

30p

What's Doing

JANUARY 2006



The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine

BLACKLEY REAL ALE GAIN

The New White Lion on Middleton Old Road was reopened by Mark and Ann Shannon in November. On a recent visit the real ales were Tetley Bitter, plus Shannon's bitter (4%) and Boggart Best from the local microbrewery, Boggart

Hole Clough. Also on handpump was Thatcher's Cheddar red cider. The real ales were keenly priced at £1.40.



Under previous owners this former Wilsons house was opened out and given a laminate flooring. The effect has been toned down somewhat and there are now four distinct drinking areas, with the original stone flooring at the side of the central bar. Settees are placed in front of a modern fireplace and the decor is in the minimalist cafe bar style.

THE CRESCENT

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www.beer-festival.com/crescent

Our Next Beer Festival will be from

Wednesday January 18th until

Saturday January 21st

40 NEW BEERS

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**Function/Party Room available for free hire - Buffets or hot meals
provided on request - T.V. and Games Room open for darts**

Chorlton's Marbelous Beer House

Neil Worthington

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA have voted the Marble Beer House in Chorlton-cum-Hardy their Winter Pub of the Season. The award is in recognition of the pub's outstanding performance in regularly delivering no fewer than seven quality cask ales.

The Marble Beer House started selling interesting beers in 1993, when the former butcher's shop became the Marble World Beers off-licence. (The old shop sign can still be seen, hanging on the wall in another outlet for Marble beers, the Bar.) It gained a full on-licence in July 1998 and made its first Good Beer Guide entry in the Millennium Edition (2000).

It's not been out of the Guide since, despite a proliferation of new cask outlets in and around Chorlton (Abode, the Bar, Lloyd's Hotel, the Spread Eagle, the Sedge Lynn, the Hillary Step are all newish pubs or relatively recent converts to cask.)

A lot of the Beer House's success must be down to the friendliness of the staff and, of course, their skills in the cellar. Warren McCoubrey, sometime licensee of the Knott in Manchester, is now the manager and takes charge of the cellar, ably assisted by Helen and Vicky Creer, the other full time staff, and six or more part-timers.

But the pub's reputation was first established by Dave Yuill (last heard of at the Hillary Step, and of whom we will yet hear more) and Karen Weldon. Sadly, Karen died last autumn, but her hard work and cheerful personality are remembered in two of the pub's features. One is



her licensee's nameplate, which has been moved from the front door to a more central spot over the fireplace. And the other is the television, not often used, but installed at Karen's insistence for the more important football matches.

The Marble Beer House is predominantly a pub for nattering in. There's rarely any music on - it would just get in the way of conversation. And it soon fills up, even during the day, with a varied clientele. There's an outside seating area - a great blessing in clement weather. The one complaint that many drinkers have had in the past - the smoky atmosphere - has been addressed by the installation of three substantial air purification units.

The current beer range includes four from Marble Brewery - Manchester Bitter, Ginger Marble, Gould Street Bitter (GSB) and Lagonda IPA - plus three guest beers, usually from other microbreweries around the country. There's also an interesting selection of bottled beers from Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic, as well as real cider.

We will be presenting the Pub of the Season certificate to the Marble Beer House team on Tuesday 10th January, at around 9.00pm. Come and join us in celebrating a 21st century Chorlton institution.

A bevy of beers at the Beer House

To celebrate becoming completely free of tie, the Beer House on Angel Street, Manchester, offered some interesting beers last month. Jolly Brewer Cascade and Sadlers Stumbling Badger joined Beer House Best (4.5), a special from Bolton's Bank Top. Enville Ginger Beer joined Shaws Winter Light, which was in splendid condition.

Also available on the Saturday night of the festival were Bowland Fair and Tender Lady, Fugelstou Autumn Village, Wilds Wild Fire from Herefordshire, and Six Bells Bishop's Castle.



Ship Shape

William of Irlam

After 17 years, Hylda and Rae have decided to call it a day at the Ship in Irlam and retire to warmer climes. Over the years I have been a somewhat irregular regular at the Ship, always being served with a good pint of Greenalls bitter. Latterly Rae replaced Greenalls with Worthington Cask Ale. New to me, but an equally good pint.

It is to be hoped that the new gaffers will find it worthwhile to continue with cask beer. Otherwise, downtown Irlam will join Cadishead as a real ale desert.

Sunshine back in Bury

Porter's Ales from Haslingden have returned to Bury. The 5.3% Sunshine was recently on fine form as a guest beer at the Rose & Crown, Manchester Old Road. Porter's Porter was on previously and it is hoped that a beer a week from the Rossendale Brewery will soon be available.

The Rose & Crown recently won an award from Caledonian for being the biggest seller of the regular beer, Deuchars IPA. A mammoth ceremonial beer bag can be seen in pride of place above the bar.



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

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

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

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

To join CAMRA send £18 to Membership, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW.

Owl on the move

Sadly, the Hope Inn on Greenacres Road, Oldham, is to close. But the good news is that the Owl Brewery is safe in Oldham and its new home will be at the Acorn Centre on Barry Street. Brewer Gordon Potts will be operating as a trade brewer with no on-licence, but will be pleased to supply beers in either nine-gallon firkins or fifteen-pint party pigs for customers organising a party or night in. The beers will be: Owl OB Bitter, Greenacres Gold, Yon Owl, Russett Owl and Night Owl, plus a Seasonal Special.



Halfway House

The Halfway House (*WD last month*), on the border of Walkden and Farnworth, reopened just before Christmas. The pub has been completely refurbished and it is now primarily a restaurant, run by John Stowell and Susan Jolly. John has run several pubs in Preston.

A large kitchen has been fitted out and a top class chef looks after the meals. On the beer front, there is handpulled Boddies and there is the possibility of a guest beer from time to time. The pub is part of the Punch Taverns group.

Burtonwood

As Banks's and Marstons beers move into the former Burtonwood estate, can the end be in sight for the Burtonwood brand? Sales of Burtonwood bitter are in decline and production of the other cask beer, Top Hat, has ceased.

