

# OPENING TIMES

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2025

FREE



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## About Opening Times & Contacts

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## 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

### Stockport & South Manchester

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

Contact: Lawrence Devaney; [secretary@ssm.camra.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ssm.camra.org.uk)

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### Macclesfield & East Cheshire

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### Macclesfield & East Cheshire:

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## 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

New year, new beer. Elena Rowe and George Charlton of Strawflower Ales behind the bar of their pub, Reasons To Be Cheerful, on Fog Lane in Burnage. Photo by John Clarke.

## Contributors

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**Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn**

**Copy date for the March/April issue is Friday 31 January**

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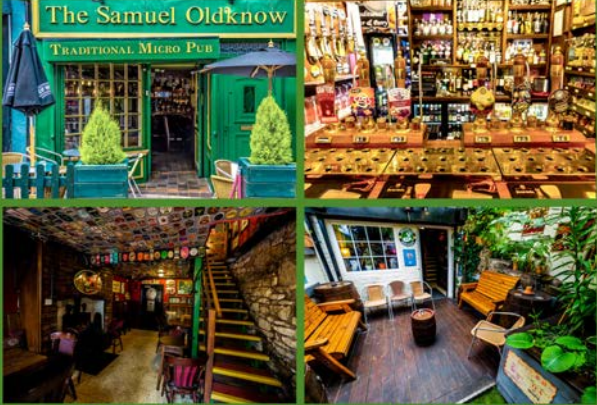
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# Pubs of the Month

## Stockport & South Manchester Winners for January and February



**January's Pub of the Month is the Chiverton Tap on Mellor Road in Cheadle Hulme. John Clarke explains why it has won.**

Opened in May 2015, the Chiverton Tap was initially a one-roomed pub, and one of the first micropubs in Stockport. In 2017, it was voted Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year and was subsequently runner-up in the Greater Manchester Pub of The Year awards.

2019 saw 'Chiv Next Level' upstairs seating and 'Chiv Outback' outside drinking areas opening. This completed the takeover of the whole of this historic building, a former draper's shop from the turn of the 20th century, trading under the name of Arthur Chiverton.

The run of awards has continued with the pub also winning the Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Year award for 2022.

Mary and Bob Ellis, who opened the pub, together with Andrew O'Shea, who is now operating their sister pub the Mounting Stone in Bramhall, remain true to their original ethos. Back in 2022, they told *Opening Times*:

"Whilst we personally enjoy many craft beers from brewers all over the world, our mission has always been to promote and celebrate all that is great on the British craft ale scene, and to source the best from the best of small breweries all over the country.

"We will never get complacent, because there are so many ways this business presents challenges, and we will always want to rise to them. We do what we love, and we love what we do. It has to be love, otherwise it just wouldn't work."

That commitment remains true to this day – and hence this further recognition of the Chiverton Tap with our first Pub of the Month award for 2025. The quality and choice of beers is still second to none. Six cask beers, with Bollington Best and Long Hop the regulars, complemented by four ever-changing guests, are accompanied by a range of changing kegs, often from local brewers. You can enjoy them all on our presentation night, Thursday 30 January, from 8pm.

Bus 313 from Stockport Interchange will drop you close by, while the 368 stop is a five-ish minute walk. Mellor Road is also directly opposite Cheadle Hulme 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.**



**Pub of the Month for February is the Blossoms, on Buxton Road, Heaviley. John Clarke also explains why this is our winner.**

The Blossoms is an excellent, unspoilt local with three rooms radiating off a traditional drinking lobby. Two of the rooms, notably the rear Smoke Room, retain many original features, with fixed seating and panelling. Upstairs is a large and well-used function room – which also hosts live music nights and a regular open mic night on Wednesdays. On Thursday nights there is a very popular quiz.



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



This landmark pub, prominently sited on the A6, was reputedly built as a coaching house in the 18th century and in the 19th was used for the planning meetings when the nearby St George's Church was being designed. Today, it's perhaps better known as the inspiration for the name of Stockport's famous indie rock band Blossoms (and the band has played at the pub, too).

It's a Robinsons 'Ale Shrine' and sells a range of the brewery's beers. Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde are regulars, and Trooper makes a frequent appearance. In the winter, Old Tom is a welcome sight on one of the handpumps. You'll find Westons cider on handpump, too. Quality is invariably high, thanks to the cellar skills of Jerry Evans, whose partner, Roxanne Bailey, runs the pub. The Blossoms is a regular in CAMRA's national *Good Beer Guide*.

Roxanne and Jerry were last due to get a Pub of the Month award in June 2020 but the pandemic intervened and they didn't get their certificate until September 2021. Hopefully, there will be no such problem this time and you'll join us for the presentation on Thursday 27 February from 8pm. Getting there is easy as the 192 bus will drop you very close by.

# STOCKPORT BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL 2025



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# Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

## New Foundry, Congleton



On Saturday 30 November, Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA presented a Best Newcomer award to the **Foundry**, based in Congleton Market Quarter. The bar, operated by Bollington Brewery, has been an integral part of the Market Quarter since the area was opened as a food and drink destination late in 2023. Five cask beers from Bollington are always available, along with a number of keg beers. The permanent presence of

Bollington products in Congleton has been warmly received after many years of them making only guest appearances around town. The award recognised how quickly the Foundry has become a part of the Congleton scene and was presented to brewery owner, Lee Wainwright (pictured left, with CAMRA's Dave Gittins), with local members and visitors from Potteries CAMRA in attendance.

