

# OPENING TIMES

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2024 **FREE**



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1/3 1.60  
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**INSIDE: GOOD BEER GUIDE 2025 /  
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OR SEARCH FOR NEW ONES - 

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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: [ssm.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=192265](http://ssm.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=192265) 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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Their telephone number is 03454 04 05 06. To report a matter to Trading Standards go to:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards)

## Subscriptions

Available at £10.50 for one year (make cheques payable to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA). Apply to Lawrence Devaney, 2 Kingsway, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 3BG.

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## Public Transport

*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](http://www.tfgm.com) 0161 244 1000
- \* East Cheshire: 0300 123 5500  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public\\_transport/public-transport.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/public-transport.aspx)
- \* 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.

## Your Local CAMRA Contacts & Websites

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[www.ssm.camra.org.uk](http://www.ssm.camra.org.uk)

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### High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire

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Contact: Sean O'Mahoney; [chair@centralmanchester.camra.org.uk](mailto:chair@centralmanchester.camra.org.uk)

## Social Media

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

### Stockport & South Manchester:

Facebook – [www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA](http://www.facebook.com/SSMCAMRA)

X – @SSMCAMRA

### High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire:

Facebook – [www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA](http://www.facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA)

### Central Manchester:

Facebook – [www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra](http://www.facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra)

X – @MCRCentralCamra

### Macclesfield & East Cheshire:

Facebook – [www.facebook.com/groups/897449270304045](http://www.facebook.com/groups/897449270304045)

X – @MECCAMRA

## CAMRA Discounts

A list of local pubs generously offering a discount to CAMRA members can be found online at [www.camra.org.uk/join/membership-benefits/real-ale-discount-scheme/](http://www.camra.org.uk/join/membership-benefits/real-ale-discount-scheme/)

## Front Cover

Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Officer Dave Preston checks the ciders and perries at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. Photo by Sarah Devaney (and adapted by Lawrence Devaney)

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**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Copy date for the Nov/Dec issue is Saturday 5 October**

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Winner Stockport Cider Pub of the Year  
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# Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for September and October



**The Pub of the Month for September is Ye Olde Vic, on the corner of Chatham Street and King Street West in Edgeley. John Clarke explains why it has won.**

Ye Olde Vic has proved to be something of a survivor. In the 1960s there were plans for its demolition to provide for the entrance to an underground car park. Luckily, and unusually for those days, permission was refused and it lived to fight on.

Its days as a Wilsons pub came to an end in 1979 when it closed down. Fortunately the pub was bought and reopened as a free house in 1983 and that's what it remains to this day. The ride hasn't always been a smooth one, though. For several years it was in the hands of an owner who rather neglected the pub's fabric. However, he also made the wise move of installing Steve Brannan and Johanne Quinn as tenants. They remain there to this day, and during their reign the Vic has gained many CAMRA awards and is pretty much a permanent fixture in the *Good Beer Guide*. It looked as though all of this might come to a sudden end some years ago when the owner decided to sell up. Steve and Jo couldn't afford to buy the pub but a consortium of locals came together and bought it (disclosure: I own a couple of bricks and a slate) and so it became the first community-owned pub in Stockport. Since then the Vic has seen considerable investment and now looks smarter than it has done for many years – it's now also weather-proof! Some of the investors also help out, both behind the bar and in the cellar.

Investment in the pub continues, but it has also become something of a local institution and attracts beer lovers from both Stockport and further afield. Six handpumps are available, but in quieter times only three may be in use, thus ensuring the turnover and quality of the beers. Popular beers have been known to sell out in just an evening. Real cider is often available, too.

Join us on the evening of Thursday 26 September as we celebrate the survival and continuing success of this remarkable pub.

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

A FAMILY BUSINESS  
**STEPHENSONS**  
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**October's Pub of the Month is the Three Tunnes on London Road in Hazel Grove. Lawrence Devaney has been along.**

I am standing across the road from the Three Tunnes and thinking that my grandfather would probably recognise it today, although he would be confused by the sign outside offering tapas. Built in 1792, and presumably named after a small brewery active in the late 18th century, the pub was sold to Wheater & Swale's Brewery in 1866\*. The Three Tunnes stands on the A6 in Hazel Grove, surprisingly next door to another Robinsons pub, the Grapes.

Inside, the pub has been refurbished and remains in the traditional style albeit with a few walls removed. Outside, the windows with etched and stained glass confirm its ancestry. Open fires on colder days, combined with a mix of leather, wood and plaid, contribute to the time-honoured 'local pub' idiom. A central bar with four cask ales on offer faces out to four separate public areas. A beer garden behind the pub completes the layout, where, on a summer's day, Unicorn, Trooper, Dizzy Blonde and Cumbria Way can be enjoyed. Old Tom can also be found in appropriate months.

Although the pub is definitely wet-led, the Three Tunnes has built up a deserved reputation for its food and, as mentioned earlier, the menu includes tapas – although my personal favourite is the liver and bacon. A full menu including a Sunday roast is available.

A Robbies house under the management of Finbar and Danielle Tuite for approximately ten years, it is part of the community, with thriving darts teams which compete in the Stockport, Hazel Grove & District Darts & Crib League. Several other social and sports groups are supported, and a weekly quiz adds to the community vibe. Several TV screens predominantly showing sport, particularly horse racing during the day, generally don't disturb customers who want a quiet pint or meal. The day-to-day running of the pub is down to Phil Quinn, who also manages the cellar and ensures that the ales are consistently excellent.

Please come along on Thursday 24 October to celebrate the pub's success and join the regulars enjoying traditional beers. The full address is 194 London Road, SK7 4DQ. As it's on the A6, a 192 bus heading for the Park & Ride will drop you off close by, as will the 199 and the 374. Hazel Grove station is a five-minute walk.

