



OPENING TIMES



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THE NURSERY IS PUB OF THE YEAR 2001

After the usual nail-biting vote, the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year Award for 2001 goes to the Nursery on Green Lane, Heaton Norris, writes Peter Edwardson. The award is particularly appropriate this year as it coincides with the twentieth anniversary in the pub of licensees George and Susan Lindsay, who have been there since 1981, making them amongst the longest serving licensees in the area. The Nursery has often been described in the past as the best pub within the branch area never to become Pub of the Year, and when asked for his reaction to the news George simply said "about time too!"

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

The Nursery is a real hub of the community, with a strong local trade and supporting numerous sports teams. At the back is an immaculate and well-used bowling green, an increasingly rare feature on the local pub scene, and the spacious upstairs room is popular for meetings and functions. Despite its well-hidden location, the pub also draws customers from a long way around, particularly for the excellent food, which has earned it an entry in CAMRA's Good Pub Food Guide. The Sunday lunches are especially well-regarded.

In Autumn of last year the pub was sensitively refurbished by Hydes, with new carpeting, upholstery and loose furniture, but avoiding any temptation to start altering the layout or knocking down walls. The changes involved putting a greater emphasis on food, with the lounge given over to dining at lunchtimes. While a few traditionalists may have muttered, this is a sensible adjustment to allow a classic pub to adapt to the changing nature of the trade and continue to prosper.

As well as Hydes Mild and Bitter, the Nursery also sells Jekyll's Gold and the various Hydes seasonal beers, plus the potent XXXX over the Christmas period. The beer quality is consistently good and the pub has been in the Good Beer Guide since 1984 without a break, by several years the longest record of continuous entries in the Stockport & South Manchester branch area.

Of course simply having a fine building and serving beer from a well-respected independent brewery does not automatically make a pub a good pub, and what has made the Nursery really stand out from the crowd is the hard work, dedication and attention to detail of both George and Susan and their staff, several of whom have also been there for many years. It's a conspicuously well-kept, spick-and-span pub where it's hard to find anything out of place.

This year there was an unusually strong field of contenders for Pub of the Year, with at least six pubs that would have been a credit to the award. In the end, what probably swung it in the direction of the Nursery was that most of the other candidates had shown dramatic improvement in the past year or so, whereas the Nursery had been maintaining the same high standards consistently for the previous twenty. And long may it continue!



The presentation night will be on Saturday 10 March from about 8.30pm onwards. While it's a big pub, it's likely to be a very busy night, so make sure you get there early. It's not the easiest pub in the world to find - probably the best way to reach it on foot is to get the 192 bus to Belmont Way on the A6 and then walk along Bowerfold Lane in a westerly direction across the railway bridge for six or seven minutes until you reach the pub on your right. If you find it once you'll certainly come back for more another time!

The Pub of the Year is chosen from the previous year's Pubs of the Month by a democratic vote at January's branch meeting

...And The Arden Arms Is Runner-Up

While there can be only one winner, a special mention must be made of the runner-up, the Arden Arms on Millgate, Stockport. One of a number of local pubs that has come back from the dead in the last year or so, the revival of the Arden Arms has been particularly welcome as this classic pub has remained more or less unchanged for about 150 years. It was therefore a cause of some considerable sadness that local drinkers watched its spiral of decline.

Former licensee Rose Senior helped stop the rot but it was the arrival of Joe Quinn and Steve King in late 1999 which saw a huge revival in the pub's fortunes. They made an immediate start with a through redecoration and spruce up, and followed this with a comprehensive programme of restoration which now sees the pub gleam and sparkle much as it did during its heyday under the long-term tenancy of Jack May.

Given their catering background, Joe and Steve have introduced a high-class catering operation which the fame of which is spreading by word of mouth. However, foremost amongst the pub's attractions has to be the superbly kept Robinson's beers - Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Fredericks, which were joined by Old Tom for the winter season. In short, Joe and Steve have rescued one of Stockport's classic pubs, not only returning it to the pub mainstream but also creating a flagship for quality and excellence on all fronts.

JC

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Despite all the doom and gloom which seems to almost perpetually surround the pub trade these days, this issue is perhaps something of a celebration of the many positive aspects of the licensed trade.

Our new Pub of the Year certainly embodies all that is best in the traditional community local and has done so for many years. It's not alone either. This year was perhaps one of the most difficult choices for Pub of the Year with at least half a dozen very worthy pubs in the frame, all thriving traditional community locals. And yet, this type of pub is supposed to be dead on its feet as drinkers turn in their droves to branded, themed, chain outlets. Clearly somebody is getting something very wrong there.

Real ale is supposed to be dead on its feet, too. Try telling that to the thousands who flocked to CAMRA's National Winter Ale Festival last month and virtually drank the place dry. Try telling it to the new brewers we feature this month, all producing tasty, characterful beers to great acclaim and, even more importantly, to great popular demand.

These are only straws in the wind but there so seem to be signs that the so-called collapse in demand for cask beers is ending and that sales could be moving forward again. What cask ale need now is a concerted push. Already brewing giant Scottish Courage is launching a major advertising campaign for John Smiths Cask (following on from the successful launch of Theakston's Cool Cask) which must be good news for cask ale in general. CAMRA, too, will be entering the fray - but more about that next time.

John Clarke

The news that there may be two new Wetherspoons opening in Stockport (page 8) is not really a total surprise - after all almost every new building in Manchester seems to have a Wetherspoons pub within it. In London it appears that Bruce (of Bruce's Brewery and the original (brewing) Firkin chain) is getting back into the act, and starting a non-brewing pub group dedicated to beer and drinking alcohol rather than eating standardised and overpriced food. He says people are getting fed up with 'the same-as, tired old themes and chains' - presumably a dig at the food-led emporia such as All-Bar-One and Slug and Lettuce - and the majority of the Hogsheads since the marketeers in Dunstable lost the plot. He says people other than the youngsters (18-26) need somewhere to drink too. Oddly, we oldsters (25+) also like a bit of variety. A world comprised solely of Wetherspoon pubs would be too banal for words.

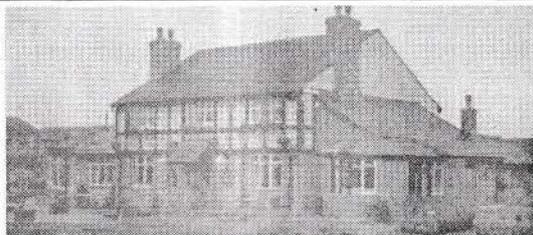
P.B. Hutchings

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 200

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 19!

PUB OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY 2001

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			



The Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA pub of the month award for February 2001 goes to the Crown Inn, Heaton Lane, Stockport. Graham Mascord and Jeanette Walmsley took over this pub in difficult circumstances following the tragic and premature death of the then current licensee's husband, Steve James. Understandably, this caused huge problems for Steve's widow Lorraine, and her family, and it is indeed a credit to her that she was able to carry on as licensee for as long as she did under such difficult circumstances. Graham and Jeanette are new to the pub trade having previously had challenging but very different careers as psychiatric nurses. Bearing this in mind, it would have been reasonable for them to start with selling just one or two cask beers, until they had become more experienced in the trade. But Graham would have none of this and a good range of beers is always on sale. To begin with the pub received a much needed redecoration both inside and outside. Next came improvements in the cellar where the dangerous beer drop has been made safer, and new state of the art auto tilting beer stillaging has been introduced. This together with improved lighting, new beer lines and cellar conditioning times for the cask beers of up to three weeks, has ensured the quality of the real ales on sale are about as good as you are going to get, anywhere. The beer range always includes a mild, and a traditional cider. With up to a further twenty six casks of beer waiting in the cellar to go on at any one time, it will come as no surprise to learn that the turnover of cask beer in the pub has increased by a more than a factor of three since Graham and Jeanette took over. Add to this a new menu, the introduction of live music (Mondays) and rock music quiz's (Thursdays), and the net result is a pub whose fortunes have been transformed in less than twelve months. In recognition of their hard work, CAMRA would like to present Graham and Jeanette with the pub of the month award for February 2001. The presentation will take place on the evening of Thursday 22nd February and it promises to be a great, if very busy night; so get there early if you want to be guaranteed a seat!

