

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

NO 76

# OPENING TIMES



August 1990 Special Cider Issue

## THE YANKS ARE COMING!

BY ALASTAIR WALKER

**H**AVING recently returned from a holiday in the United States, I am forced to reach the inescapable conclusion that American beer (with the exception of that produced by the growing number of micro-breweries) is the worst in the world. It is almost colourless, is lacking in body, is heavily polluted with CO<sub>2</sub>, and is totally devoid of that non-cost-effective hindrance known as flavour.

Although, on first impression, there appears to be a relatively large choice of different beers (eg Miller, Budweiser, Rainier, Coors, Michelob, etc), they are all virtually indistinguishable from each other in their identikit blandness. To add insult to injury, many of these products state brazenly on the can that they are made from natural ingredients. On closer examination of the contents listing, we find that these natural ingredients include such mouth-watering delicacies as maize, rice and corn syrup - not in the tiny

amounts, as are sometimes used to good effect by several traditional brewers in this country, but in huge great dollops as a cheap and nasty alternative carbohydrate source to good old-fashioned, but much more expensive, malted barley.

Why are we telling you all this? Because, in 1992, the Single European Market will come into effect, whereby virtually unrestricted trade will be allowed among all the countries of the EEC. Anheuser-Busch (the manufacturers of American Budweiser) is the biggest brewing company in the world, and already controls the vast majority of the American market. Therefore, in order to expand, it must take over breweries in Europe and the rest of the world. It is thought likely that this giant is poised to gobble up a large European, or even quite conceivably British, brewery in order to gain access to the single European market.

Since several of the better-

known American brands, through trading agreements with British breweries, are already contaminating the shelves of supermarkets and bars in this country, it would be a disaster if this infiltration was uncontrolled in 1992. The big brewers in this country are quite capable of supplying us with tasteless fizz-water without any help from their American counterparts. So please don't be conned by the expensive, glossy, alluring adverts currently being foisted on us by the American brewers. To use their own quaint terminology - THEIR BEER SUCKS!

[Note - the latest wheeze of our Trans-Atlantic friends is so-called 'dry beer', which is apparently brewed to have NO AFTERTASTE - surely the ultimate debasement of the brewers art. Despite being wildly successful in the United States, attempts to market these beers in the UK have so far been less than successful. Some products, it seems are too bland for even the most dedicated lager-victim.]

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# OT COMMENT

## CIDER SPECIAL

**W**HY CIDER, you are probably wondering, after all there's virtually none of the traditional stuff available in these parts.

That, of course, is entirely the point. Stockport and South Manchester has always been an area rich in real ale, the keg revolution of the sixties left us virtually unscathed, but real cider is under greater threat than real ale ever was, real perry could become extinct by the end of the century. Ah well, you might think, that's because there's no demand for the stuff. Nothing could be further from the truth - our experience at the Stockport Beer Festivals and the experience of those few pubs enterprising enough to make a serious attempt at selling it tells a different tale. We seriously believe that locally there is a strong, untapped demand for traditional ciders and perries, and this issue aims not only to let you, the casual drinker, know a little more about these superb drinks, but also perhaps to nudge one or two of the more enterprising licenses in the area into giving it a try.

Fears that 'scrumpy' as most traditional cider is wrongly called, will attract the 'wrong element' are groundless - there are no problems at those few pubs that do sell the stuff, and this year's Stockport Beer Festival, where we sold more than ever, was entirely trouble free. With the lifting of the cider tie on national brewers tenanted pubs, we, the consumers, have a once in a lifetime chance to bring about as great a revolution in cider drinking as we did with beer drinking 15 years ago. The opportunity is there - ask for real cider in your local.

## WELCOME

**W**ITH this issue of Opening Times we welcome several hundred new readers - a circulation increase of over 20% to 2500 copies a month arguably makes OT the most widely read CAMRA newsletter in the North West. We hope you like what you see - and if you don't, tell us!

### AUGUST

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 August goes to the **Victoria** on Hall Street in Offerton.

Formerly a Wilsons house it changed hands in a 1970 pub swap with Greenalls who have owned the pub ever since. Last year saw a major refurbishment and the pub now boasts a spacious, thriving vault and a large, comfortable lounge. Four cask beers are on sale - Greenalls Mild and Bitter, Davenports Bitter and the premium Thomas Greenall's Original and all are kept in excellent condition thanks to the hard work of licensee Ian Sherry and his wife, Christine. Particularly commendable is the way in which Ian has increased mild sales to between three and four 18-gallon barrels a week.

All in all, a richly deserved award and all are invited to the presentation night, August 23rd, when a memorable evening is in prospect. To get there the S14 bus runs from Stockport, but for those wishing to work up a thirst it's only a 15 minute walk from the town centre.

