

Opening Times



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

No.49 MAY 1988

WE'RE SORRY

To all of you who turned up at Stockport Beer Festival on either Friday night or Saturday and found it shut, please accept our apologies. Particular apologies are due to those pubs and groups who had organised coach trips to the Festival.

After the various reports in the press, we'd also like to let you know exactly what went wrong. Simply, the police made a routine check on Friday lunchtime and both ourselves and the college authorities were stunned to find out the the licence was restaurant only. It turned out that not only had the 1987 Festival been 'illegal' but, so convinced were the college authorities that all was in order that they had been running a Staff association bar on the same basis.

Despite the police doing all they could to smooth the path of our subsequent application to the Magistrates, the rules under which the court operates meant that it was impossible

for us to get a licence for the rest of the festival and we had no option but to close down.

We were as disappointed as you, as months of hard work and planning had gone into what had all the signs of being a sell out event. We were encouraged by the obvious success of the first two sessions and those of you who managed to get there certainly had a good time.

With this in mind, we have already taken a decision in principle to hold a Festival next year, which we intend to be the best yet (complete with licence)

Finally, thanks are due to all those licensees who helped out by taking some of the unsold beer off our hands. In particular mention is due to Kay Ord at Ye Olde Vic, Simon Finch at the Beerhouse and Richard Genders at the Bottle Stop.

THIS MONTH IN YOUR 12 PAGE OPENING TIMES.....

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Cask  
Beers

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good taste



## PUB GRUB

By Alexander Panesh

This month it's back to Manchester and The Red Lion in Withington. A popular Marstons house, the 'Red' as everyone knows it is often packed, although lunchtimes are quieter than evenings.

Recently refurbished by Marstons, the pub sells handpulled Pedigree and Marstons Bitter plus the powerful Owd Rodger. An interesting addition to the beer range are the Newquay Steam Beers with their distinctive flip top bottles.

Food is served at lunch seven days a week and also in the evenings until 8.00pm. I paid a lunchtime visit and tried the Steak and Kidney with my partner choosing the Mushroom and Pepper Quiche.

The pie was packed with meat, with a crisp, flaky pastry top and was served individually. Accompanied by nicely done roast potatoes, carrots and peas it made for a filling meal.

The quiche was of a good creamy consistency and well flavoured. Accompanied by a selection from the salad bar (with apparently no limit on the amount any one person might want) this too, made for a filling meal.

All in all, The Red Lion provides good plain food, with a few surprises, in good surroundings and with good beer. Worth a visit.

The pub is particularly easy to get to from Manchester with many of the 40 series buses running past the door.

## BANKS'S BUY OUT

We reported the other month the sale of about 50 Websters/Wilsons pubs which had in effect been put out to the highest bidder. The pubs were in fact bought by Heron International in conjunction with a company called Control Securities which came to attention last year when it bought about 70 pubs off Tetley-Walker in the Liverpool area. Tetleys in fact supply Control's pubs with beer, so if your local Wilsons pub now sells Tetleys you'll know it's one of those sold.

This isn't the end of the story however as 17 of the pubs in and around Greater Manchester were sold on to the Wolverhampton based Banks's who have already established a local presence with such pubs as the Longsight and the Station at Cheadle. The licensees of these pubs must have felt like they were on a merrygoround. As Phil Dixon of the LVA (the national landlord's 'union') put it: "It would be nice if someone could spare a thought for the licensees...caught up in these transactions"

Banks's say they have 'handpicked' the pubs but even so they are a strange bunch, one, the Glassmakers in Warrington, has just had a CPO placed on it and another, the Druids in Salford has been boarded up for some time following a failed attempt to convert it into a Webster's house.

The majority of the houses purchased are in the Oldham area, but two do in fact fall in South Manchester:

- \* The Royal Oak, Ogden Lane, Openshaw
- \* The Star, Hyde Road, Ardwick

Banks's beers should be on sale in both by the time you read this and if past form is anything to go on, the new ownership should mean a new lease of life for both pubs. We'll let you know what happens.



