

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



No:
158

FREE

TIMES

JUNE 1997

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Festival Fun

As this issue of Opening Times went to press, the 11th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival looked set to be yet another roaring success.

Early indications were that more beer and cider than ever before was likely to be sold although careful management and a slightly increased order ensured that supplies lasted until late on Saturday night. Thursday night was a particular success with attendance and sales well up on the previous year.

On the beer and cider front several treats were on offer - the first commercial cider from Cheshire for many years was well-received and the beer quality, despite the hot weather, held up until the end. OT's particular favourite was a wheat beer, White Dwarf, a last minute appearance from the well-regarded Oakham Brewery - a view shared by many as this was one of the first to sell out on the Thursday night.

The award-winning local guide, Viaducts & Vaults 2 was also selling well and the festival programme included a cut-out-and-keep update in the same format as the guide itself. Look out for future similar updates in Opening Times. Look out, too, for the V&V2 commemorative T-shirt - a very limited edition for those involved in producing the guide was launched - and worn to great effect! - by the guide's production editor Paul Hutchings. The last word must go to Festival Organiser Jim Flynn who told us "We were hoping that this festival would be the best ever and so it proved. My thanks go to the Stockport Express Advertiser, for sponsoring us again, Ian Brookes our licensee, all our hardworking, volunteer staff and of course the thousands of local drinkers who came along and had such a good time. See you all next year!"



Beers of the Festival

As usual it was a close contest for the beer of the Festival awards - selected by votes of all attendees. Category winners were: Best Mild: Brakespear Mild; Best Bitter: Porters Bitter; Best Premium Bitter: Enville Ale; Best Stout/Porter: Salopian Ironbridge Stout; Best Old Ale: Porters Sleighed. Best Cider: Eddisbury, Cheshire and Best Perry: Minchew Thorn/Brandy. Overall Champion Beer was Salopian Ironbridge Stout (so congratulations to brewer Martin Barry) and Overall Champion Cider/Perry was Minchew. Well done all the above.

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A recent visit to the **Beartown Brewery** in Congleton enabled OT to catch up on the latest developments at this local micro.

The brewery is now 2½ years old and is still run on a part-time basis by founders Ian Burns and Andy Millican who have kept their day jobs. However, that is not to say the brewery isn't successful; far from it, they are now brewing to capacity. Sadly, however, local outlets are thin on the ground (the only regular customer in Congleton itself is Congleton FC where Beartown beers are achieving cult status) and most of the production heads down south where there are distribution arrangements with Crouch Vale Brewery and another firm in Saffron Walden. Local distribution is taken care of by the redoubtable Phil Spencer of Openshaw.

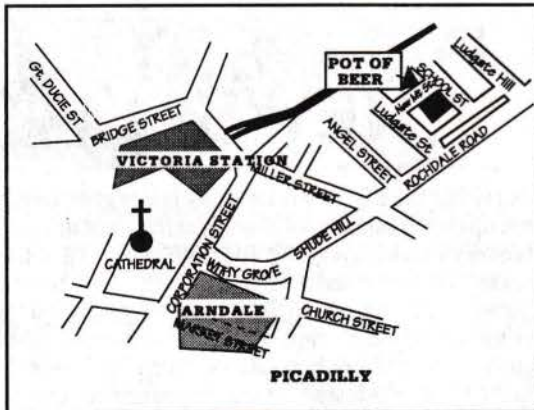
The main beers are Ambeardextrous (3.8%) and Bearskinful (4.2%) together with the recently introduced Bear Ass (!) at 4%. The two seasonal beers are Bruin's Ruin (5%) which is available from November to February and a stout, Polar Eclipse (4.8%) which is available on demand all year. OT was able to sample some of this and it is a superb example of the style - dark and rich with lots of roast character but still very drinkable and in no way heavy or cloying. Two occasional beers have also appeared recently - Christmas '96 saw Spirituyle Ale (5.5%) and latterly Babymaker (4.2%) has been seen in the local free trade. Its good to see a brewery like this, which is obviously a labour of love, doing so well. Long may they continue.

Closer to home, the **Firkin** brew-pub chain served up a mild last month, to coincide with CAMRA's annual mild promotion. Not only that, but each Firkin (they don't all brew) was supplied with a free cask for customers to sample - an excellent initiative to get more people to try the style. Brewed to a traditional recipe, Firkin Best Mild was dark red in colour with a sweet toffee flavour and smooth and easy to drink. An ABV of 4% also ensured that it was a beer with plenty of body as well.

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

First a big thank-you to everyone concerned with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Another great success - how will we top that in 1998?

However this month it's back to the nitty gritty - expect to see the announcement of the Monopolies Commission enquiry into the proposed Bass take-over of Carlsberg-Tetley. Rumours abound that too stringent conditions will see the whole deal called off. This is what many of us would like to see, but the down-side of this is that Carlsberg-Tetley will then be left in some form of limbo. Either way the next 12 months are likely to see yet more turmoil in the brewing industry. Which clearly isn't good for pubs and pubgoers alike.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The antics of Greenalls continue to take the breath away. New this month - more mature locals at one pub outraged by advertising saying 'no old trouts', evident cold feet over a marketing deal with Cains which saw two Liverpool pubs bagged as Cains houses and, last but not least, new plans for the site of Tommy Ducks which will involve amongst other things a theme bar! Er - wasn't Tommy Ducks knocked down because Greenalls said a pub on the site wasn't viable and an office block was a much better proposition? Talk about adding insult to injury!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery - how gratifying then to see Whats Doing, the self-styled Manchester beer drinkers monthly magazine that circulates thinly in some areas to the north of the city, not only adopting our typeface but now listing the contents on the cover. Keep up the good work lads and you'll get there in the end. It may be 20 years too late but, what the hell, what's two decades between friends?

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA - The Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973 (home) and (0161) 831 7222 x 3411 (wk). News, articles and letters welcome. All items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!). Articles for publication can be submitted by e-mail to jclarke@opentime.u-net.com. Compuserve users can mail the deputy editor at 100662,12.

Letters to the editor on otletter@opentime.u-net.com.

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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.

Design and Origination by CPPR, a division of Connaught Technologies, Mcr. Office is located at: 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP. Tel/Fax 0161 432 8384 E-mail pbb@opentime.u-net.com

Opening Times is printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.

CURMUDGEON



Passport to Oblivion

John Willie Lees are currently running a "Passport Trail" which offers an assortment of goodies if you visit certain numbers of their pubs. No doubt this sort of thing is a good way of getting people to go in pubs they otherwise might never try, but in this case there is a significant drawback - they insist on you drinking at least a pint or two halves in each one.

