

OPENING TIMES.

No. 14

SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA'S PUB NEWSHEET

JUNE 1985 FREE.

BODDY SNATCHERS

The latest in the new wave of Brewery takeovers, the agreed terms of Manchester based Boddingtons for Merseysides last independent Brewer, Higsons, can only be viewed with alarm and dismay by Camra as yet another Company is set to lose its identity.

Despite assurances that nothing will change can we really expect Boddingtons to keep three breweries open? (Their own Strangeways Brewery, Oldham Brewery and now Higsons)

The reasoning behind the £27M deal is clearly spelt out by Boddingtons Chairman, Ewart Boddington. The deal will give Boddingtons the presence it wants in the lager market helped by Higsons new £6M lager brewery. He said 'The acquisition of a modern lager brewery will give Boddingtons the chance to develop sales of own produced lager and to position itself for the future in this growing and higher margin sector of the beer market'

Nuff said! Boddingtons was once, quite rightly, highly acclaimed by Camra for producing fine and distinctive beers. Now it is a different story, one mild has long since gone and the famous Bitter is regarded as a shadow of its former self, and in place of being at the forefront in the battles for independence Boddingtons have become the predators gobbling first Oldham Brewery and now Higsons.

With the battle raging over Matthew Browns attempted takeover by S & N (see last months O.T.) and the sell-out by Hull Brewery to Mansfield the scene is reverting to the early 70s! when the flood of takeovers brought CAMRA into existence.

No independent Brewer is safe from the clutches of the big boys - and that includes Boddingtons! Humphrey Higgins.

OPENING TIMES is written and published by South Manchester Camra, material may be freely used in other Camra publications, but due acknowledgement would be appreciated. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. Send your news or views to : 'Opening Times', S.H.Higgins, 48, Moorcroft Drive, Burnage, Manchester M19 1WH.

PUB OF THE MONTH.

The South Manchester Branch Pub of the Month for June is the Red Bull, Lower Hillgate, Stockport.

Tenanted for the past 2½ years by Brian and Faith Lawrence the Red Bull is a fine, unspoilt two-bar pub with many interesting nooks and caannies retaining in part the original flagged floor. The internal decor, with an impressive collection of brasses gives a strong impression of a Country pub in the middle of Stockports famous Hillgate.

The excellent Robinsons Handpumped Mild and Bitter are supplemented by lunch-time meals and evening snacks.

The presentation will be made on Thursday, June 27th., when live music will supplement what promises to be an excellent evening.

THE NELSON

WELLINGTON ROAD SOUTH,
STOCKPORT.

PENNINE HOSTS.

HANDPUMPED WILSONS
MILD AND BITTER.

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

AROUND IN THE TOWN: The Rusholme
Ramble.

What follows is not intended to be a statement of the quality of the pubs or beer on all occasions, but is our opinion of both on the night of the crawl.)

A fine Spring evening in late April saw five hardy stalwarts of Camra gather in the Claremont, on Claremont Road, a large run down Holts pub, trying to relive its days of former glory. The beer was however well up to the standard we've come to expect from Drabs, with the Mild scoring 4 (60p) and bitter coming in at a respectable average of 2.5.

After the fading splendour of the Claremont, it was quite a contrast to move on to the Beehive, a large modern, eminently forgettable Hyde's pub, where in contrast to the previous pub, the beer was not enjoyed by anyone, with the Mild (61p) scoring a paltry 1.5, and the Bitter (66) not quite managing to scale even those heights.

The next stop was certainly the most interesting building of the night; the Robin Hood, a Robinsons' house. This was a fascinating hostelry which gave no apparent indication of its former use but it could accurately be described by the phrase 'once visited, never forgotten'. Large signs on the walls announced 'no drugs allowed', but drugs would probably have helped to disguise the awful nature of the beer. Only Best Bitter was available, and the one of our party who was foolish enough to ask for Mild was presented with lager.... and drank it! The bitter, amongst those who drank it, could not quite muster 1.