## HOST BUSTERS?

In Pennine Host's pubs, some managers are trying to overcome the problems caused by the rather garish and now more than a little worn 'Open House' themes inflicted by their bosses a few years ago at a time of commercial insanity. What they need now is for Pennine Hosts (the managed house arm of Websters/Wilsons) to restore them to proper pubs.

At Conways in Cheadle Hulme, Adrian Holmes has returned after seven years away in Cornwall. Since he left the pub has seen a name change, a 'refurbishment' and the disappearance of cask mild. Lo and behold beer sales are now only a third of those when he left. Adrian intends to try and stop the rot by asking for a name change to 'The Conway Tavern' and also the return of cask mild as soon as possible. What he really needs of course is support from his employers to restore it to a traditional pub. Let's hope it's forthcoming.

Meanwhile at The Roundhouse, Heaton Norris, Malcolm Boyle and Kevin Rogers are making a go of the pub after it was run down by a previous managers policy of holding frequent discos. Their decision to serve meals every day of the week at both lunchtimes and in the evenings is a brave one and can only be applauded.

Isn't it time that Pennine Hosts took a look at their pubs which were fashionable for a short time but are now appearing worn out. The Open House concept has all the hallmarks of a bad idea gone seriously wrong. It is I suppose too much for them to admit that CAMRA was talking commercial sense when we told them that the success of such pubs would be short lived and that the well refurbished traditional pub was a far better investment. They do at least though owe it to their employees and customers to do something.



## FLAT BODDIES

Some of the reasoning behind Boddingtons decisions to close Oldham Brewery and sack their draymen became apparent last month when Manchester's self styled favourite brewery unveiled their profits for 1987. £14½ million might seem a lot to you and me but to City of London whizz kids the figures were a great disappointment, showing little change on the previous year.

Last year Boddies fended off a takeover bid from Midsummer Leisure, the feeling is they might not do so again unless profits improve.

Doubtless with this in mind they announced the sale of their 13 pubs in Yorkshire to Whitbread (bad luck Yorkshire) and also a new venture with a company called Cafe Inns to help increase the profits of some less successful pubs. These developments will be aimed at the 'young adult' in the 'High value added' (which presumably means overpriced to you and me) end of the market.

The first of these outlets will open in Wigan in July. If we're really lucky we might be spared over here, we'll keep you informed of developments.

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## NEW HANDS

John and Paula Wood have now taken over as the new licensees of the Navigation at the top of Lancashire Hill in Heaton Norris.

Although this is their first pub, Paula is no stranger to the trade, having worked behind the bar at the pub since the early days of Alex Stepney's tenure.

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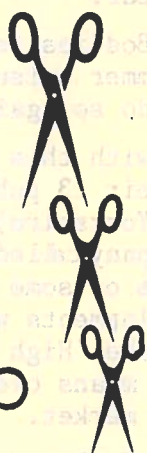


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## CROWN CROWNED

Boddingtons have come in for a lot of criticism from CAMRA recently but it has to be said that they have certainly done an excellent job on the refurbishment of the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport which had its official reopening on 13th April as trailed in last month's Opening Times.

The run down feel of much of the pub has been cured by a careful opening up of the three rooms which by simply having their doorways widened have been brought into the mainstream of the pub.

The bar has been shortened and the wall separating the hall from the vault has been removed, doing away with the small cramped hatch which served the three other rooms. The vault itself has been extended into the old living quarters and a pool table installed.

The toilets have been brought indoors and the 'awesome view of the viaduct from the outside gents' mentioned in so many beer guides is gone forever although all is not lost as a beer garden is planned at the back for the summer.

The beer range has been extended too, with Higsons Bitter joining the Boddies products. We are told that if this sells well, Oldham Bitter could also appear.

