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What's Doing

OCTOBER 2004



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

CASK BEER WEEK

A year ago, Manchester's four family brewers - Holts, Hydes, Lees and Robinsons - chose a spectacular way to publicise Cask Beer Week, by pedalling the 'World's Largest Bike' between the four breweries.

This year was a much more sedate and sophisticated affair, hosted by Holts at the Ape & Apple in central Manchester. The theme was Real Ale and Food,



Gaynor Green (Jennings), Lee Williams (Thwaites), Oliver Robinson (Robinsons), Tom Dempsey (Holts), William Lees-Jones (Lees) and Chris Hopkins (Hydes)

with the former provided by the Manchester four, plus Thwaites and Jennings. Holts' own catering division provided a wide range of food, though our vegetarian reporter was restricted to the battered asparagus and a good selection of cheeses, breads and biscuits.



17th - 26th September 2004

Entrées were served from trays, with a suggestion as to the best beer to take with each one. Then there was a plate buffet, including quenelled haggis, skewered chix bacon and black pudding (recommended with Holts Bitter), seven types of sausage, asparagus wrapped in Parma ham, Mexican canapés, roasted meats such as saddle of lamb, pork loin, honey glazed ham and strip loin, various salami, Parma ham stuffed with duxelles and deep fried fish with mushy peas. Holts' catering features in 18 of their pubs.

Executives, Head Brewers and other staff from the breweries were there in numbers. After a brief introduction by Edwin Partridge of Holts, Oliver Robinson welcomed everybody and drew attention to the fact that six rival breweries had joined together to stage the event; what other section of industry would do a similar thing? Cask Beer Week was all about making a positive statement about the product. The Nationals were reducing their percentage spend on cask ale, which presented the family brewers with a great opportunity. Quality was paramount, whilst remaining true to a great national and regional tradition. Cask beer sales amongst the six breweries were up 4%, and between them they employed 3,200 people, operated 1,352 pubs and produced 1,004 million pints. Mr Robinson thanked CAMRA and Cask Marque for their support, and mentioned that Lees' Giles Dennis had won the title 'Brewer of the Year'.

Holts Head Brewer Keith Sheard promised not to match a recent 90 minute address by a certain Bolton steeplejack. He related the ancient history of real ale; a brewery which dated from 600AD had been discovered 8,000 feet up in the Peruvian hills, using guinea pig dung as a fuel. It was estimated that the 1,000 locals were each drinking a gallon a night of the 'chi-chi'. (Just like a Holts house, then.)

Pete Cash & Phil Stout

Contributors to this issue: Dave Hallows, Paul Warbrick, Leo King, Alex Koval, Neil Worthington, Pete Cash, Dave White, Ian Kenny, Alan Gall

Photos: Andy Jenkinson, Phil Stout, Salford Local History Library

Facer's Beerjolais Nouveau 2004

Pete Cash

On 19th September, David and Annette Facer of Facer's Brewery, part of the Salford Brewery Syndicate, picked the Prima Donna hops growing in their garden, and the following day David brewed a batch of beer using a 'green weight' of 3.3kg. (Normally hops are used dry and weigh only about one-third to one-quarter as much as fresh ones.)



In fact, the bittering hop for the brew was a small amount of a conventionally dried variety (Galena: 15.8% α -acid) bought in as normal. The green hops were all used as late copper hops, added to the hot wort about five minutes before the end of the boil. This retains most of the flavour and aroma constituents.

The beer, using Maris Otter malt, was designed to be pale in colour with an alcohol content of about 4.1%. A total of 4.4 barrels was made and should be in the pubs about the same time as *What's Doing*. The photos show Annette hop-picking and David adding them to the copper.

Other news from the Syndicate is that both batches of Bazens' **Iccle Jimmy** (4.6%) sold extremely quickly. No more seasonals are planned for a while, since demand for the regular beers is fully occupying the brewery. The strong mild, **Wild Boar** (6%), will be available early November in time for the Woking Beer Festival.

