

30p

# What's Doing

APRIL 2001



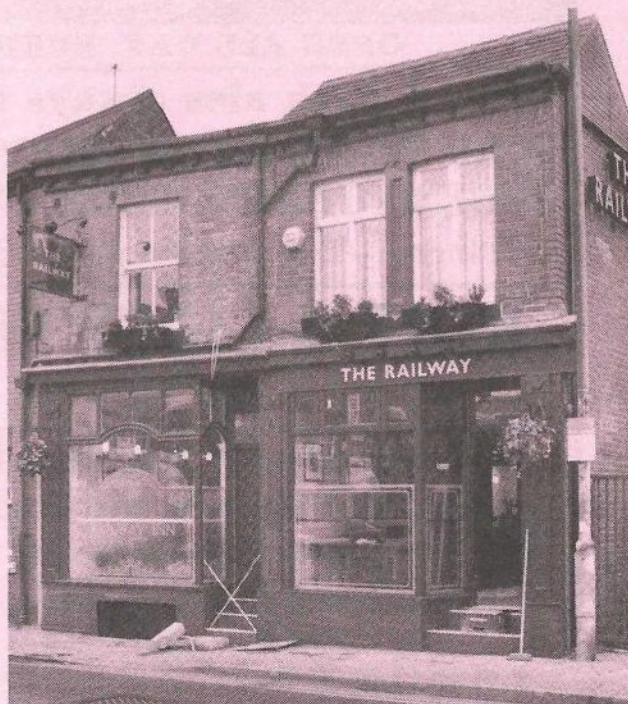
The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## NEW PUB FOR HOLTS

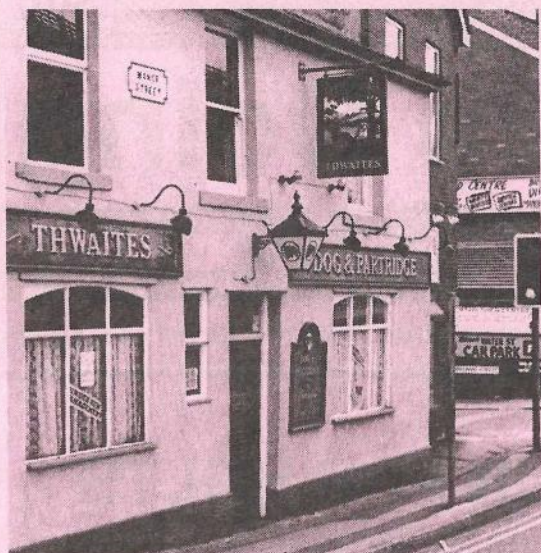
Holts opened their latest outlet, the Railway in West Didsbury, on 20th March and the event marked a significant departure from the usual Joseph Holt way of doing things. For a start, the Railway is not a big pub and the building does not have the regular Holts signage. Inside, the beer prices are higher than usual - £1.35 for bitter and £1.27 for mild - and there is guest beer - Pendle Witch from Moorhouses, at £2 a pint. Also on sale is the brewery's new 'smooth cask lager', Blonde Beer, at £1.53.

When asked if this was the thin end of the wedge - different prices in different outlets - a Holts spokesperson said, 'Definitely not.' The Railway is a one-off and because of its small size 'an extended product range has been approved to ensure its success.'

The Railway, run by Karen Daniels and Peter Gregory, is on Lapwing Lane, just off Burton Road.







## Angus reunited with Dog

On 17th March Angus Crompton returned to the Dog & Partridge on Manor Street in Bolton, following the departure of Holly Caulfield to pastures new.

It was Angus who a few years ago brought the old Dog back to life again as a Thwaites real ale pub, assisted by several Bolton CAMRA branch members.

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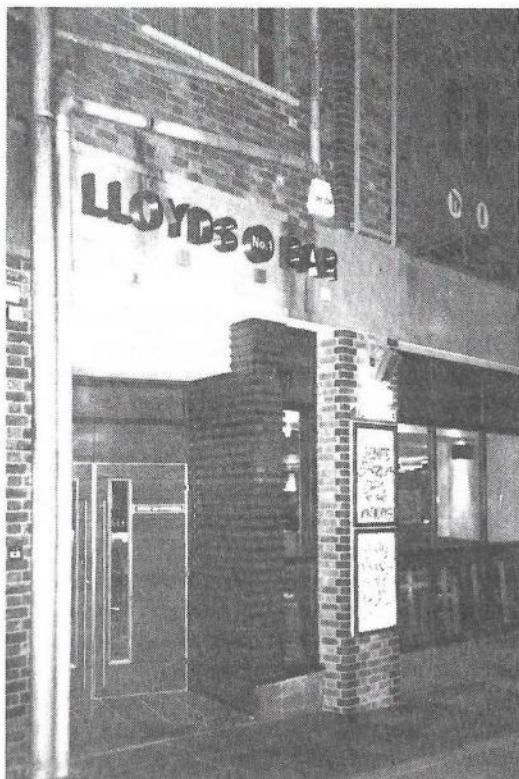
*Buffets or hot meals provided on request*

**T.V. and Games Room** open for darts, bar billiards and table football

*Beer Garden*

### JDW No.3

Wetherspoons opened their third city centre pub on 21st March. Styled as a Lloyds No.1 Cafe Bar, it is situated in the Printworks entertainment complex on Dantzic Street. Apart from piped music, there isn't much difference between a Lloyds and the usual Wetherspoon set-up. This one is on two floors and the contemporary decor includes an attractive water feature - a cascade down sloping glass under their main stairs. Note also the interesting 'pudding bowl' sinks in the toilets.



