

30p

# What's Doing

AUGUST 2000



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## NEW LOOK FOR SPREAD EAGLE

It has taken Holts four-and-a-half weeks to give the Spread Eagle, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, a dramatic refurbishment. The brewery has really gone to town on this one: new flooring, thick carpets, mosaic tiling around the bar counter panelling, walls painted in pastel shades and adorned with pictures, and Gothic-style light fittings. One of the striking attractions is a wall cabinet containing effectively-lit, coloured, frosted glass vases. Everything, down to the upholstery and curtains is magnificent. Oh, and on my visit, the beer was superb!

*Leo King*





## Independents' Day Crawl

Alex Koval

On 1st July, the Rochdale, Oldham & Bury branch of CAMRA held their annual Independents' Day crawl. This is a day of campaigning in support of the independent brewer. And how better to do this than by drinking lots of beer!

The first stop was at **Lees Brewery** to sample straight from source. Those arriving on time at 10.45am were slightly miffed, but not surprised, to find some people already propping up the bar. Everyone enjoyed a free pint of mild, bitter or Scorchers. Or in the case of the really dedicated, all three. It was then on to the free coach for even more free beer. This was at **Phoenix Brewery** and as usual, Tony and Susan didn't disappoint. There was an excellent mild and the thirst quenching White Tornado. We had to be dragged away to our next stop - the **Lord Raglan** at Nangreaves.

Despite having to pay for our drinks, it proved a great lunch stop. It was the penultimate day of their beer festival, but there was still good local beer to be had. The Pictish Summer Solstice and Marble IPA were particularly good. A short journey into Whitefield brought us to the **Eagle & Child** for some Holts. Then it was into Rochdale and the **Cemetery Inn** for some more local brews.

Some people chose to linger here, whilst the rest headed into the town centre. The official stop was the **Cask & Feather** (right) and the **McGuinness Brewery**. A breakaway faction headed for pastures new and after a curry found themselves at the **Reed Hotel**, enjoying the Banks's Bitter. Meanwhile, the main party divided, with some staying in Rochdale and others heading for the last stop in Oldham. Among the latter were members of the notorious Royton mafia, who spoke highly of the **Ashton Arms**. All in all, it was a very good day out and thanks must go to Mark for organising it.





## Trafford & Hulme news

Mike Goode

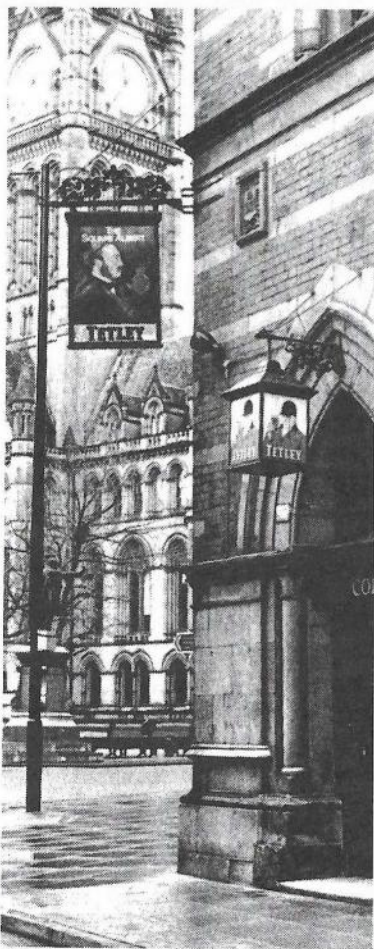
Claire and Howard from the **City Arms** on Kennedy Street are taking on temporary control of the **Square Albert** (below) in Albert Square. This pub has underperformed for some time, and Howard is planning to stillage some barrels behind the bar in an attempt to attract a new clientele. The transformation beerwise will start during August - so give it a go!

The **Volunteer** in Sale gains whilst the regulars at the **Lord Nelson** in Urmston lose: long-standing landlady Margaret Bailey has moved south.

Yet another new Wetherspools opens in Old Trafford (next to the Dog & Partridge) and hard by that football ground. Called the **Bishop Blaize** (why?), it used to be a car radio shop. Judging by the fairly poor Abbot Ale, it should have stayed as one.

Mild news. The **Crown** on Deansgate no longer sells real dark (or, for that matter, any) mild. We didn't drink enough of it. Nearby, the **White Lion** on Liverpool Road was selling Brains Dark recently, and very drinkable it was. But £2 a pint? Come on Mike Dilger, don't let all those awards go to your head. Let's have good beer in a good pub with a sensible pricing policy, please!

Remember the brief appearance of Cheshire Cat Ales? Well, the Altrincham Brewing Company is about to be set up and test brews should be happening during August. The **Old Market Tavern** in Altrincham (surprising, that) will be the first place where one will be able to sample it.



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## More disease

Yates's are to rename their Swinton premises Addisons, which is the name of a little-known disease. What next - Mad Cows, Syphilis, Piles?

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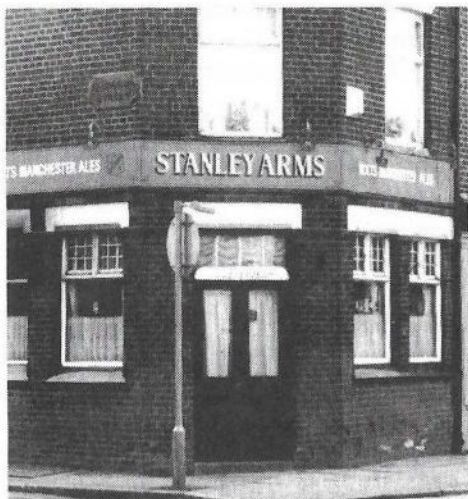
*Beer Garden now open*

## Holts Corner

*Stewart Revell*

In Eccles, the **Crown & Volunteer** is still up for sale and so is the **Golden Cross** (Cloudy's). As there are many pubs in that part of Eccles, it may be some time before buyers are found. I understand that if and when they are sold, it will be on condition that the new owners don't sell Holts beers.

