

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:181

Volume 15
Issue 5

OPENING TIMES



FREE

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FREE EVERY MONTH

MAY 1999

CASK CHAMPION

Quality is central to the survival of cask beer. Recognising this, the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, have inaugurated a new 'Cask Champion Award' to be presented annually to that person, company or organisation has done most in the previous 12 months to further the cause of quality in cask beer. It may not be presented every year but the winner of the first such award won overwhelming support. He is Tony Phillips of Hydes' Brewery, a company which has seen the quality of its beer improve enormously over the five years that Tony has been with them.

Previously a quality manager at ICI Widnes, Tony was brought into the company with a quality remit and immediately got to work. A quality control laboratory was installed and he also looked at the consistency of the brewing operations themselves. The aim was to ensure consistency in the beer going out to the pubs, a measure that has proved very successful.

However, no matter how consistent the beer leaving the brewery, it matter little if the pubs are not also delivering a high quality product to their customers. This was tackled by training up beer tasters at the brewery and then sending them out to score pubs on beer quality. This enabled the Hydes to offer advice and assistance to their licensees where problems were encountered. Not only that but attention has been paid to the training of licensees. Training courses are run which all new managers must attend and which are offered to new tenants, too.

When told of his award, Tony expressed delight but also quiet satisfaction that his work has paid off so effectively. "My aim has simply been to get a consistent pint out of the brewery and a consistent pint out of the pubs", he told Opening Times. The extent to which this policy has worked can be judged by the number of Hydes outlets in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide which locally will be at an all-time high when the next edition comes out. Although Tony is no longer directly involved in quality issues, his legacy lingers on. On-site product testing continues and Hydes are now running a cellar competition for all their houses which looks at all aspects of quality in the pub cellars.

This well deserved award will be presented to Tony on the Thursday night of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.



Tony Phillips of Hydes

FESTIVAL NEWS

We are now well and truly in the run-up to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again kindly sponsored by the Stockport Express.

The entertainment has been booked, the glasses and T-shirts ordered, and, most importantly, the beer and cider order has been worked out.

As usual Opening Times is taking this opportunity to bring you just a small taster of the many beers on offer. There really is something for every taste, whether you like mild, bitter, stout or strong ales.

There should be eight milds available from the classic West Midlands brews from Bathams and Highgate to newer brews



such as Wolf Brewery's Woild Moild, a high-strength contender in the mild stakes at 4.8 per cent alcohol.

Lovers of bitter will be well catered for with no fewer than 54 standard and premium bitters available during the course of the Festival. Last year's Beer of the Festival winner, Oakham Brewery's Bishop's farewell, will have to compete with heavy-weight contenders such as Roosters (who will be brewing our Festival Special), Passageway, Marble Arch, Kelham Island and Phoenix. The new Macclesfield micro, Storm Brewing, will be sending us two beers, as will Salford's Bridgewater Ales who

(continued on back page)

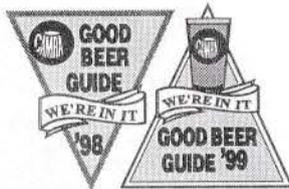
ALLIED-WHITBREAD PUB MERGER? page 15

In MAY'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Shepherds Delight	13
Pub of the Month	5	High Peak Pub	14
Letters	6	Beer Monster	15
Brewery News	8	CAMRA Calling	18
Stagger	8	Kens Kitchen	19
Curmudgeon	11	Manchester Matters ...	23
Five Years Ago	11	Pub News	24
Unreal Ale	12	Cider Champions	24

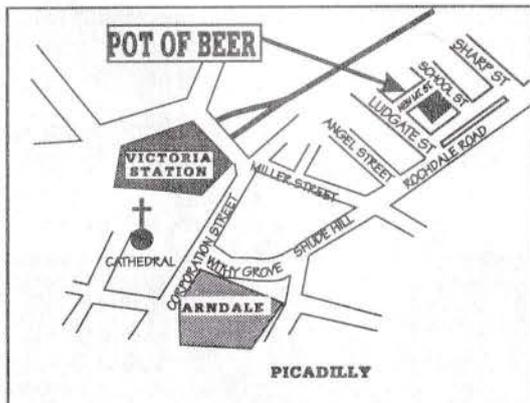
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Congratulations to Tony Phillips, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's first 'Cask Champion'. I would like to take this opportunity to explain a little about the award. I think most drinkers know that the worst advert for real ale is a bad pint of the stuff. One duff pint can put younger drinkers off cask beer for life. And yet there are still too many pubs around serving only average beer. It's not stuff you would want to pour away, but it's not going to get you racing back for another pint either. Our March and April Staggers were prime examples - plenty of well run pubs serving beer that was simply OK.

If cask beer is to have a long and healthy future, pubs have to do better than this. The watchword has to be quality all the way. To this end our Cask Champion Award has been inaugurated. Simply put, it's an award that recognises quality and those who pursue it. It can be made to an individual, a company (brewing or otherwise) or an organisation. Some years it may not be awarded, but when it is, the winner will be decided by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA at its March meeting and presented at the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

More and more brewers are realising that quality is important, and not just in the brewery but in the pubs as well. As Tony Phillips astutely realised, it doesn't matter one iota how good the beer is when it leaves the brewery if there isn't a similar degree of attention to quality in the pubs. So, we are seeing more brewery inspired cellar competitions and in-house training courses. There's still way to go yet (the amount of duff beer around proves that point) but at least the problem is starting to be addressed. We hope that our Cask Champion Award bring some recognition for those who campaign for quality, and by so doing campaign for real ale, too. *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. 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. 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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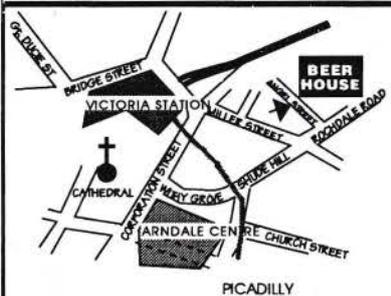
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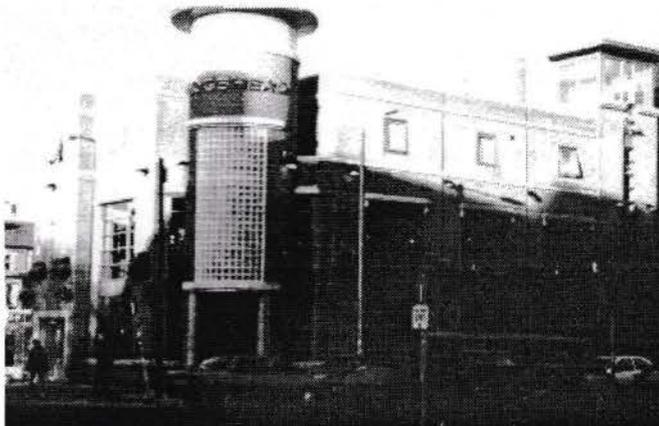
Angel Street, Manchester (0161) 839 7019



Pub Of The Month

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

MAY
1999



The Stockport and South Manchester Pub of the Month award for May goes to the Hogshead on Oxford Road, Manchester.

This striking building stands at the corner of Nelson Street near the Manchester Royal Infirmary. It is a new building, opened in April 1998 on the site of a florists. The Whitbread-owned Hogshead alehouse chain is expanding all over the country - there are now four in the Manchester area. They specialise in a good range of ales, both from the Whitbread range and guests.

The managers of the Hogshead, Adge and Mike, were previously at the Hogshead on High Street, Manchester and while there gained an excellent reputation for the quality of their beers. They have carried on this reputation at Oxford Road in no uncertain terms. There are always interesting guest beers available in addition to the regular range and the quality is second to none. There may be some guest beers served direct from the cask and real cider is also usually available.

The pub is on two floors with a small mezzanine area. The upstairs bar is non-smoking and has good views of the passing traffic down busy Oxford Road. A trip to the downstairs toilets allows an excellent view of the cellar! As the pub is situated in the heart of the university area, it is very popular with students and is usually busy. The pub serves good value food until early evening and often has special offers such as two meals for the price of one.

The pub could not be better served by public transport as all the Oxford Road/Wilmslow Road buses pass the door. Also the 190/191 from Stockport passes within a few yards of the pub. The presentation of this well deserved award is on Thursday 27 May, when a good night is guaranteed. **PB.**

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

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 181:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Edwardson, Chris Walkden, Stuart Ballantyne, Phil Booton, Phil Levison, Tim Jones, Tom Lord, The Beer Monster™, Geoff Williamson, Dave Hanson, Mark McConachie, Ken Birch, Steve Smith



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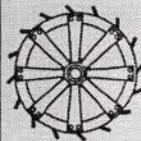
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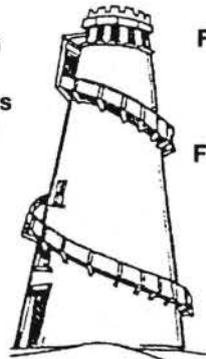
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COPY DATE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS MAY 22



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SKY SPORTS TV
CAMRA Pub of the Month
March 1997



OPENING TIMES

From Grahame Simpson, Didsbury:

I have read pretty well every edition of your excellent publication for a number of years now and have nothing but good things to say about it.

Except, that is, it seems to me that the Didsbury area is largely ignored. This seems odd since it would be difficult to find in such a compact area such a number of pubs (and increasing all the time!) all with real ale and a wide variety of real ale at that. An excellent choice of area for a 'Stagger' I would have thought – and no need to stagger very far between pubs either!

