

February 2013

Opening

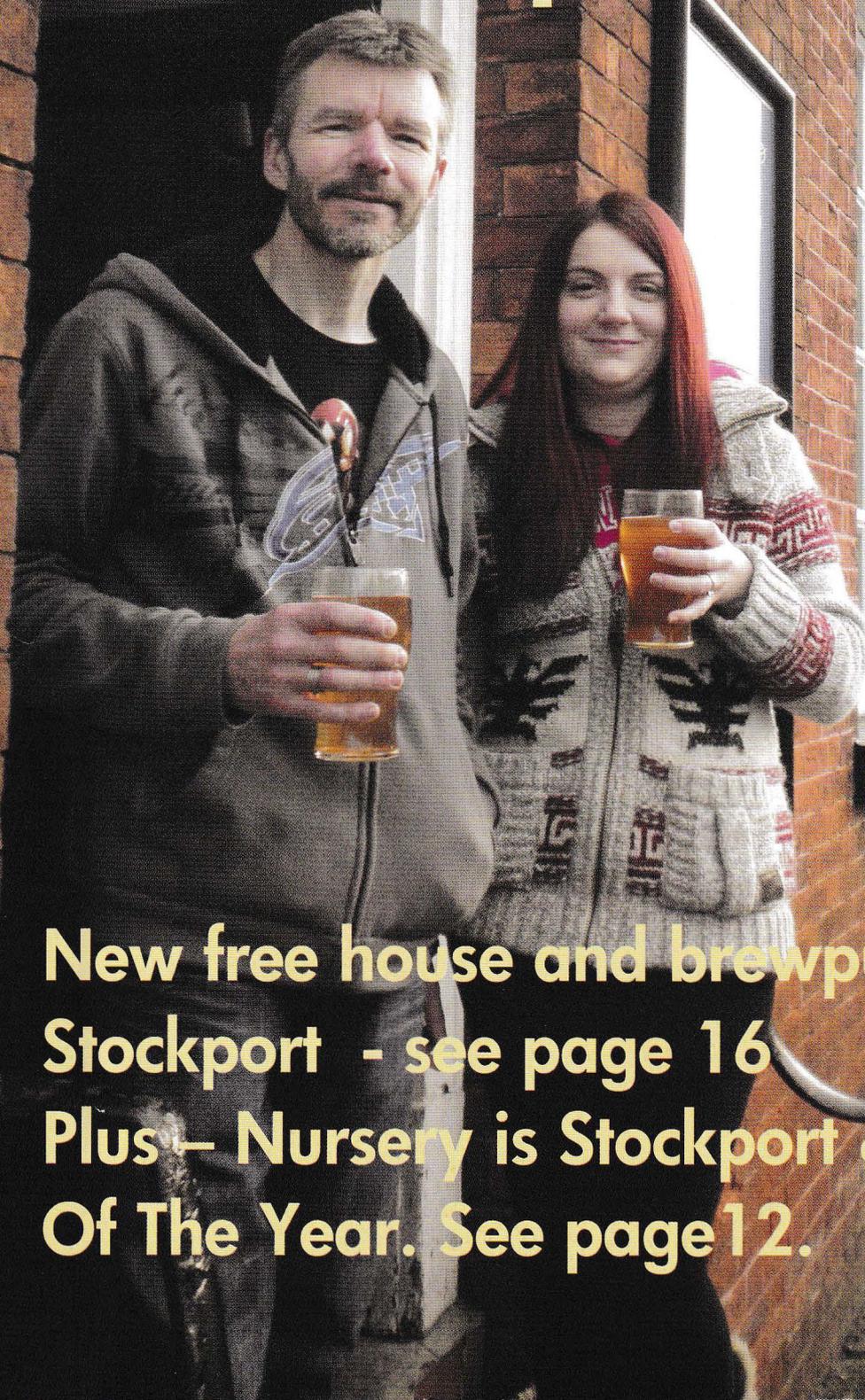
Times

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New Hope



New free house and brewpub for Stockport - see page 16

Plus – Nursery is Stockport & Sth Mcr Pub Of The Year. See page 12.

