

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

# OPENING TIMES



No:170

Volume 14  
Issue 6

FREE

• TIMES •

6,600 CIRCULATED  
FREE EVERY MONTH

JUNE 1998



## Festival Fun

**T**he 1998 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival looks set to be the best on record according to the jubilant organisers of the three day event which closed early, at 10.30pm, on the Saturday night having been drunk virtually dry by a record crowd of eager and appreciative drinkers.

Almost 4100 customers flocked through the doors, leaving organisers tired but very happy indeed. Beer sales were almost the highest ever, being just 9 gallons short of the record, while cider and perry sales, helped by the presence of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale's National Cider and Perry Championship, easily surpassed any previous Stockport Festival. Local charity Stockport Sharecare also reported a record year with almost £1000 raised for their funds.

The newly launched Cheshire Guide sold extremely well, to the delight of joint editor Simon Scott who worked on the products stall throughout. Saturday's highlight, of course, was the National Cider & Perry Championship, hosted at the Festival by Opening Times co-editor Paul Hutchings who delivers a report on the proceedings on page 13 of this issue.

The last word, though, must go to Festival Organiser Jim Flynn who told us: "We were hoping this festival would be the best ever and so it proved. My thanks go to the Stockport Express Advertiser, for sponsoring us again, Paul Stanyer 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!"



The Festival on Saturday - busy and vibrant

### Beer and Cider of the Festival

As usual it was a close contest for the beer of the Festival Awards, selected by the Festival's customers.

Category winners were: Mild - Whim Magic Mushroom Mild; Bitter - Inveralmond Independence; Premium Bitter - Oakham Bishop's Farewell; Special Beers - a tie between Kitchen Raisin Stout and Salopian Puzzle; Stout and Porter - Aspinall's Lamp Oil; Old Ales - another tie between Butterknowle Old Ebenezer and RCH Firebox. The prize for Cider of the Festival was a tie between Crone's Special Reserve and Bob Jones' twin varietal (Michelin & Verberry) and Champion Perry was Gwatkins (Malvern Hill).

Overall Champion Beer was Oakham Bishop's Farewell while overall Champion Cider/Perry was Gwatkins. Well done all of the above.

### Crown Safe?

Last month's item concerning the future of the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport, produced a flurry of media activity and a reassurance about its future from the pub's putative new owners.

Readers may recall that Greenalls are selling off the town's premier guest beer pub to the Old King Cole Pub Company and it has been far from clear whether the pub's unfettered guest beer stocking policy would remain after the changeover.

However, following an intervention by the Stockport Express Advertiser the future of the guest beers now looks more assured. David Coates, chief executive of Old King Cole told the paper that there would be "no change" in the way the pub is run. Recognising that that pub would undoubtedly become a white elephant if the guest beers were to be axed, he added "we will rely on the managers' expertise and let them carry on running as they always have."

The Old King Cole Pub Co has been in business for just 12 months and is buying the Crown along with a package of other Greenalls pubs. The company policy is apparently to concentrate on traditional community pubs run by tenants rather than themed managed houses.

#### In JUNE'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View .....	2	Mild Award .....	11
Pub of the Month .....	3	Robinsons .....	11
Beer Monster .....	4	High Peak Pub .....	12
Stagger .....	6	High Peak News .....	12
Growing Pub Co .....	7	Fistful of Arrows .....	14
Wrights Road .....	8	Pub News .....	15
Curmudgeon .....	9	Camra Calling .....	16
Five Years Ago .....	9	Viaducts & Vaults Update	17
Brewery News .....	10	Manchester Matters ...	19

National Cider & Perry Championship - details Page 13

Viaducts & Vaults II - May 1998 Update - Inside on pages 17 - 18

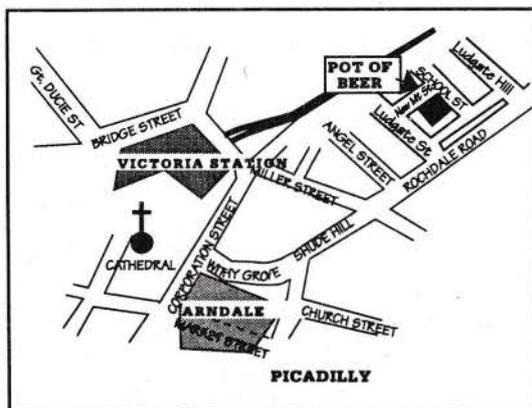
# POT OF BEER

**36 NEW MOUNT ST  
(0161) 834 8579**

- ✓ **4 GUEST ALES EVERY WEEK**
- ✓ **ROBINSONS DARK MILD**
- ✓ **HOEGAARDEN WHEAT BEER**
- ✓ **TRADITIONAL CIDER**
- ✓ **SELECTION OF WINES & MALT WHISKIES**



**2**



**FOOD NOW AVAILABLE  
12 - 2 pm,  
MONDAY - FRIDAY!**

## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

First a big thank-you to everyone concerned with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival – how will we top that next year?

Certainly the enthusiastic attendance from drinkers of all ages and walks of life give the lie to those siren voices of the big brewers who would have you believe that real ale is dead or dying. The antics of these companies continue to defy belief. Their latest wheeze is to effectively scupper the campaign for a beer duty reduction by imposing price increases which are seeing the price of a pint go up by five to eight pence. Will they never learn?

The same siren voices will also tell you that the traditional community local is on its last legs. The future, they assert, lies in large, 'branded' managed houses. Again the facts tell a different tale. As many of the pub-owning companies are discovering, well-run traditional tenancies that respond to the needs of their regulars and communities can be very profitable indeed. This month we look at the activities of one of the smaller operators, the locally based Marie Pub Co which so far has specialised in taking under-performing pubs and returning them to their communities. Something we can all support.

The story I hear, though, is being duplicated all over the country. All that many of these so-called dead end pubs need is a little tender loving care, the right person behind the bar and a decent drop of beer served at the right price. A simple enough formula you might think, but one that is apparently lost on many of the national operators who can see no further than their accountants' bottom line.

★ ★ ★ ★

Whilst it was very pleasing to see Stockport hosting a National CAMRA event - in this case the National Cider & Perry championships (see article on page 13), even better news reaches us this month. With the Royal Exchange Theatre Company set to move back into their real home, finally reborn after the IRA bomb, their current (temporary) home at Upper Campfield Market in Castlefield will be once more available to CAMRA, and the 1999 Manchester Beer Festival will also see the National Champion Winter Ale competition. More on this next month.

*John Clarke*

## OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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. Editors: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD. ☎ (0161) 477 1973 (home) and (0161) 831 7222 x 3411 (wk); Paul Hutchings, 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport Cheshire, SK4 2np. % & Fax (0161) 432 8384. News, articles and letters welcome. All editorial items may be submitted in most popular WP formats or ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!). Adverts should be in CorelDraw 3 or 5 (\*.cdr) format or TIFF or EPS files (submit printed proofs for checking and ensure that any "include all fonts" options are on). Articles for publication can be submitted by e-mail to jclarke@opentime.u-net.com. Letters to the editor on otletter@opentime.u-net.com. All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

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.

ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page: £25; 1/4 page: £40; 1/2 page: £70; Full page £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. (Rates current until July 31 1998.)

# Pub Of The Month

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	<b>25</b>	26	27
28	29	30				

## JUNE

## 1998



### CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

**B R A N C H**



**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June 1998 is the Moss Rose on Didsbury Road in Heaton Norris, a Hydes' managed house run by Graham and Gladys Tildsley.

They've received a Pub of the Month award before, in December 1993, so why another award, albeit over four and a half years later? Well, the Moss Rose's beer was good then, but it's got even better over the past few years, resulting in the pub offering one of the most consistently excellent pints of Hyde's that you're likely to find. Light and Bitter on electric pump are the regular beers, though at the time of writing Hydes' latest seasonal beer, Mad ferret, was available on handpump.

It's not only the beer, though. The Moss Rose, whilst perhaps the ugliest pub building in Stockport, is a brilliantly run community local where everyone can feel at home. All that a good pub should be, in fact.

So come along on and join us celebrating this much deserved award to a fine, well-run pub on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June. Buses 22, 42 and 370 run from Stockport and Manchester and will drop you outside.

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

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 170: John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Wayfarer, Peter Edwardson, Dave Meynell, The Beer Monster™, Steve Smith, Jim Bowden, Mark McConachie, Jack Lyons, Tom Lord, Brian Kemp, John Tune

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 pbh@opentime.u-net.com

Opening Times is printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.



Irene and Staff welcome you to  
**The Greyhound**



Bowden Street, Edgeley  
**Boddingtons Mild & Bitter**  
and ever changing Guest Beers

June 6 - Nethergate Golden Gate  
June 13 - So they Think Its Ale Over  
June 20 - MacLay Thrapple Quencher  
June 27 York Final Whistle  
July 4 Shepherd Neame Goldings Ale

BINGO: MON & THURS afternoons SKY TV

★ **OPEN ALL DAY** ★

CAMRA Pub of the Month

March 1997



## IN STOCKPORT?

### WANT SOMETHING TO EAT?

FED UP WITH THE SAME "PLASTIC" FOOD?

