

30p

What's Doing

MARCH 2003

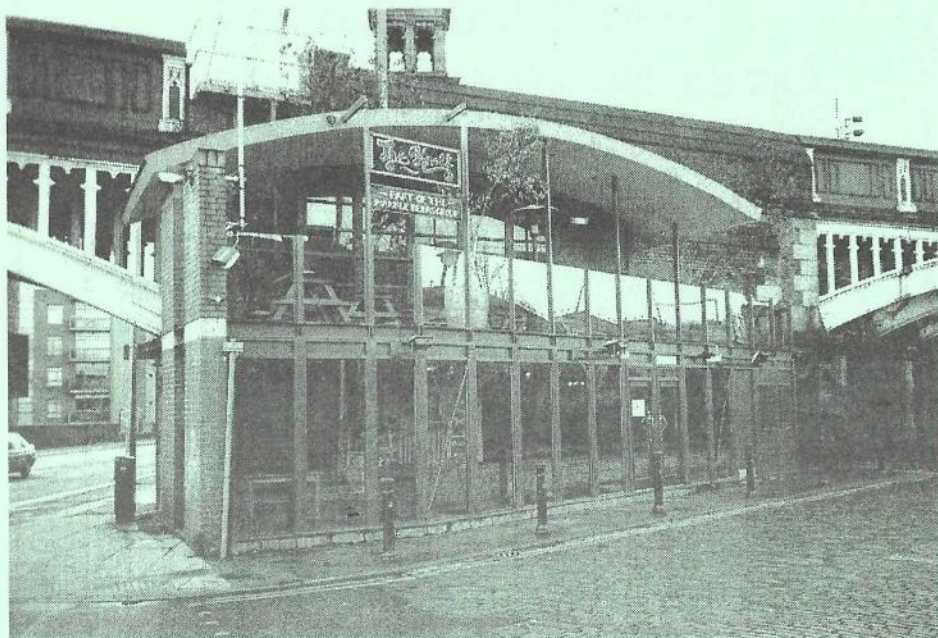


The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

WHAT KNOTT

Since no-one could ever remember whether it was the Knott Bar Fringe or the Knott Fringe Bar, Marble Brewery have rechristened their Deansgate outlet the Knott.

Marble has a new premium bitter, IPA (5%), which has replaced Old Lag. The beer was well received at its launch at the Knott on 27th February.



Andy and Lynn welcome you to

The Hare & Hounds

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News from John Willie

The limited edition vintage Harvest Ale is now available until stocks run out. The 11.5% beer is brewed in October and November each year from the first crops of the finest of the season's barley, malt and hops. It costs £2.20 for a 175ml bottle, can be enjoyed straight away or laid down for future drinking. The character of the beer varies from year to year according to the season's growing and harvesting conditions, and each year's vintage matures differently.

J W Lees is a finalist in the Regional Brewer of the Year competition, held by *The Publican* newspaper. The winner will be announced at the end of March.

Manchester Star Porter has been judged Domestic Beer of the Year 2002 by a US magazine, *Malt Advocate*. It was brewed by J W Lees head brewer Giles Dennis as part of a brewing exchange with the Brooklyn Brewery in New York.



The Star Porter recipe comes from an 1884 Lees brewing notebook and is described thus in the magazine: 'A richly rewarding beer... it is smooth and supple in the mouth, full of chocolate notes and an understated bitterness that only reveals itself fully in the lip-smacking dry finish. On cask the beer is a true marvel, with a subtle added background of flavours: cashew, ripe plum, and just a pubby hint of an open pouch of moist Cavendish tobacco.'

Nearer home, the Labologists' Society has chosen John Willie Lees' Royal Gold label as the 'Best Golden Jubilee Label'.

Facers

Bazens' Brewery will soon be sharing premises with Dave Facer, the former head brewer at Boddingtons. Their microbrewery co-operative at the Knoll Street, Higher Broughton, site (*See WD last month*) will be called the Salford Microbrewery Syndicate.

Bazens' will remain the same, while Dave is naming his micro Facers, understandably enough. His first brew, the 4.1%, ruby-brown First Draught, will be on sale at the **Queens Arms**, Cheetham, during the Northern Quarter Beer Festival, and at the **Kings Arms**, Bloom Street, Salford.

THE CRESCENT

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Featuring 40 Beers**

Function/Party Room available for free hire

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Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

As well as the 130 pubs in the Holts tied estate, Holts beers are taken by many other outlets, either as a guest beer or as the 'best seller'. This free trade comprises a mixture of pubs and private members' clubs. Recently, I was delighted to be invited to one of the clubs, the **Astley & Tyldesley Miners' Institute** at Meanley Road, Ginpit, an isolated area between Astley and Tyldesley. My invitation came from a member of the West Manchester Radio Club, whose members are affiliated to the Miners Club and hold their meetings there to talk about short wave conditions, aerals, the latest transmitters/receivers, etc. The Radio Club members have their own short wave equipment and associated aerals, together with a special call-sign to speak with others all over the world. I have been interested in radio communications (and beer) for over forty years, so the opportunity to meet fellow radio enthusiasts and drink Holts was just about perfect.

The Institute sells handpumped Holts bitter for the same price as the managed houses, 128p a pint. It is a large building with many rooms and caters for the usual club games, and for members who want to talk and relax with a pint of Holts bitter. It was built and run by the National Coal Board at a time when Coal was King and it is still very popular with ex-miners and other ex-NCB employees.

