

WHAT'S DOING

MAY
1985



THE MANCHESTER BEER DRINKER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OSBORNE AGAIN



Smartening up a pub in Collyhurst is not something a local brewer would do, but Banks's have spent a considerable sum on the Osborne on Rochdale Road which they bought from Wilsons last year. At one time Bluto and Desperate Dan wouldn't dare set foot in the place, but now even CAMRA members can go in without fear of their lives. The refurbishment includes some House of Horror features like junk bookshelves and daft dust-collecting bric-a-brac like

Victorian bread bins and sewing machines on high shelves. Overall, however, the effect is quite pleasing with a lot of pretend mahogany plywood and a high standard of decoration and attention to detail. The pub, which reopened on March 29th, deserves to succeed, but whether leather Chesterfields are quite suitable for Collyhurst remains to be seen.

OLD ABBEY SAVED

The Old Abbey, a Wilsons pub in Pencroft Street, Moss Side/Hulme, has had the Compulsory Purchase Order lifted. It is to remain a traditional pub, but Wilsons intend to refurbish. Unfortunately the mild has already disappeared from the pub (as it has from the Ducie and the Gamecock in the same area).

NO JOKE

It would be churlish to criticise the hospitality of a genuine and generous host. Allan Thomson, Managing Director of Pennine Hosts was both generous and sincere in his hospitality when he took a dozen North Manchester CAMRA members on a tour of some Host Group city centre pubs. Mr Thomson's motivation is quite understandable. The Host Group launch of theme pubs was ill-conceived and maladroitly executed. The bad press and the "Joke" appellation hit the Host Group hard. Mr Thomson's decision to meet his critics in his pubs is to be admired for its courage and its disarming strategy, much more constructive than the ostrich-like behaviour of brewers like Boddingtons, who have consistently ignored criticism and avoided their critics.

Our meeting was mutually beneficial; Pennine Host were made aware of our criticisms in the very places which gave rise to them and we came to a greater understanding of the group's objectives. Pennine Host is not a brewery but a retailer. The pubs owned by the group are managed rather than tenanted, giving rise to problems different from those faced by tenanted chains, particularly during a recession. Because of their size and location, the pubs are more susceptible to the "marketing" concept than small street-corner locals. It is important to bear in mind that Pennine Host are competing to maintain or increase their share of a declining market as well as to expand the possible markets.

Remarkably, the transformation of a pub usually leads to an increase in trade of some 40% so that the initial investment, which may be anything from £40,000 to £150,000, is usually recouped within two years. In all honesty it is difficult to point out many pubs in Central Manchester which have retained traditional values and which have been consistently successful. To be realistic, pubs in city centres do need to adapt to changing circumstances or they will decline and close as trade goes to the competition.

So far, so good. We can accept the special problems of the managed house in a city centre but this does not mean that the Host Group should be given carte blanche to alter their pubs in whatever way they think fit or that we should accept the pubs uncritically. I feel that the following criticisms of the pub conversions are still valid:

1 Pricing Policy: Pennine Hosts do not seem to compete on the basis of price. Even in the City Centre price can be important. Maintaining margins on "foreign" beers often means charging prices which are thought of as a "rip off".

2 Pub Preservation: Conversions are often made with no feeling for the building, the locality or the clientele. The Sawyers Arms is an eighteenth century listed building outside and a sort of upmarket Tarzan's bedroom inside. Important features of a pub which may be unique are often destroyed in the interest of the new layout. Staircases, windows, doorways are frequently altered in a cavalier fashion. A door in the Salisbury looks as though it has been bricked up by a failed bricklayer with reject bricks.

3 Instant Theme-ing: Pub atmospheres cannot be created overnight - they evolve. The instant grot image of "the alehouse", with bare boards, second-hand kitchen tables and junk artefacts is a parody of the real thing. Colonial themes, 1930's decor, etc, may be an improvement on what was there before but its appeal is merely transitory and it will need to be replaced as fashions change. The Tavern theme as exemplified in the Brunswick is perhaps the most successful of the themes. The space is broken up with changes of level, decoration and seating and the pub achieves an atmosphere of tradition with some hope of permanence, yet at the back of your mind you still feel as though you're in Hollywood, walking through a film set.

4 The Beers: To their credit, Pennine Hosts do sell cask beer in most of their conversions. Of the establishments we visited only the Sawyers and the Shakespeare served no real ale. The Crown, the Waggon & Horses, the Rising Sun, the Salisbury, Oxfords, the Brunswick, the Church and the Swan all sold at least one handpumped cask beer. Pennine Hosts do not served handpumped bright beer but there is a tendency to use blanket CO² pressure on cask beers, particularly mild, in an effort to maintain condition. This is a disturbing trend and it is to be hoped that the introduction of converted 11 gallon kegs may alleviate this problem.

