

30p

What's Doing

OCTOBER 2002



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

BEARTOWN IN COLLYHURST

The Junction on Queens Road, Collyhurst, has been taken over by the Beartown Brewery of Congleton and reopened on 11th September. The pub now sells Kodiak Gold, Bearskinful, Black Bear, Polar Eclipse and Ambeardextrous. Prices range from £1.30 to £1.40. Draught and bottled Continental lagers include Dortmunder Union (£1.85) and Krombacher (£2.10).

There is also real cider from the barrel.



The Junction has the deepest cellar in Manchester and all the beers were on top form recently - the Ambeardextrous was particularly notable. A refurbishment is planned, but there will be no changes to the original features of the pub. Mine hosts are Debbie and John Lewis, who previously worked at the Q Inn and the White House in Stalybridge.

Andy and Lynn welcome you to

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Dead Boddies?

Roger Hall

News that Interbrew were moving some kegging operations from Strangeways with the loss of 68 jobs was met with some optimism from CAMRA HQ. Tony Jerome was 'delighted' that the cask beer operation would not be lost to Manchester. But, hang on a minute, aren't we forgetting something here?

According to Franny Joyce, a local leader of the Transport & General Workers' Union, it is not just the kegging, but the associated brewing which is being moved out of Manchester. The surprising thing to real ale enthusiasts is that less than 20% of the Strangeways output is cask beer.

In a typical crapspeak employee announcement, Stewart Gilliland talks about Boddingtons Brewery becoming the centre for cask ale brewing and packaging in the UK. He goes on to say, 'Whilst the cask ale category is in decline, we are confident that we have the plans in place to protect Boddingtons by investing in it and growing it as a major brand in the North west and nationally.' And, 'these changes will enable the brewery to concentrate on its strengths as a centre for cask ale brewing and enable it to focus on the Boddingtons brand in its heartland, building on its heritage as a cask ale brewery.' (Cue violins)

Boddies, Flowers IPA and Flowers Original will continue to be brewed and 'packaged' at Strangeways. So that's all right then? Er, no.



Economic brewing depends on plant being utilised at or near capacity. If Strangeways is operating at less than 20% capacity, a global brewer will shut it down. They could, of course, move Stones, Hancocks, Worthington, Bass and the Museum Company ales from Burton on Trent and close that down instead. A likely outcome? I doubt it.

Shifting the brewing of non-real versions of Boddies out of Manchester is the thin end of a fat wedge. Notwithstanding assurances from Interbrew, Strangeways will not survive that reduction in output. A review in a couple of years' time will almost inevitably show that the cask ale brewing operation is uneconomic and they'll shut it down or move it to Burton on Trent. You don't become the biggest brewer in the UK and then squander that position by failing to rationalise. Brewery closures are an inexorable outcome of increasing concentration of ownership.

As the T&G press release says, 'Manchester cream turns sour with hypocrisy.'

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Ancoats CPO

Ancoats contains many listed buildings and many others are recommended for listing. Ancoats is on the Government's tentative list of sites for submission to UNESCO for World heritage status (along with Worsley and Castlefield). Perhaps because of this and the general dilapidation of the area, the inspector concluded that there was a compelling need for compulsory purchase.

CAMRA submitted objections to the inclusion of both the **Cheshire Cheese** and the **Edinburgh Castle** on the order, but said that it would not object if the intention was to retain the pubs. In the opinion of the inspector, redevelopment will increase local population and public houses will be a necessary amenity in the area. Negotiations with the owner of the Cheshire Cheese about refurbishment have not made progress and for this reason the pub is included in the order.

For some time the landlord of the Edinburgh Castle has wanted to expand into 17a next door to provide modern kitchen facilities, but has been unable to do so. In the view of the inspector, the CPO would facilitate this.

The dereliction of Ancoats, and the fact that few developments have taken place already, make the CPO difficult to argue with. Pubs in run-down areas don't survive. As the intention is to retain the pubs and revitalise the area, compulsory purchase makes survival more likely than doing nothing.



At the Festivals

Trotter

The **Britannia**, King Street, Farnworth, held its Beer Bash over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Up to eight handpulled ales were available each session in the specially created outdoor bar, and over two days I sampled a good selection.

Friday evening started with the 3.8% Summer Hog from Gales Brewery, apparently also known as Idle Pig. Next up was a pint of Two Pints, a good, full-bodied bitter and one of several from Cropton Brewery, North Yorkshire. It was then over to Hopsmacker, a golden bitter from Saddleworth Brewery.

I ploughed my way through the Yorkshire Moors, a strong, copper-coloured bitter from Cropton - and you could easily stumble after a few pints on the moors. I sampled some of Cropton's Haunting Hank, a light golden beer made with American duster hops, but it was not to my taste.

For most of the Sunday session I drank the 4% Doom Bar, brewed by Sharp's in Cornwall, which regulars and barman Paul agreed was the Beer of the Festival. Once we'd supped the Doom Bar, we moved on to the Tacklers Tipple from Three B's Brewery in Blackburn, a best bitter with a fascinating blend of dark malt and hops.

