

Opening Times

May 2013



The free local CAMRA magazine

Covering the cities of Manchester & Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield



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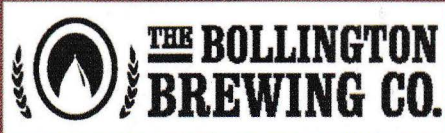
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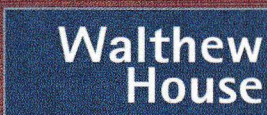
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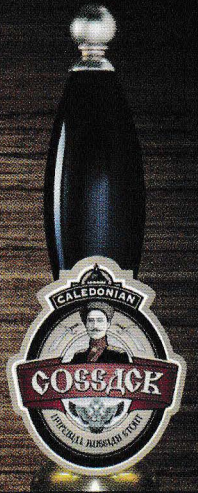
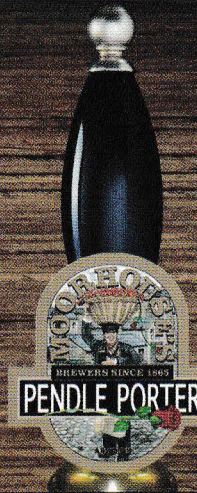
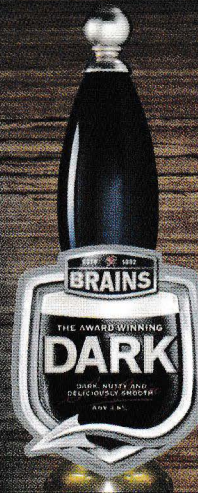
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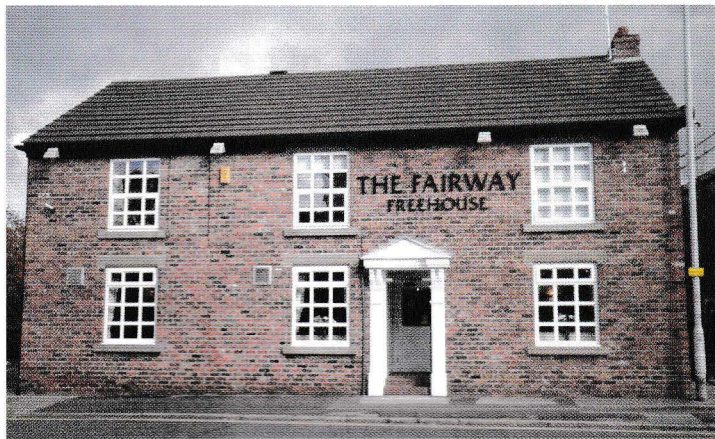
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Pub of the Month

The Fairway, Hillgate, Stockport



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for April 2013 has been won by the Fairway on Hillgate in Stockport.

Stuart and Emma Driver took on the former Robinson's house (the Flying Dutchman) and re-opened it in October 2012 after a thorough refurbishment. Stuart has had pubs in the past including the New Inn at Castleton (Rochdale), Copperfields Bar / Southlands Hotel in Adswold, and most recently the Dog & Partridge at Great Moor. Seeing how being a tenant of a pub company or brewer could be so expensive, Stuart decided to purchase the Flying Dutchman to enable him to have full control over costs, beer choice and such.

For people familiar with the old Dutchman, the layout of the new pub will seem unchanged, but Stuart assures us that under the surface a great deal of change has taken place - indeed there are entirely new toilets, a new kitchen, new fitted and upholstered bench seating, new décor and lighting, plus an upgraded outside smoking / drinking area. All of the glazing has been changed too, and the cellar facilities upgraded.

Six handpulls serve a constantly changing array of beers, with those from local micros featuring prominently. Obviously, trade determines how the beer range fares because with success the range and variety will grow. Trade and customer satisfaction has been so good that over 70 different beers have been served in the first six months. Good food is another feature of the pub's success; meal times are 12-2 Tuesday to Friday; 12-4 Saturday; and 12-6 on Sundays. There is also live entertainment every Saturday night.

