

OPENING TIMES

MAY / JUNE 2022

FREE



**INSIDE: STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL
PREVIEW / BIG ANNIVERSARIES AT THE
DAVENPORT ARMS / PUB & BREWERY
NEWS / PUB WALK / AND MORE...**



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About Opening Times & Contacts

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

- * Transport for Greater Manchester: www.tfgm.com. 0161 244 1000
- * East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport.aspx
- * Derbyshire: www.derbybus.info

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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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:

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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 all pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members can be found at camra.org.uk/join/membership-benefits/real-ale-discount-scheme/

Front Cover

Three generations of the Hallworth family, l-r Yvonne Hallworth, Jack Hankinson and June Hallworth, celebrate their pub, the Davenport Arms in Woodford, being in the Good Beer Guide for 35 consecutive years. See page 13. Photo by Lawrence Devaney.

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Copy date for the July/August issue is Friday 12 June

Howard Town Brewery is rebranding to Distant Hills Brewing. We are taking the opportunity to position the brand under one name in line with our current locale, and to better communicate the breadth of expertise we have of producing high quality, forward thinking cask and keg beer.



Get in touch at:

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Pubs of the Month

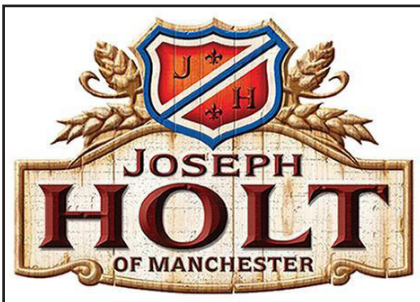
Stockport & South Manchester Winners for May and June



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for May is P5 in Cheadle Hulme. Mike Wilson tells you all about it.

Seasoned CAMRA members will recall the slog of yesteryear, going from pub to pub in search of a decent beer. Back in the seventies (or earlier!) it was a matter of steering clear of the large red signage of 'Grotneys' and the like. Where to go for refuge but one of our local family brewers' establishments, which could be relied upon to serve a decent pint of bitter or mild or, if you were feeling adventurous, a pint of mixed.

There is something about P5 that is reminiscent of the seventies, despite its various refurbishments. The Junction, as was, had quite a reputation; not always for the best of reasons! P5 is very different now but you can still get a pint of bitter, a mild or even a mixed (although



you would doubtless have to mix it yourself these days!). In fact, it was the recent news that the excellent Holt's mild was in superb form that encouraged members to rediscover the delights of P5 just a few weeks ago. In our search for the latest new beer, let's not overlook family brewers,

such as Holts, who have faithfully served the interests of real ale consumers for longer than we can remember – and who did much to support their tenants during the Covid lockdowns.

P5 serves a wide clientele, from families using the extensive dining area to football watchers (without the screens being intrusive). There is still ample space for anyone just wanting to pop in for a quiet drink and a chat.

Manager Dominic Henshaw and his team make great efforts to ensure the beer is kept in top form and they manage to offer a full range of Holts, including the mild, bitter, IPA and Two Hoots, as well as occasional beers from Bootleg.

Join us on Thursday 26 May from 8.00pm for your pint of mixed! P5 is well served by public transport. It is next door to Cheadle Hulme station and in addition buses 313 and 42B will drop you very close by. It's also just a short walk from the 368 route.



Our Pub of the Month for June 2022 is the Shady Oak, Bramhall. Lawrence Devaney has been along to have a look.

The Shady Oak was built by Barrie Sullivan and opened in April 1985 as an independent free house offering beers from Thwaites, Timothy Taylor's, Marston's, Theakstons and Ruddles. Early in 1986 Barrie sold the pub to Tetley and since then it has had several incarnations, in the hands of a variety of owners.

Sharon and Gareth took over in July 2021, which was not the ideal time to be dragging a pub back up from obscurity. It has however been transformed, with a completely renovated dining area, updated kitchens and an outside space, which includes a play area for smaller children. There's plenty of space inside for larger visitors to play, with a selection of beers to rival most pubs, including five hand-pumped cask ales.

Understandably, as the Shady is in the centre of the New Farm residential area, Sharon and Gareth are focussing on attracting locals as their main target customers. The pub enthusiastically welcomes walkers, is dog-friendly and is conveniently situated alongside the Fred Perry Way, a popular walking trail. Several events have been organised, with the Halloween bash proving to be popular with young and old alike. The Sunday Quiz night is another successful activity at the Shady.

Sharon is the driving force behind the growing popularity of the pub's food, especially the Sunday carvery, with Gareth maintaining the quality of the beers on offer. The cask beers being dispensed reflect the pub's ties to Marston's, with Gareth ensuring that he always has a dark beer and a guest beer available. When Opening Times visited to give the pub the news about their success as Pub of the Month, the guest ale was Timothy Taylor's Landlord.

We will be presenting Sharon and Gareth with their award on the evening of Thursday 30 June. We hope that our readers, together with the Shady's regulars, will come along to celebrate and to recognise their hard work.

The 374 bus will drop you off on Ringmore Road, close to Redford Drive. The 378A runs later in the evening and will pick you up on Bramhall Lane South, about a 12 minute walk from the pub.

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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Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

High Peak Pub of the Year



High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire Branch members chose the **Silly Country** in the centre of Droylsden as their Pub of the Year 2022.

It is true to say that, since opening, the pub has much increased the beer range available in the Droylsden area, and is very popular with locals and others alike. A changing range of beers is offered on four handpumps, with a real cider available on a fifth.

This is a pub which is doing an excellent job, with excellent beers, and is well deserving of the award. It's well worth taking the time to visit. Silly Country is situated right in the centre of Droylsden, almost opposite the Metrolink stop and close to several bus routes. Fairfield railway station is a 15-minute walk away.

