

WHAT'S DOING



FEB
1988

THE MANCHESTER BEER DRINKER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

BODDIES SINK O.B



Boddingtons are to close Oldham Brewery in April. This event has been widely expected for the past six years and became even more likely after Liverpool's only brewery, Higsons, was snatched by Boddies in 1985.

Boddingtons insist that Oldham mild and bitter will continue to be brewed to the present recipe at the Strangeways brewery and will retain their distinctive taste.

However, as the beers now produced at Strangeways are shadows of their former selves, there seems little hope that Oldham mild and bitter will retain their character.

This is only part of what Boddingtons term "a radical review of operations" following Midsummer Leisure's unsuccessful bid last year. The Boddingtons distribution and transport departments at Toxteth and Strangeways, as well as at Oldham, will close in February. Distribution is to be contracted out to TNT and a new central warehouse will be set up at Wigan. TNT spent some effort in 1987 promoting its new division with the country's brewers, and it is expected that others will follow Boddingtons' example.

BANKS'S TO GO FOR A BURTONWOOD?

Financial pundits reckon the hot favourite for the first takeover of 1988 is Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries' acquisition of the family firm of Burtonwood. WED have set the brewers' section of the Stock Exchange alight in recent months, while the Burtonwood performance has been far from dynamic.

The Beer House



(Weaver's Arms)



6 Angel Street

off Rockdale Road

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Sun. ~ 12noon ~ 2pm : 7.00 ~ 10.30pm



KINGS RETURNS

Kings Tavern, formerly Buckleys and earlier the Kings Arms, Tyldesley, has reopened after considerable refurbishment. All trace of a "House of Horrors" (it's a Whitbread house) has vanished and the Kings must now be the poshest pub in Tyldesley. The beer is Chesters mild and bitter from the wickets; Castle Eden was tried and quickly dropped due to low sales.

BURTONWOOD STRONG

Rumours suggest that Burtonwood's "Brewer's Reserve" (og 1065) - a bargain at 50p per half in the Castle & Falcon, Manchester - will reappear next winter with some promotion, contrasting with this winter's ultra-low-key launch.

On the other hand, production of JBA is down to a few thimblefuls a week and it is no longer a separate brew. The number of outlets has dropped to fewer than ten.

FLEMISH FLAVOUR

The survey of Manchester beer prices in last month's WD had one glaring omission. The Holiday Inn Crown Plaza Midland Hotel's Lowry Bar sells handpumped Wilsons and Websters bitters for 85p a pint. An interesting range of Belgian bottled beers includes the 8½% alcohol Kwak, served in its distinctive yard-of-ale-type glass; Kriek lambic, the wild yeast beer blended with cherries; a peach lambic, and the more usual De Koninck from Antwerp. Lowry's also advertise a happy hour from 5.30pm to 7.00pm, when all the beers are half price, making the bar the cheapest in Manchester.

Talking of happy hours, the prize for the cheapest beer generally available in Manchester should go to Amigos Bar on Deansgate, where the high gravity Websters Choice is 65p a pint. "Happy hour" is all licensed hours in this bar, which also serves cheap lunchtime food. The Ramada Renaissance, also omitted from the December survey, sells John Smiths bitter at £1.30 per pint of fizz.

SALFORD ROUND UP

The Salford Arms is still serving both Chesters mild and bitter on handpumps. The Kings Arms has only Websters bitter and Old Peculier on draught, whilst the Brown Bull has only one draught beer - Marstons Pedigree. The Egerton is still keg John Smiths but the Pen & Wig has a range of four real ales - Wilsons mild and bitter and Websters bitter and Choice, all on handpump. Back on Chapel Street, the Albert Vaults is still keg Tetleys and the Tallow Tub has only Chesters mild on draught. The Lord Nelson is still looking for a buyer (perhaps only with one eye, judging by the time it's been shut). The Punchbowl still serves Tetley mild and bitter on electric pumps. The Crown sells Wilsons mild and bitter and Websters bitter, none of which were in perfect condition on our last visit. Boddingtons' Old Ship is deservedly popular as the handpumped beers are always in fine fettle. On Greengate the Old Shears is shut, whilst the Three Legs of Man serves all four of Robinsons cask beers on handpump.



* * * * *

CEMETERY ALE

The GBG-listed Cemetery Hotel, Bury Road, Rochdale, now has its "house" beer, Cemetery Bitter, alongside the existing wide range of cask beers. At a gravity of 1037, the beer sells at 81p a pint. Source? Unknown! But manager Adrian Bell will treat himself to a free pint if you can correctly guess the brewer. What dedication!

WIGAN & DISTRICT

Dave White

Wigan may have lost some irreplaceable old pubs in recent years but, ironically, the choice of beers available in the town centre is probably wider than ever. The **CHARLES DICKENS HOTEL**, Upper Dicconson Street, for long a free house saddled with Tetley-Walker ales, was selling Matthew Brown bitter, Robinsons best bitter and Theakstons best bitter during January. With **GEM'S** free house just across the road, the lucky toper has eight or so different beers to choose from in just two pubs. Not surprisingly, trade in both is brisk. (Gem's is now selling Hydes' Anvil - the first strong ale in Wigan since Boddies was available at the Whitesmiths.)

In stark contrast, **RAFFLES**, Millgate, is now down to Burtonwood bitter. When this pub (formerly the **SHIP HOTEL**) reopened in late 1984, Almond bitter, Burtonwood mild, Tetley bitter and Youngers IPA and No.3 were regulars ...all gone west.

The **ASTLEY & TYLDESLEY MINERS WELFARE CLUB** hardly sounds like the sort of place that any self-respecting CAMRA-phile would be seen in, especially as the Wigan club trade doesn't exactly go a bomb on Real Ale. However, the **ATWMC** sells Holts mild and bitter, Websters Yorkshire bitter and Hydes light mild and Anvil strong! All the beers are handpulled, save the Anvil, which is on gravity. (How often do you see a barrel on the bar in a club?) The club is in Gin Pit village, near Tyldesley.

The **CROWN HOTEL**, Platt Lane, Worthington, could be on the verge of selling out to Matthew Brown. Bass products dominated the bar of this free house until last year, then gave ground to Theakstons. The Hammonds bitter/Bass Special was long a favourite at the Crown, but is still to be had just down the road at the **KILLHEY COURT HOTEL**. This well-to-do, sprawling edifice is on Chorley Road and serves a well-kept pint in the Public Bar (the "Inn at the Court"). If you aren't intimidated by the size of the hotel, it's worth a try.

In spite of company policy, the landlord of the **STATION HOTEL**, a Greenalls pub on Bolton Road, Atherton, has managed to have a real handpump installed. The **MILLSTONE**, Harvey Lane, Golborne (see Dec 87 WD), was also successful in this respect, but alas, has since lost its cask mild because of low turnover.

In Upholland, the **PLOUGH & HARROW** (Boddingtons) has also gone over to keg mild and the **STANLEY** (Greenalls) is now keg-only. Both boozers are on Ormskirk Road, on the way to Skelmersdale. But better news in

nearby Tontine village, as handpumped Burtonwood bitter is on sale at the DELPH TAVERN. The landlady hopes to wean her regulars off the keg variety altogether and to introduce cask mild, if Burtonwood will increase the cellar space.

The RED LION, Westleigh Lane, Leigh, has gone over to cask conditioned beer in the form of Bass Special Bitter. Nice to see this underrated ale getting one up on the ubiquitous Snotes and, as the bitter is selling for 70p a pint, the Red Lion is worth a visit.

The COMMERCIAL INN, Cale Lane, New Springs, opened again before Christmas - then closed again after the boisterous clientele wrecked the place over the festive season. Before the holocaust, the pub was selling handpumped Tetley mild and bitter and is situated near the Leeds-Liverpool canal.

Ruddles County is now on sale at the ABBEY LAKES HOTEL, Orrell Road, Orrell. So far as I know, this is the only pub in the Wigan area to stock the beer, as Wilsons/Websters pubs are few round here. Not altogether a bad thing, though, these days...

BULLS HEAD

New licensee of the Bulls Head, London Road, Phyllis Elliot, comes to Manchester with 20 years' experience in the trade (Spinners Arms, Hadfield, and Burns Tavern, Huddersfield). The tenancy is now owned jointly by Ian Dick and Teresa Scale (licensee of the Union on Princess Street) and they have no plans to change this Burtonwood pub.

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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KING'S ALE

Leo King

Last month's Manchester beer prices survey found several pubs closed. Still closed on my recent visits were the Sportsman (Lees) on Market Street, Sam's Chop House (free), Back Pool Fold, and the Smithfield Vaults (free-Boddies) on Swan Street. However, I'm pleased to report real ale in two of the pubs closed at the time of the survey.

The Royal George, Rochdale Road, on the fringe of the city centre, sells handpumped Chesters mild (73p) and bitter (75p). It's really nice to know that Whitbread-Chesters have not only relented on freak modernisations but have also put real ale in many houses in their tied estate. However, real ale has yet to be seen in many areas. What about the Bulls Head, Chester Road, Manchester 15; Sir Henry Royce, Hulme, and the Whitbread pubs in places like Wythenshawe, Chorlton, Clayton, Whalley Range, Moss Side, Salford and Cheetham Hill? Come on, Whitbread - do something about it!

The other city centre real ale outlet is - believe it or not - S&N's Swinging Sporran on Sackville Street, Manchester 1. Two handpumps have been installed amid the illuminated keg dispensers. The Youngers Scotch bitter is 80p a pint - quite pricey, but then it could be a lot more! The nearest S&N pub is the Star Inn, off Chester Road - McEwans and Youngers real ales.

The Turville (earlier the Last Hop, the Turville, the Commercial, the Friendship) at the junction of Chester Road and Ellesmere Street, St Georges, has reopened. There's not a great deal of difference, I'm glad to report. The vault remains, nicely decorated, and the room has been extensively refurbished. The magnificent ceiling has been skilfully painted. Handpumps remain and dispense traditional Stones bitter at 82p a pint. Bass, although slow in introducing traditional beer, do tend to modernise their pubs in a sensible way. The nearby Railway, unfortunately, still sells gassy Bass beer - and why did they have to replace those wonderful "Cornbrook" windows with the plain ones?

Still on the subject of Bass, at the Burton Arms on Swan Street, Manchester, I ordered a pint of Stones bitter. There were handpumps on the bar, but the beer was dispensed from a Tennants Lager pump. Talk about taking the piss!

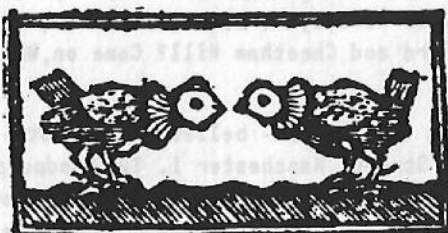
The Manchester Regiment, Hulme Hall Road, is still selling Greenalls gassy beer from those tricky handpumps. This deceiving dispense system

is also used at the Gardners Arms, Victory Street, Rusholme, but here the fake handpumps trigger an electric motor which pumps up traditional bitter.

The Weavers (soon to be renamed the Beerhouse), off Rochdale Road, appears to be doing quite well. Theakstons bitter (78p), best bitter (90p) and Old Peculier (£1.20) are on sale, together with Matthew Brown's John Peel Bitter and, of course, Holts bitter (74p) and mild (72p).

C O C K I N G.

On Thursday next, March 14, 1776,



A Main of COCKS
will be fought at Mr.
Cowgill's, the Spread Ea-
gle, in Salford.

To consist of Thir-
teen Battles, for one
Guinea a Battle, and

Two Guineas the Odd.

Seven Battles to be fought before Dinner, and six
after. To go to Pit, and begin fighting at 11 o'Clock
in the Morning, and exactly at Three in the Afternoon



Admittance to each Pit, One Shilling.

An Ordinary will be on the Table at Half past One.

In the days before pool and piano bars, Manchester and Salford publicans sometimes amused their customers in more basic ways. Cock fighting was common two hundred years ago, and some landlords even announced forthcoming events in the local papers, as this recently-discovered advertisement shows. Mine host Isaac Cowgill was offering a day's entertainment for 2/-; the "Ordinary" was a fixed-price meal - fresh chicken-in-a-basket? The Spread Eagle stood on Chapel Street, almost opposite the Old Ship, and closed in 1888.

HOLCOMBE ALES

Whitbread's Shoulder of Mutton in Holcombe Village, near Ramsbottom, now has the attraction of Marstons Pedigree and Hartleys bitter on handpumps.

NOW & THEN

by Rob Magee

No.24

PUNCH BOWL

11 High Street, Oldham

The Punch Bowl is first recorded as such in 1789, when it was kept by James Nield. (His father, John, was licensee of a Bulls Head from 1736, and this may have been the same pub.) It was renamed the Shoulder of Mutton by John Schofield (licensee from 1816 to 1819). He was succeeded by James Fisher, who also owned the pub (renamed the Punch Bowl), brewhouse and stable.

After the Fishers, there was a succession of short-term licensees until John Nicholls arrived in 1857. In the same year he was fined £5 and given a stern warning about allowing gambling on the premises. Three years later he was cautioned for serving during Divine Service (pub hours were not permitted to clash with church hours), and the following year he was fined for serving at 8.45am on a Sunday morning.

In 1864 the Punch Bowl was described as one of the oldest pubs in Oldham and in danger of falling down. Plans for rebuilding were drawn up and submitted to the licensing authorities. The new building was to have a 6-7 yard frontage on High Street and at one end there would be an avenue, five yards wide, leading to the new market place, and with



three entrances to the pub. The plans were apparently passed, with the proviso that there were only two doors into the pub. However, things did not end there and there was a series of alterations to the plans; even in 1867, when the new Punch Bowl had been built, there was an argument as to whether the front room was a vault or not. It was decided it was not a vault but a bar, and the owners had to promise not to build a front door on to High Street.

On February 6th 1867 Mr and Mrs Nicholls celebrated the opening of Market Avenue by giving a dinner for their customers on tables placed in the avenue. In the same year Mr Reuben, who owned the land on which the Punch Bowl stood, and his son-in-law, Mr Unsworth, who owned the pub, declared they didn't want the new building to be a public house after all. At the licensing sessions landlord John Nicholls said, "I wish you would take the licence and the house." The magistrates obliged! What must have been the shortest-lived rebuilt pub in the town's history was a grocer's shop in 1871, run by Mr Unsworth's son-in-law.

From the 1930s to the 1950s the building was used as a branch of Williams Deacons Bank (to the right of the avenue on the photo). Today it is a Dolcis shoe shop.

NEW SHIP?

The Manchester Ship Canal Company has applied for permission to build a new pub on Eccles New Road on land fronting Weaste Quarry. There's not a lot of pubs in that neck of the woods and not a lot of people either.

MOORHOUSE'S

BREWERS OF REAL ALE

PREMIER BITTER (O.G. 1036°)
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PENDLE WITCHES BREW (O.G. 1050°)
Believed Strongest Bitter Brewed in the North-West

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Pendle Witches Brew

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BEER AT THE PIER

WIGAN BEER FESTIVAL

The Mill at the Pier, Wigan Pier

3RD - 5TH MARCH



Thursday: 5.30pm-11.30pm

Friday/Saturday: 11.30am-3.30pm
5.30pm-11.30pm

Admission: Free before 7.00pm
£1.00 after 7.00pm

Free to card-carrying CAMRA members

EVENING ENTERTAINMENT - FOOD AT ALL SESSIONS

COCK UP DATE

Friday January 8th. Boddingtons were too busy aping their betters by sacking people and closing breweries to be bothered sending new plans for the Cock into Eccles Magistrates' Court. Despite articles in the local press, Boddingtons have not yet applied for formal planning permission, although they have had discussions with Salford's planners. Presumably this will incorporate the "locals bar" mentioned in Hubert Reid's letter...



Boddingtons' Breweries Limited.

PO Box No 331 Strangeways Brewery Manchester M60 3EL

R. Hall, Esq.,
Pub Preservation Officer,
Camra Greater Manchester,

Dear Mr. Hall,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Cock Hotel, Worsley, and our plans for its redevelopment. Our development plans do indeed include the addition of a pub restaurant, but equally the retention of a traditional lounge bar which, in the light of our experience in similar developments (a list of these is enclosed), I am confident will continue to be used by many existing regular customers whether or not they intend eating a meal.

I find your suggestion that such a plan involves "the destruction of a pub" incredible since a feature of "inns" over many centuries has been the provision of meals and other services to the traveller and the local community. We share your expressed belief that local brewers should cater for local tastes, and to this end we are developing pub restaurants on a limited but growing basis, which is an important plank of our plans for the future and will be carried out as sensitively as possible so as to preserve the best features in the pubs concerned.

However, in view of the obvious interest locally as expressed in the various letters which we have received, we are reviewing our plans to see whether there is a way in which these can be varied so as to provide a separate "locals bar" which would complement the rest of the scheme and be capable of execution in a cost effective way. Such a brief has therefore been given to our architects with whom we shall be progressing the matter.

Thank you very much for writing to us.

Yours sincerely,

H.V. Reid,
Managing Director.

BOLTON NEWS

Des Nogalski

Following Greenalls' installation of false hand-pumps in all their cask outlets, at least two pubs have regained traditional mild; the **BLACK SWAN** in Harwood and the **BROWN COW** in Horwich. Meanwhile, cask Davenports bitter has appeared at the **CROFTERS ARMS** on Halliwell Road,

the **FINISHERS ARMS** on Church Road and the **VICTORY HOTEL** on Chorley Old Road. The Good Beer Guide listed **ROYAL OAK** at Bradshaw Brow was one of the earliest outlets for Davenports and it has also been a testing ground for a new cask beer from Greenalls. This was tested under the name "Three Barrels" and could well replace Original bitter, now available in only a few pubs. The Victory Hotel received a revamp shortly before Christmas. New carpets and seat covers have been installed, but the vault has been incorporated into the lounge.

A cask beer conversion which escaped our attention last year was at the **SPORTSMANS ARMS** on Chorley Old Road, near the junction with Moss Bank Way. The pub now serves handpulled Burtonwood dark mild and bitter.

The next Peter Walker pub is to be the **DERBY** on Halliwell Road, currently a rather run-down keg Tetley house. Walkers will also be doing another refurbishment at the **HARE & HOUNDS** on Bury Road.

Currently closed for revamps are the **MAN & SCYTHE** on Manchester Road, Kearsley, and the **VOLUNTEER** on Darwen Road, Bromley Cross. Forthcoming refurbishments are at the **GREY MAN**, Daisy Hill, and, of course, **MAXIMS** on Bradshawgate, Bolton.

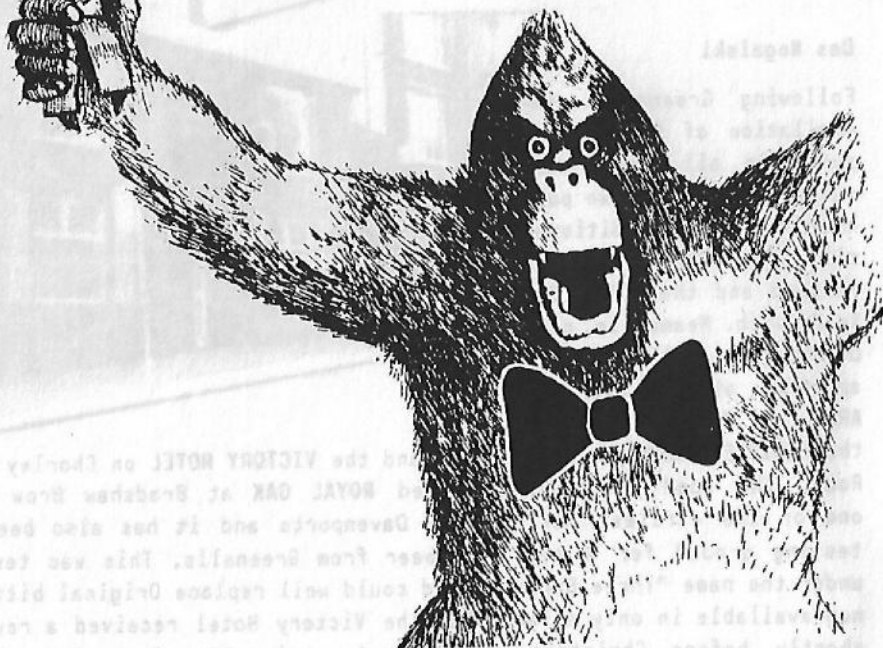


Finally, Bolton CAMRA and the Bolton Metro Leisure Services Department will be holding the Second Great North Western Beer Festival at Bolton Sports Centre from 20th to 24th April. Around 120 real ales and ciders will be on sale and it is hoped that the new Bolton Beer Guide will be launched then. More details soon.





GORILLA TACTICS



"Bouncers Under Fire" ran the headline in the Bolton Evening News. The article referred to a Bolton Crown Court judge saying "he seemed to spend much of his professional time in the town dealing with those (bouncers) who attacked customers." And this was only one of several recent items in the same vein.

Well, they do get a bad press. Some are very good at their job: that is to say, they are polite, don't block the doorway or look you superciliously up and down as you enter, deal with any potential trouble quietly before it starts and have even been known to say a friendly goodbye to customers leaving the premises.

But others - oh dear! I am of mature years and not naturally violent but even I admit to feeling some aggression when a youth half my age shoves his arm across the passageway and sneers, "Sorry, no jeans." Since young men are likely to be a bit more touchy, it's not surprising that scuffles sometimes break out. In cases like this, it's not entirely the bouncer's fault - he just hasn't been taught how to behave. Nor is his job an easy one, especially in town centres which tend to attract those who can't control their drinking (because of the numbers of licensed houses within easy reach) and those who haven't

learned to hold their drink yet (because it's fashionable to be seen doing what our grandparents called the "Monkey Run").

Dinner jackets don't help; they provide a ready target for anyone spoiling for a fight and make it virtually impossible to eject people discreetly - so the troublemaker's pride is involved and he won't back down. Finally, where they don't fit properly they really do look like "monkey suits".

It all comes down to the fact that being polite, calm and discreet can solve a lot more problems than showing muscle and ordering people about. But then customers are admitted to a licensed house at the discretion of the landlord, not the bouncer, so what is the poor man to do? If he's not allowed to exercise his discretion, or is incapable of doing so, the answer in my book is "find another job" - he's only going to cause as much trouble as he prevents. If he's got common sense, tact and the ability to hold his liquor and keep his temper, there may be a place for him in certain city centre pubs at certain times.

In retrospect, the present lack of training does have its lighter side. A treasured memory is of a spotty youth in casual attire stopping a (nearly) middle-aged friend at the door of a pub, pointing to his trainers and grunting. I hope the youth has learnt to talk now!

Fay Wray

DUTIFUL DRINKING

The latest Government statistics show that despite vast increases in standards of living between 1971 and 1986, Mr Average must still work 12 minutes to buy his pint of ale, which is almost identical to the 13 minutes required to quench his thirst in 1971. The whisky drinker is far more fortunate - a bottle of the hard stuff took 4½ hours of toil in 1971, compared to a mere 2 hours in 1986.

This highlights the ridiculous amount of duty now levied on our beers, which are among the highest taxed not only in Europe, but in the civilized world! One can only hope that the new EEC directives to standardise European taxes and duties by 1992 will lead to much lower beer prices here. In West Germany beers with an average strength of 5% alcohol can be purchased in supermarkets for about 20p a pint. Tuesday March 15th will give Nigel Lawson the chance to get our prices nearer to those of the Fatherland.

NO LAGERADE FOR SMITH AND JONES

Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones appear on separate lager commercials but alas, Smith does not drink the product and Jones does not think much of his scripts. Says Jones, "All the lager producers are looking for a way of distinguishing what is completely undistinguishable as a drink, so they fart around in that area." Smith chimed in, "Nobody at all drinks the lager I advertise; I certainly don't." (Reported in the "Independent", 16 January)

ROBINSONS UP

Robinsons beers recently went up 3p. Bitter in the Royal Oak, opposite the brewery, is now 79p.

HEROES SHUT

Another branch of the Legendary Lancashire Heroes real ale off licence chain appears to have closed. This time it's the one on Hilton Lane, Little Hulton.

Cask
CONDITIONED
BITTER

HOW IT REACHES YOUR GLASS

BREWED traditionally using only the finest malted barley, hups and water.

STORED in fermentation vessels where Greenalls' specially developed yeast transforms the natural sweetness in the beer to alcohol.

DELIVERED on drays to the cellar of your local, where under your landlord's experienced skilful care, Greenalls bitter settles and matures to be served traditionally for your enjoyment.

PIPED into 18 or 36 gallon casks with priming sugar added (to give natural condition) and finings added (to settle the beer).

The publicity department at Greenalls has been working overtime since the introduction of the brewery's new "handpumps" - really large handles which operate electric pumps. Even CAMRA's What's Brewing was fooled by their press releases. Notice that the new beer mat (above) doesn't actually tell us "How it reaches your glass" - the description ends with the beer arriving in the pub cellar!

Still, the "handpumps" do indicate Greenalls real ale - for the present. Bet they don't send out press releases and hang posters up if they decide to use them for keg beer...

BUTTERFLY BAR

Papillon's, the new bar in the Arndale Centre, Manchester, opened just before Christmas selling Boddingtons. You get in via the Corporation Street entrance to the Arndale.

WIGAN EXTRA

The New Year saw new tenants at the Amberswood, Ince in Makerfield. Neil and Glenda Redgrave arrived, having departed the Dog & Partridge, a Matthew Brown house in Oldham. Neil, having secured a place in the 1988 GBG, has swapped breweries and hopes to introduce cask Burtonwood ales at the Amberswood in the near future.

PRAT

A spokesman for Whitbread said yesterday that prices in its pubs could range from 80p to £1.30 for a pint of bitter.

"It's not like going to a supermarket," he said. "You can ask what is the price of a pint. It is not what we are selling. We are selling a leisure experience."

THE GUARDIAN

PLANNING NEWS

Whitbread have submitted proposals to alter and extend the Sir Humphrey Cheetham in Clayton.

A new development incorporating a pub is planned for the land opposite the Palace on Oxford Street, Manchester, just where the Oxford used to be.

TOBY INN

The roundabout at the Chadderton end of the A627(M) is the scene of much activity. Toby Inns are building a pub/restaurant despite much local opposition. Building is well advanced, and a sign proclaims, "...including a full range of Bass beers." We shall see!

HORTON IMPROVED

Overshadowed by the nearby motorway bridge, the Horton Arms, Street-bridge Road, Chadderton, never seemed to achieve its potential. Always a good "early doors" house for the evening session, the pub was often deserted at lunchtimes. However, new licensees Peter and Chris O'Neil look set to change all that. Straight from the Hare & Hounds (Holts), Outwood, Radcliffe, Chris is now providing the meals that are necessary in this type of pub. As well as a set menu, there is also a choice of "specials", which, at around £2, represent excellent value and quality. Meanwhile, Peter ensures that the J W Lees ales are kept on top form.



Branch Diary

ROCHDALE, OLDHAM & BURY

Tues 2 Feb 8pm, Branch Meeting, Bridge Inn, Lees Road, Sale, Oldham
 Tues 16 Feb 8pm, Committee Meeting, The Westbourne, Middleton Road, Werneth, Oldham
 Tues 1 March 8pm, Branch Meeting, Welcome Inn, Bury Old Road, Whitefield
 Tues 8 March. 10 Years in the Good Beer Guide Presentation to the Coach and Horses, Bury Old Road, Whitefield
 Tues 15 March 8pm, Committee Meeting, Ostrich, Bury Old Road, Heaton Park
 Contact: John Burns, 061 653 8361 (h)

NORTH MANCHESTER

Wed 17 Feb 8pm, Branch Meeting, White Swan, Swinton
 Wed 24 Feb, Cornbrook Crawl. Pomona Palace 7pm, Cornbrook 8pm
 Wed 2 March, Collyhurst & Harpurhey. Milan Inn 7pm, Golden Lion 8pm
 Wed 9 March, Little Hulton. Kenyon Arms 7pm, Horseshoe 8pm
 Wed 16 March 8pm, Branch AGM, Crescent, Salford
 Contact: Roger Hall 740 7937

WIGAN

Wed 10 Feb 8.30, Branch Meeting, Millstone, Wigan Lane, Wigan
 Wed 17 Feb 8pm, Annual General Meeting, Seven Stars Hotel, Wallgate, Wigan. All members please attend
 Weds 24 Feb 8.30, Beer Festival Meeting, Gam's, Upper Dicconson Street, Wigan
 Thurs 3 - Sat 5 March. WIGAN BEER FESTIVAL See advertisement for details
 Contact: Brian Gleave Atherton 892965 (h), Atherton 876200 (w)

TRAFFORD & HULME

Thurs 4 Feb 8pm, Committee/Social, Victoria, Victoria Street, Altrincham
 Thurs 11 Feb 8pm, Broadheath Survey. Meet at Cheshire Cheese, call at Navigation 9pm
 Thurs 18 Feb 8pm, Branch Meeting, White Lion, Liverpool Road, Manchester
 Thurs 25 Feb 8pm. Training Event: Stalybridge Railway Station Buffet
 Tues 1 March. All day trip to Keighley for lunch and Theakstons, Masham, Brewery in the evening
 Thurs 3 March 8pm, Committee/Social at the Railway, Ashley Road, Hale
 Contact: David Shelton 061 224 7341 x27 (w), 061 795 2113 (h)

BOLTON

Sun 7 Feb, Price Survey. 12 noon Nab Gate, 12.30 House Without a Name, 1pm Crofters (Bradshaw), 1.30 Royal Oak
 Tues 9 Feb Branch Meeting, 8.30 Crofters Hotel, St George's Road
 Wed 10 Feb, Price Survey, Bolton Town Centre. Meet 7.30 Dog & Partridge, Manor St, moving on to Old Three Crowns at 8pm
 Sun 21 Feb Social. 12 noon Jolly Carter, Little Lever. 1pm Horseshoe, Lever Street, Little Lever
 Tues 8 Mar 8.30, Branch Meeting, York, Newport Street
 Contact: Dave Fleming, 0204 75111 x207 (w) 0204 389918 (h)

Other contributors to this issue: Steve Lawton, Barbara Lee, Paul Roberts, Roger Hall, Brian Gleave

RUPERT'S PAGE

"In the Kingdom of the cloth-eared, the Spock-eared barmaid is queen."



I had, incognito naturally, been touring the hostelries of members of FLEGM (Freehouse Licensees East Grotley Mafia). I found myself in the bar of Grotley's favourite tavern, standing next to the smiling mine host who failed to recognise me, such was my disguise. A famous CAMRA member entered and positioned himself next to mine host. In a clear voice, devoid of mumbling, slurring or other speech defect, he placed his order. "A pint of Python 6X porter, please, barperson," he said. He was served, only minutes later, with $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of Gollock's mild and a packet of Gandhi's green chilli poppadums. Mine host and the CAMRA member exchanged meaningful glances in a conspiracy of silence to hush up this embarrassing interchange, little suspecting that the whole scene had been overheard.

It was assumed that I was part of the FLEGM trip to visit a Tykeley brewery via all the pubs and off-licences which were either for sale or about to change hands and we all piled on to a big red bus. My recollection of events is somewhat hazy, but I do remember some discussion as to whether the Noble Robin (who appeared not to be a FLEGM member) would be both tavernkeeper and busperson. This led on to speculation as to whether his hostelry would then retain its place in the toppers' vademecum and to a general debate on how to ensure an entry into this bibulous bible. References to the new overall female supremo were lewd and tasteless and not to be repeated here.

As the big red bus returned to Grotley, I was carried to a convenient road works by the samaritarian Nigel Hummingbird. Nursing my broken fingers, I was, from my vantage point, able to see my former conveyance besieged by van loads of high-ranking plod who dragged off one of the passengers to assist with their enquiries into some minor illegality. No doubt all is now well.

As a result of my incapacity I was unable to meet Mr Nestfeather's deadline but one happy result of this was the appearance of What's Doing in a hostelry from which it has long been banished. Mind you, in order to obtain one it was necessary to fill your mouth with marbles, don a gas mask and in a mixture of Swahili, Maori and Polish spoken with an East Kilbride accent say something like: "Bwana Kia-ora Gdansk, Jimmy!" I am happy to report that the situation has been remedied in two ways. What's Doing is not on sale and all the bar persons are now wearing tasteful Mr Spock polypropylene ear extensions. Denial: William of Irlam has not been banished from any hostelries and certainly not from the Nags Head, where the beer's as nice as ever.

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