On Saturday 7th September it was up to **Ulverston** and the beer festival in the Coronation Hall. In response to ideas left in last year's suggestion box, this year's event showcased a greater range of Cumbrian and Northern beers. I started the afternoon with Summer Session from the Newby Wyke Brewery, Lincolnshire.

Hawkshead Brewery is the latest micro to grace the local scene, and Hawkshead Bitter and Best Bitter were available. I tried some of Charles Gough's Old Faithful from the Tirril Brewery, Penrith, and devotees of lager-style beers were catered for with Regal Blond from Oldershaw's Brewery, Lincolnshire.

At this point I took a break from the festival and had a pint of Hartleys XB in the **Bird i'th'Hand**, a street-corner pub opposite the now defunct Hartley's Brewery. Then it was over to the **Kings Head**, a former free house now owned by Jennings and selling five of their ales, for a pint of Cross Buttock.

Back in the Coronation Hall, Beyond the Pale from West York Brewery and Albert Ale from the Earl Soham Brewery, Suffolk, were sampled. I concluded my second session with a late addition to the range, Bronte Bitter from Goose Eye.

Wigan and district

Dave White

Real ale - Burtonwood bitter - has returned to the **Old Springs** on Spring Road, Kitt Green, though the regulars seem to prefer the nitrokeg version of the stuff, if my pint was anything to go by. Down on City Road, the **Brookhouse Inn** still sells Lees bitter, but the Tetley products have gone keg.

On the same road, **Kennedy's** keg emporium was virtually deserted. Perhaps the time has come to turn it into a decent pub again? The best bet for a good pint in Kitt Green has to be the **Latham House Inn**, Latham Lane, which offers Tetley bitter, dark mild and Lees bitter, all in fine fettle. Nice pub, too.

The **Eckersley Arms** at Poolstock has been revamped. 'And not before time,' one might add. The exterior has been brightly painted and the interior is now just one big room. The beer remains keg, however.



Further to last month's column, the **Conquering Hero**, close by Ince railway station, has finally been demolished. Three other pubs in Ince have been closed for some time, and the chances of their reopening as God intended them must be pretty slim.

Power to the People

The Bluebell in Monton has withdrawn its application for a Special Hours Certificate after the application for a Public Entertainments licence was successfully opposed by local residents.

In Central Manchester, Dorsey Street Residents' Association and Smithfield Residents' Association were successful in opposing an application by Cord Bar to extend its hours. The extension from 11.00pm to 1.00am was turned down by the Council.

Letters

Rose & Crown

Sir - Contrary to the report in last month's What's Doing, Martin Jones is still alive and kicking at the Rose & Crown on Manchester Old Road, Bury, offering real ale from eight handpumps until further notice. But watch this space.

Dave Hallows

Wetherspoons

Sir - When recently asked what were my criteria for a good pub, my immediate thoughts were: 1. A choice of real ales (preferably at a reasonable price). 2. A convivial atmosphere. 3. No loud music. 4. A smoke free area. It then struck me that one pub company, J D Wetherspoon, fulfils my requirements on three counts (number 2 being the exception). Can anyone therefore explain why I should find Wetherspoons pubs so AWFUL?

Phil Stout

The best possible taste

Sir - In response to our kid's conundrum (*'Tasting Phenomenon' - Trevor Crookell in WD August*) concerning perceived differences in the taste of cask conditioned ale when being tried prior to ordering, and why samples invariably taste better than the pint, I would like to propose a theory.

I, too, have noticed the phenomenon (or maybe I'm just humouring him) and it is probably to do with temperature and aroma.

When a small 'taster' volume of beer is dispensed into a larger glass which is at room temperature, the beer will warm slightly, drawing heat by conduction from the glass. When the pint arrives, the far greater volume of liquid would draw a negligible amount of heat from the pint glass and so the sample will be slightly warmer than the pint.

A small volume of warmer beer in a taster glass will have a higher concentration of aromas held within the glass when tasting than would be detected from a full pint, where the aromas are quickly dispersed into the atmosphere.

Well, that's my theory anyway.

Dave Crookell



Smithfield festivals

The next beer festival at the Smithfield on Swan Street begins on 24th October. After that, there is the Second Smithfield Lancashire Beer Festival, to be held on or around Lancashire Day, 27th November.

Unsung Quarter

Some pubs in Manchester's Northern Quarter don't get mentioned as often as others. Dave Hallows redresses the balance...

I visited **Mother Macs**, hidden away in Back Piccadilly. This is one of the few small, back street pubs to have survived the developer's bulldozer. It seems to have good support from regulars and Boddingtons bitter is on handpump in the interesting, L-shaped saloon bar.

