

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
156

FREE

APRIL 1997

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The Gloves Come Off

The short measure scam, highlighted in last month's Opening Times, has now become a national row and an election issue. Last month CAMRA released the findings of a national survey on short measure pints after writing to every Trading Standards department in the country asking for details of their surveys of local pubs. The results came as something of a shock. The survey found that:

- ◆ 80% of pubs sold short measure pints
- ◆ local surveys found that at least a quarter of pints were below the industry guideline that a pint should be at least 95% liquid
- ◆ Trading Standards officers are not taking action because of legal uncertainty
- ◆ There is widespread support for the introduction of lined glasses

"We knew things were bad, but this survey has surprised even us" CAMRA's Ben Wardle told Opening Times. "Our survey shows 8 in 10 pints aren't pints at all, this costs drinkers a million pounds a day." He continued "Our great concern is that the industry's own code of practice is being flouted. The survey revealed 1 in 4 pints below the industry's guideline of 95% liquid. This should be an absolute minimum but is in danger of becoming the norm."

With election fever rampant when the survey was released, the political parties were swift to react. Labour's shadow trade and industry minister Nigel Griffiths said his party wanted to re-instate Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act which stated a pint should be a pint of liquid with the head extra. He said the aim was to not only guarantee a full liquid pint for the customer but also expected long-term savings in the industry by eliminating the problem of over-spill. "Consumers don't want to listen to broken promises any more - they just want a fairer deal. This move will provide them with that," he said.

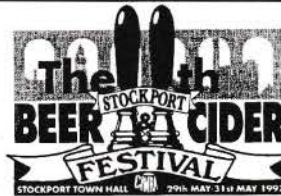
The move was swiftly condemned by trade observers who described it as a political move to win votes and by the Tories who said the real issue was Labour's minimum wage proposals which they claim would add 10p to the price of a pint.

Trade representatives were also quick to defend their corner with the same tired and discredited arguments they trotted out last time politicians threatened to implement Section 43 (which you may recall, was the Tories just before the last election) -

- "...it could lead to a situation where all beer would have to be served through metered or electric pumps" TWADDLE! This is the argument trotted out by the big brewers last time....only for them to admit later that this wouldn't happen
- "...the change would cost the industry millions of pounds in new glasses". TRIPE! Allow a long lead-in time (say 12-18 months) and most pubs would replace their glasses over that period anyway due to natural wastage. In some areas a new case of glasses a week due to breakages is not uncommon.
- "Bringing in lined glasses could rebound (on CAMRA) with pubs deciding against selling cask conditioned beers and opting instead for the smooth flow brews and kegs served on meter without wastage" BILGE! Many drinkers want cask beer and any pub ignoring that demand would be committing commercial suicide.
- "...it will be impossible for licensees to train bar staff to handpull pints exactly up to the line on a glass" DRIVEL! If CAMRA's volunteer and amateur bar staff at beer festivals can manage it, so can the professionals.

In fact, industry scaremongering about prices is torpedoed by the facts. Independent brewers Banks's (who we featured last month) use over-sized glasses as a matter of policy yet not only are they a highly profitable regional company but in many areas their prices are lower than their competition.

Short measure is an institutionalised scam which has been exposed once and for all. Trade representatives are squirming because they know they've been rumbled. Let the last word go to a local licensee. Just prior to opening he couldn't find the sparklers (the nozzles that create the head) for the handpumps. His reported words say it all "I can't open without my sparklers - how will I keep my margins up?" Let the apologists for short measure defend that!



Arrangements are now well in hand for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again sponsored by the Stockport Express Advertiser.

As usual we have a first class line-up of entertainment for you starting on the Thursday evening with

a welcome return of a popular band from last year's festival, **The Winchesters**. From them you will have a taste of honky tonk, jump jive and boogie woogie!

On Friday lunchtime we have a trio named **Johnny Friendlies** formed about eight years ago. The music they play can be classed as American roots music. Friday night is always the busiest of the festival and this year the crowds will be entertained by **Strangers in Town**. No strangers to the north west, though, they drive a rocking road through the blues to country.

The Saturday lunchtime session is taken up by a traditional country dance band, **Enoch's Hammer**, who also perform ceilidhs. To see us out on Saturday night we have another known band, **Biggles Wartime Band**. Good time jug-band music from these masters of the unusual in the vein of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band.

Entertainment Manager Lorraine Chlebicki told us "These bands make up a great array of music for this year's festival, along with the beer and cider of course!"

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will be held in the Ballroom at Stockport Town Hall from May 29 - 31.

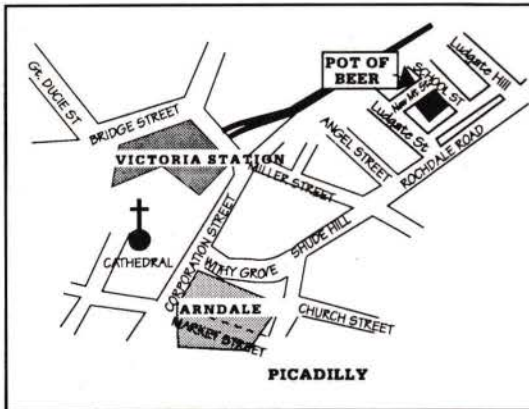
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The election campaign will be in full swing by the time you read this and so no apologies are made for re-printing details of CAMRA's election manifesto. We should all question our local candidates on these issues but while we will note what they say we should beware of promises made in the heat of the campaign.

Five years ago the Tories were pledging to legislate for the full pint and nothing happened. Labour say they will do the same thing - a case of history repeating itself? What is repeating itself are the nonsensical claims of the industry as they try and fend off the implementation of section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act. A variety of spokesmen are trotting out the same old rubbish as they attempt to defend the indefensible - let's hope this time they don't get away with it.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The actions of the Greenalls Group really do beggar belief at times. We thought we'd seen it all when they knocked down Tommy Ducks in the middle of the night. Now it looks as though the Crown on Heaton Lane, a flagship pub if ever there was one, is going to be sacrificed in the name of.....well, what? It's difficult to find words to describe this that aren't libellous. Suffice it to say that this is a decision that Greenalls are almost certain to come to regret, but of course it will be too late by then.

John Clarke

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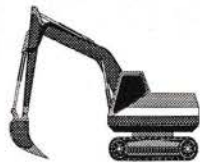
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GREENALLS CORNER



Grotty Greenalls Do It Again

Greenalls shake-up of their managed pubs division looks set to see the departure of well-known faces both in the pubs and at head office.

At head office, the shock departure is that of marketing director Ric Cowan who has left to pursue 'other business interests'. Ric always struck Opening Times as a safe pair of hands on the beer front and his departure must be seen as a major blow. His replacement is former MD of Greenalls off-licence chain, Nader Haghghi. He has a hard act to follow.

On the pub front some 245 managed houses are being transferred over to the tenanted franchise estate. 153 of these are in the north and local pubs involved include the Three Crowns, Heaton Norris, where Les and Pauline Brown are to be replaced by a franchised tenant, despite only being in the pub for over a year, and the Comfortable Gill, King Street West, Stockport, where Peter and Carmel Belfield are threatened as their pub also becomes a franchise tenancy. They, too, have been in post less than a year.



The highest profile pub affected, though, must be the Crown on Heaton Lane, Stockport where Lorraine and Steve James have also been given notice. The Crown is one of the last of the former Boddington Ale Houses to offer an unlimited range independently sourced guest beers and under Steve and Lorraine's expert management has become something of an institution on the local drinking scene and a 'must' for visitors to the town. The fact that such dedication, enthusiasm and hard work apparently count for so little, just about says it all as far as Greenalls are concerned.

The pubs are being initially offered to their managers to take on as franchises and the company has promised managers taking up the offer a package to help them raise the capital required. That is all well and good as far as standard pubs go. With the Crown it's a slightly different matter - as we went to press it was unclear as to whether Greenalls had listened to Steve and Lorraine who argued forcibly that if the pub lost its constantly changing guest beers then it also lost most of its trade. If the guests go, so do Steve and Lorraine. And so do the customers. Perhaps the Greenalls management have forgotten that the Crown only became an alehouse because it wasn't working as a standard pub. This probably cuts little ice with Greenalls who can evidently see no further than their balance sheet - they will probably be able to persuade some poor sap to take it on and then plummet into bankruptcy. And we will be the first to say - "we told you so".