Holts Corner

Stewart Revell

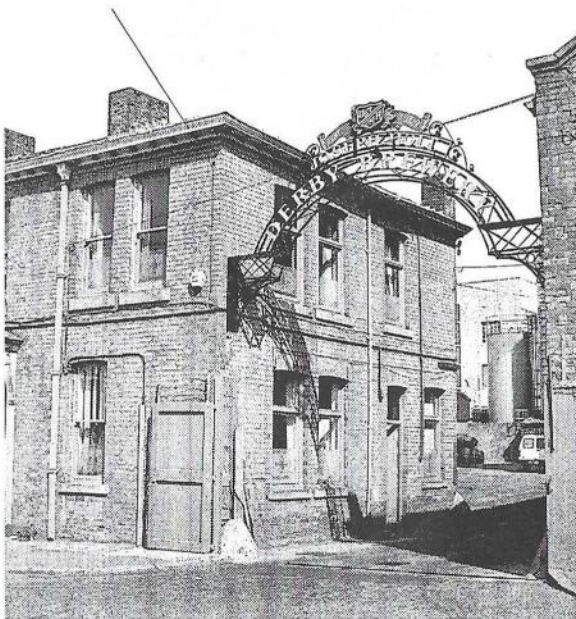
Beginning in the New Year, Joseph Holt bitter will be available through the Scottish Courage Cellarman's Reserve Scheme. This means that pubs involved in the scheme all over the country will be able to order Holts bitter.

The next seasonal beer in the tied estate, following on from the 4.5% **Touchwood**, will be the 5.5% **Fifth Sense**.

For two weeks during December, Holts pubs were offering a selection of their bottled beers for only £1 per bottle. The promotion was very successful, with **Fifth Sense** the favourite, probably because of its higher strength. Holt's customers were seen carrying out large quantities of the special offer bottles for consumption at home.

The Order Online facility (*WD last month*) is now up and running. Humdinger, Touchwood, 1849, Maple Moon, Thunder Holt and Fifth Sense are available in 12 x 500ml bottles. Prices range from £14.99 to £17.99. The cost of home delivery equates to about six pints of bitter in a Holts pub, so I presume this form of ordering is for people in the more affluent parts of the UK with no local Holts pub.

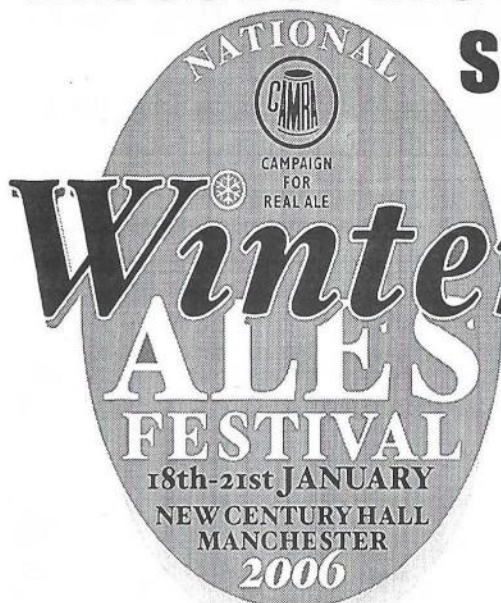
It will soon be possible to order a mixed case. Also in the New Year, Joeys will be selling their brewery merchandise - T shirts, polo shirts and fleeces - via the website.



Holts beers can be had from various stores and Thunder Holt was recently selling in Booth's Supermarkets at the promotional price of 99p. Booth's now price it at about £1.40, but 1849 is currently on offer at 99p.

Historical note: 1849 was introduced in 1999 to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the founding of the Joseph Holt's Derby Brewery.

Discover the best beers south of the North Pole



Wednesday 18th January 17.30 - 22.30

Thursday 19th January 16.30 - 22.30

Friday 20th January 12.00 - 22.30

Saturday 21st January 12.00 - 22.30

❄ £3 entry for all sessions except £4 Friday night (from 17.30)

❄ Discounts for CAMRA members

❄ Tickets available on the door

❄ Entertainment Friday and Saturday evening

❄ Over 200 beers plus foreign beer, cider and perry

❄ 5 minutes from Victoria Station, by CIS Tower

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**18th-21st January
New Century Hall
Corporation St.
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Come in from the cold and grab some winter warming

Winter Warming Festival

CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival returns to the New Century Hall, Corporation Street, Manchester, on 18th to 21st January. Last year some 6,400 customers came through the door. The organisers promise that it's going to be even better this year, with 200 beers, and with regional microbreweries having their own stands. Other attractions include a wide range of German beers at the International Beers stand (which will include beers from Ireland); real cider and perry, and real-ale-in-a-bottle stands.

The festival needs more room this year, so CAMRA has taken over two halls. The lower one, the Lancaster Suite, opens at 6.30pm from Wednesday to Friday and all opening hours on the Saturday. See advert for details of opening hours.

More capacity, more space and more seating! For the serial beer festival goer, there are the new season tickets, priced at £7 for CAMRA members and £9 for non-members for all public sessions. Details from Louise Ashworth at CAMRA HQ

Tel: 01727 798445.

email: louise.ashworth@camra.org.uk



Virtually every beer style will be there at the festival: golden beers, bitters, mild, stouts, porters, barley wines and old ales. As for the beer strengths, Festival Organiser Steven Prescott says, 'We've got three-point-something to stupid.'



Festival Survey

Kim Walton, the CAMRA under-30 co-ordinator for Greater Manchester, is in her final year studying Marketing Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. She is working on a dissertation on 'the purchasing of real ale' and will be conducting a survey at the Winter Ales Festival.

Festival-goers are asked to spare five minutes of their time to complete a questionnaire about real ale and why they buy it.

Lord of the Rings?

