

POUND A PINT?

A National price survey has just been carried out by "What's Brewing", CAMRA'S Monthly news-paper. Among the findings were 'a huge gap of more than 20p per pint between North & South,' and, lucky us, 'Greater Manchester was best value for money.' Typical bitter prices for the area are quoted as 61-64p, and of course the famous Holts averaging 55p for bitter.

Reference is also made to brews which cost over £1 a pint in London - these are Fullers London Pride (OG 1041.5), Bass (1044), Youngs Special (1046), Greene King Abbott (1048), Ruddles County (1050) & Trumans Sampson (1055). Bass is the only one of the group that is always available in our area, and although Manchester is quoted as having an average price of 68-70p for Bass, at a well known Stockport Centre pub it will cost you 80p.

Ruddles County appears from time to time in local Free Houses - at the time of writing it was available in the Waggon & Horses, Southgate (just off Deansgate in Central Manchester). This is a Pennine Hosts pub which has just received the Ale House treatment, and they're having a promotion with beers from outside the area. They've has Everards Tiger (1041) & Theakstons Best Bitter (1038) at 90p apiece (phew!) but wait for it - the County was closer than ever to the pound barrier at 95p a pint. Wilsons Mild & Bitter are also available at 68p and 70p respectively.

Phil Levison.

PUB OF THE MONTH.

The South Manchester Pub of the Month for March is the Nelson Tavern, Wellington Road South, Stockport.

Formerly Nelsons Ale House before a tasteful refurbishment by Pennine Hosts, the pub is under the energetic management of Paul & Sheralyn Sixsmith ably assisted by a bevy of friendly & competent staff. Paul has been in the Nelson for sixteen months and was previously relief manager in several Lanchester Taverns & a barman in ump-teen pubs, including the Mauldeth in Burnage.

A lively and cosmopolitan pub the Nelson boasts 3 pool teams, darts & crib teams & a ladies netball squad! The pub rightly justifies its claim to be the home of home made food with a wide range of traditional & exotic goodies & since reopening an even more comprehensive menu is available both at lunch and early evenings (where else can a half-cut Camra member get pub grub at 10 pm on a Friday night?)

The presentation will be made on Thursday March 28th., and a right good do is promised!!

WEBSTERS & WILSONS MERGE

Wilson's Brewery announced on the 19th., of last month that the Company had joined forces with Websters of Halifax to form a new Company named Samuel Webster & Wilsons Ltd.

A Brwery spokesman said that at present Wilsons were only brewing at 60% capacity whereas Websters were running at 100% and that the merger would mean good news for real ale drinkers.

Websters beers would be made available in Wilsons pubs, both tenanted & managed, 'eventually'.

Humphrey Higgins.

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PUB OF THE MONTH MARCH 1985

NELSON TAVERN

Wellington Road South,
Stockport.

PAUL AND SHERALYN THANK
CAMRA FOR THIS AWARD AND
THEIR STAFF FOR MAKING IT
POSSIBLE

HANDPUMPED WILSONS
MILD AND BITTER

IT'S THE HOME
OF
HOME MADE FOOD!!!

Handwritten notes: 28/3/85, 10/15, 10/15, 10/15

A ROUND IN THE TOWN -The Edgeley Escapade!

Beer scores from 0 (undrinkable) to 4 (excellent).

The first Good Beer Guide survey crawl of 1985 kicked off in the Alexandra, Northgate Road, off Castle Street, Edgeley. This excellent multi-roomed Victorian Pub, with a superb ornate listed interior is a perfect example of how excellent many of Robinsons Pubs were before their current wave of so-called improvements turn them into boring identikit, one-room bars that are totally devoid of character. The beer was also in good nick with the Bitter (63p) averaging 2.75 & the mild (60p) 3.75. Handpumped Old Tom is also available at the ridiculously low price of 98p. The pub is slightly off the beaten track but is definitely well worth a visit. Turning right, up Northgate Road, and right again brought us onto Bloom St., where the Hollywood is located. Formerly a private residence, this is now a large rambling pub with many rooms to suit all tastes. It is owned by Pennine Joke (Hosts) so it will doubtlessly soon be turned into a licensed astrodome or such like. Beware of low-flying drunks & very noisy children lobbing beer mats 'Odd-Job' fashion! Wilsons mild (62p) & Bitter (64p) scored 2.9 and 2 respectively.

