

February 2012

**O**  
CAMRA  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE  
**TIMES**

**Opening**  
THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE

COVERING THE CITIES OF MANCHESTER & SALFORD, STOCKPORT, TAMESIDE, TRAFFORD, N.E. CHESHIRE & MACCLESFIELD

## National Winter Ales Festival

**Pictures and Round-up – pages 12 & 13**

**Also – Bulls Head: Stockport & South Manchester**

**Pub of the Year – page 6**



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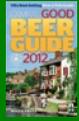
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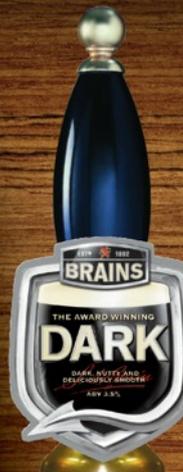
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**CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**



# Pub OF THE Month AWARD



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for February is Ye Olde Woolpack on Brinksway. Pete Brown is a regular and explains why it won.



**Y**E OLDE WOOLPACK on Brinksway, is a pub we almost lost. Closed for more than 12 months, its fate seemed uncertain until Mick Flynn and his family came to the rescue in November 2010. Situated on the banks of the River Mersey, close to the town centre and the M60 motorway (the Co-Op pyramid is about 100 yards away) it is ideally situated for passing trade and regulars alike. It is particularly popular in summer months with walkers and cyclists.

As you enter you are greeted by a U-shaped bar, with an open seating area to your left, and two small rooms to the right. There is the odd hand pump on the bar, 15 to be precise, five dispensing an ever changing range of quality beers, and 10 (yes I did say 10) given over to some of his range of up to 16 ciders and perries. This makes Ye Olde Woolpack the pub in Stockport if you enjoy the occasional pint of cider. Add to this a range of bottled ciders and 14 German bottled beers; the Woolpack really does cater for everyone.



Lunchtime food is also on offer here with both a regular menu and a daily specials board. It is simple, no frills fare and excellent value for money.

As with any good pub, the people make all the difference. While much of its lunchtime trade comes from local businesses, there is also a loyal band of regulars old and new who ensure it has that "local" feel. There is a quiz night on Wednesday, and for those that like such things, Karaoke on Friday night. Add to that, the friendly, welcoming atmosphere created by the whole team and you end up with a great place to spend an afternoon or evening (or both). Not only have the efforts of Mick and the team prevented another pub from being turned into offices, but it is steadily increasing in popularity. A fact illustrated by the speed with which the beers are changed.

All in all, a worthy recipient the Pub of the Month award. So please come along to the award presentation on Thursday 23 February from 8pm onwards.

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# Comment, Notes & Contents

# What's On

## Opening Times – Comment

Well, another National Winter Ales Festival has been and gone. Another triumph for organisers Graham Donning and Peter Alexander and their huge team of volunteers. It was less of a triumph though for our local brewers who failed to feature in the medals table when it came to judging the Champion Winter Beer of Britain.

However it promises to be an interesting year on the local beer scene – Robinsons will be commissioning their new brewhouse shortly and Hydes are on the move. At the micro level, collaboration seems to be the name of the game with all manner of joint enterprises planned with other brewers from both the UK and overseas. More on all of this in future issues of OT.

Last month we said that OT predicted that there would be more than 900 breweries in the UK by the end of this year. We seem to have been well out – a recently published statistic showed that there were now 1,002 breweries in operation. This is by any standard an astonishing figure. Who'd have thought it?

## Opening Times – Information

*Opening Times* is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,200 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth. All articles copyright CAMRA unless otherwise stated.

News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address 45, Bulkeley St, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. E-mail [stocam@btinternet.com](mailto:stocam@btinternet.com). Phone 0161 477 1973. Advertising rates on request.

Postal subscriptions are available at £9.00 for 12 issues (make cheques payable to *Opening Times*). Apply to *Opening Times*, 4 Sandown Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, SK3 0JF.

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**Copy Date for the March issue is Saturday February 10th**

**Font cover – CAMRA's Bev Gobbett launches the Winter Ales Festival as she gives Thwaites Shire Horse Bomber a drink at The Venue in Manchester. Picture courtesy Bell Pottinger**

**Contributors to this issue:** John Clarke, John Tune, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Frank Wood, Phil Booton, Mike Rose, Caroline O'Donnell, John O'Donnell, Adrain Palmer, Stewert Revell, Marc McConachie, Andy Sullivan, Tom Lord, Pete Brown, Dave Hallows.

**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

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Local CAMRA branches organise regular events in pubs across the region – members of other branches & general public are welcome to attend except some Branch business meetings (contact branch contact if in doubt). Organising branch in brackets.

## February

**Saturday 11th** Knutsford Pub Crawl starts Legh Arms, Brook St. 12:30pm (MEC)

**Monday 13th** – Winter Pub of the Season presentation to White House, Stalybridge. 8pm (NB will be followed by Branch Meeting at Q Bar)

**Wednesday 15th** – Social: Jolly Angler, Ducie St 8pm; Piccadilly 9pm (NM)

**Thursday 16th** – City Centre Social: Moon Under Water, Deansgate 8pm; Oast House, Spinningfields 8.45pm; Gas Lamp. Bridge St 9.30pm; finish at B-Lounge@Bridge and Sawyers Arms (TRH)

**Friday 17th** – Bramhall & West Hazel Grove Stagger: 7.30pm Three Bears, Jacksons Lane; 8.30pm Shady Oak, Redford Drive. (SSM)

**Thursday 23rd** – Pub of the Month Award to Ye Olde Woolpack, Brinksway, Stockport. From 8pm (SSM)

**Saturday 25th** – Social at Old Hall Hotel, Chinley. Starts 12 noon. (MEC)

**Wednesday 29th** – Leap Day Crawl: Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, 7.30pm; Eden, Canal St 8.15pm; Alibi, Oxford St 9pm; Paramount or Peveril of the Peak to finish. (NM)

**Wednesday 29th** – Macclesfield Pub Crawl – starts at The Wharf 7.30pm. (MEC)

**Wednesday 29th** Macclesfield Pub Crawl add **Brook St** after Wharf.

## Your Local CAMRA Branches:

**SSM: Stockport & South Manchester** [www.ssmcamra.org.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Mark McConachie 0161 429 9356, [mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk](mailto:mark.mcconachie@o2.co.uk)

**NM – North Manchester** [www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk](http://www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Dave Hallows 07983 944992, [davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davehallows2002@yahoo.co.uk)

**HPNC – High Peak & North Cheshire** [www.hpneccamra.org.uk](http://www.hpneccamra.org.uk)  
Contact: Mike Rose 07986 458517. [mikewrose@gmail.com](mailto:mikewrose@gmail.com)

**MEC – Macclesfield & East Cheshire** [www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)  
Contact Tony Icke 01625 861833, [contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

**TRH – Trafford & Hulme** [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk)  
Branch Contact: John Ison 0161 962 7976, [enquiries@thcamra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thcamra.org.uk)

## CAMRA Branch Business Meetings

**Thursday 9th February** – Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport. **Includes selection for 2013 Good Beer Guide, Start 8.15pm. (SSM)**

**Monday 13th February** – Q Bar, Market Street, Stalybridge. Includes final selection for 2013 Good Beer Guide. Starts 8.30pm (HPNC)

**Wednesday 15th** – Good Beer Guide 2013 Final Selection Meeting: Unicorn, Church St, Manchester City Centre. Starts 7pm. (NM)

**Monday 20th** GBG 2013 Final Selection, Dog & Partridge, Palmerston St, Bollington. (MEC)

**Thursday 1st March** – New Lloyds Hotel, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. Starts 8pm (TRH)

**Thursday 8th March** – Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris. Guest speaker: Paul Jefferies, Production Director Hydes Brewery. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)



## When is a Beer not a Beer?

**T**HE term "India Pale Ale" or IPA originates from strong, heavily hopped beers that were specifically brewed for export to India in the early part of the 19th century. By the middle of the century, beers of this style had become popular on the domestic market, and the export trade eventually died away as local breweries were established. The First World War saw a dramatic cut in beer strengths across the board, and for much of the 20th century IPA became a common name for a relatively light bitter, mostly, but not exclusively, in the South of England. Thus we had beers such as Darleys IPA, Wadworths IPA, Bass's Charrington IPA – which must have been one of the sweetest and least hoppy bitters known to man – and Greene King IPA which has now become probably the best-selling cask beer in Britain.

