



● August 2014

Opening

TIMES

THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE

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



Bakers Re-opens – see page 17



Chorlton – All the fun of the festival – page 9

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What's On

Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Opening Times - Information

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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:

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Their telephone number is 0845 404 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

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- * Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com. 0161 228 7811
- * East Cheshire: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx. 0845 140 2666
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We aim to ensure that the information in *Opening Times* is correct at the time of going to press. If we get something wrong then please get in touch (editorial contact details above) and we'll print a correction. Please also note the opinions expressed in *Opening Times* are not necessarily those of CAMRA either locally or nationally.

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Front Cover – Bakers Vault re-opens & Chorlton Beer Festival

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Trafford & Hulme (T&H)

www.thcamra.org.uk

Contact: John O'Donnell 0789 880972; enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events

All welcome at these events

Wednesday 6th – Brewery Visit: Mouselow Farm, Hadfield, train from Piccadilly at 18:18. £10 per head. Book with contact. (NM)

Thursday 7th – Branch Meeting: Stretford Sip Club, Barton Road (upstairs at Trading Places). Starts 8:00pm. (T&H)

Saturday 9th – Hope Valley rail crawl: catch 10:49 train from Piccadilly to Grindleford. (NM)

Monday 11th – Branch Meeting: Dog & Pheasant, Oldham Road, Ashton-u-Lyne. Starts 8:00pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 13th – Moston Survey: Blue Bell, Moston Lane 7.30pm; Charlestown, Charlestown Road 8:15pm, plus two others. (NM)

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting and Summer Quiz: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8:15pm. (SSM)

Friday 15th – Chorlton Social - a visit to some of the local pubs. Details from contact/website. (T&H)

Wednesday 20th – Branch Meeting: Crown & Kettle, Oldham Road. Starts 7:30pm. (NM)

Saturday 23rd – Working Social at NCC Beer Festival. Free entry and beer for those signing up to serve for a while. Contact social@thcamra.org.uk. (T&H)

Wednesday 27th – Northern Quarter Bar Survey: Soup Kitchen, Spear Street 7:30pm; Pie & Ale House 8.30pm. Finish Port Street Beer House. (NM)

Saturday 23rd – Bus trip to Derbyshire including Peak Forest, Wardlow Mires and others. Details from contact. (HPNC)

Thursday 28th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Cocked Hat, Market Place, Stockport. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

Friday 29th – Stagger: Bramhall & Hazel Grove West: meet Three Bears, Jacksons Lane 7:30pm; Shady Oak, Redford Drive 8:30pm. Bus 374 from Stockport will take you to start. (SSM)

Wednesday 3rd September – Rochdale Canal Crawl: Wharf 7:30pm; Dukes 92 8:00pm; plus two others. (NM)

Thursday 4th – Branch Meeting: Mono, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton. Starts 8:00pm. (T&H)

Monday 8th – Branch Meeting: Glossop Labour Club. Start 8:00pm. (HPNC)

Pub of the Month

The Cocked Hat, Stockport



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for August 2014 has been awarded to the Cocked Hat, Market Place, Stockport. Graham Privett reports.

It's fair to say that in its previous incarnation as the Pack House, this pub had a pretty chequered history so Gemma Gordon and Richard Maw freely admit that they wondered what they were letting themselves in for when they were installed as licensees by the recently-formed AtWill Pubs, who acquired the empty tavern and reopened it as the Cocked Hat last year.

The ambition was to create a real pub for real people, serving real ale and real food. Even the music is real, with "proper musicians" performing every Friday and Saturday. Following considerable sprucing up, helping to create a homely and welcoming atmosphere, six hand pulls take centre stage on the bar.

There are now two permanent ales, AtWill's own Cock & Sup-it and Trappers Hat from Brimstage (from the Wirral). The four guest ales are typically from micros within a 30-mile radius of Chester. All ales are £2.30 a pint until 6.30pm Monday to Friday and if the one you choose runs out whilst being served, you get a free pint! There are also helpful blackboards with tasting notes to help you choose the right ale for you.

Roy (of Swan With Two Necks fame) is now resident chef, serving what he describes as "meals your Granny would give you in her kitchen", before adding "it's all about the gravy". These traditional home-cooked meals are available for a fiver (£9 for 2) 11am - 4pm Monday to Saturday, with traditional Sunday roasts also available until 4pm.

Gemma and Richard (who chairs Pub Watch) have big plans for the future, including expanding the real ale range to eight, the introduction of real cider and perry, and creating an outside drinking area at the rear.

The Cocked Hat is just behind Stockport's famous indoor market, with the front door facing the main entrance into St. Mary's church. Join us when we make this well deserved-award on Thursday 28th.