We then progressed to the Osborne House a Hydes pub, where the numbers on the crawl doubled. This former GBG pub produced respectable scores for the Mild (61) of 3 & Bitter (66) of 2.5.

Next move was 200 yards up the road to the Gardeners Arms, a recent conversion by Greenalls to draught beer, although only the bitter was available in traditional form at 68p, scoring 2.3.

The next stop was yet another Hydes pub, the Albert, the first of the night selling the Best Mild. This pleasant, moderately large pub had a T.V. in one room with the sound turned down, and no juke box, and was appreciated by most of the people present. The Best Mild scored an average of 2.75 (66p)

and the Bitter (68p) scored a respectable 2.6.

We then headed to the Clarence, which sells Draught Bass, although only apparently in student term time. This is a busy, loud pub, and the Bass (70p) scored 2 overall, with the comment being made that the beer was too cold.

The next call was the Welcome, a very pleasant Greenalls pub, of typical Manchester design, with a number of small rooms, each with a varied clientele spanning the whole age range. The whole of Greenalls traditional Beers are available, although no one was tempted by the mild. The Bitter (69p) scored 2.5, and the Original (72p) came in at 2.4.

Finally a route march was undertaken by the survivors of this epic to the Friendship, a recently renovated Hydes pub (see last months Opening Times) Opinions were decidedly mixed about the renovations, with some members regarding the mirrors and pink walls as a strain on the eyes. The pub was packed with students, however, and they seemed to appreciate it, though presumably this is only carping on the part of a few Camra members. The beer was very pleasant as well, with the Best Mild (61) scoring 2.75 overall and the Bitter scoring 2.8.

And so another pub crawl drew to an end, after visiting pubs that many of us had not seen before and were not likely to visit again for some time! We were also looking out for price lists, and Hydes seem to be the most consistent on this front.

(Beer scores as follows: 0 - undrinkable, 1 - poor, 2 - average, 3 - good, 4 - excellent.)

Andy Cooper.

BESWICK CLOSURES.

By the time you read this both the Openshaw (which is miles from Openshaw) on Ashton Old Rd (cask Chesters) & the Tim Bobbin, Grey Mare Lane (fizz Greenalls) may well be closed, though rumour has it that the outgoing landlords may reappear elsewhere. Meanwhile lets hope this means extra trade for affable licenses Pete Traynor at the Duke of Edinburgh & Tony Healey at the Travellers Call - in both of these Houses an excellent pint is assured, hence their recent CAMRA Pub of the Month Awards.

Rhys Jones.

P U B G R U B.

It's a well established fact that many people nowadays go to pubs for something to eat as well as drink. Indeed it is probably only a substantial lunch time trade that keeps many pubs going. With this in mind & as we want to appeal to as many drinkers as possible, this series will feature pubs each month which apart from selling cask beer, also offer reasonably priced, well cooked food.

This month features one of Manchester's few home-brew pubs, the Lass O' Gowrie on Charles St., in the City centre, just by the BBC. Although declaring itself the Lass O' Gowrie Brewery Co., it is in fact owned by Whitbread (the old Threlfall's name on the exterior tiling having been covered up). Whitbread have set up various home-brew houses over the country, many of which are serviced by a 'travelling brewer'. Not so here however as brewing is done by landlord Joe & his own brewer. The beer isn't a full mash, being prepared from malt extract, a fact which doesn't find favour in all CAMRA circles. The customers don't mind however as they get through 16 barrels a week!

Onto the food which is not only good value by any standards, let alone the City centre, but nicely cooked too. On my visit the menu featured spicy pork, Beef casserole & Shepherds pie, costing between £1.50 & £1.60. I chose the Lass O' Gowrie special at £1.55, consisting of layers of mince, potatoes, onion & cheese. This, like all hot food, was served with 2 veg & potato. Additionally there is a selection of cheese & pate which can be had with bread and pickles for £1.25 & £1.30 respectively for a huge plateful. A mixture of both costs £1.45. There's a policy of no chips, no burgers & no pre-frozen meals, all of which are freshly cooked every day. They would serve coffee but its too far from the kitchen to the bar area. On Saturdays the choice is restricted to the cheese & pate,, hot food being available Mondays to Fridays only.

