

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

No:179

Volume 15  
Issue 3

# OPENING TIMES



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MARCH 1999

## Top Award for Buffet Bar

**T**he acclaimed Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar has won a major award in the CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Awards, scooping the top spot in the Pub Refurbishment category. The awards were for work completed in 1997 and, describing the sensitive refurbishment as "a lesson which many other pub owners would do well to heed", judging panel chairman Steve Parissien presented the award to "amazed" Buffet Bar owner John Hesketh in a ceremony on Wednesday 17th February.

During the 1970s and 80s the Buffet Bar was one of the very few to escape conversion to an identikit Traveller's Fare box and was famously run as an independent concern by the Redfern family. To this day the bar is still known by some as 'Dot's Diner' after the indomitable matriarch who presided over the Buffet for many years. The family connection came to an end with her son Ken, who left the trade after failing to secure the bar's future when it was threatened by a ludicrous British Rail plan to convert it into a restaurant and shops. The campaign to save the Buffet has been well documented and was ultimately successful when John Hesketh, at that time owner of the Station freehouse in Ashton, secured the lease and reopened it with Railtrack's sanction and equipped with two much-needed additional rooms. Now run by manageress Sylvia Wood, also from The Station, the Buffet once again boasts the ever-changing range of guest beers that made it famous with drinkers nation-wide. Over 1150 different beers have now been sold, with 15 more being added to the list every week.

When Opening Times asked John for his reaction to getting the award, he explained that he had simply been lost for words. "Frankly, amazed" was how he described his feel-



ings but clearly he and Sylvia are delighted that their hard work has been recognised in this way.

The Opening Times area has had quite a track record in the annual Pub Design Awards over the years. Stockport's Queens Head was a winner in the Conservation Award category while Rothwells in the City Centre was a winner for the Best Conversion to Pub Use. In addition, the Sidings in Levenshulme was Highly Commended in the Best New Pub category. For the text of the judges report on the Buffet Bar and details of this year's other winners, see the article on back page

**The 13th  
STOCKPORT  
BEER and CIDER  
FESTIVAL**

STOCKPORT TOWN HALL CAMRA 3rd JUNE-5th JUNE 1999

Stockport Beer Festival is well and truly up and running. Once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express Advertiser, arrangements are now well in hand. Our beer managers recently got together to plan one of our best ranges ever with old favourites being joined by newcomers from all over the country. In particular this year we are hoping to have a good number of beers from East Anglia, many not seen at the Stockport Festival before. Hopefully more news on this front next month. Cider lovers shouldn't feel neglected, though - as we revealed last month, we will once again be hosting CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championship so a tip-top range can once again be expected. So don't forget those important dates - Thursday 3rd - Saturday 5th June. Get them in your diaries now!

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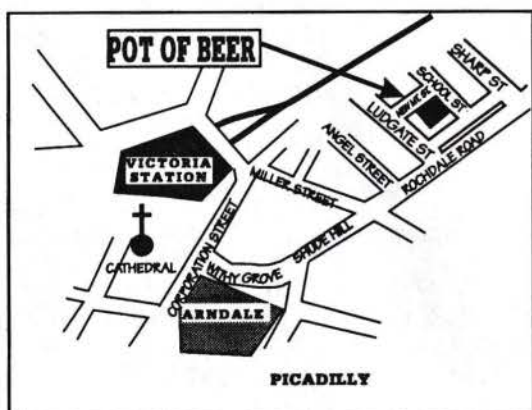
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## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Are the days of the branded, themed, managed pubs coming to an end? The death of the old-fashioned community pub has been predicted for so long that many in the industry have taken it as read. They have just had a rude awakening.

It seems that drinkers of all ages are returning to their locals, shunning the glitzy, over-priced high street theme bars. Those operators who have put all their eggs into that particular basket are beginning to feel the pinch. Large operators like Bass down to the smaller pub companies have all recently turned in disappointing results. The Slug & Lettuce operation has reported dismal results for its northern outlets (including one in Manchester) and has called a halt to further expansion outside London. The weakness of the managed outlets which is all that remains of Greenalls these days, has made the company vulnerable to a bid, with several well-known names reported circling and waiting to pounce.

By contrast, those concerns that have invested in traditional locals, often run by tenants or leaseholders, are prospering. The more street-wise companies, are starting to invest more in this type of operation, including national brewer and pub operator Scottish & Newcastle. This is good news for our regional and family brewers, too, as this is where their strength lies - despite the odd flight of fancy when they attempt to mimic their larger brethren. It is too early to say that the branding bubble has burst, but it's certainly looking rather thin in places. At times it has seemed that only we in CAMRA had any faith in the old-fashioned locals, which after all constitute the backbone of this country's public house tradition. Well-paid industry pundits and analysts had written them off - the latest in a long line of misguided and barmy predictions. Why on earth do the otherwise sane people who run our larger breweries listen to them?

*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; 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 3,5 or 7 (\*.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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# Pub Of The Month MARCH 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	29	30	31			



**T**he Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for March is the Circus Tavern on Portland Street in Manchester City Centre.

One of Manchester's truly famous pubs, the Circus's fame has spread not only because of its size but also because of the long-serving licensee, Terry Corless. Once a Tetley house but now owned by national pub operator Allied-Domecq, this must be the smallest pub in their sprawling empire, and arguably the smallest city centre pub in the country. This delightful gem consists of just two tiny rooms plus a small lobby. So tiny is the 40-capacity pub that the one-person bar is under the stairs and has room only for two handpumps dispensing Tetley Bitter, consistently at the peak of perfection. It is no surprise to learn that it is now a Tetley Heritage pub and also features on CAMRA's list of classic pub interiors. The full history of the pub can be seen on the left-hand wall near the bar. However, it's not just bricks and mortar that make a good pub. This is down to the licensee and in Terry Corless, who with wife Kath celebrated 28 years at the pub last month, the Circus has a landlord as characterful as the pub itself. Their years of experience shine through in the immaculate condition of the pub and its beer, and of course the warm welcome extended to a mixed clientele of city regulars, businessmen and airline personnel who stay across the road at the Princess Hotel. The pub is apparently very popular with Americans staying in Manchester.

The presentation of this much-deserved award will be made on Thursday March 25th when due to the small size of the pub, admission may be restricted to local CAMRA members and regulars. However, if you're in the City Centre, make sure you visit this unique institution. It's even worth making a special trip. JH.

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

**B  
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**OVER 30 BELGIAN BEERS**  
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Handpumped traditional  
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Introducing a range of artisanal krieks  
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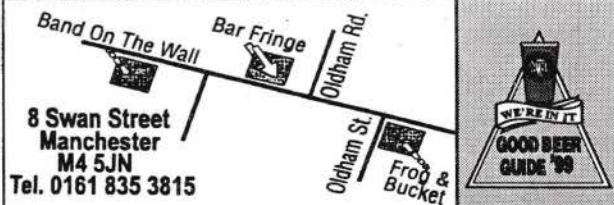
Also introducing another draught wheat  
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Other draught beers at the festival to  
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**Belgian Beer  
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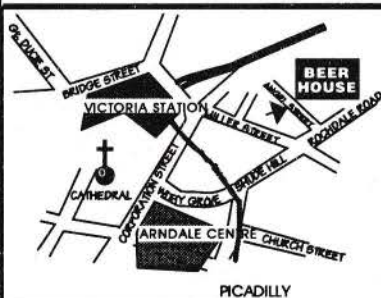
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# STAGGER

with John Clarke

## Heavy Going in Heaton Norris

**H**eaton Norris is a sprawling district of Stockport, stretching from the town centre to Didsbury Road and Lancashire Hill and is served by many pubs of varying styles, so many in fact that it is impossible to cover them all in one go. This survey, therefore restricts itself to those lying north of the A6. We started, however, at the **Bridge Inn** on Georges Road. Overshadowed by the giant new B&Q, the Bridge Inn is a pleasant 1930s pub with one or two original features remaining from that period. In recent years it does seem to have struggled to find its role and consequently can be quieter than other pubs in the area, although the notice board was full with details of forthcoming events. The pub also serves breakfasts from 8.30am. It's a Robinson's house and Hatters Mild and Best Bitter are both available. The Bitter wasn't bad at all but the Mild was considered disappointing by those who tried it.

Moving on to the A6, our first port of call was the **Magnet**, still sporting its old Wilson's livery, an increasingly rare sight these days. Originally quite a small pub, the Magnet has expanded over the years and apart from the vault and rear poolroom also has a series of interconnecting lounge areas. One of these is decked out with old Sixties pop memorabilia, and also houses the Saturday night Sixties disco. Although it's popular and well-run we have run into flak in the past for our less than favourable opinions on the beer quality, and so it proved again on this occasion. Four cask beers were on sale, Banks's Mild, Holt's Bitter, Webster's Bitter and Green label. We tried the first two and neither came up to much unfortunately.

