

# Opening Times



STOCKPORT AND SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

No. 37 MAY 1987

## IS THE PRICE RIGHT?

By Humphrey Higgins.

CAMRAS' National Price Survey, published last month, looked in depth at prices of all types of drinks in over 1000 British Pubs, and the results show that to save money consumers are better placed in the North and in pubs belonging to the Independent Breweries.

The survey was based on the 'CAMRA standard round' - the sort of selection any of us may buy on a night out with a group of friends - a pint of real bitter, a pint of strong bitter, a half of basic lager, a pint of Guinness, a glass of wine, a Bacardi & Coke, a Gin & Tonic and a bottle of fruit juice (for the driver!)

In a Big Seven (Allied, Bass, Courage, Greenalls, Scottish & Newcastle, Watney & Whitbread) pub, the standard round averaged £6.48 - 16p more expensive than the average in a pub belonging to an independent brewer. Most expensive was Croydon, where the standard round would set you back £7.26 in a Big Seven pub - that's £1.64 dearer than an independents' pub in Walsall!

Locally, Stockport comes out well in the prices league - the standard round in a town centre independents pub averages £5.96, that compares with £6.20 in Southport, £6.26 in Chester, £6.42 in York and a staggering £7.16 in Reigate. Overall Stockports' independents are beaten for price in only 8 of the 50 areas covered.

Our Big Seven pubs, though 31p dearer than the independents, are still way ahead of most areas of the Country. For instance our £6.27 for the standard round compare with £6.41 in Bradford and £7.16 in South London. On all fronts the Big Seven brewers charge more - in Stockport it's 4p a pint more for bitter, 8p a pint more for lager, 5p more for Guinness and even fruit juice is 3p more than in an independents' pub! Of the Big Seven the cheapest pint comes from Watney arm - Wilsons whereas Holts' take the prize for cheapest.

The survey, of 1,000 British pubs, was carried out by 65 Branches of CAMRA over February 1987. Prices refer to the cheapest available product in each category, and were taken from the public bar, if one existed.

## MAKE MINE MILD

A great product, tasty without being overpowering, distinct, low-alcohol, low in calories, appeals to both sexes, can be light, dark or in between, and appeals to those wary about drink-driving....Is it American? Canadian? Australian? No! It's British! It's Real Mild.

The trouble is it's getting increasingly difficult to find real mild in many pubs. In many Pennine Hosts houses, for example, there's either no mild or just keg and in lots of pubs the real thing has gone because of 'lack of demand. Why should this be? The facts are that the Brewers are not giving mild any backing they are not making much money from mild and they are much more interested in promoting lager.

And we're back to the Big Seven v Independents again - when available Chesters (Whitbread) mild is often the same price as bitter, but most Robbies pubs (and they all sell mild) give a price differential of 5p on average.

The benefits of drinking mild are many - it has a lower O.G. (Original Gravity - the measure of the amount of fermentable material used - the lower the O.G. the less the strength) It's therefore especially handy for the driver who is tempted to have just one before driving! It's low-cal too, just for slimmers, and for quality takes some beating. MAKE YOURS MILD!

## THE MANCHESTER ARMS

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BIKERS WELCOME

★

ROBINSONS FINEST  
ALES

★

MARTIN & SANDY



## PUB GRUB

By John Clarke.

This Month Pub Grub goes to Hazel Grove and the appropriately named Grove Hotel. A Robinsons house this with Best Mild and Best Bitter dispensed via electric pumps. The lunchtime menu is wide & varied and definitely in the up-market category as regards content and price. This shouldn't put you off however as we found the food to be of excellent value for money and of a high quality.

As usual with many pub menus, the food covers the whole spectrum from sandwiches to full blown meals. Sandwiches include Beef, Ham, Cheese & Turkey from £1.00 and hot sandwiches including such as sausage, Hamburger, Bacon & Steak Canadienne are from £1.00 to £1.30. Baked potatoes featured & come with either cottage cheese or cheddar for £1.30.

Two of the party chose Plaice, chips, peas & salad at £2.00, with one also having soup (70p) as a starter. The soup was thick and had that 'home-made' look and came with roll and butter. The Plaice was breaded & came with large portions of chips etc., all attractively served on an oval neat plate. The verdict on both was 'good & filling'.

