



January 2014

Opening

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Pub of the Month

The Magnet, Heaton Norris



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for January 2014 is to be presented to The Magnet on Wellington Road North, writes John Sutcliffe.

The Northern side of Stockport has, over the last few years, become something of a beer drinkers' Mecca where, within a distance of less than a mile, there is a choice of 30 interesting beers, in five or six superb traditional pubs. The Magnet was the first of these and remains a centre for choice and quality.

Built in 1840 the Magnet has retained its original name for 175 years. It was totally revitalised and reopened in November 2009 and has since then won a number of CAMRA awards. The pub is still run by the team of Lesley, Lee, Sarah and Roy, ably supported by friendly and knowledgeable staff. This year will see the Magnet become the town's second brew-pub when the brewery currently being built at the back of the pub comes on line.

Boasting 13 handpumps for beer and another for draught cider, the range is complemented by a large number of foreign bottled beers. These are mostly available on the main bar in a bustling vault to the left, leading to a lower pool room. To the right is a series of rooms separated by arched openings served by a smaller bar counter. Beyond these is a covered smoking area with a wooden staircase to the upstairs beer terrace and function room.

The Magnet has a nominate charity, Kidneys for Life at MINT (Manchester Institute for Nephrology and Transplantation). This charity is based at Manchester Royal Infirmary and funds raised helps renal patients from all over the region. So far the Magnet has raised thousands of pounds through donations, cheese nights and the sale of pump clips. Additionally a string quartet performed in the late autumn.

The award will be presented on Thursday, 30th January 2014, so please join us from 8.00 p.m. until 11.30 p.m.

There is a very frequent 192 bus service along the A6 Wellington Road with the railway station about 20 minutes walk and the bus station 15 minutes walk.



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What's On

Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Opening Times - Information

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Trading Standards

For complaints about short measure pints etc contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service. This works with all the Trading Standards services in the North West and is supported by the Office of Fair Trading. You can email the Consumer Service at the following address:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice/consumer_service.htm

Their telephone no. is 0845 404 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer_e/reporting_a_problem_to_trading_standards

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- Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com
- East Cheshire: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx
- Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info/

Disclaimer

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 January issue is Wednesday 18 December

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Local CAMRA Events

All Welcome at these events

Tuesday 8th – Presentation of Neil Richardson Award to the Marble Arch, Rochdale Road, Manchester. From 7.30pm. (NM)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting (**includes Pub of the Year selection**): Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley. Start 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting: Railway, Chapel Road, Sale. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

Saturday 11th – Branch 40th Anniversary Meal: Robinsons Visitor Centre, Unicorn Brewery, Apsley Street, Stockport. Guest Speaker Roger Protz. Cost £12 per head. Book with John Clarke on 0161 477 1973. Starts 7.30pm. (SSM)

Monday 13th – Branch Meeting: Labour Club, Stalybridge. First discussion re Good Beer Guide 2015 selection. Starts 8.30pm. (HPNC)

Tuesday 14th – Best Newcomer 2013 presentation to the Font, Manchester Road, Chorlton. From 7.30pm. (T&H)

Wednesday 15th – Branch Meeting: Eagle, Collier Street, Salford. Includes shortlisting for Good Beer Guide 2015. Starts 7pm. (NM)

Wednesday 15th – Committee Meeting: Bollin Fee, Wilmslow. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Friday 17th – Gorton & Hyde Road Stagger: 7.30pm Suburban, Gorton Cross Street; 8.30pm Plough, Hyde Road. (SSM)

Tuesday 21st – Winter Pub of the Season presentation to the Wharf, Castlefield. From 7.30pm. (T&H)

Friday 24th – Social at Manchester Beer & Cider Festival, Stuart Street, Sport City, M11 4DQ from 3pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 29th – Northern Quarter Surveying Crawl: Smithfield 7.30; Wheatshaf 8.15 plus 57 Thomas Street and Soup Kitchen. (NM)

Thursday 30th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport. From 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 6th February – Branch Meeting: Melville, Barton Road, Stretford. Starts 8pm. (T&H)

Thursday 13th – EGM followed by Good Beer Guide 2015 selection: Timperley Taverners Club. Starts 8pm. (T&H)



Curmudgeon

A Pattern of Decline

Over the past fifteen years or so, there has been a dramatic retrenchment of the British pub trade that has led to the closure of huge numbers of once viable pubs. However, in some types of area pubs continue to thrive, so it's not just a random or uniform trend. Is it possible to discern any pattern in the wave of closures?

The most obvious is that pubs in working-class areas have suffered worst. In a sense, this is inevitable, as historically most pubs have mainly catered for working-class drinkers but, even so, it seems to be disproportionate. Such areas have been most vulnerable to depopulation and redevelopment, the decline of traditional industries, changes in ethnic mix and the growing gulf between pub and off-trade prices. Smoking prevalence is also higher amongst working-class people, meaning that their pubs have suffered more than the average from the smoking ban.

Second is that big pubs, whether estate pub or roadhouse, are more vulnerable than little ones. They are more attractive for residential redevelopment or conversion to convenience stores, they cost more to run, they need more customers to make them viable and many of them were probably never all that appealing in the first place. For example, in Withington in South Manchester, the massive White Lion and Manor House (ex-Golden Lion) have shut down, but smaller pubs like the Albert, Turnpike and Victoria are still going strong.

Third, and maybe counter-intuitively, isolated pubs in residential areas have suffered worse than those grouped with others. Nearby chimneypots are no guarantee of survival, whereas pubs often seem to prosper by being part of a "circuit". This applies to some in areas of Victorian housing as well as those on 20th century estates. Returning to Withington, the Cotton Tree, which was in an area of housing about half a mile from the village centre, with no other nearby pubs, has closed down, but there are still five pubs in fairly close proximity in the centre.

