

30p

# What's Doing

MARCH 1999



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## BROUGHTON BYGONES

Last month somebody noticed that the Grove on Bury New Road, Lower Broughton, wasn't there any more. Now there is news of another casualty in deepest Broughton. The Old Priory (below), latterly an Innentrepreneur pub, was demolished late last year. The place was somewhat run down and it isn't a great loss, although the building was one of the oldest in Salford. Before it became a pub, it was a residence called Duncan Lodge.

A more prominent Broughton landmark, the Rialto Cinema on the corner of Bury New Road and Great Cheetham Street West, is due for demolition any day now.





## **Winter Ales Festival**

*Ralph Warrington*

Thank you everyone who attended the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester last month - the first major beer festival in Manchester for three years.

The event was a tremendous success, so much so that we ran out of beer and had to close two-and-a-half hours early. There will be more beer available at next year's festival. There were some great comments from those who attended, particularly about the beer range and quality, and we will make sure that next year's event is at least as good.

Thank you to those members of CAMRA who came to work at the Festival and contributed so much to its success. I think the phrase is 'exhausting but exhilarating!'

## **Ex Parrot**

The Grey Parrot in Hulme, which had been closed for over twelve months, was demolished at the end of January.

## **Piccadilly Price War**

The Goose on Piccadilly has gone into competition with the nearby Wetherspoons, resulting in a price war for the most popular drinks.

A few weeks ago Becks was 85p per bottle at Wetherspoons and 75p at the Goose (usual price £1.90). JDW's nitrokeg John Smiths was 85p per pint, while the Goose offered equally nasty fizzy Worthington bitter at 75p per pint. Guinness was £1.29 at JDW and £1.20 at the Goose. More recently, Becks at JDW was 99p a bottle Sunday to Thursday and £2+ at weekends. At the Goose it was 70p at all times!

The price of real ale has not been reduced in either establishment, but with Becks at well below the supermarket price, Piccadilly is still worth a visit before Bass and JDW kiss and make up.

## **Great oaks to fast food restaurants go...**

The Royal Oak in Baguley is to be replaced with a McDonald's Restaurant if the plans are accepted. King Charles must be weeping into his spaniels.

## **Cotton on**

It appeared that time had been called at the Cotton Tree on Great Ancoats Street in early February, when the pub was closed and boarded up. Miraculously, three weeks later, the boards came down and the place reopened.

## Alterations

It seems to be the season for alterations. The **White Lion** on Liverpool Road in Castlefield is expected to shut on 2nd March for about three weeks. The original plans for the pub have been scaled down and now only the downstairs will be affected. The cellar steps will be relocated, the kitchen will be shifted to create more space in the drinking area and at the same time the bar will be extended. Those at a loss whilst the White Lion is shut should try the adjacent Oxenoble, where the quality of the beer has been improving.



The **City Arms** on Kennedy Street is expected to shut for a major expansion soon. The exact date still seems uncertain.

Sam Smiths' **Windmill** in Carrington has closed for a major refurbishment. When it reopens towards the end of March, the vault will have gone and there will be a bigger emphasis on food. Question is, will this ex-GBG pub still have cask ale?

Finally, a pub where the work has been done. The **Quarry Bank** on Bloomsbury Lane in Timperley has been completely refurbished and it is now a far more pleasant place. The food on offer is much improved. More importantly, the full range of Hydes beers is served through handpumps and the quality has improved to the extent that the pub is shortlisted for the GBG2000.





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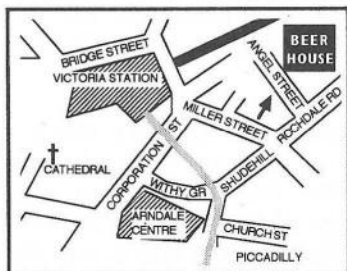
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## Wetherspoons in Urmston

The **Tim Bobbin** opened in a converted Norweb showroom on Flixton Road, Urmston, on Wednesday 10th February. The modern interior maintains the Wetherspoon traditions, but it's not as cavernous as some of their outlets. The standard beers are Theakstons Best (99p), Boddies, Directors and Thwaites Mild. There will always be two guests, which on the opening day were Ringwood Old Thumper and Summerskills Shamrock Stout.

The Tim Bobbin is open during all normal licensing hours and food is served for most of that time (11am to 10pm Mon to Sat; 12noon to 9.30pm on Sundays).

The appearance of a Wetherspoons in Tyldesley (the conversion of the currently boarded-up George and Dragon) is still expected. The delay is in the planning process.

## ...and in Eccles

The Eccles Wetherspoons is expected to be open by next July and will occupy the premises of 'Jungle Fun' on Regent Street, just a hundred yards from the Lamb.

## Bury pubs

Enterprise Inns have sold the **Blue Bell** on Bolton Road in Bury (*right*) and the building will probably be turned into a shop and flats. The pub (ex-Whitbread) had been closed for about a year.

Extensive building work is going on at the **Swan & Cemetery** (Thwaites) on Manchester Road, Redvales. Will the alterations be in keeping with the pub's traditional character? Will real ale survive?



