

30p

# What's Doing

JULY 2001



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## ECCLES PUB LOST

Time was called for all time at the Crown & Volunteer in Eccles on Saturday 2nd June. Holts have sold the once-popular Good Beer Guide pub to a law firm who apparently intend to keep intact the original late 1930s woodwork and glazing of the bar as their reception area.







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## The Pubs of North Manchester and Salford

Roger Hall

Twenty-five years ago this month, *What's Doing* began to chronicle the loss of Salford pubs and next month will mark thirty years since I moved to live in Blackley. It seems a suitable time to take stock of what has happened over the last quarter of a century.

### Salford

In July 1976 *What's Doing* reported that almost 100 pubs had been lost in the previous fifteen years owing to demolition for rehousing and road building. The same article provided a list of 37 pubs which were due for demolition and 20 which were 'safe'. Of the 37, four are still open today. One of these, the Priory, was not knocked down because of strenuous opposition by CAMRA at a Public Inquiry into the Compulsory Purchase Order. However, five of the 'safe' pubs have also been demolished. The article warned:

*The other 30 pubs, mainly in the Greengate and Chapel Street areas, are safe for the time being, but the areas in which they stand make it possible that demolition will eventually take place.*

Indeed it did. In the same edition of *What's Doing*, there was a list of 89 pubs in the Salford Hundred Club of pubs serving real ale. Of these, 53 have been closed, demolished or adapted for other uses. That figure does not include pubs which have been rebuilt, like the Wellington, the Broadway and the Hyde Park Corner, or pubs which were keg in 1976. The real ale pubs we have lost include such gems as the Papermakers Arms, the Feathers, the Flying Horse, the Punch Bowl and the Derby Hotel.

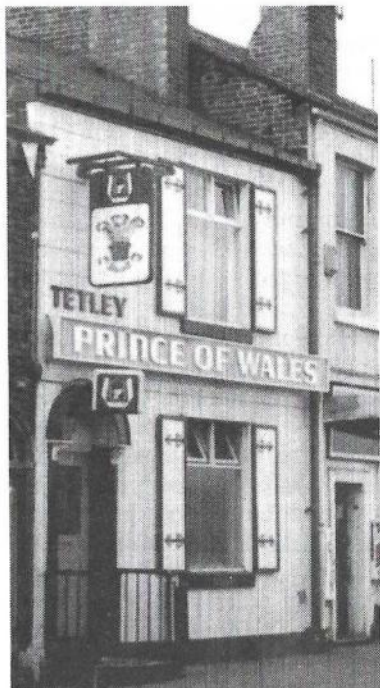


As an illustration of what has happened in Salford, I have chosen one road, which may be thought of as typical of the inner city. It is not like Regent Road, where a dozen pubs were lost because of a road scheme, but one where the attrition has been gradual but, nonetheless, devastating.



When CAMRA North Manchester began a comprehensive survey of Salford's pubs in 1976 there were eight pubs on Oldfield Road, which runs from what was Salford Royal Infirmary on Chapel Street to Ordsall Lane. We didn't have to wait long before the first pub was knocked down. April's (1976) *What's Doing* reports the demise of the Pickwick as part of the redevelopment of Ordsall.

Over the years the remaining seven pubs have followed the Pickwick into oblivion. The little Prince of Wales is now a chip shop. The Spinners Arms was an excellent Marstons pub almost opposite the Kings Arms. It retained its character even when the inside was opened up and a disco floor introduced.



My two abiding memories are of a police raid after drinking-up time when some foolish customers admitted that the drinks were theirs and were prosecuted, and of the ladies' darts team captain. She reminded me of a character in 'I Never Knew You Cared', of whom Uncle Mort said, 'That's the sort of woman you want to marry, Carter, a bloke with big tits.' She was formidable and wore a T-shirt which read, 'Eat shit and die'. I'm still unsure about whether there was a comma after 'Eat'. The site of the pub is another brick-strewn croft.

On the same side of the road, the Railway, which once boasted a full-sized snooker table, is now offices and the Brown Cow, which changed its name to Hobson's Choice in homage to the film, flirted briefly with real ale before closing and standing derelict for years.

The Kings Arms was never safe as a Wilsons pub, but when it was sold to Holts we thought that that was its salvation. Alas, no. Along with the other Prince of Wales, it too has gone to make way for a skiing development.

This leaves only one pub, the St Philips Tavern or Jolley's. That, too, is closed. Again, we thought that Lees would be able to operate pubs successfully where others might not. Sadly, we were wrong. Lees' expansion into Salford beyond their original Welcome has gone

disastrously wrong. Both the Druids on Liverpool Street and the Globe on Bury Street have been demolished and Jolley's ain't so jolly now.

