

● November 2013

# Opening

Times

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Covering the cities of Manchester & Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield



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# Pub of the Month

## The Gateway, East Didsbury



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for November 2013 has been awarded to the Gateway, East Didsbury, writes Jim Flynn.

Sited at the junction of Kingsway and Wilmslow Road, this large inter wars roadhouse was struggling by the early part of this decade. In mid-2011 Hydes sold the Gateway to J.D. Wetherspoons but all did not go well following the re-opening as they clearly hadn't got it right. With their standard low prices curtailed the public saw no reason to cross the road from the leisure complex opposite. Indeed for a while despite the obvious investment in new carpets, improved toilet facilities, exterior lighting and new kitchen facilities it looked like the usually surefooted Wetherspoons had got it wrong. However along with a reversion to their normal pricing structure they had an ace up their sleeve in the form of a new manager Kevin Muldoon.

Kev had previously worked at the Waterhouse and the Seven Stars in the city centre and in the 18 months he has been at the Gateway there has been a remarkable improvement in both quality and service despite the fact that this is his first pub management position. The public have responded in their numbers and the pub is now vibrant and highly popular. Kev was previously responsible for the cellar in the Waterhouse and his influence has come to the fore here as not only has the Gateway become an entry in the new 2014 Good Beer Guide for the first time in many a long year but over the time of his tenure cask ale sales have doubled.

There is a focus on regional beers supplied direct from the brewers with half a dozen guest ales (plus normally Old Rosie cider). Also available are the usual Wetherspoons' Abbott and Ruddles and a house beer from Hawkshead, 'Gateway to the Lakes'. The pub also runs "brewer of the month" events featuring the products of one particular brewery.

So why not join the local CAMRA branch on Thursday 28 November when the award will be presented to Kev and his hard working staff when a really great night will be enjoyed by all. Don't miss it!

The pub is on one of the UK's busiest bus routes with amongst others the 50, 142, 42, 42a, 45a from the city centre, 42, 370, 23A from Stockport, 84 from Reddish and the Heaton and 44, X57 and 130 from Cheadle and southwards stopping nearby. Trains from Piccadilly to the Airport stop at East Didsbury and the newly opened East Didsbury Metrolink stop is close by.



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# What's On

## Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

### Opening Times - Information

*Opening Times* is published by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. The views expressed are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth.

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- \* Transport for Greater Manchester: [www.tfgm.com](http://www.tfgm.com)
- \* East Cheshire: [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport\\_and\\_travel.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx)
- \* Derbyshire: <http://www.derbybus.info/>

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**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Front Cover – Hi tech brewing kit at Hydes Beer Studio, Photo by Bev Gobbett**

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Contact: John O'Donnell 0789 880972 or [enquiries@thcamra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thcamra.org.uk)

### Local CAMRA Events, Dates in blue, open to all

**Thursday 7th** – Branch Meeting: Waterhouse, Princess St, Manchester. Starts 8.15pm. (T&H)

**Monday 11th** – National Inventory presentation to the Circus Tavern, Portland St, Manchester. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

**Monday 11th** – Branch Meeting: Society Rooms, Stalybridge. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

**Wednesday 13th** – Most Improved Pub 2013 Award: Salford Arms, Bloom St, Salford. Starts 8.00pm. (NM)

**Thursday 14th** – Branch Meeting / New Faces event: Railway, Wellington Rd Nth, Stockport. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

**Friday 15th / Saturday 16th** – Chorlton Challenge: all real ale outlets covered in two days. See website for details. (T&H)

**Saturday 16th** – Trip to Reedley Hallows Brewery to present Bronze Award for Beer of the Festival. Catch 10.30 bus X43 from Chorlton St Bus Station. Details from John Clarke – 0775 383 6898. (SSM)

**Saturday 16th** – Social: Wharf, Macclesfield. From 8.00pm (MEC).

**Wednesday 20th** – Heritage pub presentation to Railway, Broadheath. From 8.30pm. (T&H)

**Wednesday 20th** – Branch Meeting: New Oxford, Bexley Sq, Salford. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

**Friday 22nd** – Offerton Stagger: Fingerpost, Hemphaw Ln 7.30pm; Gardeners Arms, Little St 8.30pm. (SSM)

**Friday 22nd** – Congleton Crawl: Starts Young Pretender 7.30pm. (MEC)

**Wednesday 27th** – Shudehill Saunter: Seven Stars 7.30pm; Lower Turks Head 8.15; Hare & Hounds 8.45; Angel 9.30; Marble Arch 10.00pm. (NM)

**Thursday 28th** – Pub of the Month presentation to the Gateway, East Didsbury. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 30th** – Winter warmer Wander Stagger: Red Bull, Hillgate 7.00pm; Arden Arms, Millgate 8.30pm. (SSM)

**Monday 2nd December** – Branch AGM: Park Tavern, Macclesfield, Starts 8.0pm. (MEC)

**Wednesday 4th** – Worsley Social: Barton Arms 8.00pm; Bridgewater Hotel 9.00pm (NM).

**Thursday 5th** – Branch Meeting: Old Market Tavern, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

**Friday 6th** – Beer of the Festival Best Newcomer presentation to Elixir Brewing: Magnet, Wellington Rd North, Stockport. From 8.00pm (SSM).





# Our mudgeon

## The World Turned Upside Down

A striking feature of the British beer scene is how, in the years since the foundation of CAMRA, the pattern of availability of real ale has been dramatically reversed. The four founder members were journalists who had moved from the North-West to London and been shocked by the poor beer they encountered. The 1977 "Good Beer Guide" says that "Greater London is no longer one of the worst counties in England for real ale", which suggests that a few years previously it had been. Most of the pubs were owned by the "Big Six" national brewers, and the vast majority only sold pressurised beer. Apart from Young's pubs, all of which sold real ale, there was only a scattering of outlets, and even Fuller's, who have outlasted Young's and are now one of the most respected family brewers, only had real ale in 16 out of 111 pubs.

Outside the capital, the situation was often little better, if at all. The 1977 "Guide" still describes North Devon and much of Norfolk as "beer deserts", and says that, apart from the handful of pubs it lists, there's little else to be found in any of Northumberland. In the whole of Cornwall, which must have had getting on for a thousand pubs, only 120 had real ale.

In contrast, across large swathes of the industrial Midlands and North, there were major independent breweries who sold real ale in all or virtually all their pubs – Banks's & Hansons in the Black Country, Hardy's & Hanson's, Home and Shipstone's in Nottingham, and Boddington's, Holt's, Hyde's, Lees and Robinson's around Manchester. Added to this, there were still massive tied estates belonging to members of the Big Six which were mostly real, such as Bass Mitchells & Butlers across the Midlands and Tetley's in Yorkshire and on Merseyside.

A myth has grown up that, when CAMRA was founded, real ale was on the point of disappearing in Britain. In and around London, that may not have been far from the truth, but across the country as a whole the situation was in fact much healthier, something that helped encourage the always rather mistaken view that real ale was a working man's drink.

Fast-forward forty years, and things have been turned on their head. London is enjoying an unprecedented boom in specialist beer pubs and craft beer bars. Across all the rural counties of the South and East, from Cornwall to Norfolk, you would be hard-pressed to find any prominent pub that didn't serve real ale. The only keg-only outlets are youth-oriented bars and a few back-street and estate pubs in places well off the tourist trail. Counties like Surrey and Buckinghamshire report over 95% of all pubs selling real ale.