The photograph shows the certificate being presented by Ben Zwierink the branch chair (third left) to owners Katy, Paul and Drew and members of the staff at an event held at the pub on Saturday 26 March.

Red Lion, Withington



Dating from the 17th century, and Grade II listed to boot, the **Red Lion** on Wilmslow Road is the oldest pub in Withington. Originally owned by the old Taylor's Eagle Brewery, it came into Marston's possession in the 1950s and reputedly became their highest turnover pub.



Given this, it was something of a surprise that they seemed to lose interest in it and then, in early 2020, sold the pub to JW Lees. By

then, it was in desperate need of some investment, but of course the pandemic intervened. Now, though, the money has been spent, and the Red Lion reopened in April this year.

First impressions are that it has been money well spent. The sprawling pub has been given a thorough overhaul and, while it still retains its vault, snug (pictured above) and large main room, everything has

been very tastefully and significantly upgraded. The whole focus of the pub has changed, too. It had become essentially a TV sports pub, but now it's tilted to a more upmarket drinking and dining experience. The pub is managed by experienced licensee Sean Lithgow, and of course cask beer features strongly, with handpumps for Lees Bitter, MPA and the current seasonal. Lees expect this to do very well, and so does *Opening Times*. Well worth a visit.

Miltons Tap, Buxton

After several years of unsuccessful trading, the Miltons Head on Spring Gardens was set for closure by owners Heineken. Luckily, in 2019 it was taken on by Atlantik Inns, a company based in Hope, and which specialises in rescuing pubs. Other pubs in the company's portfolio are the **Old Hall** at Hope, the **Anchor** at Tideswell and the **Peak Hotel** at Castleton.

Renamed the Miltons Tap, the pub reopened on 4 July last year after a £150,000 refurbishment, and it has to be said this was money well



spent. The pub retains its traditional look and layout, with a separate snug complete with real fire, and two other rooms.



The current manager is Sarah Hodgkinson, who took over on 21 March after six successful years at the Old Hall, and she told *Opening Times* that trade had been very good this year. There are three to four cask beers available, and when we called these were Bass, Theakston's Old Peculier and Ossett Yorkshire Blonde. Sarah explained that these were likely to change, and in particular the Bass was likely to be

replaced by a bitter from Adnams or Theakston. Over the summer months, there will also be a guest pale beer. Quality is good and the pub has recently gained Cask Marque accreditation.

Food is also a significant part of the operation here, and is available from 9am (10am Monday–Thursday). There's a wide-ranging menu including specials featuring locally sourced ingredients. You can check out the menu on the pub's website at www.miltonstap.com. Buxton has a lot of good pubs and this is a welcome addition to their number.

In Brief

There are two losses to report in New Mills. The **Shrub Club** at Torr Vale Mill has lost its cask beer, while **Archie's Bar** on Market Street closed down completely at the end of March. This will be sorely missed.

In Stockport, the **Hope** on Wellington Road North closed its doors for good in late March. *Opening Times* was there on the final night and the last cask beer to sell out was some rather fine Millstone Stout. We believe the pub is to be redeveloped.

Finally, the **White Hart** in Whaley Bridge has reopened. When we called, the sole cask beer was Wainwright from Marston's.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2022

Preview and Notes



The countdown is now on for the 2022 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Having missed two years because of the pandemic, we are delighted to be back at Edgeley Park again.

Here we bring you details of some of the beers, the festival's charity and other things that may be of interest. Details of the **Festival Entertainment** can be found on page 12.

Bar Nouveau

The popular Bar Nouveau will be back – this year sited on the main concourse with the other bars. Expect to see brand new beers from **Strange Times**, **Steelfish** and **Chadkirk** (who are brewing us the festival special). In addition there will be beers from our regular homebrew competition. However this is the competition that was judged in March 2020, just before the first lockdown. Luckily all of the winning brewers were happy to have their beers brewed and, more to the point, the host brewers were still happy to brew them.



So, it's very belated congratulations to the winners. The mild category was won by James Hobbins with his Strong Dark Mild at 5%. This will be brewed at **Cloudwater**.

Marble will be hosting David Ogden, who won the speciality category with a Foreign Extra Stout at 7%. This category was actually a tie, the other winner being John Rodgers and his American Brown Ale with Cacao, Coconut and Vanilla. Unfortunately, John's computer crashed and he lost all of his recipes. Consequently he had to withdraw, so commiserations to him.



The stout and porter winner was Nathan Pratt with his straight-down-the-line Stout at 5%. This is being brewed by **Torrside** and, as you may expect, you should also be able to try an imperial version of this too.

Winning the bitter, pale ale and session IPA class was Greg McCormick with Sabro Pale at 4.9%. This was quite a new hop when the beer was judged, and it's fair to say all of the judges were very impressed by what it brought to the beer. Greg's beer is being brewed by **Thirst Class**.

The final category was ESB, strong pale ale and IPA. This was won by Alex Pembroke, who won the bitter category in the previous two competitions. Alex's winning beer this time was a Black IPA at 5.3%, and this is being brewed by **Distant Hills** (who were Howard Town when the contest was run).

Opening Times plans to call in at the various brew days and take some photos, so look out for these in the next issue.

Festival Charity

Walthew House is very much looking forward to being the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival charity this year, writes *Walthew House Funding and Income Generation manager Sarah Mollitt*.



16 June 2022 (day one of the festival) actually marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of our charity's founder, John Walthew (pictured here), who was Mayor of Stockport in the early 1870s.

John's daughter, Louisa, was blind and deaf, which prompted him to invite the town's blind people to tea to consult with them about the support they needed, and draw up a plan of action. Louisa laid the foundation stone for the newly-formed Institute for the Blind, the Deaf and the Dumb in St

Petersgate in 1872. The Institute moved to its current base in Shaw Heath in 1970 and was renamed Walthew House.

