

# OPENING TIMES

MARCH 2017 / FREE

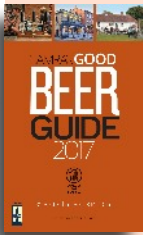


**INSIDE: PUBS OF THE YEAR / LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR / MANCHESTER BEER  
and CIDER FESTIVAL REVIEW**



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[jdwetherspoon.com](http://jdwetherspoon.com)



# 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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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](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice/consumer_service.htm)  
Their telephone no. is 03454 04 05 06.

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To find a local office: [www.gov.uk/find-local-trading-standards-office](http://www.gov.uk/find-local-trading-standards-office)

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\* Transport for Greater Manchester: [www.tfgm.com](http://www.tfgm.com) 0161 244 1000

\* East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public\\_transport.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx)

\* Derbyshire: [www.derbybus.info](http://www.derbybus.info)

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**Copy Date for the April issue is Friday 10th March.**

**Contributors to this issue:** John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, John O'Donnell, Phil Booton, Graham Privett, Stewart Taylor, Jim Flynn, Heather Airlie, Brendon Hall, Suze Appleton, Chris Morris, Dave Sheldon, Stuart Ballantyne, Graham Donning, John Hutchinson and Ben Fountain.

**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Front cover – Cheers! There's a beer for everyone.**

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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](http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk)

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

#### Salford (SAL) [www.salford.camra.org.uk](http://www.salford.camra.org.uk)

Contact: Dave Hampshire; talldave@gmail.com

#### High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

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

Contact: Stewart Taylor 07907 714826; taylorshouse@supanet.com

#### Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

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

Contact: Rob Nicholson 07983 524102; social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

#### Trafford & Hulme (T&H) [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)

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

#### Central Manchester (CMCR)

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

Contact: enquiries@centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

### Local CAMRA Events open events in blue

**Tuesday 7th** – Branch Meeting: Town Hall Tavern, 20 Tib Lane, M2 4JA. Starts 6.30pm. (CMCR)

**Thursday 9th** – Branch Meeting: Railway, 84 Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris, SK4 1HW. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

**Friday 10th** – Ashton-on-Mersey Social: 8.00pm Old Plough, 56 Green Lane, M33 5PG; 9.30pm Buck Inn, 59 Green Lane, M33 5PN. (T&H)

**Saturday 11th** – Manchester City Centre Evening Social: Meet at Piccadilly Tap on Station Approach at 7.00pm. (HPNC)

**Monday 13th** – Branch Meeting: Sportsman, Mottram Road, Hyde, SK14 2NN. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

**Wednesday 15th** – Branch Meeting & AGM: Old Pint Pot, 2 Adelphi Street, M3 6EN. Note venue to be confirmed. (SAL)

**Thursday 16th** – Brooklands Social: 8.00pm Belmore Hotel, 143 Brooklands Road, M33 3QN; 9.00pm Brook, Station Approach, Brooklands Road, M33 3SQ; 9.45pm Brooklands Tap, 117 Hope Road, M33 3YA; 10.20pm Vine Inn, 133 Washway Road, M33 7UD. (T&H)

**Friday 17th** – Stockport Market Place Stagger: 7.30pm Calverts Court, 13 St Petersgate, SK1 1EB; 8.30pm Boars Head, 2 Vernon Street, SK1 1TY. (SSM)

**Saturday 18th** – Cider Pub of the Year presentation: Railway, 1 Avenue Street, Portwood, SK1 2BZ. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 18th** – Pub of the Year presentation to the Brink, 65 Bridge Street, M3 3BQ. Starts at 7.00pm. (CMCR)

**Saturday 18th** – Frank Wood's 60th Birthday Bash: Glossop Labour Club, Chapel Street, Glossop, SK13 8AT. Details from Branch Contact. (HPNC)

**Wednesday 22nd** – Higher Irlam Social: 7.30pm Higher Irlam Social Club, Cutnook Lane, M44 6JS; 8.45pm Old Nags Head, 84 Liverpool Road, M44 6FF. (SAL)

**Thursday 23rd** – Pub of the Month award: Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury, M20 5PG. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 25th** – Spring Pub of the Season Award: Church House, Church Lane, Sutton, SK11 0DS. From 2.00pm. (MEC)

**Saturday 25th** – East Lancs Rail Trip to Ramsbottom. Details from Branch Contact. (T&H)

**Tuesday 28th** – Ladies Day Out to Macclesfield: details from Ann or Margaret at mrcamrasocials@hotmail.com. (CAMRA members welcome)

**Wednesday 29th** – Salford Quays Social: 7.30pm Dockyard, Dockhouse, Media City, M50 2HQ; 8.30pm Craftbrew, Unit 1, Digital World Centre, 1 Lowry Plaza, M50 3UB; 9.30pm Lime, Lowry Outlet Mall, M50 3AG. (SAL)

**Wednesday 29th** – Deansgate Social: 6.30pm Lost Dene, 144 Deansgate, M3 3EE; 7.00pm Sawyers Arms, 138 Deansgate, M3 2RP; 8.00pm Gas Lamp, 50a Bridge Street, M3 8DW. (CMCR)

**Saturday 1st April** – Pub of the Year presentation: Chiverton Tap, 8 Mellor Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 5AU. From 2.00pm. (SSM)

