

OPENING TIMES

JULY & AUGUST 2018 / FREE

**INSIDE: STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL
REVIEW / BOOK REVIEWS / PUBS OF THE
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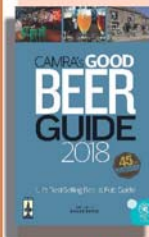
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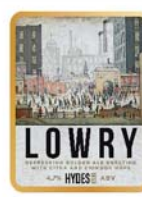
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~ OPENING TIMES ~

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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:

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Their telephone no. is 03454 04 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

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Subscriptions

Available at £9.00 for the year (make cheques payable to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA). Apply to David Sharpe, 1 Chiltern Drive, Woodsmoor, Stockport, SK2 7BE. Tel 0161 483 3708

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- Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com. 0161 244 1000
- East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx
- Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

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We aim to ensure that the information in *Opening Times* is correct at the time of going to press. If we get something wrong then please get in touch (editorial contact details above) and we'll print a correction. Please also note the opinions expressed in *Opening Times* are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally.

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – Enjoying the beer at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Photo by Lawrence Devaney

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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: John Abrams; 07734254269; Secretary@ssmcamra.co.uk

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

www.highpeaktamesidenortheastcheshire.camra.org.uk

Contact: Tom Lord; jenni.lord@tiscali.co.uk

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: Rob Nicholson 07983 524102;

social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Central Manchester (CMCR)

www.centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Contact: Margaret Corlett; mcracamrasocials@hotmail.com

CAMRA Members only

Local CAMRA Events — July

Saturday 7th – Day out in Altrincham. Train departs Stockport at 11.52am – meet 12.15pm in Old Market Tavern, Old Market Place, Altrincham, WA14 4DN. Itinerary will be available on the day – details also on website. (SSM)

Saturday 14th – Stalybridge Saunter: Meet White House, 1 Water Street, SK15 2AG at 1.00pm, then Wharf Tavern, Society Rooms, Bridge Beers and Crafty Pint, 41 Melbourne Street, SK15 2JJ at 3.30. Finish in Station Buffet Bar. (CMCR)

Monday 9th – Branch Meeting: Crown Inn, 142 Victoria Street, Glossop, SK13 8JF. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting: Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Saturday 14th – Summer Pub of the Season presentation to Bridge Beers, 55 Melbourne Street, Stalybridge, SK15 2JJ. From 1.00pm. Will be followed by a social around the pubs of Ashton. (HPNC)

Saturday 14th – Social at Bollington Beer Festival, Bollington Arts Centre, Wellington Road, Bollington, SK10 5JR. From 12 noon. (MEC)

Tuesday 17th – Campaigning Meeting: Robin Hood, Church Lane, Rainow, SK10 5XE. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Friday 20th – Cale Green & Higher Hillgate Stagger: Meet 7.30pm Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, SK2 6NU; 8.30pm Wheatsheaf 205 Higher Hillgate, SK1 3RB. (SSM)

Saturday 21st – Branch Pub of the Year and North Derbyshire Pub of the Year presentations to the Old Hall Inn, Whitehough, Chinley, SK23 6EJ. From 1.00pm. Will be followed by a social round the pubs of Buxworth and Whaley Bridge. (HPNC)

Thursday 26th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Midland, 19 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Local CAMRA Events — August

Wednesday 1st – Branch Meeting: Gas Lamp, 50a Bridge Street, Manchester, M3 3BW. Meet 6.00pm for 6.30 start. (CMCR)

Saturday 4th – Day out in Leeds. Train departs Manchester Piccadilly 11.05am. Map and itinerary will be provided on the day. (SSM)

Saturday 4th – Stroll around local brewery bars. Starts 12 noon at Beer Nouveau, 75 North Western Street, Ardwick, M12 6DY. (CMCR)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting and Quiz Night: Hope Inn, 118 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 2LL (SSM)

Saturday 11th – Branch Meeting: Prince of Orange, 109 Warrington Street, Ashton, OL6 6DW. Starts 1.00pm and will be followed by a social round the pubs of Droylsden. (HPNC)

Friday 17th – Levenshulme Stagger: Meet 7.30pm at the Klondyke Club, 1 Burnage Range, M19 2HQ; 8.30pm Station Hop, 815 Stockport Road, M19 3BS. (SSM)

Saturday 18th – Pub of the Year presentation to the Old Hall Inn, Whitehough, Chinley, SK23 6EJ. From 1.00pm. Will be followed by a social around the pubs of Buxworth and Whaley Bridge. (HPNC)

Thursday 23rd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Sidings, Broom Lane, Levenshulme, M19 3WU. (SSM)

Friday 31st – Beer of the Festival presentation at Blackjack Brewery, 36 Gould Street, Manchester, M4 4JT. From 7.00pm. (SSM)

Social Media

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



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

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

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (East Cheshire Pubs & Beer):
www.facebook.com/groups/897449270304045/



Stockport & South Manchester: @SSMCAMRA

Macclesfield & East Cheshire: @MECCAMRA

CAMRA Discounts

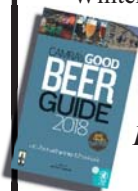
A list of local pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members can be found at www.ssmcamra.co.uk/discount.htm

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Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Cider Triumph for Petersgate Tap



Following its success in winning the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year, the **Petersgate Tap** in Stockport has gone on to win the regional competition and has been crowned the Greater Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of

the Year for 2018. It will now go head to head with the other regional winners in the national competition and we wish it the best of luck.

This is yet another award for the St. Petersgate pub which has gone from strength to strength since it opened in September 2016. Indeed it is well on the way to becoming something of a local institution and is a significant part of the Stockport Old Town pub and bar scene.



