

25p

What's Doing

DECEMBER 1994



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

New Salford Free House



Salford gains another real ale free house when the Cornerhouse on the corner of Greengate and Gravel Lane opens on 2nd December, selling a dozen cask ales. The pub is the former Three Legs of Man, which licensee Barry Johnston (above) has bought from Robinsons. The vault area on the corner has been improved and a new bar fitted, but the snug on the left as you go in and the back room remain. A kitchen has been fitted out and food will be available.

Barry is from the Greengate area and he was the last licensee of the Shears. He tried to buy that pub from Courage, but they sold it to Control Securities, who let the place fall down.

The Three Legs is one of Salford's oldest pubs, although the building itself dates from 1886. The original alehouse was part of the Clowes Estate (which owned most of Broughton and bits of Salford) and the first licence was taken out in 1793. Documents in Barry's possession show the property was sold to one of the early tenants and then by 1869 brewers Hannay & Dickson were the owners. This company was based at the Atlas Brewery on Stockport Road and around 1880 James Kay took it over and formed Kay's Atlas Brewery. Mr Kay mortgaged three of his pubs - the Three Legs, the Sun on Deansgate (across the road from the Pig & Porcupine) and the Queens at Denton - to raise £12,000. Some of this money was presumably spent on building the present pub (£12,000 went a long way then), which is why you can see Kay's monogram and crest on the building.

Draught Sixex

Stewart Revell

Holts have at last taken up a suggestion which CAMRA members have been making for years - they are providing cask conditioned Sixex on handpump. The brew is on trial in the following outlets:

Crown & Anchor	Manchester
Bulls Head	Eccles
Cleveland	Crumpsall
Derby Brewery Arms	Cheetham
Melville	Stretford
Roebuck	Flixton

Sixex has an ABV of 6%, comes in 22-gallon containers and is sold for 79p per half pint. If the trial is successful, the brewery will put the strong brew into more outlets. They are obviously hoping that many people will try a half-pint, and I'm sure we can all think of a few people who will be trying it by the pint!

The price of Holts mild and bitter was increased by 2p a pint at the start of November, so each beer is still under a pound - bitter is 98p, mild 92p.

Boddy guard

Our Welsh correspondent reports that BodPubCo is putting pressure on its managers to put pressure on Manchester's cream. Top pressure in the form of nitrogen/carbon dioxide will ensure a creamy head and make it easier to pump. No signs yet up here, but keep your ears open and your eyes peeled. If they can sell tinned beer as draught, this move ain't beyond them.

For Salford read

Egerton

Roy Seers, the former licensee of the very popular Salford Arms on Chapel Street, has unshackled himself from the clutches of Whitbread at last. He's done it by purchasing the ex-John Smiths pub across the road - the Egerton Arms on Gore Street. And what a transformation there has been. The Egerton has been redecorated in lavish style throughout - there are even chandeliers in the lounge!

All the facilities of the old Salford Arms have been transferred across and a vault has been created too. The usual value-for-money food is

on sale at lunchtimes to attract the regulars. One change from the Salford Arms is the beer range, which comprises Holts mild and bitter at 90p and 96p, and Marstons bitter and Pedigree at 110p and 135p. One feature not transferred to the Egerton is the piano on the ceiling. In sum, most surely a winner!



Take Courage

As What's Doing went to press, rumours about the future of Courage were unresolved. Both Whitbread and Scottish & Newcastle have been linked with takeover suggestions. Few people have anything positive to say about Courage (or about Grand Met and Innpreneur, for that matter) but would their acquisition by Whitbread or S&N be desirable?

If Whitbread are to take on Tetley in Yorkshire, they'd be better placed with a Yorkshire bitter - John Smiths or, God forbid, Websters. They might even keep Directors, but it would surely be the death knell of Wilsons and at least one of the breweries. Whitbread's record on closing breweries is second to none. Mind you, S&N's isn't all that wonderful, either. Remember Matthew Brown in Blackburn? Acquiring Courage might make sense to company strategists but for the punter it'll mean more badge brewing and loss of choice.

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Closed and Boarded Corner

In the city, the Imperial on London Road has been purchased by the Central Manchester Development Corporation. This has been done to encourage the development of the next door Joshua Hoyle building. The idea of an hotel for the Hoyle building and the Imperial re-emerging as a pub has already been mooted. Watch this space.

Over in Kersal, the troubled Castle (Greenalls) was demolished in late October. It had been closed for some time and suffered several fires. Local people campaigned for the building's removal - and got their way. The Castle's loss now leaves the area badly deficient in pubs; the only two left are the Kersal and the Racecourse Hotel. Perhaps the redevelopment taking place in the area will give planners the idea of having a community pub?



Lastly, in Hulme, the Grants Arms (BodPubCo) on Royce Road raises some questions. Our reporter thinks that the right hand side of the building suffered a fire as it is now boarded. The left side has lights on but the pub is not open. What can be going on?

