

25p

# What's Doing

OCTOBER 1998



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine



## Changes at the Dutton

Hydes' hidden local on Park Street, behind Boddingtons Brewery, is looking splendid under a new coat of cream paint. For years a bitter-only pub, the Dutton is now selling beers from the 'Craft' series of occasional brews. The landlord promises a stout in the near future.

The Jolly Angler, Ducie Street, is also featuring Craft ales.

## 1999 Good Beer Guide

CAMRA's new Beer Guide will be launched this month. The cover price is £10.99, but it will be available to CAMRA members at £7 at branch meetings during October and November. North Manchester's launch is at the White Lion in Swinton on 14th October.



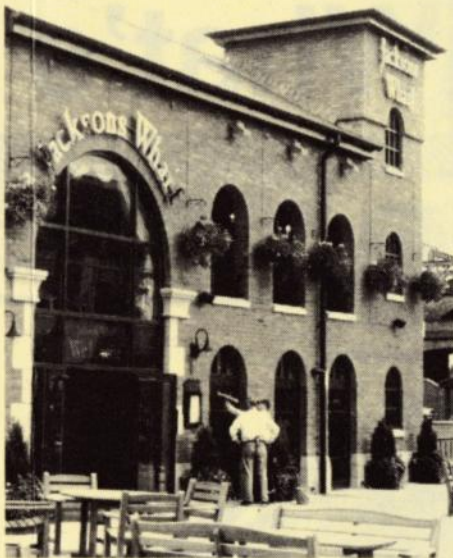
## New pubs

Mark McConachie

### Jacksons Wharf

Another new pub has opened in Castlefield. This £1.3m development overlooks the Bridgewater Canal, just down the cut from the Quay Bar, and Greenalls have obviously used ideas from the Via Fossa (Canal Street) here. It's a two-storey pub furnished with church artefacts - pews, pulpits, panelling and even some cut-off organ pipes.

Each floor has a large central bar, both dispense Bass at 170p and Boddies at a surprising 180p. Food is on offer most of the day. There are further elevated drinking areas on the first floor - the ultimate being the 'Tower'. Two balconies overlook a large outside drinking area fronting the canal.



### Blackley's got a new toy

It is not often that a brewer decides to build a new pub in North Manchester, so it's pleasing to see Allied Domecq (Tetley) investing in a development there. Opened in late September, the Toy Box is one of their Big Steak houses, complete with attached Wacky Warehouse. It is sited near the Gardeners Arms on Victoria Avenue East (buses 80, 80A, 77, 87, 112 and 149). I won't describe the pub because if you have been to one of these establishments, you've seen the lot. It does do cask ale, though - Tetley dark mild, bitter and Pedigree - with prices, hefty for the area, ranging 164-174p.

There doesn't seem to be a history of demand for another pub hereabouts and I suspect that Allied are banking on the place being 'just off the M60 motorway in a couple of years' time when all the work is complete. Should prove popular (and profitable)...

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### Crown conversion

Work on ripping the guts out of the Crown (Bass) on Booth Street, near Spring Gardens, began on 1st September and reopening is promised for 28th September.

## Another one bites the dust

As yet another regional brewer shifts out of brewing, we are set to lose a whole raft of real ales. In mid September Vaux announced that 350 tenanted pubs and its two breweries were on the market. With substantial over-capacity in brewing, the likelihood of a purchaser for the breweries is remote.



The Sunderland brewery brews four regular beers - Lorimers Best Scotch, Bitter, Samson and Double Maxim, and a range of seasonal beers. Wards Brewery in Sheffield produces Mild (also sold as Darleys dark mild and Vaux mild), Thorne Best Bitter, Best Bitter and Waggle Dance. It would be surprising if many of these survived.

Vaux's presence in Greater Manchester is fairly recent. They have acquired a number of pubs from owners like Wilsons who have been disposing of pubs for the last ten years or so. Their beers were a welcome addition to the real ales available. Their loss will be a dint in Manchester's provision but will create a real hole in Sheffield and the North East, where there is already much less choice.

Who'll be next? Holts? Hydes? Lees? Robinsons? Let's hope not.

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## O'Neill's for Deansgate?

Typewritten notices in the window of the empty Bill Hutchinson HiFi shop at 50-52 Deansgate (corner Blackfriars Street) indicate that an O'Neill's may be opening there. O'Neill's is a trading division of Bass. Meanwhile, puzzled HiFi buffs may like to know that Hutchinson's has been taken over by Raymond and Lorraine Nicholson and the business has transferred to the HiFi Room on Bridge Street.

## Triple gong for the Rembrandt

The pub by the canal on Sackville street has been given a J W Lees 'Pub of the Year' award. It has also been named Pub of the Year by the Gay Village. Completing the honours, its menu has received a commendation from the Vegetarian Society.

## More Veggie delights

The Salisbury on Wakefield Street, near Oxford Road Station, has greatly expanded its vegetarian menu. Five or six veggie dishes will be on offer daily.

## Some Salford Soundings

*and other observations from Daddy Bell*

At the end of August I found the **Coach & Horses** (Sam Smiths) on Eccles New Road, Weaste, securely boarded up. Has it become an unanticipated and extremely unwelcome casualty of the Metrolink to Eccles?