In recent years, though, there has been a move by some of the new breweries to revive something more like the original style of IPA, and this has led to accusations that existing beers bearing that name are in some way fake or inauthentic. However, the meaning of words changes over time, and for many decades of the last century the weaker, lighter IPAs were the only game left in town. To claim that something is not "true to style" because it differs from something that had died out but has recently enjoyed a small-scale revival is nitpicking obscurantism comparable to that of people who bemoan the change in the everyday meaning of the word "gay".

One of the best things about the current brewing scene is the willingness of innovative brewers to experiment and mix and match styles and traditions rather than rigidly sticking to formulas dating back two centuries. For example, I was recently reading about a "White Stout" which would have been totally unheard of in the Victorian era. And, given that most milds in the early 19th century were well over 5% in strength, it could be argued that anything under 4% calling itself a mild nowadays is equally inauthentic.

## Brass in Pocket

**Y**OU often hear representatives of the medical profession and other anti-drink campaigners moaning about alcohol being available at "pocket-money prices". However, they're always vague about exactly what they are talking about. It would be illuminating to get them to name the specific products they are referring to, and to demonstrate that they have some kind of disproportionate involvement in alcohol-related health problems. In any case, the average weekly pocket money for a child is reported to be almost £7, which would comfortably buy a four-pack of pretty much any beer in the off-trade, a half-bottle of spirits and the vast majority of wines, not to mention a couple of pints in the pub.

And are they talking about the price per individual pack, or the effective price per unit? Tesco will sell you a single bottle of Czech lager for 99p, but in terms of bangs per buck that is a lot dearer than a 20-pack of Fosters for a tenner, and the latter is beyond reach of even a weekly £7.

In reality, the UK has about the third-highest alcohol duties in the European Union, and in no meaningful sense can alcoholic drinks in this country overall be regarded as cheap. If anything really is available at "pocket money prices", then that suggests one or both of it being very weak and in a very small measure. This is a dishonest and emotive use of words that is only too typical of the anti-drink lobby, and regrettably is occasionally taken up by some claiming to represent the interests of drinkers who really should know better.

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



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## Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year 2012

It wasn't only news that it had won the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year award that made an impact at the Bulls Head last month. The day after the close run vote, a double decker bus crashed into the corner of the pub, prompting a short period of closure while the extent of the damage was assessed.

Despite its City Centre location, just behind Piccadilly Station on London Road, the Bulls Head still manages to generate a true community feel. A loyal band of regulars mixes easily with passing trade from rail travellers breaking their journey and revellers on their way to the fleshpots of Peter Street and Deansgate. Home cooked food (lunchtimes and early evenings) and a weekly Pub Quiz add to the traditional vibe.

Over the years there have been a variety of owning breweries – Wilsons, Burtonwood and now Marston's of Burton-on-Trent. Despite being a tied house the Bulls Head makes full use of the wide portfolio of beers from breweries in the Marston's family – with beers from Banks's, Jennings, Wychwood and Ringwood featuring regularly (and such is its popularity, Ringwood Boondoggle is now a permanent feature). In addition there are periodic beer festivals when the Marston's range is supplemented by beers from other breweries. Beer quality is invariably immaculate and the Bulls Head is now a regular in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide.

All of this is overseen with avuncular professionalism by landlord Keith Wylam and his business partner Mui Heng. Both were naturally very shaken by the crash and at first there were fears for the structure of the pub. However despite some dramatic cracks, the structure is fine and after one week the pub had reopened for business. Keith told the Manchester Evening News that "finding out we had won Pub of the Year was a high point" in what was obviously a traumatic week.

The date of the presentation had not been fixed as we went to press but is likely to be in April during CAMRA's Community Pubs Month.

### Crown, Heaton Lane is Runner-Up

WELL there can only be one winner but the Crown on Heaton Lane (a previous, and no doubt future, serial winner of CAMRA awards) makes a more than worthy runner-up after this year's close vote.



What can be said about the Crown that hasn't been written already? It is one of the leading pubs in the area for choice and quality cask beers, supplemented by traditional cider and a small selection of continental beer. All served in a pub, that despite some minor opening out, essentially remains a multi-roomed Victorian gem. Good, honest food is served at lunchtimes and live music in all forms (from folk nights in the back room to rock bands in the garden) is a feature.

Again beer quality is invariably high and the pub is another Good Beer Guide regular. Always busy with a real buzz about the place it is a compulsory visit for beer drinkers in Stockport.

## THE NURSERY INN

Green Lane, Heaton Norris, Stockport  
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# Stagger.....

## Didsbury

With Peter Edwardson

NOVEMBER'S Stagger took us round the northern side of the affluent South Manchester suburb of Didsbury on a mild and dry Friday evening. We kicked off at the **Station**, a small street-corner Marston's pub at the north end of the village.

The main bar area has been knocked through into one, but there is still a small, cosy snug at the far end. There was a karaoke/disco in progress, and even though it was only early evening some of the customers had clearly been enjoying themselves for some time. There was only one cask beer available – Marston's Burton Bitter – which was generally thought above average. A second handpump for Jenning's Cumberland Ale was out of use with a glass over the top.



We then crossed the main road, noting that the former Hog's Head was in the process of being converted to a Tesco Express, and avoiding the keg-only, Irish-themed O'Neill's. We then made our way past a couple of good-natured bouncers into **Sanctuary**, a spacious modern bar that was formerly the Varsity. Perhaps we weren't expecting much here, but it was to my eye surprisingly congenial, with comfortable sofas and much use of dark wood. It was fairly busy, with a generally younger but at the same time more sedate clientele than the Station. There was just the one real ale, Wells Bombardier, at a rather steep £3 a pint. Sadly, the beer was very tired, and on taking it back we were told that changing the barrel would take at least twenty minutes, so we didn't linger much longer.

We doubled back to the western side of Wilmslow Road to the **Nelson**, a small pub on the corner of Barlow Moor



Road, with a distinctive frontage of green glazed bricks. Inside it is surprisingly shallow, with a main bar area on the right and a lounge to the left. The interior featured strings of coloured lights, although we weren't sure whether they were Christmas decorations or a regular fixture. Two real ales were available –

Jenning's Cumberland Ale, which was comfortably above average, and Shepherd Neame Spitfire, which was a little better still. The friendly and attentive service was commented on.

Crossing Wilmslow Road for the third and final time brought us to the **Dog & Partridge**, a pub with a distinctive frontage decorated inside in a bare-boards alehouse style. This was the busiest pub of the night so far.



The number of customers meant that the speed and order of service left something to be desired. A feature of this pub is that free monkey nuts are on offer, although the dispenser was in an inaccessible location in a corner. It's one of those pubs that seem lacking in seating in proportion to the floor area, and some of us were unable to get a seat. It had the widest beer range so far, with Taylor's Landlord, St Austell Tribute and Old Bear Great Bear all pretty good, and Adnams Southwold Bitter not quite up to that standard but still well above average. Hobgoblin was also available, but not tried.

Our next call was at the **Fletcher Moss** on Albert Hill Street, Didsbury's only back street



pub, although redevelopment has made it more visible from School Lane than it used to be. A Hydes tied house, it was once a small pub called the Albert, but has been renamed and greatly extended at the rear. This was even busier than the Dog & Partridge, with large groups of standing drinkers. It is some time since I've seen a pub quite so busy, and it's worth mentioning that this success has been achieved without resort to food, karaoke or piped music. It was on the night in question the current holder of the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award. Not surprisingly, people tended to favour the guest beers, with Exmoor Dark very good indeed, and the best beer of the night, and Beer Rocks "British" being well-regarded by most who tried it. Hydes Original was also pretty good; the other two Hydes beers, 1863 and Manchester's Finest, were not tried.