Surely this discriminates against women, who may nowadays be more likely than before to drink pints, but still in general are more happy with halves. Why should they have to have two drinks to their menfolk's one? And I'm sure that plenty of men, faced with the prospect of going in a hundred and fifty pubs, might feel happier with the option of sticking to a half in at least a few of them. Also, despite Lees' pious words in the booklet, in real life the insistence on pints could act as an encouragement to drivers to exceed the legal limit.

Taking it a step further, if the aim is to tempt people to try new pubs, why should they have to have an alcoholic drink at all? Strange as it may seem, some non-drinkers do enjoy pubs, and the profit margin on soft drinks is often much greater than that on beer, so licensees wouldn't lose out. But at the very least, Lees should allow people doing their passport trail to be able to drink the smallest measure of beer normally available in their pubs, and the same should apply to any other brewery running a similar scheme.

Cool the Line

Now that the warmer weather is supposed to be on its way, the problem of beer temperature begins to rear its ugly head again, particularly in multi-beer alehouses. Going into a pub of this type at a quiet time of day, the best policy is often to see what someone else has just ordered, and have a pint of that. Otherwise, there's a good chance you'll get beer that has been simmering in the pipes for hours. For example, on a hot day last summer, in a Good Beer Guide listed pub, I bought a round of three pints of the same beer. The first was murky and so warm it was barely drinkable, but the third was cool, clear and delicious.

In-line coolers have a bad reputation as devices used to chill down lagers which have not been stored in a proper temperature-controlled environment, but isn't there a good case for alehouses to use them to ensure that all their real ale is served a cellar temperature? And isn't it time we punters were a bit more assertive in returning beer to the bar if it's served up at seventy-plus degrees?

Traffic Enraging

Not too long ago, a licensee was complaining to me how his lunchtime trade from nearby offices had fallen away after the local council had installed a particularly obstructive set of road humps on the road leading to his pub. What is described as "traffic calming" often in reality ends up having the opposite effect of "traffic enraging". There must be a better way of curbing the odd case of excess speed than littering the roads with crude, unsightly and dangerous obstacles. It is yet another example of the trend so prevalent in society today of penalising the law-abiding majority for the actions of the irresponsible minority.

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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1997

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COPY DATE FOR JULY ISSUE IS JUNE 20 1997



Pub Of The Month **JUNE**

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					

It's not that hard to find, really. Just a short walk up Belmont Way from the A6, turn right at the shopping precinct and it's more or less straight in front of you. Or from Lancashire Hill, walk up Nicholson Street (opposite the Nicholsons Arms) and it's sort of on the right. Anyway, the name is the Grapes, the address 2 Quantock Close, and the date June 26 when Jayne and Bryan Hall will be presented with the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month Award for June.

The Grapes was originally a parsonage for St Thomas's church in Heaton Chapel and was converted to a pub in about 1820. It underwent a major alteration in the mid-1980's which resulted in the current layout with a vault on the left and lounge on the right, the latter being one long room but partitioned up to give the feel of three distinct areas. A recent refurbishment has seen new carpeting and reupholstered seating. Fresh flowers add a pleasant touch. The large vault is thriving which is something which can't be said about too many pubs these days. Pool, darts and football teams are based there and there are plenty of events including a quiz and "open the box" raffle on Thursday nights which is especially popular.

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Jayne and Bryan have been at the Grapes for nearly 8 years and run an excellent pub which serves the local community well. Jayne also manages to combine this with her duties as president of the local Licensed Victuallers Association (she's the

first woman to hold this prestigious post) so it's no wonder that the standards are set so high.

But what about the beer? Well, the Grapes sells a lot of the stuff, with Boddingtons Bitter and Robinsons Best Bitter being the two real ales. Robinsons is a permanent guest and four 18-gallon barrels are sold every week. Bryan tells us this is the most that Robinsons sell in a guest beer outlet. No wonder! It's a superb pint and obviously well looked after. In fact Bryan stillages the beers for at least a week before putting them on sale so it's no surprise that they're in such good condition. So, there you have it. The Grapes, Pub of the Month, 26th June. Be there! Oh, by the way, both real ales will be just £1 a pint on the night after 8pm. PS.

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 Peter Edwardson:

In your May issue you report that both the Swan with Two Necks in Stockport and the Dog & Partridge in Great Moor have converted from electric meters to handpumps. However, what you do not mention is that, at the same time, both pubs have switched from using oversize to brim-measure glasses. At a time when you are supposed to be campaigning in favour of legislation to make oversize glasses mandatory, your failure to even recognise this change, let alone criticise it, is astonishing and inexcusable. It suggests that "Opening Times" is only paying lip-service to this campaign and does not "live and breathe it" in the same way as it does other issues such as misleading dispense which, while important, do not impact on the average pub user to anything like the same extent. Hopefully our new government will waste no time in fulfilling its pre-election pledge to ensure full measures in every pub.

(Wrists duly slapped, we'll try harder in future - ed.)

From Tom Kelly

Although at present I am not a CAMRA member, I have just been helping the High Peak branch set up their beer festival at Glossop Football Club. We collected beer from Phoenix, JW Lees and Bank Top. These beers were then rolled across the football ground and placed on stillage. Then to my surprise, someone came along with a venting tool to start to vent the

beer. I asked him (I don't know his name) "are you not going to clean the spiles and keystones before you do that, as they have just been rolled along the pitch where dogs and cats foul plus numerous other unsavoury activities take place". He told me that he hadn't done it for the past twenty years (I presume at the Ashton Canals Festival) and I'm not starting now.

What can I say, is it true that most CAMRA members can't tell a good pint from a bucket of cat's p'ss, apart from the size. I could go on but all I will say is, keep up the good work CAMRA, and I hope you never have to answer to a few hundred drinkers who go down with food poisoning after one of your events. PS - as this letter is not from Rhys Jones or Paul Hutchings and is also non-complimentary, I don't expect to get published.

(As High Peak branch have been running beer festivals for over two decades without inducing mass poisoning in the local populace, I think it can safely be assumed that they know what they are doing - ed.)

The Elizabethan

The Elizabethan on Heaton Moor Road, for long one of Stockport's most prominent keg-only pubs, has now gained real ale following a major refurbishment by Greenalls. Beers available are Greenalls Bitter (£1.53), Tetley Bitter (£1.56) and Greenalls Original (£1.76), on handpump. There is no sign of any guest beers.

