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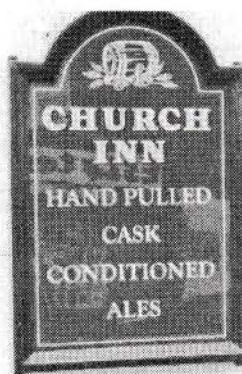
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Q. WHAT DO THESE PUBS HAVE IN COMMON?



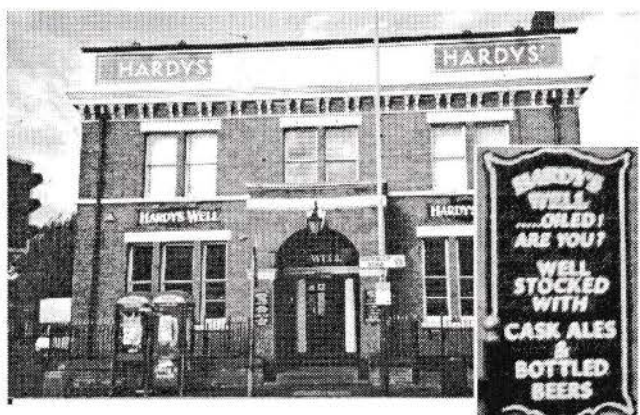
The Brewers Arms, Ladybarn



The Church Inn, Levenshulme



The Crown, Hillgate



Hardys Well, Rusholme

ANSWER ON PAGE 3....

RAILWAY, WEST DIDSBURY, BACK ON TRACK?

Good news from the Railway, West Didsbury, where the problem of the smooth beers on handpump appears to be approaching resolution.

The problem with this otherwise excellent pub was that it has been selling 'smooth cask' mild, bitter and lager on handpump. While the beers were indeed cask conditioned, they were also injected with mixed gasses on the way to the bar to give the 'smooth' appearance and texture. This also meant that the beer wasn't real ale and selling non-real ales through handpumps is a big no-no as far as we in CAMRA are concerned.

Opening Times roundly condemned Holts for this, causing the brewery to take considerable umbrage. However following negotiations between CAMRA and Holts, progress has been made. The smooth mild and Bitter (the latter now in the form of DBA) are now sold from appropriate keg fonts prominently marked 'smooth', thus leaving no-one in any doubt as to what they are buying. Thus far, so good, and a welcome victory for common sense.

There remains a potential problem with the lager, though. This is still on handpump although is now advertised in the pub as 'cask lager' and not 'smooth cask lager'. If the gas has been taken off this too, then that's good news indeed. If the gas is still on, then unfortunately the pub still remains beyond the pale (and let's be clear, in every other respect this is a very good pub indeed). We are

IN AUGUST'S OPENING TIMES

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**MORE CHOICE
BETTER BEER**



1998 International Brewing Awards
Wobbly Bob awarded Silver Medal

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

This month our front page speaks for itself. As a campaigning consumer organisation we make no apologies for naming and shaming these pubs - there is simply no excuse for these misleading signs.

Of course, in an ideal world we would want the pubs in question to sell real ale again. If they can't or won't, well that's up to them but they then have a duty to stop pretending they do. We checked all of the offending pubs before we went to press and not a drop of cask beer was to be found among them - if any have now reintroduced it, or plan to do so, we hope they will get in touch as their return to the real ale fold will be as worthy of celebration as their current deception demands condemnation. Of course, once the offending signs are removed we will announce that in these pages - even if no cask beer is introduced, at least honest and accurate signing is a step in the right direction.

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 208

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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Huddersfield and District Campaign for Real Ale

New Venue Oktoberfest Beer Festival 2001

Friday 5 October and Saturday 6 October.
At Greenhead Hall, Greenhead Road,
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Admission Charges:

50p to card-carrying members of CAMRA.
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How to find us:



Greenhead Hall is only five minutes walk from the Bus or Railway Station in Huddersfield town centre.

Car parking is available behind Greenhead Hall.



• Visit our Web Site at: <http://www.huddscamra.org.uk>



THE CROWN INN

Stockport's Premier Cask Ale House

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AS SEEN ON NATIONAL TELEVISION

*Let the Ale and the Ambience
Speak for Themselves...*

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

ANSWER: THEY ALL PRETEND TO SELL REAL ALE BUT NONE OF THEM DO!

This issue we highlight a growing trend among some local pubs – misleading signs advertising cask beer, or real ale as it is popularly known. Most of them have sold real ale at some time in their history but today not a drop of the stuff can be bought in any of them.

So what's going on? Is it cock-up or conspiracy? In most cases it's the former and it's not the licensees who are really to blame, either. Most if not all of these pubs are managed or leased on terms which make the owners, usually non-brewing pub companies, responsible for the exterior signage.

However, that's no excuse for this deception. Despite the changing product ranges in their pubs, these companies are surely duty bound to ensure their outlets display honest and accurate signage. Their failure to do so indicates something approaching a contempt for their customers which sits very uneasily with today's heightened consumer expectations.

A couple of the offending pubs we have discovered, the Black Lion (Hillgate, Stockport) and the Crown (Ashton Old Road, Openshaw) are almost on our list by accident, simply displaying Boddingtons Bitter signs which include the words 'traditional cask' in the small print. Few people are likely to be misled by this.

On the other side of the coin we have what is arguably the worst offender of the lot – this is the Brewers Arms in Ladybarn (pictured) which is actually signed as a 'cask ale house'. Well it was once (and very good it was, too) but today it's wall to wall keg. Another inexplicable offender is the Bay Horse (Stockport Road, Longsight) which despite displaying a sign offering 'real ale' among the facilities didn't sell the stuff when the sign was erected and has never done since.

The time has come to call a halt to this growing trend and so we have reported all of the offenders to local trading standards departments with a request that action is taken to have this rash of offending signs removed. Excluding the two 'accidental' offenders noted above, here is our current list of shame:

- Crown, Higher Hillgate, Stockport
- Elizabethan, Heaton Moor Road, Stockport
- Hardys Well, Wilmslow Road, Rusholme
- Church Inn, Stockport Road, Levenshulme
- Bay Horse, Stockport Road, Longsight
- Abbey Hey, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton
- Hamlet, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton
- Brewers Arms, Ladybarn Lane, Fallowfield
- Sir Humphrey Chetham, Ashton New Road, Clayton
- Derby Arms, Ashon New Road, Clayton.

JOHN HALLWORTH

John Hallworth, who was landlord at the Davenport Arms in Woodford for 23 years until 1991, died suddenly at his home near the pub. Approximately 400 people attended his funeral in Macclesfield, which shows more than anything else in what high regard John was held by so many people.

He was certainly a great friend to CAMRA – many local trips to the Thiefs Neck were enlivened by John's invariable question, 'would you all like a glass of old before you go?' One of the great licensees who will be sorely missed.

Our sympathies go to all his family, and in particular daughters Yvonne and Alson who have been running the pub since John's retirement and are the fourth generation of the family to run the business.

POT OF BEER

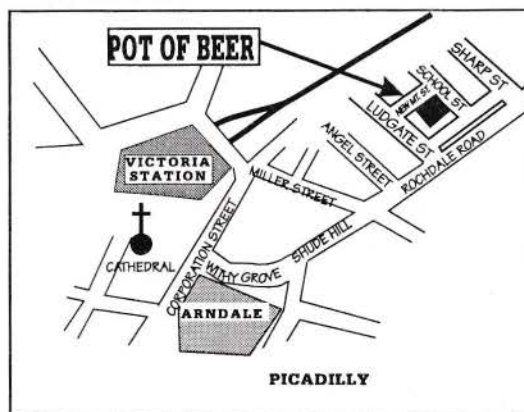
36 NEW MOUNT ST

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



**NEW MANAGERS
TAM AND DAVE
EXTEND A WARM WELCOME
TO ALL
AND ARE SERVING FOOD
12 TO 4PM MON TO SAT.
(OTHER TIMES BY REQUEST)**



KRO BAR

325 Oxford Rd Manchester

CITYlife bar of the year

Welcome to Manchester's Kro Bar. This Danish style bar is located on Oxford Road at the heart of Manchester's learned University establishment. It offers a fine selection of drinks and accompanying meals in a relaxed lively atmosphere.



The Kro Bar is to hold its first ever in-house beer festival from September 2-9.

The plan is to have 11 cask ales on sale, five on handpump and the other six stillaged behind the bar. In addition there will be up to nine draught foreign beers from Germany and Belgium, including a couple of fruit beers and also a similar number of wheat beers. About 30 different bottled beers will complement these.

The bar's excellent food may also be accompanied by a barbecue if all goes well.

www.kro.co.uk/info.htm

**MORE
DETAILS
NEXT
MONTH**

4

CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

PUB OF THE MONTH AUGUST 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	29	30	31	



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for August is the Adswood Hotel, Adswood Lane East, Stockport.

The very traditional Robinson's pub has taken on a new lease of life since Paul and Jackie Needham arrived from the Three Tunnes in Hazel Grove where they had already made an impression with the quality of both pub and beer.

