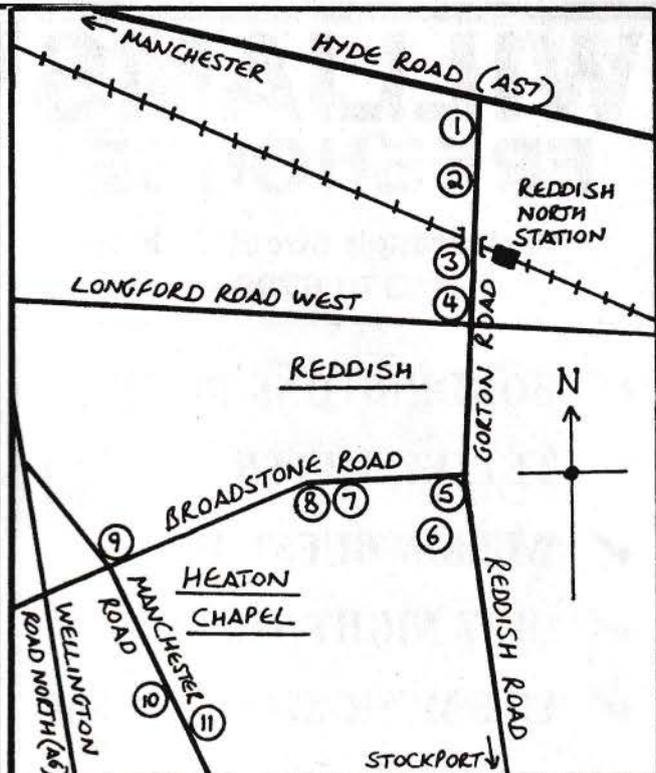
From a pub that has declined to one on the way up. Next door to the Union is the much larger Grey Horse with its imposing brick and stone frontage. Inside the pub is a large well-furnished lounge, broken up into separate areas and a well-appointed, popular vault with an emphasis on darts. Again just the one real ale - Boddingtons Bitter - which was more than a reasonable pint. Worth a visit.

A trek down to the **Carousel** in South Reddish seemed a walk too far and we therefore sauntered down to the **George & Dragon** in Heaton Chapel built in a similar style to the Grey Horse by the old Clarke's Brewery of Reddish. The vault is accessed from School Lane but we went round the corner into the lounge. As you walk in there is a side room which used to have an impressive display of football trophies but these have all gone now. Commendably, the pub has a no-smoking area (why don't more pubs do this?). One of the main strengths of the **George & Dragon** is that this is a real community pub and the atmosphere certainly reflects this. The **Chesters Mild** was above average and the **Boddingtons Bitter**, while not quite up to the standard of the **Grey Horse**, was not a bad pint at all. A guest beer also usually features here at weekends but was not in evidence tonight.

A walk down Manchester Road and our now weary band reached the **Hinds Head**, a Whitbread pub with a difference, which is more than worth a visit. The place was really heaving. Most of us tried the **Hobnob**, a Whitbread beer based on the **Hobnob biscuits** which are manufactured down the road by **McVities**. Some of us weren't sure whether it worked (including me) while others were in love with the beer. It's all a matter of taste. Also available were **Higsons Bitter**, **Marstons Pedigree** and **Castle Eden Ale**. As usual with the **Hinds Head** it was in very good condition. It is not often **CAMRA** recommend a modern Whitbread pub with a restaurant attached but in a move to shock the purists, the **Hinds Head** has deservedly found its way into the 1997 Good Beer Guide.

Most of the group decided to stay put but the real hardy souls amongst us moved on for a final pint at the **Ash**, a Scottish Courage pub with ornate stone work outside. Inside is a lounge, a 'cocktail bar', which I cannot remember being open recently, a function room and, at the rear, a vault. We sat in the wood-panelled lounge with our pints of **Holts Bitter** which, for a beer of its quality, was a little disappointing. Also on sale was **Websters Bitter** and **Theakstons Mild**, this latter having replaced **Wilson's Mild** (which must surely now be in its death throes). So, that was that. A night of disappointments with one or two genuine highlights. Of course, this is only the impression gained by our merry band of travellers on one particular night and can't therefore be taken as a once and for all judgement of the pubs or their beers. As ever, why not give the **Stagger** a go yourself and make up your own mind.

*Next month's **Stagger** will cover **Gatley** and **Northenden**



- 1 - POMONA, 2 - BULL'S HEAD, 3 - RAILWAY, 4 - FIR TREE, 5 - HOULDSWORTH, 6 - THATCHED TAVERN, 7 - UNION, 8 - GREY HORSE, 9 - GEORGE & DRAGON, 10 - HIND'S HEAD, 11 - ASH HOTEL

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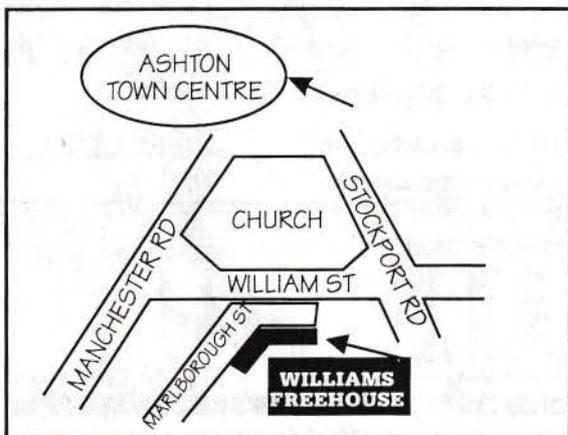
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The Combermere Connection

One of the largest country estates in Cheshire is Combermere Abbey, the ancestral home of the Cotton family, lying in the extreme south of the county between Nantwich and Whitchurch. It's most famous son was Sir Stapleton Cotton, who was one of Wellington's generals in the Peninsular War and later served as Commander-in Chief in India. In recognition of his efforts he was created Viscount Combermere, and he is commemorated by a number of pubs in the area, one of which, reflecting the Indian connection, is the excellent Bhurtapore Inn at Aston, which I have previously reported on in these pages. He is remembered more directly by the Lord Combermere at Audlem and the Combermere Arms at Burleydam.

Audlem, standing at Cheshire's South Pole, is another of the village-cum-towns which are common in the county. It has a number of attractive old houses lining the narrow streets which converge on the impressive sandstone church overlooking them on a mound. Regrettably, there is evidence of the downturn in the pub trade, with the imposing Crown now permanently closed and the Lamb currently boarded and up for sale. The Lord Combermere, standing right at the centre of the village, is however still very much going strong and gives the impression of being a focal point of the area's social life.

It's a big, white-painted building with mock half-timbering on the first floor, giving the impression that it could do with a lick of paint. Inside there's a central bar and a warren of different rooms radiating off - seven in total, according to the 1996 Good Beer Guide. A few of the interior walls have been wholly or partially removed over the years, but it still has a rambling, multi-roomed feel. The best section is a small room at the front, obviously once a separate snug, which has distinctive perforated wooden seating resembling a cribbage board. It's a free house, the beer range on our visit being John Smith's and Theakston's bitters, Marston's Pedigree and Burtonwood Forshaw's. All of the party chose the Forshaw's, which was on pretty good form. There's an extensive menu chalked up on a blackboard at the side of the bar. It must be said that the interior is a touch shabby in places, but it's clearly a lively and well-used pub with a lot of character.

