

# OPENING TIMES

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2024

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## About Opening Times & Contacts

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News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address – John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. Email - stocam@btinternet.com. Phone 0161 477 1973. Advertising rates on request or online at: [www.ssmcamra.co.uk/magazine.htm](http://www.ssmcamra.co.uk/magazine.htm). Local advertising John Clarke (as above) or contact Neil Richards MBE at [n.richards@btinternet.com](mailto:n.richards@btinternet.com)

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- \* Derbyshire: [www.derbybus.info](http://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](http://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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## Front Cover

Phil Cowtan of Ladybarn Social Club celebrates his award with daughter Rebecca and fellow club members. Photo by Lawrence Devaney.

**More on page 15.**

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# Pubs of the Month

## Stockport & South Manchester Winners for January and February



*The Pub of the Month for January is the Arden Arms on Millgate, Stockport. John Clarke explains why it has won.*

When a local institution changes hands and, make no mistake, the Arden Arms is an institution, there is always a sense of nervousness and perhaps anticipation too. What will the new people be like? What will they change? That was certainly the case when Geoff and Maria Troughton took over in August 2017.

When *Opening Times* interviewed them shortly afterwards, Geoff told us, "We're not here to change anything: we just want to run a great pub". And, in the intervening years, that is exactly what they have done.



There were some small changes – not least a redecoration, slowly carried out by Geoff before opening time, and so carefully done that hardly anyone noticed (although the pub did look brighter). There was some work on the bar back, too, and the handpumps were replaced. Outside, full use is made of the large courtyard, both for al fresco dining in warmer weather, and watching some live entertainment.

The cellar is looked after by Geoff and it has to be said the quality of the Robinsons beers here is second to none, gaining the Arden a regular entry in CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide*. At least four cask beers are always available, and at this time of year they invariably include the classic Old Tom –

ideally sipped in front of one of the pub's open fires.

The food remains varied and excellent, with the kitchen open every lunchtime from 12 noon and also in the evenings between 6.00pm and 9.00pm Thursday to Saturday. The pub's reputation for music is also undiminished with live bands every Saturday night, and most Friday nights, too.

Geoff and Maria have done an excellent job in not only maintaining but also enhancing the reputation of this classic pub (its historic interior has earned it a place on CAMRA's National Inventory of Heritage Pubs). Come and join us on **Thursday 25 January** when we celebrate their success and present this very well-deserved award. The pub is just off Stockport Market Place so is handy for too many bus routes to list here!



*John Sutcliffe writes that the Stockport & South Manchester award for February 2024 will be given to the Church Inn, 90 Ravenoak Road, Cheadle Hulme.*

This charming old pub has been in the same family for over 40 years, and is noted for excellent food, with a menu changing every three months, and featuring tried and tested favourites, plus changing specials. Food is served until 9pm every day.

Regular beers are Robinsons Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde, Cumbria Way and one other changing seasonal, which in December during the Winter Warmer Wander was Old Tom. The comfortable, oak-panelled lounge bar and rear restaurant room have real fires in winter. The building is unspoilt, with small but good changes, like refurbishing the toilets. There is a small garden at the front and a large car park on the opposite side of the roundabout at the junction between Ack Lane West and Church Road.

There is plenty of room inside, including a small snug behind the bar, a covered area with large screen TV at the rear, and a large marquee that was introduced during the Covid epidemic to serve tea and coffee in the morning, and as an extension to the pub. In the evenings this also has a large screen TV.

Our congratulations go to the general manager Ed Bromley, his family, assistant managers and staff who maintain a very high standard of quality, but with innovation when needed. We hope that you will join us on **Thursday 22 February** 2024 from 8pm, with the presentation around 9.

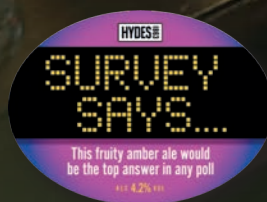
Bus 313 runs hourly to and from Stockport. The 42B runs to Woodford from Manchester via Didsbury and Parrs Wood (but finishes mid-evening) or it is a 20-minute walk up Mellor Road from Cheadle Hulme railway station.

*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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# Coming Soon

A fantastic range of seasonal beers appearing at a Hydes pub near you



# Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

## Macclesfield Update

First the good news: after months of speculation, the **Treacle Tap** on Sunderland Street finally reopened its doors at the start of December. It is now run by Buxton Brewery and features an ever-changing range of three cask and seven keg beers, all from Buxton. There are no major changes to the pub's interior, and it is expected that there will eventually be a food offering. The opening hours will initially be subject to change.



Less good news is that Chris Stairmand, owner of the **Wharf** on Brook Street, has announced that he intends to sell the pub for personal reasons. For the time being it is business as usual for this popular pub, which has been a regular *Good Beer Guide* entry for many years. Initial meetings

have taken place about about turning the Wharf into a community-owned pub. Updates can be found on [facebook.com/savethewharf](https://www.facebook.com/savethewharf).