On the other hand, many of the independent brewers in operation in the 1970s have been taken over and their estates scattered to the four winds, Nottingham having suffered especially badly. The Big Six brewers have been broken up and their pubs largely transferred to pub companies which in the 1990s started the systematic removal of real ale except where they saw a clear commercial justification. Most of the surviving back-street and estate pubs owned by pubcos now only have keg beer – indeed it's now almost seen as a defining feature of the classic estate pub. Twenty years ago, a pub crawl of Levenshulme in South Manchester included twelve or so pubs with real ale; now there are only two or three, and none on the main road. Yet a few miles down the road in Didsbury and Chorlton, new bars have opened up and it's pretty much ubiquitous.

So it's an interesting reversal of fortune how, in many cases, the areas where real ale was once sparse now have it in abundance, and where it was once plentiful it is now rare. And, of course, it has to be recognised that the preferred drink of the typical "working man" has long been standard lager, not mild or bitter.



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# Stagger

## Cale Green & Higher Hillgate with Jim Flynn



It was a warm August evening when we met up at Cale Green's **Adswood Hotel**. This large pub is set back from the road with its own cobbled courtyard so that you half expect a coach and four to pull up outside. Where we sat, to the front of the bar, has been



completely opened out and the seating was looking very worn with tape vainly trying to keep the upholstery together. However there are three other distinct rooms which have obviously had much more recent attention. Since my last visit some while ago the garden has had a makeover, with a children's play area installed and that night it all looked a real picture. The three Robinsons beers, 1892, Unicorn and Trooper, were all found to be on reasonable form.

Leaving we travelled along Adswood Lane to the **Plough** on Shaw Heath. This single roomed pub was for a long time a real ale free zone, but it returned to the fold a few years ago, sporting Copper Dragon Golden Pippin and Marston's Pedigree on our visit. To the rear is a garden which looked welcoming but risking the karaoke that was being set up we sat inside. The Plough internally is a dog leg type shape (around the bar and the pool table) and as a result there is surprisingly little seating. It was early however and we found a table to drink our beers which were again quite acceptable. The karaoke struck up 'Please Don't Go' by KWS as we left.



We moved on to the **Blossoms** on the corner Bramhall Lane and Buxton Road (A6) which has been given a makeover by Robinsons, turning it into an 'Ale Shrine'. At some point this may mean that non-Robinsons guest beers may be available but for the moment it's the Robbies range with, on our visit, 1892, Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde and Trooper available (a fifth beer having just gone off). The pub (interior pictured above) itself is a gem with a still largely unspoilt interior incorporating three rooms, and the now-disused cobbled street to the rear sports benches for outside drinking. Ingeniously the

old outside gents toilet is now the smoking area. The refurbishment has been very successful in widening the customer base with far more women evident these days. Although our numbers had swelled considerably we tried just the Dizzy Blonde and Trooper, finding both good.

Crossing over the A6 and down Hillgate we arrived at the **Wheatsheaf** which had signs outside proclaiming the availability of real ale even though none had been found there for ages. Since our visit the pub has returned to the real ale fold and has Robinsons Dizzy Blonde on handpump (see report elsewhere in this issue - ed).



Further down Hillgate the **Bowling Green** (Charles Street) was shut so onwards to the **Fairway** on the corner with Longshut Lane. This was called the Flying Dutchman when Robinsons sold it and the new owners have certainly showed them what could have been. The clean soft decor and food menu almost give it the feel of a cafe bar, but the plethora of hand pumps confirms this is an ale house. Along with the number of beers the number of customers seems to have increased as the place was packed. Of the eight beers available we tried the Marstons Pedigree, Phoenix's West Coast and Arizona, and Coach house Gunpowder Mild, finding them all reasonable or better with the Phoenix beers most probably the beers of the night.

Carrying on down Hillgate we arrived at Robinsons' **Star and Garter**. This is what some might call a 'proper boozier' with a friendly landlady and an equally friendly but lively set of customers, who were there in force that night, spilling out onto the pavement in front. The pub has been largely opened out but still has a separate pool room and a darts area. Around the walls and across the ceiling were England flags and bunting. The 1892 and Unicorn were again on decent form.

Continuing towards the town centre we passed the keg only **Crown** (aka Corner Cupboard) and on down to the **Sun & Castle**. This large ex-Tetley house is now a Holt's pub with excellent dark wood and mirrors both on the walls and around the bar. There are two rooms (the pool

room/vault can now only be accessed from the corridor to the gents) and we sat in the lounge around the corner from the bar and the main body of the room where a karaoke was in full swing. There is only one cask beer, Holts Bitter, which we found in more than respectable condition.



Our penultimate port of call was the **Waterloo** close by to two of Stockport's more recent historic locations, Strawberry Studios (Joy Division, Neil Sedaka, The Smiths, Stone Roses and Paul McCartney all recorded there) and the site of the 1967 Hopes Carr air disaster (marked by a memorial stone). This Robinsons' establishment has a well furnished lounge, a vault, games room and snug. Not quite as busy as many of the of pubs located as it is off the main drag on Waterloo Road nevertheless it makes up for it in friendliness. All three beers, 1892, Dizzy Blonde and Unicorn, were well regarded.

We moved for the last time along Hillgate to another of Robinsons' flagship pubs, the **Red Bull**. This pub with its white exterior and well-worn front steps had a top-quality refurbishment in 2008 when the pub was extended into the house next door to allow a more significant eating area. In my opinion the pub's old charm has if anything been enhanced a very tasteful modern feeling to the place. The pub has six different areas so it is easy to find an intimate space away from the rest of the pub; so much so that we found ourselves sitting in an area which I must admit I was not aware of until then. Again the 1892, Dizzy Blonde, Trooper and seasonal Hop Circle were all found to be above average or better (nobody tried the Unicorn).

Overall a stagger which can be recommended for some characterful pubs and generally above average to good beer, all within very easy access to public transport.





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# Trafford & Hulme Pub Awards

## John O'Donnell reveals the winners

*As 2013 draws to an end, Trafford & Hulme CAMRA have revealed the winners of a number of awards which recognise particular aspects of the pub industry. While the branch celebrates four Pub Of The Season winners throughout the year, these often go to long standing pubs and bars which are awarded for longevity of excellence.*

Earlier this year, the branch decided it wanted to also recognise a number of more limited categories of pubs.

### Best Newcomer



In a time of many pub closures, the **Best Newcomer** award demonstrates that all is not doom and gloom in the pub world and that amongst the closures, we are also gaining new or re-opened outlets which are well worth celebrating. The runner up in this category was **Pi (Altrincham)** which opened on Shaws Road near Altrincham Market last October. Sibling to Pi (Chorlton), the Altrincham branch continues the same successful formula of friendly service, great selection of real ales and an almost unsurpassed range of world beers, with great gourmet pies for when you are peckish. However, in what could possibly be considered cruel irony, **Pi** lost out to a new bar which is its Chorlton outlet's new nearest neighbour, **Font (Chorlton)**, opened in March this year in the premises of the former Iguana Bar, which had been closed for two years. With eight cask ales and a massive 25% discount to CAMRA members, Font has helped draw more people into what was already an excellent strip of pubs and bars along Manchester Road from the Sedge Lynn at the south, past Pi & Font to deNada at the north end.