THEN TRY...

## BEV'S BUFFET

SAMPLE.....

**BEV'S LASAGNE,  
"SOUP 'N' SARNIE"  
PRAWN & CHEESE SPECIAL  
3 EGG OMELETTES,  
HADDOCK, SCAMPI  
GAMMON STEAK, AND**

**REAL CHIPS!!!.....** ALL AT

UNBELIEVABLE PRICES!

**ONLY AT THE RAILWAY,**

**PORTWOOD. TEL 0161 429 6062**

Look out for details of our new web pages - full details and internet address next month

3

**COPY DATE FOR JULY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 19**



## In and Around the Northern Quarter

There is a common misconception amongst real-aledrinkers in Manchester that all the best beer is to be had in the City's 'Northern Quarter'. Well - it ain't necessarily so, mainly because the so-called Northern Quarter doesn't actually extend as far as people think. Indeed, much of the best real-ale is to be found 'in and around' that area. This tour will take you from an arrival point (either Picadilly - train/bus [and longer]- or St Peters Square - bus) on a tour of a bakers dozen of 'the best of the best of the best'.

*Ultimately we end up in the same place, so we will do the arrival thing first! There is a map opposite on page 5!* From Picadilly. (1) **The Waldor** on Gore St. Basically a Whitbread pub, but with an ever-excellent pint of Taylor's Landlord on offer. Up to Portland street and West to the corner by Princess St. Here are three to choose from: (2) **The Grey Horse** (Hydes), the fabulous (though incredibly tiny) (3) **Circus Tavern**, a Tetley Heritage Pub - both in the current Good Beer Guide), and (4) **The Old Monkey** a recently built Holts house in traditional style. Back to Nicholas St, and north, through Chinatown and then across Mosley Street (possibly with a brief sojourn in the *Forger & Firkin* (beers from the Footage & Firkin on Grosvenor St) to Kennedy St and the (5) **City Arms** (GBG listed), an excellently run Festival Ale House with Tetleys and an ever changing range of impressive guest beers in excellent condition. (If you like Scotco beers, the *Vine* next door usually serves good quality Directors. The City Arms is also first stop if you get off (or on!) in St Peters Square, so from here-on in, we are one.

4

Along Fountain St, across Market St, and down High St (passing the Blob Shop with narry a backward glance) and on to the **Hogshead** (6) High St. Although this pub has recently seen a change of management (the previous incumbents are now at the new Hogshead on Oxford Road next to the Eye Hospital). Here again, an excellent range of not-inexpensive real ales, many from micro-breweries, and many 'new'. Continue onto Shude Hill, and east up to Rochdale Road. Here (just off Rochdale Road on Angel Street) we find what must be the undisputed major Ale House in Manchester, **The Beer House** (7). 12 handpumps & regular major beer festivals - there is one on as you read this! - and a host of beers from micros, a great number of them new, in an unpretentious and cosmopolitan atmosphere, with interesting offers on food throughout the week. Real cider is always available as is a range of bottled and draught foreign beer.

Carry on down Angel Street to the end, then further along to Corporation St to **Holts Crown and Cushion** where you can try some of the famous cheap brew if you eschewed the Old Monkey. Back to and down Aspin St. and up Red Bank, under the Railway and on up the hill to the **Queens Arms** (8), Honey Street. Again an excellent range of well kept beers, good lunchtime food, and a large garden complete with childrens play area. (Holts freaks could now make a short diversion to Cheetham Hill Road to the Derby Brewery Arms - the Holts brewery tap, but I digress...) Back down Red Bank, then right onto Roger St, along the path at the end and up the hill (Gould St) to **The Marble Arch**. (9)

The Marble was until recently another multi-ale free house, in this case with interesting architecture to boot, including a famous dramatically sloping floor. Now however, all has changed - the Marble Arch has its own brewery, (two of Mark Dade's Marble brews should be available at the Festival). There are Dades Bitter at 3.8, Marble Bitter and Totally Marbled Bitter, an excellent Marble IPA, Dobber (a strong ale), and a Porter. Many of the recipes for the brews (and the plant itself) originated with Brendan Dobbin, who will be well known to many readers from his former brewery at the Kings Arms, but Marks latest creation - the excellent and fantastically hoppy Dades Bitter, is entirely his own.

From the Marble Arch we go to the **Pot of Beer** (10) on NewMount St., a... multi-ale free house. Smaller than the big boys, there is nevertheless usually an interesting range, the handpumps complimented by a chilled gravity stillage behind the bar, and a range of Polish (?) food at lunchtime. Back up to and along Rochdale Rd (probably popping back into the Beer House to try a few we didn't have last time.....) and left onto Swan Street. On the other side of the road can be seen the (11) **Smithfield Hotel**. This is (wait for it...) another multi-ale free house, often featuring beers from Cheshire and Derbyshire micro-breweries. If you are thirsty for Scotco again, the Burton Arms (virtually next door) is a pleasant Theakstons house.

Across the road we come to (12) **Bar Fringe**, probably the most unusual of the pubs on this crawl. This is basically a Belgian Beer Bar (Draught Kriek, Leffe and Hoegaarden at cheaper than average prices) a huge selection of bottled Belgian beers, Draught German beer and two real ales, one from Bolton's Bank Top brewery that changes weekly, and a draught cider/perry (sometimes both). On the subject of foreign beers, the Beer House has a similar draught range (some different varieties - Becks (alas) as the draught German), and a number of bottles, though unfortunately the Marble has been without an interesting German draught beer recently. The Smithfield has Bitburger on Draught. (The interesting draught Foreign beer king, though, is Sand Bar on Grosvenor St, a few feet from the (brewing) Footage and Firkin).

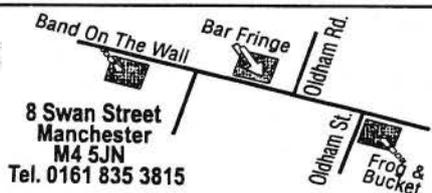
The final port of call is the only central Manchester tied-outlet for Robinsons, the **Castle** (13) on Oldham Street (left out of Fringe then right at the lights). Robinson's adverts state they produce six beers (including the badged Hartley's XB) but there is a seventh, the famously difficult to find Robinsons Best Dark Mild - and here are all seven (the only pub in the estate offering the entire range!) Incidentally, the Dark Mild is also usually available at the Pot of Beer.

*Well having got this far in the best part of a day, I'm done, but a short walk from the Castle, if you're still thirsty is the Whitbread Ale House the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street. Another multi-ale pub, and if by this time you've not been satisfied, well...tough! In next month's issue there will be a considered review of some of the more recent major CAMRA and pub beer festivals, and the annual preview of the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, together with some thoughts about current brewing trends.*

**B  
A  
R  
  
F  
R  
I  
N  
G  
E**



**OVER 30 BELGIAN BEERS**  
regularly Available  
**Draught Hoegaarden at £1.95/pint,**  
also on draught - **Bellevue Kriek & Leffe**  
**Blond in Traditionally Chilled Brewery**  
**Glasses,**  
Bottled beers include Orval, Boon Kriek &  
Framboise and the entire Mort Subite range  
**Draught Krombacher and Handpumped**  
**British Ales including changing Guest**  
**from Bank Top and Handpumped**  
**traditional Gloucester cider or perry**  
Food available 12 noon till 8pm

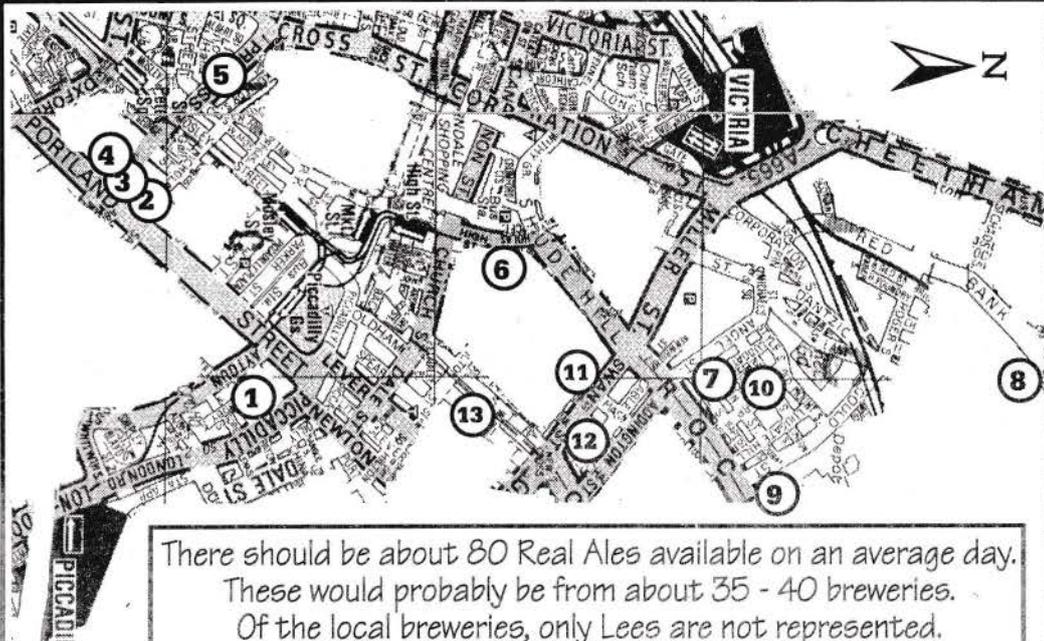


8 Swan Street  
Manchester  
M4 5JN  
Tel. 0161 835 3815



THE BEER MONSTERS™

RECOMMENDED PUBS AROUND THE NORTHERN QUARTER or Manchester on a lot of pints a day!



