



October 2014

Opening

TIMES THE FREE LOCAL CAMRA MAGAZINE
Covering the Cities of Manchester & Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, N.E. Cheshire & Macclesfield



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Win prizes on our Cider Circuit – see page 15

Harewood Arms is Regional Pub of the Year

- details on page 21

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What's On

Information, Notes and Local CAMRA Branch Events

Opening Times - Information

Opening Times is published by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak & NE Cheshire, Trafford & Hulme, North Manchester and Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. 7,350 copies a month are printed by Phil Powell Printing of Failsworth.

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Trading Standards

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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. 0161 228 7811
- * East Cheshire: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx. 0845 140 2666
- * Derbyshire: <http://www.derbyshirebus.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.

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Front Cover – cider and perry being enjoyed at Minchew's Cider, Gloucestershire.

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www.thcamra.org.uk

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

Local CAMRA Events

Everyone welcome at these events

Tuesday 7th – Autumn Pub of the Season presentation to the Old Red Lion, Holmes Chapel. From 8.00pm. (MEC)

Wednesday 8th – Irlam Expedition: Boathouse 7.30pm, then Railway, White Horse, Ship and Steelworkers Club. (NM)

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting: Railway, Wellington Rd North, Stockport. Includes talk with Punch Taverns representatives. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 9th – Branch AGM: Briton's Protection, Great Bridgewater Street, Manchester. Includes election of branch officers, guest speaker, supper and raffle. Starts 8.15pm. (T&H)

Sunday 12th – Tuted Cider Tasting: Railway, Avenue Street, Portwood. Try six halves of cider/perry, plus food. Cost £7 per head. Book with Mike Gilroy on Cider@ssmcamra.co.uk. Starts 2.00pm. (SSM)

Monday 13th – Branch Meeting: Wharf Tavern, Stalybridge. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Wednesday 15th – Branch Meeting: Royal Oak, Corporation Street, Eccles. Starts 7.30pm. (NM)

Friday 17th – Edgeley & Shaw Heath Stagger: Alexandra, Northgate Road 7.30pm; Royal Oak, Castle Street 8.30pm. (SSM)

Friday 17th – Macclesfield Fun Crawl – Waters Green Tavern 7.30pm. (MEC)

Friday 17th – Altrincham Social. Visiting Altrincham's new real ale outlets. Start 8pm. Jack In The Box, indoor market hall. (T&H)

Saturday 18th – Social at Stoke Beer Festival – from 1.00pm. (MEC)

Saturday 18th – Altrincham Amble: A tour of all Altrincham's real ale outlets. Starts 12 noon. (T&H)

Wednesday 22nd – Cider Crawl: Marble Arch, Rochdale Road 7.30pm then Angel, Smithfield, Bar Fringe and finish in Crown & Kettle. (NM)

Thursday 23rd – Pub of the Month presentation to the Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 23rd – 2015 Good Beer Guide preliminary musings: Old Dancer, Wilmslow. Starts 8.00pm. (MEC)

Saturday 25th – Branch Trip to Thornbridge Brewery. Limited spaces. Contact social@thcamra.org.uk to book. (T&H)

Wednesday 29th – Social: Wheatsheaf, Oak Street 8.00pm; Smithfield, Swan Street 8.45pm. (NM)

Friday 31st – Evening social at Didsbury Beer Festival, St Catherine's Social Club, School Lane, Didsbury. From 7.30pm. (SSM)

Thursday 6th November – Branch Meeting: Orange Tree, Altrincham. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Pub of the Month

The Hinds Head, Heaton Chapel

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for October 2014 has been won by the Hinds Head, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel, writes *Jim Flynn*.



Although the Hinds Head is an upmarket establishment with excellent food it is still very much a real and friendly community pub.

Built over 20 years ago on the site of the Poco-a-Poco club it gives you the impression of having been around longer. Set in its own grounds with one of the best and most popular pub gardens in the area the whole feel of the Hinds Head as you approach is of a country pub. Although inside is relatively open-plan, there are enough distinct areas with nooks and crannies to allow those who want to feel secluded to do so.

In the 1990s the pub was taken to the heights by the late Alan Preston but after he retired it declined, mainly due to lack of investment. The pub was then taken over by Stuart Kirkham and a local band of entrepreneurs in 2006 and it moved back upmarket with considerable success. In December 2013 a local couple, Colin and Janine Edwards, took over the lease. Although they were new to the trade they were fast learners and the pub has gone from strength to strength; on the food front there are specialist nights and a number of special price initiatives and there are now occasional music nights too. The service is top notch and they have recently been awarded a Certificate of Excellence Award for 2014 by Trip Advisor as a result.

The beer range is excellent with the house beer Jennings Cumberland Ale normally accompanied by two or three guest beers, one of which is usually Taylors Landlord. Earlier this year they joined Mild Magic with Taylors excellent Golden Best available throughout the event and they have now not only joined the Winter Warmer Wander but are providing a meal for four as one of our star prizes.

So why not join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented to Colin, Janine and their staff on Thursday, 23rd October when, I am sure, a great night will be enjoyed by all as we congratulate them on an excellent job well done!

The pub is on the 328 bus route from Edgeley and the centre of Stockport or only 2 minutes walk from the A6 down Denby Lane or 5 minutes down Manchester Road from the 42A bus route from Reddish, Heaton Moor, Heaton Mersey, Didsbury etc.

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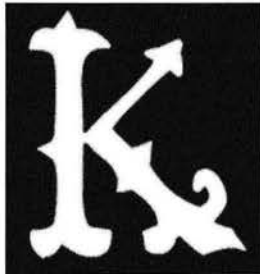
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Stagger

Jim Flynn does Cheadle East End



The **Cheshire Line** is perhaps not the easiest place to start a Stagger situated as it is, partway between Cheadle and Parris Wood. However it was a lovely summer's evening and the World Cup was providing alternative entertainment. Perhaps that was why a surprisingly small number of us made it to this pub housed in the old Cheadle station building (you can still see freight trains rumbling past the back windows). While the Cheshire Line has an emphasis on food it also has a good selection of beers from the Marston's stable of breweries, albeit at a price. There were three beers available - Banks's Bitter, Ringwood Best Bitter and Ringwood Old Thumper; two other pumpclips were turned round. This was a World Cup free zone and we elected to sit outside in the glorious sunshine to drink, finding both Ringwood beers in very reasonable nick.



We climbed up the steep steps to Manchester Road and walked down towards Cheadle and the **Ashlea**. Like the Cheshire Line this is a food pub with a central bar but there the similarities end. The Ashlea has low, beamed ceilings with a number of rooms and areas around the bar making it feel a bit of a rabbit warren. On the walls was the usual array of blackboards one expects in this type of establishment and if anything the Ashlea is even more food oriented than the Cheshire Line. After we'd sat down inside the pub (there is a garden, we discovered later) so that we could read the large board detailing its history, we were approached by a waitress to order a meal, but there were no problems when we declined to eat. The board told us that the pub was previously cottages and only converted into a pub in the 1920s when it was called the Railway. The two beers available were Lancaster Blonde which we all tried and found in good form, and Wells Bombardier.

Our next stop was decidedly different from our first two. The **Royal Oak** is a traditional and quite bland Robinson's pub which over recent

years has only intermittently sold cask beer. On our visit it certainly didn't and we were told this was now permanent. There were very few customers and we wondered about its long term future.