Turning right took us up to Castle Street. The third port of call was Wilsons Royal Oak, a predictable Brewers Tudor type pub. Short measures all round and no sign of a price list. The West wing of the open plan lounge is called the Regency Suite and the East wing the Royal Box. I doubt if the Royal Family would be inclined to visit this non-descript pub! Bitter (66p) scored 2.5 & Mild (63p) 2.9. A little further up Castle Street is the Prince Albert. This good basic boozier is somewhat spoiled by the cheap and nasty brewer Tudor interior but sells a reasonable pint of Wilsons mild (62p, 2.9 scored) and Bitter (64p, 2.1) Note the interesting directions for the toilets before going back out to Castle Street and the Sir Robert Peel. This Greenalls pub has recently been modernised and most people agreed that the new decor was an improvement. The comfortable & congenial atmosphere was compensated by good beer on handpump, with mild (64p) scoring 3.1 and bitter (66p) 2.4.

Back to Wilsons in the Pineapple where the Bitter (65p) scored 2 and the mild (64p) was unavailable. This boozier is somewhat non-descript but not unpleasant. I am reliably informed that there is a lovely mirror in the ladies loo!

Across the street lay the Windsor Sports (ex Castle), a recently started up Pennine Joke pub. The keg doopr was complemented by keg mild, in this pseudo pub which looks like an art nouveau MacDonalds with pool tables. In fairness there were a lot of sweaty bodies packed in, so it is undoubtedly popular, unlike the handpumped bitter (64p) which only managed 1.8. A bit further on lay the Jolly Crofter. For some inexplicable reason this uninteresting pub was even more popular than the Windsor Sports. The Bitter (66p) received the nights poorest score (1.1) There was a ridiculously loud jukebox playing bloody awful "music", short measures were dispensed by unfriendly staff. The only point in its favour was that the mild (63p) managed a fairly respectable score of 2.4.

A quick diversion to the other side of the roundabout led us to the Armoury, an ex Bells pub with many excellent small wood panelled rooms but a disappointing lounge. Robinsons mild (60p) scored 2 and Bitter (63p) 2.5. Back across the roundabout to the Grapes for last orders. This good, basic boozier is on the reserve GBG list and has an excellent chance of getting into the 1986 Guide. A convivial atmosphere is re-inforced by good beer and good prices. Robinsons mild (59p) and Bitter (63p) achieved 2.9 and 3 respectively. Since it was the end of the session we were forced to sample the Old Tom (£1.06) which scored 4 (enough said!!)

Jock Stroller.

NB: Since this crawl Robinsons increased their prices by an average of 2p per pint.

CHESTERS IN CLAYTON

Two more outlets for Whitbread Chesters Bitter in Clayton - The Fox on Clayton Lane now serves both bitter and mild on handpump and also sports a notice declaring part of the pub a 'no farting zone'!! Further up Clayton Lane, on the banks of the canal, the Bridge has started selling Chesters Bitter again.

Rhys Jones.

OPEN ARMS FOR GORTON.

Opening Times has been covering the steady progress of Banks's of Wolverhampton in acquiring and building pubs in the area. On March 1st., the third of the pubs they bought from Wilsons opened its doors once more - it's the Gorton Arms (formerly Wilsons fizz only Gorton Brook) on Gorton Lane in (you've guessed) Gorton, managed by Pauline and Alan Randles. The beer is Banks's mild and bitter, electric pumped at 62p and 65p respectively in the lounge, 2p cheaper in the vault. The prices are higher than the Mitcells and the Falcon and Area Manager, Brian Ayres told the intrepid band of CAMRA members who foregathered at 5-30pm that this reflected the investment made in the pub.

And they've certainly spent a few bob on the place. It's good to see the retention of a traditional vault, complete with tiled floor and dartboard. Most of the floor area, though, is broken up by a large lounge, which features two raised seating areas - but don't worry, this is no plastic-fronds-and-chrome-plating Big Six brewery job, the raised areas are just there to break a large room up, and they do this quite effectively.

The lounge incorporates a number of attractive traditional features - particularly noticeable are the modern wall tiles, hand made in Telford and designed especially for the pub, the bar fitting, and the ornate lamp standard - while I particularly liked the (nailed-down) coal scuttle with its pottery handles.

