

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:182

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Issue 6

OPENING TIMES



FREE

JUNE 1999

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BLOODBATH!

Brewers Wield Axe Nationwide

Local drinkers are likely to feel the effects of the latest round of brewery closures announced last month, with popular beers either axed or brewed at different sites. In addition many local pubs could find themselves with new owners and the possible loss of their guest beers.



The Swallow Group, the company formerly known as Vaux, have confirmed that both their Sunderland and Sheffield breweries will be closing on 2 July. The closure of Sunderland was widely expected but hopes remained high that the Wards Brewery at Sheffield could be saved until the last minute collapse of a proposed management buyout late last

month. Along with the breweries, popular beers such as Vaux Samson and Wards Bitter will vanish, to be replaced in the remaining Vaux pubs with high profile, and generally inferior, national brands.

Not that Vaux are likely to have many pubs left locally as their entire tenanted estate is being sold with Wearside operator Pubmaster tipped to pick up all 664 pubs. Pubmaster has supply deals with all the national brewers and a number of independents like Wolverhampton & Dudley.

On top of these expected closures came the shock announcement that Scottish Courage were to end 300 years of brewing tradition by closing their Bristol Brewery and moving production of Courage Director's and Best Bitter to Tadcaster. The closure was blamed on a slump in cask ale sales - Bristol is a dedicated cask ale brewery - but the real truth is that this is a decline engineered by Scottish Courage themselves, with little or no promotion of the Courage cask beers. It remains to be seen if the taste of the Courage beers can be replicated at the new site, and whether people will want to drink them. On top of all this is the proposed Whitbread-Allied Domecq deal whereby Whitbread will buy the Allied pub estate (and so, with some 700 pubs, become the biggest pub owner in the country) and float off its remaining breweries, probably via a management buyout led by Whitbread Beer Company boss Miles Templeman. As a non-brewing company (presumably the Firkin breweries which Whitbread will inherit don't count) the enlarged Whitbread's tenants and leaseholders will lose their guest beer rights. This will not only put the final nail in the coffin of the one good thing to come out of the 1989 Monopolies Commission report on the brewing industry but also threaten the future of many micro brewers who rely on this market for their survival.

See further articles on Pages 6 & 7 on this vital issue

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale is determined to fight these damaging developments, aiming to see the Bristol Brewery sold as a going concern and to preserve guest beers in Whitbread and Allied Domecq pubs.

STOP PRESS. As we went to press, news broke that Morlands of Abingdon, brewers of Old Speckled Hen and 'Ruddles' County, are in talks with Abbot Ale brewers Greene King with a view to an agreed takeover of Morlands by the Suffolk giant. This would almost certainly lead to the closure of the Morlands Brewery and the possible loss of some beers - certainly the standard Morlands Beers and possibly even the Ruddles brands could face the axe. More on this next month.

"Absolute Nonsense"?

Scottish Courage MD Graham Kendrick was quick to rubbish CAMRA claims that lack of promotion was behind the decline in sales of Courage Directors and Best Bitter. "This is absolute nonsense," he told trade paper *Licensee*. Unfortunately for him the facts tell a different story.

Kendrick claims that when sponsorship is taken into account, Scottish Courage is investing more than £1 million a year in the beer. Well, up to a point. Sponsorship is all very well for maintaining awareness of a product, but to push sales of these big brands you need to advertise. So, let's look at some advertising budgets.

In the same issue of *Licensee*, beer writer Roger Protz came up with some very interesting figures. Last year Scottish Courage spent over £2¾ million on keg John Smiths, and £900,000 on the cask version. Compare and contrast these figures with the spend on the Courage beers for the same period. Best Bitter had just £5372 spent on it. And Courage Directors? £45. That's right, forty five pounds.

Graham Kendrick is playing with figures. The fact remains that virtually no money has been spent on pushing Courage beers. Their decline has been engineered. To claim anything else is indeed "absolute nonsense".

In JUNE's OPENING TIMES

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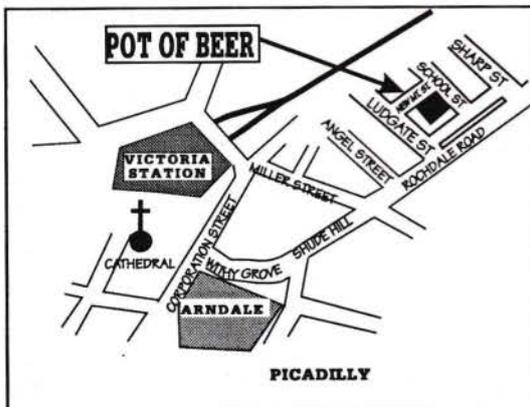
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

The national brewers are telling you lies. They like to make out that cask ale is in serious, and possibly terminal decline. People just don't want to drink it any more they say.

Lies, all lies. The real truth is that these brewers don't really want you to drink their cask beers. They no longer promote them and they seem to have little interest in brewing them. Despite the weasel words of brewery executives the facts speak for themselves - little or no advertising spend on their cask beers and millions spent on pushing smooth keg.

This, in effect is where CAMRA came in 28 years ago. If anything, though, the position is now worse than ever. The national brewers exercise a greater grip on the beer market than they did then. In 1971 they also all brewed some decent, tasty beers. If truth be told, hardly any of the national brews are worth drinking today. They are lowest common denominator beers with neither taste nor character. They have been so deprived of character that there is little difference between them and their smooth equivalents.

We in CAMRA have been too slow to condemn these travesties of the brewers art. At CAMRA's national conferences our colleagues on Merseyside have put forward motions to cast out these poor beers, to treat them with the contempt they deserve and effectively deprive them from CAMRA recognition despite their tenuous claims to 'cask conditioned' status. These moves were rejected but it is now clear that we were wrong to do so. By endorsing these thin, limp excuses for real ale we, too, have played our part in accelerating their decline both in the eyes of the consumer and those who produce them.

Is it now too late to take action? No, it is not. While the national brewers, by their very size and market domination, are able to manipulate national statistics, at the regional and micro level a rather different picture is to be found. Micros are brewing to capacity, some regionals are posting huge year on year increases in their cask ales, even those facing a drop in cask ale sales report it to be much, much less than that national picture would have you believe.

The time has come for a revolution in CAMRA's approach to the brewing industry. As the national brewers have abandoned all that we hold dear, we must abandon the national giants. Let them plough their own furrow, contemptuous of their customers, ignorant of their traditions and caring only of profit and 'shareholder value'. We must devote our energies to promoting and protecting those breweries who do still uphold all that is best about our cask beer and public house heritage. We must campaign tirelessly - to promote their pubs and make their beers the drink of choice for pubgoers everywhere. This is where our future lies. This is where the future of real ale lies.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 182

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).

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			

JUNE
1999



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for June 1999 goes to Paddy's Goose, on Bloom Street in Manchester City Centre.

Hidden away at the back of Chorlton Street bus station, and on the fringes of the 'Gay Village' the thing that strikes you most about the pub is how very well-run it is. Given its City centre location it could easily have become some tacky theme bar or eating house but instead it remains very much a local, albeit with an interesting and varied clientele who co-exist happily side by side.

This stability and local atmosphere is largely due to the fact that, unlike many city centre pubs and bar, despite changes of ownership, Paddy's Goose has been run by the same licensees for about 12 years now. Under Allan and Steve the pub has been efficiently run with great attention to detail, not least with the beer which is reliably in tip-top condition.

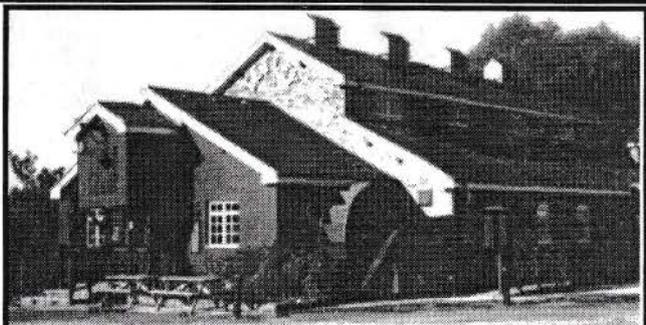
The beers themselves have varied with the pub's owners. Starting out as a Wilson's house the pub moved to The Magic Pub Co and then to current owners Greene King, so the present choice is between Boddingtons Bitter plus Greene King IPA, Triumph and Abbot Ale. However, the pub is about to be sold again and on 3 June was due to be taken over by Clarenbridge, an Altrincham-based pub owning company (who are also taking over the Rising Sun on Jacksons Row), so changes to the beer range may follow.