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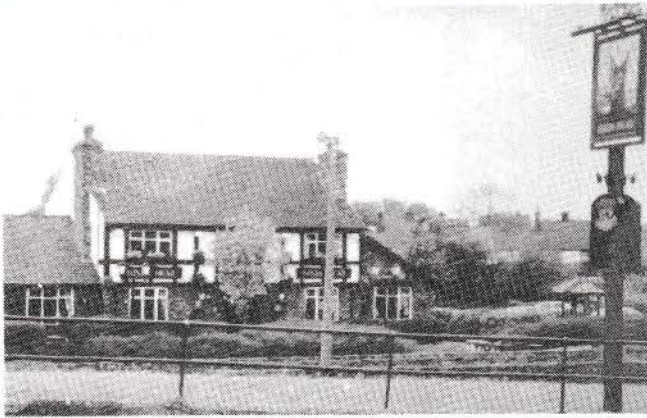
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Pub Of The Month

APRIL



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		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 Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel has been chosen as CAMRA's Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month.

Winner of a Civic Society award for its architectural enhancement of the area, the pub was built on the site of the unlamented Poco Poco club. After a slightly chequered start, with a reputation for high prices under two short term managers, Alan and June Preston took over as tenants six months after opening, some 9 years ago, and have made the pub very much their own in the years since.

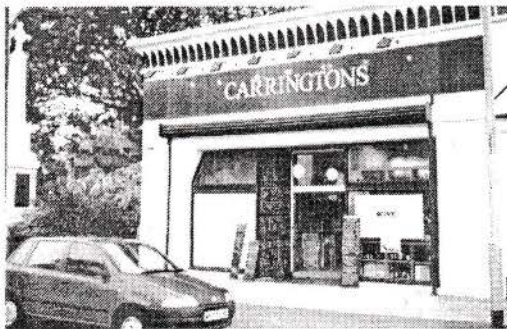
Known for its good food, served in the conservatory restaurant, with a comprehensive set menu and adventurous specials, and its excellent buffets for private functions, the Hinds Head remains at heart a community pub, and under Alan's diligent stewardship has become a true Ale House.

There are now six cask beers: Higsons, Castle Eden, Fullers London Pride, Marstons Pedigree, Taylors Landlord and a rotating guest, and two mini beer festivals are held each year.

Uniquely in Greater Manchester, the Hind's Head is a Whitbread Pub, not branded as an ale house - such as a 'Hogshead' - that not only continually increases its traditional beer sales, BUT ALSO gets a well deserved entry in the 1997 Good Beer Guide. The pub is open plan, but is well divided into a number of discrete areas, all of which have a very definite smart and lounge feel.

Alan and June collected their first pub of the month award three years ago this month, when they were resisting attempts by Whitbread to convert the pub to managed house status, and throw them out of their home. With a lot of help, and divisions within Whitbread itself, they won that long fight, and have used the three years since to make the pub an even greater success. The evening is certain to be enjoyable, and busy, with all cask ales at substantially discounted prices after 8pm, so do come along on Thursday 24th April when good beer, and a good time can be guaranteed. *The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.*

4



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Bass To Drop Tetley Buyout?

As we went to press it was being reported that Bass was preparing to scrap its proposed merger with Carlsberg-Tetley. According to newspaper reports, the conditions imposed by the Monopolies Commission appear too onerous to make the deal worthwhile and are understood to include the partial or complete disposal of the Bass Lease Company which operates more than 1400 pubs. The MMC was due to hand its recommendations to the Department of Trade & Industry at the end of March and the intervention of the election means that no pronouncement of the reports conclusions is expected until early May.

Bass agreed to take control of Carlsberg-Tetley last August and ran into a storm of protest from CAMRA and others who saw this as further unwelcome concentration in the industry which would inevitably lead to the loss of jobs, beers and breweries together with higher prices. Bass paid Allied Domecq £200 million for its half-share in Carlsberg-Tetley and Danish brewer Carlsberg agreed to contribute its half for a 20% interest in the merged company. If the deal falls through, Bass will sell its half share to Carlsberg and other brewers are drawing up plans to open talks with the Danish company as there is the fear that if left to fend for itself, it will embark on a price war. Bass are saying nothing claiming the reports are pure speculation.

JOIN CAMRA IN 1997! Form Page 19

OPENING TIMES LETTERS



From Rhys P Jones:

One issue not raised in your feature on Banks's (OT, March), no doubt because none of us involved in dialogue with the brewery was aware of it at the time, was the price charged for "smoothpour" keg mild.

I recently discovered that at the Longsight, Belle Vue, which switched from cask to smoothpour mild early this year, the price increased from £1.22 for cask to £1.50 for smoothpour. This massive 23% increase, around 10 times the current rate of inflation, has the ludicrous result that mild is 17p more expensive than bitter. As the Longsight is a managed house, this increase is entirely the responsibility of the brewery, not the licensee; indeed, it seems likely that, in houses in a higher price band than the Longsight, the mild will be even more expensive.

When we went to Banks's, they were at pains to point out that smoothpour is much the same as cask mild bar a few differences when it comes to packaging and dispense. If that's the case, why is it so much more expensive? Or is smoothpour being used as an excuse to rip off the customers?

From Alan Gardner:

Ralph Warrington, Ian Muldoon and any other like-minded people should note that the BBCS (British Beer Mat Collectors' Society) are holding a meeting at the Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham, on 26 April at 12 noon. There will be new issues, an auction and a raffle (with prizes for all). Good ale, good food, good crack and then a visit to the Manchester 'Beer Quarter'.

From Neil Kellett:

It is a pity that the care shown by Peter Barnes about pub interiors did not extend to his choice of words in his insensitive outburst in referring to the "wreck of The Printers" (OT - March). Yes, the Printers changed in 1976 and again several years ago when it was extended to include modern toilets, catering kitchen, garden drinking area and conservatory. At the insistence of the licensee the old lounge was retained as a games room which is the home of the darts "Super League" team. The Printers is a community pub run by the Turner family since 1981 and is very popular - try to get in on a Friday evening! It provides what CAMRA has been campaigning for over the last quarter century - good real ale from a local brewery, at a fair price, in oversized glasses and served with a smile by Phyllis and her family during all permitted hours.

If Peter Barnes wants a traditional Victorian theme pub let him go to Tetley's Brewery Wharf in Leeds or the Beamish Museum. However, unlike the Printers, these places have not been presented with 10-year Good Beer Guide or CAMRA's Pub of the Month awards.

Perhaps Peter would like to meet me one Friday evening in the Printers so that we can discuss the one item missing from his letter - BEER! (Neil was the founder treasurer of the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA in January 1974, founded in The Printers Arms, Cheadle. He has been a regular at the pub for over 35 years - ed)

From Jim Flynn:

I refer to your front page article in March's OT, and have to say I believe you failed to emphasise a very important point. The reason the Government has failed to ensure the pub-goer receives his/her full measure is that the Conservative Party's paymasters, the large brewers, started calling the tune. When you think about it, the beer drinker is lucky to get 95% of a pint for 100% of the price, with most of this Government's promises you get 0%!

The Labour Party has promised to invoke the legislation requiring pubs to use lined glasses - the only way for the readers of Opening Times to ensure they get a full pint is to vote Labour. (CAMRA have introduced their own manifesto this election, which we cover elsewhere. The front page article this month covers Jim's point, but as to voting... Opening Times remains strictly neutral between the parties. Ed.)

From Paul Hutchings, Branch Pub Survey Officer:

The opening of the Cafe Bar 'Beer Trading Co' (covered in Manchester Matters p 19 - ed) poses one interesting question. Eschewing a good unique selling point (beer range, quality, low prices, ambience etc) in favour of ever varying, computer controlled, (but always high) beer prices for a poorly chosen range of keg fizz and limited bottle range, how have they squared Manchester's Trading Standards Officers? Leaving aside the full measure debate a moment, one of CAMRA's other long term campaigns has been for published price lists. The legal requirement is simple - although not all prices need to be permanently displayed, a 'good representative sample' - usually taken to be over 40% of the main product range - MUST be. By Law. As they change from minute to minute, in this bar - NONE are displayed! Hopefully the newly opened (though sadly non-brewing) Firkin next door will cause this investment to crash, but otherwise what DO trading standards think, and what are they doing? I think we should be told!

