

STOCKPORT
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MANCHESTER
CAMRA

OPENING TIMES

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Drinkers Get Real - Official

CAMRA has warmly welcomed the Cask Ale Report 1994. Published by Carlsberg-Tetley, this authoritative report provides reliable information on the continued, astonishing growth of real ale.

The report shows that real ale sales rose 9% in the year to January 1994 at a time when beer sales in total fell 2% and keg beer sales fell 4%. Real ale is now 47% of all stout, mild and bitter sold, as opposed to 35% in 1987. It now seems only a matter of time before it is the majority of ale sold.

This is despite a steep decline in pub going by customers and a growth in cheap imports, both of which could be expected to damage real ale sales. The good news here is that pubs are starting to fight back with more attention to food and families.

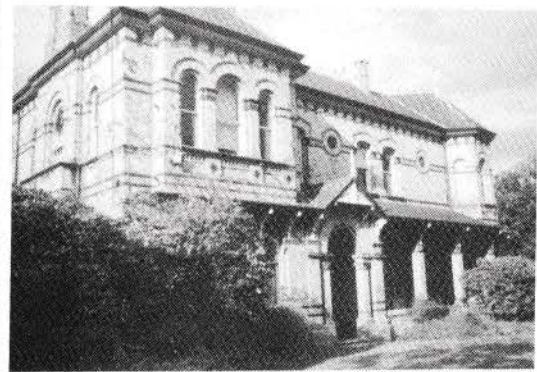
One sign of the revival - and perhaps one cause of it - is the growth in CAMRA membership. This has now reached 45000 drinkers, the highest in its history and twice the membership of five years ago.

Research done by Carlsberg-Tetley challenges many of the stereotypes that surround the real ale drinker, for example 16% of women drinkers now drink real ale and this trend seems set to continue. Real Ale sales are growing across the country - particularly in regions of traditionally low sales and also in that former bastion of the keg beer market, the club trade where 45% of clubs now take real ale.

Station Porters

Following the success of last year's event, the Station at Ashton is once again running its Station Porters Beer Festival at the end of November. This will be the latest in a line of specialist festivals at the Station which feature more obscure beers from the more obscure breweries. Spotters Heaven! With a bit of luck we hope to have a preview in the next issue.

Jabez 3 ?



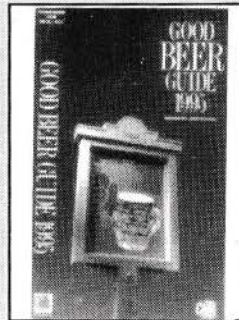
Plans for a third leg to the 'Jabez Clegg' empire in Fallowfield have run into opposition from concerned locals.

The proposed site is next to St James's primary school on Cromwell Range and staff and parents have claimed that the new pub would be both a distraction to pupils and cause overcrowding in the cul-de-sac. A protest petition with 200 signatures has also been presented to the planning authorities. The developers hit back with **their** petition, this one with 1500 signatures, claiming that existing Fallowfield pubs are too crowded. In addition the scheme has the backing of the city's chief planning officer. Councillors are due to give their decision this month and it seems likely that the new pub will get the go-ahead.

In October's OPENING TIMES

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October sees the launch of CAMRA's Annual national Good Beer Guide. This years publication is bigger and better than ever before, to cope with the increasing numbers of new micro breweries supplying beer all over the country. Preview on pages 12 and 13!



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PUB of the Month October

October's Pub of the Month is the Star Inn, Cheadle. The pub was in the doldrums three years ago, having suffered a succession of short-term and indifferent licensees. But Nora and Eric Ryder brought their enthusiasm and commitment - and before long the Star was thriving again. No gimmicks (unless you count Eric's mobile phone), just hard work, and concentration on a gradual build-up of trade, giving their customers a welcome, and value for money, in a good atmosphere.

The pub is not large, the extension done three years ago provided some much needed extra room, and a kitchen. There's no juke box: the unobtrusive muzak is no match for the buzz of conversation and the clatter of dominoes in the vault. The pub has a core of sociable regulars of all ages, also welcoming the more occasional visitors, and the busy Friday and Saturday night crowds. An active participant in the local leagues, the Star is a founder member, and sponsor, of the new Cheadle and Gatley Darts and Crib league.

The pub's facade is worth admiring, and the etched glass windows provide a puzzle, identifying the Old Star Inn, rather than just the Star. Eric is lobbying to change the name back.

Hydes Mild and Bitter is generally on good form; CAMRA purists may not approve, but I can also recommend the addition of a measure of black beer into a pint of mild! There is a decent range of interesting malts on offer too.

Eric's pricing policy is worthy of an award in itself: I don't mean the price of a pint (though the beer is cheaper than in many Hydes establishments), but the clear price tags attached to each bar stand and spirit bottle. 10 out of 10 for customer service; other landlords please copy!

Cheadle is well-supplied with pubs, with 9 establishments on or near the High Street. Nora and Eric have improved the Star no end, and it now more than holds its own amongst its rivals. The Pub of the Month award, well-deserved, will be presented to Nora and Eric on Thursday 20th October: all friends welcome, for an enjoyable evening!

(Cheadle is readily accessible by bus from, for example, Stockport, Manchester and Altrincham: 371, 157, 11, 127, 130. The Star is towards the Stockport end of the High Street.)

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Hayfield Octoberfest

Spurred on by the success of last year's event, the Royal Hotel in Hayfield is staging its second annual beer festival this month.

This year's festival includes over 30 different beers from all over the UK together with some genuine continental beers. The slated to appear include old favourites such as Batemans Mild, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Hop Back Summer Lightning alongside newer beers such as Whim Old Izaak, Springhead Bitter and the strange-sounding Steam Packet Ginger Wheat Beer (sounds like one you'll either love or hate).

There is free live entertainment on Friday and Saturday night as well as on Sunday lunch. Food is available throughout and the Courage shire horses will be putting in an appearance on Saturday lunchtime.

The festival runs from 7-9th October and is open 7-11pm on Friday, 12-11 on Saturday and 12-3 and 7-10 on Sunday. Bus 358 runs from Stockport with the last bus back at 11.40 on Friday and Saturday and 11.30 on Sunday.

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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

Carlsberg-Tetley's second annual Cask Ale Report makes, in the most part, for welcome reading. Real Ale seems set for steady growth over the coming years and it won't be long before it makes up over 50% of all ales sold.

