

# OPENING TIMES

NUMBER ONE

JUNE 1984.

SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA'S PUB NEWSHEET - ISSUED FREE WITH 'WHAT'S DOING?'

## BEAUTIFUL BODDIES?

WHAT'S  
HAPPENED TO  
THE  
FAMOUS BREW?

Many drinkers are now asking "What has happened to Boddies?"

At Camra's AGM last year, a resolution was carried which deplored Boddingtons current policies, one of which was 'the continuing blandness and lack of distinctive character compared with 10 years ago' - so Manchester Branches visited all their Boddingtons Pubs to try and find out what was going on.

The comments from South Manchester members were particularly revealing - average, bland, boring, characterless, nondescript, ordinary, unimpressive - these were only some of the uncomplimentary remarks under the heading 'character of the beer'.

Could this really be the famous Boddingtons?

Where was that 'distinctive bitter tang'? and the 'appealing nutty flavour'? There were some complimentary remarks, but these were reserved mainly for the Mild, and, sadly, about a third of the pubs have no mild (unless you count Oldham Keg).

On the financial side, the Manchester Evening News reported that Boddingtons' profits were below most estimates for the year, but the underlying growth was in line with other regional brewers. Beer volume sales were down compared with a small increase in the U.K. market as a whole.

Are the drinkers voting with their feet?

Phil Levison.

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### WELCOME TO "OPENING TIMES".

This is the first edition of a new service to South Manchester and Stockport beer drinkers.

Opening Times is written and published by the South Manchester Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale and distributed Free with 'What's Doing?'

The newsheet will concentrate on news and views about the Pub Scene in our Area and will give details of Camra's activities.

We also want to hear what YOU the drinker has to say about the pubs and the Beer in our Area - and also what you think about 'Opening Times'.

Send your views, news and comments to:

'Opening Times',  
S.H.Higgins,  
48, Moorcroft Drive,  
Burnage,  
Manchester M19 1WH.

Meanwhile - CHEERS - and have a good read!

The views expressed in Opening times are not necessarily those of the Campaign for Real Ale.

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REAL ALE -----

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HIGSONS      BITTER  
HIGSONS      MILD  
                AT

THE  
GEORGE



# A ROUND IN THE TOWN

The first in a series in which CAMRA members appraise the Area's Pubs - This Month -

## STOCKPORT

We kicked off at the Arden Arms on Millgate, a well-known Good Beer Guide Pub, where Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter were on sale at 62 & 67p respectively. (The crawl took place in early April so no guarantees against increases since) As in all the pubs members are asked to rate the Beer on a scale from zero (undrinkable) to 4 (excellent) The Arden scored a very credible 3.3 for Mild and 3.2 for Bitter. The pub must rank as one of the little-known gems among Britains pubs - its best feature is probably the fine collection of Grandfather clocks which confront you at every turn, but the most satisfying aspect is the way in which the classic layout and design of a small Victorian pub have been preserved for the best possible reason, namely that they still meet the customers needs. Note especially the delightful small snug (our Party of 10 was too large to sample it) which can only be reached by walking through the Bar area.

From here we set off uphill to discover what is claimed to be the cheapest beer in the Town Centre - Sam Smiths Old Brewery Bitter at the Boars Head in the Market Place, which was selling at 59p. Scores for quality averaged 2.5 (between average and good). By contrast to the Arden the interior has been modernised in semi-plush style with piped music to match. However the big thing at the Boars is the live music - a rock group was setting up whilst we were there although its the jazz nights that seem to enjoy the highest reputation. There are understood to be plans afoot for extensions to cater more amply for the lunchtime food trade.

Across the Market Place and back on Robinsons, at the Bulls Head (mild 60, bitter 64) Here, sad to say, there was a problem with the mild, which, while not vinegary, was uncharacteristic of Robinsons and was changed for the Bitter at the request of the member who'd ordered it; bitter attracted a score of 2.4. The Bull's Head still retains much of its old multi-roomed layout, though there has been some knocking through, particularly from the corridor into the front bar. It is impossible to look at any flat surface in the pub without encountering some reminder of the Landlords' USA origins - I gave up counting Stars & Stripes, but perhaps the most bizarre artefact is the framed can of Schlitz on one wall. Interestingly Draught Old Tom was still on sale as late as April, but we thought it rather early in the evening for that!

Next call was the Castlewood on the Brow that drops down to Great Underbank, for Wilson's mild (60) and Bitter (62). Quality came at 3.0 mild & 3.4 bitter. This house now seems to be re-established after a period of closure, and it is distinguished by an unusual split-level layout made necessary by one of Stockports' steeper hills. It's been refurbished in a restrained and tasteful manner to produce an atmosphere that's restful and comfortable but emphatically still a pub rather than an up-market cocktail bar or similar nonsense.

Now on to one that's more emphatic than most - the Buck and Dog on Bridge Street. And at last we've found one that undercuts the Boars Head (I suppose it does depend how you define the Town Centre.

## Silver Jubilee

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## A ROUND IN THE TOWN - continued.

Boddingtons mild is 54 and bitter 57p. Beer ratings are 2.7 mild, 3.0 bitter. This is the sort of pub usually described as 'ethnic Northern' - bare lightbulbs; outside toilets and nicotine stained wood work, rounded off by a formica bar top. It still retains its corridor & side rooms in some of which lurk pool tables and loud juke-boxes.