The pub itself is an impressive building dating from the early 20th century (although it looks older), set back from the road by a cobbled frontage and is in many ways one of the undiscovered gems on the town's pub scene. Inside the layout remains largely multi-roomed despite a little opening out over the years. One of Peter and Jackie's innovations has been to bring another room into use; this is used for dining at lunchtimes and also serves as both a no-smoking room and a meeting room, although there is also an upstairs function room.

However, the best among many good features of the Adswood is to be found at the back- one of the biggest and best beer gardens in Stockport. This used to be a bowling green but was planted out as a garden many years ago. In recent years it had become overgrown but Peter and Jackie are slowly restoring it and have also looped some of the surrounding trees to admit more light. On a fine summer's day it's one of the best places you can imagine to sample the pub's excellent Hatters Mild and Best Bitter.

The Adswood is simply an all-round good pub, maintaining the traditional values and run by people who care. You couldn't ask for any more than that and so this well deserved award will be presented on the evening of Thursday, 23 August. It's only a short walk from the main 192 bus route and service 313 which runs at 41 minutes past the hour from Cheadle Hulme and 15 minutes past from Stockport Bus Station will drop you outside.

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 208:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Edwardson, Phil Booton, Steve Robinson, Sue Ridings, Phil Levison, Tim Jones, Tom Lord, Frank Wood, Mark Charnley, John Creswell, Anthony Firmin, Dave Hanson, Jim Flynn, Paul Formby, Janet Flynn., Barry Pryme

JULY PRESENTATION



Successful and popular licensee Alex Lord (right) accepts his July Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for the Railway (Portwood) from CAMRA Branch Chairman John Clarke. A very enjoyable evening was had by all present.

Saddleworth Museum presents

the 10th beer festival

organised by The Friends of the Museum as a fund raising event in aid of the Museum with generous assistance from CAMRA

Fri 31st August & Sat 1st September 2001,

at the Museum, High Street, Uppermill

open Fri 7pm to 11pm, Sat 11.30am to 5pm & 7pm to 11pm

Friday night music - Roger Higgins BluesBand

Saturday night music - Clive Yeadon & Jazz Trio

(small admission charge)

10 Beers from 6 Breweries local to Saddleworth and surrounding area

(Saddleworth, Pictish, McGuinness, RiverHead, Phoenix, TTaylor)

For Travel information, phone 01457 874093



THE HINDS HEAD

Alan and June Preston and their staff welcome you to sample their

TRADITIONAL HAND PULLED BEERS

Taylors Landlord, Marstons Pedigree, Thwaites Bitter

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Try our extensive new menu, from light snacks to full meals, and our daily specials boards, complemented by an excellent wine selection

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**Bar open all day Sunday
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Stockport CAMRA Pub of the Month Oct 2000

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BELGIAN BEERS**
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Draught Hoegaarden
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Bottles from the
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DAY**

**HOT &
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FOOD
FROM
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TILL
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DAY**



**OPEN
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EVERY
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**HOT &
COLD
FOOD
FROM
12
TILL
WE STOP
EVERY
DAY**



O **LETTERS**
OPENING TIMES

From Tom Lord, Chairman High Peak & N E Cheshire Branch:

Further to Mr Beard's letter in the July edition of Opening Times I share his view that the Royal is a much valued watering hole and it has been one of my favourite pubs, regularly visited over many years. He will be relieved to know then that the future of guest beers is intact and they will continue to feature at the pub. Out of interest, on my last visit (Sat 22nd July) the beers on offer were Marstons Pedigree, Tetley Bitter, Old Speckled Hen, York Ashes Ale, Ind Coope Burton Ale, Border Brewery Special Bitter and Bartrams Green Man. Plenty of choice there then, and the three I tried were all in good nick. Perhaps Mr Beard was just unlucky and dropped on a visit when guest beer sales had gone extremely well. All I can say is that on my visits I have always found them available.

More good news - it is planned to continue the October Beer Festival as in previous years.

Indeed the Licensee was formerly at the Roebuck in Chapel-en-le-Frith and his track record there suggests that the Royal is in good hands since the Roebuck has featured for at least the last three years also as an entry in the National Good Beer Guide. I hope that this information puts Mr Beard's mind at rest and that he will continue to visit what we both seem to agree is a much valued, very good pub.

From David Ball and Dorothy Knowles, The Really Nice Beer Company:

Regarding guest beers at the Royal Hotel, Hafield - since the end of June we have supplied the following beers to the Royal: Enville Bitter, Enville White, Enville Ale, Mauldon's Midsummer Gold, Heather Ales Summer Wheat Beer, Ringwood Best Bitter and Bondoggle, Highwood Shepherd's Delight, JW Lees Scorcher, York Ashes Ale, Buffy's Bitter and Bartrams Green Man. I know for a fact that David deals direct with at least two excellent local brewers in Abbeydale and Phoenix.

Perhaps calls for deletion from the Good Beer Guide may be a little premature? Hoping to see Mr Beard and many other CAMRA members at the usual October Festival.

(David Ash from the Royal has also been in touch to assure us that the guest beer regime at the pub remains alive and well. Good news indeed! - Ed(1))

From Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel:

It is a long while since I have read such twaddle as your front page article on licensing reform in last month's OT.

When I saw the headline 'Betrayed', I thought I was going to read about the Chairman of CAMRA defecting to sit on the board of Scottish Courage or the editor of OT announcing he had given up drinking real ale for Caffreys. No, I read about a government that has decided its priorities were education and health rather than licensing reform. In other words CAMRA was criticising the government for putting our children and the sick in front of a very small minority of drinkers who want to drink into the small hours.

It is rubbish like this which will only convince the public that we in CAMRA are so bound up in our own world that we can't see

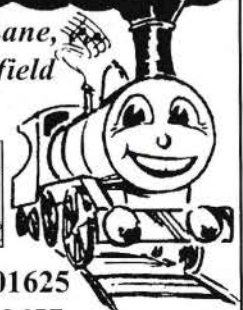
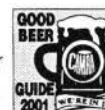
Graham
welcomes
you to ...

THE RAILWAY VIEW

Byrons Lane,
Macclesfield

GOOD FOOD
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- PLATFORM ONE**
- 8 GUEST BEERS ☆
- ☆ QUIZZES ☆
- ☆ BAR GAMES ☆



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REAL ALE £1.30 MON NIGHT

that there might be something more important than the last motion which passes at CAMRA's AGM. We need to campaign but we need to get things in proportion.

(Thanks for the Party Political Broadcast. No, seriously, Jim does have a point, but if a Government promises something (and sends nMillion mobile text messages to emphasise the point just before the election, to the very people who are interested in this reform) then there is an expectation of delivery. And anyway, CAMRA is a PRESURE GROUP, campaigning on real ale and drinking related subjects, none of which is about schools'n'hospitals, so surely we are supposed NOT to keep a sense of overall proportion. Ed(2).)

From Leo King, Chorlton:

Please can I possibly, and once and for all, get the record straight over Cityman's wrongful statements that I have taken him to task, and him stating "no apologies and no regrets". What on earth is this man on about?

My stated facts about the extremely expensive Mr Thomas's Chop House was a factual contribution sent solely to "What's Doing" and the magazine editor Neil Richardson placed my factual write-up into "What's Doing"; therefore I must emphasise that I have never had any contact or connection with Opening Times whatsoever, and I would appreciate Cityman to terminate any future statements about me.

Incidentally, I was always under the impression that CAMRA not only protects and promotes real ale, but is also concerned about high prices. Baffling (read the following) - in Opening Times somebody made a point of boycotting the Railway (Holt's) in West Didsbury due to high prices even though the rest of the Holt tied estate sells beer at very modest prices. CAMRA (North Manchester Branch) was proposing to exclude the Hogshead on High Street, Manchester, from the Good Beer Guide due to its high prices. Then we get the gripings from Cityman commending a pub with severe rip-off prices, and I mean RIP-OFF. So, he is evading one of CAMRA's issues. It is one contradiction against another - the mind boggles!!!

Regarding this 'posh' area of the City Centre - council rates ate the same throughout the whole of the centre, so there is no necessity for high prices in these pubs (Holt's pubs are an exception, of course, as their prices are extremely reasonable. Now let me finish off on a factual statement (YET AGAIN). Two pints of weak-gravity Boddy's Bitter (little, if any, transportation costs), a white wine and soda, 1½ pints of lager - total £9.70. Nuff said! Amen! No more gripings - please!!!

(Well, despite Mr King's assertions the fact does remain that, apart from the above missive, I have received two previous letters from him. Nor is it true to say that we have taken serious issue with the prices at the Railway - the bone of contention there was the smooth beer on handpump. Cityman remains unrepentant. Ed(1))

From: Melanie Jaques, Community Fundraiser, St. Ann's Hospice (the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Charity):

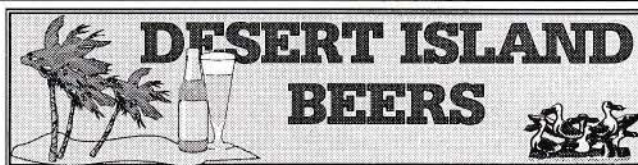
Thank you so much for giving St Ann's Hospice such a great opportunity to fundraise. We have raised approximately £1,700 over the festival, which was a great result. We felt everyone was extremely generous and we found there were many opportunities to raise awareness and talk to people about the hospice. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. And although I was dead on my feet, found the festival to be extremely good fun! I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone on the Stockport Beer Festival committee for making me and me colleagues feel so welcome and supported. Everybody made a big effort in helping us to set up, keep us secure, advise us, and entertain us! We are extremely grateful.