Next, the **Crown and Anchor** (Beer Emporium) on Hilton Street, not to be confused with the Holts pub of the same name on Cateaton Street. Ten



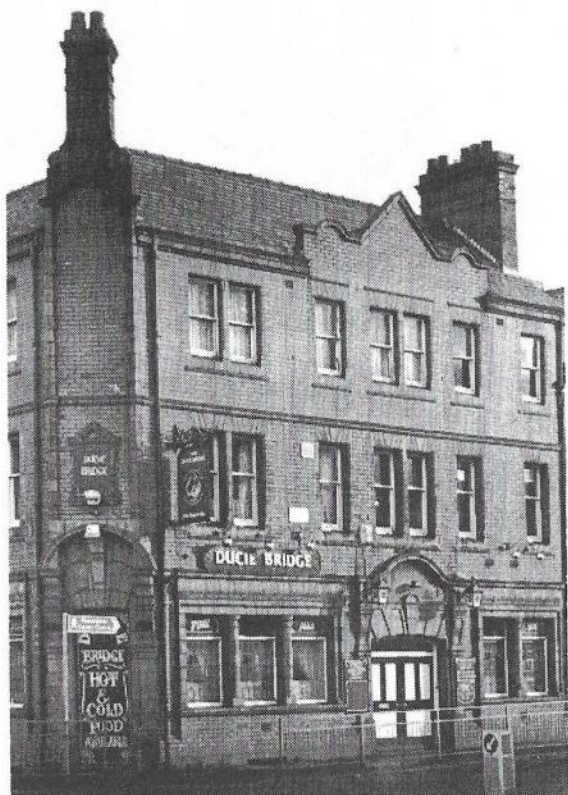
years ago this was a must for the real ale drinker and now, after some years in the doldrums, the pub is making a comeback. The real ales were Taylors Landlord, Adnams Bitter, Fullers London Pride and Black Sheep Special 'strong' bitter (only 3.8%, but a well-balanced session beer). I also tried Adnams Bitter (3.7%) - a good, dry, hoppy beer.

The real ale at the **Land o'Cakes** on Great Ancoats Street is Holts Bitter. Redecoration, inside and out, was in

progress when I called. The saloon bar decor is a clash between oak panels and mahogany-coloured leatherette seats; the main rooms are similar, but with textured cream wood panels and a textured cream central bar, giving a 'club' feel.

Entering the **Millstone** on Thomas Street, I saw a sign announcing 'In Beer We Trust'. It was my first visit, as the pub was a real ale gain some months ago, and I was surprised to see Theakstons Cool Cask was the beer on offer. Designed for young people, it is usually 'cool' at 10°C. I found it not cool, but pleasantly at the right temperature. I saw, for the first time, the beer's mid-brown colour (instead of the murky brown sludge in the 'cool' version), and it had a

pleasant, slightly
malty sweetness.
Congratulations, the
Millstone!



The **Ducie Bridge** on Miller Street is a former Wilsons house that still has two Wilsons lanterns outside - and they still work! Inside, I found an impressive oak and tiled long bar serving John Smiths Cask, Tetley Bitter and Boddingtons Bitter. I tried Tetley Bitter and found it well-kept and mature.

On Corporation Street there is the **Crown and Cushion** (Holts) serving bitter and mild. This pleasant pub is well worth a visit.

Finally, I visited the **Pot of Beer** on New Mount Street. Hidden away behind the Beer House, the pub is a jewel for beer quality. There was Porterquack Beckett's Bullseye (4%), Scattor Rock Cordon Tor (4.3), Phoenix Enville Ale (4.5) and Robinsons Hatters Dark Mild. Genial hosts Paul and Sue have made the Pot a friendly place to eat and drink (food is recommended, especially the real chips); it's a good meeting place for the start of a crawl, or somewhere to linger. I lingered.

Westhoughton

Dave White

We caught a 540 bus from Wigan to the **Grey Man**, Bolton Road, Daisy Hill. A cobbled courtyard and a porch-like entrance lead into a two-roomed local. The lounge was full of rustic Victorian prints and old advertisements. There is also a conservatory and beer garden. Live music Saturdays. The sole cask beer, Tetley bitter, vies with smoothflow for bar space, but was on form.

A brisk fifteen-minute walk took us to the **Bridge Inn** on Wigan Road. Another two-roomed local with a big screen TV and an emphasis on football. The lounge has a central fireplace and a collection of pot dogs. Karaoke is king on Friday and Sunday nights, whereas live bands perform on Saturdays. Real ales include Greene King Abbot, Grays bitter and Boddingtons bitter. Cask Tetley mild was advertised on the blackboard above the bar, but was actually dispensed from the little box in the vault for Whitbread mild. Hmm.

Our next stop was the **Hartcommon**, further down Wigan Road. This is a three-roomed local, with a pool room, games room and lounge. The lounge has a television and a personalised mirror over the brick fireplace. Lots of brassware, trophies and arched windows. Theakstons best bitter is the only traditional ale, but was eminently quaffable on our visit.

A bus then took us to the centre of Westhoughton and we alighted outside the **Victoria** on Market Street. The pub is keg, however, so we crossed the road to the **White Lion**, a classic Holts boozer, now tastefully refurbished and upholstered, and with a marvellous bar of dark wood and etched glass. On this occasion, sadly, the mild was tired, the bitter not bad.



