



Opening Times

No.21 STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRAS' PUB NEWSHEET JANUARY 1986 FREE

TAKEOVERS - THE THREAT TO YOUR PINT!

For the first time since the '60s & early '70s, takeovers are becoming common in the Brewing Industry. The last 18 months have seen the disappearance of Breweries in Lancaster, Wrexham & the West Midlands.

Whilst we can raise our glasses to toast the success of the fight by Matthew Brown to fend off the bid from Scottish & Newcastle (only after an enquiry by the City into the way S & N went about gaining acceptances) two massive bids are in the pipeline.

In early December the Trade Secretary finally got round to referring the Elders-IXL bid for Allied to the Monopolies Commission. Mind you, if their report into this bid is anything like the one on the S & N bid he needn't have bothered. This weak kneed document gave S & N complete clearance to go ahead and attempt to destroy your choice of beers - its intellectual thrust can be summarised thus: "Well, we don't really like regional breweries being taken over - but we've had a long day, oh, go on then, just this once - but if you try it again we'll be really cross..."

Meanwhile a second 'Big Six' brewer was receiving unwelcome attention. Imperial Group who are responsible for Courage & John Smiths, received a bid from City conglomerate Hanson Trust. This looks like another long hard battle, with a Commission reference a strong possibility.

In the long term the future of every small & medium sized brewer must be at risk because a) beer sales are over 10% down since 1979, b) prices can only be put up so much to maintain profits & c) if prices can't go up how do the breweries sell more beer? Answer: BY TAKING OVER SMALLER FIRMS & CLOSING THEM DOWN! This happened before & the history of the brewing industry shows takeovers mean:

- 1) LESS JOBS: Matthew Brown, for example, has four Breweries: those at Carlisle & Workington would doubtless have closed if the bid had been successful.
- 2) LESS CHOICE: taking Browns' again & its subsidiary Theakstons; they brew 8 Real Ales, fewer than half of those would probably have survived.
- 3) HIGHER PRICES: once competition is out of the way the bigger brewers can charge what they want. In Stockport & Manchester note how much cheaper the likes of Robbies, Boddies & Holts are than the likes of Whitbread/Chesters & Bass for example.

Cont. on Page 3.

PUB OF THE MONTH

The Pub of the Month Award for January has been won by the popular Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heavily, Stockport.

Run for the past two years by former Barmaid Barbara Mounkley and her family the pub serves a consistently fine pint of Robinsons (Best Mild, Best Bitter & Old Tom, all handpulled) - the beer under the careful management of Bar bara's 19 year old son, Simon.

Tastefully decorated the multi-roomed pub has appeared in every national Good Beer Guide since 1978 and boasts active darts and pool teams and is host to the popular Grannys Folk Club.

It's also a meeting place for the English Lacrosse team for Jeff Mounkley is their Captain!

Come along to the presentation on January 23rd. - it's going to be a good do!!
Humphrey Higgins.

BAKERS VAULTS

MARKET PLACE, STOCKPORT

FINE ROBINSONS ALES

SUPERB CUISINE-

NOW SERVED LUNCH &

EARLY DOORS

TEL 480 3182

STAGGER

TO HELL AND BACK! A MOTOR TOUR OF WYTHENSHAW Pubs.

On a recent Friday night a surprisingly large band of masochistic CAMRA members set off in a minibus to tour Europe's largest housing estate - Wythenshawe. We commenced at the Beech Tree on Outwood Road, on the border with Heald Green. A modernised Whitbread house with a fake drinking fountain as the focal point in the lounge, the Brewery had kept the old windows which gave the place some originality & those who had been in before felt it had been improved. The beer, however, hadn't! It was still keg, & bottled Guinness was the order of the day!

We drove on to Peel Hall Road where we stopped at the Tudor Tavern, a Wilsons pub modernised inside in an attempt to suit the name. The decor was pleasant but the hand-pumped Original Bitter was enough to give Real Ale a bad name. Further down the road was the Peel Hall Hotel, a seedy Tetley House selling only keg beers. Next stop was The Benchill on Brownley Road. From the side it didn't look too bad but the door was locked and we had to enter at the front. The barbed wire over the main entrance didn't give a welcoming feeling but at least it prepared the unsuspecting non-local for the atmosphere inside. The more faint hearted would describe this as threatening and in view of the keg Whitbread beers on offer we bid a retreat!

Things could only get better, and with a feeling of optimism we progressed on to Greenwood Road and the Anvil - as you would expect with this name Hydes was the Brewery and for the first time we had the choice of real Mild & Bitter. The decor was plain & the beers variously described as 'reasonable indifferent & average'. We walked down to the originally named Greenwood Tree, the only pub in Wythenshawe proper which was in the Greater Manchester Beer Guide. It was easy to see why, as although the pub itself was nothing out of the ordinary, the welcome was friendly & the atmosphere pleasant. The handpumped Tetely mild & Bitter were both tasted and described as above average.