**Tuesday 4th April** – Branch Meeting: Stubborn Mule Brewery, 2 Radium House, Bridgewater Rd, Altrincham WA14 1LZ. (T&H)

**Wednesday 5th April** – Branch Meeting – details from contact. (CMCR)

**Wednesday 5th April** – Swinton Social: 7.30pm Football, 33 Swinton Hall Road, M27 4BL; 8.30 Bulls Head, 199 Chorley Road, M27 6AZ; 9.30pm Cricketers Arms, 227 Manchester Road, M27 4TT. (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](http://www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA)

**Trafford & Hulme:** [www.facebook.com/thcamra](http://www.facebook.com/thcamra)

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

**Central Manchester:**  
[www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra](http://www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra)

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**Stockport & South Manchester:** @SSMCAMRA

**Trafford & Hulme:** @THCAMRA

**Macclesfield & East Cheshire:** @MECCAMRA

**Central Manchester:** @MCRCentralCamra

# Pub of the Month

## The Gateway, East Didsbury



**The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for March 2017 will be presented to the Gateway, East Didsbury. Jim Flynn tells you all about it.**

Sited at the junction of Kingsway and Wilmslow Road, this large inter-wars roadhouse was struggling and so in mid-2011 Hydes Brewery sold it to Wetherspoons. However, all did not go well as the public saw insufficient reasons to cross the road from the leisure complex opposite. Indeed, for a while despite the obvious investment in new carpets, half-height wooden panelling, improved toilet facilities, exterior lighting and new kitchen facilities it looked like they might have bought a pup. However, they had an ace up their sleeve in the form of manager Kevin Muldoon.

Since he arrived, the public has responded and the pub is now vibrant and highly popular. It is often said by critics that many Wetherspoons do not feel like proper pubs but whatever the truth in this argument that can never be levelled against the Gateway under Kevin's tutelage. Both beer quality and service are excellent and like all good licensees Kevin knows his customers and his customers know him; this most definitely is a proper pub with a proper pub licensee! As a result, it is not just perceived as a prelude to a trip across the road to the cinema or bowling but as a destination in its own right.

Kevin is very interested in his beers and stocks many from local up-and-coming breweries and such is the quality that the pub has been a regular in the Good Beer Guide since 2014. The house beer is from Brightside and a good real cider is always available.

So why not join us when the Pub of the Month Award will be presented to Kevin and his hard-working staff on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March from 8pm onwards. Don't miss it!

The pub is on one of the UK's busiest bus corridors with amongst others the 50, 142, 42, 42A, 42B, 45 and 142 from the city centre, 42, 370, 23 and 23A from Stockport, 42A from Reddish and the Heatons, 44 and 130 from Cheadle and beyond, finally the 42B from Bramhall and Woodford. Rail services on the Piccadilly/Airport line stop at East Didsbury and East Didsbury Metrolink stop is also close by.

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[www.themagnetfreehouse.co.uk](http://www.themagnetfreehouse.co.uk)  
 Open: Mon-Thur 4-11pm, Fri-Sun 12-11pm



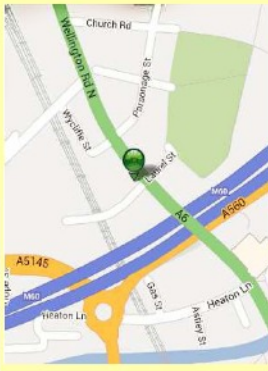
## The MIDLAND

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**SSM CAMRA  
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2010**



# Railway Heaton Norris

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# Trafford & Hulme Awards

## Ben Fountain looks at the winners

Trafford & Hulme Branch has completed the voting for its Pub of the Year, awarding **Pi (Altrincham)** the top spot, with **JP Joule** taking the silver award and **Jack in the Box** the bronze. Trafford & Hulme branch is celebrating 40 years in 2017 and while these bars are only a sample, each represents part of the changing character of the branch area served. Changes to boundaries this year have altered some pubs' eligibility as they've moved to the Central Manchester branch. The feeling at the meeting where the votes were taken was that the quality of pubs in the area continues to improve and these would be strong contenders for awards in any part of the city and surrounding areas.



**Pi (Altrincham)** takes the Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Year 2017 award. Pi continues its quiet reputation for a quality, European-style bar welcoming drinkers over two floors. During the past year they've provided an excellent range of beers. Pie Minister pie and mash for the hungry, along with free peanuts for the peckish, remain popular. A reserved approach from Pi, (no DJ or TV) encourages conversation to dominate the atmosphere. They've plenty

of options to talk about; a new house brew for 2017 from Runaway brewery (a very sessionable 4.2% pale ale) joins the two guest handpumps on the bar with typically two cider or perry options available. Pi has not forgotten its roots, and retains a strong bottle selection, recently complemented with a 'Not beer' menu to simplify the decision process for drinkers. The food is served until 11pm and includes vegan options



The **JP Joule** (Silver award) offers fourteen handpumps that mix Wetherspoon's regular beers with a rotating selection of guest ales. Improving facilities at the popular local allow it to cater to a wide range of custom. Home workers throughout the day make use of the free wifi and competitively priced hot drinks. Later on many

local families enjoy the roomy atmosphere with children welcome until 9pm.