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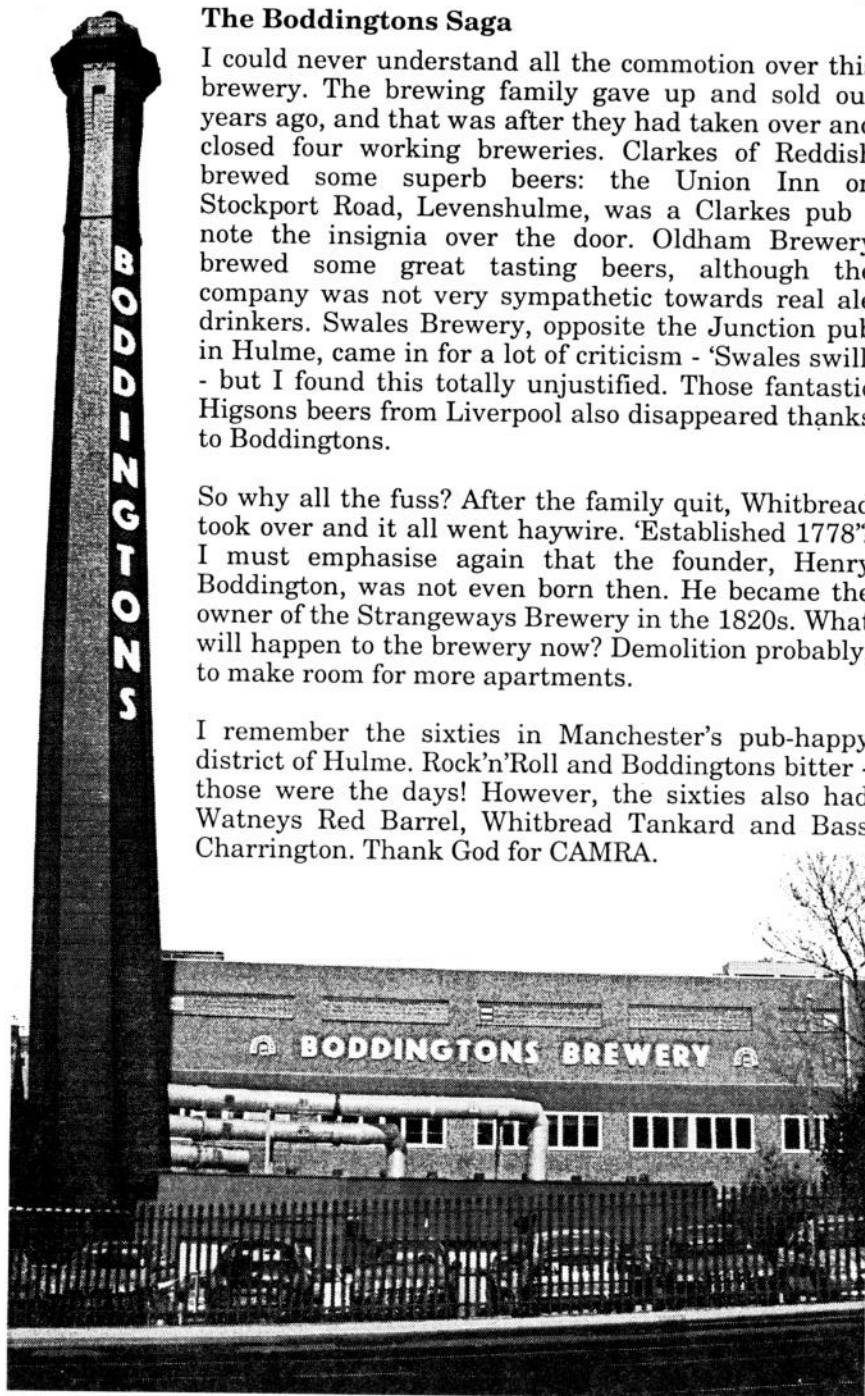
T.V. and Games Room open for darts

The Boddingtons Saga

I could never understand all the commotion over this brewery. The brewing family gave up and sold out years ago, and that was after they had taken over and closed four working breweries. Clarkes of Reddish brewed some superb beers: the Union Inn on Stockport Road, Levenshulme, was a Clarkes pub - note the insignia over the door. Oldham Brewery brewed some great tasting beers, although the company was not very sympathetic towards real ale drinkers. Swales Brewery, opposite the Junction pub in Hulme, came in for a lot of criticism - 'Swales swill' - but I found this totally unjustified. Those fantastic Higsons beers from Liverpool also disappeared thanks to Boddingtons.

So why all the fuss? After the family quit, Whitbread took over and it all went haywire. 'Established 1778'? I must emphasise again that the founder, Henry Boddington, was not even born then. He became the owner of the Strangeways Brewery in the 1820s. What will happen to the brewery now? Demolition probably, to make room for more apartments.

I remember the sixties in Manchester's pub-happy district of Hulme. Rock'n'Roll and Boddingtons bitter - those were the days! However, the sixties also had Watneys Red Barrel, Whitbread Tankard and Bass Charrington. Thank God for CAMRA.



Bolton Beer Festival

This year's festival at the Howcroft Inn will be held from 13th to 17th October. With over 200 beers available, it will be the largest pub-based festival in the country. Opening times are 7-11pm Wednesday and Thursday, 7-12pm Friday and 12-6pm Saturday.

Once again the festival is in aid of Bolton Lads' and Girls' Club. Volunteer staff are required, especially for set-up Monday to Wednesday daytime. For further information contact Claire Philips on 01204 540117

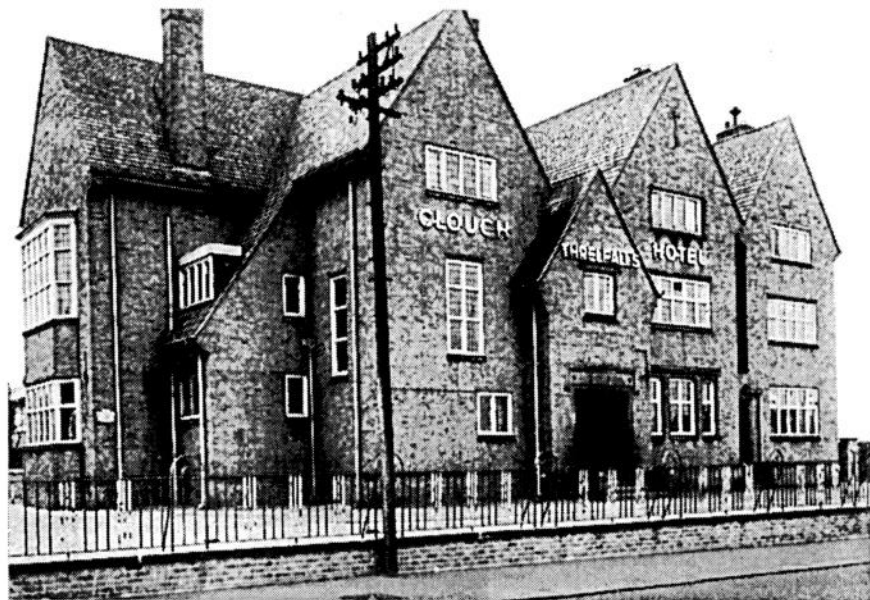
Oaks Okay?

The Oaks on Oakwood Road, Walkden (*June WD*) has been reprieved from demolition so the site can be redeveloped, following local objections to the council. Whether it will reopen as a pub remains to be seen.

The Clough

The Clough Hotel, located in Blackley between Victoria Avenue East and Grange Park Road, has not featured much in the pages of *What's Doing*. Built in the 1940s, it is a huge estate pub similar to the Oakwood in Salford (deceased). It was for many years owned by Whitbread, so real ale wasn't really a priority.