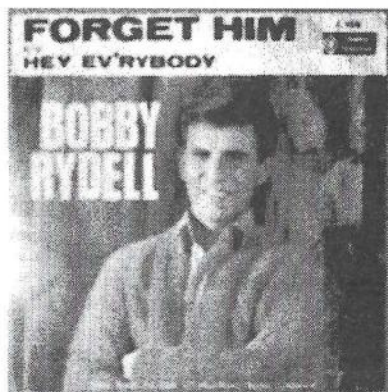
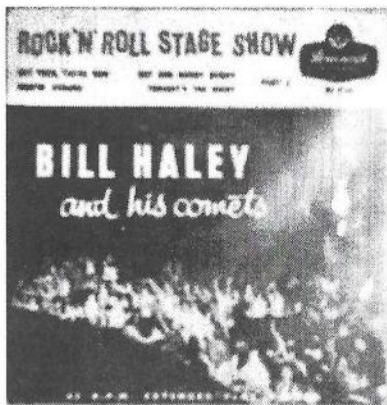
Ken Birch

Part Three

As we set forth on Tuesday 20th September, the warm and bright day sped our crossing of the Edstone and Wotton Wawen aqueducts. A peaceful breakfast and a stroll around the ancient church - built 946AD by Wagan the Thane (not Wogan the lnthane) - passed the 45 minutes or so until the **Navigation** opened. London Pride was enjoyed in the garden.

We set off towards Kingswood Junction, where the Stratford and Grand Union canals converge. We were pressed for time, but just made our mooring in daylight. There are two or three pubs in the area and we tried the **Navigation**, Bridge 65, Grand Union Canal. The beer was Butcombe Gold, as well as a couple of the usual suspects. A very good pint, but at 4.7% a little strong for all evening. Therefore it was replaced by Where's the Fox Hat (WTFH) at 4%. We cheered! Although the ale was good, the food, whilst nicely dished up, was pricey and microwaved.

The next morning we went through Shrewdley Tunnel and back to Hatton Locks, where after the first lock, we managed to pair down with 'Spellbound' and crew to reach Warwick around 3.00pm. The Saltisford Arm, as the short branch to Warwick town is called, is a credit to the trust that administers it; spruce and foliated, with free 24-hour moorings and a cheerful staff ready to give information. Different pubs were tried until a unified party slaked thirsts with well-kept Warwickshire Best Bitter (3.9%) in the unusual music room at the **Kings Head**. Unusual because live music is no longer played, but the old records, EP sleeves and an orchestra of old instruments give a most original charm.



The evening was spent in the once splendid **Cape of Good Hope**. Two different pints of sour beer and a noisy gaggle of Germans caused a swift retirement. We ended up in the **Old Fourpenny Shop**, where caring and chatty service contrasted with the genteel ambience. RCH, Pitchfork, Church End WTFH, and others I can't recall, were all in good nick.

We reached Leamington Spa by 11.00am on Thursday. A short wander

for two of us gave the other two a chance for a pint, but they kipped instead. So we carried on to the **Two Boats** at Long Itchington for some late refreshment. Wadsworth 6X was only ok, but enough to hydrate us for the ten locks of the Stockton flight, which brought us up to base at Stockton Marina.

A quick pint of Hook Norton Best in the boat preceded an evening crawl of Long Itchington - a village of six (soon to be seven) pubs and only about 2,500 inhabitants, including surrounding hamlets! Actually, two of the pubs are just over the canal, in Stockton.

A quick crawl overview:

Duck on the Pond Food pub, busy with diners.

Bell and Buck Large, very busy, good service. WTFH

Harvester Inn Lovely, cosy bar. Splendid Youngs Bitter.

Green Man Re-opening shortly.

Two Boats See lunchtime.

Cuttle Inn Single, large room. TV dominates. Beer only ok.

Blue Lias Large and modernised, but good Landlord & Deuchars.

Wigan Beer Festival

The nineteenth Wigan Beer Festival will take place on 23rd to 25th March. The old venue, Trencherfield Mill, is being redeveloped and after much searching the organisers have decided to move to Robin Park's Indoor Sports Centre on Loire Drive, facing the JJB Stadium. The main Sports Hall is twice the size of the old place, which should avoid any queuing outside and allow quite a large seating area.



There will be well over 50 real ales and traditional ciders from all over Britain, plus an extended selection of imported bottled beers, including a good number of fruit beers. Fruit wines were popular last year and will return.



Opening hours are:

Thursday 23rd March: 5.30pm - 11.00pm

Friday 24th March: 12.00 noon - 3.00pm
and 5.30pm - 11.00pm

Saturday 25th March: 2.00pm - 4.00pm and
7.00pm - 11.00pm

More information nearer the time at
www.camrawigan.org.uk

Atherton & Tyldesley Round Table

In Association with CAMRA presents the 17th



26th, 27th & 28th of January
FORMBY HALL, ATHERTON

All Proceeds to Local Charities.

Thursday 26 th January	6:00pm - 11:00pm	£4-00
Friday 27 th January	5:00pm - 11:00pm	£5-50
Saturday 28 th January	12:00 noon - 4:00pm	£4-00
Saturday 28 th January	7:00pm - 11:00pm	£4-00

