



OPENING TIMES



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Volume 17 Issue 3

MARCH 2001 No:203

6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

ASK IF IT'S CASK

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is about to launch one of its most ambitious projects yet.

For the last two years we've been getting together a fighting fund, supported by many brewers, and now at last we're ready. You should be seeing on Adshell sites and in pubs all over the country an advertising campaign promoting real ale and defending choice for drinkers. Yet, for all the effort we're putting into it, and for all the support we've received, we won't be able to spend even a fraction as much on promoting real ale and defending drinkers' choice as a national brewer can spend on a single lager or smooth beer brand. And that says it all, really.

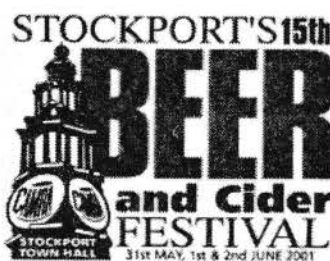
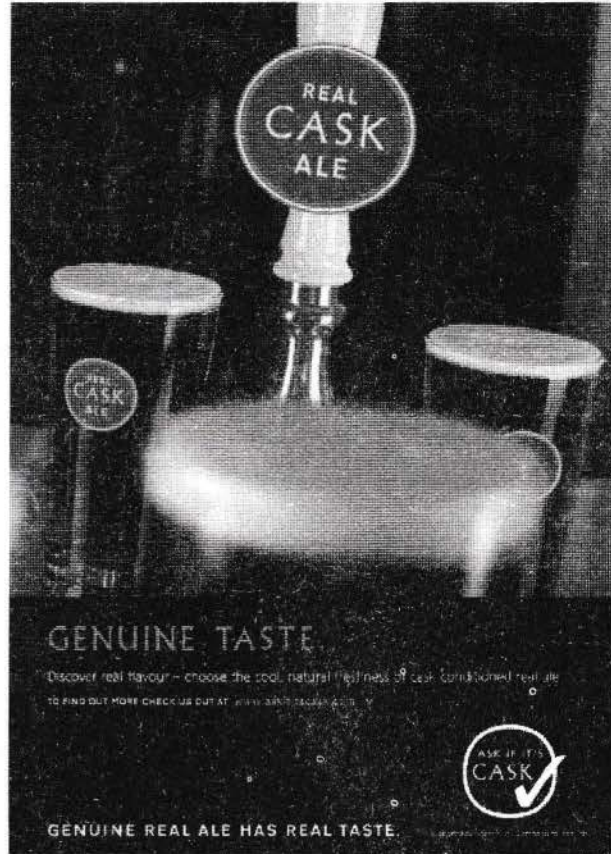
Big brewers are interested in big brands. They'll spend millions on pushing their own brands and, hopefully, knocking out the brands of their rivals. Their ambition is to shoulder all others aside, and to freeze out the competition. But what CAMRA is interested in is choice. Variety. A pub culture where there are beers of all styles and characters. You choose lager? Fine - let there be lager. You choose smooth beer? That's fine too. But we'd like you to be able to choose real ale as well, and unfortunately, in all too many pubs, that choice no longer exists.

Big brewers have been yanking the handpumps out of pubs all over the country, to create the appearance of "consumer demand" for smooth beers - which are more profitable because they're easier to store and easier to serve, and they don't have any wastage. But it's bogus. Thousands of smooth beer drinkers only drink smooth because their pub no longer stocks cask ale. We know the demand is there, because regional and micro brewers are all reporting rising sales in the 20 per cent of the market they control. But in the 80 per cent controlled by the big brewers, power over supply is being used to distort demand.

That's why CAMRA is taking to the billboards. It's about defending choice and variety. It's not about knocking lager and smooth beer, or putting down the people who prefer them. It's about persuading people who prefer cask beer to demand it in their local pub, and to refuse to be fobbed off with something they regard as second best.

For only when handpumps return alongside the lager and smooth beer fonts will brewers and licensees be able to say - and mean it - that: "The Choice is Yours"

So don't forget to "ask if it's cask" next time you go to the pub!



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

Our beer managers have been getting together to plan one of the best beer ranges ever, with some old favourites being joined by newcomers from all over the country. Hopefully we will be able to bring you more details next month although OT can reveal that, for the third year running, the Festival Special will be brewed by Rooster's Brewery in Harrogate. This will be a 3.7 per cent bitter brewed with a new variety of American hop, not previously used in the UK, Brewer Sean Franklin is keeping details under wraps at the moment but it should be another superb beer. Cider lovers shouldn't feel neglected, though - we will once again be hosting CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championship so a tip-top range can once again be expected. So don't forget those important dates - Thursday 31 May - Saturday 2 June. Get them in your diaries now!

IN MARCH'S OPENING TIMES

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

It now seems fairly certain that regulations guaranteeing consumers a full pint of beer as of right will be introduced before long (though see my co-editors comments below).

But we've been here before, only to be cruelly disappointed. Not only was the last consumer affairs minister to promote full-pint legislation, Edward Leigh, reshuffled out of the Conservative government, but the very measure he proposed to use - Section 43 of the Weights & Measures Act, enacted but never activated - was abolished by Michael Hesselstine under the guise of cutting red tape.

And remember the disappointment of Labour MP Dennis Turner's private member's bill on the subject got through all its Parliamentary stages, only to be dished by a solitary Conservative backbencher - believed but never proven to have been Eric Forth - simply shouting 'object' at the last minute?

This time we're promised justice for consumers at last - but the proposed action by secondary legislation can still be ambushed in the Lords, and you can bet that there'll be a last-minute thrashing of the dinosaur's tail as the brewing industry desperately tries to thwart the measure.

This month we highlight the campaign of misinformation that the trade has embarked on and we also expose some of the more outrageous lies spread to this end. The battle for full measure is now in its crucial final stages. It is vital that the Government is not persuaded by the vested interests of the licensed trade. I urge all Opening Times readers to contact their MP (House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA) asking them to support this long overdue measure.

John Clarke

Lord Haskins. Not perhaps the best known 'working peer, but a name that it might be well worth remembering, nevertheless. Lord Haskins is the erstwhile chairman of Northern Foods. So what? - you may ask. He is also the chairman of the Government's anti-red tape task force. What task force? do I hear. Well this body was set up with the usual media blitz 18 months ago, and has since done precisely nothing - until now. After 18 months of deafening silence, Lord Haskins has pontificated on the first piece of 'red tape' that he is 'minded' to stop, which is, you've guessed it, the proposed full pint legislation. In an interview with the Sunday papers last month, this unelected nicompoop opined that this was something that was "bureaucratic, needless and oppressive". So ripping off the drinking public is not? Needless to say, several big pub-owning groups are customers of Northern Foods. Not that this fact has any bearing on the good lord's opinions. Perish the thought.

