

OPENING TIMES

AUGUST 2016 / FREE



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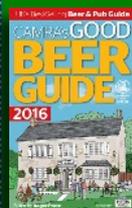
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OPENING TIMES

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch, the Trafford & Hulme Branch, the Central Manchester Branch and the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the Salford Branch and the Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branch. 7,600 copies a month are printed by Oxuniprint Ltd, a division of Oxford University Press and distributed throughout Stockport, Trafford, Manchester and Tameside. There are also many outlets in Macclesfield & East Cheshire, High Peak and Glossop.

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Their telephone no. is 03454 04 05 06.

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* Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com 0161 244 1000

* East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx

* Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

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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 September issue is Saturday 6th August.

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Jon Gobbett, John O'Donnell, Stewart Taylor, Jerry Wicken and Matthew Thompson.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – .

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What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Events, Information and News

Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

www.ssmcamra.co.uk

Contact: Paul Felton; Secretary@ssmcamra.co.uk

Salford (SAL)

www.salford.camra.org.uk

Contact: Dave Hampshire; talldave@gmail.com

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social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Trafford & Hulme (T&H)

www.thecamra.org.uk

Contact: John O'Donnell 07879 880972; enquiries@thecamra.org.uk

Central Manchester (CMCR)

www.centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Contact: enquiries@centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events

Public welcome at these events

Thursday 11th — Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, 23 Millgate, Stockport, SK1 2LX. Includes summer quiz. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Friday 12th — Sale Social: 8.00pm Vine, 133 Washway Road, M33 7UD; 8.45pm The Brook, Brooklands Road, M33 3SQ; 9.30pm Little B, 195 Marsland Road, M33 3ND; 10.30pm J P Joule, 2A Northenden Road, M33 3BR. (T&H)

Friday 12th — Trip to Track Brewing, Sheffield Street, Manchester to present Beer of Festival Silver Award. Arrive brewery 7.30pm – 8.00pm. Book with John Clarke (stocam@btinternet.com). (SSM)

Saturday 13th — Branch trip to Llandudno. Details from branch contact. (HPNC)

Wednesday 17th — Branch Meeting: Farmer's Arms, 160 Manchester Road, Swinton, M27 5TP. Starts 7.30pm. (SAL)

Friday 19th — Cale Green and Higher Hillgate Stagger: 7.30pm Plough, 197 Shaw Heath, SK2 6QZ; 8.30pm Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, SK2 6NU. (SSM)

Saturday 20th — Presentation of Regional Cider Pub of the Year: Wigan Central, Arch No. 1, Queen Street, Wigan, WN3 4DY. Presentation at 2.30pm. (All branches welcome to attend)

Saturday 20th — Social at Wigan Central (details as above). From 12 noon. (CMCR)

Wednesday 24th — Irlam Crawl: 7.30pm 1923 at Irlam Station, Station Road, M44 5ZR; 8.15pm Railway, 600 Liverpool Road, M44 5AA; 8.45pm Ship, 538 Liverpool Road, M44 6AJ; 9.30pm Irlam Steel Recreation & Social Club, Liverpool Road, M44 6AJ. (SAL)

Thursday 25th — Pub of the Month presentation to White Hart, High Street, Cheadle, SK8 1PX. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 27th — Cheshire Day Out and Dunham Massey Brewery: A stroll or cycle round the pubs of Little Bollington and Dunham Massey followed by a barbecue at Dunham Massey Brewery. From 12 noon. (T&H)

Saturday 27th — Branch trip to Derby. Details from branch contact. (HPNC)

Sunday 28th — Social at Manchester Brewing Tap, 66 North Western Street, M12 2DX. From 12 noon. (SSM)

Wednesday 31st — Castlefield Crawl: 7.30pm Wharf, 6 Slate Wharf, M15 4ST; 8.15pm Dukes 92, 18-20 Castle Street, M3 4LZ; 8.45 The Knott, 374 Deansgate, M3 4LY; 9.30pm Deansgate Tavern, 321 Deansgate, M3 4LQ. (SAL)

Wednesday 31st — Northern Quarter Survey. Details to be advised – contact branch. (CMCR)

Thursday 1st September — Branch Meeting: Venue to be confirmed. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Tuesday 6th September — Branch Meeting: Castle Hotel, 66 Oldham Street, M4 1LE. Starts 6.00pm. (CMCR)

Wednesday 7th September — Clifton and Pendlebury Crawl: 7.30pm Golden Lion, 136 Manchester Road, M27 6PE; 8.30pm Newmarket, 621 Bolton Road, M27 4EJ; 9.15pm Lord Nelson, 653 Bolton Road, M27 4EJ. (SAL)

Social Media

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



Stockport & South Manchester:
www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA

Trafford & Hulme: www.facebook.com/thecamra

Macclesfield & East Cheshire: <http://fbl.me/meccamra>

Central Manchester:
www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:
www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA



Stockport & South Manchester: @SSMCAMRA

Trafford & Hulme: @THCAMRA

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for details



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Pub of the Month

The White Hart, Cheadle



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for August 2016 is the White Hart in Cheadle. Alan Gent and Matthew Thompson are fans.

The White Hart stands proudly at one end of Cheadle High Street, next to St Mary's Church, representing the historic — and iconic — heart of the village. It was originally a coaching inn, but few would argue with the fact that the pub's heyday was as a Boddingtons's pub, when it was well nigh impossible to get through the door on a Friday or a Saturday night- and that was selling one beer, not 14!

Since then the pub has had a chequered life, passing through the hands of a succession of owners, often of little benefit to either the pub or its clientele. Now, however, the most recent transfer of ownership from the now defunct Spirit Group to (whisper it) Greene King, seems to be reaping benefits. Greene King undertook a sympathetic makeover, keeping the dark wood panelling and fireplaces, but introducing a clean, fresh look with new floor coverings, some bright tiling, and new furniture. There are televisions, but usually with the sound turned down and it's possible to find a seat where they can't be seen if sport isn't your thing

Food features throughout the day, but the biggest — and best — change has been on the beer front. Although two beers on the bar must always be Greene King, the remaining four can be guest beers, most of which are drawn from the SIBA list. When we called in, this included two from Brightside Brewery and, praise be, a very drinkable Tetley Bitter. There is also a house beer brewed by Greene King. There's a nod to the current craft boom with Hop13 and Punk IPA on keg fonts and a small selection of craft beer (Sierra Nevada, Brooklyn, Meantime, BrewDog) and Belgian beer in the fridge.

