

Opening Times



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

No. 59 MARCH 1989

LOCAL BREW

BREWING is set to return to Chorlton-on-Medlock after an absence of 65 years since the old Taylors Eagle Brewery in Greenheys shut in 1924.

The perhaps unlikely venue for this new venture is to be the Kings Arms on Helmsore Walk. The pub itself is an original Victorian building which somehow managed to escape the wholesale demolition of the area in the 1960's and indeed functioned as a Tetley house until that company closed it over 12 months ago. The pub was put up for sale and at the time it seemed unlikely that it would ever reopen but it has now been rescued from dereliction and seems set to become one of the most exciting developments in the drinking scene in that part of Manchester.

At the time of going to press details were sketchy, we don't even know the name of the owner or what beers are planned. A licence to brew has been applied for however, and looking at the pub itself, it is probable that it will feature a cellar brewery along the lines of the Lass O' Gowrie.

The pub is currently being gutted and obviously much work remains to be done, indeed an opening is likely to be some months away. We will however bring you more news of this major development when we get it.

We also hear that the Crescent, the popular Salford free house is planning a similar venture. This pub, of course, is already functioning so it will presumably be on stream sooner than the Kings. Again we will report developments.

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THE 3RD STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL
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By Alex Panesh

In 1974 when the Local Government Act shunted Stockport into the Greater Manchester County, the majority of Stockport residents turned their backs on the new 'supercounty' and continued to look upon Cheshire as their county. Indeed, even the Post Office now acknowledges that we are truly in Cheshire.

The Setter Dog at Walker Barn near Macclesfield is also in our county, albeit on the eastern extremities. It stands, defying the efforts of the weather to beat it, a gritty pub commanding an awesome view back down to Macclesfield.

Marstons Bitter and Pedigree are served on hand-pump, there's a roaring fire, coal black beams and food in portions that would defeat even the quarrymen who once worked, lived and drank hereabouts.

I chose the home-cooked ham with chips and side salad. The plate was groaning with the weight of the food - five good slices of ham, chips (frozen) and a salad that included two mixes and several other ingredients. My companion who is vegetarian went for the garlic mushrooms and pronounced herself well satisfied with both the taste and presentation of the dish. The Setter Dog also has a small restaurant attached for those wanting a more formal meal.

Next month we're travelling further afield again and I'll tell you about the strange visitor the Prince Llewellyn in Bedgellert had in 1949, not to mention the excellent Robinsons beers and fine food to be had at this pub.



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UNDER CONTROL

The Staff of Life, Ashton old Road, is among the 100+ pubs sold by Wilsons (and their sister companies in the Grand Metropolitan Group) to Control Securities, a company run by Ugandan Asian entrepreneur Nazmu Virani; rumours suggest that Nickleby's on Dale St (once the Shoulder of Mutton) may have gone the same way and in addition we gather that the Auld Lang Syne in Ancoats in one of those sold.

Control already own a block of pubs on Merseyside purchased from Tetley Walker which are trading under the Blezards name and have a 5 year supply agreement with Tetleys (although a house beer, Blezards Bitter, brewed by Tetley is due to be launched in those pubs shortly). There is no such supply agreement with Wilsons for the pubs now purchased however and it seems probable that these pubs will be supplied with beer from the famous Belhaven Brewery at Dunbar Scotland which has also been bought by Control who have announced plans to increase output there dramatically.

Belhaven beers have an excellent reputation and their appearance on the Manchester pub scene would be a major gain for the area.

SOLD OFF

Apart from the continued expansion of Nazmu Virani's pubs and brewing business, the past month saw two other developments which will interest those of you keen on the beer scene nationally. Firstly comes the news that the famous West Midlands home-brew pub, Ma Pardoes has been sold by owners Hoskins of Leicester to the Wiltshire Brewery. We have as yet no news of the new owners' plans for the pub. The second development was on the Welsh brewing scene where the Crown Brewery of Pontyclun have announced the transfer of all their brewing operations to Buckleys plant at Llanelli. The Pontyclun site will remain for kegging etc.

