

30p

What's Doing

APRIL 2002



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine



The Old Cock, Oldham Road, Middleton

In this issue: Pubs of Middleton Junction, Hare & Hounds beer festival, Swinton Pubs, a Salford pub family, a wander around Hindley Green and Westleigh, Liverpool libations.



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M E M B E R

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Return to Middleton Junction

with Daddy Bell

(Not exactly to Middleton Junction Station, which closed on 1st January 1966, but to Mills Hill Station, which opened in 1839, closed in 1842, and reopened in 1985.)

On the evening of 15th February, three tasting panellists visited four Lees pubs near the Greengate Brewery. Urged on by the editor, I paid a return solo visit one lunchtime just over a month later.

If you turn left from Mills Hill Station and head for Middleton along Oldham Road, you will soon spot the first pub, the **Old Cock**, on the corner of Baytree Lane. There are picnic tables in front of it, and a horse trough with the legend 'Dowry Farm 1863.' This is an extensive pub, very food orientated, opening all day from 11.30am, with the usual Sunday hours. I was greeted by Chris, the relief manager (covering for Paul and Sue), who recognised me from the Welcome in Ordsall. It's hard to tell what touches of antiquity are original to the building (eg the range in the lounge), but the pub is smart and comfortable, and the beer would, I think, have shouted 'Lees bitter' at you even on a blind tasting.

I couldn't linger long, even for food, but headed down Baytree Lane (where there is a side entrance to the vault), passing a Liberty depot on the left-hand side which I seem to remember used to be in Co-op hands. The road goes under the railway, turns right, meets a 'Welcome to Middleton' sign (for we are in Rochdale/Oldham frontier



territory here), and meets Mills Hill Road, which veers right, again goes under a railway bridge and becomes Joshua Lane as it bends to the left. Just to the right, however, is the next Lees pub, the **Minders Arms** (No.51), a much more workaday place than the Old Cock.

On our February visit, our self-imposed restriction to halves, and our penchant for taking them outside to sniff the beer in a smokeless atmosphere, had generated much good-humoured banter among the lively regulars. Some were here, I suspect, again, clustered around the tiny bar area, which has just a table and a few chairs and stools. For more comfort and privacy, there is a simple vault to the right, and a carpeted snug with perimeter seating and TV at the back. A pint of GB mild (£1.39) proved to be lusciously good.



Just a few yards further on I found the **Firwood Tavern** by a bus stop. Apparently stocking only Lees bitter, it was shut: I was told later that the licensee had just left and that the pub's future was uncertain.

(Enquiries, please, to the brewery; reliable information to *What's Doing*.) By now you can see Lees Brewery ahead, as you enter Chadderton briefly;

over to the left is the large **Junction** pub, where bitter is advertised at £1.30 from noon till 7pm on Sundays. Before the road junction comes the brewery on Lees Street: the road ahead, Greengate, leads to the A6104; if you turn right (B6189) you can go uphill to the **Gardeners Arms** and on into Middleton centre, or you could go left, as I did (still B6189), past the Willoughby's depot (Lees' wines and spirits arm). On the right is the **Radclyffe Arms**, but if you keep right, with care, under a very narrow railway bridge, you can then cross back over the road and into the **Railway and Linnet**.

Back in February, we had stayed in its tap room to the left, to avoid the karaoke evening, but on this occasion the only customers were in the blue and cream lounge, and the only noise was a conversation about religion and weddings. The bitter (£1.40 a pint) was more mellow than in the Old Cock, though the taste became more pronouncedly Leesish as the glass emptied. I headed back along Grimshaw Lane to the **Radclyffe Arms**, where Burtonwood bitter (£1.65) was the only real ale. In comparison with either of the pints of Lees bitter, this was definitely mildish. I felt the need of non-liquid sustenance, so selected a BLT bap from the menu. The pub seemed a bit soulless: there is a big lounge to the left of the central bar, a smaller vault and toilets to the right, and a pool area at the back.

I turned up Green Lane to the **Junction**, a spacious Lees pub (open all day) with 'Green Lane Cottage' inscribed over the door. This is definitely not a youngsters' pub, as the Radclyffe Arms may be;



hanging baskets were being prepared outside, but I was the only customer within. Bitter and mild were available, as well as both Lees' lagers. Rather than go into the lounge, I stayed in the first room, which has a full-size snooker table: the pub boasts three snooker teams. Wednesday (the day I called) is evidently the worst weekday for trade, whereas 'Monkey Monday' is the best. From there I retraced my steps up Mills Hill Road, continuing straight along it past the Sarsons (Nestle) vinegar factory and turning left along the A669 to arrive back at Mills Hill Station.

