

30p

What's Doing

APRIL 2004



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

PUB UNDER THREAT

Holts' Church Inn at Whitefield is threatened with demolition. Bury MBC are looking at two schemes for the redevelopment of the centre of Whitefield, and if either were adopted, the pub would be pulled down.

The brewery is strongly opposing the redevelopment plans in their current form and issued the following statement: 'We believe that the proposed schemes fail to recognise both the history of the Church Inn and the valuable local amenity it provides, and that any redevelopment could be designed in a way that is sympathetic with the existing building...'

Supporters of the Church Inn are asked to make their views known by writing to Bury Metro Planning Department, Craig House, 5 Bank Street, Bury. Alternatively, write to the MP, Ivan Lewis, or the local councillors.



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In the City

Andy Jenkinson

Members of the Trafford & Hulme branch recently explored the delights (or not) of the pubs in their part of Manchester city centre, combining the familiar with the not so.

We started out at the Good Beer Guide listed **Peveril of the Peak**. The usual offerings were Boddingtons, Pedigree and Bombardier, but we all enjoyed a pint of Endeavour Ale from the Cropton Brewery in North Yorkshire. This light session ale (3.6%) was a good start to the evening.

Moving on, we passed through Albert Square, heading for the **Rising Sun**. This long, thin pub had Bombardier, Thwaites Original and a guest beer from the Warwickshire Beer Company, namely St. Patrick's (£2.20). The rich, porter style ale was in complete contrast to the previous beer.

Heading along Deansgate we called at the **Pig and Porcupine**, only to find the handpumps were all dry. Continuing into Castlefield, we found that **Dukes 92** and **Barca** had no handpumps at all.

Desperation was beginning to set in. Returning to Deansgate, we went into **Galvins** (formerly known as the **Crown**) and found a very nice drop of Theakstons XB (£2.00).

Being so close to Liverpool Road, we decided to head in that direction and explore the pubs there. The first place we came to was a big disappointment, given its name, **Cask**. They had no handpulled beer at all. Excuses ranged from 'We are waiting for it to settle,' to a flooded cellar.

Still, it meant we had longer at the next pub, the **White Lion**. Here, at last, was a sight for sore eyes - Bazens Black Pig mild, Old Speckled Hen, Black Sheep bitter, Greene King IPA and Taylors Landlord, all at £2.20. All the



beers we tried were in good condition and justified the pub's nomination for the Good Beer Guide.

Somewhat reluctantly, we moved on. The next pub is the **Ox** and upon entering, we were overwhelmed by the smell of food. (It reminded me of Sunday lunches). This dimly lit pub was mainly full of diners and several of the empty tables had 'reserved' notices on them, but we decided to park ourselves at one of them anyway. Once again, we were pleased at the variety of beers available. Boddingtons, Pedigree, Landlord, Old Speckled Hen and Phoenix White Monk (£2.20).

Nearing the end of our evening, we decided on one last move, to the GBG listed **Knott Bar**. This Marble Brewery pub never fails to deliver. We had a choice of their own Manchester Bitter and Ginger Marble; Titanic Brewery's seasonal offering, Red Ensign, and another seasonal called Hoppin Mad from the Wylam Brewery in Northumberland, all at £2.00 a pint. An excellent way to finish off the evening.



Longer hours?

The Annual General Meeting of the Licensing District of Salford was adjourned following a proposal to extend the prescribed hours for the sale of alcohol in public houses. The proposal is to open at 10.00am instead of 11.00am. The new date for the recommendation to be considered is 6th April.

Planning news

Ian Kenny

Hardy & Hansons are hoping to extend the **John Gilbert** in Worsley. Planning permission is being sought to erect a timber paved patio area and provide additional car parking spaces.

In Pendleton, there are plans to demolish the derelict **Maypole** (*below*) on Broughton Road, along with the adjacent former Co-op building, and build a total of 45 apartments.

Just across Broughton Road, the **Railway** was reduced to a burned-out shell a month ago. Considering the problems that it had encountered in recent times, it seemed that the future for this street-corner boozer was bleak. However, the windows have been replaced and metal shutters attached to both them and the door. Whether it will reopen as a pub remains to be seen.