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



This month's Desert Island Beers are from Phil Booton, a local 'beer spotter' who has sampled over 10,000 beers. Already armed with the Good Beer Guide, the Champion Winter Beer of Britain (Orkney Dark Island) plus Oakham JHB, the brand new Champion Beer of Britain, Phil has had to whittle down to five the many thousands of beers he has sampled...

"To reduce well over 10,000 different beers to a selection of five is a well-nigh impossible task without setting some rather arbitrary criteria. Or at least it is for someone as indecisive as me! And also someone whose memory of the actual taste of beers has been somewhat clouded by the imperative to sample as many different ones as possible! So I have decided (there, I can be decisive!) to exclude all foreign beers (so goodbye some fantastic Belgian and American beers, not to mention Germany). I have also excluded one-off special brews that are unlikely to appear again and resisted the temptation to include beers no longer brewed, despite the strong urge to hark back nostalgically to a litany of such fondly-remembered breweries as Simpkins, Penrhos and the original Old Swan in Netherton.

"Another difficulty with an exercise such as this is to select specific beers. Several breweries consistently produce a range of excellent beers but not one that stands out - Roosters, Phoenix, Oakham, Church End - to mention a few examples. There are also some beers which should have been automatic choices which I either don't try regularly enough or are perhaps not quite the beer they were - Larkins Porter, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild, Butcombe Bitter for example. So this selection is very much a snapshot - so could be different next week! My choice of the final five (but not in reverse order - only random!) is:

"Bathams Bitter - this beer was one of the first real ales I remember drinking in the West Midlands (where I lived until 1988) and was also one of the first I actively sought out. It's an archetypal example of a sweetish, light, refreshing Midland bitter. It's also stronger than average at 4.3 abv but very moreish. Always worth a pint in the Waggon & Horses in Halesowen (if there are no ticks on of course!)

"Holdens Special Bitter - this was another beer I always looked out for, and used to drink regularly at the Swan with Two Nicks in Worcester. I once fell asleep in the office in the afternoon after a lunchtime session! Special is 5.1 abv so not to be trifled with but is very easy to drink, sweet, smooth and delicious. Always on great form in the Great Western in Wolverhampton.

"St. Peter's Apple & Cinnamon Spiced Ale - this is something a bit different. St. Peter's, a microbrewery in Suffolk, produce an innovative range of beers, both in bottle and on draught. This 6.5 abv ale is the most assertively-spiced of any British beer I have tried for a long time and is available regularly in bottle and occasionally on draught at beer festivals. St. Peter's have a tied pub in Clerkenwell, the Jerusalem Tavern, where the full range of their beers can be enjoyed.

"Lees Plum Pudding - I have been very impressed with the Lees range of seasonal specials and this one stood out as a wonderful winter beer, warming, spicy with fruity flavours. I'm certainly hoping this will appear again next Xmas in the Rain Bar.

"Fullers Organic Honeydew - my final choice is from one of my favourite brewers, who produce a superb range of beers of reliable quality. Honeydew has appeared previously but this year is a totally organic beer. I was amazed at the taste when I sampled it in some Fuller's houses in London a few months ago, and served in a special glass as well! It has been regularly available in the Smithfield in Swan Street, where it usually sells out in hours rather than days, in my opinion the best beer Fullers have produced (with apologies to the ESB fans out there!) and certainly the best beer I have ticked this year. (So far.....)"



Steve and Johanne welcome you to

Ye Olde Vic

1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport

A 'FREE HOUSE'

Wide Range of Guest Beers
Changing Weekly supplied by:
**Really Nice Beer Company,
Pictish, Beartown, Abbeydale**
and a host of other suppliers...

House Bitter: Jennings 3.8% abv



**Westons Traditional
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**Real Open 'Warm' Fire
Tuesday night is Quiz Night**

Please note - our zero tolerance policy towards bad or foul language and/or attitude is still ruthlessly enforced - so if you are easily offended, why not spend a pleasant evening with us!
at Ye Olde Vic

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!
JOIN CAMRA - DRINK REAL ALE**

Dave and Sue welcome you to

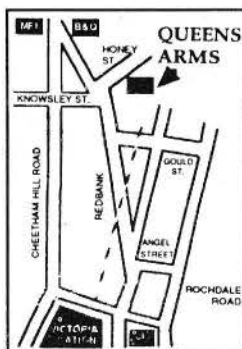
THE QUEENS ARMS

HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

Try the fine range of beers supporting independent brewers in their excellent free house!

**Bantam Bitter £1.25 a pint,
Taylors Landlord Championship Beer
plus Bottled Beers from various countries
and weekly guest beers.**

**Open: 12 noon - 11.00 p.m. Monday - Saturday
12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday**



Beer Garden

Families Welcome

Hot & Cold Food

*We're in the
Good Beer
Guide 2001!*



☎ 0161 834 4239



Stockport town centre's first Wetherspoon's, otherwise known as the Calverts Court, opened in St Petersgate, Stockport, on 25 July. There are essentially two types of Wetherspoon pub - on the one hand you have stylish, imaginative pubs which are either new buildings or conversions of other, older premises. The Paramount in Manchester and the Sedge Lynn in Chorlton are prime examples and are mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Then there are the modern shop conversions which, no matter how they are dressed up, usually end up as an oblong room with a bar down the side. The Calverts Court is one of these.

There's been plenty of money spent, though, and the finish is to a very high standard - a particularly nice touch is a series of cubicles down one side which do break the space up a little. There's a no-smoking area to the rear and out at the back what should become a popular outdoor drinking area. The crunch question, though, is how does it work as a pub? Reports so far have been mixed. OT has heard of poor service, short measures and indifferent beer (although to be fair, very good pints have been had there as well). Not only heard, but also experienced in fact - on a Tuesday night just after opening there was a frankly unacceptably long wait to be served pints of 'OK' Bateman's Mild topped off with a generous collar of foam. Admittedly, for a pub that has a no music policy, the wait at the bar was unexpectedly enlivened by a drunk attempting to sing. This is, however, a brand new operation and hopefully these are all teething problems which can be ironed out in time, but first impressions do count.

That's not to say that pub hasn't proved popular. Far from it, although on the selfsame Tuesday night the question was posed - 'if these people weren't in here, where would they be?' None of them seemed to be regulars of the other traditional town centre pubs although the question may have been partially answered shortly afterwards when the White Lion on Underbank was observed to be almost deserted. At lunchtimes it might be a different matter, though, and some pubs which might depend entirely on lunchtime trade could have a small fight on their hands.

Overall result then? 5/10 - worth a look but so far that's about it.

KRO BAR FESTIVAL

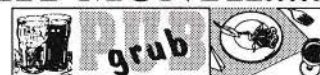
Kro Bar (Oxford Road, Manchester) is to hold its first ever in-house beer festival from September 2-9.

Already well-known for combining a stylish interior, youthful customers and healthy sales of real ale (and let's face it, that's not something you get to write every day of the week), this is a further indication of the bar's owners commitment to quality beers, be they UK real ales or continental bottles.

The plan is to have 11 cask ales on sale, five on handpump and the other six stillaged behind the bar. In addition there will be up to nine draught foreign beers from Germany and Belgium, including a couple of fruit beers and also a similar number of wheat beers. About 30 different bottled beers will complement these.

The bar's excellent food may also be accompanied by a barbecue if all goes well. This is a very welcome venture from one of the most impressive of Manchester's new bars and deserves every support.

NEXT MONTH.....



RETURNS!



STAGGER

with Dave Hanson

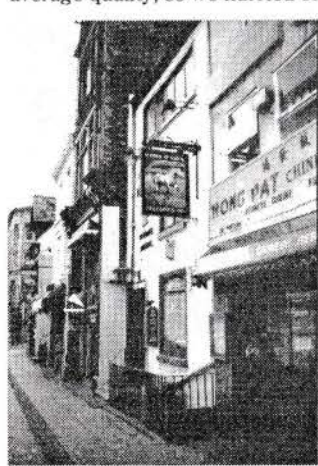
City Centre Staggering

Our stagger this month started in the Bulls Head on the corner of Whitworth Street and London Road. This single roomed Burtonwood house is decorated with lots of dark wood and bare floorboards. At 7.00pm the pub was busy with a mix of clientele, including a group of ladettes starting their night out. The Burtonwood beers sampled were Bitter, rated above average, and Top Hat, rated as very good indeed, the Mild was not tried. The Bulls Head also does a guest ale, which tonight was Ridley's Rumpus, which unfortunately was only rated as average. Making our way up London Road I was informed our next port of call was **Monroe's**. How unusual to have a pub named after the fifth President of the United States, or maybe it was in honour of Scottish 3000ft mountains? Imagine my confusion to find it was named after a blond American lady called Norma Jeane Mortenson. Inside, the walls were covered with photos of Marilyn, including the famous shot from Billy Wilder's film *The Seven Year Itch*. Monroe's is a hotel, and the bar reflects this with comfy chairs and soft furnishings. Not one, but two real ales were on offer, and we sampled both. Boddingtons Bitter was rated above average, whereas the Flowers elicited mixed reactions varying from undrinkable to excellent (funny how one person's nectar is another's poison). On a down note, none of the glasses used had any form of government stamp upon them!