It has now been taken over by K C Godin-Prior (Casey), who is determined to provide a range of real ales. His first point of call, appropriately, will be Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, on the other side of the Clough.



Wigan and district

Dave White

The **Millstone Inn**, Wigan Lane, Swinley, reopened on Tuesday 14th September after the second extension in around fifteen years. An annex has been added on the corner of Central Park Way and the pub now serves food. The bar has also been extended, but for all that, the number of handpumps has dwindled to one, serving Thwaites bitter. The Millstone has a low ceiling and can get rather smoky.

Further to last month's article, the **Beacon Inn** at Dalton has reopened as the **Fox & Hounds**. Rumour had it that the pub would be converted to a restaurant, but I'm pleased to report that hasn't happened. Traditional Jennings beers can still be found at the bar, and the dining area is upstairs. The change of name is, in a way, appropriate, since David and Jennifer Fox are the new licensees: and you can't see Ashurst Beacon from the pub anyway.

The **Park Hotel**, Manchester Road, Higher Ince, has reopened, or so I'm told. The exterior of the pub has certainly been smartened up, although when I tried to check it out on a recent Saturday afternoon, the place was closed. Meanwhile, over in Marus Bridge, the **Bulls Head** on Warrington Road has reopened after a brief closure but remains, sadly, keg.

The **New Scholes Tavern**, a dour estate pub both on and in Scholes, is now closed and shuttered up. The former **Flamingo** faces Boyswell House, a towering block of flats; so you'd think there would be plenty of locals - but seemingly not. This is the second pub in Scholes to go belly-up in recent years; the **Water Wheel**, an ex-Thwaites pub off Warrington Lane, has been closed for some time now, with the plan to turn it into a bingo hall having apparently come to naught.

Holts Briefly

Stewart Revell

From Wednesday 22nd September, a few selected Holts pubs will be selling a new beer called **Joey's**. It will be a low-strength (3.5%) brew and initially the price will be £1 a pint. It isn't certain yet whether this price will be maintained throughout the drinking day, or whether it will be increased for the evening trade. It is an entirely new brew - not Humdinger with a different name!

Following on from the success of **Humdinger**, the brewery has entered the 2005 Tesco Challenge with three beers. They are in the final for selection and the results will be known in the next few weeks. Of the three beers submitted (names not decided yet), the first will be 4.8% for spring/summer, followed by 4.5% and 5% for later in the year.

stewart@revell62.freemove.co.uk

Letter

Salford and Eccles

Sir - Pat Town and Charles Ryecroft's request last month for Rupert to visit all the pubs in Salford and Eccles seems to be a tad optimistic. Would they honestly expect someone of such a genteel and sensitive disposition to confront all the hostelries in Broughton or Pendleton late on a dark night? I think not.

For the record, Mark McConachie's exemplary series, A2C2, published in *What's Doing* during the latter half of 1992, shows the total number of pubs in Salford at that time was 122, of which only 15 were shut. As far as I am aware, no new pubs have opened since then and the current figure according to North Manchester CAMRA is 82. But only 54 are currently open. 28 are either closed and boarded or burned-out shells on their way to becoming new apartment blocks or brick strewn crofts.

On the other hand, Eccles had a total of 52 in 1992, none of which were closed with the subsequent opening of Wetherspoons' Eccles Cross. The town now has 48 pubs, two currently closed.

What is probably of more concern is the availability of real ale in Eccles. A2C2 showed only two non-real ale outlets; there are now 22. Real ale can be had in just over half the pubs in Eccles, whilst in Salford approximately 65% sell real ale.

Ian Kenny



Old Market Tavern

Neil Worthington

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA has voted the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham the Autumn Pub of the Season. This old inn, once known as the Unicorn Hotel, has long been a favourite with cask ale drinkers and today it regularly offers nine cask ales. In the winter, one of these is generally Robinsons' powerful Old Tom, served from a cask at the back of the bar. The other ales, all on handpump, come from a wide variety of regional and micro brewers, some famous and some less so. It's the most regular local outlet for Bolton's Bank Top beers, for example. For lovers of apples, there are three ciders, usually from Saxon of Batley.

The Old Market Tavern is in the 2005 Good Beer Guide (£13.99 from all good booksellers) and it has been a Beer Guide regular for a number of years. It missed out in 1999, when landlord Wayne Reece started developing his new Belgian bar, Le Trappiste, and the pub's future seemed uncertain. Eventually he decided to concentrate on his new venture and the Old Market Tavern passed to Anne-Marie Holbourne, who had been working there for some time. She spruced the place up and has brought in a few innovations to get different people to try the pub. Male strippers might not have been everyone's first idea of entertainment, but it did bring a lot of ladies in, and Anne-Marie says many of them gave the cask ales a try - probably for the first time ever!

Internally, the pub is very much an alehouse, reminiscent of its previous guise as a Hogshead pub, with much bare wood or stone on



the floor and a lot of dark wood round the walls. It has been opened out and extended into what used to be the Town Hall next door, but there are still several distinct alcoves for privacy, and there is a separate smoke-free room to the right of the bar. The clientele is varied, with all ages represented, but the pub has a particular appeal for young drinkers.

The Pub of the Season award will be presented to Anne-Marie at the Old Market Tavern on Thursday 14th October, sometime around 9.00pm.

Beer Miles

Yes, it's a new drinking game. The idea is that the team (or individual player) who collects the most miles wins. All teams have to do is pick a real ale in each of the designated pubs in the city centre on Saturday 30th October, starting at the Smithfield Hotel on Swan Street at 12 noon. Entry is £1 per person.

The teams select the breweries which are the furthest away from the pubs (by the shortest road route) and can't choose the same brewery twice. The game will end back in the Smithfield at around 6.00pm.

The teams need to find themselves a name and a full set of rules and a score sheet will be issued on the day. The winner(s) will receive the official CAMRA North Manchester Beer Miles 2004 plaque.