## Snowgoose, Macclesfield

The **Snowgoose** café bar on Sunderland Street in Macclesfield was the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch Pub of the Season for Autumn 2024. This comfortable café bar has been open since 2011, with a long break for the Covid pandemic. Some thought it would not come back, but it has, with essentially the same cosy feel but with some of the Alpine stuff toned down. The place is surprisingly spacious over two floors, and even has a small garden at the back. There are frequent exhibitions of work by local artists and occasional music events. There is a portrait-sketching group that meets there every Wednesday.



The bar is excellently run by Louise and her team, and beer-wise cask Storm Bosley Cloud, which is brewed only a few minutes' walk away, almost always features on the bar. The other local brewery to feature on the bar is a changing beer from Wincle. Other than beer, the bar has Treacle Town Pies available. They are able to cater for parties

and other events. Those customers of the Nursery, Heaton Norris, when George Lindsey was the licensee, may recognise Louise as she is his stepdaughter and used to run the food operation there. Louise is pictured above receiving her award from Macclesfield CAMRA chair Dave Gittins.

## Plough, Macclesfield

The **Plough** on Prestbury Road, Macclesfield closed suddenly on 7 November when the licensees handed back their tenancy to Punch. The pub was reopened in August 2023, but its location on the small portion of Prestbury Road, cut off when Cumberland Street was realigned in the 1970s, doesn't help potential customers find it.

## Poachers, Bollington



The end of November saw the retirement of Helen and Rob Ellwood, long-term owners and licensees of the **Poachers Inn** on Ingersley Road in Bollington. They were presented with a specially commissioned picture of the pub and other local landmarks to mark their retirement. The couple were also celebrating the receipt of an award for being in the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide* for 25 continuous years. The pub has been sold to Trust Inns and it is hoped that there will be no major changes. Pictured are Rob and Helen being presented with the award and picture by Keith Farman, CAMRA Branch Treasurer and local resident.

## Hoppy Daze, Ashton

### The Hoppy Daze Beer Café & Bottle Shop

opened in Ashton-under-Lyne back in August, adding to the increasingly interesting beer scene in the centre of town. This is the first venture by Nightbell Events, who describe the venue as a continental-style beer café. Two handpumps offer real ale from local breweries and there is also a set of 12 taps on the back wall featuring a wide range of beer styles from local brewers and further afield. Another interesting feature is the delicious traditional Sicilian street food, both hot and cold. Well worth a look.



## News in Brief



In Stockport, the **Boars Head** on the Market Place closed suddenly in late November. There is a sign in the window advertising for a new management couple. This is of course a Sam Smith's house, and the sudden closure of that company's pubs is, sadly, not an uncommon occurrence. The other Sam Smith's pub in Stockport, the historic **Queens Head** on Little Underbank, has been closed for some considerable time now.

Other closures to report are **Mary & Archie** on Burton Road in West Didsbury, which has announced its permanent closure via Facebook. In the City Centre, **Fierce Bar**, on Thomas Street in the Northern Quarter, was due to close on 20 December. Aberdeen-based Fierce Beer has, however, said they are on the lookout for a new site.

On a more positive note, the **White Lion**, on Stockport's Great Underbank, has added a third cask beer to its range. Taylor's Landlord and Sharp's Doom Bar have been joined on the bar by Bradfield Farmers Blonde.

# Obituary

## Neil Kellett



Neil Kellett, a CAMRA pioneer who played a vital role in keeping the Campaign solvent and able to challenge the power of big brewers, has died suddenly aged 83, writes *Roger Protz*.

He was an accountant and CAMRA's auditor for many years. He also founded the CAMRA Members Investment Club in 1989 that bought shares in breweries. This enabled members to attend brewery

AGMs and protest against policies that were not in the interests of cask beer.

He was also a founder member of the Stockport and South Manchester branch that celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

Chris Holmes, national chairman between 1975 and 76, said he first met Neil on a demonstration in Stamford, Lincolnshire, where Samuel Smith's had bought the local Melbourn Brothers All Saints brewery and planned to close it.

In between his CAMRA activities, Neil was a constant traveller in search of good beer. He did not disguise his support for the Conservatives but nevertheless spent many years travelling behind the Iron Curtain where many Soviet bloc countries offered historic beer styles.

The Pilsner and genuine Budweiser beers of Czechoslovakia were especially outstanding, and the writer went on two trips there with him in the 1980s. As a result, whenever we met, he would greet me with "Dobrý den", Czech for "How are you?"

Neil, who came from Cheadle Hulme, was also a keen sports fan. He had a season ticket at Manchester City and loved cricket. On one occasion he brought friends – Dietmar and his wife – he had made in East Germany to watch a Test match at Trent Bridge. They were completely bemused by the arcane rituals of the English summer sport.

Chris, who was at the game, recalls that Dietmar and his wife thought cricket would be like baseball but quickly discovered it was a very different game. "They even thought the machine used to soak up water after a rain break was part of the game," he said.

Neil was warm and friendly but was blunt where finances were concerned. He became the accountant for Chris's Castle Rock brewery – now Tynemill – in Nottingham. "One year, when Neil finished the books, I thanked him for keeping me out of trouble," Chris said. "Neil responded, more likely, I kept you out of jail."