However, as long as Allan and Steve remain at the helm, Paddy's Goose will remain one of the City Centre's few oases of tradition. An entertaining night is in prospect when we present this award on **Wednesday 30th June** and a must for those who have previously never visited the place. (Note the change from our regular date). JH.

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 182:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Edwardson, Steve Smith, Richard Hough, Kathryn Page, Bryan Carey, John Cresswell, John Hutchinson, Stuart Ballantyne, Phil Booton, Phil Levison, Tim Jones, Tom Lord, The Beer Monster™, Keith Farman, Ian Bradley, Ken Birch



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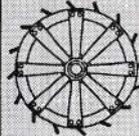
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3



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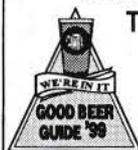
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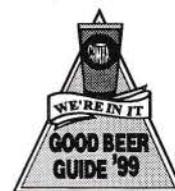


COPY DATE FOR THE JULY ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 25

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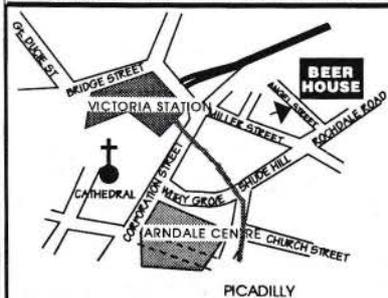
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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

Bramhall is one of those places where a few more pubs certainly wouldn't go amiss. Outside the village centre, the pubs are far flung and not within easy walking distance of each other. So, short of purchasing a pair of running shoes, the only way to cover all the pubs in one evening is to hire a minibus (no-one should attempt this Stagger while driving). Leaving the Crown, Heaton Lane (and an excellent pint of Whim) at 7pm, our first port of call was in fact just outside Bramhall, namely the **Three Bears** in Hazel Grove. Built by Robinson's just five years ago this Jacksons Lane pub has virtually no competition and was accordingly very busy, despite our early arrival. There seemed to be a shortage of bar staff but when we did get served, the Best Bitter, Frederic's and Hartleys XB were all found to be good, the Hatters Mild was less well-regarded but still a reasonable pint. It was pleasing to note the use of oversize lined glasses, thereby guaranteeing full pints. One day all pubs will be like this (HM Government allowing). A good start to the evening.

Back on to the minibus and off to the **Shady Oak** on Redford Drive (this really is in Bramhall) and if you are attempting to visit, I can only suggest you take an 'A to Z' and a compass! In contrast to the first pub, the Shady Oak was relatively empty so we were quickly served with pints of Ind Coope Burton Ale (average to good) and Greene King Abbot Ale (the guest beer and only slightly less well regarded). Tetley Bitter is also available but no one tried this. The pub itself is surprisingly large and somewhat spartan, with a central bar surrounded by contrasting areas. We sat in the vault area and while some of our party tried their hands at darts. Phil Taylor need not worry.

Next stop should have been the **Bromale** near Bramhall Hall. The signs outside this Bass pub proclaimed "cask ale" but they lied. Inside the relatively empty pub the handpumps were disused, permanently so we were told, and only tasteless smooth was on offer. We drove on, making a note to inform Trading Standards of the deceptive sign.

The **Ladybrook** is a large, open plan pub with a plethora of handpumps behind the bar but only one cask ale, Boddingtons Bitter. Many of our party, particularly those who knew the pub prior to the latest refurbishment described the place as 'terrible' and 'appalling'. I wouldn't go as far as that but with the pale woodwork, the slogans on the beams and the mottled brown walls, the best description is tasteless (as was the statement from one of our party who wondered whether the walls' colour scheme was due to a 'dirty protest' by the customers). The beer was the poorest of the night so far, struggling to get much above average.

Travelling into the centre of Bramhall, we first turned into the car park of the Bramhall County Hotel and the **Shires** pub. The sign on the door surprisingly proclaimed 'probably the cheapest beer in Bramhall' which was more a reflection on the lack of competition and the comparatively high prices locally, rather than the low prices in the Shires. For a hotel bar, however, the pub is far better than you would expect with a good pubby atmosphere. The Worthington Bitter was largely ignored and all but one of us went for either the Fuller's London Pride or Greene King IPA. The former, however, soon ran out and those who had managed to get a pint found it close to undrinkable but, creditably, it was changed without any problems. The IPA was considered above average to good while the one brave soul who tried the Worthington Bitter found this very unremarkable beer below average (well, there's a surprise!).

Right in the centre of the village is the **Victoria**. Open plan like the Ladybrook, it looked as though the same designer had been at work here too, but perhaps doing a rather better job with more separate areas. As with many of the pubs we went into that night, the place was crowded and despite a large number of bar staff, it took ages to get served. When we were, we found that the advertised Robinson's Best Bitter was not on so we all settled for Boddingtons Bitter, which was mediocre.

So that was Bramhall, but not the end of our evening. Next stop was the **Smithy**, which is on the outskirts of Cheadle Hulme by the bus terminal and Manchester Rugby Club. The bloke from the Ladybrook and the Victoria had been at it again with his slogans but in truth the Smithy is a different type of pub with a public bar and lounge which is largely a family eatery. The beer was Webster's Bitter, which, although served too cold, was better than you would expect for what is generally a very indifferent beer.

We left the best until last, however - the **Davenport Arms** at Woodford. A real gem of a multi-roomed country pub. What can you say about this extremely popular pub which has been run by the same family for almost 70 years? Superb is a word that comes to mind. The Robinson's Best Bitter, Hatters Mild, Frederics and Old Tom were equally brilliant.

A fine end to the evening. Reflecting on the night as a whole, though, the first thing that need to be said is that this article can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and isn't therefore a once and for all judgement of the pubs or their beers. Having said that, it was clear that the independent brewers' pubs were the best bet and unfortunately on the Bramhall Stagger, they were outside Bramhall. Isn't it time the licensing authorities and local planners allowed one of our local independent brewers to build a pub in this very under-pubbed area? The consumer needs choice!



5

The Nursery Inn



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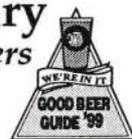
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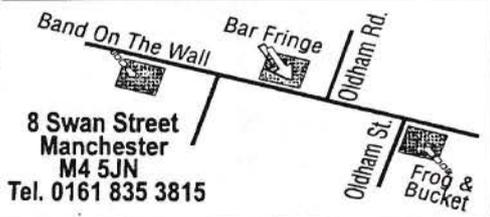
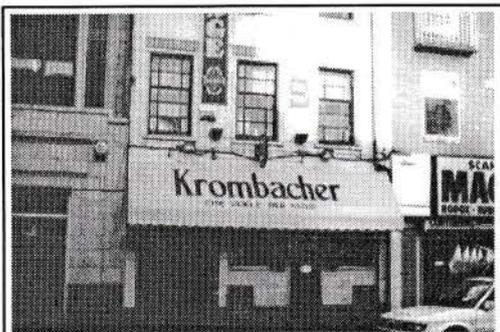
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Guest Ale Threat

CAMRA fights to save beer choice

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is going to war to defend guest beers following Whitbread's bid to buy Allied-Domecq's pub estate.

If Whitbread succeeds, it will be the country's biggest pub retailer with an estate of more than 7,000 outlets.

But to comply with the Beer Orders it would almost certainly have to sell its breweries - which would entitle it to cancel the guest ale rights enjoyed by Whitbread tenants and Allied lessees.

CAMRA National Chairman Dave Goodwin told *Opening Times* that he was deeply concerned at the knock-on effect on regional and microbreweries selling guest beers to Whitbread and Allied tenancies. "It's the biggest single threat to micros we've seen," he said. "The guest beer market is a vital lifeline for many of them. It's their only way into the pub market and many of them could go out of business if Whitbread refused to take guest beers." Dave said that the campaign was also worried by the "massive concentration" of buying power that a 7,000-strong pub group would have, cherry-picking brands from suppliers willing to offer deep discounts.

"Whitbread must allow its licensees to buy local beers and give tenants freedom to buy additional beers. If this doesn't happen then regionals and micros will be squeezed. We must fight the merger of Whitbread and Allied's pub and the sell-off of the breweries with everything we can muster."

