

OPENING TIMES. DECEMBER 1984.

NUMBER SEVEN.

SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA'S PUB NEWSHEET.

ISSUED FREE.

BANK'S PROGRESS.

October 'Opening Times' reported the rumour that Wilsons had sold about ten of their pubs to a Wolverhampton based Brewery.

November 'What's Brewing' says that four Wilsons Houses have been bought: The Gransmoor in Openshaw and the Gorton Brook, West Gorton - both South Manchester Branch Pubs - the Gransmoor has been closed for some time, and the Gorton Brook has only recently closed. The other two are the Mitchell Arms, Ancoats, and Osborne House, Collyhurst, both in the North Manchester Branch Area; another two Wilsons pubs may be bought later.

The new 'Longsight' in Kirkmanshulme Lane is now well advanced (the roof is on) and signs say it is due to open at Christmas.

As Bank's brew an excellent Mild, it will be interesting to see how this goes down with Manchester drinkers, who are not really renowned for drinking large quantities of Mild. There has been a steady decline over the years in the amount of cask mild available - as demand goes down, size of container is reduced, but then as turnover falls even further, the beer goes off before it can be sold, and the inevitable happens - Keg mild takes over.

Will Banks's be able to reverse this trend?

It's a very different picture in their trading area in the Midlands - there are even some 'Mild only' pubs.

Phil Levison.

PUB OF THE MONTH.

Pub of the Month for December is the Kings' Head, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick - Chancellor Lane is the road that links Ashton Old Road and Hyde Road, close to the Bus depot, so it's easy to get to.

It's not that long since John & Josie Sullivan took over the tenancy, but they've already considerably increased the popularity of the pub, situated as it is in an area with many pubs chasing not that much trade. The only cask beer is Greenalls Bitter, and many CAMRA members have commented of the high quality here of a beer that doesn't normally rank among CAMRA's favourites. To complement the improving trend inside the pub, it is currently receiving a smart new coat of paint (should all be finished by presentation night)

John learned much of his craft at the Manchester Arms, Stockport, where we had a memorable Pub of the Month in May, and while I can't promise a Moon-shot from under the railway arches, I'm sure it'll be a night to enjoy - the date to remember is Thursday, December 20th.

Rhys Jones.

'SPREAD' RE-OPENS.

After an overlong closure Robinsons Brewery tap on Hillgate, the Spread Eagle, re-opened on 22nd., October.

New tenants are Bill & Kath Ellis who were formerly at the Dilke Club on Charles Street, and latterly were relief at the Warren Bulkeley before it closed.

They promise a good range of lunchtime snacks and are adding Old Tom on gravity to complement their very tasty Robbies Mild and Bitter.

Opening Times is written and published by the South Manchester Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. Send us your news, views and comments about the pubs & the Beer to:

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

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

PAUL & SHERALYN APOLOGISE TO ALL THEIR CUSTOMERS FOR THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF

NELSONS ALE HOUSE

GRAND

RE-OPENING

EARLY

DECEMBER.

Wellington Road, Stockport.

A R U N D I N T H E T O W N .This Month: The Hazel Grove Crawl.

The evening commenced with a mere three enthusiasts in the Rising Sun, a large Wilsons House on the A6/A523 junction. Handpumped Mild and bitter were on sale at 66p and 68p respectively. Only the Bitter was sampled and it scored an average of 2.5. Next stop was the Bulls Head, another Wilsons pub, large, modern and uninspiring where only the Bitter was real and sold at 70p - the most expensive pint of the night. It didn't prove worth it, averaging only 1.6.

By this time the group had swelled to five and a real treat next - Hazel Groves very own House of Horrors - Greenalls Red Lion - Keg Beer, loud disco, flashing lights - surely a candidate for the worst pub in the Branc area. We did spot some bottles of Worthington White Shield but they were no great shakes tasting as though they had had the time to become very familiar with the shelf.

Back to sanity next in the from of Robinsons White Hart, where three more members arrived. Bitter & Mild on electric pump - 66p & 60p. Bitter scored 3.1, the only pint of mild sampled was given a 3.