Reopening News

Two pubs reopened in November. The first was John Smith's Lord Nelson on Newton Street, opposite the Frog & Bucket. No structural changes have been made, the pub has merely been brightened up by new decorations and carpet. The sole beer is John Smiths at 110p.

Meanwhile the Griffin, a Websters pub on Cheetham Hill Road, reopened mid-month and there appears to be little difference inside. The beers are all £1.20 and are currently John Smiths and Websters Yorkshire bitter.

Bank Sale

Former bank premises in School Road, Sale, are due to open shortly as The Bank in Sale. The beer is from - yes, you've guessed it - Banks's!

The Berwick Arms

FREE HOUSE

21 Carnarvon Street, Cheetham, Manchester. 061 832 4708

* * * * *

Open 12.00 until 11.00 Monday to Saturday
12.00 until 3.00 Sunday

* * * * *

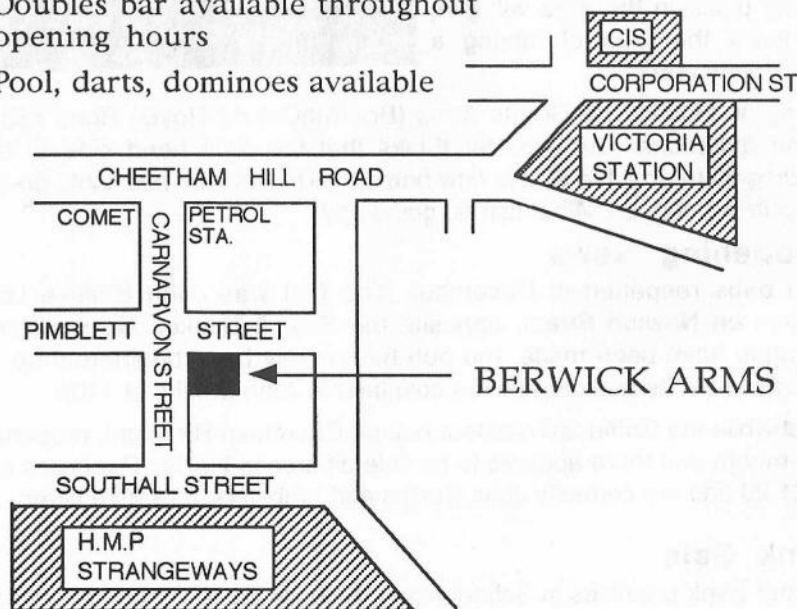
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etc.

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opening hours

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Middleton News

Peter Alexander

Some months ago I reported that the Oldham Road area of Middleton was becoming quite a decent place for a pub crawl, with a number of beers from a good selection of brewers. Since then, regrettably, things have taken a turn for the worse, with the usually dependable BRUNSWICK going through a very poor patch despite its 1995 GBG entry - the beer range had been cut and quality is variable. Also, still on Oldham Road, guest beers are seemingly a thing of the past at the ODDFELLOWS, although the Holts bitter remains in excellent condition alongside the Wilsons mild and bitter. To complete the dismal picture, beer at the RAILWAY, opposite the Brunswick, is often mediocre and mainly from the Websters range.

In fact, central Middleton is becoming a rather depressing place to drink, despite a goodly number of cask ale pubs. Lees dominate the pub scene and although their beer is usually excellent, one can get too much of a good thing. The guest ale scene seems to have bypassed Middleton, with even the big brewers' houses (mainly Bass) selling keg only, or bland stuff like Worthington Best Bitter. What is needed is a bit of good old fashioned enterprise. It seems to work everywhere else - surely Middleton drinkers aren't that different?

Any good news? Well yes, from two surprising sources. There's as good a pint of Boddies as you will get anywhere in the WAGGON & HORSES at Rhodes. Landlord Roy has been there for thirty years and drinks it himself - and there is a guest, usually Abbot Ale from Greene King. This is a totally unspoilt boozer à la 1950s, with four rooms, a pub cat and a coal fire. Worth trying. (The Rhodes Tandoori, opposite, isn't bad either.)

Finally, if you want a bit of choice in central Middleton, you will have to swallow your pride and go to the DUSTY MILLER in Middleton Gardens, a Whitbread Cask Ale House. The appearance of guest beers has been sporadic recently, apart from the Whitbread Connoisseurs collection, but there is always Taylors Landlord and Marstons Pedigree and, usually, Pendle Witch, together with Boddies and Chesters. Landlord Charlie is keen to increase his guest range but needs to get enough local interest to sustain the effort. Why not help him out? You can always purchase your WD there, the only Middleton outlet for it!

GBG '95

Owing to an oversight, the completed survey form for the Farmers Arms in Swinton failed to arrive at CAMRA HQ. Consequently the Farmers, which was again voted in, has been missed out of the guide. Apologies to Peter and Rose. With a bit of luck it will be back in '96.