This is all down to the vision, and hard work, of father and son team Alan and Chris Gent (pictured above) who, rather than resting on their laurels, constantly seek to improve the offer at the Petersgate Tap. The beer range, both cask and keg, is well-chosen with Hawkshead Brewery's Windermere Pale as the house beer. The Tap is also getting a name for its interest in strong, dark beers which many customers now seek out.

Part of the development has been a growing commitment to traditional cider and perry. Up to six are available, usually bag-in-box stored in the fridge or cellar to sell at the optimum temperature. These range from the very traditional to the more mainstream. A perry is usually included in the selection too. The aim is to support local makers so products from Stockport's Madhatters and Cheshire's Dunham Press will often be found, including bottled ciders from the latter.

Commenting on the award Alan told *Opening Times*, "We've worked hard on our cider offer and the promotion of cider and perry. We're very glad all the Greater Manchester branches recognised this and we'll work hard to represent the region in the next round. Our second cider mega-tasting session is in September, which will be an excellent showcase for ciders and perries".

Wellington Free House Opens

Pubs on Stockport's Wellington Road South have had a hard time in recent years. The **George** is closed and, optimistically we think, to let; **Cobdens** is mothballed and the **Unity** has been turned into flats.



It's not all doom and gloom though. The **Spinning Top** has found a role as a music venue and now we have the welcome arrival of the **Wellington Free House** which opened on 14 May. This is a project by Lee Goodhall (pictured below) who is a very experienced licensee, and who also happened to run the Unity for 11 years or so. He followed that with

three years at the Imperial on St Petersgate so he knows the local pub scene very well.

It was this knowledge, combined with a desire to work for himself, that led him to acquiring the former bookies just opposite the entrance to what was Grand Central. It had been on the market for a few years so a fair amount of work was needed to turn it into the pub it has become. Its appearance is certainly deceptive – outside it looks rather plain and quite small. Inside it's a different story.

For a start, it's surprisingly spacious. The bar counter, with comfortable seating, is to the right, while to the left is a stage area, also used for seating, plus a range of "mix and match" tables, chairs and sofas. This theme carries on to a second, slightly sunken, room to the back where there is an impressive collection of clocks on the walls. A further upstairs drinking area, to be called the Orangery, is also planned. Outside is a good-sized smoking area.



Also belying the plain exterior is the warm and comfortable vibe of the whole pub. Good use has been made of natural materials and reclaimed objects. The natural brick walls add to the feel, and in the cooler weather the two wood burning stoves will be a very welcome sight.

Lee is keen on his cask beer and there are three on handpump. During the opening week these were Robinsons Unicorn, Black Sheep Bitter and Marston's Wainwright but Lee tells us these will change, and a fourth handpump may be added in due course.

The Wellington is well-placed to pick up trade from the various developments planned for the town centre and across the road, and we hope it will be a huge success. Well worth a visit.

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Winner Cider Pub of the Year

Winner, Gtr Manchester Cider
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Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for July and August



Once, before the viaduct was built, the railway terminated at Heaton Norris Station and passengers were transported by horse-drawn vehicle across the Mersey Valley to join the line on the other side. The 19th century Midland Hotel is part of this rich history and John Sutcliffe describes the pub as it is today and why we consider it to be a worthy Pub of the Month for July.



The Midland Hotel was taken over by Mark Hayter about seven years ago and is an independent free house, having previously been owned by Enterprise Inns. Mark has removed the 1970s alterations so that there is now a pleasant interior having three inter-connecting rooms with the bar on the left having a new uPVC window but in the original style.

The pub was originally built in 1834 and pre-dates the viaduct. Nothing from this time remains

in the interior but you can see plenty of Art Nouveau tiling from a late 19th century refurbishment which lines the entrance corridor and part of the back room.

It is a good community public house with three darts teams and a loyal crowd of regulars. Nevertheless about a year ago this was a pub under threat of demolition. A new road is being constructed under the arches of the viaduct to relieve pressure on Georges Road with its low railway bridge. Compulsory purchase was considered as the traffic engineers wanted to make room for a bicycle lane that required two metres taking off the front of the building. This was opposed by CAMRA and other local bodies. Luckily the local councillors agreed and the pub was saved.

Mark works hard to keep his beers in superb form. JW Lees Manchester Pale Ale is a regular with three other guest ales, often including beers rarely seen in the area. There is one bag-in-the-box cider throughout the year with more in the summer months. Prices are modest.

We are pleased to celebrate the continuing excellence of this establishment that provides a home for Pepper the black and white pussycat, often seen in the bar.

The presentation will take place on Thursday 26 July so come and join us from 8.00pm. The pub is on the main A6 so is well served by public transport.



The pub of the month winner for August is the Sidings on Broom Lane in Levenshulme. Margaret O'Brien dropped in and tells you why it won.

The Sidings, tucked away on Broom Lane, is one of the Levenshulme's newer pubs, having been built in 1987 and opening just in time for Christmas that year. Since that time it has had two major refurbishments, in 2002 and 2013, and has now settled into its role as a popular and thriving community local.

There are three rooms, a lounge, snug and large vault complete with pool table and dart board. Needless to say the Sidings is also home to various darts and pool teams. To the rear of the pub is an excellent heated outdoor area and beer garden. The latter is the pride and joy of manager Sandra Booth and is always well tended.



Sandra has been running this Holt's house for 17 years, and in fact received a Pub of the Month award back in 2004. This award is in recognition of her continuing hard work at the pub. This includes a very active programme of events including a monthly

tribute night and a quiz every Wednesday. Sandra also pays tribute to the pub's former DJ and quiz master Eddie, who sadly died last January having put in a huge amount of work for the pub.

