

July 2014

Opening

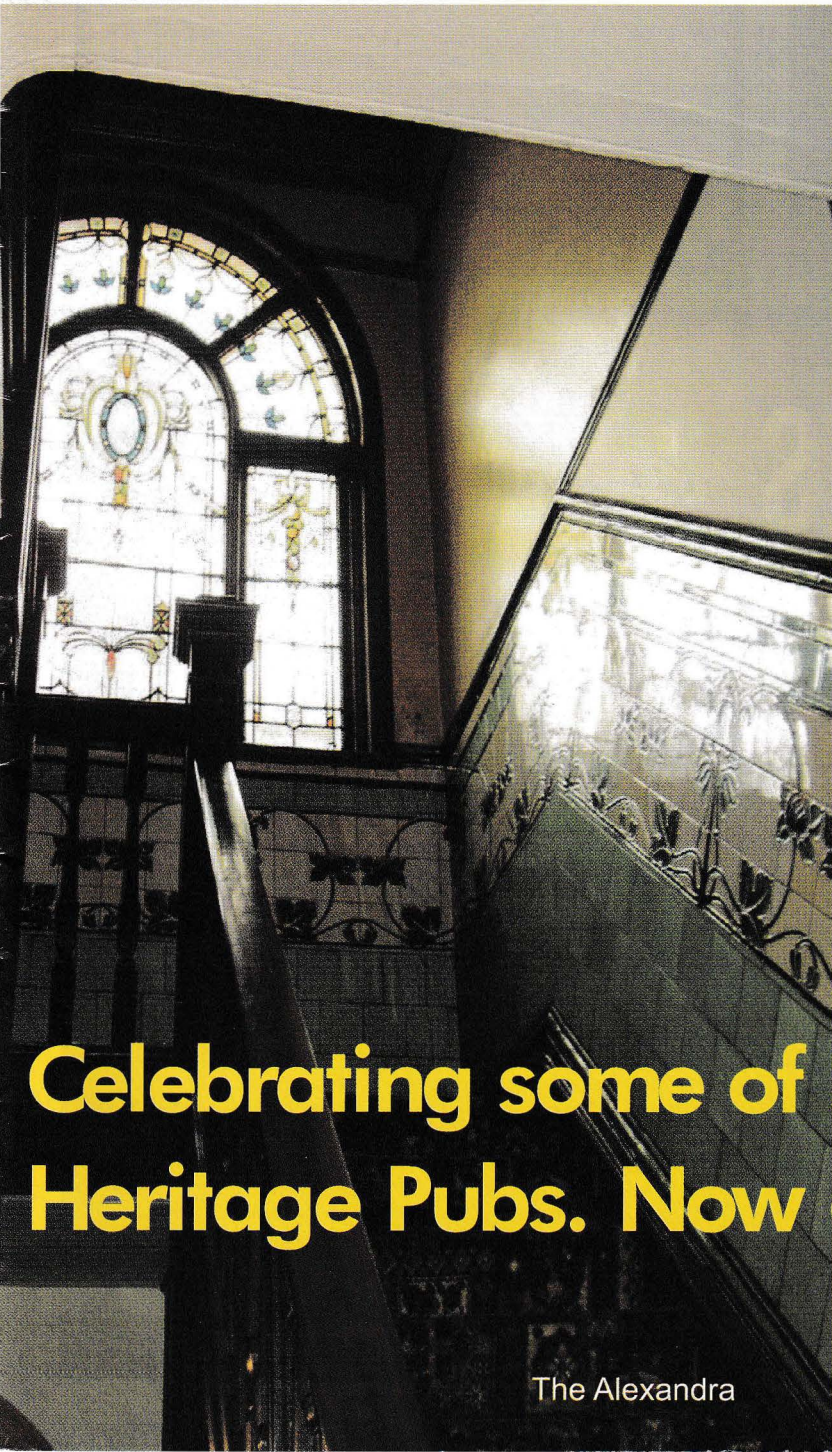


Times

The free local CAMRA magazine

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

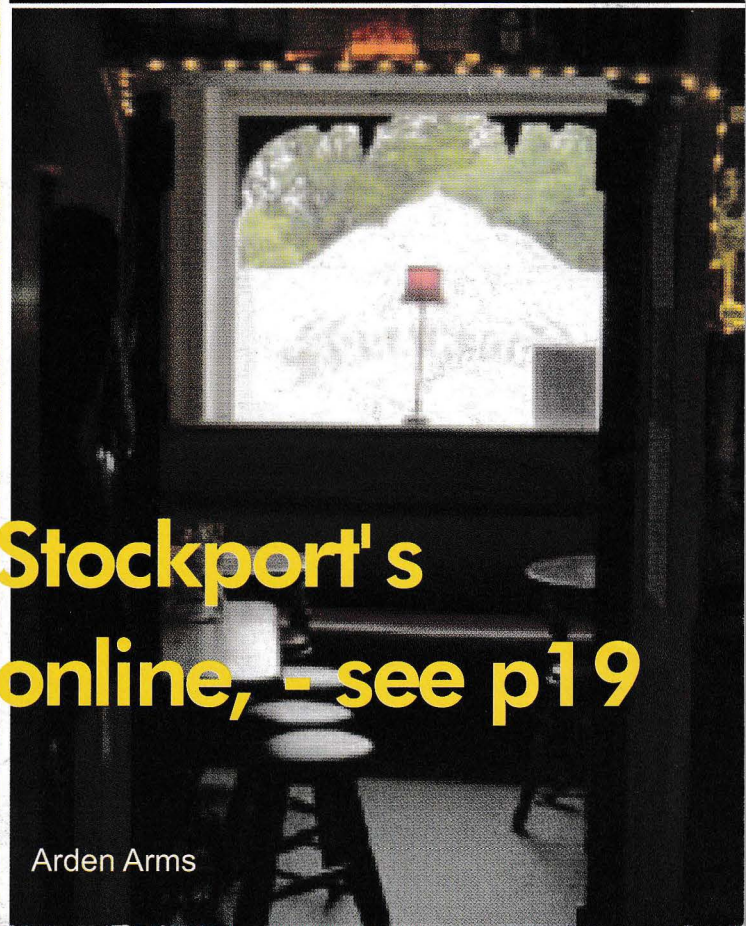
Sun and Castle



The Alexandra



Crown, Heaton Lane



Arden Arms

Celebrating some of Stockport's Heritage Pubs. Now online, - see p19

Tracy Mullen, loved and greatly missed.
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The Crown Inn, Heaton Lane

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Pub of the Month

The Crown, Heaton Lane



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for July 2014 has been awarded to the Crown, Heaton Lane, Stockport. Dave Platt reports.

When the Crown receives its Pub of the Month Award on Thursday 24th July it will be a bitter sweet occasion. While CAMRA will rightly be celebrating the pub's continuing success, one significant person will be missing. Tracy Mullen, the pub's landlady and partner of licensee Steve Alexander, who sadly passed away last month. Tracy was proud to run the pub and she will be sadly missed by everyone. We will be raising a glass to her memory on the night.

The Crown, meanwhile, carries on as a thriving and bustling cask ale flagship. It is already a multiple award winner having one local and regional Pub of the Year titles. It was also a National Pub of the Year runner-up – no mean feat.

It would be easy to rest on your laurels with a track record like that. The Crown however goes from strength to strength. There are now up to 16 ever changing cask beers (with always a stout/porter and a mild available) alongside up to three real ciders. The pub is also a regular outlet for beers from the new Stockport Brewing Co, based just across the road. Quality is top notch and the pub is a Good Beer Guide regular.

The pub itself, while having undergone some alterations over the years, still retains much of its Victorian layout and fittings with four rooms radiating off a central drinking lobby. There's a Thursday quiz, live entertainment (local bands are showcased on Saturday nights), an excellent beer garden, folk nights on Tuesday and Sunday – and on Saturday afternoons a ukulele band performs. At lunchtimes pub grub is available and at other times rather fine pork pies and sausage rolls can be had.

In short the Crown ticks almost every box you can think of. It's one of the cask ale flagships that have put Stockport on the national beer enthusiasts' map. Join us as we mark this success on 24th June- the pub is easy to reach being just a few minutes' walk from Stockport rail and bus stations.

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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 140 years. Check out their advert on this page

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What's On

Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events



Opening Times - Information

Opening Times is published 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. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth.

News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address – John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. E-mail – stocam@btinternet.com. Phone 0161 477 1973. Advertising rates on request or online at: <http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk/magazine.htm>

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 email the Consumer Service at the following address:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice/consumer_service.htm

Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer_e/reporting_a_problem_to_trading_standards

Subscriptions

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* Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com. 0161 228 7811

* East Cheshire: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx. 0845 140 2666

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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 above) 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.

