

OPENING TIMES

APRIL 2017 / FREE



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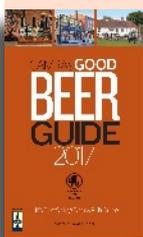
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OPENING TIMES

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch, the Trafford & Hulme Branch, the Central Manchester Branch and the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the Salford Branch and the Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branch. 7,600 copies a month are printed by Oxuniprint Ltd, a division of Oxford University Press and distributed throughout Stockport, Trafford, Manchester and Tameside. There are also many outlets in Macclesfield & East Cheshire, High Peak and Glossop.

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

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

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

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

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – Cheers! Customers enjoying Manchester Beer & Cider Festival at Manchester Central, January 2017.

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What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Events, Information and News

Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

www.ssmcamra.co.uk

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

Salford (SAL)

www.salford.camra.org.uk

Contact: Dave Hampshire; talldave@gmail.com

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

Central Manchester (CMCR)

www.centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Contact: enquiries@centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events

CAMRA Members only

Saturday 8th – Pub of the Year (Cheshire) presentation: Bull's Head, 115 London Road North, Poynton, SK12 1AG. From 1:30pm followed by Poynton Social. (HPNC)

Monday 10th – Branch Meeting: Carters Arms, 209 Stockport Road, Denton, M34 6AQ. Starts 8:00pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 12th – Pub of the Year presentation: Malt Dog, 169 Monton Road, Monton, M30 9GS. From 7:30pm. (SAL)

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting and AGM: Magnet, 51 Wellington Road, North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ. Starts 8:15pm. (SSM)

Friday 14th – Chorlton - Beech Road Social: 8:00pm The Elk, 48 Beech Road, M21 9EG; 9:00pm Lead Station, 99 Beech Road, M21 9EQ; 9:45pm Trevor Arms, 135 Beech Road, M21 9EQ; 10:30pm Beech, 72 Beech Road, M21 9EG. (T&H)

Friday 14th – Mild Magic Challenge starts: See page 15 for full details.

Saturday 15th – Mild Magic City Centre Stagger: 7:30pm Piccadilly Tap, Piccadilly Station Approach; 8:30pm Smithfield Market Tavern, 37 Swan Street, M4 5JZ. (SSM)

Tuesday 18th – City Survey: 6:30pm Old Nags Head, 19 Jacksons Row, M2 5WD; 7:00pm Rising Sun, 22 Queen Street, M2 5HX, plus others. (CMCR)

Wednesday 19th – Branch Meeting: Swinton Catholic Club, 11 Worsley Road, Swinton, M27 5WN. Starts 7:30pm. (SAL)

Thursday 20th – Flixton Social: 8:00pm Church, 34 Church Road, M41 6HS; 9:00pm John Alker Club (Flixton Ex-Servicemen's Association), Flixton Road, Urmston, M41 6QY; 10:00pm Bird I'th Hand, Flixton Road, M41 5DN. (T&H)

Friday 21st – West Didsbury - Burton Road Stagger: 7:30pm George Charles, 244 Burton Road, M20 2LW; 8:30pm Saison, 236 Burton Road, M20 2LW. (SSM)

Saturday 22nd – Pub of the Year Runner-up presentation: Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 22nd – Chapel-en-le-Frith and Whaley Bridge Social: meet 1:30pm at Old Cell Ale Bar, 10 Market Place, Chapel-en-le-Frith, SK23 0EN. (HPNC)

Wednesday 26th – Club of the Year Presentation: Eccles RFC, Gorton Street, Peel Green, M30 7LZ. From 7:30pm. (SAL)

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation: Blue Bell, 170 Barlow Road, Levenshulme, M19 3HF. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Season presentation: Quarry Bank, Bloomsbury Lane, Timperley. Meet at 8:00pm for an 8:30pm presentation. (T&H)

Saturday 29th – Day out to Sowerby Bridge: catch 12:15pm train from Manchester Victoria. (CMCR)

Tuesday 2nd May – Branch Meeting: Castle Hotel, 66 Oldham Street, M4 1LE. Starts 6:00pm. (CMCR)

Wednesday 3rd May – Cider Pub of the Year presentation: New Oxford, 11 Bexley Square, Salford, M3 6DB. (SAL)

Thursday 4th May – Branch Meeting (to be confirmed – check with contact for details). (T&H)

Wednesday 10th May – Meet the Brewer: Elland Brewery, Eccles Cross, 13 Regent Street, Eccles, M30 0BP. Starts 7:30pm. (SAL)

Wednesday 17th May – Branch Meeting & EAGM: Kings Arms, 11 Bloom Street, Salford, M3 6AN. Starts 7:30pm. (SAL)

Social Media

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



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

Trafford & Hulme: www.facebook.com/thcamra

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

Central Manchester:
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High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:
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Pub of the Month

The Blue Bell, Levenshulme



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for April is the Blue Bell on Barlow Road in Levenshulme. Margaret O'Brien has been along.

The Blue Bell is an imposing pub tucked away a short walk from the A6, in Levenshulme. While Levenshulme is slowly recovering from being a "real ale desert", the Blue Bell has been a cask ale outlet for some years, with well-kept Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter on handpump.

The pub is managed by Mark and Mary Dunn, who have worked for Sam Smith's for well over 20 years. Not every pub owned by Sam Smith's sell cask beer and that was the case with the Blue Bell until Mark pushed the company to install Old Brewery Bitter seven years ago.

The pub itself is very smart, having undergone one of Sam Smith's classy refurbishments a few years back. On the right is a spacious vault and to the left three additional rooms – a large lounge with parquet flooring wraps itself around the bar counter and off this is a smaller carpeted lounge and also a small snug.

It's really at the heart of the community with a variety of groups using the pub. Events are held to raise funds for community projects to improve local sites and walkways, there are other regular events, a quiz night, a knitting club and trips out. There's always a warm welcome from Mark, Mary and their staff.

This well deserved award will be presented on the night of Thursday 27 April. We hope to see a good crowd along to celebrate the success of a pub in an area where so many others have failed. It's easy to get to on the 192 – just walk down Cromwell Grove to its junction with Barlow Road and the pub is there on your right.



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Stagger

Chorlton-on-Medlock and University with Dave Burston



On a cold, clear January night, though with rain forecast for later, a group of us gathered in the **Ford Madox Brown**, a purpose-built Wetherspoons at the north end of Rusholme, named after the artist who painted the murals in Manchester Town Hall and lived for a time in nearby Victoria Park. It was busy even at 7.30pm, and while some of us got seats, the later arrivals had to stand. With the walls a mixture of dark wood panelling and dark red wallpaper, and a dark red ceiling too, you'd expect the pub to be gloomy, but a variety of lighting including two chandeliers at the far end ensure it is well-lit. Nine cask beers were available but only three were tried by us: Ossett Willow, Rudgate Charlotte's Web and Hafod Bad Intentions; all were in good to excellent form.



A bit of a walk up Oxford Road took us next to the **Turing Tap**, which changed its name last year from the Oxford. Not a lot else seems to have changed here except that an illuminated sign now proclaims the upstairs bar (which we did not investigate) to be the 'Genius Bar', and a CAMRA discount is still available. We must have arrived at a busy time as there was quite a queue to get served by the time I got there. Seats were available but we all stood at some high posing tables with our beers, which were Ossett Excelsior and two from Titanic: Iceberg and Plum Porter. Marston's Wainwright and Robinsons Trooper were also available along with Lilley's Mango Cider on handpump. The Ossett and Porter were rated good, the Iceberg only slightly less so.