The one cask beer is Holts Bitter, and this is always well-kept pint. Plenty are likely to be enjoyed on the evening of Thursday 23 August when we present this well-deserved award to Sandra. The Sidings is only a short walk from Stockport Road and the 192 bus.

The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 150 years. Check out their advert on the previous page.

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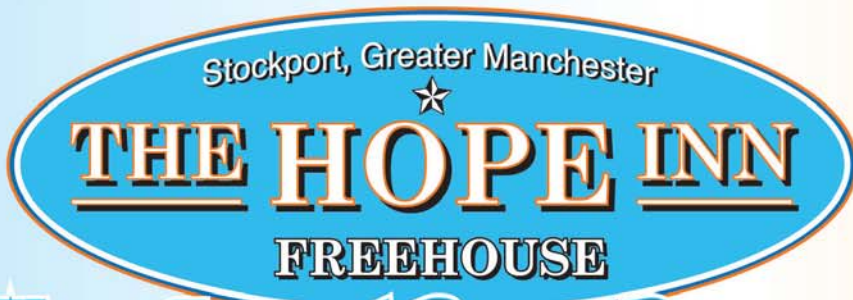
coming soon is a beer that combines both our dark arts & radical Brew series to bring you a 4.2% session stout this beer featured at the stockport Beer & cider festival & is a creamy stout with a nice red hue running through it due to the addition of apple tea it has subtle hints of both fruit & biscuit in the mix

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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival

News and views from this year's event



So, another Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has come and gone, with the organisers toasting another successful event. While attendance was slightly down, we still welcomed 4,100 thirsty drinkers who managed to put away 13,400 pints of cask beer, 2,400 pints of cider and perry plus innumerable bottles of beer from both the UK and overseas.

Entertainment hit the mark

This year's entertainment proved to be a huge success, particularly on the Saturday, where the lunchtime crowd was firstly entertained by the excellent Stockport Ukulele Players, who got everyone tapping along. They were followed by the superb Lucy Hope, The Chanteuse, making her festival debut and wowing everyone with her exceptional vocals. Saturday night, however, saw a band get the best Stockport Beer Festival reception for many a year. Baked A La Ska (pictured below) had the whole room up and dancing with their riotous sets and made it a night to remember



Festival Awards



As ever, we ran a competition to find the beer, cider and perry of the festival, all of which are based on the votes of our visitors. Many votes were cast and the Beer of the Festival was won by **Blackjack Beers** with **JIPA**. This was a very modern beer in the New England IPA style – so it was

suitably hazy and juicy with tropical fruit notes. Not only that but it also came from the homebrew competition we ran in the Spring. Pictured above is successful homebrewer Jonah Stancombe (right) with Blackjack's Euan Summers on the brew day.

The Silver Award went to **Stockport Brewing's Magnum**. This milk chocolate porter, with a touch of dryness in the finish, won rave reviews and was another of Jonah's winning homebrews. Finally, the Bronze Award went further afield to Wakefield's **Fernandes Brewery** and their rather fine **Black Voodoo**, a chocolate orange stout. It's worth noting

that of the three winners, two were dark beers – a trend noticed on the Bottled Beer Bar where all the dark beers sold out.



The competition for Cider and Perry of the Festival was intense with many top-class products to choose from. This year both of the winners are from Somerset and not only that, they also mirrored the winners at CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championships held a couple of weeks previously. So the Cider of the Festival is **Scrummage**, made by **Harry's Cider** of Langport. The Perry of the Festival is a previous winner in fact, and is **Piglet's Perry** from **Nempnett Cider** based in the wonderfully-named village of Nempnett Thrubwell.

Arrangements are being made to present all of these awards so look for reports in future issues of *Opening Times*.

Membership Success

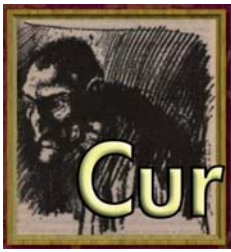
Another highlight of the festival was the success in enrolling new members of CAMRA. This year recruitment hit a level not seen for several years with no fewer than 80 new members signing up. Among them were Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's 1700th members Ahmet Patsoy and Esmatilmaz who who are pictured below.



Charity Success

Another organisation toasting the success of this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival is Stockport CP Society, the festival charity. The sale of soft drinks, snacks and generously donated beer had the CP Society members celebrating the raising of valuable funds.





Curmudgeon

You Could Be Next

The past few years have seen a growing trend of successful craft breweries founded in the modern era being acquired by the major international brewers. We have seen such well-known brands as Goose Island, Lagunitas and Ballast Point being taken over in the US, plus Meantime and Camden in this country. As Opening Times went to press, there were reports that Heineken was planning to buy a stake in craft favourites Beavertown.

This has resulted in widespread disappointment, even a sense of betrayal, amongst craft beer fans. Selling out to “the man” is, for many, hard to forgive. On the other hand, if the owners are offered well over the book value for their company, they can't really be blamed for seizing the chance of a comfortable retirement. It also contains an element of railing against fate. It may be regrettable, but it's simply a fact of business life that the most likely outcome for a successful start-up is to be taken over by a larger competitor. Very few go on to spread their wings and fly independently in the way that BrewDog has done.

There's a strange reluctance to recognize any merit in beers produced by the major breweries. In the 70s and 80s, CAMRA was very critical of the market dominance of the then “Big Six”, but it always accepted that they did produce some excellent real ales. Yet many craft fans are unwilling to touch anything in which the big boys have had a hand. But surely it's entirely possible for a big company to produce a good beer, just as a small company can make a poor one. This comes across as an exercise in cutting off your nose to spite your face.

This wave of takeovers is significantly different from those that occurred in the British brewing industry in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Then, the prime objective was to get hold of smaller competitors' tied estates and distribution networks. Promises may have been made about maintaining production at original sites, and keeping brands going, but they were rarely worth the paper they were written on.

