

30p

# What's Doing

MAY 2002



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## ANCOATS PURCHASE

The pre-inquiry meeting for the compulsory purchase of many properties in Ancoats, including the Cheshire Cheese and the Edinburgh Castle, was held on 11th April. CAMRA North Manchester has made a pre-emptive objection to the CPO and the full inquiry will begin on 11th June.

The main thrust of the case made by the Northwest Development Agency is that this part of Ancoats, whilst containing some important buildings, has







been unsightly and part derelict for many years. Their initial response to the objections to the pubs' purchase, by CAMRA and by others (notably Councillor Mark Clayton, Pennant Inns and Mr Morten of the Cheshire Cheese, and Laurel Pub Partnerships Ltd for the Edinburgh Castle) was that they were in negotiation with the owners in relation to potential refurbishment (and possible expansion of the Edinburgh Castle), but there was an implication that if agreement could not be reached on the Cheshire Cheese in particular, then redevelopment was an option.

Mr Ken Barton RIBA will be chairing the Inquiry and he has urged objecting parties to collaborate and present a common case where possible. About 112 objections have been made in respect of the many properties affected.

*Pete Cash*

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## **Boggart Brews News**

Boggart Hole Clough Brewery's tasty mild appeared in April and should continue to be available in May. It is called Onyx Ale, is dark and strong at 4.9%, and drinks more like a brown ale.

Summer cask ales are promised for May and June and there are now some bottled beers. Boggart brews may be available at the Stockport Beer Festival at the end of May.

## More choice?

*Roger Hall*

The budget announcement of a fairer system of excise duty is a boost to Britain's 350 small breweries. Yet they may still find it difficult to get their beers into pubs, even with reduced duty amounting to perhaps 12p per pint. If the 1990 Beer Orders are revoked, then the provision allowing tenants of national brewers to stock guest ales would go.

Since 1990, many of the pubs owned by the large brewers have been hived off into separate pub-owning groups to which the provision does not apply, although many of these groups allow guest ales in their tenanted or leased houses.

As arrangements come to an end and as ownership of both brewing capacity and pubs changes, so the freedom of the licensee to serve a beer of choice may diminish. Take Boddingtons, for example. Until 1990, Boddingtons was an independent brewer with just over 500 tied houses. Quite quickly that all changed. Whitbread bought the brewery and Greenalls most of the pubs. The beer is now brewed by Interbrew and many of the pubs were sold to Nomura and then to the Punch Pub Company.

In the short term it didn't seem to make a lot of difference; the pubs were still done out in Boddingtons livery and the traditional beers were still available. In many outlets a guest beer was allowed, albeit sometimes from a limited range.

There are now signs that all this may change. Some of these houses are under pressure to switch from Boddies to John Smiths, perhaps reflecting some deal between Punch and Scottish Courage. Many of us might not rate Boddies as the best beer in the world, but it's still brewed locally, even if it's owned by Belgians. It is the beer locals are used to. They wouldn't want to see it replaced by John Smiths.

Arrangements like this are an indication that the large brewers, who have significant economies of scale, can sell to pub groups at rock bottom prices. Switching from Boddies to John Smiths must be based on cost alone, with no consideration of quality or customer preference. If Interbrew gets turfed out, what chance has the microbrewer got? Big companies (and Punch has 4,200 pubs) find it difficult to deal with small companies and seem to be denying their licensees the flexibility to do so.

There are, of course, free houses but, notwithstanding their fame and high profile in CAMRA circles, they don't account for much in terms of beer sales. Free houses don't have the clout to obtain heavy discounts and are therefore either more expensive or less profitable than the pubs of groups like Punch, Enterprise Inns or Pubmaster.

If beers from the microbrewers are driven into a handful of free



houses, we may see an even greater divide in the retailing of beer. Choice may be maintained at a price in a small number of houses frequented by cognoscenti, but in most outlets only the dwindling range of beers from Carlsberg-Tetley, Interbrew and Scottish Courage will be available. Of course, our local breweries will still be here - Holts, Hydes, Lees and Robinsons (won't they?), but in the UK as a whole we can expect to see 85% of our pubs selling beers from just three brewing groups. You wonder whether Gordon Brown's concession is no more than a gesture.

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## Plough

Robinsons have applied for Listed Building consent to make internal alterations at the Plough on Hyde Road in Gorton (*right*), a pub which features in CAMRA's National Inventory of Pub Interiors of Outstanding Historic Interest. The brewery wants to improve the toilet facilities and provide additional bottle storerooms in a single storey extension.