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Pub of the Month

The Railway, Heaton Norris



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for February 2013 is the Railway, Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris. *John Clarke went along...*

When Ray and Pam Ford took over the Railway, just a short walk uphill from Stockport Town Centre (there is a bus stop close by for the less agile) it was a pretty ordinary Punch Taverns leased pub selling a pretty ordinary selection of cask beers.

While the pub remained tied to Punch there was not a lot they could do about that. However Punch's financial difficulties resulted in a fire sale of their pub stock and three and a half years ago the couple were able to buy the pub free of tie. It's fair to say that since then it's not looked back.

The Railway has comfortably settled into the local pub scene, quietly making a name for itself with the quality of the live entertainment it offers. No tuneless karaoke here – instead there is top rated live jazz every weekend and this has now been supplemented with a rock'n'roll night on Mondays.

The beer range has now settled too. Holts Bitter is always on sale – always good to have a familiar name on the bar – and this is supplemented by four ever changing guest beers, often from local micros (Ray has been a great supporter of the new Ringway and Privateer breweries) and some from further afield. Quality is spot on with the pub appearing in the 2013 Good Beer Guide.

Ray and Pam have already been rewarded for their efforts with a previous Pub of the Month and Pub of the Year award. However their continuing hard work taking the pub forward makes them worthy winners a second time around.

This very well deserved award will be presented on Thursday 28 February when an excellent night out is in prospect. The pub is easy to get to being on the 192 bus route. From the south Manchester area bus number 22 will also drop you off nearby.

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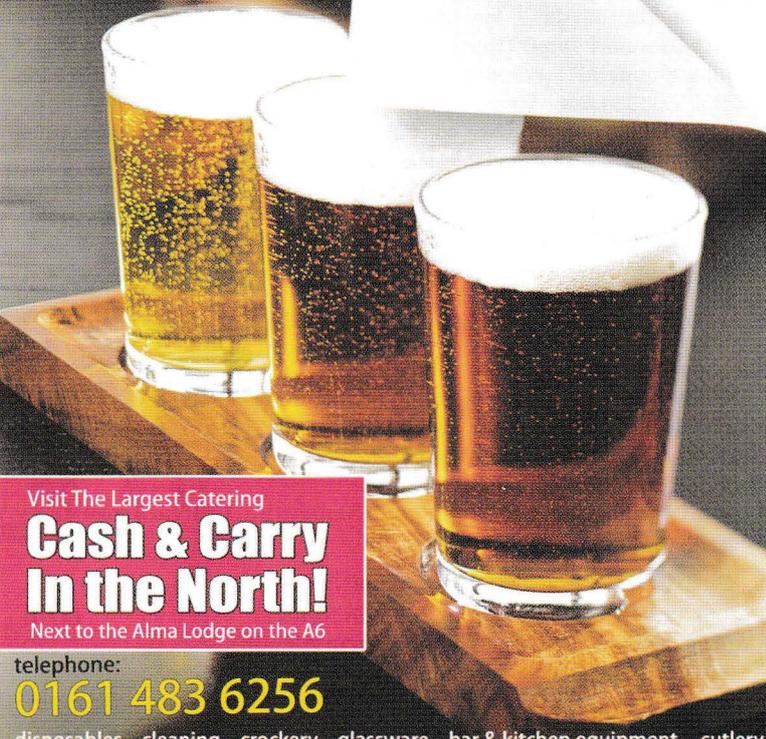
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Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Caught on the hop

"When the brewery at the Hope Inn opens in a few months' time Stockport will have four operating breweries again – the last time we were in that position was 1959" That's what we said last month. Seems like that has come around quicker than we thought as the new Foolhardy Ales brewery was scheduled to open on 7 February (so by the time most readers see this it will be up and running).

If there is space in OT we plan a review of the three newcomers, Quantum, Ringway and Foolhardy, alongside a look back at the vanished three. Robynsons have been the constant of course but back in the day there was brewing at Clarkes in Reddish, the old Bell's Brewery on Hempshaw Lane (then owned by Robbies) and the Royal Oak Brewery on Hillgate (recently turned into flats). Any readers who have memories of these are very welcome to get in touch.