**Dillon's Whistlin' Jig** just down the road remains keg-only, so it was across the road to the **Railway**. This Greenall's house has had a lot of investment in recent years, and it's all been done to good effect. The result is a very smart and well-appointed pub with a good vault to the rear and two separate lounges at the front. The right hand room is often used for cabaret-style live entertainment and has a small stage in one corner. It is clearly a well-run pub that caters for its chosen clientele extremely well. Two cask beers are sold, Greenall's Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter and both were generally considered to be above average.

A quick look through the windows of the **Hope** revealed that the handpumps spotted previously had now disappeared and the pub has returned to being the bastion of keg beer that it has always been. So it was on to the **Lonsdale** on Belmont Way, a pub which has had its ups and downs over the years. The downs reached their depths when the already poor Roundhouse, as it then was, had a grisly Pennine Hosts makeover which was then left to rot for several years past its sell-by date. Luckily, new licensees saved it from terminal decline and, if the large, mainly young, early evening crowd was anything to go by, it now flourishes again. The multi-levelled interior has been done out in a faintly rustic style which works very well and the pub probably looks better now than it has done in its entire history. A karaoke was setting up as we arrived, the first of many we would encounter. The two cask ales are Boddingtons Bitter and Webster's Green Label, and while the Boddies was thought to be above average, the Webster's was its usual dull self. Next was Robinson's **Silver Jubilee**, again on Belmont Way. It's a modern building, replacing the old Oddfellows Arms, the third pub that Robinson's ever purchased. There is a well-used vault and a comfortable well-kept lounge, catering for a more mature clientele. The whole pub is spotlessly clean and obviously well-run. There are events most nights and on our visit a live musician was just setting up. There are three Robinson's beers on handpump, with Old Stockport joining the usual Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. All three were comfortably above average with the Mild the most preferred. It's just a short walk from here to the **Grapes** on Old Road, a

popular Boddingtons pub with long-serving licensees who were due to leave in the next few days. Obviously popular, the pub was packed and the bulging trophy cabinet in the well-used vault testified to the level of activity here. A karaoke was in full swing in the lounge and we had difficulty in finding seats. Again two cask beers, Boddingtons Bitter joined by Robinson's Best Bitter as a permanent guest. The beer here is usually very reliable but tonight it wasn't up to much at all, I'm sorry to say. One of our party liked the Boddies but the rest gave both beers a definite thumbs down. Turning left from the Grapes it is another short walk to the **Grey Horse**. A Greenalls pub, it was busier tonight than I have ever encountered it on one of these Stagers with the crowded lounge being entertained by a live group. It's nicely decorated throughout and it was good to see that the impressive stained glass panels over the bar remain intact. Of particular note was the extremely good value food served every day and Monday to Thursday evenings. There's just one cask beer, Greenalls Bitter which was above average but again nothing special.

Next up was the **Three Crowns** on Manchester Road. A modern Boddingtons pub with a large lounge and vault. The extremely loud music coming from the lounge drove us to the very pleasant vault decorated with boxing memorabilia but apart from that there's very little to say about a rather featureless pub. The one cask beer, Boddingtons Bitter, was again just above average but generally uninspiring.

The **Navigation** at the top of Lancashire Hill is now all-keg so we headed to the **Phoenix**, formerly the Nip Inn, on Penny Lane. Again no real ale, but virtually no customers either – we counted five, and this was at 10 o'clock on a Friday night. So it was on to the **Nicholsons Arms**. This Robinson's pub has the distinction of being the only central Stockport pub in the first ever Good Beer Guide in 1974. Sadly, neither the Hatters Mild nor the Best Bitter was up to much tonight, though. Of the two beers, the Best Bitter was preferred but even that was only just above average with the Mild struggling to even reach that level. The pub itself, apart from being unbelievably hot, was slightly drab and shabby with the building clearly showing its age and in dire need of a refurbishment. By now in desperate need of a really good pint, we found salvation in Robinson's **Tiviot**, right at the bottom of Lancashire Hill on



**Tiviot Dale**. Regular readers will know that this was the local CAMRA Pub of the Month in January and tonight it was as good as ever. A classic town boozier in every good sense of the word, the pub was pleasantly busy, although the bulk of its trade is done at lunchtime and 'early doors'. We all sat in the classic vault and thoroughly enjoyed not only Hatters Mild and Best Bitter but a few of us found room for a half of Old Tom as well. All three beers were greatly enjoyed, with one dissenting voice who wasn't too keen on the Bitter. A fine end to the evening.

This article can of course only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and can't be taken as a once and for all judgement of the pubs and their beers. What did stand out, though, was a number of obviously well-run pubs which by and large offered only indifferent beer. Some of this was down to the fact that many of the beers sold are intrinsically indifferent, no matter how well kept they may be, but most of these pubs do have access to other beers that are tasty and characterful, so why don't they give them a go? They have nothing to lose by a little enterprise on the beer front, and everything to gain. It will be interesting to see what, if anything, has changed, when we next Stagger in Heaton Norris.

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**1999**

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## OPENING TIMES

From Ralph Warrington, Organiser of the National Winter Ales Festival:

Please could I express through *Opening Times*, my thanks to everyone who attended the first National Winter Ales Festival, Manchester 1999, last month.

The event was an outstanding success, and we even ran out of beer and had to close early. The publicity for the Campaign was superb, with several TV crews and newspapers in attendance. We were particularly pleased by the quality and range of beers on offer, and customer feedback confirmed this.

I would particularly like to thank those members who travelled from all over the UK to work at the Festival, and gave so freely of their time to make the event a success. Thanks again.

from Horace Dillnut:

As the breweries rush headlong to catch up with new developments and try to outdo each other with gimmicks, have you noticed how they have been misled into importing the worst of large, corporate business practice?

As wages go down, so bar staff have to wear ludicrous uniforms. We no longer have the personal touch but a clearly identified "us" and "them". The great democracy of the English pub could be measured by the ease with which it was possible to converse with the bar staff as equals.

Bar staff are now having to undergo training to "project the company image". What to say, how to say it, how to serve it. The quality of what they serve us is no longer their concern. They have become a simpler cog in a larger machine (or is it a simpler cog in a lager machine?).

Then comes the crunch. Every six minutes they are required to go round and clean out the ash-trays with a wet rag. They have to do it. Whether there are two or twenty discarded dimps therein.

What does all this mean for the customer? If you put down your cigarette to rest in that curved furrow on the ash-tray's rim, when you pick it up it is soaking wet! Last week I sat there and watched three people looking aghast as their cigarettes disintegrated before their very eyes. Let's have a return to some simple, old-fashioned values. A pub should be the hub of a community and should be a pleasure to go into for staff and locals alike. Let's cut this corporate claptrap!

From Keith Gardner, Manager of the Kingsway, Levenshulme: Re article on page 13 of January's *Opening Times* regarding the Kings Head, Droylsden. Your facts about the Kings Head are not quite correct.

First, it was acquired by Joseph Holts Brewery approximately 1991 and refurbished, not as you write 'about five years ago'. Part of the rear of the building was then condemned as unsafe and uninhabitable. I was installed as Manager in August 1992 and remained there with my wife and family until April 1998 when it was closed for demolition. It was declared an unfit building by Joseph Holts in 1995 when I was informed that there was a 99% chance of the building being demolished. The then Area Manager for Joseph Holts was Keith Thompson. He and I nursed the building for the last three years as bits fell off here and there, and the trade over more than one Christmas was threatened by the roof falling into busy Market Street due to high winds, the Fire Brigade and Police once threatening to close the building if they had to close the roads.

As far as a 'chequered' history is concerned, it was an extremely good pub and did a healthy trade for its sins. I was Manager for almost six years and the pub had a good trouble free reputation and a lot of good Holts drinkers.

An immense amount of planning went into the new pub and I think it would have been a good idea if you would have had a word with Joseph Holts before writing your article. You expect your beer to be spot on, therefore you should get your facts correct!

## PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP.  
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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.



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



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



**DOUBLE DAGGER**  
Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and lighter than its gravity would suggest.



**WOBBLY BOB**  
Lighter beer. Malty fruity aroma. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.

## Harrington Arms

Ian Bayley-Wright has taken over the license at the Harrington Arms at Gawsorth near Congleton to keep alive a family connection that goes back to the last century. The 27-year old took over following the death, at the age of 87, of his grandmother Marjorie, who had run the 400-year old farm pub since 1942.

Marjorie Bayley was a legendary matriarch. Born in a pub, she succeeded her mother Mary Jane Bayley who was the first tenant when Robinson's bought the property in 1934. Running this traditional pub has always gone hand in hand with running the 84-acres farm that comes with it, which keeps Ian's mother, father and brother Stewart fully occupied. His aunt and uncle also farm nearby.