Back onto the bus which took us to the Silver 'rch, Poundswick Lane, a lively and comfortable Wilsons House. One of our number noticed the Original Bitter sign on the pump and knowledgeably informed us this

signified the beer was cask conditioned. One taste told us he was wrong! (no names, John) The Landlady told us that it was tanked but they were soon to go onto Cask - there's hope yet!

Our travels then saw us on Portway & the first call, the Happy Man. This bland, modernised estate pub did not cause much happiness as the only beers were keg Stones & Bass Light. So back into our transport & down the Road to where we expected the Mountain Ash. We found it transformed into a Pennine Hosts 'Sports'. The awfully loud coloured paint had not been long dry and the neon signs gave the feeling of being on the set for an American soft drink advert! The place was obviously very popular with the younger drinkers who must see it as something different in the midst of all this blandness. How long will the novelty last? Original Bitter was on handpump but we didn't taste it as none of us managed to get served in the 10 minutes we were there! We stopped at the Cock O' The North, but keg Greenalls and the sheer blandness of the pub persuaded us not to stay long.

The next few pubs could all be described generously as typical estate pubs - the Woodpecker, Selsted Rd., served keg Bass Light & Stones & the Red Beret on Cornishway was also keg Bass. The Portway was different only in that it served keg Chesters & appeared more in need of redecoration. The Cornishman was a little more pleasant but again the Wilsons Bitter was tanked.

From this sea of mediocrity we motored to Ringway. Tucked away behind the Airport on Pinfold Lane is the Red Lion, popularly known as the Romper. This country pub is a gem and the Boddingtons Bitter was on form. The only drawback is the lack of mild, but ignore this, get down there for a pint!

Cont. on P.3.

Old Ship Inn, Styal.

IN THE HEART OF THE NATIONAL TRUST PARK.

HANDPUMPED MARSTONS PEDIGREE -

WILSONS MILD & BITTER -

WEBSTERS YORKSHIRE BITTER -

THE HOME OF HOME MADE FOOD!

STAGGER - Continued.

Reluctantly we left, and circumvented the airport to the 'Airport' on Ringway Road, a large suburban Robinsons House, recently painted and significantly improved since my last visit. The Best Bitter & Best Mild were both sampled & unanimously described as average.

Finally we went to Moss Nook and the Tatton Arms. This surprisingly large multi-roomed pub is a carefully modernised and extended 17th., Century farmhouse with extensive wood panelling and an impressive carved wooden fire surround. The Robinsons Bitter & Best Mild were thought by most to be the best of the night.

While drinking my last pint my thoughts turned back to the middle of Wythenshawe & how the nightmare caused by the postwar architects and planners had only been compounded in its pubs by the policies of the large National Brewers!

(The comments above are not a statement on the quality of the pubs or beer on all occasions, but our opinion of both on the night)

Jim Flynn.

PALATIAL ALEXANDRIA!

Well. perhaps not quite palatial, but Wilsons former Alexandria on Mill St., just north of the Canal opposite Philips Park, has certainly been smartened up a bit by its Rossendale based owners. Now a Free House, it has a large carpeted lounge with an enclosure off where pool can be played without non-playing drinkers getting a cue up the backside! It boasts six handpumps - when your scribe called in early December they were selling Tetley Mild & Bitter, Youngers Scotch Bitter, Websters Bitter - Moorhouses Pendle Witch & Vaux Samson were in the cellar but not yet ready for sale. Prices are competitive - mild 66p, 'ordinary' bitters 68 - and this enterprising venture deserves the support of our readers. From Manchester take any Ashton Old Road bus to the Crossroads (keg Bass) & walk north along Mill Street, otherwise the 53 is convenient from numerous suburban districts.

RICHARD & SUSAN GENDERS.....

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and BITBURGER PILS

ON DRAUGHT.

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TAKEOVER THREAT cont. from p.1.

The message from CAMRA is please support us in the struggle and support your local firms; unless of course you look forward to standing on Hillgate & watch Robinsons being demolished to make way for an office block, or on Ducie Street seeing Boddies being bulldozed for a car park, or on Moss Lane while Hydes is being levelled to make way for flats or..... you may laugh but it could happen. Please support CAMRA - and protect YOUR pint!!

BRANCH DIARY...

Thursday 9th., January. 8pm Branch Meeting, Castlewood, Stockport.

Friday 10th., Recovery Social: Travellers Rest, Burslem.

Monday 13th., Monday Social: Bulls Head, Manchester City Centre.

Wednesday 22nd., Wilson Brewery visit.

Thursday 23rd., Pub of the Month, Blossoms.