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

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 202:

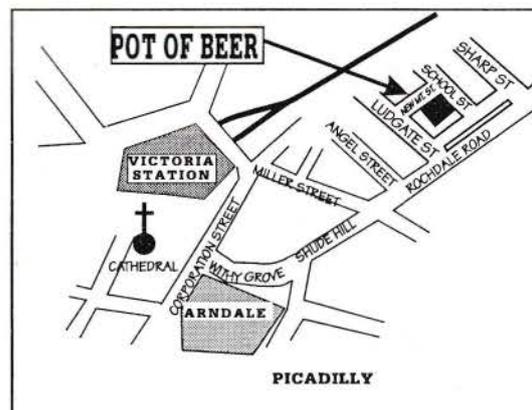
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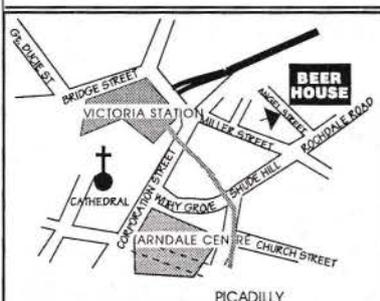
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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From: Lloyd Roberts, The British Flag, Macclesfield

Having read and taken into account most of the points raised on the subject of "the full pint". I would like to respond on behalf of what I can only see as "the minority".

I have been a licensee for 9 years and would agree that it is a customer's right to receive a full pint. I make it my duty to ensure that customers get what they pay for.

However I have on occasions been asked why does a pint lose its head when topped up to the brim?

You do not have to be a genius to answer that one.

However I cannot for the life of me understand why is it when given a pint with an acceptable head do customers ask for it to be topped up and then wonder why the pint loses its head again?

To this end I wrote the story "The square peg and the round hole". My experience with 24 oz glasses lasted just 2 days. Ever since I hung the story in the bar customers have at last realised they cannot have it all ways! I will always give customers what they are in my mind entitled to - a full pint.

In my mind the majority of CAMRA members are of a high level of intelligence. But despite their alleged ability to tell, smell, see and taste the difference on almost an hourly basis they seem to swallow their tongues when all they need to do is ask a simple CAN YOU TOP IT UP PLEASE ?

I'm sure most licensees would not be insulted if asked to do so. Instead all we read about month after month is regulatory rubbish that can do only more harm to an already suffering industry.

From Peter Edwardson, Heaton Norris:

Gordon Thorburn's memory must be seriously defective if he believes that experiments with oversize glasses were quickly rejected by pub customers in the 60s and 70s. Twenty years ago, metered dispense with oversize glasses was the norm for cask beer across large areas of the North-West and Midlands, and there was no evidence of drinkers rebelling against it.

Throughout the 80s and 90s there was a steady process of turning these pubs over to brim measures, driven by a cynical motivation to sell less beer for the same price. Beer prices were never reduced, and there was none of this foot-dragging nonsense about the cost of replacement glasses - they simply chucked all the old glasses out and replaced them with brand-new ones overnight. Very often, the change was accompanied by a switch to handpump dispense, leading many short-sighted people in CAMRA to welcome the abandonment of full measures - as they continue to do today.

Mr Thorburn seems to be waging a perverse one-man campaign to be short-changed. While it's true that many pubgoers don't seem too concerned about the current situation, that's simply because they've never thought about it much. I doubt whether many people if asked would prefer fifteen ounces in the pound to sixteen. If I was ever in the position of owing Mr Thorburn a tenner, perhaps I'd give him £9.50 and see how he liked that. And I've been going in pubs for twenty-five years, and outside Mr Thorburn's fevered imagination, I've never heard anyone refer to "glass buckets".

From: Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth:

In pointing out (Letter, January) that prices may increase if full pints become mandatory, Gordon Thorburn is surely missing the point. I have no objection to paying a fair price for a full pint, and would put up with a modest increase where that could be shown to be justified. What I do object to is being told I'm getting a "pint" when I'm clearly not.

I accept that the importance of this issue should be kept in due proportion - I'd far rather have 19 fluid ounces of excellent beer than 20 of something mediocre or worse - but nonetheless, surely honesty in retailing is not too much to ask for.

From: John Burns (via e-mail)

What would you think if your local watered its beer? You would not be too impressed and would almost certainly find a new local before informing the trading standards.

Yet most pubs, including many CAMRA Pubs of the Month sell beer that, in a sense, has a considerably lower ABV than that stated behind the bar. How are they allowed to get away with it? Selling air is considerably more profitable than selling beer. If a pub can get away with selling a pint in a brim measure glass,

that is precisely what they are doing.

Statistics suggest that the average pint sold in the UK is 7% short on beer. Bearing in mind that many good pubs use oversized glasses, there must be many pints sold that are less than 90% liquid. Many landlords and brewers argue that the head forms an integral part of a pint. But as the head is 99% gas in contains virtually no alcohol.

Now as we all know landlords must display the ABVs (alcohol by volume) of their draught beers. Bass for example is displayed as 4.4% ABV. However, if as the brewers insist, the head is an integral part of a pint, a pint of Bass that is only 90% liquid, would in fact be only around 3.9% ABV.

I would think that this is a clear breach of The Trade Descriptions Act. I would welcome comment.

(While I'm all in favour of full measure, I'm not too sure that this argument holds water, so to speak, as the actual beer in the glass will still be at the advertised strength - Ed (1))

From Dave Nunn, Hazel Grove:

I arrived here 10 years ago. Then Hazel Grove most definitely asserted itself through its pubs, people and businesses.

Still no bypass yet we get a supermarket. Demolished pub (listed), yet no supermarket. Latest news is that Macdonald's have acquired the site of the (in)famous Bamboo Club. I here cries of 'so what' from real ale drinkers. The economy of all pubs in the vicinity and late night Friday food business is dependent to a point on that business.

Worryingly some licensees seem to ignore the problem, I know one or two who know their business while there are others blind. I assert, some licensees suffer from a disregard for customers and seek merely to wake the next morning to make the golf course.

From "Puzzled", by boat(?) (name and address supplied)

As a frequent visitor to Stockport and the nearby cities, I was amazed when I went to the recent National Winter Ales do, to find that 1996! Viaducts & Vaults 2 is still being profered as the 'current' guide to the delights of drinking in the town. With all the massive changes since, surely it desperately deserves a third edition. Even the Manchester City Centre guide is renewed every two years. Or are Stockport CAMRA content to rest on their laurels having won two awards, and give up on this particular campaigning front?

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Burnage Rugby club situated in Heaton Mersey Stockport have been selling Beartown cask beers for the past 6 months and has been an instant success with the sporting fraternity, also popular with the many guests at the regular private functions held there. 2 beers are available most weeks from Bruins Ruin, Bearskinful, and Wheatbear al priced at £1.35 a pint. Club manager Howard "Harvey" Smith keeps a good cellar and takes great satisfaction in presenting a good pint of real ale. So why not take a game of Rugby in on a Saturday or watch football with Stockport Town on a Sunday and enjoy good beer at a good price.

A visit to The Governor's House, Cheadle Hulme, found evidence of the change of ownership to Hardy & Hansons, write *Dave and Carol Sheldon*. Both Kimberley Best and Kimberley Classic were on sale, both at £1.80 a pint. This represents a price reduction from the previous available 'guests'. We spoke with Steve, the Manager, and he informed us that these two beers would be regulars and that there should always be a seasonal Kimberley beer available. The beer change happened some time in late January and he has already had on Old Kiln, a 'barrel' of which went in a day.

When the Courage Directors runs out it will not be replaced as it is in the same strength band as Classic. Directors is being sold off at £1.50 a pint. Boddingtons Bitter will remain as a regular beer. We were told that the sales of lagers to bitters is 55%/45% which Steve reckons is very good for bitter sales. The Kimberley Best was below par (possibly not much pulled through when we tried it), but Steve said that all his staff had been trained to change any beer reckoned to be sub-standard. I didn't request a change as I thought it would be better later, having tried the superb Classic however I didn't return to the Bitter.

A visit to The King's Hall on at the end of January found five guests (as usual) on. These were Alchemy Aurum Ale, Cains Doctor Duncan's IPA, Goff's Fallen Knight, Jennings Snecklifter and Ringwood Fortyniner. All were in excellent condition (as usual) and £1.29 a pint.

