

STOCKPORT
AND SOUTH
MANCHESTER
CAMRA

No:186

Volume 15
Issue 10

OPENING TIMES

FREE

OCTOBER 1999



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THE GREAT SMOOTH RIP-OFF

Pub Drinkers Paying More For Less

North west pub goers are being hit in the pocket by the big brewers' push to replace cask ales with bland 'nitrokeg' or 'smooth' beers with prices up to 20p or more higher for the new smooth beers compared with the cask equivalents.

The annual pub prices survey by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale highlighted the problem and this has been backed up with local research by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA members.

The average pint of a pint of real ale nationally was £1.76, a less than inflation increase over the previous year and, as usual, the north west was the cheapest region with our pints averaging just £1.53, some 23p down on the national figure.

However, it's a very different figure when you look at the price of a pint of smooth. The national average price is 8p more than a pint of cask; recent figures from our own survey show the local difference to be an incredible 19p!

These figures would be bad enough on their own but smooth drinkers are being hit by a double whammy. Not only are they paying more for their beer but they are getting less of it. Every pint of smooth comes complete with its trademark thick head of foam, guaranteeing a short measure every time.

Our survey of local outlets shows cask ale as the value for money pint in every case. We have seen Smooth John Smiths selling alongside the similar strength Boddingtons but 15p a pint dearer. In another case the cask and smooth versions of Tetley Bitter (this is the same beer remember) were side by side on the same bar with the smooth 9p a pint more..

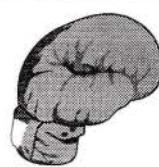
Sadly, it's not only the national brewers who are at it. When Robinson's reopened Cobdens in Stockport, the smooth Old Stockport was 20p a pint more than the considerably stronger Best Bitter. And while Hydes' Smooth may be stronger than their Bitter but does that really justify the 14—15p price differential that we discovered?

Pub companies are in on the racket, too. Wetherspoon's recently announced a new national, value-for-money pricing policy. Boddy's Bitter will cost you £1.29 a pint in every Wetherspoon's pub. Alongside will be John Smiths Smooth — at £1.39.

The message from all of this is simple. It might be smooth — but it's rough on your pocket! If you want taste *and* value, ask for cask.

In OCTOBER's OPENING TIMES

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Punch Knocks Out Firkin

In a shock move, Punch Taverns has pulled the plug on the remaining 24 in-house breweries in the Firkin estate it has newly-acquired from Allied Domecq. The Firkin brewery staff were called a meeting in Leeds on Monday 20 September and told that brewing was to cease with immediate effect. All beer on hand is being distributed to the current Firkin estate but no more will be produced. Brewing staff were remaining on the payroll until 8 October after which they were to be made redundant.

A disconsolate Richard 'Sutty' Sutton, brewer at Manchester's Footage & Firkin, broke the news to Opening Times and asked us to put on record his thanks to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA for all their support. "I really do appreciate the support the local branch has given me" he told us. The closure of the Footage brewery is a particularly hard blow as the quality of the beers produced has been second to none, and they have been very well received at the last two Stockport Beer Festivals. We hope that Sutty won't be absent from the local brewery scene for too long.

Meanwhile, the closure of the in-house breweries will kill the value of the Firkin pubs and further reduce consumer choice. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of Campaigns and Communications told Opening Times: "The Firkin chain has offered a unique service to pub goers since it was created in 1979 and has helped revitalise interest in craft brewing. Closing the breweries will make the pubs the same as all the other boring theme pubs which already rule our high streets."

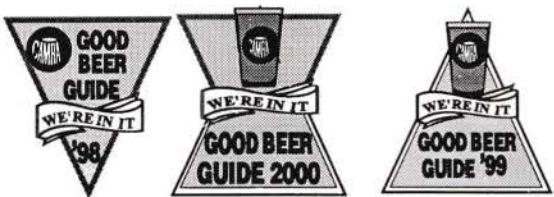
CAMRA has already been urging the Office of Fair Trading to refer the Punch Taverns purchase of the Allied Domecq pub estate to the Competition Commission for a full investigation of its effects on consumer choice. These closures prove that referral is the only way forward as consumer choice has already been affected only days after the deal had been finalised.

Of the 189 Firkin-branded outlets, Bass are due to take over some 130 — including Manchester's 'Footage' and 'Forgery' outlets — which will then be 'debranded'. Punch are to keep about 60 Firkin pubs and these will remain as Firkins and apparently specialise in real ales, with Punch reportedly considering making beers from Britain's 400 micro brewers available to them.

The Millennium Good Beer Guide Out Now! (page 6)

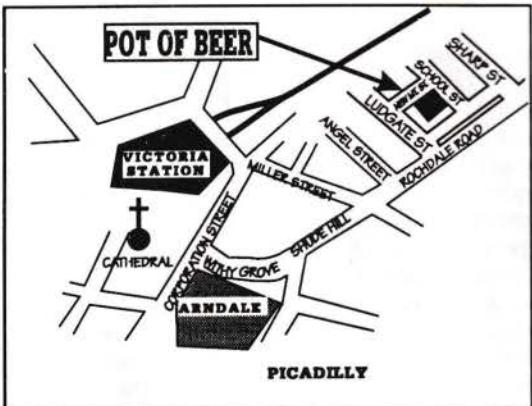
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

This month we expose the high price scam that characterises the new nitrokegs, the so-called 'smooth' beers. Of course, over-charging for the latest fad is nothing new to the brewing industry and, sadly, there do seem to be an awful lot of gullible people out there willing to be taken in by all the hype.

There are some who say CAMRA shouldn't be too rude about smooth beers. That we shouldn't expose them for the bland, over-priced, gassed-up pap that they are. "What about those who actually like these beers?" they ask. Well, if you like beer with no taste or character, that's fine. If you enjoy paying good money for the large dollop of froth (i.e. fresh air) on the top of every pint of smooth, that's fine too. CAMRA is about choice after all. What we are trying to do, though, is make sure that you are aware how good real ale is, how it will always be the better choice, indeed the only real choice, if you want taste, quality and value for money.

Most of all we want to protect and promote it so we can all enjoy it long into the future. And we will be merciless in exposing the shortcomings of any product that threatens its long-term wellbeing.

John Clarke

The take-over of the former Allied Domecq estate (Tetley pubs, Firkins, Festival Ale Houses etc) by Punch Taverns appears to be a story of unalloyed disaster.

No less than 24 breweries have already been closed (the Firkins that still had micro-breweries), and the range of real ale available elsewhere will be savagely cut back, if it continues to exist at all. Given Punch's abysmal record in the pubs they already own - a commitment to sordid 'yoof' bottle bars is all they can seemingly manage - there is a sad certainty that the beer range in Stockport and Manchester will suffer. CAMRA have suggested that the Punch take-over be referred to the Competition authorities, but do not hold your breath. Apparently Punch claim that they are looking at supplying micro-beers from independents to the Firkins. A nice idea, but frankly I'll believe it when I see it. The Firkins will just become more anonymous theme bars. More circuit pubs. More taste deserts for sensible drinkers. Hail the new enemy - Mr Punch. *PBZ*

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 186

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

OCTOBER

1999

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for October is Ye Olde Woolpack, on Brinksway, Stockport. Famously in the shadow of Stockport's giant blue pyramid, the Woolpack has had a chequered history. Fifteen years ago it was a failing Greenalls pub and this was followed by a spell as an equally failing free house, 'The Hague'. Just when permanent closure seemed inevitable it was rescued from oblivion by current owner Bob Dickinson and since then the place hasn't looked back. It is one of those pubs that tells you it is well-run the moment you walk through the door. It's clean, well-maintained and with a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere. Despite having been slightly opened up there is still very much a multi-roomed character with two lounges, a lobby area around the bar and a popular, well-used vault-cum-games room. While many reasons may be cited for the pub's popularity - the atmosphere, the comfortable surroundings, the good, home-cooked food, it is in the beer front that the Woolpack really excels. The core beer range has varied slightly over the years and currently comprises Theakstons Bitter and Marstons Pedigree, alongside Matthew Brown Mild (for a long time Moorhouses Black Cat was the house mild). In addition there are two ever-changing guest beers, usually new and/or obscure beers from microbrewers - when I called last these were Oakhill Charioteer and Weltons Bloody Bosworth Battle Bitter. Needless to say with the attention to detail prevalent here, beer quality is always second to none as evidenced by the pub's almost permanent place in the Good Beer Guide. Bob took over the pub 11 years ago last April and indeed his hard work has been recognised by Pub of the Month awards before, the last one eight years ago. Why another? Simple, this is for continued hard work and dedication - and for over a decade of maintaining the highest standards.

This hard-earned award will be presented to Bob and Anita on the evening of Thursday, 28 October. It's always a good night at the Woolpack, but this should really be one to remember. JC.

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

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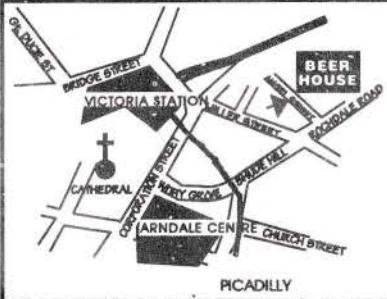
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STAGGER

with Dave Sheldon

Cheadle Hulme

Those familiar with these Staggers will be expecting the usual doom and gloom. Pubs closed and boarded up, noisy karaoke, keg beers only, an all too depressing picture. Well not this month. The Stagger visited Cheadle Hulme, an area where pubs and real ale are thriving.

We started at **The Old Mill**. Situated off Ladybridge Road this is a Tetley 'Big Steak' pub which has become well-known for the range of guest beers sold. It has recently been refurbished with more emphasis given to the food although the range of regular and guest beers hasn't been affected. As it was a mild evening our party, which already numbered ten and a baby, sat outside. Beers tried were Fullers ESB (£1.93) and Brains Reverend James (£1.80). Both were rated well above average. Also available were Robinson's Best Bitter and Frederics (as guests) plus the regular Tetley Bitter.