## MARKET PLACE

Did you miss your chance to peruse and purchase our books and products at the Stockport Beer Festival? If so, then here is your opportunity at no extra cost. We can offer the following publications, just send a cheque payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester Branch' along with your order to the Treasurer, 66 Downham Rd., Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG:

|                                        |        |
|----------------------------------------|--------|
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| 1986 Good Beer Guide                   | £1.00  |
| Dictionary of Beer                     | £2.95  |
| Pocket Beer Book                       | £4.95  |
| Great British Beer Book (new)          | £4.95  |
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| Two Beers, My Friend Will Pay (humour) | £2.95  |
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| Cheshire Beer Guide                    | £2.25  |
| Classic Country Pubs                   | £10.95 |
| Beer, Bed & Breakfast (new edition)    | £5.95  |
| CAMRA Tea Towel                        | £1.50  |
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**HEARD AT THE BAR: HEARD AT THE BAR: HEARD AT THE BAR:**  
\*\*\*\*\*

In a country pub in Staffordshire:

Customer, seeing a bar covered in shiny boxes, "Do you have any traditional cask beer?"

Landlord: "No son, you're alright, it's all keg"

\*\*\*\*\*



## BEER BOOKS BEER BOOKS BEER BOOKS

Several new 'Beer Books' have hit the shops recently and we hope to review them all in the next few issues. One that has probably most interest to readers of Opening Times is *Classic Town Pubs*, the companion volume to *Classic Country Pubs*, which came out about a year ago.

Like its predecessor, this has also been written by CAMRA's Neil Hanson but this time with more input from local branches.

Very much a coffee table book, *Classic Town Pubs* is a very glossy publication, well illustrated with many full colour photographs. There are detailed descriptions of each pub, detailing facilities and how to find them. A useful idea is the inclusion of the licensee's name.

There are two Stockport & South Manchester pubs included: for Stockport there's the Bakers Vaults described as 'a great place to enjoy... good food, good company and good music'. South Manchester is represented by the Royal Oak in Didsbury famous for its cheese lunches, and immaculate service, no matter how busy the pub. As the Neil Hanson says: 'the quality of the beer and the lunch will make you think

seriously about moving to Didsbury'

Other local favourites included are the Crown and Kettle and Peveril of the Peak in central Manchester and, perhaps unusually the Buffet Bar at Stalybridge station although once you've been there you'll see what a true classic it is.

At £11.95, *Classic City Pubs* isn't cheap but for those who appreciate pubs and beer it's an essential buy.

More affordable at £3.95 is CAMRA's *New Beer Guide*, detailing all the new wave breweries, set up since 1974. It's astonishing to learn that there are currently 144 new breweries surviving today but even more so that 143 have been and gone in the last 14 years. Sadly all those in the Manchester area are in that category with the likes of Pollards, Failsworth and Winkles listed as 'vanished ventures'.

The book is well written and laid out with clear maps and brewery descriptions so if you want to know where to sample such beers as Old Horny and Brown Willy, this is for you.

### Two Bevvies of Beauty

BODDINGTONS AND HIGSONS  
TOGETHER.

A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES,  
NOT TO MENTION DRY THROATS.

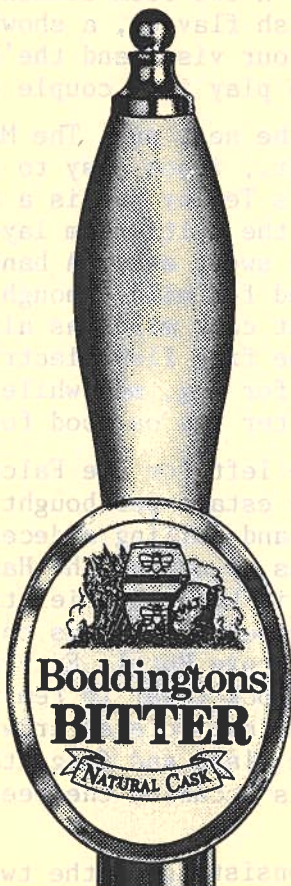
TRULY TWO BEVVIES OF  
BEAUTY, YOU COULD SAY!