Today, it is estimated that there are around 60,000 people in Stockport who have a sight or hearing loss that affects their everyday life. The festival provides an opportunity to reach people who don't know about our services as well as raising vital funds so that we can continue to support over 300 people each week with sight or hearing loss. The charity receives no contracted income and needs to raise around £300,000 each year to support its services.

We look forward to seeing you in June!

Corporate Hospitality



Mix work with pleasure at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival and make use of our Corporate Hospitality offering while supporting a local event, local businesses and a local charity! We can make the experience smooth for you and your guests by offering a complete entry solution (consisting of entry, tokens and a festival glass), a reserved prime seating area within the stand just for your party. In fact we're looking for even more ways to add value to your visit! Please email us at corporate@stockportfestival.org.uk to book and for more details.

Bottles on the Move

Over the years the festival's Bottled Beer Bar, which has evolved into a 'Bottled & Canned Beer & Cider' bar, has proved increasingly popular with festival visitors.

Due to the changed layout at Edgeley Park, this year the bar will be moving from its old ground floor location. It will be situated in one of the rooms *above* the concourse. Details of the beers have yet to be finalised, but we can confirm that our **Orval**, a famous Belgian Trappist beer, bought in 2019 for sale in 2020, will now be three to four years old and so at its peak. Don't miss out.

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What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region

New Seasonals



We have two new beers from **Robinsons** to report on. First up is Citra Pale at 3.4%. This was quietly launched in March and is currently badged as one of the very occasional 'White Label' series. We understand however that if it proves successful then it will become a permanent addition to the range. It certainly deserves to succeed, combining as it does a sessionable strength plus a generous smack of Citra hops. In many ways it's an

ideal summer beer. *Opening Times* tried it while dining al fresco at Stockport's **Arden Arms** and it went down a treat.

There is likely to be a veritable tidal wave of beers to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and Robinsons offering will be **Queen's Tipple**. This is to be a 4.2% American pale ale, hopped with Citra and Centennial. These should combine to give some tropical fruit notes and a moreish bitter finish. The brewery tasting notes describe it as "light in colour with a distinctly hoppy flavour".

Both of the above beers will be available at Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.



There's a new beer from **JW Lees**, too. This continues this year's theme of beers inspired by the brewing process, and so for May/June we have **Mash Ripple** at 3.9%. This is a hibiscus pale which has hibiscus petals in the mash. The colour is described as "peach-pink" and the tasting notes promise "silky, soft caramel flavours cut through with sharp berries and hints of grape from generous additions of Hallertau Blanc hops and

hibiscus petals".



Finally, **Hydes** are continuing with their Ralf & Alf series of monthly beers named after 19th century jobs. Out for May is **Puddler** at 3.8%, which is described as a "chestnut, spicy, earthy ale, with flavours of spice and hints of black pepper obtained from additions of Fuggles and Bramling Cross hops throughout various stages of the brewing process."

May's entrant to the range is **Noon Tender** at 4.5%. This will be a golden beer brewed using English Boadicea hops to give "a spicy, light and floral characteristic to taste and aroma".

Hydes also have a bi-monthly range named after Manchester clubs. Thus for May/June it's **The Haç Best** at 4.3%, which is described as a "golden coloured ale bursting with Mediterranean fruit flavours".

Neighbourhood Brew Co



You may well be familiar with cask beers from the local **Poynton Brewery**, based at the British Legion Club in Poynton. Their beers are available at the nearby micropub, the **Flute and Firkin**, and at many local pubs and clubs, writes *Peter Mitchell*.

What you may not know is that the same brewery has for some time now been producing a range of craft beers, mostly in keg or cans, under the label **Neighbourhood Brew Co**.

Both Poynton and Neighbourhood beers are available in cans via their respective online shops, beerdepot.co.uk (which also stocks beer from other breweries) and neighbourhoodbrewco.com/shop.

Until the end of 2021, the whole business was conducted by Colin Bavins and Dre Scuglia, who is Colin's son-in-law. Now they have been joined by a new partner and head brewer, Jake Astbury (pictured above – left, with Dre), who was previously the head brewer at First Chop brewery in Salford.

They have ambitious plans for the future, but for now, Poynton beers, mostly in casks, and Neighbourhood Brew beers almost all in keg and cans, with the occasional cask for beers of a style suited to cask, will continue to be produced at the brewery in Poynton.

Howard Town Becomes Distant Hills

From 1 May, **Howard Town Brewery** became **Distant Hills**. Brewery managing director Danny James told *Opening Times*: "We are taking the opportunity to position the brand under one name, in line with our current locale, and to better communicate the breadth of expertise we have of producing high quality, forward-thinking real ale and craft beer.

"Whilst this may seem like a big change, our core beliefs remain the same. We believe in producing quality products taking inspiration from our surrounding area. In its essence we will continue to champion Glossop but in a new and modern way."

To celebrate this change, Distant Hills will be producing some Howard Town classics from yesteryear. These will include the following beers for your enjoyment:

- **Winnat's Pass**: a hoppy pale ale and a moreish favourite of the brewers, Jack and Ollie
- **Glott's Hop**: a strong and assertive straw-coloured bitter with citrus notes
- **Hope**: pale and refreshing with nutty malts, crisp and fruity hops and blackberries on the nose
- **Salvin Ridge**: a crisp and fruity golden ale, dry hopped with Nelson Sauvin

We look forward to reacquainting ourselves with these beers and to the continued success of Distant Hills.

Scribbles on a Beer Mat



Welcome to Scribbles on a Beer Mat: the quiet corner of a Stockport pub where our Poet in Residence, Carl Burkitt, is sipping a pale ale and scribbling some poems.

