

Distributed throughout Stockport;
Central, East & South Manchester;
Tameside; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

Volume 16 Issue 3

MARCH 2000 No:191

6,600 CIRCULATED
EVERY MONTH

FREE

WHAT A CON!

We Name & Shame Pubs With Misleading Signs



The Bow Garrett & The Kings Head.
What have these two Stockport pubs got in common?



Easy – neither sells any cask beer (real ale) but they both display signs outside which say the opposite. In the Bow Garrett you'll see no sign of the 'real ale' the sign outside proclaims. At the Kings Head there are handpumps on the bar. There are pump-clips too. But can you enjoy a pint of the 'cask ales' advertised outside? Fat chance! The clips are permanently turned reversed and bar staff have confirmed to Opening Times that cask beer is no longer sold.

So what's going on? Incredibly, both of these pubs were reported to Stockport Trading Standards office in May last year. Despite visits from Trading Standards officers, nothing has been done. Both pubs have blamed 'the brewery' and claimed that matters would be put right in a couple of weeks. That was last year!

So who's to blame? The licensees of these pubs are tenants with no responsibility for the outside signs (although they could easily put things right by stocking cask beer). No, we blame the owners who are...Paramount PLC, a small pub company based in Chester. Paramount have been having a tough time lately – plans to take over the running of 285 local Banks's/Marston's pubs have been scuppered by Stock Exchange rules and the company now either faces life as a minnow among the pub chains, or as a take-over victim. Perhaps it is these upheavals that have led them to ignore such simple basics as honest and accurate signing outside their pubs.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is well and truly up and running. Once again sponsored by the Stockport Express, arrangements are now well in hand.

Our beer mangers recently got together to plan one of our best ranges ever, with one or two old favourites being joined by newcomers all over the country. Hopefully we will be

STOCKPORT'S
14th
Beer and Cider
FESTIVAL
STOCKPORT TOWN HALL
1, 2 & 3 JUNE 2000

able to bring you more details on this next month although we can reveal that for the first time ever the special festival beer is to be brewed by the same brewery for two consecutive years. Roosters Brewery of Harrogate scored such a success with last year's special brew that we are commissioning another (different) beer from them this time round. Cider lovers shouldn't feel neglected, though – we will once again be hosting CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championship so a tip-top range can once again be expected. So don't forget those important dates – Thursday 1st – Saturday 3rd June. Get them in your diaries now!

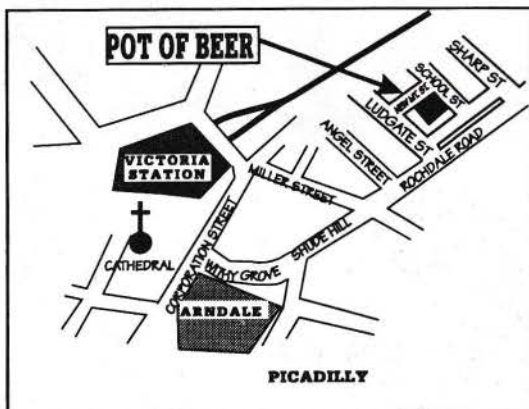
In MARCH'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Beer Monster	12
Pub of the Month	3	Curmudgeon	14
Letters	5	High Peak News	16
Stagger	6	Competition	17
Six of the Best	8	Camra Calling	18
Brewery News	9	Manchester Matters ...	19
Pub Grub	10	Pub News	20

POT OF BEER

36 NEW MOUNT ST
(0161) 834 8579

- Everchanging Guest Cask Ales
- Robinsons Dark Mild
- Draught Leffe Blond & Hoegaarden
- Black Rat Traditional Cider
- Continental Bottled Beers
- Wide Selection of Wines



**POLISH & ENGLISH MENU
AVAILABLE 12 TO 9 PM
MONDAY TO FRIDAY AND
12 TO 4 PM SATURDAY**

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

No apologies for our confrontational front page this month, although in truth we have taken this action more out of desperation than anything else.

The question of these pubs' deception has been in the in-tray of Stockport Trading Standards since May last year. After a certain amount of prompting, the pubs were visited late last year. "Don't blame us guv'nor" was the response. "It's all the brewery's fault - they'll be putting it right in the next few weeks". Over a month ago, Trading Standards were told that nothing had happened and now...still nothing has happened.

OK, this might not be the most pressing matter facing hard-pressed town hall officials but at the end of the day they have proved singularly ineffectual here in the face of blatant deception. We read reports from other parts of the country where trading standards have come down hard on pubs with this sort of misleading signage - so why are we in Stockport being short-changed? And as for the pubs' owners, Paramount PLC, well what can you say? How about - get a grip and sort your pubs out. Or don't they care any more? Perhaps someone from Paramount might like to get in touch and explain themselves.

The Bow Garrett and the Kings Head aren't the only pubs in the area pulling this sort of stunt. The other culprits will also be named and shamed in future issues of Opening Times, so if anyone connected with the other offending pubs is reading this - and you know who you are - then now is the time to put matters right. Unless you fancy some front page publicity, courtesy of Opening Times.

★ ★ ★

A piece of late-breaking news was that Joseph Holt are trying to take the brewery private, after a long time as a Public Company. The shares have jumped over 900p in value on this news, so it will be an expensive exercise. It does mean however, that the Kershaw family (Joseph Holt's descendents) will control their own destiny, so the brewery will be that much safer. A welcome bit of good news.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 191

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).

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 25cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING RATES: 1/8 page (60mm x 85mm): £30; 1/4 page (120mm x 85mm): £50; 1/2 page (horiz: 174mm x 120mm; vert: 250mm x 85mm): £85; Full page (175mm x 240mm) £140. Surcharges apply for back page. Discounts available on adverts of 1/4 page or above for runs of insertions. Advert design & origination usually free of charge unless large costs involved. Ring 0161 477 1973 for details. Artwork should be submitted as hard copy (positive bromide) or pc compatible *.eps, *.tiff or *.cdr (Corel Draw versions 3, 5 or 7 - please state which AND you MUST include hard copy back-up).

Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 19!

PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 2000

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 and South Manchester CAMRA pub of the month award for March has been won by Gothic Bar in Gatley. Gothic Bar is a relative newcomer to the pub scene in this area as it was originally a Methodist church before becoming a chapel, a shop, and then a wine bar. It is also Cain's Brewery's first pub in this area, the rest of their nine tied house estate being in and around the Merseyside. The inclusion of an additional quality independent local brewery pub in Gatley is a positive boost for the area and this has introduced much needed competition.

In the short nine months or so since licensee Lorraine Jevons has been in the pub its fortunes have been transformed. Troublesome customers have been removed, the beer quality has improved by leaps and bounds and the home cooked lunches and bar snacks have gained an enviable reputation for high quality. Visiting the Gothic is now a most pleasant way to spend a few hours.

The cask-conditioned beers on sale are the full range of Cain's beers plus a rotating guest beer. These on a recent visit comprised Cain's Mild, Cain's Bitter, Cain's Formidable Ale, Cain's Dragon Heart, and Daleside Monkey Wrench. All the beers are kept in top condition in a temperature-controlled cellar that is so spotlessly clean that you could eat your dinner off the floor.

Considering this, it will come as no surprise to learn that Lorraine has also won a Cask Marque award which is a brewing industry award for high standards in cellarmanship and this will also be presented to her on the night of the pub of the month award.

Since taking over trade has steadily been increasing, as more and more people have become aware of just what a good pub Gothic Bar has become. With future events planned such as social club events, folk and jazz evenings and the ever popular quiz nights, the success of Gothic Bar can only continue to grow and grow. The pub's success has been entirely due to the hard work and commitment of Lorraine and her staff.

So why not join CAMRA on the evening of Thursday 23rd March for the presentation of the pub of the month award? It promises to be a superb but very busy night so get there early if you want a seat! SB.

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

The Marble Brewery

"While waiting for the Liberty of the Summer, the Wee Star & Dobber totally vanished. However, deep in the Northern Quarter, the Ginger man lurked behind McKenna's Revenge."



Visit The Brewery Tap

The Marble Arch Inn,
73 Rochdale Road
Manchester 4

Brewery tours available
Contact Mark on
0161 832 5914 or
0161 819 2964



THE ALL YEAR BEER FESTIVAL

THWAITES BITTER, MOORHOUSES PENDLE
WITCH, TIMOTHY TAYLOR LANDLORD
+ 9 EVER CHANGING GUESTS



from Independents & Micros including a MILD

PLUS A RANGE OF TRADITIONAL CIDERS,
DRAUGHT KRIEK, LEFFE BLONDE, HOEGAARDEN &
EXTENSIVE BELGIAN & GERMAN BOTTLE RANGE
& NEW BELGIAN DRAUGHT GUEST BEERS (IN ROTATION)

'Oh No - Not ANOTHER' MARCH BEER FESTIVAL

THURSDAY 30th MARCH - SUNDAY 2nd APRIL 2000

40+ NEW & Rare Beers from microbreweries all
over England - Special Italian Festival Food
served at Lunchtimes and Thurs/Fri Eves

Beers from micros and independents - all served from handpump
(upstairs and down) and chilled to cellar temperature

Hot Lunchtime Food 7 Days A Week

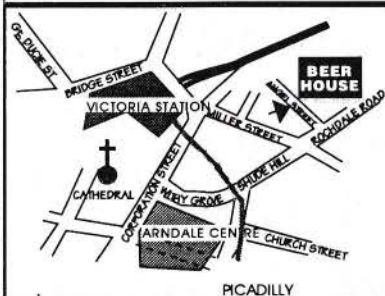
LUNCHES DAILY & EVENING MEALS 5 - 7 (FRI ONLY)