We usually run a review of the National Winter Ales Festival in this issue but this year our production schedule means that there will be a report next time. What we can say is that as this was typed it is shaping up to be a cracker and will be leaving Manchester on a high note. Our colleagues in Derby have a hard act to follow but we are confident they will rise to the occasion.

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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Subscriptions – available at £11.00 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to Opening Times). Apply to David Sharpe, 1 Chiltern Drive, Woodsmoor, Stockport, SK2 7BE. Tel 0161 483 3708

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Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Tony Icke, Geoff Williamson, Mark McConachie, Jim Flynn.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front Cover – Martin Wood and Samantha Halfyard toast the reopening of the Hope.

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Your Local CAMRA Branches

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM) www.ssmcamra.org.uk
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356; mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk

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High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC) www.hpneccamra.org.uk
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Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)
www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk
Contact: Tony Icke 01625861833; bicke@madasafish.com

Trafford & Hulme (T&H) www.thcamra.org.uk
Contact: enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Your Local CAMRA Events

Friday 7th – Branch Meeting and Good Beer Guide selection: Volunteer Hotel, Cross St, Sale. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

Sunday 10th – Cider Crawl in Chorlton: Contact branch for details (T&H)

Monday 11th – Branch Meeting: Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde. Final Good Beer Guide selections will be made. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 13th – Good Beer Guide Surveying Crawl: Peel Green/Patricroft – Grapes 7.30pm; Bird in Hand 8.15; Queen's Arms 9.00. (NM)

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting & Good Beer Guide selection: Magnet, Wellington Rd North, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 14th – Quiz Night in Bowden: Griffin 8pm; Stamford Arms 9pm for quiz. (T&H)

Saturday 16th – Flixton/Urmston Social: Railway, Flixton 12pm; Fox & Hounds 1.15; Bent Brook 2.30; Nag's Head 4.00; Castle in the Air 5.15; finish at Swinging Bridge or Mardi Gras. (T&H)

Wednesday 20th – Branch Meeting: King's Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 21st – City Centre Cross Street Social: All Bar One 8pm; Browns 9pm; Sam's Chop House 9.30; Corbieres 10pm; finish Mr Thomas's Chop House. (T&H)

Friday 22nd – Gatley & Cheadle Stagger: Prince of Wales, Gatley Green 7.30pm; Horse & Farrier 8.30. (SSM)

Monday 25th – Quiz Night in Timperley: Quarry Bank – from 8pm. (T&H)

Wednesday 27th – Good Beer Guide 2014 Final Selection Meeting: Salford Arms. Bloom St, Salford. Starts 7.00pm. (NM)

Thursday 28th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Railway, Wellington Rd Nth, Stockport. From 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 7th March – Branch Meeting: Flixton Ex-Servicemens Club. Starts 8pm. Transport back to Stretford for all members after meeting. (T&H)

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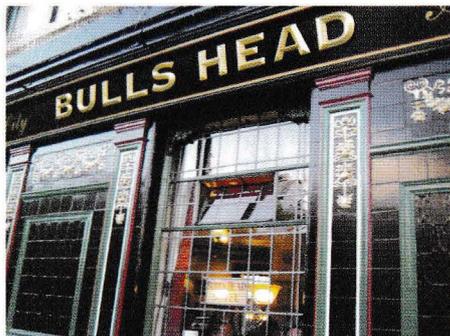
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Stagger

City Centre East with Mark McConachie



We began our City East crawl at the **Bulls Head** on London Road, across from the rear entrance to Piccadilly Station. It displays an ornately painted Victorian exterior that attracts both rail users and a faithful band of regulars. While the interior is basically open-plan it nevertheless manages to generate the atmosphere of cosy intimacy that you might expect to find in a more suburban location. With the recent retirement of long-time licensees Keith and Mui, I thought there may have been a change in the way things are managed. However I needn't have worried, as new licensee Paula continues the same professionalism and quality. Tonight we had Banks's Original; Jennings Cumberland Ale; Marstons Pedigree; Ringwood Boondoggle; Banks's Howling Wolf and Marston's Single Hop Citra. Only the latter two were sampled and both were very good.