The class factor works the other way too, as there seem to be some areas that are quite simply too upmarket to sustain pubs. For example, we have seen the closure of the Bleeding Wolf in Hale, Corbans (the former Unicorn) in Halebarns and the Royal Oak in Alderley Edge, all locations with no shortage of either spending money or potential customers living nearby. The local residents may well socialise in restaurants or each other's houses, but they no longer do it in pubs.

Market towns in general do not seem to have suffered too badly, likewise the smaller and more isolated coastal resorts. Possibly the existence of a captive market is a factor here, if the nearest big town is too far away to be easily reached for a night out, while they may also function as a hub for surrounding villages. Even here, though, the demise of traditional coaching inns is very noticeable, and peripheral pubs have suffered more than those in town centres.

The growing unwillingness to drink and drive even within the legal limit has undoubtedly led to a general thinning-out of pubs in villages and rural areas, which ironically often means that law-abiding pubgoers end up driving further than they used to. Some pubs have been able to go for the upmarket "country dining" trade, but that is a lot more fickle than local regulars and really only as dependable as the last meal served, and it isn't an option for all. Some country pubs seem to get into a downward spiral of frequent changes of licensee and format, eventually resulting in closure, whereas those with more continuity and a clear sense of purpose stand a better chance of remaining in business.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

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Stagger

Didsbury with Peter Edwardson



September's Stagger took us round the southern side of the affluent South Manchester suburb of Didsbury. We began at the **Gateway** on Kingsway to the east of the village opposite the Star City entertainment complex. This distinctive 1930s pub was for many years owned by Hyde's, who in its latter years seemed to struggle to make the most of its potential. In 2011 it was sold to Wetherspoon's and, after a slow start, has now developed a thriving trade and was certainly pretty busy even early in the evening. It has considerably more pub atmosphere than many of Spoons' outlets, with a variety of areas rambling around the central bar and much use of dark wood in the decor, although one complaint on this occasion was that it was rather overheated. Alongside the usual Ruddles and Abbot Ale, the beer range included Ilkley Summer, Millstone True Grit, Saltaire American IPA and Saltaire Blonde, all of which impressed, together with Lancaster Blonde which was not tried. A point of interest was that the manager Kevin was currently away enjoying his honeymoon.



There was no cask beer in the Bell House just up the road in the ground floor of the Travelodge, so we crossed Kingsway and carried on along Wilmslow Road to the **Olde Cock**. Owned by Greene King, it spent a period of time as a Loch Fyne seafood restaurant, but has now reverted to being a proper pub. The interior has been comprehensively remodelled from how I remember it, with a long bar down the right-hand side and a smart, modern pub atmosphere, although some of us felt the music was too loud and the bar service was not the quickest. Three cask beers were available – Greene King Festival Ale, which was pretty good, Black Sheep Golden Sheep, which shaded more towards average, and Greene King IPA Gold, which was felt to be “on the turn”. Just after we had been served with these drinks, three other beers were put on sale – Thwaites Wainwright, Taylor's Landlord and Dark Star American IPA – and the IPA Gold was exchanged for the latter, which was OK, but not quite living up to the standards of which this beer is capable.

We then doubled back to the next-door **Didsbury** which was our half-way meeting point. This is a large pub with a strong emphasis on food, with the area to the left being effectively a restaurant although the bar

area to the right is more accommodating to drinkers. Like the Gateway, this was another pub that was too warm for comfort. No less than five beers were marked as “coming soon” – Robinson's Trooper, Thwaites Wainwright, Sharp's Doom Bar, Black Sheep Best Bitter and Moorhouse's Pride of Pendle. Of the three that were available, Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted and Wadworth's 6X were both average-to-good, but Marston's EPA, a rather thin beer at the best of times, was disappointing.



Continuing along Wilmslow Road brought us to the “**Famous**” **Crown**, the first pub in the modern heart of the village. Once owned by Greenalls, this retains more of a traditional, multi-roomed feel than some of the other pubs nearby, and tonight was pretty busy with a lively atmosphere. There were three cask beers on the bar – Wells Bombardier, which was not tried, Box Steam Tunnel Vision, which was comfortably above average, and Brains Young Rev, which unfortunately was extremely vinegary. It was changed without demur and the pumpclip turned round, but you do have to question a pub's quality control procedures if undrinkable beer is being offered for sale in the middle of one the busiest sessions of the week.

Right next door to the Crown is **Expo Lounge**, a new conversion of a former furniture store by the Southern-based Loungers group. I was expecting something of a glitzy “trendy bar” feel here, but in fact it has a more relaxed, gastropub atmosphere and seems designed to appeal to twenty- and thirty-something professionals. It's basically one large room with the bar in the top left corner, a bare wood floor, an assortment of antique tables and chairs and walls covered with pictures and clocks. I thought it was quite pleasant, but it wasn't to everyone's taste, and opinions were similarly divided on the sole cask beer, Bristol Beer Factory Toga Man, a rather malty beer which some thought was fine but did not impress others. Although we had been warned of eye-watering prices, £3.40 a pint or £1.75 a half was no more than at the top end of the general Didsbury range. I also spotted Bath Ales Dark Side stout in “craft keg” form.

Crossing Didsbury Road brought us to the **Dog & Partridge**, another former Greenalls pub

now done out in a bare-boards alehouse style with various areas around the central bar. It was very busy, with a mixed clientele ranging from students to guys in suits. Four cask beers were available – Tatton Gold was very good, but Adnams Southwold Bitter and Taylor's Landlord could only manage an average rating and Thornbridge Jaipur IPA, while rather better, was nowhere near as good as examples of this well-regarded beer people had drunk elsewhere.