The Oldfield Road saga could be repeated in almost any part of the old City of Salford - Ordsall Lane, Cross Lane, Greengate, Lower Broughton Road - and serves to demonstrate in stark fashion the rapid demise of the inner city pub. You can't help wondering how long the rest will remain.



### **Blackley**

When I moved to Blackley in 1971, there was still a village and there were 24 pubs, which I began to explore. The pubs were mixed in both age and character. Some of them dated back to the early years of the nineteenth century and some were fairly modern, dating from the 1930s to the late 1960s. There was a good choice of real ale, including Wilsons, Boddingtons, Robinsons and Holts. Even the Britannia served real ale and that was a Bass house.

The last pub closures before the 1970s had been between the wars - the Paul Pry shut in 1923 and the Prince of Wales was demolished in 1932. Just as my research was getting under way, further closures followed. The Wellington, a small beerhouse on the corner of Moston Lane and Charles Street, went in 1972. The New Inn, an imposing building dating from 1829 which stood at the junction of Moston Lane and Rochdale Road, was bricked up in the mid-1970s and finally pulled down in 1978.

Two pubs at the bottom end of Blackley Village, the Wilton and the



Britannia, were lost to a road scheme which has still not materialised. The Wilton was a Bass house on Blackley New Road, opposite the Millstone, and was knocked down in the early 1970s. The Britannia hung on a bit longer but was eventually demolished in 1978. The Brit was a cracking local and served an excellent pint of handpumped Bass mild. Ironically, the road scheme which led to its demise was not needed because of the closure of ICI's plant. There is now housing on the site of the Brit.

Since 1978 there have been no further demolitions. (The Alliance was replaced with a new pub in that year.) There have been some refurbishments and changes of ownership. The Grove, the Hilltop and the Millstone are now Burtonwood houses, Lees have taken over and refurbished the Charlestown and the Farmyard is yet again under new ownership. There is one new pub - the Toybox on Victoria Avenue East, which I suppose must be in Blackley.

There are, however, four pubs which have closed. The Red Lion on Rochdale Road has been shut for over six months. The Derby, which moved from Wilsons to Vaux and sold Holts, is closed and boarded and the Pikefold near the Police Station is closed for the second time in a year. At the end of my road, the Lion and Lamb is also boarded up. This pub has the oldest licence in Blackley, dating back to the early seventeenth century.

The present pub was built on Victoria Avenue in 1927 and was converted into the Wrecker in 1971. I visited the place soon after my arrival in Blackley and still remember two old women sitting at a table in what might previously have been the snug, sipping halves of mild. Towering over them was a seven-foot, stuffed alligator. In 1978 the Wrecker was converted back into a traditional pub and



renamed the Lion and Lamb. It was sold to Banks's in 1997 and they seem to have put the kiss of death on it. Their success rate in North Manchester is not good. The Osborne House is derelict and the Robert Tinker has been knocked down.

In one famous incident the licensee of the Lion and Lamb did a sunlight flit, leaving the pub in the middle of the day. The customers, surprisingly, not only helped themselves, but also phoned all their mates up to come and drink the pub dry. This appeared in the Daily Telegraph, so it must be true. Now that it's shut, four hundred years of history have gone down the tubes.

Is Blackley typical of the outer city? Well, we've seen much the same in Pendlebury and there are signs that Eccles may be starting to slip. The Red Fox (ex-Crown) is no longer a pub and the Grapes has shut. Liverpool Road is full of empty shops. How long will it be before the pubs are the same? There are, of course, places where new pubs are opening - Worsley, for example, but these by no means compensate for the slow demise of the local, first in the inner city and then inexorably in the outer city and suburbs.

The rate of loss is such that I'm doubtful whether in another thirty years there will be any pubs left. It might see me out, as I'll likely be dead, gaga or incontinent by then, but it's not much of a heritage to the next generation and hardly constitutes a success for 'the world's most successful consumer organisation,' does it?



## Ton of Marbles

The Marble Brewery's 100th organic brew, due out in July, will be the 4.4% Stonham Cask Lager - 'pale and dry, with citrus hop notes and a moderate bitterness.' A contribution from the price of each pint sold will go to Stonham Housing, a charity which provides housing for abused women.

Another reason to get to the Marble is the excellent 4.5% Ginger Marble, the nation's first organic and vegan ginger beer. Tweaking a recipe he had used earlier in his career, brewer James Campbell found the first batch to be almost undrinkable - too many organic cloves. So the final recipe uses only one-sixteenth as many to achieve that glorious balance.

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## About Bolton

*Trotter returns to his home town...*

Having alighted from the bus near Orlando Bridge, I walked over the footbridge and headed down Lever Street to the junction with Fletcher Street and the **Queen Elizabeth**. A rectangular bar serves both the medium-sized lounge and the games room. The two real ales are from Moorhouses - Premier and Broomstick (4.2%), which was selling for £1.20 a pint. The Queen Lizzy provides a three-course Sunday lunch for £3.50, which is served in the compact dining area, complete with tablecloths!