## New pubs for the city

A new development at the junction of Oxford Street and Portland Street in Manchester, to be known as the Circus, will include an S&N pub, a Wetherspoon pub and one of Whitbread's Travel Inn hotels.



## Home and Away

*with Daddy Bell*

In Huddersfield on January 29th, en route to buy some specialist malts in Lockwood, I found (to my surprise and delight) a festival of Eire Ales in the **Head of Steam** at the railway station. Five Irish breweries were represented, all their beers were in cask form and served by traditional methods, not the mixed gas dispense which is almost universal in Ireland. I drank at least a half of six out of the thirteen ales, which were all priced at £2.25 a pint and were between 4% and 5%. There were several Red Ales (an Irish speciality) and that from the Porter House in Dublin was a fiery orange colour, with more initial bite than the 1798 Revolution Ale from the Dublin Brewing Co, which was a very dark red. The handpumped lager (Brew No.1) from the Irish Brewing Co was very pale and slightly gingery in taste. All the beers were soft in palate, the most distinctive to my taste being An Dubhain (5%) from the Dwan Tipperary brewery - more of a black bitter than a stout. With such a liquid feast to be had, how could anyone drink the 'Caffrey's Irish Ale' which was also on sale? (To be honest, I didn't notice anybody who did.)



Back in Salford, **Bridgewater Ales Ltd** achieved their fifth brew on February 17th and this time the Bridgewater Stout emerged at its projected strength of 5.2%. The second (January 26th) and fourth brews were of Barton Ale (a gratifyingly successful recreation of Holt, Plant & Deakin's 4.3% Entire) and the third was the weaker Navigator (3.8%). Sticklebract (Stickelbract?) hops figured alongside

Fuggles and Goldings in the first batch of Barton Ale, and Progress in the second, while Navigator included Styrian Goldings alongside the two English stalwarts.



Proprietors Richard Bazen and Ken Birch are aiming for two brews a week, but the limitations of their present premises and plant at the Old Pint Pot

mini-brewery are already evident. It is intended that their permanent home (next to the Chapel Street and Hope URC Church, and in the sad shadow of the old Threlfalls Brewery tower) will have four fermenters and a cask washing facility, as well as greater storage space. In the meantime, it is worth tracking their progress and enjoying this welcome addition to the North West brewing scene.

Still on the microbrewing front, I chanced to look in at the **Marble Brewery** on February 6th, to find Pete Cash and Mark McConachie busy with the brewing of Argent Ale, under the supervision of Mark Dade. The boil was well advanced, and there was time for a tour of the brewery's nether regions and a sampling of some maturing beers. What a congenial way to spend a Saturday afternoon!

There are hints that another micro-brewery may be in the offing in Greater Manchester.

Some drinkers (eg *Opening Times'* Beer Monster) have found Holts beers very off-putting lately, but my most recent experiences of the bitter suggest it has recovered much of its old acerbic form, without any phenolic oddness. And there's nowt wrong with the mild either.

At the end of January, I managed to catch some of the beers in the mini-festival at the **Smithfield** in Swan Street (*right*). Janus (4.3%) in Border's 'Mythic Beers' series, ('Divine Brews for Divine Beings') was a very pale gold, agreeably subtle in taste, with a lovely white head. Ebulum (Elderberry Black Ale - 6.5%) was more challenging, with a wonderful creamy jamminess. Smash and Grab (4.2%) from Barnfield was apparently a last-chance-to drink-it experience. Are they ceasing to brew?



## Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

Since last month's announcement that Holts were arranging visits to raise funds for the Christie Hospital, close on 350 people have been booked to tour the brewery. The visits start at the beginning of March and conclude at the end of May. Each visitor is donating £10 towards the Holt Radium Institute/Christie Hospital funds. There are a few evening visits still available for parties of up to 15 people. Contact the Brewers' Office on 0161 834 3285 and they will do their best to accommodate your group.

Another fund-raising exercise is a sponsored bike ride from Manchester to Blackpool, with each participant guaranteeing £100 sponsorship to the Christie Hospital. This is being run in conjunction with the normal bike ride during June/July so that full back-up can be assured. Cyclists who feel they are up to it and would like to take part, and can raise £100 in sponsorship, should get in touch with the Senior Area Manager at the brewery. You never know, you may be treated to a pint or two after the trip!

Rumours about the sale of the Hipp in Harpurhey and the Blue Bell at Blackford Bridge have been discounted at the brewery. I'm told that new houses are being built around the Hipp, so it would not make sense to dispose of it, and the Blue Bell is a very successful pub anyway. Another rumour says Holts are producing a 'smooth' mild, but they say they aren't.

The **Winston** in Salford (*WD last month*) was sold some twelve months ago to become a 'free trade' outlet. The pub is currently closed, its future unknown. The Cross Yates near Rochdale has changed from a tenancy to a managed house.

The conversion of the **Globe** in Leigh into a Holts outlet was recently approved by the local council. Transformation will take about two months. The other recent acquisition, the **Sun & Castle** in Stockport, should be up and running by the beginning of March.