THURS SPECIAL (5-8pm) CHOICE OF 6 CURRIES (VEG & NON-VEG) + RICE £3

SUNDAY 12 - 2.30pm - Giant Yorkshires with choice of meat,
Roast Potatoes and Veg for just £3

★ HALF PRICE MENUS & CHEAP SPECIALS MON LUNCH ★
- FREE CHIP MUFFINS WED 5-6

NEWLY REFURBISHED FUNCTION ROOM UPSTAIRS WITH BAR BILLIARDS TABLE & SKY SPORTS



ONLY AT

The BEER HOUSE

Angel Street, Manchester (0161) 839 7019



4

CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

O OPENING TIMES

LETTERS

From: David Collins, Wythenshawe:

Just some information on Archer Stout (Brewery News, February). The two John Willie Lees pubs in Wythenshawe will have this excellent beer in their respective vaults at £1.55 a pint, which is a bargain price for a 4.8% ABV stout. The two pubs tend to have all the J W Lees seasonal brews, though the Jolly Butcher tends to have them on for only a short time. For those who do not know Wythenshawe, the Jolly Butchers is first left after Tesco on Altrincham Road, coming from the Stockport/Cheadle direction. The pub is 100 yards down Butchers Lane on the right hand side. The Park, which is the other pub, is about 15 minutes walk away from the Jolly Butcher. The best way to get there from the Stockport direction is to turn right at the lights on Altrincham Road just before Tesco, which brings you on to Moore Road. At the end of the road turn right going past the Gardeners (Robinson's), then immediately turn left on to Moorcroft Road - the Park is 100 yards up on the right hand side.

The bitter and mild are also worth drinking in both pubs, and in the Park on a good night the bitter can be brilliant.

From M Bailey, Manager of the Governor's House, Cheadle Hulme:

In response to Mr Watson's letter published in the January issue of Opening Times regarding the level of head served on his beer at the Governor's House, Cheadle Hulme, I would like to issue an unreserved apology for the uncharacteristic and disappointing treatment which he has reportedly received.

Although there can be no excuse for bar staff failing to give a top-up with good grace when asked to do so, I would like to reassure your readers that this is not a reflection on the usual high standards and practices which I am proud to maintain in the establishment. It is part of Watling Street Inns' training policy to ensure that the BLRA guidance notes are observed so that incidents such as the one reported do not occur. It is most certainly not the case that Watling Street Inns' staff are encouraged to serve short measures.

I have recently spoken to my bar staff and reminded them about our policy of receiving requests for a top-up with good grace and never refusing such requests. I do hope that Mr Watson will take some comfort from this.

(This letter arrived too late to appear in last month's OT. Mr Bailey's comments are very welcome and reflect well not only on him but also on Watling Street Inns. If only every operator was as responsive to customer complaints - ed.)

From Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth:

What an extraordinary letter from Pete Moores (OT, Feb)! D'you suppose he actually reads Opening Times? If so, how can he have missed the hugely positive coverage of such places as Bar Fringe, Sand Bar, and most recently Kro Bar? All of these are superb places to drink, completely removed from the stereotyped "CAMRA pub" image - and very popular with CAMRA members.

True, the cohort that joined CAMRA back in the 70s, in response to the first crisis for real ale, still plays a large part in the organisation. But if Pete persists in his stance of not joining CAMRA until the organisation is entirely to his taste, he'll never change anything. Better, surely, to join, get involved, and work for change from within.

From Peter Edwardson, Heaton Norris:

In your February issue you refer to "Chancellor Gordon Brown, who has recognised the brewing industry's plight by freezing beer duty in recent budgets". Could this by any chance be the same Gordon Brown who has raised beer duty twice in less than three years, and grudgingly left it alone for the one and only time last year? I hope that "Opening Times" is not going to allow itself to become a mouthpiece of the New Labour spin machine.

(I am pleased to confirm that the appointment of Alastair Campbell as 'ed. 3' is not envisaged for the foreseeable future - ed(1). No indeed, his first expenses claim when we tried him out led to his immediate sacking - it was full of chits for Chardonnay and Chianti - ed (2). Only joking!)

sandbar

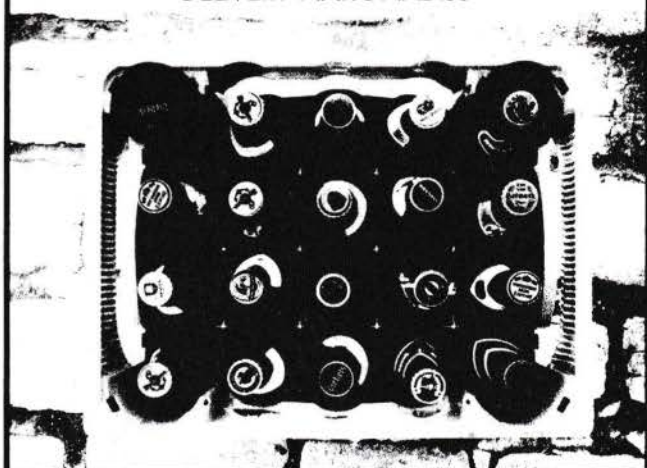
beer trading limited

From the popular World beer bar and **Alle Biere** company

GERMAN BEER CASES FROM £28

20 x 0.5l BOTTLES OF YOUR CHOICE PER CASE
INCLUDING A RETURNABLE DEPOSIT

DELIVERY NATIONAL £8



SAMPLE THEM

AT SANDBAR & SEE OUR CELLARS
CAMRA PUB OF THE MONTH
STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANC. FEB 98
120 Grosvenor St, All Saints, Manchester. M1 7HL

0161 273 2814

fax 0161 273 5802

WHOLESALE AND OFF LICENCE

CASH AND CARRY OR HOME DELIVERY



The Nursery Inn



GREEN LANE,
HEATON NORRIS,
STOCKPORT
432 - 2044

Hydes
Anvil Ales

Brewers of
Traditional
Cask
Beers

Always in
good taste

- ★ Good Home Cooked Food Served Daily
- ★ Lunches every day including Sundays for families in our Dining Room.
- ★ Beer Garden with Eating Area
- ★ Bowling Parties & Function Room.
- ★ Egon Ronay Guide, AA Best of British Gd
- ★ CAMRA Good Food Guide 1994

THE BOUNDARY

Specialists in Catering, **OPEN ALL DAY**
Mobile Bars and functions **EVERY DAY**

Food Available:

Mon - Thu 12.00 - 2.30pm
5.00 - 10.00pm
Fri - Sun noon - 10.00pm

Function Room Available
Quiz Night Every Sunday

Watch Out For Our Special
THEMED EVENINGS
Each Month

**A Quality Range of
Guest Ales
Always Available**

The Boundary, 2 Audenshaw Road, Audenshaw,
Manchester M34 5HD

Phone 0161 330 1679

Fax: 0161 285 3456

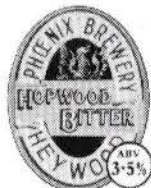
Environmental Services Tameside
Clean Food Award 1999

Corporate Member of the
Guild Of Master Caterers



PHOENIX BREWERY

GREEN LANE, HEYWOOD, OL10 2EP.
TEL: 01706 627009



HOPWOOD
Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.



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



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



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



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



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



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



WOBBLY BOB
Amber beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.

STAGGER

with Ann Hooser-Bush

A select group of half a dozen staggerers gathered in the Gateway on a cold and windy night for the start of the Didsbury stagger.

The Gateway is a large modernised 1930's roadhouse pub with a single lounge served by a central bar. The beers on sale tonight were Hydes Bitter (£1-30) and Hydes Light (£1-17), these prices being lower than normal because the pub operates a twenty pence off a pint promotion between five and eight pm Monday to Friday. There was no Hydes guest beer on tonight because we were told "it was not ready", and Jekylls Gold was not on because "it did not sell". This is fair enough, it is better the beer is properly conditioned rather than being too young and consequently tasteless or too tired and consequently over conditioned. Somehow the Gateway as a pub always disappoints, it seems to lack character and ambience, which may in part be due to its huge size. This is a shame because the Bitter was considered to be average with the Light managing a good rating.

Next on to the Didsbury on Wilmslow road. This is a Chef and Brewer (Scottish Courage) pub-cum-restaurant with a fake rustic theme. It is the same chain that has recently done up the Romper at Ringway and, yes, you have guessed it, it is virtually identical to the Romper. It has the same rustic style, candles on every table, blackboards everywhere, racks of wine bottles, assorted light fittings and furniture. When you have experienced one of these pubs you have experienced them all. Scottish Courage are guilty of pub cloning and killing off pub individuality. Having said that the beer was not bad, if a bit expensive, with Courage Directors (£0-91 / half) and Old Speckled Hen (£1-00 / half) both scoring good whilst the Theakstons Bitter (£0-84) achieved average.

Just across from the Didsbury is the Ye Olde Cock. This is an enormous pub aimed mainly at the student market and tonight was 70's disco night complete with stage and disco lighting. This was the 8:30 p.m. meeting point and because of this the number of staggerers more than doubled. Clearly some felt less than comfortable drinking in a such boisterous but friendly, loud and very busy pub. CAMRA do try and do these staggerers without giving the pubs prior notice in order to receive the same drinking experience as any member of the public, but the Olde Cock's licensee had obviously done his homework, as there was a sign in the pub saying "Ye Olde Cock welcomes CAMRA". A nice thought, thank you. Five cask conditioned beers were on offer, Oakhill Mendip Gold, Fullers London Pride, Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Timothy Taylors Landlord, and Boddingtons Bitter. Nobody tried the Boddingtons or the London Pride but the Mendip Gold received an above average rating and the Deuchars IPA a good rating. One dissenting voice tried the Taylors Landlord, which he found not to his taste and gave it a poor rating.