There are bars on both floors (the upper one is a lot smaller) and the beers are Theakstons BB, Boddies, Bombardier, Landlord, Brains SA and Cotleigh Osprey, all at a very keen £1.29. At that sort of price, the other Printworks tenants had better look out or lose custom! Lloyds No.1 may even have an effect on pubs like the Hogshead, Old Wellington, Hare & Hounds and others in the Northern Quarter.

### White Lion

Following on from the recent extension of the GBG-listed White Lion in Swinton (*WD Jan*), several other changes have been made. Opening times are now 12 till 11.00 (10.30 Sunday) and home cooked food is available 12-2pm and 5-7pm, Monday to Saturday; 12-7pm Sundays, with families welcome every day until 7pm. Robinsons seasonal ales are now available and the Old Stockport has been replaced by Hartleys XB. There is a quiz night on Wednesdays.

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Contributors to this issue: Stewart Revell, Dave White, Steve Smith, Paul Warbrick, Rob Magee, Roger Hall, Daddy Bell, Paul Roberts, Dave White, Mark McConachie, Ian Kenny, Jim Bracken

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## In the City

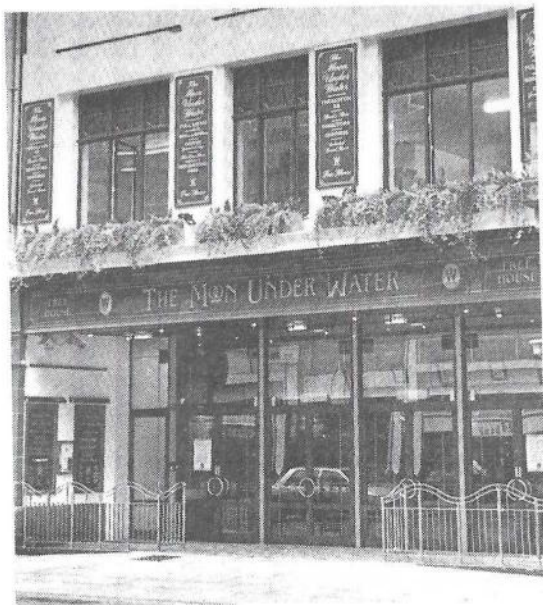
*Trotter's tour continues...*

Having disembarked from the train at Salford Central I walked over the bridge and first stop was the **Bridge Street Tavern**. The entrance hallway opens into the elevated part; the bar and the rest of the open-aspect pub are down a couple of steps. The Tavern is favoured by office and shopworker types at lunchtimes and early evenings and there is a food service area at the end of the bar. The single real ale is Theakstons Best Bitter.

Across Bridge Street in Southgate is **Mulligans** - a taste of Ireland right in the centre of Manchester - selling one real ale, Jennings Cumberland, which is always a good drink. The pub is open-plan, with a couple of partitioned seating areas facing the bar, and the walls are decorated with old photos of Dublin and even train/bus tickets in a frame. Apparently the Guinness is served 'the Irish way'. When you use the toilets, ensure you go through the correct door as the name plates are in Irish.

Next, the **Moon Under Water** at the top of Deansgate. This was the Deansgate Cinema until 1959, when ABC took over and it became the ABC Cinema. After being closed for several years, the building was transformed by Wetherspoons into one of its cavernous ale houses. The balcony has drinking booths down the left side and on the right is a huge stained glass representation of the pub's name - a moon reflected in water. Note the original art deco ceiling. The beers are

the typical Wetherspoon range and I sampled one from the Marlow Rebellion stable, the 4.3% Overdraught.



Walking down Deansgate and turning up Brazennose Street brings one to the **Rising Sun** facing Lincoln Square. Owing to the location, the pub attracts an office/business clientele by day and early evening. The lounge area is at the front, the bar at the far end. Cask ales are Boddies, Lees bitter and Robinsons bitter.

Going up to Albert Square, crossing the John Dalton/Princess/Cross Street junction and turning up Tib Lane, you come to the **Town Hall Tavern**. This is an interesting, split-level pub with separate drinking areas. I quite like the wood and glass panelled 'snugs' that face the bar, one with leather sofas. The pub is in the shadow of the Town Hall in Albert Square, but it was named after the earlier building on King Street which is shown in photos on the walls. The handpumped ales are Boddies, Pedigree and Lees, and there is Hoegaarden.

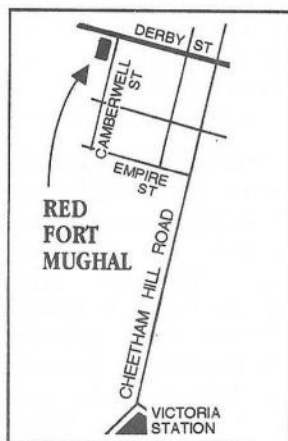
Round in Spring Gardens is **Rothwells**, the spacious former banking hall with marble walls and pillars and magnificent twin-domed ceiling. If you look at the ceiling long enough, you can see the stars. (No, I wasn't pissed.) Banks's bitter (£1.25) and Pedigree are served from the large horseshoe bar. Rothwells caters for the business types who do the business lunch or chill out in the Chesterfields after a hard day at the office.