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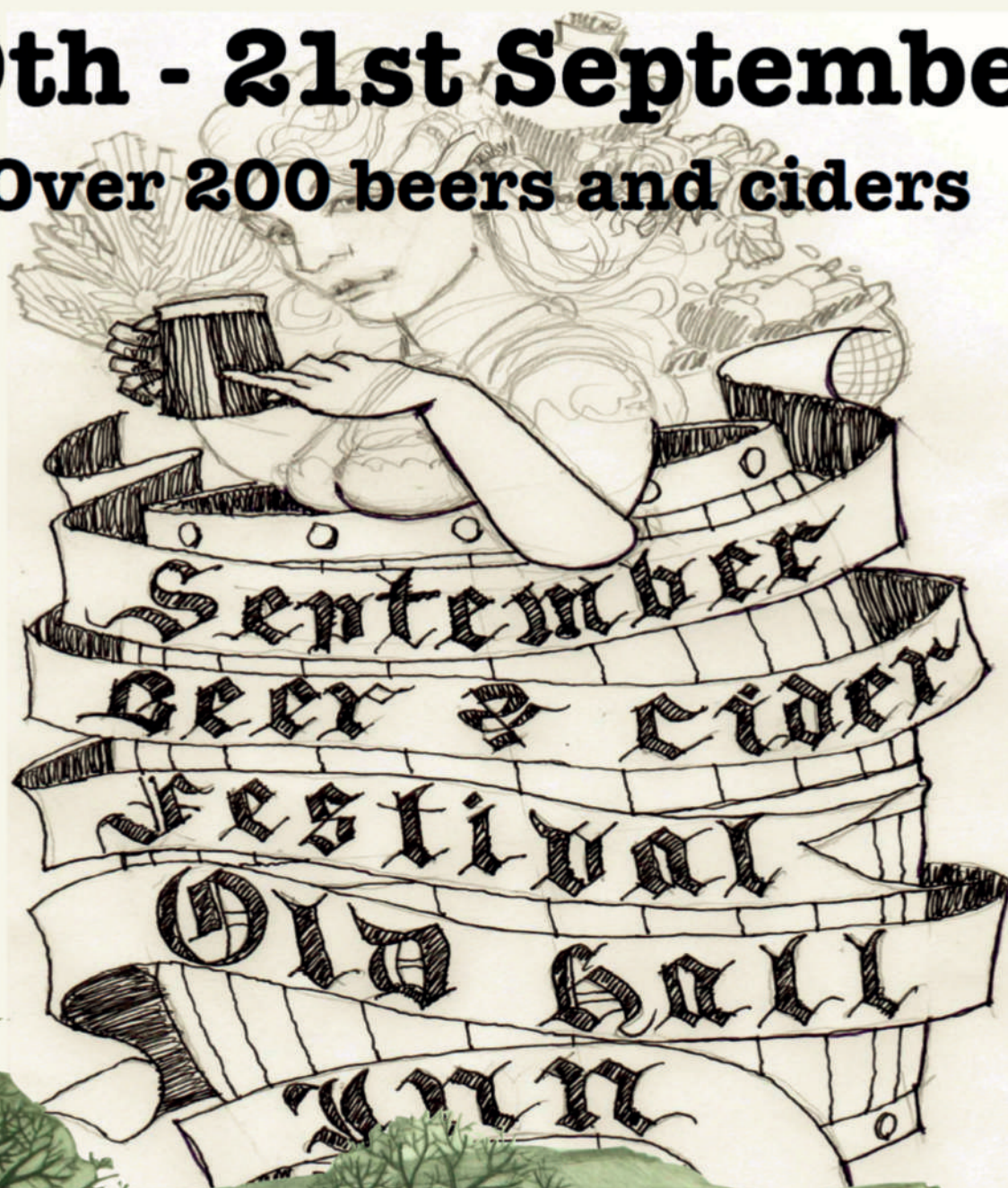
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Stagger

Peter Edwardson around Stockport Town Centre



On a pleasant sunny Spring evening, May's stagger around the south side of Stockport town centre started at the **Imperial** on St Petersgate. This pub has gone through a variety of incarnations firstly as the Blarney Stone and the Petersgate Tavern before reverting to its original name. It's a long, narrow pub with a pool room at the front and a comfortable lounge at the rear featuring black and white pictures of old Stockport on the walls. Right at the back is a stage where karaoke was being set up for later in the evening, while classic 80s hits played over the sound system. The only real ale available was Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, which was reckoned pretty good; there was a second handpump with a clip for Wainwright turned round.



We then headed up Wellington Road South to the **Nelson Tavern**, a four-square pub on the crossroads with Greek Street opposite the Town Hall. This may seem an odd choice of route, but in fact it was only added to the itinerary at a late stage as it had recently started selling real ale again. There was just one beer available – Flying Whistle, which was believed to be a seasonal brew from Brains of Cardiff, although the pump clip did not make this clear. It was a noticeably pale beer with a distinctive flavour of New World hops, on which opinions varied from a bit above average to very good indeed. We were able to take advantage of a 20p per pint discount for

CAMRA members. While opened out over the years, the interior of the pub retains four distinct sections with the bar at the back left and a comfortable lounge-type area at the front right. It has some very distinctive tiled flooring just inside the front door. Once again, karaoke was being set up for later on.

Returning back down the hill, we came to **Little Jack Horner's** on Wellington Street. This is an outwardly small street-corner pub which is surprisingly spacious inside with three distinct areas on varying levels, the bar counter being in the middle of the three. There were two real ales on sale, both from the Marston's stable – Hobgoblin was only average while Pedigree was slightly better. While the two previous pubs had both had a reasonable scattering of customers this one was pretty quiet.



We next cut through the car park and flats between the council buildings on Piccadilly and Hillgate to reach the **Red Bull**, which was by a considerable margin the busiest pub of the night so far. It was very tastefully refurbished and extended by Robinson's a few years ago to provide one of the smartest and most characterful interiors in and around the town centre, with a variety of distinct areas radiating off the central bar. Unfortunately, on this occasion a large group had been allowed to sit on a circle of stools right in front of the serving counter, making buying your beer rather difficult. There were five cask beers available including 1892, which was average to good, the World Cup-themed seasonal beer Brazilian, which was pretty good, and Trooper, which just shaded it as the best of the three. Dizzy Blonde and Unicorn were not tried.