\*Historic note credited to Mike Ogden's "A History of Stockport Breweries" - ISBN 1 85216 018 7

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# Good Beer Guide 2025

The Campaign for Real Ale's *Good Beer Guide* – the UK's best-selling beer and pub guide – is celebrating its 52nd edition with not one but two covers featuring two of the UK's favourite locals: *Coronation Street's Rovers Return Inn*, and *Emmerdale's Woolpack*.

*The Guide*, which surveys 4,500 of the best pubs across the UK, is the definitive beer drinker's guide for those seeking the best pints in the nation's pubs. *The Good Beer Guide 2025* is published on 25 September and is available for pre-order now.

The Rovers Return Inn and the Woolpack represent the familiarity and community spirit of pubs across the UK. This edition of the *Guide* pays tribute to the communities that are beamed into homes, providing entertainment and companionship to those that may not have a local pub of their own. Research commissioned by CAMRA found that people who have a local rate themselves as significantly happier because of it, and have more close friends, and the pubs on television reflect this feeling. Some of *Coronation Street's* and *Emmerdale's* most iconic, touching and memorable moments have taken place in their respective pubs.

## Iain MacLeod

The foreword of *The Good Beer Guide 2025* will be written by BAFTA- and multi award-winning Iain MacLeod, ITV's Executive Producer for Continuing Drama. MacLeod has been *Coronation Street's* Series Producer for the last five years, taking the reins in December 2018. He kept the show on air during the Covid pandemic and, throughout his tenure, the serial drama has won multiple awards and accolades, celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2020.

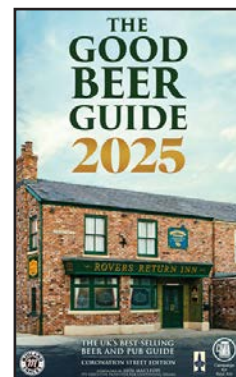
## Television

The representation of pubs on television is vital at a time when the trade is under significant pressure. CAMRA's pub closure statistics for 2023 show that 194 pubs were lost forever due to conversion or demolition, including venues like the Crooked House in Himley, and a shocking 1,293 pubs closed their doors to their communities.

CAMRA Chairman Nik Antona said: "Working with ITV to celebrate the Rovers Return Inn and the Woolpack is a great honour for CAMRA. The pubs and the soaps themselves reflect many of CAMRA's values, including the importance of community and the preservation of UK culture and traditions."

"The last few years have been an incredibly difficult time for the industry, and we need more support than ever before to keep our nation's pubs open and thriving. I'd encourage everyone to use this year's *Guide* to visit the very best pubs across the UK and support them for generations to come."

**Copies of the Good Beer Guide can also be obtained from Jim Flynn at a price of £16.99 (including p&p). Please send a cheque payable to 'CAMRA Stockport & South Manchester' to 66 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, SK4 5EG. You can also pay by BACS using sort code 16-34-27, account number 11363511.**



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The image shows two covers of 'The Good Beer Guide 2025'. The larger cover on the left is the 'Coronation Street Edition', featuring a photograph of the Rovers Return Inn. A purple circular badge with the text 'Coronation Street Edition' is positioned above the cover. The smaller cover on the right is the 'Emmerdale Edition', featuring a photograph of the Woolpack. A purple circular badge with the text 'Emmerdale Edition' is positioned above the cover. Both covers have the title 'THE GOOD BEER GUIDE 2025' in large, bold letters. At the bottom of each cover, there is a small text box that reads 'THE UK'S BEST-SELLING BEER AND PUB GUIDE' and the edition name. There are also some small circular logos at the bottom right of each cover.

The CAMRA logo is a circular emblem with the letters 'CAMRA' inside. Below the logo, the text 'Campaign for Real Ale' is written in a sans-serif font.

The Midland Snacks logo is a circular emblem with the letters 'M' and 'S' inside, and the words 'MIDLAND SNACKS' around the perimeter.



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# Stagger

## Levenshulme with Jack Lyons

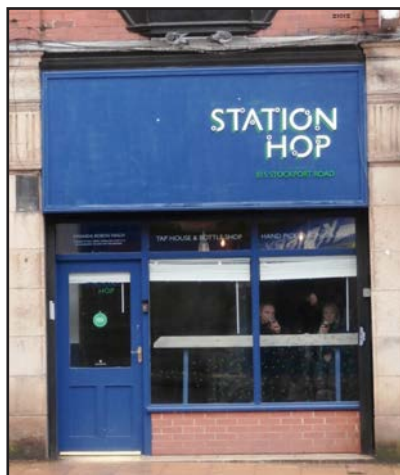


Tonight we started, on the hottest day of the year so far, at the **Blue Bell** on Barlow Road. There has been an inn on this site for well over 700 years, but the current building was built by Rochdale & Manor Brewery in the 1930s and passed into the hands of Samuel

Smiths of Tadcaster back in the 70s. The pub interior is a splendid arrangement of various rooms, all with parquet flooring. It being such a warm evening, most customers were seated outside, where there is a paved area and a large orchard-like garden to the side. Being a Sam Smiths house, the only cask ale available was Old Brewery Bitter but, on every occasion I have visited, this beer has been on fine form. It was also well received by my fellow staggerers, many of whom had not known this pub existed.

Heading down towards Stockport Road via Cromwell Grove, we pass Levenshulme Old Library, a former Carnegie Library now enjoying a new life as a community arts centre, and, across the road, the derelict Levenshulme Public Baths and Washhouse. Sunny Lowry, the first woman to swim the Channel, trained here in 1933. At the junction of Cromwell Grove and Stockport Road, turn right.

**Station Hop** is a bar located in a former shop. It was opened in 2018 by two local real ale enthusiasts, and is currently run by Manchester's Blackjack Brewery, with four cask handpumps and a range of keg beers on tap. The small front street-facing bar, with shelves displaying bottles and cans for sale, opens out to a large back room displaying art work. There is also a spacious, busy beer yard which wraps around the adjacent building. Here, more of our group joined us. The Blackjack Summer Ale was thought to be a bit uninspiring but the Pail Milk Stout was judged to be excellent.