A little under ten minutes away, on Station Road, is a Wetherspoons pub, **The King's Hall**. Despite the no music policy, this pub has been popular with young people since it opened a year or so ago. Theakston's and Boddingtons bitters were available, but we all opted for either Brains SA or Timothy Taylor's Landlord, both well-priced at £1.29. The Brains was very good and the Landlord, as is to be expected of the current Champion Beer of Britain, was better still. Although our party had the rear outdoor drinking area to ourselves, the baby had been spotted on CCTV. A member of the management came out to point out Wetherspoon's no children policy. A minute later he returned to say that the baby would be allowed to stay on this occasion. Although it was still early, the pub was already very busy as we left, baby heading home for bed, most of the rest to the next pub.

Few pub crawls take place in Cheadle Hulme because of the distance between pubs. This time it was around six or seven minutes down to **The Kenilworth** on Cheadle Road. This is another large, one-room pub but, like The Old Mill, it is divided up with various raised areas to give it a more interesting feel. There were just two real ales to choose from, Tetley Bitter, which the lone drinker said was above average, and Greenalls Bitter (£1.60), which was highly rated. This was the third consecutive pub to offer a no-smoking area and another noticeable plus was a separate toilet for the disabled.

Another ten-minute walk – don't try this crawl on a wet evening – and we reached **The Hesketh Arms** on Hulme Hall Road. Another comfortable one-room pub, The Hesketh has had an admirable guest ale policy for a couple of years now. Tonight's offerings were Exmoor Gold and Burtonwood Top Hat, both priced at £1.87 and rated very good. John Smiths Bitter was also available.

The newest pub in the area, **The Governor's House**, was another six or seven minutes away. It was twenty to ten and the pub was packed. The Governor's is large and open-plan, typical of many pubs in the area. In common with the others, though, it is very well divided up and has quite a multi-roomed feel together with a no-smoking area. It also sells a guest beer but unfortunately the pump clip showing Caledonian Festival was pointing in the wrong direction, leaving just Boddingtons Bitter and Courage Directors, both at £1.80 and rated just above average. This pub has a large outdoor drinking area which we took advantage of in view of the numbers inside. A couple of our party noted that there was a good range of single malt whiskies.

Right across the road (hooray!) is **The Church Inn**. Without doubt this Robinson's house is the most attractive pub in the area and the only one with a separate vault. Service here is always very good and

we didn't have to wait long for Hatters Mild (£1.50), Old Stockport (£1.60) and Best (£1.60), and all were rated good.

Just under ten minutes walk brought us to the last pub of the evening, **The Cheadle Hulme**, which is situated just next to the railway station (and for those trying to follow this on a map, just two minutes away from The Kings Hall). This is a Holt's pub which, disappointingly at the end of such a good evening, provided our only poor beer of the night, Holt's Mild. The Holt's Bitter was considerably better. Prices are £1.04 and £1.10 respectively.

The addition of The Kings Hall and The Governor's to the area, plus restaurants and various food takeaways, has made Cheadle Hulme a popular spot not only with the locals but also with people from outside the area. All of the pubs visited had outdoor drinking areas, and six of the seven offer food in the evenings. More importantly, 21 cask ales were available (18 of them different) with no pub selling more than it can properly handle. Public transport is good with a last 369 bus back to Stockport at 23.35 (later on Sundays!), and a last train back to Stockport/Manchester at 23.57 (23.05 Sundays).

Cheadle Hulme doesn't offer a compact crawl, but it's certainly worth the effort.

Real Ale In A Bottle...?

That Can't Be Right, Can It?

It may seem like a contradiction in terms, but, yes, you can have real ale in a bottle. Real ale, according to the dictionary definition is "beer which has been brewed and stored in the traditional way, and which has undergone a secondary fermentation in the container from which it is dispensed". The definition is usually applied to draught real ales - beers that contain yeast and continue to mature in the cask at the pub (cask-conditioned beers), but it equally applies to bottled beers which contain yeast and mature in the bottle (bottle-conditioned beers). Such beers need to be poured carefully to avoid the yeast sediment dropping into the glass, but the yeast won't do you any harm even if it does. The net result is a beer that tastes fresher, is more complex and has a much lighter texture than ordinary pasteurised and filtered bottled beers.

When CAMRA began life in 1971, there were five bottle-conditioned beers in regular production: Worthington White Shield, Guinness Original, Gale's Prize Old Ale, Thomas Hardy's Ale and Courage Imperial Russian Stout. Guinness, sadly, has now been sacrificed to the pasteuriser, and Imperial Russian Stout seems to be on its deathbed, but the other three are still going strong. What's more they have now been joined by around 300 other bottle-conditioned beers, from all over the country. The last few years have seen a remarkable revival in bottled real ale, thanks mostly to the imagination of Britain's smaller breweries and the opportunities provided by high street retailers.

The choice of bottle-conditioned beers is now staggering and CAMRA Books has the field covered in the new edition of the award-winning 'Good Bottled Beer Guide'. Now in a handy, pocket-hardback format, the book profiles all bottle-conditioned beers currently available in the UK, and includes features on storing, serving and tasting bottled beers, plus a survey of easy-to-find bottled real ales from overseas. Compiled by Geoff Evans, eight-times Editor of CAMRA's 'Good Beer Guide', the Good Bottled Beer Guide is priced at £8.99 (£7.99 to CAMRA members) and is available from good bookshops or direct (and post-free) from CAMRA at 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW; tel. 01727 867201 (credit card orders accepted).

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Millennium Edition Hits The Mark

The 27th Good Beer Guide was launched by CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale, at Fuller's Brewery in London on 30 September. Edited by long-standing CAMRA stalwart and beer expert Roger Protz, the millennium edition promises to be one of the best ever, with major changes over the 1999 Guide ('Stockport' will be back!).

It's one of the biggest editions of CAMRA's market-leading pub guide which has now sold over one million copies since it first appeared in 1974. While the Guide remains an essential work of reference, details all of the country's brewers and their beers, it is the 5000 pubs that remain the heart of the Guide. These are chosen by local members of the Campaign who know their local areas: there are no once-a-year inspectors involved pub has to be good all year round to get into the Guide. Easily arranged, county by county, fully mapped and with all facilities highlighted, from accommodation and meals to family rooms, no-smoking areas and wheelchair access, this is a book for every pub lover.

There's plenty to read, too, including:

- ★ A major analysis by Roger Protz of the state of the industry, showing that the "real ale crisis" has been caused not by consumers moving away from cask beer but by giant national brewers switching to nitro-keg.
- ★ David Fryer on how beer drinkers still get fleeced when they buy a pint.
- ★ Geoff Brandwood on the fight to save the nation's pub heritage.
- ★ Paul Nunny on the brewers' Cask Marque initiative to improve beer quality.

With tasting notes and a beer index to help you find your favourite pint, the Good Beer Guide is the book no beer lover can afford to be without and is ideal for holidays, business trips, days in the country or nights on the town.

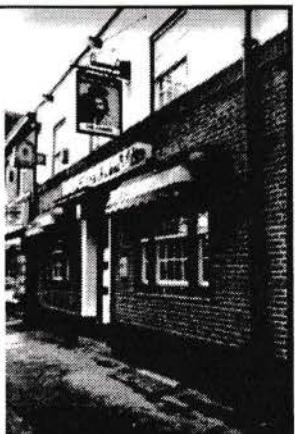
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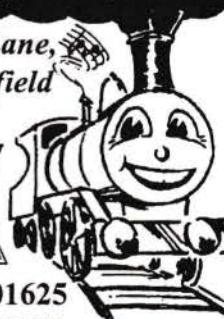
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The Greenall's Graveyard

30 Years of Vandalism

Greenall's final exit from the pub scene brings to an inglorious end a thirty-year spree of brewery closures and pub wrecking. While many will be glad to see the back of them, the departure sadly comes far too late for many breweries and pubs which have been closed or wrecked during the company's headlong rush to oblivion.

Despite the ignominy of its final years, Greenalls has quite an illustrious history, being founded at St Helens in 1762 with the Warrington brewery established in 1787. The company was registered in October 1880 and in 1952 was floated on the Stock Market as a public company, although a 'two tier' share structure meant that control remained in the hands of the Greenall and Whitley families.

Early Expansion

Greenall Whitley, as then was, had already been on the expansion trail. The Northgate Brewery in Chester was purchased in 1949 and in 1951 two Shropshire companies were acquired, the Wrekin Brewery Co of Wellington and the better known Shrewsbury & Wem Brewery at Wem. None of these concerns closed – the carnage was to begin much later – but remained fully functional as members of the 'Greenalls Group of Companies'.

The take-over trail was resumed at the end of the Fifties when Magee, Marshall of Bolton was acquired in 1959, followed two years later by the famous Salford company of Groves & Whitnall, well known for their 'Red Rose Ales'. Most of the Greenalls pubs in the Opening Times area are ex-Groves pubs, in fact. Again, both of these concerns continued producing their well-regarded ales.

The Axe Falls

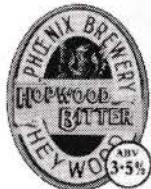
By this time Greenalls were brewing at six sites and rationalisation was in the air. The axe, when it came, was swift and bloody. The Northgate and Wrekin breweries closed in 1969, Magees went in September 1970 with Groves & Whitnall following in March 1972. Four years later the historic St Helens plant was also closed down. The Wem brewery, reputedly under the wing of a senior board member, survived this round of closures.

Having now concentrated their brewing operations on two sites, Warrington and Wem, Greenalls went on the expansion trail again, this time concentrating on the Midlands. In 1978 Shipstones of Nottingham was acquired with 280 pubs and in 1986 Davenport's Brewery in Birmingham, famous for their 'beer at home' domestic deliveries, was bought with 106 tied houses. Twelve months earlier there had been a sign of things to come when, in July 1985 the tiny Simpkiss Brewery at Brierley Hill was bought.

Despite having only 15 pubs, Greenalls had reportedly had an offer on the table for the company for years. When the Simpkiss family finally agreed to sell out, the brewery was immediately shut; beer

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OLD OAK
Well balanced bitter 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 malicness 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
Aphor beer. Malty fruity aromas. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.



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in the fermenters was poured away and all items of memorabilia in the brewery – pumpclips, beer towels etc – stripped out. The name of this small, family concern was erased from the brewing map with ruthless thoroughness. This at a time when the marketing possibilities of craft ales from a small brewery were huge, summed up the lack of foresight, imagination and vision which blighted Greenalls for years.