The new seasonal beer from Joey's - Blackwell - should now be available. It will be around for some three months before being replaced by the next one, Edward's.

stewart@revell62.freemove.co.uk

Boggart Bulletin

The new brew from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery is APA (4.6%), which translates into American Pale Ale. Brewer Mark Dade describes it as pale in colour, using US hops. He is planning to produce one new beer each month.

That dawning moment

No sooner was a new beer from Pictish announced, than it appeared at the **Bar Centro**, Tib Street, Manchester. The 4.3% Northern Dawn is a mid-brown, mellow and fruity, easy drinking beer. Surely it's time for Pictish to start looking for a brewery tap?

Olde Nelson

This long-time Good Beer Guide pub near Salford Cathedral is to close for refurbishment for a short time in early March, following a change of management. The new licensee is Dean Barlow, who hails from Wardley.

Wigan and district

Dave White

Some good news for Hindley for a change. Ian Thorpe, mine host at the **Anvil** near Wigan bus station (Wigan CAMRA Pub of the Year 2002/3) has reopened the **Hare & Hounds** on Ladies Lane and installed a manager. The Hare & Hounds had been keg for donkey's years, but now sells Hydes beers. The pub has been tastefully refurbished, and is handy for Hindley railway station.

A recent pub crawl of Aspull revealed a few changes. Real ale has returned to the **Hare & Hounds** on Bolton Road, where Boddingtons bitter is now available on handpump. At Fingerpost, however, the **Queens Arms** has lost its cask Tetley bitter following renovation and is now all keg. The **Moorgate**, a Burtonwood pub on Scot Lane now sells a guest ale alongside the best bitter, which happened to be a rather tasty pint of Belhaven 80/- when I called in.

The **Bowling Green**, Wigan Lane, Swinley, was due to open on Friday 21st February, just ten days after Chris and June Doherty moved out to go to the **Royal Oak**, down the road on Standishgate. With a bit of luck, this pub should also be open soon.

Old Monk dissolved

Not quite the dissolution of the monasteries, but the Old Monk pub chain went into administration last year. This meant closure last month for their Manchester operation, the **Old Monk** on Lloyd Street (left). It actually had a 'Closing Down Sale' - all drinks were a pound.



Sent for scrapping

The late and unlamented Brunels Bar, once part of Flixton Station, has been demolished. Network Rail have applied to build an apartment block on the site.

Star turn

Following on from the report on the **Star Inn**, Back Hope Street, Higher Broughton (WD last month), the hours of opening have improved: 1.30-4.30, 8-11 Mon-Thur. 1.30-11 Fri. 1.30-5.30, 8-11 Sat. 1.30-5.30, 8-10.30 Sun

Beer in Cyberspace

For some time now, the Branch Diary page at the back of What's Doing has carried a bunch of letters known to computer folk as a URL. That's a Uniform Resource Locator and it's a code used by computers to find information on the Internet. In this case, the codes take you to the websites run by the various branches of CAMRA in Greater Manchester. Neil Worthington, the North Manchester Webmaster, explains...

So what do these websites have that *What's Doing* doesn't? And what else can be found on the Internet that involves beer and pubs? For CAMRA members, the websites carry details of meetings, current campaigns and other activities. They also provide links to other sites - breweries and pubs, beer festivals, bus and train timetables, even street maps to help one find one's way to a pub. For the non-member there are suggestions for pub crawls, guides to local pubs, pictures of pubs and breweries, and help in contacting Trading Standards if you've had short measure. There's often a FAQ - a list of Frequently Asked Questions such as, 'What's this real ale stuff anyway?' and 'How is beer brewed?'



Many branches include something unusual such as computer games. One branch has a game with pint glasses floating across the screen - you try to click on each glass in turn to win points. I'm told it's popular with students. North Manchester's site includes a reproduction of a famous *What's Doing* article from 1979, *Real Ale in Greater Grotley*, with terse descriptions of the pubs frequented by Rupert Periwinkle and his pals. ('GUNGESMEARERS ARMS, Scum Street, Drabs Mild and Bitter. A rare example of authentic squalor.')

Perhaps the most important use of the websites is to let members and non-members communicate with CAMRA and its branch officers. We receive umpteen e-mail messages from all sorts of people - journalists asking about changes at Boddingtons, local councils asking about pubs to recommend to tourists, students asking for help with projects on the licensed trade. The most Frequently Asked Question is 'Whatever happened to....?' Someone remembers an old pub or an old brewery or an old licensee and wonders whether they still survive. Someone - usually in the States or Australia - is researching their family tree and sees a great great great grandfather listed as 'Jebediah Oswaldtwistle, Brewer and Ship's Chandler, Nether Slumley.' What beer did he brew? Where was his brewery? Did he own a pub? Is it still standing? What's it called today? Amazingly, we

have members who can answer (nearly) all of these questions! And thanks to e-mail we can respond very quickly.

CAMRA runs an annual competition to find the Branch Website of the Year. Last year it was won by Reading branch - www.camra.org.uk/reading - whose site is so advanced that it can be updated and revised by any of their committee members, not just the Webmaster. It's a truly interactive site which lets any member of the public submit views and reviews on pubs and beer - as long as they're not libellous, that is!

