

30p

What's Doing

MAY 2000



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

NORTHERN QUARTER BEER FESTIVAL

Thursday 18th May sees the beginning of Manchester's biggest beer festival staged in the Northern Quarter. Designated the N/4 ABV Tour (where ABV stands for Alternative Beer Venues), it is a jointly inspired initiative by the licensees within the Northern Quarter.

The event is hosted by eight pubs and should feature close to 150 cask ales and around 150 bottled beers from around the world.

The cask ales will be distributed around the pubs in such a way that no two pubs should feature the same beer.

The participating pubs and the approximate number of beers they should have over the weekend are listed on page two:

N/4 ABV TOUR



18th - 21st MAY 2000 MANCHESTER

Bar Centro	2+
Beer House	50
Castle	7
Fringe Bar	9
Hogshead (High Street)	30
Marble Arch	15
Pot of Beer	10
Queens Arms (Honey Street)	30



A good range of food is promised in most houses and some interesting entertainment may be laid on. All day Saturday a minibus will be ferrying people between the Queens and the main area.

Beer Bash at the Brit

The Britannia on King Street in Farnworth is hosting a beer festival from 28th April to 1st May, in the specially created outdoor bar (covered). All beers are served on handpull from the cellar and making their first appearances at the Brit will be Jennings Snecklifter and Shepherd Neame Brewmaster.

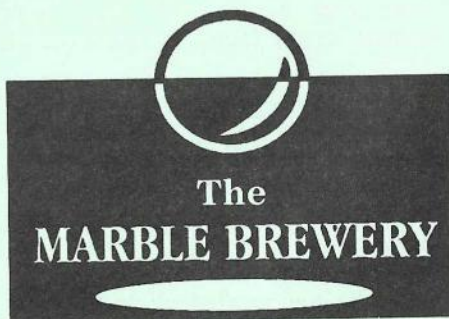
A trio of brews from Moorhouses and Bolton brewer John Feeney's Smokestack Lightning will also be on offer, along with old favourites such as Old Speckled Hen, Brains Skull Attack and Caledonian 80/-. For cider drinkers, there is Westons Old Rosie (both knee and elbow pads advised for this one). Food at reasonable prices is usually available in the form of a barbecue.

Back to the future

A few years ago Bass transformed the Town Hall Tavern on Tib Lane in central Manchester into Copperbutts. Well, that particular theme has run its course and the company is believed to be turning the place back into a pub.

More Marble

Two seasonal beers have been produced by Marble Brewery and can be found on the bar at the Marble Arch. Marble Ginger (4.5%, £1.65) is Mark Dade's third try at perfecting a ginger beer - raspingly ginger backed by sweetness. The other beer is Summer Marble (4.7%, £1.80), making a welcome reappearance.



The N/4 Discovery Tour

A proprietor's perspective by John Henley of the Bar Fringe

Until quite recently the pubs on the circuit now known as the N/4 (Northern Quarter) Discovery Tour could have been considered to be on an aggressively competitive footing. However, with recent changes of pub managers the atmosphere has been considerably relaxed, and with the decline of the Firkin estate (well, in the way that matters) the selection and quality of beers available in this part of Manchester are second to none.

The N/4 Discovery Tour idea belonged to Jan and Vance (of the Marble Arch, Bar 1 & 2, etc). Tony and Linda from the Pot of Beer gave a lot of support, reassuring some of the pubs involved that each had its own niche, and smoothed the way for me (Grimma Wormtongue) to sell the idea to my peers. After much discussion it was decided to limit the number of pubs involved to eight, which takes into consideration the time available and estimated levels of alcohol consumption in an evening session. The pubs involved are within a half-mile radius of the end of Rochdale Road.

The N/4 Discovery Tour aims to preserve the unique qualities and niche markets of the pubs involved, and also allow for change and growth without duplication of products or promotions - which means providing many different quality beers at the best possible prices within a comfortable walking distance. The best way of looking at the N/4 Discovery Tour is to consider it as one long bar: a brewery tap, next to guest ales, next to German draught, next to

Belgian bottled, and so on. If you are not sure of this, try that over there. It has been suggested that another reason for the tour is that some people are becoming entirely too large, sitting in one pub all evening. We'd like you to move around a bit and lose some beer gut, and that way we can fit more of you in!

N/4 **ABV** TOUR



18th - 21st MAY 2000
MANCHESTER

Holts at the Embassy

Bernard Manning's World Famous Embassy Club in Harpurhey is now selling Joseph Holts bitter. Some time ago it was a keg J W Lees outlet.

N/4 ABV TOUR

BAR CENTRO - BEER HOUSE - CASTLE HOTEL - FRINGE BAR
HOGSHEAD - MARBLE ARCH - POT OF BEER - QUEENS ARMS

100% **A**lternative **B**eer **V**enues



18th - 21st MAY 2000
MANCHESTER

Over 100 real ales
Over 150 foreign bottled beers

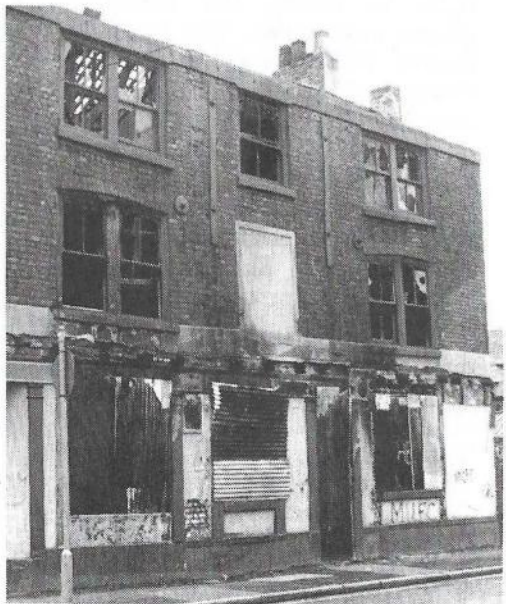
Closure

Roger Hall

For almost twenty-five years, *What's Doing* has been chronicling the demise of public houses in Manchester, Salford and their environs. Most of the closures have been in what Engels described as 'unmixed working people's quarters, stretching like a girdle, averaging a mile and a half in breadth around the commercial district.' In other words, the inner city, comprising districts like Ancoats, Miles Platting, Collyhurst, Cheetham Hill, Broughton, Trinity and Ordsall. That has certainly been the pattern until fairly recently. We've seen hundreds of pubs close in the inner city as a result of slum clearance, road schemes, economic failure and the influence of crime. Depopulation, demographic shifts and changing patterns of life, where the pub is less central to the day to day activities have accentuated the decline of pubs in such areas.

With the dawn of a new millennium, we are beginning to experience a new phenomenon - the closure of pubs in the suburbs of Manchester. Even Eccles, the beer drinkers' mecca, is not immune. Sure, we've seen the opening of Wetherspoon's Eccles Cross, but one pub has closed (Red Fox, formerly Star) and four Holts pubs are up for sale. Many other pubs in the area are struggling to survive. In Swinton, despite the promise of a new Wetherspoons in the Lancastrian Hall and the possibility of Swinton Palais reopening as a pub, survival of pubs is, nonetheless, under threat. Some years ago the Duke of Wellington became a church; Halligans has been closed on more than one occasion and the Station Hotel reopened earlier this year as a restaurant. In Blackley, the Pike Fold closed earlier this year.

What we are experiencing may be merely adjustments to population movements, or it may be the beginning of a serious decline in the focal role of the pub in the British way of life. Fewer manual jobs, the espousal of middle class values, eating out, wine drinking, an emphasis on entertainment and the growth of a more cosmopolitan, multi-cultural society have all brought demand side



pressures on the traditional pub. From the supply side, structural changes in the industry, the separation of production from retailing and an increased focus on asset valuation and return on capital have brought different but, nonetheless, significant pressures.

Faced with changing demands from customers and heightened expectations from owners, fewer traditional pubs are able to survive, let alone thrive. In the south, burgeoning property values place impossible return on capital requirements from pubs, which are worth more as homes. In the suburbs of Manchester extortionate rents and high prices for beer make it difficult for pubs to compete with alternatives like buying from supermarkets and drinking at home or joining a club.

Traditional pubs and traditional beer go hand in hand. Fewer restaurants, clubs, wine bars and cafés serve real ale than do pubs. Unless customers frequent traditional pubs in the suburbs, closures will continue. The next few years will show whether recent events are a blip or whether we have begun to see the demise of the British pub. I, for one, want to see the pub survive as a living, vibrant part of our way of life, not as an artefact in a tourist village.

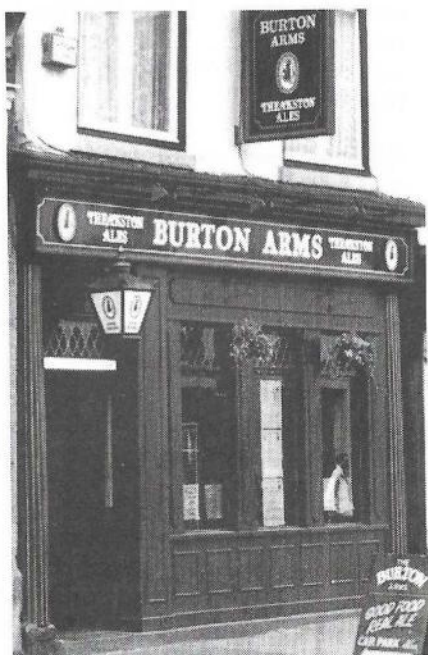
Pints and Pintables - update

Dillon Bizwarp

More pinball games have come to light to entice the travelling player and toper. The excellent Scared Stiff is now in the **Bar Fringe**, alongside a Marble Beer, one from Bank Top and Hydes Jekylls Gold. (The recent introduction of the Hydes beer has apparently had no impact on the sales of the other two.) On the pinball front, an ultra-modern machine is promised for the future.

Just across Swan Street from the Fringe is the **Burton Arms**, where a decent drop of Theakstons Black Bull can be had whilst playing Theatre of Magic. Over in Stockport, the Blossoms (Robbies mild and bitter) has Indiana Jones.

Game over.



Wigan and district

Dave White

Until about a year ago, many of the pubs that made up the old Greenalls pub chain sold cask conditioned beer; now, however, lost time is being made up and real ale outlets are dropping like flies.

The latest of these are the **Hare & Hounds**, Bolton Road, Aspull; the **Britannia**, Wigan Road, and the **Oddfellows Arms**, Downall Green Road, both Ashton-in-Makerfield. Handpumps remain in place in all three pubs, and the gaffer at the Oddfellows told me he hopes to get traditional beer on again. Until that happens, the Bryn-Downall Green-Landgate area of Ashton will remain a virtual real ale desert. with only the **Bath Springs Hotel** offering Tetley bitter. A sad state of affairs, to be sure.

Recently, I paid a rare visit to my local Holts pub, the **Douglas Bank** on Woodhouse Lane. The landlord told me that he had taken cask mild off altogether in favour of the nitrogenated version. The beer engine and pumpclip are still on show in the pub, so 'caveat emptor' and all that sort of thing.

The good news this month is that there isn't any more bad news.

THE CRESCENT

SALFORD

OPEN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY!

10 cask ales always available

**John Smiths Bitter, Son of Crescent,
Roosters Special, Phoenix Thirsty Moon
& Wobbly Bob**

**plus 5 guests including a mild
*Erdinger on draught, Liefmans Kriek
+ Quality Doubles Bar!***

Food served every lunchtime from 11.30am

Free Chip Barms every Monday 5-6pm

Weds 5-8pm Choice of Six Curries (veg and meat) + Rice £3

Out and About

with Grognard

In the belief that my existence was becoming flat and meaningless, I decided to broaden my horizons and use the rail network a little more, at least on Saturday afternoons. So, on 17th March I waited at Hollinwood Station intending to take the 'beer train' from Victoria to Huddersfield via Stalybridge and Marsden. As the vehicle arrived, the name 'Wigan' on the front sent a tremor of association through me - **Wigan Beer Festival**. Huddersfield could wait for another weekend.

Some forty-five minutes and £2.40 later (quite cheap, really) I was in the Trencherfield Mill, which was pleasingly full without being overcrowded. Most of the ales were familiar to me, though one interesting newcomer was Myrcia Ale (4.2%) from O'Hanlons, Vauxhall, London. Flavoured with honey and bog myrtle, it was delicious although perhaps too sweet for a session ale. The Ballards Nyewood Gold (5%) was an impressive example of a strong bitter and would alone have justified my journey. I agree with CAMRA giving it a Gold Award in 1999.

One thing I found curious was the pricing policy of 20p leaps from £1.40 to £1.60 to £1.80 etc. Still, what beer fest doesn't have one or two little idiosyncrasies.



Next Saturday was another beer fest, this time at the **Crescent**, Salford. The same train as the previous week but disembark at Salford Central and head in the direction of the University. On the menu were eight draught and twenty-one bottled beers, most, if not all, coming from Bavaria, one of those wonderful corners of Europe which has not yet been penetrated by the 'smooth' revolution.

To be honest, I was quite happy to drink the Rooster Special (3.9%) at £1 per pint while being entertained by 'Ringy' and 'Stu', two characters from Hebden Bridge who were well into their third hour of residence when I arrived and were well down the beer list, debating the merits of the Andechs Bergbock Helles as compared to the Unertl Muhldorfer Weisse. With the beers averaging £2.70/80 per pint I contented myself with just sampling one of the draughts, the Meusel Heller Bock - dry and very tasty.

Before I left, 'Ringy' and 'Stu' recommended the Fox and Goose at Hebden Bridge for good value and a lively atmosphere. Possibly I will pay a visit, but not on a Saturday afternoon as it closes at three.

Anyway, back to the station, dropping in at the **Kings Arms** on Bloom Street en route. They had a blues band in session that afternoon, but fortunately I'm not here as a music critic. I tried two beers; the first was Salopian Brown & Bitter Flat Cap (4.3%) at £1.78. How this one is classified beats me; better just call it individually flavoured and leave it at that. Fortunately Tyke (4.3%) from the Oak Brewery at £1.68 was on offer. I enjoy a good Yorkshire style bitter (but not Tetleys) and this was most enjoyable.

Next Saturday - 1st April - saw yet another beer fest. This time at the good old reliable **Beer House** on Angel Street, where they have festivals just like my neighbour's cat has kittens - at short, regular intervals. They had around fifteen British ales on offer at prices averaging £1.70/80. This was definitely the place to be scratching. All that I sampled were in excellent condition, my favourite being the Church End Drop Goal (4.5%), a full flavoured fruity bitter.

Meanwhile, back among the panoramic vistas of Oldham, **Mr Wetherspoon** has not been idle. A two-month extended beer festival



in January/February saw some thirty guest ales appear at £1.29 per pint, ending with the ever appreciated Taylors Landlord (4.3%), that doyen of Yorkshire bitters. This was £1.29 on the last Saturday and £1.49 on the Sunday, but still 50p cheaper than at the Buck & Union on Union Street.

Now, in a further flash of entrepreneurial flair; Wetherspoons have increased their range of permanent real ales with the addition of Spitfire from Shepherd Neame and Abbot Ale from Greene King. This will have no meaning for the residents who swig John Smiths 'because it's so cheap', but it puts me in better mood. Or should I say, it should. At £1.49

the price is reasonable and Abbot is always appreciated by yours truly, but the Spitfire I found disappointing. Is it me, or has it developed a soapy flavour? Perhaps it was just that first batch. I'll have to recheck.

And round the corner at the **Ashton Arms**, while they don't have beer festivals as such, they now offer a guest ale which at present is one of the Bridgewater range. I am assured that all the beers go well with pickled egg and pork pie.

I suppose I should finish with a mention of the 14th Oldham Beer Festival, although it will be retrospective by the time this is printed. As usual, an excellent range of beers, expertly racked and cheerfully served at the end of April. A pity about the venue - the Civic Centre (again). But let's be positive; after a few pints the finer points of this architectural gem will cease to be an issue and the weekend after I can take that 'beer train' to Huddersfield.

Letter

Wetherspoons

Sir - In the March 2000 issue you asked for suggestions for a name for the proposed J D Wetherspoon pub to be opened at the Lancastrian Hall end of Swinton Precinct.

The Lancastrian Hall and Central Library building is an internationally known architectural gem (of the Latter-Day Grot School) and was the subject of a letter from Dave Crookell (WD June 1999). Dave's letter was headed 'Carbuncle Corner' and I think that a JDW pub with that name and in that setting would be apt. Dave also mentioned that the building was not floodlit at night, unlike the nearby public buildings, so I think that 'Moon over Carbuncle Corner' might be more apt.



Cliff Price

Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

There has been a 90% take-up on the £23 per share offer for a family/management buyout (WD last month). This was better than Holts were expecting and early in April all institutions and individuals who accepted the offer were sent their cheques. The shareholders (mainly small, with fewer than about fifty shares) who opted for the one new for one old share, have been sent new Joseph Holt Group PLC certificates. In the coming months, the title may change as Holts becomes a limited company.

The few major shareholders and individuals who did not respond one way or the other will be given a few more weeks to decide and then be sent a cheque for the price of their shares, as provided for under the deal.

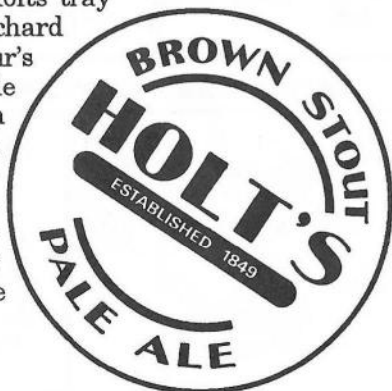
Early in April Holts increased the price of their beers by a penny per pint as per the duty increase in the Budget. Bitter is now 115p per pint and mild a few pence lower.

The Tanners on Fairy Lane is no longer a Holts pub, having been sold at the end of March. It was built about twenty years ago in the expectation that the surrounding estate would go on to be fully developed. Sadly, there has been no increase in trade over the years and so it has been sold.

There has been a great deal of controversy recently regarding 'smooth' mild in Holts pubs. Many customers have ordered 'a pint of mild', expecting the traditional beer and been given the smooth variety instead. I have been assured by senior management that this practice should not be taking place. When customers ask for 'mild' they should be offered the choice before the beer is dispensed. So to be absolutely sure, either point to the handpump or specify the traditional mild.

I've had a request from a collector of brewery trays, Richard Percival, who is trying to locate a pre-1970 Holts tray made by Reginald Corfield. (Richard recently appeared on Channel Four's 'Collectors Lot' with the lovely Debbie Thrower.) I know the chances are slim - I haven't seen a Holts tray in use in one of their pubs for fifteen years or more. It also seems a long time since we had the very useful Holts beermat (*right*), printed on one side only! They were great for making notes on the plain side.

stewart@revell62.freemove.co.uk



THE ALL YEAR BEER FESTIVAL

THWAITES BITTER, KELHAM ISLAND
PALE RIDER, TIMOTHY TAYLORS
+ 9 EVER CHANGING GUESTS
from Independents & Micros including a MILD



PLUS A RANGE OF TRADITIONAL CIDERS,
DRAUGHT KRIEK, LEFFE BLONDE, HOEGAARDEN &
EXTENSIVE BELGIAN & GERMAN BOTTLE RANGE
& NEW BELGIAN DRAUGHT GUEST BEERS (IN ROTATION)

MAY IT BEGIN BEER FESTIVAL

Thursday 27th April - Monday 1st May
40+ New and Rare Beers
Festival Food at lunchtimes with an Indian Theme
Beers from micros and independents - all served from handpump
(4 upstairs and 12 down) and chilled to cellar temperature

Hot Lunchtime Food Seven Days a Week

LUNCHES DAILY & EVENING MEALS 5 - 7pm (FRI ONLY)

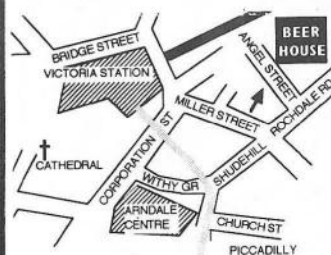
THURS SPECIAL (5-8pm) CHOICE OF 6 CURRIES (VEG & NON-VEG) + RICE £3
SUNDAY 12-2.30pm - Giant Yorkshires with choice of meat, roast potatoes and veg
for just £3



HALF PRICE MENUS & CHEAP SPECIALS MON LUNCH
FREE CHIP MUFFINS WED 5-6pm



NEWLY REFURBISHED FUNCTION ROOM UPSTAIRS WITH BAR BILLIARDS TABLE & SKY SPORTS



THE BEER HOUSE

Angel Street, Manchester
0161 839 7019



Bolton news

Trotter

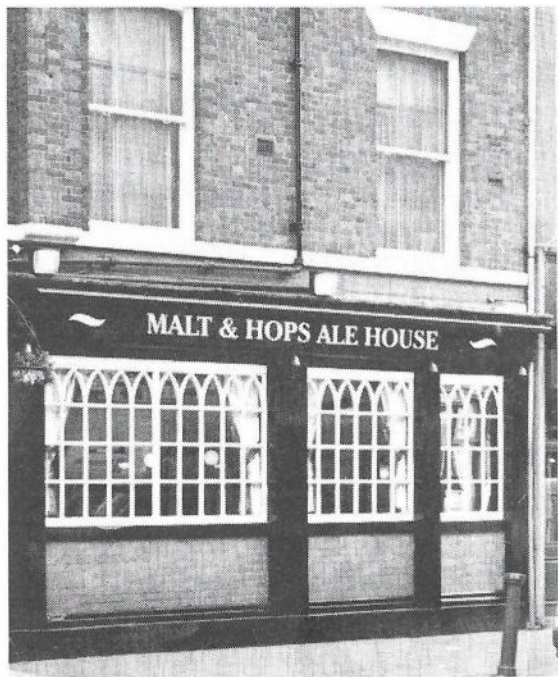
Pub award

Tony and Hilary Coyne have been rewarded for their hard work at the **Hen & Chickens** on Deansgate by being named the best business-building licensees in the region. They have been given the Inn Partnership Business Excellence Award by their pub company, Inn Partnership.

The Hen & Chickens, which last year won a Bolton CAMRA 'Pub of the Season' award, sells Greenalls mild and bitter, together with a regularly changing range of guest ales.

Malt and Hops returns

The Swan Hotel in Bolton has had yet another makeover and its Malt and Hops Bar, retitled the Malt and Hops Ale House, is back in business. For the relaunch of the basic real ale bar, a beer festival was run over two weeks. Around twenty ales were served from the six handpumps at the low price of £1.20 a pint. This proved to be a popular move and the pricing policy continues to apply for selected beer, Monday - Wednesday 12-6pm and Thursday - Saturday 12-4pm.



On my last visit the Malt and Hops Ale House was selling Bass, Charles Wells Bombardier, Hancocks HB, Boddingtons, Courage Directors and Worthington Bitter.

Man & Scythe

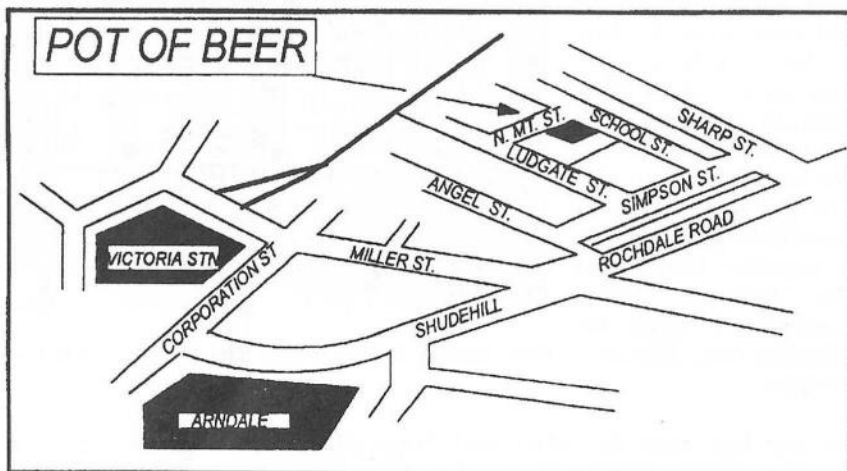
The Old Man & Scythe on Churchgate is now selling two real ales from the Caledonian Brewery - Deuchars IPA and 80/- Ale - and both are worth sampling. So is the latest addition to the handpumped range, Fullers London Pride. And you can still get a pint of good old Joeys (the real Manchester ale).

POT OF BEER

36 NEW MOUNT ST.
0161 834 8579



- ▶ *Everchanging Guest Cask Ales*
- ▶ *Robinsons Dark Mild*
- ▶ *Draught Leffe Blond and Hoegaarden*
- ▶ *Black Rat Traditional Cider*
- ▶ *Continental Bottled Beers*
- ▶ *Wide Selection of Wines*



**POLISH AND ENGLISH MENU
AVAILABLE 12 TO 9 PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY
AND 12 TO 4 PM SATURDAY**

Here and there

Bridgewater Ales

with Daddy Bell

Jester IPA (4.6%) was scheduled to make its debut on All Fools Day, but in the event it first surfaced in the Kings Arms on Bloom Street on 6th April. It proved surprisingly mellow, but recognisably a Bridgewater ale. I sampled a half-pint of the second batch at the brewery itself on 12th April: again, it was very good, but this time the flavour had much more impact. Hot Cross Bunny, another 4%er (not to be confused with Kitchen's 4.7% Hop Cross Bunny) was brewed on 10th April.

If the sap has risen sufficiently, the eponymous and already legendary Birch Ale may well be brewed this year.

Festive Frolics

We've been spoilt for choice with in-house beer festivals in March and April. The **Crescent's** German bier festival (23-26 March) offered eight deliciously discoverable beers and lagers. I found the Schenkerla Urbock Rauchbier to be wonderfully drinkable, though much tamer in smokiness than I had been led to expect. Of the English ales from the cellar which were simultaneously available, Yates' Spring Fever (4.7%) was (I thought) incomparable. Others were fascinated by Durham's Facade Lager (on handpump, 4.6%),

finding it gingery or strongly peppery. Idy rang the brewer, who assured her he had not ransacked his spice rack but had used lots of Saaz hops, with some Target for bitterness.

To atone for my dilatoriness at previous festivals, I made sure of being at least second through the **Beer House** door at Ian Casson's 'Oh, no - not another March Beer Festival', when it started on 30th March. When beers are sourced so adventurously and widely, a few duds are likely: Thwaites' 'Brand ?' (a test brew) was nothing special, and nobody was much seized by the novelties from Fisherrow, the IPA being



possibly the best. On the other hand, Backdyke's Malcolm's Crown (3.7%) was very peppery and tasty.

I didn't manage to be among the first arrivals at Idy and Sal's Spring Beer Festival at the **Crescent** (13-16 April): several thirsty Scousers (and ex-Scousers), South Yorkshiremen and other avid tipplers got to work on the beer and excellent food before me. By common consent, the stars of the show (and the first to sell out) were two of the first beers from Richard 'Sutty' Sutton's Pictish Brewery in Rochdale. The Brewers Gold (3.8%, on gravity) was a herbily hoppy beer which really grabbed the tastebuds; while the Pictish Porter (4.4%, on handpump) had all the complexity a porter should have. In popular acclaim, the Swale Old Stroker (4.1%) was not far behind.

Chapel Street, Salford

While the remodelling of the **Brown Bull** is taking months, if not years, the refurbishment (by Enterprise Inns - 'investing in the community') of the **Black Lion** has taken just a few weeks, reopening being on April 14th. Attracted by the promise of 'traditional beers, stouts and wines' in the new glazing, and seeing a prominent new sign from the railway, I looked in on April 19th. My only previous knowledge of the pub was as a source of aluminium cans for recycling: there certainly wasn't any real ale to be had a few years ago. Indeed,



despite a board outside advertising 'cask ales' in the plural, I found only Boddingtons bitter available on handpump (£1.60), though a second handpump at the other end of bar is scheduled for the likes of Flowers IPA. Otherwise, there are gantries to dispense John Smiths extra smooth, Websters Green Label, Stones, Stella, Woodpecker, Fosters and Guinness.

But let's give the place a chance: it's been opened up and refitted in a fairly sumptuous way, and food is available from 8am to 8pm. The new licensee, Paul Rimmington, seems amenable to suggestions on the beer front, so why not encourage him?

At least the Black Lion is still black and a lion. The Oxnoble on Liverpool Road is now devoid of nobility, being simply the Ox.

Licensing Reform

Roger Hall

Our licensing laws are complex and unsuited to the modern era. Reform is long overdue. The White Paper is generally welcome. Licensing hours are archaic and bizarre. Why should I be able to drink after 11pm in a night club and not in a pub? More liberal licensing hours are an important move forward. There are, however, some concerns. Allowing children into all licensed premises is not a good idea. I'd like to see some children-free zones.

The White Paper also suggests that the responsibility for licensing should shift from Magistrates Courts to Local Authorities, thus ending almost five hundred years of jurisdiction. In many ways, magistrates have only themselves to blame. There have been many instances of lack of consistency and of policies which go far beyond the requirements of the law. However, the courts are swift, cheap and unbureaucratic; they are also seen as independent.

Local Authorities, in contrast, are expensive and bureaucratic. They are also seen as being subject to political pressures. Courts, rather than Local Authorities, are better able to weigh up the conflicting demands of pub owners, residents, police and fire authorities in deciding applications for licences, extended hours and deciding on the fitness of licensees.

(I should declare an interest. I have been a member of a magistrates' licensing committee since 1987.)

Contributors to this issue: Stewart Revell, Roger Hall, Mark McConachie, Paul Warbrick, Daddy Bell, Steve Smith, Dave White, John Henley

GBG 2000 *The Millennium Pub Trail*

Part Three

Steve Smith and Mark McConachie continue their tour of Greater Manchester's Good Beer Guide pubs...

We arranged to meet mid afternoon and midway between Thornham and Slattocks in the **Tandle Hill Tavern**, near the country park. This pub, reached by one of the most pot-holed, unmetalled tracks in Greater Manchester, was acquired by J W Lees at the end of the nineteenth century. There are two pleasant rooms and the beers are mild, bitter and Moonraker in winter. Frequent buses operate between Oldham and Rochdale along the top road (A671) and Manchester and Rochdale along the bottom road (A664). I find it is best reached from the Summit pub, via Thornham Old Road and on to Thornham Lane.

After a ten-minute walk downhill and a bus ride into Rochdale and out again, we came to the **Albion** on Whitworth Road, approximately two miles out of town. This is a lively, three-roomed genuine free house with Timothy Taylors beers and guests. The Taylors Dark Mild and Hydes Light proved to be good choices. From outside the pub, the 446 bus (half-hourly) took us round to the **Healey Hotel** on Shawclough Road. This is one of a smattering of Robinsons houses in



the Rochdale metropolitan area and sells Best Bitter, with Old Tom available in the winter months. The stone-built pub has an intact front (no smoking) room decorated with country prints, a compact vault with pictures of horses and a main bar lounge with showbiz pictures.

Returning to the town centre on the 446, we walked to the **Britannia Inn** on Lomax Street. This former Wilsons house is now owned by our mate John Willie. There are two comfortable rooms and the beers are bitter and the seasonal beer. We tried the latest offering, Malted Mayhem (4.5%), but expected a more malty flavour than there was.

It was now time to eat, so we walked down to Wetherspoon's (non-GBG) **Regal Moon** on The Butts and tried a half of one of the guest beers, Burton Bridge Taylor Maid, which was almost mistaken for Taylors Mild. Suitably fed and watered, we caught the 469 out to the **Cemetery Inn** on Bury Road. This long-established free house sells Taylors beers and guests. The red Draylon-clad corner room is surely one of the classiest in Rochdale and visitors with a good sense of equilibrium may notice that the building is suffering from subsidence (sloping and dividing). We enjoyed a pleasant pint of Storm Brewery's Windgather.

We returned to Rochdale for the final pub of the night, the **Merrie Monk** on College Road, near to the junction with Mellor Street. It is



an opened out Marstons establishment (or should that now be Banks's?), dispensing Marstons bitter and Pedigree along with Banks's bitter. There is a good table football game.

The next evening we headed way out west to Wigan and four pubs around the town centre. We arrived by train (the Evening Ranger is still good value at £1.25) and walked to Gidlow Lane for a pint in the **Bird i'th'Hand** (th'En'Ole). The pub has a basic vault and a smart lounge, although when we arrived the place was populated by fanatical rugby followers watching television in both rooms and some rather obtrusive children. The beers were Tetley mild and bitter.

Retracing our steps, we came to the **Old Pear Tree** on Frog Lane, with its smart whitewashed frontage and cosy, cottage-style interior. The pub has a traditional vault and a long bar fronting a low-ceilinged lounge, complete with leaded windows and glass and wood panelling. The cask ale was Burtonwood bitter.

On the opposite side of town, in the Scholes area, the **Black Bull** is tucked away down a side street on Hardybutts. It was a welcome traditional boozer in a sea of keg, albeit rather noisy as it was somebody's birthday. The only cask ale was Tetley bitter.

We headed back towards the railway station and our final call was at Wetherspoon's **Moon Under Water** in the Market Place. It has the standard fixtures and fittings, a split-level no smoking area and a rear entrance on to a side alley. As well as the usual beer range from Scottish Courage and Boddingtons, there was an interesting guest ale in O'Hanlons Wheat Beer (4%).

An hour's bus ride from town (Manchester, that is) took us to the **Diggle Hotel** (right), set in rolling countryside at the soon-to-

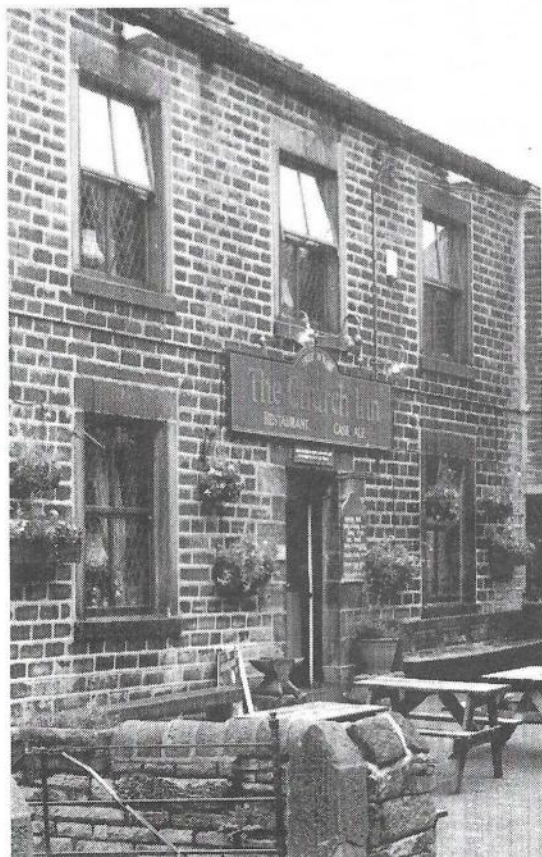


be restored southern end of the Standedge Tunnel. Buses 427, 353, 355 and 365 go there, but the services are very limited. The pub is always busy with diners and boasts three traditional drinking areas, including the Huddersfield Narrow Canal Room. There are two Timothy Taylors beers, supplemented by Boddingtons and, on our visit, Wadworth 6X.

Another bus ride took us to Uppermill for an exhilarating hike up to the **Cross Keys** on Running Hill Gate. This J W Lees moorland inn is constructed from local materials and blends in well with the Saddleworth scene. The rooms have stone-flagged floors and low beams and the walls are decorated with line drawings and pictures of the surrounding area. The beers are mild, bitter, Moonraker and a seasonal beer.

A path from the side of the Cross Keys leads on to Church Lane and the **Church Inn**. This is another popular place and the home of the

Saddleworth Brewery. We tried two of their ales, the popular Saddleworth More and the strong Shaftbender. The pub has been opened out considerably and does a good local trade, with a separate restaurant room. The landlord recently introduced the sale of plots of land to locals who wish to be buried here!



Strolling back down into the village, we headed for the **Waggon Inn** on High Street. It is a Robinsons house, with a number of rooms offering quiet drinking areas. Best Bitter and Old Tom were available, but we opted for the Hatters Mild, which wasn't up to GBG standard in this 'try also' entry. Drinking up, we headed for home.

Rupert

'Well, they're not having any of my money and I don't think we should plunder the hard-won Slumley branch funds to further their lifestyle.' Fiona was as outspoken and negative as ever. 'Those tossers at St Allballs will only waste it on coffee table books, self-congratulating gong-presenting megabuck dinners and developing daft criteria for tavern survival which have as much relevance to Slumley as Barbara Cartland. We'll all be running around in Giant Haystacks sized T shirts in a sea of Nitrokeg.'

'Hang on a sec, Fiona,' came the swift riposte from Ophelia Hampton who, for once, was wearing her sensible head. 'I've just come back from the annual beano. Now, I know you don't have much time for the boss group and consider it to be a repository for the brain-dead. Like you, I despair when I see the progress of such quasi-luminaries as Nora Tackler and Billy Bogg who, by no stretch of the imagination, could be described as stars in their own patch. Yet, believe me, a new era has dawned.

'It's a bit late, isn't it?' Fiona rejoined. Undeterred, Ophelia continued with an almost missionary fervour. 'Better late than never. OK, we were banging on about the need to get out of bed

with the brewers and slam their new keg, old beer with new gas. It was ages before the boss group woke up, but they have now. There's leverage in sending the money to them. They've got 50,000 members at their disposal. Apart from you, me and Roop, who comes to our meetings now? We can't even drum up enough support for the proverbial piss up in a brewery. There's not much use in our sitting on hundreds of pounds and not doing any active campaigning about the threat of Nitrosmooth.

We are the converted. Let's get somebody who can to convert the heathens out there. Remember the word of mouth campaign against Grotneys? Who won that, then? I believe that there is a new found zeal at HQ, which was manifested at the beanfeast. We should shower them with money at the earliest opportunity. I formally propose that we send a cheque to them for £5,000 at the earliest opportunity.'

'Bollocks!' Fiona's stage whisper reverberated around the sparsely furnished lounge of the new minimalist Ratty's (formerly the Rat and Handbag). A vote was taken. Two to one in favour with one abstention (myself) and the five grand will soon be winging its way to St Allballs. Whether it is spent wisely, only time will tell.

Uncle Igor

Whatever happened to Uncle Igor? Glyn Kendrick is seeking information on this strong (very strong) beer, which was mentioned in WD a few years ago. It had a rather high abv and was priced at around £9 a pint. If you remember the stuff, or even drank it and survived to tell the tale, please write to What's Doing.

Branch Diary

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tue 2 May 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Hunt Lane Tavern, Chadderton

Tue 16 May 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, Navigation, Wool Rd, Dobcross

Sat 20 - Sun 21 May, Weekend Social Trip by Coach. Cleethorpes and Beverley

Tue 30 May 8.30pm, What's Doing Collation, Cask and Feather, Drake Street, Rochdale

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

Email: P.Alexander@Virgin.net

North Manchester

Weds 3 May 8pm, Social, Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford.

Sat 6 May, Mild crawl. Start Beerhouse, 12 noon. Finish Crescent.

See poster in Beer House.

Wed 10 May 8pm, Social, Grosvenor, Newton Heath

Sat 13 May 12.30pm, Regional Meeting, Blue Pits, Castleton

Wed 17 May 8pm, Branch Meeting, Beer House

Wed 24 May, Blackley. Imperial, Delaunays Road, 7pm; Old House,

Bottomley Side, 8pm; Golden Lion, Old Market Street, 9.30pm

Tues 30 May 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham

Wed 31 May 7pm, Castlefield. Dukes 92, Castle Street, 7pm; Oxnoble,

Liverpool Road, 8pm; White Lion, Liverpool Road, 9pm

Wed 21 June 8pm, Special General Meeting, Crescent, Salford.

Proposal to donate £500 to CAMRA Fighting Fund.

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

South East Lancs

Thurs 11 May 8pm, Branch Meeting and Social, Victoria, opposite

B&Q, Leigh

Contact: Mike Thomas 01942 817335

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'.

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Dave and Sue welcome you to

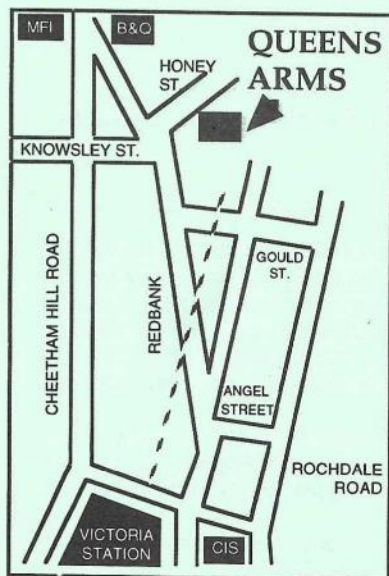
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