He went on to confirm that CAMRA would be seeking an urgent meeting with the Office of Fair Trading to discuss all the implications of the deal and see what action can be taken to save guest beers.

Whitbread may not be the only bidder, though. As we went to press, they had exclusive negotiating rights until the outline of a deal was announced. After that others can enter the fray and two names have already been mentioned. One is Bass, who presumably would have to sell their breweries to close the deal. The other is pub group Punch Taverns who took over the old Bass tenancies and promptly clamped down on guest beers in a big way.

Whoever ends up with the Allied pubs must guarantee, or be made to guarantee, their guest beer rights. Failure to act will be an abdication of responsibility by the competition authorities and spell ruin for many micro brewers.

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

NEW ADVERTISING RATES (from March 31, 1999): 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 240mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. (Please note, as is our normal practice, we are holding advertising rates for all existing regular advertisers at the 1997/8 prices until January 2000. The current increase - for new advertisers only - takes effect from March 31 and is forced on us by pressures to increase the print run and the ever increasing cost of paper)



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Boring Beer

Vaux customers lose "pint of the usual"

Adding insult to injury, Swallow Group (formerly Vaux) is set to inflict on its customers the same old national beers that are available everywhere. This became clear following news that all of the company's tenants have been sent a list of the beers they can but after the Vaux and Wards breweries close. The list contains beers from the four national brewers - Whitbread, Bass, Scottish Courage and Carlsberg Tetley and EXCLUDES Britain's 400 other brewers. The lists contain only three real ales. Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns & Communications for CAMRA said "This is exactly what CAMRA said would happen to the pubs and frankly it's a disgrace. Loyal Vaux customers are expected to bow down and sup up the same old national beers. Pub tenants who have worked hard to develop their businesses around the Vaux and Wards regional favourites are left out in the cold and unable to offer their customers anything interesting."

The Swallow Group has confirmed that it is in talks with Pubmaster, the 1,500 strong pub chain, involving the purchase of the entire Swallow tenanted estate - a move which will see most if not all Vaux pubs in the Opening Times area change ownership.

Mike Benner added, "Pubmaster does offer its tenants a wider choice than this new list, but nothing can replace the Vaux and Wards beers brewed in their homelands. The Swallow directors should extend the closing date of the breweries until a buyer comes forward who is willing to keep them open."

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 24cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.



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



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



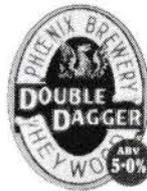
OLD OAK
Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, fruity and dry.



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



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



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



WOBBLY BOB
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It Hasn't Been All Bad

This month sees my fortieth birthday and therefore the completion of twenty-two years of (legal) drinking. Some of you might have imagined I was getting on for twice that age, but that ain't so, and I think the glowing reference last year to "More Than A Feeling" by Boston (possibly the finest rock'n'roll song of all time?) dates me fairly precisely. To mark the occasion, rather than the usual grumbles and criticisms, I will reflect (in strictly alphabetical order) on some of the positive developments during that time.

- ❖ **All-day Opening.** The ridiculous mid-afternoon closing period, which dated back to the days of Lloyd George, has been swept away, even on Sundays. There have been no drunken riots in the streets, daytime drinking is far more civilised, and many pubs in all sorts of locations do well out of it. Allied to this, we finally saw the end of Sunday closing in Wales – pubs in every part of the Principality can now open all day, every day, thus removing one of the last vestiges of 19th Century prohibitionist legislation.
- ❖ **Civilised Pubs.** Although sometimes at the cost of traditional interiors, in general pubs are far more welcoming, clean and pleasant than they used to be. The raw, dirty, threatening boozier is largely a thing of the past, and that must be a good thing, particularly for women, families and older people.
- ❖ **Guest Beers.** In a large proportion of pubs, you now have the expectation of getting something different to the standard range of beers, and that the choice will change over time. This may sometimes lead to too many beers on the bar, but it's better than having to like or lump the unchanging products of a single brewer, and increases the overall level of interest in beer.
- ❖ **Micro Breweries.** I may have criticised those who concentrate on them at the expense of everything else, but they have produced many brilliant beers, made all the better by not having to compromise to satisfy a mass market. The world would be a poorer place without the likes of Hartington Best Bitter and St Arnold. In particular, they have been largely responsible for introducing the distinctive style of dangerously drinkable strong pale ales such as Summer Lightning and Porter's Sunshine, which have been my downfall more than once.
- ❖ **Returning Beer.** In general, nowadays, if you have a cloudy or vinegary pint, it will be changed promptly without fuss. Responses from bar staff such as "Real ale's meant to be like that" or "Have you drunk much Crudgingtons 6X?" are now very rare.
- ❖ **Robinson's and Holt's.** I've always been a strong supporter of independent family brewers, but I will particularly salute two of our local favourites: Robinson's for their determination to plough their own furrow with scant regard for passing trends, their beers, which at their rare best can be superb, and the fact that a Robinson's pub is still, almost without exception, a proper pub; Holt's for their very amazing prices, their uncompromising, no-nonsense approach to business, and the very high standard of their recent new pubs, although their beer has not been all it should in the past few years.
- ❖ **Supermarkets.** The choice of quality bottled beers, both British and imported, available in supermarkets today would have been thought quite incredible in 1977. British micro brewers are well represented, and there's a growing number of bottle-conditioned products. The die-hard pub man may cavil, but it's a fact of life that people with an interest in distinctive beers are increasingly going to be buying them at Tesco and Sainsbury's, as they do with wine.
- ❖ **Wetherspoons.** They're not perfect, far from it, but they have proved that you can develop a thriving business running what basically are proper, civilised pubs which give a high priority to customer service and value, and appeal to all age groups. The creation by other pub operators of copycat chains is testimony to the soundness of the concept.

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '94

This particular issue, No. 122, was something of a milestone, as it marked *Opening Times*' 10th Anniversary. The Editorial thanked all writers, distributors and advertisers, and specific mention was made of the founding editor of *Opening Times*, Humphrey Higgins, who had been determined to see it succeed during the early difficult years. There were specific thanks also to production editor Paul Hutchings, who had been responsible for the increasingly professional appearance of the publication.

Although *Opening Times* was celebrating its 10th Anniversary, it had been running for five years before "Five Years Ago" could start, so this column celebrates its own 10th Anniversary this year.

Still on the nostalgia theme, there was a potted history of *Opening Times* – "10 successful years 1984-1994". This also referred to the original *Opening Times* which was produced by the South Manchester branch of CAMRA in the mid 70's – it didn't last very long, and it was June 1984 before OT appeared again.

But to return to campaigning issues – the front page headline was "Duty War Hots Up". The month had seen the European elections, and CAMRA had joined the fray by issuing its manifesto for Europe. The manifesto called for the retention of the tie for independent brewers, and it wanted the earlier Euro-probe into the tie to look at the marketing abuses by larger brewing companies across the continent. Perhaps more to the point, though, the manifesto was calling for drinks duties across Europe to be harmonised – at the time British beer drinkers were paying an astonishing 21p a pint more than drinkers in the Netherlands, and 26p a pint more than the French. These comparative figures were based on the duty paid on a 5% ABV beer.

Busby's Real Ale Bar in the arrivals hall at the Airport's Terminal Two was reported to be introducing a monthly guest beer. Ind Coope Burton Ale was to appear in May, joining the already available Bass and Tetley Bitter. Further changes were planned to make the bar more like a local pub (including reducing the prices). Two other items of pub news – the Victoria in Bramhall was to have yet another refurbishment, and this time the pub would be closed for six weeks whilst the work was carried out. A former plumbers' merchants in Grosvenor Street near the Flea & Firkin was due to be converted into what was described as "yet another student pub."

4th Request Stop Beer Hop

After some doubt last year, it is now confirmed that the fourth beer festival at the Bhurtpore Inn, Aston, near Nantwich takes place from Wednesday 7 July to Sunday 11 July.

The Bhurtpore Inn is in the heart of the Cheshire countryside, but only 12 minutes walk from Wrenbury Station, a request stop for local trains on the Crewe-Shrewsbury line. On Saturday 10 July, the Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers Association have arranged with Wales & West Passenger Trains Ltd for the 11.33 train from Manchester Piccadilly to stop at Wrenbury. To return visitors to the Manchester area, a train will stop at Wrenbury at 17.03. Other services are available involving a change of train at Crewe – return trains from Wrenbury run at 18.35, 20.57 and 22.03, the latter with a long wait at Crewe.