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5



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STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

It was a clear, windless, moonlit night that we began our crawl of south Hazel Grove at the **Rising Sun**. This is a large Scottish Courage pub sited in the fork of the Macclesfield and Buxton roads (terminus of the 192 bus). The pub is a comfortably appointed, largely open-plan one which still bears some of the old Pennine Host hallmarks - cornice mirrors and wooden blinds. Beers were all average quality, no real surprise really as the range was John Smiths, Theakstons Best Bitter and Courage Directors.

Off to our next pub, heading north past the Nobin restaurant to the **Bulls Head** on Buxton Road (all the pubs, bar one, are on Buxton Road on this crawl). This is another Scottish Courage house and for 7.30pm it was remarkably busy. The beers were as at the Rising Sun but without Directors; quality was less so however, especially the Smiths. The pub has three quasi-rooms around an unusual bar carved with flowers, swags and gargoyles. A pub for the younger element, this; access arrangements seem a little strange. From Buxton Road you are met by a closed fire door. You have to go round the side of the pub to the car park to gain entry - surely all customers are not car-borne?

Robinson's **White Hart** was visited next. This is a standard two-room affair; three arches dividing what were once rooms. Christmas tree lights adorn the bar and you can look at the stone-clad chimney breasts through an arched aperture complete with ornamental ironwork. A fellow imbibor thought the ceiling gave a 'pergola' effect. Well? Average Robbies beers on meters (nice to see) - Hatters Mild scoring just below the Best Bitter.

The **Horse & Jockey** (Vaux) followed. This is a mock-Tudor pub with plenty of stained glass to catch the eye. Formerly owned by Wilsons it latterly sold only Holts Bitter. This is still the case with the new owners, Vaux, despite them trying to wean drinkers off it for their own products. At £1.15 it was a good 25p cheaper than the previous pubs, too. The pub has two well-used, if slightly care-worn rooms (the 'tarmac carpet' round the bar is testimony to use). The beer was well-liked by all and scored well.



Carefully negotiating the traffic, we crossed to the **Three Tunnes**. A nice little Robinson's house that has clearly grown organically rather than have a crass scheme imposed upon it. No arches here, just some minor opening out of doorways in the three cosy, homely rooms, plus the well-used sporting vault. The beers - Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were to prove joint runners-up in beer of the night. Next door is the **Grapes**, another Robinson's house. Different from the Tunnes, but traditional with a multi-roomed layout. Plenty of good photos of old Hazel Grove add a big dollop of character. Whilst the Best Bitter compared favourably with the Tunnes, the Hatters was some way below an average and sadly quite poor.

More Robinsons was to be had in the **Bird in Hand**. Once again, Hatters and Best Bitter with both fairing well on the taste and presentation fronts. I did not note down anything distinguishable about the pub at the time, save that it was L-shaped and painted in light blue. Ah, well....

The **Cock** (Robinson's) is a landmark pub, it's up three steps and stands at the junction of Commercial Road. This house is seemingly always busy, but comfortably so. The attentive bar staff are a feature, too, that is most welcoming. The original room layout - small snug and vault at the front, large lounge to the rear have been retained in essence, all adding to the character. Usual beers - Hatters and Best, the latter was just above average, the mild was vinegary, though. The bar staff were informed and a replacement of Best was speedily served in its place.

A quarter-mile walk down Commercial Road took us to the imposing, set-back-from-the-road, **Royal Oak**. This is a large, distinctively designed 1930's house with a separate large vault and very large lounge with open staircase. A further 'billiard' room lies to the rear. Popular with all ages, the pub plays host to eight bowling teams on its green by day. I was told the members are in the process of refurbishing the bowling pavilion. Apparently on a good day the southern aspect offers a 'unique view of Lyme Cage'. Back inside, however, the place really distinguished itself by serving up the best mild and best bitter of the evening - Robbies Hatters and Best. I am curious to know whether the Royal Oak is of the same design as Robinsons Windmill in Dane Bank; anyone know?

A fitting end to the crawl was made at the **Grove** with (yes!) another pint of Robinsons. Pretty good beer too, it was. The pub is a fairly standard affair of three areas separated by varying sizes of arch.

This had proved to be an interesting night and I think most of us enjoyed the crawl. Of course this article can only reflect what we found on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement of the pubs or their beers. So go on, get yourselves 'down the Grove' and see what you think.

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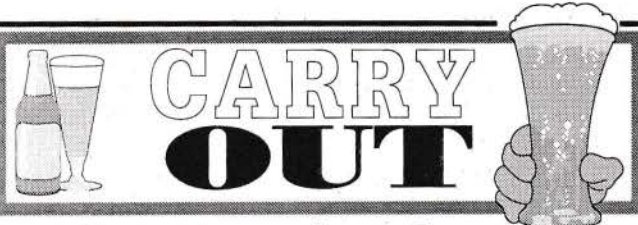
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CAMRA CONTACT IN MACCLESFIELD IS JIM BOWDEN on 0161 483 9311 (wk) & 01625 572221 (h)



Supermarket Sweep

Whilst the past 20 years have seen an enormous growth in both interest in traditional beers and the numbers of such beer produced, until recently this huge explosion in choice, diversity and quality was restricted to the pub. Despite an inexorable rise in home drinking the take home trade was for many years the preserve of the national and bigger regional brewers. While one or two specialist off-licences offered something out of the ordinary the take-home trade was, and still is, dominated by the big supermarket chains who offered row upon row of canned lager, pale ale and brown ale, all of which struggled to make it past 3% alcohol.

In the past couple of years, however, the take-home trade has also undergone something of a minor revolution. The boring cans are still there, to be sure, but alongside them are an increasing number of bottled beers, from both the UK and overseas, which now mirror the quality and diversity of the on-trade. Exotic imports from Belgium and Germany vie for shelf space with home produced beers from the smallest micro-brewery, many of which are naturally conditioned in the bottle to boot. And it's not just the specialist shops doing this - the supermarkets are leaping on the bandwagon, too, with many even commissioning speciality beers under their own labels.

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But is the commitment really there? Are the major chains now beginning to take the beer drinker seriously after year of catering solely for the wine trade or is it just lip-service? Opening Times decided to check a few out, awarding points out of five for both UK and foreign beers plus presentation. The results were pretty mixed with quite a wide gulf between those obviously trying to make an effort and those who just didn't seem bothered and apart from our winner, Tesco's in Didsbury, all had major failings in at least one area. It is also probable that local store managers have considerable discretion here which would explain the large gap between Sainsburys in Stockport and Cheadle Royal and also the poor performance of Safeway in Bredbury compared to the Shambles Square branch which does far better. Here's what we found:

Morrisons, Cheadle Heath - the newest entrant and one of the best. Large drinks dept near the entrance with lots of the usual cans and alcopops but also display of beers over several shelves. Independent brewers well-represented (Marston Moor, Wychwood, Black Sheep, Jennings and Cottage (Normans Conquest) amongst others) but foreign beer limited with the usual Czech offerings (Budvar, Pilsner Urquell and Staropramen) and little else of note. Excellent presentation with detailed descriptions and tasting notes for many beers.

UK** Foreign* Presentation*******

Sainsburys, Stockport - has been terrible in the past (Brody 'designer cider' on the 'Beers of Distinction' shelf was probably the low point) but now a little improved. Eight or nine beers from independents (Morlands, Cains (Stout), Brains, Black Sheep, Shepherd Neame), foreign limited to a couple of wheat beers, one own label. Some limited but inconspicuous tasting notes.

