

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES



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Issue 9

FREE

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SEPTEMBER 1999

BEST BEER IN BRITAIN

Yorkshire Gem Takes Top Gong

The Champion Beer of Britain 1999 was announced at the 'biggest pub in the world', CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival, held last month at Olympia in London.

After a particularly lengthy judging session, Timothy Taylor's Landlord was judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of consumers, brewers and journalists. The Keighley brewed beer was chosen as the overall winner from nearly fifty finalists in five categories including beers from tiny micros to major regional brewers.

CAMRA Head of Campaigns, Mike Benner, told Opening Times, "This is tremendous news for Taylor's who also won the top prize in 1994. It proves how beers from regional family brewers can compete on the national stage. It's a wonderfully distinctive beer with all the qualities a national champion should have."

CAMRA's Good Beer guide describes 'Landlord' as having "an increasingly dry, bitter finish which complements the pungent hoppiness and complex fruitiness of the well-flavoured and well-balanced beer." Truly a description of a champion!

The Silver award went to JHB from Oakham Brewery based in Peterborough, whose products are also firm favourites at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, with Bronze going to Deuchars IPA from the Edinburgh-based Caledonian Brewery.

The North-West also featured in the honours. Cain's of Liverpool won joint bronze in the mild category for their Dark Mild while Cumbria-based Jennings also picked up a joint bronze in the Best Bitter class with Cock a Hoop.

The Best Beer in Britain (2)

These are the full category results from this year's Champion Beer of Britain contest:

Milds

Gold - Bateman's Dark Mild; Silver - Elgood's Black Dog Mild
Jnt Bronze - Cain's Dark Mild/St Austell XXXX Mild

Bitters

Gold - Oakham Jeffrey Hudson Bitter; Silver - Caledonian Deuchars IPA; Jnt Bronze - Goddards Special Bitter/Woodforde's Wherry

Best Bitters

Gold - Taylor's Landlord; Silver - Harvey's Armada
Jnt Bronze - Jennings Cock a Hoop/Tomos Watkins OSB

Strong Bitters

Gold - Ballard's Nyewood Gold; Silver - Durham White Bishop
Bronze - Hop back Summer Lightning

Speciality Beer

Gold - Harviestoun Schiehallion; Silver - Nethergate Umbel Ale
Bronze - Dark Star Zingiber

ALL CHANGE!

In a sudden flurry of activity, many of the City Centre free houses have new faces at the helm, although all (should) remain in good hands.

Kings Ale

Reports of the demise of the Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford, have proved premature, to say the least. Barely a week after its closure following the departure of licensee Tom Jones, the pub reopened with new licensees who are determined to make a go of the place. Mike Bowden and Christine Nash who have a wealth of experience in the licensed trade have now taken on the lease of the building. Mike, perhaps better known as 'Billy Big Dinners' from Right Band, Wrong Planet, was also a regular at the pub from its beginnings as an ale house ten years ago. Christine was manager at the Salutation in Hulme and both subsequently worked for Whitbread in Portsmouth and Southampton before returning north to run the Pack Horse in Failsworth.



Mike Bowden & Christine Nash behind the bar of the Kings Arms

The Kings will continue as a genuine free house and Mike and Christine's immediate aim is to restore the pub's fortunes to its heyday under Dave and Sue Price. Consequently quality is the prime concern which means that the beer range will, sensibly, initially consist of two permanent beers (Bridgewater Navigator and Taylor's Landlord) plus three guests. This may of course expand as trade builds up. In addition there is a small Belgian range in bottle (including the classic Westmalle Dubbel and Tripel) and on draught Vlaamsch Wit wheat beer and St Louis Kriek.

The pool table has been taken out and the former pool room is to become a dining room which should help the pub capitalise on potential trade from nearby offices and the residential development across the road. Another interesting new feature is the display of paintings in the pub. These are by a local artist and are for sale (two sold in the first two days!) and Mike says he intends

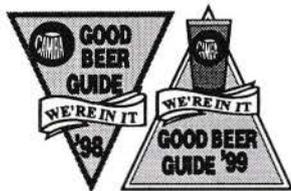
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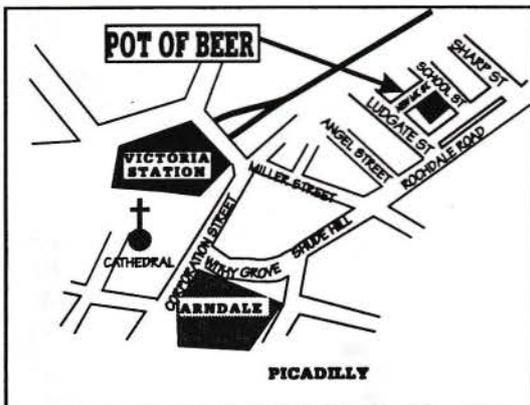
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

What a delight to see Bass, or at least their Marketing Director Mark Hunter, squirming after he unwittingly cast a little light on the company's corporate thinking on real ale:

Let's just remind ourselves of his immortal words, shall we:
"From the retailers' perspective, they don't want a living organism to look after in their cellars. They haven't got the time, they want ease of use and no worries. Basically with cask ale you wouldn't want to invest your money personally in it."

Pretty clear cut you might think. But no! He was taken out of context it seems. That's the oldest excuse in the book when someone's caught with foot in mouth! Hunter also wrote a letter of clarification to the trade press claiming that cask ale was important to Bass and they were going to spend £1 million in the next year supporting Draught Bass. Naturally he makes no mention of the £8 million going on keg Caffreys. It's quite clear where Bass are really investing their money - and it's not on cask ales.

There's more. In his letter to 'Licensee', he adds:

"We believe it is better not to stock cask beers at all than to risk compromising the quality drinkers expect through lack of commitment and cellarman ship."

Fair enough, you may think. But then - most of the local pubs that Bass either own or supply offer no cask beer. Presumably then Bass do not consider the licensees of these outlets have either the commitment or cellar skills to sell cask beer. Perhaps any licensees of keg Bass pubs reading this would like to take that one up with Mr Hunter.

Hunter's letter concludes with the final hypocrisy:

"We will continue to brew and support (cask ales) for as long as licensees want to stock them and people want to drink them".

Hurray!...just as long as we forget about the millions they are spending persuading people to drink tasteless smooth pap.; and the hundreds of pubs they supply where licensees can't stock cask beer if they 'want to', as Bass won't supply it to them.

It is clear that Mark Hunter has let the cat well and truly out of the bag. And no amount of 'clarification' or claims that he was taken out of context will put it back in.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 185

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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Pub Of The Month SEPTEMBER 1999

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the month for September is The Royal Oak in Cheadle.

Ably run by Anne and Gordon Kinna, in the two years they have been licensees a big change has taken place at the Royal Oak, so much so that some now reckon it to be the best pub in the Cheadle area.

Apart from being clean and comfortable, the pub boasts an extremely good pint of Robinson's beer, served by courteous staff who are willing to help in any way they can. Gordon is particularly proud of his cellar and this shines through in the quality of the beer sold at The Royal Oak.