Heading down Hillgate towards the town centre, we came to **Winter's**, a pub converted by Holt's from a jeweller's shop a couple of decades ago. It retains a number of interesting features such as an ornamental external clock and elaborate tiling inside the doorway, but somehow never seems to have fulfilled its potential. Indeed, on this occasion it was virtually deserted, although the barman said it had been lively earlier in the evening, and there was deafeningly loud music playing to a near-empty pub. The only real ale on the bar was

Holt's Bitter, which was generally thought average or a little above.

A few strides took us to the **Queen's Head** – alternatively known as **Turner's Vaults** – in the shadow of the bridge carrying Petersgate over Little Underbank. This cosy little Sam Smith's pub provided a great contrast to the previous one in being free of piped music and so full, mainly with older customers, that it was standing room only. It has a classic, unspoilt interior comprising front bar with ornate spirit taps on the gantry, central "horse box" snug and comfortable rear lounge. Again just the one cask beer – Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter – which was rated above average to good.



For our final port of call we climbed up the steps to the Market Place and, passing the Baker's Vaults which at the time was still closed, finished up in the **Cocked Hat**. Formerly known as the Pack Horse, this pub was taken over by new owners in the autumn of last year and has been totally transformed with a new name, a tasteful, low-key refurbishment and a much wider range of beers. The interior basically consists of a bar area to the left, where drinkers tend to cluster around the counter, and a two-part knocked-through lounge opposite decorated with more black-and-white pictures of old Stockport.

Beers tried included Privateer Red and Weetwood Old Dog, both of which were very good, and Phoenix Black Bee which was less impressive. However, it turned out this was the end of the cask, and it was replaced with Phoenix White Tornado, which was judged excellent and proved by some way the best beer of the night. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the overall beer quality knocked all the other pubs into the proverbial cocked hat. Other beers which we didn't try included Thwaites Wainwright, Brimstage Trapper's Hat and their own branded Atwill Pubs Best Bitter.

This was an excellent conclusion to an enjoyable evening that proved that a variety of good pubs and good beer can still be found in Stockport town centre. As ever, these are only the impressions of one group of people on a particular occasion, so why not try the pubs for yourself and see how you find them?

MARBLE ARCH INN

BEERMOTH

The Marble Arch and Beermoth are joining forces to bring you a series of events from the 15th to the 17th of August.

Beermoth's beer experts are curating the bar for the weekend promising to bring a whole host of exceptional keg and cask beer as well as an exciting collaboration between them and our own brewery.

Our head chef Justin is also working closely with the guys to bring you a specially paired set menu on the Friday night.

Set meal tickets £50, extremely limited availability.

On the Sunday the Beermoth team will be hosting an event focused around the weird and wonderful world of sour beers. Starting at 4.30pm tickets cost £18.

TAKEOVER



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Flixton & Urmston

George Elmslie checks them out

Trafford & Hulme Branch took a trip to the far reaches of Flixton Road to survey the real ale outlets in this part of our branch area. First call was the **Church Inn**, a stalwart of the cause serving at least two beers with Coach House being a regular supplier. Most of the bar area is devoted to good value food; the rest has a sporting and games theme with TV screens, a dartboard and pictures of sporting greats adorning the walls.

Not far along the road to Urmston is the **John Alker** or the **Flixton Ex-serviceman's Club**, the club with two names and a champion of real ale. Unusually the main bar is upstairs with a large function room downstairs. Walking into the bar you are confronted with four hand pumps with the regulars being Robinsons Unicorn and two from Tetley, the Bitter and the rare Dark Mild. The guest on this occasion was the sturdy Prince Bishop from Big Lamp Brewery of Tyneside.

Next the **Flixton Conservative Club**, the branch's well-deserved Club of the Year, with six handpumps spaced out between two sides of the bar. To save you the walk round a local, CAMRA member has knocked up a useful device to illustrate the offerings on any given day (pictured right). On this visit there were Reedley Hallows Pendleside, Prospect Silver Tally, Castle Rock Sheriff's Tipple, Jennings Cumberland Ale, Theakston's Best Bitter and the World Cup special Thwaites Magic Sponge with the pump clip being an actual sponge which had sadly gone missing. (more of this later).



On to the **Tim Bobbin**, the Wetherspoons near Urmston centre, a former showroom with lots of natural light (not always the case with a Spoons), and multiple hand pumps (with three of them for cider which isn't actually dispensed using them but from the standard boxes). The beers were all on the light side for me with the darkest being Sharps Doom Bar. Yorkshire's Elland brewery had two beers on, one of which, the Redeemer, was presumably the nod to current events down Rio way.



Our next stop was the **Steamhouse**, former railway buildings on the outbound platform of the still-open Urmston Station, which had four cask ales on, including Reedley Hallows again and the Magic Sponge from Thwaites, this time with the sponge in its proper place as a pump clip.



My fellow surveyors had left me by this time and I sailed on alone to the **Nelson**, a Joseph Holt multi-roomed traditional pub. I looked forward to a Dark Mild but unfortunately it had gone sour. Just in case it was the first of the day or at least a while since the last was served I tried a taster. Definitely gone. It was replaced with the Bitter with no fuss. The Nellie as it's affectionately known has a cracking vault round the back which always has a healthy a crowd.

