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OPENING CAMRA

No:
152

FREE

TIMES

DECEMBER 1996

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Nitro-threat to Cask Ale

Dire predictions have been made for the future of cask beer by brewing giants Bass.

The warning came at a conference sponsored by CAMRA on beer quality and flavour and the bearer of the bad tidings was one Chris Whitworth, director of logistics at Bass. He is an expert on sales figures, trends and market share - and according to his figures sales of premium cask beer are falling by 10% a year and standard cask is declining by 12% with the latter figure seeming permanent.

He predicts that drinkers will continue to switch from standard ales to premium and premium's fall will only halt in 1999 when sales of nitro-keg peak.

Many attendees, including beer writer Roger Protz were shocked by this. But as Protz has pointed out a company like Bass, with heavily promoted national brands, can't see further than its own balance sheet and sales graphs. Behind the grim picture of one company's cask decline, many smaller brewers are finding that sales are booming. Even the national brewers don't speak with one voice on the issue - Whitbread report significantly increased cask sales in their specialist Hogshead real ale pubs.

Perhaps of more significance was the insight Whitworth's words gave to strategic thinking at Bass. He believes that many cask brands will fall by the wayside and that cask beer will be confined to "quality" pubs. This viewpoint is all the more serious when you remember that Bass owns something like 4000 pubs and, with their proposed purchase of the Carlsberg-Tetley brewing operation, aim to control almost 40% of the nation's beer market.

It seems that Bass have been seduced by the runaway success of Caffreys - they aim to spend £10 million promoting it next year - but it is perhaps worth standing back and asking just how this, frankly, nondescript and overpriced beer, came to take the market by storm. The market it stormed was the market in Bass's tied estate and when you look at the competition in those pubs, Caffrey's success suddenly becomes easier to understand. Although Bass may pride itself on being one of the biggest producers of cask ale in the world, those ales are, almost without exception, some of the most undistinguished

and characterless beers in the country. Bass (and the other nationals too, no doubt) put the success of nitro-keg down to customer demand. They may well be right but rather than being a tribute to the qualities of nitro-keg, that demand is instead a condemnation of the alternatives on offer.

The underlying message is clear, though. While the big brewers remain attached to these dangerous notions of what their customers want (or rather, can be persuaded to buy) it is essential that they are not allowed to get any bigger. A referral of the Bass take-over of Carlsberg-Tetley to the MMC is vital. Even more vital is the need for drinkers to support their local brewers, by drinking their beers and promoting their interests.

Beer & (Real) Brewery News

Burtonwood

Burtonwood have just announced their second series of seasonal beers (the first was available between November 1995 and August 1996).

First to appear is Heartwarmer Bitter (5% ABV), available from November 1st to the end of the year. It's a winter ale, dark robust and creamy, with a taste of nutmeg and cinnamon. Next comes Golden Bough (4.5% ABV), available from 1st March to mid-May. This is described as a pale hoppy bitter. Last to appear is Vicars revenge (4.2% ABV), available from 1st June to 21st September. This is a malty, full-bodied, light hearted summer ale. **PL.**

Hydes' Anvil

Billy Westwood's has again been well received and is to continue in production for the time being, possibly permanently if demand is maintained.

Even better news is that 4X Anvil Strong is to reappear, being rolled out to the estate on 2nd December, to the same recipe and 6.8% ABV as last year, and is expected to sell at around £1.90 a pint. Distribution is likely to be limited, so if you want it in your Hydes' local, pester the licensee, and if you find it, make sure you drink sufficient quantities to ensure that it will reappear in future years. If demand is slack then it is unlikely to be brewed again for many years, so it's up to you. Some dedication to the cause is obviously required. **KE.**

Porters

The winter brew, Slayed at 6.5% ABV, will be making its annual appearance slightly earlier this year and should be available by the middle of December - in previous years it has first gone on sale on Christmas Day (!). The much missed Porter's Stout is also in line to make a one-off reappearance, probably next February.



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POT OF BEER

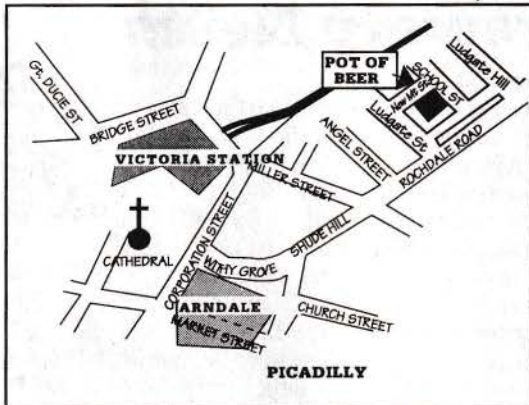
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Are Bass set to become the Watneys of the 1990's and all but turn their backs on real ale? Judging from the comments of their strategy director, this could be on the cards. He seems to view cask beer as a minority, premium product restricted to "quality pubs". Of course, for quality, read "expensive".

This would entail handpumps disappearing from many street corner locals which would take giant steps back to the 1970's when keg held sway. Brands will disappear as nitro-keg takes over, entirely as a result of consumer demand, you understand. This is tripe of the highest order. We have heard this tired old message from Bass and the other big brewers for years now. 20 years ago they reckoned we'd all be drinking the likes of Watneys Red by now. 10 years ago they predicted that lager would now have something like 80% of the beer market. Now they tell us that cask beer is once more on the downward path, with standard strength bitters terminally so.

The problem is of course that these people can't see any further than the performance of their own tired, insipid products. Caffreys took the Bass estate by storm because they couldn't offer a half-decent cask beer to oppose it. Now it needs £10 million of advertising to prop it up. The bubble will burst, as it has always done in the past. And Bass, with brands axed and nitro-keg everywhere will find itself up the creek without a paddle. It couldn't happen to a nicer bunch of people.

And on that note, all that remains is for me to wish all our readers, distributors, writers and of course the advertisers on whom we depend, the merriest Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

John Clarke

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Whisky - the Beer Spirit

Peter Edwardson traces a surprising connection

It's not something the makers of whisky tend to dwell on too much, but in fact its links with beer, Britain's other national drink, are very close. Indeed, it's fair to say that, just as brandy is a spirit distilled from wine, whisky is essentially a spirit distilled from beer.

The first connection is the use of the same raw material - barley malt. The best beers are those made from all malt without any adjuncts, and likewise the finest whiskies are those which are 100% pure malt. Cheaper materials of various kinds are widely used in beer, and most of the well known brands of Scotch whisky are blends of malt whisky with cheaper "grain" spirit distilled from maize - also commonly found in beers. However, there is a difference - adjuncts make a distinct contribution to the character of beer, which once the proportion exceeds about 25% is likely to lead to a noticeably inferior flavour, whereas grain spirit is largely neutral, and serves merely to make the malts go further. The better quality blended whiskies such as The Famous Grouse have about 40-45% malt content, cheap brands tend to have far less.

The other key similarity between beer and whisky is the process. Dotted over much of Scotland, with a particular concentration around Speyside, are numerous small malt whisky distilleries. Like breweries, quite a few have closed in recent years, but even so there are probably more malt distilleries in Scotland than there are established breweries in the whole of the UK. Many of them offer tours to visitors during the summer months, and the beer lover will find the first part of the process strangely familiar, as the "washroom" is - well, a brewery. To make whisky, you start by making the "wash" - a strong unhopped ale of about 7% alcohol. Ask the tour guides what the wash would taste like and they may give you a funny look, but it could well be surprisingly similar to the rich, heavy, unhopped ales which were once characteristic of Scotland.

Fermentation is arrested after three or four days when the wssh is still not fully attenuated. It is then piped off to the stillhouse where it is distilled through high-necked copper pot stills - usually twice, occasionally three times, to produce the spirit. This is racked into wooden casks and left to mature for between eight and twelve years before it is ready to drink.

Where the two drinks diverge is in the keynote of their flavour. In beer this is hops, in Scotch whisky it is peat. Scotch is normally made from malt dried in peat-fired kilns, which imparts a distinctive smokiness to the flavour, varying from the very subtle to the powerfully assertive. In the beer world this flavour element is only found in a few Continental specialities. But malt whisky does resemble beer in having a wide variation in taste and character which often follows regional lines.

The Lowlands produce soft, sweetish whiskies; Speyside whiskies are distinctively smooth and mellow, although this can range from the light and delicate such as Glenfiddich to the rich and full-bodied such as The Macallan. Whiskies from the rest of the Highlands are more varied, with a number of individual flavours, while those from Campbeltown in the extreme south-west have an almost briny character. For many whisky lovers, however, nirvana is the Hebridean island of Islay, which produces the most strongly-flavoured, assertive and peaty whiskies of all, some of which have an almost medicinal, iodine tang. They can perhaps be compared to intensely hoppy beers such as Holts and Boddingtons used to be. For some, nothing can

beat Laphroaig or Lagavulin, for others they're offensively pungent. It's all a matter of taste.

It's normal to attribute the lion's share of the differences in flavour and character to the mysteries of the stillhouse and the atmosphere in which the whisky matures. But it could well be argued that the selection of the malt and the fermentation of the wash makes just as great a contribution, exactly as they do with beer.

