

# Opening

September 2012

**TIMES** THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE



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see page 19

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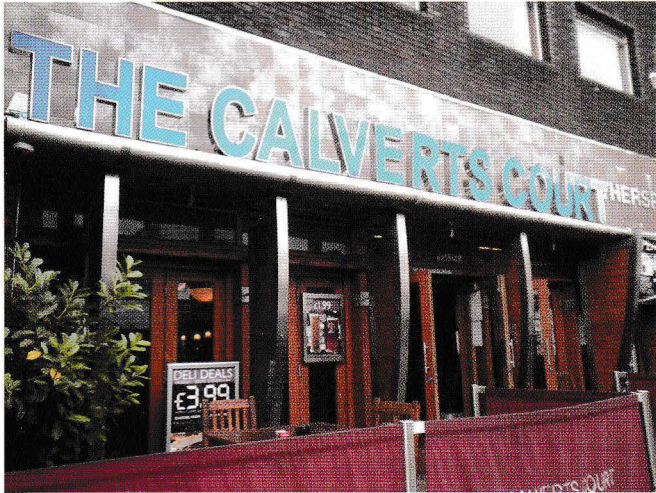
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# Pub of the Month

## The Calvert's Court, Stockport



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for September 2012 has been awarded to the Calvert's Court, Petersgate, Stockport, writes Jim Flynn.

When this Wetherspoon's pub was opened 11 years ago in an old furniture store it was welcomed by many, hoping that it would wake up the town centre pub scene. These hopes were dashed as instead it turned into a rather mediocre affair with somewhat indifferent quality and choice.

This award is testimony that all that changed with the arrival of Richard Cripps and his team. Calvert's Court is now fulfilling the hopes of over a decade ago. Before coming to Stockport he ran the Bollin Fee in Wilmslow for four years, a pub that didn't really know what real ale was when he got there but which was awarded a place in *The Good Beer Guide* just before he left.

The pub currently sells 2,000 pints of cask beer a week which is double what was sold when Richard first arrived. Five guest ales are always available (along with the usual Abbot and Ruddles) and Richard is keen to mix nationally available ales with those from local breweries. In addition at least one traditional cider is normally to be had. Richard and his team are always open to suggestions and have a 'Royal Ale' post box where customers can post a suggestion which they will then try their best to get in. Monthly Meet the Brewer nights are held and also a bi-monthly brewery tour at one of the local breweries.

They have a passionate team with special mentions on the beer front to Rich ('Chappers'), a new addition to the management team as one of Richard's deputies. He has a very keen interest in cask beer (he worked as a volunteer at the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival). Paul, a bar associate, is heavily involved with the organisation of ale events. So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented to Richard and all his staff on Thursday, 27 September when, I am sure, a great night will be enjoyed by all.

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# Comment & What's On

## Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

### Well Done Dunham

It's not all that often awards from the Great British Beer Festival head to the North West but this year was a minor triumph. Well, if you are Coniston Brewery it was a major triumph as their Number 9 Barley Wine made the top slot and is the new Champion Beer of Britain. It began its journey by winning its category at this year's National Winter Ales Festival held in Manchester so we can perhaps claim it as one of our own.

However we also have a genuine home-grown gold medal winner in the shape of Dunham Massey Brewery's Chocolate Cherry Mild. This beer (first put into cask as a favour to Stockport Beer Festival) has won a wall-full of awards and has now been voted Champion Speciality Beer. Well done and congratulations to John Costello and his team. We hope to run a feature on Dunham Massey next time.