He was equally outspoken about CAMRA's national accounts. Dave Goodwin, national chairman between 1999 and 2004, said Neil told him he could do the annual audit on the back of a cigarette packet and the accounts were so bad that the Campaign should be wound up.

Thanks to his efforts, more rigorous accounts systems at head office were installed and CAMRA became financially efficient and solvent.

He launched the investments club as a result of running a similar private club of his own. Dave said the aim of the club was to allow CAMRA members to invest in breweries and challenge their priorities.

"We couldn't stop takeovers and mergers, but we could challenge big breweries and their policies," Dave said. "We owned a chunk of shares in breweries and went to their AGMs to question them and raise concerns about cask ale.

"We're still doing that today and the money we make from the shares is ploughed back into the club, not into members' pockets. We also organise popular brewery trips."

As Neil prepared to retire, he told friends there were three countries he hadn't visited. As a result, he went to Andorra, Albania and Malta on one last tour, using trains, planes and boats with the aid of his encyclopaedic knowledge of timetables.

Neil never married. He died peacefully at his home where his last act was to send Christmas cards to his legion of friends at home and abroad.

"You won't get emails from me, you will get cards," he said firmly. The cards numbered 150 – a measure of the man.

*This obituary first appeared in What's Brewing, the online newspaper of the Campaign for Real Ale.*

**Darren Shaw, owner of the Wobbly Stamp in Cheadle, Neil's local in recent years, adds:**

Neil started coming into the Wobbly from day one of opening, and has pushed our business forward on numerous occasions – and with his contribution to CAMRA, certainly put us on the map. A true gent, very popular, with his stories of his travels around Europe and further afield, and his knowledge on all drinks worldwide.

It's a really sad time with his passing, but the Wobbly Stamp will dedicate and put up a lasting memorial equalling a Blue Plaque. With love on your further travels, Neil. From Darren and all the team and customers and friends at the Wobbly Stamp.

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# News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

## The Frog on the Bine, Buxton



This one slipped under our radar, having opened in June last year. This bright and very well-appointed little bar is at 9 Cavendish Circus, just a short walk from the station (and close to numerous other bars such as RedWillow).

It's a project by Andrew Adams and Cat Crosby (pictured below). Cat has a background in hospitality, having run pubs in the north-east, while Andrew's background is in road haulage, having worked in the industry for 23 years before being made redundant. It was this that prompted the couple, who had talked about running a pub together, to take the plunge with the Frog on the Bine. The unit, which had previously housed a café and restaurant, had been



empty for 20 months when they took it on, and a great deal of work was required – the bar counter was built from scratch. The end result though, is a light and airy bar that operates over two levels, with the upstairs mezzanine being particularly attractive.

There are three taps for cask beer although only two were in use when *Opening Times* called – a sensible move to maintain throughput while trade builds. In addition, there are eight keg taps, including one for Ascension cider. There is also a small range of wines and alcohol-free lager and IPA.

The Frog on the Bine is closed on Tuesdays, and the opening hours are slightly different each day. If you are visiting at the weekend, it opens at 1pm on Saturday and 12 noon on Sunday. Well worth a visit.

## Tūn Brewing Co.



This is a name that has been cropping up on social media, and, with the launch of its first beer, *Opening Times* caught up with the man behind it.

Richard Alston hails from Cheltenham but is now based in Chorlton, from where he runs Tūn Brewing Co. An NHS psychiatrist by profession, Richard has been a keen homebrewer since the age of 18, taking his hobby increasingly seriously as time went on.

Like many homebrewers, he always entertained the idea of opening a brewery – and that is still a long-term aim, although for the time being his beers are contract-brewed at Farm Yard Brew Co, near Lancaster. Richard has spent a couple of years developing his recipes, and the first release, Archetype, a 6% 'modern English IPA', is based on his most popular homebrew. In the pipeline are a New England IPA and a dry-hopped pilsner. He



has been helped with branding, artwork and deliveries by his brother.

So far, all is going well with numerous orders received from local bars. Archetype has so far been canned, with a small amount put into kegs. However, due to requests from several potential outlets, some of the next batch will be put into cask.

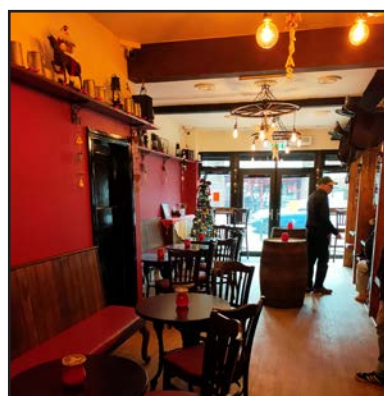
Phase two of the operation, perhaps in 12 to 18 months, is a bar with an on-site brewery. The idea is that this would be more than just about beer, but also feature food, live music and comedy. Watch this space.

## The Voltigeur



Romiley's latest pub, the **Voltigeur** on Compstall Road, opened on 21 November. It's a project by brothers Anthony and Martin Meynell, and father Dave – readers may know Anthony and Dave from Marple's **Samuel Oldknow**.

Voltigeur was a famous 19th century racehorse, and so the conversion of the former shop premises has adopted a restrained racing theme, while the décor reflects Voltigeur's racing colours of dark red and white. It was also the name of a pub in Hartlepool, run by Dave's great-grandfather in the 1920s. That pub has long since gone, but there is still a Voltigeur pub in Spennymoor, County Durham.



