



OPENING TIMES



Distributed throughout Stockport; Central, East & South Manchester; Tameside; N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield

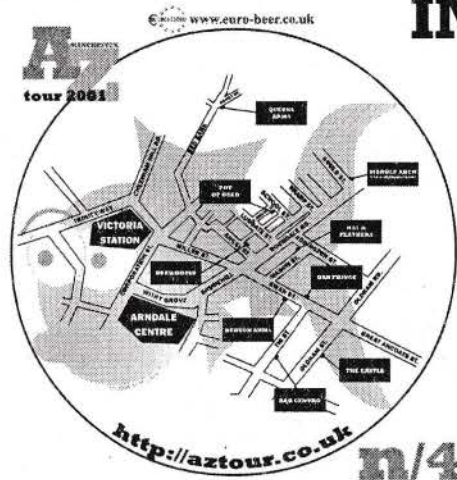
Volume 17 Issue 11

NOVEMBER 2001 No:211

6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

NEW MANCHESTER A-Z TOUR - OF PUBS IN THE N/4



Manchester's Beer Quarter is at it again - another weekend of food, beer and merriment starting on Thursday November 15. With nine participating pubs, a free bus between venues on Saturday, and a huge variety of beers, this should be the event not to be missed this month. More details on page 11, but do also note the article immediately below.

NATIONAL ORGANIC BREWING COMPETITION AT THE MARBLE ARCH

The 2001 National Organic Brewing competition will be held at the Marble Arch Pub & Brewery, 73 Rochdale Road, Manchester on Thursday, 15th November.

The competition is organised by SIBA. (Society of Independent Brewers) and is sponsored by Safeways.

Noteworthy judges are to include beer writers Roger Protz, & Barry Pepper, the head brewer from Hydes Anvil, Paul Jefferies, Manchester City Life Food & Drinks Editor, Jonathan Schofield, Idy Phillips licensee of the Crescent Pub at Salford and the Rev. Robert Bracegirdle. Judging will start from 2.30pm and the winners will be announced at 5.30pm.

There will be over ten draught cask organic beers, plus over thirty different bottled organic beers entered for the competition. The Marble Arch will be open to the public from 11.30am and most of the competition beers will be on sale as part of the N/4 Beer Festival that also starts on 15th November. Opening Times will of course be present - look for our report next month.

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NEW LOOK FOR GOOD BEER GUIDE

CAMRA's flagship gets makeover

The Good Beer Guide, the flagship publication of the Campaign for Real Ale, has been given a complete overhaul for its 29th edition. It's part of the drive by CAMRA to shed the "beards-and-anorak" image beloved by satirists, and to prove that real ale is the smart drink for young people.

The guide still includes 5,000 of the best pubs serving cask-conditioned beer but 4,000 of them now have much longer descriptions.

Explains editor Roger Protz: "In the early days of CAMRA you needed a fast car, a powerful torch and an Ordnance Survey map to find real ale pubs. Today, with cask ale pubs in abundance, the problem is to single out the ones that serve the beer in tip-top condition.

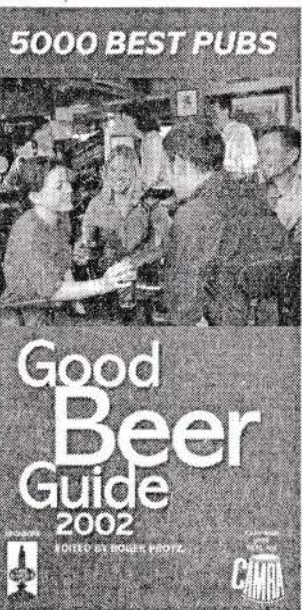
"The old GBG descriptions, such as 'friendly back-street boozier', will no longer do for today's more sophisticated drinkers. They want to know more about the history, the architecture, the welcome, the food, and facilities for families when they choose which pub to visit.

"We set CAMRA members the daunting task of writing 100-word descriptions of pubs and they have come up trumps. The Good Beer Guide is not only the longest-running and best-selling guide to pubs and breweries but also offers the most up-to-date information as a result of the efforts of our 60,000 members."

Just as CAMRA's major Great British Beer Festival has been masterminded by women organisers in recent years, the Good Beer Guide also has a powerful female influence, proving that good beer and good pubs are no longer the preserve of men. Deputy Editor Jill Adam has worked on the Good Beer Guide for 11 years. She has been joined for the 2002 edition by new assistant editor Kate Green. Along with CAMRA's Editorial Co-ordinator Cressida Feiler, they form a powerful voice and influence over the direction of the guide.

And to reinforce the point that women enjoy good beer, the guide was launched in the Pelican pub in Ladbroke Grove, West London, the third in the group of organic pubs run by two women, Esther Boulton and Geetie Singh.

*Members of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA can buy a personal copy of the guide for just £7.50 (as opposed to the £12.99 cover price). Additional copies are available at the standard members' price of £9.00. To secure your copy send a cheque, made payable to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG. If you live outside the branch area please add £1 for the first copy and 50p for each additional copy to cover post and packing.





PHOENIX BREWERY

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MORE CHOICE BETTER BEER



1998 International Brewing Awards
Wobbly Bob awarded Silver Medal

IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

Hearty congratulations to all involved at the Nursery which is now one of the four finalists in CAMRA's national Pub of the Year contest. The final round will be a tough one indeed but even if no more honours come the pub's way, this really is a tremendous achievement.

This month we are running a great membership offer if you're under 26. You might not think CAMRA is for you but if you care about pubs and beer (and if you're reading this, I guess you do) you really should think about joining us.

We're not a elite group of bearded sandal-wearing beer bores. What we are is an active campaigning organisation that also knows how to have a good time. We campaign - on prices, for full pints and to save pubs, we run beer festivals, we visit breweries and, yes, we occasionally get pissed. All this for less than 70p a month - just what are you waiting for?

John Clarke

OPENING TIMES ISSUE 211

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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PUB OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2001

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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25	26	27	28	29	30	



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for November is the Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport. Sometimes unfairly overshadowed by its more high profile neighbours, the Pineapple is a gem of a pub, having the feel and spirit of a neighbourhood community local while being in the middle of Stockport, just a few yards from busy Mersey Square.



For the past 13 years the pub has been in the capable hands of Eileen Lloyd who had previously worked there as a barmaid. In those years the pub has established itself as a firm favourite with a loyal band of regulars who appreciate the community feel of the place. The pub's popularity can be judged by the fact that it sports a quiz team, pool team and no less than three darts teams.

There's good lunchtime food (12-2, Monday-Saturday) and this is complemented by the traditional Robinson's Best Bitter and Hatters Mild on electric pumps. Quality, if recent visits are anything to go by, is top notch, too.

In many ways the Pineapple sums up all that's good about our public house tradition - no gimmicks and themes, just a good solid local serving well-kept real ales to an appreciative crowd of locals. The fact that all of these locals all have to travel some distance to the pub says all you need to know about the Pineapple's appeal. This well deserved award will be presented to Eileen on the evening of Thursday, 22nd November when a great night out is promised.

The pub is easy to get to on public transport being just a short walk from both Mersey Square and Stockport Bus Station.

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 211:

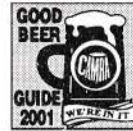
John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Peter Edwardson, Chris Walkden, Mark McConachie, Dave Nunn, Phil Levison, Ben Zwiernik, John Taylor, Steve Smith, Stuart Ballantyne, Stewart Revell, Tom Lord, Steve Bray, John Cresswell.

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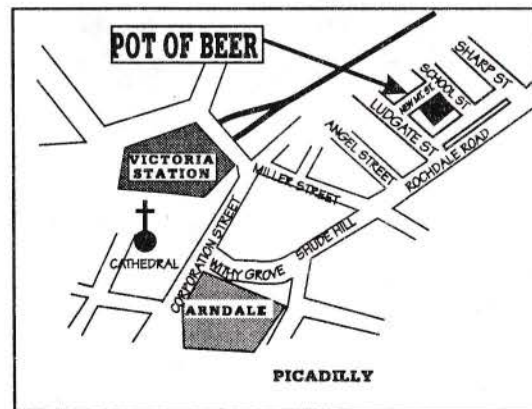
POT OF BEER

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N/4 BEER FESTIVAL 15 - 19 NOV

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A DAY OUT IN FOREIGN PARTS

Chris Walkden on a grand day out...

Well Yorkshire actually! Saturday 29th September saw a dozen stalwarts assembled outside the Crown on Heaton Lane for a trip to The 13th Keighley Beer Festival. Spot on time, our minibus arrived - the same, however, could not be said for some of the passengers who had been undertaking the onerous and thankless task of beer quality research at some of Stockport's pubs the previous evening!

