

OPENING TIMES

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2021 FREE



STOCKPORT



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About Opening Times & Contacts

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Their telephone no. is 03454 04 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

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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

Pub Opening Hours

We hope you will visit all of the pubs mentioned in *Opening Times*. There isn't the space to print all of their opening hours – however these can be checked on CAMRA's online pub guide: whatpub.com

Disclaimer

We aim to ensure that the information in *Opening Times* is correct at the time of going to press. If we get something wrong then please get in touch (editorial contact details on the left) 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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www.highpeaktamesidenortheastcheshire.camra.org.uk

Contact: Tom Lord; jenni.lord@tiscali.co.uk

Macclesfield & East Cheshire

www.eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Contact: John Barber; secretary@eastcheshirecamra.org.uk

Central Manchester

www.centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Contact: Steve Davis; treasurer@centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Social Media

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

Stockport & South Manchester:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA

Twitter – @SSMCAMRA

High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA

Central Manchester:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra

Twitter – @MCRCentralCamra

Macclesfield & East Cheshire:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/groups/897449270304045

Twitter – @MECCAMRA

CAMRA Discounts

A list of local pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members can be found online at www.ssmcamra.co.uk/discount.htm

Front Cover

From left to right – Jack Dewison (Head Brewer), Martin Wood (Lead Brewer) and Danny James (Managing Director); the Howard Town team. See Page 12.

Contributors

John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Sue Lightfoot, Tom Lord, Chris Morris, Lawrence Devaney, Mark McConachie, Darren Berry, Peter Mitchell, Dick Withecombe, Roger Protz, Peter Edwardson.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

Copy date for the Nov/December issue is Friday 15 October

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Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester winners - June 2020 and October 2021



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for June 2020 was the Blossoms in Heaviley. For obvious reasons it was not possible to make the award then but we are now catching up.

The Blossoms is an excellent, unspoilt local with three rooms radiating off a traditional drinking lobby. Two of the rooms, notably the rear Smoke Room, retain many original features, with fixed seating and panelling. Upstairs is a large and well-used function room.

This landmark pub, prominently sited on the A6, was reputedly built as a coaching house in the 18th century and in the 19th was used for the planning meetings when the nearby St George's Church was being designed.



Today it's a Robinsons' 'Ale Shrine' and in normal times sells a wide range of their cask beers. At the moment, though, it's just Unicorn, but an extremely well-kept pint of it, thanks to the cellar skills of Jerry Evans, whose partner, Roxanne Bailey, runs the pub. A couple of the handpumps are currently dedicated to cider from the Westons' stable.

Another feature is the collection of brewery memorabilia on the walls – the old photos of brewery life and the advertising material are particularly fascinating.

We will be presenting this well-deserved and much-delayed award to Roxanne and Jerry on Thursday 23 September. This will also be the launch event for this year's **Stockport Beer Week** so do come along and join in the celebrations.

The Pub of the Month award is sponsored by Stephenson's, a local family firm that has been supplying the local pub and catering trade for over 150 years. Check out their advert on the previous page.

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The Pub of the Month for October is the Wobbly Stamp on Stockport Road in Cheadle. Darren Berry explains why this popular new micropub won the award.

After opening micropubs in Romiley (Jake's Ale House) and Gee Cross (Jake's – now sold), Darren Shaw spotted that Cheadle, despite its numerous pubs, seemed a possible site for another venture. Over a few beers with Dave Ramwell, the two became business partners and on 10 September 2020 (a little later than planned due the pandemic), the Wobbly Stamp opened its doors for the first time.



Located in an old Post Office, the interior is deceptively large and can seat over 40 customers. The décor is a mix of rough-planed timber, bare brick and plastered walls which are adorned with local artwork, breweriana and mirrors. An outside drinking area located at the side of the pub is accessible through a side door. Additional outside seating at the front of the pub has been added since it reopened in May.



Proving a popular addition to the beer scene in Cheadle, the Wobbly Stamp has four rotating guest cask beers with one handpump given over to a dark beer. The beers are sourced both from local breweries, such as Stockport Brewing, Poynton Brewery and Seven Bro7hers, and those further afield like Tiny Rebel, Heritage and Spinning Dog. There is a good selection of gin and wine, and a couple of German beers are also on tap. Boxed cider is available as well.

There is a small range of bottled and canned beers to take away, and four-pint pouches are also available if you feel the need to take your favourite draught beer home. There is live music on Sunday afternoons and a 20 pence discount for CAMRA members and Forces personnel.

Join us on Thursday 28 October from 8pm and help Darren and Dave celebrate their well-deserved award. Buses 11 and 11A will drop you close to the pub.

What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Diaries

Events for September to early November for the following local branches:

- * **Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)**
- * **High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire (HPNC)**
- * **Central Manchester (CMCR)**
- * **Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)**

Formal Branch Meetings

CAMRA members only at these meetings.

Monday 11 October – Globe Inn, High Street West, Glossop, SK13 8HJ. Starts 8:00pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 14 October – Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury, M20 5PG (upstairs room). Starts 8:00pm. (SSM)

Saturday 6 November – Branch meeting and social in Poynton. Venue to be confirmed. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 11 November – Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU (upstairs room). Starts 8:00pm. (SSM)

Social Events & Presentations



Thursday 23 September – Launch of Stockport Beer Week and June 2020 Pub of the Month presentation: Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

Thursday 23 September to Sunday 3 October – Many events for Stockport Beer Week. For full details either pick up a programme from a town centre pub or visit the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA website at www.ssmcamra.co.uk/BeerWeek.htm. All welcome.

Saturday 25 September – Social Trip to Hebden Bridge: departing on 12:12 train from Manchester Victoria. Starting at Stubbing Wharf, King Street, HX7 6LU then visiting a variety of other pubs. Train back to Manchester departs 18:33. (CMCR)

Saturday 2 October – Presentation followed by social around Marple and Romiley: Traders, 111-113 Stockport Road, Marple, SK6 6AF. From 1:30pm. (HPNC)

Friday 22 October – Stagger of Great Moor & Heaviley: 7:30pm George & Dragon, 14 London Road, SK7 4AH; 8:30pm Travellers Call, 352 Buxton Road, SK2 7NL; final pub Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, SK2 6NU. (SSM)

Thursday 28 October – Pub of the Month presentation: Wobbly Stamp, 130 Stockport Road, Cheadle, SK8 2DP. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

Friday 5 November – Club of the Year 2020 presentation: Albert Club, 39-41 Old Lansdowne Road, West Didsbury, M20 2PA. From 8:00pm. (SSM)

CAMRA Awards

Recent Presentations

For obvious reasons there weren't many presentations made while *Opening Times* was away. Local CAMRA branches are now catching up.



One award that did get presented was the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year 2020, which was won by the **Petersgate Tap** in Stockport, a popular micropub run by father and son team Alan and Chris Gent. Alan is pictured here with their certificate.

The pub has actually increased and enhanced its cider offering since the award was presented, with no fewer than eight traditional ciders and perries

available on draught – some from local producers such as Dunham Press (Dunham Massey) and SiDa (Macclesfield). These are supplemented by an increasing range of bottled ciders and perries from top-rank producers.