So once again our tour of only a few outlets in this area did not disappoint with real ale aplenty.

Chorlton 2014

John O'Donnell reports

Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival celebrated its 10th anniversary with an extra day, a torrential downfall and a day baking in the sun.

The new low key Thursday session gave visitors used to the rather more hectic weekend sessions an altogether more relaxed experience. With seating for all, time to chat to the bar staff and no queues, everyone agreed it was an appropriate ice breaker for the 10th festival.

Friday afternoon saw the festival host the North West round of CAMRA's Speciality Beer of Britain Competition. A panel of judges made up of local licensees, drinkers and experts named RedWillow's Smokeless smoked porter the champion and this will go forward to the national round at the Great British Beer Festival in 2015. Second place went to Peerless Brewery's Jinja Ninja while last year's winner, Offbeat Way Out Wheat, came in third.



While the competition was being judged indoors, even the prayers of the St Clement's faithful couldn't stop the heavens opening and heavy rain falling for several hours. Despite this, almost 1000 people braved the elements taking shelter under umbrellas or in the numerous marquees across the grounds. Local band That Manchester Sound entertained those who stuck out in the rain with a great set of Manchester Indie classics.

Saturday couldn't have been more of a contrast weather-wise with visitors enjoying their beer out in the sunshine which bathed the church grounds from opening time until sunset. The day kicked off with two tutored tasting sessions - one group were taken through ciders and perries while Brightside Brewery and CAMRA hosted another which featured ales. With Saturday afternoon traditionally a family session, there were a range of activities for children in the grounds while the now traditional jazz band entertained in the car park. As the evening came in, Saturday night headliners The Fuss created a party atmosphere and with the temperature remaining warm even after dusk, and enjoyed the benefit of several encores as the night drew to a close.

Over 150 beers, ciders and perries were available over the weekend with more than 80 available right until the end. Festival visitors voted Gingery Does It from Middleton's Wilson Potter brewery as their Beer Of The Festival. It has been a remarkable year for the Wilson Potter team of Amanda Seddon and Kathryn Harrison who also topped the 2013 poll at the Chorlton Festival with their "In Shreds" and went on to take the Beer Of The Festival title at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2014 for "Don't Fall".

Second place in the vote went to Stourbridge's Enville Brewery for their Cherry Blonde with Chorlton's own Bootleg Brewery's Raspberry Vice coming in third. Cider Of The Festival was Gwatkin's Rum Cask while Impaired Vision from Double Vision took the Perry Of The Festival title.

Photos by Ben Fountain

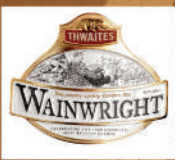
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New Festival Charity

The search is on

Walthew House has just finished its very successful three-year period as the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival charity and in their words, 'it really has transformed us as a charity.' The Festival organisers are therefore looking for a new Festival Charity for the years 2015-2017.

Through sponsorship, the sale of beer, programmes and other products and donations from our generous customers it is estimated that the chosen charity should expect an income of around £6K or more per festival. Just as important however is the opportunity to significantly raise its profile in the area.

Applicant charities must be registered with the Charities Commission, local to the area (no national charities please), provide a service to the people of Stockport and the surrounding areas, want to work as a constructive partner with the Festival Organising Committee and be willing to have their name/logo used in festival publicity.

Interested charities should email Jim Flynn at jim@flynnfam.co.uk setting out the following:

- How you will be able to guarantee to supply sufficient staff to man your stall, collect donations and sell the programmes at the Festival for all open sessions and the trade session.
- In addition how you will be able to provide half a dozen bar staff during the busy evening sessions as required (for which you will receive a donation).
- How you will be able to guarantee to be able to obtain 8 firkins of cask beer free of charge for you to sell at each of the three Festivals.
- How you will be able to attract sponsors for yourself.
- How you will promote the Festival.
- What you can do to assist and support the Festival e.g. first aiders etc.
- New ideas or initiatives.
- Why the Festival Organising Committee should choose your charity.

Applications should arrive no later than 20th September 2014. The decision of the Organising Committee will be final and no correspondence can be entered into.



Curmudgeon

Idea vs Reality

In the 1960s, there was a wave of railway branch line closures stemming from the notorious "Beeching Axe", which often came up against passionate opposition. But it was noticeable that the commemorative "last trains" often carried more passengers than the line had done in the whole of the previous month. Many people had a lingering fondness for the idea of rural branch line railways, but they had fallen out of love with the reality. Much the same is happening with pubs. There are endless campaigns to "save the Red Lion from evil property developers", and broadsheet newspaper articles bewailing the decline of the pub, but the harsh truth is that people in general are going to them less and less often.

Exactly the same can be said of many other cherished institutions – libraries, post offices, churches, traditional butchers, local bank branches, independent corner shops, even High Streets in general. The chattering classes embrace them in theory, but shun them in practice. While we love to complain about the decline of our institutions, it seems that we want someone else to keep them open for us. You get the impression many people want large swathes of the country to become some kind of Merrie England theme park kept open for their benefit and populated by cheeky Cockneys and gurning yokels, while they sit at home waiting for the Ocado delivery which they will pay for by mobile phone banking.

"Use it or lose it" is a glib phrase that is too often used without considering the implications. In practice, few of us are likely to be able to make any difference to the success or failure of businesses through our own custom alone, and it's not reasonable to expect people to inconvenience themselves out of a sense of principle. As far as businesses go, people vote with their feet, and sadly they have increasingly voted against pubs.