Where we beg to differ, however, is in our view of the so-called 'draught beer' in a can. Tetleys say that the popularity of this is leading people to try real draught beer in the pub. If this is so, and I for one very much doubt it, then Tetleys need to sack their advertising people who have been doing their damndest to convince pub-goers that they needn't bother with the pub any more but can get the same thing at home out of a can - but all the time it's been the other way round with drinkers forsaking their cheap cans to try real draught beer down the local. Pull the other one.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

While many parts of the inner city are slowly becoming pub-free zones, the Wilmslow Road corridor is a veritable boom area with rumours of new pub developments surfacing almost every week. Irish theme bars and student beer

halls seem to be flavour of the month, both no doubt viewed by brewers as jolly good wheezes to relieve people of their money ('cos you can bet your bottom dollar that amongst all the facilities these places will boast, the one thing you won't get is a cheap pint). How long before the bubble bursts and how long before the brewers start to invest in real pubs in real communities like East Manchester, Hulme and Moss Side?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At a recent beer tasting, Beer Hunter Michael Jackson compared and contrasted Munich and Manchester. The comparison was obvious - both are great brewing cities with a proud and active beer heritage. Contrast, however, the approach to each city. In Munich when you arrive at the airport and main station you are left in no doubt that this is a great centre of brewing, and proud of it. What does the new arrival at Ringway or Piccadilly see in similar vein? Nowt, in a word. Hydes MD Adam Hyde said that his company would be willing to take part in an initiative to put this right, but Hydes is only a small concern. Surely all our brewers should get together and co-operate on this one. What about it chaps?

John Clarke

5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

OCTOBER '89

"GROTNEYS RIDE AGAIN" was the front page headline - a few years ago the brewing arm of Grand Metropolitan earned the nickname "Grotneys" for their antics at the time. The name was now revived because of run-down pubs, poor beer, and demoralised licensees - a state of affairs which would have concerned any brewer. Well, almost any, but Grand Met. who traded locally as Websters/Wilsons, seemed not only indifferent to the chorus of complaints from all quarters, but were actively pursuing policies which, if anything, would make the situation worse.

PUBS - many of the managed houses were in a poor state, reflecting the cheap nature of the refurbishment only a few years previously.

BEER - Websters and Ruddles, once distinctive local beers, had lost their character because of mass production and mass distribution, and Wilsons was becoming an also ran.

LICENSEES - the future of nearly every licensee was threatened by the Intrepeneur scheme with its 20 year leases, rent increases, and penalty clauses if barrelage targets were not met.

The Pub Grub column featured the Midway on Newbridge Lane - "remembered by many as the first real free house in Stockport selling a range of, for the time, exotic beers. Now owned by John Smith's, the beer range is still impressive for a tied house of a national brewer, with three cask ales regularly on sale - John Smith's Bitter and Magnet, plus the powerful Courage Directors Bitter." There was a very good selection of food available, and the licensees Ian and Gwen Parrott had set out to make a feature of it - their advert referred to "country style atmosphere in the heart of Stockport."

There was an item on the launch of CAMRA's flagship publication, the 1990 Good Beer Guide, together with a string of adverts from the branch's pubs that had earned a place in the Guide.

Two regular features appeared - Pub of the Month for October was the Railway on Pottery Lane, Gorton, and the Stagger had covered "the many delights of the public houses of Levenshulme."

There was a lot of pub news, including two items on new breweries in the Chorlton-on-Medlock area:-

The Kings Arms was producing its first replica international beer styles, from North America. There was Harry Weinhardts Private Reserve, and Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (the latter was to produce a wrangle over the use of the name, similar to the struggle over "Guiltless" Stout.)

A new "Firkin" was to set up in the old Grosvenor Picture House on Oxford Road. As it's usual for the beers to be stored under a blanket of carbon dioxide gas in the Firkin operations, this takes them outside the definition of "real ale". Pity about that.

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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OPENING TIMES LETTERS



From : Jim Flynn

I must say that I was disappointed at the response to my piece in July's OT concerning the Grey Horse on Portland Street. It was disturbing that some of the correspondents had to stoop to personal insults to get their point of view across, which perhaps suggests my comments may have hit a raw nerve.

Whilst not wishing to repeat my criticisms of the licensee's "efforts", I would like to make the following points:

1. I, too, believe that the pub needed to be brightened up. However, I am sure that painting the place peppermint green and sticking thin pieces of wood on the walls and ceiling in the vain hope that people could be deluded into believing they were beams were unnecessary excesses.
2. I, too, applauded the way the bottleneck area in the front of the bar had been eased.
3. I didn't pass judgement on the beer because on the night of my visit it wasn't very impressive and I did not want to condemn the ale in print on the basis of one visit.
4. It would be interesting if Hydes could give Opening Times their views, on the record, concerning the refurbishment and whether they believe it will assist them in meeting the competition from the nearby Circus and Old Monkey.

As a lover of the pub I was pleased that the Grey Horse was being given a new lease of life but it is a pity that the subsequent refurbishment detracted from the essential character of the place rather than added to it.

From : R.P. Jones

I've not yet seen the new-look Grey Horse, though after September's lively correspondence I shall have to go and see what all the fuss is about! However, those who defend the new style would gain in credibility if they were to make their case without gratuitously denigrating the previous licensees.

It's true that many observers rated the Grey Horse's beer a notch below the Jolly Angler's for the past several years, and the pub's absence more often than not from the Good Beer Guide was probably no injustice given the fierce competition for Guide listing hereabouts. However, for C.M. Oates to allege (Letters, September) that the beer in the last two years was "on most occasions undrinkable....an absolute disgrace" is frankly bunkum. If the place was so bad, why did your correspondent put up with it? As he himself says - "if it's bad I go elsewhere!"

The hysterical reactions of two of your correspondents suggest to me that a point may have hit home.

From : Paul Jordan

Treading carefully through the pile of "Grey Horse" manure deposited in the September issue, the remarks of the licensee "CAMRA should stick to campaigning about real ale" and the Editors "We have never been, and never will be, such a single issue organisation" (Hear, Hear) give food (oats?) for thought.

In my own, perhaps contentious opinion, if CAMRA had been just a single issue organisation - perhaps even to the point of not producing somewhat all-embracing, lively magazines such as "OT" - then pubs like the Grey Horse and, more seriously, Independent Family Brewers such as Hydes would most likely no longer be providing for us today.

Thirty years on from the "Keg Revolution" who **would** have fought for the Independents? Only today are they (sedately) organising themselves. And what of their (the) pubs?

Perhaps the Grey Mare - if still a licensed premises - would be the "Hipsters Stable", the licensee and his staff (neatly attired as jockeys) spreading fresh hay about the floor in between dispensing bottles of this week's "In" chemic.

Without the (wider) campaign, Joe Public would have continued to stand ever benignly by and goodness knows what or where even the more discerning drinker would be imbibing today.

Little wonder, perhaps, that members are sometimes wont to express strong opinions on **all** aspects of the drinking scene.

Oh and "Well Run" OT for publishing letters from licensees who don't just stick to talking about Real Ale!

From : A.L. Walker

I note that there are already a considerable number of pubs in the Robinson's tied estate that have withdrawn the new premium beer, Frederics. I feel that there are several reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs.