A brief word about Irish whiskey. Unlike Scotch, it is always triple-distilled, and, like Irish stouts, contains a proportion of unmalted barley. Single malt Irish is a rare modern innovation, with only two varieties available, but the well-known blended Irish whiskies such as Jameson's, Power's and Bushmills are products of more character and integrity than many of the general run of blended Scotches. Irish whiskey appeals to many who prefer a rounded, malty flavour to the peatiness of Scotch, just as some beer drinkers prefer malty beers to hoppy ones. It has perhaps been poorly served by its makers, who have tended to play down the heritage aspects which have been so successfully exploited by the Scottish malt distillers, not to mention most brewers of real ale.

Another similarity to beer is that the choice of whiskies readily available to the consumer today is greater than it has ever been. Oddbins lead the field with a very comprehensive selection of single malt Scotch, although their range of Irish is surprisingly limited and unimaginative. Many of the independent off-licences also offer a good choice, and the big supermarkets are improving fast, led, as in the beer field, by Tesco. It's also more common to see interesting malts behind the bars of pubs, and if the licensee takes some care over his selection of whisky it often indicates that he does the same in choosing and looking after his beer.



PHOENIX BREWERY • HEYWOOD

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THE COACH AND HORSES

Pub Of The Month DECEMBER

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	31				

The big brewers, the licensed trade press, and commentators on the pub trade will try to tell you that the traditional local is at death's door. It's never been true, and the pub to which we award pub of the Month for December disproves it splendidly. The Coach & Horses in Gorton serves arguably the most consistently excellent Robinsons ales in the brewery's entire tied estate, and stands as a lasting reproach to the many licensees who struggle to serve these inherently fine beers in any better than mediocre condition. Rescued from a slow decline by the arrival of landlady Beryl Lavelle in February 1987, it is now recognised as one of the finest pubs in the city by those who appreciate the traditional virtues.

The Coach doesn't go in for fruit machines or pool tables. There's a jukebox in the lounge, kept down to a moderate volume; but the television in the vault, while much in demand for big sporting occasions, most often has to yield place to cards, darts, or the simple pleasures of conversation amongst

an exceptionally welcoming crowd of regulars. It's a family-run pub, with landlady Beryl expertly backed up by husband Tom and daughter Margaret, and indeed the whole pub can often have the feel of a large extended family, in which people know and genuinely care for their fellow drinkers. Mind you, strangers are made most welcome, and the pub has become well-known to the customers of the multi-screen cinema opposite. We present the award on Thursday 19th December, making the presentation at around 9.30pm. However, so close to Christmas, and in such a good pub, this is likely to be an unusually well attended event - so why not get there early to be sure of a seat? Trains to Belle Vue, buses along Hyde Road (including 203 from Stockport), and cross-town buses 53, 168 and 169 can all deliver you to a memorable evening in one of the finest pubs you're likely to see. See you there! **RPJ.**

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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OPENING TIMES LETTERS



From Barbara Nieto:

Re Steve Sharples' letter, OT October 1996. Right on Steve! Quality must triumph over mediocrity.

Praguefive is a fine bar, great ambience and some excellent beers.

CAMRA pedants are a pain in the you know what. I enjoy good ale but refuse to trek miles for 10p off the price of best bitter. Cheese-paring anoraks hugging their half-pints and notebooks - although some nowadays have gone electronic, no doubt at some cost - may suit themselves (Psion owners are barred from my favourite local). I go to pubs for their welcome and because they stock a variety of fine ales, continental or British, and don't look at female drinkers as though they just arrived from Mars.

I applaud Steve's letter and its emphasis of quality over coppers' difference on the price of a pint.

From Ron Elder (CAMRA member, Edinburgh & S E Scotland branch):

I read, with some dismay, your editorial and features on cider and perry in the November 1996 issue of Opening Times.

At a time when real ale is facing its greatest crisis since the early 1970's, with the onslaught of nitrokegs, it is indeed sad that CAMRA is allowing its focus to be diverted in the direction of cider and perry.

Whilst I have no objection to drinkers of cider and perry enjoying their favourite tippie, I take exception to the hijacking of CAMRA for their own purposes. Where will this road we have started down end? Will we have a Campaign for Real Whisky, and debar from the Good Beer Guide all pubs which only sell the watered down national whisky brands and not original cask strength whisky? What also of the pubs serving tonic for gins from the mixing gun instead of the traditional bottled versions? Should they also be barred from the Good Beer Guide?

I am sure that most CAMRA members, and certainly the vast majority of those living north of a line from Shrewsbury to Ipswich, joined CAMRA to protect real ALE, and buy the Good Beer Guide to find pubs which sell quality real ALE. They are not all that interested in correctly dispensed cider or perry. Cider and perry should be separated from beer and have their own guide where they can apply their own criteria or, at least, we should include the pubs serving the best quality real ales in the Good Beer Guide with a warning note appended to those entries which also serve cider under CO2 pressure or "incorrect" dispense methods.

Diluting the quality standards and good name that the Campaign for Real Ale has established over 25 years is unacceptable. CAMRA must shout about the need for good quality real ale and not get side-tracked by the cider issue.

Sadly for Ron, we have more Cider AND a feature on Whisky this time! - Ed.

From Geoff Williamson (CAMRA member and Disley resident):

I write in reply to the letter published last month from Bob Maycock (licensee of the Ram's Head in Disley). Firstly I apologise to Bob and to the Magic pub Co. for any inaccuracies in the previous articles referring to the Ram's Head, but would wish to point out that far from being based on gossip, the information came from an authority that should have been a reliable source, but proved to be as misleading as Bob's "good authority" which claimed that local CAMRA members "rarely get further than the Dandy Cock", which is incorrect as I, and other branch members, regularly visit all the pubs in Disley (including the recently re-opened and refurbished Albert

- see High Peak Pub News). The incident reported when no real ale was available in the Ale Bar was factually correct as on the occasion in question the Robinsons Best Bitter had just gone off, nobody indicated that another barrel would be put on in the near future, and the customer was directed to one of the many lagers and nitro beers available on the bar!!

Enough of this, though, I have not written this letter to snipe back at Bob or the Magic Pub Co., but more to set the record straight. None of the articles referring to the Ram's Head have ever claimed the Bob keeps a "bad pint", but the criticism has been levelled more at the disappointing choice of cask ales on offer. The eight pubs in Disley for many years only offered a choice of Robinson's or Wilsons' beers, more recently the purchase of two Wilsons pubs by Vaux and the appearance of the odd fixed guest beer like Boddington's in the other Wilsons' houses only increased choice to a limited degree. The acquisition of the down-at-heel Ram's Head by Magic Pub a couple of years ago offered the opportunity to really open up the choice of beers in the village. This has been achieved to a degree, and there is no doubt that the refurbishment of the pub has increased trade substantially, creating a vibrant establishment and making much more use of its huge potential than had been the case for very many years, albeit in the main attracting the younger drinkers.

Bob refers to wastage of beer when the ale bar was opened with, what must be viewed with hindsight as an over-optimistic, seven real ales. Clearly, despite its success, the pub is not attracting the drinkers interested in a variety of quality cask-conditioned ales, unlike a number of other pubs within only a few miles which feature an ever-changing range of guests. The Magic Pub Co. has certainly turned the Ram's Head around and brought life back to the pub, but I would hope that such an extensive establishment has the potential to offer something for all pub-goers and an interesting and changing guest beer range, permanently rather than spasmodically on offer, would help to attract more cask ale devotees in the future, and may even change the view of some nitro-keg drinkers.

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STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

October's Stagger took us to Gatley and Northenden, which are traditionally yoked together as neither district on its own contains enough pubs to achieve complete inebriation (sorry, I meant "arrive at a well-considered comparative judgement").

Our first call, the **Red Lion** on Gatley Green, is a Whitbread pub with a standard "alehouse" interior. It was full of chalked notices, the TV was on, pool was being played. Last time we did this Stagger, there'd been some interesting guest beers, but no such luck tonight. This left a range of Boddingtons Bitter, Chesters Mild, Flowers IPA, and Marstons Pedigree - and a deceitful handpump for keg Scrumpy Jack cider. Pedigree was OK, Boddies was a bit better, nothing else was tried.

Our next call, Hydes' **Prince of Wales**, really is an alehouse, and a damn good one, so doesn't need the faked-up knick-knacks to prove it. The original low-ceilinged vault area is perhaps the more traditional end of the pub, but we found seats in the comfortable, carpeted lounge with its carved benches. The hum of conversation made a pleasant contrast with our first port of call, which though quite busy had lacked atmosphere. Both mild and bitter, served through electric pumps as Hydes so often is, impressed, the bitter being marginally preferred.

After a quick look in at the **Gatley Wine Bar** (still keg), we found the **Horse & Farrier**. More Hydes, more electric pumps, but Hydes' Anvil Light in place of the 'ordinary' mild. And more impressive beer, both Light and Bitter - indeed the Bitter was to turn out the best beer of the evening. As befits its prominent location, this is a pub on a bigger scale than the Prince of Wales, but still admirably traditional with many drinking areas. Only some of the modern coloured-glass light fittings looked a touch cheapjack, especially compared to some of the original coloured glass which survives in the windows.