The owner of the **British Flag** on Coare Street has submitted a planning application to convert the pub into a residential dwelling. This pub used to be a Robinsons house until Lloyd Roberts, a former local councillor, purchased it, and continued to sell Robinsons beers. The result of the planning application is not yet known but this could be another sad loss of a backstreet pub, of the type that used to be plentiful in Macclesfield.

## Railway, West Didsbury



The **Railway** was taken over on 17 October by Stacy Saunders who is running it with her partner Mark Wilson. Stacy worked for Holts for 17 years in Manchester, at the Ape and Apple, and latterly the Old Monkey on Portland Street.

She has increased the number of handpumps and there are now two Bootleg beers and four Holts: Mild, Bitter, Two Hoots and Sixex. The cider list is restricted – it was Old Rosie when *Opening Times* called.

Quiz night for a prize of a gallon of beer is Tuesday; the team coming last also wins a prize, which recently was a rubber sticky slug!

All in all we think this is very good news for the Railway, and we'll certainly be calling in again.

## Closed and Boarded

Suffolk brewers Greene King now have three prominent closed pubs in Stockport. In Heaton Moor, the **Moortop** does at least seem to have a future. The brewery has announced a half-million pound investment which will see the pub 'zoned' to allow for specific dining and drinking areas, along with a 'sports zone' for pool and darts.

Televisions will be strategically placed throughout the pub. There's going to be major investment in the outside area, too.



Elsewhere, the closed and boarded **Farmers Arms** in Cheadle Heath moulders away while it awaits demolition and replacement by a Greggs Drive-thru.

More controversial is the **Golden Hind** in Offerton. This appears to have been a popular and well-run local, so news of its sale, to person or persons unknown, came as a shock to all concerned. A final celebratory night was planned at the pub but this was prevented by the shock sudden closure a couple of days beforehand. It's now 'tinned up' and awaiting whatever fate has in store.

Finally, in Cheadle Hulme, the **Hesketh** on Hulme Hall Road (owned by Star Pubs & Bars) looks set to reopen, but not as a pub. After a planning application to transform the empty building was approved, it is to become part of Italian food chain, Pesto. A heritage statement submitted with the planning application said there had been a pub on this site since 1864. Unfortunately, post-pandemic it has seriously struggled with no one seemingly able to make a go of it.

## Congleton News

Friday 17 November saw the opening of Congleton Market Quarter which is located behind Morrisons as you come from the bus station. The development includes two bars and several eateries.



The **Foundry** is Bollington Brewery's new outlet in the town, and has five of their cask beers and one real cider all on handpump. There are also 11 keg beers on tap, plus a wide range of other drinks. It does not sell food, but you can order it from independent vendors

from your table with a smartphone, or just nip outside with your table number if you don't have one. Pictured above is Bollington Brewery's Lee Wainwright (left) with civic dignitaries on the opening night.

**R&G's Tap House** offers 14 keg taps, including one sparkling cider. Some of the beers are membrane keg (and so real ale). This is a second outlet for Rosie and Greg, who also run **R&G's Beer Vault** in Macclesfield's market area. There are two fridges containing a variety of cans and bottles for customers to browse, and these include bottles of Hogan's real cider. Table food-service is available here too. Those wanting traditional cask beer can order it from the Foundry.

Another recent (re)opening is the **Orange Tree**, formerly the Cheshire Tavern, on West Street, after an impressive refurbishment by Paragon Group, which has moved the focus toward food. Less impressive however is the fact that they have abandoned real ale – which is surprising, as all their other pubs do offer it.

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# What's Brewing

## Brewery News from around the region

### News from Ossett

There's a lot to look forward to from **Ossett Brewery** this year. In early January they will be collaborating with Turning Point Brew Co. of Knaresborough to brew a 6.5% Victorian Porter called What the Dickens! Half of this will be going out in cask, while the rest will be barrel-aged for later release. Definitely one to look out for.



In 2024 they will again be collaborating with 12 different brewers (one a month), including Magic Rock, Northern Monk and Oakham, with various exciting styles planned. In addition, Ossett Brewing Company have also brought back the 'Brewers Project' which will see each of the six Ossett brewers brew a beer they have produced the recipe for, and which will showcase a full spectrum of beer styles.

Ossett sales director Sean Griffiths dropped into the Stockport & South Manchester branch meeting on 14 December to give the branch an update on what the brewery had planned, and

the opportunity was taken to present him with the Bronze award from the 2023 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 'Beer of the Festival' competition. He is pictured above with his certificate. The winning beer was Macaroni Ted, a very hoppy and bitter West Coast IPA, brewed in conjunction with Elusive Brewing.

### New from Hydes

Local family brewer **Hydes** has two new beers out for January.