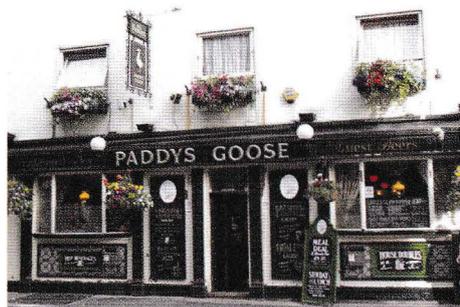
Passing by the keg-only Monroe's, one of our party enquired about cask ale availability in the Doubletree by Hilton hotel. Seemingly they sell cask Caledonian Deuchars IPA at a whopping £4 for a schooner (that's a two-thirds pint glass to you and me), which makes it possibly the most expensive pint in the world! Okay, perhaps not the world, but Manchester for sure.

He declined the offer and joined us in the **Waldorf** on Gore Street. This is an old but attractive building that stands quietly tucked away. The interior though is of more modern times, yet it gives a feel of provenance with wainscoted walls and a match-boarded ceiling. Mainly open plan (which seems to amplify the piped music), screened-off seating areas (some with sofas) afford some privacy to those wishing it. When televised football is shown, it can be busy, although tonight it was a loud with karaoke. Beers tried were Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Taylor Landlord, and from Bury, Irwell Works 1888. All scored well.

On next to Piccadilly Gardens and **Kro Piccadilly**. The most prestigious of the Danish Kro chain of pubs and bars, it occupies part of the ground floor of One Piccadilly Gardens. Inside, the predominance of concrete and glass can make for a noisy environment, what with both music and

conversation, making the latter very difficult. This is a stylish setup though that caters equally well for those dining as it does for those just here for a drink. The food is available all day whilst the beer selection tends to vary from time to time, with some interesting foreign bottles rounding it all off. Although busy at the bar, service was fast and efficient. A couple of beers were found to be on the warm side, but these were replaced when we informed the staff (the cellar beer-line-cooling equipment was working sporadically it seems). Thanks to manager Alistair Birdsell for the explanation. Beers were Robinson's Build a Rocket Boys (not tried), and Dizzy Blonde, Brakspear Bitter, Wychwood Hobgoblin, Jennings Cumberland (not tried). The Dizzy Blonde triumphed here over the others.

Passing the keg bars on Portland Street - Missoula, Blue Parrot, and Wave/Rogue, we entered **Yates** in front of the coach station. It is a large open space with raised alcove area to right leading to outside seating and smoking patio. A long curved bar sits along the back wall. It's similar in many ways to a Wetherspoon but not so cluttered with menus, so giving equal balance between wet trade and food. Unfortunately the usual Yates' House Best Bitter was not on tonight, so we passed on disappointed. Meanwhile behind the



forementioned coach station is **Paddy's Goose**, a pub of the more traditional sort where wood and paint, rather than glass and chrome, reign supreme and seats are there for the taking. The decor appears to almost be a throwback to the old Magic Pub Company days. Being on the fringe of the Gay Village, it attracts a fairly mixed crowd, with tonight having a friendly and convivial atmosphere as old Motown hits played in the background. The beers were Robinson's Unicorn and Wells Bombardier with both being in above-average condition.

Into the Village itself now, to the **Molly House** on Richmond Street. This new bar and cafe opened in December 2010 in a former worsted tailors shop. Not just a bar though, it does 20 different teas, specialist coffees, and high-end spirits. Set on two levels, its decor is

described as post-Victorian decadent shabby chic. The ground floor "The Tea Room" has the cask ale bar together with food servery. Upstairs in "The Bordello", the decor and lighting is more intimate. This floor has a bar too with sofas and a fireplace adding warmth. An outside smoking and drinking verandah finishes the impressive package. It invariably appears busy here, yet we managed to get seats to enjoy our Lancaster Amber, RedWillow Heartless, Abbeydale Fargate, Hornbeam Stretch Bitter, and Hornbeam Francesca (untried). People really took to the RedWillow beer whilst the others scored well too. They also do a real cider, which was Lancaster Farmhouse.