A comprehensive food menu is available lunchtimes and early evenings Monday to Saturday, and all afternoon on Sundays, with main courses between £4 and £7, and also a wide selection of lower-priced snacks. A lot of money has clearly been spent to create a series of light and airy spaces on several levels around three sides of the central bar. Presumably to deter drinkers in the beer garden from spilling out onto the road, the front gates are locked and you have to go round to the side entrance. The new-look Elizabethan is certainly much improved on a number of fronts, but it remains to be seen whether it can shake off its previous image as a young people's haunt and succeed in establishing a broad appeal to all age groups. PE.

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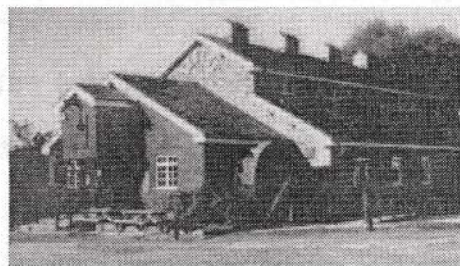
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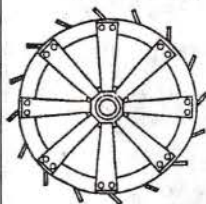
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STAGGER

with Dave Meynell

Our April Stagger was to take us mainly to the Bramhall/Woodford area for what turned out to be an interesting and enjoyable night. Due to the wide area covered a minibus was used and a small group set out from the Crown, Heaton Lane to our first stop, the **Three Bears** on Jacksons Lane, Hazel Grove.

This is a modern recent addition to the Robinsons estate, having been built in 1994. At 7.30pm it was amazingly busy and it was not difficult to see why. It is a tastefully decorated, clean, cosy single room with three separate drinking areas divided by timber and glass partitions. Four different Robinsons beers, Hatters Mild, Best Bitter, Hartleys XB and Frederics, all on handpump, were being enjoyed by a wide age group. All the beers were sampled and considered to be of a high standard. This was also the first Robinsons pub that I have visited to serve handpumped beer into over-size lined glasses - another point in its favour.

Our next stop was the **Shady Oak** which is a Tetley pub tucked away in the middle of the Newhouse Farm estate. Built in the mid-80's, it has been altered several times in its short life but has retained a pleasant atmosphere with a central bar serving split level drinking areas with timber panelling used to good effect. There is also a vault area with dart board and pool table and food is available seven days a week. Tetley Bitter and Marstons Pedigree were available on handpump and both were only average at best.

Another estate pub, the **Bromale** on West Park Road was next on the list. An uninspiring building from the outside, inside it is very comfortable with a large open-plan lounge with panelled walls covered in pictures. There were also some nice etched glass panels depicting Bramhall Hall on the back of some of the seating. Although the lounge was empty at the time of our visit, the vault

appeared to be busy and well-used. Stones Bitter was the only handpumped beer available and only just above average.

Another short drive took us to what was certainly the largest pub of the night, the **Ladybrook** on Fir Road. This impressive 1930's black and white timber fronted building was formerly a hotel and was owned firstly by Clarke's Reddish Brewery and, since 1962, by Boddingtons (and now, of course, Greenalls). Inside, the atmosphere was vibrant with customers of all ages drinking in several large rooms, all beautifully decorated and tastefully laid out with lots of wood panelling and other original features. There remains a large, well-used vault with two dart boards and a unique feature (for the Stockport area) is a large separate room housing two full-size snooker tables. For a pub of this size and popularity, I hoped to find both Boddingtons Bitter and Mild available. Unfortunately, only the Bitter was available in cask form and this was OK without being anything special.

Next stop another Boddingtons house, the **Victoria** in the centre of Bramhall. This is a large modern pub recently refurbished and now in fairly standard open-plan style with lots of exposed brickwork. There remain several distinct drinking areas, including a no-smoking area, which were all very busy with a mainly younger clientele. The attentive bar staff provided speedy service of the handpumped Boddingtons Bitter and Flowers Original which were both reasonable.

Our penultimate stop was to the second Robinsons house of the night, the **Davenport Arms** at Woodford, better known locally as the Thief's Neck. Comet Hale Bopp was clearly visible in the sky as we entered this super pub which was full to the doors. There is not a lot to say about the Thief's Neck that has not already been said. Ten consecutive years in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, Regional Pub of the Year 1997, it is a classic, unspoilt, multi-roomed country pub that has retained its character and atmosphere under four generations of the same family. You won't find music or a pool table here, although there is a dart board in the small vault. Being near to British Aerospace, a lot of aviation memorabilia adorns the walls and in front of the pub there is a fenced garden drinking area and at the back a beer garden where children can safely play. Available on handpump were Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Old Stockport Bitter, plus Old Tom on electric pump. All were in excellent form. As we left Hale Bopp seemed to have an even brighter glow. Maybe it was the clear sky or possibly the excellent Old Tom I had just sampled.

Our last call was to take us to another Robinsons house, the **Church** on Ravenoak Road in Cheadle Hulme. This is a very popular local and it was standing room only when we arrived, although some of us found seats in the small vault. The cottage-style exterior gives way to a cosy low-ceilinged, characterful interior with a lounge split into two separate drinking areas with panelled walls, as well as the vault. Although extremely busy, the efficient service for which this pub is known ensured that we were all quickly served with Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, both of which were extremely good. An excellent end to a very enjoyable night. While this article can only reflect what we found at the pubs on one particular night, and can't therefore be a once and for all judgement on either the pubs themselves or their beers, every pub featured has something to offer and is worth a visit in its own right. Why not give some of them a call and see how much you can go along with what we report here.

6



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March 1997



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A Cumbrian Day Out

There's no better way of avoiding crowded main roads than using the North-West's rail network, and not long ago a small group of us took advantage of a glorious day to do just that, calling at three fine pubs into the bargain.

A train at 8.03am from Manchester Piccadilly will take you, crossing the magnificent viaducts that span the Kent and Leven estuaries, to Barrow - a town which, thanks to those viaducts, is now probably unique in being closer by rail than by road to major population centres. Here you catch the Carlisle-bound local train, and alight at Bootle just four minutes after opening time.

Bootle station is in fact in the hamlet of Hycemoor, a somewhat insignificant place now, but clearly of some commercial importance in the past, boasting as it does the Station Hotel (of which more anon) and an imposing bank, now converted to a nursing home. Bootle itself, though, is only a mile away, nestling in the shadow of Black Combe, and we soon reached the village.