P.B. Hutchings

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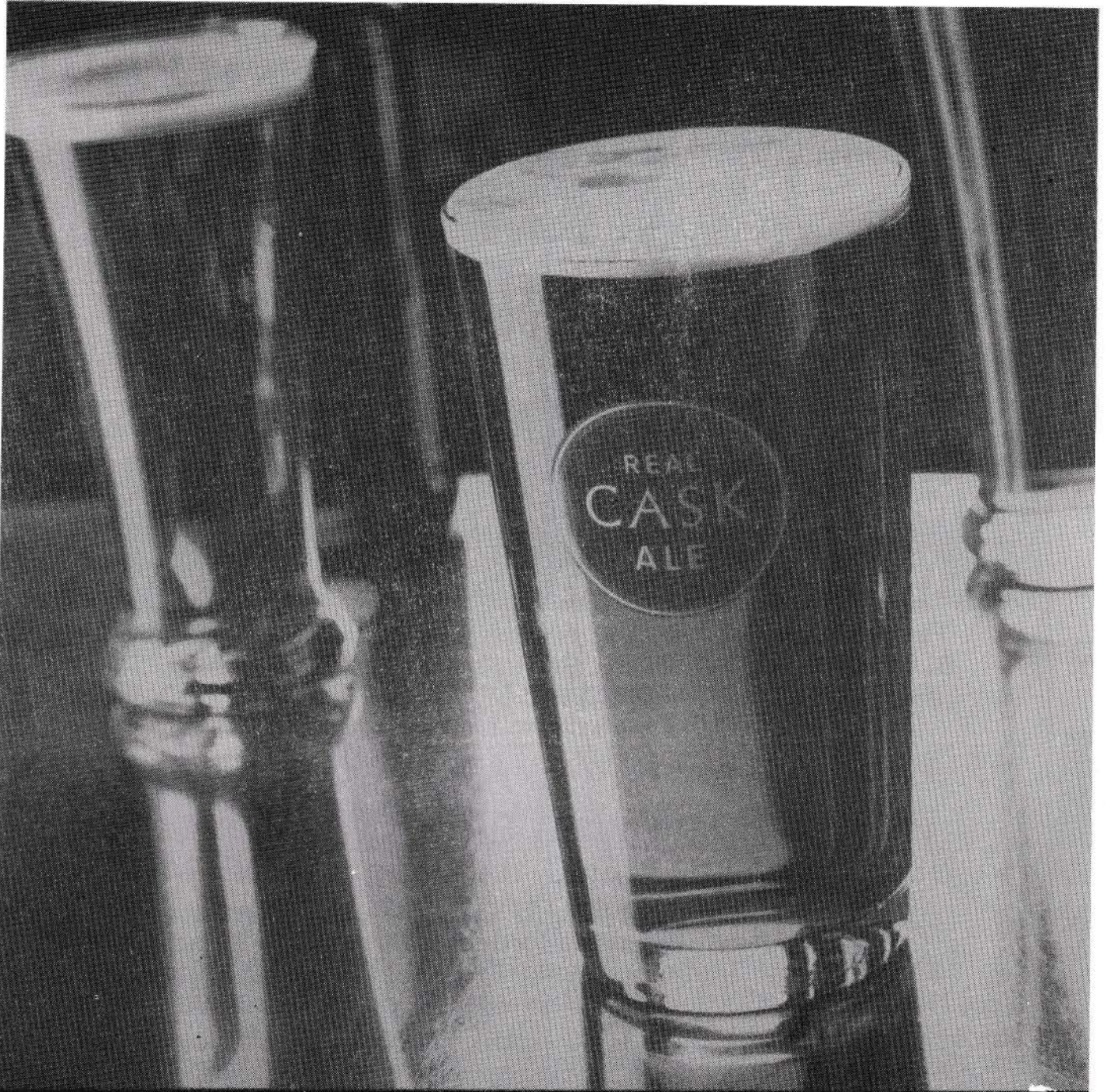
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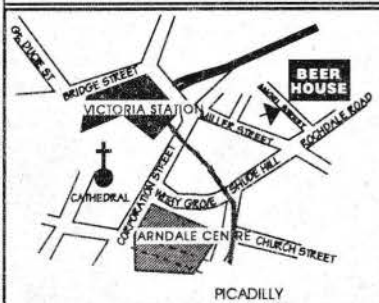
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for March 2001 goes to the Davenport Arms, Woodford, known to many as the "Thief's Neck". It is the only pub within the branch area that could really be described as a country pub, but fortunately for us is amongst the very best. The licence has been in the Hallworth family for seventy years, with the current licensee, Yvonne, who is the fourth generation, celebrating her tenth anniversary this year. The pub first became Pub of the Month in 1989, under Yvonne's father John, and then gained a further award in 1995, when it went on to become both Branch and Greater Manchester Regional Pub of the Year.

The Davenport Arms has a cosy, unspoilt interior with a traditional tap room and real fires in every room. The Robinson's beer, including Old Tom and seasonal beers as well as Hatters Mild and Best Bitter, is consistently good, and the pub has been in the Good Beer Guide continuously since 1988, a record excelled in the branch area only by the Nursery, 2001's Pub of the Year. The pub serves some very good lunchtime food and, while it is situated in a prosperous area, with many customers to match, offers a genuine welcome to all, including many workers from the nearby British Aerospace factory.

This award is richly deserved by Yvonne, sister Alison and their hardworking staff for maintaining consistently high standards over a long period of time, and keeping the flag of real pubs flying in an area where so many have been turned into identikit dining pubs.

The presentation will be made on Thursday 22 March from 8.30 pm onwards, and since the interior of the pub isn't the most spacious you should get there early to ensure a seat.

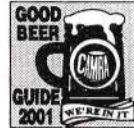
The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

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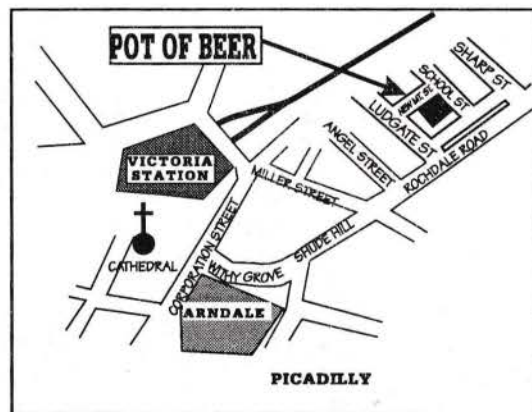
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RESUMES IN APRIL



STAGGER

with John Clarke

Perhaps it was the rapid succession of several branch events but it was a very small group indeed who met in the Anchor for the Stagger of Hazel Grove and Great Moor. Nevertheless and interesting and enjoyable night was in prospect.

The Anchor is one of many Robinson's houses in Hazel Grove and while some seem content to rest on their laurels, this is a pub which seems to make an effort. Evidence for this was the almost capacity crowd at just 8.00pm. Perhaps they had been attracted by the Burns Night offer of free haggis, but more likely it was the warm and welcoming atmosphere that was clearly in evidence. There's just the one open-plan room but it's well-looked after and is sufficiently broken up to avoid the barn-like feel that open-plan arrangements can have. Best Bitter and Hatters Mild had been joined by draught Old Tom. It was perhaps a little early in the night for that but the other beers were fine.

Almost next door is the Woodman. Robinson's again, but rather different from the Anchor. This started life as a small and very



traditional pub which was extended and opened out not all together successfully some year ago. The rambling interior has a multi-roomed feel but for me there was something lacking. There's lots of light timber - bar, furniture, floors but it all felt a bit stark and was certainly rather shabby. Having said all that, the Best Bitter was absolutely spot on and in all honesty one of the best pints of the night. Hatters Mild was also available but this went untried.

The next port of call was the only non-Robinson's pub of the night, Whitbread's George & Dragon. Above the door is a faded and peeling 'cask ale house' sign and this just about summed the place up. The 'ale house' concept has long since been ditched here and

it's now very much a Young Persons Venue (or YPV as they are known in the trade) with all manner of unsavoury designer drinks very much to the fore. The whole pub is now quite shabby and looks to be in major need of another revamp. Two cask beers remain on sale, though. These are Boddingtons Bitter and Marston's Pedigree and while we didn't try the Boddies, the Pedigree was frankly disgusting, so much so that one of our party found it impossible to finish.

