

# OPENING TIMES

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2018 / FREE

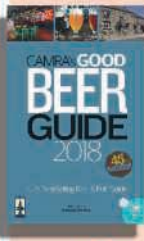


INSIDE: MANCHESTER BEER & CIDER  
FESTIVAL / HERITAGE PUBS / NEW  
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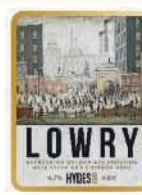
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## ~ OPENING TIMES ~

*Opening Times* is produced by the Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Additional material is supplied by the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch, and the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch. It is printed by Matelot Marketing and distributed throughout Stockport, Tameside, South Manchester and East Manchester. There are also numerous outlets in Macclesfield & East Cheshire, Manchester City Centre, High Peak and Glossop.

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### Subscriptions

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- East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public\\_transport.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx)
- Derbyshire: [www.derbysbus.info](http://www.derbysbus.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.

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**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Front cover – Get ready for Manchester Beer & Cider Festival – handpumps galore!**

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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](http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk)

Contact: Paul Felton; [Secretary@ssmcamra.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@ssmcamra.co.uk)

#### High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)

[highpeaktamesidenortheastcheshire.camra.org.uk](http://highpeaktamesidenortheastcheshire.camra.org.uk)

Contact: see website

#### Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

[www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

Contact: Rob Nicholson 07983 524102;

[social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk](mailto:social@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk)

CAMRA Members only

### Local CAMRA Events — January

**Monday 8th** – Branch Meeting: Sportsman, 57 Mottram Road, Hyde, SK14 2NN. Starts 8pm. (HPNC)

**Tuesday 9th** – Initial Good Beer Guide 2019 selection meeting: Brewhouse & Kitchen, 6-12 Swan Street, Wilmslow, SK9 1HE. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 11th** – Branch Meeting: Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris, SK4 1HJ. Note at this meeting we will choose Pub of the Year, Cider Pub of the Year and Club of the Year. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 13th** – Branch Anniversary Celebration: Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heavily, SK2 6NU. Buffet, Prize raffle, Guest Speaker – Tom Stainer Editor of What's Brewing & Beer, and CAMRA's Head of Communications. Cost £12.50 including first pint. From 7.30pm (arrive after 7pm). Book with John Clarke at [stocam@btinternet.com](mailto:stocam@btinternet.com). (SSM)

**Monday 15th** – Campaigning Meeting: Poachers Inn, 95 Ingerely Road, Bollington, SK1 5RE. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Friday 19th** – Gatley & Cheadle West Stagger: 7.30pm Prince of Wales, Gatley Green, SK8 4NF; 8.30pm White Hart, High Street, Cheadle, SK8 1PX. (SSM)

**Saturday 20th** – Winter Pub of the Season presentation: Jakes Ale House, 27 Compstall Road, Romiley, SK6 4BT. From 2pm – will be followed by a social around Romiley and Marple Bridge. (HPNC)

**Tuesday 23rd** – Pub of the Month presentation: Vale Cottage, Kirk Street, Gorton, M18 8UE. From 8pm. (SSM)

### Local CAMRA Events — February

**Thursday 8th** – Branch Meeting: Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Note – the entries for the 2019 Good Beer Guide will be selected at this meeting. Starts 8.15pm. (SSM)

**Monday 12th** – Branch Meeting: Royal Hotel, Market Street, Hayfield, SK22 2EP. Starts 8pm. (HPNC)

**Thursday 15th** – West Didsbury (East) Stagger: 7.30pm Woodstock Arms, 139 Barlow Moor Road, M20 2DY; 8.30 Wine & Wallop, 97 Lapwing Lane, M20 6UR. (SSM)

**Friday 16th to Monday 19th** – Branch Annual Winter Weekend Trip to Eastbourne. (HPNC)

**Monday 19th** – Final Good Beer Guide 2019 selection: Park Tavern, 158 Park Lane, Macclesfield, SK11 6UB. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 22nd** – Pub of the Month presentation to the James Watts, 13 High Street, Cheadle, SK8 1AX. From 8pm. (SSM)

### Social Media

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



**High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:**  
[www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA](http://www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA)

**Stockport & South Manchester:**  
[www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA](http://www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA)

**Macclesfield & East Cheshire:**  
<http://fbl.me/meccamra>



**Stockport & South Manchester:**  
[@SSMCAMRA](https://twitter.com/SSMCAMRA)

**Macclesfield & East Cheshire:**  
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### CAMRA Discounts

The full list of those pubs offering a CAMRA discount is on page 19 or online at:

[www.ssmcamra.co.uk/discount.htm](http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk/discount.htm)

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# Pubs of the Month

## Stockport & South Manchester Winners for January and February



*The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for January is the Vale Cottage on Kirk Street in Gorton. Dave Hanson is a regular visitor and explains why it won.*

The Vale Cottage is often described as “the country pub in the city” but a better moniker would be the country pub absorbed by the city. Its roots can be traced back to a beer house in the 17th century, when Gorton was a pretty village an hour by horse and cart from Manchester. The route is supposedly an old salt road and passed the front door on Croft Bank. It’s made up from three country cottages, with low ceilings and dark wooden beams still visible in the bar (please duck if over 6ft tall). A quote from some five years ago said, “The place has only had four landlords in a hundred years.” There have been a few changes since Enterprise Inns sold the pub, but Geoff McCabe returned in April 2017 and has already put his stamp on the Vale, even having a beer festival late September.

On the beer front, Timothy Taylor’s Landlord, one of the Witches from Moorhouse’s and a third guest are always in excellent condition. These are complemented by straightforward but handsomely portioned, keenly priced and beautifully presented home-made food. Such is the demand, the kitchen is currently being extended.