I See Regulars, Walking Around Like Regular People

I know what he wears on a Friday,
that bloke with a ladder on his shoulder,
buckets for hands, Brillo pad smile.

I know what he drinks on a Friday,
that man with a scarf around his neck,
a swinging briefcase, a polar bear on his head.

I know when she lets loose,
that woman with juggling ball children,
running shoe feet, A to B eyes.

I know where he sits alone,
that guy surrounded by hyenas,
inventing a life, tap dancing forever.

The Beard He's Never Seen

After John Osborne

The pub was getting busy and he'd been gone
for so long my trousers had gone from jeans

to chinos to jeans again. I didn't wear
Hawaiian shirts anymore, but flannel checks

then black H&M classic neck t-shirts
then thick jumpers bought for me with confidence.

My hair stopped being short back and sides
and welcomed curls because life can end

at 16 and some things have to be
what they're supposed to be. He could have walked

in hours ago, floated past the beard he's never seen,
asked if WKD Blues are still popular,

burst the heads of bar staff with that smile
and bored them about models of Mercedes.

Beer Festival Entertainment Preview



Once again, Stockport Beer & Cider Festival will also feature a full line up of entertainment for you. While the details for Friday and Saturday lunchtime hadn't been finalised

as we went to press, the festival's entertainment manager Anthony Meynell here gives us a rundown of the evening bookings.



Thursday sees the ultra-cool and sophisticated laid-back 'n' funky collective known as **The Retrosettes** bring their stylish brand of Nu Jazz to this year's event. Expect classic hits done with a twist by the UK's leading

vintage-themed covers band. A simply great act to kick-start the three days.



Friday, and it's the sound of one of Manchester's finest voices, with **Martin Connor and the Soul Apostles**, a group of musicians who are time-served experts in the art of making soulful, bluesy, funky music. Lead singer Martin Connor is without doubt an unsung hero of the Manchester live music circuit; once you hear

his voice, you will instantly know what I'm talking about. Expect a danceable set, with pure funk filtering through from these boys.



On **Saturday** it's fun day with a musician I've seen lots of times, and a crowd-pleaser of the highest order, **Mr Daniel Clarke**, who performs around the Manchester and surrounding areas, putting on acoustic nights. Hailing from Openshaw, Daniel Clarke has been a firm fixture of the Manchester music scene for almost two decades. His artistry, passion and dedication to the craft, along with a blind willingness to engage with audiences across a diverse and varied gigoing spectrum, have singled him out as one of the most respected and admired performers of his treasured home city.

Daniel will be performing a set of songs that are linked to our town of Stockport and the city of Manchester, so expect a hatful of well-known songs to sing along to.

The weekend will be kept jumping with full DJ support from **The Funk Soul Brother, Ste Macca**.

The Davenport Arms

90 Years of Tradition and Quality



There are very few pubs in the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA branch area that could be described as a country pub. The **Davenport Arms** at Woodford, popularly known as the Thief's Neck, fits the bill better than any, and this year it has seen some very significant anniversaries.

Perhaps the most remarkable milestone is its 90 years in the hands of the same family. The Hallworth family's connection with the pub goes back to February 1932, when it was taken on by 'Jack' Hammond Hallworth, the great-grandfather of current licensee Yvonne Hallworth. This was only ten years after it was bought by Robinsons, so this year also marks its centenary as one of their houses.



Jack was succeeded by son James Eric, and then by his son John who moved in with his wife June (both pictured here) in 1965, taking over from his parents. This almost didn't happen, as John's older brother was in line to take on the pub but decided that was something he

didn't want to do.

Current licensee Yvonne has lived at the pub since she was just three, and has worked there since 1981. She became the licensee 31 years ago and as such must surely be the longest-serving in Stockport.

Changes

Back in the 1930s, the Davenport Arms was also run as a farm, and John continued to farm land there until the late 1980s. Apart from that there have been few physical changes over the years. Back in the day there was an off-sales hatch opposite the main entrance and that has long since gone. More recently, in 2014, the pub underwent a refurbishment which saw a slight opening out of one of the rooms.

What has changed significantly is the pattern of trade. Yvonne remembers when the pub's cellar was full of 36-gallon barrels of beer, while nowadays Robinsons only supply in nine-gallon casks – although in a busy pub like the Davenport Arms this does ensure a constant supply of fresh beer. She tells us that the trade has also become much more food-led, too (and, as an aside, the food is well

worth sampling). Having said that, the quality of the beer remains extremely high, and this brings us to our other significant milestone.

Over the years the pub has picked up a slew of awards from CAMRA. It has been the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month five times – in 1989, 1995, 2001, 2006 and 2014. It was the branch's Pub of the Year for 1995, and the Greater Manchester Regional Pub of the Year for 1997, too. That in itself is a testimony to the hard work put in by John and Yvonne. This is reinforced by the pub's incredible longevity in CAMRA's national *Good Beer Guide*.



Competition for the *Guide* is incredibly high, as tight allocations mean that sometimes not every pub deserving of an entry gets in. However the Davenport Arms has now clocked up no fewer than 35 consecutive entries, and in late February Yvonne and her family were presented with a certificate marking this achievement. Pictured here with their certificate are Yvonne, together with her son Jack and mum June.

More Awards

This isn't the first time the Davenport Arms has been awarded for its longevity in the *Good Beer Guide*. Here are the presentations marking ten and 25 years respectively. We are sure there will be more to come.





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Stagger

Hazel Grove & Great Moor with Jim Flynn

Being on the 192 bus route, Hazel Grove is very accessible, but at one time this stagger was often unpopular owing to the variable quality of the pubs and beer. How times have certainly changed!