Quite a walk now as we pressed on to the Nelson passing the "famous Crown" on the way as it was just too crowded and the average beer range (Greenalls bitter 82p/half, Boddingtons bitter & Tetley bitter) wasn't worth the wait.

The Nelson is a Didsbury institution being the last working man's pub in the village and having received the CAMRA pub of the month award as recently as December 1999. As usual it was busy and although there was a disco playing the conversation in the pub was a good match for it and was probably winning. Marstons Pedigree, Holts Bitter and Websters Bitter were on sale, the Pedigree was thought to be above average and the Holts good to very good. It seems that at last Holts are getting to grips with the quality problems that blighted them for most of last year. Nobody tried the Websters.

Next on to the Station bypassing Squires (no real ale) on the way. The Station has recently changed hands and we were keen to see how the new licensee was running the pub. This is a tiny but busy

three-roomed pub with great charm and it is stacked with railway memorabilia. The pub is a haven away from juke boxes, fruit machines and satellite TV. On sale tonight were Banks's Mild, Banks's Bitter, Banks's Passion Ale, and Marstons Pedigree. Nobody tried the Banks's Bitter, some small matter to do with Wolverhampton and Dudley breweries axing Marstons bitter despite huge public demand and licensees' support for it in Manchester and beyond. We were about to be served when the mild ran out so we were left with the choice of Pedigree or Passion. Most of us opted for Passion (there is a joke in there somewhere but I had better not run it) and they obviously liked it, giving it a good rating. The Pedigree was likewise well thought of receiving a similar score. The new licensee has clearly made a promising start.

Across the road now to the Hogshead. It was clearly packed, and with doormen on the door we were discouraged from trying to enter. Most of the group gave up, however two brave souls opted to bite the bullet and fight their way in. They did not report back what beers were on sale, but they both tried the Hopback Summer Lightening giving it an average to good rating.

The next pub was O'Neill's but as it sells only keg beers we pressed on, bypassing also the Dog and Partridge as it too had bouncers on the door and was so packed, that we decided the drinking experience would be unpleasant. Turning off the main road we headed to the Fletcher Moss on William street next to the former Healds dairy. This is a pub that has been brought back from the dead by Hydes' tasteful renovation and the hard work of the current licensee. Hydes Mild, Bitter and Jekylls Gold were on sale, the bitter and the mild received a good rating with the Jekylls Gold receiving an excellent rating and the accolade of the best beer of the night so far.

Our final port of call for the evening was the Royal Oak. This great pub has had its ups and downs in recent years with the arson attack when Arthur Gosling was the tenant, then its decline under the



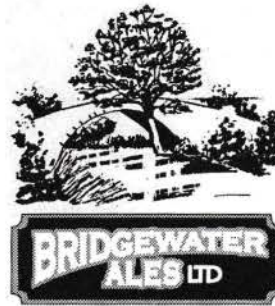
next licensee, and now it's subsequent rise again under the current management. The pub is famous for its old ceramic spirit vats (most of which thankfully survived the fire), its historic boxing notices and its cheese and pate lunches. The pub was of course very busy but somehow we managed to squeeze in and get served. Marstons Pedigree, Banks's Bitter and Banks's Mild were on sale but for some reason nobody tried the Banks's Bitter. Both the Pedigree and the Banks's (now no longer marketed as mild to encourage younger drinkers to drink it) received a good rating. One dissenting voice complained about the short measure he had received, a consequence no doubt of very busy but inexperienced bar staff. I know this pub well and if he had returned the beer to the bar and asked for a top up it would have been topped up with good grace and he would have been offered an apology.

And so ends another stagger. What we found on the night was a variety of pubs all selling good beer. However towards the end of the stagger some of the pubs were so busy that unless you enjoy drinking, standing up packed like sardines in a can, in overbearing hot conditions, you would be better advised to avoid Friday nights; or do the stagger the other way round. This is of course just a snapshot of what we found on one particular night, and can't be taken as a once and for all judgment of the pubs or their beers. Why not try the stagger for yourself to see how much you (dis)agree?

Navigator
3.8% abv

Ash Blond
4.2% abv

Barton Ale
4.3% abv



Blondie
4.7% abv

Delph Porter 1999 Stockport CAMRA
5.2% abv Beer of The Festival

Plus Regular Special Brews

February: TLC 4.0% abv & Inglewood Ale 4.2% abv
March: Mad Hare 3.8% abv

Regular Outlets - Kings Arms, Albert Vaults, Old Pint Pot (Salford); White Lion - Liverpool Rd; Pot of Beer; White House; Waters Green, Macclesfield

Tel/Fax: 0161 831 9090

13th WIGAN BEER FESTIVAL

Over 40
Real Ales

Live
Music
(not Fri)

Foreign
Beers

Traditional
Cider

Food
Available
at all Sessions

Thursday 16th March

5:30 - 11:00 - Admission £1.50

Friday 17th March

12:00 - 2:30 - Admission FREE 5:30 - 11:00 - Admission £2.50

Saturday 18th March

12:00 - 3:30 - Admission £1.50 (Jazz)
7:00 - 11:00 - Admission £2.00 (Eagles Tribute Band)

ALL SESSIONS FREE TO CARD CARRYING CAMRA MEMBERS

CAMRA at The Mill at the Pier
(Trencherfield Mill near Wigan Pier)
Organised by the Wigan Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

www.misttd.co.uk/CAMRA



HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE! - DRINK REAL ALE

SIX OF THE BEST

Pete Soane takes to the buses

Now that Stagecoach Manchester have reduced the price of their Day Saver ticket to £2.50, giving the user unlimited bus travel in the Greater Manchester area, why not try this foot friendly crawl?

Kick off at the **Crown** on Heaton Lane where an ever changing selection of guest beers, many from micro-brewers, is on offer. Then, on to the bus station to catch one of the many buses from stands D,E and F (eg nos. 20, 42, 370), any of which will drop you off at the **Griffin**, Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey. An excellent pint of Holt's mild or bitter here, served from a superb mahogany and etched glass bar.

Hop on one of the many buses back to Stockport and take the ubiquitous 192 northbound to Longsight, alighting at the **Sir Edwin Chadwick** on Stockport Road. This Wetherspoon's house has been like a breath of fresh air on an otherwise poorly pubbed area. Good value beer and food here, too.

It's back onto a southbound 192 now, and get off at the opticians near Belmont Bridge, cross over and walk down Heaton Road and then Alexandra Road to the **Nursery** on Green Lane. Hydes' Mild, Bitter, Jekylls Gold and Hydes' seasonal choice are available at this unspoilt 1930s pub, a regular Good Beer Guide entry. Retrace your steps, back onto another southbound 192 getting off in Mersey Square. From here it's just a short walk to the **Swan With Two Necks** where the Robinson's Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Frederics just can't be

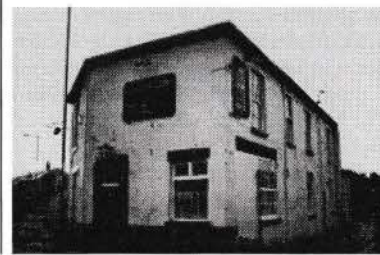


missed. Neither can the **Tiviot**, just a short walk further on, again Robinson's but with the added bonus of gravity served Old Tom. I had a truly memorable pint of bitter in here recently.

Now I know this is supposed to be six of the best, but who's counting? So, on leaving the Tiviot bear left past Sainsbury's then turn right at the lights to the **Arden Arms**. This multi-roomed classic (no apologies for that hackneyed phrase, it is that good) is currently the most improved pub in Stockport in my opinion. Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter here as well.

And finally, leaving the Arden Arms, turn left and then right at the lights, to **Porter's Railway**. A bank of handpumps greets the (still thirsty?) traveller, dispensing a superb range of beers from Dark Mild to golden Sunshine, and real cider too.

So then, there's my six or so of the best, selling beers from goodness knows how many independent brewers. Do this in April and it will be well worth taking your Mild Challenge card on this



crawl as well. This has been a purely personal choice of course - there are many, many more excellent pubs in the Greater Manchester area for you to devise a similar crawl for yourself.



8
CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

THE CRESCENT

0161 736 5600



OPEN ALL DAY EVERY DAY

JOHN SMITHS BITTER, ROOSTERS SPECIAL, SON OF CRESCENT, PHOENIX Wobbly Bob & Thirsty Moon, PLUS 5 GUESTS INCLUDING A GUEST MILD - THATCHERS CIDER £1.30/pint

ERDMANN'S HEREBER QUALITY DOUBLES BAR

FOOD SERVED EVERY LUNCHTIME FROM 11.30am, FREE CHIP BARMS - EVERY MONDAY 5-6pm, RICE + 3 CURRIES WEDNESDAY 5 - 8pm only £3

Full Sunday Breakfast (Meat or Veggie) from 12 noon

DRAUGHT BEER FESTIVAL THURS 23 - SUN 26 MARCH

FEATURING 7 DRAUGHT BEERS IN THE FESTIVAL VAULT

including Smoked, Strong (stark), Monastic & Rare Pale BEERS + over 20 Bottled Beers - Bratwurst, Bockwurst, Special German Food - Barbecue on Sunday if dry

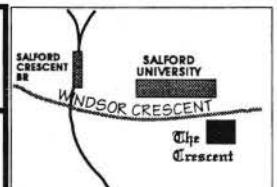
SPRING BEER FESTIVAL THURS 13 - SUN 16 APRIL

Coming Soon: New Beer Garden Opening during German Festival Weekend



10 CASK ALES ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Roosters Special £1 pint every Saturday till end of March (until 6pm)



Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 19!



