



Opening Times

No. 23 STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRAS' PUB NEWSHEET MARCH 1986 FREE

PLANNERS' AXE HANGS OVER 15 PUBS

Manchester Council planners are plotting to demolish at least 8, and perhaps as many as 15 pubs, on Hyde Road. The shock news came in a consultation document 'Planning proposals for Belle Vue' released last month.

The threat centres round a GMC scheme - which the City Council intend to continue with after GMC's demise - to widen Hyde Road to form a dual carriageway with bus lanes. The accompanying plan shows that all the widening will take place on the North side of Hyde Road - the side that has most of the pubs. For good measure, the proposed Intermediate Ring Road will intersect the new souped-up Hyde Road at a massive roundabout just about where Hydes' Travellers Call is now. The hit-list of pubs is: Definitely affected: Horseshoe (Robinsons), Unicorn (Boddies), Travellers Call (Hydes), Nags Head (Boddies), Rock (Tetleys), Victoria (Chesters), Coach & Horses (Robbies), Cheshire Hunt (Sam Smiths 'free'). Others at risk: Star (Wilsons), Bulls Head (Chester), Wellington (Chesters), City Gates (Chesters), Junction (Chesters), Plough (Robinsons), Lord Nelson (Wilsons/Pennine Hosts).

Worst hit would be West Gorton. Now blessed with varied pubs selling real ale from 5 breweries, the district would be left with just 3 modern estate pubs - the Wellington (keg Bass), the Aces (Chesters) and the Locomotive (Keg Greenalls).

Now for the good news. The proposals are at least 3 years away - exact timing depends on the council's finances - so if we act NOW, we can get these plans spiked. CAMRA is writing to the Council to express our opposition and to clarify certain details of the plans, and we'll bring you details of any response in 'Opening Times' - but there's also something you can do.

The Council have asked for public comments on the plans - if you use any of the threatened pubs, whether regularly or occasionally tell the Council you object to the demolitions. The contact is Mr. Alan Hubbard in the Planning Department of Manchester Town Hall - Telephone 234 4530. Don't put it off till tomorrow - write or ring NOW - Help us save Hyde Road!!

PUB of the YEAR 1985! THE RED BULL, HILLGATE.

After much deliberation the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA have selected the Red Bull, Hillgate, Stockport, to receive the Award for 1985 Pub of the Year.

The pub, which won the Pub of the Month award last June, is a fine 18th. century building (according to the drain-pipe built in 1750!) which retains all the traditional features - original oak beams, flagged floor and an internal decor with an impressive collection of brasses which gives a strong impression of a country pub in the heart of town.

The handpulled Robinsons Mild & Bitter are always on excellent form and the emphasis is on a good pint in friendly surroundings - a pub where the art of conversation is not killed off by an all pervasive juke-box!

With 2 bars, both open at all sessions, the Red Bull also offers a wide range of lunch-time meals and snacks in the early evenings.

Under the energetic tenancy of Brian and Faith Lawrence for the past three years the pub has deservedly regained a place in CAMRA's National Good Beer Guide in 1986 for it epitomises all CAMRA's ideals.

The presentation will be made on Tuesday, March 11th., and all are invited to come along. Live entertainment is expected and a good night out is guaranteed - but get there early - it's going to be packed!!

Humphrey Higgins.

RICHARD AND SUSAN GENDERS -

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STAGGER

A WET NIGHT IN EAST MANCHESTER.

This month's crawl features pubs on & around Ashton New Road - an area often ignored, but one containing some fine pubs. As ever, what follows is not CAMRA's 'final judgement' on the pubs or the beer - it's simply the way a few seasoned drinkers saw things on the night.