Our starting point was the **Grove Alehouse**, Hazel Grove's micropub. A former shop, it's a relatively small L-shape, with a bar in the right-hand corner and, to the rear, an outside drinking area. Under Ange and Scott Jepson's ownership this is a thriving place of homage to good cask beer and cider. It was a terrible night and the pub was understandably relatively quiet. We tried two of the four beers on offer: the Bridge Beers Dark Matter stout was on excellent form (one of our number went back for a second) with Joustier Best Bitter slightly less well received. A good start to the evening.

On then to the **Bird in Hand**, or so we thought. On entering, we found the pump clip turned round, and were informed that they no longer sold cask beer so we crossed the road and climbed the



steps leading to Robinsons' half-timbered pub, the **Flying Coach**. This was once the Cock Inn, and in truth it was awful in its latter years. The Flying Coach though is a vast improvement and maybe that's the reason, and given the state of the weather, it was nicely busy. Although the plan of the pub has not changed, with the bar to the fore as you walk in, it does feel airier and more open than previously, with three rooms: one with an American-style jukebox, a back room where most people were congregating for the disco, and a front room, with flying shuttles on the wall, where we sat. We sampled the Unicorn and Trooper, which were both enjoyable, but, perhaps wisely this early in the stagger, we left the Old Tom alone.



Next, past the sadly recently closed **Anchor**, which, with the **Grove** and **Woodman**, was once part of the trio of now-closed Robinsons pubs. The Grove has been knocked down and replaced by a new build which will be housing **Beer More Social**. This promises many good things on the beer front, and was due to open almost three years ago but, for whatever reason, disappointingly

hasn't yet. We hear, though, that an opening date for long-anticipated venture may not be far away.

Our next stop was Greene King's **George & Dragon**. This mock-Tudor pub, near Stepping Hill Hospital, stretches quite a way back from the road. The feel of the pub, like many Greene King outlets,



is somewhat corporate. Nevertheless, it is comfortable and well furnished, attracting a food-oriented clientele. By the time we arrived, any diners had mostly moved on and the place was quite quiet. We were greeted by the very friendly and enthusiastic deputy manager, who offered us a CAMRA discount (his colleague, who was obviously less enamoured, was heard to describe CAMRA as 'beer busybodies', which he presumably meant as a criticism but which we took as a bit of a compliment). There were four cask beers: Greene King IPA, Storm Isobar, Brightside Mancunian and Mobberley Juice Machine. We tried all but the IPA and found each of them to be highly enjoyable.



Moving on to Great Moor proper, and the **Crown**, an imposing three-gabled Robinsons house, set slightly back from the main road. On entering, there are large rooms left and right, both of which were busy, and it was clear from the redundant buffet that there had been a 'do' in the left-hand room. In the bar area, we noted the special tiles set at intervals round the bar. The wide arch at the rear of the bar gives a more open aspect to the deserted rear room, where we sat on high stools/benches, which I personally find uncomfortable. We tried the Cumbria Way, Dizzy Blonde and Trooper (Unicorn was also available) and found them in reasonable nick.



Our final stop, on the other side of the A6, was the much smaller but still multi-roomed Robinsons pub, the **Travellers Call**. The most striking feature of the décor is its nautical theme, with ships' wheels, bells, portholes, lanterns and propellers on the walls. I have never been sure why this is and, when we asked the regulars, they weren't sure either. There was one cask beer, Unicorn, which we found to be of good standard.

It was a fitting end to the night, which was highly enjoyable despite the awful weather, with good fare throughout. Back home then on the 192.



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Pub Walks with Chris Morris

Congleton

Congleton recently made the local headlines by appointing an 'ale taster' for the town's 750th anniversary celebrations. An important health and safety role during medieval times, every town and city had one to ensure the local ale was up to scratch. Well, health and safety is still important now, so it's only right that we do our duty as well. This walk features a scenic canal, a nature walk along a former railway line and a selection of Congleton's finest pubs.

Train Information

There is an hourly train from Manchester Piccadilly to Congleton, Monday to Saturday, stopping at Stockport, Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall along the way. The Sunday service is reduced at the moment (trains every two to three hours) but hopefully this will improve in the future. For full train timetable information, visit nationalrail.co.uk.

The Walk

The nature walk is two miles long, with at least a further mile needed in the urban area to get back to the train station. The walk is fairly flat and undemanding but hiking boots are always recommended after wet weather. The walk back to the station, along Park Lane, is the only hill climb on the route. The OS Explorer map is 268 Wilmslow, Macclesfield & Congleton (OS app also available).

When leaving the train on platform 1, don't walk up the steps of the footbridge but exit to the small car park behind. Join the canal behind the car park signposted to 'Town centre 1'. Walk down the steps and left along the canal path, keeping the canal on your right. Continue along the path for half a mile. When the nice view of the railway viaduct appears on the left, the canal crosses over a bridge. Before this bridge, exit the canal to the left and down some steps to the Biddulph Valley Way sign. Take a left here (not under the canal bridge) and walk along the main straight path – signposted route '55'. This is the old train line that ran between Congleton and Stoke. It mainly carried coal from Staffordshire and sand on the return journey to the Potteries. Continue along the old straight and wide train line for a further mile until you reach a concrete-lined bridge and a route '55' sign points up a path on the left. Ignore this sign and carry on, under the bridge. After 500 yards, the trail finishes and reaches the main road. Turn left and walk along the road's pavement for 250 yards, crossing over at the pelican crossing and then carrying on in the same direction as before where you will shortly arrive at our first pub – a great example of a traditional terraced local.



Full of character and charm in a comfortable and homely setting, a warm welcome awaits at the **Beartown Tap**. Events are regularly arranged and include pizza nights, street food, supper clubs and quizzes. A log burner is in use during the colder months. Up to six Beartown cask beers are available,

plus a cider. The beers were Kodiak, Literate, Peach Melbear, Skinful, Bear Ass and Smores when I last visited.

