

Camra Bolton Branch and its Pubs as seen by the What's Doing Contributors 2002

Bolton Branch Pubs included in the 2002 Good Beer Guide were

Bolton – Bobs Smithy, Hen & Chickens, Hope & Anchor, Howcroft, Lord Clyde, Old Man & Scythe, Spinning Mule, Varsity (Hogarths)

Bromley Cross – Cross Guns

Farnworth – Britannia, Railway

Horwich – Crown

Kearsley – Clockface

Westhoughton – White Lion

What's Doing January 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Branch Meeting & AGM – January 10th at Old Man & Scythe at 8.30pm

Winter Ales Festival Social – January 24th

NEW PUB FOR HOLTS

The Pepper Alley opened in Bolton on 29th November. The former Millstone on Crown Street has been enlarged by knocking through into next door and into a building at the back on Bank Street. The Crown Street side has tables intended for diners and the menu is quite extensive for Holts, with most main meals costing £3 - £4.

A flight of steps leads to a second bar on the lower, Bank Street level. Further back are the food bar and more drinking areas, including one for



non-smokers. Another door leads out to Bank Street. Each level has its own set of toilets and the lower one also has a cash dispenser. The beer garden to one side of the pub is similarly on two levels, and its outer wall is one side of Bank Street Chapel.

The Pepper Alley is a well-lit, airy place, decorated with eighteenth and nineteenth century portraits on the walls and televisions suspended from the ceilings. Beer prices are higher than usual for Holts: £1.32 and £1.39 at peak times for mild and bitter. However, from 2pm to 8pm, these reduce to £1.24 and £1.30, which is cheap for Bolton centre.

My first drink was 'Traditional Blonde Bier' served via handpump at 78p a half. It doesn't claim to be a lager, but the spelling of 'bier' and the pale colour and low hop rate put it close to that style. I understand that the handpump is temporary, because although cask-conditioned, Blonde Bier undergoes Holts' 'smooth' (mixed gas) treatment on its way to the glass.

Although it is against CAMRA policy to accept such beers as 'real', or to approve such hybrid dispense systems, I could not detect any excessive gassiness in the product. Smooth mild is also available, but here there is no confusion in the dispensers.

The only criticism of the Pepper Alley (a minor one) is that on the opening day there were no beer mats on any of the tables; I hope this is a temporary oversight and not a matter of policy!

