

WHAT'S DOING



JAN
1987

THE MANCHESTER BEER DRINKER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE



OPEN AGAIN IN SALFORD

Wilsons' Globe on Bury Street, behind Whitbread's brewery, reopened in November. It still serves hand-pumped mild (70p) and bitter (73p).

BURNING ISSUES

Two Salford pubs which were partially destroyed by fire in separate incidents reopened the week before Christmas. The Druids on Liverpool Street was severely damaged by a

fire which broke out in adjoining premises and after partial reconstruction reopened on 19th December. A new bar has been fitted, giving the pub an airier and lighter appearance. Draught mild has disappeared so the choice now is between handpumped Wilsons bitter and the ubiquitous Websters, both at 74p.

The Spinners, round the corner on Oldfield Road, reopened the following day. The fire did not destroy the Taylors Eagle Brewery windows, which are still intact, but did ruin much of the interior. Despite renovation, the pub still has the atmosphere and comfort of a cave. Marstons bitter is 73p but the mild is now keg. The Spinners' continued appearance in the Good Beer Guide must be in some doubt.

SPORTS

Despite rumours to the contrary, the House that Jack Built does not sell cask beer. There were indications that during its metamorphosis

from a pizzeria to a Sports, cask beer would appear, but this was not to be.

ROYAL STONES

The Royal in Weaste is now serving handpumped Stones bitter at 78p a pint. The pub has also been refurbished in a 1920s art deco style. The



split-level lounge is furnished with settees and decorated in a manner which is not over-fussy. The vault is as busy as ever. The introduction of Stones means that the choice on Eccles New Road now includes beers from four breweries - Sam Smiths at the Coach & Horses, Greenalls at the Grey Mare and the Old Veteran, Chesters at the Swan and the Waverley and Bass at the Royal.



WALKERS GAIN

The Grey Mare on Bolton Road, West-houghton, has been taken over by Walkers and the former run down pub has been transformed. There's a new central bar, games room, comfortable lounge and handpumped Walkers mild and bitter. The photo shows licensees Michael and Jane Gaffney, who have been at the Grey Mare for about a year. Walkers have six other pubs in the Bolton area - two in Farnworth and four in Bolton.

GREENALLS GAIN

Greenalls' New Ellesmere opened in December, a remodelling of their awful Narrowboat on the East Lancs Road at Swinton. The bits of old boat have been removed and the place now looks like a pub - comfortable, carpeted and they let normal people in (no dress restrictions). The beer is pricey, though: 79p for traditional bitter and 82p for Original.

WHAT'S BREWING

Last May we reported the imminent demolition of the old Steam Brewery in Chorlton-on-Medlock, which was then derelict. Well, the place won't be pulled down after all. In fact, it is being rebuilt into a restaurant/wine bar/bistro complex. Wilsons will be providing the beers - some traditional, it is hoped.

CITY DESK

PETER O'GRADY



Brewers appear to have been imbued with Christmas-time goodwill to all real ale drinkers in the City Centre. They definitely provided the wherewithal for a wet (if not white) Christmas and an extremely merry New Year.

Brilliant Boddies have carried out a good conversion of the OLD GARRETT, Granby Row/Princess Street. The range of handpumped beers reads: Boddingtons bitter and mild, Higsons bitter and mild, and Oldham bitter. The continuance of the range is obviously in our hands (and capacity)...the initial reports are that Boddingtons bitter is accounting for a very high percentage of sales. Congratulations to Boddies for providing city centre drinkers with the opportunity to sample most of their brews in one pub.

Better late than never for Bass's new City Centre "flagship", the TOWN HALL TAVERN, Tib Lane, off Cross Street. Hand-pumped draught Bass, Stones bitter and Bass mild were available from December 19th. The THT will be open all day - serving morning coffee and afternoon tea outside licensing hours. A lot of time and effort has gone into the refurbishment and provision of manager's living quarters in this famous old hostelry and Bass should be congratulated for widening the choice of ales available. BUT!! The cost of refurbishment is high - 4X mild 86p, Stones 90p and draught Bass 100p!!! The Bass red triangle has taken on a new meaning - "Warning - High Prices!"



Tetleys have finally opened THE BANK on Mosley Street in the old Portico Library, which was formerly occupied by Lloyds Bank. It's all keg.

BASS

The New Inn on Higher Ainsworth Road, Radcliffe, now sells three traditional beers - Toby Light (70p), Stones (74p) and draught Bass (76p). Unfortunately the bar persons still go for the keg Stones pump when asked for bitter - you have to specify the stuff from the handpump.