For further details please contact Ian Kenny on 0161 728 3642 email: ipkenny@supanet.com or Dave Hallows on 07931 750108 email: davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk

CAMRA members willing to marshal should contact Ian or Dave.

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.

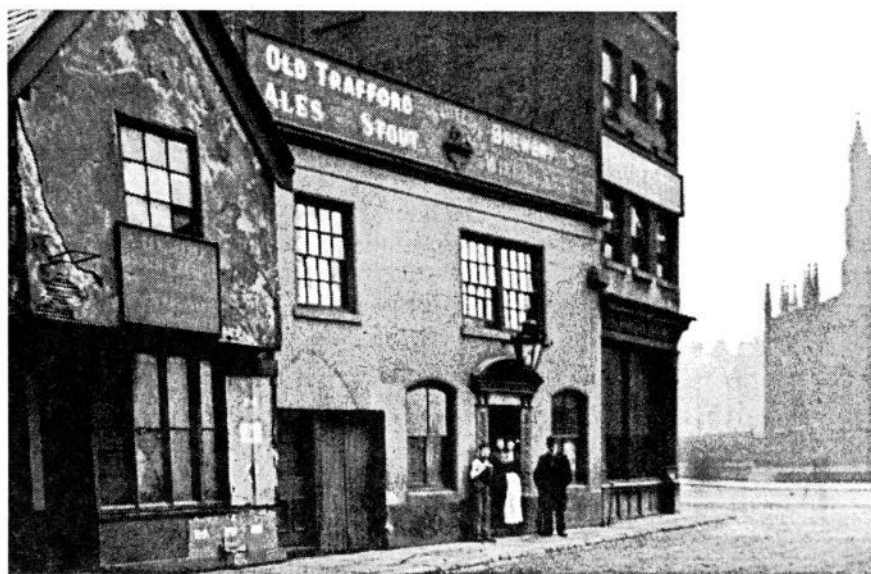
Empress Brewery

Alan Gall

In 1989, with the slogan 'Reaches the parts other Business Centres cannot reach,' media consultants began the promotion of a commercial park based in and around the defunct Empress Brewery buildings on Chester Road, Manchester. Work began on the site almost one hundred years after the brewery had originally been erected and the first few units were ready for occupation in May 1991.

The Empress story begins some years before the construction of the Chester Road brewery, when William Henry Fulford moved from Birmingham and married the daughter of a local brewer called John Trow in 1872. Mr Trow was a Welshman who had settled in Salford around 1860 and he had a brewery on Great George Street, off Chapel Street. His son-in-law began operating this in partnership with a Jonathan Gill. In 1877 they were advertising their presence at 'The Horse Shoe Brewery', but a receiver for the business was appointed in October 1880. Fulford continued trading under his own name until a move was made to the Monarch Brewery on West Peel Street, Regent Road in 1882.

The Royal Mail has received some bad press recently for the large volume of post that goes missing each year. It is not a new phenomenon. In February 1880, three parcels of letters were found stuffed inside some old beer barrels at the Monarch. The story merited a mention in The Times newspaper.



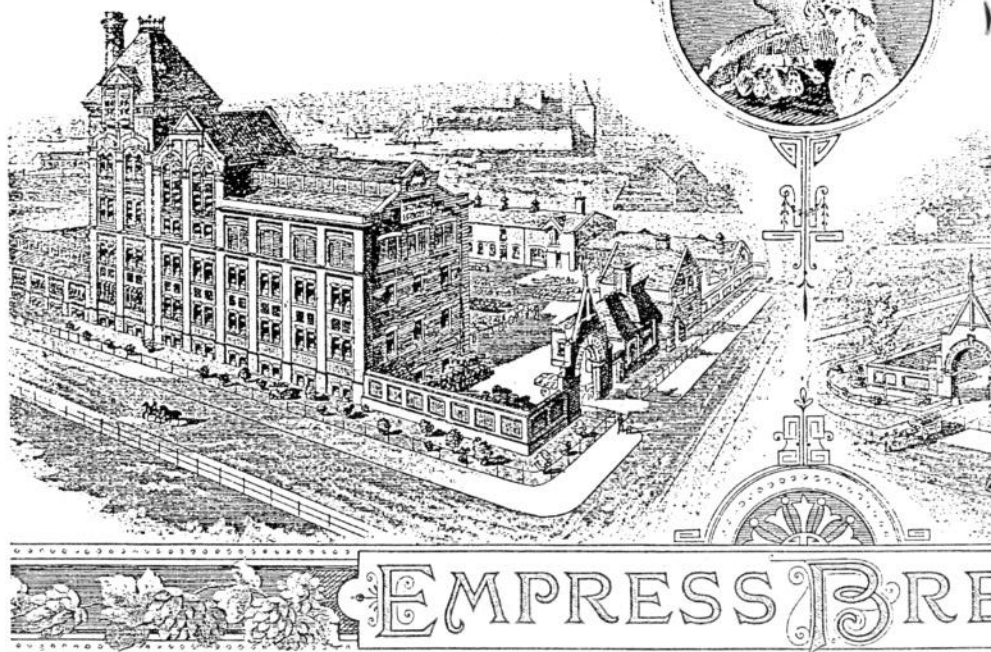
The White Lion on Long Millgate, Manchester, when it was selling ales from Fulford's Old Trafford Brewery. The site is now part of the grassed area near the Urbis building. The Cathedral is on the right

W H Fulford was intending to remain in Salford and in 1881 he submitted plans for a new brewery on Liverpool Street to the local authority. For whatever reason, the plans were shelved and some two years later another temporary home was found at relatively small premises in Hulme.

This brewery was behind the Bulls Head, on the corner of Chester Road and Clarence Street (later Cleworth Street) and it had already seen several occupants - Charles Dewse, Hargreaves & Heath, Fildes & Co, Crosby & Green, G F Carrington & Sons and Handley's Brewery Company. Charles Dewse had used the name Clarence Brewery, but under Fulford it became the Empress.