## HEALD GREEN HEIST

Not surprisingly, Boddingtons Bitter has joined the range at the Heald Green Hotel on Finney Lane. The price? A giveaway £1.08 a pint. This, of course, is to be expected at this ridiculously overpriced establishment - it also sells Chesters Mild at 98p, Chesters Bitter at £1.02 and, worst of all, Marstons Pedigree at £1.36. Excluding the City Centre hotels, this latter must be one of the most expensive pints in the area, so much so, in fact, that when the other prices rose at the end of last month, it was planned to come down - perhaps even Whitbread realise that there are some limits to the profiteering that they can get away with.

When Opening Times called only the Pedigree and Mild were available and the Pedigree was very poor. The pub is due to close for major alterations on 8th September.

Alan and June Preston  
invite you to

**The Hinds Head  
opening times**

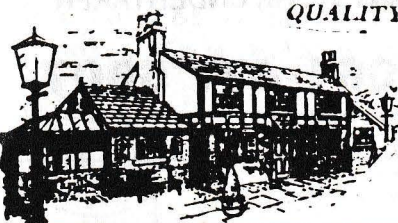
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## Managers v. Tenants

**T**HERE has been much debate over the years, on the thorny question of whether managed pubs were inferior to tenanted houses. The argument most commonly used has been that a manager, who is an employee of the brewery, may not have a financial stake in the prosperity of the pub; he can expect to be paid anyway, unlike a tenant, who makes his profit out of a full pub and will be committed to improving turnover and the pub.

There is a noticeable trend for some breweries to replace tenants with managers in their tied houses, sometimes when a tenant retires, or, less palatably, by raising rents or using other means to encourage a tenant to leave. Does this mean that tenants, or pub goers are getting a rough deal? When a brewery installs a manager it can make a large share of the profit, but at the same time, it has a greater incentive to spend money on the property to increase turnover. In contrast a tenant may have been unable to afford to invest capital in a property he did not own, and many properties have become run down. On the other hand, many pub refurbishments have been badly judged, and lack the sensitivity that a tenant would have for his pub and his regulars.

There are a number of angles to consider and no doubt many of you will have strong views. There are good and bad examples of both managers and tenants, but which system is best? Is their room for both? The Manager v Tenant Debate is now open. Let's have your views, and we promise to print the results.

## Pub Vandalism Awards

**H**AS your local been turned into a tacky theme bar? Or a yuppie food bar? Has it had some fine old features removed for no good reason, or perhaps it has been knocked down for a dubious road scheme. If so, then it could be a prime candidate for one of CAMRA's 'Pub Vandalism Awards'.

CAMRA believes that the threat to our traditional pubs has never been greater and, to highlight the problem, CAMRA branches up and

down the country are looking at pubs in their areas, identifying the worst excesses and giving them the publicity they truly deserve.

Of course, we can't visit every pub and so we need your help. If you've got a gripe about what's happened to your local, or if your local simply isn't there any more, then let us know. Please send your nominations to the address on the back page by 20th August. We will try and mention all entries, we hope to produce



photographs of the 'worthy' winners.

**TURN LEFT AT THE SITE OF THE  
ROSE AND CROWN, UP THE HILL  
PAST WHAT USED TO BE THE KING'S  
HEAD, BEAR RIGHT AT THE RUINS OF  
THE DOG AND DUCK...**



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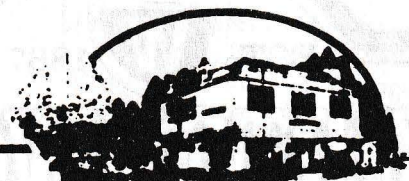


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# STAGGER

BY: PAUL FELTON

**F**RIDAY 25th May, saw a dozen of us assembled for a trip round the delights of Bramhall, Woodford and Cheadle Hulme.

First stop was the **Shady Oak**, hidden in the middle of a newish housing estate on Radford Drive in Bramhall. It was built about 5 years ago as a free house serving Ruddles and Taylors beers, but was bought by Tetleys shortly thereafter and has recently been completely refurbished in typical Tetley fashion. It is well broken-up in layout, with split-level seating areas and two bars. Four beers were available: Thwaites Bitter, which was pretty good; Tetley Bitter, which was OK; Marstons Pedigree which was below average, and Burton Ale, which no-one tried.

Next was the **Ladybrook**, on Fir Road, also in Bramhall. It's owned by Boddington PubCo and serves handpumped mild and bitter (it also used to sell Higsons, but that's now disappeared). Refurbished about two years ago, the multi-roomed layout has been retained. The local snooker club has its own private room, there's a side lounge off, a snug area built into the main lounge, and a vault at the back. The beers were both above average with the mild marginally preferred. The service, however, was very slow

considering the number of bar staff.

Another Boddingtons pub was third on the list, the **Victoria** on Ack Lane. From the road it does not really look like a pub; inside it has been refurbished (typical Boddingtons this time), and not necessarily for the better. Smart, plush, split-level, wood, Laura Ashley wallpaper, fan on the ceiling - you've seen countless pubs just the same. The front area is very much for the young (except for two old gents, looking very out of place propping up the bar), but there is a more sedate room at the back. The beer was slightly above average.