On exiting the pub, turn right and carry on along the road, crossing over at the roundabout, and walk up Park Lane (A527) signposted to the Station, which is your route for the train back home. However, if you have time for more 'ale taster' duties, many opportunities exist in

the handsome town centre along Lawton Street. There is only space to list two here, unfortunately.

The **Young Pretender** is a large contemporary bar with an eclectic style of furniture, including a piano. Low-level lighting gives a relaxed



and sophisticated feel, with the bar featuring an excellent range of cask and keg beers, plus a cider. On my last inspection, the cask beers were Fortitude from Bristol Beer Factory, Marquee from Revolutions Brewing, Thornbridge Twin Peaks, Roosters One

Eighty and Effortless from RedWillow. The cider was Holmes Chapel Apple from SiDa.



The **Prince of Wales** is a cosy and understated pub with a big dose of nostalgia and charm. The staff give a warm welcome, as does the log burner during winter. Now owned by Joules, up to four of their casks are available, which included Pure Blonde, Pale Ale and Slumbering Monk when I popped in.

After walking up the hill to the station, if further refreshment is required, then **Wonky Pear** is recommended. This small bar has been tastefully refurbished, with furniture, décor and subtle lighting all in good balance, and with a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Three cask beers from Beartown were available when I last visited, which were Kahuna, Smores and Best Bitter.

For full pub details, including opening times, visit whatpub.com.



News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

Chorlton Beer & Cider Festival Returns



After a gap of three years, the festival finally returns, opening from Thursday 7 to Saturday 9 July.

A great selection of real ales, live keg, cider, perries and world beers is being ordered for consumption in the leafy grounds of St Clement's Church, Edge Lane, Chorlton.

It will see the return of local food vendors, live music and the highly anticipated Vicar's Gin Bar.

Proceeds will go to support the church's community works, which include providing three community halls for hire and a number of support services.

This year, the festival will also be supporting the MCR Ukraine Welcome Fund.

Tickets are expected to go on sale in May, including those for a cider tasting at lunchtime on Saturday.

Children are welcome on Saturday during the day.

To volunteer visit chorltonbeerfestival.org.uk/volunteer/

Will Fotheringham



JD Wetherspoon appointed four worker directors in November last year, the first time the company has had such a position. One of them is our local regional manager Will Fotheringham (pictured here), and *Opening Times* caught up with him at the Gateway in East Didsbury.

Will told us that he's been with Wetherspoons for 22 years now. He started as a shift manager at the **Kings Hall** in Cheadle Hulme, where he was promoted to pub manager in 2000. The role took him to four other pubs – the **Sedge Lynn** in Chorlton, the **Glass House** in St Helens, the **Bollin Fee** in Wilmslow and finally the **Seven Stars** at the Printworks in central Manchester.

Promotions to area manager and then regional manager followed. He now looks after 12 pubs in Manchester, and approximately 65 across the north-west.

Will tells us that he sees this as an exciting opportunity for him, with his role being to give a "view from the shop floor". Direct 'bottom to top' lines of communication can be vital in companies like Wetherspoons and we certainly wish him well in his new role.

Runaway on the Move

Manchester's **Runaway Brewery** is set to up sticks and relocate to central Stockport. The new site (pictured above right) is in some former light industrial premises on Astley Street, just off Heaton Lane. It's right behind the currently-mothballed **Pineapple**.

Runaway's Mark Welsby told *Opening Times* that presently the landlord is undertaking some building work on the site, and he'll be getting the keys at the start of July. After that comes the not-



inconsiderable task of moving the brewery lock, stock and barrels from Dantzig Street in the 'Green Quarter' just north of the city centre. There will also be quite a lot of additional fitting out needed. The new location is rather bigger than their current railway arch, and has the scope for something more ambitious in the way of a brewery tap and food operations. The new site, which is very well-placed for forthcoming residential developments, should be up and running in the autumn, we believe.

All the staff are moving across, too, so there will be continuity there. As for the current site, we understand that Runaway and another Manchester brewery plan to use this as a barrel store, where various beers can undergo cask-ageing. Exciting times – and a very welcome addition to Stockport's beer scene.

Beer Festival Advance Tickets Record



Such is people's enthusiasm to experience our Festival once again, with over a month to go, the **Stockport Beer and Cider Festival** has already broken all records for the sale of advance tickets.

Encouraged by the £1.50 discount for non-members on the ticket prices, hundreds of festival-goers have already gone online to book their tickets – normally the sales really only hot up as the Festival approaches.

There have been a couple of innovations on the ticketing front. For the first time, CAMRA members are able to book their tickets in advance. There is also a new ticket to be booked, 'The Full Monty', which enables you to pay up front for your entry, your beer and cider tokens and your glass (which is refundable) up front. This should enable a speedier entry in to the Festival. Advance ticket buyers will have their own dedicated entry channel and desk.

Don't miss out; go to www.stockportfestival.org.uk, click on 'Tickets' and join us from 16 to 18 June at Edgeley Park.

Beatnikz Republic Closes

Just before we went to print came the hugely sad news that Manchester's **Beatnikz Republic Brewing Co.** was to close. In a statement released on 20 April, owner Paul Greetham explained this was down to a combination of Covid restrictions, export problems and hugely increasing costs. The **Beatnikz Republic NQ Bar** in the Northern Quarter is not affected, and remains open. We suspect this will not be the last of such very sad announcements. We have enjoyed Paul's beers and wish him well for the future.

Pubs in the Peak

Chris Morris visits Mossley

Located within an impressive landscape of scenic hills and waterways, Mossley also features a number of interesting pubs and bars. Easily accessible, with an hourly train service from Manchester Piccadilly; 18 minutes is all it takes to transport you from the city centre to the fringes of the countryside and the choice of eight real ale venues to discover.

