

25p

What's Doing

JUNE 1997



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

SALFORD PUBS SURVEYED



Another Salford pub was damaged by fire last month. The Royal Archer on Lower Broughton Road has joined the growing list of pub casualties in the city. See *Salford City Survey* in this issue.

Also in this issue:

- * Wetherspoons in Bury - Paul Roberts gets critical.
- * Wetherspoons in Middleton - John Willie shapes up.
- * Traditional mild - the classic beer.
- * Mark McConachie goes supping in Summit and Shore.
- * Pub news from near and far.
- * Tales from Hydes Anvil and Joey Holt goes Ape.
- * Humulus Lupulus on everything you wanted to know about malt mills but were afraid to ask.

Lees Draw up Battle Plans

Paul Roberts

The prospect of competition from J D Wetherspoon on their own doorstep has prompted Lees to consider the future of their Middleton town centre houses.

The Britannia, Delaney's and the Middleton Archer are directly concerned, as is the Assheton Arms (reported in the March WD). Lees' Marketing Director, William Lees-Jones, admits that the brewery is worried about the new Wetherspoons development in the town. Refurbishment of their pubs seems to be the best option - but perhaps Lees should consider more ways of attracting mature drinkers and getting rid of the 'kids'. Removal of pool tables and jukeboxes, discos, karaokes, etc, would seem a sensible first step.

Mr Lees-Jones told the *Middleton Guardian* that Wetherspoons could poach 10% of trade from town centre outlets and in certain cases that 10% was the profit margin of those pubs. Lees' research shows its beer accounts for more than half the local market, but as they own over half the pubs that is hardly a shock!

Trafford tales

Regulars at the Bleeding Wolf and residents on Ashley Road, Hale, are facing another challenge from Whitbread. Previous attempts to make unsympathetic changes to the pub resulted in victories for the locals, but now the brewery wants to extend the pub and dig up the bowling green to provide a car park.

In Partington, both village centre pubs, the Greyhound (Vaux) and the King William IV (Marstons) on Manchester Road are closed. The latter, a former Good Beer Guide entry, is boarded up. Local drinkers now have to go to the two estate pubs or to Partington Social Club, next door to the Greyhound, which sells well kept Tetley bitter and mild.

The Bird in Hand on Flixton Road, Flixton, has been selling guest beers recently, but at 97p per half pint (for the 4% Burtonwood Forshaws Bitter) they are a trifle expensive. A half of Joeys at the nearby Roebuck can be had for 46p less!

Bridgewater Reopens

What was Worsley's only remaining community pub has reopened after a half-a-million-plus facelift. The beer's gone up 15p a pint. Quite a hike, but even at that price they'll have to sell four million pints to pay for the facelift out of additional profits. A thousand pints a day for ten years. So that's all right then.

Salford City Survey

In late April members of the North Manchester branch of CAMRA toured the pubs of inner-city Salford. Mark McConachie reports...

Our survey was of necessity split into two visits. Visit One began at the **Braziers** (BodPubCo), where Boddies was the sole cask offering at 128p. The mild had gone keg, sadly, and it was the same story over the road at the **Black Friar** (also BodPubCo). Here, though, the Boddies was 4p a pint cheaper. Just around the corner, the **Queen Victoria** (formerly the Globe) was unexpectedly shut. This pub had flirted with Tetley bitter at one time.

A quick sortie into Lower Broughton found the **Unicorn** (Whitbread) boarded and the nearby **Royal Archer** (Gibbs Mew) burnt out. Over in the little-known Cambridge industrial area, Greenalls' **Palatine** was still keg, whilst the **Albert** had been spruced up and was selling Worthington BB at 130p. Next, it was across the Irwell via the Cottenham Lane footbridge to Springfield Lane and the **King William IV** (free). Despite the presence of a Boddies wicket, the beer was nitrokeg Boddies. Incidentally, readers intending to use the aforementioned footbridge should note that the city council are going to close it in the evenings in an attempt to thwart criminal activity on the estate.

Over Trinity Way, the **Cornerhouse** (ex Three Legs of Man) is now operating as an hotel - no beer here. Holts' **Eagle** (*below*) on Collier Street proved as popular as ever, with both mild (96p) and bitter (102p) being reasonable. On to Chapel Street and the **Old Ship** (BodPubCo), where the only offering was Boddies once again, this time at 130p. Gibbs Mew's **Black Lion** still sticks resolutely to keg beer, while Tetley's **Punch Bowl** offers Tetley bitter - no surprise there, then. A couple of us finished Visit One with a quick one in the **Crown** (BodPubCo?) on Blackfriars Street. Ex-Moulders (Ancoats) licensee Alan Southgate is working as relief manager there and the Boddies and Flowers IPA seemed on good form.

Visit Two of the survey began a week

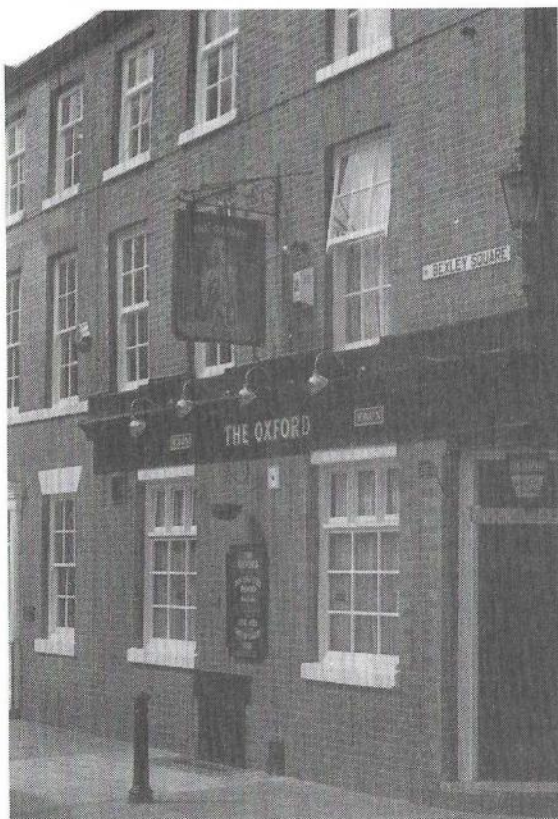


later on Chapel Street at the **Olde Nelson** (Whitbread). This pub is full of character and has a nice mirror collection. Four beers were on - Chesters mild, Trophy, Boddies and Lees bitter (108p). Outside the courts in Bexley Square, Vaux's **Oxford** (*below*) was not selling mild, despite the pumpclip, but was doing cask Samson at 130p. Greenalls' **Church** around the corner is still keg, whilst the Peel Park (IEL) was selling J Smiths and Grays BB at £1. The **Bell Tower** (ex Angel) was still keg.

