

OPENING TIMES

MARCH & APRIL 2018 / FREE



INSIDE: WIN PRIZES ON MILD MAGIC /
STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL /
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~ OPENING TIMES ~

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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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Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Sue Lightfoot, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Bob Stukins, Dave Pennington, Connor Murphy, Elena Rowe, Mick Slaughter, Matthew Thompson, Stuart Ballantyne.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – Local brewers Thirst Class Ales made a splash at Manchester Beer & Cider Festival. Photo by James Darcey.

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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

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

www.highpeaktamesidenortheastcheshire.camra.org.uk

Contact: see website

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: Rob Nicholson 07983 524102;

social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

CAMRA Members only

Local CAMRA Events — March

Thursday 8th – Branch Meeting: Blue Bell, 170 Barlow Road, Levenshulme, M19 3HF. A chance to visit our Pub of the Year. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Saturday 10th – Social trip to visit Wigan's pubs. Catch 11.22am direct train from Manchester Piccadilly. (HPNC)

Saturday 10th – Branch hosting Regional Meeting: Queens Hotel, 5 Albert Place, Macclesfield, SK11 6JW (opposite the station). Starts 1.00pm. (MEC)

Monday 12th – Branch Meeting: Navigation Hotel, 9 Stockport Road, Marple, SK6 6BD. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 14th – Branch AGM: Beartown Tap, 18 Willow Street, Congleton, CW12 1RL. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Friday 16th – Heaton Moor Stagger: starts 7.30pm at the Elizabethan, 33 Heaton Moor Road, SK4 4PB or you can join at 8.30pm at the Plough on the Moor, 82 Heaton Moor Road. (SSM)

Thursday 22nd – Pub of the Month Presentation: Flying Coach, 120 London Road, Hazel Grove, SK7 4DJ. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 24th – Social at Cheshire Brewhouse Tap, Unit 13, Daneside Business Park, Riverdane Road, Congleton, CW12 1UN. From 1.00pm. (MEC)

Local CAMRA Events — April

Friday 6th – Mild Magic Launch Stagger: starts 7.30pm at the Ford Madox Brown, Wilmslow Park, Wilmslow Road, M14 5FT or join at 9.00pm at the Victoria, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington, M20 3BW. (SSM)

Monday 9th – Branch Meeting: Harewood Arms, 2 Market Street, Broadbottom, SK14 6AX. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting and AGM: Hope Inn, 118 Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris, SK4 2LL. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Saturday 14th – Presentation of Cider Pub of the Year and Pub of the Year Runner-up awards: Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. From 2.00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 14th – Spring Pub of the Season Presentation: White House, 1 Water Street, Stalybridge, SK15 2AG. From 2.00pm. (HPNC)

Friday 20th – Cheadle Hulme Central Stagger: starts 7.30pm at the Kenilworth, Cheadle Road, SK8 7EG or join at 8.30pm at the Church Inn, 90 Ravenoak Road, SK8 7EG. (SSM)

Thursday 26th – Pub of the Month Presentation: Victoria, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington, N20 3BW. (SSM)

Saturday 28th – Evening Social at Glossop Brass Band Beer Festival, Glossop Band Club, Derby Street, Glossop, SK13 8LP. (HPNC)

Saturday 28th – Pub of the Year Presentation: Prince of Wales, 2-6 Lawton Street, Congleton, CW12 1RS. From 3.00pm. (MEC)

Social Media

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



High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:

www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA

Stockport & South Manchester:

www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA

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



Stockport & South Manchester: @SSMCAMRA

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CAMRA Discounts

A list of local pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members will appear in the next issue. The latest list can be accessed online at: www.ssmcamra.co.uk/discount.htm

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Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for March and April



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for March is the Flying Coach on London Road in Hazel Grove. Bob Stukins is a fan and explains why it won.

The Flying Coach, formerly known as the Cock, is on the A6 very near to the ASDA supermarket in Hazel Grove. It is a pub that has been transformed, thanks in the main to Eddie Leigh and Ed Hampson (pictured below) who are

passionate about their approach in how to run a pub.

In a chat with Eddie, he told me his vision was to make everyone welcome and to make people feel at home as if they were in their own front room. The starting point for any good pub is to look after the products that it sells, and I have to say that not only is the beer quality excellent (Robinsons at its best) but this extends to the food which includes a range of excellent pizzas.

The refurbishment of the pub, carried out by Robinsons, transformed the place and is a credit to all involved. The first noticeable thing is how light and airy the décor is whilst retaining the feel of a multi-room establishment, even though most of it is open plan. I was struck by how relaxing it was and even though the pub is situated so close to the busy A6, you just don't notice the road's proximity.



Entertainment is a regular feature with quizzes, open mic nights and, once a month, disco nights from Alan the Soleman, a local DJ. The pub caters for all tastes and is also dog-friendly. There is a really well designed, relaxing outdoor drinking area to the rear of the building - ideal for a drink on summer evenings.

It is refreshing in this day and age to come across a pub where you are not just treated as a source of revenue for the owners, but are truly made to feel welcome. The Flying Coach is one such pub that does this. Come and join us for the presentation which will be made on the evening of Thursday 22 March. The 192 bus will drop you close by.



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for April 2018 has been won by to the Victoria, Wilmslow Road, Withington, writes Jim Flynn.

This very busy, late 19th century pub with its period exterior and etched windows has been a Hydes house for 114 years. Over time the pub was opened out but the most recent refurbishment almost created separate rooms again, giving the pub a more intimate feel. At the rear is an attractive outdoor beer patio.

The excellence of any pub is measured by the quality of its fare and the warmth of the welcome. On these points the Victoria scores extremely highly under the guidance of Alyson and Paul Mitchell who arrived in late 2012. However, along with the excellence of the beer, the overriding feature of the pub is the remarkably friendly atmosphere they and their staff have created.

Their efforts have ensured that this is a pub which is very much at the heart of its community, attracting an eclectic mix of customers including families, pensioners, locals and more mature students. They hold quiz nights on Thursdays, have a DJ on Fridays and live bands on Saturdays. The Victoria won Hydes' Best Cask Cellar of the Year 2017, with seven different excellent cask ales at all times including beers from the Hydes portfolio and four or more guest beers, along with four traditional ciders. On a Monday to Thursday all cask beers are 10% off, with 1863 just £1.99 a pint on those days, so all bodes well for the presentation night.

Please join us in making the Pub of the Month Award to Alyson, Paul and their staff on Thursday, 26 April when, I'm sure, a really great night will be enjoyed by all. Don't miss it!

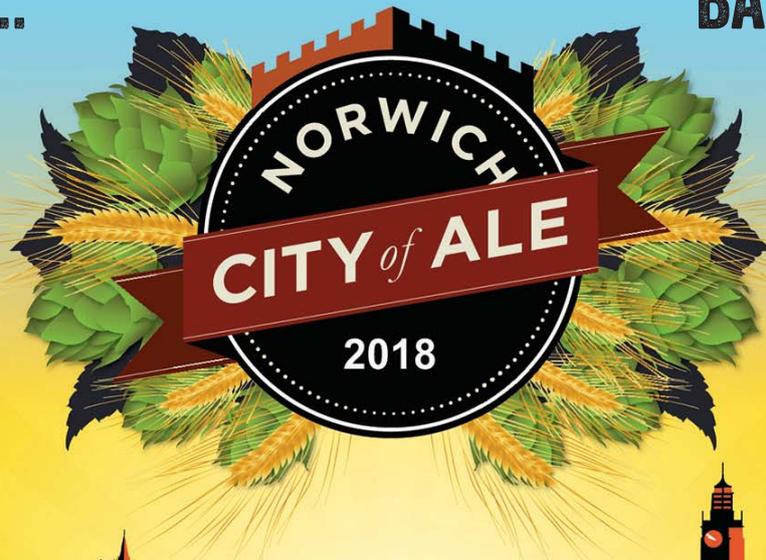
The pub is on one of the UK's busiest bus routes with, amongst others, the 41, 42, 43, 142 and 143 from the city centre and 42 from Stockport and 42A from Reddish and the Heaton's passing the door.