The **Stanley Arms** in Patricroft is one of only five Holts pubs that are run as tenancies, rather than as managed houses. The North Manchester branch of CAMRA met there on 12th July, when the mild and bitter were in their usual excellent condition. This is a well run local which has featured in recent Good Beer Guides.



I have received a letter from Graham Briggs of Tottington wherein he lists many of the Holts outlets he has visited since the start of the year. He notes the way each pub deals with the request for a pint of mild and it would seem that most bar staff went straight for the 'smooth' dispense, rather than ask him which type he wanted. On visiting the **Woodthorpe** on 9th February, some handpumps had traditional mild clips, but the bar person told him that only the 'smooth' was available. On another visit (7th June) the clips for traditional mild had been removed and again only 'smooth' was to be had.

I will bring this further example of what seems to be a disregarding of company policy to the attention of senior management at the brewery. Whether it will do any good or not, I cannot say. But I do know that many customers are not happy with the situation as it is. In the pubs, always ask for traditional mild and point to the handpump to make it perfectly clear that that is the beer you want!

Holtenbraü lager is to be phased out and replaced by a new type called Crystal, brewed with a lager yeast and bottom fermented at a lower temperature. It will have the same strength as Holtenbraü but with (I'm told) a better flavour. In about 1972 Holts introduced Regal Lager, which was replaced some three years ago by Diamond. Holtenbraü, of lower strength than Regal, was introduced in the early 1980s. Both were brewed with the same yeast as used for beer.

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## Wigan and district

Dave White

King Street in the centre of Wigan is a hive of activity at the moment, with two new theme bars on the way, tastefully blending in, one hopes, with the Aussie bar, the Irish pub and the Chicago Rock Cafe that are there already. The Old Monk Pub Company wants to transform the former Royal Court Theatre into a South African Springbok bar. The emphasis will be on rugby, rather than on some of the other attributes of one of the most violent countries on earth.

Further down the street, Surrey Free Inns are turning the ex-Trustee Savings Bank into a Mediterranean theme pub, the Bar Med. Almost anything done to this edifice would be an improvement, but the boys from Old Monk could have some trouble with their planning application, as the Royal Court is a listed building. Real ale is not expected to be a feature of either bar, but only a cynic or an anorak, whose next ounce of fun will be his first, would suggest that these places attract the wrong kind of people.

Heading away from King Street on the A577, the once-great **Silverwell Hotel** on Darlington Street East is closed (again) and boarded up, whilst on the other side of town, **Hartley's Emporium** and the **Griffin Hotel**, both on Standishgate, have gone over to keg beer.

Two pubs win this month's Hall of Shame award, namely the **Clubhouse**, Scot Lane, Marsh Green, and the **Village Inn**, High Street, Skelmersdale, for advertising cask conditioned beers on the outside, when there is nothing but fizz within. It is high time that this iniquitous practice was stamped out.

The saga of the **Minstrel**, Wigan Road, Hindley continues. The pub remains closed, but the painters and signwriters have been at work, with the **Minstral**, as it is now called, displaying the logos for Carling Black Label and Bass. This does not augur well, but things could be worse: if the pub had reverted to its old name, the signwriters might have come up with the **Lancashire Onion**...

It's nice to know that *What's Doing* is read by the great and the good, as Matthew Fort, the ayatollah of haute cuisine in *The Guardian*, visited the **Mulberry Tree** in Wroughton after my write-up last month. He loved the eats, but the beer was dismissed as 'tolerable'.

News in brief: Theakstons Cool Cask should be on sale at the **Globe Hotel**, High Street, Standish, by the time you read this, in addition to the two guest beers available at this GBG-rated inn ... the **Prince of Wales**, Victoria Road, Newtown, now sells Ruddles bitter alongside Tetley bitter. The pub is known to all and sundry as the **Jawbone** ... the old Wigan Conservative Club at Upper Dicconson Street, Swinley, has become **Le Frog** bistro, presumably because La Grenouille bistro would have sounded daft.

## GBG 2000 The Millennium Trail

### Part Six

*Pursuing their tour of Good Beer Guide pubs (and others), Steve Smith and Mark McConachie board the train for Rose Hill...*

Rose Hill station is handy for Robinsons' **Railway** on Stockport Road, a 'try also' GBG entry listed under Marple Bridge. It is a well-appointed, roomy hostelry with a central bar selling Hatters mild and best bitter. Pictures of Stockport and stained glass panes with a locomotive theme add to the ambience.

A bus ride took us into Compstall and the **Andrew Arms** (right) in the shadow of Etherow Country Park. The pub is off the main road on George Street and has two pleasant rooms, with the lounge doubling as a dining room at weekends. The beers are again Robinsons Hatters mild and best bitter.



Next, a short ride into Marple and a change of bus for Strines and the **Sportsman** on Strines Road, from where there are good views over the surrounding area. The pub has a vault and a comfortable lounge, part of which is given over to diners. We tried the Cains bitter, the other ale being Boddingtons bitter; sadly, Cains mild was not on.