So, plenty to enjoy, why not pop down on Thursday 25th and show your appreciation to Matt Jones and his team. Buses 11, 11A, 310, 309 and X57 will all drop you nearby.

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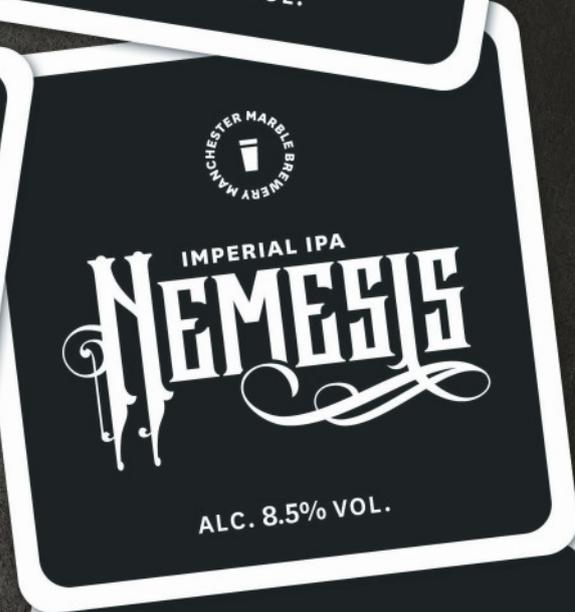
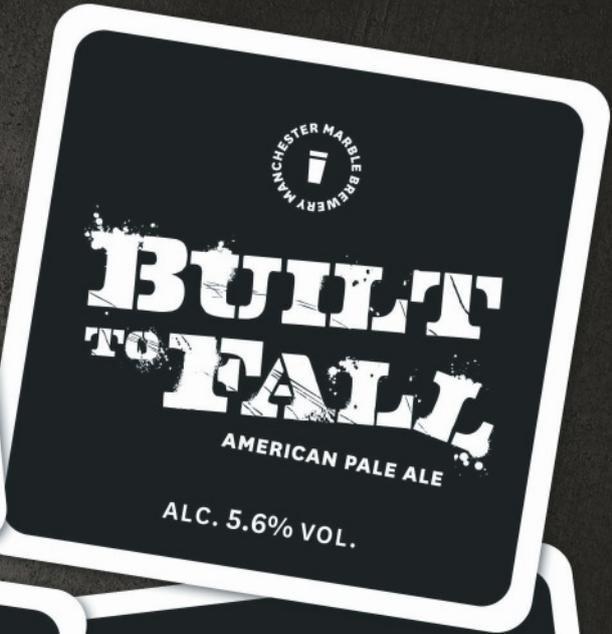


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Tea and Jaffa Cakes in Chorlton

John O'Donnell looks back at Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival



Visitors to the 12th Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival found it difficult to choose between a beer inspired by Jaffa Cakes and one infused with real tea. When drinkers' votes were counted, Marble Brewery's Earl Grey IPA was narrowly pipped to the Beer of the Festival title by Jaffa, a chocolate and orange stout by Blackjack Beers and Thornbridge which was originally brewed as a collaboration for June's Manchester Beer Week.

Marble's silver award was their second of the weekend with Earl Grey IPA also taking silver in the North West round of the Champion Speciality Beer of Britain competition which was judged at the festival on Friday afternoon. Horwich's Blackedge Brewery took the gold award for their Black Port

Porter which will go forward to be judged against other regional winners for the national competition. The bronze award went to former champion Chocolate Cherry Mild from Dunham Massey Brewery.

The festival kicked off with a low key Thursday evening session with those coming out on a school night being able to sample the full range of beers and ciders in a relaxed atmosphere. Moving into Friday, the crowds poured into the grounds and began working their way through the beer lists. Entertainment came from local legend George Borowski and his band the Fabulous Wonderfols rocking the crowds with tunes from blues to country. As drinkers enjoyed themselves on Friday, organisers were nervously watching Saturday's weather forecast, which was promising rain, and lots of it. As Saturday dawned, the heavens had indeed opened and volunteers found parts of the site underwater.

Quote of the weekend must go to the newly appointed curate of St Clement's, who had only taken up his position the previous Sunday. While standing in his wellies, manning a sump pump trying to clear water from the overflowing drains, he wryly observed "I don't remember learning this in theological college". Perhaps the things he did learn at college paid off in the end; as opening time came round the rain passed over just in time and the pumps managed to clear most of the surface water as the festival welcomed ticket holders to the ever popular tutored tasting sessions in beer and cider. Although the early conditions clearly dissuaded some from attending, as the day wore on the grounds filled once again. The festival's new layout with an additional cask ale bar and a good showing of volunteers saw it avoid the long queues of thirsty drinkers which accompanied 2015's heatwave.

Over 10,000 pints of beer were drunk over the festival's three days with one beer hall dedicated to beers from the North West of England while the other focussed on beers from London and the South East (with eagle eyed drinkers spotting a single beer from Somerset sneaking in). The best selling beer was Cloudwater's Mosaic & Centennial Session IPA, just ahead of a Chorlton favourite, Loweswater Gold from Cumbrian Legendary Ales. A new addition to the festival was the key-keg bar which brought together key-keg conditioned beers from UK breweries alongside beers from the USA, Denmark and the Netherlands. The bar was extremely popular, completely selling out by Saturday afternoon with one beer – Torrside Brewery's West of the Sun – lasting under one hour on the taps.