The pub itself is a comfortable, multi-roomed community local decorated on a naval theme and with a welcoming open fire in the winter months. Sport plays a big part in the pub's life with teams in local leagues playing darts, crib, pool, table top football, soccer and cricket! Major sports are also covered in big-screen TV in the bar although a comfortable front room is set aside for those who enjoy a quiet drink. Live entertainment is also provided on some nights. In short The Royal Oak is a superb example of a pub which supports cask ale in the setting of a thriving community local. This well-deserved award will be presented on Thursday 23 September when alongside Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, the pub will also be offering the rare Dark Mild and, returning for the winter season, draught Old Tom. **OTB.**

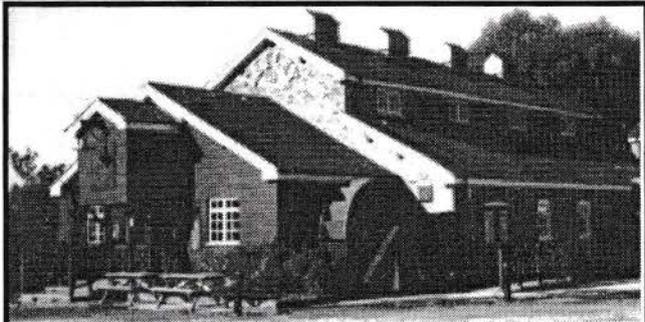
The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 185:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Jim Flynn, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, Ken Birch, Paul Stanyer, John Hutchinson, Keith Farman, Tim Jones, Frank Wood, John Tune, Chris Walkden

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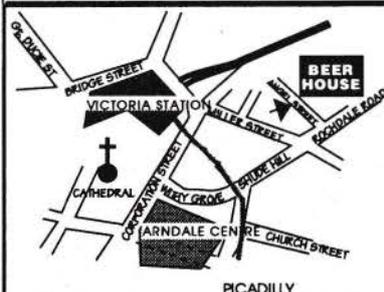
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STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Lower Hillgate Stagger

Earlier in the year, we covered the pubs on the upper part of Hillgate, which many CAMRA members usually only saw through an alcoholic haze towards the end of the annual pre-Christmas Hillgate stagger. In August we decided to finish the job and, again on a Monday night, visited the pubs on the lower half of the famous street.

We kicked off halfway down at the **Sun & Castle**, a former Tetley pub taken over by Holts and reopened earlier this year. It's an impressive 1930s building that has been very tastefully refurbished, with high-quality fittings and extensive wood panelling. The interior includes a vault, a large lounge and a smoke room at the front where the regulars seemed to gather. Unfortunately, in this pub, Holts Mild is now available only in "smooth" form, leaving Holts Bitter as the only real ale. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable pint and started off the evening on the right note.

We then detoured a little way up the street to look at the former **Pack Horse**, closed for some time, where work was obviously in full swing to convert it to the "Lamp Inn", with opening scheduled for early September. Hopefully this will enhance the Hillgate drinking scene, although as a flyer promised "a range of beers from John Smith's" we have our doubts. After poking a nose inside the outwardly impressive **Black Lion** to confirm that it was still keg-only, we turned the corner into Waterloo Road and Robinson's **Waterloo**. This is another roomy, comfortable pub, which at some time in the past seems to have had the lounge and vault areas reversed. We spotted some fine round antique tables in the lounge. Like several of the other pubs on this stagger, it was encouraging to see that trade was ticking over very nicely for a Monday evening. Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were available, commendably served into oversize glasses from electric meters, and both beers were pretty good, with the Mild just shading it, as it did in all the other Robbies' pubs that night.

Returning to Hillgate proper, our next stop was the **Red Bull**, another Robinson's outlet, which was the busiest pub of the evening



before the very last one. This well-known pub has obviously been altered a little over the years but retains a very traditional feel with various areas opening off the central bar, old settles and a stone-flagged floor in one part. Circulation around the pub has recently been improved by leaving open a door into the front lounge area which had previously always been closed. The beers available were the same as in the Waterloo, with the Best Bitter being good and the Hatters Mild verging on excellent and qualifying as the best beer of the night.

A little further down, the **Bishop Blaize** has another unspoilt interior, this time an almost intact survivor from the 1930s. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of a number of licensees, it always seems a touch gloomy and lacking the warm, cosy feel of pubs such



as the Red Bull. It was also a lot quieter, with just a knot of regulars around the bar and a couple playing pool. It's a Burtonwood pub, but also offers guest beers. However, Ridleys ESX had recently run out, leaving Burtonwood Bitter as the only cask beer, which was OK but unexceptional. It must be said that, compared with Holts, Robinsons and Sam Smiths, the other beers on this stagger, this is a rather bland beer anyway. Regrettably, Burtonwood no longer brew a cask mild. There is obviously untapped potential in the Bishop Blaize but nobody has yet found the key.

Robinson's **Royal Oak**, just off Hillgate on High Street, was also fairly quiet. This is a pleasant but slightly anonymous little pub that was heavily modernised by the brewery about ten years ago in their typical style of the period. It has three distinct areas around the central bar including a pool room. As usual, Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were available, on electric meters, both beers being perfectly acceptable but not quite up to the standard of the other Robbies' pubs we visited, possibly due to slow turnover that evening. This is another pub that deserves credit for using oversize lined glasses. Back on Hillgate, the **Spread Eagle**, tucked in to the front of Robinson's Brewery, was significantly busier. This pub was extensively altered in the Seventies, and for a long time was one of Stockport's less appealing pubs and did Robinson's no credit as a brewery tap. The current licensee has greatly improved things, moving the pool table away from the entrance, and in general making the place much more welcoming. The pub still has a number of separate areas, and darts obviously figures prominently. When we called, a Frank Sinatra CD was generating a relaxed atmosphere. Hatters Mild and Best Bitter again, oversize glasses again, the bitter pretty good and the mild, again, that bit better. All in all, this must be one of Stockport's most improved pubs.

When Holt's reopened **Winter's** just under a year ago it seemed set fair to become their flagship in the town, and they did a superb job of converting it from a wine bar and restoring the famous animated mechanical clock. Unfortunately, possibly because the initial licensees were not the right people for the job, the pub has not yet realised its potential, and when we called it was almost deserted. We all tried the Bitter, which was OK but no more; Holts Mild was also on downstairs and the stronger DBA may have been available in the upstairs bar.

We finished off the evening at the **Queen's Head**, often referred to as Turner's Vaults. This small, narrow three-roomed pub was superbly refurbished by Sam Smiths a few years ago and was the worthy winner of CAMRA's Joe Goodwin Pub Preservation Award. It was buzzing, with a row of people at the bar and only a handful of seats available. As in all Sam's pubs, Old Brewery Bitter was the only real ale available. Some of us thought it very good, others were less impressed, although this is probably a reflection of the fact that it is a characterful beer that doesn't suit everyone's tastebuds. The pub was also promoting Sam's extensive range of bottled beers on a prominent chalkboard.

It was interesting to visit these pubs away from the hectic Hillgate Stagger. Some were obviously thriving, with a good steady trade even on a Monday night; others, for various reasons, were perhaps finding life more of a struggle, but I suspect most if not all would be busy towards the end of the week. The beer was mostly very enjoyable, with nothing falling below an acceptable standard, and some pints very good indeed. Why not visit them for yourself and see how your experiences compare with ours?

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Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma.
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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
Amber beer. Malty fruity aroma.
Strongly malty and fruity flavour.
A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.

All Change (cont. from page 1)

to encourage this and hopefully develop a changing art gallery on the walls. The Kings is now open all day, every day from 12 noon. Mike and Christine are also friends of Idy and Sal who are taking on the Crescent just up the road, so we also look forward to some joint initiatives in the future!

Up Rochdale Road...

Perhaps the most dramatic change is the move of Idy Phillips and Sal from the Beer House on Angel Street. On 20th September they take over at the helm of the Crescent in Salford, where Ruth Bloomfield comes to the end of her two-year stint. Idy and Sal will be taking over as tenants of the pub, rather than remaining managers and are already planning their first beer festival at the end of October. Much of the Crescent's trade currently derives from Salford University, which is just across the road, and the challenge will be to build up trade to cover the student holiday periods. Luckily, Idy and Sal are just the people to pull this off. Their replacements at the Beer House have not yet been chosen but we know that owner Graham Rawlinson will be selecting them with care as the wrong people behind the bar could easily cause a dramatic fall-off in the pub's fortunes.

Other changes in the Rochdale Road area include the Marble Arch where Mark Dade is relinquishing his role as licensee to concentrate on brewing for the booming Marble Brewery. There are also new managers at the Pot of Beer, New Mount Street, in the form of Linda and Tony Goddard. The Good Beer guide listed pub continues to serve a variety of well-kept cask beers and American-born Linda serves both traditional pub food and an enhanced Polish menu from the kitchen.

Sir Edwin Chadwick

As I arrived at the Sir Edwin Chadwick, the new Wetherspoon's outlet on Stockport Road, Longsight, an elderly drunk staggered out of the pub and vomited copiously on the pavement. Not an auspicious start.