We quickly moved on and our next stop was another Robinson's establishment, the **Red Lion**. This however was a complete contrast to the Royal Oak. For a start the pub was the most popular and lively we had been in so far. The exterior is more ornate and its well lit, one room, modern interior is broken up into separate areas with plenty of dark wood and snug corners to nestle in. This was another World Cup free zone attracting a mix of diners and drinkers. We sat outside on decking overlooking the car park. There were four beers available: Unicorn, Trooper, Dizzy Blonde and the seasonal Brazilian. Most of us tried the latter finding it an attractive drink and Trooper was equally well received. For me this was the pub of the night and I was sorry to leave.



Further down Stockport Road was another Robinson's pub, the **Queens**. Although the modern feel was in some respects similar to the Red Lion this pub is much larger and less intimate. Here the World Cup was on the televisions dotted around but nobody seemed to be watching as the TVs were competing with the sounds and lights of a disco blazing away in the main bar area. There is a lounge/function area to the rear but that was partitioned off so there may have been a function on. There is food available but in contrast to the previous pubs this was not evident on our visit. We sat in one of areas to the front of the pub which afforded some shelter from the disco. We tried both the Unicorn which was quite a good pint and the Trooper which was generally much less well received. As we left France were hammering Switzerland 3-0.



We moved across the road to the much quieter **Printers Arms** which had a Robinson's refurbishment quite a while ago and which I have always thought stripped much of the character out of the pub. In my view it needs another makeover to give some purpose back to the place. It has two rooms and a conservatory on the back and we sat in the side room noticing that France had scored another goal. The beer in the Printers used to be dispensed from small electric pumps but now a number of handpumps adorn the bar although only two beers are sold, 1892 and Unicorn. Both beers were considered to be more than drinkable without setting the taste buds on fire, unlike the match where three more goals had been scored in the time it takes to sup half a pint.



Final stop was the **Farmers Arms** half mile away in Cheadle Heath. Both inside and out the décor of this pub shouts Greene King. As on my previous visits it was looking a little worn but the World Cup flags decorating it masked this to a degree. It serves both drinkers and diners looking for a good value meal. As we sat drinking our Morland Old Golden Hen and Greene King IPA we contemplated why Wetherspoons seem to do this sort of thing so much better. Sadly the latter was the probably the worst beer of the night while in contrast the Golden Hen was considered on good form. The TVs told us France had trounced Switzerland 5-2 as we left for our buses.

Overall a good night with a variety of different pubs and a variety of generally reasonable even though with the odd exception the quality never quite reached the heights that we have found previously on this same Stagger.

Old Market Tavern

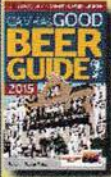


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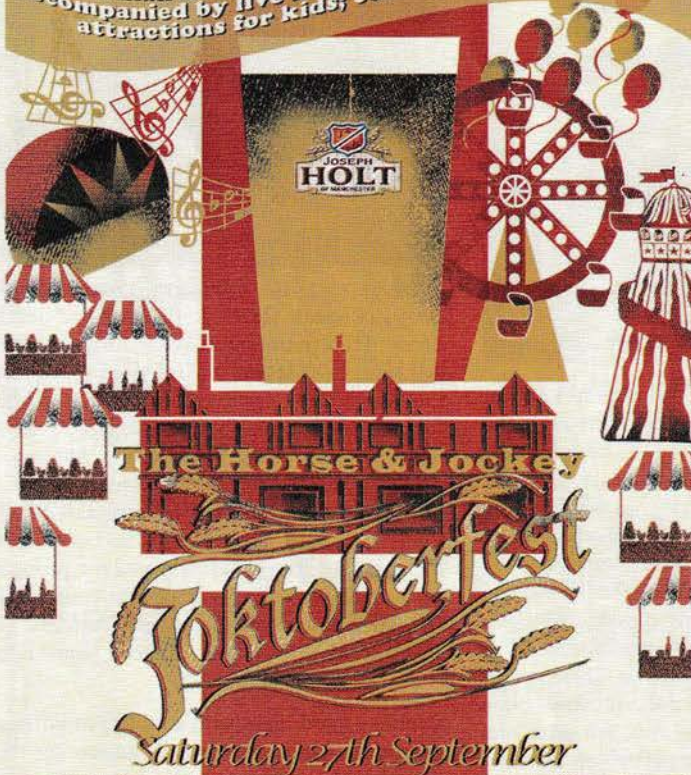
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Manchester Beer & Cider Festival



MANCHESTER Beer & Cider Festival

It's now just three months until the return of the region's biggest and most spectacular beer event. The Manchester Beer & Cider Festival will return to the Velodrome at the National Cycling Centre from the 21st to the 25th January 2015 and is promising to be bigger and better than the sell-out event in 2015.

The 2014 festival featured no fewer than 357 cask conditioned ales, but this number is set to increase to well over 400 for 2015. Two hundred of these beers will be on new bars located on the concourse around the track. This will also host a second cider & perry bar and a brand new bar packed with the best craft beers from around the world. Visitors to these bars will have easy access to over 3000 seats overlooking the track from where they will again be able to watch Britain's top cyclists training.

The organisers have listened to the feedback from the first event and made changes where needed. As well as locating half the beers on the concourse level, a new layout on the floor inside the track will allow additional seating and 'poseur' tables for your drinks. A new customer care team is being introduced to guide people to the correct bar for the beer they wish to buy next and help those with mobility difficulties get under the track to floor level via the lift and ramp. It's expected that a limited number of advance tickets are to be on sale although it has not yet been confirmed when this will be.

Of course the festival is really all about the beer and you'll be pleased to hear there will be more of that - around 40% more - to ensure that your thirsts are satisfied right through until Saturday evening. Once again the selection will feature some of the very best brewers from the North West (including the finalists in CAMRA's Champion Beer of the North West Competition) alongside some of the top names from around the country. The organising team told *Opening Times* that they were very excited that as well as established breweries, some of the freshest and most exciting new names are already signed up to feature - people like Squawk, Seven Brothers and Deeply Vale.

The extremely popular Hawkshead Brewery will again be bringing their own bar to the festival, but they will have some new neighbours in what will be two areas featuring brewery bars. The full line up will be revealed shortly but two which have been announced are very exciting - Manchester's Blackjack Beers & Crewe's Offbeat Brewery are two who are very much at the cutting edge of British brewing and will be sure to bring some stunning beers to the festival.

To find out more about the festival, visit www.manchesterbeerfestival.org.uk and for all the latest updates like them on Facebook or follow @MancBeerFest

High Peak Awards

The High Peak & NE Cheshire Branch of CAMRA straddles three CAMRA regions and so has the opportunity of making three Pub and Club of the Year Awards. Recently the Derbyshire winners have received their certificates.

Pictured right, CAMRA's Frank Wood (centre left) is shown presenting the Club of the Year Award to Glossop Labour Club's John Hallsworth. The club is very keen on cask beer with two real ales usually on sale - Moorhouses Premier Bitter and a guest.

High Peak's Derbyshire Pub of the Year award was regular winner, the Old Hall Hotel at Whitehough, near Chinley. The Old Hall is a famously good pub with a range of cask beers, real cider and good food. Two annual beer festivals are also held - the most recent last month when over 200 beers were available over the course of the weekend. Pictured below left the Old Hall's Dan Capper (centre) receiving his award from CAMRA's Tom Lord (left) and Rod Oliver (right).