Both these pubs had a mixed clientele including plenty of young people, but the next pub, the **Grafton Arms** off Oxford Road on Grafton Street has much more of a local's feel and was less busy. A Holt's house, it serves their Bitter, IPA and Two Hoots, although the IPA was returned as it was off and was changed for one

of the others, which were both rated average to good. This pub had a make-over in 2015, and the hanging sign outside now calls it the 'GA', although the full name still appears in large letters on the outside. The lounge was more salubrious than I remember from my last visit, with a mixture of high and low tables and comfy seating.



It was 9pm now and just starting to rain as we walked back onto Oxford Road and negotiated the pavement alongside the new 'Dutch-style' cycle lanes on the way to **Kro Bar**. This is the original and only remaining pub in what was once a mini-empire of pubs/bars called Kro (Danish for 'bar'). It's a rambling place, in a Grade II listed building that was once owned by the Temperance Society, but we stayed in the front room near the bar, which was serving four real ales, though as three were common brands, we all went for the fourth, Derwent Mutineer, which was rated above average. Strangely, given its position at the heart of the University area, it wasn't very busy for a Friday night.

It was still raining a little as the longest walk of the night took us further up Oxford Road to the **Footage**, on the corner of Grosvenor Street.



Originally converted from a cinema (hence the name) into a pub in the Firkin chain, it became keg-only for a number of years before returning to real ale in 2014 with a variety of different beers. Strangely, tonight both were from Robinsons: Dizzy Blonde and Trooper. The former was just above average but the Trooper was poor. After a lull in the previous two pubs, this one was busier, though we still got some seats in one corner near the door. Loud music and general noise levels testified to this being a

young persons' pub, and some of us didn't want to linger!

The remaining establishments were all close together on Grosvenor Street. As the rain got harder, we tried the **Deaf Institute**, a mixture of bar and live music venue, which sometimes has real ale. However, the downstairs bar was closed and the upstairs one didn't have any on, and was empty anyway. So we crossed the road to **The Pub/Zoo**, a strange name for a former Irish bar which is now a student-oriented place.



We were actually in the 'Pub' part; the 'Zoo' part, a music venue, has a separate entrance round the corner. The Pub is U-shaped with the bar in the middle; the right hand side is open-plan with two pool tables at the back, but we found some seats in a room labelled 'The Snug' at the back on the left hand side, past a table-football machine. Three cask beers were available: Purity Mad Goose, Robinsons Trooper and Lancaster Bomber (now brewed by Marston's). All three were above average to good. Some people didn't like the music here either, but I was quite enjoying it as we moved on to the final pub of the night.



Sandbar was created in the 1990s from two (or three) Georgian town-houses knocked together. In good weather, the tables outside are well-used, but as it was raining hard by now, everyone was inside, which was busy. It has two front doors next to each other, but it is the right-hand one that leads to the bar, where one is immediately greeted by seven handpumps, six of which were in use. The beers tried were Cryptic Enigma and Phoenix Arizona, which were good to excellent, and Blackedge Cascade and Facer's Clwyd Gold, which were above average to good.

So, a decent Stagger with a good variety of pubs and beers. Overall, the best beers of the night were actually at the first pub, but some of the others we encountered were pretty good too.

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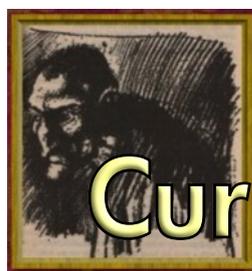
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Curmudgeon

Fear of the Dark

A frequently heard complaint is that pubs should make more effort to stock darker beers. Surely, if a pub has eight or more handpumps, they could allocate one or two of them to dark beers to provide more stylistic variety. But, on the other hand, there is no point in stocking beers that don't sell and, while you can lead a dark horse to beer, you can't make him drink it.

One licensee of a long-standing *Good Beer Guide* entry has made the point that, while he's made plenty of effort to put darker beers on the bar, his customers simply don't seem to want to drink them. He's had dark beers hanging around on the pumps for five days, while some pale ones sell out within five hours, so it's not surprising that he tends to avoid them. I've spoken to several licensees of family brewer pubs who have told me that they tend to pass on any dark beers in the brewery's seasonal range, as they simply don't sell. And it's always very noticeable at the end of Stockport Beer Festival that most of the beers left over are dark ones.

There is a widely-held belief that dark beers tend to be on the stronger side, which isn't by any means always the case, but does deter people from drinking them. And all dark beers are not the same – there is a clear division between roasty, strong-flavoured stouts and porters, and sweeter, more mellow milds and old ales. Some drinkers try to avoid those roasty notes, while others will run a mile at the thought of anything with a chestnut flavour, let alone reminiscent of Christmas pudding.

I have to say I tend to prefer the more mellow side, and I have fond memories of drinking the distinctive old ales that used to be produced by breweries in the South-East such as Brakspear, Gales and King & Barnes. These typically had a strength of around 4.3 or 4.4% ABV, so it was easy to drink a pint or two, but they still had a rich flavour and a touch of winter warmth about them. Sadly there doesn't seem to be much brewed in that kind of category nowadays.

Yes, it would be good to see more dark beers on the bar. But all dark beers are not the same, and it has to be recognised that their absence is not due to a lack of imagination on the part of licensees, but to customer preference.

Pale Shadow

Last Autumn, Marston's carried out a redesign of their beer brands in an attempt to make them look fresher and more contemporary, although many felt they were trying a bit too hard to appear trendy. One aspect of this was reclassifying their flagship Pedigree as an "amber ale" rather than a "pale ale". Historically, British beers were divided between "brown ales" and "pale ales", with the latter being broadly of the mid-brown colour you would expect from "bitter". Nowadays, when many beers have been introduced that are markedly paler than this, it may seem sensible to draw a distinction between these and the ones of a more traditional colour.

But Pedigree is a classic example of a great British brewing style, namely Burton Pale Ale, and while calling it "amber" may make some sense to a marketing man, it comes across as something of a betrayal of Marston's proud heritage.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com
(comments on these articles can be left on the website)

Trafford & Hulme Awards

Pub of the Season, Club of the Year, Cider Pub of the Year

Spring Pub of the Season

Trafford & Hulme branch is delighted to announce that its Spring Pub of the Season is the Quarry Bank, Bloomsbury Lane, Timperley, writes *Beverley Gobbett*.



This pub has been in the Hydes estate for over 100 years and is believed to have been built by the family in 1914. The first tenant was James Walker who moved into the pub on 23 October 1914. It then spent the next 78 years being run by a member of the same family, still living on the premises, until the end of 1992* when it came back to the Hydes family to find a new licensee.



Dave Kershaw has only been at the Quarry Bank since the beginning of 2016 but he and his team have made a fantastic job of building up their trade and he runs an excellent cellar which showcases the full Hydes range, which also includes the Beer Studio range, together with ever changing guest ales. There are up to eight different cask beers available at any one time. Dave also features the Hydes "Provenance" line which comprises beers brewed with hops from around the world, the current range using hops from America. He also has the "Occasional" series which is beers brewed for special events either in the UK or worldwide. Let's hope that at the time of our visit we get a beer for St George's Day.