Nevertheless, we still arrived at The Victoria Hall in Keighley in just over an hour, leaving a mere four and a half hours to enjoy the delights of the lunchtime session. Whilst most of us headed straight into the Festival, a few went on a short trip to explore the town and to get a drink of tea- or should that read black coffee?

This year the Festival was being held the Victoria Hall for the third time, a pleasant venue set in parkland on the edge of the Town Centre. There were already plenty of people around for such an early hour but the good news was there was plenty of beer left to choose from. Having acquired our starter pack for a fiver (refundable glass, £3 of beer tokens and a special festival lapel badge) we were let loose on the 40+ beers still on. Beers had been sourced from all over the country ranging from Valhalla in the Shetlands to Skinners in Cornwall and from Brains in Cardiff to Woodforde in Norfolk whilst local micros were well featured too.

The first beer I tried was from a new brewery, Golcar near Huddersfield. Their straw coloured Golcar Bitter (3.8%) was light, hoppy and very refreshing. Even more interestingly, it was classified as a mild and counted towards the Festival Mild trail where the purchase of 4 halves of different milds got you the 5th half free. As a long day was in prospect this seemed like a good idea, so Fernandes Malt Shovel Mild (3.8%), Foxfield Dark Mild (3.5%) and Wolf in Sheeps Clothing (3.7%) were consumed in rapid succession. I particularly liked the fruity Foxfield, a view echoed by some others in the group. Outside the milds, I and several others enjoyed the Wentworth Gold (5.0%) and the very hoppy Harvestoun Bitter and Twisted (3.8%). The latter was named Champion Beer of Scotland in 1999 and Beer of the Festival at several recent CAMRA events. Keighley also featured a small selection of ciders and a foreign bottle stand featuring beers from Germany, France and the USA. Alas the American Sierra Nevada Pale Ale had sold out, leaving only some of their strong dark beers available. About six years ago, I would have been in seventh heaven, but my tastes have changed and I now prefer really hoppy beers. Back to the stillage then and a half of the ever excellent Hopback Summer Lightning fitted the bill. I was also impressed with the Loxley Bitter (4.5%), the first offering from the micro set up in the Hillsborough Hotel in Sheffield.

Food consisted of a simple range of pies and curries whilst the energetic amongst us could try some pub games (a free games token was included with the beer tokens). Next to the small products stall, the tombola plied a steady trade and some of our group were laden with ashtrays, glasses and other breweriana by the end of the session. The beers were in good condition and all in all it was a well run festival - congratulations to the local CAMRA branch and friendly staff for their efforts.

Our homeward journey had been planned with a few pub visits in mind and the first two were in Keighley itself. The GBG listed Cricketers Arms is an end of terrace house formerly owned by the Worth Brewery. They had refurbished it to bare stone walls and the small drinking area was busy when we arrived with a mixed clientele recovering after the weekly shopping trip or just watching the football. Six beers were on offer. Moorhouses Premier and Taylors Golden Best are the two regulars - the Moorhouses was not sampled but the Golden Best was lacking in flavour according to one of our group. Guests were Moorhouses Black Cat, Castle Eden Bitter, Daleside Old Legover and Durham Sanctuary - their 6% winter beer. Despite the relatively early hour I tried the Durham first - their beers are always good and this was no exception. With time to spare before we moved on, some of us were obliged to while away the time with another guest. I will only say that we were all very pleased with our Legover!!

Leaving this friendly pub it was but a short drive to the Brewery Arms. This free house is under new management and they had the enterprising idea of having a number of past Champion Beers of Britain available. This was well publicised at the festival and so the place was nicely busy when we arrived. There were ten handpumps and featured on our visit were Coniston Bluebird (CBOB 1998), Mordue Workie Ticket (1997), Cottage Norman Conquest (1995), Woodforde's Norfolk Nog (1992), Fullers Chiswick Bitter (1989), Ringwood Old Thumper (1988) and Batemans XXXB (1986). Local interest was provided by the ever excellent Timothy Taylor's Landlord which has deservedly been CBOB on no less than four occasions (1982/83/94/99). Their Golden Best was also on, as was Goose Eye Brewery's session bitter Barmpot.

The large open-plan drinking area gave those who wanted to read the papers a chance to do so whilst others could keep up with United's demolition of Spurs and celebrate with another beer. Prices were on the high side however, with Bluebird at £2 and other guests at £2.10 or £2.20 a pint. Beer was in generally good condition although the Workie Ticket was described as a bit green and "gloopy". Is this a strange Yorkshire or Geordie word? Can anybody help?

Time was pressing and there was one more call to make back on the proper side of the Pennines. This was at the Lowes Arms in Denton where a special evening was planned to officially celebrate the opening of the Lowes Arms own micro - The LAB. Regular readers of OT will be familiar with the evolution of this brewery at Peter Wood's pub with Anthony Firmin in charge of the beer. Commercial production started in mid August, the first beer being a special brew, St Annes Ale (4.8%) to celebrate the re-dedication of bells at the nearby church.

On that first evening I had been able to take a sample of the Broomstair's Bitter which had literally just been brewed. It tasted very strange and I suggested to Anthony that more work was needed on it. However, later reports from the pub said that this 4.3% beer had come out particularly well - shows how good my judgement is!! Now I had an opportunity to try it for real and it was very nice with a real roasty taste. Liking more golden beers, I preferred the lighter Frog Bog Bitter (3.9%) which was very refreshing. I wanted to try all the LAB beers and detected that the Houghton Weave (4.5%) was also full of flavour - no mean feat as my taste buds were starting to falter after the day's hard work. The taste is hardly surprising as the beer has five hop flavours weaved together!! Unfortunately, the advertised Wild Wood (4.1%) was not on, so that gives me an excuse to make another visit sometime.

The pub was very busy as it usually is on Saturdays whilst the crowd was swelled by our little group and some other CAMRA members attracted to the opening. A trad jazz band played in the corner of the lounge whilst the public bar was filled with beer enthusiasts and some locals enjoying a game of pool. A wide ranging menu was available and despite the busy hour, my Gammon Steak arrived quickly. Others in the group also took the opportunity to refuel as none of the other pubs we visited offered food when we were there.

Anthony had set a beer quiz, but the clues were far too cryptic for me - I have trouble with the Sun Crossword! It therefore came as some relief that we had to leave in the middle of it to ensure that the bus got home on time. I am told that Tom Lord, Chairman of the High Peak Branch eventually won, his prize being a gallon of LAB beer. Perhaps the editor can persuade Anthony to put the questions in OT for a bit of fun or provide a new quiz with a brewery prize? Later on there was a raffle with LAB shirts and caps as prizes and a "finger buffet" was provided - whose fingers were involved I wonder?

All in all, an excellent day out with good beers and good company. More trips, both locally and a bit further afield are planned in the coming months, so if you fancy doing something a bit different and sampling some of the great variety of cask ales available in the UK, why not come along? The dates will be publicised in the OT diary.

4



STOCKPORT & MANCHESTER

Mild CHALLENGE

2002

CALLING ALL LICENSEES!

The 2002 Stockport & Manchester Mild Challenge is coming. This increasingly popular annual event will run from early April to mid-May next year but the organising starts now!

Last time over 100 people completed the Challenge with two dozen visiting every pub. Each year more and more people take part and once again we are pleased to have sponsorship from the Stockport Express which will be ensuring the Challenge gets maximum coverage.

The entry fee is just £10 per pub so if you sell traditional cask conditioned mild and would like to make a provisional booking to get your pub on the 2002 Mild Challenge then call Mild Challenge Organiser Mark McConachie on 0161 429 935

STAGGER

with Peter Edwardson

Stockport Re-Visited

Our August stagger took us to Stockport Town Centre, with the aim not of visiting the well-known classics but of checking out some of the lower-profile, perhaps unjustly overlooked pubs. We started off at the **New Inn** on Wellington Road South, next to the Town Hall. For many years well-known as a gay venue, this pub has been taken over by new licensees this year and reverted to welcoming all-comers. It's basically one room, split into three different levels, with the bar in the centre section. For so early in the evening it was surprisingly busy, with a mainly youngish clientele, who were possibly waiting for the karaoke that was being set up. The only real ale available was Tetley Bitter which was in fairly good nick.

Moving on down the hill brought us to the **Unity** on the corner of Wellington Street. This small Robinson's pub was knocked through a few years back to give a comfortable single bar in a modern style. Tonight it was very busy, with plenty of Stockport County shirts in evidence. Unfortunately, beer quality fell short of the standards normally expected here, with the Hatters Mild being OK, but the Best Bitter distinctly disappointing.