The bar is at the back of the pub, while down the left-hand side are booths reminiscent of horses' stalls. These, along with the window seats, have proved particularly popular. Down the other side are tables and chairs, with bench seating along the walls. Apart from the racing artefacts (check out the light fittings, by the way), there is also a collection of beer and brewing memorabilia, from Dave's personal collection.

Dave also undertook a lot of the fitting-out, too.

There are six handpumps on the bar – one for cider (from Sheppy's) and the rest for a range of changing cask beers, although Brightside Brewery's Odin will be a permanent fixture. One of the pumps will also be reserved for a beer from Lancaster Brewery. In the fridge, you'll see a small but well-considered range of Belgian and German beers.


The Voltigeur feels hugely warm and inviting, and unsurprisingly has gone incredibly well to date – according to Anthony, trade has been "crazy". Opening hours are 1-11pm, Monday-Thursday, and 12-11pm Friday-Sunday.

More news on page 17

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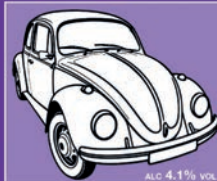
ALC 4.6% VOL

**THE QUATTRO**  
Best bitter  
A flavour packed legend



ALC 4.2% VOL

**THE BEETLE**  
Stout  
A robust ale for the people



ALC 4.1% VOL

**THE CARRERA**  
Cask lager  
Turbo charged lager




ALC 4.0% VOL

**THE HERALD**  
Blonde ale  
A blonde brewing triumph



ALC 3.8% VOL

**THE ALLEGRO**  
Premium amber ale  
A beer you'll come to love




ALC 4.3% VOL

**THE CORTINA**  
American brown  
Nothing ordinary about this one



ALC 3.8% VOL

**THE CAVALIER**  
English red ale  
An English thoroughbred



ALC 4.4% VOL

**THE MARINA**  
Golden session ale  
A dependable classic



ALC 3.6% VOL

drinkaware.co.uk for the facts

# 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.*

## My Son Asked Me What a Pub Is

A pub is  
like a playground, son,  
but instead of swings and slides  
they have dominoes and pork scratchings.

A pub is  
like a nursery where you're not really allowed  
to sleep or poo your pants in.

A pub is  
a cave for tired rhinos, thirsty crocodiles,  
a stage for shy flamingoes to open up.

A pub is  
a full stop to a week,  
an exclamation mark for a weekend.

A pub is  
a place where people are allowed  
to make things up, bend facts, poke holes.

A pub is  
a chance for people to be  
a football manager, the Prime Minister,  
judge, jury, and executioner.

A pub is  
a planet for people to visit  
when the one they live on hands them  
good news or sad news or no news at all.

A pub is  
a hand, a hug, thumbs up.

A pub is  
that friend who's always ready for a good time.  
It can also be that friend  
you might need some time away from  
when they can get a little much.

A pub is  
a building that sells beer, son.  
They often have wine and juice  
like apple or orange too.  
Your mum will sometimes  
have fizzy pop in a pub  
alongside a pie with a bit of chutney  
while she gives me the space  
to tell her what I'm thinking.

# Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

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



Our first pub, the **Higher Packhorse**, 64 Middle Hillgate, was located on the corner of Mottram Street. According to the 1828 *Stockport Directory*, there were four Packhorse inns listed in the town centre. There was the Lower Packhorse, also on Middle Hillgate,

which was renamed Land O'Cakes in the 1850s, the 'old' Packhorse in the Market Place, a possibly medieval half-timbered pub rebuilt in the 1930s (now the Cocked Hat), and the Packhorse on Millgate, a similarly old tavern, demolished (along with The Lamb next door) and replaced by the County Hotel in 1905. So, it's not surprising Mr Cox, the landlord of the Higher Packhorse in the 1820s, thought he needed something to make his house stand out, and to advertise that his was the first in the town to provide a drinking vault or tap room. He erected a large lamp over the front door. The gimmick was so successful that 'Big Lamp' stuck as a nickname.

The building that stands today is not that of the 19th century. The original building, described as 'old' in the 1820s, was demolished around 1900 in anticipation of road widening work which has, to date, not happened. The Sun and Castle further down the hill suffered a similar fate. Today, both pubs still stand back from the building line. The Higher Packhorse was officially renamed the Big Lamp in the 1980s and relaunched in the 2000s as the Lamp Hotel, aimed more towards diners than drinkers, before closing for good in 2007. It has now been converted into apartments.

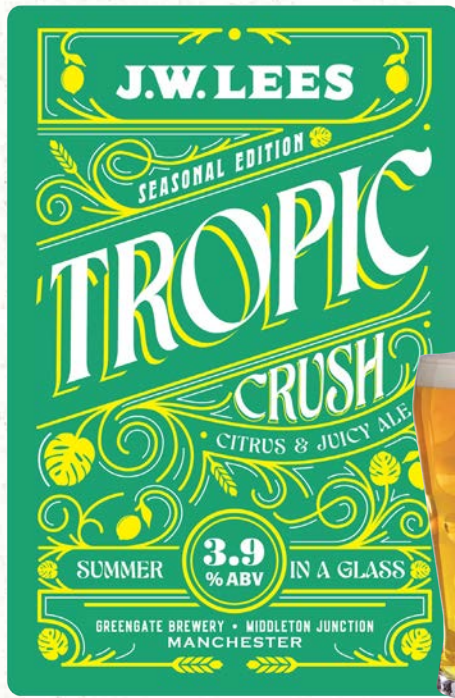


Our second lost pub under the letter 'H' is the **Hope Inn**, 118 Wellington Road North. It was located in the area originally known as Hope Hill. It is first mentioned in 1830, believed to have been built on the New Road in the 1820s. It became one of four in Stockport to become a

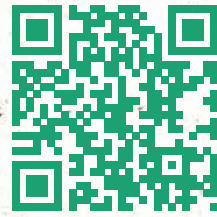
Hardy's Crown Brewery house, a brewery set up in the 1880s and based in Hulme, Manchester. The company was taken over by Bass in the 1960s, with production moved away from the North West but the pub's roofline banner hoardings remained.