Although I welcome Pennine Host's concern for their pubs and Allan Thomson's interest in CAMRA's opinions, I nevertheless have serious reservations about what they have done. Do we really want to live in a world dominated by pre-packaged marketing men's ideas of what we want, a sort of Disney/MacDonald's/Readers' Digest world which changes as fads come and go? Not for me, I'm afraid. The English Public House has an ethos built up over centuries and we should not allow it to be destroyed by the current whims of commerce. When the Pennine Host conversions have disappeared let us hope that some real pubs still remain pubs without gimmicks but with decent beer served at reasonable prices in comfortable and convivial surroundings by a caring licensee.

Roger Hall

WHAT'S DOING

TOPHAMS TAVERN TUMBLES (TWICE)

The Good Beer Guide jinx strikes again! Just when the Rochdale, Oldham and Bury branch were set to survey Tophams Tavern, Smithybridge, Rochdale, for inclusion in the 1986 Good Beer Guide, the owner went and sold it - to Boddingtons! This is the second "Tophams" to be sold (both to Boddies), the other being at Heywood - now the Three Terriers.

SALFORD SHUFFLE

The Salford Arms, Chapel Street, has new licensees and it is to be hoped that this heralds an improvement. On a recent visit not only was the Chesters bitter again unavailable, but there wasn't even the consolatory bottle of Guinness to be had.

WALDORF - A STOREY ADDED?

Whitbread have evidently failed to get shut of the Waldorf on Gore Street, Manchester, because they've now applied for permission to alter and renovate it. The alterations sound ominous as they include the first floor as part of the licensed bit - surely the guardians of our architectural heritage can't be thinking of ripping the ceiling out?

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WHAT'S DOING

WHAT'S DOING is edited by Neil Richardson, 375 Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester M27 2AY

COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS THE 20th OF THIS MONTH

JOIN CAMRA

To join CAMRA send £7 to Membership, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3BW

ALBION ALE

The Albion on Manchester Road, Walkden, is now selling traditional Tetley bitter (66p) and mild (64p) on handpumps. And it's nice to see the pub still has its revolving door!

A FRUITFUL EXERCISE

The Pineapple on Kenworthy Street, Stalybridge, has opened after a complete renovation. This Robinsons house was built in the 1880's and bought by Frederic Robinson Ltd in 1926. In recent years the pub had declined because of demolition of property nearby. Now a car park and a beer garden have been added to the pub.

WELLINGTON SHOWS THE WAY

Real ale has made a welcome return in Market Street, Farnworth, with the appearance of Chesters bitter at the Wellington. Landlord Dave Auty tells us he is selling about half a barrel a week and is pleased with its progress. Meanwhile, up the road and round the corner, Chesters bitter is still doing well at the Britannia, King Street, where it is now firmly established.

NEW PENDLEBURY PUB

Work is progressing at the top of Agecroft Road on the Springfield Guest House, acquired by Manchester's favourite brewer. It is to be hoped that Bogbrush and Mrs Prune don't spot the window bricking-up/removal and major alterations or Boddies might find themselves the recipients of a Pub Preservation Award.

BRIDGE BOOZE

The Bridge Inn, Ewood Bridge, near Haslingden, has swept out its entire Scottish & Newcastle range. Instead, Burton Ale is available at 70p a pint - surely the bargain of the year. This joins the hand-pumped Tetley mild and bitter.

PRIORY ENGAGEMENT

The Old Priory in Broughton has been substantially refurbished and now offers family facilities like food, outdoor tables, a large covered verandah, a playground and a menagerie which on our visit on opening week (April 2nd) seemed to consist of two hens and an alsatian. Handpumped Wilsons (bitter only) also adds a new dimension to the Broughton pub crawl, which was a bit short on pubs. Are Pennine Joke beginning to get it right?

OLD HOUSE AWARD

The Old House at Home, Blackley, was packed with locals, regulars and CAMRA members when a Ten Year Good Beer Guide plaque was presented to Hartley and Lynda Downs on 27th March. To celebrate the occasion, Hartley had reduced the price of beer to 50p a pint and Lynda had laid on an excellent buffet. An enjoyable time was had by all in Blackley's "hidden gem".

WHITBREAD IN BURY

Despite the valiant efforts of the landlord to keep it in good condition, Castle Eden has been removed from the Bridge Inn, Spring Street, due to low sales. Its replacement is cask Trophy. On Tottington Road, the Lamb has undergone structural alteration, thus creating much needed space. The transformation has been effected on more solid lines than usual and the only excesses are masses of greenery and a rather strident colour scheme.

