

30p

# What's Doing

JANUARY 2005



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

## REAL ALE VENUE FOR ECCLES



The Golden Lion on Barton Lane, Eccles, will be transformed into a real ale outlet in January. The new tenants at this former Boddies pub are Ken Phoenix and Heather Thomas. They will be selling a range of guest beers and other changes include the introduction of live music at weekends. Ken is well known locally, having worked at the Duke of York and the Town Hall.

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## New Nelson?

The exterior has had the appearance of a wreck for months now, and the lack of a roof won't be doing the inside any good, but according to the *Salford Advertiser*, the Old Nelson on Chapel Street may yet be saved.

A Leeds-based outfit called Hightop Developments has applied for planning permission to build a block of luxury apartments (naturally) on the adjoining site. They say they want to refurbish the pub to provide a 'traditional watering hole' next to their development, which will be called The Admiralty.

## Last Beer at the Pier

This year's Wigan Beer Festival will be from 3rd to 5th March and organisers fear that it will be the last at the Mill at the Pier. The mill is due to close at the end of March for a major redevelopment by Wigan Council. Let's hope a new venue can be found.

## Boggart Bulletin

Dogsleigh (5%) made a welcome Christmas return, along with new monthly special Snow Dog (4%), a light amber, malty ale with blackcurrant and lemon flavour and aroma.

## New licensee

Holts' **Wellington**, opposite Eccles Library, has recently been taken over by Paul Hamilton and Shirley Ingham. Paul says that several customers have remarked on the high quality of the beers since he took over.

## Holts briefly

*Stewart Revell*

By the time this edition of WD is in the pubs, a new seasonal, **Nearly Holt Upright**, will have replaced **Nuts & Holts**. This 4% brew is described by the brewery as 'a full drinking bitter, bursting with flavour, supplemented by fresh hop aroma from Cascade hops added late in the boil.' It will be available in January and February.

The 4.5% **Thunder Holt** reappears in March-May: 'A premium red ale with a strong dry palate, complemented by citrus freshness of Challenger hops and the aroma of Styrian dry hops.'

The 4.3% **Lightning Holt** will be available in June-August: 'A clean tasting refreshing summer ale, with pronounced floral hop aroma from choice Styrian hops.'

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## Wetherspoons Survey

Pete Cash

On a night in early December, a group of CAMRA members set out to survey the Wetherspoons scene in central Manchester, visiting three Wetherspoons 'proper' and one of their two associated 'Lloyd's No.1'.

Starting at the **Paramount** on the corner of Oxford Street and Portland Street, we found Marstons Burton Bitter at £1.19, Pedigree at £1.39 (this ran out as we arrived), Greene King Abbot, Courage Directors and de Koninck (guest) at £1.49. Prices in all the other outlets were the same.

Next, to the multi-roomed **Waterhouse** on the corner of Princess Street and Cooper Street. Here were Brains S.A, Hall & Woodhouse Festive Peasant, Banks & Taylor Santa's Slayer, Burton Bridge Santi-Freeze and de Koninck again.

Down to Deansgate now, where Wetherspoon's first Manchester pub, the **Moon Under Water**, has been closed and refurbished, reopening as a **Lloyd's No.1**. This enormous former cinema was selling Marston Bitter, Pedigree, Directors, Abbot, de Koninck, Wells Bombardier, Mauldon Blackadder and Stonehenge Old Smokey, a black, stout-like beer with roast flavours.

There wasn't time to visit the other **Lloyd's** in the Printworks on Dantzic Street, so it was up Market Street and on to the **Piccadilly Wetherspoons**. Marstons Bitter and Pedigree were joined by Titanic Silver Spoon, Butcombe Gold, Camerons Christmas Ale and Exmoor Exmas Ale.

Although Wetherspoons pubs might not be to everybody's taste, it has to be said that all the beers were in good condition (though some on Deansgate were served too cold), and nobody could complain about the prices. They all have a no-smoking area, but some work better than others. The only negative note was connected with the other main reason for



our survey. There is supposed to be a national agreement whereby all Wetherspoons display holders with CAMRA membership forms, etc. Sad to say, we found no evidence of these in any of the outlets.