(In the list of Bass pubs last month we moved the Ring o'Bells in Christleton (about 50 miles from Chester) to Castleton. We moved it back again in time for Christmas.)

KING'S ALE

LEO KING

The White House (free), Great Ancoats Street, has replaced Boddingtons bitter with Hydes bitter, making it one of the select few Hydes outlets with handpump dispense. Britain's highest gravity strong ale (Hydes - 1080 o.g.) is also on sale straight from the cask (63p for half a pint) and if it sells well the strong ale will be a permanent attraction at the White House.

PRICES

I have noticed that in many Holts houses (in Eccles, Prestwich, Salford and Whitefield) the beer has shot up 4p. Bitter was 66p a pint in every pub visited; even the ones which were selling it at 62p until recently. This now means that a free house (the Ancoates) sells Holts bitter for the same price as tied houses. Holts bitter still reigns supreme at the Ancoates, It also sells well at the nearby White House for an extra 2p a pint.



HOST HOUSE OAKS

The Oaks on Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, reopened last month. This Wilsons (or former Wilsons) pub is now called Sports and I probably don't need to give details of the interior as all Sports transformations are alike. The old Oaks has had the guts ripped out of it and the vault no longer exists. Neither do we have the traditional atmosphere in the lounge, but on the positive side, the pub is much brighter with plenty of luxurious seating. The vault bar has gone, but the two others remain, with the one in the former lounge moved to a different position. The bar in the other room, which was actually an extension to the pub, is where it was before but now has a separate entrance and no real ale. Traditional Wilsons bitter is on sale at the main bar (74p a pint). It's a great pity that the name "Oaks" no longer exists. This came from the old oak trees in the grounds of the pub, and a fine painting of these was expertly reproduced on the signboard.

£1 A PINT IN MANCHESTER - IT HAD TO COME!

Yes, £1 for a pint of Websters fizz. And to add insult to injury, it is 55p for a half. (When I went to school half of a hundred was 50.) Some time ago I reported that the Rembrandt, Sackville Street,

Manchester 1, was trying it on by selling Lees bitter at 70p a pint and 40p for a half. This time the offender is the Conservatory on Old Bank Street, off St Ann's Square. (It does not sell Tetleys handpumped bitter, as reported in WD's recent real ale list.)

FREE FALCON

Bass are selling the Falcon on Merrill Street, Ancoats, and while keg Stones and 4X mild will remain, it is expected that a guest real ale (or two) will be available.

HARDLY INN KEEPING

Eccles has a new pub. Or has it? The Bargee on the canal in Monton at the top of Parrin Lane has a sign declaring "The Bargee Inn and Restaurant". Indeed, if you go in through the side door, it even looks like a pub with a bar sporting handpumps dispensing Thwaites mild and bitter and a restaurant section beyond. Ask for a drink, however, and you'll be told it's only a restaurant. No eat, no drink. Why, then, bother with the "Inn" description, which my dictionary says is a public house for the lodging, etc, of travellers? It's only going to confuse the hapless punter.

MOORHOUSE'S

BREWERS OF REAL ALE



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WIGAN & DISTRICT

DAVE WHITE



Boddingtons are keeping mum about the future of the Whitesmiths Arms, Standishgate, Wigan (left). This town centre pub closed six months ago, but in a written reply to Yours Truly recently, Manchester's favourite brewery would merely comment that "the future of the building is under review" - whatever that means. It is hoped that the Whitesmiths will reopen when the nearby Ring Road development is completed.

The good citizens of Fearnhead, near Warrington, had better wait until Holts open their new pub this summer. Greenalls have done the dirty with the Farmers Arms on Fearnhead Lane. For one, there is a plaque outside the pub advertising Original bitter. In fact, when I asked for a pint, the barmaid didn't know what I was talking about! Worse, the Local bitter and mild are tank beers, served by handpumps. CAMRA should condemn this despicable practice at the highest level, before it gets worse. In the meantime, give the Farmers Arms a wide berth.

Still with Greenalls, the Britannia Hotel, Wigan Road, Bryn, was serving keg beer over Christmas. Apparently fungus or bacteria has infected the cellar. By the time you read this, however, cask beer should be back on sale at the Brit, which is situated near Bryn BR station.

Not a million miles away, the Ben Jonson, Warrington Road, Goose Green, has gone over to traditional mild and bitter. Tetley have installed an impressive array of beer engines. This move partly makes up for the fairly recent loss of the Bulls Head nearby, which was converted to Tetley fizz.