Bootle's main architectural feature is the solidly built parish church; but our pub-goers' eyes were drawn by the classically simple frontage of the King's Head, a few doors down on the main street. Entering, we



were delighted to discover an interior as unspoilt as the pub's frontage. The entrance corridor gives access to a timeless tap-room on the right, with a serving pantry on the left - no fancy innovations like bar counters here! At the rear of the pub, private accommodation has recently been opened up to provide additional drinking space; this might disbar the pub from the classic status in the eyes of the most rigid purist, but this area too has a traditional and somewhat old-fashioned atmosphere, enhanced by the presence of sporting trophies from (among others) the Millom & District Ladies' Dominoes League.

The sole cask beer, which seems to make up the bulk of the pub's wet trade, is Younger's Scotch Bitter. An unadventurous choice, you might think - but it was served in very good condition, and has no doubt been a staple of the pub for many years. I fancy hard words would be said by the regulars were it to change.

You wouldn't expect, or want, an old-style village pub like the King's Head to do food; but three pints of Youngers had made us hungry, and the obvious course was to investigate the Station Hotel. From the outside, this didn't look too promising - a trifle drab, and signs advertising Budweiser (not likely!) and Ruddles (oh well, if we must...). Inside, though, we were met by the pleasing sight of a handpump dispensing Bluebird from the small Coniston Brewery, and very good it was too. The solid refreshment was also excellent - hearty Cumberland sausage from the village butcher in Bootle - and while the pub's been considerable altered, the present licensee is clearly putting a lot of hard work into it. Well worth a visit.

The journey south holds a couple of points of interest for the bibulous. Just south of Silcroft station can be seen the substantial and seemingly well-preserved remains of J W Brockbank & Son's Bank Springs Brewery. The standard reference work informs me that this was taken over and closed in 1954 by Matthew Brown of Blackburn, who had taken over the Cleator Moor Brewery further north some seven years earlier, and it would be fascinating to learn more of the history of this small rural concern. Further towards Barrow at Foxfield, at the head of the Duddon Estuary and overlooked by elegant wind-turbines, the Prince of Wales, right by the station, is in the process of being converted into the new home of the Tigertops micro-brewery which originated in Wakefield, and will no doubt be worth a visit when complete (as, indeed, it may be by now).

We, however, were bound for Cark - or rather Cartmel, for which Cark is the railhead. Cartmel's a pleasant walk, just short of two miles, from Cark station - there is a (far from frequent) bus service, details from Cumbrian Public Transport on 01228 606000. The village, or rather small tow, has long been an important centre for the district, and indeed gives it name to the entire peninsula; this can be seen historically in the magnificent Priory Church, and more prosaically in the large school, clearly with a wide catchment area, set on the town's southern edge. Cartmel is also famous for its racecourse, when Bank Holidays see the town transformed and virtually taken over by one of the last of the old-fashioned country race meetings.

While Cartmel is "off the beaten track" compared to much of Lakeland, sadly the tide of tourism has lapped at its shops, turning almost all of them into establishments selling knickknacks for visitors. However, four pubs remain, and our destination was the best-known of them, the Cavendish Arms.

Originally a coaching inn, the Cavendish is reached through an archway from the attractive market square. It greets you with the announcement that the Good Pub Guide - not to be confused with CAMRA's Good Beer Guide - dubbed it Brewpub of the Year last year, information which is repeated, a little too insistently, on posters throughout the drinking area. Self-promotion apart, though, the atmosphere is comfortable, traditional, up-market without being stuffy; OS maps and notes on local history adorn the walls, while our fellow drinkers included a family staying in one of the pub's letting bedrooms, and a party off to a music recital in the Priory.

But what's this brewpub business, I hear you ask. Well, the Cartmel Brewery was set up here in 1994, but soon became so successful that it was forced to move to an industrial unit in Kendal in order to brew enough to keep up with demand. Now, however, there are plans to convert outbuildings at the Cavendish Arms to allow an enlarged brewery to be brought back to the pub.

Naturally, the Cavendish has sold the Cartmel beers through all this time, and a selection was available to try. All pleased to varying degrees, but the runaway favourite was the outstandingly crisp and hoppy Lakeland Gold at 4% ABV. Again, we took both solid and liquid refreshment; there's an extensive menu, served in a separate dining room (for which you may well have to book at busy times) as well as over the bar. We left replete, though perhaps a touch lighter in wallet than we might have wished. Any of these pubs would be worth a visit. Together, they made a grand day out. And we got back to Manchester with still time for an hour in the Beer House before closing! RPJ.

7

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Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



This month of June could be the most important ever for the game/sport of darts, both locally and on a more global scale.

On the 23rd of this month, the High Court hearing involving 14 professional dart players and the British Darts Organisation gets under way. It is nearly four years since 16 professionals broke away from the BDO, helping to form the World Darts Council in the process. The BDO responded by banning the players from their tournaments. Which is why there are now two separate versions of the World Championships.

The situation became even more controversial when the BDO began to ban players who competed in WDC tournaments. Local star Darryl Fitton is one of those who is banned from BDO events because of this. He was spotted, briefly, on Sky TV taking part in

the qualifying competition for the WDC World Pairs at Salford. It is reported that the legal fees for both sides thus far have been in the region of £200,000 – a figure which could double after court costs. As a grass roots darts player, I hope that the two sides can sort their problems out. It is not just the game at the top that will suffer, but the knock-on effect will be to damage the game at pub level, too.

There could be local repercussions at this month's final of the Tom Thumb challenge, for instance. Amongst the qualifiers for the final are Embassy Gold Cup Champion Paul Whitworth, who is a BDO supporter, and the banned Fitton. They could be drawn to play one another, and the meeting could well be acrimonious. Although I hope that good sense will out.

Ironically, BDO players were allowed by their governing body to compete in the newly restored News of the World Championship. The finals will have been played, and screened on Sky TV, by the time that Opening Times is published.

It would have been nice to have seen a local star at the finals, but it was not to be. Darryl did the hard work, beating Dennis Priestley in the Northern play-offs, but eventually lost out to Brian Derbyshire. One of the names behind the WDC, Barry Hearn, better known for his boxing and snooker interests, has negotiated a deal with Sky TV to bring boxing style "head to head" matches to the screen. The first of these will feature Phil Taylor against Ritchie Burnett. Now Taylor is one of the WDC professionals, while Burnett is still in the current BDO Welsh team. Will he receive a ban?

Hopefully, by the time that the match takes place, the harmful political wrangle will have ended, and the question will not arise. But I doubt it!

While the men's game is overshadowed by the WCD v BDO battle, women's darts is played with more dignity. Star & Garter landlady, Sue Hambleton, is at the leading edge of women's darts. Her latest success was in reaching the final of the Women's Pairs at the Isle of Man Open. Partnered by Sue Edwards, the two Sues eventually went down to Sharon Colclough and Frances Hoenselaar. Well done, Sue.

