

30p

What's Doing

MARCH 2004



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

ALE GAIN ON CHAPEL STREET

Real ale has once again returned to the Salford Arms on the corner of Chapel Street and Bloom Street. Shepton Brewery Copper Dragon was recently on handpump and the beer was apparently selling well.



Andy and Lynn welcome you to

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Hogs

Neil Worthington

The Hogshead on Deansgate has been refurbished and renamed the **Hog's Head**. Apart from the new spelling, it's hard to see what's different about the place. Cask ales remain, but the pubco's policy now is to have no more than two, and indeed there are only two handpumps. OK, fair enough. Cask ale sales aren't that big in a pub that's pushing wines and spirits and alcopops and soft drinks and all manner of (arguably) more profitable drinks. And we certainly don't want any pub to put on more beers than it can keep well and sell. But why (oh why, oh why, etc) have they picked two beers from Britain's capital cities - Fullers London Pride and Caledonian Deuchars IPA - when they could sell a local bitter instead? Yes, they've got the keg version of Boddingtons, but not the much improved (hoppier and stronger) cask Boddies. It's not as if Strangeways draymen don't know their way along Deansgate!

Better news at the similarly refurbished Hog's Head in Sale, though. Again, company policy means just two cask ales. But that's two more than they had before refurbishment.

Back in Manchester, the **Bridge** (formerly Bridge Street Tavern and before that, Pack Horse) has also been revamped. The food is the main attraction for now. Sadly, there's no cask ale just yet, though handpumps are in place and Taylors Landlord and others are promised. The hanging sign outside the pub is a fine new piece of work with a stylised picture of Santiago Calatrava's Trinity Bridge. This is the modern footbridge over the Irwell, leading from St Mary's Parsonage in Manchester to Chapel Street in Salford. It was only opened in 1995 - long after the pub first served beer.





Most of the work on the Lamb in Eccles has been completed. All the rooms have been redecorated, the seating given new upholstery and the extensive woodwork is in the process of being resurfaced.

The billiards room is most impressive. The full size table has a new cloth and pockets and the seating has a sumptuous dark green leather finish. The fireplace is a main feature of the room and original tiling - dark green and cyan - has been revealed. It is planned to find matching tiles to blend the hearth into the blue/green vinyl flooring. The cast iron grate can no longer sustain a real fire, but a realistic coal effect version should prove the next best thing. The surrounding woodwork has been stripped of layers of varnish and then professionally French-polished to a satin finish.

The same treatment has been given to the architrave surrounding the door, where the central oval panel has been matched with original timbers, and will be extended to similar features around the front room door and to the elaborate carved mahogany around the bar.



Framed cartoons relating to the game adorn the walls of the billiards room, along with a large painting showing ladies in Empire gowns playing billiards, and details of pub lanterns, beer engines and beer taps. In the other two rooms, there are mainly photographs of old Eccles.

The front room wall seating has been upholstered in smart red fabric, with matching chairs. Here, too, is a splendid fireplace with another elaborate wooden surround. The back room seating is finished in a maroon cord, with either matching or complementary chairs. The ceiling is white, with the wooden rails picked out in dark mahogany. The grate of yet another fireplace has been tiled over with cream and floral tiles.

The vault is altogether more subdued. The walls are done in a restrained green and the seating is a plain brown vinyl. The floor has a large chequerboard pattern of salmon and slate grey tiling. Photos of teams of yesteryear from Stockport, Manchester City and Manchester United are on the walls, along with Wills Cigarette Cards featuring cricketers.

It is possible to visit this remarkable pub on many occasions and spot something new each time, such is the wealth of detail on display. Holts are to be congratulated on the care that has gone into this latest makeover.

(Left: front room. Below: vault. Photos by Phil Stout)



Lest we forget *Part Two*

Staggerin' Man has a look at some of the Manchester watering holes that don't get much of a mention in the local CAMRA press.

Starting at All Saints, I visited the **Church Inn** (Lees) on Higher Cambridge Street, just behind Manchester Metropolitan University. Walking into the solid and dependable pub, I noticed a blue plaque commemorating its 100-year anniversary in the year 2000. The Church is very much a locals' pub, with a considerable Irish clientele and high quality Lees bitter on handpull. The interior consists of a basic L-shaped room with small bar.

