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# What's Doing

NOVEMBER 2002



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## REAL BEER WEEK

In what is becoming an annual event, the 33 Independent Family Brewers of Britain held another Real Beer Week in October. There were three launches, in London, Nottingham and Manchester. Our four local brewers (Holts, Hydes, Lees and Robinsons) were this year joined by Jennings and Thwaites in an event at the Ape and Apple in Manchester. A splendid array of handpumps (there were seven because Holts mild was also in there) had clips announcing special beers from each of the six breweries.



*A mash of head brewers: Giles Dennis (Lees), Paul Jeffries (Hydes), Chris Hellin (Robinsons), Peter Laws (Jennings), Keith Sheard (Holts) and John Williams (Thwaites).*

*Andy and Lynn welcome you to*

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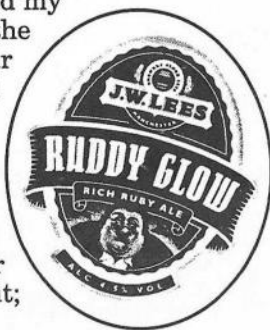


Outside the pub, a giant mobile billboard proclaimed Real Beer Week and acted as a suitable backdrop for photos of the various executives and head brewers.

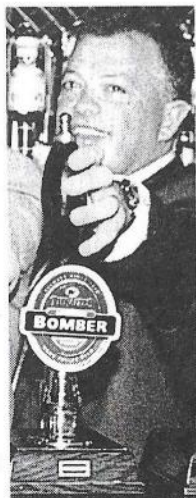
Holts were featuring **ThunderHolt** (4.5%), proclaimed as 'A Storm In A Glass'. This allusion to Manchester weather was carried further by the slogan 'Pouring It Down' on the promotional T-shirts. Head brewer Keith Sheard described ThunderHolt as a russet red bitter using a high proportion of dark crystal malt, with Challenger hops for citrus notes. Of all six beers it was my favourite, but then I like dark, luscious milds and this had a richness and sweetness quite unlike any other draught beers which Holts have produced. There is even a possibility of a bottled version at 5%.

The Lees special was in many ways similar (and my second favourite). **Ruddy Glow** (4.5%) carried the epithet 'Rich Ruby Ale' and was a similar colour but slightly less sweet than ThunderHolt. Head brewer Giles Dennis said that crystal malt was combined with Styrian and Target hops.

Chris Hellin of Robinsons presented **Coopers Bell** (4%), an all grain brew using 85% pale malt, 3% crystal and 11% wheat malt for roundness. Goldings hops were used throughout; early and late copper and for dry-hopping.



Paul Jeffries of Hydes introduced **Autumn Goldings** (4.5%), described on the pump clip as 'Pick of the Hops'. This was the fifth of Hydes 'craft beers' and was, in his opinion, the best so far. It used just 5% crystal malt and a single variety Goldings hop, together with some Early Bird for an 'orange marmalade' finish.



Thwaites head brewer John Williams offered **Lancaster Bomber** (4.4%), an original Mitchells recipe from 1994, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings. It was a 'full bodied, bronze bitter with a good hop character' and was now finding its way into outlets outside the normal trading area.

Peter Laws of **Jennings** presented **Cumberland Ale** (4.0%). All the malts used derived from Maris Otter barley, and a couple of sugars were also included. Hops were Fuggles and Goldings from 60-year-old rootstock, plus some Challenger.

Although sales of real beer in the UK declined to 8.1% in 2001, the family brewers have bucked the trend, and between them account for 50% of the real beer market. The IFBB is seeking help from the Government on four points: reduced beer tax, progressive beer duty (which so far has helped only the micros), less red tape and ensuring that the Licensing Bill does not mean higher running costs.

*Pete Cash*



*The men in suits: chairmen of Hydes, Lees, Jennings, Robinsons, Holts and Thwaites.*

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## **Queens Award**

The City Life Food and Drink Awards were held at Manchester Town Hall on 15th October, hosted by Tony Wilson. There were three nominees for Pub of the Year - the Royal Oak in Didsbury, the Marble Arch and the Queens Arms, Redbank. The presenter complimented the independent outlets and announced the Queens Arms as the winner, recommending the pub's Viking Re-enactment Society (he must have been there on a Thursday).

After jumping up and down and a lot of hugging, landlady Sue Price and her longest-serving staff member, Carol, took to the stage to accept the award and give a speech. They were very brave, though, and didn't cry like they do in Hollywood.