There's a Con-Man About

Pictured right is a CCTV image of our con-man. He's been around Stockport before and now it seems he's back. He claims to be representing CAMRA (or The Stockport Pub Guide) and tries to get "advertising money" from unsuspecting pubs. He can sound quite convincing, talking about and asking about the beers, but he's a fraud. Pubs that advertise in *Opening Times* are either invoiced centrally or give their money to a known CAMRA member. If a stranger claiming to be a representative of CAMRA starts asking for advertising money, pubs are advised to ask to see their CAMRA membership card and also get a contact telephone number. Whatever you do, don't give any money to this man.





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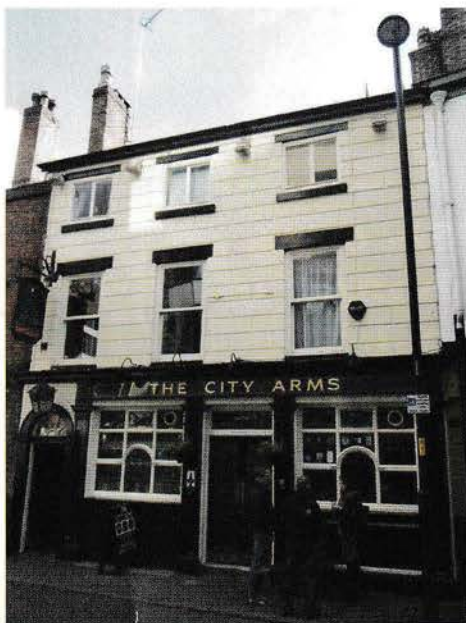
Heard at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

City Arms

We reported last month on the departure of landlord Steve Crook from Manchester's **City Arms**. As we went to press last month, Steve's replacement was still unpacking boxes; but a couple of weeks later, *Opening Times* called in to meet him.

24-year-old Dave Pattison originally hails from Herefordshire where he began his pub career at the Balance Inn in Luston, 25 miles west of Worcester. Dave swapped rural life for city living in 2008 when he arrived in Manchester and began working as a barman at the Briton's Protection. From there he moved to the Town Hall Tavern initially learning the trade from experienced manager Nick Nugent and then latterly under "Greek" George Archonodo. Earlier this year he returned to the Briton's Protection when it came under the same ownership as the City Arms before being appointed manager of the Kennedy Street pub in August.



Providing continuity at the Good Beer Guide listed pub is Jeni McHugh who has been there just short of nine years - Jeni should be familiar to *Opening Times* readers over the last nine months having stepped up to run the pub when Steve Crook was injured earlier this year.

When asked about his plans for the pub, Dave replied simply, "if it ain't broke...". On the physical side, a bit of tidy up and a lick of paint will be the extent of changes. Behind the bar, ale drinkers will see little change - why would you change a formula that has seen 12 consecutive Good Beer Guide entries? Moorhouses beers remain the pub's top sellers, where they are joined by LocAles from the likes of Hornbeam, Merlin and RedWillow. Real cider remains on the back bar while a few more whiskeys have been added to the range and

there is now a selection of 19 different gins on offer.

We wish David, Jeni and the team all the best for the future and trust this great pub is in safe hands.

Chorlton Latest



Chorlton's **Famous Trevor Arms** is under new management and is set for a serious makeover following investment from owners Spirit Pubs. The new manager is Matt Jones who moved from another Spirit Pub, the Vic in Lytham St Annes, in the first week in September. He wasted no time making changes at the pub, immediately increasing the range to a permanent three cask ales. A leaky handpump prevented this from being four ales, but that should be fixed by the time you read this. When *Opening Times* called, the regular Jennings Cumberland was on the bar while Phoenix Arizona had gone off minutes earlier. The third pump was taken by Harviestoun's excellent Bitter & Twisted which was on good form. Matt told us that while it was early days for him at the Trevor, he generally likes to rotate ales every few weeks to keep things fresh.

Late October or early November will see the pub close for a major refurbishment and it will move into Spirit's new Quality Pubs division which aims to give a less "chain" feel than their other brands such as John Barras and Chef & Brewer. Details of the refurbishment were still being finalised but the biggest change will be the removal of the dividing wall between the lounge and bar - a move which will certainly disappoint a percentage of their clientele who like the traditional distinct areas. There will be more of an emphasis on food, but concerns in the local community that the pub will go "gastro" appear unfounded. Of course, *Opening Times* will report back after the refurbishment.

Finally, the Trevor has become the fourth Chorlton pub (joining Lloyds, Mono & The Font) to offer a discount on real ale to CAMRA members. Your membership will entitle you to 10% off your pint.

Elsewhere in Chorlton, there is a new (old) name on the real ale scene with three

handpumps installed at the **Royal Oak**. One is a modern illuminated font for Greene King IPA (not surprising as they own the pub) while two traditional pumps were vacant when *Opening Times* called. It's a couple of years since the Royal Oak last flirted with real ale - something which ultimately proved fruitless with slow sales leading to reports of poor quality and ultimately the removal of cask ale. New management has moved into the pub since then so we hope that this time they will be more successful at introducing their customers to the great flavours of well kept cask-conditioned ale.

Although it was a pioneer of the Chorlton bar scene, in recent times the **Marble Beer House** has lagged behind as newer bars with kitchens were able to offer a food menu alongside their beers. Now, their sister pub the Marble Arch has come to the rescue with a range of snacks and ploughman's options made at the renowned Rochdale Road pub but available at the Beer House. The range includes Marble's own take on the scotch egg served with choice of chutney or piccalilli, pork pies, home-made pork scratchings and classic pickled eggs.

Sir Ralph Abercromby



In early September a piece in the Manchester Evening News reported that property developers were to build on the site of the "vacant" **Sir Ralph Abercromby** pub, sending out alarm bells to many Manchester drinkers who thought the popular pub had closed overnight. The bells rang clearest for landlord Michael Christodoulou who has been running the pub for the last two years building it up into a popular community local.

Opening Times called in to see Michael shortly after the piece was published and found him annoyed and confused. He told us that trade had been hit during the week since the article appeared but that it had also been heartening that many people had called in or phoned to check whether it was true. Michael did secure a small apology from the paper which was followed up by a larger piece where he was given the opportunity to state his case for the pub to become a hub of the proposed new development.

Continued on page 19

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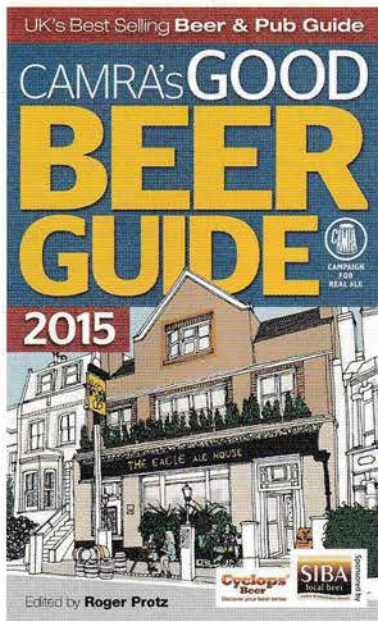
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Good Beer Guide 2015



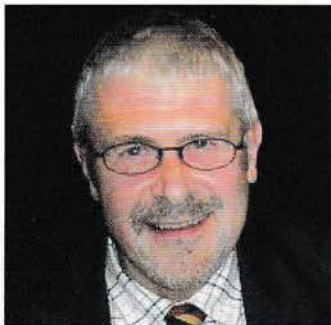
"The definitive rundown of the best places in the UK to get a pint of real ale, from cosy country inns to upmarket style bars." - Time Out Magazine

The 2015 Good Beer Guide was published on 11th September. This, the 42nd edition of the country's best beer and pub guide, features over 4,500 of the best pubs in the UK, chosen by CAMRA members from across the country.