Elsewhere on Market Street, the **Wheatsheaf** was keg, as was the **Red Lion** on Church Street, so we backtracked to the **Robert Shaw**, the new J D Wetherspoon outlet. Points of interest include an aerial painting of the town on the stairs and a modernist statue of a man, constructed from wood and metal, over the door. The pub has just received Cask Marque accreditation, so the beer tends to be on the cold side: but Wheel Ale, a 4+% golden brew, was the Pint of the Night for me. (Unfortunately, I couldn't find out who brews it.) Other ales included Cains mild, Theakstons best bitter, Oakhill Mendip Gold, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Courage Directors, Wood's Wonderful and Hopback Summer Lightning.

PS. The Grey Man is one of only two pubs in Daisy Hill currently offering real ale. The **Daisy Hill Hotel**, which used to sell Hydes, has gone keg, and the **Three Crowns** on Lower Leigh Road (formerly Burtonwood) has been closed for some time. Holts ales are still to be had at the **Rose Hill Tavern (Bug)** by the station.

A Real Turn Off

Minnie the Moocher

CAMRA has introduced the 4,000-year-old 'Ninkasi, Goddess of Beer', in order to 'attract women to British beer.' Three women are featured in promotional leaflet: two voluptuous - one dark and clothed, the other blonde and (nearly) naked (that way only redheads in pyjamas will be offended) - and one in anorak with bespectacled man (presumably to appeal to the minority of intelligent women).

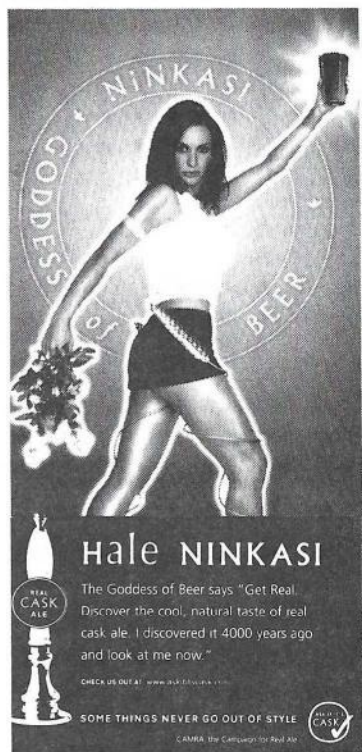
CAMRA's 'research' found that 22% of women don't drink real ale because it isn't promoted to them; 17% of women think it is old fashioned, 17% think it will make them fat, but 19% would try it if it was served in a stylish glass.

Well, if you ask stupid questions, you'll get stupid answers. This is supposed to be aimed at 'the key 25-35 year old market'. Haven't they noticed that most women of that age are too busy with careers, families or (more usually) both to be bothered with such trivia?

Sadly, CAMRA's response is even dumber. The leaflet proudly informs us that 'real cask ale contains NO FAT at all!' Yes, dear, we know - we still do most of the cooking. We also know that it contains carbohydrates (sugar) which puts weight on you if you ingest more than you work off.

On the plus side, there is a quite sensible line about buying locally brewed beer and so helping the local economy. I assume that this was put in by the token woman on the press team.

The leaflet declares, 'In those days men worshipped Ninkasi and women were in charge of brewing as well as running taverns.' Obviously brighter than we are today, then. Actually, there was a Babylonian goddess Nin khar sag ('Lady of the Mountain'), whose real name Nin-lil meant 'Lady of Power'. Wonder why they didn't use that? Perhaps 'Lil' sounded too common. Pity they didn't read as far as the bit which pointed out that she, like most goddesses in Babylonia, was 'overshadowed by her male counterpart'.



The promotion is simply an insult to women's intelligence and will only put them off. If CAMRA wastes any more of my money on this rubbish, I shall seriously consider cancelling my membership. And don't go and replace the Ninkasi models with pictures of sexy men. The one thing real ale doesn't do is enhance a man's performance (all right, you might be OK after a couple of pints, but in the 25-35 age group we're talking more than that).

Why can't real ale be advertised for what it is - a pleasant drink, available in a variety of forms? You could still use the sexy pictures, it would save on paper and it would be true - now that would be a novelty.

Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

Joseph Holt's latest pub, **Wylde**s in Bury, opened on Friday 13th September. In keeping with the company's new strategy of attracting the younger drinker, the former LloydsTSB bank building has been turned into a very modern looking pub, similar in style to the Pepper Alley in Bolton. The decor and fittings are of a high standard and there are several screens about the place for viewing videos and sporting events. There is a large bar area on the ground floor and a flight of stairs leads to the mezzanine (a sort of well appointed shelf).

This is the third Holts pub not to have any indication of the owner on the outside of the building - but once inside there is no doubt that it is one of Joey's by the array of handpumps dispensing bitter and mild. Beer prices (pre October increase) are 144p for bitter and 132p for mild, reducing to 135p and 129p during the 2pm-8pm 'happy time'. The guest beer on opening was the IPA from Rudgate Brewery, Tockwith, York. Meals are provided from 11.30am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and 12noon to 4pm Sunday.

Wylde's is run by Peter and Karen, who had been at the **Railway** in Didsbury since it opened about eighteen months ago.

