

WHAT'S DOING

JULY
1987



THE MANCHESTER BEER DRINKER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

INDEPENDENTS DAY



The Fourth of July is Independents' Day; indeed, the whole of July is being devoted to a celebration of Britain's independent brewers. This is a positive phase of CAMRA's Big Seven in '87 campaign. Instead of carping about the policies, prices and pubs of the monolithic breweries, CAMRA will be concentrating on the regional

and local brewers who are usually closer to their customers and cater for their needs better.

Manchester and the North West has more independent brewers than any other region. This has meant greater choice, more competition, a wider variety of beers and keener prices and has also helped to limit the excesses of the Big Seven. It would be foolhardy, would it not, to transform a pub into a theme establishment and charge 15p over the odds when there's a selection of perfectly good Holts and Boddies pubs down the road? Yes it would, but nevertheless Whitbread and Pennine Joke have done exactly that. Their ventures are often transiently successful until the capricious clientele move on. You won't catch the local independents doing daft things like that. They have their ears close to the ground and usually know what their customers want. We may have had the odd run in with the local brewers but in general their pubs are more traditional, their beers more in keeping with local

tastes and their prices more in line with what people can afford.

Boddingtons, Holts, Hydes, Lees, Oldham Brewery and Robinsons are all based within Greater Manchester, with pubs in most parts of the county but with areas like Bolton and Wigan less well served. The six local independents are augmented by other brewers like Marstons, Banks's, Burtonwood, Thwaites, Matthew Brown and Sam Smiths, all of which have tied houses in Manchester. In addition, a growing number of free houses supply beers from smaller and often more remote independents.



A healthy situation? Yes, but it must be kept that way. Much of the erosion has already taken place. Towns like Wigan, Bolton, Ashton, Altrincham and Bury no longer have their own breweries. More recently we've witnessed the takeover of Theakstons, Yates & Jacksons, Hartleys, Higsons, Oldham Brewery, Simpkins and Davenport's, inevitably followed by closures and a diminution of choice. Matthew Brown is still under threat. How long will it be before one of Manchester's brewers becomes a target for a takeover? By supporting our local brewers, we can help to maintain a situation which makes Manchester the best beer drinking region in the country. The disappearance of any of our local independents would result in less choice, higher prices and nastier pubs. Back Britain's Independent Brewers.



The Big Seven brewers may own 80% of Britain's pubs but they have a relatively poor showing in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide. The Independents have a representation out of all proportion to their actual numbers. The table of entries for Greater Manchester looks like this:

Big 7

Bass	5
Greenalls	6
S & N	1
John Smiths	1
Tetley Walker	20
Whitbread	1
Wilsons	20

Local Independents

Boddingtons	9
Lees	8
Holts	18
Hydes	8
Oldham	1
Robinsons	22

Other Independents

Burtonwood	9
Marstons	6
Thwaites	8
Sam Smiths	6
Free Houses*	14

Total **54**

66

43

* Beers sold in Manchester GBG free houses include Hartleys, Jennings, Moorhouses, Oak, Old Mill, Ruddles, Taylors, Theakstons and Wards as well as a number of guest beers.



It's not hard to see why a disproportionate number of 'Independents' pubs should have been chosen by local branches. All Boddies, Lees, Holts, Hydes and Robinsons pubs serve cask beer and an increasing number of Oldham houses do. Most of them serve cask mild. The pubs are comfortable and homely and cater for local tastes. They offer better value for money than the Big 7. They don't generally muck around with their pubs - a Holts theme pub is unthinkable. They don't indulge in barmy gimmicks to

encourage the fickle teenage trade and they are a more integral part of the communities they serve.

The trend of beer guide entries is likely to continue. One or two Banks's entries are inevitable in the next few years and we would expect more genuine free houses to be included. Wilsons pubs are less likely to be selected now that the brewery's in Halifax and cask mild is fast disappearing in favour of Eurofizz. How much longer are Greenalls, with their lacklustre beers, going to have entries in the guide?

One point which should be borne in mind is that the pubs chosen for the guide are a cross section. If we were to select the best 163 pubs in Manchester, there'd be even more Independents than there are now.



BOLTON NEWS

Des Nogalski

CAMRA members in the Bolton area have been surveying some of the keg Tetley, Greenalls and Whitbread pubs to see whether any of these brewers have had a major change of heart. Apparently not, although the Farmers Arms on Derby Street, Bolton, recently started selling Chesters bitter. One handpump has been installed in the lounge and early reports suggest that sales aren't too good.

The Lever Arms at Darcy Lever is now selling handpumped Castle Eden and Trophy. The Derby at the bottom of Derby Street, Bolton, will soon be withdrawing Castle Eden for the summer - the only people who drink it are students from the nearby Institute of Higher Education.