The next pub was something of a shock to me. I wandered into the **Salutation** on Higher Chatham Street, a corner Tetley house with a largely unspoiled main room and a more recent big extension. The original saloon bar and room, with an unusual clock behind the bar, lots of leaded glass, mahogany and an ornate ceiling make a rather attractive show. The place is frequented by locals and students and staff from the universities. Many moons ago, the 'Sal' was a lunchtime haunt of mine and served dependable Tetley and Yates's bitter. The Yates's has gone, leaving Tetley bitter the sole survivor on handpump. When I was ordering, the bar person tried to discourage me, saying that it wasn't good. She drew some off, but the trouble was, it was still undrinkable - sour, vinegary and just plain gone off. To be fair, I might have caught the pub on an off day. Well, I hope so!

The **City Road Inn**, by the GMEX Centre, proved to be another disappointment, although I did spy a handpump with a turned around Old Speckled Hen badge. So, to raise flagging spirits, I entered the **Knott Bar** on Deansgate, opposite Deansgate and GMEX stations. To my mind, this modern bar under the arches is the new



entry of the year in the 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide. It should have been in the Guide at least two years ago, because the beer quality is always superb! It was a pleasure to get my lips around a pint of Marble Manchester Bitter. It was golden with a biting bitter taste, dryish with a citrus feel. A very special beer! Also on were Ginger Marble, Eastwood and Sanders Elland Back (4.6%) and Titanic Iceberg, along with a good selection of continental beers on draught and in bottle, real cider and perry and quality food.

Further up Deansgate is a modern pub, the **Pig & Porcupine**. I had never been in here before, as I always thought it would be keg. Wrong! I found Old Speckled Hen as well as Boddies, which I tried, and I thought it good quality and not too cold. The new, stronger Boddies has more taste; let's hope the pubs continue to look after it. The Pig & Porcupine interior is mock Edwardian, with raised and lower rooms.



Onward to the **Sir Ralph Abercromby** in Bootle Street, right next to the Cop Shop. This is another former haunt of mine and its appearance has hardly changed for donkey's years! That's not a bad thing, but the TV lounge area is looking worn these days; the walls and fittings are in need of some TLC. On the beer front, the Abercromby is still good with Boddies, Wadworth 6X and Castle Eden Ale. There was also Draught Bass and Cains Bitter, but the badges were turned round on my visit. I tried a glass of Castle Eden Ale. It was well kept, sweet and malty.

Next stop was around the corner - the **Square Albert** in Albert Square. Mock Edwardian in style, it has a long, low bar and one of those raised sitting areas which seemed to be in vogue about ten

years ago. I think the idea then was that the Square Albert would be a Tetley flagship, and maybe at the beginning it was. Now the pub looks threadbare. The Tetley bitter was off, but I had Greene King Abbot, which was well kept, sweet and malty.

Then on to the **Town Hall Tavern** on Tib Lane, where I was pleasantly surprised to find three real ales on - Boddies, Draught Bass and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. I had a go at the Bass and found it of good quality, but with nothing of the character the beer used to have. The decor is unusual but eye-catching, with pine fittings in a two-roomed Edwardian interior. Well worth a visit.

Another pub that fits well into this category is the **Rising Sun** on Queen Street. It is one long, narrow room, smartly decorated with off-white and deep lilac walls and upholstery. I did not want to leave when I found three beers on - Charles Wells Bombardier, Smiles Old Tossa (4.3%) and Thwaites Bitter. The Old Tossa was glorious - spicy

and very tasty. Thwaites bitter, unusually badged as 'original ale', was also very tasty. Some years ago the Rising Sun was an Irish theme bar; now it is very much an up and coming pub.



Entering the **Crown** on Fountain Street, I vaguely recalled this one-time kegery going over to the proper stuff. In what is said to be a fashionable cafe bar style room, I spied four handpumps with just Boddies bitter on. Well, the beer had been sitting around for some time, because I got a hazy and tarty pint.

It was a lot better at the **Seven Oaks** on Nicholas Street. This former Whitbread house consists of one small but cosy room. The beers were Boddies, Tetley

Bitter and Deuchars IPA. The Boddies was a lot better than in the Crown. In fact, it was on song.