## Wigan & district

Dave White

The **Alexandra Hotel** in Whelley reopened in time for Christmas. The pub has been quite tastefully refurbished, serves food as before, and offers real ale for the first time in donkey's years: Boddingtons bitter and Draught Bass on handpump.

Elsewhere, alas, there isn't much to get excited about. The **Crispin Arms** at Birkett Bank is now closed and boarded up, making it the second pub in six months to shut in the Scholes area. The **Eckersley Arms**, Poolstock, has gone the same way, whilst in Aspull the **Hare & Hounds** off Bolton Road has closed once again. None of these pubs sold real ale. The **Railway Inn**, Liverpool Road, Platt Bridge, has reopened, and now looks quite smart: but again serves only fizz.

In Pemberton, the **Dog & Partridge**, Chapel Lane, has closed. This once-excellent boozer is now to let by Punch Taverns. Just up Orrell Road, the **Travellers Rest** at Lamberhead Green has reopened (see *WD Nov 04*) but remains keg. A little further



up the A577, cask beer has finally let slip its tenuous hold at the **Stag Hotel**, Orrell Post.

A couple of long-closed pubs have been de-licensed. In the town centre, the **Bricklayers Arms** on Hallgate lapsed last April. The pub was always a bit rough-and-ready, and probably wouldn't be missed. (I was in there once and heard the words, 'I think he's dead,' uttered about one of the customers, who was on the floor at the time. He wasn't, in case you're wondering.) Still, the building has become a bit of an eyesore. Over in Higher Ince, the licence for the **Engineers Arms**, Belle Green Lane, expired last February.

Finally, the **Norley Hall Hotel**, a keg emporium of many years' standing, has been sold by London & Edinburgh Inns. The pub's future, like the new owner, is unknown.

## City Arms

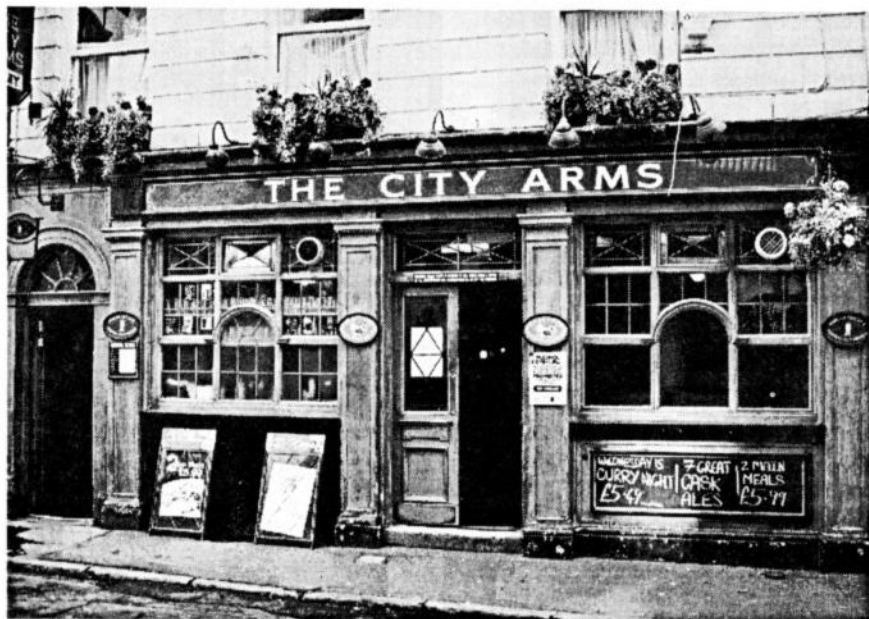
*Stuart Fish*

One of the most popular city centre pubs, the City Arms on Kennedy Street, is Trafford & Hulme CAMRA's Winter Pub of the Season. The City Arms was once a Walkers pub, then a Tetleys house for many years, before passing to Punch Taverns and then to the Spirit group. Throughout these changes, the one constant has been the high quality of the beers, justifying a Good Beer Guide entry almost every year. The pub's appearance in the 2005 Guide is its ninth in a row.