Lees to brew 'Ale for All Seasons'

JW Lees has announced the latest in its range of speciality ales which will be brewed to offer beer enthusiasts a wide variety of tastes to reflect the changing seasons throughout 2000.

The first in the range, Archer Stout has been available in Lees pubs throughout January and February. This is a rich and potent (4.8% alcohol by volume) cask conditioned stout and this was its third annual appearance in the seasonal ales range.

Out this month and available until the end of April is Malted Mayhem a 4.5% 'cereal beer' brewed using malted barley, wheat, rye and oats. The brewery publicity promises an 'explosion of tastes'! The rest of the range will comprise:

White Bear - a 4.2% wheat beer available May/June.

Scorcher - again at 4.2%, this light beer is a regular summer seasonal for Lees and will be available July/August.

John Willie's Champion Beer - this 5% ale is the prize-winning beer which won last year's Tesco Beer Challenge for the best national ale and will be available September/October.

Plum Pudding - 4.8% rich dark beer, with a 'hint of fruit', to be brewed for the festive season and will be available November/December.

Rain Bar on Great Bridgewater Street in the City Centre is pretty much guaranteed to have all of these beers on sale as they become available.

Top Beer Writer Visits Robinson's

International beer writer Michael Jackson travelled - by train - from London to spend a day at Robinson's Unicorn Brewery. The award-winning author and presenter of the TV series, *The Beer Hunter*, took a look at the brewing methods used at Robinson's as well as sampling the products.

Accompanied by Head Brewer Chris Hellin and Oliver Robinson, his tour started at the top of the brewery tower and took in each stage of the brewing process from the delivery of materials through to the cask racking plant at Robinson's Unicorn Packaging Centre in Bredbury.



Pictured (L-R) Dennis Robinson, head brewer Chris Hellin, Michael Jackson, David Robinson

The main objective of the visit was to research Robinson's award winning Old Tom, named as Champion Winter Beer of Britain at CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival in January. The research was to be used as the basis for an article about Old Tom, which Michael Jackson was writing for *The Independent* newspaper. He said that he had been reminded "just how good Old Tom is" recently when he took part in a blind tasting session in Chicago. "It really is a very robust drink and, I think, the beer world's answer to brandy," he commented.

The day also allowed time for lunch at Ye Olde Admiral Rodney in Prestbury where Best Bitter and Hatters Mild were sampled. A drink in the brewery tap, the Spread Eagle, rounded off the day.

Next month - our comprehensive round-up of all the local micros.



THE DOUBLE EVENT BANK HOLIDAY REAL ALE EXTRAVAGANZA



ASHTON-U-LYNE

THURS 27th APRIL
~ MON 1ST MAY

UP TO
90 ALES



featuring
RECENT BREWS
ONE OFFS
FESTIVAL SPECIALS
FOREIGN BOTTLED BEERS
SCRUMPIES & PERRIES

HYDE'S NEW BREW LAUNCH, ASHTON

JAZZ, FOLK
MORRIS & BRASS

HOME COOKED FOOD
always available

NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION



ATTENTION ALL FREE HOUSES!

Following the huge success of award winning Plassey Bitter at The Sportsman, Hyde, Geoff is now able to offer all Plassey products at realistic prices with free delivery to selected other Publicans (who would be willing to take it regularly) in the Stockport, Tameside, High Peak and Greater Manchester areas only. Please ring Geoff on:-
0161 368 5000, fax 0161 366 1365.

**CAMRA REGIONAL
PUB OF THE YEAR 1998 & 1999**

THE SPORTSMAN

57 MOTTRAM ROAD, HYDE
Geoff and Carmel Welcome You To



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

Regular Beers include
Hartington Bitter, Plassey Bitter,
Taylors Landlord and
Magic Mushroom Mild and
ever-changing guest beers
Bottled Belgian Fruit Beers
Special Vegetarian Wholefood
Menu Now Available

now boasting a full-sized Snooker Table
Booking in Advance is Recommended



Easy Public
Transport Connections
Tel: (0161) 368 5000

25p OFF all
Draught Beers
Sunday
12 - 4pm



This month Pub Grub returns after a lengthy absence. It will appear every other month to start with and to kick off we visit The Pot of Beer in Manchester City Centre.

The Pot of Beer (36 New Mount Street, off Rochdale Road, 0161 834 8579) has become a firm favourite since its days as the Harp & Shamrock, a characterful but neglected Marston's house. Rescued by Peter and Wanda Ward, a well-thought out refurbishment, which involved some skilful opening out has produced a cosy timber and brick interior with a welcoming open fire in the winter months.

Wanda is of Polish descent and it is the pub's speciality Polish food that has put it on the local, and even national, gastronomic map. Opening Times can in fact take a little credit for this as it was a previous 'Pub Grub' article that set the media ball rolling. That was some years ago now so a revisit was clearly called for to see what, if anything, had changed.

The main change seems to be the size of the Polish menu which is now much more extensive, running from a selection of starters, polish sausage sandwiches and main courses with prices for the latter ranging from £2.95 to £5.50. In addition there is a second blackboard with non-Polish fare plus a couple of daily specials. When I called the main special was a tempting dish of stuffed potato skins with spiced beef, cheese and home-made salsa for a bargain £2.95. I was determined to try the Polish food but couldn't resist the Soup of the Day, the intriguingly named Pork Surprise at £1.50. When it arrived this was a large dish of proper home made soup with shredded pork, mushrooms, peppers and generous spicing. Only rarely do you encounter 'home

made' pub soup that really does include nothing out of a packet but this was the real McCoy and with the accompanying bread made for a filling lunch in itself. However I had also ordered Golabki (pronounced go-womkey - the blackboard helpfully includes phonetic pronunciations of the Polish dishes), a hearty dish of cabbage rolls stuffed with minced pork and beef in a tomato sauce and served with rye bread at £4.35. This comprised four large cabbage rolls in a light but creamy tomato sauce with a generous four slices of rye bread, and I struggled to finish. The quality was superb. The rolls were perfectly cooked to the right degree of tenderness and whilst substantial managed to avoid being mere stodge. The tomato sauce complemented the dish perfectly and again the seasoning was very well judged.

I have heard equally high praise from others who have eaten there and on this experience must say that every word of it is very well deserved. The menu recommends you accompany your meal with a Polish beer (the aim is to have a small selection of these which would be another first for the city) or a shot or two of vodka. Most OT readers will probably be attracted by the cask beers, though. The two regular beers are Boddingtons Bitter and Robinson's Dark Mild (a very rare permanent outlet for this beer) together with up to three guest beers, some served by gravity from the temperature controlled cellar behind the bar. I tried Castle Rock Brewery's Hemlock Bitter which was on top form. Traditional cider is also gravity served in this way.

The Pot of Beer has become something of a local institution, its quiet understatement contrasting with its somewhat brasher neighbours. The pub and its food, though, are really something to shout about and well worth a visit. Food is currently available 12-7 Monday to Friday and 12-4 Saturdays.



GUEST ALES REVIEW

Review offers hope for hard pressed micros

Pub chains are to come under the microscope in a review of the Beer Orders by the Office of Fair Trading. Introduced 10 years ago, the Orders introduced the 'guest beer rule' for tenants of national brewers pubs, and also put a limit on the number of pubs that those breweries could tie for beer. However, they have failed to keep up with the huge changes in the pub trade in the past decade, and have been made largely irrelevant by the emergence of the new-style pub companies. The review will therefore look at whether the axeing of guest ales by the non-brewing pub companies, which now own 40 per cent of Britain's pubs, is freezing small brewers out of the market.

Announcing the review's terms of reference, the OFT set out three main areas of enquiry: (1) whether the adverse effects the Beer Orders were meant to cure still existed, (2) whether scrapping the Orders would mean the return of adverse effects that had disappeared and (3) whether the Orders needed to be changed to overcome any adverse effects that still remained.

Issues to be examined would include beer prices and the choice available to consumers, structural changes - mainly the emergence of pub companies - over the past 10 years, the effects on competition of the withdrawal of companies like Greenalls, Morrells and Vaux from brewing, and guest ale rights in the pub company tenanted and leased estates.

"The time is right for a review of the Orders," said OFT director John Bridgeman. "The market is very different now from what it was in the late '80s. Pub chains have taken a large share of the retail trade and the brewing sector has consolidated.

"We have also noted a significant number of pub closures in rural and inner city areas and a fall in the number of regional brewers. We want to know what impact this is having on competition."

Mr Bridgeman noted the appearance of 45 micro-brewers in the last year alone. But he said: "We cannot assume that this means there is more choice available to consumers."

Consulting bodies, including CAMRA, have until 31 March to make their submissions, and the OFT report is due to be laid before Trade Secretary Steven Byers by mid-August.