I strode between the imposing pillars of the **Bank** on West Mosley Street and into the former majestic library reading room, to be met by a pool table in the centre of the room! The place does seem to attract the younger clientele, but it is a bit much in such a large hall. There were ten handpumps, but only one beer was on - Morlands Old Speckled Hen.

On to Oldham Street and a visit to **Gullivers**. It's a Lees house, but sadly only offers the bitter owing to poor sales of the mild. The beer was in good nick. In the last few years the brewery have spent some money on the premises, inside and out, and it looks comfortable, with one main lounge and a large side room.

Finally, I went up Cross Street to visit a classy little hostelry named **Thomas's Chop House**. It is quite imposing and at the same time homely. Through the Cross Street entrance there is a vault and bar, leading to a long, narrow dining hall with original green tiling. The place is an absolute must for those flushed with cash. The Taylors Landlord had sold out and only Boddies was on, but it was very tasty. After such a mammoth survey, the pub provided a spectacular end to the day.

Dead Swan

The Swan with Two Necks on Withy Grove is surrounded by scaffolding and fencing and the building's future doesn't look promising.

A few years back the four-storey pub adjacent to the Printworks was purchased by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, then sold on to developers. Since then it has remained boarded up.

The Swan was in its heyday when Manchester had a newspaper industry and it was busy with Daily Mirror workers. Later, it was used for filming pub scenes in *Prime Suspect* and *Cracker*.



Wigan and district

Dave White

Things are certainly livening up in Hindley. The word is out that Beartown brewery hopes to buy the **Hare & Hounds** on Ladies Lane. The pub currently sells Hydes ales, so it's a pity that the Congleton company didn't go for one of Hindley's many keg hostelrys instead. However, the **Bridgewater** on Liverpool Road has reverted to real ale for the first time in years. This ex-Burtonwood pub is now owned by a company called Mayvale and cask ales on sale there recently have included Taylors Landlord, Greene King IPA and Grays Premium.

Last summer I visited the **Derby Arms**, Castle Hill Road. The pub then sold nothing more inspiring than cask Whitbread Trophy, but this beer has now given way to Boddingtons bitter, Flowers IPA and, best of all, a guest ale: Forgotten Promise by Hanby was on, not so long ago. Meanwhile in the centre of Hindley, the **Prince of Wales** on Bridge Street has replaced Draught Bass and Marstons Pedigree with Old Speckled Hen and Taylors Landlord.

Springfield now, and Eddie Duggan has just celebrated twenty-five years as licensee of the **Brickmakers Arms** on Woodhouse Lane (*below*). This most welcoming of pubs has barely changed in that time, and although the only traditional beer on offer is Greenalls bitter, it's as good a pint of the brew as you'll find anywhere: so if you happen to be in the area, give the Brickies a try. The pub is now part of the Pubmaster chain.

There aren't that many pubs selling Greenalls bitter nowadays. The beer survives at the **Colliers Arms**, Kings Moss, but has been replaced by Tetley bitter and Flowers IPA at the **Plough & Harrow**, Shevington.



The **Farmers Arms**, Chorley Road, Bispham Green, has reopened. Real ale is still available (Ruddles Best) but smoking is not allowed anywhere in the pub. I think this is a first for the Wigan area, and it will be interesting to see if trade is affected.

The **Queens** on Bickershaw Lane, Bickershaw, was closed for refurbishment at the time of writing, but should reopen in early March. The name of the pub relates to the six wives of Henry VIII, three of whom could be seen on one side of the pub sign, and three on the other. As far as I know, the Queens was the only pub in the Wigan area still to serve cask-conditioned beer by electric dispense. Will Banks's replace the little boxes with handpumps? Will they put the sign back up? I'll let you know.

Mamma mania has gripped *What's Doing* in recent months, so I might as well stick my two penn'orth in. We had topless barmaids in Wigan many years ago. The **Flamingo** in Scholes (now the **New Scholes Tavern**) used to have them, about a decade back, and the beer was real in those days as well. My wife seems to think that the long-closed **Bridie Donnelly's** in Lower Ince also had topless barmaids when it was the **Rock Rock Cafe**, but isn't sure.