It is likely that the **Broadway** in New Moston will reopen after refurbishment in mid-October.

A new Holts beer, the 4.5% **ThunderHolt**, will be launched in Real Beer Week at the beginning of October. The pre-increase price will be 128p a pint.

Bolton Beer Festival

Up to 200 beers, including the latest brews from Bank Top Brewery, are promised for the biggest pub festival in the country. The ninth Howcroft Inn Beer Festival runs from Weds 9th to Sun 13th October.

Farnworth & Kearsley

Phil Stout

We started at the **Railway** at Moses Gate, a large Holts house with a weather-worn exterior. Inside, there is a small vault and large, opened-out drinking area dominated by a giant screen television and loud music (the music was not related to what was showing on television). The consolation was a decent pint of Holts mild and bitter.

We then walked up to the centre of Farnworth, passing several keg pubs on the way, to the **Britannia**, a thriving pub near the bus station. We had missed the beer festival by two days and the only real ale available was an excellent pint of Moorhouses Premier.

Moving towards Kearsley, we passed more pubs with no real ale and the saddest had to be the Market Tavern. This former Good Beer Guide pub had seven handpumps on the bar and not a drop of real ale between them. In Kearsley, the **Clock Face** is an excellent traditional local with lounge, snug and vault, and the beers on offer were Tetley mild and bitter and Holts bitter.

We then hopped on to a number 8 bus to the **Clifton Park Hotel**. This residential establishment is aimed mainly at diners, but it does have a changing guest beer, which happened to be Monk Ale. Unfortunately, after the first four pints had been served, the barrel finished and as the management had no plans to put on a replacement, the rest of us moved down the road to the **Robin Hood**, an impressive building where again the emphasis is on food. So we finished the crawl with all that was available, a somewhat insipid pint of Tetley bitter. This we consumed outside in the beer garden, where the roar of the traffic on the M60 was several decibels lower than the amplified noise booming from the speakers inside.



Bazens' Brewery

Richard Bazens' new microbrewery is officially launched on Saturday, 12th October, but beers started appearing in a few select outlets in September. Pete Cash and Phil Stout were treated to a preview...

Nestling near the back corner of the small, pleasant Agecroft Enterprise Park in Swinton, the brewery occupies a single unit - essentially a large, rectangular room with thick walls and an enormous up-and-over front door. When we arrived at 11.00am, Richard and Jude were already hard at work in a space dominated by seven cylindrical stainless steel vessels of various sizes. Most of these are insulated with PU foam covered with a reflective silver finish, and comprise the hot liquor tank, mash tun, copper, racking vessel (not yet used), two fermenters and a caustic wash container.

An elaborate system of stainless steel pipes and valves connects them together, along with copper water pipes and plastic hose of various diameters. Because the brewery is so new, not all features are fully commissioned and Richard is fitting in this work between brewing operations. A large pile of sacks of malt of various types occupies a corner near the door. Beyond these, taking up most of the right hand wall, is the cold storage cabinet; a simple but effective concept using the same metallized PU one inch thick sheeting for insulation, with a fan blowing through an old car radiator coupled to a cooling unit, providing cold air from the end near the door. An expected benefit is that the outlet for this cool air is close to the 'office' area in the back corner, providing a pleasant working environment in hot weather. A new cooler had been obtained but wasn't yet plumbed in, as the current one is having difficulty getting the temperature down.

It was soon time to sparge the mash. The brew was FlatbaC, which we had sampled the night before in the Albert Vaults, Salford. A powerful pump transferred some of the runnings from the mash tun into the copper. At this stage we could see exactly what was

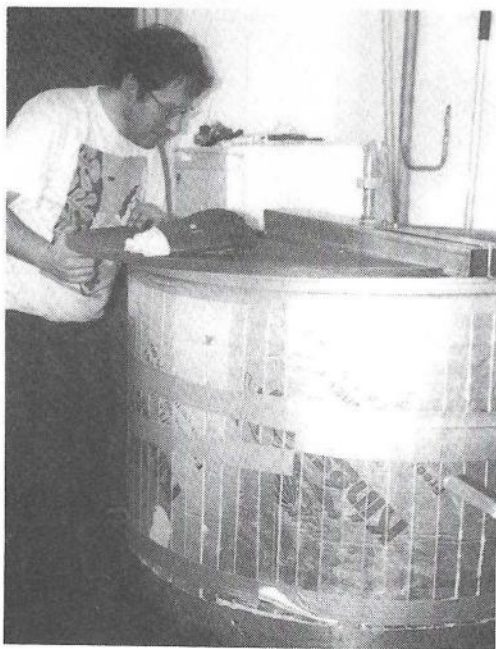


Richard attaches the door to the copper ready for boiling

going on through a large circular port in the side of the copper. The electric heating elements comprise a 6kW single phase and a 12kW 3-phase, giving a good degree of control over the vigour of the boil. Richard then started the sparge; a conventional rotating sparge arm sprinkles hot liquor on to the top of the mash. There was a good deal of stopping and starting of the sparge and of the outlet pump, in order to keep the system in balance.

