

OPENING TIMES

APRIL 2015 / FREE

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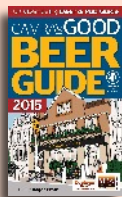


INSIDE: WIN PRIZES ON MILD MAGIC
(PAGE 11) / THE KNOTT IS TRAFFORD &
HULME PUB OF THE YEAR (PAGE 9) /
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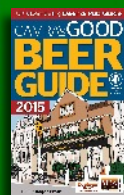
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OPENING TIMES

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- * Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com 0161 228 7811
- * East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx
- * Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – the brewing team at Cloudwater Brewery – (left to right) Will France, James Campbell, Al Wall and Paul Jones. Photo by Rebecca Lupton. (www.rebeccalupton.co.uk/)

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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: M McConachie 0161 429 9356; Secretary@ssmcamra.co.uk

North Manchester (NM)

www.northmanchestercamra.org.uk

Contact: Phil Booton; phbooton@hotmail.com

High Peak & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

www.hpneccamra.org.uk

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

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: Tony Icke 01625 861833; bicke@madasafish.com

Trafford & Hulme (T&H)

www.thcamra.org.uk

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

Local CAMRA Events

All welcome at these events

Thursday 2nd – Branch Meeting: Flixton Conservative Club, M31 5DF. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Thursday 2nd – Special Award for Innovation: Barley Hops, Congleton. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 8th – Cider Pub of the Year Presentation: Bar Fringe, Swan Street, Manchester. From 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting & AGM: Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. Starts 8.00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 9th – City Centre Social: Vine, Kennedy Street 8.00pm; Beef & Pudding 9.00; City Arms 9.45; Waterhouse 10.45. (T&H)

Friday 10th – Mild Magic First Night Ramble: Gateway, East Didsbury 7.30pm; Wine & Wallop, West Didsbury 8.30pm then via Metro to Manchester Piccadilly. Metro runabout ticket recommended. (SSM)

Friday 10th & Saturday 11th – New Mills Beer Festival: Chalkers Snooker Club, New Mills. (HPNC – all welcome)

Monday 13th – Branch Meeting: Poynton Legion Club, George's Road West, Poynton. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 15th – Branch Meeting: Pie & Ale, The Hive, Lever Street, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 16th – Pub of the Season Presentation: Sedge Lynn, Manchester Road, Chorlton. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Friday 17th – Reddish & Heaton Chapel Stagger: Fir Tree, Gorton Road, Reddish 7.30pm; Union, Broadstone Road, Reddish 8.30pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 22nd – Club of the Year Presentation: Eccles RFC, Gorton Street, Patricroft. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Wednesday 22nd – City Centre Social: Piccadilly Tap 6.00pm then to Northern Quarter and Bluu 7.15pm, The Terrace 8.00pm. (All welcome)

Thursday 23rd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Bakers Vaults, Market Place, Stockport. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 25th – Mild Magic Tour: a day visiting all the Mild Magic participants in the branch area. 12 noon start in Altrincham. (T&H)

Wednesday 29th – Clifton and Pendlebury Survey: Golden Lion, Manchester Road, Clifton 7.30pm; Britannia, Bolton Road, Pendlebury 8.30pm plus others. (NM)

Saturday 2nd May – Altrincham Amble: 12 noon George & Dragon; 12.45pm Wheatsheaf; 1.30pm Malt Shovels; 2.15pm Station; 3.00pm Costello's; 3.45pm Unicorn; 4.45pm Bricklayers; 5.30pm Pi; 6.00pm Belgian Bar; 6.30pm Jack in the Box; 7.15pm Old Roebuck; 7.45pm Orange Tree; 8.15pm Old Market Tavern; 9.00pm Barringtons. Timings are approximate! (T&H)

Sunday 3rd May – Tutored Cider Tasting and Cider Pub of the Year Presentation: Railway, Avenue Street, Portwood, Stockport. Starts 2.00pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 6th May – Pub of the Year Presentation: Crown & Kettle, Oldham Road, Manchester. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 7th May – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Social Media

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



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

Trafford & Hulme: www.facebook.com/thcamra

Macclesfield & East Cheshire:
www.facebook.com/pages/Macclesfield-East-Cheshire-CAMRA/106975496056067



Stockport & South Manchester: @SSMCAMRA

Trafford & Hulme: @THCAMRA

North Manchester: @NorthMancsCAMRA

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Curmudgeon

Not Fit to be Out

In recent months, there have been a growing number of stories involving the police “requesting” nightclubs to breath-test customers before allowing them entry, for example in Norwich, Loughborough and Croydon. The justification is that it makes it easier for door staff to refuse admission to customers who are already drunk, with the maximum alcohol level being generally set at twice the English drink-drive limit. That’s at least five pints, probably more, but, even so, it’s a level many people will reach on a weekend night out while not necessarily coming across as “drunk”.

To be fair, it is very much a police initiative, and the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (ALMR) have come out strongly against it. The overall result will probably to deter customers from visiting nightclubs at all. However, being a touch cynical, it is not hard to imagine a kind of unholy allowance between the anti-drink puritans and the nightclub bosses, to discourage punters from pre-loading at Tesco or Wetherspoon’s, so they end up drinking more in the clubs at higher prices.

As it stands, it probably won’t affect you, and it certainly won’t affect me. However, it’s worth noting that some of these schemes include not just clubs but also the more nightlife-oriented pubs. Of course we are told that such things will never happen, but it’s all too easy to see the principle being extended in future years and being included in licence conditions. If the idea of breath-testing revellers out and about on foot becomes well-established, will we eventually see normal pubgoers taking a wander round their local hostelrys on a Friday night being refused admission to their final destination due to having imbibed a bit too much Old Horizontal earlier in the evening?

Don’t Drink and Walk

It doesn’t even stop there. In Spain, serious proposals have been put forward to breath-test pedestrians involved in traffic accidents to establish whether they should bear any share of the liability. You can sort of see the argument behind this, as, not entirely surprisingly, between 10 pm and 4 am four-fifths of pedestrian fatalities are above the drink-drive limit. However, drunken pedestrians are really only a danger to themselves, and even the possibility of being judged in this way would represent a significant curtailment of individual freedom, and would put a dampener on any kind of celebration or festivities outside the house. It would also be a crude one-size-fits-all measure when individuals’ reaction to alcohol can vary so widely

As with breath-testing clubbers, it’s all too easy to see the principle being extended to apply to pedestrians in general. A few years ago, research by the University of Adelaide in Australia – a country fast becoming the Nanny State capital of the world – seriously advocated the introduction of a 0.15% (150 mg) drink-walk limit as the best way of reducing pedestrian road deaths, and suggested this would meet with public acceptance as it would not affect most people.

Ideas such as this may seem outlandish and laughable today but, simply by raising the subject, it has opened what social scientists call an “Overton Window” whereby it becomes included within the scope of serious debate. There are many measures that would have been deemed unthinkable a generation ago but have now been brought into legislation. So don’t tell me you weren’t warned.