Turning right out of Station Hop is a complete real ale desert along the A6 until you reach the Bulls Head in the city centre. We turned left and staggered south. First pub was the **Union**, a former Pub of the Month (in May 1998!) had no cask ale. Next door, **Fred's Ale House** was still closed but not converted into anything. Shall we see the return of Fred's?



Next on this side of the road is the **Overdraft** which is a former TSB branch, and is now a well laid-out bar with open air seating to the street. After an initial quick inspection revealed, as anticipated, no cask ale, we discussed whether we should partake of the 30 or so keg ales on tap, and as the branch beer festival had recently offered keykeg for sale, we all piled in and had a half each from the extensive list.

A few doors down, former pubs the **Pack Horse** and **Fiddlers Green** are both good conversions of the buildings at least (although Fiddlers Green was itself a conversion of a former bank).

Just before we reach **Levenshulme** Town Hall we come to the Levenshulme pub, or Levy to the locals, where cask ale makes an occasional appearance but has not been seen for a while.



Across the road is a modern microbar, the **Talleyrand**, set in a converted shop (there's a 'conversion' theme running through this article). It's an uncluttered bar with bare floorboards and a reclaimed wooden bar, with an eclectic range of knick-knacks on the rear wall. For sale are some keg beers and the occasional cask ale, which tonight was from Juggernaut, and was judged to be OK.

Almost across the road is **Station South**, another conversion, but this time from a railway station that used to serve the Great Central Railway (GCR), but now is situated mid-point on the Fallowfield Loop cycle route. It's an impressive place, especially lit up at night with its vast beer garden, and just right to serve real ale, but since its opening in 2022 no cask has been on offer.



Just a short walk off Stockport Road down Crayfield Road was our final destination: the **Sidings**. This pub was built by Holts in the 1980s and was on the site of former railway sidings and coal yard. This is a great example of the basic pub that Holts are famous for which provides a community hub. Split into two rooms: a lounge for entertainment, though none of us were tempted by the karaoke on offer and a vault where darts and pool can be enjoyed. Two beers were on offer tonight – Bitter and Holt's IPA. Our entire group opted for the bitter, which was on fine form, which we enjoyed in the enclosed beer garden.

So what does tonight's stagger tell us? Levenshulme has long been touted as the new Didsbury or Chorlton, but it doesn't need to be a clone. OK, a lot of pubs have closed but that reflects the country as a whole – and at least you can still afford to live and play here. And, as we've seen tonight, pubs may close but closed shops become bars.

# NORTHUMBERLAND ARMS

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# Greater Manchester Winners

## Pub, Cider Pub & Club of the Year 2024 Announced

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has announced the 2024 winners of its Greater Manchester Pub, Cider Pub and Club of the Year competitions for 2024. For the first, time both the Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year are in the *Opening Times* circulation area.

### Pub of the Year



The Greater Manchester Pub of the Year 2024 is the **Northumberland Arms**, on Compstall Road in Marple Bridge.

The Northumberland Arms (The Thumb) is 200 years old this year, acquiring its first beer licence in 1824. In January 2017 the pub was declared surplus to requirements and put up for sale by Robinsons. A Community Benefit Society was set up to save the pub from permanent closure. After a successful campaign the purchase was agreed and 'The Thumb' reopened its doors as a community-owned pub in December 2017.



In January 2024, the pub was awarded Branch Winter Pub of the Year by High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire branch. In April 2024 'The Thumb' became the branch's Pub of the Year. And now it is the Greater Manchester Pub of the Year 2024. What a year!

The pub is small, but punches well above its weight. Small rooms help give a very comfortable feel to the inside. Outside, customers can sit

in the garden, maintained by an enthusiastic gardening group, to the side of the pub, or under gazebos at the front.

The Thumb was one of the first pubs in the area to invite street food traders, who now provide food weekly, every Thursday, throughout the year. Also, every Thursday, there is a very popular Pub Quiz.

Five handpumps dispense regularly changing cask beers. Robinsons Unicorn is ever-present but other beers of all styles appear on the beer list. A good selection of wines, sourced from a local supplier, is also available.

The summer season sees live music. The music style is eclectic and ranges from brass to rock 'n' roll. In winter, the feel is more acoustic and indoors.

As well as supporting the local food bank and other charities, regular community activities include a walking group, a cycling group, darts

and dominoes, a dementia support group, and a Chatty Café which provides the opportunity for a cup of tea or coffee, a cake, and a chat. The pub is supported by an active group of volunteers who assist Phil Jarvis the pub manager and his staff. The shareholders, who helped start the whole adventure, are vital to the pub's existence, as are all its customers.

The Northumberland Arms is well served by public transport, with buses 383 and 384 from Stockport Interchange dropping you outside. The award was due to be presented on Saturday 31 August – we'll have photos in the next issue.

### Cider Pub of the Year



The Greater Manchester Cider Pub of the Year will be familiar to many readers of *Opening Times* as it is the **Petersgate Tap** on St Petersgate in Stockport town centre.

This very popular pub was opened in

September 2016 by father and son team Alan and Chris Gent, in what was previously a betting shop. Since then it has won many awards from CAMRA, both locally and regionally.

The commitment of Alan and Chris has made the Petersgate Tap one of the foremost outlets for traditional cider and perry in Stockport, as evidenced by it winning the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year every year since 2018. It's also in the regional cider and perry premier league too, having previously been the Greater Manchester champion in 2018 and 2019.



Along with a superlative range of ciders and perries, both on draught and in bottle, a recent innovation has been the occasional 'Cider Circle', featuring talks and tastings by cider makers. A recent highlight was a presentation by James Marsden

from Gregg's Pit Cider & Perry, and arguably the best perry maker in the UK.