It's now been confirmed that Stockport town centre is to get not one but two Wetherspoon's outlets. The new-build next to the NatWest bank on Underbank is going ahead, as is the development in the Partingtons/Bensons For Beds shop on St Petersgate. Both are allegedly due to open this summer although given that there is no sign of activity at either site,

this appears somewhat optimistic. More seriously is the effect that this will have on the other more established pubs in the town. It is conceivable that one Wetherspoon pub could have been accommodated but two are almost certainly going to cause difficulties for many other local pubs. Let's just hope that they prove to be well-run establishments along the lines of the outlets in Longsight and Cheadle Hulme, rather than the somewhat less then satisfactory standards that seem to be commonplace elsewhere in the Wetherspoon empire.

The Rising Sun in Hazel Grove has been doing a nice line in guest beers for some time now. When OT called recently, apart from the standard John Smiths Cask and Courage Directors, the pub was offering Gales Winter Brew and Robinson's Old Tom on handpump. Keep up the good work.

The Dog & Partridge in Great Moor, one of Robinson's few managed houses, is about to change hands. Steve and Lorraine Martin who have been in the pub for five years are departing to be replaced by the current managers of the Farmers Arms in Poynton. The Farmers is a very different pub to the Dog and it will be interesting to see how the new people make the transition. Steve and Lorraine are staying with Robinson's and will be taking over as tenants at the Friendship in Romiley.

Just what is it about the people who run pubs for Scottish & Newcastle? Not so long ago there was the case of the Fiveways in Hazel Grove, where a long-established women's group was banned for not drinking enough (happily they are now back at the pub). Now they're at it again. In Nottingham, a man with two false legs was turned away from the upstairs bar of the 'Long Island Tea Shop' (the what?? - ed(1)) for allegedly being a fire hazard. Can you believe it? Closer to home lady suffering from cancer and undergoing radiotherapy was barred from the Chestergate Tavern for wearing a baseball cap to cover her bald head. Apparently it contravened the dress code. How heart-warming to see such a sensitive enforcement of the rules. Luckily for OT readers, the pub sells no real ale so there's no need to go there (and who would want to after such a tale).

No sooner had the Brinnington Inn, Great Portwood Street, Stockport, been closed for redevelopment, than it was torched in spectacular fashion. In late January the pub was a gutted wreck undergoing demolition. A sad end for what was a seriously underrated pub which always served a decent pint when OT called.

A number of local pubs have recently come onto the market (and this doesn't include the mage sell-offs by the likes of Whitbread and Bass). In Edgeley the Gardners Arms is now 'under offer' according to the website of the selling agents. Another unidentified pub is similarly described, although from the description (three storeys, 10 private bedrooms, half a mile from the town centre) it sounds remarkably like the Blue Bell on Shaw Heath. Another big sell-off comes from pub company Enterprise Inns who have put the following local pubs on the market: Church, Clayton; Katy Daley's, Withington; Prince of Wales, Openshaw; Wellington, West Gorton and the Crown, 'Stockport'. The Crown is, we think, the one in Bredbury.





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Spicy Lancashire Beer Ragout

Again our climate dictates fleeces, woolly mittens and long-johns, so I feel another heavy dish is called for. A spicy Lancashire Beer Ragout. The mixture of black & white pudding and sausages may not have immediate appeal on paper, but on the plate it proved very popular on a Sunday afternoon, indeed Neil had seconds twice - or is that thirds. Though different it does not, in general, break with accepted usage of beer, so give it a go:-

Ingredients (for 4 people)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 4 horseshoe or 2 straight plain white puddings | 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper |
| 4 horseshoe or 2 straight black puddings | 1 tsp ground black pepper |
| 8 pork sausages | 1/2 pint porter |
| 3 tbs sage & onion stuffing | 1 pint vegetable stock |
| 12oz tin chopped tomatoes | 1 tbs vegetable oil |
| 2 tsp ground ginger | 1 Medium Onion (chopped) |
| | 1 bayleaf (large) |
| | salt |
- (NB Black White Puddings come in many types allow 4oz/person)

Method

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and gently fry the onion, meanwhile make up a warm stock. add 2/3rds of the stuffing to the saucepan, combine and remove from the heat. Cut puddings into 1/2" thick rounds, the sausages in half, and grill, for 5 minutes each side. Mix half the stock with the remaining stuffing and set to one side. Add the sausages and puddings to the saucepan with the stuffing and onion. Return to the heat and add the tomatoes, when bubbling, slowly add the porter until a thick sauce results. Add the unused stock to thin down, then the remaining ingredients (except the stock/stuffing mixture previously set aside.) and simmer for five minutes. Top the mixture (thinned down with worcester sauce & water if required) with the stock & stuffing mix and bake in a hot oven on the top shelf until lightly browned (7 or so minutes). Wash down with a local standard bitter - Leden Light Brigade, Pictish Brewers Gold, Porters Bitter or Phoenix Navy would be eminently suitable.

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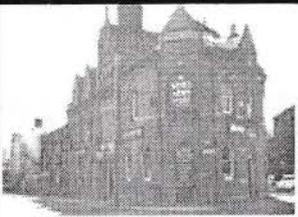
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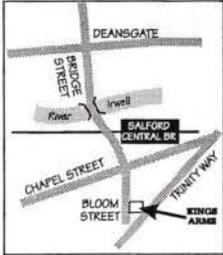


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BREWERY NEWS



The New Year has seen the local micro-brewing scene possibly more vibrant than at any time in recent years. Last year's sad demise of Bridgewater Ales has been more than compensated for by the arrival of new ventures in Altrincham and Moston, a keen new brewer at Marble and the prospect of Tameside's first brewery in over 30 years.

Marble Moves

With the departure of Mark Dade to set up his own venture (of which more below), his replacement at the Marble Brewery, based at the Marble Arch pub on Rochdale Road, is James Campbell, a brewer of considerable experience.

His CV is impressively long, having worked extensively as assistant and head brewer at various Firkin outlets including the Foundry (Sheffield), Faculty (Birmingham), Font (Brighton) and Fathom (Worthing). In 1998 he moved to the Irish Republic - home to some very impressive beers these days - working as joint head brewer at the Tipperary Brewing Co, producer of the award-winning Dwan beers and subsequently to Maguires, a brewpub on Burgh Quay in Dublin where he was assistant brewer.

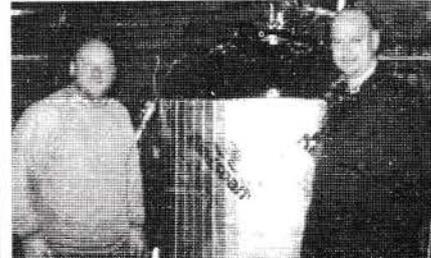


The prospect of a head brewer's position tempted him back to the UK and Marble Brewery. That, and the challenge of brewing using only organic ingredients. Given the limited range of ingredients available there is little scope for experimentation although James has already made an impact by getting most of the Marble's famously cloudy beers to drop almost bright. This has been something of a marathon effort involving skimming the yeast twice during fermentation, keeping the beers three days on chill in the fermenting vessels and a further four days in conditioning tanks. The effort, which has involved working Saturdays and Sundays, has certainly been worth it although there has been the odd complaint that the beers are no longer cloudy enough! Hopefully the imminent availability of organic carrageen (a clearing agent) may mean less effort is required.

There are no new beers in the immediate pipeline, although James is considering a new beer for the summer months, which would be "light but not weak". It certainly looks as though in James Campbell, Marble has found a worthy successor to Mark Dade who made his name with some excellently crafted beers during his tenure there and is now...

Boggart Brews

As previously reported in Opening Times, Marble Brewery's Mark Dade is now brewing on his own account as the Boggart Hole Clough Brewery which should be in production by the time you read this. Along with business partners Graham Walsh and Anne Broadhead,



Mark acquired a large, but derelict (no roof!) industrial building in Moston which two month's hard work have seen transformed into a spacious and well-equipped new micro. Mark and Graham explained to OT, that while taking

on premises in such a derelict state involved a great deal of work, it does mean that everything has been essentially purpose-built for (any by) them. A malt store, offices and toilet block are already in place, and a cold store is about to follow. This will enable beer to kept at the proper temperature prior to despatch.