The Guide shows that the UK now has more breweries per head than anywhere else in the world and records 170 new start-ups over the previous 12 months. The UK total is now 1,285 (and as we show in this issue more are in the pipeline).

All these Britain's breweries are comprehensively listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2015. As CAMRA's flagship title, the Guide features over 4,500 urban and rural pubs, giving details of the real ales, food, opening hours, beer gardens, accommodation, transport links, disabled access and family facilities.

The Guide is completely independent, and there is no charge for entry. It is compiled by CAMRA's 160,000-plus members, who exhaustively update and revise the Guide each year, thereby guaranteeing the reader with the most up to date publication to Britain's best real ale pubs.



Roger Protz, CAMRA Good Beer Guide editor (pictured left), said:

"Real ale is the only success story in a declining beer market. New breweries, making handcrafted beers, continue to come on stream while many long-standing regional and family breweries are expanding with new equipment and new brands. Real ale has almost doubled its market share over the past decade."

The continued growth across the whole of the UK has been driven by small independent breweries which have been popping up all over the country, many of whom are experimenting with the beers they brew, leading to even greater choice for drinkers:

"With every region in the country seeing an increase in breweries it means even more choice for real ale drinkers, particularly as breweries are becoming more adventurous in the beers they brew, adding herbs, spices, fruit and chocolate to beer - while a growing number are ageing beer in oak casks bought from whisky, wine and rum producers to give new depths of flavour to their products."

The pubs are surveyed by local CAMRA members and scored on a variety of aspects that make a great pub. These include customer service, the clientele mix (i.e. the pub appeals to 18 and 80 year olds), value for money, décor and of course the quality of the real ale. CAMRA members therefore guarantee to supply the reader with the most up to date publication to help locate the best pint of real ale.

Copies of the Good Beer Guide 2015 can be obtained from Jim Flynn at a price of £15.99 (including p&p). Please send a cheque made payable to "CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester" to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.

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The Moss Cider Project

THE
MOSS
CIDER
PROJECT

Brendon Hall talks to Moss Cider's Dan Hasler



The Moss Cider Project is a unique community based project where local residents use local fruit to make their very own cider. It's been going since 2010 and was the brainchild of Dan Hasler (pictured above). Brendon Hall caught up with him to get the low-down.

What made you want to dip your toe in the world of community cider production?

It started with me and my wife joining our residents' association because we knew the iconic Stagecoach bus depot building was going to be demolished. We'd heard that the land would lay waste until a developer could be found, so I thought "Let's get a community orchard on there". Only then did thoughts go to cider and the realisation that 'hold on a minute, we'd be making cider in Moss Side... we can call it Moss Cider'.

How important is the 'community' element of your organisation?

Without the community bringing us their fruit we wouldn't exist. Our first priority is to make cider for those with apples. Hopefully with our split we then make enough to pay the bills and cover our costs. We're certainly not in it for the money. Our project is very much a war on waste. Putting good use to otherwise neglected fruit. Cider making is one of those seemingly traditional, predominately rural pursuits. So it's great to have people from across the city helping out on pressing days. It's hard work, but we make sure you don't leave empty handed.

Your 'Thirsty Pony' is obviously available in bottles, are there any plans to increase the availability of your product on draught in pubs/restaurants?

Definitely. We're trickling it out to wholesalers and will do our best to stock bars, restaurants and events. You can always guarantee that we'll be at The Moss Side Market and that's the place to come meet us, have a chat and dare we say it, also the cheapest place!

Do you have any open-days coming up in the next few months?

I'm down at the cider house every Friday from 10am to 5pm. In this season pressing we're like crazy! We're also open on select Sundays for drop-offs and pressings. Just see the events page on our website for more information and how to get involved.

If you are limited to the choice of apples brought in by members of the public isn't it difficult to plan commercial cider production ahead of time?

We're not fussy about variety, we juice whatever comes down on the day. It all goes in the mix. So each batch is unique. We ferment in 220, 150, 120, 60 and 30 litre barrels so we can have up to 50-70 batches each year. The goal of course is to reach 7000 litres (3500-ish for us). We've got a pasteuriser on its way so we can produce fresh-pressed apple juice. That

may open up other product ranges. Don't worry though, we're not going to start pasteurising our cider.

We're doing our best to keep things 100% real. Natural wild yeast fermentation and bottle conditioning where appropriate.

Aside from your own, what type of cider do you like to drink when you get some time off / do you have any favourite producers?

Whenever I'm away from Manchester I'm always on the look out for regional, relatively unheard of producers. I just discovered Ralph's in Mid-Wales, who make cider for the National Trust property in Errdig. One of my favourites is the Healey's Classic Reserve Oak Cask. It's one of those ciders that just blow your perceptions of what cider is and should taste like. I'm a big fan of smoky flavours too so a pint of Yarlinton Mill always goes down well with me. I guess it's that craving for cider apple varieties that we don't have locally that I'm always keen to taste.

You're now in your fifth season - where do you see Moss-Cider in another five years time?

I've always said no matter how big we grow you'll always find us pressing local apples for people. We'd love our own orchards of course so that we can get in a good quality of single variety cider apples and hopefully reinvigorating old heritage varieties in the process. We've made those contacts so time will tell.

And...I have to get this one in, when you aren't drinking fermented apples, do you have a favourite pint?

I'm a big Porter fan, the darker and richer the better!

Photograph <http://jameslyndsay.com/> Check out the Moss Cider website at: <http://themosssiderproject.org/>

Regional Cider Pub of the Year

Congratulations to the **New Oxford** on Bexley Square, Salford for winning this year's Greater Manchester Cider Pub of the Year Award. With three ciders and a perry regularly on sale this is a worthy winner. The presentation is due be made at 7.00pm on Saturday 11th October



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THE BEER GUIDE 2015
WINNER

The Cider Circuit

Win great prizes on our annual cider trail



This month we are offering you the chance to win a 36 pint "box" of cider as we re-run our Cider Circuit. Not only that but it is once again very easy indeed to win a prize. All you have to do is visit our participating pubs and buy a pint or a half of traditional cider or perry, and then get the bar staff to put a sticker on the pub's entry on the form below. Get 15 stickers and you will win a bottle of traditional cider or perry. Get 25 stickers and you will win two bottles of cider or perry. Get a sticker from all pubs and as well as winning two bottles of cider or perry you will also be entered in the draw for the 36 pint box. If the pub has run out of (or mislaid) the sticker then get a signature and date instead.

The Cider Circuit runs from Monday 6th October to Sunday 16th November. Completed forms should be sent to: Cider Circuit, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9HD to arrive no later than Saturday 23 November. If you are entering the grand draw, make sure you specify whether you would prefer dry, medium or sweet cider. **Please make sure you include your name, address, telephone no. and email address so we can contact you.** All the prizes will be presented at a special cider afternoon to be held at the Cheshire Ring, Manchester Road, Hyde on Sunday 30 November from 2.00pm onwards (prizes awarded about 4.00pm).