A narrow lane at the side of the pub took us to the **Fletcher Moss** on Albert Hill Street, once Didsbury's only back street pub, although redevelopment has made it more visible from School Lane than it used to be. A Hyde's tied house, it was originally a small pub called the Albert, but has been renamed and greatly extended at the rear. This was standing room only, and none of us managed to get through the crowds to the back of the pub. Most of us went for the Golden Ochre from Hyde's Beer Studio craft brewery, which was OK but somewhat lacking in condition. Hyde's Voyager was judged above average while Greene King-brewed Morland Old Speckled Hen turned out to be the best beer on the bar. Hyde's Original and Manchester's Finest were not tried. The pub also had Gwynt y Ddraig farmhouse cider on handpump.

Our final port of call was the **Royal Oak** back on Wilmslow Road, a Marston's tied house of long standing famous for its cheese and pate lunches. It still has a multi-roomed feel with four distinct areas, although it has been opened up somewhat over the years. It was rather quieter than most of the other pubs, and had no guest beers on, which was perhaps explained by the fact that the licensee was leaving the next week and so things were being allowed to run down a little. Marston's Burton Bitter was a little above average but was shaded for quality by the Pedigree.



So ended an interesting evening with a good cross-section of beers and pubs, although nowhere surpassed the first pub, the Gateway, for beer quality. At a time when many pubs seem to be struggling to keep their heads above water, it was good to see most doing a healthy trade. As ever, these were only the impressions of one group of people on a particular night. Why not try the pubs for yourself and see what you think?

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Pub News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Woolpack Shuts



The shock news in the run-up to Christmas was the closure of **Ye Olde Woolpack** on Brinksway, Stockport. The last night was New Year's Eve and by the time you read this the pub will have closed down.

With Mike Quinn passing on the rest of the family had found it hard to continue in all three activities in which they are involved: the pub, the wholesale cider business and their involvement every weekend in shows up and down the country. Despite this Mike's daughters Jade and Sasha and son Liam have tried hard to make the pub pay.

The cider wholesaling business and the shows were much more lucrative than the pub which, some evenings was particularly quiet. So sadly the family decided that they needed to lose the pub in order to concentrate on their other two businesses. These businesses are doing very well, occupying eleven months of the year with the only real break being in January. When Liam, Jade and Sasha left the pub they would have run it for three years and two months. The family want to stress how much they will miss their friends, who became regulars in the pub, and express their thanks for their support. We wish Sasha, Jade and Liam the best of luck with their future activities.

Cornbrook & Urmston

The death knell has sounded on one of the last pubs in the Cornbrook area of the city. Marston's **Pomona Palace** closed over the summer and has stood boarded since. Now Peel Holdings, who own the land due to it being adjacent to Manchester Ship Canal, have applied for permission to demolish the pub - subject to planning this may be happening as you read this. There are no details of what is planned in its place, but a Peel statement said "The cleared site will assist in the comprehensive regeneration of the wider area."

In Urmston, the former **TFI Mambos / Juicy** has had yet another rebranding, this time as "The Ivory" - an attempt to rebrand it as less of a nightclub and more of a pub. Unfortunately, in the process of making the change, they have removed their occasionally-used handpumps so no cask ale is available.

West Didsbury



There is a new bar on the burgeoning West Didsbury social scene. **Volta** on Burton Road, which opened in mid-December just as *Opening Times* was going to press, is the new venture from the team behind Chorlton's successful (and Good Beer Guide listed) **Electrik Bar**. Transformed in a rapid two week turnaround at the start of December, the premises were previously occupied by well respected restaurant Rhubarb. The owners have given the new venue the tag line of "neighbourhood eatery and bar" and there is much more of a restaurant feel than at *Electrik*, including full table service for diners from the menu which has a distinct "gastro" look to it - quality is the byword.

Altrincham & Chorlton

In Altrincham, what was formerly the Faulkners and then the Malt and Apple has re-opened as '**Lounge Ceol**' - just when you thought that Irish theme bars belonged in the 90s. Run by brothers Matt and James Hackland it opened on November 14th. The false grass indoors has been replaced by carpet, although the grass remains on the patio outside adjacent to Goose Green. The pub features live sports and regular live music each Friday and Saturday night (Ceol being the Irish word for music). There was no cask ale when *Opening Times* called, but we were told it should appear shortly.



Meanwhile, the chequered history of the **Orange Tree** on Altrincham's market place continues. It is only a few months since we reported that it had re-opened under the

As at the Chorlton venue, the intention is to make everybody welcome no matter what they call in for - food, a quick coffee or for an evening's drinks. *Opening Times* first called in late on opening night and found it very much in bar mode but calling back the following evening the tables were largely occupied by diners while a gaggle of drinkers congregated at the bar. There are three handpumps on the bar although as the cellar had only been completed on the day of opening there was no cask when *Opening Times* called - we were assured that Thwaites Wainwright and Magic Rock Ringmaster NZ would be on the following night (confirmed by a post on their Facebook page - VoltaFoodandDrink). The last pump is likely to feature a beer from the *Electrik Ale Experiment* range - brewed exclusively for the group by Bollington's Happy Valley Brewery.

With **Folk** bar just next door and **Mary and Archie's** almost opposite, plus the **Railway** and **Metropolitan** just up the road, there is now much for the lover of quality beers to seek out down Burton Road. Opening hours at Volta are 5pm to midnight Tuesday to Thursday, 4pm to 1am Friday, midday to 1am on Saturday and midday to midnight on Sunday.

tenure of local turnaround specialist Chris Cocks, but seems like this was one turnaround too many and did not work out. Since then, *Opening Times* understands that owners Enterprise Inns have installed a couple of short-lived emergency managers to keep the place open and one new tenant that lasted just two days. The pub has a great location so it's a real shame that Enterprise can't find a tenant who can work with them to make it the successful pub its location calls out for.