The crawl started at the Gorton Arms, one of the pubs Banks's bought from Wilsons and selling Mild, Bitter & "Hansons" Black Country Bitter, all on electric pumps. This is one of the finest pub renovations the area can boast - the gantry attracted particular praise, but the whole job has been exceedingly well done by Banks's and their architects. We all drank mild (66p) which attracted a quality rating between 'good' and 'very good'. Next stop was the Railway, opposite Ashburys Station, in name a free house but selling only Boddingtons Bitter. A former Openshaw Brewery pub (the brewery stood close by the pub & was taken over by Hope & Anchor of Sheffield in 1957) this was a pleasant if unremarkable (and latterly all fizz) pub when Bass had it, but has now been altered to give a somewhat drab and characterless open-plan interior. The handpumped bitter was well above average though not quite achieving a 'good' score. Here we saw the first of several log-end dartboards.

Now one of the gems of the crawl - the Travellers Call, Ashton Old Road, a free house selling Bitters from Boddingtons (70p), Thwaites (70p), Marstons Burton (70p) & Marstons Owd Rodger (55p a half). We sampled Thwaites & Burton, both of which were between 'good' & 'very Good', and, as ever, enjoyed the natural unforced welcome of this paragon among pubs - it was good too to see licensee Tony Healey in circulation after suffering ill health over Christmas.

We now had a long walk to the Britannia on Rowsley Street, bought by Lees from Greenalls last year. A friendly and down to earth pub, both mild & bitter (67p & 69p) are on hand-pump, and both were very good. Next was the Duke of Edinburgh, Mill Street, a huge & essentially unaltered Tetley pub. Despite being in a very well-pubbed area the Duke has always managed to serve a good pint. Current plans include developing the ground at the back as a beer garden complete with lighting to allow al-fresco music. Mild & Bitter (66p & 68p) are handpumped & the mild was given a rating just in excess of

'good'; the bitter wasn't quite so well thought of but still clearly above average.

Next stop was the Alexandra, further North on Mill Street, a former Wilsons pub reopened as a free house late last year. It's comfortable enough but in its new one-lounge-plus-pool-room format does seem to lack that essential but intangible pub character. The beers, all handpumped & at 68p, are Tetley mild & bitter, Websters Bitter & Youngers Scotch Bitter. We all opted for Youngers, which managed a just above 'average' rating - it was too cold & too highly conditioned to be considered good beer. Back now to our first pub actually on the New Road - the Why Not? (once the Bradford Arms). The recent re-vamp has left it with far more of a pub atmosphere than it had before. A free house, it sells Thwaites mild & bitter (70p) & Boddingtons Bitter (70p) on handpump. We rated the mild only just short of 'very good' & Boddies bitter weighed in between average & good.

Out on the New Road now to Chesters' Derby Arms, a pub which has been renovated since any of us had last visited it - and we all agreed that Chesters had actually improved the place! The only real ale was Chesters Bitter (71p), which we thought was above average - and the pub certainly scored extra points when the cockle man came round!

Not far away on Croft Street is the Victoria, a splendid, vibrant Wilsons pub with hand-pumped mild & bitter (65 & 67p) and both were above average. Near the pub stands a row of barrels (no, not casks - oil drums!) placed to regulate parking - it seems these were filled with concrete & painted white some 15 years ago by 'O.T.' Editor Humphrey Higgins! To finish with, a Holts pub! The Grove on the New Road is a good example of their smaller houses - nothing flash & fancy, just a good pint with friendly service. Mild (61p) & Bitter (63) are on handpumps; the bitter was voted best beer of the night & the mild wasn't far behind!

Rhys Jones.

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!



This month we return to Stockport to visit a pub which is gaining an increasing reputation for the quality of its food - the Bakers Vaults in the Market Place.

Taken over by Ian & Bot Brookes, formerly of the Manchester Arms, last year the Bakers was a pub which had had a somewhat varied reputation over the years and at first it seemed to be something of a challenge - always busy at lunchtime but less so at night. Luckily this has now been remedied with the introduction of an excellent evening menu (space doesn't permit me to go into details - go & see for yourselves) and also an application for a music licence which if granted should really see the place come alive.