In response to this, there have been calls for pubs to be given greater legal protection. Councils can designate them as Assets of Community Value, so local communities have first refusal if they are put up for sale, and it has been suggested that planning permission should be required to convert pubs into shops. However, all the planning controls in the world won't save a single pub if the underlying demand is no longer there, and in practice the result of these well-meaning initiatives is often likely to be that closed pubs remain blighted and derelict for longer until they can be redeveloped.

On the other hand, it is now easier than it has been for a hundred years to open new pubs and bars. Prosperous city suburbs such as Chorlton and Didsbury have seen them springing up all over the place, Wetherspoon's have converted many former shops, micropubs are gaining an increasing foothold and Marston's and Greene King are building brand-new dining pubs on retail parks. Where the demand exists, new establishments will appear to meet it and, if you had to jump through planning hoops to convert a little bar back into a wool shop, you might be less willing to open the bar in the first place.

If pubs are buildings of particular architectural merit, then there is everything to be said for doing our best to preserve them, and to find an alternative use if they really have no future as pubs. But, for the general run of pubs, it has to be recognised that social trends over the years have left many simply incapable of being run as viable businesses, and attempting to keep them on life support is an exercise in flogging dead horses. It would do much more for the future of pubs if half the effort devoted to planning issues was expended on countering the social and legislative changes that have reduced the demand for pubgoing.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

(comments on these articles can be left on the website)

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Please note, times are currently provisional. Confirmed timings will be posted online approximately 2 weeks before the tour date. As all seats are reserved, pre-booking is essential.

High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

The first weekend in July saw the beer and jazz festival at Dove Holes, 2014 being the 23rd year of the event. Most of the jazz festival took place in the Community Hall, where there was also a selection of real ales. The beer festival took place in the marquee alongside the hall, where there was also some live music during the festival. While more than a dozen beers were available, this was not a big beer festival; but there were beers from lesser-known breweries, sold in good condition and with the bonus of traditional jazz in the marquee and perhaps cricket being played outside on the village cricket ground. There were beers from Happy Valley, Ringway, Mouselow Farm, Derwentio at Darley Abbey near Derby, and Healey's from the Furness district of Cumbria. As noted, all the beers that I tried were in good form but as a pick of a good bunch Ringway Session and Healey's BHW Mild were my choices. It is well worth putting the first week end in July in the diary for next year for the 24th Dove Holes Beer and Jazz Festival.

Marston's Brews

Marston's breweries provide a wide range of beers to suit many palates but until now even the paler brews have rather lacked a hop character. However Marston's New World is a 'pale golden ale' and certainly has hops to taste. Whilst the ABV is only 3.8%, the same as the ordinary Burton Bitter from Marston's, this is a rather different beer. Pale, hoppy and refreshing this beer deserves a long run and a wider audience.



It has been sold in the Marston's estate, at the **Shady Oak** in Fernilee, **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge (pictured above) and the **Royal Oak** in High Lane, and has also had a run in Punch pubs and in the free trade. In many ways there seems to be a similarity to the situation at Thwaites where Original Bitter is a traditional well produced brew, which has been overtaken (though not replaced by) the paler, hoppier Wainwright. There is room on the market for both styles of beer, and perhaps Marston's could find their own slot with New World which is in many ways atypical of their usual brews.

In Chapel-en-le-Frith the **Roebuck** was the best-dressed pub on carnival day and is worth a visit anyway. Just across the market place the **Royal Oak**, formerly Marston's, formerly Burtonwood, has been sold free of tie. Hopefully an update in the near future, though this also was a pub worth visiting.



It is good to see real cider making an appearance in both the Punch estate and in Robinson's houses. Weston's Rosie's Pig is available in the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge and just along the road in the **White Hart**. At 4.8% this cider does not affect the knees as much as some of the stronger products, and is therefore a good choice for a drink on a summer's day. It is certainly set for a summer stay in the Railway.

By the time you read this there will have been a beer festival at the **White Hart**, which has only received local publicity. There are usually four real ales from the Punch lists, so presumably there will be an enhanced range of beers for the event. More next time.

High Peak Pub News With Tom Lord

Over in Droylsden the ever popular **Beehive** has been featuring Mouselow Farm beers while the **Bush** has four regular real ales and the **Strawberry Gardens** has three.

In Stalybridge the **Old Fleece**, by the bus station on Market Street is now up for sale.



Up in Glossop the **Moon and Sixpence** (pictured above) was set to be reopened on Friday 18th July. At the moment it is not

A reminder that real cider is always available at the **Soldier Dick** in Furness Vale, where Gwynt y Ddraig Black Dragon cider and a perry are permanent fixtures.

Cock & Pheasant



Your correspondent recently called in at the **Cock & Pheasant**, a former Boddington's house in Bollington as you approach from the Macclesfield road. The 'recent' modernisation described in that fine volume *Out in Cheshire* in 1998, obviously contrasts with 'a place of old world charm' found in Boddington's own guide from around 1970. In 2014 it is worth visiting with sensibly-priced good food available during the main part of the day. Four beers are available: Tetley Cask (brewed at Banks's) is a fixture, while on my visit beers from micro-breweries were Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Storm Bosley Cloud and Thornbridge Lord Marple. This pub on the western fringe of the Peak District makes a worthwhile port of call when out on summer travels.

known whether real ale will be a feature on the bar.