The next pub on the list was **Cobdens**, the former Manchester Arms, which has become Robinson's attempt at a young people's circuit bar. Unfortunately most of the party including myself were refused admission on the grounds that they were wearing trainers, so I can't comment on either the pub or the beer, although the handful who were allowed in said that the Whistling Will, the only real ale available, was quite decent. Perhaps next time I should go back wearing steel-tipped hobnail boots. There was further disappointment at the Irish-themed **Blarney Stone** on St Petersgate, the former Imperial, where there was an unmarked handpump but no real ale on. Apparently the licensee had trouble selling it in the warm weather and would think about putting it back on in the autumn. Fair enough, I suppose, but plenty of other Stockport pubs seem to have no problem keeping it in good condition all year round.

Matters were much improved at **Little Jack Horners** on Wellington Street, where four real ales were available - Worthington Bitter, Tetley Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Cameron's Strongarm. The normally bland Worthington was not tried, but all the rest were comfortably above average, with the Strongarm being the best beer of the night so far. Although outwardly this is a small pub, it has three rooms on different levels, with the rear lounge, featuring plenty of comfortable bench seating, being surprisingly spacious. We returned to St Petersgate and the **Stockport Arms**, a Greenalls pub where a variety of areas ramble around a central bar. Impressions here were less favourable, with very loud music and pints not being topped up even when requested. Greenalls Bitter was off, leaving Tetley Bitter as the only real ale, which was OK but served rather too cold.

A few doors down the street we reached Stockport's newest and biggest pub, Wetherspoon's **Calvert's Court**. There was more trouble here with door staff refusing entry to anyone wearing trainers. "These aren't trainers, they're deck shoes," said one of the party. "No deck shoes either." Were they making it up as they went along? Fortunately we had been tipped off that entry could be gained around the back where there were no goons, but it's doubtful whether it was worth it as the pub was so busy and the service so lamentable that I for one waited ten minutes without getting a drink. Those who succeeded found Nethergate Augustinian and Mendip Gold both to be pretty good, although the Woodforde's Wherry was less impressive.

Across the street was the **Egerton Arms**, where more of a normal pub atmosphere prevailed, and where the opening of the new Wetherspoon's didn't seem to have dented customer numbers, as it was standing room only, with a lively atmosphere. It's basically a one-room pub with separate drinking areas on either side of a central bar. Marston's Pedigree was taken off sale as it had "turned", but Webster's Bitter was found quite acceptable, with several of the party commenting that it had markedly improved since production was moved from Halifax to Tadcaster.

Rather than going on to the crowded Market Place, we then chose to head back towards the A6, pausing by the **Chestergate Tavern**

to look in through the windows to check it was still all keg (it was). This was another pub where the presence of bouncers on the door suggested that daft dress restrictions might apply, and indeed one of us recalled that earlier this year a young woman undergoing radiotherapy for cancer had been ejected because she was wearing a baseball cap to cover her bald head.

We had no problem getting past the door staff into the **George**, but sadly found the sole Boddingtons Bitter handpump not in use. The older members of the party recalled how this had once been a Higsons tied house with one of the finest traditional pub interiors of the town, regrettably long since swept away.

We found the licensee of the **George** enjoying a pint a few doors down Heaton Lane in the **Pineapple**, where he explained that he had tried to promote real ale but found he just couldn't sell enough of it to keep it in good condition. There was no such problem in the **Pineapple** where the Robinson's Hatters Mild was well above average and the Best Bitter a little better still. This is a good little three-roomer, obviously popular with a strong band of regulars, which is maybe unfairly overlooked by CAMRA members.

We finished off the evening just across the road in the **Crown** underneath the viaduct, which was predictably busy, so much so that we could only find a seat in the beer garden. This multi-beer alehouse always offers a good choice, but tonight excelled itself with a particularly mouth-watering selection of tasty beers of drinkable strength, with a distinct emphasis on the hop, including Oakham JHB, which had recently been voted Champion Beer of Britain. Others tried included Pictish Honey Ale, Phoenix Monkey Town Mild and Slaters Shining Knight, and all the beers tasted were either good or very good.

As always, these are purely the impressions gained by our group of drinkers on one particular night. Whether you agree or disagree, why not check the pubs out yourself?



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FROM FRIDAY 9 TO
SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER

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This month's Desert Island Beers is by Mark McConachie, a long-time stalwart of North Manchester CAMRA who has recently become resident in Stockport.

"I consider myself to be fairly new at tasting and reviewing beers having only been in the real ale scene for about a dozen years now. During those years I have made many friends and acquaintances throughout the UK through CAMRA; I have tasted hundreds of beers, visited thousands of pubs, written many articles for Opening Times and What's Doing. I have also served the campaign in being North Manchester branch Secretary for seven years and Chairman for one; I have worked at many beer festivals, mostly Stockport, National Winter Ales, Bolton and Bury carrying out a variety of roles during the years.

"My main sphere of interest remains pubs - the differing architecture, the ambience, the mix of people, they are all fascinating to me. My five Desert Island beers then, are really based upon memorable events, the places and the people that have enriched my life and the beers that have added 'the cherry on the top' to the whole occasion. The beers are presented with favourite first, then second favourite and so on.

"It was on the occasion of Richard & Kath Hough's (ex OT contributors) wedding weekend in Newcastle-upon-Tyne a few years ago that I got introduced to **Mordue Workie Ticket**, after that I couldn't get enough of the stuff; a truly stunning beer. A mid-brown 4.5% bitter having (to my taste) the perfect balance of maltiness, body and hoppiness. The good thing was that most of the GBG pubs in Newcastle had it on! I re-acquainted myself with the beer last year as CAMRA's National AGM was held in Newcastle and it did not disappoint.

"Number two has to be any of **Harvey's** beers - Mild XX and Old Ale especially. Although not strong in alcohol the taste and balance achieved is quite breathtaking, the subtlety of taste quite remarkable - in the brewer you have a real craftsman at work here. You could say I fell in love with these Sussex beers a couple of years ago when Ed (1) and I visited Brighton & Hove for that year's AGM - a lovely part of the world

continued on next page...

Dave and Sue welcome you to

THE QUEENS ARMS

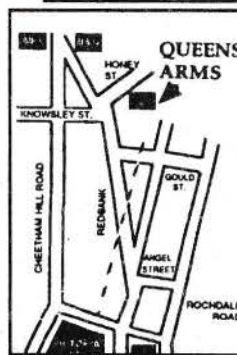
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12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



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OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Dave Nunn, Hazel Grove:

May I convey my personal congratulations to Steve and Janet at the Railway, Rose Hill, Marple on winning the Robinson's best kept bar and cellar competition 2001.

This is a very commendable brewery initiative that benefits consumers and the business owners alike.

From my first encounters with Steve, seven years ago, I could sense a determination to put customer first irrespective of whether that person was a regular or someone walking through the door for the first time. The award is something that Steve was determined to win from its inception.

More than capable at the Horsfield, Steve has transformed the Railway in three years tenure, in beer, bread and beams. At the Railway find a model of how to run a pub.

From Peter Edwardson, Heaton Norris:

Earlier this year I had the misfortune to break my ankle, and I am extremely grateful to Mr Clive Warren-Smith and the rest of the team at Stepping Hill Hospital for putting it right.

Once I got out of hospital this obviously meant I couldn't walk home from the pub as I had before, and had to depend much more on taxis. Metro Taxis in Stockport deserve congratulation for introducing a "ringback" service which means they call you back on your mobile phone when the taxi has arrived outside the pub. This eliminates all that waiting around in the cold and wet and makes calling a cab from the pub so much more convenient. Their competitors will be missing out if they don't follow suit.

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

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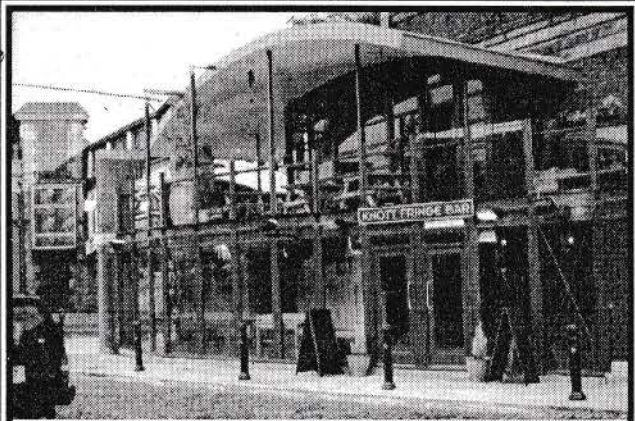
with some cracking pubs on offer. I'll never forget Harveys.