Four miles down the A525 towards Whitchurch is the Combermere Arms at Burleydam, a roadside pub in the middle of dairy-farming country. It's another rambling, white-painted building, with a large car park. Inside there is a distinctive wood-pannelled bar counter surrounded by a number of different areas - a lounge, a public bar, a restaurant and a children's play area. It has in the recent past been voted Pub of the Year by the local branch of CAMRA, with a wide selection of guest beers probably playing a large part in the decision, but we think it may have subsequently changed hands. On a previous visit it was offering Slater's Bitter, from a local micro-brewery at Eccleshall, alongside Draught Bass and Worthington Best Bitter, but this time the guest was the rather less exotic Greene King Abbot. The food menu is lengthy but somewhat predictable and not particularly cheap. Both of these pubs have appeared in the Good Beer Guide on a number of occasions - in the current issue the Combermere Arms has a full entry and the Lord Combermere is a "try also", last year it was the other way

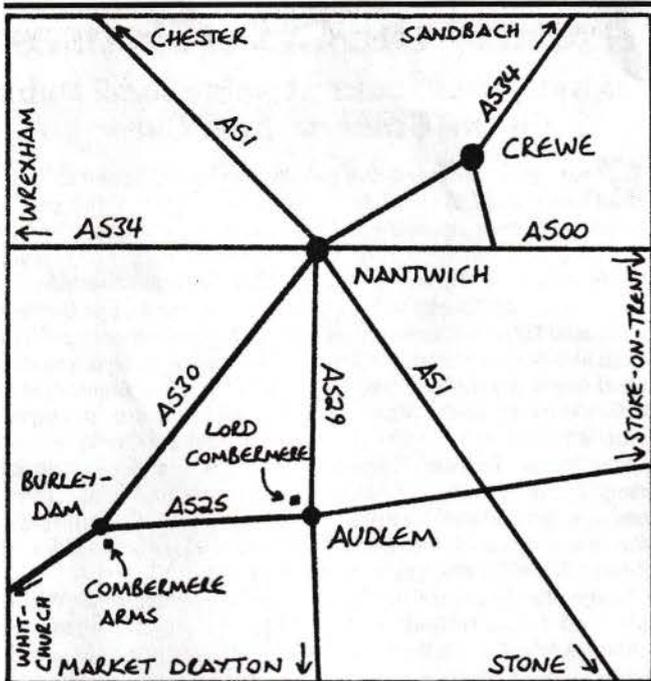
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round. While in each case there may be room for improvement in one or two areas, they are both interesting places which are certainly worth a visit if you are in the area. Audlem also has the Bridge Inn alongside the Shropshire Union Canal, a Good Beer Guide listed Marston's pub which has been much altered inside but does offer Bateman's Mild and Head Brewer's Choice alongside Bitter and Pedigree.

Postscript to Frodsham

Last month's feature on Rowland's Bar in Frodsham also mentioned one or two other worthwhile local pubs. Another which deserves mention is the Aston Arms, set in the "Isle of Aston" between the River Weaver and the Weaver navigation, just off the A56 on the eastern approach to Frodsham. A Burtonwood house of great character, and Frodsham's "other" entry in the 1997 Good Beer Guide, it boasts four separate rooms, two real fires, and a bowling green. A recent visit found Mild, Bitter, and Top Hat in fine form, with Buccaneer and Coach House's Posthorn also available (though the last named was presumably covering for the temporary absence of a Burtonwood seasonal beer). Highly recommended. RPJ.

Railway on Track



Since its recent opening, the Railway on Great Portwood Street, Stockport has quickly established its place on the local drinking scene.

Food is now available to complement the excellent Porter's ales and real cider has been introduced. This was originally on handpump but is now served direct from the cask (well, plastic barrel actually) behind the bar. This is to free up the remaining handpump for one-off and other special brews from Porters - having three pubs now makes this type of thing much more viable. Expect to see the return of Porters Stout on this basis. In a presentation last month, Dave Porters was given a certificate for winning Beer of the Festival with Porter's Porter. Our photo shows a suitably delighted Dave with his plaque.

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CIDER SPECIAL



In this month's Opening times we once again highlight traditional cider and perry, those much neglected and endangered of drinks which are nevertheless a continuing part of our national alcoholic heritage, dating back many centuries.

We in CAMRA know that there is a real, and growing demand for 'real' cider, those few pubs that sell it report healthy sales, and the cider bar at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is legendary. However, just as it was with real ale all those years ago, many licensees, brewers and pub chains remain to be convinced and continue to offer their customers fizzy, gassed up travesties of the real thing. A few even take the reprehensible step of trying to con their customers by selling these keg products through a fake handpump.

Luckily there is a growing, but still small, band of pubs who take a more enlightened view and not only offer their customers a choice of real ales but also real cider as well. Rhys Jones runs through the local outlets for us while Paula Waters reviews the new Guide to Real Cider (incidentally produced with the help of a financial donation from the 1995 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival) and Kevin Minchew offers us some thoughts on the future of perry.

If you have never tried these superb products, let's hope that this special supplement whets your appetite - one thing is for certain, you won't be disappointed. JC.

10

General Sir Francis Davies (of Elmley Castle, Worcestershire) is reputed, at one time, to have asked two of his workmen how much cider they drank in a day. They replied "sometimes we drink sixteen pints, and sometimes we drink a lot if we can get it".
From RLloyd, 'Bredon Hill and its Villages' (1967)



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Around the Cider Houses

- Rhys Jones looks at some local pubs in the Guide to Real Cider

Every guidebook is out of date before it's published and the Guide to Real Cider is no exception. Sadly, three useful outlets have been lost in the South Manchester suburbs, with the real thing now vanished from the **Brewers Arms** in Fallowfield, the **Red Lion** in Withington, and the **Olde Cock** in Didsbury.

Happily, though, Stockport brings rather better news. The **Crown**, on Heaton Lane, has attracted cider drinkers ever since its rebirth as an alehouse, and continues to serve a good and varying range. I had one of my top ciders of 1996 - the very rare Pannier - here, before standing on the other side of the bar as the crowds lapped it up at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. And the Crown is now joined by the **Railway**, Portwood, which is complementing its range of Porters' excellent ales with a varying traditional cider - perhaps appropriately for a pub that seems destined to win awards, the first cider sold was CAMRA's current Champion Cider of Britain, Janet's Jungle Juice from West Croft.