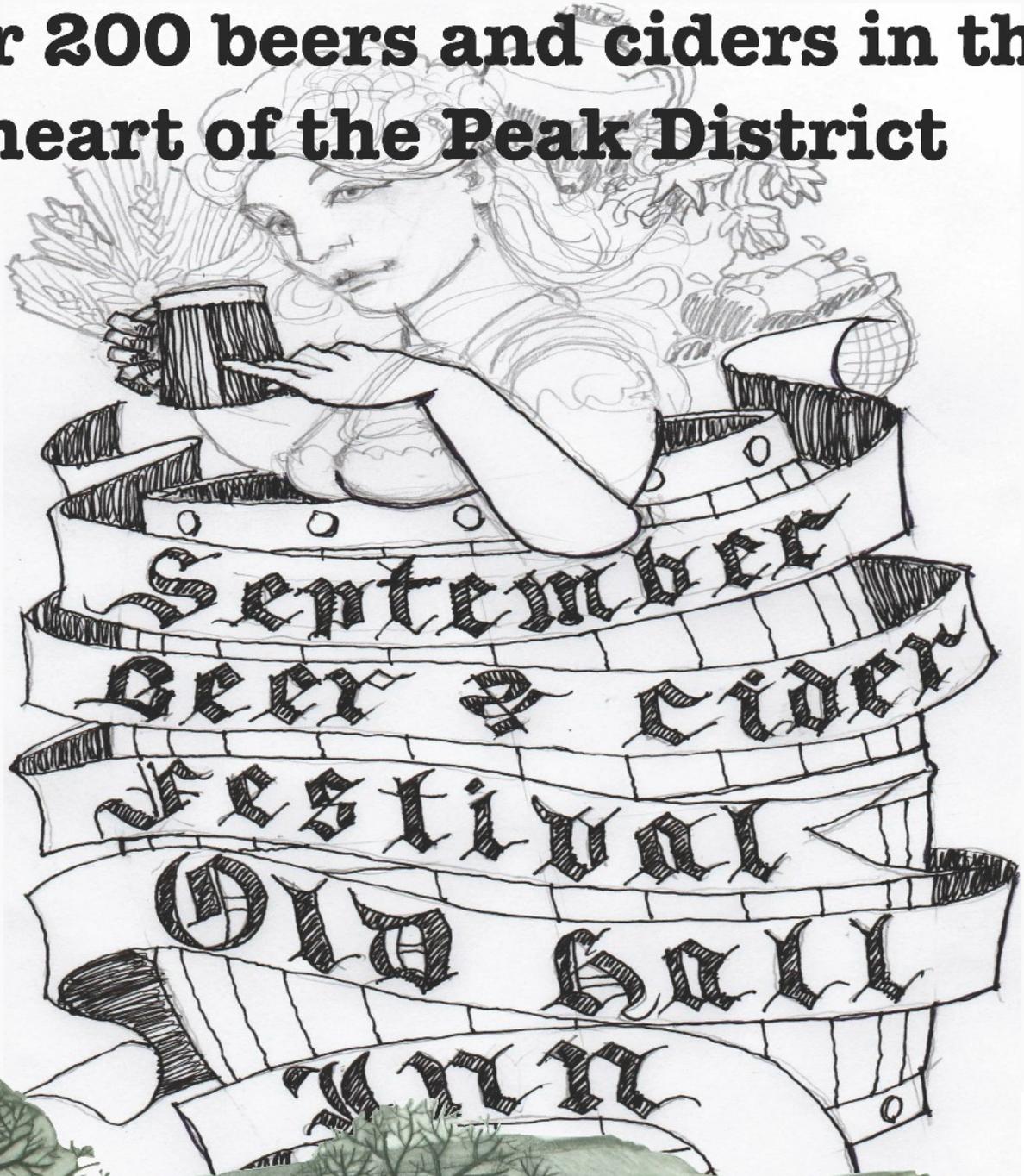
As ever, the cider and perry bar was extremely popular with 56 different ciders and perries available. Following 2015's sell out, restock and second sell out, extra stocks were brought in so a good range remained throughout. Unlike the close result in the beer vote, the Cider of the Festival vote had a very clear winner with Hereford's Snails Bank romping away with the title with their Rhubarb Cider, even though it was so popular that it was all drunk by Friday evening.

All in all, another excellent festival with lots of positive feedback. Once again, the proceeds from the festival will be re-invested in St Clement's facilities. St Clement's offers three halls for use by the Chorlton community and an ongoing programme of maintenance and improvements in the past 12 months has seen the church re-roofed and the youth centre re-clad. The festival is pleased to continue supporting St Clement's in its role at the heart of the Chorlton community.



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High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord



The **Lowes Arms** on Hyde Road on the Denton/Hyde border, and home of the Westwood Brewery, will be having a beer festival over the August Bank Holiday starting on the 26th August. It will feature 30 beers, cider, food and live music. Entry is free.

In Stalybridge it is sad to report the closure of a well known pub once famous for the longest pub name, the **Old Thirteenth Cheshire Astley Volunteer Rifleman Corps Inn**. Rumour has it that it will be turned into apartments.

Denton's new micropub, the **Crown Point Tavern**, is now offering a 10% discount to CAMRA members.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

The first weekend in July saw the 25th instance of the **Dove Holes Jazz & Beer Festival**. The main jazz events take place in Dove Holes Club, whilst the beer festival is housed in a marquee alongside the clubhouse. There are real ales on the bar in the club and also across at the cricket pavilion, though these tend to be nationally available beers.

The beers in the marquee made for much more interesting drinking. Two beers from High Peak Brew Co., just down the road at Chapel-en-le-Frith, Bitter and Pale Ale, were well worth trying. So too was Dove Jazz Anniversary Ale from Chapel Craft Brewing Co. Is this the same setup as High Peak or a second micro brewery in Chapel? There was also a 5.6% Far Eastern India Pale Ale, perhaps to be avoided during an afternoon session. Half a dozen beers from RedWillow were of course worth sampling, though unfortunately a new beer Weightless (4.0%) was not ready on Saturday afternoon. The menu was completed by a mild and a bitter from Healey's Brewery on the Furness Peninsula of South Lakeland. The Mild was especially worth trying and it is good to see a

mild available at a small festival. Look out for the 26th edition of this event next year. The 199 bus Stockport to Buxton passes the cricket ground entrance and Dove Holes Railway Station is just a few minutes' walk away, though the service is only every two hours on the Manchester-Buxton line.