By 1888, the impressive new Empress Brewery had been built at 382 Chester Road and it could boast '...a well on the premises sunk 400 feet into the solid red rock.' The services of Mr C Estcourt, the City Analyst, were secured to test the well water and certify the supply as free from contamination.

Fulford & Co operated as a partnership between William Henry Fulford, John Heap and John Wainwright, then at the end of 1894 the firm was incorporated as the Old Trafford Brewery Company Ltd. The three partners became directors without nomination of an overall



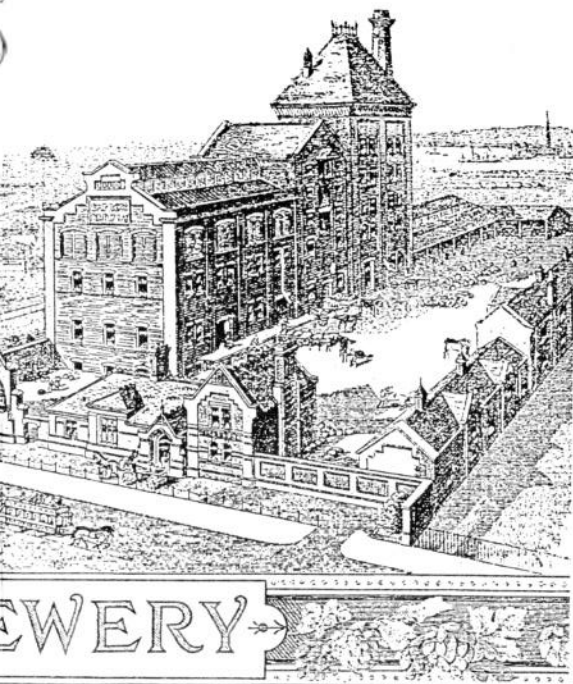
managing director. Indeed, the arrangements seem to have been quite lax, as the Articles of Association allowed that: '[a director] shall be entitled to a fee of £300 per annum and shall only devote such time and attention to the duties of Director as he may think fit.'

W H Fulford's sons Joseph and John also worked in the business, as did Wainwright's son Samuel Robert. John Wainwright had moved into brewing by virtue of his profession as an estate agent, in a similar way to John Henry Davies, the businessman who built up a fortune through pub and brewery deals and is remembered mainly as the President of Manchester United Football Club on its formation in 1902.

The Old Trafford Brewery Company Ltd was wound up voluntarily and reconstituted as the Empress Brewery Company Ltd in May 1896, with Fulford, Heap and Wainwright still at the helm. There followed an expansion of the business when, in 1898/99, Simpson & Crummack of the Swan Brewery, Ardwick, and the Queens Brewery on Moss Lane West (formerly owned by Greatorex Brothers) were bought. Empress quickly sold the Queens Brewery to Hydes, who renamed it the Anvil Brewery and moved in during July 1899. The Swan Brewery, which had been leased to Simpson & Crummack by

Chesters Brewery Company, passed to another brewer, Neil Ryrie, but Henry Crummack was still active and he joined the Empress board of directors.

Trouble was brewing as well as beer. W H Fulford resigned from the board after a strong disagreement with his fellow directors. At about this time, a draft agreement to sell the entire Empress business to Wilsons of Newton Heath for £323,000, effective from 30th June 1905, was drawn up. The report of the Empress Brewery's 1906 annual meeting makes no reference to this proposal, however, concentrating instead on murmurings of discontent from shareholders. The deal with Wilsons did not materialise, possibly as a result of Hubert Wilson visiting some of the Empress pubs!



Walker Cain Ltd had been formed in 1921 to combine Robert Cain Ltd of Liverpool with Peter Walker & Son, Warrington & Burton, Ltd. Through a group structure, Walker Cain controlled Peter Walker & Son Property Corporation Ltd and Peter Walker & Son, Warrington & Burton, Ltd. During 1929, the latter company acquired the ordinary capital shares in Empress. Brewing on Chester Road ceased at the beginning of 1930, but Walkers used the offices and Empress became a property holding company.

Walkers took over the Worsley Brewery Company Ltd in 1925 then, with their fondness for multiple companies, they made it a subsidiary of Northwestern Brewery Investments Ltd, along with several others, including Empress. During July 1933, the tenancy of the whole of Worsley Brewery's properties was transferred to Empress. Finally, a resolution placing Empress in voluntary liquidation was passed at a meeting on 30th September 1955, and the undertakings and assets were passed to Walkers.

Empress pubs were to be found mainly in Manchester and Salford, with some further afield at Bolton, Crewe and Wigan. The old Hyde Park Corner on Silk Street, Salford, was well known to Salford University students at the beginning of the 1980s, and to employees of Salford Electrical Instruments, on the opposite side of the road, before the collapse of their factory in March 1965. The pub was acquired by the Fulford-Heap-Wainwright trio in 1886 so would have been supplied with Fulford & Co's ales from the brewery on Clarence Street, Hulme.

The Queens Arms on Honey Street, Red Bank, still has some of its Empress tilework and the City Arms on Kennedy Street is another surviving ex-Empress pub.



Bury News

Alex Koval

Well, there's been quite a bit of activity here over the summer. Unusually, a lot of it concerns Good Beer Guide pubs. First, the shock news that the popular landlady of the GBG **Arthur Inn** has handed in her notice. Having done a fantastic job over the last couple of years, she will be a hard act to follow. Indeed, with Dave Porter busy on the microbrewery front, one has to ask what sort of future the pub actually has. Let's hope it will still be here to discuss later in the year.

Already gone are Andy and Lynne from the GBG **Hare & Hounds** in Ramsbottom. Having steadily built up the choice of cask beers from two handpumps to ten, they felt it was time for a new challenge and they've moved to the **Bridgewater** in Worsley. Meanwhile, the Hare & Hounds continues to sell an impressive range. Over in Summerseat, it's congratulations to Ged and Jo, licensees of the GBG **Footballers**, who have tied the knot at last.

