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MANCHESTER
CAMRA

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OPENING



FREE

TIMES

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NOVEMBER 1999

SPORTSMAN TRIUMPHS AGAIN

Second Consecutive Win For Popular Hyde Pub

For the fourth year in a row, the Regional Pub of the Year title for CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, in Greater Manchester has gone to a pub in the Opening Times area. Not only that but this year's winner, The Sportsman in Hyde, has now picked up this prestigious award for the second year running.

When owner Geoff Oliver bought the pub in July 1996 it was a failed, shabby Whitbread house with a low level of trade. Three years later, the pub has been fully refurbished and turnover is up almost seven times.

What's the secret? Well, it's no secret really, just plain common sense. There are no gimmicks, just a warm welcome for all and an emphasis on value for money. This is a trick that even the likes of Whitbread could have pulled off if they had the vision and imagination, but these qualities seem so sadly lacking in the bigger companies.

Not only has the pub been restructured on traditional lines, with stripped varnished floors, local brewery memorabilia on the walls and welcoming open fires, but it has also put down roots in the local community. There is a loyal band of regulars and the pub boasts pool teams, a darts team, a quiz team and a social club. A recent innovation is the introduction of a full-size snooker table, a rare sight in pubs these days.

It's on the beer front, though, that the Sportsman has excelled, introducing choice and quality to a town where both were thin on the ground. The permanent range includes Whim Magic Mushroom Mild and Hartington Bitter, Plassey Bitter (the pub's biggest seller and the brewery's biggest outlet), Taylor's Landlord, one Robinson's beer plus one or two guest ales. There is also real cider and a small range of bottled foreign beers. All the draught beers are sold in oversized lined glasses, too. This has proved a popular measure with the customers appreciating the value for money that this means.

The Sportsman in many ways sums up everything that CAMRA is about - a gimmick-free, thriving community pub serving a range of independently brewed cask ales in tip-top



Geoff Oliver's Sportsman Pub

condition with full measures guaranteed every time. This very well-deserved award will be presented to The Sportsman on Saturday 20th November.

Metric Madness

Another threat has emerged to the traditional pint with moves to allow pubs to serve beer in European-style metric measures.

The move comes from the National Federation of Consumer Groups, which despite the grandiose title has no formal presence in the north west. Group spokesman Chris Keenan claims that it is a 'ridiculous anomaly' that it is still illegal for beer and cider to be sold in metric measures. While accepting that there are 'emotional attachments' to pints of beer he can see no reason for the law to ban metric quantities.

Bizarrely the NFCG has managed to persuade LibDem MP Nigel Jones, Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group to put the proposal on the Westminster agenda. Hopefully, though, the issue will make little progress although, ominously, there is already a European Union proposal on the table in Brussels calling for all measures to be in metric units within 10 years.

Trade representatives have already lined up against the proposals, which seem to have been put forward from a position of ignorance about the pub trade. The point has been made that Britain was granted a special dispensation to keep pints and half-pints, and the licensed trade will jealously guard this. It could also cause endless confusion and expense, particularly as the NFCG appears to be contemplating metric measures being available side-by-side with pints and halves.

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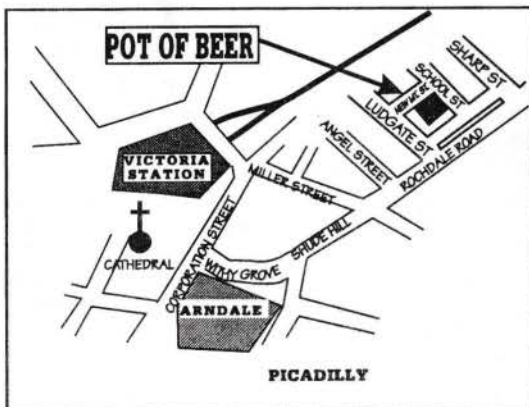
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

When Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries bought Marstons, many in CAMRA breathed a sigh of relief. It was clear that the current Marston's management planned to break up the company and sell its constituent parts (and its brewing heritage) to both the highest bidder and down the river. If Marston's had to be taken over then W&D, with their commitment to heritage and tradition, seemed the best worst option.

What many observers in CAMRA may have failed to appreciate is that W&D is a pretty ruthlessly run company with a clear agenda of its own. And so, it hasn't taken them long to emasculate the beer range available to Marston's customers. Bateman's Mild was the first to go, swiftly followed by cask Owd Roger and a major reduction in the in-house guest beer range. All of this could, I suppose, be excused as relatively minor tweaking. Taking the axe to Marston's Bitter is another matter entirely.

In many local Marston's pubs this is the main volume beer. It seemed as though W&D boss David Thompson recognised this when he pledged that Marston's Bitter would be brewed as long as there was a demand for it. South Manchester was noted as an area where that demand lay, and as we have discovered it is where that demand remains. Perhaps W&D would care to explain to us, their licensees and their customers just why the proven continued demand is now being brushed aside? Or was this the intention all along - and was David Thompson being 'economical with the truth'? And are the assurances he gave as worthless as they now seem?

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 187

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

NOVEMBER 1999

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



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November 1999 is The Spread Eagle, Lower Hillgate, Stockport.

Virtually built into the walls of Robinson's Brewery, the Spread Eagle has an interesting history, starting life as an independent home-brew house, which only came into Robinson's ownership in 1905. When I first visited back in 1977, the pub retained many of its original Victorian features and, to the best of my knowledge, sold the full Robinson's range. Soon after the pub closed and was subjected to perhaps one of the least sympathetic refurbishments which Robinson's carried out in their then house style. Consequently the pub became a series of inter-connecting box-like rooms with little or nothing in the way of intrinsic atmosphere or character.

It would take licensees of particular skill to create a pub worthy of the title 'brewery tap' from such unprepossessing material and in truth the pub struggled to find a role for many years. Until the arrival of Noel and Val Jones in February 1996 that is. From the very start they set about making the pub more welcoming and inclusive. Removing the pool table to a side room from the entrance sent out a powerful signal and immediately made the pub more inviting. Since then the pub has been on a continuous upward curve of improvement with established darts teams, a good band of locals and top-notch beer.

Indeed, the beer, Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter on electric pumps, has been increasingly well spoken of and is now of a quality that would be expected of a brewery tap. The pub does an interesting line in food, too. Noel has a long-standing interest in Indian food, and has attended night classes on the subject, so consequently there is usually a short but interesting, and well-priced, Indian menu available, all genuinely home-made and all at a bargain £3.

The Spread Eagle is a classic example of how hard-working licensees can create a good pub from the most unpromising material. It's arguably one of the most improved pubs in Stockport over recent years and this well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 25th November. Noel is planning to make the event 'a bit of a curry night' to boot, so a memorable evening is in prospect. 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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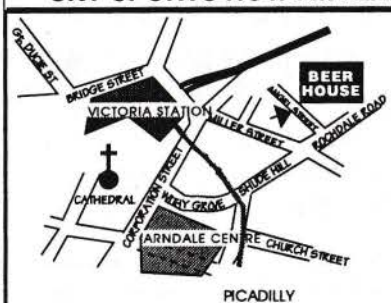
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STAGGER

with Guest Beer Writer Mark McConachie

Fallowfield and Rusholme

For a Stagger with such a title, we actually began the crawl in Ladybarn at Robinson's White Swan just behind the shops on Mauldeth Road. A decent sized house, this, with beer garden and offering two front rooms – one plush, one spartan; a good bar area with exposed staircase, a pool room off; behind the bar is a separate small vault. A good number of original fixtures remain – bench seating, room doors, lobby tiling and leaded glasswork. Two beers were on sale, Best Bitter and Frederics, the latter being untried because we only spotted it at the last moment. The Best came out well – considered good by everyone. A decent selection of single malts is available too, by the way.