The current range features Tetley Bitter and Tetley Dark Mild, along with five changing guest ales, mainly from regionals, from a list of up to thirty supplied by the Beer Seller. The standard of the Tetleys, particularly the mild, gives the lie to the notion that big brewers can't brew decent cask beer - some are quite capable when they make the effort.

Manager Sean Piatt took over in August 2003 and decided to open on Sundays for the first time. For a pub often unfairly labelled as one just patronised by 'suits' at lunchtime and after work, the new hours have worked well - trade has really picked up. Sean says the limiting factor is the size of the place - sometimes it is so busy that everyone who wants to get in can't. Naturally, lunchtime meals are a big attraction, served between 12 noon and 3.00pm every day, while Curry Night, between 5.00pm and 9.00pm on Wednesdays, has been successful.

Sean is originally from Stockport and came back up north with



partner Niki and baby daughter Sophie after a spell with the Firkin chain in London. His previous spell on home ground was at the Lass o'Gowrie, where as assistant manager he brewed the last batch of beer to be produced in the pub's brewery. 'That must have been an interesting experience,' I said. Sean laughed: 'It was if you tried drinking it!'

The recent demolition of derelict buildings on Kennedy Street caused some disruption, when the pub and its neighbour the Vine had to close briefly, but things are back to normal. The Pub of the Season Award will be presented to Sean on Wednesday 19th January at around 9.00pm. To coincide with the National Winter Ales Festival the following week, Sean has plans for some surprise guest beers. More will be known by presentation night, when all are welcome.

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## Microbrewers Celebrate

*Pete Cash*

The **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road was bulging at the seams in the early evening of 2nd December, with guests celebrating the relaunch of the pub and the Marble Brewery. Several microbrewers were spotted in the throng, who enjoyed samples of the new **Marble Bitter** and the dark **Chocolate**, pulled into a never-ending succession of half pint glasses.

A selection of very tasty *hors d'oeuvres* was brought out on trays, then main dishes were served from the new kitchen and counter in the back room. The proceedings lasted for several hours, with more guests arriving throughout the period. Here's wishing the Marble enterprise every success for the future.

A few days later, a somewhat more select band of brewers and friends joined Richard and Jude Bazen and David Facer at their pre-Christmas bash in the **Salford Brewery Syndicate's** premises in Higher Broughton. We sampled a special dry-hopped version of David's **Anthem**, as well as Richard's **Pacific** and **Green Bullet**.

Snacks and tasty food complemented the beers. The two smaller fermenters will soon be increased in height to provide a total of four ten-barrel (nominal) capacity. A new mash tun with a larger diameter will also be needed to keep up with the increased output.

David is still finalising the formulation for his soon-to-be launched **Mild** (visit the Winter Ales Festival to try it), which he wants to make distinctive. Meanwhile, the 4% **Never Christmas (NX)** has been out a while and is 'light and hoppy with ginger and cinnamon flavours'. The 5.7% **Resolution 2**, a strong version of Landslide with dry-hopping, greets the New Year.

## Boddingtons

Although I support the Boddingtons cause, I must state that the downfall was brought on by the actions of the Boddington family. They sold the firm to Whitbread, which led to the decline in quality of the once-famous beer.

Back in the 1960s I worked for Manchester Corporation as a dustman (they are now known as refuse collectors). The work was 'job and finish,' so come dinner time and with wages paid, we lads walked the half-mile to a pub in Chorlton called the **Oaks**. And that was after all the walking we did on the rounds, humping metal bins full of heavy ash.

The nearest pub to our depot (about two minutes' walk away) was a very large Swales house called the **Southern**. Swales did not enjoy a reputation for good ale (it was sometimes referred to as 'Swales swill'), so the news that Boddingtons had acquired the company aroused a lot of interest. Instead of heading for the Oaks when we got paid, a great bunch of us went to the Southern and the big vault was bursting at the seams. Boddies had a taste of its own then, and could really claim to be 'the cream of Manchester.'

As well as Swales, Boddingtons took over Oldham Brewery, Clarkes of Reddish and Higsons of Liverpool. Swales was not one of Manchester's favourite breweries, but the beers, especially the Best Bitter, were tasty. The other three produced some damn fine beers that could rival Boddingtons.



