

30p

What's Doing

JULY 2002



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine



John Willie's **PUB OF THE YEAR**

Libby and Alex Main of the Royal George at Greenfield have won the 2002 John Willie Lees managed Pub of the Year award.

The tenanted Pub of the Year for 2002 is the Railway on Oldham Road, Royton. Pat Crabb has run the Railway for the past fourteen years and she was also the winner in 2000.

Andy and Lynn welcome you to

The Hare & Hounds

400 Bolton Road West,
Holcombe Brook, Ramsbottom,
Bury, Lancs.
BL0 9RY
Tel 01706 822107

Quite Simply REAL ALE AT ITS BEST

From brewers all over the country
Six handpumps - soon to be increased

Food

Our FULL menu is served 7 days a week 12-9.30

If that's not enough

We offer a no smoking area, Two real fires,
Thurs & Sun Quizzes starting at 9.30pm,
Beer Garden & Patio Area

Plus

Our next Beer Festival is planned for
28th October to 3rd November
With 70-plus beers

Opening Times

Open 12 noon - 11.00pm Monday - Saturday
12 noon - 10.30pm Sunday

Trotter's Ales

There were several beer festivals in the area over the Queen's Jubilee weekend, but owing to other commitments I couldn't attend the Stockport Beer Festival or visit the Stalybridge Canal Festival Beer Tent. However, I did sample most of the beers at the Jubilee Beer Bash at the **Britannia** in Farnworth.

The festival opened on the Friday evening with a rock disco in the pub, while the beer was flowing outside in the festival bar. It continued to flow until Tuesday 4th June.

Appropriately, Titanic Brewery's Rule Britannia was available. This beer is usually brewed in February and celebrates an era when British craftsmen produced vessels that slipped sweetly into the sea, and this beer slipped easily down one's throat.

That old favourite of the late Big Jim, Wobbly Bob, was available, and making its first appearance at the Brit Beer Bash were two from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, Boggarts Brew and Log End. Derwent Brewery supplied four ales, including a Royal Jubilee Stout.

While I was at the festival I was recommended to try the **Bridgewater Hotel** on Buckley Lane, Farnworth (near the Albert Road/Longcauseway junction). Here Sam Smiths OB Bitter is on handpump for only £1.17 a pint. The pub has a games room with pool table on the left, a long bar area down to the right and a separate lounge room facing the bar.

In the May edition of *What's Doing* it was reported that Boddingtons is the official beer purveyor for the Commonwealth Games in



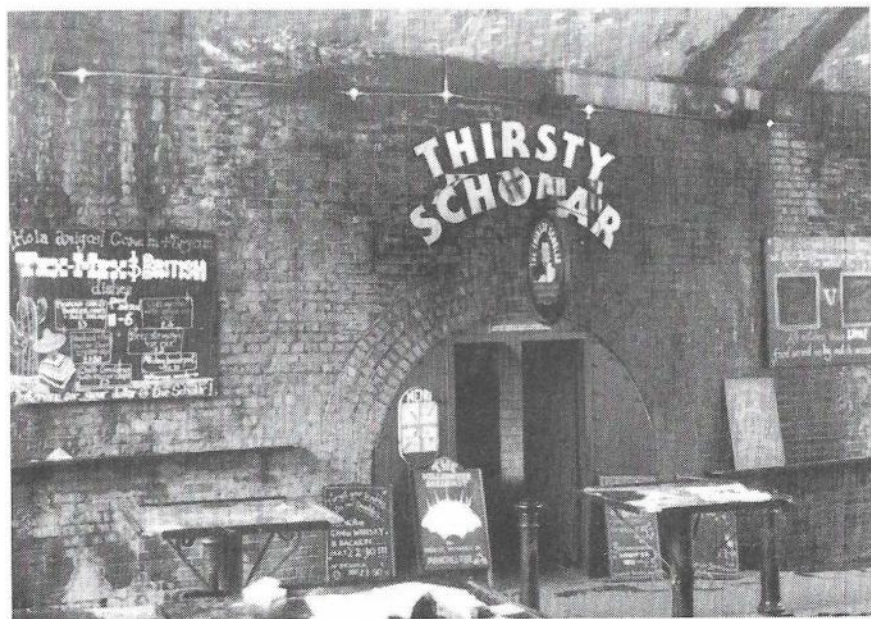
Manchester. Well, Boddies isn't the only brewery to brew for the Games, as Bank Top is producing two specials to celebrate the sporting events that are being held in Bolton. These are Spitting Feathers and Boneshaker, but I don't know what they taste like as I've yet to see the stuff served in a pub. Let's hope both are available during the events and that they outsell that bland brew from Strangeways.

In the City

The **Lass o'Gowrie** on Charles Street always has a good selection of ales and here I recently sampled the house brew, Lass Ale (4.1%), and Ushers Summer Madness. Other guest ales were Skinners Cornish Wheat Beer, Cains Englands Glory and Mouldens Midsummer Gold, alongside the regulars Black Sheep Bitter, Old Speckled Hen and Boddies.

Over at the **Thirsty Scholar**, two ales were available - Adnams Jubilee and Jewel in the Crown. I thought I'd check out the **City Road Inn** down Whitworth Street West, opposite where the Hacienda once stood. Unfortunately there was no real ale, so I headed for the **Knott Fringe Bar** and Manchester Bitter, an organic wheat beer from Marble Brewery.

I ended my session in the former umbrella factory on Great Bridgewater Street, the **Rain Bar**. This is J W Lees' flagship pub, with a beer terrace beside the Rochdale Canal. Five Lees ales were available, including Moonraker, but I stuck to the ordinary bitter.