The more recent ones, however, are about acquiring beer brands, not outlets, and so there is much more of an incentive to maintain the brand equity. Inevitably, in many cases, it will end up being eroded over the years by changes in recipe and production methods, but if they're not careful the buyers end up destroying the value of their own purchase. It's also hard to see the takeover of a start-up only a few years old as quite as much of a loss as that of a business that has been established for several generations and become part of its local community.

Every small business start-up has a life-cycle, and there will come a time when the owner wants to move on. Most micro-breweries eventually just shut up shop because the owner has become too old, or unwell, or has lost interest, or isn't making a worthwhile profit. If you look at the micros from the first couple of decades of CAMRA, few are still in existence in any form. Companies like the remaining family brewers, who have been in existence for a hundred years or more, are very much the exception, not the rule.

Brewing remains an industry where, compared with many others, the barriers to entry are very low, as shown by the fact that over 1,500 new breweries have been set up in this country in the present century. The loss of some favourites may be regretted, but we are likely in the future to see the cycle of cool new start-up turning into corporate acquisition repeated over and over again.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

(comments on these articles can be left on the website)

Another one that didn't make the grade

McLACHLAN

A.I. is too important to be left in the hands of machines.

The A.I. we're referring to isn't Artificial Intelligence, it's Ale Intelligence, of course. We're not technophobes, we just don't trust anything incapable of smelling, feeling or tasting to create something as delicately balanced as Landlord. That's why we have five hands-on, Heriot-Watt trained brewers involved in every step of the process, from barley delivery to filling the casks. This way, we can make sure that every sip of Taylor's is as delicious as humanly possible. Machines may one day take over the world, just be thankful you won't be around to drink their terrible beer.

All for that taste of Taylor's

Stagger

Heaton Moor with Viv Thorpe



On an unusually warm and sunny spring evening, a dedicated group of real ale drinkers assembled at the **Kenilworth** on Cheadle Road for our first sampling session. Recently refurbished, this large Greene King pub is popular with families and diners.

Pub games and live sport are heavily featured here with several large TVs in use. There's also an impressive games room with pool table, dartboard and an industrial strength oche.

The bar was well stocked with five cask ales available. The three from Moorhouse's - Pride of Pendle, Witches Cauldron and Black Cat were all in average condition. Greene King Abbot Ale and a house beer The Kenilworth were also available. Just before leaving, a group of three gents asked us if they could tag along. With them holding full pints, we suggested they meet us in the next pub; we gave them directions and continued on our way.



A ten-minute walk along Hulme Hall Road took us to the **Hesketh**, an upmarket destination pub that caters well for diners and drinkers. It is tastefully decorated and a large bar leads to a

carvery at the far end of the pub. When we visited there was live music on which was proving popular, with some people dancing along. We moved outside to the sizeable beer garden so we could debate the beer on offer. Mobberley Whirly Bird and JW Lees MPA received good scores, Adnams Southwold Bitter was below average with the Theakston's Best Bitter untried.



We then had a pleasant 15-minute walk along Swann Lane to reach the **Church Inn** on Ravenoak Road. Converted into an inn from 18th century cottages, it is a traditional and welcoming pub with oak panelling and low beams. Owned by Robinsons, four

of their cask beers were available - Unicorn, Cumbria Way, Light Brigade and Dizzy Blonde. All were sampled and all were in good condition. With dusk approaching, we gathered in the beer garden with some questioning what had happened to the missing three from the first pub!

Immediately opposite is the **Governors House**, another popular family-friendly eatery. Although owned by Greene King, it doesn't fit the usual open-plan chain pub mould in that the interior has plenty



of character and individualism. The use of soft lighting gives a warm and cosy feel to the many enclosed spaces. The seven cask beers available were Weetwood Cheshire Cat, Thornbridge Jaipur, Titanic Plum Porter, Timothy Taylor Landlord, and, from the Greene King stable, Old Speckled Hen, Band of Brewers and IPA. The first four were all sampled and scored fairly well.



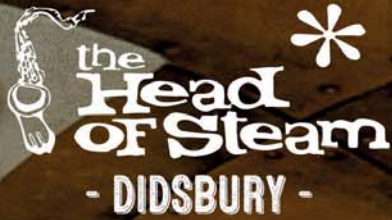
A 15-minute walk back toward the centre of Cheadle Hulme brought us to our penultimate venue - Hydes' **John Millington** on Station Road. Converted from a 17th century hall, the period features have remained giving the multi-roomed layout welcoming and unique intimate spaces. With a band playing inside, we ventured outside to the beer garden to discuss our thoughts on the three cask beers on tap - Hydes Original, Lowry and Sonic Golding from the Hydes Beer Studio range. All scored well and we did wonder if they could have added more offerings on the spare hand pumps with the pub being so busy.



Our final destination for the evening was the **Chiverton Tap**, on Mellor Road, opposite Cheadle Hulme railway station. It was converted into a micropub from a draper's shop in 2014 with great use of upcycled wood to fit out

the bespoke interior. All of the previous pubs on our evening were busy, but this was another stage further. The place was almost bursting when we first entered with standing room only. The reason? Well, you only have to look at the selection of cask ales at the bar and be aware of this micropub's reputation to work out why it was packed out with cask devotees - 'enthusicasks' perhaps? There were five cask ales on the bar - Bollington Long Hop, Vocation Chop & Change, Marble Lagonda IPA, Titanic Cappuccino Stout and Abbeydale Deception. All beers were sampled and our high expectations were duly met. So good in fact, that further drinks were ordered. All received very high scores with Titanic Cappuccino Stout voted the beer of the night.