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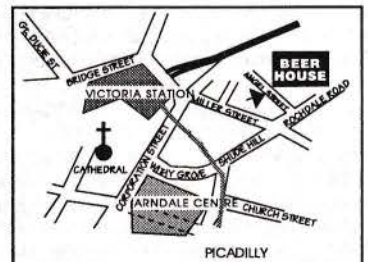
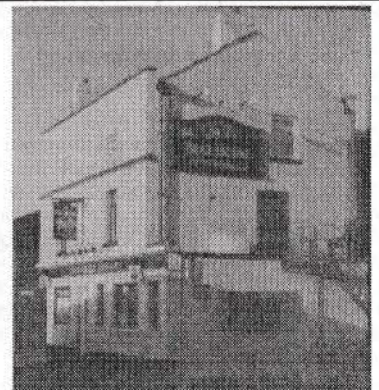
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SOMETHING FOR EVEN THE MOST DISCERNING TASTE OPEN ALL DAY MON - SUN

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '92

The front page referred to one of the current changes in the brewing industry, where regional brewers set up reciprocal deals to get their high profile beer brands into larger markets. Marston's and Banks's was one of the latest deals - Marston's Pedigree appeared in Banks's pubs, whilst Marston's were selling Banks's Mild. Marston's also announced a second beer swap deal with Scottish & Newcastle, where the ubiquitous Pedigree was available in S&N pubs in the north and Scotland, and in return, McEwan's Export, McEwan's Lager and also "draught" Becks were to be introduced into Marston's estate and for free trade distribution.

Connoisseurs of what might be called obscure beer festivals must have thought that the previous year's at Bigrig in the depths of the Lake District was a classic example. A little closer to home was the International Beer Festival at the Hare & Hounds, Simmondley Village near Glossop, to be held later in June. The star of the show was to be "Kostrizer Schwartz Bier", that had never before been available in the UK, and specially imported for the event by licensee Don Grundy. The Belgian brewery Corsendonk was to provide the "largest" bottle of beer in the world, to be raffled to raise funds for the Guide Dogs for the Blind.

There were two items concerning local brewers Joseph Holt - one was headed "Nice Beer - Shame About the Pubs!", and the other was "But Praise Where Praise is Due...". Firstly, their refurbishment policies came in for a fair bit of criticism, with particular reference to the Seven Stars in Ardwick, the Roebuck in Flixton, the Coach & Horses, Astley and the Church in Whitefield. Even the Victorian Society, an eminent national conservation body, had seen fit to express their concern. Perhaps What's Doing, CAMRA North Manchester's publication, summed up Holt's with the comment "the buggers need watching!" The "Praise" item was mostly about the Griffin in Heaton Mersey, but also mentioned the Sidings in Levenshulme, which was highly commended in the New Pub category in CAMRA's Pub & Design Awards.

The Boddington PubCo guest beer scheme was continuing to make ground. Two particular pubs in the scheme were the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel, and the Ladybrook in Bramhall. In the latter case, the comment was "with a very strong Boddington's following, it may take some time to persuade the regulars to forego their regular tippie".

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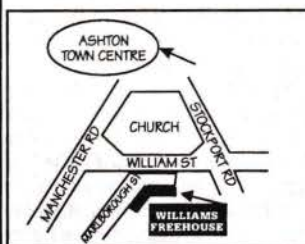


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This year 'Cheshire Inns' returns for a final time. We start off with something rather different, though - a two-part, no-holds-barred, look at the pubs of Wilmslow by a new correspondent, "Tatton"

Blue Lamp, Green Lane - For many years this building served as Wilmslow police station, hence the name. From the outside, the pub has the solid appearance of a 1930's roadhouse, but inside this image proves false as the interior has been ruined by the removal of all the rooms. A single island bar serves a cavernous room decorated in dark colours with spotlights (for the disco) and posters advertising nitro keg and designer bottled beers. The only cask beer on sale is Banks's Bitter which sells alongside Banks's Smooth and consequently has proved to be indifferent in quality. Lunchtime food is available but restricted to snacks - I have only ever tried a sandwich and this was OK.

Boddington Arms, Altrincham Road - This is Henry's Table Pub and Restaurant with adjoining hotel. The pub is a monstrous modern building that is so lavishly appointed it is devoid of any recognisable pub character. The single lounge bar is enormous and is split into a number of raised drinking and dining area. This presumably being something of a flagship venue, it is disappointing to see just three cask beers normally available - Boddingtons Bitter, Castle Eden Ale and Flowers Original. Quality was about average although the Castle Eden would have benefited by being a couple of degrees cooler. There is an extensive choice of meals, and while I didn't visit the restaurant, so can't comment on the choice or prices there, the bar menu seemed good, although not cheap. A bacon and beans jacket potato is £3.70, steak & kidney pie £4.30 and chicken liver pate £4.30. In one area the menu seems to overlap with McDonalds but I don't think they need panic - the going rate for cheeseburger and chips at the Boddington Arms is £4.55. The pub is teeming with immaculately dressed staff, some of whom appeared to be bored with the whole leisure experience and congregated in groups to chat. It is true that when they notice you they greet you with a well practised smile and a "can I help you sir?", but it seems

somehow false and impersonal. Not so much mine host as mine management team.

Whilst my visit lacked most of the things you take for granted in visiting a traditional pub, there was some compensation in overheard snatches of conversation from my fellow customers which included the classic "I'll have a Heineken please - it's a house beer you know".

Carters Arms, Chapel Lane - a pleasantly renovated small, one-roomed pub half a mile south west of the centre. For a small pub, if you have to remove the interior walls to create a one-room bar, this is probably a good example of how to do it without completely destroying the character of the place. Separate lounge and vault type areas are still evident. The two cask beers are Wilsons Bitter and Courage Directors and both have been good, despite the limitations of the beers themselves. Lunchtime food is a standard menu complemented by daily specials. The food is well prepared and nicely presented but is let down by small, poor cuts of meat. Prices are average for the area at £3.50-£4 for a main meal. I was also taken by the efficiency and thoroughness of the bar staff when barrels had to be changed.