Finally we set our auto-pilots for Robinson Brewery and straight for the front door of the Royal Oak, on the sloping lane incongruously known as High St. First the bare facts - Robinsons Mild 59, Bitter 63 - cheapest Robbies of the night. Scores - mild 3.3, bitter an incredible 3.9, which must be the beer drinking equivalent of the First Division Championship. I should now say something about the pub - but what can you say about the Royal Oak? In the unlikely event you've not visited it, GET THERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN-and stay as long as you can. No better example could be found of the way in which all the best pubs develop their own character by a gradual process of evolution - it can't be 'sprayed on'. The Royal Oak has the usual features you expect of a traditional local, but what gives it its special character is the stuff that's been brought in over the years by the cavers and potholers who form a fair proportion of the pub's customers - you could probably learn the geology of the Peak District from what's on display in the back room. Just one example to give an idea of the lovely lived-in down-to-earthness of it all - the motto of one of the pot-holing clubs, stuck on the wall in the back room, reads: SEMPER IN EXCRETA. (Semper means 'always' - you can probably guess the rest!)

So there we have six very different Stockport Pubs - we're not saying they're the best in the town centre (we'll come back to sample the others in future crawls) but they do provide a lot of variety in a small area.

See you on the next crawl!

Rhys P. Jones.

Next Crawl - Clayton, Manchester.

## NEW INN

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on beers

at

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## CLOSING TIMES.

The Grove Inn, Norbury Street, Stockport closed its doors for good on April 28th., prior to rumoured demolition to make way for development of the Area.

Also closed is the famous Warren Bulkeley which has suffered the same fate as its near neighbour the Beehive.

How many more Wilsons Pubs are for the chop?

## A NEW HEAD AT THE KINGS.

Awarm welcome to John & Josie Sullivan who moved into their first pub in May when they took the tenancy of the Kings Head, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick.

Serving handpumped Greenalls bitter they plan to extend the catering side using Josies' long experience of the Restaurant Trade.

John is no newcomer to the trade, having been at the Rudyard Hotel for 5½ years and formerly at the Poco Club in Stockport and the Tack of Yorkshire, Bradford.

## BANKS'S

This 'new Brew for the Area' first turned up at the Longsight Inn, Redgate Lane (a Free House at the back of Belle Vue) just before Christmas. Work is going ahead on a nearby site on a new 'Longsight' and with any luck it will be ready for Christmas.

Plans are also afoot to convert the Brook House Hotel on Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield into a pub, and to build a new pub near the top of Burnage Lane. It now looks as if both these schemes may run into planning problems.



# PUB of the Year 1983 —

THE GRIFFIN,  
HEATON MERSEY.

The first Award of the South Manchester Camra 'Pub of the Year' is to be made to the Griffin, Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey.

This famous Holts' Pub, a perennial entry in the Good Beer Guide, has twice won the coveted 'Pub of the Month' Award and was selected for the new accolade from a short-list of those pubs which received the Pub of the Month Award in 1983.

The Griffin, saved from demolition a few years ago, is a superb example of a classic Victorian Pub - with a fine bar of etched windows.

The presentation of the Award is to be made on Monday, June 11th., and all are welcome to attend.

Humphrey Higgins.

## PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 1984.

The South Manchester Pub of the Month for June is the Florist Hotel Shaw Heath, Stockport.

It won the nomination easily because as pubs go this one sums up what CAMRA is all about. The pub itself is old (first mentioned about 1820) and unspoilt, being a multi-roomed pub which has been gently modernised to keep its character. (A far cry from rip-it-out-and-start-again style usually favoured by Robinsons. This, though is only half the story; the other half is the beer, kept in fine form by Landlord Allen - as will be discussed by all those turning up on June 28 for the presentation.

A good night should be had by all.  
John Clarke.

## SCOTTISH IMPORT.

Drinkers puzzled by the Robert Disher mirrot in the Royal Oak, Stockport, should look under 'Edinburgh United Breweries' in 'Where have all the Breweries Gone'

The next question - how did it get to Stockport?

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## H A P P Y D A Y S.

Two Stockport Pubs are operating variations of the 'Happy Hour' - The New Inn (Wilsons near the Town Hall) knocks up to 5p off a pint at lunch time.

Ye Olde Vic at Shaw Heath (formerly Victoria Vaults) is a free house with hand pumped Wilsons Bitter, Tetley Mild & Bitter and Burton Ale, it reduces prices by about 10p from 12-2 Monday to Friday & 5-30 - 7 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Prices (and times) may vary but keen drinkers will probably be happy to know that Everards Tiger may replace the Burton which has not been available for some time.

## CHANGE AT THE VICTORIA.

The Off Licence next to the Victoria, Wilmslow Road, Withington has closed. Work has started on converting it to a lounge extension to the pub. There will be no change to the cask-conditioned Hydes Bitter and Mild.

## NEW TROPHY.

Cask conditioned Trophy is due to appear at the Lass O'Gowrie, joining Chesters Mild and Bitter, the two 'house' beers LOG 35 & LOG 42, and not forgetting Bulmer Cider (all hand-pumped)

Manchester ROBINSONS  
Arms ALES  
PUB OF THE MONTH  
MAY 1984.

WELLINGTON ROAD SOUTH, STOCKPORT.

T R Y O U R

S E T

S E S S I O N

F O R F O U R

## CAMRANEWSCAMRANEWSCAMRANEWSCAMRANEWS

All are welcome to the next meeting of the local Camra Branch on Thursday, June 14th., 1984 at the White Swan, Green St., Fallowfield.

Speakers from Robinsons Brewery.