

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

No:178

Volume 15  
Issue 2

# OPENING TIMES



FREE

FEBRUARY 1999

6,600 CIRCULATED  
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## Blossoms is Pub of the Year



**I**t has become something of a tradition for the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA voting for Pub of the Year to be a close thing and this year was no different with just one vote separating the winner from runner-up.

However, there can only be one winner and this year the honours go to the Blossoms, a traditional Robinson's pub on Stockport Road, Heaviley. Occupying a prominent corner site of the corner of Bramhall Lane and the A6, the Blossoms is very much a landmark pub, not only physically, but also in the affections of many local drinkers. This is down to the fact that it has for many years now epitomised the old-fashioned virtues of the British pub and in Neville and Margaret Owen it has tenants who manage to combine those traditional values with a thriving, popular local.

Neville's quiet hard work and 30-year experience in the licensed trade – although, incredibly, this is his first pub – shine through in the immaculate condition of not only the pub itself, but more importantly, in the superb beer sold. This is particularly important at the Blossoms, as, despite its main road position, it remains a true community local whose customers go there to drink and relax over a pint or three.

The pub retains much of its Victorian layout and many original features, particularly in the back smoke room, but it is in the beer where the Blossoms really comes into its own. Neville's career in the trade includes 25 years as a bar-cellarman and you'll be hard pressed to find a finer pint of Robinson's Hatters Mild or Best Bitter anywhere. In addition there is often a seasonal cask of well-kept

Old Tom on the bar, an image that in many ways sums up the superb traditional values of this pub.

When commentators are only too ready to consign old-fashioned locals like the Blossoms to history, the success of this pub gives the lie to their predictions of doom and gloom for the community local. The presentation of this well-deserved award on Saturday March 6 will be a celebration of the enduring strength of the traditional values of the great British pub.

## And The Crown is Runner-Up

A special mention has to be made of the runner-up, the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport.

The trials and tribulations of Steve and Lorraine James at the Crown have been well-documented in Opening Times over the past 12 months. The pub started last year in the ownership of Greenalls, who made it quite clear that they wanted rid of it. Months of uncertainty followed for Steve and Lorraine as putative buyers came and went and throughout all of this they continued to fly the flag for real ale choice in the town, with a never-ending selection of guest beers.

Those of less sterner stuff would have been tempted to throw in the towel, but they stuck to their principles and continued to offer the choice of beers on which they knew the future of the pub depended. The Crown ended the year in the apparently safe hands of the Ale House Pub Company, with Steve and Lorraine signed up as tenants, having pressed for and obtained the guarantees they wanted to ensure the continuity of the pub's guest beer policy.

This has been a heroic achievement for which Steve, Lorraine, and the Crown, will have a lasting place in the affections of the town's beer drinkers.



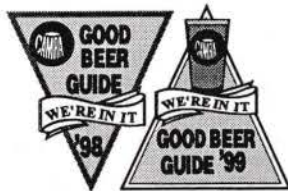
Make a date in your diary now! Stockport's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Beer Festival will be held in the Town Hall from June 3-5. Once again we will also be hosting the National Cider & Perry Championships, with a terrific range of traditional ciders and perries. Beers lovers shouldn't worry, though – the usual extensive range of milds, bitter, strong ales, stouts and porters will be available. Many thanks to the Stockport Express Advertiser who are once again sponsoring the event.

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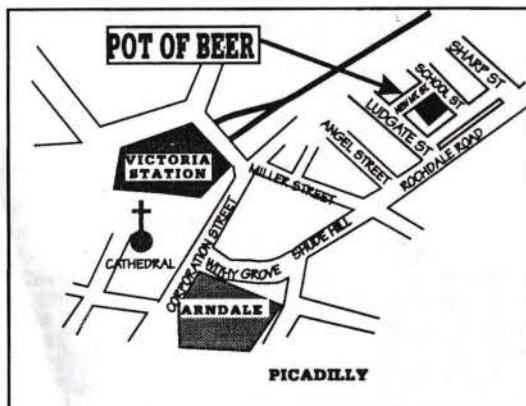
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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

This month we publish a letter which raises several fundamental points about what CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, does, what it is for what and it should be doing. Those points are well made and deserve a considered response.

Firstly, the 1999 Good Beer Guide. Yes, there are lots of errors in this. The reason for this (and not, I hasten to add, an excuse) is that for the first time ever the Guide was entered on a computer database. These mistakes should not recur. There are pubs listed in Stockport, by the way. It's just that they appear under the town heading of Standish! As you can imagine words have been said about this. It is however unfair to imply, as the author of the letter does, that this Guide and its errors is in some way representative of all others, because this is simply not the case. If it were, the Good Beer Guide would not be the best selling publication that it is today.

Now let's look at beer festivals. Obviously I cannot speak for those held the length and breadth of the country. Locally however, and at Stockport in particular, if you are a member of CAMRA you will get in for nothing. Even at the National Winter Ales Festival where our costs meant that there had to be some charge for CAMRA members, this was kept to just £1 for Friday and Saturday nights with free entry the rest of the time. As for beer prices, again locally these are well in line with the local free trade and Stockport Beer Festival has been noted for its keen pricing policy. Music at beer festivals is always a contentious issue. However at Stockport we did actually ask our customers what they wanted. Those who happened to be in CAMRA (always the most vocal) preferred little or no music. Those who were not members (the vast majority of our customers) were all in favour. And of course, one person's dirge is another's melody. Volume is a problem and we do always try and keep this at an acceptable level.

Beer quality is of course important and the author makes some good points in this respect. Temperature can be a problem and while we don't always succeed, I think we do pretty well in the circumstances. We could of course achieve a constant cellar temperature but this would mean using an expensive cooling system, which would drive up costs and raise the spectre of the £5 public admission fee that we would all balk at. The venue of our national festival is always under review but costs (again!) and/or logistics have ruled out both the NEC and G-Mex.

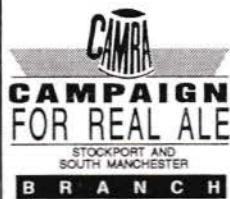
The rise of nitro keg has come about for many reasons, only one of which (and I think a minor one at that) is its ease of handling for lazy licensees. The bad cellar practices the author describes we do heartily condemn and CAMRA has published a well-received 'Guide to Cellarmanship' to help combat this. As for more pro-active campaigning, I would be interested to hear just what the author has in mind. No license will admit to any bad practice, particularly pouring back slops, it is difficult to prove, and any public accusations, either direct or implied, could see the speedy onset of legal action. Of course, oversized lined glasses, for which CAMRA has campaigned long and hard, would eliminate most of this type of wastage and hence the need to pour back.

Finally, there is the question of attending meetings and the like. It is very easy to join an organisation and do nothing. Many people do this, with many organisations, CAMRA amongst them. These people are content for their annual subscriptions to be a sign of their commitment and no-one can argue with that. It is another matter, however, to restrict your activities to carping from the sidelines. Despite the author's parting shot, CAMRA in Stockport is not run by just a small handful of activists. Over 90 of our local members work at the Beer Festival and we have a good 40 or so regularly active members - the letter's author does not currently number amongst them - he is more than welcome to do so.

*John Clarke*

# Pub Of The Month FEBRUARY 1999

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						



**T**his month, the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award goes to a pub that has had very mixed fortunes over recent years - the Bishop Blaize on Hillgate, Stockport.

Indeed, it seemed at times as if the pub was in permanent and irreversible decline, with the two previous licensees leaving the pub due to financial difficulties. It cried out for a brave and determined licensee to take over the pub and reverse its fortunes. Enter Paul Cunningham and his partner Alexandria Marshall who set about transforming the pub and its seemingly bleak business prospects. Firstly, they cleaned the pub from top to bottom, emphasising some of the superb period features such as the beautiful bar complete with leaded glass shutters. Regular opening hours, vital to any pub's success, were also established. This, together with careful cellar management and attention to detail on the beer front gradually gained the Bishop Blaize a good reputation and customers began to return.

The main change, however, was that to the pub's name. After some 130 years as the Gladstone, the pub reverted to its mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century name of the Bishop Blaize, thus becoming perhaps the only pub in the country named after this early Christian martyr (for those who are interested in that sort of thing, he was hung on a gibbet and ripped to shreds with iron combs).

For some time the Bishop Blaize has been selling top quality Burtonwood Bitter and Buccaneer, so it is not surprising that it has found its way into the national Good Beer Guide. However, due to poor turnover in the rest of the Burtonwood estate, Buccaneer has recently been withdrawn. Luckily, Burtonwood have introduced a guest beer scheme and we have it on good authority that Caledonian 80/- will be on sale on presentation night, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February. In short, the Bishop Blaize is one of the most improved pubs in town and this is all down to the efforts of Paul and Alex. They have persevered where others would have thrown in the towel creating a superb pub selling top quality Burtonwood and now guest beers too. Join us on the presentation night for what should be a most enjoyable event. **SB.**

*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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**OVER 30 BELGIAN BEERS**  
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Draught Hoegaarden at £2.10/pint,  
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Kwak & changing draught Belgian  
Guest in Traditionally Chilled

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from Bank Top and Handpumped

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Food available 12 noon till 6pm or later



3



Your hosts Jon & Judi invite you to

## The Old Mill

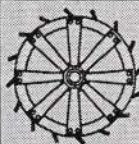
At least 10 different guest beers per week

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**COPY DATE FOR MARCH ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS FEBRUARY 20**

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HOEGAARDEN £1.50 EVERY SUNDAY**

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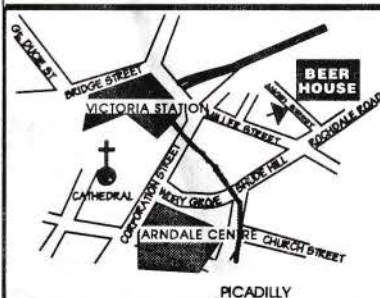
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# STAGGER

with Dave Maynell

**O**ur November Stagger covered areas of Edgeley and Brinksway, and was a night of highs and lows, both geographically and in the quality of beers sampled.