TRADITIONAL TETLEYS

Bury's premier free house, the Rose & Crown on Manchester Old Road, will soon be selling an additional real ale. The regular range of Thwaites mild and bitter, Hydes bitter and Boddies bitter will be joined by Tetleys bitter. Although there's more than enough of the stuff in the Bolton area, traditional Tetleys is as rare as rocking-horse dos in Bury, so it should prove popular. Hydes strong ale is being replaced by the Thwaites variety and guest beers will be back when the strong ale season finishes.

NEW PUBS

The PRINCE ALBERT was a pretty dismal 1960s estate pub on Oak Lane in Whitefield. Whitbread sold it to Banks's, who've done their best with it. It is, in fact, better than the Longsight, where Banks's started from scratch. There is an enormous lounge, broken up to some extent by partial screens but, nonetheless, too vast to feel comfortable in when the pub's not crowded. It has a low ceiling and the use of dark green and maroon on the ceilings doesn't do anything to brighten the place up. The furnishings are high quality - plush seats with deep-buttoned backs, wooden-topped Britannia-type tables and carpeting throughout, except in the vault, which is quarry tiled and wooden-floored in the games area. Banks's mild and bitter are sold by the almost universal electric pumps with cowls declaring, in 3/16" letters, that the beer is cask conditioned. Black Country Bitter, served through a not dissimilar cowl, is keg.

Right at the limits of civilisation, Banks's have opened yet another new pub - the SPARKING CLOG on Radcliffe Moor Road, Radcliffe. The



building is single-storey, with the licensee's house attached. The roofs are pitched, and inside the pub is not ceilinged so that the roof space gives a feeling of airiness which is sadly missing in places like the Longsight. The roofspace is festooned with a multiplicity of agricultural implements and machinery including, I think, a winnower and a corn mill. The overall impression is of a furnished barn - and I mean that in the best possible sense. It's comfortable, pleasant and probably not so gimmicky that they'll have to

rip it apart again and re-theme it in a couple of years time.

Like the Milestone, the Sparking Clog has a separate food counter and there are patio doors leading to what I fear may be a very windswept beer garden on the edge of the enormous car park. Banks's mild and bitter sell at 71p and 75p and there are notices up telling Joe Public how wonderful Banks's are in selling beer through meters and giving value for money. The Hansons Black Country Bitter is keg. Despite the upmarket appeal of the place, it does have a vault, somewhat sumptuous, admittedly, but a vault nevertheless. Nine out of ten, Banks's.

Roger Hall

ECCLES

EIGHT YEARS ON

PETER BARNES

CAMRA produced a guide to Eccles pubs in 1978 and it is interesting to note the changes since then. The 50 pubs of then have been augmented by three: the Drop Inn, the Chestnut Lodge and the Swinging Bridge (not strictly in



Eccles but within staggering distance). We have not lost any pubs over the period. In fact, according to Tony Flynn's excellent treatise on the history of Eccles boozers*, we have not lost any since 1930, although a few were demolished and rebuilt during the 1960s and 1970s. Eccles is a resilient sort of place. Despite economic vicissitudes its population has remained stable at around the 40,000 level since the beginning of the century. The density of pubs in Eccles is slightly higher than the national average of 1 per 1,000 population.

In 1978 35 pubs kept real ale (70%). Now there are 46 (83%). Is this a record? The Spinners, Hare & Hounds and the Grapes (Church Street) have gone keg but the Airport, Albert Edward, Barton, Diamond XX, Duke of York, Jolly Carter, Monton Green, Town Hall, Unicorn and Waggon & Horses all now serve real ale and it is promised at the Star on Liverpool Road. There are 13 Holts houses, 9 Boddingtons, 9 Wilsons (7 of them on real ale) and 3 free houses. 27 different real ales are on offer (18 bitters and 9 other), plus an occasional guest beer at the Drop Inn. No wonder Eccles is known as the Imbiber's Elysium!

There have been quite a lot of physical changes to pub interiors since 1978. Almost a third of premises have undergone substantial refurbishment (some more than once) and on the whole changes have been for the better. There are no hideous theme pubs, standards of comfort have improved and there seems to be a growing resistance to the open-plan concept. (See what is happening at the White Lion as a demonstration of how to undertake structural alterations without ripping out the whole interior of a pub.) Many pubs have hardly changed at all, thank

* "A History of the Pubs of Eccles", Tony Flynn, £1.50. Available from all good bookshops.

goodness - the type of pub which does not pretend to be anything but a basic local boozer. Most of the Holts houses and the smaller Boddingtons pubs come into this category. In one or two cases it is like stepping back into the 1950s. Over the years the only change has been the gradual toning to a deep nicotine shade on the walls and ceilings. Not the sort of place to take your boss but great for a knees-up and a decent pint.