However, from there on things improved dramatically. The pub is near the junction of Dickenson Road and in typical Wetherspoon fashion has been converted from former shop premises. The décor inside though, is not typical of Wetherspoon's, or at least not those locally. It's still basically one large room but the use of pale wood and a colour scheme of pale creams, greens and blues gives the medium-sized space an airy feel. For some reason it also has much more of a pub atmosphere than many of the company's other local outlets. Inside there are raised drinking areas and the usual no-smoking area at the back. Of particular note are not one, but two separate beer gardens. At the back is a spacious L-shaped area while there is another railed garden at the front right-hand side of the pub.

The beer range consists of the usual Wetherspoon offerings of Theakstons Bitter, Courage Directors etc, supplemented by two guest beers, Hop Back Summer Lightning and Moles Brew 97 on my visit, and quality was pretty good, too.

(continued on following page)



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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From David Porter, Porter Brewing Co Ltd:

At last, someone has gone into print and talked some sense about Beer Duty, referring to Curmudgeon's August article. I feel it necessary to add to the argument. If duty was seriously cut in this country then I agree that the big UK supermarkets would force brewers to pass on all or more savings. As a proportion duty is a larger slice of cost to a supermarket purchase, than it is to a pub price therefore the current crisis in the pub industry would not only be worsened, it would be apocalyptic. Instead of having to go abroad to buy cheap alcohol, every main supermarket will be selling 500ml cans for 30p!

UK Beer Duty is not to blame, the rising cost of beer in pubs is due to the brewers' penal regimes on their tied estates, regular price hikes that are thinly disguised as passing on costs (or some other pathetic excuse), leading to "a vicious circle of higher prices and lower consumption" and the seemingly endless funding required for theme pubs and high powered marketing.

The self-styled beer duty champion Stuart Neame (of Shepherd Neame) makes me laugh. On one hand he challenges a small inflationary duty rise and on the other his company keeps on recording ever-increasing profits. I'm sure all his tied estate tenants believe they are paying fair market rents and also fair tied beer prices. NOT. Please can someone tell me if there is a pint of Spitfire on sale in Kent for under £2.00 (outside of the Wetherspoons estate). I doubt it.

For years a '1p' duty increase meant 3p at the bar (to cover VAT, margins etc) and some brewers have said they will pass on the savings, so will a 5p cut equal 15p at the bar? I think not. CAMRA should be firmly focussing on Europe-wide duty harmonisation and stop sounding like the (other) brewers who seem only to bleat on about "unfair duty" while conveniently forgetting the other issues. (Hear, hear! - ed.)

...The Edwin Chadwick

The pub is like nothing the area has ever seen and offers more in terms of choice, quality, comfort and value than any other pub in the vicinity. Given its already proven popularity (and it only opened its doors on 13 August), the Sir Edwin Chadwick will clearly have an effect on existing pubs that may prove too much for some. It's certainly a major improvement and a welcome addition to the local drinking scene.

The name, by the way, comes from noted philanthropist and public health reformer Sir Edwin Chadwick, who was born in Longsight. And with typical Wetherspoon attention to detail, when I left the pavement had been washed clean by the pub staff. JC.

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Write to: John Tune, 4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport SK3 0JF Tel: 0161 477 8363

From Paul Marsden, Hawk Green:

If Mr and Mrs Oliver (OT, August) had trouble getting into Sam's Bar then they shouldn't try to get into Cobden's. I went to Sam's last weekend and had no problem gaining entry. I will not be going again due to the volume of the music.

I was refused entry to Cobden's on a Thursday night because the door staff said that I was wearing trainers. I pointed out I was wearing walking shoes, not trainers. I asked the door staff to reconsider (this has worked in the past).

"No" came the reply. I said that I would take this further. I wrote to "Mr Peter" (Robinson's Chairman, Peter Robinson - ed.) and had the courtesy of a reply.

He took up this matter with Mr Parry of Cobdens. According to the door staff I was "aggressive and abusive". Those who know me will be aware that I am not stupid enough to take on three bouncers. As for being abusive, after 30 years working in service industries I know that being abusive does not work, being polite does. Also, according to the door staff, I claimed to work for Robinson's and threatened "complaints and job complications". This fiction may have been prompted because I had a 'Robbies' badge in my lapel. Had the staff been more observant they would have spotted the John Willie Lees tie as well!

(This is one of numerous complaints I have received about Cobden's and the indiscriminate way the door policy is operated there. Anyone who knows Paul will be astounded by the cock and bull story - I hesitate to use the phrase 'pack of lies' - that Cobden's staff used to justify their behaviour. It just adds insult to injury - ed.)

From: John Hutchinson, West Didsbury:

The Breeze Bar, Peter Street, Hydes' latest attempt to join the Manchester café bar set opened for business on Thursday 5 August. It's a large two storey bar sporting a range of chrome plated fonts and two handpumps but no pumpclips, though. I have been reliably informed by people who have actually got across the door that they in fact sell Hydes' Bitter. Why do I say reliably informed? Hydes' have imposed a dress code.

I only found out when I decided to visit this chrome palace for myself. I had a sneaking feeling it may have one as I got over the threshold. I attempted to order a beer from one of the handpumps, only to be told by a jobsworth that it's company policy to refuse people in jeans. This was when I was actually at the bar. I asked him to repeat this statement, which he did. As I looked around on my way out, I noted that I was the only customer and the staff, including jobsworth, were playing with paper aeroplanes. Is this new company policy for overworked and stressed staff, or only for those who work in this chrome edifice? Hydes' should visit JW Lees' Rain Bar. They might regain their sanity. No dress code, over 21s only, plus the full range of their beers, including seasonals.

(Dress codes are always bad news. This one seems very haphazard though - I have visited Breeze on three occasions, each time in jeans, and each time been served. And operating it at the bar and not the door is just going to get peoples' backs up. I gather Rain Bar also operates a dress code at certain times, too - ed.)

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THE RAILWAY, PORTWOOD



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8



OFFICIAL
BEER
ENGLAND
RUGBY

CURMUDGEON

Fahrenheit 451

Imagine if all alcohol advertising were banned. Not just TV ads and posters, but everything. If you ran a pub or off-licence, you wouldn't be able to advertise outside what brands you stocked. You couldn't even put up posters inside, just a plain price list. There would be severe restrictions on the size and design of labels and pumpclips, and a third of each one would be taken up by a health warning. A publication such as 'Opening Times', if it was still allowed, would not be able to accept adverts from pubs stating what beers they sold, or even that they sold beer at all. Pubs would even be prevented from saying they belonged to Holt's or Robinson's, if that was also the name of a beer. If you wrote to the brewery asking for information about their products, they would not be allowed to tell you anything apart from maybe sending you a printout of their price list.

This all sounds very unlikely and totalitarian, so you may be surprised to learn that it is actually going to happen later this year. Only to tobacco, not alcohol. Of course the two substances are not directly comparable - tobacco is harmful and addictive at all levels of consumption, alcohol only if taken to excess, and there is no alcoholic equivalent of passive smoking. But, on the other hand, tobacco is not a cause of domestic violence and road deaths. Both, in their different ways, are potentially dangerous substances, which are disapproved of by a strong Puritan lobby but bring a kind of pleasure to millions. Every smoker must be aware of the health risks, but by no means all actually want to give up. To many, particularly the young, smoking is a one-finger salute to the patronising 'nanny knows best' advice they receive from the authorities.

Undoubtedly there are compelling reasons for strict regulation of tobacco advertising and promotion. Surely, though, consumers of a legal product have a right to information about it in order to make an informed choice, and the implications of banning not only advertising, but any form of dissemination of information, in a supposedly free society, are extremely disturbing. If you are a lover of pubs and beer and the tobacco advertising ban does not worry you, then you are being extremely naïve and short-sighted, because your rights and freedoms may well be next on the list.

No Nuts is Nuts

Feeling a tough peckish in the midst of the 'Mild Challenge', I was surprised to discover that one pub I visited stocked no crisps or nuts whatsoever. It wasn't an upmarket establishment where such things might be thought to lower the tone; nor was it one that does a big food trade and could offer a wide selection of snacks from the menu. It's difficult to see what can be gained from this policy apart from losing revenue. Indeed, one acquaintance of mine finds it hard to drink a pint without munching crisps at the same time and so, however good the beer, some customers may choose to take their business elsewhere. If any licensee who operates this policy is reading this (and I know the pub in question takes 'OT'), then why not write in and give us your reasons?