Further down the road, on the corner of Lower Broughton Road and Great Cheetham Street East, the building that was once the **Griffin** (latterly the Saigon restaurant) is to be demolished for housing development.

Not quite so drastic is the planning permission being sought by John Willie Lees for **Lloyds** on Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy. They hope to demolish the drinking terrace and replace it with a more appropriate structure.



Albert Edward

Reopens *Pete Cash*

The Sam Smiths pub in the centre of Eccles reopened in early March after many months of work. The layout has been changed back to something resembling the original plan. The most striking outward change is the siting of the front door, which is now in the centre of the façade. From the entrance, a black-and-white mosaic tiled walkway leads towards the the back of the pub. On the left is a stone-flagged area which fronts the bar (*below*). There is a corner door, which is normally closed but will probably be used in hot weather. To the right is a separate room (*right*), again stone-flagged, with a darts playing area and a small TV.

Further into the pub, again on the right, is another room which is set aside for non-smokers. The walls have photos of old Eccles and local industry and the floor is again in stone. The window, with its stained glass transom, overlooks an enclosed beer yard with chairs, tables



and a gas heater. Beyond this room, the tiles give way temporarily to a carpet which covers the floor of the fourth room. Here the walls carry Lowry prints and, in common with the other rooms, there is a small, realistic coke-effect gas fire.

Beyond here and through a door, the mosaic flooring resumes, leading to the lavatories, which take up the black-and-white theme in their wall tiling and are very smart and spacious.

Sam Smiths are to be congratulated on this conversion. It has been worth the long wait (unexpected problems were met during the reconstruction) and the competitive price of the Old Brewery Bitter (£1.17), makes this new Good Beer Guide pub well worth a visit.

(photos by Phil Stout)



Cask Marque

The following have recently been given 'Cask Marque' accreditation: The Musketeer, Lord Street, Leigh; Bird i'th Hand, Bury and Rochdale Old Road, Birtle, Heywood; Phethean, Wigan Road, Bolton; Bank at Sale, School Road, Sale; Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar, and All Bar One, King Street, Manchester.

Top Knott

The Trafford & Hulme branch of CAMRA has voted the **Knott** as their Spring Pub of the Season. It was a close competition, with strong support for the Knott's Chorlton sibling, the Marble Beerhouse, and the increasingly alluring Moss Trooper at Timperley. A presentation will be held on Wednesday 14th April.

Surveying Sale

Andy Jenkinson

On a chilly and windy evening, members of the Trafford & Hulme branch met up for a social/survey in Sale and unearthed a mix of the old and the new.

The first port of call was the **Kings Ransom** (*below*), directly opposite Sale Metrolink station. This pub was built from scratch, on the bank of the Bridgewater Canal, about seven years ago, although its design and location would have one think that it was a lot older. Formerly a Watling Street Inns establishment, it is now owned by Hardy & Hansons of Nottingham. The interior is divided up into drinking and dining areas of various sizes. The dark wood panelling, beams and sandstone brickwork give the pub an opulent feel. On the beer front, they serve the new cask Boddingtons, Hardy & Hansons bitter (£1.97), Olde Trip (£2.04) and occasionally a seasonal beer (mainly at Xmas). On our visit, the beer was in good condition and served well, doing justice to the pub's inclusion for the first time in the 2004 Good Beer Guide.

Moving out of the warmth, we endured a fifteen-minute walk along Northenden Road to Sale Moor and the comfort of the **Legh Arms**. This large Holts establishment is an old, traditional, local pub, though sadly missing the original revolving doors. The two large, comfortable rooms at the front retain original features and a vault at the side indulges the more sports minded with darts, pool and sports TV. The Legh Arms serves Holts bitter (£1.34), mild (£1.28) and Paterson's (£1.34). All the beers were in good form. A window bears testament to the pub's drinking quality past by sporting nine GBG stickers (the earliest being 1979).

After leaving the Legh Arms, we walked back into Sale and called briefly at the recently refurbished (and renamed) **Hog's Head**. This is a relatively new pub, only three or four years old. It originally had four handpumps, but these disappeared after six months, so it was good to see two handpumps return after the refurbishment. The beers



were Fullers London Pride and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. Unfortunately, on a more recent visit the manager told me that he was going to drop the London Pride and I suspect that it won't be long before the pub becomes keg only again.