If you have the opportunity to call in on a Monday or Thursday they have their 'Cask Club' which enables you to have a pint of any cask beer for £2.10 per pint all day. The kitchen is always open for food and there is still an extensively used bowling green out the back with a fantastic patio area for you to watch the bowling.

The presentation will take place on Thursday 27 April. Meet at 8.00pm for an 8.30pm presentation. Please do come along and join in the celebration with Dave and his team and enjoy your pint at just £2.10.

*Reference 'Brewing was a Way of Life' by Neal Hyde, 1999

Club of the Year 2017

Flixton Conservative Club has once again retained its title as Trafford & Hulme Club of the Year. The current Greater Manchester Club of the Year has now won the branch title for five consecutive years.

The runner-up spot went to Sale Sports Club on Clarendon Crescent, Sale (just off Dane Road) which was recognised for its efforts promoting real ale with its popular annual beer festival.



However, it could not displace the reigning champion whose range of six ever-changing cask ales puts many pubs to shame – in fact the quality of real ale in the club earned it a place in the 2017 *Good Beer Guide*. While the club's commitment to real ale undoubtedly stems from stewards Nigel and Sharon Porter, they have great support from the members, staff and committee at the club who held the fort while the hard-working couple took a sabbatical last summer. Nigel and Sharon used their break to conduct lots of market research into breweries to feature at the club – as *Opening Times* went to press they were putting the finishing touches to plans for a beer festival at the club over Easter weekend.

Sip Club wins cider title

Trafford & Hulme branch has named Stretford's **Sip Club** as its Cider & Perry Pub of the Year. The award goes to the Barton Road bar after five years with the Font group – three at the Chorlton outlet following two wins by the Manchester branch.



A small intimate bar in the "micropub" model, the Sip Club opened in April 2014 and is situated above Trading Places estate agents – the almost anonymous door is easy to miss if you are a first-time visitor. Climbing the short staircase takes you to a cosy open-plan room that could easily be somebody's living room. The bar is in the room to the rear behind the partition wall.

The pub's "Common Room" hosts a wide range of events including supper clubs, tasting evenings, book club, speak easy poetry nights, Sip One Purl One knitting & crafts club, quiz nights and more. Check Facebook for details.

The Sip Club was commended for its commitment to stocking local ciders having stocked both Dunham Press cider and Moss Cider in bottles since first opening. More recently the bottle range has been supplemented by two bag-in-box ciders on the bar.

The presentation date of this award has been confirmed as Thursday 11th May.

SSM CAMRA Pub of the Year 2010

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Meet the Distiller

Brendon Hall hits the hard stuff

New craft brewers don't have a monopoly on the region's railway arches. Some are home to a new wave of artisanal distillers and this month Brendon Hall leaves his beer and talks to Craig Banks of Manchester Still.

Hello Craig Banks of Manchester Still! This will be the first ever time we've spoken to someone who doesn't spend 12 hours a day stood in a bath of hops. Please introduce yourself to our readers and let us know what got you into professional spirit production.

I am the Master Distiller at Manchester's only rum distillery, based in the heart of the city. Manchester Still was founded by three scientists and inspired by a city where things are done differently. We saw the growth of gin but were also fascinated by different rums and how each had its own story. We thought it was a tragedy that there was not one more local – so the idea was born. As a chemistry graduate, distilling is something I have been trained in and it was an easy transition into professional spirit production.

What led you to choose distilling over brewing?

I have been interested in brewing since being at university where I dabbled in the art but had limited success! Distilling is not as common as you might think in the UK and many "distilleries", particularly those making gin, simply buy in the ethanol and process it. Distilling is a really pure process and we have applied our background in industrial chemistry to perfect the smoothest and scientifically proven most pure white rum on the market. However, don't be fooled that distilling is easy – like brewing the best beer, it takes patience and talent.



You're a relatively new set-up, can you give us a run-down of your product range so far and what direction you're planning to take Manchester Still in, in the future?

We have started with Faraday's Proof, named after Michael Faraday, which is a white rum and

we have a spiced rum ready for launch. We have a careful plan of our next four products all named after famous scientists.

I'm imagining there haven't been many distilleries in Manchester for some time. How have locals reacted to your rum? Could there be a Mancunian distillery 'golden age' much like we've seen with beer? (A rum 'brewtap' would be quite spectacular, in our humble opinion.)

We have had a fantastic response to our white rum and people are chasing us to stock it; it has helped that our bottle has Manchester worker bee as its branding. The rum-tap is an idea we agree with you on and are looking into this – watch this space.

We imagine you've had a few sips of differing types of spirit over the years. When you aren't making cocktails out of your own creations which producer or brand, one national and one international, would you recommend to any of our readers looking for a break from Best Mild?

When not making rum we are big fans of real ale but our suggestions for rum are to try Mount Gay Black Barrel, a nice rum with dried fruit flavours and aromas – just drink like a whisky. For more of a session rum, try Trois Rivières Rhum Blanc – good with a mixer or simply lime juice and a sugar syrup; it has a nice hint of banana and dry grass.

Finally, as there are more pubs than gin-houses these days – where can we pick up a bottle of Manchester Still?

We are putting our product in a few choice bars around Manchester and you can buy our rum from our website direct or via on-line shops.

High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

I recently acquired a remaindered copy of a 2010 publication *Bygone Days in the Northern Derbyshire Dales*, compiled by Lindsey Porter and published by the Landmark Collector's Library. This is a handy little volume for looking at pubs that used to be and pubs that still are but may have changed. There is also a wider historical view of the area as well as pubs. Back in the 1890s the Pack Horse in Chapel-en-le-Frith stood near the Market Place on the main road. The current **Old Pack Horse** has migrated down the hill towards Townend and has crossed the road. Also in the photograph is a view of the **King's Head** on the Market Place in its prime as a coaching inn. There are also interior views of the King's Head from the end of the 19th century.



A group of runners and walkers recently concluded their fortnightly wanderings at the **Vale Inn** in Bollington, reachable in the daytime by using one of the Stockport-Macclesfield buses. The Vale is the tap for Bollington Brewery located about 100 yards away. I had visited soon after the brewery and pub opened in 2008 so a return was very welcome. Six handpumps dispensed Bollington beers and there were a couple of ciders. I tried the Long Hop and the Oat Mill Stout, both in good form. Lunchtime food was also worth calling for with ample portions of freshly cooked food; the pies are a recommendation. Service was efficient especially as the pub was busy on Thursday lunchtime. Obviously the Vale is popular with locals and visitors alike. It was good to see a well frequented local at lunchtime in the middle of the week. The Vale is high on the list for a fairly imminent revisit.

Some months ago I mentioned breweries which were part of the domestic life of stately homes. Not too far from the Peak District in Staffordshire is Shugborough. Here the historic brewhouse has been reopened and with input from Titanic Brewery in Stoke makes a visit worthwhile.



