

OPENING TIMES

JULY / AUGUST 2022

FREE



**INSIDE: BEER FESTIVAL REPORT /
CAMRA AWARDS / SUMMER OF
PUB / BEER GARDENS AND MORE....**



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About Opening Times & Contacts

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Trading Standards

For complaints about short measure pints etc. contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service. This works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can contact the Consumer Service at the following address:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue

Their telephone no. is 03454 04 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards

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Opening Times does not recommend you drink and drive. Local public transport information can be obtained online as follows:

- * Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com. 0161 244 1000
- * East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx
- * Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

Pub Opening Hours

We hope you will visit all of the pubs mentioned in *Opening Times*. There isn't the space to print all of their opening hours – however these can be checked on CAMRA's online pub guide: whatpub.com

Disclaimer

We aim to ensure that the information in *Opening Times* is correct at the time of going to press. If we get something wrong then please get in touch (editorial contact details on the left) and we'll print a correction. Please also note the opinions expressed in *Opening Times* are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally.

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Macclesfield & East Cheshire

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Contact: John Barber; secretary@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Central Manchester

www.centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Contact: Steve Davis; treasurer@centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Social Media

Many of the local CAMRA branches have Facebook and Twitter accounts you can follow:

Stockport & South Manchester:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA

Twitter – @SSMCAMRA

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA

Central Manchester:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra

Twitter – @MCRCentralCamra

Macclesfield & East Cheshire:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/groups/897449270304045

Twitter – @MECCAMRA

CAMRA Discounts

A list of all pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members can be found at camra.org.uk/join/membership-benefits/real-ale-discount-scheme/

Front Cover

Bob and Mary Ellis (right and centre with certificate) of the Chiverton Tap celebrate their Pub of the Year award with bar team (left to right) Ben Holland, Lucy Weissenborn, Kate Banks and Sandra Dorney. Photo by Lawrence Devaney.

Contributors

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Copy date for the Sept/October issue is Friday 12 August

The Petersgate Tap



Winner Stockport Cider Pub of the Year
2018, 2019, 2020

Winner Gtr Manchester Region
Cider Pub of the Year
2018, 2019

Good Beer Guide 2018, 2019, 2020,
2021, 2022



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Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for July and August



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for July 2022 has been awarded to the Calverts Court, Stockport. Jim Flynn is a fan and explains why it won.

To some people, this award to a JD Wetherspoon pub, housed in an old furniture store on Petersgate, Stockport might be a surprise. No, it cannot be described as an architectural or historic gem, but it is one of the busiest pubs in the town centre, and possibly across the borough as a whole. It boasts the usual Wetherspoon's attributes of value for money, a range of beers, and confidence that you will not be short-changed on standards.

However, what has earned Calverts Court the accolade is the improvement in choice and quality of the ciders and cask beers (including milds) over the last 12 months or so. By the time of the award being presented, it is planned that the number of guest cask beers (in addition to Abbot and Ruddles) will have been increased to seven, such is their increase in popularity. They have also over this time promoted a number of beer festivals, supported Mild Magic and Stockport Beer Week and held good-quality Meet the Brewer events, such as with Titanic.

The pub itself is one very long room, with the bar dominating most of the right-hand side. On the opposing wall is a series of alcoves which provide a degree of privacy to drinkers. A seated drinking patio at the front gives a continental feel in summer, and at the rear is another outside drinking area.

Congratulations are therefore in order to Rachael Brown, the pub manager, and her Ale Champion, Tom Jones, who has been encouraged to freshen up the beer and cider offering, which in turn has led to this award. So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate with them and their staff on Thursday 28 July, when a great night will be enjoyed by all.

The pub is right in the town centre on Petersgate, only 100 metres or so from the Market Place, less than a third of a mile from the main A6 and half a mile from the station. It could not be more convenient for public transport.

The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 150 years. Check out their advert on the previous page.

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The August Pub of the Month winner is the Head of Steam on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury. Sue Lightfoot has been along.

That the Head of Steam has won Pub of the Month is testament to the energy, enthusiasm and vision of the new manager Eyo Essien, who has been in post since October last year.

Since taking over, he and his team have worked hard to make the pub, one of a group now owned by Camerons Brewery, a destination venue for Didsbury.

Situated by the clock tower in Didsbury village, where the Sanctuary used to be, and the Varsity before that, the pub has something of an urban vibe. The filament lighting, and the wood furniture and flooring provide a calming atmosphere. There are booths along one wall, and a sofa and easy chairs to relax in. The long bar affords plenty of space for perpendicular drinking. There are also tables outside – a real boon on sunny days.

The keg lines provide a variety of rotating craft beers, and there is a large selection of wines, spirits and cocktails. Cask beer availability now extends to six handpulls, the aim being to offer a variety of styles, including mild, a stout/porter – and something unusual – from around the region and beyond. Beer quality has steadily improved and tasters are offered. Cider is also available. There is an extensive range of bottled beers to try, and these can also be bought at a reduced price to take away.

The pool table has been reinstated and has proved popular. There are board games – and indeed, a games night – as well as a weekly quiz night, and live jazz on a Thursday. There are deals for after-work socials and cocktail hour. Graffiti Small Plates supply some very tempting meals.