The award was presented on Sunday 11 August and pictured above are, (l-r), CAMRA's North West Regional Director Ralph Warrington, Chris Gent, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA's cider officer Dave Preston, and Alan Gent.

### Club of the Year

And finally – congratulations to the **Dobcross Band Club** on Platt Lane in Dobcross.

This excellent club has made it a hat-trick, as it was also the Greater Manchester winner for 2022 and 2023. It's out in the sticks, but well worth making the effort to get there.

# Cider and Perry

## News, Awards and Events



### Cider & Perry Month



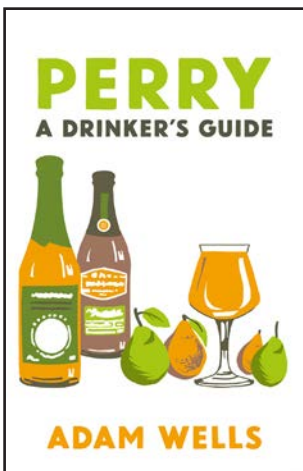
CAMRA campaigns for and supports real cider and perry throughout the year, but we particularly spotlight it in May and October.

Why May and October? Unlike real ale production, which can happen at any time of the year, real cider and perry is generally a seasonal product and can only be made when the fruit is ripe. Production is tied to a natural cycle of the apple and perry pear trees found in orchards around the country.

The month of May was chosen because it is when the orchards come into bloom and fruit begins to set. Cider and perry production from the previous year reaches maturity in May and can start being enjoyed, so it's also a time for celebration of the fruits of cider makers' labour!

October is an equally busy time in the cider maker's calendar, when fruit is harvested, milled, pressed and stored for fermentation and cider and perry production is in full flow.

### Perry: A Drinker's Guide



Perry has been made for centuries. Praised by the ancient Romans, and once prized as highly as fine wine, it is made from pears growing on trees that can be up to 300 years old; fruit that is, in some instances, so rare that only a single tree remains of a particular variety. Perry deserves its own authoritative resource, and now it has one: renowned drinks writer and campaigner Adam Wells.

*"Adam Wells – one of the rising stars of drinks writing – has rushed in where no one dared to tread and written a consummate guide to a drink most of us don't know exists –*

*perry. This book is a cracker – opinionated, witty, critical, yet passionate, intensely researched and wonderfully readable. The past, present and future of perry – it's all here."* – Oz Clarke

Adam has written the world's first dedicated and comprehensive guide to this most wondrous of drinks. Beautifully illustrated throughout with stunning colour photography, *Perry: A Drinker's Guide* takes the reader on a journey through the magical world of perry, with information on its troubled history, the many different varieties of pear, how it's made, and, most importantly, a guide to styles, countries, regions and producers.

You can be sure that in years to come perry lovers everywhere will refer to this book as the starting point on their own incredible journey. You can order your copy from CAMRA Books for just £15.99 – visit the website at [shop1.camra.org.uk](http://shop1.camra.org.uk).

### What is Real Cider & Perry?

Real cider was traditionally produced from cider apples, which are different from eating or cooking apples. These typically have high levels of tannin which lead to a very bitter taste, writes Ian Packham of CAMRA's Real Ale, Cider & Perry Campaigns Committee.



There are many varieties of cider apple, which have different characteristics and vary in levels of tannin and acid. They tended to grow in the Three Counties (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire) as well as the West Country, especially Devon and Somerset. Cider is also made in many parts of the country, with producers using eating or cooking apples instead, which leads to a different taste profile again. Similarly, perry pears are different from dessert pears in that they are smaller in size and are high in tannin, which tends

to give an astringent taste rather than the bitterness found in cider apples. They tend to dominate in the Three Counties, which is where the majority of real perry is produced.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for many of the well-known ciders and perries sold in the UK that are not produced using the natural process from apples and pears, but have been produced artificially using concentrated juice, chaptalised juice or syrup, some involving many processes prior to being ready for sale that make them far less environmentally friendly than the traditional product.



Concentrated juice is where the fruit has been pressed and then much of the water content has been removed to reduce the volume for transportation. It is then rehydrated prior to starting the fermentation process. Chaptalised juice is where the fruit has been pressed and then large amounts of sugar are added to the juice. This is then fermented to a very high ABV where it can be stored prior to being diluted with water in order to achieve the desired alcohol content for sale.

The use of these methods, plus the changing methods of dispense for traditional cider and perry, often from polybins to bag-in-boxes, led to CAMRA reviewing its definition of real cider and perry.

The wording of the new definition states: ***'CAMRA defines Real Cider or Perry as being fermented from the whole juice of fresh pressed apples or pears, without the use of concentrated or chaptalised juices'***.

Following this, CAMRA contacted as many cider and perry producers as possible, in order to confirm their production processes, and generated a list of producers complying with the definition. This is available as a map showing cider and perry producers, as well as producers of fruit and flavoured ciders and perries, or as a downloadable list. These are available via the CAMRA website or directly at [producers.camra.org.uk](http://producers.camra.org.uk), and the map is a living document that is updated on a regular basis.

# Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

*Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA presented several awards over the past few months. Here's a round-up of three of them.*

## Cider Pub of the Year 2024



The Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year 2024 is the **Poachers Inn** on Ingersley Road in Bollington.

This popular free house sells five cask beers, and will also keep you well-fed. However, for many years the Poachers has also served a selection of two or three, and sometimes more, natural ciders and perries.

Pictured above, Macclesfield CAMRA's cider officer, Mike Wawiorco (front) presents the award to the Poachers' owners Helen and Rob Elwood.

## Summer Pub of the Season



The Macclesfield Summer Pub of the Season 2024 is the **Queen's Head** in Congleton, writes *Dave Gittins*.

Situated across the road from the town's railway station on the Manchester to Stoke railway line, and alongside the

Macclesfield canal, the pub has traditionally been a regular haunt for the discerning cask ale drinker.