Holts corner

Stewart Revell

Following on from last month's article regarding the reluctance of some Holts pubs to sell the handpumped version of mild, the brewery has written to all pub managers, stating that the company policy is that customers should always be offered a choice. The tied trade director at Holts was somewhat puzzled why only smooth mild was being offered in some pubs; the handpumped version is the preferred mild, with smooth available to those who like it that way.

Many peripatetic Holts mild drinkers had sent off postcards to the brewery, giving the names of the offending pubs. The comments have been taken on board and all at the brewery are on full alert for any further indiscretions. The pubs involved have been warned.

It was revealed at the company's AGM on 14th June that they had recently acquired the **Broadway** on Broadway, Moston. It is expected to close soon for complete refurbishment and then reopen in the style of a normal Holts establishment.

Wyldes, the new Holts pub in Bury, is due to open in September or October.

The following Holts pubs will be selling the new 4.3% Baton Gold. It will be £1.28 a pint in managed houses and more in tenancies and free trade outlets. The Baton Bitter (3.6%) will be £1.20 a pint in managed houses.

Angel Hotel, Knutsford	Friendship, Prestwich
Ape & Apple, Manchester	Griffin, Heaton Mersey
Black Dog, Belmont	Old Monkey, Manchester
Blue Bell, Blackford Bridge	Pepper Alley, Bolton
Brooklyn, Bolton	Railway, Lapwing Lane
Cart & Horses, Astley	Roebuck, Flixton
Cock o'Budworth, Cheshire	Waggon & Horses, Irlams o'th'Height
Crown & Anchor, Manchester	Welcome, Whitefield
Doffcocker, Bolton	Woodthorpe, Prestwich

stewart@revell62.freemove.co.uk

Bolton

Long-standing licensee Jim of the 2002 Good Beer Guide listed Black Dog (Holts) in Belmont village, north west of Bolton, has retired to pastures new. Recent reports suggest that the background classical music remains, as does the ban on mobile phones. However, the food menu now resembles the standard Holts fare.

In the town centre, the Goose on Deansgate has achieved the Cask Marque accreditation.

Wigan and district

Dave White

Some may assert that the further south one travels, the more fervently Royalist the population becomes. Personally, I don't believe that for one minute. Take, for instance, the case of the Cabaret Club on Gidlow Lane, Beech Hill, which reopened as a pub, the **Lady Bowes-Lyon**, just in time for the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. The former Queen Mum's connections with this part of Wigan are too well known to warrant further comment here, and only a republican could have dreamt up a name as dull and boring as the Beech Hill, which is what the pub was nearly called. Those hoping to mark fifty glorious years at the Lady Bowes-Lyon with a pint of traditional British beer were, however, disappointed, as the pub serves nothing but fizz. How Cromwellian.

Beech Hill is not the only area of Wigan to witness the resurrection of a pub, as the **Plough**, Atherton Road, Hindley, reopened at the end of May. The inn has been quite tastefully refurbished, and the landlord seems keen on real ale. Draught Bass is a fixture and there is a guest beer, most recently Everards Tiger. The news from the other end of Hindley is, alas, less rosy, as the **Minstral** on Wigan Road has gone over to keg beer following a change of management.

Leigh has a new pub in the form of the **Litten Tree**, where a Lord Street designer shop and estate agent's used to be. The interior of the Tree is similar to a standard J D Wetherspoon outlet, apart from the jukebox and a big-screen TV. The cask beers on offer to begin with were Courage Directors, Marstons Pedigree and something called Litten Tree bitter (the origins of both the name and the brew remain a mystery), but on a recent visit, only the Directors was available. As the wickets are obscured by a pillar until one is right up to the bar, this is hardly surprising.

News in brief: the word is out that the former **Butchers Arms** (*right*), Castle Street, Tyldesley, currently languishing as the Kiss nightclub, could soon be turned back into a pub... the flash floods of a few weeks ago left the **Alexandra Hotel**, Swan Lane, Hindley Green, under three feet of water. A source from the local press stated that there had 'been quite a bit of damage'... it now appears unlikely that the **Shepherds Arms**, Warrington Road, Lower Ince (WD May), will be converted into a nursery after all.



Around and about

with Daddy Bell

If a pub has something worth drinking, served by someone worth looking at, give it a chance. If it hasn't, forget it.

I was reminded of this old saw (from the forthcoming Salford Book of Unattributable Quotations) when I came to consider the recent mixed fortunes of the **Beer House** and the **Kings Arms**, Bloom Street. In the case of the former, the Beer Monster™ must be feeling (justifiably) vindicated; while the Kings has brought the unavailability of beer to the level of a fine art form. Maybe 'brighter visions gleam afar' for both pubs, but there have been too many false dawns for anyone to feel confident as yet about either of them.

But enough of doom and gloom: there have been many causes for celebration, and many pubs which continue to excel. The **Crown** at Heaton Lane, Stockport, for example, in the hands of Graham and Jeanette, offers a wide range of interesting beers, though the pricing policy (everything under 5% is £1.90 a pint) is a little strange. The Ossett Best Ruby Mild I enjoyed there a month ago had a good burnt toast aftertaste. The same day Porter's Sunshine was on incomparable ultra-clear form in the **Railway**, while the Porter was almost as good in its very different idiom.

Intrigued by Paul Roberts' piece in June's WD, I visited the **Racecourse Hotel**, Littleton Road, Salford, on 11th June. It in fact belongs not to the Barnsley Brewery of Elsecar but the 'other' Barnsley brewery, Oakwell Brewery. It reopened on 14th December, and Caroline has been its manageress since February. It is amazing that so much original glass and panelling has survived the years of closure. The vault and kitchen are still to be brought back into use, along with some eighteen guest rooms and a function room upstairs.