A regular clientele has been built up; all ages enjoy the social centre the Head of Steam has become – and dogs are welcome too. An area has been set aside for people to leave information (and *Opening Times*), and the pub is happy to support local branch events such as the Mild Magic challenge. Camerons was one of the sponsors for the recent Stockport Beer and Cider festival.

This is a pub which listens to its customers and provides service with enthusiasm. There are regular updates on Facebook and Twitter about deals and events. Please come and join us for the presentation on 25 August, from 8pm, to celebrate this richly deserved award and enjoy a few beers!

Bus routes: 142, 42, 42a, 23. Tram stop: Didsbury Village.



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Summer of Pub

Take part in our photo competition



CAMRA's Summer of Pub aims to support and promote pub-going throughout the summer, and getting involved is as easy as planning a trip down your local!

The past few years have presented an enormous challenge for the whole sector, and venues and producers need support like never before. Pubs are at the heart of so many communities across the UK,

servicing a huge range of beers, ciders and perries, and hosting events that cater for every taste.

All manner of events are taking place across the country in support of this Summer of Pub and you can find details on the CAMRA website at camra.org.uk/pubs-and-clubs/current-campaigns/summer-of-pub/.

Locally, we have decided to run a photo competition until the end of August with the theme 'capture the sunlight'. Is there a particular beer garden you like? Or even a special sunlit room in a pub? Please send your photos to our dedicated email address at summerofpub@proton.me

We will publish the best photos in a future issue of *Opening Times* and the one we think is the best will also win a selection of beers from the Editor's extensive cellar.

Also check out our 'Summer of Pub' beer garden feature on page 19.

Mild Magic 2022

Record turnout delights organisers

The return of Mild Magic after a three-year gap proved to be a huge success with no fewer than 110 entries submitted – which we think is a record.



Participating pubs also got the footfall too, with the participants making a total of 2,278 pub visits between them – and of course that doesn't include those people who started but didn't get their entry card completed.

And, for a supposedly dying beer style, the pubs sold no fewer than 66 different milds over the six weeks of Mild Magic – and that's just those we spotted! It's

quite likely the total exceeded 70. Several breweries rose to the occasion and produced milds for the event – including local family brewer **Joseph Holt** with a rather fine **Cherry Mild** which seems to have sold remarkably quickly.

Mild Magic organiser Darren Berry and his team are understandably over the moon with Mild Magic's success and are already looking ahead to next year's event. Our thanks go to them, and of course to all of the pubs, breweries and pub-goers who gave their support this year.

Walthew House

Charity says Cheers to the beer festival

Local sensory loss charity Walthew House was chosen to benefit from funds raised at the recent Stockport Beer & Cider Festival that took place in June at Edgeley Park.

The festival, organised by the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA, ran from 16 to 18 June, with Walthew House able to fundraise with bucket collections, raffles and selling beer on the charity bar.



More than 60 charity volunteers worked shifts across the three days of the festival, pulling pints of beers that had been donated to them by local breweries, and which were also sponsored by Stockport-based businesses.



The charity raised much-needed funds of £5,931 from the event, to support the services they provide to people across Stockport living with sight and/or hearing loss. This includes social and sports groups, a Youth Club, sight loss counselling, and a hospital information service at Stepping Hill Hospital.

Walthew House funding manager Sarah Mollitt told *Opening Times*: "It was wonderful to be able to hold face-to-face events again, enabling us to return to community fundraising after the enforced break caused by the pandemic. In order to continue providing our services, events such as the beer festival are vital to us, and we are so grateful to everybody who made the event such a success – from our dedicated team of volunteers to everyone who purchased a pint from our bar!"

Pictured above are charity volunteers (left to right) Shanna Lennon, Becky Shorrocks, Vinny O'Brien, Brenda Marsh, Sam Case, Ron Marsh, Sarah Mollitt, and Debs Turnbull. Pictured with Stockport MP Navendu Mishra are (left to right) Shannon Gorman, Sandra Knott and Colin Knott.

Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Station South



The old Levenshulme South station closed to passengers way back in 1958. Luckily, the handsome building remained intact and for many years functioned as a DIY store. Back in 2018, a community group began a lengthy fundraising and restoration programme to turn it into a 'destination cycle café, bar, co-working space and garden'. After something of a stop-start process, the doors on the newly named **Station South** finally opened in March this year.



The restoration is something of a triumph and seems to have been an instant hit. It was certainly ticking over nicely when *Opening Times* called late on a Wednesday afternoon. At the back is a glazed viewing area overlooking the old railway line, now converted into footpath and cycle route, and the right hand side of the building is now a bike workshop. The garden area is still a work in progress but should be open this summer. The main area with its vaulted ceiling functions as a café, bar and meeting space.

Food is available, with breakfast and brunch served until 3pm, and cakes are available later. The drinks menu doesn't (yet) stretch to cask beers, but local craft beers are on tap – Pomona Island and Shindigger beers were spotted when we called. This promises to be a real asset to the Levenshulme food and drink scene.

Bulls Head, Hazel Grove



After what was perhaps an ultimately unsuccessful few years as the **Bullock Smithy**, and then a period of closure, the **Bulls Head** in Hazel Grove reopened under its old name in June. It's been smartened up substantially, both inside and out, and the largely open-plan, rambling interior is light and airy.