In fact, if you started at my own favourite, 'The Old Cock', there would be no need to stagger anywhere else at all since there are usually anything up to 12 handpumps in use with half a dozen or so of them dispensing an ever changing selection of guest real ales. You would have to go a very long way to beat that I think. Also, if you got bored, there is always the new dartboard! So, what do you think, worth a try?

(Yes indeed. A Didsbury Stagger is in the pipeline for later this year. We do also frequently have items of Didsbury news in these pages – Ed.)

From: Marie Broome, Longsight:

As a drinker of bitter who is more and more dissatisfied with the standard of beer available in the Manchester area, I felt I had to write and tell you about a real jewel in the crown of beer keeping and serving. It's called the Old Cock at Didsbury and is a real delight.

It boasts a very wide variety of beers including the best Castle Eden I've tasted outside North Yorkshire. We frequent the "Cock" both as a family and as individuals and are always assured whichever beer is selected of an excellent pint – even the guest beers are perfect.

The atmosphere is very warm and friendly to all-comers – we span three generations and are all very comfortable there. The landlord appears well able to juggle a lively young atmosphere with a real local. You will see by our address that we have to travel some five miles distance bypassing many other hostleries but it's well worth the journey. We are so delighted to have found such a local after a depressing list of failures in guise of mediocre, sometimes undrinkable excuses for beer.

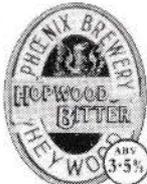
Didsbury itself sports many pubs, café bars etc but I think The Old Cock stands well apart in quality and service and merits a visit. Maybe you could pass on this information to your readers, maybe even visit yourselves! I know we would have appreciated knowing about it sooner. We have visited many of the establishments mentioned in your paper but feel none matches the uniqueness of the Old Cock.

Oh yes, and the food is good too!

(Is this a letter writing campaign I see before me? – ed)

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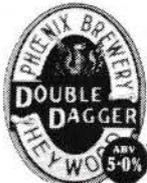
OLD OAK
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THRISTY MOON
Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight maltiness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.



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 gravity would suggest.



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From: Bob Broadbent, Darwen:

In response to the letter sent regarding the national Winter Ales Festival (issue 178), I would like to congratulate the organisers for such a great event and look forward to the next one. I enjoyed the food at the Festival, which I believe was provided by Idy from the Beer House, who did a very good job indeed. But "the best" the author has come across at any CAMRA event in the last ten years?

Has he/she not been to The Great British? Or a little nearer to home, the excellent little festival at Accrington (some time in June). Last year the festival food was outstanding, so much so that I kept a menu to show friends that could not attend.

As well as the normal run of the mill festival food of home-made potato pie, black puddings, hot dogs, and sandwiches, no fewer than seven authentic curry dishes were on offer, and a few ingredients not seen in local restaurants never mind at festivals - smoked salmon, quail eggs and caviar. I look forward to this year's event and hope that the author could pop along and enjoy the day as much as me.

PS - excellent newsletter, keep up the good work.

(I don't know about Accrington, but I think Idy's food at the Winter Ales Festival beat that at the GBBF on both price and quality - Ed(1). Frankly I agree with the original comments (best for 'n' years, etc.). I gather Barry's food at Accrington is a bit special, only I seem to be abroad each year when its on. As to the food at the GBBF, paying £4 for an undersized paper plate of poorly cooked noodles and veg IS my idea of a rip-off. I would like to add more but libel laws prohibit. Ed (2).)

From: Brian Abbott, Marple

I cannot let the article 'I wish to register a complaint' in the April issue of OT go without an observation or two. Your main concern was sub-standard beer with emphasis on bad-tasting beer.

Beer of acceptable taste and measure I have found to be the norm. However, there is for me considerable doubt as to how one objectively measures sub-standard taste. I have in mind the variety of influential mouth odours that are brought to the tasting process ranging from diseases of the mouth to those taste buds carrying the masking flavours of bar snack baltis, salted nuts, crisps in all flavours and tobacco. If anyone so afflicted can be sure of a consistent taste in beer then I would be amazed.

As an illustration of the pseudo-science in beer tasting, I witnessed in my local watering hole recently all the mild drinking connoisseurs and other regulars going through two sessions of drinking bitter without any one of them noticing the difference! The mild beer pumps had been wrongly connected to bitter for most of a day.

So by all means complain...if you really know what you are talking about.

(Or perhaps they did spot the difference but kept quiet because they knew they were on to a good thing - bitter at mild prices! - Ed (1). Diseases of the mouth make ALL beer taste foul - not just the odd one, and people who smoke and drink can STILL tell when there's something amiss. Ed(2))



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



Scottish Courage Clearout

The latest of the national operators to 'rationalise' their range is Scottish Courage. Last year they axed the contract-brewed Wilson's Mild and attention has now turned to some of their bitter brands. We understand that two Theakstons Beers, Best Bitter and XB are to be axed and replaced by a new Theakston beer somewhere between the two, most likely in the 4-4.2 per cent ABV range. This new beer will then presumably be marketed as some sort of premium product which will leave just John Smiths Bitter and Websters Bitter as the two main session beers for the north. Also for the chop is the highly regarded John Smith's Magnet - ironically one of the best beers to come out of the Tadcaster brewery for many years.



Holt's Smooth

Yes, it's finally happened. Joseph Holt's, that most traditional of Manchester's brewers, has leapt on the smooth bandwagon. They have gone down the 'real smooth' route already taken by Robinson's and are serving their Mild and badly performing DBA by this method. Initially a free-trade initiative, smooth DBA at least is now in the Holt's estate - not least in the brewery tap, the Derby Brewery Arms where it sells alongside the cask version. There are also some long-term doubts over the future of bottled Sixix. It seems that nip bottles are hardly used these days, and not by the people who bottle for Holt's. The brewers are for some reason unwilling to sell it in half-pint bottles but it would be a shame to see the beer die just for the sake of the right sized bottle.



Hydes' Ebony

By the time you read this, the latest seasonal beer from Hydes' will be in the pubs. This is 'Ruby Ratchet's Ebony', a strong, very dark mild. It is in fact essentially Hydes' Black, in cask form and brewed to the higher gravity of four percent-ish alcohol. Many drinkers have commented that a cask version of dark



would have the potential to be a very good beer indeed, so now's the chance to put the theory to the test. We also understand that Hydes' may have been on the expansion trail again, picking up a couple of pubs. More news on this when we get it.

Mild RIP

Boddingtons Mild has now finally bitten the dust (along with OB Mild and Bitter). Our photo shows Irene Morris of the Greyhound, Edgeley, pulling one of the last pints.



STAGGER

with John Clarke

City Centre Random Drinking

Organising a Stagger around a few pubs could not be easier. Meet up at a pre-arranged bar, progress along a planned route taking in several pubs and conclude with a final pint in a designated hostelry. What could possibly go wrong with this simple plan? What indeed!

The Bulls Head on London Road opposite Piccadilly Station was the starting point. At the designated time of 7.00pm only two people were on hand to commence the stagger. No problem you may think, except that neither knew the route! Never mind, let's have a pint. Surveying the bar revealed that this Burtonwood house was offering Bitter, Forshaws and Top Hat from their own range, along with Mansfield's Old Baily. The Bitter and Forshaws were imbibed, and rated above average. A few years ago the Bulls Head was given a makeover and is now a single room with a small raised drinking area. A predominance of dark wood abounds, both on the walls and floor, but it has avoided the clichéd ale house look. It was very busy for early evening, with hardly any students in evidence even though UMIST is next door. Unfortunately, though we delayed as long as possible, we were not joined by anybody who knew the way.

I decided we would travel along Granby Row to visit the Old Garret for no better reason than it was where I had my first pint of Boddies (that's back when it WAS the cream of Manchester). What a change! It is now a ubiquitous single roomer with acres of bric-a-brac all over the place. Apparently random bits of woodwork and changes in floor height make the drinking area very disjointed. The big screen in the middle of the bar was also distracting for those wishing to hold a conversation, but at least it was showing a man's game, rugby league! In keeping with the Boddies/Greenalls/Who knows ale house concept, the beer range was Boddies, Tetley's, Flowers and Old Garret Ale. We tried the latter and rated it as highly as the beer at the Bulls Head.

Travelling up Princess Street we soon came to the New Union, our second Burtonwood house. Internally there are a multitude of drinking areas, ranging from quiet rooms with comfy chairs, to a disco/light show which was starting up in the end room. If you prefer you beer al fresco there is seating outside, where you can watch barges negotiating one of the many locks on this stretch of the Rochdale Canal. Only Burtonwood Bitter was available on handpump, and was rated above average.

Walking along Canal Street brought us to the Rembrandt Hotel, one of a handful of Lees' houses in the City centre. You enter a single large room with the bar midway down one side. The only

The Nursery Inn

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Hydes
Anvil Ales

Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

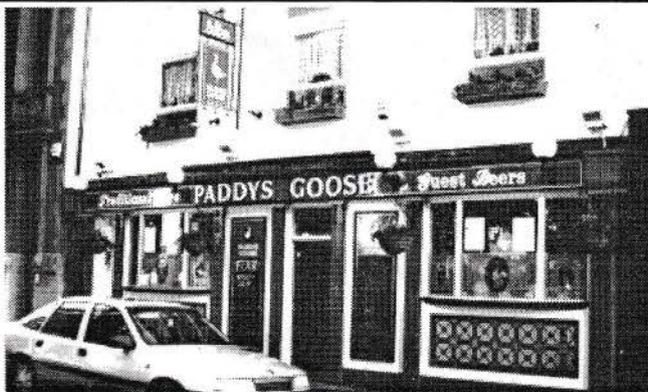
ask beer on sale was the bitter which, when sampled, turned out to be the best beer of the night so far. As the time for the mid-evening meeting was approaching we finished our drinks and headed out into the streets. There was a little consternation as we had to pass Paddy's Goose en route to the meeting point.