Fortunately it was a fine night - for incredibly, in the evening only an hourly bus service links these two popular districts, and we'd missed it by about ten minutes! Still, the walk, while hardly scenic, served to work up a thirst, and brought us to Northenden's **Jolly Carter**, a former Boddingtons pub now part of the Greenall Group. I'd read in my morning newspaper the obituary of Lord Daresbury, creator of Grunhalls Lager and the first of the Greenall family to sit in the House of Lords. He's died of a heart attack, apparently, and I idly wondered whether it had been brought on by reading the trading figures for the Jolly Carter - for at 8.30 on a Friday night, there was just one other customer in the lounge, and three or four playing pool in the vault, in this large two-room estate-style pub! We sampled some little more than average Boddingtons before encountering a fellow staggerer who'd arrived early to find the lounge locked but a handpump for Whitbread Old Henry in the vault - sadly this beer was no more impressive than the Boddingtons.

After a quick look into Greenalls' **Spread Eagle** (still keg - missed opportunity given a substantial recent refurbishment - but vastly more life than the Jolly Carter), we found our way to the **Church**, a substantial and prominently located Tetley pub. Here there was life and bustle again, with the first - indeed, the only - big-screen football of the night (though I imagine it was on in the Red Lion as well). The large drinking area here surrounds the central bar, giving plenty of space even on busy nights, and though the place needs a bit of attention (damaged seats, etc.), it's clearly well-appreciated by the locals. Nobody tried the Tetley Bitter, as the place has for some years sold Robinsons Best Bitter as a guest - this was above average, although not by all that much.

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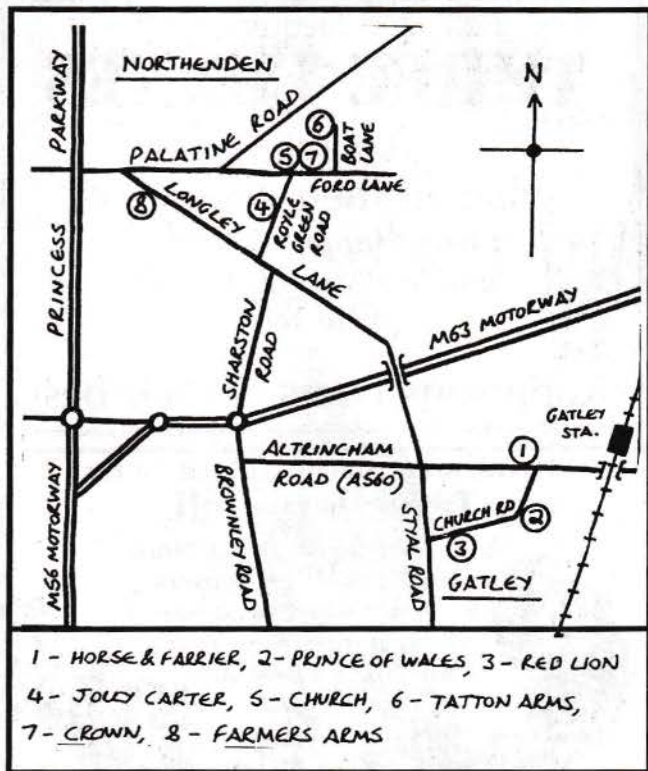


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Down to the River Mersey now, to the **Tatton Arms**. In the past, this impressive fake-half-timbered architectural pastiche has spectacularly failed to live up to its attractive location. It's certainly been comprehensively knocked about inside, but the decor of mirrors and prints seemed more tasteful, and the whole place in better order, than on our previous Stagger here. Another encouraging sign was the presence of Charles Wells Bombardier, presumably as a guest beer, alongside the more predictable Theakstons and Websters bitters - and the Bombardier was comfortably above average (apart from the first one to be served, which was clearly the first to be served for some time and much too warm). There's some way to go as yet, but I think the Tatton may be on the upgrade. Our next call, the **Crown**, a Boddingtons pub as they used to be, is generally thought of as the bustling heart of Northenden's pub scene. It's a super two-room local with a good contrast between vault and room, and we were welcomed by chatty regulars. "OT" readers Tony and Bob (we said we'd put your names in print, lads) came up with a drinkers' saying I hadn't heard before: "Anyone can drink a good pint - it takes a brave man to sup a bad un". I have to say, though, that they could have been talking about the mild, which was undrinkable. It was changed for bitter with good grace, but it didn't appear to be taken off sale - I understand that the licensee was on holiday when we called, but even so his relief should have known what to do. Still, the bitter was perfectly fine, and I wouldn't want to put anyone off visiting this well-liked local. Just one pub left now, the **Farmers Arms**, a Greenalls pub tucked away just off the main routes through Northenden. This was obviously once a genuinely multi-room pub, but fortunately the rooms have been linked by knocking holes in the walls, rather than removing them entirely, so a good sense of separate areas remains. Less robust in atmosphere than the Crown, it's another excellent local which was enjoying a thriving Friday night trade. It also has the benefit of an apparently well-used bowling green. Handpumped beers are Stones Bitter and Greenalls Bitter. Nobody tried the Stones, but the Greenalls was comfortably above average.



This was a crawl which scaled the heights and plumbed the depths - indeed (though I hope untypically), the worst beer was found in one of the best pubs. But - this was just one night, and it was just how our small band saw and tasted things. Get round the pubs for yourself, and make up your own mind.



THE HINDS HEAD

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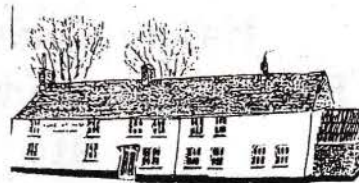
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Travellers Call,

Stockport Road, Great Moor
wish all their customers
a very Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year
Robinsons Best Ales



CAMRA Pub of the Month January 1996

8



HYDES ANVIL ALES
AND A WARM WELCOME AT
THE MOSS ROSE
DIDSBURY ROAD, HEATON NORRIS

*Gladys and Graham wish
A Merry Christmas
to all their customers*



Happy Christmas
From Simon and Margaret
at
THE CROWN
Northenden



CURMUDGEON



Drink Sensibly - Go to the Pub

This column has on many occasions been highly critical of anti-alcohol lobby groups, who have often been their own worst enemies by condemning moderate drinking in a way that most people would find laughable. When the government admitted last year that an extra three and a half pints a week wouldn't do you any harm, some of them reacted as though this was going to unleash a torrent of drunken depravity. Well, it hasn't reached my local yet. But anyone who wants to encourage the appreciation of pubs and alcoholic drinks must recognise that, for a minority of people, the abuse of alcohol does lead to serious problems - damaging health, undermining family relationships, causing accidents on the roads and encouraging domestic violence. We can't afford to adopt an attitude of "let's get everyone happily pissed".

However, none of the traditional solutions proposed by the anti-drink lobby - such as increased price and reduced availability - are realistic options today, and in any case have been discredited as effective measures. Health warnings tend to be ignored by those most at risk. There is, though, one key area of public policy where a real difference could be made, without adversely affecting the interests of moderate drinkers - encourage people to go to the pub!

In recent years there has been a big increase in the proportion of alcohol consumed at home. It's cheaper to drink at home, you're not limited to pub measures, you're not shown the door if you're under age, and there's no-one except possibly your loved ones to tell you when to stop. You've paid for all the booze in advance, and at the end of the evening you're already home and can either crawl up the stairs or crash out on the sofa. (This does not, I hasten to add, represent daily life at Curmudgeon Towers).

In contrast, you have to make some effort to get to the pub. You have to pay for each round of drinks as you get it. If you drink faster than others, it will be remarked upon; if you get drunk, or if you're under eighteen, the bar staff, if they're doing their job, won't serve you. And at the end of the evening, you have to get home again. That's not to say people can't get wrecked in pubs, but it's more difficult, more expensive and more public than doing it at home.

The pub, in short, is a "socially-controlled environment" in sociology-speak, whereas the home often isn't. Of course, the applies much less to young people's designer bars than to real pubs which appeal to all age groups.

Merry Christmas to All Our Customers
from Paul & Alex

The Gladstone

Hillgate, Stockport

Burtonwood Bitter
& Buccaneer on
handpump



Shouldn't it therefore be a central plank of public alcohol policy that, within an overall static level of consumption, the proportion of alcohol sold in the on-trade should be increased, and also that a factor in the granting and renewing of licenses should be whether establishments aim to, and do, attract customers of mixed ages? It would require some lateral thinking on the part of legislators, but it's not impossible. For starters, why does every corner shop have to have an off-licence? It's a challenge, but achieving this aim would make a significant contribution towards reducing alcohol-related problems in society, and this is something that the more responsible anti-drink lobbyists are starting to accept.

Spotting or Campaigning?

A bus-spotter's heaven is a fleet comprising a varied mixture of rare, elderly and probably unreliable buses. Such a fleet, though, is unlikely to provide a good public transport service. Similarly, a beer spotter's ideal pub, with fifteen obscure beers probably in dubious condition, does not serve most real ale drinkers well. Beer-spotting has no more to do with campaigning for real ale than bus-spotting has with campaigning for better public transport.

Erratum

Unfortunately, my argument about Irish theme pubs in last month's issue was left somewhat up in the air by the omission of the final sentence, i.e. "With a bit of luck, once the vogue for Irish pubs has passed, they'll be able to turn them into some very nice English alehouses without needing any structural work at all."