Food is available from a variety of menus every day until 8pm. On the bar is a bank of four handpumps and, when *Opening Times* first dropped in, beers from Brightside, Mobberley and Weetwood were 'coming soon', while Taylor's Landlord was on tap at £4.40. This apparently sold in double-quick time and, when we dropped by again in late June, the sole cask offering was Theakston's Old Peculier. A 5.6% dark beer might seem an odd choice for a solitary cask beer in late June, but it was cool and clearly very well kept. The Bulls Head is open every day from 12 noon to 11pm (midnight on Friday and Saturday).

Silver Birch



It has been more than 60 years since a tree which gave a Wythenshawe pub its name was planted at the venue.

But Joseph Holt pub the **Silver Birch**, on Poundswick Lane, is now home to another namesake after a silver birch tree was planted outside the pub in honour of the recent Platinum Jubilee.

Funding for the young sapling, along with a plaque and surrounding picket fence, came from a £500 grant made to local safety group the Wythenshawe Patrol – a community group which pledges to keep local parks and streets around the area safer for the community.

There are already two silver birch trees by the pub, which bar manager Christopher McIlwrick describes as 'massive.' A fast-growing species, the silver birch can grow to at least 20 metres tall.

"Now we have a new tree right at the front of the pub so customers can see it as they come and go. As well as marking the Jubilee – which was such a great moment in history – we feel the tree, with a picket fence around it, will also be used for memorial events too. The patrol does such a great job and this is a wonderful way to commemorate their work too" said Christopher.

Pictured above are Christopher McIlwrick, landlady Tricia Dunn and Andrew McIlwrick, along with the newly planted tree.

Puss in Boots, Offerton



The **Puss in Boots**, on Nangreave Road, has introduced a new concept for children with autism whereby they can choose pictures of the food they want to eat and fix them to their menu with Velcro. They were introduced after the pub's assistant manager, Leah Hyde, came up with the idea after experiencing first-hand how difficult it can be for families with additional needs to eat out.

The move has attracted a lot of praise and the scheme will now be rolled out to the other Almond family-run pubs, the **Spread Eagle** in Romiley, the **Jolly Sailor** in Davenport and the **Fletchers Arms** in Denton.

Saturday 9 July also saw the annual Almond pubs 'One Small Step' pub walk. This is essentially an awareness and fund-raiser event for the Prader-Willi campaign, something close to the Almond family. Starting at the Fletchers, it took in the Spread Eagle and Puss in Boots, finishing at the Jolly Sailor with a garden party. Look out for next year's event.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2022

Facts, Figures and Winners



Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, returning after a three-year gap, and held over three days at Edgeley Park, has been hailed a resounding success.

Between Thursday and Saturday, over 4,500 eager customers drank over 12,000 pints of beer, and 2,500 pints of

cider and perry, from 100 different breweries and cider makers. And if that wasn't enough, the stock of 1,400 bottles and cans also sold out as drinkers were tempted by the huge range of thirst-quenchers on offer.



In addition to the thousands of visitors from Stockport and the North West, beer and cider enthusiasts arrived from places as far away as London, Birmingham, York and Newcastle to sup the extensive offering of local products available.

The crowds took advantage of the sunshine to sit in the stand, and a few lucky folk were able to have their picture taken with Stockport County's National League trophy. The Walthew House charity stand was busy selling beer and snacks and, to complement the drinks, visitors also enjoyed the music and food on offer.



VIP visitors included the mayor and mayoress, Councillor David Wilson and Ms Jeanette Slavinski (pictured here with main beer manager Dave Pennington), and also Stockport MP Navendu Mishra.

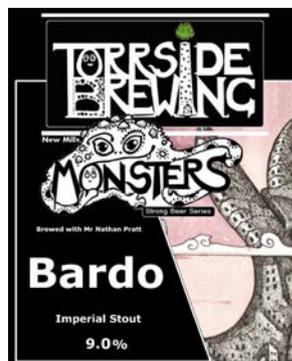
Festival Organiser Jim Flynn told *Opening Times*: "I am delighted that so many people came along to sample the great variety of drinks available in the friendly atmosphere at

Edgeley Park. After three years, we were finally able to put the festival on again, and it was wonderful to see old friends, first-time visitors and lots of smiling faces.

"I would like to thank the 150 CAMRA volunteers who gave their time to organise and staff the festival, as well as our sponsors, and the team at Edgeley Park; without them, none of this would have been possible. And finally, thanks to everyone who came along and made it such an enjoyable event."

Beers, Cider and Perry of the Festival

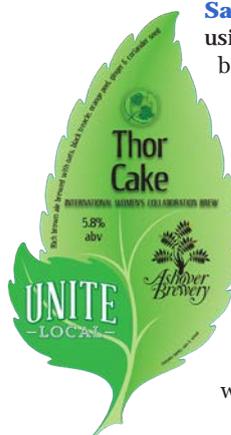
One of the many highlights of the festival has been the public vote for Beer, Cider and Perry of the Festival. Despite the festival being held in June our customers over the years have shown a particular liking for dark beers, and this year was no exception.