Rothwells and the Town Hall Tavern are worth visiting before they are turned into trendy bars or more offices which are already cluttering the city centre.

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### Opening hours:

Mon-Fri: 11-3pm, 7-11pm  
Sat: 7-11pm  
Sun: 11-4pm, 7-11pm





## Festival fun

*with Daddy Bell*

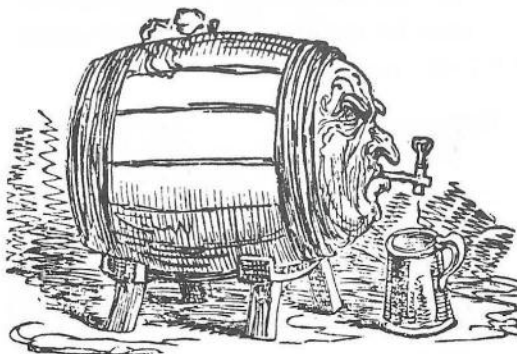
The onset of the spring beer festival season, together with repeated visits to pubs shortlisted for possible inclusion in the 2002 Good Beer Guide, has proved both stretching and satisfying. Even so, I didn't get to Bradford or Leeds, to Fleetwood or Dublin or Foxfield. Those who did have brought back reports of more or less modified rapture, while I had to

confine myself to two visits to the semi-subterranean extravaganza in Liverpool and a Saturday lunchtime at Wigan.

Nothing can match the serried ranks of casks stretching into the distance in Lutyens' crypt, like a chapter of canons in choir. (The only conceivable rival architecturally would be a Lutyens house with a Gertrude Jekyll garden.) The beer was unerringly very good, with the possible exception of a mild from Wicked Hathern. Best of all, for me, were the offerings from the twin breweries of Foxfield and Tigertops, especially the latter's very successful reproductions of a true Czech lager and a Belgian wheat beer.

Wigan was a good do as well, even if some of the novelties had been drunk up on the Friday. Having enjoyed Fernandes' 8.3% Triple Stout at Liverpool, I couldn't resist their Double 6 (6%) at Wigan, though I restricted myself to a discreet half (50p) instead of a recklessly valorous pint (£1). (It was apparently at this bargain price because the cask was in a corner where many drinkers had overlooked it.)

Otherwise, Salford has absorbed most of my attention. Lees GB mild has been particularly good in the **Welcome**, where Christine and Roger Ingham are now well established, with quiz nights started on Tuesdays. Beers from Durham Brewery seem almost as much a fixture as Navy and Brewers Gold in the **Kings Arms** in Bloom Street: Mike and Chris had White Silver (4%) on early in February, and there was a trio of Durham beers on St Patrick's Day, which enabled me to plumb again the depths of Dark Secret.



Inspired by Grogard's contribution to March's *What's Doing*, I headed for the **Buck & Union** in Oldham on 3rd March. Not only was I warmly welcomed by Tony and Linda and given a thorough tour of the premises, but I made the acquaintance of the licensee of Porter's **Ashton Arms**, to which we made our way for an extended session of cheering Sunshine. Two tremendous pubs, both wonderfully run. Don't miss them. (And, as on this occasion, you may find the shining hour still further improved by the appearance of Grogard himself.)



Finally (almost) comes news of two of Rupert's favourite people. Ben Chestnut did a week's stint as a kitchen pixie at the **Crescent**, and we were left speechless by a close encounter with Jamie Frotter at the Wigan Beer Festival. Two irrepressible and incorrigible characters: where would we be (and certainly where would Rupert be) without them?

I write this tailpiece from the **Beer House**, where Ian Casson's Spring Beer Week has just opened to great acclaim. Sulwath John Paul Jones and Oakleaf (Gosport) Nuptu'Ale have proved safe starters, but there are at least eight others on already to which I need to give attention. Will they be as good as the Boggart Angel Hill (4.2%) I met in the **Crescent** the other day? I thought it Mark Dade's best so far, the most aromatically spicy of his own range.





## 2001 - The Road to Wigan Beer

Yes, it's arrived at last. The guide covers all the pubs in the Wigan CAMRA branch area (nearly 300), including Ashton - in - Makerfield, Billinge, Hindley, Pemberton and Standish. Thirty-two pages of information, plus photographs, statistics and a town centre map. If you want to cross the desert with confidence, send £1.50 and a stamped addressed A5 envelope to 79 Hodges Street, Wigan WN6 7JD. Cheques made payable to 'Wigan Camra'.

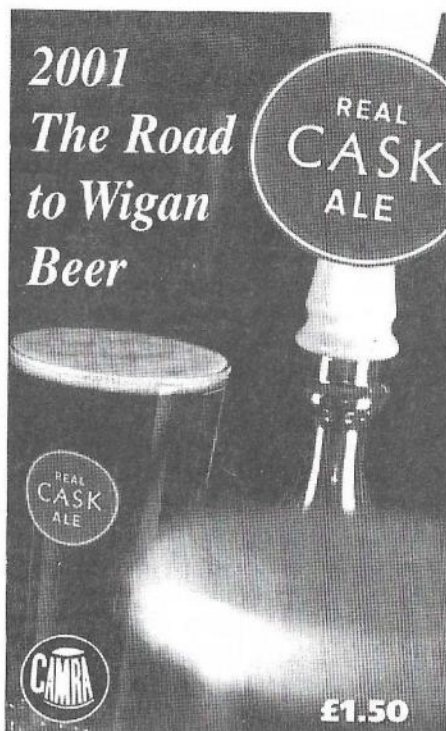
## Paulaner to reach the parts...