Heading through Chinatown we arrived at the **Seven Oaks** on Nicholas Street. A cosy little two-roomed pub, but unusual as one room is above the other. The street level room was busy, the top room was not visited. Beers on offer were Boddingtons (rated average) and Wadworth 6X (rated well above average). While supping our beer, we wondered why there were no fellow revellers awaiting us. While pondering this problem, illumination arrived in the form of our Social Secretary telling us that we were in the wrong pub!

In good cinematic tradition we now have a flashback to the Bull's Head some few minutes after we left. In walk the second third of the night's revellers. After a swift pint they decided they will soon catch us up. Fortunately they do know the correct route, but it was not the one we had travelled! They called in **Monroes** and the **Waldorf** (where we were not found), then along to the **Portland** where they had their best pint of the evening. Finally they headed to Paddy's Goose which was the meeting point.

Paddy's Goose (pictured opposite) is hidden away around the back of Chorlton Street bus station but is easily located as the front is a mock-Victorian extravaganza of ornate glazed tiles. After acquisition by Greene King the beer range is well worth seeking out as it consists of IPA, Abbot Ale and Triumph. Unfortunately on the evening in question all three conspired to run out while we were there (no connection I hope!). Great pride is taken in the beer by the landlord. Pints (half drunk) have been 'confiscated' and replaced by full pints because they were not up to scratch. The final third of our party met up here, having previously visited the Bull's Head just in case we were still there.

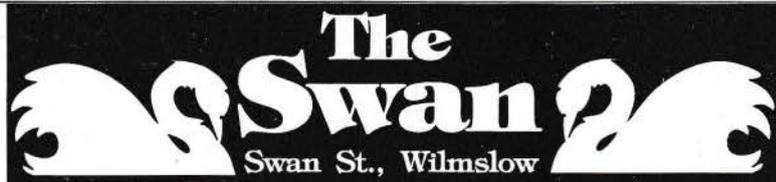
To sum up the evening so far. One starting point, three different parties, three different routes leading to two meeting points! Would we all finally join up at the **Forgery & Firkin**, our next port of call? Yes! The fabric of the Forgery & Firkin was originally a



bank, the grand architecture making this immediately obvious. The rows of ornate columns do make the bar feel as though you are drinking inside a Greek Temple. In one corner a DJ was playing very loud music, but in mitigation it was not mindless techno but 60's, 70's and 80's classics. The beers on offer were the usual range of Firkin products, and we sampled Forgery Ale, rated excellent, and Best Bitter (average). On the Saturday after we visited, the pub was to close in order to undergo a refurbishment, so things have changed.

Our next port of call was the **Grey Horse** on Portland Street. However two of our party managed to get lost en route and ended up in the **Circus Tavern** next door (a well-deserved entrant on the National Inventory of Pub Interiors). After a good pint of Tetley's they rejoined us. The Grey Horse is a back street community boozier in the centre of Manchester. Originally this would have been a house, the front and back rooms being knocked through to make the drinking areas. Adjectives such as cosy, intimate etc could be used. I will just describe it as friendly. The pub sells most of the Hydes' range and is one of only two City Centre outlets (the other being the Jolly Angler on Great Ducie Street). We sampled the excellent bitter, the mild and seasonal ales being left for another day.

9



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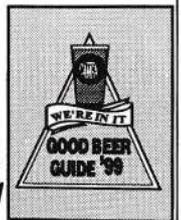
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Product Before Packaging

Last year, Hydes' launched what, to all intents and purposes, was a new dark mild. It sold for quite a bit more than the existing dark mild, although still a shade less than the bitter. It was strongly promoted, and had an eye-catching point-of-sale display. So far, it seems to have done pretty well, and has won a surprising number of converts from lager, cider and Guinness. The beer, of course, was Hydes' Black, and it's a nitrokeg. Does anyone seriously believe that, however good it was, however consistently well-kept, however prominently promoted, it would have done so anywhere near so well as a real ale?

Real ale, to be blunt, has an image problem, and this prompts the question of whether handpumps are, in all circumstances, the best method of presenting it on the bar. Twenty-five years ago, few people knew the difference between cask and keg beer, and a lot of real ale was dispensed from electric pumps which could be hard to tell apart from keg taps. However, CAMRA made the concept of "real ale" much more widely appreciated, even if people didn't really understand the details, and, linked with this, it promoted the handpump as a powerful and unmistakable symbol of its availability. For a time, this link served real ale well, but, at a time when it has been forced onto the back foot by the advance of nitrokeg, the handpump all too often gives a sign to people that it is something to avoid at all costs. I know drinkers who have had a few bad experiences with real ale, and have therefore been put off trying anything that comes out of a handpump. But that is not to say that they are unwilling to try any new form of beer - and might real ale win new converts more easily if it wasn't dispensed in a way that so obviously sets it apart from everything else on the bar? It's not the product that deters people, it's the packaging.

In a sense, that is what Robinson's are doing with their dubious "smooth" beers which involve putting real ale through a nitrogenator and then dispensing it from a tall font. However, it is of course perfectly possible to dispense real ale, unadulterated with nitrogen, out of trendy light-up boxes, or even out of "Continental" T-bar fonts as found in the Baker's Vaults in Stockport. There's no deception involved, it's simply trying to gain a wider market for the product by not confining it to a ghetto on the bar. For example, I'm sure that a fair few people who drink premium lagers like Grolsch or Stella might develop a surprising taste for strong pale ales such as Summer Lightning or Porter's Sunshine - if only they could be persuaded to try them, and not dismiss them out of hand because of the shape of the pump.

Reinventing the Wheel

I read recently that one of these new designer outlet centres had created a "Men's Creche" where menfolk could go and relax while their wives or girlfriends indulged in some serious shopping. It's not a new concept though - it was invented many years ago, exists in every traditional town centre, and goes under the name of a pub!

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MAY '94

For many years the Royal Oak in Didsbury had been something of a legend - Marston's beer, cheese lunches, and landlord Arthur Gosling had all contributed to this legend. So it came as a terrible shock to see *Opening Times*' front page headline "Royal Oak Blitzed".

A fire had started in the early hours, and Arthur was forced to escape by climbing out on to the flat roof from his upstairs living quarters. There was serious damage to the main bar, and the collection of old theatre bills and antique ceramic spirit barrels looked as if they had been lost forever. But this had been no accidental fire - the report ended "A man has been arrested and charged with the fire at the Royal Oak."

There was a full-page advert for the Porter Brewing Co with their Rossendale Brewery at the Griffin Inn in Haslingden - beers brewed on the premises by licensee David Porter. There was another half page or so with more details - keen home-brewer, working in pubs, a specialised brewing course, and six weeks with Brendan Dobbin at West Coast Brewery.

Robinson's were in the news with a new beer, Frederics, a new pub, the Three Bears, and a new name for an existing beer. Frederics, a 5 per cent ABV premium ale was described as the first new cask beer in a generation. It had apparently been in preparation for a long time, and went some way towards filling the obvious gap between the Best Bitter at 4.2 per cent and Old Tom at 8 per cent. It was really aimed at the national free trade, but would also be going into all Robinson's managed houses, and would be available to any licensee that wanted it.

The Three Bears had been built on Jackson's Lane in Hazel Grove on a site that Robinson's had acquired as long ago as 1960. It was described as a "modest building with essentially a one-room interior which had nevertheless been skilfully split up into lounge and dining areas." The décor had been described as "modern plush", which was in contrast to the neo-Victoriana which seemed to be very popular.

The new name was Hatters Mild - this was for the Best Mild at 3.3 per cent ABV which was itself unchanged.

An item of pub news - welcome to new licensee Elizabeth Bowman at Marston's Harp & Shamrock on New Mount Street, just off Rochdale Road. It was described as a terrific little pub, but for several years it had been overshadowed by the nearby Beer House and Marble Arch. It was always difficult to find but now, in 1999, nearby demolitions have made it much more visible and it is no longer Marston's. Now a free house and renamed, the Pot of Beer always has an interesting selection of beers and completes the trio of pubs that must surely offer the largest selection of beers in the smallest area - certainly in Manchester and possible elsewhere in the country.

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Unreal Ale

Keg Beer and Why You Should Avoid It

Beer is brewed from malt, hops, yeast and water. You can tinker with some of the ingredients but these are the essential building blocks of all commonly available beers. The brewing process is much the same for all beers, too. So why is there such a difference between real ale and keg? It's all down to 'conditioning'.

Real ale is a living fresh beer that undergoes a natural second fermentation in the cask, after it has arrived in the pub cellar. Like any natural product, it requires care in handling on the way to the pub, and care within the pub to bring it to perfection. Properly looked after, though, it will reach its full flavour potential without filtration, pasteurisation and added gas.

It is these processes that go to make keg beers. They condition in the brewery and are then chilled and filtered to remove all the yeast, and pasteurised to make a sterile product. All this has a profound effect on the beer. Filtering and pasteurising remove flavour and character, and pasteurisation adds its own distinctive taste, a sort of burnt sugar flavour.

These processes also remove the natural gas from the beer so to make it lively, and to dispense it, it is made fizzy by the addition of excess gas. 'Old fashioned' keg beers used to have carbon dioxide gas added which gave the beer a distinctive 'bite'. Nitrokeg or 'smooth' beers are sterilised just like all keg beers but the added gas is a mixture of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. This tends to eliminate bitterness and makes for a blander product still.