The central bar has eighteen handpumps in six ranks of three. I found the Barnsley Bitter (£1.20) sweetish and preferred the Old Tom (£1.15), a flavoursome dark chestnut mild. Of the two lagers, Acorn and Oakwell, the latter is the stronger at 5% (£1.50) and has proved very popular with regular customers.

Even hardened republicans must concede that there have been some very good Jubilee ales (and not a few lacking in lustre). I didn't



manage to sample the royal or football specials from the LAB, though a lunchtime visit to the **Lowes Arms** at Denton was rewarded with a tour of the brewery from Peter Wood. I did, however, consume numerous pints of Hydes Golden Reign (7%, £2.10 a pint!) in the **Crescent** without noticing any ill effects; and in the same pub I also enjoyed Plassey's recreation of Royal Wrexham Lager.

I thought *Opening Times* a little harsh in its judgement of the 5% Commonwealth Ale from Strangeways as 'frankly uninspiring'. Agreed, it wasn't enterprising, but I thought it worth a couple of pints, especially at £1.39 in **Lloyds No.1**, the only outlet for it I could discover. Still, it bore no comparison with Sulwath Galloway Gold fresh lager, another five percenter, which **Knott Fringe Bar** was selling at its standard £2 a pint: a flawless gold beer with a good citric aftertaste.

My pre-removal odyssey *au recherche du temps perdu* has yielded some unmemorable experiences, so I won't say anything here about Ashton or Rochdale. Buxton, too, was a little disappointing: Hardy & Hanson's Guinea Gold in their **Cheshire Cheese** was only tolerably tasty, though the Jekyll's Gold in the **Eagle** (Hydes) was a few notches better. The **Bakers Arms** on West Road was the most congenial pub in its low-ceilinged and dimly lit way, but even here there were no guests available, only Greene King IPA and Abbot, and Tetley bitter. On the other hand, a generous half of Falcon Bayerskt in a chunky Hoegaarden glass more than made up for this: a good



auburn Swedish beer, albeit from the keg gantry. The sight of a Winkle's pumpclip behind the bar reminded me of yet another long-lost micro whose wares I just missed drinking. Buxton has a special place in my life through family connections on the distaff side; but, all in all, the best drink there is the water, especially as it comes free and warm from the never-failing spring.

Now Huddersfield on 8th June, when everybody seemed to be heading in that direction on the train. Some got off at Stalybridge and ventured no further; others took a break at Marsden, and later provided reassuring news about the beer quality at the **Riverside Brewery Tap**. I headed straight for Huddersfield, and entered the 'other' pub on the station (rather than the **Head of Steam**) - the (Train) **Station Tavern** free house. Most of the pub is one large room with a stage and piano, but there is a small 'snug' bar with stools and armed forces memorabilia. I counted nine handpumps, several of them with reversed clips, and selected Gale's Jubilee Ale (£1.78, 4.5%).

On this occasion I didn't look in the **Commercial** (Sam Smiths) or Wetherspoon's new **Cherry Tree**; the **Shoulder of Mutton** at Lockwood was shut (I've yet to find it open), as was the **Star Inn** on Albert Street, which is earning a good reputation as a free house, Eastwoods and Taylors being regular bitters, with a succession of worthwhile guests. I made two visits to the **Rat and Ratchet** (ex-Grey Horse Inn), which has a much greater focus on micros nowadays. I started with Pictish Golden Jubilee and finished with Taylors Havercake Ale; but most of all I enjoyed the Rat's own White Mouse (3.7%), an intensely lemony very pale beer, well dosed with Centennial hops.

One visit is never enough when it comes to Liverpool. I returned there on 17th June for a pint of Cains mild (rich with roasted grain) in the **Globe** and a full range of Cains' special brews (including England's Glory Ale and Sundowner) in **Doctor Duncan's**. The festival at the **Ship and Mitre** was over, but some of the beers were still available



on stillage in the back room: I went for halves of Whitterus Organicus and the much more flavoursome Imperial Pint (both Anglo-Dutch). Then Tony Molineux appeared, fresh from singing shanties over the Low Countries, and summoned up Slater's Hot Shot (3.8%) from the cellar. Tony regards the Ship and Mitre as the epicentre of the Liverpudlian drinking scene, and is quietly confident about its future. Some electric lights have joined the gas fittings in the galley-like front bar; and the drinks continue to be dispensed in oversized lined glasses, for halves as well as pints.



Liverpool will need at least one further visit; so too will Sheffield, where I spent a mainly rainy afternoon on 24th May. I took the tram to Shalesmoor for my first visit to the **Cask and Cutler**. There were seven beers on in this quietly relaxing free house, all from micros: those I chose were Castle Rock Bullhead and Townes Spike, different shades of amber and both pleasantly soft. The **Fat Cat** was much busier in its 'ferociously independent' way, though the friendly resident cat is not really fat at all. Several Kelham Island beers were available, with other guests: I could not resist a half of Humpty Dumpty Broadland Gold (6%) premium bitter from a cask sitting on the bar. I was recommended to visit the nearby **Kelham Island Tavern** (ex-White Hart), which reopened in its new form in March 2002. (It opens all day Weds-Sat (3-11 on Mon-Tues), while the Fat Cat now opens all day on Fridays and

Saturdays.) There were seven cask ales on, including Beowulf Gold Work, a 5.1% clear wheat beer, and the ever-wonderful Pictish Blue Moon.

That leaves just one festival to report on, that of the **Boundary** at Guide Bridge, where a few of us gathered in the beer tent on 14th June to shelter from the squally rain. There was an extensive range of beers, in bottle as well as on gravity. I noted particularly the sweetish Clearwater Ramblers Special and the immensely flavoursome Brewsters Hogshead. Oddest of all was the Blue Anchor Bragget (6%), which was mildly grapefruity but not much else.