Six of the Best

John Richards

Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries recently broke with post-war tradition and introduced six handpumped premium beers into a hundred outlets. The beers were launched by Head Brewer Richard Westwood on 26th September. They are marketed as "Six of the Best" and the promotion includes point-of-sale counter cards and full-colour posters bearing the legend "Richard Recommends".

Unfortunately, not a lot of imagination was put into the naming of the brews and all were released under the Banks's sign - Hanson's are now all but buried.

Fine Fettle	4.8% ABV
Belter	5.0
Timewarp	4.5
Scallywag stout	4.5
Teckers Winning Brew	4.5
Wizard	5.0

The price range is £1.40-£1.50 and the beers are distinctly flavoured, in marked contrast to the bland Banks's mild and bitter. There are specially designed pump-clips, some with very strange designs and all with bright, dazzling colours.

Acceptance of the new beers has been patchy, as Banks's core business in the Black Country is in the back street boozers, where price is important. The minimum drop was three firkins, sale or return. The three new Brewery Tap Houses - Tap & Spile lookalikes - sold out very quickly. Eighty of these emporia are planned.

The acceptance of the six beers will be assessed and one, maybe two, will be introduced across the Midlands to sell alongside Camerons Strongarm, Marstons Pedigree and Tap House guest beers.

Banks's have belatedly realised that their fonts look too much like keg dispensers and in certain areas this affects sales, so their tenants are now allowed to use handpumps. However, many tenants have refused to install handpumps as they have to pay the brewery for them and prices are high.

Swan change

On 9th August Sue and John Joyce moved from the Hope Inn in Oldham to become tenants at the Swan (Thwaites), Tottington Road, Bury. The pub sells mild, bitter and Craftsman; there's a full menu, with home-cooked main meals and bar snacks available at lunchtimes, and early evenings Monday to Friday. Opening hours are 12-3.30, 5-11pm Mon-Thurs; 11.30-11pm Fri-Sat; Sunday normal.

AIL

The Association of Innentrepreneur Lessees was launched at the Woolpack in Pendleton on 27th October. A previous organisation, NAIL, failed to continue after the bankruptcy of two of the leading lights. It is difficult to see what they're all moaning about - Innentrepreneur is a lovely landlord. Peter Charleson, the licensee of the Woolpack, has to pay a rent of only £37,000 p.a. for a super shed in a really posh area. The pub is worth £45,000, so the rent's a snip. The landlords make sure the pub keeps up its standards, because last year they made Peter spend £25,000 refurbishing the place.

Innentrepreneur leases are obviously a great success, with a failure rate of only 9.4% per annum. This means that your average licensee will remain in business for as long as ten years before going bankrupt.

AIL are using unfair tactics to publicise their campaign for fairer rents. They've published the home addresses of all the directors of Innentrepreneur. None of these are near Accrington or Dewsbury. What on earth is the point of sending stuff to Lord Sheppard, the Chairman, at his home address? What's he supposed to do when tons of bump lands on the doormat at Didgemere Hall, Low Hill Road, Roydon, Harlow, Essex CM19 5JN?

AIL should thank their lucky stars that their members are able to pursue their careers with freedom under the benign benevolence of a caring landlord. Pub failure is down to nasty foreigners and useless licensees and nothing to do with the alleged intransigence of Innentrepreneur and their failure to comply with Article 85.1 of the Treaty of Rome.

P.S. Perhaps as a result of continuing acrimony and unfavourable press coverage, Innentrepreneur is to be financially restructured. Grand Met will no longer manage the pubs and they will be managed as a pubs business, not as a property portfolio. It is expected that Grand Met will eventually float Innentrepreneur and quit the pub trade.

Altrincham News

The Malt Shovels has had a discreet refurbishment, involving redecoration, revarnishing and carpeting, and it is now much smarter than it has been of late. No other alterations have been made and the pub is as friendly and welcoming as before.

Changes are being made at Marston's Railway across the road. The pub has been shut for several weeks and judging by the amount of work going on, the interior will be altered considerably. Presumably it will reopen before Christmas.

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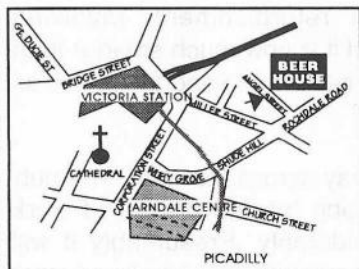
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No.5

Manchester Independents

Holts *in Salford*



Holts in Salford

Holts' Salford pubs include the old and the new, the large and the small, the busy and the slack. They are to be found scattered throughout the old city with a little concentration at Irlams o'th'Height.

Mild 3.2% ABV

Bitter 4.0% ABV

Red Lion

Bolton Road, Irlams o'th'Height (*Manchester end of shopping precinct*)

Buses: 8,12,26,28,30-1,35-9,129,225

Mild, Bitter (E)

The Red Lion is the oldest and most characterful of the three Holts houses on the Height, although its appearance is marred by the grey pebble-dash plastered over the blocked-off vault entrance. To reach the busy and still separate vault you must use a door inside the main porch; another door leads into the rest of the pub. This has been partially opened out over the years, but three distinct areas remain. There's the large and comfortable lounge running the full depth of the building, which must have been two rooms originally. Around the bar and at the foot of the large staircase with its original bottle green tiling, tables and chairs provide a second drinking area. Finally, in the rear left hand corner, there is a wedge-shaped 'snug'. Once a separate room, it is now visible from the bar over the top of a 'half-wall'.

Waggon & Horses

Bolton Road, Irlams o'th'Height (*Junction of Bank Lane*)

Buses: 8,12,26,28,30-1,35-9,129,225

Mild, Bitter (H)

Built in 1981, the Waggon & Horses has just received a badly-needed decoration. The exterior promises traditional pub architecture, but the inside disappoints somewhat. Back-to-back seating goes a little way towards breaking up the large lounge area, but the place still resembles a club more than a pub. The vault, or 'drinking box', on the other side of the bar, must be one of the most austere rooms in the Holts estate. Bench seats around the plain walls face inwards on to a vast floor area occupied by a solitary pool table.

Wellington

Bolton Road, Irlams o'th'Height (*Junction of Bank Lane*)

Buses: 8,12,26,28,30-1,35-9,129,125

Mild, Bitter (E)

This 1973 pub is the opposite of the Waggon. The exterior is a bit unwelcoming, whilst the inside is a pleasant surprise. Access at the front is up a forbidding flight of steps, but because it is built on a slope the back of the pub is on street level. Wheelchair access is via the inconspicuous door on the rear left hand side. The vault is long and high, with the ceiling following the slope of the roof. A high, windowless wall faces the bar, but narrow, horizontal windows at gutter level provide much-needed light to the rear. The large lounge, just recarpeted, is generously provided with tables and chairs to complement the wall seating. There is a third room, just too large to be described as a snug, which is reached from the lounge and served by its own section of the bar.

Union Tavern

Liverpool Street, Salford (*Between Oldfield Road and Albion Way*)

Buses: 10,11

Mild, Bitter (H)

The Union is a fine example of the traditional and popular Holts pub. Nowadays the building is surrounded by industrial property and commercial units, but it still boasts seven darts teams. Note the interesting wallpaper in the best room. The Union regularly appears in the Good Beer Guide.

Ashley Brook

Liverpool Street, Seedley (*250 yards from corner of Langworthy Road*)

Buses: 10,11,64,65,M10

Mild, Bitter (H)

A fairly recent addition to the Holts estate, the Ashley Brook is four years old this month. Planning permission and licence were first applied for in the 1920s, but were only granted in 1990 after a concerted effort led by the Rev Geoff Reid. The pub is very popular and has been in the Good Beer Guide since it opened.

Broadway

Broadway, Ordsall (*100 yards from corner of Trafford Road*)

Buses: 25,69,174 (52 from Pendleton)

Mild, Bitter (H)

A modern two-room replacement for a much earlier and larger building. The pub leads a dual life - at night it is a locals' pub; during the day it serves the needs of the nearby offices on Salford Quays. Look out for George in the vault. Food available at lunchtimes.

Old House at Home

Whit Lane, Pendleton (*200 yards from northern end of junction with Langley Road South*) *Bus: 27 (52 from Pendleton; 54,78 from Agecroft)*

Mild, Bitter (H)

At one time there were 14 pubs in the Charlestown area of Pendleton, now there are three. Of the two that still remain on Whit Lane, the Old House is the only one trading (the Kings Arms is boarded up). At a guess, the building dates from the 1930s and it has some nice features - the design is like no other Holts house. Some years ago changes were made which, sadly, meant the loss of the old bar. The result is, however, clean and convivial.

Bricklayers Arms

Ordsall Lane, Ordsall (*off Regent Road, corner of Woden Street*)

Buses: 25,33,63,71,73

Mild, Bitter (H)

A rather ordinary building design has been enlivened by the imaginative use of different colours of brick - most fitting for a pub of this name. The alternating bands of red and cream brick were left intact when in 1982 a sympathetic extension was added to the house. Although rather basic inside, this two-room pub provides the only Holts ales on this side of Ordsall since the sad closure of the nearby Sabre.

Eagle

Collier Street, Salford (*off Queen Street, off Blackfriars Road*)

Buses: 27,93-4,97,137-8,M10

Mild, Bitter (H)

One of only a few remaining pubs in the Greengate area of the old city, 'Lampoil's' is a small pub which caters for its faithful regulars and visitors from far and wide who've grown to love the place. The Eagle was the last Salford pub to gain a spirits licence and its beerhouse origins are evident in its basicness.

Winston

Churchill Way, Pendleton (*200 yards from Hankinson Way*)

Buses: 21,30,31,64-8,71,73,127,129

Mild, Bitter (E)

Another of those functional modern pubs that Holts seem to have designed as a job lot. There's a good, bustling atmosphere on market days and Saturday lunchtimes. New glass racks have been added above the bars recently.

Kings Arms

Oldfield Road, Salford (*Between Chapel Street and Liverpool Street*)

Buses: 10,11,25

Mild, Bitter (H)

Acquired from Wilsons in the 1980s, the Kings is located in an area of the city with few houses and consequently it's not the busiest of Holts' tied estate. There's a large vault at the front and a further room at the rear of the premises.

Hyde Park Corner

Silk Street, Salford (*Corner of Adelphi Street*)

Buses (with five minute walk): 27,93-4,97,137-8,M10 or any Chapel Street bus

Mild, Bitter (H)

Holts' newest Salford pub gets its name from a Tetleys pub on the same site which was knocked down some time ago. That name was a relic from an era when many parts of Salford were named after districts with enviable reputations - Windsor, Islington, etc. The pub is large, as most new Holts pubs are, with both a lounge and a vault. It is conveniently located near to the University annexe and near the recently gentrified flats in Adelphi.

Duke of York

Marlborough Road, Hightown (*Near corner of Heath Street*)

Buses: 137-8,148

Mild, Bitter (H)

Perhaps the most monumental of Holts' Salford pubs, the Duke is in Hightown, an area on the border between Manchester and Salford. One or two pubs on the Manchester side of the divide have encountered trouble and closed, so the area is somewhat underpubbed. The Duke, with its four rooms and extensive corridor drinking area, is not perhaps as busy as residential density would indicate.

Holly Bush Update

Peter Barnes

Local campaigners for this classic, thatched farmhouse pub at Little Leigh in Cheshire have won another round in their fight to preserve the place. First it was Greenalls (of Tommy Ducks infamy) who planned to convert the pub into country residences. Greenalls lost the fight to obtain planning permission for change of use, so they sold it to Real Inns Ltd, a pub company.

Real Inns then submitted plans for a large dining room extension which would destroy the character of the pub. The Planning Inspector commented that the Holly Bush is a very special kind of public house, the last of its kind in the country. In principle, small scale dining facilities would be permissible but "would need to reflect the character and ambience of the existing premises...due to its unique qualities any alterations need to be carried out with great sensitivity." That sensitivity was lacking and the planning appeal was dismissed. The North Cheshire Branch of CAMRA, Little Leigh Parish Council, Northwich and District Heritage Society, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Ancient Monuments Society are all celebrating.

Bridgewater to Melville

In 1991 Holts opened the new Bridgewater Hotel at Hollinwood to replace the original pub of the same name which was one of the many casualties of the widening of Manchester Road between Hollinwood and Oldham. The nearby Kings Arms was demolished in 1993, so the Bridgewater is now the only Holts pub in Oldham.

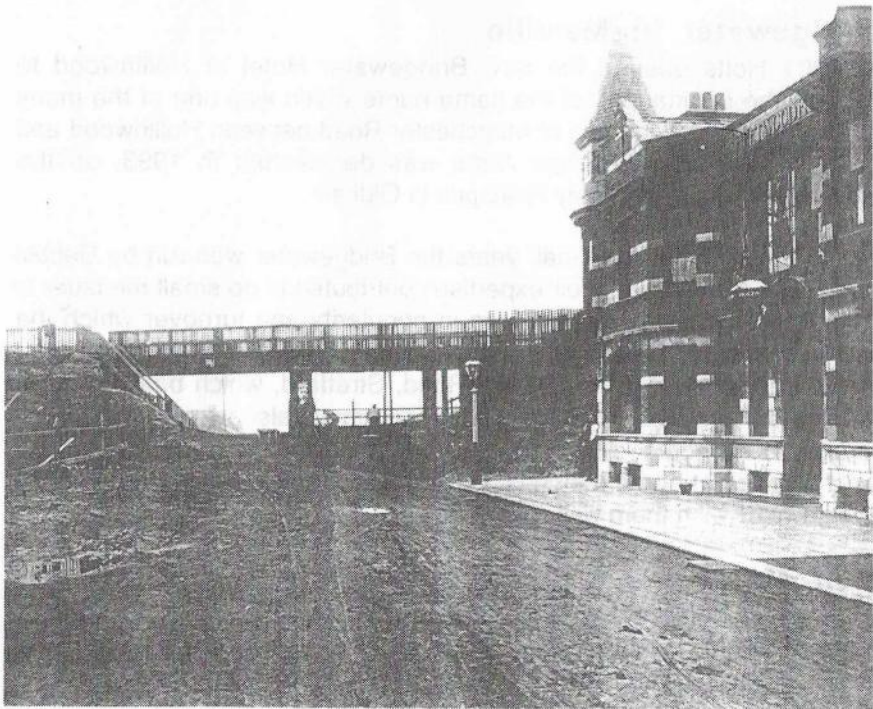
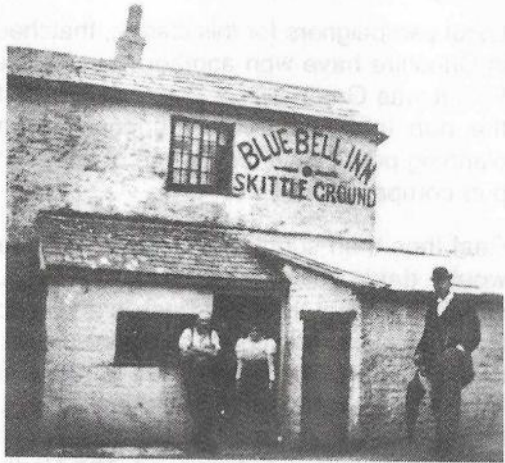
For the past three-and-a-half years the Bridgewater was run by Debbie and Frank Grimes and their expertise contributed in no small measure to the rapid and consistent increase in popularity and turnover which the pub has enjoyed. Debbie and Frank's success has been rewarded with a transfer to the Melville on Barton Road, Stretford, which boasts one of the highest turnovers of all Holts pubs. The move also takes Frank closer to his second home - Manchester United football ground - where he acts as a steward at home matches. Debbie and Frank's many friends at the Bridgewater wish them well.

Dun Mare

Alan Wright has recently taken over at the Good Beer Guide listed Dun Mare (Walkers) in Little Hulton, now that John Williams has retired. Alan, who has been in the trade for around nineteen years, has moved all of a quarter of a mile from 'Poor Dick's' (the Antelope).

Cheetwood

In last month's Independents feature on Holts in North Manchester, the Cheetwood Hotel and its predecessor, the Blue Bell in Cheetwood (right), were mentioned. The old village of Cheetwood was cleared away in the early 1900s and the land thereabouts levelled for some new streets. The photograph below shows the Cheetwood Hotel on 3rd July 1912, shortly after it was built, when Derby Street beyond Holts' brewery was just a muddy track, cutting through what was left of the countryside. Where Joseph Holt leads, civilization follows. Despite the pavement and the gas lamp on the corner, the pub's first, dedicated customers must have arrived home in a pretty muddy state!



Duty calls

It's one thing to call for cuts in beer duty, which is something we're all in favour of. It is something quite different to suggest that the difficulties our pubs face are a direct result of differences in duty. To claim, as What's Brewing did in November, that the Redruth Brewery in Cornwall went bust because of bootleg French lager is utter twaddle. Factories in other industries, where there is a level playing field, also close as we have seen only too often over the past four years.

Pubs are part of the leisure industry whether we like it or not and must compete with other attractions on which an increasingly affluent and leisured population can lavish attention. Price is only one of many factors which affect consumer choice. If the brewers sincerely believe that price is critical they should ask themselves:

- * Why are rents so high? £37,000 a year for a Pendleton shed is ludicrous.
- * Why are wholesale prices so high, when the brewers sell to supermarkets at half that price?
- * Why can some brewers sell at less than £1 a pint when others are over £1.30?

What it boils down to is that big brewers can no longer achieve the return on capital which they require from brewing and pub owning because of their own greed and incompetence. Cheaper beer, by all means, yes, but this won't be the white knight which saves our pubs. Reducing duty won't make a ha'p'orth of difference to the sad state of the industry. We shall have to wait and see.

Refurbishing in Sale

The Legh Arms at Sale Moor is undergoing a major refit and currently resembles a building site. Gone are the revolving doors and bar screens, the bar itself has been made smaller and the snug opened up more, making it less cosy. Openings have also been made between the vault and the 'concert room', so that the vault is no longer completely separate. The high quality fittings for which Holts are known and praised for do not seem to be much in evidence.

The Volunteer, also in Sale, is getting some attention when the workmen can be spared from the Legh Arms! Much needs doing here to improve the pub, but it remains to be seen whether the work that is being carried out will be sufficient to attract more customers.

Guests are
always welcome
at



ASHTON'S PREMIER
FREE HOUSE

With NINE beers on hand pumps
there are always interesting guest
beers - old favourites and also
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NEXT TO
BY-PASS



Letter

Unwelcome guest

Sir - When are Holts' quality people going to visit 'guest beer' outlets and taste the Holts beers on offer there? Or aren't they bothered that the bitter is sometimes not up to what it should be after it has been sold to the likes of Whitbread? On my many visits to a Whitbread house, the guest beer - Holts bitter at £1 a pint - seems good until the tasting. It is thin and lacks the distinctive Holts aroma. The handpump is next to the one dispensing Boddies and it makes me wonder if the two beers sometimes get 'mixed up'.

If things don't improve, I certainly hope Holts pull out of the guest beer market and keep their beers in their own splendid houses, where we're guaranteed quality.

D Hart

Supermarket Beers

Paul Roberts

Further to recent items in WD, surely the best supermarket value around is to be found in Morrisons. A 6 x 3ml bottle pack of Becker's Pils (4.9% ABV, brewed in St Ingbert, Germany) has been £2.89 over recent months. It is now down to £2.69, or just under 76p a pint. The beer is excellent, with a very strong hop flavour and aroma - a must for the Christmas drinks table! Beware the 10 x 25ml packs at £3.99, which work out at 89p per pint.

Also to be found on the shelves of Morrisons are half-litre bottles of Löwenbräu Oktoberfestbier from the 1994 'fest. This is 5.8% and costs £1.45 per bottle. It is imported by Löwenbräu UK in Richmond, Surrey, who are responsible for the latest line in posters on the hoardings. The good news is that all Löwenbräu is now brewed in Munich and imported. In the past, all but the Blue Label Export was brewed under licence by Allied in Wrexham and bore no resemblance whatsoever to the genuine product.

Planning News

A new café bar is planned for No. 8 Dorsey Street (off Tib Street) in an area of the city which remains blighted. A new pub in Piccadilly Village is also the subject of a planning application. The new premises would be near the canal between Store Street and Millbank Street - a rival to the Jolly Angler?

Fresh Bread

The Staff of Life on Rainsough reopened on 18th November. Rumours that Holts were buying the place don't seem to have materialised.

Now & Then

No.86

The Shack

Rob Magee
85 West Street, Oldham

Despite the name, The Shack is one of Oldham's historically interesting pubs. It was one of the town's first beerhouses, licensed under an 1828 law which permitted the sale of beer through a hatch or window into the street (that is, off the premises). Within days of the Beerhouse Act coming into effect in October 1830, the tenant, John Hodgson, obtained a new licence, put up the sign of the Piebald Cow and was open for business.

One of the first gatherings in the beerhouse was on 29th October, when a meeting of the local Reform movement was to have been held in the nearby Union Room. Only a dozen people turned up, so it was decided to adjourn to the Piebald Cow, thus setting an example followed by successive generations - if you must have a meeting, have it on licensed premises!

The house became known as the Spotted Cow, 'piebald' not being in the Oldhamer's usual vocabulary, and as with many of the early beerselling ventures, the premises were also used as a grocer's shop. By 1886 Oldham Brewery had an interest in the property, but it was in poor condition. Things improved when local brewers Jowett & Waterhouse took over in 1894 and two years later Wilsons were in charge.



At one time there were no fewer than eighteen licensed premises on West Street, but by the time I first went in the Spotted Cow in 1954 there were only eight left. Perhaps the best remembered licensee was Daniel Ferguson, who took over in 1972, got a full licence and saw some improvements made. The biggest change was in 1981, when an extension was built and this was often used for jazz gigs. The present licensee, Peter Shacklady, purchased the pub in 1992 and renamed it, appropriately, the Shack.

Crown & Kitchen

Congratulations to Express Newspapers for rescuing the Crown & Kettle. When they acquired the building from Grand Metropolitan it was riddled with dry rot and fire damaged. Now, in conjunction with their £7 million refurbishment of the old black glass newspaper building, they have bought up much of the property around, saved the best of it and are aiming to bring about much needed regeneration of the whole area.

But hang on - there is now talk of a restaurant in the building! Manchester cannot afford to lose a pub like this one. Not only is it a rare example of Victorian Gothic style in a public house, but like many pubs it is an integral part of Manchester's history, dating back to the eighteenth century.

Manchester City Centre has lost over seventy pubs in the last twenty-five years including, in the vicinity of the Crown & Kettle, O'Connell's Arms, Cheshire Cheese, St Vincents, Old White Bear, Ancoats Hotel and the Green Dragon. Surely there is a place for a pub like the Crown & Kettle in the new scheme of things? If Express Newspapers have any regard at all for the history and traditions of the area they will do the right thing and maintain the continuity of this pub which meant a lot to generations of newspaper workers.

Blue Bell

The Blue Bell at Monton reopened on Saturday 26th November after a £250,000 refurbishment, courtesy of new owners Scottish & Newcastle. In charge of the pub are Martin Chapman and Andrea Grierson. Martin will be remembered by local drinkers as the licensee of the nearby Good Beer Guide listed Park Hotel.

Real ales at the Blue Bell include Theakstons bitter and XB and Websters bitter. Food is available seven lunchtimes a week and the old downstairs function room, closed for several years, has been reopened.

Rupert

Whilst our government stumbles from crisis to crisis among increasingly frequent substantiated allegations of financial misconduct and amorous indiscretions, the Campaign is completely free from accusations of sleaze, I am happy to report. Admittedly there were suggestions some years ago that the entire boss group bathed in asses' milk at the annual jamboree but these gross slurs were proved to be inaccurate. Similarly, imputations of impropriety during the reign of Nora Tackler were unfounded. And, of course, a silence remains forever over the Humphrey Dumpty affair.

No, I am delighted to inform our readers that the Campaign is squeaky clean and free from bribery and corruption. It might have been thought that Opening Tripe was compiled from the scribbblings of paid infiltrators who had been suborned to write incoherent tripe and thereby bring the entire edifice crashing about Charlie Super's ears. This, however, is manifestly untrue. They sincerely believe what they are writing and are trying their hardest. Moreover, the readership loves it as month after month more copies are churned out and given away. Never knowingly undersold, eh?

And what about the big boys' mag,

the Campaign organ itself? You could be forgiven for imagining, for a fleeting moment, that the editor had been tempted by the odd bundle of smackeroos to nail the Campaign's colours firmly to the amber nectar manufacturers' mast in their endeavour to remove the tax on beer. Why else, you might think, would a sensible, if somewhat pompously euphuistic, person side with the enemy? Well, strange as it may sound, no folding has changed hands and no palms have been greased. Yes, that's right, Boris Pratt and his pals have swallowed the brewers' guff hook, line and sinker. They are really convinced that the ills of the British hostelry can be laid at the door of the dastardly Frogs and a few Arthur Daleys and that Ken's magic wand will make things hunky-dory once again.

It's great to see such honesty shining through. At the end of the day would you rather be stranded on a desert island with:-

- a) a naïve simpleton
- b) a jack-the-lad opportunist
- c) a nymphomaniac with massive knockers / a hunky male stripper with giant naughties
- d) Billy Bog
- e) ten records and the complete works of Shakespeare?

(What's this got to do with it? - Ed)

Contributors to this issue: Paul Roberts, Roger Hall, Stewart Revell, Rob Magee, Mark McConachie, Peter Cash, Michael Lynn, John Richards, Peter Barnes, Tony Flynn, Dennis Hart, Keith Egerton, Peter Alexander.

Branch Diary

Bolton

Thur 1 Dec 8.30pm. Branch Meeting, Sweet Green Tavern, Crook Street. Includes nominations for Good Beer Guide 1996

Wed 14 Dec, Trip to Cains Brewery. Depart Bolton 5.30pm. £3.50 plus transport, includes two free pints and light buffet. Minimum 12, non members welcome. Book with Paul Warbrick (01204) 708645

Wed 28 Dec, Crawl & Curry. 7.30pm Dog & Partridge, 8pm Man & Scythe, 8.30pm Malt & Hops, 9.30pm Clifton, 10pm York, 10.30pm Sweet Green Tavern. Then 11.15pm Sunar Gaw, Manchester Road. Book for curry with Richard Spedding (01204) 61244

Thur 5 Jan, Branch Meeting & Pub of the Year presentation - details from Branch Contact. Includes nominations for Good Beer Guide 1996

Thur 19 Jan 8pm, Good Beer Guide 1996 shortlisting meeting, Pilkington Arms, Derby Street. Note early start.

Contact: Judith Spragg 01204 595342 (h), 01204 397350 (w)

North Manchester

Wed 7 Dec, Swinton Crawl: Foresters, Chorley Road, 7pm; Moorside Farm, Moorside Road, 8.30pm; White Horse, Worsley Road, 9.30pm

Sat 10 Dec, Saturday Social: Sair Inn, Linthwaite

Wed 14 Dec, Social, Dock & Pulpit, Encombe Place, Salford

Sat 17 Dec, Regional Meeting, Edington Arms, Hindley, 1pm. Followed by crawl of Wigan town centre.

Wed 21 Dec, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford, 8pm

Wed 28 Dec, Christmas Crawl & Curry: Unicorn, Church Street, noon; Castle, Oldham Street, 1.30pm; Cuckoo Chef, Oldham Street, 4pm.

Wed 4 Jan, Irlams o'th'Height Crawl: Dog & Partridge 7pm, Waggon & Horses 7.30pm, Wellington 8pm, Red Lion 9pm.

Contact: Roger Hall 740 7937

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 6 Dec, Branch Meeting, Gardeners, Millbottom, Waterhead, Oldham

Tues 13 Dec, Christmas Social, Welcome Inn, Bury Old Road, Whitefield

T.B.A. - What's Doing Collation - phone contact for details.

Tues 3 Jan '95, Branch Meeting, Clarence, Bolton Street, Bury

Contact: Peter Alexander 0532 324023 (w), 061 655 4002 (h)

WHAT'S DOING contributions should be sent to the editor c/o 88 Ringley Road, Stoneclough, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1ET. News, letters, etc, must arrive by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

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