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Howard Town Brewery

Stockport & South Manchester paid a visit

On a spring-like Saturday, some branch members set off to visit the Howard Town Brewery in Glossop. The 20 minute walk from the station meant that we had all worked up a thirst, so the sight of seven hand-pumps, set up on a solid oak bar, was most welcome, writes Chris Walkden.

The brewery was established in 2005, but Stuart and Emma Swann have only owned the eight barrel plant since May last year, when the previous directors retired. Since then they have refurbished the building and have been working hard to establish consistency, win back old customers and gain new ones. Happily, this is working as sales are now on the rise. All material has been re-branded, the beer recipes have been tweaked and a new ruby ale, Superfortress (4.4%), has been introduced. This recognises the wreck of a B-29 bomber on the hills above the town and is already the second most popular beer in their range of eight. There's also a small pilot plant which is yet to be re-commissioned, but will allow Stuart to experiment with new beers; look out for a couple in the autumn.

Stuart's background is in pharmaceutical laboratories (although he has also been a tree surgeon!), and therefore he's well qualified in the technological stuff; they have their own yeast strain and Stuart has a small lab where he can check it out.

Emma acts as assistant brewer, drayman, record keeper, voice of reason and general dogsbody - her words not mine! The beer is available in bottles (the bottling is also done on site) as well as in casks and for take away. There's a Members' Club with lots of discounts, especially locally, and the bar can be hired for events.

A very pleasant afternoon was spent at the brewery sampling the beers — and enjoying a most interesting range of crisps! Thanks to Emma and Stuart for telling us about the challenges they have faced and we wish them all success for the future. Howard Town beers can be found across the Manchester area, so look out for them on the bar near you.

Branch trips are also open to non-members subject to space, so please keep an eye out in Opening Times, on the website or follow us on Twitter @SSMCAMRA for future events.



Pub of the Month

The Bakers Vaults, Stockport



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April is the Bakers Vaults on Stockport's Market Place. Brendon Hall reports.

In the seven months since its re-opened, the Baker's Vaults has become quite a fixture on the Stockport real ale scene. The pub has gone from strength to strength, bringing drinkers and life back to one of Stockport's most picturesque areas, the old Market Place. Under the guidance of Robinsons Brewery the pub underwent a huge transformation to make it much brighter and more welcoming (a little known fact is that the bar is made up of doors salvaged from the recently closed Stockport pub institution, the Tiviot). The transformation appears to have worked; the pub is generally bustling with drinkers most nights of the week, no mean feat in Stockport on a wet Tuesday in January!

With a nod to its heritage the Baker's has placed a large emphasis on hosting live music, with dedicated Blues nights on Tuesday evenings and Soul/Jazz afternoons each Sunday. What better way to spend a Sunday than with a pint, some live music and a snack from the pub's own range of gourmet hotdogs?

The beer selection doesn't disappoint – unusually for a Robinson's pub there are four hand-pumps for guest ales, supplied by Stoke-on-Trent's Titanic Brewery. Cider drinkers are catered for too, with Weston's Old Rosie on permanently. It's rare indeed to see Robbies beers and guests co-existing together, a feat only seen elsewhere at the Castle Hotel on Oldham Street in Manchester (it isn't a coincidence that both are run by the same owners). Quality of beer is also good, the pub having recently received a Cask Marque accreditation.

Looking at the bigger picture, the new-look Baker's Vaults has brought life back to Stockport Market Place. Anything that attracts both regular pub-goers and newer younger drinkers back into the heart of their town for a night out must be a good thing. It is hoped that the rise in the number of drinkers will spread to other pubs in the local area and give Stockport Town Centre the kick-start it has long needed. Join us when we present the award on the evening of Thursday 23rd April.



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 140 years. Check out their advert on this page.

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1998

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2002

Nappy



2002

Wobbly Bob



2004

Wobbly Bob

Academy IPA



Many fans of live music have long had to suffer mass produced national lagers if they wanted a beer while watching their favourite bands at venues like Manchester Arena and Apollo.

Now they can look forward to something more flavoursome to accompany the tunes as Manchester University Students Union has teamed up with Bury's Brightside Brewery to launch its very own beer.

Academy IPA is a mid-weight, modern IPA which is brewed from a blend of four fruity American hops. It is available on cask, keg and in bottle conditioned form and the really good news is that it is available now in all four of the Student Union's Academy music venues as well

as the Students Union Bar on the ground floor of its Oxford Road building.

The Students Union Bar will be selling the cask conditioned version as a permanent real ale in the recently refurbished bar. The bar is open to the general public from 11 to midnight on Sunday to Thursday and noon until 1am on Friday and Saturday.

Academy 2, Academy 3 and Club Academy (all of which share the Students Union building) will offer the bottle conditioned version. The main Academy One venue also has the beer in keg form - filtered but unpasteurised - as well as bottles. The launch of the beer coincides with the 25th anniversary of The Academy which opened its doors with a concert by Manchester legends The Buzzcocks way back in October 1989.

Opening Times was invited to the beer's launch at the Student Union in February where brewery Sales and Marketing Director Carley Friedrich told us that they had been planning the 4.5% beer for over a year. The Academy has been patiently waiting for the family-run brewery's new 18 barrel plant to come on line before it could come to fruition although it has been selling bottle conditioned Brightside beers in the Academy venues for several months.

Carley told us that after initial experiments with New World hops, they finally set on a combination of four American varieties - Cascade, Columbus, Citra and Comet. The result is a beer which is hoppy but quite bitter in the backtaste, along with the trademark grapefruit characteristics of the Cascade hops. The Academy certainly has plans for this beer with it being heavily marketed throughout the venues - banners, posters, beer mats and bar runners were everywhere on launch night. It is even commissioning a YouTube promotional video.

The Piccadilly Tap



The eagerly-awaited Piccadilly Tap finally opened its doors on Friday 20th March. This was dubbed a "soft opening", which in essence means it wasn't really ready - and indeed given the state of the place when OT passed by early that morning it was a minor miracle that the doors opened to the public at 4.00pm.

As *Opening Times* went to press it was still a work in progress (the toilets had yet to be built and so the facilities were to be found in palatial portaloos out the back). When everything settles down there will be six cask and 21 keg lines and an upstairs room to complement the surprisingly spacious downstairs bar. A full review next month when it's more finished - but we can already say it will be a major addition to the city's beer scene.

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Trafford & Hulme Awards

The Knott regains crown as Pub of the Year

Trafford & Hulme CAMRA has revealed the winners in its annual pub and club awards.

The top accolade of Pub of the Year has been awarded to the **Knott** on Deansgate, Manchester. Nestled in the railway arches opposite Deansgate railway station, this is the third time the Castlefield bar has taken the title, having won it in both 2009 and 2010 - the latter leading to it being named Greater Manchester Pub of the Year in 2010.