Our starting point was the **Alexandra**, a Robinson's pub on Northgate Road. This imposing Grade 2 listed building was built at the turn of the century and retains its multi-roomed layout with impressive original tiling in the hall and stairway. I made the mistake of asking for mild without realising that Hatters Mild was not available and ended up with keg Three Shires, which was uninspiring. The rest of the party drank the Best Bitter and considered it average.

We moved on downhill to quickly check out the **Bow Garrett** which, as we suspected, sold no real ale, despite the misleading signs outside suggesting otherwise. So, it was back uphill to the **Gardeners Arms**, known locally as the "War Office". Inside there is a vault and split level lounge and while there were only a handful of customers when we called, a disco was setting up for later. Two cask beers were on offer, Tetley Bitter and John Smiths Bitter, the former was only average and the latter very poor. The pub has however, since changed hands (again!) so things could by now be very different.

A quick visit to the **Hollywood** on Bloom Street revealed that this pub is now all keg so it was a downhill walk to Brinksway and the **Woolpack**. This is a pub that has undergone several changes of character over the years, starting life as a Greenalls pub and now well-established as a free house, cosy and well-kept pub with a vault and two separate lounge areas. Several cask beers are always available with one ever-changing guest beer which on our visit was Steam Hammer from an unidentified brewery, and on reasonable form. The new permanent mild is Black Cat from Moorhouses of Burnley and this was very favourably received.

We moved on to our second meeting point of the night, the **Comfortable Gill** on King Street West. There always seems to be a relaxed atmosphere in this small cosy pub and we all enjoyed the Boddingtons Bitter before moving on to our next call. We backtracked onto Chestergate to visit the **Bridge**, a small Robinson's Pub (and not to be confused with the other Robinson's Bridge on Georges Road). This was my first visit to this pub and I was advised that it was a lot smarter than it had been in the past. The main area of the pub had several old photographs of local interest on the walls. It was not over-busy at the time of our call, but a karaoke was being set up and would presumably bring more people in. Best Bitter and Hatters Mild were sampled but unfortunately both were below par.

Back onto King Street West and **Tom Thumbs**, a fairly large John Smiths house with a large lounge where karaoke was well underway, and a spacious vault with pool table. There weren't many customers for the size of the pub and I assume that those that were in were drinking lager, cider or bottles because the only cask beer on offer, John Smiths Bitter, was so bad that there was more of it left than drunk.

Fortunately, things improved from now on, and a climb up King Street West brought us to the **Olde Vic**, a locals pub with a cosy, relaxed atmosphere and subdued background music (a pleasant change from karaoke and disco). The Vic often sells an interesting guest beer at the weekend but not tonight! However, Theakstons Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier were available and on good form.

The nearby **Blue Bell** offered no evidence of real ale so we moved swiftly to the **Church** on Moseley Street, a popular Robinson's pub which was busy when we called with a lively clientele of mixed ages. No doubt many were attracted by the Friday night offer of Best Bitter and Hatters Mild at just £1 a pint. Both were on good form, too, with the Best Bitter having the edge.

The last call of the night had been anticipated by all and we were not to be let down. The **Greyhound** which is only across the road

from the Church was originally built by the old Clarke's Brewery and subsequently passed to Boddingtons which, of course, means that it is now owned by Greenalls (!). It was refurbished a couple of years ago and the soft colours used in the lounge give a comfortable, cosy feel to the room. There is a separate vault, which is well-used for traditional pub games. The pub was busy with a mixed clientele of all ages, and justifiably so with a range of what turned out to be the best beers of the night. Boddingtons Bitter, which is not normally one of my favourites, was on sparkling form; Boddingtons Mild, rarely seen these days in traditional form, was also in excellent condition. One of the guest beers was Wadworth 6X and rated by some as one of the best beers of the night but without doubt top marks went to Tisbury Real Nut Ale, a seasonal 4.5% bitter made with real chestnuts, that was a pleasure to drink. After a mixture of beers ranging from undrinkable, through mediocre to good, it was nice to finish on a high.

As usual, though, this article can only present a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and cannot be taken as a definitive judgement on either the pubs or the beers they sell. As ever, why not try some of them yourselves, to see how much you (dis)agree.

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FOOD AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

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

**TRADITIONAL SUNDAY LUNCH £4.75**

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**Sunday lunch 12 till 4.30pm**

**Full Menu, Specials and Traditional  
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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month April 1997

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## PHOENIX BREWERY

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



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



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



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



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



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



**DOUBLE DAGGER**  
Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its grivety world suggest.



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

## LETTERS OPENING TIMES

### Name and Address withheld

In another month or so my Camra membership will be coming up for renewal and I still haven't decided whether to renew it or not. WHY? Well once upon a time I was proud to call myself a Camra member, but as the weeks and months go by I become more and more disillusioned.

The Campaign is supposed to promote and preserve real ale, how does it do this, well lets start with what the public sees. Firstly the flagship publication of the Campaign the Good Beer Guide, at least 6-8 months out of date when it hits the shelves, the 1999 edition is full of errors, and not just simple type-setting errors, fundamental errors that compromise its usefulness, i.e. there are no pubs listed in the Stockport area, maps are wrong, the symbol in the brewery section pertaining to sparklers seems to have been worked out solely on a how far north or south basis, (I know of three micro brewers who have said that they were never asked for this information), the list for the GBG goes on and on.

Secondly lets look at beer festivals. Good points.... Erm let me think ..... ah yes, got it - loads of beer under one roof. Bad points, entry fees (up to £5.00) for some, beer prices often well over the going rate, usually horrendous dirge of loud music (its quite fun to watch the drinkers move further and further away from the stage when the music starts and then drift back when it finally ends, usually to zero applause), oh yes and the most important - BEER QUALITY. Real ale should be served and stored at around 12 degrees Centigrade and not as most festivals 18-19 degrees. Real ale can also be described as cask conditioned, how can beer festivals condition the beer when it is delivered on the Monday and sold on the Thursday? Again I could go on especially about the GBBF seeming to have found a permanent home in London, what about the NEC Birmingham, G-Mex or Nynex in Manchester to name but a few.

The campaign seems to just slag off Nitro keg etc, in the vain hope that it will just go away This will not happen. Ask yourself why pubs and brewers are swapping to nitro keg; firstly it's far easier to look after, just roll it in, connect it up and away you go, no spilling, tapping, fining, tilting, little need for stock rotation, no cellar cooling(or heating), no filtering back etc. etc., and the customer gets consistency. Ok. It may be cold, flavorless and expensive but it is always the same. Now why isn't real ale always the same? Well the first reason for bad beer in pubs is the disgusting practice of filtering back. Be it cask ends, pull offs, or slops in the drip tray, the idea of putting potentially bad beer into good beer, is absolutely revolting, (and possibly illegal) but do Camra visibly campaign against this? Other reasons for bad beer are basic cellar management skills (or the lack of them). Real ale goes off - if a pub cannot sell a barrel in 3-4 days they should go onto smaller casks, but again this leaves the cellarman with more work and so is unlikely to happen.

There are many other reasons why I am still not sure if I can continue to be a member, and I am sure that you probably have some of your own. I also realize that a lot of people put in a lot of time and effort into the campaign (both nationally and locally), I just wish that they would push their efforts in the right direction. Finally perhaps I have only myself to blame, I very rarely attend meetings, as seldom, it would appear as everyone else, as I've just discovered that at the meeting to vote for the branch pub of the year, only 12 members attended, (out of over 300 in the branch!)

A considered reply to this letter forms the editorial on page 2

From Sue at The Station, Ashton (via the internet)

Thanks to John Hesketh (Opening Times 177) for wishing us all the best.

Just to let everyone know we are up and running, and it will be great to see all the old customers. We will still be getting guest beers, so pop in and let us know what you want. Hope to see you soon.

Name and Address withheld (via the internet)

I would like to congratulate the organisers of the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester for what was, for the most part a very enjoyable event. The food in particular (run by Idy from the Beer House) was the best I have come across at any CAMRA event in the last ten years. Beer quality (until it ran out) was excellent, but run out it did. At 7.20 on Saturday of a session supposed to go on for another three hours (and even though less people had visited the festival than was estimated). Somebody blundered and I think we should be told. The foreign stuff and the cider was apparently ok for those that drink them, but I was saddened by the very limited number of new beers. The choice seemed deliberately pedestrian.