Any complaints? Well you do only get one potato with the meal & as a roast spud addict I would have preferred a couple. Apart from that very minor point, the Lass O' Gowrie can be firmly recommended for those in Manchester wanting somewhere to eat.

John Clarke.

ROUND BRITAIN DRINKER -VA Tyneside Selection.

There is no way I dare produce a definitive statement on good & bad pubs in Newcastle & Gateshead, but what I can do is describe a few of the ones I've visited recently.

Two interesting City Centre pubs which could not be more different are the Cooperage and Raffles. The former is on the Quayside and is an original oak-beamed Elizabethan building. The bar & pool rooms are small, but welcoming, and the selection of beers changes from week to week. Last time it was Dryboroughs 80/-, Tetley Bitter & Shepherd Neame. The quality was good, but the prices, as is general in Newcastle, are best left undiscussed. Raffles is a modern bar & wine bar on Pink Lane, near Central Station. The McEwans 80/- was fair, although cold, and it took 10 minutes for us to be served. Previous visits have shown this pub in a better light.

Out on the Metro along the North bank of the Tyne is North Shields, with the excellent Wooden Doll. Recently a Tyne-side Pub of the Year, it serves the Matthew Brown range, and also Youngers No. 3. The view out to sea is superb. Out the other way on the Metro is the Wheatsheaf at Felling, which is the second Big Lamp house. Although only recently opened it has been included in the 1986 GBG. The manager is a former Berni Inns Manager, and he is tastefully redecorating a basic boozery, whilst serving the excellent Big Lamp beers. If you go on a Big Lamp Brewery trip, they take you to the Wheatsheaf for the tasting! The above are but a select few pubs & any trip to Newcastle should provide ample opportunity for sampling many beers. - Carole Brookes & Theakston.

CASTLEWOOD

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WILSONS REAL ALE - HANDPUMPED.

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THE LION ROARS.

After the trashy travesty (and rumour has it), disappointing financial performance of the Far Pavilions in Stockport, perhaps the word 'pavilion' has had assassinations for Pennine Hosts. Certainly when the one-time White Lion, Wilmslow Road, Withington re-opened on May 17th., there was no trace of its brief, pseudo-Caribbean interlude as the Pavilion. This last re-vamp saw the introduction of cask beer, and the Hand-pumped Wilsons Bitter at 72p has been joined by Wilsons mild at 70p, though sad to say on opening night this was not on top form and betrayed more than a hint of gas 'tang' - perhaps the cask just was'nt vented properly. An oddity is that the usual clips to tell you what you're drinking are missing and the lager taps are completely concealed (to protect the guilty?)

There was a time in the not too distant past when the manufacturers of the light coloured fizzy stuff competed with each other to see who could produce the largest montrosity to serve their product. Stella & Orangeboom can weep in their glasses because Pennine Hosts has swept the field in the Withington Ale House, stylishly converting two 36 gallon barrels to serve Websters!! That such a deed could be perpetrated in a pub converted to the 'Ale House' theme is sad since it is an otherwise pleasant alteration. Much bare brick & timber in evidence, mainly fake breweriana, and a big plus is the bar billiards table, even if it is 50p a go.

Meanwhile oblivious to the changes above the White Lion bar downstairs continues as an all fizz establishment.

Rhys Jones/Peter Taylor.

SALISBURY PAIN?

The Salisbury, off Oxfords Road station recently added Websters Bitter to its existing range of Wilsons Mild & Bitter, but watch out! They want 76p a pint!!

At the same time the Bulmers Traditional Cider has reappeared. It would be interesting though to know what they intend to charge for this - a quick examination of the price list yielded only Woodpecker and Strongbow under 'cider'.

The real stuff from Bulmers is widely sold by Pennine & Whitbraeds, though usually at rip-off prices. They should understand that, in its homeland, cider is a real drink for real drinkers - not an over priced lager substitute, not yet a park-bench placebo!!