You may ask why the name change to Fairway? Well, although Stuart does enjoy a game of golf (driver, fairway, geddit?), that is not the reason for the name. His father suggested Fair Play, but that was deemed unsuitable, so Fairway was chosen instead. A new name for a pub given a fresh start.

This promises to be a good night, so come and join us for the celebration on Thursday, May 23rd from 8pm. The Fairway is at 137 Higher Hillgate, Stockport SK1 3HR. Buses 358 and 383 stop outside, whilst buses on the nearby A6 include 192, 199 and 378.

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Comment & What's On

Index, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

25 Years

This issue is something of a milestone as it marks 25 years since I took over the reins as editor of Opening Times. It wasn't an auspicious start as the front page carried a banner headline "We're Sorry". What was all that about? Well, those with long memories will recall that was the year our beer festival had to close early as we discovered the venue only had a restaurant license. It still haunts Stockport CAMRA to this day.

It's sometimes been a bumpy ride but OT has come a long way since then. Issue 49 was a 12 page black and white publication (with no photographs) and a circulation of just 1,500 copies. Compare and contrast with the current issue. I have included a little retrospective elsewhere.

Finally my thanks to all those who have worked so hard on, and have contributed to, Opening Times over the years and those who do so today. It's a great team effort – thanks again.

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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Trading Standards – for complaints about short measure pints etc contact Consumer Direct (North West). Consumer Direct works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can email Consumer Direct using a secure email system on their website (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk) which also provides advice, fact sheets and model letters on a range of consumer rights. Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06

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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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

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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

North Manchester (NM) www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk
Contact: Phil Booton 0161 957 7148 (daytimes); phbooton@hotmail.com

High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC) www.hpneccamra.org.uk
Contact: Geoff Williamson 01663 765634; disleygeoff@gmail.com

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

 Items in blue, open to all.

Wednesday 8th – Farewell Social: Racecourse Hotel, Littleton Rd, Salford. From 8pm. (NM)

Thursday 9th – City Centre Social: 8pm Old Grapes; 8.45 Rising Sun; 9.15 Old Nags Head; 10pm Sir Ralph Abercrombie; 10.30 Albert Square Chop House. (T&H)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting & Meet the Brewer with Weetwood Brewery: Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Saturday 11th – Informal Social at Macclesfield Beer Festival. 12-3pm. (SSM)

Monday 13th – Branch Meeting: Royal British Legion Club, Poynton. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNEC)

Wednesday 15th – Branch Meeting: Terrace, Thomas St, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 16th – Pub of the Year Presentation: Costello's Bar, Altrincham. From 8pm. (T&H)

Friday 17th – Openshaw & Clayton Stagger: Railway, Manshaw Rd 7.30pm; Forrester's Arms, Ashton Old Rd 8.30. (SSM)

Friday 17th – Chairman's 50th Birthday Weekend: mini beer festival at Bollington Arts Centre. From 7pm. (MEC)

Saturday 18th – Social: Poachers Inn, Bollington. From 8pm. (MEC)

Saturday 18th – Branch Trip to Beartown Brewery: from 2pm to present brewery with Silver Award for Polar Eclipse. Limited spaces contact social@thcamra.org.uk (T&H)

Saturday 18th – afternoon social at Glossop NE beer festival, Surrey St, Glossop. (HPNEC)

Sunday 19th – Pub Crawl & lunch on Churnet Valley Railway. From 11am. (MEC)

Wednesday 22nd – Piccadilly Crawl: Bulls Head, London Rd 7.30pm; Waldorf 8.30pm; finish at Piccadilly 9.30pm. (NM)

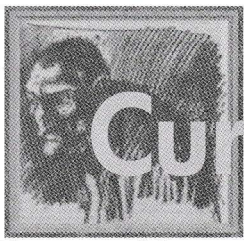
Thursday 23rd – Pub of the Month Award to the Fairway, Hillgate, Stockport. From 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 25th – Pub of the Season presentation to the Star, Howard St, Glossop. From 2pm. (HPNEC)