*Paul Roberts*

In a massive marketing enterprise, Munich's largest brewery, Paulaner, has joined forces with Europe's largest brewery, Heineken. Apart from a small presence in the USA, Paulaner has very few outlets outside Bavaria. Heineken, on the other hand, sells in 170 countries around the world. It seems likely that Paulaner Weißbier will be the product which is promoted most in the overseas markets, which should mean it will be widely available in the UK. Perhaps Paulaner's famous Doppelbock, the 7.5% Salvator, will also be promoted.



Unfortunately for the poor Bavarians, Heineken will be sold in all Paulaner pubs, but I can't see too many of them opting for the Amsterdam-produced beer. Paulaner insist that their present brewery can cope with the expected huge upturn in demand and that there is no need to move to a new site in Riem - a rumour which has been circulating for the past ten years. It was only a couple of years ago that Paulaner closed and demolished the Hacker brewery and transferred production to the main Paulaner plant at Nockherberg.





## Red is for real

Another of Mark Dade's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery beers was spotted during the Bar Fringe Red Ale Fest. His Darkside appeared to be well received and replaced the Boggart Bitter for a short time.

Other 'red' ales included Dwan's Rich Ruby and Sarah Hughes' 6% Dark Ruby Mild. The latter was sold in Manchester at £2.10 a pint over four years ago; this year at the Bar Fringe it was £1.90.

## Top brew

Last November Delphi Research interviewed 643 beer drinkers in the Greater Manchester area. They found that J W Lees was the favourite beer, named by 32% of respondents. John Smiths came second (21%) and Boddingtons third (19%).

The survey also found that there has been little change in the drinking habits of the region over the last five years. Evening drinking is still more popular than daytime drinking and younger drinkers, particularly 18-24-year-olds, are the most frequent pub goers.

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## Wigan and district

Dave White

It is a fact of life that local pub guides are out-of-date before they are printed, and the dynamic new compendium 2001 - **The Road to Wigan Beer** is, alas, no exception, **The Fox & Goose**, Wigan Lane, Swinley (*below*), has had a partition put in, ending its period as an open-plan pub. Since publication, there has been a real ale gain in the **Clarence Hotel** (aka **Harry's Bar**) which now serves Jennings mild and bitter. The Castle Brewery tried the stuff in the Wallgate pub when they took over a year or two ago, but it didn't last. Better luck this time, then.

Several pub refurbishments have been taking place recently, one such hostelry being the **Bulls Head Hotel**, Southworth Road, Newton-le-Willows. The South Lancs CAMRA branch was formed in this pub back in January 1974, and according to a founder member, the refurb is not entirely for the better. Traditional ale remains, however, in the shape of Tetley bitter and a guest beer from the Coach House Brewery, and there is now also a restaurant.

The **Spinners Arms** on Atherton Road, Hindley Green, has also been renovated, and the interior is certainly an improvement. The pub remains, however, on Burtonwood smoothflow. Elsewhere, the **Stag** at Orrell Post has closed whilst work is in progress, and the word is out that the **Inn Between**, Appley Lane South, Appley Bridge, will eventually reopen as a restaurant.

Finally, a big thank-you to everyone who helped to make the Fourteenth Wigan Beer Festival the great success it was. Scratchers and tickers may be interested to know that Castle Rock's Snowwhite was voted Beer of the Festival, and a trip to the brewery is planned for later this year.





## Letters

### Out of time

Sir - Just when did Trotter (WD March) visit the Hare & Hounds on Shudehill? I compiled a report some months ago and distinctly stated that the mild had been withdrawn owing to poor sales.

I wander lonely as a beer drinker...

*Steve Smith*

### Road Rage (2)

Sir - Old Tom (WD March) seems to be shooting the messenger. I don't like the closure of pubs any more than he does, but it's happening so we need to make the best of a bad job. I don't know why Tom has to be so disingenuous. He does read the *Guardian* and his pretend working class persona is an affectation. The only working class trait he displays is the propensity to moan about his fate without getting off his arse and doing something about it. When Tom's local, where he played dominoes, was turned into a middle class noshery, did Tom man the barricades? Did he heck.

*Roger Hall*

### Bile

Sir - I have just seen February's Rupert column, in which he compares himself to Auberon Waugh. At least Waugh had style as well as bile.

*Rhys P Jones*

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### Marble news

New brewer James Campbell at the Marble Brewery has acquired all of this year's crop of Belgian organic Goldings hops. He has also sourced some New Zealand Pacific Gem for use in future beers. A new recipe ginger beer (around 4.5%) should be making an appearance in the coming months.

James is looking for a delivery driver as he does not hold a driving licence. For details contact him at the brewery on 0161 819 2694.



## Roving round Ripponden

*Steve Smith goes to West Yorkshire again...*

I began in the centre of Ripponden with a visit to the reopened **Junction**. It still has its prominent Boddingtons insignia and green canopies, while inside the two rooms are neatly furnished in wood and stone. There are good views across the valley from the back windows of the main opened-out bar room. The pub was selling two real ales, Boddingtons and Black Sheep bitters.

