

PE

Opening Times



STOCKPORT & SOUTH MANCHESTER CAMRA

JULY 1987 No. 39



AS TAKEOVERS IN THE
BREWING INDUSTRY CONTINUE
TO RESTRICT THE DRINKERS'
CHOICE CAMRA HIGHLIGHTS
STOCKPORTS' INDEPENDENT,
AND ONLY BREWER,
ROBINSONS'.

By John Clarke.

Robinsons' are, in fact, the largest privately owned Brewery Company in the country with over 320 houses of their own plus another 50 owned by their Lake District subsidiary, Hartleys of Ulverston. Despite their size they display many of the favourable characteristics that distinguish the family run concern from the impersonal approach of the Big 7.

The combined group produces no less than eight different cask beers, five of which are produced at Stockport; Best Mild, Dark Best Mild, Bitter, Best Bitter and Old Tom, the latter of which has been described as one of the country's great beers. Two of the beers are not widely available and indeed other breweries would doubtless have phased them out.

Dark Best Mild is supplied to only about 12 outlets and the Brewery make no secret of the fact that they'd be glad to see it go. It is in fact, the Best Mild with added caramel which nonetheless produces a distinctively different beer, introduced when the Brewery phased out its standard mild, outlets are declining, with the New Inn at Buxton a recent loss.

Almost as scarce is the standard Bitter - only 2 pubs in Stockport (the Queens & Red Lion in Cheadle) & 1 in S. Manchester (Robin Hood, Rusholme) sell the beer. Unlike Dark Mild however it is available to any pub that wants it - a cheaper, lower gravity alternative to Best Bitter, it's a good beer in its own right. Try asking your local Robbies pub to try it out.

Where Robbies & CAMRA differ is on the subject of pub renovations many of these are considered bland and unsympathetic to the original character of the pub - the Star & Garter, Hillgate & the rebuilt Royal Oak, High St. have been cited as examples. Whilst this isn't always the case the Brewery does seem impervious to criticism on this aspect but nonetheless in Robinsons we have an Independent to be proud of and with involvement from all the family they are destined to prosper for a long time to come.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Greenall Whitley's Railway on the A6 in Stockport has reopened after refurbishment & the Brewery has kept three rooms (Robinsons et al please note) and the work, including the enlargement of the pub, has been done in a very tasteful fashion.

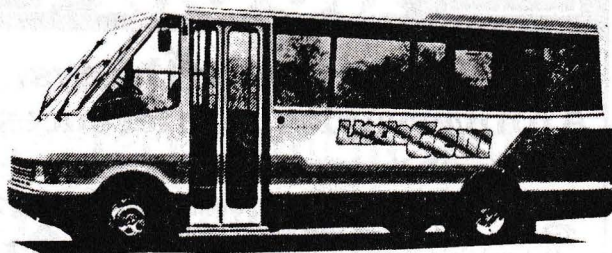
Two of the rooms have a similar decoration whilst the Dining Room which in the evenings becomes a second lounge, & the lounge itself have been fitted out with comfortable grey seating & the lounge sports a number of Railway pictures & small brass plates above the wall seating which look attractive until you get close enough to read them & find spurious wit & double entendres on them. The third room is the games room with 2 darts boards & a pool table which restricts the amount of seating.

Two real ales are available - Bitter & Original and it's a pity about the lack of real mild, apparently the Landlord has tried it, unsuccessfully in the past.

Overall a pub worthy of a visit.

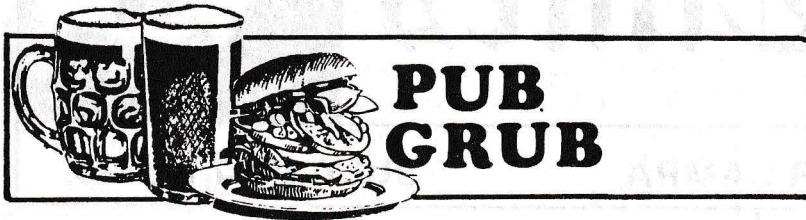
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A gem of an idea from **GM** buses



By John Clarke.

This month we go to the leafy surroundings of Heaton Mersey - the rustically named Mersey Vale on Didsbury Road. The pub is probably better known to many in its previous guise as the Dog & Partridge, a particularly gruesome 1960s estate-type pub at the far end of Heaton Mersey, near Burnage Lane. However a cash injection of many thousands of pounds & a complete revamp by Boddingtons has transformed the pub into something very different. Plush is the word with the accent on comfort & of course when pubs go up-market these days, they usually serve food.