Changes, too, in and around Manchester City Centre, as the **White Lion** and the **Smithfield** have failed to find a steady market for real cider, and the **Flea & Firkin** may well be altered before long with unpredictable effects on the cider. However a number of good central outlets remain. The **Beer House** remains undoubtedly the best place in Manchester for a range of traditional ciders, with Thatchers more or less regular but frequent, varied and interesting guests. It's also one of the best bets anywhere for finding draught perry - apart from most CAMRA festivals of course! Nearby, Biddenden and sometimes other ciders can be enjoyed in the magnificent interior of the **Marble Arch**. The pub chains also supply some real cider to the City Centre, with Old Hazy at the **Hogshead** (and its sister pub the **Lass O' Gowrie** - which is bizarrely listed under Chorlton!), and Westons at Piccadilly **Wetherspoon's** (but why not at the Moon Under Water?). Another recent gain is the **Dog & Partridge** in Didsbury where the casks stillaged behind the bar have now been replaced by tubs of cider. Up to five tubs are week are sold with Weston's Great Western Revival and Old Rosie proving particularly popular. The aim eventually is to have up to five different ciders on sale at any one time. We can only offer two cheers at the moment, though - you will see various attachments to the tubs - one of these is a cooler which is an excellent idea. The other is an aspirator which means that the cider is served under a light gas blanket and as such is not strictly 'real'. Given the volumes being sold, this seems an unnecessary step, so let's hope the practice is discontinued so that this venture can be given the hearty recommendation it would otherwise gain. In Salford, the **Crescent** has long been the flag for cider, and you are always likely to find something interesting. At the nearby **Dock & Pulpit**, the "white-style" real cider, Moonshine from Broadoak is now permanently on sale, having massively out-sold most of the others tried - and nothing wrong with that, if that's what

continued on next page

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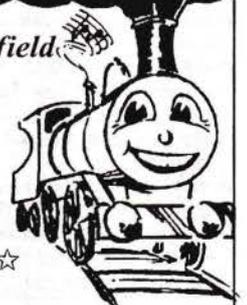
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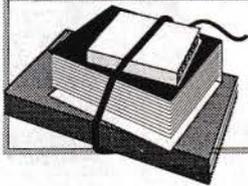
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BOOK REVIEW



Guide To Real Cider by

Ted Bruning, CAMRA Books, £7.99

OVER 2000 SPECIALIST PUBS

GUIDE TO REAL CIDER



TED BRUNING CAMRA

Paula Waters, Chair of CAMRA's APPLE Committee and Organizer of the Great British Beer Festival reviews the new Guide to Real Cider for Opening Times.

It's been six years since the last CAMRA Cider Guide, too big a gap in this fast changing area.

But it is here now and the good news is that real cider is on the increase, not just the number of outlets - more than 2000 - but also producers.

There has been a rash of new cider producers setting up, creating a similar climate to that which led to the real ale revival 20 years ago.

The guide has an interesting selection of feature articles, from a foreword by the Marquis of Bath, through a eulogy to perry and the

need for more pear trees to a DIY guide to the equipment and facilities required to become a small cider producer.

Alongside these are excellent pieces on where to get ciders and perries to enjoy at home and a useful directory of nearly 150 cider makers. The appendices contain details of wholesale distributors and organisations involved with cider, which makes the guide not only a good read but a useful tool for any licensee.

A minor irritation is that the explanatory page for entries was somehow left out of the final print. A case of Apple Mac, the god of modern publishing letting down poor old Rhiannon, the ancient goddess of apples! (Personally, I think the users rather than the computer were to blame. Ed)

However it is not hard to get into this guide which lists entries by county. There are more entries in the traditional cider making regions, but it is heartening to see a general increase. There are no illustrations or maps, but this does not detract from it, indeed in the past the latter just served to illustrate the scant availability in some area.

Pubs, clubs, off-licences and restaurants are included and there are two classes of entry, those surveyed by CAMRA with a description of the outlet including opening times plus ciders and perries available. The other entries, printed in italic, are from information given by cidemakers. Phone numbers are included so details can be confirmed before venturing forth; this is especially important as many outlets regard cider as "seasonal".

Hopefully this Guide will reach out to the public and drinks industry and combined with the work of CAMRA and the many beer and cider festivals across the country will help continue the upward trend in the amount and availability of real traditional ciders and perries.



continued from previous page

the customers want. Sadly, the **King's Arms**, having lost its "ale house" branding, no longer sells real cider; but Salford's loss is Cheetham's gain, as Dave and Sue Price are selling some very interesting ciders at their new pub, the **Queens Arms**.

Most of the major outlying towns of the Manchester region offer some real cider - there are **Hogsheads** at Altrincham and Oldham, Ashton has the **Station** and (opening too late to be listed) the **Ash Tree**; Bury has its **Tap & Spile**, and Glossop has "Boddingtons Ale House", the **Star**. It's a surprise to see no listing for Wigan, when the **Tudor House** has certainly sold real cider from time to time, but perhaps Wetherspoons' forthcoming opening in the town will provide supplies. Best of the outlying towns, though, looks to be Bolton, with Old Hazy in the **Hogshead** and (news to me) **Maxim's**, a choice of cider and/or perry in the **Malt & Hops** bar of the Swan, and various ciders from Bulmers and Thatchers in the **Old Man & Scythe**, a famous and long-standing haunt of real cider and real people where the Bulmers Traditional is served through the sort of electric pumps you normally don't see outside Hereford. They're free-flow, with the mounting resembling a "costrel", the small wooden barrel the harvest workers took to the field. The cider is sometimes a touch cold here, but it certainly pays its debt to tradition.

To the south, one of the most encouraging county sections in the whole book is that devoted to Cheshire. In 1990's Good Cider Guide, the county could boast just one real cider pub, the delightful **Commercial** at Wheelock. Now, however, the listing covers a page and a half. The Commercial is still going strong, but it's been joined by a Wetherspoons, a Boddingtons ale house, a village hall and such renowned freehouses as **Rowland's Bar** in Frodsham and the **Bhurtport** at Aston. (I wouldn't, however, turn up at Congleton Town Hall looking for a pint of Old Hazy. I suspect this entry relates to a single delivery made to a beer festival held there by Congleton Lions Club a year or so back. The perils of using suppliers' delivery lists!). With real cider now in the **Railway View** at Macclesfield, and a Wetherspoons planned for Wilmslow, real cider in Cheshire seems set for steady growth.

As the real cider market is far from attaining the maturity and development of the real ale market, no guide to real cider can hope

to claim the authoritative status of the Good Beer Guide. The guide user is an explorer, a pioneer - but isn't that half the fun?

Footnote: though not listed in the Guide, our local outlet for Dunkertons excellent bottled cider and perry deserves a mention - On the Eighth day at All Saints is a long standing outlet for these superbly crafted products.

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- Perry in the 21st Century

Perry is in decline. Once produced on most farms in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, it now owes its existence to a dwindling number of small-scale producers.

But it was not always so: indeed, perry was once widely popular and even enjoyed royal favour. Queen Elizabeth I was served perry on her visit to Elmley Castle in 1575, and it was no mere coincidence that later that same year she directed that the City of Worcester's coat of arms should carry three pears sable.