Pete Cash

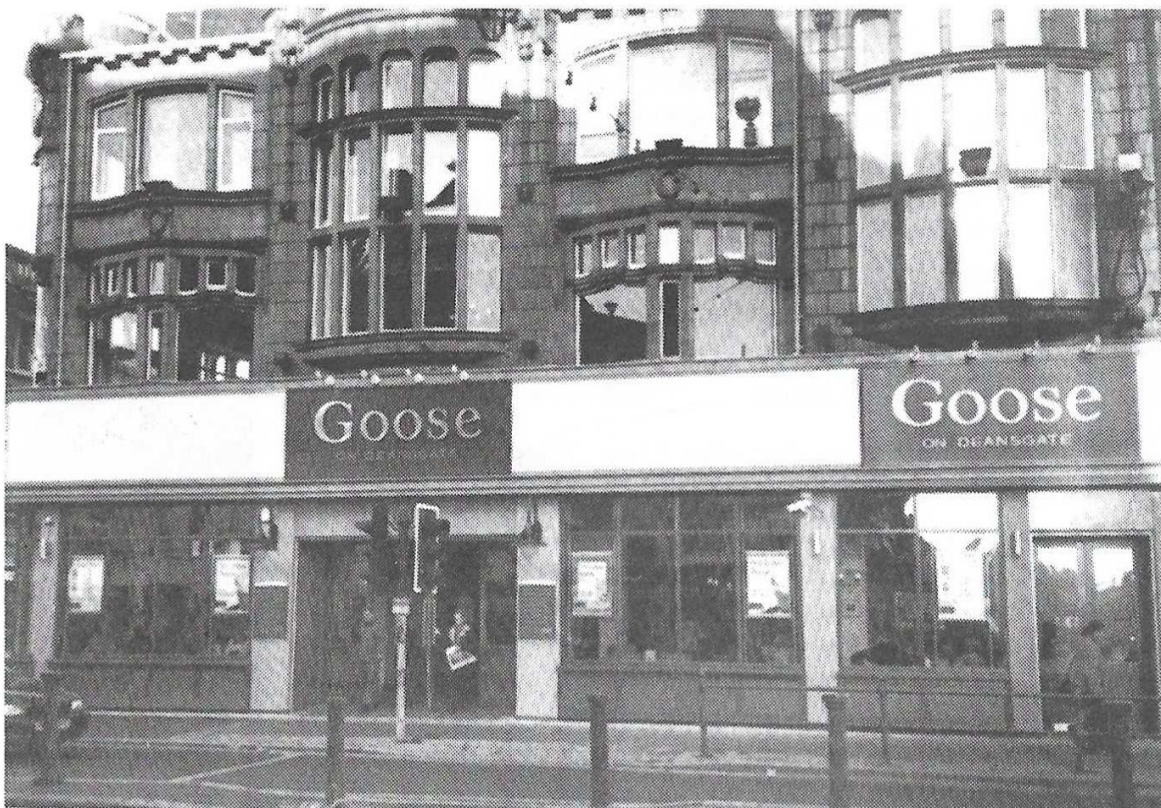
Holts corner

Stewart Revell

The new **Pepper Alley** in Bolton opened last month, a remarkable transformation from the old Millstone and adjoining property. Holts bought the Millstone some eighteen months ago, but conversion work didn't begin until the latter part of 2001, when the brewery bought the building which now forms the Bank Street side of the pub. As with the Railway in Didsbury (opened March 2001), the Holts name doesn't appear on the outside of the building and prices are higher than normal.

New Goose

The **Goose on Deansgate** recently opened in the old Whitehead's shop in Bolton (next to the Pepper Alley). It is a spacious Bass pub on two floors, with views of Bradshawgate and Deansgate from the upstairs bar. The real ales on offer were Highgate Special (£1 a pint), Draught Bass (£1.50), Pedigree, Adnams bitter and Taylors Landlord (which was popular). The Goose has a no-music policy and there are no-smoking zones.





Since everyone seems to be flocking to the **Pepper Alley** in Bolton, I thought I had better look in to see what all the fuss was about. I find it hard to cope with this new genre of Holts pubs - the split levels,

television screens, prominent ranks of silvery keg fonts, a brass luggage rack between two seating bays, and odd bits of wood panelling that one might think had been left over from other pubs or salvaged from elsewhere. But the pub is not unimpressive, especially its Bank Street frontage, next door to the Unitarian Chapel, with 'H Rigby & Co' still atop the facade as evidence of previous ownership of the premises.

I had a pint of the naughty Blonde Bier, which is refreshing enough, but too inoffensive to any taste to be a truly convincing Holtsian beer. (Some of the customers, however, were utterly authentic Holts habitués of an older generation.)

Cash Question

Sir - A cash dispenser in a Holts pub (*Pepper Alley, WD Jan*)? Now the world really has gone mad! I trust it dispenses ten bob notes.

Rhys P Jones

It is possible that Holts are still preparing to replace the Blonde Bier handpumps at the **Pepper Alley** and the **Ape and Apple** with something more appropriate. I was told when the Pepper Alley opened that this would take a few weeks to arrange. They say Blonde Bier is more real ale than not, so a keg font is not appropriate.

Horwich

Dave White takes the 617 bus from Wigan...

First, the **Squirrel** on the Horwich/Chorley boundary, an open-plan pub with several drinking areas, a no-smoking room, a family room, several shelves of china and an interesting menu. The Squirrel has an annual beer festival, and the guest ales were better-than-average when we called in: Leyden Light Brigade (4.2%) and Squirrels Hoard, a 4% brew from Hart. The Tetley mild and bitter are keg.

From the Squirrel we backtracked to Horwich proper, and the **Queens Head** on Lee Lane. We left this raucous keg boozier double-quick and went to the **Original Bay Horse** up the road. This two-roomed local has gone for the country cottage look, the artexed beams notwithstanding. It is popular with all age groups and the cask beers on sale were Flowers Original, Lees bitter and Black Sheep bitter.

Further up Lee Lane, and on to the **Bowling Green**. This is a bigger pub than it looks from the outside, with two rooms that open out at the back of the bar. The carpet has seen better days, but the pub has several points of note, including interesting tiles, wood-panelling and etched glass, limited edition prints, and baps. One traditional ale - Tetley bitter.

Next came the **Bay Horse**, an open-plan Greenalls pub with a 1960s feel to it; red plush velvet upholstery, artexed walls and those renowned mock beaten copper tables from a generation ago. Near the bar hangs a clock, bearing the inscription, 'Greenall Whitley - Brewers since 1762'. We found the pub pleasant, clean and welcoming, although it was a bit rum to see a fake stone bar in a town that has so much of the real stuff. Greenalls bitter was the sole cask beer.

Leaving Lee Lane, we returned to Chorley New Road. Here we found the **Toll Bar**, a sepulchral Thwaites pub with nothing but smoothflow on offer. We ended the night at the **Crown Hotel**, an open-plan, spacious boozier. Rural prints adorn the walls. The decor is a little florid, but the pub is big enough to carry it. Holts mild and bitter were on offer, and although the Crown is the only entry for Horwich in the 2002 Good Beer Guide, we found the beer in all the pubs we supped at to be very good.

Trotter's Trail

Little Lever

Approaching Little Lever from Moses Gate, first stop was the **Jolly Carter** on Church Street. This is a bright, friendly pub with elevated lounge, games room/vault and a separate dining area. The real ales are Taylors Landlord, Old Speckled Hen, Boddies, Tetleys Dark Mild and one from Bank Top (Sam Crompton when I called).