Eventually, Richard was satisfied that the elements were covered and proceeded to attach the circular 'door'. Curved to match the contour of the copper, it is held in place by about a dozen large hand nuts which have to be carefully tightened to ensure uniform pressure all round. The seal is provided by a large gasket permanently attached to the copper. When closed, it is reminiscent of something out of a Jules Verne submarine. Eventually the hand nuts will be replaced by hexagon nuts and an electric torque spanner will ensure even tightening.

The power to the heaters was turned on, when a curious but unexplained throbbing vibration was set up in the copper; this stops when a full boil is reached. Another interesting feature of the copper is a unique condenser which is connected to the cold water main, uses hardly any water yet completely prevents any steam escaping. The principle behind this is highly secret!



Checking the state of the sparge

Whole hops are added through a square door in the top, but we didn't see this, as sparging was still going on by the time we had to leave, and the wort hadn't started to boil. Hop varieties are Fuggles and Golding, two New Zealand types and some Styrian, nearly always in combination to get the right balance of characteristics regardless of seasonal variations. When the boil is complete the hot wort is pumped out of the bottom of the copper, but initially returned to the top, until the hops have bedded down and formed a filter for the protein

break. Once bright wort is emerging it is diverted to a conventional paraflow for cooling prior to yeast addition.

When fermentation is deemed to have reached the right point, a large cooling unit is brought into action and chills the beer to 9°C, causing it to drop clear. Currently Richard is producing Navigator (3.8%) to the original Bridgewater recipe, and FlatbaC (4.2%), an extremely pale beer using a fair proportion of lager malt.

Autumn beers are likely to be Bazens' Best Bitter (4.5%), Bomber Ale (5.5%) and Rees's Resurrection (5.2%) which will strongly resemble Delph Porter. Next summer may see a lager brewed with genuine lager yeast. Bazens' distinctive beers can currently be enjoyed at the Albert, Crescent and Kings Arms in Salford, the Smithfield in Manchester, the Crown in Stockport and, coming soon, the Wishing Well in Heywood.

Black Friar

The Black Friar on Blackfriars Road/Trinity Way in Salford (*WD Sept*) has closed and there has been a planning application to turn the building into offices.

The pub was built by Boddingtons in the 1880s, when Salford Corporation was making some street improvements following the construction of Blackfriars Road. The road cut across King Street, where Boddingtons had a beerhouse called the Old School Inn and this licence was transferred to the new building in August 1886. The words 'My Old School' and the motto 'You may go further and fare worse' can still be seen in the stonework on the King Street (Trinity Way) side of the building.

The Black Friar was renovated by Boddingtons in 1988, retaining the traditional layout, and in 1994 it became a Grade Two listed building.



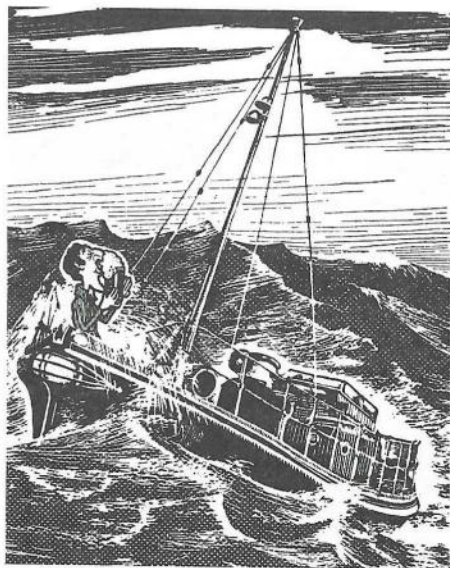
Island Ales

Real ale in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Part Two) by Sidney Sporrán

I last visited the Western Isles in 1984 (Skye's the Limit, WD Sept 1984) and was interested to know how much had changed over the last eighteen years. This time we were off to St Kilda and would be staying in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis overnight. A little research through CAMRA contacts and the internet revealed that the Isle of Skye Brewery had one outlet on Harris and that a new brewery, the Hebridean Brewery Company, had started up earlier this year in Stornoway. A telephone call to the brewery established that there were two outlets on Stornoway itself, the Whalers Rest and the Royal British Legion.

On the way up to Skye we stayed in Fort William. The range of beers in the GBG-listed Grog and Gruel was a little disappointing and the ambience a little glum, so we sought and found the only other real ale outlet in the town, the Nevisport Bar. This was a most unlikely real ale outlet, but served a well-kept pint of the excellent Red Cuillin from the Isle of Skye Brewery. All beer in Fort William was £2.20. The town itself is awful - a bypass effectively separates Fort William from the loch and tasteless concrete developments are 'like a carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend' (HRH Charlie-boy).

Over the sea to Skye, this time by the very reasonable Kyle of Lochalsh bridge (a snip at £5.70). In 1984 the ferry terminal pub at Uig sold Heriot 80/-. That's gone, along with all the other ales I found



in 1984 - Strathalbyn, Alice and Bass Greenmantle. The Isle of Skye Brewery is right next to the pub and Red Cuillin is on sale. Transport costs are evidently the reason for the price - £2.35 a pint.