Sparkler trials

Dave Hallows

The Trackside on the East Lancashire Railway in Bolton Street, Bury, is leading the way in new sparkler technology. Apparently, this new venture has close links with a microbrewery not all that far away. The usual sparkler is a plastic attachment screwed on to the handpump outlet to give real ale a 'tighter' head.

The device under trial is a plastic umbrella, or button mushroom-shaped attachment which seems to make the beer livelier. I reckon the idea is to make the head last longer. I am told that Phase II of the trial is to introduce the same design in stainless steel, as the plastic ones tend to break!

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In the City

with Arthur Dent

Early on a Saturday evening I visited the **Waterhouse** on Princess Street, the pub named after the architect of Manchester Town Hall. It has a series of small rooms, unlike the usual open plan Wetherspoon design, and it was very busy. Standing at the bar in the main room, I tried a pint of Camerons Strongarm, then followed it up with Jack o'Legs, brewed by Tring, Hertfordshire. Both beers were exceptional.

I went to the Waterhouse again a few days later and sampled a quick half of Spitfire before having some Betty Stogs Bitter, brewed by Skinners of Cornwall. (The brewery names its beers after characters in Cornish folklore.) The pale amber Betty Stogs was a Supreme Champion at the SIBA Festival in 1999.



It was then out the back door and into the **City Arms**, where fellow city gents have their liquid lunches. Betty Stogs was also available here, but I decided to sample the Greene King IPA, a light session beer that is quite sweet. Other beers available were Burton Ale, Wells Bombardier, Deuchars IPA and Tetleys. Fridays at the City feature the 'Guess the Beer' test.

From the City I moved on to the **Town Hall Tavern**, a short walk away. Here I sample a half of Deuchars IPA, which was slightly warm. It may be that it had not been pulled through for a while, but each time I have ventured into the THT the beer has been served that way. I'll be giving the place a miss for a while.

To end the evening, I made my way across Albert Square, down Brazenose Street and into Lincoln Square for the **Rising Sun**. The bar is at the far end of this rather long pub and the three wickets at the very end of the bar had Wells Bombardier (the permanent ale), Thwaites Original Bitter and Brass Monkeys, a pint of which I quaffed. The pumpclip stated that malted wheat gives this warming beer a robust, fruity flavour, and it wasn't wrong. I could still taste the fruitiness when I was having a takeaway on the way home!

Ken's Third

Pints, Paths and Paddles Pub Walk

Radcliffe - Stoneclough - Ringley - Radcliffe

Taking in some barely known rural scenery and evocative reminders of the birth of the Industrial Age, this year's walk also gives pub lovers a chance to contrast the village pubs of Stoneclough and historic Ringley with the urban delights of Radcliffe's varied hosteleries.

It's cheap, too! Excellent Bank Top Flatcap is £1.35 at the Market Street Tavern, Stoneclough, and other pubs are selling well kept ales at £1.40 to £1.70 a pint.

Take the Metro to Radcliffe for a gathering in Radcliffe Metrolink car park at 10.15am or meet at 12.30pm at the Hare & Hounds, Stoneclough, next to Kearsley rail station. Distances are Radcliffe to Stoneclough 3.5 miles (time - four hours, with pub visits). Ringley to Radcliffe 2.5 miles (time - whenever, it's a pub crawl!) Contact Ken Birch on 0161 705 0836



Boggart Bulletin

Last month's new dark 4.5% beer was, in fact, **Owd Hob** and made an appearance at the Bar Fringe on Swan Street. Out now is **Gobbart** (4%), billed as a light and fruity session beer with a lemon citrus aftertaste. The name was suggested by a customer. The regular **Winter Sun** makes another welcome appearance.

Bent & Bongs Beer Bash

The first of many local beer festivals took place at the end of January. In between serving, Paul Warbrick sampled some of the beers...

This year the BBBB opened an hour earlier on the Friday night, at 5.00pm, to accommodate the masses of real ale lovers descending on the Formby Hall, Atherton.