Thursday 23rd – Ashton on Mersey Social: 8pm Brigadier; 9pm Mersey Farm; 9.45 Old Plough; 10.30 Buck Inn. Bus nos. 16 or 19 (T&H)

Tuesday 28th – Committee Meeting and Pub of Season Award: Young Pretender, Congleton. (MEC)

Thursday 6th June – Branch Meeting: Waterhouse, Princess Street, City Centre. Starts 8pm (T&H)



Curmudgeon

Twenty Years On

This month marks the twentieth anniversary of this column, which originally began in "Opening Times" in May 1993. I'd wager it's the longest continuously running opinion column in any local CAMRA publication.

Ten years ago, I reflected on developments during that period and reached the conclusion that, while there had been some negative trends, overall there was still much to celebrate: *"While you're less likely now to find a good pint simply by going in pubs at random, the best pubs now are better than ever before. There are plenty of superb drinking establishments about, both old favourites and ones that have sprung up in the past few years. And the choice and quality of beers available, if you're prepared to make a little effort to seek them out, is enormously better than it once was."*

However, during the following ten years, things have taken a dramatic turn for the worse. While many new breweries have opened up, and the choice of beer in specialist pubs has shown a further massive expansion, for the pub trade as a whole, things have been little short of disastrous. At least a fifth of the pubs that were open in 2003 have now closed, and it is hard to make a road journey of any length off the motorway network without encountering a depressing sequence of boarded-up pubs. Beer sales in pubs are 37% down over the ten-year period.

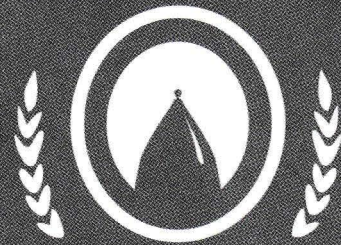
This is the result of a perfect storm of adverse factors. The trade has been battered by the twin punches of the smoking ban and the duty escalator, while there have been two related but distinct trends of the general demonisation of even moderate alcohol consumption, and the growing view that drinking needs to be ring fenced from the routine of everyday life. People place far more emphasis on not touching a drop in "normal" situations than they used to. Just "going to the pub", without involving a meal, is something that is becoming no longer an acceptable leisure pursuit in polite society.

Outside of urban centres, many of the pubs that survive have gone over to food to such an extent that they are now in effect restaurants, not social meeting places. In a sense that is an inevitable reaction to the changing market-place, and pub owners can't really be blamed for doing it, but it still renders them radically different places. Where the all-purpose pub does survive, its trade often seems thin and apologetic, and far from the parade of human nature that once could be seen. The trade is also much more concentrated towards the traditional weekend busy periods – lunchtimes and early evenings can be utterly dead.

Sadly, pubs, as a seven days, fourteen sessions a week, institution, are a shadow of their former selves. Over the years, I have had great times in pubs that I would not have missed for anything, but I suspect if I was just embarking on the world of adulthood today, regular pub going would not even feature on the agenda. Yes, there are still good pubs to be found, and good times to be had in them, but their overall place in our national life is greatly diminished from what it once was, and that trend shows no sign of abating.

A further unwelcome feature of recent years is how some who claim to stand up for pubs have sought to gain short-term advantage from an accommodation with the anti-drink lobby that ultimately can only end in tears. The success of pubs depends on wider social attitudes. A society in which the regular, moderate consumption of alcohol is viewed in a relaxed, tolerant way as a normal part of everyday life will have thriving pubs. On the other hand, pubs will struggle when alcohol is widely regarded in a censorious and disapproving manner.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com
(comments on these articles can be left on the website)



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Whats On
Monday

Big Screen Movie Night 8pm
Popcorn Hot Dogs and Ice Cream

Tuesday

Bluegrass Folk Music -9pm

Wednesday

Alternate weeks Jam Night and
Wine Down Wednesday Club 9pm

Thursday

Classic Vinyl Dj Night 9pm
Northern Soul, Motown, Indie

Friday

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Saturdays

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etc

Sunday

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Stagger

Gatley & Cheadle West with Mark McConachie



A chilly **Gatley and Cheadle West** stagger began at the **Prince of Wales** overlooking the delightful village green in Gatley.