The overall Beer of the Festival was **Bardo**, a 9% imperial stout, which was a collaboration between **Torrside Brewing** of New Mills and homebrew competition winner Nathan Pratt. This is the first time an imperial stout has won this award, but those who tried it will recall what a dangerously drinkable beer this was. Nathan, who is a member of the Sheffield homebrew group, said he was 'lost for words' when told of his joint win. Torrside have put the rest of the brew into pins (four-and-a-half-gallon casks), so look out for it in local pubs and bars.

The Silver Award went to another big stout, and another collaboration. This was between Salford's **Marble Beers** and homebrewer David Ogden, with **Ogden's Foreign Export Stout** at 7%. Another dark and delicious beer, this had been released on cask by Marble as we went to press.

The Bronze award was tied. One of the winning beers was **Pale Ale Sabro** (5.5%), a pale and hoppy beer brewed using Sabro hops. This was a collaboration between North Reddish-based **Thirst Class Ale** and homebrewer Greg McCormick. This fine, multi-layered beer is available on cask and also in can from Thirst Class.



We travel to Derbyshire now. Clay Cross-based **Ashover Brewery** produces a fine range of ales, one of which is **Thor Cake** (5.8%). This rich brown ale, brewed with oats, black treacle, orange peel, ginger and coriander seeds, was another unlikely summer hit with our customers, and a very worthy joint-Bronze winner.

The cider and perry awards have often gone to makers in the West Country, but this time Cider of the Festival was won by a maker close to home. The winner was **Dunham Cat Cider** made by **Dunham Press Cider**, based in Dunham Massey, in collaboration with local online cider and beer seller **Cat in the Glass**. Made with juice from Harry Masters and Michelin cider apples, this is a delightfully smooth and dry cider.

Perry of the Festival was won by serial winners **Gregg's Pit**, based near Much Marcle in Herefordshire. James Marsden and Helen Woodman are arguably the UK's best perry makers and their skill was on display across the four perries we had from them at the festival, along with some very fine perries by other makers, too. The winner was **Aylton Red**, **Blakeney Red** and **Gregg's Pit**, named after the blend of perry pears used to make it.

Look out for reports of all the presentations in future issues of *Opening Times*.

Beer festival photos by Bill Fawcett and Rob Colville.

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Scribbles on a Beer Mat



Welcome to Scribbles on a Beer Mat: the quiet corner of a Stockport pub where our Poet in Residence, Carl Burkitt, is sipping a pale ale and scribbling some poems.

Go For It, Mate

He's wearing adjustable trouser braces over a Father Christmas red shirt, eating a pork pie with his snowman-chin in the air.

His feet won't sit still, they are tapping the base of the table like a drummer kicking off a solo. He is alone and the music stopped

in this room 20 minutes ago. The pie is finished. He's eating the pot of chutney he realises he forgot with a teaspoon, laughter, and hellacious vigour.

Padded Booth Seats as Mum

It's a race to get their first, to feel held, to feel above concerns. They're not real leather, but you wouldn't know it by how confidently they carry it off. Can you imagine how many stories they've absorbed? The number of blows they've cushioned. Knackered wooden chairs sit opposite, their legs swaying under the wait, holding out for a quick Come here with open arms.

He Has a Moustache Like the Movies

Fist thick, curving either side of his lips, as solid as a doorstep. When a pint of beer enters his mouth it looks like a slug sliding down a miniature window, Tom Selleck kissing Monica Geller.

He is wearing a stainless white t-shirt, a pair of beige chinos, steel toe cap boots. His body is muscle and all of today. He is the road this pub sits on. He is greeting everyone. He is the North.

This month we also have a bonus poem. It's by Linda Cosgriff from Stockport Writers who meet on the second Sunday of each month, from 11am to 1pm, at Stockport Museum on the Market Place. It's a tribute to Robinsons Brewery.

There is no ambiguity
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Old Tom's is the
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Trooper Nitro
Robinsons Smooth
Each one guaranteed
To soothe
Your temper but,
To avoid the flounce,
Drink the one
I can't pronounce:
Cwrw'r Ddraig Aur

Back this year – dates for the diary...



CAMRA Awards

Recent presentations by local branches

May and June saw a flurry of presentations made by the Stockport & South Manchester and the High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire branches of CAMRA. Here's our report.



The Stockport & South Manchester **Pub of the Year 2022** award was won by the **Chiverton Tap** in Cheadle Hulme. This popular pub has not looked back since it was opened by Bob and Mary Ellis in May 2015, and indeed won the local Pub of the Year award in 2017, too. Bob (right) and Mary (centre with the certificate) are pictured above with their team.

Pictured below is Sue McGrath, licensee of **Bugsworth War Memorial Club**, being presented with the High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire **Club of the Year 2022** award by High Peak CAMRA chairman Ben Zwierink. This excellent club also won the award in 2019 and 2020, and acts as a real centre of the local community.



The **Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar** has again deservedly been selected as the **Cider Pub of the Year 2022** by the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch. Little can be written about this excellent, top-notch pub which has not already been said, and winning this award for two years running speaks for itself. It is too easy to miss trains whenever you visit, but strangely that is not a hardship! The photograph (above right) shows branch chairman Ben Zwierink presenting the certificate to manager Lyndsey Martin and staff member Beth.