The stalls were for the most part interesting, but the music (if that's what it was...)..oh dear. Only Victor Brox was neural in attracting as many as he drove away. As to the other 'acts', please return them to the rest homes and hospitals for the criminally insane they escaped from. Please, no more. I'm sure most of this can be corrected next year. The thing that bothers me though, was the bizarre Winter Ale Championship itself. Beers placed second in their categories were the overall winner and runner up. This makes CAMRA look like it couldn't organise...er.. a piss up in a brewery (or festival?). Surely only the winners need to go through. I think someone needs to revise the rules, OR at least get bigger and better trained judging panels.

## 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; 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 preferably ASCII on IBM-PC format 3.5" disks (which will eventually be returned!) or via e-mail to [johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com](mailto:johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com) Adverts or photos should be "hard copy" or 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). Letters to the editor on [otletter@opentime.u-net.com](mailto: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).

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Contributors to Opening Times Issue 177: John Clarke, Dave Meynell, Rhys Jones, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Ken Birch, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, The Beer Monster™, Mark McConachie, Tim Jones, Steve Smith, Stuart Ballantyne and the welcome return, after illness, of Brian Carey.



OPENING  
TIMES

Thurs. eve: 7-11  
Fri, Sat 12-4  
7-11



## Thursday - Saturday 18th to 20th February

Entertainment Fri & Sat Evening  
Admission: Festival Glasses  
Free Programme  
Thursday Eve £1:50 Food  
Fri. Sat. Lunch £1:00 Cider & Perry  
Fri. Sat. Eve £2:00 Childrens Room  
Free Admission to CAMRA Members

MORE DETAILS CONTACT ; Ray Jackson  
01253404143

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

7

LEEDS BEER CIDER & PERRY FESTIVAL 1999  
in association with Evening Post  
AT PUDSEY CIVIC HALL  
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Thursday 18th - Saturday 20th March  
★ Around 90 Real Ales • Some at £1 a pint.  
Unusual Cider & Perry • Global Beers • Live Music ★  
Thu 11-3 (FREE) 5-11 (£2 after 6pm)  
Fri 11-3 (FREE) 5-11 (£3 after 6pm)  
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Bradford Beer Festival (Victoria Hall, Saltaire) Feb 25 - 27 Open Thurs 6-11pm; Fri 12 - 4 & 6-11; Sat 11.30-4, 6.30-11 (some sessions likely to be sold out)

## Tameside Travels (5)

In the last of his Tameside Travels (or, given the move to nitro keg, should that be travails?) Mark McConchie tidies up a few loose ends and takes a look at Droylsden. He's had a better month - only 11 cask losses to report this time...

**A**s I stated last time there are a few odds and sods in Ashton still to report upon. The west-end area triangle bounded by Guide Bridge, Manchester and Stockport Roads is desert-like when it comes to cask ale. The Stockport Rd pubs have already been reported upon, but the ones in the back streets have gone a similar smooth-keg route. The first (and possibly biggest) loss to keg is Thwaites' Cambridge, with both mild and bitter changing to keg versions; the Birch (Bass) has lost its Worthy and Stones in favour of creamflow (I guess 'It's a man thing...'). The only cask beacon in this desert of keg is John Smith's Crowthorne, which although it has dropped the Websters, is still staying true in selling cask John Smiths.

In Taunton, the Woodcock (Marstons) has been knocked about somewhat to open it up a bit it appears, now no Bateman's mild just Marstons bitter and Pedigree; Gardeners Arms (Bass) has ditched the Toby Light in favour of just Worthy alone. Robinson's March Hare on the Crowhill estate is well worth a look at - Hatters and Best on meters are joined by handpulled Old Tom in a pub building of great character and style. Toward town, Bass's Greyhound, described as having '...the finest leaded stain glasswork in the borough...' retains the glasswork but has jettisoned the three cask beers it once boasted. On nearby Kenyon St, the Oddfellows (Vaux) is boarded up and in a bad way, too - the gable wall looks in danger of collapse. Town centre bar Underground remains grim and keg, it has changed name to become Archers.

In Audenshaw, the Causeway, a large new-build pub on Manchester Rd. is keg - whether it had ever sold anything other than that, I do not know. Head toward Openshaw and you pass the Junction Pub, the new name of the Trough/ Stake Out (ex Wilson's); it must open late because it never seems to function during pub opening hours. Across the road at the plush Fairfield Arms, a most welcome commitment to maintaining cask ale continues - the range is now Boddies, Greenalls Original and a guest, Elgoods Cambridge on my visit. To round off, in Micklehurst, the Top House a former Bass house, is now selling Marstons' bitter alongside their own smooth The town of Droylsden was my next target. Beginning at the Little Moss end, Wilson's Railway has dropped their mild to leave Wilsons and Boddies bitters; Thwaites's Bush has fallen victim to that company's desire to push smooth beers - the result is no cask mild or bitter now; meanwhile, at the Strawberry Gardens (Marstons) the bitter remains but the Pedigree has gone. Continuing onto Market Street, the White Hart (Whitbread) has increased their cask ale portfolio from just Boddies to add Chesters mild and

Holt bitter; by the football ground, the Butchers (Bass) has unfortunately given the cask Worthy the red card. Holt's Kings Head has finally been rebuilt and the result is excellent (see review elsewhere in this issue), mild and bitter have now been joined by DBA; at the Bee Hive (Wilson's), the Boddies is now partnered with Ruddles bitter (a guest, I presume) at the heady price of 153p, whilst, at the Cotton Tree (Bass) a lone handpump for Lees bitter lies forlornly unused.

Of the north side pubs, the Haddon Hall Hotel (Bass) near the Manchester boundary looks great, but is now keg having ditched Worthy; John Smith's Sundial is now down to that beer alone from a range that had Wilsons mild and Boddies on it, and the Pig on the Wall (now Greenalls) is selling Festival, mild and Boddies - no longer selling Castle Eden nor guest beers. The New Inn is busy and lively, it is painted a bright sunflower yellow and looks good for an art-deco building, it is keg however - yet another Bass loss. The Manchester and Ashton Road pubs now, first Wilson's Moss Tavern has added John Smiths to the existing Boddies; at Whitbread's Church, no change still Chesters mild and Boddies, all change at the Royal Oak (also Whitbread) where those same beers have gone altogether; the Commercial (Tetley?) retains their mild and bitter but Bass's Jolly Carter is down to just Holt bitter from a range that had two Bass milds and Worthy on it; Wilson's Buxton no longer sells Boddies, only Smiths; finally, Holt's Halfway House appears to have been altered slightly and redecorated; it retains mild and bitter.

On the Fairfield side of town, Edge Lane has three pubs - Gardeners, Friendship and Yew Tree, the first has gone keg, the second no longer sells mild, Bentleys nor Boddies, changing instead to Trophy and Smiths, the former at £1 a pint; the last pub seems very tidily kept and the Chesters mild and Boddies are good (the Trophy has now gone). Onto Fairfield Road, where the Bowling Green (Marstons) is up for sale and selling just bitter (losing the guest and Batemans mild), further along the Old House at Home has become the Horse & Frog (Vaux), it retains Vaux bitter and has added cask mild, too. The Toll Bar (Free) was closed for total refurbishment, so no news; the final pub of this report is the Astley Arms (ex Wilsons), it has dropped all the Wilsons beers and guests to go keg in the form of Grays Smooth bitter.

The Tameside Travels are now all but over, I shall still provide the odd snippet of news whenever I come across it.

## National Winter Ales Festival

Last months CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival, held in Manchester at the Upper Campfield Market, was a sell-out success. Perhaps too much so, as the beer ran out by half past seven on the Saturday night, so apologies for anyone who turned up later and had to be turned away. The event will certainly be held in Manchester again next year - and with plenty more beer! OT's Beer Monster reviews the festival elsewhere in this issue but here is a note of the winning beers:

### Old Ales & Strong Milds

Gold - Daleside Monkey Wrench

Silver - Woodforde's Norfolk Nog

### Stouts and Porters

Gold - Salopian Ironbridge Stout

Silver - Dent T'Owd Tup

### Barley Wines

Gold - Cottage Norman's Conquest

Silver - Marston's Owd Roger

These all went forward to the Supreme Championship for the Winter Beer of Britain 1999 with a different judging panel. The results were:

Champion - Dent T'Owd Tup

Second - Woodfode's Norfolk Nog

Third - Daleside Monkey Wrench.

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### Another One for the Road?

Over the Christmas period, Lancashire Police were offering £500 rewards for information leading to drink-driving convictions. No doubt some will say that anything that results in the conviction of offenders is justified, but might this not, in some circumstances, encourage offences rather than preventing them? Unless you witness an obvious drunk getting into a car, you can't tell with any degree of certainty whether someone is committing an offence unless you have observed them for some time. It's unlikely that anyone will be able to do this unless they are friends or relatives of the accused, and surely, in such a situation, friendly persuasion should come first, and informing behind people's backs should be an absolute last resort. But, given the prospect of a large reward, will people be tempted to inform rather than make any attempt to dissuade potential offenders, and even be encouraged to urge drivers to have extra drinks with the aim of securing a conviction? This is less a crime prevention measure than a dangerous and potentially fatal lottery.

### What's a Glass of Wine?

I was listening recently to a piece on Radio 5 about the Health Education Authority's nannyish guidelines for safe drinking. They will now grudgingly admit that drinking a small amount will actually deliver some health benefits over drinking nothing at all, and they mentioned that the so-called safe maximum limit for women was two to three "units" (i.e. small drinks) a day. At this, presenter Annie Webster exclaimed "Well, three glasses of wine is actually quite a lot, isn't it!" You have to wonder whether these people live in nunneries and only come out to do radio shows, because, in the real world, that's a pretty modest level of consumption.