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Beers

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good taste

MARCH

5	12	19	26	...
6	13	20	27	...
7	14	21	28	...
1	8	15	22	29
2	9	16	23	30
3	10	17	24	31
4	11	18	25	...

PUB OF THE MONTH

The Pub of the Month award for March has been won by the Station Hotel on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury. The Station has been in the national Good Beer Guide for five years and contrasts markedly with other 'less authentic' pubs in Didsbury village.

Ann and John, licensees of the Station, know their customers and know they appreciate good beer at realistic prices in homely surroundings. The Station is the last pub in Didsbury that still really cares for its customers - the quality of beer and service are testimony to that.

Two years ago, we learnt (with some trepidation) that the Station was to be extended. Often this can mean that the character of the pub is destroyed, replaced by a more modern, artificial and plastic version of what the pub used to be. Our fears proved unfounded, as the pub emerged roomier and more distinguished than before, without losing any of its special qualities.

Marstons beers are on sale, including Mercian Mild, Burton Best Bitter and Pedigree. The award will be presented on Thursday 23rd March. It was once said that 'the Station may not be the biggest pub in Didsbury, but it's the one with the biggest heart'. That is as true today as it ever was. So, make a note in your diaries now to come along to the Station on the 23rd as a great night is guaranteed.

JOIN  NOW

PLOUGHING ON

The Plough, Heaton Moor, is currently closed for major alterations which involve extending the area of the pub into a disused passageway running down the side. It is expected to reopen by Easter and the licensee tells us that this should be accompanied by the addition of Ind Coope Burton Ale to the Tetley and Jennings beers currently available.

Whilst on the subject of the Plough, we would like to apologise to the licensee, on behalf of CAMRA, for a somewhat unfair item that appeared in the January issue of Whats Doing, the North Manchester pub newsheet. It seems that a reader of that publication took exception to being asked to move from a clearly designated eating area to one of the many empty tables available in the rest of the pub. Not an unreasonable request, certainly we have not encountered any problems with this pleasant, well-run pub. Opening Times is happy to put the record straight.

LION LATEST

Regulars of the Red Lion in Cheadle, whose fight to preserve the atmosphere of their pub we featured last month, were waiting with bated breath as we went to press. According to their information, Playmaster Leisure should have made a decision on whether or not to lease the pub in early February but so far they have heard nothing. Is it a case of 'no news is bad news'?

Certainly their fears for the pub weren't eased by a meeting held with Playmaster chief Steve Kalton. Despite accusing the regulars in the press of jumping the gun, he confirmed some of their worst fears: drinking area increased by 400%, emphasis on food to 8.00pm, targeting at the business community. All a far cry from the traditional community pub the Red Lion is today.

Let's hope that Robinsons see sense and have nothing to do with these senseless plans.

Richard and Sue Genders

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Burton Ale



STAGGER

BY: Kevin Wright - Brinnington & Portwood

On a cold Friday night in January, a hardy group of 12 turned out at the 'Farmers' on Brinnington Road. A rather uninspired exterior circa 1950's hid two very contrasting rooms. The vault was very run down and in need of even basic comforts whereas the lounge was very smart and pleasant. Cask beers were OB Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter both dispensed by handpumps. The OB was thought by most to be rather pleasant and far better than the Boddingtons. All in all, the pub is well worth a visit.

On now to the Jack and Jill. Housed in a building that bore a great resemblance to a branch library with a panoramic view out of its huge windows. Unfortunately, the decor was a reflection of the Robinsons beer - bland. The range included Best Mild and Best Bitter on electric pumps and Old Tom on gravity. The mild and Old Tom were felt to be below average, but to be fair the Old Tom was at the end of the barrel. The bitter fared better in most peoples opinion.

From there another brisk walk downhill brought us to the Rifle Volunteer on Carrington Road, our first Wilsons/Websters pub of the evening. The pub was very clean and recently refurbished. Compliments to the landlord for turning what is now very mediocre beer into something that was felt by most to be at least palatable. Cask beers available were Wilsons Bitter and Webster Bitter. The Wilsons went down far better than the Websters, which just highlights the fact that Websters is being turned into the national bland (oops sorry, brand) while Wilsons is facing being phased out.