Despite the heavy marketing behind these 'smooth' beers, they really have nothing to recommend them. Compared to their 'real' equivalents they:

Cost a lot more, Taste of much less, Come with a big dollop of froth on top so greedy licensees can rip you off. You'll never get a full pint drinking smooth.

So, if smooth beers form part of your drinking 'repertoire' (as the marketing men put it) ask yourself - do you really want to part with your hard earned cash on a short measure of an over-priced tasteless liquid? And if, hand on heart, your answer is 'yes', then ask yourself another question: why?

The List Of Shame

In recent months a growing number of pubs in the Stockport and South Manchester area have turned their backs on cask beer and now deprive their customers of a choice between cask and keg. We have entered them on our 'List of Shame' which is reproduced below. The list will be updated from time to time with new entries, and of course those pubs which return to the cask ale fold will be highlighted, too.

Abbey Hey Hotel, Abbey Hey (Bass)
Angel, Gorton (Greenalls)
Bow Garrett, Edgeley (Burtonwood)
Bromale, Bramhall (Bass)
Carousel, Reddish (Scottish Courage)
Chapel House, Heaton Chapel (Whitbread)
Cheadle Royal, Cheadle (Whitbread)
Concert, Openshaw (Greenalls/Boddingtons)
Cotton Tree, Gorton (Wilsons/Websters)
Fiddlers Green, Levenshulme (Free)
Navigation, Heaton Norris (Websters/Wilsons)
Park, Ardwick Green (Burtonwood)
Prince of Wales, Abbey Hey (Whitbread)
Railway, Reddish (Whitbread)
Sir Robert Peel, Edgeley (Greenalls)
Smithfield, Openshaw (Greenalls/Boddingtons)
Tatton Arms, Northenden (Scottish Courage)
Union, Ardwick (Burtonwood)

Shepherd's Delight

In the better late than never dept. we extend a belated welcome to Mike Hollingsworth and Liz Jones who took over at the helm of the Shepherd's Arms, Whaley Bridge, on 17 June last year! They spent eight months looking for this, their first pub. Their sensible philosophy is that drastic change is often unwelcome in a pub so they searched for one that was more or less running the way they would want and then just gently 'tweak' as necessary. This Marston's house, in many ways the classic beer-led country pub, fitted the bill exactly.



Although this is their first pub, Mike and Liz come to the Shepherds with an impressive pedigree (no pun intended!). Mike previously held licenses at a community centre in Brosely, Shropshire, but more importantly was cellarman at the Coalbrookdale Inn at Ironbridge - a winner of numerous high profile CAMRA awards, including National Pub of the Year. With such a background, Mike is keen to build on the pub's reputation for good beer and retains the range of Marston's Bitter, Pedigree and the fortnightly Head Brewers Choice beer, plus Banks's Mild. To his regret, the excellent Bateman's Mild has had to be discontinued (temporarily, Mike hopes) pending the sorting out of supply agreements following the Banks's take-over of Marston's. On the plus side, Cameron's Strongarm is to be made available and this will be on sale in between the Head Brewers choice beers. Not only that, but a recent cellar refurbishment has made possible the introduction of real cider. Inch's Stonehouse will therefore soon be available on handpump, initially as a trial for the summer months, but hopefully as a permanent addition to the pub's range.

A minor refurbishment is due to the pub itself. There will be a new wooden bar in the lounge (to replace the current formica), the seat coverings in the vault will be replaced and there will be a general spruce-up. In addition the beer garden has also been trebled in size in anticipation of the summer months.

Mike and Liz are proud of their 'no smooth, no juke-box, no machines, no pool table' approach to running a pub, proving that the real keys to success are a warm welcome, a great atmosphere and terrific beer. That's something worth celebrating these days.

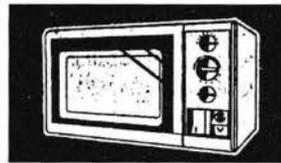
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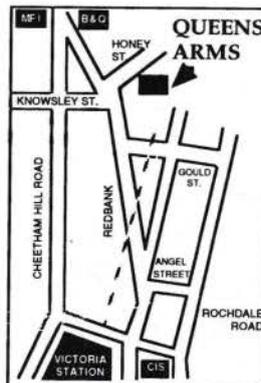
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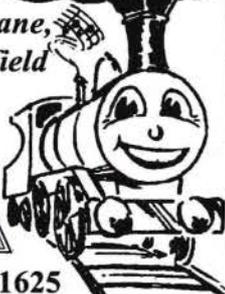
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May Featured Pub: Horseshoe, High Lane

For this edition of Opening Times we take a look at the Horseshoe, a rapidly improving pub on the A6 in High Lane. The tenants Mike and Alyson were previously at the Three Bears in Hazel Grove and although they moved to the Horseshoe only eight short weeks ago, already a positive impact is being made. The Horseshoe is a long established pub having been known in its early years as the Blacksmiths Arms. Originally intended to serve the farming community of High Lane, down the years it has progressed into an excellent traditional pub drawing its customers from all walks of life. The pub has a strong local trade, and being on the A6 road also helps to attract customers. The surrounding countryside is popular with walkers and the Macclesfield Canal is only a few yards up the road. Inside the pub the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming, with an open-plan, comfortable and spacious layout. The beers are Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters Mild on handpump, kept in good condition. Good value meals are available, with a separate no-smoking dining room where children are welcome. Mike and Alyson are keen to develop the social and community side of the pub and already have regular events such as the Friday evening meat draw; Wednesday quiz nights and specials such as curry evenings. In addition the pub supports two darts and crib teams. For something a little out of the ordinary, Mike is arranging

a charity clay pigeon shoot. There is a large car park at the rear of the pub, and accessibility by public transport is not a problem. All in all, the Horseshoe is a well organised, thoroughgoing good pub and well worth a visit. We wish Mike and Alyson well and look forward to the pub going from strength to strength. TL
Opening Hours: Mon-Sat 11.30-11; Sunday 12-10.30.
Meals: Mon-Sat 12-2 and 5-7; Sunday 12-6.
Access by public transport: 394 bus Hazel Grove-Marple-Glossop; 361 Stockport-Glossop; 198/199 Stockport-Buxton. Trains - Middlewood Station on the Buxton line is a pleasant 15-minute walk along the Middlewood Way from the A6.

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In Hyde, the Beehive has recently changed hands and refurbishment is now complete. Robbie and Sandra Daley, the new licensees, have Tetley Bitter on handpump (in good form too) with a second pump for guest beers (no beer yet). Over in Gee Cross, the Werneth now has no cask beer. The Boddingtons Bitter is the "smooth" imitation. In Stalybridge a new pub, "The Pavillion" on Market Street has opened and it would appear that this 'Victorian style' pub is offering Tetley Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Old Speckled Hen on handpumps - but no visits as yet to confirm this. Also in Stalybridge, the Fox Tavern, formerly Marstons, is now a Thwaites outlet.

Back in Ashton-u-Lyne, the Moss Side Hotel on Portland Street has been altered into an educational and youth centre! Finally, the latest episode in the soap that is the Woolley Bridge Inn ended with a For Sale sign going up (is this a repeat?).

A final footnote - it was noted at a recent meeting that Porters Brewing Company were looking for new pubs. Any High Peak members who know of a redundant pub/building in the Branch area please contact Porters. Or failing that - does anyone have a spare room? Perhaps Dave would be interested in one of the numerous High Peak branch pubs affected by the great Phoenix pub sell-off (see Stockport & South Manchester Pub News). Those on our patch up for grabs include the Gardeners Arms, Droylsden; Innisfree and JFK, Hyde; Sams Bar in Ashton and in Glossop, the Grapes Inn, Manor Inn and the Surrey Arms ('Top Surrey').

Leigh Round Table



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Doors open 7.00pm

For further information call David Hutton 01925 224681

Walk for Christies

On Saturday 3 July, High Peak & NE Cheshire Branch are organising a 15 mile sponsored walk, visiting seven Good Beer Guide pubs en route. Christies Hospital is of course one of the foremost cancer research institutes and is therefore a very worthy cause to stretch your legs for. The route starts at the Shepherds Arms in Whaley Bridge, and then as follows: Navigation (Buxworth); Royal (Hayfield); Little Mill (Rowarth); Oddfellows (Mellor); Travellers Call (Lane Ends Marple Bridge) and finishes at the Sportsman in Hyde.

Six stages in all, some fairly short, some longer; some easy going, some hill walking. Starting at the Shepherds at 11.45am and aiming to reach the Sportsman at about 7.00pm. Whaley Bridge and Hyde are both easily accessible by bus and train, and Hayfield also has regular bus services.

Anyone taking part can either do the whole route or any number of stages. For more details contact Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.



I was hoping to bring you a long, photo-rich and detailed report about the 3rd All Ireland Independent Brewers Festival in the Porterhouse Dublin, but... (haven't I read this before - ed.)

Late Breaking Rumour

This column has been hurriedly re-penned so as to make some observations on strong rumours circulating about a tie-up between Whitbread and Allied Domecq.

Q. Who is the biggest pub owner in Britain.

A. A Japanese bank.

But perhaps not for long. The papers this weekend were full of pre-announced details of a merger between the pub arms of Whitbread and Allied (as part of Whitbread). Whilst the marketing man dreams of the synergy between a Wacky Warehouse and a Big Steak, the drinker once more cries into his beer.