"Beer three is somewhat of an oddity and few people will remember it - Dobbins Kangaroo XXXX. I had tried the beer on a number of occasions and not been that impressed, but at a CAMRA Regional Meeting at the Kings Arms (R.I.P.) in Chorlton-on-Medlock (Dobbins tap) some years ago I was literally blown-away by this stunning beer. Straw-coloured and hoppy with a strength of something like 4.2% it was nectar to me that night (I had far too much of it I seem to recall...). Other people will have Dobbins favourites such as Old Soporific or Green Bullet, but XXXX was the beer for me. With the brewery now gone it is a memory that one can hold on to.

"Beer four is a local beer brewed by a local family brewer. Over the years I have indulged my tastebuds with copious amounts of Joseph Holt bitter, Hydes Light (pre the recipe change) and Robbies Best with my likings towards them always on the move. The one local beer that stands out for sheer consistency and quaffability is John Willie Lees Bitter - to me, the classic session bitter. I recall a branch visit to the Middleton Junction brewery where I was so impressed with the beer that, had I been on a 'Stagger', I would have scored it four (the highest mark possible). It was absolutely superb.

"My last beer is another local brew, but one that is no longer brewed. Before Manchester's Marble brewery went organic (and vegan), one of then brewer Mark Dade's last creations was based upon an old recipe for a mild. He created a 4.5% Kitchen Ale, a dark-brown beer with good body and an intriguingly, mildly-sweet finish. I was not taken by it in the first mouthfuls, but after five pints I was smitten. The love affair was all too short however, as the demands of being organic rendered it unrecognisable shortly thereafter. Ah well, better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all, as they say.

"That's how I see it at the moment, anyway. Ask me for my Desert Island beers in a year's time and the list could be entirely different. Other beers I would mention as favourites are Chesters mild, Robbies mild, Black Sheep bitter, Caledonian IPA, Youngs bitter, Taylor Landlord and many more. If I could take a bottle-conditioned ale (BCA) to the island it would have to Fullers 1845. I only recently tasted this fantastic ale (fool I am, I've been giving away this beer as prizes on festival Tombola stands for years!!) at a barbecue hosted by former Bury Beer Festival organisers Barbara and David Shelton (my eternal thanks, both)."



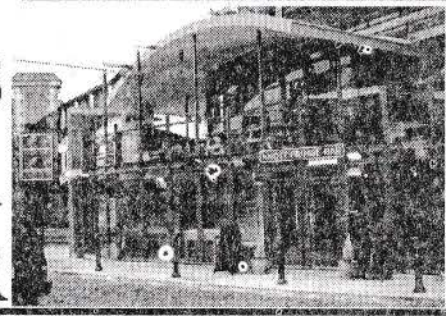
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Robinson's

PACKAGING SUCCESS AT UPC

While Unicorn Brewery is the most obvious public face of Robinson's, much of the crucial production work is now carried out at Unicorn Packaging Centre in Bredbury.

The origins of UPC date back to the late 1960s when it became apparent that it no longer made sense to bottle from two old and cramped bottling stores, at Unicorn Brewery and the Hemphshaw Lane premises of Bell and Co Ltd in Stockport.

A detailed investigation selected the site at Bredbury, which was already owned by the Company, as being the most suitable for development. One factor in the decision was that the site's total area of about 9.5 hectares would be capable, if desired, of accommodating most if not all of the Company's production and distribution requirements for the future.

The first phase of the development programme was to make plans for the construction of a bottling unit with its associated beer handling facilities and the provision of a large stockroom for all the products bottled by Robinson's.

After around two years of detailed preparation, including the selection of machinery and other equipment, work at the site started in November 1973. The building was ready for use in the autumn of 1975 with the first bottling taking place on 15th October of that year.

In the intervening years, Robinson's has emphasised its commitment to modern production methods by making numerous improvements at UPC.

In January 1981 Phase 2 with a new highly automated kegging line was installed and commissioned in a new building together with additional storage tanks and chilling and filtering facilities. Kegging capacity was further increased in 1991 when the line's capacity was doubled.

It was in the summer of 1997, when the cask racking and distribution functions were transferred to Bredbury, that the Company's long-standing programme to separate all packaging operations from the brewing and fermentation processes carried out at the brewery was completed.

A new state-of-the-art cask-racking line was installed, together with additional storage tanks and processing equipment operated and monitored by the very latest computer controlled system. In addition, the manual handling aspect of the operation was removed by the introduction of modern mechanical methods. At the same time distribution was also transferred there from the brewery.

Heavy investment in both plant and the buildings at UPC has put Robinson's at the forefront of technology and demonstrated how family traditions can exist alongside a forward thinking philosophy to ensure the quality that people expect from one of the region's leading independent brewers.



This space is sponsored by Frederic Robinson Ltd.



Local Family Favourites

All four of our family brewers have new beers out this month. The new beer that Holts were initially hoping to bring out for Cask Ale Week was finally delivered to 40 (of their 130) pubs in the first week of November. Only about 60 Casks have been produced, to see if there is a market for it. Some pubs will have two 22-gallon casks while others will only have the one! The beer will be dispensed by handpump throughout. Apparently a lot paler in colour than the normal Bitter, it is about 4.5% ABV, uses crystal malt and will retail at 135p per pint. The provisional name is "Holt's Special". When asked if a further brew will be done, Keith Sheard (Head Brewer) replied that it all depends on how well this first batch is received!



Both Lees and Hyde's come to the end of their current bi-monthly seasonal beer programme this month. Lees have produced White Bear, a 4.2 per cent ABV wheat beer that first made its appearance as a summer special last year. Lees' had brewer Giles Dennis described the beer as "a thirst quenching fruity beer with a smooth nutty flavour". Perhaps an odd choice for a winter ale, despite the presence of a polar bear on the pump clip. Perhaps more appropriate for this time of year will be Hydes' Dutch Courage at five per cent - the November/December offering is usually the strongest of the Hydes' seasonals.



Robinson's are reprising Robin Bitter, one of the most impressive of their seasonals with a full-bodied maltiness offset by a superb dry finish. Robbies, however, have pulled a rabbit out of the hat by also introducing a new permanent addition to their range. This is Cumbria Way, originally brewed for Ulverston's Real Ale Trail and Charter Fortnight it proved so popular that it's been kept on as a permanent fixture. It's sold under the Hartley's banner and is a 4.1 per cent beer, pale and full-bodied with a long dry finish. As far as we know it's generally available to the Robinson's estate and not just confined to the former Hartley's pubs in Cumbria; Cobden's in Stockport and the Castle, Oldham Street, Manchester have already sold it.

National News



Wolverhampton & Dudley (who trade locally under the Banks's and Marston's banners) have begun entering into reciprocal agreements with other breweries which, presumably, will mean a wider range of beers in Wolves' pubs. It's already happened in fact - the initial agreements are with Everards and Wychwood and beers from both have been spotted in the Royal Oak, Didsbury and it's safe to assume they will be in other locals Banks's and Marston's pubs, too.

Scottish & Newcastle have started exploiting some of the beers produced by their recently acquired Belgian operations. The allegedly 'revered' Grimbergen Blond and Dubbel are being made available on a limited basis. Revered? Let's just have a look at what the CAMRA guide to Belgium & Holland has to say about them... Grimbergen Blond - "a bland blond"; Grimbergen Dubbel - "a burnt brown ale of little brain". Hmm.

Taylor's have produced their first new beer for 30 years! This is Royal Ale, a strong amber ale of 5% ABV, brewed to commemorate the Prince of Wales' visit to the brewery earlier this year. Described as a "strong English amber ale with a rich golden colour, robust hoppy aroma and a full malty taste" the beer is available in bottle only and should be on supermarket shelves (well on Safeway's shelves at least) this month.

Micro Matters

Not a lot of news gleaned this month (time pressures prevented the usual ring-round). Pictish have two beers out in November. One is a reprise of last year's Golden Gauntlet, a 4 per cent pale, golden coloured beer using malted rye in the brew. The other special one-off is Blue Moon (so named as November has a blue moon, that is a second full moon in the one month). This is to be a 6 per cent highly hopped IPA. According to brewer Richard Sutton it will be "very bitter and very hoppy, absolutely lethal, in fact".



MARBLE BEERS

Marble Brewery are reintroducing the 4.7% Uncut Amber to their outlets this month and Chocolate Heavy (5.5%) will be relaunched on 15 November to coincide with the Organic Beer Competition being held at the Marble Arch.

Finally, Leyden Brewery is producing a new cask beer for the BBC's Children In Need appeal. This is 'Pudsey Beer' and will be on sale at the Lord Raglan in Nangreaves on Children IN Need night, Friday 16 November. While they aren't allowed to put Pudsey Bear on the pumpclip, Leyden has been given the OK to use the appropriate colours. The beer itself is 3.5%, pale, hoppy and with a dry malty aftertaste. A donation of £20 per barrel sold will be made to Children In Need so Brendan Leyden is hoping that plenty of other pubs will take the beer to make the eventual donation as big as possible. Brendan can be contacted on 0161 764 6680.