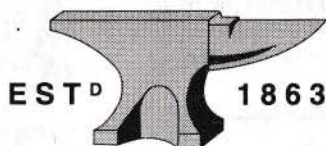
Church Inn, Church Street - initially I was impressed with the small menu offering non-standard pub fare. Prices were reasonable, quality was good and portions generous. The problem? The beer. Only Stones and Draught Bass are available and I have had decidedly dodgy pints of both over recent months. The Bass has been cloudy and lacking in taste. Stones is usually lacking in most things. This is probably not helped by the very long beer lines due to the distance of the cellar from the bar (so much so that the handpumps have to be assisted by a small gas motor).

Farmers Arms, Chapel Lane - by the number of Good Beer Guide stickers on the window (I counted at least ten), this is a long-standing favourite with many local CAMRA members. True, it is a delightful little pub that still retains much of its original character with a separate vault, two lounges and a small garden at the rear. The pub has that well-used feel and occupied that increasingly rare position these days of being the centre of the community. On a recent visit I was introduced to one regular celebrating her 90th birthday and to another (potential) regular who was just 8 days old and being proudly shown off to everyone in the pub by his parents. The only cask beer is Boddingtons Bitter which has been average to good on my visits. Lunchtime food is snacks plus a handful of predictable meals such as Chilli con carne, Chicken Curry, Scampi etc. all selling for £3.95. Quality is OK.

Next month the review concludes with critical looks at the Horse & Jockey, Kings Arms, Kings Head, New Inn, Riflemans Arms, Swan, Wilmslow Flyer and Blue Bell.

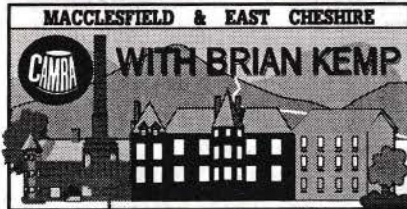
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**The Boar Hound, Brook Street,
Macclesfield**

The Boar Hound is a fairly large brick-built Robinsons pub on Brook Street which is most easily found from the Stockport direction by proceeding down the new by-pass or Silk Road, as it is known, into the town centre. Only Macclesfield's town planners could design a by-pass that goes to the town centre!! After passing Arighi Bianci's furniture shop you cross the main road to Buxton. Go up the hill to the next set of traffic lights and turn left up Brook Street. The Boar Hound is immediately on your right with parking in the streets at the back.

Until seven or eight years ago it was called the Commercial Hotel. The licensee at the time owned a large Boar Hound and wanted to give the pub a new image and I leave the rest to your imagination. The striking sign adorning the front of the pub was designed by Peter Robinson's late wife Barbara, who was responsible for many of the brewery's pub signs. The beer is Robinsons Best Bitter and Hatters Mild on handpumps and is reliably excellent.

As you enter the pub there is a separate pool room off to your right. Further on your right is a larger lounge area with the bar to the left facing another popular lounge area. It is a busy community pub that is home to games teams and in particular Brook Celtic FC. It is also home to the local branch of the Severn Valley Railway Society who use the large upstairs room for their meetings.

Landlord Eric Fox comes to the Boar Hound via the Flower Pot, Hurdsfield Road and the Crown on Bond Street, two Greenalls-run pubs. Now I would like to explore what to me has always been one of life's great mysteries. What are the secret ingredients that are necessary to make a pub successful? Let me start a list! Good beer, sensible prices, comfortable surroundings, a civilised clientele, a friendly welcome. The Boar Hound has all of these but then so do a lot of other Macclesfield pubs. So why is the Boar Hound always busy when many others are not? There must be a secret ingredient that I have yet to define.

I discussed this with Jim, our branch secretary, during a philosophical lunchtime session last Sunday. Now I am always happy to bow to his superior experience in these matters. His view was that it was having an attentive, conscientious landlord, who was ever-present. He may be right but it seemed too easy to me. Perhaps other OT readers might like to air their views on the letters page? I look forward to reading them. If you need to visit a suitable pub to enable you to formulate your theories I can suggest no better choice than the Boar Hound!

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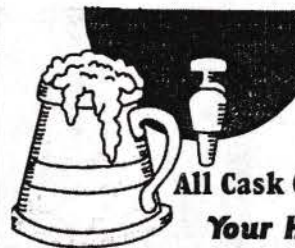
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THIRSTY MOON
Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight maltoiness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.



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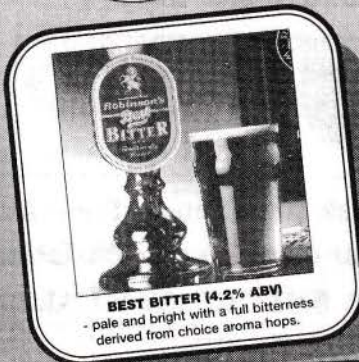
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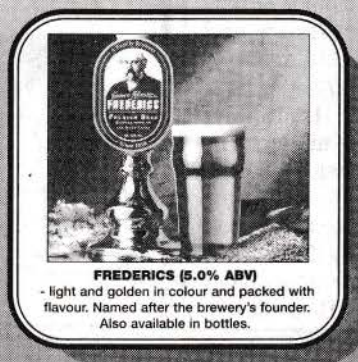
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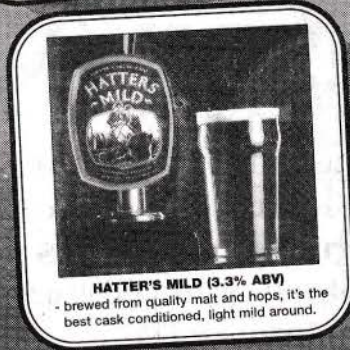
BEST BITTER (4.2% ABV)
- pale and bright with a full bitterness derived from choice aroma hops.



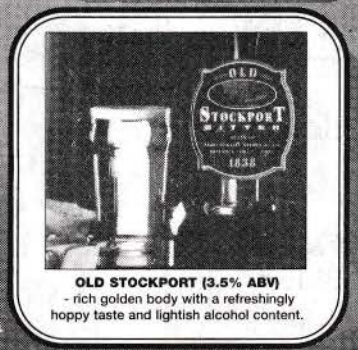
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- smooth, dark and mellow. Brewed from a recipe almost as old as the brewery itself.

CHOICE BEERS

MANCHESTER MATTERS

Manchester, Up and Drinking

Another slow month for news, so it's time once again for one of my occasional looks at the pubs of a Manchester district. Unlike Bradford and Beswick, my subject last time, Didsbury has not been plagued by pub closures; indeed, so packed can they become at weekends that some locals drink elsewhere then, returning to their "own" pubs during mid-week. And unlike the hard-pressed drinkers of East Manchester, Didsbury folk pay some of the highest prices in the City. So what do they get for their money?



by Rhys Jones

If we start at the south end of the village, "not much" must be the honest answer at the **Didsbury**, a place which consistently disappoints both in atmosphere and in range and quality of beer. It's an imposing building, and some modest investment and sound management here could surely unlock its potential - wake up, Scottish Courage! Just across the green, the **Old Cock** does rather better. Catering largely for residents of the nearby student hall, it offers an imposing array of handpumps, though there's a distressing tendency for those dispensing the more interesting beers to be reversed. Annoying, too, to see two traditional ciders advertised on a blackboard, even though they've not been sold for a year or more.