Meanwhile, a visit to the **Old Market Tavern** next door brought the news that another of Altrincham's troubled pubs should hopefully have re-opened by the time you read this. We understand negotiations were at an advanced stage to reopen the **Wheatsheaf** on Church Street just outside the town centre with a major refurbishment of this historic location planned. Hopefully more next month.

Chorlton's **Horse & Jockey** has revamped the menus both in the pub and upstairs restaurant. The new restaurant menu is described as "combining seasonal produce with British fusion cooking". Meanwhile for the pub menu, head chef Stephen White has looked to give his own spin on dishes and ingredients from around the world. There's a burger made from Japanese Kobe Beer, a German Bratwurst hot dog and American style sandwiches such as the Philly Cheese-Steak. There's also an expansion to the pies section to include hot pots and goulashes.

Manchester Beer & Cider Festival

All you need to know – and a taster of the beers on offer

What, Where and When



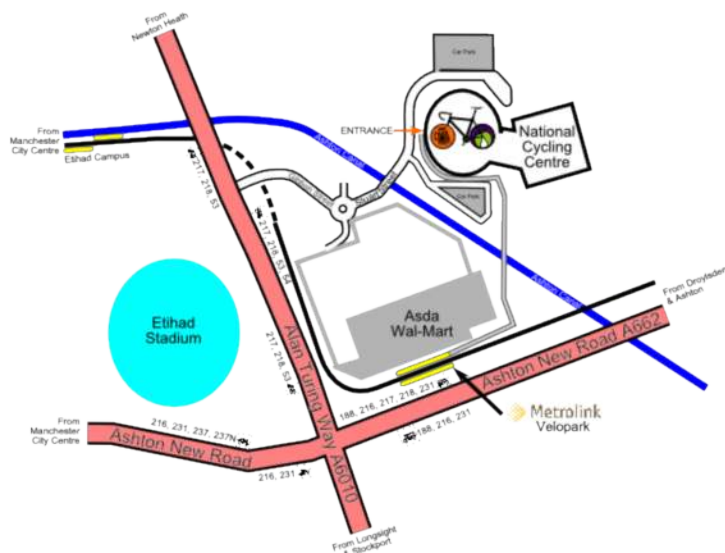
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city, if not the country. Add the odd Olympian cycling around them and you have Manchester Beer & Cider Festival.

Final preparations are now underway for the festival which takes place in the Velodrome at the National Cycling Centre from Wednesday 22nd to Saturday 25th January. The first Manchester Beer Festival since the days of the Upper Campfield Market in the 90s, it is set to be the largest ever event in Manchester. All the bars (16 of them) will be located in the centre of the Velodrome track which the public access via a tunnel which runs below the track. Visitors can opt to stay on the floor or can return to the concourse where there is seating for 1500. The concourse will also host the festival games area and a selection of food vendors. See the articles on these pages for what to expect from the various bars.

The National Cycling Centre is home to both British Cycling and Team Sky and the Velodrome track will remain operational throughout the festival. While there is no guarantee of who you will see riding around at any given session, the Great Britain Cycling Team have daily training sessions on the track - the timetable can be found at www.nationalcyclingcentre.com

The centre is located on the SportCity complex in Eastlands, close to the Etihad Stadium and Asda Wal-Mart Eastlands. It is easily accessed from the city centre being served by its own Metrolink station **Velopark** and plentiful buses from Piccadilly. It can be reached on foot (or by bike) via a short walk from Ancoats up the Ashton canal. In a special offer, on Wednesday and Thursday, visitors holding a valid Metrolink ticket can receive £1 discount off the cost of entry. CAMRA members get free entry on Wednesday and Thursday and a discount at all other times.



Key Facts

Opening Times

Wednesday: 4.30 - 10.30pm
Thursday & Friday: 12pm - 10.30pm
Saturday: 11am - 7pm

Tickets

No advance tickets - pay on the door
See website for prices

Children

Welcome daily until 7pm

Getting There

Metrolink Velopark
Buses: 216 (Piccadilly Gardens Stop D), 188, 217, 218, 231 & 237
Foot: 30 minutes from Manchester via Ashton Canal

Further Information

www.manchesterbeerfestival.org.uk
[facebook.com/ManchesterBeerFestival](https://www.facebook.com/ManchesterBeerFestival)
[@MancBeerFest](https://twitter.com/MancBeerFest)



Beer, Beer And Still More Beer

It seems you can't open a newspaper or magazine without seeing a feature about "craft beer", While the press have just discovered it, real ale drinkers have been enjoying the very best in craft beer - the cask conditioned type - for years and Manchester Beer & Cider Festival is setting out to showcase some of the very best beers from across the UK. The festival will be featuring over 300 beers from some 100 breweries - ranging from some of the largest regional brewers to some of the smallest microbreweries, many of whom feature in those "craft beer" articles.

There will be no fewer than thirteen cask beer bars at the festival including ten brewery bars. Leading the way will be Manchester's own Marble Brewery whose bar will feature eight of their beers ranging from the 3.9% Pint to the multi-award-winning Stouter Stout. Some competition to Marble's flagship stout will come from down the East Lincs Road as Liverpool Organic Brewery's bar will feature their 7.9% Imperial Russian Stout alongside more session strength drinks such as Josephine Butler "Elderflower Ale" and Kitty Wilkinson Chocolate & Vanilla Stout which has taken Beer Of The Festival awards at numerous festivals including Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival and the National Winter Ales Festival.