Before the evening session began I sampled Exe Valley Devon Dawn (4.5%), a mid-brown beer brewed to meet the dawn of the New Year. Next, I tried Elgoods Thin Ice, a 4.7% beer with a hoppy and orange aroma and a bitter finish. The name was appropriate, considering the weather conditions. I also tried an ale from one of the most northerly breweries, the 4.3% Hebridean Gold from Isle of Skye, a superb golden beer, brewed with oats.

The theme at this year's Bent & Bongs festival was to feature Champion Beers of Britain (CBOB) alongside festival favourites and some beers from new micro and pub breweries.

The CBOB ales included the 1995 winner, Cottage Normans Conquest, and the 1998 winner, Coniston Bluebird. I had a little sample of both of these, considering I've got the T-shirts. There was also Moorhouses Black Cat, CBOB in 2000, and Taylors Landlord, which was rather popular on the Friday night.

The rare Elderberry Fruit (4.7%) from St Peters Brewery, Suffolk, made an appearance. This is a fine example of a fruit beer on a wheat base, with a dry aftertaste.



By 7.30pm the Formby Hall was packed and it was non-stop serving for the rest of the evening. However, I managed to try some of the Harviestoun Indian Summer, a late addition to the list.

Both the afternoon and evening sessions on the Saturday were well attended and during meal/beer breaks I sampled a few more ales, including J W Lees Vulcan (4.1%), a sparklingly clear wheat beer with a hint of spice, named after the bomber that was built down the road from the brewery.

No Atherton & Tyldesley Round Table festival would be complete without its Beers From Around the World, in bottles and on draught, plus the Cider Selection, which included the 6% Westcrot Janet's Jungle Juice. I managed to sample one of my favourite German beers, Paulaner Hefe Weizen, a wheat beer, on draught.

Away from the Beer Bash, the **Atherton Arms** (Holts) had two beers on from the Saddleworth Brewery - Shaftbender and Hopsmacker, a refreshing bitter brewed with five varieties of hops, and a jolly good pint it was too.

I noticed a sign outside the **Jolly Nailor** proclaiming that cask ales were served, so I ventured inside. There were two handpulls on the bar, but no pumpclips, and when I enquired about the cask ale I was told, 'Sorry, don't do them any more.' If that's the case, get the signage changed!

In last month's *Big Day Out* article, the beer sampled at the Victoria Hotel should have read Bowland Oak, brewed by Bowland Brewery, which is at Bashall Barn Farm, north west of Clitheroe.

Kings Ale

Leo King

Further to last month's article about the large and small breweries of Manchester and surrounding towns, it now seems certain that the city itself can claim an additional microbrewery with the opening of the **Ace of Diamonds** on Oldham Road.

Another new micro, the **Three Rivers Brewery** in Stockport, is also in operation. I sampled half a pint in the Smithfield on Swan Street, Manchester, and it was nice. The pump clip features the names Goyt, Mersey and Tame, so I expect the brewery is located somewhere near where the three rivers converge.

Contributors to this issue: Roger Hall, Pete Cash, Paul Warbrick, Dave Hallows, Stewart Revell, Roy Bullock, Ken Birch, Leo King, Dave White, Neil Worthington, Paul Roberts

Letters

Dutton

Sir - In October, Staggerin' Man wrote that the beer at the Dutton Hotel in Strangeways was 'adequate, but on the tangy side.' Staggerin' Man may have gone in on a weekday, when the beer wasn't flowing well, or he may have got the end of a barrel, but since new licensee Gordon took over, it has been a whole lot better.

There has been a real improvement at the Dutton and occasionally the beer has been better than at the Jolly Angler, and theirs is excellent.

A L Finnegan

Cooking with Ken

Sir - Having lost touch with the elusive Mr Birch, I was pleased to see the article in January's *What's Doing* about Ken's new Cooking With Beer course, which he is running in the Kings Arms in Salford.

My expertise at cooking stretches as far as ringing the local takeaway for a Jalfrezi, but I went along to the initial course to have a few beers. The turnout was disappointing - probably due to atrocious weather conditions.

Ken's enthusiasm for cooking with beer almost (but not quite!) converted me from my takeaway habits. There must be many readers who enjoy cooking and I would definitely recommend they participate in future meetings. As well as instructing us on the preparation of interesting beer-related dishes, Ken brought along a selection of beer styles from across Europe to help to wash down the fayre.