The High Peak, Tameside and North East Cheshire Branch recently selected the **Gillery** in Mossley as its **Pub of the Season for Spring 2022**. The pub opened in March 2020 and has gone from strength to strength since. A one-room bar, with a small side room suitable for small meetings, is complemented by a pleasant outdoor drinking area.



Its previous history as a bank is amply evidenced by the architecture of the building, and the polished wooden fittings and wainscoting. The Gillery is ideally situated outside the railway station and on the bus routes from Lower to Upper Mossley. Open from Wednesday to Sunday 12-12, it has four handpumps, and is a good outlet for the local Millstone beers, amongst others. The photograph shows licensee Dermot Gill with his certificate.



The Stockport & South Manchester **Pub of the Month for April 2020** was the **Queens**, on Great Portwood Street in Stockport. The pandemic prevented the presentation taking place at the time and so, almost two years late, the pub finally received its well-deserved certificate. Licensee Sue Ighon was on holiday when the branch called in during a Stagger (see page 15) so branch chair John Clarke (left) presented the award to assistant manager Simon Alton.

BREWERY ALIVE



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Stagger

Portwood and More with Chris Morris

On a mild spring evening, a small but keen group assembled in Portwood in the pursuit of quality real ale. Whilst some of the party walked the half mile from Stockport Town Centre, the 383 and 384 buses will drop you a few yards from our first pub on New Bridge Lane – **The Midway**.

Impressively refurbished a few years ago, a comfortable and contemporary interior awaits. Although it has now established itself as a popular dining destination, drinkers are welcome too, with



cask beer being available here for some time. During our walk, the anticipation was building as we pictured the thirst-quenching beer that awaited us. On arrival, we found a single handpump of Wainwright on the bar. With just a

single offering, we enthused that it might result in being fresh and full of condition. Unfortunately, we felt it was a little lacklustre and we'd have to look elsewhere for Staggersfaction.

Moving on, one member had previously popped in the **Park Inn**, around the corner, to check for cask beer. Unfortunately, none was on offer, so we had a ten-minute walk to the edge of Stockport town centre for our second tasting, where a few additional Staggerers were waiting for us.



On Great Portwood Street, the **Queens** is a popular, traditional local, located opposite the Peel Shopping Centre, and which underwent a tasteful refurbishment five years ago. A useful accompaniment to shopping in the daytime (or alternatively, a means of escape), we found it still busy in the evening despite the shops having closed some hours before. As well as offering a warm welcome in comfortable surroundings, pool, darts and live sport feature, with live music occasionally in the evening. As a Robinsons pub, Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde were available and both were on good form. Shortly after our arrival, the pub was presented with their well-deserved Pub of the Month award which was delayed from 2020. It should be noted that the pub accepts cash only.

A brief walk through central Stockport brought us to another pub from the Robinsons stable, the **Swan with Two Necks** on Prince's Street. This heritage pub was built in 1926 and little has changed inside

since then, with a number of handsome oak-panelled rooms that all demand inspection. With the new Redrock leisure development opening at the back, the increased footfall has made the pub extend its



opening hours to thankfully include evenings, so this is a welcome addition to our Stagger route. A recent development has been an impressive refurbishment of the beer garden at the back. The Robinsons cask beers available were Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde and White Label Citra Pale. All were found to be in good nick, but this was to be expected as the pub features in the *Good Beer Guide*.

A short walk to the **Chestergate** in Mersey Square ended with disappointment as no real ale was to be found, so we reached our final pub a little earlier than expected.

The **Crown Inn** on Heaton Lane reopened at the end of last year after a long period of closure. The pub used to hold legendary status for real ale in Stockport, with 16 handpumps in use at one point, earning it a high of CAMRA National Pub of the Year runner-up in 2009. When talking to touring real ale enthusiasts from around the country, if they had visited Stockport then they would all know the pub under the viaduct.



A much-needed smartening-up has now been undertaken and the decoration has brightened the interior considerably. The classic original features remain, with the bench seating having received a welcome reupholster. Reasonably priced food is now served on weekday afternoons, live sport is often shown, and live music is a regular feature on weekend evenings. Eleven cask beers were available when we visited. Pictish Brewers Gold, Fuller's London Pride and Bank Top Dark Mild were all sampled and found to be in excellent condition. The other cask beers available were Oyster Catcher and Trapper's Hat from Brimstage Brewery, St Austell Proper Job, Pictish Galena, Adnams Ghost Ship, Titanic Plum Porter, Marston's 61 Deep and The Crown Ale house beer. It was a big thumbs-up for the Crown. It does look like the future is bright for this pub, a great way to finish the evening.



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Pub Walks with Chris Morris

Mobberley

Rolling hills can add a lot of interest in a pub walk but this one shows that flat rambles still have a lot to offer. Although lacking in ascent, this walk scores highly in hedgerow nature, a handsome cricket pitch and two excellent upmarket pubs - all whilst engaging in a bit of plane spotting.

Train Information

There is an hourly service from Manchester Piccadilly to Mobberley, Monday to Saturday, stopping at Stockport and Altrincham along the way. The Sunday service is every two hours. The ticket to purchase is a return to Mobberley. For full timetable information visit nationalrail.co.uk.

