

30p

# What's Doing

FEBRUARY 1999



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## SALFORD'S NEW BREWS

A new brewery started up in Salford in January. The first batch of Delph Porter from Bridgewater Ales Ltd (props. Ken Birch and Richard Bazen) was brewed at the Old Pint Pot brewery on the Crescent and on sale at the Winter Ales Festival.

It is hoped that by the end of February the brewery will be up and running in its own premises at 142 Chapel Street. Delph Porter will be followed by other beers such as Barton Best (4.3%) and Navigation (3.8%).

The Chapel Street building (*below*), across the road from the Albert Vaults, is a former printer's and many years ago it was a pub called the Lamb.





## Dublin comes to

### Altrincham

*Roger Wilson*

Greenalls have recently spent £750,000 in refurbishing the Station Hotel (*right*), Stamford Street, Altrincham, opposite the railway and tram station. The pub was closed for over three months and reopened just before Christmas as The Famous Old Porter House, a concept copied from The Porter House on Parliament Street in Dublin. The likeness is striking. Most of the Dublin bar's features have been replicated: walls adorned with glass-fronted cabinets housing numerous foreign beers (none of which are available from the bar, unlike in Dublin); high, tile-topped tables; stained glass panels over the bar advertising beers, liberal use of brass and copper, and the same sort of lighting.



Mike and Jackie Dearden, formerly of the Feathers in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, sell three beers - Theakstons Best Bitter (£1.51), Cains Bitter (£1.53) and Marstons Pedigree (£1.71) - and there are plans for a fourth. All beers are served using cask breathers.

The Altrincham Porter House is on two floors (Dublin - five) and whilst there are copper brewing vessels on the first floor, these are merely for show, unlike in Dublin, where the pub brews nine different beers, three of which are cask conditioned. There are no plans to commence brewing in Altrincham.

This is Greenalls' second pub in the Famous Old Porter House theme; the first opened in Liverpool. There are plans for similar pubs in towns and cities throughout the North West, including Manchester.

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## The First Millennium

Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar sold its thousandth guest beer just before Christmas, less than two years after the bar reopened. The beer was Monty's Mild (4%) from Roosters Brewery. The choice of new beers from regional and micro breweries is increasing and it may be that the total will reach 1,500 by next Christmas.

Monday night is Fun Quiz night at the Buffet Bar. This is a new venture and the none-too-serious quizzes will be given the individual touch by having occasional guest setters and presenters.

## Daddy Bell's drinking diary

*Saturday January 9th*

Look in at the Old Pint Pot brewery in Salford on the off-chance that Richard and Ken are on site. Find the run-off from the mash nearly completed and the wort ready for hopping with Fuggles and Goldings. The brew of Delph Porter - aka Old Pint Pot Porter - turns out less strong than planned, perhaps 4.4% or even 3.8% rather than the projected 5.2%. Look forward to the appearance of the beer at the Winter Ales Festival, and to future brews at Bridgewater Ales' temporary home.

*Friday January 15th*

To Eccles to buy a laundry basket. Find the Oddfellows Arms now signed as a Porters Ale House. At least this one sells real ales, even if they are only Boddies Bitter and 'Porters Cask Ale'. ('Not on till tomorrow'). To the Lamb - crowded as ever, but find a seat in the snooker room. Holts DBA no longer on, unfortunately, as it was apparently not selling well enough.

*Saturday January 16th*

Find McKenna's Revenge Porter on characteristically good form in the Marble Arch. Pub full of Manchester City supporters, many wearing that familiar fixed stare of incredulity. On to the Beer House, romantically lit by candles because of a power cut. Discover Oakhill Bitter available. I've not seen it for a long while, and find it very welcome, especially at £1.30.

*Monday January 18th*

Join the willing hands to construct scaffolding at the Upper Campfield Market for the Winter Ales Festival.

News circulates of the closure of the Winston (Holts, *right*) on Churchill Way in Salford, but nobody seems to know whether this is a temporary or permanent loss. Salford just wouldn't be the same without 'Fraggle Rock'.







**We're in the 1999 Good Beer Guide**

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**USHERS BEST BITTER £1.05**

**DIRECTORS BITTER**

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**including A GUEST MILD**



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**DRAUGHT BELGIAN KRIEK, LEFFE BLONDE, HOEGAARDEN &**  
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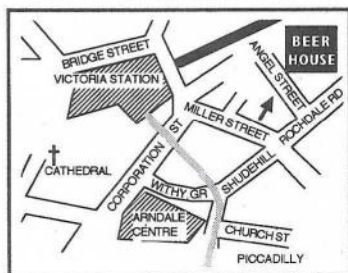
**Evening Meals 5 - 7 Friday**



**Thurs 5 - 8 Choice of three curries (veg and meat) + rice £3**



**Half price menus Monday lunch**



**OPEN ALL DAY**  
**MONDAY to SUNDAY**  
**FREE PARTY ROOM**  
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## Wigan & District

*Dave White*

As reported last month, the **Brocket Arms Hotel**, Mesnes Street, Wigan, reopened just before we went to press. Wetherspoons have blitzed the place, doing away with the interior walls and the old bar. With its uncomfortable seats and harsh colour scheme, the Brocket seems rather sterile and cold, though the place was packed when I went in. However, JDW only opened the Brocket to catch the Christmas trade, and plan to close it again to finish the job. Let's hope they don't finish the pub.

Over to Ince-in-Makerfield, where hopes of a 200% increase in the availability of real ale have been dashed. The **Fox Tavern**, Manchester Road, Higher Ince, has sold keg beer for yonks. Even in the dark days of the 1980s, when cask was king everywhere else, the Fox never wavered in its commitment to serve processed Greenalls beers, and the recent refurbishment was not going to change the situation. Up the road at Ince Bar, the **Bird i'th'Hand** on Ince Green Lane has reopened as the **Cottage**, the exterior of which declares that it is a 'traditional pub'. Pity about the beer... Burtonwood smooth.

Nearby in Hindley, the **Dog & Partridge**, Atherton Road, has reopened after a bit of knocking about, but the Burtonwood beers remain nitrogenated. A little further on, and the **Plough**, a rather forlorn Enterprise Inn, has also gone keg. Indeed, the stretch of the A577 from Wigan to Atherton is pretty barren these days, with only three pubs out of seventeen selling real ale (one closed).

The item last month about the **Hare & Hounds**, Upholland Road, Billinge, was inaccurate. A former landlord of the **Rose & Crown**, Church Street, Orrell - as opposed to the present one - was going to take over. Alas, this scheme has now fallen through and the H&H is still in the hands of a relief manager. Tetley bitter is the only real ale available. There must be a saviour out there somewhere!



### Going, going...

Only a limited number of tickets for North Manchester's 25-year bash are still available.

It's at the Marble Arch on 21st February. Tickets are £5 and include grub and two pints of anniversary ale. Contact Roger Hall on 740 7937 whilst stocks last.

## January Sales

*Groggnard*

Following the frenetic consumerism of Christmas, January comes as a soothing (though damp) relief. No more bustling around shops, stores and supermarkets in search of that perfect present for Auntie Nellie. Now one can stroll at leisure through the sales, looking for those half-price trousers or slightly off-coloured jackets. It's a shame that these bargains never seem to include Hobgoblin, Spitfire or Summer Lightning: £1.60 down to 80p would be a delightful start to the new year. The best bargains always seem to be on those cardboard cases of dumpy French fizz which the wife (bless her) is happy to quaff. At Tesco, 30 bottles of Bier d'Or went for £5.99, or 20p per bottle. It really makes you sick. How can the Frogs do it, while all we get is a price increase on good old English draught bitter?

But before I go on to that I must mention Greg's Discount at the top of Yorkshire Street, Oldham, which sells cut price everything: crisps at 10p a packet, die-cast model cars at £1 each and, notably, Theakston's Lightfoot Pale Ale at 80p per large bottle. No doubt it's on its sell-by date, but I tried a couple and was impressed; lots of flavour with a floral bouquet, in fact a damn sight better than the thin rubbish Theakstons (aka Scottish & Newcastle) call bitter. Mind you, it should be with an ABV of 5.2%



Anyway, back to price increases. Down at the Grey Horse, Hollinwood, the Lees bitter has just gone from £1.16 to £1.20. Plus, to add insult to injury, a green phallus has popped up at the end of the bar, inscribed 'Greengate Smooth'. The small print on the shaft is not easy to read (black on green) but this is supposedly a pale ale. It was offered at an introductory sale price of £1 a pint, which tempted a few of the regulars into sampling it, but their reactions were unfavourable. Politeness prevents me from quoting verbatim. I wonder what Lees' intentions are? Perhaps they are chasing the 'youf' market, believing that the juvenile simpletons will happily dosh out £1.40 for a pint of cold, nitroed horse-piss. Yet, 'Youtho e mobile', as Verdi might have written; today's style is tomorrow's history. Alternatively, they might be thinking, if Thwaites and Burtonwood can do it, so can we. Better if they concentrate on their strength, brewing good traditional beer.

Up Manchester Road at the Bridgewater, there has also been a price increase: Derby Ale up from £1.29 to £1.30. One more nail in the coffin of the penny coin. The landlord tells me he is now selling about 18 gallons a week, not a great amount, but certainly sign of a regular demand. To help the beer stay fresh, Holts will be delivering it in firkins (9 gallon barrels).

In Oldham centre at Up Steps (*pictured*), the Wetherspoon offers abound. Becks, Holsten and especially Newcastle Brown all at 99p a bottle. I first tried 'Newkie' at the Student Union Bar, Manchester, in 1964 and wasn't too keen on the stuff, but my taste buds must have developed since then as I find it quite palatable - especially at this price. It's certainly one in the eye for those complacent landlords who sell it at around £2 a bottle.

Monday 25th January will see me here, briefly, for Burns Night. Not to sport the tartan or chew haggis, 'Great chieftain o' the puddin' race,' etc, but to try the Caledonian Burns Ale, 4.7% at £1.49. (It's also on sale at Morrisons for £1.59 per 500ml bottle conditioned.)

Finally, at that 'cattery in the clouds', the Church Inn, Uppermill, the Christmas Carol Ale is still on draught - 7.4% at (wait for it) £1.40 a pint.



**LEEDS BEER & PERRY FESTIVAL 1999**  
in association with Evening Post

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3 minutes walk from Real Pudsey B.R. Station

**Thursday 18th - Saturday 20th March**

★ Around 90 Real Ales • Some at £1 a pint •  
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| Thu | 11-3 (FREE)        | 5-11 (£2 after 6pm)       |
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# 12th WIGAN BEER FESTIVAL

Over 40  
Real Ales

Live Music



Traditional Cider  
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1999

Food available  
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## THURSDAY 4th MARCH

5:30 - 11:00 50p before 7pm £1.50 after

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## FRIDAY 5th MARCH

12:00 - 2.30 FREE 5:30 - 11 £1.00 before 7pm £2.50 after

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## SATURDAY 6th MARCH

12:00 - 3:30 £1.00 7:00 - 11:00 £2.00

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ALL SESSIONS FREE TO CARD CARRYING CAMRA MEMBERS

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**at The Mill at the Pier**  
(Trencherfield Mill near Wigan Pier)

ORGANISED BY THE WIGAN BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE





## Sweet Green Tavern

*Dave Crookell*

The Sweet Green Tavern is conveniently situated on Crook Street, approximately 100 metres from the bus/rail interchange. It's one of Bolton's premier free houses, regularly voted Pub of the Year by the Bolton branch of CAMRA. The Sweet Green has a multi-roomed layout, with four separate drinking areas around a central L-shaped bar. To the left of the entrance is a basic vault with TV, to the right is a comfortable lounge with a real fire. Next to the lounge is a pool room, with many photos from pub outings adorning the walls; on the far side there is a small snug and outside there is a paved beer patio.

There are two regular real ales, handpumped Tetley bitter and Sweet Green Special bitter (4.2%, £1.60). Brewed by Moorhouses, the latter is a pale, sweetish, hoppy bitter that fills the gap between Premier and Pendle Witch. The Sweet Green is one of about twenty pubs supplied by Moorhouses with their own-brand 'custom' beer. At least two guest beers are also sold. Currently there is Bank Top's Freds Cap (4.0%, £1.60), Moorhouses Nick's Choice (4.7%, £1.60), named after a recently deceased regular, and Moorhouses Old Ale (6.0%, £2.00). Previous guest beers have included Thwaites Daniel's Hammer and Greene King Abbot Ale.



## CAMRA Membership gives:

- ★ Monthly copies of *What's Brewing*, CAMRA's entertaining and highly-regarded newspaper.
- ★ Discounts on CAMRA products and publications (including the best-selling *Good Beer Guide*).
- ★ Advance warning of beer festivals throughout the U.K. and Europe - and discounts when you get there.
- ★ An invitation to join CAMRA's activities such as brewery trips, meetings and socials.
- ★ **ABOVE ALL**, you will belong to a flourishing and successful consumer movement which is acting as a champion for beer drinkers and pub users.

## APPLICATION TO JOIN CAMRA

I/We wish to become members of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited and agree to abide by the Rules.

Name(s) .....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Signature.....Date.....

I/We enclose the remittance for:

Single £14 ☐ Joint £17 ☐ (at same address)

OAP Single £8 ☐ OAP Joint £11 ☐ (at same address)

Unemployed/Disabled £8 ☐

Under 26 £8 ☐ date of birth:.....

For Life and Overseas rates contact CAMRA HQ (01727 867201)

Send your remittance (payable to CAMRA) to:

The Membership Secretary,  
CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road  
St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW





## Holts corner

Stewart Revell

What's this then? A Holts pub included on a commercially available CD-ROM? Yes, it's true. In a guide to 1,500 pubs there appears a single entry for one of Joey's tied estate. The CD-ROM, called *The Guide to Pubs & Inns in Great Britain*, has been produced by the AA (er, Automobile Association, not the other one), and published by BTL (the software is by Bradford Technology Limited). The Holts pub is the Black Dog at Belmont. Most of the pubs in the guide have a restaurant or dining room and it appears to be aimed at people who want a trip out for a meal. Each pub's main beers are listed, but the CD is not intended for aficionados of real ale since some of the beers could be keg. There are maps showing the locations and you can print out the details of each pub. Further information can be obtained via the Net: [www.bradtech.co.uk](http://www.bradtech.co.uk), or e-mail: [sales@bradtech.co.uk](mailto:sales@bradtech.co.uk).

As part of the 150th anniversary celebrations and to raise funds for the Christie Hospital Appeal, Holts' directors have reversed their brewery visit policy for a limited period to allow the brewers to run tours for members of the public.

Tours are for groups of 12 to 15 people. It may be possible for smaller groups of 6 or more to combine - please ask about this. Visitors must be aged 18 or over. The tours will be run from 1st March 1999 to 28th May 1999 on weekday evenings, starting between 6pm and 7.30pm. A limited number of Saturday morning visits may be possible for groups from outside the North West. Each visit will comprise a one-hour tour of the brewery with one of the brewers, followed by a free pint and pie and peas supper in the Derby Brewery Arms.

The main aim of the tours is to assist in the fund-raising appeal for Christie Hospital, so a charge of £10 per visitor will be made, payable in advance by cheque made out to 'Joseph Holt 150 years Christie Appeal'. All paying visitors will be given free entry into a draw for a 'Holts Brewer for a day' prize.

To book, contact Keith Sheard, Dick Venes or Mike Hitchen by phone (0161 834 3285) or fax (0161 834 6458) at Holts' Brewers' Office. They will do their best to accommodate requirements and arrange a date for the visit. This will then be confirmed by letter on receipt of the cheque.

I have heard that the Winston in Salford has been closed now for some time. The pub is not on the latest list of Holts tied outlets and I'm trying to find out whether Holts still own it, or if it has been given up/sold.

Work on converting the Globe in Leigh and the Sun & Castle in Stockport into Holts outlets should now be under way. By my reckoning, these pubs will bring Joey's tied estate up to 126 (excluding the Winston).



## Manchester Pubs - a history

### Part Six: Neatly refurbished

A visitor to Manchester who was moved to write about his hotel accommodation here complained that he was staying at a spacious inn that had 'neither the cleanliness nor the comfort which we find in smaller places... Here all is hurry and bustle... and they care not whether you are pleased or not. We were led into a long room, hung round with great coats, spurs, and horse-whips, and with so many portmanteaus and saddle bags lying about, that it looked like a warehouse.'

That was written in 1808 about the Bridgewater Arms on High Street (Bridgewater Place marks the site). So two hundred years ago people were moaning about the way pubs change, and we've been doing it ever since. Some Manchester pubs have been altered to a great extent and others less so. Thirty years ago, opening-up pub interiors to create one or two big rooms was the fashion and all central Manchester pubs have suffered from this, with the exception of the Circus on Portland Street. There is still a wall separating the front and the back rooms of what was at first a private house and then a shop.

The Peveril of the Peak is famous for its tiling and its three separate rooms, but in the last century, before the top floor was taken off, the



*The name game. The Fleece Inn became the Kingston Hotel in the 1960s. Recognise it? The pub is still with us today as Paddy's Goose.*

place boasted six drinking rooms as well as the bar and a kitchen. Many pubs had an upstairs meeting or club room. The one at the Crown & Anchor on Hilton Street was capable of holding 150 people and on the same floor there was another drinking room. Downstairs was a wine and spirit vault, bar parlour, tap room and another parlour. The house next door on Port Street, now incorporated into the pub, was used as a corn store.

The Hare & Hounds on Shudehill has had the same layout for many years, but this is what the pub was like when you had a choice of six rooms at the Pev and the Circus was still a butcher's shop. On the ground floor were a spirit vault, two parlours and a mahogany-topped serving counter with a panelled front. The furniture consisted of substantial oblong tables, chairs and forms and there were bells and pulls around the rooms so that customers could summon a waiter. The building was lit by gas, with ornamental burners and some 'splendid bronzed chandeliers' in the rooms. The kitchen was fitted with an oven and grate, a strong fender and fire-irons, a dresser and cupboard.



*The ornate Sawyers Arms in the 1960s. The hefty piece of masonry perched on the roof has gone*

Upstairs there was the music saloon, complete with piano and a self-acting organ (the jukebox of its day) which could play forty favourite tunes, airs and overtures. Oil paintings in gilt frames depicting historical scenes hung on the walls. On the same floor was a sitting room which was sometimes used as a temporary bar. Overnight guests had the choice of six lodging rooms containing four-post and tent bedsteads, feather beds and mattresses, chests of drawers and wash-stands.

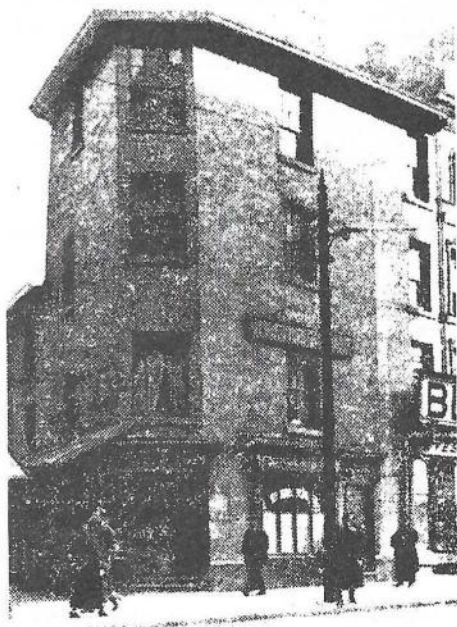
In Victorian times, as now, pubs were redecorated and fitted out in different styles to



attract new customers. When Charles Coburn took over the tenancy of the Crown & Anchor on Cateaton Street in May 1850 he advertised that he had remodelled and thoroughly beautified the place. To attract gentlemen of the business class he opened a newsroom on the first floor and kept it supplied with London and provincial newspapers and periodicals. Mr Coburn also owned a bottling business, but after five years he had money trouble and the bottling equipment and stock were sold to pay his creditors. The stock included two hogsheads of French brandy, barrels of pale ale and London stout, 1,000 dozen glass bottles and a horse and cart. His newsroom, advertised as 'a secluded, commodious and comfortable retreat', was not enough to keep him going.

The pubs around Swan Street and Tib Street had busy vault trades when Smithfield Market was there. The Smithfield Market House opened in 1823 in what is now the back (Coop Street) part of the pub. Some years later the owner took over a grocer's shop on the Swan Street corner and put the two together to create a long vault. Behind the counter, which ran the length of the Coop Street side of the building, were ranged ten 20-gallon casks, supplied with beer from the pub's own brewery.

Fashions in exterior decoration have changed over the years and garish adornments of seventy or eighty years ago can now be considered quite stylish, worth preserving, or at least acceptable. An architectural survey in 1924 said the Sawyers Arms on Deansgate was 'a glazed, multi-coloured, sprawling public-house which even the soot cannot make bearable.' The Sawyers was one of a number of pubs given the striking glazed brick and tile treatment by the Manchester Brewery Company. The Peveril of the Peak and the now closed Lower Turks Head on Shudehill are two others.



*An unadorned Sinclairs on Victoria Street in the 1920s*

Cement rendering over old brickwork helps to keep out the damp and there are many old buildings in the city which have been so treated.



Repainting every few years keeps them looking smart, and in the case of Sinclairs Oyster Bar, the addition of a few black stripes in the 1930s in imitation of the nearby Wellington was an amusing touch. In view of the fact that the new Sinclairs on Hanging Ditch is being built to appear exactly as it was in the Shambles, whoever thought that one up must still be laughing.

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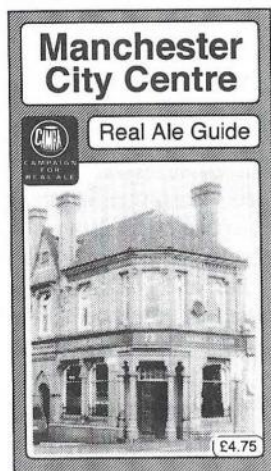
## Supermarket News

*Dave Crookell*

Found in Safeways, Swinton, in early January. A limited edition (mine was bottle number 100175!) Vintage Christmas Ale from Shepherd Neame at the reduced to clear price of 99p (from £1.99) for 500ml. Attractively packaged in a festive cardboard box, it was a 6.9% sweet, reddish-brown concoction that had unfortunately been 'flavoured' by the addition of cherry brandy. This only succeeded in masking any resemblance it may have had to an old ale. Perhaps it's not surprising that it didn't sell well at Christmas.

## New Beer Guide

The Central Manchester Guide is now on sale. The cover price is £4.75 (CAMRA members £3.75). By post the guide is £5 post paid or £4 to CAMRA members. Send cheques payable to CAMRA North Manchester to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Manchester M9 6PW.



*The Thirteenth*

# Oldham Beer Festival

150 beers for 150 years

Celebrating Oldham Borough's 150th anniversary

25th, 26th, 27th March 1999

**Queen Elizabeth Hall, Civic Centre, Oldham**

Foreign bottled beers - Traditional ciders

Commemorative Festival glasses - Disabled access

Family room at lunchtimes - Food at all sessions

**Entertainment featuring the Oldham Tinkers**

Thurs 5pm-11pm

Fri 12 noon-3pm & 5pm-11pm

Sat 12 noon-4pm & 6pm-11pm

*CAMRA members free except Friday evening*

## Joey's tale

*Last month's WD announced that 'The Story of Joseph Holt' by Christopher Grayling is available from the brewery office on Empire Street, Cheetham Hill, or by post from same. Michael D White went to his favourite brewer immediately and got himself a copy...*

I am part-way through this elegantly-written story, wherein the author tells us that a corking machine from circa 1897 is still in use, having been recovered from the Crumpsall Hotel Brewery at that date. He tells us how we got the beer tax of today, starting as a levy for the Boer War and added to ever since, as we all know to our cost!

The first Edward Holt, son of Joseph, was elected as a councillor for the Crumpsall Ward in 1890 and served until his death in 1928, becoming a celebrated Manchester figure. He was largely responsible for the Haweswater reservoir scheme which fed Heaton Park reservoir via seventy-four miles of piping. He was Lord Mayor of Manchester for two years running, 1908/09, a rare honour. Author G K Chesterton, writing in the *Manchester Guardian*, supported his mayoralty against the Temperance Movement's opposition. Edward parted with his chain of office with the wry comment, 'I hope that it hasn't been tarnished too much by being on the shoulders of a brewer'! He received a baronetcy and was also made an MBE in 1920 for his work on the Haweswater scheme.



*Edward Holt relaxes in the office hammock*



The brewery is called the Derby Brewery because it is built on land originally owned by the Earl of Derby's Estate. The Northern Hospital was built on land donated by Holts. Radium therapy was developed in Manchester from the early 1900s and the family has been a major patron of Christie's Hospital and the Holt Radium Institute since then.

I'm only up to page 28 of this nicely produced 72-page book. It costs only £4.99 plus 60p p&p, and that includes £1 donation to the Christie Hospital. Get yourself a slice of Manchester history and make a donation by buying your copy NOW!

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### Light ale

The Beer House was candlelit on Saturday 16th January. This was not an attempt to create a romantic atmosphere, nor even because Idy hadn't put 50p in the meter, but as a result of some ham-fisted driller severing the cable in the roadworks at the top of Miller Street. You can't beat handpumps for keeping the beer flowing.

### Grove gone

The Grove (*right*), a large Boddies pub on the Manchester and Salford boundary on Bury New Road, has disappeared. Funny nobody noticed before.

### Beer Guide 2000

CAMRA branches are currently surveying pubs for next year's Good Beer Guide. North Manchester's final selection meetings are on March 3rd (for non-city centre pubs) and March 10th (city centre pubs). If you have a favourite pub you'd like to have considered, come along to a branch event to collect a survey form, which you can then complete and bring to the appropriate meeting.





## Now and Then

*Rob Magee*

No.110

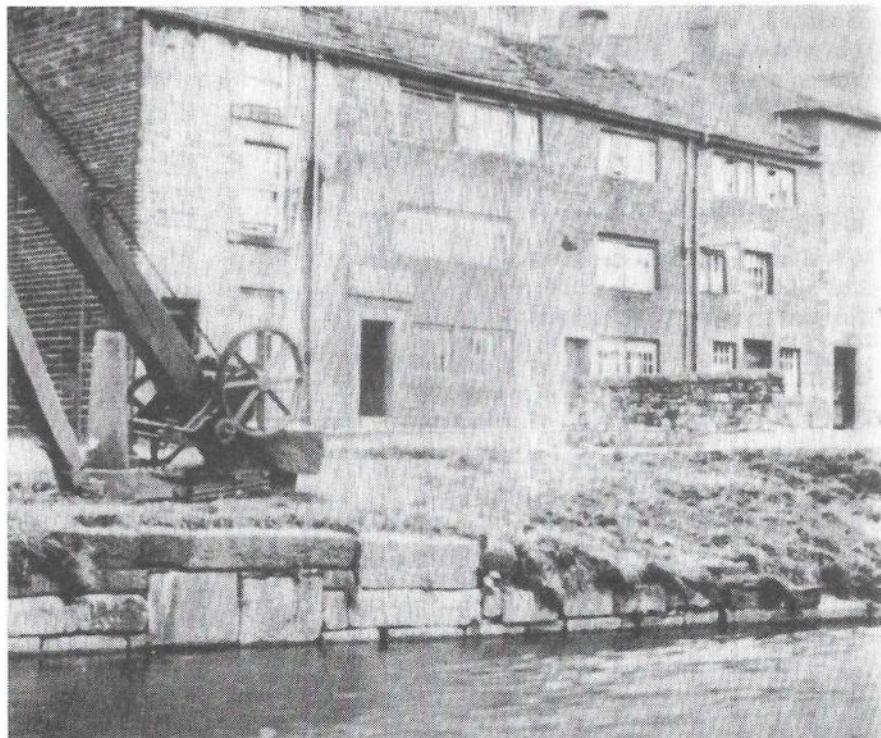
**Mechanics Arms**

Frenches Wharf, Greenfield

Overlooking the canal at Greenfield, Saddleworth, there is row of five three-storey, stone-built houses. Years ago, one of these was a beerhouse and because of the location it was nicknamed the Seaside Inn. The house was first licensed in the middle of the nineteenth century and called the Jolly Carter; later it became the Mechanics Arms.

Two events at the Mechanics were reported in the local newspaper. In 1871 the weights and measures people found that six drinking glasses were short-measure. It was a genuine mistake and the landlady was fined a nominal sixpence. In August 1891 there was a pigeon sweepstake. Fifteen birds were released from Stafford and the first one back made it home in one hour and nine minutes. The owner was James Whitaker of Shaw Hall and he collected the first prize of four pounds ten shillings.

In the early twentieth century the Mechanics was a quiet sort of place. The licence changed hands seven times and then in 1910 there was an attempt to close the beerhouse. At the licensing sessions, the



police said the licence was no longer needed as the Railway Hotel was only 113 yards away, the Wellington Inn 257 yards away and there was also a Conservative Club 160 yards away. This meant there was a licensed house for every 210 people in a radius of 250 yards. The Mechanics usually had fewer than six customers and the takings on one Sunday, the best day, had been one shilling and threepence.

The licensee protested that he had seen as many as forty people in his house. His sales averaged one barrel and twenty-two gallons of draught and eight-and-a-half dozen bottles of beer a week. The owners of the Mechanics were Hydes Queens Brewery of Manchester (now Hydes Anvil) and their outside manager stated that the beerhouse had sold 84 barrels in 1907, 77 in 1908 and 91 in 1909.

The Mechanics survived and stayed open until 1924. At the licensing sessions the police said there was only one public room in the house, a tap room, and they again complained that there were too many licensed houses in the district - two public houses and five registered clubs.

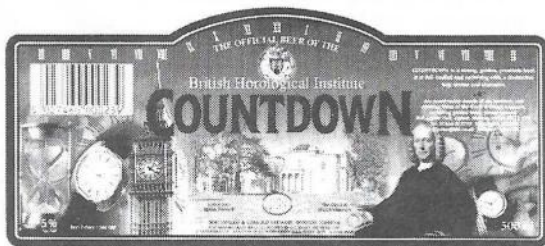
Licensee George Buckley was heard to mutter, 'The owners know about this, but it doesn't look as if they're bothering.' He was right. A solicitor for the brewery told the magistrates that the company had no objections to closure. The licence expired on 27th December 1924.

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## Countdown to 2000

*Oh no! Not Richard Whiteley and the Millennium?*

Relax. This Countdown is a new bottled beer, although it is not unrelated to the upcoming Y2K. The brewer is Tolly Cobbold and Countdown is the official beer of the British Horological Institute. It is a strong, light, golden brew, with neither the standard 'beery nose' nor a harsh aftertaste, it says here. The pretty label has pictures of Big Ben and assorted timepieces, together with a portrait of John Harrison, the chap who made the first watch accurate enough for measuring longitude and who they made that television programme about a few weeks ago with Patrick Malahide.



Countdown will be available in selected Tescos from February.



# Home Brewing Revisited

*Humulus Lupulus*

## Part Eighteen - Barrels

For home brewers, containers are either plastic barrels or glass bottles. The home-brew industry has produced many shapes (including spherical) and design of barrel, with various means of sealing, venting, gas-injection (!) and dispense.

For me, the best is a traditional barrel shape, standing on its end, with a tap near the bottom and a plain screw cap at the top. The caps of many of these barrels are specially designed to take a carbon dioxide injector. Some barrels even have the tap near the top, with a tube inside leading down to the bottom. Such designs rely on gas being injected into the container to produce sufficient pressure to lift the beer to the tap; gravity dispense is impossible!

As a CAMRA member I am ashamed to confess to owning one of these infernal injectors. In mitigation, however, I can honestly say that it has never been used. Apart from H E Bravery (1) who was writing before they were invented, Graham Wheeler (13) is the only author who does not advocate the use of an injector under any circumstances. I concur with this; I do not believe they are necessary, though some patience may be required.

Assuming the barrel is nearly full, but with an air space of, say, two pints at the top, this will fill with conditioning gas at somewhat more than atmospheric pressure. It will then be possible to draw off a pint or so without loosening the cap or (worse) allowing air to glug in through the tap and up through the beer. A day or two later, the air space (now three pints) will again be under slight pressure and more than a pint can be safely drawn. So long as conditioning is still going on, the situation repeats, with more beer being drawable on each occasion.

Eventually, though, a time will come when no more condition remains and nothing comes out of the tap. Now there is a choice. If there is not a lot left in the barrel and you are confident that you can drink it all in a few days,





then I would 'crack' open the screw cap to allow a little air (but no vinegar flies) in as beer is drawn from the tap. Screw it back tightly when you have drawn enough for immediate consumption.

If, however, there is still a fair quantity and you do not want to drink it immediately, it is quite feasible to re-prime using about one-and-a-half ounces of sugar dissolved in a little hot water and adding this through the cap to two or three gallons of beer remaining. Allow a few days for fermentation and resettling to occur; it will then be possible, thanks to the large but repleted head space, to draw copious amounts of beer through the tap.

Of course all the above is unnecessary if the barrel is to be consumed all at once, at a party, for example. In this case, once the tap starts to 'glug', just open the cap and carry on drinking!

*Next time - bottles.*

#### References

1 *Home Brewing Without Failures*  
by H E Bravery. Max Parrish,  
London

13 *Brew Your Own Real Ale at Home*  
by Graham Wheeler &  
Roger Protz, CAMRA

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# Rupert

As might be expected, Grotley national amber nectar show attracted campaign-related glitterati from all over the Queendom. Unsurprisingly the availability of strong ales combined with the advanced years of those stalwarts to create an unprecedented plethora of examples of tired and emotional behaviour to appal the most liberal-minded amongst us. Sadly, many of these excesses must remain in the unsubstantiated rumour file until I receive corroborative evidence. I was, alas, not present for much of the amber nectar show owing to my assuming National Presidency of the Persons of Restricted Growth Institute.

I would not like inadvertently to malign anyone. If you would like to deny any potential rumours about your own behaviour, please drop me a line and I'll ensure that the relevant file is destroyed. (Jamie and Trev don't bother; I've nothing on you at the moment.)

There's been a very poor response from former Slumley luminaries for the Silver celebrations. Royal Hall's pretending that the tickets are selling like hot cakes, but really sales are very poor. Can all those who were famed yesteryear be dead or moribund? Surely not. I'm hoping that some more folks will come forward, otherwise we'll have to end up paying Bazza Salt, Boris Pratt and their ilk to come

along and lend credence to the proceedings. God forbid. We've arranged the do in the afternoon so that the elderly can get home in the light and go to bed early. If two free pints is too much for you, we'll make it a half and a glass of Wincarnis. And if you don't like curry, we'll make some arrowroot biscuits available in the cardigan and slipper lounge.

The Slumley branch further promises that nobody at all will become inebriated, there will be little noise and that, if you come, you will never ever again be insulted in the pages of What's Doing. Honest! So if you've not yet decided to come, change your mind and come along. Bunty, Fiona, Tish and the crowd will be delighted to see you. A Zimmer room and incontinence pad changing facilities are provided free of charge. So we'll see you there, then, Beinlos, Charlie Bass and the rest of you. You know who you are.





# Branch Diary

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 2 Feb 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Dog and Partridge, Roundthorn Road, Oldham.

Tues 9 Feb 8.30pm, Oldham Beer Festival Organisation Meeting, Up Steps, High Street, Oldham.

Tues 16 Feb 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, Bridgewater, Manchester Road, Hollinwood.

Thurs 25 Feb 8.30pm, What's Doing Collation/Oldham Beer Festival Organisation Meeting, Cask & Feather, Oldham Road, Rochdale.

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

## **North Manchester**

Wed 3 Feb, Piccadilly Crawl. Bulls Head 7pm, Goose 8pm, Crown & Anchor, Hilton Street, 9.30pm.

Wed 10 Feb 8pm, Students' beer tasting. Crescent, Salford.

Wed 17 Feb 8pm, Branch Meeting, White Swan, Swinton.

Sun 21 Feb, 25th anniversary of branch, Marble Arch, noon. Tickets £5 from Roger Hall.

Wed 24 Feb 8pm, New members' social, Beer House.

Tues 2 Mar 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, Red Bank.

Wed 3 Mar 8pm, GBG 2000 Non-city selection. Castle, Oldham Street.

*Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

**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 £52.50 or £210 for six months, half page £36.75 or £157.50 for six months, quarter page £26.25 or £105 for six months. All adverts must be accompanied with payment. Cheque payable to 'What's Doing'.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** £3.30 for six months, £5.80 for twelve months. Send cheque/PO together with your name and address to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW. 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 £14 to Membership, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW.

*Contributors to this issue:* Pete Cash, Dave Crookell, Rob Magee, Roger Hall, Dave White, Michael Lynn, Roger Wilson, Stewart Revell, Daddy Bell

Dave and Sue welcome you to the

# QUEENS ARMS

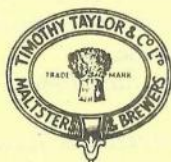
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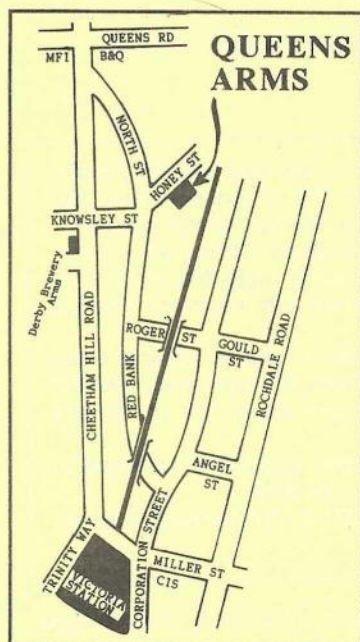


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and CAMRA's Good Food Guide*