The menu is short offering, on my visit, 3 specials, various dishes to order, a cold table & two sweets.

The specials consisted of standard pub-grub. Braised liver or mince & veg pie at £2.00 & £2.30 respectively plus one more unusual choice - poached plaice, cooked in milk and served with a savoury white sauce - very nice it looked too. I chose, however, from the 'to order' selection which ran from steaks (rump £3.50, T Bone £4.75) to sea food platter (£2.10), Gammon or King Rib (£2.50) or Jumbo Sausage (£1.50) I went for the King Rib (mainly because I've never tried one before) and after a 5 minute wait while it was prepared, was presented

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HAPPY HOUR 5.30 - 7.00 MON - FRI



with a plateful which was excellent value for money. King Ribs, I imagine, are pretty much the same everywhere (this one was a bit greasy though) but this came with a good portion of crispy cips & a large selection of salads off the cold table. I followed this with California Carrot Cake at 90p (the other sweet was apple turnover at 70p). Again very good but as in many places they fell into the trap pf serving it hot which caused the topping to melt. Still very good though & a good helping of whipped cream piped on the side of the plate. (Was this out of an aerosol I wonder

I was initially tempted by the cold table, which at £2.00 was pretty reasonable. It was also pretty run of the mill though in that it presented the usual choice of cold meats & salads with nothing particularly imaginative. It's very much help yourself. In fact on my visit it more resembled a free for all with one elderly lady slapping stuff onto her plate like there was no tomorrow!

The Mersey Vale is definitely one to visit however, it doesn't seem to get too much lunchtime trade, so there's plenty of room (it's a big pub into the bargain) & the relative lack of trade makes for a more personal service, most diners had their food taken to their seats.

Offering good quality, good value food in pleasant surroundings it deserves to be a lot more popular - check it out while it's still quiet.

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Last, but by no means least, 4th., to 8th., August sees the biggest event of them all - CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival, at Brightons Metropole Hotel - over 200 beers from the length & breadth of the country will be on sale - it's an event not to be missed.

If you want more info. please 'phone me, John Clarke, on 061-831 7222 x 307 (day) or 061-477 1973 (night).

PIER 1 - REAL ALE 2.

Pier One is a new wine bar which has opened on Copson Street, Withington. Although claiming to be a Wine Bar, it sells a better range of real ales than most Whitbread pubs in the area, as it sells Chesters Bitter & Castle Eden Ale (brewed in the North-East). I feel Castle Eden to be a far superior beer to Chesters, so it's good to see it appearing in South Manchester.

The decor of Pier 1 could best be described as fairly basic, there's a lot of wood visible and there are some interesting pictures which are the sort of thing you buy from Athena. There is also an interesting looking menu. Finally, 43p a half for Castle Eden is on the high side, but I suppose they do have a monopoly and it was in good condition - worth a visit.



**CAMRA
CALLING!**

Quite a range of activities this month as we continue with our Summer programme.

Our Branch Meeting on 9th. will be at the Three Tunnes, Hazel Grove & a guest speaker from Stockport LVA is promised - it could be a lively night! On the next night, 10th., we're having a social for new members - a trip to the Sair Inn & Brewery at Linthwaite near Huddersfield (home of Leadboiler, for those who were at the Beer Festival) Licensee and brewer Ron Crabtree, can usually be relied upon to extend a warm welcome.

Monday 13th. sees a social at the Friendship, Hyde Road, an excellent but often overlooked Marstons house. Get there for 9-00 onwards. Wednesday 15th., takes us to Davenports Brewery in Birmingham, leaving the Mauldeth at 5-40, the Pineapple, Heaton Lane at 6-00. We should be back in Stockport at about midnight. Cost is £5 - £5.50 a head and at the time of writing there were still 2 seats left.

Monday 20th. & our social is at the Vine, Cheadle and this is followed on 24th., by a crawl around Longsight & Levenshulme, Meet at 7pm at the Waggon & Horses, Stockport Road or 8-30 at the Garratt, Pink Bank Lane.

On 27th. we have a social at the Gorton Arms, West Gorton & 30th., is Pub of the Month, this time at Holt's Grafton Arms, Grafton St., Chorlton-on-Medlock. Into August and 3rd., sees a social at the Victoria, Withington.

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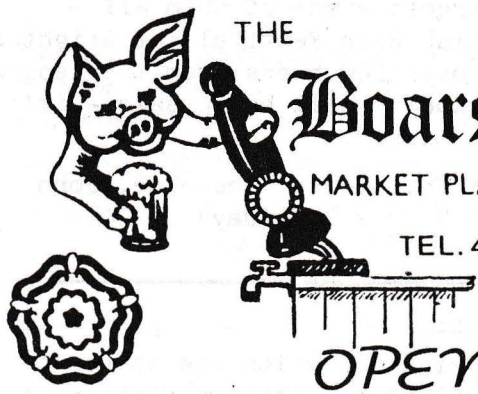
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STAGGER

RAMBLING THROUGH RUSHOLME - By Rhys Jones.

When Rusholme is mentioned most people tend to think not of the pubs but of the wealth of excellent and good-value Indian Restaurants that stud the Wilmslow Road. However, there is also a reasonable variety of beer and pubs - while all three Bass pubs are keg, real ale from five Breweries can be sampled if you don't mind a bit of walking. As ever, comments on the pubs simply reflect the opinions of those who undertook the crawl.

Our first call is really in Moss Side, the CLAREMONT on Claremont Road, a large & decaying Holts pub with mild & bitter on handpump. The bitter was well above average, while the mild was extremely good. While Holts have certainly been economising on the upkeep of the pub, the lively & convivial atmosphere went a long way to explain the loyal regard its regulars have for it.

A short way east on Claremont Road stands the BEE HIVE, a modern Hydes pub. This plain two-roofer uses the standard Hydes counter mountings to dispense its beers, but unfortunately the mild turned out to be keg - while this is not exactly a deception, as the words 'cask-conditioned' are not used, it certainly was a most unpleasant surprise. The bitter was rated average by the entire party. Round the corner now, to the ROBIN HOOD on Upper Lloyd Street, one of the scatter of Robinsons pubs in inner-city Manchester. When visited on a previous crawl this had exhibited a run down appearance and execrable beer, so it was with some trepidation that we entered. But fear not: on this visit, while it's still not a pub

to bring your great-aunt Jemima to, we found a pleasant atmosphere in what is a most imposing interior - a large room with etched glass windows and high ceiling. And the beer's interesting too - for one thing, alongside Robinsons Best Mild is the rare 'ordinary' Bitter, and for another, the dispense system is electric pumps of the 'to-and-fro' type, rarely seen in Robinsons houses. While two of us thought the bitter poor, the others noted it above average; the mild was rated good.

Back onto Claremont Road to the SHERWOOD, a blandly modernised Chesters pub which had been taken over by a new licensee shortly before our visit. Perhaps when he's settled in the beer will improve, but on this visit the hand-pumped bitter (mild is keg) was far too cold and rated well below average - the only seriously disappointing beer of the night.

More Hydes now, at the OSBORNE HOUSE on Victory Street. A good example of a sidestreet local this, opened up inside but retaining plenty of separate drinking areas. Mild & Bitter, on electric pumps, were both above average, the mild being marginally preferred. Though only a short street, Victory Street boasts two pubs and a Working Mens Club, and the second of the pubs is Greenalls GARDENERS ARMS. This is a two-bar pub with a smallish and busy vault and a larger lounge. A very Irish atmosphere here, with posters and an Irish/C & W band playing in the lounge. Only bitter is real ale, on electric pump, and this was rated above average.

Across Wilmslow Road there's more Greenalls at the WELCOME on Rusholme Grove, a very well modernised pub retaining distinct areas and boasting tiled floor, light globes, photographs of bygone (and not so bygone) entertainers - not to mention a peanut dispenser that gives you full measure for only 5p! Once again, only the bitter is real ale, on electric pump,

The Nursery Inn

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though the stronger Original Bitter has been sold in the past and is still advertised; the beer was well thought of, being marginally preferred to that in the Gardeners Arms.

Our final call was Hydes' ALBERT, on Walmer St. just off Wilmslow Road. This is more of a 'main-road' pub than the others visited, but the modernisation is far from unpleasant, with large photographs of old Manchester to look at - if you can see them through the crowds! Mild and Bitter are sold, on electric pump. While both were above average, the mild was clearly preferred.

As I said at the outset, pubs aren't the first thing that comes to mind in Rusholme - but as we discovered, the serious pubgoer can find much to enjoy. Oh yes, and the curry afterwards was excellent as well!

OPENING TIMES SUMMER

*****S A L E*****

1987 GOOD BEER GUIDE £3.50 (was £4.95p)
 STOCKPORT BEER FESTIVAL T SHIRT £2.50 (Was £3)
 LOCAL GUIDES TO STOCKPORT, CENTRAL & SOUTH MANCHESTER, BURY, OLDHAM, ROCHDALE 10p each + sae.
 Send cheques, payable to CAMRA, Stockport & South Manchester, to the Treasurer, 66, Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

Thank goodness, it's back.

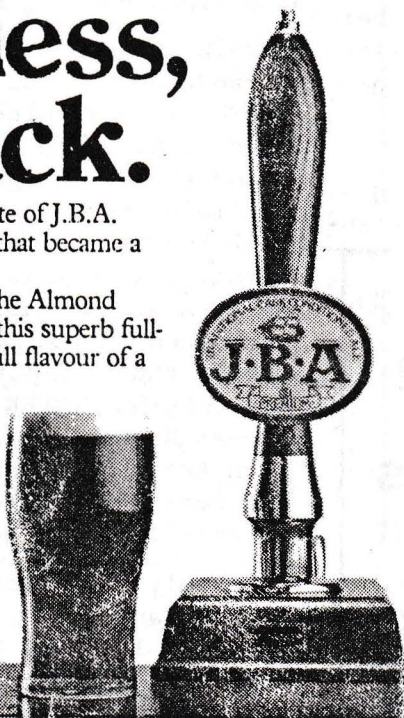
Now you can try a taste of J.B.A. Premium bitter - the beer that became a legend in its own time.

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J.B.A. Premium bitter is now being brewed again in the time-honoured tradition, allowing you to enjoy a

J.B.A. taste of the past again.

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SUNDAYS - Return of the

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WEDNESDAYS

- John Brett &

Norman Beaker



DALLAS COMES TO TOWN

One of the latest adornments to the Stockport drinking scene is JRs Place, formerly the Old Rams Head on Higher Hillgate.

Judged as a pub, in its traditional sense, then JRs Place is a monstrosity - as a disco bar however it's fair to say that it's a very good example of its type. Everything is black, walls, ceiling, bar, tables with lots of chrome & flashing lights. It gets packed at nights so it's obviously succeeding, the only draw-back is - no real ale, it's now all pressurised which is a real shame. If some pub must be converted like this & to be honest the Old Rams Head is no great loss, let them sell the real stuff - both Tetley & Whitbread say they have detected a trend whereby lager drinkers are turning to real ale as their tastes mature - what a shame Watneys (Wilson/Websters) still have their heads in the sand.

MIDWAY MURDER

One of Stockports' first, and certainly its Premier, Free House, has fallen into the clutches of one of the Big Seven Brewers.

The Midway, New Bridge Lane, for so long famous for its wide range of real ales, has been sold to Courage and it is now a tenanted tied House. The thoughtof keg John Smiths in this delightful pub is too terrible to contemplate, but we are told that Directors Bitter is to make an appearance - more news next month.

THE GLADSTONE

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HOLIDAY ALE 1. Chester,

By Humphrey Higgins.

The City of Chester is always a pleasure to visit, even more so on one of the rare sunny days of this soggy summer! There is much of interest for everyone - the ancient City Walls, the plethora of architectural gems, the scenic beauty of the River Dee and, of course, the Pubs! Travel is easy with regular rail services from both Oxfords Road and Victoria & the last train back is at 10-28.

We arrived just after opening times & made for the SHIP VICTORY, a 'tied' Free House near the bus station, with Jennings & Tetley Bitter & Burton Ale on handpumps. A comfortable pub with windows reminiscent of a church. Most acceptable beer but strong complaints about the food - £2 for a Chilli that was no more than 1/2 a Vesta! On to the ALBION, a superb pub under the Walls yet away from the tourist traps. Excellent handpulled Greenalls Mild, Bitter & Original, lots of First World War memorabilia & with food that knocked its predecessor into a cocked hat! A most imaginative menu, with prominent notices inside & out proclaiming no chips - try the Black Pudding Barm Cake.

A walk through the covered shopping veranda brought us to the OLD CUSTOM HOUSE, with Marstons Pedigree, Border Mild, Exhibition & Bitter. Large & rather bland this - though steeped in history. To finish the lunchtime session we moved over the old Dee Bridge to sample, firstly, Greenalls Mild & Bitter in the SHIP, a plain, basic pub, obviously refurbished in the 50s by the flock wall-paper, then a definite improvement at the CARLTON TAVERN, with Peter Walker Mil & Best Bitter. A large '30s pub, very much Art Deco, though the wicker furniture seemed a little out of place. there's an excellent collection of brassware thou

Leisurely walks filled in the closed session and I, at least, was fortunate to stop for lunch at Davies Chippy on Bridge Street. A proper chippy this - well worth a visit!

The Award for July goes to the Grafton Arms, Grafton Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock. The pub opened in March last year, replacing the Victorian pub on the same site which had deteriorated to the point where demolition was the only option.

The new pub is a spacious two roomer, a thriving vault complemented by the comfortable lounge. Open spaces & wide doorways are a feature of the pub which was designed to accommodate the disabled, an important feature given the proximity of the Royal

January							February						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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March							April						
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30	31					1	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	27	28	29	30			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29							
May							June						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S

PUB OF THE MONTH

Infirmary. The Grafton is ably run by Barry & Sue Manning, Barry hailing from London and previously being the manager of various Watney houses. He won a cellar-manship award during his years in London & this shows in the fine quality of the Holts Mild & Bitter he now sells.

The presentation is on Thursday, 30th., when a good night is promised, there's even a singer for the night!



KEVIN & SUE WELCOME YOU

TO The Swan with Two Necks

OPP. WOOLWORTHS, PRINCES ST., STOCKPORT

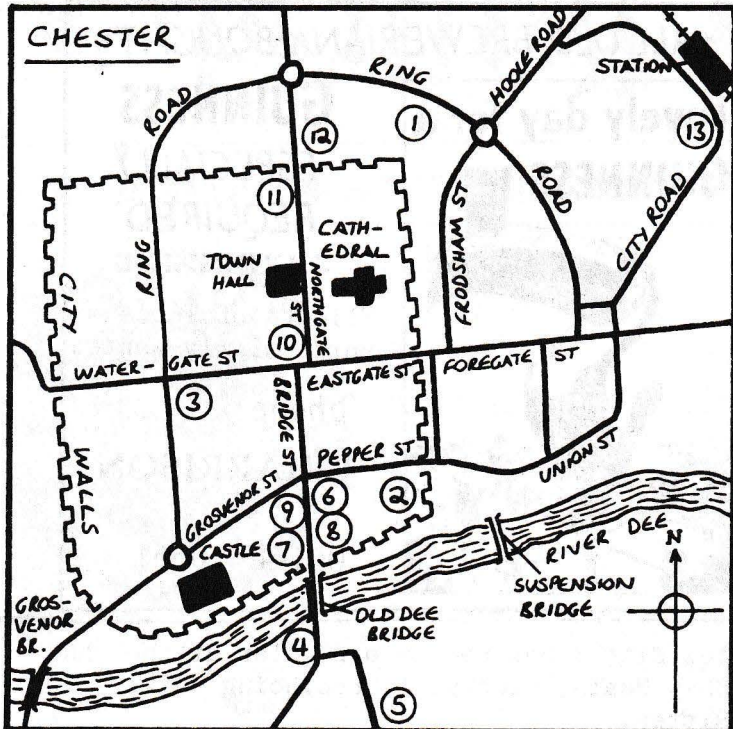
ROBINSONS BEST BEERS.

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CHILDRENS' ROOM.

A HAVEN IN THE SHOPPING PRECINCT!





KEY:

1. SHIP VICTORY	7. BEAR & BILLET
2. ALBION	8. CROSS KEYS
3. OLDE CUSTOM HOUSE	9. FALCON
4. SHIP	10. COMMERCIAL
5. CARLTON TAVERN	11. LIVERPOOL ARMS
6. CLAVERTONS	12. BULL & STIRRUP
	13. TOWN CRIER

5-30 saw us at CLAVERTONS, a wine bar which was more like a reasonable pub with decent Lees Bitter - Moonraker is also on handpump but for some reason no-one tried it! Further up the street is the attractive looking BEAR & BILLET, but looks belie it - behind the splendid exterior is a dowdy, run-down, could't-care-less pub. Hideous red, white & blue streamers, half deflated balloons, a rowdy clientelle and to top it off poor Wilsons

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Children Welcome 11-3 & 5.30-7pm

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SAMUEL WEBSTER

WILSONS

Bitter served from a pump adorned with both Mild & Bitter clips! Across the road was an improvement with Boddingtons Bitter in the CROSS KEYS a comfy open-plan house with a smart wood-panelled entrance and interesting Soames Welsh Ales windows.

Off Northgate Street into St. Peters Churchyard is the COMMERCIAL, a delightful pub - rather like walking into someones front room - with a fine Nortgate Ales sign. Excellent Greenalls Bitter, pleasant decor - there should be more like this. Further on near the wall is the LIVERPOOL ARMS, more Greenalls Bitter here is a basic, rather oddly laid out pub. The opportunity to sample Higsons Bitter was not missed so we called at the BULL & STIRRUP which has been Boddingtoned since my last visit - it's now all knocked through and the famous tiled mural of Edgars 8 has been moved to the vault entrance. Our last call was at the TOWN CRIER (formerly the Albion) where there was good Draught Bass and a chance to relax a little before catching the last train home.

GROVE OF DELIGHT

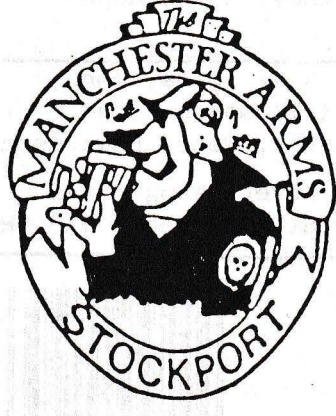
Last month we reported the work being done at Wilsons' Grove, AShton Old Road, Higher Openshaw & expressed two hopes - that cask mild would return and that the formerly uninspired pub would be well treated.

It seems that Wilsons were listening for not only does the pub now sell an acceptable pint of mild alongside Wilsons & Websters Bitter, all on hand-pump, but the modernisatio's been well done too. A three sided bar serves a single drinking area in which, though the furnishings are perhaps a bit chintzy, the liberal use of wood contributes to a pleasantly warm atmosphere. Oddly a small part of the former lounge, complete with appalling fake half-timbering, has been left untouched as a small side 'vault' - best advice is to ignore this area, which only serves to demonstrate what an improvement has been made, and enjoy the rest of the pub.

THE MANCHESTER ARMS

STOCKPORT

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MARTIN & SANDY



It's sad to report the departure of Jim & Alice Knight from the CROWN, Heaton Lane at the end of the month - a difference of opinion with Boddies over what should be done to the pub has meant they are to leave the trade. For our part we'd like to thank them for all they've done to the Crown & wish them all the best for the future.

 Work is well under way on HOLT'S new pub on Broom Lane, Levenshulme and it's due to open in November.

 The JUNCTION, Cheadle Hulme has a new Landlord Bruce Davenport. Having changed to a managed house prices have been reduced to 64p & 61p.

The NEW SPORTSMAN, Market St. Manchester, is now a J.W. Lees house, with handpumped bitter at 75p a pint, the mild is keg. Not the most characterful pub in town but a decent pint at a non rip-off price.

 Rip-off is just the word for the reopened Midland Hotel - "Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza" if you insist. In 'Lowry's Bar' Tetley & Wilsons Bitters are available at 48p a half, and tasted more like cardboard than beer.

ALL OLD BREWERIANA BOUGHT

Lovely day for a GUINNESS



GUINNESS ESPECIALLY REQUIRED

Flights of Toucans particularly wanted

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J. HARRISON

061-477 0661

Thwaites Bitter has become a regular at the OLDE VIC, Shaw Heath, Stockport, replacing Walkers Best Bitter.

 Renovations at the HORSE & FARRIER, Gatley are going on apace. The exterior is to be restored to its former glory and interior decoration is next with work on the cellar complete.

 In Wythenshawe the TUDOR TAVERN, Peel Hall Road, has gained Websters Bitter and ROYALS, Royal Thorn, has Websters Choice.

 The sign depicting a handpump has gone from the exterior of Chesters' keg only STAR on Pottery Lane. We welcome the end of this deception, but wouldn't the installation of proper beer have been a better way of putting matters right?

BOATS 'N' BEER

The 10th. Ashton Canals Festival takes place at the Portland Basin, Ashton on the 10th., 11th., & 12th. of this month. All the usual features will be there with a folk concert, brass band, jazz bands, morris men, children's entertainers, side stalls etc., and, of course, the CAMRA beer tent with a wide range of Real Ales. It's always a good do, with plenty for all the family.

HEARD AT THE BAR: (not in a Greenall's pub):
 "Greenall's independent, are they? Let's hope someone takes them over."

Contributors to this Edition: Rhys Jones, John Clarke, Humphrey Higgins, Paul Thompson, Stan Chlebicki, Jim Flynn, Bob Bromley, Peter Edwardson

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