Quality - In my own experience, I have sampled Frederics in about a dozen pubs spread across the High Peak and Central Stockport parts of Robinsons estate, and with one notable exception in Marple where the beer was absolutely superb and in perfect condition, all examples have exhibited varying degrees of "green-ness" (i.e. unreadiness). In extreme cases, the beer was so thick and yeasty as to be undrinkable. Being a premium gravity beer at OG 1050, Frederics would require a not inconsiderable maturation time and it is likely that Robinsons are ignoring this fact and pushing the beer into its pubs before it is ready.

Price - In these days of almost permanent recession, staple items such as beer are particularly price sensitive, and Robinsons standard mild and bitter are already good value at around £1.20 or less. Frederics, priced at £1.50 and above, is hardly likely to appeal to session bitter drinkers who want a product that they can drink all night without resulting in a cash-free wallet. Perhaps a beer of 1045 priced at £1.35 would have had more chance of success.

Lager Drinkers - At least one member of the Robinson family triad has publicly admitted that one of the main targets for Frederics was the premium lager drinker. However, lager drinkers are notorious for their fickleness and I suspect that once the novelty value of Frederics had expired, they moved on to next month's fad. Confirmation of this has come from several Robinson's licensees.

It is unfortunate that this valuable addition to the local real ale scene looks likely to fall at the first hurdle but I hope that it does not discourage Robinsons from trying again with a more pocket/liver friendly version. As a long-time sceptic of Robinsons beers I sincerely do hope that they try again, since that excellent Marple example of Frederics has given me a glimpse of what they are really capable of.

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STAGGER

with Jim Flynn

It was a warm summers evening when a select group of beer drinkers arrived at the Strawberry Duck on Crabtree Lane for the start of the Clayton Stagger.

Outside a group of young lads were leaping into the adjacent Manchester & Ashton canal. A good number of the pub's customers were also enjoying the summer evening sitting on the banks of the canal and indeed we joined them for the three draught beers sampled - Holts Bitter, Mild and a house beer brewed by Coach House of Warrington. All three beers were above average and the Holts Bitter very good indeed. Inside the pub, one of East Manchester's rare freehouses, has been comfortably and substantially altered over the years and is a very pleasant place to drink. Overall a great place to start off the evening.

We then made our way to Ashton New Road and the **Halfway House**, a large high-ceilinged Holts pub just yards over the border into Droylsden. Sadly, the beer wasn't as impressive as the pub with both mild and bitter considered very average.

As we retraced our steps down Ashton New Road, one of our number went off to check the **Folkestone** (Folkestone Street) and the **New Inn** (Hackles Street), both of which were closed and boarded, as well as the **Clayton Arms** on North Road which served Burtonwood keg beers only. Rightfully pessimistic about his chances, the rest of us went straight to the **Church** on Clayton Lane, owned by Centric Inns which on the day of our visit had just been bought out by Gibbs Mew. This small multi-roomed pub is the only Centric pub locally to sell cask beers, in this case Toby Light and Stones Bitter, both on handpump and both above average. My Toby was the first out and so was warm - it was changed without question (other pubs please note).

Walking down Croft Street opposite the Church we reached the **Victoria**. Externally this square brick building is uninspiring but the multi-roomed interior is more interesting, particularly the vault area with wood-backed benches and cribbage tables. The Tetley Dark Mild and the Tetley Bitter were both found to be well worth drinking by the majority of those present.

Next stop back on Ashton New Road was the **Grove**, a traditional multi-roomed pub which is one of the few remaining tenanted Holts houses. We sat in the vault resplendent with a Pub of the Month plaque, beer mats advertising Irish ferries and the star attraction, the wall-mounted memorial commemorating those regulars who fell in the First World War. We agreed that the pub had

been well worth saving from the clutches of Metrolink. The Holts Bitter was pretty good and the Mild certainly above average.

Further down Ashton New Road is the **Sir Humphrey Chetham**, the first of what in my opinion was too many Whitbread pubs. This large pub has an interesting mosaic in the entrance and a marble fireplace of note. Beyond that the pub can best be described as ordinary, though, as was the Whitbread Trophy, one of three handpumped ales available. The Chesters Mild was much better though, and nobody tried the Boddingtons Bitter.

Across the road is the **Derby** which can best be described as a bland Whitbread pub. Having said that, those who had been on previous Staggers in the area expressed the view that the beer range had improved. The Chesters Mild was again considered to be above average, the Trophy marginally better than in the previous pub and the Boddingtons Bitter average.

Back down on Croft Street, past the Victoria again and down Clayton Lane to the **Bridge**, a pleasant multi-roomed pub with old photographs of the area on the walls. Here too a pub musician was plying his trade, but at a rather higher standard than the one we had previously encountered at the Sir Humphrey Chetham. Whilst keg Chesters Mild was available, the bar staff served the cask version without being asked, but unfortunately this beer was perhaps the least inspiring of the night. The Boddingtons Bitter was far superior which perhaps suggests that the availability of keg mild has reduced sales of the cask version to the detriment of its quality.

Further down Clayton Lane is the **Fox**, another standard two-roomed Whitbread pub with a red-tiled exterior which gives the place some character. The Chesters Mild and Boddingtons Bitter were both considered marginally above average.

Cutting through to Mill Street, we arrived at the **Bradford**, a very large and imposing Whitbread pub. The most impressive feature of a fairly nondescript interior was an enormous darts trophy mounted on the wall. Unusually, the only cask beer was Chesters Mild on handpump and none of us could understand why the Boddingtons Bitter was keg (if anyone from the pub or Whitbread read this perhaps they can supply the answer). The beer itself was received with varying degrees of enthusiasm with the majority considering it no more than average.

We left lamenting the passing of Tetley's Duke of Edinburgh further up Mill Street - the demolition of this pub for the intermediate relief road was a major loss. By this stage I wasn't sure I could face another Whitbread pub and the collective decision was made to end the evening on a high note. We therefore passed by both Whitbread's Queen Victoria (although it was good to see the pub apparently thriving following its re-opening after an arson attack - that kind of thing usually spells the end for pubs hereabouts) and the Crossroads (keg Bass) on Grey Mare Lane and made our way down Ashton New Road to the **Britannia** on Rowsley Street. This is a



classic two-roomer with arguably more character than the previous three or four pubs put together. The Lees Bitter was considered to be the best beer of the evening but the one person who tried the Mild was unimpressed (Lees Mild is definitely an acquired taste).

An impressive end to a varied evening's drinking which had both its ups and downs. Of course, this article can only reflect the pubs and beers as we found them on one particular night and cannot be taken as a once and for all judgement. As ever, the solution is for you to try some of them yourselves and see how much you (dis)agree.