The rest of the unit is taken up by the 5-barrel brewing kit, acquired



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NEW BREWERS, NEW BREWERIES, LOCAL & NATIONAL NEWS

from the now-defunct Bridgewater Ales. It does however look rather different from the Bridgewater days, having been stripped out and refitted internally. Unusually the cold and hot liquor (that's water to you and me) tanks have been mounted on the wall, to create even more space.

Four beers will be produced initially: Boggart Bitter (3.8%); Angel Hill (4.2%); Dark Side (4.4%) and an exclusive house beer for the Northern Quarter's Bar Centro. This latter will be about 4.3% and is likely to go under the name Bitch Bitter. Top quality ingredients will be used throughout - Maris Otter is the main malt variety along with crystal and chocolate malts. A small proportion of wheat malt will feature in the beers to aid head retention. About eight hop varieties will be used, including Fuggles, Goldings and the American Mount Hood. The yeast has been obtained from the award-winning Orkney Brewery, although Mark will culture this himself at the brewery rather than regularly sourcing fresh supplies.

Mark has already established his credentials as a first class brewer and his new beers are eagerly awaited. The house beer should be in Bar Centro by the middle of this month (a launch is planned for the 18th) with the others coming on stream shortly thereafter. Look out for the distinctive wooden pumpclips, sawn from logs acquired from Boggart Hole Clough Park - where else?

Pubs wishing to order the new brews should contact the brewery on 0161 277 966, or Mark Dade personally on 07946 508731.

Altrincham Ales

It was in October 1999 that Opening Times first reported on the new venture that is the Altrincham Brewing Co. At the time, brewing was intermittently carried out in an outbuilding at the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham, with plans to move the operation to an industrial unit in Lymm.

Well, the best laid plans... as they say and so it is that the brewery is once again operational, still at the Old Market Tavern but now in a converted room at the back of the pub.

The shiny new 1/4 barrel plant was imported from Belgium and installed late last year, thus enabling brewer, and long-time CAMRA stalwart Dave Ward (enthusiastically aided and abetted by Old Market Tavern licensee Wayne Reece) to start production of what promises to be a range of high quality beers.

Brewing started in the first week of December and two beers have so far been produced - Agent X (3.8%) and Coal Porter (4.8%). High quality ingredients are used throughout - floor malted Maris Otter malt, along with pale, crystal and chocolate malts; Fuggles and Goldings hops; yeast from Robinson's - and this shines through in the end product. The Agent X bitter is still being tweaked and was unavailable when Opening Times called, but the Coal Porter proved to be a superb drink, combining the complex taste of a true porter with a smoothness that made for a very quaffable and moorish pint. Sales so far have been very good - "it's all quite exciting really", Dave told us. Wayne confirmed that the beers have sold "amazingly well" at the pub and explained that it had proved necessary to order another dozen casks to keep up with demand.

Other beers will be produced gradually, and by the time you read this Dave should have produced a dark mild at 3.8%.

Wayne, who now runs what must be the best pub in Altrincham, if not the whole of Trafford, also shared with us some of his plans for the future. Such is the interest in cask ales at the pub (there is a wide range of guest beers in addition to the house brews) that keg amounts for less than 20% of overall trade. This should reduce still further when a gravity served German draught beer is introduced - this is to replace on of four real ciders currently sold. The pub also sells an impressive range of foreign bottled beers and ideally Wayne would also like to run a separate café-bar specialising in foreign beers (with a Belgian emphasis, we suspect). He already has his eye on some premises so it's very much a case of 'watch this space'.

Indeed, it's pretty fair to say that the Old Market Tavern has something for everyone - if you've not been there yet, it really is a must. The pub is about a five-minute walk from Altrincham rail/bus/Metrolink.



The National Scene

After a period of silence, Interbrew have announced that they are to seek a judicial review of the decision to block their purchase of Bass Brewers. It seems that they don't actually expect to get the decision overturned but are aiming to be given a longer period in which to sell the business (two years has been mentioned) and also to have a wider range of prospective buyers. It sounds like we are entering what could be a lengthy 'phony war' before all hell breaks loose again.

Meanwhile at embattled Wolverhampton & Dudley, it's again a case of the lull before the storm. The 'strategic review' (that's to say, deciding what pubs to sell and what breweries to close) continues with the results expected 'very soon'. Talk is that a management buyout is on the cards but this is likely to meet a strong challenge from venture capital-backed entrepreneur Robert Breare. If he succeeds in buying the business he has agreed to sell over 1000 pubs to Enterprise Inns. And so it goes on...

Local News

The current seasonal beers Robinson's, Hydes' and Lees have all been sampled and given a thumbs up. Robbies Samuel Oldknow is a very flavoursome 3.5% bitter with plenty of hop character; Lees Dark Magic is a superb, smooth stout while Hydes' Quick One has been hailed as one of the best crafte beers they have produced. Robbies have also scored a notable success with their Old Tom this year. The deal with the Wetherspoon chain caused a few raised hackles among their own licensees who were unable to compete on price, but it's certainly done wonders for sales. An extra 140 barrels had to be brewed to meet demand.

Holt's Sixex has also appeared on draught again - but not in their local pubs. The brewery's beer agent, Max Taylor, asked for a few casks of the strong (6%) beer for his free trade customers in distant places, mainly Scotland. The Sixex had just been brewed so it was a relatively simple matter to fill half a dozen casks before the beer was sent off for bottling.

Micro Matters

Our local micro brewers continue to come up with an exciting range of new beers. This month Phoenix Brewery have Massacre, Jovian, March Hare (4.4%) and Shamrock (4.3%). In addition the superb White Monk, launched at the Winter Ales Festival, is still available and, unsurprisingly, is selling extremely well.

Bank Top have a new beer out, too. This is Golden Brown, a 4.2% pale bitter commissioned by a local sunbed firm in Bolton. The pumpclip will effectively be a mini-advert for the company - could this be the start of a trend? Pictish have a new beer, of course. This is Claymore, a 4.5 per cent light straw coloured beer with lots of hop character, as you might expect from Pictish, who so far haven't put a foot wrong with their specials.

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NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL 2001



Festival Round-up

Organisers of last month's CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival at the Upper Campfield Market, Castlefield, have hailed the event as an outstanding success, welcoming more drinkers than ever before. The beer lasted until closing time on Saturday night, although by that time there were just 11 gallons left. Cider and Foreign beers enjoyed booming sales, too.

The foreign beer stall was impressive to say the least and featured probably the best selection of draught (that's as in straight from the cask) German beers ever to feature at a CAMRA festival. Indeed it was the foreign beer bar that provided two of Opening Times's favourite beers (well Ed (1)'s anyway, Ed (2) as foreign bar manager is far too modest to blow his own trumpet) in the form of Dwan An Dubhain stout, a marvellously dry and complex 5% brew from the Irish Republic, and from Germany the wonderful Tegernsee Spezial. This 5.6% masterpiece really did show what a proper pale German lager should be like, and was in stark contrast to most of the crummy germanic-sounding muck foisted onto the drinking public. It was however the hundred plus British cask ales that took pride of place, with a superb selection, not only of stouts, porters, old ales and barley wines, but milds and bitter of all strengths. Many local brewers were represented, including the brand new Altrincham micro 'Cheshire Cat ales', but one of the really stand-out beers was Cockle Warmer from the tiny Brown Cow Brewery near Selby. Complex, bitter-sweet and with a hint of liquorice, this 5% beer was a classic of its style. All in all, a hugely enjoyable event, well done to all those involved.

Champion Beers

A highlight of the festival was the announcement of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain, whose judging took place just before the doors were opened to the public. Sadly, unlike last year, no local brews featured in the medals. The results in each category are:

Old Ales & Strong Milds

Gold - Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild
 Silver - Orkney Dark Island
 Bronze - Gales Festival Mild

Stouts & Porters

Gold - O'Hanlons Port Stout
 Silver - Nethergate Old Growler
 Bronze - RCH Old Slug Porter

Barley Wines

Gold - Orkney Skullsplitter
 Silver - Adnams Tally Ho
 Bronze - Bass Museum No.1

Supreme Championship

Gold - Orkney Skullsplitter
 Silver - Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild
 Bronze - O'Hanlons Port Stout.