### Opening Times - Information

*Opening Times* is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

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**Copy Date for the October issue is Friday 7 September**

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**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Front cover – Terry Langton and Paul Sieffert of Liverpool Craft Brewery with their Bronze Award from Stockport Beer & Cider Festival**

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### Your Local CAMRA Branches

**Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)** [www.ssmcamra.org.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.org.uk)

Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356;  
[mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk](mailto:mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk)

**North Manchester (NM)** [www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk](http://www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk)

Contact: Phil Booton 0161 957 7148 (daytimes);  
[phbooton@hotmail.com](mailto:phbooton@hotmail.com)

**High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC)** [www.hpneccamra.org.uk](http://www.hpneccamra.org.uk)

Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517; [mikewrose@gmail.com](mailto:mikewrose@gmail.com)

**Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)**

[www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

Contact: Tony Icke 01625861833; [bicke@madasafish.com](mailto:bicke@madasafish.com)

**Trafford & Hulme (TRH)**

[www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)

Contact: [enquiries@thcamra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thcamra.org.uk)

### Your Local CAMRA Events

Local CAMRA branches organise regular events in pubs across the region. Members of other branches and the general public are welcome to attend all events except some branch business meetings (call/email the branch contact if in doubt). Organising branch shown in brackets.

**Thursday 6th** – Branch Meeting: Waterhouse, Princess St, Manchester. Starts 8.15pm (TRH)

**Saturday 8th** – Trip to Blue Bee Brewery to present Beer of the Festival Award. Book with John Clarke – 0161 477 1973 (SSM)

**Saturday 8th** – Sale Stroll: a day long social around all of Sale's cask ale outlets. Details from contact. (TRH)

**Monday 10th** – Branch Meeting: Royal Hotel, Hayfield. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

**Wednesday 12th** – Social: Bird in Hand, Liverpool Rd, Patricroft. From 8pm. (NM)

**Thursday 13th** – Branch Meeting: Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury – includes Meet the Brewer event. Starts 8.15pm (SSM)

**Saturday 15th** – Presentation of Cask Champion Award in memory of John Tune. Railway, Portwood, Stockport. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Tuesday 18th** – Social; Robin Hood, Rainow. (MEC)

**Wednesday 19th** – Branch Meeting: Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

**Thursday 20th** – Whalley Range Social: 8pm Nip & Tipple; 9pm Hillary Step; 10pm Jam Street Café. (TRH)

**Friday 21st** – Reddish & Heaton Chapel Stagger: 7.30pm Fir Tree, Gorton Rd; 8.30 Union, Broadstone Rd. (SSM)

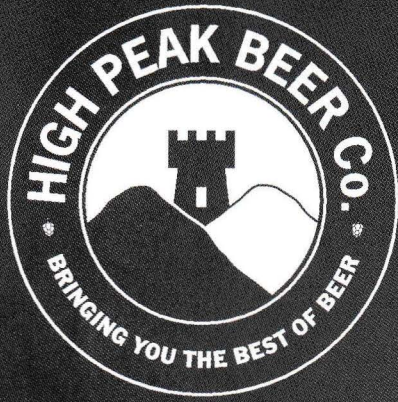
**Wednesday 26th** – Blackley Social: Grove, Rochdale Rd. From 7.30pm (NM)

**Thursday 27th** – Pub of the Month presentation to Calvert's Court, St Petersgate, Stockport. From 8pm (SSM)

**Monday 1st October** – Pub of the Season award to the Hillary Step, Whalley Range. From 8pm (TRH)

**Thursday 4th October** – Branch Meeting: Volunteer Hotel, Sale. Starts 8pm. (TRH)

**Saturday 6th October** – Mild Magic Presentation to Swan With Two Necks, Princes St, Stockport. From 8pm (SSM)



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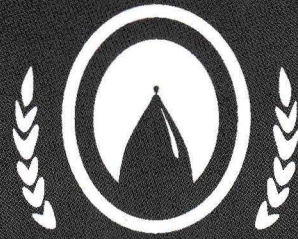
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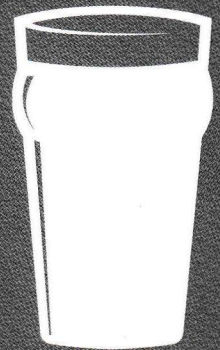
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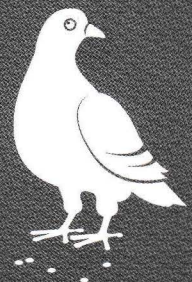
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Sat 29th & Sun 30th Sept, 2012  
Stockport Victorian  
Market Hall