Despite engineering work last year with bus replacements, a record number of passengers used Wrenbury. This year no engineering work is scheduled so travel should be a lot easier (and more comfortable!). In addition, this year there should be a bus service operating from Wrenbury Station to Aston during the afternoon. For more details about this, phone June on 01743 358179 (evenings only). Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association Stewards will meet trains on Wrenbury on Friday and Saturday. Bhurtpore is always a good event, with a superb range of beers and excellent pub food to soak it up. Highly recommended – those wanting to stay the weekend may pitch tents in a field adjoining the festival, too.

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.

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Hydes' Anvil always seem to be in the news these days. The new seasonal beer, Ruby Ratchet's Ebony is now in the pubs and is well worth seeking out. To follow will be a 4.5 per cent ABV Centenary Ale to mark Hydes' 100 years at the Anvil Brewery followed by the launch of their 4.3 per cent Premium Ale which will be a permanent addition to the brewery's cask ale portfolio. Hydes' are also seeking to expend their tied estate and two new acquisitions have been revealed. The first is the Cheshire Cheese at Wheelock in Cheshire, a fairly traditional tenanted pub; by way of contrast the other is the former Hullabalooos restaurant on Peter Street in Manchester City Centre. This is down by the new Great Northern development where 'style' bars are proliferating at a rate of knots and it will be interesting to see how Hydes' develop the site. One thing's for sure, it will probably be the only bar in that area selling cask beer. Hydes' main strategy, though, is to build up a tied estate in and around the south Manchester area and build up a reputation as the local brewery for that part of the city. This is a commendable aim and we look forward eagerly to more acquisitions locally.

At Joseph Holt's, shock news is the departure of Under Brewer Dick Venes who, we hear, is going into the chemical industry. Dick has been at Holt's for twenty years or so and will be sorely missed.



J W Lees launched their latest seasonal ale last month. Fudger Cream Ale is a 4.5 per cent beer brewed to a unique recipe created by Head Brewer Giles Dennis and includes in the recipe a little traditional Welsh fudge from Anglesey Sea Zoo (!). Further beers are planned for later in the year, with Scorcher Summer Ale appearing next month, Sloeberry Fruit Beer in September and a special Millennium Celebration Ale.



Salford's Bridgewater Ales should be moving into its new home at the end of this month, although brewing will also continue at the Old Pint Pot on Salford Crescent for some time, to ease the transition. Brewer Richard Brazen has also rejigged the brewery to a piece of equipment too large for the rest of the plant and which was allowing air into the wort as it was run off. This gave certain off-tastes to some of the beer and these have now been eliminated - the difference in the end product is quite remarkable with the 'new' Navigator being better than ever. A 10 per cent beer for the millennium is also in the pipeline - this will effectively be an Imperial Stout and it is hoped that it will have several months maturation in cask before being released to the trade.



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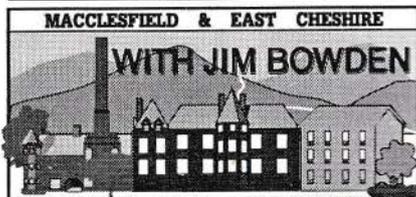
This is not a free house

OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Graeme Tonge, Arundel:

The question is sometimes asked, where do you prefer festivals, in a pub, or a council-run hall, commercial club etc? I prefer myself a good old-fashioned pub with a good garden at the back with stillages or like Wetherspoons with a good handpump range.

I don't know what it is about festivals in halls, but the atmosphere, the closing in the afternoon, the lack of pub feel about it, i.e. bar stools, comfy seating, grumpy locals. I just can't get the feel of beer festivals in halls, clubs etc. What do other readers feel - the pub fest or the hall fest? Wouldn't be the same without the cheery landlord.



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

Bollington News

One or two snippets from that well-pubbed village. The Crown is to get a new beer garden and the Cotton Tree has new licensees. We understand that they are a little concerned by the Vaux fiasco and the pub may have new owners sooner rather than later as the fall-out from that shambles continues. Meanwhile the Poachers has removed the pool table and converted the area into a separate restaurant, which was due to open on Saturday 29 May. The pub continues to offer an interesting and well-kept guest beer alongside the Taylor's Landlord, Marston's Pedigree and Boddingtons Bitter.

Peaks & Plains Pub Plod

Rotaract, which is part of rotary International, is national organisation for young people (18-30) which combines an active social calendar with a commitment to fundraising. As part of this year's activities, the Macclesfield Branch is inviting walkers to participate in its 'Peaks & Plains Pub Plod 99' which will take place on Saturday 26 June. The Plod is a sponsored walk for teams or individuals set in the glorious Cheshire countryside around south Macclesfield and the Dane Valley.

The 12-mile route includes four pubs and starts at the Hanging Gate near Macclesfield Forest between 10.30 and 11.00am, progressing on through the Wild Boar, Ship (at Wincle) and Cragg (Wildboarclough) before returning to the Hanging Gate.

Entrants are welcome to raise funds on behalf of any charity they choose or for the mere pleasure of the walk. The Rotaract Club will be raising money for two local charities - The Rossendale Trust and The Children's Adventure Farm Trust. The entrance fee of £32.50 per person will go to these charities. A very worthwhile do. For more details, phone Ian Bradley on 01625 266761.

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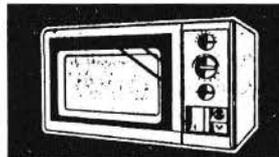
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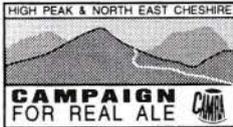
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11

COMPETITION

- (1) Where can you drink a mild twice voted Champion Beer of Britain?
- (2) Where can you be guaranteed NO returns to cask?
- (3) Where can you drink cask ale from a lined glass?
- (4) Where are you assured a warm welcome?

ANSWERS PAGE 13



June Featured Pub: Lowes Arms, Hyde Road

This month we take a look at the Lowes Arms, on the main Hyde road (Broomstair Hill) between Hyde and Denton.

There has been a pub on this site since 1818, and until 1858 was leased by a Charles Knott; who had a brewhouse behind the pub.

The pub was enlarged and altered over the years by a succession of landlords, and at the turn of the century was occupied by the Ashtons, whose clientele at the pub included miners from the coal pit in the vicinity.

Down the years the pub has continued to serve the local community and travellers along the main Hyde Road. It is today a comfortable and well-appointed hostelry.

Several years ago the pub was enlarged and modernised but has managed to retain a welcoming and individualistic atmosphere.

The lounge is comfortable and open plan with a separate dining area at the far end. The Lowes also has what in this writer's opinion, is an essential ingredient of many a pub, a good spacious vault with plenty of room for all the traditional pub games.

The current licensees are Peter and Jill Wood, who until recently had been at the Printers Arms, Thornsett, Birch Vale for four years before making a move to the Lowes. They have both been involved in the licensed trade for some time, and have extensive experience of catering in the licensed business, and in Peter's case also college lecturing on the subject.

This experience is being put to good use at the Lowes, both in making a positive impact at the pub, increasing its trade and making it a welcoming place to visit, and also providing excellent and imaginative meals at reasonable prices.

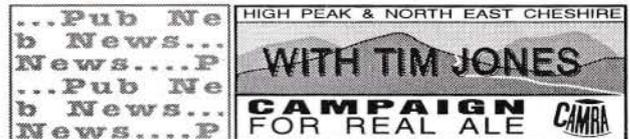
The menu is varied, and caters for all tastes, and Peter's speciality, when he can get them, is good fresh mussels (rope grown he tells

me, not from the sea-bed) – a definite varied addition to any menu. The beers, all on handpump, are Boddingtons Bitter, Marston's Pedigree, Taylor's Landlord, Castle Eden Ale, and a guest beer, the next being Bank Top from Bolton. Peter is keen to support the smaller breweries via guest beers. There are also plans in the long-term to start a brewhouse behind the pub, to provide its own beers. In the past there was a brewhouse at the pub, and Peter found two stone jugs in the cellar when he moved in, one complete with stopper. Both have lettering on them which says "George H Ashton – Home Brewed Beers and Nourishing Stout; Lowes Arms, Denton". One also refers to Invalid Stout. Peter would be interested to know if anyone has further information about them or the brewery which once was there.