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Bar Fringe 8 Swan St. Manchester M4 5JN | Castle Hotel 66 Oldham ST. Manchester M4 1LE | Crown and Kettle 2 Oldham Rd. Manchester M4 5FE | Font 236 Wilmslow Rd Fallowfield M14 6LE | Friendship 353 Wilmslow Rd Fallowfield M14 6XS |
| Micro Bar Unit FC16 Arndale Mkt. Manchester M4 3AH | Victoria 438 Wilmslow Rd Withington M20 3BW | Gateway 882 Wilmslow Rd East Didsbury M20 5PG | Railway 1 Avenue St. Portwood SK1 2BZ | Crown 154 Heaton Lane Stockport SK4 1AR |
| Hope Inn 118 Wellington Rd Stockport SK4 2LL | Magnet 52 Wellington Rd. Stockport SK4 1HJ | Fairway 137 Higher Hillgate Stockport SK1 3HR | Bakers Vaults Market Place Stockport SK1 1ES | Swan with 2 Necks Princes St. Stockport SK1 1RY |
| Salford Arms 146 Chapel St. Salford M3 6AF | Harewood Arms 2 Market St Broadbottom SK14 6AX | Red Lion 83 Stockport Rd Cheadle SK8 2AJ | Marble Arch 73 Rochdale Rd Manchester M4 4HY | New Oxford 11 Bexley Square Salford M3 6DB |
| Station Buffet Bar Rassbottom St. Stalybridge SK15 1RF | The White House Water St. Stalybridge SK15 2AG | Star Inn 2 Howard St. Glossop SK13 7DD | The Macc 1 Hill Green Macclesfield SK11 7PE | Park Tavern 158 Park Lane Macclesfield SK11 6UB |
| The Wharf 107 Brook St. Macclesfield SK11 7AW | Font 115-117 Manchester Rd. Chorlton M21 9PG | Marble Beer House 57 Manchester Rd. Chorlton M21 9PW | Rising Sun 22 Queen St. Manchester M2 5HX | The Wharf 6 Slate Wharf Castlefield Manchester M15 4ST |
| Font 7-9 New Wakefield St. Manchester M1 5NP | Costello's Bar 18 Goose Green Altrincham WA14 1DW | Old Market Tavern Old Market Place Altrincham WA14 4DN | Cheshire Ring 72 Manchester Rd Hyde SK14 2BJ | |

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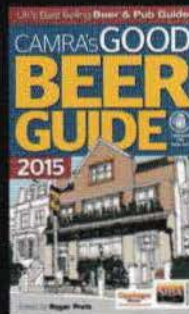
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We Are In It!



High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall



August Bank Holiday week end saw the usual smashing beer festival at the **White Lion** in Disley. A slightly smaller range of beers in the marquee reduced the chances of beer remaining on the outside bar and of course there was continued festival drinking for a few days afterwards in the main bar. There was a good range of beers from around the country, from Orkney to Tring including Northampton, Pot Belly and Frog Island breweries. There were beers from Jarrow and Northumberland in the north east and from Purple Moose in northwest Wales, with assorted other breweries in between. All the beers tried were in good form and certainly made for a worthwhile visit. Tring Kiwi was very recommendable, as was Northumberland Summer Gold. Fuzzy Duck Mucky Duck - the name sells it - was a good dark beer with plenty of flavour even at 4.0%. The White Lion festival is well established, and will hopefully carry on in the future. The range and quality of beers available give it a good recommendation. There were also four ciders and a perry, from Weston's. The perry was very palatable.



Hopefully you will be reading this early enough for it to be a reminder of the beer festival at the **Drum & Monkey** at the Horwich End end of Whaley Bridge. The 199 bus Stockport - Buxton stops at the door and the pub is less than 15 minutes' walk from Whaley Bridge Station. The number of hand pumps is increased for the festival and beers are also sold from the cellar on gravity. A recent call found Whaley Bridge Anakena and Abbeydale Brimstone on sale.

A group of runners and walkers recently dined at the **Ship** at Wincle, just in Cheshire above the River Dane and the Staffordshire boundary. When *Out Inn Cheshire* was published in 1998, the Ship was a free house. These days it is part of the J.W. Lees estate. New licensees had just reopened the Ship on the day of our visit and it is good to report that our group were served good meals at sensible prices. There were also locals in who seemed glad to have their pub open. And the beers made the visit worth the call. J.W. Lees Bitter and Manchester Pale Ale were available, the latter making a good refreshing pint after outdoor activity. There was still a pump clip for Golden Peddler, though it was not available. The Ship takes a bit of finding, but it is well worth the search, both for its beer and its food.



The **Railway** in Whaley Bridge continues to access Weston's ciders via Robinson's. Wyld Wood was a recent offering. Robinson's latest seasonal is South Island. This is a very distinctive brew and in some ways is decidedly un-Robinson's. The use of Nelson Sauvignon hops from New Zealand gives this beer a dry citrusy

flavour - very refreshing. This has also been available in the **Cock** in Whaley Bridge. At Furness Vale, the **Crossings** commendably sticks to selling one real ale, Unicorn. This means turnover ensures that a good pint is always available.

Marston's wasted no time in replacing Sue and Craig after their departure from the **Shady Oak** in Fernilee. New management was installed before the end of July, the team having arrived in west Cheshire as previous Marston's tenants. New menus are in preparation and it is promised that food will be freshly prepared and homemade. Two real ales should be available at any time. A first visit found Jennings Sheep Thrills and Marston's Pedigree. A more recent call found Hobgoblin and Bountiful from Wychwood, part of the Marston's brewing empire of course. Opening hours will be from 11.30am till 11.00pm Monday to Saturday, with perhaps a mid-afternoon break early in the week, and from noon till 11.00pm on Sunday. The pub has retained its reputation for dog friendliness. Beer quality has been maintained, so good luck to the new management team as they embark on their new venture.

Finally a mention about clubs in the area. **Whaley Bridge Club** usually has Marston's Bitter available and sometimes a second beer from another of the Marston breweries. **Furness Vale Social Club** keeps one hand pump and beers are supplied from the Thwaites list, whether their own beers or guest brews from elsewhere. **Buxworth Memorial Club** continues to source beers locally if possible. A good pint of Storm Summer Breeze was a most recent enjoyable drink.

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

It is reported in Glossop that the **Howard Arms** in the town centre is now selling a real ale, Doombar at the time of writing, and also in Glossop the **Pico Lounge** has ceased to sell real ale. In nearby Gamesley the **Centurion** has been put up for sale.

In Buxton it is reported that a new bar has opened. Called the **Ale Stop** it is situated in what used to be the wine shop at the end of the Market Place near the Vault. It is run by Dan who used to run Beltane and two beers are on at present, these being Kelham Island King of the Rocket Men from Sheffield and Brown's Renegade from Chesterfield.

In Ashton the **Station** on Warrington Street (photo above right) is now selling three real ales and two ciders and on Sundays at a good value two pounds a pint. The **Witchwood** is still carrying real ales and is looking at Cask Marque accreditation. On a sadder note in Ashton the **March Hare** is currently up for sale.



On a recent visit to the reopened **Wanted Inn** at Sparrowpit near Chapel-en-le-Frith three real ales were on offer, Springhead Outlawed, Bradfield Farmer's Blonde and Sharp's Doombar. This is now a pleasant free house which as well as providing real ale also sells local produce such as eggs, cheese and jam. On the same visit the **Royal Oak** in Chapel was selling Anakena from the new Whaley Bridge brewery.