CAMRA members (proof required) £1-50 reduction on admission fee

Entertainment & Food available at all sessions

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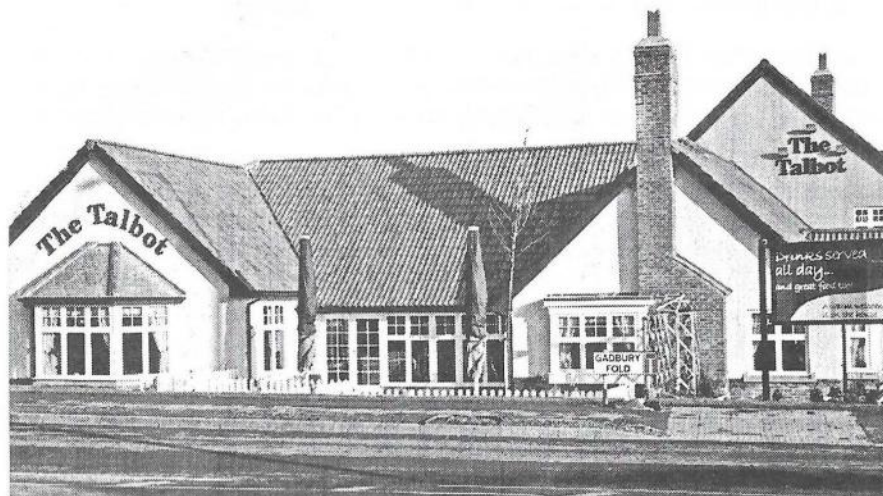
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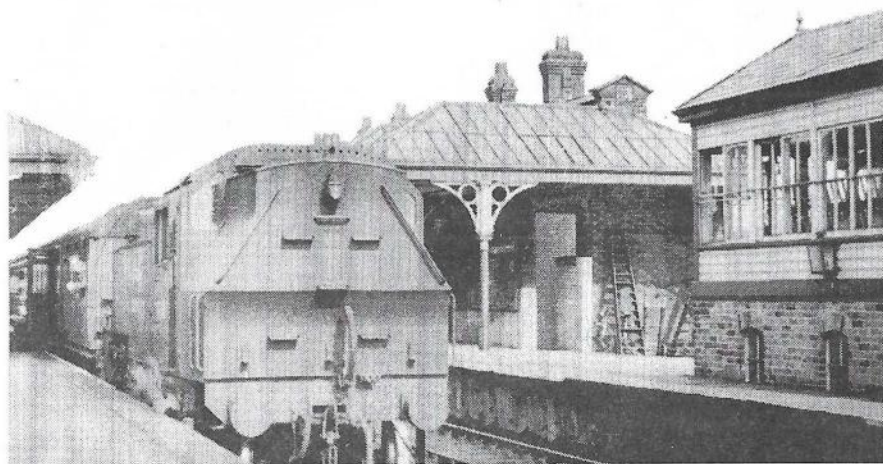
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New pub for Atherton

The Talbot opened on Monday 12th December where Wigan Road meets Atherleigh Way. It's a W&D managed house and in the opening week was selling Pedigree, Banks's bitter and Bateman's Rosey Nosey. There is an emphasis on food, but the ale side of things looks promising. According to issue No.1 of the house newsletter, *The Talbot News*, other real ales will be tried and if the demand is there, two additional guest beers will be taken on.



The pub is on the site of the Gadbury brickworks, on the edge of a vast housing development taking shape between Wigan Road and Howe Bridge. Gibfield Colliery was across the road and the adjacent Atherleigh Way follows the old railway line between Bolton and Leigh. Atherton Bag Lane Station (*below*) was nearby and would have been handy, were it not for Dr Beeching. Photos of the area's industrial past adorn the pub walls.



Wigan and district

Dave White

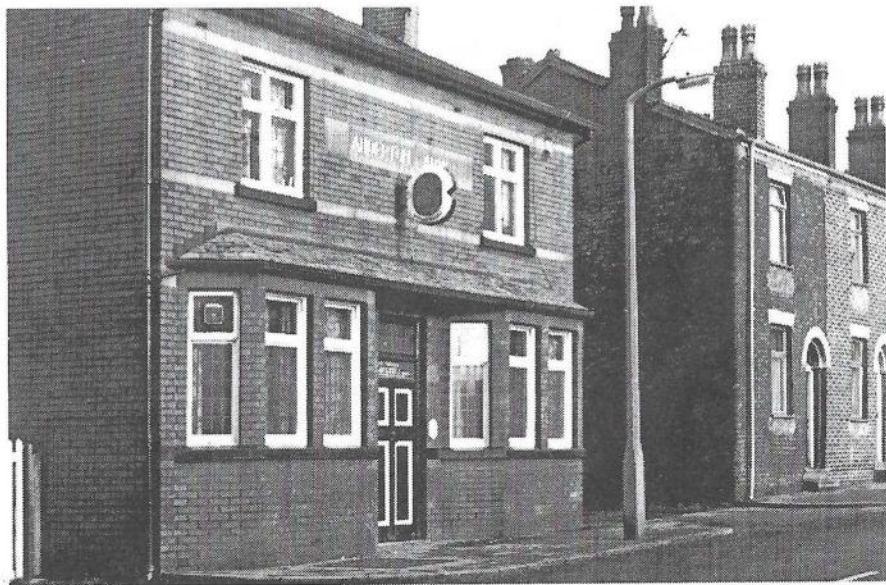
This month's column mostly concerns last month's. I don't think that the ink was dry on the article before the **Navigation Inn**, Gathurst Lane, Gathurst closed its doors again. The canalside pubs on this scenic stretch of the Leeds & Liverpool between Wigan Pier and Appley Bridge are now real ale free - unless you count the **Keepers** on Woodhouse Lane, tucked away behind new houses - not that there are many narrowboats up and about at this time of the year, of course. I don't know what's been going on at the 'Navy', but the sooner the problem is solved the better.

The December report also mentioned the **Queens Arms**, Harrison Street, Newtown, which has recently reopened. No real ale here, either, though at least the sign advertising the stuff has been removed from the exterior of the pub.

Still with December 2005, and another Thwaites pub in Ince-in-Makerfield has joined the ranks of the closed-and-boarded. This month it's the **Anderton Arms** (ex-Greenalls, *below*) Ince Green Lane, Higher Ince. As with the **Rock Ferry** at Lower Ince (*WD Dec*), Thwaites only refurbished the 'Long Neck' in 2004. Elsewhere in Higher Ince the **Park Hotel** on Manchester Road remains shut, with other pubs nearby either for sale or to let.

Cask W&D beers failed to materialise at the **Stag Hotel** in Garswood (*WD Sept*) or if they did, they weren't available for very long. The pub remains keg.

Finally, a little good news. Deuchars IPA has joined cask Tetley bitter on the bar of the **Wheatsheaf**, Miles Lane, Appley Bridge and according to the landlord, it is selling well.