Opposite on Newbridge Lane we entered another Grand Met hostelry, the Park. Inside the decor was pleasant and comfortable with a large L-shaped lounge and vault-cum-games room at the side. The cask beer range was Wilsons Bitter, Websters Bitter plus Ruddles County. All our drinkers voted with their feet and chose Wilsons which was thought to be acceptable. Sadly, Ruddles County was not available at the time, we all wondered whether this was anything to do with the happy hour and a half which was running at the time - the Wilsons was only 67p.

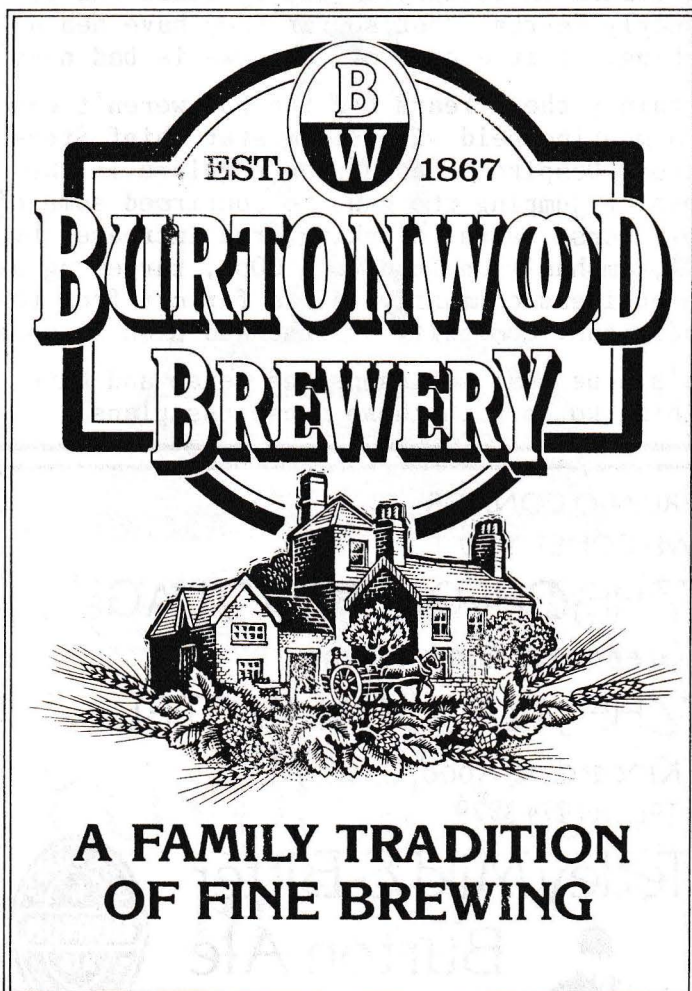
Down the road we came to the Midway, a large pub/resataurant which wouldn't look out of place in the country. This very welcoming pub was, until just over a year ago, a freehouse but is now in the John Smiths stable selling their bitter plus a very rare sight in this area, Courage Directors. Happily the beer quality is still of a high standard although many regulars mourn the loss of the widest range of cask ales in the Stockport area.

Around the corner was the Coach & Horses, a large busy two-roomed building with a good atmosphere. The beer, Boddingtons Bitter and Mild, like the pub, was thought to be very acceptable which some attributed to good cellar manship rather than the product.

Onto Great Portwood Street, we entered the Brinnington Inn, a nice traditional Robinsons pub that was friendly and humming with the sound of conversation, usually an indication of a good pub, and in this case no exception. Dispensed cask electrics were Best Mild and Best Bitter. As for the pub itself, a little decoration would not go amiss although it does seem that some breweries have forgotten what this word means and would rather rip the heart and soul out of what in most cases are perfectly acceptable pubs.

Just a stones throw away we came to the Old King, a fairly busy Bass pub. It consists of a main bar area with stained glass panels hanging over the wooden bar, set off from this are smaller, more comfortable rooms. There were two beers sampled, the first being Bass Light which was quite drinkable, the other was Stones Bitter.