Special Beers

The festival team are very excited about one very, very special beer. While some festival specials are simply rebrands of an existing beer and others are special brews but reappear elsewhere under a different name, MBCF can boast a special beer of which there is only one cask. North Yorkshire's Brass Castle Brewery have taken their multi-award winning Bad Kitty Stout and blended it with a range of spices including nutmeg & cinnamon then added a couple of bottles of rum for good measure to make their Christmas Kitty special. Then for Manchester Beer & Cider Festival they have racked one cask of it into an oak cask which was formerly full of port and left it to mature. It's a genuine one off (so much so, the brewery hasn't thought of a name for it yet) - there is only one other cask remotely like it - the same beer racked into a former sherry cask and that one is staying in Yorkshire!



It won't be the only special beer at the festival with two other beers being specially brewed just for this event. Middleton's Wilson Potter Brewery has been commissioned to brew the festival's ale, which is being produced in conjunction with local rock station Real Radio XS. Listeners on 106.1 FM in the first week of January will have the opportunity to name the special beer as part of an on air competition where there will also be the opportunity to win tickets to the festival. Meanwhile, Bridgehouse Brewery of Keighley, sponsors of Bar 3 at the festival, have brewed "On Yer Bike" - at 4.1% it's a traditional English bitter with the twist of late addition of spices.



Yorkshire & Cumbria

Representing Yorkshire on the brewery bars will be Ilkley brewery which will be featuring a beer made with an exclusive experimental hop variety. Forbidden Fruit (6%) is described as a "Grapefruit Pale Ale" and is brewed with Hop #1391 from Britain's leading hop merchant Charles Faram, part of their programme to develop new varieties and grow aromatic new English hops. There will be no shortage of hops on the Hawkshead Bar which will feature both their 5% Cumbrian Five Hop and the 6% NZPA. There will even be the answer to the question that every beer festival volunteer gets at some point during a festival - "got any lager mate" - well yes we do - Hawkshead's very own Lakeland Lager. Although sold on keg in many Robinsons' pubs across Cumbria, at the festival it will be the rarely found cask conditioned version.

Champion Beers

If award winning beers are your thing, then we have the very best of them - starting with the supreme champion of them all - the current reigning CAMRA Champion Beer Of Britain, Elland 1872 Porter. For those who like something a little lighter, we will have Jarl from Fyne Ales of Argyll which narrowly lost out to 1872 Porter in the last three of the 2013 final. Both of these beers will feature on Bar 1, where you will also find Brightside Brewery's Amarillo which recently took Gold in the Society Of Independent Brewers North West Competition. There will also be five more champions crowned at the festival with the finals of the North West

round of the Champion Winter Beer Of Britain competition being held on the Wednesday morning. The gold medal winners in the winter categories (Stouts, Porters, Old Ales & Strong Milds, Strong Old Ales & Barley Wines) will then go head to head with the winners of the other six competition categories seeking to be crowned Champion Beer Of The North West.

Barley Wines

Manchester Beer & Cider Festival has grown from the ghost of the National Winter Ales Festival's nine year tenure in Manchester and the festival doesn't intend to disappoint those who come to the city in January looking for the very best in stouts, porters, old ales and barley wines. Of course Robinsons' classic Old Tom will be present, as will Hydes 6.8% XXXX. If you like your beers strong but not dark then head for the Bollington Brewery bar where you can sample Goldenthal, a 7.4% continental style golden barley wine or cross the hall to Bar 1 where you will find the 2012 Champion Beer Of Britain, Coniston Brewery's Number 9 Barley Wine (8.5%).

Something For Everyone

There will be something for everyone with the strong Barley Wines being contrasted by some of the amazing super-hopped low ABV beers now being produced - Brentwood's BBC2 weighs in at just 2.5% whilst Stockport's own Quantum Brewing Co will have their Small Beer (2.1%) on Bar 2. As well as traditional bitters and modern golden ales, those looking for more unusual flavours will have plenty to choose from. Waen Brewery's Chilli Plum Porter does what it says on the tin, while Allgates Sloe Stout doesn't take much more working out - brewed to the same recipe as award winning Mad Monk; but to a slightly higher ABV (7.2%), freshly picked organic sloe berries are added to the cask and conditioned for two months - the acidity of the sloes provides a perfect foil to the rich beer and the additional conditioning also dries the beer. For those that like it a bit more spicy, Offbeat's Weird Whisky Mac takes the brewery's Unhinged Ginger and conditions it in Glenfarclas malt whisky casks to give the beer equivalent of the traditional Scottish cocktail of whisky and green ginger.

By the time you read this the full list of cask beers should be online at www.manchesterbeerfestival.org.uk - additions, deletions and availability can be monitored by following @MancBeerFest on twitter or liking the festival at facebook.com/ManchesterBeerFestival



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CAMRA Discounts

There are several pubs in the Opening Times area that offer a discount to card carrying CAMRA members. This is a very welcome promotion and we are very grateful to those pubs that have taken this initiative. Opening Times will be publishing an up to date list of those pubs once every three months. To date we have been given details of the following six pubs which offer a discount. If any pub out there has been missed off the list (or the information below is incorrect) then please email Opening Times' Editor John Clarke with details. The email address is: stocam@btinternet.com.

Here are the pubs which we currently have full details of:

- ☉ **Font, New Wakefield Street, Manchester:** 25% off cask ales
- ☉ **Font, Manchester Road, Chorlton:** 25% off cask ales
- ☉ **Salisbury Hotel, Wakefield Street, Manchester:** 50p off a pint of cask ale
- ☉ **Albert Square Chop House:** 20% off cask ales
- ☉ **Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:** 10% off cask ales
- ☉ **Harewood Arms, 2 Market Street, Broadbottom:** 20p per pint off cask ale Sunday to Thursday

Yet another good reason to join CAMRA – see the membership form on page 18.