## Session 1

Saturday 29th September  
7.00pm til 12.00am (midnight)  
German themed fancy dress  
competition  
Lots of prizes to be won  
(strictly no military uniforms)

## Session 2

Sunday 30th September  
11.00am til 4.00pm  
Family day with children's  
entertainers and

*Artisan Market*

## Session 3

Sunday 30th September  
6.00pm til 11.00pm  
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\*Includes German style beers from local breweries



# Stagger

## Around Edgeley with Jim Flynn

**A**S I walked towards the first pub on what was a decidedly cool and showery April evening I wondered whether the loss of income resulting from Sale Sharks leaving Edgeley Park would be the killer blow for any of the pubs we were to visit later that night.



Our meeting point was **Ye Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway in the shadow of the Co-op's giant blue pyramid and overlooking what was that night a swollen River Mersey. This free house run by the Quinn family and Mike Quinn has based his other business there, the Natural Cider Company (the pub had 13 real ciders available on this visit). As usual there were four cask beers, on this visit; Pennine Real Blonde, Howard Town Mill Town, Wincle Waller and Quantum Citrus IPA. The pub was relatively quiet and we sat down in the well lit lounge to try the Pennine and the Howard Town. Most of us had been at the pub only four days previously when it was awarded the local Cider Pub of the Year award and although these beers were in reasonable nick they had been superb at the awards night. As is our habit on staggers we left the pub just as the karaoke was being set up.

We trekked up Brinksway and turned left at the closed and largely unlamented **Bow Garrett** on to Northgate Road and on to the **Gardeners Arms** only to find the curtains closed and no sign of life at this Lees' pub. So we walked further up the hill to Robinson's impressive **Alexandra**. What an excellent multi roomed pub this is with etched glass, superb tiling and old style bench seating, no wonder it's in CAMRA's National Inventory of pub interiors to be preserved. We found some spare seats in the vault whose walls are home to Man United memorabilia (perhaps surprising given the proximity to Stockport County's home). The beers available were Unicorn and Hartley's XB but we all tried that latter finding it generally a very pleasant pint. We could have stayed there all night but it was time to move on. So refreshed we stepped out into the cold and set off for Castle Street, Edgeley's main drag, with our first

stop the **Royal Oak**. This ex Wilson's house (note the superb tiles in the loos) now serves Holt's Bitter and apparently Taylor's Landlord, but the latter was found to be off. The pub was very crowded (there was a birthday party) but we found seats in the well appointed black and white plastered lounge, which sported numerous County photos on its walls. After buying my beer however I did pop outside to view the very pleasant walled garden with its hanging baskets, an excellent example of an urban pub garden. The Holts was very well received and we all agreed that the Royal Oak is to be valued as a good solid pub with plenty of atmosphere. The disco started up with the DJ announcing that the party was for Emma and in a timely move it was then that we decided we needed to continue further down Castle Street.



Only a few yards down on the other side of the street is the **Prince Albert** which has been refurbished and has acquired cask beer since the last time we did this stagger. The pub was opened out many years ago and in my opinion lost much of its character then but the pictures of old Stockport and of course Stockport County around the walls give some character. The two beers were Greene King IPA and Black Sheep with the latter regarded as the better of the two. There were not many customers but those who were in obviously favoured the loud jukebox so having consumed our beers we beat a moderately hasty retreat to the next pub, the **Sir Robert Peel**, owned by the same licensee as the Prince Albert.