UK Foreign* Presentation*****

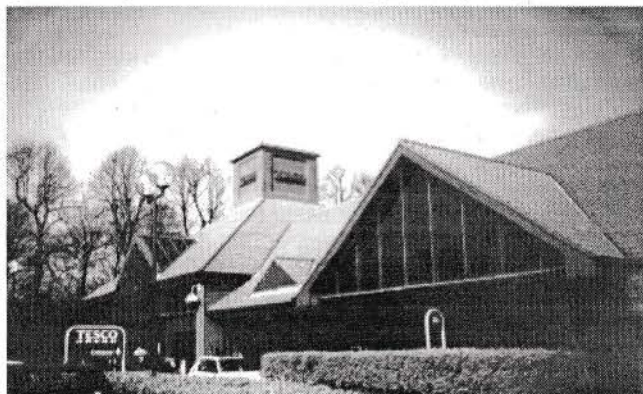
Asda, Stockport - quite good in the past but a real disappointment when we called.. Perhaps half a dozen own-label beers



which showed some enterprise plus a few more from independents (Fullers ESB, Ushers Autumn Frenzy and Charles Wells Fargo were about the only ones of interest). Foreign range small but interesting and included Duvel and Hoegaarden from Belgium. Atrocious presentation with empty shelves (at 11.30am) and no tasting notes or descriptions.

UK Foreign** Presentation***

Tesco, Didsbury - possible the biggest beer range in the sample and amongst the best. Lots of interesting own label beers (some produced by Caledonian in Edinburgh) and plenty of others as



well. Independents included Hook Norton, Cottage (Normans Conquest), Caledonian, Daleside, Sam Smiths and Fullers (Winter Ale and 1845). Foreign good, too with Duvel, Hoegaarden and Chimay from Belgium, French and German specialities plus the usual Czech offerings. Some tasting notes and beer descriptions, impact of UK beers spoilt by fragmented display.

UK** Foreign**** Presentation*****

Sainsburys, Cheadle Royal - big drinks dept but little that stood out. Representation of UK independents limited with little memorable. Charles Wells Bombardier, Marstons Oyster Stout and Export IPA, Shepherd Neame Spitfire were the only ones that stood out. Decent cider, though, with both own label and Westons in bottle. Foreign range better with good own label beers - Czech, Biere de Garde, Belgian Ale (this a genuine lambic) and Wheat beer. Presentation similar to Stockport with limited tasting notes etc.

UK* Foreign*** Presentation*****

Safeway, Bredbury - moderate drinks dept with limited bottled range. No own label beers and UK independents restricted, Caledonian, Morlands and Shepherd Neame were the only ones of any real interest. Foreign beers more enterprising with Ch'ti from France, Hoegaarden from Belgium and the excellent Coopers Sparkling Ale from Australia plus the usual Czech beers. Presentation quite disappointing with little in the way of descriptions or tasting notes. The Manchester City Centre branch is much better.

UK Foreign** Presentation****

Who'll Get Your Vote?

Bored with the election? Aren't we all, but...with so little major differences between the parties, it's the detail that matters and last month CAMRA launched a manifesto aimed at putting pubs and beer firmly on the political agenda.

There's no better time to pin politicians down and force them to speak out on issues like high duty and the danger of monopoly in the brewing industry. "CAMRA is always involved in lobbying on a range of matters which require legislation or ministerial action," Campaigns Manager Steve Cox told Opening Times. "At election time politicians are listening, so it's our chance to put our case." CAMRA's manifesto sets out its stance on:

The tie - CAMRA says the traditional tie protects the diversity of Britain's brewing industry and rejects any attempt to abolish it. **Duty** - CAMRA says high duty threatens thousands of pubs with closure.

Monopolies - CAMRA believes that allowing more concentration will lead to the collapse of many smaller breweries.

Consumer rights - CAMRA believes the national scandal of short measure should be done away with by the immediate implementation of Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act which lays down that a pint must be a pint of liquid with the head extra.

Pub preservation - CAMRA believes that pubgoers have a right to have their say when favourite locals are threatened with closure or theming.

The manifesto also covers CAMRA's demands for longer pub opening hours, a sliding scale of duty for smaller brewers, a limit on the number of pubs a brewer may own in one licensing division, and the extension of the guest ale right to tenancies of non-brewing companies.

Many of these issues and the attitudes of candidates to alcohol and other industry-related issues do not necessarily fall into a neat left-right divide. Concerned drinkers should therefore closely question their candidates of all parties - if nothing else it might help pass the time to polling day.

Tesco Backs Bottles

It is fitting that the winner of our local survey (see opposite) should lead the field on the national scene - Tesco has stolen a march on its rivals by launching a range of 48 regional beers from 28 breweries.

Although the range includes three lagers, it is mainly made up of ales from milds to barley wines - nearly half of them bottle-conditioned. There is also a bias towards micro-brewers - Tomintoul, Daleside, Salopian, Ringwood, Burton Bridge, Butterknowle and Cains are among those featured.

Tesco spokeswoman Nicki Walden said the dramatic expansion of the company's range came in response to public demand and was not an experiment. "We were at the experimental stage 18 months ago when we introduced guest ales," she said. "Such a large proportion of the market is dominated by the big brewers that we decided to support regional brewers and give our customers what they want to see on our shelves."

The move is also based on the commercial reality of a continued decline in draught sales mirrored by an increase in cans and bottles. According to Gray Oliver, responsible for creating three micro-brewers' bottling co-operatives, it's a lead other supermarket chains are bound to follow. "I'd be most surprised if the others didn't follow suit. The others - Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury, Victoria Wine - are no longer asking why they should market beers in this way, but how." But although Tesco's initiative and the likely growth of supermarket interest in craft beers represent a great opportunity for micros and regionals, it won't all be plain sailing. Nicki Walden said that the bulk of Tesco's beers would still be at the baked-bean end of the market - cheap and tinned.

Regional beers will only be available in stores in their areas, with short periods of national exposure in the company's guest ale programme. And even when Tesco's central buyers have approved a regional brewer's beers, it will still be up to individual store managers to decide whether to go ahead and stock them.

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



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



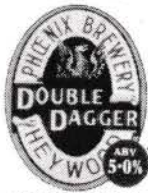
OLD OAK
Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, finny and dry.



THIRSTY MOON
Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight malteness 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 lighter 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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CAMRA Pub of the Month
March 1997

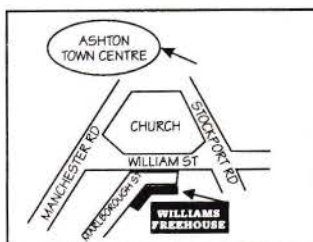


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Oh dear, oh dear! Just as we celebrate the fact that none of our local brewers are jumping on the nitro keg bandwagon, Hydes Anvil go and do just that. Hydes Smooth has been rolled out into the tied estate complete with posh new fonts and lots of publicity material. It's difficult to know what the thinking is EST¹⁸⁶³ behind this - do they really think that extra trade will be drummed up. MD Adam Hyde told us that the idea was to attract younger drinkers to Hydes products when otherwise they might have been lost to lager. Well, maybe. But in the long term it's doubtful if this will generate much more trade at any of their pubs and if drinkers turn to Smooth, the casualty is likely to be the quality of the cask beers as turnover drops. And when you consider the work put in by Hydes to increase the quality of their cask beers, the introduction of the one thing into their pubs which is likely to have an adverse effect seems particularly perverse. We normally only have good words for Hydes but this looks like a serious blunder on the part of a company who have recently hardly put a foot wrong.

Thwaites are introducing three new beers. Two, Chairman's (4.2%) and Daniel's Hammer (5%) will be permanent additions to the range while Bloomin' Ale (4%) is a seasonal for Spring. This welcome move goes some way to dispelling fears that Thwaites were heading down the nitro-keg road following the success of Thwaites Smooth.

Marketing Manager John Siddeley confirmed the company was "maintaining our strong commitment to cask beers."

Burtonwood have found a novel way to plug the gaps between their own seasonal beers. They now supplement theses with 'Tapsters Choice' special brews from the 'Samuel Allsopp Brewery' which is part of the giant Carlsberg-Tetley plant in Burton. Arctic Ale, a rich 5.2% beer has been seen not only in the Bulls Head, City Centre, but also on Anglesey by our North Wales correspondent, Phil Levison.

Cains have gone into partnership with Greenalls to supply two Liverpool City Centre pubs, the Globe in Cases Street and the Railway on Tithebarn Street. Both will sport the brewer's livery and stock only Cains beers - Traditional Bitter, Mild, Formidable Ale and a special brew, Robert Cain Brewery Bitter, all in cask form. If the experiment is a success then more Liverpool pubs could become 'Cains' houses (Greenalls retain operational control of both pubs).