So what about the food? The lunchtime menu varies daily & is chalked up on a large blackboard near the door - lots to choose from and all freshly prepared. On my visit there were 4 starters including the usual prawn cocktail (£1.50), soup (60p) & pate (£1.10), along with an interesting sounding savoury pancake with cheese sauce (£1.50). The prawn cocktail was extremely good - the prawns served in a shell with a huge helping of salad, brown bread and butter.

The main course was difficult to choose - I picked Pork Provencale at £2.65, which is about the average price you can expect to pay. This came with a superb tomato, onion, mushroom & pepper sauce & was accompanied by 4 (yes, 4!) vegetables (all cooked to perfection), salad & a baked potato (in its skin - a nice touch this, sliced & with a pat of butter). I could find no fault with this and other main course dishes were equally impressive - the gammon and pineapple (£2.65) comes with fresh pineapple and the T Bone steak at £3.25 is superb value.

MANCHESTER ARMS.

WELLINGTON ROAD SOUTH, STOCKPORT.

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FOLK NIGHT EVERY WEDNESDAY

There was a choice of 3 mouthwatering deserts - Blackcurrant cheesecake (80p) Coffee & Walnut Gateaux (95p) and, my choice, Strawberry Crepe (£1.50). This was a pancake stuffed with strawberries and covered in whipped cream - wonderful!!

If you don't fancy a full meal you needn't have all courses or you could try one of the open sandwiches which are from £1.85 (Roast Ham) to £2.00 (Prawn, Pate). These sound expensive but aren't - you get a vast plateful of salad, huge portions of ham or whatever and lots of wholemeal bread.

Reading this you may think I've gone overboard in my praise but it really is difficult to fault. If I did have to nit-pick I'd mention the frozen chips which seem out of place compared to the high standard of the rest of the food. Worth a visit - most certainly; the prices may seem high but for food of this quality and with portions as generous as these it's a giveaway.

John Clarke.

ROMPER PLANS ROUTED!

Further to our report on the Romper at Ringway, CAMRAS' objection was partly instrumental in having Boddies plans thrown out by both the City Planning Committee & the full Council. The bad news is that Boddies have appealed! more news next month.

HEARD AT THE BAR.....

"Beer was only 50 pence a pint when I started drinking."

PUB OF THE MONTH

Pub of the Month for March is the Midway, Newbridge Lane, Stockport, a popular free house which is just about unique in its style among Stockport pubs - the comfortable hunting lodge style, while by no means overdone, is the sort of thing you might more readily expect in the Peak. After a period of some uncertainty it has firmly reestablished itself under the able management of Sue & John Palmer who provide a fine range of draught beers: Tetley mild & bitter, Thwaites Bitter, Jennings bitter, Burtonwood bitter & Marstons Pedigree - and turnover is such as to enable quality to be maintained across the range.

Presentation night is Thursday 27th., March, when a highly enjoyable evening is in prospect - come along and help us pack the place out!

Rhys Jones.

IMPERIAL ECHOS

The Imperial, a former Wilsons house, on Birch Street, West Gorton, has finally been bought and is set to re-open after a closure of over 2 years. The purchaser is Bill Taylor licensee of the King William IV in Salford.

The Imperial will be run by Bill's daughter Pauline on opening, but this could be some time as the pub needs a vast amount of work - it was already very run down prior to closure & the past two years of neglect haven't helped matters. The King Billy is a well known free house & Bill tells us that the Imperial will also sell traditional beers - the range hasn't been decided yet but Holts, Boddingtons and Tetleys will be possibilities.

Before closing the Imperial was down to about 5 regulars according to former landlord Wilf Harvey, mainly due to competition from all the pubs on Hyde Road itself - although if the Councils long term road widening plans go ahead it'll become one of about 3 surviving pubs in the area and would doubtless be a goldmine. We wish Bill & Pauline luck with the pub & will bring more news when available.