The Hope achieved recent success in the 2010s, when it was taken over by Martin and Samantha Wood. In a nod to Hardy's, they set up a microbrewery, producing Fool Hardy Ales on site. The hard work paid off, with the Hope awarded the title Stockport and South Manchester Pub of the Year by CAMRA in 2014. The Hope's closure came following several COVID Lockdowns, with the home of Fool Hardy Ales closing for the final time on April Fool's Day 2022. Plans to turn the premises into a fish and chip restaurant were approved in November 2023.

*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).*



<b>Style</b>	Session IPA
<b>Hops</b>	Centennial, Magnum UK Cascade, Sabro Cyro
<b>Malt</b>	Ale Malt
	Bright gold
	Malt, pine, Stone fruits
	Tropical fruit, Pine, Citrus
<b>Bitter</b>	
<b>Sweet</b>	



# SUMMER IN A GLASS

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# Pub Walks with Chris Morris

## Stockport Pub Round, Part 6 - Cheadle to Stockport

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 five (Bramhall to Cheadle), stage six completes the circle and brings us back into Stockport, maximising the use of attractive nature trails through a delightful park and along the River Mersey. 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 six starts on the High Street of Cheadle. Buses 11, 42B, 42C, 312, 370 and 371 will all drop you there with their regular services. Cheadle's railway station is due to open at the end of 2025. A couple of bus stops can be found midway if you wanted to cut the walk short. The walk finishes next to the Stockport Interchange, with a vast array of buses, or it's a short walk up to Stockport railway station.

### The Walk

Part six is four miles long, with the option of an additional half-mile walk for a midway pub stop. The terrain is mainly flat and the paths are either tarmacked or gravelled, so not challenging. All pubs welcome dogs.



Getting off the bus near to Cheadle's **White Hart Tavern** is a useful reference point to start our walk. It's also a good place for a pre-walk drink or meal, where an impressive traditional pub interior awaits. Bench seating, dark wood and subtle lighting blend together nicely to give a cosy

and welcoming space. The cask beers available when I last dropped by were Greene King IPA and Old Golden Hen.

After exiting the pub's main door, turn left to walk past the church and along the High Street's pavement. After 300 yards cross over the road junction at the George and Dragon pub, to the Ockleston Memorial, then go left along Manchester Road. Passing the war memorial, we turn right and walk along the pavement of Newlands Road then under the railway bridge to Abney Hall Park beyond. After passing an attractive lake on our left, follow the tarmacked road past the café car park, through bollards where the road narrows. Ignoring two left turns, the path bears to the left, and after 50 yards turn left to follow a gravel path down to a delightful waterfall. Continuing along this path we pass Abney Hall then, ignoring the footbridge to the right, walk straight ahead to join a road. Turn left here to exit the park to a main road. Turn right now and walk along the shared pavement for half a mile. After crossing over the River Mersey at Lancashire Bridge, turn right and walk down the steps to the path beyond which runs parallel to the river. After half a mile, when the path forks, take the newly tarmacked path on the left – signposted National Cycle Network 62 E – which climbs up and away from the river before straightening. Turn left at the next junction, signposted TPT (E), and after 300 yards we go through a metal gate, then pass two benches and a noticeboard for the Heaton Mersey Bleach Works.

We now have the option for a mid-walk pub stop up to the **Crown** in Heaton Mersey. For this detour, turn left, signposted to Embankment Business Park. Walk along the straight pavement on Vale Road with the business units on your left, crossing over when the pavement

ends. When the road bends to the left, cross the road again and continue straight ahead, through a metal gate and up the cobbled hill, past some picturesque terraced houses, to the pub at the top.



With some parts of the Crown dating back to the 17th century, this traditional Robinsons pub is full of charm, and has the feel of a cosy country village local – far away from the hustle and bustle of urban living. A

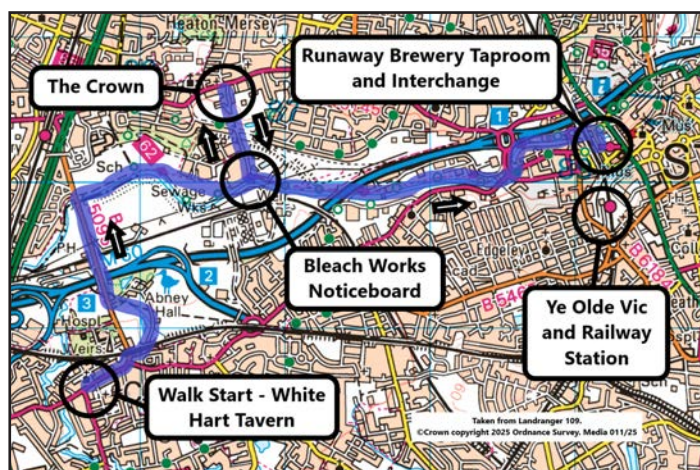
characterful interior awaits with low-level lighting, an eclectic mix of furniture and low ceilings completing the rustic feel. A typical set-up for cask is Robinsons Unicorn, Dizzy Blonde, Trooper and Cumbria Way. Buses 23, 42 and 42A stop outside.