Letters to Opening Times are welcome by post to:
 The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport.
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A DAY IN PARADISE

Chris Walkden samples an unusual beer festival

A wintry scene greeted those hardy souls who assembled at Stockport Station on Saturday 30th December for a trip to Paradise. No need on this occasion to be whisked off to Luton Airport (oldies will remember the significance of this), a rail journey courtesy of Alaphaline was all we needed. Our destination was the Paradise Brewery for the final day of their three-day Beer Festival. In this case, Paradise is located deep in the Cheshire countryside at Wrenbury, south of Nantwich and conveniently located close to the railway station.

Despite being on the main Crewe - Shrewsbury rail line, only local trains normally stop at Wrenbury every 2 hours or so. However on this occasion, the enterprising Crewe and Shrewsbury Passengers Association had arranged for the 11.33 Manchester-Cardiff express to make an additional halt at Wrenbury because of the beer festival. We left Stockport only 5 minutes late and just 45 minutes later arrived in our beer drinkers' paradise.

Some of you will know of another beery delight within a 10-minute walk of Wrenbury station - the Bhurtpore Inn in the adjacent village of Aston. The assembled throng on the station did a "bomb-burst", some heading straight for the brewery and others, including myself hiking off down the lane for lunch at the Bhurtpore as it closes at around 3 o'clock. There is a short cut across the fields, but this is not recommended in snow and ice as some found out!!

The Good Beer Guide listed Bhurtpore features good home cooking using local produce, at least 9 beers on handpump plus some interesting ciders and a large range of foreign bottled beers. Always available is the excellent Hanby Drawell from the local Wem brewery as well as beers from other micros including Paradise. It is well worth a visit and hopefully will be holding a beer festival in July when express trains will stop specially once again. Replete with good food and beer, it was time to follow the setting sun back to the Brewery, which is located on the quaintly named Creamery Industrial Estate, just east of Wrenbury station. The brewery was set up in July 2000 by John Wood and Nick Platt who originally ran Paradise Plastics on the same site. However, there was a recession in the plastics industry and over a pint or two in the Bhurtpore, John and Nick decided to convert the premises into a brewery "to combine business with pleasure".

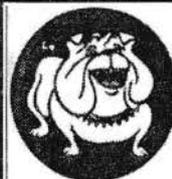
All of Paradise's current 8 brews were available at the festival, along with beers from around a dozen local micros including Beartown from Congleton, Slaters from Eccleshall, Salopian from Shrewsbury and Weetwood from Tarporley. Also available were the elusive beers of the Brunswick brew pub from Derby which are not often found outside the pub itself. As the Paradise beers were all new to me I felt it necessary to try as many as possible - well any excuse will do! Strongest of their beers was Rum Old Ale, at 6% well balanced with a hint of smokiness and very moreish. Nearly as strong, at 5.6%, was a lovely IPA called Dabbers. whilst sharing part of the same name was Dabbers Gold (5%), a typical wheat beer. Premium Bitter (4.5%) and Paradise Bitter (4.2%) were both brown in colour with the former being well hopped. Wrenbury Ale (4%) was lighter in colour with a crisp after-taste whilst the 2 session beers were Happy Hooker and Giggling Gigolo (both 3.8%). Try saying giggle... er.. goggling... er, well you know what I mean - when you have had a few- it is easier to point at the pump!

The brewery has a small bar which is usually open pub hours - best to give them a ring on 01270 780916 to check the actual times before you set out. During the festival, the brewery itself was also used as a bar with casks racked up alongside the fermenting vessels. It was a most enjoyable way to spend a day between Christmas and New Year when there are usually no beer festivals being held. Congratulations to all at the brewery for their organisation and enthusiasm and above all, the excellent beers.

There was too much to sample to catch the express, so I opted for the local train to Crewe some time later. You need to remember to leave plenty of time to get to the station before the train arrives or you will find your access to the platform cut off by the level crossing gates. In addition Wrenbury is a request stop, so you need to signal the driver to stop, just like a bus. If alighting from the local train at Wrenbury, tell the guard beforehand. You could try this journey any weekday or Saturday from Stockport by changing at Crewe and the fare is under a tenner. On Sundays, trains are more sparse.

It is probable that there will be another Bhurtpore festival in July and hopefully, the Brewery will put on another festival in December. Look out in OT for details and then there is no excuse for not making that trip to Paradise !!

The bar at Paradise Brewery will be open on the first Friday of each month between 12 noon and 11pm; all beers will be sold at £1 a pint.



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CAMPAIGN
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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

A combination of ill health and the National Winter Ales Festival (wasn't it good) have prevented me from getting out and about too much this month. In particular my planned visit to Gorton didn't take place, although I'm hopeful of getting there in the next few weeks.

The bad news this month is that following several months of intermittent availability of cask beer, the once thriving Barleycorn in West Didsbury has now gone 'smoothflow only'. The pub does of course still offer customers a wide selection of alcopops and branded lagers, and puts particularly remarkable effort into its ever-growing number of chalk-board notices. This pub was once a real oasis for cask beer and I just can't believe that there's 'no demand' - after all the Woodstock across the road, and run by Bass of all people, seems to have little problem in shifting the stuff. Having said that, the last time I was in the Barleycorn there did seem to be an air of

decay about the place, so perhaps this latest development is just another symptom of that.

On the plus side, however, the New Victoria in Longsight has reopened after a lengthy period of closure. The circumstances of both its closure and reopening are rather odd, though. The pub is owned by RBNB, a rather secretive company which also runs a small brewery in Barnsley. So secretive is it that the company managers declined to reveal the identity of the controlling shareholders. This resulted in the pub having its license revoked as the police insisted that this information be made available. Other police forces took a similar line and as you might expect it all ended up in court, where judgement was given in favour of RBNB. This paved the way for the New Victoria, and other similarly affected pubs to reopen. I've not yet had chance to pop in and it will be interesting to see if it sells any of the company's own cask beers (or any cask beers at all, come to that...).

In the City Centre there's not been much going on. I understand Terry Corless will be retiring from the Circus this month and this really will be the end of an era. Naturally Opening Times will cover the event in full.

Elsewhere, the Crown on Deansgate was closed during the Winter Ale Festival. I reported not long ago that it's now owned by Hale Leisure and presumably it is undergoing some sort of refurbishment. We might also get a new Wetherspoon's this month as work was well under way on their new outlet in the Printworks when I passed a couple of weeks ago.

And that's about it for this month. Hopefully, more next time.

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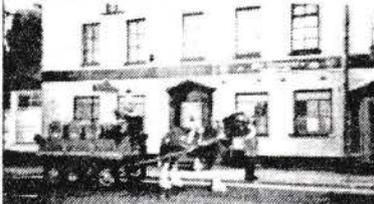


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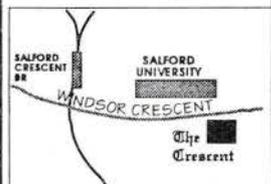
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Taste or Effect?

I was dismayed to see recently that Stella Artois had been named as one of Britain's top three grocery brands. This is a beer that, at least in its British licence-brewed incarnation, is largely devoid of flavour and character, and best suited for necking from the bottle by undiscerning customers. But it's also, at 5.2% ABV, a pretty strong beer, and you must conclude that people are drinking so much of it not because they like the taste but because they want to get drunk as simply and painlessly as possible.

Compare it with Moorhouse's Black Cat, last year's Champion Beer of Britain, a highly distinctive beer full of flavour and character, which may only have a modest strength of 3.4% ABV, but in every other respect is immeasurably superior to British fake Stella. Which would you prefer to drink?

To be honest, if your main aim in drinking is simply to get drunk, then you've got a bit of a problem. A couple of strong beers are fine to give you an appetite for your lunch, and there's nothing to beat a soothing glass of Old Tom before retiring for the night. But if you're going to spend a session on pints, both your wallet and your liver would be much better off sticking to milds and ordinary bitters with a strength of 4% or less, and you don't need to sacrifice anything in terms of taste.

Some may dismiss beers of this strength as weak and watery, and that's certainly true of standard lagers and keg bitters. But the category includes some of Britain's most distinctive contributions to the brewer's art, from the rich maltiness of Bateman's Dark Mild through to the uncompromising hoppiness of Hartington Best Bitter, and locally nobody can accuse Holt's, Hydes', Lees' or Robinson's everyday beers of being in the least bit lacking in taste and body. And it's not the case that they have no effect on you - merely that it's much more gentle, gradual and pleasant. It's also a pity that so many pubs that have the option of serving guest beers seem to ignore high-quality, full-flavoured beers of moderate gravity in favour of those with strengths of 4.5% or above.