**The Pubs**

- 1 Waldorf
- 2 Grey Horse
- 3 Circus
- 4 Old Monkey
- 5 City Arms
- 6 Hogshead
- 7 Beer House
- 8 Queens Arms
- 9 Marble Arch
- 10 Pot o Beer
- 11 Smithfield
- 12 Bar Fringe
- 13 Castle

There should be about 80 Real Ales available on an average day. These would probably be from about 35 - 40 breweries. Of the local breweries, only Lees are not represented. (This is because I cannot with a clear conscience recommend a Lees House on this trip!)

# The Beer House

OPEN ALL DAY  
MON - SUN



(0161) 839 7019 Angel Street, Manchester

USHERS BITTER, COURAGE DIRECTORS, MOORHOUSES  
PENDLE WITCH + 9 EVER CHANGING GUEST BEERS  
including a GUEST MILD, PLUS A RANGE OF  
TRADITIONAL CIDERS,  
DRAUGHT BELGIAN KRIEK, LEFFE BLONDE, HOEGAARDEN  
MANY BOTTLED BELGIAN and other FOREIGN BEERS



SOMETHING FOR  
EVEN THE  
MOST DISCERNING  
TASTE

Hot Lunchtime Food 7 Days A Week

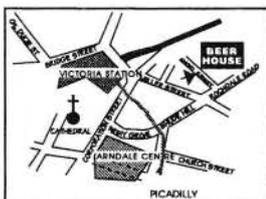
SUNDAY BREAKFAST 12 - 2.30 EVENING MEALS 5 - 7 FRI  
THURS 5-8 CHOICE OF 3 CURRIES (VEG & NON-VEG) + RICE £3  
HALF PRICE MENUS MON LUNCH - FREE CHIP MUFFINS WED 5-6  
WIDE RANGE OF SINGLE MALTS - REGULAR FESTIVALS

(0161) 839  
7019

## Saturday JULY 4<sup>th</sup>

The famous Independents' Day Pub Hunt. Meet Beer House, Angel St, City Centre between 12 noon and 1.00pm for an afternoon's cryptically guided stroll round some of the city's finest pubs selling independent brewers' beers. Teams of from 1 to 4 people - fame and (modest) prizes await the winners. Guaranteed to be easier than last year - ie possible!

**NEXT MAJOR  
BEER FESTIVAL  
AUGUST BANK HOL  
THURS 27 - MON 31  
AUGUST**



two traditional ciders always available  
-good food-vegetarians welcome

# STAGGER

with Rhys Jones

**A** rich aroma of malt hung over the city as we gathered to explore the pubs of Rusholme. Less common than it used to be since the closure of the big breweries at Cook Street and Newton Heath, this is always a welcome reminder that ours is still one of the great brewing cities. How would its traditions be represented tonight?

Our first pub is not actually in Rusholme at all – it was the **Claremont** in Moss Side. Like its neighbour Manchester City FC, the Claremont has been in the doldrums for some time; while I will say no more of City (these notes being written before the end of the football season), the Claremont at least seems to be on the road to recovery, with smart new carpet and upholstery, and a very good pint of handpumped Holt's Bitter. It's still pretty down-to-earth, of course, with plenty of effing and blinding both from the customers and from tapes of Roy "Chubby" Brown; but I'm glad to say the place is looking better than I've ever seen it, and only needs a coat of paint outside to round off the good work.

Next to the **Bee Hive**, a small brick-built estate pub belonging to Hydes'. The lounge was closed, while the sparsely populated vault was dominated by a pool table and Coronation Street. Electric founts announced Mild, Bitter and Billy Westwood's. When Billy was ordered, though, it issued from an unmarked handpump and was very good indeed; the Bitter, while not gaining quite such a rave review, was more than respectable.

The next pub on Claremont Road, the **Sherwood**, now sells only keg beer, and the **Lord Lyon** has been all keg for years, so our next call was Bass's **Hardy's Well**, formerly the Birch Villa. Aimed successfully at the student trade, it has few features of interest apart from the splendid alliterative prose-poem by Lemn Sissay on the south-facing external wall – and you don't need to go into the pub to enjoy that! Beer was a decidedly average Worthington Best Bitter (what can their Worst be like?), and keg cider was deceitfully sold on handpump.

Across the road now to the **Welcome**, and a complete change of atmosphere. With its separate rooms and areas, this is a pub that can happily accommodate a wide variety of folk – a couple of customers were playing chess in one corner, whilst overheard conversations ranged from Gladstone's last words to, inevitably, City's chances of avoiding relegation. And while I'm no royalist, the photograph of HRH presiding over the front room was a reminder of a less frenetic age of pub-going. It's just a shame that the real ale selection is so dull, with just Greenalls Bitter, Original and Tetley Bitter to choose from – the Original was in fact very good, and the

Greenalls Bitter was perfectly OK, but something like one of the beers now being brewed for Greenalls by Riddleys of Essex would greatly enhance the beer side of this excellent traditional pub. Disregarding the distractions of the spicy aromas of Wilmslow Road (not to mention the keg-only **Huntsman**), we pressed on to our mid-evening rendezvous at Hydes' **Osborne House** on Victory Street. A simple, back-street house, the Osborne is the sort of pub that has closed by the hundred in Britain's cities in recent



years. All credit to Hydes', then, for seeing the potential that still remains and spending money sensibly to bring about a very welcome improvement to the pub in traditional style using high quality materials. Mild, Bitter and the then-current seasonal beer Rampant Ram were on handpump. For some reasons, nobody tried the Ram, but the two regular beers were on good form, the Bitter being very marginally preferred.

As the **Gardeners Arms** now sells keg beer only, our next call was another Hydes' pub, the **Albert** on Walmer Street. While it's always a pleasure to visit the Albert, with its bustling atmosphere, Guinness adverts, and posters of Irish writers, sadly on this occasion the Bitter, while quite acceptable, wasn't really up the standard of the evening's previous Hydes' pubs. The Albert has always sold Guinness by the tanker-load, and I do wonder whether this may be the one pub where keg Hydes' Smooth may have taken enough sales from Bitter to dull the edge of quality.

No such speculation need detain you at the **Clarence**, where all the beer is keg (and so is the cider, despite the handpump); so despite the band belting out *Star of the County Down*, we moved on swiftly to Marston's **Whitworth**, opposite Whitworth Park. This pub has evolved over the years to its present split-level format, which was not as busy as I'd have expected late-ish on a Friday night. Could this be why the mooted extension is now apparently on hold? The atmosphere was pleasant, though, as was the beer – handpumped Bitter and Pedigree, both on good form, particularly the Bitter. The current Head Brewer's Choice, the splendid Oyster Stout, was in the cellar, but – to the great disappointment of many of the party – not ready to be served.

We rounded off the evening at the area's newest pub, the **Hogshead** on Oxford Road. No shortage of customers here, as both floors were packed with a largely student crowd – and how heartening to see a large proportion of them drinking good ale. By the Hogshead chain's high standards, the guest range was somewhat disappointing, with a "job lot" of beers from Coach House rather restricting variety, but there was still plenty to choose from and the quality seemed uniformly good. My Smiles Heritage was certainly excellent, though expensive at £1.94 for a 5.2 per cent ABV beer, while other members of the party tested the pub's range by sampling Westmalle Tripel and Gales Orange Wine (though not in the same glass, you'll be relieved to know). The Hogshead is certainly a class act, and we finished the evening on a high note. This was an evening of contrasts indeed, embracing a quiet estate pub, the latest beer emporium, and many of the variants in between. As ever, what I've written is simply an attempt to distil the views of a smallish group of drinkers on just one evening. To see if you agree, just follow in our footsteps.

6

## The Nursery Inn

GREEN LANE,  
HEATON NORRIS,  
STOCKPORT  
432 - 2044



- ★ Good Home Cooked Food Served Daily
- ★ Lunches every day including Sundays for families in our Dining Room.
- ★ Beer Garden with Eating Area
- ★ Bowling Parties & Function Room.
- ★ Egon Ronay Guide, AA Best of British Gd
- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

Hydes  
Anvil Ales

Brewers of  
Traditional  
Cask  
Beers

Always in  
good taste

# Pub-Co Going Places

## A look at the Marie Pub Co

**A** feature of the pub industry in recent years has been the growth of non-brewing pub companies. These can range from the very big, such as Greenalls, to the smaller home-grown operations running just a handful of outlets. This month we take a look at one of the smaller operators, but one with big ambitions.