### Most Improved Pub

Chorlton can also boast the winner of the **Most Improved Pub or Bar** award. Although some may consider that the **Jackalope** would have been a contender for the Best Newcomer award having only taken on the moniker in February, the Barlow Moor Road bar remains under partly the same ownership as its former name Escape. However, the transformation in this small bar



since Lee Gorton joined Rob Loader and decided to revamp it has been remarkable. Although Escape offered one or two real ales and quality was usually reasonable, Jackalope now offers four ales from some of the hottest names on the local and wider brewing scene with Salford's First Chop being near permanent alongside RedWillow, Arbor, Magic Rock, Fyne Ales and more. A regular line up of live music and other events has helped draw in the customers to keep the ale turning over regularly, making sure the place is rarely quiet. There's even the regular "Jackgammon" nights - while poker tournaments have been a recent fad in pubs, how many have tried backgammon tournaments to bring the customers in?

In a complete contrast, the runner up in the **Most Improved** category is a traditional back street local. Since Yvonne Hartley took over the **Railway** on Chapel Road in Sale, the once lacklustre pub has seen a turnaround in its fortunes. It is busier with locals returning, has more atmosphere and is turning over more real ale meaning that the quality of the beers on sale is much improved. The work of Yvonne and her team is testament to the importance of good management to traditional pubs and how there is hope for any seemingly dwindling pub in the right hands. If other landlords want to see how to improve their pub, they could do worse than look at what is happening here.

### Best LocAle Pub

The next new award for this year is the **Best LocAle Pub** - celebrating those pubs that go out of their way to offer their customers locally brewed ales and support CAMRA's scheme which encourages others to do likewise.

The top two here are very different but equally deserving outlets which have both gone out of their way to put local



brews on the bar with the familiar LocAle header letting customers know that this is local beer. Ultimately the runner up slot went to Chorlton's **Oddest** where manager Nicola Clark has been a dedicated supporter of the scheme since the bar opened, regularly giving up four or five of her six handpumps to locally brewed ales with Bollington, Wilson Potter and Blackjack (who make house beer "Oddingtons") being favourites. Pipping Oddest at the post was the city centre's **City Arms**, where the balance was tipped by the fact that the pub belongs to PubCo Spirit meaning that landlord Steve Crook has a significantly more limited list of beers to choose from but still typically has three LocAles on the bar at one time. With very few applicable beers on the main Spirit lists, Steve sources most of these beers through the SIBA Direct Delivery Scheme, giving him choice from those local brewers who are SIBA members. Steve also promotes the scheme with posters throughout the pub.

### Best Community Pub



The final award in this round goes to the **Best Community Pub** - the pub which doesn't just sell beer, it really acts as a hub for the community around it, with sports teams, trips, notice boards and much more. We are lucky that across the area we still have a great variety of pubs who serve their communities in a whole host of ways. Coming a close second this time round was the **Beech Inn** in Chorlton where almost every night sees a different local group meet at the pub from the Beech Band of folk artists to gatherings of Cajun musicians. However, Best Community Pub for 2013 was named as the **Volunteer Hotel** in Sale. Again, the pub's sports teams were considered a key part to its success but it was the overall community spirit of the place which ultimately took it over the line. The Holt's pub is rarely quiet and has the benefit of a large committee room upstairs which is regularly used by community groups. Worthy mention was also given to Northern Moor's **Carters Arms** with the wide range of sporting teams run by the pub including football, darts and pool coming in for praise alongside its regular charity events, often making use of the pub's extensive car park.





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# High Peak Pub Scene

Tom Lord & Robin Wignall with News and Views

## Peak Practice With Robin Wignall



September was beer festival time in the Peak District, beginning with the little publicised but always popular event at the **Swan** at Kettlethulme. Beers were from near, (Derbyshire, Cheshire and Yorkshire) and far, (Cornwall). Whilst dark beers were restricted in choice, only Thwaites Nutty Black and Elland Porter being available, they were both very good. More than a dozen pale ales made for interesting mix, more than you can try in an afternoon. However Abbeydale Deception was as good as ever, St. Austell Proper Job was strong on hops, and Saltaire Amarillo Gold was my pick from a good bunch. As a curio there was a Belgian wheat beer, Blanche de Bruxelles from Brasserie Lefèbvre. This has the flavours now missing from the more famous Hoegaarden. The ciders and many of the beers were stillaged in an outbuilding, and as some in the cellar had to wait their turn, not all beers were available at any one time. But this is a good little festival.: look out for it on a weekend in early September next year.



Later in the month came the now annual autumn festival at the **Old Hall** at Whitehough near Chinley (pictured above). This year the **Paper Mill** was officially part of the festival as the new festival glasses mentioned both venues. With over 100 beers on the list, not all were available all the time, as there was a rolling programme of beers in the Old Hall main bar and in the Paper Mill bar.

Whilst there beers from as far away as Cornwall (Coastal) and Wiltshire (Hop Back) most were from much nearer to home in the north midlands and northern England, with very local beers from Whaley Bridge and Mouselow Farm. As ever the range included some new and unusual microbreweries. With lots to choose from, personal taste and choice apply, and I enjoyed Abbeydale Time Travel and Rat Brewery Rat Attack as pale brews, whilst Black Jack Stout and Lytham Stout were good dark drinking.

Whilst this festival is already earmarked for next September, the next Old Hall/Paper Mill festival venture will be the winter event in February. Try to be there.

The **Beltane** in Buxton, located just below the market place on Hall Bank, is now open 7 days a week from noon (11.00 on Saturday) until late. Food is served from Wednesday to Sunday. This is a bar worth visiting with four beers, with a style target of one strong, one dark and two pale. When PP called there were beers from Whim, Beartown and Robinsons Hartleys. Beers are sourced from more or less local breweries, so expect to find Winkle, Red Willow, Buxton etc.

Still in Buxton the **Cheshire Cheese** should be open by the time you read this, according to the *Buxton Advertiser*. Titanic seems to be the main player in this venture, though Everards are reported to be involved. More on this another time.

The *Buxton Advertiser* has reported the saga of the ownership of the **Angler's Rest** in Bamford in the Hope Valley. Admiral Taverns were keen to sell to a third party, but the members of the Bamford Community Society seem to have won the day, to keep the pub open in their village.

The beers from other than the Marstons empire available to licensees included ales from Kite, Upham, Navigation, Portobello, Castle Rock and Cotleigh breweries. There have also been beers from nationally known regional brewers. Hopefully this initiative will continue and succeed. It certainly enables participating tenancies such as the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge and the **Royal Oak** in High Lane to offer

a mini beer festival to their customers for a week or so each month. And beer festivals is where we came in.

## High Peak Pub News With Tom Lord

This month to start with we have some news from Tameside. In Droylsden the **Beehive** on Market Street has Heron Porter from the Two Roses Brewery. The **Ladysmith** on Penny Meadow in Ashton has returned to the real ale fold with Hobgoblin and other real ales might follow. On the downside in Ashton however is news that the **Guzzling Goose** is closed and set to become a Metro Supermarket. The **Hare & Hounds** in Luzley has Thwaites Wainwright on handpump.