Finally, in Dukinfield the **Gardeners Arms** on Astley Street is now boarded up and all the signage has been removed.

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4.5%

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Pitch Porter 5%

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



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Heard More at the Bar



Pub News covering Manchester and Stockport

Continued from page 11

When *Opening Times* called on a warm Autumn evening, the pub's extensive beer garden was busy with the usual excellent range of real ales on the bar. The permanent ales are Copper Dragon Golden Pippin, Moorhouses' Blond Witch, Sharps' Doom Bar and Timothy Taylor's Landlord. They have recently added Brightside Odin to the range and Michael told us it is proving popular so is likely to be made permanent. A sixth ale is also in the pipeline (pardon the pun).

With regards to the development, Opening Times understands that the developers have made an offer to owners Enterprise Inns but that the offer has been rejected as undervaluing the pub. The best way of strengthening the pub's position is to increase its value remaining as a pub through increased custom, therefore we would encourage readers to check out this historic gem in the centre of our city.

Whalley Range



Whalley Range's **Jam Street** re-opened just as *Opening Times* was going to press, but thankfully we had time to pop in for a quick look on opening night. The former Jam Street Café has had quite a makeover. While the old incarnation never seemed to know if it was a café or a pub, the new version is very much a pub and almost unrecognisable. The former seating area at the front of the pub remains and beyond this the bar runs down the side of the building through what was the kitchen with more seating in a previously hidden area beyond.

The snug space downstairs which used to struggle to seat half a dozen has been opened up to give a small function space while opposite the bar, a new staircase runs to the first floor where as well as the ladies toilets there is also an additional seating and dining area. On the bar there are four handpumps. When we called on opening night only two were operational with two beers from Thwaites - Wainwright and Lancaster Bomber. We tried the Wainwright which was in reasonable form. Another pump had a clip for a beer from Allgates but which wasn't ready for serving. We'll call back again for a fuller review when they have had time to settle in.

Stockport Update

Quite a few bits and pieces to report this month starting with a closure. The Imperial on St Petersgate closed its doors last month and we hear that it may be converted to restaurant use.



However as one door closes, several open. In Cheadle the **George & Dragon** has reopened following a major refurbishment by Amber Taverns. It has to be said the pub looks very good with a variety of areas straddling a central bar - one possible downside is the huge number of television screens dotted around the place. The total is easily in double figures and they are rather difficult, if not impossible, to escape. On the beer front it's been a mixed bag. On opening local beers from Fool Hardy Ales and then Ringway Brewery were on sale. However since then the range has fallen back to national standards such as Theakston's Bitter, Jennings Cumberland Ale, Marston's Pedigree etc although quality has been good.

In the town centre, we welcome what has to be the smallest bar in town. This is the **Corner Bar** which is indeed situated in a corner of the market hall. It's connected to the café next door and it opens when the market is on, plus on Sundays and during the monthly "Foody Friday" events. There is usually (but not always) a cask beer on sale along with an imported German lager. As our picture shows, it really is very small indeed.



Also now open is the **Spinning Top** on Wellington Road South (it's in the building occupied by the Garrick Theatre). *Opening Times* hasn't had a chance to call yet so look for a report next time. We do understand there are three handpumps on the bar although as we went to press just one was in use, dispensing Tatton Brewery's Blonde (our picture shows it in pre-opening mode). Also, hopefully, open in time for a review in the November issue will be the keenly anticipated Stockport LIVE based in the old

Bambooza premises on the corner of the Market Place.



West Didsbury

By the time you read this, West Didsbury will have a brand new "flagship" bar on its doorstep. **Wine & Wallop** is the new venture from Justin Parkinson, owner of Burton Road's Folk Bar but is on an altogether larger scale. Situated in the former Blockbuster store in the newly refurbished Lapwing Lane arcade adjacent to West Didsbury Metrolink station, the new bar is split over three floors with a mezzanine above the main bar level and a spacious function room on the top floor. The emphasis is to be on appreciating the range of ales & wines on offer, with knowledgeable full time staff who know the products and can advise on flavours and food matches.



Despite the name and décor being inspired by the 1980s wine bar craze, the bar itself has space for new fewer than 13 handpumps. Not wanting to push their luck too early, a week before opening they told *Opening Times* that they planned to open with a much more modest range of just nine ales and a hand pulled real cider. The opening night plans include a mix of local and national names ranging from locals Brightside, Brewsmith and First Chop to more national names like Wells & Young's Eagle IPA. In a nice move, the incoming Champion Beer of Britain Timothy Taylor's Boltmaker features alongside the former champion Elland 1872 Porter. There are plans to produce the bar's own beer in conjunction with Bury's Brightside brewery and long term plans to have their own brewery (in separate premises).

Continues on page 27

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Regional Pub of the Year



The **Harewood Arms** in Broadbottom is the CAMRA Greater Manchester Pub of the Year for 2014. The results were announced to coincide with the launch of the 2015 Good Beer Guide on 11 September.

This is yet another example of a pub rescued from the clutches of one of the national pub companies, this time Enterprise Inns, and turned into a thriving local. The transformation came courtesy of Green Mill Brewery which bought the pub in October 2013 and relocated the brewery from Rochdale to the pub's cellar. As well as the Green Mill range of cask beers there is a range of continental bottled beers available along with a handpump dedicated to real cider.



The pub has a rambling, open plan interior with plenty of separate areas which create a multi-roomed feel. Lots of wooden beams and panelling add to the country pub atmosphere which is enhanced by open fires in the winter months. It's a real community local and although it's in a quiet village on the edge of the Peak District it's a very short walk from Broadbottom Station on the Manchester to Hadfield line.

The runner-up is the **White Lion** on Leigh Road in Leigh. Owned by Wigan-based Allgates Brewery the pub was fully refurbished and re-opened in 2011. The pub is situated opposite Leigh's historic parish church and just a few minutes' walk from the town centre. It's a friendly pub where you can enjoy the comfort of the main bar, play pub games in the vault or settle in the quiet snug. Six handpumps dispense a selection of Allgates' beers plus guest ales and a traditional cider.



Third place went to the **City Arms** on Kennedy Street in Manchester City Centre. It's a traditional, compact two-room pub with two permanent cask ales plus six guest beers, including locally brewed offerings sourced from SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme. A real cider is available from a box on the bar and the pub has been a Good Beer Guide regular for many years.



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Letters to the Editor

Flavour not format

From: Vance Debechaval:

CAMRA several decades ago was producing journals exulting the virtues of fabulous beers being brewed in Belgium and Holland, and indeed recommending bars, and in particular Belgian and Dutch brown bars where one could imbibe such great tasting glasses of said liquid nectar. (Not a cask ale in sight!)

So one can only hope that tradition continues in the same unbiased way, and CAMRA will be at the forefront in recognising, and exulting, the great values of American and British craft brewers producing glasses of fabulous tasting beers.

It can be cask, keg, bottled or canned, one hopes a beer drinker can recognise great tasting ale produced by talented craft brewers, however it's dispensed.

