

Camra Bolton Branch and its Pubs as seen by the What's Doing Contributors 1975 to 1976

In 1975 the Bolton Branch area as we know it today was still part of North Manchester Branch. In November 1975 they introduced What's Doing – The Newsletter of the North Manchester Branch of CAMRA. By Vol 2 (April 1977) it had become The Manchester Beer Drinker's Newsletter, Bolton Branch had by now, in November 1976 been formed. In March 1978 it was renamed again as The Manchester Beer Drinker's Monthly Magazine. The following pages record those articles related to Bolton Branch that appeared in the copies of What's Doing. Also listed are the annual Good Beer Guide (GBG) entries, plus a few other events that members of the day would have been involved in together with members from the other Greater Manchester branches.

All 369 Copies of What's Doing from 1975 to 2006 can be found here in both online flippable and PDF download versions <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

My thanks go to all the contributors and especially the editor, the late Neil Richardson, with whom I spent more than a few lunch hours having a couple of pints in Swinton or Farnworth when either delivering copy for inclusion or collecting the printed copies for collating and distribution to the pubs.

Direct quotes from What's Doing are in Italics, except that I have dropped Bolton from any address in Bolton. Any articles with photos from Neil's archives I have scanned, as are pub guides where this was practical. Please bear in mind that in the era covered (almost?) everyone was rather more broadminded and tolerant than the politically correct society that we have become today!

If you have further or missing information or you think my memory is somewhat less accurate than yours then please email pubs@bolton.camra.org.uk

What's Doing November 1975 (The first one) <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1975>

Bolton Branch was not yet formed, the area was covered by North Manchester branch, who it is noted had included the following additional Bolton pubs for inclusion in the 1976 GBG (£1.40)

Ainsworth Arms, Halliwell Road, Tetley Walker

Stag's Head, Deane, Burtonwood

Toll Bar, Horwich, Thwaites

Gipsys Tent, Tetley Walker, (spelt correctly as still visible on the end of the building as Gypsy's in the guide)

Queen Anne, Little Lever, Thwaites

Additional information not in What's Doing - Included in both the 1975 (£0.75) and 1976 GBG's were

Alma, Bradshawgate, Greenall Whitley

Sweet Green Tavern, Pool St, Tetley Walker

White Lion, Deansgate, Wilsons

York Hotel, Newport St, Burtonwood

Market, Farnworth Tetley Walker

Saddle, Farnworth, Tetley Walker

Lord Nelson Stoneclough

The first Greater Manchester Beer Guide (the Orange and Black one with selected pubs) was still being surveyed, and it was noted that information was still required for Bolton, Westhoughton, Little Lever, Farnworth, Horwich and Turton amongst several others.

There had been a 1972 Good Beer Guide in a stapled sheet format but no Bolton Branch Pubs were included. In the first 1974 printed book edition the following Bolton town centre pubs were included

BOLTON

11.30–3.00 ; 5.30–10.30 (11 F,S)



Alma

Bradshawgate

Greenall Whitley (Warrington)



● (E)

A lively pub near town centre. Live music at weekends.



Old Thrae Crowns

Deansgate

Wilson ○ ● (E)

Town-centre pub, with leather seating and wall mirrors. Spoilt by loud TV. ■■



George

Great Moor Street

Wilson ○ ● (E)

■■



Wagon and Horses

Birtle Street

Greenall Whitley (Warrington)



● (H)

Small street-corner pub in working-class area; friendly with no trimmings.



Ye Olde Man and Scythe

Churchgate

Whitbread ○ ● (E)

Old pub, dating from 1251. ■■



York

Newport Street

Burtonwood ○ ● (H)

Near railway station. A real drinkers' pub.

For unknown reasons now The Wagon & Horses was a spoof entry, as neither the pub nor the street existed in Bolton. It later transpired that the 1974 GBG entries for Bolton were done on one night by driving round the known real ale pubs at the time, the car passenger had a pint in all the eighteen hostelrys visited, no point doing things by halves when it was for the GBG!