**Jack in the Box** (Bronze award) is Blackjack's brewery tap, situated in a corner of the very impressive Altrincham Market Hall it sees stiff competition from several other well respected Altrincham pubs, and fares very well. Four handpumps and eight fonts naturally

focus on the Blackjack range, supplemented with guest ales from the likes of Siren, Marble and Weird Beard to complete the line-up.

Pub of the Year looks to a wider set of criteria than other CAMRA awards, and considers the overall feel of each of these pubs. In this aspect, the staff plays a very important role, and everyone involved in these bars is congratulated by the local branch for contributing to the local beer scene. Well done!

# Central Manchester Awards

## Pub and Cider Pub winners

The new Central Manchester branch has also been busy choosing its award winners and has revealed both its Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year. One winner is very new and one a Northern Quarter fixture for many years.



The Central Manchester Pub of the Year is **Brink** on Bridge Street, writes *Graham Donning*. Brink is a very comfortable, modern subterranean bar set in the heart of Manchester. With five hand pulls and four keg fonts owner Gareth Williams only serves beers that are brewed within a 25-mile radius of his bar.

With a very relaxed atmosphere, all of the staff members are very knowledgeable about the beers on tap with a willingness to discuss with the customers what they normally drink or like, even if they are unfamiliar with any of the cask or keg beers. They will willingly offer samples - with enthusiasm! They will also offer their very intuitive and informative opinion about the food that is also on offer and which comes from the local Beehive Food products - especially the "All Day Breakfast" scotch egg!

We asked Gareth (pictured right) what he'd aimed for with the Brink. He told us: "One of the things I've really enjoyed over the last year is forging great working relationships with our suppliers. I'll bet there aren't many pubs that can get casks dropped on a Sunday with an hour's notice. The best thing, however, is the people we've met along the way. We have some truly great customers that add a hell of a lot to this place. A good pub should belong to its regulars, it should be a reflection of them, and that's what we strive to do".



Manchester has many wonderful bars and it was after a long debate about many of them that Central Manchester Branch decided that it was the Brink that would its our Pub of The Year 2017. The award is scheduled to be presented in the evening on the 18th March which also coincides with the pub being open for 12 months. Happy Birthday the Brink!"



While the Brink is very much a newcomer, the Central Manchester Cider Pub of the Year is an old-established favourite, **Bar Fringe** on Swan Street. In the past it has made a name for itself by selling a wide range of foreign beers - and was something of a local pioneer on that front. There's still a lot of good beer sold there but there's also a real enthusiasm for traditional cider. There are two regular ciders - Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and Lilley's Gladiator - and three changing guests. These are all prominently displayed on the bar and customers can choose from drinking their cider at either ambient temperature or chilled from the fridge. The presentation date has yet to be announced.



**Glossop Old Band**

# Inaugural Beer Festival 2017

**Friday 31st March – 4 pm to 10 pm**

**Saturday 1st April – Mid Day till late**

**Sunday 2nd April – Mid Day till 6 pm**

**On offer will be a wide range of  
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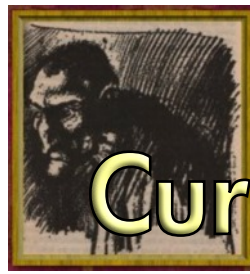
**Live music**

**Friday Night – Acoustic Duo - May Be Frank**

**Saturday Night – Bier Keller Band**

**Sunday Afternoon – Glossop Old Band**

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# Curmudgeon

## Collision Course

Every month, *Opening Times* seems to report new breweries being set up, at the same time as established pubs are closing down. If you extrapolate this into the future, within a decade or two we're going to end up with more breweries than pubs. Clearly this is unsustainable, and eventually the two trends are bound to collide.

It certainly seems to be true at present that there are too many small brewers chasing not enough business. Plenty of keen people have gone into the business without giving too much thought to where they're going to find customers. The result is a lot of cut-throat competition, with some brewers complaining that others are selling beer for less than it costs them to make it, and several reports of beer being sold “off the books” without duty being charged. This can't be healthy in the long term, and inevitably at some point a shake-out will happen.

One obvious factor is that, for most micro-brewers, it is to some extent a labour of love. They have taken up commercial brewing because they're interested in beer and brewing, not just as a money-making venture. Most have either previously been enthusiastic home-brewers, or have worked for another brewery before venturing out on their own. This doesn't mean that they don't take the business side seriously, but inevitably, across the whole population of brewers, there is a slightly less hard-headed attitude. If your prime objective in starting a small business is to maximise your profits, you probably won't take up brewing, and it can't be said that people run carpet-cleaning franchises because they're fascinated by carpets.

Added to this, a significant proportion of micro-brewers don't rely on their business to provide a proper full-time income, either because they have retired or have another job, a rich parent, or a working partner. This isn't a bad thing in itself, and may mean they can be more experimental and take more risks, but it does mean they can afford to take a more relaxed attitude to pricing, which may irk those who do entirely depend on brewing for their income.

The prevailing culture of ever-rotating guest beers also makes it more difficult for brewers to establish any kind of brand premium. The varying beers are just seen as a homogenous, dispensable product. Even if your beer isn't up to much, the pub probably won't be having it on again, so it will be quickly forgotten. All cask beer certainly isn't of broadly uniform quality, but when customers are confronted with an array of beers, and possibly breweries, that they have never heard of before, it's well-nigh impossible for them to make an informed judgment.