Moving on, we crossed the road, passing the Town Hall and headed towards the new Sale waterside development (it's next to the canal). This includes a new library, theatre and a cafe bar/brasserie, called the **Waterside**, opened by the Barracuda pub group in February. The interior is one large open space, broken up by various levels and pillars. The long bar is dominated by keg fonts and bottled lagers, but there is a lone handpump at one end, selling Marstons Pedigree. Oh, well! On subsequent visits we have been offered a choice of wines by the glass, even a choice of coffees, but no cask ale at all, though Old Speckled Hen has been promised in future.

Our final destination of the night was the **Railway**, just thirty seconds around the corner. Like the Legh Arms, this Robinsons house is a locals' pub, serving the community. Several rooms provide comfortable drinking areas, including a small vault (for darts and appreciation of all things Red). Glenn, the landlord, is proud of running a clean and orderly pub and his beers receive the same treatment. He permanently stocks Best Bitter (£1.78) and Hatters Mild and is currently offering Enigma (£1.95) as a replacement for the de-listed Frederics.

At the end of our evening in Sale, we reflected on the wide variety of real ale available in this part of the borough. There were still several pubs that we had not visited, including the **J P Joule**, a Wetherspoons outlet, the **Bank**, a Banks's pub and the **Bridge Inn**, all serving real ale. The future looks rosy for real ale drinkers in Sale.



Letters

Water quality

Sir - I wonder if your readers are aware of an issue that could have serious implications for the quality of ales in the UK. Later this year, the Government plans to fluoridate the water supply in the North West, and other regions, as an experiment to reduce tooth decay in children.

Although the motives are admirable, and dental decay is a serious problem, adding something to the water supply is not the way to improve dental health. Especially as the substance to be used is not 'true' fluoride, but a highly toxic substance called hexafluorosilicic acid, which is an industrial waste from the phosphate fertiliser industry and contains, amongst other substances, heavy metals, arsenic, lead and mercury.

The brewing industry is heavily reliant on water and the addition of hexafluorosilicic acid could affect products dramatically. It will not only contaminate the water, but other things in the food chain, including crops used in making beers, as the substance will be in the irrigation sources used to water the crops. This would be a 'double whammy' for the brewers, especially those who produce organic beers.

Although this scheme is yet to be passed by Parliament, the Government and those who produce, but have no other way of disposing of, this waste, are determined to see it through. However, there is currently a period of public consultation that can help prevent this misguided experiment. If enough people raise their objections, it will be stopped. This can be done by writing to the water companies and Members of Parliament to make them aware of our worries.

If readers would like to know more about the campaign to stop the fluoridation of our water supply, they should contact the National Pure Water Campaign at 17 Second Avenue, Heworth, York YO31 0RS, or visit the website: www.npwa.freesevice.co.uk for more information.

Bernard Kelly

Staggerin'

Sir - Regarding Staggerin' Man's 'Lest We Forget' article (*WD March*). Has the alcohol affected his memory? A look back through some issues of the magazine will reveal that several of the pubs he visited feature in my 'In the City' articles - Square Albert, Sir Ralph Abercromby, Rising Sun, etc... I would also like to point out that the Seven Oaks has an upstairs room, which is usually open at weekends.

Two clarifications. The real ale at the Salford Arms is Skipton Brewery Copper Dragon, and the Pump & Truncheon near Blackpool Tower is not in the Good Beer Guide, but is worth including.

Arthur Dent

Dutton Debate

Sir - A L Finnegan (*Letters, last month*) says I may have gone in the Dutton Hotel on Park Street, Cheetham, on a weekday, when the beer wasn't flowing well. It shouldn't matter if one goes into a pub on a weekday, as beer quality should be good all the time. The wrong time to go to a pub is when it's shut! On my visit back in October it was early evening and the pub was filling with customers. On my most recent visit, it was a Tuesday afternoon and there were only a few people in, but the Hydes Bitter was excellent, equalling the standard set by the Jolly Angler, as A L Finnegan says.