The End Game

The end of the Eighties saw the final demise of the groups brewing interests. Wem was first to go, closing in February 1988, despite a vigorous campaign to save it. Davenports swiftly followed in mid-1989. In both cases production was transferred to the Shipstones plant in Nottingham but that wasn't enough to save it. In 1990 Greenalls announced that they would cease brewing altogether by the end of that year, with the remaining group beers contracted to Carlsberg-Tetley for production at Burton and Leeds. Ironically, the final closure came just as the Warrington brewery had produced its first decent beer for years – Thomas Greenall's Original. The success of this beer seemed to take Greenalls quite by surprise, once again throwing their lack of vision into stark relief. From then on it was down hill all the way. By now the last Whitleys had left the board and the protective share structure abolished, thus leaving the company prey to City vultures should it underperform. And underperform it did. The Devenish Pub Company in the South West was bought in 1993 followed by the Boddington Pub Co in 1995. City opinion was that the prices paid for both were over the odds and certainly Greenalls Group as it had now become struggled to get a decent return from the Boddington business.

The rest, as they say, is history and a once proud family company, the biggest regional pub owner of its day, and with over 200 years of brewing history, no longer has a presence in the licensed trade. The new owners of its pubs are planning to remove its name from them, Thomas Greenalls Original has been axed and the other Greenalls beers can't be far behind. It is being erased as effectively as was the tiny Simpkiss brewery some 14 years ago. Perhaps there is justice after all. JC.

LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel:

Curmudgeon has labelled all those who are anti-smoking, totalitrian part of the "nanny knows best" brigade and puritan. It is very sad to see this column lower itself to cheap insults which prove nothing except that the writer hasn't really thought through a justifiable argument. When I go for a pint or indeed out to any social event, I don't wish to come back smelling of cigarette smoke and having shortened my life. Many of your readers will not forget seeing Roy castle bravely dying of lung cancer. As a non-smoker he was dying because his job as a musician took him to smoky clubs. How many thousands of non-smoking pub regulars and bar staff are risking a similar awful fate.

Smoking kills even those who are sensible enough not to smoke and advertising cigarettes is obscene. Meanwhile the pub trade needs to listen to its potential customers and staff. Unless you clean up your act, the 75% who don't smoke will go elsewhere and you will soon find your staff suing you.

From Dominic Kane, Heaton Mersey:

I feel I must make your readers aware of the quality of service I have experienced from door staff at the Hogshead pub on Deansgate in Manchester city centre.

On Friday 27th August I met a group of friends for an evening drink in the Deansgate area. After visiting several pubs we arrived at the Hogshead at about 9pm. We then found a table and bought about three rounds. Bearing in mind that there were seven of us, we spent in the region of £50 in there that evening. During this time we were neither rowdy nor inconsiderate to staff or other pub goers; and as a group of scientists and engineers did not form part of what could be expected to be a troublesome crowd.

I am sure you will understand our shock and surprise what at 11.00pm we then received a barrage of abuse from the resident "bouncer" who shouted at us all to leave immediately with the implication that we would be subject to physical violence if we were to finish our drinks in an orderly manner. Needless to say, the pub was effectively evacuated of customers by 11.05 but it did leave a very unpleasant ending to what had been an enjoyable evening until then.

Sadly, this sort of unprofessional behaviour of door staff is becoming far too common in some parts of the city centre and it's time that breweries started to take some responsibility for the quality of door staff they employ before customers vote with their feet and hit them where it hurts – in the pocket.

(Perhaps someone from Whitbread would care to explain this appalling behaviour – and also explain the concept of drinking up time to the Hogshead management. Or is that too much to expect? – ed.)

Letters to Opening Times are welcome either by post to The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport. SK3 9HD or via the internet to otletter@opentime.u-net.com

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PUB OF THE SEASON

Queen's Head, Congleton

The Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch has chosen the Queen's Head, Park Lane, Congleton, as its pub of the season for Autumn 1999.

Conveniently sited opposite the railway station. The Queen's is leased by Tony and Anna Gunner, who found it when they were on a canal boat holiday three years ago. They found a pub they fell in love with, but one that had virtually no customers and not much future. The only way was up!

They moved in two and a half years ago and started work to build up the trade. Quality real ale was part of their plan from the start, and the Queen's is a very rare local outlet for Ansell's Mild on hand pump. Early this year when changes of ownership led the Plough at Eaton and the Fox at Rushton to discontinue Beartown beers from the Congleton Brewery, Tony and Anna saw an opportunity and seized it by adding Beartown to their range. It has been a most successful move, not least because Beartown is always served at the Queen's in tip-top condition.

Why is the Queen's such a good candidate for this award? Several reasons spring to mind: the pub has been rescued from near oblivion, it is a rare outlet for Ansell's Mild in this area, the tenants have shown great business flair and imagination in taking Beartown beers, and they have a total commitment to real ale, as is evidenced by the outstanding quality of their beers. The full range on offer is Ansell's Mild, Marston's Pedigree, Tetley Bitter and one from the Beartown range.

The presentation will be on Thursday, October 14 at 8.00pm. Come along and see if you agree with us.

Shepherd Neame Bid for King & Barnes

Beer drinkers and pub goers everywhere are being encouraged to show their support for King and Barnes, the 200 year old Sussex brewery, subject of an hostile take-over bid by Shepherd Neame Brewery based in Faversham, Kent. CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale is supporting the King and Barnes directors fight to keep the brewery independent.

Ian Woolverton, CAMRA spokesman said, "We fully support the board's proposal to resist any hostile take-over bid by Shepherd Neame. King & Barnes have a long established reputation for brewing excellence and commitment to the Real Ale sector. We will support King & Barnes in any way we can."

Mr Woolverton went on to say, "It is regrettable that Shepherd Neame, who have themselves done much to champion the cause of the independent regional brewer on such issues as Excise Duty, are now adding to the already considerable consolidation chaos within the brewing industry."

CAMRA is committed to the survival of small and regional breweries throughout the UK. In its 27-year history, CAMRA has never seen a take-over bid benefit the consumer.

Mr Woolverton continued, "Sadly take-over bids of this nature inevitably lead to diminished consumer choice."

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10

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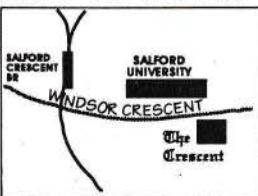
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**PUMP CLIP SALE
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CURMUDGEON



Keep Drunks Off Our Roads

I recently read in another CAMRA publication an account of a pub-crawl by bike which involved visiting at least six pubs, and suggested that pints may have been consumed in each. Fair enough, you may think, a good way of getting some exercise and avoiding any temptation to drink and drive. But is it really a responsible thing to encourage people to do, when the Highway Code is explicit in its instruction to pedal cyclists: You MUST NOT ride when under the influence of drink or drugs?

If you've had a few drinks, your perception of danger will be impaired, and you will gain a false sense of self-confidence, on a bike just as much as in a car. Clearly a drunken cyclist is mostly putting himself at risk, but that personal risk is greater as he is much more exposed and vulnerable than in a car – there are no seat belts or airbags on bikes, and the only crumple zone is your skull. There is also a significant risk to others, as a cyclist unpredictably weaving and wobbling around the road is likely to cause accidents as drivers swerve to avoid him. And it should not be forgotten that, every year, several hundred pedestrians are injured, and a handful killed, in collisions with cyclists, who presumably are riding badly and not looking where they're going – exactly the kind of thing you would do if you had been drinking too much.

I am not suggesting for one minute that cyclists should be tested or judged to the same standards as motorists. But riding a bike on public roads when drunk is no laughing matter. It is dangerous both to the rider and to others, as well as undoubtedly being unlawful, and neither CAMRA nor anyone else should imply that the bike is an acceptable mode of transport for an extended pub crawl. The message should be quite clear – if you're going to have a skinful, get someone else, whether bus driver, taxi driver, train driver or sober friend to drive you. It may not even be such a good idea to walk. It's a sobering thought that two-fifths of all adult pedestrians killed in road accidents are above the legal limit for driving. Between the hours of 10pm and 4am, the proportion rises to over 80%. That statistic of course has to be put into perspective – probably half the pedestrians about at that time have been drinking anyway, and nobody can tell me you're incapable of crossing the road if you've had a few pints. But we all know that there are pub customers who end the evening scarcely able to stand up, and obviously their prospects of safely negotiating Kingsway of the A6 must be greatly reduced. So, if you're in that state, do yourself a favour and get a cab – it just might save your life.

Pull The Udder One

The latest advertising campaign for Boddingtons Bitter, using the slogan "Chilled Cream", features what is clearly intended to be a male of the bovine species – only he's sporting a prominent set of udders. What on earth are they trying to tell us – that drinking Boddingtons is likely to play havoc with your hormones? I suppose someone in an ad agency imagines this is an amusing post-modern example of gender-blurring. Whitbread really must be desperate to restore the fortunes of their fast-fading brand to sign off such ludicrous nonsense. Younger drinkers will also find it hard to believe that, only fifteen years ago, Boddingtons Bitter was a distinctive, tasty beer produced by a local independent brewery. How times have changed!

Curmudgeon Online!

Curmudgeon has finally thrown away the trusty old Imperial typewriter, pensioned off the carrier pigeon, and got himself on the World Wide Web. The address is:

<http://members.tripod.co.uk/Curmudgeon/>

(don't forget that capital C). On the website you'll find the current month and archive columns, links to other sites of varying degrees of curmudgeonliness, opinions on non-beer related topics, and the opportunity to send Curmudgeon your comments. There are no fancy graphics, but, be honest, would you expect any? Why not give it a go – you're sure to be disappointed!

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison OCTOBER '94

Carlsberg-Tetley had just produced its cask ale report 1994 which provided reliable information on the continued, astonishing growth of real ale. The report showed that real ale sales rose 9% in the year to January 1994, at a time when beers ales in total fell 2% and keg beer sales fell 4%. Real ale was 47% of all stout, mild and bitter sold – this compared with 35% in 1987. This seemingly remarkable achievement was despite a steep decline in pub going by customers, and a growth in cheap imports, both of which could have been expected to damage real ale sales. It was suggested that one sign of the revival was the growth in CAMRA membership, which had reached 45,000, the highest in its history, and twice the membership of five years previously.