I used to travel all the way from my home in Chorlton-cum-Hardy to drink Oldham Bitter in the **Old Post Office**, near the Roxy Cinema in Hollinwood. Another long bus journey from C-c-H took me to the magnificent **George Hotel** in Stockport for a few delicious pints of Higsons bitter.

While on the subject of the old breweries, I recall that Yates's Castle Brewery of Ardwick had quite a few pubs, like the **Lord Nelson** on Newton Street in the city centre, the **Cheshire Cheese** in Ancoats, the **Standard** in Hulme, the **Peel Park** and the **Egerton Arms** in Salford, and one in Failsworth, whose name I can't remember. Yates's bitter had a kick to it on the first mouthful. The firm was taken over by John Smiths of Tadcaster and there was quite a difference in taste.



The Manchester Brewery Company was another large Ardwick firm. They had some quite large to extremely large pubs, such as the **Imperial** on London Road and the **Oxford Hotel** on Oxford Street, a superb pub that should have been preserved. Many Manchester Brewery pubs were easily recognised because they had the 'MB' sign on the wall near the entrance.

## Unicorn

The Unicorn on Church Street in the city centre seems to be more of a free house than a Bass pub. It has sold Bass (obviously), Tetley, Boddingtons and the long-gone Stones, and more recently Lees (not for me). But the best news is that the magnificent Taylors Landlord is available. Assistant manageress Liz tells me that sales have been far exceeding the other beers.

## Heritage

It was nice to read in *What's Brewing* that the **Hare & Hounds** has been classed as a Heritage Pub. I would like to see the **Marble Arch** given the same accolade. Although small, there is a hell of a lot of impressive architecture about the place. How do those ceiling bricks stay up there? The ornate frieze, ceiling lights and marble-framed entrance are magnificent. Some say that the pub lost its character when the bar was moved to the far end of the room, but I can't accept that. There are plenty of original features, which were revealed when John Worthington took over the pub and removed the false ceiling and plaster of the Watney-Wilson era.

## W&D

Now that Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries have acquired Burtonwood's pubs, maybe we'll see some real ale in the **Wheatsheaf** on Oak Street again. It would help compensate for the **Burton Arms** on Swan Street, which no longer sells real ale. Still, there is always the nearby, and always reliable, **Smithfield**.

**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.

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*Photos:* Phil Stout, Andy Jenkinson, Stuart Fish

## Waylaid in Whaley

*Hikin'Man*

We recently walked from New Mills to Whaley Bridge, first heading westwards and then south, taking in Ollerset Moor and Cracken Edge, before descending to Buxworth. Here is the **Navigation**, so called because it sits on the edge of the large canal basin. We didn't call in on this occasion, but the pub sells several real ales and is worth a visit. We still had another mile or so to go, so reserved our thirst for the final destination.

Last time I was at Buxworth (or Bugsworth) there was much heavy plant and extensive work going on in the basin, to cure the leaks that have plagued this historic site since its restoration a couple of decades ago. Now the work seems to have been completed; all the plant had gone and the water was at full level. The plan was to walk along the towpath to the junction with the Whaley Bridge arm, then turn left. There were planks across the stop-lock, beyond which the water was at half level. All the choking weed which I had seen previously had been cleared, though it appeared there was still a little work to do,



removing silt. Further up were more planks, just before the permanently moored boats which occupy the stretch before the junction. It appeared, though, that the basin could soon be reopened to boat traffic.

The walk officially finished at Whaley Bridge station, where the **Jodrell Arms** overlooks the main A5004. However, we continued south, bearing left up the Old Road where the front door of the **Shepherds Arms**, about a quarter of a mile from the station, welcomes you. You could also stay on the new road, then climb up to the back entrance, as the pub straddles both roads. It has just two rooms. The lounge is a smart, comfortable affair with many pictures and brasses around the walls.