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Real and Keg Measurements

"Do you fancy going out for 0.568 of a litre?" Doesn't exactly trip off the tongue, does it? Yet it is a sobering thought that the pint in the pub is one of the last official bastions of the traditional system of weights and measures that we have used in the country for hundreds of years.

This is often seen as part of the march of progress, replacing a hotchpotch of measures using all kinds of multiples with a rational and scientific system which is much easier to understand once you get used to it. But the point about the old measures is that they evolved naturally and represent concepts which people can grasp and visualise, while metric measures are artificial constructs which in themselves have no meaning. I was interested to learn that many small craftsmen in continental countries even now use the old-fashioned intuitive measures almost two hundred years after Napoleon imposed metrication, because in practical terms they are much easier to work with.

Compulsory metrication is the equivalent of making everyone speak Esperanto rather than the confusing mishmash of illogical languages they use at the moment - or drink keg in preference to that awkward real ale stuff with all its peculiar flavours. When a carpet store is actually prosecuted by trading standards officers for quoting prices in square yards we're on the way to punishing people for speaking their native tongue.

Would it not have been better to keep our traditional weights and measures for everyday use, and restrict the metric system to the sphere of science and precision engineering where it may serve some purpose? Far from confusing people with two systems, for the vast majority this would have meant they had measures that actually meant something to them. I suspect that the man in the street today has far less conception of a kilogram or a centilitre than his counterpart thirty years ago would have done with pounds and fluid ounces.

At least we can be thankful that we can still drink a real measure of real beer in the pub, and long may it continue that way!

Back-to-Front Pubs

Given that most of their customers arrive by car, it makes sense for country pubs to provide car parks, and entrances direct from the car park so that people don't need to walk round the front and onto the road. In many cases, this becomes the main entrance, or at least the one that is most used. But it's taking things too far when they then proceed to block off the original front door, as happens all too often - look, for example, at the Dog & Partridge in High Lane.

Not only does this subvert the original layout of the pub, it also gives an unfortunate message to anyone who arrives by foot, cycle or bus, suggesting that they aren't really welcome and will have to go round the back. Pubs can't afford to make any of their customers feel like second-class citizens. And it's particularly inappropriate for pubs in urban areas which in practice have a large walk-in trade, such as the Bull's Head in Hazel Grove.

Smooth, not Sharp

I spoke too soon when I congratulated our local independents on not wasting time and effort producing their own brands of nitrokeg. Only a couple of months later, what should I find on the bar of my local but Hydes Smooth? Any bets on how long it will be before that goes the way of Amboss? But I still find it hard to see Holts jumping on the nitrokeg bandwagon.

**CAMRA HQ WORLD WIDE WEB
PAGES ON: <http://www.camra.org.uk>**

CAMRA Saves Guests

Beer drinkers across Britain are toasting CAMRA which has successfully fought off a legal challenge to the British guest beer law

The European Commission had complained that the British guest beer law discriminated against foreign imports since the guest beer has to be cask conditioned, such as a British real ale.

CAMRA was concerned that opening the guest beer to any type of beer would simply allow a few well known lagers to swamp the market. Hundreds of small brewers would lose crucial business, and thousands of pubs would offer less choice. Worse still, a legal challenge might have ended the guest beer altogether. This was a serious threat to our smallest and most vulnerable brewers. Phil Freakly, of the Society of Independent Brewers, went so far as to call it a "life and death" issue.

The Campaign

CAMRA's campaign won national and local TV, radio and newspaper coverage. British MPs and MEPs gave us enormous support, as did the main political parties. Particular thanks are due to Parliamentary Beer Club in Europe, a group of British MEPs with a particular constituency interest in beer.

We were able to enlist fellow drinkers in the European Beer Consumers Union, as well as the European brewers' organisation CBMC, both of whom supported the British law. We argued that the British beer market offered the best choice of imported beers in Europe, and that damaging the Guest Beer would damage choice. We produced firm evidence that continental brewers could and did brew cask conditioned beers of their own, and named suppliers who would produce them.

The Outcome

The Commission has, broadly speaking, accepted Britain's case. The Government is consulting on some modest changes to the legislation and these will satisfy the Commission. The proposed change would in fact extend the guest beer law and allow national brewers' tenants to buy not only a guest cask-conditioned beer but a bottle-conditioned beer as well.

CAMRA's Steve Cox commented that "This is a sensible extension of the existing rule. It will offer British and Continental brewers of speciality beers new markets for their products, and it will stimulate the production of these beers in the UK."

He concluded "We welcome further improvement in the guest beer, which only strengthens the case for retaining it. It's time to thank all those who helped in our campaign, and to draw a pint of a high quality guest beer to celebrate!!"

(Notes - cask conditioned beer is draught beer which continues to ferment in the container - this term covers British real ale and a number of ales and lagers from other Continental countries. Bottle conditioned beer also continues to ferment in the bottle - it covers a number of British products and a variety of speciality beers from the Continent. Most of the traditional speciality beers of Europe are sold in bottled form..)

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good taste**

Firkin Reopens

After a period of closure, the Flea & Firkin on Grosvenor Street has re-opened as the Footage & Firkin, complete with £750,000 refurbishment.

At first sight, it's difficult to see where the money has gone but closer inspection reveals several changes. It's been spruced up, of course, with fresh bric-a-brac and a new paint job, but the main alteration is the opening up of the balcony, complete with its own bar counter. This is only open at weekends but is also available to hire for private functions.

The new manager is Philip 'Pip' White who has been at the Firkin for 18 months now (and so saw out its dying days as the Flea). Originating in Birmingham, Pip has been in the trade for five years now, although before taking on the Firkin, worked for Bass. OT asked him what went wrong with the Flea and, more importantly, was the Footage sufficiently different to reverse its fortunes? As Pip sees it, the Flea was an initial success both because there was little immediate competition, it was a new concept locally and it had the right people running it. Nowadays there is a lot of competition for the student market - the Jabez Clegg chain for one - and perhaps drinking trends have changed amongst the student population.

As to the 'new look' Footage, it isn't all that different but Pip is convinced that the way it is run is just as important as any major cosmetic changes. The aim is for a quality operation at all levels, and this will extend to the live bands and comedy acts he intends to introduce (the pub is now open until midnight Mondays and Tuesdays and 2.00am Wednesday to Saturday). He also intends the pub to appeal to all age groups and not just the students, although given the nature of the pub it remains to be seen whether he will be successful in this. It's all started well, though, with beer sales up 300% since reopening.

Which neatly brings us to the beer and the brewery. As part of the refit, the brewery has been reinstated and was in fact supplied by one Brendan Dobbin. The brewer is CAMRA member Richard 'Sutty' Sutton who arrives from the Firkin operation in Liverpool. Although he is a native of these parts, Sutty's interest in brewing started at University in Nottingham. Already a keen home brewer he became involved with the University's Real Ale Society and a number of brewery visits made him think that this was a line of work he would like to get involved in. The Firkin chain advertised for apprentice brewers in What's Brewing, CAMRA's national newspaper, and he duly applied, training at the Feast & Firkin in Leeds before taking over the Finch in Liverpool.

Four beers are produced at the Footage, Flicks (3.5%), Footage (4.3%), Osc'Ale (5%) and Dogbolter at 5.6%. In theory these are



'Sutty' in the Footage Brewery

all produced to a standard Firkin recipe but it usually easy to detect differences from brewery to brewery. Certainly no corners are cut in the brewing process - the malt is primarily floor-malted Maris Otter (with a small percentage of crystal malt, roast barley and wheat - the actual recipes remain secret) and the hops (whole hops) are about 50:50 Fuggles and Goldings although Mount Hood are also supplied.

No 'specials' are currently brewed at the Footage and all come from Sheffield at the moment. We detected a certain frustration on Sutty's part with these constraints and certainly the chain would doubtless benefit if it were to let the brewers off the leash a little. Having said that, Sutty's beers are more than serviceable, all having a distinct hop character (which he is keen to increase) which makes for a refreshing drink. Despite hiccups on the opening night, when the beer certainly left something to be desired, subsequent tastings have been most enjoyable.