The Old Glove Works

CASK ALE BAR & EVENT SUITE

Top 6 1999 Cask Ale Pub of The Year
UP TO 6 EVER CHANGING CASK ALES
Open all day - every day - from midday

Food Available:

12 - 2pm Mon - Fri
12-3pm Sundays

Live Entertainment:

Thursdays 9pm
Sundays 3 - 6pm
Resident DJ 8pm



Friday & Saturday (60s, 70s, 80s)
Prize Quiz Sunday 9pm

Whisky Galore 5 - 7pm Mon - Thurs
(Any Whisky, Malt, JD, Southern Comfort only £1 a shot)

Event Suite for Your Special Occasions
2 Outdoor Riverside Drinking Areas

Riverside Mill, George St
Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8AY
01457 858432



Mike & Chris
welcome you to
The Kings Arms

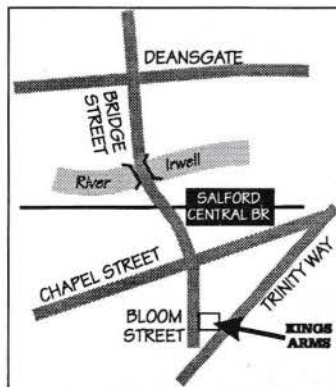
11 Bloom Street, Salford M3 6AT
(0161) 832 0167

Free House
7 REAL ALES

Belgian & German
Bottled & Draught Beers,

Bridgewater
Navigator always
available plus
6 ever changing
guest beers

JAZZ
every Wednesday night
FOLK
every Monday night
TRIO
every alternate Saturday
afternoon
GROUP
every alternate Saturday
evening



ARMOURY INN SHAW HEATH



**BEST BITTER, HATTERS MILD,
OLD TOM**

Snacks Available

**OPEN ALL PERMITTED
HOURS EVERY DAY**

(including Saturdays & Sundays)

Robinsons Traditional Ales

☎ 0161 480 5055

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation From
£17.50 - (Evening Meals if required)
Free Meeting Room Available for 20 - 40 people



The editors were sent a letter this month which they decided not (at present) to include, because it makes some pretty strong (and otherwise surprising and unsupported) criticisms of a number of pubs that we have always considered well run, so one or more 'secret drinkers' (probably me and my ilk) are being sent out to corroborate or contradict these allegations. Without naming the pubs (yet), the problem boils down to one that has had me pondering quite a bit over the last month or so - all afternoon opening in the early part of the week.

This might sound more properly a matter for my learned friend Curmudgeon, but I think there is a serious problem here. Except on particularly good weather summer days, (when 'planned sickness' boosts customer numbers), and before Christmas, pub trade on Monday-Wednesday, between 2.45 and about 4pm is absolutely dreadful, except in one or two 'value' outlets which are full of pensioners and the unwaged eking out their beer money. Whilst there was a fall off in Stockport, Manchester held out until the middle of last year, but even that has died. Certainly there are shift workers (a few), about, but shoppers and early finishers are not enough to populate even the best free houses at this time. Now in a way I am rather happy about this, because I tend to finish work at about 2 or 3, and then finish drinking before the 'beautiful' or other people come out to get legless after 8pm.

Generally I get served quickly, can find a seat, and there are enough people to natter to on my travels, yet it is quiet enough to be solitary should one want. I know many people who simply like to drink and relax who regard this as near heaven.

The poor bar staff on the other hand are bored rigid. A significant number of afternoon customers could bore for Britain, and they all seem to feel that they have a universal human right to inflict their



**B
A
R

F
R
I
N
G
E**

MANCHESTER'S BELGIAN STYLE BROWN BAR, THE BEST ENVIRONMENT TO SAMPLE A RANGE OF OVER 40 BOTTLED AND 6 DRAUGHT BELGIAN BEERS FROM AUTHENTIC BREWERY GLASSES. DRAUGHT PRODUCTS INCLUDE **HOEGAARDEN WIT** (5% ABV) AT £2.20/PINT AND **VLAAMSCH WIT** (4.5% ABV) AT £2.10/PINT.

THE BOTTLED RANGE RUNS FROM THE TRAPPIST TO THE LAMBIC FRUIT BEERS (IN BOTH MODERN AND ORIGINAL STYLES) AND ON TO THE SPECIALS INCLUDING **DELERIUM NOCTURNUM** (9% ABV) AND **KWAK** (8.5% ABV).

FOOD AVAILABLE 12 NOON UNTIL 6PM

10 - 12 MARCH - HUYGHE WEEKEND!

Delerium Tremens & St Idesbald Blond on Draught and **Delerium Nocturnum, Campus, Blanche de Neige** and range of fruit wheat beers in bottles

HAND PUMPED BRITISH ALES FROM **BANK TOP** AND **MARBLE BREWERY**. DRAUGHT **KROMBACHER** £2.00/PINT PLUS A RANGE OF BOTTLED GERMAN GUEST BEERS.

**PART OF
N/4 DISCOVERY
TOUR**



8 SWAN STREET
MANCHESTER
M4 5JN
Tel: 0161 835 3815



assinine witterings on the underpaid bar staff - almost always on their own, (often dying for a cigarette which they can't have while on the business side of the bar) who probably wonder whether the garrulous loony in question is on or off the medication.

Now I know many afternoon customers are nice, normal, healthy well-balanced people, some are probably even interesting 99% of the time, but given the number of absolute drivelling idiots I have had to put up with recently, what can it be like for the staff who must be thinking - 'I'm not getting paid enough to do this job'. Should the pubs shut? I think probably so, but then again, I don't tend to patronise pubs that do close in the afternoon, even when they are open. A conundrum. Letters to the usual address.


Wigan, Leeds and Oldham Festivals are coming up (see details elsewhere). Stockport is not far off. There is another at the end of March at the Beer House - the last (early March) was good (condition wise) but (for once) I thought there were too many dark beers of a samey-4.5% type. Hopefully the spring pales will be out by April. The Crescent has its German shindig on later this month too, and I shall visit when I get clear of London Drinker, so I may miss the opening. I hear tell that the Smithfield on Swan Street is probably having a festival soon. Keep your eyes open.

The Bradford festival was back on form, I'm pleased to report, so I can definitely recommend it next year. Lots of choice, good condition. Liverpool was apparently very good again, but circumstances conspired to make me miss it. Next month I will bring you an obscure book review to complement the one from Rhys last month.

Beer of the Month

Rodenbach Alexandre (6.2% abv)

This is a West Flanders Red Beer from Roselare. Less famous than the Grand Cru, its sourness is ameliorated by the addition of some cherry essence, turning it into a half way house between a red and a kriek, but on the sour side. Michael Jackson has written "the unimaginative are apt to consider Rodenbach's beers undrinkable". Well they soon will be, because Palm have taken over Rodenbach and stopped brewing Alexandre. Grand Cru has a one-year reprieve. The Brewery has sold out, the wholesalers are selling out, so try some soon. Bar Fringe, Swan St, Mcr. has some left.



Leeds CAMRA
**BEER
 CIDER & PERRY
 FESTIVAL**
 2000
 in association with Evening Post

at **Ridsey Civic Hall**
 3 minutes walk from New Ridsey BR station
Thursday 16th - Saturday 18th March
 Around 100 Real Ales • Some at £1 a pint
 Ciders & Peries • Global Beer • Live Music

Thu 11-3 (FREE) 5-11 (£2 after 6pm)
 Fri 11-3 (FREE) 5-11 (£3 after 6pm)
 Sat 11-11 (£2 all day) • CAMRA free at all times

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 191

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Stuart Ballantyne, Phil Levison, Alan Hurdle, Paul Stanyer, Peter Edwardson, Steve Smith, Tim Jones, Frank Wood, John Tune

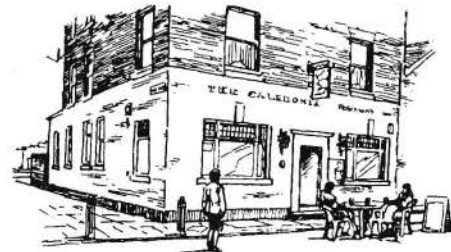


The Caledonia Hotel

Robinson's
 'CHEF of the YEAR'
 1999 - 2000

Come and try our 'Award Winning' dish that earned us 'Second Place' and 'Highly Commended' certificates in the Robinsons 'Chef of the Year' competition.

Opposite the General Post Office,
 13 Warrington Street, Ashton Under Lyne.
 Tel: 0161 339 7177 Fax: 0161 292 9313



Alan and Louise welcome you to Ashton's most traditionally refurbished pub with luxurious comfortable surroundings. A warm fire for the winter and a patio garden for the summer. Luxury en-suite accommodation is now available.

The first and only pub in Ashton to sell Frederic's premium 5.0% since it was brewed. Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatter's Mild all on hand pump.

Excellent home cooked food served:
 Monday - Saturday 11.30 - 2.30 lunchtimes
 Tues, Weds, Thurs 5.00 - 7.00 evenings
 Friday & Saturday 5.00 - 8.00 evenings
 12.00 - 3.00 Sunday. 3 course special plus full menu



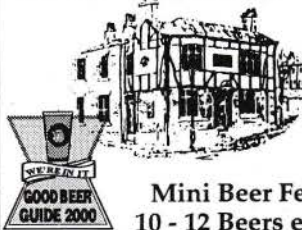


One of the most prominent pubs in Stockport - the Chestergate Tavern in its current dilapidated state



In a new monthly feature, we highlight the appalling state of the Chestergate Tavern on Stockport's Mersey Square. The pub has had a chequered history over the years and arguably has never recovered from its days as the 'Far Pavilions', the unlamented Indian Raj theme pub (those who experienced it will never forget the giant illuminated pith helmet over the bar or the taped jungle noises which simply gave the impression that all of the customers were noisily passing wind). Since then the pub has largely been left to rot and although its not too bad inside, outside it's just an eyesore - and in a prominent town centre location to boot. Don't blame the licensee, as he's just a brewery appointed manager. No, the fault lies squarely with Scottish & Newcastle who, frankly, are showing nothing but contempt for the town by letting the appearance of this pub degenerate so much. The pub has been advertised for lease with a 'major refurbishment' planned although so far the neglect and decay continues. To start with we're featuring a general view of the crumbling exterior. In future months we will highlight various aspects of the decrepit façade until we shame Scottish & Newcastle into doing something about it.