LAB Latest

Another busy month for "The LAB". Brewing is now taking place twice a week as demand increases for the beer. Landlord Peter Wood has started brewing during the week in order to meet the drinkers needs!



November will see the launch of "Wild Wood" - a light ruby coloured beer with slightly sweet malty taste with a hint of blackcurrant in the aftertaste, the beer has a lovely herbal/berry aroma! The Christmas beer "Houghton Hangover" (a porter style beer) has now been brewed and should be around 6% ABV. It will be on sale from the second week in December.

Extra equipment has now been ordered and should be in place by the end of November in order to increase production further.

PARADISE AT XMAS

The period between Christmas and New Year can often fall a bit 'flat' - not any more!

Paradise Brewery, situated next to Wrenbury Station, will be hosting a Beer Festival from Thursday 27 December until Saturday 29th. Thirty or so beers will be available from 11am until 11pm each day. To make things even easier, those estimable fellows at the Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association have made provisional arrangements with Wales & Borders Trains for the 11.33 Manchester-Cardiff express to stop specially at Wrenbury on both Friday 28 December and Saturday 29th. For the return journey, an express will call at Wrenbury at 17.05.

This Beer Festival promises to be a lot of fun and hopefully will be without the snowfall experienced last year. With 560 arrivals for the July festivals, this should put Wrenbury Station wel on the way

NURSERY TRIUMPH (AGAIN)

Following it's success in the CAMRA Greater Manchester Pub of the Year competition, the Nursery (Green Lane, Heaton Norris) has now gone on to win the next 'Super Regional' round beating the regional winners in CAMRA's Merseyside & North Wales, Yorkshire and West Midlands regions.

This makes the popular Hydes' local one of the four finalists in the National Pub of the Year contest, the other three being: the Ship Inn, Middlestone Village, Durham; Shipwrights Arms, Hollowshore, Kent and the Bell, Aldworth, Berkshire. The other three are multi-beer freehouses of one form or another, as all previous winners have tended to be. Whilst Opening Times is necessarily partisan about this, it would perhaps send a out a positive message if this time the winner was a tied house belonging to one of our local family brewers who are really the last bastions of real ale as a mass-market product. Meanwhile we all remain on tenterhooks whilst final judging takes place with the winner due to be announced by the end of the year.

NEW LOOK AT THREE TUNNES

The Three Tunnes, Hazel Grove, was closed for a week in the middle of October to undertake a major bar transplant. The new bar is all wood (Oak?) and no Formica. New shelving and optics keep the guts of the engine room out of view.

The room format is retained, however it is now possible to walk from the 'reception' area into the vault/games area without impediment. Landlord, Simon Howarth, advises that an accompanying redecoration will follow in the New Year. All in all a brave and welcome venture. Only one snag, Hazel Grove price differentials have been restored!



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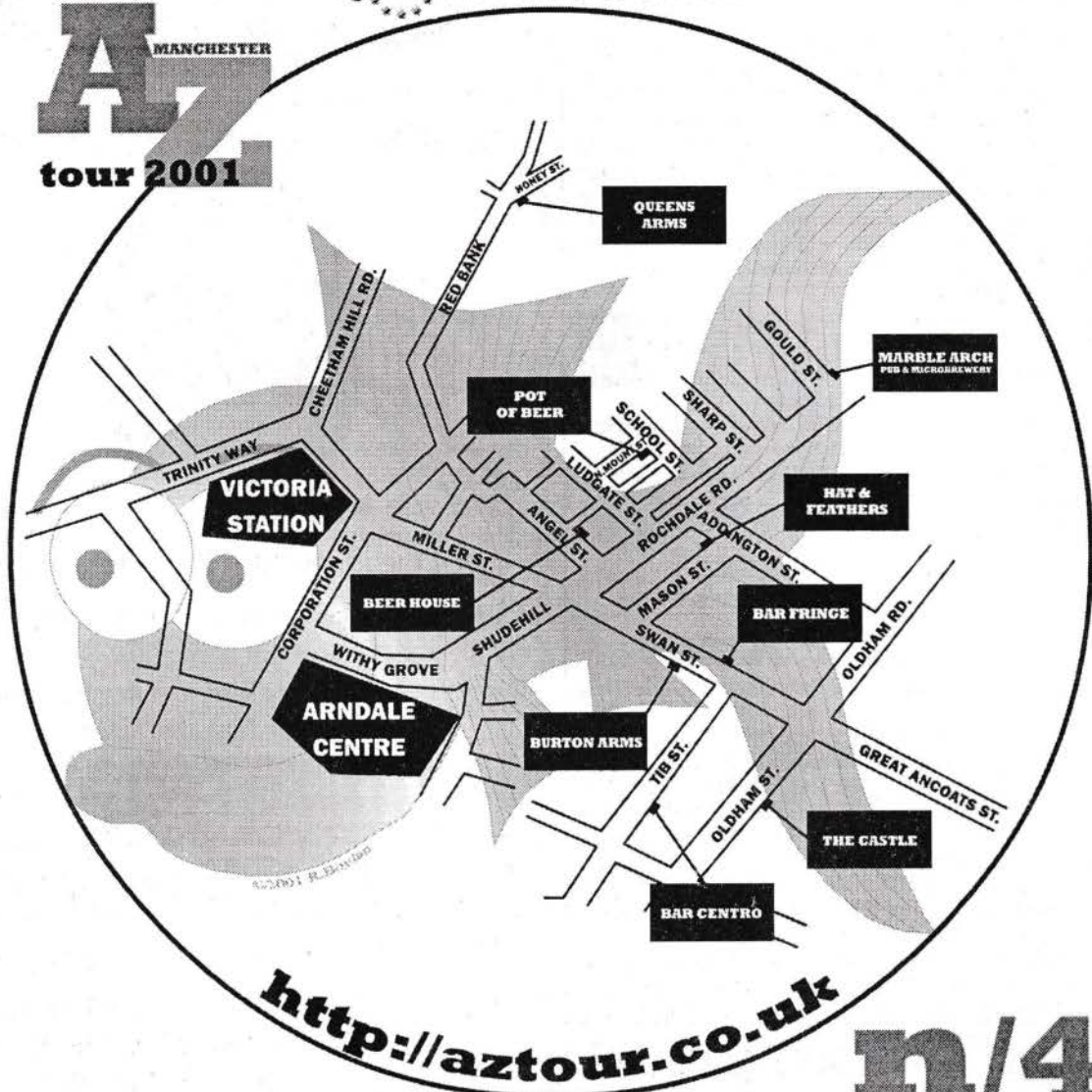
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9 PUBS IN THE A-Z

Thursday November 15 sees the start of a four day festival in and around Manchester's Northern Quarter. This year the theme is **QUALITY** rather than **QUANTITY**, but it rather looks as though we will be spoiled for both. Extra cask and bottled guests will appear at the Fringe, 26 guests are promised at the Beer House, and special food will feature at most venues. Live Music is promised and a minibus will run between venues throughout Saturday. One of the highlights is the Organic Beer championship and festival at the Marble Arch. Full details of all the events were being finalised as we went to press, but an A-Z T-shirt and special bottled beer from Boggart Hole are promised. The participating pubs are: Bar Fringe, Beer House, Burton Arms, Castle Hotel, Centro Cafe Bar, Hat & Feathers, Marble Arch, Pot of Beer, Queens Arms. A multitude of cask beers will be available, as well as a hard to match range of foreign beers. Special events in each pub will be publicised during the next few days.



**A Heartfelt Apology
for Distress,
inadvertently caused.**

Two issues ago a small footnote to my article contained an apology about an error in the previous month's diatribe about the future of the Marble Arch Pub/Brewery. The precise wording of this has caused grave offence to Jan Whitehead, a Director of the Marble Pub Co. In no way was this intended, and it appears that Jan has misconstrued what was meant, which was solely about reported changes to the structure of the business (which again, appear to be just rumour). To make matters abundantly clear, I have nothing but the highest regard for Jan both as a person and a business-woman, and my own (occasional) and my colleagues' (more frequent) dealings with her have always been amicable. Indeed in my experience, Jan has proven one of the most reliable people in the trade. I am devastated that the wording has been interpreted in such a way as to cause such grave offence - when I want to disparage someone, it is my tradition to make it abundantly obvious. I have absolutely no reason to think any ill of Jan, and clearly I failed to make this clear. I am very, very sorry for the distress caused.