Amiable chat and gossip rule most of the time, with staff knowing many customers by name. Several groups meet there and the pub has its own darts team, but beware, they certainly have home advantage. The Champions Choice board is standard size and number layout, but has very thin double and trebles rings akin to a Manchester log end. If you come from God’s Own Country (Yorkshire) it will be easy as their board is similar, except without the trebles! If you really must watch football on the telly, a screen is available, tucked away in the back room. On two nights of the week, Tuesday and Thursday, there is a quiz, so if you are coming along to the presentation on Tuesday 23 January bring along those ‘little grey cells’.

Finding this hidden gem can be tricky as it only really reveals itself over winter when the leaves fall off the trees. If stood on Hyde Road at the end of Far Lane (by the Waggon & Horses) look towards the Gorton Butterfly Garden (honest!) and the lights of the Vale Cottage should be visible through the trees. There is a useful pedestrian cut-through (not shown on Google) running over Gore Brook straight to the front door. A number of buses can get you there, from some surprising areas, 203 and 7 from Stockport; 201, 204, 205 and 206 from Manchester; 169 from West Didsbury and 53 from Salford or Cheetham Hill. Ryder Brow station is not far away either.



*The Pub of the Month winner for February is the James Watts on High Street in Cheadle. Stuart Ballantyne tells you all about it.*

Last year Hydes acknowledged that the Old Star had become somewhat tired and set about to transform the pub. It is now much more cask beer orientated, selling up to seven, two of which are usually from the Hydes stable. It also now sells a large range of world and European bottled beers with strengths typically ranging from 4.5% to 8.5% ABV.

Whilst the James Watts is primarily a beer pub it also sells a range of gins and wines which have increased its appeal to a different and wider clientele. Add to this the all-day food menu and you have a winning formula.

But none of this could have been achieved without the right person in charge. Landlady Liz Bennett took over the pub in February last year and its success has been guaranteed ever since. Existing staff Paul, Linda and Sairah were retained to provide a welcome continuity and friendliness for regular customers. The yellow lighting, traditional décor and distinctly different drinking areas give the pub a warm and welcoming feel that is most appealing.

The James Watts has a safe and relaxing environment for its customers. Although the pub has not yet been open in its current guise for a year, its customers have already raised several hundred pounds for the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital.

With reduced beer prices on Mondays and discounts for CAMRA members on Thursdays, a good deal is not difficult to find. So why not join us and the regulars on Thursday 22 February to present the Pub of the Month award to Liz and her staff?



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

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# Manchester Beer & Cider Festival

Choose the big one. Choose a new beer. Choose Manchester.

*It's the North's biggest indoor crawl. The Manchester Beer and Cider Festival at Manchester Central (G-Mex in old money) is a great way to banish the January blues, and organisers are promising rare treats alongside old favourites in the former rail station. With 750 or so different drinks, there's something to whet all whistles.*



The festival is a great way to 'Tryanuary' – a drinkers' response to the killjoys promoting Dry January. This campaign aims to inspire people to seek out and try new beers in what is often a slow month for the trade. And the festival beer orderer has not disappointed with a selection which features specially commissioned beers, collaborations and ales rarely, if ever, seen in Greater Manchester.

Some of the organising team will be headed to Lancashire breweries Rivington and Brewsmith to lend their skills (chiefly shovelling and stirring!) to unique beers created for the event - some of the past years' collaboration brews have attracted a lot of votes in the annual beer of the festival competition, so expectations are high for 2018. Organisers have also been busy pairing up top local brewers with partners from further afield – New Mills's Torrside will welcome Cwrw Iâl; Runaway will travel to Newcastle's Box Social while Alphabet travel to Southampton to brew with Vibrant Forest – with more to be confirmed.

Manchester's four family brewers will join Harveys, Timothy Taylor and more of the UK's historic brewing names with over a century of brewing experience on The 100 Club bar. Alongside them will be an Irish invasion with up to 20 cask beers from ten Irish breweries selected from both sides of the border. Northern Ireland's Farmageddon, Mourne Mountain, Lacada and Bullhouse, winners of the recent Belfast Beer Festival's Champion beer, The Dankness will be joined by Republic of Ireland brewers Metalman, O'Haras and Rascal with Cork's Eight Degrees supplying key-keg beers.

The huge main bars will reward traditional tastes as well as beer tickers with ales from favourites Track, Salopian, Marble Beers and Thornbridge pouring next to newcomers Pomona Island and Chapter Brewing. Favourites from the Opening Times circulation area will feature with Fool Hardy and Robinsons from Stockport joined by Tameside brewers TicketyBrew and Four Kings, Macclesfield's RedWillow while Torrside will be showcasing its latest barrel-aged barley wine – at 10%, it's not to be trifled with! Stockport's own Thirst Class will be one of twelve brewers bringing their own bars to the festival, with others including last year's best-selling brewery, Tiny Rebel, and local favourites Brightside (who might show their Wildside too).

The popular cider and perry bar will be providing all five of your 'five-a-day', and fans of the foreign stuff can expect a superb range of beers from Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic supplemented by a curated choice of beers from the rest of the world. And for those who like their ales in bottles – or would just like to take some home – the Real Ale in Bottle bar will have a UK-wide selection.



Around 30 local breweries from the region including many mentioned above have submitted entries to the inaugural Manchester Brewers Challenge. This contest enables brewers to enter beer in any format and judging will take place on the preview day. With beer in cask, key-keg, bottle and can, the judges face a difficult task.