Wolverhampton brewer Banks's were noted as the latest to join the increasing trend to produce seasonal, or special one-off beers. Banks's were offering a new beer in participating pubs every week starting on 26 September for a six-week period. The beers were Fine Fettle 4.8%, Belter 5%, Timewarp 4.8%, Scallywag 4.5%, Wizard 5%, and Trecker's Winning Beer 4.5%. They had all been specially devised by Head Brewer, Richard Westwood.

The City Arms on Kennedy Street in the City centre had just reopened as Tetley's first Festival Ale House in Manchester, after a two-week closure and a £80,000 refit. Tetley Bitter and up to eight guest beers would be available; the licensees hadn't changed, and the value for money lunch-time food was still available.

Still in the City Centre, work had started on Marston's conversion of the old Barclays Bank premises at the top of King Street. It was to be known as Rothwells. The Newton Heath brewery that Marston's had taken over in 1961 and closed in 1968. The new pub was due to open in December.

The previous month Ken Birch had left The Crown, Heaton Lane, and this month it was reported that Lorraine and Steve James had taken over, after just a year at BodPubCo's Mount Vernon Ale House in Liverpool. They were both real ale fans, and intended to carry on the successful formula at The Crown.

Finally, several items of pub news from the back page. Holt's had been given permission to convert the Tara Hotel in Chorlton into a pub, and it was expected to open the following year. Landlady Carol Taylor was appealing for help – she was trying to research the history of her pub, The Sun in September in Burnage. The Three Bears in Hazel Grove had Hartley's XB, Hatter's Mild, Best Bitter and Frederic's, all dispensed by meters into oversize glasses. Was this a record?

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Congleton's Beartown Brewery has bought the Grapes pub in the town, and this should now be open as their first tied house. Formerly a Tetley pub and the keg-only Grapevine Bistro, it closed some time ago after a murder on the premises! It is on Willow Street on the Buglawton side of Congleton, opposite the Shakerley Arms. Hopefully the full range of Beartown beers, including the superb Polar Eclipse Oatmeal Stout, will be available.

Closer to home, the superb Porter's Stout should be making a welcome return this month. Now a seasonal beer for the Haslingden-based Porter Brewing Co, this magnificent bone-dry, pitch-black beer was being brewed as we went to press and will of course be available in The Railway, Stockport. We understand that the Porter's tied estate could also be about to expand. More news on this when we have it.

Lees have launched their latest seasonal beer. Sloeberry is a 4.4 per cent beer and is not only one of the few British fruit beers that is worth drinking, it's worth actively seeking out. There's an attractive coppery tinge to it along with a dry, sharp, long-lasting hoppy flavour all underpinned by a hint of, erm, sloeberries. Look for it in the tied estate - it will certainly be available in Rain Bar on Great Bridgewater Street in the City Centre.

Lees have also come up trumps in another area with another of their superb beers winning a national accolade, this time through Tesco. Over 100 bottled beers were blind tasted by a select panel of industry experts to identify the Tesco Beer of the Year 1999. They were looking for a beer with a distinctive and unusual flavour which would be eminently drinkable. The JW Lees entry, which at that point was an unnamed experimental brew, created specifically for the competition, won the large brewery category hands down. So, from 18 October the new bottled beer, which is now called John Willie's Manchester Champion Beer (5 per cent ABV), will be available in all licensed Tesco stores around the country.

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Altrincham Brewing Co

New Micro Off To A Flying Start

After a 100-year wait for brewing to return to the town, thirsty locals demolished the first barrel of beer from the new Altrincham Brewing Company in just one and a half hours!

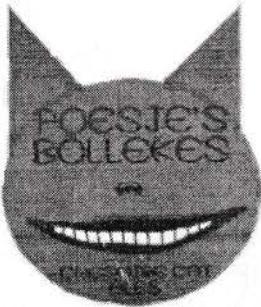
The site of the new brewing venture is The Old Market Tavern, formerly The Hogshead, in the Market Place and is the brainchild of licensee Wayne Reece, brewer – and local CAMRA Chairman – Dave Ward, and businessman John Glover. All three are keen cask ale fans and the idea of brewing commercially germinated after a trip to Bolton's Bank Top Brewery. This was one of several brewery trips organised by Wayne who has the pub on a 10-year, free of tie lease from the Ale House Pub Co, who also happen to own Stockport's Crown on Heaton Lane.

In common with many new brewers, Dave has a long home-brewing background, having started when it was first made legal in 1963 – he was 11 at the time and used his mum's pressure cooker! He abandoned kits for full-mash brewing over 20 years ago and his years of experience are reflected in the high quality of the beer produced so far.

The initial intention, and this remains the case, is that full-time production will start in December. The "launch" on 18 September was in fact brought forward at the behest of an organisation called "The Free-men of England" who arranged an event in the pub. Consequently the beer available on the night, the oddly named Poesje's Bollekens (it's Flemish for 'cat's balls!'), was something of a test brew. However the 4.1 per cent, light, hoppy bitter, brewed using Halcyon malt with Fuggles and Goldings hops "and a few secret ingredients"), will become the mainstream beer, albeit possibly under a different name. The demand for the beer and the speed with which it was consumed – the entire 40-gallon brew length went in 4½ hours – immediately led to a rethink on future strategy. The result is that the main brewing plant will now be located in an industrial unit in Lymm, with a smaller plant on site in Altrincham for small run one-off seasonal and commemorative brews. Until brewing at the new site gets underway in December, it is hoped to brew at Altrincham once a fortnight if possible.

And for the future? Well, there are plans for both the pub and the brewery. The Old Market Tavern is already an excellent local and Wayne hopes to develop it further. He wants to create a separate lounge/no-smoking room and downstairs intends to re-open an old cellar bar, which is still largely fitted out in fact. This will become a dedicated Belgian beer bar, with food to match. And if that wasn't enough, the pub's range of real ciders will shortly increase from two to three.

The brewery will market its beers under the 'Cheshire Cat Ales' name and while the intention is to concentrate on one main beer to see how demand develops, Dave already has ideas for one or two additional brews. A stout or porter 'is a certainty' and such is his enthusiasm that you just know other beers won't be far behind. The Old Market Tavern is just a short walk from Altrincham station, which is served by both Metrolink and the Chester trains which run hourly from Piccadilly via Stockport. For the time being Cheshire Cat Ales might not be available so phone first on 0161 927 7062, although the pub is worth a visit regardless. JC.



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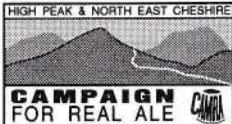
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October Featured Pub: Navigation, Buxworth

The 200-year old Navigation, in the High Peak village of Buxworth, is our featured pub this month. The pub is owned and run as a family affair by Alan and Linda Hall who have been looking after the pub for nine years now, with their daughter running the restaurant.

The pub was visited as part of the High Peak Branch charity walk for Christies, where we were warmly welcomed. The Navigation has a warm lounge bar with an open fire as well as a room featuring the history of Bugsworth and the Peak Forest Canal, along with photographs and other memorabilia. There is also a feature on the twinning of Bugsworth with the City of Clayton in California, including the proclamation. Also, the pub was formerly owned by Coronation Street's Elsie Tanner (the late Pat Phoenix), and a large party of Corrie fans was due to be visiting from Canada around the time this article was written!

The Navigation is aiming to be a pub for all ages, for locals and visitors, families and business travellers. The pub also features pine finished accommodation with single, double and family rooms.

Onto the important stuff – beer!! Alan and Linda aim to feature many different guest ales. During my most recent visit, a fine pint of York Brewery Centurion Ghost Ale (5%) was the featured guest with Greene King Abbot Ale next in line. Also on the bar were hand pumps for Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Marston's Pedigree and Webster's Yorkshire Bitter. In a move that will please the regulars, Alan and Linda are planning on adding another hand pump if they can find room and want to permanently feature Abbeydale Moonshine which has always proved immensely popular with many requests for its return. Traditional American folk music (Bluegrass) with local musicians – The High Peak ramblers – is the featured entertainment on the last Sunday of each month from 2-6pm.

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The restaurant (called Odessa) features a varied selection of traditional country fare featuring Grandma's Golden Oldies, vegetarian and fish selections and a Minnows Menu for children. Ray King of the Manchester Evening News has proclaimed that it is highly recommended for food – twice. Reservations for the restaurant can be made on 01663 732072.

Alan and Linda will always give you a warm welcome and the pub is highly recommended and well worth a visit, especially for families.

Romper Wrecked!

Greenall's pub wrecking activities continued to the very end. The company that demolished Tommy Ducks in the dead of night took the axe to the Romper at Ringway just days before the transfer of its managed pub estate to Scottish & Newcastle. There have long been plans to mess around with this pub. Boddingtons, when they were an independent company, attempted to convert the place to a soulless dining pub. They sensibly withdrew, leaving the Romper to flourish as one of the few relatively unspoilt country pubs in Cheshire under the redoubtable Harry Curran. Who will ever forget his fight with the airport authorities over the infamous staff gate?

Despite the presence of some able licensees, the pub was in all honesty never the same after Harry retired and given its location to the south of the airport, clearly had lots of 'potential' in the eyes of greedy pub company executives. That 'potential' is now about to be realised. The pub has quite simply been gutted. All that remains of the interior are the chimneybreasts and plans outside indicate an expanded one-room affair which is clearly intended to be just another anonymous, formulaic chain dining pub. Clearly it was beyond the wit or wisdom of Greenalls to play to the Romper's undoubted existing strengths. It is just this sort of profit-driven crass insensitivity that leads many pub lovers to say "Goo riddance, Greenalls!" Of course, it remains to be seen if Scottish & Newcastle will be any better.

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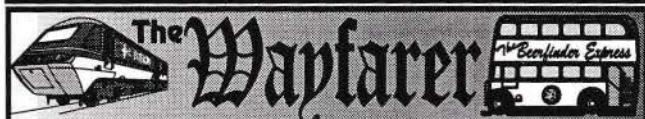
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...goes to The Albion Beer Festival

Over the weekend of 15-18 July, commencing early evening on the Thursday, a third real ale festival was held at the Porter Brewing Co's Albion, on Whalley Road, Clayton-le-Moors, just north of Accrington.

