

OPENING TIMES

OCTOBER 2016 / FREE

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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 Branch and the Macclesfield & E Cheshire Branch. 7,600 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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* 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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Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Front cover – The cider barn at Stockmoor Cider, Herefordshire.

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What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Events, Information and News

Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

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: enquiries@centralmanchestercamra.org.uk

Local CAMRA Events Open events in blue

Monday 10th – Branch Meeting: Angel, 197 King Street, Dukinfield, SK16 4TH. Starts 8.00pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting and quiz night: Railway, 74-76 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HF. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

Thursday 13th – Branch AGM: Stubborn Mule Brewery, 2 Radium House, Bridgewater Road, Altrincham, WA14 1LZ. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Saturday 15th – Trip to Neepsend Brewery, Sheffield to present Gold Award from Beer Festival. Catch 11.28 train from Stockport. Book with John Clarke (stocam@btinternet.com). (SSM)

Saturday 15th – Hollins Green to Deansgate: Inter-branch social with Salford and Central Manchester branches. Meet 12.30pm for lunch at Black Swan, Manchester Road, Hollins Green, WA3 6LA. (T&H, SAL, CMCR)

Thursday 20th – Pub of the Season presentation: Prairie Schooner Taphouse, 33 Flixton Road, Urmston, M41 5AW. From 8.00pm. (T&H)

Friday 21st – Didsbury Centre Stagger: 7.30pm Parrswood, 356 Parrs Wood Road, M20 6JD; 8.30pm Milson Rhodes, School Lane, M20 6RD. (SSM)

Monday 24th – Charles Street Crawl: 6.00pm Joshua Brooks, 106 Princess Street, M1 6NG; 6.45pm Lass O'Gowrie, 36 Charles Street, M1 7DB; 7.30pm Font, 7-9 New Wakefield Street, M1 5NP; 8.30pm Salisbury, 2 Wakefield Street, M1 5NE. (CMCR)

Thursday 27th – Pub of the Month presentation to the Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heavily, SK2 6NU. From 8.00pm. (SSM)

Wednesday 2nd November – Branch Meeting: Derby Brewery Arms, 95 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester, M8 8PY. Starts 6.00pm. (CMCR)

Thursday 3rd November – Branch Meeting: Conservative Club, 24-30 Market Street, Altrincham, WA14 1PF. Starts 8.00pm. (T&H)

Saturday 5th November – St Helens Day Out: meet 12 noon at Connoisseur Brewery, Wolverhampton House, 121-125 Church Street, St Helens, WA9 1JS. (CMCR)

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>

Central Manchester:
www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:
www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA



Stockport & South Manchester: @SSMCAMRA

Trafford & Hulme: @THCAMRA

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www.didsburybeerfestival.org.uk

Pub of the Month

The Blossoms, Heaviley



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month award for October 2016 has been won by the Blossoms on Buxton Road, Heaviley. Jim Flynn has been along.

It could be said that at this time the Blossoms doesn't need any more publicity. The local indie band named after the pub topped the official album charts over the summer and the pub was in the papers for selling a unique beer named after the band's first successful single, 'Charlemagne'. However, never let it be said that CAMRA is jumping on the bandwagon, Geraint 'Jerry' Evans and his team thoroughly deserve the accolade of Pub of the Month.

This historic 18th century coaching house (there is reputedly an escape tunnel leading from Bramall Hall to the pub) was designated by Robinsons as one of their 'Ale Shrines' after its makeover in 2012 and it now sells almost the full range of Robinsons cask beers including Old Tom all the year around (Charlemagne may have been discontinued by the time of the presentation). There was always the danger however that being designated as such might result in an elitist focus on the beer but as well as keeping all his beers in top condition Jerry has ensured that the longstanding welcoming, community nature of the pub has not only been maintained but really enhanced. From lunchtime meals to quiz nights to knitting circles to music sessions the pub has it all and Jerry must be applauded for the achievement.

Stopfordian Jerry has, as he puts it 'progressed through the ranks' at the Blossoms from bar staff to assistant manager to landlord in November 2014 and his commitment and dedication to the pub is there for all to see. So do join us to celebrate the award to this colourful character (at the time of writing his hair is all colours of the rainbow!) and his staff on Thursday, 27th October when I'm sure there will be great beer and a warm welcome.

The pub is on the 192 bus route down the A6 and the 309/310/378 routes down Bramhall Lane, so there is absolutely no excuse to miss this night!

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Stagger

Hazel Grove with Keith Holloway



On a warm and humid evening in July, a small and select group met at our first pub – the **Rising Sun** at the junction of Buxton Road and Macclesfield Road. There was plenty of room in this open-plan pub, and an interesting range of beers – St Austell’s Tribute, Adnams Samba, Deuchars IPA and Wells Bombardier Glorious English. We tried Tribute and Deuchars and rated them both as good, with Tribute perhaps slightly the better.



On to the **Bullock Smithy** – until recently called the Bulls Head – on the corner of Torkington Road. The new name links back to the early 1800s when this was a watering stop for cattle and horses at the meeting place of three villages – Norbury, Bosden-cum-Handforth and Torkington. In 1836 the three were combined to make up Hazel Grove. There is a scurrilous story that this was only done because of the terrible reputation the individual villages had – spin was alive and well then too! Unfortunately the beers were not as entertaining as the history – Greene King IPA and another from Wells, Burning Gold. We were expecting Burning Gold to be a light hoppy summer beer but it was quite dark and not particularly refreshing. And the Greene King was similarly disappointing.

Undeterred, we continued, passing three new bars, **Bar One**, **Bodega** and **Huffys**, none of which had real ale (and the first two were virtually empty with very loud music blasting out – could there somehow be a link?). So, to the **Horse & Jockey**. We looked for handpumps, but didn’t spot any so asked the barmaid if they had real ale. One of the customers instantly responded, “I wish they did!” More comments – to the managers, not just us – and they might.