Another in the party went for Pork chop with chips etc. at £4.00. Once again nicely presented, the huge chop also came with mushrooms and onion rings. A nice touch was the bowl of apple sauce.

I chose scampi, chips, peas & salad at £3.95 and again whilst portions of chips etc. were generous, I didn't feel that the scampi was as generous as it might have been. I was probably making an unfair comparison with the choice made by the fifth member of the group - seafood platter at £3.95 which really did steal the show. So often something called seafood platter is a bit of old kipper and a couple of prawns hiding in a mountain of lettuce - not here! A half smoked makerel was literally covered in mussels, cockles & prawns all in generous quantities. A small salad garnish & a bowl of prawn cocktail sauce completed what was one of the best pub meals I've seen for some time.

Any complaints? Well the service was very slow, but this was on a Tuesday and apart from us the dining room was almost empty, I imagine that extra staff are supplied for the busier days.

Certainly one to look out for in Hazel Grove.

## CLUB NEWS

A real ale gain in Clubland is the Piccadilly Branch of the British Rail Staff Association on Store Street in Manchester City Centre, which offers all three Chesters traditional beers on handpump at prices reminiscent of a Holts pub - eg 65p for Trophy. Note though, that keg Trophy remains on sale and is offered unless you specify. The club is open only to members and signed-in guests - signing in is discouraged after 9-30pm. This brings to three the known tally of of "occupational" clubs selling real ale in the City Centre - the other are the Victoria branch of the B.R. Staff Association, with Thwaites and Boddingtons, and the Post Office Club on Quay Street with Holts.

Anybody know of any more?

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## PUB OF THE MONTH

Considering the number of good pubs in Cheadle, it is a very long time since one was awarded Pub of the Month by Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA. So we are very glad to say that the Pub of the Month for May is the Queens Arms, Stockport Road, Cheadle.

The Queens is a Robinsons House run by Andy and Eunice Wilson. They offer Best Mild and the more rarely found Ordinary Bitter, there is also a barrel of Old Tom on the bar during winter, or at least till the weather warms up! The quality of the beer is consistently good, as shown by the pubs presence in the Good Beer Guide.

The building itself is traditional multi-room, only slightly opened up. There are two small front rooms (one with a dart board) and an open bar area, where a coal fire helps the friendly atmosphere. A lovely back room, with a long bench seat running round, completes the inside space.

Outside is a large 'beer garden' which years ago was a bowling green. On the grass there are now slides for children to play on. Andy and Eunice are working hard to make the Queens a family, as well as a community, pub. They organise outings and other events such as a visit to a pantomime and the recent Easter Bonnet parade.

The date of the Pub of the Month presentation is Thursday, 28th., May. Everyone is welcome to what will be a really good evening.

HEARD AT THE BAR IN A PUB IN SUFFOLK: The label on Greene King's famed Abbot Ale bottle shows the O.G. as the impressive 1046-1052. A barmaid was seen to read the figures with great interest, and then was heard to remark to customers:

"Well, he didn't live very long on the stuff, did he?"

### THE GLADSTONE

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## GOODBYE, SQUIRE

THE OLD GREY HORSE - AN OBITUARY.

This is written to mourn the passing of the Old Grey Horse in Didsbury which has been replaced by something (it cannot be called a pub) called Squires.

Whilst the Old Grey Horse was never my favourite pub (it had very strong competition from the Station and the Royal Oak) it was recognisibly a pub and it did sell two real ales, Wilsons Bitter and mild, which until recently were decently brewed.

Squires is what is known as an 'Open House' On the outside it looks pleasant - but inside!! There are venetian blinds on most, if not all, the windows and the whole place is bathed in a curious and garish blue light. On a recent Saturday, at 8-30, there were very few people in the place, although I have been told that it does get busier later, mostly with the younger set. The only real ale is Websters Yorkshire bitter. This in itself is worrying, as now that Wilsons is brewed at Websters Halifax Brewery it is not inconceivable that in the future Wilsons will cease to be brewed at all. Every ex-Wilsons pub where Websters is now available increases this possibility! Alas this is yet another Pennine Hosts pub where real mild is no longer available.