RHYTHM and BOOZE

by Richard Hough

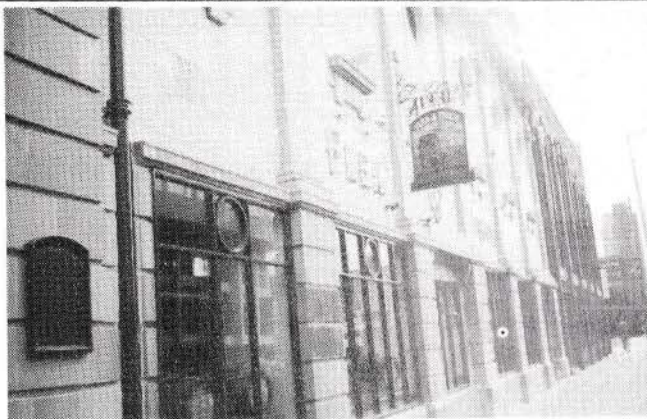
We have a double helping of live music this month from perhaps the two most archetypal student pubs in the area - the Flea & Firkin and the Jabez Clegg. They are both large beer-hall type pubs and both supplied by one or other of the big brewers, who seem to have a knack of monopolising this corner of the market.

On the night United stuffed the Swedes, the more discerning of Manchester's public were at the Jabez Clegg on Dover Street, close to the V&A University. With its bare floorboards, long pew seating and lively atmosphere it is easy to see why it is so popular with students; there is little competition nearby which must help. It is a great place to meet new friends, but rather less good if you want to relax over a good pint. But the reason for the visit tonight was more purposeful - a live session in conjunction with Signal Cheshire Radio. One or two well-known faces were present; including Neil Cossar, the Signal DJ, and Darren Poyzer, band promoter at the Witchwood in Ashton.

The Boddingtons Bitter was very average and pricey at £1.40 a pint. It was accompanied ('detrimented') by a huge head. The service too left a lot to be desired. An insistence that all glasses were to be exchanged for plastic tumblers on entering the upstairs music room completed the drinkers' nightmare, and this despite bottles being handed over the bar! The room itself was alive to pumping Indie tunes from Pulp, REM and the like. It looks like the interior of a church with chandeliers and large exposed wooden beams, and shows what can be done to change the function of a building successfully. Unfortunately it is rather an echoing chamber unless it is full of people.

Amid lots of dry ice the Candidates arrived on the small stage. A five-piece consisting of guitarist and LV, guitarist, bassist, drummer and one on keyboards played simple pop stuff, fairly typical of many bands who do the university/college circuit. A gutsy vocal performance with rather indifferent guitar backing was given a cool reception by the small student crowd; the coloured back-lighting was simple yet effective. It is good to see bands promoting their own stuff: the Candidates 11 track debut CD was on offer for a fiver. Because Boddies was the only real beer on offer upstairs we ventured down, this time for Marstons Pedigree. It was just passable, and at £1.65 a pint represented poor value for money. Just because Pedigree is lively, it doesn't mean excessive heads can be excused. I asked three times for a top-up and still came away with nearly an inch of froth. In addition a Cheapies food board advertised a baked spud and filling at £1.60, and chip barn at £1.00. Ho hum.

Irish band Blink treated us to a rare, possibly unique acoustic set which didn't ooze lively energy, but showcased quite neatly their song writing ability. Quite a few fans were proudly sporting Blink T-shirts and long hair. The four-piece (including the ridiculously simple one-drum drum kit) put the accent on two acoustic guitars until a technical hiccup saw one guitar lost and a subsequent introduction of swirling keyboards, which gave the set greater depth. A strange version of the forthcoming single "Cello" was slightly reminiscent of 80s band the Bolshoi while "It's not my fault" provided a lively finish. Downstairs then for more beer.



Flowers Original was ordered. I was expecting the worst and I wasn't disappointed: it set me back £1.65 and turned out to be utterly bland. As often happens, students were being fobbed off with inferior products at over-inflated prices.

We lingered downstairs to sample local songwriter Johnny Dangerous and his 12 string guitar. The sound was rather poor but he was still well received by the massed hordes. Upstairs for a final time then for the main attraction: A-House, and their rather quirky approach to pop. Their current 45 "Here come the good times" has an intro from Little Richard. Unlike the previous two bands A-House have enough originality to make them stand out from the crowd. They were always interesting, and always a bit different. "Endless Art" was a real treat. They are totally at home on stage; there was some lively jovial banter with the crowd. "Why me" was a bouncy jaunt along the enjoyable siding of pop's lost railway (Oh, please - Ed.) It's just a pity that more people didn't make the effort for this off-the-wall approach to pop. Luckily we were able to relive the evening when Signal Cheshire Radio broadcast highlights (and there were many of them) the following week. It is a shame the evening was let down by rather desperate beer. Still you can't have everything.

The Flea & Firkin on the corner of Grosvenor Street and Oxford Road, near the main Metropolitan University (Poly) campus was the destination a week later. It is a former cinema with a very high ceiling, famous for its beers brewed on the premises. It looks a little better after the summer refurbishment but retains a basic down-to-earth feel, and some quirky features including a red telephone box, a mock film set and odd breweriana.

The new manager, Bryan, who coincidentally was the Bars Manager at Jabez Clegg for the last 18 months) has big plans for the Flea, including an imminent beer festival. In addition Trevor the brewer is very keen on his stuff, having worked for Brendan Dobbin for a lengthy two and a half years.

The trimmed range of Scratch, Grosvenor and Dogbolter (plus OK Tetley Bitter) were fine, the Dogbolter being especially good. A hastily tapped Sinfull Stout (yes, it's back!) could have done with a few days longer in the cellar. [Additional note: three days after the gig it was SUPERB]. Large heads were almost universal, although service was pretty swift despite a throng at the bar. Such is the layout and size of the place that ash-trays and empty glassware are seen to less often than they could be.

Tonight the pub was pretty packed as a great effort had been made for the Boddingtons Manchester Festival (mercifully the beer itself was absent); there were speaker stacks, lighting rigs, a mixing desk and all. A good atmosphere prevailed as the Snappers began to play. Their first two songs

continued on following page

THE PLOUGH

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continued from previous page

were rather folksy, and very good. They then descended into soulful blues with lashings of harmonica well to the fore. Parts of the set were in a laid-back Nina Simone style, and not bad either. A guest vocalist joined the duo for a version of "Summertime", which was too squeaky for my liking. A more gutsy, throaty performance would have carried it off nicely. Still, the band provided some reasonable pub rock which added to the atmosphere.

And still people kept coming through the door. The place was packed to the rafters, reviving memories of the Chris Lewis era at the Flea. The bar ran out of glasses soon after the main band came on. And for the Flea & Firkin, that's busy! Stockport favourites Skeleton Crew play heavy duty blues with a very strong rhythm section. Finger-lickin' work on the fretboard from the LV/guitarist blended nicely with light-hearted exchanges with the crowd. SC are obviously a band who practice regularly, and enjoy what they do. They held it together much better than the last time I saw them, at the Boar's Head in Stockport. A sign of strength and confidence in a band is the "Hendrix 'Hey Joe' factor", unfortunately the band started it rather poorly, although it grew nicely and climaxed well. The slap-bass solo however was laboured and rather unnecessary. But the Ginger Baker style drum solo later in the set was great (and I'm not a fan of drum solos in the slightest). The evening finished with some chunky R'n'B, which was lapped up by the masses.