Copy Date for the August issue is Friday 11 July

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front Cover – A selection of some of Stockport's Heritage Pubs. (Photos by Alan Gent and John Clarke)

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www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: Tony Icke 01625 861833; bicke@madasafish.com

Trafford & Hulme (T&H) www.thcamra.org.uk

Contact: John O'Donnell 07879 880972 or enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events

Wednesday 9th – Irlams o'th Height Survey: Henry Boddington, Bolton Road 7.30pm, then Waggon & Horses 8.15; Wellington and Red Lion. (NM)

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting & Presentation Night: "New Faces" event plus Mild Magic and Beer of the Festival Silver Award to the pub and brewery. Hope Inn, Wellington Road, North, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting: Ape & Apple, John Dalton St, Manchester. Starts 8.15pm. (T&H)

Saturday 12th – Trip to Merlin Brewery & Sandbach. Contact John Barber, jfbarber@aol.com, for details. (MEC)

Monday 14th – Branch Meeting: Duke of York, Romiley. Starts 8.30pm (HPNC)

Wednesday 16th – Branch Meeting: Kings Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 17th – Pub of the Season Award to Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. From 8.30pm. (T&H)

Friday 18th – Didsbury Stagger: 7.30pm Station; 8.30 Dog & Partridge, both on Wilmslow Road. (SSM)

Friday 19th – Regional bus trip to Hawkshead Brewery Beer Festival. Coach departs Chorlton St 9.00am. Cost £12 (£5 deposit required). Details from Andrew Rodbourne – yogibarney@hotmail.com.

Tuesday 22nd – Campaigning Meeting: Old Red Lion, Holmes Chapel. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 23rd – Worsley Social: Cock, Worsley Road 7.30pm; Ellesmere Sports Club and then Worsley Old Hall. (NM)

Thursday 24th – Pub of the Month Award to the Crown, Heaton Lane. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 24th – Sale Moor Social: 7.30 Jackson's Boat; 8.30 Carters Arms; 9.15 Leigh Arms; 10.00 Temple. (T&H)

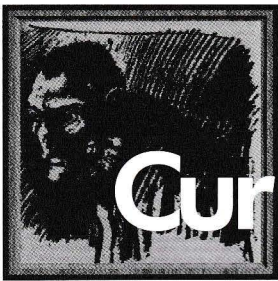
Saturday 26th – Regional Cricket Match & Fun Day at Broughton Cricket Club. Beers & BBQ. All welcome – bring the family. Playing not compulsory. From 1.00pm

Wednesday 30th – Presentation to Keith Sheard (Holt's retiring head brewer): Derby Brewery Arms, Cheetham Hill Rd. From 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 31st – Possible Brewery Trip. See website for details. (SSM)

Friday 1st August – Tutored Bottled Beer Tasting: Booth's Supermarket, Salford Quays. Starts 7.30pm. Full details on branch website. (NM)

Saturday 2nd – Grand Cheshire Day Out – Cheshire Pub Tour plus drinks & BBQ at Dunham Massy Brewery. Full details on branch website. (T&H)



Curmudgeon

Joule in the Crown

I'm sometimes accused of purveying a relentless diet of doom and gloom – which was in a sense the point of this column in the first place. However, one positive development of the past few years has been the growth of Joule's brewery and its associated pub estate. The name is from a well-known brewery in Stone, Staffordshire, which was taken over by Bass and closed in the early 1970s. Their original premises were in Stone, but they have now developed a purpose-built brewery just across the Shropshire border in Market Drayton.

Rather than going down the route of developing nationwide distribution, they have followed the more old-fashioned course of building up a tied estate within about thirty miles of the brewery, and only selling to the free trade within that area. They have concentrated on producing a standard range of high-quality, but fairly mainstream and accessible beers, and have eschewed ever-changing weird and wonderful specials. Their flagship beer, Joule's Pale Ale, is a classic balanced Burton-style brew in the mould of the original Draught Bass and Pedigree, which to my palate is one of the best everyday beers produced by new breweries in recent years.

None of their pubs are closer than about thirty miles from me, so I can't say I'm a regular visitor, but whenever I've come across them I've been impressed. While most of them offer food, they very much remain proper pubs rather than identikit family dining outlets, and the ones I have visited have been carefully and expensively restored and have interiors of considerable character. They're not cheap in Sam Smith's or Wetherspoon's terms, so aren't targeted at the down market value drinker. Possibly the one people from the Manchester area are most likely to have encountered is the Cross Keys in Chester close to the Old Dee Bridge.

However, it's difficult to avoid the impression that the development of the Joule's tied estate is to some extent a labour of love depending on some deep pockets. If it was an obvious commercial winner, then others would be doing the same, but in general they don't appear to be. Having said that, if someone's doing something right we might as well both celebrate it and enjoy it.