The Knott has been a haven for beer fans in the city centre for over 10 years, leading the way for what has become known as the "Craft Beer Revolution". With a selection of seven cask ales, a wide range of European lagers, craft beers from the UK and abroad and an enviable selection of bottles from around the world, there is perhaps no better place in Manchester for the modern beer lover. The bar supports a wide range of local breweries with long-established favourites like Marble Beers and Rochdale's Pictish Brewery sharing bar space with some of the most exciting new breweries like Shindigger and Brewsmith. Add a warm welcome, efficient service and freshly cooked restaurant quality food at pub prices and you will see the bar offers the complete package.



Pipped to the post to end up as runner up was Altrincham's **Costello's Bar** - the brewery tap of Dunham Massey Brewing Co - itself a former winner having taken the title in 2011 and 2012 (pictured above - interior of Costello's). Chorlton's **Beech Inn** was third.

John O'Donnell, spokesman for Trafford & Hulme CAMRA said "We congratulate the Knott on regaining the Pub of the Year title. It has long been one of the very best pubs across the area and has been in the running for the award year on year. Ahead of its time when it opened, the Knott has kept moving as the city's beer market has evolved, offering craft beers long before others caught on, but all on the solid foundations of well-kept real ale."

Club of the Year



Alongside the Pub of the Year announcement, the branch has also confirmed its Club of the Year award has gone to **Flixton Conservative Club** (pictured above) for the third year in a row. The private members' club on Flixton Road has cemented a considerable reputation for the choice and quality of its real ales under the stewardship of Nigel and Sharon Porter, a feature which has helped the club grow its membership and customer base at a time when other clubs are struggling.

Cider Pub of the Year



Finally, the Cider Pub of the Year is the **Font** on Manchester Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, recognised for offering four traditional ciders and perries on draught at all times alongside the widest range of bottled ciders that you will find anywhere in the city. The award marks the third time in a row that the Font chain has taken this title, with their Manchester bar winning it in 2013 before conceding to their younger Chorlton-based sister bar for 2014.

Spring Pub of the Season



The Trafford & Hulme Pub of the Season for Spring 2015 is The Sedge Lynn, Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

While possibly not having the trendy appeal of some of Chorlton's other bars, the Sedge Lynn sits quietly on Manchester Road selling vast quantities of quality real ales day in day out. Its 12 handpumps will typically feature eight different real ales alongside two traditional ciders and have seen it become one of J D Wetherspoon's top-selling real ale outlets, easily selling more than most of its competition.

Current manager Kirstin Downham took over 18 months ago, having moved from the Kingfisher in Poynton. Readers may also remember her from Didsbury's Milson Rhodes where she was the original manager in 2010. Since moving to Chorlton, Kirstin has continued the good work of her predecessor Leanne Kempthorne who boosted real ale sales at the pub by increasing choice and quality, taking it into the Good Beer Guide in the process. In September last year, the pub was named the North West regional winner for real ale in Wetherspoon's annual awards.

The pub has a loyal set of regulars who keep it busy day and night. During the week the majority of the customers come from the retired community and the way the staff at the pub treat their regulars like extended family is one of the many aspects that make the Sedge Lynn a class above your average Wetherspoon.

The Pub of the Season award is presented for a number of reasons including introducing real ale to new areas, significant increases in real ale sales or exceptional support to CAMRA. In the case of the Sedge Lynn the award represents recognition of the most basic criterion - ongoing excellence in the quality of real ales (and ciders). The presentation will take place on Thursday 16th April from 8pm. All are welcome to come along and help them celebrate.

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Mild Magic in Whaley Bridge

Five pubs in the Whaley Bridge area have registered for Mild Magic passport trail in 2015. Together they will provide participants with a good trip out. These southernmost pubs on the trail are well worth a visit in their own right, with a range of good beers and welcoming hospitality. To avoid wasted journeys some information about opening / closing hours may be helpful.

☺ **Shepherds, Whaley Bridge:** 3.00pm till late Monday to Friday; 2.00pm till late Saturday and Sunday.

☺ **Goyt Inn, Whaley Bridge:** 4.30pm till late Monday to Friday; 2.00pm till late Saturday and Sunday.

☺ **Drum & Monkey, Horwich End, Whaley Bridge:** 4.00pm till late Monday to Friday; 12.00 till late Saturday and Sunday.

☺ **Soldier Dick, Furness Vale:** 12.00 till late daily.

☺ **Old Hall, Whitehough, Chinley:** 12.00 till late daily.

These times could of course vary.

None of the pubs is new to mild Magic. Some of the five will be new to some people, and all of them will look forward to seeing new faces, and returning ones.



Getting there

Bus: 199 from Stockport stops at Furness Vale, Whaley Bridge Station and Horwich End, Whaley Bridge. It's a half hourly service during the day, but hourly in the evening, on Sunday and on Holiday Monday. The Trans Peak (TP) stops at Furness Vale, every two or three hours until soon after tea. The 61 links Whaley Bridge with Glossop, Hayfield, New Mills and Buxton hourly during the daytime, every day. The 190 links Whaley with Chinley, roughly every two hours until teatime, Monday to Saturday (not Bank Holiday Monday).

Trains: Manchester- Buxton service, Northern Table 20. Hourly through the day all week, to Furness Vale and Whaley Bridge, half hourly in the evening rush hour. Trains to Chinley, Northern Table 23. Hourly on Saturday, less frequently in the week and on Sundays, but there are more trains in the rush hour. The odd Sheffield express from Manchester and Stockport stops at Chinley during the evening rush hour. The Old Hall is a 30-40 minute walk along the Peak Forest Tramway and Peak Forest Canal from Whaley Bridge or Furness Vale, via Buxworth, and a 10 minute walk from Chinley Station.



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Mild Magic 2015

Visit Pubs, Drink Beer, Win Prizes

According to the media mild is a dying beer style, and with the axing of Robinsons 1892 this might be seen as another straw in the wind. We beg to differ.

Despite the enforced absence of the usual clutch of Robinsons' pubs this year, we have still signed up 92 pubs to take part. Not only that, but this year will see a greater variety of milds than ever before. In fact, to (mis) quote Coleridge, here in the North West it is "Mild, mild everywhere and plenty of it to drink"!

So what are we asking you to do?

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

Which pubs should I go in? If you fill a card with stickers from 12 different pubs you will have completed **Mild Magic** which entitles you to free entry to, or (for CAMRA members) a pint of mild at the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2015. After that there's a change from last time...

Points mean prizes

Each pub has an associated number of points which are shown to the left of its address on the card.

Collect a total of 24 points from 12 different pubs and you will have completed **Mild Magic Extra**. This will win you one ticket to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival or (for CAMRA members a pint of mild at the festival) plus a Mild Magic t-shirt.

Mild Magic Super is a little more challenging — get stickers from 24 pubs with a total of at least 48 points and you receive an eye-catching 'Mild Magic' polo shirt plus two festival tickets (or two free pints of mild if you are a CAMRA member).