Journeying eastwards and uphill, I came to the adjoining village of Barkisland, which has three interesting pubs. The **Fleece** on Elland Road, Ripponden Bank, is part of a chain of pubs which includes the Harwood and Pannal and the Moorings at Sowerby Bridge. The Fleece is a hillside hostelry with a cobbled forecourt and an interior set on different levels. The upstairs rooms are for dining and accommodation, whilst downstairs there is an island bar overseeing a main room modernised in 'grotto' style in timber and stone.

It's all designed to attract the younger end of the market, but there is an innovative beer range, with a house offering called Bootleggers Ale (4.2% from Moonshine) and the likes of Ruddles County, draught Bass and Black Sheep Bitter. A room to the right appears to be for television fans.

A ten minute walk and a short detour along Scammonden Road brought me to the **New Rock Inn**, shown on my map as the **Entourage Tavern**, which was its name for a brief spell. An isolated building, the pub caters for a more mature clientele. There are two rooms, one for pool and a main bar room mostly given over to diners. It was rather busy, so I chose to sit at the bar, where handpumps dispensed Moorhouses Pride of Pendle and Black Sheep Bitter. A third guest beer is usually available.

I was here informed that the next pub marked on my map, the **Northfield**, closed down some time ago. So it was on to the far end of the village for the **Griffin**, a terraced Jennings acquisition down on Stainland Road. Going through the narrow doorway and down a step, I entered a comfortable bar room selling bitter, Cumberland Ale and one of Jennings' guest beers (the likes of Sneck Lifter or Cross Buttock). Black Sheep bitter was a guest beer. The pub has two other rooms which are used for dining.

Catching a local bus back to the centre of Ripponden gave me time to pop into the **Old Bridge Inn** for a pint of Taylors Golden Best. The ubiquitous Black Sheep is available here too, but in the form of the Special, not the bitter. Some of the rooms appear to have been spruced up a little and the pub is a 2001 GBG entry.



## John Willie's Big Green Millennium Book

J W Lees have produced a limited edition book of photographs to celebrate the company's 172-year history and its pubs in Millennium Year. 'A Day in the Life of J W Lees' runs to 190 pages and contains photographs of all the pubs in England, Wales and France, staff at the brewery, and copies of those recent adverts featuring Samantha the barmaid and her friends.



In launching the book, joint managing director William Lees-Jones said, 'We wanted to create a snapshot of life at the turn of the century as a pictorial record of the people who have shaped J W Lees and contributed to our success as an independent and local brewery in a world of big breweries and pub owning companies. As the 25th largest brewery company in the UK, it is our independence that is our greatest strength, which we will continue to reinforce as we embark on the next thousand years.'

Some copies of 'A Day in the Life of J W Lees' have been reserved for *What's Doing* readers. To apply for a free copy, write to David Nuttall at J W Lees, Greengate Brewery, Middleton Junction, Manchester M24 2AX.



## Duty Bound

Ian Kenny

So Gordon Brown declined to increase beer duty in the March budget. Should we be grateful for this decision or should we rue the fact that Britain's beer drinkers continue to pay one of the highest rates in the European Union? If the fuel lobby have a grievance over their rates of duty, then that of the beer drinker is even more acute.

Britain's drinkers are paying nearly **seven** times more duty than the French; the duty on diesel in the UK is only double that in France. The beer duty gap is more than two-and-a-half times the 12p gap on petrol and 20% more than the 24p difference on diesel. No wonder that innumerable day trippers visit Calais to load up their vans with beer for 'personal use' and that a considerable amount of this beer is later sold illegally.

The Treasury takes around 34p a pint in beer duty (the equivalent charge in France is 5p) and when VAT is added, 33% of the price of a pint is taken in tax. That's almost 40p of the price of a pint of Holts bitter.

In Germany and Spain, drinkers pay only 3p a pint in beer duty and the European average is 13p a pint, so we are paying two-and-a-half times the average. The Chancellor collects more than £5 billion a year in beer taxes, the equivalent of £4.35 a week from every beer drinker in the UK.

Postscript: Carlsberg-Tetley announced in March that they were increasing the price of a pint of bitter by 5p to £1.69. They don't do themselves any favours, do they?

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## Closed

The Bank of England (Whitbread) on Pollard Street, (*right*) at the rear of the former Ancoats Hospital, is closed and boarded up. Yet another loss to the area's diminishing pub stock.

In Salford, the Braziers Arms (*WD last month*) is up for sale for £40,000





## The sad story of Boddingtons

*Jim Bracken*

Nowadays, nobody would go out of their way to drink Boddingtons, an insipid national brand, 'spoilt by a cloying sweetness', according to the 2001 Good Beer Guide. It is ever more frequently served as a nitrokeg, rather than in cask form. It is a standard sight on supermarket shelves as a canned beer. Boddingtons was once a legendary beer, only available in the Manchester area, and now it is just a minor subsidiary of Interbrew, a global company which 'has a ruthless track record of closing plants and disposing of brands'.

The Strangeways Brewery was founded in 1778. Henry Boddington (*below*) joined the firm in 1833 and twenty years later he was the proprietor. When he retired a private company was formed, with three of his sons as partners. In 1888 this became a public company, Henry Boddington & Co Ltd, with Henry Boddington junior as the first chairman.

