

Opening Times



No. 28

STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

AUGUST 1986

TIME FOR CHANGE

By Humphrey Higgins.

The defeat in the House of Commons of the Sunday Trading Bill seems to have led to a reluctance on the part of the Government to press ahead with the reform of our antiquated Licensing Laws.

The present system was introduced in 1915 as a temporary measure under the Defence of the Realm Act, designed to prevent excessive drinking by munitions workers, but in 1921 the Licensing Act set up the present 'Permitted Hours' principle.

CAMRA are deeply disappointed at the apparent lack of commitment on behalf of the Government - there is overwhelming evidence that the vast majority of public opinion favour a more realistic and flexible approach to our drinking habits - tourists are baffled by the illogical control of one of the major leisure activities of this Country.

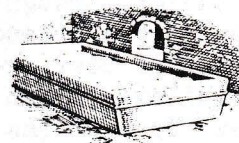
All the evidence produced over the past 20 years points towards a relaxation in the Laws - the Erroll Report in 1972 & the Clayson Report in 1973 came down strongly in favour of change. A number of National surveys, public opinion polls, the brewing & licensee industry & the Tourist Boards have all continually favoured change. Even the Police & Justices' Clerks Society are in favour of change. But the most overwhelming evidence in favour of change in recent times has been the Report on the 'Scottish Experience' - the result of the implementation of the Clayson Committee Report which, in 1976, brought flexible opening times to Scotland.

Now the Scots are not particularly renowned for their sober drinking habits! But this Report stated that the relaxation of the Law had led to more sensible and civilised drinking, and although there had been a slight increase on average consumption, there was no corresponding increase in drink related crime or other associated problems.

So, surely, it's time for change? It's 10 years since the change over the Border - how long do the Government need before they make up their mind? Positive moves MUST be made to amend the Law & CAMRA nationally are to launch a major lobby on the Prime Minister and her Cabinet as well as meetings with senior Opposition MPs - add your weight to the Campaign - write to your MP now and demand FLEXIBLE LICENSING HOURS!

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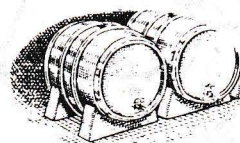
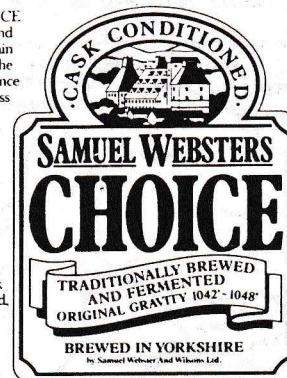
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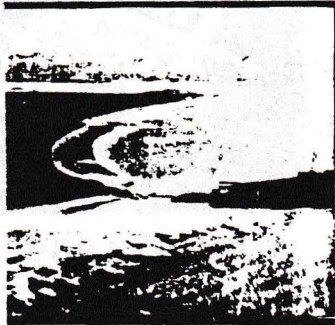


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HOLIDAY ALE 2. Anglesey

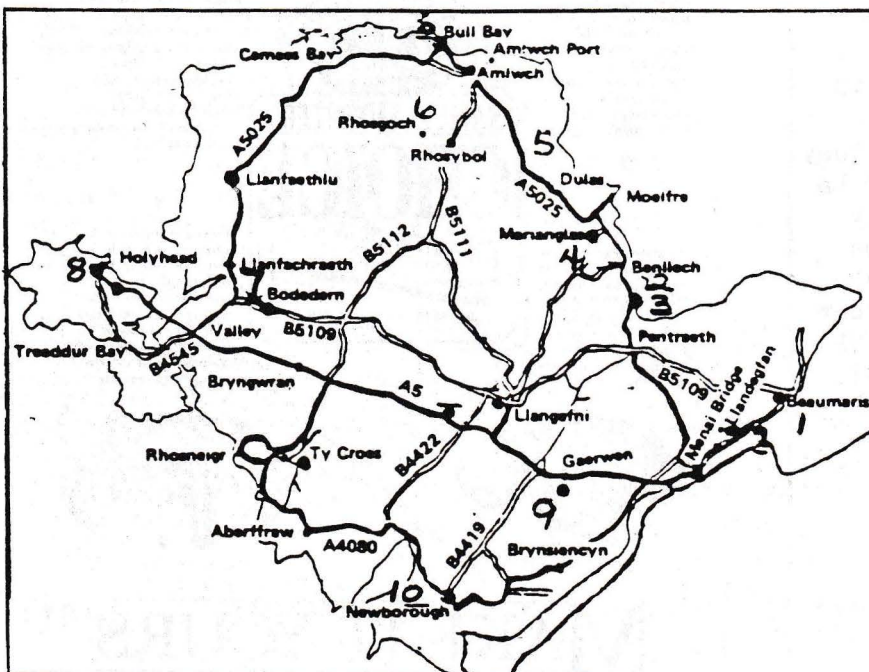
By Phil Levison.