Hurrying on, the next pub was the Crown in Great Moor. This landmark pub was built for the old Bell's Brewery, allegedly as something of a showpiece, and it's still an impressive pub today. Set back from the main road with a cobbled forecourt it still boasts a classic inter-wars interior with many original fittings and several rooms. At some stage there have been alterations which have resulted in very incongruous stone archways replacing some of the doors but this remains a very enjoyable pub. The beers are Best Bitter and Hatters Mild (Old Tom was notable by its absence from this usual regular outlet) and these were perfectly acceptable.

Our penultimate call was the Travellers Call. A small multi-roomed pub which has always been a local favourite. The two notable features here are the excellent outdoor drinking area (but not really suitable for a cold January night) and the huge collection of bells and other brasswork. This collection was in fact built up by a previous licensee and subsequently purchased by Robinson's so that it could remain as part of the pub's fixtures and fittings. It's a real gem of a pub and was deservedly packed. Handpumped Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were complemented by a cask of Old Tom stillaged on the bar. This time it wasn't too early and all three beers were sampled and all three thoroughly enjoyed.

Last but not least came the Dog & Partridge, just across the road. Another large multi-roomed pub, this is one of Robinson's few managed houses and consequently has a wider range of beers than many Robbies pubs. It was also impressively refurbished a few years ago in the much more sympathetic style that Robinson's now adopt. As a result it has a warm and cosy feel throughout and is clearly very popular. It's another pub with a good outdoor drinking area, although this time it's a huge garden at the back. On the bar Hatters Mild and Best Bitter were accompanied by Frederics and the current seasonal, then Samuel Oldknow. We tried the latter two and again they were both in fine form. The pub will however have changed hands by the time you read this - manager Steve Martin told us that he was about to move to the Friendship in Romiley as a tenant.


And that was that. Shorter than usual for a Stagger but this gave us more time to take in each pub. What ran through virtually all of them was a strong community feel and they all appeared to be well-liked by their respective customers. Lovers of pubs can take heart that this collection of largely traditional locals seemed to be faring well despite the views held by some financial analysts that the community pub has had its day. Perhaps a Friday night is not the best time to judge a pub's state of health but few showed signs of

neglect and most gave every indication of being thriving locals. Having said that, this article can only reflect what we found on one particular night and can't be taken as a once and for all judgement of either the pubs or their beers; as ever, the only thing to do is try them yourself and see what you think.





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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Gordon Thorburn, Buxton:

Mr Peter Edwardson of Heaton Norris must be a marvellous chap. Not only can he spot my own character flaws at a distance - seriously defective, perverse, fevered and willing to lend money to anybody - but he can read the thoughts of many pub goers without ever meeting them.

I much prefer the calm, common sense of Mr Lloyd Roberts, landlord. The general point is that we should be allowed to have the pint we want. In the case of Mr Roberts, myself and many pub goers, that is the pint as currently defined, served in the traditional glass.

If Mr Edwardson wants a 100% liquid pint at an increased price, served in whatever vessel he chooses, fine, but don't make me have it. Perhaps when he has been going in pubs for forty years, as I have, he might understand what I'm on about.

From M Umpleby, Brighouse, West Yorks:

Forgive me if I don't join in the euphoria over the recent Winter Ale Festival.

On the day I went there was a queue three-quarters of a mile long and they would let no-one in until someone came out! After half an hour I gave up and went to the White Lion opposite and on to the Ox. I was not the only person grumbling in the queue (I've never had to queue at a beer festival). It was their job to serve us, the customer. At this rate they couldn't run a p*ss-up in a brewery.

May I mention the excellent pub, The Beer House, with its excellent rotation of ales and the nearby Pot of Beer?

(I hardly think the queue was 3/4-mile long! Most successful beer festivals have queues at busy times. This is caused by the hall being full - the fire limit cannot be exceeded so it's invariably a case of 'one in, one out'. While it is indeed the job of the festival staff to serve their customers, it is not their job to break the law by exceeding the fire limit. Ed (1). Most beer festivals are forced to choose between advanced-ticket-only entrance or queues. Both Stockport & the National Winter Ales Festivals prefer queues. At the Winter Ales Fest next year it is hoped to open (additionally) on Wednesday night to spread the load somewhat. Ed(2))

From Dave Nunn, Hazel Grove:

While most pubs in the Grove have already passed on the Robinson's price rise to the customers the Three Tunnes, Hazel Grove firmly intends to hang on until budget day.

It remains to be seen how the exchequer increases are passed on to consumers. However, it is very clear that some licensees are quick to maintain percentage margin in a declining market. No doubt the same effect will be observed post budget day. Congratulations are due to the Three Tunnes management for having the balls to buck the trend of 'more cost more margin for me'.

Letters to Opening Times are welcome by post to:
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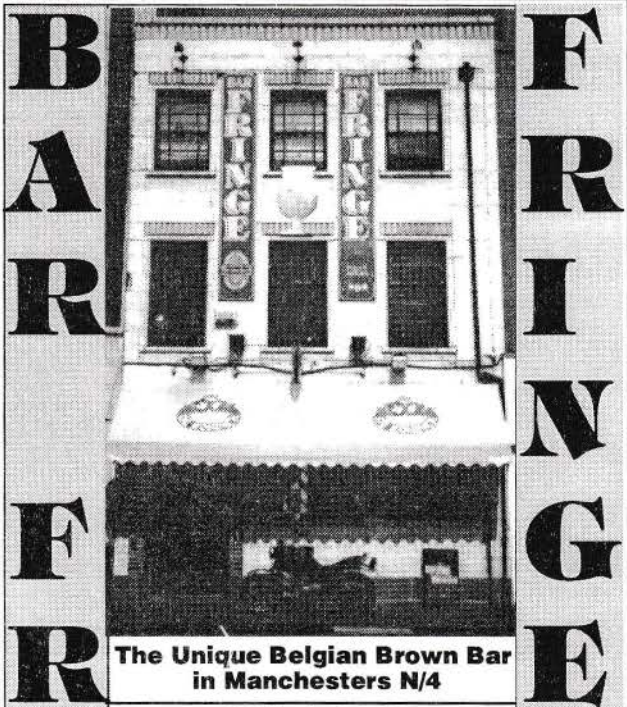
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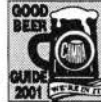


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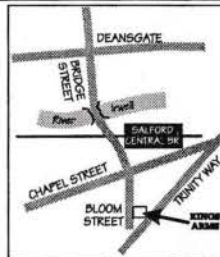
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New Seasonal Brews

This month sees new seasonal offering from three of our local family brewers.

Hydes' are entering the fray with 'Down The Hatch', a 4.2 per cent bitter (we think) - will they equal the success of the widely praised 'A Quick One'? Hopefully drinkers will be able to find out at the Pub of the Year presentation at the Nursery, which is always a guaranteed outlet for Hydes' seasonal beers.



The entrant from J W Lees is Cereal Filler. This is a rye beer a 4 per cent and is said to have a 'refreshing light taste' and the beer itself will be paler coloured than normal. AS ever, Rain Bar in the City Centre will be have the beer on sale but be warned - prices here are at the top end of the range.

Robinson's are following up Samuel Oldknow - a beer which seemed to divide opinion - with Stockport's Arches. This 4 per cent beer uses a blend of barley, wheat and roasted malts to produce "a dark, rich full bodied bitter beer that has a distinctive burnt chocolate malt flavour followed by a crisp and dry long finish". An excellent place to try this, or any of the full range of Robbies beers is the Castle Hotel in Oldham Street, Manchester.

Both the Marble Arch brewpub (Rochdale Road) and the Marble Beerhouse (Chorlton cum Hardy) will be guesting a range of Irish real ales for the period around St Patricks day from the highly reputable Dwans of County Tipperary.