Brewer's droop

KENYAN beer-drinkers were assured yesterday that a contraceptive drug has not been added to their recently-introduced darker beer. A spokesman for Kenya Breweries denied rumours that the company had been ordered by the Government to add a contraceptive to beer in an attempt to cut Kenya's high birth rate. — Reuter.

LITTLEBOROUGH GAIN

As nearby Smithybridge loses its only Taylors outlet (see elsewhere), Littleborough has gained one. The Dog & Partridge, Todmorden Road — an ex-Wilsons house — now sells Taylors Landlord, Tetley (Yorkshire) bitter and Wilsons bitter, all on handpump. The pub is well worth a visit and is situated on the road to Summit.



THE BRINSOP ARMS

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A BAR FULL OF
HANDPUMPS
SERVING:

BASS CASK BITTER (HAMMONDS), DRAUGHT BASS,
HARTLEYS XB, BASS 4X MILD, MATTHEW BROWN JOHN
PEEL BITTER, BODDINGTONS BITTER, JENNINGS
BITTER, THEAKSTONS BEST BITTER & XB, ROBINSONS
BEST BITTER and REGULAR GUEST BEERS

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THE FREEHOUSE FULL OF FINE TRADITIONAL ALES
AND STOCKED HIGH WITH WHOLESOME FOOD



FILLED BAKED POTATOES OUR SPECIALITY

TOTTINGTON SWAP

By popular demand Hartleys XB has regained its place on the bar at the Robin Hood, Market Street, Tottington. The beer was originally available before the recent alterations but was replaced by the ubiquitous Castle Eden plus cask Trophy at the same time as the plastic plants and spotlights arrived on the scene. There appears to be a great demand for cask beer in the pub, but a request for "Trophy" is greeted with a lunge towards the fizz pump. So beware!

JOHN SMITHS

Two more Thameside John Smiths pubs have acquired cask bitter. They are the Rose & Crown in Stalybridge and the Swan, Cockbrook, Ashton-under-Lyne.

BEER HOUSE

Mr and Mrs Morrell of 2 Fitzroy Street, Stalybridge, have applied for planning permission to turn the ground floor of the house into a public house.

UNPLANNED ALTERATIONS

Peppards, the Whitbread Chesters fun pub in the Old Market Place, Altrincham, in the middle of the conservation area, have fallen foul of the local council by not having applied for planning permission for the multitude of signs, lights and canopies. The council saw sense and refused a belated application and have told the brewery to remove the various items without delay. Remarks made at the council meeting include: "When I saw it I was horror struck; it was a nightmare," and "It is totally unsuitable in a conservation area."

WHAT'S DOING IN WIGAN

THE PARK HOTEL, Hope Street, closed its doors for the last time on 13th April. Sad to say, the grand old pub went out with a whimper as there was no draught beer! The Bass ran out on Friday night and the Walker mild and best bitter that afternoon. Nevertheless, landlady Rosina Brown still managed to pack 'em in and at the end everyone was suitably emotional. The windows were being boarded up (I kid you not!) at 11.30 at night, so the Park probably won't be around much longer. The Park Hotel was 103 years old and Mrs Brown had been running the pub since the Second World War. It had also been in every edition of the Good Beer Guide. Though right in the centre of Wigan, a lot of people will be looking for a "local" now that the Park Hotel has gone. But the destruction of Wigan's pubs does not end here, necessarily. The council may now go ahead with plans for a road widening scheme in the Prescott Street/Frog Lane area. The town's latest cask outlet, the Guardians (Whitbread) could be in the way and nearby pubs, the Brickmakers Arms (GW) and Bird i'th'hand (Tetley) might be in danger. When will it end?

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with a private room - bar sports as
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Our selection of handpumped beers is
Boddington's Bitter • Ruddles County •
Theakstons Old Peculier & XB • Vaux Samson •
Everards Tiger • Taylors Landlord
Porter and Best Dark Mild
& 3 guest beers & 2 Lagers
PLUS - the worlds strongest Ale ECU
+ many foreign & bottled beers

Each of your party receives
THE FIRST PINT ON THE HOUSE!



**BURY ROAD
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UNSPOILT BY PROGRESS

Wigan's oldest pub, the **WHITE HORSE** on Standishgate, has replaced its old diaphragm pumps with free-flow electric pumps. Not a trend to be encouraged, but one can never tell with Burtonwood anyway, and the beer is much better than before.

The **PARK HOTEL**, Manchester Road, Higher Ince, has stopped selling traditional mild due to very low sales. Perhaps the keg mild sold alongside it undermined turnover. There are few enough Wilsons outlets in Wigan as it is. This move probably cost the Park a place in next year's Good Beer Guide.