Overall, although there were some tired legs from a lot of walking, this was a very pleasant stagger. Every pub was comfortable and welcoming with a wide choice of cask beers. The three gents from the first never did catch us up. I hope they enjoyed the evening as much as we did!



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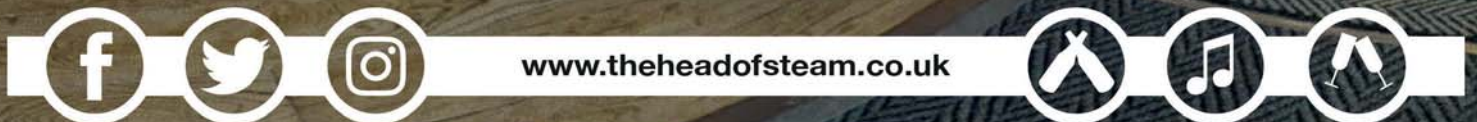
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More Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Tameside News & Openings

While Silly Country which we report on below is perhaps at the larger end of the micropub scale, the new **Ashton Tap House** is very micro indeed. It occupies Unit 16 in Ashton market hall and opened in mid-April, since when it has settled into a role as a proper local with a good crowd of regulars already developing.



It's run by former plumber Eddie McGauley (pictured here, left, with one of the regulars) and his sister Amanda Upton; Eddie had seen and liked micropubs in other market halls and thought, "Why not open

one in Ashton?" – so he did! Despite its small size there are four tables and bench seating, all of which were occupied when *Opening Times* dropped in one Saturday afternoon.

There are three cask beers, all sourced from local breweries, three keg beers, local gins and a selection of wines. The opening hours are the same as the market hall, so it is closed on Sundays and opens every other day from 9.00pm until 5.00pm. The market hall at Ashton is worth a visit in its own right and this is really the icing on the cake. Recommended.

Just as this issue of *Opening Times* was completed, the **Cotton Bale** in Hyde re-opened following its disposal by Wetherspoons. There has been a major refurbishment and when our man on the spot called, there were two cask beers on sale – Marston's Wainwright and Robinsons Dizzy Blonde.

The **Shepherds Call** on Market Street in Hyde now has an additional guest beer each week and also offers a handpumped traditional cider.

Silly Country in Droylsden



After a very lengthy gestation period, **Silly Country** opened in Droylsden over the early May bank holiday weekend. The name is taken from an old expression for Droylsden and the 'bar and bottle shop' has been an instant success. Indeed *Opening Times* heard reports of queues stretching out of the door over that weekend.

It's a project by Katie Glover, Andrew Unsworth and Phil Unsworth (pictured in the next column left to right), Droylsden locals who wanted to improve the area by doing something a bit different and encouraging others to do likewise. The quite large premises (although Silly Country is a member of the Micropub Association) had been closed for several years and occupies a prominent corner spot in Droylsden Shopping Centre (it's pretty much across the road from the tram stop).



The project was helped by a crowd-funding exercise (the names of the supporters are shown on the pig which can be seen in the background of the photo above) and has resulted in a light and airy bar decorated in a combination of bright primary colours and

neutral tones which serve as a background for a collection of Manchester-centric photos. There's also an outside drinking area on both sides of the corner site which is something of a sun trap.

Fridges contain a range of bottled craft beers while on draught there are five cask beers, five keg beers and three traditional ciders. CAMRA members can benefit from a 10 per cent discount on cask ales and traditional ciders. Silly Country is closed on Tuesdays and open every other day from 12 noon until 11.00pm with children welcome until eight. Well worth a visit – apart from the tram, buses 216 and 168 will take you there from Manchester and Chorlton (via Levenshulme) respectively.

Top Award for Old Hall



The **Old Hall Inn** at Whitehough in Chinley is no stranger to these pages, usually getting a mention when it runs one of its popular beer festivals or when winning an award. Well, this time it's gone and won two awards!

The High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch has made the pub its Derbyshire Pub of the Year. This has led the pub into CAMRA's North Derbyshire Pub of the Year competition and it's won that as well.

Needless to say, licensee and owner Dan Capper is very pleased indeed, telling *Opening Times*, "We are delighted to have been awarded this honour, it's great for us as a team to get the recognition. We have some amazing local breweries in the High Peak and surrounding towns and cities, and it's an absolute pleasure to provide a place to sample them. A special thank-you must go to CAMRA for their endless energy in promoting the Great British Pub."

The historic Old Hall is an old coaching inn that many years ago was joined with the neighbouring Whitehough Hall, an Elizabethan manor house built in 1559. It sells eight cask beers, including seven changing guests. Across the road is its sister pub, the **Paper Mill**, which sells an additional range of beers. Both pubs also offer excellent food and accommodation.

The two awards are due to be presented on the afternoon of Saturday 21 July (from 1.00pm). There's now a hourly train service to Chinley and the Old Hall is about a 15-minute walk from the station.

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Pub News Extra

More Pub News from around the Opening Times area

Flute & Firkin



Poynton Brewery has opened its first pub. The **Flute & Firkin** opened at 51 Park Lane in the brewery's home village on 18 May. The former beautician's took five months to convert with a great deal of work needed on the building – including a new roof.

It's now a comfortably furnished L-shaped bar. The bare brick walls and re-used natural wood create a modern yet rustic appearance. Upstairs is

another lounge while there's a sun-trap terrace at the front.

There are six handpumps on the bar and these feature three (or more) Poynton Brewery beers plus some guests, largely from local breweries. In addition, there is a range of keg beers from both the UK and further afield with some interesting German imports among them. Modern canned beers are available along with 20-plus gins and a range of wines.

The pub is also dog-friendly with fresh water and biscuits available for any canine customers. The Flute & Firkin opens at 12 noon every day and is just off the village centre on the same street as Bollington Brewery's **Cask Tavern** so it's possible to have a jolly afternoon or evening between the two.