Across the road now to the **Wilfred Wood**, a Wetherspoons pub and by far the busiest pub of the evening. Most tables were occupied, with many people taking advantage of the “Fishy Friday” option. There was the usual wide range of beers – eight in total – and four ciders. We all went for beers we had never tried before – Brightside Wilf’s Ale, Phoenix Black Bee and Beartown Wojtek - and while all three were OK, none had the real zing we were hoping for. Perhaps we were expecting too much – or perhaps the heat and humidity was making it difficult to keep and serve beers in tip-top condition.



Next was the **Grapes** – the first of a group of Robinsons pubs. This has a couple of rooms and a small beer garden at the back. Just the Unicorn on this evening and that was well received. We sat in the front room that had a display of cricket photos; the pub is home to the Norbury Cricket Club. In the second room there was a DJ in operation, with a couple doing a very creditable slow jive.

Next the **Three Tunnes**, another Robinsons house, which was quite busy, with a darts match in progress at the back. Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde, Trooper, the seasonal G’Day and Hartleys XB were on offer. We tried G’Day and Trooper and neither was in particularly good form (*unusual for this pub, I think – Ed.*)



We crossed the road to the **Grove Alehouse** next and found an excellent range of beers – Poynton Idaho and Darkside, Ticketybrew Golden Bitter, Outstanding Ultra Pale and Big Shed Shropshire Pale Ale. We didn’t try the Big Shed but of the rest, the Idaho was the one we preferred. It was surprising that the Alehouse was not busier – good draught beers, and a selection of bottled beers as well, board games available and books to borrow. Even if Wetherspoons takes a lot of

the real ale business, there should be room for a smaller specialist outlet – look at the Chiverton Tap in Cheadle Hulme.

Next was the **Bird in Hand** – Robinsons again, and just Unicorn on offer. A very noisy karaoke was in operation, but we found a spot out of earshot for our drinks. Unfortunately the Unicorn was not on good form.



And again we crossed the road, this time to the **Flying Coach**. Until a couple of years ago it was called the Cock (and Jim Flynn has a story about the beer and the old pub name that cannot possibly be printed in this august journal!) Dizzy Blonde, Trooper and Double Hop were available, alongside two ciders. The Double Hop was in reasonable form, but Trooper and Dizzy Blonde were definitely not. Trooper was changed (for Double Hop), but we were told that the Dizzy Blonde was perfectly OK despite it tasting unbearably sour.



Final pub of the evening was the **Anchor**, a large open plan pub with a nautical theme and furnishings all in dark red, which would be excellent on a cold winter’s day but for high summer felt a bit overpowering. Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde and Hartleys XB were on offer, and all three were just a bit below par.

All in all, a strange Stagger. The best beer of the evening was Tribute at the Rising Sun, the first pub we visited but there were too many pubs where the beers were not quite up to standard. Perhaps it was the combination of heat and humidity during the week that some cellars could not cope with – that hopefully will not recur! But this was our experience on just one evening. Why not plan your own visits and see what you think?

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Fool Hardy Ales at The Hope Inn

Trafford & Hulme John Rowlinson

Pub of the Season Award Award-winning licensee



Trafford and Hulme's Autumn Pub of the Season is the Prairie Schooner Taphouse on Flixton Road in Urmston, ostensibly a micro pub but actually a decent size, with two distinct seating areas either side of an island bar, writes George Elmslie.

The owner Robert MacRae opened the bar two years ago and the anniversary will coincide with the presentation; the bar has previously been awarded the branch 'Best Newcomer' accolade.

One recent reviewer likened the premises to bringing a bit of Chorlton or Didsbury to Urmston. Make of that what you will but it has certainly enhanced an area which is up and coming on the leisure front where, along with numerous restaurants, many real ale outlets have sprung up in recent years.

The premises were formerly a shop selling golfing tackle. The emphasis now is on fermented malt and fruit, consumed in a tranquil atmosphere (there's no TV or background music). No meals are available but nuts and nibbles are available. Lovers of whisky and wine will also find something of interest and small batch gin is a recent addition.



Recently installed are an above-ground cellar, beer engines and two more keg lines which means the bar now offers four hand-pulled real ales and three keg beers. All beer remains sourced from independent and mainly local brewers (very often from Blackjack, Brewsmith, Brightside, Dunham Massey, Seven Brothers, Ticketybrew or Tweed). They have over 100 bottled beers (British, Continental and American) from the likes of Anchor, Cantillon, Founders, Siren and Wild amongst others. Cider lovers are not forgotten, with real cider and perry in a box along with bottled ciders from the likes of Dunkerton's and the Moss Cider Project. Bottles can be taken away for consumption off the premises.

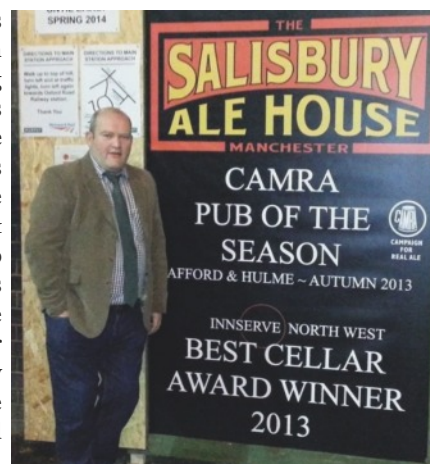
There is a weekly quiz night on Tuesdays starting at 8pm. There is a monthly jazz night every third Wednesday and chill-out DJs on the second and last Friday of each month. Every Thursday is Bring Your Own Vinyl night

The presentation will take place on Thursday 20th. of October from 8pm, as previously mentioned this is the regular bring your own vinyl night also there will be the added bonus of a meet the brewer night scheduled to be from the Poynton Brewery.