# STAGGER

UP & DOWN HYDE ROAD - By John Clarke.

This month we return to sample the delights of East Manchester & that part of Hyde Road starting at the Manchester end & finishing up near Belle Vue. An area of much demolition & re-development in recent years, for much of the way all that remain standing are the pubs - and if long term plans come to fruition virtually all of those will be swept away in a road widening scheme. As usual what follows is simply our opinion of what we found on the night and should not be taken as a once & for all judgement of either the pubs or the beers.

First call was the STAR in Ardwick, a Wilsons house run by Pennine Hosts - as so often the case with Hosts no cask mild is available. The handpumped Wilsons Bitter was on fine form however being cited very good to excellent by all bar one. The pub itself has a pleasant 1930s exterior although the inside has been partially knocked through.

Next stop was the CITY GATES, revamped a couple of years ago to celebrate its close links with Man-

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chester City F.C. whose original ground was nearby. As theme pubs go, this wasn't too bad at the time but sadly is now becoming a bit tatty round the edges and, sad to say the barmaids no longer wear football strip! The only cask beer available is handpumped Chesters Bitter, not an inspiring beer at the best of times, this was considered a poor pint from all present, in fact it turned out to be the worst beer of the night.

A walk now to the Horseshoe & the first Robinsons of the night. Much improved following a change of licensee a couple of years ago, this pleasant two-roomed pub presents a welcoming, subdued Brewers-Tudor interior. One of the pumpclips indicates the rare standard bitter but in fact it's the 'Best' which together with the mild was enjoyed by all present.

Next one up is the UNICORN, a good, old-fashioned multi-roomed boozier which was spoiled somewhat by a slight 'atmosphere' & a performing drunk. Despite this the handpumped Boddingtons Bitter (no mild I'm afraid) was considered to be at least good by all bar one of the party.

On now to the TRAVELLERS CALL, a small Hydes pub hidden next to a taxi-office. This is an excellent old-fashioned pub, with a thriving vault and a quieter back room which on our visit came alive with impromptu folk music which was so good that some stayed on to listen & caught up later.

The electrically pumped mild & bitter were equally well thought of by all as well, both citing above average to good.

A slight detour off Hyde Road to the IMPERIAL on Birch Street. For many years a run-down Wilsons pub, with ironically some of the best beer around. It seemed that it had closed for ever when licensee Wilf Harvey retired. Now in new hands it has been completely revamped & though lacking the character of the 'old' Imperial appears to be doing a thriving trade & boasts handpumped bitters from Tetley, Boddingtons & Banks's. We all chose Banks's & as is usual with this consistent beer, weren't disappointed rating it good to very good.

Back on Hyde Road to the NAGS HEAD, the second Boddingtons pub of the night & again no cask mild. This is still essentially a multi-roomed pub despite some opening out & we certainly found the atmosphere better than the Unicorn but unfortunately couldn't say the same about the beer which was no more than just above average.

Tetleys now in the shape of the ROCK and again bitter only although we understand the mild was due to go on at the start of the speedway season! More impromptu music, this time with an Irish flavour which was complemented by the handpumped bitter considered

RICHARD AND SUSAN GENDERS

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good by everybody.

The VICTORIA next which Chesters at one time applied for permission to extend into a Railway Carriage which it was intended to site next door. Fortunately this bizarre scheme has not yet materialised & the pub remains a pleasant, traditional local. Both Mild & Bitter are available on handpump & while both unexceptional, the bitter was considered better than the mild.

We then proceeded to the COACH & HORSES, the second Robinsons pub of the night. A fine pub inside with a particularly unspoilt Vault. The lounge boasts an electric organ however and on our visit one of the customers was destroying a Frank Sinatra number. The handpumped Best Mild and Best Bitter was rather better than the singing however, both being rated above average.