The Marble Arch in addition to its weeklong food service is now running a Monday to Thursday evening menu of quality home cooked food. New for the end of March/start of April will be a vegan, organic spiced ginger beer. It will be pale orange in colour, with a spicy nose, a distinct ginger character and an understated bitterness, weighing in at an OG 1045. Despite recent successes in fish free clarification, the new beer will carry a pleasant haze as it is 'almost' a wheat beer. Various suggested names have been bandied about, including James' ginger. He insists, however, that he is strawberry blond.

Elsewhere Phoenix Brewery will be introducing March Hare (4.4 per cent); Shamrock (4.3) and, at the start of April, Resurrection, a 4.7 per cent Easter beer. Bolton's Bank Top Brewery has nothing new in the pipeline just at the moment, although brewer John Feeney tells us that he is considering bottling his beers. He is currently in negotiations about this, but if all goes well, he will be producing a bottle conditioned beer before long - this will be a new 4.5 per cent brew produced specially for bottling (although you just know the odd cask will slip out into the trade).

The latest from Pictish Brewery is Dolmen. This is a 4 per cent amber coloured ale "with a delicate hop aroma, biscuity malt flavours and a lingering bitter finish". Virtually every one of the Pictish specials have been superb beers so this should be one to look out for, too. (Had it in the Beer House as it was released. Thumbs up! - Ed(2)) In Stockport Ye Old Vic and the Crown are likely outlets while the Kings Arms, Bloom Street should probably have the beer, too.



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FULL PINT LIES

This month sees the end of the consultation period announced by the Government as part of its plans to finally introduce legislation to guarantee that pint of beer is just that – 100% liquid – a do away with the current confusion whereby the head can be considered part of the pint and so give rise to short measures.

As you might imagine, the industry big boys are very much against this – it means the end of all that profit in the big dollop of froth on the top of millions of pints of smooth, for one thing. They are using every weapon at their disposal but first and foremost is a campaign of disinformation, scare stories and, to be honest, downright lies. Already there have been scare stories in the national media warning of higher beer prices and over the next few weeks you can guarantee that we're going to hear the same old whoppers trotted out time and time again even though, like tired old horses, they are really only fit for the knackers.

You are unlikely to get the truth from the big brewers so here *Ted Bruning* exposes the truth behind the lobbyists' lies

Lie number one – "It will cost the trade millions to change over to lined glasses". No it won't. The requirement will be to serve full pints consistently. The choice of glass will remain up to the licensee. There will be no, repeat no, requirement to use lined glasses. Brim measures already have a small tolerance, and licensees who prefer them will still be allowed to use them – provided they fill them up. any licensees who feel the need to go over to oversized lined glasses will be allowed a phasing-in period roughly equal to the normal breakage replacement cycle and will therefore incur little or no additional cost. Of course, there are some beers which will have to be served in oversized lined glasses, for example keg stout and smooth beers. But there's no reason why properly trained bar staff shouldn't be able to use the correct glass for the beer they're serving.

Lie number two – "It'll mean the end of the traditional handpump – we'll all have to go over to metered dispense". Even if this was true, it wouldn't be the end of the world. Locally meters were quite common until a few years ago and are still regularly seen in Robinson's and Hydes' pubs. But anyway, it's not true. The legislation won't require that every single pint should be exactly 20 fluid ounces, and that every shortfall will be prosecuted. But pubs will be required to serve full measures consistently, which in practice means that trading standards will be able to prosecute persistent offenders.

Lie number three – "We expect a big head around here, and the froth is part of the pint". If you want a big head on your beer there's nothing in the proposals that say you shouldn't have one. But in future, the liquid beer and the head together will have to add up to 20 fluid ounces, not the 18 fluid ounces and half-inch of froth you're currently being fobbed off with.

Lie number four – "If we fill the glasses, the price of a pint will have to go up". This assumes that every pub currently makes a practice of serving short pints. Most licensees don't; and the new legislation won't add a penny to the costs of the vast majority of publicans who already deal fairly and honestly with their customers.

The main problem seems to lie with the big managed house companies which base their prices on nil wastage, squeezing 76 or more pints out of a 72-pint barrel, and routinely give short measure as a matter of policy. Time and again when local trading standards officers conduct full-pint surveys, it's the big town-centre managed houses that come out worst. But remember, if, as they claim, all of these companies have been following industry guidelines, serving 95 per cent full pints and always giving top-ups with good grace, the extra cost won't be all that much...will it?

Lie number five – "There's no consumer demand for it". Even leaving aside the fairly basic assumption that consumers generally expect and demand honest treatment from retailers, this is still complete twaddle.

Those who express this nonsense should first discover how many top-ups are requested in Britain's pubs every day. Because every top-up requested (and every top-up wanted, but not requested owing to consumer fatalism and low expectations borne of long experience) is effectively an instance of consumer demand for a full pint. As no-one has ever counted how many top-ups are requested in Britain's pubs every day, it's fair to say that the claims there's no customer demand have no basis in fact.

The very fact that the industry's own guidelines stipulate that top-ups should be given with good grace when asked for, and the additional fact that many managed house chains display signs to that effect in their pubs, prove that the industry knows full well that full pints are an issue with consumers. After all, if nobody ever asked for a top-up, there'd be no need for guidelines to be laid down of for all those signs to be stuck up, would there?

The Brewers & Licensed Retailers Association makes the point that the Department of Trade never gets letters on the subject – but does anyone seriously expect pubgoers to write to the Government every time they get a short measure? Of course they don't, and the big brewers and pub companies know it. British consumers rarely take direct action: they tend to rely on official watchdogs and representative organisations to defend their interests. In this case both the official watchdog – that's local trading standards departments – and the representative organisation – that's CAMRA – have been doing everything we can to get legislation to protect the consumer enacted for years. You could argue that the very fact that we take the issue so seriously is in itself evidence of consumer demand.

Despite this, the scare stories will continue and the flood of propaganda will become a deluge as the BLRA dinosaur has a last thrash of its tail. Don't be taken in. As consumers we are entitled to what we pay for. Most pubs are happy to provide that. If those that do not have to be forced, kicking and screaming, to do so then so be it.

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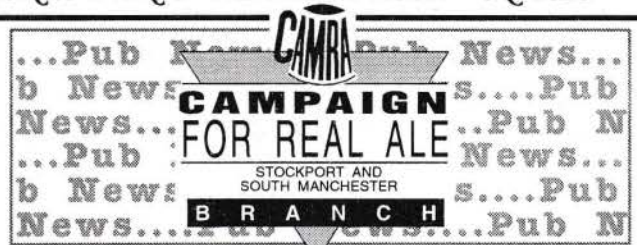


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The Punch Pub Company has run into trouble with its plans to obtain an entertainment licence for *Carpe Diem* in Cheadle. At a meeting lasting 4 1/2 hours at the Town Hall the councillors' decision came as a welcome relief to the many residents who had raised objections. Punch's original plans for the bar were to rename it the 'Beer House' and carry out refurbishments both inside and out. However, the latest proposals it was to become "Q's", an American-style theme bar with pool and a disco. Objections were plentiful, it seems, with many residents concerned about both the noise level and the type of customers I could attract. To top it all, it wouldn't be likely to sell any decent cask ale, either!

Not too far away, the **Malt Shovel** on Councillor Lane now sells no real ale but further up at the **Greyhound** an enthusiastic licensee is selling a very acceptable pint of Greenalls Bitter.