## Buzzed off

Magowan's Beehive at the junction of Rake Lane and Queensway in Clifton Green has closed for good and is to be converted into a children's creche. This is no great loss to the real ale drinker as it was latterly keg only, but it does leave the extensive Clifton Green estate publess.



## New name

Yates' Blob Shop on High Street in central Manchester has been renamed Brooks Bar. It would appear that Yates' have now moved completely away from their roots.

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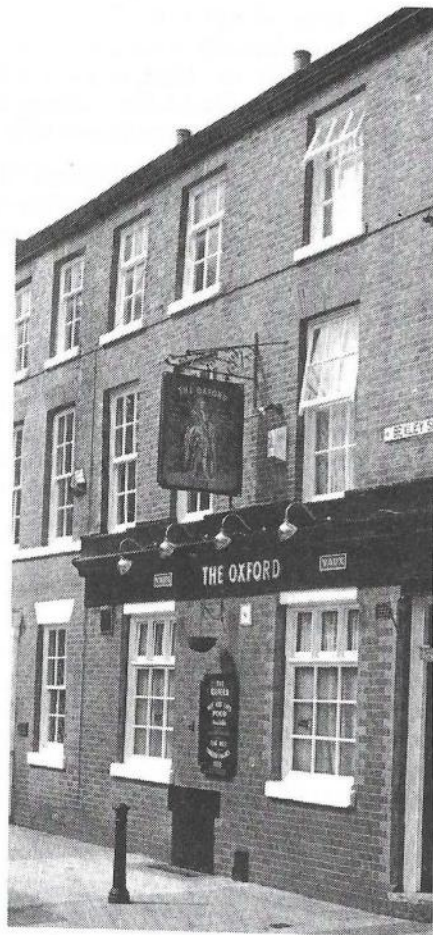
Contributors to this issue: Ralph Warrington, Paul Warbrick, Pete Cash, Daddy Bell, Roger Hall, Dave White, Ian Kenny, Steve Smith, Roy Bullock, Stewart Revell, Dave Hallows, Michael Lynn

## Here and There

*with Daddy Bell*

### Nothing to write home about

In the heart of old Salford, the **Oxford** in Bexley Square is still closed and boarded. The **Black Lion** has, however, reopened, though with nary a handpump to be seen, despite claims outside that 'cask condition' (sic) ales are stocked. Out in Weaste, the **Widows Rest** is for sale, and the **Ugly Duckling** is looking rather woebegone, apparently awaiting a new licensee. Back towards the centre, the **Stowell Spire** is now in the hands of the Pyramid Pub Co, and reopened after refurbishment on 17th April. The pub seems little changed, inside or out, except for the flooring, though there had been reports that the place had been vandalised beyond recognition. Keg fonts predominate, and of the draught beers the Banks's Bitter is definitely keg and the Marstons Pedigree almost certainly so.



### Kings Arms

The **Kings Arms** in Bloom Street is trialling Kings Own (3.8%) as a house beer (sometimes the only beer in the house). Of unknown origin, it is quite a palatable pint, though not in the same league as those stalwarts of the Kings, Pictish Brewers Gold and Phoenix Navy.

### Marble Brewery

James Campbell continues to produce wonderful organic ales, his Manchester Bitter now accounting for some 50% of output. He featured in the *Daily Mail* (not his favourite reading matter, or mine) in its coverage of the Chancellor's budget concessions to small breweries. James has no firm plans at the moment for further new beers, but would welcome suggestions.

Phil Chapman's policy of stocking a wide variety of interesting beers in the **Marble Arch** alongside the Marble's own range makes a



regular visit obligatory. The Cathedral Wheat Beer from Durham (3.7%) was densely opaque, even for that particular idiom, but satisfying with it. Earlier in April, there was Messrs Maguire's Draught Dublin Ale (4.6%), ostensibly an Irish Red but with Burton Ale affinities: its brewer, James tells me, is a Brummie.

The same day (2nd April) I found Cloudy Marble on sale in the **Beer House**, along with four Leyden beers and Boggart Onyx Ale (4.9%), a strong mild which I quite enjoyed but found somewhat over ambermalty.