The Waters Green Tavern



96 Waters Green,
Macclesfield,
Cheshire SK11 6LH
Tel: 01625 422653

opposite the Railway Station
Mini Beer Festivals Every Day!

10 - 12 Beers each week including:
Roosters, Bridgewater, Swale, Whim, Phoenix,
Exmoor and many more...

Your Hosts Brian and Tracey

Bar Meals Served Mon to Sat Lunch
This is not a free house

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

THE CASTLE

OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER
NOW SERVING THE COMPLETE
RANGE OF ROBINSONS CASK BEERS!

Old Stockport Bitter, Best Bitter,
Hatters Mild, Dark Mild, Frederics,
Old Tom and Hartleys



A WARM WELCOME
AND FINE BEER IN
A CLASSIC PUB



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 substandard, 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.
 - ★ **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





Doubtful Condition

Bottle-conditioned beers, however good, can never achieve mass market acceptance

Last year, Shepherd Neame attracted some criticism for replacing their bottle-conditioned Spitfire with a brewery-conditioned version. In the past few years there has been an upsurge in the number of bottle-conditioned beers available, and high hopes have been held out for the sector as a whole. I have probably tried more of them than most. But the results of my samplings lead me to the conclusion that their appeal is always going to remain distinctly limited, and that Shepherd Neame, in the real world, made a sound commercial decision.

The relationship between bottle- and brewery- conditioned bottled beers is by no means the same as that between real and keg draught beers. Real ale takes more effort to keep, but in the pub, it is no more difficult to dispense or to drink than keg. On the other hand, the drinker has to treat bottle-conditioned beers with a certain amount of reverence. You can't drink them as soon as you get them home from the shop, but have to let them stand for several days for the sediment to settle. Then, you have to pour them very carefully to ensure that the sediment stays in the bottle and not in the glass, that is unless you like drinking cloudy beer and spending hours on the toilet. They're not suitable for drinking outside the home at picnics or parties, or for getting in on the spur of the moment.

A further problem is inconsistent and often poor quality. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of the bottle-conditioned beers I have tried have been disappointing, and certainly inferior to the better quality brewery-conditioned bottles such as the range produced by Caledonian. Crucial to the concept is that the beer really does undergo a vigorous secondary fermentation in the bottle that gives it, when drunk, a distinctively different, more complex character than the stabilised, brewery-conditioned version. But, all too often, what you end up with is what could be unkindly described as a bottle of rather flat beer with some gunge in the bottom. True bottle-conditioning is conspicuous by its absence, because if a beer really has conditioned in the bottle, it will produce an unmistakable natural carbonation, making it just as "fizzy" as many brewery-conditioned products, albeit in a different, more subtle way. You certainly knew with the old Worthington White Shield that the yeast had been working away, but the new King & Barnes-brewed version is dismally flaccid. The style also works best with stronger, richer beers like the excellent Fuller's 1845, and "ordinary bitters" of 4.5% ABV or less do not respond to it at all.

There's no doubt that a top-notch bottle-conditioned beer will be superior to the best brewery-conditioned bottles. But, as with real ale, poor examples can be truly dismal, and there is a long way to go in terms of consistent quality control before the paying public begins to really trust bottle-conditioned products. Added to this, the care needed in transport, storage and decanting means that bottle-conditioned beers will always remain a limited, specialist sector and, unlike draught real ale, never command a mass market. It was no accident that the brewers largely replaced bottle-conditioned beers with bright ones in the inter-war years, thirty or forty years before they began to replace real ale with keg. If CAMRA, in view of the

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

MARCH '95

The front page told the story of how some Courage tenants had been exercising their rights to take a guest beer from an outside supplier, only to discover that they were being penalised by losing discounts on various other products supplied by Courage. CAMRA believed that such a policy breached the guest beer section of the 1989 Beer Orders, which had been specifically formulated to prevent such discrimination. Following complaints from CAMRA and small brewers, the Office of Fair Trading intervened, with the result that Courage agreed to amend their policy on guest beers. They denied breaching the Government's Beer Orders, saying it was simply a matter of "a different interpretation" of the guest beer rules. Following this successful case, CAMRA urged smaller brewers, tenants, and drinkers to forward details of similar cases to the OFT, which had shown itself willing to act on such complaints.

The Editorial referred to an official probe into the brewing industry, which was looking at the different prices charged to tenants and free traders by the "larger" brewers. This investigation had been prompted by the activities of Courage and Intreprenuer, which had led tied Intreprenuer leaseholders to complain to the European Commission about the prices they were being forced to pay for Courage beers. It had always been, of course, a common practice for huge discounts to be offered to the free trade by the national brewers, one of the results being that the smaller brewers were being effectively frozen out of much of the free trade as they were unable to match the discounts offered by the nationals.

A few months earlier it has been reported that a proposed office and supermarket development on Market Street, Manchester, looked likely to lead to the loss of the Sportsmans (formerly Auld Reekie) a rare outlet for Lees in the City Centre. Readers were invited to put their objections to the Chief Planning Officer at the Town Hall. But all to no avail - "the final nail in the pub's coffin was finally hammered by the CIS who surrendered the lease on the building to Tesco's developers". An article drew attention to what had been happening to one of Manchester's long established breweries - "Wilsons - Decline... & Fall?" There was a potted history, with most of the detail coming from Neil Richardson's history of Wilsons, published in 1984 to commemorate 150 years of brewing at Newton Heath. A CAMRA survey had revealed that in the Stockport and central to south Manchester area, cask bitter outlets for Wilsons had shrunk from 122 in 1986/87 to just 21. Mild had fared no better, as 62 pubs selling mild had been reduced to just 11. The beers generally were considered to be no more than "a pale shadow of their former selves", but the question was posed - should we really take such a detached view as we witnessed part of our local beer heritage reduced to nothing more than a fading name on a public house wall.

decline in the pub trade, decides to throw a lot more of its weight behind take-home bottle-conditioned beers, it will very much be barking up the wrong tree.



BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER

THE RAILWAY, PORTWOOD



Seven Beers available from the Porter Brewing Co. Ltd.

Including the Railway's exclusive Beer:-

Railway Sleeper

NOW OPEN ALL DAY SUNDAYS

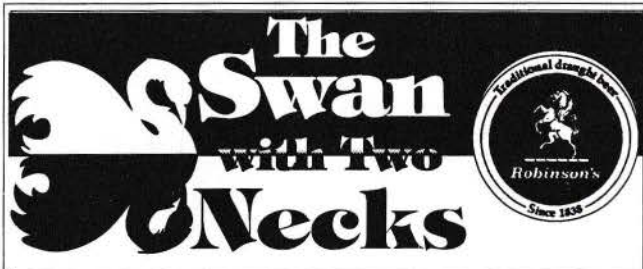


FREE QUIZ EVERY TUESDAY



EXCELLENT FOOD AVAILABLE 6 DAYS A WEEK

THE RAILWAY ALE HOUSE, 1 AVENUE STREET (Off Gt PORTWOOD STREET), STOCKPORT. (0161) 429 6062



**PAUL & BEV
INVITE YOU TO
THE SWAN WITH TWO NECKS**

**NOW OPEN
11 - 11pm MON - SAT
AND 12 - 4pm SUNDAY**

**INTRODUCTORY OFFER
ROBINSON'S FREDERICS
ONLY £1.60 pint**

**FOOD NOW AVAILABLE
NEWLY REFURBISHED DINING ROOM
quiz starts Early March - every Tuesday Eve**

The Swan With Two Necks
36 Princes Street, Stockport
0161 480 2341



Steve and Johanne welcome you to

De Olde Vic

1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport

A 'FREE HOUSE'

Guest Beers Changing Weekly e.g.:

- Kodiak Gold 4.0% abv
- Ruddles County 4.7% abv
- Charles Wells Bombadier 4.3% abv
- Bridgewater Barton Ale 4.3% abv
- House Bitter:**
- Theakstons Best Bitter 3.9% abv



Tuesday night
is Quiz Night
Wednesday Night
- Meat Night



(currently 24 trays and increasing)

Please note - we have a zero tolerance policy towards bad language and/or bad attitude

...Pub Ne
b News...
News...P
...Pub Ne
b News...
News...P

HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE CAMRA

Some good news for drinkers in Mottram. Geoff Oliver has added the White Hart (formerly known as the Innisfree Bar) to the Sportsman in Hyde, creating a 'chain' of two. The pub will be along similar lines to the Sportsman and it is intended to have Plassey beers initially (along with guests I'm quite sure). If it ends up anything like the one down the road (alright, it's a long road) - and I'm sure it will - it will be an extremely welcome addition to the otherwise disappointing pubs in the locality.

In Stalybridge, it is rumoured that Hydes' have acquired or will be acquiring two pubs. One we think is the Good Beer Guide listed White House. The other *may* be the Q!! When these guesses are more substantial, we'll let you know!

Some news from out of the area. The Cheshire Cheese in Hope is saying goodbye to current landlord Peter Ustace. The former Sheffield Wednesday player is to become a scout for West Ham Utd in the north of England and Scotland. By the way, the beers at the Cheese are Barnsley Bitter and Rotherham Brewery Wentworth Best Bitter.

News from Hadfield (the result of surveys for the forthcoming Derbyshire Beer Guide) as follows:

Pear Tree, Hadfield Road - no real ale, only Thwaites smooth flow.
Spread Eagle, Wooley Bridge - no real ale, only Boddingtons smooth flow.