LONGSIGHT LATEST.

Ann from the Longsight complains that I did'nt mention the bar staff when I did the pub write-up last month. Well, they are as friendly as they are efficient - and the female staff are'nt half bad either! So there!! - Rhys Jones.

SPECIAL OFFERS-----

To readers of 'Opening Times':

1985 Greater Manchester Beer Guide £1.25
 1985 Good Beer Guide £4.20 (Rec. £4.50)
 1984 Good Beer Guide £1.50 (Rec. £3.95)
 1983 Good Beer Guide £1.00 (Rec. £4.50)
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Send your order, with cheque/P.O. payable to CAMRA South Manchester, to The Treasurer, 13 Styal Ave., Reddish, Stockport. Allow 10 days for delivery.

BITTER PRINCE.

Cask Mild has been withdrawn from the Prince of Wales, Ashton Old Road, which was only a recent convert to real ale. The range is now reduced to Stones Bitter and Toby Light. Therevare no plans to reintroduce mild as the landlord considers the neighbourhood is 'basically a bitter area'. He could be right as several neighbouring pubs don't sell cask mild either. So much for Manchester's reputation as a mild drinking stronghold.

John Clarke.

ALL CHANGE FOR HOSTS.

Several changes in Stockport Pennine Hosts pubs licensees recently - with actual and impending departures of the Managers of Drakes, Offerton; Sports, Castle St., and the infamous Far Pavilions, Mersey Square.

DRINKING IN STYLE?

Very good wishes from CAMRA to Paul & Sheralyn Sixsmith from the well known and respected Nelson Tavern, Wellington Road South, Stockport (Pub of the Month, March) who are shortly to move to the lush pastures of the Ship Inn, Styal. I think we can rest assured that the quality of the Wilsons Mild and Bitter AND Marstons Pedigree will be as high as we have come to know at the Nelson - I bet the grubs' not bad either!!

NEW BRIDGEWATER.

Former Wilsons house, the Bridgewater, Chestergate, Stockport, is shortly to re-open as a Free House.

The pub has been bought by John Nagel, and as an avid Holts' drinker both Holts Mild and Bitter will be available alongside Wilsons Mild and Bitter, all on Handpump.

The pub, which has been closed since last September, has been completely re-furnished in a comfortable and cosy style and John promises that good beer will be accompanied by good food both at lunchtimes and evenings.

Hopefully the Bridgewater will be open by 8th., June and we wish John every success in his venture which further increases the choice of beers in Central Stockport.

News has also reached us that another former Wilsons Pub, the Crabtree, Crabtree Lane, Clayton, will shortly re-open as a free House with both Holts and Wilsons.

A BIT OF THE BLARNEY.

The latest Pennine Hosts re-furbishment was completed on May 31st., with the re-opening of the Midway, Stockport Road, Longsight.

The 'concept' this time is 'ethnic Irish' and so it was with some considerable consternation that I ventured forth on the opening night!!

Despite the daft name ('concept's' a bit daft as well!!) the Midway has undergone a considerable improvement.

It has been transformed into one huge drinking area, comfortably furnished and carpeted, with a section for regular live music, another section for three pool tables, darts etc., all served from one immense Bar. The Beer is hand-pumped Wilsons' Bitter, unfortunately the mild is keg. Surely a pub this size can serve real mild?

A big plus is the introduction of waiter service.

I may be a bit thick - but I can't understand the 'ethnic Irish' bit!

Humphrey Higgins.

Heard in the pub: The new BAMRA Branch Secretary: "I happen to like fizzy cider, particularly Strongbow."

WHY NOT BUY A PUB?

It seems that the Why Not?. Ashton New Road, Clayton, was up for sale by auction last month; further details are awaited but let's hope the 'aeroplane licensee' is not affected.

PERFIDIOUS NO MORE

As foreshadowed in our last issue, real ale has now reached the Albion, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, in the shape of Handpumped Chesters Mild and Bitter.

The pub is a fairly standard two-roomer, pleasantly, if unremarkably refurbished. Vault prices are 65p for mild, 66p for Bitter - which has the curious result that if you're drinking halves both be beers are the same price!!