The 4.8% DBA is now being tried in the **Dukes Gate** at Little Hulton. The beer has been taken off at a few other outlets because sales have been slow. The **Lamb** in Eccles was one where it was expected to do well, but after the initial interest the customers went back to their mild and bitter.

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## **Worsley beerex**

The John Gilbert in leafy Worsley may be hosting a beer festival at Easter or later in the year. The guest ales have gone down well with regulars and the licensee is keen to promote cask ale. A recent guest was Coach House Dick Turpin.

Another pub enjoying success with guest beers is the Jolly Carter in nearby Winton. Over the St Valentine's period in February this recently enlarged Greene King house was selling a new seasonal ale, Old Horny, alongside the usual range.



## **Festival Ale**

Hydes' Festival Ale, the 4.3% premium bitter launched at the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester in January, has begun to appear in the pubs. It can be had at the Fletcher Moss in Didsbury and the Pack Horse, Affetside, and retails at about £1.60 a pint.

## **Oldham Alehouse**

Whitbread have sold the Buck & Union on Union Street (formerly the Hogshead) to the Alehouse Company Ltd of Southampton. This outfit controls over 200 pubs and is looking to take on another forty or so.

## **C&A**

Holts' Crown and Anchor on Cateaton Street is closed and the sign outside says it is a 'site office'. But it is nothing to do with the Marks & Spencers building site across the street. The interior of the pub has been gutted. What can be going on?

## **Ken's Wood Walk**

Ken Birch is organising a walk down the Irwell Valley from Ramsbottom, followed by a pub crawl of Bury on Saturday 20th March. Meet at Bury E.L.R Station on Bolton Street at 9.45am to catch the train to Ramsbottom.

## Middleton Pubs

*Peter Alexander*

In the halcyon days when I first came to Middleton, beer choice there was a-plenty. If only I had known it, things were at their peak in more ways than one. Not only was the spring in my step springier than it is now, ten long years later, but the beer scene was perhaps then at a high. Beer on the wicket abounded, with Oldham, Boddingtons, Lees, Wilsons, Thwaites, Whitbread and others all being quaffed in quantity in pubs that had yet to be mucked about with. All of 'em available in mild or bitter. Cask was what we expected and by and large, that was what we got.

The picture now is much less rosy: cask beer in retreat everywhere, and mild as rare as a hen's tooth. My haunts of old are now shadows of their former selves or worse, like the **Brunswick** in Townley Street, a victim of a blaze and closed for several months. Gone are the days when, midst an astonishing mix of bikers, punks and even suits, real ale in considerable volume was supped, from Coach House mild to Wobbly Bob; guests from Adnams, Taylors and the four corners of the UK. The pub, while not to everyone's taste, throbbed with life. It deserved its Good Beer Guide entry. Latterly, however, before the fire consumed it, the Brunswick was a ghost of its former self, selling tasteless, cheap nitrokeg to a declining band of customers. The bikers were silent and deflated and the punks and suits gone.

At my old Sunday haunt, the **Joiners Arms** in Archer Park, OB mild and bitter were the order of the day. The new OB, a pale and insipid



imitation of the once proud local ale is probably no more, killed by the ruthless march of rationalisation or, perhaps more kindly, finally laid to rest from a pathetic existence. This fine Lancashire ale was moved to Cheshire, with the guts all but knocked out of it. Who knows what the replacement here will be?

At least the Joiners is still a cask ale house with an enthusiastic following. That's more than can be said for the **Roebuck** and **Old**



**Dauids** in Alkington, the **Dog and Partridge** in Spring Vale and, just around the corner, the **Nook** - all former real ale houses and now firmly in the grip of the Gadarene rush to nitrokeg.

So what have we got instead? There are one or two bright spots. Despite never rising to the heights it could have as a cask ale house (Whitbread pricing probably saw to that), the **Dusty Miller** ploughs bravely on. No more exciting guest ales, but a steady range of Chesters mild (a surprisingly good beer), Wadworths 6X, Pedigree, Boddingtons, and perhaps London Pride. Worth a try. Alas, the other potential bright light has proved something of a disappointment. I welcomed Wetherspoon's **Harbord Harbord** with eager anticipation of good things to come, but it has not lived up to expectations. Prices for the guest ales (£1.59 - £1.69) together with uninspired beer selection, have limited demand which at first, with sensible pricing, was buoyant. Predatory pricing, with Smiths Smooth and Newcastle Brown going for 99p a pint, have ensured demand is subdued enough to affect guest ale quality. The national bland cask ales such as Theakstons and Boddingtons being priced 30p - 40p below the guests is another nail in the coffin. The odd decent guest - served far too cold, by the way - does not make up for the shortcomings. I have had sour beer here on too many occasions. It makes the visit a lottery and complaining, while the correct thing to do, is irksome and demoralising if it has to be done on a regular basis. As far as Middleton is concerned, Wetherspoons have lost their way, peddling cheap bottles and neglecting the quality cask ale tradition of founder Tim Martin. Also, the effect of these giveaway prices on the rest of Middleton's pub trade can only be guessed at.