A Fit of the Vapers

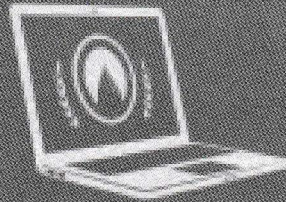
On a recent visit to my local, I was confronted by an officious notice stating that the use of electronic cigarettes was not allowed anywhere inside the pub. The reason usually given for this policy is that it may be difficult for bar staff to distinguish between electronic and "real" cigarette use and thus lead to customers flouting the smoking ban. However, the smell of tobacco tends to be a dead giveaway, and surely it is something that pubs can manage rather than taking the easy way out of a blanket ban. The fact that something looks vaguely like something else is not a good reason for prohibiting it and, if some customers find the sight of e-cig vapour unnerving, then pubs always have the option to restrict them to a designated area.

At a time when so many pubs are struggling, it can't make sense to turn away customers wanting to pursue an entirely legal activity. Also, given that e-cigs have been widely adopted as a way of helping people to quit tobacco, pubs could be accused of standing in the way of efforts to reduce the prevalence of smoking in society. If you force users outside with the smokers they might reach the conclusion that they might as well go back to tobacco. And if pubs that have banned e-cigs close due to lack of trade they're likely to be seen as having helped bring it on themselves.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

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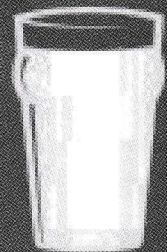
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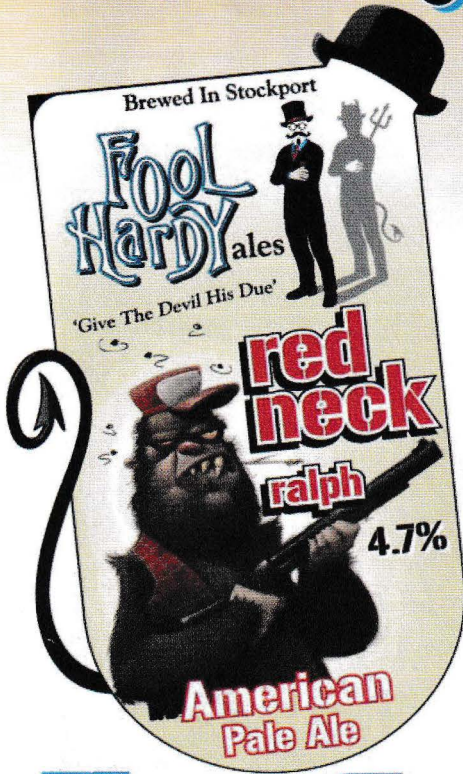