Passing the **Ring o'Bells** (closed for refurbishment) and turning left into Lever Street, I came to the **Horse Shoe**, a traditional pub with basic vault and large lounge. Hydes bitter is served via handpull; the mild is on electric pump.

Following the winding road (not too long!) brings one to the **Seven Stars** on Dove Bank Road. Unfortunately there is no real ale here, but the pub is worth a visit to see the collection of soccer shirts and the 'Wanderers Wall' in the vault.

Next, the **Canary Tavern** in the town centre, a community pub serving Holts bitter and the occasional guest beer, and finally the **Queen Anne**, a little further down High Street. This is a large Thwaites pub selling the bitter on handpump. Note the collection of Laurel and Hardy pot figures.



The What's Doing List

What's Doing is available in the following outlets...

Bolton

Hen & Chickens
Old Man & Scythe
Pepper Alley

Farnworth **Britannia**

Westhoughton
HereToPleaseYou
off-licence

This was at 338 Manchester Road

The Holts List

Stewart Revell updates the record...

Bolton Castle, Tonge Moor Rd, Bolton

Brooklyn, Green La, Bolton

Crown, Chorley New Rd, Horwich

Doffcocker, Chorley Old Rd, Bolton

Mosley, Red Lane, Breightmet

Pepper Alley, Crown St, Bolton

Railway, Egerton St, Moses Gate

Rose Hill, Leigh Rd, Westhoughton

Rumworth, Wigan Rd, Bolton

White Lion, Market St,
Westhoughton

Wingates

Dave White catches the 715 from Wigan to Wingates...

Our first port of call was the **Greyhound** on Manchester Road, an open-plan pub with several partitions of wood-and-glass and two different drinking areas. The sports trophies are in the lounge next to the bar, whereas the big-screen TV and seats with tongue-and-groove backs are in the vault. The juke box is on the loud side, and the carpets and upholstery have seen better days. A request for Tetley bitter (the only real ale) was met with a lunge for the smoothflow, so be sure to ask for cask. This is perhaps the only pub I've been to that boasts a 'beer yard'.

At least the Greyhound still sells cask beer. The **Windmill** on Chorley Road used to sell a tasty drop of Walkers Best. Nowadays there's nothing but fizzy stuff on the bar and an emphasis on meals.

Sticking with Chorley Road for the rest of the night, we moved to the **Waggon & Horses**. The pub has a Tudor feel to it, in the form of brickwork, beams, doorways and arches. Over the fireplace is a rather graphic depiction of the celebrated Westhoughton cow, trapped in the gate and having her head sawn off. The stained glass windows portray scenes from the history of the town through the ages. There are special dining offers, but book beforehand. The sole cask ale, Burtonwood Top Hat, was in pretty good nick, and this was probably the most pleasant pub-stop of the night (apart from the cow).

The next stop, however, was the most surprising. We walked up to the **Gates Restaurant & Bar**, expecting to find a food-orientated hostelry with keg beer, but were proved wrong on the second point. Tetley bitter and Taylors Landlord were on offer, the latter at a fairly reasonable £1.80 a pint. Split-level rooms, Tiffany lampshades, bamboo seating and unobtrusive background music. As you'd expect, there is a large dining area, but the menu is imaginative, with above-average cuisine for vegetarians. The bar caters for all age groups, children included, and the beer wasn't bad, either.

In spite of the handpumps, the **Royal Oak** was keg only, so we ended the night at the **Brinsop Arms**, a bustling, popular boozer with the biggest range of real ales in the area. Food is also served. There are several drinking areas, although the lounge, with its large open fireplace, is probably the focal point. On this occasion the beers were Boddingtons bitter, Taylors Landlord, Hydes bitter and Jekyll's Gold, and Phoenix Arizona.

What's Doing April 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Nothing about Bolton Branch or its pubs

What's Doing May 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Bolton to Boston

American real ale lovers will have the chance to sample two of Bank Top Brewery's ales at a festival in Boston in May. Brewer John Feeney is exporting some barrels of Smokestack Lightning and The Haka, and the casks will be returning to England filled with American real ale for a summer beer festival.

What's Doing June 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Nothing about Bolton Branch or its pubs

What's Doing July 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Trotter's Ales

There were several beer festivals in the area over the Queen's Jubilee weekend, but owing to other commitments I couldn't attend the Stockport Beer Festival or visit the Stalybridge Canal Festival Beer Tent. However, I did sample most of the beers at the Jubilee Beer Bash at the **Britannia** in Farnworth.

The festival opened on the Friday evening with a rock disco in the pub, while the beer was flowing outside in the festival bar. It continued to flow until Tuesday 4th June.

Appropriately, Titanic Brewery's Rule Britannia was available. This beer is usually brewed in February and celebrates an era when British craftsmen produced vessels that slipped sweetly into the sea, and this beer slipped easily down one's throat.