Epicurean in Heaton Moor



West Didsbury's **Epicurean** beer shop has gained a second branch in Heaton Moor. The premises at 157 Heaton Moor Road was a branch of Victoria Wine in years gone by but had more recently been put to various other uses.

We dropped in to have a chat with owner Simon Yarwood (pictured left) who told us that a Heaton Moor outlet had been on his radar for a couple of years. When he was told that the site was available he visited and signed up more or less straightaway. Simon sees this

part of Heaton Moor as very much up and coming – largely due to the impetus generated by Steve Pilling's reinvention of the nearby **Moor Top**. The new Epicurean is also close to **Nook**, which took on a much more beery focus at the end of last year, and Simon anticipates a close collaboration between the two.

The shop is about twice the size of the West Didsbury branch and is bright and airy. There is a selection of wines and gins but the large, and growing, beer range takes centre stage. There's a good Belgian selection, which Simon plans to add to, but the UK selection is very wide ranging from cutting-edge craft to the slightly more mainstream. Craft beers from Scandinavia and the USA are also present and

correct. It was good to see several large fridges accommodating the very hop-forward beers to help maintain freshness.

There's still work to be done to increase the beer range even further and also to install a growler station to dispense keg beers to take home (you'll also find these in **Heaton Hops** and Davenport's **Bargain Booze**). A very welcome addition to the local beer scene.

House of Hops



OK it's miles out of OT's circulation area but we want to give a heads-up to the new **House of Hops**, a bar and bottle shop in Swinton that opened its doors on Friday 20 April. It's a venture between local beer connoisseur Des Fisher, his daughter Claire and her partner Scott Daniels – they are pictured here in their new bar.

Situated at 1 Pendlebury Road the new bar is something very different for the area and has been an immediate success. There are two rooms, each decorated along modern and clean lines with a notable feature light fitting in the front room. Real ale come sin key-key here alongside other keg beers from both the UK and Europe, including a proper German pilsner. The bottle selection is extensive and includes numerous choice offerings – a sign of Des's sure touch we think.

House of Hops is just off Chorley Road and buses 36, 37 and 38 will drop you close by.

Pub News in Brief

Stockport Council has published its plans for the redevelopment of Stockport Bus Station. All well and good - but unfortunately the *Manchester Evening News* seems to have got into its head the idea that this will involve the demolition of the **Crown** on Heaton Lane. We have however received assurances from the highest level of the council that there are no plans to demolish the pub.

Sam Smiths seem to be having problems getting permanent licensees for the **Sun in September** in Burnage and the **Turnpike** in Withington. Both were again closed as this issue of *Opening Times* was being put together.

Recent cask beer gains include the **Albion** in Burnage which now has Hydes Original and Lowry on handpump and the **Golden Hind** in Offerton with Greene King Abbot Ale. Perhaps the most welcome though is the **Oddfellows Arms** on Abbey Hey Lane in Openshaw. Cask ale gains are rare in this part of the world but, following a well thought out refurbishment, the pub now has Hydes Original and Lowry on handpump. The **Victoria** in Burnage still has no cask beer but does have traditional cider in the form of handpumped Westons Old Rosie.

August bank holiday weekend will see a beer festival at the **Lowes Arms** in Denton, with 20-plus beers, food and live music. The Lowes now also offers CAMRA members a 20p discount off a pint of cask ale. The **Norfolk Arms** in Marple Bridge will also be having a beer festival that weekend with 18 beers, six ciders, a hog roast, barbecue and live music.

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Heritage Pubs

Pub interiors of special historic interest

This month we continue our new series looking at heritage pubs in the *Opening Times* circulation 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.

Swan with Two Necks, Stockport

Some sensitive alterations are in the pipeline at the Swan with Two Necks on Princes Street in central Stockport. Luckily none of what is planned will impact on its largely intact 1926 interior.



The pub was rebuilt just before it was bought by Robinsons and its survival places it among the small number of rare and intact inter-war pubs. The only significant alteration was the removal of the fixed seating in the front room by previous licensees. The rest is pretty much as it was built, with extensive use of wood panelling which is typical of pubs from this period.



To the left of the tiled and panelled entrance lobby is the vault, with plentiful panelling, although much of this was added in 2009 (and now covers over a fireplace). The other door leads into a classic drinking lobby, which is

essentially an extension of the corridor and faces the bar counter. Beyond this is a superb smoke room, which, with its Tudor-style fireplace and oak panelling, has a particularly warm and comfortable atmosphere. Many reckon it's one of the nicest pub rooms in Stockport. There's a further room to the rear but that only came into public use fairly recently.

Many of the fixtures and fittings are original – check out the signs, door handles and even the light fittings. Behind the bar are some original roller shutters which could be brought down to safeguard the contents of the back-bar shelves. You'll also see a sign above the servery, an old notice saying “waiters” from the days when waiter service was a regular feature.

The pub sells four cask beers from the Robinsons range plus a traditional cider from Westons. The lunchtime food comes highly recommended.

Crown Inn, Glossop



Tucked away on Victoria Street this is an end-of-terrace traditional local with a little-altered four-room interior. The pub was built in the 1840s, refitted in later Victorian times and again in the inter-war period. Beyond the entrance

porch is a lobby bar with an unusually ornamented bar counter and two sets of shelves which may be Victorian. Three rooms lead off the lobby, starting with the front snug, still with its inter-war fixed seating and tiled fireplace. The rear snug was a living room until the 1960s but is fitted out in a suitably traditional style.