If you're at the **Greyhound**, you might be tempted to visit the *March Hare*, formerly the *Old Mill*. Don't bother. Previously a characterful pub which has sold an enterprising range of beers in its time, the *March Hare* is now just another identikit country-style dining pub. It's the type of place you could imagine the *Stepford wives* going on their day off. On the plus side, cask beer is sold. Tetley Bitter and Draught Bass are on handpump and when OT called, while the Tetley's wasn't brilliant, the Bass was on superb form.

In Edgeley, the **Greyhound** on Bowden Street has now added Taylor's landlord to the permanent range alongside Boddingtons Bitter and Greenalls Mild. It originally appeared as a guest beer and has proved so popular that it's been kept on permanently. The **Greyhound** still sells a weekly guest beer as well - Everard's Original when we were last in.

Not too far away, the **Blue Bell** on Shaw Heath has changed hands and now sells Holt's. Yes really! We've not tried it yet, but this is a welcome development at this all-keg pub. Meanwhile, former licensees at the **Blue Bell**, **Quentin** and **Jane McDonald** have taken over at the *New Inn*. This used to serve Tetley Bitter on handpump - no news yet whether this has survived the transition.

On Hillgate, the good news is that the **Black Lion** is open again. Always a good pub, it seems to have lost its way in recent times. The bad news is that there is still no cask beer.

In Heaton Norris, the **Ash Hotel** on Manchester Road now has a guest beer changed weekly alongside the Boddingtons Bitter and Old Speckled Hen. Yet another milestone in the continuing improvements at this previously moribund pub. Drinker's at the excellent **Gothic Bar** in Gatley should be in for a treat this month. Owners Cains have signed a deal to import two beers from the Dublin Brewing Company, Beckett's Dublin Ale and D'Arcy's Dublin Stout, both at 4.6 per cent. Cains will be selling Beckett's Dublin Ale in all its Robert Cain Ale Houses at a special St Patrick's Day price of £1.70 a pint and D'Arcy's at just £1.



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



This month's Desert Island choice comes from Graham Mascord, licensee of the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport which also happened to be Pub of the Month for February. Already armed with the current Good Beer Guide, the Champion Beer of Britain, Moorhouses Black Cat, and the Champion Winter Beer, Orkney Skullsplitter, these are his five other choices:

"I suppose I am eclectic about my taste in beer as I am about music and I would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to select just five Desert Island Discs! Choosing five beers is equally daunting, so I used the rationale of 'which beers would I be least able to do without?'"

"Ergo my first choice was simplified for me as, sadly it is no longer brewed! **Butterknowle Banner**: a 4 per cent pale brown beer with a hoppy nose, fruity undertones and my favourite long dry bitter finish - a true classic.

"I have never been able to comprehend otherwise very erudite beer drinkers who see something sinister in an ale of a darker hue than, say, Taylor's Landlord - I suspect it may have something to do with subliminal lager advertising! With this in mind my second choice - not in any order of preference - would have to be **Inveralmond Lia Fail**, first encountered at the Blaisdon Beer Festival in the Forest of Dean when I was living in nearby Cinderford. Lia Fail is apparently the Gaelic title of The Stone of Destiny (not Twyford, as some wag once wrote on the wall in our Gents), a well-balanced malty brew, full-bodied with chocolate notes and a satisfying finish. A truly beautiful drink at 4.7 per cent.

"Thirdly, a beer I discovered a couple of years back whilst watching rock bands of a Sunday evening at a certain tavern in Altrincham. So, with fond memories of pleasant evenings, I give you **Wye Valley Hereford Pale Ale** - a 4 per cent pale, balanced, hoppy, malty brew with just a hint of sweetness - yes, it's that long dry finish again folks!! Regular visitors to the Crown will be aware of a poster from the brewery depicting the fantastic Wye Valley with spectacular panoramics between Chepstow and Monmouth, and a favourite drive in any season.

"When I lived in Somerset I discovered three excellent ales and it took over a year of intensive research and sampling to find out which I preferred. They were Wadworth 6X, Ushers Founders (mostly in Bath) and Smiles Heritage, which was called Exhibition in those days. Eventually I settled for the Bristol brew, **Smiles Heritage**: a 5.2 per cent complex, reddish-brown, well-balanced beer with a fruity nose, malty roast chocolate and hops with a long-lasting bittersweet finish and fond memories to go with it. Glorious stuff.

"Save the best for last, so my final choice has to be **Bank Top Samuel Cromptons Ale**. Our regular visitors will know that we serve the full range of John Feeney's beer on Pump 4 and they are all of consistently excellent quality, but for me this is simply great beer. 4.2 per cent, hops on the nose (and how), a lemonade start then a starburst of hops on the palate. A real mouthful with, of course, you guessed it - that long dry bitter finish. What more could a beer drinker want?

"Reading back I observe the absence of both lighter and heavier register ABV ales, and this is not to say I don't like them. On the contrary, from Whim Arbor Light to Orkney Skullsplitter I love them all (well, most of 'em) which is probably why I'm the innkeeper of a cask ale pub."

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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

City Centre Changes

After a quiet couple of months, all of a sudden there's a whole raft of news from the City Centre.

At the **Pot of Beer**, Ken Birch left the pub quite suddenly late last month. The new manager is Simon Ellis who has acted as assistant manager for the past few months. Just before Ken left there was a fire which caused extensive damage to the upper rooms and smoke damaged the kitchen. Consequently the food had been temporarily suspended as we went to press although this was expected to come back on stream by mid-March. Simon tells us that the Polish food will be back while he will be tweaking other aspects of the menu. By the way the pub now opens from 12 noon to 11pm from Monday to Saturday; it's closed on Sundays while remedial work is carried out but hopefully this will be a temporary arrangement.

There are new faces at another Northern Quarter pub, too. At **Bar Centro** on Tib Street, managers Tony and Linda have moved to the Buck & Union in Oldham, their replacement being John Kennedy. By the way, Bar Centro has recently introduced two prospective house beers. These are Tib Street Tipple (4.3%) from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery and Bitchin' Bitter (4.2%) from Sarah's Hop House in Golborne. Both beers are said to be true brews rather than blends and if they are well received they will remain as permanent house beers.

It's also welcome to Phil Elton, who took over the reigns at Holt's **Old Monkey** on Portland Street last month. While new to Holt's, Phil has plenty of experience in the trade having run the Shakespeare for 4½ years and, in the dim and distant past, Rotters and Pips clubs. He was also instrumental in introducing real ale into Bahrain! After all that, the Monkey should be a push-over!

Two long closed pubs look as though they might be reopening. The **Lower Turks Head** on Shudehill is covered in scaffolding and there is apparently a planning application to redevelop the pub as a bar, restaurant or shop with living accommodation above. Also a

hive of activity is **Sams's Chop House** on Chapel Walks. A license application has been submitted and rumour is that the people behind **Mr Thomas's Chop House** are also involved here. If that turns out to be true it's good news indeed - while it can be a little pricey, Mr Thomas's is an exceptionally well-run pub where I recently spent a very enjoyable evening sampling the excellent Taylor's Landlord.

There are also developments at the **Crown** on Deansgate where Hale Leisure have applied for a 2.00am licence. Apparently they want to turn the place into a dance venue. What a travesty! Bad news, too at **Sqizzy Taylors** on Oldham Street. This has now become **Bar Code** and has terminated its brief flirtation with real ale.

There's better news at the **Peveril of the Peak** on Great Bridgewater Street. This excellent pub is to be one of the first in Manchester to take part in the Unique Pub Company's "Cask Ale Club". This is a joint venture with SIBA, the small brewers' association, and is designed to get micro-brewery beers into the difficult-to-penetrate pub company market. It's an experiment which has already worked successfully in Yorkshire and the North East and its extension to this side of the Pennines is to be welcomed. At the 'Pev', this means the replacement of Websters Bitter with a rotating guest beer and this should be available by the time you read this.