A ten-minute walk along School Lane then took us to the **Parrswood**, a monumental 1930s pub in "Banker's Classical" style on the crossroads with Parrswood Road. We went

into the spacious lounge, and were surprised to find three beers available from Cardiff family brewer Brain's – Bitter, SA Gold and Reverend James – all of which fell into the above average to good category. The pub has recently been taken over by the "King's Feast" chain, and offers a varied menu of good-value standard pub food, although their slogan "Where size matters" raised a few eyebrows. The pub was fairly quiet, but had only recently changed hands, and hopefully the new owners will be able to build up the trade. It's worth noting that it also has a spacious separate vault with pool table, now the only proper vault remaining in Didsbury.

Just round the corner from the Parrswood is **St Catherine's Social Club**, where we were allowed entry but needed to sign in as guests to stick to the rules. This has a spacious main lounge with plenty of comfortable bench seating, plus a large ballroom at the rear. The bar featured three cask beers – Bollington White Nancy, Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter and Townhouse Mount Hood – all of which were pretty good. The OBB was a bargain £1.84 a pint and the other two were well under £2.50. If you lived nearby, taking out membership could be a good idea.

We then headed back along School Lane to finish the evening at Wetherspoon's **Milson Rhodes**. Formerly the



Pitcher & Piano, this is a more characterful and less barn-like establishment than many of the chain, with a large ground-floor bar and a more intimate one on the first floor. Like the nearby pubs in the village centre, it was extremely busy. There were five beers available – Kelham Island Radio 390 and Black Knight Porter were both very good, Robinson's Elbow-inspired Build a Rocket Boys decent enough, but felt by most to taste just like another Robinson's beer, and Phoenix Last Leaf just a bit above average. Northern Two-Tone Special was not tried. There were three or four other beers, including Blakemere Navajo, with "coming soon" labels.

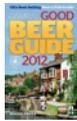
So ended a very enjoyable evening with a good cross-section of beers and pubs. At a time when there is much doom and gloom surrounding the pub industry, it was good to see some pubs at least doing a roaring trade. As ever, these were only the impressions of one group of people on a particular night. Why not try the pubs for yourself and see what you think?

## The Waters Green Tavern

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## The Pubs of Marple & District

An occasional series with Tom Lord

This is intended to be a series of occasional articles reviewing the pubs of Marple and district, to give a picture of the types of pub, the various beers and what the pubs offer.

We will start with Marple Bridge, and instead of the usual alphabetic approach A to Z we will change things a bit and go Z to A. This means that we will start with the **Windsor Castle**



The Windsor is an imposing stone built pub sitting on the corner of Glossop Road and Compstall Road junction.

Records show that the pub was probably built as a beer house sometime between 1830 and 1842 on what was at the time a turnpike road between Compstall and Marple Bridge. Stables originally adjoined the pub where the current car park is, being removed in 1968 when the pub underwent a major refurbishment which resulted in the current open plan layout.

The Windsor Castle has a pleasant relaxing atmosphere combining a traditional country pub and local pub attributes. It is very much a community pub supporting a wide range of leisure activities. These range from 'come and join in' acoustic Sunday evenings, darts, crib and free Tuesday evening pool together the weekly pub quiz on Thursday evenings. The pub also raises money for charity with its last Friday of the month coffee mornings. Dog and walker friendly, the pub also caters for meetings and events.

The pub was originally owned by Bells Brewery of Hemphaw Brook, Stockport eventually passing into Frederic Robinson ownership. The beers are Robinson's Hatters Mild and Unicorn, with the occasional Robinson's seasonal beer.

All in all the Windsor Castle is a good local pub doing what it has successfully done for the past 160 years or so, providing an excellent, comfortable and worthwhile place to visit.

Marple railway station is about a 15 minute walk away, and buses 383/ 384 (Stockport / Romiley / Marple circular) and 394 (Stepping Hill / Glossop) pass the door.

Licensee:- Joanne Farrell Tel 0161 427 9898

## Pub News Extra

Martin Matthews of the **Brew House** in Altrincham seems to have really got the bit between his teeth when it comes to sourcing beers – he has now negotiated supply agreements with cult breweries Magic Rock and Summer Wine. On 'draft will be Magic Rock Dark Arts and Summer Wine Diablo while bottles will include High Wire, Eight Ball (a black IPA) and Rapture from Magic Rock while Summer Wine bottles will include Barista coffee stout, the dark and delicious Cohort and Rouge Hop, a "red IPA". Checkout the website at [www.brewhousebar.com](http://www.brewhousebar.com)



The Derby Arms on Ashton New Road near City's ground has been converted into shops which are now up for sale/rent. No real loss as it's a long time since cask beer was dispensed and of course this will make the nearby **Grove** (cask Holt's Bitter) more viable. Down the road the **Strawberry Duck** is serving Holts Bitter plus their seasonal.

# MANCHESTER PUBS BY TRAM

WHILE many local commuters rely on the Metrolink tram system for their journeys to work, it is also a great resource for getting about the area for socialising too and most stations on the network have great pubs nearby.

CAMRA's Trafford & Hulme branch have just published two colourful leaflets entitled Pubs By Tram. The first directs visitors to pubs close by each station on the City to Altrincham line. The second covers the new South Manchester line which opened in July 2011 and takes a slightly different format due to the sheer number of good pubs and bars near the line's three stations.

There are some great offers available for off-peak travel to pubs across the network, including a £5 weekend saver valid from 6pm Friday to end of Sunday and the Adult Four Saver which gives a day's unlimited travel for up to four adults travelling together. Holders of a TFGM issued National Concessionary Travel Pass can travel free from 9.30am to midnight.



The City to Altrincham leaflet starts at the last station in the city zone, Deansgate-Castlefield and names at least one pub per stop regardless of whether real ale is sold (so the completist can say they have drunk at every stop). Where a

stop offers a choice of real ale serving pubs within a similar walking distance, more than one is named. At the terminus in Altrincham, a full page is given over to the multitude of choices which the town has to offer.

The South Manchester Line leaves the Altrincham Line after Old Trafford station and makes its way to St Werburgh's Road via Chorlton. With the vast array of pubs and bars from Whalley Range to Chorlton Green, there are endless routes which could be taken so the visitor is able to plan their own route via the included map which shows where 22 pubs and bars are in relation to the stations.

The South Manchester Line was the first stage of Metrolink's "Big Bang" expansion that will see the South Manchester Line extended to Didsbury with a spur to Manchester Airport and new lines added to Ashton, Oldham & Rochdale. An accompanying leaflet for the existing Bury line is in preparation and it is hoped that other local CAMRA branches will follow with more leaflets covering the stem's other lines.



The leaflets are being distributed to tourist information offices and pubs across the area. They can also be viewed under "Pubs" at [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk). Alternatively, to order copies of either leaflet, send a stamped self-addressed envelope - preferably DL (1/3 A4) sized - to Pubs By Tram, c/o 28 Barlow Moor Court, Manchester, M20 2UU. Please write which leaflet is required in top left corner.

# MOSI Beer Festival

From 22nd – 24th March, the Manchester Museum Of Science and Industry's Power Hall will once again play host to the MOSI Real Ale and Cider festival, organised by Trafford & Hulme CAMRA in association with MOSI.

Following the sell-out inaugural festival in 2011, there are some exciting changes planned for this year.

Firstly, there will be an extra session with the festival opening a day earlier on Thursday 22nd from 5pm in addition to Friday evening and all day Saturday.

Last year's festival featured only beers from Greater Manchester breweries. For 2012 there will again be a wide selection of Manchester beers available, expected to include beers from some of the brightest new breweries in the area including Stockports' Quantum, Chorlton's Bootleg Brewing Co and Bury's Brightside brewery. The range of Manchester beers will be supplemented by a selection from the Cumbria region, so expect to see award winning breweries such as Hawkshead and Ulverston amongst others. Last year's festival ran out of beer early on Saturday evening so this year there will be twice as much cask ale available.