Ken can be contacted on 0161 705 0836

Paul Roberts

The Great Debate (1)

Sir - When I were a lad, a pub near Victoria Station in Manchester had topless barmaids (*WD last month*). There were two pubs on Long Millgate, the Manchester Arms (where the tram crosses the street today) and a 'Taddy Ales' house called, I think, the North Western.

The ladies in question were employed at the Manchester Arms. I recall having a good look along the street each time I left the station, in the hope of catching sight of them on their way to work. It probably didn't occur to me that they would be wearing coats.

Tom the Trainspotter

The Great Debate (2)

Sir - What does Nagasaki (or whatever she's called) think of Dave Crookell's article about topless barmaids in last month's *What's Doing*? I think we should be told!

Lap dancing Lydia

To the point

Sir - Would it kill you to put **two** staples in *What's Doing*? It is a constant irritation to me. Sad, I know.

Shaun Green

Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

At the beginning of February, Holts announced that they had won the contract to supply a new bottled beer to around 200 Tesco stores throughout the UK. 'The Tesco Challenge' for spring/summer 2004 attracted entries from eighty breweries.

The 3.5% bottled beer will be sold exclusively by Tesco for thirteen weeks, starting in June. After that, Holts can sell it to other supermarkets and in their own pubs. (Maybe not at Tesco prices!)

The name for the new beer will be announced shortly. It is described as a 'refreshing summer drink brewed with a combination of quality English malt, Mexican aroma honey and citrus flavoured traditional whole hops, to provide a rounded, tongue-tingling taste with an exciting aroma.' Unfortunately, it won't be bottle conditioned.

One afternoon in February, I was very pleased to enjoy Holts bitter in the **Mort Arms**, Tyldesley, for only £1 a pint. On another occasion, I called in at the **Atherton Arms** and found Patersons selling at £1 a pint.

What was going on? Well, it all began with the opening of the **Last Orders** (ex **Kings Head**) in Atherton, where beer was being sold at £1 a pint. Holts (and others, I believe) responded by selling mild, bitter and Patersons for £1 a pint from 11.00am to 6.00pm. While I was at the Atherton Arms, I noticed there was a steady queue for the final drinks of the afternoon session, at 5.55pm!

I don't know how long the £1 a pint offer will last, but from the customer's point of view, it can't last long enough! Unfortunately, the Holts pubs in the surrounding districts haven't joined in. The Globe, or Tamar, at Leigh, Cart & Horses at Astley and Dukes Gate at Little Hulton are trading at normal prices.



Beinlos in Bavaria

Paul Roberts

Hacker Resurrects Doppelbock

March is Starkbierzeit in Munich and this year Hacker are bringing back their version of Doppelbock - Animator. The bottled version of this 7.8% brew is in the stoppered top bottles. They will no doubt be a big hit in the USA, as Hacker and Paulaner products are widely available there. Locally, the **Sand Bar** on Grosvenor Street has the largest range of Paulaner beers.

The Hacker brewery was demolished a few years ago and the European Patent Office now stands on the site. The beer is brewed at the Paulaner plant along with the other Hacker and Paulaner beers.

Beer consumption in Germany last year was a mere 105.5 million hectolitres - a 2.1% decrease on the previous year and the lowest since the latest records began in 1995.



Another Salford loss?

An outfit called Panorama Living has applied to demolish the Kersal Hotel (*below*) and replace it with two blocks of bijou apartments.



Beer by the Seaside

Paul Warbrick

Is it really twelve months since I last visited Fleetwood for the annual beer festival in the Marine Hall? Anyway, the first thing I must mention is the programme. This year's was a full colour, glossy publication with the beers listed alphabetically in brewery order. Last year's beer list was rather confusing.

Over the two days I worked there, I managed to sample quite a few of the ales, as one does! The Fleetwood Beer Festival offers beers from recently formed ventures, some seldom found brews and festival favourites like Snecklifter and Hobgoblin. The first I tried was a late replacement, Foresters from Acorn. A new one on me, it was a nice light beer to start the Friday afternoon session.

My next beer was another replacement, Chasewater from Beowulf, and then I tried Burnmoor Pale Ale, a classic pale bitter from Great Gable. The brewery is based at the Wasdale Head Inn, nine miles from Gosforth, at the foot of England's highest mountain.