WHO NEEDS LAGER?

One of the side-effects of the Central Manchester prices survey last year was to make us more aware of the brands of lager available in the area - as well as their sky-high prices. It also revealed that there is still one pub in the City Centre that sells NO 'draught' lager at all. It's the Circus on Portland Street. The excellence of the Tetley Bitter here has led to its inclusion in the national Good Beer Guide, and the pub is one of the most popular in town - so who says you need to sell lager to be successful?

YELLOW CAT PURRS AGAIN!

Last month we reported the closure of the Golden Lion (Burtonwood) on Stockports' Hillgate and now we happily report its' re-opening!

Bob & Jackie Brookes moved in on the 27th., January and it's their first pub, although they are no strangers to the 'trade', Bob having done the catering at the Stamford Arms, Stalybridge and Jackie having worked at the Hadfield Conservative Club.

They've already installed a piano and plan 'free 'n easy' nights with the good old fashioned sing-a-long. The handpumped mild & bitter remain - and both were in good form on my visit. We wish Bob & Jackie all the best.

CHARITY CORNER

Guide Dogs for the Blind seem to be the favourite pub charity these days - hard on the heels of Ashton-under-Lyne's beer festival in their aid at the Gamecock, comes news from the Church Inn on Ardwick Green. The regulars here are being sponsored to push a bed all the way from the Church to the Blue Cap in Sandiway, Cheshire (run by Andy Turner, late of the Church). They hope to exceed the £1,000 raised last year by a run round Ardwick Green!

GASK OLD TOM has made an appearance at the Grapes in Hazel Grove - it seems to be gravity served and is brought up from the cellar in jugs!!

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PUB NEWS

The George, Mersey Square, Stockport is now officially a Boddingtons' pub. Tony Harrison, who has ran the house since Dallas Davenport moved to Chester, has been confirmed as Manager by the new owners and he tells us that no changes to the pub are planned and that the usual standards will be maintained. The Higsons remains and should shortly be supplemented by Boddies. Evening food is being planned & Sunday lunchtime opening is to resume with meals available & the wine bar open as a family room.

.....
Sadly Tetley's Rock on Hyde Road is closed as we go to press - seemingly new tenant Stephen Dearden has found it difficult to make a go of the place. We shall be seeking to persuade Tetleys not to allow this fine pub to become a victim of planning blight.

.....
Contrary to previous reports, 'refurbishment' will not now be taking place at Holts' Seven Stars on Ashton Old Road. While regulars are understandably unhappy that "the brewery doesn't care about people who live round here" the good news is that the pub still has a great local atmosphere and beer to match.

.....
The Castlewood, Bridge Street Brow, Stockport, has opened its upstairs room as a games room from 5-30 until closing time. Pool, cards & dominoes can be enjoyed in comfort along with the excellent Wilsons & Websters beers.

.....
The introduction of Websters Green Label has suffered its first set-back & has been withdrawn from the Prince Albert, Castle Street, Edgeley. This pub has also recently been re-signed and painted by Wilsons, the sickly pink giving way to a smarter green.

.....
A couple of pubs are in for some minor cosmetic treatment - The Church, Clayton Lane, keg Bass, is to have a new car park & over in Didsbury, Marstons excellent Royal Oak is to have a variety of new illuminated signs.

.....
Sam Smiths are planning some minor cosmetic changes at Turners Vaults, Underbank, Stockport & cask beer is to be considered providing there are no insurmountable technical problems. Unusually this pub isn't licensed to open in the evenings Monday-Thursday, or at all on Sundays - anyone know why?

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BRANCH DIARY...

MARCH 1986.

Friday 7th: Branch visit to Dublin.

Monday 10th: Social: Strawberry Duck, Crabtree Lane, Clayton.

Tuesday 11th: PUB OF THE YEAR AWARD: RED BULL, HILLGATE.