CAMRA members can get access to members-only areas of the national website. Go to www.camra.org.uk, move to the top of the screen and click on 'Members Log-in'. When the log-in prompt screen appears, type in your user name - your CAMRA membership number without the leading zeros. Your password is your postcode typed in upper case without any spaces.

A particularly engrossing area of the Net is Usenet - the newsgroups. There's a group devoted specifically to real ale - uk.food+drink.real-ale. Here questions can be asked or comments made on the state of beer in Britain. I'm going to Newcastle, where are the best pubs? When's the next beer festival in Stoke, and what beers will be on? Where can you buy bottle conditioned organic beers? Who won Champion Beer of Britain at the Great British Beer Festival? What's a cask breather? Why doesn't beer such-and-such taste the way it used to? And, of course, the long running debate about Wetherspoons - the kiss of death to traditional pubs or a boon and a blessing to mankind?

Finally, a plea. If you're a CAMRA member and you've got an e-mail address, think about passing it on to your branch secretary. E-mail is the fastest and simplest way of getting in touch with lots of members simultaneously. It won't replace the postal system, but it does save money on postage. It also helps the branches to get news out, maybe about new beers at a pub, or a festival that's coming up, or a change in arrangements for a brewery visit. And, of course, members can send in news about a change of landlord, a change in prices, a planning application to open, close or alter the look of a pub. CAMRA's greatest strength has always been in letting people know where the best beer and the best pubs can be found so that they can vote with their feet. Now there is the power of the Internet to spread information even more widely, even more quickly. (But we'll never get the editor of What's Doing to accept articles by e-mail!)

The Plough

Bazens' beer has arrived at the Plough on Rainsough. Flatbac was being sold in February. Holts mild has replaced the Hydes mild and another beer may be added to the current choice.



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**The Mill at the Pier (Trencherfield Mill),
off Pottery Road, Wigan**

Five minutes walk from the Railway and Bus Station

Latest Information (including list of beers) available at:
<http://www.camrawigan.org.uk>

Trotter by the Sea

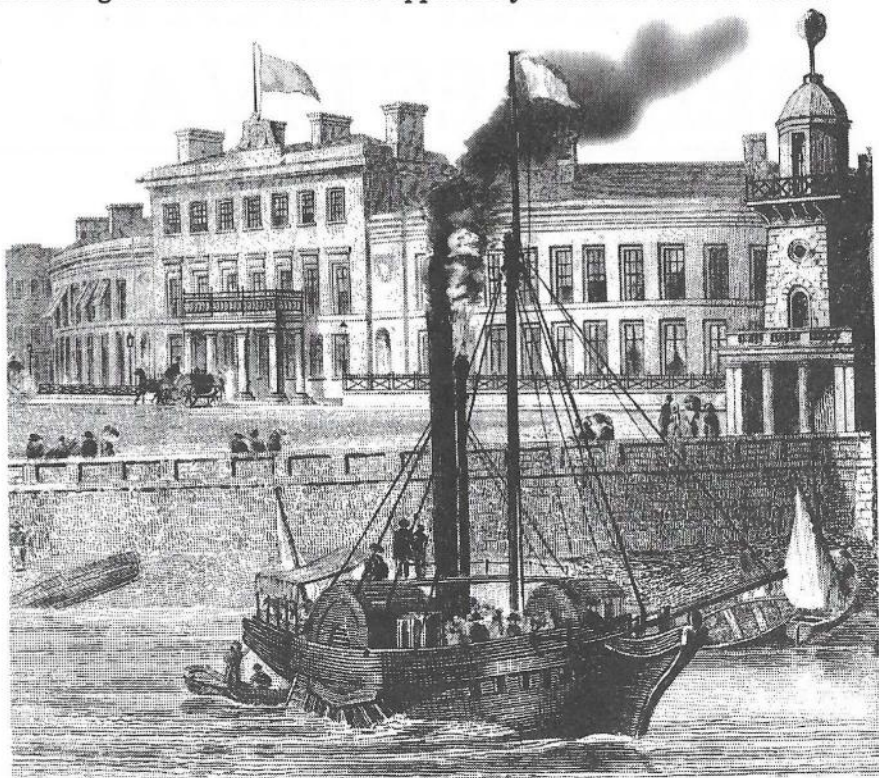
Paul Warbrick

On a nippy but sunny weekend I travelled up to Fleetwood for the 'Coming of Age' - the Twenty-First Beer Festival. Once again the festival was held in the Marine Hall, which has a beautiful dome as its centrepiece.

On my arrival mid-Friday afternoon the hall was heaving with folk enjoying a choice of around 100 beers, and I was immediately thrust behind the bar to serve the thirsty scholars. Back in 1981 at the first festival, there were 27 beers from 15 breweries; this year there were ales from all four corners of the country.

The beer listing in the programme was baffling at first, as it had the beers in regions and by the towns where the breweries are based. Once I mastered the list, I managed to enjoy some excellent ales in between serving.

The two beers from Burton Bridge Brewery - Bridge Bitter (4.2%) and Morning Glory (4.5%) - were extremely popular with afternoon session drinkers, as was Kletswater (4%), a pale coloured, hoppy beer from Anglo Dutch. The name is apparently Dutch for Waffle Water.