Next stop, after a short walk, was the **Lodge Bank Tavern** on Bridgeman Street, the J W Lees pub. Despite being listed in the 2001 Good Beer Guide as serving seasonal JWL ales, it's just the mild and bitter.

From there, I headed towards the town centre and stopped off at the **Sweet Green Tavern**, where there was a choice of four real ales: Tetleys bitter, Sweet Green Special, Adnams Broadside and Moorhouses Thunderstruck. The pub's name, incidentally, is a reminder of the area in the early nineteenth century - a place of fragrant gardens and picturesque houses.

I sampled the Thunderstruck, a strong, slightly sweet ale, then headed for the **Hen & Chickens** on Deansgate, usually my first port of call whenever drinking in the town. Back in 1993 it was rumoured that the building was to be pulled down, but happily for real ale

lovers the Hen & Chickens has not been 'laid' to rest! It was once called the Higher Hen & Chickens because there was a pub of the same name on the opposite side of Deansgate near Sweeten's Bookshop, which itself used to be a pub called the Kings Arms.

There is always a good selection of guest ales at the Hen & Chickens and on recent visits I have had Cains FA, Bishops Tipple and 'The Usual', one of Hydes' seasonal beers, plus a local beer called Golden Brown.



## Letters

### Real ale in the clubs

Sir - I recently attended a function at Elton Liberal Club on New George Street, Elton, north of Bury, where I discovered handpumped Ruddles Best Bitter at a reasonable £1.36 a pint. The club is normally open to members only. Are there other clubs with real ale in the *What's Doing* area, waiting to be discovered?

*Steve Smith*

### The Dray Twins write

Sir - We found the comments made by Ray Batty in his 'Millennium Moan' letter (WD June) deeply upsetting. Many times we have indeed 'got off our dray' to visit those gems of pubs to which he refers, whilst continuing to research the Good Beer Guide ones. We prefer not to include the other pubs in our reports and we leave them for other contributors to describe. To include all the pubs would make our monthly contributions all too lengthy.

The same pubs may be nominated for the GBG each year, as Mr Batty says, but not all these same pubs get into the guide every time. Anyhow, what is the point of having a Good Beer Guide if CAMRA members like Mr Batty are discouraging others from using it? And who needs enemies, with him around?

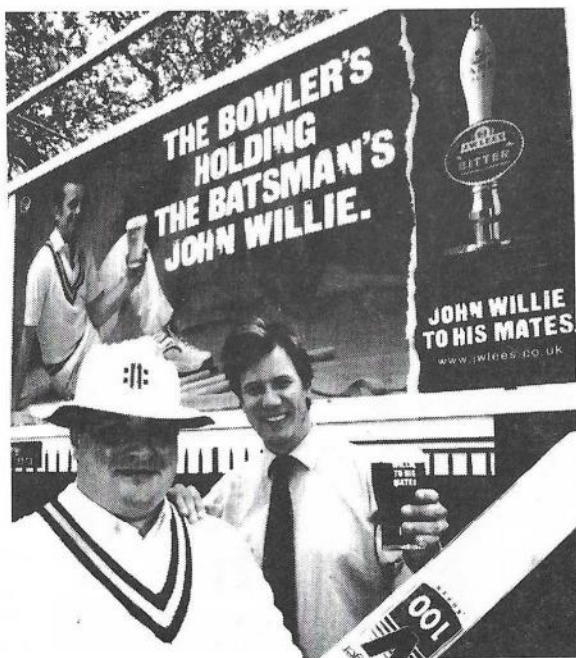
Off our dray and round the corner...

*Ronnie and Reggie*

### Pull the other one

To coincide with the First Test at Old Trafford, J W Lees put out a new advertising poster based on the supposed remark by Brian Johnston: 'The batsman's Holding, the bowler's Willey.'

The prospect of having one's John Willie held by a young man in cricketing attire may be of interest in certain quarters, but Samantha the Barmaid is still the, er, firm favourite.





## Salford pub sales

Salford City Council have been pub shopping in the Pendleton area. First on their list was the long-closed **Langworthy Hotel**, which they bought for £350,000, saying, 'as a building of character, its future will be as an integral part of the new urban village's revitalisation.' The second pub, the **Mariner** on Liverpool Street (£34,000), faces demolition and the site will be landscaped.

## No Mr Porter

The Salisbury and the Old Garratt, two ScottCo pubs in central Manchester, no longer sell beer from the Porter Brewing Company, as mentioned in this year's City Centre Guide. The pubs changed from managed to tenancy/lease in May and it seems they are no longer allowed the choice of guest beers. Very odd.