Basically, Allied have had a poor set of financial results. 'Shareholders' - a euphemism for a few vociferous American fund managers who own about 14% of the stock - are demanding increased shareholder value or heads. This means selling off the silver to satisfy the slavering slaves of mammon's insatiable appetite (come back Thatcher, all is forgiven...). Having got rid of the Burton brewery, now the pubs must go. True Allied have lost the plot of late. Having gone full tilt into Firkinisation, they eventually realised that there are only so many beer-swilling students who can stand the forced humour, so many firkins (like the Forgery in town) are being half-converted back into pubs. Well they ARE better, but why not go all the way? This all stems from All Bar One and other 'woman friendly' pubs. Again, there are only so many young women who drink... but in my experience what women want in a pub is decent and sufficient seating, a lack of harassment from drunks, and most important - a decent loo (but maybe I talk to the wrong women). Anyway a new pub-co will emerge with about 7,000 pubs, most of them of a decent size.



THE MACCLESFIELD & EAST CHESHIRE CAMRA Pub of the Season for Spring 1999 is the Crown at Lower Peover.

The Crown is a homely, 17th century inn which is still part of a working farm and has been in the same hands for 26 years. The pleasant looking exterior has a cobbled frontage, flower tubs, window boxes and hanging baskets. Inside there is a friendly, almost family atmosphere, with a welcome extended to locals and visitors alike. The walls are adorned with a cornucopia of fixtures and fittings collected during the lifetime of licensees Bert and Lesley Flint.

Three very homely rooms are centred round the bar. The room you enter from the porch has a wonderful timeless feel with scrubbed wooden tables, benches and a regularly used darts board. The central room houses copper-topped tables and a cosy snug adorned with china plates of every description. Low ceilings, beams and exposed stonework abound, along with multitudes of prints (some of Peover) and postcards. Horse brasses and a horse collar feature by the real fire. The smart front room is given over mainly to diners. Darts and dominoes are played and there is an annual gooseberry competition on the last Saturday in July!

This is one of the few remaining outlets for the rare, real (ie non-keg) and excellently kept, Chesters Mild. In total, five real ales are available, the others being Boddingtons Bitter and three guest beers, two from major breweries and one from an independent such as Cheshire's Weetwood Brewery.

This well-deserved award will be presented on 27 May when all are welcome for what should be an excellent night out. The Crown is on Crown Lane, Swan Green (B5081).

Apparently, to get this through, Whitbread will have to sell its breweries. Stuff and nonsense. The threat to consumer choice/value/competition is not from Boddingtons or Salmesbury, but from another mega pub-co, with a near monopoly in many areas, selling the same crappy nitrokeg products sold to them at a huge discount (and almost certainly by Bass). Keeping the breweries open and with a tie is the ONLY means of preserving competition in this case. Whitbread need the brewery sale because the new head honcho doesn't like anything but retail, and they need some dosh to buy the allied pubs. If New Labour has any sort of competition policy it must stop this ASAP with a Monopolies reference, and then study the whole of the beer supply industry, with an aim to promote diversity, competition, and help small and regional brewers. Otherwise, quite frankly the small guy will be utterly squeezed out, and there will probably be (effectively) NO REAL ALE within five years.

Our editorial staff will be making some considered statements on this when the dust has settled next month.

Beers to Search Out

I'm loathe to make any recommendations this month. I have had plenty of very good beer - the Hopback IPA and Bitter, and the Osset Laughing Gravy Strong Mild were nice, but did not quite have that touch extra to give a rave review.

Little new has come my way on the foreign beer front either - there was a good Reutberg Bock at Walsall - but I do have high hopes for Doncaster (20 - 22 May at the Racecourse) in both British and Foreign areas, and at the Beer House German Fest the same weekend. Frodsham usually produces some good 'uns and its ticket free this year (28-29 May see advert elsewhere).

The Beer House and Stalybridge Buffet held festivals just before we went to press, and both were excellent as usual, with very good beer quality. The Beer House seems to have solved the temperature problem upstairs with a Ship-and-Mitre-style air conditioning system. Good news indeed.

You never know, the Irish beer scene MIGHT get covered next month!

15

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"I wish to register
A COMPLAINT!"



Bad beer, adulterated beer and short measure still trouble us on occasion. You, the customer, are in the front line and we all know it can be all too easy to do nothing. Remember the point though: if you've paid good money for something which is sub-standard, then you've been swindled - so complain! So how? Opening Times offers a few words of advice and technical points:

- ★ **Be Polite** - if you create a conflict, you've lost. - the licensee has home advantage!
- ★ **Be Discreet** - no licensee wants to draw attention to a problem
- ★ **Be Reasonable** - if the beer has reached the end of the barrel, you can tell at once. The landlord may be unaware of this.
- ★ **Be Diplomatic** - "I think this might have gone" is less of an insult to the cellarman's craft than "this tastes foul!"

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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Disco and Quiz Thursday and Sunday Disco

- ★ **Be Sensible** - a tiny shortfall in volume isn't worth the fuss, but nearly an inch is worth a polite request to "squeeze a drop more in".
- ★ **Be Decisive** - bad beer should be returned promptly. Struggling valiantly through 3/4 of a pint will undermine your case.
- ★ **Don't** - complain to an outside body (see below) without first trying to gain satisfaction in the pub.
- ★ **Don't** - accept the guff that "real ale is supposed to look like that" or that old standby "no-one else has complained". Stand your ground. The law on "full measure" is currently something of a shambles - the head is legally part of your pint but the Brewers Society say that your pint should be 95% liquid and short measures should be topped up with good grace. Trading Standards officers may be prepared to take action if these guidelines are consistently flouted. Beer which is "off" is "goods unfit for the purpose" under the Trades Description Act and you have a statutory right to redress. You could ask for your money back, but a replacement from another barrel is usually the best solution. You should be able to read the price list without binoculars or a stepladder. What do you mean "what price list?"

If you **don't** get satisfaction from the licensee, contact:
The Trading Standards Officer (for consistent short measure or missing price list) - **The Environmental Health Officer** (for sour beer or unhygienic practices), **The Brewery/Pub Owner** - (for poor beer in a tied house or poor customer service), **The local branch of CAMRA** (who will certainly check up on any horror stories). Luckily none of the above is relevant in most of the pubs in the Opening Times area.

Local Trading Standards Contacts are:

- Stockport - 0161 474 4248, Manchester - 0161 234 5600
- Tameside - 0161 342 3477, Derbyshire - 01629 585858
- Cheshire - 01244 602500, Trafford - 0161 912 2274

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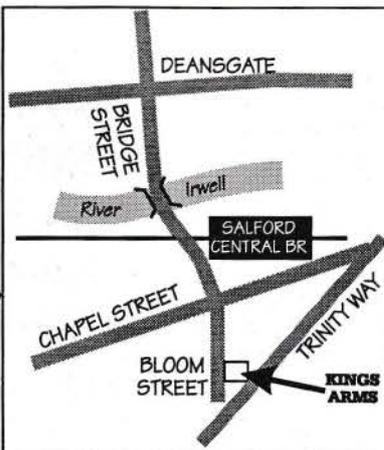
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a warm welcome from all
at the Kings Arms

Beehive Buzzes

In previous issues we have briefly touched on the exciting developments at the Beehive in New Mills. Here Geoff Williamson has an in-depth look at the pub.

The Beehive can be found on the right-hand side of Albion Road as you travel down the hill from Newtown Station. The small stone-built pub has an unusual cheese-wedge shape dictated by the acute angle on the junction of Albion Road with Woodside Street, on the corner of which it stands.

This wasn't always the case, however. The Beehive was once located on the opposite side of Albion Road and some distance up the hill, close to the toll bar, which was removed in 1886. The Toll House and the pub were then both subsequently demolished in 1902 to make way for the Midland Railway, the pub being rebuilt in its present position, reputedly a reconstruction of the old toll house.

The Beehive was purchased last year by a local businessman and was immediately closed for refurbishment, a task which took six months to complete. On its reopening in February it was clear why the work had taken so much longer than the usual pub refurb.

This was no 'makeover' but involved stripping the building almost back to its shell, and then carrying out the work with care and a thoroughness that is almost unprecedented. The best features of the pub have, however, been retained and improved upon. The outside stonework has been cleaned and augmented by a small set-paved forecourt, and new windows and signs complete the exterior. It is inside though, that the changes are most apparent with the new oak bar and accessories, the Mediterranean tiled floor and the bistro-style furniture creating an interior which has a simple, understated quality. The pub remains small, but the drinking area has been enlarged into the space previously occupied by the toilets which have been relocated to the first floor, next to the 'Toll House' restaurant, which is due to open shortly. A toilet for disabled use is provided at ground floor level.

The cellar has not been overlooked either and is an immaculate environment for the storage and conditioning of beer. It is equipped with state of the art equipment including a two-tier self-tilting stillage, hydraulic barrel lift and full temperature control.

The best news, however, comes quite rightly from the bar, where an interesting line-up of cask-conditioned beers is on offer. Whim Hartington Bitter and Arbor Light are regulars, with the addition of at least one guest - at the time of my visit Magic Mushroom Mild completed the range from Whim, and Broughton's Merlin Ale was also available. All are served in lined glasses to assist the staff in giving the customer a full measure.

The Beehive is licensee Debbie's first pub, although she has worked in the trade for over 22 years, and local drinkers seem to approve of her efforts so far as business has been good since reopening. Lunchtime food is already available in the bar. The interesting menu includes vegetarian dishes all at reasonable prices, which are cooked daily from fresh ingredients on the premises.