Given that the underlying market conditions are unlikely to change significantly, the objective for brewers must be to develop their reputation, so that pubs are going to make repeat orders, and that customers perceive their beers – whether individual brands or the overall output of the brewery – as something they actively want to drink. There's no magic bullet for achieving this, but it has to be the aim. Consistency, and having a product that stands out, not necessarily by being extremely distinctive, but by being of obvious quality, are vital factors.

There are plenty of examples of successful breweries who have done this, a good example being Hawkshead, where many drinkers, on seeing a Hawkshead beer on the bar, will immediately go for it in preference to others. And brewers of a more mainstream bent such as Otter have prospered through providing a consistent, well-branded product that is instantly recognisable and rarely disappoints the drinker.

**Curmudgeon Online:** [curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com](http://curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com)  
(comments on these articles can be left on the website)



# Heard at the Bar

## Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

### Urmston

In Urmston, the **Hop House** has closed after almost exactly two years of trading. The premises are due to become the new home of the Greek restaurant which has been operating within the nearby **Steamhouse** (which was in the same ownership as the Hop House and is pictured below).



Meanwhile, over the road, work is continuing to convert Urmston's old post office into a new pub. The owners have revealed that this will be called the **Barking Dog Alehouse & Kitchen**. The conversion will feature a main bar area and a traditional snug, and the whole pub will be open to drinkers and diners. Cask ales will feature heavily as the pub shares ownership with Lancaster's Borough Brewery. It is due to open in the Spring.

### Altrincham & Sale

Altrincham's cask ale scene continues to expand with a new bistro on George Street, near to the market district, featuring two cask ales from Dunham Massey on its bar. **Bistro Pierre** is part of a privately owned chain which began in Nottingham and Derby and has grown across the Midlands, the South West and now the North - Altrincham is their 17th outlet. Although primarily a restaurant specialising in Anglo-French cuisine, there is a bar area and when *Opening Times* called they were happy for us just to have a drink and they assured us drinkers would always be welcome.



By the time you read this, another phase of refurbishment work at Sale's **Bridge Inn** will have been completed. Following on from a

refurbishment of the outside area in January, the latest works will see a conservatory at the canal side pub on Dane Road. It has been under the management of Lisa Kettle and her team since last summer and they have transformed the pub. All handpumps are now in use serving the full JW Lees range and the Bridge is building a great reputation for its seasonal menu of freshly prepared food.

Sale also now has its very own craft beer bottle shop. **Artisan Ales** is one of 35 independent traders located in Traders Outlet on Tatton Road. The shop has limited opening hours as a result, only opening Thursday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm. A wide range of craft bottles and cans is stocked - for information on new arrivals, follow @artisan\_ales.

The Pi group, with bars in Chorlton, Altrincham and Liverpool, has commissioned Manchester's Runaway Brewery to produce a house beer for its bars. Like the majority of Runaway's beers, PI-PA is key-keg conditioned so although it comes out of a font, it is real ale. The beer, which is exclusive to the Pi group, is a 4% hoppy pale ale (referred to by some brewers as a "session IPA") heavily dry hopped with Rakau, Waimea and Mosaic. The new beer has been well received, with Runaway having to re-brew it within three weeks of the launch to keep up with demand.

### Chorlton



The **Jam Inn** on Wilbraham Road closed at the turn of the year. It has been replaced by a new bar called **Brewski** which specialises in pizza and boasts "14 craft ale lines". There is no cask ale and, when *Opening Times* called, we found several of the keg lines unavailable. We tried an IPA from American brewery Red Hook which was disappointing and the house "Brewski Pils" which was even more so. Hopefully things will improve when the bar has bedded in.

Next door, **Mono** has been opening sporadically for some time and currently is only trading on weekend evenings. The owners have confirmed via their Twitter feed that they are selling up.

Two more bars in Chorlton are now offering discounts on real ale for CAMRA members - **Strange Brew** on Barlow Moor Road is offering 10% discount while **Morley Cheeks** offers 20p a pint on presentation of a membership card.

### Cheadle Hulme area

In Cheadle Hulme the **Kings Hall** closed for a major refurbishment on 7th February. The work, which was scheduled to take about a month, will see the former Wetherspoons outlet turned into one of the Stonegate Pub Co's "Town Pub & Kitchen" chain and it will be renamed the **Kings Tap**.



Another Cheadle Hulme pub being refurbished is the **Hesketh Tavern** on Hulme Hall Road. The pub closed in early February for a £250,000 investment jointly funded by operators the Almond family and owners Star Pubs and Bars. The press release tells us "the design will play to the Hesketh's strengths by retaining and enhancing its traditional features. These will be married with new features such as worn leather and an earthy colour scheme, which were inspired by the historical public houses of London". The menu is also being expanded and enhanced. The new-look pub was due to reopen early this month.

Finally we understand the **Ryecroft** (formerly the Conway) on Turves Road has breathed its last. The pub, which seems to have struggled for some time, closed in January for redevelopment into housing.