Passing the **Didsbury Wine Bar**, still a slave to "smooth" keg (so much for wine-bibbers being discriminating folk), we come to the **Crown**, the first, and more "local" of the village's two Greenalls pubs. Pleasantly refurbished a few years ago, the place rambles attractively enough, and the decor includes some genuine local scenes among the off-the-peg stuff. In most places £1.76 for Greenalls Original would be a shocking price - but, hell, this is Didsbury!

But if the Crown is good enough of its sort, across the road lies one of Manchester's finest and most famous pubs - the **Royal Oak**. The spirit barrels, the theatre posters, and the general air of bustle owe much to the long reign of veteran - nay, celebrity - licensee Arthur Gosling; and while the beer quality has sometimes dipped since Arthur's departure, I recently enjoyed a fine pint of a 5% ABV "Head Brewer's Choice" beer at just £1.70 - and compared to much of Didsbury, that's cheap! One of Manchester's classic pubs, the Oak is still one you just have to see. And the cheese lunches are as good as ever - often imitated, never surpassed! Round the corner at the **Albert**, prices descend to Manchester normality, with Hydes Bitter at £1.35. Some pubgoers I've spoken to seem to rather look down on the Albert - but, while it inevitably suffers by comparison with the Royal Oak, it's clean, friendly, well-decorated, with a choice of drinking areas and a good pint. I like it. Set on the cross-roads, the **Nelson** is a pub I've not always liked - and indeed, when busy it can be horribly cramped and smoky (there are ceiling fans, but I can't remember seeing them in use). For all that, though, it's a good, robust working-class pub, which is to Didsbury as the Albert is to Withington - only with better beer, for the Nelson's guest beer is a very acceptable pint of Holt's Bitter at a cheapest-in-Didsbury £1.15. Excellent Irish band Quare Crack have a Wednesday residency, but on other nights the vocal renditions may be unscripted and more raucous - it's the Holts that does it!

Sad "fun-pub" **Squires** is scarcely worth bothering with, but it's worth crossing the road for the **Dog & Partridge**, Greenalls' other pub in the

heart of Didsbury (as well as the Crown, they also have the nearby ex-Boddingtons **Parrswood**). Transformed into an "ale house", the pub boasts a narrower range than initially, but there's usually something of interest - though we are back to sky-high Didsbury prices here. Purists may cavil at the gas blanket on the gravity-served beers, and I do think a more carefully selected range or smaller casks are the better route to guaranteed quality. I'm not too bothered, though, about the system's application to Weston's Old Rosie Cider, which I've found to be of consistently good here (I wish they'd also try Special Vintage).

Up the road, CAMRA purists almost certainly won't call in Manchester's only representative of Bass's Irish-theme chain **O'Neill's**. And, yes, the decor is 'Oirish' fake-rustic, in parts quite crudely done, and I'd far rather be in a real Irish pub like either Albert (Rusholme or Withington) or the Ducie behind the University. And yet...it's lively without being rowdy, there's a good crowd, and it's infinitely busier and better than the dreadful **Times Square** which used to occupy these premises. Draught Bass has vanished, leaving Worthington Bitter as the sole cask beer. I drink Draught Guinness here, which while woefully expensive ("that's £2.15 sir") is of good quality (yes, I know keg beer should be the same everywhere, but you still have to clean your lines). They tell me Sunday morning's full Irish breakfasts are a treat, and I must try one if only to read the Dublin newspapers provided - good journalism without the over-weighty, advertising-led supplements of the London broadsheets.

But at the north end of the village lies the jewel in Didsbury's crown. Sometimes quiet early in the week, though usually merry evenings, with card-play and banter, the **Station** is without doubt Didsbury's best all-round local. Linked rooms in traditional style, decorated with some very high quality railway memorabilia, accommodate a variety of drinkers in an atmosphere of mutual respect that makes you realise what so many pubs have lost - or indeed, for some of the newer "theme" efforts, never had. This is a Marstons pub, and the brewery's ales - together with the superb Batemans Mild - are always well kept.

So that's Didsbury Village - apart from one thing. Only a couple of doors from the Station lies **Carringtons**, "independent wine and beer merchants". They have some great bottled beers, and also one changing draught beer. Last time I was in Didsbury, this was Salopian Brewery's gloriously hoppy Minsterley Ale; sadly, my plans for the next few days didn't include drinking at home, but this will almost certainly have been the best beer on sale in Didsbury that night. (I consoled myself with a couple of bottles of good single-apple cider for future consumption - one from Herefordshire, one from Normandy). With good beer and cider in the on and off trades, Didsbury is a great drinking area. Get there soon - but avoid the weekend!

THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

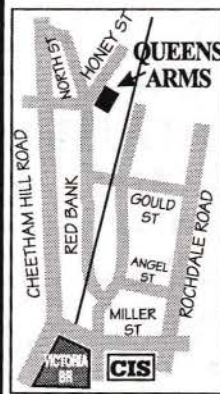


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Budvar
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Dave and Sue Price invite you to try the fine range of beer, and traditional cider in their **Excellent Free House**

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Quiz Night (Free) on Tuesdays (Cash Prizes) Food Every Day All Day **Open All Permitted Hours**



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



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

June 97

Monday 9th - Social, Footage & Firkin, Grosvenor Street, All Saints, Manchester. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 12th - Monthly branch meeting, Friendship, Hyde Road (Reddish end), Gorton. Starts 8.00pm

Monday 16th - Social, Cheadle Hulme, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 20th - Hyde Road Stagger. Starts 7.00pm Travellers Call; 8.30 Suburban, Gorton Cross Street.

Saturday 21st - Trip to Lancashire including visit to Ship at Overton (National Inventory pub). Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.30am. Book on 477 1973.

Monday 23rd - Social, Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 26th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Grapes, Heaton Norris.

Monday 30th - Social, Crown, Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey. Starts 9.00pm.

Saturday 5th July - Independents' Day Pub Treasure Hunt. Starts 12 noon, Beer House, Rochdale Road. This is a regional event so a good turnout please.