Best pub of the night was next - the **Davenport Arms** on Chester Road (A5102) in Woodford. This is a classic country pub with several rooms. The beers are Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter and the comparatively recent addition of Hartleys XB, and despite the pub being popular with the upwardly mobile from the surrounding stockbroker belt, the prices were very reasonable. The pub was the only one we visited which is in the current Good Beer Guide and it showed - the Best Mild was well above average, the Best Bitter was very good, but most of us tried the Hartleys which was the best of the lot, and by some way the most popular beer of the night. (Don't be put off by the fact that the Hartleys comes from a free-flow electric pump, it is cask conditioned).

Dragging ourselves away, our next stop was a complete contrast - Grand Met's **Smithy** on Grove Lane. It was an interesting pub, unprepossessing from the outside - all car park and long, low frontage - inside it has an impressive range of facilities. There is a large Games Room with two pool tables and darts board, a conservatory/childrens room and out at the back a beer garden with special childrens seating and even an ice cream stall. There are four beers available: Wilsons Bitter, Websters Bitter, Ruddles Best Bitter and Websters Choice. The Ruddles was entirely reasonable but most people chose the Choice, which was pretty good.

The **Church** in Cheadle Hulme is a Robinsons pub with the predictable Best Mild and Best Bitter. It serves a large residential area, and so was very busy, quite the busiest of the night, in fact. Inside it's multi-roomed with a nice line in wood panelling in the bar. Both beers were in good form, with little, if anything, to choose between them. One point worth a mention - although the pub was bursting at the seams (we had to sit outside), the service was impressively fast. The Church also does good lunchtime food.

Last was the **Cheadle Hulme**, perhaps better known to many as the old Junction. Formerly this was a very basic pub but ~~Holts~~ have flung a great deal of money at it, tarring the place up considerably, putting in a restaurant, nice carpet etc but...have they got it right? The restaurant is large and, by all accounts, under-used and, worse still, a large part of the lounge area is 'reserved for diners' with the ludicrous result that on a busy Friday night almost half the pub was empty whilst in the rest it was standing room only. It would have also have made sense to keep a vault to accomodate some of the more traditional of the pub's customers (there was a minor scuffle while we were there). The beer was pretty good though, and the attempt to drag the pub upmarket has had no effect on the prices - mild and bitter are still 71p and 76p respectively. As ever these comments simply reflect what we found on the night - why not try the pubs for yourself?

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# CIDER

## SPECIAL

## What is Real Cider? Cider Guide Review Perry - will it survive? Where to find it

**C**IDER, you say? Oh yes, I know that - keg Strongbow perhaps, 'of for the trendy, Diamond White, a fancy bottle at a fancy price.

Sorry, but that's not what we mean. These drinks are, I suppose, ciders of a sort, but they bear even less resemblance to REAL cider than a can of Kestrel does to the tasty traditional beers that Opening Times readers know and love.

### APPLE

So what is real cider? Well, CAMRA's specialist cider group, known punningly as APPLE, has come up with a lengthy definition for the best of cider but, sparing the technicalities, it's looking for cider:

made from freshly pressed whole apples

not pasteurised

not filtered

not chemically treated

not served by carbon dioxide pressure

Some of the bigger firms, for a number of reasons, are unable to meet this definition, while at the same time producing some perfectly acceptable ciders. APPLE therefore also recognises those ciders which are not made entirely from apple concentrate and are not served by gas pressure. (Apple concentrate, widely used by the big cider firms to cushion fluctuations in the domestic market, is a study in itself,

and could do with more research. Much of it comes from Malawi, which is not a country noted for its apple crop, it is however rather close to South Africa - but that's another story)

### CONSORTIUM

Now, as readers who helped drink the 1000 pints of real cider that ran out at Stockport Beer Festival in the Spring will no doubt be aware, real cider isn't easy to find round here. The reason is clear - of the three big firms that between them sell 95% of Britain's "draught" cider, two (Taunton and Showerings) are owned either directly or via a consortium by national brewing firms, while the third (Bulmers) is also heavily involved with the national brewers via a series of distribution deals. Just as with beer, national brewers want a product that is consistent, foolproof to handle, and bland - features which in the main exclude real cider (though it must be said that real cider is easier to manage in the pub cellar than is real ale).

### TRENDSETTERS

An opportunity now beckons, though, in particular for tenanted pubs owned by the national brewers. As is well known, such pubs can now sell guest beers of the licensee's - not the brewery's - choice. Many people still don't realise that, for these pubs, the same legislation also abolished

the tie on "non-beer drinks" - and that means cider. I can think of many pubs where an extra draught beer would simply divide the present trade between the two beers to the detriment of quality but where a small tub of cider (they come as small as 2½ gallons) on the bar would offer a genuine alternative to people looking for something different. If you are a regular in (or the tenant of) a national brewer's tenancy, why not get your pub to be one of the real cider trendsetters? It's cheap, it's easy, and there's none of the nonsense with breweries saying you can't use their pumps (you just serve it straight from the tub). a number of suppliers are listed in the Good Cider Guide, and your local CAMRA branch can also advise (contact via the editor).