December 1975 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1975>

Noted in the report of the North Manchester Branch Meeting was *There is the local beer exhibition for which the Town Hall, Bolton, has been suggested as a possible venue in February or March. Opinions on this are welcomed.* This never came to pass, I mean dirty beer on our lovely floor, better stick with Tea Dances.

There was a list of Bass Charrington pubs selling Real Ale, in Bolton Branch there were seven as follows:-

Lord Clyde, 107/109 Folds Rd., Bolton — Best Mild.

Brinscop (Brinsop!) Arms, 590, Chorley Rd., Westhoughton - Best Mild, Brew 10.

General Havelock, 110, Sydney St., Bolton - Best Mild, Brew 10.

Grapes Hotel, 47, Market St., Stoneclough — Best Mild, Brew 10.

Freemasons Arms, 72, Market St., Farnworth - Best Mild.

New Inn, 34, Halliwell Rd., Bolton - Best Mild.

Unity Brook, 454, Manchester Rd, Kearsley — Best Mild, Brew 10.

January 1976) <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

GREATER MANCHESTER BEER GUIDE. Owing to lack of survey data only twenty pubs have been submitted for the entire Bolton area. (Perhaps it's because there is no branch yet!)

NATIONAL BEER GUIDE. Because of problems of classification and identification cider has been dropped from the 1976 guide. (Finally resolved in 2021?)

February 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

NATIONAL BEER GUIDE in 1975 sales to pubs in our area were as follows: -

Bolton — Alma 0, White Lion 1, Sweet Green Tavern 4, YORK 6.

Farnworth - Market 0, Saddle 1.

Stoneclough — Lord Nelson 1.

(Ed - Sorry for the brevity and typing errors, The usual production team could not be sobered up in time)

March 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

There was an alphabetical list of Joseph Holt pubs, but for Bolton Branch only the last one mattered – the White Lion, Market St, Westhoughton.

The branch fared much better on the list of Tetley Walker pubs that were selling Walker's Bitter as opposed to the Tetley variety

Ainsworth Arms, Halliwell Rd, Bobs Smithy, Chorley Old Road, Portland Hotel, Portland St, Duke of Wellington, Lowock, (Lostock), Three Crowns, Westhoughton, Cross Guns, Westhoughton, Clifton Arms, Newport Street, Gipsy's Tent, Deansgate, Howcroft Inn, Pool Street, Spread Eagle, Hulme Street.

April 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

WALKERS BITTER There are two amendments to the list of Walkers outlets published last month.

1. The Duke of Wellington is in Lostock, not 'Lowock'
2. The Clifton Arms should be deleted as the bitter is now Tetleys.

In a list of Sam Smiths pubs that were possible converts to real ale the Bolton one on Buckley Lane in Farnworth was listed as - ? it was then and still is the Bridgewater, but it did for many years sell hand pumped Old Brewery Bitter, probably as a result of the action taken at this time.

May 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

The North Manchester Branch meeting was held on the 19th at the Lord Nelson in Ringley.

Lots of interesting stuff but no mention of anything else in the Bolton area.

June 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

The North Manchester branch covers a large heavily populated area with many distinct centres, and parts of it, notably those surrounding Bolton, are not very well known. We have tended to concentrate on the Salford Metropolitan District, principally because most of us live there. Attempts have been made to establish a Bolton branch to take responsibility for the area, but not enough interest has been shown. We still hope that a Bolton branch may be formed, but in the meantime we intend to cover, as fully as possible, through What's Doing, real ale pubs in that part of our area, The Editor would welcome any contributions for future issues.

THE SPORTSMAN on Chorley Old Road there are several real ale pubs, one of which is a Burtonwood house, the Sportsman. The pub is an old three roomed building with a landlord who takes an interest in his beer, bitter, mild and dark mild dispensed through electric pumps, The pub has a friendly atmosphere and a good local trade.

THE TOLL BAR One of the few Thwaites pubs in our area, the Toll Bar in Horwich is already in the Good Beer Guide. The pub is large but conveys the impression of a local since it retains the traditional four room layout. Like the Sportsman, the Toll Bar attracts all age groups and is well worth a visit.