Queens Head, Stockport



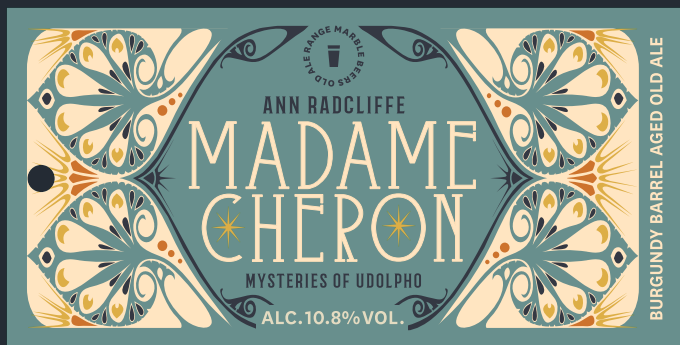
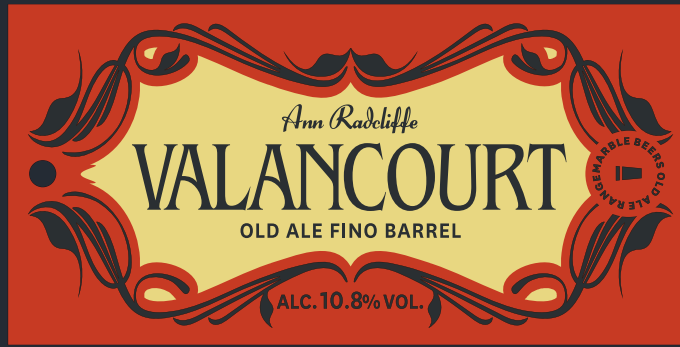
Popularly known as Turner's Vaults, this very narrow pub on Little Underbank shows how many small urban pubs must have looked a hundred or so years ago. The interior was remodelled about 1930 and appears to be little altered. The extreme narrowness of the interior led to some rearrangement of some of the internal woodwork in the early 1990s – this saw the removal of a corridor running from front to back – but the work was carried out with care by Sam Smiths and the pub keeps its authentic historic feel.



One of the most famous features is the banks of spirit taps on the bar counter (pictured left) which used to dispense drink from casks in the rooms above the bar. These went missing while the pub was temporarily closed

before its refurbishment but they were recovered by Sam Smiths and reinstated prior to the re-opening of the pub. They are a rare feature and only know to survive in a couple of other pubs in the country. Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter is the sole cask beer.

All photos courtesy Michael Slaughter LRPS

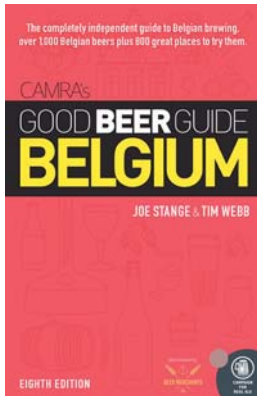


Old Ale, Mysteries of Udolpho Series.

Book Reviews

Some Summer Reading

Good Beer Guide Belgium



What is there to tell you about beer drinking in Belgium that you don't already know or can readily find out, writes *Peter Alexander*. I'm guessing that was on the minds of the authors of this book when they say in the chapter entitled *Beer in the Belgian Way(s)* and aimed squarely at the armchair drinker or beer rating site aficionado, "Unlearn what you have learned, as it is unlikely to be correct." Now such advice when given by many could be safely disregarded as bravado at best, or chutzpah at worst, but when it comes from authors of the standing of Tim Webb and Joe Stange, you have to sit up and take notice, for these guys know their stuff. Tim first produced a *Good Beer Guide Belgium* in 1992 and Joe is well-known for his beer blog and is the author of *Around Brussels* in 80 Beers so they have a track record that gives you confidence from the get-go.

The book itself, beautifully illustrated in colour throughout, is fairly conventionally arranged and no worse for that. With a foreword by the authors, a personal message from Tim, whose last edition this is, a historical chapter about how Belgian beer has developed and expanded, one on food, travel and transport, beer styles (of course) and much more; everything is covered.

Stylistically the book is written in a very easy going and approachable way. It avoids being over technical and instead gently suggests to the reader how a beer might present. It outlines but does not define. There are handy little hints dotted about so you know how to order beer, whether you tip or not, where one might stay and some helpful notes about beer making and so on. They even warn you about the comparative lack of cashpoints in Belgium. Who knew? All essential and appropriate but the meat of this book is, undoubtedly, the brewery listings and where you can best go to drink the beers. This is where the dedicated beer fiend and the beer curious alike will be most at home.

The brewery section is arranged alphabetically and it is here you can gain an insight into what you might want to sample and what indeed you might want to avoid. Each brewery has a bit of a pen picture, a listing of the beers with tasting notes and a helpful star rating system. One star earns you "Life is too short" and five stars are deemed "Amongst the best in the world". Points in between are easily understood, so the reader will be gently guided in the right direction. This though is a book with opinions and the authors aren't afraid to air them. The description for Stella Artois (a two star beer) tells us the beer is "Impressively clean and beautifully presented" and then adds waspishly "wet air". Westmalle Tripel on the other hand gets five stars and is described as "the stuff of eulogies".

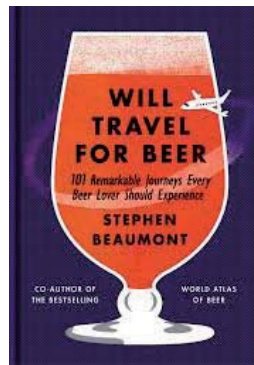
The part of the book listing pubs and bars is perhaps the section that the dedicated travelling beer drinker will find most useful. Alphabetically arranged by towns within regions, once you have decided where to go, the book becomes an essential vademecum when perusing pub or bar beer lists which can, in some cases, stretch to 300 or so beers. The authors point out - and this is important - that they did not seek samples from breweries but, rather, went there and bought the beers. They are also keen to opine that, in an age of obfuscation and blurring of lines, often by large conglomerates, the place of origin of beer remains important, as it adds to authenticity. This is particularly so in Belgium, where beer in all its diverse forms so often has a clear link to its local or regional roots.