In Romiley it is reported that the **Romiley Arms** which currently has four real ales is considering the possibility of increasing this to eight. More news on this at a later date.

It is reported that **Peg's Tavern** in Ashton is up for sale as an ostensibly free of tie pub by Enterprise Inns. Also in Ashton the **Old Friendship**, which has been derelict for some time is now to be turned into offices.

Still in Ashton the **Witchwood** has now been sold to new owners. At the moment it is expected to continue as at present with mainly Moorhouses and Marston's beers featuring. And finally the **March Hare** has now been confirmed as a permanent closure by Robinsons.

As *Opening Times* went to press several Robinsons' pubs in the High Peak area were "To Let". These included the **Friendship** in Romiley, the **Hatters Arms** in Marple, the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge and the **Victoria** in Dukinfield. Others "Under Offer" include the **Andrew Arms** in Compstall, the **Dane Bank** in Denton and the **Royal Oak** in Strines.

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* publishes an up to date list of these pubs every three months. To date we have been given details of the following 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, with details of the discounts:

- ☺ **Font, New Wakefield Street, Manchester:** 25% off cask ales
- ☺ **Font, Manchester Road, Chorlton:** 25% off cask ales
- ☺ **Font, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield:** 25% off cask ales & ciders
- ☺ **Albert Square Chop House, Manchester:** 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
- ☺ **Lass O'Gowrie, Charles Street, Manchester:** 50p off a pint and 20p off a half of cask ale
- ☺ **White Hart, High Street, Cheadle:** 10% off cask ale
- ☺ **Victorian, Ack Lane East, Bramhall:** 10% off a pint of cask ale
- ☺ **Mary & Archie, Burton Road, West Didsbury:** 10p off a pint of cask ale
- ☺ **The Lloyds, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton:** 10% off food and drink
- ☺ **Stalybridge Labour Club, Acres Lane, Stalybridge:** 14% off cask ales
- ☺ **Bar Fringe, Swan Street, Manchester:** 10p off a half and 20p off a pint of cask ale

Yet more good reasons to join CAMRA!
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NCC Beer Festival Continued

The festival is being held in the Velopark Cafe and is £3 to enter (there's a discount to CAMRA members), with additional seating on the patio and 'hub' areas to drink and eat. Speaking of which we should be spoilt for choice, with the cafe offering a full range of hot meals, sandwiches, cakes and snacks, and a BBQ outside offering burgers, hotdogs, kebabs and a vegetarian selection.

There is live entertainment on all three days, plus on Sunday morning a cycle jumble, which proved extremely popular at last years event. Live entertainment on Friday evening will be Graham Davis, a superb international-renowned solo artist. Followed on Saturday evening by the fantastic Donna-Marie, whose repertoire includes everything from folk to rock. Sunday afternoon will feature top local duo Take 2, an extremely attractive and talented pair of female vocalists, whose Tamla Motown show is not to be missed.

Transport links are excellent. The tram to Ashton runs to the Velopark station, every 15 minutes, and a bus service runs from Piccadilly Gardens at 8 to 10 minute intervals, (either the 216 or G231). The bus stop is the next one after ASDA, then go over the footbridge to the National Cycling Centre, It's only a three minute walk whether by tram or bus (Sunday services may be slightly less frequent).

The Festival is open from 4.00pm to 10.00pm on Friday 22nd, 12 noon to 10.00pm on Saturday 23rd and from 12 noon to 9.00pm on Sunday 24th.

Pub Gardens in Central Stockport

In the summer months there can be no better way to while away a few hours with friends than with a pint of cask in a well-kept leafy beer garden, writes *Brendon Hall*. Fortunately Stockport is well represented in this regard, possibly to the chagrin of people who think of any town further north than Birmingham as being permanently drizzly and overcast.

In the very centre of Stockport's shopping district we have the hidden gem that is Swan with Two Necks' beer-garden. This pub has a deceptively small frontage but manages to cram in space for several drinkers at the rear of the building in a compact walled courtyard. While this is a long-established haven for anyone wanting to escape the bustle of the shopping precinct, visitors often overlook the outside area here. A great place to catch a few rays with a pint of Robinson's finest.



A little further up the A6 is the Magnet, with a range of multi-level outdoor and covered drinking areas. This local institution really needs no introduction for its range of ales and ciders, but the well-tended outdoor space is also a hit with locals and visitors from outside the region. This is evident by how busy it can get during the summer months – better get there early!

In Shaw Heath you'll find one of Stockport's best sun-trap beer gardens at the Armoury. Again, this pub has a deceptively small frontage but leads out to an outdoor space big enough for everyone in the pub (should they all decide to go for a tan at the same time). Thanks to the high surrounding walls and owners who obviously care about the appearance of their pub you can very easily forget that you're only a few metres away from the busy King Street roundabout. Perfect for a pint of Trooper, but take some sunscreen!

As a possible outdoor drinking space of the future this writer recommends the newly refurbished Baker's Vaults on Stockport Marketplace. Whilst not a garden as such, the bench seating outside the pub gives drinkers the opportunity to enjoy the hustle and bustle of Stockport Market Place in full flow all around them. Stockport's answer to Covent Garden?

NCC Beer Festival

The National Cycling Centre is once again hosting a Summer Beer Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

This will be the second summer beer festival held at this



iconic venue and has been put together by the Velopark catering team, along with strong support from the branches of Greater Manchester CAMRA who will be running the event.