### **Bird in Hand**

One pub which has attracted attention lately is the **Bird in Hand**, a Holts house in the same neck of the Patricroft woods as the **Stanley**, the **Bridgewater** and the late-lamented **Golden Cross**. It looks little changed outside, but has been thoroughly refurbished within: to the right as you enter is the vault, with a rather plush 'best' room to the left; there is a larger lounge at the back, and a separate pool room. Baseball caps and children are equally forbidden; bitter and mild are the beers, both on handpump - but smooth mild is also available.

### **Cornbrook cornucopia**

Time was (and not so long ago) when you could cross the Irwell from Ordsall by the Woden Street footbridge and find a very compact pub crawl no distance away. For some, the **Manchester Regiment** would have been the first stop, but that is now in the hands of those ubiquitous developers, Urban Splash. On Chester Road, the **Bulls Head** (*below*) is now an electronic signage business, and the brewery



behind which supplied it is long gone. Vanished also is any trace of the much larger Cornbrook Brewery, and the distinctive wedge-shaped **Turville** which adjoined the brewery offices is now Jawa Furnishings. Another ex-Bass pub, the **Railway**, hard by the Cornbrook tram stop is boarded up and advertises the Mancunian Spring Co; and the **Cornbrook** pub itself, with its fine Walker tiling, fell victim to the road remodelling scheme.

That leaves two pubs, one of which is a regular GBG entry. The **Pomona Palace** is unlikely to be such: it is not that palatial, though the tables in the public bar are stylish enough, there are plenty of trophies in a display cabinet above the dartboard, and a pool room beyond and a lounge offer ample space. When I called in, on 15th April, there were four handpumps in the public bar, two of which had Marstons Bitter badges. Alas, it was not available, so there was no alternative to the Mansfield Smooth creamy ale, at £1.70 dearer than the Marstons by 20p, and supported by promotional material throughout the bar. The beer was clear and cool, with a faint suggestion of Worcester sauce.

It was a good thing I had already looked into the one remaining indubitably real ale pub, the **Hope Inn**, at the corner of Chester Road and Manson Street, on the recommendation of a friend who now works there behind the bar. The corner door is not in use, being obstructed inside by a fruit machine, and the room to the left of the side door seems little used, apart from darts matches. Both rooms are bare-boarded, with perimeter seating and a few stools and tables. The front bar is dominated by a large mirror at its far end, and the bar counter itself is an old-fashioned J-shape. The optics are well stocked





with spirits and mixers, but the main interest lies in the beer - Hydes Light and bitter, both on electric metered dispense into oversized glasses. There is a solitary handpump - for emergency use? - and a Black (smooth) fitting. The Light was on good form, with a hint of mint; the Bitter (£1.69) had a touch of mango: both came with a large foamy collar.

So - no chance of a crawl, but one fine survivor in the Hope, and perhaps one should not altogether give up hope about the Pomona Palace. I shall call by again.

### Back to Bury

It was good to see a favourable and well-informed mention of the **Arthur Inn**, the Porter pub in Bury, in last month's *What's Doing*. I called there in mid-April, after a visit to the nearby **Dusty Miller**, one of Moorhouses' own pubs, and also in the GBG 2002. Where else can you find two Lancashire micros represented so close together? It was a quiet afternoon in the Dusty Miller, and for once there were no guest beers on: the range was Black Cat, Premier, Pendle Witches Brew, and two handpumps labelled 'This' and 'That', which turned out to be the same beer, a 4.5% very deep golden bitter, sweetish and with a slight cast, but very palatable and good value at £1.20 a pint.

When you are visiting either or both of these pubs, extreme circumspection is needed while negotiating the very awkward road crossings, especially after a pint or two of Porter's Porter or Sunshine - or Pendle Witches.





## Wigan and district

Dave White

The **Clarence Hotel** (aka **Harry's Bar**) on Wallgate in the town centre no longer sells Jennings beers. A year or two back the pub won a Cask Marque accreditation, so I can put that undrinkable pint of mild down to an off-night. No doubt the Cask Marque plaque will be removed now that the real stuff has gone.

Swings and roundabouts in Hindley. Refurbishment is taking place at the **Plough**, Atherton Road, after a long period of closure. The Plough



had a good run as a Walkers house in the 1980s, but went steadily downhill after that. It was owned briefly by Enterprise Inns a few years ago, and more recently there was even talk of the pub brewing its own ale. Apart from the **Victoria**, Atherton Road is a beer desert, so here's hoping. Meanwhile, in the centre of Hindley 'time' has been called, it would seem, at the

**Prince of Wales** on Market Street. The pub is now closed and boarded up and, according to the local press, developers want to clear the site to make way for shops, flats and parking space.