On the ferry to Tarbert in Harris and then by bus to Stornoway. The Whalers Rest, the first of our Hebridean Brewery outlets, describes itself as a restaurant. This must be some cunning ploy to circumvent local laws which mean that even the golf course is closed on Sundays. Inside, it was more like a pub than most bars in Scotland. 'Two pints of

Hebridean, please.' A brown, foaming sludge emerged from the handpump and then the barrel ran out. The new barrel, unfortunately, was little better.

Islander Strong Premium Ale (4.8%) is described on the brewery website as 'deeply ruby in colour and predominantly malty with robust hopping to match'. The beer didn't really match this description, although, in fairness, it tasted better than it looked, but not much. We thought we would look in at the British Legion. Here the beer was marginally better, but it was not a session beer and, after two, we went for a curry and retired ready for the journey to St Kilda.



The islanders left St Kilda in 1930. Since 1957 there has been a permanent population of people looking after the missile tracking equipment. This group of twenty is supplemented every summer by conservationists, sheep enumerators and visitors. So there's a pub - the Puffinn. This is, without doubt, the remotest pub in the UK, about forty miles to the nearest bit of land. Of course, real ale was there none.



Back on Harris, we stayed overnight in Tarbert. The bar next to the Harris Hotel would be serving Isle of Skye beers. Alas, the pump clip was turned round and all that was on offer was Hebridean beer. But this was Clansman Ale (3.9%), not Islander. Two halves were converted into pints and another couple of pints followed. There was some talk of gas, but whether this was to blanket the beer or to assist the handpumps, I was unable to discover.

Early ferry to Skye, over the bridge and lunch at the Clachaig Inn at Glencoe. Owned by the same outfit which runs the Grog and Gruel in Fort William, the Clachaig serves a range of brews from independents as well as English beer - Ind Coope and Tetleys on our visit. A veritable oasis.

I suppose since 1984 things have improved. Skye Brewery ales are excellent, if expensive. If Hebridean can get its act together, we may even see a permanent presence of palatable real ales in the Western Isles. Roll on 2020.



The Town Hall Brewery

Alongside Salford Town Hall there is a two-storey building with some fencing round it and notices warning the public that the site is due for demolition. A sign on the corner shows that the place was last used by an engineering firm and the only other decorations are the words 'Heath Out' daubed on one of the walls - 1970s graffiti that has survived quite well.

The building is on Ford Street and next to it on Cleminson Street there is another derelict property, also surrounded by fencing and recognisable as a 1960s-style pub. This was the Town Hall Tavern, shut in the 1980s. The Ford Street building was the Town Hall Brewery. This closed in the 1890s, a casualty in an era of mergers, takeovers and bankruptcies in the local brewing industry.

The Town Hall Brewery story begins in the 1820s, when a rope manufacturer called John Cleminson acquired over 8,000 square yards of land between Ford Street and George Street and built a house on one corner of the site, next to a new street which he called Cleminson Street. In 1826 he obtained a licence and the house became the Cricketers Arms. A few years later it had been renamed the Town Hall Tavern.

Like many public houses of the time, the Town Hall Tavern had a brewhouse and Robert Ward, the licensee from the 1840s to about 1870, was also a brewer. John and James Ward took over and the brewery was enlarged to occupy the land bounded by the pub, Ford Street, Lupton Street and Melville Street. William Midgley, a brewer from Leeds, took over in the 1870s and the 1881 census records that



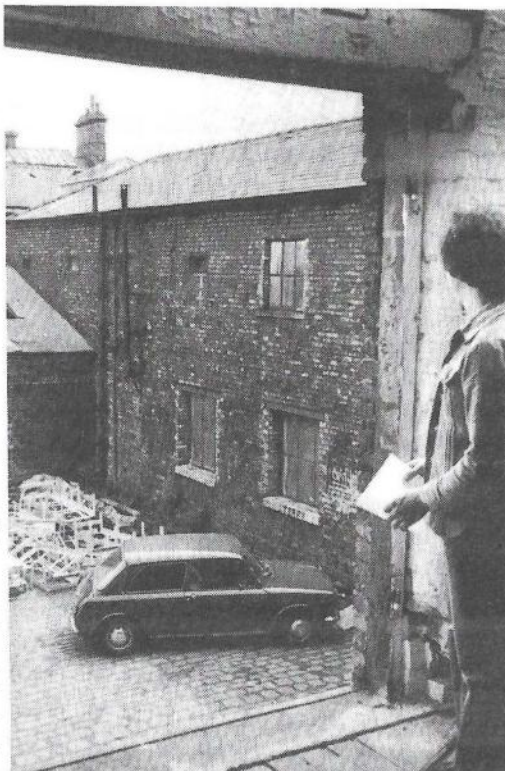
he was employing nine men at the Town Hall Brewery.

In 1889 a limited company, the Salford Brewery Co Ltd, was formed, but this was not a success and three years later the liquidators were called in. There were two freehold assets: the brewery, with its steam engine and brewing plant, and the Town Hall Tavern. The company also had short leaseholds on twelve licensed houses in Manchester and Salford. The purchasers were Chesters Brewery of Ardwick.