Moving up London Road and left into Gore Street lead us to the **Waldorf**. Outside was a riot of hanging baskets, while inside the one large room is broken up onto smaller drinking areas by ornate wooden screens. A large cable TV screen was blaring away on one wall and was being obviously ignored by the customers. As the pub was very busy, and the evening was quite warm, the pub felt uncomfortably hot and sweaty so we were glad to receive our cool glasses of ale. Four beers were on offer, Boddingtons, Wadworth's 6X, Taylor's Landlord and Tetley's Bitter of which two were sampled. Landlord was rated as above average, while 6X was considered as very good.

Cutting across to Bloom Street we arrived at **Paddy's Goose**, which is hidden away around the back of Chorlton Street bus station, our 8.30pm meeting point. Outside the facade is covered with a gloriously rich extravaganza of ornate mock-Victorian glazed tile work, while inside consists of one cosy room with the bar to the left. The ceiling is decorated with an interesting collection of wicker baskets and paraffin storm lamps. Four real ales are on offer, and their handpumps dominate the bar top. Most people went for that rare beast in the City centre, Lee's Bitter (yes I know it is also available just around the corner at the Rembrandt) and rated it as very good. Theakston's Cool cask (average) and Taylor's Landlord (very good) were also sampled, but Robinson's Best Bitter was left untried.

Leaving Paddy's Goose we made our way through Chinatown to the **Seven Oaks** on Nicolas Street. A large screen TV showing a football game dominated the downstairs bar. Ignoring this we ordered our pints of both Boddingtons and Tetley's. Unfortunately both were only average quality, so we hurried on our way.



Backtracking onto Portland Street we called into the **Grey Horse**, an excellent Hyde's house. As is usual the pub was packed, but we were quickly served. A small bar overlooks the cosy drinking area, which was free of extraneous music, so everyone was eagerly engaged in conversation. Three beers were on offer, Hyde's Bitter was tried and rated as good, Jekyll's Gold was rated as excellent and that rarest of beasts Dark Mild was also on excellent form. It was tempting to remain in these pleasant surroundings, but we unfortunately were tasked with visiting many more pubs, so reluctantly we left.

Twenty yards along Portland Street we entered the **Circus Tavern** that is well known as having the smallest bar in Manchester. I am convinced that the bar was literally built around the landlord, as there is only enough room for one person to serve at once. Only one beer is on offer, and that is Tetley's Bitter which, contrary to what is on offer in many other outlets, was on good form (as it always is). Small though our group was we completely filled the wood panelled front room, so we overflowed into the cosy back room. Untouched and unspoilt as it is, the Circus justly deserves its Heritage Inn status. Warning: at busy times the front door is closed, so if you want to sample its delight call at a quiet time. Time was passing so off we set for our next port of call. This was not a long trek as a further twenty yards along Portland Street took us to the **Old Monkey**. This is a recently built Holt's house, with the public bar at street level and saloon upstairs, both were well patronised. New though the pub is the decor has been chosen carefully to give a homely feel. The bitter on offer this evening was only average, but the mild was rated the best beer of the evening. No rest for the wicked, so we left and made our way south along Princess Street.

As we neared the canal the **New Union**, our second Burtonwood house, appeared on our left. A very quick call was made into this large multi-roomed house to try out the Burtonwood Bitter, which was rated as average. Internally there are a multitude of drinking areas, ranging from quite rooms with comfy chairs, to a disco/light show which was starting up in the end room. If you prefer your beer alfresco there is seating outside, where you can watch barges negotiating one of the many locks on this stretch of the Rochdale Canal.

Meanwhile the rest of us continued onto the **Old Garret** which is now the ubiquitous single roomer with acres of bric-a-brac all over the place. Apparently random bits of woodwork and changes in floor height make the drinking area very disjointed. The big screen TV in the middle of the bar was thankfully turned off, which is more than can be said about the **VERY LOUD MUSIC**. Three handpumps graced the bar, two labelled with Theakston's clips advertising XB and Bitter, the third being hand-coloured and offering Silver Star (?). Everyone plumped for Bitter, which was no better than average.

Leaving behind the Old Garret we made our way right along Charles Street to our final port of call the **Lass O'Gowrie**. Externally the splendid tiling is original Victorian and rivals that at Paddy's Goose, but inside a 1983 refurbishment has robbed the pub of any originality, apart from the small snug at the back, which retains its original fittings. Home brewing at the Lass O'Gowrie sets

it apart from the other pubs visited, but unfortunately it is only malt extract and not a full malt mash. As well as the two house beers, LoG 35 and LoG 42, many other beers were on offer (too many for me to remember them all at this stage in the evening!).

Tomintoul's Nessie Magic and Hardy and Hanson's seasonal, Spring Hop, were the only two tried, the former rated excellent, the latter as very good. I am told that the Lass offers a huge range of guest beers these days, all invariably well kept. So ended a very varied stagger, with beer which had ranged from the mediocre to the excellent. All the pubs, though, had something to offer and none is likely to disappoint the casual visitor.



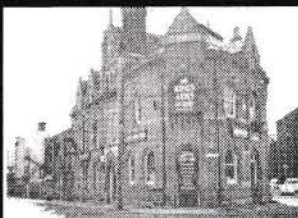
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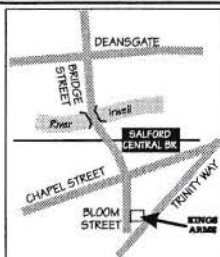
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LAB Goes On Stream

The installation of the equipment is complete. The i's are dotted and the t's crossed on the paperwork. All the ingredients have been delivered. Everything is now ready for the The LAB to begin brewing!

The first test brew is planned to be brewed on 4th August, this will be "Broomstair's Bitter". The test brews will hopefully be available at the Lowes Arms, Denton around mid-August and real-ale from "The LAB" will be available to the free trade early September.

"I am very excited about this," said Lowes Arms landlord Peter Wood, "I just cannot wait for these beers to be on sale in the pub. Interest in the brewery has been phenomenal so far". Brewer Anthony Firmin commented told OT "We have a lot of work to do in the coming weeks and with all the interest and Christmas not too far away - we are going to be very busy!!!".

More Micro News



In the case of both Phoenix and Bank Top breweries, it's really a case of no news being good news. Both have told OT that they are so busy keeping up with current demand they haven't had time to devise anything new! And who says real ale is dead? What you can look forward to from Phoenix is the welcome return of Pilsner Irwell which will be out next month. Bank Top's John Feeny reckons that his next new brews will be for the Howcroft pub beer festival in October, although he just might produce a beer inspired by the police's new helicopter, India 99. A pale ale undoubtedly beckons.



Marble Brewery has produced a cask lager, Stonham Lager at 4.4 per cent ABV. Light and quaffable, £250 from each brew goes to charity - so get drinking. Fully organic, the brew uses lager malt and (for those of a technical bent) New Zealand Hallertau and Spalt Select hops for flavour plus Hallertau Hersbrucker for flavour. So now you know. Pictish has two new beers this month. The regular special is Corn Dolly, repeated from last year. This is a five per cent strong pale ale with a superb crisp, bitter finish. Look out for it - it was one of the best of last years Pictish specials. There's also going to be a Honey Ale at 4.3 per cent. Brewed using Mexican wild flower honey, this beer will be out by the middle of the month and the aim will be to avoid the cloying sweetness that is often the characteristic of beers using this additional ingredient.



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Robbies Latest



Have they or haven't they? Tinkered with Whistling Will, the current seasonal, that is. Repeated from last year, the general consensus is that this year's version is fuller bodied and with a drier finish, and an altogether better beer. Certainly worth seeking out while stocks last. Robinson's have also launched their fourth annual Best Kept Bar &



Cellar Competition which will again see all of their pubs competing for the title. District managers have already begun the task of paying surprise visits to their pubs in order to grade them on a

10



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variety of areas including the cleanliness and tidiness of their bars and cellars and, naturally, the quality of the Robbies cask beers. When all of the pubs have been visited, a shortlist of 12 will be drawn up - with each of them being visited by Head Brewer Chris Hellin and Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson. Expect stiff competition - last year's winners, Syd and Jenny Hampson at the Masons Arms, Denton, will be hard to beat although this year Pete Burns, who won at the Church, Edgeley, should be back in force at his new pub, the Pineapple in Marple.

Hydes On The Up And Up

Hydes Production Director Paul Jefferies kindly spoke to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA  at their branch meeting, held at the Gateway on 12 July. It was the same day as the company's AGM and buoyant results had been announced. Cask ale sales were up by over three per cent (although these figures concealed an almost 10 per cent decline in cask mild) and the brewery was approaching capacity. On the pub front, a new outlet was due to open in Macclesfield on 2 August. This is Jar Bar on Waters Green, but despite the trendy name it will still be selling cask ales. The New Inn at Wilmslow has become the Coach & Four and will be featuring four or five cask beers. Of some of the earlier concepts, Corbans in Halebarns is doing terrifically well, and also shifting a fair amount of cask beer these days. And remember all the fuss about the gallery in Altrincham and how some relative of the licensee was distraught when we criticised the pub? If they were distraught then they must be gutted now as the pub has been closed and flogged to Sainsbury's. There are some major free trade advances for Hydes, too. In particular they now supply beers to the Crescent in Salford in preference to Scottish Courage and are also sponsoring the pub for its Cask Marque accreditation.