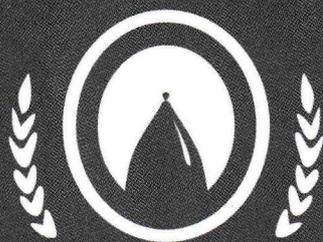
Back onto Portland Street next to finish the evening. First call was the **Old Monkey**, this was Holt's first ever new-build house in the city. Set on two floors with the downstairs being the main engine of trade, a mostly standing drinking area. Meanwhile upstairs has its own bar, and serves the



food in a comfortable and intimate environment. The upstairs windows provide you with great views of the bustle of the Princess Street junction. With a good-natured crowd in this evening, we enjoyed above-average Holt Mild, Bitter, and Wadworth 6X.

Two doors down is the **Circus**, a tiny, two-room house that echoes times past in its layout. A small bar manages to serve two cask beers, whilst friendly waiting staff guide you to a seat (space is at such a premium, that the waitress service here really is a godsend) in either room. Both rooms are plastered with hundreds of photos of footballers, boxers, comics and celebrities who have frequented the pub over the years. The back room's particular focus is on football material. Always popular with tourists, the Circus is a magnet for visitors to the town. We too were greeted well as we supped the very reasonable Tetley Bitter, it being the only beer on this evening.

Final stop was a further three doors down: Hydes' **Grey Horse**. This is a friendly single-roomed old pub. It has a light, clean interior with red upholstered bench seating and stools, and dark laminate floor. Photos of bygone Manchester adorn the walls along with a feature "Duffys" mirror. A tiny, heated outdoor yard at the rear can seat two people. We were easily accommodated although it was busy; the beers were Hydes 1863, Original Bitter, and seasonal beer Jekyll's Gold. All were well appreciated.



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Pub of the Season

The Trafford & Hulme Pub of The Season for Winter 2012-2013 is The Parlour on Beech Road, Chorlton. The award was presented on Thursday 10th January when local members joined a packed pub of regulars to celebrate with owners Jamie and Goshka Langrish and their team.

They were also joined by local MP John Leech who travelled back early from London specially for the presentation, spending two hours chatting to locals about subjects as diverse as the beer tax escalator, changes to the justice laws and the merits of various diets! As ever there were five cask ales plus a real cider and a real perry on offer while for the occasion the pub's chef had rustled up some hors d'oeuvres of roast beef in Yorkshire pudding with horseradish, mushroom & spinach vol-au-vents followed up by fish and chip cones.



Pictured below, pub cellarman Ben Brown receives the award from CAMRA's Heather Airlie and Trafford & Hulme Branch Chair Beverley Gobbett (right)



Neil Richardson Award



North Manchester CAMRA's prestigious Neil Richardson Award is presented each year to a local pub embodying the best of traditional pub values. It is presented in memory of the late Neil Richardson, long time CAMRA stalwart and editor of the now defunct North Manchester magazine *What's Doing*.



This year the award was presented to the **Union Tavern** on Liverpool Street in Salford, a traditional Holt's house. The award was presented by Neil's widow Sue who is pictured here presenting the award to landlord Danny Grayson.

The Railway Inn

A Journey Into History

The house at 91 Wellington Road South, Stockport, has seen a lot of changes. A glance at the neat frontage of Turner's art and craft shop won't give you many clues about its strange history. It won't tell you, for example, that sixty years ago, it was a popular pub. It won't tell you, either, that a gifted artist once lived there who decorated the walls with colourful murals.



The pub was the **Railway Inn** and in the 1950s this was a Wilson's house, although originally it was not owned by the Newton Heath brewers but by Daniel Clifton who brewed at the Royal Oak Brewery in Hillgate (and which has recently been converted into flats). The Railway was taken over in 1954 by John and Olive Nicholson, whose children John and Janet have been researching the history of the pub and its customers.