## Boddingtons

Roger Hall

Following last month's article about the goings on at Strangeways, it has been pointed out that Interbrew no longer have control of the Burton breweries. As part of the deal whereby Interbrew acquired both Whitbread and Bass, they were required by the Government to divest some of their brands. This they did by selling some brands (and some capacity) to Coors of Colorado. However, they retained the draught Bass brand which is still brewed at Burton, but by Coors for Interbrew.

This, of course, leaves Strangeways as Interbrew's only real ale brewery. It has been suggested that the moving of keg brewing out of Strangeways may open the door to draught Bass being brewed in Manchester when Interbrew's deal with Coors comes to an end in 2004. Why, then, sack two-thirds of the staff? If Interbrew can outsource Bass, the UK's biggest premium cask ale brand, then why not do the same for Boddingtons and Flowers?

Many people thought that Wilsons' brewery wouldn't close after substantial investment had been made. It did and production went to Websters in Halifax. That couldn't possibly close, but it did. The history of brewery takeovers and mergers over the last twenty years has resulted in the closure, not only of small regional breweries but also of huge operations like Wilsons, Websters, Tetley (Warrington) and Greenalls. As concentration of ownership continues, rationalisation will follow. Boddingtons is not safe and may well be a casualty of Interbrew's English acquisitions.

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## Pot

The Old Pint Pot on the Crescent, Salford, is one of six pubs bought by Burtonwood Brewery recently. It is to be 'rebranded to appeal to young people and the student market.'

## Christmas in Paradise

The Paradise Brewery in Wrenbury will be putting on a beer festival over the weekend 27th-29th December. The Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers' Association is arranging for the Manchester-Cardiff express to stop at Wrenbury - details next month.

## 'Zoo' closure

The former Boddingtons pub, the Two Hundred on Carisbrook Street, Harpurhey, is sadly closed. It became known as the 'Zoo' after a memorable social at the pub.

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*Contributors to this issue:* Dave Hallows, Leo King, Roy Bullock, Paul Roberts, Pete Cash, Brian Taylor, Roger Hall, Daddy Bell. Photos by Phil Stout, Brian Taylor and Daddy Bell



## North Report 1

*For some time, North Manchester pubs haven't featured much in the Good Beer Guide, though there are signs of improvement in this year's guide. There are still some good pubs in the area and Dave Hallows has had a look at some of them...*

The **Hipp** on Lathbury Road, Harpurhey, is a Holts tenanted house which unusually serves just the bitter. No sign of mild at all here, not even the smooth version, but the bitter was fully conditioned, with a biting bittersy taste. The Hipp (short for Hippodrome) is a 1970s building, with a main lounge and stage and a small side vault which seems no longer in use.

Towards Rochdale Road there is the **Ark Royal** (Robinsons), named after the famous aircraft carrier. The pub still dispenses Best Bitter and Hatters Mild through electric pumps, and the oversized glasses provide a full pint. The lounge, with its Scandinavian decor, is a shrine to 1960s/70s design. There's a small stage adorned with garlanded Union Jacks. The vault is traditional, with a large-screen TV.

The **Milan Inn** on Rochdale Road is another Robinsons house serving Best Bitter and Hatters Mild on electric pumps. This is a 1920s pub and it would be in pristine condition if it weren't for the Robinsonized bar (Formica and leatherette veneer) and the blue cloth coverings on the original seating, coupled with blue blinds on the windows. The superb wood panelling is still in place, but the fireplace is obscured by tables and chairs, with a speaker covering up what was the fire. It wouldn't take much to restore this pub to its former glory.



Jumping on a bus, I travelled to the **Alliance** on Rochdale Road, Blackley. I remember the pub back in the 1980s, when I had one of

my last pints of OB (Oldham Brewery) bitter here. It is a modern building, with a comfortable lounge (photos of bygone Rochdale Road on the wall) and a large, traditional vault. The Boddingtons bitter was well kept and it's good to see a pub like this still having cask beer.

Passing the **Farmyard** (keg), I went into the **Top Derby**. It was once a Vaux house, had been closed down and then opened again this year. There have been periods when real ale was not available at all. This time, a passable pint of John Smiths Cask was on offer, but there was a poor attitude to real ale around the bar. One comment was, 'Educated people drink smooth.'

Moving swiftly on, I called in at the **Golden Tavern** across the road, a former Wilsons house. There were no badges on any of the handpumps, but I was told the beer was Lees bitter. I found it slightly too fresh, but crystal clear.