However, late in 2018, its very existence was under threat as plans were submitted to convert it to housing use. These met with fierce local opposition. Fortunately, a local consortium stepped in to rescue the Queen's, one member of which was current owner Rob Allen, who along with wife Adele bought out the other members in 2022.

In recent times, the Queen's has had an increased dining focus, which has proved to be very popular, but that's not to say that those just wanting to venture in for a pint or two are unwelcome. Far from it; six cask beers are usually available – Bass, Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Greene King Abbot Ale and the Beartown-brewed Queen's Pale are

the four permanent offerings, joined by a couple of guest beers, which often include a stout or porter. The pub's inclusion back in the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide* of late has been very well-deserved.

The bar team, led by Carol, create a welcoming environment for drinkers and diners alike. Dogs are welcome, both in the pub and also in the large outdoor area adjoining the car park. The pub also has occasional live music events, and a board-gaming group meets there every Thursday evening.



The award was presented on Saturday 27 July. The picture shows in the foreground left to right, branch chair Dave Gittins, Rob Allen, Carol Weaver, Adele Allen & Nell.

## Club of the Year 2024



The branch's Club of the Year for 2024 is the **Alderley Edge Union Club** on Stevens Street, which is a real ale oasis in a bit of a desert of a town, writes *Dave Hasler*.

Paul Furby has been in charge of the bar for two years now, and the range has expanded to six cask beers that are both constantly changing and of great quality.

The club has lots of snooker tables, and also features darts, pool and large TVs for sport. There is also a county-standard bowling green.

Pictured above is local CAMRA member David Pearce (left) presenting the award to Paul Furby.

## Pub News in Brief



The P-Noot Brewery has returned home to where it all started and will recommence brewing at the **Lowes Arms** in Denton, following the cellar brewery being fully refurbished and upgraded.

In Denton, the **Crown Point Tavern** has ceased serving real ale, and is unlikely to resume doing so under current ownership.

**Hennigan's Sports Bar** in Levenshulme has closed – an announcement on Facebook explained that it would be closing its doors on Sunday 18 August.

The **Steel Works** in Bredbury is going from strength to strength since its launch back in March, and has now opened a large beer garden to the rear of the venue.

In West Didsbury, the **Railway** on Lapwing Lane is a finalist in the Joseph Holt Pub Awards for 2024. The pub is in contention for two awards – Best Wet Team, Standards of Excellence, while staff member Scarlett Blades is up for Front of House Team Member of the Year.

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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.*

## A Poem for the Window of the Pub

Your see-through skin lets me know  
what's happening in your heart when I cannot step in:

dogs eating Mini Cheddars, ale recommendations,  
arguments over the best way to cook liver between

men who have never cooked dinner before, relentless  
lower league football opinions, vegetarian pie scepticism,

spliced crisp packet sharing, relentless piss-taking,  
reluctant opening up and hands on shoulders.

## Your Name

The man in the pub's mouth is talking  
about retiring. Grey stubble sits on a chin

that's taken plenty of knocks and his slip-on  
shoes have decided to get a taxi home safely

tonight. His smile is a blank sheet of paper.  
His blue eyes catch mine and I'm 14 years old

warming up for 90 minutes at centre back  
wondering if a girl will ever kiss my lips.

He thanks me for keeping him company  
this afternoon and we exchange names.

He says he's never met a Carl with a C  
and I decide to smile and not to tell him how

he's got your name but not your dead body.

## Four Presents

A silver giraffe is in the pub.  
There's a navy-blue gift bag  
on the table in front of him  
with a bottle of something  
poking out the top.  
Presents two, three, and four are  
the plumber, the marketeer, and the train driver  
slowly sipping pints of ale on chairs  
listening to him remembering their mum.

# Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

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



Our first pub, the **Florist Hotel**, 100 Shaw Heath, started out under the different name of the Bowling Green. It was first mentioned in the 1840s. By 1855 it had been rebuilt and given a new name, inspired by the market garden nearby. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the pub was run for more than twenty years by the Slack family. They ran a flourishing business, brewing and bottling their own beer

and mineral water at the rear of the premises.

In the early 20th century the Florist was a Kay's Atlas Brewery house, but in 1929 the Manchester-based brewers were taken over by Robinsons. They had recently built the town centre Unicorn Brewery and were looking to expand. It was one of 23 Kay's houses around Lancashire and Cheshire to be brought into the Robbies fold, the only other Stockport pub being the Bakers Vaults in the Market Place. So began almost 90 years of the Florist Hotel as a Robinsons house.

In fact, the pub had only just reopened after the sale. It had suffered a major fire in 1927 and had been badly damaged. The newly remodelled premises included lots of glass in the modern style, including a clubroom with floor-to-ceiling mirrors. The Florist closed in 2018 and has now been converted into apartments.



Our second lost pub under the letter 'F' is the **Farmers Arms**, 209 Stockport Road, Cheadle Heath, another Stockport pub which has recently closed. It was first mentioned in 1838, when

Cheadle was well outside the Stockport boundary. The photograph is from around 1880 and shows the tollhouse for the Stockport and Warrington Turnpike gate, which was located nearby. Stockport Road was turnpiked under an Act of 1820, with the Farmers Arms built to cater for the coaching fraternity who used the road. At this time, the pub had gardens and a bowling green.

The pub had been tied to several breweries over the decades. In the first part of the 20th century, it was a Stopford's Brewery House. Wilsons took it on in the second half of the century before it finally transferred to Greene King in the new millennium. In 2019, the pub was put up for sale as a going concern, but the Farmers became a victim of the pandemic, staying closed after the first lockdown. It was demolished earlier this year, with a drive-through food chain planned for the site.