CAMRA has been trying to shake off its "old man, flat cap" image for years now, and has failed quite spectacularly. The craft brewers have come to the rescue and are producing beers that appeal to the young, urban and fashionable, as well as the broader minded fat belly brigade. For proof of this you only have to look at the demographic of the new breed of beer festivals, in particular Manchester's Indy-man-beer-con and the London Craft Beer Festival. Thirtysomethings and 30/40% of them women! Unheard of at a CAMRA festival. So as they say "take a hop forward" CAMRA members "wake up and smell the hops"! Life is too short and one's liver too brittle to waste on tasteless brown liquid masquerading as ale regardless of the format. A better choice and bigger flavours? We can all drink to that!

Where now CAMRA?

From Frank Mullen:

In response to your less than complimentary comments about The Bar, Chorlton's new interior, (it is just a lick of paint, for goodness sake) in a recent issue of Opening Times. It has left me wondering if CAMRA has lost its focus, to some extent. What about the beer? I think the time has come to get a few things off my chest.....

I have worked in licensed trade for over 30 years and have seen first-hand the deterioration of British ales from Watney's Red Barrel to party seven giant cans through to the infuriating smooth flow insipid ales mass produced and forced on the public on the back of powerful advertising campaigns.

I have also witnessed the rise of CAMRA, through the late seventies and eighties, up to the new millennium. Without your tenacious campaign I shudder to think what we would all be drinking today.

But, I have news for you my dear old CAMRA, you've won. Never before has there been such a colossal choice on offer in British bars and pubs. Even the huge Breweries and Pubcos like Carlsberg/Tetley, Marston's, Enterprise Inns, Stonegate etc., etc. have been converted. Brilliant CAMRA, job well done!

This brings me to the taboo subject of craft and key keg beers. At last year's Indy-man festival in the wonderful Victoria Baths, I sampled a huge range of wonderful beers that astounded my taste buds, and, quite frankly, without a word of a lie, was some of the finest beer I had ever tasted. The likes of Red Willow, Brewfist, Stillwater, Tiny Rebel, Alechemy to name but a few, forging ahead with new brewing methods, new taste sensations, new ideas. It's the future CAMRA, you better believe it!

So what does CAMRA do now? Any beer that is produced in both cask and keg is persona non grata; any hint of carbonisation is outlawed, what about the taste? What about the art and craft of the brewers? You are doing them a huge disservice and alienating an awful lot of people, your members included.

To me it's quite straightforward, to get people back into our pubs and bars, to reinvent the drinking culture in this country, to get the "local" back as one of the centres of community life, you have to adapt and embrace change, "two legs good, four legs bad" is long gone.

In the words of George Bernard Shaw (who liked a little drink now and then I'm told), "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds, cannot change anything". Wise words.

Editorial Comment: *This is clearly going to rumble on. CAMRA's current stance on the new wave of keg beers is that we recognise most of them as well made, interesting beers that add variety to at least part of the British pub scene. We also recognise that they are certainly not a threat to the survival of cask beer, despite what some CAMRA people seem to believe. However they are not within CAMRA's current remit so while it is not our policy to oppose them we don't promote them either. Frank is wrong to say that a beer produced in both cask and keg form is "persona non grata" – that's simply not the case.*

OT has been looking at some of these beers and it seems to us that what protagonists on both sides of this argument have overlooked is that many of these new "keg" beers are not in fact keg beers at all. Certainly some are sold from pressurised metal kegs but many (most, probably) of the new-style keg beers come from something called key kegs. The beer in these is neither pasteurised nor filtered. It is naturally carbonated (albeit at a slightly higher level than most cask beers – much like bottle conditioned beers are gassier than their cask equivalents). When it's served no gas comes into contact with the beer.

We can't help thinking that if these things had been called "key casks" there would have been rather less opposition from some within CAMRA. Even now it seems that CAMRA could accept many key keg beers without having to change one word of its current policy. As Roger Protz told the Stockport & South Manchester Branch at its 40th anniversary meal – "all we have to fear is fear itself". Indeed. JC

The Cheadle Hulme

From Joe Ryan, The Cheadle Hulme

I am writing to express my disappointment with an article about a short piece in your September edition of Opening Times. I have just moved to the South Manchester area to assist in the opening of the new Holt's joint venture at The Cheadle Hulme and so this is the first time I have come across this publication, and firstly may I say in general it is a very good read and highly informative for someone new to the area like myself.

However, I am disappointed with the article regarding the Cheadle Hulme as it appears to insinuate that once opened, the establishment will not be catering for drinkers or cask ale fans. To quote the article "the Cheadle Hulme pub has a mixture of food and drink trade and surely it would have made more sense to try and tweak the balance between the two rather than imposing an overwhelmingly food led formula that would be more at home on a leisure park". I feel this is incorrect and paints a false picture to all potential customers that the new establishment will not be a great place to drink. I would argue that tweaking the balance between wet trade and food trade is exactly what we are doing here in Cheadle Hulme.

I feel a much more professional approach would have been for someone from the publication to have come and spoken with myself prior to writing the article, that way I would have been able to fully explain our concept and give an insight into what the establishment will offer. I would have also been able to point out a few other factual inaccuracies for the author before this article went to print. I am disappointed that there was no dialogue between yourself and I prior to publication. This would have given our potential customers a much more positive and accurate view of our concept, which involves catering for drinkers and especially real ale drinkers, given we are avid fans of cask ale ourselves and pride ourselves on keeping outstanding cask ale.

Having said that, the author is of course entitled to his or her opinion and I shall respect that nonetheless. I look forward to enjoying a good working relationship with your publication going forward and I hope we can both continue to play a role in promoting real ale.

We plan to get in touch with Joe – so more on the Cheadle Hulme next time – Ed.

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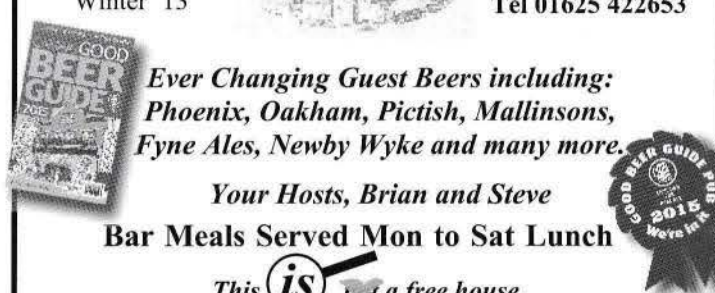


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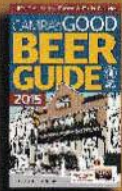
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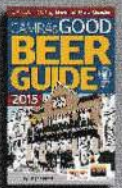
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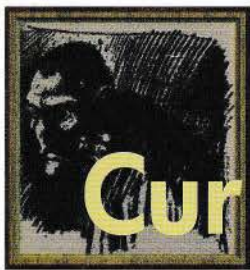
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Curmudgeon

A Bitter Triumph

It was good news on two counts that CAMRA's 2014 Champion Beer of Britain award went to Timothy Taylor's Boltmaker – both that it was won by a long-established family brewer, and that the winning beer was one in the "ordinary bitter" category that often seems to be sadly underappreciated nowadays. Some years ago, Boddington's used the advertising slogan "If you don't get Boddies', you'll just get bitter". Well, you won't get Boddies' any more, at least in cask form, but in a growing number of pubs you won't get bitter either.

Yes, if you go into a tied pub of one of the independent family brewers, or Greene King or Marston's, you will probably still find a beer on the bar in the 3.6% - 4.0% strength range describing itself as "Bitter", and most new micros have at least one in their range. But in the vast majority of pub company outlets, or any "free house" that isn't a specialist beer pub, you're likely to be confronted by three or four of the widely-distributed premium ale brands such as Doom Bar, Cumberland Ale, Bombardier, Wainwright and London Pride, which are in a slightly higher strength – and price – band. "Ordinary bitter" is conspicuous by its absence.