Passing the **Golden Lion** (keg), I called at the **Junction** (*WD last month*) on Queens Road, Collyhurst, to check on progress. Refurbishment is underway - the conveniences being No.1 priority! The building does need some TLC and there are plenty of original features to restore. On the beer front, the pub is being particularly brave. There are two bitters and two strong dark beers on offer - Kodiak Gold, Bearskinful, Polar Eclipse and Black Bear. Beer quality was excellent and prices have been pegged back at £1.30 to £1.40, which should win over the locals. The TV is back in the vault, which will keep the horse racing fans happy. I wish the Junction well.





## King's Ale

Leo King

### Boddies

Had it not been for an employee who in 1833 bolted into the blue after pocketing some cash paid by publicans for their beer, the Strangeways Brewery might not have survived the nineteenth century. The episode of the miscreant collecting clerk served to draw the attention of the brewery owners, Messrs Fray, Hole & Potter, to the potential abilities of a bright young man who had just joined the firm. Thus Henry Boddington was on his way to making his name in Manchester's brewing circles.



Henry Boddington was certainly not the founder of the brewery, as the advertising sometimes implies - it had been going for over fifty years before he arrived in Manchester - and he didn't become a partner until 1846. The Boddington family connection with brewing ended more than ten years ago when Whitbread took over and now the Strangeways Brewery is owned by a Belgian company.



So much fuss has been made over the possible closure of Boddingtons, it's almost as if it was Britain's only brewery. OK, so it will be a great loss, but Manchester has lost many such breweries and I never heard much of an outcry when they went. Boddies has had more television and newspaper advertising than any brewery I've known, but in my opinion the brewery was finished when Ewart Boddington (*left*) called it a day. The Cream of Manchester? The cream went out of Boddingtons beer years ago.

Boddingtons took over and closed their share of other breweries - Oldham, Higsons of Liverpool, Swales of Hulme,



Clarkes of Reddish - and they even badge-brewed Clarkes, which was rubbish. Today they badge-brew Flowers, derived from a Warwickshire company which finished over forty years ago.

We still have two great breweries in Manchester - Holts and Hydes - and there are the two micros - Marble and Boggart Hole Clough. So less emphasis on Boddies, although I agree it will be a pity if it does go!

### **Wetherspoons**

Phil Stout asks why he finds Wetherspoons pubs so awful (WD last month). Well, one reason could be that the buildings were not originally pubs. Wetherspoons are based in cinemas, banks, shops, etc, so there is no 'pub' feel to them. The Moon Under Water on Deansgate in Manchester still has a 'cinema' atmosphere, and to be honest I wish it was still a cinema - it was a beautiful one. The Wetherspoons on Piccadilly, a former Halford's cycle store, gets full to capacity and can be uncomfortable, but the real ale goes with a bang.

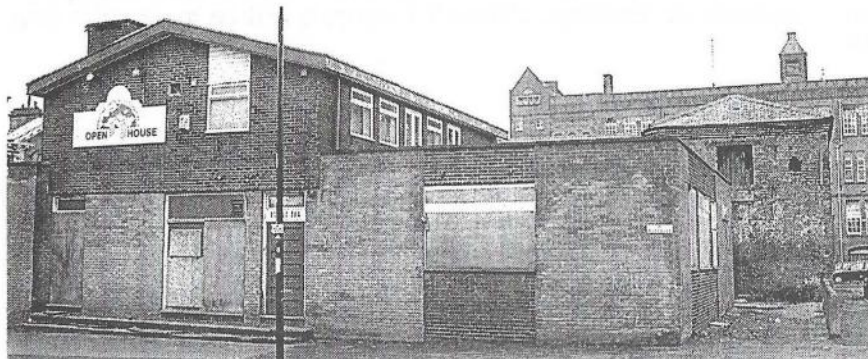
However, Wetherspoons do sell real ale at reasonable prices, the 'no smoking' areas are really acceptable, and the toilets are clean and well maintained. At some Wetherspoons where charisma is lacking, a little light music might help. Back in the 1960s we had the old pub (a real pub), but in many of them we had to put up with Watneys Red Barrel, Whitbread Tankard, Brew Ten, etc.

Even some pubs can be dreary (real ale or no real ale). Near where I live in Chorlton there is a pub (Whitbread) which has been done up very nicely - but not a drop of real ale. There is a Wetherspoons two minutes' walk away, offering lots of real ale and other niceties. What is best? In bleak East Manchester there is either no real ale, or a little real ale in dismal pubs. Be thankful for Wetherspoons, Phil!



## Brewery gone

The long-closed Town Hall Brewery and the adjoining Town Hall Tavern in Salford (*WD last month*) were demolished a few weeks ago. With the buildings (*below*) went the 1970s vintage 'Heath out!' graffiti. Sir Edward would no doubt be delighted to know that it had outlasted the 'Maggie out!' graffiti of later years.