Like all good pubs the social side of activities is developing, with darts teams, pool team, and hopefully a football team next season. There is live Saturday night entertainment every other week. On the third Sunday each month Stockport Morris Men perform at the pub, and a big Morris event is planned for 14 September. Quiz evenings also take place on Wednesdays.

All in all, the Lowes Arms, with Jill and Peter in charge, is developing into a good local pub, with all the attributes one expects and is well worth visiting. The pub is well served by public transport – numerous buses pass the door and Hyde Central Station is only a few minutes walk away. Car parking is not a problem.

The opening hours are: Mon-Fri 12.00-3.00 and 5.00-11.00; Saturday 12.00-11.00; Sunday 12.00-10.30. TL



In Marple there has been a change of licensee at the **Bowling Green**. The landlord of the Hare & Hounds on Dooley Lane has taken over and the beer range stays as is for the time being.

Over in Glossop, the **Plough** is up for sale with an asking price of £90,000. The worrying part of this news is that the owners are quite prepared to de-licence and sell as residential accommodation. It is to be hoped that is bought as a licensed house.

Also in Glossop, the **Corner Cupboard/Mulligans** (etc.), now a Thwaites house, is advertising the licence for sale – a trend that has been noticed in Thwaites pubs recently.

Finally, in Ashton-u-Lyne, a new bar has appeared (almost overnight). **Bar Centro** has taken the place of Ferreros next to the Ash Tree (Wetherspoons). This has been a rapid conversion by any standards and it is to be seen if the bar lasts much longer (that was a bit cynical).

12

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12 MINUTES WALK FROM WRENBURY STATION

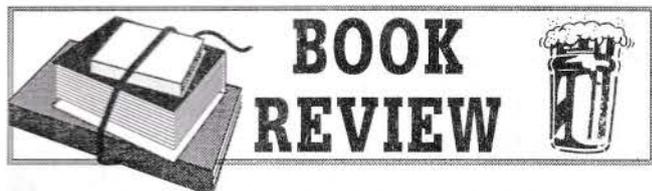




Before getting involved with reports of the various beer festivals, I cannot let our front page story pass without further comment. A month or two ago I lamented the passing of Morrells Brewery in Oxford, the beers being badged out to Morlands (near Abingdon). Well, the end result hasn't been a total disaster. The Bitter is perhaps better, the Graduate different but not bad, the Varsity significantly worse.

Now, however, Greene King are to buy and close Morlands (or so it would appear). The water/soluble salt mix in Oxford and Abingdon is about the same. That (and Greene King yeast) at Bury St Edmunds is very different. Yeuk. I said at the time that the regionals were about to embark on an orgy of self-immolation, and so it comes to pass. Hopefully Robinsons, Hydes, Lees & Holts have more sense. We may yet see Manchester as an island in a sea of bland beer/nitrokeg in the rest of the land. Added to which if Boddingtons are to survive outside of Whitbread (well its either that or closure) the famous cream of Manchester will need to rediscover its heritage (and flavour) as a distinctive regional brand rather than a bland and undermarketed national beer.

More of this in an extended piece next issue, when I will look at the whole business of the regionals, the pubcos and the micro breweries and how it is likely to affect us 'oop 'ere'.



Best Pub Walks in the Lakeland Fringes by Neil Coates, Sigma Press, 164pp, £6.95

Here is an ideal book for those walkers who want to experience the wonderful scenery of the Lake District, and who also want to avoid the crowds and the cars.

Stockport-based Neil Coates provides a series of walks on the fringes of the Lake District National Park - just as beautiful as more popular locations, but much more tranquil. 25 walks are described which utilise a good mix of field paths, farm tracks, by-roads and miners' roads. The off-beat delights include Kentmere, Shap, Furness and Ennerdale - spread like jewels around Britain's favourite National Park.

The walks vary from four to 10 miles, with most in the middle of the range, and can take from around three hours to a full day. The walks are described in detail, with additional references to local sites and their history and other attractions. Useful information includes not only the type of terrain to be encountered, but details of access including, commendably, public transport where this is available. In addition to the hand drawn maps accompanying the text, readers are also directed to the relevant OS maps, too.

As the title suggests, there is also plenty of attention paid to the pubs en route! Many of the walks start and/or finish at a pub, with others encountered along the way. Many are described in detail and it is clear that the author is as passionate about his pub and pints as he is about his walking. Real ales are recommended and in the introduction to the book there are excellent short pieces on opening hours, the village pub, and breweries and beer. There's even a little brewery history - Walk 9 takes you close to the old Bank Springs Brewery at Kirksanton, closed in the 1950's.

This latest addition to the Sigma 'Pub Walks' range is highly recommended and command a place on the bookshelf of all those who combine a passion for walking with a love of good pubs and ale. Even if you don't get out and about much it is a useful work of reference.

JC.

Best Pub Walks in the Lakeland fringes should be available in local bookshops. Alternatively contact Sigma Leisure at 1 South Oak Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 6AR. Telephone 01625 531035.

Also coming up - possibly next month, if I have time, will be an up to the minute look at pubs in Bamberg (Franconia) and Prague.

On the festival front, the start of May saw Bank Holiday festivals at the Beer House and Staylbridge Buffet, which were of the usual very high standard, (new cooling system upstairs at the Beer House was very successful), and the end of May brought the first Beer House German Beer Festival, and festivals in Doncaster and at the Ship and Mitre, Liverpool in the same weekend. All were excellent, bags of new ales (and draught German) beers. My kidneys are still moaning. The Beer House's German fest went very well, and if you missed it, another is planned to bring the Munich Oktoberfest beers to Manchester (in October, natürlich).

This month sees Stockport, which will probably be over by the time you read this. Apparently all the beers will be on sale as soon as they are ready - no rationing. What benefits/ moans this brings no doubt will be covered elsewhere next month. Pick of the remaining fests this month is undoubtedly Dudley (W Midlands), set in the grassy Castle courtyard (in the middle of the zoo!). Thurs 10- Sat 12 (12-3 & 5.30-11, Sat all day), Good beer, food, and a nice bunch of people. In my book Dudley was last years best festival anywhere.

The Beer Monster's British Beer of the Month: **North Yorkshire Cereal Killer (4.5%) abv**

This should (hopefully) be fairly widely available through various guest beer lists. (I found some in the Beerhouse). Oh, I thought, another Wheat Beer - and apart from a very few, such as the Salopian offerings, British Wheat beers tend to leave me cold. But what a revelation. Darker than most but with a full bodied, well rounded flavour, and just a little flattening from the wheat. I had it two years ago and was underwhelmed but this year's batch is a revelation. Find some!

The Beer Monster's Foreign Beer of the Month: **Augustiner Maibock (7%) abv**

The only Maibock that usually makes its way over to the UK is the very nice Hofbrau (and often in bottles only). The Augustiner turned up on draught at the Beer House's excellent German Festival over Whit weekend. Epitomising the crisp malty dryness of all of the beers from Munich's oldest brewer, the Augustiner Maibock was a true delight. It drank like a 4% and had the kick of a very large mule. It wrecked me not once but twice. Utterly superb

13

CONGRATULATIONS!

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PUB OF THE SEASON

 **THWAITES BITTER** 
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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
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welcome all their customers old and new
Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

Websters & Holts

Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day

Tuesday night Karaoke
Discos Thursday and Sunday

- ★ **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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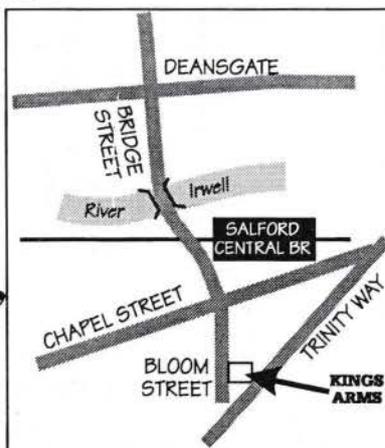
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The Ultimate Mild Challenge

This year's Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge was one of the most successful yet. Incredibly 13 people managed to visit all 50 pubs on the Challenge. Richard Hough and Kathryn Page didn't attempt the lot but tried something almost as challenging. Here's their report...