If you like Lees' beers, you've got the elements there of an interesting crawl. You might surmise that there would be a clutch of Lees pubs in the vicinity of the Greengate Brewery, but none of them figures in the current Good Beer Guide, though at least one might be a worthy contender. It is a price sensitive area, where Lees drinkers seem unwilling to spend more than £1.40 on a pint of bitter (£1.47 in the Old Cock), so there is little chance of finding customers for such excellent seasonals as Moonlight Oak and Brooklyn Best at a decidedly higher price. That said, it's an interesting area to visit, with contrasting atmospheres and sizes of pubs (almost all of them visible from the railway line) and the likelihood of varying nuances of flavour in Lees' regular cask ales.



Hare & Hounds Beer Festival

Alex Koval

On Monday 11th March, the Hare & Hounds at Holcombe Brook launched its first ever beer festival. The idea of landlord Andy Grant, it was originally planned to have about 50 beers on over the week, but circumstances contrived to inflate this figure to nearer 64. This was probably just as well, as casks soon started emptying.

Most of the beers were in what is usually the no smoking area. Here, Andy had built a special festival bar to provide beers on handpump and from the cask. These were complemented by the handpumps on the main bar, which had foregone their usual role for the duration of the festival.

Early on I tried and enjoyed the Beartown Wheat Bear and Bushy's Ruby Mild. The Bridge of Allan's Ben Nevis was interesting but had too much roast in it for my palate. I wisely avoided Boggart Hole's 9% Steaming Bog, whilst their Sun Dial was its usual disappointing self. A pleasant surprise was Fisherrow's Cascade. Usually I find this brewery's beers to have a very strange taste, but the Cascade was



The Hare & Hounds is well served by public transport: the 474 from Bury and the 273 from Bolton stop outside.

actually quite drinkable. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for Leyden's Leydenhosen. This had the experts divided over whether it tasted more like pipe cleaning fluid or the stuff left at the bottom of fish tanks. Apparently, even hardened Lees drinkers struggled to finish a pint of the stuff.

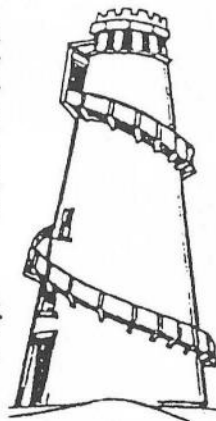
That aside, Leyden made a good impact at the festival. The Nanny Flyer was back to something of its former glory and the Hare & Hounds Festival Brew (a dry hopped version of the former?) was very good. Other local breweries in evidence were Phoenix, with the tasty Raisin Stout, and Pictish with Dolmen. My personal favourites emerged later in the week with Brakspear's Live Organic proving to be particularly crisp and refreshing. Overall, though, I would have to go for either Hampshire's Gold Reserve or Oakham's superlative Harlequin.

All in all, the festival was a very enjoyable event - thanks to Andy and his staff for making it such a success.

Frodsham Fest

The tenth Frodsham Beer Festival takes place on Friday 24th (6-10pm) and Saturday 25th May (12noon to 11pm). As usual it has been organised by Rowlands Care in association with CAMRA and will be held in the Community Centre, Fluin Lane. A selection of new brews, old favourites and farmhouse ciders is promised; food and entertainment on both days.

Tickets are £4 (£1 refund on the door for CAMRA members) from Dave Brown, Joiners Cottage, off High Street, Frodsham WA6 7AN. Cheques payable to 'Rowlands Care'.



Beer duty up 24.3%

No, it's not more leaked information from the Chancellor's forthcoming budget, but the rise in the minimum beer duty imposed across the EU. Obviously, Britain is a few dozen times over that already!

The new tax level will be 2.32 euros per hectolitre and in Germany, where beer was always classed as a food, this means quite a hefty rise in the tax payable. Understandably, public opinion is in uproar about Brussels trying to interfere with the Germans' enjoyment of their renowned amber nectar.

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Swinton Pub Crawl

Pete Cash

The crawl follows a roughly L-shaped route, parallel to the A6 and then down the A572, beginning at the **Bulls Head** on the corner of Chorley Road and Station Road. Once well known as an early evening meeting point for people moving on elsewhere, this pub has reinvented itself many times over the last few decades. On the night of our visit (Wednesday, 8pm) it was almost empty. There is just one real ale: John Smiths Cask. This not being one of our favourites, we opted for halves, but were warned that it would be 90p a half, whereas a pint would cost only £1.10! Naturally we ordered a pint, together with an empty half-pint glass and shared the liquid, which was in good condition but far too cold and lacking any real flavour.

