

# OPENING TIMES

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2026

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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: [camra.org.uk/pubs](http://camra.org.uk/pubs)

## Front Cover

The new team at Steelfish with Gideon Foster (left) joining Ali Combes (centre) and Simon Goodier (right). See page 13 for the full story. Photo by John Clarke.

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## Welcome

I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year – and were able to get out and about supporting our local pubs and bars.

This could be a crunch year for some pubs following a business rates revaluation. Despite a measure of relief in the budget, in some cases this is being more than cancelled out by a hike in the valuations which underpin business rates. CAMRA, along with others, is engaged in a vigorous campaign to soften, if not eliminate, the impact of these changes. **You, too, can help.** Please see the image below, scan the QR code and lobby your MP.

It's not all doom and gloom out there, though, as we continue to see new bars and pubs opening or reopening. In Stockport, we welcome Fell, while the Head of Steam in Manchester City Centre promises to be a significant addition to the local scene. In Denton, Percy's is a very welcome addition to part of Tameside where cask beer is thin on the ground. It was good, too, to see the Watchmakers in Cheadle Hulme reopen. This large site has struggled to make an impression in recent years so our best wishes go to those behind the new venture.

I was also delighted to visit Steelfish Brewing, who have finally moved into their own premises and have an on-site brewery tap as well. The fact they are on Temperance Street is particularly welcome – it's a Manchester thoroughfare I'd very much like to see lined with breweries and bars.

Lastly – check out page 10 where you'll get some preliminary information about this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. We are once again back at the Guildhall in mid-June. Put those dates in your brand-new diaries!

John Clarke, Editor



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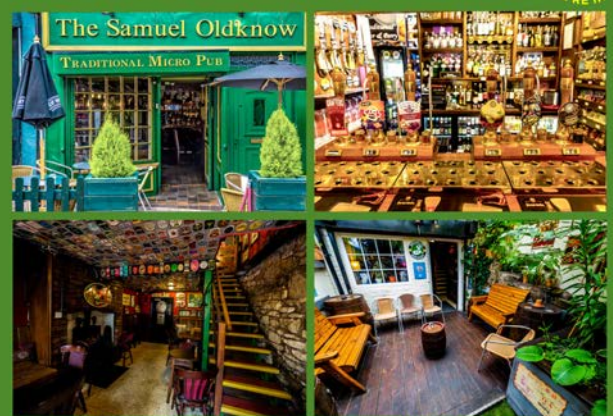
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 Stockport Cider Pub of the Year  
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# Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for January and February



*The Pub of the Month for January is the Dog & Partridge in Great Moor. Lawrence Devaney tells you all about it.*

Originally a Bell's brewery pub, Robinsons acquired the **Dog & Partridge** when they bought Bell & Co. in March 1949 for over £600,000, equivalent to over £29 million in 2025. The pub itself was built in the late 19th century, and is a solid, double-fronted red-brick structure that dominates Buxton Road in Great Moor. No doubt, when it was built, the pub would have had a range of different rooms, but like most large pubs of that era, it is now open-plan, with open-room spaces and some quiet nooks for a more private drink.

Landlady Karen Morton truly cares about building connections and has gone above and beyond by reaching out to the whole community – not just the local drinkers. She's initiated Friendly Faces, a delightful weekly meet-up every Tuesday at 11am. It's a cosy gathering for 'tea and coffee with friendly chats to make new connections', warmly hosted by Karen and her welcoming staff. It's an excellent opportunity to connect, relax, and have good conversations in a friendly atmosphere. Additionally, the pub hosts Open Mic nights, live bands on Saturdays, quizzes and other seasonal events. Karen's latest innovation is the 'Cabaret Lunch', held once a month on a Tuesday. This event is designed for people who, for any reason, do not go out at night but enjoy live entertainment. Food and entertainers for £10, what's not to like? If you would like more information, follow them on Facebook: [facebook.com/dogandpartridgegreatmoor](https://facebook.com/dogandpartridgegreatmoor).

It's a charming pub that takes pride in offering great value food. The classic pub-style menu includes a much-loved Sunday roast. The cask ale selection usually includes two different ales: Unicorn plus a seasonal beer or another of Robbies' regular ales.

Come along on Thursday, January 29, to support the pub when our Pub of the Month award is presented. The easiest way to get there is by bus, with the Woodsmoor Lane stops only a three-minute walk away. Buses available: hop on one in a 192 convoy or take the 199 Skyline service.