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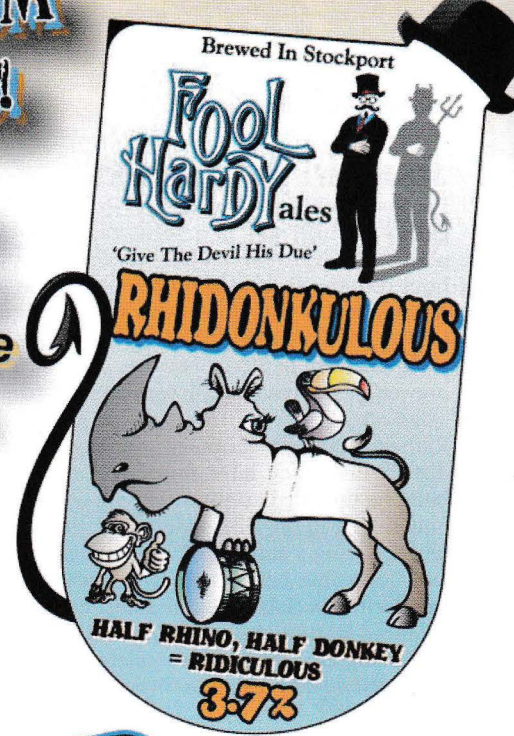
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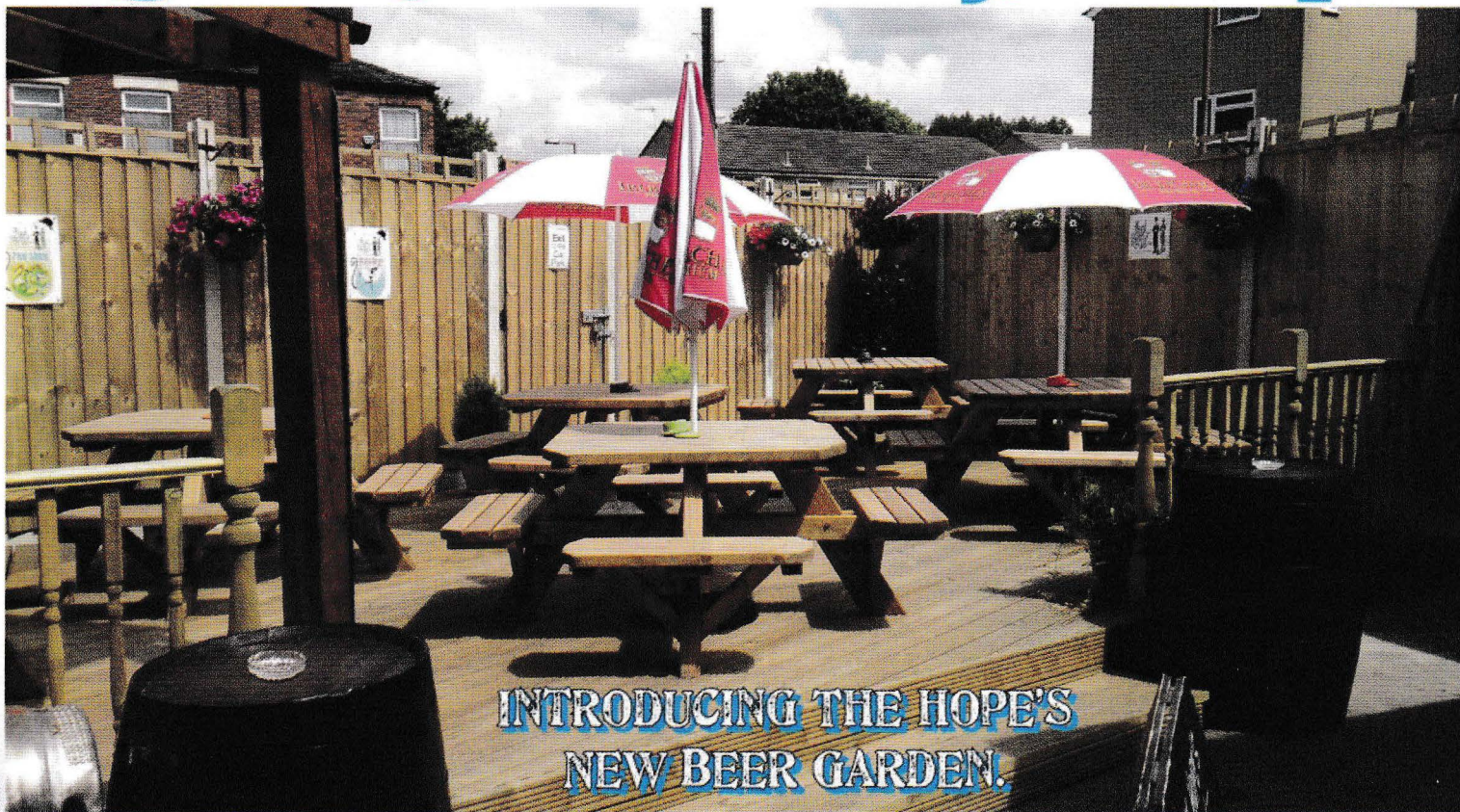
2 NEW BEERS FROM YOU KNOW WHO!

A golden American Pale Ale. Brewed with 4 American Hops, very moreish!

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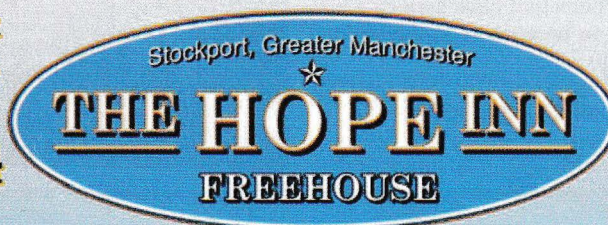


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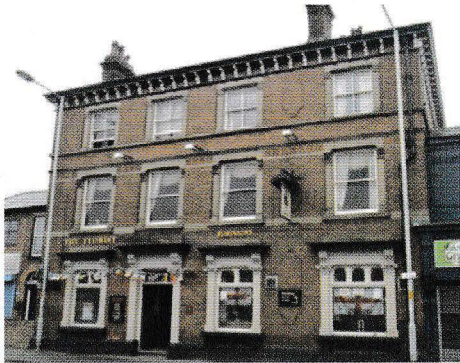
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Stagger

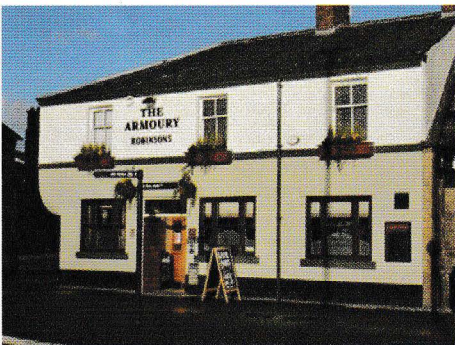
Mark McConachie on Shaw Heath & King Street West



We began our March Stagger at the imposing, three-storey early-Victorian structure that is Robinsons **Florist**.