The pub was well filled on opening night including at least 3 landlords (two Banks's - the Mitchells & the Longsight and the boss of the Forresters, a Tettey pub in Swinton). The night was enhanced by a good selection on the jukebox of Beatles classics but, most important of all, the beer was on very respectable form. Banks's cellar services manager reckons the cellar is one of the most capacious under his supervision, which no doubt makes it a lot easier to serve up a good pint.

Unfortunately the Gorton Arms won't appear in the forthcoming Greater Manchester Good Beer Guide, when it opened, the Guide was too far advanced to allow 'stop-press' inclusions, but if you want a good pint in a good pub,

you should include it on your visiting list. Get there via Ashburys Station on the Manchester-Glossop line, or on the 53 or 203 bus.

Incidentally three more Banks's pubs will be opening in the next month: Gransmoor, Ashton Old Road, Friday 22nd., March; Osborne, Rochdale Road, Collyhurst, 29th., March; New Longsight, Kinkmanshulme Lane, BelleeVue, 3rd., April all at 5-30 pm. Brian Ayres was kind enough to invite our Camra Branch to the 'do' at the Longsight, but at all three events I'm sure all CAMRA Members and other interested drinkers will be made very welcome.

Rhys Jones, Paul Bradley, Phil Levison.

PENNINE PLANS.

It is interesting to note that Pennine Hosts have submitted an application for planning permission to refurbish the Railway in Heaton Mersey. So what now for the Railway? Hacienda style? Or will we have a Mid-Atlantic cocktail bar in Didsbury Road? In any event the alterations cannot do much to make the pub any worse! We await developments with interest.

Andy Cooper.

WHITBREAD REAL ALE GAIN.

The Gardeners Arms, Gorton Lane, has had a bit of money spent on it & is now selling handpumped Chesters Bitter at 64p. In the new configuration a central bar serves the whole pub, which consists mainly of a comfortable lounge done out in fairly standard 'Big Six tasteful' style - plenty of studded dralon seating, no House of Horrors excesses. There's a games room with pool, television and so on.

True to the name, the pub sign depicts a gardener, and the decor includes several floral prints. How odd, then, that all the vegetation is artificial!!

BUS SPOTTING.

Probably the most reliable type of pub survey - from the top of a bus! The old Shady Lady is still closed, but is now pink and blue, and over the door it says 'Open House' & 'Oxfords'.

The Host treatment marches on: the Strawberry Gardens in Offerton is to have a glass & timber conservatory, planning department willing.

ROUND BRITAIN DRINKER:-

Beer, Battlements & Breathtaking Beauty

Over the last glorious summer my wife, Janet, and I toured the vast, and beautiful County of Northumberland, visiting the historic monuments, walking the beaches, and sampling the Beer.

After a few days in the Lakes, we crossed the Pennines armed with the AA Guide to guesthouses, farmhouses & Inns & "A Canny Bevy" (Real Ale in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear) First stop was Haltwistle where we learnt that while the sites and scenery are dramatic the towns are normally of the one horse variety! (and a half dead one at that!) After settling into our guesthouse we went in search of food & a decent pint. The beer guide recommended the Grey Bull, with Theakston Bitter, XB & Old Peculier but on arrival we found only the Bitter. The landlord told us that the locals had no taste and only the visitors drank real ale. He then ushered us away from these 'peasants' to eat & drink in a separate room. However the Bitter, brewed at the Carlisle Brewery made the visit worthwhile.

The following day it was a trip round the Roman Fort and then on through the Southern reaches of the Kielder Forest which is to scenic beauty what Trophy Keg is to good beer. We reached our next guesthouse near Otterburn & on checking the 'Canny Bevy' found the nearest hostelry with food was in Ridsdale, a semi-deserted industrial village. The Gun Inn served Theakstons Bitter, this time the beer was not as good but the isolation from the locals was the same - are they trying to tell us something? The next couple of days were spent touring and walking round Central Northumberland. Desperate for a good pint I consulted 'Canny Bevy' which advised 'go & visit' the Star Inn, Netherton. We did, and found the ultimate pint of the holiday, Castle Eden Ale on gravity. The Landlord may have been ninety, the pub dead but my taste buds were crawling along the ceiling! We then made the mistake of moving to nearby Alwinton to try the Marstons Pedigree, the pub had all the character of a coach station waiting room & the Pedigree was so ordinary it made the pub look interesting.