Staggerin' Man

County boundaries

Sir - Periwinkle recently asked for suggestions for county names. There is really only one serious alternative to the present hotch-potch, and that is to revert to the boundaries of the old Celtic tribes. At a stroke, two millennia of Norman, Danish, Jute, Anglo (and Saxon) influences would be erased.

Imagine, from the Cheshire border to the Lake District, the principality of Briganteland. Oh what glory there would be, to dwell in this god-given paradise and drink our pints of subsidised Pictish ale.

J P Snott

Hare & Hounds Beer Festival

Alex Koval

The Hare & Hounds, Holcombe Brook, held its 5th beer festival recently. Once again, Andy and Lynn amassed a varied collection of beers, ciders and perries for the week-long event. I found Archer's Silver Train palatable, as was Bazens' Blue Bullet. Arkells Peter's Porter was too weak at 4.3% to be a true representation of the style, whilst Salamander Titan was also disappointing.

However, the Coach House Blueberry Beer more than lived up to its name and the Banks & Taylor Fruit Bat also delivered on the taste buds. In my opinion, Enville Ginger was pretty standard for its type and not as good as those from Mr Porter and the Marble Arch. The same cannot be said for Arran Fireside. This was a premium dark beer with a lovely touch of ginger that made it an absolute delight. Local brewer Paul Robinson was well represented at the event, with Wind Farm and Orse's Andle both being very good. So, well done everyone concerned and here's to the next festival.

Contributors to this issue: Dave Hallows, Paul Warbrick, Pete Cash, Ken Birch, Alex Koval, Brian Taylor, Ian Kenny, Roger Hall, Neil Worthington, Andy Jenkinson, Stewart Revell

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A Rainy day in Altrincham

Neil Worthington

The recent spell of stormy weather led me to visit rather more pubs than usual in Altrincham. Every time I left one, driving rain sent me round the corner into the next. Fortunately there are some very comfortable pubs and excellent ale to be had.

For me, there are two special treats in Altrincham. One is the fishmonger's on Greenwood Street, with such delights as loose shrimps (not potted) and sweet cured herrings. The other is just a few doors away: **Le Trappiste**, with its immense range of Belgian beers. These include a wide choice of Gueuze - challengingly sour but a great way to start the day. I treated myself to Frank Boon Oude Gueuze - not cheap at £4.50 a bottle, but it really does knock your socks off! The owner, Wayne, manages to keep finding new beers from places I've never heard of. Sadly, he hasn't been able to rebuild his kitchen after extending the drinking area, so the mussels and chips are a thing of the past.

Next stop was the **Orange Tree**, where the beer range is increasingly adventurous. The pub is owned by Unique Pub Company, which has a supply agreement with the Society of Independent Brewers. Andy was very impressed with a beer from Skipton Brewery that his regulars drank dry in just three hours recently: Copper Dragon Golden Pippin. He would have been even more impressed if he could have got a pint for himself! I settled for Rudgate's Viking, a full bodied beer but still safely under 4%.

Fortunately, it's only a few steps to the **Old Market Tavern** next door and an even bigger array of beers. This also had Skipton beers, but for me, the treat here is always Robinsons Old Tom, a winter staple served on gravity. And there are now no fewer than three ciders on offer, usually from Saxon (implausibly based in Batley).