Death of a Curmudgeon

I was saddened last month by the news that Auberon Waugh, one of the great curmudgeons of our time, had died, aged 61, at his home at Combe Florey, Somerset. Despite losing a lung during National Service in the 1950s, he always believed in living life to the full, and enjoyed a prolific career as a journalist and commentator, working for a number of national newspapers and magazines. In recent years he was best known for his "Way of the World" column in the "Daily Telegraph". His greatest moment of fame came in the general election of 1979 when he stood against former Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe as the candidate of the Dog Lovers' Party. Like any true curmudgeon he had a variety of strongly-held views that would not fit into a convenient pigeonhole. But he was always a staunch opponent of the efforts of the politically correct to ban anything that people actually enjoy doing. In particular he was a great champion of country pubs and had the courage to speak out against the efforts of the police to close them down through over-zealous enforcement of the drink-drive laws.

5 Years Ago
by Phil Levison **FEBRUARY '96**

Football Crazy! "Man Utd HQ" Faces Bulldozer - these were the headlines, and the HQ was the Imperial Hotel, where the old Newton Heath FC had been saved from bankruptcy in 1902, and the name Manchester United was adopted. For many years afterwards the Imperial was known as the "headquarters" of Manchester United - a postcard from 1903 shows the club flag flying proudly over the building. However, the Imperial had been closed for a number of years, and under the dead hand of the Central Manchester Development Corporation's ownership, it had been allowed to decay. Situated as it was, next to the old Joshua Hoyle building, it was in the way of the plans of the Joshua Hoyle Hotel Co Ltd, who wanted to clear the whole site and build their prestige Malmaison Hotel. As the Imperial was a listed building, the owners required permission to knock it down. The whole affair was classed as outrageous, and letters of protest were sent to the City of Manchester Planning Department. Sadly, all to no avail and the Imperial is now nothing but a memory.

The fallout from the merger between Scottish & Newcastle and Courage had hit with a vengeance, with the announcement of two brewery closures and the loss of 1600 jobs. The closure of Nottingham's Home Brewery had brought to an end a long history of brewing in the city. The only good news was that the Home Ales brands had been bought by Mansfield, who could be expected to make a better job of replicating the brews than most. The other brewery closure was the Webster plant at Halifax - the brews affected were to be brewed in other parts of the Scottish Courage empire.

A City Centre pub had won an award in the 1995 Pub Design & Conservation Awards run jointly by CAMRA and English Heritage. Rothwells on Spring Gardens was joint winner in the Best Conversion to Pub Use class. The pub was a converted banking hall with elaborate marble columns, mosaic floor, and extensive use of mahogany fittings and stained glass. Marston's had done a wonderful job in creating a palatial establishment, which had become one of their flagship pubs. (Food for thought - Rothwells was the name of a local brewery that Marston's bought, and then closed. The new pub originally sold the full range of Marston's cask beers now it has no real ale at all.)

A final item from "Manchester Matters" - after a number of false alarms, the Harp & Shamrock in the City Centre had finally closed. Whilst all but inevitable in view of the decline in employment in that part of town, it was nevertheless a sad loss. Happily the pub reopened and has now been re-born as the Pot of Beer, a worthy successor to the old Harp.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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Always in
good taste

HISTORY IN A GLASS - THE GOLDEN AGE OF COACHING

A Wry Look at the History of British Drinking by Pete Soane (Part 5)

One of the earliest routes of the new coaching era was from London to Bath and anyone wishing to travel on the coach was instructed to "repair to the Belle Savage on Ludgate Hill in London and the White Lion in Bath, at both which places they may be received in a Stage Coach every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, which performs the whole journey in three days (if God permits) and sets forth at five in the morning. Passengers to pay £1.5s each, who are allowed to carry 14lbs of weight."

The journey was advertised in 1667 although an earlier regular coach route was operating between London and Chester in 1657, a four-day journey made at a cost of 35/6d (£1.77). The Belle Savage was a well-established inn in the 16th Century and although it was burnt down in the Great Fire of 1666, it was rebuilt and survived until its demolition in 1873. In the 1590s a traveller called Banks and his dancing horse entertained the customers at the Belle Savage but unfortunately Banks decided that greater fame and fortune lay abroad so he and his amazing horse went to the Continent where they were accused of harbouring a demon and burnt at the stake by the Inquisition in Rome.

Some of the painters who made stagecoaches and inns their subjects at times during the 18th and 19th Centuries provide an insight into the importance in which coaching was held.

Hogarth painted an inn sign, "A man burdened with mischief" his wife and a monkey), and helped organise an exhibition of sign painters' inn signs in 1762. JMW Turner painted an inn sign in Dartford High Street. A David Cox inn sign is preserved in the Royal Oak at Betws-y-Coed and the Princess Louise, who was the subject of several inn signs, was supposed to have painted the sign at the Ferry, Roseneath.

Probably the artist most closely associated with inns and ale houses was George Morland, and one of his favourite haunts was the Bull, North Hill, Highgate. Morland enjoyed a tippie and he recorded one day's intake in a Paddington alehouse: Hollands gin, porter, Hollands, ale, bottled porter, ale, gin & water, rum & milk, porter, gin, port wine (dinner), opium & water, coffee, punch, shrub, porter, port (supper), rum (for bed). Morlands Brewery at Abingdon, Oxon., now of course sadly closed, was named after him. Perhaps the most famous drinker of the eighteenth century was Henry Elwes, nicknamed Toby Fillpot (who was the inspira-

tion for the Toby Jug). This great glutton and star drunkard was said to have consumed 20,000 gallons of ale in his lifetime.

The mason and carver Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721) stayed at the Belle Savage and another notable London inn, the Cock & Bottle in Fleet Street bore one of his signs. Samuel Pepys celebrated the King's coronation there on St George's Day 1668, and in 1768 the Cock & Bottle was still going strong.

*"Nor think the Cock with these not on a par,
The celebrated Cock of Temple Bar
Whose Porter best of all bespeaks its praise,
Porter that's worthy of the Poet's lays."*

The Post Office at the time favoured a system using mounted carriers or post boys, but this was slow and corruption was rife. So, on 2 August 1784 John Palmer despatched the first mail coach from Bath to London. The journey took sixteen hours and the Bristol Mail remained the best mail service until the last run in 1841, benefiting from the Bath road provided by Beau Nash in 1754.

By the 19th Century the mail was organised so well that the posting stage was down to four miles on the fastest routes and a complete team of horses could be replaced within a minute. It must have been a colourful sight with the maroon, scarlet and gold liveried mails and the Blue, the Shamrock and the Emerald among others, all wit their distinct liveries. Of course all these horses and passengers needed sustenance and refreshment, food was vital to keeping warm for it was not uncommon for outside passengers to freeze to death. The fate of one female passenger related by Mr Jingle at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, in the Pickwick Papers, was fortunately less common: "Terrible place - dangerous work - other day - five children - mother - tall lady, eating sandwiches - forgot the arch - crash - knock - children look round - mother's head off - sandwich in hand - no mouth to put it in - head of family off - shocking - shocking".

The name of the Golden Cross was unusual for an old inn as most inns and alehouses named after crosses had fallen foul of either the Dissolution or of the Puritans. The Three Crosses on the Dunchurch-Daventry road was named after the cross-roads and Dean Swift was reputed to have engraved the following on the window after being less than impressed by the service there:

"To the landlord

*Thou fool, to hang three crosses at thy door,
Hang up thy wife and thee'll have four"*

Another Three Crosses at Biddenden in Kent is known as the Three Chimneys which is a corruption of Les Trois Chemins, a reference to a cross-roads beyond which French prisoners of the Napoleonic Wars could not go without being deemed to have absconded.

Another traveller who was moved to complain about his lodgings was one John Byng (Viscount Torrington), in the 1780s, "My sheets were so damp and the blankets so dirty and stinking, and the room so smelling of putridity that I slept little, though I took off the sheets and employed all the brandy, nearly a pint, in purifying the room and sprinkling the quilt and blankets. Glad I was to rise, tho' with a headache and gloomy as the day..."