As Real Ale Lovers, you need no introduction to the deliciously nutty tang of Boddies bitter.

Now, however, you can also try the superb individual flavour of Higsons at many Boddies' pubs in the Stockport area. This noble brew from down the M62 has been winning friends among real ale drinkers for many years - 200 to be exact!

Like Boddies, Higsons is brewed in the traditional way, using only the finest malt and hops. So whether you stick to the local favourite or sample the strength of the guest from 'out west', you're still in for a treat.

Try a bevvy of beauty today. Or better still, try both.





# STAGGER

EASY AS ABC - ARDWICK, BRUNSWICK AND CHORLTON  
-ON-MEDLOCK: By Rhys Jones

This month's staggerers gathered in the Kings Head on Chancellor Lane, a former Greenall's pub now a free house with a tie to Scottish & Newcastle and selling Youngers Scotch Bitter and IPA and at last beginning to realise its considerable potential. Though it was only 7 o'clock, the noisy group of customers outdoing Sinatra on the jukebox had obviously already got a few under their belts and, like them, we enjoyed beer in very good condition.

No such look though, at Chester's Steam Engine across the road - appalling mild (the bitter was little better), stacks of uncollected glasses, and a family row in progress amongst the bar staff made it quite obvious why this place was empty when the pub opposite was full of people enjoying themselves.

Wilson's Star on Hyde Road. revived us with a

good pint of bitter though the mild here has been keg for some time - its recent purchase by Banks's (see report elsewhere) will presumably lead to the installation of cask mild, so let's hope they sell enough to keep it in good condition.

It's a short stroll down Higher Ardwick to the Union, a pleasant and homely street-corner Wilsons pub where both the beers were in good form and it was a particular pleasure to see full measure guaranteed by the use of a half pint glass for topping up. More impromptu singing too, this time from a group of Irishmen in the corner.

Just round the corner is the Church on Ardwick Green, another Wilsons pub though in this case part of their 'Pennine Hosts' managed estate. Extended, quite pleasantly, a few years back, this offers Websters Bitter and Choice as well as the two Wilsons beers; the beer on our visit was above average, even the normally undistinguished Websters Bitter being considered quite passable.



The Church, Ardwick Green

We briefly looked in at the Apsley Cottage at the back of the Appollo to confirm it was no longer selling cask beer (it wasn't) and then continued to the

Cleveland standing in splendid isolation on Wilson St (appropriately enough as it was yet another Wilsons house) for more good bitter. A two room community pub with a distinctly Irish flavour, a showband was in full voice on our visit and the 'B & I Ferryman' were due to play in a couple of days.

From the Cleveland, the next pub, The Mawson Hotel on Kincardine St., is not easy to find - but persevere for this Tetley pub is a real discovery, retaining the multi-room layout that many places have swept away. A handpump is due to be installed for mild, though we learnt afterwards that cask mild was already being sold through the free flow electric pump previously used for keg, meanwhile the handpumped Tetley bitter was on good form.

Not without regret we left for the Falcon, an ordinary but well run estate pub bought by Banks's from Wilsons and selling a decent pint of mild and bitter (as so often, the Hansons Black Country Bitter is keg). A brief tramp across another open space brought us to Boddingtons Plymouth Grove Hotel, Externally magnificent, with a clock tower to remind you of the building's original role as Ardwick Town Hall, the pub is bland and forgettable on the inside; on this occasion the beer was similar.