The Hazel Groves members local, the Three Tunnes was next - handpumped Robbies Bitter and mild at 66 & 60 again. This is a comfortable pub with several small rooms which does tend to get rather full at times. Bitter scored 3.3 mild 2.5. Next to the Grapes - a large, rather uninspiring Robinsons Pub, bitter and mild on electrics at the same price as the previous two. 2.4 for bitter (lowest of the night) and 2.5 for the one mild drinker. We then undertook the hazardous journey across the A6 to the Horse & Jockey (Wilson's) Some debate about the mild here. There were no pump clips to show it was on sale - on request it was poured from an unmarked handpump. There was some feeling that it tasted gassy but an enquiry at the bar was met with insistence that it was traditionally served. Bitter & Mild both sold at 65p, bitter scored 1.7, mild 1.5.

Back to Robbies next in the Bird in Hand, a small, comfortable pub where Bitter & Mild are sold on electric pumps. Scores Bitter 3.3 mild 3.5.

More pubs awaited, but it was getting late and so we adjourned back to the Three Tunnes for last orders.

A good night was had by all - Robbies seemed to come out best on both price and quality with a couple of possible candidates for a future reserve list of Good Beer Guide pubs.

Alan Seal.

THE SUN IN SEPTEMBER.

As reported last month the 'Sun in September', Sam Smiths newest pub, opened last month. Formerly the Milton Lodge, situated on Burnage Lane near Lane End Road, it is a plush pub in the Burnage Estate, with very pleasant decor, though not perhaps really suited to the area.

'Business' people, in the main, seemed to make up the bulk of the clientele on my visit.

The Beer prices are very reasonable, 59p for Tadcaster Bitter and 61p for Old Brewery Bitter, both on handpumps, service is provided by smart and polite staff and a most agreeable Manager.

The pub has been included in the new Greater Manchester Good Beer Guide.

Ron Sproson.

THE MALTESE FALCON

Taking a break from the Host Treatment of his pub in late November, licensee of the Nelsons Ale House, Paul & Sheralyn Sixsmith are off to Malta - a prize from Hosts for the largest % increase in Sales in South Manchester. Excellent Mild & Bitter will continue to be served after Hosts have had their way.

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FIZZ BEER IN THE FOUNTAIN.

Stockport now boasts the only pub in Manchester with a fountain! Whitbread may have been stopped from defacing the outside of the White Lion on Underbank but they've certainly made up for it inside.

Pink walls, mirrors, plastic plants abound. Part of the pub is now called Hudsons, serving morning coffee and afternoon tea (can you believe this?) To add insult to injury the cask Chesters bitter has gone to be replaced by the usual range of fizz - yuk!

Heard at the Bar -

Customer: That was an excellent curry, are you a chef?

Landlord: No, I'm a piss-artist like yourself.

MORE ON LOW PRICES.

Happy hours apart, prime contender for cheapest pint in South Manchester must be one of our Holts pubs. The Mild in the vault of the Garratt, Pink Bank Lane, Longsight, is currently 51p - anyone equal or beat that?

Another under wraps.

The Church Inn, Ardwick Green, is currently closed for renovations, and is expected to reopen in early December. It is expected to re-emerge still as a recognisable pub.

IRISH LOSS

It was sad to have confirmation from O.T. Editor, Humphrey Higgins, of the persistent rumours that Irish mini-Brewery, Hartys of Blessington, have stopped brewing traditional ale. I remember Hartys with pleasure, if only for the remark of one of their partners concerning selling into the Free Trade in the Wicklow Mountains: 'If you want to sell real beer round here you've got to know a bit about sheep!'

Rhys Jones.

ADVERTISE IN 'OPENING TIMES'

The next edition of O.T. will be our Christmas number & we are offering special cut-price ads to licensees to pass on Seasons Greetings - a lot cheaper than the Evening News!! Contact Ron Sproson, 48, Moorcroft Drive, M19 1WH, Tel: 432 0059 for details.

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STOCKPORTS' WINE BAR WITH REAL ALE

DRAUGHT BASS - HIGSONS BITTER -

HIGSONS MILD

AT THE

GEORGE

CHANGE AT VICTORIA.