Buses from here to the Derbyshire town of New Mills are every hour and when we arrived there was not time to explore the Millennium Walkway. So it was straight into the former GBG-listed **Masons Arms**, tucked down the back of High Street. It is a pleasant, friendly and cosy pub with a small bar dispensing the two Robinsons bitters, Best and the rarer Old Stockport, along with Hatters mild.

Frequent buses operate from here to High Lane, where there are a number of pubs lining the A6, the main Buxton Road. We stayed on the same side of the road and one of the pubs we tried was the **Horseshoe** at the corner of Windlehurst Road, another Robinsons outlet and a 'try also' GBG entry. The equine theme is echoed in a collection of pot horses and brasses. Hatters mild and best bitter are the beers.

Heading in the direction of Stockport (conveniently downhill) we came to a GBG entry, the **Royal Oak** (*below*). This is an opened-out, two room Burtonwood house with a compact bar selling bitter and guests (Adnams Broadside at £1.90). Also along here is the non-GBG **Robin Hood**, a comfortable and friendly pub serving Robinsons Hatters mild and best bitter.



Next, a bus to London Road at Hazel Grove and the **Three Tunnes**. It isn't in the GBG, but is a fine pub nonetheless and it was busy, in contrast to the other pubs visited so far. There are two well furnished rooms at the front and a substantial vault at the rear.

The main road becomes Buxton Road again in the Heaviley district of Stockport and here is the **Blossoms**, a real drinkers' pub featuring some superb glasswork in an Edwardian setting. In Stockport itself is the popular **Unity** on Wellington Road South, an opened-out pub with plain decor.

We concluded our day's wanderings in the **Pineapple**, just off the A6. (The very frequent 192 buses between Hazel Grove and Manchester are a godsend.) This is another non-GBG pub, plainly furnished and with beers on electric dispense.

The **Crown** on Heaton Lane in Stockport (*right*) provides a good start to any pub crawl. Nestling under the town's famous railway viaduct, the pub has developed a reputation as a premier ale house. It was rescued from a scruffy existence a few years ago by BodPubCo, then in the hands of Greenalls it was tarted up to provide four general drinking areas: a games room, two comfy side rooms (one no smoking) and a back room. There is a walled garden area at the rear. The beers are the ubiquitous Boddingtons bitter and several guests.

A short walk from the Crown there is another splendid outlet for guest beers, **Ye Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway, dwarfed by the giant blue pyramid. It has three comfortable rooms and sells Theakstons best bitter, Marstons Pedigree and usually a couple of guests, one of them nearly always a mild.



Turning left outside the Woolpack, then left again and going over the motorway slip roads into the Heaton area, one comes to the **Moss Rose** on Didsbury Road, Heaton Norris. This is a typical Hydes estate pub with a traditional vault and spacious lounge in which one can drink electrically dispensed Light and bitter from oversize glasses.

A short bus ride brought us to the **Griffin** at Heaton Mersey. This is a multi-roomed Joseph Holts establishment with an impressive bar of carved wood and etched glass, a black and white mosaic tiled floor and a curious drinking corridor sporting a lounge settee! The rooms are neatly furnished in the brewery's usual style. Mild and bitter are the ales.

Next, another bus ride to Heaton Moor and the **Crown** on Heaton Moor Road. This is a large Greenalls hostelry with some interesting wood and glass panelling, a neat front room, vault and dining area. The beers are mild and bitter plus Boddingtons bitter.

We turned right out of the Crown, left on to Parsonage Road, right on to Warwick Road and left on to Green Lane. Following this round to the right, we came to the **Nursery Inn** after a pleasant fifteen minutes' walk. This is a hidden gem of a pub in a cobbled area off



Green Lane, selling mild and bitter on handpull; Jekylls Gold and the seasonal offering on electric dispense. The pub has a lounge and a back room with a view of the bowling green.

Leaving the Nursery, we walked on to Bowerfold Lane, which eventually becomes a footpath leading to the A6. From there we caught a 192 bus to Denby Lane, crossed the road and walked up to Manchester Road at Heaton Chapel. Here is the **Hinds Head** (*below*), a new Whitbread house which has the appearance of having been there for years. It is a popular haunt, selling good value, well prepared and well presented food. The beer range is Pedigree, London Pride, Landlord, Thwaites bitter, Castle Eden and guests. A good spot to end our day's wanderings.

With the Oldham Beer Festival beckoning, we took the opportunity to visit two GBG pubs in the town. The **Three Crowns** on Manchester

Street has three drinking areas - one for pool, one for watching telly (large screen and conventional) and a split-level, quieter one at the rear. Only Banks's bitter was on; the other pump clips were turned around.



Across from the festivities, the **Tommyfield** on Henshaw Street is a product of the 1970s market development. It is a substantial Lees pub with an opened-out lounge and traditional vault with collections of rugby memorabilia. GB mild, bitter and seasonal beers are on offer.

There were some interesting beers at the festival, provided by brewers such as Larkins (Kent), Kaltek (Cornwall), Hop Back (Wiltshire), Nethergate (Suffolk) and Roosters (Harrogate). The local brews from Hydes and Lees were as popular as ever and some micros provided an exciting variety. Bridgewater attempted a German beer style, Beltane Bok; the newish Pictish from Rochdale had a very drinkable Porter and Leyden (Lord Raglan, Nangreaves) a light session bitter in Nancy Flyer.



## Horwich

*Trotter catches the 575 bus from Bolton town centre and alights at the Crown Hotel...*

The **Crown** is a large Holts pub with a spacious lounge and a small vault. In the latter I asked for Holts mild, was offered smooth or cask and naturally chose the cask.