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## Bazens' Treat News

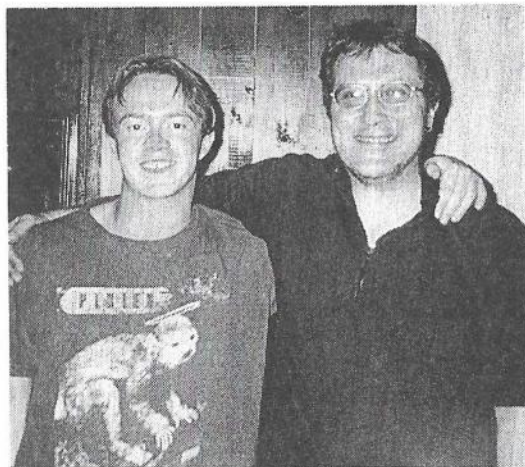
*Pete Cash*

Richard Bazen and Jude Rees officially launched their new brewery at the recently renovated Kings Arms, Bloom Street, Salford on 12th October. Guests were treated to a choice of three Bazens beers and an excellent buffet comprising mainly Indian dishes.

As well as the regular Navigator (3.8%) and FlatbaC (4.2%), there was the first seasonal beer - Freshers' Special. With a strength of 5.5%, this premium bitter was naturally malty, but a good balance of hops made it deceptively quaffable. It is expected to be available until January, when the freshers start to run out of money.



The entertainment kicked off with Colonel Lee's Mounted Ratigators providing a lively rendition of Woody Guthrie and similar numbers.



*Richard Bazen (right) with fellow brewer James Campbell*

The good Colonel paused the singing at one stage and gave a rabble-rousing endorsement of Bazens' Beers, worthy of the slickest snake-oil salesmen of the Wild West.

Later in the evening, the main group, Gone Beggin', took centre stage. As well as the outlets mentioned in last month's report on the brewery, Bazens' Navigator was on sale at the Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham, early in October.

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## Wigan in brief

*Dave White*

The Sandbrook Hotel, Sandbrook Road, Tontine, sells cask conditioned ale once again. The beers are usually Tetley bitter, Draught Bass and/or Taylors Landlord.

The former Billinge Conservative Club on Main Street has been turned into Squires Bar. Any real ale?

## Plough reopens

*Pete Cash*

The former Wilsons house on Rainsough Brow, Prestwich, was closed for about five years, then early in 2002 renovation work was evident and on 13th September the pub reopened. With its free standing sign in maroon and gold, the Plough might be taken for a Hydes house, but then again the chunky gold letters on a green background along the front of the building are unmistakably Wilsons. It is, in fact, a free house, currently selling handpumped Hydes mild (125p), Hydes bitter (130p) and Holts bitter (130p).

Licensee David Watson hopes to put on guest beers and pub lunches are also planned. Opening hours are 1pm-11pm (Mon-Fri), 12-11pm (Sat) and 12-10.30pm (Sun). The interior has been refurbished but without any further changes to the structure. The small, separate vault, complete with dartboard, has been retained, whilst in the lounge the red upholstered seating complements the red carpet, which gives way to a stone-tiled margin around the bar. There is a piano in the lounge alcove and 'free & easies' are on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

*Below: The Plough fifty years ago*





## Winter Ales

Sadly, the National Winter Ales Festival won't be happening in Manchester next year because the City Council is handing the Upper Campfield Market Hall over to the Science and Industry Museum. The 2003 event will probably be in Burton Town Hall in late January, part of the Burton upon Trent Winter Ales Festival.



The 2002 festival organiser, Steve Prescott, was officially informed at the end of September, and the organising committee and local CAMRA branches had been looking for alternative venues in the area since June, when the handover was a possibility. Steve writes: 'Each year we have used the Hall there has always been a possibility of it being the last... On behalf of the organising committee and the Campaign, I would like to thank the members of the public for supporting the festival in Manchester, and the CAMRA members who volunteered their time to work at the festivals.'