All in all there's a welcome buzz of confidence about Hydes these days - it's certainly one of the most improved of the old-established family companies and moving in all the right directions.



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Robinson's DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

While the days of delivering beer by horse and dray are over for Robinson's, their shires, Sportsman and Statesman, are still a familiar sight as they are exercised on the roads around the Unicorn Brewery by horsemen John Walker and Paul Greenwood.

Sportsman, aged 12, is 18.5 hands high and weighs 940kg while nine-year-old Statesman is 17.3 hands with a weight of 980kg.

While they may not actually deliver beer, both earn their keep by representing the brewery at shows, carnivals and other events around the country - promoting the company and, ultimately, helping to sell more real ale.

Sportsman and Statesman are stabled next to the brewery except for a three-month period after the show season, when they take a well-earned break in fields at the Davenport Arms, Woodford.

Robinson's association with shire horses dates back to the nineteenth century. When Frederic Robinson took over as landlord of the Unicorn Inn, he decided to brew his own ale and sell it to other taverns. The quality of the beers he produced ensured that there was an ever growing demand but he still needed a way to transport his goods.

At first, Frederic used carriers and the local railway network but, as his volume of trade increased further, it was the shire horses, pulling drays loaded up with casks, that eventually provided a flexible and reliable means of distributing the ales.

Although this year's foot and mouth outbreak has severely restricted the number of events the horses have appeared at, they did make a successful visit to the East of England Show at Peterborough in June, winning rosettes in both the singles and pairs categories.

With foot and mouth apparently under control there is also more optimism about the rest of the show season. This is welcome news because the array of honours that the immaculately groomed animals frequently win around the country is a present day symbol of Robinson's commitment to quality in all its activities.

Visitors to last month's Hazel Grove Carnival had the chance to see another form of Robinson's transport in the form of the brewery's vintage Thornycroft dray which won first prize in the Best Community Vehicle Category. Weighing two-and-a-half tons, the dray has a 27 hp engine and travels at 20 to 25 mph with a fuel consumption of one gallon every six miles.

The Thornycroft was first registered in Somerset in 1927 and was bought by Robinson's from Irwell Sheet Metal Co Ltd of Ramsbottom in 1980. Its livery is similar to that of the brewery's delivery wagons at the turn of the century and, as with the horses, it is a powerful reminder of the company's rich heritage.



This space is sponsored by Frederic Robinson Ltd.





On the 13th August, probably before you read this, the fate of Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries will be decided. Whoever wins, the Wolves (Banks's) management or financial predator Pubmaster, several breweries (probably including Marstons in Burton-on-Trent) will be sold on, and/or closed. This is, frankly, a disaster.

Marstons Pedigree may, these days, be something of a shadow of its former, sulphury, hoppy, self, but it remains THE ONLY bitter beer brewed in the Burton Union system anywhere in the world. The last of the true Burton Pale Ales will die, probably to be remanufactured at some sickening chemical factory elsewhere. It almost spells the absolute end of totally traditional beer.

CAMRA is, of course, robustly opposing the sale of Banks's to Pubmaster, but the predatory Pubco already has nearly enough shareholder acceptances to succeed. Pedigree is probably doomed.

Elsewhere in this issue, there is a letter from Stockport's erstwhile Festival Organiser and CAMRA Branch Treasurer, moaning about the single-minded focus (on licensing hours) of our last issue front page - it was too extreme. We should apparently allow Government to get on with its job and not complain when promises to drinkers are broken. Well, Jim, that may be alright for you, but I will choose to howl against the storm unto the very end, and whine and stamp and complain, no matter that it may all, ultimately, be in a lost cause. I have, in truth, nothing better to do, and a pox on all weaselly politicians.

I went to the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, earlier this month, - hundreds of beers, lots of (exorbitantly priced) food stands, and a good few folk of various sexes, orientations and ages, drinking vast amounts of liquid ambrosia. Despite what were, (even for London) slightly higher than expected prices - the beer was exceptionally good (certainly until I left on Friday). Clearly if real ale is becoming a minority sport, it still has a very active and not small, minority involved. I even saw a reasonable number of females....! Previous to this I visited New Brighton - indeed - for their local pub festival, with vintage transport between venues, and what an enjoyable day it was. I was

particularly struck by the conversion of the previously keg-only Railway to Real Ale and traditional cider, and by the amazing multi-cask stillage in the Fort. Well done indeed. A lesson on how to do things. Elsewhere in this issue you may read of changes in Manchester's Northern Quarter. For seven years or so, this area has provided, without doubt, the best drinking in Britain - as regards choice and quality. Heed my words well, for you may lose it all before you know it. Ian Casson at the Beer House is taking his toys home (or at least elsewhere) because despite sourcing some of the rarest beers in the UK on an almost weekly basis, AND holding 14 beer festivals in a year, all he gets is moans from those (ie local CAMRA members) that should most support him, and (almost) never a single word of praise. The whining of certain parties on the Internet News Group has been utterly pathetic. When, indeed, he sourced seven milds for the day that North Manchester CAMRA held their mild crawl, all anyone can remember was the moans of a pair of disgruntled crawlers that their schedule was too tight and "he shouldn't have put so many on". No thanks at all. For all the odd, sad and bathetic comments about the halcyon days under previous (now successfully Salfordian) management, I for one remember the even more relaxed and (through the rose-tinted glasses of extreme age) even more halcyon days of Peter Caton's previous Beer House stewardship. Bluntly, Ian has done a fabulous job, and brought more and new interesting beers into town regularly than anyone (no, I am not forgetting Jenny's sterling efforts at the Smithfield, but I am talking numbers and frequency). We (or certainly, I) will miss him very badly when he's gone. He will, I am sure, prove a near impossible act to follow. My very real fear is that owners Graham & Anne will agree, and place the pub on the market. The Marble is now under new ownership, but the organic micro-brewery is apparently safe for the immediate future, and it MAY be bought out by 'friends' of the current set up. I live in hope. Shude Hill is to get a massive budget hotel in the new development, which must threaten the prosperity of the excellent Smithfield Hotel, and to some extent the Burton Arms now improving steadily under the experienced hands of Claire and Howard Watts, formerly of the City Arms, Kennedy Street. It all changes, but the changes seem to me to foretell the 'globalisation' or 'branding' of the most compact and individualistic drinking zone in Britain. I hope my doomsaying is premature, I really do, but I fear all will soon be lost. If worst comes I may pack my rucksack, and with heavy heart leave our fair city, never to return. No beers of the month - the news is all too depressing for such things.



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Class Divisions

In the past, the splitting of pubs into public bars and lounges was often criticised as perpetuating outdated class divisions. As we were supposed to be moving towards a classless society, it had to be a good idea to get rid of the dividing walls, so everyone could mix together. But unfortunately this failed to recognise that traditionally people had engaged in all sorts of activities in the pub, some quiet, some rumbustious. Very often this was a function of the differing ages of the customers rather than their background.

Inevitably in a one-room environment, the louder activities tended to drive out the quieter ones, so there was less scope for different kinds of people to use the pub. Some might decide not to go to the pub at all, so the "democratisation" of the layout could have the perverse effect of reducing the social mix of people using it. Or it could happen that the rowdy clientele went in one pub, and the more sedate or older folk in a different one entirely, with the result that age and class divisions ended up if anything more pronounced than they were before, when everyone went in the same pub, albeit in different rooms.

One of the biggest problems in this is the increasing presence of large screen TVs in pubs. ATV will dominate a single-room pub and leave no escape for those who just want a quiet pint. While undoubtedly many people do want to watch major sports fixtures on TV, the audiences for these events are typically far less than those for popular soaps and drama series. Sport remains a minority taste, yet more and more it drives anyone who isn't a fan out of the pub. That must be yet another good argument for the return of multi-roomed layouts in pubs.

A Man of Substance

Whatever one may think of his politics, beer drinkers everywhere will welcome Ken Clarke barging his way through to the final round of the Tory leadership contest. This country has had a serious lack recently of political leaders who give the impression of enjoying a pint or two. You can't imagine Tony Blair getting through anything more than a very occasional small glass of Chardonnay, and I suspect it's many years since William Hague drank fourteen pints in a month, let alone a day, while Iain Duncan Smith would be more at home with a stiff G'n'T in the officers' mess.

There's a lot of talk nowadays about the general public becoming disconnected from politics. But if politicians - of all shades of opinion - spent a bit more time in the pub they might get a better idea of what really matters to ordinary people.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk

Letters to Opening Times are welcome by post to:
The Editor, Opening Times, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley,
Stockport. SK3 9HD or via the internet to
johnclarke@stocam.u-net.com

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

AUGUST '96

The main front page story referred to a string of pub closures that had taken place in Stockport, but a sudden flurry of activity had seen most of them "Back in Business". The Crown on Hillgate had re-opened with Alan Roebuck in charge, whilst further down the hill, the Gladstone was due to re-open - little had altered since the 1930s. The Midland on Wellington Road North had become an Irish theme pub, Dillon's Whistlin' Jig, but Upstairs Downstairs was much as before (no real ale and no customers). In Edgeley the Pineapple had improved in appearance, but still no real ale. The Stanley Arms had gone for good, but very interesting developments were promised for Byron's on Great Portwood Street.

