

30p

# What's Doing

JULY 1999



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## ANCOATS ALE GAIN



The Cheshire Cheese on Oldham Road, Manchester (J Smiths) is selling cask beer for the first time in years - John Smiths bitter, Theakstons bitter and Marstons Pedigree. The beers are priced at 140p, 140p and 160p respectively, except on Sundays, when the first two are only £1.

Dave the licensee moved here when Nicklebys on Dale Street closed and many of his old customers have stayed loyal. Nikita (the large white Samoyed dog) took a week to get used to the new surroundings and now she is comfortable inside or outside, as takes her fancy. Dave intends to have the whole pub decorated in the near future and hot lunchtime food will be introduced.

## Independents Day 1999

The Rochdale, Oldham & Bury branch of CAMRA invites members and non-members to join them in this year's celebration of local brewers. On Saturday 3rd July a coach will convey us around the area in comfort and it's FREE. You may join or leave the coach at whichever of the venues is convenient. The itinerary is as follows (all times are arrival times at the venue):

1100 Lees Brewery. 1230 Saddleworth Brewery's Church Inn, Uppermill. 1430 Millgate, Failsworth (outlet for Bridgewater Ales). 1530 Phoenix Brewery, Heywood. 1700 Moorhouse's Dusty Miller, Bury. 1830 Joseph Holt's Woodthorpe, Heaton Park. 1930 McGuinness' Cask & Feather, Rochdale.

To make sure of your seat, contact Elaine or Mark Hardman as soon as possible on 01706 648428.

## Burtonwood in the City

The Wheatsheaf on Oak Street is closed for a month whilst the pub gets a thorough refurbishment. When it reopens, the builders will be moving on to do the same at the Shamrock on Bengal Street. The Shamrock still sells cask Burtonwood bitter, but will this be lost after the refit? Will the Wheatsheaf get cask beer back?

## Shambles update

The new provisional date for the opening of the relocated Shambles pubs, Wellington and Sinclairs, is 27th July.

## Walkden

Planning permission is being sought to demolish Banks' Oaks on Oakwood Drive, just off Manchester Road (A6) at Walkden in order to build a housing development. The pub is currently selling keg beer, although real ale was available until two years ago.

## Fat Chance?

On Trafford Road at Salford Quays, Fatty Arbuckle's American Diner/Restaurant has applied for a licence to sell alcohol. Considering the availability of real ale in neighbouring establishments it seems likely that a decent pint will remain elusive.

## No Choice

The long closed **Brown Cow** on Oldfield Road, Salford (latterly Hobson's Choice) is no more, having been demolished in mid-June. So now there are no functioning pubs on the west side of Oldfield Road, while the **Jollies** (Lees) and the **Kings Arms** (Holts) remain as cask ale outlets on the east side. The **Prince of Wales** is now on nitrokeg.

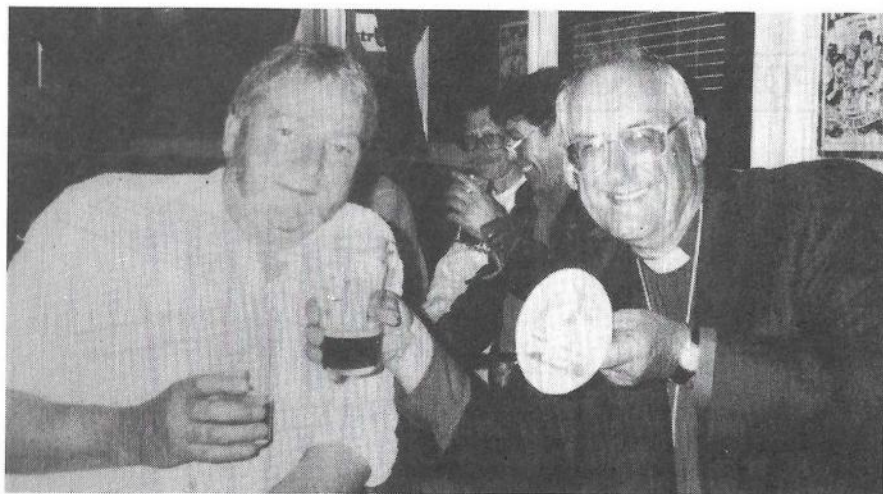
## Bridgewater Ales

*Daddy Bell*

Fitting-out work continues slowly but fairly surely at Bridgewater Ales' new home on Chapel Street, Salford, with much accomplished in tiling, electrics and connecting-up of brewing kit.

A positive public achievement has been the introduction of a new Bridgewater beer - Stephen's Special Bitter (SSB for short) - which was launched to great acclaim at the Kings Arms on Bloom Street on Thursday 17th June. (The beer was brewed in honour of the new (since 23rd April) Bishop of Hulme, the Right Reverend Stephen Lowe, who put in a much appreciated personal appearance at the Kings Arms on the evening of the 17th to give the beer his blessing (principally by consuming it with great satisfaction).-

Attractively red in hue, the 4.9% beer was hopped with Challenger and Stickelbract and had a hefty late hopping of some variety of Goldings. Peat-smoked malt is an ingredient, though its presence was not as perceptible at the launch as at earlier tastings.



This well-received one-off beer might well become the basis of a regular brew. Daddy Bell thanks Richard Bazen and Ken Birch for allowing him to have a hand in its production; Tom Jones for hosting its launch, and Bishop Stephen (*pictured with Ken*) for sharing in the launch with such gusto and interest.

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## New pub for Radcliffe

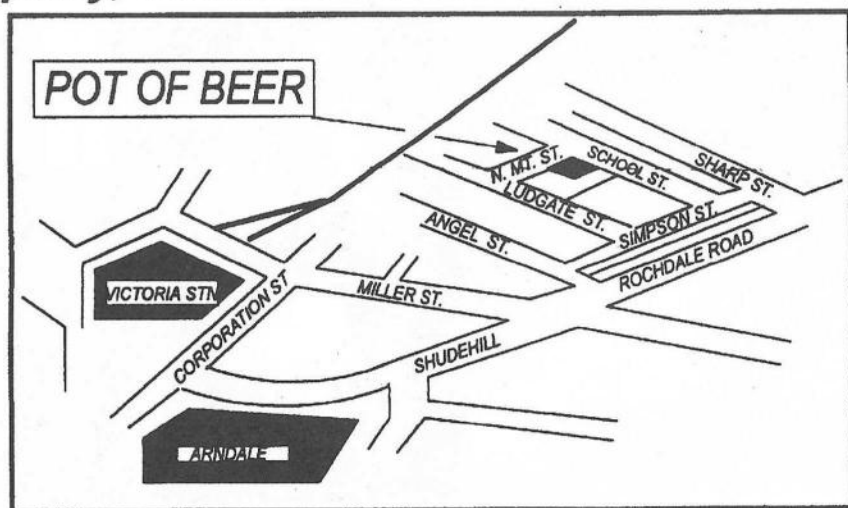
Allied Domecq is building a new pub/restaurant (complete with the now obligatory Wacky Warehouse) on Pilkington Way, Radcliffe. It is expected to be open by Christmas.

# POT OF BEER

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*Everchanging range of real ales,  
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Boddingtons Bitter, traditional cider or  
perry, continental beers and fine wines*



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VARIETY OF POLISH DISHES  
SERVED 12 TO 7 PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY  
AND 12 TO 4 PM SATURDAY**

## Bury News

Alex Koval

It's been a case of mixed fortunes for Bury's drinkers recently. The smoothflow plague of Walmersley has struck once again. Both the **Vic** on Buckley Street and the **Sundial** on Walmersley Road have succumbed and join the **Wagon & Horses** in keg paradise. What with the **Brunswick** demolished and the **Fernhill** boarded up, this area is becoming something of a beer desert. The **Cricketers** is the first pub on Walmersley Road with real ale, offering Boddingtons and Bentleys. You can then pop across the road to the **Hark to Towler** (below) and try Websters or Holts. And on Walmersley Old Road, the **Hark to Dandler** is currently selling Lees Fudger. This will appeal to those who like toffee in their beer. Personally, I prefer hops.

Down on Manchester Old Road, the **Jolly Waggoners** is seeing some changes. Unfortunately, so far, these have only amounted to dropping cask beer and removing the front curtains. However, contrary to rumour, the nearby **Trafalgar** is still selling a decent pint of Burtonwood Bitter. In the town centre itself, the **Knowsley** has entered the Boddingtons price war. It's offering the 'cream of Manchester' for just £1 all day Monday to Thursday. At least the pub is handy for the bus station.

Getting out of the centre, there is good news on Ainsworth Road. The **Rose & Crown** has reopened after a refit and is looking much better for it. There is more seating and food is now available 12-7 daily. The beers remain Boddingtons, London Pride, Castle Eden and a guest.

The nearby **Victoria** on Hall Street has added Marstons Pedigree to its range of Boddingtons and Flowers. But on Higher Ainsworth Road, the **Railway** has dropped Boddingtons in favour of Thwaites. Meanwhile, on Rochdale Old Road, the **New Inn**, which has been closed and up for sale for some time, has reopened under a temporary manager.



## Holts Corner

*Stewart Revell*

The Globe In Leigh is due to reopen as a Holts pub on 2nd July. The Rumworth, the recently acquired outlet in Bolton, will be reopening about a week later.

The brewery trips were extremely successful, with all evenings being fully booked since the trips were announced three months ago. Many groups had to be put on a stand-by list because they could not be fitted in and it is hoped that these can be accommodated later this year. Several thousand pounds were raised for the Holt Radium Institute/Christie Hospital by the brewery visits. Each of the brewers gave up his own time to show visitors around. (No overtime at Joeys!)

I hear that there may be two prices for DBA - one for the normal cask version and another for the 'smooth' type - although no-one can detect any difference in taste. Texture, yes, but not taste. It's out of the same barrel anyway!

Well-known Holts brewer Dick Venes has decided to call it a day and leave the firm. He has been with Joeys for some eighteen years and during that time has given many slide shows about the brewery to CAMRA groups throughout Greater Manchester. His first intention on leaving Holts is to cycle across America. I'm sure we all wish him well in his future activities.

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## Mansfield on the march

Mansfield Brewery has appointed a Manchester firm of chartered surveyors to find local pubs which would make suitable Mansfield houses. £30 million could be made available to build up an estate in this area. The brewery, which currently has around 500 tied houses, recently bought seven pubs from Morland and made unsuccessful bids for Morrells of Oxford and part of the Swallow estate.

New tied houses from the smaller breweries are always a welcome addition to the area. With Lees and Holts, not to mention Dave Porter looking to expand their empires, the future for the Manchester pub scene is looking interesting.

## Swinton

The Good Beer Guide listed White Lion (Robinsons) on Worsley Road, Swinton, has recently changed from a managed house to a tenancy and there have been a few changes in the beer range. Best Bitter, Old Stockport and Hatters Mild remain, but there are doubts about the future availability of the Hartleys and Frederics. The bottle conditioned Worthington White Shield may disappear, though this could be down to a shortage of supplies. Bottled Czech Budvar has been replaced by Bitburger.

## Wigan and District

*Dave White*

The £2.00 pint has come to Wigan! I suppose it had to happen sooner or later. Even so, it still came as a bit of a jolt to shell out three quid for a pint-and-a-half of Robbies Best. The pub in question is the **Wayfarers Tavern**, Alder Lane, Parbold, where bitters by Tetley, Theakston and Lees were also on offer. Some other intrepid soul can check them out.

Speaking of Parbold, back in April I reported that the **Stocks Tavern**, also Alder Lane, had reopened after spending several months of 1998 shut. Tetley bitter is on but there was no sign of the cask mild or guest ale of yesteryear. Smoothflow Tetley bitter is also on tap in the vault, which was where most of the punters seemed to be located when I called in.

Just over the road in Skelmersdale, the **Horseshoe**, Liverpool Road, had a new manager at the start of the year. Walkers mild, Tetley bitter and Cains bitter are available in this GBG-rated boozier.

You have to go back a while to find the **Bowling Green**, Ormskirk Road, Newtown, in the Good Beer Guide, though the pub was there often enough in the 1970s. There isn't much chance of this Boddies house making it into the 2001 edition either, as real ale has bitten the dust. Beware that handpump.

There has been a flurry of activity in Ince-in-Makerfield, not that you'd notice. The **Shepherds Arms**, which reopened recently, sells nothing more inspired than Thwaites fizz and, still on Warrington Road, the **Rock Ferry** is still lumbered with the same old gassy gunge from Vaux. Recently, the exterior sign of the 'Little Rock'

proclaimed that the pub was now a free house, though I guess the logos for Lambtons and Samson Smooth were a bit of a giveaway.

Both these pubs are in Lower Ince. Near the railway station at Ince Bar, the **Conquering Hero**, which has been closed for some time, now looks as though a light breeze would blow it away. In Higher Ince, the **Park Hotel**, Manchester Road, is up for sale. On my last



survey of Ince in November 1998, the Park was the only pub in town still to sell cask ale (Wilsons bitter).

King Street may be in the centre of Wigan, but nowadays there are as many properties closed as open. At the bottom end, half of the old town hall has been knocked down and across the road, the local D.S.S. lurks like some sleeping leviathan. Halfway up, however is the **Chicago Rock Cafe**. I haven't been in here yet (there are bouncers to negotiate) but if the cafe is anything like the one in Bolton, then cask conditioned beer will not be a feature. Nearby, an 'Australasian Bar' is about to open where the Court Theatre Bar used to be. The neon sign in the window would have us believe that New Zealand is nearly as big as Australia, and perhaps it is.

News in brief: the **Fleece**, Westleigh Lane, Westleigh (Enterprise) is boarded up and for sale... the **Rams Head**, Bolton Road, Stubshaw Cross, has been demolished, having been closed for a year or two. Lots of houses but few pubs on this long stretch of A58 between Platt Bridge and Ashton: two real, one keg, and one - the **Bamfurlong** - closed.

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## Ancoats News

The Crown & Kettle, having been closed for many years, is now up for sale with a variety of uses in mind. You'd think that, with the regeneration of Ancoats, it might have a future as, say, a pub. Perhaps some entrepreneur will reopen the Hammer, which featured in 'Cracker'. After all, you'll want somewhere to drink after you've strolled through the new Ancoats past the refurbished Italianate church. There's not much chance of the Two Terriers reopening. It closed in 1912 and was knocked down last month. The closure-to-demolition timescale is a little shorter today.

## Closed and boarded

The Bell, a Vaux pub on the A6 at Little Hulton, has now been closed for some eight weeks. About five years ago it was owned by Tetleys, but as trade had declined from its heyday of the sixties and seventies the pub was sold on to Vaux. Sadly, trade continued to decline and it's now shut. The Bell was only built in the late 1950s to replace an old end terrace pub, the Commercial.

## Mould broken

Economic pressures have brought about the closure of Manchester's most obscurely located pub, the Moulders Arms on Heyrod Street. Licensee Dennis, his family and staff did their best to keep the Moulders going over the last two years, but it now seems likely that the former Burtonwood house will be sold and put to another use.

## Tyldesley

The **George & Dragon** (ex-Greenalls, ex-Vaux, *below*) on Elliott Street has got the builders in. The pub is being converted into a Wetherspoons.



Not to be outdone, Holts are going in for a serious bit of refurbishment at the **Mort Arms** along the road. Work will start soon and in the best Holts tradition the pub is expected to remain open when the dust starts to fly.

## The Station now departing

Following the Wetherspoons, casino or health club rumours regarding the future of the Station Hotel on Bolton Road, Pendlebury, the latest word on the street (from a resident of Vine Avenue, next to the pub) is that it will reopen as a Tapas bar and will eventually be developed into a restaurant, presumably Spanish. Just what Pendlebury needs.

CAMRA Greater Manchester branches

### INDEPENDENTS' DAY PUB HUNT

Saturday 3rd July 1999. Starting 12 noon at the Beer House

A quizzical tour of Manchester's real ale pubs  
which serve beers from independent brewers

Team entry fee £2.00 A gallon of ale for the winning team

Free grub for all competitors at around 8pm

Find the pubs! Solve the clues!

Contact: Roger Hall - 0161 740 7937

## Hare & Hounds

Roger Hall

As Paul Roberts claims (*WD June*), the Hare & Hounds is one of Manchester's few remaining traditional pubs, inside and out. It is much more than that. It is a link with the city's pre-industrial past and a model of a multi-roomed community pub in the heart of Manchester. The Hare & Hounds has been continuously licensed since 1778 in a building which dates back to the first half of the eighteenth century. The exterior is largely unaltered, apart from the between-the-wars tiled frontage at ground floor level. Inside, the tiling and wood-and-glass panelling dates from the same era.

It is perhaps because of these pre-war alterations that the pub has not been listed and is therefore vulnerable to the whims of errant brewers or pub-owning groups. As Shudehill emerges from years of depression into a rapidly developing area of the city, the vulnerability increases. Developments on Withy Grove and Dantzic Street, the reopening of Marks & Spencers and the success of pubs like the

Marble Arch, the Pot of Beer, the Beer House, the Hogshead, Bar Fringe and the Smithfield Hotel are all clear indications of a change in fortunes for the area. Gentrification is taking place with the conversion of premises to 'lofts' on Thomas Street and plans are afoot to build on the fish market site.



As values in the area rise, temptations to alter or close traditional pubs increase. Distant business minds don't give a toss about heritage, tradition or authenticity. It is important that the Hare & Hounds is listed as soon as possible to place a barrier in the way of the unscrupulous. Arguments about alterations some seventy years ago can easily be overcome. When the pub was first licensed over two hundred and twenty years ago, things were very different. Beer pumps had not been invented, alehouses did not have bars and beer was brought from the cellar and served to customers where

they sat or stood. By the 1840s the layout of the premises had been changed to accommodate a bar, and a music saloon had been established, a tradition which continues today.

The refurbishment dating from between the wars is of a high quality and appropriate to the character of the pub. The tiled lobby and wood-and-glass panelling are of particular merit. The glazed ceiling at the foot of a lightwell in the rear room is a unique feature. Decoration and furnishing is in keeping with the building. The pub is free from tat or incongruous alterations. Furthermore, it is popular. Its loss would leave Manchester City Centre with very few pubs of traditional character. The Hare & Hounds must be listed and it must be retained.

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## **Wetherspoons**

*Paul Roberts*

Three new JDWs are expected to open in the Greater Manchester area later this year - Stockport Road, Longsight; Regent Street, Eccles, and Manchester Road, Chorlton. This will bring their number of outlets in Greater Manchester to nineteen, and there are plans for more. The Company's target of 500 nationwide by the end of 2000 should easily be reached.

The first-ever Wetherspoons opened on December 9th 1979 and to mark the company's twentieth anniversary there are plans for special price promotions in the lead up to Christmas. After Christmas there will be a Millennium promotion, which will end at 8pm on New Year's Eve, when all JDW pubs will close.

Most JDW outlets seem to have permanent offers, with one or two bitters also available at 99p, Becks at 99p, etc. During the recent beer festival, the Harbord Harbord in Middleton was charging £1 per pint for all the guest beers, even the 5%+ ones. Holts may have to reduce their prices in Eccles once JDW open there!

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## **Happy days**

The Swan Hotel in Bolton is having all-day happy hours (11am-11pm Monday to Thursday) when all drinks - pints, bottles, minerals, etc - are £1. Real ales on a recent visit were Boddies bitter and Courage Directors. Still, you can't complain at £1 a pint.

## **Bass boots out cask**

The Halfway House on Middleton Road, Crumpsall, has turfed out cask ale (Stones or Worthy) to leave just Worthy smooth on the bars.



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**THWAITES BEST BITTER £1.05**

**WADSWORTH 6X**

**MOORHOUSES PENDLE WITCH**

*plus*

**9 EVER-CHANGING GUEST BEERS**

**including A GUEST MILD**



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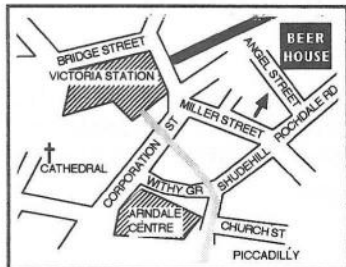
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## Escape to Entwistle (eventually)

*Dave Crookell*

It was the night of a certain European Cup final and in an attempt to escape from the hordes of boisterous football fans in their red replica shirts crowding into every pub in Manchester, we visited Entwistle in the West Pennine Moors, courtesy of First North Western Trains, where we hoped to find the Strawbury Duck a red shirt and televised football-free zone.

To get there, a cheap evening return ticket from Salford Crescent to Entwistle cost £1.70, which was exceptional value for a round trip of about thirty miles, when compared to £1.35 for the three mile bus ride to the station.

Once north of Bromley Cross, the train passed through attractive countryside, the views almost rivalling those on the Settle-Carlisle as we travelled alongside Jumbles Reservoir and crossed an arm of Wayoh Reservoir by viaduct before approaching Entwistle some 25 minutes after leaving Salford. Curiously, our train continued through the station without stopping. Apparently the driver was confused and had forgotten to stop at Entwistle, so we found ourselves in Darwen, thirty minutes before the next train back. After apologising profusely, the driver gave us a fiver for a drink in Darwen by way of compensation. We tried two pubs near to the station but they were both fairly dismal and keg-only.

Eventually we arrived back at Entwistle where, virtually at the top of the station approach, stands the Strawbury Duck, a popular rural free-house and not to be confused with the Strawberry Duck on Crabtree Lane by the Ashton Canal in slightly less rural Openshaw. Originally known as the Station Hotel, the Strawbury Duck was built at the end of the nineteenth century and extended in 1981 into the much older Bridge Cottages. The pub has a rustic interior, with exposed beams and a flagged floor around a



central bar that has unusual and fairly uncomfortable cycle-saddle shaped seats attached to it. Round the back of the bar, past the toilets ('Ducks' and 'Drakes') there is a small games room with pool table and TV (and yes, the football was on). There are several alcoves and a separate dining area. As usual in a country pub, the Strawbury Duck is food oriented with a fairly predictable menu and more imaginative daily 'specials' advertised on a blackboard.

There were five real ales available, all on handpump - Duck Ale (brewed for the pub by Bank Top, 3.6% and £1.50), Taylors Landlord, Fullers London Pride and Batemans - all at around £1.80 - and Pendle Witch at £1.92. We found all the beers to be in good condition and the Taylors Landlord in particular was in fine form.

Return trains to Salford and Victoria are at 2217 and 2324. I would recommend the 2217 because if you miss the last one (or if the driver forgets to stop) you are faced with an expensive taxi ride home, although the Strawbury Duck does have accommodation. We interrupted the return journey in Bolton and visited the Sweet Green Tavern, where guest ales were Pedigree and Burton Ale, both at £1.60, before making our way home, anticipating the play-off finals when we too would become boisterous football fans - but in laser blue shirts...

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After 2 years of immense critical success we have added another  
5 beers and this Real Ale indulgence will open with 25 beers on offer

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open every day until Sunday 18th July.

Ring The Albion on 01254 238585 for beer list and public transport details

## Festival Season

Steve Smith

### Saddleworth

*In 1997/98 Steve Smith wrote his Saddleworth Sojourns. He was back in Saddleworth this year for the Arts Festival weekend, starting on the day of the famous Brass Band Contest ...*

From Manchester we caught the train to Greenfield and after a twenty minutes' walk found ourselves outside the **Navigation** on the edge of the pretty village of Dobcross. Evening opening was not until 7.00pm, so we headed for the centre of the village.

The main square was alive with appetite - fast food stalls, barbecues and revellers who seemed to be quaffing ales by the gallon. At varying intervals a brass band would arrive, play a few 'oompahs' and then move on. From Brighton and Besses, Woking and Wigan - it was amazing how far they had travelled to play in Saddleworth.

We took refuge in the **Swan** with its Phoenix and Theakstons beers and opted for Theakstons mild, which unfortunately came in two plastic glasses which were leaking like dripping taps. Downing both of these rather quickly so as to waste as few of the precious drops as possible, we moved on.

Plastic glasses seem to be the norm around here during the festivities. They are convenient for carrying around from pub to pub, although short-measure can sometimes be a problem.



We went down the hill to the **Woolpack**, which was selling Marstons Pedigree as well as Tetley bitter. This time the plastic glasses didn't leak and we treasured these for the rest of the night. From the Woolpack we returned to the **Navigation**. As well as the Banks's mild (now badged as Original and £1.60 a pint) there were Banks's bitter, Camerons bitter (a rarity for the area) and Marstons Pedigree. We paused outside here a while, enjoying the cool night air.

In Uppermill the streets were thronged with people and all the pubs were busy, so we opted for the relative tranquillity of the back street **Cloggers**. The pub has been

redecorated since the last time I was here; Tetley bitter remains and the cat is alive and well. Around the corner on the main street, Robinsons' **Waggon** was quite popular, so all its rooms were open. After finding a quiet spot to sit with our pints of best bitter we reflected on the sadness of seeing the mild pump clip turned about face. Could this be only temporary, or due to poor sales, we wondered?

Back in Greenfield, we had our final pint in the **Railway**, which to me is still the best pub for miles around. A tasty drop of Taylors dark mild crowned a wonderful night out. Other beers on offer were Landlord and Wilsons bitter.

The next day (Saturday) we caught the bus into Uppermill and walked up the hill to the **Cross Keys**. This Lees pub was in full swing, complete with an outside barbecue supplying burgers and hot dogs. Inside, apart from the usual GB mild and bitter, Moonraker strong ale seems to be a permanent feature, but since it was well over £2 a pint we opted for the seasonal Fudger Cream Ale at £1.65.

From the Cross Keys there is a path to the **Church**, home of the Saddleworth Brewery. A favourite of mine is the strong, stout-like Shaftbender at 5.4%. The beer range has been revised to include Ayrton's Ale (formerly Bert Korner Bitter), Hopsmacker and Boomtown Bitter.

Returning to Uppermill, we made another stop at the **Waggon** and then a short bus ride took us to the **Farrars Arms**, which is just beyond Greenfield Station. The pub was comfortably busy and the Farrars bitter went down well. Next, it was the **Railway** again for more Taylors mild and on the way home we called at Banks's **Three Crowns** in Oldham, by the Spindles Centre.

Two nights later we made our final visit to the area, travelling over the county boundary into West Yorkshire. The bus stops conveniently outside the **Great Western**, a Wards 'free house' selling Wards best bitter, Tetley bitter and a guest. From here, we walked back towards Oldham, passing Thwaites' **Floating Light**, which was closed and in darkness.

The **Diggle Hotel** (*right*) was much



more inviting and doing a roaring trade with diners. There is a good range of beers here - Boddingtons bitter, Flowers Original and IPA, Taylors Landlord and Golden Best. From the Diggle we walked to the **Hanging Gate** and a pint of Worthington Best Bitter, which turned out to be an above average example of an 'ordinary' beer. To end the night, we made our last stops at the **Navigation** and the **Railway**.

A worthwhile companion for visitors to the area is Rob Magee's book on Saddleworth pubs, £4.25 from all good bookshops.

### **Nangreaves Beer Festival**

Thirty or so rotating guest beers from well and lesser known breweries were on sale at the **Lord Raglan**, Nangreaves, in June. On the opening night there were guest ales from Moorhouses (Pendle Witch), Batemans (Middle Wicket), Riddleys (Fishermans Whopper) and Fiddle and Bone (Fiddlers Feathers), which was one I hadn't seen before.

Entertainment on the opening night began with a Beatles tribute band, 'The Beetles', and very good they were, too. They were so good that I stayed for the finale, sampling several pints in the process. Other events during the festival included a Belgian beer tasting, 'Meet the Brewer' (a talk by John Feeney of Bank Top), Irish and Guinness promotion nights and a Thwaites Lancashire night.

A micro brewery is being assembled in the cellar of the Lord Raglan and if all goes to plan this should be up and running in the autumn. The pub also specialises in Belgian beers and a list is available with tasting notes. Try the Vlaamsch Wit (4.5%), which is available on draught as well as in bottle. The pub is open during the summer on Mon-Tues 12-2.30, 7-11; Weds-Fri 12-2.30, 5.30-11; Sat 12-3, 5.30-11; Sun 12-10.30.

### **Boundary Bash**

There was another festival of note in June at the Boundary, Guide Bridge. Over sixty beers, mostly from the North and Midlands were on sale in a marquee erected in the car park. German draught and bottled beers and a number of ciders and perries were also available.

To buy the beers you obtained beer tokens (80p per half pint) and each beer was priced the same, so the higher gravity beers were good value for money. This festival was also selling Fiddlers Feathers (3.8%) and Fishermans Whopper (4.3%).

The Boundary is a former Wilsons pub which over the last few years has developed into a thriving canalside free house. The pub is well served by public transport - Manchester-Glossop trains stop at Guide Bridge Station and the 219 bus from Manchester to Ashton stops outside the door. A Winter Festival is planned for October.

## Letters

### Gricing

Sir - In reply to Steve Smith's letter concerning 'gricing', I can confirm that the word is usually applied to transport enthusiasts, especially railway buffs. It must have gained wide recognition, as there was a question about it on Channel 4's quiz show, '15 to 1', a few months ago. However, I do not know if it has joined such terms as Y2K, etc, in the latest edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary. The word is now used to describe beer spotters as well as train spotters.

Incidentally, aircraft gricers at Manchester Airport are referred to by airport staff as cabbages (for obvious reasons!) and the spotters' car park is called the cabbage patch!

*'RML 2760'*

### Adrift in the Miles Platting Triangle

Sir - I was a teenage gricer. I began gricing seriously in 1962, aged 18, consciously choosing to break with more mainstream contemporaries on Platform 7 at Liverpool Lime Street, whose weekly highlight was hailing the 'namer' which appeared regularly on the 5.20pm from Crewe. It was a calculated risk. Would my growth indeed be stunted by attempting to survive for two days or more on improvised jam buttty rations... and would the promised intimate knowledge of Oakamoor Sand Sidings, Long Meg and the Muckhole adjacent to Basford Hall Yard serve to further my self-development?

In its simplest and purest sense, gricing means travelling over a railway line for the first time. One source suggests that the term originated from the piss-taking of the nasal whine of a much-loved Southern Jessie, who used to drone on about 'gricing' (=gracing, geddit?) tracks with his presence. The word became accepted among aficionados of the practice somewhere about 1960, if memory serves, as a substitute for the more cumbersome 'I've done that track'. By the early 1960s there were thousands of gricers, often literally falling over each other (but in an inconspicuous, non-loutish way) as they vied to cover the thousands of miles of branch and subsidiary lines presaged for closure under the Beeching Report.

We gricers often travelled by day and through the night, for a week or more at a time. We sampled the local brews as we went, then slept on overnight trains, in all-night station refreshment rooms (Crewe, Derby, Carlisle), or in the (heated) empty coaches placed to work the first trains of the day. The 6.48am Carlisle-Silloth provided the regular nightly bothy for thirty or so gricers of obscure Scottish track, staged, as it was, with steam-heat pipes coupled-up to buffer stop connections at Carlisle Citadel from about midnight onwards!

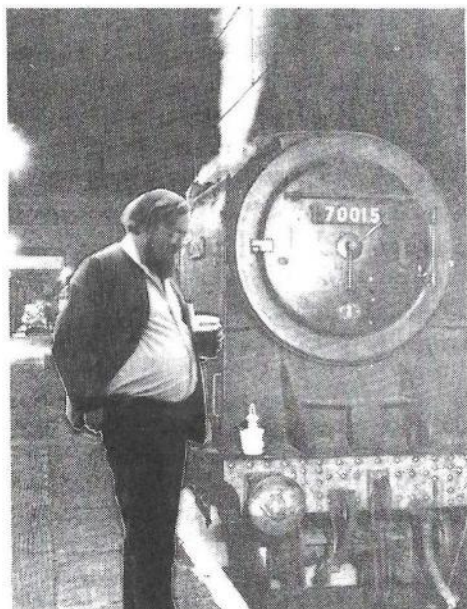
As the 1960s progressed, opportunity for steam-haulage became rarer, more track was closed or threatened and the railways'

remaining freight traffic relentlessly contracted. All these factors lent a new urgency and momentum to the practices of gricing, and produced a fragmentation of the gricing movement. A radical wing evolved, concentrating on exclusive gricing of threatened freight-only lines. They applied for, and frequently got, permission for parties of about a dozen gricers to travel in freight train brakevans. Many in the mainstream preferred to organise (mainly steam-hauled) railtours, the winning formula for viability being inclusion of as much 'rare' track mileage as possible. Others - we could perhaps call them revolutionary gricers - pushed gricing to new exploratory depths, becoming obsessed with traversing individual sidings of freight yards, rare track curves, crossovers and turnouts (like the Northwich chord, or the 'third side' of the Miles Platting Triangle). Finally, the gricing fraternity began to forge links with ramblers to develop 'healthy' gricing expeditions - part naturist, part gricing - by walking over closed lines, often with the track or trackbed still in place.

On such did I learn to beware of the Highland sleeper weevil and to avoid contact with giant hogweed! And I observed the characteristic male dress to resemble Jamie Frotter's infamous boy scout attire, although the average gricer's behaviour was rather less mincing, some would say.

I became a gricer organiser for some ten years, between 1962 and 1972 - at first professionally (whilst attached to the District Operating Superintendent's Office at Lime Street) and later as an

unpaid Railtour Organiser for the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (Merseyside Branch). Whilst with British Rail, it fell to me to arrange brakevan permits for gricing parties on freight trains originating in the Liverpool division. As a covert gricer myself, I was often able to swing things so that I accompanied such jaunts, doubling as Inspector. This facilitated what sociologists would now term extended participant observation of the gricer phenomenon.



It is true that many railwaymen regarded gricers as 'nutters' or loonies (the

derogatory term 'anorak' had not then entered common parlance), but I found them, for the most part, just charmingly, endearingly eccentric, gentle people - more like Tony Molyneux than Rumpleshirtscream, if you see what I mean. I was once momentarily incommoded when threatened with an emergency axe because a certain railtour lost its path from Bidston to New Brighton on a rare grice behind steam on an all-electric line. However, since some gricers have gone on to become JPs, solicitors, schoolmasters, lecturers and headshrinkers, I cannot but reflect that society would be the poorer without them.

*Bogbrush*

### **Wetherspoons - 'Caveat Emptor'**

Sir - On a recent visit to London I picked up a copy of your sister publication, *London Drinker*. Glancing through the 'Capital Pubcheck' section I was surprised to read that many of the Wetherspoons pubs I have frequented in the past are being 'acquired by Ambishus'. I am puzzled as to what is going on and I feel that we should be told. One London drinker wrote to the May 1999 edition of *London Drinker*, expressing his dismay when his local pub was 'de-Wetherspooned'. I quote from his article...

*The first surprise... was seeing the usual plethora of pump-clips turned around with the only cask beer available being Theakston's Best. When I asked the bar staff what would happen when the Theakstons ran out, I was told 'nothing, we close tomorrow'. It then became clear that this was one of the smaller Wetherspoons pubs being disposed of as part of a shake-up of their estate.*

*A few days later I visited this post-Wetherspoons watering hole. The ubiquitous audio speakers were in place and wall brackets awaited the imminent arrival of the TV screens all around the walls. Some time later I called again. Noisy music blared out in every room, meal-times were reduced and people were smoking in the non-smoking area. The privacy afforded by the seating bays abutting the walls had been destroyed by the removal of the glass in each of the dividing panels. This was done one lunchtime virtually over the heads of bemused drinkers. Behind the bar, the once brightly chalked blackboards were as bare as the day of the takeover. Death by Wetherspoons? This is now just another run-of-the-mill inner city pub which I normally wouldn't give a second glance to.*

Ambishus? Delving in my recent archives I find that the word appeared in the May 1998 edition of *What's Brewing*. It is a pub company which was 'floated' on the Alternative Investment Market, with tremendous success, that month. It's alleged that David Bruce of the Firkin chain is somewhere behind the company. Do we 'Firkin' care? I do.

*Sean Kilgarriff*

## Beinlos in the Fatherland

### Beer, Buses and Tains

A 1950 Berlin double-decker bus has been fitted with tables and converted into a mobile Bitburger Bar (*below*). The cream and green livery closely matches Bitburger's colours, the original bus seats have been retained and the interior is decorated with lots of breweriana. At



the Cologne Frühlingfest the vehicle was selling draught Bitburger and Kölsch. All in all, I found the bus had far more ambience than most British pubs!

Deutsche Bahn Inter-Regio trains have the solution for bored passengers - a buffet carriage (called Bistro Café) fitted with stools and set out just like a bar. Draught

Fürstenburg Pils served in real Fürstenburg glasses soon relieves the boredom. The only problem is that draught Pils takes so long to pour and the trains travel so fast that for short journeys (Düsseldorf to Cologne takes only twenty minutes) the beer is just about ready to drink when the destination is reached! If Virgin adopted the idea, late running wouldn't attract as many grumbles.

### Spare a copper...

The Hacker Pschorr Brewery was a familiar sight to visitors to Munich, as it was adjacent to the main railway lines at Hackerbrücke, the nearest S-Bahn station to the Oktoberfest. The brewery was closed last year and production was transferred to the Schröghuber group's other brewery in Munich - Paulanerbräu, just east of the Isar from the city.

Now the European Patent Office is to move its Munich headquarters to a new seven-storey building on the Hacker Pschorr site. One of the old brewing coppers will be retained and will take pride of place in the inner courtyard of the new construction, which should be ready by 2001.

More bad news on the Munich brewing scene. Löwenbräu is shedding over 200 jobs following its recent takeover by close neighbour Spaten.

## Rupert

I don't know what comes over Fiona at times. She knows very well that Bertha Periwinkle is still alive. After all, my mother is Fiona's godmother. I've not seen her like this since she was refused a pint of Drabs in the Dockers Wedge in 1978 and broke up the furniture. Even Bunty was apprehensive about intervening.

I suppose it's good that some people still have teeth. I wonder what's happened to Beinlos. He seems to have become almost agreeable all of a sudden. He's actually praising a Grotley pub and its ale. It's not long since he drew up his own Good Beer Guide, rejected everyone else in the Campaign as lacking in taste, believed Drabs was irredeemably horrid and suggested that Grotley should hand over all its tavern allocations to a much more deserving area. Has all that constant to-and-froing to Krautley begun to take its toll?

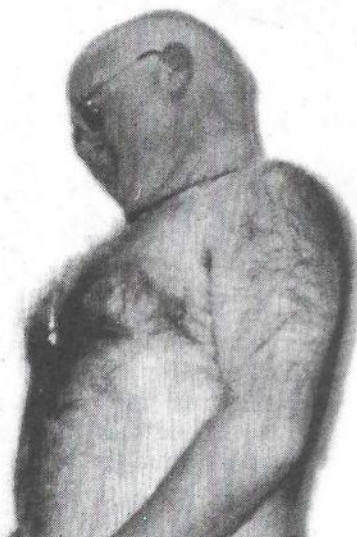
Another blast from the past - Sweetie Bogbrush writes. I wonder if his advertisements paid off and he's now living in bliss with the partner of his dreams. To be frank, it doesn't seem like it. It doesn't seem to me that 'gricing' is an activity which is likely to attract

nubile companions; if it did, the result would be lookalike pairs of interminable bores in matching knitted cardigans ticking lists of obscure perries and travelling to obscure destinations by train and charabanc.

I'm delighted that Eddy has responded to the criticism of his organ with an altogether more newsy edition in June. The

inclusion of lists was a great help and it's good to see stalwarts of yesteryear crawling out of the woodwork. However, there is still some way to go. There's far too much flippancy and irreverence, a tendency to disparage almost everything and treat things as a joke. Too often there's a focus on trivial issues with no relevance to the future of amber nectar and the

hostelries in which it is served. Who wants to read about Arctic sled dogs or library architecture, to say nothing of 'gricing' or the prosecution of unfortunate licensees? Ole Gink keeps banging on about some long dead administrative unit much like Mercia or Prussia and we have three pages on journeys in a foreign land. What's happened to 'Abstruse Aspects of Ale Manufacture, Part 48'? A vast improvement, but there's a lot of work to be done yet.



# Branch Diary

## **Regional Meeting**

Wed 14 July 8pm, Beer House, Angel Street, Manchester

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 6 July 8.30, Branch Meeting, Britannia, Lomax Street, Rochdale

Tues 20 July 8.30, Committee Meeting, Wishing Well, near centre, Heywood

Sat 24 July 8.30, Coach Trip to Wirral pubs, Contact has details

Tues 27 July 8.30, What's Doing Collation, Cask & Feather, Rochdale

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

Email: P.Alexander@Virgin.net

## **North Manchester**

Sat 3 July Independents' Day Pub Hunt, Beer House, 12 noon

Wed 7 July, Castlefield & Deansgate: Oxno 7pm, Atlas 8pm, Ape & Apple 9pm

Wed 21 July 8pm, Royal Oak, Barton Lane, Eccles

Tues 27 July 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey St

Wed 28 July, Beer & Gardens Crawl. Park, Monton, 7pm; Drop Inn 7.30, Barge Inn 8pm, Queens, Patricroft 9pm.

Sat 31 July 1pm approx, Barbecue, Queens Arms, Honey Street. All branches welcome.

Wed 4 Aug 8pm, Committee & Social, Star Inn, Back Hope Street, Higher Broughton

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:* Paul Roberts, Sue Barker, Dave Crookell, Alan Gall, Dave White, Alex Koval, Steve Smith, Roger Hall, Mark McConachie, Ian Kenny, Stewart Revell, Daddy Bell.

*Dave and Sue welcome you to*

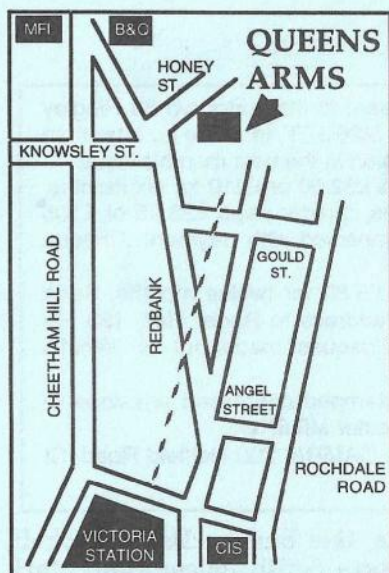
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