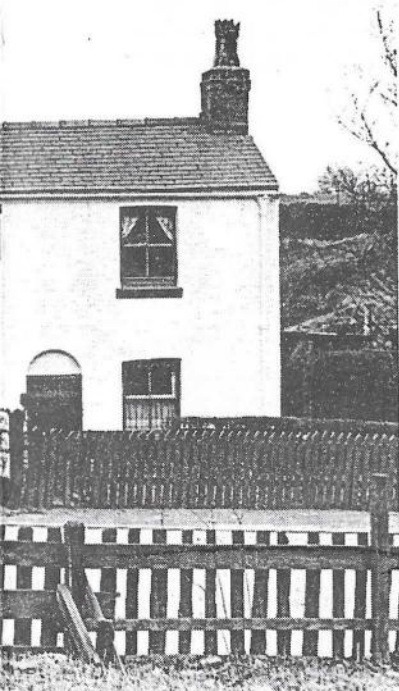
## Letter

### Wetherspoons

Sir - Last month Phil Stout asked why Wetherspoons pubs lack a convivial atmosphere. Well, the company opens pubs in locations where they know they'll sell the most bottles of sweet booze (the kind that gets advertised on TV) and this, coupled with supermarket prices, seems to attract the laddish lads. All they want to do is get as many down their necks asap, before hitting the town. Wetherspoons are alcoholic fast food emporiums - rack 'em high and sell them quick - they even do meals deals!

However, real ale drinkers who live in Longsight, Motherwell or Epsom, I hear, are grateful for Wetherspoons, as they are the only pubs serving cask beer at reasonable prices. So maybe we are being just a bit too critical!

*Dave Hallows*



## Leigh: The Second Leg

Dave White

We took the 658 bus from Wigan and then walked to Butts Bridge for the first two pubs of the crawl. I had my first pint of John Smiths cask bitter in the **Bulls Head** on Warrington Road, donkey's years ago, and the pub still advertises the product around the doorway. A defunct handpump awaited us, however, so we moved on to the **Wheatsheaf** nearby. After reading a rather complacent article about Enterprise Inns in *What's Brewing* recently, we hoped to find an interesting cask ale or two. There was nothing but keg, however, so with time to spare, we went down Manchester Road.

Before long, we came to the **Bowling Green**, an open-plan pub with a beamed ceiling. The lounge and back room are comfortably upholstered, with several eye-catching features, such as an old sewing machine and framed prints of bygone Leigh. Food is served, and there are high chairs for children's meals. No kids after 9.00pm, however. The tap room is more traditional. The cask ales on offer were Wells Bombardier (ironic, considering we were in the Bedford area of town) and Holts bitter.

Retracing our steps down Chapel Street, we called in at the **Foundry**. No real ale at this Inn Partnership inn, however, so we back-tracked to the **Three Crowns**. As at the Bulls Head, traditional ales are advertised outside the pub, but the handpump is redundant. There is free internet access, though, which is a bit of a novelty. Further down Chapel Street, across the road from the closed and criminally misnamed Happy World Chinese restaurant, we found the **Standard Mower**. Keg.





The night began to pick up a little at the **Eagle & Hawk** near the police station. This is a sprawling open-plan pub with several nooks and crannies, but offers no refuge from television. Lots of bric-a-brac, and an intriguing L-shaped pool table stands near the bar. Tetley bitter is the sole cask ale.

The **Brewery Inn** down Brewery Lane is now keg, so we left this part of Leigh and headed for Bradshawgate, where we found the **Globe**. A spacious, one-roomed Holts house with several cosy corners, tasteful wood fittings around the bar and pleasant lighting fixtures. The jukebox was rather intrusive and the pub had more televisions than Soft Mick. That said, the mild was very good. (In fact, the beer was of a high standard all night).

The next pub, **Courts** on Vernon Street, sold keg beer only, so we repaired to the **Litten Tree** in Lord Street. This is a vast pub with much use of pine, leather 'bucket' chairs and comfy sofas. The Tree has a large dance floor with professional disco lighting, and the music can be loud on a Saturday night. Food is served and parties catered for. Handpulled Courage best bitter, Directors and 'Litten Tree' bitter were on sale.

We ended the night in the **Musketeer**, but a cockstride away, a local consisting of three lounge areas and a games room. Colliery plates adorn the walls, as do various curios of leather, brass and bronze. The lighting was congenial, and the jukebox was unobtrusive (to begin with, at any rate). The Musketeer caters for a mixed clientele. The cask ales are Boddingtons bitter and Tetley mild, and the guests on this occasion were Nimmo's XXXX and Tetley Imperial (the latter was a very agreeable surprise). Pub of the night.



## Trafford & Hulme anniversary

*Brian Taylor*

The Trafford and Hulme Branch of CAMRA celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Old Market Tavern, Altrincham, on Thursday 3rd October. Many members, past and present, turned out to enjoy the night. Thanks to the Old Market Tavern licensee, Wayne Reece, there was plenty of good food, and, of course, excellent real ale. One of the founder members, Dave Ward, handed over a certificate to Mr Reece to mark the pub's entry in the 2003 Good Beer Guide. The photo shows Neil Worthington (present branch chairman), Alan Hurdle (founder member), Dave Ward (first chairman), Ian McDermott (founder member) and Wayne Reece.