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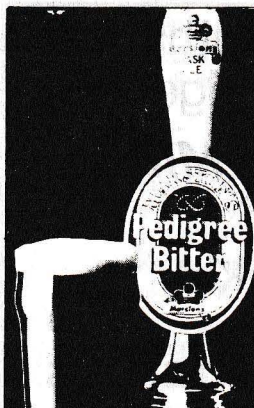
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# 6 CIDER SPECIAL

Charlotte Bulmer reviews the Good Cider Guide

**F**IRST, a declaration of interest: I'm a fan, though not a knowledgeable one, of traditional cider. Thus, I'm inclined to be enthusiastic about this book, before I've even opened it.

What am I expecting? It says on the cover 'Good Cider Guide', so it should tell me what cider is, what makes one cider different from another; what the difference is between 'real' and 'keg' and why it matters (this is a CAMRA publication, after all); and perhaps tell me something about how cider is made, and who makes it. Last, but most important, I want to know where I can find good cider, both near home, and wherever I might be thinking of taking a holiday. Do I get all this? The answer is yes, and a bit more.

## DEFINITIVE

The format of the Good Cider Guide follows very closely that of the Good Beer Guide. It divides itself by county, with outline maps; it lists, with brief descriptions, pubs and off-licenses that sell traditional cider, and cider makers. All good, useful information, well presented. Unlike the Good Beer Guide, it aims to be a definitive list of every cider outlet in the country. This begs the question: is the quality of the cider you are served ultimately dependent upon the skill of the landlord, as it is with the beer? If not, why not? If so, then

this guide lacks the Good Beer Guide's idiosyncratic (and ever fallible) guidance as to what is good.

The county by county listings bring home the uneven availability of cider.

It's a form of north-south divide: Nottinghamshire, for example, shows a mere three locations where cider can be found; but Devon's map is all but unreadable for the proliferation of outlets. Being optimistic, perhaps this Guide might wake up a few licensees, and nudge them into introducing this lovely, subtle, tasty drink to parched and deprived areas.

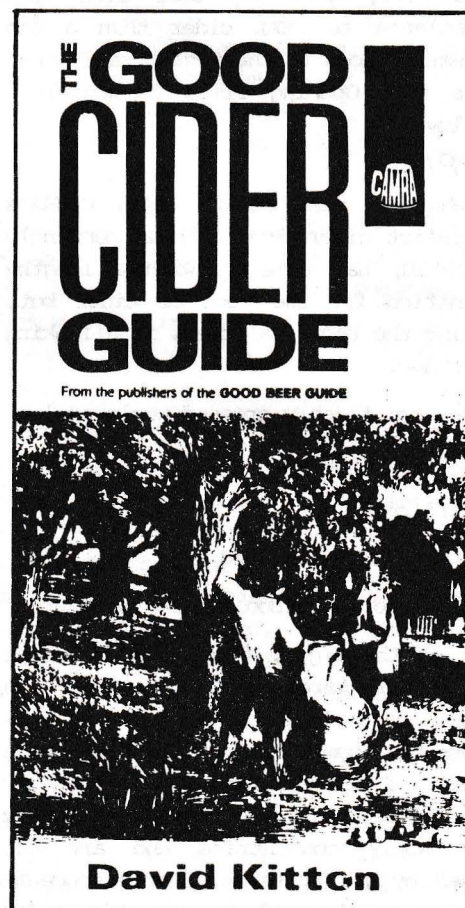
## PARAGONS

Near on a third of the Guide is taken up with unrelentingly enthusiastic descriptions of all the individual cider makers. Don't any of these paragons ever have just one off day? Or worthy-but-dull produce? It's all a bit unbelievable; each spiel is in itself quite fascinating, and probably even true; but when every article is so uncritical, sometimes to the point of reading like an advertisement, one becomes bored (and sceptical). A bit of honest criticism would give more credibility to the praise. Useful, though, is the factual listing of each maker's location, opening times, facilities (eg camping sites), and ciders available; this is, after all, a tourist guide. It also highlights an important difference from brewers of beer - how many breweries welcome visitors strolling up, knocking on the front door and asking to buy a couple of pints?

Overall, criticisms apart, this has to be as indispensable a book as the Good Beer Guide; informative, enjoyable,

and an invaluable aid to those seeking out the rare, quirky, individual golden nectar that is cider. Of course the only real way of checking out the accuracy of the information is to explore: visit the pubs, find the off licences, spend a few days holidaying in Herefordshire; I'd hoped to do this, to help write this review but, alas, the editor of Opening Times refused my entirely reasonable request for expenses!