The Chinley-based Marie Pub Co Ltd started out with just one outlet, the Park on Newbridge Lane, Stockport and has now expanded to eight outlets, with more in the pipeline, under the determined guidance of Park licensee and company owner, Nigel Eastwood, who now lives in the Derbyshire village.

We asked Nigel to tell us the history of the company and what drove him to expand from the one prosperous pub on to the potentially risky path of the multiple operator. He took on the Park in December 1992 in partnership with his mother, Marie, in whose honour the company is named. She sadly died in January 1997 but even before Marie's death she and Nigel had talked about expanding into more pubs. Thus it was in February 1997 that Nigel took the decision to build up a small pub chain, aiming for a target of eight or so outlets.

Why did he take the plunge? "Well, I had the collateral to do it, and also the experience. I'd worked as an area manager for a small pub company before and thought 'why not do it for myself?' After all I'd had the experience of running pubs since I was 20." He'd certainly made a success of the Park and thought that the winning formula could be applied to other outlets. His target was "very underperforming" pubs which had potential if they were run on the right lines. Nigel explains "My philosophy is to pay a fair price for a potentially very good business and not a good price for a fair one. Yes, there are some risks involved but I have a knack of looking at a pub and seeing the potential."

It's a strategy that has certainly paid off so far, as trade at all of the Marie outlets has not only increased but has done so significantly. And this has been without spending a fortune on them. Some of the refurbishments haven't been cheap but have cost nothing like the mega-spends of the national operators. This is good news for pub-lovers everywhere as Nigel is demonstrating that many pubs that the big companies are keen to write off are viable, all they need is some tender loving care. All bar one sell cask ale, too, again bucking the allegedly unstoppable trend to nitro-keg.

There are currently eight Marie Pub Co outlets, the original target. However there is now no fixed target and Nigel tells us that several other Stockport outlets are in the pipeline. Negotiations are under way to take over another four or five in Stockport and a meeting about this was imminent as we went to press. The company is also looking to buy a pub in Wigan.

So what is the aim now. Nigel puts it simply "to build up a nice, small and profitable pub company in the memory of my mother."



We now take a brief look at the current Marie Pub Co outlets:

### The Park, Newbridge Lane, Stockport

The original Marie Pub Co outlet. Nigel Eastwood remains joint licensee with Jill Halliwell who runs the pub with husband Dave. Jill officially took over on 1 June, having worked in the pub for three years. The pub is open all permitted hours and sells handpumped Theakstons and Holt's bitters. Lunchtime food is a feature as are the extensive happy hours - 4.30-7, Monday to Thursday and 8.30-10 on Fridays. There's a disco on Saturdays and Karaoke on Sundays.

### The White Lion, Disley

The second outlet, take over in February 1997 and run by Alf and Kay Carter. A £60,000 refit last August saw an upturn in trade and Bed & Breakfast was started this year. Open all permitted hours and sells Lees Bitter on handpump. Food is available every lunchtime, seven days a week. Friday also sees a happy hour and Karaoke in the evening and there is a Saturday disco.



### The Ducie Bridge, Corporation St, Manchester

The fourth Marie outlet taken over in June 1997 and run by David Bradley. The main feature at this City Centre outlet is the Saturday night 'Jucy Ducie' Comedy Club run by Key 103's Smug Roberts (details on the back page ad). The pub is open all permitted hours Monday-Saturday but remains closed until 7.00pm on Sundays. Lees and Wilson's Bitters are on handpump. Food is served at lunchtimes and early evenings Monday to Saturday.

### The Pack Horse, Mottram

The fourth outlet in the Opening Times area and the Marie Pub Co's seventh, having been taken over this March. David Hughes is the licensee and the pub is open all permitted hours. Three cask beers are sold - Theakstons Bitter, John Smiths Bitter and Webster's Green Label. Food is the major attraction here though, with a bar menu available every day from 12 noon until 10.00pm and a restaurant menu available from 7.00pm. There is a supper license until midnight and a function room for 80. Despite the accent on food, the pub still shifts no less than 15 barrels of beer each week.

### Other Outlets

Apart from those detailed above, there are another four outlets outside the Opening Times area. In Northwich there is the Whitton Chimes, the towns only outlet for Holt's Bitter. A big bikers pub, it will remain so after the forthcoming refurbishment. The Rawstrons Arms is in Whitworth near Rochdale and is a freehouse purchased last December. A total refurbishment finishes in the middle of this month. Lees Bitter on handpump. The George Hotel in Sandbach was taken on in February and is an all-keg circuit pub. The latest acquisition is Jo-Jo's in Royton, a club currently open two night a week. Licensed for 650 it's the company's biggest outlet. Work starts in the middle of June to convert part of the premises into a pub, The Eastdale, an upmarket operation which will sell cask beer. The nightclub will be renamed 'Marie's (The Nightclub)', The official re-opening will be mid-July.

7

## On The Wrights Road

Chris Wainwright looks at the  
Wrights Arms, Offerton.

Steve and Toni Burchell of The Wrights Arms at Offerton Green have good reason to feel pleased with themselves.

They took over the license in November 1997, having come from a Banks's pub in the Midlands, to what can only be described as a ship without a rudder. In 1996 this former Wilsons house passed from The Magic Pub Co to Greene King of Bury St Edmunds. With three or four licensees passing through the result was that the pub lost direction and custom dwindled. In his first six months at the Wrights, Steve has made great inroads in reversing the trend by focusing on improving beer quality, concentrating on customer service and is now topping it all off with a head to toe redecoration. The Wrights Arms first sold beer in 1756 as the Fogg Brook Inn and Samuel Oldknow built his turnpike road (Marple Road) on its doorstep later that century, thus ensuring a constant supply of customers. Since then the structure of the pub has changed little. The bar stretches through two of the three rooms on the front of the pub. Completely separate are two rooms, the snug to the left of the front door (easy to miss) and the lounge to the rear of the pub.

Greene King, mindful of this history and the pub's multi-roomed layout, are only redecorating, just re-papering and re-carpeting to a high standard. Only the toilets have had a complete refit. One important thing that is being restored though, is the pub's place in the community. A great football fan, Steve is organising a team for the Stockport Sunday League with sponsorship from Greene King and one of his regulars. Other teams in the pipeline are darts and netball. There is live entertainment on Thursdays, a prize quiz Wednesdays and regular seventies disco nights for the nostalgic. Specially installed in the top room for the World Cup is a large screen TV. This may be a blessing or a bind, depending on your point of view.



The cask beer range at the Wrights is set to grow as Steve intends to introduce a guest beer. Currently the main beer is Greene King Abbot Ale (usually on form), supported by Webster's Green Label and Theakstons Bitter, all on handpump. He is thinking of putting on a mild. "I was shocked when I came here." Steve says, "This is my first pub with no mild". He has a soft spot for mild having received a "Master of Mild" award from Tetley's Brewery during his nine years with them in the Grimsby area. I wait with anticipation. When I asked about introducing over-sized lined glasses, Steve explained that his hands are tied by Greene King's dictate on that matter. (Come on Greene King!)

Whilst Steve is busy in the bar and cellar, wife Toni looks after the bar food. Since taking over they have been continuing the menu inherited from the Magic Pub Co but this is about to change. A revamped menu, which retains favourites like chicken balti and lasagne, is to be augmented by a range of hot and cold baguettes and a variety of "sizzling skillet" meals. Toni is also hoping to introduce special Chinese and Indian theme nights.

"The pub was in decline when we arrived here, but we like it and want to make something of it. We feel it's the place for us", and with their enthusiasm they probably will, and I hope they do. The Wrights Arms is three miles south east of Stockport on the A626, served by bus routes 358 and 383/384 with the last one back to Stockport about midnight.

8

# THE WRIGHTS ARMS

Offerton Green, Stockport

**Steve and Toni Burchell welcome you to their historic pub,  
recently refurbished**

**Greene King Abbot Ale,  
Theakstons Bitter  
and Websters Green Label  
all on handpump.  
Green label just 99p a pint!**

*Prize Quiz Wednesday night  
Live Entertainment Thursdays  
Regular 70's Disco nights*

**Watch the World Cup on our specially  
installed large screen TV**

Hot and cold food available:  
12 - 2pm and 5 - 7pm Mondays to Saturdays  
12 - 2pm Sundays



**WE ARE OPEN 12 - 11pm  
Monday- Saturday  
and 12 - 10.30pm Sundays  
Phone 483 3762**



### Waiter, the Beer List, Please!

Occasionally, I have had the questionable pleasure of staying on business in the kind of hotel that you would never dream of forking out your own money for. Such establishments normally pride themselves on the excellence of their cuisine, and their wine lists boast an impressive selection of vintages. But this attention to quality suddenly stops short when it comes to beer. Real ale is conspicuous by its absence, and all that's on offer is a dreary collection of mass-market kegs and bottles, usually at exorbitant prices.