Quite a few beers made their debut at the festival, including Glastonbury Ley Line (4.2%), a dark, fruity ale, and a good selection of Picks ales from Accrington. From Beartown Brewery there was a new beer called Bearly Literate (5%), while the Plough Inn, Bodicote, Oxford, was represented by the interestingly titled Life Sentence (5.1%).

After the Saturday afternoon session I ventured out to try a couple of beers in the pubs of Fleetwood before heading back to Blackpool and the train home. With the early evening sun beaming upon me, I strolled along the Esplanade and past Queens Terrace to the **Steamer Hotel**, a fine old pub dating back to 1842 and a former Matthew Brown house.

The curved wooden bar dominates the large open-aspect main room. There's a smaller games room on the left of the front entrance and I also noted a door to the Market Bar to the left of the bar. The beers available were Charles Wells Bombardier (always a favourite of mine), Spitfire and John Smiths.

Turning right outside the Steamer on to Dock Street, one comes to the **Victoria Hotel**, billed as Fleetwood's oldest pub. So why is it currently keg only?

My last port of call was the **North Euston Hotel**. The magnificent semi-circular frontage of this, the most spectacular building in Fleetwood (*see picture*), dominates the area overlooking the Wyre estuary and is a reminder of the days when trains came to Fleetwood from the West Coast main line between London Euston and Glasgow. The Victoria Bar had an excellent range of beers, several from Moorhouses. I sampled Red Heart, brewed for Valentine's Day, from the Blackpool Brewing Company.

There I ended my visit to Fleetwood. But there are still some pubs to try on a pub walk and so, as Arnie said, 'I'll be back.'

Not the Winter Ales Festival

The Orange Tree in Altrincham has ordered the following beers for its mini beer festival on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th March: Moorhouses Black Cat, Ballards Trotton Bitter, Ringwood Best Bitter, Atlas Meridian Tawny Ale, Ridley's Prospect, Ossian's Ale (Champion Beer of Scotland in 2001), Arundel Cold Willie, Haggard's Horny Ale, Barnsley Black Heart Stout, Exe Valley Sheppard's Crook, Darwin Saints Sinner, Dent T'Owd Tup.

The Orange Tree is open all permitted hours and will be doing food on both days up till 5pm or thereabouts.

What's it all about?

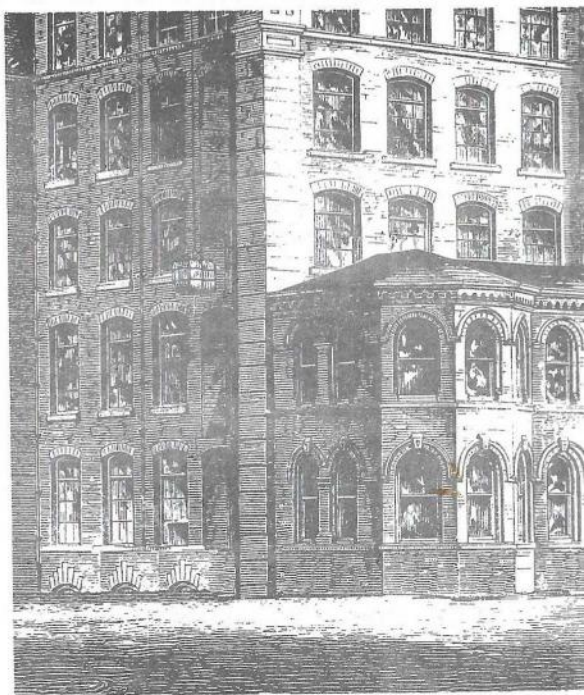
In January a student researching the brewing industry presented Roger Hall with the following questions:

1. Why do you feel it is important to protect traditional brewing in the UK?
2. What type of impact do you think the growth of chained pubs, bars and clubs has had on licensees of independent public houses?
3. How has the increase of foreign drink sales affected the traditional British brewing industry?
- 4 What future do you see for independent brewers and licensees in Britain if this growth continues?

Sometimes it's useful to think about why we are so passionate about real ale and real pubs. We tend to take them for granted. Here, for the record, is Roger's reply...

Traditional brewing is worth protecting and fighting for, not because it is traditional, but because it offers diversity and choice and therein lies quality. It is important not to hang on to the past through misplaced nostalgia, but to identify those elements of tradition which are valuable and worth preserving.

Traditional British beers encompass a wide variety of styles and tastes, from stouts and porters to light ales; from low gravity milds to old ales and barley wines. There is a beer for all tastes, for all seasons, for all occasions. Economies of scale, which large brewers seek in order to satisfy their shareholders, usually result in a reduction of variety and a diminution of choice. Their beers are likely to be those which are the least offensive to the most people; in other words, we end up with beers which reflect the lowest common denominator of taste. Those beers about which minorities are enthusiastic disappear. To me, this is poorer quality, even if the beers which have gone were not my personal favourites. I might not like what you drink but I defend your right to drink it!



Since the Beer Orders, there has been a growing separation of production from retailing. This has been accompanied by increased concentration of ownership in both sectors of the industry. True free houses had all but died out by 1974. Although they have grown in number since then, they are still not common. Those that do remain suffer in many ways. They do not have the buying power of large chains and have to compete by differentiating themselves and competing in terms of quality, variety and choice. It is hard work to ensure a continual supply of interesting quality ales which provide the variety that customers want.