**The Good Cider Guide: David Kitton: Alma Books Ltd 1990; £5.95.**



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# CIDER

## SPECIAL

PERRY - PARED TO THE BONE *by Rhys Jones*

**M**OST people have a rough idea what cider is; but, be honest, - have you ever heard of perry? Very likely not: perry is fermented pear juice, similar to cider but derived, not from apples but from specific varieties of pears. The variety is important - one writer records that even the farmyard pigs would shrink from eating the perry pears.

Once on a day, perry must have been made throughout the fruit-growing districts of these islands. Today, though, it is confined to a heartland that is small even in the context of traditional cider territory. Farmhouse perry's heartland is the land between Severn and Leadon on the Herefordshire-Gloucestershire border. Beyond that country, those who speak of perry know it only as that bizarre concoction, Babycham.

The decline in the making of perry is linked directly to the reduced acreage now put to perry pears. This in turn has its roots in changes in farming practice, where increasing specialisation (not to mention subsidy-hunting) has seen the demise of former systems in which fruit-growing formed a traditional part of a small mixed farming enterprise. Today's farming trends, though, could be set to throw perry a lifeline. Thanks to the EEC's impenetrable agricultural policies, the talk today is of "extensification" and "low-energy-input" farming (this year's Farmwoman of the Year got her gong for turning several hundred acres of Wiltshire "organic"). In such times, the planting of standard perry pear trees, of such varieties as survive, could prove to be a good, if unconventional, long-term bet.

Let's hope so. For the resulting drink - never a major commercial product even in the heyday of real cider, and now exceptionally hard to find - combines the dry-to-sweet spectrum of real cider with a delicacy and finesse all its own. Real perry is unique: it must survive.

## Hereford - City of Cider

**I**F YOU want a day out drinking and learning about cider, why not try Hereford (hourly train service from Piccadilly and Stockport)?

The Cider Museum, despite considerable Bulmers funding, gives an admirably objective view of the growth of the industry, with a well stocked gift shop featuring their own cider brandy - it's open 9-5 weekdays, every month but January, and the city of Hereford has several good cider pubs, notably the Sun on St Owen Street and the Saracen's Head on St Martin's Street. You can also buy quality bottled cider from such firms as Dunkertons and Westons at Dickinsons on Bridge St (across the Wyse Bridge from the Saracens) and the Shop Under The Clock on Commercial Road (near the station). CAMRA members have the chance to join APPLE's annual trip - this year on October 13th and will feature Devon Cidermakers - details from CAMRA HQ.

## Westrags Cider & Traditional Beer Supplies

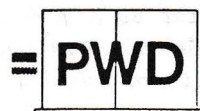
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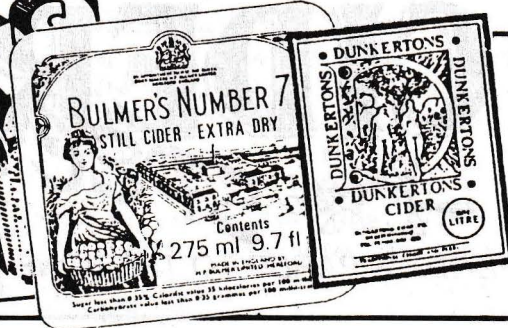
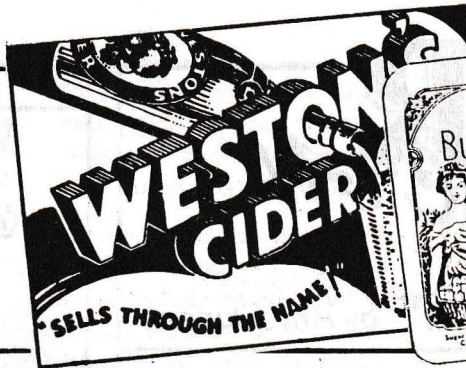
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# CIDER SPECIAL



Rhys Jones tells you where to get it



**N**O, there's not much real cider in and around Manchester and Stockport. But the outlets are there, if you know where to find them - so here's a quick whizz round the local pages of the Good Cider Guide.

The first thing to say is that, like any guide, things do change. Two of the outlets listed sadly no longer sell real cider - the Cottage Hotel in Delph and the Bottle Corner (off-licence) in Levenshulme. Happily, though, these are more than balanced by a clutch of new outlets not in the Guide. Three of these are amongst Greater Manchester's best-known free-houses or "relaxed tie" pubs - the **Duke of York** in Eccles, **Rose & Crown** in Bury, and **Tap & Spile** in Rochdale, all recently selling Bulmers on hand-pump, though Westons could also appear, at least in the Tap & Spile. On the off-licence scene, many branches of **Oddbins** sell a range of Westons bottles and flagons, while **Shaw Heath Wines**, opposite the Florist (Stockport), has the very creditable West Country Scrumpy from the Cheddar wholesalers of that name.