Around Salford

Ian Kenny

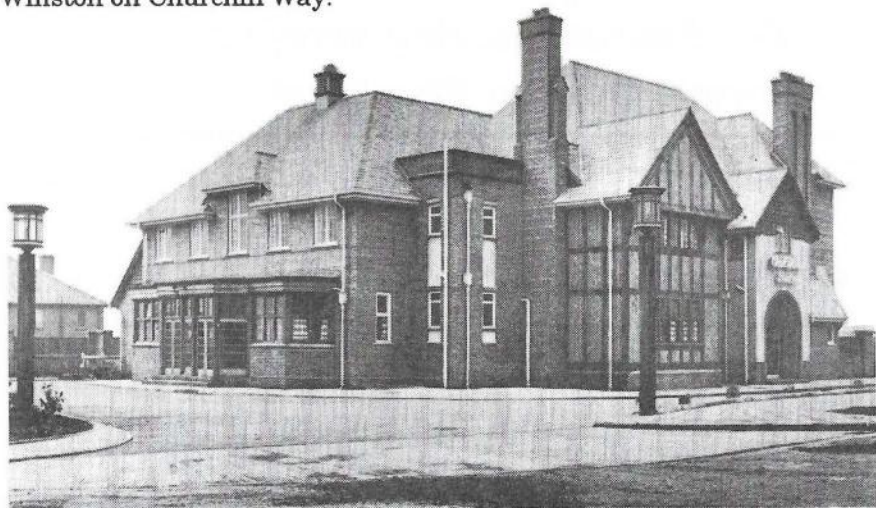
Salford Rugby League FC Variety Club on Willows Road, Seedley, is to be converted into a pub called the Willows Tavern. A Special Hours Certificate has been applied for, so that the premises can open from 11.00am to 1.00am Monday to Saturday, and from 12 noon to 12.30am on Sundays. Real ale has never been a feature of the club since it was built in the 1960s and this situation will probably not be remedied.

Yates' Wine Lodge on Chorley Road, Swinton, has also put in for a Special Hours Certificate. The hours will be extended from 11.00am to midnight Thursday to Saturday, and from noon to midnight on Sunday. Real ale does not feature here either.

Planning permission is being sought to demolish the Oakwood (*WD March*) on Lancaster Road, Salford, in favour of a residential development. The pub (*below*) is already closed and is believed to have been the scene of a recent arson attack. At the bottom of Lancaster Road, at the corner of Eccles Old Road, the Inn of Good Hope has been revamped and is now called simply The Hope.

Last month Daddy Bell reported that 'Kings Own Ale' was on sale at the Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford. I have it on very good authority (a former licensee of the pub, no less) that the beer is in fact John Smiths Bitter and is the result of an agreement between the pub owners and Scottish Courage.

After turning round the pub's fortunes, Andrea and John Lythgoe have left Holts' Newmarket in Pendlebury to go to the Abbey in St Helens. The new licensees, Sean and Claire, have come from the Flemish Weaver near Cross Lane, Salford. Claire's father runs the Winston on Churchill Way.



THE CRESCENT

SALFORD 0161 736 5600

OPEN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

10 cask ales always available

**HYDES BITTER - MOORHOUSE PENDLE WITCH
ROOSTERS SPECIAL - PHOENIX THIRSTY MOON**

Plus 8 guests including a Mild

Erdinger on draught, Liefmans Kriek + Quality Doubles Bar

Regularly Changing BELGIAN Guest Beer

OUR NEXT FESTIVAL

is from

Thursday 4th to Sunday 7th July

30 NEW BEERS

From Independent Micro Breweries

Food served all day except Sunday

(Normal Sunday Breakfasts at £3.20)

Food served every lunchtime from 11.30am (12.00 on Sundays)

Free Chip Barms Mondays 5-6pm

Weds 5-8pm Choice of Six Curries (Veg & Meat) + Rice - £3.20

Function/Party Room available for free hire

Buffets or hot meals provided on request

T.V. and Games Room.

Open for darts and table football

Riding the Irlam shuttle

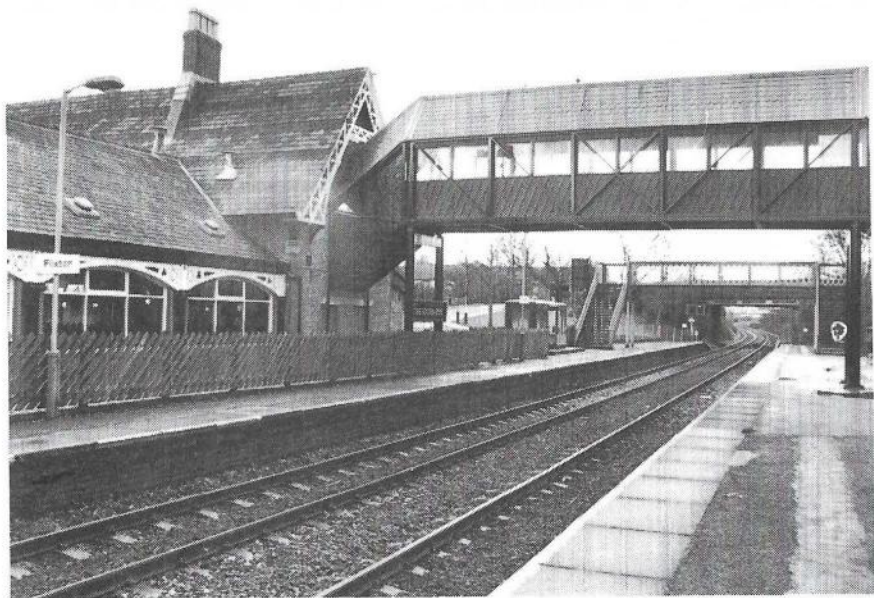
Neil Worthington

The Irlam shuttle is one of Greater Manchester's less busy trains. Once an hour it shuffles out of Oxford Road Station and heads down the Warrington line to Irlam. On the way it passes some interesting pubs.