At the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge two extra handpumps have been fitted to the bar but the extras were not in use last time I called. Marston's Wainwright and Black Sheep Best Bitter were available on that visit. The Wainwright made for a decent pint. Like a lot of pubs the Railway seems to be slow to recover

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

Up in Buxton it is reported that Holt's have bought the **Railway** in the centre of town. It was formerly a Greene King pub and prior to that belonged to Hardy and Hansons.



In Glossop the **Norfolk Arms** is currently undergoing refurbishment but it is reported that it will remain open. Also in Old Glossop Robinsons have sold the **Bulls Head** to the Inglenook Pub Company.

In Poynton the new micropub is to be called the **Vinehop** and is on Fountain Place in the centre of the village. It is due to be open by the end of March. It will have six key-keg taps and a real cider. Cask conditioned beer may follow later. Also in Poynton the **Vernon Arms** is currently selling Timothy Taylor's Dark Mild alongside Sharp's Doom Bar and Wells Bombardier.

from Christmas though it is busy at weekends when Saturday evening live music is especially attractive and brings in the customers.



There is as yet no sign of the effect of the Heineken takeover of a large tranche of Punch pubs. Doubtless some licensees will be concerned that they may be caught up in the transfer. For all its faults as a pub company Punch does at least offer its licensees a choice of beers from breweries large and small. In Whaley Bridge both the **Goyt** and the **White Hart** are happy to access this wide choice to ensure that their customers benefit from some different beers. At the White Hart recent interesting brews have included Moorhouse's Ice Witch, alongside the regular Blond Witch, and Pennine Hair of the Dog from near Masham in North Yorkshire.

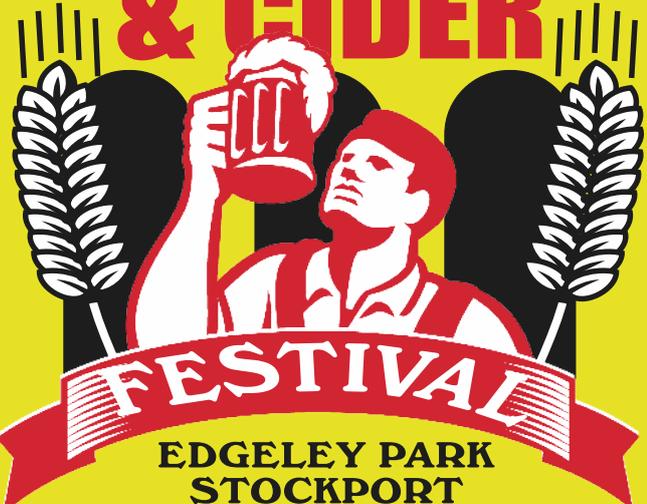
Back around 1990 when the emergence of the new wave of microbreweries was in its infancy, Ringwood in Hampshire was one of the new small breweries. At about the same time there was the appearance of a new wave of free houses. Ringwood Forty Niner at 4.9% was one of the beers which used to reach into the Manchester area and I can recall drinking this premium beer in the **Marble Arch** and the **Cheshire Ring** as both pubs were key players in the free trade in those days. In 2007 Ringwood was bought out by Marston's. To its credit the brewing giant kept Ringwood Brewery open and even expanded its production. As a result Forty Niner is still available, and though I would not necessarily vouch for the authenticity of the recipe, it is still a good brew. These days it is widely available in the Marston's estate and in the now much expanded free trade - and also makes welcome appearances in the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge. Ringwood Razor Back 3.8% also reaches the northern parts of the Marston's estate and has also been available in the Shepherds and elsewhere in the estate. This is a fairly recent renaming of Ringwood Best Bitter. Finally another one off from Marston's has been Idle Dove. This presumably takes its name from the River Dove which in its final miles meanders to join the Trent not far from Burton.



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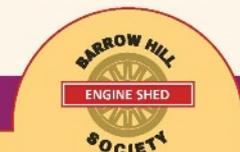


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Arden Unveiling

Blue Plaque for Elizabeth Raffald

An 18th century domestic goddess has been honoured with a blue plaque at the Arden Arms in Stockport.

Elizabeth Raffald was an innovator, educator and entrepreneur at a time when married women had no legal rights. She produced a major cookbook, wrote the first trade directory for Manchester, introduced the first servants' employment office, ran pubs, shops and a catering business and still found time to have nine children.



Her nephew built the Arden Arms and she is buried at the nearby St Mary's church in the market place with other Raffalds, an old Stockport family. The pub is owned by Robinsons who have been generous in their support for the new plaque. The idea for it came about from a conversation between Suze Appleton (pictured here, second from right), Elizabeth's biographer, and the pub's licensees, Steve King and Joe Quinn, who are very proud of their pub's connection to such an amazing woman.



Elizabeth was born in 1733 in Doncaster, moving to Arley Hall in Cheshire as housekeeper when she was 27. After marrying the gardener and moving to Manchester, she dedicated herself to improvements of all kinds.

She was a tremendous innovator and produced the first town directory for Manchester and Salford in 1772. She gave birth to nine children, ran shops and pubs and her catering skills were much in demand. In 1769 she produced a major cookbook (more than 100 years before Mrs Beeton) which contains over 800 of her own recipes, many of them still in use today, such as Piccalilli.

Of Elizabeth's nine children only three survived and descendants of one of those three, Anna, still live in Stockport. The plaque was partly funded in memory of one descendant, Connie Jackson, of Reddish, who sadly died last year before the plaque could be realised.

Another generous donation was given in memory of Roy Shipperbottom, a Stockport resident who spent 20 years researching Elizabeth. His book was published in 1997 and contained a thorough introduction to her cookbook, *The Experienced English Housekeeper*.

More funding also came from members of The Heaton's WI, a group of Stockport women who gave generously after hearing the talk about the amazing superwoman.

This plaque was co-ordinated by Suze Appleton, the most recent supporter of Elizabeth Raffald. She has worked tirelessly for the last few years to revive Elizabeth's reputation. She has reproduced the cookbook in e-book and paperback formats, written a short version of Elizabeth's life, *The Experienced English Housekeeper of Manchester*, and gives talks about Elizabeth. She is also creating a fictional version of her story.

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Mild Magic 2017

Visit Pubs, Drink Beer, Win Prizes



According to the media mild is a dying beer style. The axing of Robinsons 1892 might have been seen as another straw in the wind. We beg to differ.

This year we have signed up 88 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 below as this may influence your choice of pub. Repeat from step two (no need for a new card) until you have filled the card. NB Check the times of pub opening hours, especially if you are making a special journey (details available at whatpub.com).

How do I win a prize?

Collect stickers from **12 different pubs** and you will receive a free entry ticket to, or a free pint of mild if you are a CAMRA member at, the 2017 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival (1 – 3 June) at Edgeley Park.

To complete the **Mild Magic Extra**, collect stickers from **12 different pubs in 12 different areas** and you will receive an entry ticket (one pint of mild for CAMRA members) plus a Mild Magic T-shirt.

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

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

Finally we have the **Mild Magic Master (or Mistress)** award for visiting every pub. This will win you a Mild Magic hoodie plus four entry tickets to the Beer Festival (or four free pints of mild for CAMRA members).

How long do I have to complete all this? Mild Magic runs from Friday 14 April to Sunday 21 May inclusive.