There were some comments on the possibility of a change to the legal drink-drive limit - the current law, setting a maximum level of 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, took effect in 1967. This limit had become generally understood and accepted, and recent years had seen a dramatic fall in the number of drink-related deaths on the road. But the British Medical Association, and others, had called for the legal limit to be reduced from 80mg to 50mg, which would in effect reduce the maximum amount that one could legally drink before driving from about two pints of ordinary bitter to one pint. The government had rejected these calls, but the pressure for change was thought extremely unlikely to go away.

As a follow-up to the previous month's round-up of the damage caused to City Centre pubs by the terrorist bombing, it hadn't been thought likely to have included a pub that had been closed for nearly 10 years. Sadly, however, the Castle & Falcon just off Shudehill suffered considerable damage in the blast, and was demolished in the interests of safety.

Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, (perhaps better known as Banks's) had apparently started a retreat from their generally disastrous foray into the East Manchester pub scene. As Opening Times had gone to press, both the Gorton Arms in West Gorton, and the Star in Ardwick were on the market, with an asking price of £90,000 each.

The Three Bears on Jackson's Lane, Hazel Grove, was getting an enviable reputation for the quality and variety of its food. Licensees Kath and Dave Bailey had collaborated with Mrs Stephenson (of Stephenson's Glassware) to put together a very attractive recipe book, to be sold in aid of the Barbara Robinson's Memorial Fund, which contributed towards the work of Christie Hospital. The book was on sale for £1, also at other Robinson's pubs, and over £650 had already been raised for the charity.



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MANCHESTER MATTERS *by Cityman*

There's been quite a lot going on this month, although I haven't been able to get out and about as much as I had hoped.

In the City Centre we have a brand new Wetherspoon's in the shape of the **Paramount** on Oxford Street. Named after an old cinema nearby, this has to be the company's better offerings in the area. The stylish interior has the feel of an old style cinema foyer with deep pile carpets and low level lighting complementing the dark wood used in the furnishings and bar counter, the latter having a vaguely art deco appearance. It's also cleverly split into a variety of levels including a mezzanine drinking area. The floor to ceiling glass walls fronting Oxford Street not only add a light and airy feel to the proceedings but are perfect for relaxing over a pint and watching the world go by. The beer's been good (excellent Oakham JHB on opening night) and the service prompt and attentive. Will it all last? Let's hope so as it's currently the only City Centre Wetherspoon's that I can see myself using on a regular basis.

In the Northern Quarter there's been a right old merry-go-round. Howard and Claire from the **City Arms** have apparently moved to the **Burton Arms** on Swan Street, although what the plans are for this pub I don't know. Those expecting a City Arms style operation have so far been disappointed - indeed when I called precious little had changed with just Pedigree available on the bar and the proceedings enlivened by some foul-mouthed customer who, after roundly abusing the bar staff was, eventually, ejected from the pub.

At the **Beer House**, Ian Casson has apparently handed in his notice and is off to Bristol. He may or may not be replaced by Simon from the **Pot of Beer**. Meanwhile at the Pot, there are new managers in the shape of Dave and Tam Wroe who have returned to Manchester from a Thwaites pub in Bradford. Wild rumours have been circulating that the Pot was to become a 'champagne and oyster bar'. This always struck me as a load of old cobblers so I took it up with Wanda Ward (of Ward Taverns who own the pub). Once she had stopped laughing she assured me that nothing could be further from the truth - "Why change a winning formula?" she asked. Indeed - it does make you wonder where these stories come from, though.

One enterprising Northern Quarter licensee is John Henley of the estimable **Bar Fringe**. He's spreading his wings and opening a new outlet. This is **Deansgate Bar** and will occupy the premises of the former Nowhere Bar/Smart Bar just across the road from Atlas. This opens later this month and three cask ales will feature. More on this one next month.

Staying in the City Centre, the ground floor bar of the **Ape & Apple** on John Dalton Street was in the throes of a refurbishment as this was written. As far as I can see the aim is to split the one large room up into separate compartments using wood and glass partitions. It all looks very promising indeed.

I was shocked to hear that the **Hogshead** on High Street, by far the best of the local Hogsheads in my opinion, is to be turned over to lease. Whether the pub will still be able to continue in Hogshead fashion remains to be seen. I sincerely hope so although I'm still in shock at the loss of most of the guest ales at the **Salisbury** when that stopped being a managed pub (OK, it's owned by a different company but it still sets an unfortunate precedent).

Further Afield

Just outside the City Centre, the excellent **Kro Bar** is due to host its first ever beer festival at the beginning of September. There's more on this elsewhere but this initiative is certainly to be applauded and I hope it's a great success. I for one will be supporting the event enthusiastically.

Down in Didsbury the **Royal Oak** has been recommended in the 2001 British Cheese Board Awards - and quite right, too. This pub still shows all the rest how it should be done and hearty congratulations to all concerned.

While in Didsbury I quickly put my head round the doors of both the 'famous' **Crown** and the **Clock Tower** expecting the worst and was delighted to see that both are still selling cask beer. The Crown has Greenalls Bitter, Boddingtons Bitter and Marston's Pedigree on handpump, while the Clock Tower has Theakston's Cool Cask alongside the ubiquitous Boddies.

In Ladybarn, the **Talbot** has become the **Peninsula** but still sells cask beer in the form of Tetley Bitter from an unmarked handpump. How long that will last is anyone's guess. Across the road the **Brewers Arms** is still masquerading as a 'cask ale house' when not a drop of the stuff is sold.

And now some club news. Didsbury Cricket Club (off Wilmslow Road near junction with Parswood Road) has recently added regular guest beers on handpump, alongside the usual Stones Bitter. Recent offerings have included Kimberley Classic, London Pride, Taylors Landlord and a Thwaites Craft Beer. Average price £1.70. Weekly jazz sessions are held every Monday (Mart Rodgers Manchester Jazz), every Friday (alternating guest bands) and occasional Saturday and Sunday Jazz Specials.

Chorlton At Last

I finally made a long-promised visit to Chorlton last month and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

I dropped into the local branch of **Carringtons** (Barlow Moor Road) which is bigger than its elder sibling in Didsbury and has a considerably larger beer range. I was just going to have a nose around but couldn't resist picking up their last two bottles of Westvleteren Abt, possibly my favourite Belgian Trappist ale and a great rarity, even in the Low Countries let alone over here.

The main aim of my trip was to visit the **Unicorn** co-operative grocery on Albany Road (number 89 - right down the far end - it's easier to go down the alleyway next to the former Town & Country Driveways on Manchester Road, as I discovered later). Virtually everything they sell is organic and this extends to the beer and cider. I'd met licensee Graham Patient a couple of times before and had been struck by his enthusiasm and it's certainly apparent in the very well thought out range on offer.

There are something like 25 beers and 14 ciders on sale and the range is growing all the time. There's the full Pitfield range (in large 75cl bottles) along with beers from Brakspear, St Peters, Sam Smiths, Bateman's and Heather Ales. There is also a small range of foreign beers, mainly from Germany and Belgium (including three from the excellent Dupont brewery), although I picked up a bottle of Moulins D'Ascq, a wheat beer from French Flanders.

There's a good range of ciders and perries, too with Dunkertons, Crones, Heron Valley and Sedlescombe well represented. There are also ciders from both Normandy and Brittany - very different (and not as strong) to their British equivalent and wonderfully refreshing served chilled in hot weather. All in all, highly recommended. There are various ways of getting in touch: you can phone on 0161 861 0010 or e-mail on office@unicorn-grocery.co.uk. There's also a good website at www.unicorn-grocery.co.uk.

After leaving Unicorn suitably weighed down, I popped across Manchester Road to the **Marble Beer House** for a pint of their organic



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Ginger Marble, one of the best of the alcoholic ginger beers. This really is a great little pub with the full Marble range and guest beers, too. Suitably refreshed, my last visit was to the **Sedge Lynn**. This is the local Wetherspoons and the 'Conversion to Pub Use' category in CAMRA's recently announced Pub Design Awards. You can see why, too. A lot of money has clearly been spent here and for once you can see where it's gone. Reflecting the building's early 20th century origins, the décor has been carried off in the style of famous Glaswegian designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh, although it successfully avoids the near-parody which can so often accompany attempts to use his style as a base. I was particularly taken with the light fittings, which have been designed to reflect the building's origins as a snooker hall. The beer (Taylor's Landlord) was good too and I was pleased to see that the pub is clearly popular with a wide range of the local community. Well worth a visit if you've not yet been.

Bredbury. "The trade is really in my blood," she tells us. "My great-grandparents once ran another Robinson's pub, the Friendship Inn at Woodley". No major changes are planned and Christine is planning to increase the community feel at the pub by re-introducing the darts and crib teams that were popular in the past.