Just in case you are wondering, Anglesey pubs are no longer dry on Sundays, and they have a small bonus to offer - during the week, afternoon closing is 3-30 pm.

The Olde Bull's Head (1) at Beaumaris is an interesting old inn, with lots of brass-ware and ancient weapons, and Draught Bass. Have a read of the Pub Crawlers Guide by Intoxicous - a student effort of a few years ago - look at those prices. Beaumaris also has a castle, a goal, a regatta in August, as well as four other real ale outlets.

Red Wharf Bay is a good spot for a pint close to the sea - the Min-y-Don (2) (Welsh for "edge of wave") has Burtonwood Bitter and Draught Bass, good bar food, and there are discos and sing-songs at summer week-ends. The Ship (3) is just a couple of minutes walk away, with Ansell's or another Allied Bitter, but don't miss the Banks's Bitter which is a permanent resident. It has been said about some of Anglesey's beer "It doesn't travel" - I think this Banks's must have been very happy to come here - just try it.

Next call is the Parciau Arms (4) at Marianglas, where there is a choice of Banks's Bitter, Draught Bass, Younger's No. 3, and Pedigree. It's a friendly hostelry, and with its selection of beer, good food, a family dining room, (and a children's cabin) it must come high on the list for "best on the Island." Up to now, it's been hand-pumps all the way, but at



the Pilot Boat (5) you will find those familiar blue plastic boxes dispensing Robinsons Best Mild and Best Bitter. It's a characterful pub, with a stone fireplace, a beamed ceiling, and the front of the bar is actually part of a clinker built boat.

It's back to hand-pumps again for the rest of the trip, and the next stop is the Rhoegoch (6) or The Ring as it's known locally (possibly because they used to hold cattle auctions nearby, with the animals in "the ring".) This is a small, welcoming Free House, with Bass Special Bitter, and sometimes Draught Bass. There is no juke-box, piped music, or noisy games, but at week-ends you can enjoy traditional Welsh singing accompanied by the organ - and if you are hungry, there's always a selection of good food available. The Rhoegoch is off the main road, but well worth searching out.

The next three pubs are all Burtonwood - the Crown (7) at Bododern - typical village pub, with good grub, but Bitter only; the George (8) at Holyhead - recently refurbished but still retaining the lay-out of separate rooms served from the central bar; and the Dinam Arms (9) at Gaerwen, a very pleasant local with a long-serving, friendly landlord. Like the George, it has both the Dark Mild and the Bitter, and at 67p and 69p it's certainly the cheapest Burtonwood on the Island.

The last call on this trip is the White Lion (10) at Newborough, the only Marstons's pub on Anglesey, with Mercian Mild and Burton Bitter. It's another pleasant little local, and a long-standing entry in the National Good Beer Guide.

**

If you would like a list of all 64 Anglesey cask pubs, please send 10p and SAE to:

Phil Levison,
2, Harbour View,
Cemaes Bay,
Anglesey,
Gwynedd,
LL67 ONG.

NEXT MONTH HOLIDAY ALE VISITS YORK

LETTERS...

From Rhys Jones, Chairman Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA.

Sir,

I don't often use these pages to sound off in my personal capacity. However I cannot leave unanswered the value judgement implied in July's item 'Mild Matters'.

Our correspondent appears to imply that while it's bad news for the Boddingtons Group to supply just one mild to all their pubs (because it's brewed in Liverpool), it's perfectly O.K. for the Watney/Websters/Wilsons group to supply just one dark mild to all their - far more numerous - pubs (because, although no longer brewed in Manchester, at least it's got a Manchester name.