But it is the tap room which makes this a 'must'. My last-but-two visit was in 1984 whilst navigating the Cheshire Ring and it certainly hasn't changed since then. I suspect that it was the same long before that. You are greeted by a stone-flagged floor, a small but effective open fire, and tables that have been worn white by decades of scrubbing. It was so warm that I had to remove three of the four layers I had been walking in, leaving only a thin T-shirt on a cold November evening. One customer, the dog of one of the regulars, was so taken with the fire that she lay about ten inches in front of it until the heat forced her to move away. She was back in ten minutes, though.

Other dogs graced the fireplace, too: on the left a large brass canine casting and on the right a set of firedogs. Above the fire is the darts board and on the wall opposite the entrance are, appropriately, photographs of breeds of British sheep and another of sheep in the snow. The wall seating is backed by old fashioned, stained and polished tongue-and-groove wood.





Opposite the fire is the bar, where three handpumps dispense the regular Banks's Original, Marstons Bitter and Pedigree. To see the guest beer pump you have to go to the lounge. On this visit it was Hook Norton Old Hooky. The quality of the beers in this pub is outstanding and it has featured in most of the thirty-odd *Good Beer Guides* published to date. Trains back to Manchester, Salford and Bolton are approximately hourly up to 2150 on a Saturday, with a last one to Manchester only at 2307. However, there were rumours amongst our walking group about the long term future of the Buxton line.

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## Session in the Golden Lion

*Staggerin' Man*

Lees, Robbies, Hydes and Holts. These are the family brewers in Greater Manchester and the region's drinkers are well off because of them. The real ales are usually on good form in the pubs they own, where they can ensure quality control.

I went into the Golden Lion on Old Market Street, Blackley, intending to have only a swift pint of Holts bitter. The beer, with its uncompromising bitterness, was on out-of-this-world form, so I stayed for a session and eventually had to drag myself away, as I truly got the taste.

The pub is a stalwart of the North Manchester drinking scene and is noteworthy for having retained its bowling green. In warm weather I've had some very pleasant times sitting on the sun patio, watching the bowls. Both rooms in the Edwardian pub have recently been tastefully redecorated.

## Letters

**Boris Pratt**

Sir - A group of four CAMRA members from Urmston, including a local licensee, recently followed Rupert's example and went to Prague with the purpose of sampling the local amber nectars. We stayed at U Medvidku and visited most of the recommended hostelrys, including the micro breweries: U Fleku was the rip-off we were warned it would be, Novometsky Pivovar was excellent with its unfiltered beers and Pivovarsky Dum reminded us that good beer can be brewed in smart, modern surroundings.



The fourth brewery, over the river and up the hill near the castle, was the recently reopened Klasterni Pivovar, in the Strahov Monastery. We were looking forward to drinking the St Norbert dark and light beers, so imagine our surprise when we saw the CAMRA logo outside. 'We're all CAMRA members from Manchester,' we told the doorman, who then explained that we could not come in because a well-known



beer 'expert' was holding court. He showed us a CAMRA document complete with a résumé of the one and only Boris Pratt.

Undeterred at first, we waved to Mr Pratt (or should that be Rev Pratt?) who grinned at us but did not allow us in. We had to make do with the monastery's other bar, where, despite the pump clip, there was no St Nobby beer. As we left we passed the main bar and were invited in by the doorman, who said that as Boris and his chums had gone, he could sell us some bottles of St Norbert dark, but there was no draught to be had. So Pratt had prevented CAMRA members from drinking beer in a bar they had travelled a long way to see.

*Kipper*

### **The Missing Branch**

Sir - Neil Worthington's piece last month, *Desperately Seeking CAMRA*, in which he made several references to the shortage of North Manchester members on a City Centre social in November, deserves a reply. I had fully intended to go on this venture, but after spending half a day telephoning all the 'regulars' who might be expected to attend, it was obvious that for various obscure reasons nobody else was turning out and I would be on my own.

Now, I don't mind going anywhere within or without the branch area providing there is just one other person along for company, but I don't like drinking alone. Of course if either of the Trafford & Hulme members had told us they were going, I would have been there like a shot.

It is worth pointing out that this is only the second occasion in the last twelve months that North Manchester members have been guilty of a nil attendance, despite a calendar involving them in no fewer than 66 events, not counting Regional or beer festival related meetings.