On Saturday 31 July, the **Malt Disley** micropub on the main A6 road in the centre in Disley was presented with the 2020 Branch Pub of the Year award by High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire CAMRA. If you have not visited before, what awaits you is a cracking and popular little micropub which is both

comfortable and friendly, and which offers a wide range of real ales. Well worth a visit, and one which is very likely to turn into multiple visits, too. Pictured above, owner Lauren Booth received her award from branch chair Ben Zwierink.

On Saturday 21 August, **Buxworth Memorial Club** near Chinley, Derbyshire was awarded the certificate for Branch Club of the Year 2020 by High Peak CAMRA. The club is always a friendly and welcoming place to visit and non-members are welcome. It is handily situated in the village of Buxworth, close to the restored Peak Forest Canal Basin, and so is perfect for boaters and walkers alike.

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year 2020 was the **Magnet**



on Wellington Road North in Stockport. One of the best-known and most-visited pubs in the area, the Magnet is a testament to the hard work of the whole team, led by mother and son Lesley and Lee Watts. Lee is pictured here with the certificate which was presented on 26 August.

This multiple award-winning pub continues to have beer quality and choice at its heart. The ever-changing range currently features 12 cask beers plus a dozen more on keg and keykeg. Salopian Oracle is a permanent beer and a beer from Tiny Rebel brewery is also regularly available.

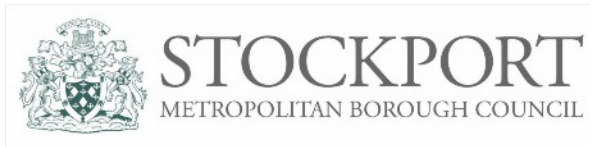


STOCKPORT BEER WEEK

23 September to 3 October 2021



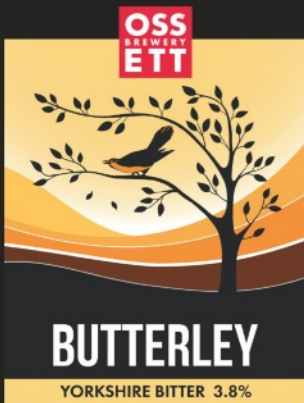
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Stockport Beer Week

Eleven Days of Beer



Coordinator Chris Walkden reports.

At last Stockport is open for business again. Everyone has been hit hard in some way by the pandemic and this is certainly the case for our local pubs, hospitality venues and breweries. So **Stockport Beer Week** is back for 2021 to encourage you to give them some support.

The Beer Week runs from 23 September to 3 October in conjunction with National Cask Ale Week and is designed to help people get safely back to the pub, there are numerous face to face events while others, such as the Ale Trail, can be completed in your own time.



The opening event of the Beer Week is on 23 September and will be a retrospective presentation of a Pub of the Month award (for June 2020) to Robinsons' **Blossoms** in Heaviley. Afterwards, William Robinson, Managing Director of the brewery's Pubs Division, will tell us about the effects of the last 18 months on the

business and their plans for the future.

A beer and food-matching event with renowned beer sommelier Annabel Smith will be held on 30 September at the **Petersgate Tap**. This will feature different beers from the 2019 event and includes the ideal food to accompany, amongst others, Thirst Class's Stocky Oatmeal Stout. Due to the anticipated demand, this will be a ticket-only event: tickets (cost £10) will be on sale from the Petersgate Tap in mid-September. Keep an eye out on their social media as well as that of the CAMRA branch for full details.



Speaking of **Thirst Class Ales**, owner Richard Conway is brewing a special beer for the Beer Week; you can find out what it is and taste it when he tells us all about how the brewery survived the pandemic in a talk at the **Magnet** on the evening of 29 September. **Stockport Brewing** will also be producing a Beer Week special; it will be a stout, so watch out for it around the town.

Some of the popular pub cellar tours will return on the first Saturday; whilst the final Saturday will see a service bus tour to pubs in Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall, with the chance of a free pint for some participants!

And the Stagers are back! On Friday 24 September there will be a ramble around pubs on 'Stockport's Slopes'. We will meet at the **Wellington** at 7pm and be at the **Swan With Two Necks** at 8pm, followed by visits to the **Railway**, **Midland** and **Magnet** on Wellington Road North. Our guides will be equipped with lots of historical information about the pubs involved.

If you prefer to go to the pub independently, there's a **Cask Ale Trail** to follow. Comprising 24 pubs, this will be starting early, on Saturday 18 September, to allow you to complete it at a relaxed pace. There are beery prizes for doing 12 pubs and even more for the full set. All valid entries will receive beer vouchers and bottles as well as being put into a draw for a pub meal and a case of Robinsons beer. Watch out for the full details on the Stockport CAMRA website.



The **Angel** and both Stockport's Wetherspoons (**Calverts Court** and the **Wilfred Wood**, Hazel Grove) will showcase local beers throughout the Week. Meanwhile, the **Olde Vic** in Edgeley will be featuring single hop beers; and the **Petersgate Tap** will host more strong Torrside Monsters beers over the last weekend.

In addition, there will be a virtual mystery pub quiz on the Stockport CAMRA website. Pictures of cask ale pubs, which are all in Stockport Borough, will be revealed and all you have to do is identify them. All entries will receive a prize and those who correctly identify all of them will be put in a draw for some very interesting prizes – an overnight stay at the **Governors House** in Cheadle Hulme, a free



gallon of beer in a nominated Greene King pub in Stockport, as well as a pub meal.

There are plenty of events to choose from, so please support them if you can. If we don't use our pubs, we will lose them.

Details of events can be found in programmes and flyers around the Town Centre, on our website at www.ssmcamra.co.uk/BeerWeek.htm or on SSM CAMRA social media. And you can listen out for regular reports and updates on our radio partner, Strawberry Radio.

Destination Ardwick

Manchester's Brewery Central

While Manchester's breweries are scattered across the city, without doubt its brewing heartland is centred in and around inner-city Ardwick. This former industrial area is now home to no fewer than a dozen brewing operations (plus a cider maker), and here we look at some of the newcomers.

Arch 75



Most of the brewers are based in railway arches on North Western Street and, while Arch 75 is the home of Steve Dunkley's **Beer Nouveau**, it resembles a Russian doll with all sorts of other things going on there.

For a start, it's the home of the expanding **Temperance Street**

Cider, which, we think, is Manchester's only commercial cider maker. It's a project between Steve, Rob Muir and Matthew Gibson. They made 3,500 litres last year and are expanding – when *Opening Times* dropped by in August they had just taken delivery of a large quantity of surplus pears to be turned into perry.

The arch is also now the home of **Temperance Street Brewery**. This consists of three small brewing kits, with respective capacities of 25 litres, 50 litres and one barrel. Temperance Street is a project by Steve Dunkley along with keen homebrewers Alex Pembroke and Sarah Hyde. Alex and Sarah use the smaller kits to make their own Temperance Street beers, and other homebrewers are also able to use them, too.

A forthcoming project is 'Beer and B Movies' – part of the arch will be given over to a cinema which, on Sunday afternoons, will run double features, one a "really cheesy bad film" and the other a cult film in the same genre.

But there's more...