Ian has no plans to change the character of the pub and is pleased to be carrying on the family line that actually predates his great grandmother - the Bayleys have farmed in Gawsorth since the 17th Century. There will be a little 'sprucing up', though, and one or two minor alterations, such as fitting an old stove to replace a radiator, to make the pub even more authentic. Subject to environmental health regulations he is also considering offering traditional ploughman's lunches. Ian has also just completed an intensive 5-day training programme at Robinson's brewery. The course is approved by the British Institute of Innkeeping and is designed to provide training in all aspects of the industry. This is all good news for the Harrington Arms regulars who like the pub the way it is and, according to the 1934 inventory, the way it has been for some time. The list of fittings shows the 'slow combustion stove' that Ian is moving from the bedroom to the taproom where the original long tables and benches are still in use. Once discovered the Harrington Arms is not a place that is easily forgotten. It maintains its character through its family connections and the role it plays in the local community. It is a pub where everyone is included in the conversation and which maintains the old fashioned values in the best possible way. Little wonder that this listed building also appears on CAMRA's National Inventory of heritage pubs - it is one of a vanishing breed, but with the latest family commitment to it, the Harrington Arms will be with us for many years to come.

This article is based on an item in Unicorn News, to whom many thanks for permission to use it here.

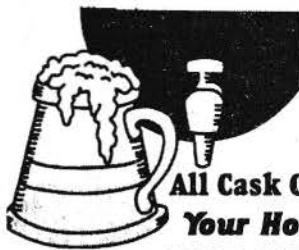


The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch Contact is Tom Lord (0161 837 4474 (h) 0161 427 7099 (h))

## The Victoria

Hall Street, Offerton

Tel: (0161) 480 3983

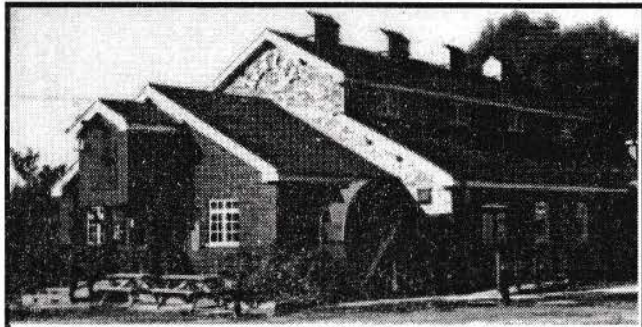


Stones Bitter,  
Greenalls  
Mild & Bitter

All Cask Conditioned · Guest Ales

Your Hosts Ian & Christine

BAR SNACKS AVAILABLE



Your hosts Jon & Judi invite you to

## The Old Mill

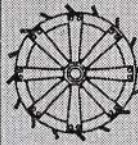
At least 10 different guest beers per week

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Great food served daily till 10pm  
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7

Don & Jane welcome you to the

## Longsight Pub

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Big Screen Entertainment

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Bank's Mild &

Bitter from 99p

between 3pm &

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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Thursday 3rd - Saturday 5th June 1999

## Sun & Castle

**T**he Sun & Castle on Hillgate, Stockport, opened as the latest Holt's tied house on Wednesday 24 February, and of course Opening Times was there.

Holt's are to be congratulated for a first class job on the pub which now looks better than it has for many years. Although dating back to Victorian times, the Sun & Castle was virtually rebuilt in the 1930s, and for many years retained its inter-war interior virtually intact. This was largely swept away several years ago and replaced by a mock Victorian finish – a move which earned its then owners a Pub Vandalism Award.

It's a Victorian theme that Holt's have followed, too. They have, sensibly, kept the admittedly very impressive Victorian bar back which was installed at the last major refurbishment, and kitted the rest of the right-hand lounge out in similar opulent style. Indeed the rather odd pillars supporting the pot shelf are, if anything, just a little too over the top. Of particular note, though, are the glazed



Holts on Hillgate - The Sun & Castle

## The Nursery Inn



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Hydes  
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Brewers of  
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panels and snob-screens around the separate bar counter that serves what used to be the front snug. Raised areas at the back have been retained, one a carpeted drinking area, and the other with bare boards which will no doubt be put to good use for discos, karaoke and other in-house entertainment.

The vault is on the left, and its clean lines reflect more of the pub's inter-war period origins. An altogether plainer room, with a polished wooden floor and less in the way of bric-a-brac and fancy lighting, it, too, works very well and should prove popular.

In fact the whole pub should prove popular. It was certainly busy enough when we called – no doubt helped by Holt's usual low prices for Mild, Bitter and DBA, all of which are on handpump. The Sun & Castle has had its fair share of ups and downs in the past but now it looks set fair for a long period of popularity. It should certainly give most of the nearby pubs a run for their money – and in the long-term there may even be one or two casualties. JC.

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# Sun & Castle



Middle Hillgate Stockport.



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### Losing the Plot?

A couple of months ago, "Opening Times" described Hydes' conversion of the Baker's Arms in Altrincham into "The Gallery" as "a disaster and a horrible place to drink" - a comment which we explained was about the architecture and not the beer (nor indeed its apparent popularity). Exactly the same is true of the Unicorn in Halebarns, which has now become "Corbans Old Winery and Bar" (sic). The old Unicorn may have been looking a bit tired and falling short of its potential, but there was nothing that couldn't be put right by a sympathetic, well-judged refurbishment. Indeed, there's a fine example just over the road in the shape of Robinson's Bull's Head.

Instead, Hydes' have butchered what was still a basically traditional pub to turn it into a characterless, comfortless café-bar type establishment. There's not even any consolation in the beer range, as there's no Mild, no Light, no seasonal beers, just a single apologetic handpull for Bitter amidst a forest of T-bar taps. There isn't much of "The Real Ale of Manchester" in Corbans. The trade might be up in the short term, but how long will it last before another cash injection is needed?

This is exactly the kind of crass, marketing-led vandalism for which CAMRA has over the years roundly condemned the major pub operators. It is particularly disappointing when Hydes have shown themselves capable of thoughtful, high-quality refurbishments such as the Horse & Farrier in Gatley and Fletcher Moss in Didsbury, both prosperous areas which can't be too different in demographic profile from Halebarns. We expect better from one of our local independent family brewers - they should be following their own distinctive course rather than copying the mistakes of their bigger brethren. Hydes have built up a lot of goodwill from the way they have improved their beer range and introduced seasonal beers, but, if they persist in wrecking their pubs like this, they will rapidly fritter it away.

### Pubs the Way They Used To Be

I recently passed a village pub that was advertising itself as being "the way pubs used to be". I can imagine it now - the shabby, weathered door opening onto a long, dimly-lit corridor, the quarry-tiled floor in the tap room, the high-backed wooden settles, the nicotine-coloured, matchboarded walls, the only sounds the ticking of the grandfather clock, the click of dominoes and the murmur of voices, the two unmarked handpumps dispensing Mild and Bitter (and mostly Mild), no draught lager, the bottled beers at room temperature, the glass case at the end of the bar containing elderly pork pies and Scotch eggs, the threadbare, chintzy sofas in the back parlour, afternoon closing and time called at 10.30 from Monday to Thursday...

Somehow, I suspect it wouldn't be anything like that at all, so perhaps it's best not to spoil the illusion. More than likely, it would be just another bland, knocked-through dining emporium with a few bare brick pillars and a scattering of rustic bric-a-brac. A pub that really was "the way pubs used to be", warts and all, would be an interesting curiosity, but wouldn't attract many customers in 1999. On the other hand, there are a handful of pubs, both urban and rural, where the atmosphere is still strongly redolent of the 1950s, but they probably would not want to proclaim it in such a self-conscious way.

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## 5 Years Ago

# MARCH '94

by Phil Levison

**'N**ew Threat to Local Brewers" was the front page headline - the threat was to beers, pubs and breweries from a potential European Commission ruling. When the Commission last looked at European brewing it considered the tied system to be anti-competitive - a Block Exemption allowing the tie to continue until 1997 had been declared in breach of Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome. Stockport brewers Robinson's had joined forces with 37 other brewers to form their own organisation, the Independent family Brewers of Britain. Their objective was for the tie to be continued after the 1997 deadline.

CAMRA was in full agreement with the tie continuing - they feared that "weakening or abolishing the tie would give even greater powers to the national brewers. They would loan-tie most outlets and beat off competition through deep discounts". (Last month, it was finally announced that Whitbread had been given final clearance to continue to operate its tied system of public houses. Other brewers were likely to be given the "all clear" soon.)