But anyone who imagines that a glass of wine contains only a single unit of alcohol is seriously mistaken. A unit represents 10ml of alcohol, so for a small 125ml glass to contain one unit it would have to have an alcoholic strength of no more than 8 per cent, which is true only for the very lightest German wines. A much more typical glass of wine nowadays is 175ml at 12 or 13 per cent, and thus contains well over 2 units, or more than the alcohol in a pint of mild or ordinary bitter. So you may imagine you're being healthy sipping an elegant glass of Chardonnay rather than guzzling a pint of beer, but in reality you won't be reducing your alcohol intake, and neither will be taking in any fewer calories.

### Limitless Confusion

It's impossible to believe that the general public get any meaningful guidance from all this advice about "safe limits", particularly since it seems to change on a regular basis. Previously we were told that the maximum recommended "safe" limits of alcohol were 21 units a week for men and 14 for women, which may have been questionable science, but at least had the benefit of clarity. How-

# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **FEBRUARY '94**

**T**he front page featured the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport, as Pub of the Year. This was described as the "much sought after award from the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA," said to have been awarded after a vigorous debate in which it was a pity that any of the leading contenders had to lose. It was considered to be an extraordinary achievement for a pub which had only been run in its existing form for just over a year, and it was put down to both the foresight of the Boddington PubCo, who owned the pub, but most of all to licensee Ken Birch - described a former regional CAMRA stalwart and beer enthusiast.

The month's editorial drew attention to Michael Hesseltine's De-regulation Bill, which, as expected confined to the dustbin the Government's pre-election pledge to implement Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act - this in effect meant that drinkers would continue to pay millions of pounds a year for the privilege of having huge heads on their pints. But the Bill also attacked three other consumer rights - pubs would no longer have to display a comprehensive price list; nor would they have to give information on the strength of the beers they sold; and there would no longer be any obligation to display their opening hours.

"Curmudgeon" was having a go at the increasing number of new "draught beers in a can" that were becoming available - Theakston's, Stone's, John Smiths and Tetley's, to name but four. It seemed that the big brewers had managed to persuade some people that these beers were much closer to the genuine article on draught in the pub. But they were filtered, carbonated and pasteurised just like any other canned beers, and then subjected to a highly artificial process which involved the use of nitrogen, to simulate the appearance of a pint pulled through a tight sparkler to give a creamy head. Appearance was all they did simulate - in reality, they were even more processed and artificial than the original canned beers. Finally, there was the usual preliminary notice giving the dates of the next Stockport Beer Festival. This would be the eighth and only the second in the new venue, Stockport Town Hall Ballroom.

ever, to tell people that they can drink three to four units a day if they are men, or two to three if they are women, is downright confusing, and will inevitably be interpreted as meaning the upper end of the scale. What they don't tell you, though, is that all this represents is the point on the graph where the health risks bottom out, and that you have to drink more than twice as much per week on a regular basis before the risks from drinking start to exceed those from not drinking at all.

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# BREWERY NEWS



Greater Manchester's latest brewer was launched at the National Winter Ales Festival last month, although it will be a short while before they are able to move into their permanent home.

We reported briefly on Bridgewater Ales last month, and now more details are available. The men behind the operation are Ken Birch, former local licensee, and his business partner and brewer Richard Bazen. Richard has a fair bit of brewing experience behind him, having been brewer for the Holt, Plant & Deakin operation in the West Midlands. The first beer, Delph Porter, a tasty 4 per cent alcohol brew, was on sale at the National Winter Ales Festival and by the time you read this will have been joined by the new

company's flagship beer, Barton Ale. This is a 4.3 per cent premium bitter, closely modelled on the old Holt, Plant & Deakin Entire, much-missed by drinkers in the West Midlands.

The beers are currently being produced on the small brewery at the Old Pint Pot in Salford, although the brewery should be in its permanent home on Chapel Street, in the shadow of the old Cook Street Brewery tower, in the next couple of months. Opening Times will carry a full review after the formal launch at the new site. In the meantime, Bridgewater beers can be found in the Old Pint Pot, the Kings Arms on Bloom Street and, possibly, the Millgate in Failsworth.

## News from Hydes'

Another beer previewed at the Winter Ales Festival was the new premium bitter from Hydes' Anvil. Temporarily called 'Festival Ale', this is a 4.3 per cent alcohol EST<sup>®</sup> 1863 version of the popular Maris Gold craft beer from last summer. It was certainly well received at the Festival and will also be going on test market in half a dozen Hydes' pubs including Fletcher Moss in Didsbury. It's well worth seeking out and will be a most welcome addition to Hydes' permanent portfolio. On the seasonal beer front, Ruby Ratchets Porter is now available and very good it is too, although it must be said it's not really like a porter. Instead it's a deep red-brown, slightly fruity winter ale. Excellent for this time of year. As to further craft beers, the next will be 'Hydes' Old Oak Ale', named after the small oak vessel in which it is produced. After that the craft beer programme will be taking a break while the new premium bitter is launched but will be returning later in the year with a new programme of beers.

## Holt's Visits - At Last!



At long last Joseph Holt's have finally flung open the brewery doors. It's only for a short while, though, so make the most of it. To help celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the company, and raise funds for the Christie Hospital Appeal, the directors have reversed their long-standing ban on brewery visits to allow the brewers to run tours for members of the public. The tours are for groups of 12-15 people, run from 1 March to 28 May and cost £10 per head, with the proceeds going to the Christie Appeal. Bookings can be made by phoning the brewery (0161 834 3285) - ask to speak to Keith Sheard, Dick Venes or Mike Hitchen.

## Bits and Pieces

Elsewhere, it's a case of some you win and some you lose. Aspinall's Cambrinus Craft Brewery, based at Knowsley Park near Liverpool, and reviewed in these pages just 12 months ago, has closed. The rich Lamp Oil Porter, will be much missed. However, down at Shraleay Brook in Staffordshire, brewing has recommenced at the Rising Sun. The brewery is now an entirely separate business from the pub and is producing beers on a Civil War theme. The pale and hoppy Charles 1<sup>st</sup> Brew (4.2 per cent) was recently sampled at the Waters Green in Macclesfield, and proved to be an excellent beer. Look out also for the premium Executioner (4.9 per cent). Look out, too, for Greene King's new seasonal ale. The Suffolk brewers have quite a local presence via the old magic Pub Company outlets, and many now take Greene King's standard range and the seasonals, too. Out this month, to coincide with Valentine's Day, is Old Horny. Brewed to an ABV of 4.2 per cent, this is a light coloured beer with a delicate hop finish. It also has an additional ingredient in the form of ginseng, long considered an aphrodisiac, particularly in China. "Very appropriate for Valentine's day", brewery spokesman Sue Mullick told OT, hastily adding "But we aren't guaranteeing anything!"



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## Brewing Up a Storm

**M**acclesfield is a town with a long brewing tradition which came to an abrupt end in 1962 when the old Smith's Crown Brewery was taken over by Marston's. However, after a 35-year gap, commercial brewing returned to the town last year when Storm Brewing came on stream in October. Last month Opening Times finally managed to pay the new venture a visit.

Originally to be called the Bollin Brewing Company, Storm Brewing is the creation of Hugh Thompson and Dave Stebbings and at the moment remains very much a part-time operation. Not only do Hugh and Dave have regular day jobs, they also play in local soul/RnB band Dazed and Confused!

Having said that, there is nothing part-time about their commitment to the new brewery which they both come to from a keen home brewing background, as far back as their student days, "Beer's always been in my blood", says Hugh.

Luckily, they have a good friend who is already well-established on the micro-brewing scene. Brian Rides runs the Wickwar Brewery in Gloucestershire and encouraged them to bring to fruition the idea they had knocked around for some time and proved an invaluable source of help. "Without his help we wouldn't be here today", Hugh told OT.

The brewery is situated in an old ICI boiler house near the Hurdsfield Industrial Estate and has proved ideal for the installation of a small brewery. The plant was made locally and installed by Hugh and Dave, with Dave carrying out most of the plumbing and electrical works. It's a 5-barrel brew length but in practice only produces 4½ barrels at a time, although a second fermenter is due to be installed this month which will increase capacity.

Ordinary town mains water is used in the brewing although, as is usual, this is 'Burtonised' with the addition of various salts. The malt is pre-crushed and a mixture of pale, chocolate and crystal malts is used. Hops are Fuggles only. Yeast, unsurprisingly, comes from Wickwar Brewery.



At the moment just one beer is produced, the 4.2 per cent ABV Ale Force. While many local micro brewers tend to go for quite bitter beers, Ale Force is a mid-brown, lightly hopped, easy drinking beer. The Wickwar influence showing through again? In any event, it has proved a great hit with local drinkers and the brewery is currently operating at capacity. About 14 pubs take the beer - Dave and Hugh are particularly proud of the fact that all those pubs that have taken it have come back for more. Regular



outlets include both the Waters Green Tavern and the Ship, both in Macclesfield.

When the second fermenter comes on stream more beers will be produced although there are no definite plans as to precisely what these will be, although a more bitter beer is certainly being considered. OT was quick to suggest a stout or porter!