The future also looks grim for the **Shepherds Arms**, Warrington Road, Lower Ince. This ex-Tetley pub has been closed pretty much since the then landlord was assaulted a few years back. Enterprise Inns tried to make a go of it, but had no more success than at the Plough at Hindley. Council planning officials are now considering a bid to convert the Sheps into a children's day care nursery.



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## Holts mild, please

*Holts say that all their pubs must have both cask bitter and mild on at all times, but in North Manchester it can be a different story. Dave Hallows investigated...*

First call was the **Blue Bell** on Moston Lane, Moston. I was told there was no call for handpumped mild, but if the landlord was in, he'd put it on. He wasn't, so I had the bitter.

Next, the **Duke of Wellington**, Weardale Road, Blackley. I was told 'It's only handpumped here.' Locals were drinking it, and it was in good form.

On to the **Golden Lion** on Old Market Street, where I asked for handpumped mild twice, but they were serving me with smooth. I repeated my order and pointed to the solitary mild handpump in the vault. They drew the beer off and I was served with what I wanted - just.

At the **Fox Inn**, 100 yards down the road, I was told, 'Don't do it - just smooth.' At the **Cleveland Hotel**, Crumpsall Lane, the mild is sometimes on and sometimes off. This day, it was on. No problem.

Next was the **Egerton Inn**, Hanlon Street, Crumpsall. There was no cask mild, despite it being advertised in the vault. On to the **Crumpsall Hotel**, Cheetham Hill Road. Here, the mild handpump in the vault has been replaced by a smooth font. There was one remaining mild handpump, but the beer was not on - 'It's just the freeflow mild,' I was told.

I moved on to the **Duke of York** on Marlborough Road and was told 'Don't do it - just the smooth,' as I stood by the handpump with the mild pumpclip. Finally I ventured into the **Derby Brewery Arms** on Cheetham Hill Road - the brewery tap. Cask mild was on and there was no problem.

Only four out of nine pubs had cask mild available, although all of them had pumps for it, if only in the vault. That is just sad.



*Andy and Lynn welcome you to*

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## The Pits?

*Groggnard*

Anyone believing in the optimistic philosophy of Leibnitz - living in the best of all possible worlds - should sight-see around Oldham. His mind would soon be cleared.

The **Ashton Arms** on Clegg Street and the **Bath Hotel** on Union Street remain bolted, with no clue as to when, or if, they will reopen. On Park Road, the **Park Hotel** and the **Alexandra** seem to have been boarded up since the year dot.

If one journeys to the eastern fringe of the town centre at Mumps Bridge, once called Bottom o'th'Moor, one is entering the Graveyard Zone. Here, two hardy survivors hang on: the **Royal Oak** (Robinsons) at Rhodes Bank, near the Oldham Chronicle building, and the **Black Swan** (Lees), at the beginning of Huddersfield Road. But along Huddersfield Road, Shaw Road and Lees Road there are the less-than-picturesque remains of several once-pubs: the **Globe**, the **Malt & Hops**, the **Robin Hood** and the **Boundary**.

Moving back into Oldham centre, the **Oldham Hotel**, opposite the Royal Oak, proved unviable in spite of Marstons' best efforts and has not yet found a buyer. So then up Union Street, dropping in at the **Buck & Union**.



At the western end of Union Street is King Street, where the **Star Inn** is still running, although I do not recommend it. The other two pubs on this street, **Bucks** (formerly the Roebuck) and the Irish theme pub whose name I cannot be bothered to learn but used to be the **Sergeant at Arms**, are both closed. However, just off King Street and behind Mecca Bingo, the reopened **Bank Top** (Lees) seems to be popular with the student fraternity from the nearby college on Rochdale Road.

Even closer to the college, on Middleton Road, are three pubs almost in a row: the **Dog & Duck** (Banks's), the **Abbey** (Tetley) and the **Ring of Feathers** (no real ale). From there, going uphill to the new bus station at Cheapside, there is the **Three Crowns** (Banks's), a comfortable lunchtime eatery which sometimes adds Marstons bitter and Pedigree to its beer menu.

Now I must mention something a little out of the ordinary. Behind the Star Inn and between George Street and King Street is **Jacksons Pit**, not a pub but a cellar bar. The premises (so I've been told) used to be a brewery in the nineteenth century, which seems possible. Certainly it was for a year or two a massage parlour, cheekily situated only two hundred yards from the local cop shop. Or maybe this was for mutual convenience, as the police don't like to do much walking these days.