New for 2012 will be the addition of a foreign beer bar, offering a wide range of beer styles from continental breweries. Expect traditional bottled beers from Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic and maybe even a few surprises from new breed of craft brewers in the likes of Norway and Italy.

Traditional cider and perry fans won't be disappointed either, with a new dedicated cider and perry bar separate from the cask ale bar and twice as much available as last year.

The bars will be separated to give more room to move around the Power Hall between them while viewing the various machines and engines on show. There will also be more seating around the hall, with temporary benches and tables being brought in specially. The selection of snacks on offer is also to be expanded.

For further information see [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk) or [www.mosi.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.mosi.org.uk/whats-on)

## Chorlton Advance Notice

The popular Chorlton Beer Festival, run by Trafford & Hulme CAMRA in association with St Clements Church will again take place this year. The dates for your diary are Friday 6th and Saturday 7th July. Look for more details in future issues of Opening Times.



All Inclusive Beer  
Festival Cruises On

 **The Bell** 



72ft Party Narrow Boat sailing on  
Saturday 10th March 3pm & 7pm

The Bell will cruise you down the  
Macclesfield canal for 2½ hours.

Whilst on board you can sample  
real ale supplied by:  
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On return you will then be served  
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All Inclusive Price £30 per  
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Please book via The Ring O' Bells, Marple  
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Email Romanza1@virginmedia.com



High Peak & NE Cheshire  
CAMRA Branch announces its

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Beer Festival**

Chalkers Snooker Club  
Newtown, New Mills, Derbyshire

Friday 13 and Saturday 14 April  
12 noon to 11 pm

Close to New Mills Newtown Station  
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**Admission Free – Food Available**

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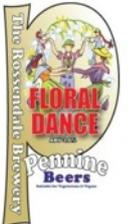


Pennine Ale (Rossendale) Limited, The Griffin Inn, 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden, Lancashire BB4 5AF;  
Telephone: 01 706 21 40 21; Fax: 0871 247 5484; [www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk](http://www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk)

**THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY**

Contact Robin: 07709 874 783; [robin@rossendalebrewery.co.uk](mailto:robin@rossendalebrewery.co.uk)  
Or Geoff: 07816 912 794; [geoff@rossendalebrewery.co.uk](mailto:geoff@rossendalebrewery.co.uk)

**Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes**

 <p><b>Floral Dance</b> 3.8%</p> <p>A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!</p>	 <p><b>Hameldon Bitter</b> 3.8%</p> <p>An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.</p>	 <p><b>Glen Top Bitter</b> 4.0%</p> <p>A citrusy, full bodied, pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.</p>	 <p><b>Rossendale Ale</b> 4.2%</p> <p>A malty aroma leads to a complex, malt dominated flavour, supported by a dry, increasingly bitter finish.</p>	 <p><b>Halo Pale</b> 4.5%</p> <p>A citrusy, pale ale brewed with Cascade aroma hops, finishing with a slightly bitter aftertaste.</p>	 <p><b>Pitch Porter</b> 5%</p> <p>A full bodied, rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and obvious roast barley dominance.</p>	 <p><b>Sunshine</b> 5.3%</p> <p>A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy.</p>
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Please do not hesitate to contact us for further info!

All of our beers can be sampled at:-  
The Griffin, 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden Lancashire (Brewery Tap) - 01706 21 40 21  
The Sportsman, 57, Mottram Road, Hyde Cheshire - 0161 368 5000  
[www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk](http://www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk)

All of our beers are suitable for Vegetarians & Vegans.

# High Peak Pub Scene

Frank Wood with Pubs News from High Peak & North East Cheshire CAMRA plus Robin Wignall's monthly round-up of the Peak District Pub scene

## High Peak Pub News With Frank Wood

RECENT reports from Ashton by three separate members who have visited the pubs on evenings out, would suggest that it is not as good as in the past. Aside from the closures that are affecting most towns, the number of real ale outlets of a good quality is down significantly and some of the outlets once recommended, are no longer as good.

However, the **Ash Tree** (Wetherspoons) was remarked by all three as being the most consistent in the town and the **Old Fire Station** next door, also an outlet that sells a good choice of real ales, is highly regarded. The **Caledonia** also gets a decent rating by all three members; on two of the visits the seasonal Scrooge was particularly rated.



Further out of the centre though, some two miles to be exact, the **Dog & Pheasant** at Bardsley on Oldham Road, is up to form and has held its place in the Good Beer Guide for many a year. In the direction of Mossley, the **Junction** on Mossley Road is reported to consistently sell excellent beers from Robinsons. These last two are the current 2012 entries in the Good Beer Guide but it's a shame that there isn't a pub worthy of an entry in a central location in the town.

Back to the town centre, the **Station** and the **Witchwood** appear to have suffered in quality of late and were not rated as good as the others. However, this is the opinion of three reports and I would hope that in the future they will once again be leading lights in the town. Elsewhere in this issue, Andy the Hat has discovered that the **Crawthorne** is well worth a visit (see page 16 - Ed).

Final word on Ashton, it is reported that the real ale in the **Beau Geste** has not worked out and it has been discontinued recently. Other central pubs that have Robinsons cask available in decent form are the **Prince of Orange** near to the bus station and the **Junction** at the rear end of the train station.

Good reports have come in this month that the **Hare & Hounds** (at the entrance to Stalybridge Celtic FC) is a real ale gain, with two hand pulled beers on sale (handy before a match). The Copper Dragon Golden Pippin

was particularly rated there in early January. This is bound to be popular on match days with the improvement in the playing fortunes of the club. The **Kings Arms** at Droylsden is another pub given good reports recently by our members in the know in that area (very close to Droylsden FC).

With football grounds in mind then, Hyde have the Sportsman close to them and Glossop North End have the **Friendship** or the **Star**, all highly rated by respective fans. As far as the other local clubs in the Branch area are concerned i.e. Ashton United, Curzon Ashton, New Mills and Buxton, I have no idea which pub the fans use on match days, though I am pretty sure that none of the clubhouses have cask ale on sale, apart from the Howard Town beers (and a huge selection of Howard Town bottles) at Glossop NE.

Finally, I am told that the **White House** in Stalybridge now have a Folk Night on alternate Thursdays and a quiz each Wednesday that are worth supporting, in a pub that is currently on the "up". Keen Landlord Tim Hathaway tells me they are taking a regular beer from Marble Brewery as well as a changing guest beer and of course the Hydes Original, Old Oak and the seasonal beer from Hydes.

## Peak Practice With Robin Wignall

PICKING up the theme of group dining from last month's column, since that article, seasonal



culinary excess continued. A large group of ramblers visited the Good Beer Guide listed **Pack Horse** New Mills, on the road to Mellor from New Mills. A rewarding visit this was. A range of seasonal fare was well presented and very enjoyable, and this on the Sunday before Christmas when the pub had been busy with other groups dining through the day. Good food was accompanied by a range of good beers, Tetley Bitter, now brewed somewhere in the Marston's empire, is a regular. Other beers that evening were Phoenix Snowbound, Blackwater Santa's Big Sack and a very popular Tatton Ale from the Tatton Brewery at Knutsford.

The Pack Horse is well worth a visit for beer and food, despite being a bit of a walk from

New Mills centre, with no regular public transport. Exercise enriches the experience.

Just before Christmas, with a group of fell runners I made the always worthwhile visit to the **Beehive** at Combs. This is another pub that needs a walk if using public transport. It is exactly a mile each way to the 199 bus stop at the Hanging Gate between Whaley Bridge and Chapel en le Frith. Yet again the effort is recommended. Good food from the Christmas menu was very enjoyable. The beer range these days is Pedigree, a house bitter from Brakspear and another beer from the Marston's breweries. A much larger ramblers' group shared our lunchtime and seemed well contented with their visit. The Beehive is deservedly popular and if dining, booking is recommended even if just for two or three people.

In January a few of us made a delayed seasonal visit to the **Old Hall** in Buxton. This Old Hall is popular with early evening diners prior to a night out at Buxton Opera House, and can also be busy at lunchtime. Ample portions of good food can be washed down with a changing range of beers. The changes can be frequent enough to catch bar staff unawares, a sign of good turnover. During this visit the pick of the beers was Buxton Moor Top, a pale hoppy bitter brew. Thornbridge Sequoia was worth trying and Molson Coors Sharp's Doom Bar.