Now the stakes are rising. **Mild Magic Ultra** requires stickers from 48 pubs with a total of at least 100 points. For this you receive a special-edition Mild Magic sweatshirt and four Festival entry tickets/pints.

How long do I have to complete all this? Mild Magic runs from Friday 10th April to Sunday 17th May inclusive. To get you off to a flying start why not join us on Friday 10th April for a **Metrolink Mild Night**. We start at the Gateway, East Didsbury at 7.30pm. After that it's a tram to Didsbury Village for the Dog & Partridge and West Didsbury for Wine & Wallop which will be the 8.30 meeting point. Next stop will be Burton Road for the Railway and then straight through to Chorlton for the Sedge Lynn. After that the itinerary is more flexible as we get a tram into the City Centre, but expect at least one pub in the Northern Quarter, and the finishing point will be the Bulls Head on London Road.

What do I do when I have finished Mild Magic? Simply send your card(s) to the organiser (details on card) no later than 21st May and your tickets (entry or beer) will be sent out by return post. All participants returning a card will be included in a draw to be "Brewer for the Day" at Track Brewing, a local Manchester brewery.



The other prizes will be distributed on Sunday 21st June at the Magnet, Wellington Road North, Stockport between 4.00pm and 7.00pm.

To add even more interest, everyone participating is invited to vote for two pubs – one where you enjoyed the best pint of mild and one which you think had the best mild promotion. The two winning pubs will then be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award and all participants are invited to attend these award evenings.

Such is the success of Mild Magic that this year Hydes Brewery has agreed to be our sponsor. Our grateful thanks to them! Hydes produce not one but two milds. Owd Oak is a tasty dark beer while 1863 may be marketed as a low gravity bitter these days but it started like as Best Mild. Both are tasty low strength beers that are well worth seeking out.



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

The Mild Magic Pubs

ALL SAINTS Sand Bar; **ALTRINCHAM** Costello's Bar, Jack in the Box, Orange Tree, Unicorn; **ASHTON-U-LYNE** Ash Tree; **BRAMHALL** Ladybrook; **BROADBOTTOM** Harewood Arms; **BROADHEATH** Old Packet House; **CHEADLE** Crown, White Hart; **CHEADLE HULME** Kenilworth, Kings Hall; **CHORLTON** Beech, Parlour, Sedge Lynn; **CLAYTON** Strawberry Duck; **DENTON** Lowes Arms; **DIDSBURY** Dog & Partridge, Gateway, Milson Rhodes, Parrswood, Ye Olde Cock; **DIDSBURY (WEST)** Railway, Wine & Wallop; **DUKINFIELD** Angel Ale House; **FALLOWFIELD** Friendship, Great Central; **FLIXTON** Flixton Conservative Club; **FURNESS VALE** Soldier Dick; **HAZEL GROVE** Fiveways, George & Dragon, Wilfred Wood; **HEATON MOOR** Crown; **HIGH LANE** Royal Oak; **HYDE** Cheshire Ring, Cotton Bale, Queens, Sportsman; **LEVENSHULME** Fred's Ale House; **MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE** Bulls Head, Grey Horse, Molly House, Old Monkey, Paramount, Castle Hotel, Crown & Anchor (Cateaton Street), Crown & Kettle, Marble Arch, Micro Bar, Smithfield, Ape & Apple, City Arms, Knott Bar, Moon Under Water, Rising Sun, Waterhouse; **NEW MILLS** **NEWTOWN** Chalkers Snooker Club; **OLD TRAFFORD** Bishop Blaize; **POYNTON** Cask Tavern, Kingfisher; **RUSHOLME** Ford Madox Brown; **SALE** JP Joule, Volunteer; **SALE WEST** Plough; **SALFORD** New Oxford; **STALYBRIDGE** Society Rooms, Stalybridge Labour Club, Station Buffet Bar, White House; **STOCKPORT (CENTRAL)** Bakers Vaults, Calverts Court, Live Stockport; **STOCKPORT (EAST)** Midway, Railway (Portwood); **STOCKPORT (NORTH)** Hope, Magnet, Midland, Nursery; **STOCKPORT (SOUTH)** Fairway, Spinning Top; **STOCKPORT (WEST)** Crown (Heaton Lane), George; **TIMPERLEY** Timperley Taverners Club; **WHALEY BRIDGE** Drum & Monkey, Goyt Inn, Shepherds Arms; **WHITEHOUGH (CHINLEY)** Old Hall; **WILMSLOW** Bollin Fee, Coach & Four; **WITHINGTON** Red Lion, Victoria.

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What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region

Cloudwater Launch

Social Media was buzzing in the days leading up to the launch of Manchester's Cloudwater Brew Co. in mid-March. Did it live up to expectations? Oh yes.

The brewery is one of the largest start-ups in recent years (and indeed perhaps *the* largest) with a 15 barrel plant supplemented by a huge fermenting and conditioning capacity. As co-founder Paul Jones explained this will enable all the beers to get the conditioning they need before being released (lagers, for example, will get a decent two-month conditioning).

On opening night Paul, together with co-founder and head brewer James Campbell, treated us to a brief technical tour of the three-vessel brewery, a masterpiece in stainless steel imported from the United States, (readers will know from his years at Manchester's Marble Brewery). All present were deeply impressed by the scale of the operation and by what is planned. Even the bottling machine is top of the range and able to process 2,000 bottles per hour, although that scale of operation is likely to be some way off.



Of course any brewery stands or falls on the quality of its beers. The brewing team has an impressive pedigree – in addition to Paul and James, there is Will France, original manager of Port Street Beer House who gained his brewing experience at the acclaimed Summer Wine Brewery, and Al Wall, who seems to have worked in every good bar in Manchester and who is an exceptionally keen home brewer – so they should be off to a flying start.

So, what are the beers like? The plan is to have no core range but instead produce a range of seasonal beers (and indeed the brewery logo will change subtly with the seasons and the spring version is shown here, left). The Spring range features fresh harvest American hops for aroma, British and European noble hops for bittering and the addition of seasonal Southern European citrus fruits. The range of beer styles is both traditional and very modern.

Eight beers were presented on launch night at Manchester's Port Street Beer House. These ranged from Pennine Light (3.6%), a traditional light Yorkshire mild with appealing biscuity malt balanced by traditional hop bitterness, to an IPA (7%) loaded with American hops and an Imperial Stout (9%) which was rich and robust. This latter was something of a limited edition with the rest due for barrel ageing and a winter release. In between were a Session IPA (4.8%), perhaps a little too green in the cask but getting smiles of approval in keg, and an excellent Pale Ale (4.1%) which drank easily with a moreish robust bitter finish.

More modern beer styles were represented by a Bergamot Hopfen Weisse (6%), a cloudy and hoppy wheat beer loosely in the German style but freshened up with bergamot lemons. This is available in keg and bottle only, and was an immediate winner. Also successful was the Table Beer (4.2%), a light saison-style farmhouse ale enlivened by the addition of lemons and juniper berries. The only slight mis-fire on the night was a Citrus Gose, a take on an old German beer style characterised by a lactic sharpness which was missing here.