That old favourite of the late Big Jim, Wobbly Bob, was available, and making its first appearance at the Brit Beer Bash were two from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery, Boggarts Brew and Log End. Derwent Brewery supplied four ales, including a Royal Jubilee Stout.

While I was at the festival I was recommended to try the **Bridgewater Hotel** on Buckley Lane, Farnworth (near the Albert Road/Longcauseway junction). Here Sam Smiths OB Bitter is on handpump for only £1.17 a pint. The pub has a games room with pool table on the left, a long bar area down to the right and a separate lounge room facing the bar.

In the May edition of *What's Doing* it was reported that Boddingtons is the official beer purveyor for the Commonwealth Games in



Manchester. Well, Boddies isn't the only brewery to brew for the Games, as Bank Top is producing two specials to celebrate the sporting events that are being held in Bolton. These are Spitting Feathers and Boneshaker, but I don't know what they taste like as I've yet to see the stuff served in a pub. Let's hope both are available during the events and that they outsell that bland brew from Strangeways.

The following Holts pubs will be selling the new 4.3% Baton Gold. It will be £1.28 a pint in managed houses and more in tenancies and free trade outlets. The Baton Bitter (3.6%) will be £1.20 a pint in managed houses.

Angel Hotel, Knutsford
Ape & Apple, Manchester
Black Dog, Belmont
Blue Bell, Blackford Bridge
Brooklyn, Bolton
Cart & Horses, Astley
Cock o'Budworth, Cheshire
Crown & Anchor, Manchester
Doffcocker, Bolton

Friendship, Prestwich
Griffin, Heaton Mersey
Old Monkey, Manchester
Pepper Alley, Bolton
Railway, Lapwing Lane
Roebuck, Flixton
Waggon & Horses, Irlams o'th'Height
Welcome, Whitefield
Woodthorpe, Prestwich

Bolton

Long-standing licensee Jim of the 2002 Good Beer Guide listed Black Dog (Holts) in Belmont village, north west of Bolton, has retired to pastures new. Recent reports suggest that the background classical music remains, as does the ban on mobile phones. However, the food menu now resembles the standard Holts fare.

In the town centre, the Goose on Deansgate has achieved the Cask Marque accreditation.

Blackrod crawl

Dave White

We took the 617 bus from Wigan to the furthest point of our intended crawl, namely the **Ridgeway Arms** on Station Road. The Ridgeway is an elegant, multi-roomed interwar pub with comfortable chairs and a real fire. There is a function room at the back and a large dining area, as well as a main drinking area with an abundance of pottery and brassware. Magazines are available to read, possibly to give the place the feel of a hotel, an aspiration largely dissipated by the presence of games machines and large-screen TV. The pub boasts a bowling green, beer garden and outdoor play area. On our visit, the guest beer blackboard was blank, and only boring Boddies and Theakstons bitters were available. The bar service, however, was both prompt and polite.

A fifteen-minute walk along the A6 followed, until we reached the **Poacher** on the corner of Scot Lane. This pub is bigger within than without, but several alcoves around the main drinking area create an aura of cosiness, and it's quite easy to escape the TV and games machines, depending on where you sit. Numerous photographs of old Blackrod, a horseshoe-grate fire and even an hour-glass... all very 1960s. The stag whose head loomed over us looks as though it is smiling - unlikely but true - and this is the only pub I've been in that has an ox yoke hanging from the ceiling. This pleasant inn also has a beer garden. Cask beers were Burtonwood bitter and a guest, Caledonian 80/-. The latter was a tad warm, but okay.

Our next stop was at the **Green Barn**, further up Manchester Road. In contrast to the Poacher, this pub looks smaller inside than out. A three-roomed local with (original?) low beams in the smaller back room. The decor is Tudor, and points of interest include a cartwheel by the main entrance and a framed photograph of the Reebok Stadium on the wall. A tiny side room contains a pool table. Two outdoor drinking areas, one of which contains a 'Rolling Stone' (see for yourselves). Cask John Smiths and Tetley bitters were on offer, alongside Cains mild.

I then checked out the **Royal British Legion Club** across the road and was pleasantly surprised to find real Thwaites bitter on offer. One big room with a clubby, but friendly atmosphere. The wallpaper design was singular, and royal bunting and balloons were everywhere (well, it was Jubilee weekend). The beer was a little on the cool side, but at £2.18 for a pint and a half, was the best value of the night. There is a small entrance fee for non-members.

Our lucky run was broken at the **Red Lion** on Church Street. No real ale on this occasion, so we proceeded to **Blackrod Conservative Club** over the road. This consists of a small, single room with a low

ceiling. Doggedly unatmospheric, with only blue silk curtains to suggest the club's credentials. The sole real ale, Ruddles best bitter, hadn't been tried by the regulars before we came in. Their loss, as it proved the best pint of the night. The steward who accepted our peppercorn fee was prepared to wager that the club was one of the most miserable places I'd ever supped in. Not by a long chalk, it ain't!