North of the Irwell

It's always good to see licensees from the area prospering when they go further afield and this couldn't be more true than of Richard Joyce, one-time manager of the Kings Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock in the days of West Coast Brewery, who is now running the George on Liverpool Road in Cadishead. Richard has succeeded in introducing a regular guest beer or two, usually chosen from amongst the less obvious regional brewers (Felinfoel and Morrells have featured), into a previously unremarkable Whitbread house. Thanks to Richard's success, the place is now being refurbished, and the "new look" George is set to open on Thursday December 5th, with a choice of real ale still very much a part of the formula for success. The pub is at the eastern end of Cadishead, and thus an easy stroll from Irlam station.

Heard at the Bar (1)

In the John Willie Lees' downstairs bar in the Arndale Centre: "Is upstairs open?" reply from customer perched at the bar - "I didn't know there was an upstairs."



GREY HORSE

Happy Christmas

from Dave
and Joan

at the Grey Horse
Reddish
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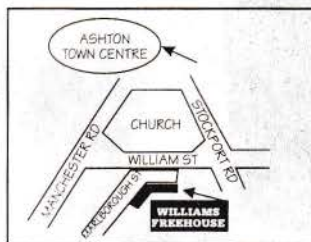
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 from Yvonne & Alison

*Robinsons Traditional Draught Beers
 at Their Best*



GOOD BEER GUIDE 1988 - 1997

TEN GLORIOUS YEARS!

STOCKPORT CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 1995

Still More Cider In The Jar...

As a post-script to last month's Cider Special, we print below a personal view by industry expert Peter Mitchell of the roles played by quality and tradition in the definition of "real" cider.

Cider: Traditional or Real?

I have just returned from a food and drink festival where we were, alongside other producers, selling cider and perry. As is typical at such events, questions were asked about "quality" and about "traditional cider": "Do you use traditional techniques when making cider?", one customer asked. NOW I must admit that I have a problem with these questions. What is meant by "traditional", and how does it link to quality? Almost implicit in the original customer's question, a link is being made between tradition and quality, the non-use of traditional techniques implying some possibly lost quality. But can I reliably produce good quality cider from exclusively traditional methods? What do I do when someone asks for "a sweet cider, please": add sugar and keep my fingers crossed that the bottle does not explode before they drink it? Add sugar and pasteurise it? Add saccharine?

There is a current debate within CAMRA associated with the definitions of cider and perry. One could expect differences of opinion between CAMRA and the major cider manufacturers, but there should be a much closer meeting of minds with the smaller-scale producers, as there seems to be with the smaller-scale brewers. Yet it was not all that long ago that CAMRA representatives were required to leave a meeting of a small-scale cider association - so where is the problem? As someone involved in trying to achieve the aim of a good quality product, and as a lecturer in cider production encouraging others to do the same, I believe that the current CAMRA definition of "real" cider does not help producers in the quest for quality and that therefore the consumer is left, sometimes, complaining about the product. Although in recent years the overall cider market has boomed, the picture is by no means rosy for the smaller producer, and quality problems do not help.

A case in point is the use of sulphur dioxide as a preservative in cider. Under the current CAMRA definition for "Category A" cider, a definition concerned with the maintenance of traditional practices, the use of sulphur dioxide is implicitly prohibited. Yet the Romans used to burn sulphur in barrels to "sweeten" them, and surveys of cider carried out early this century found levels of sulphur dioxide far in excess of those acceptable on health grounds today. So where does this leave us with the use of sulphur dioxide? Should one not use it at all in cidermaking, or should one return to the long-established tradition first used by the Romans?

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Hydes
 Anvil Ales

Brewers of
 Traditional
 Cask
 Beers

Always in
 good taste

The way, I believe, to reconcile potential contradictions between "tradition", "quality", and "allowable practice" is to accept the fact that tradition is always evolving, with our predecessors generally utilising the "best" techniques available in their day with the aim of producing a good quality product. Last century, cidemakers used to add a leg of mutton to a vat of fermenting apple juice to help prevent a "stuck" fermentation - with today's fuller understanding of the requirement of yeasts for nutrients, we can add a proprietary yeast nutrient and keep the leg of lamb for Sunday lunch! It is right and proper that organisations such as CAMRA continue to exert pressure on manufacturers to produce good quality products which do not harm the consumer and which continue to celebrate the best heritage. I have recently been asked to produce a discussion document for CAMRA's APPLE Committee concerned with definitions of cider, and my suggestions include the following aims which I now throw open to wider debate:

to promote the wider availability of draught ciders
to promote high quality products

to celebrate the regional diversity in British ciders
to educate the retail trade and public in the types of cider available
to encourage the trade to produce, stock, and distribute traditional ciders

to do all possible to encourage the production of ciders free from off-flavours, taints, and faults due to poor manufacturing methods and cellar practice

to strongly discourage the use of imported concentrated apple juice, artificial sweeteners, artificial colouring materials, extraneous carbon dioxide, and other superfluous additives
to ensure the consumer is reliably informed as to the contents and production methods utilised

CAMRA does need to accept that most producers are not just making cider as a hobby, but are aiming to make a living from it. Cidemakers, particularly the small-scale producers, do require encouragement and help to produce high quality cider and perry. I look forward to a healthy debate which, I trust, will result in a good working relationship between CAMRA and the cider producers with the ultimate goal of promoting and maintaining a fine tradition of cider and perry.

Peter Mitchell is Head of Food technology and Cider Production at Worcestershire College of Agriculture, which produces its own cider and perry under the Hindlip label. A fuller version of this article will appear in "Cider Press", CAMRA's national quarterly devoted to cider and perry.

Cider Update

Through an unaccountable oversight, last month's review of local cider pubs omitted both the Sportsman in Hyde, where a varying real cider is now available to complement the excellent selection of real ales, and the Waters Green in Macclesfield where handpumped Thatchers carries out similar duties. Humble apologies!

Jean and Martin of the Parrswood Hotel Didsbury

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Fine Cask Conditioned Ales
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Sand Bar

Sand Bar on Grosvenor Street, All Saints can probably lay claim to being the best "undiscovered" beer bar in the city.

"Where?" most of you will be saying. Well, Sand Bar opened on 9th April and for those in the know has in that short time become one of the best places to drink on the south side of the City Centre. The building is an unassuming early Victorian terraced house, which for many years housed various commercial enterprises but in the recent past had lain empty on the ground floor and housed an architects practice upstairs. It is these architects - Simon James, Stephen Gingell and John Barber - who are in fact responsible for the largely self-built Sand Bar which they developed, literally in their spare time, over a period of months prior to the opening in the Spring

Simon was one of the prime movers. He studied at Manchester Polytechnic but found that as he got older no bars around the area really catered for him. Too many bars had "character thrust upon them" whereas he wanted something that was more in tune with its surroundings. This is the basic concept behind the design of the bar which has been worked in to what was already on the site (the fact that the project didn't have a massive budget also played a part here) and the end result is as if someone had decided to turn their house into a pub

It seems to have paid off as Sand Bar is now doing very nicely indeed with a good crowd of locals drawn largely from local university and college staff and generally 25+. They are a fairly fashionable arty bunch, though - again in keeping with the general feel of the bar itself with its coloured walls, bare boards, eclectic furniture and bluesy jazz floating in the background.

The accent is firmly on the beer. On draught are three cask beers, usually drawn from local independents and micro-brewers (plus some from further afield sourced by the redoubtable Phil Spencer of Openshaw), together with a range of continental beers - Hoegaarden is a regular and of the other pumps one is dedicated to a changing Belgian beer (Palm Ale has been hugely popular) and another to German and Czech beers (Maisels Weisse was particularly good when OT called and Hofbrau Fest beer is planned for Christmas). In addition to the draught ales, there are in addition



about 50 bottled beers, mainly from Europe and largely concentrating on Belgian, German and Czech beers. The range changes from time to time but the number remains about constant.


Richard Smith is the enthusiastic manager and he is keen to see more beer drinkers use the place, although even now he still turns over at least six nine-gallon barrels a week of the British beer plus a fair amount of the rest. To this end he runs special events and mini festivals from time to time - "Phoenix week" will run from December 9, featuring all of the brewery's beers.

December will also see a new kitchen come on stream and the current menu of snacks and tapas will be augmented by hot dishes as well.

A pub selling three ever changing guest beers from regional and micro brewers together with around 50 quality bottled beers from Europe and German wheat beers and other speciality products on draught should be high on any beer enthusiast's list of places to visit on a regular basis.

Sand Bar is such a place and yet, whilst it is usually busy, its clientele is very different from the crowd you get in the city's other main beer pubs. They don't know what they're missing.

12




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GOOD BEER
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WE'RE
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9 ever changing Guest Beers

Real Cider or Perry always available

Many Interesting Continental Bottled Beers

Home Cooked Lunchtime Food

Your hosts Lorraine & Steve James

Heaton Lane, Stockport

Ploughboy Re-Opens

Some time ago we reported on the Ploughboy in Disley which closed as landlady Jean Harold couldn't afford the huge rents being demanded by brewers Vaux. Despite the closure, Jean remained in residence and now her perseverance has been rewarded. The pub was set to re-open on 7 or 8 December - with Jean as licensee!

The extremely good news comes about because Vaux have handed the pub over to Albion Pub Contracts (who will be running the pub while Vaux try and find a new tenant) and they have installed Jean as manageress.