After a couple here I was getting hungry, and over the road is a chip



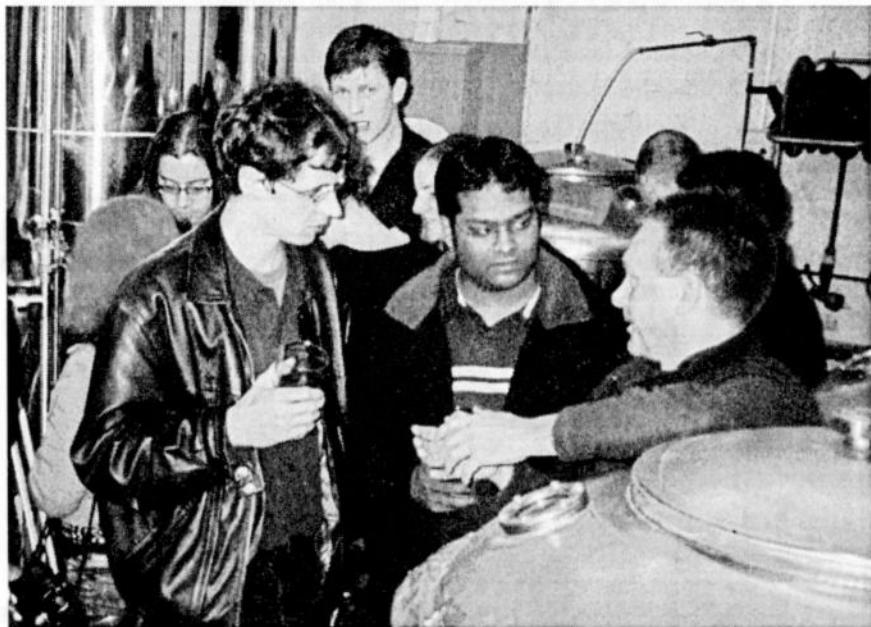
shop, the Don Supper Bar. Here I could hide from the rain in their dining room and enjoy very substantial fish and chips.

I ended up a few doors away in the **Old Roebuck**, a pub that I remember from years ago when it did the best pint of Wilsons mild in town. Sadly there's no cask mild now, but there are three bitters, Boddingtons, Charles Wells Bombardier and Greene King IPA. I find that Boddingtons, despite the new recipe, can still be a variable beer, but here it was on good form. The Roebuck is still a traditional, multi-roomed pub and it has a welcoming atmosphere. Just the place to watch the rugby on TV while the rain lashed down outside!

U26 visits the Syndicate

Dave Hallows

Back in March, members of CAMRA's Regional Under 26 social group and Salford University Real Ale Society visited the Salford Brewery Syndicate, Bazens' and Facers, in the Cliff district. We were greeted by Dave Facer and Jude and Richard Bazen, and were soon enjoying Bazens' FlatbaC and tucking into a running buffet. Ms Andi B (chair-witch of the Real Ale Soc), presented the brewers with an open letter of thanks from both parties for the visit. Later, we were treated to the new seasonal from Facers - the 3.9% Wordsworth.



At last year's Activities Fair at the university, Bazens' kindly donated up to 40 free pints of their Freshers Special for new members and they were at the free pint social in Salford's premier pub, the Crescent.

About Bolton

Frank Booth

On the last Saturday in February I teamed up with my old school mate, Martin Ward, for a session around the town centre. First call, as always, was the **Hen & Chickens** on Deansgate. When I'm in this pub, I usually start with Cains Mild, but this time I went straight for the guest beers. I sampled a half of Highgate Saddlers Best Bitter, a 4.3% fruity, pale yellow ale with strong hop flavour, while Martin had a pint of Lady Godiva from the Warwickshire Beer Company. This brewery, based in a former village bakery, has been in operation since 1998. The beers in the Hen & Chicks are always well kept.

We moved on to Nelson Square and the **Spinning Mule**. This is the town's only J D Wetherspoon outlet and it is always busy. The St Austell Tribute had sold out, so we both tried the Steaming Billy Bitter from the brewery of the same name in Leicester. It was an excellent, well-rounded 4.3% beer. The quality of the guest beers here has been much improved in recent months and the pub deserves to be included in future editions of the Good Beer Guide, particularly since there are not many real ale outlets left in the town centre.

It was then straight down Bradshawgate and into the **Pepper Alley** for a pint of good old Joe Holts bitter. The latest seasonal and the mild were also available.

There was just enough time before our bus home for one more ale, so we called into the **Old Man & Scythe** (t'cider 'ouse). I had tried a half of the new version of Boddingtons Bitter earlier in the day, so we



both had Holts bitter. Martin reckoned that the Holts here was preferable to that at the Pepper Alley. The other two handpulled ales were Flowers Original and Deuchars IPA, with Tetleys on smoothflow. The Old Speckled Hen handpull was not in use. A Bank Top ale would be brilliant here, as the Bolton brewery's beers are rarely available in the town centre.

The Man & Scythe has become the first pub in the country with Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS) accreditation, joining high profile tourist attractions such as Hampton Court Palace and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The pub's intriguing history is told on tours of the place, which are proving quite popular.