Any excuse to go back to Stockport and Manchester for a few beers is a good one. When we heard that the Mild Challenge was to return, we made this a reason to journey across from Sheffield, which, it has to be said, is a virtual desert when it comes to real mild. The idea of the Mild Challenge Extra was intriguing, but we wondered whether it could be taken one stage further. The thought of doing twelve different milds in twelve different pubs in twelve different areas presented itself; could it be done?

We emerged from Stockport rail station, blinking into the sunshine. Armed with a Day Saver (£3 from your friendly bus driver), a copy of Viaducts & Vaults II – the Stockport Pub Guide, and, of course, a Mild Challenge card each, we were off. The 14 bus took us up Hall Street to our first pub, the **Victoria**. Here we met our other party member, Bec. Unfortunately we had to stand around for a bit, since the pub didn't open until 11.30. Never mind, the sunshine was lovely. First beer of the day – *Greenalls Mild*, a pleasant enough dark brown brew, but nothing outstanding. A number 14 took us back into Stockport, bustling with shoppers all oblivious to the challenge that lay before the three 'bibulous wanderers'. A short walk took us to the **Railway**. Not for the first time that day, we found ourselves too early for the pub! Once inside, *Porters Dark Mild* was purchased – a rich, almost black mild, and very well crafted. We decided that food would be a good idea; the Railway comes well recommended. We sat outside and soaked up some more sunshine.

A walk back into Stockport and we squeezed past numerous 'pavement tippers' to enter pub number three, **Winters** on Underbank. *Holt's Mild* was reasonably good, and ridiculously cheap (we are used to Sheffield prices). While inside, the famous clock chimed one, and gave us a chance to see the impressive workings in motion. So to the bus station, and the 42 took us to the **Moss Rose**, Heaton Norris. A refreshing drop of *Hydes' Light* was enjoyed, and again we made the most of the sunshine. The staff informed us that interest in the Mild Challenge had been considerable at this pub. In common with many pubs on the Hydes' estate, the beer was on electric metered dispense, thereby guaranteeing full measure.

We decided it would be as quick to walk to our next port of call, the **Woolpack** on Brinksway. *Black Cat Mild* from Moorhouses was the chosen tipple, an excellent 3.4% brew, and just as rich and dark as you could wish for. A number of Stockport County fans were 'preparing' for the big match against Sunderland; we had rather more pressing business. A short, but no less pleasant walk along the south bank of the River Mersey brought us out opposite the **Crown**, Heaton Lane. We were informed that there was no mild on, but *Bateman's Salem Porter* was a more than adequate substitute. It was black in colour, and roasty and bitter on the palate, and at 4.7%, likely to be the strongest beer sampled during the day.

From here on the rest of the Challenge pubs were a little more widespread, so it was back to the bus station. A 330 took us to Hyde, then a 201 was caught round the corner, not through being lazy, but it was the easiest way to find Mottram Road and the **Sportsman**. Although Lees GB Mild was available, we all plumped for *Whim Magic Mushroom Mild*, which was good value at £1.30 a pint. Again we sat outside. A large number of people were drinking keg beers, but the pub is well supported on all fronts, and is deserving of its title Regional Pub of the Year for Greater Manchester. Now we knew the way, we walked back to the bus station and caught a 204 into Manchester, an interminably long journey up Hyde Road. We alighted at Piccadilly and walked up Oldham Street to the **Castle**. *Robinson's Dark Mild* is always available at the pub, alongside the entire range of Robbies cask ales. Unfortunately on this occasion

it appeared to be on its last legs. We did as you do in the Castle, and put some tunes on the juke-box, and played pin-ball.

A 42 bus from Piccadilly Gardens dropped us outside pub number nine, the **Friendship** in Fallowfield, for more Hydes. The Mild Challenge card indicated that the darker *Hydes' Mild* should have been available; no such luck, however, and we had to settle for *Hydes' Light* again. With time against us, it dawned on us that we would be unlikely to complete the Ultimate Mild Challenge, since it would have involved further journeys out to Cheadle or Gatley to find the elusive *Hydes' Mild*. We settled back and determined to enjoy the rest of the day; we still had the Mild Challenge Extra to finish. You can't visit Manchester and not have a famous Abdul's take-away, and the sustenance was most welcome. We boarded a forty-something bus, and made the short journey to the thriving village of Didsbury. *Bateman's Dark Mild* was available from the **Station**, and yet again we sat outside. The bar person who served us said "We don't sell much mild to younger drinkers", which just goes to show that "younger drinkers" are missing out on a real treat.

Before long we were off again, this time a 370 bus took us to Heaton Mersey, and the **Crown**, reputedly Stockport's oldest pub. Amazingly, we had completed 10 pubs and not tried any *Robinson's Hatters Mild*. Here we did, and we were glad we had made the effort, although the Crown is one of the more expensive pubs on the Robinson's estate, the beer is usually excellent. What we tried there though was utterly magnificent, and our vote for beer of the day. We had just one more pub to do to finish the Challenge, but we had to find one in a different area. So a bus into Stockport, and a 192 up the A6 dropped us at the **Blossoms**, the current local CAMRA Pub of the Year, and rightly so. More *Robinson's Hatters Mild* was enjoyed, and the feeling of sheer exhilaration at completing the Mild Challenge in a day.

So there you have it: twelve different pubs, in twelve different areas, with ten different milds enjoyed, in a helter-skelter eleven hours (we caught the 10.28 train back to Sheffield). Not bad for a day's work! We can be proud to wear our Mild Challenge T-shirts, and no mistake.

More on the Mild Challenge next time.

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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

June 99

Thursday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Kingsway, Levensulme. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 14th - Social: Forgery & Firkin, Moseley St, Manchester City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 18th - Reddish Stagger: meet 7pm Fir Tree, Gorton Rd; 8.30pm, Grey Horse, Broadstone Rd.

Monday 21st - Social: Moss Rose, Didsbury Rd, Heaton Norris. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 25th - NB minibus tour postponed

Monday 28th - Social: Parrswood, Parrswood rd (corner School Ln), Didsbury. Starts 9.00pm.

Wednesday 30th - Pub of the Month presentation to Paddy's Goose, Bloom St, Manchester City Centre.

Monday 5th July - Heaton Norris Social: 9.00pm Railway, Wellington Rd Nth; 10.00pm Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way.

Thursday 8th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Blossoms, Buxton Rd (A6), Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm.

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

June 99

Saturday 26th - Branch walk/trip to Hedden Bridge. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

Saturday 3rd July - GBG Pub, 17-mile sponsored walk for Christie Hospital. Whaley Bridge to Hyde.

Monday 5th - Committee Meeting: Shepherds Arms, Whaley Bridge. Starts 8.30pm.

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

Monday 21st - Committee Meeting: Admiral Rodney, New Rd, Prestbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 28th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Freemasons Arms, Silk Mill St (between Princess St and King St), Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENT

Saturday July 3rd - Independents' Day Treasure Hunt. Beer House, Angel St Mcr.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 99 Planner

Dave and Sue welcome you to

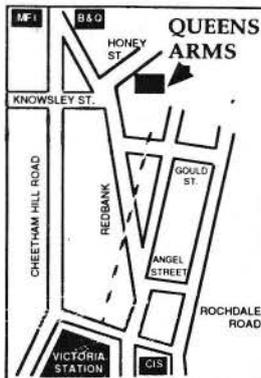
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OUR JUNE BEERS

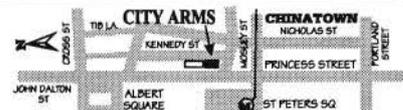
Among our guests:
Batemans XB, Valiant, Jollys D-Day, Middle Wicker; Ruddles Best; Thwaites Morning Glory; Broughton Williamette; Youngs First Gold; Ashvine Frying Tonight; Elgoods Pageant, Greyhound; Tomintoul Monster Mash; Maclay Full Monty, Wallace IPA; Smiles Summer VAT Ale; Caledonian 125; Belhaven IPA ...etc...etc



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and 11.30 - 2.00
Saturday



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Grilled Prawn and Peach Salad

As I write this, it has been a baking hot day, and I have had to shed copious amounts of sweat lifting and rolling beer about, as well as availing myself of the joys of mash tun cleaning in temperatures last produced at Los Alamos in 1953. So, a cool summer dish seemed appropriate, by the time OT hits the pubs, I'll wager Mr Bluesky will have packed his bags and fled to Novosibirsk or somewhere! Still, we must try and eat as if we can have some hope of warmth, so here goes:

Ingredients - Marinade

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard |
| 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots | 1 teaspoon soy sauce |
| ½ tablespoon lime or lemon juice | ¼ pint Belgian peach beer |
| 1lb peeled prawns | pinch of salt and pepper |

Method

Combine all the ingredients (except the prawns) in a small saucepan. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for three minutes. Cool to room temperature. Transfer to a bowl, add the prawns and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes. You can use fresh, uncooked prawns for this dish in which case they should be placed under a medium grill for 3-4 minutes, turning three or four times. Threading them on wooden skewers may assist here.