I mentioned last month the success of Whaley Bridge Brewery at Whaley Water Weekend, when Crow Hill sold out in four hours on the Saturday. Brewer Michael Wilde managed a bit of publicity with his photo in the W3 article in the *Buxton Advertiser*. Recently WB Stoneheads has been available at the **Drum & Monkey** in Whaley Bridge (pictured above) and at the **Soldier Dick** in Furness Vale, whilst Crow Hill has been on the bar at **Buxworth War Memorial Club**. Stoneheads was available in Whaley Bridge on Carnival Day at the end of June and sold well.



The latest news on the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge is that Robinsons have put this recently closed town centre local up for sale. This could make a good free house with decent management. Any plans for change of use should involve High Peak Borough Planning and Conservation officers as the Railway lies within the town's Conservation Area. Let us hope that the Railway does not become another lost local.

Talking of lost locals, I came across the Grapes on Hayfield Road in Chapel-en-le-Frith which has for many years been a house. This is another lost pub along the road from Chapel to Chinley. It was apparently popular with workers at the Ferodo factory when that plant was a much more thriving and expansive enterprise, and

when the odd pint at lunchtime was at least tolerated before becoming frowned on.



A recent visit to the **Ryles Arms** at Higher Sutton, fringing the Peak District near Macclesfield, made a good dining and drinking experience. A good choice of food at sensible prices was very welcome after a couple of hours exercise on the local hills. Three beers were available to slake the thirst. Two of these were local beers, RedWillow Headless and Wincle Rambler, whilst the third beer was Timothy Taylor's Landlord. It is especially good to see the support for local breweries in this dining pub which is well worth a visit anyway.

The **Cock** in Whaley Bridge has been selling Robinsons' football beer, Bonjeuros. At the **Goyt** the unseasonal Nethergate Growler flew out when there was a hint of summer, whilst Bradfield Farmers Blonde is popular and is set for a good run as a regular beer. At the **Shepherds** Banks's Mild has returned as a permanent fixture with your correspondent and others more than happy to give it a regular tasting. Also 'back by popular demand' as the pump clip proclaims, has been Marynka Single Hop Golden Ale, a particularly tasty brew which was one of the Marston's Single Hop series from some months ago.



A few weeks ago the *Daily Telegraph* had a feature on pubs with good beer gardens. The nearest one to the Peak District in the various lists was the Wharf in Manchester. Out in the Peak there is of course a long list of pubs whose welcome extends to a decent beer garden during the occasional warm summer day. Located next to the canal basin the **Navigation** at Buxworth is worth a mention as are the garden areas at both the **White Hart** (pictured above) and the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge. If you get out into the High Peak in the summer months, give our pubs a visit.



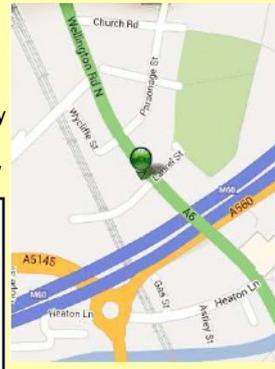
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Heard at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester

Stretford News

Brewer Erin Guy has left her position as head brewer at the Joseph Holt owned Bootleg Brewery. She has joined the team at Stretford's **Sip Club**, looking after everything to do with their beer offering, including brewing beers exclusively for the Sip Club. The first Sip ale was brewed on the pilot kit at Manchester's Beer Nouveau in late June and went on sale at the Barton Road bar in July.

Further changes at the Sip Club have seen the bar relocated to make better use of the available space. A new full height window has been added where the bar used to be to improve ventilation. Changes are also planned to the cask cooling system to improve the quality of the real ale offering.

Over the road from the Sip Club, the **Robin Hood** is planning "Robinfest", a live music and beer festival to take place over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Further details will be available on their Facebook page by time you read this.

Trafford Pub Shorts

Another pub planning a bank holiday beer festival is the **Axe and Cleaver** in Dunham Massey. The festival will run from 27th to 29th August and will be showcasing local ales from Dunham Massey Brewery, Lymm Brewery and Mobberley Brewhouse. The pub now offers CAMRA members a 10% discount off cask ales.

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Opening Times recently reported on the re-opening of the **Tavern on the Green** on Stamford New Road, Altrincham. The pub has had a successful first few weeks of trading, with Fridays and Saturdays particularly busy. There are four regularly changing real ales on

offer with manager Sam welcoming recommendations on beers to be featured. Card carrying CAMRA members receive a 20% discount on cask ales. The Tavern is the latest opening on a much revived Stamford New Road following the Craftsman and the Cheshire Tap, both of which are also doing well.

Sun in September

Carole Taylor has been in touch to let us know that she and husband Alan were due to retire from the **Sun in September**, Burnage, on 1st August after 23 years at the pub. Carole told *Opening Times* "It's been a real privilege working here for 23 years serving real ale to all our lovely customers in Burnage. We have had a fantastic time and would also like to thank CAMRA and its members for their support over the years. Keep up the good work." The Sun in September has been something of a beacon for quality and cask beer over the years in a part of Manchester where good pubs are thin on the ground. We wish Carole and Alan a long and happy retirement.



The Mounting Stone



The **Mounting Stone** is Stockport's latest pub – and one of a growing number of micropubs in the town. If you include the three “beer shops with seats” they are now eight in number with at least one more on the way.

This former cigarette shop opened its doors on 25th June as the culmination of a 10-month conversion project which involved a wholesale reconstruction of the premises. It's an impressive job, too – but given that it's been opened by the people behind Cheadle Hulme's Chiverton Tap that is to be expected. It's being looked after by Andrew O'Shea, one of the Chiverton Tap team who has

now given up his day job to manage the new outlet.