Four other pubs are supplied by the Footage - the Forgery on Mosley Street, the Filigree in Macclesfield, the Flitch in Leigh and the Flax in Preston. It's early days yet but with both the pub and the brewery in safe hands, the Footage & Firkin looks set to make a positive contribution to the local pub and brewing scene - the only black mark being the Addlestons Cider on the bar. It's cask conditioned but sadly served under gas pressure. JC.

12

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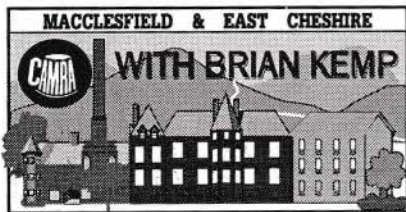
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The Meridian Inn, Palmerston Street, Bollington

The Meridian is the quintessential Bollington pub. It is the typical pub that time forgot. If you are a beer-lover and you are not familiar with Bollington your education is sadly lacking! Suffice to say it is a small town with a village atmosphere and a population of less than 10,000 that stands about three miles north-east of Macclesfield. It has, I think, 17 pubs selling cask-conditioned beer from a variety of breweries almost all of which would grace the pages of any Good Beer Guide. The Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch has the invidious task each year of selecting perhaps two to go into the Guide. Having presided over many of these wrangling sessions I can assure you that full and frank exchanges of opinion are the order of the day.

The Meridian is an old white-rendered stone building on Palmerston Street which is the main road at the top Pott Shrigley end of the town. The name of the street is probably indicative of the age of the building. It stands almost opposite the large Pool Bank car park which is the main one for the town and the best place to park if you go there by car. I noticed in last month's OT the announcement of our February branch meeting there containing a small typographical error describing the pub as the "Meridien" making it sound like some sort of Gallic-themed cafe-bar. Rest assured, nothing could be further from the truth!

You enter the pub via four substantial, well-worn stone steps from the street. The bar faces you at the end of a short passage. On the right is a small room that houses a pool table. To the left of the bar is the main lounge area in which you will find the piano that features in the popular Saturday and Sunday evening singalong sessions. Another passage to the left of the bar has a small games room on the left and another small room at the end which has an increasingly rare table skittles set. The unchanging nature of the Meridian was summed up to me at our last branch meeting by our erstwhile chairman, Geoff. I commented on the fact that it had not changed in the 22 years we had held meetings there and he said that he thought they had got a new carpet in the lounge! Enough said!

It is a real community pub that we feared was threatened with closure in the mid 1970's when it was rumoured that Boddingtons were threatening to close it due to the need for expensive structural repairs. As the then branch secretary, I can remember writing numerous letters at the time in a campaign to keep it open. It is now owned by the Paramount pub company of Chester and sells Burtonwood Mild and Bitter, and Boddingtons Bitter. The beer was certainly good there last Monday and we are including it in the 1998 Good Beer Guide.

If you are not familiar with Bollington, or even if you are, a visit to the Meridian or any other of the pubs is well worthwhile. It has been a popular destination for CAMRA branch coach outings for many years. I remember one from Derby Branch in the 1970's. It was

supposed to be a pub crawl. They alighted at the Dog & Partridge at 7.30, never got any further and had to be prised out by the coach driver after closing time! That's Bollington! It is known locally as 'Happy Valley'!

Lynne and Andrew ☎ 445 4405

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The First in Didsbury - Thursday night is mixed
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SKY SPORTS

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Pubfile Diary
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

APRIL '92

It was the third time that "Full Measure" had made the front page in the last year or so. Firstly in June 1991, it was estimated that in pubs using brim measure pint glasses, drinkers were receiving at least 5% less beer than they had paid for.

Even more striking, Trading Standards Administration estimated that this "short-changing" amounted to £225 million a year. In January 1992, after pressure from CAMRA and drinkers up and down the country, the Government announced their intention to implement Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act, requiring a pint to be a pint of liquid. Then, in April 1992, the Government announced it would become a legal requirement from April 1st 1994. (Perhaps an unfortunate choice of date, particularly as now, three years late in 1997, it still hasn't been implemented.)

Pub of the Month for April 1992 was the Cheadle Hulme, a Joseph Holt house just across the road from Cheadle Hulme station. It had also received the award in 1985, but anyone who hadn't been back since wouldn't have been able to recognise the place. In 1989 it was completely gutted and rebuilt, sadly with the loss of the vault and full-size snooker table, but with the addition of a restaurant. This had been a definite move upmarket, but the traditional "Holts" feel had been maintained, with of course the "cheapest in the area" prices.

The Editorial had been written just prior to the General Election, and just one sentence shows how things never change - "Regardless of what party is in power, I doubt whether the drinker can expect the Chancellor to leave us alone in future years, and the prices of our pints will continue to rise."

News from the West Coast Brewery - welcome to Nick Astbury, from Clifton Inns Orange Pub-Brewery in Pimlico, who was taking the place of Don Burgess, who had left to set up a new brewing venture in the south-west - no details. (With the benefit of hindsight, he set up the Freeminer Brewery in the Forest of Dean, still flourishing in 1997).

Stalybridge Station Buffet was no longer under immediate threat. The campaign to save it had been well publicised and supported, and as a result, British Rail had decided to take it off the market. But because it was on a short lease, it was likely to remain a potential target. There was a debt of thanks due to everybody who had given up their time, posted the cards, and signed the petition.

**DON'T MISS THE MACCLESFIELD BEER
FESTIVAL 9 - 10 MAY - DETAILS Page 19**

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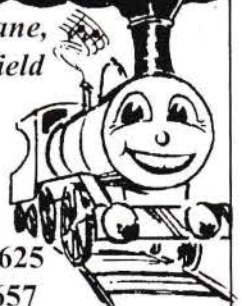
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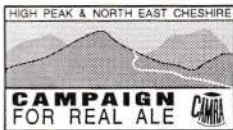
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March Featured Pub: The Sportsmans Arms, Strines

O riginally a dwelling-house known as Spouthouse, the Sportsmans Arms was granted its first ale-house licence in 1805.

Ideally situated in those days, for passing trade on Strines Road, lots of trade coming from nearby print works and the horse-drawn boats on the Peak Forest Canal running parallel.

The licence changed hands many times over the years. In 1842, the landlord Joel Sidebottom took out a lease on two cottages, on what is now the site of the Pineapple Inn in Marple, with the intention of opening an ale-house there. However he died the following year leaving his wife to run the Sportsman. The Sportsman had the distinction of three well-respected female licensees between the 1930's and 1960's. The last one, Elvina Baird, left in 1958. The last major alterations to the inside of the pub took place shortly after Ken Moon arrived in 1970. The results were a spacious lounge-dining room and a small cosy vault.

Ken managed to lose the Wilsons/Websters tie in the early 90's and for a few years up to his retirement in 1996 the place was a magnet for real ale drinkers with four or five interesting beers always on tap.

In 1996 Brian Pendleton took over leaving a former 'pub of the month' in the Wirral. Brian has changed the choice of beers to Boddingtons Bitter, Cains Traditional Bitter and Mild and Bass (this latter replacing a changing guest). The layout of the lounge has been changed slightly, giving one half a 'cafe' feel. The coal fire in the vault has been re-opened, too.

On the food side, Brian's wife has added her personal touch in the kitchen, producing tasty daily specials.

The Sportsmans Arms continues to be a warm, welcoming pub, serving superbly kept cask beers and good home-cooked food. Being only a twenty-minute walk from Marple it makes a good place to visit now Spring is on the way. **SJ.**

The First Glossop Beer Festival

The festival is being held at Glossop FC on Surrey Street in Glossop - not far from the station - and will be in a 50ft marquee on the pitch and has been timed to coincide with the end of season festivities at the football club.

Admission will be £1 at all sessions (50p for Glossop FC members and card-carrying CAMRA members) apart from Saturday evening which will be £3 as there will be a band and Glossop FC presentations.

This is the first outing for this event and it is hoped that it will become a regular of the beer festival circuit. There will be a range of beers from (it is hoped) Black Bull, Leatherbritches, Beartown, Whim, Bank Top, Phoenix, McGuinness, Hydes and Lees (subject to availability and accessibility). Please come and support us - it promises to be an interesting weekend. The dates for your diary are: Saturday 24 May (11am-11pm) & Sunday 25 (12-5pm).