Turning to those outlets listed in the Guide, the first call for any Manchester cider fan has to be the **Beer House** on Rochdale Road. With always four or five ciders on, and always a perry to boot (an exceptionally rare achievement), this is one

of the few pubs anywhere in the country where cider drinkers can indulge their taste without feeling like second class citizens. Much the same ethos, though not always quite so wide a range of cider, prevails at the **Crescent** in Salford, which also wins special praise for stocking the exquisite and bone-dry Bulmers No7 bottled cider (which is in fact a 'single apple' cider, made solely from the Dabinett variety). It's a shame other city centre free-houses, like the **Queens** in Cheetham and the **Marble Arch**, don't follow the example of these two, for the only other real cider in central Manchester is acceptable, but overpriced, Bulmers at the **Lass o'Gowrie** and the **Salisbury**.

East of Manchester, Saddleworth still has an outlet in the **Golden Fleece** at Denshaw, with handpumped Bulmers; further north in the **Red Lion** at Littleborough, a cider and beer enthusiast landlord (a Wilsons tenant with Lees Bitter as a guest) sells various ciders (Bulmers, Thatchers etc) on handpump - if you ask for medium you might get dry and sweet blended! Further south, Robinwood Brewery's **Auld Lang Syne** in Oldham still seems to be selling real cider most of the time, and in Tameside there's Thatcher's at the **Witchwood** in Ashton and a varying selection of cider amongst the weird and wonderful ales at **Stalybridge Station Buffet**.

West of Manchester, though long-standing cider outlet, the **Red Lion** at Haigh appears to have deserted the fold, Wigan Metro still has an outlet in the **Half Moon**, Tyldesley, with West Country Scrumpy (as at Shaw Heath Wines). In Bolton, the famous and historic **Olde Man & Scythe**, though considerably refurbished and now with real ale (and bouncers) as well as real cider, still has a healthy sale of handpumped Bulmers.

On the off-licence scene, as well as Shaw Heath Wines, the off-licence cum grocers opposite the Pomona on Reddish Lane in Gorton, also has West Country Scrumpy - a useful place to know.

Finally, no mention of cider round Manchester would be complete without the **Railway** at Ashburys. The Framptons cider sold there rapidly became a legend, if only for its hefty strength (8% alcohol by volume), and other ciders also featured, not least at a memorable cider festival last summer. Sadly, Frampton's present owners have discontinued traditional cider and the Railway has been 'between ciders' for most of the summer although we now understand that it will be selling James White cider from Suffolk, which may be joined or followed by other ciders depending on sales.




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## On The Right Track

**W**E reported last month that our intended July pub-of-the-month, the Railway, Manshaw Road, Openshaw was changing hands, and expressed our concern that the new manager would have a hard act to follow. Initial impressions are that our fears were unfounded. The pub is now in the hands of Barry and Margaret Wilson who held the Winston in Salford for 21 months. Better news still is that Holts are committed to spending a considerable sum on the pub, much of it in improving the living accommodation. Also on the cards is a tasteful redecoration of the public area, with new seating in the Commercial Room, and the poolroom to be converted into a snug/family room, complete with new floor. The splendid collection of railway prints remains.

On a recent visit, Opening Times was invited to inspect the cellars, which were spotless. Turnover is still running at around 10 barrels a week, one of which is mild, and business is confidently expected to improve. Barry is considering putting on singers and would consider small-scale catering if there was the demand. Even more encouraging for lovers of pub architecture is that Barry is asking Holts to replace the magnificent lamp which used to be such a distinctive feature of the front of the pub. Armed with photographs from the CAMRA archive, Barry is confident of success.

This excellent pub is clearly in very good hands and deserves to be supported; we expect it will go from strength to strength.

## Boring Boddies

**T**HE Boddington PubCo continues to take a few faltering steps into the guest beer market. Further evidence of their policy has emerged with the arrival of Theakstons Bitter in the George, Mersey Square, Stockport (where the existing range of Boddingtons Bitter and Sheffield-brewed 'Higsons' Bitter is unaltered) and the Old Garrat on Granby Row, Manchester (where it has replaced Oldham Bitter).