The Sportsman became a restaurant, Chianti, and is now demolished, the Toll Bar was sold by Thwaites and is now called Beeleys and no longer sells real ale, it has been pubco swapped several times and is now part of Admiral Taverns.

July 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

The North Manchester Branch meeting was held on the 21st at the Lord Nelson in Ringley.

No mention of anything in Bolton, but amongst other interesting things there was a copy of the first ever letter from Joseph Holt to Camra! It was a denial that the Brewery was about to be demolished, as we know it still stands today, of course!

August 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

The North Manchester Branch meeting was held on the 18th at the Lord Nelson in Ringley.

Pub of the Month – The Howcroft, Pool St, Bolton

The Howcroft is in a terraced street, off St Georges Road, not far from the centre of Bolton. The pub is one of the few remaining pubs in or near a city centre still to retain a bowling green. Most greens have been tarmacadamed for a number of years but bowls is still played on summer evenings. Walkers bitter and Tetleys mild are served from handpumps in the central bar. Besides the not inconsiderable drinking area round the bar, there are three rooms, a large vault opposite the bar, a small games-cum-television room served through a hatch and a large room which is not always in use. The pub has not been spoilt in any way by modernisation and is well worth visiting.

Note no Topp Way in 1976, it came later and when it did it removed several pubs, though not including the Howcroft itself, but its Bowling Green was affected and had to be moved and re-laid.

September 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

BOLTON BASS The Swan Hotel, a Bass Charrington pub on Bradshawgate, Bolton, is opening a Real Ale Bar. Whether this is real ale as Camra or as Bass Charrington define it remains to be seen. 'Real' beers available will be Toby Light, Worthington Best Bitter, Bass, and a mild. According to the Bolton Evening News, the ale is free on the opening night - Wednesday 15th September - from 7.00pm until 8.30pm, which is just about the time when this issue of What's Doing hits the streets, so by now you've probably just missed out.

BRANCHING OUT A meeting to test support is to be held in Bolton in October. Bolton is an area which has received less than its fair share of attention from the North Manchester branch in the past, partly because of the lack of interest shown there. Although there is less real ale available in Bolton than in other parts of the area, there are nevertheless several excellent pubs selling Walkers, Wilsons, Burtonwood, Greenall Whitley and Thwaites. There is also a lot of work to do in completing the survey of pubs in Bolton. It is hoped that members of all the local branches will come along and give their support to Chris Molyneux and John Slater who are enthusiastic about the meeting which is to be held at... The Sweet Green Tavern, Crook Street, Bolton, at 8.00pm on Tuesday 19th October. Further details from Chris Molyneux, Bolton 57356. If a branch is set up in Bolton, it is envisaged that it would be responsible for Metropolitan Bolton, including Farnworth, Westhoughton, Little Lever, Horwich and Blackrod, which would leave North Manchester with the more manageable area of

Metropolitan Salford and Metropolitan Manchester north of Deansgate and Market Street and west of the Medlock.

At the August Branch meeting it was decided that the following pubs which appeared in the 1976 Guide should be excluded from the 1977 Guide, either because the pub no longer sold real ale or because the quality of the beer was not consistently of the highest order in the opinion of branch members: Stags Head 31 Junction Road, Bolton.

The meeting discussed which pubs could be put in the guide as additions, if our suggestions were met. The selected pubs are listed below together with the persons who promised to submit returns:-

Stanley Arms, Chorley Old Road, Howcroft, Pool St, Bowling Green, Bury Rd - all John Slater

Lord Nelson, 9.30pm, Tuesday August 31st, Mary had announced on previous nights that she would provide a few sandwiches on their last night - sure enough the whole of Stoneclough turned out. By the time I arrived the Nelson was all merry confusion with Percy looking flushed. Mary was still in supreme command as ever. At Rogers behest we presented our plaque, all gleaming stainless steel and varnished wood. Silence. Percy stopped blinking and Mary was reduced to silent disbelief. We said many thanks for their hospitality to the branch and wished them well in Suffolk. And that was it. Uproar resumed almost immediately. Maybe the week after as they unpacked they saw it for the first time and remembered.