What do I do when I have finished Mild Magic? Simply send your card(s) to arrive with the organiser (details on card) no later than Friday 26 May (only **one entry** per person). All entries will be included in the Grand Draw to be one of lucky few who will be able to visit Moorhouse's Brewery. Festival entry tickets are valid any session **except Friday evening**. To receive your entry ticket(s)/mild token(s) please enclose a **larger sized (A6 suggested), stamped and self-addressed envelope**.

Garments will be distributed between **4.00pm and 6.00pm on Sunday 2 July** at the **Crown Inn**, Heaton Lane, Stockport (or as

otherwise agreed). All garments are graced by a stitched version of the Mild Magic insignia.

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



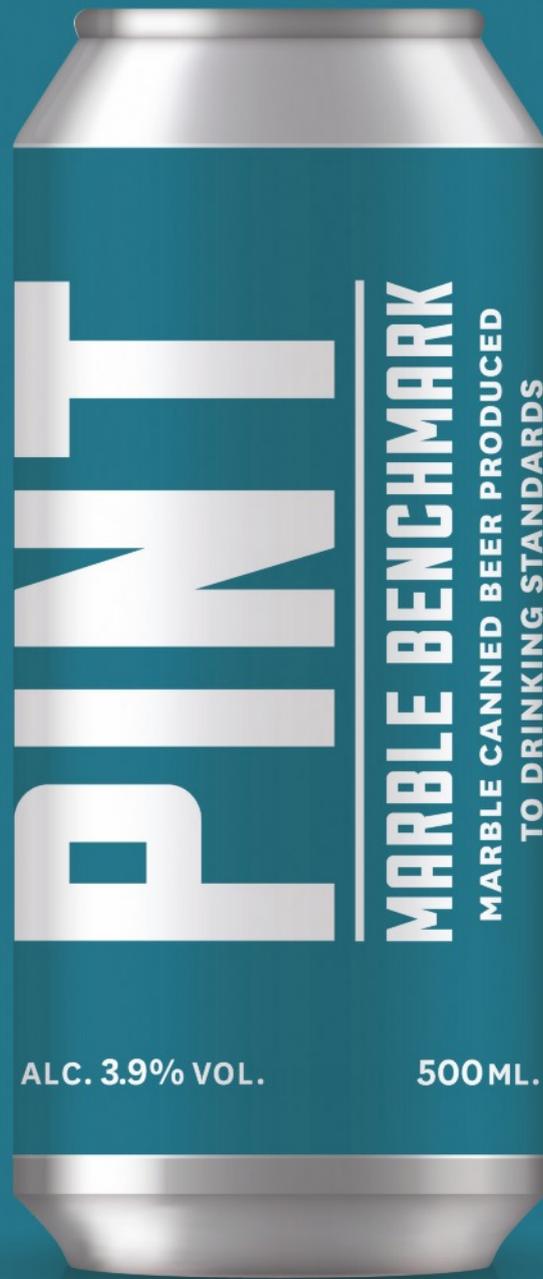
This year we are delighted to welcome **Moorhouse's Black Cat** as the Mild Magic Sponsor. This excellent beer has won a huge number of awards including CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain. It is described as a "dark refreshing beer with a distinct chocolate malt flavour and a smooth hoppy finish" and is a favourite in many local pubs. Look out for it as you take part in Mild Magic.

If you haven't taken part before, you must have a go this time; it's great fun and it's so easy - you only need to visit 12 pubs over a five week period. It's an excellent chance to visit some new pubs, try new beers and win some great 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

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

ALTRINCHAM: Costello's Bar, Jack In The Box, Unicorn; **ASHLEY:** Greyhound; **ASHTON UNDER LYNE:** Ash Tree; **BRAMHALL:** Ladybrook Hotel, Shady Oak; **BROADBOTTOM:** Harewood Arms; **BURNAGE:** Reasons To Be Cheerful; **CHEADLE:** Crown, White Hart; **CHEADLE HULME:** Chiverton Tap, Governor's House, Kenilworth; **CHORLTON:** Beech Inn, Sedge Lynn; **DENTON:** Crown Point Tavern; **DIDSBURY:** Dog & Partridge, Fletcher Moss, Gateway; **DIDSBURY WEST:** Wine & Wallop; **ECCLES:** Eccles Cross, Lamb Hotel; **FALLOWFIELD:** Friendship Inn, Great Central; **GATLEY:** Horse & Farrier; **HAZEL GROVE:** Grove Alehouse, Wilfred Wood; **HEATON CHAPEL:** Hind's Head; **HEATON MOOR:** Moortop; **HIGH LANE:** Royal Oak; **HYDE:** Cheshire Ring, Cotton Bale, Queens, Sportsman; **LEVENSHULME:** Fred's Ale House; **MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE:** Ape & Apple, Brink, Castle Hotel, City Arms, Crown & Anchor, Crown & Kettle, Grey Horse, Marble Arch, Micro Bar, Moon Under Water, Old Monkey, Paramount, Piccadilly Tap, Pie & Ale, Smithfield, Town Hall Tavern, Waterhouse **MARPLE:** Samuel Oldknow, Spring Gardens; **MONTON:** Park; **NEW MILLS:** Beer Shed, Chalkers Snooker Club; **NORTHENDEN:** Crown Inn, Lounge About; **OLD TRAFFORD:** Bishop Blaize; **POYNTON:** Kingfisher; **RUSHOLME:** Ford Madox Brown; **SALE:** JP Joule, Volunteer; **SALE WEST:** Plough Hotel; **SALFORD:** New Oxford; **STALYBRIDGE:** Society Rooms, Station Buffet Bar, Bridge Beers; **STOCKPORT:** Calverts Court, Crown Inn, George, Hope, Midway, Nursery, Railway (Portwood), Remedy Bar, Spinning Top, Ye Olde Vic; **TIMPERLEY:** Moss Trooper; **URMSTON:** Flixton Conservative Club, Prairie Schooner Taphouse, Tim Bobbin; **WHALEY BRIDGE:** Drum & Monkey, Goyt Inn; **WHITEHOUGH:** Old Hall; **WITHINGTON:** Victoria.



500ml of Pint

In Search of Mild

Tracking down an elusive beer with Margaret O'Brien

As the number of pubs offering cask mild as a regular beer has declined over the years the objective of Mild Magic has changed from celebrating and recognizing those pubs that sell mild to now encouraging pubs to stock it and beer drinkers to try it for the five weeks of the scheme.

In advance of those five weeks (starting on Friday 14 April through to Sunday 21 May) we thought that it would be interesting to take stock of those pubs in and around Stockport town centre which still offer cask mild regularly. When we first started this annual campaign, then called the Mild Challenge, this was an area which had an abundance of pubs selling mild but as you will see times have changed dramatically. Unfortunately for us we picked a bad night; it was bucketing down with rain.



Our first pub was Hydes' **Nursery Inn** on Green Lane in Heaton Norris. This former CAMRA National Pub of the Year has a longstanding reputation for serving some of the best cask ales and pub food around. It is a classic 1930's pub, a real hidden gem largely

unspoilt by progress, with wood panelling and a very well kept bowling green, attractive gardens and patio. The place was packed and buzzing with families having meals and every seat taken with drinkers; however we got served quickly and politely. Almost unbelievably in this day and age they had two good cask milds available: Hydes 1863 (ex-Hydes Light) and Old Indie (ex-Hydes Dark Mild and more recently Owd Oak). These beers were in fine fettle and with the rain beating down it was very tempting to stay in this tremendous pub but duty called.