Sorry, but this is balderdash. CAMRA opposes the loss of all local beers, be they from Manchester Yorkshire or Lower Cwtwrch (if we didn't, brewers could weaken us by playing one region off against another - as indeed both companies concerned have tried to do.) We must, and will, fight the recent withdrawal of Websters Dark Mild, just as we must and will fight the likely coming threats to Boddingtons mild, Wilsons Bitter & Oldham Brewery.

Yours etc.,
Rhys P.Jones.

From Mr. A.Ball, Licensee, The Emigration Inn.

Dear Sir,

I refer to the June article 'Stagger' & particularly the paragraph about my Public House.

- 1) Electric pumps: I have them because of the speed we have to serve our customers with mild & bitter. Handpumps are too slow.
- 2) Both Best Bitter & Best Mild below average - my pubs trading figures would seem to prove otherwise & note my Old Tom is on handpump drawn from the cellar.
- 3) Difficult to taste because it was so packed - surely people who are going to write an article like this as connoisseurs would make sure that once they had been served would find an area even if it had to be outside to taste the beer

properly.

- 4) Heavy handed one room conversion: perhaps the persons who compiled the article do not know the requirements of the law once a pub has been modernised. The licensee & staff must be able to see into every area from the bar.
- 5) Mainly young clientele - just to point out that the age range in my pub is from 18-95 with a probable average of 34-40. & at my OAPs party the pub is completely full of Pension regulars of mine.

In conclusion I note that it was a warm evening in April & I feel we may have been on holiday, but I note they thought they knew the Landlord & Landlady's name in the White House, they got them wrong & in the Waterloo they went down the cellar proving to me they must have introduced themselves in some pubs on the round. This was certainly not the case in my pub because neither I nor my staff met them.

Yours sincerely,

A.G.Ball, Licensee/Tenant.

SEVEN UP?

Yes, we've said it before, but this time it seems that the alterations at Holts' Seven Stars, Ashton Old Road, will definitely be going ahead. When Brewery officials met licensee Brian Porter early in July a start-ing date of late July was set for the work, with completion aimed for late September. The scheme will leave the existing pub virtually unaltered, but the addition of a pool room, kitchen and new toilets should help this excellent traditional local achieve its full potential.

GRIFFIN GAINS

A warm welcome to Dave & Yvonne Woolstonecroft who have taken over at the Griffin, Heaton Mersey, Dave is former licensee of the Wilston Arms, Radcliffe. It is surprising to note that as a result of the change prices have been reduced! As the pub is now managed, as opposed to a tenancy, Holts managed house prices prevail - 62p for bitter and 58p for mild.

Which other Brewer would do anything similar?

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STAGGER

A HOMAGE TO HOLTS - By John Clarke.

Earlier in the year the Centenary of the death of Joseph Holt was reached and to mark this solemn occasion members of the Stockport & South Manchester Branch visited the then all nine Holts Pubs in the Branch area. (There's now 10 since the Grafton is now open). What follows is our impression of each on the night of our visit and as ever our comments should not be taken as definitive. You'll see that there are no comments on beer quality which, for the record, was pretty good in every pub visited.

We kicked off in the Junction, Cheadle Hulme, where handpumped mild & bitter cost 62p & 64p respectively. A typical large Holts pub which has sadly become pretty run down in recent years, the former billiard room having been partitioned up into a concert room and a corridor to the gents.

Next stop was the Griffin, Heald Green. Holts rebuilt this pub in 1967 and, in common with many pubs of the period the end result has proved pretty characterless. This pub also had the distinction, if that's the word, of being one of the few outlets for Holts short-lived keg bitter. The mild (59p) & bitter (61p) were dispensed through free flow electric pumps.

Onto another Griffin, this time in Heaton Mersey, a classic pub by anyones' standards and now saved from its threatened demolition. Well deserving its pub of the Year award in 1983, the handpumped mild & bitter were 62p & 64p.

Fourth port of call was the Claremont, Claremont Road, Moss Side. Built in 1929 this is a typical monolithic inter-wars pub. Getting sadly run down now (the smoke room being an exception) this is an excellent basic boozier and, we are told, is Holts top seller for beer. The two ladies in our party reported that the scrubbed wooden seats in the ladies would be a comfort in cold weather! The handpumped mild and bitter were again 62 & 64.