By taking a step by step approach, and establishing the reputation and consistency of just the one beer, Storm Brewing looks to be laying the foundations for a long presence in the local pub and beer scene. We wish them every success - and look for news of future developments in Opening Times.

Storm Brewing can be contacted on 01625 615856.



## Midlands War Games

**W**olverhampton & Dudley's bid for Marston's has erupted into all-out war, with the Burton brewery turning on its bigger rival with a so-called Pac-man defence. Wolves scored an early goal with an agreement to sell 170 Marston's pubs to Greene King should its own bid succeed. Now Marston's has made a £330 million counter offer for Wolves which has outraged local drinkers, CAMRA members and MPs.

If successful the Marston's plan would mean:

The closure of Banks's and Cameron's breweries, throwing hundreds out of work.

The transfer the brewing of the well-crafted Banks's and Cameron's beers to the Bass Cape Hill plant (the home of Brew XI, say no more!).

The disposal of 1,150 tenanted pubs for £250 million, leaving a rump of managed houses

While Marston's says it would keep its own historic brewery open the claim rings hollow in the light of revelations that it approached both Scottish Courage and Whitbread last year offering to sell. CAMRA is urging the Office of Fair Trading to refer the Marston's bid to the Monopolies Commission immediately, particularly as it would result in Bass dominating the Midlands beer market.

However, this move may prove unnecessary. Just before Opening Times went to press, Wolverhampton & Dudley increased their offer to about £3.06 per share, which many commentators believe may result in victory for their attempt to buy the Burton brewers. By the time you read this it may all be over bar the shouting.

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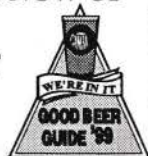
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National Winter Ales Festival over till next year. Hurrah! Running out of beer early was a little sad, but everything seemed to go well otherwise. (My bar didn't run out till 8!, and even then not completely, but a CAMRA festival selling only Cider and Foreign beer made little sense I suppose). The Idy/Beer House cheese stall was superb with a great variety at good prices. The same source's hot food I tried was very much ok too, but I only managed to sample one of the hot dishes. (Everyone seemed to like the others tho!). The Bent & Bongs bash at Atherton a week later was very good, once again the beer quality was fine, though the range of 'new' beers or 'scratches' was little better than the NWAFF. 'Taking scores' seems limited to pubs these days!



In between the two I went over to the Head of Steam Pub on Huddersfield Station for their Eire Ales festival. What a cracking pub it is, and what a great little festival. Superb beers not normally found in cask form make this an annual *must* do.

Listed at the bottom are the next major fests, though my next one will be Battersea in London (Feb 11-13). I am (reliably) informed that there will be at least one German Draught Beer Festival soon at the Beer House, and there has been much talk of something similar at Bar Fringe. Lots to look forward to, and the Hydes new Premium (in test form at NWAFF) was very promising. But WHAT has gone wrong with Holts? Now I've never been Holt's greatest fan, but the current stuff coming out of the brewery is (to my mind at least) very phenolic, and little short of undrinkable. Some people say I'm a little over-sensitive to phenols, and others that its high time Holts put in an acid wash for their very tired (exhausted) yeast, where the problem surely lies. Anyway, I'm staying clear of the stuff till it improves.

*The Beer Monster's Joint British Isles Cask Beers of the Month:*  
**Dwan Tipperary Rich Ruby (4.6%) abv**  
**Dwan Tipperary An Dubhain (5.0% abv)**

Two very fine beers out of (indirectly) the fine Dobbin & Dobbin stable. Unfortunately, this was probably their only appearance in cask form - at least this year, at Tony Brookes' Head of Steam Eire Beer Festival at Huddersfield and Euston. From the new Dwan Brew-pub in Tipperary, (a minimalist and somewhat cold environment, very metropolitan for a country town!) brewing excellent beer that is sadly mixed gas in its normal form. Brought over in cask for the festival, the Rich Ruby was everything an Irish Red Ale promises to be - but never - until now - has been. Deep, dark, bitter-edged - somewhere between a dark bitter and a brown ale in body with a malty dryness turning to a hoppy bitter finish. Sublime. The An Dubhain was a trip down memory lane, an improved (if that is possible) version of Brendan Dobbin's Guiltless Stout. Dry, bitter, black, but with no rough edges, the transitions in taste now being made with a subtle smoothness to the utterly dry finish. Too close to call on which was best, but I think the Stout might just edge it. (Incidentally the 13 beers that made it were in excellent condition - well done!).

*The Beer Monster's Foreign Beer of the Month:*  
**Keesman (Bamberg) Bock (6.2%) abv**

Of a number of very fine Foreign draught beers at the Winter Ales Fest, this excellent pale hoppy winter ale was probably the best - certainly a rarity in Manchester. Tying in my mind with the always excellent (but somewhat easier to find) Augustiner Edelstoff, it won many friends with its subtle drinkability (tasting less than 6.2%), and uncompromising dry finish. Look out in March for a number of pub German draught festivals.

### Beer Festival Diary

We're now well into the Festival season, with Fleetwood and Barnsley this month - advert page 7 for the former and Victoria Hall, Victoria Rd Saltaire, Thu 25-Sat 27 for the latter. Friday or Saturday Lunch probably the best bets (tickets Lu Cody, 15 Armidale Way, Bolton Woods, Bradford. BD2 1EN. Ticket hotline 01274 735875. Early next month is Wigan (4-6 Mar) at the Mill on the Pier - details on the strapline page 17. Oldham has a mega (150 beer) festival in late March - full details next month.

## Whaley Bridge Notes (1)

**B**eing at a loose end one Saturday, I decided to have a trip over to Whaley Bridge to catch up on the pub scene there.

I started at the **Board Inn**, in Horwich End, on the road to Dove Holes and Chapel-en-le-frith. This is a Robinson's pub with excellent handpumped Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. It is pleasant, spacious and well kept - the roaring coal fire was particularly welcome on a frosty lunchtime.

On to the **White Horse** at the bottom of Long Hill, a 'Boddington's' pub with handpumped bitter and, rarely these days, the mild, too. Heading down the A6 to Whaley Bridge proper, the next stop was the **Cock Inn**. From the outside the pub definitely has a lean but inside everything is upright and the pub has Robinson's Best Bitter and, adding to local choice, Frederics, both on handpump.

The next pub is truly superb. A national Good Beer Guide pub for many a long year, the **Shepherds Arms** takes some beating, both for the interior and the range of beers for the area. There are five beers, all on handpump - Marston's Bitter and Pedigree, Banks's Mild, Bateman's Mild and the Marston's Head Brewer's Choice range of special beers. At the time of my visit this latter was Little Lambwick at 4.1 per cent ABV. Much has been written about the interior of the pub, and the vault continues to be one of the finest in the area. It was however time to stand by the open fire in the lounge and get warm again.

Down the hill to the **White Hart**, by the river bridge. Tetley Mild and Bitter add to the variety here, together with a changing guest beer - Jolly Jaunts from Bateman's at the time of my visit.

At this point I decided that it would perhaps be wise to break my Whaley Bridge trip into two parts, as otherwise I would not make the kick-off at Edgeley Park! So, the second half of these notes will be next month and also include the Goyt Inn, which is the other national Good Beer Guide pub in Whaley Bridge, the Dog & Partridge in Bridgmont and the pubs in Whitehough and Chinley. TL

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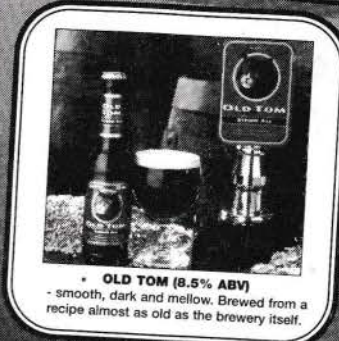
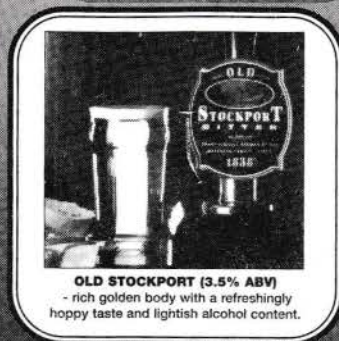
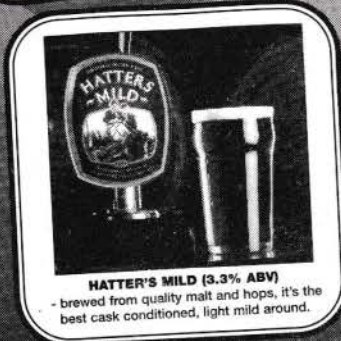
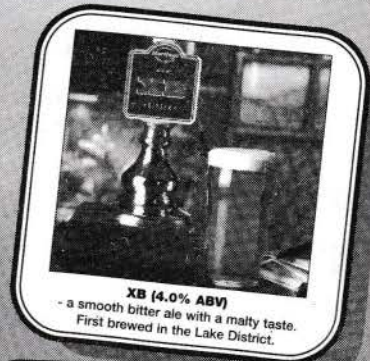
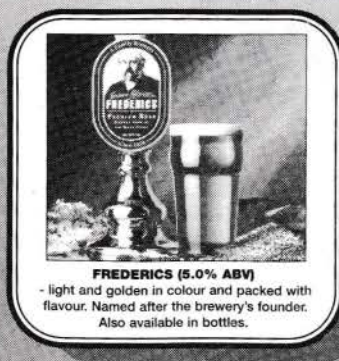
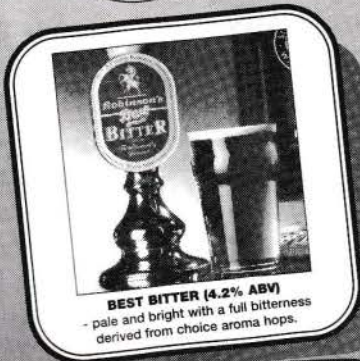
A WARM WELCOME  
AND FINE BEER IN  
A CLASSIC PUB



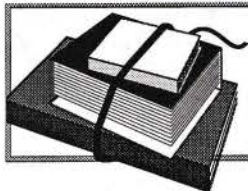
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# THE Robinson's COLLECTION



C H O I C E B E E R S



## BOOK REVIEW



**The Beers of France, by John Woods and Keith Wrigley, Artisan Press, 268pp, £11.95**

Just like the 53 bus, you wait ages for a book on French beer, then two come along at once. Following Arthur Taylor's look at Northern France, reviewed in these pages recently, this volume covers the whole country with over 60 breweries from Calais to Corsica (whose micro uses not just malt and hops, but chestnut flour).