Given that the turnover may be low and erratic, it's perhaps not unreasonable to expect hotels to stock real ale on draught. But surely any hotel that wishes to be taken seriously as a high-quality establishment should make an effort with every aspect of its service, including beer. There's no reason why they can't stock a carefully chosen selection of ten or so good British and imported bottled beers, and publicise the fact by putting a beer menu with tasting notes on every table in the bar. And, I suspect that a lot of hotels that have a captive market of business travellers might be surprised at the result if they chucked out the nitrokeg John Smith's and Caffrey's and put in a single handpumped bitter from a local independent brewer.

### The Goldfish Bowl Inn

A complaint often heard about pubs from trendy commentators is that frosted glass windows make them old-fashioned, unwelcoming and female-unfriendly, because they stop potential customers looking inside before venturing over the threshold. I can just about see the point in some tourist and city-centre locations where there's a substantial amount of foot-borne passing trade. But the number of pubs that come into that category is relatively small, and if you don't like what you find you can always walk straight back out again. Traditional etched glass is one of the great glories of our pub heritage, and its destruction in the name of a fleeting fashion can never be justified. To my mind it's a major plus point, enhancing the appeal of a pub as a cosy refuge from the pressures of the world outside. And if I'm sitting in the front snug of a high street pub, the last thing I want is passers-by gawping in at me.

### Ballykisschelsford?

In April, an Essex pub was refused an application for an extension on St George's Day because the licensing bench decided that the occasion wasn't special enough. Yet every fake Irish pub in the vicinity had managed to get a late licence on St Patrick's Day a month before. We certainly seem to have a warped sense of patriotism in the country. But, as G K Chesterton wrote,

*"St George has was for England,  
And before he killed the dragon,  
He drank a pint of English ale  
Out of an English flagon"*

You can't really imagine the ascetic St Paddy downing a Guinness before casting the snakes out of Ireland.



**There are now only 14 weeks until the Shambles is due to re-open - but it's still a hole in the ground! - "On my God they've killed The Shambles!" with apologies to South Park™**

A full review of the sorry progress (or lack of it) with a picture of the hole in the ground will appear in the next issue.

# 5 Years Ago

## JUNE '93

by Phil Levison

**T**he Government's Beer Orders had been in force for four years, and their aim had been to "free up the beer market, help smaller brewers, improve customer choice, and lead to lower prices". Despite these high hopes, little progress had been made.

Whilst it was true that some aspects of consumer choice had improved, and the guest beer legislation had been moderately successful, the four years since the report had also seen the big brewers actually tightening their grip on beer production. The formation of new pub owning companies effectively side-stepped the "freeing up" of pubs, that finished up still tied to the original brewery; and the lower prices didn't materialise, in fact prices had gone up by more than the rate of inflation.

The Stockport Beer & Cider Festival had broken two records - attendance had been the biggest ever (4034 visitors), and more beer, cider and perry had been drunk than ever before. It was suggested that the following year's festival might move dates, possibly to September. Long standing CAMRA members would remember the Stockport pub treasure hunts that were run by the branch some years previously. The idea was to be tried out again, but this time in Manchester - there would be a small entry charge, and prizes, with proceeds going to a licensed victuallers' charity. The event was to take place on Saturday 3 July, and is still going strong with this year's event due to take place on Saturday 4 July, starting at the same venue - the Beer House in Manchester.

The April Stagger had taken an unusual form. It was the occasion of CAMRA's National Conference, held in Salford, and whilst the organising committee had opted to leave the assembled hordes to their own devices, Stockport & South Manchester, as a local branch, decided to show their visitors some interesting local pubs. So a helpful (and extremely proficient) driver ferried a coachload of serious drinkers - from Cumbria and Kent, Shropshire, Yorkshire, and London, plus a few local members - round seven pubs in East Manchester. For the record, the pubs were Lee's Britannia in Beswick, the Little Bradford, the Hare & Hounds, Abbey Hey; the plough on Hyde Road, the Coach & Horses and the Travellers Call. It really was an excellent evening, thoroughly enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. Success had probably been assured at the planning stage by carefully selecting pubs with a proven track record.

The final item of pub news on the back page reported the demolition of the Duke of Edinburgh on Mill Street, Bradford, after being closed for over a year. The demolition was described as "another nail in East Manchester's drinking coffin."

## The Waters Green Tavern

96 Waters Green,

Macclesfield,

Cheshire SK11 6LH

Tel: 01625 422653



opposite the Railway Station

Mini Beer Festivals Every Day!

10 - 12 Beers each week including:  
Abbeydale, Oakham, Whim, Hanby,

Bath and Roosters

Your Hosts Brian and Tracey

Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch

# BREWERY NEWS

Last month saw the launch of the second in the run of Hydes' new bi-monthly seasonal beers. Mad Ferret weighs in at 5 per cent ABV and can perhaps best be described as a stronger and richer version of their standard Mild. Reports so far have given the beer a unanimous thumbs up. Most Hydes' pubs seem to be stocking these new beers so look out for it.

Also on the seasonal beer trail are John Willie Lees with their Ale For All Seasons range which will appear at two-monthly intervals. The second of the range was also out last month in the form of cask-conditioned Archers Stout at 4.8 per cent. Lees say the £1.45 price is designed to give drinkers value for money and who can argue with that. Further seasonal beers are planned for July, September and November.



Liverpool brewers Cains, again well-represented locally, have launched their latest seasonal beer, Sundowner Ale, which will be available until the end of June. It's a 5 per cent ale brewed entirely with Maris Otter malt 'for extra body and flavour'. It's also produced with the addition of natural lemon juice to provide 'thirst quenching' properties. Hmm.



Robinson's weren't the only north west brewer to scoop a gold medal at the recent Brewing Industry International Awards (see article on next page). Tony Allen's Phoenix Brewery took Silver in the Cask Conditioned (4.7-6.9% ABV) category with the superb Wobbly Bob and Burtonwood got a Bronze for their bitter in Cask Conditioned (less than 3.8%). Thwaites won a Bronze for their mild in bottle, whilst Gold went to Moorhouses for Black Cat Mild in bottle. Hearty congratulations to all concerned!



As we approach 2000, almost every brewer in the country will probably be producing some sort of millennium ale. First

off the blocks seems to be Devizes brewer Wadworth, better known locally for their 6X. Fifty barrels of Millennium Ale have been produced and are being left to mature in wooden casks for the next two years. The beer will be available, probably in corked bottles, in time for January 1, 2000 and should be in the 10-11% ABV region.

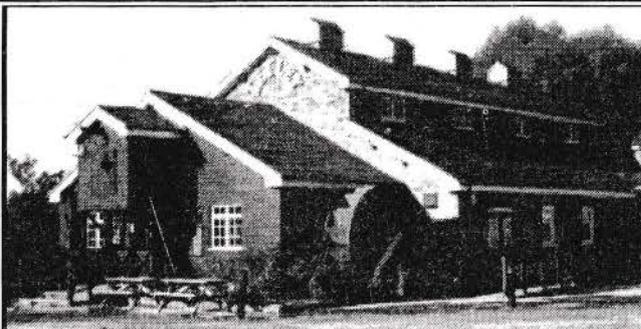
Head Brewer Suttys phones from the Footage & Firkin with news of the latest guest beer. This is to be a 4.2% ABV cask lager and will be on sale from the start of this month until the end of the World Cup. The name hadn't been decided as we went to press but was expected to be something like 'Firkin 98' of 'Three Dogs'.

## Royal Visit



When the Carlsberg-Tetley Shire horses, Prince and Charles, made a 'royal' visit to the City Arms on Kennedy Street, Manchester City Centre, they found the pub's beer festival was to feature a guest beer called The Shires. Prince and Charles paraded through the city streets before calling at the City Arms to visit Howard Watts and wife and licensee Claire, whose summer beer festival started on 29 May for one week. The Shires is brewed by Wychwood and was showcased alongside others including Three Lions, Fiddlers Elbow and the infamous Dogs Bollocks. Howard was delighted by the Shire horses presence. "Their presence at the pub was fantastic."

10



Your hosts Jon & Judi invite you to

## The Old Mill

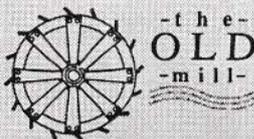
At least 10 different guest beers per week

Quiz night Tuesday & Thursday

Great food served daily till 10pm  
(32oz Steaks, sizzlers etc.)