The theme is loosely taken from an old blacksmith's that was nearby in the distant past. Much use has been made of reclaimed wood and this gives the whole place a warm glow, and complements the other reclaimed items such as bottle crate light fittings and wall features incorporating old tools. A feature has been made of the winch used to get casks into the cellar (which can be viewed through a glass panel in the spacious downstairs seating area). There's also plenty of fixed bench seating which adds another traditional touch. This use of reclaimed materials is carried through to the small outdoor beer garden at the back of the pub, where old casks and crates have been used to good effect.

There are six cask beers with Bollington Brewery's Long Hop and Best as the permanents, while the four changing guests will always include one dark beer. There are also six keg beers, three from Salford's Outstanding Brewery and three changing guests. Traditional cider is also available. Food is limited to Titterton's pork pies (with chutney) or a bowl of olives. This is to be extended to include a cheeseboard. There's free wi-fi, it's dog friendly and you can take away flagons of beer should you wish. To date trade has been brisk to say the least – hardly surprising given the quality of what is on offer and, it has to be said, the lack of any real competition in the centre of Bramhall.



Queens Arms, Cheadle

Opening Times paid a recent visit to the **Queens Arms** in Cheadle and we were very impressed with the way that experienced licensee Dennis Davies is working to restore the pub's fortunes. The Queens has had something of a bumpy ride in recent times and hasn't always enjoyed the best reputation but that now seems set to change.

Dennis has had to work hard to turn round the customer base but he's now being rewarded by the return of some of the old regulars which is good news. There's a nice looking pub food menu and the two well-kept cask beers are Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde.

The Pilcrow Pub

Now this is an interesting idea. A new pub is being built in Sadler's Yard, a new public open space which is part of the “old” Co-op complex off Corporation Street in the City Centre. It's apparently pay-back by the Co-op for the loss of the nearby Ducie Bridge pub.



What makes this special is that the pub is being built from scratch by a community group – which is still open to volunteers. The overall aim of the project is to use traditional construction techniques to build a pub for the community, giving them the opportunity to

have a say in what they want and need from their local. There have been 22 workshops so far and the next set – including coopering and conduit laying – have already been arranged.

The exterior was pre-fabricated but everything inside will be made by hand through the Pilcrow's team of expert craftspeople and volunteers. So far they've made the beer pump handles, tap handles, bar tiles, hanging baskets, stools, pub screen designs, aprons and acquired a traditional Manchester log-end dartboard.

They are always looking for people to get involved, so if anyone has a specific skill they want to share they can email hello@thepilcrowpub.com, or go along to a workshop. The website's at www.thepilcrowpub.com.

Photo from Rob Evans with Love Photography.

High Peak Pub of the Season

The High Peak, Tameside & North-East Cheshire Branch Pub of the Summer is the **Fleece Inn** in Mossley, writes *Tom Lord*. The photograph below shows licensee Mike Tebbs (right) receiving his presentation certificate from local CAMRA member Duncan Roberts along with other Branch members.

Under Mike's guidance the pub has seen a revitalisation over the last year during which it has become a busy and successful community local with a wide range of changing guest beers. Situated at 53 Stamford



Street in Top Mossley it is well worth a visit. Out of interest looking back over the records it shows that the Fleece in 1995 was serving Bass Toby Light, Stones Best Bitter and Websters Bitter all on handpump. How things can change in 20 years. Mossley itself is well worth a visit as alongside the Fleece there are other fine pubs serving a wide range of cask conditioned real ales, one of which, the **Rising Sun**, also has its own micro brewery. Mossley is also of course home to Millstone Brewery whose fine beers can be regularly found in local pubs.



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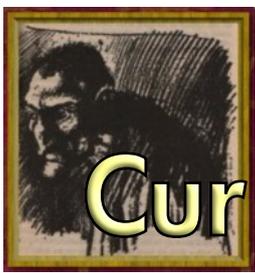
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Curmudgeon

Hear, Hear

A few years ago, the well-known beer writer Pete Brown bemoaned the tendency in modern, crafty bars to remove all carpets and soft furnishings, leading to an environment in which all sounds were echoed rather than absorbed, thus creating an often unacceptable level of general background noise. I have to say I wholeheartedly agreed with this.

This view has now been reinforced by a recent report produced to coincide with Lipreading Awareness Week, which makes the point that pubs with loud music and a lack of sound-absorbing materials can provide a very hostile environment for the deaf and hard of hearing. A common problem with mild hearing loss is that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish conversation with people close by from background hubbub. Hearing aids may amplify the general level of sound, but they do little to help with this.

The report suggests that pubs should turn down the music and introduce more carpets, curtains and soft upholstery. They should also add more alcoves, booths and room dividers. That's certainly music to my ears! It points out that half of all over-65s have measurable hearing loss, and I'd bet that most of the rest have at least a small amount of degradation. I'm in my mid-fifties and, while I wouldn't say I have any major hearing problems, I do find it increasingly difficult to follow pub conversations when there's a substantial level of background noise.

The contemporary trend of pub refurbishments seems to very much involve replacing carpets with wood or parquet floors, and cloth upholstery with faux-leather. Personally, even if done tastefully, I find this a touch alienating. I prefer pubs to be cosy, but apparently that isn't desirable now. And it greatly reduces the ability of the pub interior to absorb sound.

The age profile of the potential drinking population is ever rising, and any attempt to appeal to an elusive youth market is going to be increasingly counter-productive. There have been numerous media reports about how the young are turning their backs on pubs and drinking, while older people have a growing amount of spare time and cash. Where pubs are busy, especially at lunchtimes, they're often busy with pensioners.

I've always expressed a certain amount of scepticism about forcing pubs to make adjustments for disabled customers that in practice will be scarcely used. For example, I felt that recent calls for all pubs that did not provide disabled facilities to be closed down were going too far. Many pubs are in historic buildings where such adjustments are simply impractical.