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Stockport & South Manchester Awards

Pub of the Year and other winners

In recent years the voting for the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year has been nail-bitingly close and this time was no exception with just one vote separating the top two pubs.



The winner is chosen from the Pubs of the Month in the previous year and the 2017 crop was not only very diverse but also included many excellent pubs. Debate was intense but there can only be one winner and this year the top spot is taken by the **Blue Bell** on Barlow Road in Levenshulme.

An imposing pub tucked away a short walk from the A6 (turn down Cromwell Grove and keep walking) the Blue Bell has been a cask ale outlet for some years now with well-kept Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter on handpump. For years it was one of the few oases in the now recovering Levenshulme "beer desert".



It is managed by Mark and Mary Dunn (pictured left with their Pub of the Month award), who have worked for Samuel Smiths for well over 20 years now. Not all Sam Smith's pubs sell cask beer and that was the case with the Blue Bell until Mark pushed the company to install cask beer eight years ago.

The pub itself is very smart, having undergone one of Sam Smiths classy refurbishments a few years back. On the right is a spacious vault and to the left three additional rooms – a large lounge with parquet wraps itself around the bar counter and off this is a smaller, carpeted lounge and also a small snug. The extensive light oak woodwork gives the pub a warm and cosy feel and it is understandably very popular with a wide range of locals.

What really makes the Blue Bell special though is its special position at the heart of the community with a variety of groups using the pub. Events are held to raise funds for community projects to improve local sites and walkways, there are other regular events, a quiz night, a knitting club and trips out. Local pensioners are particularly well looked after but there's always a warm welcome for everyone from Mark, Mary and their staff.

The award was due to be presented on the evening of Saturday 24 February so look out for a photo or two in the next issue.

Two Awards for Petersgate Tap

The very close runner-up in the Pub of the Year voting, and also the clear winner of the **Cider Pub of the Year** award is the **Petersgate Tap** on St Petersgate in Stockport town centre.



A most welcome addition to the town centre's real ale scene, the Petersgate Tap, run by Alan and Chris Gent (pictured below), opened in late September 2016 in the premises of an old betting shop and has been

dispensing a wide variety of well-kept beers and ciders ever since.

Set on two floors, downstairs is a modern, minimalist, continental-



style room with the bar on the left-hand side and recycled oak-topped tables amongst the seating. A growing display of artwork adds to the atmosphere and a variety of beer magazines is available to browse as you drink. Upstairs is a function room with table seating and comfortable settees which also plays host to a variety of beer and cider tastings, as well as

live music nights and other functions.

Six handpumps are on the bar, with Hawkshead's Windermere Pale being the house beer. A further five ever-changing beers from local, regional and national craft breweries are available, with one or two pumps usually reserved for a stout or porter. In addition, there are four keg fonts including one dedicated for Hawkshead Lakeland lager. A loyalty card scheme rewards ten purchased pints with the next free – this applies to both cask and keg beers.

A cider fridge containing three or four ciders and perries on rotation sits alongside an excellent selection of bottled and canned beers from around the world. A wide range of gins and wines is also available.

The two awards will be presented from 2pm on the afternoon of Saturday April 14.

Club of the Year

The Stockport & South Manchester Club of the Year is the **Wythenshawe Club** on Longley Lane in Northenden.

On entering this very welcoming club you are afforded the choice of the large, well-furnished lounge to the left which opens out on to a delightful veranda overlooking the pitch, while to the right is a further lounge with a seating section at one end, and a more opened-out area where people can gather if TV sport is being viewed.

Both are served by a single central bar with the cask beers being Lees Manchester Pale Ale and two changing guests, the latter often sourced from Greater Manchester or Cheshire micro-brewers. The club has hosted occasional beer festivals in the past, too. At the time of writing the presentation date had not been finalised so look for details in a later issue of *Opening Times*.



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Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Station Hop, Levenshulme



A few years ago Levenshulme was something of a “beer desert” with cask ale outlets increasingly rare and even the local pubs steadily closing. Happily that trend now seems to be in the other direction.

Fred's Ale House on Stockport Road is well-established as an outlet for good beer and it has now been joined by the very welcome **Station Hop**, also on Stockport Road a couple of blocks closer to Manchester.

Perhaps more craft beer focussed than Fred's, the Station Hop is a project by keen home-brewer Chris Buxton and partner Amanda Finch, who is a director of the nearby Levenshulme Market (held most Saturdays next to the station and well worth a visit, by the way).



Opening night was Wednesday 7 February and while it is still something of a work in progress (lots of artwork is planned for the walls) it's already proved an instant success.

Chris and Amanda (pictured left and right here) told *Opening Times* that the search

for suitable premises took some time but, with a very supportive landlord, this proved the perfect choice. The frontage is quite small but this appearance is deceptive – the front room, with corner bar and shelves with bottles and cans to drink in or take out, leads to two further rooms and an outdoor space at the back. Upstairs are offices which will be rented out to freelance workers.



The draught beer range comprises two cask and eight keg and on opening night these were drawn from local brewers. While the beers will continue to have a local focus, others from further afield will feature as well. Chris also has a “nano-brewery”, Souldoubt Brew Co, which is currently based at the

Old Abbey pub near Manchester Science Park, and beers from there will also appear at the Station Hop. If you buy one of the bottled or canned beers to drink, in they are available cellar or fridge cold, which is a welcome touch. Snacky food is available – pies from Beehive Foods plus scotch eggs and Italian nibbles. Every Friday and Saturday there will be a street food trader in the back yard.

This family- and dog-friendly pub is closed on Mondays, and opens from 4.00pm Tuesday to Friday and 3.00pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Closing is 11.00pm (midnight Friday and Saturday; 10.00pm Sundays). Recommended.

Photos by Elena Rowe of Reasons to be Cheerful

Northumberland Arms

When Geoff Tarbatt and Margaret Houghton retired from Marple Bridge's **Northumberland Arms** in January last year Robinsons took the decision to close the pub. And, as has so often been the case, that should have been that.



However a community group, chaired by local Rick Clarke, had other ideas. Determined not to lose their pub, a ‘Community Benefit Company’ was formed with a share offer

attracting over 200 shareholders. The best part of £300,000 was raised. Of course it wasn't as straightforward as that. A business plan had to be put together and there was the small matter of persuading Robinsons to sell them the pub.

After those hurdles had been crossed much work was needed to make good the effect of almost a year's closure. The pub has been re-wired, re-plastered, new carpets laid and the seating re-upholstered



– while maintaining the cosy, multi-roomed layout. With the work completed, the Northumberland Arms reopened on 16 December, exactly 11 months after it closed. Business has boomed since.

The company is run by a six-member board (pictured left) comprising Rick Clarke, Janice Robertson, Malcolm Allen (missing from photo), Lauren Taylor and, in a welcome sign of continuity, Geoff and Margaret, the former tenants. The board is particularly pleased about the equal gender balance and the fact the ages of the members ranges from the mid-20s to 70. A manager, Vicki Ratcliffe (herself a local shareholder who has worked at the pub in the past), has been appointed along with bar staff and cleaners.



As “The Thumb”, as it's affectionately known by the locals, is now a free house the beer range has changed. Robinsons Unicorn remains but this has been joined by Marston's Pedigree, TicketyBrew Golden Bitter and Bank Top Dark Mild. The latter has proven an unexpected

success, with even the Coors drinkers switching to it. A fifth handpump is likely to be added to accommodate a changing guest beer.

A small extension to accommodate a community cafe is planned, while the upstairs rooms will be used as community spaces for groups and functions.