Known locally as the "Mop" as it used to have a problem with flooding. Originally two cottages, these were knocked together many years ago resulting in its current layout of three distinct areas. Enter the pub through the left of the two low doors to find the vault/tap room with darts, dominoes and TV, whilst the area on the right forms a larger lounge. The low ceilings give the pub a country feel complementing its bench seating and subdued lighting. It was sad that the once three-beer range is now just down to Hydes Original, however we found it on very good form. It was quite busy early on, then that tailed off.

Next up was the characterful **Horse & Farrier**, sited opposite the village war memorial.



It was very busy indeed, and with room only to stand. This is a mock-Tudor house that gives the appearance of being three large cottages joined together and it is far bigger than first appears. A central bar serves all the rooms with the Martingale Room (upstairs) available for functions. A quiet room is set to the right of the entrance, and there are a couple of seats set cosily under the stairs. Food is served in the day via a carvery counter towards the rear. Beer festivals happen from time to time, usually coinciding with Bank Holiday weekends. Since Hydes brewery moved to Salford, this was my first sighting of their new "Beer Studio" beers; here it was the 5% Burnt Sienna that impressed us. Meanwhile other beers on the bar were Hydes Original which was a fair example; the 1863 went untried while the Titanic Lifeboat proved very tasty.

A short bus ride on service 11 (or 14 minute walk for the folk choosing that option) took us to the **White Hart Tavern** in nearby Cheadle. Lively, and with a mix of clientele, the beer range here was Wells Bombardier, which went untried; Ossett Patriot Pale which went down very well; and lastly Young's Special which divided opinion, but was generally thought well of.



Set beside the beautiful St Mary's Parish Church, this impressive whitewashed building is part two-storey, part three. The left part contains a comfortable snug with much oak decoration - note the fire surround. Adjacent is a large bar with limited seating, but also space for stand-up drinkers, which is needed when the pub is at its busiest. The pub's right half is opened out with an emphasis on dining, this extends all the way to the rear and right round the back of the bar. There's a 10% discount on production of a CAMRA card which is valid on all ales.



A short distance away is the **Crown**. Some years ago Hydes converted this former fish-shop into a pub. It has a narrow interior that broadens out towards the rear. Here you will find the bar (accommodating seven hand-pumps) and a raised seating area. The seating at the front has recently been rearranged to provide more room. A friendly and amiable crowd was in an expectant mood for the entertainer to brighten their weekend. It soon became clear why the pub was so busy, as an attractive female singer started to entertain the throng.

The Crown won Hydes' Best-Tenanted pub for 2011, and was runner-up in their Best-Kept Cellar award. Evidence of their ability to keep good ale was found in the tasting of the beers - Hydes Owd Oak proved to be a winner, whilst Titanic Iceberg, and Tring Ridgeway Bitter were equally good. The Hydes Original and Manchester's Finest went untried. Good value lunches are served until 2pm.



Further along High Street, is Hydes' second pub, the **Star**. This was another pub featuring entertainment tonight, here it was a lively karaoke however. Other than that, it remains relaxed and friendly, with a well-appointed lounge bar area. We took our seats at the quieter front, which was opened out some years ago, leaving the once separate traditional vault looking somewhat forlorn. The many trophies and cups behind the bar bear witness to the success of a number of sports teams, including three darts teams, dominos and cribbage. Note the impressive Hydes Crown Brewery plaque above the entrance. Three Hydes beers were on - Original was better than average; the powerful XXXX scored very well; and Stowaway (this is in their "Nautical and Nice" range) equalled the score of the XXXX.