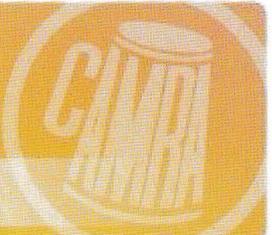
Their fascinating website (www.journeyintohistory.co.uk) provides a snapshot into a vanished world with atmospheric photographs of the pub and its customers from almost 60 years ago. It also provides a striking contrast with the building as it is today. After a couple of years the family moved to another vanished pub, the Church Inn on Love Lane in Heaton Norris, where the copious intake of regular "Sticky" Edwards is recalled by John Nicholson.



Pictured above – Olive Nicholson behind the bar (top), John, Olive and customers (above right), John Nicholson and clientele (above left). Many thanks to Janet and John Nicholson (who retain copyright of the pictures and site content) for permission to use this material.

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High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood & Robin Wignall with News and Views

High Peak Pub News With Frank Wood

The **Prince of Wales** in the Milltown area of Glossop changed hands in the Autumn and seems to have stabilised after several years of uncertainty and various changes in personnel. The Marston's pub had the standard Marston's Bitter and Pedigree on sale on my visit in early January, with the stronger Marstons Empire and a beer from Wychwood on the guest pump. I stuck with the Marston's Bitter and it was in good form. Heading down into central Glossop the **Howard Arms**, near top of the town's main traffic lights, sells no real ale and hasn't done for many a year.



At the **Globe** brew pub at the bottom end of High Street West, the new beer on sale from the New Year was Malt Star, a light coloured beer at 4.3% which was proving popular on my visit and unfortunately replaced the batch of Ginger Ale that was consumed over the Christmas period in double quick time (more Ginger Ale please!). The **Moon & Sixpence** now sells Taylor's Landlord alongside its other beers and across the road, a new basement bar has opened called **Hurricanes**. One handpump is fitted, but so far is not in use.

In Droylsden, the **Beehive** has been selling real ale for some months and recent beers on sale have been from Ringway Brewery and Wilson Potter at Middleton. They also sell food – a rarity among pubs in the area. Also in the town, the **Cotton Tree** had its licence withdrawn by the Council in the Autumn after pressure from Councillors and residents following concerns after a shooting at the pub last May. It is now up for sale. The **Gardeners Arms** on Edge Lane is also in the news following an armed raid just prior to Christmas.

The **Society Rooms** in Stalybridge has improved no end in the past months. Ben Royle is the real ale 'specialist' and he is doing all he can to promote it via events such as 'meet the brewer' nights.

Carrbrook Institute Club on Buckton Vale Road has been selling Greenfield beers recently, a real ale gain here and further on up towards Mossley, the **Stamford Arms** at Heyhead, a Thwaites pub, sells Lancaster Bomber, Wainwrights and the seasonal beer and has had good reviews.

Back in Stalybridge, the **Old Fleece** has been selling real ale but following various changes in temporary licensees, it had none on in late January. The nearby **Q** has re-opened, with Tom Hathaway from the White House looking after both pubs. Tom is unsure at present if it will be a permanent position, but it makes sense for it to be open as they are very close together and both fall under Hydes ownership. He will be working on expanding the beer range.

Peak Practice With Robin Wignall

The festive season brought some opportunities to visit some establishments not on the normal circuit, even though many of them do serve decent real ale.

The **Old Hall**, Buxton received its annual visit before Christmas. This is a historic pub, the present building dating from 1670, and in Victorian times was described as a 'comfortable and fashionable hostelry.' A decent lunch was taken by a small group of us, and at sensible prices taking into account the town centre location of the Old Hall in this tourist hub. Beer choice was Buxton Moor Top, as good as ever, Thornbridge Kipling, and Sharp's Doom Bar. The Old Hall is also well worth a call.

The **Beehive** at Combs is still one of the best places for handling large parties. Food service is slick and quality is maintained even when there is a score or more of diners. The beer is well kept. These days the three beers are from the Marston's breweries. Beehive Bitter is Brakspear Bitter, a worthwhile 3.4% brew.