On match days and during the day the Bobby Peel can be a busy pub but that was not the case on our visit that evening. The fish swimming around the very large fish tank were in quiet contrast to the loud music being played as we entered. The pub has very recently started selling cask beer again but on the evidence of that evening they still hadn't quite got the hang of it. The Marston's Pedigree was undrinkable but to be fair they did swap it for the Black Sheep which was unfortunately only marginally better. The last of our number had to wait to be served while the cask was changed and he was the lucky one because his Black Sheep when it arrived was significantly better than ours. The

final motivation to depart was the karaoke that was starting up again.

We passed the decidedly weather beaten **Pineapple**, the smarter **Jolly Crofter** which are both still keg only (and neither very busy) and the now-closed **Grapes**.

A stone's throw from the Grapes across the roundabout on Shaw Heath is the **Armoury**. What a pub this is! Anybody with a liking for traditional pubs will love this buzzing Robinson's house. It has something for everybody from the comfortable lounge to the vault with its adjacent darts room to the garden to the rear. We managed to find seats in the lounge and found that the Unicorn, Hatters and Dizzy Blonde were as usual all on great form. It was certainly easy to see why this pub is a regular entry in the Good Beer Guide. We sat next to a local couple who were interested in our itinerary and when we informed them that as the **Greyhound** was keg our next and final stop was the **Olde Vic** they said that they thought that this had been shut for some time.



When we walked down to the Olde Vic on the corner of Chatham Street of course it wasn't shut but I could see that to the casual observer that it might appear so. Talk about hiding your light under a bushel this small free house has been one of the hidden gems of Stockport's beer scene for many years but its brilliance is concealed from the casual passer-by by the less than encouraging exterior. If you haven't been then pay a visit if not for the excellent choice and quality of the beer (on our visit **Abbeydale Now Then**, the excellent **Hawkshead Lakeland Gold**, **Marble Draft No 9**, **Dark Star Six Hop Ale** and **Wincle Lord Lucan**) and cider then for the opportunity to meet one of Stockport's most distinctive licensees, Steve Brannan (unfortunately absent for the majority of our visit). In contrast to the exterior the interior of the pub is full of character stuffed with idiosyncratic artefacts. All together this is a fine must visit pub!

Overall it was a good night with characterful pubs and a variety of beer both in terms of breweries and quality.

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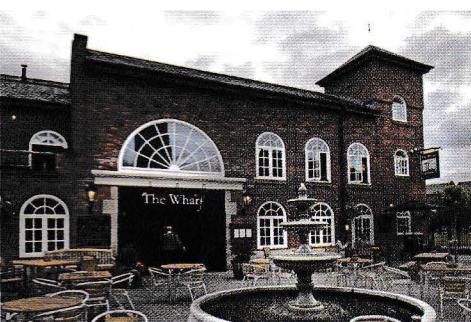
Opening Hours: 4 -10pm Tuesday to Thursday; 2-10pm Friday and Sunday; 12-10pm Saturday



# The Wharf at Castlefield

## John O'Donnell pays a visit

*As reported in last month's Opening Times, the newest addition to Manchester's ever growing cask ale scene is The Wharf in the Castlefield*



*area of the city which already boasts the Good Beer Guide listed The Knott and Cask pubs plus the enduringly popular Dukes 92 complex. Despite being open just two months, the Wharf is already a major real ale destination offering anything up to 11 cask ales at a time – more than virtually anywhere else in the city.*

Behind this ale range is bar manager David Green. Opening Times caught up with David to find out a little bit more about the pub. David has been with Chester based Brunning & Price group for a number of years most recently as a roving manager overseeing the opening of new pubs across the South of England where the group's pubs tend to be more restaurant focussed than in the north.