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CAMRA 2002 NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL

**NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL
MANCHESTER 2002**

Festival Opening & Admission: (hours to be confirmed)
Thursday 19 January: 5.30 - 10.30pm (£2),
Friday 19 January: 12 - 4 (£2) & 5.30 - 10.30pm (£3),
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Stockie on The Oche

By John Taylor



With just four weeks of the new season gone, there are only two undefeated teams left in the Stockport Licensed Houses Super League, champions Royal Mortar and the Magnet. In Week 1, the Wembley who were newly promoted, went up the hill and thrashed the Jack & Jill 7-0, with Trevor Jones and Jimmy Platt their start men. This form didn't last and they lost their next three fixtures. The Printers Arms from Cheadle had a reversal in fortunes, having lost narrowly in their first fixture they then won three on the trot, including the scalp of the Ash in an amazing 6-1 win. The Ash team, who had previously played out of the Nicholsons Arms and the Star & Garter, had until recently ruled supreme and had picked up 11 trophies in six seasons including five League Championships, so this was definitely the shock of the season to date. At the other end of the table, the Jack & Jill and Sidings are propping up the rest. The Sidings from Levenshulme have just lost a number of players due to a breakaway group who have started a

team playing out of the Pack Horse in the Premier Division, so this could be a long and difficult season for Bob Flanagan and his team. The other promoted team from last season, North Reddish WMC, are also struggling to keep pace in the top division, having won just one match so far, which was against the Wembley in week 3. They do have Steve Needham in their ranks though and he has won three of his four games, including a win against Steve Pritchard from the Magnet when he went out in 12 and 18 darts, which included a big 161 outshot, the best of the season so far. This just beat the 160 kill by Eric Stubbs from the Bobby Peel in their match against the Moss Rose in week 4. Two players lead the 180s list - Dave Peplow who has won all his games since signing for the champions, Royal Mortar, and Mick Cooney from the Bobby Peel. The least darts is Steve Needham's 12 darter that I mentioned earlier.

There were no great shocks in the first round of the team knock-out, with all the Super League teams drawn against Premier opposition all progressing to the next round; only four Premier teams made it into round two. English international Tony O'Shea made his first appearance of the season for the Ash Hotel in the knock-out against the Nursery Inn and went out in legs of 21 and 14 darts. Tony also hit a 180. He had a bit of a shock, though, when he lost the first leg in 25 darts, yes 25. Never mind, I'm sure things will improve for him and his beloved Stockport County, although I'm not sure about the latter.

Taffy Roberts from the Cheadle & Gatley League informed me that their AGM is on Thursday 8 November at the Old Star on Cheadle High Street. Proceedings start at 8.45pm and any new teams wishing to join that league should send a representative to the meeting. Their presentation night is on 16 November at Cheadle Hulme British Legion, everyone is welcome with just £3 to gain entry.

Getting back to the oche, Taffy mentioned that Paul Whitworth, who is a star player for Lancashire and Rochdale recently won his semi-final in the CGDCL, in four world class legs of 15, 16, 13 and 13, and hitting two 180s as well. The Griffin Inn are the top boys in this league and if they manage to win their remaining three matches of the season they will have gone two years without a defeat. Nice one lads - you're not Man Utd in disguise, are you? Well, that's it for another month. As usual, if you want any darts matters mentioning, ring me on 0161 432 2707 and I will see what I can do. Many thanks for your time.

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Is the Price Right ?

"What a rip-off!" "Why do you promote pubs charging such extortionate prices?" "CAMRA should do something about it!" From time to time we hear these complaints in the letters column of "Opening Times". But campaigning on the subject of high prices is nowhere near as easy as it might sound.

For a start, how do you define high prices? £1.80 might seem a lot for a pint of bitter in Levenshulme, but a few miles down the road in Didsbury nobody would bat an eyelid. Beer is not a commodity in the same way as cornflakes or petrol - you might well choose to use a different filling station to save 2p a litre, but even a dramatic price differential may not lure someone away from a pub where they like the beer, where they feel at home, and where their mates go.

Many people are prepared to pay a little bit extra for something special. You will find CAMRA members in local free houses happily supping unusual guest beers that are 40p a pint more than fine beers of the same strength from local independent breweries in Good Beer Guide listed pubs only a few hundred yards away. And, given that the free house owners have gone to some trouble to obtain these rare beers, they're entirely justified in charging a premium for them, and I don't blame anyone for choosing to pay it. I do myself from time to time.

Beer only makes up a small part of most people's weekly budget, and if you're out to enjoy yourself on Friday night you really aren't bothered about counting the pennies. Indeed, many of the most expensive pubs, particularly in Manchester City Centre, are the most conspicuously busy. If their customers choose to pay through the nose, then who am I to stop them?

If you're not happy about prices, the only thing you can do is to avoid those establishments you think are charging too much, and there's nowhere round here that you can't find reasonably-priced pubs. Indeed Holts and Wetherspoons in their different ways have successfully made a policy of it. While CAMRA has a role in highlighting prices that are particularly low or high, any concerted campaign against pub rip-offs will fall at the first hurdle.

Regulars on the Rack

But there's another side to the coin, as by no means all pub-goers are weekend revellers or beer hunters. A lot of pub customers are regulars who go to the pub as much to socialise as to drink. They're often pensioners or others on a budget. If prices go up, they may not change their pub, but they will go out later in the evening, go less often, and drink a bit less when they do go. Sitting at home with a couple of cans may not appeal much, but it can be hard to justify going to the pub when the beer's twice as expensive.

A policy of constantly ratcheting prices up by more than inflation will, over time, erode the trading base of the pub. Many pubs now don't even bother opening at lunchtime, and many more are depressingly empty away from peak times, in a way they weren't ten years ago, while at the same time there must be a lot more sad solitary tipping of cheepies from the off-licence. Those owning and running mainstream local pubs must be very careful that in the long term they don't end up pricing themselves out of the market and destroying their trade. The signs are already there for all to see.

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison



Concern had recently been expressed regarding the European Commission "threat" to pubs, breweries and beer, but the headline "Euro-sense At Last" indicated that perhaps the danger was receding.

The review of the tie, which could have threatened the existence of many local brewers if it had been abolished, had been put off for two years. In fact, the Eurocrats had given themselves until 1999 to decide how to reform the tie, if at all. Also the Commissioner had indicated that he was looking for eventual reform, rather than outright abolition.

The European Commission had also threatened action on Britain's guest beer rule, as it believed there was discrimination against European brewers. But it was finally concluded that it was not the intention for the UK guest beer rules to be opened to all-comers, and the preferential treatment of small brewers was to continue.

Hydes and Bank Top were featured in the local Brewery & Beer News: Hydes had started using chocolate malt, instead of caramel, in their Mild, which had darkened it and made it slightly less sweet. Customers seemed to like it, as sales were said to have increased by nearly 50 per cent. Consideration was being given to 4X Anvil Strong Ale, as to whether it would be available again, after its relaunch the previous winter.

Bolton's Bank Top Brewery had introduced a new beer at the Howcroft Inn Beer Festival. This was a "ruby red beer", named Cliffhanger after festival bar manager Cliff Burgess.

Dave Porter's Railway had only recently opened, but had quickly established its place on the local drinking scene. Food was available to complement the excellent Porters ales, and real cider had been introduced - originally on hand pump, it was now served direct from a plastic barrel behind the bar.

There were several items on cider and perry, including a Book Review on Ted Bruning's Guide to Real Cider, published by CAMRA Books. It had been six years since the last CAMRA cider guide, thought to be too big a gap in this fast changing area.

The Crown in Heaton Moor had reopened after a refurbishment, and the general opinion was that Greenalls' had made "a decent job" of this former BodPubCo house, and it was then further qualified as "all in all, a pleasant surprise". The beers were Boddingtons Bitter £1.43 and Greenalls Original £1.62. Greenalls Mild had been tried, and then replaced by Chesters Mild. Guest beers included two of Mitchell's beers - Tempest Stout and Lancaster Bomber, both at £1.62.

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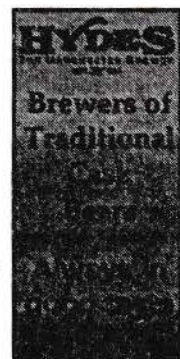
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NEW TRAVELLERS

After a prolonged closure, the Travellers Call in Bredbury finally re-opened its doors on 10 October. The changes have been quite drastic!

Such has been the nature of the alterations that, to all intents and purposes, this is a brand new pub. Regulars will recall the 'old' Travellers; the interior consisted of a main L-shaped room, a pool room looking the worse for wear and a dismal back room, all served by a central bar area. Additionally, the building suffered from serious structural defects and, for many years, it was under threat of demolition because of a proposed by-pass.

Nevertheless, whilst never realising its full potential, the pub still thrived as a community local and the quality of the handpumped Lees Bitter was consistently excellent.