The new-look Beehive has added a new style and welcome variety to the New Mills pub scene and is well worth a visit when in the area. It's only about a five-minute walk from Newtown Station or alternatively buses 358 and 199 from Stockport will also take you there (the 358 goes past the door).

Hong Kong Heist

Local CAMRA member Chris Walkden has just returned from an overseas trip shell-shocked by the prices he encountered in Hong Kong...

At a rate of about 12 Hong Kong Dollars to the Pound, Draught Boddingtons came in at £4.55 a pint (including froth) which made the Tetleys at £4.25 a pint almost a bargain. These were of course the keg versions so on the lookout for something more palatable, he came across bottled Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Sam Smith's Taddy Porter and Old Speckled Hen - a snip at just £3.75 a throw! The Tetley's just about had that typical taste after you had let it warm up for about 30 minutes! Whilst these were prices in the hotel (a 4 star), I found these prices seemed not too much out of line with outside bars. It seems such a shame with China just next door that some of the excellent local brews have not yet come across the border. And I though draught Boddies fizz at £3.10 a pint in the Radisson at Ringway was bad news... Meanwhile, I was in South Africa in late February - beer there is incredibly cheap - about 70p a pint. Bad news is that it is so bland and tasteless that you don't feel like drinking too much!!

Vaux Shambles

More uncertainty looms for local Vaux licensees following the collapse of the proposed management buy-out of the company's two breweries and 350 pubs.

The Sunderland-based company, now renamed The Swallow Group, was originally intending to sell off its breweries, the Vaux plant in the north east and Wards of Sheffield, together with a package of pubs including The Thatched House on Chestergate and the Swan, Shaw Heath, both in Stockport.

That fell through when major shareholders vetoed the scheme and it has now been announced that the entire tenanted estate of 634 pubs is to be sold off, leaving Swallow with a couple of hundred managed pubs and a hotel chain (and ripe for takeover). This could perhaps be a lifeline for one of the breweries. Both are due to close, with 700 job losses, on 2 July unless buyers are found but it is thought that the buy-out team may be interested in purchasing just Wards brewery and its 200 tenancies. This would not only save jobs and some very popular beers, but also see the re-emergence of Wards as an independent brewer.

This is small consolation to many local licensees, though, who now await the sale of their pubs to the highest bidders. It is possible that the pubs may be sold in smaller packages to local brewers, or the entire estate may be picked up by one of the expanding pub companies. Either way, this is fresh uncertainty for local pubs, many of which were just finding their feet again after many years of neglect on the Wilsons/Grand Met/Intreprenuer merry-go-round which also saw many experienced licensees leave the trade.

and Greenalls?

The financial papers were full of rumours that Greenalls and Whitbread were to do a deal over Greenalls remaining estate. The later rumours of a merger between the Whitbread and Allied Domecq pub estates would seem to have ended this, but given what has happened to some of the former estate - already on their third owner in fifteen months - the uncertainty is going to continue.

17

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Our Second Beer Festival

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Fri 14 May Wrench 280

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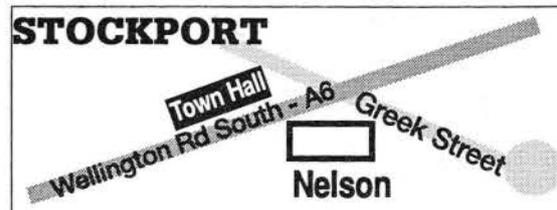
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STOCKPORT



CAMRA CALLING!

Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak, Macclesfield & Trafford & Hulme

Diary

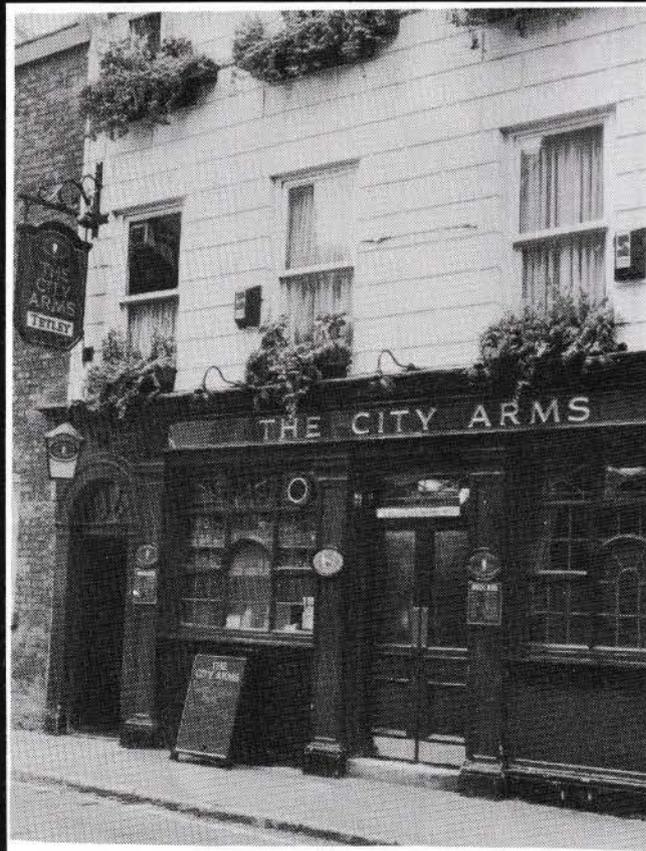
May 99

Monday 10th – Social: White Swan, Green St, Fallowfield. Starts 9.00pm.
Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting: Royal Oak, High St, Cheadle. Starts 8.00pm. **NB Guest Speaker – Chris Hopkins, Chief Executive of Hydes' Brewery so a good turnout please.**
Saturday 15th – Day trip to brew pubs in Osset and Dewsbury. Minibus departs Royal Oak, Didsbury 10.15am; Crown, Heaton Lane 10.30. Price will include £3 for pie, peas and beer at Dewsbury. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177.
Monday 17th – Social: George & Dragon, Manchester Rd, Heaton Chapel. Starts 9.00pm.
Friday 21st – Ardwick, Brunswick & Chorlton-on-Medlock (ABC) Stagger: Meet 7.00pm Seven Stars, Ashton Old Rd, Ardwick; 8.30 Church, Ardwick Green.
Monday 24th – Social and Brewery Visit: Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, Manchester. Starts 8.30pm.
Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation to The Hogshead, Oxford Rd, Manchester
Sunday 30th – Trip to beer festival at Bentley Brook Hotel, Fenny Bentley (home of Leatherbritches Brewery) and possible early evening at Waters Green, Macclesfield. Minibus leaves Royal Oak, Didsbury 10.15am; Crown, Heaton Lane 10.30. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177.

May 99

High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all point north. They have advised us of the following events:
Monday 10th – Branch AGM: The Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. All members please attend this important meeting. Starts 8.30pm.
Friday 21st – Social: Beehive, Albion Rd, New Mills. Starts 9.00pm.
Tuesday 1st June – Committee Meeting: Beehive, New Mills
Monday 7th – Branch Meeting: Q, Stalybridge. Saturday 3rd July – ADVANCE NOTICE: Branch sponsored walk, 15 miles, 7 Good Beer Guide pubs. All welcome to take part, either whole route or stages. Details from either Tom Lord (0161 427 7099) or Frank Wood (01457 865426) Apart from Macclesfield and Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch cover a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton.
They have advised us of the following events:
Monday 17th – Committee Meeting: The Highwayman, Rainow. Starts 8.00pm.
Saturday 22nd – Joint Social with South Cheshire Branch at The Albion, Pedley St, Crewe. Starts 8pm.
Monday 24th – Monthly Branch Meeting: Bells of Peover, Lower Peover. Starts 8.00pm.
Thursday 27th – Spring Pub of the Season presentation to the Crown, Crown Lane, Swan Green (B5081), Lower Peover. Starts 8.00pm.
Sunday 6th June – Sunday lunch social at the Dog, Well bank Lane, Over Peover. Starts 12.30pm.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 99 Planner



EARLY EVENING MEALS NOW SERVED!

Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers

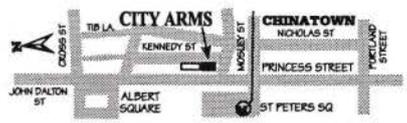
MAY BEER FESTIVAL

(throughout May)
 Among our other guests:
 Arundel Hare of the Dog; Hopback GFB, Entire Stout, Summer Lightning; Hoskins Maypole; Otter Bitter, Ale; Elgoods Black Dog; Brakspear Bitter, Bee Sting; Ashvile Bowls to You; Harviestoun Mayfest; Wychwood Owzat; Batemans Hillbilly, XXXB; Caledonian One o'clock gun; Tomintoul Ginger Tom; Weltons Abinger Hammer...etc...etc



KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

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





Belgian Chowder

For this month's recipe, I have taken the New England thick potato soup, clam chowder, and adapted it to arrange a marriage between Belgian Geuze (pronounced 'hurser') which I feel is one of my most successful meals. With a healthy input of potatoes and a full consistency, I can quite happily say that the 'soup' is definitely a meal on its own. The recipe serves six.

Ingredients

3 Tablespoons vegetable oil	3-4 bayleaves
1 medium onion, chopped	Pinch salt
3 oz white flour, sieved.	Large teaspoon ground black pepper
¾ pint milk	4-5 medium potatoes
¾ pint fish stock	
1 can Baxter's Lobster Bisque	
½ litre Gueze (or 1 glass white wine)	

Method

1. De-gas the gueze by pouring from glass to glass and place to one side. Note Sainsbury's Gueze or Frank Boon Gueze are particularly suitable, don't use a very sour gueze.
2. Peel and dice potatoes into 1 inch cubes; par boil until just undercooked (about 8 minutes) and place on one side.
3. Heat oil in a large saucepan (at least 4 pint), lightly fry the onion with the bayleaves. Don't allow the onion to brown.
4. Add flour and stir well to form an even, creamy roux. Again, don't allow to brown.