And In The Suburbs

The **Royal Oak** in Didsbury changed hands last month when June Turner, former licensee of the Tollgate, Old Trafford, took over. June is an experienced licensee having previously worked at the Old Pump House, Salford Quays and the Fox & Hounds, Flixton. No major changes are planned and all the current cask beers will continue, including the range of seasonal beers. The famous cheese and pate lunches will also remain. Also in Didsbury, the **Station** has now stopped selling cask mild due, I'm told, to poor sales.

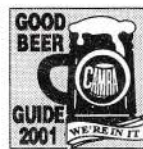
Nearby, the former **Via Vita** is due to reopen shortly as a **Parisa Café Bar**. When it was first mooted the Parisa chain was to feature in-house breweries but this appears to have been abandoned so don't expect a sparkling addition to the village's cask beer scene. The **Red Lion** in Withington is also due to reopen soon after a major refurbishment and hopefully, I'll be able to let you have a report next time.



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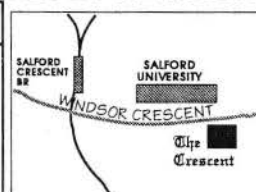
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Drunk on Half a Bottle?

There could be no better example of the modern, politically correct attitude to alcohol than a couple sharing a bottle of wine over their evening meal at home. They're combining drink with food, savouring it for the taste more than the effect, and there's no question of rowdiness, drunkenness or drink-driving. So it may come as a surprise to learn that, according to official guidelines, they are drinking to excess. A typical bottle of wine, 750 ml at 12% ABV, contains 9 "units" of alcohol, yet the maximum "safe" daily limits are 3-4 units for men, and 2-3 for women. This underlines just how ludicrous these guidelines are.

In reality, for most adults, there is no significant risk to health unless you routinely drink more than twice this amount. So it is disappointing the way that the drinks industry, in particular the Portman Group (the industry body that aims to promote responsible drinking), seem to accept these figures without question. There is of course a strong whiff of hypocrisy about all this, as the brewers and pub operators know very well that their business depends on people who exceed these official guidelines. If everybody religiously stuck to these limits, scarcely a pub in the country would still be viable. In effect, they are simply paying lip-service to political correctness.

Undoubtedly the drinks industry must encourage sensible drinking and condemn drunkenness and alcohol abuse. But the notion that anyone who drinks more than two pints in a day is guilty of irresponsible drinking is so absurd that nobody outside the anti-drink lobby should give it any credence whatsoever. So isn't it time that official industry bodies started to fight back in defence of genuine moderate drinking and challenge these exaggerated and unscientific pronouncements?

No Half Measures

One aspect of moderate drinking that seems to be withering on the vine is the half-pint, as I was told by an article I read recently. In the 1950s, many people, particularly the more genteel sort, chose to drink halves of mild or bitter. Now, however, it's dismissed as the kind of rather feeble thing the likes of John Major might do. Real men, and increasingly real women, drink pints.

But in a way this is a symptom of two unfortunate modern attitudes to alcohol, that the main point of drinking is to get drunk, and that drinking should be ringfenced from the rest of life almost as if it was taking hard drugs. All too often, where people might have drunk halves in the past, it's now considered politically incorrect to touch anything stronger than mineral water.

So ironically it would reflect a more mature and tolerant view of alcoholic drinks, and one more like that which applies in France and Italy, if more people were seen with a half-pint in their hands. Why have a sickly coke or an overpriced designer water with a hint of passionfruit when you could have a tasty glass of beer instead?

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

5 Years Ago

MARCH '96

by Phil Levison

For the second month running, the whole of the front page was taken up with the progress, or rather lack of it, in the fight to save the Imperial from demolition. Apart from the Manchester United connection, the pub had also been involved in the birth of the Professional Footballers Association. The battle was coming to a head as the planning application was due to be heard by the Central Manchester Development Corporation, a meeting to which the public were *not* invited. Apparently Joseph Holt had offered to buy and restore the pub, but they had received only silence from the CMDC, and just as odd was the reaction from Manchester United. The Imperial had been discussed at a board meeting, but whilst they had acknowledged the part the pub had played in their history, Chairman Martin Edwards felt that the club couldn't comment on the current plan.

Much to the surprise of many Stockport drinkers, the Stanley Arms had closed, probably for good. For almost six years the pub had an ever changing selection of beers, and was a by-word for innovation among "beer spotters" who travelled many miles to sample the latest that Mike Belsham was selling.

Under a sub-heading "End of an Era", it was reported that after 29 years in the same pub, Arthur Gosling was to retire from the Royal Oak in Didsbury. Under Arthur's stewardship, the pub had become something of an institution, and he himself had become something of a legend in his own lifetime. The Royal Oak had featured in just about every pub guide going, and had become nationally famous for its cheese lunches. Full of character, and characters, the pub had survived a devastating fire, only to re-emerge as good as ever. Hydes' had launched their latest seasonal beer, Billy Westwood's Bitter, which had quickly become very popular - the first brew sold out in four days, followed by a flood of re-orders. Billy was the mash room foreman at Hydes' for many years, having started work there in 1902 aged 16. He taught brewing skills to Neal Hyde, Chris Hyde and their father Tommy Hyde. The new bitter had a surprising degree of body and flavour for a brew of only 3.2 per cent ABV - it was on sale at 99p a pint.

The Lass O'Gowrie in the City Centre re-opened after refurbishment under the Hogshead banner. This meant that in addition to the home-brewed beer, there would be a much wider range of guest beers on offer. The Lass had been brewing for 13 years, making it one of the longest established brewpubs in the region. Today the Lass continues to brew and, having left the Hogshead chain, offers an even better range of guest beers.

The Head of Steam at Deansgate had closed - owner Tony Brookes said his concept just hadn't worked at this particular station.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

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STOCKPORT'S WHISTLING WILL

Doug McCaskill explains the history behind the inspiration for Robinson's first seasonal beer

We all hope to be remembered in some way or another. Some important people have monuments erected to their memory. Some have books written about them. Most of the rest of us have to be content with a heading on a gravestone at the end of our days. Few, if any of us, are commemorated in such a robust and unusual way as to have a beer named after us - like Whistling Willie of Stockport.

William Faulkner, that was his proper name, was a Stockport newsagent in the 1820s. As well as newsagent he was also a blacking maker and a fishmonger. Added to that he made a little extra money as a water carrier selling water from the various town pumps. Of course, this was long before North West water and running water in each house. He became a well known character in the town for his unfailingly cheerful demeanour as he went his rounds and particularly for his habit of whistling tunes while beating the rhythm on his water cans - hence his nickname 'Whistling Will'.

I suppose he could be called a cheerful eccentric and this happy attitude possibly stood him in good stead when he applied for the position of Beadle in Stockport. The duties of Beadle - or Town Official - varied from town to town. Charles Dickens has much to say about Beadles and their duties in 'David Copperfield'. In Stockport the duties included that of 'bellman' or town crier. Being Beadle was a fairly important and responsible job and, when he succeeded in being appointed, it must have seemed to many to be a bad decision. This is what could have been behind the thoughts of some Stockport gentlemen who provided him with a uniform of a cocked hat, braided coat, red waistcoat, plush breeches and red stockings.

Whatever might have been the reaction of the dignified Town Council, ordinary citizens of Stockport thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of Faulkner striding round the town, whistling his tunes, banging his drum and, every now and again blowing a trumpet or ringing his bell. If his job was to attract attention so that he could give out the news, it could be said he was only doing his duty. His downfall came when he purchased a donkey to get around the area more easily. Not that the donkey was the problem, The problem was that Faulkner would ride the animal backwards! All this while wearing his outlandish uniform, as well as banging his drum, blowing his bugle and ringing his bell. The dignity of the town was at stake. Faulkner was dismissed.