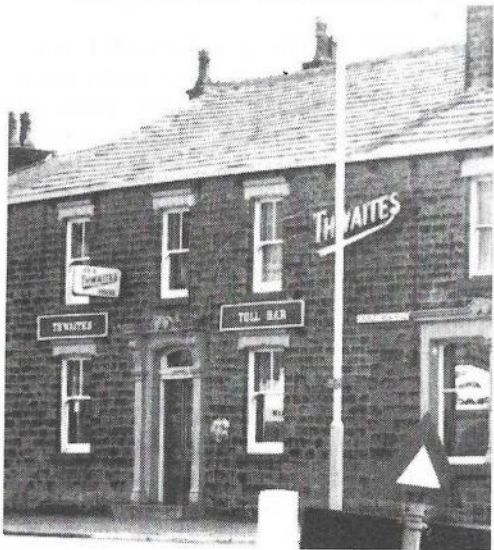
A short walk along Lee Lane brings you to the **Original Bay Horse**, a small, traditional pub with wooden floor, low beams/ceilings in both lounge and cosy vault. The beers are Lees bitter plus two guests. On the day the guests were Tetley bitter and Black Sheep bitter, which I sampled, though I thought it a bit overpriced at £1.68 for a 3.8% beer. The pub has a beer garden at the rear.

The next port of call was the **Victoria and Albert**. From the outside it looks like a traditional pub, but inside it is a modern, open-plan affair with cheap wood panelling. The only cask beer was Theakstons bitter.

Still on Lee Lane, I popped into the **Saddle**, which still advertises 'Lion Ales' in the front windows. Sadly, no real ale now. From here it was down Winter Hey Lane and on to Chorley New Road for the **Vic**, where Boddies was on special offer at £1.20 a pint. A central bar serves this spacious pub, which has some exposed original brickwork. Also note the green tiling in the corridor to the gents.

Back to the roundabout at the Crown and a pint of Thwaites bitter in the **Toll Bar** across the road. This is a large, three-roomed, basic boozer; note the unusual mural on the corner of the pub.

My final port of call was the **Squirrel**, which is just over the border from Horwich in Anderton (left at the roundabout). This is a single - storey pub/restaurant with a large children's play area at the side. Among the real ales listed on the 'coming up' board were Frog Island's best bitter and Fire Bellied Toad, Pride of Pendle and Leyden's Raglan Sleeve. The two beers available on my visit were Hart Amethyst and Jack o'Leys, the legendary beer from Hertfordshire according to the pumpclip.



## Bury Old Road and Bury New Road

*These two roads begin in Whitefield and wind their ways towards Manchester. Alex Koval takes a stroll...*

Bury New Road was completed in 1827 and since then it has been the main artery between Bury and Manchester. Not surprisingly, a number of pubs have sprung up along the way to refresh the weary traveller. Right by the Metro station in Whitefield there is the **Church Inn**. This dates back to about 1830, but did not become part of the Joseph Holt empire until 1908. Horse drawn buses used to stop outside and the pub's stables were only demolished in 1987. Just a little further along is the **Wheatsheaf**. This possibly predates the Church Inn and once belonged to Kay's Atlas Brewery of Longsight. Robinsons acquired the company in 1929 along with all of their pubs, possibly the best known being the Castle in Oldham Street, Manchester. The Wheatsheaf of today is wearing badly inside, but is still selling Best Bitter.

The same can't be said for the **Derby Arms** and the **Bulls Head** across the road. Both of these are keg. Take a little detour down Radcliffe New Road and you'll find the **Goats Gate**. This is a modern (1962) Holts pub that is definitely worth a visit. Back on Bury New Road, both the **Masons** and the **Red King** are keg. Real ale can be found at the **New Grove** (Holts), and at the **Beehive**, which usually offers a Moorhouses beer as a guest.

We're now at the junction of Bury Old and New Roads. Before continuing, back up a little and take a look at Higher Lane. At one time, this could boast six pubs and the Whitefield Brewery. Nowadays, Higher Lane is home only to the excellent **Eagle & Child**, which offers both Holts mild and bitter.

There are no pubs on Bury New Road until you reach Prestwich, but here there are no fewer than seven competing for one's custom. Joey Holts is once again well represented, with the **White Horse**, the **Red Lion** and the **Foresters**. All are pleasant, with the first two offering outdoor seating at the front.

On the same side of the road is the **Railway & Naturalist**. This ex-Wilsons pub has seen better days in both decoration and beer choice. The cask free approach certainly doesn't seem to be winning over the locals. The nearby **Wilton** also seems to be suffering and appears to be closed at present. Things are a lot better across the road at the **Grapes**. This is a comfortable pub offering good food to accompany the Tetley bitter. A drink might be advisable as it's a long way to the last pub on this side. The **George** is a large, unpromising corner pub that screams keg from the outside. Appearances can deceive, however, as cask Boddingtons is available inside.



Those wishing to explore Bury Old Road will also experience highs and lows. Lovers of the Derby Brewery will be more than happy with the four Joey Holts along there, starting with the **Coach & Horses** and then the **Welcome**. Then there's the **Ostrich** (*right*), a first class, multi-roomed pub. And of course, there's always the famous **Woodthorpe** to finish off at.

If you fancy some variety, there are two options. The first is the **Heaton Park Inn**. This was closed the last time I passed it, but it usually sells Banks's bitter. The second option is on Whittaker Lane, just off Bury Old Road and close to the Metro station. The **Royal Oak** is the third oldest pub in the Hydes estate, having being purchased by them in 1901 and it has been greatly improved by a recent refit. It sells bitter and mild, with the latter being £1 a pint during the day.