The pub is on Compstall Road and buses 383 and 384 will drop you pretty much outside. Well worth a visit. The pub opens at 3.00pm Monday to Friday and 12 noon on Saturday and Sunday.

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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival

News and Entertainment Preview



You can see more examples of Claire's work on her website at www.artworks54.co.uk.

Planning is now well underway for this year's Stockport Beer and Cider Festival. The venue is again Edgeley Park and this year's dates are 31 May to 2 June. Get those diaries and calendars noted!

This year we again ran a competition for the logo design and the winning entry, pictured here, came from local freelance designer Claire Byrom.

Entertainment Preview

Once again the festival's Entertainment Manager, Anthony Meynell, has put together a great selection of music to keep you entertained. Here's what you can look forward to. As usual the entertainment will be in the downstairs room housing Bar Nouveau.



Thursday Night features **King of Rome** a 4-5 piece band hailing from Nottinghamshire. Starting as a duo five years ago, the group has added several fine musicians along the way! Named after a famous racing pigeon which won a race from Rome to Derby in 1913 (it took it a month) the music is in parts a celebration of local folklore. The guys play an energetic brand of Folk, Americana and Celtic music as well as their own

songs. Expect to see guitar, mandocello, fiddle, accordion, bass and cajón plus gritty vocals. King of Rome love festivals, especially those involving and promoting the brewing of beer, and of course those featuring live music.



The **Friday afternoon** and **Friday Night** sessions are a **Leaf Promotions Showcase**, returning for their fourth year at the festival. Since Leaf's first ever event in 2005, they have developed a reputation for fusing together the finest original musical talent from across all genres to create truly memorable gigs. Leaf

continues to strive to provide a platform for new bands and artists to get the attention they deserve, with a policy of giving opportunities to acts based on pure ability, not just how many people they can bring down to an event themselves. In turn, they've built a huge following in the areas where they currently run their nights, on the back of the quality of their acts. At the time of writing they run seven regular monthly events around the north-west, as well as providing entertainment for various beer and music festivals throughout the year. They are looking to build on that even further in 2018.

Leaf will be providing a mix of acoustic acts and full bands during the mid and late sessions on the Friday this year, under the name of their regular event, the "Leaf Showcase". Here's to checking out the next generation of the region's unsigned talent! The full line up will be announced nearer the time on their social media pages (www.facebook.com/leafpromotions/) so go ahead and give them a like now!



Saturday afternoon sees the festival debut of **The Chanteuse**. Lucy Hope is one of the UK's most devoted exponents of French chanson, yé-yé and the songs of new wave France. She reinterprets these songs with her own je ne sais quoi, songs that

have become a Gallic soundtrack to love, passion and heartbreak. The Chanteuse will be performing songs from the oeuvres of Serge Gainsbourg, Edith Piaf, Françoise Hardy, Barbara and Jacques Brel. The band will also throw in a few Django Reinhardt-inspired gypsy jazz numbers for good fun and good measure!

The Chanteuse has just released an album of the songs written by Nobel Prize-winning French author, Patrick Modiano, which has had critical acclaim on both sides of the channel garnering reviews in the French national press and being played on national French radio.



The fantastic **Baked A La Ska** are our **Saturday Night** headliners. Baked A La Ska are the "heavy heavy sound" of Manchester, a super charged 11-headed ska monster on a

rampage through the dance floors of the UK leaving a trail of skanked-out bodies in their wake.

It's a band of assembled oddballs and pranksters brought together by keyboardist and wizard Mr John Ellis, fronted by an un-holy trio of singers: Frank "The Skank", Tommy Robot and Kuntri Ranks, who combine with the soft lilt and harmonica magic of Robin Sunflower. Baked A La Ska also feature one of the tightest rhythm sections in Manchester with the "chops to make you drop".

The band has released four acclaimed albums showcasing their trademark mix of spaced-out and spooky originals plus quirky covers that have been put through their ska machine.

Baked A La Ska are synonymous with legendary shows at Manchester's Band On The Wall and have performed riotous sets at the Kendal Calling, Matthew Street, Saddfest and Hungry Pigeon festivals.

Advance Ticket Sales

You can pay cash on the door for entry to all public sessions during the festival, but if you'd like to beat the queues and get priority entrance, as well as details of our other events, please book an advance ticket here: stockportfestival.org.uk/tickets

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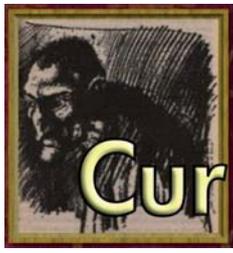


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The Mounting Stone

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS CITY LIFE PUB OF THE YEAR 2016

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Curmudgeon

A Matter of Taste

Thirty years ago, when most pubs just offered a fixed beer range, the idea of asking for a taster would have been greeted with derision. More recently, though, as ever-changing guest beers have increasingly become the norm, it has become much more common. If you're confronted with an array of ten beers you've never heard of before, it's not unreasonable to ask for a sample before committing yourself to spending what now can often be approaching a couple of quid just for a half.

However, the range of flavours encompassed by the great majority of beers is fairly limited and predictable, so you're unlikely to end up with something that really frightens the horses. If it doesn't suit your palate, then just don't buy it again. It's also doubtful whether a small sample really gives a fair impression of what a beer is like. It's said that you don't fully appreciate a beer until you reach the bottom of the glass.

It's also something likely to incur the wrath of both bar staff and other customers if you do it when they're three deep at the bar. You can imagine the cartoon of "The man who asked for a taster in Wetherspoon's at 10.30 on Friday night". And it does seem to appeal to a certain type of person who specialises in making a nuisance of himself. With sufficient chutzpah, it can easily be exploited to get a significant quantity of beer for free.

It's sometimes argued that offering tasters is a good way of encouraging people to try cask beer. But surely it just adds a layer of mystique to the subject, and the best way of promoting cask must be to keep it in good condition and offer beers that people actually want to drink and are likely to make repeat purchases. And nobody should be asking for tasters to check whether the beer's in good condition. You have a reasonable expectation in any pub of not getting a duff pint and, if you do, the remedy is to take it back and ask for it to be changed.

Yes, if a beer has an unusual or challenging flavour, then offering tasters makes sense. But, for the great majority of beers, it's just an affectation on a par with putting little jam jars of beer alongside the pumps to indicate the colour. And you never see people ask for tasters of lager, do you?

Good Money After Bad

The economy's growing steadily, unemployment is at a ten-year low, and pub operators seem to have plenty of money to invest. Scarcely a day goes by without reading of some pub or other reopening after a £250,000 refurbishment. One local pub reputedly had a cool £1 million spent on doing it up. But, looking at the industry as a whole, you have to wonder what benefit it produces. Is it actually generating new business overall, or is it just dragging the same customers around the stock of pubs in a giant game of musical chairs?

I would have thought all that even the tattiest pubs need is a deep clean, new wallpaper, upholstery and carpets, perhaps a bit of new loose furniture and, if appropriate, some new kitchen equipment. The vast majority of refurbishments, when they involve any structural alterations, end up leaving pubs worse, not better. Maybe customers are attracted by novelty, but that soon wears off. The best pubs, in my experience, are those that haven't been knocked around for decades, and benefit from continuity and familiarity. But maybe, if you've already thoroughly wrecked a pub once, you're fatally committed to wrecking it again every five years. It's like a drug where you have to keep on increasing the dose to get the same effect.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

Beer Cities Forum

National Platform for Stockport Beer Week



Stockport Beer Week organisers have been invited to speak at a prestigious national event, the British Beer Cities' National Forum, to be held in Norwich in October 2018.

The National Forum is the first of its kind to take place in the UK and is being organised by Norwich City of Ale, supported by the Brewers' Research & Education Fund (BREF). Norwich, as the first British Beer City, will host the inaugural event, but subsequent Forums are being planned to take place in other cities in future.

