



OPENING TIMES



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FREE

FULL PINTS ON THE WAY?

Minister asks CAMRA to provide evidence

Moves to ensure pub customers get a full pint of beer look set to go ahead as the Government talks to CAMRA about ending the practice of short measure, reports Tim Hampson.

The Government now looks likely to call time on publicans cheating customers out of the full pint they have paid for under tough new consumer legislation expected later this year. Following a meeting with Consumer Affairs Minister Kim Howells, CAMRA has been asked to provide evidence of short measure, not just for real ale but also for fizzy nitrokegs and stout.

CAMRA Head of campaigns Mike Benner said: "We are looking for a sensible solution over this. There is no problem with brim-measure glasses where customers prefer a flat pint, because they include a degree of tolerance anyway. But there is a problem with creamy heads where over-sized lined glasses which define the measure are preferable.

"The issue, though, is not really about glasses but giving the public what they pay for - a full pint."

Currently the pub industry works to Brewers & Licensed Retailers Association (BLRA) voluntary guidelines that specify that a pint should contain at least 95 per cent liquid, with top-ups offered to any customer who thinks they have been given short measure.

However, there is much evidence to show many pubs fall well short of the guidance thanks to unscrupulous landlords, over-zealous area managers demanding impossible profit margins, and carelessness or inexperienced staff. Pub managers are also under pressure to maintain "good stock" - which usually means squeezing 76 pints out of a 72-pint firkin. It is estimated that drinkers are being ripped off by more than £160 million a year by paying for beer which is never poured.

Mike Benner condemned industry attempts to persuade the Government to enshrine the BLRA guidelines in law. "Turning the BLRA guidelines into law would be legalising short measure," he said.

"A pint should comprise 100 per cent liquid, though we do accept there needs to be a small tolerance which could mean some pints end up as 97 or 98 per cent liquid."

Two years ago a Private Members Bill which would have guaranteed a full pint was introduced by West Midlands MP Dennis Turner, but it was talked out by the infamous Eric Forth MP, following heavy lobbying by the pub trade.

STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS

Lancashire Brewer Moorhouses of Burnley scooped the Champion Beer of Britain Award at this years Great British Beer Festival at Olympia earlier this month, with their Black Cat Mild being judged both best mild AND Supreme champion. Congratulations to them. A full report on all the winners in September's Opening Times.



Robbies Host National Awards

Frederic Robinson, Stockport's family brewer, hosted a ceremony at the Unicorn Brewery at which the awards from the year's National Winter Ales Festival were presented. The annual event, organised by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, took place in January at Manchester's Upper Campfield Market in Castlefield. Dave Goodwin, national chairman of CAMRA, presented certificates to representatives of three breweries.

Robinson's were chosen to host the ceremony because their famous winter warmer, Old Tom had taken first place in the competition and earned the title "Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2000", beating stiff competition across the country. This was the latest recognition for the 8.5 per cent ABV strong ale which had been runner up in its class at the last two festivals and was winner in 1991. The other breweries present were Scottish Courage who were runners-up with Theakston's Old Peculier and Wye Valley who achieved third place with Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout.



Production Director David Robinson, left, and head brewer Chris Hellen (right) with CAMRA Chairman Dave Goodwin & the award

Production Director David Robinson and Head Brewer Chris Hellen were at the brewery to receive the certificate marking Old Tom's achievement. "During the year there are two competitions which really matter to us and the Winter Ales Festival is one of them," explained David Robinson. "Winning the title of 'Supreme Champion' is just recognition for all the hard work put in by everybody at the brewery," he said.

In his presentation speech Dave Goodwin recounted how, many years ago, his grandmother had held the licence for a Robinson's house and that it was a thrill for him to be at the brewery which has been the source for so many of his memories. "I spent many happy hours with my grandmother at The Swan in New Mills and it was there that my passion for the brewing industry first started. It's now a real pleasure for me to be here at the Unicorn Brewery," he said.

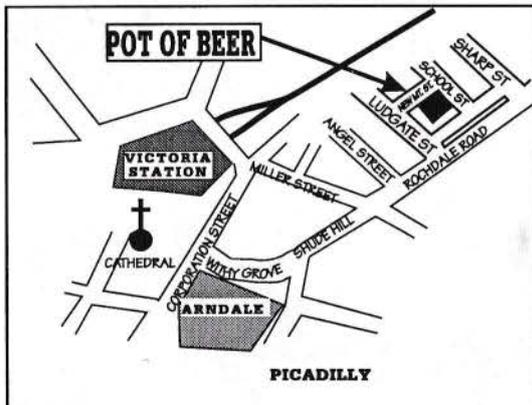
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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

A minor item in this month's Pub News – the application to build a new pub on Stockport's Great Underbank could herald a big shake-up in the towns drinking scene, and not necessarily a welcome one.

The new pub will, in all likelihood, be the long-expected Stockport outlet for the JD Wetherspoon organisation and the question we need to ask is: do we want a Wetherspoon's in Stockport?

With their combination of cask beers, low prices, no games, no music, food available all day, and no smoking areas, the Wetherspoon pubs would probably score highly on a tick list of what many Opening Times readers would want to see in a pub. Many CAMRA branches welcome them with open arms, too. There is however a downside.

First there is often a feeling of disappointment, that somehow many Wetherspoon pubs don't equal the sum of their parts. They can be inconsistent – get a good management team (for example, like those at the outlets in Cheadle Hulme and Longsight) and they can be very good pubs indeed. Others are less impressive, with only a token use of the company's guest beer programme and poor service.

More serious than this, though, is their impact on other local pubs. The pub scene in some areas can be immeasurably improved by the opening of a Wetherspoon's, again Longsight is a good example. In others, often underpubbed suburbs, there is clearly enough trade and money to go round to avoid any adverse local impact. Cheadle Hulme is a case in point here.

Central Stockport, though, is already well-pubbed. Many of its pubs exist in a finely balanced equilibrium. Disturb that to any great extent and some will undoubtedly go out of business. That's not to say that no new pubs should ever open in the town centre. What is in doubt is whether they should be cheap beer super pubs which characterise the Wetherspoon operation.

With its combination of multi-beer freehouses, heritage pubs and widely available, and often high quality, beers from independent brewers, Stockport is arguably one of the best pub crawls in the country (despite the existence of several self-proclaimed 'Real Ale Capitals'). It has largely avoided the youth-oriented 'circuit' which blights many other town centre drinking scenes. And make no mistake, sited between the White Lion, Briarlys and Yates (now Addisons), the Wetherspoon's at night would not be a haven of peace and tranquillity but instead just another packed-out, vertical drinking bottle bar.

The advent of Wetherspoon's in Stockport threatens to undermine what we already have and introduce what we do not need. Do we want a Wetherspoon's in Stockport? The question almost answers itself.

John Clarke

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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). All editorial items © CAMRA: may be reproduced if source acknowledged. All Advertising images are copyright the respective design sources (Largely CPPR, but all other copyrights and trademarks acknowledged).

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

PUB OF THE MONTH AUGUST 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 & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for August is the Friendship, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield.

In the student heartland and surrounded by halls of residence, the Friendship is arguably the last true local on Wilmslow Road between the City Centre and Withington village, a role it maintains due to its ownership by Hydes Brewery who have resisted the temptation to turn it into another 'Young Persons Venue'. That's not to say it doesn't attract any of the local student population - one of the pub's strengths is its appeal to the whole local community, young and old alike.

The traditional values have been enhanced by a recent refurbishment (reported in a recent issue of Opening Times) which saw the pub redecorated in a very traditional style with autumn colours adding to the warm, friendly feel. Creditably, a largely separate vault area was retained at the rear of the pub too. Extensive outdoor drinking areas are very popular and well-used in fine weather.

The traditional qualities of the pub are underpinned by the range of cask ales available. Hydes Bitter and Jekyll's Gold are the regulars and these are accompanied by the latest craft ale from the brewery. It hardly needs saying that quality is tip-top.

Of course none of this would count for much if the right people weren't running the pub. Luckily in Chris and Tricia Batty, the Friendship is in very safe hands and this very well deserved award will be presented to them on the evening of Thursday, August 24th. The Friendship is well served by public transport, with a multitude of busses serving Wilmslow Road and stopping close by. From Stockport, the 42 will drop you almost outside.

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

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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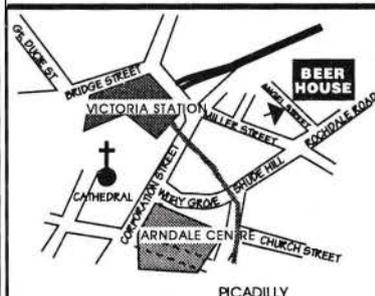
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STAGGER

with John Clarke

Our June Stagger took us to another part on inner-city Manchester, but one very different to those covered in recent issues. Whilst the A6 corridor is rapidly becoming a cask ale desert, Wilmslow Road to the east overflows with pubs, bars... and cask ale.

The starting point was the **Whitworth** on Moss Lane East, a popular Marston's house long known a something of a student haunt. Inside it's largely open-plan but decorated in traditional style and to my mind is a rather characterless pub. There are two cask beer - Marston's Pedigree and Banks's Bitter. The Banks's was off and my pint of Pedigree tasted as though it was about to join it. Happily it was changed for a much more palatable pint from a different handpump. "I think it's from a different barrel - I don't know whether that means anything" explained the barmaid, displaying a less than comprehensive knowledge of cellar craft. The rest of our party were perfectly satisfied with their pints, too.

We took the opportunity to visit the nearby **Denmark**, also on Moss Lane East. This is a modern estate-type pub, built by Hydes' to replace the old Denmark just around the corner. It's a standard two-roomer with spacious lounge and vault, the exposed brickwork and roof trusses making for an incongruous rustic feel. All in all it seems pleasant enough without being anything special. The same comments could apply equally to the Hydes' Bitter that was available on handpump. Mild and Light may have been available on electric dispense but we were unable to establish whether the pumps were actually working.

Another new pub next, the **Hogshead** on Wilmslow Road. The Hogsheads are Whitbread's national chain of ale houses and can vary enormously in quality. This one is usually pretty reliable but tonight was something of a let-down. The range of beers was uninspiring, comprising the usual suspects (Abbot, Pedigree, Landlord, Boddingtons etc) with only Brakspear Ben & Ted's Organic Beer and Branston DT (from Titanic) catching the eye. The latter wasn't on (and neither were Pedigree or Landlord) but the Ben & Ted's was pleasant enough, scoring comfortably above average. One of our party tried the Greene King Abbot and found this enjoyably good. (Since this was written however much has changed, again for the worst - see Manchester Matters on page 23) Round the corner on Grafton Street is Holt's **Grafton**, another new pub replacing an older one of the same name. Another standard two-roomer with lounge and vault, such is its popularity it was necessary to extend the pub shortly after opening. The lounge was bustling with a good pub atmosphere although we made our way to a small outdoor drinking area at the back. Mild and Bitter are on handpump and both were on good form.

From there it's a short walk to the **Bowling Green**, a former Greenalls pub which adopted their 'Porter's Ale House' concept. This means lots of bare wood, brewery-related bric-a-brac and a slightly different beer range. This includes a cheapie "Porter's Ale House Bitter" at 99p, which was unavailable on our visit, alongside Cain's Bitter and Pedigree. The former was average, the latter slightly better, although neither were much to write home about. Upper Brook Street forms something of boundary - on one side pubs and real ale thrive, on the other there's a trackless real ale desert from Chorlton-on-Medlock through Ardwick and on to Bradford and Beswick. There are a few oases in the desert, though and one of these was our next port of call. Just off Brunswick Street is Kincardine Road and the **Mawson**. A wonderful inter-war multi-



roomed gem with wood panelling, leaded stained glass and a rich red and gold décor which makes for a cosy, welcoming atmosphere. As ever, there was a great atmosphere and we were pleasantly surprised to see that the handpulled Tetley Mild and Bitter and been

joined by a guest beer, Coach House Coachman's Bitter. All three beers were on good form, the Tetley Mild being exceptionally good. Back across Upper Brook Street and down Dover Street to **Jabez Clegg**, the first purpose-built student beer hall in the city. I was particularly interested to see how this was faring, having first visited when the pub was little more than a building site during its conversion from a former church hall. The first part of this complex to come on stream was a smaller bar at the back, now dubbed the "Manchester Room" which is where we headed. What a let-down! I recalled quite a stylish décor but this was just another bar. To make matters worse, all of the handpumps were out of use and some had lost their handles giving a very poor impression on the bar. Real ale was available in the big room next door, though with a choice of Boddington's Bitter, Taylor's Landlord and Coach House Summer Sizzler. We all went for the latter and very nice it was, too. As for the pub, though, I got the distinct impression of an establishment just going through the motions and certainly in dire need of a refurbishment. I'm sure it's still turning a handsome profit but, I don't know, I just feel it could be so much better.

Back to Wilmslow Road and just round the corner is the excellent **Kro Bar**. This opened late last year and is an extremely stylish conversion of the former premises of the Manchester Temperance Society. There are outdoor drinking areas at both front and back and inside there are two first floor rooms along with another two downstairs, one being a former yard which has skilfully been brought into the body of the pub. Although very busy we managed to get seats and were able to enjoy an extensive range of beers. The bar is dominated by a bank of handpumps dispensing Boddingtons Bitter, Courage Directors, Wells Bombardier and Taylors Landlord. The Boddies was good but the Landlord was truly exceptional and proved to be the best beer of the night. I was tempted by one of the small but well-chosen range of German bottled beers - Jever Pilsner is the bitterest beer made in Germany and a long-time personal favourite.

Time was now pressing and we were clearly not going to complete our planned itinerary. However a short bus ride took us to Grosvenor Street. The **Footage & Firkin** was charging to get in so we quickly made for **Sand Bar** around the corner. We think it was graduation day or something similar as the street was overflowing with revellers, most of whom seemed to be patronising Sand Bar. As ever we were spoilt for choice here. Phoenix Bantam, Wells Bombardier, Hart PA, Milton Pyramid and Burton Bridge Hello Sailor (!) were on handpump and there was a wide range of German and Belgian bottled beer as well, plus one or two continental specialities on draught. Sadly, due to the nature of the night, all of these were being dispensed into plastic glasses, which did mar our enjoyment slightly. Having found seats we stayed for another, though so it obviously wasn't marred to badly and indeed the beers tried, Bantam and Burton Bridge on draught, various in bottle, were very pleasant.

Thus ended an interesting and varied evening. This article can only be a snapshot of what we found on one particular night and so can't be considered a definitive judgement of the pubs or their beers. However, it's fair to say that all of the pubs visited had their merits and varied in style enormously. We had no seriously bad beer, either and some of it was very good indeed. Everywhere visited would repay a visit so why not try some of these pubs for yourself and see what you think.



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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Rod Oliver, Marple:

An addition to any list of the shortest books in the would be "A Pub Crawl Around Marple".

Anyone driving into the town from Stockport is met by the Bowling Green, soon to be renamed Satis House, empty for months, and the Jolly Sailor looking like Fort Apache, the Bronx and also closed.

With the exception of one handpump of Boddington's, there is only Robinson's, Robinson's and more Robinson's with their wide variety of seasonal beers and specials.

Dave Porter would be sure of a place in the Good Beer Guide if he came back to his home town and it seems the only building in Marple not (wrongly) linked with Wetherspoon's has been my house. I'm open to offers - a two-up, two-down Wetherspoon's - The Bijou, I think.

Now, now, Robbies have at least launched a range of bi-monthly seasonals, with Whistling Will to be followed by Coopers Bell at the end of the month. And as for predicting Dave Porter's pubs going in the Good Beer Guide...ed(2). Ed(2)'s ramblings were truncated at this point by Ed(1) who cried "Enough, already!"

From Dave Patchett, Manager of the Crown Inn, Cheadle:

With reference to your July issue of Opening Times, I would like to mention your article "Stagger". After visiting 11 public houses in one night, how can any of the group who do the "Stagger" tell a good beer from a bad beer?

Needless to say that during your visit to the 11 public houses you sampled beers from Hydes', Cain's, Boddingtons, Greenalls, Banks's, Marston's and Robinson's which are all totally different brews. Why doesn't Opening Times do a survey amongst customers who use all the houses in each area to give their verdicts on the quality of beers in the houses which you mention. I'm sure that the results which you got would be a lot more accurate than the conclusions your group reach.

While it's true that palates may be a little jaded by the end of the more intensive Staggers, it's still easy to tell when a given beer is on form and when it's pretty ropey. As it happens, most of the beer tried on the Cheadle Stagger attracted favourable comments, one of the exceptions being Hydes' Jekyl's Gold ...in the Crown, Hmm. - ed(1). My palate is a little stronger than eleven half pints - ed(2).

From: Tony Jowsey, Stockton-on-Tees:

I get back copies of OT via Tim Kniveton, late of Atherton, and it has occurred to me you might like to know about the Zetland at Marske, which offers north-western beers - Robbos Bitter, Thwaites, Jennings plus Adnam's and Cameron's Strongarm on a rotating basis. The landlord, Richard Whittle, always known as Sol, just as the pub is always called the Top House, has recently issued his first CD. His group are called Los Gatos Pantanas (The Swamp Cats) and the album is a good mix of blues, cajun etc. The pub is 50 yards from the station - half-hourly service to Middlesbrough to connect wit the Transpennine Express (17 minute journey), and enquiries for B&B etc should be made on 01642 483973. It is a largish pub, with a proper bar, several CAMRA awards over the years and I'm sure any of your readers visiting the area would feel they had found a home from home, especially as this is the only regular outlet for Lancastrian ale for many miles.

From Peter William, via e-mail:

Is there any thing that spoils the taste of a great pint more than someone else's smoke? As a non-smoker I lament the number of otherwise good pubs that I would visit, if I did not need breathing apparatus to do so. Although 60% of the population do not smoke voluntarily, the lack of smoke free rooms in pubs means that most have only two choices. Put up with the stink or drink at home. I am afraid that I have come to favour the latter. It is not simply the risk to my health that concerns me. I find that the taste of the beer is also spoiled. But the main reason that I avoid so many establishments is that I hate waking up in the morning and smelling my clothes all round the house.

I find it quite incredible that owners spend thousands on daft makeovers for their pubs in the hope of attracting more customers, whilst so little effort is made to improve the environment for non-smokers. Most offices, hospitals, trains, planes, and buses are non-smoking, not only for the health benefits, but also because many people just will not put up with the smell. If landlords wonder why business is not what it once was, perhaps they should forget the Irish themes, and look at the colour of their ceiling for the answer.

Now it just so happens that many landlords/breweries actually put tobacco (or brown dye) into the ceiling washes on their pubs during re-decoration to achieve a sort of smoked-in effect....though I have yet to find a pub with a sort of reverse air conditioner. Generally I think the situation is actually improving, as more people give up smoking, and health regs insist on better air quality. I would not like to go too far (despite being a fairly fanatical non-smoker) or else we'll start seeing a new campaign for alcohol free pubs - ed(2)

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HYDES
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Hydes Brewery continue to pick up a variety of brewing contracts to help keep the mash tuns full. Latest additions to the contract brewing range include Peter Yates Bitter for the Yates's Wine Lodge wholesaling arm and, for local suppliers Findlater & Mackie, Grays Champion (4.3%) and Grays Premium (4.5%). The latter was previously a re-badged version of Mansfield Brewery's Old Baily, which has now been discontinued. Under Hydes, however, all are separate, independent brews. The bi-monthly seasonal beer programmes of the Manchester family brewers all seem to run in tandem, and next month will see new beers from Hydes, Lees and Robinson's. Hydes are producing Henry's Hampton, Lees are re-brewing Manchester Champion Beer, a draught version of a previous winner in Tesco's Beer of the Year competition for bottled beers, while Robinson's will be launching Coopers Bell, the second in their new seasonal range.

The only local family brewer not to produce a seasonal beer range is Joseph Holt, who prefer to concentrate solely on the standard mild and bitter, both of which are now back on form after last year's disastrous quality problems. Holt's have however entered into a supply agreement with the Head of Steam chain of railway station bars, which will see Holt's Bitter supplied to outlets in Liverpool, Scarborough, Newcastle, Huddersfield and London. This is the first time Holt's have agreed to supply beer so far from their immediate trading area.

While the mash tuns remain dark and empty at Bridgewater Ales, another micro brewer will be springing back into life this month. The Altrincham Brewing Company was launched last year but remained very much a part-time, intermittent affair. After considering relocation to nearby Lymm, the decision has been taken to install a brewing plant in a room at the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham. The was being shipped over from Belgium at the beginning of August and it is expected that test brewing on the 1½ barrel plant will be under way by the end of the month. Look for a formal launch in September when the brewery's Cheshire Cat Ales will come fully on stream.

Ex-Bridgewater people Richard Bazen and Danny Bates are now firmly ensconced at Heywood's Phoenix Brewery where they have already proved their worth to brewery boss Tony Allen. Will we see Bridgewater-style beers from Phoenix? Unusually, there isn't much new from Phoenix this month. The three superb 'White' beers - Typhoon, Tornado and Hurricane - are continuing and will be joined as a one-off by White Lightning, a 4.2 per cent beer being brewed for Ian Casson's Lancashire beer festival at the Beer House. If you see any of these 'White' beers on sale make sure you try them as they really are top notch.

Rochdale's Pictish Brewery continues to prosper and has picked up a few accounts following the Bridgewater demise. Pictish Porter is being discontinued for the remainder of the summer months (it's not a warm weather beer) but will return later in the year. New this month is Corn Dolly, a 5 per cent strong pale ale with the strong hop profile that is becoming the Pictish trademark.

Interbrew seems to be having trouble in communicating from the right hand to the left. Last month, sales and marketing director Stewart Gilliland declared that Wadworth 6X would be the group's "lead premium cask ale". At the same time he was less positive about the rest of the group's cask ale portfolio, including Draught Bass, rehearsing the same tired old arguments about cask ale declining with the trend towards nitrokeg etc, etc. Gilliland is, presumably one of the keg ale fanatics that Interbrew inherited from Whitbread and Bass and perhaps needs to have a word with his new boss, Hugo Powell. The latter, in a separate, and later,



interview, picked out one of the company's beers as a potential star performer - Draught Bass. Er - isn't that one of the beers that Steward Gilliland was less keen on? And isn't it a cask ale?



Bolton's Bank Top Brewery has three or four new beers in the pipeline. CAMRA's St Albans beer festival have commissioned two special beers for the end of September, and in October another festival special will be brewed for the Howcroft in Bolton itself. Brewer John Feeney tells us that he is still working on a dark mild and we look forward to seeing this before too long. Incidentally, congratulations are due to John for completing not one but two bungee jumps last month - apparently he got such a buzz from the first he just had to go back and do it again!

We may be losing another local brewery - the owners of Mash have indicated that the Manchester brewery may close and be relocated to a new location in London.

White Shield Saved (Again) And Thomas Hardy Goes West...

Worthington White Shield, one of the most famous bottled beers of all time, is returning home to Burton on Trent.

Originally known as India Pale Ale, the legendary bottle-conditioned beer is to be brewed and bottled by Museum Brewing Company at the Bass Museum. The move follows a two-year exile when King & Barnes brewed and bottled White Shield under licence in Sussex.

Bass Museum director Mike Maryon said: "This is truly exciting news for the Museum Brewing Company and we are proud to have been chosen by Bass to continue to produce this classic ale. "The Museum will ensure that White Shield's fine quality and distinctive taste remains every bit as good as its first ever brew."

Museum head brewer Steve Wellington said: "White Shield is a king among bottled beers and has always been a brewers' favourite. "I brewed White Shield in the early '60s at the Old Brewery in Burton High Street and I am delighted to have the opportunity to brew it again."

Good Beer Guide editor Roger Protz said: "This is marvellous news - a classic beer saved. King & Barnes made a good job of matching White Shield but it no longer had that unique Burton quality, in particular the sulphury 'Burton snatch'.

"Worthington White Shield is a true Burton India Pale Ale and I am delighted it's going back to its home town. I congratulate Steve Wellington on his commitment and devotion and I look forward to cracking the first bottle with him on the side of his mash tun."

Another of the handful of bottle-conditioned beers on the market when CAMRA was founded could also have a new home soon... in America. Thomas Hardy, the contract brewing firm which took over Eldridge Pope's brewery in Dorchester, Dorset, earlier this year announced that it would produce no more of the 12 per cent ABV brew because of falling sales. Now Phoenix Imports of Maryland, which tried to order a batch of the 2000 vintage only to be told there wasn't going to be one, is in talks with Eldridge Pope, the brand's owner, to have it brewed under licence. Phoenix president George Saxon said: "I can assure all Hardy's fans that we are making every effort to save this product from the dustbin of classic English beers."

Vaux's famous Double Maxim brown ale could soon be relaunched by a consortium headed by former Vaux head brewer Jim Murray. It is thought that the beer could be brewed by Newcastle's Federation Brewery.

Stop Press: in a fitting postscript to its days at King & Barnes, Worthington White Shield became Champion Bottled Conditioned Beer in the Guardian-sponsored competition held at this year's Great British Beer Festival.

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).

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Departing at 6.43pm (18:43) from Manchester Piccadilly (for Stopfordians, it calls at Brinnington about 6.58pm [18:58]) on the first and third Tuesdays of each month in summer (first Tuesdays only in winter), this train forms part of the Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership.

The train is the regular stopping service to Sheffield but on these days passengers are provided with entertainment on board from various folk groups and musicians. After arriving at Edale around 7.70pm, most of the passengers, along with the musicians, descend on the Ramblers Inn.

Conveniently hard by the rail station and formerly the Church Hotel, the name change came with the advent of its popularity with walkers

and hikers. It has a pleasing collection of rooms – a bar area, some given over to pool, darts and the like, and a well-used dining area. It also offers accommodation, so those over indulging and missing the last train back will be able to find a bed for the night.

The beers come from Sheffield's Kelham Island brewery and can include their Sheffield Bitter, seasonal beers and a beer brewed specially for the pub, "Beyond Hope". Geddit? That's the next station along the line towards Sheffield. When I called, Springhead Bitter from the brewery of that name was also available. If the weather's fine these can be enjoyed in the large beer garden. There's also a children's play area for the kids.

You can either choose to stay at the Rambler for further musical reverie or wander into the village proper and visit the Old Nag's Head Inn. This pub, so the sign outside says, officially marks the start of the Pennine Way. More rambling than the aforementioned Rambler, the loftily beamed lounge bar is dominated by a huge stag's head, antlers and all, above the chimney breast. The Hikers Bar has lower ceilings and has been opened out somewhat to reveal a cluster of separate areas. Food is available both lunchtimes and evenings and once again you can sit outside to enjoy your pint. The beer range varies but at the time of my visit featured beers from Tetley, 'Grays', Barnsley and Black Sheep.

Both pubs are open all permitted hours, can get busy and can be a little on the expensive side. The return service from Edale is at 9.07pm which allows enough time to sample the delights of the quaint Derbyshire village and still get back in time for public transport connections home (or another pint if you feel so inclined). A reasonably priced cheap day return ticket (£6.40 from Manchester) is available. A Hope Valley Leisure Guide booklet can be obtained from main line rail stations.

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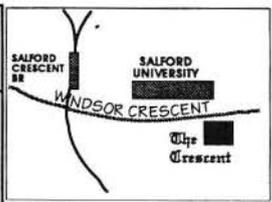
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Moderating the Yobs

Tony Blair committed one of the worst gaffes of his premiership when he suggested frog-marching drunken yobs to cashpoints to collect on-the-spot fines, a plan quickly condemned by senior police officers as ill-considered and unworkable. But there is no doubt that there is a serious and growing problem of late-night alcohol-related violence and disorder in our major towns and cities.

This has been encouraged by two major changes in our drinking culture over the past twenty years. The first is the increase in the strength of beer. Before 1980, it was difficult to find any draught beers above 4% ABV, whereas now premium lagers of 5% or above are the trouble-makers' preferred tittle. These lagers are also deliberately brewed to be bland and easy-drinking. Getting drunk on mild or ordinary bitter takes a lot more doing than pouring strong lager down your neck.

The second is that pubs have become much bigger, more open plan and more conducive to stand-up drinking. This has even been encouraged by the licensing authorities in the interests of improving supervision from the bar. But an official Home Office study has now shown that the more open-plan a pub is, and the more the customers stand rather than sit down, the more likely it is to be associated with trouble. You can't really visualise much disorder happening in the likes of the Circus Tavern or the Swan with Two Necks, and even if it did break out it would be very localised. But if something goes off in one of the new mega-pubs the effects can spread like wildfire.

Paradoxically, while in many ways we are becoming more censorious about alcohol, we are much more tolerant of drunkenness. In the 1950s, it was a point of pride that someone could "hold their drink" and it was a source of shame and embarrassment to get legless. Yet today you often hear even young professional people bragging about how bladdered they were the previous night. At the same time, regular, moderate drinking is discouraged - for example by employers frowning on their workers having a lunchtime pint - which only encourages people to cut loose on the few occasions when they do get the opportunity.

Extended closing times are often proposed as a way of reducing drink-related violence, but the behaviour of British tourists on foreign holidays suggests they could make it even worse. In various subtle ways, closing times have already been relaxed, moving back from 10.30 to 11, with drinking-up time extended, and late licences more freely available, but that trend has gone hand-in-hand with the upsurge in trouble. The experience with opening throughout the day isn't really a guide, as there weren't crowds of drunks spilling out of pubs at 3 pm, as there now are at 11. The people who want to go out and get hammered overwhelmingly want to do it late at night, not during the afternoon. It's also suggested that increasing the availability of food in pubs would improve matters. But in fact there's never been as much food on sale in pubs in the evenings. In the 1950s, evening pub food was virtually unknown - but drunken yobbery was equally rare.

In reality, there are no quick or easy answers. You're not going to limit the strength of beer by law, and in the short term extended opening hours would merely spread disorder throughout the night. But it is clear that smaller, more compartmentalised licensed premises with more fixed seating (that is, something more like proper pubs) are much less trouble-prone, and planning policies should encourage this type of establishment rather than open-plan stand-up bottle bars. But in the long term the problem will not be solved unless we move towards a climate where moderate drinking is accepted as a normal part of everyday life, and drunkenness is considered uncool, which regrettably is the opposite of what prevails today.

Visit Curmudgeon on the World Wide Web at
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(Note new improved URL - but the old one will still work).

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

AUGUST '95

The extra large heading was "At Last! Sensible Sunday Opening arrives". All day opening during the week had been introduced as long ago as 1988, so it had taken seven long years for Sunday restrictions to be relaxed - pubs could remain open during Sunday afternoons. Some licensees had formed the opinion that restrictions were to be completely abolished, and they could be open from 11am to 11pm. Sadly, that particular reform was thought to be still some way off.

The Rossendale Brewery, set up in April 1994, based at the Griffin Inn, Haslingden, and run by former Stockport resident Dave Porter, had doubled the size of its tied estate. To two. The Albion in Clayton-le-Moors, near Accrington, was to sell the full range of Porter's beers, and the licensee was to be Paul Stanyer, who had previously been barman at the Crown, Heaton Lane (and now he's at Stockport's Swan With Two Necks, after some years at Porter's Railway in Stockport).

Manchester's first J D Wetherspoon pub was due to open on 15 August - this was the first venture into the north west by the very successful London-based operator. It would feature the usual policy of no music, no pool table, and a no-smoking area. It was a £2 million conversion of the old Deansgate cinema into The Moon Under Water. With something like 8000 square feet of public area, it was thought to be the biggest in the UK.

The two "Forthcoming Beer Festivals" were both in North Wales - Bangor, and Denbigh (which was described as "just about the friendliest and best of the small festivals"). Neither appears any more, nor does Llandudno or Rhyl - seems a sad loss.

On the plus side, in-house beer festivals seemed to be becoming more and more popular. During early September, the Boundary at Audenshaw was staging its "First British Beer Festival", in a marquee adjoining the pub, and the Crown on Heaton Lane was to feature about 50 beers in total. Later in the month were to be two more in-house beer festivals at the now-defunct Head of Steam on Whitworth Street, and the newly opened Wetherspoon's on Deansgate (both in the City Centre). Later in October, a major festival was to be held in Bolton at the Howcroft Inn (a tradition that is still going strong - and much looked forward to this coming October).

There were several references to the Gladstone on Hillgate. It was closed "once more" but due to open "soon". The "Local Haunts" column talked about the mysterious "lady" in the cellar, and the footsteps upstairs when there were only two people downstairs in the whole pub. Originally known as the Bishop Blaize, the Gladstone has now reverted to that name.

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 196: John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Phil Levison, Peter Edwardson, John Hutchinson, Tim Jones, John Tune, Stuart Ballantyne, Brian Carey, Paul Stanyer, Rick Caveney, Steve Smith, Phil Booton, Andrew Sleight

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ASH REOPENS

After a slightly prolonged period of closure for a fairly substantial refurbishment, the Ash Hotel on Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel, reopened for business on Friday 7 July. The pub has been transformed, and owners Unique are to be congratulated. From a dingy barn, the pub has been turned into, well, a pub.

The former games room had a false ceiling removed to reveal the excellent original, iron, glass and wooden canopy roof - and is now an attractive dining area when required, or a useful seating area in the evenings. Work on the very extensive garden is on-going, with more planting expected, but already it is a pleasant place to sit and drink. The main drinking area, still opened out into one room is well divided into lounge and vault/games areas that successfully have a different feel. The fine stained glass windows on the staircase can now be seen.



The whole pub exudes a good, quality feel, and handpumps are a major feature of the bar, dispensing the major regular (and well kept) offerings of Tetley and Boddingtons, but also a changing selection of guest beers from a variety of regional breweries. According to the pub company, a scheme at their Yorkshire pubs offering an extensive range of micro-brewery beers is set to be extended to Manchester, and the Ash should be one of the first pubs to benefit.

The food side of the operation has been similarly transformed, and taken resolutely upmarket with an interesting range of dishes from lighter snacks to substantial three course meals, at reasonable prices. Altogether, licensees Jayne & Bryan Hall are justifiably pleased with the result.

BHURTPORE FESTIVAL From Strength to Strength

Record numbers of visitors to this year's Bhurtpore Inn Beer Festival also had the chance to visit Paradise, writes John Cresswell, Chair of Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association.

The new Paradise Brewery opened its doors during the Festival, offering brewery tours and the chance to sample Nantwich Ales' Dabbers Gold (pale, straw-coloured, 5% ABV) and the darker Bitter (4%). Both had been brewed at St Helens College and drew very favourable comments from visitors. By the time you read this brewing will have commenced on site - telephone 01270 780916 for full details of beers, tours and outlets.

Figures at Wrenbury Station passed all previous records with 437 passengers arriving at Wrenbury between 12th and 15th July. Of these 280 arrived on the Saturday. Unfortunately there were some problems with the train service on the Thursday evening and also on Saturday 15th. The through service from Piccadilly at 11.33 was cancelled due to brake problems - it started from Crewe and did stop at Wrenbury with 48 alighting. Thankfully Wales & West Trains Ltd arranged for the 12.33 from Piccadilly to stop specially at Wrenbury with a further 43 alighting from this service. The Association has drawn the attention of Wales & West to the shortcomings in services. Thanks to all affected for being so patient. Luckily the Paradise Brewery, adjacent to the station, proved its worth with some passengers awaiting one delayed train availing themselves of another brewery tour! The Beer Festival itself was a huge success with beers fast disappearing on the Saturday night.

I received many comments praising the Association for its efforts in promoting the line, and I look forward to seeing you on the station next year. You may care to visit some of the other attractions along the line. (John kindly sent me copies of two very useful leaflets, one produced by the Passenger Association detailing some local attractions, the other produced by South Shropshire Tourist Association featuring the county's breweries. Both are available from John Cresswell, 39 Cotton Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 2DY. Please enclose a SAE - ed(1).)

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CAMRA
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Great British Beer Festival 2000

Last month, I wrote: "...the Great British Beer Festival (Overpriced, understaffed and too much American beer..." Well how wrong could I be. A truly vast American bar, taking up half of a very large Foreign Beer Stand, with flags, staff and...NO BEER! Well very little anyway. Laughably, the ship with the relevant container broke down in Rotterdam, and by Friday it was still marooned. Ho, ho! How I wish I'd taken a camera. I found the "Gawd bless ye ma'am, we are not worthy" bar (The Queen Mum's 21 beer commemorative bar) far too strong for my taste and ran away gasping for breath from such monarchist fawning (and I'd hardly call myself a republican), so I can't tell you about the beers, oh except the Youngs one which I had in a pub. Based on 'Winter Warmer but with no hops and added caramel at 5.0%. Yeuk. Actually overall the CAMRA shindig at Olympia was pretty good. Well laid out, more (but never enough) seating, very good range of German, Belgian, and indeed, British beers, all at an excellent temperature, and in three days I had nothing that was not in tip top condition. So, pricing apart (it IS London, I suppose), well done to all concerned. I will draw a veil of the Champion Beer Judging (though c.f. my comments last month on Cider Judges) until September.

Others

Bhurlpore was very good, with the unexpected bonus of the new Paradise brewery by the station (whose beers were very good imho). The specials were good too, as was everything I had from the main bar, though some of the gravity dispensed Festival bar beers suffered a tad in the heat. And then, of course, there was ...Leadmill. Ian's last fest at the Beerhouse was a tad confusing, because for once, Oliver Hare messed up an order and a few of the more interesting beers (such as the Carlow stuff from Ireland) failed to turn up until after the festival. Still there was a good range, and condition was maintained. Unfortunately there was also...Leadmill.

Leadmill - a 'brewery' of Nottingham

Which brings me to Leadmill. Outright winner of the Very Worst Beer of the Millennium (pick one - last or next - it'll still win) award for their 'Apocalypse Now'. So truly awful that you wish the real Apocalypse would hurry up and come before you had to drink the second half. Oh my. I have never tasted such an excrescence (and the condition was perfect at BOTH Bhurlpore and the Beerhouse - I tried it again - being a damfule - thinking it surely couldn't be that bad - it was) masquerading as a beer in my life. So I made the mistake of trying one of their other beers. Then, in desperation a third, and a fourth. I have no hesitation in awarding Leadmill the honour of brewing the four worst commercial cask ales in the world, and probably in recorded human history. (For the record, in order of foulness, Rolling Thunder, Line Backer and Niagara). I had sample qualities of Agent Orange (poor, but I might finish a half), and Arctic Light (dreadful). I eschewed the Wild Weasel. Now I realise someone must like these beers - presumably the taste-challenged brewer (unless he is an evil sadist planning to convert the world to Caffreys as an alternative) - but I have yet to meet him or her. Be their likes milds, malty scots beers, east anglian hop-free beers, gueuze, bud light, decent, hoppy IPAs - NO-ONE I have spoken to has a good word for this stuff. Everyone seems to detest it. Ian at the Beerhouse tried it at Bhurlpore and wailed that he had a cellar-full of the stuff - if only he'd known. And, oh, did it take a long time to shift. Avert, avert, avoid. Try an exorcism. Try strychnine. Anything, ANYTHING but Leadmill. I hope the brewers have a day-job, because they are clearly in the wrong business. I stress that this is my opinion and not that of CAMRA locally or nationally (but almost certainly the view of the vast bulk of individual members who have had the misfortune to drink the vile stuff). God! I can still taste the filthy stuff as I write. I see one free-house advertising in this paper is listing Leadmill as a forthcoming attraction...I think SIBA (the micro-brewery association) needs a whip-round to buy these guys out before they destroy the reputation of the several hundred very good micros that exist. What did the denizens of Nottingham do to deserve this.

More Manchester Matters

No doubt much of this will be discussed elsewhere, but as I have the dubious privilege of seeing much of OT before I pen my drivel,

there are a few pieces of late breaking news I can vouchsafe. Indirect fallout from the Interbrew/Whitbread takeover has begun, with changes in the Whitbread pub estate. The well liked Adge and Mike have left the Wilmslow Rd Hogshead for Walsall (though they may soon reappear in Sale, I gather). The pub is debranded, cask ale is out and it is to be another vertical crap-bottle emporium for flavour-challenged students. Apparently the overheads of running it as a proper Hogshead was too much for vacation trade. It is also apparently the case that the Deansgate Hogshead is sort-of being rebranded - in that Real Ale is being 'de-emphasised'. I gather Didsbury and the High Street emporia are safe for the mo. During a refit of the Crown & Anchor 'Alehouse' on Hilton St half the handpumps vanished, so I expect when all is done and dusted this will be a cask-ale house no more though hopefully a token handpump or two will remain. More next month.

The date for the next Northern Quarter shindig is finalised - a 'World Tour' on 19 - 22 October. The May affair will be a hard act to follow, so it will be a test of the mettle of Ken Birch, our erstwhile food writer, CAMRA stalwart, and otherwise popular licensee who is now ensconced in the Pot of Beer. Anyway, Ken, the very best of luck.

Tony from the Centro asked me to express his sincere thanks to Ian Casson (Beerhouse) and John Henley (Fringe) for their assistance with beer supplies and staff when he tried (successfully) to cater to the needs of the attendees at this month's N/4 Street Festival, without whose help he would have been swamped. Needless to say Ian has a festival planned this month and next, Idy at the Crescent, Salford has one over the bank holiday, as does the Stalybridge Buffet.

Beers of the Month

Smiles Glorious 12th (3.8% abv)/Gales HSB (4.8% abv)

The latter (a very old favourite that seemed to have lost a lot of character) has gloriously come back to form, won something at GBBF and now resembles what it was in the early 80s, when, full of a gallon or so of it, I used to run over the bonnets of police landrovers stuck in SOHO traffic jams (hence its then London nick-name - Landrover brew!) The Smiles brew is a light red-brown beer with a small head (no torrifed wheat here) and a slight flowery sharpness in the nose leading into an appropriately light but dry body with a hoppy bitterness dominating a short, sharp and ultra-dry finish. Emminently quaffable summer beer.



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NAMED & SHAMED

More Pubs With Misleading Signs

In our March edition we highlighted two Stockport pubs with signs advertising real ale when none was available inside. At the time we said that other offending pubs would be similarly exposed if they didn't put matters right. Some have, but others haven't bothered.

We had six pubs in our sights. Two have taken the offending signs down and one has been repainted and the misleading wording removed. Three remain.

In Longsight, the Bay Horse received a very welcome refurbishment some time ago. Outside the sign says 'Real Ale' and we understand it was intended to introduce this. However, no cask beer has appeared in the pub and it seems unlikely that it ever will. The sign remains, however.

The Crown on Hillgate, is a different story. It used to sell the cask conditioned ales that it advertises outside, and very good they were too. It was even Pub of the Month less than three years ago. It's had its ups and downs since then, though, and hasn't sold real ale for some time. It even likes to advertise itself as a 'CAMRA free pub' - well, it might be 'CAMRA free' but it certainly couldn't escape our camera, though.

Number three is Squires in Didsbury. Here the sign advertises 'Hand Pulled Ales'. Now, you might argue that all beer is 'hand pulled' in the sense that it doesn't serve itself but we all know what this sign really means, don't we? Beer on handpump is what it means and it's some time since you were able to get that in Squires. So who's to blame for these? Two of the pubs are tenanted and one, Squires, is managed. None of the licensees will have responsibility for outside signing (but they could of course put things right by stocking cask beer...). Once again it's down to the pubs' owners. The Bay Horse was, until recently, owned by Paramount PLC (we think) and if so it will have now been sold on to the Royal Bank of Scotland, believe it or not. The Crown is now owned by Pubmaster, a Hartlepool-based pub company, while Squires is owned by Scottish & Newcastle Retail, the pub owning arm of national brewers Scottish Courage, who really should know better.

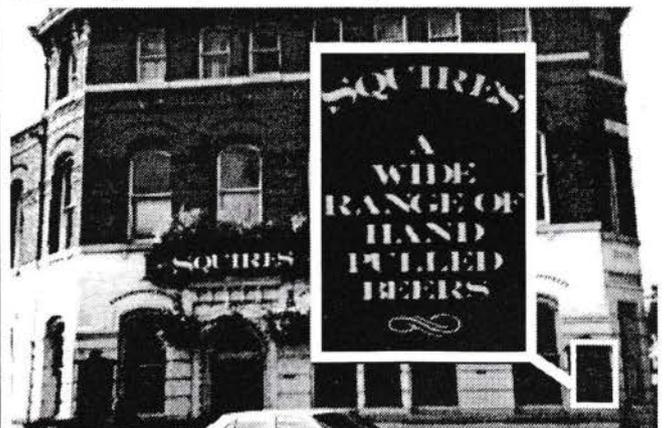
Hopefully this exposure will lead to these signs disappearing. Just to make sure, letters have been sent to the appropriate trading standards departments.



The Bay Horse - NO REAL ALE - even the Brit-fizz lagers being described as 'Continental' is a poor joke



A former Pub of the Month fallen on hard times - The Crown on Hillgate now boasts of itself as CAMRA-free - its certainly free of any connection with Real (Cask Conditioned) Ales



Another shabby display from Scottish & Newcastle retail - this time at the sad and rundown-looking Squires in Didsbury, very much a 'hand-pull' free zone. For S&N's other shabby displays see OT's *passim ad nauseam*.....



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

HISTORY IN A GLASS - FROM MEAD TO ALEHOUSE

A Wry Look at the History of British Drinking by Pete Soane

Every time you pick up a glass of beer you're looking at over 2000 years of drinking in this country. So, as we enter the new millenium it's a good time to look back at drinking and pubs in England from its earliest days to the present.

Before the Roman invaders so rudely disturbed our woad-painted ancestors wild honey was plentiful and mead was the favoured drink. But with the growth of settlement and the subsequent cultivation and deforestation of land honey became much scarcer. Malted grain was the obvious substitute and a new word "ale" or in Saxon "ealu" came into use. Incidentally, the word 'beer' is derived from the Sumerian/Hamitic languages and was used to describe the infusions of malted bread drunk in Egypt over 3000 years ago. The Romans brought with them two innovations which are relevant to our story, roads and wine. And as thirsty travellers needed rest and sustenance on their journeys so 'Mansiones' along the roads and 'Tabernae' in the towns were built to accommodate them. The Tabernae were identified by a bush of vine leaves displayed above the door, hence the saying "A good wine needs no bush".

During 450 A.D., after the Romans had departed two Jutish chieftains Hengist and Horsa met the Kentish King Vortigern at Ebbsfleet. During the subsequent banquet King Vortigern met the beautiful Rowena bearing a golden cup filled with wine. She greeted him with the words "Laverd King, wacht heil!" to which he replied "Drink Heil!" and bade the damsel drink. And so the custom of wassailing began and the custom of pledging and toasting has been with us, unbroken, for 1500 years.

Wassail, Wassail, over the town, Our toast it is white, our ale it is brown, Our bowl it is made of the maplin tree, We be good fellows all, I drink to thee.

The introduction of Christianity in 597 did little to moderate the drinking habits of the country and St. Dunstan, who appears on present day inn signs 'tweaking the devil's nose' was fighting a losing battle. The St. Dunstan's Inn at Langley near Macclesfield, a Marstons house with superb views from the back garden is one example. Even at Wakes 'The people fell to lechery and songs and dances with harping and piping and also to gluttony and sin and so turned the holyness to cursedness.'

What, in those days, did they drink from? Most of the drinking vessels would have been made of wood - the most common of which was the mazer or bowl. They were usually made from elm or, most prized, maple, the wood that gives the mazer its name. Mead was traditionally served in mazers as late as the 1660s. Leather bottles and metal were also popular choices for drinking vessels as well as a large amount of ornate glass.

Ale was simply made then, just malt barley, boiled with water with yeast added later. Flavourings such as ground ivy, costmary and even hops were sometimes added, as well as spices. As the population and pollution increased ale, being boiled, was the only safe liquid to drink. Wine was unaffordable for most of the people and ale along with bread was central to life.

Ancient Welsh Chronicles record the propensity of British chieftains to go into battle drunk. On the eve of the Battle of Hastings, perhaps the most famous in British history, the Normans, under William the Bastard, settled down to a night of sober prayer and contemplation. The English, however, having defeated the Viking Harold Haadrada at Stamford Bridge and then having marched 275 miles south, spent the night revelling "And in the morning had their brains arrested for the arrearages of the ingested fumes of the former night, and were no better than drunk when it came to fight!" However the delights of Anglo-Saxon feasting rapidly appealed to the previously sober-minded Norman conquerors. The knight Peter of Blois lamented: "When you behold our barons and knights going on a military expedition, you see their baggage horses loaded not with iron but wine, not with lances but cheeses, not with swords but bottles, not with spears but spits. You would imagine they were going to prepare a great feast rather than to make war." William, son of Henry I died when his White Ship ran aground after he rather foolishly gave his crew three casks of wine. William of Malmesbury commented 'Drinking in particular was a universal practice in which occupation they passed entire nights as well as days.... They were accustomed to eat till they became surfeited and to drink till they were sick. These latter qualities they imparted to their conquerors.'

As the number of alehouses grew so King Edgar in 975 restricted them to one per village. He also decreed that drinking vessels be

of a standard size, the pottle with a capacity of four pints. Each pottle was to be subdivided into eight parts by means of pegs set inside the vessel and no-one was to drink down more than one peg at a time. King Edgar certainly didn't think this through and Englishmen everywhere naturally took this as a challenge. They began to take each other down a peg or two, so much so that by the start of the twelfth century drinking to pegs was a serious social problem. After the murder of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury Cathedral pilgrimage became an important activity and inns were built to provide sustenance for weary travellers. Ale wives or 'brewsters' were engaged in brewing in the alehouses and were likely to be ducked if their ale was poor. An alewife was ducked at Kingston in 1745 and another in Chelmsford as late as 1801.

As brewing became more profitable so men began to replace women as brewers and even drinking became more unfeminine. By the end of the twelfth century drinking was done in bouts and as a lot of drinking vessels, horns, bowls and tumblers could not be put down once filled without spilling, the entire contents had to be consumed. Archbishop Edmund, in 1236, condemned 'the ill practice by which all that drink together are obliged to equal draughts, and he carries away the credit who hath most drunk and taken off the largest cups, therefore we forbid all forcing to drink.'

About this time Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire had a malthouse with a capacity to brew 900 barrels of strong ale per year (230,400 pints). And although monks were to enjoy their luxury for another 350 years an ever-increasing population meant that the alehouses and inns were growing in number to provide the needs of the nation. (To be continued in future editions of Opening Times)

This is what I now propose,
In a tavern I shall die,
With a glass up to my nose,
And God's angels standing by,
That they may indeed declare,
As I take my final tot,
May God receive with loving care,
Such a decent drunken sot.

*Fourteenth Century
Latin toast.*

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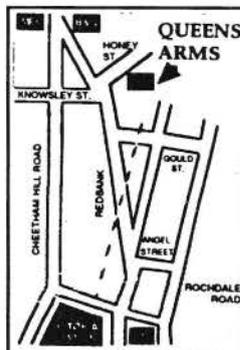
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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

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**A Far From
 Mild
 Challenge**

The Mild Challenge has a number of levels. The lowest level is to drink a glass of mild in a participating pub in each area, the next (and worthy of a pewter tankard, to drink a glass in every participating pub. It takes a very determined enthusiast to try to do every pub using legs and public transport alone. Here is two women's story of this year.

During a conversation in my pub (The Castle on Oldham St., Manchester City Centre), Jayne (my friend) said half-jokingly "Shall we do the Mild Challenge this year?" Some of the male customers - declaring it wasn't easy, gallantly offered lifts, if needed, to some of the outlying pubs. "Oh no!" said Jayne "We'll do it by Public Transport." So now we're on a double challenge! Jane equipped herself with Bus and Train Timetables and an A to Z; I acquired a copy of a G.M.P.T.E. Network map, and off we set.

Saturday 8th April

A No.68 bus to the Crescent, Salford - McGuinness Feather Plucker was our first drink of the challenge. On foot then to the Kings, Bloom St. for Black Cat, on to the Crown & Anchor for Holts Mild, and a short walk back to the Castle to sample Robinsons Dark Mild. Four down 59 to go.

Tuesday 11th April

Bus 192 to Hazel Grove. We found the Three Tunnes easily - Robbies Light, then back on the bus to the Blossoms, again Robbies Light. On foot to the Red Bull, again Robbies and on to the Spread Eagle (more Robbies). Winters came next - Holts (in top form) and on to the Brinnington Arms (yes, Robbies!). Then we walked on to Porters Railway to sample Porters Dark Mild (very nice!). A further walk to the Swan with Two Necks, for Robbies Dark Mild (excellent) finishing our walk for the evening at the Pineapple (Robbies). The 192 bus took us

home, and we took a two week break for holidays.

Sunday 30th April

No.11 bus to Claremont Road to find the Bee-Hive - Hydes. We walked to the Osborne - again Hydes. A No.42 bus took us to Withington and the Victoria - Hydes. Back on the 42 to Didsbury and the Fletcher Moss - more Hydes. We walked to the Station - Banks, then on to the Royal Oak, again Banks. A No.43 to East Didsbury and the Gateway - Hydes, then by train to Gatley and the Horse and Farrier - yes, Hydes. On foot again to the Gothic Bar - Cains, and the Prince of Wales - more Hydes! A long walk then to the High Grove (yes, Hydes!) and another equally long walk to the Griffin - Holts. A 369 bus took us to Adswold and the Cross Keys (Hydes). Back to Stockport on the 369 and the 192 back to Manchester. Phew, what a day - 13 pubs in all!

Monday 1st May

Train from Piccadilly to Rose Hill and the Railway - Robbies. We walked to the Pineapple in Marple - Robbies, and on to the Navigation - Robbies. Then by train from Marple to New Mills to the Masons Arms - Robbies. Train again back to Marple, where we walked to Marple Bridge and the Northumberland - Robbies, and on to Compstall to the Andrew Arms - (more Robbies). We took a 383 bus to Romiley, walked to the Cow & Calf - Robbies. By train then, to Oxford Rd via Piccadilly to the Lass O'Gowrie - Moorhouses Black Cat (excellent). Then we walked home.

Tuesday 2nd May

Train to Broadbottom and the Cheshire Cheese - Thwaites. Train to Gorton. Walked to the Plough - Robbies, on to the Pineapple - Hydes and on again to the Coach & Horses - Robbies. No.203 Bus back to Piccadilly.

Saturday 6th May

157 Bus to Woodford. A six minute bus turnaround gave us time to visit the Davenport Arms - Robbies, and catch the same bus to Cheadle Hulme and the Church - Robbies. **(Now I hate to interject, but going to the Davenport Arms for 6 minutes is the nearest thing to sacrilege I can think of - surely, surely you could have made it an hour! Ed(2). Still I digress...)** Next a 308 to Cheadle and the Royal Oak - (yes) Robbies. We then walked to Ye Olde Star - Hydes, and on to the Crown - Hydes. Then we took a No.11 to Edgeley and the Grapes - Robbies, walked to the Church Inn - Robbies again!. On we walked to the Olde Vic - Timothy Taylors Dark, then the Woolpack on Brinksway - Grays. A walk up the river took us back to Stockport and a 199 bus to High Lane and the Robin Hood - Robbies. Back to Hazel Grove by 199 and then a 374 to Conway Drive and the Three Bears - Robbies. Back (by bus) to Stockport and the Unity - Robbies - and then back home.

Monday 8th May

Walked to the Smithfield - Greene King, on to the Pot of Beer - Robbies Dark and finally to the Beerhouse - Titanic Mild (superb).

Tuesday 9th May

Train to Heaton Chapel, then on foot to the Crown, Heaton Moor - Greenalls, and on to the Nursery, Heaton Norris - Hydes. From there walked down to the Moss Rose - Hydes and a further long walk to Heaton Mersey and the Crown - Robbies. Yet another long walk to Burnage and the Albion - Hydes. Train from Burnage back to Piccadilly.

Saturday 13th May

The last leg. 192 bus to Stockport, 392 bus to Bredbury and the Arden Arms - Robbies. 327 bus took us back to Stockport and the Tiviot - Robbies. We walked to the Arden Arms - Robbies, then up to The Bakers Vaults - Robbies. A 330 bus took us to Hyde and the Sportsman, our last port of call - Magic Mushroom Mild. Well worth the effort. 201 bus back to Manchester. **THE END!**

A short footnote, to say thanks to Jayne, my friend and drinking companion and chief navigator, without whose help this wouldn't have been possible.
 Kathryn Smethurst



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**WARM WELCOME AND FINE
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Marooned on a desert island, shipwrecked only with the Good Beer Guide, the Champion Beer of Britain, Moorhouses Black Cat and the Champion Winter Beer, Robinson's Old Tom, we have asked the famous and not so famous, for five other beers to take with them, and their reasons for doing so. This month we start off by asking Paul Stanyer, licensee of Stockport Beer Festival and the Swan With Two Necks.

"Well, the first beer I would have to take would be Boddingtons, not the Boddies of today but that wonderful, hoppy golden ale of yesteryear. I can still remember the look on the landlord's face, when on the evening of my 18th Birthday, I strolled into my local (of two years) and said 'Stuart, a pint of bitter for the birthday boy'. 'About bloody time!' came his response, 'have this one on me.'

"Second beer has got to be Holt's Bitter, this beer when on form is so bitter that other beers just pale into insignificance. Many times the first pint had to have a lemonade top, just to take the edge off! I choose this beer not just for its unique bitterness but also because I was drinking this when I first clapped eyes on my wife, and Holt's and that moment are now impregnated on my taste buds.

"I'm not normally keen on the sweeter beers, however for my third beer there is an exception. That wonderful beer brewed by Dave Porter, Rossendale Ale. The first pint that I had in my first pub. It's not really a sweet beer, it's more fruity, with the fruit perfectly balanced with the hop, and at around 4% the perfect session ale.

"Fourth on the list has to be Kelham Island Pale Rider, for no other reason than it is absolutely wonderful. Keep an eye out for it, I guarantee you won't be disappointed!

"My fifth and final beer, decisions, decisions. Well, I was trying not to pick a foreign beer, and in fact it's not one beer in particular, it's a style of beer, namely German Dunkel Wheat Beers. These usually come in at 5% and have a very distinctive flavour. In true Food & Drink style, they taste of banana flavour bubble gum. Although they look like mud, a bottle of dunkel straight from the fridge on a hot sunny day on a desert island would be pure heaven." Watch out for more Desert Island Beers in forthcoming issues.



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12.00 - 3.00 Sunday. 3 course special plus full menu





KRO BAR

The Kro Bar opened its doors last November situated at 325 Oxford Rd in the All Saints area, overlooked by the Holy Name church and surrounded by the Manchester University establishments. This large terraced property built in 1813 was, ironically, the former home of the Manchester branch of the Temperance Society and more recently the Okasional café which was a squatters enterprise. Although there has been a large refurbishment of the property most of the original features have been maintained, this is in part due to the grade 2 listing but also because of the management's appreciation of the buildings architectural qualities. Spread over two floors and with a large forecourt, conservatory and rear beer garden there is plenty of room in which to enjoy the fine food and ales. Landlord Martin introduced myself and my two connoisseurs of good grub, Will and Marie-Luce to the bar explaining that a Kro is a Danish village public house and that it is indeed part owned by the Danish. The real ales available were Courage Directors, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Bombardier, Boddingtons was also available. There were some fine quality imported draught beers including Hoegaarden, Krombacher and Pilsner Urquell a Czech import that I became great friends with on a recent visit to the beautiful city of Prague. The range of bottled beers was immense and included some very interesting sounding ales Hof Brau Original Munchenar, Paulaner Hefe Weisse and Flensberger Pilsner to name a few. I even spotted a bottle of Hobgoblin lurking on the shelf. There is also a good sized wine list and vast array of teas/coffees served both hot or iced.

The food menu was quite extensive serving a mix of English, Danish and even a few Middle Eastern dishes there is also a varied selection of vegetarian dishes. Breakfast is served from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and for £3.95 consists of Cumberland sausages,

bacon, black pudding, eggs, tomato, mushroom, sautéed potatoes, beans and toast, the vegetarian counterpart is of similar size and price. The rest of the menu is served from 11:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. There's a good selection of home-made soups, salads and sandwiches the Danish platter incorporating sweet pickled herring, Danish brie with grape and curried yoghurt with prawn and egg. After much deliberating we settled for the Frikadeller £4.95, Danish pork & veal meatballs, served with braised red cabbage & sugar browned potatoes this came covered in a spectacularly tasty sauce which was gingerly mopped up with lots of bread and potato wedges. The home-made fishcakes £4.95, cooked to a traditional Danish recipe with salmon & smoked halibut were a dream and with three of them to consume were extremely filling. Lastly was the Gnocchi £4.85, small potato dumplings, pan fried with wild mushrooms in butter, again these were truly scrumptious. After the meals only Marie-Luce had the space for dessert which was a large portion of sticky toffee pudding £2.50, not a peep was heard from her until the plate was totally cleared.

If you can make it to the Kro bar while the weather is still dry you can dine 'Al Fresco' from the barbecue set up in the forecourt 5:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. weekdays and all day at the weekend. Serving 8 oz. sirloin steak £7.50, 8 oz. lamb steak £5.50 or 8 oz. tuna steak £6.50 as well as the usual burgers and hot dogs. Again there are plenty of vegetarian counterparts.

The Kro Bar can be found at 325, Oxford Rd., Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, M13 9PG tel: 0161 274 3100 fax: 0161 273 7550. email: contact@kro.co.uk ; website: www.kro.co.uk

N/4 ABV WORLD TOUR

19 - 22 October 2000

Hard on the heels of May's successful Manchester Northern Quarter ABV (alternative beer venues) tour - which featured 260 beers in cask and bottles, a second event is going ahead in October, with (among other things) all the Munich Oktoberfest beers featuring in the Beerhouse, and the eight pubs of May being joined by the Smithfield Hotel on Swan Street. Entertainment, food and beer from around the world, and over 100 cask ales to boot! Further details next month.



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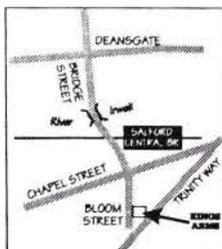
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TALES FROM THE VIENNA BREWPUBS

Phil Booton samples the beery delights of the Austrian capital

I recently had the opportunity to spend a weekend in Vienna, en route to Kosovo on business. I'd heard that there were several brewpubs in the city so decided to visit as many as possible in between viewing the more conventional tourist sites. After a later than expected arrival (courtesy of a cancelled Lauda Air flight!) I set out from my hotel near the Westbahnhof (one of the main train termini) on Friday afternoon. I had come well prepared with maps and a veritable rainforest of internet printouts and had also armed myself with a 72 hour public transport pass for 150 Austrian Schillings (AS). This is valid on the metro, trams, buses and local rail services within the city. It must be validated before you start the first journey.

I took the metro (underground) to Spittelau, with one change. The metro runs about every five minutes and in my experience was fast, reliable and not too crowded. After some difficulty in identifying the correct exit from the station a short walk brought me to Fischer Brau, Billrothstrasse 17. This spacious bar and large beer garden serves one beer, an unfiltered helles beer (pale lager), which was being consumed in copious quantities by a large and enthusiastic crowd of drinkers. An excellent refreshing brew to start my crawl on.

Following a brisk walk back to the metro station and a short trip on Tram D, I arrived at Brauhaus Nussdorf, Freihofgasse 1, in the suburb of that name. This was surprisingly quiet for a Friday evening and seemed to be more food-oriented. Five beers were available, Hell (4.2), Zwickl (4.3), St.Thomas (5.2), Old Whisky (5.5) and an English-style stout, Sir Henry's at 5.2. The beers were not bad, the Old Whisky having a smoky taste and the St.Thomas being served in a stone jug.

I decided on a leisurely tram ride back to the city centre, alighting near the Opera. A short walk past the Volkstheater brought me to Siebenstern Brau, Siebensterngasse 19. This two-level pub was busy with both drinkers and diners. They brew several beers, of which I sampled three, a Marzen at 4.8, Prager Dunkles at 4.4 (a malty, sweetish beer) and Helles Mondscheinbeer (4.9), the seasonal special. All beers were very tasty.

After a slightly longer walk I arrived at the last brewpub of the evening - Bauernbrau, Gumpendorferstrasse 134-36. The beer here is not actually brewed onsite but at the Schlieb Brewery in Styria. For some reason my memory of this pub is rather hazy but I believe there was only one beer available, Hausbier, a helles beer.

Saturday dawned hot and sunny. I needed to visit some of the more obvious tourist attractions but still found time for two more brewpubs plus a few other bars. I had lunch at Salm Brau, Rennweg 8, near the entrance to the Belvedere Palace. This was an interesting bar with the brewery vessels prominently visible and a busy mix of locals and tourists. Five beers were available here, Pils, Helles, Marzen, Weizen and a Special. The beers were among the best I tasted in Vienna - the Weizen in particular being a refreshing unfiltered German-style wheat beer. Menus are in English and both food and service were excellent.

In the evening I visited Wieden Brau, Waaggasse 5. This proved to be another spacious bar with a busy beer garden. It was strange that the beer gardens were often bursting at the seams while the bars indoors were quiet, despite the, to me, oppressive heat! Five beers on here also - Pils, Helles, Weizen, Marzen and Hanf (Hemp) beer. Both service and food were again excellent and the beer was the best I had in Vienna. The Hanf beer in particular was very quaffable, sweetish and spicy, possibly the beer of the trip. I then strolled (or floated!) back to my hotel, stopping off for a final drink at Kanguruh.

Other non-brewpubs I recommend include Zwillingssg'wob, Universitätsstrasse 5, which has four beers brewed for the pub by the Schlagl Brewery; Bierhof, Naglergasse 13, which serves the local Viennese beer, Ottakringer; Bieramt, Am Heumarkt 3, with Zwetler beers on draught; Kanguruh, Burgerspitalgasse 20 (serving a good range); Kolar, Kleeblattgasse 5a (Hirter beers); Krah Krah, Rabensteig 8 (a wide selection but a bit noisy); Bierteufl, Ungargasse 5, with more than 100 beers from around the world. The one brewpub I didn't have time to get to was Medl-Brau, Linzerstrasse 275, which is out in the western suburbs.

Generally I found the beers in Vienna to be very drinkable and not too gassy. Prices varied very little - from 29 to 34 AS for 0.33 of a litre (known as a Seiterl) and from 37 to 42 AS for a half-litre (known as a Krugel). Beers are also sometimes sold by the Mass (litre) and Pfiff (0.125l). Austrian beers were almost always cheaper than foreign imports. Strengths are usually quoted in degrees Plato, as in the Czech Republic. The current exchange rate is around 21 AS to the pound. I would certainly highly recommend Vienna for a weekend break. It may be well known for its grand old buildings and art galleries but there is also some very good beer to be drunk if you know where to go.

For more details see the very informative website (in English) at: www.austrianbeer.com/

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Out of our area but a former favourite *The Valley Lodge*, Bradwell, is sadly up for sale with planning permission for residential use. A great shame that such a good free house has spiralled to this in what seems to be a very short space of time.

Closer to home - but a similar tale - the *Dukinfield Arms*, Dukinfield, is closed and is to be converted into an Indian restaurant/take-away. This is another pub that seemed to promise much a few years ago.

In Marple, the *Pineapple* welcomes a new landlord Pete Burns who moves with wife Jan from the Church Inn, Edgeley. Over the hill in Romiley, the *Stock Dove* has opened after extensive refurbishment and the "new" pub has altered outside and in. outside the render has been removed revealing brickwork which is a definite improvement. Inside it seems no expense has been spared with split-level areas and alcoves. Unfortunately the beer situation isn't so wonderful - only two handpumps - both serving Theakston's Best - and these are lost in a battery of keg, smooth-flow and lager fonts. It's a shame that this prominent pub still hasn't taken up real beer with any conviction.

In Stalybridge, Hyde's have now taken possession of Q and the recently re-opened *White House*. The joint managers are Ray and Sheena Calland (Ray runs Q while Sheena looks after the White House) who have moved from the Scottish & Newcastle (ex-Greenalls), Good Beer Guide listed Swan in Wilmslow. Having become disillusioned with S&N, who are intending to 'theme' the Swan as a T&J Bernard house, a move which was anathema to both Ray and Sheena, they leaped at the chance to move to Hydes. Both pubs are to be re-signed and the White House is to have a major refurbishment which will see the interior remodelled, the bar moved and a food operation introduced. Regulars can rest assured though that the beer won't be taking a back seat as the couple are both dedicated real ale enthusiasts. The beer range at both pubs will be Hydes' Bitter, Jekyll's Gold, Taylor's Landlord, the latest Hydes' seasonal and either Hydes' Mild or Light.

Dave Connor - the previous owner of both pubs - is rumoured to be considering selling his stake in the *Bridge Inn* (Stalybridge) which if this does happen will mean the loss of an enterprising pub owner who brought a great deal of choice and quality to this section of Tameside. A real pity.

Meanwhile in Mottram, the *White Hart* has taken on Pictish *Brewers Gold* to its range as a result of the recent demise of the Bridgewater Brewery which supplied beers regularly.

Finally - with Robinson's getting into the seasonal beer habit we have found the inaugural beer, Whistlin Will, in the following pubs: *Friendship*, *Glossop*; *Hare & Hounds*, *Low Leighton* and the *Oddfellows* and *Caledonia* in Ashton-under-Lyne.

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BOOK REVIEW

Wayfarer reviews Britain's 500 Best Pubs by Roger Protz (Carlton Books, £16.99, 384pp)

I purchased this book on the strength of a review by Ted Bruning in *Whats Brewing* (CAMRA's national newspaper) and after a quick browse, I was immediately impressed.

The chunky format doesn't disappoint and the entries are cleverly arranged, divided into numerous topical subjects. There are pubs for Greenwich and the Dome, pubs associated with famous people, pubs with religious root, seaside pubs, and many more besides. There are even sections on pubs for cyclists and for bird watching! I'm sure a lookalike of the author (or was it he?) was sitting in the Victoria at Beeston, Nottingham, when I visited a couple of years ago - certainly I found the description spot on, as was that of Stalybridge Station Buffet, one of the entries a bit closer to home. However, you won't find these two pubs under the heading for rail travellers; they are under "Pubs for Vegetarian Food" and "Award Winning Pubs" respectively.

The main body of the text is set out in an easily read style, some pubs deserving a page or more, other less so. Addresses and telephone numbers are given along with major roads and directions where appropriate. Certain pubs without a description are contained in a 'Best of the Rest' notation following the subjects. The book, which is more to be dipped into rather than read cover to cover, is lavishly illustrated with sixty specially commissioned coloured drawings, including 10 maps featuring pub walks.

It's nice to see a work of this kind also including some of the excellent pubs to be found in the Irish Republic although I can't quite work out why there a few continental bars described as well. If you don't know where to find a particular pub, there are two useful indices, one listing the pubs by name, the other by county or region. Don't expect to find Greater Manchester, though. It isn't there: Manchester is in Lancashire and Stalybridge in Cheshire! (Why do publications of this sort never recognise our beloved county?)

Certain CAMRA-ites amongst others do not always see eye to eye with Roger Protz's journalistic ways, but for anyone who is interested in visiting pubs, this is a book that will give lasting pleasure. Highly recommended.

ALL BAR NONE?

Silly Season officially kicks off

The managed house division of Suffolk brewers Greene King, who locally run the 'Hungry Horse' outlets, has a new Managing Director. Neil Gillis, previously head of Linda McCartney Foods (and so a man clearly rooted in the British public house tradition), obviously wants to make an impression and has come up with a blinder.

The problem as he sees it is that waiting to be served at the bar is a major source of annoyance for his customers. He has a point - after all we've all experienced frustrating waits to get served. So, you might think, Greene King will be taking on lots more bar staff to ease the problem. Oh no! Neil Gillis's solution is ...take out the bars! OK, then - a welcome return of table service. Wrong again, he has ruled out this as an alternative.

So, what then? Yes, you guessed - "Customers are perfectly capable of getting drinks themselves", says Gillis, although he remains strangely vague about how the established system of being served by staff would actually be replaced.

His sidekick, Operations director Andrew Jones, presumably keen to make an impression on his new boss, is equally enthusiastic. He has visited Yo! Below! A cutting edge bar in London where customers obtain lager from a tap on their tables. The system records their consumption and presents a bill when they leave. "We would do this yesterday if we could," he gushed, adding that pubs might find it difficult to convert police to the idea under current licensing laws. You bet. They might have a problem with their customers, too. Considerable resistance could be expected to an idea which has everything to do with marketing gimmicks and nothing with the concept of hospitality which underpins much of the licensed trade.

BEER IN BUXTON

The May branch meeting of High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch was arranged for a Saturday lunchtime in Buxton instead of the usual Monday night, so that it could be combined with a social. A bright sunny start was the first sign that a grand day out would be enjoyed by all. The starting point and venue for the meeting was the *Swan* on High Street, a small three-roomed local with plenty of character. To start the days drinking off Wychwood Fiddlers Elbow and Green King Abbot Ale were enjoyed by all.

Next we headed to Ramsey's Bar, a large public bar which is part of the Buckingham Hotel on St. John's road. This has seen a remarkable turnaround recently after being taken over, with no less than five hand pumps installed serving three regular beers and two ever-changing guests. Available on the day were Courage Directors, Ruddles County, Charles Wells Bombardier and the two guests Hydes' Clever Endeavour and Everad's Perfick, which nearly everyone went for.

Heading back into the centre of Buxton we called at the Old Club House, which is situated opposite the Buxton Opera House. This is a large bar, which mainly serves the tourist trade. The usual Burton Ale and Tetley Bitter were both available and were fine, the Burton Ale being the better of the two.

Time was moving on and we had arranged to meet some late arrivals at the Cheshire Cheese, which is opposite the Swan, so we backtracked to where we had started. This is not a local pub that is known for its ale, so we were surprised to find an occasional guest had now appeared, on the day it was Hardy Hanson's Guzzling Goose. This was on form, but soon ran out so it was time to move on.

Turning right outside the Cheshire Cheese we passed the Old Sun Inn (Now one of the most expensive pubs in Buxton and sadly reduced to only Banks's and Marston's), and headed across to the Eagle on the Market Place. This has recently been bought by Hydes' and is one of the larger, if not the largest, pub in Buxton with three bars, although currently not all are in use. This pub is in need of its planned refurbishment and has great potential. The only beer on worth drinking was the Hydes' Bitter, which was fine considering we were probably the first to try some that day.

Next we headed for the George which is just past the Old Club House which we visited earlier. This is a two-roomed pub, which is currently undergoing refurbishment after just being taken over and turned into a Free House. Hartington IPA, Bitter and Everard's Tiger were available and on top form. This is now currently the only local outlet for Whim Ales (Previously only at the Old Sun Inn), and just keeps getting better.

Next it was time to head to the final destination the new Wetherspoon's, which has recently opened. On the way a few of us called in at the Railway Hotel where again surprisingly, Hardy Hanson's Old Ale was on as an occasional guest; this is another new addition. The Wye Bridge House is a remarkable conversion in true Wetherspoon's tradition, which has opened up two previously separate rooms into one main bar. The beers available were the usual Courage Directors, Boddingtons Bitter, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and two changing guests of which only Stonehenge Heelstone was on at the time of our visit.

The current availability of real ale in Buxton has never been so good, it is definitely worth a visit. There are even more local gems that were not visited on this trip, so everyone was in agreement that another visit would have to be arranged soon.

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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

AUGUST 2000

Thursday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 12th - Yorkshire Day Out with trip to Boat Brewery. Book with John Hutchinson on 434 7177.

Monday 14th - Social: Ash, Manchester Rd, Heaton Chapel. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 18th - Edgeley Stagger: 7.30pm Alexandra, corner Northgate Rd/Chatham St; 8.30 Grapes, Castle St.

Thursday 24th - Pub of the Month presentation to The Friendship, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield. 8.00pm onwards.

Thursday 31st - Robinson's Brewery trip for Mild Challenge Winners.

Monday 4th September - Didsbury Social: 9.00pm Royal Oak, Wilmslow Rd; 10.00pm Fletcher Moss, Albert Hill St.

Friday 8th - New Members trip to Beartown Brewery in Congleton. Details from Paul Moss on 439 8309.

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

Friday 11th - Pub Crawl of Audenshaw and Ashton-u-Lyne. Meet Boundary, Audenshaw Rd, Guide Bridge 8-8.30pm.

AUGUST 2000

Monday 14th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

Friday 18th - Pub Crawl of Denton. Meet Chapel House, Stockport Rd 8-8.30pm.

Saturday 26th/Sunday 27th - Beer Bar at Glossop RUCF. Contact Tom Lord (0161 427 7099 (h)) or Frank Wood.

Saturday 2nd September - Pub Crawl of Stalybridge. Meet Bridge Inn, 8.15pm.

Monday 4th - Committee Meeting: Kinder Lodge, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 18th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. 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:

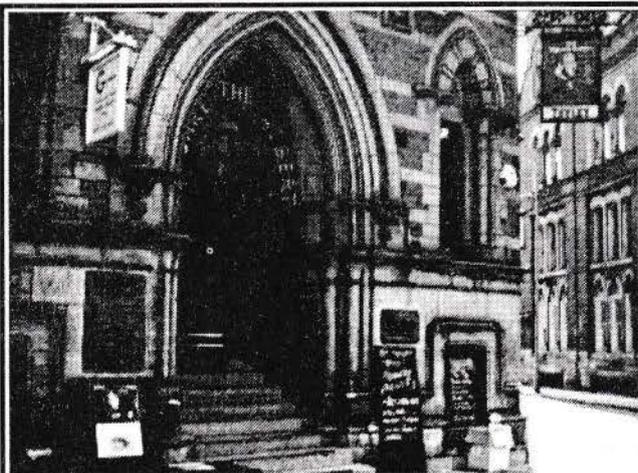
Friday 18th - Summer Pub of the Season presentation to The Bluebell, Spen Green Smallwood (off Congleton Road, east of village). Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 21st - Combined Branch and Committee Meeting: Sutton Hall, Sutton. Starts 8.00pm.



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Revenge; Oakhill Yeoman
Strong, Mendip 2K;
Weltons Beach Babe,
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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

Prada-ing About

I must say I enormously enjoyed the debacle that surrounded the opening of *Prada*, the latest theme bar for fashion victims to grace the Deansgate Locks development on Whitworth Street. As you may have read in the local press, the owners overlooked to clear the use of the name with the Italian fashion house of the same name. Consequently the signs are currently covered in bin liners (*very chic*) and the owners face a six-figure bill to replace the staff uniforms, crockery etc, all of which bears the Prada name. Oh well, on to more serious matters...

City Centre Changes

The big news surrounds the *Square Albert* in Albert Square. Claire and Howard from the *City Arms* have taken over (they continue to run the *City Arms* by the way) and are introducing a fine range of cask ales, which will ultimately include a selection of micro brewery products gravity dispensed from a new stillage, but already boasts an impressive battery of no less than 8 handpumps



on the main bar. This is a pub that has seriously underperformed for some time and, I never thought I'd say this, full marks to Punch Taverns for having the vision to let Howard and Claire work their magic on the place.

Equally welcome are Tony and Linda (ex-Pot of Beer) at *Bar Centro* on Tib Street in the Northern Quarter. Real ale has been introduced in the form of Hydes' Jekyll's Gold and the current seasonal, with increasingly frequent micro-brewery guests (the first from Phoenix went down very well) along with a small but well-chosen range of British bottled beers, most of which are bottle conditioned. The Jekyll's Gold was in particularly good nick when I called recently. The Cajun menu looks tempting, too and I'll probably be back to try that before too long.

I was sorry to hear that the *Crown* on Deansgate no longer sells mild - I remember enjoying the now-defunct *Vaux Mild* there on numerous occasions. Equally surprising were reports of *Brains Dark* selling for £2 a pint at the *White Lion* on Liverpool Road. This is of course a reliably excellent pub and the beer, whilst not exactly cheap, has always been acceptably priced. Let's hope this was a one-off aberration.

I had hoped to have a look at the revamped Deansgate *Hogshead* and the refurbished *Moon Under Water* this month, but unfortunately circumstances dictated otherwise. More on these next month. (I can't say I noticed a lot of difference in the *Moon* - ed(2)).

Round And About

Further afield, I see that the *Bank of England* in Ancoats has closed although this is balanced by the welcome reopening of the *River* on Palmerston Street with Holt's Bitter on handpump.

On the A6 corridor, the *Ducie Arms* in Longsight looks set to change hands. The freehold of the pub has been up for sale at £135,000 and I understand that it is now under offer. Further down the road, the *Ceili Inn* (formerly the *Crown*) is now just a vacant site. Continuing into Levenshulme, local pub company *Clarinbridge* have taken possession of *Biddy Mulligans*, the *Farmers Kipper* and the *Little Vic*. All three have been repainted and re-signed with the two former reverting to their original names of the *Midway* and *Farmers Arms*. Sadly all three remain resolutely keg but at least the misleading sign on the *Midway* proclaiming cask ales has gone in the makeover.

In Burnage, *Bellway Homes* plan to build houses on the site of the *Old Bull*, arguably one of the most dismal pubs in that part of the city and, if truth be told, no great loss. I for one won't be lying in front of the bulldozers any way.

Didsbury continues to buzz, although there are one or two grounds for concern. *Squires* is looking run-down and is clearly in need of a refurbishment. It does itself no favours with misleading signage, either. Outside it proclaims "a wide range of cask conditioned beers are available" when it's been all-keg for ages. Hopefully this month's OT expose will put an end to that nonsense.

While not in the same league, the *Parrswood* gets a black mark for its keg mild. OK, so many (too many, sadly) pubs can only sell keg mild these days. Very few though still keep a mild handpump complete with pump clip - there really can be no excuse for this sloppiness and the sooner the *Parrswood* gets its act together, and gets rid of the offending pump clip, the better it will be for all concerned.

On the plus side, the beer range at the *Dog & Partridge* has improved considerably since *Scottish & Newcastle* took over. As far as I can see, this is down to a change in guest beer supplier. Supplies now come from the *Beer Seller* and on my last visit included the likes of *Orkney Dark Island* and *Harviestoun Belgian White*. Well worth a visit.

Stop Press: I hear that the new licensee at the *Pot of Beer* is local pub, beer and brewery personality *Ken Birch*. Ken has been associated with many licensed trade ventures over the years and it will be interesting to see how the *Pot of Beer* develops under his guidance.



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The external refurbishment of the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport, is now complete and the pub looks a treat. Full marks to Innspired for a first class job. There has also been a degree of redecoration inside (the gents toilet is particularly striking) and the pub really does seem to be going from strength to strength. Graham and Jeanette continue to develop initiatives to attract custom and are being rewarded by the return of a number of old faces along with many new ones. On the beer front, ten cask beers are regularly on sale, and quality is first class. If you've not been there yet, you're in for a treat.

Just up the road, Ye Olde Vic, is another pub that just gets better and better. Don't be put off by its appearance at the moment - it's not closed and boarded, it's just being redecorated outside and a couple of the windows are to be blocked off at the same time.

A slightly belated welcome to Lynda Wilson and partner Damian, licensees at the Moss Rose on Didsbury Road in Heaton Norris. They were previously at another Hydes pub, the Farmers Arms in Burnage, and say they are very impressed by the strong local following at the Moss, and the lively atmosphere in the traditional vault, now a rare feature in pubs in the area. On recent visits the Hydes Light and Bitter have been on very good form and the Moss Rose, despite its somewhat off-putting 1970s exterior, is well worth a visit.

Another belated welcome, this time to Susan and Vic Edwards who took over at the Royal Oak, High Street, Stockport, on 8 May. This is their first pub but Susan and Vic have already made an impression; there has been a complete redecoration and hanging baskets brighten up the front of the pub. More importantly, beer sales are well up and the pub is starting to attract custom from the brewery across the road - always a good sign! It's very much a family affair, too, with Vic and Susan's son helping with the cellar and their daughter looking after the catering - food is now available every day (including Sundays) from 11am-5pm. The pub is open all permitted hours, too.

Another new licensee introducing a food operation is Peter Sibbit, who took over at Winters, Underbank, Stockport, on 24 July. Peter is familiar with the local pub trade, having run the Horse Shoe in High Lane for nine years to 1996, and where he built up a huge reputation for his pub food (and some pretty good beer, to boot!). After leaving the Horse Shoe, Peter spent four years working for a catering company in Bolton but returned to the trade as he missed it so much. While at the Horse Shoe, Peter was a regional finalist in the Pub Caterer of the Year competition and is looking to repeat that success in Winters with the aim of selling "restaurant type food at pub prices". Food is available every day from 12 noon until 4pm (and this includes a traditional lunch on Sundays), and from 7-10pm on Friday and Saturday evenings when the menu moves up a notch to offer a la carte specialities.

Several local pubs have had exterior makeovers, courtesy of Robinson's. The Pineapple, Heaton Lane and the Tiviot, Tiviot Dale are looking resplendent in their new colours, and the Swan With Two Necks is also to have a coat of paint and some new windows. Amazingly, the Chestergate Tavern in Mersey Square has also had a lick of paint - well at least the doors and window frames have been painted. The rest of it is just as shabby as ever.

It's also goodbye to Pete Belfield who retired from the Comfortable Gill, King Street West, Stockport, on 26 June. His successor is Mike Moran who has worked at the pub for the past 4½ years and has some 20 years experience in the licensed trade.

In Didsbury we will be bidding a fond farewell to Joe Slattery of the Nelson, who is looking to retire from the trade sometime in the next few months. The exact date isn't yet known but he's sure to go out with a memorable leaving do.

In Edgeley, the Prince Albert on Castle Street was in the throes of a major refurbishment as we went to press. The pub has been completely gutted and hopefully will reopen before long.

London Regional Estates Ltd have applied for permission to build a public house at 6-8 Great Underbank, Stockport. This is the vacant plot at the side of NatWest's Underbank Hall Branch and has previously been confirmed as the site of the long-expected Stockport outlet for Wetherspoon's.

On Saturday 9 September there will be pump clip sales in aid of local charities at the Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford and the Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham.. The Kings Arms sale, from 12 noon to 3pm, will be helped along by the Rev Robert Bracegirdle and proceeds will go to the Ordsall Community Trust. The Queens Arms sale starts at 3.30pm and the money will go the Francis House.

AUGUST COMPETITION

A slightly reduced response to last month's competition albeit from a wider area, including Stoke-on-Trent and Nottinghamshire (although competition regular Ron Elder from Lothian was absent this time). The winning entry, picked out at random, was slightly closer to home, though, and is J Sidebotham of Denton., who wins a Dutch lager football shirt and six pints of beer at the Crown, Heaton Lane.

The beers you were looking for were: Quismas Quacker, Rampart, Tennis Elbow, Wagtail, Legend, Drake, Early Riser, Red Roses, Saddleback, Kingdom and May Fly.

This month's competition has again been set by Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks and this time you are looking for beers or breweries, all of which are in the 2000 Good Beer Guide. As usual, complete the grid in a clockwise spiral - the last letter of an answer is the first letter of the next. We have given you the first letter.

The prize, kindly sponsored by landlord Steve Brannan, is a gallon of real ale in Ye Olde Vic, Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport. Many thanks to Steve for sponsoring this month's prize.

Entries to OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 28th August please.

1,B									2
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			9						
			11						
		10						7	
5									3
		8							
			4						

- 1) Did Scrooge mutter this from Mauldons? (2 words)
- 2) Does the Judge wear this? (2 Words)
- 3) Top hand at bridge will give you this Tomintoul beer. (2 words)
- 4) Dance around this Rudgate beer in the springtime.
- 5) Did Sutton build this lighthouse?
- 6) Say you make beer at the Gribble Inn (2 words).
- 7) CHOWDER EMU In Aviemore? (2 words)
- 8) Top forest will give you this Linconshire brewery
- 9) Bacon and TNT could ruin Stonehenge (2 Words)
- 10) Fullers BES! (Anag)
- 11) Sounds like a knackered javelin from this regatta brewery.