By the time you read this Cloudwater will have opened a tap at its brewery in Piccadilly Trading Estate (just off Great Ancoats Street and an easy walk from Piccadilly Station). This will be open from 11.00am to 4.00pm every Saturday and will offer everything "from one off pilot batches and special treatments to the freshest beer served straight from tank". It doesn't end there though. The fifth key member of the team is Emma Cole, who has joined Cloudwater from BrewDog. Ultimately Emma will be running the Barrel Store, based in a railway arch on Sheffield Street, just behind Piccadilly Station. This is where Cloudwater will barrel-age a variety of beers (that imperial stout is already there) and also experiment with wild yeasts. There will be a tap room there, too, and this will feature aged and "wild" beers, along with wines, cheeses and meats that share the same "wild or aged" ethos.

It has to be said that some people have looked askance at what they have seen as an over-hyping of Cloudwater. The proof of the pudding will be in the (err) drinking and on the evidence of what *Opening Times* has tried so far any hype, if hype it was, would be fully justified. This is a significant operation which looks set to gain a national reputation and help cement the region's status, and history, as a centre of quality brewing.



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Beer Festival Bands

Anthony Meynell previews what's on

Thursday Night

Lazlo Baby plus special guests The Flat Cap 3

Hailing from Eastern Stockport, Lazlo Baby bring you Balkan folksy ska with high octane exuberance. Whilst dabbling in the delights that klezmer, gypsy and traditional Irish music have to offer, Lazlo Baby stitch together stomping melodies with their own original songs to entertain and energise audiences from folksters to punksters.

Friday Night

Rook and the Ravens

Harmony-led indie rock band from the High Peak.

"Young, bold and unfathomably talented" (High Voltage)

"Articulate, edgy, blistering and self-assured" (BBC)

"Rook and The Ravens impress with versatility reminiscent of The Byrds and Traffic" (The Independent)

Saturday Lunchtime (12.30pm)

Leaf Promotions' The Sap Tap, featuring Matt Fryers, Glass Tides, Ook and the Elephant

Since Leaf Promotions' first-ever event on December 1st 2005, they have developed a reputation for fusing together the finest original musical talent from across all genres to create truly memorable gigs. Leaf continues to strive to provide a platform for new bands and artists to get the attention they deserve, with a policy of giving opportunities to bands and artists based on pure ability- not just how many people they can drag to a gig.

Saturday Teatime (4pm)

Intrepid Duo



Intrepid Duo consists of two originally solo artists, Darren Smith and Jacob Orchard, both acoustic guitarists and fantastic vocalists. They met a few years back doing some work for a charity called Mothers Against Violence, and became good friends. They crossed paths over the next few years and eventually moved to the same town and Darren invited Jacob

to come along and play at one of his gigs. The feedback from this was such that they decided to jam together and realising how well they worked together they decided to book in some concerts as a duo. They are now playing all over Manchester, Tameside and Cheshire and can be seen strumming their acoustic guitars to many varied genres and eras of fantastic music. They're always sure to add their own spin on the covers that they play.

Saturday night (8pm)

Asparagus and the Kilburn Habit

Once upon a time, men were real men - and music was real music. In this day and age, where young folk don't respect their elders and it seems to be acceptable to go to Sunday lunch without wearing a shirt and tie, Asparagus & The Kilburn Habit bring you some good old-fashioned entertainment and remind you how of how things used to be...

Transported directly from the 1950's, these four brave men and a wise sailfish from Manchester Village bring some light relief to a world run by gigabytes and mobile telephones with blue teeth. Fuelled by hearty food and real ale, they aim to bring joy, entertainment and song into your rubbish modern lives.

The Ale Stop

Buxton's New Micro-pub



If you are a fan of well-kept, unusual and interesting cask beers at sensible prices (craft beer outlets take note), then you should check out Buxton's own micro pub, writes *Alastair Walker*.

Housed in a former off-licence shop, it's tucked away in a corner of the Market Place, next to the Methodist church. The town's bus terminus is virtually outside the front door, or it can be reached by a brisk 10-minute walk from the railway station. An unassuming façade leads to a basic but very pleasant interior, with newly-installed bare wood flooring complementing the cheerful red

walls of the open bar area to the left and the more subdued tones of the small tabled area to the right. Top marks also for the disabled facilities in the single toilet cubicle.

The proprietor, Dan Hawtin, has considerable experience in the drinks industry and apart from providing a warm welcome, likes to talk enthusiastically about his range of cask beers. An impressive display of pump clips on the wall reveals a wide range of previous offerings from the likes of Vibrant Forest, Nutbrook, Siren and Celt Experience breweries, amongst others. On my recent visit, the three handpumps were dispensing Accent Compensation (4.1%) from Abbeydale/Dr Morton, Dragonfly (4.8%) from Fallen Brewery and my personal favourite, the powerfully-hopped Elisir (5.2%) from the team at Clouded Minds. This last beer is darkish, very bitter and packed full of Centennial, Simcoe, Chinook and Cascade hops. There are also a couple of pins of draught cider: on this occasion, JJ's Lighter Cider of Life (4.4%) and Sandford Orchard's Vintage (7%).

As well as all this, Dan somehow manages to pack a record deck and two racks of LPs behind the small bar area. The eclectic music selection (which includes the likes of Roxy Music, Johnny Cash, The Beatles and various Latin American-style combos) is kept at a sensible volume that adds to the background ambience.

Since opening last August, no beer has been featured twice and Dan is hoping to maintain this policy for as long as possible. The pub is normally open from lunch time until 10pm (closed Mondays), although this can be extended during special events such as live music sessions. The inaugural beer festival is being planned to coincide with the Buxton Spring Fair on Monday 4th May. Highly recommended.



The 2nd Withington Beer Festival

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Meet the Brewer



Oliver Turton of Squawk Brewing Co.



This month Brendon Hall meets Oliver Turton of Ardwick's Squawk Brewing Co.

What initially got you into brewing your own beer?

The first time I brewed beer was when I was fourteen. I had saved up my paper round for a very basic 'add hot water' kit from Boots. I got away with the first brew in my bedroom but unsurprisingly I was rumbled by the events that followed!

The next brew was in my mid-twenties. In hindsight it's got me in more trouble than the first time. I was working with one of the people that had also been in trouble from my school-day brewing. He has a restaurant called Mezza in Holmfirth now. We were shut on Mondays so we used to take the massive 100 litre pans home and home-brew on my stove. Disaster and success followed in equal measures but most of all a good way to spend our day off.

This gave me the bug and I started to volunteer at Hand Drawn Monkey brewery in Huddersfield, where I soaked up as much information as I could over a year. Then I was ready to make the leap to start my own outfit.

You're famous for using unusual ingredients in your beers - espresso in a stout being one example. Do you actively set out to try new flavour combinations or stick to traditional recipes?