We then made our way to the **Black Horse** on the street of the same name. This bare-boards boozer has changed beyond recognition since my last visit, many years ago. The Horse is now open plan, but with a separate pool room which, we were told, used to be a bowling alley. There are several local photographs to engage the interest of anyone not interested in the big-screen TV. Very much a young person's pub; even so, the 3.8% Bank Top Brydger bitter wasn't bad. Other real ales were Tetleys and Lees bitters.

And so to **Gallagher's** at Little Scotland. This is one of our favourite eateries, but the pub itself is comfortable: an open-plan area, divided by a wall. Local arts and crafts are supported here and you can admire the mariner's map if ikebana isn't your scene. The real ales on offer are a little on the safe side, but well-kept: Tetley mild and bitter, Boddingtons bitter, Black Sheep bitter, Taylors Landlord and (yes, really) Whitbread Trophy.

What's Doing August 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Brewer Brendan Leyden regularly has up to seven of his own beers on at the 'Lord Rag'. His beers can often be found around Bury - in the Hare and Hounds at Holcombe Brook, the Garsdale near Burrs and the Footballers, Summerseat. In Bolton, they appear at Bob's Smithy and the Howcroft.

The next day I sampled the Baton Gold again in the **Pepper Alley** in Bolton, where it was a clear deep gold, immensely toffeeish in aroma and flavour throughout. I still think, on balance, that I'll stick to Holts' usual duo, especially when the bitter is as blisteringly bitter as it was in the **Broadway**

Trotter's Ales

A new Wetherspoons pub has opened over in Westhoughton, so on 6th July I visited the **Robert Shaw**, named after the actor who was born in the town. The pub is on Market Street, on the site of a house called Mount Pleasant and later a Co-op supermarket. It is set out in bright, modern style, with the bar on the left and a raised area with three drinking booths complete with book racks at one end. I tried two of the guest ales - Ryburn Numpty and Nethergate Augustinian - and ended the session with a half of Abbot Ale.

While in Cowyded City, I decided to call in the Holts pub at the other end of Market Street, the **White Lion**, for a pint of Baton Bitter. I found the new brew to be a smooth, drinkable ale, and it seemed to have found favour with some of the regulars. This old pub (*below*) has an unspoilt interior with a cosy bar/parlour and other drinking areas. The most attractive feature is the curved, island bar.



Letters

Tasting phenomenon

Sir - When I am in a Wetherspoons (Bolton, for example) and I'm given a tasting glass of a different brew to try, the taste can be excellent and full of flavour. But when I buy a pint of the stuff, it can be totally different and I sometimes wonder if it is the same brew!

Is this something to do with the concentration of a small, fresh amount of beer in a small glass, compared to a great big pint, or is it something more mysterious? Has anyone else experienced this, and does anyone know the answer?

Trevor Crookell

What's Doing September 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

remains keg. Further down Swan Lane, the **Alexandra Hotel** has reopened. The freak floods of one Friday in June led to the Alex being submerged. The pub has been tastefully refurbished, and Tetley bitter is still available, plus a guest.

Bolton

Getting away from the increasingly busy Bolton town centre Saturday night scene, I paid a visit to the **Kings Head**, Junction