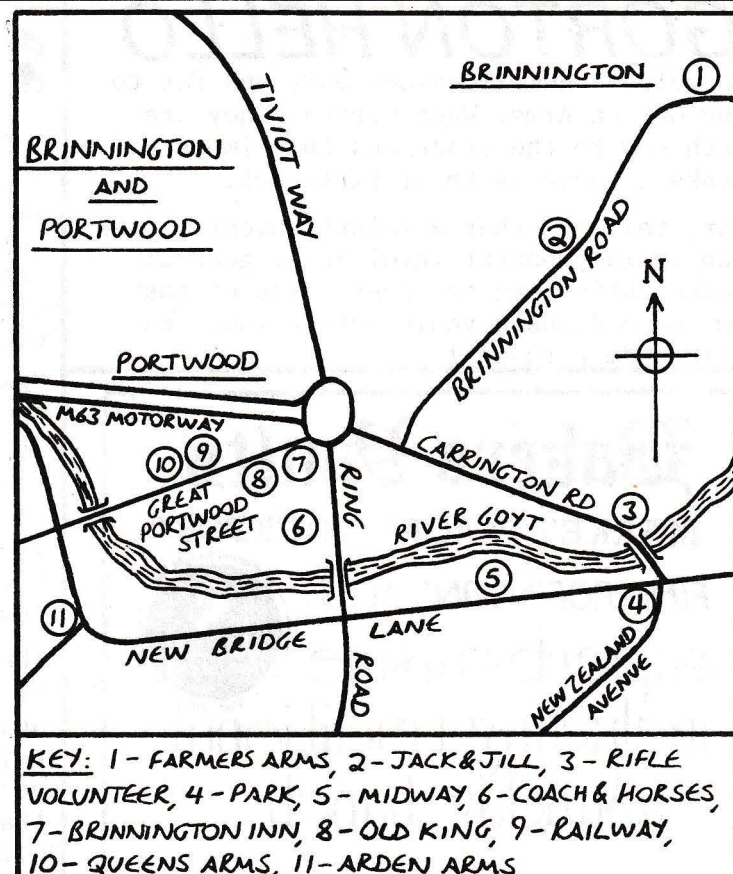
From here we shunted down to the Railway, a small street corner boozer from the outside



but inside deceptively large. This was our third and final Wilsons/Websters stop which just reinforced our opinion that good landlords are being let down by a very inferior product, all for the sake of mass markets, or as brewery spokesman like to call it, rationalising their portfolio, or as I like to call it, utter bullsh*t. If Grand Met have their way, in a couple of years all you will get from this brewery is Websters Yorkshire Bitter, Ruddles County and may -be 3 or 4 versions of Fos*** Kanga Wee.

Next came the Queens Hotel, a Robinsons house which looked slightly unkempt from the outside. Inside, the bar area was very compact, and the decor left much to be desired, including an unusual style of chairs which collapsed when picked up. Needless to say nobody was brave enough to actually sit on one. As one member put it, it was a "monument to bad taste" and we left wondering when the development company would be called in. Having said all this, the beer wasn't at all bad, both mild and bitter being thought better than average.

Just around the corner was our final stop, the Arden Arms which last year saw the retirement of long serving licensee, Jack May. Old Tom has now joined the mild and bitter on handpump and we all agreed that all three were the best beers of the night. New landlord Phil certainly seems to be maintaining this pub's high standards.



So ended an interesting evening's drinking. The views expressed are simply a reflection on what we found on the night, why not try some of the pubs and make up your own minds?

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SUN. 12.-3., 7.-10.30

GORTON HELLO

We welcome new licensees Gary and Pat to the Gorton Arms. West Gorton. They are both new to the trade and this imposing Banks's house is their first pub.

Gary tells us that a refurbishment of the pub is in prospect involving a general redecoration and the conversion of the virtually disused vault into a snug. We wish them both well.

BEER BOOKSHELF

It's been quite a while since a beer guide covering any part of Greater Manchester was produced and it is therefore doubly pleasant to welcome the new guide to Bolton, not only for much needed coverage of one of the less well known (from the beer drinkers view) areas of the county but also for being an excellent example of its type.