Steelfish Brewing Co



Simon Goodier and Ali Combes (pictured here) have been homebrewing for several years and met through attending Chorlton Homebrew Club. They started talking about a move to commercial brewing last year, although both have kept their day jobs, and operations commenced in December, with the first

beers going on sale, in can and bottle, in March.

Brewing currently takes place about once a week using the larger, one-barrel kit at Temperance Street Brewery. This means three to four kegs or casks are available to the trade each week and this limited availability is proving something of a selling point.

At time of going to print, Steelfish will have brewed 24 times. Coming out of lockdown, they recognised that people would be keen to get back to the pub and spend time catching up with friends. Accessible session strength beers seemed the most appropriate to the time, so the majority have been 3.8% to 4.2% pale ales of various hop combinations, and ranging from clean, crisp and bitter to soft, hazy and juicy, plus a couple of single

hopped best bitters. That said, they wanted to test the kit, processes, etc. so have also brewed imperial stout, mild, a saison, lagers and a sour.

STEELFISH BREWING CO

The most regular outlet for Steelfish beers is the bar at Beer Nouveau. Simon and Ali have also supplied beers to Reasons to be Cheerful in Burnage, Heaton Hops in Heaton Chapel, the City Arms in central Manchester (where a nine-gallon cask sold out in a day)

and, in Chorlton, Dulcimer and Font.

In fact, it's the Font that inspired the brewery name – Steelfish is an old and obscure font, which they have now used in the brewery logo.

Doomed Brewing Project

Also operating out of Arch 75 is Tom Bacon's Doomed Brewing Project, so called because at one point his ideas for various projects were dismissed as "doomed from the start". That can't be said for this one, though, as his beers have been very well received.



Tom (pictured left) has a background in homebrewing but also a career in the brewing industry, in various capacities. He started brewing in January, following conversations with Steve Dunkley, which gave him access to a brewing kit. Since then he's brewed on average twice a month, in volumes from 25 litres to one barrel.

So far, 12 different beers have been produced, including Arch of Pines, a West Coast IPA, and You Are (Not) Alone, an imperial brown ale. There have also been some much more esoteric styles such as Castaways & Cutouts, a bog myrtle and coriander cider-fermented gruit! The inspiration mainly comes from beers that Tom personally wants to drink but which just won't work on a large commercial scale! His best-selling beer is probably Everyday Hero, a Belgian-style wheat beer brewed with coriander and lemon peel.

Doomed beers are available in polykeg, cask and bottle, and are regularly on draught at Beer Nouveau.

Balance Brewing & Blending



Elsewhere on North Western Street is this potentially very exciting wild and sour beer project from James Horrocks and Will Harris, who have day jobs as brewers at Squawk and Track respectively.

The wort is brewed at Squawk, and then transported a couple of hundred yards down to Manchester Brewing where owner Paul Mellor has let them have space to store a number of cleaned ex-wine barrels in which the beers will slowly mature and ferment, taking in the micro-organisms and flavours which remain in the casks. There may also be some fruit additions to some of the beers.

The plan is to release these in 750ml bottles, with the first to appear early in the New Year. Both James and Will are sour beer enthusiasts and have brewed them with great success in the past. One to watch.

Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Going, going, gone

There have been a number of local pub losses in the past 18 months. Some are very permanent, some, hopefully, are less so. Here's a run-down.

In North Reddish, the **Fir Tree** has breathed its last. The pub has not only closed but it has also been demolished to make way for a branch of Aldi. This was the last pub in North Reddish.



Also closed and awaiting its fate is the **Farmers Arms** in Cheadle Heath. In the last issue of *Opening Times* (March/April 2020) we reported that while the pub had been sold, it remained reopen for business. Well, that didn't last long. After the first lockdown it failed to

open and we have now had confirmation that it's game over. All of the signage has been removed from this former Greene King house and the pub awaits its fate.



Another Greene King pub closed and boarded as we went to press was the **Bullock Smithy** in Hazel Grove, which again has been closed since March last year. However we understand that this pub *will* reopen – it's currently undergoing repairs following a fire in the kitchen and will then be re-let.

The well-known **Crown** on Heaton Lane was also closed and boarded at press date. It closed last autumn and has remained so following the sad death of licensee Steve Alexander earlier this year. However, multiple sources tell us that there are plans to have the pub up and running by the end of October.



In South Manchester, we have a report that the **Albert** in Rusholme (left) has closed its doors for good – a sad loss this, as it was the last traditional pub in the area. Further down Wilmslow Road, in Withington, the **Turnpike** is also closed – this time awaiting a new management couple. This is a Sam Smith's pub and is one of many around the UK that are in a similar situation.

Finally, in Stockport, there are three 'mothballed' Robinsons pubs. The former **Cobdens** (originally, and memorably, the **Manchester Arms**) has been put up for sale so it is clear the brewery sees no future for it. The other two, the **Pineapple** on Heaton Lane and the **Bulls Head** in the Market Place, *will* reopen, we are told. The former is waiting for the completion of work on the new bus interchange (due to open in 2024 so there's a way to go yet) while the latter may well be open again by the end of next year.

City News

Two famous Manchester city centre pubs suffered very different fates while *Opening Times* was away.



Many people were shocked in summer 2020 by the news that the iconic **Jolly Angler**, hidden away on Great Ducie Street behind Piccadilly Station, was to close after Christmas.

Despite its obscure location, the fame of the Angler spread far and wide and it came to almost define the classic, Manchester inner-city boozier. Famous for its impromptu Irish music sessions that could last late into the night, the basic, down-to-earth atmosphere and immaculately-kept Hydes Bitter, the pub had both a national and international reputation – *Opening Times* remembers taking two German brewers there and they were still talking about it years later.

It's probably fair to say that if the Angler had been owned by a pub company or national brewer it would almost certainly have closed years ago. So, while credit is due to Hydes for keeping it open for so long, it is unfortunate that they appear to have succumbed to the developers' cheque. The pub is still there – but now closed, boarded and rather forlorn.



While Hydes were closing the Jolly Angler, Holts were busy buying the **Lower Turk's Head** on Shudehill. They acquired the pub last winter, saving it from permanent closure and being redeveloped as inner city flats. This also marks the brewery's ongoing commitment to drawing drinkers back to community pubs. As one of central Manchester's few small hotels, the pub is also the place to enjoy overnight accommodation.

Dating back to 1745, the Lower Turk's Head was once an old stagecoach stop and enjoyed a long history through successive centuries before closing in August last year.

Inside what is a deceptively deep and roomy pub, it is crammed with distinctive fixtures and fittings including a long wooden bar, checkerboard floor, wooden staircases, cut table and cubby hole seating. The ornately-tiled façade makes it a distinctive landmark in the centre of Manchester – the 'MB' over the door marks the pub's one-time ownership by the long-since defunct Manchester Brewery Co.

Elsewhere in the city centre, **Track Brewing** was on the move as this was typed. The new, much larger, premises on Piccadilly Trading Estate will also incorporate a large brewery tap.

What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region

New Beginnings

You would have expected the last 18 months to have been a quiet period for our local brewers. Far from it. There appear to have been just two losses in the *Opening Times* circulation area – and the demise of Stockport's **Remedy** and **Fool Hardy Ales** is mentioned elsewhere in this issue. In Salford, not on our patch but well known locally, **Outstanding Brewery** seemed to just fizzle out, and has been succeeded by **Strange Times**.

In Glossop, **Howard Town Brewery** has seen a change of ownership but more remarkably no fewer than 11 new brewers have either launched or are gearing up to do so. Most of these developments are covered below.

Howard Town

Last year saw a change of ownership at **Howard Town**, which has been part of the Glossop beer scene since 2005. Stuart and Emma Swann have departed and in their place has come an investment by two local families, the Jameses and the Bottomleys, along with their business partner Jason Greenway.



Opening Times paid a visit in late August and was taken round by Managing Director Danny James. One change was immediately obvious – the brewery tap has been enlarged and brightened up (with a display of local artwork) and now also benefits from an

extensive outdoor area. The tap is open Thursday to Sunday from 11am, and food is available at both lunchtimes and evenings.

There have also been changes in the brewing team. Jack Dewison remains and is now head brewer, although his main role is with Howard Town's 'Distant Hills' range of craft beers, in both keg and can. He has been joined as lead brewer by Martin Wood, previously owner of Fool Hardy Ales in Stockport. Martin's speciality is as a cask ale brewer, so he will be overseeing the Howard Town range of draught and bottle-conditioned beers.

New beers and specials are planned for both Distant Hills and Howard Town. Martin's first project is an elderflower pale ale and, given his proven track record of innovative beers, this will be worth looking out for.

In the pipeline for Distant Hills is a new Czech-style lager brewed using Haná malt – a heritage variety from Moravia. This was the malt used in the first-ever golden lager from Pilsen in 1842, and has been re-grown by speciality maltsters Crisp Malt. The 4.6% brew was maturing in a tank at the brewery so should be out soon.

Howard Town currently has 30-50 regular outlets but there are no plans to stand still. Danny told us that they want to become known as the town's brewery – there are still people in Glossop who don't know it's there – and become something of a 'Local Hero'. With a smattering of local free trade outlets there's no reason why that shouldn't happen. We'd also expect these confident, well-made beers to gain appreciative audiences much further afield. This is definitely a brewery that's going places.

Thornsett Brewery & Hopyard



North of New Mills, well on the way to Rowarth, is Thornsett Fields Farm, now also home to **Thornsett Brewery & Hopyard**, a 'completely off-grid and eco-friendly' brewery run by keen homebrewer Paul Medcraft.

The farm is owned by Paul's sister and her husband, and includes a 50-year old hay barn.

It took two and a half years to gain planning permission and convert the building, which finally opened for business in July this year, complete with brewery tap, which is proving a very popular location, with people walking for over an hour to get there (but you do have to book ahead at www.thornsettbrewery.co.uk/contact).



Paul brews twice a week on a small one-barrel kit, and so far has produced four regular beers – "He's Behind You" IPA (4.2%), Blue Ron's Session Ale (3.4%), Home Sweet Home Dark Mild (3.6%) and New Mills Madness Strong Ale (5%). Keen to keep everything local, and

support his home town of New Mills, Paul has commissioned a local artist to design both the brewery logo and his bottle labels.

The best seller so far is Blue Ron's, but all the beers are selling well at the local shops and pubs that stock them. Given the off-grid location of the brewery, the beers have only been bottled so far, but cask will be looked at soon.

And yes, there is also a hop farm there. It's officially certified by the British Hop Society as the first organic hop farm in the north of England, and the first official hop yard in Derbyshire. Several varieties are grown and can be purchased (www.thornsettbrewery.co.uk/our-hop-yard).

Big Stone Beer



Adrian Porteous had always been a keen homebrewer, but the seeds for what became **Big Stone Beer** were planted in 2015 when his wife Maggie bought him a 'Setting Up A Microbrewery' course as a 50th birthday present.

So, in early 2019, he began converting an outbuilding in the grounds of their house, in a very rural spot north of Chinley. The first commercial brew came off the two-and-a-half barrel kit in January 2020 – this was Downfall, a 4.3% pale ale which remains the brewery's biggest seller. This was followed by 4.5% ginger pale, The Naze, and Kinder Stout (4.2%). All three beers featured at the brewery launch in March last year – just before everything closed down!



Brewing now takes place every week, or fortnight, according to demand, and the range has expanded to a core range of six, with seasonal beers too. They range from an IPA at 5.5%, a blonde, pale ales, best bitter, stout and fruity seasonal pale ales at 3.9%. All are available in cask and are also bottle-conditioned. Adrian tells us that feedback has been very positive, with Mount Famine (a West Pennine homage to the West Coast IPAs of the USA at 5.5%) and White Rakes (a 5% Blonde Ale) also proving very popular.

Bottles are available from a number of local outlets, including Beer District in Buxton, Drinkzone Plus in New Mills, Goyt Wines in Whaley Bridge and Portland Wines in Marple Bridge. You'll find the beers on draught at the Old Hall in Chinley, Malt Disley, the Ale Stop in Buxton and the Nook in Whaley Bridge.

Bridge Beers Brewery



The last few years have seen a marked reduction in the number of microbreweries in the Tamside area, writes Peter Mitchell.

In a counter to this trend, David Bridge and Glenn Hall, the owners of **Bridge Beers** micropub on Melbourne Street in Stalybridge, used the prolonged Covid-enforced closure to prepare for a new venture. Taking on a canal-side industrial unit in the town, they then travelled down to Birmingham to dismantle and retrieve the former Thousand Trades brewery. With the equipment safely transferred and stored within the unit, the pair spent the following weeks submerged in paint and timber, electrics and plumbing and, of course, the inevitable mountain of paperwork.

David told us everything seemed to come together all at once. The gradual lifting of restrictions and the real probability that the bar could re-open once again happened just as they were made aware of the brewery sale and also of the availability of suitable premises.

Glenn added, "We've spent a number of years trying to make this happen and now finally, after so many obstacles and setbacks, we've managed to bring everything together."

"We've always been committed to bringing the very best locally-sourced, real ales to Bridge Beers and now, with the bar open again and our own production facilities now in operation, we're confident we can improve and develop that service even further."

The beers are available in both cask and bottle-conditioned form and will be available at Bridge Beers and in the local free trade.

Three for Reddish

Is Reddish about to become the brewing centre of Stockport? That's not a question you'd have even dreamt of asking a couple of years ago but now it's a distinct possibility.

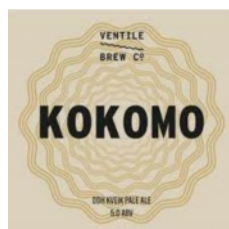


Up and running as we went to press is David Foulger's **Ventile Brew Co**, based in an industrial unit at Spur Mill. Dave is another former homebrewer whose professional career started when he was given the opportunity to set up and run **ÖL Brewery & Bar** at Hatch (based in a series of former shipping containers on Oxford Road in Manchester), which is where he first started producing beer for commercial purposes.

Winning a brewing competition at the Independent Manchester Beer Convention prompted Dave to think about setting up on his own, and he finally obtained the keys to his unit last November.

Currently he's brewing just twice a month on a three-barrel kit, but production will hopefully be ramping up over the coming months as the Ventile taproom gets up and running and a nationwide distribution network grows.

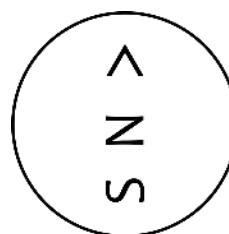
The beers so far have mainly been hop forward pales as he gets used to the kit. Going forward the plan is to have a core range of four or five beers, all inspired by both traditional and modern brewing techniques. He told *Opening Times*: "Style wise it'll more than likely be something pale, something dark, something crisp and something tart. Alongside our core range will be a constantly-developing barrel programme which I'm excited to get started on".



The best-selling beer to date is Kokomo, a 5% Kveik Pale using Citra and Mosaic hops. It's been well received but Dave admits he is his own worst critic and he's constantly thinking about possible improvements to both his recipes and processes.

The beers have so far just been put into keykegs but cans are planned for online sales, and some one-off cask beers will be produced for the taproom. Sales have been to a variety of independent outlets and locally new releases from Ventile are likely to be encountered in the Station Hop and Nordie in Levenshulme, the Magnet in Stockport, Bottle in Heaton Moor and Heaton Hops in Heaton Chapel.

Right next door to Ventile is **Assembly Brew Co**. During August, the brewery's social media documented the final work on the unit and the arrival of the brewing kit. It all looks very promising, and all being well we'll be featuring Assembly in more detail next time.



The third new venture in the Reddish area is **SupNorth**, run by four friends who currently brew informally twice a month on an 80-litre system. They are currently focussing on honing their recipes for the start of a core range that will consist of a Pale Ale, Session IPA, New England IPA and a Stout. They will then scale up production.

For the moment they don't have a full commercial licence so they give the beers away to friends and family for feedback. If all goes well they will have a licence soon and then the beers should start to appear in local outlets. Keep your eyes peeled for these.

Chadkirk Brew Co



Jonathan Winchcombe started brewing in Sheffield 10 years ago, at the now-defunct Little Ale Cart Brewery. After working for numerous other companies it was time to go it alone.

Based in a unit on Green Lane in Romiley, the first brews on the four-barrel, three-fermenter kit were put through in October last year, and he aims to be at capacity very soon.

So far, eleven different beers have been produced with many more to come in the future. The bulk of the production is sessionable pale ales with a focus on New World hops, although darker beers are also produced from time to time. At present, the best-selling beers are tied between Citra (4.7%) and Mosaic (4.5%), and the first foray into hazy beers, Haze (4.3%), has also been very well received.



Currently, the beer is packaged in cask and Bag-in-a-Box and can be ordered directly from the brewery (call 07966 125257). This includes BIAB, where a few days' notice would be appreciated to avoid disappointment. Regular outlets so far include Jake's Ale House in Romiley, the Petersgate Tap in Stockport, the Star Inn in Glossop and the Samuel Oldknow in Marple.

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News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

Stockport Pubs Under Threat

Two of Stockport's major free houses were under potential threat as we went to print.

As some readers may have seen from the local press, the developers who have owned the **Railway**, Portwood, for almost 20 years have resurrected a scheme to demolish the pub and the neighbouring carpet shop to replace both with a speculative retail unit.



CAMRA objected to the revised plans and spoke against them when they initially came to be considered by the local Area Committee.

There was a lot of sympathy to our view at both this and the subsequent Planning Committee meeting. Unfortunately, a previously-approved planning application submitted in 2005 remained in place so the councillors were advised their hands were effectively tied.

The good news is that the developers have said they won't be proceeding with the scheme until they have obtained a tenant for the unit and, given the current climate, they could be in for quite a wait. In the meantime, please do make tracks to the Railway and enjoy its excellent atmosphere and well-kept, reasonably-priced beers from the likes of Phoenix, Dunham Massey, Strange Times and other local brewers.

A question mark also hangs over the future of the **Hope** on Wellington Road North, formerly the home of Fool Hardy Ales. Martin Wood, the



pub's now-former owner has sold the brewing kit and the pub, and has taken up a brewing role at Howard Town Brewery.

Fool Hardy Ales is no more but the pub was still open in early September. However, while we don't know who has bought the

pub, we do know they haven't bought the fixtures and fittings, which may well indicate there are plans for non-pub use. This will however require planning permission so we'll be paying very close attention. Hopefully, our fears are misplaced and the Hope will continue to thrive as a free house.



For completeness, we should also record the demise of **Remedy Bar & Brewhouse** on Stockport Market Place. We aren't quite sure what happened here, but very early last year we'd heard about some financial problems and only intermittent brewing.

As far as we can tell, last year the landlords took possession of the premises, and all the contents, including the brewing equipment, were stripped out and sent off to auction. However, as one door closes another opens, and the empty shell was taken on by Joe Paton, owner of the highly successful **Cracked Actor** on Little Underbank, and the new **Glass Spider** on Vernon Street. It has now reopened as **Dr Feelgood** (pictured above), a music and comedy venue which has been an almost instant success. There's no cask beer but

plenty of interesting stuff on keg. There's also a very decent lunchtime and evening American-themed menu.

The Glass Spider



As mentioned above, Joe Paton has opened the **Glass Spider** which occupied the premises of the former **Vinaböd** on Vernon Street, just off Stockport Market Place.

The bar has been transformed with a 19th century 'gin palace' vibe, albeit on a smaller scale!

There's plenty of stained glass, partitioning and traditional furniture (including cast iron Britannia tables). Two small and completely enclosed snugs have also been cleverly created. Next door was a bottle shop but the Glass Spider is now being extended into that, to form what we are told will be a cocktail bar.

There's no cask beer so your real ale will come from keykegs here. Also on tap is Brugse Zot Blond, all the way from Bruges in Belgium. Very tasty it is too.

News in Brief



In our last issue (March-April 2020), we mentioned the forthcoming **Milliner**, a conversion of former shop premises at 179 Bramhall Lane in Davenport. This stylish new micropub opened in July last year and seems to have been an instant hit. Three cask beers are sold, mainly from Bollington Brewery. More next time.

Somewhere else we'll be looking at in more detail in the next issue is **Withington Public Hall Institute**. This is the reincarnation of a failing private members' club at 2 Burton Road in Withington – it's just around the corner from Wilmslow Road – and is now a thriving community local with real ales (both cask and keykeg), real cider and a small brewery installed by Burton Road Brewing.

A couple of local pubs have been given modest refurbishments. The **Griffin** in Heaton Mersey, which had been looking a bit down-at-heel, has been given new carpeting and upholstery. It's also worth recording that it was selling exceptionally good Holt's Bitter when *Opening Times* called in late August.

The **Horse & Farrier** in Gatley has also received new upholstery and carpeting/flooring, and has seen the two rooms on the right partially knocked together. While some may bemoan the loss of half a wall, this actually makes the pub work better as the access to the front beer garden is now much easier and more obvious.

It is reported that the **Tweed Tap** in Hyde may be reopening in September. We'll keep you posted about that one. Up in Buxton, the **Ale Stop** in the Market Place has reopened and has added a fourth handpump. Meanwhile, in Mossley, it is reported that the **Fleece** is down to just one handpump.

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Modern British Cider

Its roots and challenges



Dick Withecombe reviews *Cider Country* by James Crowden, published by William Collins, and *Modern British Cider* by Gabe Cook, published by CAMRA Books.

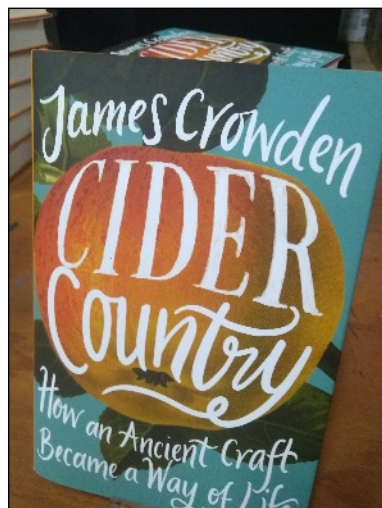
Two books but one message: **this is the most exciting time in history to be a cider drinker.** Not since the 17th century, when cider briefly replaced wine as the drink of the aristocracy, has there been such innovation, investment and celebration of cider.

Cider historian James Crowden in his new book *Cider Country* explores the history of cider, tracing its roots from the wild orchards of Kazakhstan through to its modern-day renaissance.

In launching his book at the Bristol Cider Salon, James Crowden urged listeners to also buy Gabe Cook's *Modern British Cider* published by CAMRA Books.

"I explain the historic roots of cider's recent renaissance, whereas Gabe explains modern British cider and provides key messages about campaigning to promote its growth."

Traditional cider



Only a few hundred years ago, cider was the wine of Britain until commercial interests replaced craft. These days about 90 per cent of the cider sold in the UK is made with apple concentrate and has a juice content of around 35 per cent.

Large scale commercial cider "has become little more than an alcopop", as James Crowden puts it in his new book. But now a renaissance is under way so could cider be returning to its roots?

In the mid-17th century producers competed to ferment

wine-strength ciders. Claret was in short supply and cider was England's answer to wine. Some of the greatest minds were involved: "The Royal Society was, in effect, an upmarket cider club."

From that high point for cider, James Crowden charts its decline. "By the 1970s large cider companies were tinkering with cider behind closed doors, gradually diluting it down until it was only about a third apple juice" – and the sad truth was that by 1980 most cider orchards and non-industrial cider makers were keeling over. Farmhouse cider makers, the defenders of tradition, nose-dived in number.

However, with contributions from a diverse band of enthusiasts such as orchard champions Common Ground, experts like Andrew Lea and Liz Copas, and dedicated artisanal cider producers, those traditions were kept alive. Indeed, from early on, CAMRA played a significant role in championing cider in its campaigns and at festivals.

Modern British Cider

Since 2000 there has been a renaissance in artisan cider-making all around Britain. The National Association of Cider Makers (NACM) currently estimates a minimum of 480 active cider makers in the UK. Three quarters of these have started up in the last 10 years.



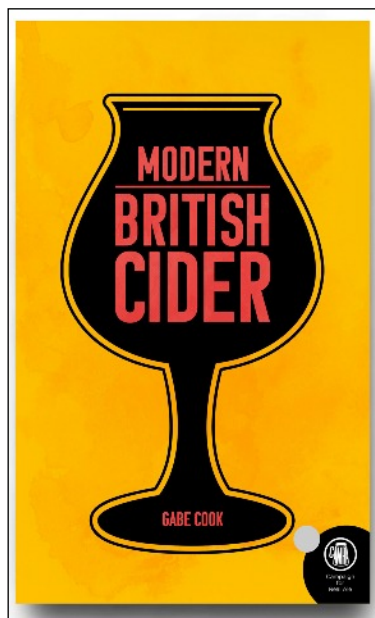
Gabe Cook (pictured left) reports on the rise of a new wave of artisanal cider producers in his recently-released *Modern British Cider*. He features a number of producers around the country including award winning Dunham Press from Altrincham. He also picks out Stockport & South Manchester's new start-up cider producer Temperance Street Cider (on the border with Manchester City

Centre): "Carrying on the legacy of the now-defunct but pioneering Moss Cider Project is Temperance Street Cider – Manchester's first city centre cidery".

The author argues that Modern British Cider is at a crossroads, its resurgence achieved as traditional producers have been joined by, and reached out to, a wave of new exciting producers, achieving an exciting celebration of styles, approaches and traditions.

"I truly believe there is a cider for everyone: from bone dry to unctuously sweet; zingy and crisp to bold and earthy; still and silky to bright and bubbly; pint to flute."

He then sets out a clear campaigning agenda: "I hold that now is the most exciting time for cider in the last 400 years, since the 17th-century 'ciderists' were advocating cider as one of the finest drinks made on these shores. There is still a long way to go, however".



Cider faces many challenges holding it back from achieving its full potential. Gabe Cook identifies three key areas for campaigning progress:

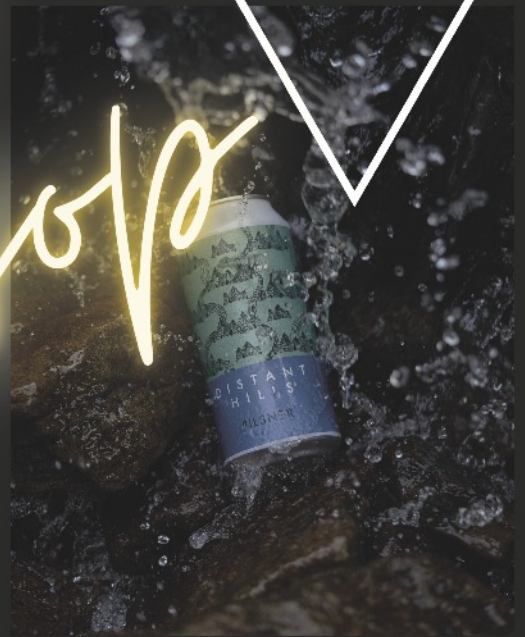
- The 35 per cent Minimum Juice Content does not uphold the integrity of cider and serves the interests of industrial producers of cider from concentrate. An increase to where cider has more juice than other ingredients would be an important breakthrough.

- Current duty legislation prevents small makers from becoming viable and he joins with CAMRA in calling for the introduction of a Progressive Cider Duty system.

- Greater transparency is needed for consumers to make fully-informed decisions – we need ingredients listed and the end of misleading marketing claims.

In this he is joined by James Crowden: "Changing labelling rules is perhaps a vital step forward, so the cider drinker knows far more about their cider. My own belief is that the public has a right to know the juice content of ciders they are drinking and the levels of glucose syrup and added water within the cider."

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Pub Walks with Chris Morris

Compstall

The restrictions over the last 18 months have made us cherish the things that we once took for granted. Whilst drinking in pubs is one we can all agree on, another has been the freedom to explore open spaces in the great outdoors. It makes sense then to combine them both. The very best country walks will always include a pub!

This walk is from the village of Compstall. Located between Romiley and Marple, the village was built by George Andrew in the 1820s for his mill workers. Much of the original mill cottages remain unchanged which leaves this delightful village full of character. The first part of the walk is through Etherow Country Park, one of Britain's first country parks. The park is a popular local tourist destination featuring scenic lakes, beautiful woodland and a number of excellent nature trails to explore.

Andrew Arms



At the end of this walk you'll want a friendly and welcoming pub in which to refresh and recharge. This comfortable 19th century Robinsons pub doesn't disappoint, being walker and dog friendly and offering excellent home-cooked meals and good cask beer. On my last visit, these were Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde, both in good condition. Free wifi is available and the beer garden at the rear is well worth seeking out when the weather allows. Opening times are noon to 11pm Wednesday to Sunday, closed on Monday and Tuesday. Mealtimes are noon to 8pm Wednesday and Thursday, noon to 9pm on Friday and Saturday, noon to 6pm on Sundays.

Bus Information

The 383 and 384 buses run from Stockport to Compstall via Bredbury, Romiley, Marple and Offerton. The 383 runs anti-clockwise and the 384 clockwise. Both services run every 20 minutes in the day and every hour in the evening, with Sunday and Bank Holidays slightly less frequent. For full timetable information visit tfgm.com.

The Walk

This is a moderate two-mile walk with some stiles and one long climb. The paths are mainly good throughout with just one narrow section offering a little challenge. Sturdy footwear is recommended. The OS Explorer map is OL1 The Peak District (OS app also available).

The walk starts and finishes at Compstall Post Office. Buses stop nearby on both sides of Compstall Road. Use the traffic island to cross over if

getting off the 383 bus. From the Post Office, continue further along George Street and then turn right into the Etherow Country Park Car Park.

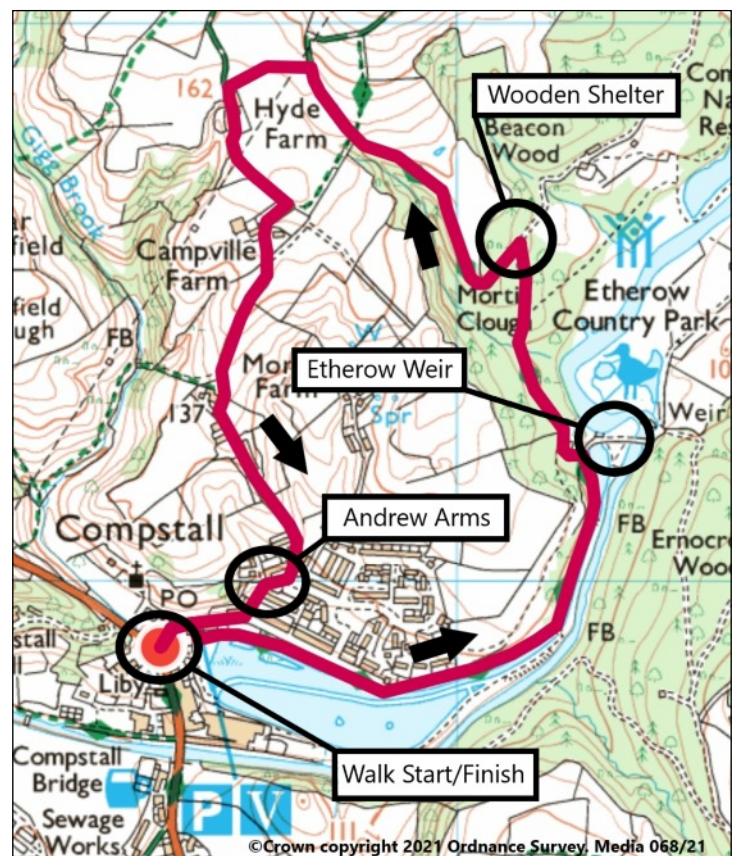
To the left, you will find public toilets and a café next to the lake. Take the wide path between the cafe and lake keeping the water on your right at all times. After passing a little garden centre, the path becomes wider before joining a tarmacked lane to the right. Carry on along the lane for half a mile until you reach a house in a clearing in the woods.

At this point, you might be able to hear the sound of rushing water. This is Etherow Park weir, which is recommended, viewing ahead and to the right. Our route, though, is to take the path to the left signed to Hirst Cottage. This is where the hill climbing starts. We pass more public toilets on the left and the house on our right.

The path then bends to the right, passing through a gate and a display for Keg Woodland (not Cask!). Continue along the tarmacked path for 500 yards until a stony path appears almost behind you on the left together with a bench, park sign and wooden shelter. Take this narrow path which continues up the hill. Shortly afterwards, the path bends to the right and takes you to the edge of the woodland with views of fields to the right and a steep incline down to the left. This is the most challenging part of the walk as it can get narrow in places, so extra care should be taken here.

Continue along the path for a further 500 yards and straight over two stiles, ignoring the one to your left. Carry on for 200 yards passing through another stile before reaching an old tarmacked road that has been patched up. Turn left here and after 200 yards left again through a farm. Carry on the road down the hill for a half mile taking in the fine views until you reach the Andrew Arms on the right for your well-earned refreshment.

On leaving the pub, turn right and continue along George Street back to the Post Office.



Obituaries

Let's raise a glass to their memory

While *Opening Times* has been away we have sadly lost several local names, prominent in CAMRA or the pub, brewing and cider world. Here we remember some of them.

Stuart Ballantyne



Stuart, who died at home on 2 August, shortly before his 65th birthday, was a well-known figure on the Stockport and Didsbury pub scene, where he had delivered *Opening Times* for many years.

Hailing originally from Sheffield, but growing up in Grimsby, Stuart had made his home in Stockport for 40 years, and during that time had been a very active member of Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA. Committee positions included a very successful stint as Membership Secretary, but he probably made his greatest mark as the Entertainment Manager at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, a post he held for several years.

A big music fan himself – annual visits to the Colne Rhythm & Blues Festival were always diary fixtures – Stuart prided himself in sourcing some of the most varied and talented acts available.

In recent years, his main CAMRA activity centred on distributing copies of *Opening Times*, mainly in the Didsbury area where he became a great champion for the local pubs. Indeed, his enthusiasm for the causes he championed could sometimes run away with itself but he was always a huge supporter of and champion for great pubs and good beer. He will be sorely missed.

John Reek



John, who died in January, was well known, both locally and nationally, as a distributor of traditional cider and perry to many beer festivals across the UK. Trading as Merrylegs Cider, John had the remarkable knack of discovering very new and/or very small producers who were reluctant to deal with other firms.

Despite his reputation in the world of cider and perry, John was in fact a committed lager drinker until he had an epiphany at the first Stockport Beer Festival (as it was then badged) where a small selection of ciders and perries was available.

After that he didn't look back. Such was his subsequent reputation that in 2006 he was joint winner of CAMRA's Pomona Award, given to those who make a significant contribution to the cause of traditional cider. In 2013 he was nominated as one of CAMRA's top cider and perry campaigners.

Always willing to lend a hand and give advice, John was passionate and knowledgeable about the industry, producers and festivals alike.

Jim Beeson

Jim, who died at Easter, was one of the unsung CAMRA stalwarts who attended meetings when he could, distributed *Opening Times* in the Great Moor area and supplied pub news.