The final leg now, consisting of the two pubs on Grafton St. Greenall's Bowling Green some well conceived renovations lately and on our

ESTD **B W** 1867  
**BURTONWOOD**  
**BREWERY**



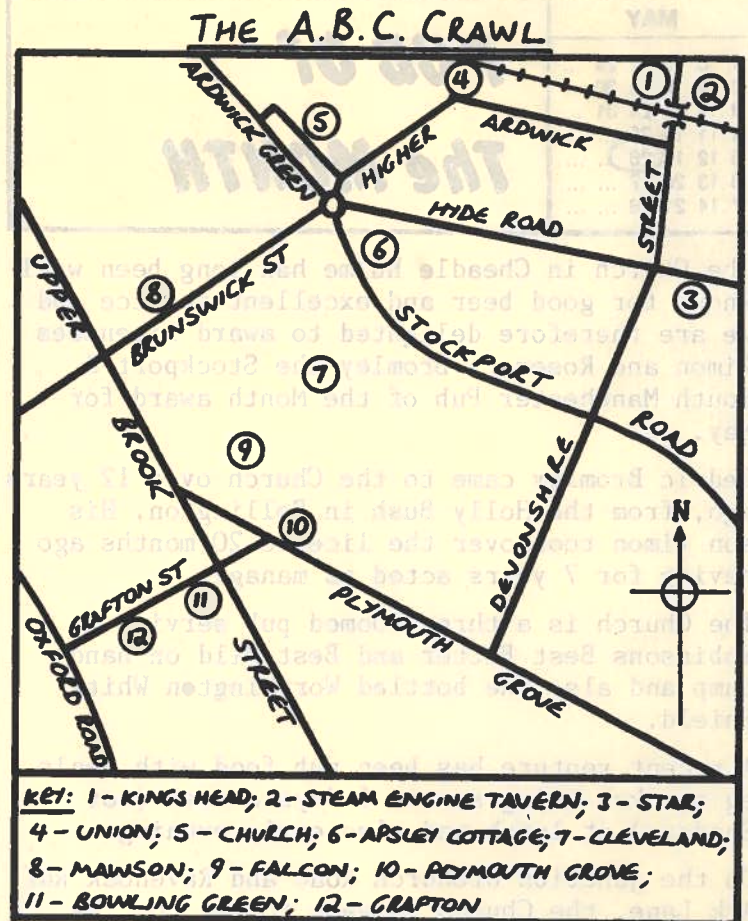
**A FAMILY TRADITION  
OF FINE BREWING**



visit was full of students, with a band playing in the lounge. All three Greenall's Warrington beers are on handpump (the Scrumpy Jack cider is 'handpumped' keg) and while opinions differed on their quality this was largely due to the fact that some of our party don't like Greenalls (not to mention the considerable amounts drunk already) - I certainly enjoyed my pint of Original (me too - ed.).

There were no arguments though at the nearby Grafton Arms where the Holts beers stood out as the best we'd had on a crawl which had produced few disappointments and a number of unexpected delights. The Grafton may not be the most imaginatively designed pub the 1980's have produced, but the excellence of the beer at Holts usual bargain basement prices made it an extremely pleasant place to finish the evening.

As ever, the opinions expressed simply reflect how we found things on the night - try the pubs for yourself and make up your own mind.



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## MAY

|   |    |    |    |     |     |
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| 1 | 8  | 15 | 22 | 29  | ... |
| 2 | 9  | 16 | 23 | 30  | ... |
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| 6 | 13 | 20 | 27 | ... | ... |
| 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | ... | ... |

## PUB OF The MONTH

The Church in Cheadle Hulme has long been well known for good beer and excellent service and we are therefore delighted to award licensees Simon and Rosemary Bromley the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for May.

Cedric Bromley came to the Church over 12 years ago, from the Holly Bush in Bollington. His son Simon took over the licence 20 months ago having for 7 years acted as manager.

The Church is a three roomed pub serving Robinsons Best Bitter and Best Mild on hand-pump and also the bottled Worthington White Shield.

A recent venture has been pub food with meals, eg steaks, being served 6 days a week (not Sundays) at lunch and also early evening.