That's the aim yes. Now the brewery is dialled in and the lumps and bumps have been ironed out we plan to experiment. One of the things I like most about brewing is the control you have with the ingredients. You can experiment so much with things like times and temperatures that you can end up with very different results from the same recipe brewed over and over.

How you manipulate the brew day and fermentation changes things like mouth feel thick or thin, sweetness and dryness, flavour and aroma, and bitterness to name a few. I'm constantly manipulating these factors and learning about the relationship that exists between them. If you want dryness you sacrifice sweetness for example. Look out for some odd and interesting Greek-inspired ingredients from back when I was a chef.

From your experience in the industry, do you have any tips for anyone thinking of starting up their own brewery?

I get asked this quite often. I say try and volunteer at a brewery you like. It's hard graft and it can be dangerous too. Only this week a fellow brewer had a pallet of kegs fall on him and break his leg!

What I would say is that the brewing community is a welcoming one. One of the best things about the industry is how friendly it is. In Manchester we all bounce off each other and share information. So don't be afraid to approach other brewers and ask questions. There is a lot to learn and the best place to learn is on the job.

Any sneak peeks at what Squawk will be brewing in 2015?

We're looking to do more collaborations this year. We are currently lining two up with the new Alphabet and Track breweries. We are also in talks to hold a multi-brewery event in the next few months which will include a collaboration brew with a big group of Manchester breweries. It's all getting very exciting in the Manchester beer scene.

Where do you see Squawk in five years time... - bigger premises, brewtap maybe?

Squawk in five years. I'm not looking to take over the world or anything like that. It would be nice to add a few more tanks and ramp up production. A brew tap has always been on the cards so watch this space.

Finally, when you aren't drinking your own beer... can you recommend one local, one national and one international beer or brewery that blew your socks off in 2014?

OK that's a hard one. How to narrow it down? Birra Toccalmatto Brewery in Italy are amazing. Bexar County Brewery of Peterborough is knocking out some great beer. I really enjoyed the collaboration they did with Hand Drawn Monkey called Schwarzwald Kirschtorte (brown ale loaded with Maraschino cherries and forest fruits!) and only 3.6% ABV. Then the local one has got to be A To The K from Alphabet Brewing Co. An oatmeal Pale 5.6%. It's well nice.

Letter to the Editor

From Colin Marshall, Godalming:

Thank you for the latest issue and the note regarding renewal. I should like to carry on and enclose a cheque for £11.00 for another 12 issues. Since my last renewal I was part of a group who visited one on the Craft Beer Co. pubs on Covent Garden. As a major birthday was being celebrated (not mine) we tried all the beers on handpump, one of which was £12 a pint. So, getting 12 issues of your magazine for less than the cost of a pint is excellent value. The craft beers were up to £18 a pint! The cheapest on handpump was £4.20. Reading the Staggers I imagine you do not come across many pints at those prices.

(We aim to please, Colin. Incidentally, this letter was passed to me at a CAMRA meeting being held at the Blue Bell in Levenshulme where the beer was just £1.80 a pint. Ed.)

Bus to the Pub 2015

This year's Bus to the Pub will take place on Saturday 23 May so get that date in your diaries. Full details will appear in next month's *Opening Times* but this time around the journey will be anti-clockwise around the route. Two new venues taking part this year should be the award winning Stretford Sip Club and the brand new Fred's Ale House in Levenshulme. The city centre focal point will be Stevenson Square, thereby avoiding some of the congestion on Great Ancoats Street. Last year's event was a great success with all those taking part saying how enjoyable and different it was. So make sure you hop on board this time around.



Pennine



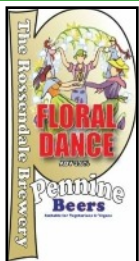
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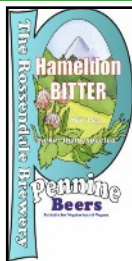
Contacts - Office: 0333 210 4021; Geoff: 07816 912 794; Robin: 07709 874 783

Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes



Floral Dance
3.8%

A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!



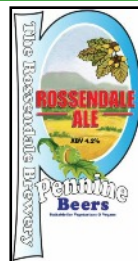
Hameldon Bitter
3.8%

An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.



Glen Top Bitter
4.0%

A citrusy, full bodied pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.



Rossendale Ale
4.2%

A malty aroma leads to a complex, malt dominated flavour, supported by a dry, increasingly bitter finish.



Halo Pale
4.5%

A citrusy, pale ale brewed with Cascade aroma hops, finishing with a slightly bitter aftertaste.



Pitch Porter 5%

A full bodied rich beer with a slightly sweet, malty start, counter-balanced with sharp bitterness and obvious roast barley dominance.



Sunshine
5.3%

A hoppy and bitter golden beer with a citrus character. The lingering finish is dry and spicy

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 BB4 5AF (Brewery Tap) - 01706 21 40 21
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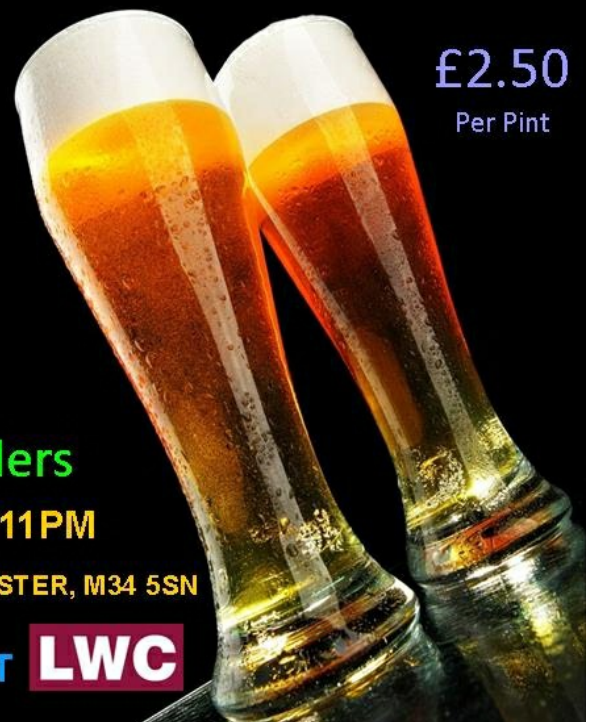
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High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

As we are reminded regularly in the national press, the business of running a pub continues to be a parlous task, with many falling by the wayside as pubs continue to close in large numbers.

Various strategies are tried to make a pub viable. These aim to cut costs and/or increase business. In many cases the pub does not provide an income for a couple, never mind for a family with children, and often one of the partnership has another job, the income from which tops up the earnings from the pub.

A frequent way to cut costs is to reduce opening hours. This is often used in wet-led pubs in suburbs and isolated villages. Teatime opening is quite common and does make sense. Some pubs even have a closed day, often Monday. In early March the **Shady Oak** at Fernilee was reported to be closed on Monday and Tuesday. There does need to be footfall to justify heating and lighting costs – thought it can be argued that if the door is closed then nobody can enter anyway.