The beers are predominantly northern based and the emphasis is on light summer ales, to satisfy the thirst brought on by the summer sun, should we still be enjoying it! There are also a few porters and stouts sprinkled within the list along with a good selection of ciders. In total there will be over 60 beers and ciders to choose from, at this (hopefully annual) event.

Continued in column 2



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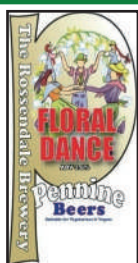
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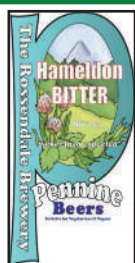
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Meet our beers - Beer Tasting Notes



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, 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

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Heard at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Market on the up?

The fortunes of the pub scene in Stockport Market Place appears to be on the up and up. We have already reported on the revival of the former Pack Horse as the **Cocked Hat** and now two further reopenings look set to seal the Market's revival.



First up is the **Bakers Vaults** which reopened on 11 July following a substantial investment from Robinsons Brewery and publican trio Jonny Booth, Jamie Langrish and Rupert Hill (the team behind such successful ventures as the Castle on Oldham Street in Manchester City Centre and Parlour in Chorlton).

What drew them to the Bakers? "We saw an opportunity to get stuck in with the burgeoning regeneration of the historic Market Place" said Jonny. "The Bakers has always been known as a music venue but a lot of people don't know its history as a turn-of-the-century gin palace."



The interior of the pub has seen a dramatic change in colour scheme which uses a palette of greys and dark blues to create an airy and open feel. There are feature walls covered in a distinctive style featuring postage stamps, letter trays and quotations. New lighting fixtures have been added which hang down around the bar area and across a new two-level decking area. A new kitchen has been installed which will offer a modest food selection which comprises a selection of speciality hot dogs (and very good they are too).

The biggest change, however, has been the movement of the central bar. It is now situated

more towards the rear of the pub creating a larger space for additional seating and increased visibility for the enhanced cask beer range. The Bakers has the widest cask offering of any Robinsons' pub with new fewer than 10 handpumps on the bar. Five dispense Robinsons' beers (including the current seasonal), one is reserved for traditional cider (Weston's Old Rosie) and the other four feature guest beers from outside the Robinsons' stable. Beers from Saltaire, Titanic, Jarrow and Hop Back are among those seen to date.

So far the overall reception has been very positive. The new-look pub has been consistently busy and while some of this will no doubt be down to the initial novelty the Bakers is attractive enough to succeed in the long term too – it's certainly in the right hands to do so. Highly recommended.



If that wasn't enough, next up will be the re-opening of the former Bamboozer (and before that Yates's) nearby. This is to become **Stockport LIVE** and is scheduled to re-open in the middle of this month. Manager Dave Adamson has been in touch to tell us that it will feature live music ("lots of live music") and live sport but also a better beer range than has ever featured there in the past (which admittedly would not be a difficult task). The plan is to sell a range of local cask ales, including changing guest beers, real cider and perry plus a "big selection of German and Belgian draught and bottled beers". It goes without saying that this is a hugely welcome development – look for a fuller report next time round.

All we need now is for Robinsons to do something with the currently mothballed **Bull's Head**....

Midland Shock

Last month came the welcome news of some major investment in Stockport's transport infrastructure following a large government grant. One of the planned changes is the construction of a new road linking Travis Brow with the A6 – presumably to take this traffic off Georges Road. So far so good. The route runs through one of the arches on the viaduct and emerges across the derelict site just next to the motorway. Planned highway improvements

will see a road widening with a planned footpath and cycle lane running through the front of the **Midland** pub on Wellington Road North (shortly after which it converges with the existing formation just before the Magnet which will be unaffected).



Mark Hayter, owner and licensee of the Midland is understandably horrified by this proposal – as are we. It's early days yet and meetings need to be arranged to see if there is any wriggle room to avoid this wholly pointless demolition. Mark plans to fight for the survival of his pub and he will have the full support of *Opening Times* in this. Expect to read more on this one in the coming months.

Stockport Pub Shorts

Popular licensee John Goodhew will be leaving the **Blossoms** later this year. John has made the pub very much his own and has enjoyed a very positive relationship with Robinsons over the two years he



has been there. His departure is purely for personal reasons and he will be heading back down south to Hertfordshire. John will be around for up to six months though – unless a suitable replacement is found sooner. We believe that Robinsons are keen to find a successor who will continue to drive the pub forward as a cask ale outlet. *Opening Times* wishes John the very best – he will be a hard act to follow.

Elsewhere the former **Woolpack** on Brinksway is now "under offer". We doubt it will re-open as a pub but then again we said that last time! Also closed as we went to press was the **Beech Tree** in Heald Green, after having the tenancy advertised as "to let" for some time. We also hear that the **Horse & Farrier** in Gatley will be having a major refurbishment in the near future. Lastly – the **Crown** on Heaton Lane now has a pizza oven and 12 inch pizzas are available on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

More Pub News on page 19

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Pub & Brewery News

Covering Altrincham, Manchester and beyond

Altrincham Update

Altrincham's **Orange Tree** has had a pretty torrid time over the last couple of years with several different licensees coming and going. However, things may be looking up for Enterprise Inns' owned pub on Old Market Place with the news that the new team there is to be led by Chris Clish, the man behind the revitalisation of Chorlton's **Beech Inn** (which went on to be Trafford & Hulme CAMRA's Community Pub of the Year runner-up for 2013).