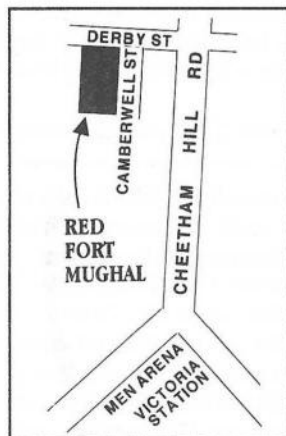
## Paint jobs

Burtonwood's painters and decorators have been out and about. The **Staff of Life** in Swinton has been repainted and given new signage, whilst the **York** in Bolton has been given a full makeover and is selling a guest beer alongside the Burtonwood.

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## Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

Regular readers will recall that in 1999 Holts brewed a special Sesquicentennial Ale called 1849 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the brewery. It went on sale in all Holts tied houses (£1.50 for a 500ml bottle) and since sales have been very good, the beer is still being produced.

A quantity of 1849 is brewed and sent off for bottling only about once a year and when all the bottles have sold, another batch is brewed. With the most recent brewing, a small amount was racked off into casks and sent to the new **Railway** in West Didsbury, to replace the guest beer for a short while. The 5.5% 1849 is priced at £2 a pint and as only three firkins were racked off, it is not expected to last very long. And there won't be any more until 1849 is brewed again!

The **Millstone** on Crown Street in Bolton is being transformed into a Holts pub. The work is expected to take until November and when the pub eventually opens it will have a new name - **Pepperally**. (Pepper Alley was the name of an entry off Deansgate which was widened to become Crown Street.) Parts of the cellars of the adjacent church are being incorporated - yes, I know, lovely vault - into the new pub layout and an additional entrance is being provided. The Bass pub next door (part of the Goose chain) is expected to open some four weeks earlier.

The AGM of the 'new' Holts company took place on 7th June at the Roebuck in Flixton. It was attended by very few CAMRA members, as virtually all had sold their shares to the brewery last year. Opinion on how long it took to hold the AGM varies - somewhere between nine-and-a-half and ten-and-a-half minutes. The buffet was excellent.

stewart@revell62.freemove.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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**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** £3.30 for six months, £5.80 for twelve months. Send cheque/PO together with your name and address to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW. Cheques made out to 'What's Doing'.

*Contributors to this issue:* Steve Smith, Mark McConachie, Paul Warbrick, Roger Hall, Stewart Revell, Daddy Bell, Alan Ainsworth, Sue Barker, Phil Stout



## Rochdale Road changes

Things are stirring at two closed pubs. The **Red Lion** in Blackley is being tidied up and the near-derelict **Osborne House** in Collyhurst has a new roof and extensive work is going on inside. Whether either will reopen as a pub remains to be seen. Another victim on the road is the **Golden Lion**, which appears to be shut. At one time this was a decent Whitbread house with cask ale and a bowling green to boot.



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## Here and there

*with Daddy Bell*

Pubs continue to close or to change hands - the **Flemish Weaver** in Pendleton is boarded up, and the **Grapes** in Church Street, Eccles, is for sale - but for me the saddest closure is that of the **Crown and Volunteer** in Eccles, where time was called for all time on Saturday 2nd June. I've not yet been to check, but let's hope that the original late 1930s woodwork and glazing of the bar, together with other fine features of the interior - the heavy doors, for example - survive as fine specimens of period style. The last licensee, Neville Doe, may well be continuing in the trade but was considering his options carefully.

There have been momentous changes in the beer range at the **Crescent** in Salford. Out have gone John Smiths and Theakston Cool Cask, and since June 6th the standard house beer has been Hydes Bitter (£1.40 per pint). Jekylls Gold seems to be a fixture as well, and the dark mild initially made for a trio of Moss Lane West products. The hardened John Smiths drinkers seem to have made the transition to Hydes without any detriment to their wellbeing or their pockets (the price being the same). The lagers - Heineken, Harp and Stella - are dispensed from a series of discreet T-bar fittings.



One of the side-effects of the deal with Hydes (otherwise an admirable move) has been the loss of Becks, which is much missed. Perhaps there is scope for Idy and Sal to source a quality German-brewed lager (or top-fermenting beer, for that matter) from elsewhere? If price and taste were right, one of those superb imported beers we have lately enjoyed at the **Beer House** would surely find favour among the discerning drinkers of the Crescent?

Although I am often supposed to be in almost permanent pastoral residency at the Crescent, I



have not been neglecting my home ground local, the **Welcome**, especially in the last few weeks, when the Moonlight Oak dark mild has been on special offer (and on good form) at the bargain price of £1.40 (the same as the bitter). I hope that Chris and Roger will persevere with stocking Lees' seasonal ales, even if the regular price has to be somewhat higher.