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High Peak Pub Scene

Tom Lord & Robin Wignall with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Whilst some of the local pubs were still selling autumn seasonal beers, Caledonian Autumn Red at the **White Horse** in Whaley Bridge, the early days of December saw the arrival of Christmas and winter beers. Brains Fir King Gold was available in the **White Hart** (pictured below), and Great Heck Treason Stout was a highlight in the **Goyt**, both in Whaley Bridge. Treason Stout is a fine complex brew. At the **Navigation** in Buxworth, a good range of beers from Geeves, Stairfoot, Barnsley and Greenfield was supplemented by a seasonal mulled cider from a box, Weston's Twist. Christmas beers were also available at Good Bottled Beer Guide listed **Goyt Wines** in Whaley Bridge. These included Burton Bridge Festive Christmas Porter, Anchor Brewing, San Francisco, 2013 recipe, Merry Christmas Happy New Year, Gouden Carolus Christmas from Belgium and the Wye Valley Dorothy Goodbody Christmas brew.



My brief annual visit to the **Sheffield Tap** gave the opportunity to sample the wares of the recently installed on-site Tapped Brewery which also supplies York and Euston Taps. Ale Best Bitter, Mojo Crystal Pale and Stogue Dry English Stout made for good drinking. Guest beers were still available and Chantry Brewery New York Pale from this new-ish brewery in Rotherham was also well worth trying. Sheffield Tap is conveniently located in historic premises on Platform 1 of Sheffield Station, convenient for those arriving by train from the Manchester area or from the western side of the Peak District.

Mid-October (I know it seems ages ago now) saw the celebration of Peak District crafts, food and drink, in the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton. This year a dedicated beer marquee helped to keep off persistent rain, if not the cold. Although there was input from Thwaites, and Thwaites Phelan Fine was available, beers were mainly local Derbyshire brews. Buxton, Thornbridge and Howard Town were all

represented, whilst ales from Wirksworth, Brampton and Barlow were less familiar. There were no problems keeping the beer cool, so all the beers tried were in good form, if somewhat expensive. Well worth a visit next October, but be aware of my last comment.



A December visit to the recently re-opened **Cheshire Cheese** (pictured above), on High Street just south of the Market Place, was very enjoyable. A good range of Titanic beers was available from their 3.5% Steerage through Night To Remember, Anchor, White Star and Plum Porter to Captain Smith's at 5.2%. If that was not enough, Everards Tiger, Wood's Wonderful, Shropshire, and Springhead Leveller, a fine dark brew from

Nottinghamshire, were also on tap. The beers could be used to wash down enjoyable and sensibly priced food. An interesting menu is served until 20.30, with lunchtime 'lite bite' special deals available until 17.00. The recent refurbishment has produced a tasteful decor and pleasant surroundings. The Cheshire Cheese is well worth a visit, and I am sure that my December call will be the first of many.

Whilst the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge and the **Crossings** at Furness Vale continue to serve decent pints of Unicorn and Trooper, elsewhere in the Robinson's estate there are continuing changes. The **Crescent** in Disley is closed and has had all signing removed, though elsewhere in Disley the **Dandy Cock** has emerged from a big refurbishment, and has re-opened (see High Peak News below for details). The **Pineapple** in New Mills is closed and again all signing has been removed. The **Wanted Inn** at Sparrowpit has been sold, I understand, and again is expected to be re-opened by the time you read this. That would make much better news for the New Year.



High Peak Pub News With Tom Lord



The **Dandy Cock** in Disley reopened at the start of December having undergone a complete redecoration and refurbishment. This has been achieved in a sympathetic manner retaining the original layout but increasing the seating areas. It is understood that further improvements are to be undertaken outside the pub particularly at the rear. Food is now available and four handpumps provide a range of Robinson's beers.

On the downside the **Masons Arms** in Denton at the junction of Two Trees Lane and Stockport Road has closed and the pub signage removed. However a positive note from Denton is that the former **Jolly Hatters** pub on Stockport Road near Crown Point is shortly to

reopen as the **Full Shilling** hopefully selling a range of cask conditioned ales.

In Glossop the **Labour Club** now often has a Buxton Brewery beer alongside the regular Mmmmoorhouses Premier. The **Spinnners Arms** in Hadfield currently has beers from Mouselow Farm Brewery. These are Smokey Mild, Udder the Influence, Flying Goose and Xmas Ale.

Back in Tameside the **Bee Hive** in Droylsden now has a regular changing beer supplied by a micro brewery. Also in Tameside up in Mossley, the **Best of Brass** has recently featured Hornbeam beers. Good reports have been received about the Ginger Domination at 5.5%

Over in Thornsett between New Mills and Hayfield the **Printers Arms** currently has a good deal of a meal and a pint for a fiver between 4.30pm and 7.00pm.

The **Navigation** in Marple which was closed for a few weeks has now happily reopened again. The site of the demolished **Cherry Tree** pub in Romiley is now a block of flats !!

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Hello and Goodbye

Retirements and New Openings

Last Orders At The Tiviot

We briefly reported last month that Dave Walker and Jill Woolley of the Tiviot, Stockport called 'last orders' for their final time. This was in fact the end of a 47 year family connection with the pub and Robinsons brewery. So no apologies for revisiting the story.

In December 1965, Dave's father, Roy Walker, became the licensee for the Tiviot and pulled his first pint of Robinsons. So when his son, Dave and Dave's partner Jill Woolley announced their retirement it concluded one of the longest standing family partnerships within Robinson's estate. Working in the pub from an early age, Dave developed a passion for the trade that has continued ever since.