Despite changes over the years, we had a choice of five distinct drinking areas around the bar itself. Under temporary management by a team from the Blossoms, it has recently been decorated in a modern, restrained style. Images of the town Stockport County memorabilia decorate the walls. All this has given the place definite character and appeal. Pubs however are more than bricks and mortar, they are really made by the customers, and at the Florist the people on both sides of the bar are some of the friendliest you could meet. It was a little quiet when we arrived, although that said, it was early on. The two beers on were Robinsons 1892, and Unicorn; we were told normally that Dizzy Blonde, and Trooper would be on too, but not tonight. The Unicorn scored marginally better than the 1892.



Next on the list was Robinsons **Armoury**, just a short walk along the road. This Victorian pub was refitted in the 1920s and has remained largely intact since then, with a host of original fittings and evidence of ownership by the old Bell's Brewery still evident in the interior glasswork. There really is a room for everyone in this pub - there is a bright, brassy lounge, drinking lobby, complete with its own bar counter, a darts room (the Hatters Room) at the back and an excellent traditional vault, arguably one of the best in town. The lounge walls feature memorabilia of the Cheshire Regiment. Outside at the back is a good, secluded beer garden, which can be quite a suntrap in the summer months. The Armoury has a more

mature clientele, with a strong community involvement, and friendly and knowledgeable staff. It was very busy tonight with what appeared to be a regimental celebration, but speedy service was not hindered by this. We found seats in the Hatters Room; the scatter cushions here are a neat and most welcome touch. Beers tonight were: Robinsons 1892, Dizzy Blonde, Unicorn, Trooper, and seasonal beer, Hoptimum (which turned out to have sold out). All beers scored comfortably good marks.



Walk to the very top of King Street West, and on your left is the **Olde Vic**. Now, to the casual observer this may appear to be a shut pub (although it is now being repainted - Ed), but do try the front door. This was the first Stockport pub to offer a changing range of guest beers and still flying the flag (or two in the Vic's case) for choice and quality. We were welcomed by larger than life licensee Steve Brannan who likes to run a tight-ship here.; no-swearing rules are strictly enforced. A blazing real fire provides a welcome focus in winter months and on this squally, wet night was most welcome. A secluded and well covered drinking area at the back is well used in the summer. Six handpumps dispense an ever-changing range of guest beers, mostly focusing upon local micro-breweries. The interior of the pub is full of character and stuffed with idiosyncratic artefacts. If you haven't been, then pay a visit if only for the excellent choice and quality of the beer. All together this is a fine must-visit pub! Beers tonight were Dark Star Partridge Bitter; Hop Studio XP; Burton Bridge GD; Blue Monkey BG Sips; plus a beer from Ardwick micro, Privateer. All beers scored comfortably good marks.

Down King St West and opposite the town's bus garage is the **Comfortable Gill**. A tidy pub with an olde-worlde look to it as the decor is rustic in the two front rooms, and a further Games room lies beyond. The bar confronts you upon pushing your way through the saloon doors. It once sold Copper Dragon beers, however it has sadly been no real ale for some years, and a mere three customers were in when we called...

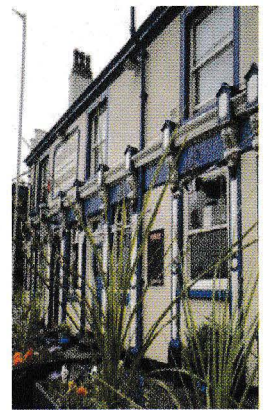
Keep heading north, cross the River Mersey and bear right under the famous railway viaduct to find Robinson's **Pineapple**. This



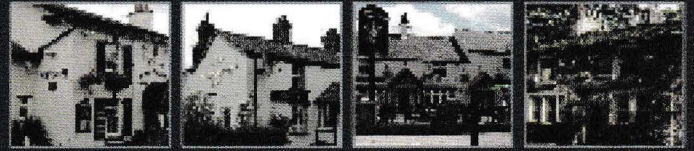
is a pub that feels like it should really be on a homely street well away from the hustle and bustle of life rather than only yards from the A6 in the centre of Stockport. Inside this friendly and cosy pub the two rooms to the front have been opened out somewhat but are still clearly separate and on the walls are numerous plates many of which the customers have brought back from their foreign travels for the very longstanding licensee. To the rear is a more basic games room resplendent with an array of trophies, from which leads the entrance to the smoking area. A warm, friendly welcome was accompanied by good beers in the form of Robinson's 1892, Unicorn, and Hartley's Cumbria Way.