This company's operations will be no stranger to aficionados of real ale and readers of Opening Times, having been well-documented in these pages over the last few years. Dave Porter prides himself on brewing god quality beers and selling them at realistically low prices. The Railway in Portwood, Stockport, is a fine example of his operations. The Albion was Dave's second acquisition a few years ago and is a pleasantly furnished quiet retreat. No gadgetry is needed here - there are just good ales and simple, inexpensive food (decent sized portions, too). The single bar can accommodate several hand pulled beers, including the dangerously drinkable Sunshine and the extremely palatable Porter. On sale when I called was the summer seasonal Celebration Ale (7.6%) and two real ciders, Farmhouse Tipple and Woggle Gob (what? - ed.), both at 6 per cent.

The main body of the festival was held underneath the pub, next to the canal side beer garden. This is reached via stone steps leading down from a patio furnished with picnic tables and umbrellas, more of which were downstairs. Racked behind a small bar were up to thirty or so ales on gravity dispense. The beers came from far and wide, with Harviestoun from the far north (Original, Ptarmigan) down to RCH in the south west (Pitchfork, PG Steam). One featured brewer brought a certain sadness. Mitchells of Lancaster, imminently exiting brewing, had available their Mild and Lancaster Bomber. This was perhaps the last time I would encounter these beers.

I visited on the Friday evening, which was a reasonable pleasant night, and found the festival well patronised and in full swing. I travelled by bus from Manchester, Chorlton Street (service X1 at 17.05, operated by Blackburn Transport); the return journey is from Clayton-le-Moors (service X2 at 21.12, operated by Stage-

coach Ribble). The return fare is £4.70 and the ticket is interchangeable between operators. The stopping place is outside The Hare & Hounds, one stop prior to the pub. You can also go by train, changing at Blackburn and getting a bus from Accrington. The Railway in Stockport also usually runs a trip on the Saturday. Whichever way you decide to go, you can be assured of a rewarding experience at The Albion, whether there's a festival on or not.

Marston's Choice Chopped

Marston's and Banks's have unveiled a trimmed-down range of guest ales for their combined estates. And instead of 30 beers as before, there will be just 12.

The Marston's Head Brewer's Choice introduced a new cask beer every fortnight in one of the most hectic programmes in the brewing world. The more leisurely Festival Beers series from Banks's introduced a newcomer every two months. The new programme, The Guest List, will see a new beer every month, with each brewery contributing six a year. Director of ales, Malcolm Todd said: "We have taken the best from both programmes and will be distributing them through selected outlets to ensure quality." The first six months' beers are September - Lindridge Ale (Banks's); October - Sweet Chariot (Marston's); November - Regimental Ale (Marston's); December - Merry Fettle (Banks's); January - Time Flies (Marston's); and February - Passion (Banks's). The beers all range from 4.5-5.5 per cent ABV.

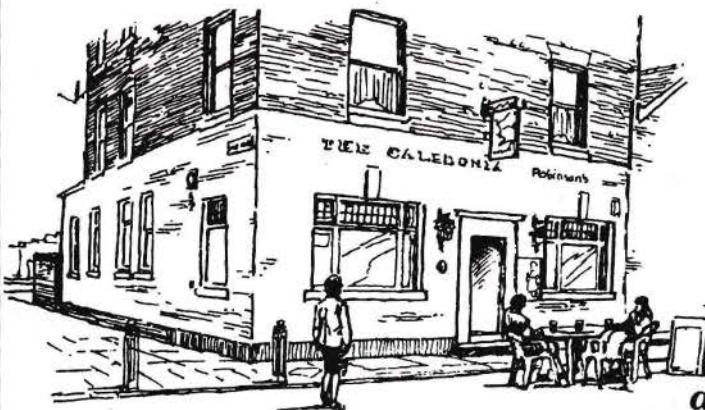
In a widely predicted change to the permanent range, Bateman's Dark Mild is being delisted in the Marston's estate and replaced by Banks's Original. However Malcolm Todd said Marston's tenants with a particular market for dark mild could request Hanson's instead. A major casualty of the shake-up is draught Owd Rodger, the 7.6 per cent barley wine. Mr Todd said that the bottled version (which is **not** bottle-conditioned) remained one of the brewery's flagships, but in cask form it had failed to achieve significant distribution. It is unfortunate that the company's current thinking has no room for what would always be a low-volume niche product.

15

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The pub where quality counts

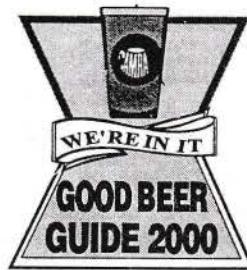


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TOWN VISIT THE SUN INN**

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BEER GARDEN**

WIN A MOUNTAIN BIKE IN AID OF CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



Anyone who is a regular reader of this column will know my views on breweries and their attitude to the game of darts. Darts players, as a rule, like their pint and can often outnumber other customers on many occasions. Strange then, with a few notable exceptions, the breweries and chain operators, pay scant attention to darts. It is good to see that Bank's have agreed to sponsor a league in the West Midlands. They obviously realise that a thriving darts scene puts money in the tills and helps turnover. If a similar situation is to arise in these parts then league officials must put themselves around a bit and look for sponsorship. The organisers of the Billy Dawson Memorial League have worked really hard to find organisations who recognise the commercial value of sponsorship. As well as Bank's, the forward looking league have sponsorship from a local pub (the Bradford Arms, Walsall), an electrical retailers and the Walsall FC supporters club. I hope that local league organisers in our area take note.

Sadly, hard on the heels of the Bank's deal, comes the news that Guinness have withdrawn their own sponsorship of Northern Ireland darts. Apparently that decision will cost the NIDO around £8,000 per year. Guinness have been sponsoring the game for around two decades, it is a shame that it has come to an end. The Inter-Counties Championship has started again with local players featuring prominently again. Defending champions Lancashire will have locally based players like Darryl Fitton, Kevin Weir, Chris North, Sue Hambleton and Steve Cusick available. Mick Haynes was rumoured to be signing on for Lancashire, but has stayed with Cheshire, who narrowly missed promotion to the First Division last season. Tony O'Shea, Joanne Prince and Gill Ball will also be hoping to help the Cestrians move up the league ladder. Lancashire, though, will miss Ronnie Baxter, who has decided to give up county darts to concentrate on tournaments. Former captain Reg Cupit has been seriously ill and will not be available for some time. The Cheshire Super League is also well underway with Stockport having one side in the Men's section and two (Armoury and Labour Club) in the Ladies. It is also good to see that Cheshire will be taking part in the ANDO Youth Darts (Midland section). Youth darts is the way forward and I am glad to see that we are making an effort in that direction.



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"

I hear that the South Manchester Log End League have a vacancy for their forthcoming season. Games of 301, straight start-double finish, are, obviously, played on the little board. The seven-a-side matches take place on Thursday evenings. Interested parties can contact Bernard Hand on 224 7176 (weekends and evenings). The Tele Taxis Individual Championship starts on October 15. It will be the usual format of eight heats, each heat winner going through to the Grand Final on December 10. There is over £600 of prize money available and entries are welcome from both men and women. Entry fee is £2 per night, losers may re-enter in subsequent weeks. This shows that local sponsorship is available, it is a pity that it can't be found as easily for grass roots leagues, rather than just tournaments that will be won, in all probability by elite, semi-pro players. That said the tournament deserves your support. The venue is the Sir Robert Peel on Castle Street. Nice tournament, pity about the beer!

The first season of the British Darts Organisation's British Grand Prix has drawn to a close. Sixty two events nationwide were nominated as ranking tournaments. The first winner was Surrey's Peter Manley, with Scot Peter Johnstone second and Lancashire's Ronnie Baxter third. Our own Tony O'Shea finished joint 29th. This column wishes Tony good luck when he travels to Trentham Gardens on November 6, when he will represent Cheshire in the Embassy Gold Cup in the singles and partner Peter Boughey in the pairs.

Finally, it is always nice to report on a Lancashire victory in a Roses match. Not content with beating Yorkshire in the cricket, the Lancashire players took on the Tykes in a darts match as part of wicket-keeper Warren Hegg's testimonial. Not only did the Old Trafford lads beat the Yorkshireman, but Alan Warriner from Lancaster beat Mexborough's Dennis Priestley in a professional exhibition as part of the evening's entertainment.

The Embassy Darts Roadshow, featuring Mike Gregory and Trina Gulliver, will be on tour in the area shortly. They are due at Moss Trooper, Timperley on Monday November 8. The previous night the pair are scheduled for Bigs Wigs, Audenshaw. According to pre-tour publicity the Audenshaw date also sees Gregory facing Steve Beaton. Obviously, some one has cocked-up, but you can guarantee that if you go down on that date you will see some great arrows.

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Contributors to Opening Times Issue 186:

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

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



Turkey Kebabs in Cider

Try this tasty dish with a mixed leaf salad, or perhaps a Greek Salad (red onion, cucumber, tomatoes and feta cheese). This recipe serves 4 with two kebabs each.

Ingredients

2lb turkey meat
2 medium onions
12 bayleaves
1 pint medium cider or perry
3 cloves of garlic
teaspoon dried mint
salt and pepper
small (6oz) tub of plain yoghurt
teaspoon tomato puree
teaspoon honey

Method

Empty the cider or perry into a large mixing bowl. Finely chop the garlic in a little salt and add to the bowl.

Add the mint, tomato puree, yoghurt, honey and seasoning and mix thoroughly.

Take the turkey meat and dice into 1½-inch cubes. Add these to the bowl and turn them over, making sure each piece is well coated. Marinate overnight.

Peel and halve the onions and slice the halves fairly thickly. Then take 8 skewers (wooden ones are very cheap) and thread pieces of turkey alternately with an onion slice and a bayleaf (bayleaves are so redolent, don't you think?). brush the onions and bayleaves with a little oil and grill for 5 minutes. Turn and repeat. Serve piping hot. Next month's word: oeuvre.

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Down And Out

Grotty Greenalls Bites The Dust

Greenalls has left the building. No longer running breweries, no longer running pubs, Britain's one-time biggest regional brewer is now a pure hotel and leisure firm after selling the last tranche of its pubs to Scottish & Newcastle. And for the first time a member of the Greenall family will not be running the company - the chief executive Lord Daresbury, the former Peter Greenall, has fallen on his sword and is standing down to become non-executive chairman.