Irlam itself has nothing to interest the cask ale drinker - the nearest proper beer is actually in Peel Green at the **Grapes**. So don't bother going to the end of the line; stay in the peninsula between the Mersey and the Ship Canal and enjoy a few drinks in Flixton and Urmston.

Flixton station once had a pub of its own. The station buildings were converted to a pub which flourished briefly but was then destroyed by fire. Some blame disgruntled patrons who'd been barred. Whatever the cause, **Brunel's Bar** is now a dismal blackened shell which should really be bulldozed.

Turn left on the main road and left again and there's good ale in Church Road. The **Greyhound** is a Beefeater kegfoodery with a disused handpump that once offered Marstons Pedigree, but the **Church Inn** next door is a comfortable Greenalls pub and a Good Beer Guide regular. The ales on offer are Greenalls Bitter, Robinsons Bitter, Taylors Landlord and, since the sad demise of Greenalls' own mild, Cains Dark Mild. Cains doesn't seem to appeal to the locals, so there may soon be another mild. The place has been opened out but retains something of the feel of a multi-room pub. As the name



suggests, it's next to the church, overlooking the graveyard at the back.

Back to the station and on to the next stop, Chassen Road. Is Chassen pronounced as in apple or as in hasten? I've never found out. A hop, step and a jump to the south takes you to the **Roebuck**, a magnificent Holts outlet. This is a huge pub, a monument to Brewers' Tudor. It still boasts a bowling green at the back and a splendid upstairs function room with beautiful timber trusses spanning the ceiling. Holts used the pub recently for their company AGM. Downstairs there are the usual three beers, mild, bitter and mixed, and there's a dining room, laid out with proper tablecloths. Food is served at lunchtimes and early evenings (last orders at sevenish).

On the north side is the **Bird i'th'Hand**, another Greenalls pub. This just offers Greenalls bitter but is handy for the local leisure centre and is not too far a walk from Urmston's local picture house, the Curzon.

And so on to Urmston itself, where the station features a modern booking office on one side and a gently decaying original building on the other. (I used to think it would make a good pub until I saw what had happened at Flixton.) Urmston has never had many pubs, though that doesn't stop people from writing to the local paper and claiming that the main road (two pubs and two wine bars, one currently closed) is like the Wild West on a Friday night. They've obviously never been to Wigan or Oldham, or even Peter Street in Manchester.

On a recent visit, the **Britannia** had more people behind the bar and



on the door than it had supping. It's keg, and it's up to let. The **Tim Bobbin**, the local Wetherspoons, was far busier and I've never seen John Wayne throwing people through the saloon doors there.

This is one of the cheapest 'Spoons in the whole chain. Prices have just been increased - to a maximum of £1.15 for cask ales, even for Hop Back Summer Lightning. The usual suspects are there - Boddingtons, Theakstons, Abbot Ale, Spitfire - but there are also two or three rotating

beers from small and regional breweries. Recent offerings included Ryburn Numpty from Halifax. Tim Bobbin, by the way, was the pen-name of Urmston lad John Collier (1708-1786), a caricaturist, poet and writer, best known for his Lancashire dialect writing.

From here, forget the train for a while and wander down to the **Nelson** on Stretford Road. This is another Holts outlet, less splendid than the Roebuck but still a vibrant community pub with good ale, a social club and a fiendishly difficult quiz night. Unlike many modern pubs, this is the sort of place where you can sit on your own and read a paper without some pubco minion insisting that the lights have to be dimmed.

The **Manor Hey Hotel** along Stretford Road is a very unusual place. Yes, it is a hotel, and yes, it does cask ales, usually two. Recent offerings have been Robinsons' seasonal beers, Theakston XB and Charles Wells Bombardier. They're a good bit pricier than in the Tim Bobbin - two quid plus - but this is a quiet, comfortable place to enjoy a slow pint, especially if you're having their excellent value Sunday lunch.

Further along is the **Urmston**, with a big banner outside proclaiming, 'newly acquired by J W Lees'. Unkind souls were heard to mutter that it had been acquired by Sarson's, such was the quality of the mild. Thankfully, the pub has given up trying to sell GB Mild to the locals and a decent bitter is now the only cask offering.

From here it's easy to get back on track at Humphrey Park Station,



just half a mile away. There's nothing worth stopping for at Trafford Park, so on to Deansgate and the delights of the **Knott Fringe Bar**. Formerly the Nowhere Bar and at some point the Smart Bar, this unusual venue has been selling real ale since August last year. From the outside, it looks a bit like a conservatory wedged into a railway arch. The interior is best described as eclectic. Furniture includes armchairs and a chaise longue. Food is upmarket toasted sandwiches, 'served on half a Ciabatta Slipper with Mixed Leaf'. Music is a mix of rock, pop and jazz classics played at a level that doesn't stifle conversation. And there are, of course, four or five cask ales, along with an interesting array of Belgian and German beers in bottles.

The house beer is Marble's Manchester Bitter. Other beers include one or more from Marble and there's usually something from Phoenix. But all sorts of brews turn up, with Salamander, Caledonian and Greene King represented recently. They're all priced at the kind of level we've come to expect around Deansgate Locks, £1.90 or £2 a pint, but it's a welcome haven and a real showcase for Marble beers.