It was time again for the "high-profile" presentation of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's 1993 Pub Vandalism Awards". The first award was to the Tut n' Shive in Heaton Chapel, although the award was actually to Tut n' Shives everywhere. Their contribution by introducing cask ales to a wider public was to be welcomed, but why should the pub have to look like a building site? The second award commemorated the anniversary of the demolition of 'Tommy Ducks' - Greenalls were symbolically presented with a 'Golden Bulldozer' on the site of the pub. Symbolically, because Greenalls were arrogant to the last, and had neither the guts to turn up, nor the grace to apologise to the people of Manchester.

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for March 1994 was the Bridge Inn, Georges Road, Stockport. It had changed hands about a year previously, when Pete and Lil Massey started to revive the pub's fortunes. Pete was involved with Stockport Ghost Society - his 'Local Haunts' article was on the same Opening Times page as an advert for the Bridge, which described it as "Home of the Stockport Ghost Society; Stockport Skywatch (UFOs); The Small World Society; and Son of Slade".

One of the news items on the back page said that a For sale sign had appeared on the Imperial, London Road, Manchester - "Who will be prepared to take this on, we wonder." The Imperial had an unusual claim to fame - in 1915, a meeting was held there with the result that Manchester United was formed from the Newton Heath club. (The pub was eventually demolished to make way for a hotel development. There had been plans to move it, brick by brick, to Old Trafford, but it was not to be. The site was cleared, and is now part of the access to the Malmaison Hotel.)

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# BREWERY NEWS



## Phoenix Monkeys

The Phoenix Brewery at Heywood continues to be ever inventive with its range of beers. This month sees the launch of the seasonal regular, March Hare (4.4% ABV) but the major news is a new range of beers based on a monkey theme. This has come about as Heywood is apparently known as 'Monkey Town', the nick-name deriving from a corruption of the name of the Heap Bridge area to 'Ape Bridge' by 19th century Irish labourers. The range kicks off in April with Monkey Business (4.1%) followed by Monkey Town Mild (3.9%) in May; Struggling Monkey (4.7%) in June and Monkey Puzzle in July. A competition may be run in conjunction with this last beer. Given the superb quality of Phoenix beers these days, they will all be worth seeking out.

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## Take-over Travails

As expected the Wolverhampton & Dudley (Banks's) takeover bid for Midlands rivals Marston's proved successful, with victory announced by the Black Country brewers just after the last Opening Times went to press. Clearly it's early days yet and it remains to be seen to what degree the two businesses are integrated. Let's hope however for the early introduction of over-sized lined glasses throughout the former Marston's estate, in common with W&D's policy. The main concern now is whether this takeover will ignite a wave of similar mergers amongst the regional brewers. At the moment the jury remains out on that one.



## Vaux Beers Saved?

The disposal of its brewing interests by Vaux took an unexpected turn last month. First the company announced that the management buyout by former MD Frank Nicholson was the preferred option and the MBO team was given four weeks to get a financial package together. Part of the proposed deal was an agreement to supply beer to the pubs remaining in Vaux's ownership, thus guaranteeing the survival of brewing in both Sheffield and Sunderland. It turned out, though, that Chief Executive Martin Grant favoured a more radical solution, namely to obtain beers from the cheapest supplier, even if that meant the loss of the breweries, and the beers and jobs that went with them (as it inevitably would have done). To further this scheme he approached a major shareholder in a bid to halt the MBO - a move that promptly earned him and another director the sack! So there is a God after all. Not only that, but our local Vaux pubs have, hopefully, been saved from a wave of such delights as John Smiths, Websters and Worthington, bargain basement beers which would almost certainly have featured amongst the cheaper options.

## More from Bridgewater

The Bridgewater Brewery in Salford has got off to a flying start. The appearance of its beers at the National Winter Ales Festival led to a substantial number of orders with subsequent repeats. On the beer front, a new session bitter, Navigator (3.8 per cent ABV) has been introduced and the golden, very hoppy beer has been very well received. The premium Barton Ale (4.3 per cent) has also hit the pubs and is being rebrewed with an increased hop rate to heighten the bitterness. Next out will be Stout at 5.3 per cent - Opening Times was able to get a sneak early taste and can confirm that this really will be one to look out for. An American blond beer at about 4.5 per cent ABV is being planned for the summer. There has been a slight hitch with the planned move to the brewery's permanent home and this will probably not now take place for another couple of months. In the meantime, the beers are being brewed at the Old Pint Pot in Salford, which is a permanent outlet for the beers, as are the Kings Arms on Bloom Street, Salford, and the Millgate, Failsworth.

## Minor Bids For Major

Almost nothing in the brewing industry causes surprise these days but just as Opening Times went to press along came a story which left us all thoroughly bemused. Brains Brewery in Cardiff is a well-respected regional brewer, which has caused a few raised eyebrows by its recent decision to move into a larger brewery currently being vacated by Bass. What they didn't expect was to be on the receiving end of a hostile takeover bid. Still less one from a micro-brewer producing about 20 barrels a week! But that is just what happened on Friday 26 February when Simon Buckley of the Tomos Watkins Brewery of Llandeilo launched a £60 million-plus bid for his larger southern neighbours. Despite the Brain's management sniffily pointing out that his current output would just about supply one of their pubs, this is a genuine bid. Buckley claims to have financial backing from a Canadian bank and as the Brain family doesn't control a majority of the shares in what is still a private company, this audacious move could just succeed. So there we have it, a micro-brewer bidding for a regional brewer which is about to move into the premises of a national brewer. You couldn't make it up.

## Bottle It Up!

David and Jill Hasler celebrate a classic beer

There are a few things in life as satisfying as a pint of real ale, served of course in a pub that takes pride in the quality of its beer.

However, that pint is not always easy to come by – you may be unlucky in your local, there may be a good match on television, you might be stuck at home babysitting, or just not fancy having to drive and then be restricted due to the drink drive laws. There is an answer – real bottle conditioned ales, available not just from pubs but also from off licences and even supermarkets. For those not sure of the distinction, bottle conditioned ales have not been filtered or pasteurised and undergo a secondary fermentation in the bottle. This produces a sediment, so pour these beers carefully.

Much as we love living in the North, as born and bred Londoners, we did miss our old regional brewers. During a visit to one of our old haunts three years ago, while enjoying a pint (or two) of ESB, we spotted something different – a celebration ale brewed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the brewers – Fuller, Smith & Turner. Due to return north we bought a few bottles of the 1845 ale to sample. Only available in a limited area originally, demand was so high that 1845 is now available nationally, including at our local Tesco. The beer is a rich, dark amber brewed with Goldings hops and amber malt, with a specific gravity of 1062 (Alc. 6.3% vol., so you do need to drink these at home). This beer has as full and satisfying taste as most found on draught at your local, with a distinctive aftertaste. It is the current CAMRA/Guardian Gold Medal champion bottled beer and is not surprisingly now the biggest selling bottle conditioned beer in the country. Supermarkets are beginning to wake up to the fact that there are many of us who would prefer the varied, distinctive tastes of real bottle conditioned ale and there are several on the shelves to choose from. Why not drop a bottle of 1845 in the trolley, ready for those long evenings in front of the fire – then perhaps try a different brew next time? Encourage your supermarket the only way they understand – buy the beer!



## BOOK REVIEW

**Real Ale in York and About, CAMRA York Branch, 66pp, £2.00**

From modest beginnings as a guide to the pubs in the City of York, this latest edition of the local CAMRA branch's pub guide has grown to cover a massive area of some 1000 square miles, and extends north to the Moors, east to Pocklington, south to beyond Selby, and west to Tadcaster.

This may not be all gain if, as seems likely, it spells the demise of the once excellent "North Yorkshire Ale". Indeed, with the honourable exception of last year's admirable "Cheshire Ale", county or regional guides involving collaboration between CAMRA branches seem to be in decline wherever you look – a trend to deplore. Taken on its own terms, however, this present volume is both attractive and useful.

A major change in this edition is the improved organisation of the pub listings for York. The previous (1996) edition gave users severe difficulties as they struggled to find favourite pubs amongst the chaos of largely arbitrary areas into which the city had been split. Now, though, the approach is both clear and simple, with a single alphabetical listing for all the city's pubs backed up by a panel listing the pubs in each of the outer suburbs.

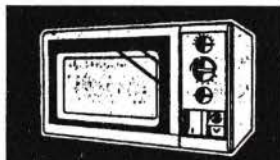
Indeed, clarity and simplicity are in many ways the keynotes of this guide, with good plain typefaces (no danger of confusing pub and town names) and really good town plans for York, Easingwold, Selby and Tadcaster. The pub descriptions, while concise, bring out the important points and the supporting articles cover the basic essentials of describing CAMRA, real ale, and the beers regularly available locally, and also promote the important topic of our pub heritage.

Altogether an excellent, good-value guide which will provide endless pleasure and interest for locals and visitors alike.