Although the coaching era would last until the 1850s and later, the last commercial run from Amersham to London ending in 1894, the steam train was making itself felt. The inns and taverns however, would mostly survive the passing of that great era.

*"Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found,
The warmest welcome at an inn."
- William Shenstone (1714-63)*

OPENING TIMES 202 (FEBRUARY 2001)

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The Castlefield National Winter Ales Festival was a great success in almost every way (though don't mention the queue for the gents on Friday evening), and is reviewed elsewhere, so I will return to it only in passing, at the end of this.

February is Liverpool. Not a place I visit VERY frequently, but there are a number of compelling reasons in the near future. (1) Cains Dispensary on Renshaw St is having a Winter Ales thrash with an extensive range (including & up to 11.5% abv) from Feb 8 - 16. (2) The excellent Ship & Mitre on Dale St has a festival coming up (15 - 18) and these are always worth a punt (and great and ultra-good-value grub) (and...note the overlap). (3) The fabulous Liverpool Beer Festival in Lutyens Crypt under "Paddy's Wigwam" - details below from Feb 21 - 24, and finally (4) a German Beer Fest with Wheat Beers, Dunkels & Lagers draught and bottled at Dr Duncans (Cains again) on St Johns Lane from 24 - 28, brought about by Cain's tie-up with the Hopf Weisse brauerei of Bavaria. AND, of course there's the excellent Head of Steam at Lime St. BR, complete with architecture, rail memorabilia, excellent cask ales and beers from Irish Micros. Worth a visit on EVERY trip to scouseland. (The HoS is also having an Irish micro fest next month, to coincide with Paddy's day. More details next issue).

"BLOODY" (OR, ANWAY, LIVER-ISH) MARCH

If I survive March, I will be surprised. Following on from Liverpool (see above - with Fleetwood Beerer the same weekend for gluttons) the first weekend in March sees the annual Bradford festival in...Saltaire. Excellent venue, the only problem being the need for tickets every session except Friday Lunch. But well worth the trouble of getting some. The following week starts at the Wigan Beer Festival (Mill at the Pier, Wigan from Thursday 8th to Saturday), and a rapid trip across the water on Saturday for the All Ireland Independent Brewers Festival and competition in Dublin (held at the excellent Porterhouse - but if ONLY they'd rack some stout off in casks....) with the festival running on until St Patricks Day on the 17th (19th is the holiday). Then its back (probably via the Liverpool Head of Steam for their Irish 'Do' the next week) and straight on to Leeds Beer Festival, (15 - 17) in Pudsey (see below) with 100+ real ales and a splendid global beer bar on which I will probably be working. Pause for breath, then the Beer House (Angel Street, Manchester) mega-spring festival starts, (19 - 25) and Ian Casson has sourced no less than 60 new & rare beers for our delight. Hardly has that got underway than a brief jaunt to London is needed, to attend London Drinker (March 21-23), at the Camden Centre Bibbro' St (its on Euston Rd but the entrance is at the back). Then back to the Beer House. If an April column is written it will be because of the wonders of modern medical science.

FESTIVALS PAST AND VILE DOINGS

Idy & Salvo's Winter Fest at the Crescent at the start of this month went very well. The beer quality was excellent, though I think the Pictish Claymore was my favourite - despite some very tasty winter brews. Ian's

Beer House do, and the City Arms' effort concurrent with the National Winter Ales sort of passed me by, as I was at Castlefield in a zombie-like daze for most of the week. What I remember of them was enjoyable. Castlefield has been spoken of elsewhere, and indeed I will now break a rule of this column not to criticise other publications. There is always an exception. The other Manchester CAMRA rag, Whats Doing - the little one you still have to pay for, has a puerile piece of drivel near the back each month - 'Rupert'. The old teasing humour seems to have gone bitter years ago, and in this issue it was given over to a vitriolic attack on the Winter Ales Fest, the customers, and the volunteer staff. It was clearly meant facetiously (facetiousness must be the new satire) but its particular point was totally off beam - the festival attracted hordes of beer drinkers who were NOT CAMRA members, many of whom had never been to a festival before, and who, almost without exception, learned a lot about good beer and had a great time. I agree the same is not always true of some local fests, which seem to run on inertia, but here it was entirely wrong. Given that we had many new staff, who may not know that 'Rupert' is an inane, embittered, foolish old man, some may wonder if CAMRA is worth the effort of giving up their free time. In his conclusion, he writes "The campaign has had its day, and its luminaries are odious." Whether meant in a 'funny' sensor no, the odium is entirely his. Frankly if this is the best they can do, the writer and publisher/editor should pack up and retire in disgrace - or remove the CAMRA logo from the front of their vile yellow rag. From now on I'll be saving 30p.

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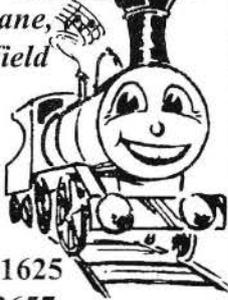
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HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE
WITH TIM JONES
CAMPAIGN
FOR REAL ALE

In Buxton, the *Bakers Arms* has withdrawn the Tetley Smoothflow and replaced it with Greene King Abbot. The intention is to have a rotating guest beer on handpump all the time, and this will be a premium ale.

The *Peels Arms*, Hadfield, now has Black Sheep Bitter alongside the regular Theakstons Bitter. This 'guest' will change regularly and there is the possibility that Marston's Pedigree will become a fixture in addition to the two real ales available at the moment.

In New Mills, rumours surrounding the *Beehive* have been cleared up. Concern was felt when the pub appeared to shut for a short period of time. But the only thing to actually change is that the restaurant above the pub is now of the thriving Indian variety. A great improvement from the point of view of many members (watch out for details of a curry night soon!).

The *Hare & Hounds* on Dooley Lane now has "three cask beers". The regular Hydes' Bitter and Theakstons Cool Cask have been joined by a guest - recently Wells Bombardier.

In Stalybridge, Mark Mitchell (formerly of the White Hart in Mottram) has taken over the Pineapple. This Robinson's pub on Kenworthy Street has Hatters Mild and Best Bitter alongside either the seasonal beer or Frederics - all on handpump. It is something of a social centre with various 'nights' throughout the week. On Fridays expect to find live music - usually a singer or other solo artist, on Saturdays there is a low-key disco and alternate Sunday evenings is a soul night/rock night (to coincide with a bikers club meeting). The Pineapple was one of the original 'Stalybridge 8' seems to be thriving and is, along with the above activities the home of Stalybridge MUFC Supporters Club and a computer club on Mondays.

With all this going on you could well forget about the beer...well, perhaps not. Let's hope it keeps all the plates in the air and carries on as successfully as it has started.

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1999 - 2000

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and theme nights

12.00 - 3.00 Sunday. 3 course special plus full menu





PUB OF THE SEASON

East Cheshire's Winter Pub of the Season is the **Admiral Rodney** in Prestbury.

The 'Rodney' is situated in the centre of the village, just a short walk downhill from the railway station. It has been owned by Robinson's since 1939 and is an attractive brick terrace building that is also Grade II listed. The interior is split into cosy drinking areas and low beams are a feature throughout. The furnishings consist of wood panelled seats and include some tables made from beer barrels - beware they are not all perfectly level on top. At the end of the bar on the wall you can read the history of the real Admiral Rodney, plus the history of the pub and a list of every licensee since 1730. The beers on offer are Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and the seasonal Robinson's beer - all of which are kept in excellent condition by the landlord Peter Brady. Peter has been at the 'Rodney' since 1993 and has featured in the last 7 editions of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, the pub also features in the Out

Inn Cheshire Guide as a Flagship entry. Food is served at lunch-times - the sausage sandwiches are particularly excellent.

On receiving the award Peter was keen to praise the support of a well trained team behind the bar and some good customers in front of it. Congratulations to Peter and his team for selling consistently good quality real ales and becoming CAMRA Pub of the Season.



...Pub News...Pub News...
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The Evening Star, James Street, Macclesfield is closed at time of going to press, due to financial reasons. This is a former Good Beer Guide Pub that has been given a CAMRA award in the past. It used to have a good turnover and fine local trade, under 3 separate landlords, until Marstons increased the rent to ridiculous levels. Why do they always try to fix something that is not broken?