Five successive generations of the family ran this company. The last of these was Ewart Boddington, who took over as chairman in 1970. Boddingtons could have disappeared in that year, for Allied Breweries had launched a takeover bid. But Ewart made an almost Churchillian speech to the shareholders, concluding with 'We don't need to be taken over. We brew jolly good beer already.' This saved the day and mercifully, Boddingtons retained its independence for another 19 years.

Later, Ewart wrote: 'In a world which is changing with such bewildering speed, there seems to be a yearning to "hang on" to those parts of our local scene which have remained traditional and steadfast. All of us, I am sure welcome, if not actively support, the many moves to safeguard the good things in our society and prevent them being swept away. Strangeways Brewery is now almost 200 years old and continues to brew traditional beer, albeit in very modern hygienic conditions, thus combining the merits of yesterday's skills with today's technology.'



In the mid-seventies, Boddingtons had 260 pubs, mainly concentrated in Greater Manchester and North East Cheshire, and all of them sold real ale. The estate stretched from Crewe in the

south to Carnforth in the north. You could not buy Boddingtons outside that area.

They brewed three beers: a dark and tasty mild (1033 og), the renowned pale straw coloured bitter (1035) and a smooth and mellow, dark strong ale (1063). This was only sold in half pints in winter. But it was for their bitter that Boddingtons were most famous - a very distinctive, hoppy and bitter beer that was an acquired taste. It tasted like a much stronger beer and whoever wrote the notes in CAMRA's 1975 Good Beer Guide was taken in by this, describing Boddingtons as one of the strongest (by alcohol volume) in Britain. This was corrected the following year, when for the first time brewers revealed the strength of their beers, and the description in the 1976 guide was 'exceptionally bitter'.

I first became acquainted with Boddingtons in 1971, when I took up a job in Sale and a colleague took me to the Rope & Anchor, a Boddingtons pub near Altrincham. I was immediately hooked! I soon found out that there was a Boddingtons pub in Sale - the Bridge - and I became a regular customer. It was then an unspoilt locals' pub, like

many Boddingtons houses. From then on, I sought out their pubs whenever I could.



Surprisingly, they only had two pubs in Manchester city centre: the Old Garratt and Cox's Bar (left). This small bar was absolutely packed at all times, with electric pumps coping with the fast and furious serving. It wasn't surprising it was busy - not only were the beers very good and the quality superb, but Boddingtons beer was also very cheap, at around 18p a pint in 1977, when prices were topping 30p down south.



In 1976 I had a rare privilege - I was taken on a tour of Boddingtons Brewery with Ewart Boddington as my guide. At that time, the company did not run brewery tours. After my visit, I asked Ewart if I could have some of his beer for a festival in the South of England. He agreed to ask his head brewer. In those days, the head brewer was all-powerful! The head brewer refused. His argument was that he did not want his beers sold anywhere outside their trading area, as he would have no control over how it would be looked after.

In the late seventies I worked in the South West and used to pine for my favourite tippie, so much so that one weekend in 1978 I caught a train to Manchester. I spent the evening in Cox's Bar, stayed the night in the Midland Hotel and returned to Somerset the next day. 1978 was the year that Boddingtons proudly celebrated their bi-centenary and brewed a special beer to commemorate the event.



But change was on its way. In 1982 the beer seemed to be losing its distinctive taste. The

Strong Ale was discontinued and Boddingtons took over the neighbouring Oldham Brewery. Three years later, they took over Higsons in Liverpool, who produced an excellent, hoppy bitter. Brewing continued at both sites until 1988, when Oldham was shut. Some months later, Ewart Boddington retired. For the first time in over a century, a member of the family did not succeed him. Instead, his place was taken by a man called Cassidy, who had been with Marks & Spencer and probably knew more about selling lingerie than he did about beer. It did not take long under his leadership before Boddingtons was sold down the river - and Higsons with it.

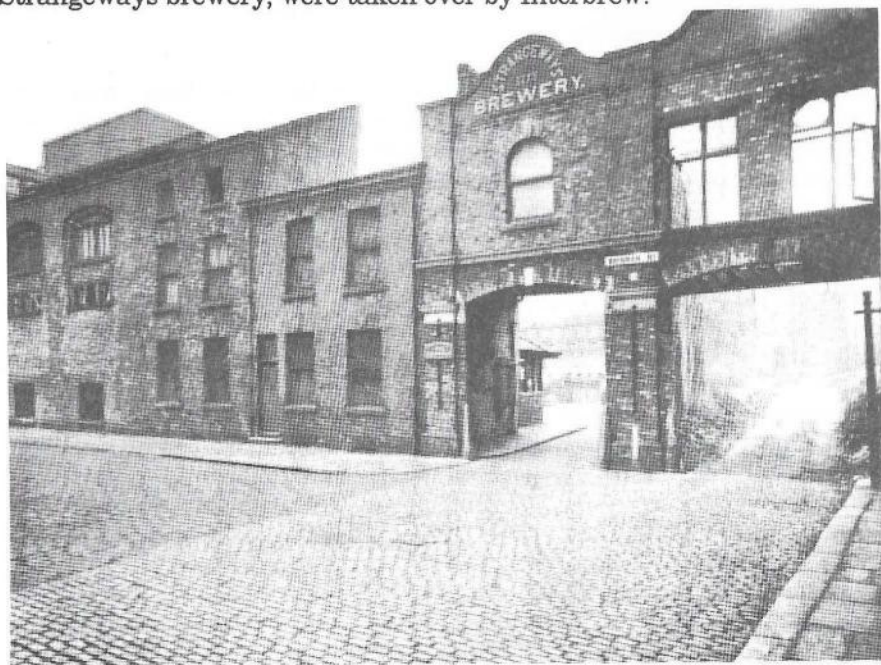
The announcement came over the news in autumn 1989. Boddingtons and Higsons breweries were to be sold to Whitbread for £50 million. Whitbread, the great axe-men of traditional breweries - no brewery was safe in their hands. By then, I was not so much concerned for Boddingtons, whose beers had continued to decline in quality, as I was for Higsons. It was obvious that Whitbread wanted Boddingtons for the name, having few brands with much credibility themselves. And so it proved. Within months of the takeover, it was announced that Higsons would close. Boddingtons bitter was suddenly a national brand, on sale all over England in Whitbread pubs. Boddingtons mild