The **Football** on Swinton Hall Road had a signboard portraying an oval shaped ball, evidence of the pub's association with Swinton Rugby ground nearby (now a housing estate). Although somewhat altered inside, this is still a fine pub with a keen licensee and three real ales: Tetley Bitter and Dark Mild and Boddingtons Bitter. The two front rooms have survived, though the snug at the back was opened out some years ago. Next door is a former Swales pub, the Weavers Arms, where you could once get Draught Bass on gravity. Sadly, even the Boddingtons bitter is 'smooth', though the sign outside still proclaims traditional beer.

A bit of a walk along Swinton Hall Road and a right turn through the side streets allows one to sneak up behind the **Cricketers Arms**, the first of the three Holts pubs on the crawl.



Nearby, at the junction with the A572, is the **White Lion** with its long association with the above mentioned Swinton Lions. There are normally four beers from Robinsons: Hatters Mild, Best Bitter, the new and excellent Hartleys Cumbrian Way, and the seasonal. We had arrived between seasons - the Samuel Oldknow had finished and Stockport Arches was due to go on in a few days. I had tried the former a couple of weeks earlier and whilst it was in fine form, one must question Robinsons' placing of this beer in February/March, when it is a low gravity, rather thin 'thirst quencher', surely more appropriate to a hot summer's day!

Down the A572 towards the East Lancs Road is the **Park Inn**, where the Holts Mild, in particular, was the subject of many complimentary remarks. The pub retains what must surely be the smallest snug for miles around. Across the road a bit further down is Holts' **White Swan**, long a favourite meeting place and despite some alterations, still with many of its features, including four distinct rooms. There is even talk of a real fire being brought back to the main lounge in time for next winter's frost.

Finally, we sent a scout to Burtonwood's **Staff of Life** across the road. This former Walkers house now sells Burtonwood Bitter and has featured some guest beers. It provides value-for-money pensioners' lunches, but we suspected that it was quiz night. The scout confirmed this, and as we were in a mood for conversation rather than conundrums, we opted for another pint of Eric's excellent beer.



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Wigan briefly

Dave White

First, an apology to anybody who went to the **Orange House**, King Street, Wigan (*WD March*) in the hope of finding Websters Yorkshire Bitter. The beers on offer are in fact Websters Green Label and Theakstons best.

Still with the town centre, and the range of ales at the **Swan & Railway** (*right*) on Wallgate has been pruned. Marstons bitter and Mansfield dark mild - the two beers that I drank - have made way for a W&D seasonal guest. Banks's bitter and Original remain.

Real ale has been put out of its misery at the **Park**, Manchester Road, Higher Ince. The inn reverted to keg after reopening recently, though the handpumps remain. Eleven pubs out of twelve in Ince serve only fizz, with several others closed and boarded up.

Last, but by no means least, many thanks to everyone who attended the fifteenth Wigan Beer Festival last month. Dark Star Hophead from West Sussex was voted Beer of the Festival.



Westleigh wander

Dave White takes the 33 bus from Wigan to Hindley Green and Westleigh...

With hope springing eternal, we alighted on Corner Lane and walked down Leigh Road to the **Railway Hotel** in Hindley Green. This was the first time I'd been to the pub, and a cosy little local it is, too. Sadly, only Tetley smoothflow was available, so we moved on to the **Mechanics Arms**. This former Greenalls pub is now a rather spartan boozer, with nothing to titillate the real ale drinker. Heaving a sigh of relief, we repaired to the **Red Cat**. Another keg house, this time courtesy of Burtonwood. We pressed on into Leigh.

Real ale was assured at Holts' **Tamar** on the corner of Wigan Road and Nel Pan Lane at Tamar Lane Ends. A two-roomed local formerly

known as the Bowling Green, the pub retains a green and the area around the bar boasts stained and leaded glasswork featuring a game of bowls. Alas, this attraction is obscured by A4 posters, and the fireplaces in both rooms have suffered a similar fate, blocked up with boards, bin liners and masking tape! Framed flower prints hang from the artexed walls of the lounge. Children are not allowed in the vault but, on this occasion, there were several in the lounge to make up for it. The mild and bitter were so-so.

Further along Nel Pan Lane stands the Silver Dollar freehouse, which is keg. Across the road, on the corner of Westleigh Lane we found the **Red Lion**, an open-plan pub which seems bigger within than without. Features include stripped pine, tongue-and-groove cupboards near the fireplace and a slate floor. There is a games area, and epigrams adorn the beams and bar area. Friday night is karaoke night, so be warned. Theakstons best bitter was the sole cask beer.

Turning right, in the direction of Leigh town centre is the **Fleece** (right). This rough - and - ready boozer has been closed for some years, and is likely to remain so. We headed in the opposite direction of Westleigh Lane to the **Church Inn** at Pickley Green. Standing slightly back from the road, and in the shadow of St Paul's Church (depending on the time of day), this picturesque pub looks an ideal place for a pint of real ale.