Greenalls has been struggling for some time and announced poor trading figures in July, since when speculation about its future had reached fever pitch. Both parties announced the deal on Tuesday 14 September with 531 managed pubs, 234 pub restaurants and 61 lodges all in the package. The deal takes the Scottish & Newcastle tied estate way above the limit imposed by the beer orders, and consequently it will have to either sell or free from the tie between 600 and 700 pubs. Although S&N have made a point of keeping many of the pubs that they have previously freed from the tie, a major sell-off now looks likely and the company has made clear that it is considering selling both tenanted outlets and smaller managed pubs.

To many observers, Greenalls has a long history of bad decisions and wrong moves but it has seen particularly troubled times since it led what was then a new trend among regional and national brewers of abandoning the brewing operation in 1989. City opinion was that it paid over the odds for both the Devenish and, particularly, the Boddington pub groups and it is this, together with reported difficulties in its Tavern wholesaling business, which has now laid the company low.

Even the sale of its tenanted pubs earlier this year failed to lift Greenalls out of the doldrums and there was a sharp profits fall reported in May and a further warning in July. It was these final problems that caused the latest pub sell-off. What remains of Greenalls is to focus on hotels and health clubs. How long it can now remain an independent company is a moot point.

1999 Stockport CAMRA Beer of the Festival -

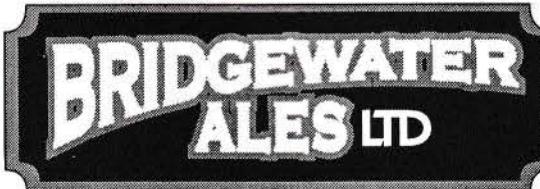
Delph Porter

5.2% ABV



Barton Ale

4.3% ABV



Navigator*

3.8% ABV

*Available Now...
Blondie*

4.7% ABV

(American style Ale)

*Regular Outlets - Lowes Arms, Denton; Bar Fringe, Swan St, Mcr;
Albert Vaults, Salford; Old Pint Pot, Salford; Millgate Failsworth; Kings Arms, Salford*

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Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated, but pressures of space have prevented me venting my wrath for the last couple of issues. There is STILL no room for my reports from Germany, but never mind.

It has been a traditionally busy time on the Beer Festival front, with both pubs and CAMRA getting the season well under way.

The Beer House said a fond farewell to Idy and Sal after their final Beer Festival at the end of August, which was an absolute stunner. They are only a few weeks away from their opening 'do' at the Crescent, Salford - their new home - and I am sure that standards will be maintained. Speaking of such things, welcome to Ian at the Beer House. I was a regular irregular at his last place, the Titanic 'Free' House, the Stafford Arms, by Stafford Station, and enjoyed many memorable pints there. Punch Tavern's arrival - and the departure of both decent beer and Ian, have at least blown Manchester some good, but it is Stafford's loss.

I made the trek over to the CAMRA festival in Keighley the other week, and whilst I had the sneaking intent of drinking a large quantity of Timothy Taylors in its home, the festival - held at Worth (Keighley's other brewery) was remarkably good. Beer quality on the Friday was as good as I have found at a CAMRA do since January's National Winter Ales Festival (of next year's fest, more next month). Taylors brewed an uncharacteristically malty festival special, and the Worth Festival beer was excellent. Their Wheat beer, with the unfortunate name of Knobwilter, was disappointing last time I tried it, but it is a MASSIVELY improved beer now.

The Beer Monster's British Beer of the last Two Months:
Hopback Taiphoon (5%) abv

I am sad to say, that because I was excised last month, you will probably be unable to find this now. Hopback are probably THE most reliable of the micros, but I have to say I approached this (with its included Lemon Grass) with a certain amount of scepticism, not to say trepidation. I need not have worried. Powerfully aromatic in the nose, it was marvelously dry, spicy with just a slight sweetening at the end of an incredibly long finish. Just about the most moreish beer I have had all year. I found some in the Beerhouse during Idy & Sal's last festival at the end of August, it was being served direct from the cellar, and never made it onto the bar. Rather a large number of customers, once it was tried, couldn't be tempted off it).

The Beer Monster's Foreign Beers of the last two Months:
Augustiner Oktoberfest Bier (6%)abv

If you're quick, you can have some of this. Although the Munich Fest finished the Sunday before we print, the Beer House has an Octoberfest the second weekend in October and the Augustiner is very definitely present on draught. In bottled form, its a toss up whether the Paulaner or Augustiner Oktoberfest beer is superior. The Paulaner is dry, and has a deep satisfying body and a long dry finish, with a lot of hop character. (5% or so). In draught form it seems a little less good this year, but it may well age well. It can be tried on draught during a brief appearance at the excellent Sandbar in Grosvenor Street, in the very near future, together with Hofbrau's Octoberfest beer. Both are also available in bottles. The Augustiner can also be had in bottled form, rich, fruity, malty and very alcoholic, at the Crescent in Salford. The draught stuff is blindingly good, and fortunately can be had in smaller vessels than a litre 'Mass'. A pint at a time is quite enough!

Artoon (5%)abv

An excellent full flavoured Belgian Blond beer, aromatic and complex and a very worthy competitor for Leffe Blond and similar beers. Long in the finish, it contrives to be both one of the most accessible Belgian beers I have tried, yet retaining sufficient interest for the aficionado. It was recommended to me by Rob at the Sandbar, and a very worthwhile recommendation it was too. They had it on draught as a guest and I prophesy that it might return!

Pub Massacres

I have held my peace on this for far too long. When Allied Domecq decided to sell its pub estate there were three likely bidders.

Whitbread who would have got out of brewing (selling Boddingtons to its management, and the lager factories likewise or to euro-giant Interbrew - no bad thing you might agree - but their estate and the Allied one might have meshed quite well. Nomura (Britains biggest pub owner) were not interested for a number of reasons, at least in the first wave (they will almost certainly pick up some spoils at a later date). They are in business of selling most of the Czech republic's breweries to Bass! (Bass already own the largest Czech Brewer - Prague Breweries, maker of Staropramen, and Bass have sold their 33% share of another brewery to Nomura, who may well sell their combined breweries of Radagast and Pilsner Urquell back to Bass - though Heineken and A-B (American Bud) are said to be contemplating a bidding war.) Bass might end up with 65% of the Czech market. Ugh!

Punch Taverns were the other bidder for Allied (subtly, or not, backed by Bass). Punch have a dismal record on offering variety of quality products to the customer. Cheap, heavily marketed national brands, of inferior quality and usually british brewed ersatz lagers or nitrokeg. Perfect for the undemanding mug who will pay £3 for a pint of British brewed chemical soup (such as Stella). With the Greenalls estate (including what used to be the Boddington Pub Co going to equally cynical giant Scottish and Newcastle we will be lucky if anything other than a handful of free houses, and our local regional pubs (Robbies', Hydes, Lees and Holts) offer ANYTHING that's fit to drink within a year or two. Its too depressing for words.

Forthcoming Festivals

Both the Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester, (German) and The Boundary at Guide Bridge (Winterish Ales) have festivals the second weekend in October, and there is a CAMRA festival in the crypt of Liverpool's Metropolitan (Catholic) Cathedral. Note the Friday lunchtime (1-5pm) session is the only one that is walk in rather than ticket only. Still a beer fest in a Lutyens Cathedral Crypt must be Good News!

Idy & Sal at the Crescent are building up to a festival from 28th - 31 October, with 30 Winter Ales, Milds and porters, and apparently the annual Real Lancashire festival is scheduled for November. Also in November Ian at the Beer House will host a Winter fest from the 4th to 7th November.

Also in early November will be the Bury Festival, Friday 5th, (12-3pm & 5-11pm) and Saturday 6th (12-4 and 6-11) at the Met Arts centre on Market Street. Live entertainment of Friday evening.

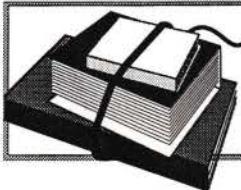
SANDBAR

Grosvenor Street, Manchester

Widest Selection of Genuine Draught Foreign Beers in Manchester

Frequent Guests

Ever Changing Range of Draught Real Ales
Formidable Bottled Range and
Excellent Food



BOOK REVIEW



The Fifth Edition of CAMRA's 'Good Pub Food' Guide

The growing trend of turning pubs into restaurants with bars is condemned by Susan Nowak in the 10th anniversary edition of the Campaign for Real Ale's guidebook 'Good Pub Food'. Nowak, editor of all five of the sell-out guides, warns that traditional pubs are threatened by "the rise and rise of the restaurant pub."

She said: "These are the pubs where most of the tables are laid out for eating and people who just want a quiet pint get chilling stares from the landlord. Some of the food now served in pubs is absolutely superb, and I applaud that, but you would not want dining tables to push out the darts team or the landlord more interested in selling you a bottle of wine to go with his a la carte than a decent pint of well-kept cask ale."

So to recognise simpler bar food the 1999 guide has a new category with short entries featuring pubs serving excellent snacks such as ploughmans.

The decade since the launch of CAMRA's first Good Pub Food has seen "a total revolution in the pub food market," says Susan Nowak. From being a fairly small percentage of the eating out sector, pubs are now the largest, ahead of both Indian and Chinese restaurants. A number of important changes in the 10 years since the first edition of Good Pub Food are highlighted in the new edition.

*The pub is now the number one dining out destination for families - helped by the liberalising of licensing laws, especially on Sunday afternoons, and the wide range of good value choice on menus.

*Explosion of pub eating chains - sadly most of them serving identical menus of microwaved frozen food pre-prepared in factories with a high proportion of junk food.

*Huge ethnic range now available in pubs from Thai to Tex Mex (even Maltese in one case.)

*Emergence of the gastro pub where, increasingly, top chefs and talented young chefs are choosing to take a pub instead of a restaurant. "At their best they are serving restaurant standard food at pub prices alongside well kept real ale," says Nowak in the introduction to the guide.

*Heartening increase in beer cuisine in pubs, and in all the different styles of beer to drink with food - some publicans give beer descriptions on a blackboard. The guide has a whole chapter of pubs' beer recipes.