In Cheadle, Hydes are refurbishing the **Star** on High Street. This has been in the pipeline for a while and in fact the pub, due to be renamed the **James Watts** after a 19th century mayor of Manchester and occupant of nearby Abney Hall, should be open by the time you read this.

### Heaton Moor

This month will see the closure of the **Moor Top** on Heaton Moor Road for a major refurbishment costing the best part of £1 million. This is long overdue and we look forward to seeing how it all turns out. The same management team also now runs the **Dog and Partridge** in Didsbury.



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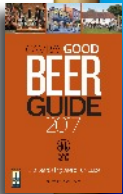
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# High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

## Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

It is good to see the products of the fairly recently re-established Poynton Brewery finding their way into the Peak District with the **Navigation** at Buxworth selling Happy Daze and Kiwi. As I have noted before, the Navigation is good at accessing interesting beers, including recently a batch from Empire Brewing at Slaithwaite near Huddersfield. The **Drum & Monkey** at Horwich End, Whaley Bridge, has sold Vulcan Best Bitter from the Poynton Brewery, the name being a nod to the aircraft from along the road in Woodford. Like the Navigation the Drum & Monkey also accesses interesting beers. A recent handpump had Stray Dog (4.2%) created by New Order and brewed by Moorhouse's.



A call at the **Goyt** in Whaley Bridge found Long Arm Brewing Co. Shadow Wolf. This is a 5% smoked stout, full of flavour and a good way to finish the afternoon. More stouts and porters are expected in the Goyt in the next few weeks when they appear on the Punch lists for licensees.

Meerbrook village lies in Staffordshire in the south west of the Peak District. The **Lazy Trout** is the village pub and is a fine multi-roomed establishment with alcoves and hidden corners. It also has a reputation for good, sensibly priced food. A group of us called after a couple of hours of running or walking on the nearby hills and while the pub was busy, service was efficient and cheerful and we did not have to wait long for our ample meals to arrive. Back in 2002 Andrew McCloy noticed a Marston's influence on the beers in his *Peak District Pub Guide*. These days Greene King holds sway with IPA, IPA Gold and Grubber, a golden ale which is a reference to the Six Nations Rugby Union games. There was also a very welcome guest beer, which is the norm. On this occasion Wincle Sir Philip was available and was much appreciated by members of the

group. Meerbrook can be accessed from the Macclesfield-Leek road near Rushton Spencer, or from the Buxton-Leek road. It is handy for walking on the Roaches or for strolling along the shores of Tittesworth Reservoir.

The beers from Whaley Bridge Brewery are often available in the **Drum & Monkey** in Whaley Bridge, and have recently been on sale in two of our local micropubs. Mike Wilde delivered some of his beers to the **Beer Shed** in New Mills and the **Old Cell** in Chapel-en-le-Frith. Whaley Bridge beers also get elsewhere in the free trade and are well worth trying.



A quick call at the **Shady Oak** in Fernilee, on the Long Hill road from Whaley Bridge to Buxton, found Ringwood Mauler, which seems to be a regular in the Marston's estate, and Brakspear Jerusalem which is presumably a one-off to be found in Marston's pubs. Mauler was described as a golden ale and is to be recommended if you come across it.



The **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge makes careful beer choices from the Punch lists. A recent good choice was St Austell Cousin Jack, a '100% Cornish Amber Pale Ale', as described on the pump clip. Can a beer be both pale and amber? Anyway it made for a good pint. Drinkers are assured that 5p from the price of each pint will be donated to RNLI. Back in the 1990s St. Austell used to brew a fine local bitter, Tinnars, which made for good holiday drinking, and a good, but hard to find, mild. Whilst Cousin Jack is a good drink I sometimes wonder if sending beer all over the country on a regular basis really benefits the beer or the drinker.

The copy of *Buxton Advertiser* which was published the day before I wrote this *Peak Practice* carried an article on the **Roebuck** on

## High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

In Glossop, the **Jubilee** at Simmondley has been sold and it looks like the site will be developed for housing. The nearby **Hare & Hounds** has 'for lease' signs outside. Also in Glossop over the weekend of 31st March to 2nd April there will be a beer festival at Glossop Band Room on Derby Street close to the town centre (see the advert on page 8 for more details – Ed). The Festival is being held to raise money for repairs to the Band Room roof.

In Droylsden there is talk of a new micropub to be named **Silly Country** and to be opened in the summer. According to the Twitter feed (@Silly\_Country) this will be "a unique local pub specialising in fine beers from small breweries in the Northwest of England". More news on this as it becomes available.

In Hyde the **Shepherds Call** at the top of Market Street has reopened after being closed during most of January for some refurbishment. Happily it is featuring real ale again in the form of Robinsons Dizzy Blonde and Sharp's Doom Bar. The **Clarkes Arms** on Stockport Road has a 4.0% house beer called Clarkes Arms Bitter.

Up in Mossley the **Fleece Inn** will have sold its 500th cask ale in three years by mid-March. To celebrate a special beer called 'Golden Stout' is to be brewed.