The Forum will provide a showcase for organisers of similar festivals across the land to get together to share experiences, ideas and best practice. Since 2011, when Norwich City of Ale was first held, fourteen British cities and towns now organise their own beer weeks - Stockport Beer Week first ran in 2015. The Forum will be of interest to existing beer city organisers and also those wishing to set up and promote their own city-wide festival or beer week. Many of the country's top beer writers will be attending as well as tourism chiefs, directors of pub and beer organisations and CAMRA national and regional representatives. The ultimate aim is to promote Britain internationally, through its beer cities, to beer lovers all around the world.



"We are honoured to have received this BREF funding" said Dawn Leeder, co-founder of Norwich City of Ale and co-organiser of the Forum (pictured above with Roger Protz, centre, and co-organiser Phil Cutter), "and we're really looking forward to getting together with other beer week organisers throughout the land to share resources, experiences and expertise in order to rise to the common challenges we all face."

"This will be a great opportunity to talk about the Stockport beer scene on a national platform", said Chris Walkden, Stockport Beer Week organiser. "This year our beer week runs in conjunction with National Cask Ale Week (from 20th to 30th September), so the timing is ideal from our point of view."

The British Beer Cities' National Forum takes place in Norwich 8-9 October, 2018. For more information visit beercities.org.uk

Stockport Beer Week takes place 20-30 September 2018. For more information visit: www.ssmcamra.co.uk/BeerWeek.htm

Norwich City of Ale is sponsored by Norwich BID and runs from 24 May to 3 June 2018. Last year 43 city pubs took part. For more information visit cityofale.org.uk



Glossop Old Band

2nd Annual Beer Festival 2018

Friday 27th April – 4 pm to 10 pm

Saturday 28th April – Mid Day till late

Sunday 29th April – Mid Day till 6 pm

**On offer will be a wide range of
Real Ales & Ciders
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Green Mill, Rock Mill
plus other local breweries**

£2 Glass Charge

**Food available throughout the weekend
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Live music

Friday Night – Simon Wood & Friends

Saturday Night – Bier Keller Band

Sunday Afternoon – Glossop Old Band

**The Bandroom, Wood Street,
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(Just a 10 minute walk from train station)**

Brewery News

News from local brewers

RedWillow opens in Buxton

Buxton's growing reputation as a great place for beer took another step forward last December when Macclesfield's RedWillow Brewery opened a new bar in the town. A sister pub to the brewery's Macclesfield outlet, **RedWillow Buxton** is a stylish conversion of a former bank premises on Cavendish Circus, a short walk from the railway station.



Many original features have been retained to add character and the former manager's office has been converted into a small snug, which is a particularly attractive feature. At the back, a mezzanine has been inserted from where you can view the drinkers below.



There is a wide selection of wines, gins and other spirits and a choice of no fewer than 20 beers – five cask and 15 keg. These change regularly and apart from a wide choice of RedWillow beers there are changing guests too.

A full menu was due to be launched early this year but at the time of writing there is a selection of “Small Plates” such as baked Camembert or nachos, plus a range of pizzas. Well worth a visit – RedWillow Buxton opens from 4.00pm Monday to Friday and noon on Saturdays and Sundays.

Tameside Beers

The **Four Kings Brewery** in Hyde is having a series of open days, all on Saturdays with a 1.30pm start. The dates for your diary are 17 March and 7 and 21 April. You need to book ahead for these to gain entry to the industrial estate where the brewery is located. Check out the website at www.fourkingsbrewery.com for more details and to get your name on the list.

The Lowes Arms in Denton is having a beer festival from 29 March to 2 April. This will feature 20-plus beers and traditional ciders. The former Westwood Brewery in the pub's cellar is currently lying idle and if anyone is interested in using it please contact the pub to discuss this.

Poynton Brewery

Poynton Brewery seems to be going from strength to strength. The brewery has no fewer than 11 core beers for 2018 ranging from the 3.8% Hoppy Daze (a triple hopped pale ale) up to Dark Side, a 5.2% porter, which won its category in the 2017 Champion Beer of Cheshire competition. Poynton is also hosting the winner of the bitter category in the homebrew competition for this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. More on that next time.

While this issue of Opening Times is out, Poynton should also be opening a brewery tap, the Flute & Firkin, on Park Lane in the village, which will primarily showcase the brewery's core and seasonal beers. Review to follow.

Mild Magic 2018

Visit Pubs, Drink Beer, Win Prizes



**MILD MAGIC
2018**

According to the media, mild is a dying beer style. The axing of Robinsons 1892 might have been seen as another nail in the coffin. Recent statistics show this neglected and misunderstood beer style accounting for just 0.3% of the beer market. Time to take a stand.

This year we have signed up 87 pubs to take part – many will be offering their customers cask mild just for the duration of Mild Magic and for that they have our thanks.

This year will see a greater variety

of milds available during Mild Magic than ever before – we hear that both Brightside Brewery and Tweed Brewery are brewing milds specially for it - so here's your chance to seek out and try examples of this tasty and, usually, low strength beer.

So what are we asking you to do? First enter a participating pub (see below) and pick up a card. Second, buy a cask mild (pint or half) and ask the bar staff to put a sticker on your card. Third, drink the mild and enjoy its taste. Fourth, enter a different participating pub; check below as this may influence your choice of pub. Repeat from step two (no need for a new card) until you have filled the card. NB Check the times of pub opening hours, especially if you are making a special journey (details available at whatpub.com).

How do I win a prize?

To complete **Mild Magic**, collect stickers from **12 different pubs** in **12 different areas** and you will receive a Mild Magic t-shirt plus one free entry ticket to, or a free pint of mild if you are a CAMRA member at, the 2018 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival (31 May to 2 June) at Edgeley Park.

Collect stickers from **24 different pubs** in **24 different areas** to enter **Mild Magic Extra** and receive a Mild Magic polo shirt plus two entry tickets to the Festival (two free pints of mild for CAMRA members).

Mild Magic Super is a little more challenging. Visit **48 pubs** from at least **36 different areas** and you will win a Mild Magic sweatshirt and four entry tickets to the Beer Festival (or four free pints of mild for CAMRA members).

Finally we have the **Mild Magic Ultra** award for visiting every pub. This will win you a Mild Magic polo shirt and sweat shirt plus six entry tickets to the Beer Festival (or six free pints of mild for CAMRA members).

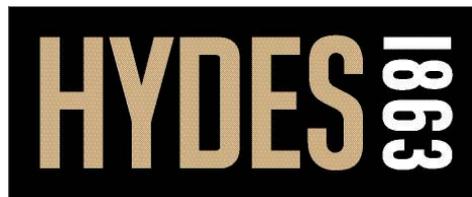
For a fun challenge we also have **Mild Magic Scrabble**. Each participating pub has an associated letter (shown on the card). Collect enough stickers on the card to spell out MILD MAGIC and win an extra pint (with a maximum of two) at the Beer Festival.

How long do I have to complete all this? Mild Magic runs from Friday 6 April to Sunday 13 May inclusive.

What do I do when I have finished Mild Magic? Simply send your card(s) to the organiser (details on card) no later than 19 May (only **one entry** per person). All entries will be included in the Grand Draw to be one of the people visiting Stockport Brewing Co.

Festival entry tickets are valid any session **except Friday evening**. To receive your entry tickets and mild tokens please enclose a **large sized, stamped and self-addressed, envelope**. Garments will be distributed **from 6.00pm on Sunday 1 July at Fred's Ale House**, Stockport Road, Levenshulme (or as otherwise agreed).

To add even more interest, everyone participating is invited to vote for the pub where you most enjoyed the mild. The winning pubs will then be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award and participants are invited to attend these award evenings.