Jean tells us that it will be business as usual at this much-missed community local. Handpumped beers will be Wards Best Bitter and a guest, as before. Jean is to be congratulated on her determination and we wish her every success.

Your Hosts
Graham &
Vera welcome
you to ...

THE RAILWAY VIEW

Byrons Lane, Macclesfield

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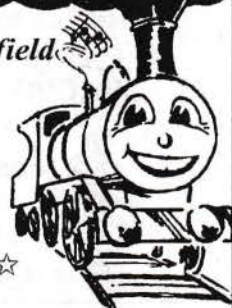
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Christmas Fayre

Food to line the stomach and drinks to warm the heart. As is traditional at this time of year, Opening Times brings you a variety of festive recipes for food and drink. Some you may want to try at home, some are perhaps only for the adventurous....

Old Tom Cake

A Christmas institution in Opening Times is this recipe for Old Tom Cake. All you need is:

4 oz butter; 4oz sugar; 1 cup dried mixed fruit; 1 nip bottle Old Tom ale; 2 cups plain flour; 1 level tsp. bicarbonate of soda; 1 level tsp. mixed spice.

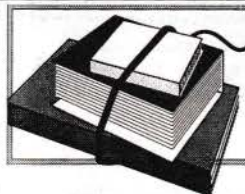
Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 4; 180C/350F. Place butter, sugar, fruit and ale into a saucepan. Melt all together and then boil for three minutes. Sieve flour, bicarbonate of soda and spice into a bowl, add fruit mixture and mix thoroughly. Transfer to a 1lb. loaf tin and bake for at least 40 minutes in the centre of the oven. Test occasionally with a skewer - if it comes out clean, the cake is done. Old Tom Cake can be eaten both cold, spread with butter, or warm with cream or custard as a pudding.

Opening Times Christmas Pudding

A dish long associated with the use of beer is Christmas Pudding. If you fancy making one yourself, why not try Opening Times' special recipe. All you need is:

8oz fresh breadcrumbs; 6oz brown sugar; 6oz currants; 8oz seeded raisins; 6 oz sultanas; 1oz mixed peel; 8oz shredded suet (vegetarian or otherwise); 1/2 tsp. salt; 1 tsp. mixed spice; grated rind of one lemon; 1/2 tbspn lemon juice; 2 eggs, beaten; 1/4 pint milk; 1/2 pint stout.

Take a large basin and mix together all the dry ingredients. Stir in the lemon juice, beaten eggs, milk and stout. Mix well and turn into either one large or two smaller pudding basins. Tie over cloths and let them stand overnight. Steam for eight hours checking from time to time to make sure there is enough water left in the pan. Either eat straight away or let cool, re-cover with a clean cloth and store in a cool place.



BOOK REVIEW



The Complete Guide to the Vale of Glamorgan's Pubs 1997, by David Matthews. Matthews Pub Guides, 72pp, £2.99.

The latest offering from the Matthews stable breaks new ground - after two successive annual volumes devoted to Cardiff, indefatigable imbibor David Matthews turns his attention to the Vale of Glamorgan, the strip of countryside just west of the Welsh capital, between the M4 and the Bristol Channel. It's a well-pubbed area, and each of the pubs gets a thorough description, together with a list of real ales sold (if any - though there are few all-keg houses here) and - an interesting touch - the pub's top three best selling drinks.

Fans of earlier Matthews guides will be on the look-out for quirky facts, and they won't be disappointed. Within these pages you will find the three Vale pubs selling pickled cockles, and the one at which the fearsome-sounding Austrian Tree Stump Game is played. The maps are exemplary, but public transport information, where applicable, would have been a useful addition.

With its witty content and clarity of presentation, this slim volume could teach even the best CAMRA guides a thing or two. An essential purchase if you're visiting the area, and highly entertaining even if you have no intention of doing so. It's on sale at bookshops in Cardiff and the Vale, or by post at £4 (including postage and packing) from Lakeside Publishing, Pen-y-Wain Lane, Roath, Cardiff CF2 3NH. RPJ.

The Thatched Tavern Reddish Sid and Ann

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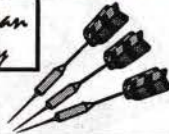
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Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Casey



The News of the World Tournament is back on the calendar. After a break of six years, the original, and most famous, darts competition of all time is to make a welcome - and much called for - renaissance.

In its heyday 15,000 spectators would pack Alexandra Palace for the final. And it has its roots in the vault of your local. Even the most illustrious of players has to qualify via a pub knock-out. Because of the playing format, 3 legs of 501, an average player has a great chance of causing an upset over the top professionals. Few of us would stand a chance against Dennis Priestley, Phil Taylor, Richie Burnett or Steve Beaton over a long match. But I could name half a dozen or more players from the area who are capable of beating these lads over the best of three legs.

The sponsors, who, in addition to the Sunday newspaper and Big D nuts, include Sky Sports, Unicorn and Kings, have put up a massive £115, 500 in prize money. The eventual winner will pick up £42,000. The top woman will pocket six grand. Go for it, Sue! There is bound to be a strong local representation in the tournament. Wouldn't it be great if Tony, Darryl or any of our leading players were to make the televised finals. They are good enough.

Perhaps the most staggering aspect of the tournament, however, is the fact that the British Darts Organisation have agreed that their registered players can face World Darts Council members without fear of suspension. Quite why this competition should be any different from others has not been fully explained by the BDO.

At least one local is still facing the flak from entry into the World Pairs at Salford. Although he did not reach the final stages, this former county player is expecting a ban from county Super League games as I write. Quite why he has been singled out for this treatment is unclear. Other players who progressed even further have not been banned. These include throwers currently representing their county. Strange. The politics of darts, which mean that many players who have WDC

connections are banned from BDO events, has reached such a farcical state that a move has been made in this area to combat the worst effects of these actions. To this end, the North West Darts Association is in the process of formation.

A similar organisation currently exists successfully in the North east, and its North Western counterpart seems an exciting proposition. It is hoped that an inter-town league will be formed. Already talks are underway with officials from places like Burnley and Morecambe. Games will be played on Sunday lunchtimes and the experienced Alan Roebuck is already searching for players to represent Stockport. Anyone who wants more information on the NWDA can contact either myself on 286 7762 or Jack Hyman on 292 1530. Alternatively, pop in and have a chat with Alan at the Crown, Hillgate.

At grass roots level, the 50th anniversary of the Stockport Licensed Houses League has started. John Parkin, from the Sir Robert Peel, has taken over from Mick Moran at the helm. "Capper" is enthusiastic and is full of great ideas to improve the league. It would be a shame if his proposals fail to happen. If the league is to progress, people like John Parkin must be listened to. It's no good doing things the old way "because that's the way they have always been done". New ideas must be followed through. John respects the need for good publicity; the success of the annual Teletaxis Open at the Bobby Peel reflects this. Getting results and tables from many darts organisers is often like getting blood out of the proverbial stone. The reverse is true of John; he is on the phone to local darts writers almost before the last dart has been thrown. Others, who often bemoan their organisation's lack of publicity, should take note.

Congratulations to Wilmslow's Paul Singer. Aged 32, Paul had never thrown a dart in anger just over a year ago. In his first full year he has guided his side, Wilmslow Flyer, into the Stockport Super League; played for Wilmslow at county Super League level; organised a successful knock-out which attracted most of the top local players at the Flyer; taken the Wilmslow Pairs title and reached the finals of both the Adswold WMC Challenge and Teletaxis Open. To mark this spectacular rise, Paul recently was awarded the most promising newcomer title by the Stockport Express Advertiser. To round off a great first year in the game, Paul received his trophy from the great Dennis Priestley.

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COME TO THE ALL YEAR ROUND BEER FESTIVAL



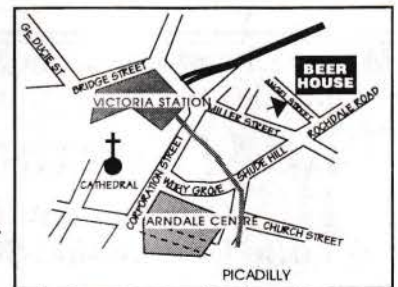
The Beer House

Angel Street, Manchester

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SOMETHING FOR EVEN THE MOST DISCERNING TASTE

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

DECEMBER '91

The opening of the Jabez Clegg was heralded on the front page as "one of the best developments on the South Manchester real ale scene for some time." It was situated on the corner of Dover Street and Portsmouth Street (just off Oxford Road opposite the University Union), and was an imaginative conversion of the former Holy Name Hall. The four regular beers were to be Marston's Pedigree, Boddington's Bitter, John Smith's Bitter, and Courage Directors.

Pub of the Month was the King's Arms, Helmshore Walk, Chorlton-on-Medlock, home of the West Coast Brewery ("of blessed memory" seems appropriate here). There was a comment that, in the past, the pub had not always, in terms of upkeep, atmosphere and service, lived up to the quality of the beer. But now, happily, all that had changed with the arrival of Simon Finch as tenant. The place had previously been run by a series of managers.

The venue for the month's musical pub review - Rhythm & Booze - was also the King's Arms, with live music on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays in the back room away from the bar. A Monday ceilidh with acoustic instruments was followed on Tuesday by Victor Brox - "unique" - and a free residency on Thursday nights. The King's Arms was highly recommended as the place to be for free live music and excellent beer, in a no nonsense boozier with a lively atmosphere.