"Beer in Bolton" is certainly one of the most clearly laid out, easy to read guides produced for a long time. It kicks off with an introduction to the local beer scene and its changes in recent years and follows this up with good meaty articles on silly dress restrictions imposed by some pubs, lager, overpricing and the increasing trend to blandness in many beers. There is also a fascinating history of local brewers.

The main section of the guide of course, is devoted to listing all the real ale outlets in Bolton Metro and it is here that it really stands out. Too many guides offer only a cursory description of the pubs, here more space is devoted to providing descriptions that actually give you the flavour of the pub together with historic anecdotes which actually make you wan to visit many of the pubs listed, surely a sign of an effective guide.

The one area where the book falls down is on the maps which are poorly drawn and unhelpfully all placed at the back of the guide. This apart "Beer in Bolton" is an essential buy for all those interested in the local real ale scene and is available for £1.50 (p&p included) from Dave Tong, 17 Belmont Rd, Bolton, BL1 7AF

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TRAVELLER'S TOSH

There is usually nothing more hilarious than so-called guides and reports written by advertising executives who obviously know little or nothing about their chosen subject. The latest example comes courtesy of British Rail who have produced an amazing leaflet extolling the dubious virtues of the different canned beers available on Inter-City services.

OK, its easy to make fun of attempts to make junk beers like McEwans Export sound exciting (although so nondescript is this beer that the best that is said about it is that it is brewed 'in a distinctive red can...'), but when you are confronted with something which in all seriousness describes Websters Yorkshire Bitter as having a 'wholesome full bodied flavour' it is difficult not to burst into hysterical laughter (presumably the author of that thinks soda water is an exciting taste experience). The low point is reached when we are told that Grolsch, which is familiar to many in its stoppered bottle, is now available 'in the elegant can'. They'll be selling it at Habitat next! Until BR start providing free sick bags, beer lovers should give this lot a wide berth!

FESTIVAL LATEST

By the time you read this, posters will be springing up all over the place advertising what has become one of the main events of the year for Stockport drinkers - yes, it's Festival time again when the refectory at Stockport college is turned into the town's biggest pub for three days of excitement, fun and the chance to sample some of the best traditional beers the country can offer.

All the beer has now been ordered and although we gave a sneak preview of some of the ales last month, we are now able to reveal that we should have two firsts for Greater Manchester - lovers of dark beers will be delighted to learn that we hope to feature both Maclays Stout and Caledonian Porter, two fine Scottish beers which, as far as we know, have never before been sold locally. These will be complemented by the ever popular Timothy Taylors Porter and of course, Linfit English Guineas Stout, two festival favourites.

Another first this year will be in the food dept. - we are doing the catering ourselves this time and hope to offer a satisfying range of home-made hot food, including a vegetarian alternative at all sessions.

The entertainment's looking good too, we've something for everyone, ranging from traditional Irish folk music to Rhythm and Blues


Oh, and if you've any lingering doubts following last year's problem, that's been taken care of as well, our licence was granted on February 16th. Festival licensee is Kay Ord of Ye Olde Vic to whom many thanks

So, get those dates in your diary - March 30, 31 and April 1st. We open at 5.00pm on the Thursday - will you be first in the queue? Admission will be £1.00 in the evening, however if you present the voucher below you'll get 25p off on Thursday night. See you there!

If Stockport gives you the taste for festivals then you won't have long to wait for the next one. Just two weeks later the Great North Western Beer Festival is being held at the Sports and Exhibition Centre, Silverwell St., Bolton. This is being run as a combined effort by the Greater Manchester branches of CAMRA and, as the name suggests, it is the biggest event of its kind in the North west of England. There will be 120 real ales and ciders to chose from and the festival will open at 6.00pm on Wednesday 12th April. LUnchtime sessions will run from 12 noon until 4pm, reopening at 6 and running through to 11. If you want to know more about this phone 061 789 2323.