When David heard of the groups plans to acquire the former Jacksons Wharf pub on the Bridgewater canal on the edge of Castlefield basin he knew



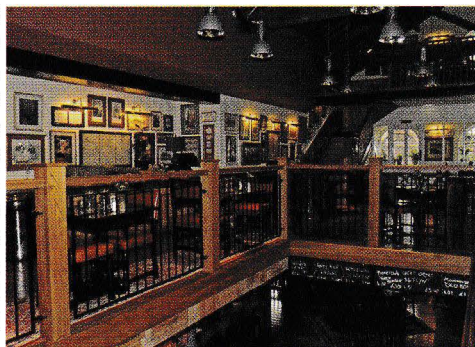
he wanted to return north for a permanent role there. While David said the six month conversion of the pub was one of the more straightforward he has been involved with it only came after a three year long pursuit of the site. Brunning and Price's original offer was rejected by then owners Peel Holdings who wanted to demolish the building and replace it with flats. Local residents group the Castlefield Forum spent three years battling Peel's plans through a number of planning applications before Peel finally threw in the towel and sold up towards the end of 2011.

Although the initial impression of the Wharf has been that it is a "Gastro-pub", David is keen to explain that it is not - while the pub can cater for 140 diners downstairs (with a further 105 in the first floor restaurant) it actually makes most of it's turnover from "wet" sales. The management's aim is for a relaxed and friendly pub where drinkers and diners are welcome in equal measure. The relaxed attitude is evident even before you enter where large signs encourage you to head straight for the bar for a drink and not to stand on graces, if you see an empty table, sit at it. While the pub does take reservations, food service downstairs is by the order at the bar method.

To the front of the pub is a large terrace raised above the canal side, with plentiful seating which was packed out during August's

warm summer days. Entering the pub from the terrace you are faced with a large open plan area with the long bar directly in front of you. There is an over-riding feeling of space with the pub which has a capacity of up to 600. To the rear of the pub either side of and behind the bar are two smaller and more secluded areas known as The Library (obvious what's in here) and The Old Office. The walls all round the ground floor are almost completely covered by an eclectic mix of framed photographs, prints and paintings.

The bar is dominated by the twelve handpumps in two banks of six. The house ale, Brunning & Price Original is brewed by Heywood's Phoenix Brewery while the other regular is Weetwood Brewery's Cheshire Cat. The remaining pumps feature a wide range of beers from a mixture of local microbreweries with the odd more nationally known names. When OT visited on a Monday, these included Timothy Taylor's Landlord, RedWillow's excellent Headless and a pair from Northwich's Blakemere Brewery with a total of nine ales available plus a hand pulled cider from Gwynt Y'Draig.



The commitment to stock a wide range of ales was evident when David showed OT round the pub's cellar which was packed with casks from at least a dozen more breweries than already on the bar. David's problem in the cellar is that he has limited stillage space for his cask ales requiring very careful management to be able to keep up the range. There just isn't the stillage space to keep eleven ales on all week so early in the week a couple of handpumps will be doubled while casks are prepared to offer the full range of 11 ales at weekends. The Weetwood beer is proving so popular that an extra stillage is being planned to take it in barrels (36 gallons) rather than the more usual kilderkins (18 gallons) and firkins (9 gallons) which will free space for more beers on the main stillage.

David told OT that the cider handpump was just a trial, but if it is successful he has the option of adding two more pumps for cider/perry and another for cask ale. There is capacity to add more handpumps dedicated to cider and perry. Generally the pumps in the left hand bank of six will feature lighter ales, while those to the right end of the bar will feature amber and dark beers. The details of which beers are available are also posted on blackboards situated around the bottom edge of the four sided balcony which houses the upstairs restaurant.



The first floor is reached by a wide staircase to the left of the main bar, there is also a lift just behind the stairs, cunningly disguised as a blackboard containing the pub's wine list. At the top of the stairs is a small bar to serve the restaurant which offers the same menu at the same prices as downstairs but with full table service. The menu is extensive with a choice of starters, light bites, sandwiches, jacket potatoes and around 20 main courses.

The terrace also features a permanent barbecue hut which will be open when the weather is fine, helping to relieve the pressure of the kitchen when drinkers on the terrace boost the pub's capacity.