Halfway stage was reached at the Garrett on Pink Bank Lane, Longsight. Built in 1960 this is again a pretty characterless pub consisting basically of a large vault and a lounge-cum-concert room which was hosting a 'talent' (if that's the word) night on our visit. We sat in a small room off where a group of youths were amusing themselves raising clouds of dust out of the carpet. Again wooden seats in the ladies but the overflowing trough in the gents was less than pleasant. The mild & bitter (handpumped) came in at 59p and 61p.

Next came the Waggon & Horses on Hyde Road. Built in 1913 & knocked about a bit since, this can best be described as an average pub (for Holts!) & would benefit from a coat of paint. Handpumped mild and bitter were again 59 & 61p. Angela and Charlotte again reported wooden seats and mentioned how spotlessly clean the toilets were.

On the home straight now and to the Railway on Manshaw Road, Fairfield. An older pub this time (1894), one of the main features is the superb lamp over the entrance which must be one of the few surviving examples in Manchester. A previous licensee here is reputed to have stabbed his wife just prior to opening time, cleaned up, opened the pub and served through lunchtime then closed the pub and phoned the police! (A more lurid version has him stringing up the unfortunate lady from the lamp outside!) No mild was available but the handpumped bitter, which was probably

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!

the least cold of the night, was 64p.

Penultimate pub was the Grove, Ashton New Road. A bright, clean, but fairly spartan pub, unsigned like most of the others. An interesting feature is the Roll of Honour on the vault wall recalling those regulars who died in the First World War. Again hand-pumped, the mild and bitter were 61p & 63p.

Last but not least came the Seven Stars on Ashton Old Road. An excellent pub, both inside and out, with a lot of good glasswork and where the tenancy has recently changed hands again. The beer was the dearest of the night - mild and bitter 63 & 65p!

To sum up, a terrific night with an incredible range of pubs. Some were classic examples of tat & grot that only Holts can produce (no names, no writs!) but all had one thing in common - excellent, value for money beers. Here's to the next hundred years!

PUB OF THE MONTH

The Pub of the Month for August stays in Stockport with the award going to the Bakers Vaults, Market Place. Tenanted since last November by Ian & Dot Brookes (who will be remembered for their sterling service in the Manchester Arms, 1984 Pub of the Year) the Bakers now enjoys a fine reputation for the excellence of the Robinsons Best Mild & Best Bitter (so much so that it has won a place in the 1987 Good Beer Guide) and also for the superb quality and range of its meals, available both lunchtimes and nights, and also the special Sunday Banquets. Ian has also introduced live music into the cellar and the pub itself. A fine Victorian building, vaulted windows & barrelled ceiling with a fine collection of artefacts & objets d'art.

Undoubtedly the presentation night, on August 28th., should not be missed - the Market may prove to be the new launch pad for the legendary rocket man!!

RAILWAY NEWS

The Station, Didsbury, has been smartened up, being given a coat of paint and hanging flower baskets. Marstons Pedigree has been added to the Bitter & Mild and all are on excellent form.

Meanwhile, in Cheadle, Banks have opened their latest acquisition, the Station, the former Railway station off Wilmslow Road. An excellent conversion & the full range of Banks' cask beers - the pub was so packed on opening night that a further visit is necessary!

BRANCH DIARY...

AUGUST.

- Mon. 4: Social: Station, Didsbury (Marstons)
 Mon. 11: Social: Railway, Gorton (Wilson's)
 Thu. 14: Branch Meeting, Gateway, East Didsbury (Hydes)
 Sat. 16: 'Opening Times' trip to Blackpool: For details phone John Clarke.
 Mon. 18: Social: Horse & Farrier, Gatley (Hydes)
 Fri. 22: Reddish Stagger: Start Pomona, Gorton 7pm. For details of 8-30 start phone John Clarke.
 Mon. 25: Social: Cross Keys, Adwood (Hydes)
 Thu. 28: Pub of the Month: Bakers Vaults, Market Place, Stockport (Robinsons)

SEPTEMBER.

- Mon. 1: Social: Crown, Northenden (Boddingtons)
 Wed. 24: ADVANCE NOTICE: Visit to Sam Smiths Brewery, Tadcaster. Phone John Clarke for details.

All Monday Socials start at 8-30pm.

Contacts: Business: Andy Cooper 0625 872641 (w) 477 2959 (h).
 Socials: John Clarke: 831 7222 ext 275 (w) 477 1973 (h)

MORE HOLTS?