Out in Poynton it is reported that a new micropub in Fountain Place is to open next month and will operate as both on and off licence premises. In High Lane the **Royal Oak** has been listed as an 'Asset of Community Value'.

the Market Place in Chapel-en-le-Frith. This had recently been closed but has re-opened after a 'substantial redevelopment by Punch Taverns'. The new licensee was previously a member of staff and so is aware of the potential of the pub. Plans are afoot for food, live music and interestingly beer festivals will be on the agenda too. I quite enjoyed occasional visits to the Roebuck in its two previous guises so I look forward to catching up on the latest version of this good community local.

Finally another recent *Buxton Advertiser* contained a photo of a lost local. The Shakespeare Hotel used to stand in Spring Gardens in Buxton but back in the mists of time 'was demolished to make way for a row which is now occupied by a diverse selection of shops'. And how often is history repeated?

# Letters to the Editor

## Time to air your views

### Roger Hall

I was saddened to read in January's *Opening Times* of the sudden death of Roger Hall. I thought Sue Richardson's fine article on his contribution in several ways to CAMRA in Greater Manchester over many years was a fitting tribute to Roger.

I started work at Stockport College of Technology in September 1968 (in the Department of Management & Business Studies) and in September 1971 Roger joined the department. Although we lectured in different sections we got to know each other well as we shared a small workroom for three years in the Greek Street building. We frequently had conversations about beer (in its many facets) and pubs, and we undertook several pub crawls in Hillgate at lunchtimes towards the end of terms.

Roger left in the mid-1970s and I also left in 1977 to pursue my career elsewhere. As I recall our paths crossed briefly when I was active in the Rochdale, Oldham & Bury Branch of CAMRA in the late 1980s.

Younger CAMRA members should be aware of the tremendous contribution people like Roger have made to the development of CAMRA and its success as a consumer organisation with national impact.

I shall raise a glass to his memory.

*John Lewis, Shrewsbury*

### The Fletcher Moss

Further to your recent publication with regards the Fletcher Moss and the statement made about Hyde's policy on the preference to recruit only Management couples, we feel it necessary to comment.

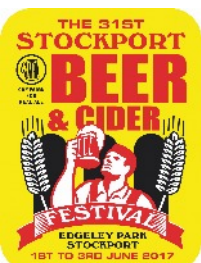
This statement made by CAMRA is both insensitive to the current Manager who has suffered a tragic loss and is factually incorrect. Hydes currently employ single management operators in over 80% of their estate and we continually look for experienced managers to join our successful retail business.

We will continue to support the manager Martin through this sad time and the loss of his wife Jane has had a tremendous effect on everyone in our business, she will be sadly missed. Martin will continue to run the Fletcher Moss and the brewery are very supportive of his situation, we have no plans to change what is a very successful site and a very passionate and well thought of manager within our business. It should therefore not be the intention of anyone outside of the business to make such insensitive comments at this time, but to focus their attentions on ensuring the wellbeing of the family.

*Carol Shearer, Hydes Brewery*

*(Apologies to all concerned here. We printed this in good faith but clearly got it very wrong about both the Fletcher Moss and also Hydes policy in general. We are of course delighted that Martin is staying on at the Fletcher Moss. Ed.)*

## Stockport Beer & Cider Festival



The beers and ciders are being ordered. The bands are being booked. Beat the queues with priority entry to this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival which runs from 1st to 3rd June at Edgeley Park. Buy your advance tickets now with our special Early Bird Offer of no booking fee.

Go to [www.stockportfestival.org.uk](http://www.stockportfestival.org.uk) and book now! Hurry though as the offer ends on 31st March!

# Meet the Beer Seller

## Brendon Hall goes to Browton's



Browton's Bottle Shop, on Fletcher Street in Ashton-under-Lyne, was established in December 2012 and was granted an on-licence in December 2015. Around 100 regularly changing beers and ciders are available to either take away or drink in the cosy beer parlour. Brendon Hall went along to have a chat with owner Simon Browton (pictured left).

**Hello Simon Browton of Browton's Bottle Shop! What prompted you to take**

**the jump into selling beer in the wilds of Tameside and East Manchester?**

It was hard for me to buy the bottled beers that I wanted to drink back in 2012, so I thought that I would start selling them myself and see if anyone else was interested in buying them too.

**Recently your shop gained its on-licence. Ashton isn't particularly well known for 'craft' beer, how have the locals taken to it? Are there any particular beer styles which have proved more popular than others?**

I've had the on-licence for a year now and the locals love it; all sorts of styles are popular as long as they are quality drinks. Hospitality is the most important thing; a warm welcome and a friendly, inclusive vibe will make people more willing to try something new. My wonderful regulars certainly help with that.

**Have you seen any change in people's drinking habits since you opened?**

A lot of my customers have been serious about beer for a long time, but those just discovering the joys definitely soon get a taste for the more unusual brews once they find out about the vast range of styles available.

**Where next after Ashton? Any plans for global domination?**

Global domination isn't really my thing. If I can make a living providing a service that I enjoy providing, that people like and balance that with a happy home life then that's enough for me.

**Finally, a question we ask all of our contributors. Please tell us one local, one national and one international beer or brewery that you can't get enough of at the minute!**

Local - Torrside are doing some fantastic stuff. National - The Kernel have been doing great beer for a long time. International - Tricky one that, how do you pick one? I do have a soft spot for a little German brewery called Maria Hilfer at the moment; their Black Madonna stout is a nice drop.