Nothing doing, however, so we went to the **Railway Tavern** instead. Remember the rather tasty porter that Burtonwood brewed a few years ago? I had my one-and-only pint of the stuff in here. Today, however, there is nothing but smoothflow from the Bold Street brewery.

Our last stop was the **Bull & Butcher** on the corner of Westleigh Lane and Smallbrook Lane. In days gone by this pub made it into the Good Beer Guide on the strength of its excellent Greenalls mild and bitter, and the quiz machine was the easiest in the world. The handpumps are still there but (surprise, surprise) no longer in use.

Brewery Fair

Beermats, pump clips, glasses, labels and other brewery related items will be on sale at the Stalybridge Station Buffet on Saturday 4th May, 12 noon start. All money raised will be forwarded to the Willow Wand Hospice, Stalybridge. The organisers welcome donations of beery gear for the sale - contact Sylvia at the Buffet or phone Allan Gardner 01772 455536.

Beers from Messrs Maguires Brewery in Dublin - Mild, Plain Stout, Extra Stout and Red Weiss - made their appearance at the Buffet Bar recently. All were on good form, none the worse for their journey. Apparently their shipping had to be delayed for twelve hours because the Irish Sea was a bit rough.

Arthur Inn

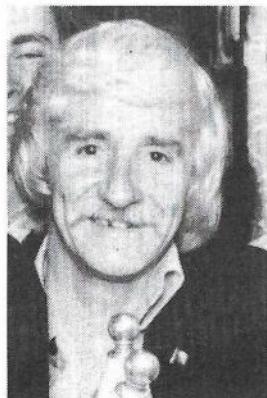
When in Bury, the Arthur Inn on Bolton Road is always worth a visit. The pub sells the Porters range of mild, bitter, Sunshine, Porter, Rossendale Ale and Floral Dance, plus either a cask cider or a seasonal ale.

The pub has a games room, a long vault and a long bar, plus a non-smoking lounge with piano and Jack and Vera, the resident lovebirds in a cage. No-one knows which is which and the birds may not know either, since the regulars are still waiting for Vera to give birth.

Alan Ball

On the eve of last month's Wigan Beer Festival the branch was saddened to learn of the sudden death of Alan Ball at the age of 68. He was a Wigan branch member for over twenty years, attended several national AGMs and was a regular contributor to What's Doing in the 1980s. His knowledge of the Wigan pub scene was second to none. One memorable article concerned rumours that the Wheatsheaf at Standish was going to be refurbished. Alan wrote that **anything** done to this pub would be an improvement. A couple of months later it was pulled down and a supermarket was built on the site. Some may remember him as a judge in the infamous Regional Farting Contest at the Brinsop Arms, held after one of the first Manchester beer festivals.

Although he was less active in the branch in his retirement, he still turned out to the pub virtually every day, whether in Wigan, Shropshire or the Lakes. He leaves a wife, Kath, and two daughters by a previous marriage.



Here and There

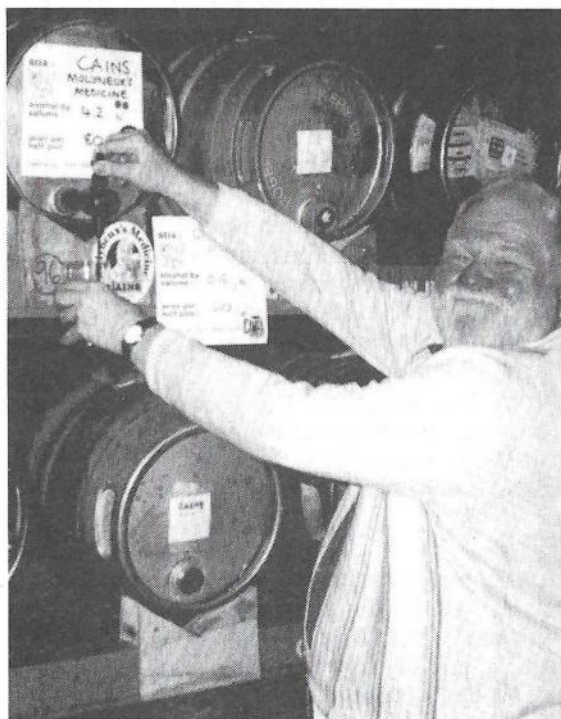
with Daddy Bell

I almost gave up beer festivals for Lent. I didn't get to Bradford or Leeds or the **Ship and Mitre** in Liverpool, but I allowed myself two exceptions to abstinence, the Liverpool Beer Festival itself and the fifteenth Wigan event a fortnight later. After all, who could really deny themselves the awesome pleasure of those seemingly infinite expanses of Lutyens' monumental crypt, a subterranean cathedral in itself, or the sheer bonhomie of the Mill at the Pier, where good company and good beer are always guaranteed?