A man big in stature and character, John was best known for his big heart. He sadly passed away after a fight with kidney cancer, *writes Heather Airlie*

John had been an engineer for BT in a previous phase of his life before his passion for real ale took him into the pub trade. After a stint in the **Churchill** and **Garrick**, in 2001 John moved to the **Salisbury**, first as manager then landlord. This move enabled John to indulge his passion for all things ale.

John was renowned for his commitment to quality, both of the cellar and in the serving of the beer. This was confirmed in 2013 when he was presented with awards for North West Cellar of the Year and the Trafford & Hulme Branch CAMRA Pub of the Season. So chuffed was he at this that he commissioned a giant poster to cover the temporary hoarding at the foot of the steps from Oxford Road Station!



In 2014 he took on the **Lass O' Gowrie**, a Grade 2 listed building. With the Salisbury now designated an Asset of Community Value, it seems John's enthusiasm for ale also protects our history.

A real people-person, John treated his staff as an extended family, doing jobs for them at the expense of his own "projects". He was a mentor and father-figure to many of them - when his illness became apparent in June the bar staff got together to return the many favours, landscaping his neglected garden in a true team effort. Still in good spirits, John died at The Christie from complications of kidney cancer. He is mourned by his wife Kirsty, brother Dave and sister Lynn.

Didsbury Beer Festival

Didsbury beer drinkers have come to expect year round choice and one great festival of ale in late October, *writes Mike Connolly*. The **Dog and Partridge** perhaps deserves to be the pride of Didsbury for its commitment to real ale but there is strong competition from pubs of great natural warmth like the **Fletcher Moss** and the welcome newbies such as **Wine & Wallop** or **Mary & Archie**. It will be a playground on School Lane, however, that steals the drinkers for three days this month as the 9th Didsbury Beer Festival is staged in two huge marquees at St. Catherine's.

Expect young people in a great mood. Expect older people catching up with neighbours, friends and relatives. Expect a huge choice of beer and cider and expect the warmest of Didsbury welcomes to visitors far and wide.

Stockport and South Manchester CAMRA will be at the festival to encourage the Didsbury team and to spread the news about the wonderful pubs beyond the village. These include our valuable antiques such as the **Crown Inn**, under the viaduct in Stockport and the **Railway** in Portwood, as well as the pleasant surprises like the **Chiverton Tap** in Cheadle Hulme. Plenty to talk about over a pint. Didsbury Beer Festival runs for three days from Thursday October 27th.

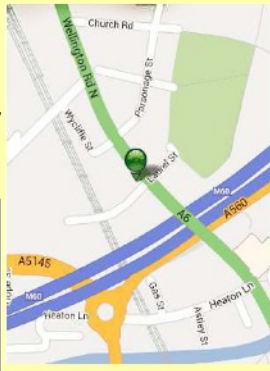


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**GOOD BEER GUIDE
2017
We're in it**

High Peak Pub Scene

Robin Wignall & Tom Lord with News and Views

High Peak Pub News

With Tom Lord

We will deal with the sad news first as our pub stock continues to dwindle with two more closures. In Dukinfield the **New Inn** on Birch Lane has now closed, as has the **Railway** in the centre of Whaley Bridge. Two already closed pubs have been converted to other use. The **Centurion** in Gamesley is now a convenience store and the **Waggon** in nearby Mottram is private accommodation.

The **Shepherds Call** on Market Street in Hyde now has a new licensee and the real ale previously on offer has now disappeared. The **Woodley Arms** in Bredbury has now reopened but sadly with no real ale.

Now for more cheerful news. Over in Glossop the **Windy Harbour Hotel** on Woodhead Road now has cask conditioned beer. A beer from Bradfield Brewery was on sale at the time of the visit. In Chapel-en-le-Frith **REMS**, which describes itself as a 'café, restaurant and bar', has three handpumps on the bar. Marston's Burton Bitter is permanently on one, the second is for a changing Thornbridge beer, with the third occasionally used for another guest beer.

In Stalybridge the closed **Labour Club** has reportedly been bought by a consortium of businessmen with a planned reopening at the end of last month. There is no certainty that it will serve real ale. Time will tell. Also in Stalybridge the **Stalybridge Tavern** on Market Street is now open. This is not a micro pub but a full sized pub in the building which was formerly Bar Liquid. The ground floor is a pub and the upstairs a music venue. On a recent

visit beers from TicketyBrew Brewery were on offer.

Up in Mossley the brewery at the **Rising Sun** had temporarily ceased brewing for some work to be carried out. As we went to press this was near completion and brewing about to recommence. The plans are to brew a core range of three beers, Builder's Craic Best, Builder's Craic Gold and a Stout together with a range of one-off speciality beers. The upstairs is due to open as a restaurant by Christmas. The pub website lists those beers currently on the bar and those in the cellar. Roughtown Reckless (12%) is planned for sale over Christmas.



Good news from Hayfield. The **Pack Horse** has reopened and at the time of a recent visit had Bradfield Farmers Blonde, Moorhouses Blond Witch and Copper Dragon Bitter on offer. Also alongside the church in the village centre a new bar/restaurant called **Dutsons** has opened with two cask conditioned beers, normally one from Torrside Brewery in New Mills and a changing guest beer alongside. This makes Hayfield a great place for a beer sampling visit with five pubs in the village centre all selling cask conditioned beer and two on the fringes, the **Sportsman** on Kinder Road and the **Lantern Pike** in nearby Little Hayfield.

of plans for a micropub in New Mills, previously reported in OT. More on both these projects as they develop.



The free houses in the Blackbrook Valley certainly take advantage of their freedom of choice to ensure that customers get a good range of choice. A recent call at the **Navigation**

in Buxworth found three beers from the Empire Brewery of Slaithwaite, Huddersfield. These have been at the Navigation before and are well worth a try. Or you can always try Taylor's Landlord, or perhaps an Abbeydale beer or Wainwright from the Marston's brewery. The Navigation is always worth a call.