While the pub's prices will undoubtedly deter some drinkers, for those that drink regularly in the area the differential is not that great. There is no doubt that the owners' large investment has created a very welcoming and pleasant pub that is a valuable addition to the city's drinking and dining market.

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# High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

## Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Even during a damp and dismal summer the Peak District is lit up by village carnivals, well dressings, Rose Queen processions and other community events. One of the categories for awards at these events is for the 'Best Decorated Pub.' This year's winners have included **Pride of the Peaks** at New Mills, the **Roebuck** in Chapel en le Frith, always good for a decent pint, the Good Beer Guide listed **Shepherds Arms** in Whaley Bridge and the **Milton's Head** in Buxton. Regulars and locals help to prepare pubs for the occasion, and a community spirit welcomes visitors to towns and villages for the events.



As the months pass the Marston's Single Hop beers follow apace. No sooner was the Styrian hop from Slovenia available, a very good beer incidentally, but this was followed by Strisselspalt, brewed with French hops. The **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge has of course kept up with the monthly changes, giving customers some interesting drinking.



The **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge re-opened at the end of July following an extensive refurbishment (external "before" and "after" photos are shown above). Refurbishing and redecorating has been tastefully carried out to a high quality and this, the oldest pub in Whaley Bridge has been brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Food comes on stream in September. There is an outside decking drinking area, with fine views along the River Goyt. Beers available in early August have included Young's Bitter and Special, Tetley Bitter, J.W. Lees Game On, Goff's 2012 and Leeds Eternal Flame, the latter a predictably good brew. The finished work at the White Hart leaves a very good impression, and with well kept beers this is a pub to visit.

An article in summer's *Potters Bar*, the Potteries CAMRA branch newsletter, mentions a brewery at Flash, just into Staffordshire, four miles south of Buxton. Whilst the **New Inn** is the pub in this reputedly highest village in England, Potters Bar notes that the brewery produces three bottled beers, available at Leek Farmers' Market on the third Saturday of each month.

A recent Saturday night at the **Soldier Dick** in Furness Vale was a well booked Steak Night, our meal washed down by Wainwright and Half Nelson from Thwaites and Phoenix Arizona, which were in good form.

Another group of us dined at the **Beehive** at Combs. The lunchtime menu during the week is a model of quality, value for money and of course good service. The beers are from the Marston's empire and Beehive Bitter, probably Brakspear's Bitter was the most enjoyed by the beer drinkers in the group.

The August Bank Holiday beer festival week end will have come and gone by the time you read this. A write up of the event at the **White Lion** in Disley will appear next time. Sadly of course, no Dog & Partridge event this year. Do try to get to the **Old Hall** and **Paper Mill** at Whitehough, Chinley for the beer and cider festival over the week end of 21-23 September. This is one not to miss.

## High Peak Pub News With Frank Wood

In Tameside, the **Cotton Bale** continues to have its "Meet the Brewer" evenings, the latest being Limestone and Elland. The real ale side is being championed by staff member Lisa, who has run several brewery trips with much success and now has a CAMRA corner on the left as you walk in the pub. There is a list for customers' suggested beers, which Lisa then tries to get hold of. On Monday evenings there is 50p off the normal price of beers which make it a real bargain (The **Society Rooms** in Stalybridge do this on Wednesday evenings).

Also in Hyde, the **Old Town House** (previously the Moulders Arms) on Hyde Road, is worth supporting as there are now three real ales on the bar. Visits by Branch members during July found Theakston's XB and Black Bull with Ringwood 49er as a guest.

In Ashton, the **Lord Napier** on Crickets Lane takes Moorhouses beers and the **Beau Geste** behind Ashton market, after years with no real ale, surprisingly now has draught beer on at weekends and up in Mossley, the **Commercial** near to the railway station goes from strength to strength since real ale was introduced earlier this year.