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

SEPTEMBER 1994

The front page main item reported the possible demise of the West Coast Brewery, which had been placed in voluntary liquidation, with debts rumoured to be in excess of £100,000. The brewery and its one tied house, The King's Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock, were in the hands of a receiver, and although continuing to trade, this was unlikely to remain the case unless a buyer could be found within a few months. The liberalisation of Sunday shopping had drawn attention to the fact that whilst many shops would be opening until 4.00pm, pubs would close an hour earlier, at 3.00pm. That 3.00pm would still have been 2.00pm if there hadn't been a slip-up which allowed an extra hour on Sundays. The Government had plans to launch a consultation Green Paper that autumn, and there was speculation as to whether the demands for greater reform would be met.

Greenalls had taken their first faltering steps with a "real ale" theme pub (The Dog & partridge in Didsbury), and had made more positive moves to open up the guest beer market in the rest of their tied estate. They had announced a list of ten regional beers that were to rotate as guests - these included Old Speckled hen, Abbot, Adnam's Extra, Smiles Exhibition and Gales. There was also a plan that would involve test marketing of new beers on 60 "prime outlets" - a successful trial would qualify a beer to be added to the list.

The one year old Caernarfon & Anglesey Branch of CAMRA had just held their very first presentation ceremony - Pub of the Season to The Ship at Red Wharf Bay. Two special beers had been provided from the new micro-brewery at Denbigh - Bragdy Dyffryn Clwyd. (The branch has now been renamed Eryri a Mon, which means Snowdonia & Anglesey).

There was another episode in the long running saga of the campaign to save the unique buffet bar at Stalybridge Station. The Friends of Stalybridge Station decided to erect a blue plaque in celebration of the fact that the bar had been in continuous licensed use since the station was rebuilt in 1885. But British rail (or is it Railtrack?) refused permission for the plaque to be fixed to the wall. So after a presentation ceremony at the old Town Hall site in Stalybridge, the plaque ended up in pride of place, inside the buffet bar.

Finally, two brief items of pub licensee changes: Ken Birch left The Crown, Heaton Lane and Janet Dixon took over The Bull's Head in Stockport Market Place - she is the daughter of Ian and Dot Brookes at the nearby Bakers Vaults.

9

HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!

FIGHT TO PRESERVE REAL ALE!

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Graham welcomes you to ...

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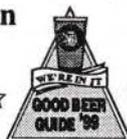
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PUB OF THE YEAR 1998**

THE SPORTSMAN

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

Regular Beers include
Hartington Bitter, Plasley Bitter,
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12 - 4pm



Greater Manchester's newest brewery comes on stream this month. Cheshire Cat Ales from the Altrincham Brewing Co, based at The Old Market Tavern (previously The Hogshead), in the town's Market Place, are launched this month. Test brewing by brewer Dave Ward, better known in CAMRA circles as Chairman of the Trafford & Hulme Branch, was underway as we went to press and the first beer, a 4.1 per cent ABV brew (the name is being kept under wraps until launch night) will be unveiled from 7.30pm on Saturday 18 September. This is a very welcome venture and will see brewing return to Altrincham after a 109-year absence! A full report next month.

The county's two other new brewing ventures are also on track for production by the end of the year. The Lord Raglan at Nangreaves, Bury, is aiming for an October/November launch date, while at The Railway, Golborne, 'Sarah's Hop House' is well under construction (walls up, roof to go on).

One of our more well-established local breweries is also on the move. John Feeney's Bank Top Brewery in Bolton is aiming to move to the club house at Bank Top Tennis Club, a Grade 2 listed building which is conveniently sited across the road from



John's house! He has applied for change of use planning permission but told Opening Times that he expects it to be some weeks before anything is heard. On the beer front, the Rye Beer reported last month should definitely appear in September (time permitting!); followed in October by a Festival Special for the Howcroft pub beer festival (13-17 October, 200 beers) and the three remaining 'Knights of the

Round Table' beers by the year end.



Phoenix Brewery at Heywood continues to do the business with a constant flow of impressive specials and seasonal beers. This month look out for Flash Flood at 4.1%, a very impressive brew when tasted previously.

The Footage & Firkin beers are currently available in their supplied pubs at half-price (yes, really!) from Monday to Thursday. We understand that this is in part an attempt to boost sales of the Firkin beers as sales have nose-dived since the Firkin pubs also installed Tetley Smooth.

A bottled beer to look out for is 'New Roof Ale'. This bottle-conditioned brew has been produced by the Kitchen Brewery in Huddersfield to mark the completion of the new roof on Piccadilly Station. Only 276 bottles, which have a picture of the station interior on the label, of the 4.5% ABV brew have been produced. It's a pale amber beer and, if the other Kitchen beers are anything to go by, should have a decent hoppy kick.

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...Pub News...
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CAMRA

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

B R A N C H

...Pub News...
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Congratulations to Martin Kinderman's Belgian Beer Company for gaining a contract to supply a small but perfectly formed range of Belgian beers to the outlets of the Hale Leisure Group. Patrons of the likes of Jabez Clegg, Dry Bar, The Thirsty Scholar, Joshua Brooks et al will now be able to Chimay, Delirium Tremens and others. Happily, Hale sees these beers as a 'value added' addition to their outlets and will not therefore be dumping them if sales remain low.

A very warm, and equally belated, welcome to Mel and Judy Boswell who took over at the Queens Head (Turners Vaults), Underbank, Stockport, just before Christmas. Since their arrival they have developed a very homely feel to the pub which has attracted a loyal band of regulars. There's a sprinkling of good pubby bric-a-brac and the famous 'Compacto' has been brought back into public use (slim gentlemen only!). Tasty, home-cooked food is to be had between 12 and 2.30 Monday to Saturday and 12-3 on Sundays. Turners is also open all permitted hours every day. It's good to see such a classic pub in safe hands.

There are also new licensees at Winters on Underbank. Their predecessors, Brian and Laura are currently at the Grove, Clayton, (another classic pub) on a relief basis. A recent Monday night visit found Winters almost empty at 10.30pm when neighbouring pubs very at the least 'ticking over nicely', so clearly some work needs to be done to realise the pub's potential.

A pub that is realising its potential these days is the Spread Eagle on Hillgate. The pub functions as Robinson's brewery tap and also attracts a steady crowd of regulars. Landlord Noel is quite a dab hand at home-made curries which are available both to eat in or take away at very reasonable prices (about £3 a time, we seem to recall). The beer's pretty good, too!

Rumours abound that Holt's have bought the closed Railway (and adjoining shop premises) in West Didsbury, but we understand that the brewery have denied this. Also in the unconfirmed rumour department is the proposed purchase of The Chestergate tavern, Mersey Square, Stockport, by none other than the J D Wetherspoon organisation. This would clearly make sense for Wetherspoons, who must have Stockport high on their hit list, and would tie in with reports that a proposed major refurbishment of the pub by Scottish & Newcastle has been shelved. Clearly something needs to be done to the pub which is fast becoming an eyesore (just when was it last painted?) and sells no real ale to boot.

In Edgeley, The Pineapple on Castle Street (no real ale for years) seems to be undergoing one of its regular periods of closure. Sadly, this looks to have been joined by the nearby Prince Albert, which was closed too as we went to press.

The Bridge Inn on Chestergate has now been sold by Robinson's. The surprise purchaser of the pub (which remains closed) is Stockport Council. Demolition for junction improvements looks to be on the cards.

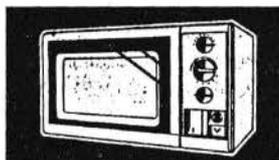
The Keg only monstrosity that occupies the site of the former Yates Wine Lodge (and old Railway Station) in Fallowfield is apparently under threat. The giant new Sainsbury supermarket immediately behind it is apparently too small to hold the range of goods deemed appropriate to student/lecturer land, so more space is required. Outright demolition is being proposed, the owners, despite the inevitable recent multi-hundred-thousand refurb are keen to get their paws on Sainsbury's dosh, the council seem to have no opinion, so another minor piece of heritage will go. The bottled beer range might improve though....