The **ROCK FERRY**, Warrington Road, Lower Ince, now sells Youngers IPA alongside YSB

The **RAILWAY HOTEL**, Twist Lane, Leigh, at the time of writing, is selling Tetley bitter alongside Tetley mild and Walker best bitter.

Burton Ale is on sale in the **CHARLES DICKENS**, Upper Dicconson Street, alongside Tetley mild and bitter.

BE PREPARED

Trafford & Hulme branch have a number of local real ale guides for various parts of the country. If you require any of the following, contact Mick Rottenbury, 969 7013 (home). Kent; Wiltshire; Surrey; Bucks; Essex; Bedfordshire; Suffolk; Norfolk; Peterbro'; Hereford-



THE STATION

Our range of hand pumped real ales include
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Owd Rodger (when it's cold), Boddingtons Bitter.

Recent Guest Beers have included
Ruddles County, Oldham Bitter, Old Peculier

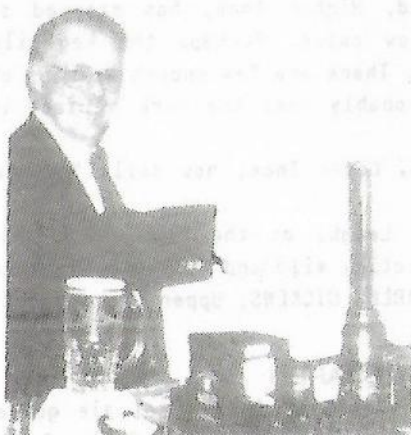
We are renowned for our superb luncheons
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All served in a Victorian setting.

*if the weather's nice,
enjoy a pint in the
beer garden!* * **Organise an excursion & we'll provide** *
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shire; Walks & Pubs in North Herefordshire; Northants; Telford; Chesterfield & Matlock; South Yorkshire; Kirklees; Durham; West Lancs; Lunesdale; Isle of Man; South & Mid Wales; Avon; West Somerset; Isle of Wight and the Cider Directory.



OH YES IT IS!

There is real ale at Oxfords (aka Shady Lady, etc), despite last month's report. The photo shows Pennine Host managing director Allan Thomson and the Wilsons traditional bitter handpump in the downstairs bar.

HANDPUMPS

The Coppull Royal British Legion, Springfield Road, Coppull, Chorley, now sells Tetley bitter and Boddingtons bitter on hand-pumps.

OPEN AND SHUT HOUSE

Why is it that the Pennine Joke pubs known as "Open House" - those with the hideous guillotine signs - are the very ones which employ bouncers to chuck out those who don't comply with their idiosyncratic views about clothing? No public house should be allowed to disbar people on such trivial grounds. Serve them right if people affronted by the arbitrary behaviour were to object to the renewal of their licences.

Contributors: Mick Rottenbury, Stewart Revell, Dave Hale, Dave White, Roger Hall, Keith Egerton, Steve Lawton, Dave Fleming, Peter Wightman

SADDLEWORTH SUMS

Sir - Mr B Leather is to be congratulated on having discovered how to use a calculator; however, it is sadly to his detriment that he is not as familiar with the current developments in the free trade as he is with canine excretory tendencies. Had he bothered to read my article (March WD) he would have perceived that the argument I was advancing was not concerning total choice of



traditional beers in the area, but choice at individual free houses. The purchase of the Floating Light by Thwaites, the sale of Wilsons beers to the exclusion of all others at the Golden Fleece and the Printers in Denshaw testify to this trend. The acquisition by Matthew

Brown of the Cross Keys and the exclusive sale of their beers at the Roebuck does not denote choice in the accepted sense in the free trade - this could become even more worrying should the current Scottish & Newcastle bid by this brewery succeed.

The increase in cask beers, particularly in former keg-only or limited cask conditioned ale pubs, is really down to the success of CAMRA as a whole and the local branch's activities in particular. Sadly, Mr Leather seems to exhibit all the signs of complacency seen all too often these days. CAMRA's work is by no means achieved, cases should not be rested. May I recommend to your correspondent that he visit some CAMRA branch meetings and meet some active members.

I should also like to mention two other points of concern which recent issues have invoked. One is the increasing use of bad language in WD. Several readers have complained to me about this, and have indicated that they will not buy the magazine in future. The second point is the increasing number of pseudonymous letters and articles which appear. The excellent Roger Hall is to be congratulated for deploring this trend.

Surely the whole point of WD is to be a campaigning document for CAMRA, not an introspective newsletter for the cognoscenti cliques. Printing ever more of this (to most people) incomprehensible copy will not have a beneficial effect on the sales of WD or ultimately the cause of CAMRA.

