



OPENING TIMES



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6,600 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

MARSTON'S BITTER SAVED!

In a major U-turn, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries have announced that Marston's Bitter has been saved from the axe and will continue to be brewed. The announcement was made by Wolves boss David Thompson addressing a packed branch meeting of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, and followed a vigorous local campaign by CAMRA to relieve the threatened brew.

Following the meeting David Thompson travelled to Didsbury to announce the reprieve in person to the licensees of the Royal Oak and the Station, where a spontaneous cheer ran round the pub as the news filtered through to the regulars.

It was clear that there had been enormous customer resistance to the axeing of this popular beer and its replacement with Banks's Bitter. Sales of the replacement brew reportedly collapsed in some pubs with locals turning instead to lager, Guinness or the premium Pedigree.

Brewery spokesman Jeremy Eaton subsequently confirmed to the trade press: "We have reversed our decision" - a scenario he had previously dismissed as "most unlikely" - "We have realised that Marston's Bitter is very popular in small pockets of the country and the brand will continue to be available where it is in demand." South Manchester was one of the "pockets" identified and fears remain that there will still be attempts to exclude it from other local pubs where it was previously popular, such as those in the Macclesfield area. Local CAMRA activists are already urging pubs in these areas to press for Marston's return.

In South Manchester meanwhile, some licensees have already welcomed back what was their biggest selling beer. A quick survey of the Royal Oak and the Station in Didsbury, the Red Lion in Withington and the Whitworth in Rusholme, revealed all four pubs keen to get the beer back. "Of course we will!" and "as soon as it can be made available" were some of the comments from local licensees when asked if they would be getting Marston's Bitter back, and as we went to press deliveries were already expected at the two Didsbury pubs.

While celebrating a victory for consumer power, campaigners also paid tribute to David Thompson for being prepared to make such a dramatic U-turn. "There can be very few brewery chiefs in his position who are prepared to listen to their customers and change what had previously seemed an irrevocable decision. It says a lot about David Thompson and his company that they have done this", a local spokesman told Opening Times.



Beer Festival Latest

Making Music

Details of the entertainment on offer at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider festival have now been released and we are able to bring you this exclusive preview. Along with some well-established Festival favourites, this year we are bringing you some bands new to the event, all well-established professional musicians and sure to make the event go with a swing. Our Thursday evening opening band are **The Winchesters**, a very entertaining band to watch with an array of exciting music to listen to. Their range covers Honky Tonk, Jump Jive and Boogie Woogie. They are known as "The Crackpot Kings" of Blues and Western-swing and regularly perform at Manchester's Band On The wall, Burnley Mechanics and venues in Ireland and Europe. A talented band to look forward to on the night.

From midday, Friday, you will see, hear and experience the magnificent **Wurlitzer Organ**, recently installed in the Town Hall by the **Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust**. This particular Wurlitzer originally came from the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. The organ is positioned to the front of the hall and rises up from under the floorboards at the front of the stage. The pipes, to the rear, are above in the balcony. The wurlitzer creates a beautiful sound, listen to the flow of notes and enjoy the experience. Incidentally we have restored

free admission to this session.

On Friday night **Flaky Jake and the Steamin' Locos** mix a heady brew of Cajun Zydeco from "The Steamy Swamps of Louisiana". This joyous and at times soulful music irresistibly sets feet tapping and dancing. The five piece line-up from around London are well known and have played all over the West of England, and are gathering speed to conquer the North. Grab your partners and come along and enjoy our Friday night party.

Saturday lunchtime is our quiet

drinkers session which has proved so popular in recent years. The highlight of the afternoon will be the announcement of the winners in CAMRA's **National Cider & Perry Championships**, together with the chance to try the winners. On Saturday night we close with the recently reformed **Deltones**, a band from the 60's and 70's. They will play a mixture of rock and pop from the 60's, 70's and 80's. They also play a lot of charity events.. Roger Mycock, an original Deltone, now runs a Robinson's house, the George, Marple Bridge. Next month we will preview some of the highlights from the beer, cider and perry on offer - and there are certainly some treats in store there! Don't forget those important diary dates - June 1-3 at Stockport Town Hall.



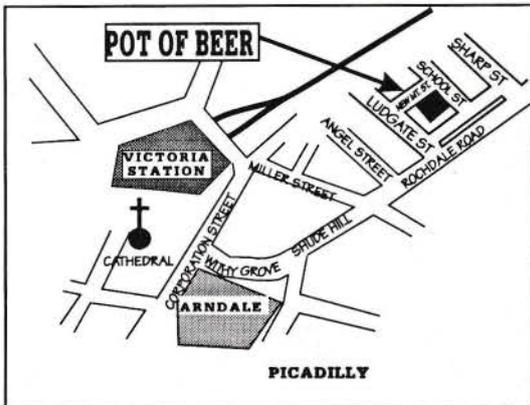
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

This month we celebrate two famous victories. First there was the little question of those misleading pub signs that we highlighted last month, although here we must acknowledge the assistance of the Manchester Evening News. Their local reporter picked up our story and made a phone call to the pubs' owners Paramount. And would you believe it? The signs were painted out in less than 48 hours! We are looking to compile a photo feature of all the other local pubs pulling the same stunt for next month's Opening Times.

However, the real celebrations must be reserved for the reprieve granted to Marston's Bitter which should have returned to some of its former outlets by the time you read this. It just goes to show what can be done if we all shout with one voice and here the message from CAMRA, pub regulars and licensees alike was simple - bring back Marston's. And to everyone's surprise, that's exactly what has happened.

But let's not get carried away just yet. While it looks as though Marston's Bitter is coming back to Didsbury and other parts of south Manchester, there are other pubs around, in Macclesfield and Knutsford for example, that also desperately want it back. It's not yet clear that they will be getting it although our colleagues in Macclesfield CAMRA will be doing their damndest to make sure they do. Let's also hope that Wolves & Dudley don't take the opportunity to jack up the price of what they know is an in-demand beer. That would certainly take at least some of the icing off the cake.

But let's not be too cynical and I for one will be having a celebratory pint or two of Marston's Bitter over the coming weeks.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 192

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Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 23!

PUB OF THE MONTH APRIL 2000

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The Stockport & South Manchester Branch Pub of the Month Award for April 2000 goes to the Nursery on Green Lane, Heaton Norris. George and Susan Lindsay have been managers there since 1981, and this will in fact be their fourth award, but since the last was in November 1992 many will feel that it's high time they received another.

The Nursery is an excellent all-round pub that appeals to a wide clientele and offers many of the things you would expect in the perfect pub. Originally built in 1939, the multi-roomed interior, including a superb wood-panelled lounge, and that endangered species, a proper vault, is little changed since then and the pub is on CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors.

The Nursery is a real hub of the community, with a strong local trade and supporting numerous sports teams. At the back is an immaculate and well-used bowling green, an increasingly rare feature on the local pub scene. Despite its well-hidden location, the pub also draws customers from a long way around, particularly for the excellent food, which has earned it an entry in CAMRA's Good Pub Food Guide. As well as Hydes Mild and Bitter, the Nursery also sells Jekyll's Gold and the various Hydes seasonal beers, currently Clever Endeavour. The beer quality is consistently good and the pub has been in the Good Beer Guide since 1984 without a break, by several years the longest record of continuous entries in the Stockport & South Manchester area.

The presentation night will be on Thursday 20 April from about 8.30pm onwards. While it's a big pub, the Thursday before Good Friday is always a busy night, so make sure you get there early. It's not the easiest pub in the world to find - probably the best way to reach it on foot is to get the 192 bus to Belmont Way on the A6 and then walk along Bowerfold Lane in a westerly direction across the railway bridge for six or seven minutes until you reach the pub on your right. If you find it once you'll certainly come back for more another time!

PE

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

The Marble Brewery

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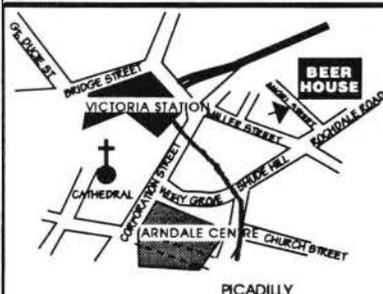
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4



CAMPAIGN
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OPENING LETTERS

From Dave Porter, Porter Brewing Co Ltd:

As the owner of The Railway on Portwood in Stockport, I must express deep regret and great concern at the news that the Railway will not be included in the Good Beer Guide for 2001 surveyed in March this year. I understand that its exclusion is due to its failing of the local CAMRA rule that pubs included in the guide will be excluded from the following guide if there is a change of management/Licensee in the previous six months. Two of the reasons that I chose Stockport as a site for a pub was the success of my beers at your annual beer festival and the strength of the branch in the area. It strikes me as absurd that the branch has now allowed a situation to occur that will cause irrebuttable damage to both parties. Did it not occur to someone within the branch that this situation was going to happen and that this internal rule was completely inappropriate to the way I run my operations? I believe that this exclusion rule is ridiculous and the branch should have foreseen this situation and changed the rules via an EGM. I suppose that the thought of changing a rule just to suit one pub may be regarded as favouritism or may be 'just too much trouble'. Not to change the rule will fuel extensive dismay throughout members and non-members and decry Fleming Robb-Brown's efforts. I employ managers who I believe will run the pub and the business well, and if their beer knowledge is lacking in some way then I train them to serve the excellent beer my customers have come to expect. This way I have achieved consistently high quality real ales served at the bar in all of my pubs. If any one believes this is not the case then please let me know and I will sack the offending manager. In my case why should a manager be penalised when it is the pedigree of the brewery that is important. I believe that there is no member of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA that thinks the Railway is not worthy of a full listing in the Good Beer Guide. So why have you allowed this to happen? I have seen much written with regard to the number of entries into the Good Beer Guide and that the number should be cut to include only the best pubs that sell the best real ale. When it comes to real ale The Railway's choice, value and quality IS the best, and has been excluded because of local rules. CAMRA needs brewers like me, CAMRA needs brewers who operate pubs like me. CAMRA is always bleating on about this threat and that threat to real ale, and then you go and penalise the people who are 100% committed to the cause of real ale. Someone please explain because I am very confused. The local branch's antics, hidden agendas, and internal politics have driven me to despair. The ludicrous selection criteria for your beer festival have virtually excluded me from exhibiting because I don't produce an endless stream of one-offs and blends. Finally, take a very, very long hard look at the following words. I believe they epitomise what our organisation stands for. Make very sure you understand the meaning of them as well: THE GOOD BEER GUIDE and THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE. (Many CAMRA branches take the view that licensees of potential Good Beer Guide pubs should have been in place for a minimum length of time or at least have a known Good

Beer Guide track record. The Railway changed hands barely two months before the entries for the 2001 Guide were chosen and it was therefore felt regrettable but appropriate to omit it this time round. - Ed.1)

From Graeme Tonge, Bury:

Looking back on March's Stagger regarding doormen. More and more pubs are starting to employ doormen - some are so intimidating I don't even frequent these places. Friday night seems to be a do or don't I venture out into the great wide open. At least in Manchester's Northern Quarter (which I feel should have it's own club and map), walking from the Queens Arms to the Castle on Oldham Street via all the hosteries is a pleasant beer drinking crawl a lot of cities would die for. No trouble, no doormen, good beer. What more could you ask for. What about the trouble free pubs in other towns getting together on a trail? Any ideas? (The N/4 [Northern Quarter] DOES have its own MAP, POSTER, AND t-shirt [the N4 Discovery Tour] AND beer [the Marble brewery N/4 beer] available in almost any N/4 outlet....so its a sort of club already - Ed. 2)

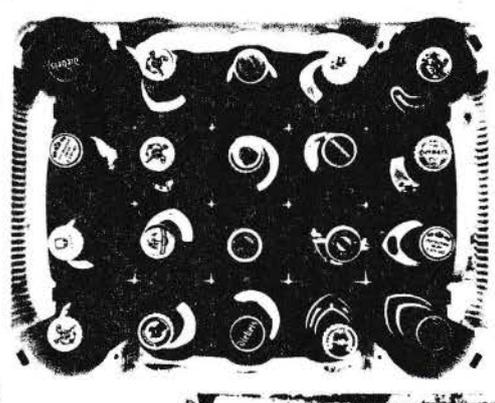
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STAGGER

with guest beer writer Mark McConachie

Something of a shake-up has occurred with our stagger routes and agendas. This one has been curtailed to only nine pubs now. The start point has not changed, however, it remains as the Rising Sun at the terminus of service 192.

A landmark building, standing guard, as it were, at the junction of the Buxton and Macclesfield roads. Inside, it is comfortable and fairly spacious, it appeared to be fairly busy given that it was the very early part of the evening. The beer offerings were John Smiths and Directors, both were deemed acceptable albeit with a dissenting voice re the Directors. But hey ho, that's Directors for you...

A short walk northward brought us to another ScotCo house, the Bulls Head. This is now very much a dining pub (menus were evident on almost every table) and whether this contributed to it being far busier than the Rising Sun I cannot say. We were told a recent change of management had occurred too. We judged the beers to be just a tad better - this time being John Smiths and Theakston Best; incidentally, it was good to be offered a choice of cask or (so-called) smooth John Smiths, so good for you Bulls Head. Remember boys and girls, 'Ask for Cask'.

Continuing north we passed the newly opened portals of Browns Cafe Bar (complete with door personnel). It did not offer cask beer but did appear quite busy (novelty value, surely). Robinson's White Hart was our next port of call (the first of six Robinson's houses we visited). This is a smallish two-room house divided up by walls inset with fashioned iron-work. The atmosphere was both convivial and comfy, the clientele consisted, in the main, of couples enjoying a quiet evening. We enjoyed our Robbies Hatters Mild and Best, we also enjoyed the keen prices - £1.10 and £1.20 respectively. As a great fan of metered pump dispense (they are fast and give full measure) it was warming to see them in full use here. On the same side of the street is Vaux's Horse & Jockey, this used to be a good outlet for Holts but on our visit it sold no real ale whatsoever. So we crossed the frighteningly busy A6 to Robinson's Grapes and had some more Hatters and Best in freshly decorated surroundings; both beers were deemed better than average. The Grapes offers the drinker three decent rooms (I noted that there was no difference in decoration standard between the vault and the lounge - ah, equality) in what may be described as a restrained rustic look. The pub is deservedly popular with trophies attesting to their skill at cricket and such; for those of a less energetic nature, a large fish tank at the rear could be a source of contemplation and relaxation. Next door at the Three Tunnes (Robbies again) we were to have some of the best beer of the evening with Robbies Best edging it over the Hatters. The licensee is ex of the Horse & Jockey from last December, so comes with a good record. The pub, too, was in fine fettle with a goodly number of folk swelling the bar (always busy, I was informed by someone in the know). There are two plushly fitted rooms at the front and a large sporting-man's vault that occupies the width of the pub, to the rear.

Across the road once again to another Robinson's house, the Bird in Hand which is a small L-shaped affair where copper and brass get a good showing on the walls and the like. Lively and loud with a karaoke in full flow, there seemed a fair crowd in that night. Once again the staple Hatters and Best were the beers but here only gaining an average mark from our contingent.

At the junction with Commercial Road one finds the Old Cock. This brick and part-rendered house is seemingly always bustling (or perhaps lots of people like to stay close to the bar making it seem so) and tonight was no exception to that. Two beers - Hatters and Best - brought forth varying comments, the mild was judged average, whereas the bitter got glowing scores. The pub has a central bar around which are a cosy, quiet snug, a large back lounge and a vault-cum-games area (with pinball machine, which I wanted to play but the machine would not accept my money - never mind). Our last pub was reached by a third of a mile walk down Commercial Road to the magnificent-looking Royal Oak (yep, it's a Robbies house). Dating from the 30's, at a guess, some classic features remain - right hand vault, large lounge with staircase and another large room (the former Billiard Room) at the rear. The only change I noticed was that a doorway now joins the vault and lounge (separate entrance doors were in use prior to this) and the vault is no longer a vault but a no smoking lounge. An interesting idea, I wish it every success. On the beer front, most of us tried what we thought was a very tasty pint of Hatters, whilst the lone taker of Best thought it only average; the pub was busy and deservedly so.

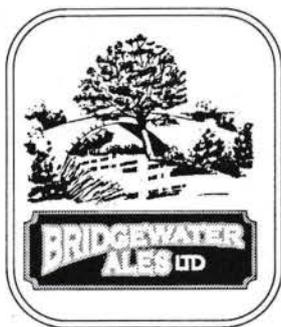
There you go, that was south Hazel Grove, go on, get supping!



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Fistful of Arrows

By Brian Carey



One of the joys of playing darts for your local pub is the away match. You get to visit pubs and clubs that otherwise you may never have entered. Usually, this is an enjoyable experience, and quite often my wife and I have returned to the pub on other occasions. Of course, sometimes you would never revisit the place in a month of Sundays and you pray that the opposition either win promotion or get relegated so that you do not have to repeat the experience for another season.. We have visited some of the most appalling places you could imagine, though, thankfully, they are far and few between. But why anyone would wish to drink or socialise in such a place is beyond me. Happily, most of the pubs that I have visited have been cask ale places, but on occasions it has been necessary to visit keg only pubs. Not something I would choose to do under other circumstances, but you cannot pick and choose your opponents. Not long ago my team were due to play a well known pub that has gone over to all keg quite recently. There was a lot of brands to choose from, but nothing that I would drink. Normally, I would have compromised and selected a bottled beer - after making my feelings clear about the lack of the real stuff - but I was feeling particularly bloody minded that evening and made my protest by choosing to drink tonic water. Amazingly, the pub was full that evening, making me feel that my protestations would fall on stony ground. But, even more surprising, one of the drinkers at the bar, merrily downing pints of the tasteless liquid was wearing a STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL SWEATSHIRT. I couldn't understand it. I didn't have the chance to ask him why he was there, when there were pubs selling decent beer only a hundred yards away. I won't mention the name of the pub, as it is in the process of changing hands and the new management may change the policy. But

if that guy recognises himself, perhaps he will let us know why he was there. I had no choice, what is his excuse?

Nice to see that the Cheadle and Gatley league have appointed Taffy Roberts to look after PR. I have for many years argued the need for local leagues to bring about a closer relationship with the local, and even national media. Taffy has already been in contact with me and promises to keep me, and therefore you, informed about this super league.