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11

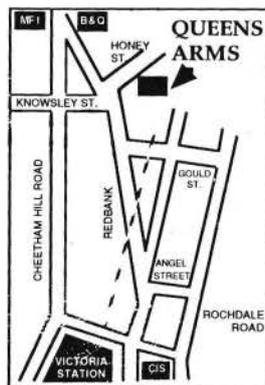
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September Featured Pub: The Queens Arms, Old Glossop

Well and truly on the local beer map after its recent purchase from the Devonshire Pub Company, a subsequent refurbishment by the new owners and the introduction of a good beer range, the Queens is a further plus for the Glossop area. With Barnsley Bitter and Hancocks HB both selling at £1.30, plus Jennings Cumberland Ale and Grays Premium at £1.40, it is not surprising that within weeks of reopening, 12-13 barrels of traditional beer are being sold each week.

The Wednesday to Friday lunch and evening meals (with special deals), and weekend lunches are also taking off, with further incentives, e.g. selected bottles £1.00, double shorts £1.70, ensuring there is something for everyone. Landlord Philip Eaton says, "We wanted a traditional country pub and we are also hiker friendly. We have had a stone floor put in that is easy to wash over, so we don't mind muddy boots."

Historically, the area around the pub was the Glossop Tramway Terminus and the walls of the pub pick up this theme, including an enlarged photograph of the last tram to terminate in Old Glossop, outside The Queens - with a superimposed photograph of Philip standing at the door! The pub also has a labyrinth of underground chambers which linked the pub to the nearby Bulls Head and the parish church opposite. These have, however, long been blocked off. Returning to the present, a £60,000 refurbishment has been carried out to good effect and in keeping with the pub. Two stone fireplaces and pew seating with ample wall lights give a rustic charm, along with a Victorian-style bar. Philip and Brenda plan music nights in the future, and there are already darts, dominoes and cards played in the open-plan tap-room section.

All in all, The Queens is a big improvement for pub-goers in Old Glossop and is highly recommended for a visit. Those familiar with the area will know the pub is just 100 yards down the road for The Bulls Head; for first time visitors, it is just a 15-minute stroll from Glossop town centre through Manor Park.

...Pub Ne
b News...
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In Hyde, the new landlord at The Lowes Arms is apparently seriously considering the possibility of starting a small brewery on site. This is very interesting news and if he needs any encouragement a quick word with any branch member should do the trick. It would be refreshing to have a new brewery, especially as it would be just down the road from the Failsworth Brewery Tap (defunct) and the CAMRA Investments venture at The Whitegates (also defunct - the venture, not the pub). This isn't an omen!

Also in Hyde some less welcome news from the Godley Hall Inn - the changes at former Vaux outlets has bitten with only two handpumps serving...Stones and Bass. A similar tale from The Plough Boy in Disley where the landlord has been restricted to the temporary beer list. Mind you their ambition only stretched to trying for Boddingtons Bitter!

Some Robinson's news. In Glossop, The Oakwood on High Street West has added Frederics (at the expense of the mild) to the Best Bitter and Hartleys XB - all on handpump. The Frederics and XB are £1.50 a pint (good value! - for the Frederics, anyway. The Navigation in Marple is also considering a change in the beer range following extensive redecoration - also Frederics and XB. Finally, in Peak Dale, The Midland, the only pub, has closed following its sale by the brewery. A shame as it was a pleasant pub full of railway bits and bobs (a few well regarded pictures) and "anoraks", plus two real fires.

12

ARMOURY INN SHAW HEATH



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Jim Bowden

Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch are very sorry and sad to report the death of Jim Bowden, on 1 August after a long illness.

Throughout the branch's 25-year existence, Jim was one of our staunchest and most stalwart members. He held all of the branch officer positions, being Chairman and Secretary for long periods, and the Treasurer from formation until his untimely death. From 1976 in Blackpool, Jim attended 22 successive National AGMs.

He enjoyed good real ale and good conversation in good surroundings, which for him meant a quiet pub without intrusive music. He campaigned tirelessly for what he believed in. During the early nineties Jim kept the branch going virtually single-handedly, and yet the last branch meeting attracted 12 attendees, and several more now help to distribute newsletters and attend social events. Even those who never met Jim owe him a great deal.

One of the nicest people you could meet, he was the perfect gentleman and an ideal ambassador for our organisation. He had a splendid sense of humour, once dismissing a door-step religious visitor with the words "my religion opens at 5.30". Jim always had time to introduce new members and visitors to his favourite pubs. American CAMRA member Scott French recalled "he was a great friend. I remember going on a crawl of Manchester pubs with him in my first year in the UK. It was a great introduction to the wonderful pubs of Manchester with one of the experts."

Jim was a good friend, an efficient branch officer and was widely known and respected by members and officers throughout CAMRA. The Branch extends its deepest sympathy to Jim's wife Pauline, and their son and daughter, David and Nicola. Locally, we will find Jim irreplaceable for the numerous tasks and duties he performed for CAMRA. He is a major loss to the Campaign.



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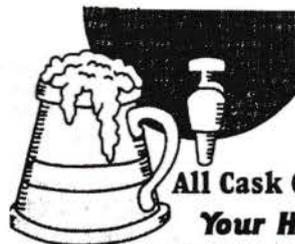
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Mild & Bitter

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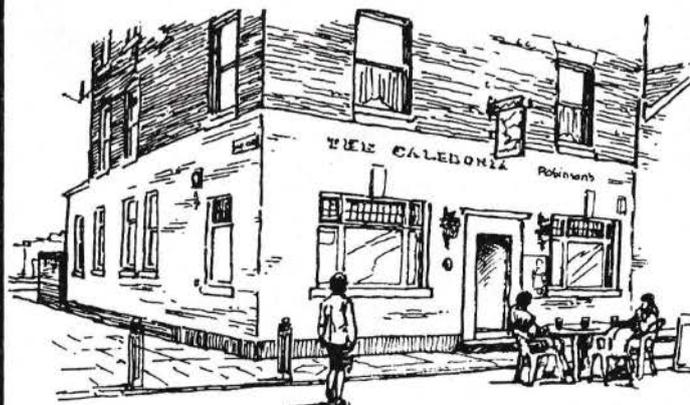
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Warm Rain, Cool Breeze

Two new and eagerly awaited City Centre Bars both opened their doors on Thursday, August 5th. J.W. Lees finally unveiled their new Rain Bar while Hydes' opened Breeze Café Bar. They couldn't be more different.

The conversion of the four-storey Victorian building at 80 Great Bridgewater Street has taken Lees some 12 months and £1.5 million to convert into their flagship. It has clearly been time and money very well spent.

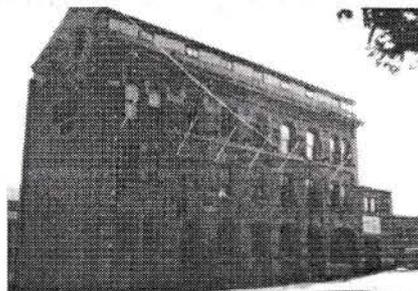
Design team Richard Chadwick Associates and architects Mike Bowers have executed a difficult balancing act to achieve a skilful amalgam of the latest café bar idiom and the city's traditional public house heritage. The ground floor is in traditional style with polished wood, dark metal and bare brick to the fore. Nooks, crannies and different levels give the space character, which is enhanced by the traditional, but not over-fussy, décor and furniture. Central to the operation is the three-sided bar, each side dominated by a bank of handpumps dispensing the full range of Lees' cask beers at prices which, while high for Lees (Mild £1.50, Bitter £1.70) are very reasonable for the City Centre.

On the first floor is a bistro bar decorated in a more modern look with polished steel girders stretching across exposed brickwork mounted with contemporary art. The bar is smaller and there is just a single handpump dispensing Lees Bitter. However, in common with the main bar below, the other keg products are presented in a very low-key manner. Outside is a small patio that overlooks the larger, ground floor outdoor drinking areas, which stretch down to the canal banks and are set to be very popular in fine weather.