Wooley Bridge WMC - no real ale, keg Federation.
Chieftain, Green Lane - Hydes' Light, Bitter and Jekylls Gold, all on hand pump.

Spring Tavern - no regular beer but an ever-changing single guest (aimed at mid-strength) . At the time of the visit this was Greene King IPA, which is a welcome addition to a meal in what is a mainly foodie pub.

In Gamesley the Alexandra, Winster Mews, has no real ale; the Old Tup has John Smiths Bitter on handpump while Hydes' Centurion on Melandra Castle Road has Light, Bitter and Jekylls Gold..

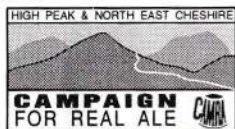
In Marple, the Hare & Hounds on Dooley Lane has recently reopened after extensive refurbishment. The new licensee has two cask guest beers - at the time of our visit these were from Bank Top (Bolton) and Coach House (Warrington).

Finally, High Peak Pub News wouldn't be complete without something on the vague side (mind you, we've had the "Hydes' pubs in Stalybridge" already!). In this month's "vague corner" is the dandy Cock in Disley. It has recently changed hands - not sure of the new licensees. The former bar manager (Steve) has moved along the road to the Crescent as licensee. I'd like to think we'd fill this one out next month...but...



**De Olde
Cock Inn,**
Didsbury

A wide range of guest beers changing weekly
Chef's Homemade specials from £3.95
Food Served: Mon - Thurs 12 - 2.30pm
Fri 12 - 4pm, Sat & Sun 12 - 5.30pm
Monday night quiz with 'Bamber Andy'
Every Tuesday Doubles Bar
(Vodka, Brandy, White Rum, Gin - all £1.49)
Phone Andy on 445 4405



**March
Featured Pub:
The Friendship Inn,
Glossop**

A Good Beer Guide entry for several years, writes Frank Wood, the Friendship is a superb example of a street corner local, serving the local community, only a hundred yards off the main shopping street, High Street West, in a residential area of stone-built terraces.

Built in 1852, it became a Gartside's house, then a Schofield's house from 1893. Schofield's were an Ashton brewery who were taken over by Robinson's in 1926. Interestingly, the pub remained only a beer house until 1961 when Robinson's, under the then licensee May Howe, obtained a full license.

Above the front door is the original lamp, appearing to be a hallmark of the pub from around 1900, and the only one now remaining in the locality. Inside attractive wooden panelling is the prominent feature, with two carved wooden hands shaking over the fireplace, with the words "The Friendship 1954". This brings me back to the present and my Tuesday night writing up this piece on 1 February, when the fire was well stoked up to keep the cold winter's night at bay.

The licensee is Mike Howard who runs the pub with his wife Karen. It is their first pub, though Mike has plenty of experience in the trade. He worked as a Technical Sales Executive with Guinness until his redundancy and these days he doubles up as an installation engineer for Robinson's, having installed lines in many of the brewery's pubs in Tameside and down into Cheshire. Good credentials for keeping his own beer, you may think. Well the Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters Mild are both always in excellent condition. The couple's friendliness make them an excellent choice to carry on the good traditions of this pub.

Mike was formerly a footballer at Mossley, Stockport County, Curzon Ashton and finally Glossop, where he ended his playing days. Ironically Glossop North End ground is only a stone's throw away and regular supporters use the pub before and after matches, when discussions go on well after the final whistle, especially after Tuesday night games! Cricket is a feature, too, with mementoes and artefacts in one corner of the pub. Both Mike and Karen are fanatics and love to hold discussions about the sport.

The Friendship doesn't sell food and nor does it have a jukebox. It is a local pub where conversation is first and foremost, and visitors to the town usually remember their visit with affection. Opening times are 4-11 Monday to Thursday; 3-11 Friday; 12-11 Saturday; and 12-3, 7-10.30 on Sundays. The pub is on Arundel Street and is only a five-minute walk from the rail station and main bus terminus.

Incidentally, any interested historians will find May Howe, licensee from 1957 to 1972 and a regular ever since, only too happy to chat about the history over the past half-century of a pub that has a keen local affection.

OPENING TIMES COMPETITION

As last month's quiz was a bit of a stickler, Paul Stanyer, licensee of the Swan With Two Necks, has made this one a bit easier!

But first back to last month's comp. The beers you were looking for were: Old Tom, Mad Hatter, Roisin Dubh, Hama, Arrowhead, Duckling, Goshawk, Killellan, Nightmare, equinox, XSB and Bert Corner. There were a surprisingly high number of entries and the winner is J Sidebotham of Denton. This month all the pubs, beers or breweries can be found in the February issue of Opening Times. So complete the grid in a clockwise spiral, the last letter of an answer is the start letter of the next. We have given you the first letter.

The prize this month is a Robinson's sweatshirt. If any pub or brewery would like to sponsor the prize for the OT Competition, please let us know. You don't have to set it - just sponsor it!

1,0										
										2
	6									
4					9	7				
		8								
						5				3

- (1) May be tilling ones plot for this imported beer
- (2) Take your kids here to play Hyde and seek?
- (3) This pub isn't new and its not stuffed with cotton (3 words)
- (4) Into the galley for some delightful oranges as recommended by the Beet Monster! (3 words).
- (5) Arsenal not out will give you this Robinson pub (2 words)
- (6) Did he build the Bridgwater?
- (7) The Crescent sells this special chicken beer.
- (8) When out sailing careful not to get stuck here or you will have to drink cases of German beer!
- (9) Is this what you should wear when you go to Question 2?

Entries to: OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 24 March please.



Graham welcomes you to ...

THE RAILWAY VIEW



Byrons Lane,
Macclesfield
GOOD FOOD
Now Being Served on
PLATFORM ONE
8 GUEST BEERS ☆
☆ QUIZZES ☆
☆ BAR GAMES ☆
REAL ALE £1.30 MON NIGHT

01625
423657

the 14th CAMRA

BEER FESTIVAL LDHAM

28th & 29th April 2000
Queen Elizabeth Hall, Civic Centre
50 real ales and traditional ciders
Friday 12noon - 3pm 50p
Friday 5pm - 11pm £2
Saturday 12noon - 4pm £1
Saturday 6pm - 11pm £2
CAMRA members free at all times



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

MARCH 2000

Saturday 11th - Presentation of Pub of the Year award to Ye Olde Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 13th - Social: Bulls Head, London Rd, Manchester City Centre. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 17th - Longsight & Levenshulme Stagger: 7.30pm Sir Edwin Chadwick (Wetherspoon's), Longsight; 8.30 Little Vic, Levenshulme. Both pubs on A6.

Monday 20th - Social: 9.00pm Copperfields Bar; 10.00pm Adswold Hotel. Both Adswold Lane West, Stockport.

Thursday 23rd - Pub of the Month presentation to Gothic Bar, Church Road, Gatley. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 27th - Hazel Grove Social: 9.00pm Grapes; 10.00pm Three Tunnes. Both London Rd.

Monday 3rd April - Withington Social: 9.00pm Orion, Burton Rd; 10.00pm Victoria, Wilmslow Rd.

Monday 10th - Social: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 13th - Branch AGM: Gateway, Wilmslow Rd, East Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm. All members please try and attend.

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

MARCH 2000

Monday 13th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Q, Market Street, Stalybridge. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 25th - Evening trip to Macclesfield. Meet Waters Green Tavern, 7.30pm.

Monday 3rd April - Committee Meeting: White Hart, Old Road, Newton. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: White Hart, Market St, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm
Apart from Macclesfield & 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:

Saturday 11th - Hillgate / Stockport Crawl. Start in the Unity, Wellington Road South Stockport 12 noon.

Monday 20th - Open Committee Meeting: Cross Keys, Knutsford. Starts 8.00pm

Monday 27th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Beartown Tap, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm.

Saturday 8th April - Brewery Tour with South Cheshire Branch: Beartown Brewery, Congleton. Starts 6.00pm.

Sunday 9th - Sunday Lunch Social: Whipping Stocks, Over Peover. Starts 12.30pm.

Greater Manchester Branches AGM and Regional Meeting.

Saturday 25 March: The Orwell, Wigan. Starts 12.30pm

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

18



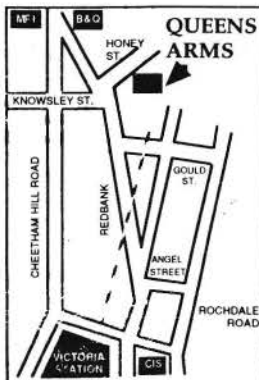
Dave and Sue welcome you to

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 St. Louis Kriek Belgian Fruit Beer on draught plus weekly guest beers.

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 2000

Telephone:
0161 834 4239

Claire and Howard welcome you to the city centre's friendly Ale House

Among Our MARCH BEERS:

Everards Perfick, Old Original; Fullers Chiswick; Morrells Oxford Blue, Varsity; Four Rivers Moondance, Hadrians Centurion; Batemans XB, Italian Job; Moorhouse Black Shamrock; Harviestoun Montrose, Ptarmigan; Broughton Clipper IPA, Greenmantle; Hop Back Cuckoo Pint; Butcombe Bitter, Gold; Brakespear 3 Sheets; Wychwood Alchemy Gold; ...and many more

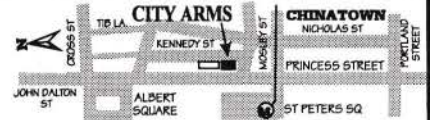


KENNEDY STREET THE CITY ARMS

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 took a break last month as there was little to report on after the Christmas lull. This month however, there's plenty going on with a flood of licensing applications for new bars in both the Great Northern and Printworks developments although it remains to be seen if real ale appears in any of them.