Aside from seasonal dining the changing pub scene continues. The **Board Inn** at Whaley Bridge changed hands in December. At first the new tenant was trying lunchtime opening Monday-Thursday, but into the New Year this seems to have gone by the board. On these days the pub opens from 5.00p.m. till late. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday there is all day opening from noon. During a brief visit I did have a very good pint of Unicorn, whilst Double Hop was also available.

The **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge changed hands early in the new year. The previous tenant had become disillusioned with Punch Taverns. A relief manager was put in place quite quickly. No changes on beers available as a decent pint of Tetley Bitter is available along with Young's Special, and a third real ale will soon be added to restore the status quo.

At the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge the usual good range of beers from the Marston's breweries continues. A recent interesting addition was Marston's Single Hop Wai-iti, with New Zealand hops. This is a good brew.

Along the road at the **Railway** decent Unicorn is the staple fare whilst Mr. Scrooge has been a popular seasonal beer. It is hoped that Long Kiss Goodnight will be as popular when available.



# National Winter Ales Festival 2012

This year's National Winter Ales Festival was another huge success. Just under 9,400 customers, an increase of almost 1,000 over the previous year, made their way down Oldham Road to The Venue. The Trade Session on Wednesday was also the best attended yet. Here are a few photos (courtesy of Stewart Revell and John Clarke)...



Michelle Kelsall, Head Brewer at Offbeat Brewery, Crewe.



John and Richard Gill of Bradfield Brewery with Richard Hough of Blue Bee Brewery.



The Marble Brewery Team.



Volunteers from After Adoption, the Festival's chosen charity.



Roy and Janine Shorrock from Ashover Brewery near Chesterfield.



Revellers having a great time.



Dave Hughes, Head Brewer at Happy Valley Brewery, Bollington.



Hornbeam Brewery's Kevin Rothwell (left) with Mike Knowles.



Keith Sheard, Head Brewer at Joseph Holt.



Volunteers staff the bar.



Australian visitors Severe Pridans and Benjamin Bullen.



CAMRA's Frank Wood and Lisa Fletcher on fancy dress night.



One of the many highlights of the National Winter Ales Festival is the judging for the Champion Winter Beer of Britain. This time our local breweries failed to win any silverware with the top award heading to the far south west. Here we have a run down on the full results along with some more photos of the festival.

Driftwood brewery's (of St Agnes, Cornwall) 'Alfie's Revenge' was crowned the Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2012

The 6.5% ABV old ale is described in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2012 as a 'strong and fruity, well-balanced premium ale'. CAMRA's Nik Antona praised the outstanding quality of the champion. He said: 'The beer is well-balanced, highly drinkable, and certainly belies its strength. A worthy winner, I congratulate this thriving Cornish brewer on their success today'.

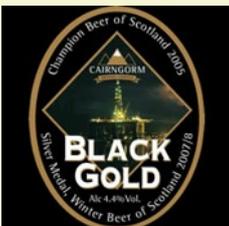


Driftwood brewery began in 2000 in the famous 17th-century pub, Driftwood Spars, where the team continue to brew. A custom built five-barrel plant, the brewery range has since expanded to ten regular beers.



Pete Martin, Driftwood Head Brewer, was taken aback when hearing of the brewery's success. He said: 'We are thrilled to have won. It makes a big difference to us, and will put our brewery on the map, as well as Cornish breweries in general, as there are a lot of good brewers in the county. As a brewpub, we hope the impact on our business will be significant.'

Also in the overall awards, Silver went to Cairngorm Brewery's Black Gold, whilst the Bronze medal went to Coniston Brewery's No 9 Barley Wine. A panel of beer writers, members of the licensed trade and CAMRA members judged the competition at the Sheridan Suite. Driftwood's Alfie's Revenge, as well as the overall finalists, will now enter into the final of the Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London, in August (7th to 11th).



Festival Organiser Graham Donning (right) and Deputy Organiser Peter Alexander (left).



The Robinsons party – John Robinson, Rick Heap and David Bremner



Part of the bumper Saturday afternoon crowd.



Warren McCoubrey, Living Ventures' Beer Guru with Caroline and Toby McKenzie of RedWillow Brewery



Paul Travis with the Beer Inn Print stall.



CAMRA's Ruth Andrew



The cider bar during a rare lull in business.



Concentration at the bar.

# Hydes Craft Beers 2012

Jan - Feb

Winter  
Fuggle

abv 4.2%

See  
Chestnut Brown  
Smell  
Hop & Malt  
Taste  
Fruit  
Bitter  
Sweet

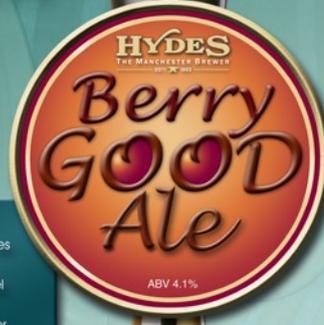


March - April

Berry  
Good  
Ale

abv 4.1%

See  
Copper tones  
Smell  
Soft caramel  
Taste  
Smooth bitter  
Bitter  
Sweet

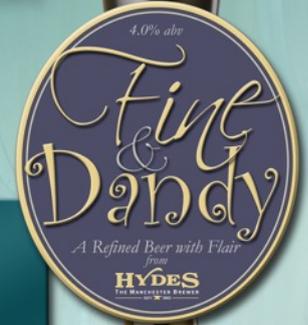


May - June

Fine  
&  
Dandy

abv 4.0%

See  
Amber  
Smell  
Citrus  
Taste  
Zesty fruit  
Bitter  
Sweet



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# Pub News



## Urmston News

There is good news for real ale drinkers in Urmston. Firstly, there is a new cask ale outlet in the precinct off Higher Road, not far from Urmston Station. The Boogie Piano Bar was formerly The Victoria, but after a major revamp it now boasts an upstairs late night music venue known as the **Boogie Lounge** and a ground floor bar sporting two handpumps. OT understands one will at least initially be selling Wells & Youngs Bombardier with the second selling guest ales, which the management hope will primarily come from local microbreweries. The bar is expected to be open 12 - 12 daily.

Back at Urmston Station, the **Steamhouse** (interior, pictured right) has added four additional handpumps, making a total of eight. When OT called, three pumps were given to Hydes beers - it remains to be seen what the sale of Hydes free trade interests (see elsewhere) will mean for this aspect of the Steamhouse's range. The remainder were dominated by more local breweries including Dunham Massey and Robinsons, with just one visitor from slightly afar - Skipton's Copper Dragon brewery. A very welcome addition that will no doubt further cement the Steamhouse's reputation as the premier cask ale house in the area.



Blakemere and Moorhouses breweries and usually in good nick. It's not clear if any work is planned in the cellar but OT hopes that the cask ale range is at least retained. With the **Oast House**, **Sawyers Arms**, the **Bridge**, the **Gas Lamp** and the **Mark Addy** just over the river, the west side of Deansgate has definitely become an area worth checking out in recent months.

It appears Manchester's **Commercial Hotel** may be on borrowed time. The Hotel can lay claim to be the country's oldest railway hotel due to its site opposite the original Liverpool Road station (now part of MOSI) but Manchester City Council have approved planning permission for a developer from Liverpool to turn the site into a "boutique hotel". It is reported that the ground floor will incorporate a bar and restaurant but it seems unlikely that the history or unique ambiance of the Commercial will play any part in this. They call it progress apparently.

## In Altrincham

In Altrincham, the **Faulkners Arms** on Stamford New Road (with rear exit to Goose Green) has re-opened after a number of months of closure. Money has been spent on new carpets, wallpaper, seats and so on and when OT called two of three handpumps were in action, both selling beers from the extended Marston's stable. The Faulkners previously had a local reputation for attracting the more boisterous members of society - early indications are that little has changed but time will tell if this is still their target market for the long term.