Finally, a pub which appeared to have a very uncertain future is close to opening its doors again. The **Spinners Arms** on Hadfield Road, Hadfield has been bought by Mark Coxon, who previously had the Trap and the Blues Club in Glossop. He tells me he plans to open a restaurant in the basement and also do bar snacks, but in addition he is looking into putting on real ale from local breweries, which would be a definite plus for the area. More on this venture when I have it.

The **Beehive** in Glossop had Taylor's Landlord and Wells Bombardier as the usual beers with a guest beer. The **Bulls Head** at Tintwistle had Landlord again, with Marston's Pedigree and Howard Town Wrens Nest, which seems to be the permanent three beer line up at this unsung olde world pub.

## High Peak Pub of the Year



High Peak CAMRA's Tom Lord (left) is seen presenting the High Peak Pub of the Year award to Sue and Joe Stockton at the Sportsman in Strines.

## Jolly Hatters

This particular Jolly Hatters is 155 Haughton Green Road, Denton. The landlord and landlady, John and Michelle, moved in around April and at the time of our visit were keeping a good pint. At any one time they have two panel beers on hand pumps and they change these twice per week. I tried the Jennings Cumberland and the alternative was Spitfire. The Pedigree had just finished. The pub is on bus routes 347 to Manchester and 206 to Denton. Well worth a visit.



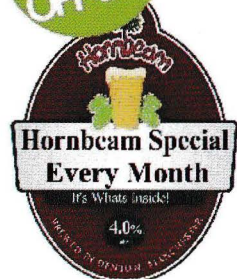
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## It's Hall in a Day's Work

Stockport's Victorian Market Hall is soon to see the start of its first beer festival thanks to the work of local CAMRA member Corin Bland, of High Peak Beer Promotions, but it certainly won't be the last, as Opening Times found out.

Stocktoberfest, designed as a celebration of Stockport's 30 years of twinning with the German town of Heilbronn, will see the Market Hall transformed into a German Beer Hall on 29 and 30 September, with 50 different German beers, Bratwurst, Pretzels and of course the obligatory Oompah bands. With over 700 tickets sold already it's proving to be popular amongst Stockport residents and visitors alike with tickets sold as far away as Dublin! Pictured below – promotional activities for Stocktoberfest under way.

However, Corin isn't happy sitting on his laurels and is already hard at work on the next event planned for December. 'This time we're dropping the dirndls and lederhosen for surcoats and serving wenches, as the hall takes on a medieval theme for the Winter Wassale. With plenty of strong winter ale, cider and mead, the flagons will soon be flowing and of course it wouldn't have that medieval feel without a hog roast or two'. The entertainment is planned to include medieval players, jugglers, acrobats and fire breathers. You can keep up to date as this event develops by following on twitter @winterwassale.



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Following a bit of a break over Christmas and a few well deserved beers at the last National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester, it'll be on to the next event. This time the beer will be taking a back seat (well only a little bit) as the market becomes home to the Stockport Sausage Festival in April. This will see sausage producers from a 30 mile radius competing with each other to win the titles of People's Champion and Judge's Choice - oh and there will of course be a beer festival featuring beers from a 30 mile radius to wash all that food down with.

Finally, after all that beer and food, a little bit of light exercise is called for in the form of the Stockport Brows Challenge. Based on a tradition of running the Market Brows leading to and from the square, this will see teams competing in a relay race using barrels of beer as batons. There will of course be plenty of food and drink on hand to keep both spectators and participants alike suitably refreshed.

## Double Award for Poynton British Legion Club

Poynton RBL is the CAMRA Greater Manchester Club of the Year for 2011. It also won the 2005 award but for some reason never received its certificate. That was put right with a double presentation in July. Pictured (left to right) are Paul Hession (Club Chairman and Head Brewer of Worth Brewery which is based at the club), Greater Manchester CAMRA Regional Director Ralph Warrington and Club Steward Nick Williams with the 2005 award.