The surprise of the evening came when two old friends, who had not seen each other in fifty years, attended the event. David Scott and Barry Lyons were in the Stretford Boy Scouts in their teens, then Mr Scott moved away from the area, first to Oxford and then to California. He returned to Altrincham twenty-five years ago (because he said he missed the taste of real ale).

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA covers the whole of the Borough of Trafford as well as part of South Manchester and the city centre (principally Castlefield and the Deansgate area). There are nearly 300 paid-up members in the area and the branch has regular business and social meetings.





## Holts Corner

*Stewart Revell*

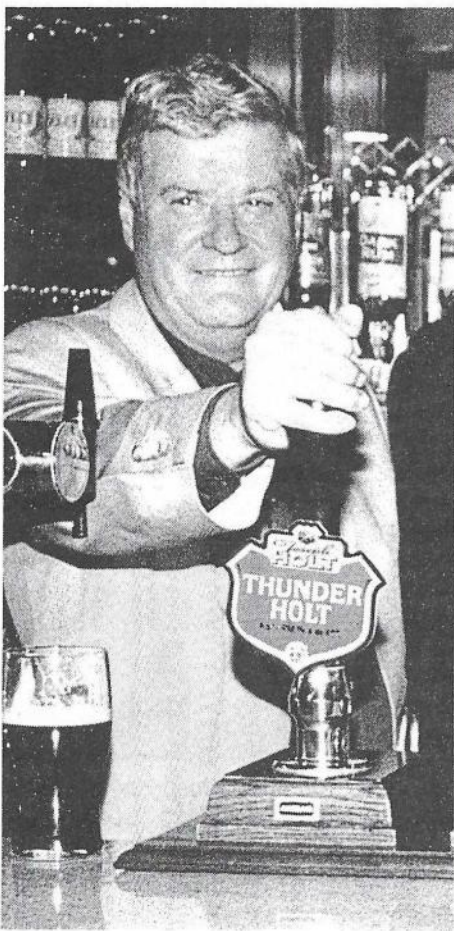
The **Broadway**, on the corner of Nuthurst Road and Broadway, New Moston, reopened as a Holts pub on Thursday 17th October. So far, reports have been extremely complimentary and the locals are pleased. Far more people have been visiting the pub than under the previous owners.

The new seasonal beer, ThunderHolt (4.5%), is apparently doing well in most of the ninety pubs that are taking it. Several had to order further supplies after only a few days of it being delivered. ThunderHolt was launched at the Ape & Apple during the Independent Family Brewers of Britain's Real Ale Week. The brewery is thinking about doing a 5% bottled version of ThunderHolt, but not bottle conditioned.

Even before September was out, Holts raised their mild and bitter prices by 4p a pint. I don't think ThunderHolt was ever sold at the proposed 128p a pint - it is now 132p.

It is hoped that Head Brewer Keith Sheard will be giving a talk at a North Manchester CAMRA meeting early in 2003. The venue will probably be the White Swan, Swinton.

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## No more than ten

Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar was recently selling a superb pint of Golden Jackal from Wolf Brewery in Attleborough, Norfolk. The bar has added to its collection of railway memorabilia with a sign on the gents' door dating from 1904: 'GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY Workman's Lavatory. Workmen using this closet must on entering give their numbers to the attendant. If longer time than ten minutes is taken the whole time will be stopped. BY ORDER.' So, no reading of the newspaper, then!

## Yabba dabba Bury

*Barney Rubble*

In September's What's Doing it was reported that real ale was being sold at the **Eagle & Child** on Bolton Road, Bury, for the first time since Fred Flintstone was around. The pub was selling Leyden's Forever Bury and since then Theakstons Best and Boddingtons bitter have been tried. Forever Bury was on offer again recently and I hear that a second handpump may be installed soon. Wilma, Wilma!



The nearby **Arthur Inn** continues to stock a guest ale and Dave Porter's No.4, Raspberry Ale (4.5%), has also been tried. This had a pleasant raspberry aroma (it's made with real raspberries), a sweet, fruity taste and a slight bitter and hoppy aftertaste.

The entry for the Arthur in the 2003 Good Beer Guide omits to mention that the pub regularly sells Porter as well as the other Haslingden brewery beers. The Arthur is about fifteen minutes' walk from Bury Interchange.

## Oktoberfest 2002

*Beinlos*

The 169th Oktoberfest ended on Sunday 6th October. 5.9 million visitors consumed 5.7 million litres of beer, 87 oxen and 440,000 chickens. This was an increase of around 20% on the previous year, which was adversely affected by the events of 11th September.

As usual, the Wies'n was a fest of two halves. The first week had wet and cold weather - Munich suffered its first September snow since 1931! The second week saw the sun break through and the temperatures rise to their normal levels. Add to that the fact that people are paid at the end of the month and that 3rd October is a public holiday, and it is no surprise that the final week was extremely busy. At €6.80 a litre, beer prices were marginally higher than last year, but at least they were not inflated as much as most of the other prices following the introduction of the Euro.



## Crumbs from Cumbria

*Daddy Bell writes from his new incumbency...*

What about beers in this neck of the woods? Readers will be expecting me to sing the praises of the **Prince of Wales** at Foxfield, which I do without hesitation. It was good to welcome Stewart Revell and family to their first taste of the Foxfield experience; and I am sure others would be heading in this direction, were it not for the vagaries of First North Western Trains. As I write, the Broughton Festival of Beer has just begun, the PoW's range including Willy's Last Resort, whose somewhat herbal flavour took me back momentarily to the original Franklins bitter, as served in the now lost **John Bull** in Layerthorpe, York; and the darkly oily 10% Durham Imperial Stout, which proved an ideal nightcap before catching the last (late-running) train back to Millom.

Millom itself is by no means the beer desert I was half expecting. There are several closed pubs on the slagbank side of town, some derelict, others awaiting conversion to flats. Up Holborn Hill, on the old side of town, there are a couple of Hartleys (i.e. Robinsons) pubs: the **Ship** restricts itself to Hartleys XB, but the busier **Castle** offers Snowdon, Old Stockport and XB in both smooth and indubitably real form. Out at Haverigg, the **Harbour Hotel** contents itself with Boddies and Ruddles; but the **Rising Sun** (open evenings only, except at weekends), which is run by a lively Scouse couple, has recently served Barngates Tag Lag and Thwaites Thoroughbred in fine fettle. (Both pubs are ex-Matty Brown, and therefore presumably old Brockbanks pubs.)

In Barrow it is hard, for some reason, to escape Thwaites, but a new arrival on the freehouse scene has rapidly established itself as a local CAMRA favourite. The **Ambrose Hotel** (right) on Duke Street (no great distance from Ramsden Square and B&Q) has a couple of Jennings beers as standard, with Black Cat as a favourite guest mild, and (on my visit) a particularly good pint of Gales Trafalgar. In Broughton-in-Furness, two old and atmospheric hostelries, the **Old Kings Head** and the **Black Cock**, seem to be concentrating on



food and accommodation; but the **Manor Arms** (*right*) is still unashamedly a beer paradise, where Yates Bitter, Coniston Bluebird XB, a couple of Taylor beers, and three other guests (Phoenix being a frequent source) can be found on consistently good form. One is used to meeting pubs which display histories of the building; but the Manor is the only one I know which exhibits a potted history of its proprietor's surname.



Ecclesiastical business took me for the first time to Coniston, an extraordinary place whose centre looks like a stage set with the Old Man as a backdrop. We lunched at the **Sun Inn** (*below*), a sixteenth-century establishment with an Edwardian hotel somewhat





awkwardly attached. Yates Fever Pitch (ex-Summer Fever) proved predictably irresistible, but four other choices would have been quite acceptable. In the nearby **Black Bull Inn** there were more photographs of Donald Campbell and *Bluebird*. I found this pub somewhat self-consciously antique, but it is the home of the Coniston Brewing Co, and its only real ales are its own products. The XB was very good indeed, pungent and clear, the Old Man (also 4.2%, and £2.20 a pint) was dark and fruity: pricey beers, as I had been warned, but on splendid form at source.



What a sequence of send-offs from Salford we had! Two months on, it is hard to recall all the details: but I do recollect a marvellous CAMRA-inspired evening in the **Crescent** on August 31st, when various campanulaceous objects were presented to us. I am glad to report that the birds are enjoying their edible offering, and that Baby Bell was suitably flattered by the cheesy globules. (The administrative accountant formerly known as Ancient Monuments Bell is still wondering what more she must do to attract such attention.) There were tributes in verse besides, and a mint condition bottle label from Alan Gall from our sometime local brewery, at Bank Springs, Kirksanton, (The area is still full of members of the Brockbank family who owned the brewery.)

Thanks too to Idy (and an absentee Sal) for a memorable Sunday lunchtime session on September 15th, and to Tony Oak for the complimentary nine of Black Bee which so deliciously slaked our thirsts. I haven't yet dared to wear the extra loud shirt which Idy so generously pressed upon me, but I have no doubt that its time will soon come.