Thursday 13th: Branch Meeting, Egerton Arms, St. Petersgate, Stockport.

Monday 17th: Social, Shady Oak, Bramhall.

Friday 21st: Ardwick & Brunswick Crawl: 7 pm Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road, 8-30: Church, Ardwick Green.

Monday 24th: Social: Duke of Edinburgh, Travellers Call, Seven Stars.

Thursday 27th: Pub of the Month: The Midway, Newbridge Lane, Stockport.

ADVANCE NOTICE: THURSDAY, 10th., APRIL
BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:
GATEWAY, EAST DIDSBURY 8 pm:
ALL MEMBERS PLEASE ATTEND.

Branch contacts:

Branch business: John Clarke: Tel: 832 2468
ext. 385 (day) 477 1973 (H)

Socials & Trips: Andy Cooper: Tel:
0625 872641 (day)

HEARD AT THE BREWERY: In a brewery with a large number of fermenting vessels, a sharp eyed CAMRA member spotted that FV 9 was missing. 'Obvious you never have one over the eight!'

I remember you.



THEN

MANCHESTER'S FIRST JUKE BOX?

If you think the jukebox is a relatively recent nuisance in pubs, think again. The following article from a 1907 Manchester Guardian will enlighten...

"A curious point was raised at the licensing sessions yesterday. The Corporation solicitor objected to the renewal of a licence to James Whitehead of the Old House at Home, Ashton Old Road, on the grounds that he had allowed public music in an unlicensed room on a Sunday. A police inspector had visited the premises and found music being played on a piano in the bar parlour. He cautioned the licensee and playing was stopped for the night. The piano was played by electricity and was set in motion by the putting of a penny in a slot. The piano played selections from "The Belle of New York", a comic opera. The Chairman of the licensing bench observed that the electric piano may be a nuisance to other people. Putting a penny in the slot starts the piano, and other people had to put up with it whether they liked it or not. On the other hand, if a gentleman came in and played a penny whistle through his nose...someone can always throw him out!"

(Reproduced by kind permission of "What's Doing")

AND NOW

I went to visit the Old House at Home to see what mechanical entertainment it had now. I counted ONE television (tuned to 'Coronation Street'), ONE 'Fruit Chaser' machine, ONE Juke-box (Shirley Bassey, Johnny Cash & the top 40) and ONE 'Super Triv' video quiz! No Belle of New York, no penny whistle and no separate bars any more - still, alongside handpumped Wilsons Mild & Bitter you can get Websters Bitter as well!!

Rhys Jones.

ORIGINAL MOVES

Wilsons have told us of a change in policy in their beer marketing. Readers may recall that when Original Bitter was first so called a few years back it was to distinguish it from the keg & tank versions of the same beer which would be called simply 'Wilsons Bitter'. This has led to some difficulties with advertising and is set to change with the 'Original' tag being applied to Wilsons Bitter in all its forms. Already some pubs selling the tank product have electric bar mountings showing the 'Original' logo and this is to be extended to keg as well. For the real ale drinker this shouldn't cause too many problems as most of Wilsons cask beer is dispensed via handpumps which can usually be taken as a guarantee of the real thing. Problems may arise with the few pubs selling cask beer thru' electrics but these are thin on the ground, the Blue Bell, Shaw Heath, Stockport being a local example.

John Clarke.

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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BAKERS VAULTS

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NEW WELSH BREWERY STARTS UP

Alan Beresford started brewing with Ind Coope & Allsop before the war and has been at it ever since. He has just set up the Plassey Brewery, Eyton, Wrexham, in part of an old milking parlour, with equipment from Border Brewery. Farmhouse Bitter (10390G) is at present available at the Last Inn, Hengoed, and at the Brewery between Easter & September. It is hoped that more outlets will follow, within a radius of 10/15 miles or so from Wrexham/Chester.

Phil Levison.

Castlewood (HOLE IN WALL)

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