Each brewery gets a full history and description with tasting notes, running to several pages for some of the more established firms with wide product ranges. The authors give their personal ratings independently of each other - Wrigley appears to be the more indulgent marker of the two - and are not afraid to criticise ("the unpleasant hairspray and resinous bitterness in the finish destroy any credibility engendered by the palate").

The title should alert you to the fact that this is primarily a beer guide, not a bar guide, and the bar/café listings seem to be very much an afterthought. However the half-dozen pages cover most major cities (nowhere in Marseilles, though) and many much smaller places; be warned, though, that many entries stem from brewers' recommendations and may be subject to rapid change. Paris is surveyed much more fully, with a five-page piece by John

White picking out a nearly comprehensive selection of good beer bars (though I'm delighted to note my favourite remains a well-kept secret). The book's background articles are a delight - erudite, sympathetic, and full of quirky information (Saint Brigid, it seems, possessed the ability to turn used bathwater into beer - her name will be honoured wherever Webster's is drunk).

A closely printed page towards the end of the book gives details of no less than 17 new entrants to the French brewing scene which the authors did not have time to cover fully. This is doubly good news - not only is it evidence of the revival of French beer culture, it also gives hope for an early second edition. This handsomely produced handbook is already one of the best beers books of 1998 - a new edition, with perhaps a little more emphasis on recommended outlets, could lift it into the unmissable category. **RPJ.**

## Jo and Pat and the staff from the **NELSON INN** Didsbury

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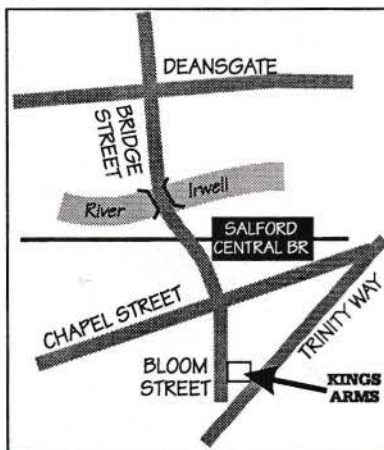
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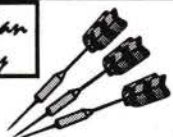
on

**DRAUGHT  
and in  
BOTTLES**

a warm welcome from  
all at the Kings Arms

# Fistful of Arrows

By Brian  
Carey



Recently, there has been two big conversions of pubs within walking distance of my home. I am pleased to report that both have seen fit to retain the dartboard, thereby bucking the perceived trend. It is good to know that breweries are realising that not only is darts the perfect ice-breaker, but that a darts team can bring much needed revenue into a pub on a quiet, rainy Tuesday in February. The million or so regular dart players, boost takings considerably. But it is too easy just to plonk the board anywhere. Clearly it is not difficult to determine the mathematics of the board, by making sure that it is the correct height and that the oche is placed the correct distance away. But that is the easy bit. Consideration has to be given to the actual geography of the board. Ideally, it should be in a side room, a vault or something similar. During a match background music should be turned off, so that the caller can make himself/herself heard to the scorer. Any distractions, like TV, games machines or pool tables should be rendered inoperable. Some pubs have it exactly right, others leave a lot to be desired. Is it asking too much that the dart team be consulted *before* a major change?

After spending over five years as darts correspondent to *The Stockport Messenger*, I know only too well how hard it is to prise information from certain leagues. Indeed, there are darts leagues in Stockport that are more secretative than the Masonic Lodge. Why this is I'll never know. I would have thought that the more good publicity a league can obtain, then the more successful they will be in attracting teams to their league, and players to their teams. Darts can only survive at a competitive level if new players take up the game. That is why I am so impressed with the work that Bernard Hand is doing with the Withington ManLon League. For those not in the know, the ManLon is a cross between the standard big board and the log end. It has a trebles ring, but both doubles and trebles are the same size as those on the Manchester board and the whole is scaled down to log end size. Because of the difficulty in playing the board, games in this league are played off 401. As far as I am aware, this is the only league of its kind in the world. Therefore, when Brian Adshead of the Nelson equalled the best ever throw, it was truly a world record. Brian finished in 11 darts, a remarkable feat, which many league secretaries would have duly recorded in the weekly report in the sports pages. But not Bernard. He arranged for Brian's achievement to be reported in the features sections of the local papers, together with photographs. These would be seen by those who would not normally as much as glance as the darts report in the minority sport section. Who knows, perhaps some youngster might be inspired to pick up a set of arrows, instead of playing the trivia machine, the next time he goes to the pub. The days have gone when sending in a league table and a few hastily compiled match reports to the local paper was enough. What is needed is a local darts "spin doctor". Any offers?

Not all publicity is good, and darts recently suffered the worst publicity it has ever had. The constant carping about overweight, scruffy players has, thankfully, become hackneyed and, to a degree, redundant. The battle between the two organising bodies, although still being fanned by a few with their own agendas, has virtually burnt out. But the latest has saddened the hearts of all players, be they pro, semi-pro or pub players. Playing in the World Championship finals must be the dream of anyone who has ever thrown a dart. The qualifying heats are hotly contested, but "an incident" in which professional Mike Gregory was injured, was perhaps the games darkest hour. Darts games always end with a handshake, when a player is "decked", it is time to consider just how important it is in the scheme of things. On a brighter note, it has been pleasing to see the emergence of young Chris North, recently. Son of the late Jack North, Chris,

together with Phil Kerr and Mark Cairney, was part of the North West team that won the Post Office's national title. Chris also took the Singles title, which was held by his father in 1989. To add to his delight, he also beat professional Bob Anderson in a challenge match. The young man is now beginning to make his mark on the tournament circuit, reaching the quarter finals of the Vauxhall Festival in Great Yarmouth

*On a final, personal note, I would like to thank everyone who has inquired after my health. Not least editor John Clarke. To John, and the rest of you, I can say that I am, hopefully, well on the way to a full recovery and look forward to playing darts, and contributing to Opening Times, for a few more years yet.*



Welcome once again to Ken's Kitchen. A few personal points before I get on to the recipe. Firstly, for regular readers (if any exist!) my column was moved from January's OT to the Winter Ales Festival programme - for those who missed this, the recipe will be re-printed later this year. Secondly, I have now left the King's Arms to set up Bridgewater Ales. However, I intend to carry on with this column. Now the food!

## Somerset Sausages Ingredients

This recipe serves four.

- 8 good class pork sausages (Porkinsons if you don't know a good butcher)
- 2 eating apples (Braeburns are ideal)
- 2 medium leeks
- 1 small onion or 2 shallots
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 teaspoon tomato puree
- ½ pint of draught (real) cider or a bottle of Bulmers No.1
- 2 teaspoons cooking oil

## Mis-En-Place

This term is used to describe the preparation of ingredients prior to cooking. For this dish preparation can be done while the sausages are cooking in a medium oven for 20 minutes (remember to turn them once).

- Peel and core the apples, then slice into ¼ inch thick pieces.
- Trim the leeks and slice into ½ inch thick rings. Wash thoroughly.
- Peel and crush the garlic; mince very finely into a couple of pinches of salt.
- Finely chop the onions or shallots.

## Method

When the sausages are cooked, remove from oven and place on one side.

Gently fry the onions for 1½ minutes; add the apples and stir for 2-3 minutes; add the leeks and, turning regularly, fry until they just start to brown.

Stir in the paprika, then add the tomato puree and garlic. Add the cider slowly, blending all the time - an adjustment may be needed as the sauce should be thin but not watery.

Finally, turn the heat down until the sauce is barely simmering. Add the sausages and warm through for 1-2 minutes. Be careful not to reboil as this causes coagulating of the albumen in the sausage meat, leading to toughness.

Cider would be a natural accompaniment, and of course would not disgrace this dish. But for the adventurous, why not try a bottle of Belgian gueuze, or my own favourite, Liefman's Goudenband. Absolute Heaven!

**JOIN CAMRA NOW! - SEE FORM ON PAGE 19**

# ATTENTION ALL FREE HOUSES!

Following the huge success of award winning Plassey Bitter at The Sportsman, Hyde, Geoff is now able to offer all Plassey products at realistic prices with free delivery to selected other Publicans (who would be willing to take it regularly) in the Stockport, Tameside, High Peak and Greater Manchester areas only. Please ring Geoff on: 0161 368 5000, fax 0161 366 1365.