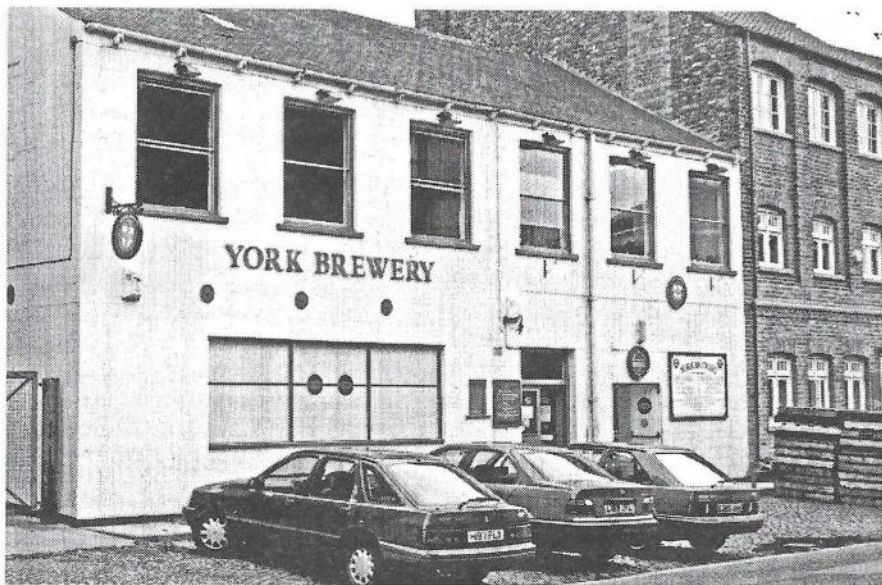
York Brewery

In December the Crookells had a pre-Christmas break in York. While Mrs Crookell was mooching round the shops, Dave had the opportunity to visit the York Brewery, in the Micklegate area of the city...

Opened in June 1996 in a former carpet warehouse, York Brewery was designed as a show brewery, and the tour began in the gallery which had been constructed around the brew house to provide a viewing platform for the grist case, mash tun and copper. From the gallery there are windows into the adjacent fermenting and conditioning rooms, where the great unwashed are not allowed to enter. The 20-barrel brew plant, fermenters and conditioning tanks were obtained second-hand from the defunct Lion Brewery of Blackburn. As with most modern breweries, the copper is actually constructed of stainless steel, but here there is a copper outer shell to give a traditional appearance.

Our guide, Dominic, explained the role of the raw materials. The fairly hard local tap water was known to be ideal for brewing and is used untreated. Malts are obtained locally from Fawcetts of Castleford and we had the opportunity to taste the variations from pale through to dark roast malt and to recognise the flavours imparted to the beers. Challenger hops are used for the best selling Terrier Bitter, but for reasons of economy American or Czechoslovakian hops are used for the other beers in the range.

York Brewery supplies about 400 pubs and there are plans for expansion to meet demand for the beers. Tours only take about 20 minutes, at 12.30pm, 2.00pm, 3.30pm and 5.00pm, and booking is unnecessary except for parties. Admission is £4.50 and includes a pre-tour half of



Terrier Bitter and a post-tour half of Ghost Ale in the upstairs Tap Room, where brewery merchandise and off-sales are available.

Four York beers are brewed regularly: **Stonewall** at 3.7%, a malty session beer; **York Bitter** at 4.0%, with a balance of malt and hops and a full bitter taste; the excellent **Terrier Bitter** at 4.2%, a bronze award winner at GBBF 2000, described as a premium bitter with a rich creamy malt and full hop palate; and **Centurion's Ghost** at 5.4%, gold medal winner at BIIA 2002, a warming dark ruby bitter with a roasted malt taste. A range of seasonal beers is also brewed; for December there was **Stocking Filler** at 4.8%, described as a dark, rich, full bodied ale with a distinctive finish of roast malt and chocolate and a hint of spice. According to Dominic, the chocolate flavour is achieved by the addition of a locally produced Terry's Chocolate Orange into the conditioning tank!

In 2000 York Brewery joined forces with Tynesmill, a pub group founded in Nottingham by one time CAMRA chairman Chris Holmes, to form the Mildly Mad Pub Co. With a policy of no jukebox, pool, darts or kids, the first of its three pubs, the **Last Drop Inn**, opened on Colliergate. Named to commemorate the final executions in the city by hanging, this former solicitor's office has the full range of York Brewery beers and the large shop window frontage affords drinkers a view of the street entertainers in Kings Square. Unfortunately the music-free policy appeared to have been contravened on our visit, with an act billed as mellow jazz but which in reality comprised a somewhat tuneless singer with a guy on a keyboard who sounded to our untrained ears like he was playing notes at random. Maybe the no music policy continues after all...

The second pub, the **Three Legged Mare** (known as the Wonkey Donkey) is on High Petergate, close to York Minster. It was named after a three-noose gallows, a replica of which can be seen in the beer garden. There is an artful yet rough-and-ready style to the decor, with old barrels as tables, but beware the spiral steel staircase down to the toilets. Again the full range from York Brewery is available, with guest ales usually from Castle Rock Brewery of Nottingham, also owned by Tynesmill.

The third York Brewery pub is the **Yorkshire Terrier** on Stonegate. The modest entrance lies behind an elegant Victorian facade and is to the side of an extensive gift shop selling the brewery's bottled beers and merchandise. Behind the gift shop the bar area can best be described as cosy and here, along with the regular York beers, the festive **Stocking Filler** was available. I found the beer to have a distinctive chocolate flavour but I guess my palate was insufficiently discerning to detect any orange notes although there were definitely mince pie spices in the aftertaste. A little too sickly for my liking but Pat, who would normally prefer Bailey's or port to real ale, found it just about acceptable.

With its brewery, Minster, National Railway Museum and medieval pubs - many of them offer real ale, several claim to be haunted and at least two claim to be the oldest - the historic City of York is well worth a visit.