Perry's decline has been gradual but inevitable, entwined as it has been with the fortunes of the rural landscape.

Changes in agricultural methods, the economics of farming, and government policies have affected all traditional crafts and skills, including perry production. Small makers have had to survive unaided in a highly competitive market where the odds are stacked against them. Perry, once the joy of the monarch and labourer alike, has found no niche in the modern market which does it proper credit.

So why do people doggedly persist in its manufacture? Why do enthusiasts pursue it and continue to proclaim its virtues? One explanation might lie in the unique qualities of different perry pear varieties.

A significant difference between perry and cyder is that perry cannot readily be successfully standardised. Perry pear varieties do not readily blend, and there is no short cut to homogenised blandness. Each perry pear variety is distinctive and there is a myriad of varieties. Hundreds once existed and although reduced in number today, they still exist in profusion.

But it is not only pear variety which makes perry unattractive to the big industrial producer: variations in season and soil also play their part. There is no guarantee of consistency from year to year, and the inexact nature of perry making is indicated by the adage: "Mill you

pears one year, press them the next, and drink it the year after" - in other words, just as the taste cannot be duplicated year to year, so the methods of production must change..

But even though perry is not readily susceptible of industrial production, the perry maker is no magician. Expertise comes from experience - trial and error as well as an intimate knowledge of the raw materials. The problem is that there are no heirs to a complex area of knowledge which was once widely shared..

But it is not only this narrowing of the base of knowledge which threatens perry today. Orchard strongholds are encroached upon by urban expansion, road-building and changes in use, and replanting is scarcely economic since a perry pear tree can take 50 years to bear - although it can continue cropping for more than 300 years. Perry production is labour intensive and time consuming, too, and the results are not always certain.

But there are grants for replanting and set-aside land can be used, so there is room for regeneration. But this should not be founded on nostalgia, which would do a disservice to perry's distinctive quality. Perry's continuation must be on the strength of its unique qualities. It is not enough that perry should be preserved as a relic, effectively consigned to antiquity. It is a dynamic drink whose qualities must not be compromised in its revival, lost to the demands of a mass market. Perry should be seen as an equal in quality of the finest wines, but still the domain of all social classes.



"Of Peres, wyne is made, if they be grounde
And through a rare sack with fors y wronge,...
Of peares sours and wilde, it is no wronge
Aysell (*vinegar*) to bringe..."

From 'Palladius on Husbandry', fourth century, probably translated into English by a Colchester gardener and monk in the 1300s. This medieval reference to perry was quoted by Dorothy Hartley in 'Food in England', published 1954. She goes on to add "Made in England in the cider districts, but not given the care and research that attends cider making." (!)

12

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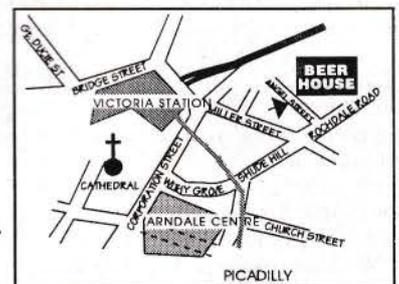
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SOMETHING FOR EVEN THE MOST DISCERNING TASTE

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

NOVEMBER 1991

When pubs were given the chance to open all day in 1988, it was found that whilst many extended their hours, there were other who took the opportunity of closing during slack periods. A survey had been carried out to see how many pubs displayed their hours outside, so that if a thirsty customer arrived to find a pub closed, at least he would know how long he had to wait to get a drink. Of 200 local pubs that were visited, a staggering 80% gave no indication of their hours, hence the headline "Times Please, Gentlemen" on the front page. A comparison was made with local high street shops, the majority of which displayed their hours, which in any case were far more predictable than pub hours. In this climate of recession, could pubs really afford to turn away business by keeping their opening hours a secret?

The Pub of the Month for November was the Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, Stockport. It had a chequered history, and the thought then of such an award would have been laughable. But it had been rescued from dereliction by Mike Belsham., although it then suffered a serious fire just days after the completion of the purchase. The original S&N beers were jettisoned in favour of what were "arguably the most enterprising array of beers in Stockport". (Nothing stays the same for very long - it is reported elsewhere that Mike, in 1996, is now at the Bulkeley Arms in Edgeley, but he is leaving the trade at the end of the month.)

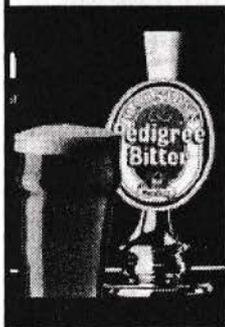
CAMRA launched its new 1992 Good Beer Guide at the start of the celebration of its 21st anniversary. Campaign Director Dave Goodwin said at the regional launch at the Robert Cain Brewery in Liverpool: "The Campaign was started by four North West journalists 21 years ago. It had its roots in an area which is still famous for its quality ales brewed by independent brewers." As if to underline this statement about quality ales, independent brewers etc., it was reported that Cain's Traditional Bitter had won the prestigious title of Champion Bitter of Britain - the judging had taken place at the Great British Beer Festival held in London during August. Robinsons had agreed a supply deal with the London wholesale Brewers Dray, which looked likely to make their beers more widely available in the South of England. The price was likely to be the only drawback - 12 months previously (so that's 1990) Robbies Best Bitter had been spotted in a Brighton freehouse at the give-away price of £1.49 a pint. Rumours were still circulating about Holts being interested in the Imperial on London Road, Manchester. Although the building had been closed "for refurbishment" for some considerable time, there had still not been any signs of activity.

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Sorry . . .

Due to the uncertainty of the opening date of our new venture, Stalybridge Buffet Bar, (sometime in November is our hope, Railtrack permitting!), we're postponing the Porter's Festival until late January.

However this will now be . . .



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There will be a selection of 50 plus beers, split between the two venues. The usual selection of food and festival glasses and T-shirts will be available.

Hope to see you there and there!