On to Ladybarn Lane next for two pubs. First was the **Brewers Arms**, a Whitbread 'Cask Ale House'. Upon entering however, we discovered one other customer and six handpulls, all idle bar two which bore the description "on next when tapped and vented". We asked the bar staff if there was any cask ale, this was met with a shrug and "sorry". We left.

Across the road at the **Talbot** (also Whitbread) we did get some Trophy and very decent it was too. The Talbot is a tidy, semi-multiroomed house, nothing outstanding but more than okay; dominoes appear to be popular here.

Continue along Ladybarn Lane, to Exbury Street and Webster's **Derby Arms**. This old cottage style pub offers Wilson's and Holt's bitters in what is now one room with a bar down one side. We found the Wilson's very lack-lustre and the Holt's average – a poor show for Wilson's, especially as it was 20 pence dearer.

A half-mile walk to Wilmslow Road brought us to the **Friendship** (Hydes) – an imposing, high-set, landmark building. Always reasonable busy with tonight being no exception (we numbered a dozen at this point). The refurbishment of a couple of years ago is standing up well, thus you get a horseshoe-like drinking area around the bar with, probably, the best outside drinking area on the road. The two beers – Light and Bitter – scored as well as the White Swan's, the Light having the slight edge, though.

Then followed seven pubs/bars near the corner of Wilmslow and Wilbraham Roads that did not sell cask ale for one reason or another. They were **XS** (the ex-Durty Nellies); **Buchanans** which had its front door bricked up and was in the throes of a massive refurb; **Revolution** was being extended in to next door premises; the former YoYos noodle bar was now **Glass**; another bass concept – **It's a Scream** emerged from what was Robinski's Wallet; Tetley's **Queen of Hearts** was keg; so too was Oirish neighbour **Scruffy Murphys**. Further up, **Shed** (formerly Route 236) displayed a Boddies wicket, apparently though, tonight, the beer was not on – doubtless OT will investigate. At this point I was all kegged-out and jumped a ride to Dickenson Road on one of the shed-load (pun, fully intended) of buses that operate this corridor. Going past **Hardy's Well** (ex-Birch Villa) which has no real ale, we entered Greenall's **Welcome** on Rusholme Grove.

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A well-run house, this, selling three cask beers – Greenall's Bitter, Original and Tetley Bitter. As the Original was being discontinued it was a last chance to sample this beer (a guest, such as Bass, will take the Original's place on the bar in future). Taste-wise, the Bitter fared below par, the Tetley above average and the Original better still. The Welcome offers two rooms flanking the bar and servery with a lounge extension off that; a collection of signed photos from film and sport adds interest.

A quick look into the **Huntsman** (Gibbs Mew) and the **Gardeners Arms** (Enterprise Inns) revealed both to be keg, the latter a fairly recent convert. On the same street (Victory Street) as the Gardeners is the excellent **Osborne House** (Hydes). Converted to an ale-house style pub a couple of years ago, the result is clean, welcoming and functional. We found seats in the right hand room as we deliberated over our Hydes' Mild and Bitter – both were very good. Passing the closed **Lord Lyon** (closed for a refurb, that is) we entered the last pub of the crawl, the **Albert** on Walmer Street. This small Hydes' outlet underwent a makeover earlier this year to emerge with a much more pub-like feel to it. Thus gone is the dark brown ceiling, now replaced by a far more pleasing restrained green. The character and charm have not diminished either, it is still a most welcoming pub. On the beer front, the Albert usually sells Hydes' Bitter and the seasonal, the latter was not on tonight however. The Bitter did rate on a par with the best we had sampled that night. A fitting conclusion to a most interesting and varied evening.

Calling All Charities

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is looking for a new charity to support from next year.

The Festival normally supports its chosen charity for a three-year run and as 1999 was the third appearance for Stockport Sharecare the organising committee is looking for a new organisation to support from 2000.

The minimum requirements are pretty straightforward. Firstly, you have to be based in Stockport or South Manchester. Secondly, and this is most important, you will need to supply volunteers to staff the charity stall for each of the five open sessions. Our chosen charity normally finds it worthwhile to approach brewers to donate two or three casks of beer to sell during the festival. While you would be expected to organise this yourselves, the festival beer managers will be quite happy to make one or two suggestions as to who to approach. They will also stillage, vent and tap the casks for you.

The 14th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will run from Thursday 1st to Saturday 3rd June 2000 at, negotiations permitting, Stockport Town Hall. If you think you might fit the bill, then please contact Festival Organiser Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5EG. Telephone 0161 432 1816.

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Dave Sheldon, Cheadle Hulme:

On Saturday 9th October we decided to do two beer festivals. First was at the Royal Hotel, Hayfield. This is a fine pub. The beer selection was a mix of the familiar and the less so. All beers tried were in fine condition. The only negative points were the price, the tickets working out at £1.95 per pint, and, despite advertising 'food available throughout', it wasn't. There was none to be had between 2.45pm and 6.00pm. A late afternoon meal before departing for festival number two would have been just the job.

Arriving at the Beer House (via the Glove Works in Glossop) we were famished. No problem, their advert read 'food all day'. It wasn't - due to staff shortages! Never mind, with memories of the excellent German Beer Festival here in May in mind I rushed upstairs - to an empty room. Now here's an interesting question, how many beers are required to make a beer festival? Well apparently under the new Beer House regime, the answer is two because that's how many German draft beers were on. (I think there were some bottles but surely they don't count for a pub beer festival). Perhaps the new manager wasn't ready for this festival, it would be interesting to know. Not impressed, and very hungry, we left for food and drink elsewhere.

(Oh dear - the Beer House is usually utterly reliable in these matters. Possibly this glitch was caused by the recent change over - ed(1). Far be it from me to cast nasturtiums in the direction of Dave's sobriety on this occasion, but I distinctly remember four draught German beers on Saturday. This, it has to be said was not absolutely obvious, (the in-pub signing was terrible), two were behind a cooling jacket, one (Spaten Oktoberfest) was coming out of a resigned Fosters pump, and the other was on the floor behind the bar coming out of a top spike/air pump. As to the bottles - 5 of the 6 Oktoberfest beers were available, 7 other bottled German Lagers and no less than 12 wheat beers, so Dave is exaggerating a bit. I can't understand why there were only four draught beers (originally 6 were planned) but there you go. Staffing matters I think can be put down to settling in - Ian had only been in the pub 3 days, after all. I think it would be fairer to judge his performance on the strength of his 'traditional' beer festival (4-7 Nov) when everything is coming out of handpumps - including the four on the upstairs bar. Beer quality so far has continued to be excellent. As a matter of policy, Ian does not favour over-bar gravity stillage - nor running down to the cellar to satisfy the 'beer scratchers' who are not bothered about condition and just want the ticks. He also feels there was no real demand for the German beer. There (as May proved) he is wrong, but the German Festivals can surely find a new home, easily enough - ed(2))

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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Hydes Strike Gold

Hydes have finally launched their long-awaited premium bitter and early signs are that they could be on to a major winner with the new beer.