The Derby Arms on Halliwell Road, once targetted as a Peter Walker house, is still looking run down and still sells keg Tetleys. Further up, John Smith's bitter has yet to appear in cask form at their only Bolton pub, the Belle Vue. The pub's interior, while not offensive, looks like a design from the 1960s or 1970s, with period keg beer to match.

Followers of the Bolton Fun Pub scene will be sad to hear of the departure of the management of Rosie o'Grady's Good Time Emporium (ex- Loose Goose, Amigos, Dog & Pheasant) in West-houghton. They have moved to Bananas in Farnworth, which now rejoices under the title of "Rosie Goes Bananas". Not very long ago this was a real ale pub called the Golden Lion. Admittedly a facelift was needed - but not of this nature! The last incumbent of Bananas left under unfortunate circumstances after a group of Little Hulton pub wreckers chose Bananas as their Pub of the Month and proceeded to cause £4,000 worth of damage. Similar organised violence took place at the Crown in Horwich recently, while Bolton town centre is increasingly becoming a rather unsafe place to drink.

Farewell to a couple of local licensees this month. Bob and Kath Bailey will shortly be departing from the GBG-listed Dog & Partridge on Manor Street for the Masons Arms on Sion Street, Redcliffe. Keith and Pauline Nicholson have left the Alma on Bradshawgate. Our best wishes to them all.

The Bowling Green on Bury Road holds its annual Beer Festival from 15th - 31st August. Around 20 real ales will be on sale over the period and we hope to have more details next month.

Finally, the Great Maxims Refurbishment now looks set for September, when the pub will close for three weeks.

JAZZ AT THE VINE

Renovation work at the Vine, Kennedy Street, Manchester, is under way to restore the original Victorian fascia and will take two or three months. Meanwhile, mine hosts Peter and Claire White have introduced live jazz every Wednesday (8.00pm-11.00pm) in the cellar bar, and this is proving very popular.

NEW BUCKLEY

The Buckley Arms on Partington Lane, Swinton, reopened recently after a short closure for refurbishment. The rumoured major structural alterations have not, thankfully, occurred. The bar area, which was previously small and congested, has been enlarged at the slight expense of room in both vault and lounge. Internal partitioning walls have, with one minor exception, been retained, hence the pub still exhibits meaningful zonal qualities - unlike another Tetley pub not a mile distant which is now no place for the agoraphobic. Mild and bitter are now dispensed by beer engines, rather than electric pumps.

MOORHOUSE'S

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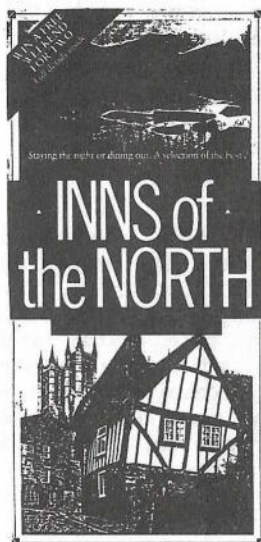


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DREADFUL PUB GUIDE OF THE MONTH



Bass's guide book, "Inns of the North", covers seven areas from the Scottish borders to the Lincolnshire wolds. Our own area stretches from Bardsey Island to Whitworth. It's a selective guide, so let's see which pubs they've chosen:

Bolton: The Unity Brook seems to have been moved to "Kearnley". Corks Wine Bar

Manchester: Yes, of course, the Old Wellington is included, and the Town Hall Tavern, but where is the Unicorn? No mention of what many would regard as the best Bass pub in the city. And while we're in Manchester, why on earth have they got to include pubs under the heading "Manchester" which are in Denton, Failsworth, Eccles, Little Hulton, Stretford and Atherton.

Salford: Nothing at all.

Swinton: Yes - one entry. The Red Lion appears under "Swinton". Funny, when it's

four miles nearer to Manchester than the New Inn in Little Hulton.

The guide includes symbols for restaurants, bar meals, accommodation, gardens, disabled toilets and family rooms. No mention of cask beer. Pretty useless really. Geographically inaccurate and, apart from the advert for Stones, you wouldn't know from reading it that pubs actually sell beer. Selections must have been made by a dart chucking Southern chinless hooray and if they're as brilliant in Workington, Gateshead and Spalding as they are in Manchester you'd have more chance of getting a decent pint from a telephone directory.

TIME PLEASE

If you are reading this WD over a drink in a Trafford pub after 10.00pm and you would like to continue doing so, then beware! All the efforts of CAMRA in promoting 11.00pm closing may come to nothing if the Trafford Licensed Victuallers Association have their way.

At the 1988 Brewster Sessions they will be opposing 11.00pm closing and, furthermore, arguing for 10.00 closing. So be warned, good people of Trafford; if you do not agree with the LVA then why not let your landlord and the brewery know your feelings, or even write to the clerk of the licensing justices. If you do nothing, don't blame us!