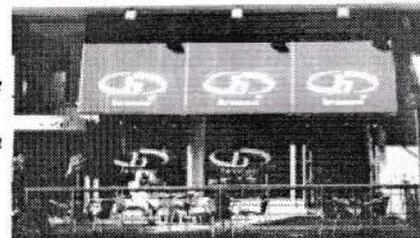
As well as the full range of Lees' beers, which have been in superb condition so far, food is served throughout the day from 8.00am to 10.30pm, offering a wide choice of dishes from light snacks to main meals. *City Life* magazine described Rain Bar (so-named as the building was once an umbrella factory!) as the model for the 21st century pub and they are probably right. A major addition to the City Centre drinking scene and Lees are rightly promoting it as a showcase for their beers - there's even a roll of honour listing the various awards they have won over the years.

★ ★ ★ ★

By contrast, you will have to search hard to find Hydes' name on Breeze Café Bar, just opposite the Free Trade Hall on Peter Street. Occupying the former Hullabaloo restaurant, Breeze is clearly aimed at the café bar crowd expected to flock to the Great Northern Warehouse development and its environs. Consequently it eschews any hint of tradition in its décor but nevertheless still manages to be a stylish and well executed place to eat and drink. There is a raised area on the spacious ground floor, a mezzanine balcony and a fenced-off outdoor drinking area at the front - the perfect place for watching



Lees new flagship Rain Bar, serving up the full range of Cask Ales...



Hydes' new Breeze Cafe Bar on Peter St. Not an anvil in sight...

the world go by. The food menu is adventurous and well thought-out, and another plus is the late license to 1.00am.

The style is very modern and light but in common with most independently run operations manages to avoid the usual clichés and offers something that little bit different. Having said that, however, there remain major doubts on the way that the place is run. The bar, for example, is dominated by a row of chrome fonts, flanked at each end by the welcome sight of a prominent steel handpump. For some reason, though, all of these are unmarked (a strange policy, which is clearly someone's 'Good Idea', and needs an urgent rethink). The draught beers are listed on the menus on each table, and it is here that you will find the only mention of Hydes' with draught "Hydes' Cask Ale" listed at £1.90 a pint. This is Hydes' Bitter and here's another problem - the bar staff seem either reluctant to tell you it's on sale or do so in a tone which suggests that it's not really considered a serious option. Despite this, the beer is clearly turning over and has been in very good condition when sampled. If you can sample it, that is, as there also appears to be an erratically enforced dress code (see this month's letters) in operation.

No doubt Hydes' will say that all of these oddities are part of a carefully thought-out policy. Well, maybe. While they are due nothing but the highest praise for putting cask beer (and shifting the stuff) in an outlet which many operators would not even consider for real ale, that praise must unfortunately remain qualified for the time being. JC.

14



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!"
- ★ **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

Pub Closures

Resistance At All Costs?

Historically, the most heavily pubbed areas in Britain have been, at least until recently, town and city centres and their immediate surroundings.

The town and city centre has always been a focal point for social activity and so it remains today. Surrounding the centres are those districts which first accommodated the explosion in urban growth in the 18th and 19th centuries and where much of the industrial population was concentrated. It is there that many pubs grew up to service that dense population. Unfettered at the time by licensing laws or other restrictions on opening, and in the absence of competition from other forms of entertainment many of them flourished. Much of inner city Manchester and, in Stockport, the Lancashire Hill, Hillgate and Edgeley areas are testimony to this. Since the 1950s there has been a movement of population out to the suburbs as jobs disappeared, housing density was reduced and peoples expectations rose. In many of the clearance areas, the pubs vanished with the houses. In others which experienced a less rapid decline in population and industry, such as the Ashton Old Road and New Road corridors, the pubs remained to serve a declining and in many cases, increasingly impoverished, population. The owning brewers and their tenants clung on, each hoping that their increasingly marginal businesses would outlast their competitors. It couldn't last but while the last 15 years have seen many inner-urban pubs close, many remain. Arguably, too many remain, with the result that many have deteriorated, with less investment from their owners, fewer customers, dwindling sales and to complete the vicious circle, deteriorating cask ale quality. And what has CAMRA done? Well, the Campaign has joined King Canute on his chair and fought against pub closures. It convinced local authorities not to compulsorily purchase pubs just to knock them down. It tried to embarrass brewers and pub companies who tried to shed their inner-city pub stock.

The 1990s have seen us reap the results of this mistaken approach. The drinking of cask beer has increasingly become a rarity in the inner cities, as pub goers reject second rate real ale in favour of bland, but at least consistent, smooth keg ales. As recent Staggers in Opening Times testify, many of these pubs have stopped selling real ale and in those that continue to do so, the quality of the product is often poor. Many of the inhabitants of these areas now do not have the opportunity to try quality cask ales. And has the fight against closures had the desired affect of saving the inner city pub stock? No, it hasn't! Pubs continue to close in many areas.

One of the real causes of this problem is the difficulty in obtaining a license and planning permission to replace inner-city losses with new pubs in those suburban districts that are now effectively under-pubbed. As a result we still have areas with too many pubs and others, such as Bramhall, with too few. And make no mistake, under-pubbing can also cause cask ale quality to suffer as lazy licensees can flourish in the absence of real competition.

It is time CAMRA realised that in many areas campaigning against pub closures is a campaign against the long-term viability of cask ale. Instead we should perhaps be encouraging brewers and pub companies to close some of their marginal pubs and campaigning to liberalise the licensing and planning laws. Only by maintaining a balanced distribution of pubs will quality real ale flourish and the consumer get a square deal.

Jim Flynn.



Chutney, Dips & Relishes

Several of the recipes which have appeared over the past 12 months could have been enhanced by being served with one or two of the accompaniments I will lay out here. In addition, cold meats, fish dishes and several vegetable recipes can all benefit from the hint of beer. A bonus is that you may fancy a glass of wine with your food and a beery side dish may held assuage any guilt that you may feel at deserting the hop for the grape.

Rich Beer Chutney

This is suitable for cold meats or bacon butties. You will need 4 jam jars with a suitable seal.

4 medium onions
6 large tomatoes
2 red peppers
12 stoned dates
4oz currants
2oz brown sugar

2 cloves of garlic
Pinches of cinnamon, ginger, slat and black pepper
1 tablespoon vinegar (preferably sherry vinegar)
½ pint Delph Porter or old ale

Method

Scald tomatoes in boiling water for 1 minute; drain and cool. Then peel, core and finely chop the flesh.

Finely dice onions, peppers and dates. Peel and finely chop the garlic then crush into a little salt.

Gently heat enough oil to cover the bottom of a 4-pint saucepan. Sweat off the diced peppers (1 min.), then add the onions and garlic (2 mins.), finally add dates, currants and spices. Gently fry until all are soft.

Add the tomatoes and stir in. Then add the sugar and the mixture should be briskly stirred until this has melted. Add the vinegar and the beer and simmer until a marmalade-like consistency is reached. Stand for ¾ hour. If the mixture is too liquid, add the white of one egg and whisk on a gentle heat. Leave to set again. Pour into jam jars and seal.

Fennel Dip

This is suitable for fish. You will need:

1 medium fennel bulb
½ pint fromage frais

1 bottle Rodenbach
Pinches of ginger, salt and pepper.

Method

Top and tail the fennel, keeping the bushy top for decoration). Dice into 1/8-inch squares and place into a microwaveable bowl with all the ingredients except the fromage frais. Microwave for 4½ minutes (750w) or 6 minutes (650w). Alternatively, place on the middle shelf of medium hot (gas mark 7) oven for 25 minutes. Strain into the fromage frais and gently fold in. Decorate with the fennel leaves.

Cheesy Rodenbach Dip

For use with crudites of dippy, crispy things. You will need:

½lb cheddar cheese, grated
1 bottle Rodenbach

½ pint garlic mayonnaise
Pinches of dry mustard, salt and pepper

Method

Very gently heat the Rodenbach in a saucepan; add the grated cheese and seasoning. Stir until all the cheese has melted then take off the heat and cool for 5 minutes. Spoon or fork the mayonnaise into the beer/cheese combine, using the method by which a dollop is thoroughly stirred in before the next dollop is introduced. Cool and chill for ½ hour.

Dollop is now my favourite word - next month's word: redolent.