But, on the other hand, if you are redesigning pub interiors and introducing new features, you should take care not to make them less friendly to the disabled. Classic examples of this are variations in floor level and high-level posing tables. Someone in a wheelchair can happily engage in a conversation at a normal-height table, but with a posing table they're isolated at a lower level. Likewise many people with mobility problems would struggle to climb up on to a high stool.

It also shouldn't be forgotten that many people, while not officially registered as disabled, may have some impairment to their mobility. It's a facile assumption that everyone who is disabled is in a wheelchair. Pubs should be welcoming and accessible to all their customers.

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

CAMRA Awards

The Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Year award has been won by **Pi** in **Altrincham**. Pictured here is manager Chris (left) receiving his certificate from Trafford & Hulme Branch Chair John O'Donnell. Second was Chorlton's **Marble Beer House** while Pi's near neighbour **Jack in the Box** was third.



The High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire Branch covers such a large area that it straddles three CAMRA regions. As a result they have three Pubs of the Year and the last to be presented was that for Cheshire. The winning pub was Bollington Brewery's **Cask Tavern** on Park Lane in Poynton. Pictured above is High Peak CAMRA's Lawrence Bamber (right) presenting the award to Cask Tavern manager Tom Quinn.

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year bucked the trend for such awards to go to multi-beer free houses and instead the branch chose the traditional, and very well-run, **Boars Head** in Stockport Market Place as its winner. This Sam Smiths pub offers just the one cask beer, Old Brewery Bitter, sold on top form in very traditional surroundings. Pictured here with her certificate is manager Sue Wild and her enthusiastic staff.



Stockport & South Manchester also presented a Pub of the Year Runner-up award and this went to popular free house **Ye Olde Vic** on Chatham Street in Edgeley. Pictured here, receiving his certificate, is long serving licensee Steve Brannan (left) from Branch Chairman John Clarke.



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CAMRA Discounts

There are several pubs in the *Opening Times* area that offer a discount to card-carrying CAMRA members. This is a very welcome promotion and we are very grateful to those pubs that have taken up this initiative. *Opening Times* publishes an up to date list of these pubs every three months. To date we have been given details of the following pubs which offer a discount. If any pub out there has been missed off the list (or the information below is incorrect) then please email *Opening Times* Editor John Clarke with details. The email address is: stocam@btinternet.com.

Here are the pubs we currently have full details of:

- ☺ **Albert Square Chop House, Manchester:** 20% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Ashlea, Manchester Road, Cheadle:** 10% discount off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Axe & Cleaver, School Lane, Dunham Massey:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Bar Fringe, Swan Street, Manchester:** 10p off a half and 20p off a pint of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Beehive, Market Street, Droylsden:** 10% off a pint of cask ales and ciders.
 - ☺ **Beer Traders, Stockport Road, Marple:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Bier Cell, Greenwood Street, Altrincham:** 10% discount on bottled beers.
 - ☺ **Grove Ale House, London Road, Hazel Grove:** 10% off cask ales (Monday to Thursday).
 - ☺ **Harewood Arms, 2 Market Street, Broadbottom:** 20p off a pint of cask ales Sunday to Thursday.
 - ☺ **Heaton Hops, School Lane, Heaton Chapel:** 10% off all draught beers.
 - ☺ **Jack in the Box, Altrincham Market:** 10% off Blackjack House Pale.
 - ☺ **Ladybrook, Fir Road, Bramhall:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Lass O'Gowrie, Charles Street, Manchester:** 50p off a pint and 20p off a half of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Mary & Archie, Burton Road, West Didsbury:** 10p off a pint of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Mary & Archie, Manchester Road, Chorlton:** 15% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Mono, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Morley Cheek's, Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton:** 10p off a pint.
 - ☺ **Mounting Stone, Woodford Road, Bramhall:** 30p off a pint of cask ales (Monday and Tuesday).
 - ☺ **Oxford, Oxford Road, Manchester:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Pie & Ale, The Hive, Lever Street, Manchester:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Prairie Schooner Tap House, Flixton Road, Urmston:** 20p off a pint of cask ales (50p with Wetherspoon voucher).
 - ☺ **Saison, Burton Road, West Didsbury:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Salisbury, New Wakefield Street, Manchester:** 50p off a pint and 20p off a half of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Samuel Oldknow, Market Street, Marple:** 20p off a pint of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Spinning Top, Wellington Road South, Stockport:** 30p off a pint and 12p off a half.
 - ☺ **Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:** 10% off cask ales (does not apply Friday and Saturday).
 - ☺ **Tavern on the Green, Faulkner Street, Altrincham:** 20% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Trevor, Beech Road, Chorlton:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **White Hart, High Street, Cheadle:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **White House, Water Street, Stalybridge:** 10% off cask ales.
 - ☺ **Wine & Wallop, Lapwing Lane, West Didsbury:** 40p off a pint of cask ales.
 - ☺ **Ye Olde Cock, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury:** 25p off a pint of cask ales.
- All the more reason to join CAMRA. There's a membership form on page 18 or go to www.camra.org.uk/join. Many thanks to all of these pubs for their generous offers.**



- ☺ **Bridge Beers, Melbourne Street, Stalybridge:** 10p off a pint, 5p off a half of cask ales (Tuesday to Thursday).
- ☺ **Bullock Smithy, London Road, Hazel Grove:** 10p off a pint of cask ales.
- ☺ **Chiverton Tap, Mellor Road, Cheadle Hulme:** 30p off a pint of cask ales (Monday and Tuesday).
- ☺ **Church Inn, Church Road, Flixton:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Craftsman, Stamford New Road, Altrincham:** 25p off a pint.
- ☺ **Didsbury, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Fir Tree, Gorton Road, Reddish:** 20% off a pint of cask ales.
- ☺ **Font, New Wakefield Street, Manchester:** 25% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Font, Manchester Road, Chorlton:** 25% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Font, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield:** 25% off cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **Fred's Ale House, 843 Stockport Road, Levenshulme:** 30p a pint off cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **George & Dragon, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Grey Horse, Portland Street, Manchester:** 10% off cask ales.