THE STATION • WARRINGTON STREET
ASHTON - U-LYNE

13



Irene and Staff welcome you to The Greyhound



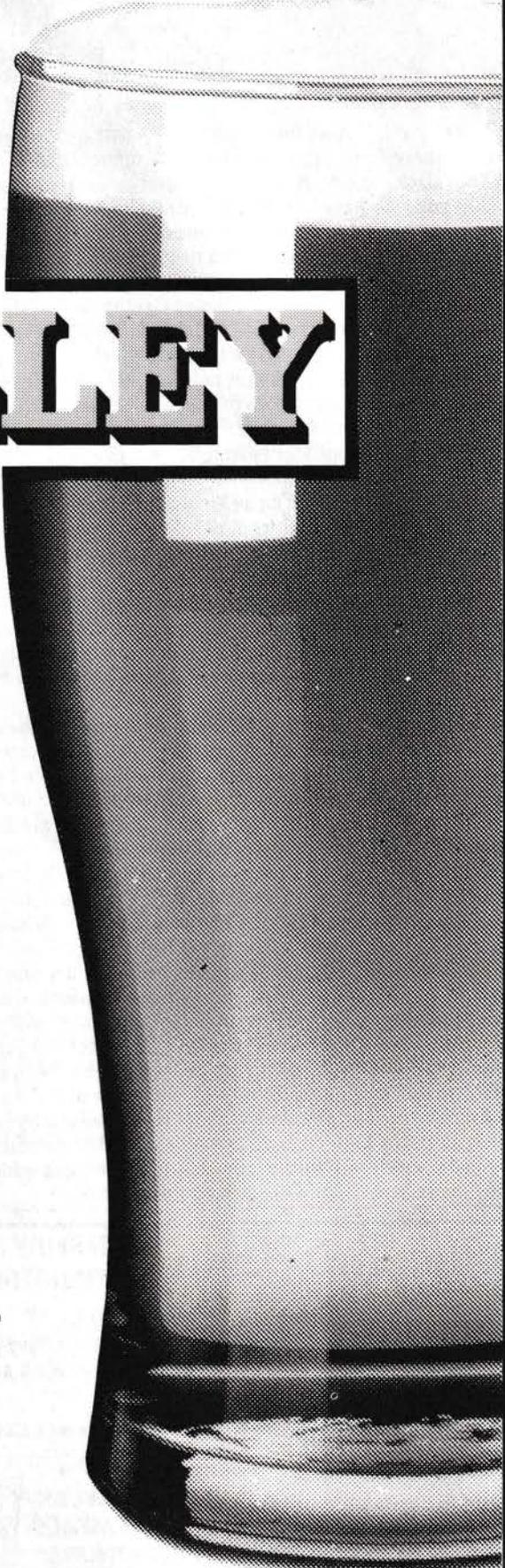
Bowden Street, Edgeley
Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
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Guest Beers
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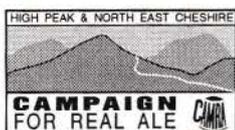




LOCALLEY

TETLEY
BITTER

BRITAIN'S BEST
LOVED BITTER



October Featured Pub: Rose & Crown, Market Street, Stalybridge

There has been a pub on this site since at least 1796, though the present building dates from the mid-Victorian period, and its solid, functional lines are typical of the period. The establishment has been through a succession of names and owners, but passed into the ownership of Henry Shaw's Dukinfield Brewery as the Rose & Crown, and became a John Smiths house upon the latter firm's acquisition of Shaw's in 1941. After an unremarkable existence in their estate, it was passed just a few years ago to the Sunderland brewers, Vaux, who have provided the wherewithal to allow the pub to develop into the fine place it is now. A recent refurbishment has seen the correct application of quality materials and decoration applied with sensitivity and that rare thing, truly beneficial improvements, such as the fitting of an attractive lounge fire and the incorporation of the dark and poky back room into the main side room space. Other brewers, (and I think we can all bring at least one to mind), and their refurbishment Gauleiters would do well to visit the premises to see how well it can be done, no themes, no books by the yard, just an attractive, welcoming interior.

With the arrival of Vaux came a change of beers, such has been their popularity, no doubt aided by the hard cellar work put in by May and Peter, that four real ales are always on offer, the excellent malty mild, bitter, Samson and a rotating fourth beer, either from the brewery or its guest list. All are always in sparkling form and provide welcome variety in the town. A warm welcome is always guaranteed in this genuine urban local, and given the pub's proximity to a clutch of fine pubs, should not be overlooked when planning your next pub crawl.



OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 24cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

...Pub Ne
b News...
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In Hyde, the Oddfellows on Ridling Lane (Vaux) has hit hard times again. It's closed, and not long after it had re-opened again. The one-time Good Beer Guide regular has struggled in recent months/years and it makes you realise how much a good licensee can put into a pub that is not prominently located or particularly fashionable.

Down the road, the Royal Albert now "Carpenters Music Bar" has gone "real" and is serving Grays Bitter on handpump (this is actually a Mansfield beer under another name). Finally in Hyde, just a note regarding the Crown (Robbies) - the long-running refurbishment has been completed.

In Bredbury the Rising Sun has reintroduced Holts Bitter to its range after a long break. Meanwhile in Disley, the Albert (Vaux) is to undergo a long overdue refurbishment and this must be welcomed (according to our local members).

The Sportsman in Strines, having recently changed hands is selling off the "old stock" of beer which was left at the hand over. The new range will initially be Cains Mild and Bitter and (of course) Boddingtons Bitter.

In Derbyshire, the Lamp in Hadfield has introduced a "guess the guest" competition - to mixed reviews and over in Woolley Bridge, the Spring Tavern's more conventional approach to guest beers recently boasted the Great British Beer Festival Champion Beer - Woodforde's Wherry.

Meanwhile in Glossop, Hollies (formerly Roxy's, formerly the Rose & Crown) is closing for a month for refurbishment. It will be opened towards the end of November as...you guessed it!...an "Irish Bar". It will be known as "Paddy Mulligans" and Thwaites seem to think this is a step forward. In my opinion even if an "Irish Bar" refurb is done well - and most are not - the only location for Irish bars is, by definition, Ireland where they are known simply as ...bars. We should concentrate on retaining genuine English/British pubs with genuine and authentic interiors. One look at CAMRA's national Inventory of Pub Interiors in the 1997 Good Beer Guide brings home the extent to which the "pub" has been neglected as an important part of Britain's architectural and historic heritage. It is time that as much attention is paid to pubs by planners and conservationists as, say, churches, stately homes and even cooling towers!

Moving on (I was getting dizzy up there on my high horse) in Ashton-u-Lyne, both the Peaks and the Turnpike have been reported to be keg only. Better news at Williams freehouse where guest beers are back on the agenda. Staying in Ashton, the Station recently received an accolade from Whitbread after scoring 100% in a survey of Boddingtons Bitter which judged such things as beer temperature, beer lines, presentation, clarity etc. Not bad really. This feat is to be celebrated in another publication. Mandy Hicks - of the "eh Tarquil" Boddys advert was at the Station for a photo-shoot for none other than Cheshire Life. Tally Ho!

SOUTHLANDS HOTEL & COPPERFIELDS BAR



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- ★ FREE HOUSE
- ★ TRADITIONAL BEERS

JOHN SMITHS BITTER 99p -SUPERB HOME-COOKED
5 Different Cask Ales FOOD LUNCHTIMES &
Live Entertainment Saturdays EVENINGS

The Victoria

Hall Street, Offerton

Greenalls Mild & Bitter,
Stones Bitter

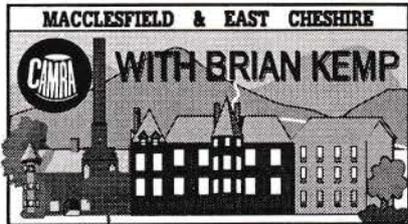
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The Harrington Arms, Gawsworth

I hope my monthly columns in OT are not going to become a harbinger of fate for the pubs concerned. Shortly after extolling the unspoilt virtues of the Lord Byron in Macclesfield town centre last month I visited it, as is my habit, on Saturday lunchtime for a post-shopping reviver.