The survival and success of such pubs depends entirely on the dedication of the individual licensee, who will also need to ensure that the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming - a tall order and one which few can meet. In contrast, in chains, the demands on the individual are less diverse; work is shared and the licensee can focus on such things as staff development and creating a welcoming atmosphere. Such things as pricing policy, choice of beers, purchasing, cellar management and so on can be left to others.

I don't think that I have anything against foreign beer sales, per se; after all it expands choice, doesn't it? However, part of me wonders whether we are not best sampling Mexican beers in Mexico. I think this must be to do with authenticity. It is often the case that food, and I would include beer in that, is modified when it is sold in foreign



markets and there is a great likelihood of the lowest common denominator effect, which detracts from quality. Having said that, I am sure that traditional British beer can hold its own against the invasion of Budweiser or any other bland competitors. If only people were swayed more by experience than image! We are facing an era of globalisation in brewing. Interbrew is our biggest brewer. This trend threatens to do for the world brewing industry what brewers like Whitbread did for the British industry - take over other breweries, close them down and reduce choice. Global branding seems like the future and I don't welcome that because it will inevitably reduce variety and choice and, to me, that is loss of quality.

Over the last thirty years I have seen the disappearance of many local and regional breweries and increased concentration in both the production and retailing sides of the industry. It is true that there has been a burgeoning of microbreweries, but these represent only a tiny proportion of total consumption and their stability is tenuous. In the last few years we have witnessed a reversal of the real ale gains of the 1980s and 90s. There are whole swaths of Manchester, for example, where you can't get a traditional pint. If this trend continues, real ale will become an increasingly niche product, served at premium prices to a diminishing band of cognoscenti in a limited number of establishments. The rest of the population will buy six-packs of Bud, Stella or Kirin from the supermarket and consume them in front of whatever replaces the TV. That's a future I don't want and why it is essential to continue to fight for traditional beer and traditional pubs.

Beer for the ladies

This year's Wigan Beer Festival has the accent on beer for the ladies, with a beer menu aimed at promoting real ale among the gentle sex. The beers include Caledonian Deuchar's IPA, Harviestoun Schiehallion, Hopback Summer Lightning, Mayflower Wigan Blonde, Oakham JHB, Sulwarth Galloway Gold, St Austell's Tribute, Charles Wells Banana Bread Beer, Woodforde's Nelson's Revenge, Beartown Wheat Bear and Roosters Cream.

There will be a beer trail for ladies at each session of the Festival. The first six to complete the trail, trying six halves, will be presented with a commemorative T-shirt.

See the advert in this issue for details of dates and opening times.



Letters

TIT Awards

Sir - My branch has instructed me to write to you, making it clear that we totally dissociate ourselves from the remarks made by the individual calling himself 'Trotter' in the feature 'TIT Awards' (February WD).

In particular, the remark concerning the Bar Fringe is, in our opinion, most undeserved. This is underscored by the fact that we have again shortlisted this lively and interesting establishment as a candidate for the Good Beer Guide 2004. The Guide needs a selection of varying styles of pub and whilst the Bar Fringe may not be to everybody's taste, few would dispute that what it offers is unique in Manchester's Northern Quarter.

Pete Cash, Secretary, CAMRA North Manchester

Gourmet corner

Sir - Recent mentions in What's Doing of the Joseph Holt website prompted this reader to gain access, thus reminding him of a very old joke:

Q: What's the similarity between a blow job and a lobster thermidor?

A: Neither is on the menu in our house!

The website says that 'Holts offer a wide selection of food across its stable of pubs.' A long list of delights follows: Thai Style Tiger Prawns, Jalapeno Peppers, Whole Tail Breaded Scampi, Surf and Turf, Spicy Szechwan Chicken Sizzler and so on.

However, visitors to certain Holts pubs, expecting some of the above, would be lucky to find a hot baked potato on sale!

John Greenway

Lakes and ale

Sir - Once again I find myself forking out 30p for January's *What's Doing*, the only CAMRA newsletter in the country (I am told) to charge its readers for the pleasure of reading about the real ale scene in Manchester. Very valuable it is, too. Let us forget that it's only 24 pages; that the pages are a mere A5 size and about four and a half of them are adverts - the information in the remaining 16 pages is genuinely valuable.

Sixteen pages? Had I missed three and a half of them? Were they stuck together? No, they were not, but they may as well have been. Once again, we have Daddy Bell taking over 15% of *What's Doing* with his views on pubs which I have no intention of ever visiting.

If I go to the Lake District, I have the Good Beer Guide. Why don't we have articles about real ale in Osmotherley, Chandlers Ford or

Shepton Mallet? I have been to Tokyo, Manila, LA, etc. Do you want my recommendations? No, I certainly hope not. Daddy Bell should come back to Manchester and write about pubs here or stop wasting our valuable pages. If I want to drink in Somewhere-in-Furness, I'll find my own pubs, thank you!

Albert Onejug

What happened to the Volunteer?

Sir - For several years I have read with interest your articles on public houses and their histories. I think I have a real challenge for you here. Having lived in Altrincham all my life, I always knew about the Volunteer. The strange thing about this public house was the fact that no-one could remember it being open!

I have asked old-timers who have lived in Altrincham forever and even they could not remember it being open. The building has gone now, but it stood on Stamford Street, between the Victoria and Kingsway. Does anyone have any information about the Volunteer?