## Joseph Holt expands

In Firswood, Holt have purchased the **Quadrant** from Greene King. The pub, which sits on the roundabout at the junction of Kings Road and Great Stone Road, closed in early February for what Holt has described as a "huge refurbishment". The reopening was scheduled for 24th February so it should be open by the time you read this. After many years of being at best an intermittent cask ale outlet, *Opening Times* is looking forward to real ale being permanently available under Holt's stewardship. Another Holt purchase is the **Railway Hotel** on Bridge Street in Buxton where we await developments. Holt is also about to invest in an internal refurbishment of Sale Moor's **Legh Arms** - one of the most historic pubs in the brewery's portfolio.

# Festival Review

## Manchester Beer & Cider Festival

Beer lovers in Manchester kept their part of a promise to make the Manchester Beer and Cider Festival bigger and better than before.

Organised by the combined expertise of the nine Greater Manchester branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), drinkers poured in to the city centre venue last month to enjoy the 756 beers and ciders served at 22 bars. They despatched a staggering 62,000 pints at the three day festival; a rate of almost 27 pints a minute!

The annual event moved to Manchester Central last year, and organisers have been delighted by the response from beer fans. Organiser Graham Donning said: "Manchester Central is the perfect venue for our festival. It's right in the heart of the city, itself a booming centre of brewing excellence. We've had great support from the venue team, who I know have been stunned by the professionalism of our volunteers. And most importantly, our customers love coming here and trying so many excellent brews.

"So we're delighted to announce we will be back at Manchester Central from Thursday 25th to Saturday 27th January 2018."

Visitors and volunteers were both asked to vote for their beer of the festival. Drinkers made **Bad Kitty**, a 5.5% porter from **Brass Castle** brewery in North Yorkshire their top tippie. Volunteers stayed local and voted their favourite **Sonoma**, a 3.8% golden ale brewed by **Track Brewing** in the railway arches by Piccadilly station. Both breweries supported the festival by bringing their own branded bars. And another first-time brewery bar at the festival, **Tiny Rebel** from Newport in South Wales was a huge hit with festival goers – one in 20 beers supped at the festival were served from its bar.

Festival beer orderer John O'Donnell said: "January is traditionally a difficult time for the brewing industry. Our festival showcases some of the best beers from Britain and abroad and our drinkers certainly chased away the January blues. We hope this encourages people to support their local pubs and clubs throughout the year."

There was a record range of foreign and bottled beers, with the equivalent of over 4,400 pints enjoyed by visitors. Alongside favourites Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic, the Netherlands proved a hit with drinkers looking to sample the best of mainland Europe.

On the cider and perry bar, 4,000 pints were sold over the three days of the festival, with Friday's drinkers seeing off the stock of **Hogan's Elderflower** (Warwickshire), **Green Valley Rum Tiddly Tum** (Devon), Stockport's own **Madhatters** cider and 20 others. From the North's largest ever selection, Saturday's drinkers still had a staggering 66 to chose from. **Grumpy John's** from Shipley, West Yorkshire was chosen by visitors as the cider of the festival, with **Gwatkin's Farmhouse** (Herefordshire) picking up the perry award.

The CAMRA membership stand was also busy signing up 334 new members including the consumer organisation's 185,000th member, Katy Molyneux from Stockport.

Work for the organising team is not quite over. Graham Donning said: "We've had some wonderful plaudits from visitors, but we are our own biggest critics. Volunteer managers will report on what we could do better in future. We are determined to make this festival an irresistible choice for Britain's beer lovers."

One change already on the cards is a change of head organiser. Graham announced that his ten years in charge of the premier beer festival in the city (initially the National Winter Ales Festival and for the last four years, Manchester Beer and Cider Festival) is coming to an end. The team is looking for a successor to manage the 2018 festival.

# Reasons to be Cheerful

Welcome to the wonderfully named **Reasons to be Cheerful** which opened on Fog Lane, very close to Burnage Station, in mid-January.

It's very much a family affair and was the idea of Elena Rowe and her partner Andrew Munro. Andrew worked for Marble Brewery delivering beer, saw similar operations and thought it was something they could do. Elena's parents Estelle (pictured right with Elena and Andrew) and David were equally enthusiastic and have played a major part in getting everything off the ground. It's been a slog with the planning application being lodged back in January and having to overcome some initial opposition from local residents and objections from the council planners. Luckily they won the day and now Burnage has a small, modern and welcoming bar offering great beer in cask, keg, bottle and can.


There is a choice of three changing cask ales (mainly from local brewers), six kegs and a range of bottled and canned beers which can be bought to either drink on the premises or take away. "We want to buy the beer we like to drink" Elena told us when *Opening Times* paid a visit – they are all self-confessed beer fans who like to explore new beers from both the UK and around the world. So far they have not sold the same draught beer twice – and when we called Marble Lagonda, Hawkshead Windermere Pale and Empire Brewing Moonrakers Mild were on the pumps.

Continuing the family theme, the bar's logo was designed by Estelle and David's niece and the name itself is inspired by a late family member who was also an Ian Dury fan. It all works very well and the locals seem to think so too with a growing trade and the same faces returning. Highly recommended and we wish it well.