Jekyll's Gold, a 4.3 per cent ABV golden beer, was rolled out into the Hydes' estate at the end of last month, and already has listing with wholesalers and other brewers (including John Smiths) which will put it into pubs throughout much of the country.

The new beer will be familiar to those who visited the National Winter Ales Festival in January as it is in fact the selfsame beer as the Hydes' 'Festival Special' which went down so well there. The 4.3 per cent ABV strength means that the beer can be full-bodied yet remain a session beer, and early samples indicate that it certainly lives up to its claim to be 'easy drinking and moreish'. The use of Fuggle and Styrian Golding hops gives a deep, smooth bitterness to the beer with a long, dry aftertaste with the result that one pint inevitably leads to another.

Hydes' marketing manager David Safiruddin told Opening Times that Jekyll's Gold would spearhead the brewery's plans to expand into as wide a geographical area as possible - the purchase of several new tied houses, and potential sites, is in the pipeline.

He said the creation of the new brand, adding to Hydes' existing all-year beers and its range of seasonal ales, was intended to give the Manchester brewer its own rival to increasingly successful cask ales like Pedigree and Landlord. •Jekyll's Gold will initially be available on draught in about 16-17 of the company's pubs, as outlets are being restricted to those where turnover for a permanent premium beer will be sufficient to maintain quality. In the run-up to Christmas it will also be available in 500ml bottles.

Hydes' New Image

Along with the launch of Jekyll's Gold, Hydes have also unveiled a new corporate image which will cover everything from pubs down to bar towels and ashtrays.

At a presentation to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, Chief Executive Chris Hopkins unveiled both the new livery and the new-look pumpclips. The 'Anvil' tag has been dropped and the company and its beers are now plain 'Hydes', although a small representation of an anvil will remain in the corporate imagery. More emphasis is being placed on the company's local roots with the tag line 'The Manchester Brewer'. The new look will appear on the company's pubs over a period of some years - the Prince of Wales in Gatley is the first with the new look - although the new point-of-sale material will appear rather more quickly. Of particular note are the new metal pumpclips, which really stand out on the bar.

Chris Hopkins also gave details of the new craft ale programme that will introduce a new beer every two months, commencing next January. The series is labelled "T'Ale of the Century" and each beer commemorates a particular person or event over the past millennium. They are also likely to become known for some of the excruciating puns used to name them. In order of appearance they are:

January/February - Harry Verderchi (4.8% - Battle of Hastings)

March/April - Clever Endeavour (4.5% - Captain Cook)

May/June - Hair Raid (4.2% - Winston Churchill and WW2)

July/August - Your Bard (4.0% - Shakespeare)

September/October - Henry's Hampton (4.4% - Henry VIII and his palace!)

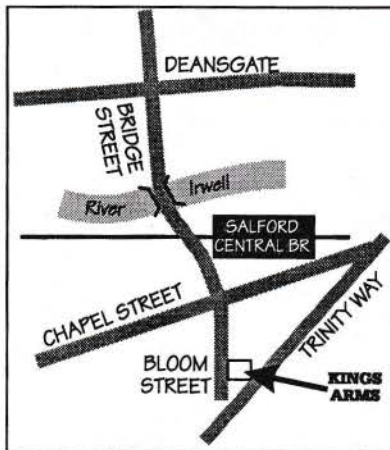
November/December - Rocket Fuel (5% - Stephenson's Rocket)



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Pub Chain Supply Probe

The Office of Fair Trading has launched an investigation into claims that small brewers are being frozen out of pubs. The move follows complaints by CAMRA and others that drinkers' choice is being limited through the consistent erosion of guest beer rights by pub companies.

The Guest Beer Order was brought in by the last Conservative Government in the early 1990s following a highly critical report on the state of the brewing industry by the Monopolies & Mergers Commission. Tenants of pubs owned by national brewers were given the right to buy real ales of their choice from independent brewers. The nationals were deeply offended by measures that sought to bring a small degree of choice to their pubs. In a decade long campaign they have rendered the Beer Orders meaningless by selling their tenanted pubs to new pub groups that do not have to offer guest beers as the order only applies to brewers.

Bass today does not own a single tenanted pub and Britain's biggest brewer, Scottish Courage, has signalled that it will convert its few remaining tenancies to management. Carlsberg-Tetley, formerly Allied Breweries, is now a brewer without pubs, while Whitbread is anxious to get out of brewing to run pubs.

The new power brokers are the pub companies. Many of these were set up with big brewer money. In some cases, senior executives moved seamlessly from breweries to pub companies with the help of generous golden handshakes. As pub companies are outside the provisions of the Beer Orders, it is not surprising that many of them restrict their beer supplies to the national brewers from whose loins they sprang.

Punch Taverns is a good case in point. Initially set up to acquire the tenanted and leased estate of Bass, it quickly snuffed out the guest beer rights of the former Bass tenants. Now that it has acquired the

former Allied Domecq estate (again with no little help from Bass) it is looking to do the same again. It has now unveiled an updated lease for the Vanguard pubs division, bought from Allied. Once again the aim is to restrict the guest beer rights enjoyed by those pubs by imposing a full tie on beer and cider.

It is this worrying situation that has prompted the Office of fair Trading to act. An OFT spokesman said: "We are making enquiries about pub companies' beer supply arrangements to see whether small brewers have sufficient access to the estates. There has been growing concern over the falling number of pubs with guest ale provision. We are looking at this area under the Fair Trading Act." Good Beer Guide Editor Roger Protz fully supports the move. He told Opening Times: "First the big brewers drove a dray-and-horses through the Government's Guest Beer Order and now the pub groups restrict choice in their vast pub estates by confining their real ales to national brands." He called on the Government to extend the Guest Beer Order to non-brewing pub companies and urged readers of the Good Beer Guide to lobby MPs and the Office of fair Trading to strike a blow for drinkers' choice.

Licensing Reform

Home Office minister Mike O'Brien has committed the government to a spring deadline for the publication of a White Paper on liquor licensing reform.

Mr O'Brien told a meeting of the all-party Parliamentary Beer Group at the Labour Conference in Bournemouth that he accepted the need for reform. "At the moment the situation is bureaucratic and inconsistent," he said. "This is inadequate and urgently needs modernising. We need a regime free of red tape."

The brewing industry, with CAMRA's support, is calling for a range of measures including a more flexible approach to opening hours and easier access to pubs for families with children. But later opening, especially in residential areas, remains controversial, as does the proposed transfer of licensing to local authorities.

8

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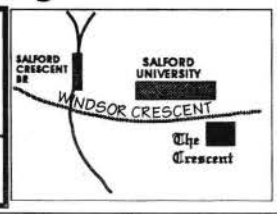
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More Can Mean Less

Reports in the press indicate that it's almost certain that the government will introduce a dramatic liberalisation of licensing hours, with pubs allowed to stay open well past midnight unless there is a clear local nuisance. It's difficult to argue against this unless you're part of the old-fashioned anti-drink lobby, but nobody should be under any illusions that it will do much to revitalise the pub trade.