Finally, the list of shame. Yes, those pubs which sell nothing but overpriced fizz: the **Parkside**, the once excellent **Commercial** and the **St Margarets Tavern**. At the last of these, the barmaid was quick to point out that although the pub didn't sell real ale, it did have a large car park. Well that's all right then!

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## More ale in N/4

The **Bar Centro** on Tib Street in Manchester's Northern Quarter is selling real ale. The bar is now managed by Tony and Linda (late of the Pot of Beer) and they have introduced two Hydes beers - Jekylls Gold and the seasonal Your Bard. Also new is a change in the menu towards Cajun cooking.

## Ancoats news

Trouble seems to have struck the **Bank of England** (ex-Whitbread) as it is now closed. On nearby Palmerston Street, the **River** (Burtonwood) has suffered a period of closure but it should be trading again by now and selling Holts.

## Pubs of the A57

### Part One

*At the end of a recent pub crawl of Peel Green and Patricroft, Sean Kilgarriff and Pete Cash reflected on what they had found and concluded that, apart from the Holts pubs, the western end of Eccles is no longer a great place to find real ale. After more research, the following picture emerged...*

The **Airport Hotel** was selling John Smiths bitter in good form at £1.30, alongside smooth at £1.40. The **Unicorn** offered warmish Theakstons bitter at £1.54, 6p dearer than John Smiths smooth. The barman proclaimed the Unicorn 'a lager pub'.

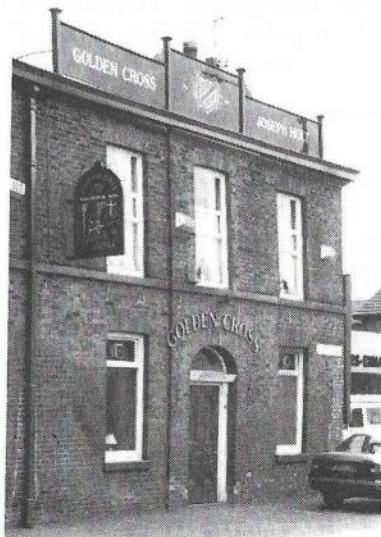
The **Waggon & Horses** had no real ale. After the dependable **Grapes** (Holts) we were surprised to find that Boddington's **Packet House** had no real ale either. Less of a surprise was the lack of the real stuff at Burtonwood's **Spinners Arms**, despite a large plastic sign on the outside proclaiming 'Traditional Beers'. A suggestion that this was misleading was met with a shrug and an invitation to 'try the Stanley'.

Before we took this advice we popped next door to the **Bird in Hand** (Holts). This has recently been done up in sumptuous style. When we ordered mild they started to pull the smoothflow, but as soon as we protested the handpump lines were pulled clear of water and an excellent pint of mild ensued.

Across the road to the **Oddfellows Arms** and another nasty surprise. Until recently this sold handpumped Greenalls mild and bitter, always in good form. Not any more!

It was too early to visit the Stanley, so we tried the **Golden Cross**. This must be one of the few Holts houses not to have installed a mild smoothflow pump. The mild was in tip-top condition, as it was in our final pub, the **Stanley** (Holts), which is GBG listed.

Other pubs nearby but not visited are the **Bridgewater** (Holts) and three non-real ale outlets, the **Ellesmere**, **Diamond XX** and **Star**. The **Black Boy** (Banks's) needs checking and will be the starting point for Part Two of this survey.





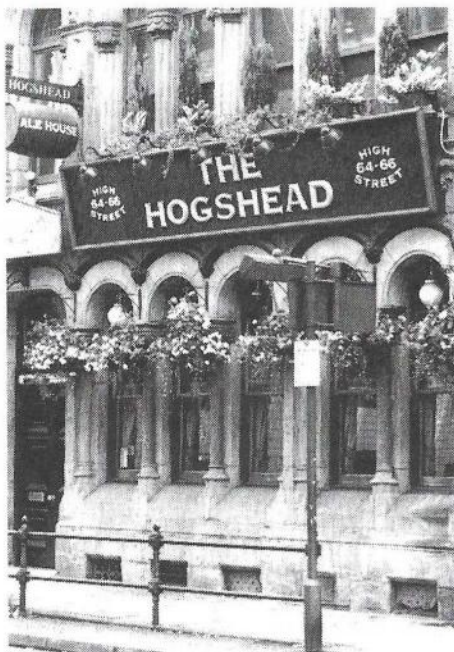
## Big pubs

*Leo King*

I have been on the prowl around Manchester city centre in search of the largest 'original' pub. The result of my survey is that the **Hogshead** on High Street is the biggest.

There is a large L-shaped bar counter containing twelve handpumps, plus many of those brightly-illuminated things dispensing the insipid stuff. The spotlessly clean cellar is large and like a dungeon and the vast area tends to baffle visitors who go down there for the first time. A map and a compass would be useful for finding your way out.

Way back in the pub's Chesters days it was called the Wheatsheaf and it was quite a rough place, with sawdust on the vault floor. Before the interior was opened out, the vault was on the right, there was a long, wide corridor and the snug and a large music room were on the left. Whitbread transformed the pub into Bensons - overdone in a kind of American style - I never liked it. Then it became the Hogshead and has been successful ever since.