The landlord, Ken, disclosed that he had been visited by a representative from Robinsons that very morning who had proposed amongst other worthwhile alterations knocking the whole left hand side of the pub, i.e. two separate rooms and an enclosed staircase, into one open-plan area! Did I, he wanted to know, think he had done the right thing in declining their generous offer? I trust I do not need to tell you my reply. Can anybody tell me why breweries cannot leave well enough alone? As they say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". The other alterations were due to commence last month. I will keep you posted. They are also sending a member of their marketing staff to advise him on how to improve his profitability. As Ken says, "The place is full of blokes drinking beer every night, what more do they want?" Anyway, as usual I am digressing from the subject.

This month, for those of you who do not know it already, let me introduce you to the Harrington Arms at Gawsworth. It is just off (about 100 yards) the main road south from Macclesfield to Congleton in the very attractive village of Gawsworth. Take the first turning on the left after Maggotty Lane just past the entrance to Tarmac Topmix and it is on your right hand side. Maggotty Lane derives its name from the fact that Old Maggotty, i.e. Samuel Johnson, is buried in the woods next to it. As Michael Caine might have said, "Not a lot of people know that."

The Harrington is not so much a pub as an institution and is presided over by Mrs Bailey. To call her merely the landlady in no way does justice to her presence, status and control. She does not suffer fools gladly. If foolishness is part of your character this is not the place for you! It is a tall, attractive brick-built pub with a small cobbled courtyard with some benches at the front. It is part of a farm which is also owned by Robinsons. I just have this nagging fear that one day they will decide to exploit its position and land and want to turn it into another lookalike family eaterie with massive car-park and adventure playground thereby destroying another piece of local history. Still, Peter Robinson lives in Gawsworth and as this would greatly upset the local inhabitants perhaps it might be safe for a while.

It is difficult to convey an adequate description of the inside of the pub. Let me say that if you want to know what a typical English basic rural pub was like in the inter-war years you need go no further than the Harrington! You enter a passageway. On the left is the large main room with wooden bench seating. On your right the bar leading to a tiny snug at the end and another sitting room off. The beer is Robinsons Bitter and Hatters Mild. We believe the bitter varies between Best and Old Stockport but nobody has had the guts to ask Mrs Bailey! Legend has it that she came to the farm as a landgirl during WW II, got married and has been here ever since.

Let me tell you a little story that sums up her stewardship of the Harrington nicely. I was in there one midweek lunchtime. Trade was very quiet. Enter two local lads. The following conversation ensues:

Lads: Two pints of bitter, please, Mrs Bailey

Mrs Bailey: Were you the ones who knocked over my plant pots after time last night?

Lads: N'N'No, Mrs Bailey, but we know who did

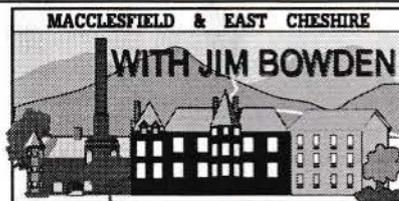
Mrs B: Right, I want to know who they were, and you're not having Best Bitter. It's too strong for you. You can have Einhorn lager and like it! Now, who were they?

They meekly surrendered the information, quietly drank their lager, and left. I bet those pot plants soon got stood up again!!

If you are hungry there is usually some simple cold fare available but don't expect a menu, it just depends what is in the refrigerator. Not long after the formation of the Macclesfield and East Cheshire branch of CAMRA about 18 years ago, the Harrington did actually suffer some 'modernisation'. And to be fair, it probably needed it. The living accommodation was improved, some decent toilets were provided and central heating was installed. But boarding up splendid open fireplaces and slapping modern metal radiators in front of them. I ask you, have some people no soul? Also at this time the genuinely old wooden bar was ripped out and replaced by a mock antique bar. All, of course, in the best possible taste. Prior to these alterations the beer had been on gravity stillages behind the bar and to be honest during hot weather the quality of the beer did suffer. Now handpumps have been installed.

If you have never been to the Harrington go there soon. Pubs like it are becoming rarer as the years roll on. One final anecdote, though. When I was leaving at the end of the lunchtime session with the two local lads described above, I emerged from the front door and thought to myself "That's funny. I didn't realise it was raining." It wasn't. Mrs Bailey had just been watering the hanging basket over the door!

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The Waters Green Tavern



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Ever Changing Guest Beers including:
Rev. Eaton Ale, WheataBlitz, Enville White, Florrie
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Your Hosts Brian and Tracey
Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

The landlord of the *Cotton Tree*, Bollington, a Vaux pub, is leaving.

The *Cock* at Henbury, a Robinsons Good Beer Guide pub recently had a fun day which realised over £1000 for charity, most of which went to the Andrew Fox appeal for muscular dystrophy.

It last moth's OT it was mentioned that the *Castle*, Macclesfield was an ex-Greenalls pub - correction - it is an ex-Tetleys house.

The *White Lion*, Knutsford is closing for a two-week refurbishment.

The *Railway View* now has cask cider on sale. The first cask was Biddenden and sold out very quickly.

The *Filigree & Firkin* has a new manager, Sharon Threlfall. Sharon has been a manager for Tetleys for 12 years. The only changes will be to the menu, the happy hour prices are to stay for the time being.



The Luck of the Irish

Take a run-down pub, paint it green, orange and white, fill it with fake Irish tat and rename it Paddy's this or Riley's that, and there you have it, an instant Irish theme pub. It's hardly surprising that the recent wave of Irish makeovers has attracted so much criticism.

But some of the better executed versions, in particular the various Scruffy Murphy's outlets, actually have a lot to be said for them as pieces of pub design. They may be pastiche, but it's a pastiche of something with genuine character and atmosphere. The designers have obviously taken a lot of care to obtain authentic memorabilia and to build in cosy snugs and boxes, partitions, black and white tiles floors, wood panelling and impressive mirrored backfittings. The encouragement of live traditional music in "Irish" pubs is another big point in their favour.

In short, what they've created, underneath the Irish veneer, is real pubs, and, unless they've destroyed an interior of character in the process, which has not generally been the case around here, there's nothing you can really object to in terms of the fabric of the place. If only half as much effort had been applied to many of our "Victorian" pubs, which so often are no more than a few Victorian trimmings applied to a modern plan - whoever heard of a raised seating area in the last century?

When in Rome (or even Dublin)

A friend suggested that people who normally drink ale or lager, but switch to stout in Scruffy Murphy's, are being in some way

hypocritical. But is that any different from choosing chow mein in preference to chicken and chips in a Chinese restaurant? On my rare visits to "Irish" pubs, I must admit myself that I feel I'm entering much more into the spirit of things with a pint of Guinness in front of me, and if the only real ale available (if any) is Tetleys or Worthington, I'm not really missing much.