V Condron

Good Beer Guide

Sir - I couldn't agree more with Dale Arden's letter about the Good Beer Guide (*WD February*). He has a valid point about the way pubs are selected, usually by about half a dozen branch members. Mr Arden's suggestion that every branch member selects a top ten is a sound idea - we might get a truer, broader indication of where real ale is available in the region.

Arthur Dent

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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BACK NUMBERS: 15p per copy. Send stamped addressed envelope to Roger Hall, 123 Hill Lane, Blackley, Manchester M9 6PW.

To join CAMRA send £16 to Membership, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW.

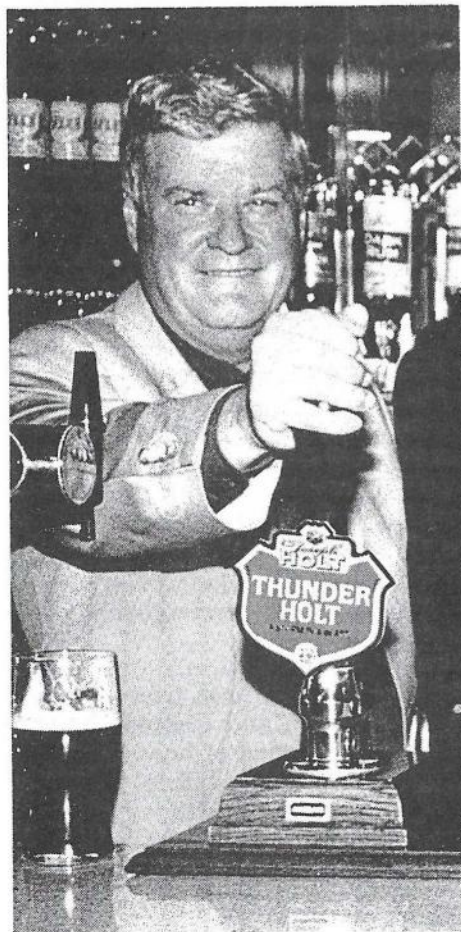
Contributors to this issue: Paul Roberts, Pete Cash, Paul Warbrick, Dave Hallows, Dave White, Roger Hall, Tony Evans, Stewart Revell, Daddy Bell, Brian Gleave, Neil Worthington

Holts In The Twenty-First Century

Pete Cash

Members of the North Manchester Branch of CAMRA were recently entertained by Holts' Head Brewer, Keith Sheard, in the brightly lit setting of the Training Room, upstairs in the Derby Brewery Arms. After giving us an often amusing account of his personal history in the brewing industry, Keith went on to illuminate some of the cutting-edge ideas he is bringing to the production of seasonal beers at the Empire Brewery.

During his time at Leeds Grammar School, where he showed an aptitude at Chemistry and Physics, he became acquainted with Tetley bitter at lunchtimes. This was soon followed by a school trip around the brewery, where his obvious keen interest led to an offer of work in the Cold Room, lagging the conditioning tanks, during his holidays. A Mr David Butcher asked whether he had considered a career in the industry.



A Chemistry HND was followed by a degree course in Brewing Science at Heriot-Watt, with a year out to work at Sam Smiths Brewery in Tadcaster. They wouldn't let him anywhere near the actual brew plant, however. Grants weren't available at Heriot-Watt so he washed bottles at Ushers Brewery during another holiday. In fact, every vacation was spent at one brewery or another, familiarising himself with a different aspect of the industry each time.

He worked in the Bass Tadcaster mill room on one occasion, and was in fact sponsored by Bass in his final year. So, after obtaining his degree, he found himself at Burton-on-Trent, in both the Draught Bass and Lager plants. Here he met Peter Edwards (a famous toper) who took him round the Bass plant with its 1,000 Unions. Most of the first day was spent sampling the beers at various

stages, and included a visit to the Excise Room, where a Most Important Cupboard housed bottles of White Shield of diverse vintages, which naturally needed sampling!

It was at Bass that he learnt the brewers' equivalent of tarring and feathering. There was apparently a tradition where the 'victim' (usually prior to his wedding day) was stripped naked, then coated in caramel syrup followed by dry hops. After one such incident, he was banned from the sample stores. Three years at Runcorn were followed by cask brewing at Tadcaster, where he became brewing manager. In 1992 he was moved sideways on to a computer project, but never got his brewing job back, taking redundancy in 1995.

Then the unexpected boom in Caffreys Bitter in Bass Belfast gave him the opportunity to oversee the shift from two-day to five-day brewing. In 1997 he had a six-month spell at Rudgate Brewery, but didn't really see his future at a brewery with no pubs. Finally, his present job at Joseph Holts came along. Keith is very proud of his Brewing Diploma which he gained with Honours in 1981, there being only 40 holders worldwide.

The most exciting development at Holts is the new 30-barrel mini-plant, which allows seasonal and experimental brews to be made in lengths of 15 to about 40 barrels. Keith is most adamant that this is the correct way to proceed, as he is strongly opposed to the alternative - blending mainline brews using the main (120 barrel minimum) plant. Another overriding principle in the new beers is that 'nothing unnatural' is to be used.