Anyway, now the entertainment is of a less physical nature, with bar billiards, table football and small-screen TV. Musical evenings, sometimes live, are a speciality of the house. The decor is basic red brick with a dash of Tate Gallery and the premises are fairly spacious with shallow brick arches and cast-iron supporting pillars. One nice touch is fresh flowers on the tables.

The bar offers a selection of Belgian beers, with draught German Pils (Dortmunder and Warsteiner) and a changing guest ale at about £1.60. Taylors Landlord and Phoenix Arizona have been on display recently.

The **Up Steps** (Wetherspoons) has been stimulating the consumption of real ale for the last four months with a 99p per pint rolling beer festival. The beginning was less than impressive, with the first ten days being totally beer-less. Even the dreaded Smiths Smooth was off. Then it proceeded in fits and starts. Some days would have three or four guests, then on the following day, zero. Saturday was a favourite day for option B. But after a couple of months the management seemed to have worked out the logistics of maintaining a consistent supply. I think what surprised them was the scale of the demand. But why the surprise? Most Oldhamers would walk a mile to save tuppence!



## So that's where it went!

*Ralph Warrington*

Mancunian beer lovers whose faculties have yet to be irreversibly addled may remember, possibly even with affection, the smart wooden panelling that featured in the lounges of the Crown & Kettle at New Cross. Rumour had it that this was salvaged from some famous airship of the pre-war era.

Well, rumour was, for once, correct. The large sheets of decorative panelling were bought at auction when the R100 was broken up in the late 1930s. This airship was very successful, completing a well reported - and for its time, fast - trans-Atlantic flight to Canada. The passengers travelled in unparalleled luxury, and would have continued to do so if it hadn't been for the fatal crash of the R101 in France. After this incident the other large British airship of the day was removed from service and ingloriously scrapped.

Other parts of the R100 have survived, but the collection at the Crown & Kettle was outstanding for its sheer size. Unfortunately, the pub was closed some years ago and the wood started to succumb to dry rot, despite the care taken to preserve this listed building.

By chance, a museum in Yorkshire has been establishing a permanent memorial to one of the country's greatest technical minds of the twentieth century, Barnes Wallis, he of the Dambusters' bouncing bomb fame. It was Wallis who was chiefly responsible for the design of the R100.



The museum heard of the existence of the panels and an agreement was made with the owners to restore them and place them on permanent exhibition along with other artefacts relating to the great man. Though this is a sad loss for the Crown & Kettle, should the pub ever be restored and reopened, at least the panels will be cared for and seen by many more people. A display at the museum carries a photographic record of their finding, removal from the Crown & Kettle and their re-display.

This little part of Manchester history can now be seen at the Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, North Yorkshire, just off the A64, near York. The museum is open daily and is highly recommended, having a superb collection of aircraft (including the world's only complete Handley Page Halifax heavy bomber) and displays of life on a WWII aerodrome.

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## Holts corner

*Stewart Revell*

Holts won a Silver Medal for their cask conditioned mild at the International Brewers' competition held in Burton-on-Trent a couple of months ago (*WD March*). The brewery knew they had won a medal, but didn't know which one until the prize-giving ceremony. Mild beers were in the same category as stouts and porters, some of which were keg, and the Gold Medal went to keg Murphys stout! Why was there no separate section for keg beers? Very strange.

The first beers produced using the new 30-barrel plant will be called Baton and will be on sale at the end of May/early June. Baton will be available in two forms: a 3.6% brew for the tied estate and a 4.3%, known as Gold, for free trade customers. Different pumpclips showing the ABV have been ordered. No doubt the Gold will be quite a bit more expensive than the 3.6% version, but it will be available to Holts tied houses if they think they can sell it. (I can think of only three of the 'flagship' pubs that might.)

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## Bolton to Boston

American real ale lovers will have the chance to sample two of Bank Top Brewery's ales at a festival in Boston in May. Brewer John Feeney is exporting some barrels of Smokestack Lightning and The Haka, and the casks will be returning to England filled with American real ale for a summer beer festival.