Continuing their policy of expansion, Holts have applied for permission to build a pub off Broom Lane, Levenshulme. Plans are at the outline stage at the moment and we should have more news next month. Whilst Holts' are constantly on the lookout for more sites we can confirm that despite reports in the South Manchester Reporter, Holts' have not done a pub swap & acquired the Church in Northenden.

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CHILDRENS' ROOM. BEER GARDEN

A HAVEN IN THE SHOPPING PRECINCT!



By John Clarke.

This Month Pub Grub visited the Grafton on Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock. One of the new wave of Holt's pubs that seem to be springing up everywhere, the Grafton was in fact rebuilt on the site of the former pub of the same name which had to be demolished when it became unsafe. In many ways a typical two roomed modern pub a point of note is the spaciousness of both rooms which were deliberately designed to make things easier for the disabled (there are several hospitals nearby) and for whom there is also a special toilet.

Landlord Barry Manning hails from London and keeps the handpumped Mild & Bitter in the first class condition that you'd expect from the winner of a cellarman award from his previous employers (Watneys as it happens!) The beer sells at Holts usual knockdown price of 61p for bitter & 59p for mild (and a penny less in the vault.)

Also at a knock down price is the food which must be some of the best value around, the most expensive item on my visit being quiche, salad & chips at £1.70. The menu isn't extensive, which as I have said before is no bad thing and Barry is keen to emphasise that the Grafton is first and foremost a pub with food a sideline. This should not, however, be taken as a reflection on the quality which on my visit was first-class.

I chose fishermans pie with chips at £1.60p - the pie consisted of large portions of cod in a savoury white sauce, topped with mashed potato & cheese. Served in a separate dish the portion was generous and with lots of chips & a small salad garnish as well proved very

filling.

I ate alone on this occasion and so can't comment on the quality of the other dishes but the country chicken casserole & chips (£1.60, 1.45 with salad) looked equally good. Also on the menu was scotch egg, salad and French bread at £1.55 and steak & kidney pie at £1.25.

Sandwiches are freshly prepared and are 65p for turkey, cheese or ham with a choice of white or brown bread.

The menu is rounded off with the ubiquitous jacket spuds - 55p with butter, 70p with coleslaw or 75p with cheese.

The Grafton is certainly worth a visit and is worth considering for a change if you work in the City Centre - most buses out to Didsbury or Rusholme will drop you at the end of Grafton Street and run at about 10 minute intervals. It's also best to go early in the week as lunch-times are very busy on Thursdays and Fridays.

NEW FACE AT THE OLD

Ye Olde Vic, Shaw Heath, Stockport, changed hands on 27th., June & is now in the capable hands of Kay Ord. Although having spent many years waiting behind bars it's Kays' first pub & a few changes are planned. Redecoration is on the cards & the cellar has been given a good clear out to bring it up to scratch. Kay recognises the importance of serving good beer and her dad looks after the cellar. On first samplings he seems to be doing a good job! Lunchtime meals have been introduced & trade is building up in what used to be a quiet time, evenings are as busy as ever. The beer range is basically unchanged - Tetley Mild & Bitter, Jennings Bitter, Walkers Best Bitter and Ind Coope Burton Ale.

Castlewood (HOLE IN WALL)

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REAL ALE IN CENTRAL & SOUTH MANCHESTER - UPDATE NO. 5.

I've been asked to make this item more 'readable' & with relatively little to report this is a good opportunity to try!

Only one new real ale outlet this month - the City, Oldham St. in the City Centre. Other news concerns changes to range. The Ancoats (sensible place) has dropped Websters Bitter in favour of Holts Bitter, the Crown on Deansgate has added Wilsons Mild & Websters Bitter. The Oxnohle has added Chesters Mild & Sams Chop House has dropped Manns bitter (can you blame them?) Meanwhile in leafy Victoria Park, the Rampant Lion is selling Walkers (ordinary) bitter, however the pub has not for some considerable time sold Jennings Bitter (What's Doing please note - though I suppose we should be grateful they didn't report the place as boarded up!)

Finally, I repeat my request to keep the information flowing in on pub changes anywhere in the City Centre & South Manchester. In the fight for better beer, knowledge is power - let's pool our knowledge for the general good!

Rhys P.Jones.

C A M R A - SUMMER SALE!!