The 'Laurel Pub Company', (that's the fancy new name under which the old Whitbread pubs are now run) is turning over to lease some high profile managed pubs. Those in the High Peak branch area include the **Royal Oak**, Droylsden; **Causeway**, Audenshaw; and the **Old Dog**, Haughton Green.

Also flogging pubs is the **Unique Pub Company** who have put 65 pubs on the market. Those in High Peak branch area are the **Astley Arms**, Droylsden (£60,000) and the **Masons Arms**, Dukinfield (£80,000). Enterprise Inns is also selling off a clutch of pubs and again, there are a couple in High Peak area - two Church Inns, in fact, in Audenshaw and Glossop.

Tom Lord adds... The mark of a good licensee is not only the cellarmanship needed to serve up consistently top-quality cask-conditioned beer, but also the ability to recognise the importance of maintaining the character of the pub and improving it, and when making improvements and refurbishing, doing so sympathetically.

This has been achieved at the **Railway** (Stockport Road, Rose Hill) with the completion of a skilful and thoughtful refurbishment and redecoration. The most striking improvement has been the removal of the false ceiling from the main bar area, so that it is now the same height as the other lounge bar. This is a Victorian building and the change back to the original internal ceiling height and design, with cornices and wooden cased beams, is much more in architectural keeping with the pub.

These changes really do work and it is also amazing what an extra foot or so of height in a large pub room adds to the atmosphere - far less claustrophobic and much more airy and convivial. Steve, the licensee is to be congratulated on another positive move in further improving what was already an excellent, friendly and well-run pub.



Firstly this month news of a pub on the Woodhead Road, just outside the High Peak branch area. The **Dog & Partridge** on the right hand side on the way to Flouch crossroads, appears to have had a refurbishment inside, with food signs on display outside. But it is the signs signifying that it sells beers from the **Barnsley Brewery** that have taken the eye. Hopefully someone will pass by and report on this for next month's OT.

Latest from the **Lowes Arms** at Broomstairs, Denton,, is that the brewing equipment is now fully installed and Anthony Firmin tells me that by the time we go to press with this column, test brews will be underway.

The **Moon & Sixpence** at Glossop has had a change of licensee. The good news is that they are continuing putting on two guest beers. When I called on 7 July Black Sheep Special and Flowers Original guested alongside the staple Tetley Bitter and Directors Bitter.


Feathers, Stalybridge, is now selling cask ales. John Smiths Cask and Saddleworth More have been available recently and there are apparently plans to continue the theme. Potential visitors should note, though, that there is often none available mid-week.

The **Travellers Call** at Bredbury closed for nine weeks from 15 July for the promised major refurbishments by owners J W Lees. We will of course bring you a full report when the pub re-opens.

The Sponsored Walk, in aid of Marie Curie Nursing, starts at The Shepherds Arms, Whaley Bridge, at 11.00am on Saturday, 1 September. The route then calls at: Bee Hive, New Mills; Royal Oak, Strines; Sportsman, Strines; Navigation, Marple; Navigation, Woodley and finishing at the Lowes Arms, Denton (which may well be brewing by this time!!).

If Christine Windebank, the new tenant of the **Travellers Call** in Marple Bridge, ever needs any advice, she should be able to rely on some family support. Her brother David I the landlord of another Robinson's house, the Three Crowns near Macclesfield. Christine has plenty of experience in the licensed trade, having done bar work in other Robinson's houses such as the **Railway** in Romiley and the **Arden Arms** in

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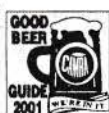


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TREASURE HUNT 2001 - A GRAND DAY OUT.

This year's annual CAMRA Pub Treasure Hunt was organised by 'The Castle Knights', last year's winners from the Castle, Oldham Street. This is how it went on the day...

On Saturday 7th July, the annual North Manchester CAMRA treasure hunt held in Manchester City Centre. As last years winners we (the 'Castle Knights') had the task of arranging this year's pub perambulation. We would like to report that it was a success.

On the day eighteen teams consisting of a total of sixty-six people signed up for this glorified pub-crawl. What was even more amazing was all the teams got back in the evening; we understand this was a first. Another first was the use of colour pictures for some of the clues, although we must stress we were not trying to set a precedent, just trying to make it more original. Next year no pictures at all could be the new Technicolor.

Returning to the actual hunt there were 71 points on offer this year and the competition was very close run. This years winners were the 'Raving Mad Bastards' (winners in 1999) with 70½ points - who went away with a magnificent trophy, twelve even more magnificent (and possibly more valuable) beer tokens and the dubious honour of setting next year's treasure hunt.

Joint second and receiving six beer tokens each were 'Legalise Cano'piss' and 'Two Dead Goldfish' with 70 points apiece. Both teams accepting defeat with good grace.

In fact we would like to thank all the teams who took part for their enthusiasm and sporting spirit which all went to make this a splendid day enjoyed by all. We would also like to thank all the pub landlords/ladies and their staff who gallantly allowed sixty-six drunks to blunder about their premises, inspecting walls and occasional ceilings (possibly even a couple of floors later on) very closely.

Thanks to 'What's Doing' and 'Opening Times' for publicising the event for free which no doubt helped swell the numbers. Special thanks to Ian at the Beer House for allowing us to start and finish there again and providing the food for free (the teams entry fees all went on paying for the beer token prizes). In fact the food was so popular that three of us organisers never got any - quite a sacrifice (although we did notice one or two people got in the queue more than once). Don't worry we are not sulking - we are just relieved it is all over - it does take some organising.

Anyway thanks again to everybody who took part and we look forward to seeing you all next year (Saturday July 6 2002, we believe) as we will be able to take part again. For anyone who is interested the following pubs were involved - Beer House (Guest), Marble Arch (Marble Brewery), Bar Fringe (Bank Top/Boggart), Castle (Robinson), Sinclair's (Sam Smith), Ape and Apple (Holt), Rain Bar (Lees), Grey Horse (Hydes), Lass'o'Gowrie (Guest) and Bulls Head (Burtonwood).

NEW RECORD AT REQUEST STOP BEER HOP

Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association Chairman John Cresswell reports on record numbers travelling to this year's Bhurtpore and Paradise Beer Festivals by train...

Passenger figures at Wrenbury were broken this year with a total of 560 passengers arriving during the recent beer festivals. 278 of these arrived on Saturday, probably the highest number of passengers ever seen at this small country station.

Saturday arrivals were in for a triple treat - two beer festivals, the well established event at the Bhurtpore Inn, and the Paradise Brewery Beer Festival - and for the first time ever there was a bus link between the two sites, which also proved useful to rail passengers. This link was jointly funded by the Bhurtpore Inn, Paradise Brewery and the Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association. Between the two festivals, something like 120-plus beers were available. My favourites at the two festivals were: Bhurtpore - Enville Ginger Beer (4.6%), a refreshing summer beer; Paradise - Marbury Mild (3.2%), an excellent tasty dark mild. Paradise's own Rum Old Ale (6%), is also highly recommended. Wales & West Trains came to the rescue during the travel problems on Saturday. With the wires down at Heald Green (and no trains via Stockport), all Manchester-Cardiff services were staring at Crewe. A phone call to Wales & West at Crewe confirmed a stop on the 13.11 from Crewe, which brought 50 delayed passengers to Wrenbury; a further call confirmed that a stop had also been arranged on the 14.06 bringing a further 20 passengers.

Our thanks go to all at Wales & West for their help, all staff at both Paradise and Bhurtpore venues, the bus driver and of course all who travelled by train, thus putting Wrenbury on the map as possible Beer Festival Capital of Britain!

Visits to Paradise Brewery can be made on Fridays, and by prior arrangement parties of 10 or more can visit the brewery at other times - phone 01270 780917. Watch out, too, for the Paradise Brewery Beer Festival between Christmas and New Year.

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BEER TICKING - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Phil Booton gives us the low-down...

Spotting. Ticking. Scooping. Scratching. All mean more or less the same - attempting to drink as many different beers as possible. I slightly prefer the term "ticking" and will henceforth use it, but each designation has its supporters. The word usually conjures up a picture of groups of scruffy characters at beer festivals frenetically filling small bottles with beer, prior to loading them into a capacious bag, which is then carried (or wheeled on a trolley) out of the venue. This vision however is rather misleading. Many beer tickers will only drink a beer at the point of dispense. Others try new beers but don't necessarily have to try every new one. Some will only count beers in pubs, not at beer festivals. So if you think the terms "ticking" and "bottling" are synonymous, you're wrong.

The practice of beer ticking was really spawned by the proliferation of microbreweries which started in the early 1980s and shows no sign of abating. This meant that suddenly there were many more different beers available to sample and inevitably some drinkers began to keep records of which beers they had drunk. I started drinking real ale and attending beer festivals in the mid 1980s and it seemed natural to tick off which beers I had tried. From there it was a small step to writing them down and counting them up! Just an example of the collecting habit, whether it be stamps, beer mats, trains or toby jugs.