*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.*



*The February Pub of the Month is the Puss in Boots on Nangreave Road in Offerton. Kevin Davies has been along and tells you why it has won.*

The Puss in Boots is a 1970s estate pub which had been run down throughout the 2000s before being temporarily closed. The Almond Family pubs group took over the tenancy of this Robinsons pub and, following a refurbishment in 2010, it was reopened. There have been some further additions and improvements since.

The pub is on a single level with a number of distinct areas, some of which are reserved for dining during the day. It has a well-deserved reputation for its food, including a very good carvery, so that even during the day the pub is busy. It is, though, the consistent high quality of the beer which is the primary reason for the nomination as Pub of the Month for February. Although it is well regarded for hosting post-funeral receptions, these occasions don't always reveal the lively and welcoming pub that regular visitors know and enjoy.

The pub has three handpumps on the bar, with Robinsons Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde on two of them and a seasonal on the third. The glass-fronted ground-floor beer cellar is something of a novelty, but demonstrates the care and organisation behind the beer quality.

Nick Bateson has been the manager of the Puss in Boots for 15 years, having started working in the trade in Lincolnshire. Under his management, and with the efforts of all the team, the pub thrives.

Another reason for the award is recognition of the positive impact that the Almond Family pubs have had on the Stockport area – in the **Puss in Boots**, the **Jolly Sailor** in Davenport, the **Spread Eagle** in Romiley and the new **Station House** in Cheadle Hulme, they have taken pubs that were failing and transformed them into significant community assets. For those of us who remember the Puss in Boots in its former state, it is possibly the biggest turnaround of them all.

Join us on Thursday 26 February when this well-deserved award will be presented. It's not too far to walk from the A6 and the 192 bus service. Apart from that, buses 383 and 385 from Stockport will drop you close by.



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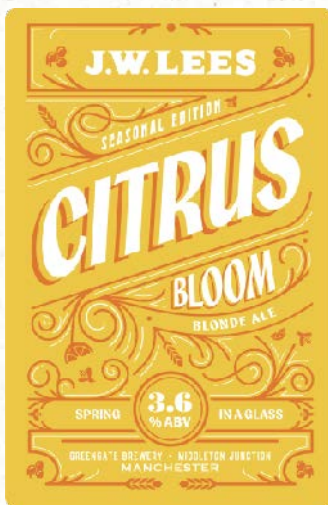
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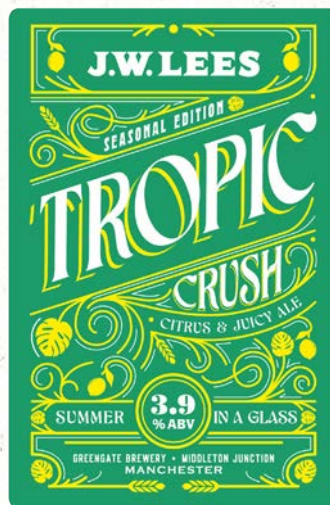
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# Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

## Station House, Cheadle Hulme

In Cheadle Hulme, Holt's P5 reopened on 21 October as the **Station House** after a lengthy refurbishment. It now operates under the Almond Pubs umbrella as one of their 'premium dining' pubs, writes *Mark McConachie*.

As you enter from the car park entrance, you are greeted by a reservation desk. This is for the restaurant area to the left of you at the rear of the building. If you enter via the steps off Station Road, then you go straight into the former pub vault, now styled as the Snug. With its real fire, it is cosy enough, but being so open, perhaps the Snug appellation is a misnomer.



Linking the restaurant and Snug is a comfortably appointed lounge that fronts Station Road. Furnished with high chairs (not to this writer's taste) around tables, this area can be used for informal dining as well as plain old drinking. The overall effect is one of a classy and slickly-run operation, while the decor is just the right level without feeling cluttered.



The bar is central to the pub, with various handpumps along its length dispensing Holt's beers as well as one from Bootleg. A most useful feature for people using public transport is a real-time departures screen for trains serving the station (could they show real-time buses too?).

Business prior to Christmas saw the large restaurant at capacity on an early December Monday lunchtime. Cheadle Hulme is quite a tough market, so by my visit I would say Holt's/Almond have pitched the place just right to be a success.



