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NOV/DEC 2007
CHRISTMAS ISSUE

DRINKER'S ALEMANAC

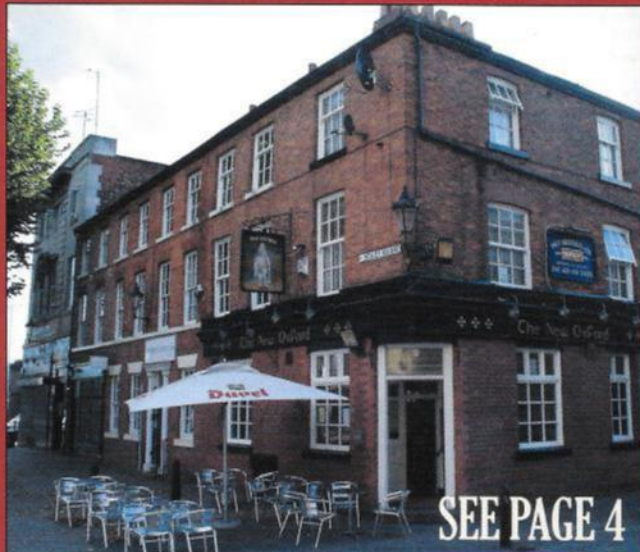
incorporating *What's Doing*
covering Manchester, Salford and Beyond

NEW OXFORD REAL ALE REVIVAL



IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|----|
| Editorial | 3 |
| <i>A quick word from the editor</i> | |
| Spotlight on Two Cities | 6 |
| <i>News from Manchester & Salford</i> | |
| News | 8 |
| <i>From around the Region</i> | |
| Bagatelle in Chester | 12 |
| <i>Feature</i> | |
| Forthcoming Events | 13 |
| <i>What's going on in your area</i> | |



SEE PAGE 4

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DRINKER'S ALEMANAC

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The Licensing Act 2003 attempts to promote 'good public order' in areas where there are a high number of pubs and bars. This means in substantially sized town and city centres throughout Britain.

Manchester City Centre is relatively small compared to some places, particularly on a Friday and Saturday night, but still sees a high number of revellers. It is very likely that most of these people will walk through Piccadilly from pub to bar and then on to the night clubs.

Is it fair that Manchester City Council continues to approve more licenses in such a small area, while in the suburbs the pubs and bars are folding with alarming regularity? From day to day we see an increasing number of gangs and cyclists racing through Piccadilly and the other pedestrianised areas, creating havoc for the law abiding public in general. Where's the public order in that - particularly in Piccadilly?

Dave Hallows, Assistant Editor

**DRINKER'S ALEMANAC
WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL
OUR READERS,
CONTRIBUTORS AND
ADVERTISERS A VERY
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
SEASONAL GREETINGS**

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Photographic Credits: Dave Hallows, Andy Jenkinson, Stewart Revell and Steve Smith.

Trading Standards

Should you wish to make a complaint concerning certain aspects of service regarding the pub, firstly it is better to take it up with the management of the establishment concerned. If however the matter cannot be resolved you may wish to contact your local Trading Standards office.

These are located as follows:

Manchester City Council -

1 Hammerstone Road, Gorton, Manchester M18 8EQ. Tel: 0161 234 1555. Fax: 0161 957 8379. Email: tradingstandards@manchester.gov.uk.

<http://tradingstandards.gov.uk/manchester>.

City of Salford - Turnpike House, 631 Eccles New Road, Salford M5 2SH. Tel: 0161 925 1346. Fax: 0161 925 1199.

www: <http://www.salford.gov.uk/>

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NEW OXFORD REAL ALE REVIVAL

We are proud to announce that the New Oxford, situated adjacent to the Magistrates' Court in Bexley Square, Salford has been chosen to represent Greater Manchester as their regional pub of the year.

The award is chosen from a selection of those pubs which have ascertained a certain merit within the branches of a particular area. It then goes forward into the regional rounds and if successful on winning this accolade, the pub then goes forward into the national pub of the year competition for 2007.

The prize was presented to mine hosts Tim Flynn and Paulette Scanlon by CAMRA Regional Director Ralph Warrington accompanied by a packed audience. To commemorate the occasion there were two special beers from local brewer Bazens', with Top Of The Pubs (4.3% abv) and Greater Manchester Bitter (4.0% abv) as well as the regular beers New Oxford Bitter and Flatbac and four more beers from around the country.