In conclusion, the Flea probably out-does the Jabez Clegg in every respect: beer range; beer quality; service; value for money; food. And not forgetting the Weston's Old Rosie on handpump! The Flea & Firkin is definitely worth a visit, while the Jabez Clegg should come less high on the agenda. I believe that of the two crowds at these gigs, those from the Jabez will have left the more disappointed.

Thursday 22 September saw the first live music at the Queen's Head (Turners Vaults) for around two years. Peter Good gave a great performance against a fierce head-wind of lively pub atmosphere. He and his guitar play a Donovan-esque set with hints of Bob Dylan and Don McLean. The pub was heaving, and the Sam Smiths Museum knocked down to a bargain £1.25. It was all in aid of Dave and Paula's first year at the helm of Turners, and a great night was had by all. Long may the good times continue!

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MEMBERSHIP SOCIALS - DETAILS PAGE 23**

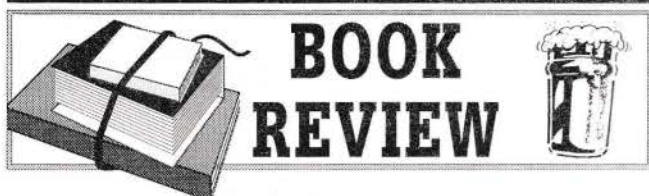
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BOOK REVIEW

Restaurant, Cafe Bar and Pub Guide to Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Publications Ltd, 98 pages, £2.50.

This unsnappily titled A5 booklet is the latest publication from the "City Life" stable. It's arranged in four sections - restaurants (grouped by nationality/style of cuisine), hotels (though only their dining facilities are considered), cafe bars, and "proper" pubs.

The pub selection majors on central and south Manchester, but includes entries as widespread as Wigan, Ramsbottom, and Broadbottom. All the selected pubs serve real ale (as do a surprisingly high proportion of the cafe bars, though sadly the guide doesn't tell you this); they are largely the usual suspects, though a few less hackneyed entries do creep in, such as the Ducie Arms, a splendid photograph of which introduces the pub section (though the compilers should surely have noticed that the Ducie hasn't been a Wilsons pub for some years now). It's a shame to see not one of East Manchester's excellent pubs getting a mention.

The writers, all "City Life" regulars, provide straightforward and pithy notes on the establishments reviewed. Mike Hill (restaurants and pubs) boils down the essential detail into punchy paragraphs (though Indian food gets short shrift, relying largely on a map of Rusholme which provides no more than restaurant names and locations); Nayaba Aghedo (hotels) eschews the irritatingly giggly style which characterises her contributions to "City Life" (though as residential facilities are not covered this section could per-

haps have been integrated with the restaurants); and Matt Greenhalgh (cafe bars) is enthusiastic if sometimes over-indulgent (anybody who thinks the Exchange Cafe Bar is delightful probably hasn't tried the draught beer). The guide is lavishly produced, with full colour on every page and a photograph for almost every listing. This is no doubt financed by the copious advertising, which however does not seem to have influenced the editorial content - a number of advertisers receive no listing, and there is no whiff of advertorial.

Regular OT readers who keep up to date with CAMRA's local guides will not need this guide simply for the pub listings. However, anyone who eats out at all often, or who would simply like a brief subjective guide to a selection of good pubs around Manchester, will find it very useful. A copy should certainly be put into the hands of anybody who comes to live in the Manchester area, whether for study or for employment. I thoroughly recommend it and hope to see it prosper through many successive editions, in the course of which the few rough edges can no doubt be attended to.

I do have one major quibble though. Manchester is a key centre of the British brewing industry, not to speak of the wider food business. Why on earth is this guide sponsored by such an alien and imported product as Michelob Imported Beer? Even Boddingtons would have been better than that!

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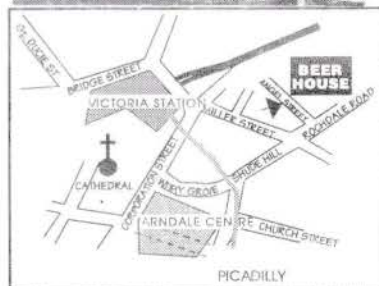
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October Featured Pub

This month's High Peak Featured Pub is the **Horsfield Arms** on Ashton Road in Bredbury.

The Horsfield made its first appearance in the Good Beer Guide in 1994. The entry in the Guide was a just reward for all the hard work that Peter Brady the landlord had put into the pub. However, soon after the Guide was published, Peter moved to the Admiral Rodney in Prestbury. Luckily there was no cause for concern as Peter's successor, Steven Healy, was trained by none other than Peter himself.

Since then the Horsfield has gone from strength to strength and despite its somewhat out of the way location, on the Ashton Road opposite Robinsons bottling plant, the Horsfield has attracted a steadily increasing flow of regulars who are prepared to travel the distance to enjoy the welcoming, comfortable atmosphere of the pub, and above all, the excellent quality of the Robinsons beers - Hatters Mild and Best Bitter. In fact, the popularity of the pub is such that Steve and partner Janet are already looking into the possibility of extending the relatively small lounge into the adjacent storage room. The Horsfield is described in the Good Beer Guide as having 'an unassuming exterior'. Appearances, however, can be deceptive and none more so than in the case of this pub.

The overall verdict then: a good, welcoming local serving some of the best Robbies in the area. You can reach the Horsfield Arms from Stockport by taking the 327 bus which goes past the pub, or by taking a Bredbury bound bus, get off at the Travellers Call and take a five minute walk up Ashton Road.

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Romiley Amble

with Tom Lord

The traditional beer scene in Romiley is currently in a pretty healthy condition.

Starting from the **Cherry Tree**, on the Compstall side of Romiley, down the main road and up to the **Spread Eagle** on Hatherlow there is a widening choice of real ales. I wish one could say the same for the centre of Marple! Full marks, though, to the Pineapple for Robinsons 'Ordinary' Bitter - sorry, Old Stockport; to the Bowling Green for the return of Holts Bitter and to the Wine Bar with its guest beer. I may return to this subject in a later edition, however, let's not get sidetracked and get back to Romiley.

Several High Peak branch members met at the **Cherry Tree** one recent evening for an amble round Romiley. I refuse to call it a stagger or crawl since our hardened veterans can take their ale and generally finish the evening still standing (hah! - ed.) The beer here is John Smiths Bitter (handpump) and perfectly OK. The pub was built to serve a large estate which it still does in a boisterous, exuberant, unpretentious way. No airs and graces here.

Moving down the road, next on the list was the **Stock Dove**. The pub was renamed Magnums for a while until sanity prevailed and it got its old identity back along with a refurbishment and Theakstons Best Bitter (and Websters) on handpump.