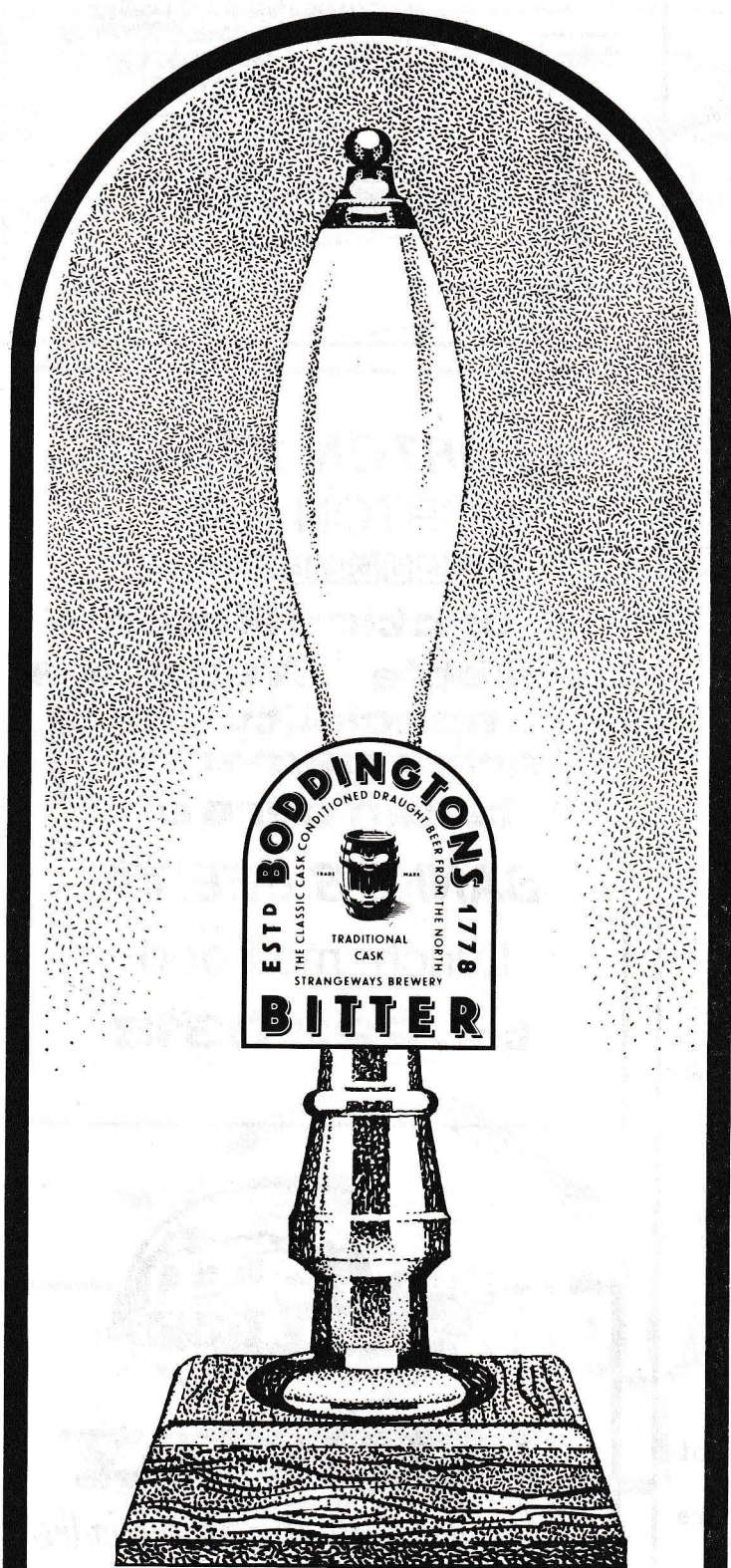


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**THE CLASSIC
CASK
CONDITIONED
BITTER**