Retracing our steps back under the viaduct we came to our end-point, the **Crown Inn**. A runner-up nationally in CAMRA's Pub of the Year for 2009 and still doing a wealth of different beers, so no wonder the Crown is a busy pub, especially in the evenings. A choice of around 16 ever-changing beers is usually to be had, making it probably the town's foremost cask ale outlet; beers from Pictish and Copper Dragon are normally available. Four rooms radiate from the busy bar: two compact snugs, a large lounge with feature overmantle, and lastly a plushly decorated room. The atmosphere is one of friendly professionalism aided by knowledgeable staff. Real cider is often sourced by Merrylegs. I found there were just too many beers to note down all of the names of them, yet all that were sampled were to score a good mark once again.

All in all, a cracking stagger which included no fewer than FOUR Good Beer Guide 2014 pubs (I will let you fathom out which they are).



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Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season

The Old Market Tavern, Altrincham

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA's Pub of the season for summer 2014 is The Old Market Tavern in Altrincham - better known as 'OMT' to most people, writes John Ison.

John Glover with his wife Linda and family 'took over the reins' in March 2005 and quickly set about making the pub what we see today. However when they first entered the building it was in a mess. It had been closed for a period of time and certain 'undesirables' had broken in - the pub had been vandalised and many items had 'gone missing'. Over the intervening years the OMT has been transformed into a thoroughly enjoyable place to drink some fantastic beers. 2008 was the year that saw the OMT re-enter CAMRA's Good Beer Guide and has been in every edition since. The same year saw it voted as Trafford & Hulme's CAMRA's Pub of the Year.

Although the OMT is owned by Punch Taverns, John has an excellent agreement with them which allows him to choose which beers he wants. Six beers are permanent - Caledonian Deuchars IPA, George Wright's Drunken Duck & Northern Lights, Taylor's Landlord, Phoenix Arizona and Facers DHB, with a futher five handpumps reserved for guest beers from far and wide. Due to John's previous employment in the brewing industry in Warrington, he is meticulous with his beers and will not hesitate in refusing to accept beers which he feels are not up to standard - no matter what the brewery is! The OMT is open from 12 noon until late every day and if you visit on a Monday to Friday lunchtime you will find an excellently priced menu serving home-cooked food prepared by Linda.

Whether you want 'a quiet pint' or a few beers with friends you will be made to feel most welcome. However on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings the OMT comes alive with the sound of 'live' Heavy Rock music which is renowned for miles around. Quiz nights are held on Wednesday evenings with acoustic sessions on Thursdays (this will take place after the presentation). A function room is available which is where Trafford & Hulme regularly hold their CAMRA branch meetings. All this in a safe environment made possible by John, Linda and family, friends and staff. The OMT is only five minutes walk from Altrincham Interchange where Metrolink trams (services from Manchester & Bury), buses (from all local areas including Lymm and Warrington) and trains (hourly services from Stockport, Knutsford, Northwich and Chester) are all available. The presentation will take place on Thursday 17th July, 2014 at 8:30 pm (fifteen minutes before the acoustic session starts), so come along for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.



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To get you in the mood for this year's Great British Beer Festival, we are giving you the chance to be the Beer Master and win a year's worth of beer.

Simply send us a photo of you holding the Beer Master's Tache flyer and you could be in with a chance of winning twelve cases of beer - delivered every month direct to your door - each consisting of 18 different bottled real ales.

The flyers are going to be distributed to hundreds of UK pubs in the run up to the Great British Beer Festival this summer, or alternatively you can visit www.gbbf.org.uk/competitions to download a Beer Master flyer yourself.

When taking your photo and choosing your location be creative, be adventurous, be humorous - but most importantly, be the Beer Master!

To enter the competition

Download, print off, and cut out a Beer Master flyer by visiting: gbbf.org.uk/competitions (or pick one up from selected UK pubs) Take a photo of you holding the moustache flyer to your face Email your photo to beermaster@gbbf.org.uk

That's it!