A final thought. The guide concludes with a one-page list of the area's keg-only pubs. How fitting that one should be called "Plonkers". RPJ.

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CAMRA Pub of the Month  
March 1997



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I would like to apologise to any of my readers who expected to enjoy the (free - no advance ticket required) Friday Lunchtime session of the Bradford (Saltaire) Beer Festival and actually attended. The session that attracts 200 odd 'scratchers' who travel a long way at great cost (£15 odd in my case) and a few locals (about 50-100 or so) were greeted with "you can't have a programme - they are only for paying customers at the other sessions" and then to add grievous bodily harm to insult, we were told that all the 'new' beers were being taken off sale, within half an hour of opening, because we were likely to drink them. You couldn't make this up. After a lot of argument, threats of violence etc. the organiser decided to make (some) of these beers available for one hour - between 1.30 and 2.30. It was like an aussie pub in the old days between 5pm and 6 o'clock close (the six o'clock swill). AND he actually took them all off at 2.30. What an absolute prat. I went on strike, with no programme to find out what was there, on two floors, I jackbooted my way to the German bar and drank lager for 4 hours.

Message to the brain-dead, malicious twerp who claims to organise this - (a man who can un-organise a piss-up in a beerex) - if you want a festival to fail, annoy your regular heavy-drinking customers. Charge a fee, we wouldn't mind. Print a few more programmes - we gave away our 32 page A4 programme at Manchester, having printed 5000 odd copies, and didn't mind how much had been paid. Some of the Friday crowd who also had tickets for later sessions tore them up in disgust. Unless I need to see someone next year, I won't be back for one. I don't like being treated like a despised minority (or a Virgin Trains Purple zone person) rather than a welcome customer. If CAMRA festivals elsewhere get like this, I'll be off.

Incidentally, Battersea earlier in the month was fine, with a much better beer range (I have NO idea what the range was like at Bradford). The Ship and Mitre in Liverpool had an excellent, WELCOMING, FRIENDLY, festival. Incidentally I have no problems with the 'grunts' (bar staff) at Bradford. They seemed as confused and unhappy by it all as I was.

**The Beer Monster's British Cask Beer of the Month:**  
**Bridgewater Ales Navigation (3.8%) abv**

Although this is in theory exclusive to the Kings Arms in Bloom St, Salford, I tried it in the Ship & Mitre in Liverpool. Dry, hoppy, quite delightful session beer with all the best features of North Western bitters. Try it at the Kings...and look out for the new stout from Bridgewater team, it promises to be very interesting.

**The Beer Monster's Foreign Beer of the Month:**  
**Heller (Schenkerla Bamberg) Helles (4.3%) abv**

Bamberg is famous for its (almost) unique smoked beers - amongst other things - and Schenkerla is famous for making the most heavily smoked beers of all, a Marzen beer (the famous 'tourist' brew), a winter brew or bock, which we had at the Winter Ales Fest (and was on at Bradford), which is excellent and a smoked wheat beer. They also brew a 'normal' pale lager for local consumption. There's one slight problem (well two, actually). Its smoked. Only a bit, but quite enough to make your hair stand on end. Its also absolutely delicious. Smoked beer for those who have difficulty with the concept, AND for those who like a bit of subtlety. Actually there's a third snag. Apart from going to Bamberg, or ordering a couple of cases off Olaf, I can't think of any way of getting anymore....

**Beer Festival Diary**

After Wigan, which is on while this is being distributed, the big local fest will be Oldham at the end of the month. Unlike the usual ones at Werneth Music Rooms, this a 150 beer biggie. At the Queen Elizabeth Hall, West St (next to civic centre) Thurs 25 5-11, Fri 26 12-3 and 5-11, Sat 27 noon - 4 and 6-11. A key event in Oldham's 150th Anniversary. Leeds Festival (almost certainly without a Klingon organiser) is on 18-20 and is advertised elsewhere.

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## Whaley Bridge Notes (2)

**F**ollowing on from the Whaley Bridge Notes (1) article in February Opening Times, here is the second part of the Whaley Bridge survey. Apologies for the omission of Chinley and Whitehough, I have decided to add in Furness Vale and Buxworth and notes on these areas should appear in the April OT.

However, back to Whaley Bridge and the five pubs left to visit. The first of these is the **Dog & Partridge**, at Bridgemont on the A6 towards Furness Vale. A little out of Whaley Bridge this pub, but an easy 10-minute walk along the road or preferably the canal towpath. The pub is worth the walk. An attractive stone building, set on a truncated part of the A6 away from the busy traffic, has a surprisingly good beer range. At the time of my visit they were Tetley Bitter and Dark Mild, Old Speckled Hen, Ind Coope Burton Ale, and a guest beer, Chadburns Old Ball (4.4 per cent ABV) from Mansfield Brewery. The pub has a good atmosphere, with a restaurant, coal fires and a stone-paved bar area. Verdict – well worth a visit.

Back along the canal towpath now to the **Navigation**, near the Peak Forest Canal Basin. Again an imposing stone building, comfortable inside, with pub food and Boddingtons Bitter.

Across the road to the **Jodrell** (which does B&B accommodation) by Whaley Bridge railway station. This pub must have the most attractive frontage in Whaley Bridge with three gables and a porticoed entrance. The beers were Thwaites Bitter and Tetley Bitter – both on handpump, an improvement on the days when the range consisted solely of Webster's Bitter.

Facing the Jodrell is the **Railway**, a down to earth, no-nonsense locals pub with Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter on handpump. This now left just one pub to visit; the **Goyt Inn** down a small side street opposite the Jodrell. This small, cosy pub is the second national Good Beer Guide pub in Whaley Bridge (together with the Shepherds, featured last month) and contributes admirably to the range of beers available. On handpump when I called were Wards Bitter, Thorne Bitter and a Jennings Snecklifter as a guest. Again good food is available and the pub is well worth trying.

Off the topic of pubs for a minute, there is in Whaley Bridge (again on the A6 opposite the Jodrell), the off-license **Goyt Wines** which has a good range of foreign bottled beers (the proper stuff!) and for bottle-conditioned beer addicts would repay a visit.

Whaley Bridge therefore, in a relatively compact area along the A6, is providing an increasing range of cask conditioned beers and is well worth a trip, with a regular rail service (Manchester-Stockport-Buxton) and Trent Buses 198/199 (Manchester Airport-Stockport-Buxton).

A quick look at the time – 15 minutes before my 199 bus – just time for a quick trip to the Shepherds and some Brewers Choice India Pale Ale, before County-v-Birmingham. **TL**

### Contributors to Opening Times Issue 179:

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## THE CASTLE

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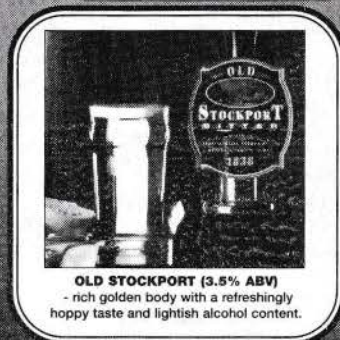
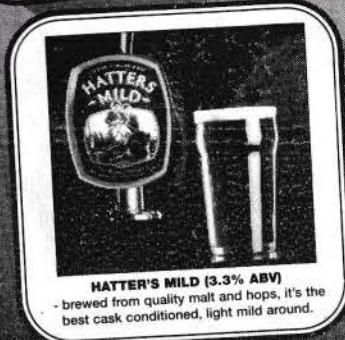
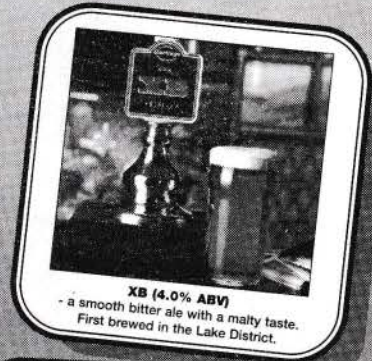
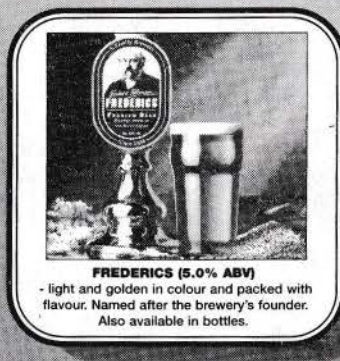
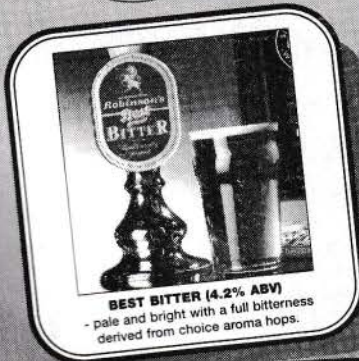
A WARM WELCOME  
AND FINE BEER IN  
A CLASSIC PUB



13



## THE Robinson's COLLECTION



CHOICE BEERS



14





### Ram Tam - Yam Yam

The vegetable dish can be used as a main meal or as a side dish for roasts, grills, curries or my own favourite - breast of tandoori chicken.