The building which houses the pub hails from the 1830s, when it was known plain and simply as the Oxford. Since the demise of its former owners, Vaux Breweries Limited of Sunderland (the sign still features on the exterior wall), the pub had been closed and boarded for a number of years. Revitalised during 2005 it reopened as a continental café style bar and pub by a property developer. Now known these days as the New Oxford, real ale was reintroduced in March 2006, the pub having never looked back since. The style has been toned down a little since then, with a sympathetic redecoration and refurbishment by the present publicans.

The pub consists of an L-shaped main room, a central bar and a separate back room. Hot and cold food is served during the day and there is a television for sporting events.

The pub is very much a rejuvenated venture which provides access for all and has made its



mark with real ale drinkers from near and far. It has recently increased the number of handpumps from six to ten in order to cope with the weekend demand. And even more are planned!

The beer range is sourced from all over the country and also offers beers from local brewers Northern and Bazens'.

The regular pub beer festivals which usually feature up to 25 real ales - plus regular cider and foreign bottled beers - have rapidly established the pub's popularity on the imbibing scene.

There is always a friendly Irish welcome from Tim, Paulette and staff, with the pub included in CAMRA's flagship publication, the Good Beer Guide for 2008, for the very first time in its present incarnation.

Our pictures show an interior view and CAMRA Regional Director Ralph Warrington presenting the award to Paulette and Tim.

The New Oxford is at 11 Bexley Square, Salford, off the main A6 trunk road and is open on Mondays to Saturdays from 1100 to 2300 and Sundays from 1200 to 2300. Telephone: 0161 832 7082. Meals are served on Mondays to Saturdays only from 1200 to 1600.

There are regular frequent buses which stop close by on Chapel Street. If travelling by train, alight at Salford Central Station, turn left down to the traffic lights, cross the road and then take the second street on the right into Bexley Square. The pub is at the top on the left hand side.

Dave Hallows, Steve Smith

DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

If you are a CAMRA member, please consider giving up some of your time to distribute our North Manchester Branch magazine, Drinker's Almanac. We are looking for persons to deliver to the pubs, especially in the city centre.

As an incentive CAMRA North Manchester Branch will give you two complimentary tokens, to be exchanged for pints which will be valid at the next National Winter Ales Festival which takes place at the New Century Hall, Manchester in January 2008.

As the magazine is bi-monthly, it will only mean giving up a little bit of your time every other month.

For full details contact Dave Hallows on telephone number 07983 944992 or Email to davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk.



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SPOTLIGHT ON TWO CITIES

MILD CHALLENGE AWARD

Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Branch Chairman John Clarke presenting the New Oxford with yet another award. This time it was for the Best Mild Pub for the 2007 Mild Challenge. From left to right John, Tim, Paulette and staff in the background.



UNION TAVERN PRESENTATION

A Good Beer Guide and long service award were given to landlord Danny Grayson of the Union Tavern, Liverpool Street, Salford. It took place on Wednesday, September 26th and the picture shows bar person Gayle receiving the award.



Bazens'

As part of the 'Salford' series High Water at 4.3% abv made its appearance. The next beer to be brewed was Royal Ale to commemorate the opening of the Lowry Centre by Her Majesty the Queen.

The new improved version of Flatbac appeared recently during the run of the play Nico at the King's Arms on Bloom Street, under the guise of Nico Light, while Black Pig Mild was rechristened Nico Dark.

Boggart Bulletin

Mark Dade's Moston micro brewery Boggart Hole Clough, which lies close to the park of the same name, has been busily at it again. There have been rave reports about the fruitiness of Jennie Lee's Hebden Hero (3.7% abv) to commemorate the brave actions of the Boggart driver for saving a little girl's life from a swollen river in the Peaks. Ruby Tuesday (3.8% abv) was a ruby red bitter with - hot on its heels - Sundowner (4.9% abv), a strong pale bitter. The imbiber may catch Golden Boggart (3.9% abv) and Sunday (5.7% abv). Also spotted was the Dark Mild which at 4.0% abv is rather strong.

From the Marble Vaults

Congratulations are in order as the Marble Brewery walked away with best beer award of the Manchester Food & Drink Festival with their J P Best Bitter.