**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).**



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# Pub Walks with Chris Morris

## Stockport Pub Round, Part 4 - Middlewood to Bramhall

The Stockport Pub Round is a series of linked pub walks, along traffic-free nature trails, visiting fine pubs in the process. Continuing from where we finished stage three (Marple to High Lane and Middlewood), stage four takes us along varied terrain of peaceful woodlands and open fields. A good pub features at the start, midway and at the end. As with all these walks, they are easily accessible by public transport.

### Public Transport Information

Stage four starts in High Lane for bus users (using the 199 Skyline service) and at Middlewood Station for train users (services every two hours). The walk finishes at Bramhall with a railway station and bus stops for the 378, 378A and 379. A couple of bus stops can be found midway if you wanted to cut the walk short.

### The Walk

Part four is the most challenging stage of the Pub Round, being six miles long. Although not hilly, some sections will be muddy after wet weather and there are some uneven paths, so hiking boots are recommended. All pubs welcome dogs.



For bus users, get off the 199 in High Lane at the stop near the Royal Oak pub. As well as a useful point of reference, the pub also works as a great pre-walk meet up, opening at 1pm. An attractive, refurbished interior awaits, and a relaxing beer garden features at the rear. No food is available but a pizza van visits on Thursday evenings. On my last visit, the cask beers were Carlsberg Marston's Wainwright and Hobgoblin Gold.

Leaving the pub, our route is along Middlewood Road, opposite the pub entrance, following signs for Middlewood Railway Station. After 300 yards, ignore the turning to the left for High Lane Cricket Club and carry on straight ahead. After 150 yards, turn right and follow the trail until you join the wide Middlewood Way track. Turn left here and, after 200 yards, take the steps down to the station's platform 2. This is where train users can join the walk.

With the tracks on your right, continue to the end of the platform and join a path between metal railings, down the incline, left down steps and right along a gravel road to the main road. Turn right and keep right so you are facing oncoming traffic. Taking extra care here; it is advisable to briefly cross over twice so you can see around two bends in the road. When the road bends right to cross a river, we carry on straight ahead through Parkgate Farm on the main track and out the other side into woodland.

On the other side we enter the field ahead via a kissing gate. Turn right here and follow the track for half a mile until you reach a farm,

squeezing through two farmyard gates and round to the farm's front entrance road. Turn right to the edge of a field hugging the fence to a kissing gate that joins a smart residential street. Turn right here and, before you reach the main road, take the signed footpath to the left until you reach Anglesey Drive. Cross straight over here, through the car park to the scenic Poynton Pool, and then first right, to cross the main road via the traffic island to the path beyond through a tall kissing gate.

Cross the footbridge and continue along the path which narrows briefly, then pass through three further kissing gates and under the A555 road bridge, with the river on our right. On the other side, turn left to walk back up the hill and then to the right next to a garden fence to a lane and then a road. Turn right here and, watching out for traffic, cross over to the pavement at the bridge and continue along for 100 yards before entering a field on the left by untying a metal gate. Walk along the right edge of the field for half a mile, exiting into woodland, over a stile and left, down to another stile, and then right along the boardwalk.

Carry straight on for another half mile on the left edge of the open grassland. Passing through a stile, the path now goes through the Happy Valley nature reserve with the river on our left. After 600 yards, cross over the river at the footbridge and continue along the same tarmacked path, then the right-hand fork, to follow the riverbank until we reach a little car park. Cross over Valley Road and walk along the pavement with the main road to our right until we reach a large roundabout.



Our midpoint pub stop can be found by taking a left along Fir Road. After 200 yards we find the imposing 1930s mock-Tudor exterior of the **Ladybrook**. The interior is equally impressive, with a recent refurbishment undertaken. Despite the extensive size, some clever dividing up means a homely and cosy feel is to be found. Whilst majoring on food (served until 9pm), an impressive range of cask beers is at the heart of operations. On last inspection, the cask beers were Black Sheep, Taylor's Landlord, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Yardbird, with Old Golden Hen and Belhaven 80 Shilling found in the games room at the rear. A large area of outdoor seating is located at the front. Bus stops for the 379 are outside.

Returning to the roundabout, cross over Bramhall Lane South using the two pelican crossings and turn right to the bus stop (378, 378A, 379 services) where we turn left and join a tarmacked path into Bramhall Park. Turn left to join a road signed to Bramhall Hall and after 400 yards we reach a crossroads with a café, toilets and the splendid Bramhall Hall on our right.

*Continues on page 19*



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# Pub Walks Continued

To our left is the continuation of our walk, signposted GM Ringway. Take the tarmacked path to the right of the car park which leads to pedestrian lights at a main road. Cross over and head straight on through Carr Wood for half a mile along the main wide path, ignoring a path to the left. After exiting the woodland, walk clockwise around the roundabout along Robins Lane.

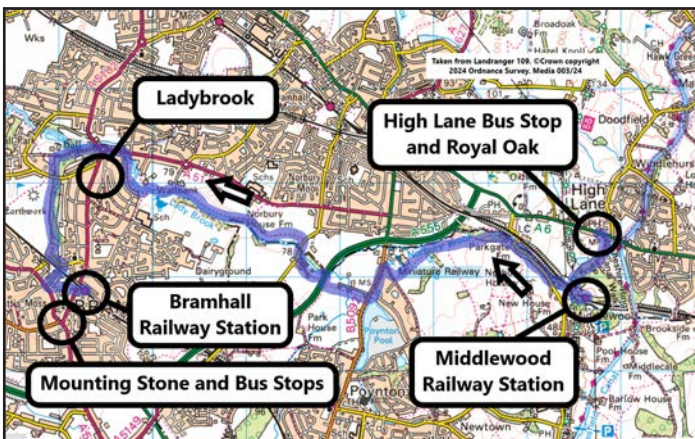
After 150 yards, cross over and turn right following the GM Ringway sign along Hillbrook Road, under the railway bridge and up the street to the main road. Turn left and left again along Benja Fold, with a road on either side. Continue straight ahead, through woodland, across a stream, then up to a main road with Bramhall railway station opposite.