At last, however, the brewery decided to invest a substantial sum of money and embarked on a renovation project which has completely transformed the pub. As far alterations go, this is probably as good as it gets.

The main room has been sub-divided into smaller, more intimate drinking areas through the use of 'smoke' screens and a new back room has been created, utilising premium space. Both these rooms have had traditional look fireplaces installed whilst the pub's unique bay windows now feature more as an integral part of the interior. The flooring is now a good mix of wood, carpet and, in the back room, tiling. Overall, the ambience is warm and welcoming.

But what about the beer, you ask! Well, the news is very good indeed! Prior to the closure, the only real ale was the bitter. Now this has been joined by mild and seasonal beers on handpump. All of these were on excellent form during my recent visits.

By happy coincidence, the Travellers makes its first full appearance in the 2002 Good Beer Guide. A well-deserved accolade for Maeve, the hardworking licensee.

Expectations from the brewery are undoubtedly high, especially now that the pub has a significant catering operation. So far, trade has seen a dramatic upturn, and there is no doubt that the pub now attracts a far broader social mix of people, a factor that will be crucial to its success in the future. Lees are to be congratulated for their efforts.

Do try and visit. There are regular bus services from Stockport to Bredbury, the 330 and 384 pass the pub.

BZ.

TOP 12 FOR BEST BAR & CELLAR COMPETITION

Robinson's have announced the winners of their fourth annual Best Kept Bar and Cellar Competition. This year's winning pub is the Railway at Rose Hill, a pub which keen OT readers will know has received numerous favourable reports in these pages. Last year's winner, the Masons at Denton was runner-up this time while the inaugural winner, the King William in Wilmslow was third.

Railway licensee Steve Healy, who co-owns the business with his wife Janet, was understandably cock-a-hoop with his award. "I was over the moon because we do work very hard, and couldn't provide such quality without our fantastic staff, and my dad Lesley Healey who helps out in the cellar", Steve told us.

The winner of the award for the Most Improved Cellar was the Ring O'Bells in Marple, which was also placed fourth overall. The runner up in this category was the Pineapple in Stalybridge.

The winners were selected by an exhaustive process which saw Robinson's managers paying surprise visits to over 300 pubs, from North Lancashire to South Cheshire and Derbyshire to the Welsh coast. There were 12 shortlisted pubs which won though after being graded on a variety of areas including the cleanliness and tidiness of their bars and cellars, and, of course, the quality of their cask ales.

There were 12 finalists and apart from the winners mentioned above, these included Cobdens, Stockport; Emigration, Offerton; Grapes, Hazel Grove; Dog & Partridge, Great Moor; Cock & Magpie, Whitworth; Plough, Whitegate and the Railway, Handforth. The final selection procedure saw the pubs get further unannounced visits from Head Brewer, Chris Hellin and Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson. "Standards have risen beyond recognition since we started the competition," Oliver told OT "It is important that there is uniformity for our customers so that a pint of Robinson's Best Bitter will taste just as good whether it is served in Stockport or North Wales."

CHEFS FOLLOW IN CAMRA'S FOOTSTEPS

"Pub chains hate chefs" - Antony Worrall Thompson

The Campaign for Real Food (CARF) is following in the footsteps of the Campaign for Real Ale and is fighting to improve the quality of pub grub.

CARF was founded by publican Tom Finlay 1997 and this year he won the support of top TV chef and restaurateur Antony Worrall Thompson, who is now president of the campaign.

"I'm putting my name behind CARF because there are such important issues here," he told pub food writer Susan Nowak in the 2002 Good Beer Guide. "It's like the Campaign for Real Ale, which has been a fantastic campaign for a lot of pubs serving real ale. We need to do the same for food."

He does not have the highest opinion of British pub food and believes this an area where his campaign must concentrate. "Pub chains hate chefs," he says. "The majority of pubs buy in ready-made food."

CARF aims to be a powerful voice promoting fresh food and forcing action on everything from GM crops to the EU red tape strangling small producers. "What we want is a voice for the ordinary people. We all have to eat, and what we eat is important. There are 600 people in the Food Standards Agency and it's just a cop out. If the government had set up an agency with teeth, as they promised, it would be different — we might not have such a massive increase in cases of food poisoning, for instance, and the foot and mouth crisis might not have reached such catastrophic levels. People are too reticent about complaining. Recently I had such an appalling meal in a pub that I took it back and said: 'You should be ashamed for serving this', and then I walked out. I didn't even ask for my money back. We have to get on our soap boxes and make the British people the biggest moaners in the world, then perhaps we'll get somewhere."

One of Tom Finlay's first supporters was Carl Smith, award-winning licensee of Young's Guinea and Windmill pubs in London's Mayfair. He is a chef with the impeccable credential of being the country's official steak and kidney pie champion.

"When I saw what Tom was trying to do I wanted to join in and play an active role," says Carl, now a director of CARF. "There really is a crying need to encourage pubs and restaurants to prepare wholesome meals from quality ingredients in their own kitchens."



In Langley the Leathers Smithy, which was previously reported as having been sold to S&N, has as expected changed its beer range. Gone are Storm, Timothy Taylors, Jennings etc. to be replaced by Theakstons Bitter, Marstons Pedigree, Courage Directors and a guest bitter. On our visit the guest was York Brewery's Brideshead and very nice it was too, despite being £2.00 a pint.

Just down the road from the Smithy is the St. Dunstan which was still being refurbished when we visited. It is however open for trade in the evenings and the refurbishment should be finished by the time you read this. Currently Marstons Bitter & Banks's Bitter are on sale, however once the building work has been completed there will be other beers available.

The Navigation in Macclesfield has recently changed hands. Also in Macclesfield the manager of the Woodman has just become the tenant of the Woodman.

The Harrington at Bosley has just been taken over by Ian Biggar, who is the son of the landlord of the George & Dragon in Macc. and therefore knows a thing or too about keeping good beer. Ian is also an experienced chef so you can expect good food to be available, once the brewery have finished refurbishing the kitchen.

In Bollington the Church House, another pub that has been recently sold, now sells Tetleys Bitter, Timothy Taylors Landlord & Greene King IPA. While the emphasis is still very much on food, it must be said that the IPA is 38p cheaper than the Redway Tavern, which is situated just up the hill.

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Because of the demand for Whim Hartington Bitter, production of Magic Mushroom Mild has been stopped for the time being. This has meant a change in the permanent line up at the Sportsman in Hyde which has put Cain's Mild on in its place.

The Crown on Market Street, New Mills, has been refurbished and had reopened as the Torrs. Its image has been changed and it now appears to be attracting a wide range of customers rather than just the younger end of the market as before. Cask beers seem to be Theakston Bitter and Worthington Bitter.

In Flowery Field, Hyde, Robinson's White Hart has been redecorated throughout but luckily there have been no alterations and the pub remains a good traditional local.

Two losses to report now. In Marple, the remains of the Bowling Green have been demolished while in Stalybridge, the Feathers might remain standing but it has lost both its cask ale and real cider.

In Romiley, Phil Jarvis and Zoe Hackett have achieved their long-standing ambition of running their own pub by becoming tenants at the Railway. The licensed trade is nothing new for Phil as he has more than a decade of experience of full and part-time bar and cellar work at the Windsor Castle in Marple Bridge which, like the Railway, is a Robinson's house. Zoe, meanwhile, worked as a supermarket store assistant before moving to the pub.

The Railway has a strong local trade which Phil and Zoe are keen to build on by laying on bar snacks at lunchtime. They are also aiming to increase the community feel at the pub by introducing pool and football teams and would be glad to hear from anyone interested in playing.

The new landlady of the Royal Scot in Marple Bridge is already a familiar face to many of her customers. Before taking over the Robinson's house with her partner Huw James, Janet Heap ran the nearby late night store. Huw will be helping out at the pub during the evening while in the day he is continuing with his job as a music teacher at local schools and colleges as well as conducting in local orchestras.

The Royal Scot itself is a historic pub, being the first house that Robinson's purchased - in 1876, when it was known as the Railway Inn. It has a reputation as a friendly local and this is something that Janet wants to build on. "We've started holding quiz nights every other Thursday in aid of a charity for local children. We're also putting bar snacks on at lunchtimes that I hope will be popular with locals as well as those who are walking in the local countryside", says Janet.

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MANCHESTER MATTERS by City

Marble Merger?

As I write this, the word on the streets is of a proposed merger between Jan Whitehead and Vance De Decheval's Marble empire with John Henley's Bar Fringe operation. Being a purveyor of facts rather than rumour, I checked the story with Marble's Jan Whitehead and I can confirm that while something may be in the pipeline, nothing has yet been resolved and the proposals may still yet come to naught, although all participants are very positive about them. However *nothing is yet settled* and, of course I'll let you know when it is. In the meantime it's very much business as usual all round.