was given no promotion and was later phased out, as were the emasculated copies of Higsons and Oldham beers.

Meanwhile, Boddingtons, shorn of the breweries, became the Boddington Pub Company and controlled all the pubs of their own estate, as well as those of Higsons and Oldham. They also went into the unlikely field of the nursing home industry. Numerous larger pubs were converted into a chain of restaurants, named after old Henry Boddington as 'Henry's Table'. And what of Cox's Bar and the Bridge in Sale? In 1993 I returned, to see what had become of them. Cox's had been enlarged and tarted up and, at 8.30 in the evening, was almost empty. The Bridge in Sale was unrecognisable; it had become an eating-house.

The Boddington Pub Company only lasted a few years. In 1996 Greenalls, who had closed down all their breweries, took them over. All the pubs became part of a vast estate known as Greenalls Inns. In 1999 the once proud Boddingtons name was removed from their former pubs, as Greenalls felt 'the time is right to flag up our own corporate image as a major retailer'.

Perhaps the time was right. But not for their flag. A few months after this announcement, Greenalls Inns were taken over by Scottish and Newcastle. Shortly afterwards, Whitbread, including their Strangeways brewery, were taken over by Interbrew.





## Now and Then

*Rob Magee*

No. 121

**Bell Ringers**

104 Yorkshire Street, Oldham

The photo shows a group of customers outside the Bell Ringers on Yorkshire Street, Oldham, ready for a morning drive. Their vehicle, a horse-drawn wagonette, is parked in the side street on the left and the driver is the gentleman in the top hat. Sarah Rhodes, the licensee, is no doubt one of the ladies standing at the back.



The Bell Ringers had been in the Rhodes family since the 1880s, when James Rhodes, a painter and decorator, purchased it from Nancy Hilton of Lumb, near Droylsden. Twenty years before that, the beerhouse was known as the Britannia and it was kept by a blacksmith called William Green.

James Rhodes made some alterations to the property, which originally had a back door opening on to Reed Street at the rear. He made some space at the back in order to create a yard, as required by public health by-laws, and in 1892 he was rewarded with a licence to sell wine as well as beer. He ran the Bell Ringers until his death in 1908. Sarah Rhodes took over and when she retired in 1921, two years before her death, the licence was transferred to Herbert Rhodes.

After Herbert left in 1929 the beerhouse had five more licensees, then in February 1937 it was on a list of premises which the police thought were no longer required. In January 1938 the building was converted into a shop. In the 1980s it was given a new roof and frontage to match neighbouring property and it is now occupied by Dial-a-Cab.

## A look around Liverpool

*Trotter takes the train to explore pub culture by the Mersey...*

From Lime Street station I headed towards Renshaw Street and called in at the **Dispensary** for a half of Blackout (5%), brewed by Cains. This ale is based on the Original Porter, which buried the bitterest autumn blasts beneath the beige blanket of its creamy head. The Dispensary is a traditional, Victorian corner local and the recipient of a CAMRA/English Heritage pub refurbishment award.

From there I eventually found my way to **Ye Cracke**, tucked away down Rice Street, off Hope Street. Here we have a basic, multi-roomed pub, each drinking area with its own character, and an excellent selection of beers including two from Phoenix - Old Bitter and Wobbly Bob.

While meandering through the shopping area around Church Street, I stumbled upon the **Carnarvon Castle** in Tarleton Street. The pub is a long, thin, two-roomed affair, popular with shoppers. The semi-tiled facade stands out among the more modern shop frontages.

After trying the Cains mild, I made for the **Head of Steam**. This pub is in the former North Western Hotel (*below*), which closed over sixty years ago, and is adjacent to Lime Street Station. The main attraction here is the Display Bar, an explosion of railway advertising and brewery artefacts. The Grand Hall is favoured by most real ale lovers, as this spacious hall has one long bar serving fifteen real ales from mostly independent breweries, as well as real cider and foreign beers.





For the more upmarket, fashion-conscious clientele, there are Studio 58 and the Loft, all very plush and bright, with leather sofas in which to sink whilst necking a few beers. Each section of the Head of Steam has individuality and one could spend a whole session here.

I returned to Liverpool one Saturday afternoon for the **Ales From the Crypt Beer Festival**, held in the spacious Crypt Hall of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. Around 150 ales were on offer and I tried a few which were new to me, such as Lemon & Ginger from St Peter's, a 4.7% beer which doesn't need describing; Cockfighter from Wicked Hathern in Loughborough, and Red Gem by Tiger Tops of Wakefield.