# Rupert

So we're up to the 30th edition of the toppers' vademecum and Boris Pratt writes in the Grauniad to trumpet the success of the oeuvre. Some seventeen hostelries have appeared in all 30, but none from Grotley. Why not? I hear you cry. Don't we have the best taverns and ale in the known universe? Well, yes, but it's not that simple.

Back in 1974 the Grotley branches were in their infancy and not consulted by the great and the good who compiled the first groundbreaking volume. Some local bloke in d u n g a r e e s helped them to put it together, but basically, all that happened was that some people came up from Smokeley on the iron horse, got off, went in a few alehouses and recorded their adventures for posterity.

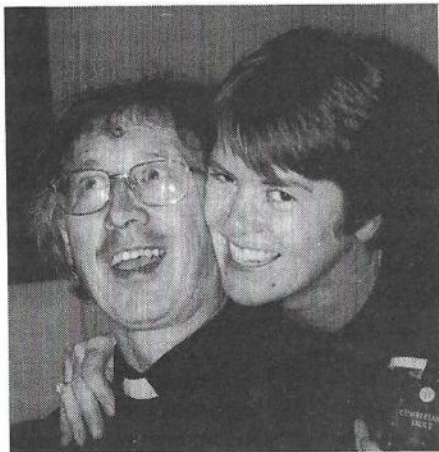
They obviously got a little squiffy because they included the odd fictitious entry (not the Boston Arms) and the odd keg-only place which was built with cellar tanks. Moreover, they missed out Slumley Parva in its entirety, thereby omitting the Drabs drinkers' nirvana. Plenty of Brobdingnags houses, but only one Drabs establishment, which proved they knew of its existence. Mind you, in

them days a decent pint of Drabs was an oxymoron.

There were pubs a-plenty serving quaffable real ales in 1974, but half those in Grotley have been knocked down, some of the others have been transferred to nitrosmooth and many of the rest have had their ups and downs. One or two have been in the toppers' vademecum for twenty years or more.

From time to time an event is announced which seems incredible. When Beinlos first emerged on the real ale scene at about the time of the first vademecum, he was 21.

He looked 40 then, but he was 21. There are few people who thought he would survive until he was 30, given his prodigious bibulousness, which makes Oliver Reed and George Best seem like Bible belt puritans. But no, next year, in the footprints of



Rumpledshirtscream, he reaches his demi-century. To celebrate this unlikely anniversary, he and his chums are zooming off to his beloved Krautley to sink a few glasses of Kölsch. My, oh my! Perhaps we can look forward in another 50 years to his centenary, when many of his more abstemious contemporaries will have predeceased him.



# Branch Diary

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 5 Nov 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Black Swan, Bottom of the Moor, Oldham

Sat 16 Nov: Coach Social to South Cheshire. Details from Branch Contact

Tues 26 Nov 8.30pm: Committee/What's Doing Collation, Royal Oak, Manchester Road, Werneth

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)

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

Wed 6 Nov, Eccles Crawl: Lamb (near tram terminus) 7.30pm. Royal Oak, Barton Lane, 8.30pm. Stanley Arms, Liverpool Road (A57), 9.30pm onwards.

Wed 13 Nov 8pm, Social, Drop Inn, Monton

Wed 20 Nov 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Tues 26 Nov 6pm onwards, What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, Cheetham

Wed 27 Nov 8pm, Social, Broadway Hotel, Broadway (A663), New Moston

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## **Trafford & Hulme**

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

Thurs 21 Nov, City Social: 8.00pm White Lion, 9.00pm Knott Fringe Bar

Contact: Dave Ward 0161 980 1170

## **Wigan**

Weds 13 Nov 8 pm, Branch Meeting/Pub of the Season presentation, Dog & Partridge, School Lane, Standish

Contact: John Barlow (01257) 478816 (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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*Dave and Sue welcome you to*

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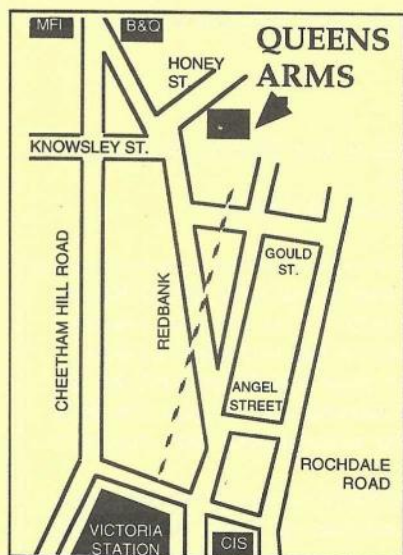
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