Gregory & Haynes, brewery engineers

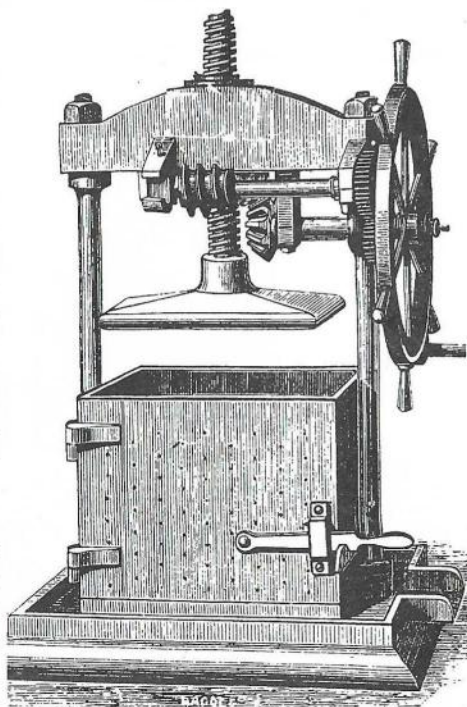
Alan Gall

Architect, engineer, boot & shoe merchant, coal agent, candle & lamp wick manufacturer; these were the professions claimed by William Haynes in 1881. It might be imagined that Mr Haynes combined the activities on a modest scale. Not so. Through Haynes & Co he was the sole agent in the area for the Astley & Tyldesley Coal & Salt Co Ltd, who owned one of the largest collieries in Lancashire. He had interests in shoe manufacture via J Bradbury & Co, and ran one of the best-known brewery architect and equipment manufacturing businesses in the country.

William Haynes was born in Middlewich, Cheshire, around 1834. In the early 1860s he formed a partnership with Francis Gregory, his long-standing friend from schooldays. Gregory & Haynes operated from premises on William Street, off Chapel Street Salford, where a great variety of brewery equipment was designed and constructed. A patent of 1867 covered a brewers' refrigerator and the company continued to innovate with other patented devices such as a mashing machine and a compound action hop press (*below*). In addition to the engineering expertise, William Haynes held an appraiser's licence as a valuer of breweries, maltings and public houses. Gregory ceased to have an active role in the management of the business from the 1870s but continued as a partner.

In 1893, some time after Francis Gregory's death, William Haynes took on another partner. John Henshaw Canavan had been manager of Thomas Gadd, engineers to the calico printing, bleaching and dyeing trades. He had also been the licensee of the Grapes Inn, Cross Lane, Salford. The business was renamed Canavan, Haynes & Co. By this time, the company claimed to have built 100 breweries and to have remodelled a further 200. Notable local breweries that were built or extensively equipped were as follows:

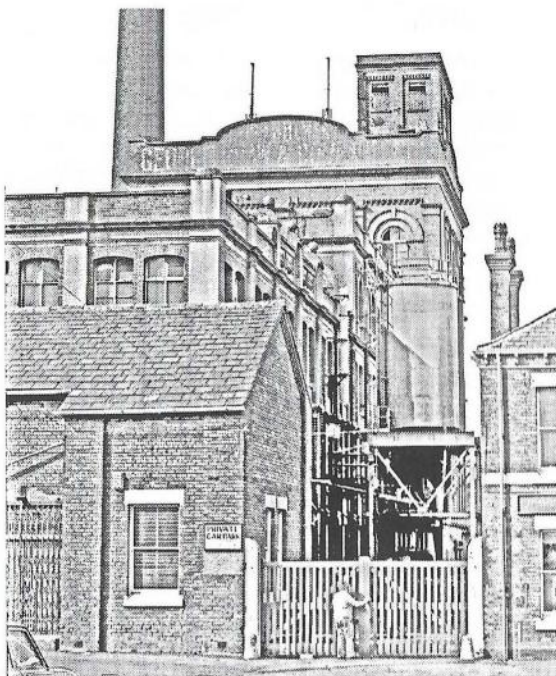
1868: B. & J McKenna's at Harpurhey. The brewery was once described as 'an architectural ornament to Harpurhey'. Constructed 'at great expense', it was demolished not



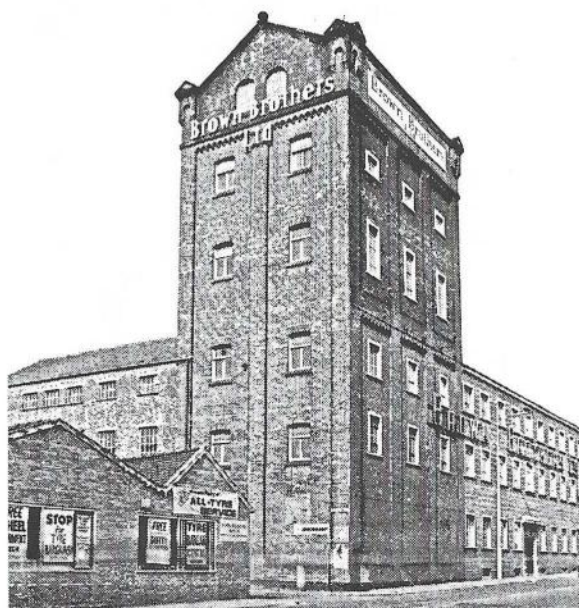
long after McKenna's business was sold to Salford brewers Walker & Homfray Ltd in 1903.

1872: The Bedford Brewing & Malting Co Ltd, Leigh. This became George Shaw & Co Ltd in 1902 and was taken over by Walker Cain in 1931. The brewery (*right*) was demolished for housing.

1872: Albion Brewery Company Ltd, Wigan. The brewery stood in Acton Court, off Hardybutts. The company properties were bought at auction by Threlfall's Brewery Co Ltd in 1919.



1874: Christopher Rhodes, Rusholme. Hydes used the Rusholme Brewery on Monmouth Street from 1889 to 1899 before they moved to their present home on Moss Lane West.



1878: Watson & Woodhead, Salford. Used for many years by Brown Brothers, the buildings (*left*) on Irwell Street are now under development for residential use.

1882: Gatehouse & Yates, Castle Brewery, Ardwick. This company became William Yates & Co Ltd and then Yates's Castle Brewery Ltd. John Smith's Tadcaster Brewery Co Ltd acquired the concern, along with the Barnsley Brewery Company, in 1961.