This year we are delighted to welcome **Hydes 1863** as the Mild Magic Sponsor. Hydes are one of the few breweries to brew not only

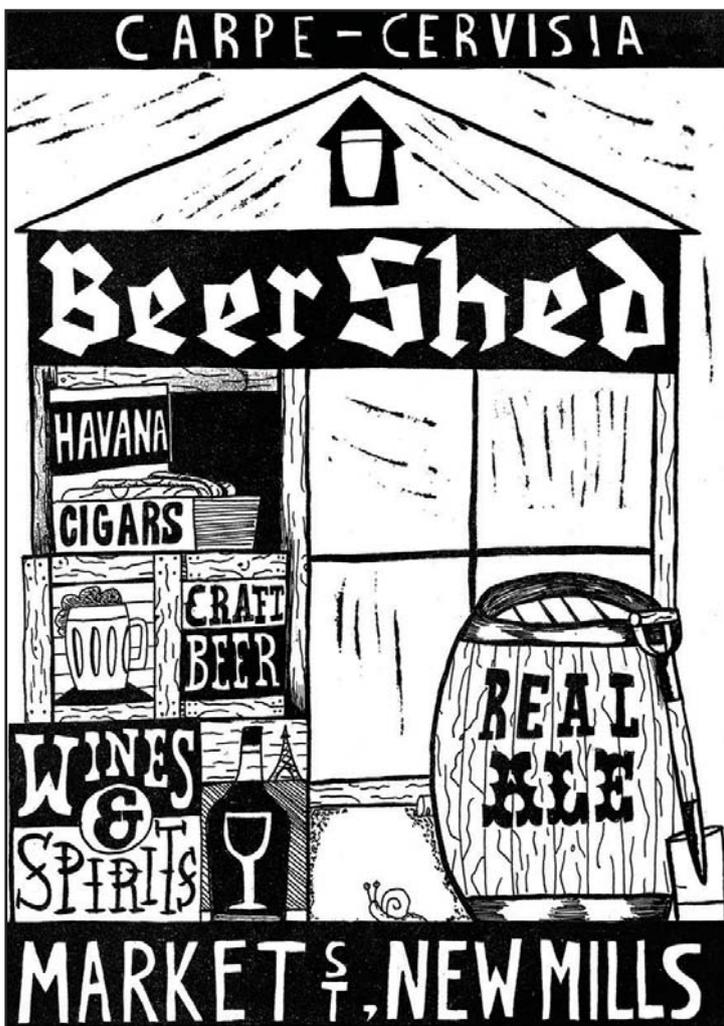
one but two milds. Old Indie is a luscious dark mild while 1863, now badged a light bitter, is unchanged since its days as Hydes Best Mild – a classic northern light mild (they don't all have to be dark). Look out for both of them as you go round the Mild Magic pubs.

If you haven't taken part before, you must have a go this time; it's great fun and it's so easy - you only need to visit 12 pubs over a five week period. It's an excellent chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and win some great prizes while voting with your feet in favour of Britain's proud brewing heritage. Please give our campaign to preserve cask conditioned mild in this area your support!

The Mild Magic Pubs

Some of the areas below will be sub-divided on the Mild Magic card.

ALTRINCHAM: Unicorn; **ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE:** Ash Tree; **BRAMHALL:** Ladybrook Hotel; **BROADBOTTOM:** Harewood Arms; **BURNAGE:** Reasons To Be Cheerful; **CHEADLE:** Crown, White Hart; **CHEADLE HULME:** Kenilworth, Platform 5; **CHORLTON:** Sedge Lynn; **DENTON:** Crown Point Tavern, Lowes Arms; **DIDSBURY:** Dog & Partridge, Head of Steam, Gateway, Olde Cock; **DIDSBURY WEST:** Wine & Wallop; **DISLEY:** Malt Disley; **DUKINFIELD:** Angel; **ECCLES:** Eccles Cross, Lamb Hotel; **FALLOWFIELD:** Friendship Inn, Great Central; **GATLEY:** Horse & Farrier; **GLOSSOP:** Smithy Fold, Victoria Lounge; **GORTON:** Vale Cottage; **HAZEL GROVE:** Grove Alehouse, Rising Sun, Wilfred Wood; **HEATON CHAPEL:** Hinds Head; **HEATON NORRIS:** Nursery; **HEATON MERSEY:** Griffin; **HEATON MOOR:** Moor Top; **HYDE:** Cheshire Ring, Joshua Bradley, Queens, Sportsman, Tweed Tap; **LEVENSHULME:** Fred's Ale House; **MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE:** Ape & Apple, City Arms, Crown & Anchor, Crown & Kettle, Grey Horse, Moon Under Water, Old Monkey, Paramount, Piccadilly Tap, Pie & Ale, Smithfield, Waterhouse; **MARPLE:** Samuel Oldknow, Spring Gardens; **MONTON:** Park; **NEW MILLS:** Beer Shed, Chalkers Snooker Club; **NORTHENDEN:** Crown Inn; **OLD TRAFFORD:** Bishop Blaize; **POYNTON:** Kingfisher; **ROMILEY:** Jake's Ale House; **RUSHOLME:** Ford Madox Brown; **SALE:** JP Joule, Old Plough, Volunteer; **SALFORD:** New Oxford; **STALYBRIDGE:** Bridge Beers, Crafty Pint, Society Rooms, Station Buffet Bar; **STOCKPORT:** Calverts Court, Crown Inn, Fairway, Hope, Petersgate Tap, Railway (Portwood), Remedy Bar, Olde Vic; **SWINTON:** Morning Star; **TIMPERLEY:** Quarry Bank; **URMSTON:** Lord Nelson, Tim Bobbin; **WHALEY BRIDGE:** Drum & Monkey, Goyt Inn; **WHITEHOUGH:** Old Hall; **WITHINGTON:** Victoria.

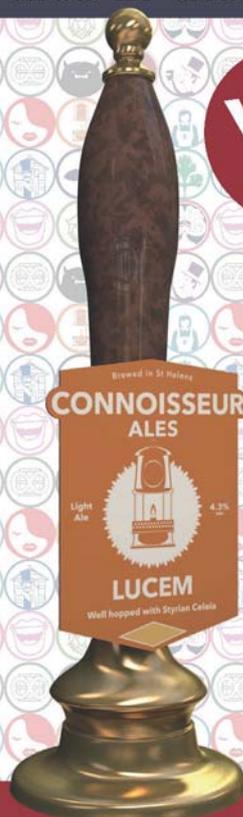


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High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire CAMRA - PUB OF THE SEASON - SUMMER 2017

High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire CAMRA - CIDER PUB OF THE YEAR 2017

Greater Manchester CAMRA - REGIONAL CIDER PUB OF THE YEAR 2017

Manchester Food & Drink Festival Awards 2017 - Nominated in Best Pub category



Heritage Pubs

Pub interiors of special historic interest

This month we continue our new series looking at heritage pubs in the Opening Times catchment area. As we explained last time this will look at historic gems from Ashton-under-Lyne to Stockport and from Withington to Whaley Bridge. Some will be almost intact from the day they were built while others are more a collection of surviving fragments. They all have something to tell.

The Plough, Hyde Road, Gorton



This basic and friendly drinkers' pub has a layout virtually unchanged since it was largely rebuilt and extended in 1893. There has been a pub on this site since the late 18th century.



The main entrance leads to a black and white tiled-floored lobby with lots of lovely green tiling on the walls. To the right is a vault which is a splendid example of a late Victorian public bar with a particularly elaborate bar counter. The corridor leads on to what are now termed the snug (rear) and lounge (front left) which have historic features such as bell-pushes. On the side road is a doorway to the former off-sales department.



Owners Robinsons undertook an excellent refurbishment in 2013 which among many good points included the removal of a modern pot shelf above the bar and the clearing of the off-sales area to reveal its original appearance. The pub is listed Grade II.

The Tollemache Arms, Mossley



On Manchester Road beside the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and at the end of a terrace of 1837, this was converted into a pub between 1847 and 1866, and then taken over by Robinsons in 1926 when they acquired the old Schofield's Brewery in Ashton-under-Lyne.