There are now plenty of big pubs in the city centre, but not all were pubs to begin with:

**Yates's**, Portland Street: former British Gas offices.

**Wetherspoons**, Piccadilly: former Halford's cycle shop.

**Ape & Apple**, John Dalton Street: former offices.

**Goose on Piccadilly**: former offices and shops.

**Moon Under Water** (Wetherspoons), Deansgate - very big, but it used to be the Deansgate Cinema. And what a beautiful cinema it was!

**Rain Bar**, Great Bridgewater Street: former factory.

**Crown & Anchor**, Cateaton Street - quite big, but part of the building was once a butcher's shop and then a bookshop.

**Rothwell's**, Pall Mall; former bank.

## Cycloheximide corner

*Dave Crookell*

According to an article in a recent edition of *New Scientist* (24 June), a potential crisis is looming for the brewing industry owing to the shortage of a fungicide antibiotic vital for checking the quality of yeast. The substance - cycloheximide - is added to samples of yeast to test for troublesome acetic-acid-producing bacteria.

The sole right to manufacture cycloheximide is held by a Japanese chemical company, Tanabe Seiyaku, but they do not make the stuff and stocks are dwindling fast. Suppliers have hiked prices for their remaining stocks from as little as £25 per gram before the crisis to as much as £1,000 per gram now.

A spokesman for Brewing Research International of Nutfield, Surrey, said that the chemical had become the cornerstone of brewing microbiology with no known substitute and to avert the crisis they are launching a research task force to find alternatives. He added that if stocks ran out altogether, some foul-tasting beer could theoretically reach customers, but a more likely scenario would be that the industry would have to ditch vast quantities of beer.

I can think of one or two pubs that would try to flog it off cheap!

## Robinsons Seasonal

Robinsons of Stockport are following the trend set by Hydes and Lees and have ventured into the field of seasonal ales. Their first offering, *Whistling Will*, is a 4% bitter, apparently named after a local nineteenth century eccentric and is described as a summer ale with a smooth, clean and refreshing palate, slightly sweeter and less hoppy than best bitter.

The beer is on sale at the **Castle** in Manchester and has also been seen at the GBG-listed **Black Horse** in Denshaw.

## Pump clip sale

On Saturday 9th September there will be pump clip sales in aid of local charities at the **Kings Arms**, Bloom Street, Salford and the **Queens Arms**, Honey Street, Cheetham.

The **Kings Arms** sale, from 12 noon to 3.00pm, will be helped along by the Rev Robert Bracegirdle and proceeds will go to the Ordsall Community Trust. The **Queens Arms** sale starts at 3.30pm and the money will go to Francis House.

## No Bull

Bellway Homes plan to build apartments on the site of the Old Bull in Burnage.



## Notes from Irlam

*Sean Kilgarriff*

At the **White Lion**, Grays bitter (£1.15) on handpump has been joined by Grays Super Smooth. Same price, same barrel, same beer? As an alternative, one can drink John Smiths Super Smooth for £1.10!

Across the road at the **Nags Head**, the John Willie Lees has gone. The etched windows still proclaim 'Real Ale' and no-one has got around to removing the J W Lees stickers which adorn the walls inside and out. I'm sorry to say that the Green Label is keg, but at £1.05 it is the cheapest pint in Irlam.

The **Boathouse** still has cellar problems and the hand-drawn beers are warm. Guest beers have been reduced by 20p to £1.53 to shift them more quickly, but not quickly enough as the last pint I had there was 'going off'.

Across the Ship Canal in Warburton, the **Saracens Head** (Greenalls) recently had six handpumps with no beer in them. And to add insult to injury, the cheapest pint was John Smith's gassed-up stuff at £1.89!

## Saddleworth Museum

*presents its*

## 9th Beer Festival

Organized by The Friends of the Museum  
as a fund raising event in aid of the Museum  
with generous assistance from CAMRA

**Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd September 2000  
at the Museum, High Street, Uppermill**

Open Friday 7pm to 11pm,

Saturday 11.30am to 5pm & 7pm to 11pm

Friday night music - Roger Higgins Blues Band  
Saturday night music - Clive Yeadon & Jazz Trio  
(small admission charge)

**9 beers from 6 breweries**

**local to Saddleworth and surrounding area**  
(Saddleworth, Pictish, McGuinness, River Head,  
Phoenix, T Taylor)

## Letters

### Phew, what a Scorcher!

Sir - So far I have visited about sixty pubs on this year's J W Lees 'Passport Trail' and I have paid various amounts of cash (£1.30/£1.40/£1.50) per pint and slightly more for their seasonal ales. I was shocked at the price I was charged in the Rain Bar in Manchester for Lees Scorcher - £3.00 a pint! I had been in there in late April, trying the Malted Mayhem at a reasonable (considering the venue) £1.95 per pint. I don't think it reasonable for Lees to charge punters another £1.05 for the Scorcher. Needless to say, my wife and I finished our beers and left. We wandered around the corner to Hydes' Grey Horse and had two pints of bitter for £3.16.

Is this £3.00 a pint an exception or a rule? Does anybody know of Scorcher costing more?

*Concerned beer drinker*

### Uncle Igor corner

Sir - In the May issue of What's Doing I noticed that your correspondent Glyn Kendrick was asking about Uncle Igor. I apologise for the late response, but I am sure you will appreciate that What's Doing arrives down here in Cardiff via all sorts of routes and is not always hot off the press when it does.

Anyway, Uncle Igor was a massive 21% dark beer. It may even have been 23%; the brewer was aiming for a world record although I don't think he actually got there. It came from the now defunct Ross Brewhouse in Bristol. They would brew Uncle Igor for the winter only and once the small brew length had been drunk, that was it until the next year. As far as I know, it did not usually travel very far beyond the Bristol area, although it did get to the other Ross brewpub in Newport, Gwent (also now defunct).