One of the oldest leagues in the area, the Stockport Licensed Houses League, is facing a difficult time at the moment. Formed in 1947, last season the league ran two men's, two women's and three mixed leagues. All this takes a great deal of hard work to organise. It has not been helped by the resignation of a large proportion of the committee. There is nothing sinister in this, there has been no fall out and all the former committee members have good reasons for not continuing. So the remaining members would welcome anyone who is interested in helping the league to come forward and be co-opted on to the committee. Interested parties should contact Anita Longson on 406 6862.

In my last article I mentioned the amount of darts that had been on television over the new year period. Most of us have seen TV coverage of the game. But radio? Would you believe that TalkSport, the national commercial talk station, recently came live from the Irish Masters in Wexford. Now I happen to think that darts is a great TV sport, but it was difficult for the broadcasters, including Sid Waddell and Cliff Lazarenko, to sustain the interest on radio. It was a valiant effort and is to be applauded, but I'm afraid it just didn't work. There was one superb piece of Colemanballs, though. Big Cliff was commented on the women's finals between Crissy Howat and Trina Gulliver. Both women were apparently throwing great arrows, leading Lazarenko to comment: "you could almost believe they were real players." Nice one, Cliff. All letters from women throwers to Cliff, and not me.

Something went wrong with my last article, when for some unknown reason, the mobile number that I gave was nothing like right. For the record I can be contacted on 07946 308036 (mobile) or 0161 286-7762.



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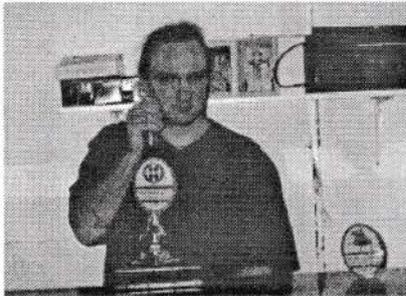
UNIT 9, CANALSIDE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, WOODBINE STREET EAST, ROCHDALE, OL16 5LB



New Brewery For Rochdale

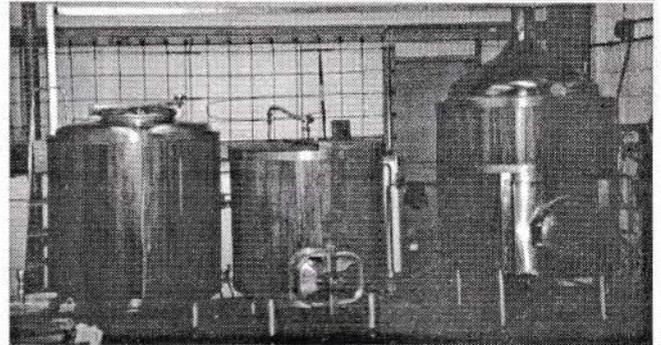
The big news this month is the launch of Richard 'Sooty' Sutton's Pictish Brewing Company in Rochdale.

Readers will remember Sooty as the last brewer at Manchester's Footage & Firkin, where he turned out some very memorable beers. It was always his intention to brew on his own and by a strange turn of fate it was the demise of the Firkin breweries which enabled him to realise this ambition sooner than he imagined.



After leaving the Firkin, Sooty acted as brewer for Tony Allen at the Phoenix Brewery (with whom he remains on very good terms by the way, despite some rumours to the contrary) until Punch Taverns put all the Firkin brewing plants up for sale. One of these was in Dundee and, sensing that few people would bid for it, a rather small offer was put in and accepted, albeit slightly grudgingly.

All that remained was to collect a brewery from Dundee, find some local premises and install it! Sooty managed this in a remarkably short space of time and the gleaming, mahogany-clad plant is now located in a spacious industrial unit in Rochdale. The enterprise hasn't been without some frustrating delays, though. He thought



the brewery was gas-fired - it's electric! So some more work had to be carried out and a vital part awaited. Vital part arrives and...another vital part has to be replaced. Despite these frustrating delays, brewing was about to start as these words were written and the beers should be out in the trade as you read this.

Three beers are planned to start with. Brewers Gold (3.8% ABV) is described as a refreshing, thirst quenching, pale golden session bitter. Expect malty undertones and a powerful, spicy hop aroma. The premium beer is Celtic Warrior at 4.2 per cent. This will be a full-bodied, mid-brown ale with malt flavours dominating the palate with delicate hop aromas in a well-balanced finish. Top of the range is Pictish Porter (4.4%), a complex black beer where a mellow bitterness and subtle hop aroma aim to balance the amber and roast malt flavours.

All beers are brewed with Maris Otter as the main malt variety, with a small amount of wheat malt in each brew, along with combinations of crystal, amber and chocolate malts and, in the porter, roast barley. Five hop varieties are used - Brewers Gold, Cascade, Fuggles, Goldings and Bramling Cross. Sooty intends to supplement this main range with monthly specials, the first one appearing in June. A large number of barrels came with the brewery and Sooty is looking



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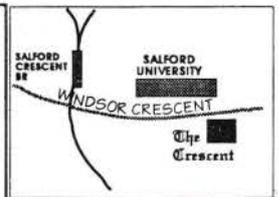
EXTENSIVE RANGE OF NEW & RARE MICROBREWERY BEERS, FROM HANDPUMP & CHILLED GRAVITY IN THE VAULT -

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Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 23!

to supply as many local free trade outlets as possible. All three beers should also be appearing at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

Holt's Go In House

To enable the company to continue running in its current 'conservative' style, the Kershaw family are leading a buyout of Joseph Holt's.

On 3 March a newly-formed company called Inhoco 1849 contacted Holt's shareholders and offered to buy their shares for £23 each. This was £8.55 more than the price quoted for the previous four days' trading on the stock market. Inhoco 1849 has been set up by the family members and directors of Joseph Holt plc to buy back shares and make the company secure from takeovers.

If the exercise is successful (and by all accounts it will be), Inhoco 1849 will then apply to change its name to the Joseph Holt Group and the brewery will no longer be listed on the stock market, which it has been since 1951. Meanwhile it's business as usual, with the free trade department about to supply Holts beers to a selected number of outlets belonging to Avebury Taverns. Some are in the Opening Times area and include the Portway, Wythenshawe; Hat & Feathers, City Centre; Aces, West Gorton and Land o' Cakes, City Centre.

More From The Micros

Several of our local micro brewers have new beers out in the coming weeks. These are just some of the beers to look out for. Bridgewater Ales have three beers on the stocks for the coming weeks. In fact the first, Jester IPA should be out by the time you read this. This comes in at 4.6 per cent ABV and is described by brewer Richard Bazen as a true IPA with a very high hop profile. On 17 April, Hot Cross Bunny will be launched for Easter. At 4.3 per cent ABV will be a reddish, chocolaty beer ("but not too chocolaty") but a degree of hoppiness will mean that it's not too sweet. Perhaps the most interesting of the three is Beltane Bok, to be launched at this month's Oldham Beer Festival. This will be a 5 per cent-ish dark beer, brewed in the bock style using something called a 'double decoction mash'. This promises to be a beer for the connoisseurs and is eagerly awaited.

John Feeney's Bank Top Brewery in Bolton will be producing the eleventh in his Knights of the Round Table series this month. Sir Bors (4.2 per cent) will be launched at the East Lancs Beer Festival and is brewed using a brand new hop variety - so new it's still on trial and doesn't have a name yet. John has picked up three of these experimental hop varieties and will be brewing with the other two soon.

Phoenix Brewery in Heywood can always be relied upon to produce a range of interesting beers and this month is no exception. Resurrection (4.7%) and St George's Flag (4.3%) should be out by the time you read this. Towards the end of the month watch out for Mayfly (4.4%) and the return of the superb Monkey Town Mild (3.9%).

Robinson's On Anglesey



Although Robinson's started buying pubs to add to their tied estate as long ago as 1876, it was 1953 before they bought their first pub on Anglesey, the Kimmel Arms at Moelfre.

During the Sixties and Seventies another eight were acquired - including the George & Dragon at Beaumaris, Gazelle on the Menai Strait, and Bulkeley Arms in Menai Bridge. Then, along the A5025 came the Four Crosses, the Breeze Hill, Pilot Boat and Trecastell, followed by the Marquis at Rhosybol. 1985 saw the Foundry Vaults in Llangefni and the Sportsman at Caergeiliog added to the estate, and in 1998 came the California at Brynteg, just outside Benllech. Finally, the latest acquisition, in 1999, was the Bedol at Penysarn, near Amlwch, just along the road from the Pilot Boat.

This brought the total Robinson's outlets on the Isle of Anglesey to 13. All of them sell Best bitter, and in eight of them it is the only cask beer available. Hatter's Mild is in four of the pubs, and Hartley's XB is in two, with Frederic's making its sole appearance at the Bedol, where it has been on regularly since the pub was acquired in November 1999. Last winter, a pin of Old Tom appeared on two bar counters. Smooth is available in all but three of the pubs. PL.



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A Fair Deal At Last?

Last month's press reports of the Government's "leaked" white paper on liquor licensing made interesting reading. Editors throughout the country chose to make a snap decision on whether their publication is 'for' or 'against' proposals to let pubs open longer hours.

Headlines varied from "24 hour drinking shame" to "new proposals to end late night binge drinking". In great media tradition, neither extreme represents the full picture of the government's efforts to reform our antiquated licensing laws.

The government is likely to take a more permissive view of opening hours and for many pubs this could offer the opportunity to finally be able to offer modern pub goers what they want. After all, is it fair that at 11.20 each evening responsible adults are forced to leave the pub of their choice, sup up and go home or on to a rowdy nightclub to be surrounded by sweaty youths and overpriced fizzy beer?

The current laws date back to the First World War when Lloyd George (not renowned for enjoying a tipple) decided that munitions workers made better bombs when they were sober. A reasonable policy, but not one which applies to the average Joe (or Josephine) today. The current system is messy, expensive and inconsistent and a more simple and transparent approach must surely represent progress.

But won't our streets be filled with drunks and hooligans all night long? Both common sense and the evidence would suggest not. Take the example of 1988 when all day opening was introduced during the week. Or 1995 when we were finally allowed to have a refreshing beer after that heavy Sunday lunch. Despite the gloomy predictions of many, there was no significant increase in consumption or in alcohol related crime. In fact, it appeared that people were drinking more slowly...

Kicking everyone out into the streets at the same time every night causes problems. People often knock back their final drinks too quickly and leave a little more tipsy than is good for them. They all queue up for the same taxis, buses and kebabs and that causes tension which often leads to trouble. It is the concoction of restricted hours and circuit pubs that has turned many of our town centres into war zones on Friday and Saturday nights. While fun for certain groups of younger drinkers, it unfairly excludes older and the majority of more reasonable younger pub-users. If new laws allow pubs to stagger their closing times then it is fair to assume that people will not be in such a hurry to 'get a last one in' and the pressures on our valued public services will be relieved. Experiments in Scotland and the Netherlands show that to be the case. The resulting more relaxed approach to enjoying alcohol is likely to benefit us all - not just pub-goers - through reduced alcohol-related crime and safer town centres.

(continued on next page)

The East Lancashire Millennium



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King George's Hall - Northgate
**Wednesday 19th April
to Saturday 22nd April**

- Over 70 Real Ales, Cider & Perry
- Traditional Festive Food
- Live Lancashire Folk Music



East Lancs CAMRA in association with
Blackburn with Darwen Millennium programme



STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER MILD TRAIL 2000 - APRIL 8TH - MAY 14TH

STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER

Mild CHALLENGE 2000

Following the success of last year's competition, we have once again teamed up with the Stockport Express to bring you another Mild Challenge, and again we have stretched our wings to include parts of Manchester and Salford along with two or three other pubs further afield. The previous Challenges have been a great success and if you haven't taken part before, try and have a go this time. It's fun and it's easy. It's also a chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and, of course, to win some great prizes.

The Challenge runs from Saturday 8 April to Sunday 14 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2000 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival. We are also again featuring the **Mild Challenge Extra** - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a specially engraved pewter tankard.

This year we are also especially grateful to Robinson's for enabling us to offer an extra-special prize: every completed entry will go into a draw and the first 10 pulled out will win a visit to the brewery to see how Hatter's Mild is made. Too good to miss out on? Definitely! So, what do you have to do? It's easy...

First, get a card. All participating pubs have a stock or you can use the version printed in this issue of Opening Times. Additionally you can get one from the Mild Challenge address: 30 Lonsdale Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3FL

A Fair Deal at Last (cont)

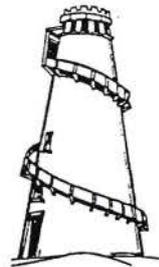
Rest assured too that residents will be given protection. It is likely that local communities will have a say when it comes to dishing out longer hours for individual pubs. If the residents think it will cause major problems, the pub is unlikely to be able to open much beyond existing permitted hours. Who knows, over the next decade or so perhaps a more permissive approach to opening hours will help us shake off the label of 'the lager louts of Europe'. It is quite reasonable to suggest that a more relaxed approach will eventually convince our young that they don't have to get as drunk as possible, as quickly as possible, in order to have a good time. If you agree with this view, why don't you drop a line to your MP and let them know? This could be a last ditch attempt to get a fair deal, so don't let fear of change stand in our way.

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Friday Night 6 - 11 pm

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11

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JEKYLL'S GOLD

HYDES
THE MANCHESTER BREWER
ESTD 1863

OT APRIL COMPETITION

Paul Stanyer, licensee of the Swan With Two Necks, made last month's competition slightly easier and this attracted a bumper crop of entries. The beers and pubs you were looking for were; Hoegaarden, Nursery, Ye Olde Woolpack, Kitchen Sexy Satsuma, Armoury Inn, Navigator, Roosters, Sand Bar and Romper. The winner was P Delaney of Gorton.

This month Paul has set a nice, easy one based up north. Get your Good Beer Guides out - we are going to Scotland! Complete the grid in a clockwise spiral. The last letter of an answer is the start letter of the next and we have given you the first letter. This month the prize is a Swan With Two Necks T-shirt.

If any pub or brewery would like to sponsor the prize for the OT competition then please let us know. You don't have to set it - just sponsor it (please).

1. In pursuit of the beaver's home will give you this Strathclyde pub (2 words)
2. Under par bird of prey needs somewhere to stay in the Borders (2 words)
3. Sounds like someone is chuckling at the ties in Fife
4. Horse changed into a pub near the sea when the tide is not out near Grampian (2 words)

1,0									
									2
	6								
4					9	7			
		8							
						5			3

5. The Lothians will lead you to this lesser religious tavern. (3 words)
6. Yeast and guns in this Lothians room? (2 words)
7. Is the train allowed here in Strathclyde (2 words)
8. Does the Queen stay here when she visits Grampian?

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

Mild - Who Brews It

While the national brewers seem to have virtually turned their backs on good cask mild, our local companies still produce the real thing. Robinson's in fact still produce two, and Hydes' three! Here we give a run-down on most of the milds available in the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge area with the alcohol by volume given in brackets. Those marked* are available on the Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge:

Robinson's: Hatters Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - a light mild with a refreshing dry, malty flavour. Dark Best Mild*: Hatters Mild with added caramel. Fruity, malty and a rare find - although three Challenge pubs (Swan With Two Necks, Stockport; Pot of Beer and Castle, City Centre) sell it.

Hydes': Mild* (ABV 3.5%) - dark and dry, an all malt brew. 'Welsh' Mild* - an even darker version of standard mild. Very rare outside Hydes' Welsh estate, but also sold in Fletcher Moss, Didsbury. Light* (ABV 3.7%) - lightly hopped session beer. Refreshing and fruity with a dry finish.

Holt's: Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - very dark with a complex taste. Very bitter for a mild with a long and satisfying aftertaste.

Porter: Dark Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - rich and full-bodied with a roasty aftertaste.

Whim: Magic Mushroom Mild* (ABV 3.8%) - well balanced with a complex mix of flavours and a sweet finish.

Cains: Dark Mild* (ABV 3.2%) - smooth, dry and roasty. A superb drink when on form.

Banks's: Mild* (ABV 3.5%) - often sold as plain "Banks's" or "Banks's Original". Amber coloured and well-balanced.

Thwaites: Best Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - rich and dark with a smooth malty flavour and a pleasant, slightly bitter finish.

Greene King: XX Dark Mild* (ABV 3%) - smooth and sweetish with a bitter aftertaste. A rare visitor from Suffolk, available in the Smithfield, City Centre.

Lees: GB Mild (ABV 3.5%) - malty and fruity with a dry, malty aftertaste.

Timothy Taylors: Golden Best (ABV 3.5%) - clean tasting and refreshing with a hoppy, bitter finish. A frequent free trade guest beer.

Coach House: Gunpowder Strong Mild (ABV 3.8%) - full bodied and roasty with a malty aroma and full finish. Another free trade regular.

Carlsberg Tetley: Tetley Dark Mild (ABV 3.2%) - fruity and dark. Less distinctive than it was.

Tetley Mild (ABV 3.3%) - well-balanced taste of malt and caramel with good bitterness.

Greenalls Mild* (ABV 3.3%) - thin and undemanding. May be discontinued in favour of Tetley Mild.

Scottish Courage: Theakstons Mild Ale (ABV 3.5%) - rich and smooth with a creamy body.

Websters Green Label (ABV 3.2%) - thin and bland. Often sold as a 'budget' bitter.

In addition eight pubs on the Mild Challenge will be offering a variety of guest milds during the Challenge. Milds missing this year are Vaux Mild (axed - along with the brewery!), Chesters Best Mild (axed in cask form) and Bateman's Dark Mild (de-listed from Marston's pubs following Banks's take-over - although still shown on the Challenge cards, oops!).

Mild - The Facts

What it is, and why you should drink it

This beer is without doubt a "red list" species in danger of extinction. Yet if it were to disappear from our pubs it would be a great shame. Even though it may be seen as a beer without 'street cred', and the one you may have been warned off early in your drinking career because of what unscrupulous publicans might be putting into it. Not least because it was usually dark coloured and would therefore conceal the evidence from view!

Today breweries tend to brew a wide range of bitters and, tacked on at the end, a solitary mild. It wasn't always like that. Before the Second World War, many breweries would have a 'family' of milds, of various strengths and styles, which ran in tandem with a similar range of bitters. Indeed mild was the biggest selling draught beer style for many years: in 1959 it accounted for over 40 per cent of beer brewed. Twenty years later it was down to ten per cent, and today it is just a fraction of that.

Initially this steep decline was largely the result of selective advertising on bitter beers, but until the late 1970s most brewers produced at least one mild. Its last strongholds are now the Midlands and here in the North West, although even in parts of Greater Manchester you will have to look long and hard to find it. Its popularity here was perhaps typified by Chesters' "Fighting Mild", as it was endearingly known. Once a delicious dark mild, so dark that the first time you walked into a pub selling it, you would be convinced everyone was drinking draught Guinness. Its reputation lingers on but as it once typified mild's popularity, it also mirrors its decline - the beer has recently been discontinued in cask form.

Unlike many parts of the country, all our local brewers still produce cask mild today, and this includes a good number of our micros, too. Robinson's still produce two, and Hydes' three! Elsewhere, many breweries today produce only very small amounts of cask mild, some just as a seasonal beer, or none at all where its popularity has diminished through a vicious circle of no promotion, restricted availability and hence declining demand.

Mild beers in good condition are deliciously tasty and come in a host of varieties. Many are dark in colour but some, like Robinson's Hatters Mild are as lightly coloured as a bitter beer. Some are light and hoppy and others rich and high in gravity - it's a mistake to think of mild as being a weak beer and although many of today's examples are low in alcohol, in times gone by milds of five or six per cent alcohol were commonplace. In fact there are still over 100 milds brewed nationwide.

Mild beers are normally characterised by being brewed with less hops than bitter beers and often use darker malts, or sometimes more sugar or caramel, to give their typical dark colour. They are generally light and easy to drink, and usually being lower in alcohol, make an ideal lunchtime pint. They are also some of the best value beers around. So next time you pop out for a pint - make yours mild. You won't be disappointed.



MILD CHALLENGE RULES

- 1) When you buy a pint (or a half pint) of cask conditioned mild in a pub supporting the challenge, get this card stamped by a member of the bar staff.
- 2) Only one stamp from each participating pub.
- 3) When this card has stamps from 12 pubs complete the section below and send it to 'Mild Challenge' c/o 30 Lonsdale Rd Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3FL, by 18th May 2000 and it will be included in the grand draw (to be drawn at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival). There are numerous great prizes including 10 trips around Robinson's Brewery to see Robinson's Hatters Mild and Dark Mild being brewed!
- 4) You will be entitled to a free ticket to the 2000 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 1st-3rd June. (Camra members, 2 free pints of mild instead) NB if you want a free ticket (or 2 free pints) enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Tickets will be posted by 22nd May, 2000.
- 5) To join the **Mild Challenge Extra** get stamps from 12 different pubs in 12 different areas and you will receive a free 'Stockport & Manchester Mild-Challenge T-shirt'.
- 6) If you are brave enough (or daft enough) to send in six cards with stamps from all participating pubs you will also receive a free tankard. Otherwise only one card per person.
- 7) The Mild Challenge runs from 8th April to 14th May 2000 inclusive. All prizes distributed at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8) The Organizers decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered in to.



**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT &
MANCHESTER
MILD CHALLENGE**

This year you can win 4 pints of mild at the Festival by coming up with a slogan of no more than 8 words on why you drink mild (NB Entry into the Mild Challenge does not require you complete this). The winning slogan will appear on next years Mild Challenge T-shirt. The winning slogan will be announced at the Festival.

I drink mild because

.....

Complete for the Grand Draw

Name

Address

..... Post Code

Signature Tel. No. (H) (W)

Camra Membership No (if applicable)..... Signature

I wish to enter the 'Mild Challenge Extra' and claim my free T-shirt

I enclose a SAE for my Stockport Beer & Cider Festival ticket (or two free pints)

I am interested in joining the Campaign for Real Ale



SEND TO: 'MILD CHALLENGE' 30 LONSDALE ROAD, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER M19 3FL

(NB Only one stamp per pub- see overleaf for rules)
 Fill this card with stamps from 12 different pubs and you will receive a free ticket to the 14th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival and entry into a grand draw- First Prizes - visits to Robinsons Brewery & Sampling room.
 FREE T-SHIRT WHEN YOU ENTER THE MILD CHALLENGE EXTRA (see overleaf)

Sponsored by **Stockport Express**



MILD CHALLENGE PUBS

Stockport
Express

PUB	LOCATION	BEER	PUB	LOCATION	BEER
Cross Keys	ADSWOOD Adswold Road	Hydes' Mild	Griffin,	HEALD GREEN Finney Lane	Holts Mild
Coach & Horses	BELLE VUE Belle Vue St/Hyde Rd	Robinson's Hatters Mild	Blossoms,	HEAVILEY Buxton Road,	Robinsons Hatters Mild.
Brinnington Inn,	BRINNINGTON Great Portwood Street,	Robinson's Hatters Mild.	Robin Hood,	HIGH LANE Buxton Road,	Robinsons Hatters Mild.
Arden Arms	BREDBURY Ashton Road	Robinson's Hatters Mild	Sportsman,	HYDE Mottram Road,	Whim Magic Mushroom Mild + guest mild
Ye Olde Woolpack	BRINKSWAY Brinksway	Guest Mild	MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE - CENTRAL/SOUTH		
Cheshire Cheese	BROADBOTTOM Lower Market St	Thwaites Dark Mild + guest	Castle,	Oldham Street	Robinsons Dark Mild.
Albion	BURNAGE Burnage Lane	Hydes Light	Crown & Anchor	Cateaton Street	Holt's Mild
Crown, Royal Oak, Ye Olde Star,	CHEADLE High Street, Stockport Road, High Street	Hydes Mild. Robinsons Hatters Mild. Hydes Mild	Lass O'Gowrie	Charles Street	Guest Mild
Church,	CHEADLE HULME Ravenoak Road,	Robinson's Hatters Mild.	MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE - NORTH		
Andrew Arms	COMPSTALL Gecrge Street	Robinson's Hatters Mild	Pot of Beer, Beer House, Smithfield	New Mount Street, Angel Street, Swan Street	Robinson's Dark Mild Guest Milds Greene King Mild
Station, Royal Oak, Fletcher Moss,	DIDSBURY Wilmslow Road, Wilmslow Road, William Street,	Batemans Mild Batemens Mild Hydes Light	Navigation Pineapple	MARPLE Stockport Road Market Street	Robinson's Hatters Mild Robinson's Hatters Mild
Gateway	EAST DIDSBURY Kingsway	Hydes' Mild	Railway,	MARPLE-ROSE HILL Stockport Road	Robinsons Hatters Mild
Grapes, Church, Ye Olde Vic	EDGELEY Castle Street, Bowden Street, Chatham Street	Robinsons Hatters Mild Robinsons Hatters Mild Guest Mild	Northumberland	MARPLE BRIDGE Compstall Road	Robinson's Hatters Mild
Gothic Bar Prince of Wales Horse & Farrier,	GATLEY Church Road Gatley Green, Northenden Road,	Cains Mild Hydes Light Hydes Mild.	Bee Hive	MOSS SIDE Claremont Road	Hydes' Mild
High Grove	GATLEY SOUTH Silverdale Road	Hydes' Mild	Masons Arms,	NEW MILLS Market Street,	Robinsons Hatters Mild
Plough Pineapple	GORTON Hyde Road, Off Hyde road	Robinsons Hatters Mild. Hydes' Mild	Railway,	PORTWOOD Great Portwood Street,	Porters' Dark Mild
Three Bears , Three Tunnes	HAZEL GROVE Jacksons Lane, London Road	Robinson's Hatters Mild. Robinson's Hatters Mild	Cow & Calf ,	ROMILEY School Brow, RUSHOLME Victory Street	Robinson's Hatters Mild.
Crown	HEATON MERSEY Didsbury Road	Robinson's Hatters Mild.	Osborne House	SALFORD The Crescent Bloom Street	Hydes' Mild
Crown,	HEATON MOOR Heaton Moor Road,	Greenalls Mild.	Crescent Kings Arms	STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE - EAST	
Moss Rose, Nursery,	HEATON NORRIS Didsbury Road, Green Lane,	Hydes Light Hydes Mild.	Arden Arms Tiviot, Bakers Vaults	Millgate Tiviot Dale, Underbank,	Robinson's Hatters Mild Robinsons Hatters Mild Holts Mild.
			Red Bull Spread Eagle, Winters	STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE - HILLGATE	
			Pineapple, Swan with Two Necks	Middle Hillgate Lower Hillgate, Market Place,	Robinson's Hatters Mild Robinsons Hatters Mild. Robinsons Hatters Mild.
			Unity,	STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE - WEST	
			Victoria,	Heaton Lane , Princes Street	Robinsons Hatters Mild. Robinson's Dark Mild & Hatters Mild
			Davenport Arms,	Wellington Road South, WITHINGTON Wilmslow Road, WOODFORD Chester Road,	Robinsons Hatters Mild

Protect your Pint and Pub. Join CAMRA

Drink-Drive Limit Cut Shelved

The government's review of road safety, released on March 1st, indicates that they do not intend to proceed for the time being with plans to cut the drink-drive limit from 80 mg to 50 mg, or approximately from two pints of normal strength beer to one.

There had been fears that this cut, proposed in a consultation document issued in early 1998, would result in the closure of large numbers of pubs outside urban centres. The review states that the European Commission is considering the introduction of a harmonised 50mg limit throughout the EU, and the government will therefore "deal with proposed reductions in the European context". However, there have been indications that this is a matter that the Commission intends to leave to individual member states. Although the limit will not be cut in the near future, the review proposes a variety of other measures to deal with drink-drive offenders more effectively. These include mandatory two-year bans for first-time offenders over twice the legal limit, the introduction of digital roadside breathalysers which do away with the need for a further test in the police station, and extending police powers "to breath-test people driving at locations where it is reasonable to assume an amount of drinking may have taken place", without any need for the police to have grounds to suspect an individual, or a traffic offence having been committed. The road safety strategy document can be viewed on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.roads.detr.gov.uk/roadsafety/strategy/tomorrow/>

Contributors to Opening Times Issue 192

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Edwardson, Phil Levison, Mark McConnachie, Brian Carey, Ken Birch, Tim Jones, Frank Wood, Jim Flynn, Paul Stanyer, Lorraine York

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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15

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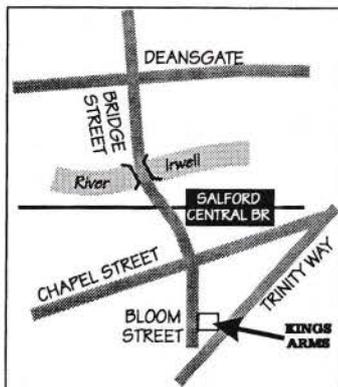
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Despite the Editors' promises, I have been truncated rather drastically this month.

Upcoming Festivals

Crescent, Salford 13 - 16 April. Doncaster (at the Racecourse - same weekend); Blackburn, at St George's Hall (now upstairs) with 100+ beers 19-22 April; Beer House, Stalybridge Buffet, Station Ashton and CAMRA Oldham weekend of 27- April - May 1 (Oldham Fri & Sat only). Survive it if you can.

Festival Reviews

Crescent German Festival

Good Range (8 draught, 20 bottled), excellent condition, but it ran out a day early! Very successful and well done to everyone. I gather there is a sequel planned in October with a lot more beer.

Beer House - Early March

Once again Ian Casson excelled himself with a good and interesting range. One or two of the weaker bitters didn't keep their condition, but the mainstream & stronger stuff was excellent throughout with beers changing every half hour during the busier sessions. Apparently the Italian Food was popular - it went so fast I never got a sniff...

Leeds (Pudsey Civic Centre) - CAMRA

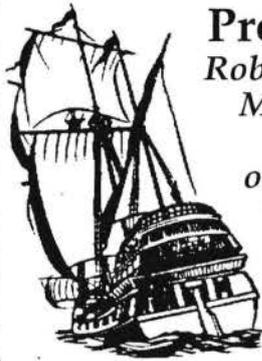
Excellent. Good range with a separate bar for brew-pub beers, many of which were new to me and all in excellent shape. The promised German beer was a bit late (missing the first three sessions due to colossal automotive failure) but when it arrived it went terrifically well.

Obscure Book Review (as promised)

Bamburger Bier und Aischgrunder Karpfen (Hollhuber/Kaul)-available via Beers Inn Print at Festivals

This is one of a series of walking tours through the more interesting parts of Franconia. Inside the book, whose German is littered

Ye Olde Admiral Rodney



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with Franconianisms, there are 23 walking tours, starting in the city of Bamberg, and then moving into the beautiful rural areas to the south - a zone littered with brilliant brew pubs. It is also one of the best areas in Germany for Coarse Fishing, and this is amply dealt with, rivers, carp, and pubs to eat them in.

The tours are about a day or a half day ramble each, and some take in as many as 7 pubs. Fascinating and very useful - as I have already found. Maps of all the walks, photos and full descriptions with ranges of the more interesting brew pubs. The German isn't easy, but its a great way to improve it!

Beer of the Month
Weltons Predator (3.7% abv)

I remember drinking this a couple of times last year, and feeling distinctly underwhelmed. Yet another pale gold, weak session beer with a bit of late hopping with pseudo-IPA pretensions. I was in a southern Hogshhead and a bit bored so I tried it, having been assured it had been supplied from Arundel, in Arundel casks. Weltons and Arundel have, it appears become one, with Arundel doing most of the brewing. God! What an improvement. Meaty, rich, satisfying. A dry maltness, with a bitter lingering finish. If all badge brewing was like this, we'd be laughing.

the **14th** CAMRA **OLDHAM** BEER FESTIVAL

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 HOPWOOD Pale coloured bitter, clean tasting session beer with a bitter hop finish.	 BANTAM Pale brown bitter. Slightly nutty, full flavoured beer.	 OAK BEST BITTER Tawny coloured, with a hint of sweetness in the full bitter palate. A fresh but dry hop finish.
 OLD OAK Well balanced brown beer. Malt and hops balance the strong fruitiness in the aroma and taste. The finish is malty, fruity and dry.	 THIRSTY MOON Light brown bitter. Strong hop aroma. The slight maltness is dominated by a full crisp bitterness giving a dry and satisfying finish.	 BONNEVILLE Light brown bitter. Malty character with a soft rounded hop balance.
 DOUBLE DAGGER Pale brown bitter. Full flavoured hoppy bitterness. More pleasantly dry and light than its gravity would suggest.	 WOBBLY BOB Another beer. Malty fruity aroma. Strongly malty and fruity flavour. A slight sweetness yields to a dry finish.	



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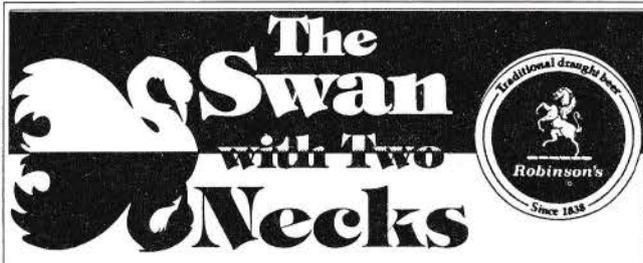


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Fine Cask Conditioned Ales

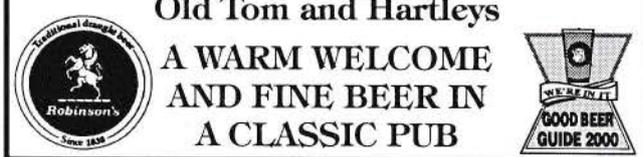
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AND FINE BEER IN
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CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE
STOCKPORT AND
SOUTH MANCHESTER
BRANCH

What a result! Last month's Opening Times had been out for less than a week and the misleading signs on both the Kings Head and the Bow Garratt had been painted out. A phone call by the Manchester Evening News to owners Paramount seems to have done the trick.

What's happened to the superb etched windows at the (keg-only) Crown on Hillgate, Stockport? Many were the Victorian originals but they have now all been replaced by plain glass. Presumably mindless vandalism is the cause of this sad loss.

Recently opened after refurbishments are the Midway, Newbridge Lane, Stockport and the High Grove, Gatley. Full reports next month. The Ash in Heaton Chapel is also undergoing a major refurbishment. Again, a full report will follow.

At Ye Olde Vic, Edgeley, Theakstons Bitter is being replaced as the house bitter. The replacement is Greene King IPA.



"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 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



An Unfair Tax

Tens of thousands of pubs across the country will be subjected to a new and unfair tax burden if local authorities implement government proposals to tax workplace parking. Under these plans, every employer, however small, will have to apply for a licence for a set number of employees and trade visitors to park on the premises. This will apply whether or not the establishment is actually served by any public transport, and licensees will even be expected to pay for the privilege of parking their own cars at their own pub. The minimum charge is likely to be at least £200 per year per parking space, and in some areas could be considerably more. It is completely irrelevant to efforts to deter drink-driving as it excludes parking for retail customers.

Many pubs, even within Greater Manchester, can't be reached by public transport, particularly in the evenings. For most others, buses and trains will have stopped running by the time bar staff shifts finish at 11.30 pm or later. Even if there are good late-night connections, female bar staff are unlikely to feel very safe waiting alone at the bus stop at a quarter to midnight. If and when evening closing is extended, the problem will be made worse.

Even a small pub could easily find itself having to pay £1000 a year for the licensee, his or her partner and three bar staff. This could be enough to push some struggling pubs in out-of-town locations over the edge to closure. Since the purpose of the tax is supposedly to encourage the use of public transport, it is grossly unfair to levy it where there is no practical public transport alternative. If it is to be brought in at all, surely it should be restricted to workplaces where there are reasonable public transport connections and employees work something close to normal office hours.

Not A Drop to Drink

In these days when so many pubs are regrettably switching over to the dreaded nitrokeg, the beer lover is increasingly likely, in the course of general socialising, to find him or herself in pubs without any real ale. But of course there has been such an upsurge in the range of distinctive bottled beers on sale that some respite should surely be at hand - even the top shelf of your local Victoria Wine will now have ten or more bottles worth drinking.

Unfortunately, it doesn't work like that in pubs, and the level of choice of draught and bottled products seems to go hand-in-hand. Specialist real ale free houses usually also offer an impressive range of British and imported bottles, while independent brewery tied houses may well have a few bottles produced by that brewery - Sam Smith's being particularly noteworthy - to go alongside their real ale. But a keg pub supplied by the national brewers is likely to be a bottled beer desert too.

There's no reason why even the most determinedly keg pub couldn't offer a handful of the best-known premium bottled ales - even Old Speckled Hen, Abbot, 6X and Pedigree would be a damn sight better than nothing at all. But, all too often, a lack of interest in the draught beer range goes hand-in-hand with a lack of imagination, quality and

5 Years Ago
by Phil Levison **APRIL '95**

As Opening Times went to press in April 1995, speculation was rife that Scottish & Newcastle were to buy the breweries run by Courage - it was thought that an announcement was imminent. The move would create a combine controlling almost one third of the country's brewing capacity - but further concentration in the brewing industry would be bad for competition, leading to higher prices, less choice, and loss of jobs. The merged company would have substantial excess capacity, and breweries were likely to be axed - in particular, those in Halifax, Nottingham and London looked to be very vulnerable. CAMRA intended opposing the proposals, and press for a referral to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission.

There was a reminder of a phenomenon sometimes known as the North South divide - a visit to Brighton - it was thought that a Harvey's tied house was selling their own XX Mild (3% ABV) for £1.60 a pint, and Harvey's Porter (4.3%) for £1.88. Prices were even higher in the free houses - our own Boddingtons had made the long journey south, and had appeared, (in not very good form) at £1.84.

Members of the CAMRA Investments Club paid a visit to the Moss Side premises of local brewers Hydes' Anvil. Joint managing director Adam Hyde welcomed the group, and then joined them on a brewery tour with Head Brewer Alan Mackie and newly appointed second brewer Stuart Thompson. A sampling session followed, and in addition to the regular Mild, Light and Bitter, a fourth experimental beer (4.5%) was on offer - this was the first non-portfolio beer produced by Hydes' Anvil for some years.

The Harp & Shamrock on New Mount Street, just off Rochdale Road, was featured as "one of the unsung gems of the Manchester drinking scene". Once a regular entry in the Good beer Guide, it had suffered something of a spiral of decline, but this had been halted in November 1993 with the arrival of Liz Bowman from the Gorton Arms. The pub had been cleaned up and redecorated, and first-class Marston's Bitter and Pedigree were available. It was recommended that anyone en route from the Marble Arch to the Beer House should pay it a visit. The recommendation still stands of course, but now it is known as the Pot of Beer, and you're likely to find Robinson's Dark Mild, with guests and continental beers. Several brief items of pub news: the Bottle Stop in Bramhall was to offer Fuller's as it's first take-home draught beer; the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury was expecting beers from the Orkney Brewery; the High Grove on Silverdale Road in Gatley, had reopened after a refurbishment - it was an all-round improvement liked by the customers.

variety in everything else that is on offer behind the bar. Keg pubs are even far less likely to stock a range of malt whiskies.

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

In Stalybridge it would appear that Hydes' have made offers for both the White House and Q. If they were to be accepted it would be a sad loss for Stalybridge drinkers. But Hydes' would be a good replacement even though they couldn't provide the variety that the White House and Q currently offer.

In Buxton, Ramsey's Bar in the Buckingham Hotel has replaced Tetley's Bitter and Old Speckled Hen. There are now five hand-pumps adorning the bar and the intention is to have three regular beers and two guests. The range at the time of our visit was Theakston's Best, Ruddles County, Courage Directors (regulars we think), Hydes' Clever Endeavour and A N Other.

Over in Whaley Bridge, the Shepherds Arms is open again. It's been repainted inside and has Marston's Bitter (hoo-ray!), Pedigree and Banks's Original on handpump.

The Peaks in New Mills has started to take guest beers alongside the regular Boddingtons Bitter - on a recent visit it was joined by York Stonewall Bitter.

The Quiet Woman in Earl Sterndale (free) has a good selection of beers available: Banks's Original, Marston's Bitter and Pedigree, Taylor's Landlord and Everard's Tiger Bitter. The landlord is not impressed with Banks's and intends to make room for a dark mild (having lost Bateman's Dark Mild as a result of the recent changes at Marston's). He is thinking in terms of Mansfield Dark Mild - but is also considering Whim Magic Mushroom and possibly also making room for Hartington Bitter (perhaps at the expense of the Pedigree?) but this is something for the future.

At the end of February, adds Frank Wood, the new development at Mottram roundabout, the Outside Inn, opened for business. Bizarrely, it is a real ale gain for the area, with Theakston's Bitter and Courage Directors available. As its name implies, this is an ordinary looking building, blending well with the nearby McDonalds, but once inside the interior is most unexpected. You go through the door and cross a wooden bridge and follow the signposts, either left for the eating areas or right for the bar and drinking areas. On a mid-March Saturday trade appeared brisk at 7.30pm and it does seem very family friendly, with older couples catered for later on. Despite the waterfalls, plethora of (authentic looking) trees and even a water wheel, it has the makings of success.

At the White Lion, Hyde, Robinson's Old Tom was on good form on the same night while along the street Ringwood Fortyniner was excellent in Wetherspoon's although the guest beers have now had a price 'hike' from £1 during February to £1.29. Still a bargain, though. At the Sparrows in Glossop, the guest beer at weekends is to alternate between Plassey Bitter and a beer from Bridgewater. Barton Ale was on the bar when I called in mid-March.

In Stalybridge, Marston's Bitter is now available at the three pubs run by Dave Conner, namely Q, the White House and the Bridge, all within a few hundred yards of each other. At the Bridge, the two other beers permanently on draught are Taylor's Landlord and Boddingtons's Bitter. Along the road at the Rose & Crown, the beer range in this former Vaux house is now Tetley Bitter, Draught Bass and Cameron's Strongarm. The Pavilion now only has Marston's Pedigree on draught.

The Kinder Lodge in Hayfield is now featuring guest beers alongside the regular Draught Bass. Storm Brewing's Windgather Rocks and York Brewery's Terrier were available on a recent visit.

Tim Jones concludes, I'm sad to report the recent death of Mr Philip Bailey. Mr Bailey was the landlord of the Railway at Rose Hill in Marple for 21 years until he retired about 18 months ago. Our sympathy goes to his wife Barbara and son Jason.

Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 23!



**April
Featured Pub:
The Navigation Hotel,
Marple**

Sited at the junction of Stockport Road and the Macclesfield Canal's Posset Bridge, dating back some time before 1791, when it was bought by Samuel Oldknow from Richard Arkwright, at that time a brew house. The bridge gets its name from the custom of supplying labourers working on the construction of the canal and aqueduct with a "posset", which is a mixture of hot milk, ale, sugar and spices.

The derivation of the name of the Navigation should be obvious. At this time the hotel had a stable block, above the stable was a mortuary used for the many deaths during the construction and later use of the canal. One of the upper rooms was used as a coroner's court. Due to the thickness of the walls it is the only pub in Marple to be a mobile phone free zone, but my wife knows this and if I am out of range she calls me on the pub's phone!

The pub was altered in 1940 and again in 1972 when many of the original features were found, including clay pipes and coins minted by the hotel's owner. The present landlord, James Lavin, better known as Jim, took over the tenancy in April 1999. Since then he has embarked on a series of renovations to what had become a somewhat rundown pub. From the outside, the most obvious change is the opening up of the courtyard as an outside drinking area. Internally, all the seating has been replaced and a new bar fitted, though it is in keeping with the original bar. When I took Father Mack, a priest and professor from New York, and one of the Winter Ale Festival judges, for a drink there he did not notice any changes from his last visit 10 years previously.

The public bar has been retained and is a music free zone at the request of the regulars; one of the features of the bar is an air cleaner to eliminate tobacco smoke. This bar can be a bit lively at times when John Ogilvy is pontificating on a subject of which he is an expert...anything, but it's always in good nature. There is no jukebox or pool table. So for entertainment you'll have to talk to someone or join in a game of cards. Something else that has not changed over the past 20 years is Viv, working behind the bar.

The lounge is now very comfortable and can be used for small private meetings, as can the larger upstairs function room. The dining area is at the rear of the pub slightly raised and well away from the bar. Food is served all lunch times and from 5.30-8.00 in the evenings, Tuesday to Saturday. A carvery Sunday lunch is also served. All the food, ranging from the traditional to the exotic, is cooked by Jim's wife, Joyce. Two of their family have become top chefs, after being taught the basics by Joyce. Jim has been a licensee for over 30 years, having moved from the Lord Darly (Yorkshire Post Pub of the Year 1998-9) and prior to that he was a butcher. The electric pumps have been replaced by hand pumps for the Robinson's Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, and the beer seems better for it. The smooth is going and Frederic's is coming. A wide selection of malts is on offer as is a better than average range of wines. For the masochist, Einhorn is also available, some of the regulars do drink it!



Smoked Salmon Cider Bake

This is really an inexpensive dish. You can pick up 11lb of smoked salmon off-cuts for about £2 from a good fish stall. This should serve 4 people.