Bulls Hydes (4.2%) is described as "perfectly balanced with complex flavours... an amber ale which is both satisfying and deliciously moreish. A slightly spicy, premium bitter that's a bullseye of a beer".

In the brewery's bi-monthly range is Brown Stout (4.1%) which is brewed traditionally with brown malt. The beer is described as having "a deep, warm colour and a muted roasty flavour. It combines delicious chocolate, caramel and

malt highlights with a satisfying creamy body, whilst the choicest English hops give it a discreet, yet noticeable bitterness". It also comes with a delightfully retro pumpclip (shown here).

### Wander Beyond



Many folks were dismayed when Manchester's **Wander Beyond Brewing** closed down. Well known for big beers with lots of interesting additions, they were well on the way to acquiring a cult following. The good news is we will still be seeing plenty of Wander Beyond beer over the next few years.

We caught up with owner Dan Whitehead DeBechevel (pictured here) to get the lowdown. While it is true that the brewing kit has been sold, and the premises vacated, there is still a lot of

Wander Beyond beer in existence, maturing in a variety of casks – some are at Marble Brewery in Salford but most are in a unit in Wales.

Dan is looking at quarterly releases which will be available via a web shop, with packaging probably taking place at Marble. As these are mainly very big beers (ABV 9% and above) they may also be released in 33cl bottles along with the regular 75cls used by Wander Beyond in the past. He reckons that there is easily enough beer in stock to keep going for two years or more.

There is also a chance that Dan, who is now largely based in Antwerp, where his partner runs a beer import business, may return to brewing – albeit getting beers contract-brewed, either in Belgium or the UK.

### Blackjack Award



In October, Stockport & South Manchester Branch also presented the Beer of the Festival Silver award from last year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. The winning beer, Elderflower Bitter, came from the festival's homebrew competition and pictured above are homebrewer David Ogden (left) and Blackjack head brewer Kieran Johnson with their certificates.

### New from Robinsons

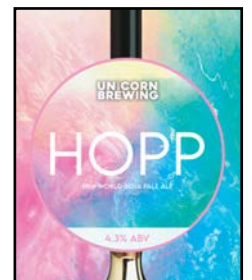
Last year, Robinsons launched Unicorn Brewing – a collaborative brewing project between their licensees and the next generation of brewers at the brewery. The goal was to innovate and create some styles of beers and flavours that you might not have seen from Robinsons before. It appears to have been a huge success and on the back of that Robinsons has a full programme of seasonal beers for 2024.

In February they launch a brand-new seasonal beer, IDAHO, in cask. This 4.6% IPA uses Idaho 7 and Galaxy hops to create a "delicious tasting ale with a modern spin."

March sees the return of HOPP, a 4.3% IPA-style beer using both English and American hops. Another beer returns in June – AMO, the 4.4% pale ale brewed using Amarillo hops.

There's a brand new beer in August. Beret (3.8%) is a raspberry pale ale, which is "delicate but delicious and packs a flavoursome punch". The popular Big Sur is back in September. This 4.7% West Coast IPA has been one of the best-selling seasonal beers so far.

Finally, Robinsons will round the year off with the return of Old Tom in cask from November as they celebrate the beer's 125th birthday alongside the popular Tom & Berry (4.4%).





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Real stories, real people, **real ale**

# Stagger

## Heaton Chapel with Jim Flynn

Starting in Heaton Moor, near Heaton Chapel Station, we met up at the **Elizabethan**, which Lees acquired some years ago, and which not so long ago had an extensive refurbishment.



This plush, well-lit, imposing, detached Victorian house sports a central bar serving a very large, comfortable, open-plan lounge. Having walked through the front garden, where a few hardy souls were drinking on what was

a wet evening, we were greeted by the door staff. On entering we found the place very busy, with a mixture of drinkers and diners, although we managed to find seats in one of the more hidden alcoves that the pub still retains. Unusually, there was no seasonal beer available so we tried just the Bitter and MPA which were on good form.



Now on to Heaton Chapel proper, which has a burgeoning bar and restaurant scene, and is the home of the multi-award-winning **Heaton Hops**. With three changing cask beers, traditional cider and keg beers, along with bottled and canned beers from the UK and around the world, this is one of the standout additions to our area of recent years. One of the cask

beers is now always supplied by Taylor's as the bar is a member of Taylor's Champions Club.

The place was packed out, in part because the inclement weather had forced most people inside. For a while we sat outside, braving the elements, drinking the Taylor's Landlord, Harvey's Sussex Bitter and Duration Turtle's All the Way Down, all of which were well received, with the latter regarded by some as the beer of the evening. After a few minutes the friendly locals, taking pity on us, called us back into the pub as they had managed to find us enough seats, even though for some of them it meant standing up. Well worth a visit.