Midway through the afternoon, the Beer of the Festival was announced, as voted by a tasting panel the previous night. This was Oakhams Bishops Farewell (4.6%). Triple Triumph from Osset came second and Phoenix Snowbound, last year's winner, was third.

Bishops Farewell is a full bodied, yellow bitter with a fruity flavour and I was fortunate enough to get the last half pint (one of the advantages of working on the bar). My penultimate ale for the session was Elsie Mo from Castle Rock Brewery, Nottingham, which is blonde and beautiful, according to the beermat. The name derives from the initials of Low Colour Maris Otter, the type of malt used in the brew.

Once all the thirsty scholars had departed, my 'staff session' drink was one of the Scottish ales, the 5.2% Belhaven Fruity Partridge. As the name suggests, it's a fruity ale, using black and crystal malts to give a dark ruby colour.

The Friday evening session got off to a slow start but it was soon really busy and a lot of the beers on the A-G section, where I was working, began to run out. I sampled some Old Disreputable from Three Rivers, the five barrel plant which went into production in Stockport in November 2003. I also tried another of my Scottish favourites, Orkney Red McGregor, and Pale Face from Shaws of Dukinfield.



No visit to Fleetwood is complete without a pub crawl, so after doing a couple of hours of the Saturday afternoon session I made for the **Wyre Lounge Bar**, where on a clear day there are excellent views across Morecambe Bay. There was also a good selection of beers and I tried the Wentworth Needles Eye.

Next it was along the Esplanade, Queens Terrace, on to Dock Street and then London Street for a superior Wetherspoon pub, the **Thomas Drummond**. This former church building is spacious, modern and named after the architect of many of Fleetwood's Victorian buildings. I sampled Arundel Chilly Willie and then Betty Stogs Bitter from Skinners of Cornwall. Every time I try this beer I want to bottle some (preferably in two-litre bottles) and take it home for a nice session.

Heading back the way I came, I called in the **Victoria** on Dock Street and am pleased to report that real ale is sold in Fleetwood's oldest pub, which wasn't the case last year. The two handpumps were serving Brysons Patricks Porter, brewed in nearby Heysham, and Coach House Farriers, a mid-brown, slightly fruity ale.

The next pub on the agenda was the newly refurbished **Steamer**, which can be very busy on market days. The beers available were Sam Smiths bitter, Theakstons Best Bitter and Wells Bombardier. My final stop in Fleetwood was to take in the elegance and splendour of the **North Euston Hotel**. Here I had a Moorhouses ale called Lucky Jim with my evening meal, before heading back to Blackpool.

I just missed a train home, so I decided to call in at the **Pump & Truncheon** on Bonny Street, close to the Tower, for a pint of Youngs bitter. This is an open aspect pub with bare brick walls, a wood/flagged floor and real fire. The selection of guest beers make the place a worthy entry in the Good Beer Guide.

Oh I do like beer by the seaside, and I'm looking forward to the 2005 Fleetwood Beerfest.

WHAT'S DOING contributions should be sent to the editor c/o 88 Ringley Road, Stoneclough, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1ET, to arrive no later than first post on the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

WHAT'S DOING ADVERTISING: Full page £52.50 or £210 for six months, half page £36.75 or £157.50 for six months, quarter page £26.25 or £105 for six months. All adverts must be accompanied with payment. Cheque payable to 'What's Doing'.

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

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

Rupert

We might not like Honker & McNasty's ales, but we deny them the right to stop making them. Have they no sense of heritage and tradition? These are important. Ole Gink certainly has that sense. He lives still in his beloved Clogshire and denies the existence of such administrative constructs as Greater Grotley.

There are some who think he's either barmy or living on a different planet or in a different century. They argue that it makes no sense at all to base modern districts on feudal fiefdoms, Domesday divisions or ecclesiastical eccentricities like hundreds. This results in bizarre boundaries, which take little account of the urbanisation which accompanied the industrial revolution, resulting in metropolitan areas and their hinterlands, which have become the main focal points of post-industrial society. They point out that, say, Dukinfield has more in

common with its neighbour, Ashton, than with Parkgate or Birkenhead in the Wirral.