Monday 27th., Monday Social: Kings Head, Ardwick.

Friday 31st., Ashton New Road pub crawl: 7pm Gorton Arms, 8-30 Duke of Edinburgh.

Contacts: Branch Business: John Clarke:

832 2468 ext. 385 (w), 477 1973 (h)

Socials, Trips: Andy Cooper: 0625 872641 (w)

Seen on the Bar: The Museum, Museum Street, London, a handwritten pump clip proclaiming 'RUDDLES TIGER £1'!!

The Boars Head, Market Place, Stockport.

Open 6 Days: Closed Sundays: Good Food Daily: Live Music 6 Nights.

Sam Smiths Real Ale: Tel: 480 3978



This month Pub Grub has visited a Pub familiar to many readers: The Castlewood, Bridge Street Brow, Stockport. A new entry in the 1986 Good Beer Guide, the Castlewood is a comfortable, split level Wilsons Pub which, under the able direction of Don & Aline Cleary has gone from strength to strength since it reopened after a lengthy period of closure. In addition to the excellent handpumped Wilsons Mild & Bitter the Castlewood was one of the first pubs to introduce Websters Green Label into the area. Equally well kept, this is also selling well & should be a permanent feature.

The food, which is also available on Saturdays, tends to fall in the chips with every thing variety, but don't take that as a criticism; it's also of a high quality and portions are generous to say the least. The menu ranges from cheese or fishburgers at 90p & 70p respectively up to gammon, egg & chips at £2. Home made pie, chips & veg are £1.30, plaice, chips & peas £1.60, pizzas are 60p & £1.20, steak barms are very good value at 80p. Tea & Coffee are available at 25p and 30p. each. Also priced at £2.00 are the 'chefs special' Pork or Turkebabs with chips and salad. I chose the Porkebab which consists of lean chunks of meat, threaded on a wooden skewer, battered and then deep fried. Very tasty and what a change for the salad to be just that and not a curling lettuce leaf and half a tomato stuck on the plate as an afterthought. Here the salad filled half the plate with cucumber, tomato, onion and egg slices, all nicely presented on a bed of lettuce. In fact the presentation and attention to detail really do make this place stand out - good, enjoyable food doesn't have to be exotic and unusual; keep it simple and make a first class job is a recipe for success and many pubs could learn from Don at the Castlewood.

John Clarke.

MIDDLETON MOVES

East Manchester gained a rare outlet for Lees Beers late last year when they bought the Britannia on Rowsley Street (behind the Volvo showroom on Ashton New Road) from Greenalls. Handpumped Mild & Bitter (67p & 69p) are near to be on good form.

CASTLE MXXXX

You'll have seen it on the posters. You'll have seen it in the pubs, usually accompanied by lots of red & yellow bunting, bar towels & beer mats. But what are the facts about the "Aussies favourite lager"? Well for a start it's about as Australian as I am since it's brewed in that well known Australian outpost of Wrexham. (That's the Wrexham, as in Wales) The product that we are being urged to drink is also considerably weaker than that drank down under. There it's stronger than Robbies Bitter, this stuff however has a gravity of about 1036 which puts it at about the same as bitters from Boddies, Hydes and Wilsons. The price of those beers ranges from something like 64p to 78p. For Castlemaine, however, you'll pay about 90-95p. good value eh? And what about the 'taste'? Well I've tried it and it's mainly just sweet & fizzy - it should appeal to Vimto drinkers who like being ripped off!! (no offence to Vimto!!)

John Clarke.

NO STAKE IN BODDIES!

Over 12 months ago 'OT' reported that the Black Lion, Hillgate, Stockport. was going to be turned into a steak house by Boddingtons, a story confirmed by the licensee. Since then there has been a distinct lack of action & Boddingtons have confirmed to us that no conversion is now planned. The future of another Stockport Boddies house seems to be in some doubt. The pub in question is the somewhat rundown Buck & Dog on Bridge St. This too was the subject of a Steakhous rumour & once again Boddies have confirmed that no such conversion is to take place. They have not, however, been willing to divulge their intentions. We have however a report that it has, or will be, bought by Barclays Bank.

Castlewood (HOLE IN WALL)

BRIDGE STREET BROW, MARKET, STOCKPORT

WILSONS REAL ALE - WEBSTERS GREEN LABEL

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MANCHESTER

ARMS.

WELLINGTON ROAD SOUTH, STOCKPORT.

ROBINSONS BEST ALES!

PUB FOOD & SNACKS MON - SAT.