The Walk

This is a five-mile flat walk with some uneven and muddy areas after rain, so hiking boots are recommended. The OS Explorer map is 268 Wilmslow, Macclesfield and Congleton.

On exiting platform 2, take a left through the station car park and immediately enter a field on the left via a kissing gate. Walk along the left edge of the field for 200 yards, then turn 45 degrees to the right and walk diagonally across the field to the opposite corner, crossing a footbridge, and then join a road via a stile. Turn right here and walk along the road for 150 yards, leaving via a stile on the left next to a brown 'Owen House' sign.

Our route is now right and through a metal gate, then left through two wooden gates with a road in the middle. Continue through the middle of the next field, crossing over a pond via a footbridge, then through a kissing gate in the next field. Walk around the sunken trees and shrubs in front of you and continue through the middle of the field beyond. At the far end is a large metal gate. Go over the stile to the left of it, then another stile, across the road and a further stile straight ahead. You will notice Manchester Airport Runway Two to your left. We now follow a straight nature trail for 500 yards until we reach a road. Turn right here, then left onto Davenport Road for a further 500 yards.

Just before the road bends left, exit to the right through a kissing gate. Follow the right hedge to a further gate then follow this straight path through a series of gates and two fields, hugging the edges of both fields. When you can see a church on your right, this is the location of our first pub. Midway through the second field, bear right and aim for the metal gate in the middle of the field with a tree behind. After the kissing gate, walk right, crossing the field in the direction of the church. On the other side of the gate is our first pub.

Church Inn



This 18th century pub ticks all the boxes of what you'd associate with a fine country pub. Low beams, red quarry-tiled floors, subtle lighting and bags of charm are all in evidence. Exquisitely furnished with great attention to detail, this extends

to the attractive beer garden at the side with views of the 13th century church opposite. The award-winning food is very popular here but drinkers are welcome too, with up to four cask beers available. These were from Mobberley, Storm and Beartown when I last visited.

Continuing on, we exit the pub and turn left to walk along the road. Cross over when the road bends to the left. Walk through the kissing gate signed for Mobberley Field, then the next two kissing gates to the left and continue straight on, walking around the edge of the cricket pitch with the fence on your right. Just after the scoreboard hut, exit right through a kissing gate and down to the footbridge. Cross the next field to the stile on the left, go straight across another field and over two stiles which join the main road. Go straight across the road and walk along Mill Lane, where you will find our next pub.

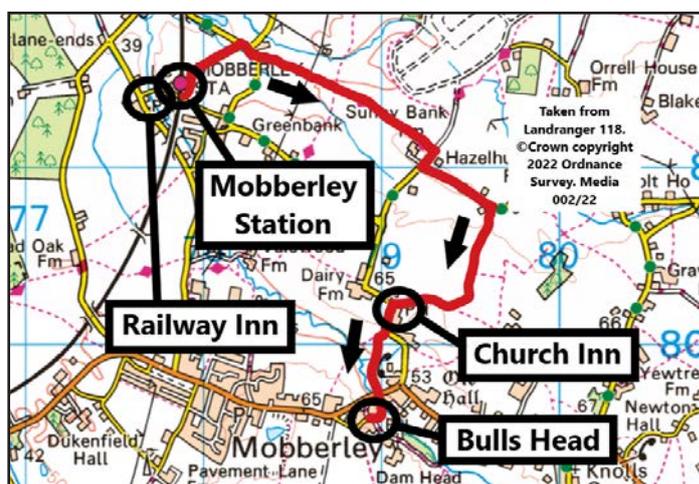
Bull's Head



Run by the same team as the Church Inn, expect to be impressed again by a quintessential village pub with heaps of character and quirkiness. Low beams, low-level lighting and cosiness are featured strongly again, but the Bull's Head feels a little more pubby than the Church. Even though the food is still of high quality, more drinkers can be found here, which is reflected in there being more cask beers available. The seven handpumps featured beers from local breweries Weetwood, Tatton, Wincle and Mobberley, plus a Rosie's Pig cider, when I last popped in. The outside area is extensive, with numerous seating arrangements to suit all, including a number of small summerhouses. The pub is also the birthplace of the brand Umbro.

The return walk is merely a matter of retracing your steps back to Mobberley Station.

For full pub details, including opening times, visit whatpub.com.



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Pubs in the Peak

Beer Gardens with Chris Morris



To coincide with CAMRA's Summer of Pub celebrations, we thought we'd highlight some of the best beer gardens in the High Peak area. During the warmest period of the year, relaxing in a comfortable and peaceful beer garden, with a nice view, shelter from the sun and a quality pint are all high up on the agenda. The following six recommended pubs all feature excellent beer gardens and cask beer.

Old Hall Inn



Located in the pretty hamlet of Whitehough near Chinley, this handsome pub exceeds in all that it does. As well as excellent drink and food, the pub has outside spaces which offer a tranquil oasis in a perfect setting. A number of covered

tables and benches feature in the scenic rear garden and to the side of the pub. The cask beers available when I last visited were from Marble, Abbeydale, North Brewing and Bradfield, with two ciders from Hogan's. Chinley train station is an easy ten-minute walk away, as is a stop for the 190 bus.

Lamb Inn



A few miles away, Hayfield Road, between Chinley and Hayfield, brings you to this 18th century gem, bursting with rustic charm. Inside, the low ceilings, settles and stone floors are a delight. This is continued outside with a newly refurbished patio

area, offering numerous seating options to suit all, in a picturesque hillside setting. The food is very popular here, but drinkers are catered for too. The cask beers available on last inspection were Black Sheep Bitter and Timothy Taylor's Landlord.

Little Mill Inn



This 18th century former mill is located in the quiet and remote village of Rowarth, on the Peak District border. Set in a two-acre cleared woodland, the vast outside area has been recently refurbished, with a large number of tables and benches dotted around, many

of them covered. An adventure playground is located on the other side of a stream, with ducks, geese and chickens allowed to roam freely. A new kitchen was installed recently and food is popular, with booking advised, during peak times. Up to three cask beers are available.

Fox Inn



Situated in the beautiful hamlet of Brookbottom, near New Mills, this 18th century hidden gem offers pure escapism for pub-goers, with peace and quiet all around. The short hill climb from Strines Station or the 358 bus stop is definitely worth the effort! Full

of character inside, it offers similar joys in the outside area, with a dozen parasolled tables and a couple of benches allowing customers to soak up the tranquil atmosphere. As well as reasonably priced food, up to three Robinsons beers are available.

Distant Hills Brewery Tap



A 20-minute walk from Glossop Station brings you to this excellent brewery tap, previously known as Howard Town. The name might have changed but the quality beers, plus a warm welcome and relaxed atmosphere still remain. Often

frequented by walkers, the lawn features eight tables in peaceful surroundings with views of the local hills. Outside toilets and a further four tables can be found around the corner. Up to four cask beers are available, plus a good keg selection, all from Distant Hills.

Pack Horse Inn



Lying a mile north of New Mills on the road to Mellor, this old stone pub has unrivalled views of the surrounding hills from the two tables at the front of the pub. A large and impressive beer garden is found at the rear, with most tables covered by parasols.

An interesting feature is a pond in one corner. The three cask beers available when I last dropped by were Phoenix Arizona, Wincle Waller and Wainwright.

For full pub details, including opening times and locations, visit whatpub.com.

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Brewed at Last

Homebrew competition winners get their beers brewed

One of the highlights of Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is Bar Nouveau, which features up to ten brand-new beers. Since 2016, these have included five beers made by local homebrewers in conjunction with different local brewers. The competition has become very popular, and so it was with the contest launched in late 2019 to find five new beers for the 2020 festival.



All went nicely to plan. Martin Wood at the now-closed Hope Inn once again let us commandeer the pub's vault for two Sunday afternoons and the beers were judged over two weekends in March 2020. At that point everything was locked down and the festival didn't happen. It didn't happen again last year either.

Happily, we were back to business as usual for 2022. Two questions remained. Would the homebrewers still be up for their brew days, and would the chosen breweries still be prepared to host them? The answer was 'yes' on both counts. All the brews took place over two weeks in May, and *Opening Times* was there.



First off was **Torrside** on Monday 16 May, when Sheffield-based homebrewer **Nathan Pratt** journeyed across the Pennines to brew his winning stout **Limbo**, (in recognition of the two-year hiatus) and, Torrside being Torrside, an imperial version, **Bardo**.

As we report elsewhere, **Bardo** went on to win gold in the Beer of the Festival competition. Nathan is pictured above with his certificate, and Torrside's Peter Sidwell, Chris Clough and Sarah Rothko-Wright.

Later that week, on Friday 20th, it was the turn of Stockport's Chiverton Tap Brew Club member **Greg McCormick** to travel up to North



Reddish and **Thirst Class Ale**, where he brewed his 5.5% **Pale Ale Sabro**. This turned out to be another medal winner, gaining joint bronze in the Beer of the Festival competition. Greg is pictured above with Thirst Class owner Richard

Conway, left, and head brewer Mark Blandamer, right.



The following week's brewing kicked off on Tuesday 24 May when another member of the Chiverton Tap Brew Club, **James Hobbins**, journeyed into Manchester and **Cloudwater Brewery** to brew his winning strong mild. **Man of Tod** (4.5%) was delightfully smooth and rich, and again proved extremely popular with the festival-goers. James is seen here (left)

with Cloudwater brewer Amy Booth and brewery team manager Jay Krause.

The following day, we were off to Glossop and **Distant Hills**. The brewery, formerly called Howard Town, has not only changed its name but also ownership, so we were particularly grateful that MD Danny James agreed to host Chorlton Homebrewers member **Alex Pembroke**, one of the competition's serial winners, to brew his black IPA, **The Darkness Beckons** (5.5%) (now called Astral for



its's free trade release), another beer which proved a big hit with the festival crowd. Alex is pictured below (left) with Distant Hills head brewer Jack Dewison.

Last, but certainly by no means least, it was a trip to **Marble Beers** on Friday 27 May, for **Dave Ogden**, the second member of Chorlton Homebrewers to win a competition category. Dave's winning beer was the dark and brooding **Ogden's Foreign Export Stout** (7%). This was another Bar Nouveau hit, so much so that it went on to win silver in the Beer of the Festival competition.



Pictured here is Dave (right) receiving his winner's certificate from Marble head brewer Joe Ince. Like the other winning beers, Ogden's Foreign Export Stout is available to buy –

most are cask-only, so look out for them in your local freehouses.