**CAMRA REGIONAL  
PUB OF THE YEAR 1998**

## THE SPORTSMAN

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TRADITIONAL CIDER**

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE  
**WITH TIM JONES**  
**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE** CAMRA

First of all a correction from last month's news. Due to my poor handwriting, the newly renamed pub in Hyde was reported as the Police & Hound - this of course should have read Bike & Hound.

In Bredbury, the **Queens** on Bents Lane (Bass) is now all keg (surprise, surprise!). In Romiley, the **Romiley Arms** is also all keg and the **Cherry Tree** has lost the **Holt's Bitter** and now just has **Bodds Bitter**. Finally for Romiley, the **Stock Dove** is serving **Webster's Bitter** - the only beer on handpump.

Nearby in Woodley, the **Wagon & Horses** has **Wards Bitter** and **Vaux Samson** on handpump and the **White Hart**, quite surprisingly still has a 'real ale' - **Worthington Bitter**.

The continually changing guest beer at the **Bowling Green** in Marple is now **Tetley Bitter** - much to the landlord's chagrin - as the **Wards Bitter** is not on the owner's (Nomura) list!

Over in Hayfield, the **Kinder Lodge** now has **Thwaites Bitter** alongside the **Tetley's** on the bar. The pub was also advertised for sale at the end of last month - it's yours for £115,000.

The **Chieftain** in Hadfield has had to remove the **Hydes' Bitter** and **Light** on handpump. Close by in Padfield, the **Peel Arms** has introduced a rotating guest beer policy (you win some, you lose some).

In Glossop another Bass outlet has axed real ale - this time it's the **Norfolk**. Meanwhile the **Plough** is on the market for £90,000.

In Ashton-under-Lyne, the **Station** has now begun to take **Tetley's** guest beers from the **Tapsters Choice** range. Recent rumours of a **Tetley Bitter** only policy seem to have been a bit alarmist. More news as things develop but it is going to need more than a solitary guest beer from **Tapsters Choice** to regain the pub's former reputation.

Meanwhile the **Buffet Bar** at Stalybridge has reached its millennium! Just before Christmas, less than two years after its reopening, the 1000<sup>th</sup> draught guest beer was served. The beer in question being the excellent **Monty's Mild** from the respected **Roosters Brewery** of Harrogate. As the choice of new beers from the regional and microbreweries is on the increase, it is hoped that the total will reach 1500 by next Christmas. As a new venture at the **Buffet Bar**, not too serious **Fun Quizzes** have been introduced on Monday evenings, starting at 8.45pm. There will be occasional guest setters and presenters to add an individual touch, owner **John Hesketh** told **Opening Times**.

Finally, some luvvie news! The **Quiet Woman**, **Earl Sterndale** is to be/have been used for a 'Peak Practice' setting and in Hadfield, the **Palatine** has been used in the BBC's 'League of Gentlemen'.

## Ye Olde Admiral Rodney

**Prestbury**

*Robinsons Hatters*

*Mild and Best*

*Bitter*

*on handpump*

**Lunchtime Bar Snacks**

**12-2.30 Mon-Sat**

*Peter and Gail*

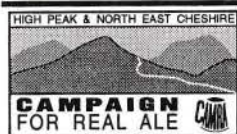
*welcome you*

**Tel: 01625 828078**



**JOIN CAMRA NOW! - SEE FORM ON PAGE 19**





**February  
Featured Pub:  
Railway, Stockport Rd  
Marple**

**F**or February's Featured Pub, we return to Marple, and the Railway on Stockport Road, by Rose Hill railway station. Records show that a beerhouse stood on this site as early as 1868, and was known as the Gun Inn, but once Rose Hill station opened in 1869, the pub gradually became known as the Railway.

By 1879 the old pub had been pulled down and the present building erected in its place. It has continued to serve the local community and travellers alike ever since.

Several years ago the pub underwent an external and internal refurbishment. Externally, old paintwork was removed to expose original brickwork. This was cleaned up and together with the other external features such as gable ends, gave an attractive, imposing appearance to the pub. Internally the pub is open-plan in design and is comfortable and spacious.

Licensees Steve and Janet moved into the Railway last November from the Horsfield Arms in Bredbury which has been a successful pub featured in the Good Beer Guide for several years. The cask conditioned beers at the Railway are Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, and Steve's first move was to replace the electric pumps with traditional handpulls. General customer response was that this had a most positive effect on beer quality! The pub also offers a full menu of good value lunchtime meals and there is also a large car park; so no problem there!

The Railway is a friendly, welcoming pub that caters for all tastes and has a strong local following. Steve and Janet's intention is obviously to develop the popularity of the pub, on which they have made a great start and we wish them well in their efforts. **TL**

*All in all a good traditional local that is well worth a visit. Rose Hill railway station is close by and buses regularly pass the door. Services 358 Stockport-Hayfield, 359 Stockport-Hawk Green, 363 Stockport-Marple-Mellor, and 383/384 Stockport-Marple-Romiley circular will all get you there.*



**PUB OF  
THE  
SEASON**

The Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA Pub of the season for Winter is the popular Hanging Gate at Sutton Lane Ends. The Hanging Gate is a fascinating pub dating from 1621. Bare stonework peeps through the whitewash all over the pub, adding to its historical charm. It is a superbly refurbished hillside building, with four small rooms on several levels as you progress down the hillside. You enter through a porch into a tiny hall with an intimate snug containing a lovely open fire and main bar ahead. To the right is the first of a number of stepped rooms, clinging onto the hillside. This contains a small bar, an old wood-burning stove with surrounding coach lights and a rack with the daily papers. Other rooms include the 'View Room' at the bottom, which commands a magnificent panoramic view over the Cheshire Plain and Welsh Hills. In addition to areas on either side of the bar, there is also a welcome no-smoking room.

The inner man and woman are catered for by simple home-made pub food, much of it locally produced, which is served every lunch and evening. Landlady Carole Marshall prides herself on her fresh home-cooked food but nevertheless is keen to keep the Gate as a community local. The guest beers are nominated by the locals and their excellent choice includes beers from Cains of Liverpool and a guest beer from an independent brewery.

The Gate is a good example of a successful pub renovation which neither destroys the pub nor its character. Greenalls and other pub chains should take note.



**The Sun Inn**



*The Pub where Quality Counts*

**Hand Pulled**

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The Sun Inn

The Sun Inn

Licensee: Malcolm Roberts

e-mail: [thesuninn@mcmail.com](mailto:thesuninn@mcmail.com)

**The Sun Inn**

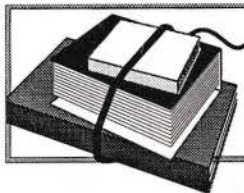
**45 Mill Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 7NN**

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**Wigan Beer Festival 4-6th March, Mill at the Pier**

Thu 5.30 - 11pm; Fri 12-2.30 & 5.30-11pm; Sat 12-3.30 & 7-11pm



# BOOK REVIEW



**City Life Restaurant, Café Bar & Pub Guide 1999, 162pp, £3.50**  
**Manchester City Centre Real Ale Guide, 64pp, £4.75**

The vibrancy and diversity of the drinking scene in Manchester is neatly summed up by the publication of these two very different guides to eating and drinking in the city. The appearance of the *City Life Restaurant, Café Bar and Pub Guide* is now an annual event, and looked forward to with a reasonable degree of anticipation by most habitués of the City centre scene, whilst a CAMRA guide to the City Centre is a more occasional treat.

Those of you familiar with previous editions of the *City Life* publication will know that it was very handy as a guide to eating out but often fell down on the pub side with ill-chosen and sometimes inaccurate information. Happily, this new edition is far better on the pub side with approximately half the book given over to pubs and bars this time. Several glaring omissions remain, though.

The pubs have been broken up into sections – pubs, country pubs, café bars and chains (Hogshead, Wetherspoon et al). The pub section is clearly laid out, alphabetically within each town or district and many of the favourites are there with a photo and a good description – not only of the pub, but its character, clientele and the area that it serves; beer range and opening hours are included. The small 'Country Pubs' section goes over the boundary to feature some classic houses in Cheshire, Lancs and Derbyshire.

Some bizarre omissions remain – where's the Station, Didsbury; Griffin, Heaton Mersey and, most seriously of all, the Railway, Portwood? The Grey Horse in the City Centre is reduced to a footnote in the entry for the neighbouring Circus. The sportsman in Hyde, the new regional Pub of the Year isn't mentioned at all! Ok, so it's not a real ale guide, as is made clear, but these are all good pubs in their own right and as good as any of those listed.

But let's not quibble – these are omissions that can be put right next year (there are tear-out nomination forms for new entries throughout the book). The pub listing has improved enormously over the years and the quality of the other sections makes this a most worthwhile addition to your bookshelf if you have any interest in good pubs or good food.

If the *City Life* book is a worthwhile addition to your bookshelf, then the new *Manchester City Centre Real Ale Guide* is an essential one. Published by North Manchester CAMRA, this is the sequel to *Manchester Pubs and Bars*, produced four years ago. In that time the Shambles has been demolished to be (sort of) rebuilt and reopened, a veritable tide of nitrokeg has swept across the Bass and Whitbread estates and a profusion of me-too 'bar-cafés' have opened up, devoid of real ale.