WIGAN & DISTRICT

Dave White

Greenall Whitley have been renovating and redecorating a few of their pubs in the area, and the results have been mixed. The Unicorn, Upholland Road, Billinge, has reopened, unfortunately selling keg beer. There is better news in Lowton, however, as the Rams Head on Slag Lane, St Lukes, is now selling the full range of Greenalls ales on handpump (bitter, mild and Original). The Rams Head had an unsuccessful spell on Original Bitter some years ago, so let's hope that sales are buoyant this time around. Lowton and Golborne are dominated by Greenalls, but the Rams Head is the only pub to sell Original round there.

On the other side of Wigan Metro, Greenalls are doing up the Wheatsheaf, Appley Bridge. This pub has narrowly missed inclusion in the Good Beer Guide over the last six years; it would be a pity if the cask ale were to disappear amidst the "improvements".

Two more Greenalls pubs have gone over to keg/tank beer. They are the Beech Tree, Beech Hill Lane, Wigan (the mild had long been keg) and the Commercial, Victoria Road, Platt Bridge. Indeed, Platt Bridge is becoming a beer desert, with only the Victoria (Peter Walker) on Liverpool Road selling the real thing. Tetleys ought to be ashamed of themselves, as three out of five fizz pubs in Platt Bridge belong to them.

Burtonwood have closed and sold off the White Duck, easily the best pub in Standish (see May WD). The word is out that the inn will be transformed into a bistro. There's a lot of good beer in Standish, but "quintessential pubness" is a bit thin on the ground. Near to the White Duck is the Horseshoe (Burtonwood) - always busy, with excellent beer, but the pub is characterless. Not far away is the Dog & Partridge, a funereal Tetley pub, again with good ale. And if you like Matthew Brown fizz, there's always the Globe, just across the road from the White Duck. Standish just won't be the same any more.

In response to the "Mild in Manchester" survey (June WD), I am pleased to report that mild is thriving in Wigan. An excellent pint is guaranteed in almost all of these pubs in or just outside the centre of Wigan:

BASS 4X: Swan & Railway

BURTONWOOD: Old Pear Tree, Raffles, White Horse

GREENALLS: Flamingo

HOLTS: Gems

TETLEY: Ball & Boot, Bowling Green, Bricklayers Arms,
Charles Dickens

THWAITES (Best Mild): Millstone, Seven Stars

WALKERS: Raven

Several of these pubs sell two bitters, the Swan & Railway three. Things could be better still when the Fox & Goose, Standishgate, goes over to traditional Tetleys and if the nearby Whitesmiths Arms (Boddies) reopens.

The Orwell on Wigan Pier lost its Tetley mild a while ago. The Market Tavern (Youngers) has never sold traditional mild. Otherwise, as you can see, the old drink is doing fine in Wigan. Just outside the town centre, the Queens Hotel in Newtown (Greenalls) successfully reintroduced cask mild recently. So come to Wigan!

ESB

Mitchells ESB was recently on sale (86p a pint) at the Coach & Horses free house, Piccadilly.

HANDPUMPS

Handpumps are due to return to the Swan (Thwaites), Tottington Road, Bury. Years ago, when the pub was on handpumps, the Swan used to feature regularly in Thwaites's "best kept cellar" awards.

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GOOD BEER GUIDE

There are from time to time complaints about the selection of pubs for the Good Beer Guide. When these concern the quality of a pub which has been included they are usually justified and are often the result of a deterioration in standards between the time of survey and the publication date. When they concern the omission of a particular pub they are invariably without foundation.

In Greater Manchester less than 9% of all real ale pubs can be selected for the Good Beer Guide. Most branches during the course of a year will visit all their real ale outlets and a high proportion of non-real ale pubs as well. In North Manchester a shortlist is drawn up some two months before the GBG deadline from suggestions submitted by members and all those pubs are surveyed, usually by people who do not normally frequent them. An entire evening is set aside for the final selection and although many areas can be agreed by consensus, voting is sometimes necessary for an area with a superabundance of good pubs - like Eccles.

People who argue fiercely for the inclusion of a particular pub must, if their argument is to be tenable, have an intimate knowledge of all the pubs in the area; not only in, say, Eccles, but also in Newton Heath, Blackley, Moston, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Collyhurst, Ancoats, Swinton, Salford, Irlam & Cadishead, Worsley, Walkden, Little Hulton and Manchester City Centre.

The aim is not necessarily to include the best 27 in the area but to provide a variety of pubs all of which serve excellent beer, spread throughout the area and with a good selection of brewers.

RAIL ALE

New tenants at the Railway Inn (Tetley), Church Street, Eccles, are Peter and Carol Dolan. It's their first pub and they have improved the beer and started darts and dominoes teams. Burton Ale is a possibility for the future. The Railway is now back to normal opening hours.