"I remember working for my dad when I was only 15 years old," recalled Dave, "I would collect glasses under the watchful eye of my parents; they were making sure I wasn't getting up to any mischief! When I was old enough I started pulling pints behind the bar and haven't stopped since!"



Dave took over from his father in 1978 and continued to run the pub for over three decades, building up the Tiviot's reputation as a hub within the community. Jill joined The Tiviot in 1976, first working part time on Friday evenings before becoming Landlady in 1988 (Jill and Dave are pictured above with Robinsons Chairman, Peter Robinson).

"It wasn't uncommon for some of our regulars to let themselves in the back door if they found the front was shut," recalls Jill. "They would sit down in the pub and wait for us to start the bar service. They treated the place like it was their home but it really added to the atmosphere and community feel of the place."

"You get to see a lot of changes during that amount of time," remembers Dave, "prior to the new drinking laws we had to shoehorn our customers out at 3pm. They would wait around Stockport till we re-opened at 5pm that evening! We couldn't get rid of them! They were the best regulars any pub owner could have asked for!"

Upon the announcement of their retirement from the Stockport pub, customers old and new made the trip to the Tiviot to give the duo the send-off they deserved. "We had people from all parts of the country turn up on our final day," said Dave, "some of them brought their



children who wanted to come because they remember the pub so fondly from their childhood. It was really humbling to see that our pub had touched so many lives." Many of the pub's regulars are pictured above on the last day.

Speaking on the relationship with Robinsons Brewery, Jill said: "The Robinsons family have always been so supportive of us, from the old generation to the new generation. We have loved working hand-in-hand with them for so long. We have always had the support we have needed by the brewery throughout difficult times."

White Hart Departure

Gillian Tyrrell of the White Hart, Hazel Grove, has announced her retirement after a dedicated 38 years. Gillian had already been pulling pints behind the bar of the London Road pub since 1975 when she took over the pub in 2008. No stranger to the regulars of the White Hart, she jumped at the opportunity to take over and put her stamp on the popular pub.

Fiveways Opens



The Fiveways on Macclesfield Road in Hazel Grove reopened late last year a refurbishment by new owners Joseph Holt. It's clearly had a lot of money thrown at it and you can see where the reported £1.8 million was spent.

The interior rambles around the set-back bar and most appears to be devoted to a substantial all-day food operation including a carvery plus dedicated cake and ice cream counters. The pitch certainly seems to be working as when OT called very early in the evening there was a steady dining trade. If you just want to drink then the only area which is not obviously set out for eating is a dark panelled, comfortably

"Having worked behind the bar for so long, it seemed only fitting that I would one day run the place!" joked Gillian, "It's been an absolute blast working at the pub and I wouldn't have changed it for anything."



With so many years of experience under her belt, she took the helm of the White Hart and steered the pub successfully over the next six years. The secret to her success was to offer her customers something they couldn't receive at home – quality entertainment coupled with hand-pulled cask ale and an overwhelming feel of community spirit.

Gillian said: "Hazel Grove has a high volume of pubs that are, in many ways, quite similar to ours. Our success was all about understanding what our customers wanted. We offered live music, themed nights and group activities to encourage people to get out of the house and join us. Throughout the years we've had so many supportive regulars and it has always been great to see people from all walks of life coming together."

furnished "library-cum-study" area to the left of the main entrance (pictured below). The rest of the pub reflects the light and airy "modern-traditional" style favoured by most brewers these days.



On the beer front, five cask beers were available – Holts Mild (an increasingly rare sighting in cask form), Bitter, IPA, and Two Hoots plus Speak Easy from the Holts-owned Bootleg Brewery in Chorlton.

It's a huge improvement on the old pub and should prove to be a major asset to an area where pubs are thin on the ground.

More Pub and Brewery News on page 19

THE BEER SHOP

13 KINGSLEIGH ROAD, HEATON MOOR



The Beer Shop is now fully open until 22:00 every night for on and off sales. Check the website for future events following the successful "Meet the Brewer" with Toby Mackenzie of RedWillow. Tutored tastings and more Meet the Brewer events are planned. Visit www.ukbeershop.com or call 0161 947 9338 for updated information.

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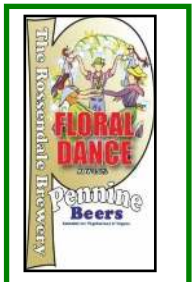
Pennine Ale (Rossendale) Ltd., 84-86, Hud Rake, Haslingden, Lanc's BB4 5AF

THE ROSSENDALE BREWERY

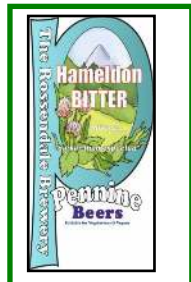
www.rossendalebrewery.co.uk

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

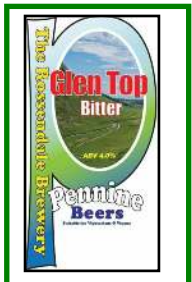
Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes



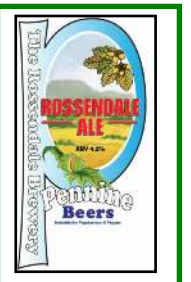
Floral Dance
3.8%
 A pale and fruity session beer, with body that is more than a match for many stronger beers!



Hameldon Bitter
3.8%
 An unusually dark traditional bitter, with a dry and assertive character that develops in the finish.



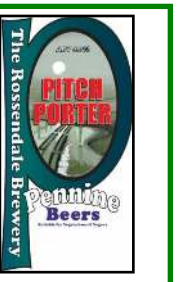
Glen Top Bitter
4.0%
 A citrusy, full bodied pale beer. Intentionally not over hopped with quite a dry after taste.



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

All of our beers are suitable for Vegetarians & Vegans.

Brewery News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Marble Brewery

Details of Marble's new head brewer, to replace James Campbell who left in the autumn, have been announced. New man at the helm will be Matthew Howgate who will join Marble on 26 February.



A little googling reveals that Matthew is currently a manager at the AB Inbev plant in Samlesbury (where ironically they still make keg Boddingtons Bitter – we think – which was the inspiration behind Marble's iconic Manchester Bitter). Prior to that he spent three and a half years as a technical brewer at the respected Leeds Brewery and before that it was almost four and a half years at Molson Coors. Plenty of experience there we think. His brewing debut for Marble will be with "Spring", the first of the 2014 seasonal brews. In the meantime Kevin Mutch continues to head up production at Marble.

Worth Brewery

Head Brewer, Paul Hession, is on the lookout for a trainee brewer to join the team at Worth

New Brewers

Readers may recall that last month we reported on the new **ShinDigger Brewing Co.** At the time the beer was in keg only which we thought might limit their horizons a bit. It's good to report then that their rather good Pacific Pale Ale (4.5%) has now made an appearance in cask. Feedback has been sufficiently positive that some future brews will also be casked too.

And yet more. Just before this issue went to press we discovered another new brewery in Manchester. This is **Squawk Brewing** who had a beer (an IPA at 5.5%) at this year's Nottingham Beer Festival. This was brewed elsewhere we think as it looks as though the kit wasn't installed until November. Hopefully more next time on this one.



The BBC's Local

Another new opening late last year was at Media City out at Salford Quays. This is the **Dock Yard**, a project by Steve Pilling and Simon Stanley, who also run the Red Lion in High Lane. The new venture is in the Dock Yard Building right next to the BBC so it will

Brewery in Poynton. This is a golden opportunity for a young person interested in brewing to serve an apprenticeship with a newish microbrewery.

If you or anyone you know is interested, please in the first instance contact Paul via c.hession@ntlworld.com, providing a brief CV together with why you think you are right for this great opportunity.

Cheshire Champs

CAMRA members from Cheshire gathered at the Poachers Inn, Bollington to celebrate the best in Cheshire beer. The reason? The presentation of the Champion Beer of Cheshire 2013 which was again judged at the Chester Beer Festival in October.

In third place, as if by magic, was Merlin (from Arclid near Sandbach) with The Wizard, a stunning best bitter. The top two were old hands at this competition having been top two in 2011. This time, however the roles were reversed and in second place was RedWillow from Macclesfield with Directionless, yet another stunning best bitter.

For the winner the judges turned to the dark side and favoured Happy Valley brewery from Bollington with their Black Out Rum Porter,

inevitably become the haunt of the corporation's staffers.

It's obviously in a modern building and the interiors is spacious and airy with the use of reclaimed wood and steel girders putting it firmly in the "industrial chic" bracket - although it's none the worse for that.



There's an all day food operation (it opens from 7.30 (9 Saturday and Sunday) for breakfast). The menu is resolutely northern in tone with butties, burgers and pies featuring along with something called a "Manc" fondue. Joking apart though on OT's sampling it's a high class operation.

On the beer front there's an emphasis on craft beers, both cask and keg with a clear Thwaites involvement. The two regulars on handpull are Wainwright and Dockyard Ale and there are four guests – we enjoyed Dark Side stout from Brightside Brewery. Keg offers were from Thwaites and Salford's First Chop Brewing Arms (mainly hoppy stuff at 5% upwards). Well worth the tram ride out.

described as dangerously drinkable by one of the judges.

Commenting on the competition, Nick Bosley (CAMRA Cheshire Area Organiser) said, "The quality and range of Cheshire brewers' beers improves year on year. This was the most difficult to judge and on any other day any one of the eight finalists could have won."

Responding, Dave Hughes the Head Brewer of the winning beer said, "We were delighted to win first place at Champion Beer of Cheshire 2013. Time to get our thinking caps on now for something special for next year's competition. Thank you to all concerned."

Thanks also to Rob & Helen Ellwood and the team at the Poachers for arranging for all three beers to be on the bar plus the complimentary buffet. A good time was had by all.

So it's congratulations to Dave and the team at Very Happy Valley brewery.

Pictured below with their awards (left to right) brewers from Merlin (Dave Peart), Happy Valley (Dave Hughes) and RedWillow (Toby McKenzie).



Robbies Seasonals

Robinsons have revealed their 2014 seasonal ale range. The six beers include two returning from 2013 and four brand new brews.

For January/February look out for Hannibal's Nectar (3.9%) which returns from 2012. It's a ruby red ale brewed using Target and Cascade hops. It should be out now. March/April sees the return of Hoptimum Prime (4.1%) brewed using only British hops – East Kent Goldings, Fuggles and First Gold. The May/June beer is Brazilian, (4.2%) described as a blonde ale, timed to coincide with the World Cup, using Cascade and Stella hops to create a "full bitter and lemon citrus palate with a lingering green hop finish". For July and August there is Citra Pale Ale (3.8%) described as an "American ale made with Citra hops" which will have a "vibrant citrus and tropical fruits character". September/October sees South Island (4.2%) a "New Zealand blonde ale with Nelson Sauvignon hop". This is the sole variety used so if Robbies put enough in this could be a real winner. Finally November/December has Indulgence (4.4%), a "mahogany coloured festive ale".



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FOR CONFERENCE & TRAINING ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT
events@frederic-robinson.co.uk or call us on 0161 612 4100
www.robinsonsbrewery.com



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