## Tyldesley tour

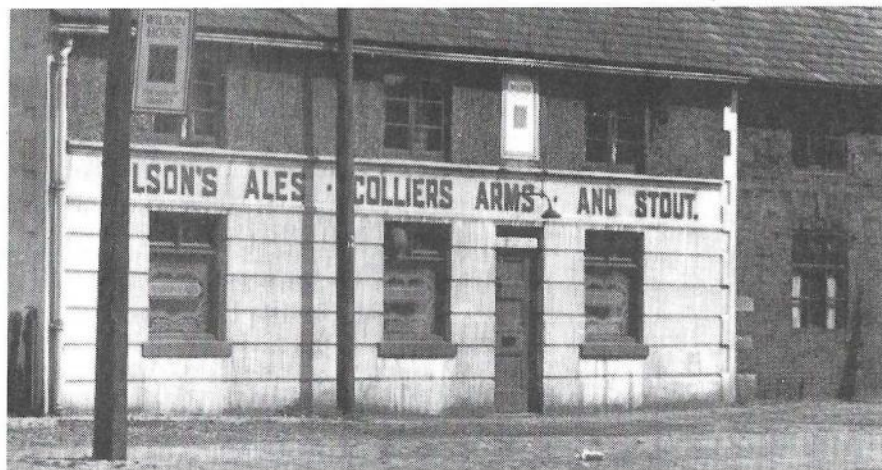
*Dave White*

Strictly speaking, the crawl began at the **Red Lion**, Sale Lane, but only fizzy beer was on tap, so we moved quickly to the **Colliers Arms** nearby. A two-roomed, traditional local with low ceilings, the style in the lounge is best described as 1960s Tudor - bare brick and false beams - even the ventilator is Tudor! Horse brasses adorn the bar area and there is a piano in the corner of the lounge. The vault is largely unspoilt. Goodish Holts and Lees bitters were to be had.

Our next stop was the **Gatehouse** on Manchester Road, an open-plan estate pub with good access for the disabled. It is separated into lounge and vault, with a pool table taking up most of the space in the latter, although the dartboard was seeing rather more action. The lounge is on several levels and has separate drinking areas. There is much dark wood, and stained (or shellacked) and leaded glass over the bar. This is a Thwaites pub, which means that the traditional bitter is on sale alongside smoothflow... but it wasn't a bad pint.

We then walked to Elliott Street for the rest of the night. First was the **Mort Arms**, a two-roomed Holts boozer with a central bar which has retained its fine etched glass and woodwork, and shutters which still work. The lounge has lots of 1930s wood panelling, a bevelled mirror and fireplace from the same period, together with pleasingly ornate mouldings on the ceiling. The vault is smaller and is decorated with framed photographs of bygone collieries in the area, and of Bolton Wanderers FC. I am reliably informed that TV celebrity Fred Dibnah holds court in the Mort on Thursday nights, and there is a Sunday meat draw. The cask mild was not quite on top form.

The **Black Horse** is but a cockstride away, an open-plan inn with floral wallpaper and brass knick-knacks on the fireplace. The



landlord is a Manchester United supporter, as the many framed photographs on the wall will testify (although a picture of Frank Bruno holds pride of place behind the bar). On the wall at the back of the pub can be found a cabinet of memorabilia, including a bottle of Quink ink and a Ludo board. Happy hours are Mon-Fri 11am-6pm, when the Tetley and Lees bitters are just £1.16 a pint. Good beer.

On next to the **George & Dragon** (*below*), a J D Wetherspoon house. The colour scheme is lurid and the mouldings on the ceiling obviously haven't been up as long as those at the Mort Arms. However, there is an interesting 'modernistic' G & D ironwork in the main drinking area and the Egyptian tiles on the stairs are attractive. The bar area is small for Wetherspoons. A glass of Shepherd Neame Spitfire had to be changed, but the Thwaites mild was on fine form: indeed, the best pint of the night. (Why is this beer so hard to find in Thwaites pubs?) Other beers were Boddingtons bitter and Elgoods Golden Newt.

The **Last Orders**, just across the road, may be remembered by some as the **Welcome Traveller**, or more recently, **Skinners**. This traveller stayed only long enough to survey the bar - all keg - then crossed over to the **Queens Arms**. Points of interest include old prints of Tyldesley, a yellow pub directory, wallpapered beams and Romanesque tiles. Again, the pub is open-plan, and noisier outside than in. The sole cask beer, Hydes bitter, was well past its best, and with 'last orders' (the usual ones) fast approaching, we moved on.