On the junction of Church Road and Ravenoak Rd/Ack Lane, the Church is easy to get to: the 157 and S13 go right past the door. Thursday 26th is the presentation evening - please join us.

## THE LAST RESORT

Blackpool is a popular holiday destination for many people in the Stockport & South Manchester area, be it for days out or longer stays. It will probably come as a surprise to learn of the cynical way in which they are being ripped off by big brewers Bass and Whitbread with beer soaring by up to 8p a pint, indeed a pint of bitter at one promenade pub, the Star will now set you back £1.

Bass have attempted to defend this by saying that the high summer prices are evened out by lower ones in the off season although this isn't borne out by other pubs owned by Tetley and Thwaites where prices have only risen by 1 or 2p and that is claimed to be a result of the budget and in line with an earlier price rise by all breweries.

Perhaps the lamest defence of this blatant profiteering came from the trade paper, The Morning Advertiser which claimed that the majority of holidaymakers 'appreciate the position' and go away 'expecting to pay higher prices'. Expecting to pay through the nose is one thing, liking it is another. Lets hope that visitors this year will vote with their feet and show just how much they do 'appreciate' the position.

## CHARITY CORNER

Following our report on the charity appeal at the Plough, Shaw Heath, Stockport last month, congratulations are due to another mammoth fundraising effort this time at the Sidings in Levenshulme. Despite only being open three months, a massive £2045 was raised to pay for a dream holiday for cancer victim Elizabeth Floyd. Congratulations on a great effort.

## SPORTING ROBBIES

Robinsons are now gearing up for their 150th anniversary celebrations and have introduced a range of leisurewear with the anniversary logo. Sports shirts, t-shirts, sportsbags etc are all available at quite reasonable prices. You can pick up leaflets in most pubs. Watch for a special Robbies feature later in the year.



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## CAMRA CALLING!

A bit of a disappointment to start this month as we've had to abandon the North Wales trip as it was starting to look impracticable. The good news though is that we should be visiting the Oak Brewery at Ellesmere Port towards the end of the year - look for announcements.

We start the month then with a social on the 9th. A two pub event this: 8.30 to 9.45 will find us in the White Hart in Cheadle and from 9.50 to 11.00 we'll be in The Crown across the road.

Our branch meeting is on Thursday 12th at the Victoria in Withington where our guest speaker will be Max Taylor, formerly of Moorhouses and now with Mitchells of Lancaster. This is followed on Monday 16th with a social with a difference. This is at The Beacon in Sedgeley in the West Midlands. The minibus will leave the Crown, Heaton Lane at 6.15pm and all places had been filled at the time of writing. We'll be running another trip later in the year though. We end that week with our monthly stagger, this time round Clayton. We start at 7.00 pm at the Strawberry Duck on Crabtree Ln., and will be in the Grove, Ashton New Road at 8.30. I hope to run a minibus to take people there, leaving the Pineapple, Heaton Lane at 6.45pm and picking us up from the finishing point (probably The Why Not) at 11.00. Phone for details.

Another two way social on Monday 23rd, this time in Rusholme: The Osborne House, Victory St from 8.30 - 9.45 and across the road at

the Gardners Arms from 9.50 to 11.00. This is followed on Thursday 26th by Pub of the Month at the Church, Cheadle Hulme.

On Saturday 28th we are having a 'Night out in Angel Meadow', which despite the rustic name is in fact the area between Cheetham Hill Rd and Rochdale Rd in Manchester. We meet at 7.00pm at the Dutton on Park St, behind Boddingtons Brewery and will be in the Milehouse at 8.30.

Finally we end on the 30th with a social in the Travellers Call, Great Moor (it's on the A6).

If you want more information about any of the above or our activities in general, then please 'phone me, John Clarke on 831 7222, ex 3411 (day) or 477 1973 (night)

## TIME FOR CHANGE

As readers may imagine, we've been carefully following the progress of the licencing reform bill as it makes its way through Parliament.