5. Add pepper and then slowly combine half the milk, stirring in a figure of eight to keep the texture smooth.
6. Add the lobster bisque and stir in.
7. Increase the heat, stirring all the time, and add the fish stock.
8. Turn the heat back down and slowly add the gueze.
9. Add the potatoes and stir in.
10. Adjust the thickness using the remaining milk.

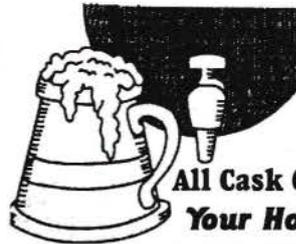
You now have a basic chowder. However, the dish will be greatly enhanced by the addition of some kind of fish - crab, scampi, cod, smoked haddock or even the dreaded clam (I find the shell fish rubbery and, in my opinion, it clashes with the other textures in the dish). My preferred option, however, is 4 oz of prawns and two fillets of white haddock. Cut the haddock into bite-sized chunks and add these and the prawns to the chowder. Simmer for no more than 3 minutes, whether or not you add the fish.

Serve in soup bowls with a decent bread and enjoy - perhaps with an extra bottle (or three!) of gueze to wash it down.

OPENING TIMES 181 Design and Origination by CPPR, a division of Connaught Technologies, Mcr. Office is located at: 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP. Tel/Fax 0161 432 8384 E-mail pbh@opentime.u-net.com Printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.

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Greenalls
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All Cask Conditioned - Guest Ales

Your Hosts Ian & Christine

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The Pride of Bollington – Ten of the Best

One changeable November Saturday, I and a few friends set out to explore this large Cheshire village. Bollington was once a thriving industrial area paying homage to 'king cotton'. To the south, its bigger neighbour, Macclesfield, has taken most of the industry away and the place now has more of a rural village feel about it.

Places of interest include the Macclesfield Canal, which passes through on a magnificent aqueduct, the Gritstone Trail nearby and the 'White Nancy' monument, sitting invitingly atop Kerridge Hill. Around and about there are twenty-odd pubs to whet the appetite, so here is a selection of those, with the promise of a follow-up article on a future visit.

The Poachers, Ingersley Road

This pub was formerly known as the Masonic Arms and is an end of terrace building, built from local stone, just a short walk from the bus terminus. It is one of the "Out Inn Cheshire" pub guide's flagship entries and it's easy to see why. The entrance, with stained glass panel in the door, leads to a tiny cottage-style lounge area with a real fire and relaxing armchairs. The bar is a long narrow affair with comfortable seating areas split up in alcove-style. There is an emphasis on good value food (it may not be the cheapest but the quality is some of the best I have encountered). There is also a separate pool room and outside a beer garden which features barbecues in the summer months.

Real Ales: Boddingtons Bitter, Taylor's Landlord, Marston's Head Brewers Choice (on this occasion Monk's Habit).

Church House Inn, Chapel Street

The second of our "Out Inn Cheshire" flagship entries, on the corner of Church Street at the end of a row of terraced cottages. Inside there's a quadrant shaped bar which overlooks the main lounge with its real fire (real fires seem to be a feature of Bollington pubs) and church pew-style seating. A further back room is used

for drinking and dining – food is again a feature here and the pub is included in both Egon Ronay and CAMRA guides to pub food. There are some unusual features in the gents including barrel ends advertising various ales and a toilet seat converted into a mirror! Real Ales: Flowers IPA, Theakstons Best Bitter, Wadworth 6X.

Cotton tree, Ingersley Road

A Good Beer Guide listed, pleasant corner local, facing the bus terminus. The stone-built building has been very well refurbished inside by owners Vaux. It's a cosy little pub with pictures of old Bollington on the walls, good stained glass panels above the bar, stoned flagged floor, open fire and a separate games area. During the 1830s this was the meeting place for members of what became the Bollington Building Society.

Real Ales: Vaux Bitter, Samson, Wards Bitter.

Meridian, Palmerston Street

Bollington's oldest pub and another in the Good Beer Guide. Changes of ownership down the years now see it in the hands of Enterprise Inns, but it's none the worse for that. All pubs must have been like this once as it is like stepping into a timewarp. Enter through its preserved half-glazed door with brass rails and gaze in wonder at the black and white mosaic tiled floor and myriad of tiny rooms. There's a lounge at the back with leather-covered settles, coal burning stove and piano. Each of the other rooms has its own character – darts in one, TV and pool in another and, tucked away at the end of a corridor another lounge with all its original features. Even the original bell-pushes remain (they still work, I am told, although they are often unplugged for fear of misuse). Table skittles, a local favourite, is played here. The passageway to the gents take you through a door incorporating a grille made from old horseshoes. On a personal note, this is easily the best pub in Bollington for me.

Real Ales: Boddingtons Bitter, Theakstons Mild, Wilson's Bitter.

Holly Bush, Palmerston Street

A black and white mock Tudor building with mullioned windows, close to the village centre. The interior has retained virtually all of its 1930s features. There are leaded windows incorporating a holly bush design, 'sash window' bar fittings with leaded glass panels, and a wealth of superb wood panelling. There is a stone fireplace

20

Alan and Louise welcome you to the CALEDONIA

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in the back lounge with a fine period wooden surround. There is also a front lounge, tiny snug and, upstairs, a games room.
Real Ales: Robinson's Best Bitter, Hatters Mild.

Queens Arms, High Street

From the outside, this pub has retained much of its solid original façade, but once inside the modern, spacious interior reflects the brewery's standardised designs. A popular locals' pub close to the old village green, and Good Beer Guide listed.
Real Ales: Robinson's Best Bitter, Hatters Mild.

Dog & Partridge, Palmerston Street

Cosy, smart pub, just behind the aqueduct, with three pleasantly furnished rooms and bar area. Behind the bar is a parquet floor and a perspex Guinness clock hangs from the ceiling. Unusual table lamp holders whose wooden bases depict barrels on stillage. Formerly a Bell's house.
Real Ales: Robinson's Best Bitter, Hatters Mild.

Waggon & Horses, Wellington Road

One of Bollington's larger pubswith an impressive stone portico entrance and the original pub name in the floor tiling. Etched windows and high ceilings both feature here, as does the almost inevitable (and welcome) real fire. There is a quiet raised area to the rear and archways lead into other rooms, with one for pub games.
Real Ales: Boddingtons Bitter, Guest Beer (from Greenall's list).

Royal Oak, Palmerston Street

Basic two-roomer with one room serving as a dimmer 'blue light' games area. The other is a plainly furnished lounge, albeit with television. There is a presentation trophy cabinet on one wall and an unusual iron-frame coat rack by the door.
Real Ales: Marston's Bitter, Pedigree

Olde Cock & Pheasant, Bollington Road

Brick-built, Grade II listed pub by Bollington Cross, and dating from the 18th Century. There is an interesting builder's mark above the door. The modernised interior has been extended into adjoining cottages but still retains a cosy, unspoilt feel. There is also a

conservatory and substantial outside drinking areas. Again there is an accent on food, and a hearty evening meal was taken here.
Real Ales: Boddingtons Bitter, Greenall's Bitter

There we are then, a selective overview of the pubs in Bollington. Details of opening times and other facilities can be found in CAMRA's excellent 'Out Inn Cheshire' pub guide (£4.95 from good bookshops and some local pubs). My thanks to Ian our guide and mentor on the day who led us round the pubs. We shall return!

Public Transport Details: A round trip from Stockport is probably the best way to explore the area and allows for unlimited time. Catch bus 391 (operated by Arriva Midland North) from Stockport Bus Station (Stand C) to Bollington (runs hourly, fare £2.05 single). Return to Macclesfield via bus 12 (also operated by Arriva, frequent daytime service, hourly evenings, fare £1.05 single). From Macclesfield to Stockport by train (£1.85 evening single after 18.30). Alternatives are a 'Wayfarer' ticket at £6.60 offering unlimited travel on the day. Note that the last bus operating out of Bollington into Stockport is at 18.09.

THE CASTLE

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NOW SERVING THE COMPLETE
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!
Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
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A WARM WELCOME
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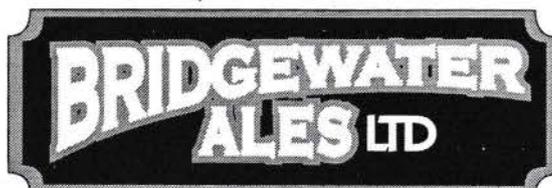
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Delph Porter

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Barton Ale

4.3% ABV



Navigator*

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

JOIN CAMRA NOW! - SEE FORM ON PAGE 23



22



MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

A very quiet month this time, with not even the obligatory new café bar to report on (although there are plenty in the pipeline...). Still, I did manage to get a good look at the revamped Footage & Firkin on Mosely Street, and very impressive it is too, confirming my initial impressions last month.

The pub has (in keeping with an attempt to make the Firkin pubs more 'woman-friendly') generally been made less gimmicky with most, if not all, of the Firkin imagery – the jokey signs, the punning slogans – all removed, to be replaced with a more sophisticated and upmarket design. The one loss is the over-sized pub games, but this only attracted a small (and usually exuberantly inebriated crowd). The woodwork is lighter, there are large rugs and comfortable sofas, and a warmer colour scheme. The big driving game machines are also due for removal. Chatting to manager John Anderson, he told me that about 20 or so Firkins had been redesigned in this way and it seemed to be the way forward for the chain, though if the allied-whitbread deal goes through, who knows? He was also pleased to say that the changes had seen a more upmarket clientele at the weekends. The Forgery sells the full range of Firkin beers brewed by 'Sutty' at the Footage on Grosvenor Street, including the specials, and in my experience they are all on top form.