Drinkers in Manchester, Stockport, Chorlton and many of our other town centres may have been surprised to hear Altrincham pronounced as the best place in Britain for a Christmas Pub Crawl - at least according to The Guardian in late December. While not everybody may agree, it was heartening to see a national newspaper give praise to the Railway in Broadheath alongside Altrincham's Brewhouse, Mort Subite, Belgian Bar, Malt Shovels and Costellos, with special praise given to The Old Market Tavern for its "10 well-kept ales on tap, real cider, the lot".

## Stockport Supping

The **Plough** on Heaton Moor Road in Heaton Moor (the only local pub known to host a knitting circle) has recently re-emerged after a brief period of closure as a "Pizza Kitchen & Bar". The menu, not surprisingly, majors on freshly-prepared, stone-baked pizzas, but also offers a selection of wraps, burgers, quesadillas and salads, altogether making a refreshing change from the usual predictable "pub grub".

The general layout is unchanged, but the interior has been generally smartened up and opened out a little towards the rear with an extensive area of mock stone flooring. There are seven handpumps, one of which always features a real cider, on our visit Broadoak Pheasant Plucker, and one the house beer The Scarf My Father Wore, brewed by Cheshire's Northern Brewing. Every pint of this sold makes a donation to the Stockport County supporters' trust. On our visit there were three other cask beers - Itchen Valley Fagins and Hampshire Rose, and Blakemere Bobby Dazzler. We tried the Fagins and "The Scarf", both of which were very enjoyable.



We have news of a real ale gain in Reddish where the **Houldsworth** on Houldsworth Square has been selling hand pumped Greene King IPA at a bargain £1.75 a pint. On the other side of the coin there is a cask loss, and indeed a pub loss, in Cheadle Hulme where the **Sozzled Sausage** (formerly the Penny Black) has closed we are told.

A post-Christmas tour around a few of the pubs that feature less regularly in these pages was both interesting and rewarding. Starting on the **Royal Oak** on Castle Street in Edgeley, the beer range has now increased. The handpumped Joseph Holt's Bitter has now been joined by two additional cask beers. Only one of the newcomers was on sale when OT called but this was a very pleasant pint of Taylor's Landlord. It has to be said that this is a seriously good local with not only good beer, but good food and one of the best beer gardens in town.

Next stop was the **Florist** on Shaw Heath where the new tenants have settled in nicely now. The pub looked very welcoming and sells four Robinsons beers on handpump - Hatters, Dark Hatters, Dizzy Blonde and Unicorn. The Dizzy was particularly enjoyable. Penultimate call was the **Plough** further down Shaw Heath. This was the busiest pub of the night so far with a good atmosphere and obviously well maintained. The usual Copper Dragon beer had been replaced with Wells Bombardier which was on notably good form.

Finally to the **Blossoms** where "temporary" manager Eric Mills continues to make an impact. Black Beauty was the choice here although it was impossible to pass on a final half of Old Tom.

## City Centre News

The previously reported refurbishment of the city centre's **Rising Sun** has been put back by approximately one month, so can now be expected mid to late February. The area will be busy with refurb teams as the nearby **Sawyers Arms** on the corner of Deansgate and Bridge Street is due to be closed for most

of February for an extensive rework that will see a brand new kitchen installed complete with pizza ovens. The pub has recently been



in the hands of a relief manageress but a new permanent manager is due to arrive to coincide with the refit. Once a fairly run down John Barras pub that local office workers and shoppers largely avoided, the Sawyers has been transformed in recent years including selling three real ales, typically from Northern/

# The Hat Goes Forth

## Out and about in Tameside with Andy Sullivan

THIS time I've a bit of a collage, a mélange if you will for you. There are three reasons for this, the first of which is that I have a number of unrelated little bits of news. Two, a couple of corrections. Thirdly, a visit to Buxton that cannot be left untold and finally because no one in their right mind would attempt the walk I've just done to the west end of Ashton and back into Hyde.

Now the brighter reader will have spotted that this is four reasons, but forgive me, the first three provide the backdrop that allows me some little license to go "off piste" and take a slightly different look at things in Tameside and this is where I will start; it is my area so to speak anyway. I trust that you'll understand too that there are some things I am happy to do on my own, but there are pubs in this neck of the woods that I will pass judgment on from a distance rather than actually entering them. So if you are a customer or licensee of one of them, feel hard done by and/or serve, or are served cask ale, then by all means let me know via the editor and I will be happy to put things straight.

The skiing metaphor is hardly appropriate for a day, which is grey but unseasonably warm, it's the day after Boxing Day and I venture into the lesser known wild west of Ashton. From Guide Bridge railway station turn right and you'll spot the closed **Boundary** I have mentioned before and to its right is the **Corporation Arms**. This is a pub that always seems to have a healthy clientele, but not one I have ever been inclined to enter, there is enough evidence of a lack of real ale not to bother doing so today. In fairness though any pub that can get the level of custom I saw on such a mid afternoon as this can't be doing too bad a job.

### Crowthorn

A pub that is tucked away behind Manchester Road opposite the Evans Hallshaw Ford dealership, unsurprisingly perhaps on Crowthorne Road is the **Crowthorn**. I say perhaps because this pub was originally the Shepherds Tent. Formerly a run down John Smiths place it has, I



am delighted to say, been transformed. I understand this is an Enterprise concern, but cannot confirm this. However, someone has spent a deal of money in presenting the place in a comfortable, modern style, which is clean and welcoming. Welcoming too were the locals, thank you. The place wasn't very busy, but a few were in. The two ales on offer vary, so I was told, and on my visit there was Courage Best (£2.80 mind) which I found fine as well as Caledonian's Santa's Little Helper which I did not try. I sat in the games side, to the right on entering, appearing also to serve as a vault/public bar and is lighter in character to the lounge on the left. I always try for a look in the toilets when I visit places as this says a great deal about the management and custom. Very nice, clean, soap, bolt on the cubicle door and I would expect the ladies to be of a similar standard.

The Crowthorn must be one for a visit into Ashton and is a perfect start or end for it; to try to provide real ale here, clearly when through business isn't going to be great is a brave move that deserves support and so do the locals that use it. There really is nothing of this standard left here, in this area, for them otherwise. You can get to it by any number of buses that serve Manchester Road and bus stops are nearby so it's easy to avoid the rest of that bit of Ashton and arrive and depart from the main road. The more intrepid could walk from Stockport Road having used a 347 or 219, or Guide Bridge Station.

Talking of Stockport Road I did not venture into the **Oxford** (Inn). A former Bass house, not very real ale looking and I do know it by reputation. Up on Cambridge Street is the eponymous pub. A Thwaites

place with no real ale, but actually packed. I did not linger to find out why.

The **Pineapple** is now demolished and there are houses in its place. The **Trafalgar** on William Street was not open for business but looks in need of resuscitation and **Williams** on the roundabout end of the same street still forlorn and neglected and that is quite enough of this bit of A-U-L!

Now the corrections and a little titbit.

First the **Cock Inn** on Two Trees Lane, Denton has always been known as such in my time and I checked this in one of the yellow books (acknowledgment at end). However without my noticing it has become entitled **Hotel!** The second



correction is that it is the 335 bus that passes close to the **Penny Farthing** on St Annes Road Denton, not the 345 as I said previously.

And now the titbit is that I have finally been in the Penny after a really long time. This again is a not to be missed pub and whilst I had previously said that it doesn't really fit in with a walk it could be a stop off on the way to the, not very far away, **Lowes Arms** on Hyde Road for dinner. The Penny is a Thwaites place and on my pre-Christmas visit I was greeted by the landlord putting on a fresh beer which was Our Boys & Girls and the other ale on offer and tried was the popular Wainwright. Both were excellent as was the greeting and I immediately felt at home.

This is a large estate pub from 1980, has always been Thwaites and has a lounge bar ahead and to the right on entering with some bizarre pillars and two floor levels. To the left is a spacious and light games room which I understand attracts a youngish crowd. Nicely presented and friendly with plenty of seating this pub should do well and has what I believe is the right catchment area for it. Things at last are looking up in Denton. I shall certainly visit here again and I suggest you should give it a try too. With the Lowes (Free house Hornbeam and Phoenix usually) not far away and the **Old Pack Horse** (Robinsons) accessible by 335 and doable walking we actually have the makings of a nice little route which must surely benefit all three pubs. So off you go then.