We moved on to what is probably Heaton Chapel's most traditional and certainly most longstanding popular pub, Greene King's **George & Dragon**. This large pub on the corner of Manchester

Road and School Lane has a striking stone and brick exterior in common with many of the other notable buildings in the area of the same vintage. Inside the pub, there is still a feeling of separate areas even though it has been opened out considerably. When football is on it is often packed out but, unusually, there was none on the night and clearly World Cup Rugby, New Zealand v Argentina, was much less popular. Unusually again there was only one cask beer available,

Deuchars IPA, and this was perhaps a little past its best, it must be said.



Further down Manchester Road to the **Hind's Head**, set back from the road in its marvellous and spacious pub garden (CAMRA gave this an award some years ago). Arguably the most upmarket pub on the stagger, with a focus on food, it attracts a relatively well-heeled clientele. What am I talking about? I sometimes frequent this pub! Oh well, I suppose there are exceptions.

There is a restaurant area on one side and during mealtimes diners populate most of the left hand side of the pub. There is always space for drinkers to the right. By the time we arrived, most of the diners had gone home so it was quiet. The one cask beer is Taylor's Landlord, which was certainly in good nick on our visit.

Our final walk took us further down Manchester Road past the old Ash, (now smart flats) and the derelict Three Crowns (looking anything but smart), to Beartown Brewery's only Stockport pub, the **Navigation**, on the roundabout at the top of Lancashire Hill in Heaton Norris.



This pub was built to service both the workers from the flour mill next door and the barges on the now long-gone Stockport branch of the Ashton Canal.

The central bar services both the lounge, in which daily newspapers are provided, and the vault, which has a pool table. There are TVs and a jukebox, but none are normally intrusive enough to interfere with conversation. However, there was a karaoke/disco that night which made it a little more difficult. The pub boasts an excellent range of Beartown's beers, including that night Skinful, Kodiak and Bitter, which we found in more than decent form, with one of our number regarding the Kodiak the beer of the night. The pub has new licensees, who stepped in when it seemed that this archetypal 'street corner boozier' was likely to close, and they already seem to be making a real go of it. From our visit, the locals seem to be appreciating their efforts; long may it continue!

This is a very accessible stagger with generally good beer and a really wide variety of pubs; give it a go!

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# Scribbles on a Beermat



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

## The Jukebox Set the Tone

He was born

to god-fearing parents who owned a pub. They passed him around the regulars

with fingers shaped like pork scratchings through cigarette smoke clouds. Each one

poked his full cheeks and said he had arms fit for a professional darts player.

He learned

how to walk on a pool table. His first words were either 'dry roasted' or 'tequila shot'

and the barmaids taught him how to kick the jukebox in the right way to play

Bohemian Rhapsody for free and the importance of dancing with your elbows.

He grew up

spitting brown ale on the floor laughing at 13, hiding his breath from his mum and dad,

playing poker in the basement with Jeff, getting a job cleaning the forever stained tables,

marrying a barmaid in the room with soggy carpets, hanging pictures of their kids on the four walls.

He died

80 years after he was born. The pub was filled with regulars with pork scratching fingers.

They ate dry roasted peanuts, sipped tequila, played poker, spat brown ale on the floor laughing.

The jukebox set the tone for a lifetime spent dancing on soggy carpets.

# Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

We continue our series looking at the Lost Pubs of Stockport. This issue: the letter B.

Firstly, the historic **Britannia Inn** on Churchgate, pictured below shortly before demolition in the 1960s.



Located over the road from St. Mary's Church, it was first mentioned in the 1790s, when it was important as a coaching inn. It had a large yard to the rear, and in the 1830s it is said to have had stabling for 50 horses, not to mention the occasional elephant. Early in the 19th century it became a meeting place for reformist organisations such as the Luddites, the Chartists, the Anti-Corn Law League and early trade unions but these days it is probably best remembered for its connection to The Beatles.

It was at the Britannia Inn that Britain's first black circus owner Pablo Fanque (real name William Darby) died in 1871, whilst visiting Stockport. He is well known to Fab Four fans for a mention in the lyrics to 'Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite', the John Lennon song from the 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' album. The song was inspired by a poster promoting one of Pablo's circus shows. The pub closed in the 1950s and was later demolished. A major new apartment development is now underway on that side of Churchgate.

Our second lost pub under the letter 'B' is the **Buck and Dog Hotel** on Bridge Street, pictured below in January 1986.



It was first mentioned in the 1770s, but it is thought it could have dated back to medieval times. Young men visited the pub at their peril during the Napoleonic Wars at the start of the 19th century, when press gangs used it as a favourite haunt to pick off unsuspecting drinkers and send them to a life on the high seas. It was

also a busy coaching inn, with stables to the back from where you could take a carriage ride across town to pick up the stagecoach to Manchester or London.