15

Jo and Pat and the staff from the
NELSON INN
Didsbury

welcome all their customers old and new
Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

Websters & Holts

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Old Tom and Hartleys

A WARM WELCOME
AND FINE BEER IN
A CLASSIC PUB



Sun Shines

As reported last month, The Sun in September, the popular Sam Smiths house on Burnage Lane has recently undergone a major refurbishment. The results were unveiled on Bank Holiday Monday and it must be said that this is a very impressive job indeed.

There have been improvements both inside and outside the pub. Internally, the layout remains essentially unchanged although the two raised areas in the lounge have now been brought down to ground level and new leather-covered fixed seating installed. Landlady Carole Taylor says the aim was to more reflect the building's origins as a Victorian villa without going over the top in terms of adornment and bric-a-brac, and this has certainly been achieved. A complete redecoration and new curtains complete the effect.

The vaguely Indian Raj theme has been retained in the lounges - the pub now has a distinct multi-roomed feel - while around the bar area and in the entrance lobby there has been more of an emphasis on the history of both the building and its locality. The separate vault remains although this, too, has been redecorated and the seating re-covered. Outside there have also been major improvements. The rendering has been removed to reveal stone plinths beneath the windows and these have been retained in their natural state while the rest of the building has been repainted. Two new doors have been opened in the front of the pub and these lead to a new York stone terrace furnished with eight cast iron tables and 32 chairs. Yes, at long last (some 15 years or so) the restriction on outside drinking has been lifted and the Sun in September is at last able to make use of what is perhaps the best pub garden in Manchester!

Old Brewery Bitter remains on handpump and, despite the huge investment that has been made in the pub, is unchanged in price at £1.17 a pint. Food is also available from 12-2pm Mondays to Fridays, and also at Sunday lunchtime when are bargain two meals for just £5 is available. Carole and husband Alan have always run a good pub at the Sun in September and with this latest refurbishment the very good just got a whole lot better. Highly recommended and well worth a visit. **JC.**

Good Beer Guide 2000

The 2000 edition of the Good Beer Guide (GBG), launched next month, does more than mark the start of a new century and a new millennium. It is the most important edition of the Guide for many years.

As well as listing 5,000 of the very best pubs serving the very best pints of cask beer, the Guide tackles the crisis in the brewing industry that has seen the closure of Mitchells, Morrells, Ruddles, Vaux and Ward, the impending closure of Morland and the merger between Wolverhampton & Dudley and Marston's. The Guide argues that the closures and mergers have little or nothing to do with an alleged slump in real ale sales and everything to do with getting rid of breweries and either selling pubs for vast amounts of money or switching those pubs to heavily advertised national brands.

The Guide argues that the decline in real ale sales has everything to do with the national brewers dumping the style in favour of lager and nitro-keg and little to do with a change in beer drinkers' preferences.

With so many dramatic changes in the industry in the past year, every CAMRA member needs to study the Breweries Section, which has kept pace with those changes, the last of which took place even as the Guide was going to press.

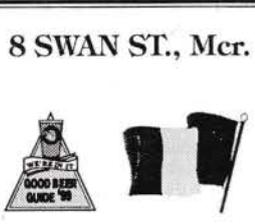
It is the one edition of the GBG you cannot afford to miss. Attractively designed and packed with information, it should be bought by everyone who has an interest in pubs and beer. And it is worth considering buying two editions of the Millennium Guide - one to use and one to keep as a memento of an historic occasion.

Special features on the GBG and a special offer for CAMRA members will appear in next month's Opening Times.

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BAR FRINGE

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BAR FRINGE

BELGIAN BEER TASTING

FOOD & DRINK WEEK - THE ONE DAY BEER PASS

For the duration of the forthcoming Manchester Food & Drink Week, we will be offering a special **ONE DAY BELGIAN BEER TASTING PASS** which entitles you to try all six of the specially selected bottled Belgian Beers on offer in this special event, served in its correct brewery glass, for just £9! The beers in this special promotion are:

Ciney Blond (7% abv); Jupiler (5.2% abv); Mort Subite Kriek (4.3% abv); Brugs Wit (5% abv); Westmalle Dubbel (7% abv) and St Louis Peche (2.6% abv)

Just buy the one-day pass and present it at the bar as you order each beer - for stamping - at any time (during opening) on the day of issue.

BAR FRINGE HAS OVER 40 BELGIAN BEERS AVAILABLE - EVERY DAY

Draught Hoegaarden £2.20/pint, also on draught - St Louis Kriek, Vlaamsch Wit & changing draught Belgian Guest in Traditionally Chilled Brewery Glasses, Bottled beers include Orval, Boon Kriek & Framboise & the Mort Subite range Draught Krombacher and Handpumped British Ales including changing Guest from Bank Top

ONLY ONE PASS PER PERSON - PASS VALID ON DAY OF ISSUE ONLY



A wide variety of Hot & Cold Food is available 12 till 6pm or later



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There are some 2,000 real ale brewed in the UK by over 400 independent breweries. Nowhere in the world is there a greater choice of tasty draught beers.

But our choice and enjoyment is under threat. Four companies now have over 80% of the beer sales in Britain and this looks set to become even more concentrated. These companies concentrate on marketing a handful of premium lager brands and 2smooth-flow2, what we call nitro-keg, beers. Their few remaining real ales receive very little in the way of promotion and sales are declining as a result.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale is working to reverse this trend by helping to promote real ales from Britain's family and regional brewers, the biggest producers of real ale, as well as those from 300 small brewers.

So why should you drink real ale?

It's a full flavoured and refreshing alternative to the usual national beers. It should never be warm or cloudy, and it's a myth that it is stronger and more fattening than other beers. It should not be 'flat', but it should be pleasantly conditioned, rather than fizzy. Most of the real ales available are brewed to meet local tastes, so there is a huge variety available. Unlike most mass-produced lagers and nitro-kegs, two rarely taste the same and once most people have tried a few gems they soon become hooked.

How do I know it's real ale?

There's an easy way, which is 99% reliable. If it's served through a full-sized handpump in a pub you can be fairly sure you are drinking real ale. Some local brewers, particularly Hydes' and Robinson's also serve their real ales using an electric pump. Either way, it's not pasteurised and it's not served pumped full of carbon dioxide or nitrogen. It's fashionable for brewers to cash in on the image of real ale by presenting other beers in a similar way. For example you may find beer served via a large fount with a small handpump-style switch on top. It's not real ale.

Opening Times Competition

Our competition last month attracted fewer entries, perhaps reflecting the more difficult questions. Once again thanks to Paul Stanyer of The Railway, Portwood, for setting the questions and providing the prize. The pubs you had to identify were: Old Woolpack; Little Mill; Commercial; Ring of Bells; Head of Steam; Imperial Vaults; Rising Sun; Dun Cow; Quarrymen's Arms; Dandy Cock; Blue Pig and Strawberry Duck (and yes, we do now realise that Captain Pugwash sailed in the Black Pig, so no letters please - ed.). There were two winners who get four pints of Porter's Sunshine each. The lucky two are Martin Wystyrk of Heaton Chapel and Leigh Musselwhite of Hazel Grove.

September Competition

Paul has kindly set us another quiz and this month all the pubs are in the 1999 Good Beer Guide under Derbyshire. Entries to OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HD and the first correct entry picked out after 30 September will win a Porter's Railway Polo Shirt.

So, following our now established pattern, if "TRACK PATH" is "RAILWAY" what are these:

Triplet bucks principals

Snack, twice not out?

Train station with heavenly music maker?

Use these to make barrels?

Careful you don't get pricked here?

Square bashing in the safe room?

Crown or flat, either way it's verdant

Paddling in the trench here?

Is this place antipodal?

Game Bird?

17

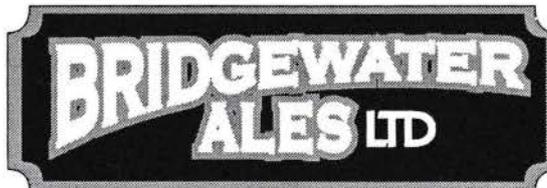
1999 Stockport CAMRA Beer of the Festival -

Delph Porter

5.2% ABV

Barton Ale

4.3% ABV



Navigator*

3.8% ABV

Available Now...