### Wet Day in Buxton

Lastly I have to say a huge thank you to Buxton and apologies to my colleague Robin Wignall who normally covers this area. I promise to leave the main detail to you. My friend, his dog and I took to the hills early in December believing that the weather there couldn't be worse than Hyde and it didn't take too long for our four legged companion to tell us that perhaps our judgment may have been somewhat misplaced!

Anyway in such circumstances there is only one thing to do and we did it, following the rapid purchase of oatcakes. First to the **Milton(s) Head** Spring Gardens, we sat in the tiny snug cum vault on the left and had two pints of top notch Black Sheep. Busy place as it should be in the town centre. Next to the **Eagle** on the Market Place, lovely sized market pub, shame about the loss of the market. Youngs best again in top form. Lastly the **Swan Inn** multi-roomed and lots of wood and a very nice pint of something I did not note accurately. In all three pubs we were all welcomed, included in conversation with people genuinely interested in us and kept warm with real fires in two of them.

We fed simply and inexpensively at the Eagle, I had some of the best chips ever there. If everywhere is as good as these three I can see it being a nightmare deciding which to feature in the Good Beer Guide, those losing out must do so by a whisker.

Cheerio then, I await comments about the state of my mind from my friends at the Cheshire Ring with interest.

**Acknowledgments to Rob Magee author of A Directory of Ashton Pubs and also Frank Rhodes for A History of Pubs in Denton and Haughton. Invaluable reference works. They are both still available and far from dear.**

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIRST CLASS

From Andrew Mayne, Heaton Mersey:

As with poems included in the best of poetry anthologies, one expects to come across the occasional entry in the *Good Beer Guide* which provokes a shake of the head and the thought 'I wonder how that one got in?' Usually one can fall back on the notion that there must inevitably be a wide area of subjective judgment in the choice of entries and at least understand why a pub that appears in the *Good Beer Guide* might appeal to certain drinkers. However, the inclusion of Wetherspoon's Milson Rhodes among the entries for Didsbury is nothing short of bizarre. I do a lot of drinking in Didsbury and, along with fellow drinkers, have been to the Milson Rhodes on several occasions since the 2012 *GBG* appeared, in order to seek out what we have all been missing. We have yet to find it.

The *GBG* remains an indispensable guide which is of particular value, of course, to drinkers who find themselves in an unfamiliar part of the country. Fortunately in the 2012 *GBG*, Didsbury is represented by an unusually high number of entries and two other pubs of excellent quality are listed.

Just as we know there is absolutely no possibility that a pub's inclusion in the *GBG* could rest on the standard of hospitality provided by a landlord for the hard-working core members of a local CAMRA group on a visitation crawl, so the suggestion that a pub might be included in the *GBG* because CAMRA has formed a special relationship with a large national chain of pub owners should be equally unthinkable. However, for as long as CAMRA offers, as an incentive for joining or renewing membership, the gift of large numbers of sheets of coupons which promise '50p off a pint' at any Wetherspoon pub, the thought that there might be a certain insidious pressure to get Wetherspoon pubs into the *GBG* could cross the minds of a small number of cynics. CAMRA surely needs to be above suspicion in this area. It would be a shame if readers of the *GBG* who had been disappointed by visits to one or two listed Wetherspoon pubs fell into the error of discounting *all* Wetherspoon entries.

*(I am sorry if you have been disappointed by the beer at the Milson Rhodes. All I can say is that on my, admittedly few, visits the quality has been fine. Local Good Beer Guide entries are selected following a process of continuous assessment of beer quality throughout the year – I can assure Andrew that provision of refreshments and the Wetherspoon voucher scheme play no part at all in this process. Ed)*

From Margaret Corlett, Newton Heath

Can I just offer my thanks to Dave Porter and his team at Outstanding Brewery for inviting me to the brewery again for another brew of Matron's Delight. Thanks also for arranging another draw for a lucky Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA member to devise another beer with him – I'm sure winner Margaret O'Brien will want to add her thanks to Dave

*(Apologies to Margaret for not including this sooner. The latest brew of Matron's Delight went on sale at the National Winter Ales Festival last month as was again a superb drink. A cask has once again been reserved for Stockport Beer Festival in June. Margaret O'Brien is planning a chocolate stout with a hint of mint which promises to be very interesting. Ed)*

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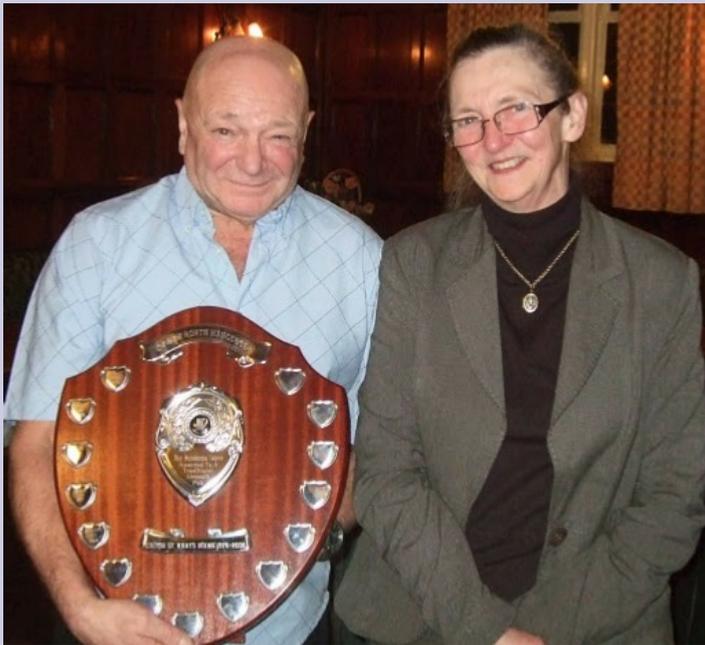
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# CAMRA Awards Gallery



The 'Neil Richardson Trophy' for 2012 has been awarded to the **Racecourse Hotel** in Salford by CAMRA North Manchester for a fine example of a traditional unspoilt pub – such pubs get scarcer year by year. The trophy is in memory of Neil Richardson, local publisher and editor for 30 years of the then oldest CAMRA branch magazine – 'What's Doing.'

The Racecourse Hotel is an imposing mock Tudor pub –built in 1930- which won CAMRA best refurbishment award in 2005. It is an Oakwell Brewery pub – the brewery hails from Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Going through some revolving doors, the patron is greeted by a massive central bar, because up until the 1960s the pub served the Manchester Racecourse. Separate lounges and an alcove with an art deco fireplace, with a separate vault are inside. This gargantuan community pub is used frequently by local groups (ladies football, student hockey and darts teams) and serves the locals well. This is the fifth time running that a Salford pub has won this award. The Racecourse was up against the Bird In Hand in Patricroft, Royal Oak in Eccles and previous winner - the Star Inn on the Cliff. The other winners have been the Stanley Arms in Patricroft in 2008, Star Inn in Salford in 2009 and Queens Arms, Patricroft in 2010 and Eagle Inn, Salford in 2011.

*Pictured above – Racecourse Hotel licensee William Price with Neil Richardson's widow Sue, who presented him with the award.*



Last year the **New Oxford** in Salford won a unique award – the first UK pub to win a "Community Pub" award from the All Party Parliamentary Beer Group. Pictured left are pub owners Paulette Scanlon and Tim Flynn receiving their award from local MP Hazel Blears. The pub was cited for offering "great beers in a safe environment".

As local CAMRA branches start to declare their Pubs of the Year for 2012, here we catch up below with the two High Peak CAMRA awards for 2011



At its September branch meeting the certificate for branch Pub of the Year for the Greater Manchester area within the branch was presented to the **White Lion** in Disley. Ray, Sheena and Martin at the White Lion have done a fantastic job in creating a real community pub offering an impressive selection of cask beers through its eight handpumps, and they insisted that the whole team was present on the night. Geoff Williamson, Branch Chairman, presents the award and Gill receives it on behalf of the White Lion team.