Up in Mossley we understand that the **Fleece Inn** on Stamford Street will be reopening soon under the guidance of new licensees with a range of both national and local real ales.

In Hyde the **Shepherds Call**, the last remaining pub at the top end of Market Street, is also back in the real ale fold with Old Speckled Hen and occasional guest beers. Also in Hyde the **Unity** on Croft Street was recently up for auction again on the 16th October. Out in Godley the **Godley Hall** now has Doombar, Theakston's Bitter and a guest beer from the Hornbeam range.

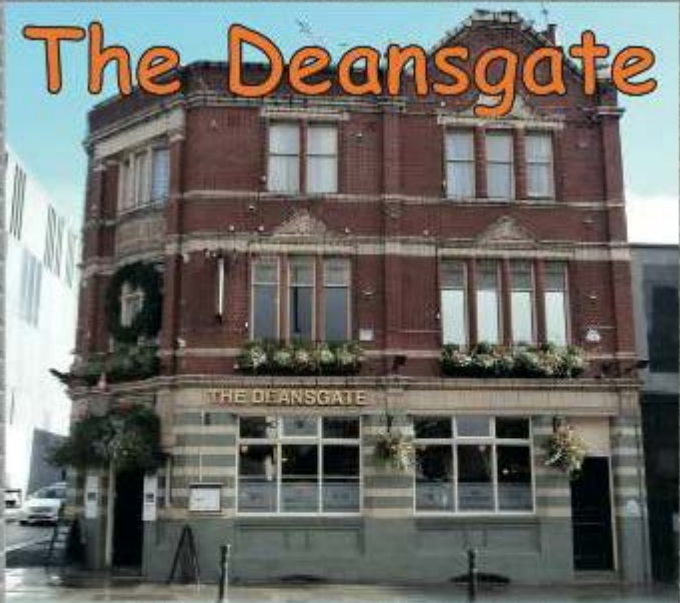


In Broadbottom the **Harewood Arms**, handily close to the railway station, is now open and is the home of the previously Rochdale based but now relocated Greenmill Brewery with the beers on offer in the pub.

Over in Cheshire in Poynton, on Park Road the new Bollington Brewery pub the **Cask Tavern** is set to open later this month, contributing nicely to the rapidly improving real ale scene in the village (see report on page 21 – Ed).



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# Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

## Chorlton & Trafford

When legendary chef Oz moved from Manchester's the **Knott** to sibling the **Bar** in Chorlton, fans of the monthly Oz's Epicurean Nights feared an end to the series of special gourmet evenings. However, they were not to be disappointed with new chef Frank continuing the nights (now simply Epicurean Nights). Now Oz's version is back with the launch of similar nights at the **Bar** being held on the last Tuesday of the month. As at Deansgate, £15 will get you a three course meal on a different theme each month and rarely has anybody gone away hungry. October saw a Spice Night while booking is now open for Game night on 26th November - just pop in or call the bar and pay your £5 deposit. Meanwhile the Knott's Epicurean Nights continue on the second Tuesday of every month.



Elsewhere in Chorlton, the new manager of the **Sedge Lynn** is Kirstin Downham. This is Kirsten's second stint in charge of a South Manchester Wetherspoon having been the original manager of Didsbury's **Milson Rhodes** when it opened in 2010. More recently Kirsten has been at the Kingfisher in Poynton. Opening Times welcomes her to Chorlton and looks forward to her continuing the good work done by former manager Leanne Kempthorne, leading the pub into the 2014 Good Beer Guide. Meanwhile Leanne and partner Ryan have completed training with the Marston's empire and are now at the helm of Atherton's the Talbot where they are already working at expanding the beer range from staples of Pedigree and Hobgoblin.



The **Melville** on Melville Road, Stretford has reopened after an extensive refurbishment with

the emphasis definitely moved towards dining. Work commenced on the building in August, beginning with a full revamp of the already impressive exterior, bringing it back to its original state and restoring all original features. Internally, the décor has been updated to include a lighter and more contemporary feel, along with comfy seating booths and snug areas.

There is a new open restaurant area and a new menu has been introduced throughout, which boasts a variety of special dishes, along with homemade traditional pub food. Opening Times understands that The Melville will become yet another Holts house to offer guest ales, including those from subsidiary Bootleg Brewery alongside regular Holts beers.

## Chorlton Challenge

November 15th & 16th will once again see Trafford & Hulme Branch lead their annual mass social survey around the 23 real ale serving pubs and bars in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. They do of course drink responsibly as they go, but guests are welcome to come along and share the burden of surveying the regions' self appointed real ale capital where there are typically 100 handpumps in operation on any given night. Whether trying your hand at the full Chorlton Challenge or just popping along for an hour or two, everybody is welcome. As OT went to press, the full itinerary was yet to be set - check out [www.thcamra.org.uk](http://www.thcamra.org.uk) for details or follow @thcamra on twitter.

## Macclesfield



The big news from Macclesfield was the opening of the RedWillow-owned new bar on 27 September. Situated in the town centre on Park Green, 50m from the corner with Sunderland Street, in a former furniture shop, this is a welcome addition to the rapidly growing pub scene in the town.

The design is very modern and stylish and would not be out of place in the Northern Quarter or Chorlton. The bar area to the left is large with five hand pulls prominently displayed in the centre. A further 15 beers are available on key-keg dispense from taps mounted on the rear wall of the bar, All 20 beers are listed on a large LED

screen above these and below a very arty looking clock. So far the beers available have been from RedWillow of course, with other impressive beers on both methods of dispense. Seating is varied from large booths, wooden chairs and tables to sofa seating. More unusual features are the cinema style pull down seating on the way to the Gents. Food is limited to Charcuteries or Cheese Platters for £10 at the moment.

Opening times are 4pm-midnight Tuesday to Thursday, 12pm to 12am Friday and Saturday and 12pm to 10.30pm on Sunday, Monday closed. This now makes Macclesfield an even greater place for a pub crawl with a huge range of beers from some of the country's best modern micro brewers.

## Stalybridge



On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October **Stalybridge Buffet Bar** won Pub of the Year at the Manchester Food & Drink Awards. The award was announced at the glittering Gala Dinner event held in the Great Hall in Manchester Town Hall. The Manchester Food and Drink Awards are a benchmark for excellence in the hospitality industries, and for foodies. They were up against tough competition and it's a tremendous achievement after only a year under its new ownership. The MFDF Awards shortlist was curated by the MFDF Judging Panel, made up of the region's leading food and drink critics and experts. The shortlisted venues were then mystery shopped by the judging panel and the scores from these visits were then combined with votes made by the public.

Buffet Bar co-owner Mike Field (pictured above with wife Mary and the Buffet Bar team) told Opening Times "After only 12 months in charge we are delighted to have won this important award. The competition was very good and the warmth of our reception by the audience at Manchester Town Hall showed how much the buffet bar is loved by local people. Believe me it has been a team effort but I must single out Sam and Caroline for their contributions. I would like to think it was, at least in part, due to the refurbishment carried out last year that we caught the judges' eyes".