BODDINGTONS COMPETITION

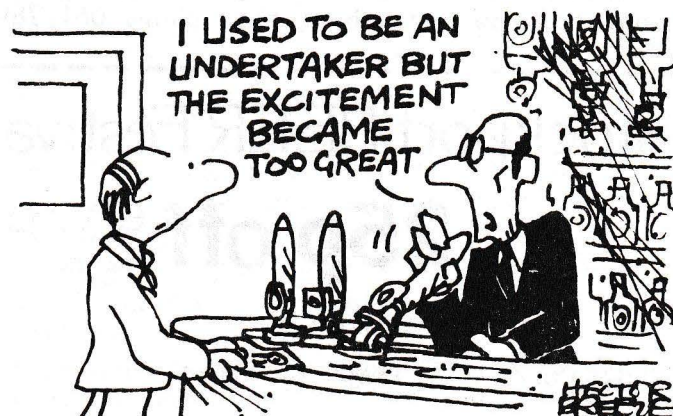
Readers will recall the competition we ran in the summer months in conjunction with Boddingtons, with a first prize of 50 pints of Boddies Bitter. We now have the results and can announce the winners.

First the answers which foxed a lot of you:

1. Why are Boddies beers always available in a drought? - the brewery use their own natural well water
2. What gives Boddies Bitter its distinctive pale colour? - only pale ale malt is used and no caramel added.
3. What is the source of finings and what is their effect on beer? - they are made from the swim bladders of tropical fish and cause the yeast to sediment, leaving clear beer.
4. What is the purpose of priming sugar? - to give a secondary fermentation
5. Where does the Boddies bee come from? - the City of Manchester crest
6. Why was the brewery originally built outside the Manchester boundary? - to avoid a grains tax imposed by Manchester Grammar School on grain milling within the city limits.
7. Who was the first Boddington to run the brewery? - Henry Boddington
8. What English hop varieties are renowned for their contribution to the flavour of beer? - Fuggles and Goldings.

Now the winners, Boddingtons Parker Pens are on their way to: Geoff Corfield, Brinnington; Rhys Jones, Belle Vue; Peter Edwardson, Stockport; Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel; Paul Felton, Withington; Charlotte Bulmer, Cheadle; Paul Thompson, Fallowfield; Linda Webb, Heaton Mersey; Andy Pringle, Oldham and Alan Webb, Stockport.

The overall winner, with 50 pints of Boddies Bitter, is Alastair Walker of New Mills. Our congratulations to Alastair for winning what proved to be a very difficult quiz.





CAMRA CALLING!

The first social event of the month is on Sat. 4th, with a day trip down to the West Midlands featuring a visit to Bathams Brewery at Brierley Hill. Spaces are strictly limited at the trip was full at the time of going to press. Phone to see if an vacancies have arisen.

This is followed on 6th with a Social at the Hind's Head, manchester Road, Heaton Chapel. Like all socials, this starts at 9.00pm. The branch meeting is on Thursday 9th and will be in the upstairs room at the Victoria, Wilmslow Road, Withington. all members should try and attend this important meeting as we will be selecting entries for the 1990 Good Beer Guide.

On Monday 13th there is a social at the Dolphin on Clowes Street, off Hyde Road, West Gorton and on Friday 17th we have our monthly Stagger. This month we are covering part of the Openshaw area kicking off at 7.00pm at the Royal Oak on Ogden Lane with an 8.30 meeting point at the Oddfellows on Abbey Hey Lane.

The following Monday, 20th, there is a social at the Red Lion in Cheadle. Will we be celebrating its escape from the clutches of Playmaster Leisure, let's hope so! On Thursday 27th we present our Pub of the Month award to the Station in Didsbury.

Last but not least, the month ends with the biggest social of all, Stockport Beer Festival. The festival opens at 5.00pm on Thursday 30th March, on Friday we open 11am-3pm and 5.30 - 11.00. On saturday we are open all day from 11am. This is an event you must not miss - see you there.

For more information about any of the above or any of our activities in general, phone me, Angela Walker on 0663 43769 (evenings)

NEW KING

A belated welcome to John and Josie Sullivan, formerly of the Kings Head, Ardwick, who after some time in Dukinfield are now running Tetley's Fir Tree in Reddish. Apologies for taking so long to pick the move up, but welcome anyway.



MANCHESTER MATTERS

Again, not too much to report this month. The latest addition to the City Centre's upmarket drinking haunts is the Gemstone on St Mary's Street, next to Kendals. Handpumped Stones Bitter is perhaps not the most enterprising beer they could have chosen - especially at 98p for what's, if you insist on a full measure, a full pint - but it must be an advance of sorts to get real ale into one of the city's proliferating cafe bars. Also surprisingly, the Gemstone also sells bottled White Shield, the famous sedimented Pale Ale. At 70p it's reasonably priced and well worth trying.