Disley News

The White Lion in Disley had an uncertain start to its period of ownership by the Manchester Pub Co a few months ago, with licensee changes giving rise to an unsettled period. The Company now appear to be setting things on a more even keel with improvements to the pub now imminent. An interior refit and decoration will help to bring a lift to the pub, which is located on the A6, and this work has been pre-empted by a change in the cask beers on offer. Holts Bitter has now replaced the previous Boddingtons and Websters Yorkshire Bitter, which featured for some years before the pub changed hands, and although Holts is the only cask beer currently on offer, it is a welcome addition to the range of brews available in the village, especially as it is currently priced at £1 a pint. **GW.**



In Ashton, the **Buck & Hawthorn** (Robinsons) has new licensees. The corner local is being advertised as a 'Cafe Bar' with a coffee machine behind the bar - but Hatters Mild was conspicuous by its absence at the time of our visit.

Also in Ashton, the **Broadoak Hotel**, also Robinsons, is (again?) to provide accommodation. I understand that eight bedrooms will be available soon with the only alteration being the addition of a fire escape.

Over in the Marple area - the **Sportsman** in Strines (free) has added Bass to its range - this though at the expense of guest beers. Not a popular move with local members and I feel a backward step by the new owners as it was the good range of guest beers that put the pub on the map. The range is now Cain's Mild and Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter and Bass (all on handpump).

The **Prince of Wales** in Glossop has Banks's Mild back after a long break - a good sign if ever there was one.

In Hyde, the **Sportsman** has now opened a kitchen and food is available every lunchtime. Not far away the **Commercial** has reopened - and this is the last time I'm going to mention the erratic opening of this pub...until something permanent seems to have happened!

Down the road in Stalybridge - the **Rose & Crown** (Vaux) has started having non-Vaux guests on the pump previously dispensing Waggle Dance. On a recent visit this was Belhaven St Andrews. The **Buffet Bar** has re-introduced a range of foreign bottled beers. This is a welcome return to a tradition lost some years back.

The Buffet Bar, along with the **Station** in Ashton will be the venue for another 'two station' festival over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. Apart from the bars in the two pubs, there will be a marquee erected next to the Station and the aim is too have 100 plus beers, their most ambitious event yet. "Can I do it?" asks owner John Hesketh. OT feels sure he can - and what better way to celebrate/drown your sorrows after the election? Actually, regardless of who wins, the end of this interminable campaign will be worth celebrating in itself.

Last month we reported that the Rock in Chisworth was a Banks's house - not so. The licensee tells us that the pub remains a free house, but supplies Banks's and Camerons beers. He is also keen to stress that the Rock has never featured belly dancers. These apparently were at the other pub in Chisworth in the days when it was the Hunters. Sorry for any embarrassment caused.

VIADUCTS & VAULTS 2

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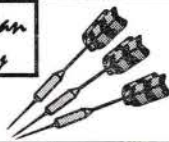
VIADUCTS & VAULTS 2 for ONLY £2.95

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Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Tony O'Shea, currently the best darts player in Stockport, retained the 1919 Taxis Championship with a brilliant display of arrows at the Grapes in Heaton Norris. The highlight of his performance was a superb 10 darter, with a bull finish, in the final of the competition. Tony beat his old mate and sparring partner Darryl Fitton in straight legs in the best of eleven final. Tony found the finishes in 18, 18, 17, 10 and 18 darts to round off a remarkable evening of arrows.

We are lucky in Stockport in that there is an open knockout virtually every week of the year, enabling good pub players to try their luck against the best. Currently, Thursday is the busy day, as the Banks Smooth Pour Silver Trophy nears a conclusion at Adwood WMC, whilst over at the Tom Thumb their knockout are holding heats until well into the summer.

On the 18th of April, the prestigious Stockport Express Individual Open gets underway. The venue for this one is, again, the Grapes, Old Road, Heaton Norris. Check the local press for details.

One of the questions that I am often asked, is "how popular is darts on TV?" If you believe the national press, darts is a spent force. However, the public do seem to disagree. During its peak in the eighties, there was no doubt that TV darts was on the box as often as snooker. Perhaps the game suffered from overkill, but the TV companies soon fell out of love with the game; looking down their noses at what was regarded as nothing more than a pub pastime.

Only the Embassy World Professional is now covered by the main channels. And the viewing figures? Given that most of the coverage was on in the afternoons on BBC2, when most players and supporters were at work, then you may be surprised that average viewing figures

were 2.5 million. That's pretty good for daytime viewing – and not bad for anything on BBC2 at any time. Further, the semi-finals, which were shown on Grandstand on BBC1 were watched by 6.5 million.

The live final, between Les Wallace and Marshall James, neither household names outside of dart circles, attracted a peak of 5.4 million, again on BBC2, and was one of the most watched programmes on that channel for the week.

Figures are harder to find for the WDC World Finals, shown on Sky the week previously, but it has been shown that only football and cricket get better figures than darts. So it will be seen that darts fares better than most sports, but the TV companies prefer to give the public what they think they should want, rather than what they really want. Perhaps CAMRA members can think of similar situations! The Embassy finals are a long way away from grass roots darts. Most pub players realise that they have no chance of joining the elite. Although the Sports Council classifies darts as "a game of chance", there is no doubt that, in reality, few of us could compete with the skill of the top players. But in Stockport, at least, there are a number of players who can – and do – hold their own with the best. So I thought it a good idea to keep readers up to date with the accomplishments of our best players in the outside world. The best performance recently came from the aforementioned Tony O'Shea. One of 1000 entrants for the Dutch Open, Tony did well to finish in the last 32. The competition was won by Mervyn King, who was a semi-finalist in the Embassy the previous month. In the Pairs, Tony and partner Micky Brookes did even better, reaching the semi-finals, which were won by the Dutch pairing of Ray Barneveld and Co Stompe.

New Stockport resident Steve Cusick reached the finals of the Elkadart British Open Pairs, partnered by Vijay Kumar. They only lost in the final to the England and Lancashire pairing of Ronnie Baxter and Paul Williams. At the same event Star & Garter landlady Sue Hambleton reached the last 32 of the Women's Singles.

So the next time you manage to take a leg off one of these players in a local league match, you can doubly congratulate yourself.

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THWAITES

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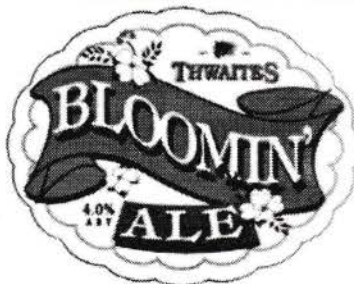


Daniel's Hammer

ABV - 5.0%

Pale and Golden in colour with a distinctive malty flavour and a crisp dry hoppy finish

Availability - All Year Round

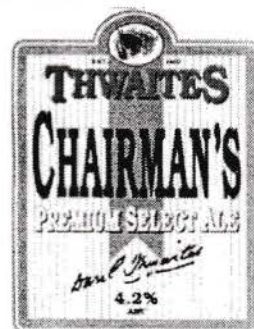


Bloomin' Ale

ABV - 4.0%

Kick-start springtime with this dry, light ale with a nutty bitter finish - One for the seasoned drinker!

Availability - April, May June



Chairmans

ABV - 4.2%

A light quaffable ale with a robust golden colour and a subtle hoppy finish

Availability - All Year Round

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B R A N C H

It's well known that the **Grey Horse** in central Manchester now looks like a traditional pub again, now that landlady Lily Duffy has removed the aberrant decor introduced during the brief incumbency of the previous licensee. Now we hear that Hydes are to complement Lily's efforts by introducing a new exterior treatment - a black-and-white painting scheme, floral display, and new signing should all be ready in time for summer. Well done to both brewery and licensee.

In Bramhall, Bramhalls has reopened as Baraka. No news yet as to whether real ale is sold, but it's probably safe to make an educated guess.

In Edgeley, the **Pineapple** on Castle Street was up for sale as we went to press. According to the signboard the going price is £45,000 freehold.

Also in Edgeley, the **Bulkeley Arms** on Brinksway has now formally adopted its long-standing nickname of the **Bow Garret**. Cask beers are now Burtonwood Mild and Bitter on handpump.

The **Elizabethan** on Heaton Moor Road is closed for a lengthy refurbishment. OT wonders if the Greenalls Group will take the opportunity to install cask conditioned ale for the reopening.