Retracing our steps back to the Bleach Works noticeboard, continue along the path as before, signposted Stockport town centre 62, with the River Mersey on our right again. After half a mile we pass under the M60 bridge. After another half mile we reach a paved area with Stockport Pyramid on our left. Continue straight ahead to rejoin the riverside path as before, which then takes us under a road. After 400 yards we reach a large chrome bench. Take the path behind it and to the right to rejoin the riverside path. At the end of the path, walk up the steps to a main road where we see the Stockport Viaduct beyond. Cross over and walk under the viaduct along Heaton Lane. Turning right along Astley Street, we now finish our walk with refreshments at **Runaway Brewery Taproom**.



The taproom is a fitting venue to reward your efforts. As well as the warmest of welcomes, there's a choice of two cask beers, plus up to ten quality keg, all skilfully brewed on the premises. The refurbished warehouse provides a spacious interior, impressively blending old bare brick walls and solid floorboards with modern

furnishings. Plenty of additional seating can be found upstairs and in the rear beer garden, which also sells pizzas at peak times. It's open from 3pm on Thursday, 1pm on Friday and Saturday. When it's closed, it's just a short walk up to **Ye Olde Vic**, for a choice of up to six cask beers, open from 5pm Wednesday to Sunday.





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# Stagger

## Gatley & Cheadle with Jim Flynn

Our start was at the ever-popular **Prince of Wales** in Gatley; what a very pleasant spot it is too, next to the village church and overlooking the village green.



However, this was a late autumn evening and unless you were a hardened smoker this was not an occasion to sit outside whatever the view. We sat inside at one of the few tables with seating still available in one of the

three rooms. The low doors and ceilings reveal the pub's history as a pair of cottages and, together with the bench seating, provide for a country pub atmosphere, although the televisions in two of the rooms certainly do not. The Hydes beers on offer were Hopster, Original and the seasonal Say What You See. All tried were very well received, with the Original one of the beers of the night. An excellent vibrant atmosphere made it hard to leave, but leave we did.



With the **Red Lion** long since converted into a Tesco, off we went down Church Road to another Hydes pub, the **Horse & Farrier** on Gatley Road, opposite the war memorial. With its mock-Tudor exterior and bay windows, this is certainly an imposing building. Inside, this

low-ceilinged, multi-roomed, characterful and well refurbished pub is even bigger than it seems from outside, but despite this, on our visit it was packed. My eyes lit up when I saw a Dark Ruby pump clip, only to be told that the beers available were Original, 1863, Hopster and Lowry. We tried the Lowry, which was in good nick, and the 1863, which unfortunately was not. Perhaps I could have taken it back but we had a bus to catch (it certainly does pay to have a bus app on this stagger because the timings were all over the place!). It must be said that both the Gatley pubs are well worth a visit.



Our first port of call in Cheadle was another imposing pub, Greene King's **White Hart**, with its whitewashed exterior, situated next to St Mary's parish church. Inside, there are fireplaces and dark wood panelling, but despite these features the pub has a clean,

modern feel. There are televisions, but I didn't find them intrusive. The pub was relatively quiet compared to the Gatley pubs, and we quite easily found a table to sit at and sample our Rocking Rudolph and Bass, which were both enjoyed; nobody tried the Greene King IPA.

Further down Cheadle High Street is the **Crown**. Hydes (yes, them again) converted this shop into a pub some while ago, long before it was fashionable to do so. As a result, I always think it lacks some of the character of the first three pubs but, on the evidence of our visit, that hasn't stopped it being exceedingly popular. There was a vocalist,

who was quieter than some of the Friday night acts I have come across in this pub over the years. The beer range was Original, Hopster and Say What You See, with all three considered worthy of a second pint, but on these staggers you never have that luxury.



Whilst in the Crown we had been joined by one of our local Cheadle members, who is also a cider aficionado, and she recommended that we go to the **Rectory**, based in a former hairdressing salon in the row of shops next to Cheadle Post Office on Old Rectory Gardens. I had never been in this bar before and I was struck by how airy and brightly coloured it was, with four large panels printed with music lyrics on the walls. There was no real ale and so we all tried the Level Medium Dry Cider from Pulpt, a cider maker from Somerton in Somerset. We all enjoyed supping our cider and listening to the guitarist. Unfortunately,

by the time we left he was playing solely to the bar staff. Perhaps the owners need to walk the half mile down the road to the **Wobbly Stamp** to see what effect putting cask beer on the bar can have on your business, because Cheadle Village itself could do with a micro bar selling more hard-to-find beers.

Our penultimate stop was supposed to be the **George & Dragon**, back on High Street, where we were greeted by the first and only bouncers of the night. In we walked, to be greeted by probably more television sets than customers, and an empty set of handpumps. So, no cask beer and out we walked again. Just what has happened to the place? It was never my favourite pub by any means, but at least it had decent cask beer and plenty of customers.