It's quite a trek anywhere from the Nursery and by now the rain was that bad that on the way to the A6 we saw a little frog jumping over the road to higher ground. We called in at the **Hope**, which does occasionally serve mild

and is on Mild Magic, but with no success so we continued on to the **George** on the corner of Wellington Road South and Heaton Lane. This free house with its mix of quarry tiled bar floor and oak floor boards is lit by two large roof lights so the place is full of natural light on a sunny day but today was definitely not one of those days. It's a large pub with three distinct areas plus a pool room and is very TV sports oriented (especially football) but with no big match the place was fairly quiet. It is good to see this type of pub with cask mild; often the mild (or milds) are from Timothy Taylor's but on our visit it was Bank Top Dark Mild, which was again well regarded.

Our next stop was due to be around the corner at the **Crown** on Heaton Lane but an advance party reported back that unusually the mild had gone off and had been replaced by a stout and so on we trekked to the Market Place. Luckily the rain had eased off by this point. Not infrequently the **Remedy Bar** has a mild on, often from local brewery Cryptic who produce two regular milds, 1049 Dead and The Ghost, but there was no luck again.



Therefore, our final stop on this damp night was the **Railway**, Portwood, opposite the Peel Centre. It looks ordinary from the outside, but once within it quickly becomes apparent this is far from an ordinary pub. A warm welcome awaits both the regular and the stranger from the

friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. A single L-shaped bar serves a large lounge area. Among the many cask ales was Moorhouse's Black Cat (the generous sponsors of Mild Magic) but it quickly became apparent that it was at the bottom of the barrel. Customer service is king here though and Sue the licensee stepped in, apologized and changed it straight away; excellent service as usual. In the cellar another cask mild was waiting to go on, Phoenix Monkey Town Mild. Once again it was top notch fare.

As we finished off our pints we reflected on how good our mild ales had been but how much difficulty we had in finding pubs which sold this increasingly rare beer outside the period when Mild Magic is running. Therefore, grab the opportunity Mild Magic affords by sampling these beers while you can!

Mild Magic in Whaley Bridge

Three pubs in the Whaley Bridge area have registered for Mild Magic this year. 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 and closing hours may be helpful.

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 noon till late Saturday and Sunday.

Old Hall, Whitehough, Chinley: 12.00 noon till late every day.

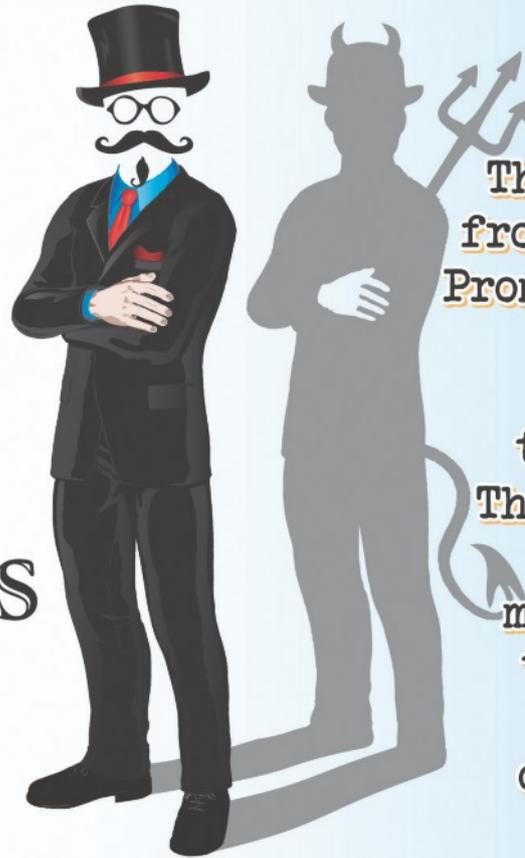
These times could of course vary.

None of the pubs is new to Mild Magic. Some of the pubs will be new pubs for some people. All the pubs will look forward to seeing new faces, and returning ones.

Getting there. Bus 199 from Stockport stops at Whaley Bridge Station and Horwich End, Whaley Bridge. It's a half hourly service during the day and hourly in the evening, on Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday. 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 (but not BH Monday).

Going by train the Manchester - Buxton service, Northern Table 20, is hourly through the day all week to Whaley Bridge, and half hourly in the evening rush hour. Trains to Chinley, Northern Table 23, are hourly on Saturdays and less frequent in the week and on Sundays. 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 via Buxworth and just ten minutes from Chinley Station.

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Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Chorlton



By the time this issue of *Opening Times* hits the streets, you will have just a few days left to enjoy some South American Empanadas with a pint of cask ale. Chorlton's **de nada** bar and restaurant has announced that it is closing on 9 April. It was four years ago that co-owners Nigel and Sam decided to bring a taste of their favourite continent to this small bar at the north end of Manchester Road with Nigel adding his love of cask ales to the mix as well as a notable commitment to stocking real cider and perry at all times. Whether it was to enjoy their top-quality food, or just to pop in for a quiet pint away from the hustle of some of the area's louder bars, de nada brought something different to Chorlton that will be missed. *Opening Times* wishes Nigel and Sam all the best for their future endeavours.

Flixton



Flixton's **Fox & Hounds** is under new management with Andy Flynn taking over in mid-March. Andy is an active CAMRA member who regularly enjoys a busman's holiday serving and cellaring at CAMRA festivals, including at January's Manchester Beer & Cider Festival. He is no stranger to the pub game either, having been at the helm of the Bird i'th Hand in Hindley, Wigan for the last four years.

The new management immediately brought back cask ales and when *Opening Times* called a few days into Andy's tenancy, two from Theakston's were on offer - Atlantic Red and Vanilla Stout. The selection will rotate from the guest list provided by owners Star

Inns - Heineken to its friends - so Heineken's own Caledonian brewery will be likely to feature. The aim is to increase the range available once a modest refurbishment project has been completed. There is a quiz on Monday evenings from 9.00pm and weekends will feature live music; karaoke on Friday nights and professional singers on Saturdays.

Altrincham



Landlord Adam Greaves is continuing to make improvements at Altrincham's **Orange Tree**. The pub is majoring on sports with a choice of seven TVs to watch the games. The pub is now serving five cask ales - Sharp's Doom Bar, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Adnams Lighthouse and Marston's Wainwright being permanent alongside Henry Weston's Perry. There is also now a purpose-built stage for live music which is held every Friday with an open mic night on Sundays.

Chapel-en-le-Frith

The micropub phenomenon has now reached further into the Peak District with the opening of the **Old Cell Ale Bar**, on the Market Place in Chapel-en-le-Frith. Operated by a former licensee of



the Beehive in New Mills, the Old Cell opened on 9 December in time to benefit from the Christmas trade. Historically the premises were the police station and in the cellar are holding cells. Set in the local bedrock, the deep dark cellar is ideal for keeping real ale.

The bar area has been interestingly furnished and gives space for those who wish to sit at a table as well as those who wish to stand and chat. There are currently three handpumps and a fourth is promised. When *Opening Times* called two beers from Intrepid in the Hope Valley, American Pale Ale and Galaxy Single

Hop Pale Ale, were available. There is also a pump set aside for a Marston's product, the brewery having been helpful in establishing the Old Cell. Beers from Poynton Brewery were in the cellar and Whaley Bridge beers were next up. The aim is to sell mainly locally sourced draught beers.