Ingredients - Dressing

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots
 1 chopped clove of garlic
 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
 salt and pepper
 Blend all together with a whisk or fork - take about five minutes

Salad

- 1 cos lettuce
- 1 lollo rosso lettuce
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 medium mango or peach
- 4 spring onions

Method

Chop lettuce into pieces about 2 inches round and place in a large salad bowl. Top and tail the spring onions, cut into rings and mix these into the lettuce. Carefully scoop out the avocado flesh (after removing the stone), trying to keep a half avocado in one piece: I could try and make this cleaner, but just use your brains! Peel the mango or peach, cut in half and slice into pieces about ¼ inch thick; repeat for the avocado. Leave these pieces on one side. Toss the salad thoroughly with the dressing, and lay the mango and avocado slices in alternate layers around the edge of the salad bowl.

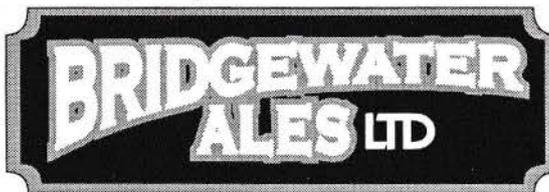
Remove the prawns from the fridge and roughly drain. Place these in the centre of the salad bowl and sprinkle with dressing.

Eat on the terrace with some well-chilled peach beer or a decent wheat beer and pray the sun stays out

Finally, my apologies to Deborah Lee of Mellor for the disaster of the Ram Tam-Yam Tam (April OT). This was caused by 'scaling down' a commercial recipe which I have used successfully many, many times. The problem is that you really do have to boil fiercely, and domestic equipment - both pans and cookers - have difficulty in providing the heat quickly enough. This is not an excuse, as I should have borne this in mind and adjusted the liquid to compensate. However, I am but a poor, frail, erratic and inconsistent human being (although incredibly well formed), so grovel to you Deborah, and if you care to ring me on 0161 831 9090 (day), I have a bottle of something social by way of recompense.

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*Available at Kings Arms, Albert Vaults, & Old Pint Pot, Salford,
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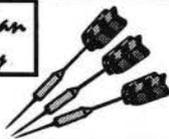
Tel: 0161 831 9090 Fax 0161 950 6561

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 19

Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



When the time comes for the history of darts to be written, the writer will concentrate on two periods. Both can justly be called the "golden days" of the sport. The first came between the wars. At that time the game was totally centred on the pubs and clubs. It was so popular that crowds of 15,000 would cram into the "Alexandra Palace" for the News of the World finals. Winners were as famous as footballers, cricketers or jockeys. Sadly, for most of those with an interest in the game today, those days came too early and if we were to name our "golden age", most would name the late seventies and early eighties as the most important in our game. New television techniques, like the split screen, meant that darts became one of the most popular of televised sports. Names like Eric Bristow, Jocky Wilson and John Lowe were as well known as any other sportsman. Alan Evans was another who enjoyed that lofty status. Sadly, Alan recently lost his battle against illness and died in hospital aged just 49.

For over a decade, Alan made Stockport his home and will be well remembered in all the town's darting venues. Amongst his titles he can claim the 1975 World Masters and 1975 British Open, plus runner-up in the News of the World in 1972. He made 53 appearances for the country of his birth, Wales, winning 35 of the games. But it was in the pubs and clubs, playing exhibition games, that he was to make his name and his living. Indeed his exhibition work would take him all around the world. Famously, he stormed out of The Johnny Carson show in the USA, after being asked to throw his arrows backwards, using a mirror. His reasonable reaction: "I am a serious darts player, not a circus clown." As an illustration of just how famous Evans was, two of the regulars in the Rovers Return were playing on the board. "Who d'you think you are, then? Alan Evans?" came the remark. The Coronation Street script writers did not have to make any clarification. The world of darts is the worse for the loss of Alan Evans.

I have been accused in the past of ignoring the Manchester board, or as it is more properly known "The Log End", so I thought that my accusers may be interested in the following story. One time World Champion, and

current jobbing darts player, Bob Anderson was recently in exhibition against players from the Denton and District and David Bailey leagues, which both play on the small board. Bob demonstrated that a good player is a good player whatever the board, only losing once against the Denton lads and one match against the Bailey players. Apparently, Anderson so enjoyed the sessions that he took a board back with him to Swindon. I hope someone told him that the board needs to be soaked!

Since my last article, quite a few people have expressed to me their amazement that darts is not officially recognised as a sport. I gave a list of activities that are regarded as sports by the Sports Council, many of them a lot less difficult and more sedate than darts. To that list I have unearthed some more officially recognised sports. These include arm wrestling, bicycle polo, croquet, quoits and skipping! It may seem unimportant, but always remember that without the official recognition of the Sports Council, funding by way of lottery grants, etc. is impossible. A question has recently been asked in the House about this lack of recognition, which may be the first step along the path to recognition. It is sad, that this should still be unresolved in the country which is the birthplace of the game. Australia, Holland and Germany all officially recognise the game as a sport, as do many other countries. It really isn't good enough.

Once again, I can report good achievements by local players on the national scene. Darryl Fitton, Kevin Weir, Sue Hambleton, Steve Cusick and Chris North were amongst the players who helped Lancashire to another Premier Division Championship. Darryl was also a member of the Lancashire "A" team that won the BDO Inter-Counties KO at Southport. Cheshire "A" went out in the quarter-finals of the same competition. Chris North reached the quarter-finals of the Men's Singles and, partnering Kevin Weir, reached the last 16 of the Men's Pairs. Darryl Fitton, partnered by Mark Holden, went out of the same competition at the same stage. Local players usually do well at the Isle of Man Open, but this year the verdict was "could do better." In the Men's singles Kevin Weir was the most successful reaching the last 16 out of 420 entries. The competition was eventually won by England international Andy Hayfield, who beat Alan Warriner in the final. Star & Garter landlady Sue Hambleton reached the last 16 of the Women's competition, won by Holland's Francis Hoenselaar, probably the best female player in the world at the moment. Sue, together with Dot Ainsworth, also reached the same stage of the Women's pairs. Darryl Fitton, again partnered by Mark Holden, made the quarter-finals of the Men's pairs; the Weir/North partnership going out a stage earlier.

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Alan and Louise welcome you to the **CALEDONIA**

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Let's get this month's new City Centre café bars out of the way before going on to places you might actually want to drink in. First up is Flares (formerly the Town Hall Tavern) on Tib Lane, which I mentioned last month. This Seventies theme bar is every bit as grisly as you might imagine and (thankfully, dare I say?) sells no real ale. No real ale either in Bar Med at 109 Princess Street although it's quite a colourful and well-executed place to drink. A nod is made in the direction of serious beer drinking with the presence behind the bar of a few Belgian offerings, although don't all rush at once as they consist of Leffe, a pretty bog standard Abbey beer and some sickly sweet fruit beers (from the De Troch 'Chapeau' range for those who are interested).

Turning now to real pubs, apologies to the White Lion in Liverpool Road which unveiled its new look several weeks ago but which I omitted to mention last time. It's a first class job with the bar moved back to create more room and a complete refurbishment of the pub. The extensive beer range and excellent food remain as before.

On the other side of Town, Holt's have reopened the Crown & Anchor on Cateaton Street after a very well-judged and, by the look of it, expensive refurbishment. What we have is a recreation of the opulent style favoured in the late Victorian period with dark wood, mirrors, and ornate light fittings. I was particularly taken with the tiled insets in the floor of the lower level vault, which now has its own separate bar counter. There's even a no-smoking area, which must be a first for Holt's. Mild and Bitter are on handpump but no sign of bottled Sixex behind the counter - have we lost this one, I wonder - apparently not, according to Holts (see article elsewhere).