Some CAMRA members and other drinkers tick off pubs, trying to visit as many as possible in the Good Beer Guide in the course of a year. Or all in a particular county. Or all which have appeared in every edition of the guide. But a larger group has concentrated on ticking individual beers. Some hardy souls of course do both! I have seen the beer ticking fraternity (and it is predominately, but not exclusively, a male pursuit) grow from a small group numbered in tens to one numbered in 100s (or perhaps 1000s for all I know!) One interesting point to appreciate is that there are no rules for beer ticking. Each individual sets their own. So some will not count a beer unless they have drunk a pint of it (don't know how they deal with short measure!) The majority feel half a pint is sufficient and some (of whom I am one) feel that any reasonable amount is acceptable. In other countries (Belgium and the USA for example) beer is served in much smaller measures at festivals - they are not so tied to specific measures. Perhaps the most significant difference though is between those who bottle beers for later consumption and those who only drink beers at the point of dispense. I am firmly in the latter camp, saving one solitary lapse! But I have no objection to those who take a different view.

Another notable difference in approach is between those who, if you like, tick full-time and those who tick incidentally to their normal beer-drinking activities. So the full-time tickers travel all over the country to beer festivals. And if they can't get to one themselves many will get someone else to bottle any new beers for them. The less committed tucker will drink and record new beers locally but will not travel long distances specially. Of course one of the major disadvantages of serious ticking is implicit in all the travelling - you spend a great deal of money on train fares as well as beer! A few tickers drive cars and these invariably bottle their beers, for obvious reasons.

Another significant downside to ticking is the sheer quantity of beer drunk. More than 1000 new beers in a year equates to more than 500 pints (or at least 10 a week). And that's without counting the ordinary day-to-day pints of Hydes, Lees or Phoenix! The main pleasure in ticking for many people, apart from the simple delight at adding a new name to the collection, is the camaraderie of the tickers. There is something rather heart-warming about walking into a pub in say, Aldershot, and immediately seeing a familiar face, there for the same reason as you, they have a beer festival on and might have a few new beers!

One regret I have about ticking is that so many CAMRA members, including local ones here in Manchester, will not accept it as a legitimate activity. Some beer festivals, includ-

ing Stockport, actively discourage tickers. Most beer tickers (apart from those few who have resigned in disgust) are CAMRA members, and it's a pity that differences of opinion and behaviour cannot be tolerated within an organisation whose objective after all is to promote real ale, which beer tickers consume in copious quantities. Anyway I'm off to start ticking malt whiskies! Phil Booton has sampled over 10,000 different beers. Next month he whittles those down to just five in Desert Island Beers.

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CAMRA CALLING!

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

Diary

AUGUST 2001

Thursday 9th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 17th - Stockport Town Centre Stagger: 7.30pm New Inn, Wellington Road South; 8.30 Little Jack Horners, Wellington St.

Thursday 23rd - Pub of the Month Presentation to the Adswood Hotel, Adswood Lane West. 8.00pm onwards.

Friday 31st - Trip to Pictish Brewery to present Beer of the Festival award. Minibus leaves Crown, Heaton Lane 7.00pm. Contact Paul Formby on 0161 612 0759 after 6.00pm.

Thursday 13th September - Monthly Branch Meeting; Adswood Hotel, Adswood Lane West, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

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 13th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Station, Warrington St, Ashton-u-Lyne. Starts 8.30pm.

AUGUST 2001

Saturday 18th - Trip to Hart Brewery. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 865426.

Saturday 25th - Social at Friendship, Arundel St, Glossop for Robbies Beer Festival.

Saturday 1st September - Sponsored Walk. Starts at Shepherds, Whaley Bridge, 11.00am. details from Frank Wood or Tom Lord (0161 837 4474).

Monday 3rd - Committee Meeting: Friendship, Arundel St, Glossop. Starts 8.30pm.

Monday 10th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet. 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 event:

Monday 20th - Business Meeting: The Highwayman, Rainow. Starts 8.00pm.



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New manager Neil Grimshaw is combining his loves of cooking and the licensed trade at the **Three Bears** in Hazel Grove. Neil is a trained chef and will still be helping out in the kitchen despite his extra responsibilities. Neil, who will be helped part-time by his fiancé, Jill Nicolson, kows the pub well having previously been assistant manager. He stresses that there will not be too many changes at the Three Bears as he is anxious to maintain the pub's reputation as a proper family pub.

The food operation could expand, though, say Neil. "At the moment we don't serve meals in the evening from Monday to Wednesday, but this is something I'm hoping to start doing."

Changes could be on the cards at one or two local pubs. The Laurel Pub Company (formerly Whitbread Pub Company) is turning about 200 managed houses over to lease. Locally these include the Beech Tree, Heald Green; Houldsworth Arms, Reddish and, surprisingly, the Hogshead on High Street, Manchester City Centre. At the same time, the Unique Pub Company is selling some 65 pubs across the country including, locally, the Lord Nelson, Gorton (£90,000); Lord Raglan, Openshaw (£60,000), Pack Horse, Levenshulme (£95,000) and the Wembley, Adswold (£140,000). Also selling off pubs is Enterprise Inns, which is seeking to off-load the Midland in Gorton for an undisclosed price.

The Frog & Railway which was found to be all keg on last month's Stagger now has real ale again in the form of Ruddles County on handpump. Welcome back to the fold!

The Lamp Hotel on Hillgate has reopened after a few month's closure. New licensee is Paul Wood who was previously assistant manager of the New Union on Princess Street, Manchester. With the change of regime has come a change of cask beer - Jennings Bitter on handpump.

Staying in the Hillgate area, work continues on the Bowling Green on Charles Street. Despite press reports of plans for town houses on the site, it looks very much as it will be reopening as a pub.

There's also a new face at the *Silver Jubilee*, Heaton Norris, where Jeff Cookson is aiming to provide live music with a difference. As part of his plans for this Robinson's pub, he is hoping to have brass bands performing live in the beer garden.



Jeff Cookson (right) receiving his new licensee training course certificate from Wayne Roach (Robinsons Tied Trade Manager)

"It's always been a big interest of mine," said Jeff. "I used to play the flat bass in bands in the Saddleworth area and I'd love to have some here if anyone wants to contact me."

Jeff also intends to put on other forms of live music in addition to holding fun days and barbecues. He stresses, though, that he will not be changing the character of the pub, citing it as a friendly community local whose regulars have already made him feel welcome. Jeff has run other Robinson's pubs in the past, the last being the Wagon & Horses in Uppermill.

The refurbishment of the Blue Bell, King Street West, Stockport, is turning into something of a marathon. As we went to press there still seemed no prospect of a reopening despite work commencing in late May. Let's hope it's worth the wait.

LOVE BEER? TIME TO JOIN CAMRA.

If you're reading this newsletter the chances are that you already enjoy a pint of two in a decent pub. But are you a member of CAMRA? If not you're missing out.

If you think all our 60,000 members are middle-aged men with a preference for beards and woolly jumpers think again! CAMRA members come from all walks of life and from all age groups. If you are under 26 you can join us for a mere £8 per year - that's less than 70 pence a month. In return you can enjoy a whole range of benefits including your own copy of 'What's Brewing' our hard-hitting and informative monthly newspaper. You also get discounts on entry to many CAMRA beer festivals and on CAMRA products including the best-selling Good Beer Guide. Most of all you get to be a part of one of Britain's most successful consumer groups and you are welcome to get involved in local campaigning and varied social activities.

Why should I care?

Many of the issues we campaign on matter to you. We are lobbying for a fairer and more flexible approach to pub opening hours. We are working towards new laws on full pints to make sure you don't get ripped off in pubs. We campaign to promote choice and competition to keep the pubs you like open and the beers you like on the bar.

You could sit back and do nothing. Or you could put your money where your mouth is. Fill in the form in this newsletter or check us out at www.camra.org.uk

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 208)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by its rules.

NAME (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

PARTNER (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

ADDRESS

. POSTCODE

TELEPHONE SIGNATURE

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO CAMRA

SINGLE £14 JOINT £17 UNDER 26 / OAP: SINGLE £8 JOINT (both must qualify) £11

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



THE BEER HOUSE
Angel St N/4 Mcr
Tel 01618397019

12 Real ales available including Thwaites, Taylors Landlord & up to 10 guest beers from independent breweries. Draught imported beers inc. Hoegaarden, Liefmans Kriek, Erdinger Weiss & 3 draught guest Belgian beers. 2 Draught ciders inc. Thatchers scrumpy. A wide range of imported bottled beers inc. Fruit, Wheat, Trappist and German beers.
Regular Beer Festivals featuring new & rare micro brewed beers

Free of cheap beers not being available, line cleaning whilst open, making poor excuses about beers not being on when advertised etc. But we do:- Have Thwaites Bitter on at



£1.30 a pint all week or 99p Friday 4 till 8pm plus at least 8 more real ales always available - all the time, good value food with changing daily specials at only £3- All Day - Every Day !!!

GUARANTEED

Monday 13th- Sunday 19th August

Beer Festival

40 new and rare beers from a range of microbreweries across the UK and featuring food with an English Flavour!

**- IAN'S LAST FESTIVAL -
BE THERE - OR YOU'LL MISS IT!**

1/2 Price menu Monday lunch, free chip butties Wednesday 5 - 6pm, curry night Thursday 5 - 7pm, choose from 6 curries & rice for £3-
Look out for forthcoming events & festivals!

MANCHESTERS PREMIER FREEHOUSE

6 Angel Street (off Rochdale Road), Northern Quarter, M/cr