Playstation evenings

SKY TV - 3 screens



Mill Lane, Cheadle Hulme,  
Stockport SK8 5PG  
Tel: 0161 488 4090

## PHOENIX BREWERY

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

 <b>HOPWOOD</b> <small>Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.</small>	 <b>BANTAM</b> <small>Pale brown bitter. Slightly nutty, full flavoured beer.</small>	 <b>BEST BITTER</b> <small>Tawny coloured, with a hint of sweetness in the full bitter palate. A fresh but dry hop finish.</small>
 <b>OLD OAK</b> <small>Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, fruity and dry.</small>	 <b>THRISTY MOON</b> <small>Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight malikness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.</small>	 <b>BONNEVILLE</b> <small>Light brown bitter. Malty character with a soft rounded hop balance.</small>
 <b>DOUBLE DAGGER</b> <small>Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its gravity would suggest.</small>	 <b>WOBBLY BOB</b> <small>Another beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.</small>	

## Mild Competition Winner



Another highlight of Stockport Beer Festival was the unveiling of the name chosen for the Mild brewed for the event by Manchester's Footage & Firkin. The lucky winner was Dave Kenny with his suggestion 'Hillgate Booze'. Dave came along to pull the first pint and he is pictured with Footage Head Brewer Richard Sutton.

## Robbies Round-up

Local brewers Robinson's have been making news on various fronts lately - opening a new pub, getting into the off-trade and picking up more awards for their beer.

Local readers who like to spend time in North Wales, and a fair few do, will be able to visit the company's new flagship pub at Conwy Marina. Built on two levels with bars on both, the Mulberry is, according to Chairman Peter Robinson, the most expensive pub ever built by the company.

Overlooking the marina and Conwy's old harbour, the pub is the centrepiece of the marina development. Features at the Mulberry included leaded stained glasswork in the shape of naval signal flags spelling out 'Robinson's Best Bitter' on the upstairs bar and the pub name downstairs. There is also a stained glass window in the shape of a ship's compass. The centrepiece is a mast and sail which rises from the ground level up to the first floor gallery. Around the main entrance are photographs and a potted history of the floating WW2 Mulberry harbours that the pub is named after (and which were built on the site of the marina). Two locals who worked on the job were invited to pull the first pints at the official opening. Given the location there is a big emphasis on food but beer is certainly not neglected with a particularly wide range of the brewery's beers on offer - Best Bitter, Frederics, Hartleys XB and Hatters Mild are all available on handpump.

Robbies have also gained a toe-hold in the lucrative supermarket trade, securing a listing for bottled Frederics with Safeways. Initially the beer will go into 76 stores in the north west and midlands but if all goes well it could appear in all 430 stores nation-wide.

Meanwhile on the draught beer front, Robbies have picked up two more awards. Best Bitter

was judged the best cask conditioned beer in its class, according to 36 brewing experts from 18 countries, who gave it a gold medal at the 1998 Brewing Industry International Awards. Robinson's beat 84 other entries from 65 different breweries to take the gold at the awards. This is the latest in a long line of successes at this biennial competition. Two years ago Frederics won a medal, in 1994 Best Bitter picked up a silver medal, and before that various bottled beers, including Old Tom, have won prizes.



Old Tom is also a regular winner of CAMRA awards, too. The latest is a silver in the barley wine category in CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer contest, held last November at Glasgow. This is the second consecutive silver that Old Tom has picked up in the contest and was presented to Head Brewer Chris Hellin at last month's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival which also featured a special Old Tom promotion. Our photo shows a delighted Chris Hellin picking up the framed certificate.

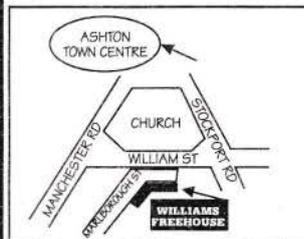
# WILLIAMS

## FREEHOUSE

1 Marlborough Street. Ashton.

☎ 330 6738

- ✓ BODDINGTONS BITTER
- ✓ TRADITIONAL CIDER
- ✓ 3 GUEST ALES PER WEEK
- ✓ HOEGAARDEN WHEAT BEER
- ✓ QUIZ NIGHT TUESDAY
- ✓ LIVE MUSIC SUNDAY (1 PM)



**ALL REAL ALES**  
**ONLY £1.10/PINT**  
**MONDAY, TUESDAY**  
**& WEDNESDAY!**

Call in for a warm welcome  
 and good service!

11

## THE SPORTSMAN

57 MOTTRAM ROAD, HYDE

Geoff and Carmel Welcome You To



**A GENUINE FREE HOUSE WITH**  
**EVER CHANGING REAL ALES**  
**AND TRADITIONAL CIDER**

Regular Beers include Hartington Bitter,  
 Plassey Bitter, Taylors Landlord and  
 Magic Mushroom Mild and  
 ever-changing guest beers



Easy Public  
 Transport Connections  
 Food Now Available  
 Tel: (0161) 368 5000

**25p OFF all**  
**Draught Beers**  
**Sunday**  
**12 - 4pm**

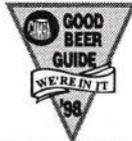
# THE CASTLE

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



Graham  
welcomes  
you to ...

## THE RAILWAY VIEW

Byrons Lane,  
Macclesfield

**GOOD FOOD**  
Now Being Served on

**PLATFORM ONE**

6 GUEST BEERS ☆

☆ QUIZZES ☆

☆ BAR GAMES ☆

REAL ALE £1.20 MON NIGHT

☎ 01625

423657



12



## THE HINDS HEAD

Your hosts Alan and June Preston welcome you to enjoy  
our range of excellent

### TRADITIONAL HAND PULLED BEERS

Castle Eden, Marstons Pedigree, Higgs Bitter  
Taylors Landlord, London Pride & Guest Beer

**AT THE INN WITH THE REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENT  
FOOD AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

Extensive new menu including lighter meals and  
snacks, younger childrens menu also available

**TRADITIONAL SUNDAY LUNCH £4.75**



Bar open every Sunday from  
noon till 10.30pm

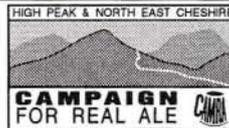
Sunday lunch 12 till 4.30pm

Full Menu, Specials and Traditional

Roasts in our conservatory Restaurant

Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1997

MANCHESTER ROAD, HEATON CHAPEL  
STOCKPORT, TEL 0161 431 9301



## June Featured Pub: The Vine. Birch Vale

**L**eaving New Mills on the Hayfield Road you are conscious of the countryside opening up before you. The Peak District and Kinder Scout loom large just ahead, due east. Houses become more isolated and perch in rows alongside the edge of the road.

Many would be unaware of their passing through Birch Vale, where once stood a small station on the long-gone railway to Hayfield. Amongst one of the rows of roadside houses nestles The Vine. Stone-built and unpretentious, this modest Robinson's pub is one that could easily be passed almost without notice.

Sylvia and Neil have been at the Vine for four years now, although in the licensed trade for much longer. They have created an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness which has given rise to its popularity with the local regulars (the excellence of the Robinson's ales probably has something to do with it as well!). The Vine's reputation for good value, quality food, "from a sandwich to a steak" has also built a patronage from a much wider area, and at lunch-times and early evenings the meals are always popular (particularly the OAP specials).

Good ale, good food, and the weekly evening activities including pool, darts, quiz nights etc are the essential mix of many community pubs, and the Vine is no exception, but it is the friendly atmosphere which makes even the stranger feel welcome.

The Vine is situated on the Sett Valley, close to the Trail of the same name (the track leading up from Wild's Crossing brings you directly to the pub), and a pleasant stroll to Hayfield along the Trail, which, of course, follows the route of the aforementioned defunct railway, takes a mere 15 minutes. Very reasonably priced B&B is available, making this an ideal base to explore this superb walking country on the westerly side of the High Peak. Walkers are always welcome, as are children up to 8.00pm, and dogs after 9.00pm.GW.

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



The Spread Eagle at Hatherlow has reopened after its recent refurbishment. It now has a and serves Boddingtons Bitter, Greenalls Bitter and a guest (which has been Castle Eden Ale). The eating element has expanded and the small 'smoke room' on the right as you go in as now sadly been opened up. The larger areas have however been split up more. From the advert placed by Greenalls in the local press they seem to be suggesting that they have discovered the traditional local and this is it. Well, if all they say is right...(until the next theme!), the Spread will have not changed much!

In Bredbury, the Rising Sun has stopped stocking Holt's Bitter which has been replaced by Tetley's - but who can tell the difference these days!! (I think Holt's is slightly paler than Tetley's - ed.) Holt's has also gone in the Bowling Green in Marple, replaced by Wilsons Bitter - but who can tell...no, there is a difference!

In Droylsden the rebuilding of the Kings Head is making steady progress. The cellar has just been excavated and the walls shuttered off. We'll have to wait for the pub proper, but it's nice to see that they're doing the job properly.

### Out of our Circulation Area ?

Having Difficulty Getting Your Copy?

Postal subscriptions to Opening Times are available. Cheque payable to Opening Times for £2.75 for 6 issues or £5.50 for 12. Write to : John Tune, 4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport SK3 0JF Tel: 0161 477 8363  
e-mail: jtune@geoworks.co.uk

# National Cider & Perry Championship

**O**ur local area is becoming the venue for a number of major national CAMRA events. At this Stockport Beer & Cider Festival we played host to the CAMRA/Apple National Cider & Perry Championships for the first time. Until now, this prestigious event has been held concurrently with the National CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival in August.