Into Adelphi next. The **Town Hall Tavern** is still boarded after many years. The **Dock & Pulpit** offers the drinker a good choice, with D&P bitter at £1 and at least three other beers and a draught cider always on. Heading towards Silk Street, we found the Squealing Pig had become the **Lima** again. This time, though, the 'New Lima' was selling only Whitbread keg products. We passed the boarded-up **Brewery Tavern** (Burtonwood) on our way to the **Hyde Park Corner** (Holts). The bitter can be relied upon, but the mild may not always be available. The pub seemed fairly quiet, too.

Up to the **Old Pint Pot** (ex Adelphi Riverside), where a re-badged house beer is always on (usually Matthew Brown bitter). It's a shame they don't put more emphasis on producing and promoting their own in-house brews. Two more pubs are worth a mention. The **Jollies** (Lees) on Oldfield Road is now in the hands of a management company on Lees' behalf. The licensee comes from the now closed Top View in Sholver; only bitter is on. The **Salford Arms** is still doing fairly well and has Grays Premium (4.8%) at £1 a pint.

The changes in Salford have been quite dramatic, with more pubs closing or changing use and a steady swing away from cask ales to the new highly promoted nitrokeg offerings. A few pub oases stand out, but the future looks pretty bleak.



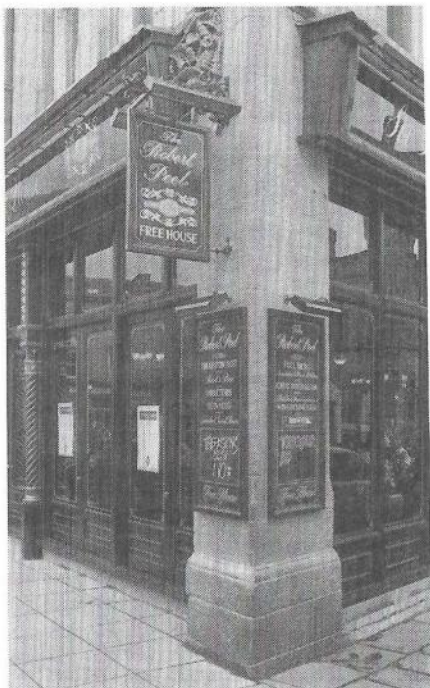
Bury Bobbies

Paul Roberts

Wetherspoon's latest, the Robert Peel (*below*), opened in Bury Market Place on April 30th. The beer range was disappointing, with the usual Theakston and Scottish Courage products supplemented by two Thwaites 'guest brews'. At £1.60 a pint for a 4.3% product, these were not exactly in line with Wetherspoon's value-for-money policies! However, the usual good value meals were on offer: bar food is served at all times and this is very much a plus point for the Wetherspoons organisation.

The pub (in the former Bury Corporation Transport offices building) has been fitted out to the company's usual high standards, although I was disappointed with the Robert Peel theme. Wetherspoons usually adopt the theme of the previous occupancy of the building and it would have been nice to have a transport theme - especially as the building is a stone's throw from the East Lancashire Railway and the Bury Transport Museum.

There is a Tussaud's-type statue of a 'Peeler' in the window which is quite realistic, although it wasn't realistic enough to deter the rather basic clientele present on my early evening midweek visit. Bar service seemed to be below the normal Wetherspoon standard and the company's laudable policy of no smoking at the bar wasn't being enforced.



Verdict - very disappointing after such a long wait. Some decent good value beer would be appreciated!

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

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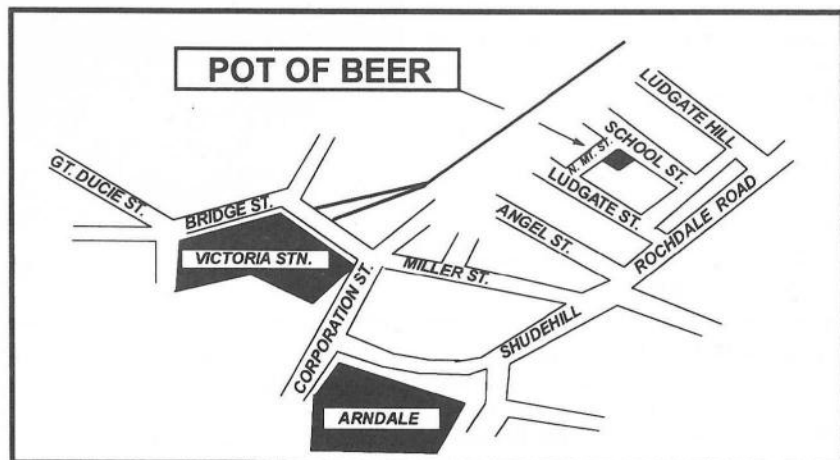
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Middleton News

Peter Alexander

A combination of a few days off and Lees' Passport scheme has allowed me to stray from my usual haunts and report from some Middleton pubs rarely mentioned in these pages. First, on the Passport scheme I can strongly recommend Lees' **Junction** opposite the brewery, both for fine beer quality and the rather attractive interior with excellent tiled floors and a genuinely warm atmosphere. Likewise, the **Ring o'Bells** in St Leonards Square and the **Boarshaw Hotel** are worth visiting as genuinely attractive pubs in their own right. On the other hand, I enjoyed less my visits to the rather down at heel **Cotton Tree** on Boarshaw Road and the somewhat boisterous vault in the **Old Cock** near Mills Hill Station. Nevertheless, both these pubs, while not to my taste, had an enthusiastic local following which means they are certainly thriving and viable. Good for them! Almost all of the beer sampled was in very good condition.