Bottom Mossley



Close to the station, the **Commercial Hotel** was the first pub in Bottom Mossley, and has welcomed thirsty punters from before the railway age. The welcome holds true today, although the pub's style has more of a contemporary feel now, with modern furnishings throughout. Popular events are regularly arranged,

including live music and quiz nights. Tiger Rut, Trinnacle and Stout from the local Millstone Brewery were available when I last visited.

The **Britannia Inn** is a friendly locals' pub with a traditional pub layout and furniture. Pool and darts are featured in the room on the left, with the bar and seating area to the right. The reasonably priced food is very popular, as is their selection of cask beers. These were Titanic's White Star, with Trinnacle and Tiger Rut from Millstone, when I last dropped in.



Styled as a café-bar, the **Gillery** opened in December 2019 and is a great new addition to the local scene. Expertly converted from a former bank, the high ceiling and grand interior features give a classy and contemporary feel that offers something a bit different. High tables feature throughout but there is low seating around an inviting log burner. As well as good quality

food, up to four cask ales are available, usually from local breweries. On my last visit, these were Tiger Rut and True Grit from Millstone Brewery.

Top Mossley



Walking to the right of Gillery and up Stamford Road, parallel to the railway line, brings you to Top Mossley. The climb is half a mile but, if you aren't feeling energetic, the frequent buses that pass can give you a lift to the top, where the **Butchers Arms** awaits. The pub's contemporary-styled interior appeals to a younger clientele, with high seating on the left,

a pool table taking centre stage on the right and background music often in evidence. The cask beer offering is excellent here, with Seven Brothers Hoppy Pale, Timothy Taylor's Boltmaker, Cross Bay Huell Melon and Titanic Plum Porter available when I last visited.

A short stroll along Stamford Street brings you to the **Fleece Inn**. Full of character and characters, this is a proper locals' pub where lively conversation is always flowing around the bar. Rustic furniture features heavily throughout, and this, together with scrubbed floorboards and bench seating, gives an added layer of charm. Gold from Green Mill Brewery was the cask beer available, whilst the Donkeystone Cotton Clouds had just finished.



Retracing your steps past the Butchers and walking along Stockport Road for half a mile brings you to the **Church Inn**. Another traditional locals' pub with a friendly welcome that is the norm in these parts. The central bar serves

the main room, and the games room to the left with pool and darts. The four casks available were Javanilla from Donkeystone Brewing and Millstone's Trinnacle, with Hen Harrier and Boxer Blonde from Bowland Brewery.



Continuing along Stockport Road for a further 300 yards, and taking in the scenic views of the local hills, you will arrive at the **Rising Sun**. On entering, you'll find comfortable rustic furniture, bench seating and two welcoming log burners. As well as live

sport, live music is regularly featured until late, with the pictures of Elvis, David Bowie and Kurt Cobain pointing to clear influences. Up to seven cask beers are available. On last inspection, these were Thornbridge's Cocoa Wonderland and Jaipur, Saltaire Red Dawn, and Citra, Tiger Rut, Stout and True Grit from Millstone. The pub also serves homemade pizzas on peak evenings which prove to be very popular.

Canal Pub



The local stretch of the scenic Huddersfield Canal is a popular walking route in these parts. If refreshment is on the agenda, the **Tollemache Arms** is a good choice, with direct access from the canal towpath to the beer garden. This traditional local has an inviting interior of reupholstered

bench seating and two log burners, giving it a homely feel. Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde were the cask beers available when I last visited.

Full pub details, including opening times, can be found at whatpub.com. Public transport timetables can be found at tfgm.com.

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Balance Brewing & Blending

Exciting New Venture Launches

After years of planning, and many months of fermentation, the first release from **Balance Brewing & Blending** is scheduled for May 19. That release is Saison de Maison, the first example of their house saison, a beer that marries funky complexity and harmonious drinkability, and one that really exemplifies what the brewery is all about.

People and Processes



As we reported in the September/October issue, Balance was set up in 2021 by James Horrocks and Will Harris (pictured above), and is the only brewery in Manchester dedicated entirely to the production of barrel-fermented, mixed-culture beers.

After meeting while working together at Chorlton Brewing Co, their shared passion for sour, wild and funky beer led to the inevitable conclusion of wanting to produce beers that they love brewing and drinking. Now at Track (Will) and Squawk (James), and with over a collective decade of brewing experience, they decided it was time to set up Balance.



They are currently a fairly small-scale operation with only 30 barrels, with the two of them putting in shifts brewing, bottling and everything in between during the evenings and at weekends. They anticipate releasing roughly a beer a month over the next year. All of the beers will be

available in 750ml bottles, designed for sharing.

The aim is to produce nuanced sour and funky beers in a range of styles, from brettet saisons to lambic-inspired creations, utilising both wild-captured and lab-propagated yeasts and bacteria. As an environmental consideration, and to create a sense of terroir in the beers, only British ingredients are used. They source as locally as possible: the malt is from Fawcett's in Yorkshire, the hops come from Brookhouse in Herefordshire, and they only use British-grown fruit.

After fermenting in barrels for anywhere from four months to what will be several years, they carefully select blends and move them onto hops, fruit, or straight into bottle. What emerges at the end is tart,

complex, funky, fruity and ultimately an expression of the brewers' passion for these styles of beer, and for the complexity that can be achieved through simple ingredients.

The Initial Release - Saison de Maison

The first beer, Saison de Maison, is a 6% brettet saison, blended from beer fermented and conditioned in used red-wine barrels before being dry-hopped with fresh UK Goldings. It is the first iteration of what will be the house saison, which will be a regular release. The base beers were brewed using low colour Maris Otter and torrefied wheat to put a British spin on a classic lambic-inspired base. The beer was hopped in the kettle with aged British Goldings and fresh Bramling Cross before being transferred to barrel to undergo fermentation with a carefully selected blend of *Saccharomyces*, *Brettanomyces* and *Lactobacillus* which were propagated in-house.