Free to Mislead

It's all too common nowadays to go into a pub proclaiming itself to be a "free house" and find yourself confronted by a choice of beers no wider or more interesting than you would find in any brewery-owned pub. Some are owned by the ever-growing number of pub chains; others are independently-run but have a loan tie with one of the big brewers. Some pub chains, such as Wetherspoon's, do feature a range of beers from different brewers, although still largely dictated by head office rather than the individual manager. Many, though, offer a selection even more limited than in a national brewer's pub where the licensee exercises his right to stock a guest beer.

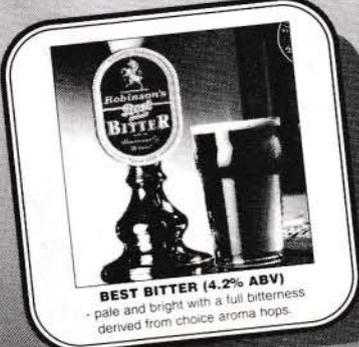
It's naive to imagine that the words "free house" imply a forest of handpumps - more than ever, you have to go inside and look for yourself what's actually on the bar. But, on the other hand, if all you find is Draught Bass and Worthington Best Bitter, you have a right to feel misled. If the term is to retain any meaning, should there not be a tighter legal definition restricting it to pubs where the individual licensee (and not the owning company) is genuinely free to buy at least some of his draught beer from whatever supplier he chooses?

**COPY DATE FOR DECEMBER ISSUE
IS NOVEMBER 22**

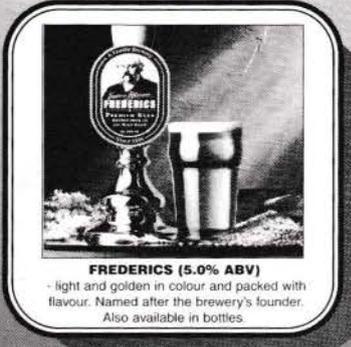
17



THE Robinson's COLLECTION



BEST BITTER (4.2% ABV)
- pale and bright with a full bitterness derived from choice aroma hops.



FREDERICS (5.0% ABV)
- light and golden in colour and packed with flavour. Named after the brewery's founder. Also available in bottles.



XB (4.0% ABV)
- a smooth bitter ale with a malty taste. First brewed in the Lake District.



HATTER'S MILD (3.3% ABV)
- brewed from quality malt and hops, it's the best cask conditioned, light mild around.



OLD STOCKPORT (3.5% ABV)
- rich golden body with a refreshingly hoppy taste and lightish alcohol content.



OLD TOM (8.5% ABV)
- smooth, dark and mellow. Brewed from a recipe almost as old as the brewery itself.

C H O I C E B E E R S

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

November 96

Saturday 9th - Day out in North Wales. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.00am. Book on 477 1973.

Monday 11th - Membership recruitment social at the Railway, Great Portwood Street, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 14th - Monthly branch meeting, Mawson, Kincardine Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock (off Brunswick Street at Upper Brook Street end). Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 18th - Membership recruitment social at the Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel. Starts 9.00pm

Wednesday 20th - Second meeting to organise Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 22nd - Heaton Norris Stagger: 7.00pm Bridge Inn, Georges Road; 8.30 Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way.

Monday 25th - Social, Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 28th - Pub of the Month award to Griffin, Heaton Mersey. See article on page 4.

Friday 29th - Trip to Kitchen Brewery, Huddersfield. Minibus leaves Royal Oak, Didsbury 6.30pm; Crown, Heaton lane, 6.45. Phone 477 1973 to book.

November 96

Monday 2nd December - Social, Gladstone, Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

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

Monday 11th - Committee meeting, Jolly Hatters (Hydes), Stockport Road, Denton. Starts 8.30pm

Monday 18th - Monthly branch meeting at Q, Stalybridge. Starts 8.30pm

Mystery Social - sometime in November! Contact Frank wood on 01457 865426

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

Monday 25th - monthly branch meeting at the Farmers Arms, Wilmslow, Starts 8.00pm.

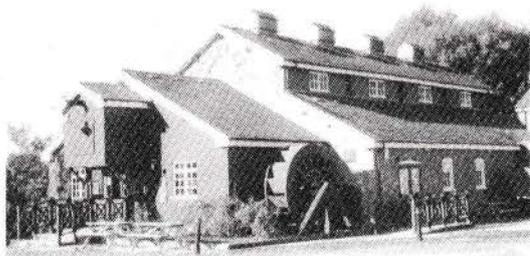
Regional Events

Wednesday 13th - Regional Meeting, Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, Mcr. 8pm

Wednesday 27th City Centre Prices Survey, starts Smithfield Hotel, Swan St, Mcr 7pm

To Do Address Mapped Minutes:30 CAMRA 93 Planned

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Jon and Judi Laidlaw

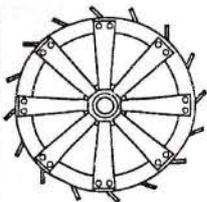
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9 HANDPUMPS - 6 GUEST ALES

FOOD 11.30-2.30 & 5-7 Mon-Fri

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CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
HIGHEST QUALITY GUEST ALES

MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

In Moss side, the Whalley Hotel, at the junction of Upper Chorlton Road and Withington Road, now has Holts Bitter on handpump. It's a good, hearty, bustling pub this, and it's good to see it back in the real ale fold. In Wythenshawe, the Cock o'the North on Portway has been taken over by Burtonwood and pleasantly refurbished. Renamed the Talisman

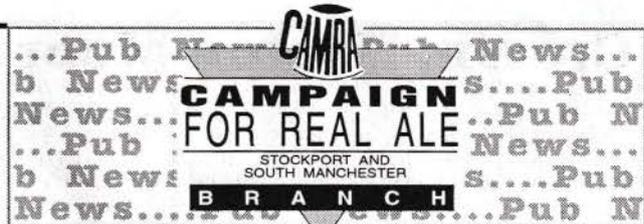
in an apparently successful attempt to expunge a reputation that was previously dubious or worse, it sells Bitter on handpump, and may have other beers at times.

The month's third real ale gain is considerably more up-market than these two, and (initially, at least) considerably less successful. Kings Cafe Bar on King Street West (near Kendals) is now known as Quo Vadis, and is a strange stylistic blend of cafe bar and bare-boards alehouse. I entered to behold two banks of three handpumps; and while all the pumpclips were reversed, the cheerful bartender told me that all the beers were on and that they were Tetley Bitter, Marstons Pedigree and cask Double Diamond. Despite some minutes' strenuous effort, however, nothing drinkable issued (nothing at all from one of the pumps). I may go back if they ever get their act together. Nearby, HR Fletchers is being turned into something called Cafe Coast, which sounds as if it's going to be another of those establishments where the half-trained serve the half-brained - we shall see.

Elsewhere in the Centre, the Bulls Head has been given the alehouse treatment - it's a perfectly decent job but without any real distinguishing features. The handpumped beers are Burtonwood Bitter, Forshaws, Top Hat and Buccaneer, with a spare pump for seasonal beers, but the rumoured guest beers from other brewers have not yet appeared. A beer to look out for in November will be "Private Eye Lord Gnome Bitter", a 4.2% brew from Brakspeares celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Eye and the 25th anniversary of CAMRA (*that's enough anniversaries - ed*). Exclusive to the Hogshead chain, it will appear in central Manchester at the Hogshead on High Street and the Lass O'Gowrie on Charles Street.