Last stop of the night was the CHESHIRE HUNT, another ex-Wilsons pub, now a free house. Despite the fact that the sign proclaims 'this is a Free House' there is evidently an exclusive tie with Sam Smiths, so that to all intents & purposes it is a Sams tied house. Surely the time is ripe for legislation to prevent the abuse of the Free House name in this way? The pub itself, however, was thriving with excellent live Rock 'n Roll music. The only beer is hand-pumped Old Brewery Bitter and opinions varied between way below average to good, although judgements at this stage of any crawl must be of doubtful value. All in all a good night, memorable above all else for the excellent live music encountered en route.

FOOTNOTE: On an historical point - visitors to the Imperial will notice next door a collection of buildings signed as the Imperial Trading Estate. They are the remains of Stopfords Imperial Brewery, taken over by Walker & Homfray in 1927 and merged with Wilsons in 1949.

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## CAMRA NEWS

Another varied collection this month kicking off on Monday 4th., with a social at the Navigation, Lancashire Hill, Stockport. As usual with Monday Socials we officially start at 8-30pm., but most people don't arrive until about 9-00pm.

This is swiftly followed on Thursday, 7th., with a trip to the Whitbread Brewery in Sheffield. An early start I'm afraid with the coach leaving the Mauldeth, Kingsway, at 5-30; Pineapple, Heaton Lane at 5-45 and the Bulls Head, Hazel Grove at 6-00pm. Cost to members is £3.50 and £4.00 to non-members, returning to Stockport by midnight at the latest.

On Monday 11th., we're having a joint social with the Macclesfield and the Trafford & Hulme Branches at the Bulls Head in Mobberley. We'll be leaving Stockport at about 7.430 pm and transport will be provided - phone me for details.

Next event is Monday 18th., with a social at the Griffin in Heald Green, a fine Holts pub this, and this is followed on Friday, 22nd., with our monthly crawl, this time Rusholme & Moss Side. We kick-off at the Claremont, Claremont Road at 7-00pm and our 8-30 meeting point is the Osborne House on Victory Street. Those of a nervous disposition should note that the Robin Hood is on the pre- 8-30 itinerary

On Monday 25th., we have a social at the White Swan in Fallowfield and on the 28th. it's Pub of the Month, this time at the excellent Queens in Cheadle. A chance here to sample the elusive Robinsons 'ordinary' Bitter.

To round off this month, into June with a social on the 1st., at the Crown in Cheadle, much improved under the new tenancy.

If you want any more information please 'phone me, John Clarke, on 477 1973 at night or 831 7222 extn. 307 during the day.

### HEARD AT THE BAR.

In a Pennine Hosts pub.

Customer: "What lager have you got?"

Barmaid: "Foster or Carlsberg."

Customer: "Websters, please."

Websters - the bitter so bland that even lager drinkers like it!!

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WE'VE GOT THE QUESTIONS TOO.

-oOo-

## KING ROSE

Greenall's King's Head, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick, has been on the market, and hence under temporary management, for some months. In early April, however, the tenancy was taken over by Northampton based pub management company called Gentle Rose Ltd. Gentle Rose apparently have the Kings for a 3 month trial period as part of a deal involving 8 or so Greenalls pubs in Greater Manchester, including the (keg) Jersey Lily in Ancoats, the Dog & Partridge in Eccles, and a couple of pubs in Bolton. All will remain tied to Greenalls & the link with the midlands company is thought to have come about through contacts made by Greenalls Birmingham subsidiary - Davenport's - the new manager at the Kings comes from the Hen & Chicken in Bordesley, an inner-city Birmingham pub.

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## ROMPER PLANS

Boddingtons have once again put in planning permission to revamp the Romper, Pin Fold Lane, Ringway. This would involve converting the top room into a snug, slightly opening up the current lounge and snug and building a new snug plus a conservatory at the rear. The plans seem reasonably restrained with much reference to traditional materials & retaining open fires etc. If they must do something to the pub this doesn't seem too bad on the face of it but why get rid of the tap-room and why muck the pub about in the first place? The prime motive would seem to maximise the return (ie profit) on the place. Is this really necessary?

## TURNERS TAPS

Stockport readers may recall Press reports that thieves had stolen the old brass & ceramic spirit taps from the Queens Head (Turners Vaults) on Underbank. We are pleased to report that Sam Smiths have now confirmed to us that the taps have been recovered and are now in store for 'future re-use'. We have also asked Sams when the planned refurbishments are to be carried out.