The Urmston and Flixton peninsula is a fairly flat part of the world and very easy cycling country. The roads are quiet by 21st century standards and with the light nights upon us, a pub crawl by bike is quite an attractive option.

Independents Day Trip

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury CAMRA's annual coach trip, celebrating the art of the independent brewer, is on Saturday 6th July. The timings below are approximate.

- 1100: Meet at Phoenix Brewery, Green Lane, Heywood
- 1200: Lord Raglan, Nangreaves, Bury (Leyden)
- 1310: Pack Horse, Watling Street, Affetside (Hydes). Lunch Stop
- 1455: Dusty Miller/Arthur Inn, Crostons Rd/Bolton Rd, Bury (Moorhouses & Porter)
- 1620: Bridge Inn, Edenfield Road, Norden (Jennings)
- 1715: Healey Hotel, Shawclough Road, Rochdale (Robinsons)
- 1810: Cemetery Hotel, Bury Road, Rochdale (Free)
- 1900: Hunt Lane Tavern, Middleton Road, Chadderton (Lees)

Advance booking is essential.

Contact Alex on 0161 705 2875 or email robcamra@ntlworld.com

Contributors to this issue: Alex Koval, Paul Roberts, Roger Hall, Pete Cash, Ian Kenny, Paul Warbrick, Stewart Revell, Neil Worthington, Daddy Bell

Blackrod crawl

Dave White

We took the 617 bus from Wigan to the furthest point of our intended crawl, namely the **Ridgeway Arms** on Station Road. The Ridgeway is an elegant, multi-roomed interwar pub with comfortable chairs and a real fire. There is a function room at the back and a large dining area, as well as a main drinking area with an abundance of pottery and brassware. Magazines are available to read, possibly to give the place the feel of a hotel, an aspiration largely dissipated by the presence of games machines and large-screen TV. The pub boasts a bowling green, beer garden and outdoor play area. On our visit, the guest beer blackboard was blank, and only boring Boddies and Theakstons bitters were available. The bar service, however, was both prompt and polite.

A fifteen-minute walk along the A6 followed, until we reached the **Poacher** on the corner of Scot Lane. This pub is bigger within than without, but several alcoves around the main drinking area create an aura of cosiness, and it's quite easy to escape the TV and games machines, depending on where you sit. Numerous photographs of old Blackrod, a horseshoe-grate fire and even an hour-glass... all very 1960s. The stag whose head loomed over us looks as though it is smiling - unlikely but true - and this is the only pub I've been in that has an ox yoke hanging from the ceiling. This pleasant inn also has a beer garden. Cask beers were Burtonwood bitter and a guest, Caledonian 80/-. The latter was a tad warm, but okay.

Our next stop was at the **Green Barn**, further up Manchester Road. In contrast to the Poacher, this pub looks smaller inside than out. A three-roomed local with (original?) low beams in the smaller back room. The decor is Tudor, and points of interest include a cartwheel by the main entrance and a framed photograph of the Reebok Stadium on the wall. A tiny side room contains a pool table. Two outdoor drinking areas, one of which contains a 'Rolling Stone' (see for yourselves). Cask John Smiths and Tetley bitters were on offer, alongside Cains mild.

I then checked out the **Royal British Legion Club** across the road and was pleasantly surprised to find real Thwaites bitter on offer. One big room with a clubby, but friendly atmosphere. The wallpaper design was singular, and royal bunting and balloons were everywhere (well, it was Jubilee weekend). The beer was a little on the cool side, but at £2.18 for a pint and a half, was the best value of the night. There is a small entrance fee for non-members.

Our lucky run was broken at the **Red Lion** on Church Street. No real ale on this occasion, so we proceeded to **Blackrod Conservative Club** over the road. This consists of a small, single room with a low

ceiling. Doggedly unatmospheric, with only blue silk curtains to suggest the club's credentials. The sole real ale, Ruddles best bitter, hadn't been tried by the regulars before we came in. Their loss, as it proved the best pint of the night. The steward who accepted our peppercorn fee was prepared to wager that the club was one of the most miserable places I'd ever supped in. Not by a long chalk, it ain't!

We then made our way to the **Black Horse** on the street of the same name. This bare-boards boozer has changed beyond recognition since my last visit, many years ago. The Horse is now open plan, but with a separate pool room which, we were told, used to be a bowling alley. There are several local photographs to engage the interest of anyone not interested in the big-screen TV. Very much a young person's pub; even so, the 3.8% Bank Top Brydger bitter wasn't bad. Other real ales were Tetleys and Lees bitters.

And so to **Gallagher's** at Little Scotland. This is one of our favourite eateries, but the pub itself is comfortable: an open-plan area, divided by a wall. Local arts and crafts are supported here and you can admire the mariner's map if ikebana isn't your scene. The real ales on offer are a little on the safe side, but well-kept: Tetley mild and bitter, Boddingtons bitter, Black Sheep bitter, Taylors Landlord and (yes, really) Whitbread Trophy.

Shut

The George and Dragon on Ardwick Green South (*right*) is closed, boarded up and all the signage is missing. The building is up for sale.

Monton and Peel Green

The **Drop Inn** at Monton was selling Moorhouses Black Cat at the end of May. Apparently this highly popular beer features regularly as a guest.

Down in Peel Green, the **Grapes** (Holts) was surrounded in roof-high scaffolding and plastic sheeting. The inside was also being given a thorough redecoration.



Shropshire Weekend

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury CAMRA recently paid a weekend visit to Shropshire to see what that part of the county had to offer. Alex Koval was with them...