And there's the one that got away. The judging for the speciality category resulted in a tie between Dave Ogden and **John Rodgers**, who brewed a 5.5% **American Brown Ale with Cacao, Coconut and Vanilla**. Unfortunately, John had a computer disaster during the lockdowns and lost his recipes. As a result, he was unable to have his beer brewed for the festival. We do still plan to present him

with his category winner certificate, so look out for this in a future issue of *Opening Times*.

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What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Diaries

Events for July and August for the following local branches:

- * **Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)**
- * **High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)**
- * **Central Manchester (CMCR)**
- * **Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)**

Formal Branch Meetings

CAMRA members only at these meetings.

Thursday 14 July – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Will include guest speaker from Ossett Brewery. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 16 July – Greater Manchester CAMRA Regional Meeting: Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Starts 1pm.

Tuesday 9 August – Crown, Crown Lane. Lower Peover, WA16 9QB. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Thursday 11 August – Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ. Will include prize quiz. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Social Events & Presentations

Friday 15 July – Social in Woodley and Bredbury pubs. Meet 8pm at Joshua Bradley, Stockport Road, Hyde, SK14 5EZ. (HPNC)

Friday 22 July – Moss Nook & Heald Green Stagger: 7:30pm Tatton Arms, Trenchard Drive, M22 5LZ; 8:30pm Heald Green, Finney Lane, SK8 3QH; final pub Griffin, 124 Wilmslow Road, SK8 5BE. (SSM)

Saturday 23 July – Summer Pub of the Season: Beer Shed, 47b Market Street, New Mills, SK22 4AA. Presentation at 2:30pm, to be followed by a social in New Mills pubs. (HPNC)

Thursday 28 July – Pub of the Month presentation: Calverts Court, 12 St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. From 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 30 July – Beer of the Festival presentation: Torrside Tap, Torrside Brewery, The Wharf Warehouse, Hibbert Street, New Mills, SK22 3JJ. (SSM)

Saturday 30 July – Macclesfield West Wander and Club of the Year presentation to the Broken Cross Club. Start 12 noon at Broken Cross Club, Fallibroome Road, Broken Cross, Macclesfield, SK11 8TU. (MEC)

Wednesday 3 August – Weekday Wander in Greenfield: catch 11:30 train from Stockport to Piccadilly, and/or 11:58 train to Huddersfield. First stop Wellington Inn, 29 Chew Valley Road, OL3 7AF. (SSM)

Saturday 6 August – 21 Years in the Good Beer Guide presentation: Ye Olde Vic, 1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, SK3 9ED. From 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 13 August – Buxton social. Meet 1pm at RedWillow, 1 Cavendish Circus, Buxton, SK17 6AT. (HPNC)

Friday 19 August – Gatley & Cheadle West Stagger: 7:30pm Prince of Wales, Gatley Green, SK8 4NF; 8:30pm White Hart, High Street, Cheadle, SK8 1PX; final pub James Watts, 13 High Street, Cheadle, SK8 1AX. (SSM)

Saturday 20 August – High Peak No. 60 bus route social. Meet 1pm at Swan, Macclesfield Road, Kettleshulme, SK23 7QU. (HPNC)

Thursday 25 August – Pub of the Month presentation: Head of Steam, 653 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, M20 6QZ. From 8pm. (SSM)

Tuesday 30 August – Branch trip to Shrewsbury. Catch train at either 10:31am (Manchester Piccadilly) or 10:39am (Stockport). (HPNC)

CAMRA Awards

Recent Presentations



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April was the Vale Cottage, on Kirk Street in Gorton.

The phrase 'a country pub in the heart of town' can be rather over-used but, in the case of the **Vale Cottage**, it is a very appropriate description. Set back

from Hyde Road, well hidden in the Gore Brook conservation area, the pub has a definite country feel. Standing outside the front of the pub it seems a million miles from busy Hyde Road. There's a warm country feel inside, too, with low-beamed ceilings, an open fire and several different drinking areas.

The beers in this free house generally come from Timothy Taylor and Moorhouse's. Keen licensee Geoff McCabe ensures the beer quality is invariably high and is seen above (left) receiving his certificate from branch chair John Clarke.



Stockport & South Manchester's Pub of the Month for May was **P5** in Cheadle Hulme.

Conveniently situated next to Cheadle Hulme station, P5 serves a wide clientele, from families using the extensive dining area to football watchers (without the screens being intrusive). There is still ample space for anyone just wanting to pop in for a quiet drink and a chat.

Manager Dominic Henshaw and his team make great efforts to ensure the beer is kept in top form, and they manage to offer a full range of Holts beers, including the mild, bitter, IPA and Two Hoots, as well as occasional beers from Bootleg. Dominic is seen here with his certificate.



Getting up to date, the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for June was the **Shady Oak** in Bramhall.

Since taking over in July 2021, Sharon and Gareth have revitalised the pub, and have made it a real centre of the community. Sharon is the driving force behind the popularity of the pub's food, especially the Sunday carvery, while Gareth maintains the

quality of the beers on offer. The cask beers reflect the pub's ties to Marston's, but there is always a dark beer and a guest beer available. The couple are pictured here with their certificate.

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