In Fallowfield, Route 236 has re-opened as Shed, a remarkable exercise in modern bar design. The eye is first caught by the bubbles rising through water-filled double glazing at the street frontage; inside, though, what's interesting is the way a real feeling of separate areas has been achieved without the place looking remotely like a conventional pub. I think it's exhilarating, some readers will hate it - go see. The handpumped beers are Tetley Bitter and Jennings Bitter, at top-end studentland prices (£1.75 for Jennings) - does anyone else remember when student pubs used to be cheap? In Northenden the Jolly Carter has gained Whitbread Old Henry on handpump (visible in vault only), while the Tatton Arms now has no Ruddles beers but does have a handpumped guest. In Gorton, the Vale Cottage has dropped Taylors Landlord following quality problems leading to excessive wastage, replacing it with Theakstons XB. However, Landlord retains a strong following with many of the pub's regular customers, and all hope for its return has not been abandoned. In Rusholme (Victoria Park, really), the Blackstock is closed.

Finally, I must take issue with OT's outgoing pub food columnist; for despite his remarks (Pub Grub, October), Tetley Bitter at the All saints Scruffy Murphys is keg. True, there's a pump, and a pumpclip - but order it, and a pint of keg is fetched. Happily, the same beer at the Owens Park branch is cask, and usually good quality in my experience.



The Union in Reddish now serves just one real ale, Robinsons Best Bitter, which is served by handpump. Kay Ord finally left Stockport's Olde Vic on Sunday 27th October. As we went to press the pub was closed for refurbishment/re-decoration. Hopefully more news next month. Robinson's Old Stockport Bitter continues to make inroads into the local tied estate. Recent local gains for this excellent beer include the Waterloo and the Arden Arms, both in the town centre.

The Thatched House on Chestergate continues to do a nice line in guest beers at the weekend - on a recent visit Hall & Woodhouse's powerful Tanglefoot was on offer and in fine fettle.

Allied Domecq have put 42 north west pubs on the market. Included are two in the OT area - the Chequered Flag on Boundary Lane, Manchester and the Golden Lion, Moss Lane, Macclesfield. Another local pub currently being offered for sale is the Dolphin in West Gorton.

In Gorton, the Vulcan was closed at the end of October - we are told that it was recently sold at auction and is undergoing an extensive refurbishment. More news when we have it.

A trip round Openshaw late last month revealed some sad sights - both the Concert on Fairfield Road and the Halfway House at Openshaw cross-roads remained closed and boarded - the latter up for lease. Nearby the Wrexham looked even more forlorn. Roofless and derelict it is almost inconceivable that this will reopen as a pub again. There is much better news at the Pack Horse on Ashton Old Road, though. Thriving under a new licensee, Holts are apparently going to spend some money on the pub and the aim is to have the inside redecorated and the outside repainted before Christmas.

In Didsbury, Carringtons, continues to go from strength to strength. The range of bottled beers continues to grow and while the accent remains on British beers, and particularly bottle conditioned ales, the German range has also been increased recently. Even more exciting is the introduction of draught beer to take home. Wychwood Dogs Bollocks and Jennings Snecklifter were on sale as we went to press and interesting beers to come included Traquair House from Scotland. This will in fact be the forerunner of a series of Scottish beers on draught which will also feature the likes of Orkney. Best news of all is that the two- and four-pint containers are FREE!

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superb cuisine
including
traditional
Sunday Lunch**




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Crown, Heaton Moor

The Crown in Heaton Moor reopened in mid-October after refurbishment and to be fair Greenalls' have made a decent job of this former Boddington PubCo house. There are no major structural operations thank goodness, rather the multi-room layout of the Crown has been emphasised. The big room has lost a little ground to an entrance vestibule, and a passage leading to the Ladies. The small room on the right now has its own entrance off the main entrance vestibule. The best dart room has had its separate identity strengthened by becoming a 'best' vault. Bare boards replace carpet and the dart board has its own partition. Gone, thank goodness, is the unfortunate plastic arch, replaced by a timber doorway.

The vault, entered by a side door, is retained, and is basically unchanged, and continues to host darts and cards. Lots of historic photographs adorn the walls (perhaps a few too many). The most interesting are photos of Heaton Moor. The dark stained timber may not be everybody's choice, but is acceptably in vogue. High level angled mirrors in the bar area seem OTT but presumably they serve a supervision purpose. The only serious criticism is the loss of the price differential between vault and best room. All in all, the Crown refurb is a pleasant surprise.

The beers: Boddingtons Bitter £1.43, Greenalls Original £1.62, Greenalls Mild has been tried, and succeeded by Chesters Mild (what was wrong with Cains Mild, on sale before the refurb?). Guest beers have included the excellent Mitchell's Tempest Stout, and Mitchell's Lancaster Bomber, both at £1.62. RW.

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Come and Join Us in CAMRA



November is CAMRA Membership Month. If you have ever thought about joining CAMRA but have never quite got around to it, then this is the time to seize the opportunity. This month we are running three recruitment nights to boost the Campaign's membership, already approaching 50,00, still further. We have been fighting for Britain's beer, breweries and pubs for 25 years, and though CAMRA is booming, new blood is needed now as much as ever..

Locally in Stockport & South Manchester branch we pride ourselves on being amongst the most active campaigning branches in the country with a social side to match. If you want to join, or have been thinking about it, then now is the time, as anyone joining at one of our special nights gets £2 off the normal rate (students get an even better deal and can join for half price - just £6), plus a free pint on us. For your tenner you can get:

★ Discounts on CAMRA products - including Good Beer Guides ★ What's Brewing - CAMRA's information packed monthly newspaper ★ A free Members Handbook ★ Reduced or free entry to beer festivals - including Stockport, of course ★ The chance to get involved in local campaigning action ★ Priority for our local brewery trips and other socials

Just come along to one of our special membership nights:

Monday 4th November - Grey Horse, Portland Street, Manchester
Monday 11th November - Railway, Great Portwood Street, Stockport
Monday 18th November - Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel

On these nights the fun begins at 9.00pm and in addition to their free pint, new members will get the chance to pick up the brand new 1997 Good Beer Guide for the members price of just £7.00 compared with £10.99 in the shops. If you've not yet picked up your copy of the new Stockport pub guide, Viaducts & Vaults 2, then this will also be available at the discounted price of £2.95, a saving of £1 on the cover price.

If you can't make any of these special evenings, then just clip out the membership form below. If you want a Good Beer Guide at the same time then the address to send it is Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, together with a cheque for £17 (membership £10 + Guide £7) made payable to CAMRA (Stockport & South Manchester).

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APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

VALID UNTIL NOVEMBER 30 ONLY (OT151)

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

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £10 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6

Steve McCarley, 32 Howden Close, North Reddish, Stockport

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.