The old Buck was pulled down in the 1890s to allow the widening of Lancashire Bridge. It was rebuilt by Henry Boddington in the fashionable 'gin palace' style of the era. A stone marking the high-water mark of the 1799 flood waters was all that remained of the original pub. The new ornate frontage included several stone carvings, in particular the carved animals over the doorway. It also had three levels of cellars, the lowest of which was cut into the stone bedrock, ideal for keeping the perfect pint.

Almost one hundred years later in 1987, the rebuilt pub was demolished. The distinctive Buck and Dog carvings were saved however, and now adorn the staff entrance to Barclays Bank, which was built on the site. The old flood stone from the original pub was built into the back of the new building too.

*Dave Stearn works for Stockport Local Heritage Library, and all the photos in this article are courtesy of them. More images can be seen at [www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-image-archive](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-image-archive)*

# Crisps

## Who owns your favourite brands by Tony Springall



Is there anything better to go with a pint of beer than a bag of crisps? Slightly salty, they quicken the thirst and are a guilty pleasure to eat, a view shared by 98% of the UK population who said they liked crisps. The story behind the big producers echoes

what happened with breweries in the latter part of the 20th century with big players taking over the operations of smaller rivals. In this article there will be two names that reoccur, PepsiCo of the USA and Intersnack from Germany, who between them now dominate this once home-grown industry.

**Walkers** – Founded in 1948 in Leicester, they were taken over by Frito-Lay, a subsidiary of PepsiCo, in 1989. Producing 11 million bags a day using 800 tons of potatoes, they fill their bags with nitrogen to keep things fresh. The largest crisp producer in the UK.

**Smiths** – Founded by Frank Smith in the early 1920s in Cricklewood, London, they dominated the market for over 40 years with a 95% market share; they introduced a small blue bag of salt to add to the crisps. Taken over by Nabisco, they eventually ended up owned by PepsiCo who rebranded a number of their snack foods as Walkers.

**Golden Wonder** – Founded in 1947 in Edinburgh, it was Golden Wonder that knocked Smiths from its dominant position by introducing a whole plethora of novel flavours. Taken over and sold many times, it was bought in 2006 by Tayto Crisps of Ireland who were eventually bought by Intersnack.

**Tyrrells** – Having an upmarket image, it was founded in 2002 on a potato farm in Herefordshire as a way of diversifying as the wholesale price of potatoes set by supermarkets was so low. Sold in 2013, it was eventually bought in 2018 by KP Snacks, who are a subsidiary of Intersnacks.

**Tayto** – The inventor of flavoured crisps, Joe ‘Spud’ Murphy founded the company in Ireland in 1953 and quickly developed the technique to introduce flavouring (cheese & onion) to crisps. A national treasure in Ireland it was sold to Intersnack in 2015.

**Pipers** – Created in 2004 by three farmers to produce high quality crisps from Lincolnshire, it was purchased in 2018 by PepsiCo to add to their portfolio of snack food products.

**McCoy's** – Introduced in 1985 as a thicker, crinkle cut crisp by KP Snacks it eventually ended up, like its parent company, owned by Intersnack.

**Seabrooks** – Founded in Bradford in 1945 by Charles Brooks, it is said that the name derived from a clerical error – rather than C Brooks, a printer produced Seabrooks and the name stuck. Potatoes are sourced from an area of 50 miles around the factory, and in 2018 the company was sold to Calbee Snacks of Japan.

**Kettle Chips** – Another upmarket crisp, it is owned by the Campbell Soup Co.

**Burts** – Founded by Richard & Linda Burt in 1999 after a trip to the USA, it aimed to produce a thicker, hand-fried potato chip (crisp). Based in Devon, it lost its independence in 2014 but in 2021 was bought by Europe Snacks of France.

**Pringles** – A 2009 ruling determined that Pringles are crisps notwithstanding they only contain 42% potato. However, this was overturned in 2016 when they were classified as a biscuit for VAT purposes. The hyperbolic paraboloid saddle-shaped snack was created by Proctor & Gamble and started to be sold in the USA in 1968. Made up of a potato dough mixed with wheat starch, corn and rice flour, plus vegetable oil emulsifier, it is extruded into the familiar shape. Now owned by Kellogg's.

**Gone but not forgotten** – A number of companies have bitten the dust, but the two most famous ones were Tudor, who were snapped up by Walkers and Riley's who became part of Golden Wonder.



### British Crisps

– Now one or two honourable mentions. If you are trying to find a truly British crisp, then Real Crisps were founded in South Wales in 1997 and remains family-owned. Two Farmers Crisps was founded in Herefordshire

by the eponymous two farmers and is the only UK company to use compostable crisp bags to reduce waste and litter. Locally, Fiddler's Lancashire Crisps come in a variety of flavours, and are based on a farm near Ormskirk (and each pack tells you who fried that batch!).

*Above – crisps form an important part of the extensive snack food range at Ye Olde Vic in Edgeley.*

*This article first appeared in Mad Cow, the magazine of Berkshire South East CAMRA and is reproduced with their permission.*



# News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

## Award for Ladybarn

Phil Cowtan, the secretary and bar/cellar man for **Ladybarn Social Club**, won a major award from CAMRA in November.