The reasons for the move were twofold. First, Cider and Perry are more likely to be in peak condition earlier in the year, and May/June is an ideal period. Second, the event tended to be dwarfed by the Champion Beer competition, and it was felt that a separate event would give the awards greater prominence. After a great deal of careful consideration, Stockport was chosen, as this festival traditionally has one of the largest ranges of cider and perry available at a regional festival, and it was at the optimum time of year.

On Friday exhaustive (and exhausting!) elimination rounds were held - in three stages when the best six of each fruit were chosen. There were a dozen perries alone shortlisted this year, and the twenty two ciders that reached the 'semi-final' stage were divided into two sessions. Tasting even these 'few' took its toll on the judges, and towards the end of one session there was a spontaneous outbreak of singing! It was pleasant to note a basic strong level of agreement on the judging panels, and though there were some strong individual preferences expressed, the result of the selections for Saturday's Grand Final was felt to be fair.

The Final blind tasting of six of the best of both Ciders and Perries took place



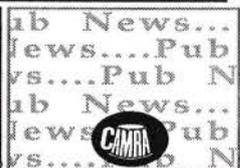
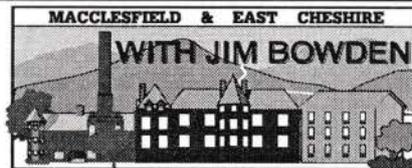
*Huge range at the festival*

before a panel of celebrity and expert judges (including Stockport MP Anne Coffey, and previous Great British Beer Festival Organiser Christine Cryne) on Saturday lunchtime, with the results announced before the end of that festival session by CAMRA's Apple Chairman Paula Waters.

In both categories, bronze, silver and gold awards were made.

**Cider: Bronze - Westcroft, Silver: Crone's Special Reserve (from Norfolk) and Gold - New Forest. Perry: Bronze - Coombes, Silver - Minchew Malvern Hill, and Gold - Dunkertons.**

I had the privilege of tasting all the ciders/perries entered into the competition - as I was organising the blind tasting, I did actually know which was which, so my opinion is not perhaps as unbiased as it might be, but I think the awards are very balanced (though I admit to a sneaking preference for the Whisky cask conditioned Minchew Malvern Hill!). **PBH**



The Sun In re-opened on April 19th in the hands of Malcolm Roberts, previously of the Brocklehurst Arms in Macclesfield and the Jolly Sailor in Stockport. Malcolm has permission to obtain his beers from any source so a varied range of quality ales is expected, and he will try to get any beer his customers request. Malcolm will also be introducing a range of Belgian bottled beers. Bar snacks will also be available but in a chip-free zone. Pub games are being encouraged and this summer a beer garden will open. All in all it sounds as though the Sun is on the up and up again.

The Windmill at Whitley Green, once a famous free house and now in the hands of Allied Domecq, has been refurbished and puts a strong emphasis on food. We understand that just one cask beer is sold, Tetley Bitter, for which you will pay no less than £1.85 a pint. That's bad enough, but if you just want a half it'll set you back one pound! Now, that's really taking the p\*s's!

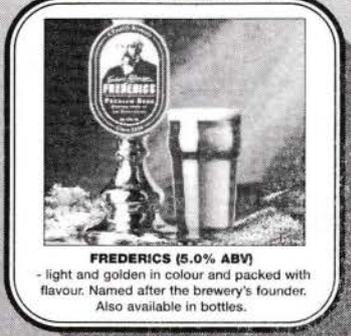


## THE Robinson's

### COLLECTION



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



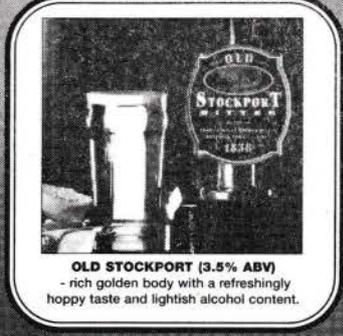
**FREDERICS (5.0% ABV)**  
- light and golden in colour and packed with flavour. Named after the brewery's founder. Also available in bottles.



**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.

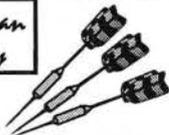


**OLD TOM (8.5% ABV)**  
- smooth, dark and mellow. Brewed from a recipe almost as old as the brewery itself.

C H O I C E B E E R S

# Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



**T**wo local players, Kevin Weir and Ian Walters, have both taken a giant step forward in their County careers. Both of them play their local darts for the Star & Garter, but have progressed for two separate counties. Kevin, well known for many years at pubs like the Crown, Heaton Moor and the George & Dragon, Heaton Chapel, recently played his first game for the Lancashire "A" team, after some good performances for the second string. Kevin was first on for the Premier Division side in Lancashire's match against Durham, beating Mick Muckian 3-1 to help his side to a 10-2 victory. There is a strong representation from Stockport in the Lancashire side at the moment, with Darryl Fitton, Steve Cusick and Sue Green all in the current squad.

Ian's county aspirations are with the Cheshire set up. He has waited patiently for his call up to the "B" team, and gained his reward with selection against Buckinghamshire at Aylesbury. Ian, last man on for the second team, was under little pressure as the side was leading 8-3, but a 135 shot on his first trip to the oche showed that Ian was not showing any nerves. However, opponent Wayne Warren took the opening leg in 19 darts after some lose arrows from Ian. Steady darts in the second leg helped Ian to level the score with a 20 darter, but Warren took back the advantage with a 29 dart leg. Three ton plusses in leg four saw Ian bring the score to 2-2, but the Buckinghamshire player held the arrows for the deciding leg. But throws of 140, 45, 135, 100, 81 game shot gave the Stockport the match for an average of 26.80.

Contributions from other Stockport based players in the match came from Tony O'Shea (20,15,18 - 26.31 av) against Phil Barter; Mick Haynes (18, 20, 18 - including a 180 - 26.34 av) versus Cheshire Open winner Graham McFarlane in the Men's "A" match, won 7-5 by Cheshire. Paul Cumston beat Danny Chaplin (22, 19, 26 - including a maximum - 23.35 av).

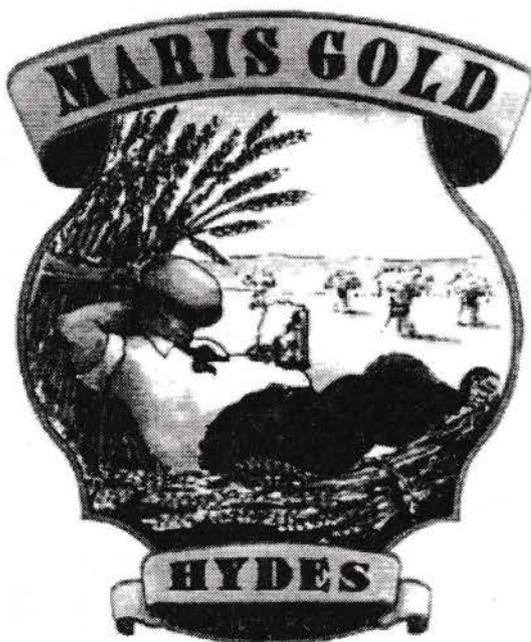
O'Shea and Haynes were involved in Cheshire's attempt to win the Inter-Counties Knock Out trophy. As a Second Division side, the five man side were given little chance of beating the star-studded Yorkshire "A" team in the final. The game went down to the decider, and Mick Haynes was just one leg away from beating former England international Denis Hickling, leading 3-1. Sadly, it Hickling took the next three to give the Tykes the trophy, but the Cheshire men earned the respect of the crowd.

Once again, the Isle of Man Open proved to be a happy hunting ground for our local players. Gill Ball, partnering Peter Manley, won the Mixed Pairs event beating Gary Welding and Pat Steele in the final. Tony O'Shea and partner Ted Hankey, went out in the final of the Men's Pairs to Roland Scholten and Andy Fordham.

Darryl Fitton is currently standing at number 46 in the PDC World Rankings. To qualify for the World Matchplay to be held at the end of July in Blackpool, he has to finish in the top 32. However, the odds are stacked against players like Darryl as the next ranking competitions are to be played in Antwerp, Calgary, Saskatoon and Switzerland, making extremely difficult for all but full time professionals.

Locally two Knock Out finals are imminent. The Bank's final is scheduled to take place at Adswold Working Men's Club on Thursday 11 June, while the 1919 Taxis final should take place the following night at the Crown, Hillgate. Check with the venue, though, to confirm the dates.

14



## HYDES ANVIL



The real ale of Manchester

Celebrate Summer with the third of a season of exceptional ales

### Maris Gold

The character of this beer is derived from the addition of Styrian Goldings aroma hops late in the brewing process. This variety is renowned for the crisp citrus notes it imparts to the nose and palate of the beer. Mashed with an all malt Maris Otter grist, the beer is light, very drinkable and extremely refreshing.