Blondie

4.7% ABV

(American style Ale)

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COMPETITION Present This Advert at The Millgate, Ashton Rd West, Failsworth on any day during the week of 11 - 18th of September and earn a chance to win £30,000

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

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

September 99

Monday 6th - Social: Friendship, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Gateway, Kingsway, East Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 11th - Beer of Festival Presentation to Bridgewater Brewery. Meet Kings Arms Bloom St, Salford 12 noon.

Monday 13th - Social: Cobdens (ex-Manchester Arms), Wellington Rd 5th, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 17th - Fallowfield & Rusholme Stagger. Meet White Swan, Green St, Ladybarn 7.00pm; Friendship, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield 9.00pm.

Monday 20th - Social & Brewery Tour: Footage & Firkin, Grosvenor St, Manchester City Centre. Starts 8.00pm.

Thursday 23rd - Pub of the Month Presentation to Royal Oak, Cheadle. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 27th - Social: Griffin, Didsbury Rd, Heaton Mersey. Starts 9.00pm.

Monday 4th October - Social: Union, Stockport Rd, Levenshulme. Starts 9.00pm.

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

Monday 6th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Queens Arms, Old Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Wednesday 15th - Regional Meeting: Kingway, Moseley Rd, Levenshulme.

September 99

Thursday 16th - New Derbyshire Guide Committee Meeting in derby. Phone Tom Lord (427 7099) for details.

Sunday 19th - Branch walk. Starts 10.00am. Details from Frank Wood (01457 865426).

Friday 24th - Branch Social Trip to Whaley Bridge, ending in Shepherds Arms. Starts 8.30pm - details from Tom Lord.

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

Monday 20th - Committee meeting: Waggon & Horses, Wellington Rd, Bollington. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 27th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Stanley Arms, Ankers Ln (off A537 Buxton New Rd near Cat & Fiddle Inn), Bottom of the Oven. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Wednesday 15th - Regional Meeting: Kingway, Moseley Rd, Levenshulme. Starts 8.00pm.

Sunday September 26th - 12.30pm National Winter Ales Festival 2000 organising committee meeting Beer House, Angel St Mcr.

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 99 Planfest

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UP TO 6 EVER CHANGING CASK ALES
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and customers

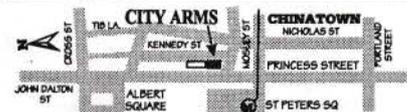
OUR SEPTEMBER BEERS

Among our guests:
Orkney Raven; Old Mill
Traditional Bitter;
Wychwood Ryder Cup;
Batemans Jollys Voyager, Miss September;
Charles Wells
Josephine Grindleys;
Smiles Wurz Ale Gone;
Brains Merlins Oak;
Castle Eden Nimmos XXXX; Weltons IPA;
Ash Vine One in Your Eye; Brakspear
Barnstormer; Rebellion
Red October; Elgoods
Barleymead and many more....



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and 11.30 - 2.00
Saturday



EARLY EVENING MEALS NOW SERVED!

MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

It's a bit like waiting for buses, really. You wait for ages then half a dozen come along at once. And so it has proved on the local pub scene where, after a few quite months, August saw a flurry of openings.

The City Centre has been particularly active and the highlight must be the JW Lees' **Rain Bar** on Great Bridgewater Street. This will doubtless be reviewed elsewhere in these pages but just let me say that Rain Bar is a magnificent flagship for the Middleton Junction brewers and deserves to succeed, as it undoubtedly will. First class beer, too. More of a curate's egg is Hyde's **Breeze Café Bar** on Peter Street, just opposite the Free Trade Hall. Rather more ultra-modern than Rain Bar, and likely to date rather sooner, it is nevertheless a stylish place to drink although the emphasis on real ale is half-hearted, to say the least. All the pumps are strangely unmarked and one report has the bar staff not even mentioning cask beer when asked what they dispensed. When I asked the same question, I was advised that bitter was on sale, but in a tone of voice that said "but you aren't seriously considering drinking it, are you?" Well, I was, and it wasn't half bad, if a touch warm. I was also heartened to note a large party behind me also ordering bitters all round so perhaps a note to the bar staff not to undersell it so much might be in order.

Elsewhere in the City Centre it's keg, keg, keg. There's no cask beer in **Chains Bar**, Abingdon Street; **The Village Inn**, Whitworth Street; **Spirit**, Canal Street and **Tribeca**, Chorlton St, although the latter must be one of the most stylish new bars to open in the centre for a long time. Nor, as expected, does real ale feature at the newly reopened **Wheatsheaf** off Oldham Street. Yet another illustration of Burtonwood's half-hearted support for cask ale. They really have got to start doing better than this. It's no good protesting their commitment to cask beer, actions speak louder than words and to date they are failing miserably. Nearby, the closed **Royal George** (ex-Vaux) on Lever Street looks to be a permanent loss. A firm of accountants now occupies the upper floor and the gutted ground floor is available for rent. Also presently closed is **Quo Vadis** on South King Street. The premises have been gutted and work is underway converting it to...well, who knows what.

Meanwhile the Shambles continues to live up to its name. Remedial work continues on **The Old Wellington**, I am told, and **Sinclair's** has had all its rendering removed as cracking could have led to chunks falling off in cold weather! What a mess!

There's much better news in the suburbs, though. Despite my predictions that completion was some way off, the new Wetherspoon's in Longsight opened on Friday 13 August. The **Sir Edwin Chadwick** is, to coin a phrase, probably the best thing to

happen to the Longsight real ale scene for years. Again there should be a review elsewhere in this issue of OT but I will say that the other local pubs will now certainly have to pull their socks up if there aren't to be some casualties.

Pride of place, though, must go to the refurbishment at **The Sun in September** in Burnage. Landlady Carole Taylor gave me a sneak preview and it must be said that this is a job well done. And at long last the pub has an outdoor drinking area - a York Stone patio now overlooks what must be one of the best pub gardens in the City. This too, should be reviewed elsewhere in OT but for me it is one of the best refurbishments I have seen for a long time. Nearby on Kingsway is the **Old Bull**. I was intrigued by the sign, which declared "There's life in the Old Bull", but sadly this doesn't extend to the beer which remains keg, as has been the case for years. Needless to say this is a Bass outlet.

Bass Backtrack

Bass have beat a hasty retreat following the unguarded comments of their Marketing Director, Mark Hunter, reported here last month.

Hunter, readers may recall, let the cat out of the bag by admitting that as far as he was concerned publicans could spare neither the time nor the effort to look after cask beer and you wouldn't want to invest money in it. No sooner has these comments appeared in the trade press than the roof fell in about the hapless Mr Hunter's ears. Bass fell back on the oldest cliché in the book - Hunter was apparently quoted out of context (oh yes?) and he personally wrote a letter to trade paper *Licensee* 'clarifying' Bass's position on cask ales. Everything's hunky dory it seems. They are going to spend £1 million supporting Draught Bass over the next 12 months. Cask ales are an 'integral part' of their portfolio and they will continue to brew and support them for as long as licensees want to stock them and people want to drink them. Believe that and you'll believe anything.

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19

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 185)

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

Paul Moss, 60 Adelaide Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1LU

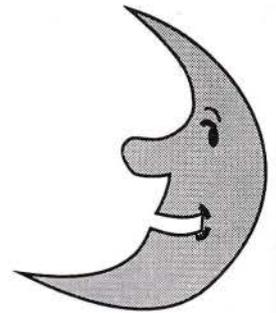
those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:

Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH.



Jo and Andy are Delighted to Announce that Idy & Sal (formerly of the Beer House) will be taking over the tenancy of

THE
CRESCENT



SALFORD

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PHOENIX Wobbly Bob & Thirsty Moon

PLUS 5 GUESTS INCLUDING A GUEST MILD

THATCHERS CIDER £1.30/pint

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LIEFMANS KRIEK & QUALITY DOUBLES BAR**

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THURSDAY 28 - SUNDAY 31 OCTOBER

30 WINTER ALES, MILDS, PORTERS & STOUTS

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HALLOWEEN
PARTY
FRI 29 OCTOBER
- MANY PRIZES**