There is something for everyone in Eccles, ranging from the restaurant pubs (Airport, Drop Inn, Swinging Bridge and anticipated at the Town Hall) to the comfortable, roomy places to go for a quiet talk (Brown Cow, Dutton, Bridgewater). And those good for a sing-song on a Saturday night (Stanley Arms, Golden Cross, White Lion). The teenage scene (at weekends) is mainly at the Cross Keys, Oddfellows, Fox Vaults and Monton Green. For Manchester Ship Canal historical photographs and documents go to the Kings Head, Swinging Bridge and Dutton, but not the Ship Canal (Wilsons, Barton Lane), which is associated by name only.



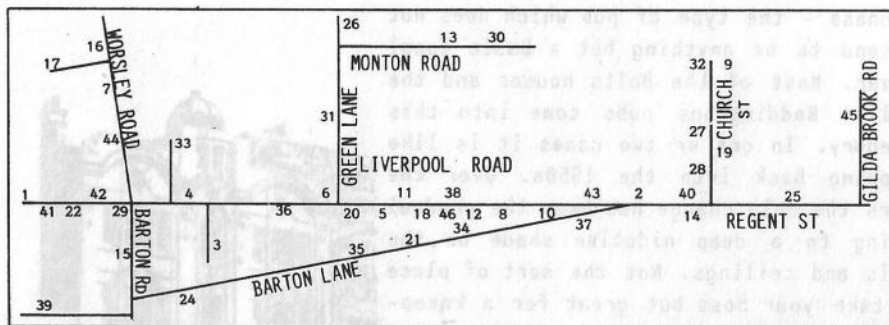
There are so many good pubs in Eccles that CAMRA members have difficulty in choosing entries for the annual Good Beer Guide. The 1987 edition lists the Duke of York, Lamb, Park and Stanley. One wonders whether the choice is influenced by affection for certain pubs rather than quality of the beer. Only four entries are allocated to Eccles but even so it is difficult to explain the absence of the White Lion and the Wellington (Church Street) from the Guide.



Three suggested crawls:

Architectural:

Three splendid red-brick, Edwardian Holts houses, complete with mahogany and cut-glass interiors: Lamb, Royal Oak and the Grapes; plus four street-corner locals with unspoilt, traditional interiors: Packet House, Red Lion, Queens Arms,



REAL ALE IN ECCLES, PATRICROFT, MONTON AND WINTON

- 1 Airport, Chesters
- 2 Albert Edward, Sam Smiths
- 3 Barton Inn, Chesters
- 4 Bird in Hand, Holts
- 5 Black Boy, Wilsons
- 6 Bridgewater, Holts
- 7 Brown Cow, Robinsons
- 8 Church, Wilsons
- 9 Cross Keys, Bass
- 10 Crown & Volunteer, Holts
- 11 Diamond XX, Wilsons
- 12 Dog & Partridge, Greenalls
- 13 Drop Inn, free
- 14 Duke of York, Chesters, free
- 15 Dutton Arms, Boddingtons

- 16 Egerton Arms, Boddingtons
- 17 Ellesmere, Holts
- 18 Ellesmere, Boddingtons
- 19 Fox Vaults, Greenalls
- 20 Golden Cross, Holts
- 21 Golden Lion, Boddingtons
- 22 Grapes, Holts
- 23 Jolly Carter, Wilsons
- 24 Kings Head, Boddingtons
- 25 Lamb, Holts
- 26 Monton Green, Wilsons
- 27 Oddfellows, Boddingtons
- 28 Old Bulls Head, Holts
- 29 Packet House, Boddingtons
- 30 Park, Holts

- 31 Queens Arms, Boddingtons
- 32 Railway, Tetley
- 33 Red Lion, Boddingtons
- 34 Royal Oak, Holts
- 35 Ship Canal, Wilsons
- 36 Stanley Arms, Holts
- 37 Star, Greenalls
- 38 Star, Bass
- 39 Swinging Bridge, free
- 40 Town Hall, Wilsons
- 41 Unicorn, Wilsons
- 42 Waggon & Horses, Tetley
- 43 Wellington, Holts
- 44 Wellington, Greenalls
- 45 White Horse, Robinsons
- 46 White Lion, Holts

White Lion. Liverpool Road Holts pubs: Starting at the Lamb and finishing at the Grapes (or vice versa), it is possible to take in nine Holts houses along the way (plus another two just off the route).

Grand Tour: Sampling the beer from eight different breweries: White Horse (Robinsons), Railway (Tetley), Cross Keys (Bass), Oddfellows (Boddingtons), Albert Edward (Sam Smiths), Wellington (Holts), Dog & Partridge (Greenall Whitley), Ship Canal (Wilsons).

The Duke of York is not included above because it cannot be put into any particular category and it deserves special mention anyway. Nominally it is a Whitbread house, but as well as the two Chesters beers there are three Timothy Taylor (Landlord, Ram Tam and Bitter Ale), plus Marstons Pedigree and Thwaites bitter. It is a real ale emporium with a vault, a no smoking room and a real fire. The Duke will be closed for two weeks in January for alterations to the vault and the bar. Also, the toilets will be sanitized and the whole place redecorated. Long overdue, it promises to be a top-class refurbishment.

BEER DROP

The Crown & Kettle on Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, has changed hands again and beer prices have been reduced. Wilsons bitter is down 5p to 70p, mild 4p to 69p and Websters bitter 6p to 72p. The new tenants are Chris Teague and Brian Mair, who also run the Star, Hyde Road, Ardwick.

To the Editor:

375 Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester M27

LETTERS



Sir - As a founder member of GAS (Greenalls Appreciation Society), I must point out another (deliberate?) mistake in Wigan News (WD Oct). The New Inn, Goose Green, does not sell keg or tank beer but real ale, as it always has.

GAS is a collection of drinkers who enjoy Greenalls traditional beer in preference to the bland products from Tetleys, Boddingtons, Whitbread, et al. It is a social organisation whose function is not to defend Greenalls' dubious policies. Current membership stands at 4.

James Fox, Ewloe, Deeside

FARNWORTH FORTUNES

Two Farnworth Tetley pubs have been transformed. The White Hart on Albert Road has been bought by Regal Knight Hotels (who also own the Quill & Pen in Bolton) and it has been enlarged and fitted out quite nicely. Unfortunately it is now all-keg Tetley. Round the corner in King Street, the Saddle has turned pink and is now called Scandals. Handpumped Tetley remains.

The Canary on Plodder Lane was redecorated recently and local press advertising promised a range of cask beers. Unfortunately things don't seem to have changed much; real ale (Chesters bitter and Hartleys) was on sale last month but so was the Whitbread range of fizz. For Whitbread in Farnworth, stick to the Britannia on King Street.



STRONG WALKERS

Following up their success last year, Walkers brought out their Winter Warmer again last month. It's a sweet, ruby-coloured strong ale with an original gravity of between 1058 and 1062. The price is 45p a half - same as last year.

Winter Warmer can be had at the following:

BOLTON: Ainsworth Arms, Halliwell Road; Stags Head, St Helens Road; Church Inn, Farnworth; Market, Farnworth. **ASTLEY:** Miners Arms. **WIGAN:** Raven, Wallgate; Springfield, Springfield Road.

Other contributors to this issue: Stewart Revell, Steve Byrne, Duncan Roberts, Bill Collier, Tony Flynn, Pete Cash, Bob Potts. Rupert is on holiday.

NOW & THEN

by Rob Magee

No.12

BLUE BELL INN

13 Market Street, Shaw

No-one knows when the Blue Bell was first licensed; it was there in 1630, but the first innkeeper I can identify with any certainty

was Joshua Wild in 1714. Joshua was also the parish clerk, a position which his son inherited in 1738, together with the Blue Bell, "Fow Lane Ends". A choral society was formed at the inn in 1742, but this moved to the new, large concert room at the Queens Head (Queen Ann) in 1825.

Another notable innkeeper at the Blue Bell was Edmund Cheetham, who succeeded James Taylor in the 1790s. He was also an attorney's clerk and in his spare time composed music with the vicar of Royton Church. Seven landlords later, another Taylor, Edmund, was in charge in 1851. By 1860 Jane Taylor was in charge and she got into trouble a couple of times; she was fined 10/- for having a "disorderly house" and the same for allowing customers to play dominoes for money. By 1870 Jane's son George had moved from his butcher's shop on Market Street to take over the Blue Bell, although he appears to have left around 1876.

The choral society may have packed its tuning fork in 1825, but for many years the Blue Bell hosted a benefit society, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1860. The full name was The Friendly Plough Boy Ancient Sons of Adam Society. Try saying that after a few pints!

A survey published in 1890 showed that the Blue Bell could accommodate one traveller and provide refreshments other than drink to 10 people. The old photo dates from this period, when Arthur Bentley ran the pub and was also the



proprietor of the pork butcher's next door. Susannah Bentley took over from 1895 to 1904, when John Lord became licensee. Mrs Bentley still had an interest in the property, and lived on the first floor for some years afterwards.


Robinsons Brewery paid John Lord £6,750 for the Blue Bell in 1920. The brewery has recently made extensive internal alterations and Robinsons are to be congratulated for their tasteful matching of the decor. The Blue Bell will have an official reopening on 13th January. licensee Geoffrey Barker sells Robbies best bitter (72p) and mild (70p), or if you fancy something stronger, there's Old Tom on draught at £1.16!

A stone inscribed "JWS 1763" has been preserved in the frontage of the inn (renewed earlier this century), a reminder of the days when parish clerk John Wild and his wife Sarah ran the old Blue Bell.

(Rob Magee is currently researching the old pubs of Shaw)

NO JOE KING

Contrary to the rumours, there was no Holts when the King, Oldham Street, Manchester, reopened in early December. The pub is still a Tetley house. The excellence of the handpumped mild and bitter is, however, somewhat marred by the appearance of over-loud, tone-deaf singers, unfunny comedians and a bouncer who chucks you out at 11.09½pm.



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WILSONS



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Mild Ale



WHAT IS MILD ALE?

Mild may be either light or dark in colour, ranging from amber through many shades of brown to almost black. Colour is sometimes a regional preference - in the northern Home Counties and the South Midlands light is much more popular than dark. Strength also varies and although most milds are weaker than their own brewery's bitters, many Midlands milds are over 1035 o.g. and some of the more contentious milds, such as Marstons Merrie Monk, are over 1040 o.g. - approaching the weaker Old Ales.

The important thing about mild is that it is not bitter. Mild ale has a longer pedigree than bitter beer, going back before the introduction of hops to British brewing. In an ideal world, mild would be unhopped or only lightly hopped and its colour determined by the type of malt used, rather than the addition of caramel. Sadly, many milds no longer conform to these standards.

MILD BY ANY OTHER NAME

Some drinkers (and some brewers, for that matter) just say "ale" when speaking of mild. In South Wales the drink to order is "dark", but remember that in Scotland you should ask for 60/- "light" (not to be confused with 70/- "heavy", which is what the English call bitter!)

SAVE OUR MILDs

Even if you are a bitter drinker, why not seek out a pub with traditional mild and try a pint? The brewers keep telling us that there is no demand for mild, so it is up to us to prove them wrong. Even if your pub doesn't sell traditional mild, keep on asking for it! WD readers usually have a good idea of what comes from every handpump and electric pump in their area. But how aware are you of what your pub, club or off-licence sells on keg, top-pressure, or in bottles and tins? There are areas where processed milds and brown ales sell well and here CAMRA can still campaign to persuade brewers to sell the traditional variety. Even if production levels of processed mild have become uneconomic, all is not lost. It has long been CAMRA policy to encourage brewers who cannot brew their own mild to sell somebody else's cask mild in the same way that many now sell another brewer's barley wine or stout. As long as you can tell us which pubs would like to sell mild, we can take the matter up through CAMRA's contacts in the industry.

(Mild Marketing Board, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3BW)

BOLTON NEWS

DES NOGALSKI, BILLY BOLTON

Bolton Metro are to get their way as far as the Topp Way extension scheme is concerned. This means that the Peel on Higher Bridge Street and the Falcon on Kay Street will soon be demolished. The Peel closed well over a year ago, while the Falcon is set to close in the spring.

On the other hand, the pre-Christmas period saw a number of pubs re-open after refurbishments and even a couple of brand new pubs opened. No doubt about the most lavish. The Tavern at Hunger Hill has cost a Manchester firm £800,000 and involved the transformation of a derelict farmhouse into a pub/restaurant. The emphasis is naturally on the food side of the business, although there is handpulled Wilsons bitter on sale (at 82p a pint!).

The Golden Lion on Churchgate is now the Bears Paw (a name the pub last had 200 years ago). Chef & Brewer (aka Pennine Host) have turned the place into a posher pub and bouncers now turn away all those in jeans, etc. Pennine Joke's "basic ale house" transformation of the nearby Three Crowns a few years ago, which involved the removal of all the old seating, fireplace, etc, proved to be a dismal failure - the customers left. The old Golden Lion may have been somewhat neglected, but it did have an individuality obviously appreciated by its customers. Will the company's idea of what the customer wants be more successful here? Let's wait and see. The place is now selling real ale (Tetley mild and bitter) for the first time for ages. The former "Berni" restaurant upstairs is still there and jeans and training shoes are acceptable (providing you keep your feet well under the table?)

Across the road, the Man & Scythe has had another coat of paint and this ancient pub still has an emphasis on cider (Castle Eden is also available on handpump). It is now cleaner and brighter than of late, although a new Formica bar top and fluorescent lights hardly enhance the antiquity of the place. Wouldn't it be nice if Whitbread spent a few quid and removed the coats of black paint, took the boxes off the beams and restored the interior woodwork to something like its former glory?

The Benjamin Topp on Bath Street (next to the Duke of Clarence) is a new pub/restaurant. No jeans, trainers, etc, and keg Tetleys at 96p a pint. Just what we needed.

The Gardeners Arms on Valletts Lane is now Arkwright's Ale House. It's a "Victorian-style" refurbishment, but the layout hasn't changed much. Tetley mild and bitter (reasonably priced) remain.

More name changes. The Wheatsheaf on Great Moor Street is now Serendipity's. Greenalls have spent £100,000 on the pub, installing numerous video screens in an attempt to attract more "nice" people. The Tippings Arms on Blackburn Road, Astley Bridge, is now Astleys. No real ale at either.



The General Havelock (left) has reopened after a long period of closure. This free house on Sidney Street has had a fresh coat of paint and some new fittings in a sensible refurbishment. The layout has not been altered, there are no gimmicks, no dress restrictions and no extortionate prices. Boddies bitter, Bass 4X mild and Stones bitter are on handpump.

the front has been retained. Handpumped Tetley mild, bitter and Jennings.

The Clifton Arms, Newport Street, managed to reopen before Christmas (just about!). The bar has been moved to the back, there's a pool table in the old bar area, but the nice smoke room at

A further indication of the way things are going in the town centre came in an application for a drinks licence at the former Bolton Central Labour Club on St Georges Road. Carlow Catering of Rochdale want to turn the club into a "cabaret showbar" called "Carringtons". Objections from nearby nightclubs and the Salvation Army hostel were overruled and Carlow director Eddie Grindrod stated: "We only want to attract nice people who are willing to pay 40p a pint more for lager!" At least he's honest.

BOLTON AMBER NECTAR SHOW

The Bolton branch of CAMRA, in association with Bolton Sports and Exhibition Centre, are to present the Great North-Western Beer Festival at the Sports and Exhibition Centre on Thursday 2nd - Monday 5th April 1987. Over 50 different beers and ciders will be on sale and food and entertainment will be provided at all sessions. The Centre is situated on Silverwell Street, off Bradshawgate, right in the town centre - less than five minutes walk from the railway station.



LITTLE HULTON BASS

Cask Stones has replaced the keg variety at the New Inn, Little Hulton. Nearby, the Horseshoe (also Bass) is expecting handpumps early this year after the pub has been done up. Another Bass pub in Little Hulton (there are five altogether), the Welcome, has recently gone from free flow to metered dispense for its all-keg range. The licensee would have liked at least one cask beer, but he was not offered one. He is, however, selling What's Doing. Good for him!

HIGHER IRLAM HANDPUMPS

Cask Wilsons bitter (68p) and Websters (70p) are now on sale at the Tiger Moth. Handpumps have returned to the Boathouse (Boddies) and they seem to be a permanent feature at Higher Irlam Social Club, where Websters Choice has joined Wilsons bitter and mild. The Nags Head is to be de-horrored early this year - the Handpumped Chesters mild will stay. Even Sports sports a solitary handpump which advertises, and on occasion dispenses, Websters bitter. How about bringing the Wilsons back?

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BREWERIES AT RISK

Last year CAMRA submitted a "Save Our Breweries" report to the Office of Fair Trading which predicted that if the present rate of takeovers were allowed to continue there would be no independent regional brewers left by the end of the century. Following on from this, CAMRA has published a summary of how the various independents stand. This is what the summary says about the independents in our area:



BODDINGTONS (including Higsons & Oldham): Looking forward to becoming North-West top dog when Matthew Brown goes under; ambitious and could strike again (though not many options remain). Whitbread umbrella has saved them before and is a real deterrent in this case. Oldham surely unlikely to survive 1987 now that the lager is on stream at Higsons.

MATTHEW BROWN (including Workington & Theakston): 29.9% S&N, awaiting re-match. Recent closure of Carlisle presumably cements future of Workington and Masham (the latter only because of the bad press it would generate). Could try to grow beyond S&N's reach, or grow where S&N are already over-represented. (A bid for Camerons would represent a stroke of genius?)



BURTONWOOD: Rejection of Wolverhampton & Dudley Brewers offer only reaffirms the recent commitment to independence and expansion. Board (just) has majority control. Looks safe for the present. Expansion unlikely to involve acquisitions, after Border: the right-sized companies are now thin on the ground in the area.



GREENALLS (including Wem, Shipstones, Davenports): Any of the satellite breweries could be under threat but the company itself is well organised to deal with an unwelcome approach. Still a highly dangerous predator, and not only in the Black Country.



HOLTS: A real success story: both Boddingtons and Robinsons have been warned off in recent years (and sold or dramatically reduced their stakes) and the Kershaws have established their commitment to the future. Holts/Kershaws retain majority shareholding. Solid.



HYDES: Wholly family owned, mainly in trusts. Given the will, can beat off any marauders - and the will to survive does seem to be there.



LEES: Wholly dependent on the continuing commitment of the Lees-Jones brothers, which certainly seems to be there at present. Beer production has increased considerably and further expansion is possible.



MARSTONS: Jumping to Whitbread's orders, but despite 36% holding, no real threat can be discerned. Management not over-strong? Likely to try to expand further.



ROBINSONS (including Hartleys): Family owned, isolationist but rock-solid (unlike the brewery foundations!) Hartley's brewery much more at risk, despite the beer's reputation, and will do well to survive once the Bredbury plant is fully operational. More likely to be aggressors.



SAM SMITHS: Totally secretive but family control still looks pretty strong - a takeover would be a surprise. They appear much more as likely predators - could buy Jennings (but why haven't they acted yet?) or Taylors.



TAYLORS: Succession problems when Lord Ingrow (ex Sir John Taylor) calls it a day (no male heir). He seems confident that problems can be side-stepped, but is unforthcoming as to how (and as to everything else). Entirely family owned, but how tightly are the shares owned? Otherwise, no problems - beer popular, steady expansion, finances OK. But doubt remains - especially if bid made for sake of the good name.



THWAITES: Yerburgh family still exercise some control, although ownership is more diversified. Performance has been patchy (some less-than-successful excursions outside brewing), but image is good and no known predators are involved. Solid?

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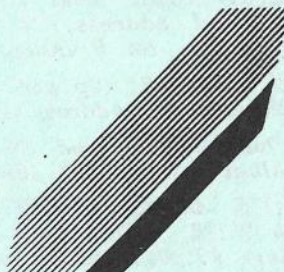
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ODDIES ALTERATIONS

New landlord at the Oddfellows, Church Street, Eccles, is Brian Barry and the pub has certainly improved of late. Brian is hoping to replace the electric pumps with handpumps for his Boddingtons mild and bitter and there are plans to extend the lounge at the back to take in some of the underused vault. The Oddfellows was built about ten years ago, when Boddies' idea of a new pub was two open rooms, a bar in the middle and not much else. Over the years they have broken up the lounge area with better seating and partitions and the extension will be another welcome improvement. The Oddfellows is about half way up Church Street (not too far from the Holts pubs!) and worth trying.



Branch Diary

WIGAN

Wed 7 Jan 8.30. Branch Meeting, Old Pear Tree, Frog Lane, Wigan
Contact Brian Gleave Atherton 892965 (h) 876200 (w)

BOLTON

Tues 6 Jan 8.30. Branch Meeting, Falcon, Kay Street. Come and pay your last respects to this doomed pub.

NORTH MANCHESTER

Wed 7 Jan, Eccles. Swinging Bridge, Redclyffe Rd 7.30. Kings Head 8.30

Wed 14 Jan 8pm. Ordsall, Oldfield Road, Salford

Wed 4 Feb Black Friar, Blackfriars Rd, 7pm. Buskers 8pm.

Wed 11 Feb Monton Green 8pm, Drop Inn 9pm

Wed 18 Feb. Branch Meeting, White Swan, Swinton. 8pm

Contact: Roger Hall 740 7937

WHAT'S DOING is edited by Neil Richardson, 375 Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester M27 2AY. News, articles, letters, moans, etc, must arrive by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

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