Look out for Maris Gold from the beginning of July

For details of Maris Gold and other ales in the craft seasonal ale programme, call our hotline on 0161 226 1317



# 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 98

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** - Social: Griffin, Wilmslow Road, Heald Green. Starts 9.00pm.  
**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Kingsway, Levenshulme. Starts 8.00pm.  
**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** - Social: Friendship, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield. Starts 9.00pm.  
**Friday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Hazel Grove Stagger: Starts 7.00pm Grove, London Road; 8.30pm Crown, Stockport Road, Great Moor.  
**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Social: Nag's Head, Hyde Road, West Gorton. Starts 9.00pm.  
**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Moss Rose, Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris.  
**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** - North Wales trip including Snowdonia Parc brewpub and 3 other Good Beer Guide pubs. Phone John Clarke on 477 1973 to book.  
**Monday 29<sup>th</sup>** - Social: Dog & Partridge, Buxton Road, Great Moor. Starts 9.00pm.  
**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July** - Social: Lass O' Gowrie, Charles St, Manc City Cnr. Starts 9.00pm. *High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:*  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>** - Lunchtime Social, Little Mill Inn, Rowarth. Starts 12 noon.

## June 98

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** - **Branch Meeting and AGM, Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar.** Will all members please make every effort to attend this important meeting. Starts 8.30pm.  
**Friday 12<sup>th</sup>** - Manchester City Centre Social: meet Pot of Beer, New Mount St (off Rochdale Road) 8.30pm.  
**Friday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Disley Social Evening: meet at plough Boy 8.30pm.  
**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** - Saddleworth evening. Details to be arranged. Contact Frank Wood on 01457 865426 for details.  
**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July** - Committee meeting: Railway, Bredbury. Starts 8.30pm.  
**Friday 10<sup>th</sup>** - Marple Social Evening. Phone for details.  
**Monday 13<sup>th</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Andrew Arms, Compstall. Starts 8.30pm. *Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have advised us of the following event:*  
**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Monthly Branch Meeting: George & Dragon, Higher Hurdfield, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 98 Planner

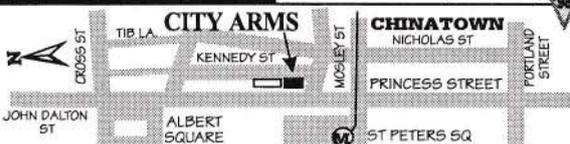


**Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers**

Among our June Beers:  
 Batemans XB, Victory, XXXB; Caledonian Deacon Brodie; Ridleys Spectacular; Hall & Woodhouse Badger IPA, Dorset, Tanglefoot; Maclay Liberty; Fullers Summer Ale, Vaux Thorne; Jennings Cumerland; Wychwood 3 Lions and The Roosters Experience - end of June

## KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

8 HANDPUMPS  
 6 GUEST ALES  
 LUNCHTIME FOOD  
 11.30-2.30  
 and 11.30 - 2.00  
 Saturday



## THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

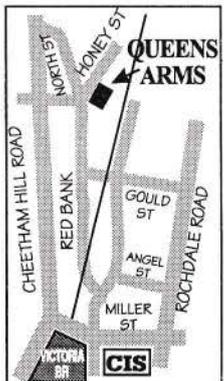


Real Ales  
 Traditional Cider and Czech Budvar on Draught

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

Taylor's Landlord, Phoenix Bantam and Constantly Changing Range of Beers Beer Garden & Children's Certificate

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



**Pages 17 & 18 are currently missing**

# MANCHESTER MATTERS

**F**irst to last month's unfinished business, starting with the Quay Bar on Deansgate Quay.

As I suggested last month, landward access is not exactly obvious, but what you do is go down the far south end of Deansgate, past the Pack Horse, and take the canal-side walkway (too gentrified to be a mere towpath) passing underneath the Bridgewater Viaduct. The Quay Bar discloses itself as a striking glass fronted building, sparsely furnished in the current fashion. There's ample outside seating on a sort of wooden 'deck' constructed above the walkway, and on a fine day it's a pleasant place to contemplate the canal's leisurely traffic, and the rather faster trains and trams on their separate viaducts above. Handpumped beers are Banks's Bitter and Cameron's Strongarm (the latter £1.90 and no more than adequate on my visit), and food is served until 8.00pm.

If you think £1.90 is expensive, just wait till you see the Metropolitan (the old Midland), at the corner of Lapwing Lane and Burton Road in Didsbury. For here Taylor's Landlord is £2.10 and Bateman's XXXB a truly shocking £2.20 (the other handpumped offerings are Boddingtons Bitter and Hartleys XB from Robinson's). There's an ambitious menu, more seared tuna than fish and chips, with an enclosed dining area at the rear. However, there's plenty of room (including a large non-smoking area) for those who principally want to drink, and the old pub's radical transformation has been carried out with taste and style. You can't help reflecting, though, that if Joseph Holt's had bought it, the beer would be half the price. In the University district, Barney McGrew's now appears to be incorporated into the Phoenix nightclub, and also bears Bass's "yoof" branding "It's A Scream". Unsurprisingly, it's still keg. In Higher Openshaw, the Halfway House, on the corner of Ashton Old Road and Ogden Lane, has reopened, with a couple of handpumps amongst a thicket of keg dispensers. When I called in mid-May, however, the handpumps were not in use and the barmaid seemed unsure whether they ever would be.

The Friendship in Gorton now sells just Marstons Bitter on handpump - the loss of not one but both milds is a shame, but can be put down to the pub's period of neglect under temporary licensees. With a new and enthusiastic couple now in charge, I'd like to think a second cask beer could become viable before long. Along Hyde Road in West Gorton, the Travellers Call has dropped the Hydes' Light that went on as an experiment, but is still selling good Hydes' Mild and Bitter, now by handpump rather than



by Rhys Jones

electric pump. The 24-oz glasses used with the electric pumps were initially replaced by brim-measure stock when the dispense method changed, but I understand 22-oz glasses are on order so that a full measure can still be guaranteed.

Finally, there's the sad loss of a long-standing real ale outlet in the Angel in Gorton, where the sole cask beer, Greenalls Festival, was withdrawn recently. Even at its best, Festival is a frankly disappointing beer, brewed down to a price rather than up to a quality; the Angel is still a busy pub, and I feel sure something better would have sold.

## Farmers, Northenden

The trend towards tasteful refurbishments that improve pubs continues with the Farmers in Northenden where Greenalls have made a deliberate attempt to move the pub up-market when compared to the majority of the pubs in the area.

The main body of the pub remains largely unaltered with just a redecoration giving a more 'olde worlde' feel to the place. It is at the rear of the pub that the major change has taken place with an extension built on, overlooking the bowling green. This is an eating area at lunchtimes and early evening with the pub operating under Greenalls 'Innkeepers Table' banner, and later forms part of the general drinking area. The food is reasonably priced with two main courses for £5.00.

Through the French doors of the extension is the bowling green with a beer garden and children's play area currently under construction. Good, too, to see that the bowling club hasn't been forgotten either, with a new clubhouse having been built as part of the refurbishment project.

The one disappointment comes in the beer range. While perfectly well kept, the somewhat restricted range of just Greenalls Bitter and Stones Bitter is just about the only thing that hasn't been given an overhaul. A changing guest beer must surely be worth trying here, you would think. Overall, though, a good job and well worth a visit. **JF.**

## INNCYDER

### Cider and Perry Wholesaler

Extensive Range of Real Cider and Perry from around Britain. Available in 5 gallon polybarrels. Limited range of cider always in stock. Local, prompt and efficient service.

Tel: (John) 0161 432 6126

Fax: 0161 336 1365

Real Cider and Perry available at  
The Crown Ale House (Heaton Lane)

19

## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 170)

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 ..... Date of Birth .....

SIGNATURE ..... TELEPHONE NUMBER .....

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

UNDER 26 YRS 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 PARK

**NOW FULLY  
REFURBISHED**



## PUBLIC HOUSE

Newbridge Lane  
STOCKPORT

*Happy Hour every Friday 8.30pm - 10pm*

**DISCO every Saturday starts 8pm  
+ Bottle BONANZA**

**HOT & COLD FOOD AVAILABLE  
MON.-FRI. 11.30AM - 2PM**

### OPEN ALL DAY

Tel: 0161 480 2275



**THE ONLY PUB IN STOCKPORT  
WITH FREE POOL & JUKE BOX**

## J W LEES BITTER

**NEW LARGE GAMES  
ROOM  
POOL, DARTS,  
DOMINOES, CRIB**



**MENU AVAILABLE**

135 Buxton Road, Disley  
Tel: 01663 765290

**Alf & Kay Carter**

Welcome New & Existing Customers.



## The White Lion

20

# The Ducie Bridge



**NOW OPEN!!**

## MANCHESTER

Opposite CIS Building, Close to Nynex Arena

**DAVE BRADLEY  
WELCOMES YOU**

### FULLY REFURBISHED

## J.W. LEES

*Function Room Available*

*Superb Menu!*



### Open All Day

**NOW FEATURING THE "JUICY" DUCIE COMEDY CLUB  
presented by KEY 103's SMUG ROBERTS  
EVERY SATURDAY - £5 ON DOOR**

**Seats Reserved Until 8pm - booking line 0161 834 1006**