Quality post-walk refreshments can be found at the *Good Beer Guide*-listed **Mounting Stone** in the centre of Bramhall. This welcoming micropub, set across two floors in comfortable surroundings, is the perfect reward for the day's walk. On the well-equipped bar, you'll find six handpumps, plus eight taps of quality keg. When I last popped in, the cask beers were Bollington's Long Hop and Best, Milestone's North Rock, RedWillow's Nelson Idaho 7 and Bramhall Best from the in-house brewery, Made of Stone. The sixth handpump was for Kentish Pip's Craftsman cider.

For full pub details, including opening times, visit [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com)

Next time: Stage five – Bramhall to Cheadle.



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# News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

## RedWillow Awards

Macclesfield-based brewery **RedWillow** has been named among the top food and drink producers globally this year, picking up a highly prized 3-star Great Taste award for Perceptionless, a New England IPA.

13,672 products were put through the competition's rigorous blind judging process at the world's most coveted food and drink awards. 3,938 products were awarded a Great Taste 1-star – 'food and drink



that delivers fantastic flavour', 1,386 were awarded a Great Taste 2-star – 'above and beyond delicious', and 266 were awarded a Great Taste 3-star – 'extraordinarily tasty food and drink'.

Perceptionless, first released by the brewery back in 2016, was a big hit with the Great Taste judges, described as "a beautifully inviting hazy pale beer". Fewer than two per cent of all the products entered this year received a 3-star great taste Award in 2024.

Divisionless, the brewery's first gluten-free, vegan lager, made with all British ingredients, and released only last year, also received much praise from the judging panel, gaining a 2-star award. Weightless, RedWillow's best-selling Session IPA, and Shameless, their West Coast Style IPA, both received a 1-star Great Taste award in 2024.

Toby McKenzie, head brewer and founder of RedWillow Brewery, told *Opening Times*: "We are thrilled to have won not just one, but four Great Taste awards in a range of styles which reflects the breadth of what we do as a brewery."

## Old Tom Day

Robinsons' Old Tom Day will take place on Saturday 2 November and will mark not just the first chance for everyone to drink Old Tom from cask for the



first time this winter but, this year, is an extra special event as the brewery celebrates Old Tom's 125th birthday.

Old Tom Day will be taking place in selected Robinsons pubs (a full list will be available closer to the event), and the plan is to engage with Old Tom drinkers in the run-up to contribute to some very special events.

This year, they are also celebrating Old Tom's birthday by bringing back an iconic design from the beer's past, which will be available on all bottles of Old Tom and on a limited-edition pump clip to mark the occasion.

## Old Hall Beer Festival is Back



Last year saw the very welcome return of the annual beer and cider festival at the **Old Hall** in Whitehough, and the good news is that it's back for this year as well (see advert on page eight).

Last year's event was one of the best, with a superb range of beers, which featured not

only many local brewers but also top-class beers from around the country. The food was also notably good, and we are expecting the same this year, too. The festival runs across both the Old Hall and its sister pub, the **Paper Mill**, just across the road. In addition, there should be an outside bar beneath a large tent.

The Old Hall is around a 15-minute walk from Chinley station and this year, thanks to overrunning engineering work, there will be an hourly direct train from Stockport, via Hazel Grove. *Opening Times* never misses this – and neither should you.

## Chapel House, Denton

The **Chapel House** in Denton (the Big Chap) has a new landlord, young real ale enthusiast and CAMRA member Adam Lavery, who took over in April. Since then, the cask offering has extended to two, with a guest from Bootleg complementing Holt's Bitter. Thanks to a significant improvement in quality, sales of cask ale are up and, if the trend continues, we could soon see a third pump.

Adam has also introduced live music on Saturday nights, and other initiatives such as a free Jukebox on Tuesdays and Fridays, and free pool on Wednesdays and Fridays are helping the pub to thrive. And, by the time you read this, Adam and his team will have climbed Mount Snowdon to help raise £4,000 for The Christie!



# Real Ale Experience at the Ford Madox Brown

We're holding a special young members event at the Ford Madox Brown on Wilmslow Road in Rusholme on Wednesday, 25 September from 7.30pm.



The event will allow all our current and prospective young members to meet their peers and discuss our activities with both them and other active branch members.

We will have a membership stand where you will be able to learn more about the campaign and discover all about the activities we undertake. This includes our annual beer and cider festival, day trips to pubs in different towns, regular monthly branch meetings, often with guest speakers, annual campaigns to promote different styles of beer, and visiting breweries, amongst many other campaigning activities.

If you're not a member then you'll be able to learn more about the Campaign for Real Ale and, if you join on the night, there will be some attractive enticements, including £30 worth of beer vouchers, T-shirts and bottles of beer.

A great night is to be enjoyed, especially as our hosts, Wetherspoons, will have all cask beers at £1.99 for the event.

So come along and bring your colleagues, and meet like-minded people for a great night out.

You can learn more details about our aims and activities at <https://ssm.camra.org.uk/>

## Be part of the CAMRA story

*Real ale is just the start...*

Our story is your story. So join us in supporting everything from pubs, clubs and drinkers' rights, to licensees and breweries, uniting us in the story we all love.

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Campaign for Real Ale

Real stories, real people, real ale

# Obituaries

Our thoughts go with them

## Ray Ford



*Opening Times* was very sorry to hear of the death of Ray Ford, the licensee of the **Railway**, Wellington Road North, Stockport.

Together with his late wife Pam, Ray took over the Railway in November 2008, and in July 2009 they purchased the pub from Punch Taverns. This move resulted in a rapid improvement in the

pub's fortunes. The number of cask beers steadily increased to four and, apart from Holt's Bitter, these were ever-changing guests. This gained the Railway two Pub of the Month awards, and the pub was also the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2010.