The **Poachers** at Bollington makes another good lunchtime call, with an inexpensive meal deal during the week. As can be expected in a Good Beer Guide listed pub, well kept beer also features. Storm Desert Storm and Weetwood Black Dog are usually available. York Jester and the local Happy Valley Christmas Cracker were on in December, the latter making enjoyable lunchtime drinking.

Another Good Beer Guide listed pub always worth visiting is the **White Lion** in Disley. Sensibly priced food can be washed down by a selection of well kept real ales from the

Enterprise Inns SIBA list.

Every so often both the **Soldier Dick** at Furness Vale and the **Navigation**, Buxworth serve the odd cask of mild as a guest beer. In this way customer interest is raised and the beer sells well and quickly enough to remain in good form. Thwaites Nutty Black has featured at the Soldier Dick whilst Phoenix Monkeytown Mild and Bank Top Dark Mild sold well at the Navigation.

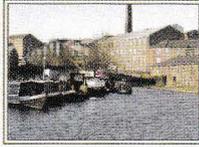
The Marston's monthly Single Hop offerings during 2012 reached the year end with Kohatu New Zealand hops and Saaz Czech hops. Each of the single Hop beers has been distinctive, and certainly has greater hop flavour than say Marston's Bitter. Hopefully Marston's found this to be a successful experiment worthy of being continued. The **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge (pictured below) has had each of these monthly beers on the bar as they have become available.



The Festive season produced a range of seasonal beers. Some were rich and dark, others pale, whilst some were herbed and spiced, sometimes a bit too much. However it is good to see brewers producing beers with a seasonal interest. It is even more pleasing to record some of the many pubs where some of these beers have been available. If it is commercially viable, it is good to see licensees providing a wider range of beer choice when they can.

The Navigation at Buxworth has sold Abbeydale Frostbite. A December visit to the **Drum & Monkey** at Horwich End found Christmas beers from Storm and Happy Valley in the cellar. Phoenix Christmas Kiss sold well at the **Old Hall**, Whitehough. Coach House Christmas Pudding and Moorhouse's Lap Prancer was available at the Soldier Dick. The Shepherds sold Wychwood Bah Humbug and Marston's Ugly Sisters with others from the Marston's breweries. Tom & Berry featured in the Robinson's estate, notably at the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge and the **Crossings** in Furness Vale.

Of course the next opportunity to experience a really big choice of real ale in the High Peak comes with the Winter Beer Festival at the **Old Hall**, Whitehough, during the last week end in February. As ever, this is one not to miss.



High Peak & NE Ches.
CAMRA Branch announces its

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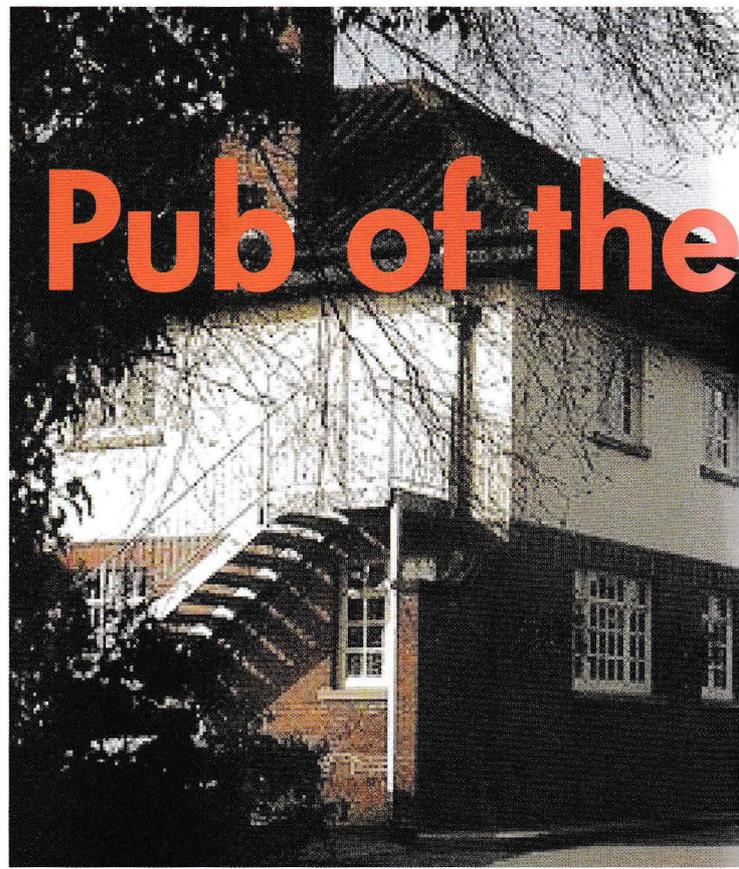