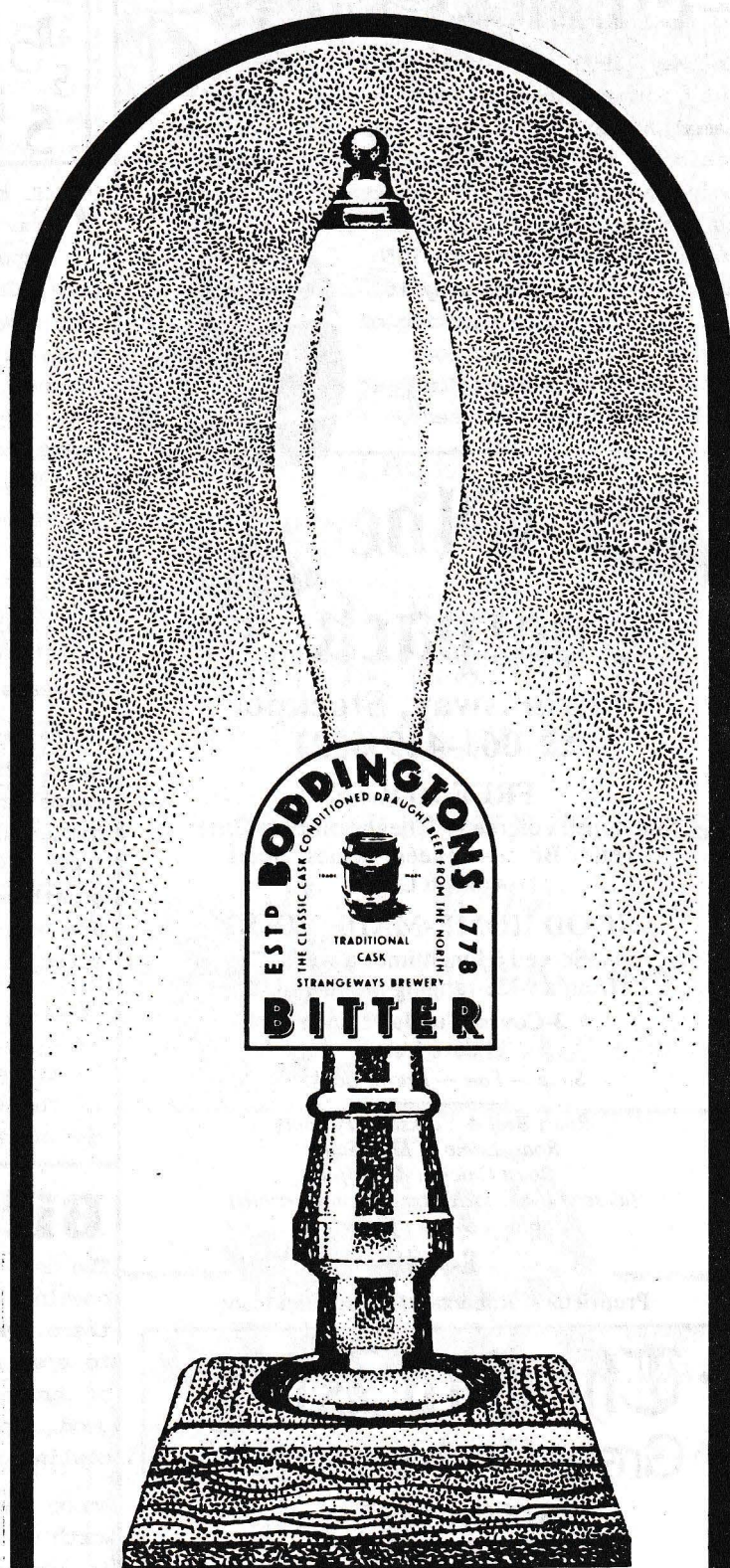
Possibly the PubCo are looking for a safety net should Whitbread decide to 'rationalise' Boddies Bitter (although to be fair, the latest information we have from the brewery is that Whitbread are very anxious that nothing should change), but what a pity they have chosen another of the national brewers - they already have an arrangement with Tetley. It would be nice to see them turn to another local or regional independent brewer. Even so, the precedent has been set for other Boddies pubs has been set and we await developments with interest - what beers, for example, will be sold at the Kings Arms on Bloom St in Salford, which the PubCo intend to turn into a 'freehouse'?

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## CIDER FACTS

In May 1988 a national cider committee was formed within CAMRA; the quaintly named APPLE - the Apple and Pear Produce Liaison Executive. Apple has numerous objectives, the most important of which is to promote traditional cider to the public. If you want more info about cider, particularly if you are a licensee thinking of trying it out, contact our local APPLE rep, Rhys Jones at 24 Ellen Wilkinson Crescent, M12 4JU (tel 231 6465).



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## YEARS AGO

THE main story on the front page of Opening Times in August 1985 concerned the small West Midlands brewery of J.P. Simpkins, who supplied "distinctive and truly local beers" to their own 16 pubs. Greenall Whitley had taken them over, and very quickly closed them down. Simpkins was one of a clutch of small breweries in that area, where the brewery tap was virtually part of the brewery - then Greenalls announced that they would demolish the brewery to enlarge the car park of the brewery tap, and the pubs would be supplied with beers from their Wem subsidiary. As we know, they closed Wem early in 1988. What a dismal performance.

Pub of the Month was the Castlewood, near Stockport Market, with Wilsons Mild and Bitter. The Mild has now gone, and Websters Bitter is sold alongside Wilsons. There has been another change, too. The bar used to be on the right as you went in off Bridge Street Brow - it's now in front of you, which is apparently where it used to be years ago.