Along the Peak Forest Tramway at Whitehough is the **Old Hall**, another pub with a big reputation for good beer. My last visit found beers from Howard Town; Longendale Lights was a fine refreshing pint on one of those rare hot days this summer. The Old Hall is another must visit pub.

My last call in the Blackbrook Valley was to **Buxworth War Memorial Club** where real ales are a permanent feature, with one or two beers during the week and with the third handpump frequently used at weekends. This turned out to be an exceptional visit. Seamless and Feckless were available from RedWillow. Seamless was a top marks beer with perfect temperature and excellent condition on a very warm day. What more can one ask for?

A call at the **Soldier Dick** in Furness Vale found the unfamiliar Dartmoor Legend alongside more familiar fare, Greene King Abbot, and Wainwright. I tried the Legend which was a good choice. Rosie's Pig cider was also available on handpump. Nearby at the **Crossings** there is the ever-reliable, very good pint of Robinsons Unicorn. This really is the pub to find top notch Unicorn.

Still with Robinsons, the **Railway** in Whaley Bridge remains closed, though the 'For Sale' sign has been removed. The local rumour machine has failed to produce possible scenarios, so it is just wait and see.



Up at Fernilee the **Shady Oak** sold a decent Olympic beer from Wychwood, part of the Marston's brewing empire of course. Hoptathlon was brewed with Target and First Gold hops, so even the ingredients had a nod to the Olympics. This was another good beer to try.

A recent problem with Marston's Bitter was temporarily solved at the **Shepherd's** in Whaley Bridge by selling Mansfield Cask Ale. Even with Marston's Bitter returning to form sales of Mansfield are buoyant enough for it to be a fixture on the bar, at least for the moment.

Peak Practice

With Robin Wignall

Two recent editions of the *Buxton Advertiser* have highlighted the situation at the **Grove Hotel** in Buxton, closed in August 2013. The local newspaper is supporting the concerns of High Peak Borough Council about the lack of activity by Robinsons to both restore and reopen the hotel and bar, or to put the property up for sale.

On a happier note *Buxton Advertiser* reported on plans for a micropub in Chapel-en-le-Frith. Plans have been submitted to utilise an estate agents on Market Street. This could be a welcome addition to the beer scene in Chapel and comes fairly soon after the announcement



Curmudgeon

Cash is King

THE DEATH of cash has often been foretold, but it still seems a long way off happening. This is something that is also true of print publications, such as the one you are reading now. The digital age may encroach on the territory of its analogue predecessors, but in most spheres it seems incapable of dealing the final blow.

We are constantly being urged to use credit and debit cards and abandon cash. This is especially true since the introduction of contactless cards, which undoubtedly make a big difference in ease of use, and have led to a surge in the number of card transactions.

However, cash is still proving very resilient, and one of its prime strongholds remains the pub trade. Yes, people may be flashing cards more to pay for meals and rounds of drinks in trendy bars and gastropubs, but in your average local you would still be looked on askance if you proffered a card to pay for a couple of pints, even if they offered the facility, which most don't.

Using a contactless card rather than cash also exposes you to the risk of unwise spending on a night out where your judgment might be impaired by a few pints. If you want to control your spending, stick to cash. If you depend entirely on cards, you're also left at the mercy of bank computers, which can all too easily fail, as several recent incidents have shown. Most of the extensive grey and black economy runs on cash, which isn't going to disappear overnight. The same is true of most ordinary local pubs, and CAMRA beer festivals. Cash isn't going anywhere any day soon.

Ring My Bell

THE ONGOING decline of the pub trade inevitably leads to staffing reductions, so very often one person is left to look after a serving area which can't all be seen from one vantage point. And, even if there is just a single bar counter, there are reasons such as toilet breaks and popping into the kitchen that mean the sole server is absent.

In these situations, it's all too easy for staff to be distracted and fail to check regularly whether there are any customers waiting. I can think of several occasions in well-regarded local pubs, including Good Beer Guide entries, where I've walked in, only to find nobody behind the bar, and no means of summoning them. Less patient people might well have walked out and gone elsewhere, and I have done that myself on one or two occasions in the past. It shouldn't be too difficult, though, even if staff are hard-pressed, to say "I'll be with you in a minute", which will swiftly defuse a lot of frustration.

It's tempting to argue that it makes sense to bring back the service bell, a staple of the old two-bar pubs, but rarely seen nowadays. At least that way you might stand a chance of actually getting served. However, in British culture that often comes across as a touch aggressive and peremptory, like sounding a car horn.

To get over this problem, a correspondent suggested it would be a good idea to attach a squeaky rubber duck to the bar. That would certainly defuse any confrontational element, but inevitably might be abused by some mischievous customers.

Curmudgeon Online:
curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com
(comments on these articles can be left on the website)

Good Cider As It Used To Be Mick Lewis looks back

Believe it or not, it is nearly 30 years since CAMRA published its first edition of the Good Cider Guide. This book first came out in October 1987, compiled, almost single-handedly, by cider enthusiast David Kitton.

He had originally produced an earlier version, published by Virgin, but this was the first time that CAMRA had seriously promoted real cider and perry to the outside world, and it is interesting today to see how the cider industry has changed, by looking at the producers and outlets that were around in those days.



There were around 80 producers listed in the Guide, although there were a lot more that were not included, but nothing like the hundreds of producers that you can find today, and only about a third of them are still going, with some areas having changed dramatically.

One of the most remarkable changes has been in Wales. This country was traditionally a big cider and perry area, but when the Guide came out there were no known producers at all. Look how that has changed today, where there has been a big revival in cider and perry production and now there are several dozen makers.

Similarly Dorset, another traditional cider area, has taken off again recently, with a whole range of new producers. When the 1987 Guide was published, there were only two, and neither of them is still producing. Mill House at Overmoigne is now a museum, and has one of the most amazing collections of cider presses to be found anywhere. Likewise, Captain Thimbleby at Wolfeton House no longer produces, but the eccentric medieval and Elizabethan house is open to the public (at least it was the last time I checked).

There were, of course, a number of producers who were subsequently bought up and closed down by the big companies. One of them was Symonds in Herefordshire, whose family had been making cider since 1727. But this meant little to Bulmers, who eventually bought them and closed them down, while still making a keg cider called Symonds Scrumpy Jack. Likewise, Bulmers did the same with Inch's in Devon, who had been making cider since the beginning of the 1900s. Once again, bought up and closed down. (See, it isn't just breweries that do it.)

In the East of England there was James White Suffolk Cider, no longer producing. When the Guide came out, it seemed that every other pub in East Anglia was selling it. And in Herefordshire, Westons is still producing and seen in many pubs throughout the country. But by far the largest number of outlets with cider (including a lot of off-licences) were stocking Bulmers, so some things never change! Indeed, in those days Bulmers had even owned a small number of their own cider houses, which were sold off. The one at Quatt in Shropshire is the only one still open, although now independent.

But the list of producers who are no more is a long one. A lot of cidemakers were also farmers, and cider had been made for generations, and when they retired or died there was often no-one to take over the business. But luckily, as well as the hundreds of new producers, some of the family businesses are still there. So you can still say hello to makers like Roger Wilkins and Derek Hartland, both cidemakers in the old tradition, while welcoming all of the new ones as well.

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 10 stickers and you will win a bottle of traditional cider or perry. Get 20 stickers and you will win instead 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 stickers then get a signature and date instead.

The Cider Circuit runs from Friday 7th October to Sunday 13th November. Completed forms should be sent to: Cider Circuit, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9HD to arrive no later than Saturday 19th 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 4th December from 2.00pm onwards.

Please note those pub names in red and marked with a * do not have standard opening hours (that is to say from midday every day). Please check pub details on WhatPub (whatpub.com) before making any special journey.

<u>New Oxford</u> 11 Bexley Square, Salford M3 6DB	<u>Brink</u> 65 Bridge Street, Manchester M3 3BQ*	<u>Rising Sun</u> 22 Queen Street, Manchester M2 5HX	<u>Font</u> 7-9 New Wakefield Street, Manchester, M1 5NP
<u>City Arms</u> 48 Kennedy Street, Manchester M2 4BQ	<u>Vine</u> 46 Kennedy Street, Manchester M2 4BQ	<u>Micro Bar</u> Unit FC16, Arndale Market, Manchester, M4 3AH	<u>Marble Arch</u> 73 Rochdale Road, Manchester M4 4HY
<u>Smithfield</u> 37 Swan Street, Manchester M4 5JZ	<u>Crown & Kettle</u> 2 Oldham Road, Manchester M4 5FE	<u>Castle Hotel</u> 66 Oldham Street, Manchester M4 1LE	<u>Pie & Ale</u> The Hive, 47 Lever Street, Manchester, M1 1FN
<u>Browtons</u> 8 Fletcher Street, Ashton-u-Lyne OL6 6BY*	<u>Bridge Beers</u> 55 Melbourne Street, Stalybridge SK15 2JJ*	<u>Station Buffet Bar</u> Rassbottom Street, Stalybridge SK15 1RF	<u>White House</u> Water Street, Stalybridge SK15 2AG
<u>Harewood Arms</u> 2 Market Street, Broadbottom SK14 6AX	<u>Star Inn</u> 2 Howard Street, Glossop SK13 7DD	<u>Cheshire Ring</u> 72 Manchester Road, Hyde SK14 2BJ	<u>Ford Madox Brown</u> Wilmslow Park, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9NG
<u>Friendship</u> 353 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield M14 6XS	<u>Victoria</u> 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington M20 3BW	<u>Wine & Wallop</u> 97 Lapwing Lane, West Didsbury M20 6UR	<u>Font</u> 115-117 Manchester Road, Chorlton, M21 9PG
<u>Jack in the Box</u> Altrincham Market Hall, Market Street, Altrincham, WA14 1SA*	<u>Grove Alehouse</u> 145 London Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 4HH*	<u>Samuel Oldknow</u> 22 Market Street, Marple SK6 7AD*	<u>Spring Gardens</u> 89 Compstall Road, Marple Bridge, SK6 5HE
<u>Blossoms</u> 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, Stockport, SK2 6NU	<u>Olde Vic</u> 1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9ED*	<u>Crown</u> 154 Heaton Lane, Stockport SK4 1AR	<u>Spinning Top</u> 20 Wellington Road South, Stockport, SK4 1AA*
<u>Railway</u> 1 Avenue Street, Portwood, Stockport, SK1 2BZ	<u>Magnet</u> 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ	<u>Hope</u> 118 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 2LL	<u>Heaton Hops</u> 7 School Lane, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5DE*



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Heard at the Bar

Pub & Beer News covering Stockport, Manchester and beyond

Robin Hood, Rainow

Celebrating the return to good times, the Macclesfield and East Cheshire Summer Pub of the Season is the Robin Hood in Rainow - right on the edge of the Peak District, writes Dave Hasler (who is pictured on the right below presenting the award to the team at the Robin Hood).



As outlined in a previous article, Rainow had rapidly gone from three pubs to one in recent years, and when the Robin went from bad to worse, it was feared that the village would lose its only local. However, Suzanne and Rob Price (formerly of the Highwayman, in the hills above Rainow), took over the tenancy and the once-threatened pub has gone from strength to strength. It's still a Punch Taverns house with restrictions on beer choice but the Prices have managed to ring the changes a little, and the beer is always good. The food is home cooked and excellent and the new, improved decking has proved a real attraction.

The village rallied round when an objection was raised to the decking the Prices had installed - taking part of the over-large car park and providing a much needed outside drinking and dining area and a safe link to the garden. It appeared that, contrary to telephone advice Suzanne had received, as the pub is inside the Peak District planning area, planning permission was needed and the pub was told the decking should come down. Obviously they appealed. Villagers sent nearly 300 letters, and a group of us, with strict instructions to stick to our brief and not repeat what others had said (a tricky challenge), joined Suzanne and Rob at the planning offices in Bakewell to plead our case. As the meeting progressed and each villager took their allocated 3 minutes (no more!) it became obvious that even the planning committee thought the whole process was a waste of time and the application was approved - drinks all round and a victory for commonsense!

The Prices make sure the pub takes an active part in village life - a Queen's birthday event for charity, a float in the village fete procession, fireworks night, quizzes, the Powder Kegs Morris Men and they were planning something for the day the cycle Tour of Britain whizzes through the village!

Cheadle Hulme

In Cheadle Hulme the **Governors House** has had something of a makeover. Whilst the general layout inside is largely unchanged access to individual areas has been altered by the insertion of dividers and our reporters felt that overall the work that has been carried out has improved the general appearance of the pub. While it looks as though it is tilting its hat at the dining trade (and the back of the pub certainly seems more given over to that) those just wanting a drink should be able to find somewhere close to the bar or towards the front of the pub to relax in.



The eight handpumps are now situated along the main length of the bar in two banks of four close together. Regular beers are Greene King Abbot, IPA and Old Speckled Hen and there are up to five guests. On most occasions there should be at least six beers on but these will increase in the winter "when people drink more ales". When OT called all eight pumps were in use offering Greene King Abbott, IPA and Golden Breeze; Belhaven Old Gold; Cryptic Ghost Ale; Robinsons Dizzy Blonde; Tatton Best and Thornbridge Jaipur.

Having a Robinsons beer on when situated over the road from Robbie's **Church Inn** seemed an odd choice but local Cryptic, local-ish Tatton and well-known Thornbridge make up a decent range though.

Elsewhere in Cheadle Hulme, Wetherspoons have sold the **Kings Hall** to the Stonegate Pub Company as part of a package of ten disposals. As we went to press the pub was closed for a refurbishment and, presumably, conversion to one of the standard Stonegate formats. More news next time.

Pub Shorts

Cheadle will get a new bar when **Brenzo Lounge** opens at 30 High Street. It's the latest outlet for Bristol-based Loungers Ltd. They already own a few local outlets such as **Bevano Lounge** on Flixton Road in Urmston and the **Expo Lounge** in Didsbury. Cask beers do appear on the company website but we're not sure whether Brenzo Lounge will offer any.



You should be getting cask beer in the **Pilcrow Pub** (pictured above under construction) based in the new Sadler's Yard in Manchester City Centre. We wrote about this community-built outlet in the August issue and it's now on the point of completion. It was always the plan to have the pub run by a commercial operator and while various local brewers, big and small, were approached it's going to be run by a new venture formed by Jonny Heyes, owner of Port Street Beer House and Common in the Northern Quarter, and Paul Jones, co-owner of Cloudwater Brewery. The pub will feature a rotating selection of cask beers and was due to open on 23rd September.

Super Trooper



Last month saw the launch of the latest in the Trooper series of beers - the collaboration between Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson and local brewery Robinsons. Trooper famously took the world by storm, being a pretty

easy drinking golden premium bitter. The new beer is a rather different proposition. At 6.8% in bottle and 5.5% in cask, Red 'n' Black is described as a porter and is certainly the strongest one-off beer that Robinsons have released.

Initial impressions are very favourable. It is indeed a ruby hued dark beer with a welcome touch of roastiness, a good depth of flavour and a notable dry, bitter finish. Well worth seeking out.

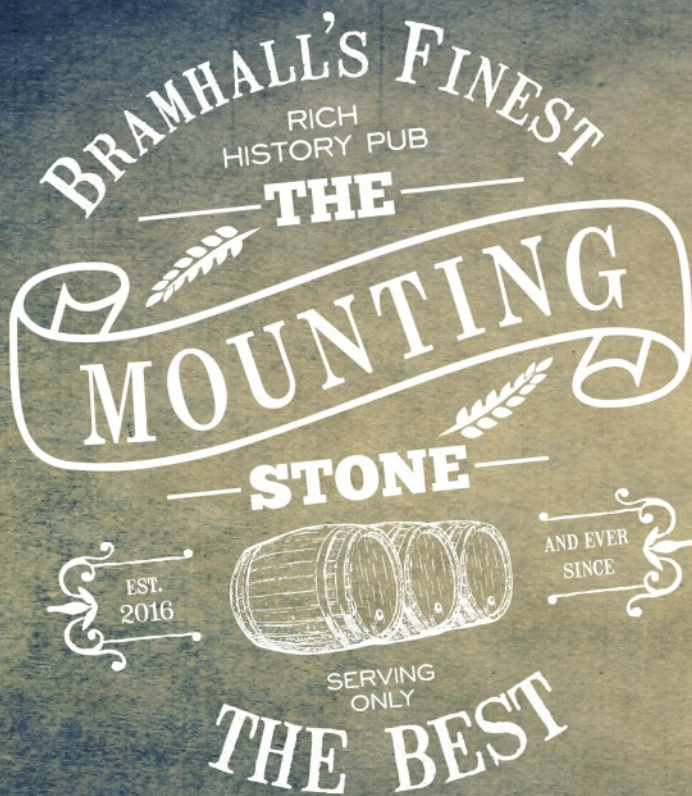


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Regional Awards

Greater Manchester Pub and Club of the Year winners

The annual launch of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide also sees the announcement of the Regional Pubs and Clubs of the Year and, as ever, the Greater Manchester results were eagerly awaited. The winners for 2016 have both won in the past and remain worth recipients of these prestigious awards.

The Greater Manchester Pub of the Year is the Baum in Rochdale, a previous winner of the National Pub of the Year competition. Situated on Toad Lane, next door to the Pioneers Museum, which is the original Co-op store, the Baum has only been a pub for around 30 years and was converted from Morris's Hardware Store in the 1980's.

Simon Crompton, one of the owners, started work there in 1993 and became manager in 1994. In 2005, Simon and his wife Heidi, who co-owns the business, bought the pub just two days after having their first child. Since then they have won a multitude of awards from CAMRA.

CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2017 describes the pub as "A split-level inn with old world charm, the conservatory at the rear overlooks a large beer garden and smoking area. Friendly staff serve seven real ales, a cider, a large selection of worldwide bottled beers and continental lagers on draught. Good, reasonably priced fresh food is available daily."

Peter Alexander, Chairman of Rochdale, Oldham and Bury CAMRA said, "Clearly we are absolutely thrilled that the Baum has been chosen as CAMRA's Regional Pub Of The Year. While we locally know how good a pub the Baum is and given that it was up against some tremendously fierce competition, Simon and Heidi have done a tremendous job."

The Baum now goes forward to the national Pub of the Year competition. Regional fingers are crossed that it can once again bring the national title to Greater Manchester.



Urmston Club does the double

Flixton Conservative Club has been named regional Club of the Year for the second year running. The club which is on the corner of Flixton Road and Chassen Road has retained the Greater Manchester Club of the Year title it first took in 2015, beating off seven other private members clubs from across CAMRA Greater Manchester's branches. The club has been named Club of the Year by its local Trafford & Hulme branch for four consecutive years.

Mystery shopper judges visited all the finalists over the summer, scoring each club on a range of attributes including the range and quality of beer and cider, customer service, warmth of welcome, and value for money. Judges praised the club for the devotion of its staff, the wide range of beers on offer and the warm welcome extended to non-member visitors. Like the Baum in the national pub competition, it will now go forward to be judged against 15 other regional winners for the National Club of the Year title.

Club stewards Nigel and Sharon Porter have transformed the beer range at the club from two real ales when they arrived five years ago to six on the bar at one time and the club is reaping the benefits with membership flourishing. Nigel said "Feedback I get from the committee is that many new members cite the beer as their main reason for joining the club with others stating that they come here because they find it a welcoming, safe and secure place to enjoy a good beer".

On his and Sharon's role in the club's success, Nigel said "It requires a bit of dedication and hard work but basically enthusiasm carries us through. We enjoy what we do - especially the market research - that bit is important!" Asked what makes running a club different to running a pub he commented "Thanks to the support of the committee and members working together with us, the club moves forward as a family unit."

As well as a great range of real ales, club members have an active snooker league, a number of bowling teams and even a popular chess club which meets once a week in the club's function room. On the last Friday of the month, the club holds a Brewers Night with the pumps turned over to a single brewer and this month will see the team from the highly regarded Acorn Brewery travelling from Barnsley. Non-members are welcome to visit to see for themselves why the club is so well regarded, with membership available to those who like what they see and want to visit regularly.



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Germany Calling

Jerry Wicken concludes his European Tour



We are very lucky in CAMRA. When we visit beer festivals and chance upon the foreign beer bar we will find carefully and skilfully selected beers from around the globe. When you visit a particular country you will be fortunate to have the same success.



So I found in Germany where, in the interests of accurate reporting, I had to drink an awful lot of mass produced and gassy beer to find a few gems. In truth, craft beer by any description has been slow to take off in Germany. Although Germans remain the highest beer consumers worldwide it seems to be quantity rather than quality they are after. Of course it might just be the strict laws governing brewing but too many slight lagers, uninteresting Pilsners and lightweight Dunkels (dark beers) proliferated, certainly in the areas I visited, before I found a few beers worthy of the name.

In Hannover, the Gilde Brewery is long established and the beers they produce are above average but that's not saying much. Other breweries like the Schöfferhofer in Frankfurt am Main do, I understand, brew some bottle



conditioned Weisse beers, but the Hefeweizen Dunkel and the Kristallweizen Pilsner we tried were not amongst them, although once more slightly better than most.

Many old established breweries have now been taken over by large corporations like InBev and one old Berlin brewery, Berlin Kindl, is now part of the Oetker Group and seems to have suffered because of it. Any hint at something different seems to be a road to failure. Old traditions of fruit and herb beers are now reached by adding essences and syrups and are really quite unpleasant (should a company that produces frozen pizzas be allowed to brew beer? Not on my patch!). In one Hannover beer garden I ordered something which sounded different. It turned out to be a Pilsner poured on top of half a tin of fruit salad! It's not funny and it's not clever. Actually it was quite funny but not in a good way.

So where's the good stuff I hear you ask? I found a good brewpub in Berlin called Hops and Barley (photos above left). The beers were cask

conditioned although only three were brewed there, Friedrichshainer Pilsner, Dunkel and Weizen as well as two guests. We tried the Dunkel and the Pilsner and both were a cut above previous examples both being a lot fuller on the flavour front although perhaps a little gassy. The bar opens late afternoon till late and is certainly worth a visit. It makes a refreshing change from some of the traditional beer gardens and cellars found widely in Germany and more like a small pub.

Another success on the real ale front was found in a brewery in a park in Potsdam which 60 years previously had held the famous conference which divided Europe after WW2. The Meierei Brewery in the Neuen Garten produces four beers - Hell, a lager (in the Dortmunder/Helles style), a Maibock (Heller Bock style), a Weizen (German Hefeweizen style) and a Weisse (Berliner Weisse style). We tried the Hell and the Weisse; both were very good and the Hell, nice and hoppy with a slightly sweet finish, was our top rated beer of the trip.