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Pub of the

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year vote is often strongly contested and this year two classic Stockport pubs were in the running. With the Nursery in Heaton Norris and the Arden Arms in the town centre both in contention it was always going to be a close run thing. Both were previous winners but only one could emerge triumphant and this time honours went to the Nursery, with the Arden Arms a well - deserved runner-up.

Of course honours have gone to the Nursery in the past. Indeed it was CAMRA's national Pub of the Year under long serving licensee George Lindsay back in 2002. George's stepson Simon Wetton (pictured right) is now at the helm and if anything the pub has improved in the time.

Of course it is still an unspoiled multi-roomed gem, nowadays benefiting from a Grade II listing, and remains on CAMRA's National Inventory of Heritage Pubs. There is still superb food, now under the supervision of Simon's sister Louise. There is though if anything an even more impressive community focus with an increased amount of charity work and a broader spectrum of entertainment bringing in crowds of all ages. There is a good traditional vault crowd too, who enjoy the televised sport – the Nursery is one of the few local pubs with a separate vault with its own entrance which cannot be accessed from the rest of the pub.

On the beer front there have been major changes. Back in 2002 just the Hydes range featured (the Nursery is a Hydes tied house) but now this has been expanded to include a range of changing guest beers. This is supplemented by occasional beer festivals. Quality continues to be high and indeed the pub recently received an award to mark 30 continuous entries in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide.



Year



Simon was over the moon when he learned of the pub's triumph in the voting. "That's fantastic news", he told us. "I never thought we would win this year. It is really is a great start for the New Year for me, Louise and the rest of the staff." The presentation is due to take place on Saturday March 9th when the customary good night will be enjoyed by everyone there.

Arden Arms is Runner-Up

This year's runner-up is also a serial award winner with both Pub of the Month and Pub of the Year awards under its belt. Again like the Nursery it's a multi-roomed Grade II listed gem on CAMRA's National Inventory, although the Arden Arms dates from the early 19th Century, rather than the middle of the 20th. It is in fact one of the oldest surviving pubs in town, with the current 1815 building replacing an older structure dating back to 1650.

However while the Arden Arms is a historic pub, it's no ossified museum piece. It's a vibrant community local ably run since 1999 by Steve King and Joe Quinn. There's a darts team, a quiz team and live jazz. Numerous



groups and societies meet there, ranging from Stockport Heritage, Stockport PLUS to Robinsons Fishing Club and even a knitting group.

The quality of the food at the Arden Arms is the stuff of legend with restaurant quality food served in a comfortable pub environment, made particularly welcoming in the winter months by two real fires blazing in the Millgate Room. A recent development has seen the introduction of evening meals between 5.30 and 8.0pm from Wednesday to Sunday.

The Arden is a Robinson's house and makes the full use of the Robinsons range serving 1892, Dizzy Blonde, Unicorn, Double Hop and the current seasonal. A small cask of Old Tom on the bar in the winter months adds to the traditional feel. In many towns a pub like the Arden Arms would be permanently top of the heap. It is a testimony to the strength of the Stockport pub scene that it is one amongst several superbly run traditional pubs. We hope to present a runner-up award at a date to be arranged.

Introducing...

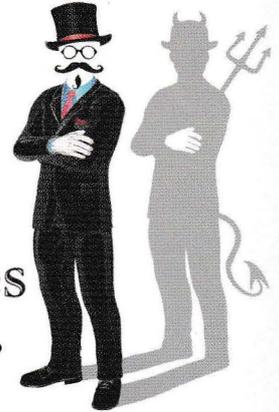
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