There is a drinking lobby with an untouched servery at the rear left and then, round the corner, a tap room which has lost a small piece of wall separating it from the lobby bar. It retains its 1920s fixed seating and has a counter to the servery. The small separate smoke

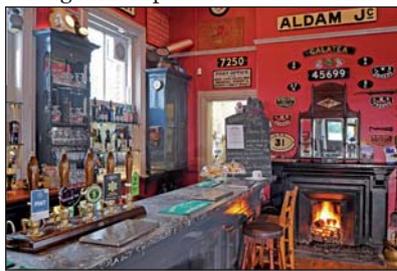


room on the right has lost its door and now has a large hole in the top part of the wall to the lobby, but it still retains the fixed seating from c.1926 around the room and a stone fireplace from the 1960s.

Stalybridge Station Buffet



This is a marvellous institution - one of the last-remaining, truly traditional railway buffets in the country. It was part of the 1885 rebuilding at the station and consists of a conservatory and high-ceilinged main part of the buffet within the brick-built station buildings.



In the latter there's a long, straight, marble-topped counter with three tall narrow Victorian bar back fittings of shelving on the back wall. This room has a Victorian stone, tiled and cast-iron fireplace, some original fixed seating on the platform side and lots of railway memorabilia.



To the right is a bare-boarded passage leading to two rooms brought into public use as part of the buffet. The first is a narrow room with the toilet entrance on the rear wall and a small bar counter which looks like it was added in the 1970s. The extreme right-hand high-ceilinged room was originally the first-class ladies' waiting room and has a good cornice and ceiling rose.

All photos courtesy Michael Slaughter LRPS

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Another one that didn't
make the grade



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All for that taste of Taylor's



Build it and they will come

Huge success for Manchester Beer & Cider Festival



Manchester Beer & Cider Festival

volunteers built the festival in four days, served a record number of drinkers in three days and dismantled the whole event in just over a day. Their efforts were recorded on a time lapse video, now on the festival's YouTube channel*

Although the attendance of 14,675 was just shy of 2016's 14,804, the festival opened to the public a day less than in 2016. Organisers were delighted with the public response which reinforced the festival's position as the biggest beer and cider festival in the North.

And drinkers didn't just turn up. Almost every one of the 22 bars recorded an increase in consumption with a staggering 41,000 pints of cask ale sipped. In line with its reputation for innovation, the festival showcased a wide range of high quality beers dispensed by keg or key-keg and 7,730 pints were enjoyed by visitors. Records tumbled at the cider and perry bar with 4,300 pints consumed, an increase of 8% from the previous year. The main foreign bar, serving German, Czech Republic and Belgian beers, shifted almost 2,100 litres (3,560 pints).



With a strong selection of ales or put in cask or brewed exclusively for the festival, beer tickers were in their element. Manchester brewer Cloudwater was persuaded to put a couple of its beers in cask, and drinkers responded by shifting the firkin (nine gallons) of 'DDH Pale NZ Chinook' in a shade over two hours. Brewery bar Tiny Rebel was not far behind with the first cask of 'Peaches and Cream' drunk so fast it forced the Welsh brewer to ration the remaining supply to avoid disappointing visitors later in the week. And new beers including Middleton's J. W. Lees who launched its Stout at the festival were in big demand.

But the festival wasn't just about consumption. Two debates drew respectable audiences, with the Sexism in the Brewing Industry topic aimed at the trade to focus on realistic actions to eradicate outdated marketing and behaviours. The Great Manchester Beer Debate on the Saturday was lubricated by some free beer and examined the price of beer with strong contributions from those who thought it too dear (and those who thought it too cheap).

Beer lovers flocked to the city last month when the Manchester Beer and Cider Festival took over Manchester Central's great hall.

Organised by the combined expertise of the nine Greater Manchester branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), a team of 330

Award Winners

As usual visitors were asked to vote for their beer of the festival. Drinkers made 'Peaches and Cream' (5.5%) from Newport's **Tiny Rebel** their top tippie with last year's choice, 'Bad Kitty', a porter from **Brass Castle Brewery** in North Yorkshire the runner-up and **Stockport Brewing's** 'Avant-Garde Cutting Edge', a 3.8% bitter in third place. Cider drinkers selected **Cleeve Orchard** 'Dry' as their favourite, and the perry of choice was from **Hecks** of Somerset.



This year, in a break with tradition, the festival invited every brewer in Greater Manchester to submit a beer in any style to compete for the Manchester Brewers' Challenge. The inaugural champion, selected by judges at the trade session on Wednesday, was **Alphabet Brewing's Type A**, a keg IPA weighing at 7% ABV and described as an "orange juice bomb" using Mosaic, Simcoe, Azacca and Rakau hops. Almost immediately sold out at The Font Bar, organisers managed to get more stock in for the open days of the festival. Wigan's **Wily Fox** provided the runner-up with 'Karma Citra' in bottle form, pipping two cask stouts, Ramsbottom's **Irwell Works** 'Marshmallow Unicorn Milk Stout' and 'Javanilla' from **Donkeystone** in Saddleworth.

The North of England Cider competition run at the festival on Friday selected its champion as **Hedge-hoggers** 'Old Aged Pig', produced in Seamer, North Yorkshire. **Ampleforth Abbey's** 'Traditional Still' was named as runner-up.

The North of England Perry competition saw **La Cantina** retain its champion title for another year. 'Yesterday's Dream' is a medium-sweet example at 6% ABV made in Elland, West Yorkshire. The county also provided the runner-up when **Udders Orchard** from Huddersfield took the honours with 'Waterloo Sunset'.

There was an emotional moment as time was called for the final time. Organiser Graham Donning is standing down after a decade running the premier beer festival held in the city (initially the National Winter Ales Festival and for the last five years, Manchester Beer and Cider Festival). Drinkers paused to applaud his contribution, and volunteers recognised his vision and drive to make the cask capital also the home of the best beer festival with a suitably large bottle of ... whisky.

It may be all over, but the festival is already starting planning for a return to Manchester Central from Thursday 24 to Saturday 26 January 2019.

(*www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwCcmP8qODI)

Photos by and courtesy of James Darcey

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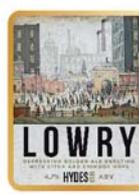
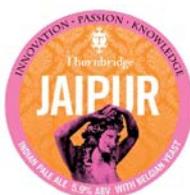
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Heard More at the Bar

More Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Head of Steam

Occupying the former Sanctuary premises on Wilmslow Road, the **Head of Steam** opened in Didsbury on 1 February – and promises to be a significant addition to the local beer scene. The new bar is part of an expanding national chain owned by Hartlepool-based Camerons Brewery and is the company's specialist beer brand.



The old Sanctuary premises have been transformed with a long bar counter down one side - and the rest of the space has been broken up with a snug area to the back,

booths with bench seating opposite the bar and, at the front, a very welcoming area with comfortable chairs and low tables. There's lots of natural wood and the warm lighting makes what is quite a large bar feel very warm, laid back and intimate. Striking features are the cages dotted around, all containing bottles of beer. There's a sizable outside drinking area for the warmer weather.



And there's a lot of beer. There are eight handpumps with four beers from the Camerons range and four changing guests – Opening Times was pleasantly surprised to see a cask beer from West Didsbury's Burton Road Brewing. In addition there's a wide

range of keg beers on draught including foreign imports like Brooklyn and Sierra Nevada from the USA, La Trappe from the Netherlands and Chimay and Achouffe from Belgium. As if this wasn't enough there are over 150 bottled and canned beers from the UK, the USA and Belgium – there is strength in depth here with a notable selection of Trappist beers. All the beers are listed in a large printed menu and also on two display screens. There's a 20p discount on pints and 10p on halves for CAMRA members.

To soak up all this beer there is also a wide-ranging food menu covering everything from snacks to full meals. The kitchen is open every day until 9.00pm. Well worth a visit we think.