#### Ingredients

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4-6 sweet potatoes (see note at end)      | 2 teaspoons ground ginger (or minced fresh ginger)     |
| 1 medium cauliflower                      | ½ teaspoon salt  |
| 1 medium tin of white or red kidney beans | ½ teaspoon chilli powder                               |
| 2 onions                                  | 1 pint Taylor's Ram Tam (or any sweet stout or porter) |
| 2 tablespoons paprika                     | 4 pints of water (approx.)                             |
| 3 cloves of garlic, finely diced          | Cooking oil  |
| 2 teaspoons tomato puree                  |  |

When purchasing many of these ingredients, a good class Indian or Asian store is both economical and offers better quality ingredients, although all of the above items can be obtained from the larger national supermarket chains. When buying sweet potatoes, try picking the longer, thinner ones - and look for a slight purplish tinge to the skin. Discard any which appear soft.

#### Method

1. Peel sweet potatoes and cut into ½ inch slices. Then make sure each slice is about the size of a 50p coin - this could involve cutting some in half or even quartering.
2. Break the cauliflower into florets about the size of your thumb above the final joint.
3. Roughly dice the onions.
4. Gently heat the oil and fry the onions until just browning.
5. Add the cauliflower and fry for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
6. Add sweet potatoes and fry for a further 2 minutes, stirring constantly.

7. Add the remaining solid ingredients, stirring in well.
8. Add water and bring to the boil. Boil very vigorously until reduced by half and then turn down to a simmer.
9. Add all the beer and gradually increase the heat until boiling. Boil vigorously for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
10. Test the sweet potatoes and cauliflower - if underdone again boil vigorously (you may need to add more water). Serve when they are reasonably soft.

The dish is now ready to serve. However, the appearance will be greatly enhanced by a further process. Peel and thinly slice two more sweet potatoes (rounder ones are better for this), gently fry for 30 seconds each side, or brush with oil and grill for the same period. Place the slices over the cooked dish to give a mouth-watering finish.

Medium dry cider, gueze or a Belgian peach beer might well be your choice to accompany this meal. Cheers until next month's culinary shock!

Jo and Pat and the staff from the  
**NELSON INN**  
 Didsbury  
*welcome all their customers old and new*  
**Fine Cask Conditioned Ales**  
**Websters & Holts**  
**Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day**  
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### 8 REAL ALES

Foreign Bottled Beers

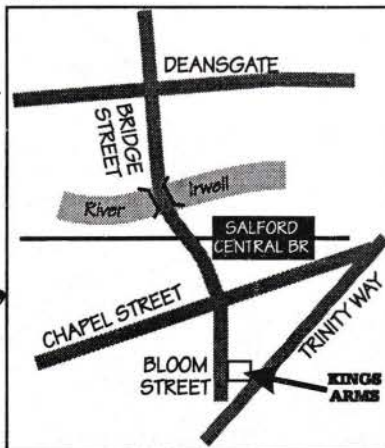
Faxe Lager

Landlord £1.64 a pint

Barnsley Bitter £1.15 a pint

**WATCH OUT  
 FOR OUR NEW  
 FOOD RANGE  
 VEGETARIAN,  
 SNACK MEALS,  
 SANDWICHES**

soon available every day



**Beers From  
 BRIDGEWATER ALES,**  
 Salford's  
 Newest Brewer,  
**always on Sale!**

**Navigator (3.8% abv)  
 Exclusive To us!**

a warm welcome from all  
 at the Kings Arms

# 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

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  
Bottled Belgian Fruit Beers  
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Easy Public

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25p OFF all  
Draught Beers  
Sunday  
12 - 4pm



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

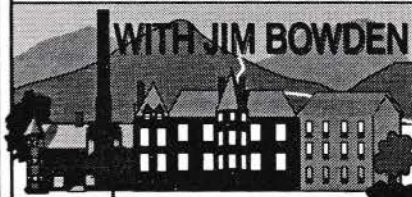
In the heart of Derbyshire, the Quiet Woman, Earl Sterndale, is now selling Taylor's Landlord alongside the more familiar Marston's selection: Bateman's Dark Mild, Marston's Bitter, Pedigree and Owd Roger complete the impressive range. Closer to home, there are rumours that the Romper on Marple Ridge (a previous Good Beer Guide entry) has been sold to Jennings. Marple members are trying to verify whether this is the case and will update me in due course.

The Lane Ends at Marple Bridge is now serving Tetley Bitter and Chesters' Mild while Matteos (The Rock Tavern) has Banks's Bitter alongside Hansons Mild. This is an interesting and unusual mild for the area and three cheers for a cask conditioned mild being sold in a comfortable bar with an excellent restaurant, on the Greater Manchester/Derbyshire border. There is also an excellent beer garden here, which must be among the best in the area, with good views over the Etherow Valley to Werneth Low. There is disabled access and a large car park, too. It's also accessible on public transport as the 394 (daytime only) Hazel Grove-Glossop service stops outside, or better still, you can walk there through the Etherow Country Park. Well worth a visit.

In Denton, the Chapel House has been redecorated by Holt's, and very nice it looks, too. Sadly the premium DBA has been discontinued here due to poor sales.

Finally some late news - just before this issue of OT went to press, the Bee Hive in New Mills reopened after a lengthy refurbishment. The beer range is Boddingtons Bitter, Castle Eden Ale and, as a permanent feature...Whim Magic Mushroom Mild, Arbor Light and Hartington Bitter! More news on this exciting development next month.

MACCLESFIELD & EAST CHESHIRE



ub News...  
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vs...Pub N  
ub News...  
ews...Pub  
vs...Pub N

The Hanging Gate (Higher Sutton) is the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Winter Pub of the Season (the ladies toilet is especially highly recommended!!). A separate article described this excellent local last month.

The Poachers in Bollington is under new ownership with effect from 4 January. The new landlord has re-established regular guest beers, which will include beers from both our local breweries, Storm Brewing and Beartown, in the next few weeks. He is also running a fun quiz on Sunday evenings, regular special menus (e.g. Valentine's Night, Chinese New Year etc), and a special lunchtime snack for only £3. On current form he is a likely candidate for future Good Beer Guides.

More new faces to report. New licensees took over at the St Dunstons Inn, Langley on 24 February. This can't be anything but an improvement. The Robin Hood, Rainow, has also been under new management since November last year and has featured some interesting guest beers (e.g. Adnam's Sole Bay).

On the new pub front, two developments are taking place in the area - in Alderley Edge, Hydes' are converting old cottages into 'The Gallery' while in Wilmslow, a new pub is being built by Thwaites next to the Swan. Also in Alderley Edge, Robinson's are refurbishing the Moss Rose, now the Drum & Monkey. Our man on the spot thinks this could well be for the better.

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



## Bid for Beer Tax Break

CAMRA, the campaign for Real Ale, has launched a powerful appeal for a progressive duty system to be included in this month's budget to help microbrewers and other small independents compete with the big discounters in the vital pub chain market.

Small brewers are rapidly being squeezed out of the market as pub companies and regional brewers mop up the free trade and abolish landlord's guest ale rights.

Now CAMRA has swung behind the Small Independent Brewers Association (SIBA) in calling for a sliding scale of beer duty – rapidly becoming standard in other European Union countries – to help its members compete on price as effectively as they already do on quality. A hard-hitting submission has gone to the Treasury, and CAMRA Head of Campaigns Mike Benner said; "The Government should act now to protect jobs, consumer choice, and local economies." SIBA chair, Carola Brown of Ballard's Brewery warned that the small independent sector was approaching a crisis and without immediate Government support would go into decline. "Without fairer tax the enormous range of beers will disappear along with future opportunities for development and employment," she warned. A growing number of smaller independents including Ridley's and McMullen's are openly supporting progressive duty.

Meanwhile Kent brewer Shepherd Neame has been refused leave to appeal both to the European Court and the House of Lords in its legal fight to prove the Government's beer duty policy breaches the Treaty of Rome. A spokesman said the brewery had anticipated the Court of appeal's decision and would be making a fresh application to appeal to the Lords.

The enormous costs of the brewer's stand – described as "well into six figures" – are being supported by donations from other brewers.