The former Filigree and Firkin (or Bears Head if you are a bit older) has reopened as Kusch. It sells Boddingtons Bitter (don't they all) and Burton Ale - which is a nice surprise as it is a beer that you cannot find much of locally. It is being operated by the former licensees of the Amsterdam Bar.

If you experience problems in a pub, try to sort it out tactfully with the licensee, but if you need to take it further - 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

Ye Olde Admiral Rodney

Prestbury

*Robinsons Hatters
 Mild and Best Bitter
 on handpump*



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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

FEBRUARY 2001

Monday 12th - Social: Sir Edwin Chadwick, Stockport Rd, Longsight. Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 16th - Reddish & Heaton Chapel Stager: 7.30 Fir Tree, Gorton Rd; 8.30 Union, Broadstone Rd.

Thursday 22nd - Pub of the Month presentation to Crown, Heaton Ln, Stockport. 8.00pm onwards.

Monday 26th - Social: Spread Eagle, Lower Hillgate, Stockport. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 8th March - Monthly Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. **NB Cask Champion 2001 will be decided at this meeting.**

Saturday 10th - Pub of the Year 2001 presentation to the Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. From 8.00pm. **A good turnout please.**

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

Monday 12th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Rd, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.

Sunday 18th - Branch Walk: Starts from Swan, Kettleshulme at 10.00am. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

FEBRUARY 2001

Monday 5th March - Committee Meeting: Hatters Arms, Church Ln, Marple. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 12th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Travellers Call, Stockport Rd, Bredbury. 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:

Monday 12th - Monthly Branch Meeting: New Inn, Alderley Rd, Wilmslow. Starts 8.0pm.

Monday 26th - Social: Swan, Macclesfield Rd, Kettleshulme. Starts 8.00pm.

Regional Meeting

Wednesday 14th March - Greater Manchester CAMRA Branches Regional Meeting. Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester. Starts 8.00pm



To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planning



Dave and Sue welcome you to

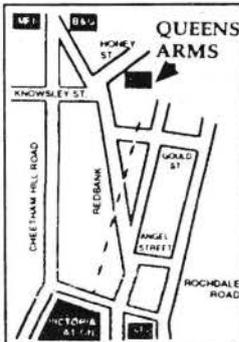
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OPENING TIMES FEBRUARY 2001 COMPETITION

Last month's competition attracted a good number of entries.

The beers and breweries you were looking for were: Futtocks; Snowdrop; Pandamonium; Mutiny; Yardstick; Knockendoch; High Hop; Pilsener; Restalrig; Grainstore and Epoch. The winner of the usual pack of beer-related goodies was R Yates of Heaton Norris. Congratulations!. This month we have some more brewery related items, again kindly donated by the Beer Seller.

The competition has once again been set by Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks and is a little different this month, for all you who complain that the normal competition is too difficult, we have a word search, simply find all the words, the letters remaining will reveal a rambling sentence.

Send it to OT Competition, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD by 26 February, please.



Sponsored by
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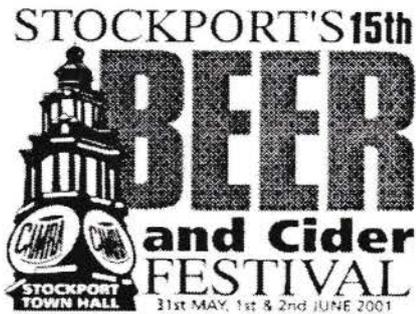
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S	O	J	O	I	N	S	E	D	Y	H	C	A	T	O	P	T	N	I	P
P	M	R	A	R	N	S	E	E	L	W	J	T	N	O	D	A	Y	A	N
H	D	E	S	I	E	U	P	P	O	S	S	E	N	N	I	U	G	M	C
O	R	T	P	T	A	P	S	T	B	I	T	T	E	R	E	T	L	E	B
E	R	A	Y	S	O	A	P	P	M	U	P	D	N	A	H	D	L	I	M
N	E	W	U	T	E	R	R	O	O	L	O	C	E	L	A	L	A	E	R
I	T	E	R	O	L	I	A	L	C	H	D	B	I	T	C	H	E	N	R
X	N	G	E	U	B	S	S	M	A	N	D	A	S	M	I	L	E	S	E
W	E	D	T	T	R	H	A	E	R	I	E	A	E	S	A	N	D	O	S
N	M	I	R	A	A	R	Y	R	E	W	E	R	B	H	V	E	Y	T	N
E	R	R	O	U	M	S	E	T	A	Y	O	U	N	G	S	R	D	T	I
D	E	B	P	A	M	A	L	T	R	J	E	N	N	I	N	G	S	E	K
Y	F	I	C	N	K	S	E	M	I	T	G	N	I	N	E	P	O	R	R
E	P	O	T	K	N	A	B	S	R	E	D	R	O	T	S	A	L	H	I
L	I	Q	U	O	R	S	T	S	I	R	G	B	O	T	T	L	E	S	F

MALT	YEAST	HOPS	COPPER	MASH TUN
KILDERKIN	FIRKIN	HOGSHEAD	GRIST	LIQUOR
FERMENTER	BITTER	MILD	REAL ALE	CAMRA
PORTER	STOUT	SHIVE	KEY STONE	BEER ENGINE
HAND PUMP	PINT POT	LAST ORDERS	OPENING TIMES	BOTTLES
BREWERY	CASK	BEER	BODDINGTONS	ROBINSON
ALE	JOSEPH HOLT	HYDES	JW LEES	PHOENIX
MARBLE	BANK TOP	LEYDEN	BRIDGEWATER	MCGUINNESS
PARISH	TAPS	SMILES	JENNINGS	YATES
ADNAMS	OTTER	NIP	ITCHEN	BELTER
YOUNGS				

15TH STOCKPORT CIDER & PERRY FESTIVAL 2001

Make a date in your diary now! Stockport's 15th annual Beer and Cider Festival will be held in the Town Hall (negotiations permitting) from 31 May to June 2. Once again we will be hosting the National Cider & Perry Championships, with a terrific range of traditional ciders and perries. Beer lovers shouldn't worry, though - the usual huge range of milds, bitters, strong ales, stouts and porters will be available.

Work on the beer order was starting as we went to press and promises to be the usual mix of old favourites and new beers. Will anything match last year's Ten Cent, the imperial stout from the now-defunct Bridgewater Brewery? Look out too, for a selection of beers from Heather Ales, winners of last year's Beer of the Festival. Many thanks are due to the Stockport Express for once again sponsoring the event and to Paul Stanyer of the Swan With Two Necks for acting as Festival licensee.



14th Wigan Beer Festival

Over 45
Real Ales

Bottled
Beers

Real
Ciders



German
Sausages,
French
Crepes,
Pies,
Sandwiches,
etc...

Mill At The Pier
(8 minutes from rail or bus)
Thur 8 March 5.30 - 11 (£1.50)

Fri 9 March 12-3 (Free)
5.30 - 11 (£2.50)

Sat 10 March 12 - 4 (£1.50)
7 - 11 (£2)

Admission FREE to card-carrying CAMRA members at all times

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 202)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE Date of Birth

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER

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

UNDER 26 YRS or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £8

Send To: Paul Moss, 60 Adelaide Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1LU

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to:
Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £8



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MIX AND MATCH FROM OVER 800 BEERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR (MIN 12 BOTTLES PER CASE)

Extensive list of British Beers

	BEER OF THE MONTH
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Moorhouse's Black Cat

This fabulous beer won the coveted award of CAMRA's Beer of the Year 2000. It is a smooth, well balanced dark mild with a fruity aroma. Chocolate and coffee flavours complement the bitter roast character that lingers on into the after taste. Try it any you won't be disappointed.

ABV 3.4%

£1.39 per bottle

£15.88 per case (12)

FREEPHONE 0800 085 5496

TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

Beer Barons was created by Beer Enthusiasts for Beer Enthusiasts. This site features a massive selection of beer from around the world. Beers of limited production, real rarities including beers which have never been sold in the UK before, and of course, all your old favourites. Unlike most other sites, we deal direct with the brewers, this means we can pass the savings on to you. Our beer stock is changing regularly and we are constantly updating our website, please check this regularly for news, availability, special offers, prizes and much more, or call us free on 0800 085 5496.