Elsewhere in Middleton, the picture is patchy, with cask holding its own at the **Oddfellows** on Oldham Road and still, surprisingly in view of Thwaites' record of installing smooth beer, available in very good form at the **Hare and**





**Hounds** opposite (although smooth is on in competition at 8p a pint more). All cask ale has vanished from the **Railway**, also on Oldham Road, despite the signs outside. In nearby Rhodes, the **Barbers Arms** has given up on its brief flirtation with Camerons cask bitter (pity that, because I never had a bad pint there), but the **Waggon and Horses** has both Holts mild and bitter and both in good form too, at a recent visit. Not much to shout about, I know, but cask clings on at the **Wilton**, the first pub in Middleton, geographically at least, in the shape of Boddingtons and Greenalls bitters.

So where does this gloomy picture leave us? We still have John Willie Lees, thank goodness. When all around is

dispiriting, we can still enjoy a decent pint of one of the top cask ales in the country (Lees bitter), from a local brewer firmly committed to cask. They still do a mild, too. Try them in the **Britannia**, the **Old Boars Head**, the **Ring o'Bells**, or - oh - most of them really. Fine beer in pubs which, by and large, are still pubs in the best tradition. However, Lees can get it wrong. The awful Greengate Smooth, the appalling 'entertainment' in the **Assheton Arms**, which otherwise is a likeable pub with cheerful staff and very good beer. (Top tip: Time it just right on Thursday night and you can get a couple of quick pints in when the karaoke man has a break.) I quibble, though. When all is said and done, there is still decent beer in Middleton, but raise a glass to Lees for making it so. Despite their faults, without them the picture would be bleak indeed.

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## No longer

The Lonsdale, a long derelict (it must have shut about ten years ago) Bass pub on Waterloo Road, Hightown, has fallen victim to the bulldozers. The pub was demolished on 13th February.



## Polly Hops

*March 17th is St Patrick's Day and to mark the occasion Dave Crookell visited a traditional Irish pub...*

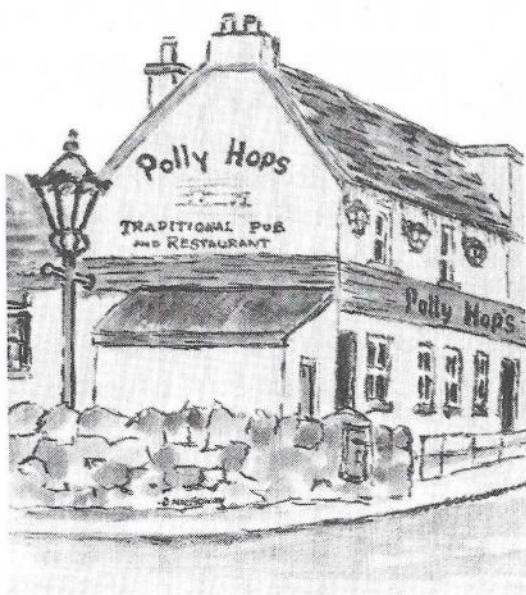
The Polly Hops pub and restaurant is situated in the small rural community of Milltown, between Newcastle and Lucan, about twenty minutes' drive from Dublin city centre. Established in 1847, the Polly Hops is reputed to be one of the area's oldest pubs, although it was originally situated a hundred yards down the Lucan road. The remains of this building can still be seen on the first bend - the pub was moved by the council about a hundred years ago to enable road widening.

Polly Hops was the original owner's wife. She was a well known character in the Dublin area who travelled with a cart laden with a cask of ale to provide refreshments at local racecourses, including Punchestown, Fairyhouse and the now defunct Baldoyle and Phoenix Park tracks. The practice was continued by two generations of the family and the present owners, Vincent and Anne Buggy (Polly's great, great granddaughter) are trying to renew the licence in order to resume the tradition of selling ale at the races.

The pub has four separate areas around a central bar. There is the Cottage Bar with whitewashed walls, exposed beam ceiling and open hearth fires; the Sportsmans Bar with a collection of sporting memorabilia, and the Poets Corner honouring the great wealth of Irish writers and poets.

The restaurant, 'Polly's Pantry', specialises in seafood dishes, including thick, creamy chowders, freshly steamed mussels, wild salmon, Dublin Bay prawns and garlic crab claws, together with steaks, stews and poultry dishes.

As might be expected, there is traditional Irish music, together with riverdancers, on most nights. The Polly Hops is said to be a unique pub in today's Irish licensed trade, maintaining originality to the detriment of many of the



comforts expected in the newer pub. It has unevenly flagged and tiled floors complete with sawdust, log fires, hard wooden seating and ancient plumbing, but is well worth seeking out during a visit to the Emerald Isle.

*Further to Dave's article on the pubs of the Coniston area (January), the Wilsons Arms in Torver has converted to Tetley Smoothflow...*

The landlord tells the story of the walker who had called at the pub enquiring about accommodation. He was shown a bedroom, then the restaurant; he had a look at the menu and tariff, all of which he found acceptable, so he checked in and unpacked. A short time later in the bar, on asking for a pint of draught bitter, our thirsty friend noticed the smoothflow font, whereupon he promptly walked out of the bar, packed his bags and left. 'Must have been a fussy bugger,' muttered the landlord. 'The beer's all t'bloody same, isn't it?'

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### **Captain shut**

The Woodville Hotel on Rochdale Road (formerly Captains Bar) is closed once again. Licensees Dave and Lena Cohen have moved to Belle Vue to take on the Coach & Horses (Robinsons). The Woodville's future looks bleak.

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## Swinton and Pendlebury

Ian Kenny

Tetleys appear to have managed to dispose of the **Station** on Bolton Road. The pub closed in January and a 'Sold' sign appeared. The building is now being refurbished and rumours are rife that Wetherspoons are involved.

A recent planning application has been made to demolish the public toilets at the corner of Station and Chorley Roads, together with the access ramp to the library and the premises underneath, and to build a new pub there. Again, Wetherspoons are reckoned to be the company concerned.



At Burtonwood's **Staff of Life** on Partington Lane (*above*), the Top Hat has been removed but fortunately replaced by a guest, currently Caledonian 80/- Ale. This will be followed by a different beer each month, starting with Mansfield Old Baily in March.

Sales of DBA have been disappointing at Holts' **Cricketers** on Manchester Road and the beer has been withdrawn.

### Mild matters

Batemans mild has been replaced by Tetleys Smooth at the Robin Hood on Droylsden Road in Newton Heath. However, the Hogshead on High Street in Manchester city centre has bucked the trend. Chesters mild has been removed, but the pub continues to stock a guest mild, more often than not from an independent brewer.

## Dark Days

Groggnard

These days my opportunities for festivalling are somewhat limited, but I was determined to find time for the afternoon session of the National Winter Ales Festival at Upper Campfield Market on Deansgate on Saturday 23rd January. With so many new dark ales coming on to the market this seemed an opportunity not to be missed. A train to Victoria then an easy stroll down Deansgate, no problem. But, as usual, I had to complicate my life, this time with a detour to the Kings Arms on Bloom Street. I might as well have saved my shoe soles; the place was closed and it was a long, wet walk up Quay Street to arrive at the festival ten minutes before high noon. A queue had already formed, mostly of gentlemen of early middle age in sensible shoes and anoraks. (Question - Is there a recognisable CAMRA type?)

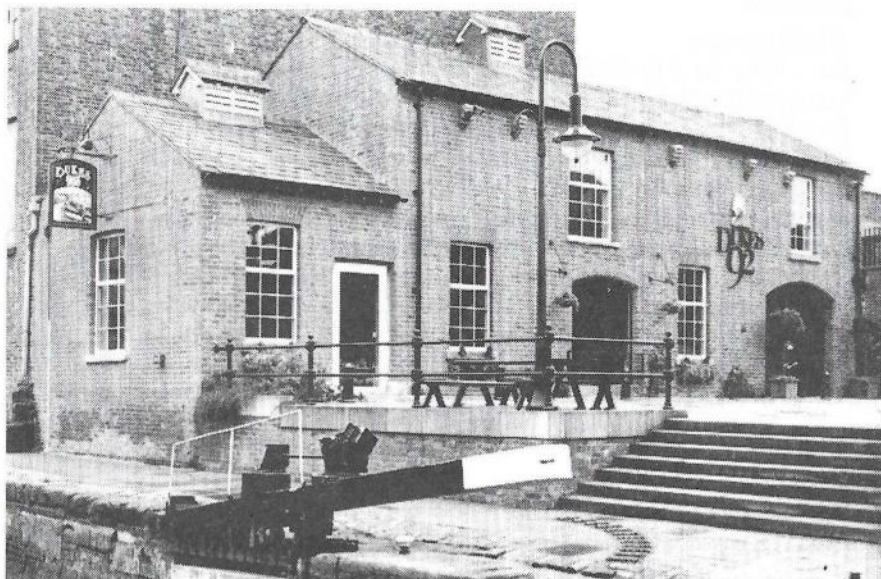
Inside (it opened five minutes late) was a profusion of porters, old ales, winter ales, stouts and milds. Without going into heavy detail I must say that I was impressed by the variety and quality. Some of the labelling is misleading, with so-called milds which are anything but, dry porters and sweet stouts. Porter is definitely making a comeback: there were seven with that label and another three or four I would put in that class. My personal favourite, however, was labelled as a mild - Gales Festival at 4.8%. Definitely not an eight pints a night session beer. They had bitters on offer as well, but that wasn't the purpose of my journey.



There were some green slips of paper on the bar offering free bottles of Lees Festival Ale round the corner at Dukes 92 on Castle Street. So, why not? A two-minute walk took us to a very hygienic-looking, pale wood panelling/floored building, where we were given some 275ml bottles of honey coloured liquid with a knife and fork on the label. Actually, it tasted quite reasonable and distinctive as well. Dukes also sells draught Taylors Landlord and Boddingtons, but I didn't enquire about them.

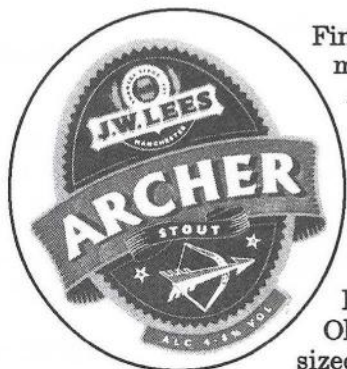
So back to the festival, where by 3.30pm the choice was severely depleted and I just managed to grab one of the last halves of Hydes' new Ruby Ratchet Porter (5.3%). Then a final half of Museum Imperial Stout (8%) and time for a dignified exit.





Aside from the beer, I must mention the food, which was well above the burger and chips standard. A well-stocked cheese bar was my own choice. Also worth mentioning is the programme, which was practically a mini beer guide; it will take me a month or two to investigate all the possibilities it mentions (with the probable exception of Blobs on High Street).

One of the programme suggestions I followed up was the Sportsman on Mottram Road, Hyde. I went up on a Sunday because from 12 to 4 there's 25p off a pint. I particularly wanted to sample their Magic Mushroom Mild (3.8%) and found it delicious at £1.05 a pint. They do a house bitter called Sportsman, what else, which is 5% and slightly heavy for my taste, but they also do Plassey bitter, Taylors Landlord and Hartington. Prices are around £1.50/60 (less the 25p, of course).



Finally, on the subject of dark mild I must mention Lees, who are bringing out their Archer Stout in March - 4.8% and very sleek with a dry aftertaste. Much to be preferred to certain nitro-stouts. Their strong ale, Moonraker, has apparently been named 'Import of the Year' by the US ale publication *Barleycorn*. I wonder how much it sells for over there. At the Bowling Green on Manchester Road, Oldham, it's £1.55 for one of those egg-cup sized bottles.

## Letters

### Chill factor

Sir - Why do J D Wetherspoon keep all their bottled beers at the same temperature? On a recent visit to Bolton's Spinning Mule, Taylors Landlord and Coniston Bluebird were alongside Becks, Budweiser, Pils and, indeed, Newcastle Brown in the cooler, which I was informed was set at 4°C. CAMRA should remind JDW that real ales served too cold lose their full flavour. Newcastle Brown is probably robust enough to retain flavour at this temperature and lagers are fairly tasteless anyway, but shouldn't bottled versions of draught real ale be served at the recommended cellar temperature so that the subtle flavours can still be appreciated? It cannot be beyond an organisation such as JDW to have a separate cooler for bitters and milds set at 13-14°C and one for lagers set at 4°C.

*Dave Crookell*

### Traveller's Tale

Sir - After reading with interest a traveller's comments regarding the hurry, bustle and lack of cleanliness and comfort at the Bridgewater Arms, Manchester, in 1808 (*Manchester Pubs Part Six, last month*), I thought you might be interested in the following from *Rides Round Britain* by John Byng.

Byng arrived on horseback at the Bulls Head in the Market Place on Midsummer Day, 25th June 1792, and commented 'Oh! What a doghole is Manchester. For the old town is like Wapping; and the upper, the new town, like Spital Fields - in the same gloom and dirt.'

'My ordered dinner was a salmon peal, lamb chops and peas (but peas were not to be had), the salmon served was too stale to be eaten; and the thick, raw fried chops swam in butter. God sends meat, but the devil sends cooks. I could not eat, I tried to drink of the port wine, but I could not, the bread was intolerable and the cheese was in remnants. I said, Take it away.'

Perhaps wisely, he chose not to sample the ale!

*John Richards*

### Missed their Marque?

Sir - I have just seen a list of Cask Marque pubs, those pubs which the brewing industry believes to be serving high quality cask ale. There's only one in Greater Manchester, the Oak Tree Root in Atherton. Does this mean that Paul Roberts is right and that we've no pubs serving a decent pint? Should we give up on our allocation of Good Beer Guide pubs to a more deserving area of the country? I think we should be told.

*Duff Marx*



## Over the hills and not so far away

*Countryman*

### Around Affetside

The Pack Horse at Affetside is a popular country pub on the old Roman Road midway between Bolton and Bury. The detached stone building probably dates from the late eighteenth century and it is one of Hydes Brewery's more remote outlets. The main bar area and lounge (Duck and Grouse Room) are on the left of the entrance porch. Here there are mahogany furnishings, lots of brass ornaments, a collection of blowlamps suspended from the beams and a crackling log fire in the winter months. A snug-type room adjoins the bar and there is a games room opposite.

The beers are Hydes bitter and light mild on electric pumps and seasonal ale (Ruby Ratchet porter on my visit) on handpump. Good value food is available seven lunchtimes a week and on Friday evenings.

Don't be put off by the skull behind the bar. Tradition has it that this belonged to a local executioner and anyone who tries to remove it will meet with disaster. A potted history of this can be seen at the side of the bar.

Affetside is served by bus No.508 from Bolton at 20 minutes past the hour and from Bury at 18 minutes past the hour, daytime only and not Sundays. A day saver ticket (£3) is good value as you can use it to catch buses 273 and 560 to visit the nearby villages of Hawkshaw and Walves. The **Red Lion** at Hawkshaw (273 and 508 stop outside) sells handpumped Jennings and the **Willows** (a Millers Kitchen Family Pub) at Walves sells handpumped Boddingtons bitter and Greenalls Original. This place was only built a few years ago and it has already had its name changed from the more appropriate Turton Heights. The original Walves pub, the Bulls Head, shut a couple of years ago but it can still be seen across the road.



## Home Brewing Revisited

*Humulus Lupulus*

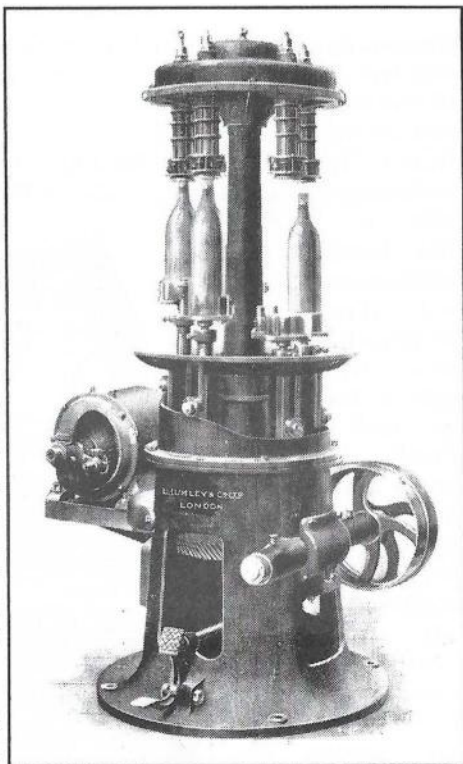
### Part Nineteen - Bottles

Many decades ago, long before P.E.T. bottles and even before Watney's Party Sevens (large seven-pint cans of pasteurised beer) I used to take an empty rucksack to teenage parties. In those days, some beers and nearly all ciders came in heavy, two-pint glass 'flagons'. These had an internal screw thread in the neck and were fitted with a 'composition' stopper with a rubber ring to provide a seal. Thanks to my rucksack I built up a sizeable collection of these, and despite a few breakages over the years I still have about twenty of them. I also have a dozen smaller versions of the same thing; these have a capacity of about one-and-a-third pints and originally contained beer - mostly Wilsons. I believe they are known as 'reputed three gills', the idea being that you can fill three half-pint glasses from them and still have room for a frothy head.

The rubber rings perish after several years' use, and recently some of the 'composition' stoppers have become tainted and no amount of bleach or other cleaners would cure them. Fortunately both new rings and complete stoppers in a modern hard plastic are still available from home-brew shops, so I have now refitted the entire stock with modern stoppers, though I have kept some of the old ones for nostalgia's sake. In fact, new, one-pint bottles with the same stoppers can still be purchased from home-brew shops, but are quite expensive. Care is needed in washing the old thick glass bottles, as hot water will crack them.

Second-hand Grolsch bottles with their wired-on stoppers and rubber seals are also ideal, except they don't hold very much (50cl). Some years ago, I think it was the Newquay Steam Brewery that produced a range of quality (pasteurised) beers in brown pint bottles with stoppers identical to Grolsch.

If you don't have any of the above, the next best option is





crown cork bottles. These come, or came, in a whole range of sizes: 25cl, one-third pint (nips), 50cl, half-pint, pint and litre. I even had a couple of quart crown cap flagons from the now defunct Shipstones Brewery. Crown caps for these, in a wide range of colours, are widely available from homebrew shops, as are the gadgets for attaching them.

The latter come in two types; a simple metal tool with a handle which you place over the cap on the bottle and hit with a mallet, and an altogether more complicated affair with hinged levers and a pair of handles. I strongly advocate the second type, having smashed more than one bottle using the primitive version.

Finally, there is no reason why other bottles such as P.E.T. or those thin glass ones with external threads and aluminium caps cannot be used in an emergency, providing care has been taken not to over-prime.

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## Wigan Beer Festival

The twelfth Wigan Beer Festival takes place at The Mill at The Pier, Wigan Pier, on 4th to 6th March. There will be 45 beers from all around Britain's coastline, such as Brewery-on-sea Spinnaker Buzz, brewed with honey in Sussex, and Poole Best Bitter. Several offshore breweries will also be represented, such as Orkney Dragonhead (a 4% stout), Old Laxey Bosun Bitter from the Isle of Man (3.8%), Isle of Skye Avalanche (5%) and Ventnor Oyster Stout from the Isle of Wight.

The strongest beer will be Lees Moonraker (7.5%), and Caledonian of Edinburgh are providing their rare Edinburgh Strong Ale (6.4%), which is also best drunk in halves!

Beer Manager Dave Hughes recommends last year's Beer of the Festival, Oakham Helter Skelter, brewed in Peterborough, and Black Lager from Harviestoun, which is a Scottish lager, properly brewed, matured and served without gas.

The opening times and admission prices are:

Thurs 4th March	5.30-11.00: 50p before 7.00pm, £1.50 after 7.00pm
Fri 6th March	12.00-3.00: Admission Free 5.30-11.00: £1.00 before 7.00pm, £2.50 after 7.00pm
Sat 7th March	12.00-4.00: £1.00 7.00-11.00: £2.00



# Rupert

"Toujours un tosseur!" Fiona spoke with a finality which implied that further discussion was not to be permitted. We had been looking back at the success of the Grotley amber nectar show. Tish had reflected on how remarkable it was that so much alcohol could be consumed without the slightest sign of violent behaviour. We had considered the reasons for this - middle aged beer bores, wimpish scratchers, waning testosterone levels and the calming effect of naturally conditioned ale.

Ophelia Hampton put it down to the wonderful professionalism of the security staff who nipped potential conflict in the bud through their charismatic charm and silver-tongued demeanour. It was at this point that Fiona launched into her attack. She pointed out that there was something fundamentally wrong with the psyche of those who wanted to wear uniforms, be enclobbered with walkie-talkies and control others. Her comparisons with the Third Reich, Allende, Pinochet, Saddam Hussein, Traffic Wardens and doormen at the Hacienda were a little exaggerated, but she went on to suggest that the last policeman you should give a gun or a fast car to is the one who wants them most.

A gentle, 'Oh, come off it, Fiona,' was met with a long list of faux

pas by the soi-disant chief of security, including the ejection of a major supplier and a threat to duff up Mr Kepple, the chief cashier.

Stunned into silence, I went to the bar. We were in Butler's Gin Palace, which now served Drabs but not Alistair. Alistair had for some reason been wearing an England cricket touring team cap from the 1920s and was told that he wouldn't be served unless he turned it back to front. I went for his round. As I waited for six pints of Drabs amber nectar I noticed that the mild had become nitrogenated. Can this be the beginning of the end? On a happier note, I spotted a catalogue of Drabs leisurewear. Eventually, following the success of the double-sided beer mat, young Perry Drab must have been given his head. Sadly, it became apparent, as we inspected the offerings, that even young Perry was not in synch with the millennial zeitgeist.

Blazers, cravats, smoking jackets and plus-fours are hardly the preferred leisurewear of their clientele, enmired in the mid-century as they are. There was a very fetching cap, striped in the livery of the Crown Brewery and emblazoned with the Drabs coat of arms. 'That would really suit you, Roop,' said Fiona. 'Why not try one on?' 'I'm sure it would,' I replied, 'but if I didn't wear it back to front I'd be thrown out. And guess who the bouncer it? It's Fiona's friend from the amber nectar show, flushed with success.'



# Branch Diary

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 2 Mar 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Old Blue Bell, Bell Lane, Bury.

Wed 3 Mar 8.30pm, Evening Social, J W Lees Brewery, Middleton Junction. Details from Branch Contact.

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

Sat 13 Mar, Coach Social, Roosters Brewery, Harrogate. Date provisional. Details from Branch Contact.

Tues 16 Mar 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, Red Lion, Ramsbottom Road, Hawkshaw.

Thurs 25-Sat 27 Mar, Oldham Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Civic Centre, Oldham.

Tues 30 Mar 8.30pm, What's Doing Collation/Oldham Beer Festival Post Mortem, Cask & Feather, Oldham Road, Rochdale.

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

## **North Manchester**

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

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

Wed 10 Mar 8pm, GBG 2000 Final Selection (City), Black Friar, Salford.

Wed 17 Mar 8pm, Branch AGM, Beer House.

Wed 24 Mar 8pm, What's Doing discussion & social, Queens Arms, Honey Street.

Tue 30 Mar 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey St.

Wed 31 Mar, Boothstown Crawl. Moorings 7pm, Greyhound 8pm, Royal Oak 9pm.

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## **Trafford & Hulme**

Thur 18 Mar 8pm, Hogshead Ale House, Altrincham.

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

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**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.

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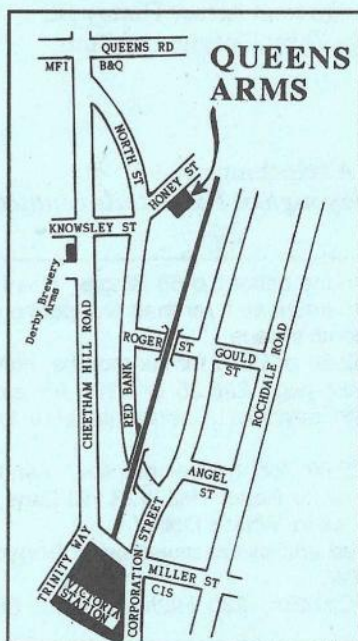
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