The **Bulls Head** on London Road, Manchester City Centre, has now added Burtonwood Mild on handpump. The pub now sells the full Burtonwood range and is well worth a visit.

As the Irish bar craze reaches saturation point, the brewers are casting around for the next big theme which looks like being...Australian theme bars. There are already a couple of independently run 'Australian' bars in Manchester but now the big

operators look set to move in. Scottish Courage has already dabbled with the 'Bar Oz' concept and this is now due for a £5 million national launch. Not to be outdone, Greenalls have announced that their first 'Roo Bar' will open in Bristol in May. You have been warned.

The **Hesketh** in Cheadle Hulme is now doing a nice line in guest beers. In addition to the usual Scottish Courage range, excellent **Greene King Abbot and Ushers Founders Ale** were reported on sale in mid-March. The latter was quite appropriate as Ushers of Trowbride made its stock market debut on Monday 10 March. Forthcoming guest beers include **Pendle Witches Brew** and **Youngs Special**. The range available includes **Youngers No 3, Gales HSB, Brains SA, King & Barnes, Shepherd Neame** and others. Licensee Frank and his real ale fan assistant manager Neil intend to continue to run a rolling programme of two non-ScotCo guest real ales changing every 2-3 weeks.

THE CASTLE

OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
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Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
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A WARM WELCOME
 AND FINE BEER IN
 A CLASSIC PUB



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

April 97

Thursday 10th - Branch meeting and AGM, the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. ALL MEMBERS SHOULD TRY AND ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING.

Friday 11th - minibus Stagger around Bramhall and district. Departs Crown, Heaton Lane at 7.00pm. First port of call will be Three Bears, Hazel Grove at 7.30. Join minibus there if you want. Book on 477 1973.

Monday 14th - Stockport Market Social - Boars Head 9.00pm, Bakers Vaults 10.00pm.

Friday 18th - Sunday 20th - CAMRA AGM and National Conference at Llandudno.

Monday 21st - City Social at the Pot of Beer, New Mount Street. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 24th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel. See separate article.

Sunday 27th - Lunchtime curry in Hyde. Meet 12 noon at the Moulders or 1.00pm at the Sportsman, both on Mottram Road. Curry in Balti House, Clarendon Place.

April 97

Monday 28th - Social, Gateway, East Didsbury. Starts 9.00pm.

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

Monday 14th Monthly branch meeting, Prince of Wales, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Sunday 4th May - Woods Walk. Meet Swan, Newtown, New Mills at 9.45am

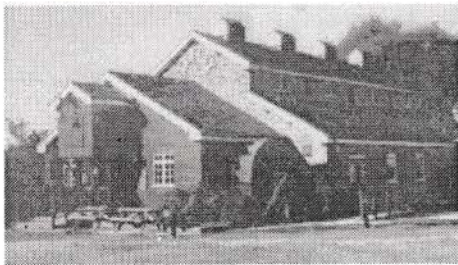
Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow and Knutsford down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following event:

Monday 28th - Monthly branch meeting at the Angel, King Street, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm.



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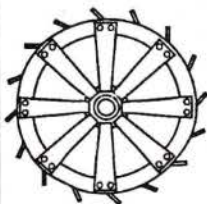
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MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

Most of the month's interest is concentrated in the City Centre, where the **Forgery & Firkin** opened on March 20th in the premises of the former Bank on Mosley Street. Yes, I know I said it'd be called the Financier, but at least that was a better guess than the ludicrous "Overdraught & Firkin" which appeared in another publication. Anyway, Forgery is not a bad name, as it's only an imitation of

a brew-pub, the beers actually being brewed down the road at the Footage & Firkin. The house beers are Genuinn (3.5%), Forgery (4.3%), and Replica (5%), all on handpump along with the ubiquitous Dogbolter. Also on handpump is Addlestons cider, but this is regrettably served by gas pressure. Structurally unchanged, the historic building has been quite sympathetically treated to produce the usual bare-boards Firkin style together with the chain's latest fads, such as the giant Jenga game - and on opening night, the beer was a lot better than the mediocre stuff the Footage & Firkin had managed to produce for its own opening a month or so previously (although these initial teething problems have now been put right).

Right next to the Forgery is the **Beer Trading Company**, a cafe-bar with a gimmick. The gimmick is that the beer prices are set by "market forces" - the more a certain beer sells, the faster its price increases, until the computerised till intervenes with a happy hour (sorry, "market crash"). The beer is all keg - but then, would you expect people who find this sort of thing amusing to have any taste in beer? Another new all-keg bar is **Solomon Grundy** on Bridge Street, a branch of the Withington establishment; and on Oldham Street, the dismal, dingy Merchants Bar has been remarkably brightened up to emerge as a cafe bar called **Squizzy Taylor's** - but alas, it may be Squizzy, but it's still fizzy!

The **Rocket Bar** (formerly, briefly, the Head of Steam) has closed, and though there's talk of it reopening under another name, this does seem to be one of the Centre's most unpromising sites. On Newton Street, the "new" **Tommy Duck's** is now all keg - slow sales of cask beer are officially blamed, but surely excessive competition from a plethora of "smooth" keg fonts is the underlying cause. Do I hear Thomas Duckworth turning in his grave? Nearby at the **City** on Oldham Street, there was an interesting development recently when a sign went up in the window advertising Holts Bitter at £1.05. A couple of weeks later, though, the sign

had gone. Is the beer still on? I haven't ventured in to enquire! To round off the City Centre, the **Old Wellington** on Shambles Square has re-opened, with Bass, Worthington Bitter, and a house beer (Old Wellington Ale - presumably brewed at the Bass Museum brewery in Burton) on handpump. Most regrettably, however, another "handpump" dispenses keg Cidermaster - a cheapjack deception which is particularly out of place in a high-profile outlet such as this. And sad to say, my first visit was ill-starred - just three days after the pub opened, the only draught beer available was Worthington, and service was so inattentive (despite the pub being quiet) that eventually I gave up and went next door to Sinclairs. It's great to see the place open again, but now it needs to get its act together - in a company the size of Bass there must surely be somebody who knows how pubs ought to be run!

Bad news from Fallowfield, where **Robinski's Wallet** is no all keg and **Durty Nelly's** has just Boddingtons Bitter on handpump (and is in any event threatened by yet another Tesco supermarket). There's some slight compensation at the **Talbot**, which has gained Whitbread Trophy on handpump. At the **Polygon** in Levenshulme, Old Henry is no longer sold - indeed, there's a suggestion, so far unconfirmed, that this beer, brewed by Whitbread originally for the "pre-Greenalls" Boddingtons pubs, has ceased production.

In Gorton, the **Vale Cottage** is to have a monthly changing guest beer; first on the list is Mansfield Bitter, which should be available by the time you read this. And I close in Gorton, by offering heartiest congratulations to Pat and Nick Knight, who last month completed ten highly successful years in Holts' **Waggon & Horses**. In today's pub trade, ten years in one pub is a very long time. Pat and Nick hadn't been at the Waggon all that long when they were judged CAMRA's local Pub of the Year for 1988, a presentation made on a memorable night of glorious beer and Ukrainian music. Since then, they've notched up a formidable nine consecutive appearances, 1988-1997, in the national Good Beer Guide (and informed sources suggest the run may not be at an end...). Congratulations!

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I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £14 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £17

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Steve McCarley, 32 Howden Close, North Reddish, Stockport SK5 6XW

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.





The Beer House

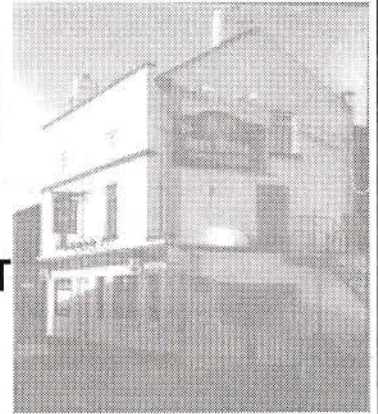
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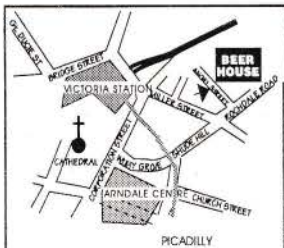
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