Bottled beers are mainly British, with a smaller number of Belgian and German beers usually available. Some key-keg and even keg beers are available which will be beers of character. A box of cider will be a permanent feature. Amongst other spirits, Forest Gin from Macclesfield is stocked. These will be alongside a selection of English wines.

Work at the Old Cell is on-going and as time and finance permit the old cell in the cellar will be refurbished to create an atmospheric drinking area. This is a welcome addition to the pub scene in Chapel. Even during the quiet time of January targets were reached and hopefully this new venture can look forward to a successful future.

Cheadle



The Star in Cheadle was pretty tired and needed a new lease of life but what direction to take? The "community local" market is already well catered for, not least by Hydes' Crown, while pubs like the White Hart and Red Lion cover the more food-focussed end of the trade. What they have done is turn the Star into the **James Watts**, very much a beer-focussed outlet with more than a nod to the craft beer scene. It's named after a former mayor of Manchester who lived at nearby Abney Hall. The new-look pub opened on 23 February so *Opening Times* paid a visit and chatted to manager Liz Bennett.

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A New Beer Festival for Manchester

Central Manchester Beer & Cider Festival 29 June – 1 July

Where is the new Manchester Beer & Cider Festival being held? Well, it turns out that the brand-new festival will be held at a brand-new venue.



After the newly-formed Central Manchester branch's successful Left Bank Beer Festival at the People's History Museum in July last year, the immediate thought was to use the same venue for the new festival: however, this was thwarted by a quadrupling of the rent! Undeterred by this, the branch began looking for a replacement. One of our members suggested we try one of the newest theatres in Manchester, **53two Theatre** on Albion Street, close to the Britons Protection, and this has borne fruit.

53two was created by the conversion of the old Bauer & Millett luxury car showrooms. It has a convenient central location, and it's close to public transport links: the Metrolink Deansgate-Castlefield stop, Deansgate railway station and numerous bus stops are nearby. The venue itself caters for up to 500 people, and its management have been very accommodating and have warmly welcomed the festival.

Last year's Left Bank Beer Festival saw numbers dwindle after around 7.00pm, even though the doors were open until much later; so a decision has been made to close a little earlier for the new festival, at 9.00pm each day.

As for the beers, it's planned to have a 'Central Manchester Bar' with beers from all of the smaller breweries within the branch's boundary – there are seven in all, with a further five just outside. Beatnikz Republic, moving up from London, will be the next to open, with "the ability to excite or satisfy the drinker", and it's hoped that their new brewery – situated in Manchester's Green Quarter (the railway arches on Red Bank, Cheetham) – will be up and running by then, which will bring the branch total to eight. It means that we will be providing keg, key-keg and cask beers in another innovative move by the branch.



Then there will be a second larger bar with around 30 beers from breweries across the United Kingdom. These will include Brass Castle, Mallinsons, Pig & Porter, Tiny Rebel and Vocation, to name but a few.

A cider bar will have ciders sourced from local producers. This bar will also be serving rosé wine and something decidedly new – cider cocktails! Plus, there will be cider and perry offered for sale in pitchers! More innovation.

Depending on the rental charges for the outside parking area (part of NCP), we aim to have some on-street food stalls. Beehive Foods (who supply the Brink with pies and scotch eggs, etc) will be one of them; any further suggestions for other stalls are welcome.

The opening hours and admission prices will be as follows: Thursday 29 June, 4.00 pm until 9.00 pm (£2); Friday 30 June, 12 noon until 9.00 pm (£3 before 5.00 pm, £5 thereafter); Saturday 1 July, 12 noon until 9.00 pm (£4). CAMRA members will get a £2 admission discount at all sessions. The actual address is 53two Theatre, 8 Albion Street, Park Avenue Car Park, M1 5LN.

As ever, volunteers are always needed to help with the setting up, taking down, serving, etc, amongst other tasks, so they will be very welcome. Contact Graham Donning on 07961 886696 for further information.



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CENTRAL MANCHESTER BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

29/6/2017 - 1/7/2017

Opening Times & Admission
Thursday 29th June : 4pm - 9pm : £2
Friday 30th June : Noon - 9pm : £3 (£5 after 5pm)
Saturday 1st July : Noon - 9pm : £4
(CAMRA Members - £2 discount all sessions)

Location
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Heard More at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Continued from page 19

It's certainly different from the Star but works pretty well. There is a traditional area of bench seating to the left and at the back a bigger room with tables, chairs and subdued lighting. In the centre one wall has been taken back to the brickwork and this is covered in small chalked signs detailing the large range of bottled beers on offer. Seating in this area consists of high chairs around tall tables converted from old barrels which work well here but less successfully in the old vault on the right where they sit incongruously with the real fire (one of two).

Apart from the bottle range, which includes some unexpected finds, there are seven cask beers. The two regulars are TicketyBrew Golden Bitter and one from the Hydes range (Tight Head Hop Dark when we called) and the rest are changing guests. Turnover is key with this number of cask beers if quality is to be maintained, and while it's still early days that doesn't seem to have been a problem so far. The keg beers include some imported lagers and two ales including the rather good "A to K" from Manchester's Alphabet Brewing. On Monday there's 50p off a pint of cask, too, and a 10% discount for CAMRA members on Thursday. Worth a look.

Cheadle Hulme



The former King's Hall in Cheadle Hulme re-opened as the **Kings Tap** on 14 March, following its disposal by JD Wetherspoon and acquisition by the Stonegate Pub Company. Naturally, *Opening Times* was there on day one.

The pub is part of Stonegate's Town Pub & Kitchen chain and our first impression is that the refurbishment has improved the pub. There are five cask beers available – permanent are Marston's Wainwright and a house beer from Moorhouse's along with three changing guests. When OT called the guests were Moorhouse's Irish Red, Shepherd Neame Whitstable Bay and Robinsons Trooper. There are also eight keg taps with one or two craft offerings.

Food is available from Monday to Thursday between 5.00pm and 8.00pm. In the medium term there will be live music on Thursdays.

Heaton Mersey

The **Dog & Partridge** on Didsbury Road re-opened last month following a refurbishment by Punch Taverns – and we think it's a notable improvement.



The pub remains basically open-plan but the rambling interior is nicely broken up into various areas and so avoids a barn-like feel. The new licensees are Vicky and Stephen Pritchard, who both have experience in the pub and retail trade, and they told *Opening Times* that so far the new look pub had been well received. There's a big food operation from 10.00am right through to 8.00pm although Vicky and Stephen are keen to emphasise that this is very much a pub with food rather than a quasi-restaurant.



The good news is that cask beer is back. When OT called three were available – Robinsons Dizzy Blonde, Sharp's Doom Bar and Greene King Abbot Ale. The Dizzy Blonde has been selling particularly well but the Abbot less so – and may well be replaced by Marston's Wainwright. Recommended.

Pub Shorts

In Woodley the **Late Lounge** on Mill Street has been converted from the Palace Snooker Club into a bar and nightclub. The good news is that cask ale remains on sale with Marston's Pedigree and Wainwright on handpump. It's open every day from 10.00am.