JENNINGS GONE

The trial of traditional Jennings bitter at the Britannia, Bolton Road, Pendlebury, did not last long. The pub is now back to keg-only.

Contributors to this issue: Paul Roberts, Duncan Roberts, Rob Dunford, Tony Flynn, Keith Egerton, Roger Hall

NOW & THEN

by Rob Magee

No.18

BEAVER INN

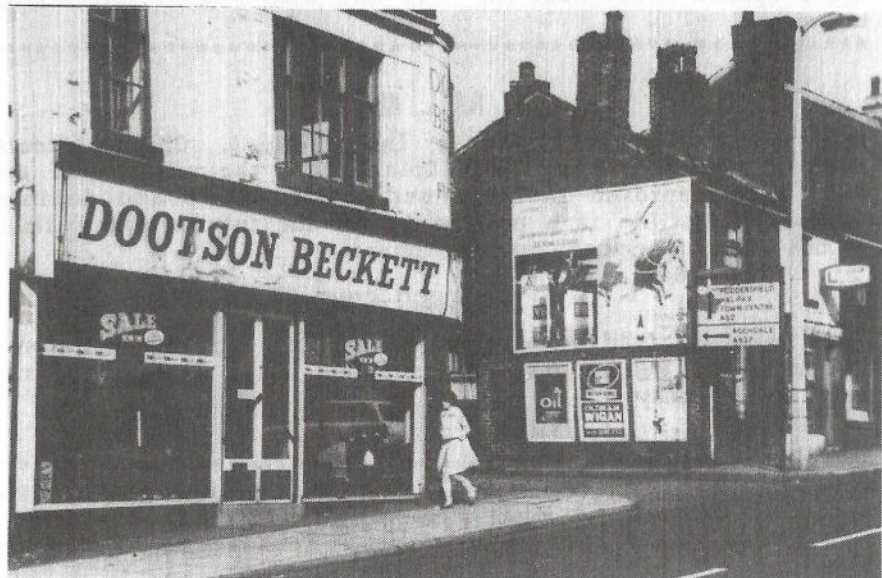
56 Manchester Street

The building on the left of the photograph below used to be the Beaver Inn, which closed almost ninety years ago. The pub was on Manchester Street, Oldham, and for a good part of its colourful history it seems to have given the police and successive licensees problems.

There was a licensed house on the site in 1790, when John Schofield moved into the "Butcher Inn" on the "New Road" (Manchester Street). By 1802 it was recorded as the Beaver Inn. James Butterworth mentions that the Beaver was a desirable place to stay in his "History of Oldham" (c1817). The Schofields owned the Beaver, and they had a succession of tenants in the 1820s-1850s.

The first record of trouble at the Beaver was in June 1854, when one John Alison was sentenced to a month's hard labour for stealing from the inn's ostler. Not long afterwards, the licensee, Buckley Shaw, was found to be keeping a disorderly house and was warned by the magistrates. He then had a second warning and in 1859, during his last year at the pub, the Beaver had become an established meeting place for "prostitutes and other undesirables".

Three more licensees came and went in quick succession and in 1863 the owner, Henry Schofield, had to take on the licence. He employed a manager, but that didn't do any good because one evening at 10.30 the police had to be called to read the Riot Act!



Another landlord, Samuel Redfern, arrived and tried to tame the pub. During his tenancy a man fell asleep, drunk, in the vault and when he woke up his money had gone. He blamed the prostitutes. The police were not impressed.

In 1867 the next licensee, Thomas Holden, was refused a music licence because, he was told, the music would only encourage undesirables to dance on the tables. In an attempt to clean the place up Thomas decided to ban the regular vault customers. The following year he was bankrupt.

The owner, by then William Johnson of Stalybridge, had to step in until he could find someone to run the pub for him. The lucky man was Kenneth Graham, but he had trouble getting his licence - the police were still protesting that the Beaver was full of prostitutes and thieves.

Several landlords later, Alfred Swales decided to get out after two years at the pub. In 1885 he took over at the Beaver Vaults higher up the street, which until then had been kept by Joshua Beaver. Alfred promptly changed the name to the "One and Three" - he was probably sick of the name "Beaver"!

Oldham Brewery bought the infamous Beaver Inn in the 1890s and their first tenant, Michael Brady, was their last. The licence was given up in 1898 and in later years the building was used as a furniture shop. It was demolished in the late 1960s and the site is now grassed over.

100 TRADITIONAL PUBS

As a result of the branch's peregrinations around traditional public houses in May and June, North Manchester has decided to publish a selective guide to the best 100 or so traditional pubs in Greater Manchester. About ten are envisaged for each metropolitan district. There are no fixed criteria, but theme pubs, gutted pubs



and establishments with ubiquitous noise are unlikely to qualify. Suggestions for inclusion are welcomed, particularly for pubs in outlying districts of the county.

BODDYSWINGS

The Swinging Bridge in Barton has been sold to Boddingtons for a lot of brass. This free house built its reputation on the range of beers and it will be interesting to see whether Boddies will chuck out Marstons and Taylors along with the Chesters.

To the Editor:

375 Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester M27



LETTERS

In the article based on Stewart Philbrock's talk on health hazards last month, we got a bit of it wrong. Stewart writes:

The statement that "the use of Autovacs and returning beer to the barrel is OK" was not, in fact, correct. There has been considerable debate within the environmental health profession recently over the merits of economiser devices. The whole issue of whether or not economisers are permitted rests on the interpretation of the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations, 1970; in particular, Regulation 9, which states that all reasonably necessary steps must be taken to protect food (which includes drink) from risk of contamination, and Regulation 2, which states that "regard shall be had to the extent to which such contamination is immaterial because of the nature of the food".

Environmental Health Officers have to make a judgement, on the basis of the evidence that is available to them, on whether or not there is a risk of contamination and if there is whether or not that is a material risk. Clearly, interpretation varies across the country!

Although cases have been successfully taken in magistrates' courts by local authorities, most recently in Rochdale, where a guilty plea was entered, these cases do not set a legal precedent, as only decisions in the higher courts can do so. There is, therefore, no case in law in existence relating to economisers.

Until a case is taken, on appeal, to the higher courts and a judgement obtained one way or another, this variation in interpretation will continue. Perhaps CAMRA could sponsor an appeal when a suitable case arises?

Finally, the returning of slops or spillage from the bar to the barrel via buckets or other containers is definitely not permitted.

(The views expressed in this letter are my own and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of Manchester City Council)

Stewart Philbrock
Environmental Health Officer (Central)

LAGER

Sir - On Sunday 14th June, just after 12.00 noon, I found myself watching "Network 7" on Channel 4. The programme is aimed at the fashionable young set (why was I watching it?) and one item was on alcohol or, more to the point, the abuse of it amongst young people.

Part of the programme gave details of a survey taken of young people, with the following results:

- 1 The most popular drinks are
(a) Beer, (b) Wine, (c) Spirits
- 2 The top ten beers are
(a) Heineken, (b) Skol, (c) Tennants, (d) Carling Black Label, (e) and so on, listing a further six lagers!

(I may have got the order wrong, but there were definitely ten lagers listed as the top ten beers!)

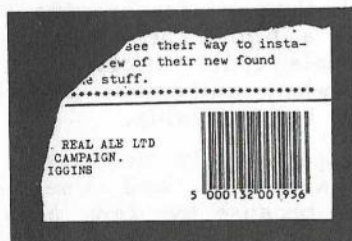
A further item in the programme may explain how this has come about. Remembering that the main point was on the abuse of alcohol, one of the reasons for alcohol abuse is that the stuff is too readily available for the young. Shelves full of cans of lager in Tesco, Asda, etc, were shown as an example.

It would appear that this availability, together with advertising, is brainwashing the young into thinking that the only "beer" drink is lager of one make or another.

This depresses me, because as time goes on a generation of young lager drinkers will eventually take over a bigger and bigger share of the market, by far outnumbering the traditional beer drinker.

The answer? Adopt a lager drinker and show him the light (and the dark, and the bitter, and the 80/-, and...)

Peter Wadsworth



TRIPE STRIPES

Sir - Have any of your readers noticed the similarity between the bar code on your rival organ, "Opening Times", and that on a well known make of toilet tissue? Are they in any way related? We should be told.

W C Boggs

MALT SHOVELS

Under a succession of short term managers, the Malt Shovels (Sam Smiths), Altrincham, had been allowed to deteriorate into a pit. Happily, the pub has now been completely refurbished. Structural alterations have been limited to opening up the staircase, giving a less claustrophobic feeling near the bar. The bar woodwork has been completely stripped and re-stained and, most importantly, the quality of the beer and bar service is considerably better.

LICENSING LAWS

The Government has promised major changes to the licensing laws in the next few years. So what's new? Kings, Queens and parliaments have been messing about with liquor laws for some considerable time. Until 1800 the system seems to have been fairly kind to the drinker, if not to the drunkard!

People have always been afraid of what we'll do when we're drunk - in the tenth century King Edgar ordered pegs to be fitted inside drinking vessels; the draught taken was not to exceed the distance between two pegs. But then our ancestors didn't drink by halves; the smallest standard measure in a list of 1277 is a quart. Healthy profits did not buy the brewsters (female brewers) respect, though - in the same year they were forbidden to wear furred caps like respectable ladies.

There was concern about quality in the Middle Ages too. Ale-tasters were appointed in the mid-fourteenth century to taste the brew before it was sold and to set prices, and the only permitted ingredients were water, malt and yeast. In fact, when hops came into this country in the fifteenth century, the first people using them were charged with adulterating their ale and it took some time for beer to become established as a separate product. (Sugar was allowed in the nineteenth century, partly as a result of pressure from West Indian commercial interests).

Greedy brewers are not a new phenomenon. In the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth had to tick them off for brewing too much of the strong stuff (which had a higher profit margin) and remind them to brew what people could afford - this mattered, of course, in the days when water was largely contaminated and even children drank beer at table.

Drink problems aren't new either, especially in this area! A report of 1591 complained that Lancashire and Cheshire churches were empty at service times because too many people were getting drunk in the alehouses, and if you were caught drunk in Manchester, you had to spend a night in the dungeon and pay 6d on your release. The law was even harsher under James I, who thought an alehouse was "for the receipt of travellers, and for the supply of wants to poor people not able to provide for any quantity of victual for themselves"

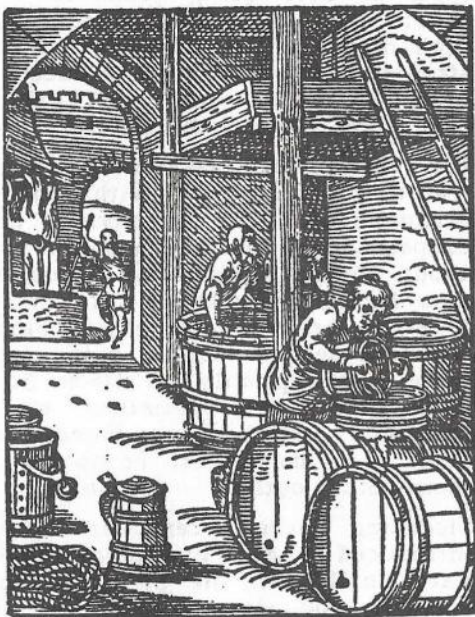


and not "the receptacle of drunkards, felons, and loose and idle persons". He decreed that only travellers and their friends, lodgers and labourers for one hour at dinner time could be served. Business lunchers take note! If you were caught drinking in your own neighbourhood it was a fine of 3s4d or the stocks; drunkards had to pay 5s or sit in the stocks for six hours. (time to sober up!)

It would be unfair to blame Oliver Cromwell entirely for the high taxes on beer today - Henry II imposed the first one-off levy on the malt liquor trade in 1188, to fund his wars with Saladin. But it was Parliament during the Civil War who imposed the first

regular duty on beer (2s a barrel to be paid by the brewer/retailer and 6d per barrel by common brewers selling in quantity). King Charles cashed in on the idea in 1645 by issuing a warrant levying the same duty from his headquarters in Oxford, and his son confirmed this, much to the disappointment of the brewers, who had hoped that duty would be lifted at the Restoration. Since then taxes on the liquor trade have played their part in funding several wars, which tend to be expensive. Beer duty was raised 50% in 1689 and doubled the following year, partly because of conflict with the French and partly to finance William of Orange's exploits in Ireland. Private brewers were hit hard in 1780 by a big increase in the duty on malt designed to help us keep the Americans from declaring UDI. What a waste!

Oddly enough, spirits, not beer, are indirectly responsible for much of the system we know today. The massive increase in spirit drinking in the eighteenth century meant that by 1739 approximately one house in every six in London sold some kind of liquor - that's one for every 47 people! The Gin Acts (no street sales; licences; increased taxation) were a dismal failure, so the authorities resorted to increasing the powers of local justices to control licences and the conduct of licensed houses, and this affected beersellers as well as spirits sellers.



As spirits were such a problem, beer was left alone and in the first half of the eighteenth century there was no increase in duty on ale, beer or malt. This stability led to different types of beer being produced - basically, the normal cheap brown ale; a medium priced, heavily hopped brown ale; a high quality, expensive pale ale; and "entire", or porter. The strength of porter was reduced following increased taxation after 1760 and the new, pale, bitter beers increased in popularity - much the situation we have today.

The variety of beers available led retailers to break with tradition and deal with different brewers for different products instead of buying all their supplies from one company, and to prevent this some brewers began to think about buying their own alehouses. Their own price increases also forced them to do this in some cases. Between 1722 and 1799 the brewers' price per barrel went up from 23s to 35s (the excuse, no doubt, being increased taxation). The retail price went up only 1d (from 3d to 4d a quart!) and the publican's profit remained static. Licensees began to go bankrupt and brewers found themselves obliged to convert debts into mortgages, or to buy the pubs, in order to keep their retail outlets - the birth of the tied house system.

Licensing hours weren't an issue then - shorter hours were introduced under emergency regulations in the First World War. Until then the pubs were open all day, except that on Sundays you weren't supposed to start drinking until after Mass (or, later, Divine Service). Many towns operated a curfew at about 8.00pm in the Middle Ages, but then if you've been mucking-out the Hanging Ditch since dawn you don't want to roll home along an unmade, pitch-black lane frequented by thieves and goblins!

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.

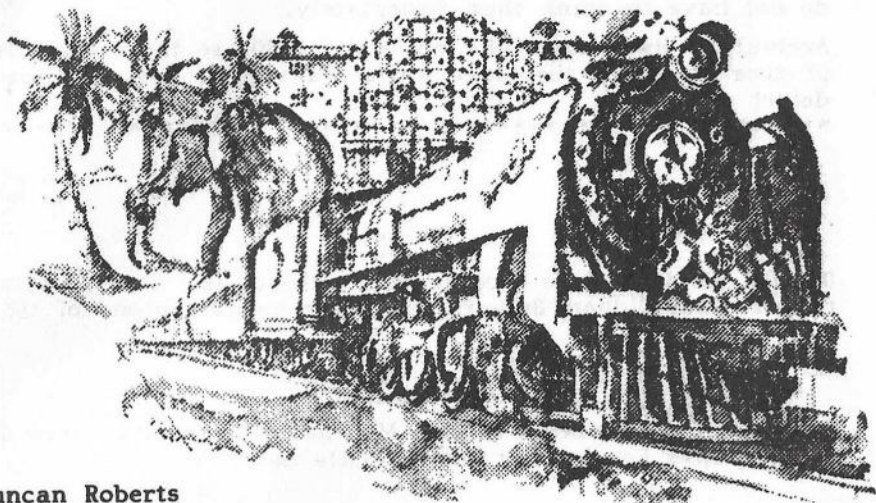
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ASIAN CORNER EXTRA



Duncan Roberts

TRAIN 86 UP: BANGALORE - HYDERABAD

Late in the afternoon of 26th April, three hot, dirty Europeans (one of them me) cooked gently under the canopy of the broad-gauge platform of Bangalore Station, watching metre-gauge steam locomotives shunting some distance away. Presently a diesel shunter struggled in with a typically Indian, monumental rake of rolling stock that was to form train 86.

We boarded, and at 1700 the train glided out, starting for us another long overnight haul. Before long the steward appeared, checked our sleeper reservations and took our order for supper. A quick glance at the menu and we all selected a non-vegetarian thali. This was brought aboard at Dharmavarani. The dish comprised a rich egg curry, a smooth dhal, a tasty selection of fried vegetables, curd (yoghurt) and a generous heap of rice. Small quantities of sea salt and a particularly sour lime pickle were also provided. The meal cost us Rs 6/90 (say 34p).

The following morning breakfast was brought to us at Vikarabad. We had grown accustomed to receiving omelettes or fried eggs for this meal. On this occasion, however, our tiffin boxes held a surprise. Within them were idli (steamed cracked wheat dumplings), coconut chutney and savoury doughnuts (experts on Indian food could possibly advise me, via the next edition of WD, of the correct term) all wrapped in

banana leaves. Flasks of hot, sweet, milky coffee followed. A civilised feature of Indian Railways is that, generally, hot drinks served with a meal are presented in flasks. Hence you do not have to drink them immediately.

Arrival at Hyderabad was not until 0930, so there was plenty of time to enjoy the meal whilst taking in some fascinating desert scenery.

OB

Despite denials from Boddingtons, there are still persistent rumours that Oldham Brewery will close before the end of 1987.

CROWN CHANGES

The Crown on Fountain Street, Manchester, closed on June 28th so that Bass can turn it into a "cafe bar".

TAKEOVER BID FAILS

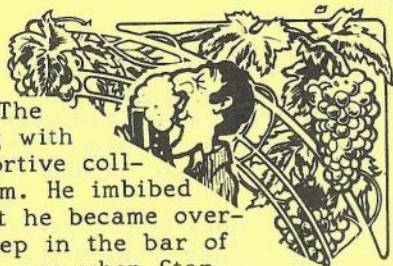
Just to prove that not all takeover bids are successful, at a recent meeting between Stockport & South Manchester, Trafford & Hulme and Macclesfield branches of CAMRA, where Stockport & S Manchester and T&H had suggested "rationalising" boundaries by taking some areas off Macclesfield, a firm rebuttal was given. Attempts to wide the circulation of What's Doing to Knutsford, Mobberley and Wilmslow areas may therefore now fail as Macclesfield feel that they cover these areas adequately and do not require the facility of this publication.

GOING FOR A BURTONWOOD?

We could be about to lose the Castle & Falcon, Bradshaw Street, Manchester. The licensee has given his notice to the brewery because he can't make a living at the current volume of sales. The promised alterations have not been done, Burtonwood apparently preferring to spend their money on the brewery. Will they now be stung into action?

The Castle & Falcon has always sold a good pint of bitter. The main reason that it hasn't appeared in the Good Beer Guide is the lack of cask mild - due again to low sales. So make the most of the pub while you have the chance!

RUPERT'S PAGE



Stan Craap is not a happy man. The final straw left him commiserating with Charlie Bass about one-time supportive colleagues who had now turned on him. He imbibed so freely of the amber nectar that he became overtired and maudlin and had to sleep in the bar of Leech's. It all began many moons ago when Stan attended a Slumley branch meeting which was planning a takeover of Piddlesley. As the takeover was to be made by a policy of gradualness and stealth, Billy Cosh suggested setting up a condominium. At this juncture, Stan said that he was "gloddy glazing" and stormed out. Looking back on the incident, I feel that Stan may not have fully understood what was being proposed. For him, a condominium may have conjured up visions of a scene from Porterhouse Blue.

Notwithstanding this threat, the stalwart Mr Craap has continued to run his branch single-handed, dispensing Manky Ales and regional glasses and surveying every pub in Piddlesley twice a week. Imagine his fury when only a couple of weeks ago he found Billy Cosh handing out Slumley branch leaflets referring once again to an impending takeover of Piddlesley. Billy compounded this by suggesting that Stan might possibly have been seen in Friggin a fortnight earlier. Stan was outraged, protested his innocence and threatened to sue if the accusation was repeated. It was at this stage that he retired with Charlie Bass.

I would like to make it quite clear that Stan Craap has never ever been to Friggin for any purpose whatsoever. Furthermore, in the unlikely event of his going, it would not be for any nefarious purpose. Stan would not commit naughties in Friggin. In particular, I would like to make it crystal clear that Stan was not in the vicinity of Wallgate on the night of Wednesday 13th May.

People keep asking, "Why won't Red Max do the decent thing and resign?" Since he became Campaign supremo vis a vis Brobdingnags he's not done a lot. He imagines in his delusions that he's forever hobnobbing with Efrem and his lads, but in reality he gets fobbed off by a couple of Bertie Woofahs in a cardboard front organisation. I've always thought it kinder to let people live out their dementia in a harmless sinecure and let someone else do the work. Max has now been promoted to Grand High Supremo for the Brobdingnag Group of Breweries and Leisure Facilities both now and in the future which is to come. His buddy Seamus Spud may not agree, but I feel it's a good thing, particularly as we now have Hattie Nightingale waiting in the wings, ready and eager to carry on where he didn't begin.



Branch Diary

NORTH MANCHESTER

Sat 4 July, Independent Brewers Crawl of Manchester. Old Garratt 7pm, Castle 9pm
Wed 8 July Tyldesley Takeover. Gatehouse 7pm, Union 8pm
15th July, Branch Meeting. Crescent 8pm
Wed 22 July, Lager Survey of Irlam. 7pm Nags Head, 8.30 Railway
Wed 29 July. Moss Side. Claremont 7.30, Whitworth 8.30
Wed 5 Aug Oldham. Spinners, Lees Road 7.30. Bath, Union St 8.30
Wed 12 August Regional Meeting, Three Legs of Man, Salford
Wed 19 August, branch meeting, White Swan, Swinton, 8pm
Contact: Roger Hall 740 7937

WIGAN

Wed 8 July, 8.30pm Branch meeting, Old Pear Tree, Frog Lane, Wigan
Wed 15 July, Leigh Crawl. Bulls Head (J Smiths), Butts Bridge, 7.30pm; Foundry (GW) approx 8.10pm
Contact Dave White Wigan 37389 (h)
Warrington 826515 x303 (w)

BOLTON

Tues 14 July 8.30pm Branch Meeting, Cattle Market, Nelson Street, Bolton
Sun 19 July, 12 noon, Social, Craven Heifer, Blackburn Rd
Sun 26 July, 12 noon, Social, Pack Horse, Watling Street, Affetside.
Sun 9 Aug, Bowling Competition (phone for details)
Contact: Dave Fleming Farnworth 75111 x207 (w)
Bolton 389918 (h)

TRAFFORD & HULME

Thurs 2 July 8pm Committee/Social, Toll Gate, Chester Road, Old Trafford
Thurs 9 July, 8pm. Survey of Urmston, starting at Bent Brook, Bent Brook Road
Thurs 16 July 8pm. Branch Meeting, Old Roebuck, Victoria Street, Altrincham
Thurs 23 July 8pm. Didsbury Crawl, starting at Station, Wilmslow Road
Thurs 6 Aug 8pm. Committee/Social, White Lion, Liverpool Road, Manchester
Contact David Shelton 061 224 7341 x27 (w)
061 795 2113 (h)

ROCHDALE, OLDHAM & BURY

Tues 7 July, 8pm. Branch Meeting, Old Cross, Eton Hill Road, Radcliffe
Tues 14 July, "Hollinwood 7" Pub Crawl. 8 pm Railway, 9pm Old Post Office
Tues 21 July 8pm. Open Committee Meeting, Walmersley, Walmersley Road, Bury