All entries will be displayed at gbbf.org.uk/competitions

Deadline for entries is Saturday 16th August 2014

A Tour of Dukinfield

Andy Sullivan continues his trip round Tameside



Dukinfield is a Tameside town which has a rather indistinct character. I mean no disrespect, but it has always seemed to me to not really have a clearly defined identity or position. Nor does it appear that there is, on the face of it, any reason to go there and this goes for the real ale fan too. However I think it my duty to put the record straight if I can. There are a number of real ale outlets in the area and whilst there may not be that much choice in any one pub, the quality isn't too bad for a place that has not one single entry in the Good Beer Guide or indeed a hostelry with Cask Marque accreditation.



Dukinfield, like so many places, has had its share of pub casualties. It is now a largely residential area with some small, medium and consequently very important local businesses. The days of masses of workers at mills and pits, all living locally and needing refreshment, are long gone. The result is that the pubs are either isolated a little or come in groups. It is this that has given me such a problem in researching the place.

Now then there are nine, yes that may surprise you, nine real ale pubs in Dukinfield that I know of. I'd be delighted if anyone can tell me about a local that I have missed mentioning here. These are, in no particular order, the **Chapel House** on Astley Street (pictured above), the **Angel Inn** on King St, the **Victoria** on Victoria Road, the **Old General** on Crescent Road, the "Top" **Astley Arms** on Chapel Hill, the **Tame Valley** on Park Road, and the **Wheatsheaf, Albion and New Inn** all on or accessible from Birch Lane.



With the notable exceptions of the **Wheatsheaf** and the **Angel**, all are normally single ale houses and none the worse for that. The **Old General** was very nearly missed off as it hasn't had cask on for some time, but just recently started with **Hobgoblin**. This is a start in this popular and rather spacious street corner pub with a central bar. I think the licensees need congratulations and

support for the initiative. Service was good but could have been a bit more helpful. People here, as everywhere, choose what they know and sometimes need help in exploring something different. Otherwise what a smashing family local this is, providing a clear alternative to the "Top" **Astley Arms** a little distance away. Both are on the 346 bus route.



The **Astley Arms** is a Robinson's house in a brilliant and commanding location opposite one of my favourite war memorials. A rather more sophisticated establishment than the **General**, it's a large pub with a corner bar and a drinking area with tables and comfy settees. A pool table is tucked away in the back. The blue plaque at the front commemorates Andrew Moynihan's VC earned during the Crimean War at Sebastopol. Unicorn, the usual Robinson's offering in single beer pubs, is generally very good indeed.



At the other end of Chapel Street, the **Angel Inn** on King Street has been serving four ales at sensible prices for some time. With two rooms, both clean and bright, this pub was closed for some time and has had a serious refurbishment. I found it a bit sterile in atmosphere compared to the **General** and the **Astley**, but variety is the spice of life and it is clearly popular, very well run and admittedly the times I have chosen to go in may not have been properly representative. One real positive is the quality of the staff here; really sharp. This is a good match for the **General** and the **Astley** as they cover similar customer bases whilst remaining very different. All three also have a food offering.

A pie offering can be found at the **Chapel House** on Astley Street heading towards

Audenshaw. I have a real soft spot for this little pub. Set back a bit from the road it really looks the part and sells a stonkingly good pint of **Holt's Bitter**. A small vault is on the right and somehow accommodates a pool table, (and presumably players). A larger lounge is on the left; with the many plates, brasses and mirrors it seems cluttered by today's standards. Predominantly red and with a tiny bar area so crammed it must difficult to manage on busy days, I would imagine



While I have never yet heard of a "Chippy Night", this was scheduled to take place on the 9th May at the **Tame Valley** on Park Road. I have left this pub until last in this piece because what a gem it is. Isolated now among crumbling mills, some of which are being demolished, and slightly disturbingly, at the bottom of the hill where **Dukinfield Crematorium** stands! With a central bar and opened out interior it is welcoming and talkative. **Thwaites Original** is on the bar with a landlord seemingly determined to make this beer more special than it usually is! You really have to want to come here as there is no bus service to the outside world, and is quite a step away from anywhere else, but trust me you are in for a treat if you do. It is also the only pub left in the area where once there were several others. There's not much in the way of residential property either, so it will have to work hard to keep going. Lovely beer garden too.

So there's a little taster of Dukinfield. Real ale fans can sometimes be a bit sniffy when there is just one beer on offer and that is from a regional or one of the "usual suspects", but without pubs there wouldn't be any real ale at all, so use your local and give the regionals a break, they are not always deserving of our scorn.

Before signing off I note the **Hare and Hounds**, **Werneth Low** is indeed dog friendly and seems there is a much greater emphasis on real ale than previously. I am pleased to put the record straight on this. Also the **Broomhouse Inn** in Denton is now an American styled grill. Depressing though this is, it seems popular and it is far better as this than a conversion to flats. In time it could be a pub again.