Fletcher Moss



Staying in Didsbury, the **Fletcher Moss** on William Street has recently been refurbished by Hydes Brewery. There is provision for some vertical drinking; more new windows have been added in the roof of the rear extension where the floor has also been

renewed. The pub lighting has also been renewed with chandeliers added as a feature. Outside, the faded artificial lawn has been replaced with a new greener one and new seating has been added. The number of handpumps has been increased to fourteen - seven on the front bar and seven at the back. The same seven beers appear

on each bank of handpumps – five from the various Hydes ranges (including Beer Studio and Provenance) plus two genuine and changing guests.

It's good to see Hydes investing in this excellent local which is a solid part of the Didsbury beer scene.

The Crafty Pint



The latest micropub to open in the Opening Times catchment area is the **Crafty Pint** on Melbourne Street in Stalybridge which opened its doors on 16 December.



It's a project by local beer lover Daniel Daveley who has opened the bar along with his dad who is a sleeping partner in the business. Daniel is a Stalybridge local who's been enjoying real ale in the town for years, and, looking for a change of direction, sought out suitable premises for his new pub. It's just down the road from Stalybridge's other micropub, **Bridge Beers**, and was a pet shop in the past (and latterly sold e-cigs).

There's one main room, with a large corner bar, and a couple of steps lead up to a small snug at the back. It's painted a warm red and the walls are decorated with some striking photos from local artist Wyn Jones.

Apart from a small selection of bottled beers (which may expand as time goes on) there are four cask beers, and Daniel told us that the aim is to balance two session beers with one premium ale, with the fourth pump reserved for a something dark – this was a very tasty Millstone Stout when *Opening Times* called. This is a useful addition to Stalybridge and we wish it well.

Made of Stone



If all goes to plan Stockport's newest brewery will fire up its copper in early May. The **Made of Stone** brewery is a project by Andrew O'Shea at the **Mounting Stone** micropub in Bramhall. Opening Times dropped in to have a chat with Andrew (pictured here in his new brew house). The one-barrel kit was due to arrive by the end of February and this will mark the culmination of three months work preparing the small room at the back of the pub – electricity, plumbing and drainage all had to be sorted out. Andrew, who is a keen home brewer,

plans a series of one-off and ad hoc beers. Local home brewers will be able to use the brewery and the pub's staff will also be learning the ropes and creating their own signature beers. Look for more news about Made of Stone beers once the brewery is up and running.

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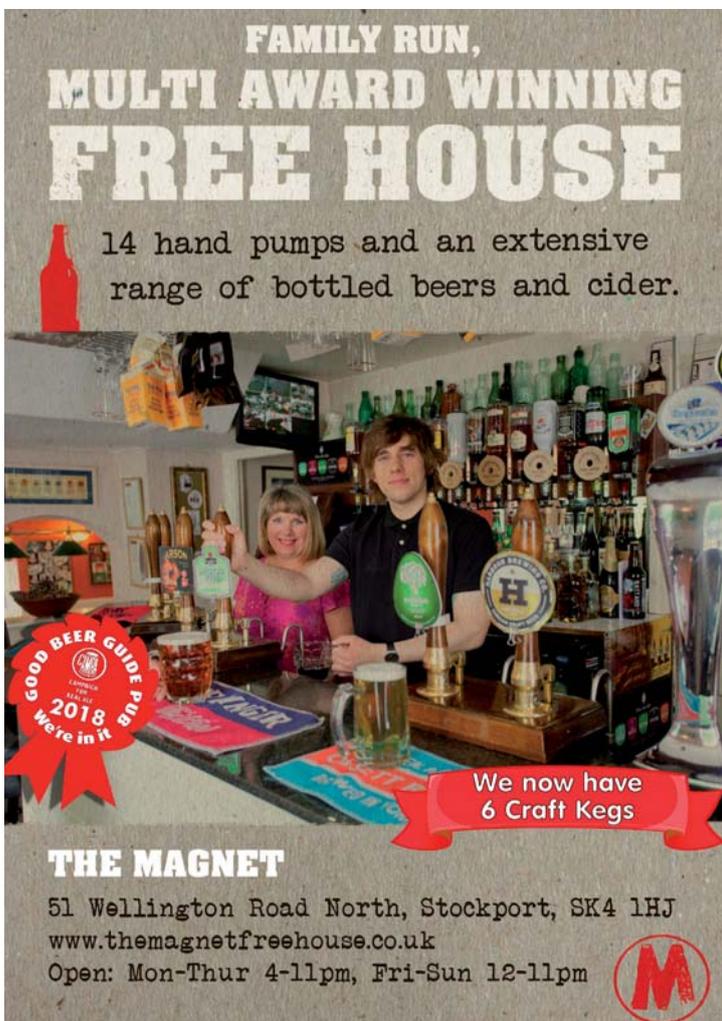
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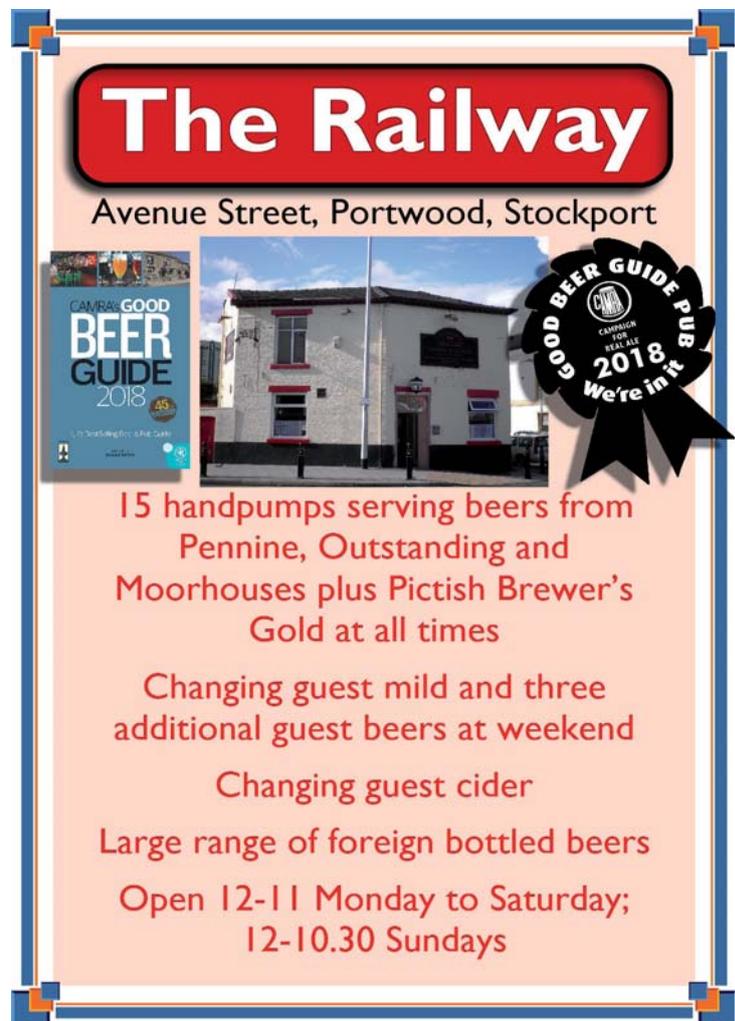
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Stagger

Gatley & Cheadle with Matthew Thompson

On a cold but mostly clear January night, with only the occasional wintry shower to impede us, a dozen or so drinkers set out to explore pubs in the adjacent villages of Gatley and Cheadle.

We started at the **Prince of Wales** on Gatley Green, a cosy, low-beamed pub with a friendly welcome and a choice of Hydes Original and Lowry, both of which were rated as good.



From there, it was only a short walk to our next stop, and another Hydes pub, the **Horse and Farrier**. Built in the late Edwardian era, the building was modernised some years ago with rooms opened out and extensions added, one of which houses a dining area, although it still retains

a pubby atmosphere. There were two milds on the bar here, the dark Old Indie and light 1863, both of which were in good nick, plus Original bitter (slightly less so apparently) and a selection of guest ales and real ciders.

Most of the party now decamped to the nearby bus stop for an imminent service to Cheadle, except for your intrepid correspondent who set out on foot to cover the three quarters of a mile or so to our halfway meeting point at the **White Hart**. This is a pub I know well,



albeit one I now only drink in infrequently, as it was the resort of myself and fellow sixth formers from a local comprehensive during free periods in the late 80s for pints of Boddingtons Bitter. This impressive white-walled Victorian building at the centre of the village is now operated by Greene King

and featured beers from their stable – Belhaven IPA and Abbot Ale – which were deemed acceptable, as well as several guest ales including Batemans Yella Belly, Howard Town Wren's Nest and Draught Bass – which, being a Burton romantic, I opted for. All were judged as good. Some people thought there were fewer TV screens showing live sport than when they last called in, adding to the place's pubbiness.

Across the road is another of my old haunts from when I worked around the corner in the late 80s/early 90s, and the third of the four Hydes pubs we would visit this evening. **The Crown Inn** when I first knew it was fronted by a brick facade topped by a strip of opaque glass, but this facade has since been replaced by a large window which showcases this long pub, originally converted from a former fish shop. The choice on the bar here included Hydes Original and Lowry, both of which were in good condition.

Our penultimate stop of the evening was at the **George & Dragon**, a historic coaching inn where Charles Dickens is reputed to have once stopped. Formerly a Greenall's house, after a long period of closure a few years ago this multi-roomed pub has now been taken on and re-opened by Amber Taverns, who have glassed in the archway through which horsedrawn carriages once trundled, to create an attractive dining space. They have also attracted a younger clientele with an extensive schedule of TV sport. The only cask beer available, Wells

Bombardier, was deemed average at best, although we were told that the microbrewery in the back yard, for which planning permission was sought some time ago, is now due to open in the autumn.



The end point of the evening's walk was the **James Watts**. This was once the Old Star, and in the late 80s when I first called in, it was a very traditional pub which was definitely the domain of the more mature drinker. It has now been transformed by Hydes into a much trendier and craftier drinking spot – and

renamed after a onetime mayor of Manchester. The pump-clips at the bar advertised the availability of ales from their Beer Studio range – the Kansas Avenue Wild Wichita which I drank was particularly good – and guests, including Davenport IPA, also being judged good.

With its warm and convivial candlelit interior, this was a fitting final stop on what had been an enjoyable jaunt around six contrasting pubs. All were interesting in their own way and each offered beers that were not only generally in good condition but also, despite their location in two of Stockport's more affluent suburbs – and no doubt as a result of the healthy competition between them – very reasonably priced, including two (the Crown and White Hart) which give a 10% discount to CAMRA members.

And Online: Burnage & Heaton Mersey by Jim Flynn



Also covered is the Burnage & Heaton Mersey Stagger which can be found online at www.ssmcamra.co.uk. This started at the **Farmers Arms** on Burnage Lane where the cask beer was Marston's Wainwright and, after a short walk, at the

Beer Shop on Kingsleigh Road in Heaton Mersey. This always has a selection of cask beers and tonight they included well-received Fixed Wheel Blackheath Stout plus Track NZ Sonoma and Loose Morals. The **Albion** on Burnage lane was a real ale gain with Hydes Original but on the downside the **Sun in September** was unexpectedly closed (but has now reopened).

The much-improved **Dog & Partridge** in Heaton Mersey was next and here there were two cask beers – Theakson's Best Bitter and Sharp's Doom Bar. Both were in decent enough condition. It was then up to Holt's classic **Griffin** (pictured above) where that brewery's Mild and Bitter were on sale alongside Bootleg Chorlton pale Ale – all beers were on very good form, particularly the mild. Next was the **Frog & Railway**, a recent acquisition by JW Lees, and due for a major refurbishment any time soon. The cask Lees Bitter and Weavers' Shuttle went down well. Finally it was across the road to Robinsons' **Crown** where Dizzy Blonds, Dark Vader and Wizard were enjoyed.

News Extra

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Manchester Beer Week Returns



Manchester's only city-wide beer festival returns this summer, promising a packed 10-day calendar of events designed to celebrate the best of beer and pub culture.

Now entering its third year, Manchester Beer Week will run from Friday June 29 to Sunday July 8, featuring breweries, pubs, bars, restaurants and retailers across Greater Manchester.

Last year's event built on the success of the festival's inaugural run, including 102 different events at 85 venues. Highlights included a huge brewery open day – when 11 city centre breweries opened their doors to the public – an all-day showcase of beer and music at Band on the Wall, and two successful beer festivals.



This year's festival will see a similarly exciting range of new beers created to delight drinkers' taste buds, and will include a variety of tastings, talks, walking tours and beer-focused meals across its 10-day run.

"It's incredible to see how far Manchester Beer Week has come in just two years and we are really excited about the potential this year's festival has to continue building awareness about good beer and outstanding independent producers," said festival organiser Connor Murphy.



"Manchester has a beer scene like no other and we absolutely guarantee that breweries and venues across the region will once more pull out all the stops to put on a series of unusual and exciting events that simply cannot be missed.

"But we also feel there is still much more work to be done to expand independent brewing's footprint, particularly in the restaurant trade, and we are keen to work with more food-led venues to showcase the power beer has to dazzle when paired with great food."

Last year's festival also succeeded in giving something back to the community, as £2,000 was donated to homelessness support network Street Support, and this focus on charity will feature prominently in 2018.

"Manchester Beer Week doesn't exist in isolation and it is important to us that we acknowledge the social context within this city," added Murphy. "Homelessness is a big problem that Manchester must get to grips with and we want to do everything we can to support the efforts of organisations such as Street Support."

More information on the festival can be found at www.mcrbeerweek.co.uk or by following [@mcrbeerweek](https://twitter.com/mcrbeerweek) on Twitter.

High Peak Winter Pub of the Season



The High Peak, Tameside and North East Cheshire Branch Winter Pub of the Season award was presented on Saturday January 20 to Darren and Cheryl Shaw, the licensees at **Jakes Ale House** in the centre of Romiley.

Jakes Ale House opened around ten months ago and has gone from

strength to strength since then, with an ever changing range of beers from both local breweries and further afield. Darren, Cheryl and the staff make the pub a relaxing and pleasant place to visit. No two ways about it, this is just a darn good pub and richly deserves its award.

It's well worth paying a visit; the proximity to Romiley railway station and being on bus routes 383 and 384 from Stockport make getting there no problem.

Pub News in Brief

The **Silly Country** micropub in Droylsden town centre is likely to open by the time you read this. They are seeking 'crowdfunding' and information can be found on the website.

The **Church Inn** in top Mossley has been bought from Thwaites by the existing licensee and is now a free house with four handpumped rotating guest beers.



The **Lazy Toad** in Droylsden continues to sell a changing range of cask conditioned beers, the latest including beers from the Lancaster Brewery.

A number of Stockport pubs have closed since the last issue of

Opening Times was published. On Underbank, **Winters** closed in early January following Holt's sale of the pub to Stockport Council. We think the pub is likely to reopen as some form of licensed premises but at the moment information is hard to come by. Also likely to re-open are the currently closed **Victoria** in Offerton, which we believe is due a refurbishment, and the **Jolly Sailor** in Davenport, where owners Greene King have confirmed they are looking for a replacement tenant.

Permanent closures include the **Queens** in Cheadle, where departing licensee Dennis Davies has moved across the road to take over the **Printers Arms**, and the **Florist** on Shaw Heath. We suspect these two, both occupying large sites, are likely for residential development. Currently closed, and fate uncertain, is the **George** in Mersey Square. The privately owned building has been in darkness for some weeks.

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