The **Half Moon** is a rather sparse open-plan boozer, but with a games area at the back and a cosy corner near the toilets. The ceiling is low and the beams look as though they could be original. There are some attractive black-and-terracotta tiles around the bar area. Another nice touch is the Boddingtons bitter cellar award from yesteryear which can be seen behind the bar: only the nitrokeg version is available now! The one cask beer, Holts bitter, was in very good nick, bringing the night to an enjoyable conclusion.



## In the City

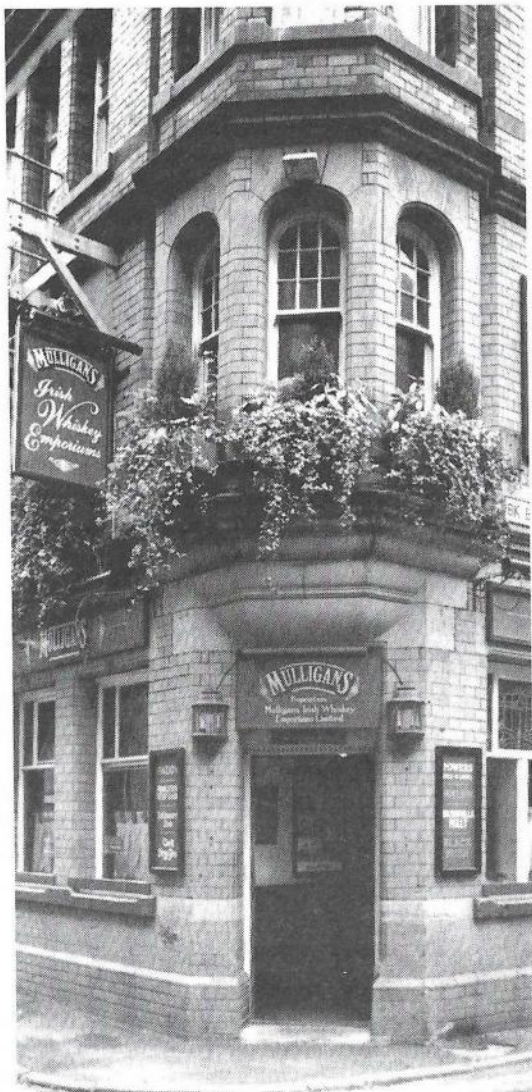
*Trotter returns...*

Disembarking from the last train at Salford Central, I made my way over the bridge to **Mulligans** on Southgate, off Bridge Street. The pub was reopened in 1990 by Roy Barraclough and, as the name suggests, there's an Irishness about the place. It is decorated with old posters and photos, including a collection of photos of Irish writers in the entrance. The one real ale is Wells Bombardier (£1.80), which has replaced Jennings Cumberland Ale.

Next, the **Rising Sun**, facing Lincoln Square, where the main entrance leads into the lounge area; the bar and vault area are to the rear of this long pub, which has another entrance on Lloyd Street. The three cask ales are Lees, Old Speckled Hen and Boddingtons.

**Rothwells** at the top of King Street is a spacious former banking hall, with elegant twin domes above an impressive horseshoe-shaped bar. The two real ales are Banks's bitter and Pedigree. The Banks's was only £1.09 on my visit (a Wednesday evening around 8.30pm), which must make it the cheapest pint in the city.

By contrast, visitors to the **Salisbury Ale House** are advised to take out a bank loan before buying a round of drinks. All the real ales are priced at £2.10 a





pint, including Theakstons Best Bitter. On a recent visit, six real ales were available and I sampled one of the three guests, Rocketeer (4.5%) before heading for the nearby Wetherspoons - the **Paramount** - for a more reasonably priced Summer Lightning at £1.55.

There were four real ales available at **Sam's Chop House** - Boddies, Taylors Landlord, Flowers IPA and Sam's Special. The bar area, with its flagged floor, is down a flight of stairs from street level and the restaurant is at the rear. The Sam's Special is brewed by Coach House and I was charged £1.20 - for a half!

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## Racecourse

The Racecourse Hotel on Littleton Road, Salford, has reopened and was recently selling Barnsley Bitter at £1.20 a pint. The pub, which was built by local brewers Groves & Whitnall in 1929/30, has been refurbished and the Portland stone exterior cleaned.

Members of the Revolving Door Appreciation Society will be pleased to note that the revolving door is still there.

## Game plan

The Boddingtons brand has paid for the exclusive rights to be official beer purveyor to the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. This means that only Boddies can be advertised in connection with the Games. Just when we were looking forward to sampling Robbies Runner, Hydes High Jump, Boggart Blood Test...