Our final call was at Robinson's **Royal Oak**. This a three room house, reached via a couple of steps. The main room features the bar along one side and a garden off to the rear. Two rooms flank this - a comfortable snug to the left, and a pool-cum-games room to the right. Not too many people were in, but it was still made to feel lively, with music playing and a friendly barmaid serving. Two Robbies beers were on the bar, the Unicorn was average, whilst the Dizzy Blonde was just a tad below that. With time gone, and buses home to catch, we bade farewell to Cheadle for the night.

THE BEER SHOP

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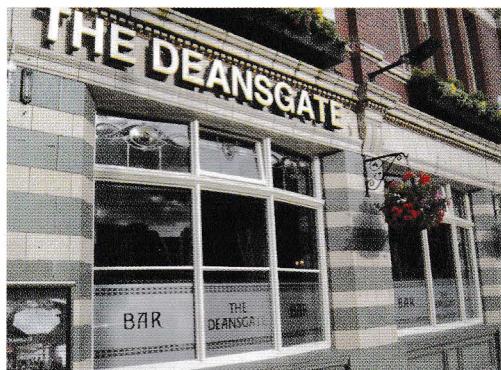
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Deansgate & Castlefield

George Elmslie reports on the local pub scene

An early Spring Saturday afternoon seemed like a good time to plan a trip to the flourishing real ale district of Castlefield where among the trendy café bars and canal basin moorings can be found some real gems. We knew prices can be high but with a couple of Good Beer Guide entrants on our route, we knew there was to be quality on offer.



We kicked off in the **Deansgate** which occupies a corner on the road of the same name among motorbike shops and expensive looking kitchen specialists. The pub which was once the Crown, then Galvins, is multi-roomed with open fires and classic décor. While today was sunny there was a chill wind blowing so we forsook the excellent roof terrace on this occasion. Beers on offer were Coach House Honey Pot Bitter, Thwaites Original and Wells Bombardier; the Coach House Blueberry had had a good run and was unavailable. Your author had the Honey Pot and thought it was a superb start to the day, the honey flavour being quite subtle; others found it more of an acquired taste. The Thwaites Original was considered to be in excellent condition.

Out on to Deansgate now past the impressive Beetham Tower, across the road and down Liverpool Road to **Cask**, a corner plot of humbler proportions but no less impressive on the beer front.



Cask has many exotic styles and flavours from around the world to tempt the adventurous and a good selection of domestic ales too, with local brewers Phoenix and Pictish alongside Acorn from Barnsley. The Acorn Sovereign took my fancy. A dark brown robust bitter, it was a pleasant alternative to the two pale ales on offer, Phoenix Arizona and Pictish Brewers' Gold.

However, each to their own and others went pale or opted for the fourth choice, Phoenix Hopsack, a light brown bitter ideal for a session. There was time for a couple of samples, however we did have to move on.

A few yards down Liverpool Road is the **White Lion** which is always busy on match days home or away although the pub has a distinctive red tendency. Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Greene King IPA and Robinsons Dizzy Blonde were on offer, the other regular beer here, Copper Dragon's Golden Pippin, being unavailable on this occasion. The Landlord and Dizzy Blonde were both good but at £3.90 a pint definitely on the pricey side. One can imagine that the owning pub company view the location as a prime one and set the landlord's rent accordingly.



Crossing in front of the Roman remains, we arrived at the **Oxnoable** aka the **Ox**. It was busy with diners at this time, a lot of family groups perhaps taking advantage of the close proximity of the Museum of Science and Industry, the site itself of a beer festival in recent times. The bar had Landlord once again, along with Black Sheep Bitter and here the Copper Dragon Golden Pippin was available - the choice of most of our group.