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

Doing The Card

Dave Hallows

Sampling, not to be confused with 'having a taste', is one of the joys of drinking. Particularly now, when CAMRA branches throughout the land have just finished a survey and vote for the Good Beer Guide 2005.

In celebration of this, I chose to visit the City Arms on Kennedy Street, a stone's throw from Manchester Town Hall and a current Good Beer Guide listed pub. It was also an apology to manager Sean Piatt, as I accidentally missed out his pub in an earlier article. Sean would like to point out that the City Arms doesn't have a 'notable tiled exterior', as mentioned in this year's Good Beer Guide. That's the Vine, the pub next door.

So, here is the card:

Tetley Dark Mild (3.2%): Malty, fruity with hints of chocolate and caramel. Not at all bland. Brewers' labour of love.

Tetley Bitter (3.7%): A national standard for a national beer. Amber coloured, tasty session bitter. Bitterness with fruits.

Broughton Merlins Ale (4.2%): A pale Scottish ale that is at first malty and sweet, but gives way to a refreshing fruitiness. A growler!

Harviestoun White Belgian (4.3%) Pale, flowery and hoppy. Excellent.

Fullers Organic Heavy Dew (4.3%): A pale honey beer with a good body and fruity undertones.

Shepherd Neame Early Bird (4.5%): Billed as a Spring Hop Ale, this is deeply golden with a great body; fruity, with a good young hop character. Moreish.

Youngs Luxury Double Chocolate Stout (5.2%): Jet black with slight ruby red hues. A supreme full-bodied, deep chocolate taste. A warming, roasted, handsome pint.

For drinkers who like a challenge, there is a 'guess the real ale' competition on Friday nights.



Marble Brewery Presentation

Neil Worthington

On Tuesday 24th February, the North Manchester and Trafford & Hulme CAMRA branches got together at the Marble Arch for a presentation to celebrate the fact that all four Marble Brewery pubs are listed in this year's Good Beer Guide. No other brewery with as many pubs has achieved this record - not even Porter's - we checked! But if Porter's can get the Albion into next year's Guide...

Marble's pubs are the **Bar** (*below*) and the **Marble Beer House** in Chorlton, the **Knott** near Deansgate station, and the brewery's home, the **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road.

It was especially apt that the presentation took place in National Pubs Week, because the slogan for the week was, 'There's a Pub for Everyone!' The Marble Brewery has done more than any other pub operator in Greater Manchester to make that statement true. Their four pubs appeal to a wide range of drinkers. They have taken some of the best ideas of the modern cafe bars in terms of decor and food, and combined them with their own twist on traditional beer. All the Marble beers are, of course, totally organic and vegan, registered with the Soil Association and the Vegetarian Society.

The special certificate was presented to Frank Mullen, the pub group's senior manager. He works at all four Marble pubs, providing cover for holidays, sickness and training courses.

As Frank said, the 'special ingredient' in Marble pubs is, of course, the beer. So we were very pleased to be treated to a tour of the





brewery by head brewer, James Campbell. To my surprise, if no-one else's, the brewery is much more than the bit you can see behind the plate glass windows in the back bar. This area just contains the mash tuns and boiling coppers. Most of the action is downstairs in the extensive cellars, with fermenting vessels, racking lines and long lines of casks gently maturing.

Here's hoping that Marble continues to be successful in brewing good ale and running a pub chain where all the pubs feel like free houses.

Holts briefly

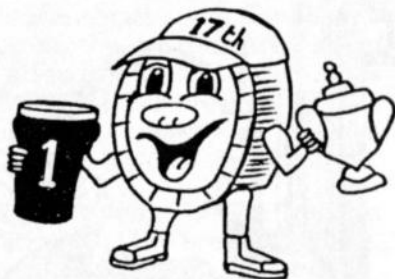
Stewart Revell

The new bottled beer (*WD last month*) going on sale in Tesco stores throughout the land will be called **Humdinger**. The name was chosen to reflect the ingredients, in particular, the Mexican honey. The 3.5% brew will be sold in 500ml bottles and will be available in June.