Eastwards we trekked to Alnmouth on the coast where after wetting our feet in the sea we sampled Bellhaven 80/- at the Schooner Inn. Then inland to Alnwick with its Caatle, Abbey &

market. It was Carnival Week and most of the inhabitants were dressed in medieval costumes, including the staff at the 'Fleece' and the 'Market Tavern', I tried the Dryborough Pentland 70/- at the Fleece, which was awful and seemed under top pressure. The Market Tavern dispensed Vaux Sampson which was flavoured and with live folk music the pub is definitely recommended. Next stop, Wooler, where the Guide promised the Rycroft Hotel, the only pub in England selling Lorimer & Clarks from Edinburgh. After the build up I was disappointed! After lunch we went walking and driving in the Cheviots and the night was spent in Belford where we signed the Real Ale visitors book in the Salmor Inn, mind you the Lorimers Scotch left a lot to be desired and the landlord was off his chump!!

To the coast at Seahouses & on to Banburgh where after visiting the imposing castle and the unspoilt beaches we sampled Lorimers Scotch in the Castle. It was far superior to that in the Salmon and we convinced the American tourists to try a half! The evening was spent eating and drinking at the Black Bull in Lowick, with cask conditioned Exhibition which was on trial. Whilst welcoming the production of Peal Ale at the Tyne Brewery I didn't consider the beer a success & found it inferior to the McEwan 70/- or 80/- from S & N's Edinburgh Brewery, which was also on sale.

We certainly enjoyed our holiday and can recommend the many of North Eastern & Scottish beers available. However it will not be until the quality and availability of cask conditioned Ale reaches the level of the scenery and the historic sites that Northumberland can be called a beer drinkers mecca!

Jim Flynn.

SYKES WINE BAR

Heaton Lane, Stockport, off Mersey Square.

Tel: 480 5996.

STOCKPORTS' WINE BAR WITH REAL ALE
DRAUGHT BASS

HIGSONS MILLS AND BITTER

AT THE

GEORGE

TEN YEARS HARD LABOUR.

As many people realise the Coach & Horses in Manchester is the only pub covered by South Manchester Camra to have been in every national Good Beer Guide from the start in 1974. Some time back a splendidly convivial evening was held in the pub to mark this momentous fact. With the passage of time, the opportunity arises for other pubs to notch up 10 consecutive years in the GBG and 1975 seems to have been something of a vintage year as no less than four pubs entered the Guide in that year and have continued through in every edition to 1985. The pubs are listed with the description from 1975 & 1985: GATEWAY, East Didsbury: 1975: Large unspoilt pub retaining a cosy atmosphere. Private room for up to 80 people. 1985: Large, multi-roomed pub.

GRIFFIN, Heaton Mersey: 1975: Good choice of rooms with pleasant & traditional decor. 1985: Victorian pub, superb bar.

PRINTERS, Cheadle: 1975: A thriving pub with a good card school in the men only vault. 1985: Thriving locals pub.

TATTON, Moss Nook: 1975: 350 year old pub a mile from Manchester Airport. 1985: 17th., century farmhouse, carefully modernised. Interesting carved fireplace. In 1976 a further member joined the exclusive club, when the Star in Cheadle was included for the first of its 10 years in the GBG when it was 'a busy pub with ornate fascia' a description that lingered unchanged for many guides while in '85 it's a comfortable house on main road. Thriving vault.'

Rhys P. Jones.

THE CROWN AFFAIR.

The Crown in Didsbury closed around Christmas for the long expected alterations. There had been a lot of rumours going around about what was to happen, so Mr. Michael Maddocks, Design Consultant took the trouble to write to the local press. Greenalls original scheme was to produce a one-room, one-bar pub but the consultants prevailed against this, and have gone to some lengths to retain the small room 'feel' of the pub, and its passageway and public bar. It will be very traditional, with a larger public bar, simple, informal pub entertainment will be encouraged and it is hoped that all this will mean the Crown becoming more of a community local, not less, and 'a haven for those wanting to avoid the posers which abound in Didsbury.'

Everything was all set to re-open on

7th., March but the Licensing Magistrates decided that the pub had actually been extended, rather than just refurbished, they wanted to see the finished pub before finally granting the licence, so this means a delay until the 12th., or 13th., March - we can't wait!!

Phil Levison.

OPEN & SHUT CASES.