After a long drive we reached our first stop, the **Plough** at Wistanstow, the Wood Brewery tap. Unfortunately, the Parish bitter apparently came from the end of the barrel and tasted accordingly. This, and sampling some of the others on offer, did little to improve my perception of Wood's beers. However, my companions enjoyed some of the other beers on offer, proving taste is in the eye of the beholder.

I had rather better luck in the next stop, Ludlow. This charming market town nestles on the bank of the River Teme and boasts over 500 listed buildings. It also has one or two rather decent hosteleries. The **Church Inn** is a busy market pub and delivered a good pint of Wye Valley Bitter. The **Rose & Crown** teasingly ran out of Brakespeare, whilst the **Blue Boar** was very keen on Greene King. Unusually for such a town, the **Globe** was keg only and not surprisingly, it was also the quietest pub of the day.

Down the hill and over Ludford Bridge lies the **Charlton Arms**. This is an old coaching inn that offers a good selection of real ales - I enjoyed a pint of Hobsons and Salopian's Golden Thread before it was time to move on.

Next stop was the **Kangaroo** at Aston on Clun. I enjoyed the Roo Brew here, which is brewed by the Six Bells Brewery. This was followed by an excellent couple of pints of Hobsons at the **Ragleth Inn** at Little Stretton. The London Pride at the next stop, the **Compasses Inn** at Bayston Hill, wasn't quite as good. By now I had built up something of a thirst. Luckily, our evening stopover proved to be a real thirst quencher.

Shrewsbury, or Scobbesbyrig as the Anglo-Saxons knew it, is an historical town that boasts Charles Darwin as one of its famous sons. Indeed, his statue guards the entrance to the town's library. There is also a statue of Clive of India, who served as MP and mayor of the town. Of more relevance to us were several good pubs, either in the centre or within easy walking distance.

The **Dolphin** brewpub is not far from the station. A two-roomed 'drinkers' pub, it has several of its own beers on tap. Unfortunately(?), we didn't get to see all nine cats that inhabit the place; presumably mice aren't a problem here. Back in the centre, **Loggerheads** was that very rare beast nowadays, a four roomed traditional local. The

Coach & Horses was also very nice, offering us a beer from the distant shores of Heywood; Phoenix Arizona. Final stop of the night was the smoke free **Three Fishes**, where I enjoyed a pint or two of Adnams. The pub is renowned for its good food. I stuck to the beer, but a colleague thoroughly enjoyed the local trout.

Sunday rolled around, bringing with it the inevitable problem, Sunday licensing. This meant killing a little time at Bridgnorth waiting for the **Railwaymans Arms** to open. It was well worth the wait. Situated on Platform One of the Severn Valley Railway station, this is an ideal venue to enjoy a pint or two of Bathams.

Ironbridge, as in the famous gorge, was our next stop. Our destination was the **Golden Ball**, although I did also manage a drink at the nearby **Horse & Jockey**. This was offering Hopstone Bitter from nearby Worfield Brewery and quite nice it was too. Our last stop was the classic **Coalbrookdale Inn** in Telford. This really is a delightful pub, where I enjoyed both the Adnams Broadside and Beowulfs *Catcher In The Rye*. All too soon, it was time to be making the long journey home. Some enthusiastic and protracted goodbyes took place before everyone left, tired but happy.

Consuming passions

Paul Roberts

Figures for last year show that the Germans consume almost as much non-lager beer as the British. The Germans drank a total of 2,200 million litres of top fermented beers (Weizenbier, Alt, Kolsch, etc), while the British drank 2,300 million litres of non-lager beers (bitter, mild, stout, etc).

However, although lager-type beers are the British favourite, with consumption of 3,300 million litres, that is a drop in the fermenting vat compared to the German total of 8,300 million litres. Overall, the Germans average 130 litres per head, compared to a dismal 94 litres per head consumed by the British.

The trend to premium lagers is demonstrated by the recent statement from Dutch group Heineken, who say they are to discontinue the weaker (3.4%) version of Heineken brewed in the UK and only sell the 5% version.

Hamburg brewer Holsten introduced its Alt-coloured beer, Duckstein, into the UK in 2000 and will introduce three types of fruit beer later this year. Unfortunately, consolidation among the large German brewers is forcing them to experiment with silly beers instead of sticking to the winning formula of the excellent Reinheitsgebot-brewed, pure Pilsner types.

Listed pubs

Roger Hall

Many pubs in Greater Manchester have listed building status, which can act as a deterrent to the grosser excesses of brewers or pub owning groups. Listing covers the entire building - inside and out - so no alterations can be carried out without the appropriate permission being sought.

However, English Heritage usually emphasise the exterior rather than the interior. More detailed descriptions of interiors would act as an additional safeguard to the integrity of pub interiors. Some owners think if it ain't written down, you can do what you like with it. Some more writing down might go some way to stop them.

The disparity between external and internal descriptions is illustrated in the listing of the Marble Arch:

Public house. Dated 1888 in gable to Gould Street. Buff brick with polished pink granite to ground floor, hipped slate roof. Corner site. Two storeys; 5 bays to Gould Street with splayed corner and 2-bay return to Rochdale Road. The ground floor has a moulded plinth and a frieze and cornice carried round; a corner entrance recessed in a 3-sided granite columned porch with "Caernarvon" arches over; further entrances to the centre and left end of the Gould Street facade, both round-headed with 2-centred arched hoodmoulds; and "Caernarvon" arched windows, those on Gould Street coupled, with central colonettes. The 1st floor has similarly-shaped windows, that in the centre of the Gould Street facade under a pentice canopy and a gable with a terracotta panel dated 1888 and flanked by very tall corniced chimneys, 3 square-headed windows to the corner, and an enriched eaves cornice of red terracotta carried round. Interior with original decorative features including much faience work.