Gregory & Haynes also had several projects in Liverpool, like the building of the Fontenoy Street Brewery for James Glover & Sons (one of many Liverpool brewers later taken over by Peter Walker) and work on Robert Cain's Mersey Brewery.

1909 saw the company listed for the last time in local directories - the 1910 edition shows the St. Stephen's Works on the corner of William Street and Edmund Street to be unoccupied. The site now lies under the A6042 (Trinity Way) although part of William Street still runs alongside.



Font Farewell

Beer guru Dominic Driscoll is leaving the Font Bar on New Wakefield Street, Manchester, at the end of this month. After the best part of five years at the bar, he is looking for fresh challenges. It is to be hoped that we shall see more of him, since Northern Quarter pubs are one of his passions.

Boggart Bulletin

Bog Sleigh (5.5%), the Christmas seasonal from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, is doing the rounds. It was bang on song at the Beer House on Angel Street, Manchester, recently. There was also a new special, First Christmas, at 4%.

Bolton cuisine

After a thorough makeover, the building that was the Painters Arms (aka Scandals, Mr D's, Academy Bar and latterly a Chinese chippy) has emerged as an Indian restaurant called the Achari. The interior is smart and bright, and menu is interesting, with house specials and chef's specials supplementing the usual suspects.

The Achari is on Crook Street, across from the Sweet Green Tavern.

Huddersfield Jaunt

There's nothing like a Christmas getaway to sample some premier pubs in another town. The perfect guide for getaways is CAMRA's 2006 Good Beer Guide (available in most good bookshops) and with a copy tucked under his arm, Staggerin' Man and his companions headed for Huddersfield...

We didn't have to leave the station to sample the proper tipples. Not only is there a **Head of Steam**, there is also the **Station Tavern**. We found six ales on. All opted for Brighton's own Dark Star Double Chocolate Stout. A wonderful chocolate flavour, with a moderate bitter finish. Before we left, I had a chance to sample one of the best light milds in the land, Taylors Golden Best. Also on were Oakham JHB, Slaters Supreme, Roosters Eagle Eye and Newby Wyke Red Squall. The pub is one large beer hall with a stage and two smaller separate rooms. Good value food.

We made our way across town to the main event. The **Star Inn** at Folly Hall, on Albert Street in Lockwood, is just outside the town centre, but well worth the walk. Their fourth beer festival was in progress. Nine beers were on handpump in the pub and no fewer than 46 more were on handpump in a marquee outside. All beers came from the cellar, so were cellar-cool, and a cunning beer line system provided a magnificent variety and quality.

I made a beeline for new brewery Hammerpot with Sussex Vinery Mild. It was a dark, wine red colour and had a sweet, dry fruity flavour of red currants, slightly smoky, and with a rich fruity aroma. A fruit mild, no less. Other notables were Jamaican Ginger from Halifax Steam, Bobs Dog Jumping Frogs from Churchend (a special named by customers), and Dogs iIn t'Barrel and 80 Bird from Old Spot Brewery. Food was excellent and good value, with shepherds pie and generous-sized hot beef barmes. The beef and onions pie with mushy peas was the best pie I have tasted for a long while, and that goes for the numerous ones consumed in Wigan. Inside the pub, memorable were Marston Moor Prince Rupert Ale, Suddaby's Auld Bob and Conwyn Brewery's, Conwyn Special.

Having spent a good part of the day in the Star, we had to drag ourselves to the home of the Osset Brewery, the **Rat and Ratchet** on Chapel Hill. Yet another fantastic pub with four from the micro: Excelsior, Silver King, Firestorm and Pale Gold. I tried the Silver King and it was in superb hoppy form. Moreover, I spied a bank of three from Taylors with Landlord, Golden Best and the dark mild, which was my first sighting of this beer in a very long time. To finish off the bar there was a further bank of five guest beers - Oldershaw's Grantham Stout, Ahtanum Gold, Roosters Special, Barnegates Catnap and Copper Dragon Golden Pippin.

After a brief visit to a supped-out **Albert Hotel** on Victoria Lane, where only Tetley Bitter was left, we boarded the train to Marsden for a visit to the **Riverhead Brewery Tap**. We arrived just at the right time, as it was the climax to the Christmas fair - the pubs were packed out and the

populace was enjoying Yuletide pyrotechnics in the night skies. Virtually all the Riverhead card was on, with Sparth mild, Black Moss stout, March Haigh, Redbrook Premium, Deer Hill Porter and Buttery Bitter. All beers were well received, but it was noted that there was the dreaded fake Scrumpy Jack handpump next to a real handpump for Saxon Strawberry Field cider. I thought the makers of this keg cider had stopped this practice long ago. It was the only dampener on a grand day out.

Homebrewing Revisited

Humulus Lupulus

Part 36: Cider Post Script

In Part 33, I described how a gallon of apple juice, variety now established as **Court Pendu Plat**, when thawed out from a frozen state, had started a spontaneous ferment without any added yeast. (Most of my cider was made with a commercial Champagne yeast.) At the time this was inconvenient and it was returned to the freezer, but in the spring of 2005 I thawed it again and allowed nature to take its course.

Sure enough, a fermentation slowly started up again, the previously clear juice becoming slightly cloudy. This was no doubt due to the traces of wild yeast present on the original apples surviving my washing, sterilisation and freezing stages, and given the chance, building up a viable colony in my demijohn. Fermentation continued throughout the summer and autumn, never vigorous but nonetheless steady. Eventually, towards the end of the year, it ceased and the 'cider' became clear again. I use the term cider advisedly, because when I measured the specific gravity at the end of December it was 1.043. Now since the original gravity was 1.055, this meant that only 21.8 % of the fermentable sugar had been converted, yielding an alcohol content of about 1.6%.