So on to another Hydes pub, the **James Watts**; older readers will remember it as the Star (the old sign is still on the side of the pub). It has been opened out since the Star days, but still retains distinct areas with two 'rooms' to the left and the right before you get to the bar, a central area with high tables, and then more seating at the rear, with a full-width set of doors which open out into the outside drinking area at the back; given how cold it was we elected not to venture there. Instead, we sat in one of the 'rooms' to the front and tried the Lowry, Hopster and Say What you See (nobody tried the Original). The beers here, along with the Original at the Prince of Wales in Gatley, were the beers of the night.



Altogether an interesting stagger with generally good quality beers, albeit the majority of those pubs were from one brewery, Hydes.



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# Letters to the Editor

**From: Douglas Tasker**

With so many pubs having disappeared in recent decades we are thankful for those that remain even though one or two of them may be somewhat smaller than they used to be. This is the case with the Blue Bell on Barlow Road. During the latter half of the last century this pub was bigger than it is now with a large concert room in which, on Thursday nights and some weekend nights, customers were entertained by on-stage vocalists (part-time professionals) and the occasional C&W/pop group introduced by a jovial compère. I assume this entertainment continued in the 1980s and 90s but I lived down south in those years. I returned to my hometown in the summer of 2000 to buy a house in Levenshulme (in good condition) for £20,000. Around 2005, the Blue Bell closed for quite a few weeks while extensive renovation work was carried out. It was during this renovation work that the overall size of the pub was reduced and the concert room disappeared. Jack Lyons may know these facts but they're not really relevant for inclusion in a stagger write-up with limited space available.

Jack Lyons' Stagger report (*Opening Times September/October*) also includes the interesting fact that Channel swimmer Sunny Lowry trained at the now-derelict Public Baths on Cromwell Grove in preparation for her big achievement. Mention is also made of the former Levenshulme Library directly opposite. No doubt Jack also knows that that building too once had a high-achiever regular attender in the person of architect Norman Foster. He of wobbly Millennium Bridge fame as well as other non-wobbly modern structures.

*Thanks for getting in touch Doug – some fascinating background information there. Letters to the editor are always welcome, by the way – Ed.*

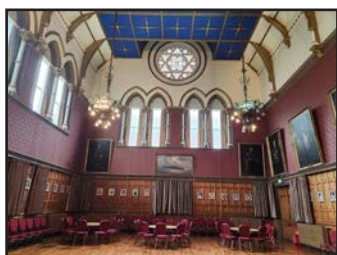
## Mild Magic is Back



Following the huge success of last year's Mild Magic, which saw a 30 per cent increase in entries, plans are already under way for Mild Magic 2025.

This year's Mild Magic will run from Friday 11 April to Sunday 18 May. Following last year's very successful inclusion of some Macclesfield pubs on Mild Magic, this year we are also extending it to Buxton. Full details in the next issue of *Opening Times*.

## Chester Beer Festival



Chester CAMRA Beer Festival will take place on Friday 14 March and Saturday 15 March. To mark the 50th anniversary of the first Chester festival, the new venue will be the gloriously splendid Chester Town Hall.

The two-day event will feature 36 quality real ales and 16 ciders, plus locally sourced food. Tickets for Friday and Saturday cost £8, with a reduced £6 for Saturday evening only. CAMRA members will receive two half-pints.

Online tickets are available mid-January. More information on the West Cheshire CAMRA website: [westcheshire.camra.org.uk](http://westcheshire.camra.org.uk).

# News Extra

## Oxford Road Tap



The small, but perfectly formed, **Oxford Road Tap** opened on Thursday 12 December. A sister bar to the **Piccadilly Tap** and the **Victoria Tap**, it also offers a range of cask and keg beers – in this case four cask and ten keg, with something for pretty much every taste.



It's on the station approach, more or less directly opposite the station, and is a stylish conversion of what was a cycle hub and small café. Good use has been made of the limited space with the bar along the back, and bench seating, tables and chairs facing. We particularly like the curved wooden ceiling, which reflects the striking architecture of the station itself.

Overseeing all of this is manager Max Petersen, who cut his teeth helping at both the Victoria and Piccadilly Taps.

We understand that the chain's owners, Bloomsbury Leisure, may also be on the look-out for similar sites in the region.

## Strawflower Ales

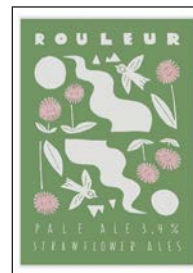


Another new addition to the local beer world is **Strawflower Ales**, a project by George Charlton and Elena Rowe, perhaps better known as two of the people behind **Reasons TO Be Cheerful**, in Burnage.

George currently handles the social media for Blackjack Brewery, but prior to that he was a brewer at Pomona Island for five years. Strawflower came about because he still wanted to brew, and both of them wanted to sell some beers they had more of a direct involvement in.

In the medium term, the aim is to have their own brewery, but for now the beers are cuckoo-brewed at Stockport's Runaway Brewery. This lets them test the water for their beers, and also get used to the admin side, such as selling the beer.

The first beer, a Citra-hopped, 3.4% pale session ale, is Rouleur, a cycling term which references the cycling community that uses the pub. It's deliciously floral and aromatic, and very easy to drink. They are hoping to produce a monthly range of beers – next up is a best bitter, and a mild will be brewed for Mild Magic. We think Strawflower is likely to be a very significant addition to the local beer scene. Look out for them.