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## THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM



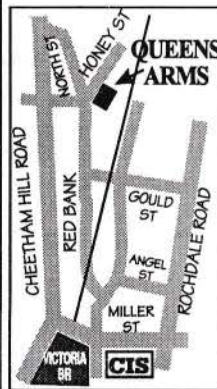
Real Ales  
Traditional  
Cider and  
Czech  
Budvar  
on Draught

Dave and Sue Price invite you to try the fine range of beer, and traditional cider in

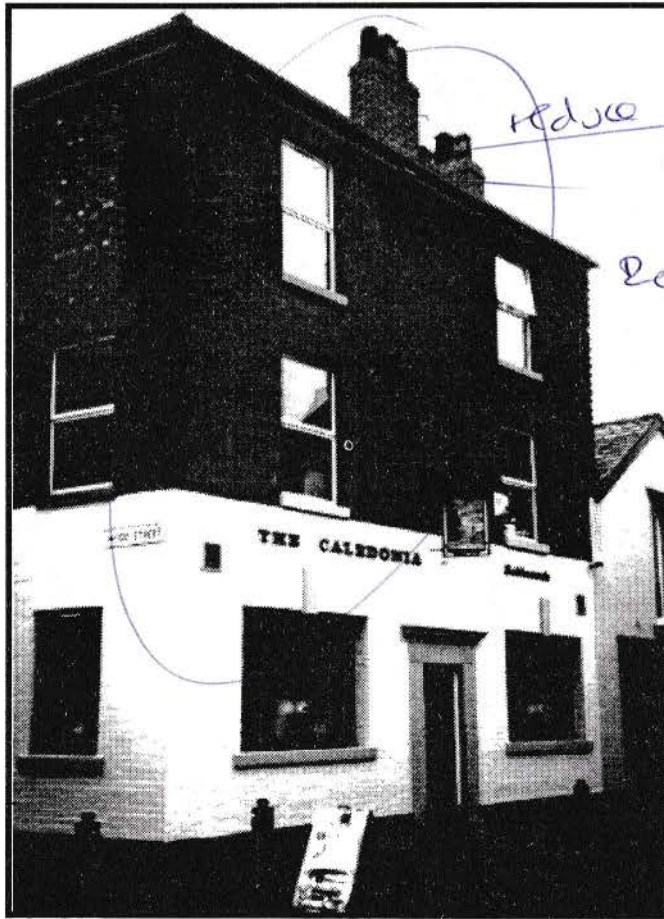
**their Excellent Free House**

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**



17



Alan and Louise welcome you to the

## CALEDONIA

Warrington St. Ashton-under-Lyne

*long catchers comfy pub.*

*Del*  
Recently fully refurbished.

We have a car park at the rear and our beer garden has just been completed.

We also now have three twin en-suite letting bedrooms

### Robinson's Fine Ales

Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Frederic's  
always available

Good homecooked food  
available at lunchtime

11.30 - 2.30 Monday - Saturday,  
12 - 3 Sundays



Apology for the editor using this copy for his editing notes!

# 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 & Trafford & Hulme

Diary

### March 99

**Saturday 6th** - Pub of the Year presentation to the Blossoms, Buxton Rd, Heaviley. **A good turnout please.**

**Monday 8th** - Social: The Hesketh, Hulme Hall Rd, Cheadle Hulme. Starts 9.00pm.

**Thursday 11th** - Monthly Branch Meeting: The Gateway, Kingsway, East Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm.

**Monday 15th** - Social: Orion, Burton Rd, Withington. Starts 9.00pm.

**Friday 19th** - City Centre Stagger: starts 7.00pm Bulls Head, London Rd; 8.30pm Seven Oaks, Nicholas St.

**Monday 22nd** - Social: Little Jack Horners, Wellington St, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

**Thursday 25th** - Pub of the Month presentation to the Circus Tavern, Manchester.

**Saturday 27th** - Informal lunchtime social at Oldham Beer Festival. 12 noon onwards.

**Monday 29th** - Didsbury Social: 9.00pm Station; 10.00pm Hogshead. Both Wilmslow Rd.

**Thursday 8th April - Advance Notice: Branch AGM at the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. All please attend. Hopefully, Hydes' Chief Executive will be our guest speaker, too.**

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

**Monday 8th** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet. Starts 8.30pm.

**Saturday 13th** - Derbyshire Trip. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

### March 99

**Sunday 21st** - Branch Walk: Disley Circular starting Ram's Head 10.00am.

**Tuesday 6th April** - Committee Meeting: Railway, Stockport Rd, Rose Hill, Marple. Starts 8.30pm.

**Monday 12th April** - Monthly Branch Meeting: The Royal, Hayfield. 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 events:*

**Monday 15th** - Committee Meeting: Leigh Arms, Brook St/Chelford Rd, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm.

**Monday 22nd** - Monthly Branch Meeting: Harrington Arms, Church Ln, Gawsworth. Starts 8.00pm.

**Sunday 11th April** - Social evening at the Oakwood, Brook Ln, Alderley Edge.

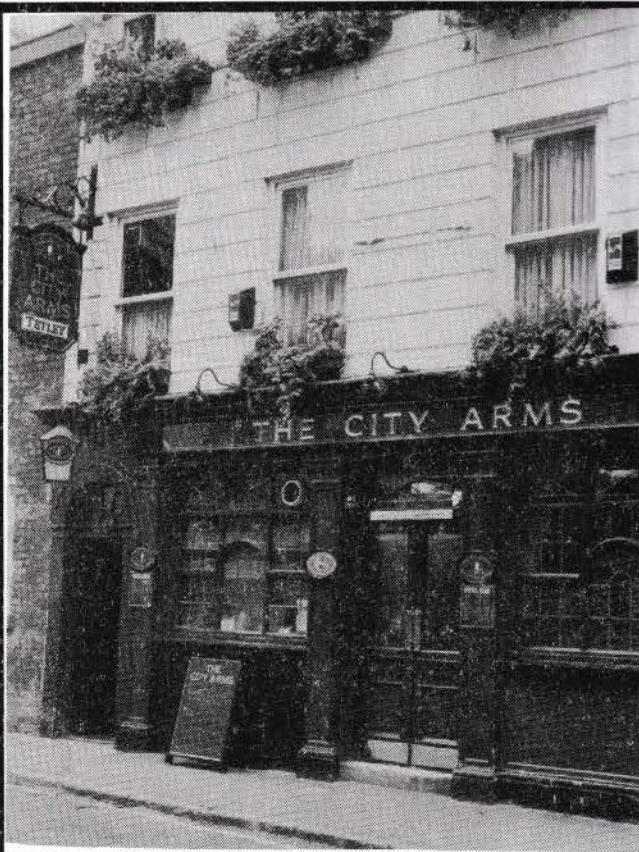
*Trafford & Hulme Branch covers the Borough of Trafford together with parts of Hulme, Moss Side and the City Centre. Branch members meet most alternate*

*Thursday nights - details from Dave Ward on 0161 980 1170. They have also advised us of the following events:*

**Thursday 18th** - Branch AGM at the Hogshead Ale House, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. All members please attend

**Thursday 15th April** - City Arms, Kennedy St, City Centre 8.00pm; Peveril of the Peak, Great Bridgewater St, 10.00pm

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner



**MAD HATTERS NIGHT EVERY TUESDAY  
BEER PRIZES - ALL HATS MUST BE Home-made**

*Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers*

## MAD MARCH FESTIVAL

(throughout March)

Among our other guests:  
Gales Buster, HSB; Hook Norton Old Hookey, Best Bitter; Smiles March Hare; Batemans Miss March, Jollys Flyer; Broughton Clipper; Wychwood St Patrick, Hobgoblin; Charles Wells Discovery Golden Ale; Vaux Boxing Hare; Ash Vine One for the Pot; Hoskins Frog Hopper; Brakspear 3 Sheets; Kitchen Rampant Rosemary, Tubby Tangerine, Portered Prune



## KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

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



# MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

**A**fter last year's flood of changes in the City Centre, things now seem to have slowed down, but from what I can see this is only a temporary lull and by the end of the year several major new developments will have come on stream, although few hold out the promise of real ale.

## More City Centre Bars

I touched on many of these in February's OT but last month saw the announcement of something altogether more promising - if rumours are to be believed. This is the 'Deansgate Locks' development on Whitworth Street West, which will occupy the largely disused railway arches fronting the canal near the G-Mex tram stop. There will be 12 units in the development and licenses have been obtained for six of them. And here's where things start to get interesting. Word has it that the developer wants to see local brewers moving in, rather than the usual national operators. This could mean the likes of, say, Hydes' and Robinson's getting new City Centre outlets. Lees are, I think, unlikely to be interested as their City flagship continues to take shape nearby at 80 Great Bridgewater Street. In the same area, **Bar Aqua** (keg-only) is also up for sale.