I disagree. It's baloney. Slumley Parva, which really shouldn't be part of Slumley, let alone Greater Grotley, has much closer affinities with Walney Island, conveniently situated near Barrow on the other side of the Lake District, than it does with Snobley, which is nearly six miles away on the other side of Grotley city centre. I, like Ole Gink, am happy to dwell in the glow of a nostalgic yesteryear, rather than attempt to accommodate completely unnecessary and disconcerting change.

Why should we stop here? After all, most of the changes are only thirty years old. We can surely put the clock back even further and get rid of many of the innovations of the last couple of millennia which haven't contributed to human progress in the slightest. Suggestions would be welcome.

I note a letter in *Private Eye* from one Boris Pratt, likening the new BBC bumlick to Postman Pat. Well, wouldn't it be easy for any of us to liken pseudo-luminaries to cartoon characters? I could write to Eddy, suggesting that Boris Pratt resembles some psychedelic rabbit or Mr Angry. I know Boris doesn't look like Mr Angry, but he might behave like him. I am not sure Roger Hargreaves has Mr Angry getting out of his Volvo, shouting at people and then getting smacked in court for his behaviour, but, if he doesn't, he could do and might do yet. Pot and kettle came to mind, Boris.



Branch Diary

Regional CAMRA Under-26 event

Fri 12 March. Brewery visit to Bazens' and Facers of Salford. To book, ring Dave Hallows on 0161 708 9151.

davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

North Manchester www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 3 March 8pm, GBG 2005 Final Selection, Marble Arch, Rochdale Road

Wed 10 March 7.30pm, Social, Queens Arms, Patricroft (next to station)

Wed 17 March 8pm, Branch AGM, Crescent, Salford

Wed 24 March, Ancoats Crawl. Mitchell Arms, Every Street, 7.30pm.

Jolly Angler 8.00pm, Bar Fringe 9.15pm

Tues 30 March, 3.00pm to 7.00pm, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms

Wed 31 March, Bury Social. Arthur Inn 7.30pm, Trackside 8.30pm

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 2 March, Branch Meeting, Hare & Hounds, Holcombe Brook

Thurs 11 March, Evening coach social, Hydes Brewery, Manchester.

Branch contact has details

Tues 16 March, Committee meeting, Wyldes, Market Place, Bury

Fri/Sat 19th/20th March, Oldham Beer Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham

Sun 28 March, Start of Summer Social, Tandle Hill Tavern, Thornham Lane, Middleton

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

email: p.alexander@virgin.net

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

Thurs 4 March 8pm, Branch Meeting, Orange Tree

Thurs 18 March, City Survey/Social, Peveril of the Peak 7.30pm

Contact: Dave Ward 0161 980 1170

Wigan

Wed 3 March (all day): Festival set-up

Thur 4 to Sat 6th March: SEVENTEENTH WIGAN BEER FESTIVAL, Trencherfield Mill

Sun 7th March (am): Festival clear-up. Beer and buffet at the Orwell, Wigan Pier, to follow.

Wed 10 Mar 8pm, Beer Festival Post Mortem, The Anvil, Dorning Street, Wigan

Wed 24 Mar 8pm, Branch Meeting & POTS presentation, The Silverwell, Wigan

Contact: Valerie Hollows 0161 629 8243 (weekdays);

07889 898955 (eves/weekends). email: vhollows@peel.co.uk

Dave and Sue welcome you to

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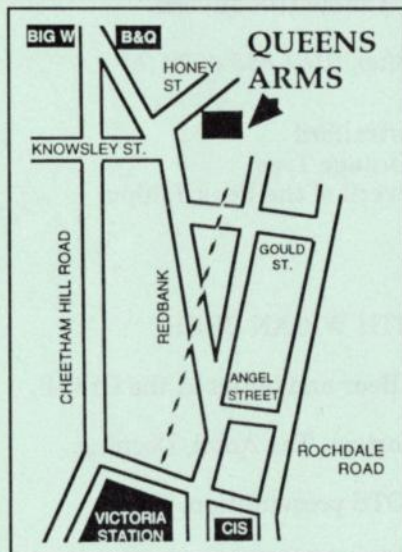
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