I have explained previously that wild yeasts are generally less tolerant of alcohol than commercial strains, and this has been borne out by the above. However, temperature could also be a factor, since my fermenting room is unheated throughout the year and can fall close to freezing in midwinter. I will therefore leave it for another year to see if it reawakens with the warmer weather. If so, it may still be possible to produce a true 'farmhouse' style cider. However, I am glad that I didn't rely on this method for the other 38 gallons which I made. The combined elderberry/apple juice brew described in Part 34 is also still fermenting and at the last tasting had developed a resemblance to a fine Ruby Port.



Rupert

The most enduring memory of the festive season for me will be Ratties' nostalgia quiz. Urbino Tocqueville, the new proprietor, had collected, courtesy of Eddie Nestfeather and others, a veritable foison of memorabilia of Slumley's rich hostelry heritage. My, how things have changed since we started tasting the amber nectar over 40 years ago and even since the Slumley branch of the campaign was set up over 30 years ago. Younger quizzers didn't stand a chance, but the photographs taxed the collective memories of our team of ageing aficionados.

It's difficult to recognise pubs you've been in hundreds of times when the signs are obliterated. When the place in question was knocked down 25 years ago, it's well nigh impossible. Virtually all the Brobdingnags, Dillons, Kepples and Goosegrease and Dishwater taverns have vanished. Only Drabs has an (almost) unblemished record, although some places like the Dockers' Wedge and the Rat and Handbag have moved markedly upmarket.

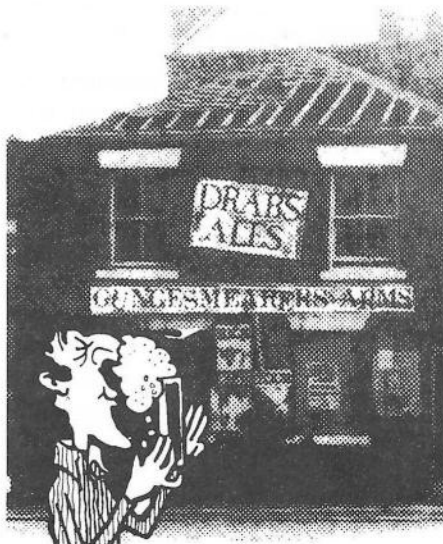
As we argued about where the threepenny bit jukebox used to be, the conversation turned to Christmas presents. Many of the people who'd bought us gifts seemed to be sadly lacking in the imagination department. We'd all received a copy of 'The Little Book of Shite Pubs' and most of us had also got Boris Pratt's latest tome, 'A 100 Crap Beers to Avoid

Before You Die'. This year, thankfully, CAMRA spats, cummerbunds and cufflinks were largely absent.

Just as the announcement of our victory was made, Mycroft produced what he described as the ultimate pub quiz. It made even the most arcane of the Independents' Day contests seem like a Sun crossword. Mycroft had put up a portion of his not inconsiderable fortune as a prize - over a million pounds. We were privileged to see a taster of what he promised to publish more widely in the New Year. The first clue was intriguing and we haven't found it yet.

'Where the Drabs outlet nearest to Grotley Town Hall now consuming the same in 1975 can be found. Take its capital, remove the last and rearrange for this popular Lombardy hostelry.'

The next clue, apparently lies therein.



Branch Diary

Sat 14 Jan: Regional Meeting (N Manchester hosting), Hare & Hounds, Shudehill, 1.00pm onwards, after unloading of van at Winter Ales site completed.

North Manchester www.camra.org.uk/nmanchester

Wed 4 Jan: City centre crawl. Crown & Anchor, Hilton Street, 7.30.

Millstone, Thomas Street, 9.00. Castle 9.45.

Sun 8 Jan 1pm. Final Winter Ales meeting, Crescent, Salford

Wed 11 Jan 8pm: Good Beer Guide 2007 - Shortlisting and allocation of surveys. White Lion, Swinton (A6/A572). Bus 12,26,35-39.

Sat 14 Jan 10am. Unloading Winter Ales van at New Century Hall, Miller Street/Dantzic Street

Sun 15 Jan: Setting up begins for National Winter Ales Festival.

Continues on 16th and 17th.

18th-21st Jan: **National Winter Ales Festival** open

22nd & 23rd Jan: Festival takedown (incentives being considered)

Tues 24 Jan 8pm: Branch Meeting, Beer House, Manchester

Tues 31 Jan 3pm: What's Doing Collation, Queens Arms, Honey Street.

Note - One week later than normal.

Wed 1 Feb: Irlam's o'th'Height. Waggon 7.30pm, Wellington 8pm, Red

Lion 9pm

Wigan

Thur 12 Jan 7.30pm: Branch Meeting/Pub of the Season presentation at the Crown Hotel, Platt Lane, Worthington.

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

Rochdale, Oldham & Bury

Contact: Peter Alexander 0161 655 4002 (h)

email: peter@peteralexander.plus.com

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

Thur 5 Jan 8pm: Branch meeting, Orange Tree, Altrincham

Sat 7 Jan 7.30pm: Post Christmas meal and social at the Rope & Anchor, Dunham

Tues 10 Jan 8pm: Winter Pub of the Season presentation to the Marble Beer House, Manchester Road, Chorlton

Thur 2 Feb 8pm: Branch Meeting, Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976

Contributors to this issue: Ken Birch, Brian Gleave, Bill Collier, Dave Crookell, Dave Hallows, Stewart Revell, Alan Gall, Pete Cash, Neil Worthington, Dave White

Photos: Ken Birch

Dave and Sue welcome you to

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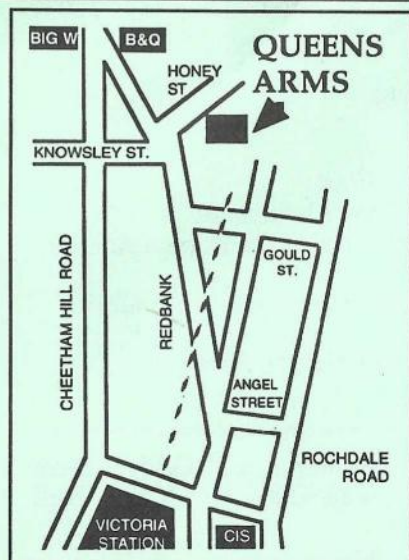
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