Liverpool provided a chance to sample Wapping beers, produced on the old Passageway kit now installed in the **Baltic Fleet**. I spent more time on beers from Fernandes, Foxfield and Tigertops, while not neglecting the very chocolatey Undertaker from Faint Hope (a new North Lincolnshire micro), the clear but rather odd Turnpike from Harviestoun, and Caledonian's Lorimer & Clark IPA, a sweetish old gold beer with touches of apricot and marzipan, which is usually to be had only in bottled form.

When it became available, I was quick to dose myself with Molyneux's Medicine, a 4.2% concoction from Cains prepared to the inestimable Tony's own specification, two bottles of Woods Navy Rum being added

to each firkin of Cains Mild. *(Tony is pictured in characteristic mode with his celebratory beer.)* The taste? - to me, not so much medicine as coltsfoot rock.



The Liverpool festival was graced, not only by the presence of the Scousely Seacaptain, but by the reappearance of Bogbrush. They cropped up again together (along with such engagingly unconscionable drinkers as Dicko) at the Wigan festival. Here the main attraction was Lees' Brooklyn Best on

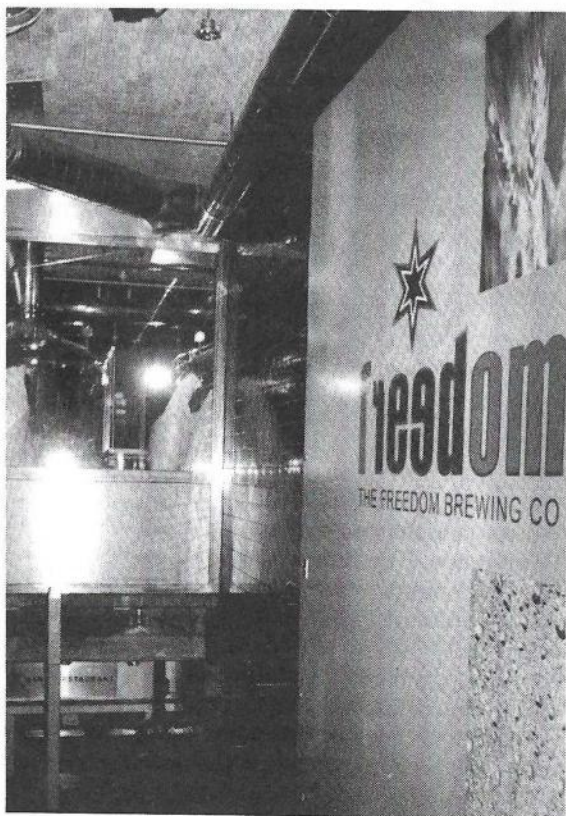
gravity, which turned out to be every bit as stunning as we had anticipated from the reputation of its American creator. Bogbrush and I were the last customers to leave the hall, an hour after last orders, but we felt moved to look in Wetherspoon's **Moon under Water** for a pint of Cains Mild - on incomparable form, and only 99p.

Towards the middle of March I paid one of my rare visits to the Great Wen, and while Mummy Bell was occupied with essential ecclesiastical business I sought out some of central London's microbreweries. I never did get round to visiting **Mash and Air** during its briefish Mancunian existence, so I had little to go on when I ventured into the **Mash** brew-restaurant, just up Great Portland Street from Oxford Street. There were no clips on the fonts, but on the barman's recommendation I opted for the pilsner (£3.20 per pint), which was cold but tasty, with honey and almond notes. The decor of this modern bar is curious, mostly taupe and green, with the orange and stainless steel brewing vessels visible behind glass at the back.

From Oxford Street I headed for Charing Cross Road, and along Earlham Street soon detected the unmistakable aroma of brewing in progress at the

Freedom Brewing Company.

I descended to the basement, where ten tall, slim vessels (four fermenters, five conditioning tanks and one cold liquor tank) gleamed at the far end of the bareboarded bar. Here I enjoyed the lunchtime special (a meal and a pint for a fiver), as well as halves of the Freedom Pale (4.3%, £1.50, a good clear gold but not assertive enough in flavour) and the Soho Red (4.4%, £1.50) which had more attack, thanks to roasted amber malt and Chinook hops. Best of all was the Wheat Beer (5%,



£3.30 per pint), a deep orange, darker than Hoegaarden, and with strong hints of chocolate and nougat. The rear entrance of the brewpub leads into a shopping precinct specialising in the sort of gear which appeals to Baby Bell and other skateboarding enthusiasts.