Under Ray, the Railway also developed an enviable reputation for its live music. Live jazz was a speciality but this was supplemented by other music nights, and the rockabilly weekends often saw the pub drunk dry.

Ray's well-attended funeral was followed by live music at the Railway, both on the day and the following weekend. Both very apt tributes to someone who took a potentially failing pub and put it on the map. The Railway was closed as we went to press and we understand it is to be sold.

Pictured above – Ray and Pam with a Pub of the Month award.

## Rod Studholme



We have been informed of the sad passing of Rod Studholme in February.

Rod and his wife Sheila were tenants of the **Apsley Cottage**, Ardwick Green (Apollo tap), from 1974 to 1984 and latterly of the Fountain, Newsome, Huddersfield from 1984 until their retirement in 2020.

Rod was from Newton Heath and was a large character in both communities, having

football, darts and pool teams in Manchester.

At The Fountain they formed several Rugby League teams, the pub being the original home of the Newsome Panthers, which is now one of the largest clubs in Yorkshire.

If you ever visited either pub you were certainly given a warm welcome. Rod and Sheila will be remembered as great publicans, and a loss to the industry.

# 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 10 September** – Town Hall Tavern, 20 Tib Lane, Manchester, M2 4JA. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

**Thursday 12 September** – Gateway, 882 Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury, M20 5PG. Guest speaker from Phoenix Brewery. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 14 September** – Crown, 142 Victoria Court, Glossop, SK13 8JF. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

**Thursday 10 October** – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Guest speaker(s) from Torrside Brewery. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Monday 14 October** – Dog & Partridge, 97 Palmerston Street, Bollington, SK10 5JX. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Saturday 19 October** – Venue TBC. Starts 1:30pm. (HPNC)

## Social Events & Presentations

Everyone welcome at these meetings

**Friday 20 September** – Didsbury South Stagger: 7:30pm Didsbury, 852 Wilmslow Road, M20 2SG; 8:30pm Famous Crown, 770 Wilmslow Road, M20 2DR; final pub Fletcher Moss, 1 William Street, M20 6RQ. (SSM)

**Saturday 21 September** – visit to classic Liverpool pubs. Catch 10:25 train from Stockport. Further details TBC. (HPNC)

**Saturday 21 September** – Cider Pub of the Year presentation: Marble Arch, 73 Rochdale Road, Manchester, M4 4HY. From 2pm. (CMCR)

**Wednesday 25 September** – Membership Night: Ford Madox Brown, Whitworth Park, Wilmslow Road, M13 9NG. From 7:30pm. (SSM)

**Thursday 26 September** – Pub of the Month presentation: Ye Olde Vic, 1 Chatham Street, Edgeley, SK3 9ED. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 28 September** – Mild Magic Champion Pub and Champion Mild presentations: Castle, 29 Church Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6LB. From 12 noon. (SSM/MEC)

**Monday 30 September** – Weekday Wander to Glossop: catch 12:03 train from Manchester Piccadilly to Hadfield. First pub: Smithy Fold, Victoria Street, Glossop SK13 8HS. (SSM)

**Friday 18 October** – Offerton Stagger: 7:30pm Puss in Boots, 147 Nangreave Road, SK2 6DG.; 8:30pm Gardeners Arms, Little Street, SK2 5AB; final pub Cocked Hat, 2 Market Place, SK1 1EW. (SSM)

**Thursday 24 October** – Pub of the Month presentation: Three Tunnes, 194 London Road, Hazel Grove, SK7 4DQ. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 26 October** – Autumn Pub of the Season presentation: Snow Goose, Sunderland Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6HN. From 1:30pm. (MEC)

**Wednesday 30 October** – Weekday Wander to Wigan: Meet Manchester Piccadilly to catch 11:02 train towards Blackpool North then change at Bolton for Wigan Wallgate. First pub: Raven Hotel, 5 Wallgate, Wigan WN1 1LD. (SSM)

# CAMRA Awards

## Recent Presentations

The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for May was **Reasons to be Cheerful**, on Fog Lane, near Burnage station.



When Reasons to be Cheerful opened, Opening Times hailed its arrival as a welcome oasis in something of a beer desert – and there are still no bars or pubs close by.

There are three cask beers, which are ever changing and usually include something dark, eight keg beers, often featuring local craft brewers, and in the fridge is a selection of cans and bottles.

All of this is overseen by Elena Rowe and James Croft – James

is shown here (right) with the certificate.

The Pub of the Month for June was the **Magnet** on Wellington Road North in Stockport.

‘A Multi Award Winning Freehouse’ says the prominent sign on the front of the Magnet. That, if anything, is something of an understatement. The pub was closed and semi-derelict when the Watts family took it on and triumphantly reopened it on 13 November 2009.



There are up to 14 cask beers available alongside seven changing kegs. Quality is exceptional, and the Magnet is a fixture in the national Good Beer Guide.

All of this is overseen by mother and son Lesley and Lee Watts, and, of course, their hard-working bar team. Lesley and Lee were away on the presentation night, but seen above receiving the certificate on their behalf are Phoebe Reid (with Portia), Emma Curry and Mia Reid.



July's Pub of the Month was the **Railway**, on Lapwing Lane in West Didsbury.

The Railway is a great pub with a friendly atmosphere, good beer and attentive staff, making it popular with lifelong residents and new visitors alike, but less than a year ago it had few customers and only one handpump. The transformation began when Stacy Saunders and her partner Mark Wilson took over in October 2023.

The seven handpumps now include regular beers of Holt's Bitter, Mild and Two Hoots, along with Bootleg Brewing's Chorlton Pale Ale and Fool's Gold. The other two handpumps change seasonally, usually featuring Old Rosie cider and a seasonal ale, which in winter months is Sixex, rarely seen elsewhere on cask. Mark and Stacy are seen here with their certificate.



# OLD TOM DAY

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