They tell us that it is still their intention to carry out the refurbishment but a number of 'unforeseeable difficulties' have arisen which we hope to overcome in the near future. We'll let you know when anything happens.

### ANY QUESTIONS?

Quiz evenings have been started on alternate Tuesdays at the Ash in Heaton Chapel. Anyone wishing info. ring Maurice Daniels 748 8882.

### REAL ALE IN CENTRAL & SOUTH MANCHESTER - UPDATE 14.

In the City Centre, the Weavers Arms is closed, temporarily at least. Branagans has gained Websters Bitter & Choice and McEwans 80/-, all on handpump, Sam's Chop House has replaced Websters Choice with handpumped Ruddles County, while the sad demise of Winkles brewery sees this vanish from the Coach & Horses.

Handpumps dispensing the super-bland Websters Bitter continue to infest our Pennine Hosts houses. At Squires (formerly the Old Grey Horse & various other names) in Didsbury it's the only real ale on sale, while at the Waterloo in Withington it has now replaced traditional Wilsons Mild - which has also vanished from the Star in Ardwick.

Finally in Northenden, while the Farmers Arms has lost its traditional Greenalls Mild, the Church Inn has gained handpumped Ind Coope Burton Ale (this corrects our Pub News item last month.)

This year we hope to conduct a survey of the many clubs in our area which sell cask beer - if you know of one, please let us know. An early discovery has been Heaton Moor Rugby Club which sells handpumped Matthew Brown Mild & Theakstons Bitter at 71p & 76p respectively.

## The Nursery Inn

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- \* Bowling Parties Catered for — Details on on request.



# PUB NEWS!

Chesters' OLD BREWERY on Bell Crescent, Beswick is closed and boarded up following the demolition of Beswick flats. Surprisingly, though, Whitbread are understood to intend re-opening this sixties estate pub which a few years ago enjoyed a brief flirtation with real ale in the shape of Chesters Bitter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Websters Choice is now available at the HOLLYWOOD, Bloom Street, Edgeley and speaking of the Hollywood we learn that Landlady Lily Glynn is one of the longest serving in Stockport and will retire next year after 25 years.

\*\*\*\*\*

The HORSE AND FARRIER, Gatley, will no longer be selling Hydes Strong Ale.

\*\*\*\*\*

The WEMBLEY, Wilsons, in Adswod, appears to have gone keg (thanks be!!)

\*\*\*\*\*

The Watney takeover of Ruddles reported some months ago is starting to show through in local Pennine Hosts pubs - with the strong Ruddles County due to go in to the RISING SUN, Hazel Grove; the JOLLY SAILOR, Davenport and the HORSE & JOCKEY, Chorlton Green.

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Castlewood

(HOLE IN WALL)

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\*\*\*\*\*

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We are told that the GARDENERS ARMS, Offerton, is now selling Oldham Bitter alongside the Boddingtons and Higsons. We wonder if Boddies will put a similar range in the GEORGE, Mersey Square, where the revamp was at an advanced stage as we went to press and was due to re-open on the 23rd., April.

\*\*\*\*\*

Alcoholic developments in the Levenshulme area - planning permissions have been applied for to convert both 881 and 1022 Stockport Road into wine bars/bistros.

\*\*\*\*\*

The OLD RAMS HEAD, Higher Hillgate, was closed for alterations as we went to press. We are told that it will emerge as something called 'J.R.s Palce' - one of the hottest night spots in Stockport! Yech!!

\*\*\*\*\*

The OLDE VIC, Shaw Heath, Stockport has been selling a weekly guest beer since early April. Beers on up to the time of writing have included Burton Ale, Everards Tiger, Marstons Pedigree and Ruddles County. Landlady, Kay Ord, tells us she wishes to keep on experimenting to find out what goes down best with the customers. Next time you're in let her know!

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Contributors this Month: John Clarke, Rhys Jones, Humphrey Higgins, Jim Flynn, Paul Thompson, Charlotte Bulmer.

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### OPENING TIMES

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