What's Doing In The City Centre

The two Firkins present a pretty sorry spectacle on the beer front these days – it's just a sea of Tetley's and Boddingtons and my visits to both proved deeply disappointing. I also popped into Rothwells on Spring Gardens after a lengthy absence – and wished I hadn't bothered. It just seems to be missing something these days and the beer range was down to just Banks's Bitter, Pedigree and, if the pump clip was to be believed, Marston's Bitter! Depressingly, though most of the handpumps were seemingly out of use. I suppose the sign outside advertising a special offer on vodka and Red Bull should have been a warning, Round the corner, L'Espres, the glorified snack bar that replaced Rosies Bar seems to have closed although this is no great loss.

Hydes' Bar Breeze on Peter Street also proved a disappointment. I've mentioned before that pump clips have appeared but on my early evening visit they were turned round and no real ale was available – a pity as the beer, if it had been available, was Jekylls Gold. Let's hope this was just a glitch.

On a more positive note, though, the Beer Trading Co on Mosely Street still serves a solitary cask ale from the Tapsters Choice range and is worth a visit for that alone. I also made one of my too infrequent visits to the superb Fab Café on Portland Street and made a note to pop in more often. Jekylls Gold is the beer in a unique atmosphere, and groovy tunes as well.

New Guest Beer Outlet

Having convinced myself that I had seen real ale mentioned in an advert, I called in at Copper Face Jacks, on the corner of Whitworth Street and Oxford Road. It's still all keg, so my memory was obviously playing tricks. However, this was merely a diversion as I was en route to somewhere much more rewarding.

The Salisbury is set back off Oxford Road just behind the Grand Central and while it has been a long-time real ale outlet, it has rarely strayed from the mainstream – as you would expect from a Scottish & Newcastle managed house. However, the arrival of Andy Massy seven months ago changed all that. He arrived from the Rat & Parrot in Lytham, not an outlet known for its range of cask ales, but Andy is a cask ale man through and through – and he rapidly spotted the potential for a guest beer operation at the Salisbury. He had to make a 'business case' for extending the range but, all credit to S&N, they agreed and for the past five months he has been getting through about 25 guests a month. The range consists of

Theakstons Old Peculier and one of Theakstons XB and Courage Directors. These are supplemented by three ever-changing guests. When I called these were Marlow Rebellion Smugglers, Tom Wood Lincolnshire Legend and Old Timber. Andy tells me he aims for a broad spectrum of guests from regional and micro brewers. It's all been a great success, too, with the pub now shifting over 100 gallons a week. Highly recommended.

Over The Border

Although it's just off my patch, I must give a shameless plug to the King's Arms on Bloom Street, Salford. It really has gone from strength to strength over the past six months with consistently good beer supplemented by a great 'craic'. Several local artists display their works on the walls and generate quite healthy sales for themselves, I'm told.

The next move will be to restore the large upstairs room, which will allow the pub to run in-house beer festivals. Owners Mike and Christine also tell me that they are planning to set up a free theatre group for local children, too. Quite a number of actors and other media people use the pub and many have offered their services to the project free of charge so it looks as though this could well come off. This is another pub that's worth making a detour to visit.

Out In The Sticks

Not a lot happening in the suburbs, at least not a lot that I know about. There seem to be some rum goings on in Levenshulme with a variety of pubs opening and closing. I'm told that the Blue Bell is now closed while the Railway has reopened. And despite my doubts, it looks as though the Pack Horse really is going to reopen. I'll still believe it when it happens but it looks as though it's a question of 'watch this space'.

In Didsbury, the Parrswood now sells only Boddingtons Bitter. Nothing else will sell according to the landlady. Oh well, you can't win 'em all. The Derby Arms on Ashton New Road in Clayton has lost its cask ale since my last visit just before Christmas. The handpulled Chesters Mild and Trophy are now on keg joining the already keg Boddies cream flow. Just one redundant handpump remains (with Trophy pump clip!) which I was told *might* be used for occasional guest beers. I seem to have finished on the same downbeat note I started on – let's hope things pick up next time.



Out of our Circulation Area ?

Having Difficulty Getting Your Copy?
Postal subscriptions to Opening Times
are available.

Cheque payable to Opening Times for:
£2.75 for 6 issues or £5.50 for 12.

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

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times191)

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.





In Didsbury, Kevin McHugh (ex-Four in Hand) has taken over at the Station on Wilmslow Road. His stated aim is to try and re-establish the pub as a Didsbury community local and he has reintroduced darts, dominoes and crib. He also plans to re-form the pub football team – so any budding footballers who have so far been overlooked by other clubs should pop along to the Station and offer their services. We also have an unconfirmed report that there are plans to extend the Station into the hardware shop next door. If this is true then great care will have to be taken if the pub's unique character is to be preserved.

Two pubs in Edgeley remain firmly closed and boarded. On Castle Street the Prince Albert shows no sign of life, while on Northgate Road the Gardeners Arms presents a sorry sight, closed, boarded and now fire-damaged. The pub is up for lease with the Unique Pub Co – given the pub's roller coaster ride in recent years it will be a brave individual who takes it on.

The High Grove in Gatley is currently closed for a major refurbishment. It is to become more family and food oriented, but retaining an emphasis on being a pub for local drinkers. We understand that it will be in a similar style to the Quarry Bank in Timperley, a previous successful refurbishment by Hydes.

Wetherspoons attempts to break into Stockport are something of a roller coaster ride at the moment. Plans for a Hazel Grove outlet have been knocked back following protests over plans to convert the Gateway Food Market into a pub. Given their track record, it is doubtful that they have given up on the village, however. On the other hand, it looks as though Wetherspoon's may be making their long predicted breakthrough into Stockport Town Centre. Apparently having given up in finding a suitable building to convert, it looks as though they are to embark on a rare, for them, new build on a site behind Underbank Hall. We await developments with interest.

At the Greyhound (Bowden Street, Edgeley), Marlene Fry took over on 16 February and will hopefully restore the pub's fortunes – the last days of the previous incumbents' stay had seen topless barmaids on Tuesday nights, which is often a sign of a pub on the skids. Marlene comes with a wealth of experience in the trade, and working for a pub management company this is her sixth pub in two years, but her first cask ale pub for 14! Having said that, once into her stride she has had no difficulty in keeping the beer in tip top condition (the only hiccup has been occasionally not ordering enough!). The range will be Boddingtons Bitter plus one or two guests with hopefully a minimum of two guest beers on at any one time. Cask mild is making a comeback, too, starting with Greenalls Mild and then seeing what else is available. Trade has been steady so far and Marlene is enjoying the nice, stress-free atmosphere at the pub. She wants to re-start the weekly folk sessions as well. If any budding musicians out there are interested, give Marlene a bell on 0161 480 5699. Well worth a visit.

JOIN CAMRA NOW! - SEE FORM ON PAGE 19

Pump Clip Sale

As part of her preparations to leave the Crown, Heaton Lane, Lorraine James is selling/auctioning off the huge number of pump clips that the pub has accumulated over the years since she and her late husband Steve took over the pub.



The sale promises to be a major event for collectors of breweriana as there are some 3000 in total! Well there were 3000 – about 250 were sold in a preliminary auction on 27 February. The rest will be sold in the main event on Sunday 19th March between 12 noon and 3.00pm. The selection is huge and ranges from upmarket metal and ceramic clips to the more down to earth plastic 'stick-ons' used by many micro brewers in the free trade. Many of the clips are for beers brewed once only and some are from now defunct breweries. Apart from collectors, many present and former regulars of the pub may wish to bid for one or two for sentimental reasons, perhaps to remember good times in the pub over the years. An event not to be missed.

Harmonise Duty Now

It's Budget time again this month, and the predictable chorus of calls for a cut in beer duty is already echoing round the impassive, unhearing walls of Whitehall, writes Ted Bruning.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has presented its argument for a 2p cut in duty as an immediate salve to the problems caused by the absurd tax differential between Dover and Calais. It should be noted that the effects of this differential impact not only on brewers and publicans, but also on the Government's own enforcement agencies and, indeed, on society as a whole. For cross-Channel bootlegging is now the territory of organised criminal gangs to whom the ready flow of cash it generates is an invaluable source of seed capital for altogether darker enterprises.

CAMRA has also presented an unarguable case for the introduction of progressive beer tax as the key element in permitting the burgeoning independent brewing sector to compete with the enormous discounts the big brewers can offer the pub companies.

But a budget should be about more than quick fixes. Budgets are the Chancellor's opportunity to set out a strategy; and what brewers, retailers and consumers want to know is: what is Gordon Brown's strategy for harmonisation?

Harmonisation is a given. We are committed to it by the Treaty of Rome. Ken Clarke, the last Tory Chancellor, at least paid lip-service to the idea, if only by arguing unhelpfully that the French should increase their duty to our levels. Gordon Brown's even less helpful nod towards harmonisation has been to increase duty by marginally below the rate of inflation.

In previous years Chancellors have found little room to do more than freeze duty. This year, things are different. Teachers, judges, the armed services and MPs – yes, MPs – have all had pay awards of slightly above the rate of inflation because, say ministers, the money is available. If it's available for them, why not publicans? Why not for small brewers?

It is not as if we were proposing large cuts to fuel a nation's crazed booze habit. We just want struggling small businesses to be given a glimmer of hope for a future that stretches beyond tomorrow's post and its crop of brown envelopes.