MANCHESTER PRICES

On November 27th., the massed branches of CAMRA surveyed virtually all the pubs & bars in Manchester City Centre regarding both the prices charges and whether there were legible price lists. The Stockport & South Manchester Branch only includes a small chunk of the City Centre but our few outlets include some of the most expensive. which are: The Portland Bar: Handpumped Tetely Bitter, 84p, Burton Ale 90p. The China Garden: Keg Tetley Bitter 85p. Grand Hotel, Vineyard Bar: handpumped John Smiths Bitter 80p, Boddies Bitter 90p, keg Websters Bitter 90p. Piccadilly Hotel: keg Teteley Bitter £1.10. Portland Hotel: keg Youngers Scotch Bitter £1.30

Even though some of the above outlets operate 'Happy Houts' when prices are more sensible & even though the Piccadilly & Portland obviously cater for the more money than sense brigade, there can be no excuse for these extortionate prices especially when you bear in mind that in the same area as these we have the Circus Tavern which sells handpumped Tetelys at 70p & the Grey Horse serving Hydes mild at 68p, bitter at 70p and the super-strong Anvil Ale at £1.20.

On the price list front the results were similar to those at our own survey in the summer, with about 1/3rd of the pubs having no list or an illegible one.

GETTING CLOSER

We don't have many John Smiths pubs, and none have yet gone 'real' but it took a step nearer when the Vine, Kennedy St., Manchester, went over with cask Bitter at 71p. If Tadcaster is listening, how about the Railway in West Didsbury for your next Manchester conversion, followed by the George & Dragon, Ardwick? Oh, there is also Tom Thumbs in Stockport to think about as well!!

ROCK ON!

Tetley's Rock, Hyde Road, West Gorton, was closed for a while in November; and briefly it seemed as if the closure might last some time. However we're pleased to report that the pub reopened on the 29th., November in the very capable hands of Stephen Dearden, who has been trained in a good school - his father keeps the City Arms on Kennedy Street in Manchester.

Under the previous licensee the beer was good enough to earn a place in the CAMRA prestigious national Good Beer Guide, but now it's if anything even better - and there's the added attraction of a Happy Hour from 6-30 to 7-30 Monday to Saturday, when handpumped Mild and Bitter will cost you just 50p. Stephen also tells us he will be opening at 5-30 from now on.

We wish him success.

BELLE VUE DISCO PUBS

If you're really into pubs with "the best sound around" then the Belle Vue district could be good for you this year-but if, like most sensible people, you prefer a real pub with a real pint at a real price, perhaps you'd better forget it.

Bass's Midland on Hyde Road finally opened on December 7th., looking not quite so much like a licensed discoteque as we'd feared, but still full of bright lights and plastic fronds. AND there's no real ale - this and Burtonwoods nearby Lakes Hotel are now the only all fizz pubs for a long way, the next nearest probably being Whitbreads Steelworks Tavern on Gorton Lane. Meanwhile there's a planning application in to convert the former Co-Op on Hyde Road (opposite Gorton Market) into a disco pub-cum-snooker hall. Local residents are objecting owing to the lack of parking in the vicinity.

BRIDGEWATER

CHESTERGATE, STOCKPORT.

FREE HOUSE

WILSONS BITTER

HOLTS MILD & BITTER

WEBSTERS GREEN LABEL

all handpumped.

HOT & COLD FOOD EVERY DAY.

PUB NEWS

Refurbishment is expected to start this month at the Seven Stars (Holts), Ashton Old Road. The bar is to be made into an island bar, allowing customers to walk through from vault to lounge at the rear where a food preparation area (architects don't call 'em kitchens!) and new toilets will also be provided. The half-height partition that separates the lounge from the pool room will go, creating one big room. Meanwhile the beer continues as good as ever.

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Work should now be well under way on the former Cheadle Railway Station which is due to open as Banks's pub at Easter.

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After an extended trial Greenalls cask mild was removed from the Angel in Gorton in November owing to poor sales. Rather than sell keg mild the pub has reverted to having no mild at all.

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Don't forget your cheque book if you intend to visit the new Berni-Hosts 'City Limits' on Didsbury Road, Heaton Morris. Keg Websters is available at £1 a pint!

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Websters Green Label continues its advance and is now on sale in two Edgeley pubs - the Prince Albert and the Royal Oak, both on Castle Street.

.....

The Alexandra, Northgate Road, Edgeley, has now started a shooting club. There's already a scuba club and a parachute club - it makes you wonder how they find time to drink the Robbies!

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The Manor House, Withington, now sells Jennings Bitter (75p a pint). Other beers are Tetley Mild (71) Tetley Bitter (75) & Ind Coope Burton (82)

.....

Robinsons Old Tom has made a welcome reappearance at the Manchester Arms, Wellington Road South, Stockport.

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OPENING TIMES is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester branch of CAMRA. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Campaign. Send your news to: S.H. Higgins, 48 Moorcroft Drive, Burnage M19 1WH

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Advertising is cheap and reaches thousands of pub goers: contact the Editor, address above, for details.

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Egerton Arms

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