Returning west we stopped in Bremen. We started just outside the city in the Bürgerpark and the Meierei restaurant. The setting was lovely and the beer on offer was a draft Stortebeker Pilsener. The beer is brewed in Stralsund on the Baltic in north eastern Germany. Our beer was served vom Faß and was refreshing on a warm day and very hoppy. It was also served in a sexy glass which (see photo above right) can't make a bad beer good but can give a boost to what is already a decent product.

Into town and the cavernous beer hall and restaurant Schüttinger Gasthausbrauerei which brewed two of their own beers, a Dunkel which was poor and the Hell which was slightly better but way below the quality we found in Potsdam. A lot better was Feldmanns Bierhaus. They had advertised two of their own beers but one turned out to be Haake Becks lager which as the name suggests is just a regional Beck's product which we weren't about to try. They do, however, brew their own Dunkel which was truly excellent and what I had been looking and hoping for throughout the German leg of our tour. The bar/restaurant is on the river's edge, the food is good and reasonably priced and it was a good place to finish our European travels.





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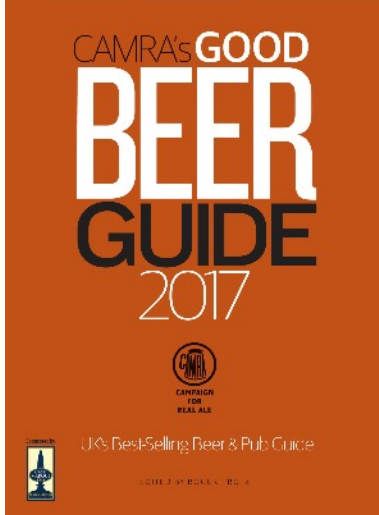
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The **2017 Good Beer Guide** was published on 15th September. This, the 44th edition of the country's best beer and pub guide, features over 4,500 of the best pubs in the UK, chosen by CAMRA members from across the country.

The Guide shows that the UK now has more breweries per head than anywhere else in the world and records 200 new start-ups over the previous 12 months. The UK total is now 1,540 (and increasing all the time).

All Britain's breweries are comprehensively listed in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2017. 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. The Guide is compiled by CAMRA's 182,000-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 can be obtained from Jim Flynn at a price of £15.99 (includes p&p). Please send a cheque payable to "CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester" to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG.

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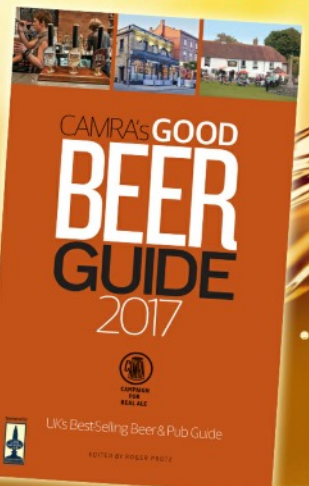
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Letters to the Editor

From: Pete Summers, Tameside:

Just to let you know that another Robbies pub, the New Inn in Dukinfield, is closed and up for sale in Tameside. I've lost count, but that must be nearly 30 Robbies pubs now closed across Tameside in the last few years. Do CAMRA ever put up a protest i.e. try for an ACV, or is it just a fait accompli with Robbies? Is it a case that CAMRA don't get involved because they are too close to Robinsons and don't want to upset them?

I dread the day when in urban Tameside there are no Robbies pubs left (will the Caledonia in Ashton be the next to close?) and there'll be little point in going out on a pub crawl on a Friday (40 years and counting, but losing choice). If it's rationalisation by Robbies, I assume that means keeping the rural pubs open by doing them up and ignoring the old fashioned locals.

I'll try my luck in Ashton tonight for a few pints and hope no other Robbies pubs have put up the shutters in the last week.

(Robbies have indeed conducted a cull in recent years. Part of the problem is that for a long time they hung on to many basically unviable pubs instead of closing them gradually.)

Giving a pub ACV status wouldn't stop Robinsons closing it or selling it on. If Robbies closed a well-used local then I'm sure CAMRA would put up a fight - the trouble is that many of the pubs they have closed down really do seem to have reached the end of the road. Ed.)

From Dave Rhodes, Whaley Bridge:

I always enjoy reading Opening Times, but I think that it would be a good idea with any of your articles where individual pubs are mentioned to give some idea of opening times.

As an example, I live in Whaley Bridge, and having retired from work am quite partial (as probably are others of my peer group), to a pint at lunchtime. However, it is well nigh impossible to get a decent pint in Whaley Bridge before around 4:00 in the afternoon, since most of the pubs don't open until then, even at weekends. Any readers living outside the immediate area but who decide, based on the recommendations/reviews in your publication, to make a day trip to Whaley Bridge with the intention of visiting two or three of the pubs usually mentioned will therefore be sadly disappointed.

I can appreciate that to remain viable, pubs, particularly those in semi-rural or suburban areas, only choose to open when the footfall is likely to justify it, but unfortunately the downside is that drinkers such as myself are being somewhat marginalised. Perhaps Curmudgeon might care to do an article on this 'problem'?

(Dave makes a good point but sadly space prevents us doing this really. Potential visitors are advised to check the pub's details in WhatPub before making a special journey. Details are at <https://whatpub.com/> Ed.)

Manchester Beer & Cider Festival

Online tickets are now available for the biggest ever Manchester Beer & Cider Festival.

Lovers of the brewer's art are poised to snap up guaranteed admission to the North's biggest celebration of beer and cider. Advance tickets for all days of the Manchester Beer and Cider Festival went on sale from 1st August through the festival's website. Organised by the Greater Manchester Branches of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, the event returns to Manchester Central from Thursday 19th to Saturday 21st January 2017.

Tickets can be obtained on the festival website at www.manchbeerfest.uk/about/tickets/. This promises to be the biggest and best festival yet. Look for more updates and information in future issues of *Opening Times*.

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