Turning to more recognisable pubs, the Crown & Anchor on Hilton St. has gained handpumped Marstons Pedigree but lost Taylors Ram Tam, while in a long overdue move the Square Albert has added handpumped Ind Coope Burton Ale to its range of Tetley beers.

As we went to press we also heard that the Royal George on Rochdale Raod was closed, whether permanently or not we cannot say.

GOODBYE

We say farewell to Stan Mason of the Grey Mare, Ashton Old Road, who is leaving the trade. It was Stan who returned the Grey Mare to cask beer after many years on Keg. He insisted that all the ales - mild, bitter and Trophy - should be handpumped and cask conditioned, and he ensured that they were always in prime condition. His successor has a hard act to follow. Let us also hope that the brewery at last put some money into improving the structure of this pub, without wrecking its character.

De Olde Vic Chatham St.
Edgeley

**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER
FREE HOUSE**

Guest Beers Weekly

**MARSTONS
TAYLORS**

**BATEMANS
TETLEYS**



PUB NEWS



Ruddles County is no longer on sale at the Navigation, Heaton Norris, the range is now Wilsons Mild and Bitter plus Websters Bitter.

The George and Dragon in Hazel Grove has been selling Wethereds Winter Royal recently. This powerful (og1055) dark ale originated at the old Wethered's Brewery in Marlow, Bucks. As with many other Whitbread breweries this was closed a couple of years ago and the beer is now produced in Cheltenham.

A much needed refurbishment is currently

underway at the Golden Lion, Hillgate, Stockport. Let's hope that this goes some way to restoring the fortunes of this pub which has had a chequered history in recent years. Any chance we wonder of Burtonwood installing the cask version of their Top Hat premium bitter, due to be launched shortly, in the pub when it reopens.

Whitbread intend to extend the Sherwood in Fallowfield to incorporate what can perhaps best be described as a licenced pizza parlour. This will accompany a general refurbishment of the pub as a whole.

We reported that Midsummer Leisure had bought the Circus, formerly the Devonshire, on the junction of London Rd and Devonshire Street in Ardwick. It seems that they have in turn leased the site to McDonalds who have obtained outline planning permission to demolish the old pub and adjoining properties to build a new drive-in burger bar. What a shame they can't 'burger off' and 'make our day' by leaving the old pub standing...

We understand the Manchester brewer Joseph Holts has purchased a further two pubs in central Manchester. We don't have full details yet, although one is rumoured to be the Crown & Cushion on Corporation Street.

As we went to press the Sun in September, Burnage was in the throes of a much needed redecoration. We believe that there may also be some external improvements with the building of a patio for outside drinking in the summer months.

Fritzbys in Fallowfield has reopened after an apparently undetectable refurbishment. Chesters Bitter remains available on handpump.

Tetleys have applied for permission to alter and extend the Shady Oak in Bramhall. The alterations will include the building of a conservatory extension to the pub.

Sam Smiths refurbishment of Turners Vaults in Stockport is due to be unveiled this month. Glimpses of work in progress point to a very impressive job indeed. Let's hope that Sams stick to their original intention and instal real ale in the pub. A full report, with luck, next month.

The Bottle Stop in Bramhall is to have the full range of Burton Bridge Brewery beers on sale with the Bitter (og1042) and Festival (og1055) featuring regularly.

Contributors to this edition: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Angela Walker, Alex Panesh, Stuart Ballantyne, Kevin Wright, Peter Edwardson, Robin Wignall, Paul Thompson, Ian Saunders

Copy date for next issue 21st March, publication 4th April. Details of advertising rates and postal subs. can be obtained from the address below



The Red Lion WITHINGTON

LUNCH 7 DAYS A WEEK

ALSO MON.-FRI. 5.30-8.00

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Handpulled Marstons  
Pedigree and Bitter

## Owd Rodger on draught Burton Best Bitter



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