He is still remembered however. A contemporary woodcut made of Whistling Will exists. It provided the logo for the new beer brewed by Robinson's. Whistling Will would undoubtedly have appreciated the gesture!

14



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Jim Flynn, 66 Downham Road,
Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire. SK4 5EG
(Telephone: 0161 432 1816)



Memories Of Pubs and Pub Groups

You may recall the tale told in Opening Times a few months ago of the Punch Taverns Area Manager who asked a local licensee "Landlord, er... who brews that?". Well furthering the stock of "You couldn't make it up" stories try this.

The scenario: A major national pub brand/chain is having a meeting of its managers to discuss promising initiatives to put the group back on track. It is the turn of one of the midlands area managers (yes, aged about 24 with red plastic rimmed glasses, a degree in media and marketing, possibly male though of fairly indeterminate gender and having "never pulled a pint in his life" as Al Murray would say). He introduces his 'big idea' - a "floorwalker". To the puzzled licensees he explains the concept - a dedicated member of staff, who goes around the hostelry, chatting to customers, making sure everything is all right, checking that food has met with approval, and organising staff to provide more alcohol where necessary. "Ah", says one of the more experienced licensees, "you mean a landlord".

Do you remember the Hogsheads? These were Whitbread pubs, whose badge included the words "Ale House" who carried at least four guest ales in addition to those from the Whitbread stable, had good pubby food (especially vast ranges of sausages) and were dark and, well, pub-like. The 'modern' Hogshead, of course is a giant open plan barn with light wood, steel, comfy armchairs, giant windows, very little beer and the words 'ale house' removed from the branding, and is a sort of imitation of the worst bits of Bass' Edwards and All Bar One concepts, and despite being 'woman friendly' is probably very nearly devoid of persons of the female persuasion. Well, titter ye not, but the next 8 Hogsheads to open (and most of the ones due a refurb) are slated to resemble the originals because, among other things, the powers that (currently) be have realised (a) that the number of Young Persons Venues (YPV's) chasing a limited pot of money is now excessive, and (b) that (most) women seem to prefer the original (now renamed 'inheritance' Hogshead) design, with its more mature and violence free environment. The only problem is that the Hogsheads are about to be sold, quite probably to a pub group led by 24 year old marketing genii and accountants. Possibly even Punch or Japanese mega-bank Nomura. Ask if it's cask indeed.

Cask Ale of the Month

Salopian Golden Thread (5% abv)

Feeling fairly dreadful after being exposed to the tender mercies of Railtrack and Virgin XCountry, and facing a five hour nightmare back I popped into the ever-reliable Hobgoblin on St Aldates, Oxford, and after sampling a couple of very pleasant ales in immaculate condition, I tried a pint of this and stayed for another three. Martin Barry brews very good beer but this was quite exceptional. Crystal clear, with a flattish wheaty nose breaking into a powerfully bitter floral hop flavour, that combats a hint of sweetness balanced by a lingering dry, and increasingly bitter finish in which malt flavours dominate until the hop burst through once more. Complex, incredibly moreish and an excellent example of the brewers art.

Foreign Beer of the Month

Van Honsebrouck K8 (8% abv)

After a long childhood illness, I forever associate cherry flavour with penicillin, so I am not a particular fan of cherry beers. Many of the 'artisanal' krieks beloved of true aficionados combine this with various 'off' (complex to them) and phenolic flavours which I also detest. K8 however, is that rare beast, a Kriek that I actually like, and one that is incomparably better in draught form than in bottles (usually the reverse is true). Powerful, brewed for a perceived Young Persons market, it creeps up on you, and then you fall over. Not as sweet as you would expect, and not too cherryish. Now back on at Bar Fringe, Swan St. Manchester.

In the April Issue of OT... Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge Entry & Guide, The Return of the Opening Times Competition (with February's results), Book Reviews of Manchester Pub & Bar Guides... and much, much more...

Jayne & Bryan welcome you to

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STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER

Mild CHALLENGE 2001

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

The Challenge runs from Sunday 8 April to Sunday 13 May and offers everyone taking part the chance to win something. All completed entries will receive either a free entry ticket for the 2001 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or, if you're a member of CAMRA, a voucher for two free pints of mild at the Festival.

We are also again featuring the Mild Challenge Extra - visit a participating pub in 12 different areas, using the headings shown on the card, and you will win a special Mild Challenge T-shirt; visit all participating pubs and you will win a n engraved pewter tankard. Full details including a list of all participating pubs and an entry card will appear in next month's Opening Times.

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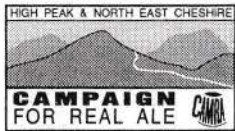
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12.00 - 3.00 Sunday. 3 course special plus full menu



MARCH FEATURED PUB

The Swan Inn, Kettleshulme

This month's Featured Pub takes us to the hills beyond Whaley Bridge on the road to Macclesfield. Two miles out you will find the village of Kettleshulme. This is ideal walking country, up over Taxal Edge, and on to Pym's Chair and Jenkin Chapel (1733) up to Shining Tor, the highest point in Cheshire. This is English countryside at its best, and Kettleshulme in Cheshire, but a stones-throw from the Derbyshire border, is typical of the English village whose style and architecture echo the surrounding countryside. There are two pubs in the village, both on the main road. Firstly the Bulls Head, well worth a visit, with local character, Boddingtons beer and a regular guest beer, and secondly the Swan, the subject of this article.

The Swan is a 15th Century pub with a white-washed exterior, set at right angles to the main road. Set into the pub wall there is an intriguing profile of a woman's head. Any explanations please?

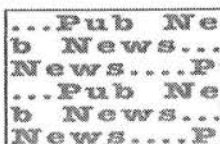
The car park and outdoor drinking area are made interesting by the presence of a small stream which flows under the main road and into the garden centre opposite. The views over the nearby hills make a pleasant accompaniment to a pint in the beer garden and of course walkers are welcome here.

The 15th Century appearance of the pub is continued inside with beams and posts, and a cosy, comfortable atmosphere helped by the real fire in each room. One unusual feature is the ground-level cellar at the back of the pub. Shady and cool, it does not detract at all from the good quality of the beer. Each of the two rooms is comfortable and furnished with high backed settles; historic photographs on the walls depict local scenes with the Swan featured. The pub is still very much part of the local community and quiz nights feature each Tuesday.

On the beer front Thwaites Bitter is the staple diet, supplemented by two imaginative ever-changing guest beers (Arkells 3B and RCH Pitchfork at the time of writing), plus real cider, too. In addition there is a range of foreign bottled beers available. As you would expect, hot and cold food is served at lunchtimes (apart from Mondays).

If you are brave enough, the landlord's speciality is chilli eggs, marinated in chilli vinegar. The pub record is one egg and 28 chillies. Beat that if you can! One visitor described it as "like a mouthful of lime pickle, eaten with a red hot poker!"

The Swan is open Monday 5.30-11 and Tuesday-Sunday 12.30-11



We understand that the Rams Head in Disley has been acquired by Bass. It's currently closed for a 41-week refurbishment and when it reopens will be a food-style pub, presumably in the identikit 'country style' formula that Bass seem intent inflicting on their estate.

The Mechanics at Hooley Hill, Audenshaw, has new reopened with Thwaites Bitter on handpump.

In what seems to be becoming a trend, the Royal Oak in Mellor now has a curry shop on the premises.