Adrian Cunningham

UNKIND

Sir - Perusing my What's Brewing the other day, I saw a familiar face. It was Roger Sedgeley, a candidate for CAMRA's National Executive. In the December 1981 edition of WD, there is a paragraph from "The Local" written by a pillock by the name of Roger Sedgeley. The article concerned his drinking in the "Steam Packet" on the Bridgewater Canal at Eccles, and then moving on to the Duke of York for a pint of "Burtonweed". Could these two Roger Sedgeleys perhaps be related?

Hawkeye

A TALE OF WOE

Sir - Trafford & Hulme branch decided to hold their March meeting at the excellent Chesters pub, the White Lion, on Liverpool Road in the city centre. Thursday being delivery day, the beer was as cloudy as pea soup so unfortunately could not be served. After a couple of bottles of Guinness the meeting was removed to the Crown, Deansgate. Here the mild is now keg due to poor sales, so onward to the Old Grapes in Back Quay Street, now reduced to selling only Wilsons real ale (Boddingtons having been removed) in fairly mediocre form. A large sign outside invited entry with the offer of free steak and kidney pie before 9.30pm. The bar staff remained elusive until 9.20 and then

declared that it was too late and no pie was available! Onward again, therefore, to the Sawyers on Deansgate, a newly refurbished Joke Group pub. Here we were spared the need to drink the fizz by the refusal of entry to our female contingent, who were wearing jeans. Proceeding, therefore, to the Waggon & Horses, a Pennine Joke "Ale House", there was no problem gaining entry but there was difficulty in affording the beer, with Everards and Ruddles at 94p and 95p a pint.

So, to finish the evening, on to the Peveril of the Peak. Always assured of a good pint here. We were served with cloudy mild and regaled by an inebriated person purporting to represent the landlady, who told us what rubbish CAMRA was and we had no right to criticise beer or landpersons. He insisted that their beer was always good and that they should remain in the Good Beer Guide regardless. Lively discussion ensued until chucking-out time!

Keith Egerton

MILD AND OTHER MATTERS

Sir - I see my letter to the March WD has brought some unfavourable reaction. I feel that your correspondents Messrs Swinglehurst and Roberts may have missed my point slightly; so please allow a correction.

Firstly, I do not regard myself as a "mild drinker" as I enjoy good ale of most types. Admittedly my favourite tipple is Merrie Monk, but I would agree with Mr Roberts that MM cannot really be described as a mild. The point I was trying to make is that so much of the CAMRA cognoscenti (sic?) go so often for over-strong bitters - 'are these people the victims of the "Big Six" advertising campaigns so reviled by CAMRA as a whole? Mr Roberts' observation that a lot of Y&J mild was consumed on the trip to Lancaster solely because of indifferent bitter surely confirms this opinion?

We are in danger of losing mild ale in many areas if CAMRA members do not take a more responsible attitude to its preservation. (Whither Boddies light mild or Burtonwood light mild, or Plymouth Heavy, come to that?)

Turning now to the Marble Arch. Mr Roberts states that the mild there was poor owing to problems experienced by Holts. That being so, why sell it when he could have kept Jennings mild instead? That would have been a decision worthy of ensuring entry into the next Good Beer Guide. A recent visit there, incidentally, found excellent Walkers mild, but still only one mild. Come on CAMRA beer drinkers! I'm not knocking John Worthington - his ideals are sound, but it is all the brouhaha for the Marble Arch at the expense of other fine houses that I object to. Little has been written about the success of the Travellers Call in Openshaw, which regularly "packs them in" and never fails to give a superb pint of mild or bitter (Thwaites and

Boddingtons). Once again, is it because the landlord here is not a CAMRA stalwart?

I J Maule

PS: Mr Swinglehurst is being a little hard on the new licensee of the Station in Ashton. Admittedly the advert in WD is not accurate, but the blame for that lies with the owners of the Station and the publishers of WD. Bill and Sylvia have done wonders with the ale at the Station, which had recently been variable, as its exclusion from the 1985 Good Beer Guide testifies. I for one think it now deserves to be reconsidered for inclusion next time around.

TEDIOUS TAFFY (2)

Sir - It is hardly surprising that North Manchester don't find many volunteers to check on their more inaccessible pubs if anyone who has the temerity to question any detail of the branch's procedures is subjected to the public character assassination meted out to the unfortunate Mr Bullock (letters, WD April). Lycanthropy, it would appear, is not confined to Snoot Magna - whose members, actual or potential, may be assured that here in the effete South (of the Medlock) our policy is to encourage all members to make as great a contribution as they are willing and able to do. Then again, in South Manchester we reckon to be part of a campaign - not a private bitching club.

Rhys P Jones

(The extent of Snoot Magna's commitment to the Cause is not always obvious. Only one member bothered to turn up to the April Regional Meeting - the rest were getting pissed at some freebie.)

GOOD BEER GUIDE

Sir - It was very bold of South Manchester to ignore the Good Beer Guide editor's wrist-slapping from past years and publish their 1986 selections. Bold too are the selections, with a couple of bitter-only pubs and the removal of one or two long-established favourites. The gutless wimps of North Manchester were too toadying and conventional to follow up with publication of their own choices.

Will the Jolly Angler be chucked out again? Is the Marble Arch in or out? Has the percentage of Holts pubs gone over 70%? Will the Duke of York still be in? What about the Crown & Anchor? Are there any Greenalls pubs included? Have they missed the Eagle out again? The answers to these and other questions of moment will be answered not now but at the launch of the guide on 30th October in the boiler house of Agecroft Colliery.

Grotley Gordon

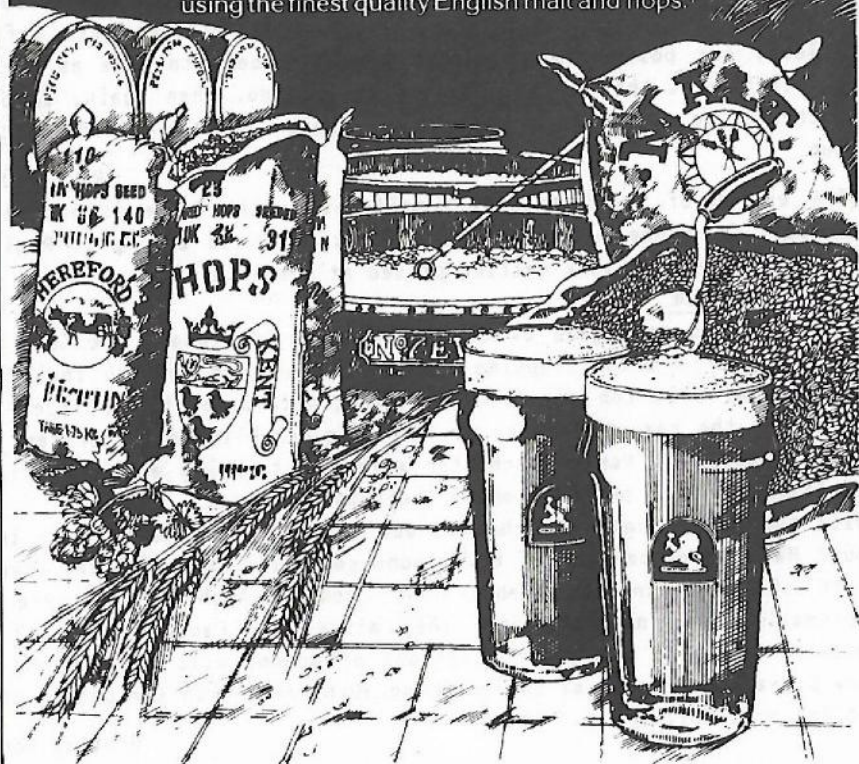
BANKS'S

THE BEER DRINKER'S MILESTONE



UNSPOILT BY PROGRESS

Banks's Draught Beers are full bodied cask-conditioned ales
They are brewed in the Traditional way,
using the finest quality English malt and hops.





I have been inundated with queries about my sudden gender alteration. The story is as embarrassing as it is extraordinary. I was leaving my favourite amber nectar hostelry during AI's on St Trinian's Night, somewhat tired after an exhausting game of tiggy-off-the-ground, when I was spotted by a group of Snoot Magna inebriates emerging from an alcoholic freebie at the Pavlov's Dog. With a cry of "Lesh grab the ponshy basztrd, boyos," they seized me and knocked me unconscious. So far this had the makings of a jolly jape. I remember nothing of what happened next but I was, apparently, placed in a coffin and left with a number of late persons in a Welsh Baptist Chapel of Rest.

The rest is history. I awoke in the Obs and Gynae Ward of Dyfed Infirmary minus my naughty parts, which had been found in a Sharwoods Mango Chutney jar behind a bookcase in the manse of the aforesaid chapel. Snoot Magna, whilst denying all knowledge of the incident, were nothing if not mortified by the whole affair and, to salve their grief-stricken consciences, have magnanimously agreed (on a majority vote) to lend me one of their chairperson's frocks until such time as I have built up a suitable wardrobe of my own.

Whilst I was convalescing in the Sturmbannführer Churchill ward of the Ben Chestnut Bumectomy Home I was really touched by the kind thoughts of my friends and colleagues. I was positively deluged with bunches of flowers and grapes from a wide variety of well-wishers, including many famous members of the Campaign like Badge Fairplastic and (from Venezuela, via Intergrape) Martin Boreman.

This set back has certainly put in jeopardy my attempts to join the hierarchy but I have received several proposals of marriage, one of which from Islam Deafwater I am taking seriously. Invitations from the Lesbian Ale Swillers Society I have dismissed as beneath contempt. Words cannot express how much I appreciate the gift from the once again Noble Robin of a baby parrot which I have called "Fagin". I have not yet got around to reading "The Single Girl's Guide to Real Ale Spanking Pubs" which arrived anonymously, but this will no doubt prove of invaluable assistance.

Finally, I would like to express my eternal gratitude to Perry Drab who sent me a marzipan model of the East Grotley Brewery and has

instructed all his tavern keepers to serve all women with pints in future, whether they want one or not. I'm gradually regaining my strength and if I've saved up enough money should be at the Dullville amber nectar show later in the year.

STOP PRESS: Undenied rumours could perhaps indicate the possibility of a suggestion that the Grotley Topers Vademecum could conceivably be almost ready for possible sale in the foreseeable future.

RUMOUR DENIALS: There is absolutely no truth whatsoever in suggestions that the Whingeing Sartorial Scot is being sued for writing nasty things about a lovely hostelry in Opening Tripe.

The cellarman of a famous hostelry did not get upset about suggestions of unclean lines, run outside in a huff, drive off in a fork lift truck, pick up a Pakistani in a Datsun, tip him in the Irk and wake up in Collyhurst nick.

LETTER

Dear Ms Periwinkle - I am delighted that you have been permitted to continue to serve Mr Nestfeather's organ, despite your sex change. Long may you both flourish. Nonetheless, like the silly Celt from Snoot, I am distressed that you do not address yourself to exposing the major issues of the day, such as:

- * Why did the National Beer Show supremo resign his post in a drunken stupor, only to come crawling back a couple of days later?
- * Why is Bogbrush proposing motions of censure, and against whom?
- * Why is the redoubtable Mrs Prune refusing to speak to any of her fellow members of DOGSHIT?

Your saviour, Ben Chestnut, may be able to supply some of the answers.

Yours truly, A Mole (aged a little more than 13 $\frac{1}{4}$)

REAL ALE IN DUBLIN

Readers of CAMRA's "What's Brewing" magazine may remember an article on Irish Ale published earlier this year. The piece was subtitled "CAMRA's Greatest Struggle". Having spent a day in Dublin (the movement's most westerly point), I'm sorry to report that things are even worse there than "What's Brewing" would have us believe. If you don't like bottled Guinness, you are in trouble!

It is unfortunate that since the 1985 Good Beer Guide entries were selected, Harty's Traditional Ale has ceased to be, effectively halving the uninitiated traveller's choice. The only real ale in Dublin that isn't bottled is Dempsey's Real Ale, a pleasant 1037 og bitter, which reminded me of cask John Smiths. Even so, outlets for

this seem to have waned. The fizzy Bass, Harp lager and Smithwicks - a Guinness subsidiary - have got a stranglehold on the city and people seem happy enough with their lot.

My first port of call was the Norseman in Essex Street. Despite a sticker promoting Dempseys, the barman said that the brew was no longer on sale, but suggested I try the Palace Bar in nearby Fleet



Street. Sure enough, Dempsey's real ale was on sale at £1.28 a pint. Rather cold, but refreshing. My next stop was the College Inn, College Street, near Trinity College, of course. This had been a Harty's outlet, but I went in hoping to find Beamish & Crawford's bottled stout from Cork. No luck, and I made do with a bottle of Guinness.

After this I went to O'Dwyers Bar, one of three "Good Beer Guide" pubs in the city. An impressive row of handpumps came into view as I

walked in. They'd obviously been used in the past, but now they were fixed to serve keg Bass and Smithwicks. A solitary handpump served Dempseys. It was palatable, but cloudy and watching the barman pull my pint, I got the impression that this was probably the first pulled all day. It was 2.00pm.

That evening I tried other outlets - George Chaney's and the Granary - and had to drink Guinness in both. George Chaney's was in the GBG and the Granary advertised real ale over the bar, but sold only the bottled stuff.

It was by chance that I spotted Kenney's Bar, on Westland Street, which sported a Dempsey's window sticker. The beer (£1.30 a pint) was in good condition and the bar also sold the elusive Beamish stout, as dark as Guinness, but dryer and sharper. As this pub wasn't on my list, it was quite a bonus finding it. The barman said that turnover of real ale was reasonable, but that the local CAMRA branch had never visited the pub. At this point, it was time to go back for the ferry. Thus ended the adventures of the unwary toper in Dublin. Real ale is worth seeking, but the future in Dublin seems uninspiring. So remember, when you are quaffing your umpteenth pint of Boddies or Bass and complaining that the stuff ain't what it was, there's always somebody worse off, somewhere!

Dave White



ASIAN CORNER

Manchester's Chinatown now offers the best Chinese cuisine in Europe, a fact that has been reflected in the prices of established restaurants like the Woo Sang, the Kwok Man, the Yang

Sing, the Connaught and even Kais. They still offer good value for money but it's nevertheless pleasing to see new establishments opening which have to compete to ensure a share of the market. The Chinese Dragon is

housed in a former Chinese supermarket on Portland Street on the edge of Chinatown and serves excellent food at most reasonable prices. The menu is not as clear as others and mistakenly makes concessions to English tastes by offering steak and chips and similar meals, but the Chinese dishes are well prepared and tasty. The mixed dim-sums, chilli beef and duck with orange are particularly recommended. Next time you're staggering out of the Circus Tavern give the Chinese Dragon a try.



North Manchester CAMRA chairman Peter Cash with Hartley and Lynda Downs at the Old House at Home presentation.



Branch Diary

TRAFFORD & HULME

Thurs 2 May 8pm. Committee/Social at the Star, Hulme. All Welcome
Sat 11 May. Evening trip to Buxton. Details from Branch Contact
Thurs 16 May 8pm. Branch Meeting at the Peveril of the Peak, Gt Bridgewater St, M/cr.
Thurs 23 May 8pm. Provisional date for Pub of the Month. Details from Branch Contact
Thurs 6 Jun 8pm. Committee/Social at Stretford Cricket Club, Leslie Rd, off Urmston Lane. All welcome
Contact David Shelton 061 795 2113 (h) 061 224 7341 x54 (w)

SOUTH MANCHESTER

Tues 7 May Open Committee Meeting 8pm Gateway, Kingsway, E Didsbury
Thurs 9 May Branch Meeting, 8pm, Three Tuns, London Rd, Hazel Grove
Fri 10 May Coach trip to Saddleworth Beer Festival. Pick up at Bulls Head, Hazel Grove at 6.15pm. Pineapple, Stockport 6.30pm, White Swan, Fallowfield 6.45pm
Thurs 23 May Pub of the Month. Alexandra, Northgate Rd, Edgeley, Stockport
Sat 25 May Public Transport Farewell Trip to the Villiers, Liverpool. Details from J Clarke (061 477 1973)
Tues 4 June Open Committee Meeting, 8pm, Swan with 2 Necks, Princes St, Stockport Shopping Precinct
Sat 8 June Coach trip to Jennings Brewery, including visit to Ulverston Beer Festival Details from J Clarke
Thurs 13 June Branch Meeting, 8pm Gateway, E Didsbury
Fri 14 June. Full day trip to Wards Brewery and Sheffield. Details from J Clarke

HIGH PEAK & NORTH EAST CHESHIRE

Mon 13 May 8.30 Branch Meeting, Dog & Partridge, Ashton Rd, Denton (Robinsons)
Sat 25-Mon 27 May (Bank Holiday Weekend), Dinting Festival, Glossop - CAMRA Bar
Contact Tom Lord 061 427 7099

NORTH MANCHESTER

Wed 8 May Osborne (Banks's), Rochdale Rd, Collyhurst 8pm
Wed 15 May Union Tavern, Liverpool Street, Salford 8pm
Wed 22 May Patricroft - Waggon & Horses 7pm, Grapes 7.30, Packet House 8pm
Wed 5 June Newton Heath. Prince of Wales 7pm, Copenhagen 8.30pm
Wed 12 June Angel Chapel Street 8pm
Wed 19 June White Swan, Swinton
Wed 26 June John Smiths Survey. 7.30 Pen & Wig (Wilsons), New Bailey Street, Salford. **FINISH AT THE MARBLE ARCH**
Contact Roger Hall 740 7937

ROCHDALE, OLDHAM & BURY

Thurs 7 May 8pm Branch AGM Castle (Wilsons), Manchester Rd, Rochdale. **All branch members are urged to attend**
Fri/Sun 10/12 May Saddleworth Beer Festival
Tues 21 May 8pm Committee Meeting. Reed Hotel (Bass), off Yorkshire St, Rochdale
Tues 4 June 8pm Branch Meeting, Welcome (Holts), Bury Old Rd, Prestwich
Tues 18 June 8pm Committee Meeting, Ostrich (Holts), Bury Old Rd, Heaton Park
Contact Steve Lawton 061 620 9239 (h) 061 775 3351 x248

Apologies to those whose articles have not been included in this edition - the editor received an unusually large number of contributions. Please keep the letters and articles coming in - and mind that effin' language.

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