## P-Noot

**P-Noot Brew Co.** has returned to where it all began and resumed brewing exclusively at the Lowes Arms Brewery, in the cellar of the **Lowes Arms**, Denton. As a result of this, all beers are now available entirely as cask and are also vegan. Whilst the Lowes is still the most likely venue to find P-Noot beers, they are now distributed nationally, so you may encounter them just about anywhere. Six new recipes are planned for 2025.

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REDDISH  
STOCKPORT  
SK5 1AS

**THE GRIFFIN HEALD GREEN**

124 WILMSLOW ROAD  
HEALD GREEN  
CHEADLE  
SK8 3BE

**THE GRIFFIN HEATON MERSEY**

552 DIDSBURY ROAD  
HEATON MERSEY  
STOCKPORT  
SK4 3AJ

**PLATFORM 5**

47 STATION ROAD  
CHEADLE HULME  
CHEADLE  
SK8 7AA

**THE SUN & CASTLE**

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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.**

**Wednesday 8 January** – Lass O'Gowrie, 36 Charles Street, Manchester, M1 7DB. Will include shortlisting for the 2026 *Good Beer Guide*. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

**Saturday 11 January** – Greater Manchester Area Meeting; Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Starts 1pm. (All)

**Monday 13 January** – First 2026 *Good Beer Guide* selection meeting; Swan Inn, 27-29 Station Road, Holmes Chapel, CW4 7AU. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 16 January** – Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ. This meeting will include the selection of the branch Pub of the Year, Cider Pub of the Year and Club of the Year 2025. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 18 January** – Harewood Arms, 2 Market Street, Broadbottom, SK14 6AX. Starts 2:30pm (NB the pub opens at 2pm). (HPNC)

**Tuesday 11 February** – Second 2026 *Good Beer Guide* selection meeting; Park Tavern, 158 Park Lane, Macclesfield, SK11 6UB. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 13 February** – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. This meeting will include selections for the 2026 *Good Beer Guide*. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

## Social Events & Presentations

**Wednesday 22 January** – Social to York. Catch 10:58am train from Piccadilly. (HPNC)

**Friday 24 January** – Cheadle East Stagger: 7:30pm Cheshire Line Tavern, Manchester Road, Cheadle, SK8 2NZ; 8:30pm Royal Oak, 22 Stockport Road, Cheadle, SK8 2AA; final pub the Printers Arms, 220 Stockport Road, Cheadle, SK8 2BT. (SSM)

**Saturday 25 January** – Bollington Wander: start 12 noon at Vale Inn, 29-31 Adlington Road, Bollington, SK10 5JT. (MEC)

**Thursday 30 January** – Pub of the Month presentation: Chiverton Tap, 8 Mellor Road, Cheadle Hulme, SK8 5AU. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Wednesday 5 February** – Weekday Wander to Astley Bridge. Meet 10:40am at Manchester Piccadilly (gate to Platform 10). Catch 10:50 train to Barrow from platform 14. First pub will be Bank Top Brewery Tap. (SSM)

**Thursday 13 February** – Trip to GBBF Winter. Catch 11:48am train from Piccadilly (12:10 from Marple). (HPNC)

**Saturday 15 February** – Winter Pub of the Season presentation: Chester Road Tavern, 18 Chester Road, Macclesfield, SK11 8DG. From 1pm. (MEC)

**Friday 21 February** – West Didsbury Stagger: 7:30pm Woodstock Arms, 139 Barlow Moor Road, M20 2DY; 8:30pm Wallop, 97 Lapwing Lane, M20 6UR; final pub Railway, 3 Lapwing Lane, M20 2NT. (SSM)

**Thursday 27 February** – Pub of the Month presentation: Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heavily, SK2 6NU. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Wednesday 5 March** – Weekday Wander to Rawtenstall. Meet 10:30am at Manchester Shudehill Interchange (Stand E) for 10:40 X43 bus to Burnley. First pub Hop Micro Pub. (SSM)

# CAMRA Awards

## Recent Presentations



The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month for October was the **Three Tunnes** on London Road in Hazel Grove.

A Robbies house under the management of Finbarr 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. A central bar with four cask ales on offer faces out onto four separate public areas.

Unfortunately, Finbarr and Danielle were unavailable on the night. The award was accepted on their behalf by Jack Piper (left) and Tom Whiteley, who are pictured above.

November's Pub of the Month was the **Sun in September**, Burnage. After a period of closure, the pub was taken over in October 2019 by John and Kerry Fitzmaurice. Unfortunately, this was quickly followed by the onset of Covid but, since then, they have succeeded in developing it into a very popular local, with a strong band of regulars and often a lively buzz of conversation, and it is this achievement that won them the award. It supports a number of social activities, including a darts team and regular quiz nights.



Seen here with the certificate are (left to right) Sam, Nathan, Kerry, John, Sophie, Katie and CAMRA's Peter Edwardson.

The High Peak, Tameside & NE Cheshire CAMRA Pub of the Season for autumn was **Tapsters** on Old Street in Ashton-under-Lyne.

The premises were converted from a pram shop in 2018 and taken over by Lee Dempsey in August 2021. He refurbished the pub to a high standard, and it is now a welcoming and comfortable place to enjoy a pint or two. Up to three rotating cask beers from north-west breweries feature and quality is always high. Pictured here are Lee and partner Stephanie receiving their certificate from High Peak branch chair Ben Zwierink (right).



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