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# What's Brewing

## Brewery News from around the region

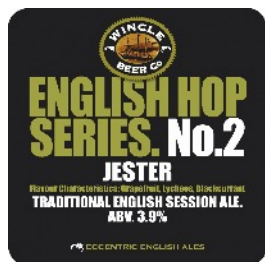
### Robinsons seasonals



Robinsons have announced their seasonal range for 2017. Out now is **Magnum IPA** (4.1%), a fruity, golden ale with a satisfyingly bitter finish. This will be followed by **Pint of Thrones** (4%)

which will be available during April and May. It's described as "a traditional amber ale, full bodied, reliable and down to earth with a warm heart of spicy cedar". June and July will see **Robohop** (3.6%) gracing the bars. This blonde beer is to be brewed using a combination of American and British hops to give a "tangy and hoppy taste". Out for August and September is **Yippee IPA** (4.2%) which will be a very pale beer brewed with Nelson Sauvin and Galena hops so expect lots of grapefruit and citrus with this one. Wheat in the mash should also ensure a good, crisp finish. The October and November beer is the more autumnal **Dark Vader** (4%), a red ale whose "toffee, biscuit malt and citrus flavours will render you defenceless". And finally – the 4.3% **Mr Scrooge** will be out in December. This will be a malty, copper coloured beer with tastes of toffee, blackcurrant and grapefruit.

### Wincle



The Wincle Brewery is backing English hop growers this year with a new series of all-English single hop beers. According to the British Hop Association these are

the ingredients that produce the best session beers in the world. The series of twelve cask beers, one produced each month, will each feature just one English grown hop variety in the brew.

Head brewer Giles Meadows explained the reason behind the project: "The past few years has seen an explosion in the number of new English hop varieties which are producing some fantastic new flavours. We think that Wincle's range of single English hop beers is the perfect tribute to our national drink and the innovation of the growers".

The series kicked off in February with a 4.3% brown ale brewed from Phoenix hops and this month's beer features Jester a "traditional English session ale" at 3.9%. The flavour profile will include grapefruit, lychees and blackcurrant.

### Whaley Bridge Brewery

Mike Wilde of Whaley Bridge Brewery has been in touch to give us a run-down on his current range following a brewery move in 2015 and a major re-brand last year. The recipes were overhauled too and the core range now comprises of four beers. He described them as: "**Hockerley Southern Red** (4.0%) where the malt and hop profile was written to suit modern palates; four hops blended with four specialist malts give a fruity flavour and a hint of liquorice.



"Two new beers include **Crow Hill American Amber** (4.4%) which is California hopped with plenty of tangerine aroma and flavour ending with a smooth rounded bitterness. The other is **Mount Famine IPA** (4.8%) which is triple hopped with bags of aroma and flavours of passion fruit leaving a hint of citrus over a subtle bitterness.

"**Stoneheads West Coast Pale** (4.8%) was the second name to stay but again the recipe was re-written using specialist blended malts, and heaps of U.S. and Slovenian hops give plenty of flavours and aromas of lemon and lime over a honey finish."

Mike tells us that the re-launch has been a huge success and this year he is looking to launch a brewery tap-cum-micropub.

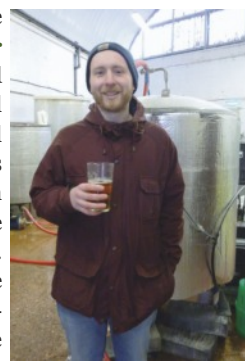
### Sore Feet Brewing



is brewing at Manchester's **Blackjack Brewery**, and he plans to largely distribute his beers in the Manchester area.

He brews with his brother Max in their parents' garage and has a keen home brewing background – and it was chatting to fellow

home brewer Steve Dunkley, of **Beer Nouveau**, that turned his thoughts to a small scale commercial operation. It really is small scale with each brew filling just one keg and some bottles. There's no cask at the moment. After a low-level event at the Smithfield the beers



were officially launched in late January at the Pilcrow pub on Sadlers Yard in the City Centre.

And the beers? So far there have been **Salad Days** (5.3%), a pale ale; **Jackalope IPA** (5.5%); **Down the Mouth** (6.2%) a very tasty stout; **Little Fox** (4%), an 'American farmhouse ale' and **Stone Thrower** (8.6%), a double IPA. We asked Tom what was in the pipeline and he told us more saison-style beers are planned with Little Fox being the first of a trilogy and he's also keen to make more sour beers. We enjoyed the beers at the launch so keep your eyes peeled for them – they should pop up in the Pilcrow and the Smithfield (on Swan Street in the City Centre) on a reasonably regular basis.

### Cryptic Ales

There's a new beer from Stockport's Cryptic



Ales. **Thai Breaker** (4.2%) is an experimental first-time brew that was made available to the trade in cask form from mid-February. It is described as a 'pale ale flavoured with lemongrass and elderflower'. The brewery's liquorice and coffee-accented porter, **Acroscopic** (5.1%) is also making a welcome return.

### Four Kings

Hyde's new Four Kings brewery launched its third beer last month. This is a porter at 5.2% and it has been commented that this is the brewery's best beer to date. It now sits alongside Gold (4%) and IPA (4%) and we look

forward to further additions to the range in due course. Four Kings' beers are regularly available at the Cheshire Ring and Godley Hall in Hyde.



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