Beer in the Baltic

Jerry Wicken continues his European tour



I've read in a few places that Lithuania has the cheapest beer in Europe. Clearly those writers have never been to Manchester! Perhaps life's too short to worry about the odd penny on a pint.

Lithuania has a fledgling craft beer industry but I get the feeling it has not been embraced by the locals. Nearly all the craft beer bars I visited in Vilnius and Kaunas had tourists outnumbering locals by at least five to one. Of course, many Baltic capitals are now destinations for stag weekends and the like and a lot of these bars are geared up to just these events.



Having said that, there are a few bars and beers worth tracking down. In Vilnius, Leičiai has three outlets in the same street but the most interesting houses the brewery. In the bar you sit at tables with a central tap through which you serve yourself with the home brewed lager. At the end of your stay the amount is totted up and you pay accordingly. In truth the lager was fairly bland and the English style IPA not much better but it rates highly as an experience. (See photo.)

Šnekutis is another decent bar (again I think there is more than one of the same name). It serves many Lithuanian beers, but for me the quality was not quite there. I tried the stout and the Vilniaus IPA, the latter being the pick of the two. The stout was very sweet for my taste but does seem to reflect tastes in the Baltic.

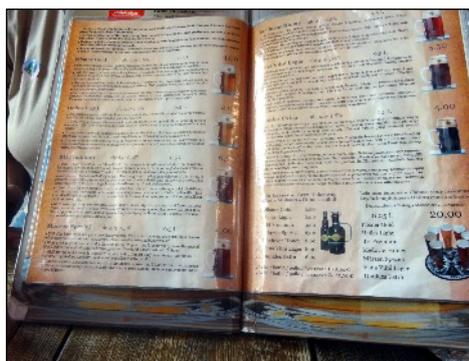


Moving on to Kaunas, a lively university city, there are a couple of places worth noting. Avilys brews its own beer and of the three they were serving their standard beer was good but the

other two were the same beer with honey added or served hot. Certainly the best bar we visited was Nisha, tucked in a back street, but worth seeking out. It had 11 beers on tap as well as dozens of bottles. Sadly, it only served one Lithuanian beer on tap, namely Ipanema from Endless Brewery which, as the name suggests, is an IPA. It was probably the best I tried in Lithuania. The rest of the beers came from all over Europe, including Shepherd Neame from the UK. I suspect the bar is particularly popular as a late evening venue.

Overall, though, the draught beers were a little disappointing, particularly after Poland, but some of the bottled, unfiltered wheat beers hit the spot particularly that from the Vilniaus brewery. The unfiltered, slightly sweet, Lithuanian lager, Proginis from the Rinkuškiai brewery is also worth checking out.

Next stop Latvia where there is also a craft beer scene but not as developed and again more geared towards tourists. Our first bar in Riga was Queens which offered a four beer tasting. Bauskas Dark was sweet, almost like an old fashioned brown ale, at 5.5%; an IPA of the same strength from the same brewery was fine; Aldaris lager at 4.8%, which the waitress described as being like Fosters but thankfully wasn't and the best of the bunch Mežpils, an unfiltered Pilsner at 5.3% but also commercially brewed by Aldaris.



This was all a little disappointing but whilst we found a couple of decent bars, Aptieka being one, the beers were generally fairly standard. Tērvetes, a slightly bitter pilsner was available in many bars, and refreshing on a hot day, but produced by a large commercial concern. Better was Zoltners, a microbrewery from the same town, which brews a couple of decent beers: Gaišais (a lager) and Originalais (a hoppy slightly darker lager) but which I found hard to track down in Riga.

Of the bottled ales I tried those from Valmiermuiža were the best of an average bunch with the unfiltered wheat beer at 5.2% the pick.

A Czech brewery, Stargorod, have opened a brewery in the city, though their brewery tap did not produce anything exceptional.

The problem in both Latvia and Lithuania is the national sweet tooth in beer, probably stemming from Kvass. Originally a soft drink tasting rather like the disgusting, in my opinion, root beer, it is now being brewed by some beer companies at about 1% ABV. It now appears on beer taps but is not always labelled. Avoid at all costs.

Onto Estonia and a great improvement if you manage to steer away from most beers from A. Le Coq, which produces gassy lager and is the most common brew in the country. However in Pärnu we found a great little pub, Veerev Õlu, which had on tap Alexander, a double fermented wheat beer made by A. Le Coq. I'm not sure whether this was cask conditioned or



not but it was very tasty, slightly bitter and, for Estonia, great value at about £2.20 a pint. The best bar was Wirre (pictured above). It served a good range of cask conditioned ales from Estonia including Tanker Sauna (an unusual session beer flavoured with birch) and Rattur from the Õllenaut brewery. Õllenaut also collaborate in a brew made with 'Moose Moss' instead of hops but we couldn't find any. They were good but at prices that would make the Metropolitan blush, a cool £4.50 a pint. That's probably why the bar was nearly empty.

Then to the capital, Tallinn, where we tried a good bottle conditioned IPA from Anderson's but created in the Tanker brewery and a range of very good bottled beers from the Põhjala and Pühaste breweries.

We visited two brew pubs: Hell Hunt meaning nothing more than Gentle Wolf in Estonian, where we enjoyed Nisuõlu wheat beer and a slightly sweet Hell Hunt ale, and the Beer House which brewed seven beers although the best of these set us back an eye watering £4.90 a pint. I reckon this place is strictly for the tourists given the staff's medieval dress in a bar only 14 years old. The best ales may be good in Estonia, and there are many more craft breweries popping up, but you certainly pay for the privilege. It is probably setting me up for Sweden!

Stagger

Offerton with Peter Edwardson

May's Stagger took us around the Stockport suburb of Offerton, on the south-east side of the town. The weather had been balmy during the day but, on approaching the first pub, it started pouring down, and hardly relented for the rest of the night.