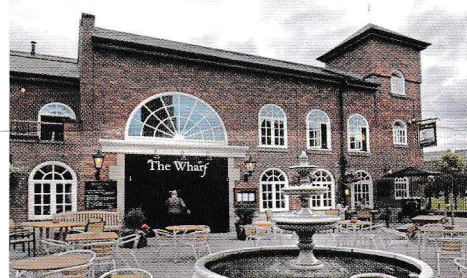
A short walk across the street and under the railway arches took us to the historic Castlefield basin where we crossed the Rochdale canal to **Dukes 92**. This was again busy with a lively crowd inside - there is plenty of space outside but it was a tad too cold at this time for us - some of the younger crowd inside would have definitely felt the chill wind judging by their apparel.

The casual viewer at the bar may struggle to see the real stuff here, a single chrome handpump that looks more like a menu holder being stuck on the bar. The "menu" taking the place of a pump clip read "Cask Ales" and below listed Moorhouse's Blond Witch, Holts Two Hoots and a very surprising Brewdog Punk IPA - very surprising as Brewdog loudly and proudly "don't do real ale" so it should have no place under the Cask Ale menu - Trading Standards anyone? Both the real ales were rated as "OK", usually

"surveyor's speak" for "lets sup up and head elsewhere".

On a previous visit to this area the relatively new **Bar Eight** was a pleasant surprise, a small one room bar at the base of a redeveloped warehouse with a handpump selling Cross Bay beers. Alas this seemed to have disappeared over the preceding month.

Although our schedule would eventually take us to the adjacent Wharf, we opted to call the **Castlefield Hotel** off the subs bench, our route out of the basin taking us rather incongruously through a 'beach' - a sanded area by the canal basin left over from summer events. The hotel and adjacent Y Club belong to the YMCA organisation with the club sports hall being visible from the bar; so as you sip your Greene King Yardbird or Deuchers IPA any number of activities may be taking place through the picture windows.



Once more across the beach returned us to **The Wharf**, a huge place on two floors, its 14 handpumps offering ales too numerous to list here and a couple of real ciders. There was a varied selection to suit most tastes including the Brunning & Price house ale brewed by Phoenix, the resident Weetwood Cheshire Cat, a real lager and a selection of ruby and dark beers. Drinks are somewhat pricey but there are discounts during the week for early doors drinkers.

Near the end now, a stroll on the towpath past the regenerated canal basin area admiring the narrowboats tied up, across the bridge, up a staircase and we are at **The Knott**, long a flagship bar for the Trafford & Hulme branch and the winner of many awards including a former Regional Pub Of The Year. As you would expect a good and ever changing range of beers flow from its seven handpumps while for those who prefer their beers colder, The Knott's selection of other beers predates the dreaming up of the term "craft keg". As the bar is situated under a busy railway line the rumbling of passing trains can be felt if not heard.

So, a full circle of Castlefield. It's not cheap, but well worth the visit.

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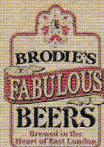
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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Stockport Update

A visit to the re-furbished **Park** in Portwood was in order. Unfortunately, the visit coincided with the removal of all handpulls as they were being replaced. They should be back by the time you read this. Beers should be John Smiths Cask, and Wells Bombardier although that may change. The place seemed smart, and there were people having lunch too.



Further along the road is the **Midway**, a detached building situated by the River Goyt, which describes itself as "contemporary eating and drinking", with the emphasis on eating (food daily until 9pm). The interior is divided into two areas: a restaurant and a bar. The latter can appear cluttered with furniture to accommodate even more diners, yet it is so tastefully and stylishly done that you can forgive them that. For that special occasion, there is a downstairs area primarily set aside for dining. Always seems to be busy. The beer garden overlooks the river and associated industrial heritage. The beers on offer were Sharps Doombar and a guest beer (Marston's Easter EPA).