Also reopened last month was the new-look Bar in Chorlton. I believe there is a more detailed review elsewhere in these pages but just let me say that this is an equally impressive job although its clean, modern lines couldn't be in greater contrast to the Crown & Anchor.

There's just one loss this month and that is the excellent Moulders Arms on Heyrod Street behind Piccadilly Station which I hear reported as closed, possible due to financial problems. I hope that this is not the case, or if it is there is an early reopening, as the Moulders is one of the finest back street locals in the City Centre. On the plus side, the Victoria in Withington has reopened for business after what proved to be a very short closure.

A recent visit to Ardwick and Brunswick proved to be pretty dispiriting. In Ardwick the Park, Union, Star and Grey Mare are all keg and on Hyde Road the Bulls Head, Wellington and City Gates closed, boarded and in various states of dereliction. Indeed the City Gates has been derelict for so long I'm not entirely sure what's keeping it up! There's also a new bar on Higher Ardwick - the

Gaelic Bar is in converted church premises and sells no real ale. In Brunswick the Tilted Falcon remains keg and has been joined as such by the Plymouth Grove.

The real growth area for bars remains the City Centre with really too many to count in the pipeline, although few are likely to offer real ale. Best bets for this are JW Lees' Rain Bar opening on Great Bridgewater Street in August and Hydes' development of the former Hullaballos restaurant on Peter Street. These are just two of some thirty City Centre developments recently identified by *City Life* magazine. Hang on - it's going to be a bumpy ride!

What is CAMRA?

This magazine is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. It is easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking everyone knows who CAMRA is and what it does, but of course this ain't necessarily so. So, then, what is CAMRA?

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, founded in 1971, is an independent, not for profit consumer organisation with 53,000 volunteer members. Its remit is to:

Promote and support full flavoured beers, real ciders and perries.
Stand for choice and diversity of both beer and pubs
Defend consumers' rights for beer drinkers and pub users
Promote and defend the public house as a focus of community life
 Democratically controlled by its membership, CAMRA is directed by an elected, unpaid National Executive supported by a small team of paid staff. The Campaign is financed through membership subscriptions, beer festivals and the sale of products. It receives no outside funding other than through areas such as advertising in its publications, i.e. CAMRA is completely independent from breweries, pub chains etc.

It is no exaggeration to claim that without CAMRA, real ales and some breweries would no longer exist, that more pubs would have been lost and that we may not have today's more liberal licensing laws. CAMRA has been the catalyst for the formation of hundreds of new small breweries who brew thousands of real ales. CAMRA also saved the guest beer law from a legal challenge from the European Commission. If the challenge had been successful, this would have stopped some pubs from having a guest beer, reducing choice.

Much remains to be done and CAMRA continues to campaign to:

Save breweries and pubs.
Reduce British excise duty on beer.
Have more information on beer ingredients.
Extend guest beer rights.
Legally enforce full measure glasses so drinkers can get a full pint.
Have a better choice of reasonably priced, tasty beers.

Despite all the campaigning, CAMRA membership is rewarding, entertaining and, most of all, fun. Any organisation that has all of its meetings in pubs cannot be boring and, no, not all CAMRA members have beer bellies and wear sandals. Why not come and see for yourself?

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 182)

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.





Inner city pub sell-offs continue. Avebury Taverns are having yet another attempt to sell the Gorton Arms, Gorton. The asking price is £65,000 and you'll certainly get a lot of pub for your money but given the length of time Avebury have been trying to sell the place, and the apparent lack of interest, the question is whether it has any real future as a pub. The best hope would be one of our local independent brewers who are prepared to spend money on the place and install firm management to turn it round.

Congratulations to Stephen Pilling, licensee of the Mr Thomas's Chop House in the City Centre, for receiving a Chairman's Award from the Inn Partnership company. Given for increasing business, Mr Thomas's has seen turnover double in the last 18 months and trade is now so busy that there are plans to extend the food operation to the first floor. They sell a pretty good pint of Taylor's Landlord, too.

This month sees the reopening of Stockport's Manchester Arms following major work by brewers Robinson's. Those who remember the old style 'MA' are in for a surprise, though, for everything will have changed, even the name - in future the pub will be known as Cobden's. The pub has been extended backwards to incorporate a conservatory overlooking the park next door, there will be Sky TV during the day, a DJ booth and a stage for live music. Hmm. A full report next time.

As a follow up to our review of the new-look Albert in Rusholme the other month, licensee Jim Callaghan has asked us to say that a brand new pool table has been installed - our report may have given the mistaken impression that it had been removed for good. Not so.

The Nelson in Didsbury has finally got its guest beer programme underway. The first off the block was Webster's Green Label followed by Boddingtons Bitter. The guest beers, which will change weekly, are deliberately cautious to begin with so as not to put off regulars unused to trying these different beers. Hopefully as the programme gets established, a more adventurous policy will be adopted but full marks to the Nelson for taking the plunge in the first place.

More conversions to keg to report, this time in Stockport. You will now find no real ale in the Swan, Shaw Heath; Black Lion, Hillgate; and the Kings Head, Tiviot Dale. The Kings does in fact still advertise cask ales outside - shame on them. Meanwhile a long-standing keg outlet, the Hope on Wellington Road North, was in the throes of a refurbishment as we went to press. It would be nice to think that the new-look pub will introduce real ale but as it is a Bass outlet, don't bet on it.

The long-awaited reopening of the Gatley Wine Bar as a Cain's pub will probably have taken place as you read this. Renamed the Gothic Bar & Grill, the style of the new-look pub will, we are told, reflect the building's origins as a chapel. Cain's have a very impressive track record when it comes to refurbishments, and of course all of their pubs sell a range of cask beers, so this has been eagerly awaited. A full report next time.

On the early May Bank Holiday (Monday 3rd), a Fun day was held on the car park of Somerfield's supermarket in Withington, and hosted by landlady Sandra from the Orion, ably assisted by her staff. A sum in excess of £400 was raised in aid of the Holt's Christies Appeal. A delighted Sandra told OT that she would like to thank both the Somerfield's management for the use of their car park and also UK Scaffolding Services for their support.

Whitbread's local Hogshead ran a 'Micro Beer Festival' last month featuring 25 'small brewery favourites'. And very good many of them were, too, with the likes of Titanic, Roosters, Orkney, Phoenix and others. But what's this? Hydes' Anvil Bitter? Robinson's Best Bitter? Micro Breweries? Some mistake surely. We know that Hydes' Chief Executive Chris Hopkins wasn't best pleased with the 'micro' epithet and we imagine that a blistering letter will also be headed Whitbread's way from the Unicorn Brewery, too.

The Bar Opens

In an obvious move the neighbouring Bar and Bar 2, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, have been knocked together to form... The Bar, and a mighty success it is, too.

Next to each other, and under the same ownership, this was an inevitable move at some stage but the new-look Bar is not just a simple knock through. Instead, the opportunity has been taken to create a whole new bar with a clean, modern appearance but at the same time incorporating many traditional elements. Hence the colour scheme is a subdued burgundy and matt green, there is great emphasis on real wood (floors, furniture and bar), mirrors and brewery memorabilia.

By moving the bar counter to the right-hand side, much more space has been created, although this is no open-plan sprawl, but rather a series of interconnecting areas giving a cosy, multi-roomed effect. Elements of the old Bars remain, including the 'poster wall' and the old mirrored bar back, which now forms a feature on the left-hand wall. All this was accomplished in seven weeks with just seven days of



complete closure, which is a remarkable achievement. Owners Vance de Becheval and Janet Whitehead were delighted with the place on opening night, as were the crowd of locals who poured in during the course of the evening.

The Bar is of course an outlet for the Marble Brewery and four of their beers are available. On opening night these were Chorlton Bitter, Marble Bitter, the premium Totally Marbled and the new seasonal beer, Summer Marbles, a refreshing, golden 4.7 per cent beer. These are complemented by the range of German and Belgian bottled beers for which Bar 1 and 2 were known. Hoegaarden is also on draught.

Since last December, the manager at The Bar has been Frank Mullen who used to run the Bowling Green at Chorlton-on-Medlock. The Bowling Green was well known for its food, and he has brought with him Chris Baldwin who ran the food operation there and who hopes to repeat that success here.

All in all a superb job all round and highly recommended. The bar is at 533 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton (just opposite Safeway, in fact) and is open all permitted hours.

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