Sunday 6th - trip to Bishop's Castle, Shropshire. Hopefully catch end of town beer

June 97

festival and visit two brew-pubs (Three Tuns and Six Bells). Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane at 10.00am. Book on 477 1973.

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

Monday 9th - Branch meeting and AGM, Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde. Starts 8.00pm. **Note earlier (prompt!) start. All members please try and attend this important meeting.**

Saturday 21st - trip to Bridgnorth and Kidderminster, including the Severn Valley Railway. Details and booking from Frank Wood on 014578 65426.

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

Saturday 21st - Severn Valley Railway trip. Meet 8.45am at Waters Green, Macclesfield. Picking up at the Waggon & Horses, Congleton.

Monday 23rd - Monthly branch meeting at the Cotton Tree, Bollington. Starts 8.00pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14

Claire and Howard wish all their friends and customers a warm welcome at



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

Introducing

THE SPECIAL **K** BEER FESTIVAL

From Friday 30 May for Two Weeks

Featuring during the first week:

Kimberley Classic

Kingsdown Ale

King Alfreds Ale

Knickadroppa Glory

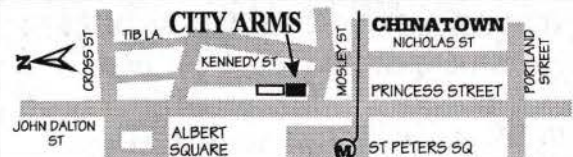
Kinds of May

King & Barnes Sussex

King & Barnes Broadwood...

among others

For a list of subsequent beers - Visit The Pub!



CONSTANTLY CHANGING RANGE OF HIGHEST QUALITY GUEST ALES
GOOD FOOD - FREQUENT EXCITING PROMOTIONS



Yates's Wine Lodge subsidiary, Watling Street Inns has embarked on a £6 million programme which will see six new pubs open over the next twelve months. First off the blocks is the £1 million Samuel Finney's in Wilmslow, due to open shortly to be followed in October by the Oakley Manor in Cheadle Hulme. This is the former hotel opposite the Church Inn and is to be rechristened the Governor's House prior to re-opening in its new format. The Governor's will also house Watling Street's HQ.

At the Britannia in Beswick, we welcome new licensee Mike Mulver. While trade is still slow at this lovely but isolated little pub, OT recently enjoyed a fine pint under Mike's stewardship. And more trade could come from the demolition of the nearby Mosley which is understood to have been bought by the neighbouring Mercedes-Benz car showroom. Although the Mosley was run-down and had struggled for years to sell cask beer, it's a shame to lose any pub (and an even greater shame to lose it to sales space for luxury motorcars which are way beyond most locals' pockets). Nevertheless, if it helps to maintain the Brit as a viable pub, some good will have come of it.

At the Polygon in Levenshulme, the cask beers, both on handpump, are Boddingtons Bitter and Greenalls low-gravity, low-price Festival. The Polygon's licensee has now taken on the Union in Levenshulme, and the same range should be available there.

The Rocket Bar next to Deansgate Station is now known as the Beat'n Track, but no longer sells real ale.

Two real ale gains in the Greenalls estate, both long-standing keg outlets. In Northenden the Spread Eagle has gained handpumped Tetley and Stones Bitter, while in Heaton Moor, the Elizabethan now has handpumped Tetley Bitter, Greenalls Bitter and Original. Congratulations to Gary and Saxon from the Station in Didsbury who got married on Saturday 26 April. Our roving OT rep bumped into a somewhat nervous Gary having a calming drink in Ye Olde Cock just before the ceremony. Dressed in top hat and tails, Gary certainly looked the part. We hope everything went according to plan and best wishes for the future.

Harry Curran (ex-Romper, Ringway) was spotted recently pulling pints in the Rifleman's Arms, Moor Lane, Wilmslow. Although now officially retired, Harry can be persuaded to put in the odd celebratory appearance by helping out with the occasional bit of relief work. He will be back at the Rifleman's towards the end of August. In the meantime he declared it his intention to visit Stockport Beer Festival this year as "it will be the first time really that I am able to attend".

Meanwhile, rumours abound about the Romper itself. Greenalls are reported to have plans for the pub and trade is allegedly well-down. We hear that regulars who went in the pub for years have now found alternative places to drink. Boddingtons of course tried to turn the place into an upmarket eatery year ago but withdrew their plans after uproar from all quarters. Betting is closed on whether Greenalls would be similarly responsive.

Stockport seems to have gained its own Band on the Wall in the shape of the Bowling Green on Charles Street, just off the top of Hillgate. Stockport musician John Brett, of the Removal Men and many other local bands, is credited with building the stage. Other than Monday and Tuesday there are now live bands most nights and they seem to be proving very popular. Look for a review in a future OT. Two real ales are sold - Websters



Yorkshire Bitter (yawn) and Grays Bitter which is really Mansfield Riding Bitter in disguise and eminently drinkable.

In Bramhall, Bramhalls is now known as Bar Aka and sells no real ale. Imported Czech Staropramen lager is available but at £2.30 a pint.

Changes are likely at Stockport's Arden Arms which changed hands on June 2nd. More on this next time together, hopefully, with one on the Ladybrook in Bramhall which was closed for refurbishment as we went to press.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(OT158)

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

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

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

STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £8

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £8

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 TP PARK
 PUBLIC HOUSE
 Newbridge Lane
 0161 480 2275
STOCKPORT

HAPPY HOUR
 and 1/2
FRIDAY
 8pm - 10pm



DISCO
SATURDAYS
STARTS 8pm
 (with BOTTLE BONANZA)



KARAOKE
SUNDAYS
STARTS 8pm
 with **JENNIE**

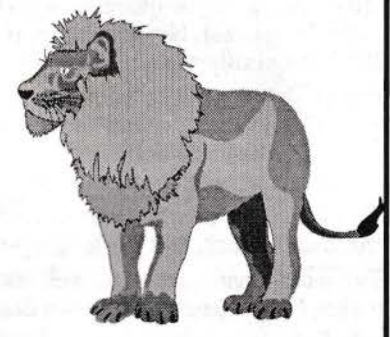


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ALL
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HOT & COLD
FOOD
AVAILABLE
MON - FRI
11.30am - 2pm

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THE WHITE
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LION



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Joseph Holt (Traditional Bitter)

NOW ON SALE

£1.00 Per Pint - Limited Period Only

Refurbishment starting 1st Week in June

OPEN AS USUAL

DUCHIE BRIDGE,
MANCHESTER

(opposite CIS Building)

RE-OPENS
JUNE 9th

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT