

OPENING TIMES

JUNE 2016 / FREE



**INSIDE: MIDLAND UNDER THREAT /
CHORLTON BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL /
MEET THE BREWER / BREWERY NEWS**



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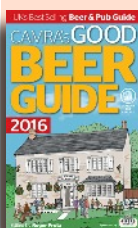
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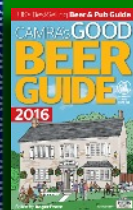
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OPENING TIMES

Opening Times is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch, the Trafford & Hulme Branch, the Central Manchester Branch and the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the Salford and the Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branches. 7,500 copies a month are printed by Oxuniprint Ltd, a division of Oxford University Press and distributed throughout Stockport, Trafford, Manchester and Tameside. There are also many outlets in Macclesfield & East Cheshire, High Peak and Glossop.

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Opening Times does not recommend you drink and drive. Local public transport information can be obtained online as follows:

* Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com 0161 244 1000

* East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx

* Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

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

Copy Date for the July issue is Friday 10th June.

Contributors to this issue: John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Pete Farrand, Neil Worthington, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Robin Wignall, Peter Edwardson, Tom Lord, Jon Gobbett, John O'Donnell, Stewart Taylor, Phil Booton, Stuart Ballantyne, Brendon Hall, Jim Flynn and Carl Manton.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – Midland (Wellington Road North) under threat from new road scheme. Read more on page 7.

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What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Events, Information and News



Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

M18

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

www.ssmcamra.co.uk

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

Salford (SAL) www.salford.camra.org.uk

Contact: Dave Hampshire; talldave@gmail.com

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

www.hpneccamra.org.uk

Contact: Stewart Taylor 07907 714826; taylorshouse@supanet.com

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: Rob Nicholson 07983 524102;

social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Trafford & Hulme (T&H)

www.thcamra.org.uk

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

Central Manchester (CMCR)

www.centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Contact: Heather Airlie 07734 622519;

chair@centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events (events open to all in blue)

Wednesday 8th – Swinton Social: 7.30pm White Lion, 242 Manchester Road, M27 4TS; 8.15pm Cricketers Arms, 227 Manchester Road, M27 4TT; 9.00pm Farmers Arms, 160 Manchester Road, M27 5TP. (SAL)

Thursday 9th – Committee Meeting: Ladybarn Social Club, 13 Green Street, Ladybarn, M14 6TL. Starts 8.15pm. Note short meeting to be followed by Regional Club of the Year 2015 Runner-up presentation, (SSM)

Thursday 9th – Timperley Social: 8.00pm Stonemasons Arms, 356 Stockport Road, WA15 7UR; 9.00pm Quarry Bank, 151 Bloomsbury Lane, WA15 6NY; 10.00pm Moss Trooper, Moss Lane, WA15 6JU. (T&H)

Wednesday 15th – Branch Meeting: Kings Arms, 11 Bloom Street, Salford, M3 6AN. Starts 7.30pm. (SAL)

Thursday 16th – Branch Meeting: Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 16th – Sale Moor Social: 8.00pm Jackson's Boat, Rifle Road, M33 2LX; 9.00pm Carters Arms, 367 Northenden Road, M33 2PG; 10.00pm, Legh Arms, 178 Northenden Road, M33 2SR; 10.45pm Temple Inn, 103 Northenden Road, M33 2FE. (T&H)

Saturday 18th – Branch Meeting and AGM: Navigation, 9 Stockport Road, Marple, SK6 6BD. Starts 1.10pm. Will be followed by a social in Marple. (HPNC)

Saturday 18th - CAMRA bar at Manchester Beer Week closing event, from 11:00am, Old Granada Studios, Quay St. Manchester M60 9EA (CMCR)

Wednesday 22nd – Manchester Social: 7.30pm Marble Arch, 73 Rochdale Road M4 4HY; 8.15pm Angel, 6 Angel Street, M4 4BQ; 9.00pm Bar Fringe, 8 Swan Street, M4 4JN; 9.45pm Lower Turks Head, 36 Shudehill, M4 1EZ. (SAL)

Friday 24th – Gorton Stagger: 7.30pm Plough, 927 Hyde Road, 7FB; 8.30pm Royal Oak, 114 Cross Lane, M18 8NZ. (SSM)

Saturday 25th – Club of the Year presentation: Union Club, Stevens Street, Alderley Edge, SK9 7NL. More details from contact. (MEC)

Wednesday 29th – Monton Social: 7.30pm Blue Bell, 41 Monton Green, M30 9LL; 8.30pm Park Hotel, 142 Monton Road, M30 9QD; 9.30pm Malt Dog, 169 Monton Road, M30 9GS. (SAL)

Thursday 30th – Pub of the Month Award: Heaton Hops, 7 School Lane, Heaton Chapel, SK4 5DE. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 2nd July – Independents Day Treasure Hunt. Details here: www.salford.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=29703. Organised by Salford CAMRA but all welcome.

Saturday 2nd July – Open Day at Mouselow Farm Brewery. 12 noon onwards. Farm is a 10-15 minute walk from Hadfield railway station. (HPNC)

Wednesday 6th July – Swinton Social: 7.30pm Cock & Swine, 207 Worsley Road, M27 5SQ; 8.30pm White Swan, 186 Worsley Road, M27 5SN; 9.30pm Park Inn, 135 Worsley Road, M27 5SP. (SAL)

Thursday 7th – Saturday 9th – Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival: St Clement's Church, Edge Lane, Chorlton. (T&H)

Social Media

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



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

Trafford & Hulme: www.facebook.com/thcamra

Macclesfield & East Cheshire:

<http://fbl.me/meccamra>



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Pub of the Month

Heaton Hops, Heaton Chapel



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for June 2016 has been won by Heaton Hops on School Lane in Heaton Chapel, writes Jim Flynn.

It could be said that this award has been late in coming as Heaton Hops has already won the City Life Greater Manchester Best Pub award for 2015, but we in CAMRA like to be sure that a new venture has legs before we award a gong. Perhaps here, though, we were somewhat tardy given the stellar success of this bar opened by Damian O'Shea (the 'Aleman') and his partner Charlotte in April last year. They clearly knew that the area was ready for such an innovative project having run a stall selling their interesting range of bottled beers at the monthly Heaton Moor market and found a great thirst for new beers. These bottled beers are still very much part of their business.

Heaton Hops, based in converted shop premises with just two small rooms (the second is downstairs) and an outside drinking area, is an intimate but hospitable place to have a drink. Along with the bottled beers from the UK and around the world there are two changing cask beers, traditional cider and keg beers. The aim is to promote local beers as far as possible although not to the exclusion of high quality products from around the country. CAMRA members are especially welcome with a 10% discount offered on all purchases.