After the fermentation and conditioning phase, barrels which offered the desired funky saison characteristics were selected, and developed into a final blend. This blend was transferred onto fresh Goldings and stayed on the hops for a week before being bottled with nothing but priming sugar added. The bottle-conditioning phase allowed all of the flavours to marry and develop until Will and James were happy that the beer was well balanced and ready to release.



The end result is a beer with bright carbonation and pleasing acidity, leading into a layered, fruit-forward brett and hop character. Tasting notes include funky pineapple up front, with hoppy notes of gingerbread, ripe peach and subtle perry pear. Gentle bitterness and herbal, woodruff notes meander into the long, clean yet complex finish.

"This is the first beer we envisaged when we dreamed of brewing our own beer, and we are so pleased with how it has come out," Will and James told *Opening Times*.

The Future



The launch event was due to take place on Thursday 19 May at Café Beermoth, on Brown Street in Manchester city centre. On the same day, the brewery web shop was scheduled to go live and will be able to ship direct to customers and bottle shops across the country.

The next release is already in bottle, too. Jam is a blend of saisons fermented in barrel then aged on damsons for four months. Look for more on this in a future issue of *Opening Times*.

Balance Brewing & Blending plan to release "a whole host of beautiful creations" over the next six months, including more dry-hopped saisons, fruited beers and some interesting experiments.

We look forward to trying them.

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Campaign for Real Ale



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- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Stripe asks you to.
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[†]Price of single membership when paying by Direct Debit. *Calls from landlines charged at standard national rates, cost may vary from mobile phones. New Direct Debit members will receive a 12 month supply of vouchers in their first 15 months of membership. The data you provide will be processed in accordance with our privacy policy in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. **Joint members receive £40 worth of vouchers.

What's On

Local CAMRA Branch Diaries

Events for May to early July 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.

Tuesday 10 May – Meeting and Cider Pub of the Year presentation: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar, Rassbottom Street, Stalybridge, SK15 1RS. Starts 8pm. (HPNC)

Thursday 12 May – Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris, SK4 2NA. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 9 June – Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 11 June – Halfway House, 123 Whiteacre Road, Ashton, OL6 9PS. This will be followed by a social in other Ashton pubs. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

Monday 13 June – Castle, 29 Church Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6LB. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Social Events & Presentations

Saturday 14 May – Cellarman presentation and social at the Old Hall Inn, Whitehough, Chinley, SK23 6EJ (from 1pm). Followed by Club of the Year presentation at 5pm to Buxworth Memorial Club, 1 Station Road, Buxworth, SK23 7NJ. (HPNC)

Saturday 14 May – Trip to Clitheroe Beer Festival. Details tbc. (CMCR)

Friday 20 May – Offerton Stagger: 7:30pm Puss in Boots, 147 Nangreave Road, SK2 6DG; 8:30pm Finger Post, 434 Hemphaw Lane, SK1 4QA; final pub Cocked Hat, 2 Market Place, SK1 1EW. (SSM)

Saturday 21 May – Pub of the Year presentation: Chiverton Tap, 8 Mellor Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 5AU. Presentation at 4pm. (SSM)

Thursday 26 May – Pub of the Month presentation: P5, 47 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 7AA. From 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 28 May – Sutton wander and presentation of Cider Pub of the Year Award to the Sutton Hall. Starts 12 noon at St Dunstan's Inn, Main Road, Langley, SK11 0BU. (MEC)

Tuesday 31 May – Weekday Wander in Chorlton: catch bus 23 at 11:40 from Stockport Bus Station. First pub: Spread Eagle, 526-528 Wilbraham Road, M21 9LD. (SSM)

Monday 13 to Sunday 19 June – set up, run and take down Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. (SSM)

Friday 24 June – Northenden Stagger: 7:30pm Farmers Arms, Longley Lane, M22 4JR; 8:30pm Lounge About, 424 Palatine Road, M22 4JT; final pub Northenden Untapped, 67 Church Road, M22 4WD. (SSM)

Thursday 30 June – Pub of the Month presentation: Shady Oak, Redford Drive, Bramhall, SK7 3PG. From 8pm. (SSM)

Tuesday 5 July – Weekday Wander in Hayfield: catch 358 bus from Mersey Square, Stockport (stop G) at 11:35. First pub: Lantern Pike, 45 Glossop Road, Little Hayfield, SK22 2NG. (SSM)

CAMRA Awards

Recent Presentations



The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year for 2022 is the **Petersgate Tap** in central Stockport. This is the fourth year in a row that the Tap has won and this is testimony to the dedication of the owners, father and son team Alan and Chris Gent.

While local producers feature here, such as Dunham Press (Dunham Massey) and SiDa (Macclesfield), there is also an accent on sourcing high-quality ciders and perries from leading producers further afield. Top names such as Ross on Wye, Gregg's Pit and Hecks now often feature on the list. All of the ciders are either fridge- or cellar-cooled too.

Pictured above is local CAMRA Cider Rep Dave Preston (left) presenting the award to Alan and Chris.



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month Award for December 2021 was won by the **Moortop** in Heaton Moor. Unfortunately, an outbreak of Covid delayed the presentation, which was finally made in March. Pictured here, CAMRA's Jim Flynn (left) presents the award to manager Nathan Henchion.



Stockport & South Manchester's Pub of the Month for March was the **Nursery** in Heaton Norris. This former CAMRA national Pub of the Year has been revitalised since the arrival of manager Paul Harper in mid-2020. Paul has 30 years' experience in the pub trade and he has brought this to bear on the Nursery. Beer quality has been excellent since he took over, earning a five-star rating from Cask Marque. Paul is pictured here (left) receiving his award from CAMRA's Mark McConachie.

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