On Bolton Road, both the **Eagle & Child** and the **Jolly Carters** are boarded up. Enterprise Inns have been trying to flog the Eagle for £10,000 for ages without success, so it seems it's gone for good. I can't say it will be missed. Also gone to the great development in the sky is the **Star** on Bridge Street, Freetown. No less an authority than myself once branded this 'the worst pub in Bury,' so no tears there, either.

The **Pack Horse** on Manchester Road has reopened after an expensive refit. It looks much cleaner, but the interior resembles a



reality makeover show gone badly wrong. Despite being advertised as a 'pub with something for everyone,' this apparently doesn't include real ale.

The **Dusty Miller** on Crostons Road goes from strength to strength. If the guarantee of an excellent pint wasn't enough, there has been an impressive expansion of the outdoor drinking area. It thus joins the **Trackside** in the seemingly increasingly popular alfresco drinking craze. Other new converts include the **Oddfellows**, still serving a good pint of Holts, and the **Lamb**, both on Tottington Road. The Lamb really is an excellent pub these days. It makes the most of its single handpump by offering a different beer each week (Copper Dragon when I called) and has started doing food at weekends.

Finally, the **George** in the town centre is undergoing yet another revamp. This pub is bang in the shopping centre and practically next to the bus station, so it should be turning people away. However, Whitbread, with their usual business prowess, always managed to avoid such a fate. The pubco that followed them was equally inept, although their idea of an afternoon pub quiz with meat prizes certainly was unusual. After a ban on baseball caps in order to identify troublemakers via CCTV, business dropped sharply. Now there is scaffolding up and recruitment adverts for staff seeking 'exciting, challenging opportunities.' Apparently, the pub is even going to be offering food. Have they seen the future and realised it's scampi, I wonder?

Boggart Bulletin

Dave Hallows

More information about Boggart Hole Clough Brewery's Pioneer (4.5%), mentioned last month. I found it in the Bar Fringe on Swan Street, Manchester, and it was pale in colour, very fruity, giving way to a mellow bitterness and citrus taste.

This month's special, Redrec (4%), is a deep, reddish oak colour, bitingly bitter, with lemon and fruits. If you see it, try it. Only a small batch has been brewed.

Slaithwaite Beer Festival

The Fourth Annual Slaithwaite Beer Festival is on Friday and Saturday, 19th and 20th November. It will feature beers from the microbreweries of Yorkshire, Lancashire and further afield, along with music and pie and peas. The event is organised by the Colne Valley Lions in aid of the Air Ambulance.

The venue is Slaithwaite Conservative Club, two minutes' walk from Slaithwaite Station. Trains are every hour from Manchester Victoria. For further details contact Brian Moriarty 01484 850801.

Out and About

At the beginning of September C A Rotwang (Trotter really) took a trip over t'Pennines to watch a bit of cricket and try a few recommended pubs in Scarborough...

The **Indigo Alley** on North Marine Road is a popular one-room establishment and a local CAMRA Pub of the Year, selling six regularly changing real ales. I sampled Daleside Blonde, and at 3.9% it was a nice start to my session. Next was Castle Rock Hemlock, a full-bodied 4% beer. Finally, I tried the dark, strongish Jerry from the Outlaw Brewery Company. Outlaw beers tend to be experimental and are brewed by the same couple who make Roosters beers.

Whilst dining at the Carvery, below the **Crescent Hotel**, I sampled a very good pint of Black Sheep bitter.

Going along the North Bay Promenade, one comes to **Old Scalby Mills**, Scalby Mills Road. From the patio or the lounge there are superb views of the North Bay and the castle. Tetleys, Burton Ale and guest ales are available at this popular pub, originally a water mill. I tried the Youngs bitter and Summer Madness, brewed by Wychwood for Ushers. Both were palatable session beers.

A lot of Scarborough's real ale outlets seem to be located in hotels, which is quite unusual for a seaside resort. **Scholars** is part of the

Bedford Hotel, with a separate entrance on Somerset Terrace. Yorkshire Terrier from York Brewery is the main ale and there were three guest beers. I tried the Durham White Velvet, a smooth golden bitter, followed by Titanic White Star, a terrific straw-coloured, hoppy beer.

Glossop

Over the weekend of the Glossop Victorian Fair, the High Peak & North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA usually run a real ale tent. The



beers are supplied by small independent breweries and this year there were three beers from a brand new microbrewery, Callow Top from Derbyshire: Dr Samuel Johnson and Bad Ram (both 5%) and Imperial IPA (5.25%). I sampled the Bad Ram, which despite its strength was quite a good drink.

There was a one-off brew from Shaws of Dukinfield called Roly's 1,000 Dozen. This celebrates the fact that Mr Ticker (Roly) has now sampled 12,000 ales. Mayflower of Wigan had two ales on, Wigan Bier and Black Diamond Mild (3.4%), which I tried. Monty's Leap from Brown Cow Brewery was a refreshing, lager-like ale. Others on offer included Eastwood & Saunders Leantown Bitter and Kheans Milton Bitter. Most of the ales were served on gravity, which tended to make them look a little flat, but the overall quality was good.

Liverpool

A quick trip over to Liverpool meant I had the opportunity to visit one of my favourite pubs in the city centre. The **Globe** on Cases Street, close to Central Station, is a busy two-roomed Victorian pub selling Cains mild and bitter and three guest beers. I tried the Archers Special Bitter. Next, from one 'Pool to another...

Blackpool

The **Pump & Truncheon** near the Tower on Bonny Street was a CAMRA Pub of the Season in 2003, according to the TV screen which gives information about what's on in the pub. It is an open-plan place, with part wood and part flagged flooring. There were three ales from Blackpool Brewery: IPA, Mayflower (not the Wigan one!) and Harvest Gold. Other beers were from Phoenix and Boddingtons.