CAMRA's new Club Recognition Award has been introduced to celebrate and recognise 'a person, group, or organisation which has made an outstanding achievement, commitment, or contribution to the promotion of real ale, cider or perry in social clubs over the last 12 months – or ongoing outstanding work'. There were over 40 nominations, and Phil was one of just three winners.

The award, presented at the annual *Club Mirror* awards evening in Leicester, was made in recognition of the way Phil has transformed

the cask beer offer at the Ladybarn club. A tie to Carlsberg-Tetley was bought out and instead the focus has been on local brewers. Robinsons Unicorn is a fixture on the bar (in a previous incarnation, the club was a Robinsons pub called the White Swan) and alongside this you'll find a changing range of beers, usually from smaller brewers such as Steelfish (whose beers are very popular here), Burton Road and Big Trip. So popular have these changes been, that a fourth handpump was installed to keep up with demand.

Do pay the club a visit – it's at 13 Green Street, Ladybarn, M14 6TL. The website (<https://www.ladybarnsocialclub.co.uk/index.html#>) tells you all you need to know. Pictured above are Phil and his daughter Rebecca on the presentation evening.

## High Peak Pub of the Season



At a time when many pubs are struggling to survive, it seems that the micro bars, at least in our area, are coping well, writes *Ben Zwierink*.

**Bar 2** in Glossop is a good example of this. Set in small premises on High Street East, this small and comfortable bar has

become a favourite with local people, adding to an already thriving real ale scene in the area.

The bar is run by Kevin and Gaynor Clegg whose hard work has made this possible. A well-attended presentation took place on October 28 to present Kevin and Gaynor with their well-deserved award. They are seen here receiving their award from High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire CAMRA chair Ben Zwierink (centre).

## Stockport in Brief

New bars continue to spring up on Underbank in Stockport. The latest is **Stanleys**, across the way from the still-closed **Queens Head**. The man behind it is Lyndon Thorpe, who has 15 years' experience in the hospitality industry. Operating over two floors, it's beautifully done looks a treat, particularly the Landlord's Living Room on the first floor, which is furnished and decorated in High Victorian style. There's a piano downstairs which seems to be proving very popular.

The only thing that lets it down is the rather dull range of beers on offer – no cask, and many will find the keg range pretty uninspiring, too. Having said that though, it's been very busy from the start.

Further down Underbank, work continues on what will be **Cobblers Bar** and, at the very end, work seems to be well advanced at the **White Lion**.



In the Market Place, **Mobberley Brew House** have closed down their operation at **Project 53** (and its sister site in Knutsford, too). However, it has swiftly reopened as **Thread**, a name inspired by Stockport's industrial past, and the fact that in years gone by the premises was a clothes shop.

It's a joint project by Luke Morgan, manager of the **Bakers Vaults**, and Craig Johnson, one of the owners of the **Angel**. As we went to press it was still something of a work in progress, but was already looking much more cosy and inviting than its predecessor. The focus will be on draught and bottled Belgian beers but two handpumps have been installed, and in mid-December they were dispensing beers from Tiny Rebel and Only With Love breweries.

For the moment, Thread is only open on Fridays but this should extend to six days a week (with a Monday closing) by mid-February. There are also plans to bring the kitchen back into use, too. All in all, a very welcome addition to the Market Place.

## Mild Magic Returns



Following the huge success of last year's Mild Magic, which saw a 40 per cent increase in entries, plans are already under way for Mild Magic 2024. This will be something of a milestone too, as it will mark the 30th anniversary of Mild Magic, which started life as the Stockport Mild Challenge in 1994.

This year's Mild Magic will run from 12 April to 19 May. Full details in the next issue of *Opening Times*.

## Pub Shorts

Following an unsteady period, the **Crown Point Tavern** in Denton appears to be returning to its best under the stewardship of Emma Daly. Once again, four real ales are available and CAMRA members continue to enjoy 10% discount at the pub, which is celebrating its fifth consecutive year in the *Good Beer Guide*.

In Levenshulme, **Fred's Ale House** remained closed as we went to press, and has been advertised as being up for lease or rent. It will be a sad loss for Levenshulme if it does not reopen.

In Hazel Grove, Robinsons have now formally closed the **Bird in Hand**. The building is now for sale, described as a 'former public house'. It's fair to say that the pub did seem to have struggled for some years, so this is not an altogether surprising development.