Perhaps if we adopted a less ambitious Branch Diary, like T&H, who opted for only 29 gatherings (according to WD) in the same period, then we would not be so 'stretched' - like butter that has been scraped over too much bread, as Bilbo put it - but there has been a tradition since the foundation of the branch in 1974 that every Wednesday was 'CAMRA Night'. Thanks to the efforts of Dave Hallows there are now additional events on other days aimed at younger members, some of whom we hope will enter the mainstream of activities.

We often hold events in other branches' areas, and if the local branch informs us that they intend joining in, then of course we will make doubly sure that we are well represented too.

*Peter Cash, North Manchester Secretary*

## Blue Bell

*Pete Cash*

This large ex-Wilsons house opposite Monton Green has reinvented itself several times over the last four decades, although the exterior remained more or less the same, apart from the extension on the left. One recent change visible from the outside is the name 'John Barras' on all the windows.

New licensee Steven Kelsall explained that the pub is now one of a hundred or so belonging to the Spirit Group and that John Barras is an old brewery name which they own. 'At the Heart of the Local Community' is their slogan. There are four handpumps on the bar and the initial line-up was Boddingtons Cask Bitter, Theakstons Best Bitter, Old Speckled Hen and Shepherd Neame Spitfire. The Boddies and Spitfire sold out more quickly than the others and Steven has decided that if cask beer sales don't support four different beers, he will reduce the number; the early days will be very much 'trial and error'. His list of about thirty approved regular beers includes a few notable ones such as Youngs Special, Adnams Broadside and Smiles. In addition, he will be featuring one guest on a changing basis. Theakstons Mild will appear before the New Year.

The whole pub has a comfortable, 'traditional' feel; quality solid wooden chairs and tables of different heights are complemented by padded settles and wall seating. The extension and the original area to the left of the entrance are on a raised level and at the back of the extension is a games area with pool table and darts board.

Food is a major feature. Main meals are mostly in the £3 - £6 range, with a 'two for one' offer on Mondays and Thursdays. Sunday lunch is £5.30 and there are also starters, sandwiches, jacket potatoes and salads.





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## Angie Achieves an Ambition

*Stuart Fish*

CAMRA member Angie Taylor achieved an ambition last year when she became the licensee of her local, the Urmston Hotel, a large roadhouse on Stretford Road. She started working there a couple of evenings a week in early 2001 and was pleased when the pub was bought by J W Lees three years ago this month. 'It was a happy coincidence,' she recalls, 'because at the time I was also the secretary of nearby Stretford Cricket Club, who had been with Lees brewery for a couple of years. I had become a big fan of Lees cask bitter there and this crystallised my interest in running my own pub.'

After a number of training courses, Lees offered Angie a job as a relief manager and she started at the Travellers Call in Bredbury in March 2003. Over the next eighteen months she did reliefs at several Lees pubs, including the Old Boars Head in Middleton and the Welcome in Orsall, and several spells at the Urmston. 'I enjoyed working at different pubs, seeing how each one did certain things and I got some good ideas. Then out of the blue, Urmston licensees Bill and Barbara decided to leave the trade and I applied for the job.'

The Urmston was one of a number of big pubs in the area built by Wilsons Brewery in the thirties. The others included the Moss Vale, Red Lion and Garricks Head, all of which were transferred to Chef & Brewer in the eighties. This company was taken over by Scottish & Newcastle, who sold the Urmston to Noble House, a small pub chain.

Traditional beer had always been on sale - Wilsons Great Northern Bitter and Mild for many years - before being replaced by the disappointing Websters. But the handpumps were taken out by Noble, so it was good news for cask bitter lovers when Lees came along a month later and put them back in. A year after buying the pub, Lees gave it a long-overdue refurbishment and it now has a comfortable lounge and a separate, thriving vault.



As a new and enthusiastic licensee, Angie Taylor has already started to put her plans into operation. New menus have been introduced, the wine list has been revamped and the bottled beer range extended. It is her intention to attract more lunchtime diners, appeal to all age groups and really

make the Urmston a community pub. The popular quiz night on Thursdays will continue and live football and rugby (Angie supports Manchester City and Sale Sharks) will still be on the big screen in the vault only - there's no television in the lounge.