Away from CAMRA, Jim was also prominent in the local Pub Quiz League, being a member of a winning team that played out of several local pubs over the years. He was also an accomplished violinist, playing in local orchestras and also a string quartet that sometimes performed in local pubs.

His contribution will be sadly missed.

David and Peter Robinson

The past 18 months has seen the passing of two of the fifth generation of the Robinson brewing family, both of whom devoted their lives to the company and helped steer it through the turbulent times of the 1960s and 70s, when many similar brewing companies lost their independence.



David Robinson died on 5 August 2020 aged 83, after a battle with cancer. He had joined the company in 1962 as a brewer and was involved as a director for over 50 years. His last big project was the installation of the new Brewhouse, completed in February 2012.

Opening Times has many fond memories of 'Mr David' – especially at the annual presentation of the Bar & Cellar awards where his affability, infectious enthusiasm and deep knowledge of all things to do with brewing shone through.



Former brewery chairman Peter Robinson died on 8 May this year, aged 89. He had joined the company as secretary in 1957 and was appointed a director in 1962. He served as chairman from 1978 to 2020, succeeding his father, the late Sir John Robinson.

Mr Peter, as he was known to licensees and employees, was active within the brewing and pub industry as a Liveryman of The Worshipful Company of Brewers, a founding Board member of the Independent Family Brewers of Britain, a long-standing Council member of the British Beer and Pub Association, as a Chairman of the North West Beer and Pub Association, and as a President of the Shire Horse Society.

He will be fondly remembered by Robinsons' licensees for his regular afternoon visits, whether it was to look at completed investments, to meet new licensees, or while judging the pubs' external floral competition he organised, keeping a meticulous record of each of his visits over all the years.

Thoto of Peter Robinson is courtesy of Frederic Robinson Ltd.

Book Review

Roger Protz reviews *Modern British Beer* by Matthew Curtis



Old codgers should approach this book with caution. While we grumble about the difficulty of finding a decent pint of Bass these days, Matthew Curtis points to the wealth of modern beers on our doorstep and the need to broaden our horizons.

He underscores the point with the fact that when CAMRA was launched in 1971 to protect cask beers there were just 170 breweries in Britain. Today there are in excess of 2,000 and, as

Matthew says, we live in a time of beer joy.

He reminisces about the late 1970s when his father would drink in Sheffield pubs where regulars would loyally sup Stones or Tetley's all evening. Today, with Pandora's beer box fully ajar, drinkers can play "jump the pumps" and try a range of beers and styles in the course of one session in the pub.

The book offers something new. It doesn't go into great depth on how beer is brewed. Neither is it yet another tome on the variety of beer styles available. Malt, hops, water, yeast and how they produce beers that range from pale ale through porter and stout to barley wine are mentioned but are carefully woven into the story of the beers and the breweries he has chosen.

Matthew's epiphany started in the taproom of Odell's brewery in Fort Collins in Colorado. He had drunk and enjoyed beer back home but this first taste of Odell's IPA was like the moment in the Wizard of Oz when the film turns from black and white to full Technicolor. "I tasted fresh orange peel and citrus zest in great waves, each one underpinned by the rich, biscuit-like fixture of malted barley, both culminating in a riotously bitter finish that hoisted me by the lapels and demanded I take another sip."

He was fascinated to learn that the founder of the brewery, Doug Odell, had been inspired to launch a brewery following a trip to Britain and tasting the ales available here. A sidebar of the book is the cross-fertilisation of brewing knowledge, skills and recipes between the UK and US.

Matthew returned home, determined to find brewers in Britain that were making equally stunning beers. As you follow him around the country, be not afraid: the book is not packed with citrus-laden IPAs but offers a broad sweep of beer, including some modern lagers.

Before embarking on the Grand Tour, Matthew goes into some detail on how the modern beer scene has emerged and evolved in Britain. At some length, he extols the ground-breaking path built by BrewDog in Scotland. It started life in a garage and is now one of the biggest breweries in the country.

Matthew has broken the UK down into its constituent parts in order to stress the importance of the regionality of the beer styles available in these islands. He gets off to a flyer in Scotland with Fyne Ale's Jarl, a superb blonde ale I always hurry to sample in the Guildford Arms in Edinburgh when I'm waiting for a train south.

Among a clutch of new breweries in Scotland, I'm glad Matthew has included the long-standing Harviestoun of Alva, whose Ola Dubh 12 is an imperial porter aged in whisky casks. A few years ago I made a memorable trip with head brewer Stuart Cail to the acclaimed Highland Park distillery on Orkney, where Stuart chose a range of casks to take home, and we were invited to taste some samples of the local juice of the barley.

In Yorkshire and the North East, Matthew covers such influential breweries as Northern Monk, Saltaire, Kelham Island and Thornbridge, but I'm pleased he gives generous space to Roosters of Harrogate. While it's now owned by the Fozard family, it was founded by Sean Franklin, who deserves to be high on the list of modern beer heroes. He was the first brewer in Britain to use the American Cascade hop and led the way in producing pale beers bursting with ripe citrus aromas and flavours. The region also includes North, which makes the rare German style Gose, and Saint Mars of the Desert, which brews a Wallonian-style saison.

Across the Pennines, pride of place in Manchester is rightly given to Marble Brewery which brought choice back to a city dominated by big regional companies. Marble's range includes pale ale, bitter, and the succulent Earl Grey IPA. Cloudwater has rapidly built a good reputation for its range of beers, which include not only hoppy IPAs but lager and a Bavarian-influenced wheat beer. Love Lane in Liverpool is another brewery bringing much-needed choice to the area, while in an age of hazy and heavily-hopped pale beers, Cheshire Brewhouse offers a fine porter, with Buxton weighing in with an imperial black IPA.

The Midlands and East Anglia chapter includes such seasoned practitioners as Titanic, Brewsters and Oakham, with newcomers Braybrooke's Keller lager and Little Earth Project's Saison. With Purity, Matthew sounds a clarion call for brewers to "put something back". He says brewing takes a lot from the environment with five pints of water needed to make one pint of beer. He wants other brewers to follow Purity's path of recycling and cleaning used water through a series of reed beds.

The West Country covers the proper lager made by Utopian, the spectacular Wild Beers from Shepton Mallet and the important role made by Tribute in turning round the fortunes of St Austell Brewery. In Wales and Northern Ireland, Matthew has unearthed several new small breweries that bring choice to regions dominated by big brewers – though Tiny Rebel may be a trifle miffed at missing the cut in Wales.

London, once designated a "beer desert" by CAMRA in the 1970s, has seen a great blossoming of new breweries with a wide range of beers. Matthew pays tribute to the pioneering work of the likes of Anspach & Hobday, The Kernel, Jaega Wise at Wild Card, and Five Points in Hackney whose Porter may be the closest thing to the original 18th century beer we are likely to find.

Matthew Curtis has written an inspirational book, one no beer lover should miss. He has presented me with a checklist of new beers to try ... but I still pine for a pint of Bass.

Modern British Beer is published by CAMRA Books and will cost you £15.99. Buy it here: shop1.camra.org.uk/product-category/books-published-by-camra

This review first appeared on Roger's website, Protz on Beer, and is reproduced here with kind permission. Check it out at protzonbeer.co.uk

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