The Holts well will be brought back into use. The iron and manganese content (which has prevented its use for a number of years) will be removed by reverse osmosis. At this stage in his talk, Keith produced an astonishing range of samples of malts and hops, including things like roasted malted rye, malted oats, and hops, some with extremely high α -acid content. We were also given an advanced view of the high quality artwork which Holts have commissioned to accompany the promotion of the new beers; a far cry from the old 'London Gin' style spirit labels once used in their pubs. (Anybody remember these minimalist efforts?)

The Blackwell bitter, which should be available by now, uses a lager yeast, which works better at this time of year, and Cascade hops. Later, the Edwards Amber will contain a proportion of honey (Keith brought a sample of Mexican Honey which he is evaluating) but not too much as the weight for weight cost is about eleven times that of malt, though the higher fermentability offsets this slightly. Some of the seasonals will have bottled versions (probably not bottle-conditioned). Thwaites have now bought the bottling plant from Brakspears.

Missive from Millom *Daddy Bell*

'Have you settled in yet?' they ask, in this wondrous part of the world where greengrocers still use brown paper bags and brides-to-be come for wedding interviews chaperoned by their mothers. So settled are we that I have barely stirred from Millom and its environs since before Christmas. The one exception was a trip down memory lane (Liverpool and Birkenhead, to be precise) which gave me a brief chance to revisit some scenes of past pleasures. My reward was my first taste of Roosters Vanilla Porter in **Dr Duncan's**, and a pint of Dwan New Year Paddy (a very dark brown, not black, porter) in the **Head of Steam**.



Otherwise, so all-consuming have my responsibilities in Millom become that I rarely venture to anywhere more exotic than Broughton or Foxfield. Monthly festivals in the latter's **Prince of Wales** regularly produce train- or coach-loads of familiar and welcome faces from Greater Manchester and beyond. Inclement weather did not deter me from returning to Coniston, where the **Sun Inn** is not open at lunchtime on winter weekdays, but the **Black Bull** had on the full range of its own Coniston Brewery ales, all on exemplary form, the Blacksmith's Ale being paleish, smooth and gentle, the Old Man Ale being more tangy, very dark with red tints.

The big talking point locally, as I suggested two months back, has been the opening of a new micro-brewery at The Green. Beckstones Brewery is the creation of David Taylor, on the site of an old mill, and



is housed in a stone-faced and slate-floored building just across the road from the **Punch Bowl**. (David's original hope had been to take over the pub and install the plant - which came from the former High Force Brewery - within it.) Dave's first brew, which came out at around 4.9%, has matured beautifully while he has been waiting for the excise men to give him the green light for releasing it for sale. Brewed with Maris Otter malt, a good dose of torrifed wheat and a touch of chocolate malt, Willamette and Liberty hops, it uses liquor from a bore-hole sunk on the premises. It looks the part of a brownish bitter of a northern - perhaps north-eastern - kind, but with age any residual sweetness has worn off, leaving one with the taste of orange peel, both malt and hops still being strongly detectable in the nose.

A fine start, then, and the second brew, which emerged at the projected 3.8% strength, vanished from the pumps in local free houses within hours of being put on. If you get a chance to drink Beckstones brews - there was talk of Liverpool beer festival having placed an order - take it; and remember that you read of it first in *What's Doing*. Best of all, come up this way to enjoy it. Sadly, the Punch Bowl won't be its most likely source -all too often, they are down to keg beers - but within a few miles of the brewery you may well find other pubs where Beckstones is establishing itself as the beer of choice.



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Beinlos in Bavaria

Paul Roberts

In the UK it takes years to bring in changes to licensing laws. Things move more quickly in Bavaria. The parliament announced on 21st January that with immediate effect the *Sperrstunden* (hours that premises must close) in the Free State will be amended to 0200-0600 during the week and 0300-0600 at weekends, with the exception of religious days, when 0100-0600 continues to apply.

Until now, Bavaria had some of the strictest hours in the Bundesrepublik - a little strange for the world's greatest beer drinking region. Having said that, as agriculture plays such an important role in the economy, it is normally a case of early to bed and early to rise. Pubs outside the cities are busier at 0800 on a Saturday or Sunday morning than they are at 2200 on a weekday evening.

Some states (NRW being a recent example) are now free of *Polizeistunden* and can open twenty-four hours. In practice, few places have taken advantage of this freedom. It is useful for a spontaneous late session in out-of-town bars, but in places such as Düsseldorf and Cologne Altstadts it will be very useful for summer weekends. However, many bars there already had special licences allowing them to open until 0400 at weekends.

The photograph of Paul (wearing a tie with an appropriate beer glass motif) was taken at his 50th birthday bash in Peter's Brauhaus in Cologne.



Rupert

We were once again in Ratties. The Tripedressers Arms, where we had intended to meet, was closed and boarded. 'Perhaps, if Drabs had revamped it as Tripies, it might still be here,' Alistair began. 'Isn't it ironic that Grotley and its environs have the highest level of pub visiting in the country and yet, all around us, hostelrys are closing? They must be shutting down in droves elsewhere, but it doesn't seem as obvious.'

I pointed out that the opportunities to turn redundant taverns into private residences, bijou bistros or upmarket offices in Grotley were fewer than might be the case in Smokeley or rural middle England. 'After all, who'd want to live in the blackened shell of the former Shrieking Vole on Gutter Lane in Gungehurst, surrounded by prostitutes, drug dealers and violent children?' I was quickly reminded that in Slumley Parva, once the beer drinkers' Mecca, ex-taverns were flourishing as trattoria, tavernas, offices and churches.

Alistair, who was still reading the newspaper where he'd come across the pub-visiting report, looked up and said, 'I see Crappivo have got their comeuppance in court.' We asked what he meant and he explained that for the last twenty

years he'd been following the activities of the massive American brewers, Crappivo. Apparently, a brewing dynasty from deepest Balkania, which dated back to the eighth century, had split up before the Second World War and the black sheep cousin Igor Pivo had gone to America to establish what was to become the world's biggest producer of beer. The original Urechtpivo company remained in Balkania and continued to brew in the centuries-old traditional way, maturing their beer for months in the mountains and selling it under the Pivo name.

The growth of tourism to Balkania gave people from all over the world a taste of arguably the best beer in the world and soon it became available in the pubs of Sydney and the free houses of Grotley. Crappivo, whose product was marketed world wide under the name of Pivo, were enraged, believing perhaps that a quality product could undermine their own bland offering. So they sued. And it took for ever. But common sense prevailed. Urechtpivo, which had been sold as Pivo since before the time of Charlemagne, could continue to sell it as such and Crappivo could whistle. So, in England at least, tradition is upheld and Crap fails. Some consolation as around us Drabs emporia close their doors.

Diary extra: Bus details for Plough, Rainsough, 9 April: No.93 @ 7.30pm from Cannon St to Kersal Vale. (note no return bus 93). No.92 @ 7.31 Pendleton Precinct or 7.32 Maypole on Broughton Rd. Note that evening route avoids Kersal Rd, so alight Moor La/Kersal Rd junction and walk Kersal Rd, or stay on via Bury New Rd until Hilton La/Sandy La junction and walk down Hilton La. Return 92s @ 9.51 and 10.51 (Pendleton 10.04 and 11.04).

Branch Diary

Fri 7 Mar: Regional Under-26 Retro Crawl: 7.30pm in the Sand Bar, Grosvenor Street. (Off Oxford Road, All Saints). 9.30pm in the Knott (ex-Knott Bar Fringe), Deansgate (opposite Deansgate Station). Visiting a selection of Cafe Bars serving real ale and genuine continental lagers. Meet under 'CAMRA' sign.

Sat 5 April 1pm: Regional AGM: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill.

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Sat 1 Mar, Train Social: Wakefield, Huddersfield and Marsden.
Details from Branch Contact

Tue 4 Mar 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Hare & Hounds, Holcombe Brook

Sat 22 Mar, Coach Social: East Lancs Brewpubs. Details from Contact

Tue 25 Mar 8.30pm: Committee/What's Doing Collation, Friendship, Scholes Lane, Prestwich

Fri 28 & Sat 29 Mar: Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham

Contact: *Peter Alexander 0113 232 4023(w), 0161 655 4002 (h)*

email: *P.Alexander@Virgin.net*

Trafford & Hulme www.camra.org.uk/trafford

Thurs 6 Mar 8pm, Branch Meeting, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Sat 15 Mar 2pm. Social at the Beer Festival, Orange Tree, Altrincham

Mon 17 Mar 8.30pm, Joint Social with Stockport branch, White Lion, Liverpool Road, Manchester

Thur 3 April 8pm, Branch Meeting, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Contact: *Dave Ward 0161 980 1170*

Wigan

Thur 13th - Sat 15th March, Wigan Beer Festival, Trencherfield Mill

Contact: *John Barlow (01257) 478816 (w), 427595 (h)*

email: *john@misltd.co.uk*

North Manchester www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 5 Mar 8pm prompt: GBG Non-City Selection: Marble Arch, Rochdale Road.

Wed 12 Mar: Good Beer Guide Salford Crawl: Mark Addy 7.30pm, Albert Vaults, Kings Arms 8.30pm, Eagle (Collier St), Olde Nelson (if reopened) 9.30pm, finish at the Crescent.

Wed 19 Mar 8pm: Branch AGM. Crescent, Salford.

Wed 26 Mar 8pm: Social at the Trackside, East Lancs Railway Station, Bolton Street, Bury. Eccles tram terminus at 6.45pm for a Metromax £2 return ticket.

Weds 2 April: Crawl of Ancoats area. Jolly Angler 7.30, White House 8pm, Land o'Cakes 8.30, Bar Fringe 9pm, Smithfield 9.30.

Wed 9 April: Social at the Plough, Rainsough Brow (new free house).

For bus details see under Rupert, previous page.

Contact *Roger Hall 0161 740 7937*

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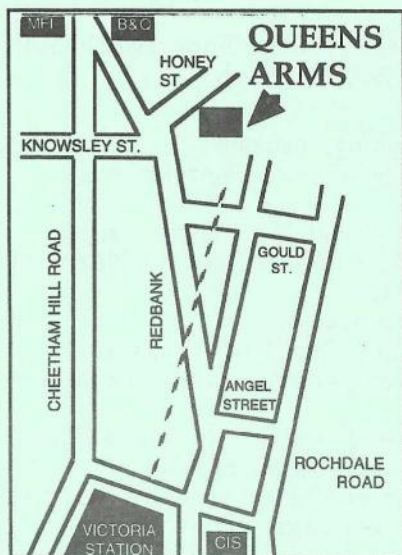
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