The best thing that can usually be said about a guide book is that it makes you want to go there, to check it out and to see if it really is like that. This book ticks all these boxes in spades and it will add a bit of genuine insight to the keenest Belgian beer aficionado, the armchair ticker, or those that aspire to travel there and see for themselves. I thoroughly recommend it.

Good Beer Guide Belgium is published by the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. ISBN: 978-1-85249-341-7 RRP: £14.99

This review first appeared on Peter's Tandleman blog which can be found at tandlemanbeerblog.blogspot.com, and appears here with his kind permission.

Will Travel For Beer



One of the highlights of Stockport Beer Festival was two talks by beer writer Stephen Beaumont, writes *John Clarke*. Stephen has spent well over of a quarter century travelling for beer. He is the author or co-author of a dozen books about beer, as well as hundreds of articles and features. In particular, he has co-authored with Tim Webb two editions of the *World Atlas of Beer*. Despite this, he has perhaps a low profile among British beer fans – he deserves to be better known in the UK and hopefully this book will change that as it is an engaging guide to

101 beer destinations around the world.

It starts with essays on Stephen's approach to his work and what drives him in his beery searches. There are handy hints on travel and how to really get under the skin of the local beer scene. "First off, forget your brewery obsession," Stephen suggests. "...if it is the beer culture of a city you're after, bars are much more the way to go. Scout out the good ones, talk to the bartenders and servers, connect with the locals," he advises. And with that we're off on a whirlwind global beer marathon.

Each essay is no more than one or two pages, each beautifully illustrated but still packing in all the necessary hints, tips and, crucially, the addresses of the many places mentioned en route.

We start with CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival, complete with a plan of action for those attending (one-third pint measures are recommended) and which is hailed as very much deserving "its place at the top of the global beer festival hierarchy". Locally, our own Independent Manchester Beer Convention gets a look-in and is justly praised as a "bold-letter event on the British beer drinker's calendar".

The European section takes in the usual highlights plus one or two other unexpected destinations including features on Folk Beer in Lithuania and the world's most northerly brewery at Svalbard in the Arctic Circle (both guest contributions by Beaumont's long-time collaborator Tim Webb).

The tour finishes at the other end of the world with the Cape Brewing Company in South Africa after a breathless and compelling journey around the world's beer scene. Highly recommended.

Will Travel For Beer is published by Mitchell Beazley. ISBN: 978-1-78472-320-0 RRP £14.99

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Stockport Beer and Cider Festival 2018

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Great British Beer Festival

Mark Your Calendar for August



One of the summer's most unmissable events is just around the corner! CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival will be returning to the halls of Olympia, London from 7-11 August 2018, writes *Katie Wiles*.

Living up to its reputation as 'the ultimate beer festival', this is the only place where you can visit 30 different bars serving nearly a thousand different beers, ciders, perries, wines and gins. One of the biggest, most exciting and well-known events in the beer world, the Great British Beer Festival brings together great food, great entertainment, and most importantly - great beer.

This year we'll be welcoming back our favourite brewery bars including Greene King, Fuller's, Harvey's, St Austell, XT and Titanic. For the very first time we will also be introducing brewers including Budvar, Beer Monkey, Arkell's, Angels & Demons, Brew York, Hook Norton, Thornbridge, Bedlam and Greyhound.

These are in addition to more than 350 breweries represented on the CAMRA bars, including those in the Champion Beer of Britain competition; and there are two dedicated cider and perry bars. This year we will also be introducing even more handpumps with rotating beers on our bars - keep an eye out for these, because once they're gone, they're gone!



In a first for the Great British Beer Festival, entertainment at the Thursday session (9 August) will be hosted by Planet Rock, the largest rock radio station in the UK. Planet Rock will bring the bands Broken Witt Rebels, Danny Bryant, the Dust Coda,

Bad Touch, Mollie Marriott and Fireroad to entertain the crowds. This is in addition to the rest of the week's entertainment line-up which will keep the party going.

The Thursday session will also welcome back the festival's famous Hat Day, so come along with your most topical, silly or fabulous headgear!

If that wasn't enough, you can attend tutored tasting sessions to learn more about the brews you are sampling, and also enjoy some fantastic street food. Visitors can listen to live music, partake in pub quizzes and be the first to sample this year's Champion Beer of Britain winner, the highest accolade in the beer world.

Tickets are now on sale, with day and season options available at cheaper rates than paying on the door. CAMRA members receive an additional discount on all advance tickets, except for VIP options. Don't miss this year's exciting line-up of events - book your tickets today to take part in five days of fun at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival 2018!

Check out our social media for more updates: Twitter [@gbbf](#) and [@camra_official](#), Facebook [@greatbritishbeerfestival](#). For more information and to buy tickets, check out our website: gbbf.org.uk

CAMRA Awards Gallery

Stockport & South Manchester Awards

The **Pub of the Year 2018** is the **Blue Bell** on Barlow Road in Levenshulme. This excellent community local is managed by Mark and Mary Dunn who are pictured here with their Pub of the Year certificate.



Stockport's **Petersgate Tap** came away with two awards. Not only was it a very worthy **Pub of the Year Runner-up** but it also took the crown as **Cider Pub of the Year**. Alan and Chris Gent are pictured here with their certificates.



Club of the Year is the Wythenshawe Sports & Cricket Club on Longley Lane in Northenden. Stockport & South Manchester Branch Chairman John Clarke (centre) is seen here presenting the award to the team.





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