It all started back in May, when the off-licence next to the Victoria in Withington closed, as it was to become part of the pub. A temporary partition wall appeared, but otherwise life seemed to go on much as usual.

Then, in mid-September, the new bar opened for business - it was much larger than the old bar, and illuminated 'plastic-box' dispensers had replaced the old plunger type. The beer itself, of course, remained completely unaltered excellent cask conditioned Hydes Mild & Bitter at 60p and 64p a pint.

Work then started on the old Vault and Bar area, and by early November the alterations were almost complete, but although the new carpet was down, the curtains were still missing.

There are several interesting features about this conversion, firstly although it is now a one-price pub (the vault was originally 1p cheaper) by no means is it a totally boring one bar pub - by use of existing walls, and new wooden screens, there are now two distinct and different 'sitting' areas, a Games Room (replacing the Vault) & there is still plenty of room for those who prefer to prop up the bar (and 'bum-rail' if you want to lean in the opposite direction)

Secondly during all these quite considerable alterations the pub has never closed, so how can you have an official Opening night? There is a date - 20th., November but as this has passed another date to note is 17th., December - you are assured of a decent pint in pleasant surroundings but it should be an evening with a difference - come along and find out why.

RED REVOLUTION.

Last months 'Opening Times' reported that a Pedigree Handpump had appeared in the Red Lion, Withington, and more were to follow. The conversion from the old metered dispense is now complete and Mercian Mild and Burton Bitter have joined the Pedigree, at 65p, 67p & 72p a pint respectively.

The Bar staff at this very busy pub may be taking a little time to get used to the new-fangled pumps - a too energetic first pull by an enthusiastic barman and everyone at the bar got some of my mild!

R. I. P. GRAFTON

Sadly, the Grafton Arms, Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, which was an institution among students, hospital workers and general boozers alike, is to be demolished at Christmas.

This pub has been in the CAMRA national Good Beer Guide for several years, but has unfortunately decayed in recent times since Holts Brewery have refused to spend any money on it. A new pub is to be erected on the site, and should be completed by next November, but how can a bland, modern estate pub replace a characterful local which, although built at the end of the last Century, had such wonderful modern inovations as a stuffed mallard, a hideous '60s style clock which virtually covered the whole wall in the smoke room, 'gold' records above the juke-box and the biggest, noisiest electronic clay pigeon shooting machine in the known universe (mercifully this last item was usually out of order).

And who could possibly replace the dulcet tones of the lovely Dorothy ('Dot' to her muckers) who sang out the orders at lunch times for hot pies and mushy peas in a voice that was lethal at 100 paces?

Ah, life just isn't going to be the same in future.

Jock Stroller.

Contributors to this Edition of Opening Times: Jock Stroller, Rhys Jones, Phil Levison. Ron Sproson, Humphrey Higgins, Alan Seal.

MILD & BITTER

John Turrell writes a regular feature, Mild & Bitter, which appears in the 'Reporter', South Manchesters' own local paper. His comments are not confined to real ale pubs, so it was all the more interesting to find that a large part of one of his recent articles was devoted to comments about CAMRA, and it was quite complementary - "we owe a considerable debt to CAMRA...." he says. There were also a couple of mentions of "What's Doing"

In a later issue of the Reporter he makes some comments about the changing licensees at the Friendship, and on another page there's a picture of the new Pedigree handpumps in use at the Red Lion.

BUFFALO BREWS.

During a recent visit into deepest Hertfordshire, a call at the GBG Buffalo's Head at Puckeridge revealed that in addition to Benskins Bitter (its a tied house) Victorias Albert was also on sale. Benskins BLO Jim Axford gave some more information on the situation. The pub took part in a Benskins guest beer trial, taking several Allied cask beers in rotation for two months each, and it also stocks, on a regular basis, beers from the Victoria Brewery at Ware.

The enthusiastic landlord (a CAMRA member) seems to have been able to persuade Benskins to support his 'bulk beer' policy, but it's thought to be a 'one off' as Jim doesn't know of another pub in the Benskins estate which is allowed to take a true additional/guest beer. Another Allied guest beer trial was due to start in September, involving about 100 pubs.

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