The quality of Bavarian and other German beers at the **Bierhaus Mai-Fest** in late May was such that I barely touched any of the British ales. The Tegernsee Maibock was every drop as rich and complex as its learned promoter promised: it communicated to me the flavour of a whole iced fruit cake in liquid form. The Augustiner Edelstoff and the Mahrs Weiss were both most refreshing. Now I must see what Ian Casson has in store for us at his Flaming June Festival.

Festivals elsewhere have invariably proved well worth the time and expense of venturing outside Salford. Three beers stood out for me at Stockport on June 1st: the gently lemony Crown Festival Bitter ('kindly sponsored by the Crown, Heaton Lane') from Roosters; an exemplary floral Meadow Wheat beer from Heather (using meadowsweet flowers as well as hops); and an immensely butterscotchy Yates Bitter, which I can rarely if ever have met on more superb form.

The next day I had cause to venture into Cumbria, intending to look in at the **Prince of Wales** at Foxfield on my way home. What I had not realised, until I saw a leaflet in the **Ratty Arms** at Ravenglass, was that the three pubs at Boot were putting on a joint weekend beer festival. I set off accordingly by 15" rail (R&ER) and looked in both the **Brook House** and the **Burnmoor**. The guest beers were not cheap, but the pubs were busy, and it was good to see trade reviving after the worst of the foot-and-mouth outbreak.

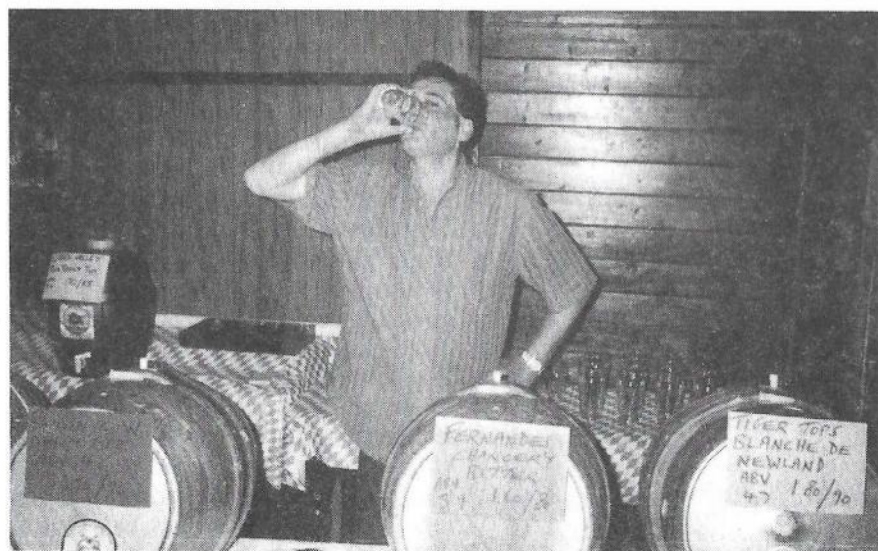


I had a pint of the newly launched Jennings Crag Rat (4.3%, £1.85) in the Burnmoor, where Lees Moonraker was available on gravity for 95p a nip. (I did not have time to venture further to the **Woolpack**, or into the next valley to enjoy the simultaneous festival at the **Wasdale Head Inn**.) Back at Foxfield, the Prince of Wales was packed with customers for its Brewers Weekend Festival, featuring beers from Durham and Brown Cow breweries. I

concentrated on Brown Cow beers I did not remember meeting before (including Hops off the Press and Constellation), but began with Foxfield's own marvellous 4.3% dark mild. I did manage to hobble into Broughton in Furness to buy Cumberland sausage and bacon, and to down a pint of Yates Bitter in the **Manor Arms**: this time it was much drier than at Stockport, but still an excellent drink.

The last festival I got to was at the **Boundary** at Guide Bridge, where Audenshaw meets Ashton, on June 16th. The weather was not good, but the company was, and so was the beer - on gravity in the marquee. Holden's Golden Glow was very good indeed - but finest of all for me (though others could not appreciate it quite so enthusiastically) was the Return of the Fulman from Fernandes, an amazing 4.3% wheat beer, a rich opaque yellow in colour, with the aroma and flavour of eau-de-cologne mint!

Perhaps the most enjoyable session of all was the evening of June 13th, when a North Manchester CAMRA threesome whiled away a delightful few hours at the **Riverhead Brewery Tap** at Marsden, in the engaging company of its owner and brewer, Philip Houldsworth. He is now brewing 450-500 gallons per week, 98% of which is sold in the pub, using malt from Fawcetts, Kentish hops and (at the moment) yeast from Castle Eden. Among us we must have sampled the full range of seven beers (and one of us the Saxon Ruby Tuesday cider, made by an Italian in Batley), but the most highly regarded, I think, was the 3.6% Sparth Mild, one of the very best milds you could meet anywhere. A return visit is much to be desired in the near future.



*Sal in his element in the festival vault at the Crescent*



## Party in a brewery

The photo shows some of the 56 people who completed the J W Lees Passport Trail celebrating their achievement at the brewery.



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## The Millennium Pub Trail

### Part Fifteen: Manchester

*The Dray Twins look at the 2001 GBG entries for the city centre...*

Revitalised and much mended since the IRA bomb of 1996, Manchester offers the imbiber the widest choice of real ales anywhere in the region and the cheapest prices for miles around.

The **Britons Protection** on the corner of Great Bridgewater Street and Lower Mosley Street is a Tetley house which retains many interesting features: rooms with rag-rolled walls, original doors and windows and a magnificent corridor resplendent with high tiling and scenes of the nation's glorious heritage. The pub's pricing policy is not always compatible with the city's reputation, but its collection of rooms makes for a comfortable retreat. Regular beers are Tetley, Jennings and Robinsons Best Bitters, with usually a couple of guests. There is a small beer garden.

Also on Great Bridgewater Street is one of the city's newest institutions. The name of Lees' **Rain Bar** is both a comment on Manchester's weather and a reflection of the fact that the building used to house an umbrella factory. The bar is something of a departure from the brewery's usual style, being most definitely aimed at café bar society and patrons of the nearby Bridgewater Hall. Prices reflect this - expect to pay over £2 a pint for the seasonal beers, which are available alongside bitter, GB mild and Moonraker. There is an upstairs room and a patio overlooking the Rochdale Canal, where on fair weather days it is nice to sit and consume the classy food.

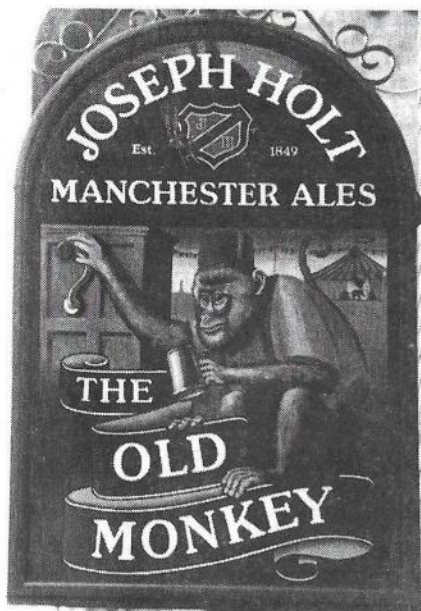
In the heart of the city, near the Town Hall and at the junction of Princess Street and Portland Street is the **Old Monkey**, one of the cheapest of the city's drinking establishments.





The pub has a smart vault downstairs and a more plush upper saloon. It always seems to be very busy, no doubt owing to the popularity of the Holts bitter and mild.

Across town, near the scene of the 1996 explosion, the old **Sinclair's** building in Shambles Square suffered remarkably little damage. Now relocated in the Cathedral Gates pedestrianised area, the pub retains much of its old charm. Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter is £1.26 a pint (compared to draught Bass at £2 a pint at the Wellington next door).



*Next month - the suburbs*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **CAMRA steps out**

### **Boggart Hole Clough**

At the end of May Manchester CAMRA members went to see the Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, where brewer Mark Dade explained how the plant had been installed and talked about his future plans. A cask of Steaming Bitter (a hefty 9%), its pump clip depicting a North American steam locomotive, was made available, together with Jack's Nasty Face (4%), which is now a regular house beer at the Bar Fringe in Manchester.

### **Hogshead**

At the beginning of June members were treated to a tasting session of Moorhouses beers at the Hogshead on High Street, Manchester. The brewery's range included Pride of Pendle (4.1%), Witches Cauldron (4.2%), Dragons Bait (4.4%), Black Cat (3.4%), Thunderstruck (5%) and the popular Pendle Witches Brew (5.1%).

Samples of the beers came round at regular intervals and all were available for purchase at the bar. The Black Cat was especially popular as it was served from a stillage behind the bar. The pub provided an excellent buffet and there was a free prize draw for bar towels, glasses, tee shirts, etc. It is hoped there will be more of these Hogshead events in the future!

## Darwen Revisited

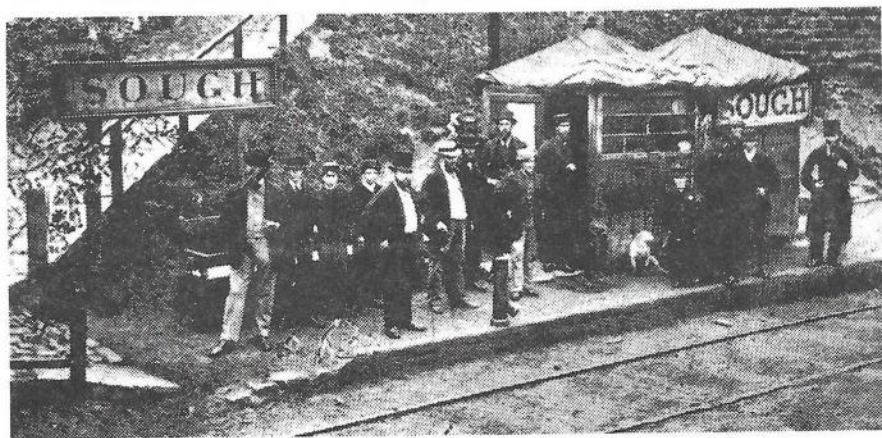
*It's almost two years since Trotter took the train to Darwen and now, as with any good book, here's the sequel...*

On the Saturday of the May Spring Bank Holiday weekend Steve Larkin and I headed for the **First Black Horse Rare Beers Festival**, which was held in conjunction with the Darwen Music Live Festival. We arrived at the pub on Redearth Road about midday and from there decided to try the Witch Ale Trail.

After One F'Road, an aptly titled ale from Bank Top Brewery, we went to the furthest pub out on the Trail, the **Greenfield**, situated near Sough Tunnel. Here there were four guest ales alongside Taylors Landlord and Abbot Ale. We tried the Oakhill Mendip Gold and Piddle in the Wind from Wyre Piddle Brewery (not to be confused with Wye Valley).

Next it was down towards Sough Road, over the humped-back bridge and to the imposing **Borough** on Grimshaw Street. Here we had the Bank Top beer, Volunteer, which was originally known as Dr Dibnah at the Howcroft's 2000 Bolton Beer Festival. (A percentage of the profit goes to support the Bolton Lads' and Girls' Club.) We both agreed that the ale was similar in taste to One F'Road; is the brewer becoming complacent?

Moving on down Grimshaw Street to Bolton Road, we came to the **Bowling Green**. Here I sampled Angel Hill, which (although not stated on the pump clip) is brewed by Boggart Hole Clough Brewery. Since my last visit the pub has been brightened up, with pastel green/cream walls, but the cask mild has gone and there was a notice on the blackboard saying it is closed on Tuesday evenings.





After a ten-minute walk along Bolton Road, we came to the **Britannia**, opposite the India Mill complex. Not much needs to be said about this traditional Thwaites pub. The mild and bitter were on form and the sun came out as we sat in the excellent beer garden to eat our butties.

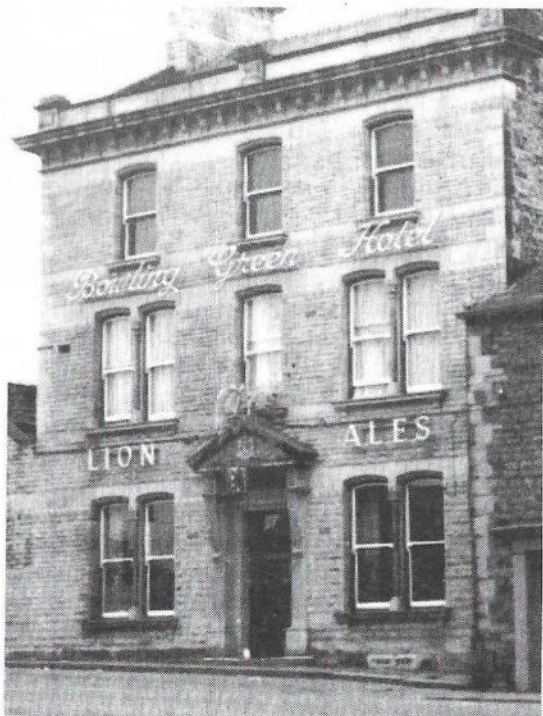
The next two pubs on the trail, the **White Lion** and the **New Inn**, serve Thwaites, though the New Inn also had Reward, a 4.2% ale brewed in the Wild North West, which was quite good. It was then on to **The Pub** (formerly the Greenway), a modern, open-aspect pub where there is always a good selection of ales. Here we tried Bedlam Bitter and Blackpool Black Diamond.

Only three more pubs to go. A short walk down Duckworth Street brought us to the **British Queen** and the most disappointing pub on the trail. The handpump with the Thwaites bitter clip wasn't used and the beer tasted like keg. Something the local CAMRA branch could look into!

We moved on swiftly to the **Entwistle** on the corner of Entwistle Street and not far from the train station. The Thwaites bitter was real ale and in good nick. Like the Britannia, the Entwistle is a typical unspoiled, multi-room pub, complete with fish tank beside the bar.

Returning to Redearth Road, we headed for the **Crown**, which was selling Tetley mild and bitter, Camerons Strongarm and Adnams bitter. We had visited eleven pubs, so it was back to the Black Horse to claim our prize - a Witch Ale Trail T-shirt.

Considering the size of the town, Darwen has a lot to offer real ale drinkers, with the majority of pubs selling guest ales and many having reasonably-sized beer gardens or courtyards from where one can contemplate the surrounding hills.



## Rupert

Great news for drinkers as New Labour win an unprecedented second term of office. They may have gone a little soft on their promises to liberalise opening hours, but how important is that? Do we really want the Kings Arms and the Bulls Head opening until three o'clock in the morning?

Surely that would mean traditionalism would disappear as local hostelrys fell over themselves to attract the late night trade. Old folks with weak bladders would go home to their slippers and such delights as dominoes and mild would disappear.

Premium lagers would supplant cheap local beers and crowds of ratarsed hoorays wouldn't give a monkey's about whether they were supping amber nectar from the wickets or horrid nitrosmooth. And of course there'd be loud music and silly food, so it's not really a good idea at all.

But, what our little Tony has in store for us is truly wonderful. When the Bank of England was freed from government control, it heralded a new era in economic stability. Freed from the political paranoia of those with a vision extending no further than their own electability, inflation fell to a

level not experienced since the Black Death. Beer prices, for example, have hardly risen at all since 1997.

Imagine if the political yoke were removed from those who decide whether mergers and takeovers should take place. What then? Well, instead of slight taps on the wrist and half-hearted attempts to reverse cretinous megamergers, there would be a watchdog with real teeth. I look forward to a regime of meticulous scrutiny, whereby such deals would be found to be against the public interest and prohibited.

We would see a gradual move to real competition, the revival of regional and local brewers and a growth in traditional beers brewed for the local palate. Prices would

fall and the archetypal public house would be conserved for future generations. Fiona thinks that this is a load of bollocks and that in her words, 'There'd still be a bunch of useless upper class tossers feathering their own nests and crapping on the drinking public like they've always done.' I beg to differ. I'm sure that New Labour knows what it's doing and that this policy will have positive results, unlike the Tories' ill-conceived Beer Orders.





# Branch Diary

## North Manchester

[www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester](http://www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester)

Wed 4 July 8.30pm, Social and 'Ask for Cask Mild' event. Blue Bell, Moston Lane, Moston

Sat 7th July, Independents' Day Treasure Hunt. Start at Beer House, 12 noon.

Wed 18th July 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Tues 24 July 6pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey St, Cheetham

Wed 25 July, Bolton Crawl. Howcroft, Pool Street, 7.30; Farmers Arms, Chorley St, 8.30; Hen & Chickens, Deansgate, 9.15.

Weds 1st Aug 8pm, Social, The John Gilbert, Worsley Village

Contact: Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 3 July 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Wishing Well, Heywood

Sat 7 July, Independents' Day Trip. Contact has details.

Tues 31 July 8.30pm, Committee Meeting & What's Doing collation, Flying Horse, Rochdale

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

email: P.Alexander@Virgin.net

## Bury Beer Festival

*Alan Ainsworth & Sue Barker*

R.O.B members who worked at the 2000 BBF enjoyed an excellent thank-you party at the Smithfield Hotel, Swan Street, Manchester on the 18th May. As expected, a superb selection of real ales was provided, supplemented by a buffet, which can only be described as 'gut-bustingly good' (compared to what little was provided for the same price at the Lord Raglan for the Christmas do!). On behalf of the branch, we'd like to say many thanks to Jennifer, Terry, Neville and all the staff at the Smithfield for a grand night.

If you didn't help out at the BBF, you wouldn't have known about the party and missed out on the free beer and buffet. So, perhaps you might want to consider working at the 2001 festival, to be held at the Met in November - details later in the year!

## Lights out

Judging by the work going on at the **Punch Bowl** on Chapel Street, Salford, it seems that time has finally been called at this former Tetley house. Devoid of signage and smartened up, the building's future would appear to be as some sort of office.

*Dave and Sue welcome you to*

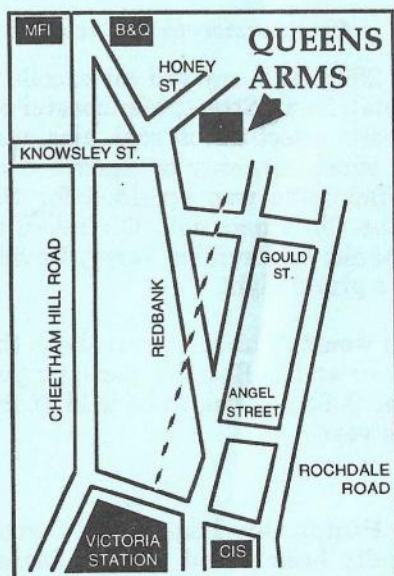
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