October 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

North Manchester branch had held its Branch meeting at the Lord Nelson in Ringley, but were considering a move elsewhere after a change in the original licensees. In a full page article they were most upset by the installation, as a condition of the new tenancy, that a jukebox had been installed.

'What they cannot be excused for is the monstrosity that appears in the snug and which makes its presence felt everywhere through external loudspeakers – quite the most gaudy and ugly juke box to be found. I should think, anywhere an eyesore, which literally destroys the pub's former atmosphere. It's about as incongruous as the Queen arriving for the State Opening of Parliament on the back of a Kawasaki 1200.' - A missed opportunity at the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in 1977.

(No doubt the said jukebox would now be worth a fortune to a collector!)

Also included was a list of pubs selling Tetley or Walkers hand pumped beer

Farnworth – Market, Saddle and Clock Face (all Tetley)

Bolton – Sweet Green Tavern, (Tetley) Ainsworth Arms, Gypsy's Tent, Clifton Arms, Howcroft, Spread Eagle,

Westhoughton – Three Crowns and Cross Guns with Duke of Wellington in Chew Moor (listed as Bolton)

For the 1977 GBG it was noted the following pubs had been suggested as extras (additional to main entries)

Bolton - Falcon, Bowling Green, Spread Eagle and Howcroft

Westhoughton – Duke of Wellington

In reality only the Duke of Wellington did make it and that was listed in Bolton rather than Westhoughton or Horwich or Lostock. The pubs that were included were

Bolton – Ainsworth, Alma, Duke of Wellington, Gipsy's Tent, Sportsmans Arms, Sweet Green Tavern and York

Farnworth – Market and Saddle

Horwich – Toll Bar

Westhoughton – Grey Mare and White Lion

The North Manchester branch meeting was held at the Three Crowns in Little Lever on November 17th.

Volume 2 Issue 1 - November 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

BOLTON BRANCH A second meeting to test support for the formation of a Bolton branch was held at the Gypsy's Tent, a Walker's pub on Deansgate in Bolton, on 9 November. After the extremely successful first meeting a month earlier, when the Sweet Green Tavern proved far too small to accommodate all those attending, the meeting at the Gypsy's Tent unfortunately clashed with a rearranged Bolton Wanderers match. People in Bolton take their football seriously (they have to), but in spite of this about thirty people turned up to hear talks by Dave Easton, Richard Greenhalgh and Rod Oliver about CAMRA nationally and at branch level. The inaugural meeting of the branch has been fixed for Tuesday, 14 December, at 8 p.m., again in the Gypsy's Tent. There seems to be enthusiastic support for a branch in a town which has hitherto been somewhat neglected. A lot of work remains to be done and it is to be hoped that the initial enthusiasm leads to the establishment of a thriving branch. Anyone who wants to be involved but couldn't attend the previous meetings should contact Eric Petela (Bolton 793526) or Les Kilsby (Westhoughton 812884).

Bolton Wanderers had a local derby in the old Division 2 that night and beat Burnley 2-1. At the start of the meeting a number of people were asking if Barrie Pepper from Leeds Branch was present, he must have been expected but didn't make it. A few others arrived late as they went to the match first.

Volume 2 Issue 2 December 1976 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/#1976>

Six Whitbread pubs in Greater Manchester are being sold to other breweries. Five go in a 'package deal' to Burtonwood and one to Sam Smiths. One of the five was the Rawsons Arms, Peel St, Farnworth.

The strike at Tetleys brewery is causing problems for licensees, but our itinerant boozers are having a field day. Beers such as Thwaites, Robinsons and Hartleys have been sold in parts of Manchester well

away from their usual outlets. In Farnworth the Clock Face has had Thwaites mild and bitter; the Market and the Saddle have had Robinsons bitter. In Bolton Hartleys best bitter was available in the Gardeners Arms (alongside bright Chesters, served through handpumps)