Best beer so far? That was to be found in the **Britannia** in Middleton Gardens (*below*), although you should bear in mind this, like my other comments, is a snapshot only - try for yourself. I have certainly enjoyed the Lees Passport initiative and recommend it as a way of trying out different pubs. Middleton has compared favourably with other areas visited, both for the quality of the beers in Lees houses and the pubs themselves, which have been, in the main, splendid.



Two new(ish) refurbishments next. First, the **Albion** on Wood Street, opposite Aldi (where there are some good bargains in German beers). This Boddingtons (Greenalls) house is now the **Albion Sports Bar**, aimed at a predominantly young clientele. Complete with games machines of every sort and big screen televisions, the pub would not appear to be fertile ground for good cask beer. It started off last December with three cask beers and to my surprise, given the lager/bottle drinking types who go there, it still has three: Boddies bitter, Tetley bitter and Greenalls - all on handpump and all in good nick in the middle of April.

The second refurbishment is at the **Railway** on Townley Street - nicely done, mainly in wood, by the Devonshire Pub Co. Cask beer is Tetley bitter, also in very good condition when I called, despite being somewhat lost in a thicket of nitro keg founts. Further up Wood Street, the Whitbread-owned **Woodman** again surprised me by providing a pint of Chesters mild in exemplary condition despite my calling at the quietest part of the afternoon. Well done! Boddies bitter is also available in cask and apparently in nitro form.

Out in faraway Rhodes, the **Waggon & Horses** (ex-Boddies), now a busy free house, has been dispensing Uncle Joe's amber nectar at £1.05 a pint. Good condition, too. Boddies cask is also available, although the beer range seems to vary and the cask Tetley has been replaced by the nitro keg version. Along Manchester Road, back towards Middleton, the **Barbers Arms** (Mercury Taverns) has a large banner inviting us to try their new range of beers. I haven't yet, but this pub has been all keg as long as I can remember. I'll let you know if anything's changed.

Returning briefly to the Lees theme, the **Lancashire Fold** on Kirkway has new managers, Julie and Phil from the Rose of Lancaster replacing 'three in a row' Good Beer Guide entrants Steve and Sharon. In accordance with local CAMRA policy, the Lancashire Fold drops out of the 1998 Good Beer Guide owing to change of licensee. The Middleton pubs selected for the 1998 GBG are the **Crown** (right) on Long Street and the **Tandle Hill Tavern**. Congratulations to both!

Finally, I couldn't let the recent spate of letters about Wetherspoons in Middleton go without comment. Wetherspoons will bring to Middleton a new range of real ales plus a weekly guest beer, a no smoking area, food

from opening time until late in the evening, no fruit machines, no music, no recycled or returned beer, a no-quibble guarantee if not satisfied and high standards of service and decor. Not one pub in Middleton offers **all** of those. Nuff said?



Letters

Middleton matters (continued)

Sir - No, Paul (Roberts - letter in May issue replying to mine in April), I did not miss your point **completely** about Middleton pubs where you can have a quiet pint, but I do appreciate now that your accent was on the word 'quiet'!

Living near the Joiners Arms as you say you do, you are clearly the better judge of noise bombardment. Despite the evidence you bring to bear on all the Middleton matters under discussion, and even though the Joiners may not be **your** oasis, it is a gem and typical of the dwindling number of small, characterful pubs coming increasingly under threat from the 'big boys', in this case Wetherspoons. I hope Wetherspoons' halo, as painted by Paul, is supported by the facts should their Middleton pub come into being.

Yes, I do know OB bitter of old (going back as far as the 1950s!) and I agree it is a tragedy that Oldham Brewery is no more (thanks to Boddingtons). Apparently the substitute brew is now under threat from Greenalls, but meanwhile the current production is an excellent pint of cask conditioned bitter, still being kept well by Duggie, the new landlord at the Joiners.

As for Paul's tilt at John Willie Lees (a deservedly surviving member of the smaller brewers' fraternity), his proposed name (Moon Over Greengate!) for the Wetherspoon emporium is a load of moonshine - how about 'Paul's Retreat'?

I think we both have at heart the continuance of one of the best features of British life, namely the cosy, characterful pub, selling top-class traditional beers in an acceptable social environment with no one group of people dominating in their tastes, whether it be music or whatever. **If** the 'emporium' style can fulfil this and not hasten the demise of pubs like the Joiners Arms, Ring o'Bells, Hare & Hounds (Oldham Road) and others like them in Middleton, then I would be in favour. But are the two styles compatible; can they coexist economically? I fear not, but fervently hope I am wrong.

Mike D White

Manchester Beer Festival

Sir - As Chair of the Manchester Beer Festival Committee, may I thank Gary Page for his kind comments about the event last year. I was surprised, however, to read his statement that the organisers need to 'get their act together' and let people know what is going on regarding the festival's future. Mr Page must be the only person in Manchester unaware that the IRA bombed the Royal Exchange last June, with the consequence that the theatre has relocated temporarily to our festival venue, the Upper Campfield Market building. Repairs to the Royal Exchange building are progressing well and the festival should be back in business at some point in 1999. Be assured that *What's Doing* readers will be the first to know.