Some observers have noticed that **Patersons** and **ThunderHolt** have been on sale at the same time in a few Holts pubs. It would seem that there has been some overlap in the phasing out of the former and the reintroduction of the latter.

Wigan Beer Festival 2004

Wigan's 17th annual beer festival was held at the Mill at the Pier during the first weekend in March. As usual, Paul Warbrick was there, working and sampling some of the beers as well...



Most of the festivals I've attended thus far this year are using the 'Champion Beers' theme. The Wigan festival featured ales that have been Champion Beer of the Festival since 1988.

They included Taylors Landlord (1988,1994), Hanby All Seasons (1996) and Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted (2000). Oakhams Helter Skelter, the 1998 winner, was not available, so it was replaced by Bishops Farewell. This ale has already been a festival winner this year, at Fleetwood, and it was a Champion Beers of Britain bronze medal winner in 2003, in the strong bitter class.

Before the afternoon session, I started with Alton Pride (3.8%) from Triple FFF Brewery in Hampshire, a clean tasting session bitter that also won a CBOB bronze medal in 2003.

One of the beers on handpull in front of me was Ossian's Ale (4.8%) from the Inveralmond Brewery, Perth. As it was a Scottish ale, and Champion Beer of Scotland in 2001, I had to have some. It is a pale, golden brew with a fruity flavour and hoppy aroma.

Three Shires Bitter (4%) from Millstone proved very popular, to the extent that a second barrel had to be put on midway through the afternoon. The brewery is in Mossley, where the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire meet. The bitter was a very enjoyable drink - a pale, hoppy beer with fruity aromas.

One of the late additions to the beer list was Eastwood & Saunders Bargee (3.8%), and as this is one of my favourite session beers, I sampled some. I was not disappointed: the pale, bitter ale was on form.

Another addition was a seasonal from my favourite Scottish brewery, Harviestoun. Belgian White (4.3%) is a lively beer brewed with wheat.



The name suggests that it is aimed at people who like Belgian wheat beers.

No Wigan Beer festival is complete without the customary staff pies. I had a tasty meat and potato pie.

Away from the beer festival, between the afternoon and evening sessions, I called in the Orwell at the Pier and sampled GMT from Three Rivers Brewery. A very insipid ale.



It was then back to work the evening session and sample a few more beers. Barnegates Cracker Ale (3.9%) was a clean, smooth and refreshing bitter to begin with. Barnegates is brewed in Cumbria, where there are 55 outlets; there are 25 outlets in Lancashire.

The evening session was extremely busy, so I didn't get much time to sample too many ales. I did try Folly Ale (3.8%) from Wharfedale Brewery, Skipton. This full-bodied Yorkshire bitter was Beer of the Festival at Keighley in 2003.

There's always a good choice of ales from around the country at the Wigan Beer Festival. If you've never been to one, make a space in your diary for 2005.

Porter's Brown Ale

Dave Hallows

Brown Ale is a beer style that is not often seen these days, but a while ago I heard a whisper from my barstool at the Arthur Inn, Bury. There was a barrel of beer in the cellar with 'brown ale' marked on it, but no one knew if it was a Porters brew or one from a micro that Dave Porter had helped to set up.

The end of February came. I strode into t'Arthur to assume my usual position (on said barstool) and there it was - Porter's Brown Ale! The 4% beer was dark brown in colour, as one might expect, with liquorice notes and malty undertones. Not a straightforward brown ale, nor a nut-brown ale, as such.

It took me back to the great days of drinking the sadly no more Double Maxim from Vaux Brewery of Sunderland, which was on handpump in the Rose & Crown in Stalybridge in the mid-1990s. That was a brown ale, and popular too! Of course, there are bottles and cans of Newcastle Brown Ale, but it's a smelly keg beer! A nicer, but bright form of strong brown ale is brewed by Sam Smiths at 5% and sold in bottles.

Rupert

So, Boris Pratt is 65. Admirable! Where other writers cloy the appetites they feed, Pratt makes thirsty where most he satisfies. More power to his pen. Like Boris, I have always considered myself to be a man of the world. Yet, in conversation at Wedgie's the other night, I found myself out of my depth as the discussion turned to such practices as felching, rimming, dogging and roasting. Despite Bunty's quick explanations (gerbil in a johnny where the sun don't shine; literal vernacular sycophancy; consensual voyeurism; and a gang bang for footballers) I am still not sure I fully understand.