*More Pub News on Page 23*



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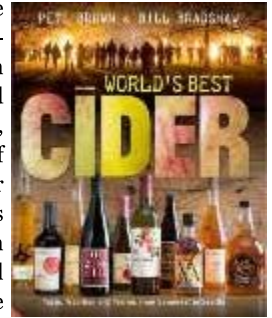


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# Book Review

**World's Best Cider, by Pete Brown and Bill Bradshaw, Jacqui Small LLP, 256 pages, £25**



After long years in which little of any value was published about cider, the much-vaunted "cider revolution" has at last given rise to some worthwhile and well-researched books on the subject. What it has lacked, however, has been a major global overview of the sort that now exists in some numbers for such drinks as beer and whisky. In this handsome volume, drinks writer Pete Brown and photographer and cider enthusiast Bill Bradshaw set out to fill that gap. While the authors nowhere mention the great man's name, they must surely be conscious of the comparison with Michael Jackson's agenda-setting *World Guide to Beer* of 1977. This book is fully worthy of being seen in the same light.

Introductory chapters ("Cider Basics") take the reader through the history of cider (not avoiding the many and large uncertainties), orchards and fruit propagation, with some useful notes on cider flavours and tasting. While the authors take an open-minded approach to quality criteria (at one point they approvingly quote a New Zealand definition of "real cider" that reads "A product made from apple concentrate, sugar and water is not real cider. A product made with freshly pressed apple or pear juice, with as few additional ingredients as possible" is. This contrasts with "more convoluted ideas suggested in the UK") the single page devoted to the mass-market commercial brands of "industrial cider" leaves no doubt that their commitment is firmly to artisanal producers and their products, whether cider, perry, or cider brandy and related drinks.

This leads on to a world tour of the principal areas of cider production, with overviews of significant countries and regions, producer profiles, and tasting notes for a total of 244 products which are proposed as being, if not definitively the world's best, at least amongst the best. Major coverage is given to Spain, France, Germany, the UK, and the USA, but there are surprises lurking elsewhere, from the Austrian perry tradition encouraged by Empress Maria Theresa to Quebec's invention of the new style of ice cider (evidently much better than it sounds, and now being imitated by a Herefordshire producer). Gimmicky stuff is largely absent, though the German cider which "sees apples aged with vanilla, red pepper, chillies, quince, red- and blackcurrants and lavender, aged for 15 months in French oak" is possibly something you would drink only once. To judge by the UK entries, the authors have a nose and palate for quality across a range of styles, though it's a surprise not to find any perry or cider from Gregg's Pit. (At one point they describe Kevin Minchew and Tom Oliver as arguably the world's two greatest perry-makers. Many good judges, not to mention this reviewer, would add the name of Gregg's Pit proprietor James Marsden to that illustrious duo. I understand though that he specifically asked to be excluded from the book which is something of a pity.)

The book is lavishly illustrated throughout, with Bill Bradshaw's superb photography complemented by well-chosen archive photographs. Written in an approachable style that will not put off the novice, it will not disappoint enthusiasts and experts of long standing. One disappointment, especially considering the difficulty that cidemakers in many countries experience over access to market, is the almost complete lack of advice on where to buy good cider in its various regions. However, I recall that after Michael Jackson's pioneering volume of 1977 about beer, he went on to write a book about the pub – so perhaps we can look forward to a volume on cider houses from these talented and committed authors. Let us hope so. **RPJ**

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# Manchester Beer & Cider Festival 2014

*When CAMRA decided that it was time that the National Winter Ales Festival's nine year tenure in Manchester came to an end, there was some degree of outcry both from those volunteers who had pulled the event together for many years and from the drinkers who had enjoyed the annual January outing.*

Nine months on from the final event in Manchester, that decision by CAMRA may well have been the best thing that ever happened for festival goers in the region - without it, the Manchester Beer & Cider Festival would never have been conceived. The new festival takes the same slot in the January calendar (22nd - 25th January) and is shaping up to be Manchester's biggest and best ever beer festival. The biggest coup for the organisers was securing the amazing setting of Manchester Velodrome for the event - not the adjacent café used for the small warm up event in August - the actual Velodrome itself. As a building, it's simply stunning to stand inside that track and marvel at the scale of the place - and that's without any beer in it.



Set on the floor inside that steeply banked track will be the largest range of beers and ciders ever offered in Manchester. There will be well over 300 cask conditioned craft beers alongside a bar full of real ale in a bottle (drink in or take away) - every beer that is ready for sale will be available from the first session until it is sold. The cider and perry bar is expected to offer at least 75 different ciders and perries - all made from fresh apple or pear juice.



If the best of British beers isn't enough, then the 'Bières sans Frontières' bar will be importing the very best beers brewed for Germany's Oktoberfest alongside Belgian, Dutch, Czech and American beers - far too many to mention. Some of the most cutting edge breweries in the country including Marble, Hawkshead, Liverpool Organic and Ilkley will be hosting their own bars offering a larger range of their beers than the three main cask bars can accommodate - plus offering the chance to meet their brewers.

In total there will be no fewer than 16 bars to visit. Surrounding these are some 1800 seats from where visitors will be able to look over the festival floor and watch cyclists riding the track. The Great Britain Cycling Team have training sessions on the track twice a day which will continue throughout the festival alongside other clubs and cycling taster sessions.

The festival starts at 4.30pm on Wednesday 22nd January and runs through until Saturday evening. The Velodrome is easily accessible via Manchester's Metrolink tram network - its own Velopark station is served by trams every 12 minutes - with the 216 and other bus routes from Manchester even more frequent. CAMRA Members will be entitled to free entry all day Wednesday and Thursday with discounts on entry at all other times.

To find out more, visit the festival website at [www.manchesterbeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.manchesterbeerfestival.org.uk) and for all the latest news you can follow the festival via twitter on @mancbeerfest or at facebook.com/ManchesterBeerFestival

## Stocktoberfest 2013

Stockport Victorian Market Hall played host to the second Stocktoberfest German Beer Festival on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September. The event, which sold out in just seven weeks, which was even quicker than last year, saw visitors enjoying hundreds of Bratwurst and thousands of steins of beer to the sounds of traditional Oompah bands. Organizer Corin Bland of High Peak Beer Co stated 'it was even bigger and better than last year which is going some - it's great to see the market come alive with locals and visitors all enjoying themselves and getting their Oompah on!' To find out about our next event "follow" on twitter @highpeakbeer.



## Winter Warmer Wander



December is not only the time for Christmas and the start of winter, it's time for the **Winter Warmer Wander!** This year's event runs from Sat 30<sup>th</sup> Nov till Sun 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014. There are lots of prizes to be won, including T-shirts, bottled beers, meals for 2/4, bottled-beer hampers, plus loads of new beers to try. There are some new pubs new to the scheme taking part this year. This year's event is sponsored by Stockport family brewer **Robinsons**, and in particular their famous Old Tom. For more information see the **December issue of Opening Times**.

To launch the Winter Warmer Wander there will be a Stagger around central Stockport on Saturday 30th November. The start will be at the Red Bull on Middle Hillgate at 7.00pm with an 8.30 meeting point at the Arden Arms, Millgate. This will be a great chance for participants to get some stickers in their card which will be published in December's Opening Times. A social to present all of the prizes will be arranged for the New Year.





# The Altrincham Amble

## George Elmslie and friends go on a tour

The annual jaunt round the hostleries of Altrincham started with a couple of disappointments. Firstly the scheduled start at the **Station Hotel** had to be by-passed - although keen on real ale not more than three weeks previously, Caledonian being a favourite, a phone call the day before confirmed the reports by fellow CAMRA members that a change of policy meant no cask beer.



The second pub on the list therefore became the first of the day. The **George and Dragon** on the A56 to the north of the town centre is a large multi-roomed pub/restaurant belonging to Whitbread's 'Table Table' group and serving the Premier Inn hotel to the rear. On this day they were serving Boondoggle, a blonde ale from the Ringwood stable alongside Jennings Cumberland.

From the bay windows of the hotel, we could see the evidence of more bad news for our outing - the "Pub To Let" sign on the **Wheatsheaf** just 50 yards away on the opposite side of the road. The site of some early Trafford & Hulme CAMRA meetings in the spacious upstairs function room, not to mention once legendary jazz nights, it was closed and had been for a number of weeks.

Heading into the town proper took us to the **Malt Shovels**, a Sam Smiths pub serving the staple Old Brewery Bitter. As is the way with Sam Smiths, the beer was not to everyone's taste but there was no denying that at £1.80, it is the cheapest pint by far in this or, come to think of it, any area. A cracking pub this, with a games room, a separate lounge and an open fire with no music to disturb the congenial atmosphere.



Immediately opposite is the **Victoria Tavern** which is more of a restaurant really. However we

drinkers were welcomed at the bar to sample the Old Speckled Hen on offer.



Along the shopping precinct now to the **Bricklayers Arms**, a lively haven from the Saturday crowds. Marston's EPA and Pedigree were among the offerings today. A small fenced off patio area at the front leads into a long narrow room with the bar taking up most of the space to the right. On the left are large open booths and to the rear some more tables and a separate room which can be used for darts.

A short walk now to the edge of the town centre to the **Unicorn**, the Wetherspoons branch in the town. Occupying a prominent corner position, the pub has a large open plan internal area that is a bit too cavernous for some tastes. There was the usual array of real ale to be expected from the chain and I had the Weetwood Ambush from the Kelsall Brewery in Cheshire, an excellent alternative to the big brewery wares.



Down now to the Goose Green area and **Costello's Bar**, named after John, the founder of the Dunham Massey Brewery, and until recently the sole brewery pub (a new outlet has opened up in nearby Lymm.) All ales on the bar are of course from the brewery ranging in styles from the Milk Stout through mild to the Golden ales such as Summer Meadow via the Big Tree Bitter.

A surprise now and a welcome diversion across the square through the rear of what used to be the Faulkners is now the **Malt 'n' Apple** specialising in cider and whisky but with a beer on handpump too, Thwaites Wainwright being served for the grain fanciers. Pleasantly fitted out the bar feels a lot airier and with a lot more light now. Stop press - the Malt 'n' Apple has now closed (see Pub News).

A quick diversion now out the front door of the **Malt 'n' Apple** down the main street towards the station and a pop in to the **Slug'n'Lettuce**. The lack of real ale on numerous previous surveys had meant expectations were not high, but we were pleasantly surprised to find one on offer. The Green King IPA was not rated well by most, but the effort is appreciated and we had the chance to talk to the manager about his plans.

Now up to the market area of town and a cluster of bars and clubs to explore starting with a pre-arranged visit to the **Working Men's Conservative Club** selling a decent pint of Holts Bitter, the early arrivals in our party having finished off the guest ale which has been alongside it. A small cosy lounge leads into a large function room and a games room with snooker tables.

A few doors down is the **Belgian Bar** selling among others products of that country mainly in bottled form, some real ale has been on in the past but not today.

A few yards away now to the bar known as **Pi**, one of a small group so named for the various crusty products served up alongside an ever changing beer and cider list. Sibling Pi (Chorlton) is now in its fifth year in the Good Beer Guide while this



branch has also visited Pi (Rose Lane) in Liverpool. A number in our party took the opportunity to devour a gourmet Pieminister pie while enjoying a beer from the selection of three real ales including house beer Tatton Blonde.

Next now to the **Altrincham Conservative Club**. A welcome always awaits CAMRA members at this spacious club with a large high ceilinged room with a small half circle bar dispensing at least one beer. Today it was a fine pint of Charles Wells Bombardier.

We bade farewell to steward Bob and headed off down the hill to the **Old Mill** or **Barringtons** as it is now known. There are two rooms downstairs with accommodation upstairs; the bar layout has changed over the years and the current configuration has the handpumps in the front room. These are now visible from the main road whereas in the past they were in the back and would lead to confusion as to whether any real ale was for sale. The bar had one ale on, an on form Holts Bitter. *Continued on page 21*





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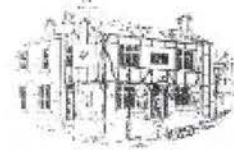
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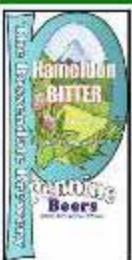
**Contacts - Office: 0333 210 4021; Geoff: 07816 912 794; Robin: 07709 874 783**

*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.



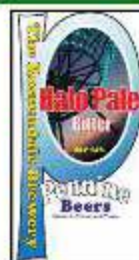
**Glen Top Bitter**  
4.0%

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  
The Sportsman, 57, Mottram Road, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2NN - 0161 368 5000

[www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk](http://www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk)

*All of our beers are suitable for vegetarians & vegans.*



# The Altrincham Amble

Continued from page 16

Back up the hill now to the old centre of town calling in at the **Old Roebuck**. There were a few standard nationals on sale here but it's a cosy enough venue, multi-roomed with karaoke and some live acts as well as a good quiz in my experience. A lively enough locals' pub suiting all tastes.

Across now to the old square past the town stocks to the re-opened **Orange Tree**, its demise being short-lived. There were a couple of ales here, as it has always had, with a karaoke on this particular night which one of our number indulged in (nothing like a dozen pubs to relax those inhibitions). The upstairs lounge is a sometime venue for CAMRA branch meetings.



Finally our journey ended at the **Old Market Tavern**, at one time the town courthouse hence the aforementioned stocks outside. A superb array of handpumps greets the discerning drinker with details of the style strength and price conveniently listed on a whiteboard making this pub a regular nominee for various branch, regional and national CAMRA awards. There are also live bands most weekends so be prepared to rock till late. Quiz night is Wednesday with acoustic gatherings on Thursdays. The small room to the side is an excellent venue for our branch meetings and poker nights.



So the real ale scene in Altrincham is alive and constantly evolving despite a few setbacks, however by the time you read this there may be some new additions.

## Poynton Update

Bollington Brewery opened their third house last month in the form of the **Cask Tavern** on Park Lane in Poynton (as predicted in last month's OT).

While we missed the opening night OT dropped in soon afterwards. The Cask Tavern has had something of a chequered history but has usually sold cask beer (albeit of varying quality). It's now had a complete makeover and we can vouch for the quality of the beers on offer.



It has a modern, almost stripped-back look, with clean lines and a colour scheme in up-to-the-minute shades of grey-green and other dark colours. That's not to say it's a gloomy place – far from it. The furniture and other accessories are vintage and traditional, and the overall effect is very smart.

There are six cask beers from the Bollington range along with a cask cider (Celtic Marches Thundering Molly) and perry (Broadoak). These are supplemented by three keg beers from the likes of Buxton, Marble and RedWillow. Even the lager is local – Moravka from Taddington Brewery. A major addition to the local beer scene we think.

# Brewery News

Local, Regional and International

## Moves Afoot

The Opening Times area has lost a brewery and gained a brewery. In Manchester the **Privateer Brewery** has left its Temperance Street premises and is now brewing in more rustic surrounding somewhere in Salford. On the other hand, Rochdale based **Greenmill Brewery** has upped sticks and moved to the Harewood Arms on Broadbottom. They took over the pub on 24 September and the plan was to have eight handpumps – six for beers and two for cider together with bottled Belgian beers. If all goes to plan OT will be dropping by in time for December's issue.

## Magnet Brewery

As this issue of OT went to press there was a large hole in the ground behind the Magnet in Stockport. This was to accommodate the foundations of the pub's brewhouse which is now being built following the granting of planning permission. Magnet owner Ian Watts is doing the building work himself and he will also be installing the brewery which should be up and running by Christmas. The original plans to position the brewery in the pub cellar have been abandoned as impractical.



Sarah Bergin will initially be the brewer but due to the demands of being a new mother, thereafter the brewing duties will be shared amongst the other staff to brew a range of regular beers. At this stage it is not known if the brewery name Cellar Rat will be resuscitated or whether a completely new pub brewery name and recipes will be used.

## Fool Hardy Ales

Martin Wood is now producing a monthly special to go alongside the core range. For October this was Rabble Rouser (4.8%) made with pale and amber malts with the hop varieties being Cascade, Galena and Chinook for a crisp bitter finish. The November special will be Ruthless Breed (4.2%) a very pale beer using Summit, Chinook and Pacific Jade hops. Martin is also contemplating a dark six percent beer for Christmas. Apart from the name, Rogue Santa, no other details had been finalised as we went to press.

## Rooie Dop and Oersoep

Who? What? Last month two Dutch new wave brewers came to the North West. Mark and Jos from Utrecht-based Rooie Dop along with Kick and Sander from Nijmegen brewers Oersoep hosted a "Meet the Brewer" event at Manchester's Beermoth beer shop where lucky punters were able to try a selection of their beers. At the same time they also visited Ilkley Brewery, and more locally, Buxton, Quantum and RedWillow breweries for some collaborative brewing.



The beers sound interesting. At Buxton they made a very hoppy imperial oatmeal stout which was infused with wild *brettanomyces* yeast and is being matured in a red wine cask for some months. The beers from Quantum and RedWillow will hit the streets sooner. From the former is a Belgian *saison* style beer infused with lapsang souchong tea while at RedWillow there will be a "continuously hopped" table beer at about 2.9%. We hoped to have a photo of the guys at Quantum Brewery to illustrate this but your editor left his camera in an anonymous black cab... We do however have a picture of Mark from Rooie Dop at RedWillow and here it is.



# CAMRA Update

Latest News from the Campaign for Real Ale

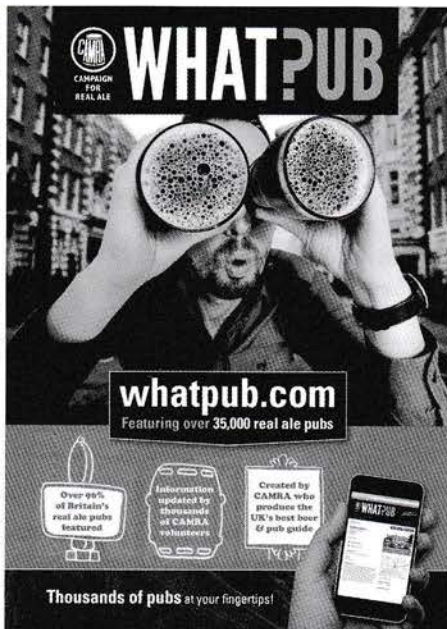


## New Online Pub Guide

**CAMRA has launched its first ever national online pub guide – [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com) – dedicated to helping the public find the best pubs to suit their needs across Britain.**

Following an extensive two year project by thousands of CAMRA volunteers, [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com) features 47,000 pubs, around 36,000 of which serve real ale – making the site the most definitive online guide to real ale in the UK.

Whatpub.com, which has been designed to automatically optimise for use on laptops, tablets and mobile devices, offers over thirty different search fields ranging from dog friendly pubs to those that offer newspapers or live music, making the results customizable to each person's individual preferences. Another key feature is that of the 35,800 real ale pubs featured, around 22,000 have details of the real ales being served – taking the guesswork out of a visit for real ale lovers.



Andy Shaw, a CAMRA Director, said "CAMRA has developed WhatPub to be the ultimate online pub guide for all pub-goers. It may even help encourage people who have stopped using pubs regularly, since WhatPub will help them find the ideal pub to suit their needs."

WhatPub entries are written by local CAMRA members and then approved by dedicated branch volunteers. A full entry offers a description and pictures of the pub, the address, opening hours, who owns it, lists the regular real ales they stock, states whether the pub offers Guest Beers, highlights the pub's main features e.g. availability of food, gives a map of where the pub can be located, sat nav reference, OS reference and highlights the local transport available.

WhatPub also allows CAMRA members to score the quality of the real ales served in the pub, which helps CAMRA select entries for a number of local and national publications.

Andy Shaw commented on the entries, "WhatPub differs from many other pub websites which are based on details provided by the person who owns the pub, who may be a little biased! I would like to thank the thousands of CAMRA volunteers for their time and effort in submitting these entries. It is this process that makes WhatPub totally independent."

Mr Shaw concluded, "WhatPub has plenty more future planned developments but we are very proud of the website launched today and CAMRA hopes everybody will enjoy using it."

Some examples of pubs featured on [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com):

### **Nutshell, Bury St Edmunds (Smallest pub in the UK)**

One of the claimants to the title "England's smallest pub", with an interior measuring only 15 by 7 feet & is listed by the Guinness Book of Records. Main drinking area is crowded if more than 6 people are in the bar at any time. The record for the number of people crammed into the pub is said to be 102 (plus a dog called Blob). Contains various curios

including a mummified cat & old halberd. Function room upstairs. The building dates from the mid-19th century.

### **The Baum, Rochdale (CAMRA National Pub of The Year 2013)**

A hidden gem within a conservation area, the Baum occupies part of the same building as the Pioneer Museum on an isolated part of Toad Lane, just south of the By-Pass (St Mary's Gate). A split level inn with old world charm, the conservatory at the rear overlooks a large beer garden. Friendly staff serve ever changing real ales from 8 hand pulls – one dedicated to Cider, a large choice of worldwide bottled beers and continental lagers on draught. Good, reasonably priced fresh food served daily until 9.00pm (6.00pm Sunday). Outside is a covered smoking area. CAMRA branch Pub of the Year 2009 and National Pub of the Year 2013.

## Good Beer Guide Selection

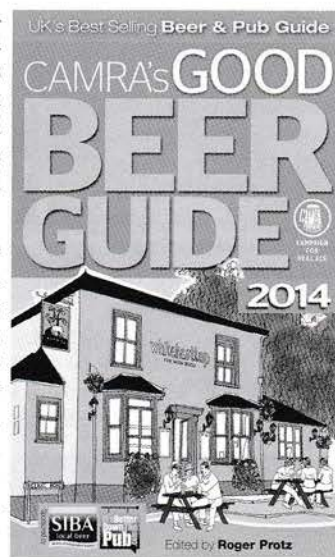
Have you wondered how CAMRA selects pubs for the annual Good Beer Guide? Each CAMRA branch is responsible for the entries in its area within the county and each listed pub must consistently serve real ale (and real cider if offered) of good quality.

To help us do this, we collect beer quality information through CAMRA's National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) in which members are asked to contribute scores for pubs throughout the year. It is easy to score your beers in NBSS. Log in to CAMRA's online pub guide, WhatPub (<http://whatpub.com>), using your membership number and the same password that you use to enter the CAMRA national website.

Search for the pub and enter a score for each beer that you drank in the Submit Beer Scores panel on the right of the screen. There is plenty of help and information about NBSS on the Beer Scoring tab. A version of WhatPub optimised for use on a smart phone is due to be launched in August 2014 and a downloadable app will appear later, so you can score your beer in the pub while you drink it! If you don't have online access at all, then ask your NBSS Coordinator at a branch meeting for paper forms and we will enter your scores for you.

Having collected thousands of beer scores over the year, we generate a report in January giving the average, best and worst scores for each pub and a confidence factor based on the number of scores received. The Branch Committee uses these data to draw up a list of eligible pubs with the highest average score, supplemented by other sources of information, and then visits them to update the pub details ahead of a selection meeting in February. All branch members are invited to that meeting at which branches select their quota for the next Good Beer Guide. To make this work better, we need many more members to enter their scores.

We value the opinions of all members whether active or not and we need as many opinions as possible for as many pints in as many pubs as possible. This is so we can have confidence in the statistics. We ask members to score the pubs continually not just once or twice. NBSS works across the country not just in your local branch. If you are not a member but would like your opinions of beer quality in pubs to count, then join CAMRA!







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Liver Pâté with Fruit of the Forest Compote, served with Warm Toast

### Mains

Rosemary & Orange Glazed Turkey, with Goose Fat Roast Potatoes, Horseradish Mash, Stilton and Bacon Chipolatas, Maple Roast Parsnips, Herb Buttered Sprouts, Pork Braised Cabbage, Pork Apricot & Orange Stuffing Balls Served with Madeira Gravy.

Nut Roast with Cranberry Topping Served with Christmas Trimmings (V)

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Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit [www.camra.org.uk/joinus](http://www.camra.org.uk/joinus) or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

### Your Details

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Joint Membership (Partner at the same address)	£28 <input type="checkbox"/>	£30 <input type="checkbox"/>

For Young Member and concessionary rates please visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or call 01727 867201.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association

I enclose a cheque for \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Applications will be processed within 21 days

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01/08

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## Enjoying Real Ale & Pubs

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Date



# Pub News

## Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

### Wheatsheaf



Readers may recall that in our September issue we highlighted some local pubs advertising they sold cask beer or real ale when in fact none was available. There have been some welcome changes.

The best news is from the **Wheatsheaf** on Higher Hillgate, Stockport. Cask ale has been introduced here in the form of Robinsons' Dizzy Blonde. Not only that but licensee Lorraine Jones tells us that it is selling well which is doubly good news. It is good to welcome the pub back to the cask ale fold.

Elsewhere things are mixed. The **Pineapple** in Gorton has decided to take down the misleading sign rather convert to the real thing (which is fair enough if there really is little or no demand for cask ale there). The **Full Shilling** which advertises "Real Ales" has explained that this is accurate in that at least one "real ale in a bottle" is sold, and so is off the hook.



### Bulls Head

Paula Wilkinson (pictured above) celebrated 12 months at the helm of the Bulls Head on London Road, Manchester in September. You can't really miss the pub as it is situated directly across the roads from the rear entrance to Piccadilly Station and presents a warm welcome to visitors to and from the city.

Paula took over from long term licensee Keith Wylam but it was a smooth transition as Paula had worked as a barmaid at the pub for nine years before taking over from Keith, who still

calls in (and who nominated her as his successor). Her philosophy has been "if it's not broken you don't fix it", so it's been very much business as usual albeit with sales on a pleasing upward trend.

There are now six cask ales available: Jennings Cumberland Ale, Ringwood Boondoggle and Banks's Sunbeam are permanent with three additional guest beers, usually but not always from the Marston's range. Banks's Mild is available on a semi-regular basis, too. A recent innovation has been the introduction of traditional cider, and two should be available by the time you read this.

Food is available every day at lunchtime and evening and the famous Tuesday quiz continues. "It's been brilliant" says Paula looking back over the last 12 months. "It's hard work but very good". Well worth dropping in next time you're at Piccadilly.

### Didsbury News



The new licensees at the **Royal Oak** in Didsbury are Danny Howell and Emma King. Danny and Emma are former Wetherspoons licensees from the 2013 Good Beer Guide listed Spinning Mule, Nelson Square, in Bolton. During a brief discussion that OT had with Danny he told us that he is planning a mini ale festival (subject to Marston's approval of course) and the introduction of hot food for the winter period. His plans include providing a hot stew and a chilli to draw in customers during the cold winter months.



Another new licensee in Didsbury is John Molloy at the "**Famous Crown**". He is from Wexford in

Ireland and when OT visited the pub in mid-October it was in the final stages of a complete refurbishment and looked much better for it. John has no plans to change the range of cask beers sold but he told us that his aim is "to get the pub busy again" and to introduce a new menu. He said that he would do "whatever it takes" to get the pub going. Next time you are in the Didsbury area please call in and give him some encouragement by drinking the cask beers and perhaps suggesting a guest beer that he might try.

### Pub Shorts

In Stockport the former (and long closed) **Nicholsons Arms** on Lancashire Hill is about to reopen – as a Costcutter convenience store. The pub's one claim is that it was the only central Stockport pub to feature in CAMRA's first Good Beer Guide in 1974. No we don't know how or why either.

In Edgeley the former **Greyhound** (also a one-time Good Beer Guide entry) has been sold at auction and an application is in for a residential development. Another Stockport pub with a possibly uncertain future is the **Tiviot**



(above) on Tiviot Dale. Long serving licensees Dave and Jill retire on 17 November and we believe that that the pub may then close.

On the plus side a new pub is due to open this month on Styal Road in Moss Nook. This is to be a Mitchells & Butlers operation to be named the **Flying Horse** (we think). Expect a reasonable cask offering.

In Central Manchester the **Albert Square Chop house** offers a decent range of cask beers with local and national beers available (for example Bootleg Chorlton Pale, Sharp's Doombar, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Holt's IPA have recently featured.) CAMRA members can get a 10% discount of cask beers on production of a valid membership card.

In Altrincham the former Faulkners (latterly the **Malt & Apple**) has been closed and secured by the landlord. We think this is a shame as, despite being slightly flawed, this was a genuine attempt to try something different. In Stretford the closed **Bass Drum** looks to have served its last as a planning application has been lodged to demolish and replace the pub with a drive-through McDonald's. And in Whalley Range the **Jam Street Café** has been reported as having a skip outside and workmen within. We have no information what will be replacing this popular venue.





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