Apart from Lees Bitter, Angie is taking each Lees seasonal beer as it comes along, and the strong Moonraker will be available on draught as often as possible. She would like to see her pub listed alongside the Rain Bar and Lloyd's in Chorlton as a banker for the seasonal beers. She aims to get the Urmston listed in the Good Beer Guide: 'The beer's got to be right because I drink it!'



The Urmston is on Stretford Road, Urmston, and is open 11-11 Monday to Saturday, 12-10.30 Sunday. Food is served 12-2 and 4-7 Monday to Friday, 2-6 Saturday and Sunday.

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## Little Hulton

The **Welcome** at the corner of Madamswood Road and Mort Lane has been closed for several weeks and may be demolished to make room for housing. The pub was built by Bass in 1975, in an architectural style likened to a World War Two air raid shelter. It was always a keg-only outlet.

The former **Antelope Inn** on the A6 reopened before Christmas as an Indian restaurant - called the Antelope.

The **Stumble Inn** on Cleggs Lane has had a makeover costing thousands of pounds. It continues to sell keg beer.

## Bury Beer Festival

*Dave Hallows*

Inclusive, interactive and imbibing are three of the words used to describe this year's Bury Beer Festival. The dedicated band of CAMRA cohorts assembled 60 interesting real ales, with something for most palates.

For lovers of mild and dark beers, there was Cannon Royall's Fruiterer's Mild (3.7%). It was no surprise that this fruity, dark and roasted malt mild was supped up in no time. For fans of pale beers, there was Phoenix West Coast IPA (4.6%), a fine example of what a pale ale should be. One of the best beers was Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold (4%) - a striking, dry and well-hopped bittery bitter.

The local brewers were well represented. Bury's own Leyden Brewery had the old favourite session bitter, Nanny Flyer, along with the copper coloured, spicy and malty Balaclava (3.8%), and Sevastopol (4%), which is very pale and hoppy. Pictish of Rochdale had that other old favourite, Brewer's Gold, and the stronger Z-Rod (4.8%). Millstone from Mossley had no fewer than four - Windy Miller, Grain Storm, Millstone Edge and Autumn Leaves. Bank Top had Gold Digger, Orient Line and a new one to me, Pavilion Pale Ale (4.5%), which was pale and hoppy. Ramsbottom Brewery had Old Ground Mild and Peel Porter, together with two very fruity brews - Summerseat and the oddly-named 'L' at 4.4%. Red Rose from Blackburn had Nord Brauer, Old Ben and IPA.

From further afield, there was Brewsters of Leicestershire with the hoppy session bitter, Hophead, plus a new special, Marlena (4.8%). This was an attractive but dangerous red hoppy beer with a subtle malty sweetness. The craft brewers from Burton Bridge, Burton-on-Trent, had Golden Delicious, Bramble Stout and the very special Stairway To Heaven (5%). This tribute to the old Led Zeppelin song was blonde and gloriously well-balanced. Truly memorable.

As for the other aspects of the festival: the chicken curry was tasty and portions were generous, and Bury Black Puddings were also to be had. Kind colleague Ruth kept the CAMRA crew going with home-made almond slices, red melon, quality chocolate biscuits, fresh orange and jam and toast in the mornings.



# Rupert

As I posted the last of my unwanted Christmas gifts on Ebay, the words of a song by the antipodean humorist of yesteryear, Kevin 'Bloody' Wilson, came to mind. A small boy on Christmas morning complains: 'I've opened all my presents and there's nothing that I like. Santa Claus, you blank, where's my effin' bike?'

The toppers' vademecum in its emesis-resistant cover is always a welcome find in one's stocking. I was delighted to see that at least two of the sordid hovels which so often find their way in had been excluded. Whether this was on the basis of demolition or tasteful judgment, I am unsure.

I could well have done without 'Slumley - Hostels, Inns and Taverns' by Charles Rycroft and Pat Town, or "Shit by Crapt," as Fiona called it. This is a glossy publication from a vanity publishing house. It is so disparaging of beloved hostelries like Ratties, Wedgies and Happy Clappies that I fear Charles and Pat may lose an ear apiece should



they venture there again. What, I ask, is wrong with sharing things with the good readers of this esteemed organ without consideration of personal wealth or esteem? I have kept it. I have also hung on to a third book, 'Living with microgenitalism'. I think the anonymous donor may have been trying to insult me, but, who knows, there may be some useful tips.