But the philosophy of Good Pub Food remains the same. As 10 years ago, it is still the ONLY guidebook solely featuring pubs serving real ale and real food.

It includes pubs cooking modern, traditional, ethnic or regional dishes of their area sourcing excellent local produce and products

from cheese to locally smoked fish and meat, home grown vegetables to game from the nearby countryside and fish from the local harbour.

*A new category of "snack" pubs recognising those serving the best in simple fare - splendid ploughmans of real bread and cheese, hearty pasties, locally made sausages, hand cut doorstep sandwiches, home cooked cold ham or roast meats, the best jacket potatoes, bowls of home-made soup or a simple hot dish, at budget prices.

*The highest number yet of favourite recipes donated by pub cooks as well as a chapter of beer recipes - a recipe book as well as a guide book!

*List of the pubs which have been in every edition of the guide.

*Star system for the very best pubs in the guide.

You'll find a pub serving produce from its own adjoining smokehouse, a pub brewing beers from its home grown hops as well as growing unusual vegetables for its dishes, possibly the last pub in the UK serving rook pie, a pub where the landlord has his own fishing smack, the Welsh pub where the landlord gathers laverbread by the sea to serve traditionally with cockles and bacon and at least three pubs specialising in cooking with beer featuring dishes such as duck breast with blackcurrant beer or salmon in wheat beer served on seaweed.

But Susan Nowak says that despite the huge improvement in much pub food, vegetarians and children are still treated like second class citizens. Vegetarian food is often bought in frozen with the same dishes appearing in pub after pub, while childrens' menus remain at the burgers, nuggets and chips level. "And the lasagne of 1989 is the deep fried Camembert of 1999!"

Beer, Bed and Breakfast

Take time out with a 'Room at the Inn'

"Relax with a refreshing pint of real ale before you slip into bed". That's the advice of Jill Adam, editor of the 2nd edition of 'Room at the Inn', the only guide to pubs offering quality accommodation and a decent pint of real ale. The Guide, produced by CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale was launched on 6th July.

Jill Adam said, "Many people today complain of increasingly stressful lives, trying to combine the demands of busy jobs, families and other commitments, and the time for relaxation seems to vanish into thin air. CAMRA can rescue you from this hectic schedule - and it will only take a weekend of your precious time." 'Room at the Inn' contains over 500 of the most delightful pubs in Britain including inns and hotels to suit all tastes and budgets; pubs in walking country such as the Yorkshire Dales and Scotland, offering very basic hostel accommodation, to luxurious hotels in popular tourist haunts such as the Cotswolds and the West Country. They all have one thing in common, apart from offering excellent bed and breakfast, they all serve a perfect pint of real ale. The second edition of Room at the Inn has been completely updated and resurveyed. Dedicated members of the Campaign for Real Ale have combed the country to find new places to stay. Our criteria for selection are always high, but this year for the first time, the guide leads you to pubs whose hosts are members of the British Institute of Innkeeping, an organisation that promotes excellent standards of professionalism in pub hospitality.

The choice of hosteries in the guide is as diverse as the British pub itself. There are simple taverns with one or two rooms - you may not get en-suite facilities, but you will revel in that indefinable quality, 'atmosphere'. Other pubs have built up a reputation for their cuisine to rival the top restaurants. Some have spent a lot of money updating their amenities to provide four-star comfort in stylish bedrooms (and prices to match). Many of the pubs offer weekend (or longer) packages to allow you to pursue an interest - whether it be golfing at St Andrews or brewing your own beer in Lincolnshire!

The majority of the pubs are happy to accommodate children (mostly at reduced rates) and some will accept pets, so you have no excuse - just get up and go.

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

welcome all their customers old and new
Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

Websters & Holts

Cheapest Beer In Didsbury - Open All Day
Tuesday night Karaoke
Discos Thursday and Sunday

OPENING TIMES OCTOBER Competition

Last month's competition attracted a bumper crop of entries, from as far afield as Rotherham and Scotland (hello, Ron Elder). As ever many thanks to Paul Stanyer of The Railway, Portwood, for setting the questions and providing the prize. The pubs you had to identify were: Three Stags Heads; Crispin Inn; Crew & Harper; Coopers Arms; Thorn Tree or Hollybush Inn; Drill Hall Vaults; Bowling Green; Rowditch Inn; New Zealand Arms, and Grouse. The lucky winner drawn out at random is Dawn Geddes of Withington.

October Competition

This month we take a quick step over the county line to Cheshire (all the pubs are to be found in the 1999 Good Beer Guide under Cheshire) This month the prize is a spanking new 2000 Good Beer Guide!

Is this sea man a "plonker"?

Pull over at the entrance for this municipal feature

Fleur de leigh

The ugly duckling became one

Sounds like a tedious dog?

Another "plonker" at Westminster

Was this guy one of a hundred

Legal rule with heavy weight will give you munitions

PL PHALANGER at the middle of society will find this private club

Grape bush not out?

Legal rule with heavy weight will give you munitions

PL PHALANGER at the middle of society will find this private club

Grape bush not out?

BEER

CAMRA 2000 NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL



Upper Campfield Market,
Deansgate, MANCHESTER
(4 minutes from Deansgate BR and G-Mex Tram stations)

National Champion Winter Ale Competition,
WINTER WARMERS, OLD ALES,
STOUTS AND PORTERS
**MASSIVE SELECTION OF BITTERS
AND OTHER REAL ALES**
including many brand new beers
TRADITIONAL CIDERS & PERRIES

Unique Foreign Beer Bar featuring: Draught Winter Beers
from Belgium, Germany & the USA and an extensive bottled range

Hot & Cold Food available at every session

Open: (hours subject to confirmation):
Thurs 20 January 5.30 - 10.30pm Fri 21 January, 12 - 4 & 5.30 - 10.30pm

Sat 22 January 12 - 4 & 5.30 - 10.30pm

Admission: £2 Thurs Eve, £3 Fri Eve, £1 Sat Eve, £2 Lunchtimes

CAMRA members FREE at lunchtime & Sat Eve, £1 Thurs & Fri Eve



20-22 JANUARY 2000
THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

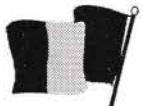


FESTIVAL

21

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BELGIAN BEER TASTING

7 - 17 OCTOBER - THE ONE DAY BEER PASS

For the duration of The Manchester Food & Drink Festival, We are 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.

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



OPEN FROM
NOON
EVERY DAY

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**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

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 and Macclesfield

October 99

Monday 11th - Heaton Moor Social: 9.00pm Plough, 10.00pm Crown. Both Heaton Moor Road.

Thursday 14th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 9.00pm.

Monday 18th - Social: Coach & Horses, Belle Vue St, Gorton. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 22nd - Offerton Stagger: meet 7.00pm Wrights Arms, Marple Rd; 8.30pm Fingerpost, Hempshaw Ln.

Monday 25th - Social: Greyhound, Bowden St, Edgeley. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport. 8.00pm onwards.

Saturday 30th - Black County Day Out. Minibus departs Royal Oak, Didsbury 9.45am; Crown, Heaton Ln 10.00am. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177.

Monday 1st November - Social: Dog & Partridge, Buxton Rd, Great Moor. 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:

Sunday 10th - Branch Walk: route to be decided but ending at Royal Hotel, Hayfield

October 99

beer festival. Starts 9.45am - phone Frank Wood for details (01457 865426)

Monday 11th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Travellers Call, Stockport Rd, Bredbury. Starts 8.30pm.

Friday 22nd - Glossop Crawl: starts Star Inn, Howard St, 8.30pm.

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

Thursday 14th - Pub of the Season presentation to the Queen's Head, Park Ln, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 18th - Open Committee Meeting: Oakwood, Brook Ln, Alderley Edge. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 25th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Wharf, Canal Rd, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Sunday October 31st - 12.30pm National Winter Ales Festival 2000 organising committee meeting Beer House, Angel St Mcr.

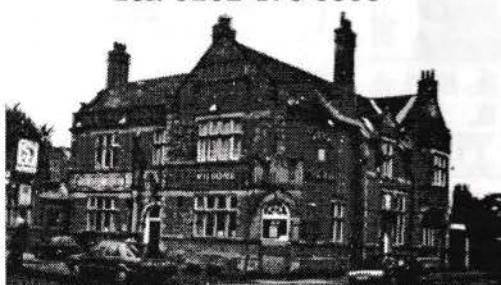
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Jayne & Bryan Welcome You to The

Ash Hotel

232 Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel

Tel: 0161 476 0399



Activities include:

Darts, Pool & Large Screens for All Sports Coverage

FUNCTION ROOM

available for all occasions, Business & Private

NO ROOM CHARGE FOR CHARITY FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Warm, Friendly Atmosphere

OPEN ALL DAY EVERY DAY

Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers

OUR OCTOBER BEERS

Among our guests:
York Swing Low;
Hanby Rainbow;
Smiles Old Russ Ale;
Clarks City Gent;
Fullers Red Fox;
Maclays Hopscotch;
Mansfield Chadburn's
Goal Post;
Batemans Hooker,
Jollys Conquest;
Hopback Summer
Lightning, Jack O
Lantern; Highwood Old
Timber; Castle Eden
Autumn Knights;
Shepherd Neame Late
Red and many more....



KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

8 HANDPUMPS
6 GUEST ALES

LUNCHTIME FOOD
11.30-2.30
and 11.30 - 2.00
Saturday



EARLY EVENING MEALS NOW SERVED!

MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

I have finally been able to make my long promised trip to east Manchester and while there's plenty of keg, it's not all doom and gloom with things improving notably the further out you go.

However, the reopened **Birch Arms** on Gorton Lane is supplied by Bass and accordingly now has no real ale. The nearby **Gorton Arms**, once a Banks's flagship is likewise real ale free but it has at least moved up a notch from its sorry state a few years ago when the place was reduced to selling canned beer only! Happily **The Crown** on Vallance Close still flies the real ale flag with Chesters Mild and Boddingtons Bitter. A good community local this, too.

On Belle Vue Street, **The Coach & Horses** (Robinson's) is being thoroughly redecorated inside and out (no changes to the internal features, either) and the beers, Hatters Mild and Best, remain on good form. By contrast at Mayfair Taverns' Railway on Chapman Street the story is a depressing one of keg beer only.