The House of Lords has made two amendments which have been accepted by the Government. One will let supermarkets etc with off-licences to sell alcohol from 8.00am (it's 8.30 at present) but more importantly the other extends Sunday afternoon opening to 3.00pm, apparently to take account of those people who go out for Sunday lunch. If passed this will really be of benefit to the back street locals who would probably not have gained much from the new Monday to Saturday all day opening.

It all now depends on how the House of Commons votes, we'll bring you more information when we have it.

We learn that the Bottle Stop in Bramhall has now added Draught Bass to the range of beers sold.



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## THE NEW BREWERIES by PHIL LEVISON

The first two articles in this series covered the period to 1973 by which time we were left with the original four small breweries who had been joined by three newcomers. The real revolution was still to come and in the early 1970s any growth was painfully slow.

In March 1974, Tom Litt, licensee of the Masons Arms at Southleigh near Oxford, started to brew his own beer in a converted piggery at the back of the pub. The ale was called Sowlye (the Old English name for Southleigh) and it was brewed from malt extract, rather than a full mash, which is the method used in the brewing industry. Three barrels a week were brewed for consumption only at the pub, this being the original conception of the home brew pub. The Masons Arms continued this tradition and almost 10 years later it was still brewing for the pub only.

So, from what appears to have been the first new home brew pub we now move on to the first ex-commercial brewer to branch out on his own - a feature that was to figure prominently in the new 'revolution'. There were two main-streams - those leaving breweries to start up on their own, and those leaving to act as consultants in the field, often supplying the equipment as well.

Bill Urquhart was sacked by Watneys and in 1974 he started to produce his own filtered keg beer at the Litchborough Brewery which was set up along his home at Northampton. Such was the demand for the 'rael' stuff that within a few years more than half his production was cask-conditioned Northamptonshire Bitter.

In 1975 The Fighting Cocks at Grantham started selling its own malt extract beer, brewed on plant supplied by Brewpubs Ltd., and although it was served through handpumps it was kept in

tanks under CO<sub>2</sub> pressure and was available only at the pub. Soon after this another ex-commercial brewer branched out on his own - David Pollard, formerly with Robinsons. He set up his plant in part of a defunct cloth processing works, supplying some 50 outlets in North West England as well as his own pub in Salford.

1976 saw three more new comers: The Miskin Arms at Pontyclun, Mid-Glamorgan, started to produce pressurised beer. Then The New Fermor Arms at Rufford near Ormskirk decided to have a go and installed a Brewpubs plant (as at the Fighting Cocks) and the beer was only sold at the pub. The last of this trio was something completely different - John Boothroyd produced a strong, naturally conditioned bottled beer at his home and sold it at his home-brew shop in York.

So from seven in 1973, numbers had doubled to 14 in 1976, and there were pub licensees, commercial brewers and home-brew enthusiasts producing malt extract, cask conditioned, pressurised and bottled beers. The earlier reference to brewing in a piggery was only the start of every imaginable type of premises being used - the more normal ones would be small units on industrial estates, but most were to appear in converted premises - an explosives factory, a quarry, stables a rope warehouse, even a slaughterhouse. We were also to hear more of Brewpubs and their plant originally designed by Roger Booth, ex-commercial brewer whose other brainchilds were Tom Caxton kits and Sodastream.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Aside, early advert from Litchborough. Next month, we look at 1977 when the new breweries began to take off.  
\*\*\*\*\*



(This series was originally written for Opening Times, but first published in Pint in Hand, the quarterly magazine of the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood)

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## MANCHESTER MATTERS

A quiet month this, but with an excellent piece of news to report - the Mawson Hotel on Kincardine St., Chorlton-on-Medlock is once again selling real ale in the shape of handpumped Tetley bitter with real Tetley mild available initially served through the electric pumps previously used for keg, though a handpump may well have appeared by the time you read this. It's a real pleasure to welcome the return of real ale to such a fine traditional pub - well done.