By Romiley railway station are the **Romiley Arms** (Whitbread) and the **Railway** with Robinsons Best Bitter and Hatters Mild. We made for the Railway which has had a change of licensee in the last few months. Two points worthy of note here are the reintroduction of handpumps and the continuing, unchanged existence of the tap room at the rear of the pub. Just as a side issue, how many good tap rooms have you known which have bitten the dust over the last few years either as a desire to smarten the pub up or as part of the 'refurbishment - customers didn't want this any more' approach. Material here for another article I think.

Pressing on down the main road, next comes one of the pubs which have helped to increase the choice of beer. The **Grey Horse** was once one of the area's few keg-only pubs but landlord Terry Moore has changed that. Handpumps are in and the beers are Theakstons Mild, Best Bitter, XB, Marstons Pedigree and Morland Old Speckled Hen. The pub is deserving of support and an appreciative thanks from all real ale drinkers in the area. Almost next door, Robinsons can be sampled at the **Friendship**, which together with the Romiley Arms up the road has a bowling green.

The next, and on this trip last, port of call was also a keg-only pub in the not too distant past. The **Duke of York** has been an entry in the Good Beer Guide for some years now following the introduction and development of the real ale range. The beers, all on handpump, are currently John Smiths Bitter, Ruddles County, Courage Directors and a regular guest beer which at the time of our visit was Rudgate Battleaxe. A pub with lots of character and a suitable place to round off the evening sitting down outside, by now feeling very melow.

A further pub, the **Spread Eagle** in nearby Hatherlow was to have been the last of the itinerary but we didn't make it. For those of you who like complete notes, however, the beer is Boddingtons and usually a guest beer.

New Banks's Brews

Wolverhampton Brewers Banks's are the latest to join the increasing trend to produce seasonal or special one-off beers.

Banks's entry takes the form of an 'Autumn Beer Festival' with a new beer being sold in participating pubs every week for a six-week period and started on September 26th with Banks's Fine Fettle, a 4.8% hoppy beer brewed entirely with Goldings hops.

Beers to follow are Belter (5%, dark sweet and malty), Timewarp (4.8%, amber and lightly hopped), Scallywag (4.5%, a 'bittersweet' stout), Trecklers Winning Brew (4.5%, dry, pale, and named by the bowls team at the Thimblemill Recreation Club, Warley!) and lastly, Wizard (5%, tawny, nutty and fruity). All the beers have been specially devised by head brewer Richard Westwood and only 3 firkins (9-gallon barrels) of each will be delivered to participating pubs. Those taking part locally include the Station at Cheadle, the Four in Hand, West Didsbury, the Blue Lamp, Wilmslow and the Watermillock in Bolton.

Licensees have also been asked to complete a questionnaire to establish which of the beers is the most popular (to find a new permanent addition to Banks's range, perhaps?)

Heard at the Bar

Married couple talking to a CAMRA member.

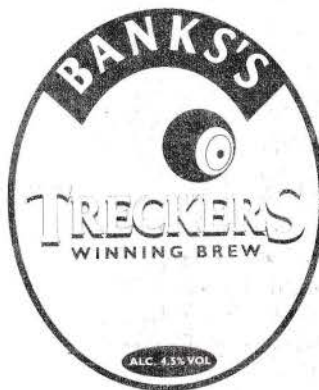
Husband: "Are you still in CAMRA?"

Member: "Oh, yes."

Wife: "What's CAMRA?"

Husband: "The Campaign against Real Ale."

Member: "For, For!"



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New Look City Arms

After a two week closure and an £80,000 refit, the City Arms on Kennedy Street in the City Centre re-opened on Thursday 28th September as Tetleys first 'Festival Ale House' in Manchester.

The Festival Ale Houses are Tetleys chain of real ale themed pubs and share features that are common to others of the genre - lots of bare boards, a few chalk signs and quite a lot of job-lot Victoriana thrown around. That perhaps sounds too dismissive for, while some may mourn the loss of one of the few pubs in the City Centre with a local feel, the new-look City Arms really does work well. The quality of the refurb - more akin to the H R Fletcher style of operation than some of the more down-market examples around - and the cosy, domestic scale of the pub make for a very pleasant place to pass a pint or two. There have, fortunately, been no structural changes apart from the removal of the over-bar which makes the front vault seem more spacious without it actually being so, a clever illusion. The rest of the pub is much as it was before apart from the change in decor (although the twee sayings painted on the walls wouldn't be missed...)

Also good news is that the licensees stay the same too. Over the recent years Claire and Howard Watts have shown consistent commitment to both choice and quality, and under the new regime for the pub can indulge this much more freely than they were always able to before. There is a veritable forest of handpumps on the bar dispensing Tetley Bitter and up to 8 guest

beers. These will change every two weeks on a rolling programme and although these do have to be selected from an in-house list we are given to understand that this is extensive to say the least and by no means concentrates on beers from the Carlsberg-Tetley stable. OT raised the question whether the pub was physically big enough to generate the trade to turn the beer over in sufficient time to maintain quality - this shouldn't be a problem, it seems. All the beers are stocked in small 9-gallon barrels and the pub is already packed at lunchtimes and 'early doors'. It is hoped that the new look will also generate an increased late evening trade. There are also plans for quarterly beer festivals when the beers on offer will be based on customers' requests.



Gastronomes will also be relieved to know that the City Arms's value for money lunchtime menu also remains unchanged - a fact evidently appreciated by the suits thronging the pub on opening day.

Victoria Re-Opened

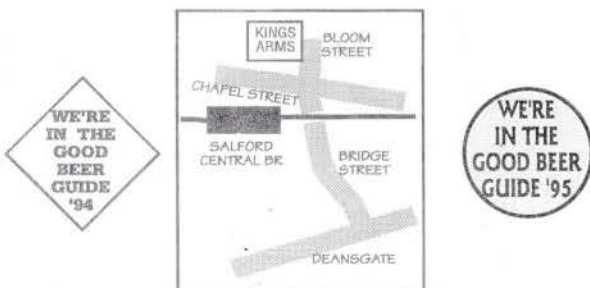
When the Victoria (Bramhall) re-opened during the summer, the beers were Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers Original, Pedigree, and Chesters Mild. Now, just a few months later, (early Sept.), the Mild has gone, but two more bitters are available, Robinsons Best and Tetleys - it seems a bit over the top, particularly when the pub is nearly always populated by Boddies drinkers (and Rymans Reserve Wheat Beer has also put in an appearance.)

The smartest pub in the Stockport area? and that's just the decor. But there's a sign which says "Smart casual and over 21's", but do you have to smell nice too? There's a minty fresh breath freshener machine in the Gents - that'll cost you £1. All this seems a far cry from when the Vic. just sold Boddies Mild and Bitter, and you were welcome in the vault in your muddy boots.

Finally, a local drinker in the area posed the question - "Compared with the Victoria, why can you get served in half the time at the Cheadle Hulme, where there are only half the staff, and twice as many customers (or more)?"