Wetherspoon's has embarked on a new project to highlight the history of its pubs across the UK. Many of the company's pubs are built on

the site of interesting and, in several cases, unique buildings. These include former banks, post offices, churches, theatres, cinemas, even an opera house! The company plans to flag them up in a rolling programme over the coming years. Among the first pubs to be featured are Manchester's **Seven Stars** and **Moon Under Water**. Check out the website at www.jdwetherspoon.com/pub-histories.

Congratulations to **Robinsons Brewery Visitors Centre** for being named North West Visitors Attraction of the Year in the Going Places UK Tourism Awards. Pictured below is Visitors Centre General Manager Olivia Wilson and her team with the Going Places award.



There's a new face at the **Railway** on Chapel Road in Sale. Dave Biss took over the Robinsons house on 23 March arriving from Sale's United Services Club (and before that he worked at the Old Market Tavern in Altrincham). His mission is to build trade up at a pub which seems to have drifted somewhat in recent times – he tells us he is up for the challenge and looks forward to welcoming CAMRA members to the Railway.

Two more micropubs are in the pipeline. As we went to press **Jakes Ale House** on Compstall Road in Romiley had been good to go but had encountered a last minute hitch getting some papers signed off by the council. Hopefully it will open in time for us to bring you a report in the next issue. Meanwhile in Disley, the proposed **Malt Disley** on Market Street has just completed the public consultation period with no hiccups.



The **Lowes Arms** in Denton (pictured above) will be holding a beer festival over the Easter weekend. It will run from 14 to 17 April and feature up to 30 ales during the course of the festival.



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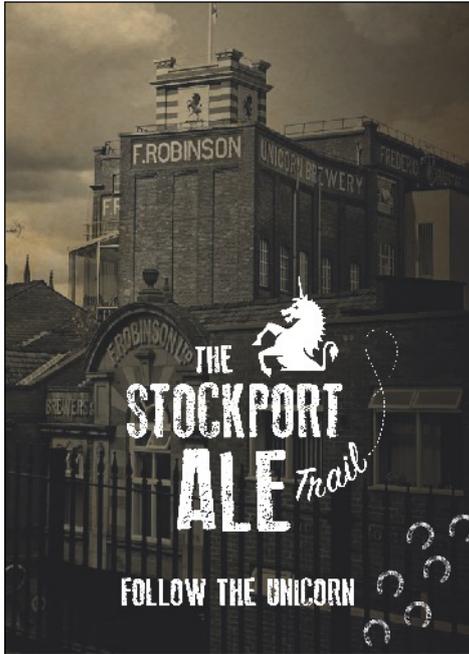


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What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region

Robinsons



Robinsons has recently produced a very welcome *Stockport Ale Trail* leaflet featuring 14 pubs in and around central Stockport (pubs in Offerton, Great Moor and Edgeley are included). Participants collect a stamp when they visit one of the pubs and buy a pint, once they have a stamp from eight different pubs the card can be taken to the Brewery Visitors Centre and exchanged for a free goodie bag. The completed cards are also entered into a draw where the winner will win his or her height in beer. Cards can be picked up at participating pubs.

Con Club Brewery



Wednesday 1 March saw the inaugural brew from the in-house brewery at the recently opened **Con Club** on Greenwood Street in Altrincham. The premises are opposite the thriving Market House and occupy the old Workingmen's Conservative Club which had a good real ale pedigree in its time.

There has been a complete re-build and the bar-restaurant now fits in with the vibrant drinking and dining experience of the

area. As you enter via large glass doors the bar is right in front of you with the brewhouse to the right and the open kitchen and dining area to the left. The first impression is that there seems to be quite an emphasis on food but there is more than adequate space for those wishing to just have a drink. If you find the clamour of the main bar too much there is a separate upstairs lounge with its own bar and facilities.

The first product of the brewery was a 4.1% ABV session bitter by Jamie "on loan" from the Dunham Massey Brewery, badged as Federation on the pump clip and titled "A Wing & A Prayer" (it will probably be known in the future as Con Club Ale). Everyone seemed to be enjoying this first sample; did we mention it was free on this first night? According to the Con Club website (conclubuk.com) the plan is to brew up to twice a week.

Bootleg Brewery

A 4.4% Oatmeal Stout was brewed to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and this was on sale at Chorlton's Horse & Jockey among other outlets. This very dark and full-bodied beer had a rich taste with coffee and roast notes in the aroma.



A new venture is a hop garden on the roof at the Horse & Jockey – Bootleg brewer Stef Occhi worked as an agronomist in his past life and still really likes gardening. The brewery has bought six large planters and a hop rhizome was planted in each one at the beginning of March. The next step will be to build a hop trellis to let them climb and, with a bit of good weather, the plan is to brew a green hopped beer in September to celebrate the hop harvest. They'll play it by ear as the first crop is not usually very large and they're not sure how the hops will like the Manchester weather.

Brewery Shorts

The new **Four Kings Brewery** in Hyde now has its beers regularly available at the Star in Glossop – always a pub worth visiting in our experience. This month a series of tastings is planned for the brewery's tap room. They will feature beers from Four Kings and other local breweries. Details should be on the brewery website at www.fourkingsbrewery.com. The next open day at the brewery will be on 22 April and will showcase the latest Four Kings beer – the fourth to be produced since the launch.

Salford's **Seven Brothers Brewery** seems to be going from strength to strength. They have

recently advertised the sale of their current brewing kit, as an upgrade to a 20-barrel plant is in the pipeline.



Not local but a new permanent beer from legendary Keighley brewery **Timothy Taylor** is always worth recording. Knowle Spring is described as a blonde beer brewed with a combination of "English grown whole leaf Cascade, Chinook

and Minstrel hops, plus Strisselspalt hops from Alsace". It is said to have floral and grapefruit notes on the nose and a citrus hop finish.

Home Brew Winners

Once again Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has organised a competition among local home brewers to find five new beers for the popular Bar Nouveau. The judging took place over two Sundays in March and once again there was a very strong field of entries.

The mild category was won by Mark Reeves with a 4.6% strong Salt & Pepper Mild which he will be brewing at Glossop's **Howard Town Brewery**.

The winning bitter was a Pale Ale (5.2%) brewed using a combination of British and New World hops (Olicana, Waimea and Wai-iti). This was brewed by Adam Land who will be brewing this at **Manchester Brewing** in Ardwick.

The IPA category was again very popular with many strong entries. The winner was a 4.6% Session IPA from Jonah Stancombe. Munich and rye malts gave a firm background to the Magnum, Chinook, Cascade and Centennial hops in this beer which Jonah will be brewing at Macclesfield's **RedWillow Brewery**.

Stout and Porter was another popular category with plenty of good beers entered. Many of the beers had flavour additions and this was the case with the winner – Tom Barnard's Lactose and Coffee Stout (4.6%). This will be brewed at **Squawk Brewing** in Ardwick.

Finally imaginations were cut loose with the speciality category with some truly excellent beers for the judges. It was a double win for Jonah Stancombe though as he also won this class with a classic Belgian-style Witbier (4.8%) with coriander seeds and Curaçao orange peel. This will be brewed at **Torrside Brewing** in New Mills.

Congratulations to all the winners.



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