Not far away though, the handpump (often out of use) has been removed from Wilson's Apsley Cottage which now becomes all keg, while Whitbread's City Gates on Hyde Road is closed and boarded up.

Finally, some beer changes. Handpumped Burtonwood mild is back at the Castle and Falcon in the City Centre whilst on London Road, Burtonwood JBA has disappeared from the Bull's Head (has this beer finally been discontinued?). The Cleveland in Ardwick no longer sells Wilsons Mild and the Sun in September, Burnage has added Sam Smith's potent Museum Ale on handpump.

PS - a late correction to our March issue: Boddington's Polygon in Levenshulme does not sell cask mild. Sorry.

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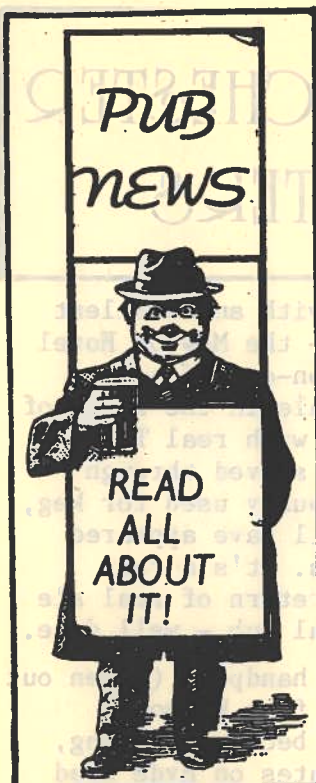
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The Alexandra, Northgate Rd, Edgeley has taken the gas fires out of two rooms and will be installing real fires for next winter. The 'Alex' is already one of Robinsons most unspoilt pubs and this will only add to the warm welcome normally offered.

Boddingtons are planning to add an extension to the Games Room at the Bulkeley Arms, Brinksway, Stockport.

Presumably prodded into action by developments at Yates Wine Lodge next door, Robinsons are spending money at last on the Bulls Head in Stockport Market Place. The pub has been run down for some time - we'll let you have a report on the finished product.

Speaking of Robinsons, an unusual planning application appeared in the Stockport Express Advertiser

at the end of March. Bell & Co are applying for planning permission to build a public house on Jacksons Lane in Hazel Grove. Bell & Co is of course the name of the old Stockport concern bought out by Robbies in 1949 and we know Robinsons have had a site on Jacksons Lane for years. One and the same?

The Hague on Brinksway, Stockport reopened at Easter, following a period of closure brought about by Whitbreads bailiffs. New owners are Gill and Robert Dickinson who have turned it back into a proper pub (gone is the pink and blue Brewers Tudor) and are renaming it 'Ye Olde Woolpack'. Beers at the moment are Websters and Tetley Bitters plus Ruddles County, although guest beers are hoped for once the pub is established. the county in particular has been on fine form when sampled.

This is only the 2nd free house in Stockport and deserves support. Go and try a pint with the lunchtime food which is available again. We wish Gill and Robert well.

Greenalls are planning minor alterations to the Pack Horse on Ashton Old Road in the form of a single storey extension to form a store and a new 11 space car park

In a similar area, Chesters Queen Victoria on Grey Mare Lane is to get a new entrance and toilet block.

We welcome William Armstrong to The Kings Arms, King St East, Stockport. Lets hope that this well placed pub at last starts to realise its potential.

Belgian Beers seem all the rage in the local free trade at the moment. The Beer House in Manchester stocks a wide range and Ye Olde Vic in Stockport has also been experimenting with one or two. We hope to run a feature on these unusual beers in the near future.

Congratulations are due to Howard and Susan Ball of The Sun & Castle, Hillgate for winning a Tetley-Walker award. It would be nice if they were to follow it up by installing cask beer in this fine pub.

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