## Makeovers and Cheap Beer

As for Holt's, well they do tend to be something of a law unto themselves and it is difficult to see them even contemplating dipping a toe in the so-called style market (and long may things remain that way!). They are however carrying out a major refurbishment of the **Crown & Anchor** on Cateaton Street, which closed in February for three months. Also to be getting a makeover is **Brahms & Liszt** on Brown Street which may be feeling the competition from the nearby All Bar One. While this is certainly one of Bass's better ideas, it's still pretty ordinary to my mind. A far better bet is the **Unciorn** on Church Street which I popped into late last month. This was my first visit since the pre-Christmas redecoration, and very smart it looks, too. Stones Bitter and Bass remain on handpump.

Another month and, almost inevitably, we have a new café bar. This one is at Castlefield, it's called **Bar Abaco** and it will come as no surprise to learn that it sells no real ale. You can have some pricey Worthington Smooth, though. By contrast you can get dirt-cheap Worthington Smooth at the **Goose on Piccadilly** which seems to be involved in some sort of bizarre price war with the nearby **Wetherspoons**, which has retaliated with Shepherd Neame Spitfire at 99p. I know which I'd rather have! And to think that some poor, misguided soul described the Goose as the best thing to happen to Manchester's drinking scene for ages - I hope he's started taking the tablets again.

In that area, the continually excellent **Bull's Head** on London Road is taking the Burtonwood guest beers and had Caledonian 80/- on tap last month. Not too far away, the **Slug & Lettuce** on Canal Street looks to have abandoned cask beer with all pumpclips removed.

## Down The Road

Moving out of the City Centre, though, changes continue to filter through with news of several pubs changing hands. In east Manchester the **'Big Bradford'** has both new licensees and a new look after a refurbishment, and has been added to the growing list of pubs in that area I must visit.

In Ardwick, the **Union** is now all-keg and on a recent visit to the **Church** on Ardwick Green the pumpclip for Boddingtons Bitter was reversed leaving no real ale available. I hope that this latter was just a temporary blip as the Church can be a very enjoyable pub. Further down the A6 in Longsight, presumably bracing itself for the arrival of Wetherspoons later this year, Reillys Tavern (formerly the Crown) has been taken over by the owner of the **Ceili House** in Levenshulme and renamed the **Ceili Inn**. It all looks very smart but there's no real ale. The **Farmers Kipper** in Levenshulme also has new licensees and should soon be getting a new look, too. Well overdue, I must say, as the old Magic Pub Co bric-a-brac is looking very tired. There is cask beer here, too, in the form of Webster's Green Label - which was perfectly acceptable when I called. I also hear that the **Union** in Levenshulme could be changing hands - more on that next month, with luck.

Moving over to Burnage now, there is a new licensee at the **Victoria** and in Fallowfield Chris and Trish Batty have taken over at the **Friendship**. They arrive from another Hydes' pub, the Royal Oak in Prestwich, and this is almost a return home for Chris whose family have previously run the pub. His mother still runs the popular **Pineapple** in Gorton, also a Hydes' house. The Friendship is also an outlet for the new Hydes' Festival premium butter, by the way.

## Bakers Vaults

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

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Sunday Lunch

LIVE MUSIC MOST EVENINGS

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## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 179)

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.





In Didsbury, the Railway on Lapwing Lane was closed and boarded up last month. We have no further news on the fate of this characterful little pub. It would however be a great shame if it were to disappear from the south Manchester drinking scene for good.

We report elsewhere that the new licensees of Stockport's Sun & Castle are Pauline and Brian Taylor from the Old Monkey in the City Centre. At the Monkey, their replacements are from the Church, Newton Heath.

In Openshaw, the Halfway House on Ashton Old Road was advertised for sale at the beginning of last month. Offers are invited in the region of £150,000 for the freehold. Given the pub's prominent location, you would think that someone would be able to make a go of it but, given the large number of pubs in the area, it's sale for non-pub use can't be ruled out. As far as we are aware, the pub hasn't sold real ale for some time.

In Heaton Norris, the Bridge Inn on Georges Road is once again selling Robinson's Hatters Mild, having dropped Old Stockport. Best Bitter also remains on handpump. Further up the road, the Magnet on Wellington Road North has dropped Theakston's Mild, Wilson's Bitter and John Smith's Bitter but added Banks's 'Original' (that's mild to you and me) and Webster's Green Label. Bitters from Webster's and Holt's complete the handpumped range. Just up the road, the Railway has lost its Greenalls Mild leaving Greenalls and Boddingtons Bitters as the cask offerings.

On Portwood, Dot and Steve are leaving the Old King this month after a stay of 20-odd years. More on this next month. Also on the move are Brian and Jane Hall who left the Grapes in Heaton Norris at the end of last month. Jane was the first female president of Stockport LVA and she and Brian always ran a good pub. They haven't been lost to the trade, although they will be taking a couple of month's hard-earned rest before taking up the reins again. No news yet of their successor at the Grapes.

Not too far away, the Lonsdale has dropped Webster's Bitter (well it wasn't on sale when OT called) leaving Webster's Green Label and Boddingtons Bitter as the cask beers. Not very inspiring you might think, but at least it has cask beer. The same can't be said for the Phoenix, formerly the Nip Inn, on Penny Lane behind the Lancashire Hill flats. A recent visit revealed no real ale, and virtually no customers.

The Ale House Company, owners of the Crown, Heaton Lane, have bought a further 75 pubs off Whitbread. Among them is the Hogshead in Altrincham, which continues to serve a good range of guest beers.

## Design Awards

### More Details and Judges Report

The award to Stalybridge Station Buffet for Best Refurbishment in the CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Awards, was not only a welcome recognition of the work put into the Buffet Bar by owner John Hesketh but also the latest in a string of success in the competition for the North West. The award to the Buffet, though, is perhaps one of the most rewarding and arguably represents the culmination of the campaign, by CAMRA and others (most notably FOSS, the Friends of Stalybridge Station) to save the bar for the enjoyment of future generations.

Judging panel Chairman, Steve Parissien alluded to this in his report, saying: "During the 1970s and 80s the Buffet Bar was one of the very few to escape conversion to an identikit box offering terminally dismal Traveller's Fare. And following closure in the early 1990s, the building almost succumbed to a ludicrous British Rail plan to convert this much-loved and celebrated *Brief Encounter*-era bar into a restaurant and shops. The Buffet Bar has, thankfully, now been reopened with Railtrack's sanction and equipped with two much-needed additional rooms. The old bar and conservatory are almost exactly as they used to be - cosy, warm, friendly and unpretentious: the epitome of the best pub virtues - while the new areas are sensitively furnished with Thirties-style furniture and a modicum of tasteful railway memorabilia".

### Modern Facilities

"There are now even on-site toilets (in the old days, after the station toilet had been locked at 5pm, desperate customers had no choice but to utilise the adjacent track-bed while nervously scanning the horizon for approaching expresses). This fine old institution, whose many claims to fame include the penning of 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' in its atmospheric bar, has been refurbished and extended to the approval of even the most robustly sceptic locals. Modern facilities have been successfully introduced in a manner which has ensured that none of the bar's precious character has been diluted or lost - a lesson which many other pub owners would do well to heed".

### Other Winners

For the first time in 14 years, an award was also presented for the best Newbuild Pub. The winner of this elusive award was The Wharf in Walsall, one of the few tied houses run by the newly independent Highgate & Walsall Brewing Company. Praised as an "encouragingly down-to-earth and unmistakably contemporary pub" the judges also pointed out that the pub was built for half the cost of the average over-the-top refurbishment. Highly commended in the category was another West Midland pub, Browns in Coventry. The Conservation Award went to Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem in Nottingham, one of the candidates for the Oldest Pub in Britain. Now owned by local independent brewers Hardy & Hanson, work to open up more rooms and improve the catering facilities was carried out while doing "nothing to spoil the unique charm of this ancient pub". Another "shining example of good, thoughtful conservation work" was the commended Lamb in Devizes, Wiltshire, and run by another independent brewer, Wadworths.

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## Pub 2000 Concept Competition

### A Pub for the 21st Century

For one year only CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is launching an exciting competition to mark the beginning of the new millennium. Professional architects, designers and consultancies are invited to design a pub that encourages good, innovative and imaginative design. The competition was launched at The Pub Design Awards presentations on 17 February.

It is intended that the designs should reflect the positive attitudes of the British pub, give consideration to both the client and the consumer, and look to take the pub into the 21st Century. Participants will be asked to submit their ideas in the form of a series of

architect's drawings with written views on how these features meet the needs of the consumer in 2000

### On to Next Year's Awards...

Entry forms for the Pub design Awards 1999 are now available from CAMRA's Press Office. The awards will be open to pubs opened or reopened for business during 1998. The five categories are Pub 2000, New Build, Conversion to Pub Use, Refurbishment and the English Heritage Conservation Award. Entries are welcome from anywhere in the UK and the closing date is Friday 18 June.

The CAMRA Press Office can be contacted on 01727 867201. The postal address is 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW.