

# WHAT'S DOING



SEPT  
'77

THE MANCHESTER BEER DRINKER'S NEWSLETTER

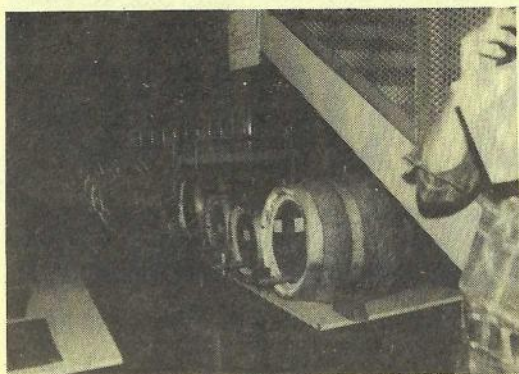


A new sign has appeared outside the Fire Brigade, the John Willie Lees pub on Pollard Street, Ancoats. It may not be obvious from the photograph, but the pub's name is now The Pollard.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The price of a pint - are you getting value for money? Discoveries in an old pub - rare bottles from The Swan. Three Irlam pubs - a change for the worse? The Grapes - a regular's memories. Also all the latest pub and brewery news.





## BEER EXHIBITION A SUCCESS!

The Central Manchester Beer Exhibition in the Royal Exchange was extremely successful, despite some problems with supplies. Over the three days from 21st to 23rd July more than 3,200 people, including many local licensees and brewery representatives, drank nearly 8,000 pints. Particularly popular brews were Whitbread (Marlow) and Stones, kindly supplied by a Sheffield licensee after the brewery only offered the keg variety. Walkers bitter sold well and it is hoped that Tetleys will increase the outlets for this in Manchester.

The organisers would like to thank the licensees of the Borough, Salford University and the Staff of Life for providing beer when supplies ran low on Friday, and Wilsons, Tetleys, Boddingtons and Lees, whose late deliveries kept the exhibition going on the Saturday.

## BREWERS BITTER

Wilson's Brewers Bitter has been on sale in about fifty pubs for over a month now. On average, pubs are selling half as much Brewers Bitter as Great Northern Bitter, which is what the brewery expected. Some pubs are not selling much at all - one even sent it back. In at least four pubs - the Heywood in Miles Platting, the Railway and Naturalist, Prestwich, the Ship Canal, Eccles, and the Bird in Hand, Salford - the beer is doing exceptionally well. Indeed Raymond Rossi of the Ship Canal tells us that he is selling twice as much of the new beer as Great Northern.

*A full list of pubs selling Brewers Bitter is given in the advertisement elsewhere in this issue of What's Doing.*

## BREWERY STRIKES

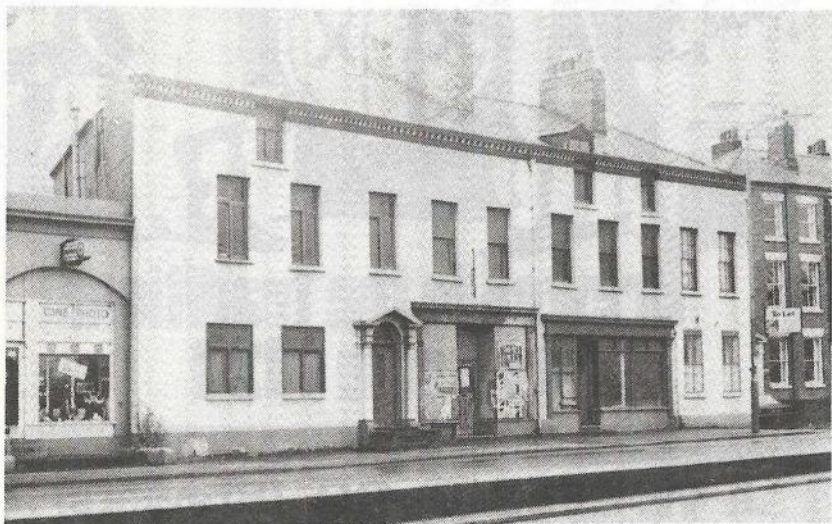
Two brewery strikes are in the news this month. Thwaites production workers have been out since their pay demand was turned down. Thwaites' tenants may be taking supplies from other breweries if the strike continues. An unofficial strike at Wilsons will soon be affecting 700 pubs in Greater Manchester.





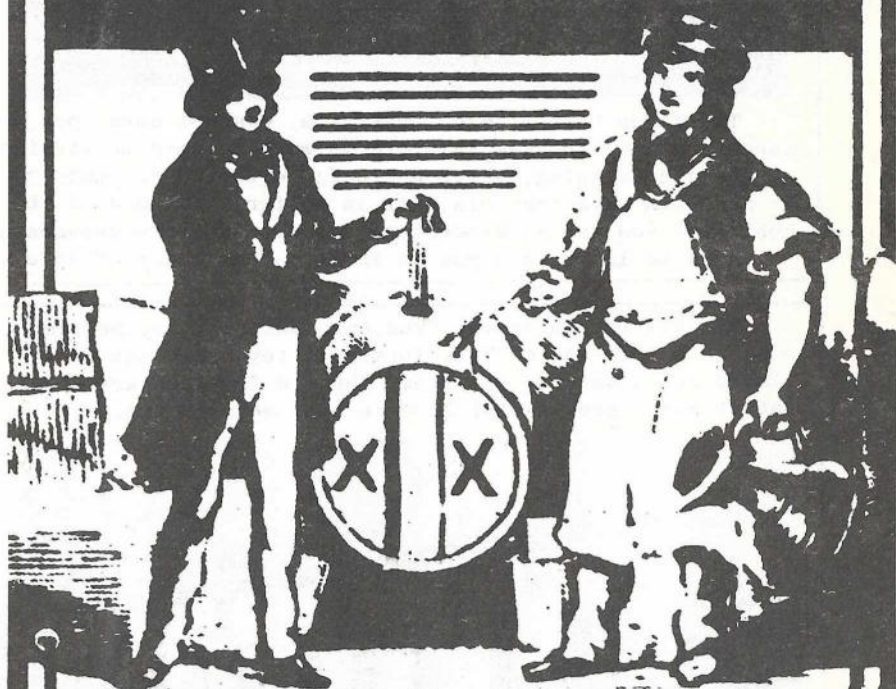
The Three Legs of Man, Greengate, has now been open for several weeks. The new landlord is working hard at tidying up the old building, which has been neglected for many years. It has been said that his beer is better than much of the Robinsons you get in Stockport, and with that recommendation it looks as if the old pub is in for a new lease of life.

The Red Dragon on the Crescent, Salford, may be reopening soon as a free house. This former Tetley house has been closed for about six years but the old fittings are still intact and a provisional licence has been granted.



# LEES

## DRAUGHT BEERS



**Brewed in the traditional  
way since 1828**

**J. W. LEES & CO (Brewers) Ltd**  
Middleton, Manchester. Tel: 061-643 2487





Work has again started on a new Wilsons pub on Bank Lane, Irlams o' th' Height. The pub - name as yet unknown - is presumably intended to be a replacement for the Britannia, the first pub to be demolished as part of the widening of the A6.

In keeping with current ideas in pub design, it is an eight-sided structure with two open rooms on either side of a central bar. One will feature a pool table and the other two raised stages. The living quarters and cellar are on the ground floor, and the front door is reached by a concrete bridge from Bank Lane over what at present looks like a moat. A far cry from the Brit!

Another new Wilsons pub - The Rover's Return - opens in Salford on Wednesday 17th August. The pub, on Guy Fawkes Street, Ordsall, will be selling traditional draught beer.

Wilsons have not yet been forthcoming about the reasons why they did not oppose the Compulsory Purchase Order on the Grapes, Eccles New Road. Perhaps, as they have numerous new pubs in the city (Chequerboard, Mariners, Rovers Return are the most recent) they are less concerned than Lees or Greenalls about losing some of their older, smaller, less salubrious and no doubt less profitable outlets.

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The Albert, the small Bass pub on Regent Road, Salford, has stopped selling traditional 4X mild. The pub, which was the only Bass house in Salford selling real ale, now has only keg Toby Light and Guinness on draught. The 4X has been dropped due to lack of demand.



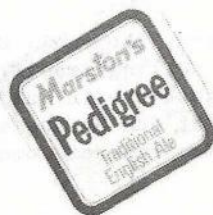
## THE PRICE OF A PINT

Although beer prices have risen considerably in the last few years due to increases in both excise duty and brewers' prices, the relative price of beer has fallen. The average wage will buy more pints now than at any time in the past, except for a time in the 1830s when excise duty was removed from beer to encourage people not to drink gin.

If the relative price has fallen, there nevertheless remain many anomalies in beer prices. Greater Manchester is fortunate in having a good choice of beers at prices which are lower than anywhere except Nottingham, where it's still possible to buy a pint for 21p.

Elsewhere in the country, we've seen prices jump considerably. In parts of London the 40p pint is a fact. At first this was a result of large combines promoting premium beers and operating local monopolies but recently we've seen a more insidious trend, that is the tendency for pubs to jump on the real ale bandwagon and sell cask conditioned beer at inflated prices. To some extent it's fair enough to charge higher prices in a pub where overheads are very high but in places the practice seems to have got out of hand.

There is little evidence yet of this happening in Greater Manchester, perhaps because of the number of real ale outlets and the amount of competition. However, there are wide differences in prices even in Manchester. The small local breweries tend to be cheaper than the large national combines. Holts and Boddingtons bitter may cost 24 or 25p a pint whilst Tetleys or Wilsons is usually 3 or 4p dearer at around 28p. The picture is further confused by the fact that beers vary in strength. As the brewers pay duty on the strength or original gravity (o.g.) of the beers, this can certainly affect the value for money. For example, Robinsons best bitter may seem expensive for a local brew at around 28p a pint, but when we bear in mind that it's







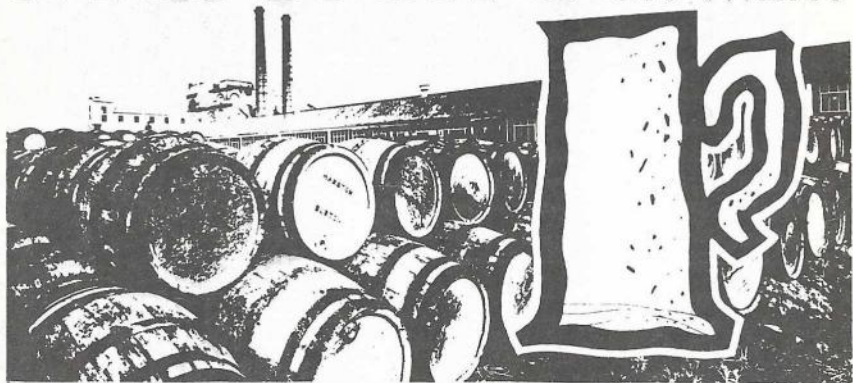
the strongest bitter brewed in Manchester with an o.g. of about 1040, it is considerably better value than many other beers. Holts and Boddingtons sell at about the same price but Holts has an o.g. of about 1039 compared with 1035 for Boddingtons and therefore offers better value for money.

Not only do prices vary between brewers but also between pubs of the same brewery. In managed houses high prices may reflect the facilities of the pub and in tenanted houses the licensee will charge what the market will bear, taking into account the area he's in and the competition which he has.

As a general rule in Greater Manchester, the South tends to be more expensive than the North where there are a good many more brewers operating - Thwaites, Marstons, Greenalls, Burtonwood, Lees, Oldham Breweries, Matthew Brown and Holts all have far more pubs in North Manchester than in the South, which tends to make people more price conscious.

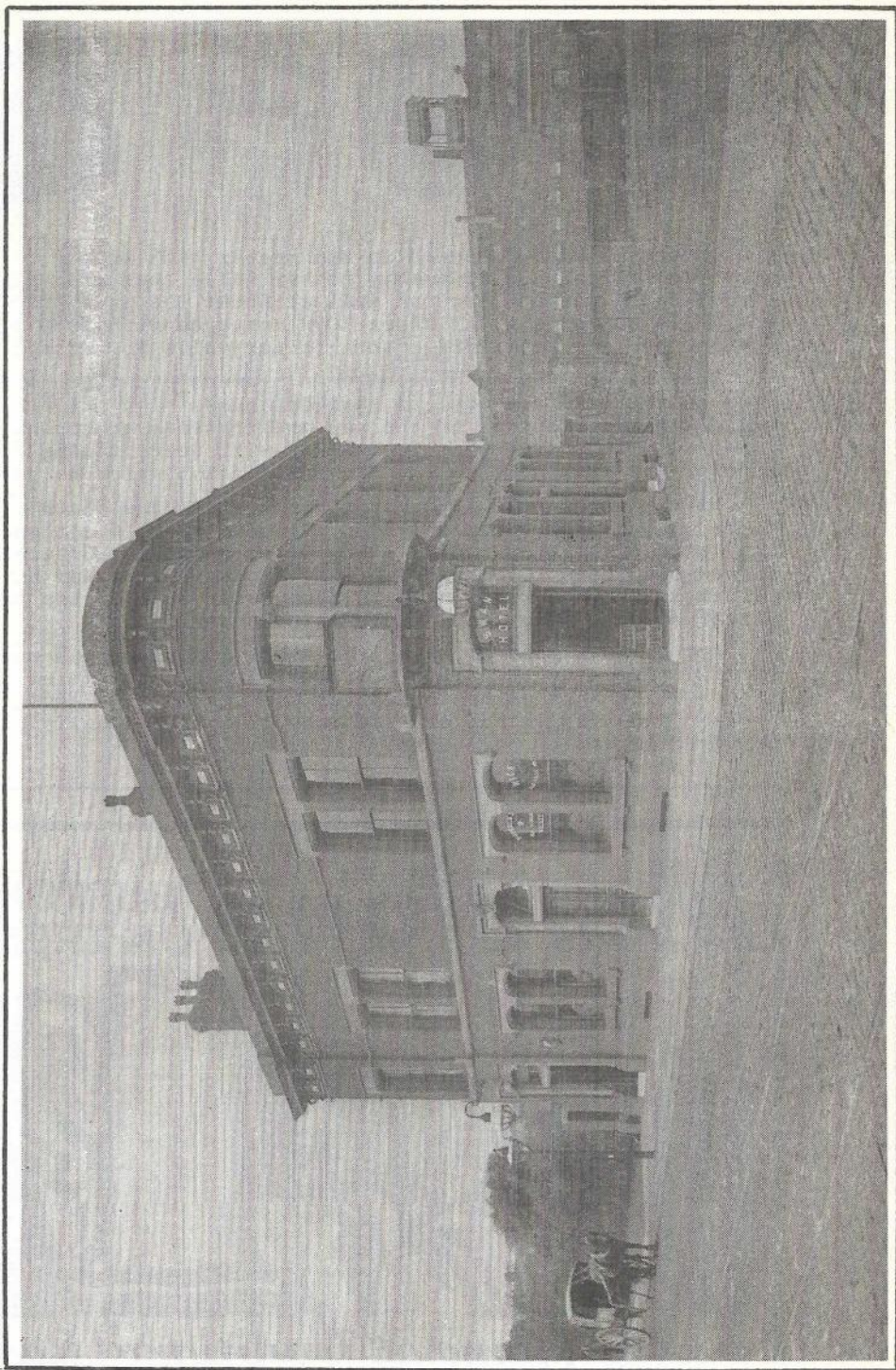
Again, as a general rule, the small independent breweries give better value than larger breweries and real ale offers better value than either bright or keg beers; it's usually cheaper and often stronger than many of the nationally advertised lagers or keg beers.

# **Marston's** BURTON- ON-TRENT



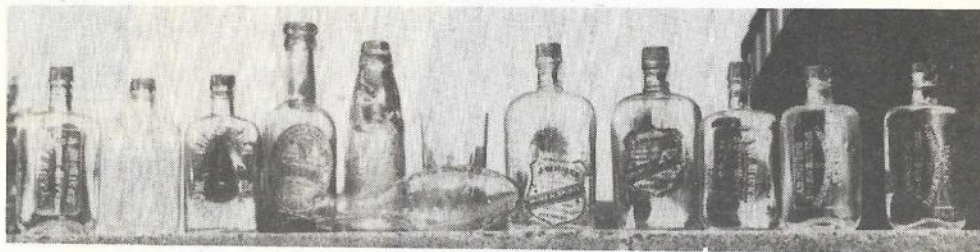
*... The Home of Traditional Beer*







## THE SWAN, WEASTE



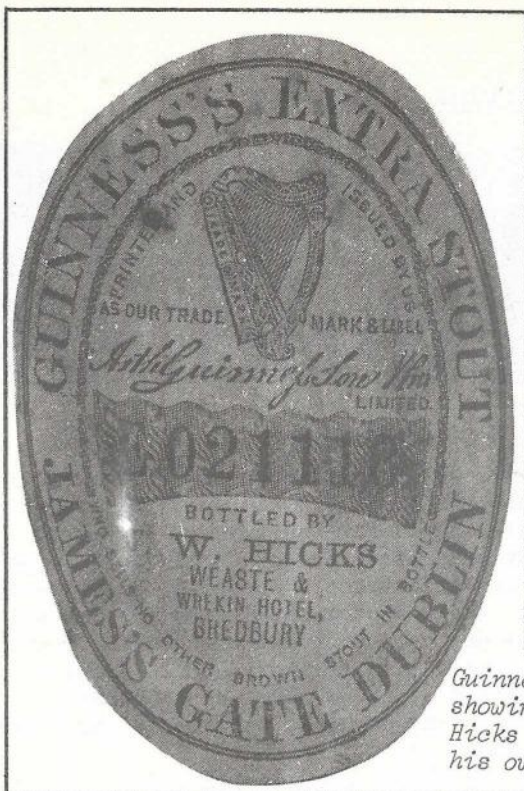
by Tony Flynn and Neil Richardson

The bottles shown on this page are some of those found in the attic of the Swan Hotel, Weaste, in June this year. They date from the beginning of the century and were probably deposited there by successive occupants of the two top guest rooms through a convenient hatch opposite the bedroom doors. The first 'find' was a photograph of the pub (shown opposite) from the same period, which was discovered by the landlady, Dilys Dixon. Dilys kindly allowed us to excavate the attic and over a period of three days we uncovered bottles, newspapers, cigarette packets, matchboxes and other items from the early 1900s.

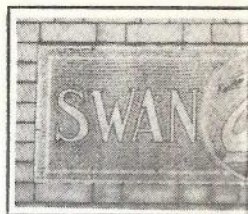
From records in Salford Local History Library we were able to piece together the following account of the pub's history....

The first Swan Inn on record was a small, whitewashed building standing back from the road in Weaste Lane. It was built by a John Dixon, who was also its first landlord, some time before 1823. A cup inscribed 'John Dixon, Swan Inn, 1823' is known to have been in existence in the 1890s. The next landlord was John Clay, followed by James Andrews about 1840, when the pub was listed as the White Swan. The next licensee was Peter Jump in the 1860s, then a Mrs Butler, who was followed by Walter Dowie, who had the pub for about ten years until 1882. Dowie's brother-in-law was for fourteen years licensee of an earlier Royal Hotel, Weaste, and it is probable that he built the present Royal on the corner of Cemetery Road.

In 1883 John William Hicks took over the Swan and about this time the pub was renamed the Swan Hotel and rebuilt by Messrs Collins and Chester, later Chester's Brewery Company. The photograph is pre-1904, since in that year plans of the pub show Chester's fascia boards. In 1908, the year after Robert Hall took over as landlord, the outside urinal on the left of the picture was demolished and an enlarged Commercial Room was built in place of the old News Room, which was moved



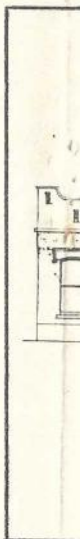
*Guinness label showing that Hicks bottled his own.*



to the back of the pub. Above the corner door, which has now been bricked up to give more room inside the vault, was a stuffed swan in a glass case. The croft to the right of the pub on the photograph contained horse troughs which disappeared when the new Grey Mare was built in 1912. The story goes that the original Grey Mare was so named by one of its early licensees after a friend of his had bought a grey mare from a Mr Wombwell as his menagerie was passing through Weaste.

The old stables still stand in the pub yard virtually unchanged and the two tied cottages on Weaste Lane were only recently demolished. Two hand painted swans can still be seen in the glass of the doors to the News Room and the Commercial Room. There is the top half of a service hoist in what was the Billiard Room on the first floor, although alterations in the vault have removed all trace of it downstairs.

The present pub is no longer a hotel. It is a busy Salford local popular with dockers and has active darts and football teams. A Buffs lodge founded in 1905 still meets in an upstairs room. It is now a Whitbread tied house, since the company took over Threlfall Chester's Brewery of Salford.





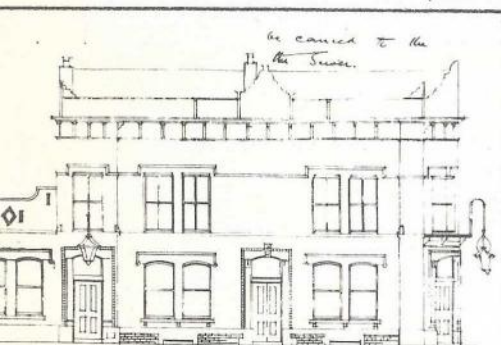
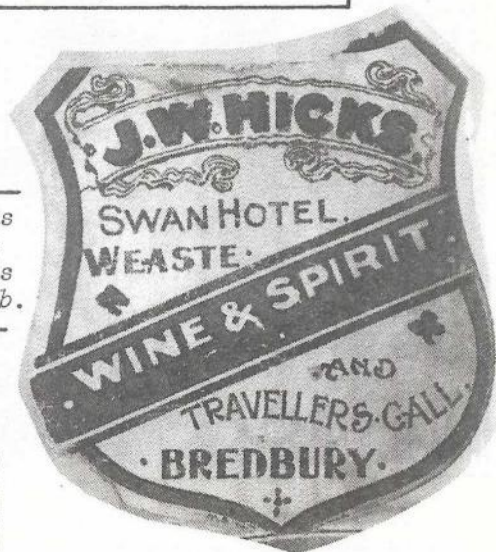


*Etched monogram  
on a spirit glass*



*Spirit flask moulded  
with 'Hicks, Swan Hotel,  
Weaste and Wrekin Hotel,  
Bredbury'.*

*Label from a Hicks  
spirit flask. The  
Travellers Call is  
now a J W Lees pub.*



*FRONT ELEVATION*

*Architect's drawing of  
the pub showing Commercial  
Room extension and Chester's  
fascia*

*The Swan today.*



## THREE IRLAM PUBS

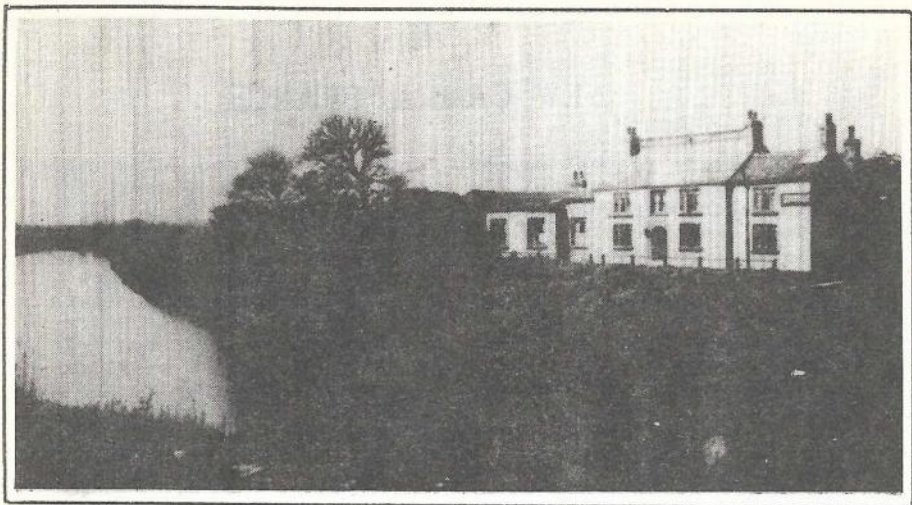
*As a postscript to the 'Real Ale - Plastic Pubs' feature in a recent What's Doing, this article on Higher Irlam pubs comes from a book by James Goodier recently published by Irlam and Cadishead Local History Society. All three pubs have been affected in one way or another by 'progress'*



Of the three public houses in Higher Irlam, there has always been some controversy as to which is the oldest. An old map of the district bearing the date 1781 shows the existence of all three, but there is good reason to believe they go back to a much earlier date. In the old coaching days the Nags Head Hotel was recognised as the half-way house between Manchester and Warrington; and indeed I remember in the years around the turn of the century there was a sign hanging from the front wall of the hotel advertising this fact.

The early history of the Boat House Inn is tied up with the history of the River Irwell, probably from the time when the Old Quay Navigation Company made the river navigable about the middle of the eighteenth century.





The original White Lion Hotel was built with its frontage facing the 'Old Road', or what is now Boat Lane, since at that time Boat Lane was the main thoroughfare through Higher Irlam. Regrettably, the old building was demolished some years ago, and here again I think it is a pity that no attempt was made to embody any of the characteristics of the old building into the new White Lion. The old building was a plain solid structure typical of its period, but evidently not in keeping with the modern ideas of architecture as expressed in the new monstrosity. The old building at least had the appearance of strength and character - symbolic of its age - which it retained to the end of its long history of 200 years and more until the demolition men commenced their ruthless destruction in 1971.



## NEW CAMRA BRANCH

A meeting to test support for a Trafford and Hulme branch of the Campaign for Real Ale will be held in September. The South Manchester Branch now covers Trafford and Hulme but it is felt that these areas are being ignored since present activity is concentrated around their meeting place, the Gateway in Parrs Wood. It is also considered in some quarters that the South Manchester branch of Camra, like many others in the country, is showing its age and that active concern for real ale and traditional pubs has given way to esoteric discussion of comparative trivia. So, if you live anywhere in the Trafford and Hulme area, or even if you don't, and are interested in traditional beer and its future, attend the meeting on Thursday, September 15th at 8pm in the Malt Shovels, Stamford Street, Altrincham (two minutes from the Altrincham bus/rail interchange). Further information can be had from

Mick Rottenbury 061-969 7013 (home)  
John Curry 061-872 2181 (work)

## REAL ALE GUIDE

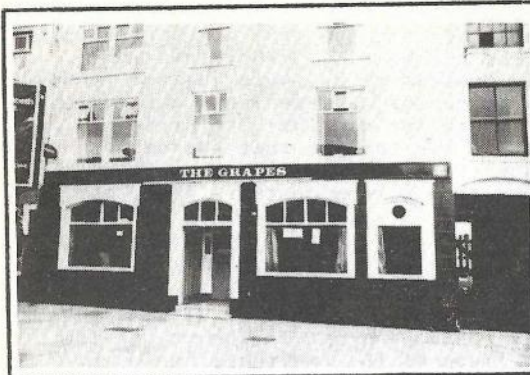
'Real Ale in Manchester and Salford' has been brought up to date this month. The guide lists about 250 pubs in Central/North Manchester, Salford, Swinton, Eccles and Irlam selling traditional cask beer. This second printing is now available from Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester, for 10p plus a stamped addressed envelope.



Tony Flynn, address 18 Gilda Crescent Road, Eccles, telephone number 736 1575, would like to hear from readers with recollections of old Manchester and Salford pubs and breweries. Readers' photographs would be copied and returned immediately and credited if used in publications.

**BEER MATS** Ivan Thornley of 30 Pollard Street, Kettering, Northants, collects beer mats and would like to get in touch with other collectors with a view to exchanging 'swops'.





## THE GRAPES, ECCLES

The Grapes on Church Street was once the only Wilsons pub in Eccles. The other six were all Walker and Homfray houses prior to Wilson's takeover in 1949. The following account has been put together with the help of Jim Doherty, the present landlord, and Teddy Hulme, the oldest regular....

Teddy Hulme first started coming into the pub with his dad in the early 1900s, before licensing restrictions on children were as they are today. The vault was smaller than it is now and as the early photograph shows a door opened straight into this room from the street. Stables at the back of the pub still survive as a reminder of the days when Church Street was one of the main roads to the city. The pub has always had a concert room, and Mr Hulme himself was one of the entertainers when the room was separated from the rest of the pub by wooden doors. There were originally wickerwork seats in the vault, which was also provided with spittoons. In the early years



when carters used to pass the pub on their way to Smithfield Market, ham, kippers and bloaters were cooked on the open fire. People who absent-mindedly spat on the fire apparently claimed that it saved the ham from burning! The story goes that 'carters' pints', at 1½d instead of 2d, were cheaper because a policeman would hold the carter's horse for a maximum of five minutes while he went in for a drink. The price of the pint was reduced because it was thought that the carter didn't have time to enjoy it. Spirits were once served from copper pipes plumbed down from a room upstairs where the barrels were kept.

In the last hundred years the pub has suffered two catastrophes. The first was when an enormous bunch of grapes which used to hang outside the door plummeted without warning to the pavement. Luckily no-one was underneath at the time. The second was when the floor of the vault collapsed into the cellar. Again no-one was hurt and regulars transferred themselves from the seats to the windowsills to finish their beer. The Great Unsolved Mystery of the Grapes is the tunnel which runs underneath the pub. Accounts of its origin and destination vary, but the mystery is likely to remain one, since the entrance to the tunnel in the cellar was bricked up after some enterprising thieves tried to use it to get to the bank at the bottom of Church Street.

Today the Grapes is as busy as ever and concerts still take place on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. It has been unkindly said that the one drawback about the pub is that the landlord supports Manchester City.

*Advertisement*

**NEW**



New from the manufacturers of Funny juice instant laughter elixir - RAPIDOPIST instant drunkenness pills. With the astounding scientific discovery that the major reason for drinking alcohol is to get drunk comes a new approach to insobriety. No longer is it necessary to drink vile tasting beers in distasteful public houses. Breakthroughs in pharmaceuticals mean that it is now possible to enjoy the benefits of alcoholic stupefaction by taking a small tablet in a little water. All this in the comfort of your own home.

Rapidopist is sold in varying strengths at 80p per bottle of 100  
Available from chemists and former Public Houses

RAPIDOPIST is a registered trade mark of the Universal Brewing, Pharmaceutical and Taxidermy Corporation



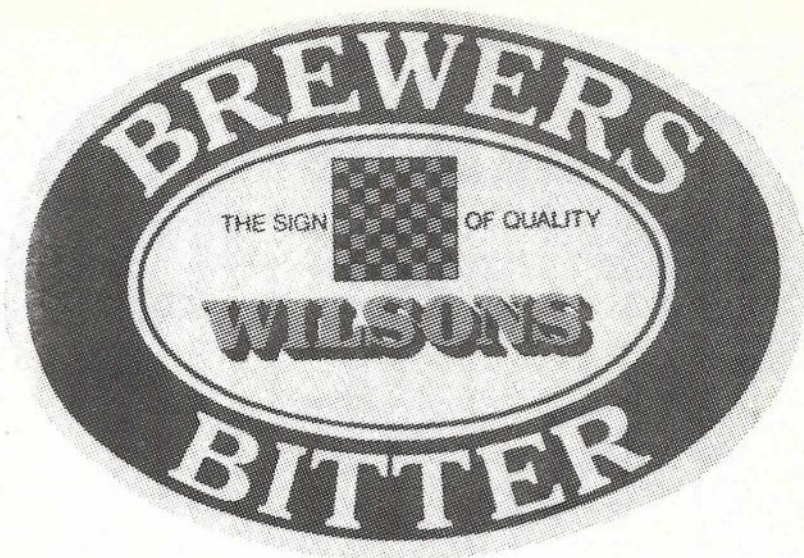
## Rupert Periwinkle



"How does Richard Boston get away with it?" I asked the Contessa over a pint of Pisenlits 4X Olde Royale in the Shrieking Vole. "I'm a figment", she reminded me. "Pardon?" "Figment!" she repeated. I must have misinterpreted what she said for she removed my hand from her thigh and slapped my wrist. What I mean is, Boston used to have a column in the Guardian about beer and he wrote about beer for about a fortnight then he wrote about whatever came into his head - punctuation, cheese, people with funny names and what have you. Recently he's been doing the same again with his Eating Out column. He invents fictional people, goes in about two tandoori chip shops, runs down the Good Food Guide and rabbits on about whatever he wants.

The Rupert Periwinkle column will not fall into the same trap. The column is about beer and will not try to enliven descriptions of beer festivals and accounts of public enquiries with digressions about sex, punk rock, elephantiasis, International Dwarfism, mushroom farming, oxymorons, fell walking in Kuwait or underwater bassoon playing, attention riveting as these may be. As I remarked to Long John Silver in the Pope's Knee over a half of Molestrangler's diabetic lager, I will not be persuaded to follow the example of Stanley Reynolds and Richard Boston and people my column with a number of fictitious characters in the hope that their eccentric beliefs, unique personalities and bizarre behaviour will hold the readers interest. Henceforth we will concentrate on the major issues confronting us at this moment in time and there will be no further mention of the Hitler twins, Josiah Drab, The Fatted Pseud, Max Wall, Rasputin, The Prune or The Lirrel Pirrock.

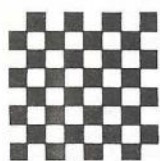




*Wilson's Brewers Bitter is available from the following:-*

Medway, Stockport  
 Swan, Shaw Heath, Stockport  
 Cotton Tree, Ingersley Road, Bollington  
 Weavers Arms, Oldham Road, Failsworth  
 Copenhagen, Oldham Road, Newton Heath  
 White Hart, Oldham Road, Newton Heath  
 Grove, Rochdale Road, Blackley  
 Old House at Home, Bottomley Side, Blackley  
 Masons, Hadfield  
 Auld Lang Syne, Manchester Road, Oldham  
 Hope, Greenacres Road, Oldham  
 Windsor, Shaw Road, Oldham  
 Prince of Wales, Bleasby Street, Oldham  
 Minds Arms, Huddersfield Road, Oldham  
 Morning Star, Featherstall Road, Oldham  
 Sun Inn, Henshaw Street, Oldham  
 Royal Oak, Leigh Road, Boothstown  
 Grapes, Church Street, Eccles  
 Hare and Hounds, Church Street, Eccles  
 Ship Canal, Barton Lane, Eccles  
 Railway and Naturalist, Bury New Road, Prestwich  
 Duke of Edinburgh, Market Street, Royton  
 Cloverdale, Entwistle Road, Rochdale  
 Old Roebuck, Victoria Street, Altrincham  
 Windsor Castle, Castle Street, Stockport

Doubloun, Adswood Road, Stockport  
 Jodrell Arms, Whalley Bridge  
 Bird in Hand, St. Stephen's Street, Salford  
 Crown and Kettle, Oldham Road, Manchester  
 Millstone, Thomas Street, Manchester  
 Waggon and Horses, Stockport Road, Longsight  
 Star, Hyde Road, Ardwick  
 Church, Church Street, Eccles  
 Heywood Arms, Oldham Road, Miles Platting  
 Robin Hood, Cheetham Hill  
 Museum, Moston Lane, Moston  
 Mitchell Arms, Every Street, Ancoats  
 Cranberry, Cranberry Street, Oldham  
 Black Horse, Ripponden Road, Oldham  
 Albert, Withington  
 Grapes, Yorkshire Street, Oldham  
 Mare and Foal, Ashton Road, Oldham  
 Greens Arms, Ashton New Road, Clayton  
 Cross Keys, Delph  
 Granada T.V. Social Club, Manchester  
 Sinclairs Oyster Bar, Manchester  
 Crown, Glossop  
 Newbridge Lane Conservative Club  
 Crown, Bollington  
 Windmill, Whiteley Green



# Wilson's



## CAMRA

Camra is a national consumer organisation concerned with maintaining the choice of beer and preserving the variety of pubs throughout the country. Until recently takeovers by the six major brewing companies resulted in the closure of local breweries and the loss of many draught beers. The threat is still there but as a result of Camra's efforts many pubs have gone back to serving cask-conditioned beer, and the big brewers are slowly realising that there is a demand for good beer in traditional pub surroundings.

If you want to preserve your right to choose what you drink fill in the membership form below. 'What's Brewing' is the Campaign's newspaper, sent free to members every month, and keeps them in touch with news and events throughout the country.

### Application for Membership.

I wish to become a member of The Campaign for Real Ale Limited. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign, and I enclose £4

FULL NAME (Block capitals) .....

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS (Block capitals) .....

.....COUNTY.....

SIGNATURE..... DATE .....

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited. Applications should be sent to Membership, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3BW.

## Camra North Manchester

Chairman: Robin Bence 061-794 6461, 061-236 4571 (day)

Secretary: Jem Callaghan 061-736 5843 (day)

Press/Publicity: Roger Hall 061-740 7937, 061-736 3065 (day)

The next branch meeting will be in the Castle, Oldham Street, Manchester, on Wednesday 21st September 1977, at 8.00pm.

Winners of the 'How many pints' competition: Correct answer 7760 pints sold.  
1st prize: R M Walker of Warrington (7756 pints) gets 9 gals.beer.

A Hurdle (Sale), I Bannatyne (Woodford) and I Rhodes (Dukinfield) all with 7777 pints, get 3 gals. each.

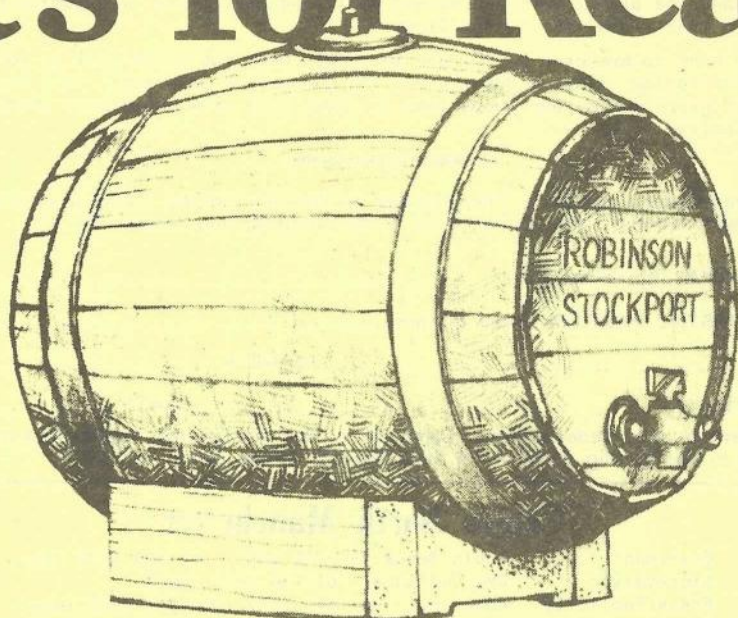


In next month's What's Doing: The pubs of Ashton Old Road - Real Ale in Irlam and Cadishead - Drinking in Hanky Park twenty years ago - A beer drinker's guide to the Isle of Man - plus news, Rupert Periwinkle and more. Readers' letters should be sent to the editor, address below.

What's Doing is published on the third Wednesday of the month and is sold through pubs in Manchester and Salford and at local Camra meetings. It can be obtained by post from Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester, £1 for six issues.

What's Doing is edited by Neil Richardson, 94 Leach Street, Farnworth, Bolton

# It's for Real



We, at Robinson's, think that what matters most about beer is its flavour. That's why we are still brewing beer the same way that we did a hundred years ago. Natural ingredients, the same time-honoured brewing ways, even on the same site — not many can say that!

And you can buy at least one, usually two and sometimes more of the traditional Ales listed here in any Robinson's pub within 100 miles of Stockport. Not many can make that sort of claim either.

Now you can have Real Ale at home for parties or just for your own enjoyment. Available in Firkins and Pins\*, complete with tap, stillage and detailed instructions. You can order

from any Robinson's On or Off-Licence or Unicorn Wine Shops.

Always available from Unicorn Wine,

**Old Tom Ale**  
**Best Bitter Ale**  
**Bitter Ale\***  
**Best Mild Ale**



Lower Hillgate, Stockport, (just by the Brewery) 061-480 6571. And its the cheapest way of buying beer. A little more trouble perhaps but we think you will agree with us that it is worth it.

There are deposits on the casks, stillages and taps, returnable in full when you bring them back. You can borrow glasses, paying only for those you break or fail to return providing you also make appropriate purchases of items to fill them.

We strongly recommend that you place your order as soon as possible for Christmas or New Year use.

**It's Robinson's . . . for Real.**

\*Bitter Ale not available in Pins.

**When you buy any of these Robinson's Ales,  
you are buying Traditional Draught Beer  
-at its very best.**