There's a good case for midnight closing on Fridays and Saturdays, but beyond that, extended hours will only be relevant to a minority of young, urban pub-goers. Staying open into the small hours won't in practice increase alcohol consumption, but it will push up costs by spreading the existing trade over a longer period of time, just as all-day opening has done, and therefore inevitably lead to higher prices. The big pub chains with their rosters of hourly-paid part-time staff will be able to take longer hours in their stride, but what will be the impact on the small tenanted pub? Currently, licensees who close at 11pm probably never get to bed before 1am, because there's plenty of work to be done after the doors shut. They then just about get time for a decent night's sleep before they have to get up and prepare for opening the next morning. In the new deregulated world, they will probably have to stay open later to avoid losing trade to the big boys, but they won't sell any more drink in total, and their lives will be made much more unpleasant. Longer opening hours will lead to a further decline in individual, owner-managed pubs in favour of characterless national chain outlets.

In all the countries of Continental Europe closest to us - Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium and France - beer duty is much lower and opening hours much more liberal. But, compared with the UK, in all these countries bar prices are higher, the differential between on and off-trade prices is far greater, and the proportion of beer drunk at home is much higher. That is the direction we are heading in, and greatly extended licensing hours, far from boosting the pub trade, will, accelerate the process.

Bringing the Morning After Nearer

Another potential effect of pubs staying open into the small hours which nobody seems to have mentioned is an upsurge in "morning after" drink-driving. If you drink four or five pints and finish at 11pm, you'll almost certainly be well under the legal limit by the time you come to drive to work the following morning. If you drink the same amount, but don't finish until 1 or 2am, there's every chance you won't be, and you won't have had a proper night's sleep either. This is a subject on which the government - in my view irresponsibly - keep very quiet, possibly because they fear it will complicate their message on the general dangers of drink-driving. But if many more people are regularly drinking into the small hours, even if in total they are drinking no more, the authorities will no longer be able to ignore the issue.

Public transport, apart from late-night buses in a few big cities, normally finishes around the current closing time. If pubs are open until 2am, will buses and trains still be running to take their customers home in places like Macclesfield and Northwich? Somehow I don't think so. At least it will be easier to get a cab home from the pub as everybody won't want one all at once.

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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison **NOVEMBER '94**

"Calls for Duty Cuts" was the headline - Chancellor Kenneth Clarke was due to present his second budget later in the month, and once again there were widespread calls for a cut in beer duty. Earlier in the year, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA had joined forces with Robinson's Brewery to launch a national petition calling for British beers taxes to be reduced. The petition, with almost half a million signatures, was presented to the Government as part of an ongoing lobbying campaign by the industry for "a level playing field" on which to compete with the flood of imports coming into the country from the continent.

The Stanley Arms on Newbridge Lane, Stockport, suddenly discontinued its entire range of Ryburn beers. This came as more of a surprise because the Stanley had a long established reputation as an unofficial "brewery tap" for the West Yorkshire brewery, often having their entire range on the bar, including two exclusive house milds. There had been a brief (but unannounced) interruption in supplies when the brewery moved premises, followed by a 10 per cent price increase across the board. "5 Years Ago" (November '89) reported a "Boddie Blow" when Boddingtons decided to turn their backs on 136 years of brewing tradition and sell their breweries to Whitbread. Boddington's were to retain control of their 500-plus pubs and free trade outlets, and would buy 75% of their beer from Whitbread, under a renewable five-year agreement.

Spurred on by the success of their Marble Arch World Beers off-licence, Janet Whitehead and Vance de Becheval had gone the whole hog and opened an on-licensed sister establishment. The simply named "Bar" was (and remains) on Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, and the aim was to recreate the atmosphere of a Belgian beer café - they seemed to have largely succeeded in achieving that unique blend of café and pub which is so common on the continent, but here it often results in a tacky wine bar, or worse. In "Manchester Matters", Rhys Jones suggested that Bar was a contender for the most tersely named pub in Manchester.

It was reported that Holt's prices had gone up a little earlier in the year, in mid-October. With a 2p increase, it was still likely to be another year, duty permitting, before Holt's Bitter reached £1 in their managed houses.

Finally, there was a small headline at the bottom of the back page - 'A Fishy Tale'. Burtonwood Brewery had just been fined £4,000 for discharging 11,000 gallons of stale ale into a stream, which had foam and froth on its surface. The brewery admitted the offence, and the Warrington magistrates were told that no fish had been killed, but they were 'hung over'.

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Robbies Aims for the Big Time

Stockport's family brewer Robinson's is hoping to establish a national presence with the bottled version of the 5 per cent ABV Frederic's Premium Beer.

Robbies bottled beers are already well-established in the local take-home trade. Apart from the ever-reliable brewery shop on Hillgate, Frederic's is available in Sainsbury branches in the area, and ASDA is stocking the bottled version of the 4 per cent Hartley's XB. Old Tom is also distributed throughout the region in 275ml bottles.

Frederic's has also been available in the larger branches of the southern-based Waitrose chain since February, and free trade sales manager Ian Welling said a tasting session in all 42 outlets that stocked it had resulted in a 10-fold increase in sales.

"If sales go to plan the brand may well be introduced into more of Waitrose's 117 stores," he said. "It is all part of the company's increasing effort to build off-sales volume."

New Micro Brews

Our local micro brewers have several new beers in the pipeline for November. The ever-reliable Phoenix Brewery is producing four beers, including its revered Porter (5%) which will be available until the end of January. Also available until the end of January is Snowbound (4.3%) and available until Christmas are Christmas Kiss (4.5%) and Flash flood (4.1%). We also hear that 'Sutty' Sutton, former brewer at the Footage & Firkin is now working as brewer at Phoenix, good news indeed. Bridgewater Ales will be producing the formidable 'Ten Cent' millennium beer this month. This is an imperial stout, essentially a 10% ABV version of Delph Porter. Two casks have already been ordered for next year's Stockport Beer Festival - after six months' maturation, it promises to be a highlight of the Festival.

The Leyden Brewery, based at the Lord Raglan, Nangreaves, Bury, began commercial brewing last month. Monday 11 October saw the launch of 'Brendan's Birthday Beer', a tawny, very hoppy 4.5% beer which proved very popular. Efforts are now being concentrated on producing a permanent 3.8% session beer. A full report on this new venture should appear in next month's Opening Times.

Porter Expands

The Porter Brewing Company is on the expansion trail with not one but two new tied houses in the pipeline. The first should in fact be up and running by the time you read this - this is the Ashton Arms on Clegg Street (what a great northern name!) in Oldham town centre. Another new Porter Brewery pub is expected to open in Bury in December. Both pubs should sell the full Porter Beer range, plus seasonals, one-offs and, hopefully, real cider.

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Pressure Grows for Beer Tax Cut

A powerful lobby group made up of 30 brewing industry organisations including CAMRA is to be formally launched this month to increase the pressure on the Treasury for lower beer taxes.

And help could be on the way from the European Taxation Commissioner designate Fritz Bolkestein, who said the resolution of problems caused by differential rates of excise duty and VAT across the EU was on his list of priorities.

Mr Bolestein's problem is that although the EC is in favour of tax harmonisation, it's up to member states to set their own rates. Some countries with low duty, like France, have increased their rates considerably. Others with high rates, including the UK, have still to move beyond a duty freeze.

As part of its campaign on UK duty the new lobby group, the Fair Beer Tax Action Group, is to turn the spotlight on the social problems high taxation causes - especially smuggling and consequent increases in under-age and street drinking.

It is also campaigning on the brewing industry's pledge to pass on any reduction in duty to the consumer: ex-treasury minister Barbara Roche was against cutting duty because she didn't trust the brewers to pass the saving on.