It was reported that a new symbol had appeared amongst those used in the 1992 CAMRA Good Beer Guide - it indicated No Smoking. A survey of local pubs a bit earlier in the year had revealed that none had this facility - but since then, the Davenport Arms (Thief's Neck) at Woodford had taken the plunge. The snug on the right on the way in had been designated a no smoking room. This had proved to be extremely popular, not only with diners, but also with drinkers who simply wanted to escape from the smoky atmosphere. There was only one other pub in the branch area with a smoke-free zone, and that was the Old Mill at Cheadle Hulme. Would the idea catch on?

There were a lot of Christmas Greetings from local licensees, and another two features which tend to turn up at this time of year - recipes and old ales. Among the former were Old Tom cake, and a "hearty stew" with a strong beer content. The old ales included Old Tom, Anvil Strong, Moonraker and Sixex, all from established local breweries. The new breweries were offering Old Soporific (West Coast), Wobbly Bob (Oak), and Winter Stout (Flea & Firkin). Finally the 1991 Hillgate Crawl was to be held in reverse for the first time. It was to start at the Turners Vaults, going uphill to finish at the Blossoms. Merry Christmas!

The Red Lion WILMSLOW RD WITHINGTON

Mon. - Sat. 11 - 11

Handpulled Marstons Pedigree
Burton Bitter and Banks Mild
plus
Marstons Head Brewers Choice

★ LUNCH ★
7 DAYS A WEEK
EVENING MEALS
MON - THURS
★ 5.30 - 8.30 ★



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 . . .



STARTING THURSDAY, JAN 30TH
UNTIL SUNDAY EVENING

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

15



Irene and Staff welcome you to
The Greyhound



Bowden Street, Edgeley
**Boddingtons Mild & Bitter
and Ever Changing
Guest Beers
changed weekly**

BINGO: MON & THURS afternoons SKY TV
Merry Christmas to All our Customers
from Irene and Staff
★ OPEN ALL DAY ★



THE BOTTLE STOP

Outside Bar Services - "We're Always Open"
Tremendous Range of Xmas Beers
including King & Barnes Festive and
Old Ale on Draught



Merry Xmas to All Our Customers
Richard, Susan & David
0161 439 4904
136 ACRE LANE, BRAMHALL

Seasons Greetings
and best wishes for 1997
from Hilda and Bill
The Royal Oak
Commercial Road, Hazel Grove
Robinsons Fine Beers



16

The SPREAD EAGLE



Lower Hillgate, Stockport

A Merry Christmas to All Our
Customers From Noel and Val

"The Brewery Tap"

*Probably the Best
"Robinsons Ales"
in the World*



The Dearth of the Beer mat

- Ralph Warrington highlights an endangered
species

I cannot be absolutely certain, but I feel sure that I cannot be the only regular pub-goer to have noticed the perplexing disappearance of the beer mat from many of our pubs. Of course there are places which have never used them (in my memory at least), but in nearly all the urban pubs which I have visited they have been ubiquitous, however over the last two years they have started to disappear at an alarming rate, from all manner of establishments - much to my, and I am sure many other people's annoyance.

Beer mats, drip mats, coasters, whatever you call them, have been around for well over a hundred years in pubs and serve many functions: score cards for card games, postcards, competition forms, tap room Frisbees (OK, I know that this can be rather annoying), table-wobble removers, brewery advertising medium - they even soak up spilt beer. This last item is of course their *raison d'être*, and very good they are at it, too. Yet in this day of the swan-necked pump with a tight sparkler, where untrained/incapable/Australian staff routinely cause beer to cascade liberally down the outside of your glass, the one thing which can soak it up has been removed from your table. So, unless you remember to dry the bottom on a handy bar towel, if such exists on the bar, you are forced to either endure drips down your clothes upon each mouthful, or to drink your pint in such a manner as to give the impression that you are trying to cure a bout of hiccups.

The excuses for this non-availability of the mat range from "the brewery don't/won't/can't supply them" (rubbish) to the laughable "we don't want those messy items in this public house". This latter absurdity I find particularly annoying, as the landlord gives the impression that beer mats are a feature of scruffy boozers, which have to be cleared up continually, yet their absence inevitably leads to tables awash with the overspill of glasses, which in a busy pub transforms tables into fair representations of the Nile Delta, and when combined with polyurethane varnished table tops, which turn white when wet, soon give the impression that you are standing your glasses in piles of snot - very upmarket. The simple fact that these matophobes have failed to grasp is that the beer mat is an eminently sensible item whose use transcends class barriers. I am sure that if you were invited into the average stockbroker's home and had the temerity to place your glass of beverage down directly onto his Queen Anne table without recourse to a coaster you would stand a good chance of getting a Nine-Iron wrapped around your head.

Furthermore, in this age of corporate identity, I cannot believe that breweries are condoning or promoting this activity, and thus missing out on reminding us of what we are, or what they would prefer us to be, drinking. Mats are cheap to produce and distribute, and attractive designs are decorative, and can undoubtedly enhance the appearance of a pub interior; some people even collect them because of the designs. I personally collect them, but for a different reason - so as to have a stock to use, and then leave behind, in pubs which don't provide their own mats, as I am fed up of asking bar staff for mats and receiving the sort of look that would suggest I had grown another head. So come on landlords, stop messing about and get mats back on the tables for all our benefit.



**December
Featured Pub:
The Junction, Mossley Rd,
Ashton-under-Lyne**

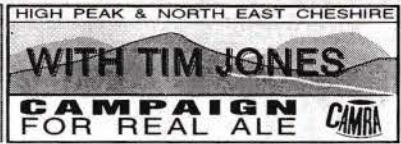


The Junction is an attractive stone pub of great character at the junction of Gorse Lane with Mossley Road close to Ashton golf course. It dates from the first half of the nineteenth century and comprises a bar, vault, lounge and separate pool room. It appears largely unaltered and any changes have done nothing to detract from the traditional pub feel. The bar is low ceilinged with a welcoming atmosphere and is the heart of the pub (access to all other rooms is from here). The vault is basically furnished, it has a hatch to the bar, a darts board and TV. The lounge, by contrast, is comfortably appointed with walls covered in photos and paintings of local landmarks and views, some of which are for sale. A screen at the door creates a private air and with well-polished tables this is definitely the posh room!

The inclusion of Frederics into the standard Robinsons range of Best Bitter and Hatters Mild has been a success and has remained on the bar when a lot of pubs in the area only flirted with the premium brew. The quality of the beers, all on handpump, is consistently good and has been rewarded by an entry in the 1997 Good Beer Guide - some feel that this is overdue recognition for a well-run pub and perhaps Good Beer Guide allocations can be blamed for the delay in its inclusion. Lunches are served to complement the liquid refreshment making the Junction a ideal venue for walkers or trippers to Hartshead Pike. A better stop off than the large new Hartshead Inn just up the road for drinkers who like their pubs more in the traditional style and human scale.

A large car park is available just beyond the pub (on the Mossley side) and buses from Ashton run up Mossley Road almost to the door. "Well worth a visit" as guides would have it! **TJ.**

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



A traditional beginning...an apology for mis-reported pub news...my turn for discipline from the OT disciplinary committee.

It was reported that the Rose & Crown in Glossop was being converted to Paddy Mulligans. As everybody knows this should have read the Corner Cupboard and not Rose & Crown (which is shut, incidentally and rumoured to be a new acquisition for Royal Free Houses though this has yet to be confirmed).

The Pot of Beer - sister pub to Williams in Ashton-under-Lyne - has recently been "Woodied" and will be selling Black Bull Brewery Bitter in the near future.

The Romiley Arms (Romiley) has recently raised its minimum age limit to 21 years and over - so don't expect any surveys from High Peak members for a few years or so (who do you think you're kidding? - ed.).

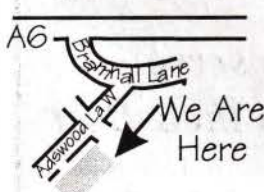
In Flowery Field, Hyde - the Bank Cottage has come to the end of the line - Paramount Inns have recently gained permission to demolish the long closed pub and to redevelop the plot for residential purposes.

Both the Marstons pubs in Droylsden, the Bowling Green and the Strawberry Gardens, now sell the low-gravity, £1-a-pint Marstons "house beer".

Geoff Williamson adds: After a period of closure for a much needed refurbishment, the Albert in Disley reopened at the end of October. The owners, Vaux, are rumoured to have spent in the region of £60,000 on the work, which is a model example of how a brewery should undertake a tasteful refurbishment of a traditional pub. Despite being on the main A6, the Albert is likely to continue to be mainly a locals' pub, and the revamp has retained the original features whilst repairing and renewing the complete interior to bring back the original quality yet retain the character. Vaux should be congratulated for this project as should the new tenants Sally and Paul if they had a hand in the improvements. Current beers are Vaux Mild and Samson plus Wards Bitter, all on handpump.

Many pubs have "happy hours" or similar discounted periods featuring special offers at times of the day when trade is lower. Seldom have I come across an offer as good as that currently on offer at the beehive in New Mills. This unpretentious little locals' pub on Albion Road which didn't open too early at one time now offers early session drinkers a good deal. All the handpumped cask beers - Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers IPA, and the guest beers (Wadworth 6X at the time of writing) are all offered at £1 a pint from 11am-1pm Monday-Saturday (12-1pm Sundays) and 5.30-8.30pm Monday-Friday 97-8.30pm Saturdays and Sundays). Well worth a visit if you are in the area.