Roger and Jan Mycock of the George, Marple Bridge (Robinson's) are leaving the pub on 12th March with a leaving do planned for the 9th. Roger is also a member of the Deltones, a band that played at last year's Stockport Beer Festival; and which will be making a welcome return to open the Festival on 31 May. We wish Roger and Jan all the best for the future.

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

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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

MARCH 2001

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

Monday 12th - Social: Travellers Call, Hyde Rd, Gorton, Starts 9.00pm.

Friday 16th - Openshaw Stagger: 7.30 Pack Horse, Ashton Old Rd; 8.30 Oddfellows, Abbey Hey Ln. A minibus will leave the Crown, Heaton Ln at 7.00pm.

Thursday 22nd - Pub of the Month presentation to the Davenport Arms, Woodford. A minibus will depart from the Crown, Heaton Lane at 8.00pm - book with John Clarke on 477 1973.

Monday 26th - Two-way Social: 9.00pm Tiviot, Tiviot Dale; 10.00pm Swan With Two Necks, Princes St. Both Stockport.

Friday 30th - 12 noon - Mild Challenge Launch at Nursery, Green Ln, Heaton Norris. Evening Mild Stagger starting at the Nursery 7.30pm meeting at Crown, Heaton Ln 8.30.

Monday 2nd April - Social: Gateway, Kingsway, East Didsbury. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 12th - Branch Meeting and AGM. Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Starts 8.00pm. NB Membership Cards required to vote.



MARCH 2001

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: Travellers Call, Stockport Rd, Bredbury. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 31st - Provisional Curry Night at Beehive, Albion Rd, New Mills. Details from Tom Lord (0161 837 4474 (h), 0161 427 7099 (w)) 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 - Branch Meeting: Drovers Inn, Allostock (on A50, south of Knutsford). Starts 8.00pm.

Thursday 15th - Trip to Hydes' Brewery. Contact George Symes for details (0161 288 6778 (w), 01565 653096 (h))

Monday 9th April - Branch Meeting: Queen's Head, Biddulph Rd (opp. Station) Congleton. 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 Panel

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Dave and Sue welcome you to

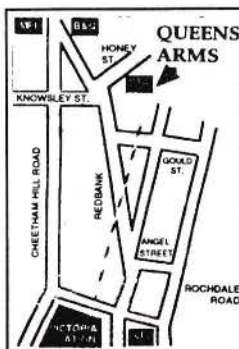
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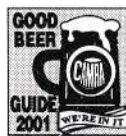


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HISTORY IN A GLASS - PORTER AND THE RISE OF THE GREAT BREWERS

A Wry Look at the History of British Drinking by Pete Soane (Part 6)

*"Brewers from their tuns and coolers,
Arose to be our sovereign rulers,
And still to their immortal praise,
Build coaches daily out of days."*

The pro-gin measures adopted by William III had a profound effect upon beer drinking habits. When the brewers responded by increasing strength naturally enough drinkers matched their taste to their pockets. The fashion was to mix beer from each of the two strengths brewed by the town brewers, with a third measure of pale ale brewed by the country brewers. Consequently the price of the strongest beer was diluted, while the strength of the weakest beers was fortified. This drink was called 'three threads' and the tradition survives today with drinks such as light and bitter in the South and mixed (mild and bitter) in the North.

Combining three beers into one brew was the next step and in 1722 Ralph Harwood of the Bell brewery in Shoreditch, perfected a recipe for three-threads which was first served at the Blue Last public house. Later that year a malt was produced which allowed anyone to brew the new, popular drink which was now known as 'mild beer' or 'entire'. The name 'porter' didn't become popular until the 1760s when it found favour with London's market porters.

Porter was London's own and the local water lent itself to the production of the beer. Although porter brewers were opened in Sheffield (1744), Dublin (1759) and Glasgow (1775), the drink was universally known as "London Porter" and the great brewing dynasties that grew up on its back were London porter brewers. Porter was very lucrative and it had to be because it was very capital intensive. Looking at just one brewer, Meux, at Gray's Inn Lane installed a vat at a cost of £10,000 in 1795. This monster was 30 feet deep, 70 feet in diameter and it could hold 5,760,000 pints. It was bound with iron hoops, each weighing three tons and costing £300 each. A vessel of similar capacity hosted a banquet for 200 people on its completion. One vat burst in October 1814 at the Meux site but fortunately it was a mere 22 feet high and contained only 1,045,840 pints. Even so, eight people died in the subsequent deluge, either drowned or overcome by the fumes, and several houses were demolished by the flood.

Another porter brewer which was growing rapidly was Truman's. Valued in 1741 at £23,240, by 1790 Truman's was valued at £271,240 with an annual output of about 100,000 barrels. The number one position, however, was held by Samuel Whitbread, the archetypal beer baron. Born in 1720 near Bedford he was apprenticed to a brewer at the age of 14 and eight years later he set up as a brewer with the brothers Godfrey and Thomas Shewell as partners. By the time he was thirty he bought the Kings Head Brewery at Chiswell Street where the Whitbread Brewery was to remain for over 200

years. Samuel Whitbread went on to become MP for Bedford, campaigning against the slave trade and by 1787 when the King and Queen chose to visit the now famous brewery with its huge steam engine, output was 150,280 barrels per year. Samuel Whitbread died in 1796 at the age of 76 and that year output had reached 202,006 barrels of porter. If he were alive today goodness knows what he would make of recent events.

By the 1790s, the Industrial Revolution was creating social discord, upheaval and urban squalor, and gin fever once again gripped the nation. Faced with this competition and the increase in the cost of raw materials brought on by the war with France, the problem of adulteration of beer by retailers grew. Popular adulterants at the time included chillies, coriander seeds, sulphuric acid, liquorice and sulphate of iron. In an effort to protect the quality of their product, brewers sought to extend their influence over the distribution process and the loan-tie began. From one-off informal arrangements a pattern began to emerge and once the industry recognised the full implications of having a loan-tied estate this gradually became more a stampede. This system would dictate the pub landscape up to 1990.

Just when it was at its height, however, porter production began to decline. There were several reasons - loss of confidence caused by adulteration, the temperance movement, competition from gin and rising prices due to the cost of the tie. Another nail in the coffin of porter was the replacement of pewter with glass as the main material from drinking glasses. The weight of glass needed to make a vessel large and robust enough to hold a quart, which was the standard measure for porter, was uneconomic and cumbersome, and the pint of beer gradually did for the pot of porter.

Although the big brewers have turned their backs on porter there are many micro and smaller family brewers who produce a superb range of porters and dark beers.

Finally, what follows was written over 350 years ago but is still as relevant today as then:

*I have been in love and in debt and in drink
This many and many a year;
And those three plagues enough one would think,
For one poor mortal to bear.
'Twas drink made me fall in love,
and love made me run into debt;
and though I have struggled and struggled and strove
I cannot get out of them yet.*

(The Mad Lover (1650) Alexander Brome)



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 203)

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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

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

those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romley areas, should write instead to:
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| <p>4x</p> |  | <p>Dark Ruby SarahHughes Dark Ruby has a growing reputation as a near black strong ale with an aroma of sweet fruit and chocolate, a fruity malt taste and dry, more bitter finish. It is a 6.0% bottle-conditioned beer with a good balance of fruit and hops, leading to a lingering hops and malt finish. Gold winner at the Winter Beer Festival 2001.</p> |
| <p>4x</p> |  | <p>Skullsplitter named after Thorfinn Hausakluiff, or Skullsplitter, the 7th century Viking Earl of Orkney, around 1000 AD, this 8.5% beer is satiny smooth in the mouth, deceptively light and dangerously drinkable. Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2001/2002.</p> |

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