Chris's partner in the Orange Tree will be Gabby Burns-Smith who has been managing the Beech on his behalf for the past two years. Chris and Gabby will concentrate on the Orange Tree while day-to-day running of the Beech will transfer to the capable hands of Andy Hackland who moves across Chorlton from Oddest. The Orange Tree is expected to reopen towards the end of August with the team vowing to undo some of the changes made by the recent merry-go-round of tenants, including a bizarre relocation of all the handpumps to the lower bar invisible from the entrance. Once back up and running, Enterprise is expected to back the new team with a significant investment via a total refurbishment of the pub later in the year. When the pub re-opens, *Opening Times* will of course be there to report.

While the re-opening of the Orange Tree will be good for the town, elsewhere in Altrincham things aren't so good with no fewer than three outlets closing in recent months. First to go was the **Victoria** on Stamford Street - primarily a restaurant in recent years but one that maintained a handpump on the bar and served a decent enough pint of Old Speckled Hen. A change of use application has been submitted by "Small Corporate Financial Planning" so that seems to be that. The Victoria was followed by the **Conservative Working Men's Club** on Greenwood Street (not to be confused with the Conservative Club just on the other side of the market hall) which has closed due to lack of funds. The large building is up sale. Finally, the **King George** on Moss Lane near Altrincham FC took to Twitter on 10th July to announce "Deeply sorry we have had to close but it was inevitable. Thanks to all #regulars #staff and real folk at #jwlees. I hope we stay in touch".

Manchester News

There was surprise in the Twittersphere and beyond at the start of July when cryptic closing time posts from Manchester's **Odder Bar** on both Twitter and Facebook announced #EndOfAnEra. As the dust settled, it became apparent that the seemingly popular Oxford Road Bar and club had been closed and sold with just one day's notice (leaving a number of event promoters looking for other venues). A planning application published shortly after the closure suggested that premises are set to become a Costa Coffee.

Elsewhere in the City Centre, the **Botanist** was due to open on Deansgate this month. Occupying the former premises of Label it promises a "soon to be world famous selection of cocktails, craft beers and ales, Champagne and wine". The beer range is indeed likely to be pretty good. More next month once we've dropped in.

Down Wilmslow Road, the Fallowfield branch of **Font** has finally broken free from its PubCo tie and so is free to stock whatever beers and ciders it likes. There should be two handpumps for changing guest beers (from breweries like RedWillow, Hawkshead and Magic Rock) with a further handpump for traditional cider. CAMRA members will get a 25% discount off cask ale and cider on production of their membership cards.



Finally, congratulations to the **Fletcher Moss** in Didsbury for winning Hydes' Best Managed House Award for 2014. It's certainly a feather in the cap for Jane and Martin Devlin who have worked hard to increase the pub's trade. Well worth a visit (buses and trams stop nearby).

Brewery News

Beers from Mark Welsby's **Runaway Brewery** have now started appearing in local pubs, bars and beer shops - and to great acclaim. To date four beers have appeared - Pale Ale (4.7%), IPA (5.5%), American Brown Ale (5.7%) and Smoked Porter (6%). OT has yet to try them but we are certainly on the lookout. No cask yet though - just bottles and keykeg.

Another newcomer is Salford-based **Seven Brothers Brewery** and yes - that is how

they spell it. They're certainly not lacking in confidence. Their Twitter feed describes them as "the UK's best new brewery". And yes, there really are seven brothers involved. The McAvoy's have set up shop in Salford barely a mile from Weaste where they grew up. The actual brewery will be operated by Kit and ex-Salford Reds player Nathan.

The 10-barrel plant was installed by Dave Porter and a core range of seven beers is planned along with regular specials. The first beer, we think, is to be a "session IPA" followed by a melon wheat beer and a liquorice porter. Beers will be cask, keg and bottled. Given that the brewery's stated aim is to "change the face of the beer market" they ought to be spectacular. (Thanks to *ALE of Two Cities* magazine for some of this material).



A man of more modest ambitions is former music teacher Simon O'Brien whose **Trüb Brewery** is based at his home in Glossop. We contacted Simon who explained his business model: "Basically it is different to the traditional brewery model, in that I am offering a service where the customer signs up for 6, 12, 18 etc bottles per month and I deliver them straight to their door. The other bonus of getting involved is the quarterly pop up beer and BBQ evenings where my customers can enjoy their favourite tittle and try all the potential recipes for the following quarter's seasonal beer. They decide which of the seasonals they prefer and that is what would then be available to them."

Simon is currently waiting to receive a 200 litre brewery plant which is being built by a company call Homebrew Builder, so he really will be a nano-brewery. In the meantime he is looking for a suitable unit to house the brewery from the end of August. At the moment the beer is being made in his kitchen!

Trüb will offer two staple beers and a quarterly seasonal beer. The staples are Tryptopus, a 4.2% pale ale which has three different malts, three different hop varieties and three strains of yeast "specifically selected for a balanced fruity bitterness with a rounded malt character which is refreshing on the palate", and Red Yeti, a darker style 5% IPA which has a light ruby appearance and is hopped in the boil for bitterness and taste but is fed through a hopback to get a sweet hoppy aroma and finish. The seasonals will range wildly in style and amongst others will include wheat beers, stouts, ruby ales and fruit beers. Interested parties can contact Simon at: trubbrewingcompany@gmail.com.



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