Well, with this thoroughly worthwhile publication you can safely avoid the current pitfalls. With research completed late last year, and most changes since then also noted, it is as up to date as possible and comprehensive – giving a small type 'no real ale' to all the known offenders. All pubs and bars in the area covered (broadly that area between the River Irwell, the Mancunian way and Ancoats) are mentioned with half the book devoted to pub listings which as far as one can tell seem very even handed. Opening Times, beer ranges etc are listed and many of the pubs are shown in photos.

The second half of the book is in some ways even more interesting. No less than 21 pages are devoted to nine specific pub crawls, with Neil Richardson providing historical background to the walks. There are sections on food, with particular emphasis on the curry cafés of Shudehill, and breweries plus a heartfelt whinge about the destruction of the Grade I listed Shambles.

*continued on next page*

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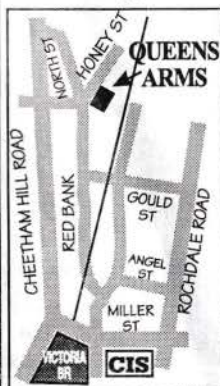
## THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM



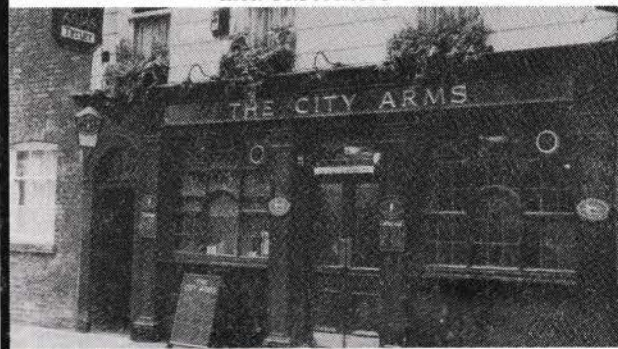
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Cider and  
Czech  
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Coming in February (among others)

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## KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

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6 GUEST ALES  
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and 11.30 - 2.00  
Saturday



# MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

Last month was a quiet one for the Manchester pub scene, with the post-Christmas lull in full swing. The highlight of the month was of course the National Winter Ales Festival held at the Upper Campfield Market. This will be mentioned elsewhere but the event's runaway success must surely clinch the city's position as the true real ale capital of Britain.

## All Quiet in the City Centre

As far as the City Centre is concerned there are no real changes of any note to report, although the next 12 months hold the promise of several new developments. Work is well under way on what will be J W Lees' city centre flagship at 80 Great Bridgewater Street and a short walk away will see a new J D Wetherspoon outlet in the leisure development on the corner of Portland Street and Oxford Street. The former Brannigans in the basement of the Royal Exchange will be reopening and there will be a plethora of new bars in the Printworks and Great Northern developments. Just how many of these offer their customers the option of cask beer remains to be seen. There are even rumours that the rebuilt Shambles pubs may not offer any cask beer, which really would be piling insult on injury. Luckily we shouldn't have too long to wait to discover the truth as the new pubs should be open in the next couple of months. I also hear that this autumn should see the opening of a 'Fat Cat' café bar near Canal Street. Just another café bar? Perhaps, but this small chain has been known to feature cask beers, some even worth drinking, in its outlets.

## But Changes in the Suburbs

There has been some news in the suburbs, though. Perhaps the saddest item to report is the early retirement of Beryl Lavelle from the Coach & Horses in Gorton. This pub has long been a favourite of this column, and indeed of all discerning beer drinkers, not only for the Robinson's beers of benchmark quality, but also for the superb old-style community atmosphere. Beryl worked hard to achieve this and it was the greatest shame that ill-health prevented her realising her ambition to be at the pub's helm for the millennium. Former branch chairman and pub regular Rhys Jones,

journeyed from Wales to present Beryl with a commemorative CAMRA mirror to mark the event, as shown in our photo. Beryl will not be severing her connections with the pub, though, as she will



remain an active member of the ladies darts team. She is succeeded by Dave and Lena Cohen who arrive from a two-year stint at The Captain's Bar on Rochdale Road in Collyhurst. Dave and Lena realise they have a hard act to follow and are promising no major changes. We wish them well at their new pub. Elsewhere, there are a few changes to report in Didsbury. At the Parrswood, Boddingtons Mild is to be replaced by Greenalls Mild and the pub now features live music every Saturday and Sunday evening. On Wilmslow road there is a temporary licensee at the Dog & Partridge while a replacement for Allan Seale is sought out. The guest beer policy remains unchanged. Meanwhile at the Nelson, the new guest beer policy is up and running with Taylor's Landlord going down a treat. The pub is keen to receive suggestions for any other independent brewer's beers which would sell well as guests in the Nelson.

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## BOOK REVIEW - Manchester Pub Guides (continued from previous page)

If you really wanted to find fault, then it would perhaps have been worth including an extra four pages to allow more space for the pub descriptions, some of which seem to have been savagely edited (The Edinburgh Castle in Ancoats gets a mere 18 words). This, though, is nit-picking in the extreme. The *Manchester City Centre Real Ale Guide* is a very good effort and highly recommended - a compulsory

buy for anyone with any interest at all in the city's pub scene. The CAMRA guide is on sale at numerous City Centre pubs and can be obtained by post from Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Manchester M9 6PW (members get a pound off but add 25p for postage). The *City Life* guide is available from most bookshops and newsagents in the City Centre.

## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times178)

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.**





# 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 & Macclesfield

Diary

## February 99

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** – Social: Bulls Head, London Rd, City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Monthly Branch Meeting: Boar's Head, Market Place, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. **NB selections for 2000 GBG will be made at this meeting. All please attend.**

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Social: Hind's Head, Manchester Rd, Heaton Chapel. Starts 9.00pm.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Heaton Norris Stagger: starts 7.00pm Bridge Inn, Georges Rd; 8.30 Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way.

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Social: Union, Stockport Rd, Levenshulme. Starts 9.00pm.

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Bishop Blaize, Stockport.

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>** – Beer and Chinatown Social: 12 noon Circus, 1.00pm Grey Horse, both Portland Street. NB change of venue for 12-noon start as Forgery & Firkin closed Sunday lunch.

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March** – Social: Crown, Higher Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

*The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:*

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** – Committee Meeting, Boundary Inn, Guide Bridge. Starts 8.30pm.

## February 99

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Branch Meeting: Crown, Victoria St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm. **NB selections for 2000 GBG will be made at this meeting. All please attend.**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Branch Walk. Meet Royal George, Greenfield 10.00am.

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** – Social evening in Whaley Bridge. Meet at Board Inn, Chapel Rd (A6) 7.30pm

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March** – Committee Meeting: Pack Horse, Ashworth Lane, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm. **NB change of venue from 'What's Brewing'.**

*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:*

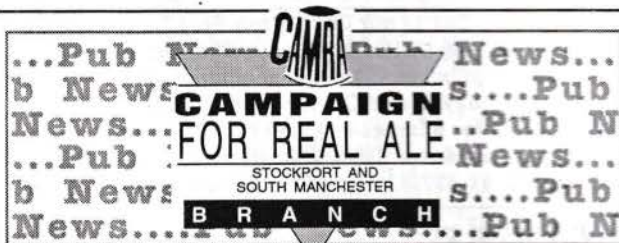
**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Committee Meeting, The Ship, Beech Ln, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>** – Social and Pub of the Season Presentation to the Hanging Gate, Sutton Lane Ends. Starts 8.00pm.

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Monthly Branch Meeting: Roebuck, Moberley.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March** – Congleton Pub Crawl/ Survey. Starts 7.00pm at the Rams Head, Rood Hill.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 99 Planner



Shock of the month must be the news that Irene Morris, landlady of the Greyhound in Edgeley, has handed in her notice. During her seven years at the Greyhound, Irene has maintained the highest standards, not only in terms of the pub and its customers, but also in the beer quality. Not only does the Greyhound sell superlative Boddingtons Bitter and Mild (the place to drink Boddies in Stockport according to some), but her imaginative use of what guest beer provisions Greenalls have made available have always ensure an good range of beers in the pub. The time of Irene's departure is not yet known but she will be sorely missed and an almost impossible act to follow.

The presentation of the CAMRA Greater Manchester Regional Pub of the Year award was made to the Sportsman in Hyde last month when the pub hosted a party to mark the event. Our photo shows owner Geoff Oliver with his framed certificate. Sadly, the Sportsman did not feature in the final honours when the results of the national Pub of the Year Award for 1998 were released late last month. The national winner is the Fat Cat in Norwich with three others highly commended, namely The Brewery Arms, Keighley; The Plough & Harrow at Monkash in the Vale of Glamorgan; and the No. 22 in Darlington. Congratulations to all concerned.



Geoff Oliver (centre) celebrates his Regional Pub of the Year Award with wife Carmel and bar manager Dave Dupree

In Stockport work is now well under way on the Sun & Castle on Hillgate which should reopen as the town centre's second Holt's house within the next few weeks. There will of course be a full review in Opening Times when the new-look pub is unveiled.

Not too far away, however, there are less signs of progress at the Pack Horse. Part of the old building was demolished late last year but since then very little appears to have happened although of course, behind the scenes it may be a hive of activity.

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