Most people would not recognise Uncle Igor as a beer because it had all the characteristics of a sherry. It was sold at £1.50 a nip which is equivalent to £9.00 a pint. And that was in 1995! I have to admit to trying the beer on one or two occasions and I also recall being part of a discussion on the possible ramifications if we featured it at our beer festival. We decided that we would feature Uncle Igor, the beer was rationed but it soon got drunk and nobody overdid it.

The Ross Brewhouse premises are now used as a club selling only keg beers and the brewing plant has gone to a new home, I'm not sure where.

*Brian Francis*

### Singeing Bridge

Most of the closed and boarded Swinging Bridge on Trafford Boulevard was damaged by fire recently. It can be assumed that demolition will follow.



## Home and Away

with Daddy Bell

*They used to brew there... but it's all over now*

There's not much point now trying to give a blow-by-blow account of the débâcle of **Bridgewater Ales**, at least in its present or most recent form. Suffice it to say that Richard and Danny are now working for the Phoenix Brewery, where they have already proved their worth to Tony Allen. There have been hints that brewing may resume at 142 Chapel Street; there have also been hints that Bridgewater-style ales may yet be forthcoming from Phoenix. Meanwhile, all we can do is be thankful for the memories of the brief return of commercial brewing to Salford, and wish well to Richard and Danny (yes, and to Ken) in their new enterprises.

## Cumbria

If it's mid-July, it must be Cumbria. One could, if new to the area, take as one's starting point the latest (1999) edition of *The Concise Guide to Lakeland and Furness Pubs*. But it seems unevenly revised: perhaps the hard-pressed local CAMRA branches could do with more input than from non-resident but much-travelled members from elsewhere?

That said, let me begin at the **Burnmoor Inn**. Its signage still suggests a Jennings bias or dominance, but under Harry and Paddington Berger the range of ales continues to increase, with the addition of Black Sheep (including the 5% Boot Loosener - aka Yorkshire Square Ale) and Barnegates beers. The spice cupboard has gone, since a door has been created to give access to a much-needed residents' (non-smoking) lounge.



One's pleasure at being back at the Burnmoor is tempered by sadness at the news of the death of its long-time landlord, Tony Foster, a redoubtable gentleman who looked the archetypal 'mine host'. Shepherd, drystone waller, gardener, innkeeper and raconteur, he embodied much of the best of the local traditions and spirit.

A propos the *Concise Guide*, take with more than a pinch of salt its working definition of 'summer' as 'roughly Easter to Autumn half-term'. At Boot, the Burnmoor, the Poachers Bar and apparently the

Woolpack may have gone in for all-day opening for such an extended period, but elsewhere 'summer' means 'the inside of August, if you're lucky'.

Best value in beer, as far as prices go, is probably still to be found down by the Duddon, with the Foxfield/Tigertops beers and other micro products at the **Prince of Wales** at Foxfield, and at the **Manor Arms** in Broughton-in-Furness, where Yates bitter is £1.50 per pint and Coniston Bluebird is decidedly cheaper than at its point of origin.

I'm writing outside the **Screes** at Nether Wasdale, enjoying a second pint of Yates bitter and contemplating the long haul back to base over Irton Fell. It turns out that the only lunchtime the Screes is open is Saturday, though there's a chance Thursday and Friday may be included over the next few weeks. I shall have to revise several walking and cycling schedules to take account of this unwelcome deprivation.

Still, I am greeted as a long-lost friend here as elsewhere (though at the Burnmoor they enquired after the bicycle's health before my own).

After a refreshing dip in the River Esk at Ford Bridge this afternoon, I walked up to the **King George IV** on the edge of Eskdale Green and (just for a change) asked for a pint of Theakstons Cool Cask instead of my usual Jennings Cumberland Ale. What a mistake! The beer was not without flavour (though I've tasted better from the Esk itself) but it was too sweet, almost headless, and had too much of a chill haze to be a reliable way of weaning lager-drinkers on to real ale. For anyone who likes a pint to be crystal clear from first pull to last sip, this was a definite disappointment. The Yates I'm drinking at the moment, however, has everything to commend it... but it must be the last for today.

## Independents' Day Treasure Hunt

About a dozen teams took part in a well-organised pub hunt on 1st July, thanks to North Manchester CAMRA and last year's winners, the Raving Mad Bastards. This year's winning team was the Castle Knights, comprising Elizabeth, Mark, Kath and Jane.





## Britannia sunk

The long-closed Britannia (ex Wilsons, *below*), the single-storey pub on Newton Street, Manchester, has been demolished. Prior to closure it had periods as the Frog & Bucket and latterly Tommy Ducks' Whisky Bar.



## Blackley happenings

Mercury's **Pikefold** has had the boards removed and is trading again - keg only, of course.

Another keg outlet, the **Red Lion** on Rochdale Road, is closed for what is reported to be a major revamp - the roof tiles are already off! Apparently the management wants to see a sea-change in the type of clientele the pub attracts. Sounds good, but don't get your hopes up.

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## Tony Longmire

One of Bolton's popular landlords, Tony Longmire, died on 29th June after a short illness. Tony and his wife Lilian had run the Sweet Green Tavern for thirteen years. He served in the Merchant Navy before becoming catering manager at the local evening paper and then taking the pub. He was also the chairman of the Bolton Licensees' Alliance.

The Sweet Green Tavern is a popular town centre real ale venue, which a few years ago was Bolton CAMRA's Pub of the Year. Mrs Longmire will continue running the pub in Tony's memory.

## Rupert

Fiona had arrived late at Ebenezer Drab's memorial service. Apparently, she'd been to Strangleways to visit Bunty on the way. We'd not seen her since the evening of the alien abduction revelation and still knew little of their adventure. We had to contain our curiosity until the service had finished, we'd expressed our condolences to young Mr Perry and were assembled in the Crown Brewery Tap for a pint or so of Drabs.

We began politely with questions about Bunty's wellbeing. He was in rude health and was due to appear in court later in August. We kept suggestions of Martian Aids to ourselves, rather than risk Fiona's wrath. With these preliminaries out of the way, it was time to return to the glimpse into the future which Fiona and Bunty had experienced.

They had indeed visited Ratty's and many more hostelrys, some familiar and some not. By 2020 the demise of inner city taverns was complete. All of Slimeley and Vile Splatting and much of central Slumley were utter deserts. All the breweries were owned by mega global outfits and Brobdingnags had closed. Ben Chestnut was on his fourteenth microbrewery

venture. Chains led by Eunuchramforks were to the fore. Central Grotley was wall-to-wall minimalist café bars with strange-sounding names and amber nectar from the wickets was £10 for a half litre in a dwindling number of outlets frequented by an ageing population of atavistic aficionados.

Many of the Campaign stalwarts famous today had shuffled off with cirrhosis or Alzheimers and the Campaign branch system had died with them. Lord Pratt of St Allballs, who had been raised to the peerage by Sir Michael Portillo, was still writing coffee table books and opining in pages of posher papers. *What's Doing* had celebrated its 45th birthday and I was delighted to learn that my column was still intact. Whether it was ghosted or not, I was unable to discover.

Fiona painted a picture of a future which in many ways seemed inevitable. Given the loss of belly fire it may be difficult to avoid that doom-laden scenario. Fiona was pessimistic about our chances to influence events in a more favourable way. I just hope that if she or Bunty is abducted again, they ask to be transported to an alternative and more auspicious future. Who knows? What they experienced may be the best we can hope for.

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## Pendle Riches

The Hogshead on High Street in Manchester held a single brewery beer festival featuring Moorhouses of Burnley, but check out the prices: Black Cat Mild at £1.87 a pint, Premier Bitter at £1.91 a pint, Pride of Pendle at £1.96 a pint and - wait for it - Pendle Witch at £2.31 a pint. It hardly encourages people to drink the stuff.



# Branch Diary

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tue 1 Aug 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Arthur Inn, Bolton Road, Bury  
Sat 12 Aug, Classic Lancashire Pubs Coach Trip. Details from Branch  
Contact

Sun 27 Aug, Saddleworth Rushbearing. Details from Branch Contact  
Tue 29 Aug 8.30pm, Committee/What's Doing Collation/Bury Beer  
Festival Organisation Meeting, Two Tubs, The Wylde, Bury  
*Contact: Peter Alexander 0113 232 4023(w), 0161 655 4002 (h)*  
*email: P.Alexander@Virgin.net*

## **North Manchester**

Wed 2 Aug 8pm, Social, Ape & Apple, John Dalton Street,  
Manchester

Wed 9 Aug, Chapel Street Crawl. Black Lion (corner Blackfriars  
Street) 7pm, Mark Addy 8pm, Old Nelson 9.30pm

Wed 23 Aug 8pm, Hare & Hounds, Shudehill (upstairs). Meeting to  
plan new Manchester Pub Guide.

Tues 29 Aug 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey  
Street

Wed 30 Aug 8pm, Social, Welcome, Robert Hall Street, Salford

Wed 6 Sept 8pm, Social, White Lion, Worsley Road, Swinton

Wed 13 Sept. Proposed club social. details next month.

*Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

## **Wigan**

Thur 10th Aug, Trip to Pictish Brewery, Rochdale. Coach departs  
from the Orwell, Wigan Pier, 7pm. Cash up front. Contact Deano on  
01942 323034

Sun 13th Aug 1pm, Branch Meeting, Bowling Green, Wigan Lane,  
Swinley; followed by barbecue

Wed 23rd Aug 8pm, Pub of the Year presentation, Bold Hotel,  
Poolstock Lane, Poolstock

Thur 7th Sept, Branch Social at Railway Tavern, Hoscarr (by the  
station on the Manchester-Southport line). Train leaves Wigan  
Wallgate 19.09, returns 22.47

*Contact: John Barlow (01257) 426464 (w), 427595 (h)*  
*email john@misltd.co.uk*

## **South East Lancs**

Thur 10 Aug 8pm, Branch Meeting & Social, Musketeer, Lord Street,  
Leigh

*Contact: Mike Thomas 01942 817335*

*Dave and Sue welcome you to*  
**THE QUEENS ARMS**  
HONEY STREET, CHEETHAM

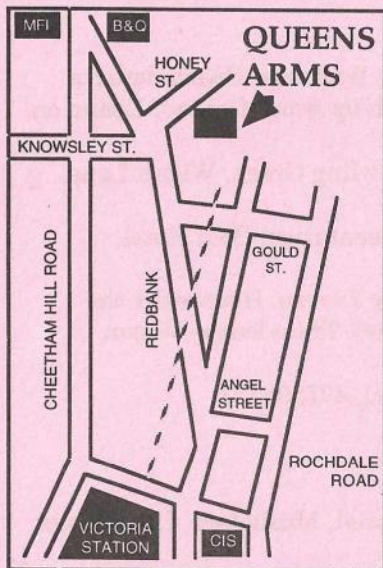
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