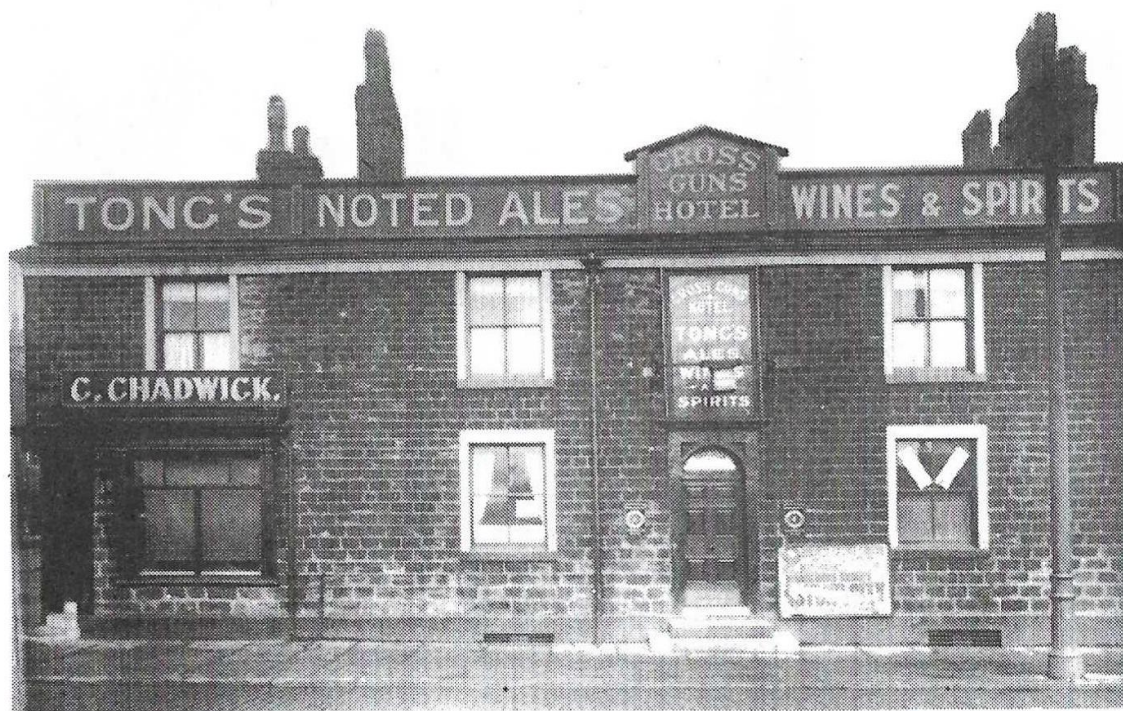


Road, Deane. This is a 300-year-old, Grade II listed pub, refurbished in 1991 to provide three drinking areas served from one long, wood panelled bar. Up to six real ales are available and on my visit these were Tetley mild and bitter, Cottage Pride, Taylors Landlord, Pride of Pendle (£1.45 a pint), and Executioner, a Bank Top beer brewed exclusively for the pub.

Three minutes' walk away on Wigan Road is the large, imposing **Rumworth**, a Joey Holts establishment. I asked for a pint of the Baton Bitter but it was sour, so I returned it and decided to head towards town.

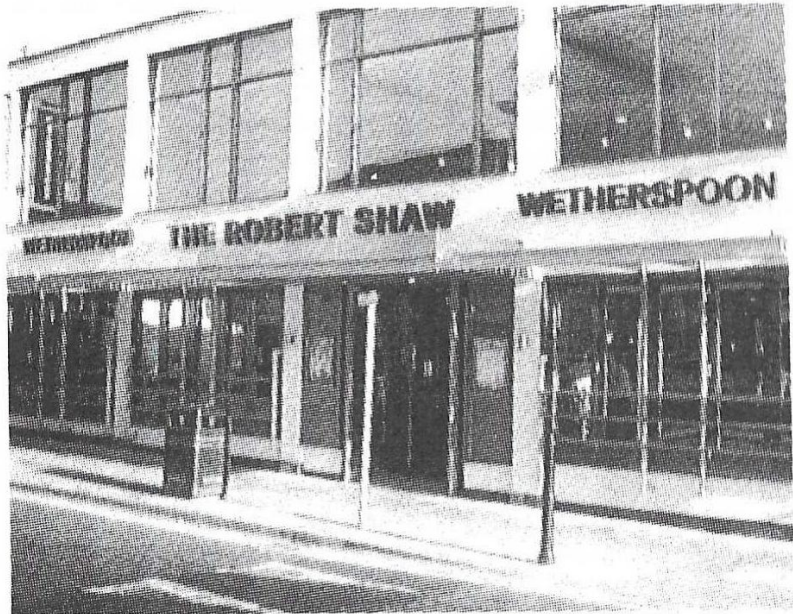
I stopped off at the **Cross Guns** on Deane Road, which years ago was a Tongs pub and more recently Walkers, where I had a pint of Hydes bitter (£1.25). Back in the town centre, I ended the evening in the **Hen & Chickens**. There is a choice of three guest ales, plus Greenalls bitter and Cains mild; my choice was a pint of Ridleys Prospect.

Finally, for once, some praise for Boddingtons. I managed to sample their Commonwealth Games beer in the **Britannia** in Farnworth. It was a deceptive brew with an added ingredient to give it an extra kick and, at 5%, a couple of pints made me feel light-headed. If Boddingtons can make an excellent 5% one-off cask ale, why not brew it regularly? And less of the nitrokeg!



Westhoughton Wetherspoons

The **Robert Shaw**, the new Wetherspoons pub in a former supermarket building (*WD last month*) is proving popular and attracting customers from nearby Lostock and Horwich. The regular beers are Theakstons bitter, Cains mild, Spitfire, Directors, Abbot Ale and Hopback Summer Lightning. Robert Shaw was the local lad who went to Hollywood and was in Jaws. But hands up anybody who remembers him as Cap'n Tempest in that live action Pugwash - type programme on teatime telly about 1960.



What's Doing October 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

At the Festivals

Trotter

The **Britannia**, King Street, Farnworth, held its Beer Bash over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Up to eight handpulled ales were available each session in the specially created outdoor bar, and over two days I sampled a good selection.

Friday evening started with the 3.8% Summer Hog from Gales Brewery, apparently also known as Idle Pig. Next up was a pint of Two Pints, a good, full-bodied bitter and one of several from Cropton Brewery, North Yorkshire. It was then over to Hopsmacker, a golden bitter from Saddleworth Brewery.

I ploughed my way through the Yorkshire Moors, a strong, copper-coloured bitter from Cropton - and you could easily stumble after a few pints on the moors. I sampled some of Cropton's Haunting Hank, a light golden beer made with American duster hops, but it was not to my taste.