Alongside the ales, there'll be new street food traders supplementing the best from 2017. Returning are favourites Viva La Toastie, while popular Manchester treats from Beehive Foods will make a first appearance. Old Granary Pierogi promise Polish delights, including a vegetarian menu, while Waygu Lookin' At? will bring some premium beef - Japanese Kobi beef all the way from Yorkshire. Another trader from over the hill, Pickled Porker Smokehouse, will feature their Yorkshire Tapas grazing boards. Howdah Foods, last seen at the Rochdale Beer Festival, will bring moreish home-made Indian snacks. And the Steep Soda Company will provide fantastic options for any designated drivers.

Two beer debates will be run, on the price of cask (Saturday) and sexism in the brewing industry (Wednesday). Popular tutored tastings include those run by your favourite *Opening Times* editor...

With the tragic memory of the Manchester Arena bombing, enhanced security checks by Manchester Central staff will be in place. All visitors are urged not to bring bags to the festival, but searches will take place. Organisers suggest if you wouldn't take it through the airport, don't bring it to MBCF18.

The public sessions are from Thursday 25 to Saturday 27 January 2018 and advance tickets are on sale online. Card carrying CAMRA members are also welcome admission-free to the preview evening from 5pm on Wednesday 24th January. And if you're a CAMRA member, have you considered volunteering at the festival? Hundreds are needed and you'd be most welcome – details on the website, [www.mancbeerfest.uk/volunteer](http://www.mancbeerfest.uk/volunteer)

To keep up on beer news, follow the festival on social media - [@MancBeerFest](https://twitter.com/MancBeerFest) on Twitter and Instagram and also on Facebook.

Another one that didn't make the grade



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All for that taste of Taylor's



## Curmudgeon

### Nobody Else Has Complained

Cask beer is a natural, living product and, as such, with the best will in the world, it's inevitable that occasionally you'll be served with a sub-standard pint. What matters is not that it's happened in the first place, but that the pub deals with the issue swiftly, politely and without quibble. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work out that way, and an ill-mannered and unhelpful response can easily put a dampener on an enjoyable evening. Indeed, the whole business of returning beer to the bar can be something of a minefield.

The first thing is to be specific as to exactly what it is you're complaining about. If the beer is obviously cloudy or vinegary, then you should have a cast-iron case, although opinions will vary on what degree of haziness is acceptable. However, there are other faults that are not so clear-cut, for example being served far too warm, lacking in condition, having a noticeable off-flavour, or simply being generally tired and end-of-barrel-ish. If you're in a pub where you're a regular and are known to the licensee and bar staff, such a complaint might be taken seriously, but in a strange pub you could well feel that you are chancing your arm.

It's also important to be clear about your objective when making a complaint. Obviously the best solution is to be given an acceptable replacement, either the same beer which has been pulled through, or a new cask tapped, or a suitable alternative. Failing that, the aim should be to be given a refund, which you may well prefer if it's the only cask beer on sale and you don't fancy a Carling as a replacement. Or, in some cases, just venting your spleen will leave you with a sense of moral satisfaction.

The last two outcomes, though, imply that you'll be bringing your visit to an end. If you're in the middle of a pub crawl, or there's an alternative pub nearby, that might be entirely acceptable. But in other situations, for example having a meal or social evening with a group, you might not want to do that, and thus be reluctant to create a fuss. You'll just quietly leave the sub-standard pint, and put up with Guinness or Diet Coke for the rest of the proceedings. And, even if you gain a moral victory, creating a confrontational situation may end up leaving a sour taste in the mouth and spoiling your evening.

In general, attitudes to changing sub-standard beer have improved over the years. The days of "everyone else is drinking it" or "real ale's meant to look like soup/taste like vinegar" are largely a thing of the past. One of the worst responses I recall was "but you've drunk some of it!" Well, if I hadn't drunk any, how would I know it was foul? But that kind of quibbling hasn't entirely disappeared. Given the amount of goodwill at risk, compared with the gross profit on a pint, it's hard to see why pubs continue to argue the toss about changing beer if customers present a reasonable case.

Some will point out that, if you stick to mass-market lagers and smooth beers, you won't have any of this problem with variability. However, the point about cask beer is that, when it's good, it reaches heights that keg never can, and the occasional duff pint is a price worth paying for that. If you stick to pubs in the Good Beer Guide, or ones with a decent reputation locally, you're unlikely to have much problem. And keg beers, especially small-batch "craft" ones, are by no means immune from faults either.

Curmudgeon Online: [curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com](http://curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com)

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



# Heard at the Bar

## Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

### Tweed Tap



Late October saw the opening of the **Tweed Tap** on Hamnett Street in Hyde. Although there's an obvious reference to the town's Tweed Brewery, the bar is run as a separate business by Tracy Lowe, whose partner Anthony Lewis runs the brewery.



The former shop has had numerous uses over the years and originally functioned as an undertaker's premises. Tracy, who worked at Tweed Brewery, was familiar with various micropubs and thought, "Why don't I do that?" and so, after a five-month wait while permissions were obtained and the

conversion work carried out, the Tweed Tap opened for business on 26 October.

It's essentially one room with a rustic-style bar at the back and a rather spectacular full-wall image of a street scene to the left. The beers will comprise rotating beers from the Tweed range plus a changing guest. In addition bag-in-box cider is also sold. It's early days yet but Tracy tells us that trade has been good and is growing. The bar, which is a welcome addition to the Hyde beer scene, is closed on Tuesdays but is open from 12 noon until 10.15pm every other day. Well worth a visit.

### Coming Soon



While this issue of *Opening Times* is out two new bars should be opening their doors to the public. In Droylsden the **Silly Country** will be opening on Market Street. This is described as a "unique local bar selling beers from small breweries in the north-west of England". There's an enthusiastic young team behind this project which promises to be a significant addition to the local area.