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<b>Hops</b>	Magnum, Minstrel
<b>Malt</b>	Pale Ale, Amber Malt, Chocolate Malt
	Walnut
	Spiced Berries, Chocolate
	Caramel, Malty, Nutty
<b>Bitter</b>	
<b>Sweet</b>	
<b>Available in</b>	Cask ABV 4.2% (9 Gallon)



**J.W. LEES**

# Pub Walks with Chris Morris

## Sale Water Park

When you think of the great walkers' pubs in our area, they are usually located beyond the urban areas, surrounded by miles of countryside. Situated on the edge of Sale Water Park, **Jackson's Boat** is one exception to this rule – offering all the qualities of a countryside walkers' pub, but a mere five minutes' walk from a tram stop.



Set in a peaceful location, and surrounded by nature, this 18th century pub attracts visitors looking for a drink or hearty meal to go with a walk along the nature reserve's scenic paths. Muddy boots and paws are welcome here,

almost expected. The first area on entering caters for dogs and is perfect for drying out, with real fires during the winter months. The cosy feel continues around the central bar, with characterful furnishings and comfortable seating throughout. The two cask beers available on my last visit were Timothy Taylor's Landlord and the house beer, Jackson's Boat Premium Ale, brewed by Beartown. The vast beer garden with children's playground is popular in summer, and bike hire can be found opposite.

### Tram Information

Up until recently, most visitors to the pub would come by car. However, with the introduction of the Metrolink line to Manchester Airport, this hidden gem now has its own tram stop nearby. We leave the tram at Sale Water Park tram stop and board again at Stretford tram stop (both are in ticket zone 3). Dog walkers can use the trams as dogs are now permitted.

### The Walk

This two-mile walk takes in the River Mersey and lake, and then continues on to Stretford along the Bridgewater Canal. We finish with a choice of three excellent bars, all serving quality cask beer, before catching the tram back. After wet weather, some of the paths will be muddy, so hiking or wellington boots are recommended. The terrain is generally flat with only a few steps to climb. All pubs and bars welcome muddy boots and dogs.

Exit Sale Water Park tram stop and aim for the mini roundabout with a big sign for the Jackson's Boat pub. Follow the arrow and turn right here, following the lane for 300 yards until you arrive at the pub.

On leaving, walk up the steps to the bank of the Mersey. Don't cross over the bridge but take a left and walk along the riverbank, keeping the river on your right. I'd recommend the higher of the two paths. Walk past the sluice gate building and after half a mile, we reach a pair of concrete steps with metal handrails on each side of the bank. Go down these to the left, away from the river. At the bottom, we turn right and follow the path with the banking now on our right. Carry straight on along this tree-lined main path which shortly gives us scenic views across Sale Water Park to our left and a bird spotting hide to the right.

400 yards further on from the hide, the path turns left with a large 'Welcome to Sale Water Park' sign. Leave the main path here and take a right, up an incline with overhead tram power lines beyond. Cross over the River Mersey via the bridge and go straight along the path for 500 yards with the tram lines on your left. We now take a left and

walk under two bridges, then continue straight along the path on the other side. Take a right at the National Cycle Network 62 sign, past the gate and right again to walk along a narrow road.

Before the canal tunnel, walk up the steps on the left and take a left to join the towpath of the Bridgewater Canal, with the water on your right. Continue along this straight path for 600 yards. Just before you reach a road bridge passing overhead, take a left which brings us to the centre of Stretford and a choice of three walker-friendly bars, all offering excellent cask beers.

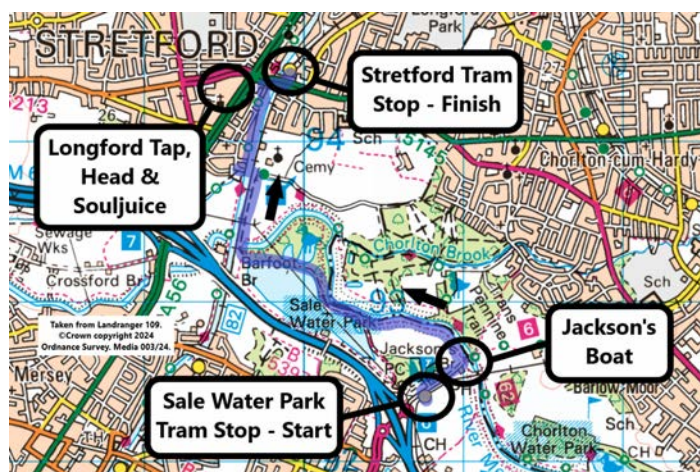


**Longford Tap** is a friendly and welcoming bar which is tastefully furnished, with subtle lighting, giving an inviting space. The greatest offering, though, is the beer choice, validated with a listing in the *Good Beer Guide*. As well as a number of quality

kegs, up to four cask beers are available from local breweries. When I last dropped by, these were from Brightside, Big Trip and Tatton, plus the Longford Tap House Bitter brewed by Marble.



**Head** is a stylish bar, skilfully furnished with attention to detail and bags of atmosphere. Quality keg is a feature here too. The two cask beers were from Cloudwater and Theakston's when I last visited. **Souljuice** is a modern bar that is also worth a look, with more quality keg and up to three cask beers available. These were from 4T's Brewery and Tiny Rebel on last inspection, and were reasonably priced.



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**THE GRIFFIN HEATON MERSEY**

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# What's On

## Local CAMRA Branch Diaries

Forthcoming events 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 9 January** – Town Hall Tavern, 20 Tib Lane, Manchester, M2 4JA. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

**Thursday 11 January** – Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 2NA. Will include selection of Pub of the Year, Cider Pub of the Year and Club of the Year 2024 winners. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Monday 15 January** – Angel, 197 King Street, Dukinfield, SK16 4TH. Starts 7:30pm. (HPNC)

**Thursday 8 February** – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1RY. Will include selection of entries for the 2025 *Good Beer Guide*. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 10 February** – Commercial, 137 Manor Park Road, Glossop, SK13 7SH. Meeting will be followed by a social event. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

**Tuesday 13 February** – Beartown Tap, 18 Willow Street, Congleton, CW12 1RL. Final selection of entries for 2025 *Good Beer Guide*. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Saturday 24 February** – Final selection for 2025 *Good Beer Guide*. See website for location. Starts 1pm. (CMCR)

## Social Events & Presentations

**Saturday 13 January** – Branch 50th anniversary celebration with guest speakers, buffet and prize raffle. Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris, SK4 2NA. Booking essential. 6:30 for 7pm start. (SSM)

**Saturday 13 January** – New Mills Social: starts Masons Arms, 57 High Street, SK22 4BR at 2pm. (HPNC)

**Friday 19 January** – Didsbury North Stagger: 7:30pm Station, 682 Wilmslow Road, M20 2DN; 8:30pm Head of Steam, 653 Wilmslow Road, M20 6QZ; final pub Fletcher Moss, 1 William Street, M20 6RQ. (SSM)

**Thursday 25 January** – Pub of the Month presentation: Arden Arms, 23 Millgate, Stockport, SK1 2LX. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 27 January** – Winter Pub of the Season presentation: Northumberland Arms, 64 Compstall Road, Marple Bridge, SK6 5HD. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

**Tuesday 30 January** – Weekday Wander in Astley Bridge: catch 11:32 train to Blackpool North from Piccadilly. First pub Bank Top Brewery Tap, 68-70 Belmont Road, Astley Bridge, BL1 7AN at 12:20pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 3 February** – Pub of the Season presentation: BarleyHops, 29 High Street, Congleton, CW12 1BG. From 2pm. (MEC)

**Friday 16 February** – Hazel Grove South Stagger: 7:30pm Rising Sun, 2 Buxton Road, SK7 6AD; 8:30pm Wilfred Wood, 204 London Road, SK7 4DF; final pub Grove Alehouse, 145 London Road, SK7 4HH. (SSM)

**Thursday 22 February** – Pub of the Month presentation: Church, 90 Ravenoak Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 7EG. From 8pm. (SSM)

# CAMRA Awards

## Recent Presentations

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for September was **Reddish Ale** on Broadstone Road in Reddish.

Situated in a former shop, not far from Houldsworth Square, Reddish Ale was opened in September 2022 by brothers Craig and Chris Ballinger, together with their business partner Samantha Doolan. Three handpumps dispense changing cask beers, of different styles, both traditional and modern, from a variety of breweries, many of them local, and there are



several keg beers too. Real cider is available, and there's a fridge with bottled and canned beer to drink in or take out.

In the short time it has been open, Reddish Ale has built up a regular clientele, and people of all ages (and their dogs) enjoy its relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Pictured above with their certificate are (l-r) Dan Gregory, Craig Ballinger, Elliot Barlow and Chris Ballinger.

The October Pub of the Month was the **George & Dragon** in Hazel Grove.

You cannot miss the George & Dragon as you pass on a 192 bus, or park

at Sainsbury's. It's unusual, as you don't get many pubs built to a mock-Tudor style which just about squeezes in two floors. Greene King is the current operator but that doesn't mean that the beer choice is limited to their ales. Nick Lanigan and Adam White, respectively manager and deputy, offer an interesting selection of guest beers. They are not afraid of providing a dark beer and supported Mild Magic with Coach House Gunpowder Mild, which flew out and is now regularly available. Nick and Adam are pictured above with their certificate.



The November Pub of the Month award went to the **Sun & Castle** on Hillgate in Stockport. Landlady Veronica Bell (known to everyone as



Ronnie) says that her pub is something of a contrast between inside and out. She's right. From the outside, it can look a little plain – but walk through the doors and you're in a warm and friendly local.

The cellar was looked after by Ronnie's late husband Harry, who won many awards for his efforts, but he passed his skills on to Ronnie to very good effect. The Holts Bitter is always in excellent form, and it's pretty much impossible to stay for just one pint! Pictured above with their certificate are (l-r) Nelly, Ronnie, Louise and Heather.

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