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Festival Foretaste

October is one of the busiest months in the CAMRA beer festival calendar, so it seems an appropriate time for another in our occasional series of consumer previews of forthcoming festivals, concentrating on those easily accessible from North-West England but throwing in one or two further afield for good measure - which is, of course, one thing CAMRA festivals guarantee you with their use of lined glasses.

Friday and Saturday 7th and 8th October bring one of the North-West's premier festivals at the Met (formerly Derby Hall) in Bury, just a couple of minutes from the town. Noted for its well-chosen beers, good range of books and souvenirs, and friendly atmosphere, Bury does get very busy in the evenings, so get there early. Last tram back to Piccadilly is at 11pm, though if you fancy that after-festival snack there are trams as far as Victoria up to 12 minutes past midnight.

Next weekend (13th-16th) sees the nation's beer spotters descending on Wakefield Town Hall for a beer list made up entirely of microbreweries' and new breweries' products. As at many Yorkshire festivals, admission is by ticket, and further information is available on 0924-378435. Also that weekend, Scunthorpe CAMRA hold their first ever festival at the Baths Hall on the Doncaster Road. It's great to see new festivals continuing to spring up, and anyone who visits Wakefield should really make the effort to support Scunthorpe as well - quite easy if you make a day of it, but note that the evening session at Scunthorpe doesn't open till 7pm.

The next weekend (21st-22nd) sees the focus move closer to home, to the King's Hall in Stoke-on-Trent, where the festival actually opens on Wednesday 19th. This is a large festival, held in a most imposing venue, with a beer range now back to form after one or two slightly lacklustre years and a much improved range of cider and perry (including Stockport favourite Gwatkins!). The great strength of the festival though (and in more senses than one) is the huge range of quality European beers; Potteries CAMRA's in-depth presentation of the Belgian scene (look out for the golden, stunningly hoppy La Quintine from Belgium's newest brewery, Brasserie Ellezelloise in Hainault province) is complemented by a wide Bavarian selection from concessionaire Derek Bishop of Stourbridge.

The long-established and popular Nottingham festival takes place the same weekend, and could easily be combined with a visit to Stoke, and there's also another "launch" festival to support - in Kendal, where Westmorland CAMRA hold their first event, appropriately enough at the Brewery Arts Centre.

My fancy, though, is taken by Cardiff, where the inauspiciously-sounding Star Leisure Centre in inner-city Splott hosts an excellent festival. Cardiff CAMRA promise "a full selection of

Welsh beers plus visitors from across the border" - to which I would add all-day opening, a good cider range (usually including some Welsh rarities), a small but well-stocked foreign bar, and the chance to nip into a superb Brains pub, the Vulcan, on your way back to the train!

The following Wednesday evening, October 26th, sees the doors open on the East Lancashire Beer Festival at King George's Hall in Blackburn. I confess to finding this a somewhat soulless venue, but it's an extremely well-run festival with a good range of beers - and you don't need to be a driver to enjoy their draught sarsaparilla! Further afield but with direct trains from Manchester and Stockport, Loughborough's festival sounds attractive to cider-drinkers, with around 20 ciders and/or perries; it runs from Thursday 27th (evening only) to Saturday 29th, and takes place at the Town Hall on the Market Place.

Things quieten down a bit after October, allowing festival-goers to rest their livers in preparation for the festive season, but a couple of events are worth mentioning.

The unique and charming pub-based Mid-Wales Beer Festival at Llanwrtyd in Breconshire now runs from Saturday 12th to Sunday 20th November; if you're captivated by the town and the event, as many have been over the years, there'll be another chance to experience the special Llanwrtyd magic at their "Saturnalia" or winter ales festival on 14th and 15th January - further information on Llanwrtyd from Gordon Green, hotelier and one-man Tourist Board, on 059610-236.

Finally, a tip to beat those Christmas shopping blues - if you really can't avoid that London shopping trip, why not combine it with a visit to the Pig's Ear Beer Festival, one of the capital's biggest festivals held in the majestic surroundings of Stratford Town Hall in East London. Dates for this are not yet to hand, but it's usually the first or the second weekend in December - your CAMRA contact should have more information by November.



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STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

MANCHESTER MATTERS



by Rhys Jones

In the City Centre, the Corporation Street site previously occupied by the Top Cat Tavern, and before that Rowntrees, opened on 16th September as Bouchelles, consisting of "the Cafe Bar" and "the Metro Bar" with Boddingtons Bitter, John Smiths Bitter, and Courage Directors on handpump. In the past these premises have been home to a succession of unsuccessful and short-lived bars; unless there's a rapid improvement from the dreadful Boddingtons I was served in the place's first week, this pattern seems likely to continue.

Things are a shade more hopeful at Royal Hotel on Altrincham Road in Wythenshawe (in the shadow of the M56 as it leads onto Princess Parkway), which now has four beers on handpump - Bass, Boddingtons Bitter, John Smiths Bitter, and "Grays Landlords Choice" from Mansfield. Don't necessarily expect all the cask beers to be on at once, though.

Pub closures continue, with the Lord Nelson in the City Centre and the Oaks in Chorlton-cum-Hardy boarded up. In Withington, the Waterloo, whose death throes have been piteously protracted, has been granted a Viking funeral in circumstances which have attracted the attention of the authorities.

The disposals of the former Chef & Brewer pubs are now being reflected in their range of beer, with the overall (and not unwelcome) trend in those that have passed to Scottish & Newcastle being the spread of Theakstons Best Bitter at the expense of various Courage brews. In the City Centre, the Brunswick and the Sawyers

both have Theakstons on handpump, the latter having lost Ruddles Bitter. In Didsbury, both Squires and the Didsbury have Theakstons on handpump in place of Ruddles Bitter; in addition, Squires has Courage Directors on handpump, the Didsbury John Smiths Bitter. Closer into Manchester, the Withington Ale House is another straight swap of Theakstons for Ruddles on handpump, albeit with the less welcome replacement of the bar billiards table by boring old pool. And in Northenden, the Tatton Arms is yet another gain for handpumped Theakstons Best; having lost John Smiths Bitter and Ruddles County it still, to its shame, retains "handpumped" Scrumpy Jack keg cider (which reminds me to compliment the Dog & Partridge in Didsbury on having ceased this deception.)

A couple more previously unreported Chef & Brewer disposals have passed to the Magic Pub Company. The Yew Tree in Wythenshawe has the standard handpumped range of Bass, Boddingtons Bitter, and Websters Green Label, but at the Fallowfield (in Fallowfield), Bass is missing, and the other two beers are at less than the Standard Magic prices - Green Label 89 not 99, Boddies £1.25 not £1.30. Another Chef & Brewer, the Church in Ardwick, is now owned by Canadian brewers (I use the term loosely) Labatt, and has Wilsons Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter on handpump.