As for the Osama bin Laden mask and the suicide bomber outfit, complete with a wired candle corset, I had initially thought of wearing this to Ophelia Hampton's masked ball on New Year's Eve. Upon reflection, however, I decided against it. If Plod can shoot dead people armed with table legs and Beano rubber daggers, what chance would I have dressed as a mad terrorist? I wore my Dubya mask instead.



As *What's Doing* enters yet another year of bringing hot-off-the-press news of all things ale and hostelry related to an avid readership, I would like to wish everyone a prosperous and enjoyable New Year. One in which no traditional taverns are burned down, no breweries close and nitrokeg and lager are overtaken by foaming pints of the real stuff once again.

# Branch Diary

## **Regional Meeting**

Sat 15 Jan 12.30pm: Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre

## **Regional CAMRA Under 30 Social Group**

Fri 28th Jan from 8pm and Sat 29 Jan from 2pm. Visit to National Winter Ales Festival. Meet by CAMRA sign at Membership Stand  
Contact: davehallows2002 @yahoo.co.uk MBL: 07931750108

## **North Manchester** [www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester](http://www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester)

Wed 5 Jan 8pm: New Year Social, White Swan, Worsley Road, Swinton (A572/A580 junction)

Sun 9 Jan 1pm: WINTER ALES MEETING, Crescent, Salford

Wed 12 Jan 8pm: Good Beer Guide Shortlisting, Hare & Hounds, Shudehill

Sat 15 Jan 12.30pm: Regional Meeting, Hare & Hounds, Shudehill

Thurs 20 Jan 8pm: Branch Meeting, Crescent, Salford

Sat 22 Jan onwards: Setting up Winter Ales Festival

Tues 25 Jan 3pm: What's Doing collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street

Wed 26 - Sat 29 Jan: National Winter Ales Festival, New Century Hall, Manchester (see advert)

Wed 2 Feb, Monton Crawl: Blue Bell 7.30, Drop Inn 8.30, Park Hotel 9.30

Contact Roger Hall 0161 740 7937

## **Wigan**

Weds 19 Jan 8pm: Branch Meeting, Jubilee Club, Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield

Contact: Valerie Hollows 0161 629 8243 (weekdays);  
07889 898955 (mob). email: vhollows@peel.co.uk

## **Rochdale, Oldham & Bury**

Tues 4 Jan 8.30pm: Branch Meeting, Flying Horse, Town Hall Square, Rochdale

Contact: Peter Alexander 0113 232 4023(w), 0161 655 4002 (h)  
email: p.alexander@virgin.net

## **Trafford & Hulme** [www.camra.org.uk/trafford](http://www.camra.org.uk/trafford)

Thur 6 Jan 8pm: Branch Meeting, Orange Tree, Altrincham

Thur 13 Jan 8pm: Chorlton Social. Meet at the Beech Inn, Beech Road

Wed 19 Jan 8pm: Pub of the Season presentation. City Arms, Kennedy Street, Manchester

Thur 3 Feb 8pm: Branch Meeting, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976

*Dave and Sue welcome you to*

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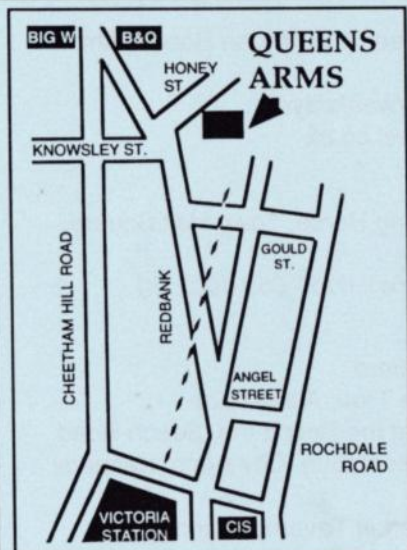
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