The hall was packed and I came across festival stalwarts Rock Chick, Old Dick and the Dray Twins. I left with Rock Chick and Old Dick and we headed for the **Swan** in Wood Street, calling in at the Dispensary en route. The Swan is a basic, back-street free house, reputed to have the best rock jukebox in the city. In here we met Idy from the Crescent in Salford, who informed me she was once the landlady of the pub.

As the sleet turned to snow in the early evening, we contemplated staying in the Swan, but decided to move on by taxi to the **Ship & Mitre** on Dale Street. This is a friendly pub where gas lighting picks out the art deco features and an old-style radio was playing away. After a quick pint here, I headed back for the train to Manchester.

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## Blackley blues

Suburban pub closure continues apace. Joining the Red Lion and the Top Derby (*WD March*) are the Pikefold and the Lion & Lamb (*below*). Both are boarded up.



## Rupert

Shame is not a feeling with which I am most familiar. Yet, it is fair to say that I am ashamed of what I wrote in these pages in February. Gratuitous insults to dedicated stalwarts and vituperation about those least able to defend themselves say more about me than about them. Alefiend got it about right in *Opening Tripe* when he referred to me as 'an inane, embittered, foolish old man'.

Usually when people react as much as he did, it is because they recognise some foundations of truth in what has been said, but in this instance that is certainly not the case. Mea culpa. It is important to dissociate Eddy Nestfeather from what I wrote. For decades, Eddy and Glynis have been publishing my puerile drivel. Rarely have they seen fit to censor what I have written. That is until February. The piece I wrote was significantly more vitriolic, vulgar and immoderate than what appeared in print. I have Eddy to thank for toning down what might have got up the noses of even more people.

It was not, however, *Opening Tripe* which punctured my hubris. My nemesis came in the very much gentler admonition of Daddy Bell, whose rare mixture of godliness and scholarship acts as an example to us all. It was certainly understated compared with the actions of those whom I have long

regarded as friends. My own family, including Mumsy and Cholmondley, have shunned me and all the crowd - Fiona, Tish, the Hamptons and even Buntz - have indicated that I am persona non grata until I mend my ways.

I know full well that any protestations of a Damascene conversion will fall on hearing-impaired ears, so I will not make such claims. All I can do is to work quietly and unnoticed in an entirely different way to atone for my past sins. Just as people like Christine Keeler, Jonathan Aitken and Rudolf Hess have turned to activities such as caring for donkeys, eradicating AIDS in Botswana, building wind farms and reforming Burmese prisons, so

I shall seek redemption through good works. I will undertake the most menial and unrewarding tasks at future amber nectar shows. I will cease to use this column as an opportunity to strut my ego and I will strive never again to disgrace the Campaign logo on what

I have turned into a 'vile yellow rag'. So I won't be going on about pretentiousness and prudery at all. Reputations are fragile. Mine has gone and the little that is left of my worthless life may prove insufficient to restore it. But, I shall try through writing positively. I'll very likely begin next month with the Nicest Landlord Oscars, rather than the Most Miserable Licensee in England competition which I'd planned.





# Branch Diary

## North Manchester

Wed 4 April, 6.41 train to Wigan. Swan & Railway 7.30, Old Pear Tree, Frog Lane, 8pm, Anvil 8.30, Moon Under Water 9.30

Wed 11 April 8pm, Social, Park Inn, Worsley Road, Swinton

Wed 18 April 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Tues 24 April 6pm, What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Cheetham

Wed 25 April 7pm, Airport Hotel, Barton (if open); Grapes, Peel Green, 8pm; Stanley, Patricroft, 9.30pm.

Wed 2 May 8pm, Social, Hat & Feathers, Mason Street, Manchester

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 3 April 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Wishing Well, York Street, Heywood

Fri 6/Sat 7 April, Oldham Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Halls, Oldham

Wed 11 April, Evening Coach Social, Bank Top Brewery, Bolton.

Details from Branch Contact

Tues 24 April 8.30pm, Committee/What's Doing Collation, Crown, Long Street, Middleton

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

email: P.Alexander@Virgin.net

## Wigan

Fri 6 April, Trip to Phoenix Brewery, Heywood. Depart from the Orwell, Wigan Pier, at 7pm. £10 in advance to Deano on (01942) 323034

Wed 11th April, 8pm, Branch Meeting, Silverwell, Darlington St East N.B. The outing to Black Dog Brewery in May has been cancelled.

Contact: John Barlow (01257) 426464 (w), 427595 (h)

email john@misltd.co.uk

**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.

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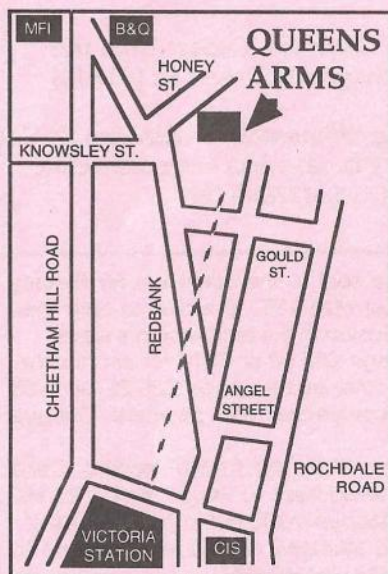
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