Welcome....

To Don & Shiela Newton, who have moved from the Sabre in Salford to the Halfway House, Ashton New Road.

Heard at the Bar:

A pub Landlady in East Manchester, opening 'What's Doing' and turning to the Periwinkle column: "It's very cliquey this, I thought at first it was me being thick - but it is rubbish, isn't it?"

At Saddleworth Beer Festival, where the excellent Enoch's Hammer, a strong ale brewed at the Sair Inn, Linthwaite, Huddersfield, was on sale: "Two halves of Enoch Powell please!"

At a Wilsons' pub in Edgeley: Customer to Landlord: "Your beer is bloody awful"

Landlord: "I know it is"

BOARS

HEAD

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT.

SAMUEL SMITHS OLD BREWERY BITTER

PUB FOOD DAILY LIVE JAZZ AND

ROCK 'N ROLL.

PRODUCTIVITY CORNER.

Our contacts tell us that the new Production Manager (they don't have a Brewer any more!) at Chesters' Brewery in Salford, is a Mr. John Kennedy, previously at Wilsons. Although not always enjoying the highest reputation Wilsons Beers are usually far superior to the products of the Cook Street Brewery, particularly the bland Chester Bitter, frequently the only traditional Beer available in their pubs, so perhaps we may now see an improvement. Time will tell.

John Clarke.

LETTER FROM BRAMHALL

LLYTHYR O FON has been promised (according to a reliable source, this means letter from Anglesey), but before that there's a letter from Bramhall. The Shady Oak is the major alteration, but's that's already been covered, so this is just a confirmation that the existing outlets for the Bramhall/Woodford section of the Comprehensive Lists are alive & well, with one or two random thoughts.

Bromale - still difficult to find - no change in the beer - Toby 68p & Stones 70p (H)

Davenport Arms, locally the Thieves Neck - a good Robbies pub - what horrors could they perpetrate - good collection of optics, engines & taps (enough to open a beerex?) Mild 63p & Bitter 70p.

Ladybrook - the Oldham Bitter survives, but who drinks it? Mild 61p, Bitter 65.

Victoria, Boddingtons again, and your excellent home-made meat pie, chips & veg will only cost you 95p. 61p Mild & 65p Bitter (E)

Checks on other local outlets revealed nothing else real (was the old Pownall Arms real Tetleys at one time?) - it is now the Moat House, Bass and all fizzy.

Phil Levison.

A Cat's Eye View:

Down with pub dogs, up with pub cats; feline fans should visit the Griffin, Heaton Moor. PS The Chesters Bitter in the Farmers Arms, Stockport Road, was quite good!

Theakston Cat.

LOCAL PRICES.

Recently we reported CAMRA'S National Price survey, when Greater Manchester was adjudged "best value for money". Non CAMRA members, but obviously interested drinkers may like to know a bit more about local prices. We all moan when the price of a pint goes up, as it seems to be happening all the time, so it may come as a surprise to learn that our records show that the average price of a pint rose by only 4p during the last 12 months.

The price of Mild throughout the South Manchester Branch started off in the range 54/63 and a year later was 58/66. Bitter started off in the range 56/66 and finished at 60/70. So if you're paying 58p for mild and 60p for Bitter you can think yourself lucky (but remember these prices are pre-budget).

Phil Levison.

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Thursday 13th., June: Branch Extraordinary General Meeting to consider change of name and increasing size of the Committee - 8pm Gateway, East Didsbury.

Wednesday, 26th., June: Midsummer Pub Hunt - £1 entry per team of two, prizes for the winners! Come along & use your brainpower on a pub crawl! Start 7-15 Castlewood, Bridge St Brow, Stockport.

Thursday, 27th., June - Pub of the Month - Red Bull, Lower Hillgate. All members and non-members welcome.

Contributors to this issue:

John Clarke, Carole Brookes, Peter Taylor, Rhys Jones, Humphrey Higgins, Phil Levison, Theakston Cat.

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