By the time you read this, the last of the West Coast beers will almost certainly have gone from the King's Arms in Chorlton-on-Medlock; however the pub is selling Holts Mild and Bitter on handpump. While they clearly cannot replace Brendan Dobbin's wide range of quality brews, these cheap robust beers do seem to suit the ethos of the King's, and I wish the pub every success. In Gorton, the Gorton Arms is now selling Banks's Bitter on handpump - a very unusual move for this brewery.

The next few months promise to be an eventful time for Manchester pubwatchers, with a number of developments in prospect on top of those foreshadowed in recent months' OTs. Most of the interest centres on "student land", clearly where the action now is on the city's pub scene - though you've got to wonder whether (or when?) the bubble will burst. The Victorian mansion on Cromwell Range in Fallowfield, opposite the "toast-rack", seems set to become a Jabez Clegg clone despite objections from a nearby school - its rumoured title the Nico Ditch is a local geographical feature, not an allusion to one of Blaster Bates's racier recitations. Rusholme is likely to see a Whitbread "beer hall" on the Manchester Garages site opposite Whitworth Park, while the All Saints area will be getting a second O'Shea's (to soak up the queues from the one in town?) plus possibly a development from Boddingtons PubCo, who are also believed to have a project planned in the Canal Street zone of the City Centre.

I just hope the customers attracted to these major developments have even half the fun I had in discovering the delights of Brains Dark, in a perfectly ordinary tied house, in my student days in Swansea.

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Come and Join Us



Sign up, sign up and join one of the world's most successful consumer groups.

In October and November we are holding a number of recruitment nights to boost the Campaign's membership still further - it is now at 45000 and rising. We have been fighting for Britain's beer, pubs and breweries for 24 years, and though CAMRA is booming, new blood is always needed.

Locally in Stockport & South Manchester branch we pride ourselves on being amongst the most active campaigning branches in the country, with a social side to match. If you want to join, or have been thinking about it, then now is the time as anyone joining at one of our special nights gets £2 off the normal rate. (Students get an even better deal and can join for half-price, just £6). For your tenner you can get:

- ★ Discounts on CAMRA products - including future Good Beer Guides.
- ★ What's Brewing - CAMRA's information packed monthly newspaper.
- ★ A free members handbook, plus a local handbook for Stockport & South Manchester members.
- ★ Reduced or free entrance to CAMRA beer festivals, including Stockport of course.
- ★ The chance to get involved in local campaigns to save local pubs.
- ★ A chance to go on brewery trips and other social events.

Just come along to one of our special membership nights:

Monday 17th October - Swinging Sporrán, Sackville Street, City Centre

Monday 7th November - Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport

Monday 14th November - Olde Cock, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury

Plus one other to be arranged - see next month's Opening Times.

On these nights, in addition to the super discounts on membership, those joining will get a free pint plus the chance to pick up a brand new 1995 Good Beer Guide for the members' price of £5.75, compared to £9.99 in the shops.

APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (OT126)

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

NAME(S) DATE

ADDRESS
.....

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

I / We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: INDIVIDUAL £12 JOINT MEMBERSHIP £14

STUDENT or OAP or REGISTERED DISABLED £6

Chris Stone / Sue Tiffensor, 11 Twiningbrook Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, SK8 5PU

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



STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6



Brewers Holts have now been given permission to convert the Tara Hotel in Chorlton into a pub. They've got a licence for the place as well. The pub should be opening some time next year. Crossword enthusiasts among our readers will of course have spotted that 'Tara Hotel' is, appropriately enough, an anagram of 'ale tiroat'!

In an imaginative move to boost Tuesday night trade, the Royal Oak on High Street, Stockport, is now running a games night - in addition to the usual pool, darts, dominoes etc, a variety of board games are also available. With a free supper thrown in as well, it's certainly worth a visit.

Landlady Carol Taylor is trying to research the history of her pub, the Sun in September, Burnage, and the building it now occupies. If anyone can help they should either write to Carol at the pub or phone on 431 0243.

This month sees a change of licensee at the Flea & Firkin in Manchester. We welcome Bryan Babrovskie, who has spent the last eighteen months as Bars Manager at the other great student pub, the Jabez Clegg, in addition to another year and a half in bar and cellar work. He is a qualified chef, so hopefully the food side of the pub will do great things. He hopes to promote live music, promote the 'Firkin' image and wherever possible educate people about beer. A beer festival is planned at the Flea for the autumn, and we wish Bryan and the staff all the best for the future.

In the City Centre work is now underway on Marstons conversion of the old Barclays Bank premises at the top of King Street. Going by the name of 'Rothwells' (the Newton Heath brewery they took over in 1961), the new pub is due to open in December.

We welcome Steve and Kay Durkin behind the bar of the Bridge Inn on Georges Road, Stockport. This is the first pub they have taken charge of, but between them they have over 20 years experience of the licensed trade, mostly in the Denton area. Their predecessors had revitalised this characterful pub and we hope that Steve and Kay will be able to build on this success.

Congratulations are due to the local lads at the Pack Horse in Stockport Market Place - having entered a Guinness-sponsored regional 5-a-side football competition they turned up trumps and beat 79 other teams for the winners spot.

The alterations at the Hole i' th' Wall on Bridge Street Brow in Stockport are now largely complete and the pub is looking much better for it. The wall dividing the upper level has been removed and replaced with a banister - not the type of thing that OT normally raves about but here it does seem to have brought the upstairs area more into the main run of the pub without compromising its separate atmosphere. Downstairs much of the carpet has been removed to reveal the floorboards to good effect, too. A general redecoration is under way and the pub looks set fair for a welcome upturn in its fortunes. Landlord Steve Sherlock tells us that he is planning to introduce live music although the final format of this hasn't yet been settled. Three cask beers are now sold - Vaux Bitter and Samson plus Thorne Mild and all three have been in good nick when sampled recently.

Hartleys XB is now available at the Three Bears in Hazel Grove, alongside the Hatters Mild, Best Bitter and Frederics, all dispensed by meters into oversize glasses. Do readers know of any other pubs serving four real ales by electric pump, or is this a unique claim to fame?

New Faces at Crown




The new licensees at the Crown, Heaton Lane are Lorraine and Steve James who took over the pub on September 1st having previously spent just over a year at BodPubCo's Mount Vernon Ale House in Liverpool.

Prior to this Lorraine was a council worker, although with considerable experience of part-time bar work, while Steve was assistant manager at the Black Bull in Preston. Both are real ale fans and intend to carry on the successful formula at the Crown. If, however, any regulars have ideas about either beers to sell or events to run in the pub, Lorraine and Steve will be happy to consider them. Our best wishes go to both of them.


JOIN CAMRA AT OUR MEMBERSHIP SOCIALS AND SAVE POTS OF MONEY (see Page 23)

☎ 429
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CROWN ALE HOUSE

HEATON NORRIS



Boddingtons Bitter plus
9 ever changing Guest Beers
 Real Cider or Perry always available
 Many Interesting Continental
 Bottled Beers
 Home Cooked Lunchtime Food
Your hosts Lorraine & Steve James
Heaton Lane, Stockport