Southport

The Fifth Sandgrunder Beer Festival was in the second week of September, so it was over to Southport for a few days of sun, no sea and ale. The theme at the festival was Lakeland Breweries. There were also some of the old favourites and a separate Cains bar, the festival sponsors. A new feature of the festival were the Pubs of Excellence Awards. These went to Baron's Bar, the Berkeley Arms and the Dog & Gun. Special Merit Awards went to the Falstaff, Freshfield (Formby), Derby Arms and Cheshire Lines.

On to the beers. On the opening night I sampled Wayfarer IPA from Atlas (a dry refreshing bitterness) and White Amarillo from Durham (a light session ale using Amarillo and Goldings hops). Southport Brewery launched its beers: Sandgrunder (3.8%), Natterjack (4.3%) and Carousel (4%), which were popular throughout the festival. Oakham supplied a beer called Lager and Lime (5.4%), a real lager flavoured with lime. Stout lovers could get Caught Behind, a smooth, traditional stout. No Sandgrunder Festival is complete without a Wapping Blonde, and this refreshing wheat beer was excellent.

Doing The Card

Staggerin' Man

The Beer House on Angel Street, off Rochdale Road, Manchester, is showing definite signs of recovery from its recent chequered history, when numerous tenants and reliefs came and went. It is now in the able hands of Sue and Paul Higginson, who took over when their old pub, the Pot of Beer, closed in the spring. They are bringing the Beer House back to life - in terms of beer, food and atmosphere. I made two visits in one week...

Moorhouses Black Cat Mild (3.4%): The popular resident mild. Dark with ruby red hues. Pleasant mellow maltiness with fruits.

Moorhouses Premier Bitter (3.7%): A golden, well-balanced session bitter.

Triple FFF Pressed Rat & Warthog (3.8%): Again, dark with ruby hues. Moreish malt and fruits. The barrel went very quickly, I'm told.

Black Sheep Best Bitter (3.8%): Amber, well-balanced session beer with citrus notes and always on here.

Envile Brewery Traditional Ginger Beer (4%): Light, golden, slightly sweet ginger taste. A grower.

Sarah Hughes Pale Amber (4%):

Very fruity at first, giving way to a refreshing hoppiness. Excellent.

Jennings Cumberland Ale (4%):

A composite tasting by the CAMRA under-30 social group found this a light brown, hoppy, full-bodied beer with an aftertaste of orange and grapefruit peel.

Taylor's Landlord (4.2%): A popular bitter. Refreshing and again very tasty.

Envile White (4.2%): Pale with a distinct fruitiness. One for both sexes.

Moor Merlins Magic (4.3%):

Tawny brown with malt, a bitterness and just enough fruit.

RCH Pitchfork (4.3%): On semi-chill, making it very refreshing. Pale and bitter.

Cotleigh Kookaburra (4.4%): Mid-brown with malts, suffused with a bitterness. Complex but interesting.

Durham Priors Gold (4.5%): A great hoppy and flowery beer.

Phoenix Thirsty Moon (4.6%): A popular beer from the Tony Allen stable in Heywood. Light brown with a fruit malt aroma. Well-balanced with a dry hoppy aftertaste.

Ring o'Bells Dreckly (4.8%): Oak coloured, malty and fruity strong ale.

Village Old Raby (4.8%): Dark brown, fairly fruity with a bitter finish, though thin on the palate.

Archers Swindon Strong Bitter (5%): A complex, well-crafted, well-balanced beer.



No-Smoke Rooms

Neil Worthington

In olden days, many pubs had Smoke Rooms. You could probably smoke anywhere else in the pub, but this room was usually ornamented with etched windows proclaiming its smoky nature to one and all.

These days, an increasing number of pubs are bringing in the complete opposite, a smoke-free room. It's been the policy of the Wetherspoons chain since they began, and it seems other chains and free houses are following suit. Smoking at the bar is also frowned on more and more, because of the conditions it creates for staff.

A lot of pubs now have a sign by the entrance, indicating their policy on smoking - permitted throughout, prohibited throughout, or permitted in specific areas only. These signs are provided through the AIR Initiative (Atmosphere Improves Results). They work to provide solutions to the problems of smoke in public places, not necessarily by banning it, but by using effective ventilation. Their website, at www.airinitiative.com, has a lot of useful information on how mechanical ventilation can make things better or worse, depending on how it is installed, maintained and operated.



The following pubs in the Trafford & Hulme branch area have a smoke free room or area at all times they are open (not just when they're serving food):

Prohibited altogether: Hillary Step (Whalley Range)

Separate room where smoking is prohibited: Old Market Tavern (Altrincham), Orange Tree (Altrincham), Railway (Hale), Railway (Sale), Railway (Heatley), Beech (Chorlton), Church (Flixton), Stamford Arms (Little Bollington).

A smoke free area (not physically divided from the main room): Wheatsheaf (Altrincham), Old Packet House (Altrincham), Moss Trooper (Timperley), Old Porterhouse (Altrincham), Unicorn (Altrincham), Tim Bobbin (Urmston), J P Joule (Sale), Waterhouse (Manchester), Moon under Water (Manchester), Old Hall (Altrincham), Sedge Lynn (Chorlton), Rain Bar (Manchester), Fox & Hounds (Flixton), Lloyd's Hotel (Chorlton).

After the entirely smokeless Hillary Step, the most remarkable is the Railway at Heatley, where they've chosen to make the main bar smoke free. Since the main bar is the heart and soul of the pub, it means that non-smokers no longer feel they are being banished to some remote corner to avoid the noxious weed. And it means much better working conditions for the staff, too.