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 187:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Rhys Jones, Peter Edwardson, Ken Birch, Paul Stanyer, John Hutchinson, Tom Lord, John Tune, Mark McConachie

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11

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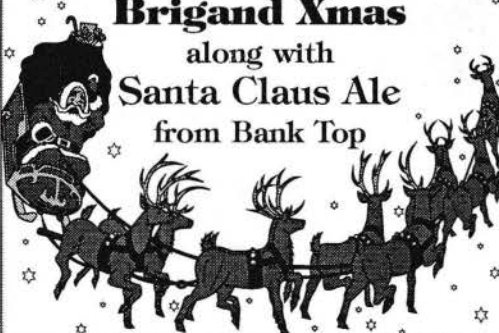
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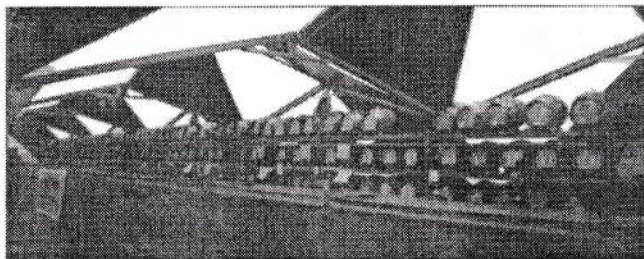
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Festival Review

Idy and Sal's 'Dark Side of the Moon' - their welcome festival at the Crescent in Salford went very well. The new chilled stillage in the 'auctioneers annexe' - sorry, vault, worked in an excellent fashion, keeping the beer at cellar temperature. Nice to see so many dark beers and milds at once (I've been paid to say that....), no but it was very good. Excellent beer quality, excellent food.

Having gone to the CAMRA event in Keighley (sadly, probably the last in the current venue), I was mightily impressed with the beer quality. Good range of British stuff with excellent specials from Keighley's two breweries (Taylor & Worth) - though a dreadful foreign beer bar - with French (Breton, actually) beer on handpump - didn't care for most of it, though one was ok. Had a thoroughly good day out and thought it might well be my festival of the year until.... I attended Liverpool's festival in the Lutyens crypt at the Metropolitan (Catholic) Cathedral. What a venue, cool, staggering, with multiple rooms. Awesome. AND a fabulous and enormous beer range with something for everyone - ALL - in even better nick than at Keighley. An utterly brilliant day. Even the use of tokens instead of money and lack of foreign stuff failed to detract from what was an exemplary and brilliantly run festival. The staff were uniformly friendly and helpful



Massive Stillage under canoas at Bolton's Howcroft Festival

(even if I did have to use a bilingual scouse-english translator I took with me [thanks to Alan Preston of the Hinds Head in Stockport]). Couldn't fault it. A basic but tasty food menu, and a worthwhile pair of brewery bars from Cains & Passageway. Best of the year, and I gather the 2000 do will be early in the year at the same venue. Can't wait. The excellent Bolton Lads & Girls club Charity do at the Howcroft (pictured) will get a full review next month.

Forthcoming Festivals

The Northern Quarter is the place to be over the weekend 4-7th November. The Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester has a Festival of Fawkes Ales (and others) 30 in all on handpumps on both floors. At the same time The Smithfield Hotel in Swan St - round the corner, is having its Winter Festival of 20 odd exclusively new brews. My kidneys are complaining already! Later in the month (Fri 26 - Sun 28) Idy and Sal are having their second thrash at the Crescent in Salford - the annual Real Lancashire Festival. (Which I seem to remember is around the time of the Liverpool Ship & Mitre's do.)

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 on Friday evening.

The Beer Monster's British Beer of the Month: Roosters Millennium Beer (4.3%) abv

Sampled at the Smithfield Hotel in Swan St (a pub sadly under-rated by our erstwhile cousins in North Manchester), this proved to have a wonderful and massive aromatic hop hit in the nose, an uncompromising dry and almost bitter middle and a long lasting ultra dry finish. A classic example of Sean Franklin's love affair with the hop, with just hints of dry maltiness throughout. Should be fairly widely available.

The Beer Monster's Foreign Beer of the Months:

Paulaner Draught Oktoberfest Bier (6%)abv

If you're very quick, you might get some of this at the Sand Bar on Grosvenor St - if not I've finished it off myself - sorry! (The bottles will still be available). Although the Munich Fest finished early last month, the promised Paulaner did not appear in Manchester until the very end, but what a treat it is. Liquid perfection in a glass. Far and away the best beer Paulaner's Nocherberg brewery in Munich has made for years, and their normal brew is one of my favourites. Aggressively and uncompromisingly dry in the mouth and finish, light but full bodied with gorgeous dry malty flavour balanced by an increasingly hoppy tail. Poop Poop! - as Mr Toad would say. Best beer I've had this year.

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

First, an apology. My comments last month regarding the non-availability of cask ale in the Kingsway, Levenshulme have apparently been taken as a criticism of the licensee. Not so. The manager of the Kingsway, in common with many other Holt's licensees, is currently struggling to maintain quality and supplies in the face of some pretty rosey beer coming out of the Derby Brewery. Just what's going on I don't know, but the extreme variability of Holt's beer in recent months has gone beyond a joke. They had better get their act together pretty damn quick as local CAMRA branches will be choosing their entries for the 2001 Good Beer Guide next February and March, and on current form many of the current Holt's entries will be under threat. This would be particularly unfair on many conscientious licensees but at the end of the day beer quality is paramount and if it's not measuring up, for whatever reason it would be difficult to justify their continued presence in the Guide.

Staying in Levenshulme, the Wetherspoon organisation is continuing its march south and plans to follow up its recent Longsight opening with a new pub at 863-871 Stockport Road. This is the building presently occupied by the 'Walk Round Warehouse', right next to the currently closed **Pack Horse**. The Warehouse is currently trading as normal, or it was in mid-October, but nevertheless a license application for the building has appeared in the *Manchester Evening News*. This should be the kiss of death for the Pack Horse, which seems to have been a marginal pub for some time, and it is difficult to see it reopening.

In Rusholme, the **Lord Lyon** on Claremont Road has reopened after the refurbishment I mentioned last month. The pub has been renamed, too and it's now the **Nelson**. Presumably this has been

done to try and shake off the last remnants of its former reputation. The new-look pub is a pleasantly refurbished one-roomer and is apparently run by the same team controlling the nearby **Sherwood** and **Huntsman**. These two sell no real ale but the Nelson does – for the first time in years – in the shape of hand pulled Boddingtons Bitter.

Further south in Didsbury, **Fletcher Moss** was short listed in the *City Life* magazine Pub of the Year and quite rightly so as it continue to impress on all fronts. There has been a change in the beer range, too. The ordinary Hydes' Mild has been replaced by the extra dark version or 'Welsh Mild' as the brewery now seems to be calling it. Rarely seen outside Hydes' Welsh estate (although the **Jolly Angler** on Great Ducie Street also sells it if memory serves me correctly) this has gone down well with the Fletcher Moss locals.

The winner of the *City Life* competition was another outlet praised in these pages, namely **Rain Bar** in the City Centre. Congratulations are due to all involved with Rain Bar and I can't help but feel that this is the first of many such plaudits heading in Rain Bar's direction. Staying in the City Centre, the occupants of the Deansgate Locks development on Whitworth Street West are becoming clearer. Sadly early reports that local brewers would be encouraged to move in here appear to have been misplaced although its not all doom and gloom. Admittedly another outlet for Bass's dreary '**Bar Coast**' chain is nothing to celebrate but other occupants are the **Comedy Store** and the **Fat Cat Café Bar** chain. This latter has been sizing up Manchester for some time (as reported here some time ago) and to date has offered cask beers in its outlets, including some reasonable guests. Another new development under way is '**The Circus**' on the corner of Portland Street and Oxford Street and this, too, should spawn a number of new licensed premises. Wetherspoon's are already lined up, I see.