A favourite strategy to encourage custom is to go down the food road. If food trade can be built up then the pub's income can be enhanced.

Happy hours are still used to bring in custom, but do the drinkers leave at the end of cheaper drinks time?



There is also a case for initiatives being original. There is no point copying the pub down the road. About eight years ago there were four Punch pubs in Whaley Bridge. The Punch beer list was not so interesting or extensive in those days, but it seems odd that all four pubs sold Black Sheep Bitter. Since then licensees have moved on, and we are now down to three pubs. However the current managements at the **Goat**, **White Hart** and **White Horse** provide a much more interesting range of beer, with little or no

overlap. Now that seems to be a good way to bring in customers.

The **White Hart** is also one of those to add food to its portfolio. There will be food all day on Saturday, with breakfast from 12.30 to 4.00. Sunday lunch will be served. Coffee and snacks will be available in the week. Beers to accompany food include Banks's Tetley White Hart Bitter, Moorhouse's Blond Witch and two other changing beers.

The **Duke** (formerly the Duke of York) at Burbage, Buxton is good for a sensibly priced meal. A recent visit also found some decent beer for accompaniment. Taylor's Landlord, Thwaites Wainwright and Banks's Tetley Bitter were available. The Duke is worth a call.



The most recent Marston's beer festival, during which they allow their licensees a wider choice from a list of about a dozen different beers from regional and local breweries, finished in February. Oakham Inferno was the last of the festival beers available at the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge. This is a fine beer to find on the bar, and hopefully is one which might return in a future Marston's festival.

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

It is understood that Thwaites Brewery is offering those pubs with a reasonable turnover in cask beers the opportunity to offer other breweries' products. Locally the **Church Inn** on Stockport Road, Mossley, has had Flipside Brewery Golden Sovereign and Leeds Pale Ale on sale recently.

Tweed Brewing has opened a brewery tap at the brewery in the Newton Business Park at the top of Talbot Road in Newton, Hyde. Check Twitter or Facebook for weekend opening hours. Also they are reported to have new beers coming soon.

Two of our local pubs have been sold recently. The **White Hart** in Mottram went to

Attending a meeting at **New Mills Golf Club** was made enjoyable as Robinson's Dizzy Blonde was available to members and guests alike. This was a pleasant change from a Christmas meal at Chapel-en-le-Frith golf club where only keg beers were served. (No need for discussion about who drove home from there then.) Of course as previously reported some of our other clubs are good for a decent pint of real ale. **Furness Vale Club** usually serves a beer from Thwaites. **Buxworth War Memorial Club** always has one real ale available and on special event weekends this can often be extended to a choice of three beers.



The **Old Hall**, at Whitehough near Chinley, is always good for a range of well kept beers. The recent winter beer and cider festival added to this reputation with beers available from a wide geographical area. You can't do justice to eighty beers in a weekend but all that I tried in a couple of sessions were on good form. Many beers came from brew pubs and micro breweries. There were old favourites and many new brews to try. I enjoyed Sensibull from the Pied Bull in Chester. Two pale beers from Welsh breweries caught the palate – look out for Kia Kaha from Cwrw Lal and Pamplemousse from Waen Brewery. Being a winter festival there were many darker offerings. Cryptic Codebreaker from Stockport, Running Stout from the Firebrand Brewery and Thornbridge St Petersburg Stout were my choices. Look out for the next festival at the Old Hall in September.

residential use and the **Oddfellows** in Ashton was sold at auction subject to restrictions. Also in Ashton, a planning application to demolish the closed **March Hare** has been submitted to Tameside Council.

In Stalybridge the **Old 13th Cheshire Astley Volunteer Rifleman Corps Inn** has recently reopened with a new licensee and features two guest beers from local breweries. Regular live music also remains a feature here. Another pub recently reopened, this time after the completion of refurbishments, is the **Friendship** in Glossop.

Two of the pubs in Hadfield are now in the process of being refurbished. These are the **Palatine** (Robinsons) and the **Chieftain** (Hydes).



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Stagger

Hazel Grove to Great Moor with Paul Felton

The top of Hazel Grove to Bramhall Lane is a stagger dominated by Robinsons pubs (six out the eight) – and this night was perhaps a last chance for aficionados to drink the soon-to-be-discontinued Mild/Hatters/1892. The rain that was forecast held off, and it wasn't too cold, so it was a reasonable February evening for a pub crawl up the A6.



Our first pub and our first Robinsons house, the **Anchor** is at the north end of Hazel Grove. It was once one of three Robbies pubs in a very small area; but the Woodman next door has long been closed, while the Grove opposite is little more than an empty space. It's essentially a one-room pub: the bar is immediately ahead of you when you enter, with seating areas off to the left and right, divided by examples of the once-fashionable but unlamented Robinsons arch. There are a number of sailing pictures on the walls, in line with the pub's name. The service was very slow, although it should be mentioned that our beer was topped up without the need to ask. Two beers were available, 1892 and Unicorn; the latter was okay, the 1892 rather better.

Next was Greene King's **George & Dragon**, which occupies a long, low mock-Tudor frontage along the main road. Fairly smart in its decor and furnishings, it styles itself as a "pub and flame grill" (!), and it was quite food-oriented. Most of the interior walls are long gone, but it still has several distinct areas, a couple of them raised a few steps above ground level; and there are various high tables, some with perches rather than seats, some without for vertical drinking. There are several TVs, but thankfully not in all areas. Five beers were available: four from Greene King – the rather rare XX Mild, IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Abbot Ale – and Skinners Splendid Tackle from Cornwall. Most of us went for the XX Mild, if only for its scarcity value: but sadly it wasn't particularly good; the Skinners was a little better.

The **Crown**, still on the west side of the A6, brought us back to Robinsons. It has a very impressive three-gabled frontage – it's worth risking your life to cross the road just to have a better look. The high-ceilinged interior has a

room on either side of the front door, plus another at the back of the bar. There's an attractive high-backed wooden screen with seating, which partitions off the doorway to the (nicely tiled) gents, and an impressive set of stairs leading up to the first floor. Four beers were available: 1892, Unicorn, Trooper and the seasonal Voodoo Dawn. All were pretty decent, with the Unicorn just taking the honours.



The **Travellers Call** offered more Robinsons, though for variety we had to cross to the east side of the A6. It's a small, white-washed, very attractive building: best approached from the south, to view the splendid sign which takes up the whole of the side wall on Cherry Tree Lane. Inside, there are two rooms at the front, and another at the back behind the bar area. The obviously noticeable feature is the remarkable array of nautical memorabilia – ships' bells, lifebelts, portholes, divers' helmets, propellers – covering every wall; and there's an aquarium in the front right snug. Elsewhere, this all might be a little excessive, but it's far too interesting for that. Only one beer was available, Unicorn: it was quite good. This is such a singular, characterful place that it's worth a visit even if you're not a Robinsons fan.