Meanwhile in the town, the **Robinsons Brewery Visitors Centre** has opened (it is behind the brewery, on Apsley Street, which is off Wellington Street). Four



beers are on offer - 1892, Dizzy Blonde, Unicorn, alongside the seasonal beer Hoptimus Prime on our visit. Sited in what was the former "Unicorn Room", this is an impressive and bright space now. Approached via the reception area then down some steps, you go through a well-lit corridor-cum-standing drinking area decorated with images of the brewer's brands and historic bottles. Then it emerges into the main bar area where plenty of light wood

furniture marries well with the hardwood flooring. A nod to the past is evoked by a wall containing old copper brewing vessels. While it is primarily a space to entertain visitors who have completed the brewery tour, it also operates as a bar and cafe in its own right. A good place to be the first to try the seasonal beers as well as doing light lunches, tapas, and cakes.

Martin Wood at the **Hope Inn** in Heaton Norris tells us that the pub is now doing lunches in the form of various sorts of pie and mash, these are being served Sunday to Thursday from noon till 8pm and from noon to 7pm on Fridays and Saturdays. Eleven draught beers are now on sale, made up of four regulars plus seven guests.



Bramhall News

Having heard that the **Bubble Room** in Bramhall was now selling cask ale, OT sent out a reporter for a look-see. They do indeed sell cask, and the beer on offer was Marstons EPA. The Bubble Room opened late 2008 as part of a three-pub chain, the main outlet being in Alderley Edge, and is an upmarket yet relaxed café bar. From opening it resolutely sold only keg beer, then in January 2013 it began to sell cask ale. An island bar is surrounded by a variety of seating areas, all of which you may eat in. It has a mix of furniture from high posing tables set with candelabra, to dining tables and comfy leather tub chairs in which to relax and linger. All these are set against a background of wood-panelled walls on one side, opposite bare brick ones decorated by large poster art. A sun-exposed outside drinking area on the pavement completes the picture.

Didsbury

Our man caught a bus to Didsbury to check on the opening of another new venture, **Didsbury Lounge**, on Barlow Moor Road. Larger and a tad more upmarket than near-neighbour Art of Tea, this opened in late March 2013. Set on two levels, with tables outside too, and a modern open-kitchen to the rear. Decor is modern and clean with bookcase wallpaper adding a contrast to the

otherwise white part-panelled interior. For the moment it remains a keg-only zone, which is a shame given its credentials and the client-base.

Almost next door is the firmly established **Art of Tea**, a conversion of shop premises to a quirky café and bar. Set on two levels it also has a few chairs out front. Long and narrow, it appears to be furnished with shabby-chic second-hand furniture, but that merely adds to the cosiness of the place. A bookshop and picture framer is accessed at the back. Whether you're visiting for a tea, coffee or cake, maybe one of the bottled beers from Europe or home-grown brewers such as Stalybridge's Tickybrew, you are sure to be happy here.



A good deal closer to the Didsbury crossroads is the **Nelson**, one of the few surviving traditional pubs in the village. Fairly busy with folk watching racing and football on the multiplicity of tellies, the beer range seems to be down to just Jennings Cumberland Ale now. It was an excellent pint though.

Our correspondent in neighbouring Northenden reports that **Lounge About** continues to make a fair crack of things. It's restricted by size but both Andy and Pat are keen to keep real ale on. The room which used to be full of sofas changed a couple of weeks ago - it has turned into a mini-carvery, so it's more tables and chairs in there now with a serving area. At the **Farmer's Arms** it seems to be more of a token effort on the real ale front - for a long time both pumps had Black Sheep and nothing else although in March that had disappeared and there was one pump with Marstons EPA.

Poynton

The Bromleys - Ken, Barbara and Sally Anne - have purchased the freehold of the **Bull's Head** in Poynton and the pub is therefore the village's latest free house. The house bitter is now Thwaites Original, "an excellent, traditional session bitter and just about a LocAle to Poynton" says our man on the spot. When he dropped by in mid-March the other three handpumps were dispensing Thwaites Big Ben, Jennings Cockerhoop and Thwaites Half Nelson, the latter described as "a distinctive, hoppy pale ale full of tropical fruit flavours".

Continued on page 16