In mid-September there was scaffolding up around the long-closed **Waverley** on Eccles New Road. Any suggestions as to what is going on (or coming down)?

On Chapel Street, the **Bell Tower** front door was open one day, revealing bales of wire netting inside. Were they materials for new decor?

There is an alarming rumour that the **Dock & Pulpit** (at present closed for refurbishment after its sale by the Davieses) will not be reopening in anything like its present style. I hear that the new owners are looking to develop it on more café-bar lines to appealing to a different sort of clientele. (The sort who will apparently be living in the converted courts and on the Salford Royal Hospital site as it undergoes redevelopment).

In Ordsall, the **Welcome** has been redecorated externally in J W Lees' new corporate livery and there's a free-standing inn sign at the roadside on Robert Hall Street. Curiously, the sign depicts two handpumps, one for GB Mild (like the bitter, always worth drinking at the Welcome), the other for Moonraker, which the pub does not

stock on draught. Is it likely to? Certainly, it has just had on Lees' seasonal premium ale, Ruff Yed (£1.47 for a 5% beer, as against £1.22 for the 4% bitter). Let's hope the regular customers get to appreciate this extended range: I can't drink all the Ruff Yed myself.

The exterior of Lees' other Salford pub, the **Jollies** on Oldfield Road, has also been repainted, but the cream paint seems to have attracted an application of dirty foot- and hand-prints. Perhaps old-fashioned glazed tiling would be a better idea.

On Cross Lane, the **Corporation** (left) is selling Websters Green





Label and Wilsons Bitter, both at £1 a pint. The handpumps seem to be kept busy, so the pub must be holding its own in competition with the rival attractions of the **Paddock** opposite (nitrokeg Tetleys at 99p and occasional topless barmaids).

There was a well-patronised beer tent, the **Wet Dock**, on Salford Quays for the IWA National Waterways Festival over the late August bank holiday, selling a decent range of real ales on gravity, mainly from reputable regionals and larger micros. Prices were steep by Salford standards and quality was becoming indifferent by the end of the festival.

The souvenir brochure for the festival included some ludicrously duff information on local pubs and breweries (none of whose ales were available, I think, in the beer tent). Nine local breweries were mentioned, including Bank Top at Bolton and 'West Coast Dobbins North Country' (*sic*) and its much-missed products. No mention of the Marble Brewery, though. Holts' **Broadway** figured as a Salford Quays pub (fair enough); but of thirteen Salford pubs listed, the Paddock figured twice, six were on nitrokeg, two were shut (the Coach & Horses and the Druids Arms on Liverpool Street) and one was mythical (the Rovers Return in Weatherfield). Perhaps next time the brochure compilers could consult the experts!

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### **Yates's in Oldham**

A new Yates's opened in Oldham last month. It's near the Hare & Hounds on Yorkshire Street, behind the façade of the former Halifax Building Society premises at the top of Hunters Lane. The interior is plush, there's a separate bar upstairs and the cask beers when WD went to press were Worthington bitter and Boddies (which had run out). The management guarantee meals within fifteen minutes of ordering and as an added inducement they do 'cash back' - spend over £5 and you can draw up to £50 on your credit card.

### **Yates's in Manchester**

Yates's are planning to open a pub on the corner of Deansgate and Peter Street, scene of much demolition in recent months. The signs say the site is to become a 'leisure and retail venue' (yippee, another one) called the 'Great Northern Experience'.

### **Closed and boarded**

The Church on Ford Street, Salford, is closed again. Territory wars involving gangs and machete attacks seem to have emerged once more after some months of relative calm in the area. No doubt the police have it all under control.



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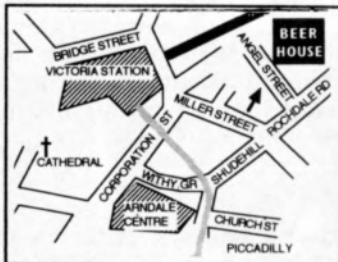
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## **New Manchester Beer Guide**

There have been many changes in City Centre Manchester since the publication of the 1995 Beer Guide. A new guide to be published to coincide with the January Winter Ales Festival will reflect these changes. The new guide will provide details of all real ale pubs and bars in the city centre and will also build on the much acclaimed historical material which has appeared from time to time in *What's Doing*. Any information on city centre outlets would be much appreciated.

## **Sam's for the Chop?**

Whilst collecting details for the new guide, a surveyor was advised that Sam's Chop House (Back Pool Fold, off Cross Street) might have changed beyond recognition by the time the guide appears. The present lease expires at the end of December and it is not known what the new owners will make of the place.

## **Branagan's**

A new Branagan's will be opening in the basement of the Royal Exchange, with additional access via the Arcade. Branagan's was the original name of the Exchange Café Bar, which pre-bomb was situated in the Arcade, unit L10, and sold four real ales.

## **Selling the silver**

1999 sees the 25th anniversary of the North Manchester Branch of CAMRA. Plans are already under way to celebrate this milestone in a suitable way with a special anniversary ale and a bash in a hostelry of renown.

## **Wetherspoons**

Plans have been submitted to convert a DIY store in Didsbury into a J D Wetherspoon outlet. The premises are at 726-732 Wilmslow Road (opposite the Royal Oak). Didsbury seems a much better bet than Levenshulme.

## **Imago**

Robinsons' Red Admiral is a 1960s building on the Cavendish Street end of Stretford Road in Hulme. It has been closed for some time and now Robinsons plan to refurbish it, no doubt to tap the customers from the nearby student accommodation which has sprung up on Cambridge Street.

## **Apologies 2**

The proprietor of the Cob o'Coal, Winder Drive, Ancoats, informs us that he knows of no plans to demolish the pub (WD Sept). We can only apologise to him for any upset caused; the information received was taken in good faith.

## Wigan and district

Dave White

Back in late 1975, when this august magazine was in its infancy, I swigged Boddingtons bitter at 21p a pint at the **Whitesmiths Arms**, Standishgate, on my very first night round Wigan. Six years later, I bought my first copy of *What's Doing* here, and the rest is history. In those days, the Whitesmiths was a regular fixture in the Good Beer Guide, but times change, and with them the Whitesmiths. Now it doesn't sell traditional ale any more, in spite of what the exterior of the pub would have you believe. Bad.

Boddies bitter should be on sale at the **Inn Between**, Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge, by the time you read this; according to the fellow behind the bar, anyway. At the time of writing, the nearest thing to real ale that the Inn had to offer was a glimpse of the John Smiths handpump that wasn't in use. Down the railway track at Gathurst, the **Station Bar** has opened yet again. More news on this, as and when.

A tour of the hostelries of Norley Hall and Marsh Green was a sobering experience in more ways than one. The **Norley Hall Hotel** on Severn Drive offered nothing but Vaux smoothflow (like the rest of the thankfully few Vaux pubs in Wigan), though there was a redundant beer engine on the bar. The **Montrose Hotel** on Montrose Avenue, Marsh Green (free) has gone over to nitrokeg, whilst the **Stork Inn**, Pembroke Road, was closed and shuttered up. This was a Tetley pub, once upon a time. On the edge of the Marsh Green estate, the **Bridgewater Arms**, Scot Lane, has been resurrected as the **Clubhouse**. The pub is a curious mix of an American-style bar and a more traditional lounge. Meals are now served, with an eye no doubt to taking trade from the **Red Robin**, down the road. The Clubhouse has seen off the last of the old Magee Marshalls windows, but Greenalls bitter remains, alongside Marstons Pedigree and something called 'Clubhouse Bitter'. I was informed that this was in fact Greenalls Festival, which came as a bit of a surprise. The ale was cold, rather sour, and I'd say it weighed in at 2% ABV. In short, nothing like the full-bodied, flavoursome Festival of yore...

News in brief: further to a recent *WD* column, **Sam's Bar**, Orchard Street, Scholes, offers nothing for the real ale drinker (Tetleys and Calders Smooth) though the pub seemed busier than of old (that wouldn't be difficult) ... on the other side of town, the **Seven Stars Hotel**. Wallgate, also had no real ale on a recent visit, so beware those handpumps. This Thwaites pub has had a chequered career of late ... the **Balcarres Arms**, Haigh Road, Haigh, has had a change of licensee, and the Cains beers have gone west, leaving Tetley bitter as the only cask ale on sale. Haigh is not the drinking area it once was ... the **Hare & Hounds**, Upholland Road, Billinge also joins the ever-growing category of once-mighty boozers. Though back open, the pub





has gone over to Tetley nitrokeg, at least for now ... and to end on a high note, the **Fox & Goose** (left), Wigan Lane, Swinley, now stocks Holts bitter as a permanent guest beer. The fightback starts here...

*Late News:* The **Brocket Arms Hotel**, Mesnes Road, Wigan, closed mid-September for Wetherspoonisation. Rumours persist that JDW have purchased the **Crooked Wheel** on Worsley Mesnes estate. Can it be?

## Apologies 1

In August WD it was stated that Cliff was the licensee at the Lord Nelson in the city. In fact, he is the manager.

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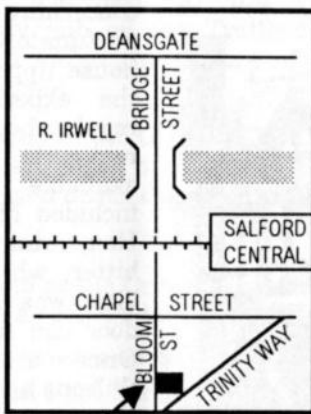
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## Sedgley Park, Kersal Moor and Rainsough

*The area of Rainsough Brow, Sedgley Park and Kersal Moor is approximately one mile south of Prestwich village along and south of the A56 Bury New Road. Ian Kenny investigates...*

First, the **Park** on Lowther Road, which is a large estate pub best reached from Hilton Lane via Sandy Lane. On entering, one is immediately confronted by numerous 'smooth' beer fonts, but there are also two handpumps dispensing Whitbread Trophy and Boddies bitter. An interesting feature of the pub, a full-size snooker table, can be found in the rear lounge.

The next pub is located at the traffic lights at the corner of Scholes Lane and Bury New Road and it is undoubtedly the best in the area. The **Friendship** (*below*) is a Holts house comprising two lounges and a vault selling, as one would expect, both mild and bitter. The pub's name is reflected in the etched glass windows.

Continuing towards Manchester and passing the police training college, one soon comes to the village of Sedgley Park with its sole pub, the **George**. Despite the advertisements for guest ales on boards outside, the only real ale is Boddies bitter. The pub has been opened up of late but still has a large split-level lounge and vault. Continuing out of the village, turn right into Moor Lane. With Kersal Moor on your right (a site of biological importance in Salford!) you soon come to the **Kersal Hotel**. Again, an opened out pub with an L-shaped lounge and vault. The solitary real ale is Boddies bitter. An interesting collection of military medals and buttons can be found in one corner of the lounge.

Heading left out of the Kersal Hotel, turn right into Kersal Road and at the end of this can be found the **Rainsough Brew**. A few years ago this pub was the subject of a *Cook Report* television programme

concerning extortion in pubs. Fortunately this erstwhile free house appears to have survived the experience. Although the regular beers are all 'smooth', a real ale guest is regularly available. Recently these have included Morlands Old Speckled Hen, Adnams bitter and Tetleys bitter, which on the day of my visit was rather off-form. Next door can be found the **Plough**. Once a cosy multi-roomed Wilsons house, the place has been shut for months and it would appear to be falling into disrepair.



## Salford extra

Marstons Pedigree has replaced Boddies mild at the Oakwood on Lancaster Road. The pub is soon to undergo a major refurbishment which is reputed to include provision for a vault.

The new version of Camerons chilled Strongarm is on sale at Banks's Old Pumphouse on Salford Quays. All other beers are now keg.

At Pendleton Shopping Centre, Burtonwood's Keystone (*right*) is no more. The premises were demolished in early September.



## Seesaw

Scaffolding surrounded the Sawyers Arms on Deansgate last month, so it's renovation time again. It is such an appropriate name, Sawyers. The rhythmic sound of carpenters sawing up the partitions and floorboards of one theme before installing the next can oft be heard.

## Partington pub woe

Three of the four pubs in Partington are shut because of drug dealing and thuggery. A recent *Manchester Evening News* article stated the Redbrook was the only pub on the Trafford overspill estate still operating. Villains had forced the closure of the Squire, the King William and the Greyhound.

Vaux had invested heavily in the Greyhound in an attempt to make it a focus for community activities, but the last straw came one year on when the landlord received death threats.

## Crown ale

A guest beer is being sold at the Crown (Vaux) on Deansgate. Adnams Broadside at £1.85 was a recent addition to the range.

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*Contributors to this issue:* Paul Roberts, Steve Holt, Rob Magee, Mark McConachie, Pete Cash, Dave White, Daddy Bell, Ian Kenny, Michael Lynn.



## Out and About

*with Grognard*

This month it's all about Oldham, the town where anything might happen - but never does.

First, the **Waggon & Horses** at Hollinwood. I left it last time planning an investigatory visit. Now I can report my findings. Since reopening, the pub is pitching hard to attract some clientele - but not necessarily the real ale fancier. The bar has a full selection of fizz-fonts plus a solitary handpump which at present is waiting for the cellar to be insulated so the real ale can be settled in. (That's the tale I was told.) When it becomes operational I don't envisage too much of a stampede as the chosen ale is Lees bitter. Across the Manchester Road, fifty yards away are two Lees pubs, the Woodman and the Grey Horse.



On t'other side o'town in Lees at the junction of Becket and St John Streets is the **Grapes** (*below*), a pub whose lintel stone carries the date 1741. Legend tells that in 1745 troops of the 'Young Pretender', Charles Edward Stuart, paid an unscheduled visit, en route to London from Scotland to claim the crown. Charles proved to be a romantic failure, his journey south was cut short and the return journey was too hurried to allow a revisit. Today, the historical aspect



of the place is all in the stone frontage. Internally the decor is 4-Seasons pizza, sprinkled with a bit of everything. This includes two cast-iron fire ranges (non-operative), a trophy-filled pool room, two cute wooden-floored alcoves, bunches of grapes in stained glass and the crumbling gothic ruin of a barbecue in the beer garden.

Yet the place is comfortable and relaxing, the wall photos and decor interesting (look out for Old Blind Joe (*left*), a genuine Oldham character) and the handpumped OB bitter at £1.45 is always in good condition. They also do handpumped Greenalls bitter at £1.54 but I haven't tried it.

Meanwhile, midway between the Waggon and the Grapes, up on the breezy heights of Oldham town centre sits the **Wetherspoons** (code name 'Up Steps') on Yorkshire Street, where the Autumn Bierfest is scheduled for October 1st/4th. At £1.29 per pint and with a list of fifty beers to work through, this should be a good session. However, the official fifty is shrunk to an actual twenty, because when they held the Summer Bierfest this year, seventy gallons of best brew had to be returned owing to the slow-sipping habit of the local ale drinkers. Could I politely remind readers of an obvious truism. If you want real ale outlets, you have to go there and drink the stuff.

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## Pub Design Awards

*To date about forty pubs and bars all over the country have been entered for the 1998 CAMRA/English Heritage Pub Design Awards, including the Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. The following comes from Dr Steven Parissien's judges' report of the 1997 awards...*



1997 gave those interested in the future of the British pub something to shout about. At last we are seeing the creation of quality pub interiors harnessed to those elements which define the pub as a British institution - warmth, friendliness and informality.

However, a depressingly large proportion of the entries for the Awards were bedecked with 'heritage' paraphernalia - Disneyesque travesties straight out of the catalogue. In 1997 the average refurbishment was wearing wall-to-wall blackboards daringly complemented by a profusion of swan-necked brass lamps. In 1998 - what? Back to chamber pots and horse brasses, perhaps? Or will the haybale-and-pitchfork get a much-needed revival? The fact that most evocations of 'Victorian' pubs are as authentic as Dick Van Dyke's cockney accent still seems to escape most pub owners.

1997 was the Year of the Bank. With increasing numbers of town centre bank premises being unloaded on to the property market, conversion to pub or restaurant use appears to be almost the only option for these fine structures. Many of the bank-to-pub conversions of 1997 were executed with panache and sensitivity, but in other instances pub owners and their architects preferred to treat buildings as shells whose interiors need to be completely reinvented. The misconception that a historic building is nothing more than four walls and a roof seems an especially ingrained one.

Converted farmhouses, markets and school buildings were also submitted for awards. The tide of conversions even included the former Preston headquarters of the Conservative Party, which had apparently been 'closed through lack of support'.

There was no award in the NEWBUILD category, although one entry did impress the judges. This was the **Nowhere Bar** on Deansgate in Manchester, a bold, well thought-out building beneath a railway arch which used honest new materials - steel, wood and brick - in a manner which was modern, humanly-scaled and welcoming. Sadly



this stylish design did not get beyond the first hurdle as, astonishingly, the pub does not serve any real ale.

A surprising number of entries in the **CONVERSION TO PUB USE** category were couched in a similarly modern idiom and the standard of some of these gave the judges hope that, at long last, pubs are being designed in a way which combines traditional benefits with contemporary decor. **Bargo** in Glasgow's Albion Street was one of the best. This conversion of a former cheese market, with its use of steel, zinc, copper, timber and back-lit glass is a welcome addition to Glasgow's pub stock. Yet this, too, failed to qualify for an award since it does not serve real ale.

Wetherspoons' conversion of the **Imperial Hotel** in Exeter is also worthy of mention. The vast, semi-circular conservatory bar, lit by a huge lunette window and supported by curved iron beams in the manner of a Victorian trainshed, provided an exuberant and enjoyable contrast to the building's restrained Late Georgian façade.

The clear winner of the **CONVERSION TO PUB USE** category was **Frazer's Bar** in Edinburgh. The bar is situated in the former offices of the Royal Bank of Scotland (the banking hall itself is next door), a muscular, temple-fronted edifice dating from 1847. The pub blends the highest quality new materials with the architectural features of the bank. The design of the bar, the wall decoration and the impressive, Dutch-made lighting evokes a 1930-ish Art Deco feel, while at the same time remaining unmistakably contemporary. Every new element of the interior is designed to be as attractively functional as possible - the colourful Marmoleum lino combines practicality with flair and makes a welcome change from the usual Vaguely Victorian carpet or sawdust-strewn floorboards.



The **REFURBISHMENT** category included a number of schemes which eschewed the tired old clichés of pseudo-Victoriana or fake Oirish in favour of a contemporary approach. Prominent among these was the **Tavern on the Green** in Crawley, Sussex. At first glance the site does not look very promising. Situated at the end of a nondescript shopping arcade in the heart of commuterland, the building's fake weatherboarding and overdominant mansard roof immediately mark it out as a

product of the early 1970s, a period not known for the excellence of its pub design. On closer inspection, however, the architect has worked wonders. The original wooden door and windows have been replaced with a glazed steel door and subtly-profiled metal windows, all painted an appealing blue-grey. Inside, high-quality materials - American oak, stainless steel, glass bricks and glass panels, bold paint colours and colourful natural fabrics - have been combined in a fashion which, the designer avers, 'strives to continue some of the best traditions of British public house design - craftsmanship, quality, community, comfort, innovation, transparency and delight'. The chrome-yellow cylindrical ceiling supports and yellow and crimson Conran-designed tripod stools are nicely complemented by the specially-designed blue-and-yellow carpet.

The only aspect which stops the design from being an out-and-out winner is the lame seating area outside, where over-familiar picnic-spot benches sit in serried ranks on dull concrete pavements punctuated by white plastic lamps and hacienda-style ironwork.

The overall winner of the REFURBISHMENT category was the **Bread and Roses** in Clapham, London SW4, which arose from the ashes of Allied's Bowyer Arms, a building of the 1840s which 150 years later was in a decidedly poor condition. The overall impression is of well-lit, open, light space with a sense of order and calm - the complete antithesis of many pubs. The flooring is of wide planks of blonde wood - not a sawdusted board or floral carpet to be seen - while the interesting two-colour lamps provide subtle and reflective light. The internal colour scheme of purple, sage green and cream (with more lurid hues in the toilets) works very well. The cream terrazzo bar top with stainless steel leaning rail is a robust alternative to the usual timber bar counter, while the dramatically-glazed, steel-framed conservatory neatly complements the existing Victorian brickwork.



Even the wall decoration is both classy and quietly confident; instead of the usual sepia prints there are high-quality black and white photographs, carefully - selected modern art, and a prominent photo of Nelson Mandela visiting nearby Brixton (the colour of his shirt fortuitously matching that of the wall).

The judges felt unable to make an award in the CONSERVATION category. While good modern pub design appears to have turned the corner, the discrepancy between the resources put behind the refurbishment of historic pubs and the poor standards achieved appears to be widening. Last year over £10 million was spent on revamping Britain's pubs and much of this money seems to have been wasted.

All over the country some of our most cherished pubs are at risk from unthinking owners. Allied Domecq's plan to spend £200,000 on 'improving' Hampstead's famous **Holly Bush** - built in 1807 and retaining much of its original interior and charm - on the risible grounds that the building is 'tired' have been denounced by CAMRA and English Heritage. A similar reaction has greeted the same company's proposals to refurbish the **Posada** in Wolverhampton - a unique, turn-of-the-century jewel - and to allow the 17th-century **Running Horse** in Leatherhead to become yet another Firkin.

Such schemes show that many pub owners have little grasp of how to treat their pub stock. Perhaps they may learn from Ipswich Borough Council's successful prosecution and fining of the Pubmaster chain for damaging alterations to the 16th-century, listed **Old Bell** in Ipswich.

Money alone is obviously not the answer. The Pub Design Awards show that there is no substitute for good design that takes into consideration the development of the building and the needs of the customer, rather than the dictates of a marketing strategy. Perhaps in 1998 more pub owners will take this on board.



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## Holts Corner

*Stewart Revell*

It is hoped that there will be a strong Holts beer on sale at the Winter Ales Festival in January, perhaps a form of Sixex on draught. Who knows, it may be called Sesquicentennial Ale, part of the company's celebrations to mark 150 years of being in business. Other items, such as ties and T-shirts, may also be sold to help raise money for Christies Hospital.

The Mosley Arms on Red Lane, Breighmet, Bolton, is now open and Winters in Stockport is due to open on 1st October. Holts are looking at another pub in the same area - the Sun & Castle? An outlet in Ashton-in-Makerfield is also being considered.



## Swinton and Pendlebury

The demise of real ale on Bolton Road continues, with Thwaites bitter being withdrawn in favour of 'smooth' at the **Pendlebury** (ex-Butchers Arms). However, there is better news over the road at the **Bowling Green**, where the Websters bitter has been permanently replaced by the Mansfield-brewed Grays bitter. Further down the road, Holts are soon to start work on a refurbishment of the **Lord Nelson** which will include the replacement of all windows. True to form, the pub will remain open whilst the work is being carried out.

There is mixed news from Swinton, where a 'To Let' sign can now be seen at Tetleys' keg-only **Foresters**. At the **New Ellesmere** on the East Lancs Road, it would appear that a guest beer policy featuring beers from independent breweries is being followed. Recently Gales bitter from Hampshire and Jennings Snecklifter from Cumbria have been available.

## Latics and Lees

Last month Grognaard asked why 'Boycott Lees Beer' fly posters have been appearing round Oldham. Well, it's all to do with J W Lees having a controlling interest in Oldham Athletic and not spending any money on the club. A protest group is urging fans to boycott Lees pubs and beers until they invest in the team or sell to somebody who will. Was that really Rupert Murdoch in the Middleton Archer the other night?

## Eco-warriors?

The Devonshire Arms (S&N) on Liverpool Road, Eccles, has been revamped as Swampy's Family Pub. The place has been refurbished and it looks quite comfortable, but the beer remains keg.

## Guest beers for Winton

Changes at the Jolly Carter should be completed by mid-October and guest ales will join the Greene King XX dark mild and IPA. The Bury St Edmunds brewer, who bought the Magic Pub Co two years ago, has spent £275,000 on extending the pub to the left and refurbishing the rest of the place. Food sales, currently suspended, will resume when the work is finished.

## Breakfast in the city

A number of real ale outlets open early morning for breakfast. Among these are Bonaparte's, Piccadilly Station (7am; 9.30am Sun); Paddy's Goose, Bloom Street (7.30am, not Sun); Quay Bar, Deansgate Quay (10am daily); Rat & Parrot, Old Bank Street (8am, 10am Sun); Rosie's Bar, York Street (7.30am, not Sun). Sadly, you can't have real ale on your cornflakes as the licensed bars open at more conventional times.

## Losses

Banks's Brewery did not have a good September. Well at any rate, not in Collyhurst. First, somebody broke into the closed Osborne House (*right*) and set fire to the building. It was already semi-derelict; it is worse now. Next, the Robert Tinker across the road was fenced off, then demolished. With this, the last link with history and Tinker's Gardens must surely have been erased.

Six pubs now operate in Collyhurst. Further north, in Harpurhey, the Jolly Miller (ex Greenalls) is boarded up. The pub, on Fernclough Road, has been keg for many years.



## In the best possible taste?

You know all those wonderful beer descriptions in the Good Beer Guide? Want to help write them? CAMRA is looking for volunteers to join its next tasting panel. The work is arduous. It involves drinking every beer brewed in the North West. Contact Graham Chinn on 0161 652 4524. The first tasting with training is at the Beer House on Saturday 24th October at 12 noon.

**WHAT'S DOING** contributions should be sent to the editor c/o 88 Ringley Road, Stoneclough, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1ET, to arrive no later than first post on the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

**WHAT'S DOING ADVERTISING:** Full page £50 or £200 for six months, half page £35 or £150 for six months, quarter page £25 or £100 for six months. All adverts must be accompanied with payment. Cheque payable to 'What's Doing'.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** £3 for six months, £5.50 for twelve months. Send cheque/PO together with your name and address to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW, for six issues. Cheques made out to 'What's Doing'.

**BACK NUMBERS:** 15p per copy. Send stamped addressed envelope to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW.

**To join CAMRA** send £12 to Membership, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW.

## Letters

### Free house prices

Sir - I have long complained loudly about the high prices for guest beers in CAMRA-recommended free houses in Manchester and I refuse to frequent them for that reason.

I have just returned from a weekend sampling the amber nectar delights of Central London, where I found the prices were well below the Manchester level. In the Red Lion at Whitehall an excellent pint of Adnams Bitter was on offer as a guest beer at £1.70. The Shipwrights Arms, which boasts magnificent views of Tower Bridge from its upstairs lounge, was selling Bishops Bitter for £1.60. Other free houses charged similar prices - I have mentioned these two because they both face major tourist attractions.

The standards of the London free houses are vastly superior to their Manchester counterparts. The pubs are all far cleaner and less smoky; the bar staff are efficient, fast, friendly and very knowledgeable about what they sell and the pubs are generally far more pleasant places in which to enjoy a drink.

There is no excuse for the high prices charged in the Manchester free trade. Bar staff wages, land and property values are far higher in London, yet the free houses there offer cheaper beer. Many breweries offer discounts to the free trade, so pub owners can buy beer at prices lower than a brewery's own tenants. Some praiseworthy free houses do pass this saving on to the customer - the White House and Fringe Bar being obvious central Manchester examples.

It is time that Manchester CAMRA left a few more gaps in the Good Beer Guide to give other areas of the country an increased allocation.

*Paul Roberts*

### Hogsheads

Sir - Life is strange. I wouldn't have dreamt that one day I would be praising Whitbread for getting it right. I think the two Hogshead outlets in the city centre, at High Street and Deansgate, have turned out to be good pubs. I never go for the Whitbread beers but there is always a good range of independent brewers' beers, with a range of alcoholic strengths and you can rely on them being in good condition.

Despite the fact that both pubs have large, open interiors, I think the designers have done a reasonable job. I don't know if you can generally rely on Hogsheads in other areas, but the experience of drinking at these two is at least as good as in many of our genuine free houses.

*Peter Barnes*

## News from the Pubcos

*Time was, not so long ago, when you knew where you were with pub owners. Six or seven national brewers, a number of well-known local brewers and a free house here and there just to make things interesting. Now a Japanese bank (Nomura) owns 10% of the pubs in the country and others are controlled by pub companies in a variety of shapes and sizes. Peter Davies, CAMRA's Retail Group Co-ordinator, provides the latest run-down on who is up to what with whom...*

**The Alehouse Company** bought 103 pubs from Allied Domecq last year and now they have acquired 38 more, mostly in the Midlands and Wales.

**Ambishus**, set up by some Pizza Express people in May, has 31 pubs from Grosvenor Inns and Regent Inns and 10 in the London area from Wetherspoons.

**Avebury Taverns** has acquired 147 pubs from Wolverhampton & Dudley, 222 from Bass and 253 from Whitbread.

**Century Inns** have bought nine pubs from Yates's, some of which will become Tap & Spiles.

**Grand Pub Company**, formed in March to take over Innentrepreneur and Spring Inns. (All are owned by Nomura.)

**Grosvenor Inns** has changed its name to **The Slug & Lettuce Group**.

**Honeycombe Leisure**, Preston, is putting £6m into expanding the 32-pub estate.

**Mercury Taverns** was one third owned by both Marstons and Wolverhampton & Dudley, and has now sold out to Pubmaster.

**Old English Pub Company** has 101 'coaching inns' and 59 pub/restaurants.

**Phoenix Inns** is selling 270 pubs throughout England and Wales.

**Regent Inns** had 'inconsistencies and inaccuracies' in its accounts and may merge with **Surrey Free Inns**.

**Yates's Wine Lodges** plans to expand to 200 outlets in the next five years.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Bank balance

No. 5 Old Bank Street, off St Ann's Square, is now called Bar 5 (no real ale). This was once the Conservatory, selling John Smiths and Whitbread beers, and before that it was the Old Bank Street Brewery and Mariners. Round the corner in Half Moon Street, the Corbieres sign has disappeared.



# Rupert

As the Slumley Branch prepares for its silver jubilee, it is trying to make contact with luminaries from its past who helped shape its future. Many of them are still in place of course, pickled in Drabs and in various stages of senile dementia. But what of the others, those who came and did their thing and then moved on? If you know of the whereabouts of any of these stalwarts, let us know so that they can be invited as guests of honour in February.

What on earth's happened to Max Wall, for example? He was Grotley's first supremo and led us in the mid-1970s, when the good Doctor Brew Ten was our national bossperson. Max was last seen alive, driving a bus in Wealthshire some years ago, but where is he now? And what has become of Grotty Hardman, erstwhile blue-penciller of the toppers' vademecum to whom many entreaties were made and lost as he ruled like a medieval baron. A gutter rag of the time described Grotty as a beer swilling drunkard. Has he moved on to Bollinger?

Max's successor was one Martin Boreman who held a meeting for 4,000 people in a room that held only 26. As Max gave way to Martin, so the good Doctor groomed Jimmy Slyme, who threw up well-hopped Shepherd Neames over a Maidstone sofa. It was their joint alleged ineptitude which led to the establishment of Provisional CAMRA

in Slumley Parva, but where are they now? Many of those who first held office here in Grotley have moved on to greater things. The Noble Robin who did the work of two men (Laurel and Hardy) and ran the Slumley branch and a tavern joined the boss group, but what of him now and how are his pets?

We know that Demys Roussos who took the helm when Jimmy Slyme jacked it in is dead, but how many more of his contemporaries have snuffed it too? Is Bogbrush still alive? And what about the Lunesdale Prune and Peter Podge, are they still around?



In 1979 Albert Ackroyd and Eric Snot left Grotley on the first CAMRA inter-branch cultural exchange. They went to Esher and we haven't heard of them since. Their replacements in Grotley were Bunty Fortescue and Fanny Featheringstonehaugh. Bunty, in his own way, fitted in with the Slumley ethos and is still around when he's not in chokey. Fanny

never seemed to embrace our rough Northern ways and I've not seen him for almost eighteen years. We'd be delighted to meet him again for the silver anniversary.

Perhaps we might be able to invite back the Slutch Morris Women whom I last saw perform at Ag's funeral in May 1979. It was in that same year that young Perry Drab completed his apprenticeship at the Frothy factory and joined his father at the Crown Brewery in East Grotley. Perhaps he'll come if Mr Bolero asks him nicely.

# Branch Diary

## Winter Ales Festival Meetings

Sunday 11th October

Sunday 1st November

Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester, at 12.30pm

### Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Sat 3 Oct, Roosters Brewery coach trip. Details from Branch Contact

Tues 6 Oct 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Old Boars Head, Long Street, Middleton

Tues 20 Oct 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, Junction, Green Lane, Chadderton

Sun 25 Oct, 10k Run/Walk/Stagger, Tandle Hill Tavern. Details from Branch Contact

Tues 27 Oct 8.30pm, WD Collation, Flying Horse, Town Hall Square, Rochdale

Sat/Sun 31 Oct, 1 Nov: Tyne Mill pub/brewery weekend coach trip, Nottingham/Loughborough/Derby. Details from Branch Contact.

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

### North Manchester

Wed 7 Oct, Stockport Crawl. Red Bull, Hillgate, 7.30pm; Bakers Arms, Market Place, 8.30; Arden Arms, Millgate, 9.30.

Wed 14 Oct 8pm, Committee & Social, White Lion, Manchester Road, Swinton

Wed 21 Oct 8pm, Branch Meeting, Castle, Oldham Street

Wed 28 Oct 7pm, Student Treasure Hunt, start and finish at Crescent, Salford.

Tues 27 Oct 6pm onwards, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham

Wed 4 Nov, ROCKET crawl of Patricroft & Eccles:

Red Lion, Chapel Street, 7pm

Oddfellows Arms, Liverpool Road, 7.30pm

Chestnut Lodge, Trafford Road, 8.00pm

Kings Head, Trafford Road, 8.30pm

Ellesmere, Liverpool Road, 9.00pm

Town Hall, Church Street, 9.30pm

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

### Trafford & Hulme

Thur 8 Oct 9pm, Branch Meeting, City Arms, Kennedy Street, Manchester

Branch members meet most other Thursday nights. For details contact Dave Ward, 0161 980 1170 (h)



Dave and Sue welcome you to the

# QUEENS ARMS

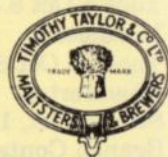
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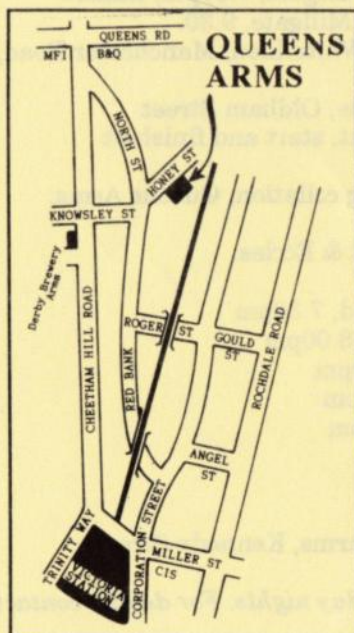


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and CAMRA's Good Food Guide*