Chatting to a young (ex-Wilsons!) brewing consultant about the beers, I learned that Freedom's organic lager is now produced in Germany and is all bottled: the Freedom brewery itself has no lagering capacity. The wheat beer contains four malts (pale, crystal and another as well as wheat), and is brewed (on site) to a specific German recipe by a German brewer using a dried German yeast. My informant thought that the new growth area for microbreweries was not now the USA or the UK, but South-East Asia. He mentioned a French-style micro in a neighbouring street, but I failed to find it, so must reserve that discovery for another occasion.

I did not fail, however, to drink some decent British beers in London. Consulting the GBG 2002, I selected the **Buckingham Arms** in Petty France as a good place for dinner the next day. The food was simple and good; the Youngs Special and Winter Warmer (the latter £2.40 a pint) were both in good nick; there were the usual photographs of the Queen Mother drawing and consuming a pint of Youngs; and there was a Fang lookalike fast asleep in front of the food ordering point.

For lunch the following day we went to a nearby Fullers pub, the **Sanctuary House**, a rather grander establishment (actually a hotel) on Tothill Street. The menu here was more extensive, the food very tasty, the beer (I drank ESB and Chiswick) on good form but not as headless as in the Buckingham Arms. Both pubs can be recommended and fully deserve their GBG listings. Mummy Bell gave the Sanctuary House at least a four star rating for the quality of its Ladies.

I don't propose to emulate the Beer Monster™ in selecting my own personal Pub of the Month, but now and again I find one whose praises particularly deserve to be sung. I have long been urged by Paul Jordan to visit the **Fox and Goose** at Hebden Bridge, and eventually achieved it in mid-March. Despite a late-running train (no prizes for guessing the operator) I got to the pub with time to spare before its 3pm afternoon closure. The pub is not



too hard to find (you can see it from the railway) and my fairly reliable directional instincts got me there in ten minutes from the station. Many know Hebden Bridge only as a Green/newagey/arty/gay paradise, but in the Fox and Goose it has at least one first-rate pub, the sort of place where any **Crescent** or **Beer House** regular would immediately feel at home.

The beams and other surfaces of the low-ceilinged bar are festooned with pumpclips (many rarities among them); to the left of the bar is a room with a pool table, and Jones and Singer sewing machines on the window ledge; up a couple of steps to the right of the bar is another room with a dartboard. Daleside Blonde is now the regular beer, and I found three others available - Durham White Gold, WYB Jet Stout, and (my first choice) Abbeydale Absolution.

I picked up a copy of the free weekly PubPaper which circulates in Calderdale, but I doubt if our own editor would wish to adopt two of its regular features, pictures of 'Customers of the Week' or of 'Sleepers.' You don't read *What's Doing* for cheap laughs, after all.

Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

Holts won a medal in the cask conditioned mild category at the International Brewers' Competition, held a few weeks ago at Burton-on-Trent. Brewers from all over the world competed in around 800 sections. We don't know which medal yet - the Gold, Silver and Bronze winners will be announced at a ceremony on 14th April.

The people at Holts are extremely pleased with this result and a spokesman close to the brewing team said it did not matter which medal they had won. To receive a Bronze in competition with the rest of the world was quite an achievement.

Installation of the new 30-barrel plant at the Derby Brewery is nearing completion. To see how the equipment functions, a test brew (for internal consumption only) is planned for the end of April.

The name of the first brew for public consumption has yet to be decided, although I hear it may well reflect some theme or other relating to the 2002 Games in Manchester.

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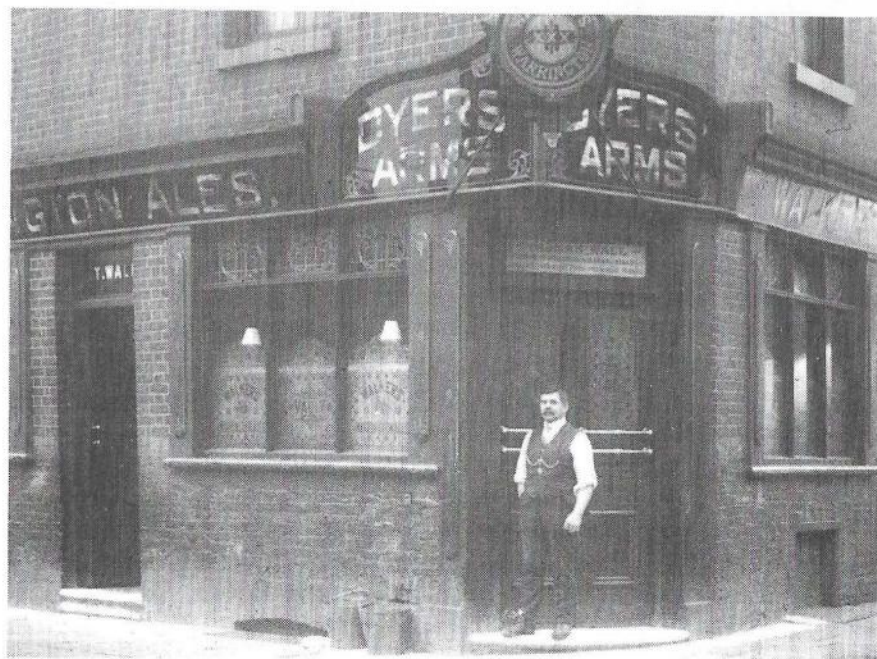
Contributors to this issue: Allan Gardner, Dave Hallows, Alex Koval, Pete Cash, Brian Gleave, Paul Roberts, Stewart Revell, Roger Hall, Dave White, Daddy Bell

A Salford pub family

Iris Johnson died on 27th February at the age of 66, just sixteen months after Alan, her husband for 44 years. Iris and Alan will always be associated with the old Welcome on Ordsall Lane, which they took over on 1st March 1972. Despite a hard-fought campaign by CAMRA members and others to retain the pub, it was pulled down in 1978. A long stint followed at the Ordsall just across the road, and a much briefer sojourn at the Black Boy in Eccles. They returned to Salford when J W Lees acquired the former Chequerboard on Robert Hall Street; this became the new Welcome, and there Iris and Alan stayed until Alan's death and Iris's retirement.



Iris's family had a long association with Salford pubs. Her great-grandparents, Michael and Ellen Wall, kept the Cardigan Arms on George Street, near the Islington Mill, off Oldfield Road. Her grandfather, Tom Wall, ran the Star on Ford Lane (off Blackfriars Road), where her mother, Vina, was born. In 1904 Tom moved to the Dyers Arms on Ordsall Lane, not far from the old Welcome and now the site of the Regent Flats. The photograph below was taken in 1912. In the 1920s he moved to the Buck on Cross Lane (later run by his daughter Nellie) and after that to the Park Hotel on West Park

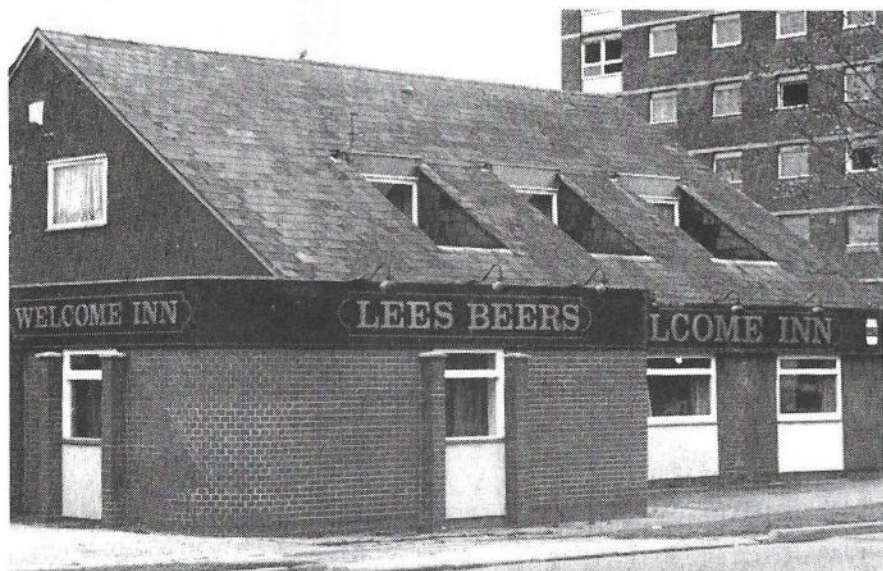


Street; his last pub was the Greyhound on Broad Street.

In 1936 Vina and her husband, Harold Lewis, took over at the Masons Arms on Robert Hall Street, which was where Iris grew up. When Iris married Alan in 1956, his parents had the Park Hotel on West Park Street, the pub that her grandfather had run in the 1930s-40s.



Iris, like Alan, was the source of many kindnesses. She liked a quiet life for herself and others, and ran a no nonsense pub as so many others of her family had done before her.



Rupert

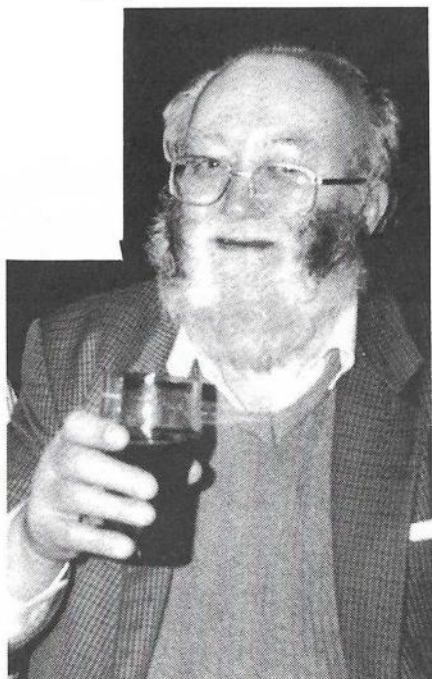
'I want a full pint,' said Bunty in a way which was difficult to dispute. Ophelia Hampton had just arrived with five foaming pints of real Drabs mild, which is increasingly rare, but is served in excellent condition in both Wedgie's and Ratty's. She immediately returned to the bar and attempted to communicate with the barperson, yet another member of the cloth-eared brigade. She informed the said barperson that the pints, albeit foaming, were not full and asked if they could be topped up.

'It's against Government policy,' the barperson replied, so the licensee had to be sent for. He went on to explain that, as long as the pint contained 19 fluid ounces of liquid, then this was a legal pint and the hostelry was under no obligation whatsoever to top it up. In other words, a pint can be 5% less than a pint.

When Ophelia reported this conversation back, there was considerable anger. 'So,' Fiona exploded, 'does this mean that they're going to give us a 5% discount on the price, say, knock 6p off?' 'We could always drink flat pints,' I suggested helpfully. 'After all, Bunty's from the South and probably prefers it that way.' As soon as I'd said it, I knew it was a mistake. I was bombarded from all sides with a tirade of abuse, which made it as clear as crystal that the foaming head was an essential feature of the Northern pint and that we shouldn't have to pay for it. A pint is a pint and the

head is on top of a full 20 fluid ounces, not part of it. They went on a bit about whether we'd end up with marked 19 ounce glasses and so on for several minutes.

The next round was Bunty's and he returned with five full pints with a head on top. I knew it was too good to be true. Before we'd had a chance to take the tops off our pints, Plod arrived and we were interviewed about our threatening behaviour. As a result of this, Bunty is once again in Strangleways and the rest of us have an exclusion order, barring us from most of our favourite watering holes throughout Slumley. I am incensed that it is I who has a criminal record, rather than the tavernkeepers who are swindling their customers. What happened to fair play?



Branch Diary

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury
Tues 7th April 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Cemetery Inn, Bury Road, Rochdale

Wed 17th April, Evening Coach

Trip to Mayflower Brewery, Standish. Branch contact has details.

Tues 30th April 8.30pm, Committee/What's Doing Collation, Flying Horse, Town Hall Square, Rochdale

Contact: *Peter Alexander 0113 232 4023(w), 0161 655 4002 (h)*
email: *P.Alexander@Virgin.net*

North Manchester

www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 3 April 8pm: Social, Cleveland, Crumpsall Lane (near Crumpsall Metro)

Wed 17 April 8pm: Branch Meeting, Crescent

Wed 24 April: Branch visit to Lees Brewery. All places are taken. Pick up at White Swan (Swinton) 6pm, Crescent, 6.15, Beer House 6.30

Wed 30 April 6pm onwards: What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Honey St.

Wed 1st May: May Day Crawl: Mark Addy 7.30pm, Albert Vaults 8.15pm, Ye Olde Nelson 8.45pm, Crescent (Real Ale With Love) 9.30pm

Contact *Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

Wigan

Wed 10th April, 8pm. Branch Meeting, Bowling Green, Wigan Lane, Swinley

Contact: *John Barlow (01257) 4788161 (w), 427595 (h)*
email *john@misltd.co.uk*

Regional

Wed 10 April 8pm: Regional AGM, Stalybridge Station Buffet

Sat 13 Apr 6.30pm: Winter Ales Festival Staff Party; Crescent

WHAT'S DOING contributions should be sent to the editor c/o 88 Ringley Road, Stoneclough, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1ET, to arrive no later than first post on the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

WHAT'S DOING ADVERTISING: Full page £52.50 or £210 for six months, half page £36.75 or £157.50 for six months, quarter page £26.25 or £105 for six months. All adverts must be accompanied with payment. Cheque payable to 'What's Doing'.

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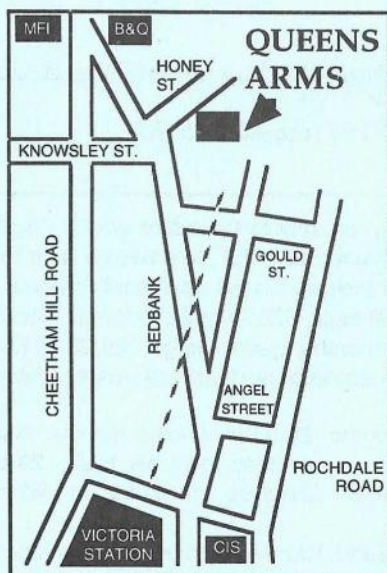
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