Over to Openshaw where **The Smithfield** on Ashton Old Road was closed and boarded when I passed by. On Ogden Lane both **The Royal Oak** (Banks's) and **The High Bank** (Greenalls) remain keg; while the same fate awaits those entering **Screwy Hughies** (ex-Halfway House) although a handpull for Websters Green Label was 'not on'. There's better news at Whitbread's **Albion** where Chesters Mild and Boddingtons Bitter are the order of the day. Off Ashton Old Road, **The Oddfellows** (Greenalls) does just Boddies Bitter although time was when the Oddies was one of the few pubs in the area to offer a decent pint of mild, too. **The Concert**, once a superb outlet for cask Boddingtons Bitter, remains keg through and through but opposite Screwy's is 'Wilson's' **Lord Raglan** which is providing Holt's and Wilson's Bitters to an appreciative crowd. Another real ale oasis is the nearby **Forresters** selling Robinson's Best Bitter. Heading towards Clayton, **The Fox** on Clayton Lane retains Chesters Mild as its sole cask offering, and this is also the case at the nearby **Big Bradford**. Two good community locals these. Heading towards the City centre the situation deteriorates. On Grey Mare Lane, John Smith's **Honeycomb** is boarded up. Hardly a surprising development, this – I recall visiting many years ago when my pint of John Smith's Magnet was the first to be pulled through that night – this was at 9.00pm. The **Queen Victoria** (ex-Whitbread) seems to be selling Trophy and Boddingtons but worryingly, the pub was astonishingly quiet for the time of day when I called. To round up, **The Crossroads** (Bass) remains the keg bastion it has always been and across the road, **Mary D's Beamish Bar** (free) has dispensed with JW Lees' bitter to go keg too.

South Side Doings

That whistle stop tour complete, there's also plenty of activity to the south of the city, too. Out in Chorlton work continues apace on the new Wetherspoon's outlet on Manchester Road. My predictions of projected opening dates for Wetherspoon's outlets have proved embarrassingly wide of the mark recently but I'll stick my neck out and say that we are looking at November for this one.

The Wilmslow Road corridor is often a hive of activity and this month has proved no exception. Starting in Ladybarn, I was dismayed to find that the **Brewers** on Ladybarn Lane had no real ale on offer, despite labelling itself a 'cask ale house'. Let's hope they either get some cask ale on sale or remove the deceptive signage without delay otherwise a note to the local Trading Standards office seems to be in order. Happily, the nearby **Talbot** was selling a decent pint of Trophy when I called and I was pleased to see the blackboard was advertising various other cask beers, too. On Wilmslow Road proper, **Buchanans**, the former Scottish theme bar, is closed for refurbishment – I'll let you have details of the latest cheesy theme when it reopens. YoYo's noodle bar is now just a bar, it's called **Glass** and is keg, as is the former **Robinski's Wallet** just round the corner on Wilbraham Road. This has now been taken over by Bass and rebranded as one of their grisly **It's A Scream** student bars. Similarly, **The Queen of Hearts** is now all keg but surprisingly the nearby **Shed** sells Boddingtons Bitter on handpump, although this was temporarily unavailable when I called.

Up in Rusholme, the **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove remains the well-run pub it has always been. On a recent visit I was able to sample a last-ever pint of the now axed Thomas Greenalls Original from the pub's last-ever barrel of the stuff. It is to be replaced by Draught Bass. Staying in Rusholme I was staggered to see the **Lord Lyon** on Claremont Road closed, gutted and in the throes of a major refurbishment. For many years this place has arguably deserved the title of Worst Pub in South Manchester and it is to Enterprise Inns' credit that they are actually investing in the place, although time will tell whether or not this particular investment is wise or foolhardy.

In Longsight, I am told that the **Bay Horse** is being refurbished, and about time too. Down the road in Levenshulme, **The Pack Horse** was closed when I passed in mid-September – this on a particularly memorable night when a visit to the **Kingsway** had revealed the pub to have no draught beer on sale! Not what you expect in a Holt's managed house.

By contrast with all this feverish activity, the City Centre has had a relatively quiet month. The Shambles pubs continue to live up to their name and remain closed although reopening surely cannot be far off now. The fate of the former **Quo Vadis** on King Street West has however become clear. Don't hold your breath – it's being turned into a pasta restaurant called 'ASK'.

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APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 186)

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.





The Crown on Hillgate, having been sold as part of the Vaux estate, has now dispensed with its cask beers. From one of the best pubs in the area to one of a very poor crowd, all in less than six months. Can the pub survive without what has been one of its major attractions – good beer? There must be severe doubts.

There is better news on Hillgate with the opening of the Lamp Hotel in the premises of the Pack Horse and the next door tailor's shop. It is the first of a proposed chain of pubs to be set up by a local car dealer. The pub has obviously had a considerable amount of money spent on it. With two bars, polished wood floors and a classy feel throughout, the lamp Hotel is probably the most upmarket pub in the area. The only cask ale on handpump is currently Theakstons Best Bitter but it is hoped that by the time you read this article there will also be guest beer available. In addition food is served until 8.00pm daily and there will be six en suite rooms for guests by the end of November. The lamp is worth a visit and deserves to be a success, despite its location in one of the most heavily pubbed (arguably over-pubbed) areas of Stockport.

The Greyhound in Edgeley has now introduced live entertainment. Thursday nights will now see live folk and acoustic sessions, starting at 8.30. The Greyhound still does a good range of guest beers, Caledonian Mellow Yellow on a recent visit, and is well worth a visit.

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In Didsbury the new Pitcher & Piano has opened on School Lane. First reports are that it is pretty ordinary, apart from the prices that is. Marston's Pedigree is the cask beer and this will set you back the tidy sum of £2.40 a pint! Now Didsbury isn't perhaps the most price sensitive part of Manchester but let's hope that even the Didsbury locals jib at this blatant and frankly disgusting profiteering.

This month's Cheadle Hulme Stagger omits one pub – the out of the way Conway on Turves Road. This is a pub that has had more than its fair share of ups and downs in recent years but since May last year has been in the capable hands of Joe Morris. Joe took over as a tenant and has spent a considerable amount in improving the pub - £17,000 on the outside alone. Last October Scottish & Newcastle freed him from the tie and since then he has been offering one guest beer a week, alongside the bargain Theakstons Bitter (£1.29 a pint) – Greene King Black Baron was on the bar when Joe called us. Give this welcome venture your support if you're in the area. In the City Centre, Sand Bar on Grosvenor Street has seen the 'old' bit nicely redecorated and generally spruced up. It's still one of the premier foreign beer bars in the city (Bar Fringe on Swan Street being the other with the Beer House coming up on the inside) but also does a nice range of guest beers. It's certainly the place to try new Phoenix Brewery beers, all of which are normally sold here. Spider Monkey was particularly enjoyable recently.

Graham and Gladys Tildsley have recently moved from Hydes' Moss Rose, Heaton Norris to a rather different pub – the Prince of Wales in Gatley. Graham tells us that whilst the Moss Rose had extensive cellars, the Prince of Wales' 'cellar' is actually at ground level. Notwithstanding this, he still aims to keep the beer in the tip-top condition that saw the Moss Rose become a regular entry in the Good Beer

Guide. The move is good news for Gatley, which already has two excellent pubs in the Horse & Farrier and Gothic Bar. Staying in Gatley, rumours abound that Wetherspoons are taking over the Tatton Cinema to turn into one of their 'superpubs'. If true, there is probably enough trade in Gatley to cope with such a development. Having said that, rumours tend to connect Wetherspoons with almost every available large building these days.

When Jayne and Bryan Hall left the Grapes in Heaton Norris, they said they wouldn't be out of the trade for long. And so it has proved to be as they have now taken on the Ash on Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel. Now this is a pub that has resolutely failed to fulfil its potential for years but Jayne and Bryan have not gone into this with their eyes closed and do know that the potential is there, if it can be unlocked. The pub is owned by the Unique Pub Co and they are initially taking it on as tenants although hope to sign a lease eventually, although the pub is to be thoroughly refurbished first. The current cask beer range is Boddingtons Bitter and Tetley Bitter and while Jayne wants to increase this, she intends to make sure the pub's trade is sufficient to turn over whatever is sold, thus ensuring tip-top quality. It looks as though the Ash is in line for a long overdue upturn in its fortunes.

Staying in Heaton Chapel, there has been a change in the beer range at the Hinds Head. Following Whitbread's decision to delist 'Higsons' Bitter, Alan Preston has replaced this with the very welcome Thwaites Bitter, which will now be a permanent addition to the pub's range. The Hinds Head is now possibly the only pub in Stockport to sell Thwaites on a permanent basis.

Following Greenalls sale of their managed pubs to Scottish & Newcastle, some very prominent local pubs will have changed hands. Among those going to S&N are the Dog & Partridge and Parrswood, Didsbury; the Crown and Elizabethan, Heaton Moor; the George & Dragon, Cheadle and the Kenilworth, Cheadle Hulme. Developments are awaited with interest.

Late news about The Beer House. New manager is Ian Casson who took over on 29 September. Previously he was manager at the second tied house of the Titanic Brewery, The Stafford Arms, Stafford (which has now been sold to Punch Taverns...aargh!). The Stafford has been in the Good Beer Guide for at least the last three years and was a Stafford CAMRA Pub of the Year, so Ian comes with an impressive pedigree. Things are to remain much the way they are at The Beer house, although a permanent beer from Titanic (either one of the regular range or a house special) is a possibility on the bar. Food, atmosphere and quality will all remain paramount.

Meanwhile, Idy and Sal are getting into their stride at The Crescent. On a recent visit, the place had a gleam and sparkle to it that certainly seems to have been absent in the past. The wonderful Roosters Special is a permanent feature on the bar and was on particularly good form when OT called recently.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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OPENING TIMES 186 (October 1999) Design and Origination by CPPR, a division of Connaught Technologies, Mfr. Office at: 8 The Green, Heaton Norris, Stockport SK4 2NP. Tel/Fax 0161 432 8384 E-mail pbh@opentime.u-net.com Printed by Redvers Press Failsworth.