Two recent closures were noted in Stockport: 1) The Egerton Arms, St. Peter's-gate (Wilson's) & 2) The Crown, Heaton Lane, (Boddingtons); but 2) has recently re-opened and 1) will be open by the end of the month.

LUCKY SEVEN.

A small group of dedicated toppers made the long trek out to the Midway, New Bridge Lane (just outside Stockport) one cold & snowy evening at the end of January. It was really to check that draught Old Peculier was available, but quite a few of the others were quaffed. The complete range of cask-conditioned ales is now: Tetley Mild & Bitter, Thwaites & Boddingtons Bitter, Pedigree, Old Peculier and Clive Winkles very pale BVA.

SORRY!

Our report that alterations to the Three Tunnes in Hazel Grove were imminent appears to have been unfounded. Our very reliable source (T.T.T) expects nothing to happen for at least three years, welcome news indeed, let's hope that by then Robinson's idea of what makes a good pub will be the same as everyone else's!

John Clarke.

CASTLEWOOD

(HOLE IN WALL)

BRIDGE STREET BROW, MARKET, STOCKPORT

TEL: 480 5529

WILSONS REAL ALE - HANDPUMPS

PUB FOOD MONDAY TO SATURDAY & BANK HOLS

11-30 - 2-00

Function room available
for

Meetings, Parties etc.

Pub of the Year 1984 - THE MANCHESTER ARMS.

The coveted 1984 Branch Pub of the Year Award has been won by the Manchester Arms, Wellington Road South, Stockport.

The Award is given in appreciation of the consistent, high quality of the traditional beer, the traditional surroundings and of the licensee, who is committed to keeping things that way!

Ian & Dot Brookes have just celebrated six years in the 'M.A.' and they have retained their high reputation for great handpumped Robinsons Best Mild & Best Bitter which has combined with a unique individuality in the pub with such diverse activities as Christmas in July, the worst entertainer talent night, the famous rocket man (a repeat performance is promised!!) and, of course the live music nights, including the Mega Band and the trumpet playing Landlord!

The Presentation is on April 4th., - come early, it might just get a bit busy!!

Humphrey Higgins.

TO COIN A PHRASE?

The Talbot, Mauldeth Road, Ladybarn, (Chesters Mild & Bitter) is closing at the end of March for a re-fit. We are all now well used to the meaning of 'Hosts Treatment', so what shall we call this one? 'De-House of Horrification'?

Heard at the Bar.

A Lakeland pub with 5 handpumps:
 'Have you any real ale on handpump?
 Barman: 'Yes'
 'I mean real ale on handpump.
 Barman: Hartley's, Tetleys, Cask Bass, Hartelys Mild or Cider?'
 'Oh'
 And now an 'in' one, from the Marble Arch: "Hello Leo!"

A cat's eye view: 'I purred when I saw my words in print but stopped when I heard about the Grafton. 'Weird' the black cat told me - business was better in the last week than she ever remembers, no point going back to see that young lady in the new pub, she won't be there!'

Theakston Cat.

NEW HOUSE AT HOME.

The Old House at Home, Burton Rd., Withington (Whitbread), which has had several dates for re-furbishment, is now finally re-open for business! The only real structural alteration is an extension in the car park side - this is now the only entrance as the Burton Road door is bricked up.

The pub style has been described as 'cottagy' and the low beams, curtained windows and comfortable furniture certainly have a very cosy feel about them, and what with the hunting prints and 'old' photos, you'd never know you were in deepest Withington! One wall is lined with books, but it's no good going for a quiet read, they're all glued together!

There are two cask-conditioned ales available, Handpulled Chester Mild has joined the Bitter at 65p & 66p respectively. There's the usual range of the processed variety, Trophy, Light, Strong bow, Heineken & Stella. Full marks for the clearly legible price lists, which also give O.Gs.

WREXHAM RE-OPENING.

Nothing seemed to happen for some time at the Wrexham, a small Boddies house on Ashton Old Road which closed last Autumn, but it's now a hive of activity, and is instantly recognisable by its sign boards - BODDINGTONS and WREXHAM INN. When politely asked for a re-opening date the best the brewery could say was 'in the near future.'

Phil Levison.

BOARS HEAD

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

SAMUEL SMITHS OLD BREWERY

BITTER

PUB FOOD DAILY

LIVE JAZZ AND ROCK AND ROLL