Chesters gave up five of the leaseholds and eventually bought the other seven properties. The brewery buildings were taken over by a joinery firm and were later used by a number of other businesses. Mr Midgley was given a job at Chesters as a company rep.

The original pub was demolished and a new Town Hall Tavern was built on Cleminson Street in 1967-68, taking over the site of what had been the brewery's cooling house.

One former Salford Brewery Company pub is still going today - the Edinburgh Castle in Ancoats - and when the Town Hall Tavern and Brewery are demolished, it will be the last reminder of a local brewery which never made it to the big time.



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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Rupert

Charlie Brobdingnag was pretty angry when cousin Efreem flogged off the family silver and came out of beer making, which had been part of the family heritage for generations. He'll now be foaming at the teeth in his farm/funny farm or turning in his grave/urn. When you sell something, you can't usually place conditions on the purchaser as to who they sell it to.

So, the much loved family house ends up as an elderly persons' home or house of ill repute. In Brobdingnag's case, all looked well for a bit. Dillons had just shut their Slumley ale factory, so there was lots to brew and the future looked rosy. The brewery chimney would continue to be part of the Slumley skyline along with the nearby Strangleways penis.

But, alas! Dillon's, who had been on the rampage for a couple of centuries, buying up rivals and shutting them down, suddenly gave up and sold out to a bunch of foreigners. And we all know you can't trust Johnny Foreigner. This bunch of megakeggers had also bought another British brewery group, so

they owned nearly 40% of the industry. To keep the Government sweet they sold a bit of it to an American outfit and as soon as the dust had settled, began to dismantle what they'd bought.

Brobdingnag's was the first casualty. It doesn't make a lot of sense to foreigners to put beer in silly little barrels which have to remain in cellars for ages and need to be looked after. Far better to filter it, pasteurise it, nitrokeg it, tin it and bottle it so it doesn't go off. The public don't give a monkey's. They're all drinking nitrosmooth as though it's lovely. Campaigners seem like Neanderthals, bellyaching about anachronistic bevies their daddies used to drink in Neolithic times. So not much bother there.

They'll leave it for a bit, Strangleways, that is. Then they'll find some excuse to shut it down and mouth platitudes about the sad loss of heritage.

Oh, Charlie Brobdingnag, if only you could have been stronger and not acceded to the greed of others. It might have been like Boringsods, Brassos, Sikhs or Drabs, not just a memory of a distinctive well-hopped, straw-coloured ale, but the real thing.



Branch Diary

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 1 Oct 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Wishing Well, York Street, Heywood

Sun 20 Oct: 'Not the 10k Run' Social, Tandle Hill Tavern, Thornham Lane, Middleton. Details from Branch Contact

Wed 23 Oct: Evening Coach Social, Lowes Arms, Denton (microbrewery) and Nursery Inn, Heaton Chapel (CAMRA National Pub of the Year). Details from Branch Contact

Tues 29 Oct 8.30pm: Committee/What's Doing Collation, Britannia Inn, Lomax Street, 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 2 Oct 8pm, Social, Pot of Beer, New Mount Street, Manchester

Wed 9 Oct 8pm, Regional Meeting, The Armoury, corner of Greek Street and Shaw Heath, near Rail Station, Stockport

Wed 16 Oct 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Wed 23 Oct 8pm, Social and presentation of GBG 16-year Certificate, Crescent, Salford

Tues 29 Oct 6pm onwards, What's Doing collation. Queens Arms, Honey Street

Wed 30 Oct 8pm, Duke of York, Marlborough Road, Hightown

Fri 1st Nov 8pm, Special Under-26 Social, Bar Centro, Tib Street, Manchester

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Trafford & Hulme

Thurs 3 Oct 8pm, Branch Meeting and Jubilee Party, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Sat 5th Oct 8pm, Joint Meeting with Stockport Branch, Railway, Stockport

Thurs 17 Oct, Visit to Hydes Brewery

Thurs 7 Nov 8pm, Branch Meeting, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Contact: Dave Ward 0161 980 1170

Wigan

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

Contributors to this issue: Roger Hall, Alan Gall, Paul Warbrick, Roy Bullock, Leo King, Stewart Revell, Pete Cash, Phil Stout, Dave White, Dave Hallows

Dave and Sue welcome you to

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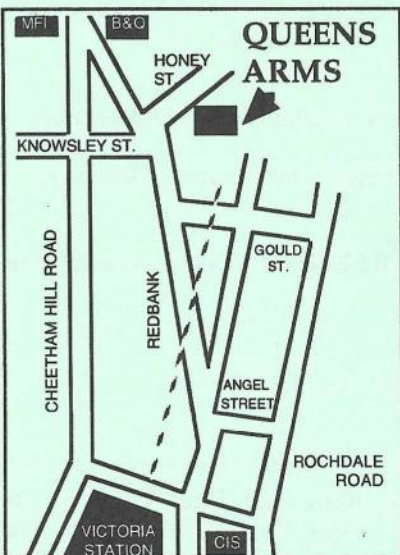
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