Then it was back across the road to the **Dog & Partridge** for (what? no!) more Robinsons. There's a lot of exposed wood here – bare floorboards everywhere and a lot of wood panelling. This does give it an "ale-house" feel, but the pale coverings of the wall seating, and chairs with wicker seats, suggest that something "posher" is intended. There's a large bar area, with two separate rooms on the left – a small one for pool at the front and a

larger one at the back. Both these rooms have had window spaces knocked through the internal walls, which made them feel odd, slightly exposed spaces in which to drink. Three beers were available: Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde, both of which very okay; and Double Hop, a beer I've never really taken to before, but which here was really very good – indeed, probably the best beer of the night.

Back on the east side, we bypassed Robinsons' Duke Of York – no real ale, reported our pathfinder – and went on to the **Bamford Arms**. This is a Beefeater with a bar on the ground floor and a restaurant on the first. Given the fact that it's definitely a restaurant with a bar attached, the atmosphere in the bar was perhaps surprisingly convivial and pub-like – there was some background music playing, but more noticeable was the pleasant hum of conversation. Describing the layout and decor is pointless, as numerous posters made it known that the place was closing the following Wednesday for a 10-day refurbishment – there were certainly a few signs of wear. Two beers were on sale, Hobgoblin Gold and Thwaites Wainwright. Both were acceptable, the latter marginally better.



One final crossing of the A6 saw us end up at the **Blossoms**. It's an impressive building on the corner of Bramhall Lane, with some particularly good leaded windows. One of Robinsons' Ale Shrine pubs, it has three rooms, one either side of the front door (a pool table has made a reappearance front right) and a particularly comfortable one at the back left – though I'm not entirely convinced about the tartan carpet and lampshades. Six beers were available: the rare 1892 Dark, Unicorn, Voodoo Dawn, Dizzy Blonde, Trooper and Old Tom. The single person who tried the Dizzy Blonde wasn't overly taken with it, but that was the exception rather than the rule, as all the others were pretty darn good.

Obviously, this is not a crawl for those who don't like Robinsons. There are some fine pubs, though, and while one or two of the beers we tried were a little disappointing, the quality on the whole was pretty good. See for yourself?

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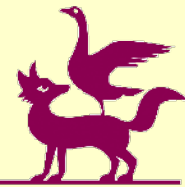
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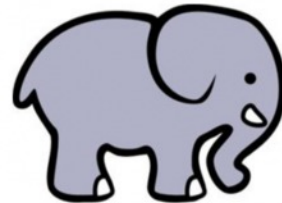
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Heard at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Fred's Ale House



Opening just too late for inclusion in last month's *Opening Times*, Fred's Ale House is a welcome addition to the Levenshulme pub scene. Part of Lawrence Hennigan's local pub empire, Fred's Ale House differs from his other outlets by focussing on cask beer as the main drinks offer. There are usually six available covering staples such as Taylor's Landlord, Sharp's Doombar and Thwaites Wainwright, alongside beers from Hydes, Blackjack and Sheffield-based Bradfield.



Billed as a "Real Ale House, Coffee Shop and Art Gallery", Fred's operates over three levels. In the basement is a white-walled art gallery, the ground floor is the main bar area while upstairs are two further rooms (one occupying the first floor of the neighbouring Union) decorated in warm colours and furnished with comfortable leather sofas (pictured above). There's an outside drinking area at the front with some fine old tiling as a feature, while at the back is a very well appointed smoking shelter, complete with large screen TV.

Coffee comes courtesy of the Ancoats Coffee Company, while for solid fare there is a range of cakes, pastries and hot and cold sandwiches. There's a quiz on Monday nights, a comedy club on Wednesdays and live music as and when. Fred's Ale House opens from 9.00am every day (10.00am Sundays), closing at 11.00pm Monday to Thursday, midnight on Friday and Saturday, and 10.30 on Sundays.

Future plans includes the establishment of a micro-brewery to supply beers not only to Fred's but also other outlets in Lawrence Hennigan's local chain – which would be good news for cask ale choice locally.

Cheadle Hulme

Holt's Cheadle Hulme has now reopened as **Platform 5** and despite fears to the contrary, it still functions very much as a pub. There is certainly a greater emphasis on food, with the rear of the pub predominantly given over to diners, although even here it still feels more like a pub than a restaurant. The former vault has been brought more into the body of the pub and is perhaps the most "pubby" part of the operation, although the darts board and televisions have gone so Platform 5 will no longer pull in the large number of sports fans that used the Cheadle Hulme as their local.



On the beer front there have been up to four Holt's beers available – when OT last called these were Mild, Bitter, Two Hoots and IPA – alongside a guest beer or two. On sale when we were there was Wells Bombardier. The bottled beer range is noteworthy with quite a few beers beyond the "usual suspects" – Sierra Nevada Pale Ale and Porter, Anchor Steam Beer and Porter, Founders All Day IPA, Duvel and, from Germany, Schlenkerla Märzen, Weizen and Lagerbier. Well worth a visit.



Elsewhere in Cheadle Hulme, Liam Ward, the manager of the **Governor's House** has been in touch. He tells us that the pub now has an account with SIBA which means that apart from three Greene King beers, there are three changing guest beers at all times. Liam is looking to drive up cask ale sales at the Governor's House so this sounds like a major step in the right direction.

Also eagerly awaiting is the opening of the **Chiverton Tap** on Mellor Road. Planning permissions have now been obtained so the next step is a license. The application has been submitted and CAMRA has lent its active support – decision day was set for 1st April. More news when we get it.

The Beer Studio



Hydes have turned the Sir Joseph Whitworth in Fallowfield into the **Beer Studio Bar & Kitchen**. "Bringing the great world of beer to Fallowfield" says the website (www.thebeerstudiofallowfield.co.uk) and the beer range has indeed expanded considerably. The Beer Studio is of course also Hydes' more craft focussed sub-brand and two of these beers (Glacier Pale and Dark Odyssey) were on the bar when OT called. Joining these were Hydes Triple Crown and Original plus Greene King London Glory, Nelson Powder Monkey and Purple Moose Calon Lân.

There is also a selection of world draught and bottled beers such as Goose Island IPA, Einstock White Ale, Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, La Chouffe, Erdinger Weißbier and Flying Dog Pale Ale.



The interior now has more of a stripped back look (gone is the garish wallpaper) which helps to highlight the architectural features. The new tiled bar front is indeed impressive and inevitably there is the usual collection of mix and match furniture.

As the name suggests there is also a significant food operation running from sharing flatbreads, charcuterie boards, burgers, ribs and sandwiches. Most of these come with suggested beer pairings which is a nice touch. A visit is highly recommended.

Finally – by the time you read this both **Heaton Hops** (School Lane, Heaton Chapel) and **Bottle Heaton Moor** (Shaw Road) will be open. Full reports next time – along with a long overdue return visit to the one that got there first – the **Beer Shop** in Heaton Mersey.



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