I was shocked to hear of the ex-Greenalls pub sell-off (see this month's Pub News). This uncertainty is just what some of these pubs don't need. I have also heard a whisper that Greene King are to sell off the bulk of their Manchester estate. This seems a strange move given that they have already disposed of some of the poorer performing outlets and are just getting established in the area. More on this one as things develop.

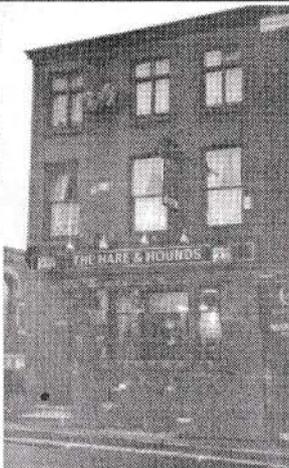
There's a new licensee at the Britannia in Beswick, the new landlady having arrived from the Church in Clayton. This is an excellent little pub that has had too many licensees in recent years, no doubt reflecting its out of the way position in an inner city area with more than its share of social problems. Having said that, the welcome has always been warm and the beer excellent and it would be nice to think that the pub is entering a period of stability, particularly as it will be well-placed to cash in on the new stadium once it is built. Lees are also due to refurbish all of their pubs in the foreseeable future so the Brit may also benefit from some inward investment (although I do hope that they resist the temptation to muck about with the multi-roomed interior).

Being mucked about with good and proper, though is the former Town Hall Tavern on Tib Lane. For years this traded successfully, and served a decent enough pint of real ale. Not too long ago it was turned into Copperbutts, a café bar set up with no cask beer. It's now closed again, this time to be turned into 'Flares', a Seventies

theme bar. It almost goes without saying that all this nonsense comes to you courtesy of Bass.

Staying in the City Centre, Maxine Doyle at Tetley's Hare & Hounds on Shudehill has started selling J W Lees Bitter alongside the Tetley and Holts. The Lees is priced at £1.15 to match the price of the popular Holt's. She is trying the beer on an experimental basis at the moment to give drinkers who do not like Holt's an alternative. Meanwhile the licensee of the now-demolished Nickleby's on Dale Street has moved to take up the post at Oldham Road's Cheshire Cheese. It remains to be seen if cask beer will be available at the Cheese as it has been a keg John Smiths outlets for donkeys years. I also hear a report that Holt's Crown & Anchor on Cateaton Street is due to reopen on May 12 – a full report next time if this is the case. Out in the suburbs, the Dolphin in West Gorton has reportedly reopened, but I have no further information as to beer range at the moment. Not too far away, long-time licensee Sue Condon has retired after 12 years at the spotlessly run Park on Ardwick Green. This tenanted Burtonwood house is in new hands now and unfortunately the first thing to go has been cask Burtonwood Bitter, replaced by smooth – a great shame.

Finally, I hear that the Victoria in Withington closed suddenly just as we went to press. This has the potential to be a fine local (although, in my opinion, largely unrealised potential so far) and I am sure that Hydes' will be seeking to reopen it as quickly as possible.



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Shock news this month is the closure of the Crown ('Corner Cupboard') on Hillgate, Stockport. After a chequered few years, the pub seemed to have found a new lease of life under licensee Alan Roebuck, culminating in a first-class refurbishment a couple of years ago. We understand, though, that trade had declined dramatically since Christmas and financial problems led to the pub's sudden closure. It remained closed as we went to press and, with the entire Vaux pub estate on the market, its future must be in some doubt.

The Bromale in Bramhall has lost all its real ale. A recent visit found the handpumps in place but unmarked and, according to a bar person "permanently disused". Needless to say the Bromale is a Bass pub. There is better news at Shires, which is the public bar of the County Hotel. Three cask beers are on sale - Worthington Best Bitter, Greene King IPA and, as a permanent guest, Fullers London Pride. The IPA was particularly good when OT called recently.

Work continues on Stockport's Manchester Arms. The pub has been gutted and extended backwards into neighbouring buildings and as we went to press a conservatory-like structure was taking shape on roughly the site formerly occupied by the pub's toilets. An entertainment license has also been applied for but the opening is some way off - probably September.

Stockport's Nelson Tavern on Wellington Road South hasn't always had the best press in these pages but things are definitely on the up. Manager Nigel Pitman has had the foresight to give enthusiastic bar-cellarman Dean Farrah his head when it comes to the beer range and the result has been not only two or three changing guest beers each week but one successful beer festival at the pub with another one in the pipeline this month. Guests tend to major on the north of the country (with Caledonian beers very popular) and the south featuring beers from the likes of Hook Norton and Shepherd Neame. In fact the Shepherd Neame Spring beer was on sale when OT called and very good it was too (rather better and cheaper in fact than the same beer in a Sheps tied house in Brighton visited recently). Dean tells us that there is a significant demand for cask beer in the pub which, given its largely youthful clientele, is good news indeed. The forthcoming beer festival promises some fine beers indeed including Adnams Broadside, Caledonian Porter, Golden Promise and Deuchars IPA, Malton Pickwick Porter and the famous Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (yes, it's a mild and yes, it's 6% alcohol!).

Readers may recall that Greenalls sold their tenanted and leased pubs to Japanese bank Nomura, who run the pubs via a subsidiary called Inn Partnership. Nomura have another subsidiary called Phoenix Inns which they tend to use as a vehicle for selling unwanted pubs. It looks as though Nomura have trawled through the former Greenalls/Boddingtons pubs as a large number have been put up for sale (along with some other ex-Wilsons pubs). In Manchester and Stockport, those up for grabs include the Coach & Horse, Portwood (despite rumours that it has been sold already); Crown Inn, Openshaw; Honeycomb, Beswick; Navigation, Stockport; Oddfellows, Openshaw; and the Greyhound, Handforth.

Back in Stockport, we hear that at long last, Scottish & Newcastle are to spend some money on the Chestergate Tavern. Since they took the pub over all they have done is install some pool tables upstairs. The rest of the pub has been left to gently decay and outside it is now simply an eyesore, so any form of investment is long overdue.

Miles out of the OT area, but the Dog & Partridge on Manor Street in Bolton seems to be going great guns. Not only is it the current Bolton CAMRA Pub of the Season but they license Damien and Holly ran a first anniversary celebration at the end of April, featuring the full range of Thwaites cask beers. In fact, they've got so carried away that they are doing it again on 21st of this month. Well worth a visit if you're in the area.



Who will succeed New Forest and Dunkerton's as holders of CAMRA's Cider and Perry of the Year awards? There's only one place to find out - Stockport Beer & Cider Festival next month. Following the successful move last year of this prestigious competition from the Great British Beer Festival to a time in the year which best suits the product, it is once again being held at the Town Hall during our Beer Festival.

A huge list of ciders and perries commonly available is being drawn up by APPLE, CAMRA's special cider and perry committee. This will now be whittled down and will form the bulk of our cider order. The total order will again be in the region of 250 gallons and will cover all spectrums of taste from the sweet to the very dry. Final judging will be on Saturday 5th June with the winners announced sometime during the afternoon session. Also to be announced at the same time is this year's winner of the Pomona Award, presented annually to that person or organisation that has done most to promote traditional cider and perry during the previous 12 months.

Addlestons back On Board

Addlestons, the Matthew Clark brand at the heart of the long-running "fake dispense" controversy, has returned to the real cider fold. Although it was a 'real cider' sold via handpump, the producers insisted on recommending it to be served under gas pressure, thus disbaring from the Good Beer Guide most pubs that stocked it. Now, following some trials last year and requests by their customers for a real cider which would be approved by CAMRA, Matthew Clark have announced that all handpumped Addlestons will have the gas switched off. For those outlets unwilling or unable to handle the product without this, a new keg font will be available. The product is to be relaunched this month with a new design handle and pumpclip. All outlets should be converted to the new dispense methods by the end of June.

Commented APPLE Chair Paula Waters: "This is brilliant news - persistent campaigning for the last eight years finally wins the day!"

Festival News (from front page)

should have their new summer beer Hop a Long on sale. Lovers of the hop should also look out for the astonishing Indian Summer Pale Ale from the Swale Brewery.

Our 'Special Beers' section is a fairly recent category at the Festival and here we have ten contenders including a new Ginger & lemon beer from Manchester's Footage & Firkin, Heather Ale from Scotland's Fraoch, a cask lager from Roosters and two beers, Puzzle and Golden Thread, from the ever-reliable Salopian Brewery.

Salopian will also feature amongst the ten stouts and portes with their award-winning Ironbridge Stout (a previous Beer of the Festival). The range also includes Bridgewater's Delph Porter, Norfolk Porter from the Green Jack Brewery and the formidable P2 Stout from the Bass Museum Brewery which weighs in at eight per cent alcohol. Which leads us nicely on to Old Ales where we have eight offerings. Robinson's Old Tom heads the pack at 8.5 per cent, closely followed by Butterknowle Old Ebenezer at 8%. Wolf Brewery's Timberwolf at 5.8% is a newer beer in the sector and one to look out for.

So, something for everyone. Do remember, though, that not all beers will be on at the same time and one or two may not even arrive (although we usually have an acceptable alternative if that happens).