Indeed, very often the standard ale in these pubs is a smoothflow offering such as Worthington, John Smith's or the dreaded nitro Boddington's, while cask beer is reserved for the discerning "premium" customer with his deep pockets. Yet, to pack so much flavour and variety into beers of such modest strength is arguably one of the greatest achievements of British brewing. And, at a time when high pub prices are a constant source of complaint and we are being urged to curb our alcohol consumption, making a wider variety of ordinary bitters available would help both our wallets and our livers. Let's hope that the victory of Boltmaker leads to a revival of interest in what for decades was the staple beer of British pubs.

Scattered in the Plough

The latest bizarre interior design feature to appear in pubs is a proliferation of scatter cushions, which once you'd be more likely to find in your gran's front lounge. They've appeared in a number of Robinson's recent refurbishments, and they've even cropped up in Wetherspoon's. And, not content with colonising the lounge side, they've started spreading to the vault!

The idea, I suppose, is to make pub interiors seem more female-friendly by introducing a cosy, homely, design element. But in practice nobody ever derives any comfort from them, and they just end up being chucked on the floor to free up more seating space. Surely it is appropriate for the "public" side at least to have an understated, functional, even austere design ethos of a somewhat masculine character, rather than being bedecked with fancy fripperies. And isn't it somewhat patronising to women to imagine that they will be tempted into pubs by the introduction of fussy, chintzy soft furnishings that serve no practical purpose?

Pile 'em High

It's funny how these odd little innovations seem to sweep across the pub trade without any obvious prompting. Another one, which is trivial in itself, is putting beer mats in a little pile in the middle of tables rather than spreading them out. Maybe this saves the bar staff a tiny amount of work, but it can't have evolved independently in a thousand different pubs – the idea must have come from somewhere. You start to wonder whether there is some kind of periodical called "Daft Pub Trends" that licensees read and then slavishly follow.

Curmudgeon Online: curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com

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Pub, Brewery and Festival News

Covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Continued from page 19

All in all, it promises to be a great addition to the local scene and with such a wide range of ales is likely to become a destination for ale lovers from further afield being perfectly placed near both tram stop and West Didsbury bus terminus. **Opening Times** will bring you pictures of the new venture in the next issue.

Jack in the Box

Blackjack Brewery has launched its very own brewery tap bar in Altrincham. **Jack in the Box** is situated in the revamped Market House on the corner of Swan Street and Market Street, a short walk from Altrincham's transport interchange.



Altrincham's historic market has undergone a transformation since control was passed from the council to Market Operations Ltd, a company headed up by Nick Johnson, former marketing manager of the Urban Splash property development company and original operator of Manchester's Atlas Bar & Deli. The outdoor market continues to trade in traditional form on Tuesdays and Saturdays but now also operates as a specialist market on Sundays, with each Sunday given over to a different type of speciality – Farmers, Vintage Food & Fashion, Handmade & Producers and Home, House & Garden.



The biggest transformation however has been the reinvention of the indoor Market House into a food court housing a number of food and drink specialists including Blackjack whose bar occupies one corner of the hall alongside a new outlet for West Didsbury's Reserve Wines. There are four handpumps on the bar, alongside eight fonts dispensing craft keg beers. When **Opening Times** called on a Sunday afternoon, the four pumps were offering Blackjack's own Play Your Cards Rye't alongside beers from Marble, Siren and Burning Sky breweries. The casks (and kegs) are housed in a glass fronted chilled cellar located behind the bar. There is also an extensive selection of bottled beers from

names such as Weird Beard, Celt, Raw, Anarchy and more.

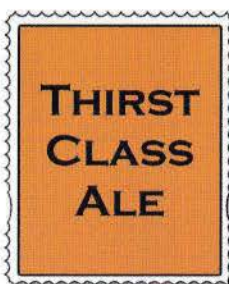
Opening Times called on the second of two "soft" test weekends for the new market hall. Jack in the Box manager Jon Hartley told us that both weekends had been very successful, with customers flocking to the bar. Indeed when we called, while all four cask ales were available, the keg selection had taken something of a hammering. The test weekends are now behind them and the bar is open on Tuesday to Saturday from 12 noon until 10.00pm and 12 to 6.00pm on Sundays.

New Stockport Brewers

The brewing scene in Stockport goes from strength to strength and is now a fully fledged local industry.

Stockport Brewing, based in a unit across the road from the Crown, Heaton Lane, has now received HMRC approval for brewing to start on the site. **Watt's Brewing** attached to the Magnet on Wellington Road North has also been given the go ahead and we understand may be looking at a November launch.

Also imminent is Richard Conway's **Thirst Class Ale** which will soon be brewing in a unit on Mottram Street, just off Hillgate near the town centre. **OT** caught up with CAMRA member Richard for a pint and a chat in the Magnet.



In common with many new-wave brewers Richard has a keen home-brewing background where he has been making his full mash ales for two years now. In fact he's an award-winning home brewer, having last year won an IPA competition organised by Manchester's Beermoth beer shop. The prize was a commercial brew of the beer, Elephant Hawk IPA, made by Richard at Stockport's Quantum Brewery. This was followed by a second place in the IPA class for the same

beer in last year's national home-brewing competition; this year he gained a second place in the wheat beer class for a Hefeweizen and first in the speciality class for a Treacle Imperial Stout. That's a good track record.

As we went to press Richard was assembling his two-barrel kit and was aiming for a mid-October launch. For the time being it will be a part-time operation and he will be keeping the day job at an IT manager. Beers will be available in cask, key-keg and bottle with the launch beer probably an IPA. For the time being Richard will be using the flexibility of the small kit to experiment and see what beer are well received and which aren't. More news when the beer is out – in the meantime check out the brewery website at www.thirstclassale.co.uk.

And that's not the end of it. **Cryptic Ales** (mentioned in **OT** some while back) has also now obtained planning permission to convert a unit in Heaviley into a brewery with a public and trade counter – more next time, hopefully. Once **Cryptic Ales** is in production it will give Stockport no fewer than eight breweries which, we think, is the highest number since 1899!

Didsbury Beer Festival

The beer volunteers of South Manchester are negotiating with brewers to deliver a huge range of quality ales to the



7th annual Didsbury Beer Festival. Festival volunteers visited the Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA meeting in September, met the Ilkley Brewery team and ordered their excellent beer for the festival. Didsbury Beer Festival's reputation has been built on the advice and practical involvement of the CAMRA organisers of the Stockport Beer Festival and CAMRA always have a stall and a warm welcome in Didsbury. So what reputation does Didsbury Beer Festival have? 200 casks, always well served, a people's army of volunteers, young people in fancy dress and a community in party mood.

The festival runs from 30th October to 1st November: the Halloween weekend again. So expect a ghostly theme, particularly on the Thursday. There is a prize for the best outfit. Merrylegs Cider will supply some of the wide range of ciders and perries available for fruit lovers. Uncle Strawberry is one of the many live bands who play Didsbury for charity. See www.didsburybeerfestival.org.uk for details or to spot yourself on a film from last year. Profits will this year go to Visioncare for homeless people and The Wellspring which is a resource centre for homeless and disadvantaged people and situated behind Robinsons brewery



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