Paul Mason

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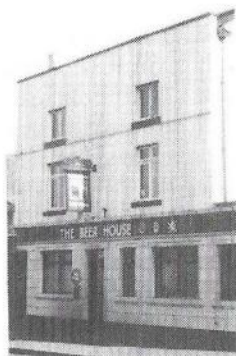
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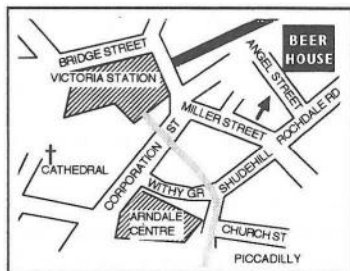
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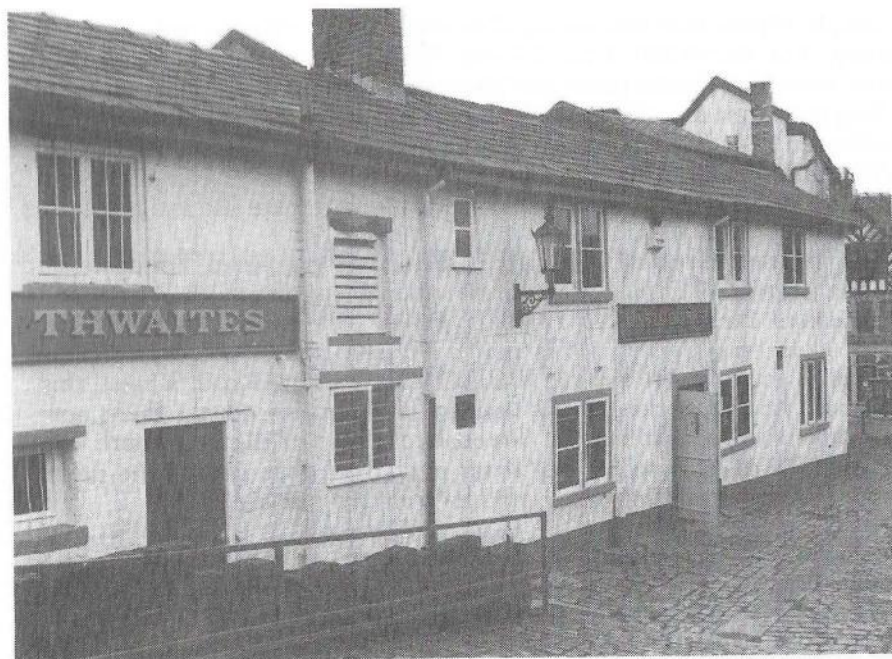
Dave White

Wigan CAMRA branch held its AGM at the new-look ORWELL free house, Wigan Pier, on 14th May. The interior of this long-standing Good Beer Guide entry looks more like a pub than of old, with several separate drinking areas, though the noise emanating from the television remains inescapable, at least in the evenings.

The 1996 Pub of the Year award went to another GBG regular, the BIRD I'TH'HAND, Gidlow Lane, Springfield. The 'Hen 'ole' has been runner-up for this prestigious presentation more times than I care to remember, despite selling Tetley mild and bitter in immaculate condition, and a varying range of guest ales. Congratulations go to licensee Allan Houghton and staff. (The date of the presentation has yet to be decided).

There have been a few changes in the town centre. HARTLEY'S EMPORIUM (the WHITE HORSE of yore) on Standishgate has reopened, retaining real ale in the form of Burtonwood bitter and Top Hat. The JOHN BULL CHOPHOUSE (*below*), Coopers Row, was closed at the time of writing, because of improvements to the lavatories, but this Thwaites pub might be open again by the time you read this. Nearby on Wallgate, O'NEILL'S Irish Bar, which I mentioned last month, sells no real ale, and the mild at the RAVEN HOTEL (Tetley-Walker) is now keg.

Cask-conditioned mild has disappeared from two pubs in Ashton-in-Makerfield: the COMMERCIAL (Burtonwood) and the EAGLE & CHILD



(Greenalls), both on Heath Road. The former, a GBG entry, sells a dependable drop of Burtonwood bitter and Top Hat, whereas the E & C sells Boddies from the spare handpump.

Elsewhere in Ashton, Thwaites' PIT PONY, Low Bank Road, sells no real ale at all now, in spite of the handpull for bitter on the bar. The beer front is brighter at the BAY HORSE, however, which sells groovy guest ales alongside Greenalls bitter, Original and Stones bitter. This hack enjoyed a pint of Dent Ramsbottom on a recent call, whilst admiring the traffic on Warrington Road from the conservatory.

Just when it seems that the hostelryes of Ince-in-Makerfield can't get any worse, they get worse. Vaux's MANLEY HOTEL (one of the better pubs) on Ince Green Lane is closed yet again and up for sale. On Belle Green Lane, the ENGINEERS ARMS (another Vaux) is closed, without any 'For Sale/To Let' boards. The mild and guest beer have gone from the PARK HOTEL, Manchester Road, leaving only the uninspiring Wilsons bitter on the bar in cask form.

Other pubs in the area that are currently closed are the QUEENS HEAD, Fingerpost, Aspull (Tetley) although parts of the building are lit up at night, and the BALMORAL, a dire keg Matthew Brown hotel on Atherton Road, Hindley, which is boarded up and to let. Another of Matty's, the SIMMS ROAD HOTEL, Garswood Road, Garswood is closed, but only for renovation.

A couple of pubs that have managed to stay open are offering real value-for-money. The BANNER, Chapel Field, Hindley, has replaced Stones best bitter with John Smiths bitter and Theakstons Old Peculier, the latter brew selling at an amazing £1.26 a pint! Beware the Smiths Smooth, though. The Tadcaster beer can be supped for as little as £1 a pint at the NEW ENFIELD, Enfield Street, Pemberton. The pub is thriving under a new landlord; Wilsons mild and Websters Yorkshire Bitter are also available.

News in brief: Greenall's GOLDEN BALL, Wigan Road, Landgate, is trading again (*see WD May*), but real ale was not in evidence when I popped in recently... the RAILWAY HOTEL, Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge, has lost its cask Tetleys and is now a fizz-only zone... not even topless waitresses could fan life into the FLAMINGO, Vauxhall Road, Scholes; this Greenalls boozer is now up for auction, but remains open... there now appear to be new houses in Greenslates Road, Billinge, where the COLLIERS ARMS used to be (it was pitch-dark when your scribe drove past). The Tetley pub had been closed for many months.

Finally, local CAMRA member Ed Mather is writing a history of Wigan's bygone breweries. If there is anyone out there with nuggets of information on the subject, please write to Ed at: 29 Queensway, Wigan, WNI 2HR.

Holts corner

Stewart Revell

You know, it's very strange, like waiting for an LUT bus in the old days. You stand at the bus stop for ages and ages and then, just as you are about to give up, three arrive all at once! Well, it's been a bit like that with Holts news over the past two months. There's not been a lot to report, just business as usual, ticking over in a somewhat depressed market but managing to stay ahead of the competition.

Now information about Joeys is pouring in. First, there is news regarding the mild promotion. Posters will be appearing in Holts pubs and each pub is being issued with a quantity of specially marked glasses. I am assured these glasses are not for sale and they will not be leaving the pubs! (As I write I see a few pink animals - short snouts, curly tails - flying overhead.) For Holts to promote their mild in this way is quite exceptional, not to say unique. Advertising for Joeys beers has, in the past, been confined to the point of sale - pump clips and beer mats.

Holts mild accounts for about one in five of all pints sold. Some pubs do sell a higher proportion of mild but others sell less, say one pint in fifteen. I hear that the 5% Diamond Lager is doing very well at £1.22 a pint (not that we are at all bothered about this).

The mild from Joeys has its own distinctive flavour and is often the preferred drink by many who frequent Holts pubs, whether CAMRA members or not. At only 96p a pint, I can see why.

The second item of news is that, at last, a name has been chosen for the new outlet under construction in John Dalton Street, Manchester. It has been decided to call the pub the Ape & Apple. Owing to horrendous site conditions (there has been a complete re-build from the inside), the opening will now be at the end of August or early in September, providing no further problems arise.

1997 GBGs

If Santa didn't put a Good Beer Guide in your stocking, worry not. They're still available - at a discount - to purchasers of *What's Doing*. Call at the Dock & Pulpit, Encombe Place, Salford, and pick up your copy for only £6. Hurry while stocks last.

Closed and Boarded Corner

There are steel shutters all over the Osborne House (Banks's) in Collyhurst. This closure makes it 100% for Banks's in the area, as the Osborne joins the nearby and long-closed Robert Tinker. Would former owners Wilsons have fared any better?

Contributors to this issue: Paul Mason, Paul Roberts, Roger Hall, Pete Cash, Roger Wood, Keith Egerton, Mark McConachie, Stewart Revell.

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Up the Summit

The summit in question is the area of Littleborough where the names of the villages begin with the letter S. Thus we find Summit, Stansfield and Shore. WD sent Mark McConachie up to the hills...

The appropriately-named Summit Inn (Thwaites) is the last of four pubs on Todmorden Road before you cross into West Yorkshire. It's a pleasant, stone-built house close to the Rochdale Canal, which runs parallel to Todmorden Road. There appears to have been a refurbishment of late, but the pub is none the worse for it, and two beers were on - Thwaites bitter (140p) and Daniels Hammer (158p).

A three minutes' walk in the direction of Littleborough takes you to the Huntsman (Websters) which sells, surprisingly, Websters Yorkshire Bitter at 138p. This pub is an open-plan affair, but quite pleasant nonetheless. Evidence that there was once a greater selection of beers is displayed on the walls.

After a further two minutes' walk you come to the Sportsmans Rest (formerly the Dog & Partridge), which reopened in April after being closed for nearly two years. It is now owned by P.J.PubCo, a company which has four or five pubs that are fairly well spread - one in Clayton le Moors and another in Flowery Field, for example. The Sportsmans Rest has been refitted in a restrained style, with signed sports shirts and many sporting photos around the new central bar. At 125p a pint, the two beers - Boddies and Tetleys - offer good value for the area, and they are served in oversize, lined glasses too - a most welcome practice. A £1 a pint 'happy hour' is in operation 5pm-7pm Monday to Friday and 12noon-3pm on Sunday.



The Caldermoor

A little way down the road is the Gale (Theakstons) which used to sell cask ale, but now it is on nitrokeg only. It's a shame, really, as the place not only looks good, it is busy and has a good atmosphere, which can be put down to a long serving licensee who is now retiring. His wife's needlework picture of the pub is outstanding! By the way, the Gale gets its name from a plant that was used in brewing beer many years ago, and not from ferocious winds.

You can get to these pubs from Rochdale via the 589 and 590 buses; the 457 takes you close, too.

The village of Stansfield offers nothing for the pubgoer, so it was on to the Caldermoor (Wilsons) on Calderbrook Road. Note that this is at the Littleborough end and not the Stansfield end of the road. From the outside, the Caldermoor is a good looking, 200-year-old house, but it is rather plain inside. Websters Yorkshire Bitter at 136p had few takers; those on bitter preferred Smith's Smooth. This pub should be watched as it may lose its only cask beer.

The Caldermoor and the next pub, the Dyers Arms, can be reached by the 454 and 588 services from Rochdale (daytime only, not Sundays). The Dyers is a two-room Bass house of some character on Whitelees Road - unfortunately it sells no real beer.

The last pub is a ten minutes' walk away up Shore Road, or you could get the 454 bus to its terminus, the King William IV. This Whitbread house affords great views over the valley from the top of Shore village. There's a strong emphasis on food here, yet the pub offers three cask ales - Chesters mild, Boddies and Flowers IPA. The mild is 138p.

All in all, there are some very nice pubs 'Up the Summit' for those who enjoy a walk round different parts of Greater Manchester.

Anvil Tales

Keith Egerton

The Rochdale, Oldham & Bury branch of CAMRA visited Hydes Brewery on 30th April and were treated to an interesting and illuminating tour. The efforts that Hydes have made towards improving their products and image are now beginning to pay off and in contrast to those of many brewers, their cask ales are no longer in decline. In fact sales are slightly increasing, particularly the reformulated mild.

Sales of Billy Westwoods are steady and the introduction of the Nitrokeg Anvil Smooth appears to be affecting sales of cider, lager and Guinness rather than cask ales. This is exactly as the brewery had hoped: they see the nitrokeg as a transitional beer which lager and cider drinkers will try, and then graduate to the real stuff. During R.O.B.'s visit, unpasteurised samples of the Special Smooth were provided for blind tasting, which proved interesting.

'I Never Drink Mild'

Phil Stout

When I hear someone complaining about the quality of the bitter he is drinking and suggest he tries a pint of mild instead, I often get the reply, 'Oh, I never drink mild.' This strange confession has me baffled. After all, mild is made from the same basic ingredients as bitter. Unless you judge a beer solely by its strength, the most important factor must surely be its flavour and quite a lot of milds have far more flavour than some bland bitters, such as those from Worthington, Stones and Tetley.

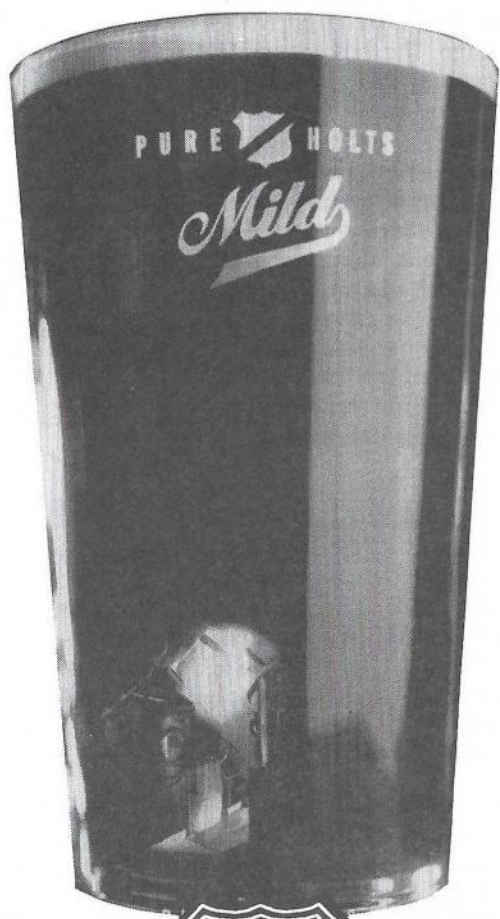
Mild ales were created in the nineteenth century to slake the thirst of the working population who wanted a beer with a lower gravity than the bitters, which were then far stronger than the standard bitters brewed today. These milds remained the most popular selling beers up to the 1960s, when the brewing industry came under the influence of accountants and marketing men. They decided that mild ale, along with the public bar, had a cloth cap, working class image and had to go. So at vast expense bitter, with its lounge bar, smarter image was widely promoted and advertised. This was especially so for the keg bitters which were appearing at that time.

The industrial North West of England used to be a stronghold for mild drinkers: mild outsold bitter by a long way and most of the breweries in the area produced two milds, a light and a dark. Sadly, mild today accounts for only a small percentage of local beer production and breweries which produce two are few and far between. One local company still brewing two milds is Robinsons, although the dark best mild is sold in very few outlets. However, one pub, the Castle on Oldham Street, Manchester, sells both milds, so an interesting comparison can be made.

Some classic dark milds to look out for include those brewed by Batemans, Cains, Crown Buckley and Moorhouses. Although they are not widely available in Greater Manchester, there is a chance of finding them in the Beer House on Angel Street, Manchester. This pub is to be commended for having a guest mild policy. Another interesting dark mild is Sarah Hughes Original Dark Ruby Mild. At 6%, this can definitely not be called weak and insipid! An excellent light mild to look out for is Timothy Taylors Golden Best. There is also a Timothy Taylors dark mild, which is Golden Best with caramel added. Of the locally brewed milds, the most outstanding by far is that from Joseph Holt. This can taste more bitter than a lot of bitters and,



MAKE MINE A MILD



PURE  HOLTS

Traditional Manchester Ales since 1849

depending on how much roasted barley they put in the brew, can even taste like a stout. In fact, Holts mild is one of the few beers you can actually taste after a pint of Holts bitter.

So the next time you go to the pub, why not try a pint or even a half of mild (that is, providing they sell a traditional mild)? You could be pleasantly surprised. I drink mild. I also drink bitter, porter, stout and bottle-conditioned foreign beers, and appreciate their different styles and enjoy them, providing they have that most essential feature - flavour.

Bass up

Bass will be putting 4p on the price of a pint from the beginning of June. They defend the price hike with talk of increased overheads, but in Bass Taverns, the pub division of the brewer, there have been three price rises in the last year.

The best advice to Bass is to give Holts a call. Mild is still less than a pound a pint.

New Pubs

Applications have been submitted for new licensed premises on the corner of Princess Street/Charles Street and at 421-423 Oxford Road (near Nelson Street).

THE MIDLAND BEER COMPANY

826 Manchester Road Castleton, Rochdale
near Castleton BR

FOUR REAL ALES

Burtonwood 99p a pint

Theakstons, Taylors and Guest Beers

Thatchers Cider

plus German and Belgian Beers

Lunchtime food Monday - Friday

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Open all day

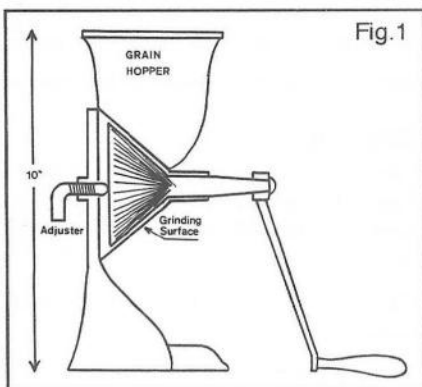
Home Brewing Revisited

Humulus Lupulus

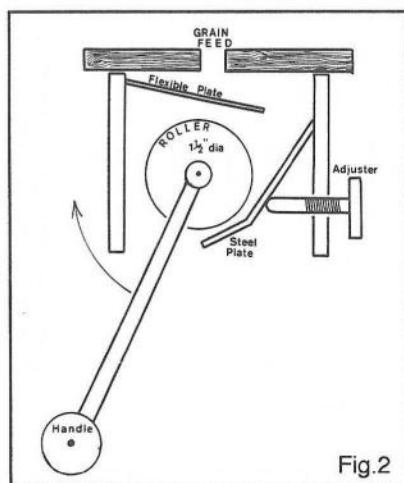
Part Three - Cracking the Grain (continued)

Last month I reviewed numerous methods of grain cracking suggested by various authors, most of which were less than satisfactory. In this section I describe the equipment I use and some other recent developments.

I finally settled on a Spong coffee mill (see figure 1) which was produced in various sizes. Mine is a No.3; smaller versions (1 & 2) were also made and I have seen a larger one (No.4?). Spong were taken over by Salter, I think, but I am not sure whether these mills are still available. The mill is turned by hand and takes about twenty minutes to crack 4kg of grain. It has large conical grinding surfaces, with an adjustable gap; I find the coarsest setting just right for malt. The mill is clamped to a purpose-built strong wooden frame which straddles a 2-gallon bucket to collect the grist. All whole grains, be they pale, crystal or black malts, wheat or roast barley, are pre-mixed then ground together, after which they are mixed with any flaked adjuncts, if used.



I recently enquired at my local home-brew shop about any developments in this aspect, and discovered two such devices. The first was the 'Philmill', made by the Listerman Manufacturing Company. It is described as a stainless steel roll mill and listed at £75. I actually examined and used this mill, courtesy of Julie's Homebrew, 875 Oldham Road, Newton Heath.



It is shown in figure 2. It consists of a single roller with a knurled surface, directly linked to a rather crude steel handle and mounted in a square metal box. It is covered by a 1" thick block of oak with a 1" diameter hole over the roller; presumably this takes a funnel to feed the grain, though there is a slight tendency for the feed to block if the funnel is too narrow.

The crushing takes place between the roller and a steel plate, the gap being adjusted by a screwed knob. I found the adjustment very critical; the grain fell straight through unscathed or was too finely crushed, all within a narrow

band of settings. Eventually I managed to persuade it to produce an acceptable grist. However, considering the price, I was not greatly impressed with the Philmill. A telephone number (513 731-1130) was printed on a label stuck to the mill; whether this is a UK or overseas number I know not.

There is a **Home Beer & Winemaking Show** in Sheffield on Saturday 7th June. The venue is Ponds Forge International Sports Centre, Sheaf Street, near the rail and bus stations. The time is 10am to 5pm, price £2.50. I hope to attend and keep a special lookout for malt mills and other useful gadgets.

More impressive was an Italian mill supplied by Brupaks*. Similar to the Spong, the main body was cast iron. A large hopper with a 40mm outlet dropped the grain into a screw chamber. The screw and the crushing wheel were turned by hand, and adjustment was by a rotatable, spring-loaded, notched plastic collet. This mill was available from Blades Home Brewery (who also stock the Philmill), 115 Market Street, Farnworth.

**Brupaks, 2 Kennedy Avenue, Fixby, Huddersfield HD22 2HF - 01484 456455.*

Taking its toll

In August 1978 CAMRA members were invited by Bass to the Eight Bells in Failsworth to celebrate the installation of handpumps serving Bass, Brew Ten and Toby Light. Bill Tidy was at the do, drawing instant cartoons. On May 17th 1997 the Eight Bells celebrated its 30th birthday. The pub has been refurbished and is still a well run, popular community pub. But guess what? The handpumps have gone. It seems that Caffreys and Worthington smooth flow are the order of the day. The real ale gains of the 1970s and 1980s are being swept away as the ale swingometer moves unerringly towards something which promises much.

Buttheads

Draught Bass may no longer be one of England's great pale ales, but if looked after properly it can bear a resemblance to its old self. The landlord at the Town Hall Tavern, Tib Lane, Manchester, a founder member of the Honourable Order of Bass Drinkers, could be relied on to produce a decent pint of Bass, but not any more - the Town Hall has become a café bar.

Now called Copperbutts, this is definitely a young persons' venue, with a powerful sound system and fridges full of alcopops. Worthington bitter is the sole surviving real ale in a forest of lager pumps.

There are countless café bars in Manchester and a diminishing stock of pubs, so it's especially worrying when we lose a pub to a café bar. If Bass are casting café bar glances at the Unicorn in Church Street, then opposition from CAMRA and others will be fierce and loud.

Rupert

It had been many years since Drabs had employed a marketing consultant. After the débâcle of the double-sided beer mat, young Mr Perry had not dared raise the issue again. Yet the global trends in alcoholic drinks and licensed premises had not left Drabs unscathed. As their existing customers were incarcerated or died of delirium tremens, they were not being replaced by members of a younger generation. These, with their high disposable incomes, preferred the bright lights of Grotley centre, where they could drink in converted synagogues and trade union offices.

It was not without difficulty that Perry persuaded his father and other board members to listen to a presentation by a young P.R. person, Tara Phellay-Tamster, about image. To the casual observer, Tara's ideas may seem naïve and vacuous, focusing as they do on names and matching upholstery, but the success of many creatively-named pub chains suggests otherwise. Surprisingly, the directors bought Tara's ideas and decided to alphabetise their estate using an animal and fruit theme. Out would go all the Red Lions, Crowns and Wellingtons and in would come names with which the young could identify. The new name of the first

Animal Fruit chain pub (beginning with A) is a closely guarded secret, but exclusively What's Doing can reveal some future transformations:

Baboon & Blueberry
Chimp & Cherry
Gorilla & Grapefruit
Kangaroo & Kumquat
Llama & Lemon
Monkey & Melon
Orang & Orange
Sloth & Sloe

This cunning stunt promises to transform Drabs' image and it's possible that they may become the target for a City takeover bid to make them the most powerful drinks group in East Grotley. We wait with anticipation for the first alphabetised tavern. Will it be the Aardvark & Apricot, the Alligator & Alligator Pear, the Ai & Avocado, the Agouti & Alkekengi, or even the prosaic Ape & Apple? Watch this space.

Contestants are reminded that 20th June is the last date for entries to two What's Doing competitions.

The Northern Quarter Muggee of the Decade Award

The Tubby Bleachhead Award

Rules have been published previously. Photographs à la Nodding would be appreciated.

Footnote: Seen on a Bloom Street pillar box: 'I love Big Bunty' - who doesn't?

Millennium recount

Further to Dave White's letter ('Wrong Number', May WD), our correspondent on Hale-Bopp has written to say that the Greenwich Observatory has begun the countdown to the millennium, thus agreeing with the original WD calculations. Dave will be starting his celebrations just as the rest of us are sobering up!

Branch Diary

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tue 3 June 8.30, Branch Meeting, Hunt Lane Tavern, Hunt Lane, Chadderton.

Tue 17 June 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, Halfway House, Oldham Road, Failsworth

Tue 24 June 8.30pm, What's Doing Collation, Flying Horse, Town Hall Square, Rochdale

Sat 5 July. Independents' Day Campaigning Event by coach. Branch Contact has details.

Contact: Peter Alexander 0113 232 4023(w), 0161 655 4002 (h)

Trafford & Hulme

Thur 5 June, Timperley survey. 8pm Gardeners Arms, Deansgate Lane. Then to Hare & Hounds, Stonemasons and Quarry Bank.

Thur 12 June, Mobberley Bike Ride. 8.15 Roebuck, then Bulls Head, both on Town Lane. 9.45 Railway, station approach.

Thur 19 June, Towpath Crawl (bike or foot). 8pm Ye Olde No.3, A56 (Lymm Road), 8.45 Swan with Two Nicks, Park Lane, off A56, both Little Bollington. 9.30pm Vine, B5156 (Dunham Massey); Axe & Cleaver (Dunham), Bay Malton (Seamons Road) and finish at Railway (Broadheath).

Thur 26 June, Hale Survey, 8pm Unicorn, Hale Barns, followed by Bulls Head, Bleeding Wolf, Cheshire Midland and Railway.

Thur 3 July. 8pm Melville, Barton Road, Stretford, then to Stretford Cricket Club, Robin Hood and finish in Beech, Chorlton.

Contact: Roger Wood 0161 747 3987

North Manchester

Wed 4 June, Reclaiming the Territory: Moon Under Water, Deansgate, 7pm; Sawyers Arms, 8pm; White Lion, Liverpool Road, 9.30pm.

Wed 11 June, Committee & Social. Wellington 7.30, Sinclairs 8.30, both Shambles.

Wed 18 June, Branch Meeting, White Lion, Liverpool Road, 8pm

Tues 24 June, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham. 6pm onward

Wed 25 June, Cornbrook/Ordsall crawl. Hope, Chester Road, 7pm; Bricklayers, Ordsall Lane, 8.30; Kings Arms, Oldfield Road, 9.30.

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Irlam pub losses?

Two Irlam pubs face uncertain futures following a row over unpaid business rates with Salford Council. Colin Noone, licensee of the White Lion on Liverpool Road, has said he will close the pub and sell the nearby Tiger Moth on Swallow Drive. He had agreed a payment plan with the Council, but after a two week lapse, bailiffs were sent in to recover the debt. That was the last straw as far as Mr Noone was concerned. Will he carry out his threat, and if he does, what will happen to the two pubs?

Dave and Sue welcome you to the

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Tel. 0161 834 4239

4/6 Honey Street (off Red Bank), Cheetham

Serving a large range of traditional ales supporting the independent brewers

**Batemans Mild & XXXB - Mitchells
Bitter - Old Peculier - Taylors Landlord
& Best Bitter - Bantam Bitter £1 a pint
plus weekly guest beers**

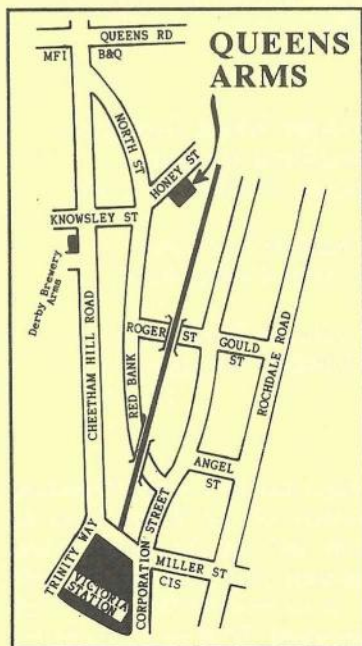


Westons Traditional Cider on handpump

A large menu plus home-made specials
available seven lunchtimes a week

Hot and cold food available until early evening

Opening Hours: 12.00-11.00 Mon-Sat; 12-10.30 Sunday



Children's play equipment in the Beer Garden, with swings, slides, climbing net, etc.

We have a Children's Certificate so families are welcome inside or in the Beer Garden.

Bar-B-Que for hire free of charge.

Bar Billiards, Backgammon,
Chess, etc.

General Knowledge Quiz Night
Tuesday. Beer Prizes

*We're in the Good Beer Guide
and CAMRA's Good Food Guide*