Due to the popularity of their organic beers - supplies of malt and hops were running low - the brewers decided to create a trio of 'one off' non-organic specials. Roasted barley, Maris Otter malt and Cascade, Green Bullet, Liberty and Mortueka hops were all used in the brewing. These beers, in order of strength were Janine's One (3.9% abv), a pale hoppy mixture, brewed by Dominic Driscoll jointly with guest brewer Janine Shorrocks from the Ashover Brewery based at the Old Poets' Corner Inn near Chesterfield; Colin Stronge's creation was Tawny '4' (4.5% abv) and a variation on Campbell Tawny whilst the third offering from James Campbell was an extremely popular Stouter Stout at 4.7% abv.

For the onset of winter to celebrate their 1,000th organic brew, brings Decadence which will have matured nicely by then, having been concocted in

June of this year. It is available in bottle only, conditioned of course, comes in the style of a Russian Imperial Stout and is brewed with a variety of New Zealand Saaz hops. The abv (alcohol by volume) is expected to be somewhere in the region of 8.0 - 8.4%.

During October, the pub held their Ten By Ten Beer Festival, a celebration of the best top ten beers for ten years.

Holts' Corner

The annual price increase has kicked in. In my local Holts' Pub it has, along with all their other managed houses, increased the Bitter by 4p a pint and so it is now 166p a pint and the Mild is now retailing at 158p a pint. If it's any comfort for those who drink the real stuff, the lager has been increased by 6p a pint! This equates to 50% more of an increase than the 4p for their beers. The afternoon discount that saw 135p a pint for Bitter only lasted a week at that price, and is now 4p more expensive, retailing at 139p a pint, posters in the pub having been carefully amended. However, if you were to order only a half of Bitter in the afternoon, this would be charged at half the full price and not half of 139p. Not 70p then for a half pint in the afternoon but the full 83p. So, quite big discounts for quantity, up to 6pm! Not at weekends though.

stewartrevell@gmail.com

New Bar on the Fringe of the City

Styled as Greens Bistro Bar on Chester Street, just off Oxford Road near the BBC, comes this new innovation from the same stable as Bar Fringe. Nothing like its counterpart, for this is decidedly up market and is a light and airy, roomy, lofty construction set below student apartments. A variety of floor and wall coverings, plants and wall prints are displayed around the one spacious room which incorporates the main bar and open kitchen area. To the rear is a semi circular drinking plinth in a breakfast bar style, plain tables and chairs with more contemporary furniture to the fore.

There is provision for up to four hand pulled ales, an Allgates beer (3 Muskebeers on my visit), Boddingtons Cask, a further guest and a cask cider, Westons 1st Quality.

Good news for the Crescent, Salford, as it is now under new ownership with Gerrard and Ayesha at the helm continuing as pub managers. The pub will stay the same for now, run in the manner to which it has been accustomed, with future plans for a gentle facelift in the spring, bringing some new beers and varieties of food. The pub will be proudly displaying its banner to read "In the Good Beer Guide for more than 21 years!" Former owners Andy and Jo Davies have gone into retirement.

Scene Around Salford

Mixed news this month. First the good news of a real ale gain. The Unicorn on Broughton Lane, Pendleton is now selling Holts' bitter 8 pence cheaper than in their managed houses at just £1.60. The beer is selling well and when visited it was hinted that a further real ale from a local microbrewery was being considered. The small two-roomed pub is pleasantly decorated in red and cream and is well worth a visit. Holts' is also available on the other side of the church on Ford Lane at the Church Inn.

On Eccles New Road the outside of the Grey Mare sports signs suggesting traditional ales. Don't bother, the handpumps are redundant. Further down the Ugly Duckling is closed and boarded with a planning application proposal to turn it into apartments as is the fate of the Stowell Spire where most of the roof tiles are now missing. For a pub built less than 20 years ago it appears that Wolverhampton & Dudley continue with their run of failures in the area.

Change of ownership of the Crescent by Salford University was finalised in October. The pub is now owned and run by Salford Student Homes. It will remain a pub, serving up to 10 real ales, a real cider and foreign beers with, at first, minor redecoration to interior.

The Barton Arms, Stablefold, Worsley has been running a beer festival spanning over a month since mid October. It is on until 25th November, so there is still time to catch it.

Robinson's Brewery in Stockport has announced via their website that the White Lion on Chorley

Road, Swinton has advertised the tenancy 'to let'. Their Christmas beer is described as Mr. Scrooge's 'Humbug Bitter'. Weighing in at 4.0% abv, it is mahogany in colour with an aroma of roast malt, blackcurrant and lemon with a rich, biscuity and fruity finish. One to definitely look out for, we think.

AROUND THE REGIONS

LOCAL FESTIVALS AROUND BURY

Bury is fast becoming the beer festival capital of the north! The metropolitan borough can boast several offerings throughout the year; starting in February with the East Lancashire Railway (this year's was cancelled - a return next year perhaps?), we then have the Forever Bury event held in the social club at the Gigg Lane football ground of Bury F.C. Following on from this are two pub festivals - the Lord Raglan at Nangreaves and the Good Samaritan at Ramsbottom - then comes the SeptemBURYfest in the town (see reports below), another festival at Radcliffe Cricket Club, culminating in November with the popular CAMRA Bury Beer Festival at the Met Arts Centre.

Two of the recent ones are showcased here...

The 'Good Sam' - Helping Drinkers to Enjoy Real Ales in the 21st Century



On the weekend of the August Bank Holiday the Good Samaritan public house in Ramsbottom, a town north of Bury which once boasted its own Urban District Council and Transport Department, before the days of its absorption into Greater Manchester, held another of their

popular beer festivals. This, the fourth was as usual enjoyed by the masses and proved that this is one of the better pub festivals.

The pub is known locally as the 'Good Sam', organised by CAMRA members and licensees Roger and Debbie Howarth. It features over twenty or so handpulled ales, plus ciders and speciality bottled beers from Belgium. A number of local beers were featured with favourites from Bank Top in Bikes & Trikes & Beer, Pavilion Pale Ale and Trotter's Tipple. There were beers too from the likes of Howard Town, Marble, Pictish, Phoenix and Robinsons.



Others from far and wide included the popular cask lager from Harviestoun, Schiehallion; Acorn Barnsley Bitter, Cairngorm Trade Winds; Castle Rock Harvest Pale; O'Hanlons Dry Stout; Old Mill Nellie Dean; Ossett Moby Dick and Thornbridge's Jaipur IPA.

On the continental side, the Belgian ones came from those renowned brewers such as Duvel, Lindemans, Orval and Timmermans.

Irrespective of their strength, the beers were all priced at the same level and the Belgian beers at £2.70 per bottle.

The Good Samaritan is on Peel Brow in Ramsbottom. Regular frequent buses are the Bury-Ramsbottom circulars 472 and 474 which stop outside. The seasonal East Lancashire Railway from Bury to Rawtenstall has a station at Ramsbottom.

SeptemBURYfest

The second festival offering during mid-September was the popular SeptemBURYfest, organised by the Bury Round Table and a charity

event supporting the Macmillan Cancer Support. It was held at the Bury Sports Club on Radcliffe Road, a short distance from the town centre. It is home to Bury Cricket Club and the Bury Rugby Union Football Club and the clubhouse overlooks the playing fields. There is a front bar and on a raised level to the rear a back bar room with a large screen television. The club's regular real ale is normally the handpulled Thwaites Bitter.

A token scheme was in operation, very good value for the beers which worked out £2 a pint with beer tokens, irrespective of their strength. There was a diverse beer range with many local favourites - Bank Top, Bazens', Greenfield, a new Green Mill brewed beer from Rochdale entitled Pearly Gates (5.0% abv), Howard Town, J W Lees, Marble, Millstone, Phoenix and another new brewer Prospect from Standish near Wigan (unnamed in the programme, but assuredly it was Gold Rush (4.5% abv). Those from a little further afield included Copper Dragon (Skipton), Saltair (Shipley) and Thornbridge (Ashford in the Water). A selection of ciders and perries were on offer as well as light hot and cold snacks.



DON'T FORGET!

This month there is the annual CAMRA beer festival in Bury. This is the 25th anniversary and as usual is held in the Met Arts Centre on Market Street. It is on Friday 16th from 12.00 pm (noon) to 3.00pm (£1.50) and 5.00pm to 11.00pm (£4), then on Saturday 17th from 12.00pm (noon) to 11.00 pm (£2.50). Free admission to CAMRA members at all times. There are about 60 real ales and always a wide selection of continental bottled

beers and country wines. Easy to get to by public transport, it is close to Bury Interchange. For information contact traveline.info on 0871 200 22 33.

TREVOR ARMS POTS



Trafford & Hulme Branch was pleased to announce that their autumn Pub of the Season award went to the Famous Trevor Arms on Beech Road in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. The presentation took place on Thursday 11th October starting at around 8.00pm.

When Kevin took over as landlord of the Trevor Arms at the end of 2006, his first move was to introduce guest ales. One of the first of these guest ales to be brought in was Bateman's Rosey Nosey and although previously unknown in the "Trev", the new choices quickly became popular with the locals, particularly the darker beers. Kevin is keen to increase the selection of beers and is investigating new sources to complement his existing range. The house regular is Boddingtons Cask and remains a popular choice, maintaining steady sales.

In April, the pub was awarded the coveted "Cask Marque", an accreditation scheme indicating excellence in the service of cask ale. Independent assessors check the cellar and temperature as well as the poured pint, thus ensuring a consistency of quality in the ale served.

The Famous Trevor Arms is one of the oldest buildings in the popular area of Chorlton Green, in the bohemian environs around Beech Road. A traditional two room styled pub, the original mosaic floor was discovered in the public bar during the last restoration. The pub retains a number of other original features and the planned autumn refurbishment is expected to enhance rather than detract from them. Long popular as a Manchester United supporters' pub,

the "Trev" now shows most televised football matches, including the latest Setanta Sports offerings, increasing the variety of sport which is proving ever so popular.

Special entertainment nights include "Free and Easy" on Fridays, and occasional race nights are planned for the coming months.

Heather Airlie

The Friendship on Scholes Lane, Prestwich has had a make over. This Joseph Holt establishment, in keeping with their modern trends, has emerged with a brighter, more glamorous interior. The cask beers are Bitter, Mild and the seasonal offering (1849 on this visit).

Sale Snippets

The Volunteer Hotel, Cross Street, has a new landlord. The beer range has been extended to include a seasonal and a mild beer. On a recent visit to Ryan's Wine Bar on Orchard Road it was selling Old Mill Nellie Dean at £1.40 a pint.

The Railway on Chapel Road has withdrawn its Robinson's Hatters Mild due to poor sales.

A new brewery for the Trafford area has materialised in the form of the Durham Brewing Company, a new micro operating from Durham Massey village. A couple of beers are in the pipeline, believed to be Big Tree Bitter and Deer Beer, to reflect the area around the park.

A 2008 Good Beer Guide entry, listed under Heatley, Cheshire (near Lymm) has been closed and boarded for a few months now. The Railway on Mill Lane could become one of the earliest casualties of the new guide, a former local CAMRA Pub of the Year and very popular as it's beside the Trans Pennine Trail, the old trackbed which formed the Warrington & Stockport Railway.

HOLTS' GET IT RIGHT!

The tasting notes for Holts' Bitter in the 1976 Good Beer Guide, and for several subsequent years, said simply "a very bitter beer". Later editions refined this somewhat, but the bitterness was always a feature. Other publications have claimed that "it makes strong men weep!" Once

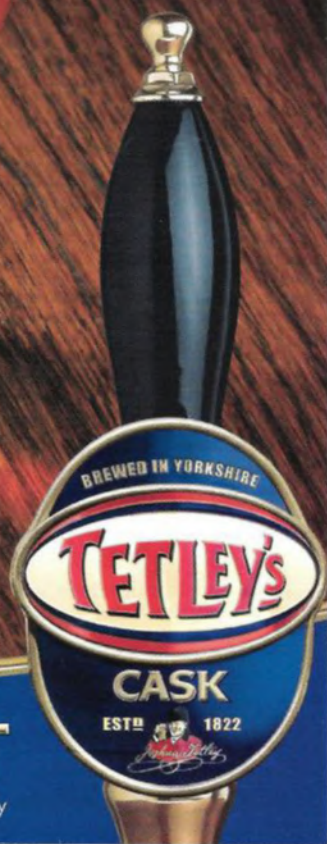
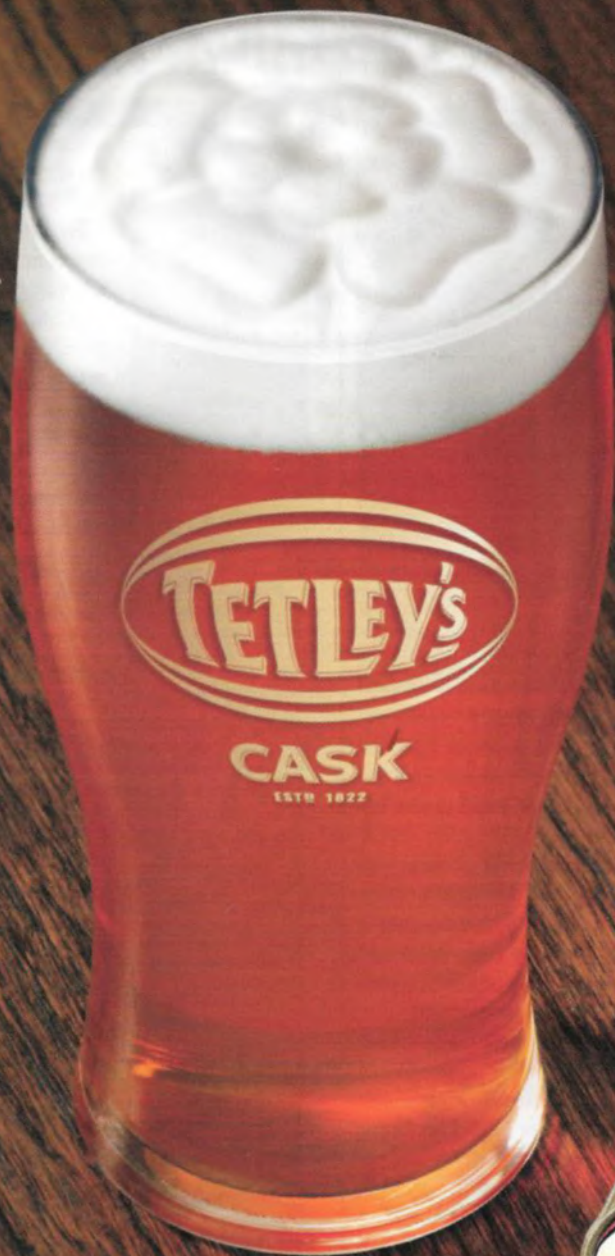
when Dick Venes, then the underbrewer at Holts', gave a talk to North Manchester CAMRA, he speculated that the brewery may one day produce another draught beer, besides the regular Mild and Bitter. When asked what this might be, he jokingly suggested "a stronger and more bitter bitter" which the assembled company thought was an excellent idea.

It is generally agreed that Holts' standard bitter today is not as bitter as it was in those Halcyon days and the current head brewer Keith Sheard has offered an explanation for this, to do with the shorter storage time of the hops. To his credit, he has overseen the installation of a small scale plant which has allowed the production of experimental and seasonal beers on a modest scale and these are now appearing regularly in selected pubs - look out for the "Wall Calendar" giving details of what is coming when.

Now whilst I welcome the appearance of new beers on Holts' bars, I have to admit that not many of them (to my taste) have been as good as the two "regulars". Mostly I have found them either bland or too sweet, the latter perhaps due to the inclusion of maple syrup or honey (is it true that Holts' bought the entire Mexican honey crop one year recently?). Fifth Sense was about the best and Thunder Holt, though sweetish, derived its sweetness, body and colour mainly, I think, from crystal malt, which I find gives a much more acceptable taste and balance.

However, my taste buds were awakened anew this month (August) by the latest offering, Pioneer. The draught version of this 5% abv soon-to-be-bottle-conditioned beer is on sale in the Crown & Anchor in Manchester, the Morning Star in Wardley and numerous other houses. It is pale, dry and extremely hoppy, with a clean aftertaste, which belies its strength. Undoubtedly, this is the best beer that I have ever tasted from Holts in the 47 years that I have been drinking their products. Well done!

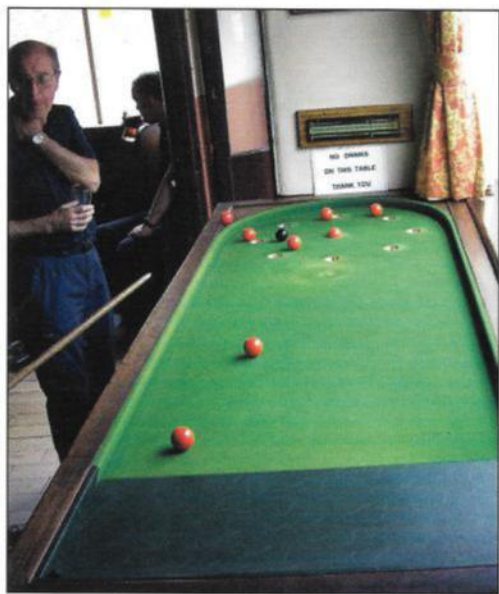
Pete Cash



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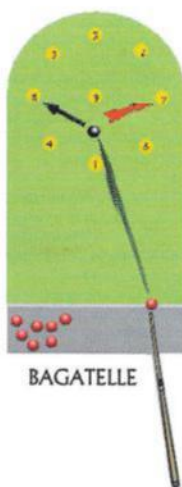
BAGATELLE IN THE PUBS OF CHESTER



CAMRA North Manchester Branch members recently sampled some of the pubs of Chester, and in one called the Union Vaults on Egerton Street, (an excellent street corner local of the old fashioned sort) we came across a Bagatelle board. Similar in size to a Bar Billiards table, it differs in having a curved back-end and shallow cups instead of holes to trap the balls. The balls therefore do not disappear, there is no time limit and the games are free. The game is over when a pre-agreed score such as 101 or 1001 is reached.

The older amongst us remembered these tables from a previous visit to Chester in the nineteen-eighties, though I believe there are now fewer pubs (about 10) which still have one. The Good Beer Guide for 1981, which had a lead feature on pub games, fails to mention Bagatelle, though there is an entry that year for the Spital Vaults, Alma Street, in the same city, where the precious two-line description is used up describing such a feature.

The diagram shows what the locals told us was the ideal starting position, the idea being to put the black (which scores double) into the 8 cup with the red cue ball ending up in the 7 cup. The



same player continues taking shots until all the balls are either in a cup or out of play. The opposing player then cues off from the start position, and so on, until the target score is reached. The Union Vaults is a Good Beer Guide 2007 entry offering a choice of three real ales and was extremely lively on a Saturday afternoon. The regulars were anxious that in any write-up we should mention that it is not just a men's pub; there is a smart rear lounge on a higher level.



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WHERE WE GO AND WHAT WE DO THE BRANCH DIARY

North Manchester

NOVEMBER

Wed 7: New Members Social and Marble Brewery Visit, Marble Arch Inn, Rochdale Road, Manchester, 8.00pm. To book contact Phil Booton on telephone number 0161957 7148.

Wed 14: Presentation for 10 continuous years in the Good Beer Guide, Smithfield Hotel & Bar, Swan Street, Manchester, 8.00pm.

Wed 21: Branch Meeting, New Oxford, Bexley Square, Salford, 8.00pm.

Wed 28: Rochdale Pub Crawl, Cask & Feather, Oldham Road, 7.30pm; Regal Moon, The Butts, 9.00pm. Bus 17 (First) from Shudehill Interchange, journey time about 40 minutes. Trains to Rochdale from Manchester Victoria at 1830 (via Oldham), 1847 (via Moston). Return from Rochdale at 2252 (via Moston), 2302 (via Oldham).

DECEMBER

Wed 5: Eccles 'Alemanac' Crawl, Eccles Cross, Regent Street, 7.30pm, Dog & Partridge, Church Street, 8.15pm; Albert Edward, Church Street, 9.00pm; Lamb Hotel, Regent Street, 10.00pm to finish. Starting and finishing point is close to the Metrolink tram stop. Frequent buses operate from Manchester.

Wed 12: Double Social, Dean Brook Inn, St Mary's Road, Moston, 7.20pm; Railway, Dean Lane, Newton Heath, 9.00pm. (Note slightly earlier start time). Buses 52 from Pendleton; 82, 83, 184 (frequent main buses from Piccadilly along Oldham Road, then short walk) Trains to Dean Lane from Manchester Victoria at 1907. Return from Dean Lane at 2230.

Wed 19: Branch Meeting, Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester, 8.00pm.

JANUARY 2008

Wed 2: Patricroft and Monton Crawl, Queen's Arms, Green Lane, Patricroft, 8.00pm; (look in at Drop Inn, Monton Road, Monton); Park Inn, Monton Road, Monton, 9.00pm.

Wed 9: Presentation of the Neil Richardson Trophy 2008 to Stanley Arms, Liverpool Road, Patricroft, 8.00pm.

Trafford & Hulme

NOVEMBER

Thu 8: Branch Social, Church Inn, Church Road, Flixton, 8.00pm.

Thu 22: Manchester City Centre Crawl, Ape & Apple, John Dalton Street, 8.00pm; Waterhouse (J D Wetherspoon) Princess Street, 9.15pm; City Arms, Kennedy Street to finish.

DECEMBER

Thu 6: Branch Meeting, Volunteer, Cross Street, Sale, 8.00pm.

Branch Contact John Ison,

Telephone: 0161 962 7976

LOCAL AND REGIONAL BEER FESTIVALS LISTINGS

Not necessarily endorsed by CAMRA.

U = Indicates official CAMRA festival.

NOVEMBER

Thu 1 - Sun 18: J D Wetherspoon Real Ale Festival, at most of their outlets around the region.

Fri 9 - Sun 11: Broughton Festival of Beer, various pubs around Broughton in Furness.

U Fri 16 - Sat 17: 1st Barnoldswick, Station Road, Barnoldswick.

U Fri 16 - Sat 17: 25th Bury, Met Arts Centre, Market Street, Bury.

U Fri 16 - Sat 17: 7th Otley, Otley Civic Centre, Cross Green, Otley.

U Fri 16 - Sat 17: Whitehaven, Whitehaven Civic Hall, Whitehaven.

Fri 16 - Sun 18: Winter Beer Festival, Fox & Goose, Heptonstall Road, Hebden Bridge.

Thu 22 - Sun 25: November Beer Weekend, Black Horse, Redearth Street, Darwen.

Fri 23 - Sun 25: 6th Annual Beer Festival, Barnton Cricket Club, Townfield Lane, Barnton, near Northwich.

JANUARY 2008

U Fri 4 - Sat 5: 6th Frodsham Winter Beer Festival, Church Hall, Church Street, Frodsham.

U ADVANCE NOTICE Wed 16 - Sat 19: CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival, New Century Hall, Corporation Street, Manchester.

UNDER TH' AMMER - WHAT FATE THE SMITHS ARMS NOW?



One of the former great drinking institutions of Ancoats is about to become extinct. The Smiths Arms on Sherratt Street, which was formerly named Spittal Street and colloquially known to the locals as

"Th'Ammer" (referring to the trade of the smiths) is under threat of demolition, the building being in a dangerous state and having been declared unsafe. The pub has been closed for some years with the building remaining extant, albeit unused. Now it seems it has been allowed to decay gracefully and fade from view altogether.

This was once a bustling community local which dates back to the early 19th Century, a once former Taylors Eagle Brewery house, thence acquired by Joshua Tetley of Leeds during the 1920s. It was previously known as the Blacksmiths Arms and the Hammer In Hand. Around this time the Ancoats area boasted over 160 public houses, built up around the thriving industries of the district. As these industries declined so too it seems did the pubs, that today we are left with only a few reminders. The Smiths Arms would be a fitting accompaniment to the surrounding area, with the recent restoration of St Peter's Church and new developments all around.

I can remember during the early 1990s drinking there as part of an opposing quiz team and having been impressed with the place from the start, I returned several times thereafter. Surely this building should not allow the developers to get their way - it opened in 1824 and is one of the oldest licensed houses in the district - and needs to be preserved. A fitting reprieve would be for it to become a pub again.

Material for this article has been sourced from The Old Pubs of Ancoats (Neil Richardson, Radcliffe, Manchester, 1987), Vintage Pubs in the Manchester Area (CAMRA, 1988) and other local CAMRA guides. Photo courtesy of Nick Bowles.

And yet another Ancoats pub goes - the Land O Cakes on the corner of great Ancoats Street and Newton Street has been turned into a Brazilian restaurant.

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