During a short break from the very busy beer festival held at the **Old Hall** at Whitehough in mid-September Dan Capper and his wife Natalie received a certificate from High Peak and NE Cheshire Branch Secretary Mike Rose. The certificate was in recognition of the Old Hall being awarded the Pub of the Year for the area of Derbyshire falling within the branch. This is the second year in succession that the Old Hall has won this award.

The Old Hall continues to run a series of highly successful beer festivals. The next one is on 24th to 26th February and will feature over 60 beers and ciders. The pub is a 10-15 minute walk from Chinley Station (depending on your walking speed) and is well worth a visit. The last train back is usually express to Stockport and Manchester.

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# Brewery News

## Hydes Bombshell

Hydes has announced its intention to close its ageing Queens Brewery in Moss Side (*interior shot, right*) and move to a new facility within the locality late in 2012. The Company has identified a number of suitable premises that meet its needs for the future and will commit an investment of some £2.0m to the new site. We understand the location of the new site will be finalised in the next couple of months – and this will be the fourth time the brewery has moved in its history (although the last one was donkeys' years ago.)

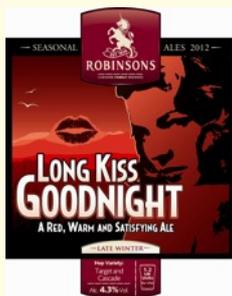


They say the new facility will be far more efficient than the existing plant and will focus exclusively on the production of high quality beers targeted at the growing cask ale sector. This will include core range beers such as Hydes Original and Manchester's Finest as well as a diverse range of seasonal and themed craft ales. Indeed the newer and more flexible plant should allow for an increased range of one-off brews to be produced.

Not only is the state of the brewery an impetus for the move but the current site will have spare capacity following the termination of a major contract brewing operation. We guess this means the arrangement with AB-Inbev which has seen Hydes brewing the cask version of Boddingtons since the closure of the Strangeways brewery. However cask Boddingtons has been dying a slow lingering death for some time now and there must be every chance that it will now be put out of its misery. A sad end to a once iconic beer.

As we went to press there was not much more Hydes could say as they were still in an official consultation stage with their staff. More news however as we get it.

**Robinsons** tend to kick off the new year with a tasty, premium red-brown ale. They have done it this time, too, with Long Kiss Goodnight. Here's what they say about it: "by 1940's Hollywood glamour, embracing a sense of intrigue and mystery, Long Kiss Goodnight is the first of Robinsons 2012 innovative limited editions".



"Full bodied ruby red, Long Kiss Goodnight," says John Robinson, Brand Manager at Robinsons Brewery, "caresses the taste buds with rich, biscuit and hoppy palate complemented by floral, spicy hop, malt, toffee aromas."

## Micro Brewery News

First bit of news is that, because of high demand for **Quantum**



brews, Shaws beers are going to be retired for the time being and the brewery is now going under the sole name of Quantum rather than having both names. A result of this demand has meant that the brewery is expanding next month with more fermenters and casks.

Owner Jay Krause has also had a slight change of branding (new logo above) which will hopefully make it easier to spot which beer is on. A new core beer has been brewed called Pale Ale 4.5% as Jay realised that all his other core beers (Bitter 3.8%, Stout 4.8%, AAA 5.3%) are all brown or dark. This is a mixture of simply pale malt and torrefied wheat, with UK and US hops making it citrusy and nicely bitter for its strength. It was due for release early this month. Grimley's Stockporter was released at the end of January, a 6.8% porter dry hopped with Stella, this was a recipe dreamt up by longstanding helper and avid homebrewer Ed Grimley and was the last beer brewed before 2012 began.

Collaborations are the name of the game at the moment. Quantum have some lined up for the coming months as does **Marble Brewery**.

The first Marble collaboration will be later this month when Kees Bubberman of the highly regarded **Emelisse Bouwerij** in the Netherlands joins Marble Head Brewer James Campbell on Monday 20th.



Emelisse is one of the new wave Dutch micros who are largely unheard of in the UK (although Manchester's reliably excellent Port Street Beer House has some of their beers) but are really making waves with European beer enthusiasts. The collaboration beers planned are a Bitter at about 4.8% ABV brewed using darker malts and a big slug of hops and a Earl Grey IPA, a big hoppy 6.3% IPA with the addition of Earl Grey tea. Marble are also planning a "Meet the Brewer" night with Kees,

which will be at either 57 Thomas Street or the Marble Arch itself.

Also recently brewed at Marble were the 2012 vintages of both Decadence Imperial Stout and the prosaically named Barley Wine. Neither will be seeing the light of day until next winter. Finally with Marble, Lagonda has been going through a variety of hop trials. Number 6 was seriously good but has been eclipsed by No.7 brewed with a complex hop grist using Centennial, Citra, Galaxy and Simcoe. The final version, which will see the beer back to just "Lagonda" will be a combination of numbers 6 and 7.



**Phoenix Brewery** is still producing a range of great beers with a steady flow of seasonal brews. Out this month are Massacre (4.5%) and March Hare (4.4% - this beer will also be featuring in Wetherspoons pubs. Early March will see the return of Shamrock (4.3%). Phoenix fans (and who isn't?) should head down to the Friendship in Fallowfield where a range of Phoenix beers will feature in the pub's Valentine's Beer Festival running from 13th to 16th February.

Major news from **Bollington Brewery** is that they were awarded independent Retailer of the Year in the Macclesfield and Wilmslow Business Awards. This is very exciting for all the staff in the brewery



and two pubs because it recognises their hard work and commitment to what the brewery is trying to create. The award was received at a gala dinner at Capethorne Hall. Both Bollington pubs (the Vale in Bollington and the Park Tavern in Macclesfield) now have Cask Marque accreditation and they passed with a very high mark!! Well done to all concerned. The brewery has also had a rebranding with new pump clips, new bottle labels and new design bottle packs, boxes and four pint take away jugs. Very smart it all looks, too, as you can see from the Bollington Nights pumpclip above.

Finally look out for the reappearance of Extra Rum Porter (6.4%) from **Boggart**. Yum.

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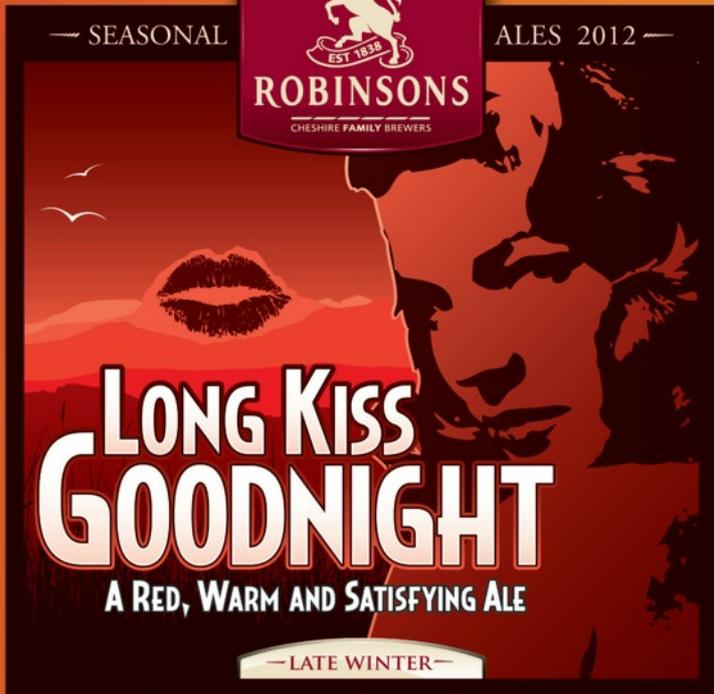
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SEE |  RUBY RED

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TASTE |  RICH, BISCUIT, HOPPY

BITTER |     

SWEET |     

*Available January/February 2012*