**SOUTHLANDS HOTEL &
COPPERFIELDS BAR**



- ★ FUNCTIONS
- ★ 29 BEDROOMS, 16 EN-SUITE
- ★ PUBLIC BAR
- ★ FREE HOUSE
- ★ TRADITIONAL BEERS

-SUPERB HOME-COOKED
FOOD LUNCHTIMES &
EVENINGS

5 Different Cask Ales
Live Entertainment Saturdays

The Victoria

Hall Street, Offerton

Greenalls Mild & Bitter,
Stones Bitter

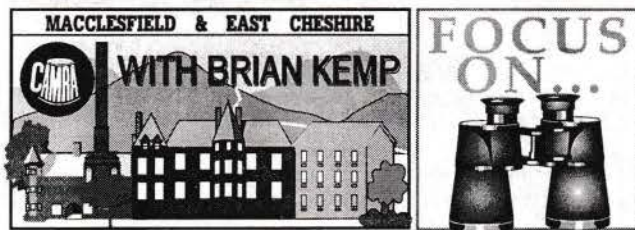
All Cask Conditioned

BAR SNACKS AVAILABLE

Your Hosts

Ian & Christine

Tel: (0161) 480 3983



The Castle Inn, Churchwallgate, Macclesfield

I said last month that the Harrington Arms in Gawsworth was a perfect example of what a rural village pub was like during the inter-war period. The castle is its urban equivalent. It is a gem right in the middle of Macclesfield. It is not that easy to find if you are not familiar with the town although it is no more than two minutes walk from the railway station. Walk across Waters Green, which is the large car park across the road from the station, and up the steep cobbled hill to the right. This is known to all locals as Churchwallgate although it is now officially named Church Street. You will pass Reeds Rains estate agents on your left and then there is a tiny road on the left that joins Churchwallgate with Backwallgate. The Castle is just on the right.

Its external appearance and internal charm lead many to believe that it the oldest pub in Macclesfield but I am assured by usually reliable sources that this is not the case. That honour I believe goes to the Bate Hall on Chestergate. The Castle looks tiny from the outside but is, in fact, a deceptively large pub. As you enter there is a very small vault through a door on the right. Continue down the passage through the internal door and you will find the main lounge on your right, a large separate lounge on the left, and a further elevated sitting area up some steps at the end. This part of the pub has a sort of conservatory feel to it as a result of the glass roof at the top of the stairs to the private accommodation.

With the exception of the opening up to the public of the elevated sitting room at the back, The Castle is unaltered in the 22 years I have lived in Macclesfield and I would imagine for much longer than that. There have been persistent rumours in recent years of plans to convert it into a wine bar or bistro. Although God knows why! The centre of town is crawling with the places already! Whereas the Castle is a quiet oasis where you would not imagine that you are only a stone's throw from the main shopping area of the town.

Part of the wall on Backwallgate adjacent to The Castle is supposedly the original wall of what was known as Macclesfield Castle which, if my local history serves me correctly, was a

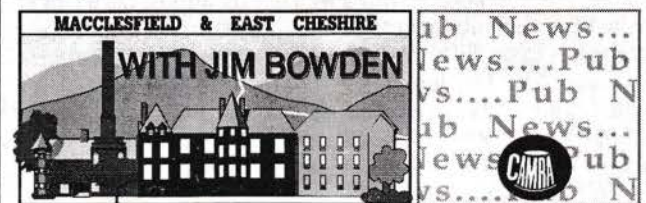
substantial fortified house that was built for the Earl of Buckingham. I believe it stood on the site of what is now Mothercare on Mill Street. Legend has it that the Castle Inn is connected by underground passages to other strategic parts of the town like the market place and Town Hall. Whether it's true I have no idea, but it's a good story.

No description of the Castle would be complete without mentioning landlord, Roland (Roly) Smith. He has come to the pub via a number of other town pubs. He probably will not thank me for saying this but he is actually a very nice bloke. It's just that he likes to cultivate an image of surliness and contempt. Don't be deceived!

The Castle used to be a Ansells pub and, presumably, before that it must have been Lonsdale & Adshead's. However it is now owned by one of the new pub companies, The Second Pub Company of Chorley. Roly tells me he hardly ever sees anybody from the company and I really wonder whether they appreciate what a classic pub they own. The beer is currently Theakstons Mild and Bitter and Courage Directors, all on handpump. There is a simple selection of food available at lunchtimes but don't expect a menu.

The Castle has a timeless atmosphere that has to be experienced to be understood. The National Executive of CAMRA seemed to appreciate it when they had a Branches Committee in Macclesfield in 1977. There are plenty of bigger and busier pubs near the railway station but if I had to wait for a train then the Castle would be my favoured waiting room every time!

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The Dun Cow at Ollerton, Knutsford, a Greenalls pub is at present closed for refurbishment. This means that the small rooms that were there before will have gone and it will be one big open space. It reopens first week in December.

The landlord of the Crag, Wildboarclough, a free house, left on 21st November.

The Crown, Bollington, a Banks's pub, is also being refurbished.

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.

The Waters Green Tavern



96 Waters Green,
Macclesfield,
Cheshire SK11 6LH
Tel: 01625 422653

opposite the Railway Station

Ever Changing Guest Beers including:
Enville, Icen, Church End, Tom Wood, Mansfield,
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Your Hosts Brian and Tracey
Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

George & Dragon

Kevin and Ros

wish all their customers a very Merry
Christmas and a Happy New Year



*Continuing to serve
Robinsons beers at their Best*

Sunderland St, Macclesfield

ROYAL OAK

DIDSBURY

**Ye Olde Admiral Rodney
Prestbury**

*Robinsons Hatters Mild
and Best Bitter on
handpump*

**Lunchtime Bar Snacks
12-2.30 Mon-Sat**

*Peter and Gail
welcome you*

Tel: 01625 828078

Bakers Vaults
MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

Robinson's Fine Ales

**superb cuisine
including
traditional
Sunday Lunch**

**LIVE MUSIC MOST EVENINGS
BOOGIE CLUB SUNDAY NIGHT**

TEL: 480 3182

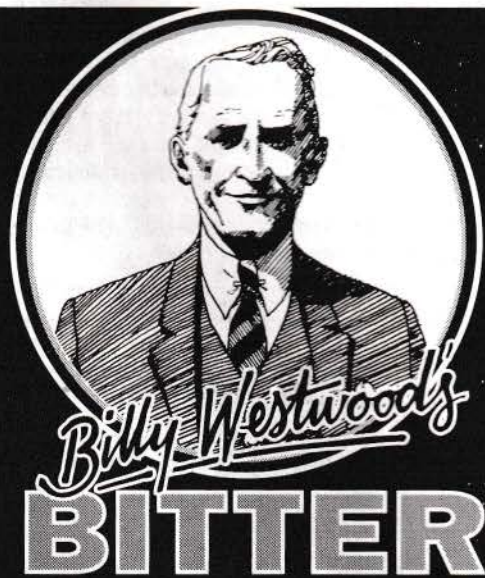
THE CASTLE

OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
NOW SERVING THE **COMPLETE**
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!

Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
Hatters Mild, Dark Mild,
Frederics, Old Tom and Hartleys

**A WARM WELCOME
AND FINE BEER IN
A CLASSIC PUB**

Billy's back by popular demand!



**SAME TRADITIONAL
TASTE, STILL GOOD
OLD~FASHIONED
VALUE!**

The winning good~value quality bitter is back. Light and clean tasting, it's named after Billy Westwood, who was with us for 52 years and became a legendary mashroom foreman.

ESTD 1863 HYDES ANVIL BREWERY ESTD 1863



The Grapes

Castle Street Edgeley



Seasons Greetings to
all our customers
from Dave, Sandra and
all the staff



Robinsons Fine Ales



20

Jolly Crofter

Castle Street, Edgeley

Merry Christmas to all our customers
from Jane, Roy and all the staff



Vaux Samson on handpump

Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year
to all our customers from
Pat, Dinx and all the Staff

Royal Oak

High Street, Stockport
Robinsons Ales



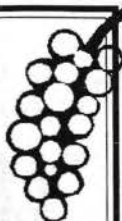
The Grapes

London Road, Hazel Grove

Elaine and George
and all the staff

wish all their customers
and friends

a very merry Christmas
anda happy New Year
Robinsons Fine Ales



New Olde Vic



Ye Olde Vic in Edgeley has reopened after a very short period of closure during which it was redecorated and repainted.

As OT readers will know this long-standing Stockport free house is now owned by Glen Geldard who, together with manager Val Morris (who has a great deal of experience looking after cask beers), aims to re-establish trade at this once very busy pub.

There have been no structural alterations and apart from the redecoration, the only really noticeable change is on the bar. Some eyebrows were raised just after the pub reopened as one of the handpumps was for keg Scrumpy Jack - luckily Glen was having none of that and, despite some apparent reluctance on the part of Bulmers, this has now been replaced by a proper keg dispenser. There are usually four cask beers on sale - since the reopening these have been Theakstons Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, Morlands Old Speckled Hen and Youngers No. 3. Whilst the Theakstons will be permanent the others may change, although for the time being these will be sourced via Scottish Courage, although they will not necessarily be Scot Courage beers - Ruddles County and Charles Wells Bombardier are in the pipeline.