To say that the place has captured the imagination of local drinkers is an understatement with the place packed out almost every night (don't go on Mondays though as it's shut). Get there early to join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award which will be presented to Damian, Charlotte and their staff on Thursday, 30th June when I'm sure there will be great beer and a convivial welcome.

The pub is on the 329 and 84 bus routes, the 192 stops nearby and Heaton Chapel train station is only 5 or 6 minutes away, so there is



The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 140 years. Check out their advert on this page.

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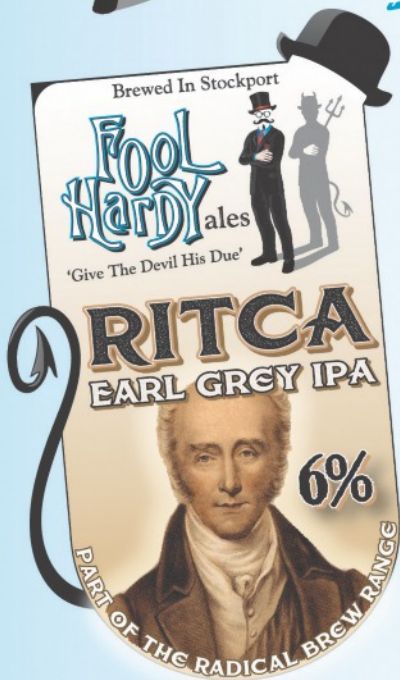


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Midland under threat

Road plan threatens demolition of popular local

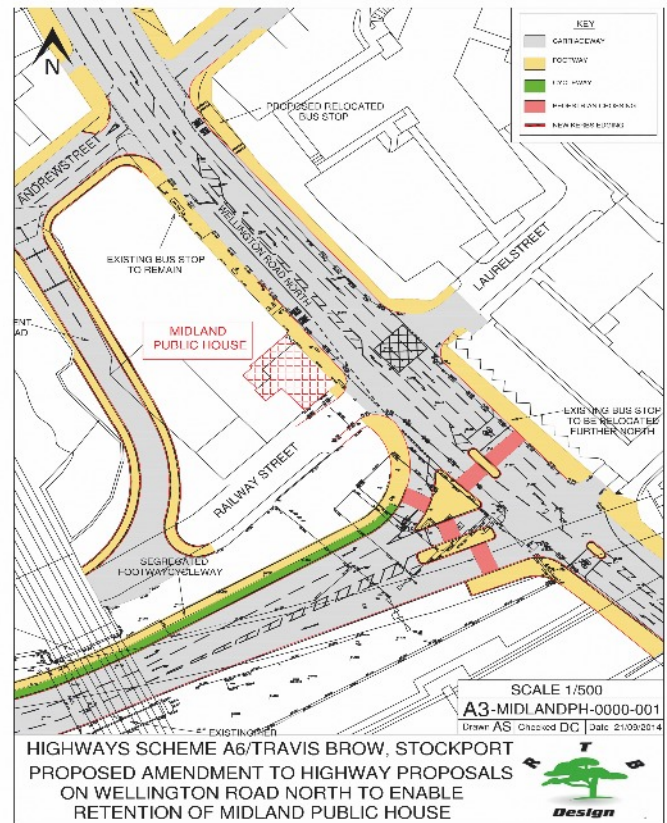
We have previously reported on plans by Stockport Council to demolish the Midland pub on Wellington Road North. The future of this popular local is threatened by works associated with the Town Centre Access Plan – a scheme which we at *Opening Times* generally support. However this proposal is, we think, a step too far, harking back to the destructive schemes of the past when little thought appeared to be given to the communities and businesses affected, and which we thought were behind us. Apparently not.

The Midland dates from 1833 and so is a rare link with early 19th century Stockport. It pre-dates the viaduct and also retains much ornamental tile work from a later 19th century re-fit. Add in the fact that it's an independent business and part of the popular "Stockport Slope" of free houses that is becoming a local tourist attraction, and you do have to wonder at the logic behind the proposal.

It's not entirely clear whether the pub is threatened by a cycle lane or a relocated footpath. Either way the development takes about the first six feet off the pub so you'd think there would be some wriggle room. In fact we think there is. When these plans were first floated last year CAMRA obtained a revised plan drawn up by a recently retired local authority highways engineer. This maintained the integrity of the scheme and was in fact submitted to Stockport Council as part of the initial public consultation. Presumably they either ignored it or lost it as nothing further was heard. It's reproduced here on the right so you can see how unnecessary the destruction of the Midland really is.

It's clear that Stockport Council is going to have a fight on its hands. There's a petition in the pub and also one online at Change.org (the address is www.change.org and then Search for "Save the Midland pub"). The online petition had gathered 1,268 signatures when this was typed. The council has now submitted a formal planning application but at this stage only the pub's owner, Mark Hayter, can object. However this will have to be followed by a Compulsory Purchase Order and the council should stand on notice that there will be many objections then.

So what does the Council have to say about this? Well it's all been a bit feeble so far. Commenting to the Manchester Evening News a spokesman said: "The proposed new link road is a key element in the Town Centre Access Plan providing a link between the A6 and M60 whilst reducing traffic in the town centre. Unfortunately the Midland Pub is very close to the proposed junction and we believe it would impact on pedestrian and vehicle safety to try to retain it". As our alternative scheme shows they are clearly wrong. Let's hope common sense prevails.



Crown Point Tavern



Denton has something of a reputation as a real ale desert, particularly in the town centre. That is about to change with the opening of the **Crown Point Tavern** (Unit 2, 16 Market Street) which should be open for business by the time you read this, *writes Carl Manton*.

This is a project by Adam Cordingley, Chris Marsden and Chris's dad Ken. They are all locals and this is their first venture of this type. It's a one roomed micro-pub and I have been there several times to watch it develop and can report that it's looking great with plenty of seating and tables, plus lots of room around the bar. All the work has been carried out by the guys themselves so it's a real labour of love.

The plan is to feature six cask beers on handpump together with two keg fonts (one for a quality lager that is not usually seen in the area) and also at least one traditional cider. There will also be a range of bottled beers. Coffee and bar snacks will be available, too (and on Sundays Chris tells me they will offer free sandwiches with a choice of fillings).

Opening hours are planned to be 11.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday and 10.00am to 11.00pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Pub Shorts

The **Thatched House** on Churchgate, Stockport has now come to the end of its life as a pub and is being converted into apartments. Of course the pub had some very rare windows advertising the old Showells Brewery (pictured right) – let's hope they survive the work (we're not holding our breath).



In Gorton, the **Gorton Mount** has reopened but our reporter doesn't know if it's operating as a pub. We suspect not. Meanwhile in Burnage the **Mauldeth** on Kingsway has also breathed its last as it's now been converted into Rainbows Day Nursery. At least the building is being put to good use after several years as a visibly failing pub.

There has been a change at the helm at the **Admiral Rodney** in Prestbury. Long-standing licensee Peter Brady has now left and has been replaced by Geoff Leigh-Ford and his wife Gill. Geoff is experienced in hospitality and comes immediately from running a hotel near Llangollen. He originally comes from the Prestbury area and commented that many of the customers at the Admiral Rodney are the same as 30 years ago! Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde are the current permanent beers and there is one changing beer from Robinsons. Geoff tells us he hopes to add a fourth beer subject to demand and cellar space.



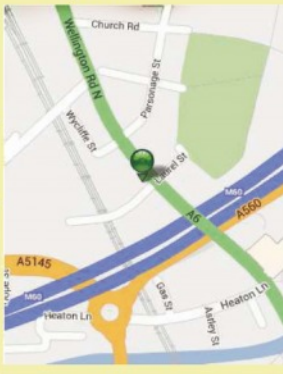
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Great Stuff this Bass

The well-known Bass red triangle was famously the first trademark ever registered, and it remains a distinctive beer symbol almost 150 years later. When CAMRA was formed in the early 1970s, Draught Bass was the only nationally-distributed cask beer. Outside its Midlands heartland, it had a strong following in rural Wales, the West Country and the North-East, and was also well-regarded from London to Edinburgh. It was always a free-trade favourite even where the owning company had no tied houses.



Across large swathes of Derbyshire and Staffordshire it (along with Marston's Pedigree, of similar strength) was often sold in pubs as the standard bitter. Bass also entered into trading agreements with a number of independent brewers that led to the beer being sold in some of their tied houses, a notable example being Higsons of Liverpool, with it being available in the George in Stockport, a once-great pub now a shadow of its former self.

In the mid-1970s, its original gravity was increased from 1039 to 1044 to make it a stronger competitor against the popular premium ales of that period. It was never an in-your-face beer, with a distinctive subtle, bittersweet palate, but was generally reckoned to be amongst the beer aristocracy. In the 1970s, the parent company controlled over half the pubs in Birmingham, but only condescended to make Bass available in six of them.

As the number of nationally distributed beers mushroomed in the 1980s, it lost some of its status, although it remained a widely available and popular beer. In the early 80s, Bass stopped using the distinctive Burton Union fermentation system, a move that was felt to rob it of some of its character. The late, great beer writer Michael Jackson certainly reckoned Pedigree, not Bass, to be the Burton classic.

The upheaval in the brewing industry following the Beer Orders inevitably took its toll. The Bass brewery at Burton-upon-Trent ended up being taken over by Molson Coors, but the rights to the Bass name went to ABInBev. The cask version of Bass is now contract-brewed by Marston's, home of its historic rival Pedigree. The bottled and canned versions are brewed by ABInBev at Samlesbury, and are not from the same brewing stock, although they do have a slight echo of the cask original. Ironically, Pedigree seems in recent years to have lost a lot of ground in the free trade, and I have to say I've struggled to find decent examples recently.

I wouldn't claim that the Marston's-brewed Draught Bass is on a par with the 1970s original, but it is hard to compare things over a forty-year gap. But it does retain much of its essential character – complex, subtle, bitter-sweet, slightly sour and lactic, and not really drinking its strength. Its understatement makes it a classic English beer. Unlike many other 4.4% beers, you could happily sink several pints in a session.

While its distribution is diminished compared with what it once was, it is still often found in the Midlands and in other areas such as the North-East, Wales and the South-West. I read of one new pub opening in the North-East putting Bass as the core of its beer range, and visited a pub in West Wales proudly advertising it as their next guest beer. It remains the signature beer in classic unspoilt pubs such as the Star in Bath and the Seven Stars in Falmouth. And, wherever I see it on the bar, I get the feeling it's a pub that keeps in touch with its heritage and tradition.



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Chorlton Beer Festival

John O'Donnell previews south Manchester's premier event



There are few finer settings for a summer beer festival than St Clement's Church in Chorlton. In July, the Edge Lane church and its youth centre will once again be filled with beer while its grounds will be packed with thirsty drinkers when the Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival rolls around. The festival which is supported by the relocated and expanded Outstanding Beers is now in its 12th year.

After introducing an extra night as a one off to celebrate the 10th festival in

2014, the festival is now firmly established as a three-day event which this year will run from Thursday 7th to Saturday 9th July. Last year's heatwave brought more drinkers than ever to the event, so organisers Trafford & Hulme CAMRA and St Clement's have again been tweaking things to improve the festival.

A third cask beer bar has been added in the church hall giving a 50% increase in bar frontage which it is hoped will allow the volunteers to serve beers more quickly. The ever popular world beers bar will move into the grounds where the wide selection of bottled beers will be joined for the first time by draught beers from international brewers.

At the 2015 festival, the warm weather and sunshine made the cider bar more popular than ever, so much so that all the cider was drunk by 5pm. Emergency calls to cider supplier supreme John "Merrylegs" Reek found him completely the other end of the country – picking up more cider in Somerset. But not one to let his cider loving public down, John drove all the way back to Chorlton with fresh stocks where he got a rock star welcome from the waiting cider fans – who promptly drank a van full of cider in two hours! Needless to say, supplies for 2016 will be increased from the start.



The final addition to the line-up will be a new bar featuring key-keg conditioned beers. This new form of storage and dispense of real ale gives all the full flavours of cask conditioned beer but with higher carbonation levels and lower serving temperatures which some drinkers prefer. Manchester's Runaway Brewery which specialises in key-keg conditioning is one brewer guaranteed to feature – but get there quick – their beers will be popular.

Crossing the North-South Divide

While much of the London based press would have you believe that the so called "craft beer" movement has its centre in London and the south of England, June's Manchester Beer Week is set to highlight that Manchester has more than enough claim to be the centre of the "beer revolution".

Chorlton Festival will take this further by challenging drinkers to cross the North-South Divide. In the Church you'll be in the North West of England – represented by amazing beers from Blackjack, Brightside, Outstanding, Track, Marble, Hawkshead, Brewsmith and many more from Manchester, Cheshire and Cumbria.

The path to the Youth Centre will represent the M6, the M1 and the M5. At the end you'll find a bar packed with some of the best breweries from the South. Representing London will be names like Brodies, Weird Beard, Hammerton and Five Point while from down the M4 we'll have Arbor, Moor, Left Hand Giant and Bristol Beer Factory alongside established southern favourites such as Dark Star and Oakham.

To show that beer doesn't have to be divisive, we've persuaded Berkshire's XT brewery to head up to Bury to produce a divide-conquering beer with Brightside. At the time of writing, XT brewer Gareth and Brightside's Lance were keeping tight lipped about what they plan to brew but anyone who's had beers from either brewery know it's likely to be a stonker.

Check out Guitar George

Of course, Chorlton isn't just about the beer – there's also great live music. Friday night's headliner is George Borowski and the Fabulous Wonderfuls. Widely understood to be "Guitar George" who Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler thought "knows all the chords" when penning the 1979 hit Sultans Of Swing, George Borowski has been touring the world for decades. He has shared stages with Meatloaf, Pixies, Radiohead, REM, Van Morrison, the Happy Mondays, Teenage Fanclub, Neil Young and more.

He is an artist who has earned the highest level of respect from those on the 'inside' whilst also being able to reach and appeal to those on the 'outside' with his rarefied combination of presence, performance and beautifully crafted works of art. Music with a message for all, delivered with a passion - George's songwriting winds its way through pop, rock, country, and blue suede tunes in true rock 'n' roll style.

Taking to the stage on Saturday night will be new local funk and soul band The Groove Emperors. All the players have fabulous CVs playing with a wide range of well-respected bands across the city while the soulful vocals of lead singer Sarah Grundy are helping to earn them a reputation as a *must see* band on the local scene.

Get Tutored

Early risers on Saturday can get into the festival before anybody else by signing up to one of the exclusive tutored tasting sessions. There is a choice of sessions which commence at 12 noon – the Cider and Perry session features an explanation of how traditional cider and perry is made before our cider expert demonstrates how the different apples and pears can affect the taste of the finished product in the best way possible – by copious tasting.



For those who prefer malt & hops in their drink, our trained beer expert will lead you on a journey through the world of beer – from light golden ales to deep and rich stouts, explaining the ingredients which contribute to the taste and colours and the processes which allow beers to develop complex flavours way beyond mass produced supermarket beers. Book now at www.chorltonbeerfestival.org.uk

Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival is always popular so beat the queues and get advance tickets – these are on sale now from the festival website www.chorltonbeerfestival.org.uk and the festival Facebook page.

Heard at the Bar

Pub News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond



Chorlton Updates

Chorlton has gained yet another bar and restaurant serving cask ales and “craft beer”. The interestingly named **Man Bites Frog** is in the first unit of the Victorian arcade on Barlow Moor Road near Chorlton bus station – just down from Strange Brew and the Spoon Inn.

Co-owner Dave Cleall-Hill has moved from the Spoon Inn to fulfil a long held dream of having his own place. The wacky name is accompanied by the off-the-wall aim to be a combo of craft ale bar, laid back restaurant and outdoor cinema! Yep that’s right – cinema! Plans are in place to turn the courtyards at the rear into a venue where guests will wear headphones to watch movies *al fresco*.

Dave, who first came to local prominence during his time at **Marble Beer House** when it was named Trafford & Hulme CAMRA Pub of the Year, has partnered with Saffron Hulme, formerly of Waterstones café, in the new venture. As the name might suggest, the food will be French inspired – including frog’s legs. On the beer front, there are two handpumps on the bar with beers coming from local brewers such as First Chop and Alphabet Brewing



Chorlton’s **Mary and Archie** (pictured above) has followed its West Didsbury sibling by offering a discount to CAMRA members. Card carrying members can now get 15% off the café bar’s choice of four cask ales. The Manchester Road bar is already proving popular with locals, especially during recent sunny days when its wrap round terrace was very busy. Unfortunately, restrictions on the licence mean one half of the terrace has to be closed at 9pm and the other half at 10pm.

Change at Pi

The Pi bars group has bidden farewell to Operations Manager Ben Reynolds who has decided to take a career change after eight years. He began with opening **Pi (Chorlton)**, taking it into the *Good Beer Guide* before overseeing the expansion of the group to Liverpool’s Mosley Hill and then to **Pi**

(**Altrincham**). Group owner Andy Ingham has decided to get back into the day to day management of the group, supporting local pub managers Chris (Altrincham) and Paul (Chorlton). Andy has a long background in beer led pubs including stints at Manchester’s **Joshua Brooks** and Huddersfield’s Rat & Ratchet and is planning on expanding the range of beers stocked in both Chorlton and Altrincham, bringing in new breweries and more rotation. He is also investigating squeezing a fourth handpump onto the cramped bar at the Altrincham outlet. The group’s wine list will also be getting a revamp.



Junction Shock

Locals in Hulme have reacted with concern about the sudden closure of the **Junction Hotel**, one of the last remaining traditional pubs in an area that used to have one on every corner. It is reported that noise complaints about the long running jam nights made by new arrivals to the area curtailed those nights and severely hit trade. More worrying is the news that owners Hydes Brewery have wasted no time in selling off the pub to a property developer. *Opening Times* has no information on who that developer may be or their plans for the pub but local campaigners have vowed to fight any attempts to redevelop the pub which they wish to retain as a community asset. Anybody who is interested in backing the campaign to save the pub should contact savethejunction@thcamra.org.uk.

Wendover Over?

Just as *Opening Times* went to press, there was also worrying news for locals in the Brooklands area of Sale with reports that Marston’s **Wendover** has also closed. The pub on the corner of Wendover Road and Ferndown Road is a classic “estate pub” which fell on hard times during the early noughties but was renovated and made much more welcoming in recent years. It is hoped that the closure is only temporary but sadly this is just one of many community pubs which are still closing at alarming rates every week up and down the

Flixton & Urmston



In Urmston, the **Prairie Schooner Tap House** will be renovating its frontage with new windows, new signage and a large awning. Inside, air conditioning will be added. Events-wise the bar and bottle shop now hosts free live music every Wednesday from 8.30 (jazz, blues, folk). Every Thursday there is a “vinyl night” where customers are welcome to bring their own MP3 players! The bottle shop’s range now reflects the great beers being brewed across the North with an emphasis on new breweries too like Torrside, High Peak and Thirst Class.

There’s a new landlord at the **Bird i’th Hand** in Flixton. Mark was previously in charge of Robinsons’ **Railway** in Whaley Bridge. After completely replacing the beer lines, Mark has re-introduced Wells Bombardier and Theakston’s Lightfoot and hopes to introduce a dark beer later. The kitchen has re-opened, serving food from 12:00 until 7:00pm every day.

Altrincham



Altrincham’s **Tavern on the Green** has re-opened after a refurbishment. It is now part of the Bermondsey Pub Co which is the company set up by owners Enterprise Inns to run managed pubs as opposed to the tenanted model which has so badly let down pubs like the Tavern in the past. New manager Sam Foster told *Opening Times* that there will be four cask ales on rotation and the pub will be offering a discount to CAMRA members. Food is based around an extensive choice of pies from Bristol’s PieMinister with associated sides. Opening times will be 10am – 11pm with an extra hour until midnight on Friday and Saturday.

Stagger

Didsbury with Stuart Ballantyne



We began our stagger at the **Gateway** on Wilmslow Road, not far from the East Didsbury tram terminus. This large Wetherspoons pub was busy so we walked around the central bar to try and find a free table. Every table was taken and there was a crowd around the bar waiting to be served. At 7:30pm we estimated that there must have been some 200-plus people in the pub eating and drinking. How many other pubs can boast that many customers at that time in the evening? Clearly the Gateway must be doing something right. Tonight there were eight beers on sale of which we tried four; Irish Peated Ale, Acorn Barnsley Bitter, Lancaster Admiral Archer and Dark Star Revelation. All were above average quality.

Next walking past the East Didsbury bus terminus brought us to the **Barlow Croft** pub restaurant. This was much quieter but was still ticking over nicely. With only one member of the bar staff working it took us a little time to be served. The pub is a brightly lit, modern lounge bar with a Wacky Warehouse children's play area at one end. Tonight's beers were Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Greene King IPA. Everyone opted for the Landlord which was just average, being slightly sweet which suggested that it would have benefited from a bit more conditioning in the cellar. Nobody tried the IPA.

Our 8:30pm meeting point was **Ye Olde Cock**, a large pub recently converted from a failed fish restaurant. In term time it is popular with students and at other times there is a good mixed clientele. The beer range includes craft-keg beers and a number of real ales. It is a Greene King pub and so we were not surprised to see IPA again. But it was the guest beers, RedWillow Directionless and Partners Six Nations, that took our interest. The Directionless scored highly with the Six Nations a little behind at above average. It is worth mentioning here that the Olde Cock has a CAMRA corner with beer related material, *Opening Times* to read and a large sign reminding CAMRA members that they will receive a 25p discount on the price of a pint of cask beer.

A quick U-turn brought us to the **Didsbury** which we had just walked past. The Didsbury is a dining pub with subdued lighting, plenty

of fake beams and waiter service at the tables. The beers on sale today were Greene King IPA, Marston's Pedigree New World Pale Ale and Robinsons Double Hop. One of our group volunteered to try the IPA which he soon regretted giving the beer a poor rating. The rest of us fared better giving the Marston's an average score and the Robinsons an above average. The Didsbury is in competition with the Olde Cock and so if you show your CAMRA membership card you will receive a 10% discount on the price of your beer.

We paused briefly at the **Chalk Bar & Grill** only to be told "the beer in the cellar is not of saleable quality and so is not on sale". Make of that what you will. We bypassed the **Expo Lounge Café Bar** as neither of the two handpumps were in use.



Next it was the **Famous Crown** towards the centre of Didsbury village. None of us seemed to know why the pub was famous. The central bar serves several rooms where large screen TVs, fruit machines and a loud juke box seem to dominate. I don't think the pub's enthusiasm for selling cask beers is what it used to be and tonight two cask beers were available, Sharp's Atlantic and Robinsons Unicorn. The Atlantic received an average verdict whilst the Unicorn fared a little better.



A short walk down Wilmslow Road and around the corner onto Barlow Moor Road brought us to the **Nelson**. This is unashamedly Didsbury's working man's pub, tonight featuring karaoke. I thought that the singer was out of tune, but what the hell!, she was clearly enjoying herself. The Nelson sells

only one cask beer, Jennings Cumberland Ale, which is a very malty beer and received mixed reviews from good to poor.



Backtracking somewhat we returned to Wilmslow Road and the **Royal Oak**. This famous old pub has had its ups and downs over recent years including an arson attack, some poor managers and a few very good ones. Currently it is well-managed selling a range of Marston's beers which tonight included Burton Bitter, Pedigree, Old Empire, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, Banks's Sunbeam, Ringwood Boondoggle and Thwaites Wainwright. The friendly bar manager offered us a taste of any beer that we were not familiar with. The Wainwright received an average rating; all the others were above average and the powerful Old Empire achieved a very good score.



Our final pub was Hydes' **Fletcher Moss** on William Street just behind the Royal Oak. This is now a phenomenally successful pub and it is invariably busy. The pub sells the full range of Hydes beers together with Weston's Farmhouse Scrumpy. All of our party opted for the guest beers; Provenance Bruges, Beer Studio Golden Galino and Hop Back Golden Best. Each beer received a good score or a better than good score. It is worth mentioning here that our beers were all topped up without us having to ask.

And so ended a very enjoyable stagger. Not all of the pubs were brilliant but some of them were extremely good so a visit to Didsbury can be very worthwhile. Why not try the pubs yourself to see how much you agree or disagree with the author?

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High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Although it seems ages ago it is worth opening the article with a good mention of the annual Hills and Mills Beer Festival organised by CAMRA's High Peak Branch at **Chalkers' Snooker Club**, Newtown, New Mills. More than a couple of dozen beers are squeezed into the small space available, and what an interesting array they were. Appropriately lots of local breweries were represented, with the list augmented by beer from some of the recent microbreweries in Stockport, and a couple of tubs of Scottish cider.

Some of the local beers included Calico Rye Pale and the dangerous 9% Imperial Stout from Torrside Brewery plus Mermaid's Pool and Pale Rye from Rock Mill Brewery. Both these breweries are in New Mills. From Whaley Bridge Brewery there was Crow Hill American Amber and Stoneheads Pale, and from High Peak Brew Co. in Chapel-en-le-Frith was Pale Ale. I tried all of these and was well pleased with my choices. Also of note were Smokey Joe, a stout from Greenmill and Rude Vagabond, a pale hoppy beer from Fool Hardy. As ever this was a good little festival and is certainly worth looking out for at about the same time next year.



The recent beer festival at the **Drum & Monkey** (pictured above) was also well worth visiting, and whilst sales were good new beers were being freshly tapped into the following week to extend the delights of the event. There were beers from Storm, Whaley Bridge, Happy Valley and Thornbridge, of fairly local source, with Abbeydale from Sheffield, and beers from Manchester Brewing Co., Blackjack and Cloudwater breweries in Manchester, and First Chop in Salford. The most travelled beers seemed to be Waen Lemon Drizzle, from Llanidloes and Inferno from the Oakham Brewery at Peterborough. Beers tried were in good form and favourites really depended on personal taste. I enjoyed Whaley Bridge Crow Hill, a

fairly new beer which is part of the brewery's re-branding. Other pale beers of note included First Chop POD, Thornbridge Empress, Cloudwater Pale and Blackjack Dual Hop Pale Ale. Happy Valley Dangerously Dark was the best of the dark beers. There was live music available on at least Sunday teatime. This was yet again a good presentation at the Drum & Monkey and it is certainly worth looking out for the likely autumn event.

Festival in Buxton

A third local beer festival was the big event organised in the Pavilion Gardens in Buxton during the early May Bank Holiday weekend. This was an ambitious project with 150 beers. Admission prices for sessions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday were to my mind expensive, but there were highly rated live bands playing during these sessions. A *Buxton Advertiser* correspondent commented very favourably on the live music. Monday was a charity donation admission with a glass and programme included. Beers were £3 a pint throughout; very sensible for the Peak District. There were some beers from Liverpool Organic Brewery, but only eight out of the total. All casks were in alphabetical order by brewer, and casks were numbered to match the programme information. This was really good organisation. There were beers from all over the country, and obviously too many to list. A cool weekend helped beer condition and the beers I tried on Monday were still in good condition. Yorkshire Blonde from Ossett, Atlas Stout from Frontier in Derby, Conwy California, Liverpool Organic Cascade and White Rat from Rat Brewery, Huddersfield, were my choices from the huge range available. Hopefully this festival was a success because it is the best beer festival I have seen in the Pavilion Gardens and it would be good to see it repeated.

Pub Snippets



A few local snippets include Cracklin' Rosie Perry being on handpump at the **Soldier Dick** in Furness Vale. Beers from Intrepid

Brewery in the Hope Valley, have been on sale at the **Old Hall** Whitehough, Chinley, along with beers from Ashover, including Font. This last has also been available at Buxworth Club as has St. Austell Trelawney. If you see this in time, you might be interested in the Classic Car Rally at the **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge during the afternoon of Sunday, 12th June. Here at the White Hart, J.W. Lees MPA has been re-badged with approval to WPA so that Wendo's Pale Ale has become the house beer.

At the **Shepherds** in Whaley Bridge the latest genuine guest beers made available to licensees by Marston's include Oakham Inferno, Everards Sunchaser and Adnams Mosaic.

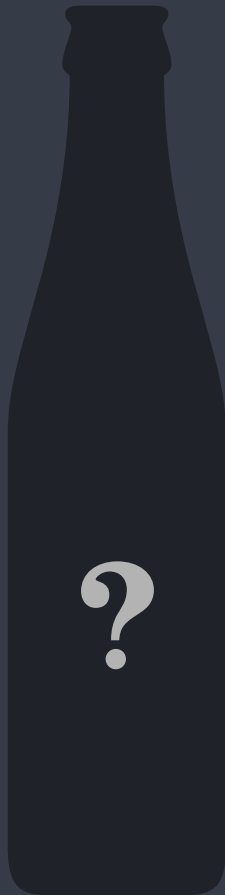
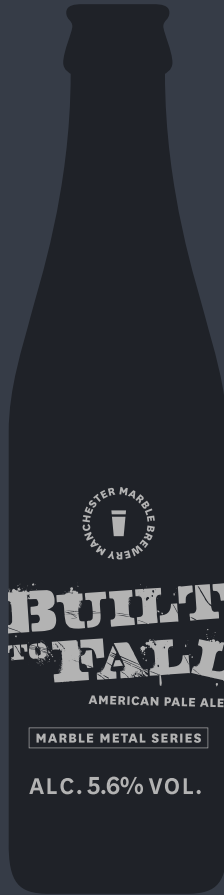
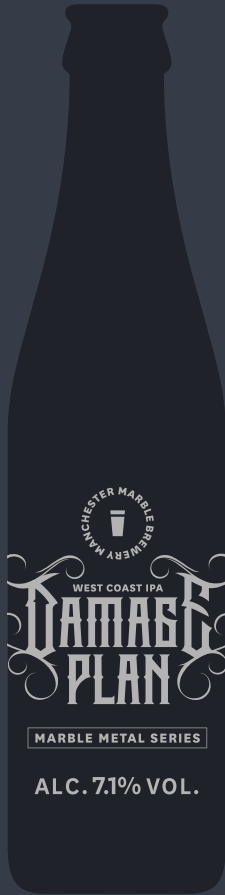
Finally the long-closed **Rose and Crown** between Whaley and Chapel has been demolished and it looks likely that housing will be on the footprint. In Buxton work on the closed **Prince of Wales** on Fairfield Road suggested domestic use, but it has been given the kiss of death by its reopening as an undertakers.

High Peak Pub News With Tom Lord

In Hyde the **Buxton Inn**, which was closed for a while, has now reopened and is selling Marston's Pedigree and Sharp's Doom Bar plus a reported guest beer. Down in Hyde town centre the **Jolly Carter** has also now reopened with regrettably no real ale, the recently installed handpump has disappeared along with the Courage Best Bitter.



Up in Mossley it is reported that the **Rising Sun** (pictured above) is now regularly selling its own beers brewed on the premises. Also in Mossley the **Fleece Inn** in the town centre will be selling around six of the Titanic Brewery's beers for about a week starting on Saturday 18th June. The tap takeover will not be complete however as other breweries' beers will still be available.



MARBLE METAL SERIES

Fighting Fit

Peter Edwardson on CAMRA's Revitalisation Project



CAMRA has recently announced a Revitalisation Project, which aims to take a root-and-branch look at its aims and objectives. This makes a great deal of sense at a time when the organisation boasts a record membership, but when issues like the rise of the anti-drink lobby and the closure of pubs loom larger than a threat to real ale itself.

Unfortunately, CAMRA put out a press release about this with the headline-grabbing title of "Is this the end of the Campaign for Real Ale?" which inevitably led some journalists to jump to the wrong conclusions. Some have lazily assumed that CAMRA has been forced to review its purpose because "real ale" has been knocked into a cocked hat by "craft beer".

One of the worst examples was an article in the Guardian entitled "Craft beer: is it closing time for the Campaign for Real Ale?" The subtitle read "The craft beer revolution has delivered quality ales to the masses, and created a crisis for CAMRA and its supporters", which is about as far from the truth as it is possible to imagine. The juxtaposition of "craft beer" and "the masses" in the same sentence is particularly absurd.

Of course, in the past fifteen or so years there has been a dramatic rise in beer enthusiasm outside the auspices of CAMRA, which has given many long-standing members cause for thought. "Is this good beer, even if it isn't real ale?" This is entirely a positive development – CAMRA has never claimed a monopoly on good beer, and more choice and innovation has to be welcomed. But the extent of this "craft beer revolution" has been greatly overstated. It's maybe not surprising coming from journalists who spend most of their time in Inner London, and only visit other parts of the country through excursions by train or plane to other big city centres.

Even in the North, it's easy to see the mavens of popular culture wending their merry way from the Port Street Beer House via the Grove in Huddersfield to North Bar in Leeds without apparently caring that the main A62 road linking those three points is lined with closed and boarded pubs. It's still the case that the reach of that revolution is very limited. Get out of the city centres and go into normal community locals and family dining pubs in suburbs, medium-sized and small towns, villages and the countryside, and you will see little or no sign of it.

Even the strictest definition of "craft" includes plenty of cask beers, and many would argue that most, if not all, cask qualifies as craft. The whole thing is a false and unhelpful dichotomy. However, the distinctiveness of the "craft beer movement" is epitomised by "craft keg" on draught. And how many pubs offer anything on keg that isn't either lager or nitro ale or stout? Even Wetherspoons only have Devil's Backbone and Shipyard Pale Ale, both brewed under licence by those notorious check-shirted upstarts Marston's. I'd bet that "craft keg", as defined above, accounts for well under 1% of the total draught beer market.

The same is true in the field of packaged beer. Yes, go in your average supermarket and you'll probably see a shelf or two of BrewDog bottles and garishly coloured cans. But the volume they're shifting is trivial compared with all the mass-market lagers and premium bottled ales. And punters may after a while get tired of paying more for less. Again I'd go for a market share of less than 1%. Many of those premium bottled ales are the direct equivalents of popular cask beers.

Craft in the UK may have made a lot of noise, but it hasn't remotely revolutionised the beer market in the way that its champions claim. Much

of this comes from an inappropriate read-across from the US market to the UK. In the mid-70s, the US had effectively lost all its independent brewers, and the territory occupied by the current American craft brewers is very similar to that held by the UK's regional, family and established new breweries.


CAMRA hasn't lost any kind of battle against craft beer, and indeed in recent years cask has been about the only section of the on-trade beer market bucking the general trend of decline. Most of what counts as craft beer is cask anyway. It makes sense to take stock and review the organisation's values and aims, but it's certainly not being done from a position of defeat.

Peter Edwardson writes the regular Curmudgeon column, and also blogs at pubcurmudgeon.blogspot.co.uk

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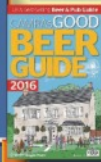
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Meet the Brewer

Paul Mellor of Manchester Brewing Co.



This month Brendon Hall interviews Paul Mellor of Manchester Brewing Co, one of the new generation of brewers occupying railway arches on the "Piccadilly Mile" between Manchester Piccadilly and Ardwick stations.

Hello Paul of Manchester Brewing Co! What led you to get into commercial brewing?

A disastrous series of ill-judgements and bad choices! Truthfully, I've always liked making things, especially food and drink. And I enjoy making things for people, for people to (hopefully?) enjoy. I came to brewing reasonably late (in my early thirties) but instantly fell in love with that mix of science and alchemy. Plus, it's an industry that is filled with fantastic characters whose passion and enthusiasm has ultimately passed through to me.

Being located in Manchester's burgeoning 'beer-mile', what new things do you hope to add into the mix? Any long term plans for a brewtap?

Our aim, from the outset, has been to make good beer, to not take things too seriously, and to have fun. There is a great mix of people down the way who make a great deal of fantastic beer. Are we here to reinvent the wheel? Not really, our ambition is purely to make beer that we're proud of and that people enjoy and appreciate.

In terms of a brewtap, there are no plans for anything regular however we will be having open days every so often . . . apologies for the vagueness!!

Any sneak-peaks about what future projects/beer-styles you're planning? We see you aren't afraid to concentrate on the classic beer styles (the excellent American Pale Ale being an example!)

Why thank you! The core range - 4% pale, 4.5% APA, 5.9% IPA - was always intended as a solid foundation upon which we could explore our more experimental tendencies. We have a series of single hop IPAs in the offing which will all be around 7% and will all go under the name "Wolf In The Willows" (free pint if you can tell me why!). The first of these will use the snappily titled hop, ADHA 527 (due out in June), followed pretty swiftly by Rakau and Pekko. We also have a coffee porter joining the core range which will make an appearance in the summer (perfect timing?!), a Berliner Weisse made with black raspberries, a high ABV Scotch Ale aged in Bunnahabhain casks, and an Imperial Stout aged on fresh cherries and cocoa nibs in a Sauternes barrel which, fingers crossed should be out in time for Christmas.

Finally, when you aren't drinking your own beers - please can you tell us one local, one national and one international beer or brewer that is blowing your socks off at the minute?

Locally, I'm loving Track's beers presently, Sonoma in cask being something of a desert island beer.

Nationally, albeit still rather local, Buxton seem unable to do any wrong over the last few years, consistently outstanding to a point where it's almost a given. Their recent Belgian series is a prime example of that.

Internationally, I always get a little giddy when I have a beer from Gigantic in the fridge, especially their IPA.



Horse & Jockey
the inn on the green
9 The Green, Chorlton

Trafford & Hulme Awards High Peak Pub of the Year

Rather belatedly, Trafford & Hulme branch will be presenting their Pub of the Year awards on Thursday 23rd June. A special evening has been planned involving all three winners in the annual competition.

The overall winner of the 2016 award was **Altrincham's Pi**. The Shaws Road bar, which opened in 2012, has three handpumps and a wide range of taps serving top quality international beers and guest UK kegs. Seating is set over two levels making the bar seem smaller than it really is – it's clearly been packing people in to get recognised as the best in the whole of Trafford & Hulme branch. The pub made its way onto the Pub of the Year shortlist by taking the branch Pub of the Season award in summer 2015.



In taking the title, Pi beat off competition from not one but two brewery taps. First runner up was Chorlton's **Marble Beer House** – itself a former Pub of the Year. Second runner up place was taken by a relative newcomer which is only yards away from Pi – **Jack in the Box** is the in-house bar at Altrincham Market Hall and is a joint venture with Manchester's Blackjack Beers.

All three bars will be represented at the presentation evening on 23rd June and to make their visitors from the other bars feel at home, the bar for the evening will feature beers from both Blackjack and Marble breweries.

The evening will kick off around 8pm with presentations at 9pm.

Old Tom Award Bonanza



A recent meeting of Stockport & South Manchester Branch was treated to a very entertaining and interesting presentation about the brewery's beers and pubs by Sarah Rogers and Gill Yates from Robinsons. At the end of the meeting they were presented with a backlog of awards won by Old Tom and are seen here with the collection of certificates they took back to the brewery.

New Breweries Alert

The proliferation of new breweries shows no sign of slowing down. If you read our High Peak Pub Scene page you will see that Tom Lord reports that the **Rising Sun** in Mossley is now brewing its own beers (and indeed a look at the website showed the pub selling Lullaby IPA, Big & Daft Irish Stout and Builders Craic). Hopefully more on this one next time.

Meanwhile there are developments in Altrincham. The former **Altrincham Conservative Working Mens Club** on Greenwood Street is being refurbished and as part of the work a brewery is to be installed. A brewer has apparently been appointed and is being trained at RedWillow in Macclesfield.



On Saturday 23rd April the **Cheshire Ring** in Hyde received the High Peak, Tameside & North-East Cheshire Branch's Pub of the Year 2016 award for that part of the branch area falling within Greater Manchester. The photograph above shows landlord Wayne Taylor and his staff with their much deserved award.

The Cheshire Ring, well known to both local CAMRA members and also to those further afield, has featured in the national *Good Beer Guide* for many years. This award is testament to the range and quality of the beers from both Beartown Brewery and other guest breweries and the effort put in by Wayne and his staff to run an excellent and welcoming pub.'

Cider Pub of the Year



Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's Cider Pub of the Year was perennial award-winner, the **Railway**, Portwood. The Railway has shown a continuing and determined commitment to selling traditional cider and perry over many years now. Pictured above Vince and Sue Mathers (centre) celebrate their win.

Pub of the Season

The **Ale Stop** in Buxton opened towards the end of 2014 and was the first micropub in the High Peak. The mission statement was to bring to Buxton real ales never or only rarely seen in the town. This commitment is ongoing and during the time the Ale Stop has been open some most unusual beers have been sold and always in top notch condition.



The ongoing excellence of the beers offered by the Ale Stop was recognised by the local CAMRA Branch (High Peak, Tameside and North East Cheshire) with the pub being nominated as branch Pub of the Season for spring 2016. The photo shows owner Dan Hawtin (left) receiving the certificate from branch member Frank Wood at a presentation made on Saturday 7th May.

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

I enclose a cheque for _____

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01/15
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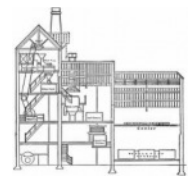
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What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region



RedWillow Expands

It was in late December 2011 that *Opening Times* first visited Toby McKenzie in his then brand new **RedWillow Brewery**. Over the years we have watched as the brewery has gone from strength to strength. Numerous awards have been picked up on the way and you can now even get RedWillow beers on Virgin Trains (Tilting Ale for Standard Class, Wreckless for First).

Inevitably the brewery outgrew its premises and has now relocated just down the road into a brand new unit that has been built on to an old house (which is used as offices although the cellar beckons for barrel ageing). *Opening Times* took up a long-standing invitation to pay a visit.



The impressive new kit (pictured above) can brew 12 barrels (just over 3,400 pints) at a time and can brew twice a day if necessary. RedWillow is currently brewing six times a week and is just about keeping up with demand. The range of beers brewed is bewildering – 84 have been produced to date. This includes the core range (of which the award winning Wreckless, a 4.8% generously hopped golden beer, is the star performer), the experimental Faithless series (now up to no. 57 and counting), and other one-offs and specials. The beer is available in cask, keg, bottles and cans so all bases are covered.

There is also a one-barrel kit which Toby, a born experimenter, uses to play on. He's a foodie at heart and he told us that many of his ideas are food related. "Brewing is like cooking without worrying about presentation", he says. The small kit is also used for experiments with mash temperatures, hopping, yeast and various brewing techniques (one recent experiment using Mosaic hops was driven by the question 'how many hops can you fit in one beer?'). Some of these one-offs end up at Macclesfield's RedWillow Bar. In fact there will be 24 of them available (in cask or keg) on the weekend of 23rd and 24th July when a special event is planned (look out for the coffee and cigar stout). That's certainly a date for your diary – although by the time you read this you should have enjoyed some RedWillow beers at Stockport

Beer Festival. Pictured below, the RedWillow team (from left to right): Rich, Toby, Mel, Graham and Paul.



MCR Fold

Manchester's oldest family brewer, **JW Lees**, has joined forces with **Cloudwater Brew Co** to create a new beer for Manchester Beer Week, Mcr Fold. JW Lees Head Brewer, Michael Lees-Jones and Cloudwater Brew Co's co-founders, Paul Jones and James Campbell have created this one-off ale that brings together tradition and innovation.

Michael Lees-Jones, said: "We're so excited to have created Mcr Fold with Cloudwater Brew Co. The ale bridges the gap between nearly two centuries of brewing heritage and the modern craft beer scene. Packed full of spicy and citrusy flavours coming from traditional Pridewood Farm Goldings and innovative Townend Farm Olicana, it's a powerful ale that will deliver on taste and quality."

Paul Jones, Co-founder at Cloudwater Brew Co, said: "It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Michael Lees-Jones and his team at JW Lees. We've set ourselves on a path to produce a beer that celebrates the best of what both breweries offer – traditional, yet modern, bold, yet supremely drinkable. Mcr Fold represents a historical and significant meeting of minds and tastes, powered by ambition that is rooted in one of the best beer scenes in the UK." The 100% British hopped beer is also brewed using 100% British malt and JW Lees yeast which is over 4,000 generations old. Apparently



a quarter of a ton of hops (the most Lees have put in any beer) were used to produce this 4.8% ABV auburn ale which "captures elements from both hop farms and breweries, combining a time-tested traditional approach with bold, modern flavours and techniques".

Mcr Fold is the official beer of Manchester Beer Week and will be available in cask and keg throughout venues across the city. Manchester Beer Week will take place between the 10th and 19th June with the aim of promoting the Manchester beer scene and raising awareness about its rich tradition and modern innovation. Many of the city's breweries, pubs, bars and restaurants are set to be involved.

Awards

Just in time before the 2016 event, Stockport & South Manchester Branch finally managed to finish presenting the awards from the Beer of the Festival contest held at the 2015 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

On a particularly horrible night in January a party from the branch made their way up to North Reddish to present the bronze award to Thirst Class Ales for Reddish Rye. Brewer Richard Conway is pictured above with his award. A very pleasant night was enjoyed by all who went along with various Thirst Class beers to sample.



Cutting it fine in May the branch finally made it to Squawk Brewing in Ardwick to present the silver award for Bean Brothers Espresso Stout. Pictured here is brewer Oliver Turton with the certificate.

Once again this was a very enjoyable night with three Squawk beers to try, including the winner of course.

Many thanks to both brewers for having us along and for their hospitality.





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