There were some comments on the use of hand-pumps to dispense keg beer. The culprit in this case was Burtonwood, with a pair of hand-pumps in the Black Lion at Llanfaethlu, Anglesey - both mild and bitter hand-pumps said Cask Conditioned, but the mild was keg. It took quite a while to get things put right, but even now there's something odd about the place. Both Cask Conditioned and Keg Bitter are the same price, £1.07, which seems high for a beer of this strength.

Finally, 'Round Britain Drinker' covered the Scottish Highlands - with more complaints than compliments about the beer, it does tend to remind us what a wonderful selection of real ale is available in the Greater Manchester area - so it must be the scenery that's the attraction in Scotland.

## Bits and Pieces

The new conservatory at the Red Lion in Withington had a 'gala' opening at the end of last month, and of course, Opening Times was there. Marstons laid on the usual lavish hospitality that they seem to specialise in on these occasions but, despite possible accusations of bribery, it has to be said that they have done a particularly good job. Complete with its own separate bar and overlooking the bowling green, the new extension is a definite asset to the pub.

Among various licensee changes that have cropped up lately, two worth mentioning are the Golden Lion on Stockport's Hillgate which is continuing its tradition of about one landlord a year, and the Red Lion in Hazel Grove - let us hope that Greenalls will be taking this opportunity to do something about the appalling state of this pub (and perhaps introduce real ale to boot).

Another pub is taking guest beers. This time it's Tetley's Plough in Heaton Moor which has introduced Robinson's Best Bitter alongside the Tetleys, Jennings and Burton Ale already available. Not perhaps the most enterprising choice for a Stockport pub, although to be fair it will be the only Robinsons available in the general area.

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## PUB NEWS



The **Seven Stars** in Openshaw closed for alterations on 29th July. The etched windows will be removed and used again, but not necessarily in the pub. The manager and his wife will be working on relief management while the work progresses. We will bring you a full report when the pub reopens.

The handpump in the **Bulls Head**, Reddish, which dispensed Draught Bass for a short time earlier this year, and has been due for removal ever since, now sports a Bass Special Bitter clip, but was still inoperative on a recent visit.

On demolition of the **Unicorn**, West Gorton, to make way for the Intermediate Relief Road, the licensees will be staying with the Boddington PubCo and making the short journey to the **Royal Oak** in Gorton. We wish them well in their new surroundings.

The **Little Jack Horner** on Wellington Street, Stockport, whilst being an excellent little pub, has long had the drawback of offering only one cask beer - Websters Yorkshire Bitter. This, however, has now been joined by Ruddles County. What about a guest beer as well?

Gorton & District Sunday Pool League is this year having a competition sponsored by one of the local pubs. On Sunday, September 2nd, the **Railway**, Pottery Lane, Ashburys will host the 3-Man Challenge Trophy (it says here - hopefully women may also play), starting at 12 noon.

The day that this issue of Opening Times comes out (August 7th) sees Whitbread auctioning off a few of their 'no-hoper' inner city pubs. All for sale 'with very low reserves' are the **Pop Inn**, Openshaw; the **Steam Engine**, Ardwick; the **Marsland** and the **City Gates**, West Gorton. With the possible exception of the Marsland, it is difficult seeing anyone buying these with a view to running them as pubs - the City Gates and the Pop Inn are derelict and the Steam Engine has struggled to do any form of business for years (and on one Stagger in the area served up what must be the all-time awful pint of Chesters Mild).

The **Railway** on Avenue St, Portwood, Stockport, has reopened as **Cheekies**. Inside, not much seems to have changed, apart from a liberal coating of pink paint. But outside - Stockport must now have the most tasteless pub sign in the country as the old hanging sign has been covered by dark blue paint and on each side now sports a pair of shiny pink plastic buttocks! ON the beer front apart from Wilsons and Websters Bitter, the pub

also sells Robinsons Best Bitter as a guest beer, not the most enterprising choice, given the location of the pub, but a step in the right direction, nevertheless.

Stockport's **Manchester Arms** was closed as we went to press. The problems of the out-going licensee have already been aired in the local press but, notwithstanding what has now happened Martin Gibbs was a good friend to CAMRA and an asset to the local pub scene. He will be sorely missed. The pub was due to re-open at the beginning of August under new licensee Bill Bromley, whose first pub this will be. He has our best wishes.

Contributors to this edition: Alastair Walker, John Clarke, Stan Chlebicki, John Tune, George Symes, Paul Felton, Rhys Jones, Charlotte Bulmer, Martin Sellers, Phil Levison, Dennis Rowlinson,

Copy date for the next issue 24th August, publication 6th September.

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Opening Times is published by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA — the Campaign For Real Ale. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the campaign either locally or nationally. Editor: John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9WD. Tel: 477 1973 (home), 831 7222 ext. 3411 (work). News, articles and letters welcome. All items © CAMRA:: may be reproduced if source acknowledged.