Long-time aficionados of the Vic will doubtless find this disappointing when compared to the exotica which the pub used to specialise in. However, there can be little doubting Glen's commitment to cask beer, and to the future of the pub - only after Kay Ord had got the Vic onto a proper footing was she able to branch out into the more unusual reaches of the guest beer scene and we are sure Glen will be similarly adventurous once trade has built up. To encourage this a variety of events are planned - already the Tuesday night quizzes are proving a success, and occasional live music and feature music nights are also in the pipeline.

It's early days yet but the Vic certainly seems to be in a safe pair of hands and we wish Glen every success.

The Anchor

London Road, Hazel Grove

Jan and Dave

would like to wish all
their customers

a very happy Christmas and
a prosperous New Year



**OPENING TIMES 'NAME THE PUB' QUIZ
SPONSORED BY PORTER BREWING**

Co. LTD

1 Round About Here is this pub.

2 A Bonny Place to Hide or Drink in
Didsbury

3 Not a Pub TOO
FAR and worth the
visit

4 First of 'The Bill' in
Edgeley

5 Find the Duenna in the
Heatons, Imagine That.

6 Did his pet enjoy the
Panto - Ask Richard

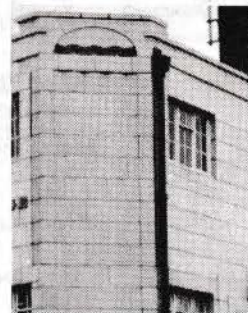
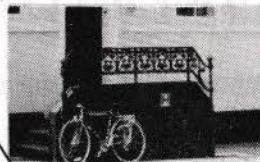
7 This part is not on
the menu - but the

rest could be - mm
delicious

8 Make for the Station and Travel On.

9 Name The Pub

10 Name The Pub



**HYDES
ANVIL
ALES**

**The
Star Inn**

**Traditional Cask
Conditioned
Mild &
Bitter**

13 High Street, Cheadle
Tel Bar: 282 5896

Eric, Nora and all the Staff
wish their customers
a Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year
**Billy Westwoods
from £1 a pint**

**Happy
Times**
Mon - Fri
3.30 - 8pm
Sat 5 - 7pm
Sun 1 - 2 & 5 - 7pm

**Home Made Food
Served
Mon - Sat
12 - 2**

Prizes - Porters Sweat Shirt &
T-Shirts for the first correct
answers drawn.. Answers to be
handed in over the bar at The
Railway, 1 Avenue St, off Gt
Portwood St, Portwood
before January 1st, or
sent to John Clarke,
45 Bulkeley St.,

Edgeley SK3 9HD to arrive by Jan 1st.
Winners will be notified early January.

**GOOD LUCK and
MERRY CHRISTMAS**
to All Our Readers

**COPY DATE FOR JANUARY ISSUE
IS DECEMBER 24**



**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!

December 96

Monday 9th - Social: Stalybridge Station Buffet (meet in Q if Buffer still closed). Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 12th - Monthly branch meeting and Christmas Quiz. Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. Sandwiches will be provided.

Monday 16th - Social: Moss Rose, Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 19th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Coach & Horses, Hyde Road, Belle Vue.

Friday 20th - Famous Annual Hillgate Stagger. Starts 7.00pm Queens Head (Turners Vaults 0, Underbank; 8.30 Red Bull, Hillgate; Finish in Blossoms.

Monday 23rd - Social: Bulls Head, London Road, Manchester City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

Monday 6th January - Withington Social: Old House at Home, 9.00pm; Orion, 10.00pm. Both on Burton Road.

Thursday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting - Kingsway, Levenshulme. Starts 8.00pm.

December 96

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

Monday 9th - Monthly branch meeting at the Sportsmans, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 14th - Branch Christmas trip to Sheffield including Cask & Cutlet and the Fat Cat. Contact Frank Wood for details on 01457 865426.


Wednesday 8th January - Trip to Lees Brewery. Details from Frank Wood.

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

Monday 16th - Monthly branch meeting, The Castle, Churchwallgate, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

Diary
To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

22



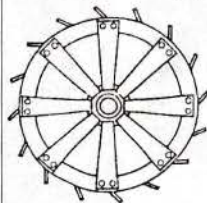
Now Under New Management with your hosts
Jon and Judi Laidlaw

Five guest beers at any time including

LAPSIERS
Choice
TRADITIONAL "HANDPUMP" BEERS

changed fortnightly

Food available 12 - 9 every day
Quiz Nights Tuesday and Thursday



- t h e -
OLD
- m i l l -

Open 12-11,
Mon - Sat,
12-10.30 Sunday

Mill Lane, Cheadle Hulme
Tel: 0161 488 4090

Claire and Howard wish all their friends
and customers a Happy Christmas



WE'RE IN THE GOOD BEER GUIDE '97

KENNEDY STREET
MANCHESTER'S
1st FESTIVAL ALE HOUSE

9 HANDPUMPS - 6 GUEST ALES
FOOD 11.30-2.30 & 5-7 Mon-Fri
and 11.30 - 2.30 Saturday
CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF
HIGHEST QUALITY GUEST ALES

MANCHESTER MATTERS

The Midland on Hyde Road in Gorton - right outside Belle Vue station, which means I walk past it twice every weekday - reopened after a brief and minor refurbishment having gained two handpumps on the bar. One supposedly sells Draught Bass, though when I called this was unavailable, and nobody seemed to know when it might come on. The other sells keg Cidermaster. I shall continue to walk past.



by Rhys Jones

Further out in Gorton, the **Pomona** has dropped Courage Directors in favour of Morlands Old Speckled Hen on handpump. And back in the Belle Vue area, the **Travellers Call** and the **Pineapple** were two early and enthusiastic stockists of Hydes' Billy Westwood's Bitter. It's great to see this fine beer back, even if at a slightly less bargain-basement price this time round, and it should be in most of the tied estate by the time you read this. Two pubs which have decided against it, though, are the **Albert** in Rusholme and the **Grey Horse** in the City Centre (I intend no criticism of either pub - indeed the brewery are to be congratulated for not forcing the beer on licensees who aren't convinced it's right for their particular pattern of trade). In Ardwick, the **Old House at Home**, keg in its last months, has now closed, while the **Railway** in Openshaw is once more selling Holts Mild on handpump. In Hulme, the **Old Abbey** now has a guest from the Vaux list on handpump. **Bonaparte's**, on Piccadilly Station, now appears to be using its third handpump, alongside the Bass and John Smiths, to dispense a changing guest beer. Don't get too excited, though - Wadworths 6X is about as enterprising as it's got so far! Also in the City Centre, the **Bank** has lost its Greenalls Original and its guest beers, though handpumped Tetley Bitter survives alongside its "smooth" keg equivalent. Of course, if the persistent rumours of a "Firkin" conversion here prove true, handpumps will doubtless be back in strength - such are the mysteries of pub-chain marketing! Finally, the **Manor House** in Withington has reverted to its original name, the **Golden Lion**. The layout is little changed, but the rear of the pub is now largely given over to dining - the pub is a member of Allied Domecq's Big Steak chain. Right at the back there's a "Wacky Warehouse" children's play area, while adult customers can enjoy Tetley Bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale, and Marstons Pedigree on handpump.

Stay Safe - Don't Drink and Drive this Christmas

As a reader of Opening Times you will know that alcohol is very much part of the world we live in. Have one drink too many and the only things that normally suffer are your head and stomach. But combine driving with your drinking and you have a lethal cocktail which could have a lasting effect - on your own and other people's lives. Each year in Britain some 800 people die in road accidents involving drivers or motorcycle riders over the legal limit. Up to 19% of all drivers and riders killed are over the legal limit; and around 50% at night between the hours of 10pm and 4am.

The more you drink, the greater the problem. Just one drink will impair your driving performance. Twice the legal limit of alcohol in your blood and you are at least 30 times more likely to have an accident.

Contrary to popular opinion, alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the processes occurring in the brain and makes you less alert but at the same time gives you a strong but false sense of confidence. The more you drink, the more your brain is affected and the greater your chances of having an accident.

Alcohol slows down your reactions

Alcohol affects your judgement

Even one drink will affect your performance

Those who believe that sticking to beer or cider will stop them going over the limit are sadly mistaken. It's not the type of drink that's important, it's the total amount of alcohol it contains. Alcohol takes effect quickly and wears off slowly. Once you've had a drink, there is nothing you can do to reduce the level of alcohol in your blood.

Exercise doesn't work

Nor does black coffee

Nor medicines of any kind

Nor vitamins

The only thing that will reduce the level of alcohol in your blood is time. And a long time at that. The body gets rid of alcohol from the bloodstream at a very slow rate - equivalent to about half a pint of beer in every hour. If you have been on a long or late drinking session, you might still be over the limit the morning after, or even at lunchtime.

How to Avoid the Problem

Plan in advance. Take a minibus or taxi. Use public transport. If you can't arrange a lift home, then fix up somewhere to stay. If you are in a group decide among yourselves that whoever will be driving will not drink for the evening. Drink soft drinks. **Don't be a statistic the Christmas. Don't drink and drive. For once the cliché is right. Drinking and driving really does wreck lives.**

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