For most of the Sunday session I drank the 4% Doom Bar, brewed by Sharp's in Cornwall, which regulars and barman Paul agreed was the Beer of the Festival. Once we'd supped the Doom Bar, we moved on to the Tacklers Tipple from Three B's Brewery in Blackburn, a best bitter with a fascinating blend of dark malt and hops.

Farnworth & Kearsley

Phil Stout

We started at the **Railway** at Moses Gate, a large Holts house with a weather-worn exterior. Inside, there is a small vault and large, opened-out drinking area dominated by a giant screen television and loud music (the music was not related to what was showing on television). The consolation was a decent pint of Holts mild and bitter.

We then walked up to the centre of Farnworth, passing several keg pubs on the way, to the **Britannia**, a thriving pub near the bus station. We had missed the beer festival by two days and the only real ale available was an excellent pint of Moorhouses Premier.

Moving towards Kearsley, we passed more pubs with no real ale and the saddest had to be the Market Tavern. This former Good Beer Guide pub had seven handpumps on the bar and not a drop of real ale between them. In Kearsley, the **Clock Face** is an excellent traditional local with lounge, snug and vault, and the beers on offer were Tetley mild and bitter and Holts bitter.



Westhoughton

Dave White

We caught a 540 bus from Wigan to the **Grey Man**, Bolton Road, Daisy Hill. A cobbled courtyard and a porch-like entrance lead into a two-roomed local. The lounge was full of rustic Victorian prints and old advertisements. There is also a conservatory and beer garden. Live music Saturdays. The sole cask beer, Tetley bitter, vies with smoothflow for bar space, but was on form.

A brisk fifteen-minute walk took us to the **Bridge Inn** on Wigan Road. Another two-roomed local with a big screen TV and an emphasis on football. The lounge has a central fireplace and a collection of pot dogs. Karaoke is king on Friday and Sunday nights, whereas live bands perform on Saturdays. Real ales include Greene King Abbot, Grays bitter and Boddingtons bitter. Cask Tetley mild was advertised on the blackboard above the bar, but was actually dispensed from the little box in the vault for Whitbread mild. Hmm.

Our next stop was the **Hartcommon**, further down Wigan Road. This is a three-roomed local, with a pool room, games room and lounge. The lounge has a television and a personalised mirror over the brick fireplace. Lots of brassware, trophies and arched windows. Theakstons best bitter is the only traditional ale, but was eminently quaffable on our visit.

A bus then took us to the centre of Westhoughton and we alighted outside the **Victoria** on Market Street. The pub is keg, however, so we crossed the road to the **White Lion**, a classic Holts boozer, now tastefully refurbished and upholstered, and with a marvellous bar of dark wood and etched glass. On this occasion, sadly, the mild was tired, the bitter not bad.



Elsewhere on Market Street, the **Wheatsheaf** was keg, as was the **Red Lion** on Church Street, so we backtracked to the **Robert Shaw**, the new J D Wetherspoon outlet. Points of interest include an aerial painting of the town on the stairs and a modernist statue of a man, constructed from wood and metal, over the door. The pub has just received Cask Marque accreditation, so the beer tends to be on the cold side: but Wheel Ale, a 4+% golden brew, was the Pint of the Night for me. (Unfortunately, I couldn't find out who brews it.) Other ales included Cains mild, Theakstons best bitter, Oakhill Mendip Gold, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Courage Directors, Wood's Wonderful and Hopback Summer Lightning.

PS. The Grey Man is one of only two pubs in Daisy Hill currently offering real ale. The **Daisy Hill Hotel**, which used to sell Hydes, has gone keg, and the **Three Crowns** on Lower Leigh Road (formerly Burtonwood) has been closed for some time. Holts ales are still to be had at the **Rose Hill Tavern (Bug)** by the station.

Bolton Beer Festival

Up to 200 beers, including the latest brews from Bank Top Brewery, are promised for the biggest pub festival in the country. The ninth Howcroft Inn Beer Festival runs from Weds 9th to Sun 13th October.

What's Doing November 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Branch Meeting and AGM – Sweet Green Tavern November 14th 2002

Social – Visit to Manchester City Centre meet at Sweet Green Tavern 7.00pm November 21st to catch train

What's Doing December 2002 <https://greatermanchester.camra.org.uk/branch-magazines/whats-doing/>

Out in Bolton

Trotter

On a mild Saturday in November, I took a bus (the 519) out of town to the **Hope & Anchor** on Chorley Old Road, Doffcocker. A corner bar serves the main drinking area and two snugs, whose walls are adorned with framed photos of Bolton in a bygone era. There are four real ales - Tetleys mild and bitter, plus guests Taylors Landlord and Lees bitter (£1.46). Both guests were in good condition.