Last, and by no means least, as this was penned it was strongly rumoured that the Shambles pubs, the **Old Wellington** and **Sinclair's** were due to open this month. Indeed, they could well be trading as you read this. Will the wait have been worth it? See next month's OT!

14

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National Winter Ales Festival 2000

Planning is now well advanced for CAMRA's next National Winter Ales Festival which will once again be held in Manchester next year.

The venue is the same as before, the Upper Campfield Market, off Deansgate in the City Centre and those important dates for your diary are Thursday 20th to Saturday 22nd January 2000.

The National Winter Ales Championship is the winter equivalent of the Champion Beer of Britain contest held annually in August at the Great British Beer Festival in London. It enables stouts, porters, barley wines and old ales to compete on a more level playing field, because of their traditionally seasonal nature.

That's not to say that there won't also be the full complement of other beer styles - the festival will also feature milds, a huge range of bitters, premium and strong ales, not only from the north west (all the Greater Manchester brewers will be represented) but far and wide. There will be a cider and perry bar with a wide choice and a large foreign beer stand which will not only feature many Belgian and German seasonal beers, but will see some excellent handpumped beers from America and (they hope) the Irish Republic. The organisers are also ordering considerable extra stocks of beer to avoid last year's premature sell-out early on Saturday evening.

An even more extensive range of hot and cold food will be available at every session, and this year there is an extra cheese and butty stall to cut down on queues.

In addition to the beer there will be the usual range of side stalls that festival goers expect, souvenir glasses, t-shirts and membership offers. Beat those new years blues, forget that millennium hangover, and get back into the festive spirit! Those important dates again - Thursday 20 - Saturday 22 January 2000. The opening times are confirmed as on the adjacent advert.

Important note to ALL Regional CAMRA members.

As always, the Festival needs its volunteer staff if it is to be a success. Staffing forms will be available through CAMRA CALLING and other Branch publications and events - and at the Regional Meeting (Ape & Apple, John Dalton St, Manchester - 8.00pm Wednesday 10 November). Please help - even if you can only manage a few hours it will be MOST welcome.

The next (December) issue of Opening Times will carry a form for those who have not managed to find one.

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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

WITH THE HELP OF
MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

**20-22 JANUARY 2000
THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**



FESTIVAL

15

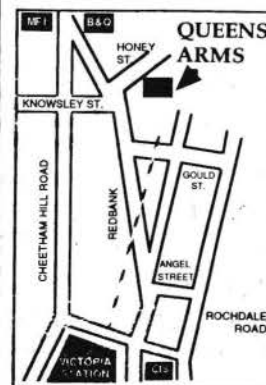
Dave and Sue welcome you to

THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

Try the fine range of beers supporting independent brewers in their excellent free house!
Taylors Landlord - Bantam Bitter £1.15 a pint
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Open: 12 noon - 11.00 p.m. Monday - Saturday
12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



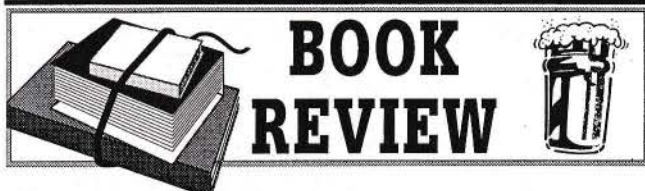
Beer Garden

Families Welcome

Hot & Cold Food

We're in the Good Beer Guide '99!

Telephone:
0161 834 4239



Fifty Great Pub Crawls by Barrie Pepper.
CAMRA Books, 190pp, £9.99

Away in a strange town, you've taken the Good Beer Guide (of course) - but you don't know how to get to any of the pubs! If this has ever happened to you, this new volume from CAMRA Books has the answer.

Quite simply, the book takes the guessing out of guzzling, by giving meticulously clear directions to 50 pub crawl routes spread across the British Isles, in great cities and small towns alike. The coverage is predominantly of England, though Scotland and Wales get two each, as does Ireland (one each for Belfast and Dublin). While most are walking tours in towns, there are two rail trips (Leeds to Manchester, and the preserved Severn Valley line), a boat trip north out of London, and a ramble in the Yorkshire Dales. In the Manchester region, the featured crawls are of Hyde Road, Salford, central Stockport (with a passing mention of Hillgate), and Stalybridge. It's a pity that a central Manchester crawl was not devised, while other notable omissions include Eccles and, further afield, Glasgow. Still, half the fun of a book like this is dreaming up suggestions for the next edition.

In those towns known to the reviewer, the pub selections seem generally sound (I will charitably ascribe the bizarre recommendation of Monroe's to rail travellers arriving at Piccadilly to the Yorkshire author's determination to put his native county in a good light). The prose style is sometimes uneven, a consequence no doubt of receiving information from numerous sources, but at its

best it flows pleasingly, as when early Methodism in Wales is described as the period "before the gospel and the glass parted company". Most of the information seems tolerably up-to-date, though the Belfast crawl should be approached with caution - a number of the pubs listed were dropped from the 1999 Good Beer Guide as no longer selling real ale, though on the plus side the glorious Crown Liquor Saloon now sells local Whitewater beers, not Bass. (And on the Dublin crawl, there's no real ale to be seen, apart from usually one in the Porter House - but the author does make this clear, and it's still a good crawl). The maps, gathered together at the back of the book, are both clear and attractive, though a location map showing the crawls on a map of Britain would have helped.

If your idea of a good night out is one of the more liver-defying, and comprehensive, 'Opening Times' Staggers, this may not be the book for you - hardly any of the crawls gets into double figures, and some are little more than a gentle amble. But if you enjoy visiting pubs in different parts of the country, with half an eye to the local architecture and historic associations, it could be just your ticket. I can see it making a good Christmas present for beer lovers who've already snapped up the Good Beer Guide as soon as it came out (and what true beer lover doesn't?). Recommended. **RPJ.**

Opening Times Competition

Last month's competition attracted considerable interest. As ever many thanks to Paul Stayer of The Railway, Portwood, for setting the questions and providing the prize. The pubs you had to identify were: Admiral Rodney; Parkgate; Princes Feathers; White Swan; Boarhound; Lord Rodney; Centurian; Lawton Arms; Grappenhall Community Centre; Vine Inn. There was only one correct entry and this came from Martin Wysterk. Congratulations!

November Competition

Paul has set us a slightly different competition this month. Using your knowledge of beers (or a Good Beer Guide), complete the grid in a clockwise spiral. The last letter of an answer is the first letter of the next. We have given you the first letter. The prize this month is a gallon of beer at The Railway, Portwood. Entries to: OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. Closing date for entries is Friday 26th November.

- (1) This brewery closed in 1991, but the beer continues to be brewed in Stockport.
- (2) Porter's and Townes brew this daylight beer.
- (3) In March B&T brew this; is it green?
- (4) A canine may be greedy to get this now defunct Firkin beer.
- (5) Adnams are having fun on the water.
- (6) Does a blacksmith use this in Manchester?
- (7) Richard from Hampshire brews this.
- (8) Is this still brewed in Masham?
- (9) Easingwold's newspaper?
- (10) Rugby team from Surrey?
- (11) Regal angler from Woodhampton.