Ingredients

- 11lb (457gm) smoked salmon trim
- 1 pint cider
- 2 lb new potatoes
- 1 tablespoon mixed herbs
- 2 medium onions
- salt and pepper
- 4 leeks

Method

Roughly scrape the potatoes and slice into half inch (13mm) slices. Top and tail, peel and slice the onions into rings half inch wide; trim the leeks and cut into one-inch rings.

Break the smoked salmon into two groups - large chunks and flat pieces, breaking the chunks into thumb size pieces if necessary. Set aside along with the vegetables.

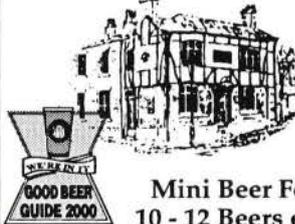
Gently heat (do not boil!) the cider, herbs and seasoning. Leave to one side. Take a pyrex or metal pie dish of sufficient size (10 inches x 4 inches minimum if round). Well you know these things come in round, rectangular, both deep or shallow and either short or long, so use your nuts! A foil dish would even suffice. Anyway, leave enough potatoes on one side for topping the final dish. Take the rest and blanch in boiling water for two minutes only.

Lay out the pie dish thus: a layer of leeks plus onions plus smoked salmon, then a layer of sliced potatoes. After each layer pour in some cider, finally topping with the sliced potatoes saved earlier. Bake in a medium oven (300C) for 25 minutes - test with a skewer to see when the potatoes are done.

For an added visual touch, the dish can be glazed by simply beating an egg with some milk (about a 50:50 mix) and coating the top about 8 minutes before the end of cooking time.



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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries
Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

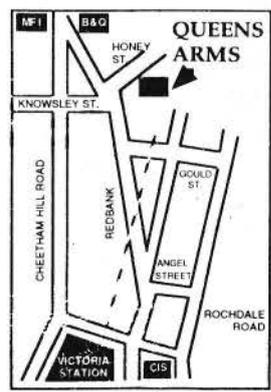
Diary	APRIL 2000	APRIL 2000	To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner
	<p>Monday 10th - Social: Ye Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p>Thursday 13th - Branch AGM: Gateway, Wilmslow Rd, East Didsbury. Starts 8.00pm. All members please try and attend.</p> <p>Friday 14th - Sunday 16th - CAMRA National AGM & Conference, Assembly Rooms, Derby. (Includes Members Beer Festival)</p> <p>Monday 17th - Social: Unity, Wellington Rd South, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p>Thursday 20th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. From 8.00pm.</p> <p>Friday 28th - Brinnington and Portwood Stagger: 7.30pm Farmers Arms, Brinnington Rd; 8.30 Park, Newbridge Lane.</p> <p>Saturday 29th - Informal lunchtime social at Oldham Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham Civic Centre. From 12 noon.</p> <p>Sunday 30th April - Town Centre Beer Festival poster distribution: meet Railway, Great Portwood Street, 7.00pm.</p> <p>Monday 1st May - Town Centre Beer Festival poster distribution: meet Unity, Wellington Road South, 7.00pm.</p> <p>Monday 8th May - Social: Hinds Head, Manchester Rd, Heaton Chapel. Starts 9.00pm.</p> <p><i>The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple</i></p>	<p><i>and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:</i></p> <p>Monday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: White Hart, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p>Friday 14th - Trip to Derby for CAMRA AGM & Conference. Contact Tom Lord (0161 427 7099).</p> <p>Sunday 30th - Branch Walk - meet New Mills Bus Station 9.45am. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.</p> <p>Tuesday 2nd May - Committee Meeting: Palatine, Station Road, Hadfield. Starts 8.30pm.</p> <p>Advance Notice - the Branch Sponsored walk will take place on Saturday 24th June. Contact Tom Lord for details.</p> <p><i>Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton.</i></p> <p>Saturday 8th April - Brewery Tour with South Cheshire Branch, Beartown Brewery, Congleton</p> <p>Sunday 9th April - Sunday Lunch Social: Whipping Stocks, Over Peover 12.30pm</p> <p>Monday 17th April - Combined Branch & Committee Meeting: Robin Hood, Buglawton. Starts 8.00pm</p> <p>Friday 5th & Saturday 6th May - Branch Beer Festival: Macclesfield Rugby Club</p>	



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APRIL 9 - MAY 7

14th Oldham Beer Festival 28-29 April Q.E. Hall, Oldham

MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

I pen this still in a state of shock from a terrible night out in Levenshulme and Longsight. Okay, these two have never been the best beer drinking areas of the city but at least there has always been a sprinkling of decent real ale outlets. Not any more there aren't!

Closed, Boarded and Keg

After the, still good, O'Connors and Sir Edwin Chadwick in Longsight and heading south, there was not a drop of cask ale to be had in any of the next 13 pubs. Every one, from the Ceili House in Longsight to the Wheatsheaf in Levenshulme was either closed and boarded or, more commonly, offered keg beers only. Perhaps the most shocking development was the absence of cask beer in the Union in Levenshulme. This excellent little pub could always be relied upon for a decent pint and for a good while sold a house beer alongside a well-kept pint of Boddingtons Bitter. Now it's just Boddies and for most of the week 'smooth' only, with cask beer kept for weekends. Hopefully I was unlucky with the Levenshulme and Wheatsheaf both of which had handpumps but with the clips reversed but that was small consolation on the night itself.

Depressingly, it looks as though the plans for a Wetherspoon's in Levenshulme have also been abandoned so there's no relief on the horizon either. The good news, though, is that the Pack Horse looks a definite for reopening. What chance cask beer, though? Wetherspoon's are also having to jump through hoops to get their Didsbury outlet off the ground. The plans have apparently been revamped but there are still vociferous local objections to the plans. Don't hold your breath on this one.

Castlefield Capers

In the City Centre there are major changes at the Oxnoble on Liverpool Road. It's now the City centre's first 'gastro-pub'. This is just a fancy term for restaurant standard cooking served in an upmarket pub which tries to pretend it isn't one really so as not to frighten off the middle class customers who are mug enough to pay the equally fancy prices. Having said that, this isn't too bad an example on the price front (although it's by no means cheap) and there's an adventurous beer policy. Taylor's Land-



lord is one of the regulars and there are two guests, one of which will always be a Bridgewater beer. At the risk of being deemed a pedant by *City Life* magazine, I must however take issue with the name change to 'The Ox'. It is perhaps easy to make light of the fact that as The Oxnoble this was the only pub in the country named after a potato, but this was a direct link with the area's past and in particular the nearby Potato Wharf. The new name has about as much relevance as calling the place Barney McShagg's Oirish Bar and I for one will continue to use the old name until common sense prevails. Once again, don't hold your breath.

Old House On Form

Regular readers may recall a Stagger of West Didsbury and Withington last year, and the particularly scathing comments reserved for the beer in the Old House At Home on Burton Road. I was there! I drank that beer - and it really was terrible. However a phone call from new manager Dave Ogden led me to drop in again and what a transformation.

I have always found the Old House to be enjoyable as a pub and now there's beer to match. Dave has a long background in the trade - his parents were publicans - and he has been with Whitbread for four years, coming to the Old House at Home from a pub in Bolton. Our Staggerers weren't the only people to take a dim view of the beer it seems, and Dave has had to work hard to re-establish the reputation of the beer quality in the eyes of the, largely student, regulars. But he's got there in the end. A scrupulous attention to detail and a sensible reduction of the cask beer range to four, thereby guaranteeing throughput, has paid dividends and there's now an active interest in the guest beers from his regulars. Cask beer volumes are on the up too.

The permanent beer is Boddingtons Bitter and one other rotates through the standard Whitbread range, which includes the likes of Cains Bitter, London Pride, Wadworth 6X and Castle Eden Ale - the latter was in fact on when I called. In addition there are two guest ales and although Dave has to source these via Whitbread there's quite a variety available - on my visit Caledonian Deuchars IPA and 80/- were on - and the IPA was particularly good. Highly recommended - I shall certainly be calling back.

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(Opening Times 192)

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I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £14 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £17

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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.



**Thursday
1st June 2000**

Evening:
5.30pm-11.00pm
Admission: £2.00
Live: The Winchesters

**Friday
2nd June 2000**

Lunch:
11.30am-3.30pm
Admission: FREE
Live: Wurlitzer Organ

Evening:
5.30pm-11.00pm
Admission: £3.00
Live: Flaky Jake & The
Steamin' Locos

**Saturday
3rd June 2000**

Lunch:
11.30am-4.00pm
Admission: £1.00
Quiet Drinking Session

Evening:
6.30pm-11.00pm
Admission: £2.00
Live: The Deltones

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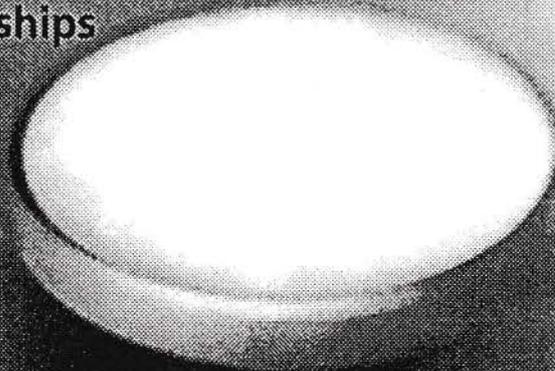
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