1986 GOOD BEER GUIDE £3.95.
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HEARD IN A BEER TENT: "Do you sell lager?" "No, sir."
"Oh, I'll have a pint of lemonade then."

ROMPER RE-RUN

By John Clarke.

Readers may recall that a couple of months back CAMRA helped spike Boddingtons plans to inflict two huge dining rooms, a central lounge and a vast car park on the Red Lion, more commonly known as the Romper, at Ringway. As one of the few unspoilt country-type pubs left in Manchester, this was the last thing the Romper needed and it has come as a shock, but perhaps not a surprise, that Boddingtons are trying again. As the Planning Department are recommending approval this time round it seems as though the development will go ahead.

Luckily Boddingtons have, however, seen sense and the proposals are on a much more modest scale - one 40 seat dining room is planned and the car park is down to 48 places. There will also be a landscaped play area at the rear of the pub with a cobbled patio forming an outside drinking area at the front. According to the plans the internal layout of the existing pub will be unchanged although it is unlikely that the same can be said of the atmosphere of this excellent little pub which, like so many others, is to be sacrificed it seems in the continuing search for increased profits.

COMPARISONS

By Paul Thompson.

As noted opposite, the Rampant Lion in Victoria Park now sells Walkers bitter on handpump alongside Tetleys Mild & Bitter. Walkers is a Merseyside based sister company to Tetley, both of whom are owned by Allied Breweries. A few Tetley pubs also sell Ind Coope Burton Ale (another sister company) or Jennings Bitter, which is available under a Trading agreement.

Compare this to Boddingtons - how many of their pubs sell cask conditioned Oldham or Higsons' products - both of whom are subsidiaries? In our area virtually none. Also consider Whitbread. Here the only real ales available are Chesters & real Trophy, but Whitbread brew a fine beer at Durham called Castle Eden, which is available in Sheffield but not in our area yet. How about it Whitbread?

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better
bitter

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Contributors this Month: John Clarke, Andy Cooper, Stuart Ballantyne, Rhys Jones, Humphrey Higgins, Paul Thompson, Phil Levison, Alex Panesh.

For details of Advertsing rates in 'Opening Times' please contact the Editor, address below.

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



PUB NEWS!

Ralph & Jean Heatley, after many years of Managing The Gateway in East Didsbury have moved up the road to Cheadle, where they have taken the Tenancy of the Crown (Hydes) - one of Ralphs' first promises was 'to do something about the xxxxxxxxxx awful wallpaper. Meanwhile Hydes have ambitious plans for the Gateway, which will mean a virtual restructuring. Work is due to start in January. More news next month.

The Birch Hotel (Bass), Gorton Lane is to have new toilets and a food preparation area and Chesters Albion Inn, Ashton Old Road, is to be extended into the neighbouring vacant site and to have a single storey.

Robinsons Crown, Didsbury Road, as reported last month, is to receive its 'facelift'. Whilst it is intended to extend the pub inside (which sounds a bit like doors off and walls out) there are no plans to alter the exterior. No date is yet fixed for the 'improvements'.

The George & Dragon, Cheadle (Greenall Whitley) bears a sign proclaiming Bar Food and showing pictures of food & handpumps. BEWARE: There are no handpumps and no Real Ale.

The Clarence, Wilmslow Road, Rusholme no longer sells Draught Bass.

Following the recent conversion of the Fir Tree, Reddish, Tetleys inform us that there are no plans to take similar steps with the Thatched Tavern, Stanhope St. They do say, however, that if customer demand justifies it, they are prepared to consider installing Real Ale in the pub. So if you are in the Thatched Tavern try and make it clear that you would prefer to drink real ale.

Boddingtons not only seem heedless of their tradition of quality brewing (see earlier 'Opening Times'), they also seem to care little about those little touches that make their pubs individual. The wooden roof boards on the Unicorn, Hyde Road, which have probably been there as long as the pub itself, have been removed and wantonly destroyed, to be replaced by Boddingtons' standard plastic nameboards stuck to the walls of the pub.

HEARD AT THE BAR: At a freehouse near Chesterfield: "Pint of Pedigree, please." (A 'pint' with an over-generous head is pulled into a brim measure glass) Licensee: "I'd better give you a bit more - you might be from the Weights & Measures."

The Swan, Shaw Heath, Stockport (Wilson's) has undergone major refurbishment and is to reopen this Month - it could be a Real Ale Gain - watch this space.