The 10th Annual Independents Day Treasure Hunt

BAR TREK

More Pubs! More Clues! More Beer! More Expensive!

Saturday 6th July 2002

Starts at 12.00 (doors open 11.30)

at the MARBLE ARCH, Rochdale Road, Manchester

Teams of 1 to 5 people. Free Beer for the Winning Team

Entry fee £2.50 per team (price includes supper)

Enquiries to Mike at RAVMADBAS@HOTMAIL.COM

or just turn up on the day

Rupert

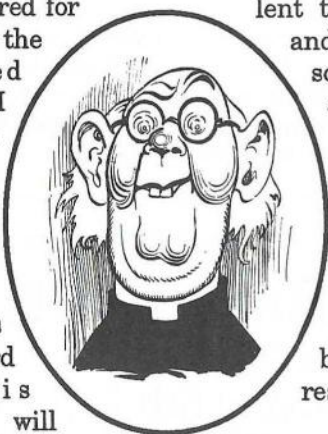
I put it down to my long association with Bunty. If someone disappears for some time and then re-emerges in Campaign circles, I automatically assume that they've been banged up in chokey. I know full well that there are many other reasons why this might be - family problems, job changes, death threats from career criminals, new hobbies and friendships - so my assumptions are usually unfounded. And so it was with the artiste formerly known as Tubby Bleachhead. He's not been seen for two years and the Smarmford and Slutch branch had soldiered on with one member for all that time. The rest had disappeared for a combination of the reasons described above. As far as I know, none of them is in Strangleways.

Dermatitis, it seems, has been honing his political skills and is at last one of Tony's men on Smarmford Council. His interpersonal talents will certainly be appreciated as much as they were when, as one of Wayne Bluto's predecessors as el supremo Grotley and environs, he stamped his not inconsiderable self-importance on the Region. No doubt there will be disagreements, but his propensity for suggesting that disputes be settled by taking

people outside should resolve them to the satisfaction of all.

For some time the selection of taverns by Smarmford and Slutch for inclusion in the toppers' vademecum has been less than democratic, consisting of proposals and votes of the 'I agree with me' kind. With Tubby's reappearance that should stop. Not that I have much faith in Tubby's judgement, but it's important that the process is seen to be fair. Far better a satisfactory process with poor outcomes than vice versa.

There may also be less discontent about Smarmford and Slutch's inability to look after their hostelrys. The Slumley branch lent them some twixt river and road some years ago so that they would have a toehold in Grotley centre. They've let them go to rack and ruin. Even wonderful new ventures like Nodal Edge have not been visited. To prevent reoccupation by Slumley, they should respond now.



Some good news and some bad news. The Reverend Nathan Blether, whose reputation has been restored since his nugatory 'underpants for horses' campaign, is up for the big one. If he fails to become Archbish numero uno, I expect he'll retire to some rural idyll to end his days.

Branch Diary

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 2 July 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Crown & Shuttle, Rochdale Road, Milnrow

Sat 6 July: Independents' Day Coach Social. Branch-wide campaign. See elsewhere in this issue.

Tues 30 July 8.30pm: Committee/What's Doing Collation, Healey Hotel, Shawclough Road, 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 July 7.30pm: Golden Lion (Holts), Blackley. Including possible Bowls Match.

Sat 6 July noon: Independents' Day Annual Treasure Hunt. Meet Marble Arch. £2.50 entry. Note new venue.

Wed 17 July 8pm: Branch Meeting, Crescent

Wed 24 July 8pm: Social, Ace of Diamonds (ex-Bird In Hand), Oldham Road. Smithfield, Swan Street, 9pm

Tues 30 July 6pm onwards: What's Doing collation, Queen's Arms, Honey Street

Wed 31 July: Wigan Crawl: Swan & Railway, 8pm. Bowling Green (Wigan Lane, A49) 8.30pm

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Wigan

Weds 17 July 8pm: Branch Meeting/Pub of the Year presentation, Anvil, Dorning Street, Wigan

Sunday 18 Aug 1pm: Branch Meeting-cum-Barbecue, Bowling Green, Wigan Lane, Swinley

Contact: John Barlow (01257) 478816 (w), 427595 (h)
email john@misltd.co.uk

Region

Weds 10 July 8pm: Crescent, Salford. Guest brewers from three micros

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'.

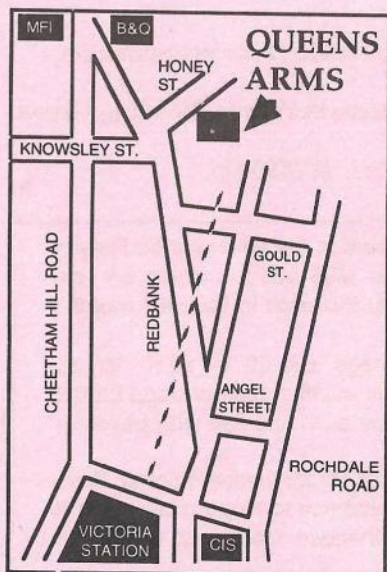
SUBSCRIPTIONS: £3.30 for six months, £5.80 for twelve months. Send cheque/PO together with your name and address to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW. Cheques made out to 'What's Doing'.

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

Try the fine range of beers supporting
independent brewers in their excellent free house!

Bantam Bitter £1.30 a pint
Taylor's Landlord Championship Beer
plus
Bottled beers from various countries

Open:
12 noon - 11.00 p.m. Monday - Saturday
12 noon - 10.30 p.m. Sunday



Beer Garden

Families Welcome

Hot & Cold Food

We're in the
Good Beer Guide
2002!

Telephone:
0161 834 4239