After a brief walk around Doffcocker Lodge, it was back on the bus for a visit to the **Howcroft Inn**, home of the recent Bolton Beer Festival. A Bank Top beer continues to be available here, although the brewery has moved from the unit near the pub to new premises on Ainsworth Lane in the Bank Top area of town. I tried one of the guests, Wentworth Best Bitter.



From the Howcroft, I walked across to the **Hen & Chickens**, a welcoming pub on the fringe of the town centre circuit. On Saturday nights there are always three guest beers alongside the Greenalls bitter and Cains mild. I had the Thwaites Thoroughbred.



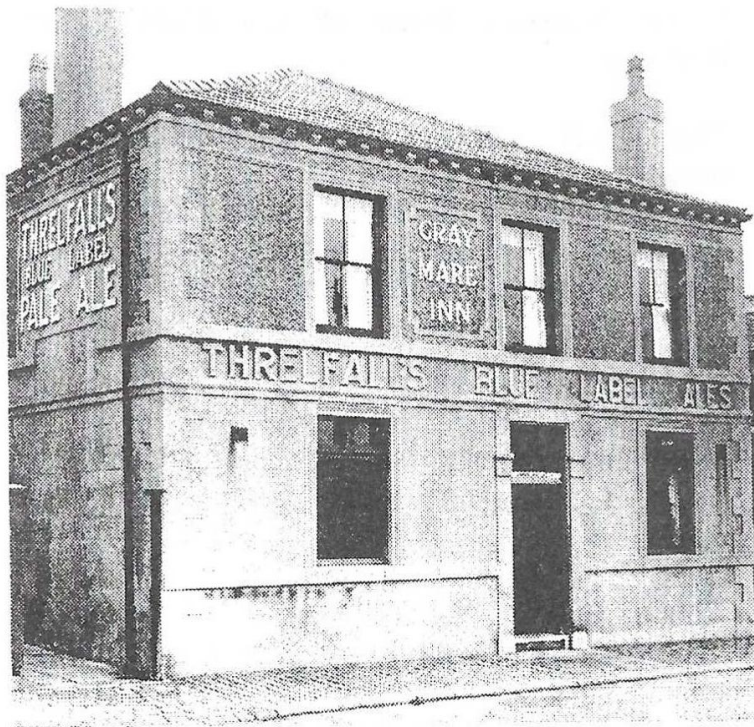
Westhoughton - the Second Leg

Dave White

A train took us to Westhoughton Station, not far from our first watering hole, the **Commercial** on Church Street. A friendly local, comprising pool room, vault, side room and lounge, plus a beer garden and big-screen TV. Mock-ups of bygone issues of the *London Herald* adorn the walls and local newspapers are available for those who want to read the real thing. Much tongue-and-groove panelling. Some of the carpets and upholstery have seen better days, but the colour scheme in the pub is pleasant. The cask beer - Tetley bitter - was a little on the cool side, but otherwise okay.

We then backtracked past the railway station. A brisk walk along the A6 brought us to the next pub, the **White Horse** on the corner of Manchester Road and Bolton Road. The handpumps here are redundant, however, so we called at the **Howfener** nearby. The pub was known as the **Rose & Crown** until recently, and the old name can still be seen beneath the sign outside. Whatever the monicker, the inn has served keg beer for as long as I can remember; so it was something of a surprise to find handpulls on this particular night, serving Tetley bitter and Imperial. The interior has an olde-worlde feel to it, with low beams and a timbered bar. There is also a lower level bar, handy for the Saturday night disco. The pub has several cosy nooks and is popular with all ages, though the disabled should note that there are steps leading to the main entrance, and to the toilets. The beer was fair.

A pint in the Howfener wasn't the only surprise of the night. Our next pub, the **Grey Mare**, wasn't there any more! We repaired to the



Cross Guns, a deceptively roomy boozer. There is much to catch the eye on the walls, including paintings of waterbirds, trophies and a framed pistol, complete with powder bag. Tastefully muted decor all round. The pub has a pool room, and another room at the back, possibly useful for meetings. Real ales were Tetley mild and bitter.

By now we were slightly ahead of

ourselves, and even though we'd covered it before (*WD 10/02*), there was time for a quick one in Holts' **White Lion** on the corner of Bolton Road and Market Street. Great pub - shame about the mild!

On, then, to the **Rose Hill Tavern** on Leigh Road, in time for 'Last orders'. The 'Bug', as the pub is known, is an open-plan Holts house with a lively clientele. The decor and upholstery are florid, but the pub is big enough to take it. Games room. The juke box was on the loud side, but the Drabs bitter was in fine fettle, making the Bug the pub of the night... and situated so close to Daisy Hill Station, it was convenient for the last train back to Wigan, too.

Branch Meeting – Kings Head Junction Rd December 12th 2002

Social – Christmas Past No Pub Crawl December 26th 2002, Spread Eagle Hulme St 7.23pm, Falcon Kay St 7.57pm, Peel Higher Bridge St 8.18pm, New Zealand Chief Great Moor St 9.42pm, Commercial Victoria Square 10.29pm