The Sixteenth

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# Rupert

Fiona thought Efrem Brobdingnag should be kicking up the daisies by now and rotating in his urn at what is happening to his hostelries. Yet none of us had seen an obituary. As Ophelia so succinctly put it, 'If the Grauniad can do a piece on the elder Drab, then surely some budding E J Thrubb would have penned an obit on Efrem.

After all, he didn't so much sell the family silver as melt it down, mix it with radioactive anthrax and bake cakes with it.' Some of us thought this a little unfair and expressed the view that we wouldn't have been at all surprised if young Perry Drab had cashed in his shares and beetled off to do something more interesting.

None of us could be described as a Brobdingnags fan. We spend all our time in timeworn Drabs houses (and places like Ratty's and Wedgie's), sipping their gong-winning amber nectars. Nonetheless we were all adamant that we should defend unto death the right of those unwise enough to drink Brobdingnags in perpetuity.

When Efrem reneged on his commitment to brewing and to tavern owning, his hostelries went to Goosegrease & Dishwater, who themselves soon gave up both ale manufacture and the ownership of tenancies. They flogged the hostelries to the Karaoke Bank, who sold them on to the Judy Tavern Company. And what do they want to do? They want to kick out Grotley's favourite amber nectar and replace it with Smugs Tykeley emetic.

We didn't think that Grotley folk would take this lying down, but what could they do? It's not much use boycotting your favourite pub; this would only make you miserable and bankrupt the licensee and it's not his fault. Trying to reason with people who are only interested in making brass is a waste of time, unless they can be persuaded it's going to hit them in the pocket. It may be crass to chuck out an amber nectar loved by all, but that's what they do.

As we cried into our gong-winning mild, we were unable to come up with a strategy. Our three cheers for Gordon Brown were a little muted.

## Making music

A Pub Music Trail is being held in Salford on the afternoon of Bank Holiday Monday, 6th May, featuring music at the Kings Arms, Bloom Street and the Crescent. Entry is free - ring 0161 834 2041 or contact the pubs for details.

## Weather permitting

John Willie Lees' Rain Bar on Great Bridgewater Street in the city centre is seeking planning permission to install a barbecue on the upper terrace - for use between April and September only.



# Branch Diary

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 7th May 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Welcome, Bury Old Road, Whitefield

Sat 18th/Sun19th May, Weekend Coach Trip to Shrewsbury/Shropshire. Branch contact has details.

Tues 25th May, Committee/What's Doing Collation, White Hart, Platting Road, Lydgate

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

## **North Manchester**

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

Wed 1 May, May Day Crawl: Mark Addy, 7.30. Albert Vaults, 8.15.

Ye Olde Nelson, 8.45. Crescent (Real Ale With Love) 9.30pm.

Wed 8 May 8pm, Social, Jolly Angler, Ducie Street, Manchester

Sat 11 May: National Mild Day crawl. Start Smithfield, Swan Street, Manchester, at 12 noon. Finish Crescent, Salford, early evening.

Wed 15 May 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford.

Wed 22 May, Castlefield and Deansgate Crawl: Knott Fringe Bar, 7.30pm; White Lion, 8.30pm, finish Ape & Apple 10pm.

Tues 28 May: What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, 6pm onwards.

Wed 29 May 7.30pm, Boothstown Social: Royal Oak (also looking in at the Greyhound).

Wed 5 June, Royal Jubilee Crawl: Queens Arms, Patricroft (next to Station) 7.30pm. Prince Albert Edward, Eccles Centre, 9pm.

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## **Wigan**

Wed 15 May 8pm, Branch AGM at the Orwell, Wigan Pier.

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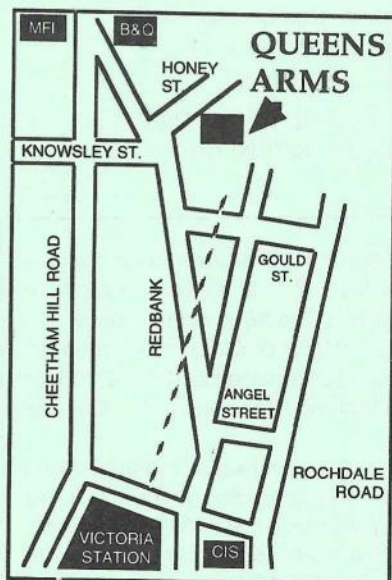
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