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Activities include:

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Warm, Friendly Atmosphere

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Barnsley Chops in Stout Sauce

As winter draws on, I offer a hearty dish to combat the cold. A rich hearty sauce is more in the mainstream oeuvre of beer cookery and is what many folk perceive as being beer's proper place in the culinary pantheon.

Ingredients

4 Double Lamb Chops (i.e. not split at the spine) or	1½ pints sweet stout or porter
8 Leg chops	2 beef stock cubes
2 medium onions	Salt, pepper and a pinch of mustard powder
4oz flour	A little oil
2 tablespoons tomato puree	

Method

Place the chops in a roasting tin and brush with oil. Cook in a medium oven for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the sauce, thus:

Heat a little oil in a 2 or 3 pint saucepan

Chop and finely dice the onions and gently fry in the oil until soft. Slowly add the flour to make a roux.

Dissolve the stock cubes in a little boiling water, and slowly blend in, together with the seasoning.

Stir in the tomato puree (be careful to make sure the roux is not too dry - cut down on the flour if necessary).

Stir rapidly until the roux browns

De-gas the stout/porter if it is bottled by passing between two vessels until the head subsides

Slowly and gradually add the stout/porter to the roux. It is advisable to check the heat or occasionally remove the pan from the heat, in order to keep the sauce lump free.

Slowly simmer for 10 minutes, stirring all the time. Add some water if the sauce becomes too thick.

Coat the chops in the sauce and serve with boiled potatoes and green beans, or whatever you fancy!

Next month - Yule Be Sorry!

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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TOM LORD
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE CAMRA

The Sparrows Inn on Gladstone Street has a new licensee. Graham Salt has taken over at the pub and intends to have a permanent guest beer spot.

In Hyde, the Beehive Inn at the bottom of Commercial Brow now features Plassey Bitter on handpump all the time.

In the Stockport suburbs, the current licensee of the George Inn, Compstall is to leave shortly. We also understand that Lees Brewery may have plans to expand and improve the Travellers Call, Bredbury, but this information is as yet unconfirmed.

More unconfirmed news, this time from Whaley Bridge where we hear that the Board Inn may soon be offering Chinese cuisine, courtesy of the operation at the Plough Boy, Disley.

As has often been mentioned in these pages, the Wetherspoon organisation is frequently rumoured to have an interest in just about any available large pub. This month's unconfirmed report links their name with the Eagle on Buxton Market Place. Developments are awaited. Staying in Buxton, the Ashwood looks set to become a 'Wetherlodge' providing accommodation etc.

Several prominent pubs in the High Peak area have been advertised as for sale in the trade press. These include such well known names as the Squirrels at Chinley; Lantern Pike, Little Hayfield and, in Hayfield itself, the Royal.

Congratulations are due to the Red Lion in Denton. This excellent local has been announced as the winner of Hydes' Best Kept Cellar Competition.

And finally, the Burlington, Oldham road, Ashton, is selling, probably, the town's cheapest pint and, no, it's not Holt's. It is Hydes' Bitter and at a bargain £1 a pint all day, every day. The pub already sells Holt's but the Hydes' now outsells it. With two classic local beers, why bother with the falseness of new café bars. Get yourselves to Ashton!

17

1999 Stockport CAMRA Beer of the Festival -

Delph Porter

5.2% ABV

Barton Ale

4.3% ABV



Navigator*

3.8% ABV

Available Now...

Blondie

4.7% ABV
(American style Ale)

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

Tel: 0161 831 9090 Fax 0161 950 6561

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

Diary

November 99

Saturday 6th - Informal Lunchtime Social: Bury Beer Festival

Monday 8th - Social: Rain Bar, Great Bridgewater St, City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 11th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Florist, Shaw Heath, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 12th - Sunday 14th - Weekend away to present Cider & Perry of the Festival Awards.

Monday 15th - Social: Spread Eagle, Lower Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 19th - Minibus tour Northenden & Heald Green. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Ln 7.30pm; Crown, Didsbury 7.45; meet Crown, Northenden 8.00. Book - John Hutchinson 0161 434 7177.

Saturday 20th - Presentation of Regional Pub of the Year to The Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 22nd - Social: Sir Edwin Chadwick (Wetherspoons), Longsight. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 25th - Pub of the Month presentation to The Spread Eagle, Lower Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 29th - Social: Prince of Wales, Church Rd, Gatley. Starts 9.00pm.

Tuesday 30th - Committee Meeting: Queens Head (Turners Vaults), Underbank, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 3rd December - Minibus tour of the better pubs of East Manchester. Departs Crown, Heaton Lane 7.30pm. Book with John

Hutchinson on 434 7177.

-Hutchinson on 434 7177.

November 99

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

Monday 8th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Old Glove Works, George St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 20th - Presentation of Regional Pub of the Year to The Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.00pm.

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

Monday 15th - Open Committee Meeting: Roebuck, Town Lane, Mobberley. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 20th - Presentation of Regional Pub of the Year to The Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.00pm

Monday 22nd - Monthly Branch Meeting: Congleton Leisure Centre, Worrall St, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

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To Do: Address: Notepad: Anniversary: CAMRA 99: Planner

REGIONAL EVENTS

Wednesday 10th - Regional Meeting Ape & Apple, John Dalton St. Mcr, Starts 8pm

Sunday 21st - 12.30pm

National Winter Ales Festival 2000 organising committee meeting Beer House, Angel St Mcr.

Claire and Howard welcome all their friends and customers to the

WINTER BEER FESTIVAL

starting 23 Nov

Among our Festival guests:

Spinnaker Fire Side; Rebellion Lounge Lizard; Hopback Fawkes Finale; Arundel Old Knucker; Big Lamp Winter Warmer; Cotleigh Old Buzzard; Daleside Nighjar; Durham Magus; Hambleton Goldfield; O'Hanlons Myrica, Woodfordes Norfolk Nog; Springhead Roundhead Gold.

Ciders :-

Moles Black Rat and Westons 1st Quality

Bottled Beers

Chimay Red; Liefmans Kriek; Leffe Blond; Duvel; Schneider Weisse; Franziskaner

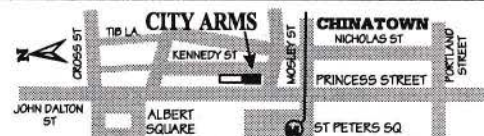
OTHER NOVEMBER BEERS

Among our guests:
Hydes Jekyll's Gold;
Gales Trafalgar;
Belhaven 80/-; Ushers
Autumn Frenzy;
Broughton Winter Fire;
Batemans Jollys High
Treason;
Exmoor Wid Cat;
Old Mill Autumn Breeze;
Highgate & Walsall Black
Pig; Goose Eye Wharfdale;
Tomintoul Culloden;
Everards 2XM;
Weltons Dr Frenchs
Old Remedy;
Brakspears Grim Reaper
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!

Come And Join us!

Best Ever Membership Offer

Until the end of the year CAMRA, that's the Campaign for Real Ale, is making some great offers for new members.

Join before 31st December and:

- ★ Try CAMRA membership FREE for three months if you join and complete a direct debit form, or
- ★ Pay only £12 - that's £2 off the standard rate, and
- ★ For members joining via Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA using the form below, you can buy the new 2000 Good Beer Guide for just £7 - that's an incredible £4.99 off the cover price.