Chapel House

One of the only three remaining Holts tenants, Nigel Bailey of the Stanley Arms, Patricroft, is expanding his interests by buying a pub. He is taking over the Chapel House at Portland Basin, Dukinfield canal junction, where the Ashton, Lower Peak Forest and Huddersfield Narrow Canals meet. This is not to be confused with Holts' own Chapel House pub about three miles away. Nigel's pub is a free house which sells Holts mild and bitter. He plans to refurbish it fully, including the beer garden, and to continue selling draught Holts, as well as a good range of foreign lagers. He is retaining the tenancy of the Stanley, a regular Good Beer Guide entry, and regular barman Matthew Belwood is taking over as manager.

Owl Brewing

August saw the appearance of Oldham's first brewer since Oldham Brewery closed back in the eighties. The Owl Brewing Company is in the Hope Inn on Greenacres Road and the brewer is Gordon Potts, a cheerful man and a former keg font designer.

His inaugural ale was Horny Owl (4.2%), ruby red in colour, with a malty richness on the first taste and a liquorish/chocolate aftertaste. It was on sale in the Ashton Arms on Clegg Street, Oldham. One comment from by the bar was that it tasted like 'a weaker Jennings Sneck Lifter.'

Rupert

'How does Efrem Brobdingnag sleep at nights?' I mused as I awoke in a ditch just outside Prague. We had come away on an impromptu trip to celebrate the forthcoming nuptials of Fiona and Tish. There had been a minor incident at the airport. Following a documentary, which portrayed them as less than assiduous, not to say workshy dossers, the security staff were searching everyone most thoroughly. Bunty was searched more intimately than he would have wished. I can only surmise that it was his experiences in Strangleways which tempered his reaction.

All went well in Czechley as we drank Staropramen, Prazan, Pilsner Urquell, Gambrinus and Budvar at a very reasonable 45p a pint. Tish's *Opining Tripe* guide hadn't been much help, but Ron Pattinson's guide, downloaded by Ophelia, certainly was.

As we drank the best beer in the world in some of its best pubs, we

could see signs of creeping Brobdingnagisation even there. There was a George & Dragon pub in the old square and the famous U Fleku had rammed its prices up to three times the going rate and driven out all the locals. As Bunty said, 'Would you still go in your favourite tavern and drink superb Drabs if it were five quid a pint?'

It was thus that our thoughts turned to Efrem and his selling the family silver. What chance could there have been of retaining the brewery when it was in the hands of Dillons' successors and then some global Belgian outfit? What will happen to 'Grotley's Nectar'? Will Sikhs brew it? Will it be the same? Who cares? How can we campaign to stop it? Why is it that only the biggies are losing cask beer sales? Why is beer more expensive than petrol when we don't have to fight wars to dig it up, most of it is water and there's less tax on it? Why can't we, if Brobdingnags goes, import Budvar and sell it for 50p a pint?

As the argument raged we were thrown out of Fleckies, as it will soon be called, and were enticed into a sleazy nightclub by a cocaine-selling tout, where among the depraved cavorting, the Slivovice took its toll. The tram went the wrong way and my stagger was incomplete. I dozed off, thinking of Efrem and vowing that I would not squander my own heritage in that way.



Branch Diary

Regional Meeting

Sat 16 Oct, 12.30pm, Crescent, Salford

Regional CAMRA Under 30 Social Group

Cider Night: Fri 1 Oct at 8pm, Marble Arch, Rochdale Road. 9pm, Beer House, Angel Street, (off Rochdale Road), Manchester City Centre. Meet by CAMRA sign.

Contact: davehallows2002 @yahoo.co.uk

North Manchester www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 6 Oct: Trip to Mayflower Brewery, Wigan. Train from Manchester Victoria at 6.28pm, Salford Crescent 6.34, Swinton 6.41, Walkden 6.47. Arrive Wigan 7.14pm. Meet at brewery by 8pm. Further details from Paul Warbrick on 07944 500174 or 0161 228 5682, 2pm-6pm Mon-Fri

Wed 13 Oct: Blackley Village Crawl: Imperial 7.30pm, Old House at Home, Millstone 9pm; Fox, Golden Lion 10pm.

Sat 16th Oct 12.30pm: Regional Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Wed 20 Oct 8pm: Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Tues 26 Oct: What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Honey St, 3-7pm.

Wed 27 Oct 8pm: Social at Ashton Arms, Clegg Street, Oldham

Sat 30 October: Beer Miles event. Starting Smithfield 12 noon, returning at about 6pm. (See elsewhere in this issue)

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

Wigan

Contact: Valerie Hollows 0161 629 8243 (weekdays);

07889 898955 (mob). email: vhollows@peel.co.uk

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Tues 5 Oct 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Wishing Well, York St, Heywood

Fri-Sun 22-24 Oct. Trip to Salisbury and Hop Back Brewery. Details from Branch Contact

Sun 31 Oct: 'Not the 10k Run' Social. Tandle Hill Tavern, Thornham Lane, Middleton. 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

Fri 8 Oct: **BRANCH AGM**, Wheatsheaf, Manchester Road, Altrincham

Thur 14 Oct 7.30pm: Pub of the Season presentation, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Thur 21 Oct: Urmston/Flixton survey and social.

Contact: Dave Ward 0161 980 1170

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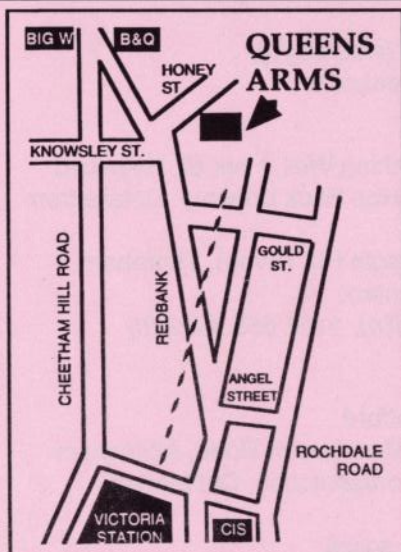
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