What's Doing In The City

First of all, hearty congratulations to the Briton's Protection for picking up a gong as *City Life* magazine's Pub of the Year, announced as part of the city's Food & Drink Festival celebrations. Runner-up was the Peveril of the Peak while third nominee was the Castle on Oldham Street. Three of the finest traditional pub sin the City centre in my humble estimation and it was good to see such non-nonsense locals recognised in this way.

I'm also relieved to learn that the future style and direction of the City Arms (Kennedy Street) seems secure. Yorkshire brothers Chris and Mike Jones, together with long-standing manager Chris Roden, have taken over the running of both the City and the Square Albert. Chris Roden will manage the City Arms, which is good news since he has looked after the cellar for the last few years, and Mike, who previously worked for the Firkin chain in York, will run the Square Albert. There will be some spending on both pubs but without any substantial changes to either which in itself is good news. The wide range of beers will continue but the very popular 'chips with everything' menu at the City has been replaced by a more standardised affair from owners Punch Taverns.

Elsewhere, the Hare & Hounds on Shudehill, a superb inter-wars pub on CAMRA National Inventory of classic pub interiors, has reduced the price of a pint of Tetleys to just £1.35, which makes it well worth a try - providing you can tear yourself away from the tip-top Holt's, of course.

Rothwell's on Spring Gardens has returned to the real ale fold with Banks's Bitter and Marston's Pedigree and now seems to have a more 'pubby' feel after a spell spent in pursuit of the 'pre-club' trade. One outlet that always disappoints is Bonapartes on Piccadilly Station. As the only licensed outlet at the gateway station to what is now after all one of the great brewing cities and regions in the UK you might think it would have the nous to act as a showcase for the area's beers and trade on this. No such luck, the only cask offering is Draught Bass and even that's not always available. It doesn't look as though things will improve with the station redevelopment, either. The only new licensed outlet that I'm aware of is a Yates's Wine Lodge on the site of the former Little Chef.

On Deansgate, the Crown remains closed. It's supposedly shut for some form of refurbishment to make it 'pubbier' but there's precious little sign of any activity so far. On a happier note, the Salisbury, by Oxford Road Station, has reopened after a major overhaul. The layout is basically unchanged but is generally smarter and lighter with a new bar and a bewildering array of flooring (variously bare boards, carpet, tiles and even stone flags!). The interior seems to have been more compartmentalised, too. On the beer front there are three regulars - John Smiths Cask, Courage Directors and Theakston Old Peculier - and three guests which on my visit comprised Caledonian 80/-, Brakspeare Leaf Fall and...Websters Choice! Now there's a blast from the past! I still can't quite believe it's been revived,

there's certainly been no fanfare in the trade press but there it was as large as life. I must say I feared the worst when the Salisbury closed but it has to be said that this is quite an impressive job - it's not cheap, though - Caledonian 80/- at £2.10 a pint for example.

In the Suburbs


A belated welcome goes out to Joyce and Barry Hill, new managers of the Station in Didsbury. Joyce and Barry took over the pub on the 22nd August and whilst this is their first pub in their own right, Joyce has worked before as a barmaid at the Carters Arms, in Sale. Plans include the reinstatement of the ladies and gents darts teams and returning the pub to being the local pub for Didsbury village. Joyce and Barry stress that they are permanent managers intent on building up trade and not managers there for the short term. This permanency has been reflected in the trade figures, which have doubled since they have taken over, with Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights becoming exceptionally busy. The pub has now dropped all Banks's cask beers concentrating solely on Marstons Bitter and Pedigree. Longer-term plans include a refurbishment in which the middle room will be carpeted and the rear room turned into a lounge.

Meanwhile, The Royal Oak has been featuring guest beers following Wolves & Dudley's reciprocal arrangements with other brewers. Everards Tiger has been and gone and as I write this I'm told that a Wychwood Brewery beer is on sale.


I also managed to pay one of my visits to East Manchester last month and met Dave Ellis who, with brother John, has taken over at the Hare & Hounds on Abbey Hey Lane in Gorton. The pub had become run-down and indeed when I called was no longer selling real ale. However, Dave and John had only taken over two days previously and they were still trying to get a feel for what the locals want with the aim of restoring the pub's fortunes. Cask Boddies was always a good seller here so let's hope it's reinstated before too long. Just up the road, the Oddfellows was selling cask Boddies and very good it was too. The pub had also just had a redecoration. Also impressively refurbished were both the Railway on Manshaw Road, Openshaw and the Grove, Clayton. These are both Holt's pubs and it has to be said that Holt's aren't putting a foot wrong on the pub refurbishment front these days - it's also good to see money being invested in East Manchester pubs when some other pub owners in the area seem to have thrown in the towel.

On a less happy note, the Coach & Horses at Belle Vue (Robinson's) is once again closed and in search of a tenant. That pub really has struggled since Beryl Lavelle retired and, sadly, there must surely now be a question mark over its long-term viability. Mind you, a couple of years ago you'd have said the same thing about the nearby Traveller's Call (Hydes) and that pub is now thriving under keen licensees. I also tried to visit the Friendship which has now reopened but at 8.00pm on a Friday night the doors were firmly closed. There's a sign in the window advertising Burtonwood Mild and Bitter but whether this is cask or not, I don't know.







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CAMRA CALLING! Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries

Diary

NOVEMBER 2001

Monday 12th - **Two-way Social: 9.00pm Blue Bell, Shaw Heath; 10.00pm Olde Vic, Chatham St, Edgeley**

Friday 16th - **Heaton Norris Stagger: 7.30pm Swan With Two Necks, Princes St; 8.30 Silver Jubilee, Belmont Way.**

Thursday 22nd - **Pub of the Month Presentation to the Pineapple, Heaton Lane, Stockport. 8.00pm onwards.**

Saturday 24th - **Informal lunchtime social at Bury Beer Festival, 12 noon onwards.**

Monday 26th - **Social: Hogshead, Oxford Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock. Starts 9.00pm.**

Friday 30th - **Brewery Visit - Contact Paul Formby for details.**

Thursday 13th December - **Monthly Branch Meeting; Boars Head, Market Place Stockport. Starts 8.00pm. NB - special Christmas quiz with great prizes!**

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

Saturday 10th - **Train trip to Dewsbury and Ossett. Details from Frank Wood on 01457 851674.**

Monday 12th - **Branch Meeting: White Hart, Mottram. Starts 8.30pm.**

NOVEMBER 2001

Saturday 17th - **Sponsored Walk Cheque presentation evening: White Hart, Mottram from 8.30pm.**

Monday 3rd December - **Committee Meeting: Crown, Market St, Hyde. Starts 8.30pm.**

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:

Monday 12th - **Meal and two pub social: Roebuck, Mobberley preceded or followed by Bulls Head.**

Monday 26th - **Campaigning Meeting: King William, Wilmslow. Starts 8.00pm.**

20th Bury Beer Festival

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We've had many successes and every time you visit the pub or order a pint, the work of CAMRA over the last 30 years lies before you.

Do you think...

...that it's right that 8 out of 10 pints sold contain less than a full pint of beer? Thought not, but that's reality. And that's why we are lobbying the government to change the law so you get what you pay for - a full pint every time.

Do you think it's fair that pubs have to chuck you out at twenty past eleven every night? Of course not, you're an adult and should be treated like one. That's why we are pressing the government to move quickly to reform our outdated pub opening hours.

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- ★ Reduced entry prices to beer festivals
- ★ A chance to join in local social and campaigning activities. See 'CAMRA Calling' for local branch activities.
- ★ Our special members offer for the new Good Beer Guide. See front page for details.



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

(Opening Times 211)

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

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

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Dear All,

The last couple of months have seen a few things written about the beer house that might have given the idea that the it was going to be turned into some kind of a nitro infested topless Kareoke Bar - Rest assured for those who feared the worst this is *not* the case (apologies to those who were looking forward to Sarah, Yvonne and Simons new scanty look!)

The kitchen is open, the beer is flowing and while the Juke box has been changed we will be returning some of the old favourites to their rightful place as soon as possible!

Don't let the pre-emptive hogwash and sceptics put you off- come and tell us what you think yourself -

This month we are happy to be involved in the Northern Quarter A-Z Tour 15th -18th Nov and as you would expect THE BEERHOUSE will be serving cask ales named from A-Z from breweries all over the country - We will also have some musical entertainment on Saturday and Sunday afternoon during the festival to help with the digestion of such a fine selection!!!

The Beer House - Nothing's really changed - it's still Simply the Best!!
We look forward to welcoming you back.

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Lynne and Alan Whitehead

P.S. Look out for our Christmas menu and party booking forms at the bar!!