When I stayed with my pal Bruce Heep in Australia, he passed me around his friends, but this was only at dwarf-chucking competitions, not for sexual gratification. When I have inadvertently happened upon vehicular sex or ginnel knee-tremblers, I have found these deeply embarrassing rather than Goddardly orgasmic.

I have come to the conclusion that behaviour of young people has deteriorated considerably since Boris and I were teenagers nearly

fifty years ago. I don't want to sound too Daily Mail, but sexual conduct and the observed norms around alcohol consumption are not what they were. In the 1950s the protestant work ethic had not yet been eroded and there was a clear distinction between young men and young women. There was very little drinking to excess, designer drinks were unknown and you could walk the streets of Grotley or any other large city without fear of violent attack. We drank to enjoy the flavour of what real ale was available, rather than to get rat-arsed as rapidly as possible.

There are those who would say that little changes, but that is not my view. There has been a seismic shift. Young people today think that enjoying themselves involves excessive consumption of vile tasting alcoholic concoctions and group sex. There is little hope for traditional cask conditioned ale or friendly four-roomed local public houses if this continues. The whole fabric of society is being eroded and along with the demise of family values comes an unhealthy disregard for the institutions of English life which greybeards like Boris and myself hold dear. Is it too late to reverse the trend or will those who are young today live to regret what they are doing?

Boggart Bulletin

Spring is a-coming after the March Madness, but at Moston's Boggart Hole Clough Brewery they are still Barking at 4.5%. This is a tawny beer, citrus with a floral aftertaste. There is a new regular in Boggart Mild (3.8%), a classic malty mild with a bitter edge.

Branch Diary

Regional Meeting

Sat 17 April 12.30pm, Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, Manchester

Regional CAMRA Under-26 event

Fri 2 April 8pm, Social in the Rising Sun, Queen Street, off Deansgate, Manchester. Meet by CAMRA sign.

davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

North Manchester

www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 7 April, Eccles Crawl. Albert Edward 7.30, Lamb 9pm.

Wed 14 April, Manchester Centre Social. Rising Sun, Queen Street, 8pm. Ape & Apple, John Dalton Street, 9pm

Weds 21 April 8pm, Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Tues 27 April, What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street, 3pm-7pm

Weds 28 April, Ringley & Stoneclough crawl. Spread Eagle (A666)

7.30pm, Horseshoe 8pm, Market Street tavern (Bank Top beers) 9pm.

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 6 April 8.30pm, Branch Meeting, Ring o'Bells, St Leonards Square, Middleton

Tues 20 April 8.30pm, Committee Meeting, The Baum, Toad Lane, Rochdale

Sat 24th/Sun 25th April, Weekend Coach Social to Lake District.

Details from Branch Contact

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

email: p.alexander@virgin.net

Trafford & Hulme

www.camra.org.uk/trafford

Thurs 1 April, Branch Meeting, Orange Tree

Thurs 22 April, Timperley Social. Moss Trooper 8pm, Quarry Bank 9pm

Contact: Dave Ward 0161 980 1170

Wigan

Contact: Valerie Hollows 0161 629 8243 (weekdays);

07889 898955 (eves/weekends).

email: vhollows@peel.co.uk

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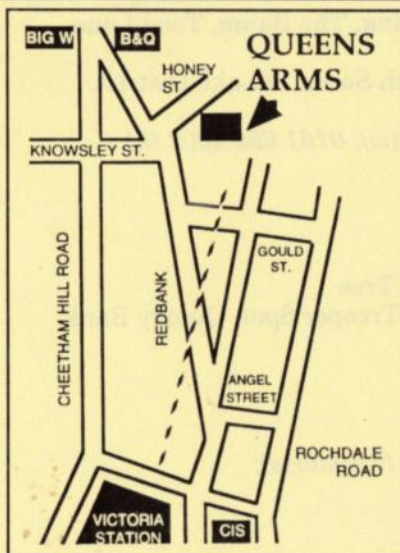
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