In Levenshulme work was underway on what will become the **Station Hop** as this was typed. The former shop premises at 815 Stockport Road is to become a "craft beer tap house and bottles shop" in a project by Amanda Finch and Chris Buxton. This is yet another indication that the historically dreary Levenshulme beer scene is on the up – a trend started by the excellent **Fred's Ale House**.

There are reports of two more micropubs in the offing too. In Stalybridge the **Crafty Pint** is due to open on Melbourne Street in the town centre. In Ashton-under-Lyne a bar called **Tapsters** is planned for Old Street. In Stockport, 53 North Trading Co Ltd has applied for permission to convert the premises at 22 Market Place into a bar. We have little or no information about these projects but will of course bring you more news as we get it.

### Local Stars in National Finals

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has announced the finalists in its national Pub of the Year and Club of the Year competitions. The good news is that this time the two Greater Manchester regional winners have made it through to the final four.



The local entrant in the Pub of the Year contest is **Wigan Central**, a two-roomed pub with a railway-themed interior and a screen displaying live arrival and departure times from the two rail stations. The pub is owned by the nearby Prospect Brewery but sources real ales from all over, alongside continental bottled beers displayed in the 'beer library'. Regular beer club and beer matching events are held. Live music plays in the Platform Room on Sundays and bar snacks are available. Wigan CAMRA Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year 2015 and 2016.

Patsy Slevin, co-owner of Prospect Brewery and Wigan Central said, "We are very humbled and frankly ecstatic to have been chosen for the top 16 pubs in the competition – never mind making it to the final four! Wigan Central only opened three years ago so to be this far along in the competition is beyond our wildest dreams. I'd like to massively thank Jo Whalley the manager and our fantastic staff who bring such a positive atmosphere to the pub, and our customers who regularly provide us with good and honest feedback and beer suggestions."

The other three finalists are the **Cricketers** in St Helens, the **Stanford Arms** in Lowestoft and **Weavers Real Ale House** in Kidderminster.



In the Club of the Year competition, run in conjunction with *Club Mirror* magazine, the local finalist is **Flixton Conservative Club**, a perennial regional winner well-known for its commitment to real ale. The other three finalists are **Appleton Thorn Village Hall** near Warrington, and two Royal Air Force Association clubs – the **Albatross Club** in Bexhill-on-Sea and the **Real Ale Farm** in Bargoed, south Wales.

The results of both competitions should be announced in Spring next year. Let's hope one or both brings the silverware to Greater Manchester.



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# Heritage Pubs

## Pub interiors of special historic interest

This month we launch a new series that will look at heritage pubs in the *Opening Times* catchment area. We will have a look at historic gems from Ashton-under-Lyne to Stockport and from Withington to Whaley Bridge. Some will be almost intact from the day they were built while others are more a collection of surviving fragments. They all have something to tell. But first, a little background.

### CAMRA and Pub Heritage

CAMRA was founded in 1971 to save Britain's traditional beer but it quickly became clear to campaigners that the best places to drink that beer, our pubs, were also under threat. In due course, CAMRA put campaigning for pubs on an equal footing as campaigning for real ale, cider and perry.



From the 1970s there was a huge increase in the opening out of pubs and removals of fine fittings, so preservation of historic pub interiors emerged as a key campaigning issue. After pioneering work in York in the late 1980s, a specialist group was set up which evolved into today's Pub Heritage Group. The

first step was to identify the most intact interiors surviving across the country's (then) 65,000 pubs.



This massive task involved following up thousands of leads, developing criteria for inclusion, recording what was found (in words and photos) and creating a list – the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. At first this focused on interiors which had remained largely unaltered since before the

Second World War, though intact early post-war pubs were admitted later. Another development was to include pubs with specific features or rooms of real national significance.

The first National Inventory was published in 1997 and totalled 179 entries. Since then it has been continually refined and updated as new candidates were discovered and, sadly, existing entries lost. The present total stands at 278.

Regional Inventories were the next logical step. As would be expected, the criteria for inclusion are set lower than for the National Inventory though the same principles apply, with the emphasis on the internal fabric of the pub and what is authentically old.

CAMRA also identifies a third category – pubs which have experienced still more change but which still have historic rooms or features deemed to be of 'some regional importance'. Pubs in all three categories can be found on the Pub Heritage website at [www.heritagepubs.org.uk](http://www.heritagepubs.org.uk) – click on the 'Search Here' facility in the top left-hand corner to access easy-to-use drop-down menus.

*Pictured above – two local National Inventory pubs: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar and the Plough on Hyde Road in Gorton.*

### The Blossoms, Buxton Road, Heaviley



This Regional Inventory pub is a landmark building originally built in 1824. It was later given a traditional layout of a central lobby and three rooms leading off. Its unspoilt interior owes much to the long-serving licensee Mary Body who occupied the Blossoms from 1942 to 1967.

A passage leads to the lobby bar (the bar counter and fittings date from a 1990s refurbishment). On the right is the vault (now the pool room) with vintage fixed seating and stained glass windows. On the

left is a small room with more stained glass windows and a couple of old settles. The smoke room (rear left) still has vintage seating (with traces of bell pushes), a hatch to the server and more stained glazing.

### The Crown, Heaton Moor Road

Another Regional Inventory listing and what counts here is the 1930s remodelling of an early 19th century pub by Clarke's Reddish Brewery which was taken over and closed by Boddingtons in 1962. Behind the symmetrical, fairly plain facade is a layout of four rooms with extensive remains from the inter-war period.



At the front is a small snug, on the left the main bar, and behind each of these is a further room (that on the right is the vault). In these rooms are the original servery with a centrally placed stillion

(a structure for bottles, glasses etc), bell-pushes for table service (in both front rooms), fixed seating, stained glass panels, draught screens and some wall panelling. The Gents still has the original tiled walls and urinals.



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## Stockport Beer Week



The Stockport and South Manchester Branch of CAMRA once again coordinated the many town centre events of Stockport Beer Week. This was held in conjunction with National Cask Ale Week at the end of September 2017.

One of the most unusual events was the presentation by Dr James Sumner of Manchester University. His talk to a packed audience



was called 'Chemists, Druggists and Beer Doctors' and took us through the stranger practices of 19th century beer making with a live demonstration of the old-style art of the 'beer doctors'. In one, he turned a blonde beer into a stout-like liquid and showed

how brewers had adulterated beer. We also heard how using chemical additives was a widespread feature of 19th century brewing; this was heralded as great innovations by brewers but was viewed with suspicion by drinkers who saw the traditional goodness of malt and hops under threat. In addition, there were fascinating stories about fatal poisonings which scared the public, and tax-dodging which worried the authorities...



Other events included beer festivals at Robinsons Brewery Visitors Centre (pictured left) and the Remedy Bar, and various meet the brewers and tap takeovers. Cider enthusiasts were not forgotten either with an excellent tasting

session at the Petersgate Tap and the Stockport County Supporters Club Stockport Quiz was hotly contested, with the lead constantly changing during the evening. Everyone won a prize at the end, mostly consisting of bottles of beer, although the team that came last won a packet of custard creams!

Chris Walkden, coordinator of the Beer Week said, "The Beer Week was once again a success with both locals and visitors attending the many events in the Town Centre. We have reports of people travelling from places such as Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Norfolk and South Wales, so Stockport is definitely highly rated when it comes to pubs and beer."

Chris concluded, "I would like to thank the Council for its support and it was particularly pleasing to see the Chief Executive and Mayor and Deputy Mayor at events. Thanks also to all the sponsors, organisations and pubs involved who came together to make the Beer Week such a success."

If you have any feedback on the 2017 events, please let us know as the branch will do it all again in September 2018. If you have any ideas for events that could be held next time, please get in contact with a member of the Committee. Similarly, any additional pairs of hands would be useful, especially helping out with social media matters. It's good fun and meetings are only held monthly from March until October so look out in Opening Times, on the branch website and in the local CAMRA members' notifications for the dates.

## Tryanuary



Tryanuary returns in 2018, supported by a team of over 60 volunteers throughout the UK. Now entering its fourth year, Tryanuary is a nationwide campaign to encourage support for the beer industry throughout January.

The brainchild of Mancunian beer blogger Andy Heggis and brewery owners Stuart Swann and Shane Swindells, Tryanuary was created to encourage beer fans to support

independent breweries, pubs, bars and other retailers during what can be a challenging month for the industry.

Since its inception in 2015, the campaign has garnered huge support. Spearheading this year's campaign is Tom Stapley, who is best known for Craft Beer Hour, a weekly gathering on Twitter that embraces all aspects of the industry and showcases many independent brewers.

Tom's vision to enable the continued growth of the campaign involves coordinating nationwide teams, each championing the beer on offer in their local areas. "A campaign like this needs local people to galvanise local businesses," said Tom. "It needs people all over the country to celebrate the beer on their doorstep and share that with the nation through the different mediums of Tryanuary."

Following an overwhelmingly successful recruitment drive for volunteers, for the first time, in 2018, the campaign will be advocated by an ever-growing team of over 60 beer lovers and enthusiasts who will have exclusive access to the Tryanuary website and social media profiles.

Although the campaign will be driven using the wide reaches of social media, the ultimate aim is to inspire people to show support for their local enterprises. For more information, including details of how to get involved, visit [www.tryanuary.com](http://www.tryanuary.com) or call 07921 470 803.

## Cider Awards

In early November a party from Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA travelled to Hereford to present the Cider and Perry of the Festival awards from the 2017 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.



The Perry of the Festival was won by **Ty Gwyn Cider** based in the far south of Herefordshire at Pontrilas. Pictured left, Festival Cider Manager Charlotte Bulmer presents the award to Ty Gwyn's Alex Culpin.



The Cider of the Festival was won by **Seb's Cider** of Cradley near Bromyard. The winning cider was Brown's Apple and Charlotte is seen here presenting the award to Seb Hughes.



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# Stagger

## The Sound of the Suburbs – with Jerry Wicken

It may just be me. But in the same way that people with no general knowledge appear on TV quiz shows, why do people who are tone deaf insist on inflicting their voices on innocent bystanders enjoying a quiet drink in the pub? Heaven knows, I have the sort of voice only to be used to empty pubs of awkward clientele at closing time but I do not choose to use it on the general public. Truly, Reddish is the karaoke capital of Stockport but let this not deter you from visiting some otherwise excellent pubs.



Our starting point was the only pub in North Reddish, the **Fir Tree**. This huge, two-roomed community local has improved in recent times and in addition to karaoke has TV screens, pool tables, weekend entertainment, a heated outside drinking area and, most importantly, real ale (with, incidentally, a CAMRA discount, so don't forget your membership card). Tonight there was Hobgoblin which was quite good and Whirlybird from Mobberley Brewery which scored very highly and was runner-up for beer of the night.



Next stop an old fashioned street corner two bar local, the **Thatched Tavern**. This type of pub is fast disappearing but here one is happily thriving. Most drinkers were crowding into the larger room (thus avoiding the karaoke) whilst

enjoying the only real ale on offer, Sharp's Atlantic. This scored OK to good. There is also an outside drinking area. Back on Broadstone Road, the **Union**, extended over the years, offers Robinsons Unicorn (not tried) and Dark Vader which all agreed was good. This, like nearly all the pubs we visited, was busy which is not always the case these days on Friday staggers. Weekend karaoke is of course available but on lighter, brighter days there is a beer garden.

Just along the road and slightly quieter is the **Grey Horse**. Previously a Boddingtons house it is now Joseph Holt's. It has a large lounge and smaller tap room, a pool table and, you guessed, karaoke. Holt's Bitter was the only ale and scored identically to the Dark Vader. Unusually for Holt's, so often the basis of lively discussion, everyone agreed it was a good example.

Walking into Heaton Chapel on the corner of Manchester Road is another ex Boddies House, the **George and Dragon**. It is huge inside but does have some semi-separate drinking areas. Alas none can save you from the assault on the senses from the karaoke. On the plus side,

the staff are excellent, the Greene King IPA was drinkable although the Robinsons Trooper scored better (and both attract a CAMRA discount). The pub was buzzing which is a great sign so clearly not everybody shares my views about volume levels and singing abilities. Just as well we're all different.

Across the road is **Heaton Hops**, a micropub and bottle shop which has gone from strength to strength. It was heaving at about 9.30pm and crowds were spilling out on the pavement. It had been even busier when I passed it at 7pm! Good news is that it offers two ever changing real ales as well as craft keg and a range of bottled beers. Even better news is that there is no karaoke. Happy days indeed. The ales on tap were Timothy Taylor's Landlord which received good scores, and Saltaire Triple Chocoholic, a very smooth rich brew, which was voted beer of the night. If you can find a seat you could comfortably spend an evening there (but not Monday because it is closed).



Our final destination was the **Hinds Head**, just off the Manchester Road and fronted by a pleasant beer garden. Luckily there was no karaoke but conversely there were very few customers at 10pm. As this is another large hostelry it meant there was little atmosphere. Apparently this is more of a food pub (and I'm told a good one) so most of the crowds are early birds. The ales were Bombardier and Timothy Taylor's Landlord. The latter achieved the evening's biggest disparity in scores ranging from poor to good.

We were pleased to have a decent turnout for this stagger and we enjoyed a range of beers from small independents to huge multinationals. It is probably of no surprise that the highest rated ales belonged to independent breweries. So why not try one of these pubs (especially) if you've got a good voice but better still join us on our next Stagger. You'll be very welcome.

### And Online

#### Hazel Grove North with John Sutcliffe

Also covered is the Hazel Grove North Stagger which can be found online at [www.ssmcamra.co.uk](http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk). Pubs included are Robinsons Anchor with a nautical theme where beers were Unicorn and Trooper; the **George and Dragon**, a Greene King house with Old Trip and Greene King IPA; and the **Crown**, another imposing Robinsons pub set back slightly from the A6 and still with a bowling green in use. Beers here were Wizard, Cumbria Way - slightly below average, and good Unicorn. Also included was the **Travellers' Call**, a traditional Robinsons house again having nautical décor with brass bells etc., the fairly recently refurbished **Dog and Partridge** with three Robinsons cask beers, the friendly **Duke of York** and the **Bamford Arms**, one of the Beefeater chain of steakhouses serving Wainright.

All but two were Robinsons pubs, mostly with noisy discos or karaoke and mostly average beer except our last stop of the evening, the **Blossoms**, an excellent community public house capably managed by Jerry and his team. It is still a relatively unspoilt multi-room pub. Beers sampled were Wizard, Trooper, Dizzy Blonde and Old Tom. They all scored highly with the Old Tom being the best beer of the night.

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# CAMRA Discounts

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

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

- ☺ **Ashlea, Manchester Road, Cheadle:** 10% discount off cask ales.
- ☺ **Beehive, Market Street, Droylsden:** 10% off a pint of cask ale or cider.
- ☺ **Beer Shed, 47b Market Street, New Mills:** 30p off a pint of all cask ales.
- ☺ **Beer Traders, Stockport Road, Marple:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Bridge Beers, Melbourne Street, Stalybridge:** 10p off a pint, 5p off a half of cask ale (Tuesday to Thursday).
- ☺ **Bullock Smithy, London Road, Hazel Grove:** 10p off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Cheshire Cheese, Stockport Road, Gee Cross:** 40p off a pint of guest beers.
- ☺ **Chieftain, Green Lane, Hadfield:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Chiverton Tap, Mellor Road, Cheadle Hulme:** 30p off a pint of cask ale (Monday and Tuesday).
- ☺ **Crown, High Street, Cheadle:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Crown Point Tavern, Market Street, Denton:** 10% off cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **Didsbury, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Fir Tree, Gorton Road, Reddish:** 20% off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Font, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield:** 25% off cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **Fred's Ale House, 843 Stockport Road, Levenshulme:** 30p a pint off cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **George & Dragon, Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Greenfinch, Palatine Road, West Didsbury:** 10% off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Grove Ale House, London Road, Hazel Grove:** 10% off cask ales (Monday to Thursday).
- ☺ **Harewood Arms, 2 Market Street, Broadbottom:** 20p off a pint of cask ale Sunday to Thursday.
- ☺ **Heaton Hops, School Lane, Heaton Chapel:** 10% off all draught beers.
- ☺ **Hope Inn, Wellington Road North, Heaton Norris:** 10p off a pint of cask ale or traditional cider (Monday to Thursday).
- ☺ **James Watts, High Street, Cheadle:** 10% off a pint of cask ale (Thursdays only).
- ☺ **Ladybrook, Fir Road, Bramhall:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Lowes Arms, Hyde Road, Denton:** 20p off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Mary & Archie, Burton Road, West Didsbury:** 10p off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Mounting Stone, Woodford Road, Bramhall:** 30p off a pint of cask ale (Monday and Tuesday).
- ☺ **Reasons to be Cheerful, Fog Lane, Burnage:** 10% off all beer.
- ☺ **Remedy Bar & Brewhouse, Market Place, Stockport:** 5% off cask ales (Sunday to Thursday).
- ☺ **Romper, Wilmslow Road, Ringway:** 10% off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Saison, Burton Road, West Didsbury:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Samuel Oldknow, Market Street, Marple:** 20p off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Spinning Top, Wellington Road South, Stockport:** 30p off a pint and 12p off a half of cask ales and ciders.
- ☺ **Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:** 10% off cask ales (Sunday to Thursday).
- ☺ **Tweed Tap, Hamnett Street, Hyde:** 20p off a pint of cask ales.
- ☺ **White Hart, High Street, Cheadle:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **White House, Water Street, Stalybridge:** 10% off cask ales.
- ☺ **Wine & Wallop, Lapwing Lane, West Didsbury:** 40p off a pint of cask ale.
- ☺ **Ye Olde Cock, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury:** 25p off a pint of cask ale.

## High Peak Club of the Year Award



High Peak, Tameside and North East Cheshire Branch has awarded its 2017 Club of the Year certificate to the **Royal British Legion Club** in Poynton. This perennial award-winner is known for its wide range of well-kept cask beers. Although a separate operation, this is enhanced by the presence on-site of the increasingly impressive Poynton Brewery.

A well-attended event took place on Monday November 13 when the presentation was made by Branch Chairman Ben Zwierinck. The branch was particularly pleased to welcome the Mayor of Poynton, Councillor Sarah-Jane Gilmore to the presentation.

This is not the first time the club, which seems to go from strength to strength, has received a branch award. A quick count of the proudly displayed certificates behind the bar (including the latest one) shows no fewer than seven. These have been achieved through hard work and commitment by the club's management team. Pictured here, Ben (right) presents the award to Glyn Derbyshire (Poynton Branch President), new Club President Eileen Bailey and, far left, Club Steward Nick Williams.

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# What's Brewing

## Brewery News from around the area

### Pomona Island Brew Co



**Pomona  
Island  
Brew Co.**

The region's newest brewery launched last month when Pomona Island Pale hit the pubs – and very good it was too, being a classic 3.8% session beer generously hopped with Chinook and Citra.

Needless to say *Opening Times* hot-footed it to Salford to see who was behind the new project. The brewery isn't actually on the famous Pomona Island but in an industrial unit just off Daniel Adamson Road, a short walk from Media City. It's in the former Seven Brothers premises, which became vacant after that brewery moved to a rather bigger unit across the way.

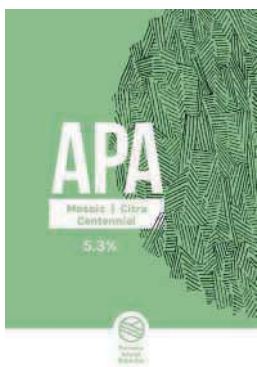
It's run by old friends Nick Greenhalgh, Ryan Thompson and Gaz Bee along with Head Brewer James Dyer who has moved down from Tempest Brew Co in the Scottish borders. Nick and Ryan run the **Gas Lamp** on Bridge Street in the City Centre and Gaz is a familiar face from his time at the Marble Arch and Marble Beer House. *Pictured below (left-right) Nick, Gaz, James and Ryan.*



The Gas Lamp has been open for seven years now and Nick and Ryan were looking for a further project when Gaz suggested a move into brewing. It turned out that something similar had been on the minds of Nick and Ryan for some time and so when Gaz came

on board with more experience in this area it sealed the deal.

They advertised for a head brewer and James, who was a technical brewer at Tempest, saw an opportunity for career development. He has a degree in brewing from the famous Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and was looking to be more involved in a brewery start-up and also recipe development.



With the team in place all that was needed was some tweaking of the existing 10-barrel kit and recipe formulation. This brings us back to the launch of that Pale Ale which garnered rave reviews. The follow-up beer was a 5.3% APA hopped with Mosaic, Citra and Centennial. This was due to be followed by a Porter and a Stout. The beers are available in both cask and keg, while both bottling and canning will be considered further down the line.

There's also some work to do on the brewery. Some additional vessels are on order from China and there are plans for a small bar so they can run a regular tap. There's also an empty space in one corner – this is due to be filled by the smaller brewing plant of the forthcoming **Brass Tap Brewery** run by the team behind West Didsbury's **Wine & Wallop** and **Folk**. While it's not a dedicated brewery tap you should find a Pomona Island beer on the bar of the Gas Lamp more often than not. Numerous other local outlets are likely too. Look out for them – they're good.

### Wander Beyond Brewing

Not a new brewery but a re-brand and a re-launch. The rather low-key **Dan's Brewery** has had a facelift. Not only that but Dan Whitehead-DeBecheval has been joined by full-time brewer Matt Breslin who has moved across from the Hop Studio in York. Matt is also the brother of Tina Breslin who works in the brewery on admin and sales.



The new team (Dan and Matt are pictured left) and the re-brand should see the beers getting more of an airing. Bars like **Knott** in the City Centre and the **Chorlton Tap** will continue to be major outlets but more sightings in the free trade can be expected.

The beer range is having a revamp too. Core beers like Peak Pale Ale will remain (although some will have a tweak) but a new range of beers has been launched – there was an open day at the brewery on 16 December. *Opening Times* was lucky enough to get a sneak preview of some and was extremely impressed.



Beers to look out for include Milkshake IPA (5%) hopped with Citra and Mosaic but with a smooth, slightly sweet profile from the use of oats and lactose, and a full, satisfying mouth feel. Equally impressive was Finders Keepers (6.2%) a slightly old school, classic IPA with Amarillo, Citra and Simcoe hops and a clean, bitter edge. A double IPA was also promised for the launch day.



Dark beers include Great Rift (6%), a smooth and rich milk stout with a welcome dryness in the finish, and Northern Night (4.1%), a ginger porter with a good fiery smack of ginger that nevertheless doesn't overwhelm the beer. Expect to find the beers in cask and key-keg while down the line both bottles and cans may appear.

Why Wander Beyond? Not only does it reflect the team's love of outdoor activities but also the desire for exciting experimentation – something both Dan and Matt mentioned to OT. So, they are looking to barrel-age some quite high gravity imperial stouts. There was a range of casks at the brewery which had previously contained wine, Madeira, whisky and bourbon. There is also a plan to start a sour beer project next year with some of these beers going into red wine casks.

Exciting times and exciting beers - this isn't going to be a low-key brewery for much longer.

### Epicurus Brewing Co

It was in late 2016 that Epicurus took over the operations of Hornbeam Brewery in Denton. Their beers have not been easy to find and we now understand that brewing has now ceased in Denton pending a move to Bolton. We are told that the brewing plant will be relocated to the **Star & Garter** on Bow Street which is rented by one of the Epicurus owners.

# News and Awards

## Recent CAMRA Awards and News Extra

### Whaley Bridge Tap



Whaley Bridge got itself a new pub on 21 October when Mike Wilde opened the **Whaley Bridge Tap** on Old Road. The former shop (it last functioned as a florist) has been converted into a welcoming small bar which will also serve as a tap house for Mike's Whaley Bridge Brewery.

The décor is bright and cheerful and when *Opening Times* called there was just one room open at the front, although a second rear room was planned for the near future. On the bar are two handpumps and the usual offer is planned to be one Whaley Bridge beer plus one guest. There will also be a bag-in-box cider. There's also a small keg range which included Thornbridge Lukas lager and a stout from local Intrepid Brewery.

Mike told us that the bar has gone "exceptionally well" to date and it is indeed a welcome addition to the Whaley Bridge beer scene.

### News in brief



In January 2017 Robinsons closed the **Northumberland Arms** in Marple Bridge on the retirement of long-serving tenants Geoff Tarbatt and Margaret Houghton. And that might have been that if it hadn't been for the determination of a local

community group. With around 200 members the local group raised around £298,000 to buy the pub and it was due to open as a free house on 16 December. If all goes to plan *Opening Times* will be paying a visit soon after – look for a report next time.



After a short period of closure (not the first it must be said) the **Rising Sun** in Bredbury reopened last month with Joanne and Callum Robertson now at the helm. There is one constantly changing cask ale available and as trade increases this will

increase to two or three. Food is available until 9pm every day, with Wednesdays featuring a steak night. There's also a quiz night on Sundays.

Fool Hardy Ales based at the **Hope Inn**, Wellington Road North, Stockport, has now restarted brewery tours on Thursday nights – book at the pub. The Hope is now also offering a discount for CAMRA members who will get 10p off a pint of cask ale or cider on Mondays to Thursdays.

Other local pubs newly offering a discount are the **Lowes Arms** on Hyde Road in Denton and the **Tweed Tap** on Hamnett Street in Hyde which both now offer 20p a pint off cask ales for card-carrying CAMRA members.



It is reported that the **Commercial Inn** in Mossley (pictured left) has now reopened, as has the **Fleece** after some refurbishment. The **Railway Inn** in Droylsden has now been acquired by the owners of the **Witchwood** in Ashton. The **Albion** on Clarendon Place in Hyde

appears to no longer be selling cask conditioned beer.

The **George** in Mersey Square, Stockport, was closed as this issue was typed. We have no further information but hope to have more next time

### Brewery Bits

**Rock Mill Brewery** in New Mills is planning to extend into the unit next door, initially for more space but eventually for more beer production. A one-off Chocolate Stout called **Black Breagha** at 4.5% was brewed recently and went down well so is likely to be brewed again. The name comes from a black labrador which visits the brewery.



Congratulations to Macclesfield's **RedWillow Brewery** for winning CAMRA's Champion Beer of Cheshire with **Wreckless**, a superbly hoppy 4.8% pale ale. RedWillow also picked up gold in the speciality category for Smokeless, their 5.7% smoked porter. Both beers

will doubtless be enjoyed in the new **RedWillow Bar** that was due to open in Buxton in mid-December.

Other local winners in the Champion Beer of Cheshire contest were Bollington's **Happy Valley Brewery** which won the mild category with Little Mill Town while **Poynton Brewery** won the porter class with Darkside.

### Pub Company Changes

Pub company changes – how do they affect your local? CAMRA is investigating the impact of changes to our pubs as the big pub-owning companies react to the Pubs Code, put into force in 2016 after years of campaigning by licensee groups and CAMRA.

In the last two years, the number of pubs run on traditional long-term tenancies has fallen, as some tenants are replaced by managers. Licensee campaigners are concerned that this may encourage management turnover, all to avoid pubs being covered by the Code.

The impact on customers is less clear. Our Pub Campaigns Committee is looking, confidentially, for information. It is particularly interested to see if changes in management to pub company pubs result in more or less choice for pub-goers. Has your local pub increased or reduced its range of real ale and cider after a change of tenant? Or do you work in a pubco pub and have seen changes? The Committee would also like to know about any changes in prices and in the quality of the beer being served. Please send information to the Committee's Chair, Paul Ainsworth – [paul.ainsworth@camra.org.uk](mailto:paul.ainsworth@camra.org.uk).





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