So, why join? Simple, CAMRA is needed today more than ever before. Many of the achievements of the past 25 years are threatened by the activities of the national brewers and pub chains. Thousands of pubs are being closed or ruined; character and quality are being dumbed down by the new smooth keg beers; the grip of the multi-nationals is tightening. To counter these threats:

- ★ CAMRA campaigns to save individual pubs, to get historic pubs 'listed' and to encourage people to use their community local.
- ★ CAMRA promotes full flavoured distinctive beers, through awards, through 150 beer festivals a year and through the best selling Good Beer Guide.
- ★ CAMRA attacks the double whammy of the new 'smooth' keg beers which are both overpriced and designed to give you a short measure every time.
- ★ CAMRA campaigns for choice and diversity be it in pub or beers

In a nutshell our continuing fight is to protect consumer choice of good quality real ale in decent pubs and a fair deal for all. Our membership is approaching 55,000 for the first time ever, so why not join now and add your voice to what has been described as "Europe's most successful consumer organisation".



"I wish to register
A COMPLAINT!"



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

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

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

Local Trading Standards Contacts are:

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

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times187)

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.



DG 0115 472 6027



There are new faces at Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley, where ex-policeman Steve Brannan and partner Johanne Quinn have taken over as tenants of the previously managed pub, which remains in private ownership.

Having moved in on 6 October, their declared aim is to take the pub "back to its former glory" and it has to be said they are so far succeeding. Steve told us that the response so far has been "fantastic" - so much so that he hasn't yet had time to get round to redecorating the pub, which he will be doing as soon as time allows. It certainly seems markedly busier than before, and the increased trade has helped build up the atmosphere in this cosy little pub, which in turn brings in yet more people. One of the attractions must be the beer quality, which has been tip-top so far. The permanent range is Theakstons Bitter, Courage Directors and Wells Bombardier. These are usually supplemented by a guest beer and Steve has been experimenting with different beers to see what goes well - light hoppy bitters have proved a success with Beartown Brewery's Kodiak Gold making a particular impression. Coming soon will be a real open fire - just right for the winter months. Ye Olde Vic is open from 5-11 Monday to Thursday and all day (from 12 noon) Friday to Sunday. Very much worth a visit and highly recommended.

20

One of the few local ex-Vaux pubs still making an effort on the beer front is the Thatched House on Churchgate, Stockport. Handpumped Stones and Worthington are complemented by a changing guest beer from the 'Tapsters Choice' range. When OT called recently this was Barleymead from Elgoods Brewery, and in very good nick it was, too. For lovers of rock music who also like a decent pint, the Thatched is a local must.

Thatched House licensee Barry Shepherd is also taking over the currently closed Gardeners Arms on Northgate Road, Edgeley. The pub is owned by the Unique Pub Company who have redecorated the pub and also carried out some minor remedial work. The pub will operate more like a community local and during the week will be run by Nick Sibbit from the Thatched, which thereafter will probably only open at weekends as a live band venue. Cask beer will also feature at the Gardeners in the form of Tetley Bitter, Worthington Bitter and a, hopefully independently sourced, guest beer. The pub should be open again by the time you read this.

In Rusholme, the Clarence was closed for refurbishment as we went to press. No news of what is going on but as this is a Bass outlet the likelihood of cask ale going in is nil.

Staying in South Manchester, we understand that the excellent Mawson on Kincardine Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock, is now selling a guest beer. Something called 'Coach House Premium' has been spotted on the bar (should this be Innkeepers Special?). In any event, this is a welcome development at what is one of the best community locals in that part of the city.

Staying with S&N, a sign has now appeared on the Chestergate Tavern, Mersey Square, Stockport, advertising the franchise of the business for sale. Externally at least, the Chestergate must now have the title of shabbiest pub in Stockport. Indeed, given its prime location, it is nothing short of a disgrace that S&N have allowed it to deteriorate in this way.

A recent visit to Offerton revealed a couple of cask ale losses. The Hungry Horse (formerly the Golden Hind, formerly Drakes, formerly...) now sells no real ale - a surprise this, given that it's owned by Suffolk brewers Greene King who usually supply at least one cask beer to their pubs. Less of a surprise is the loss of real ale at the Strawberry Gardens, as this is a Scottish & Newcastle managed house and, in stark contrast to Greene King, S&N do seem markedly reluctant to supply real ale to many of their managed pubs.

Meanwhile, in the other Chorlton (-cum-Hardy), the conversion of the old billiard hall on Manchester Road into a new Wetherspoons continues apace. Projected opening date is 23 November (at least that's what it says on their web site!).

Also up for grabs is the Pineapple, Castle Street, Edgeley which is due to be auctioned off. The pub's latest period of closure began in July and possibly this is now permanent. Is anyone out there really mad enough to take it on as a pub?

In Withington, we welcome new licensees at Holt's Orion on Burton Road. They are Billy and Tracey who come from a Burtonwood house, the Nelsons Quarter, in Warrington. We wish them well in their new surroundings.

The trade papers were full of local pubs up for grabs as Opening Times went to press. Up for auction this month are the Honeycomb, Beswick; the Auld Lang Syne, Ancoats and the former Tommy Ducks Whiskey Bar in the City Centre. Whitbread were advertising the Sir Humphrey Cheetham in Clayton and former 'Tetley' managed houses being turned over to leasehold include the Church, Northenden; Shady Oak, Bramhall and the Filligree & Firkin, Macclesfield.

Marston's Bitter Axed!

The rationalisation of the beers available to the former Marston's tied estate continues with now a major beer brand facing the axe. Following the take-over of Marstons by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, it was always likely that some beers would be lost, but the axe is now being wielded with a vengeance by W&D. Last month we reported on the slimming down of the in-house 'guest beer' programme, the delisting of Bateman's Mild from the Marston's estate and the end of Owd Roger Barley Wine as a draught beer. Now comes news that the mainstream Marston's Bitter is also destined for oblivion.

The plan is to have the beer out of all the company's managed houses by early January and from the free trade in March. It will be replaced by Banks's Bitter from Wolverhampton. This move has been on the cards for some time. When interviewed for *What's Brewing*, CAMRA's national newspaper, W&D Chairman David Thompson pointedly omitted Marston's Bitter from the list of beers that his company would promote. However, he went on to add: "If there's a demand for Marston's Bitter it will continue. South Manchester wants Bitter, there's a strong demand..." Are we therefore to assume that the 'strong demand' has collapsed in the four months since those words were uttered? Or were Thompson's comments just so much hot air?

To find out, Opening Times carried out a spot survey in South Manchester, where the axing of the beer has been greeted with dismay. Typical comments were "in Manchester people like Marston's Bitter, they don't like Banks's" and "We can't sell Banks's Bitter in this pub, it's crap"! Harsh words indeed, but some of the sale figures we have heard do indicate a continuing strong demand for Marston's Bitter. The lowest sales we uncovered were the equivalent of five 36-gallon barrels a week and we think the total sales along the Wilmslow Road corridor alone but be in the region of 40-50 barrels. It is clear that no matter how much spin W&D try and put on this, the axing of Marston's Bitter shows contempt for customer demand, is a kick in the teeth for hard-working licensees and is more about improving brewery profits than maintaining consumer choice. And this from a brewery that styles itself as 'unspoilt by progress'. It just makes you sick.