We started out at the **Puss in Boots** on Nangreave Road, a pub in a rather out-of-the-way location which means it can get overlooked. It's a modern estate-type pub that has been thoroughly refurbished by Robinsons in conjunction with the Almond Pub Company. Inside, you're faced by a long bar as you walk in through the door, with a dining area to the right and a section more oriented towards drinkers to the left, with plenty of seating in a variety of styles. At the front is a long covered terrace where the temporary windows had been pulled down in anticipation of the rain, but the patio heaters left on, making it unbearably hot.

Even though only early evening, this was by some way the busiest pub of the night, with the dining section doing good business and seats at a premium in the remainder. There were four real ales on the bar – Dizzy Blonde, which was above average, Unicorn and the seasonal Beerdo, which were both good, and Trooper, which was not tried. An interesting feature is a glass panel giving a view of the casks stillaged in the ground-floor cellar.



Nipping through the back streets brought us through the car park to the rear entrance of the **Fingerpost**. This is a massive redbrick Edwardian Robinsons' pub commanding the junction of Hempshaw Lane and Dialstone Lane. Internally, although somewhat opened up

over the years, it retains five distinct sections, most with ample bench seating, plus a concert room at the end of the corridor where a band were rehearsing. There's also an extensive outdoor drinking area at the rear. Only two real ales were on sale, Unicorn and Trooper, both of which were reckoned above average to good. There were also turned-round pumpclips for Wizard and Beerdo, which were expected to come on later in the weekend. Initially, the pub was fairly quiet, but it became noticeably busier during the half-hour we spent there.



We had heard that the **Strawberry Gardens** on Offerton Lane had stopped selling real ale, but one of the party went ahead to check, phoning to confirm that this was indeed the case. We therefore headed straight down Banks Lane to the **Gardeners Arms** (pictured above), a long, low, white-painted pub situated in the angle of that road and Offerton Lane. It's a surprisingly roomy pub, with a long, comfortable lounge along the front being matched by an equally capacious vault at the rear. It's one of the pubs recently acquired by Greene King as part of Spirit Group, and that was reflected in the keg beer range. Real ales were a house beer, Gardeners Ale, which we assumed was a rebadged Greene King product, and the unpronounceable A-Hop-Alypse Now from Camerons. The former was only just average, the latter rather better. I always think this pub could make more of its potential with a more settled and familiar beer range.

A short walk down Hall Street then brought us to Robinsons' **Emigration**, a pub name believed to be unique in the UK. The interior has been opened up somewhat, but still provides a couple of areas with bench seating towards the front, plus a more open lounge at the rear. Unfortunately, we were met with a distinctly unfriendly reception from the licensee, who for some reason seemed to take exception to a number of people ordering halves of Unicorn, the sole cask beer. Not surprisingly, this left a rather sour taste in the mouth, and the verdict on the beer ranged from very poor

to just about average. In many years of taking part in these events, I have honestly never encountered such a poor welcome.

We rapidly moved on to the **Victoria** across the road, a white-painted Punch Taverns pub retaining a two-roomed layout. There was a loud disco in progress in the lounge, so we retired to the quieter vault side. Two cask beers were available, Wychwood Hobgoblin, and Morland Old Speckled Hen, both of which were reckoned a touch above average. The service was noticeably efficient and friendly here, although strangely the barmaid asked me if I had any preference as to what kind of glass my half was served in, possibly due to previous customers grumbling about getting Guinness glasses.



This completed Offerton proper, so we continued on down Hall Street towards the town centre and the Market Place. On past Friday nights, the **Cocked Hat** has also featured a loud disco, but tonight this wasn't the case, so it made an obvious place to finish the evening. It's maybe a lesson to pub operators that loud discos can deter more customers than they attract. Originally the Pack Horse, it has been brought back to life by the Atwill Pub Company and now seems to do a thriving trade. There's a standing area by the bar on the left, and two lounge-type sections on the right with extensive fixed seating.

There were six real ales on the bar – the rather questionably named house beer Old and Filthy Vintage Sauce, Brimstage Oystercatcher Stout and Scarecrow, Cross Bay Zenith, and Hornbeam White Swan and Bowing Out, so called because it was the last brew before the brewery's sale. The one person who tried the Oystercatcher found it pretty good, but most went for the Morecambe-brewed Zenith, a 5.0% IPA, which was very good verging on excellent and comfortably the beer of the night.

In summary, with one blemish, a very enjoyable Friday night out, showcasing a number of pubs doing what they do best, being good locals serving their communities well. Why not try them for yourself and see what you think?

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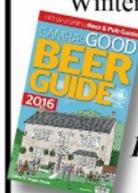


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Monday – Drink the bar dry

Fri – 4pm til Late | Sat – 12pm til Late | Sun – 12pm til Late | Mon – 12pm til there's nothing left!!

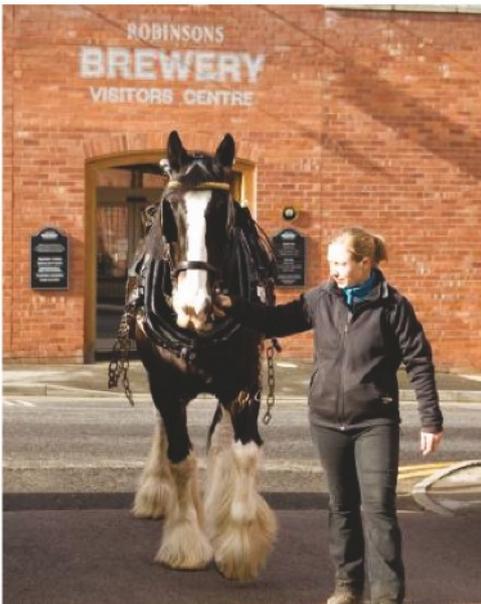
Enquiries – hiddenbeerfest@gmail.com || BBQ & Food stalls all weekend

Knutsford Sports Club, Mereheath Lane, Knutsford, WA16 6SZ



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