Staying in Cheadle Hulme, the **Watchmakers** (ex-Kings Tap) reopened on 5 December. The lease has been taken on by a trio of experienced folk from, we think, Didsbury. The good news is they have a working relationship with Timothy Taylor's brewery, and both Landlord and Boltmaker were on handpump. There is also talk of possible guest beers.

Expect live music, TV sports and a possible name change in the New Year. All potentially very good news.

*Thanks to Dave Sheldon for the interior shots of the Station House and details of the Watchmakers.*

## Fell, Stockport

The announcement that Cumbria-based Fell Brewery was taking over the former premises of MO6B on St Petersgate in central Stockport came out of the blue. Equally surprising was the speed at which it reopened on 28 November.

Although the brewery is in Grange-over-Sands, it already has two Manchester outlets – one in Chorlton and the other in the Northern Quarter, so this seems to be a good fit.



The speedy opening may account for the slightly distressed appearance of the walls, although this is softened by some modern artworks and ambient lighting (apart from a rather bare snug area at the back, which definitely needs some work).



There are currently two beers on handpump with the capacity to increase this to four if trade warrants it. One of the cask beers will be either Crag (3.8%) or Ghyll (3.4%), both pale and hoppy, while the other will be a further beer from the extensive Fell range. In addition there are eight keg lines, mainly for Fell beers, and one for Hogan's cider. There are also cans from Pilot Beer and, a rare find, large bottles from Mills Brewing of Stroud.

Fell is closed on Monday and Tuesday, opening at 4pm on other days apart from Saturday when it's 1pm. A welcome addition, and worth a visit, but note that at the moment payment is by card only.

## Head of Steam, Manchester



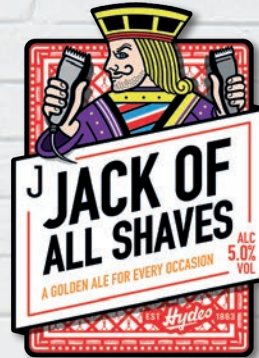
The **Head of Steam** has opened in Manchester's iconic Northern Quarter. The new pub, located at 16 Newton Street, directly opposite **Fell NQ**, welcomed its first customers on Friday 28 November, writes *Sean O'Mahoney*.

The 2,800 square foot venue offers space for around 180 drinkers. The pub features a striking circular central bar, with an impressive selection comprising 24 keg and six cask options, showcasing the best of UK craft beers alongside Belgian favourites. The opening night proved exceptionally popular, with the venue buzzing with activity, and a week later the pub continued to draw crowds. It's encouraging to see another venue committed to serving quality beer in the Northern Quarter. Food comes courtesy of Salford legends That Burger Place, serving their burgers from Tuesday to Sunday.

*Opening Times* spoke to Newcastle-born manager Kieran Cant, who told us he is very keen to feature local beers on the bar – a Cloudwater beer has just finished, and guests from Track, Sureshot and Shindigger were waiting in the wings. He is also keen to feature strong beers in pins (36-pint casks), and anything in a wooden pin would be very welcome.

We think the Head of Steam Manchester NQ looks set to become a firm favourite among both locals and visitors exploring the area.

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# More Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

## Percy's, Denton



Occupying the former premises of Howard's Neighbourhood Bar at 49 Manchester Road, **Percy's** opened for business on 5 December. Early signs are that it will be a real success.

It's a project by Alex Ollerhead, who worked at and co-managed **Silly Country** in Droylsden for seven years. He'd always wanted to strike out on his own and when these premises became available he jumped at the chance, feeling that it would really work out. The conversion of what was an empty shell has been skilfully carried out – there is bench seating down one wall and comfortable booths down the other, while there are plenty of tables and chairs in the middle. It's a surprisingly big space, and when *Opening Times* called it was already getting full.

The bar is to the back and has three handpumps which will feature a changing range of cask beers. We also asked Alex where the name came from – it's apparently named after his granddad. It's also well worth a visit.

*Percy's photo courtesy of SBPIX*

## Bollington News



In October, a new bar and café opened in Bollington, **Coupe!** (rhymes with loop). The bar is run by husband and wife team of Jacob Thrasher & Hope Collis (Hope was previously manager of the Beer Emporium Bottle Bank in Holmes Chapel). The place has a light and airy, open-plan feel. Up to two cask beers are available

from Congleton's Beartown brewery, as well as coffees and cakes. Food is available from a series of kitchen pop-ups, with pizzas on Wednesday and Thursday. Weekend food availability is published on social media. The bus stops for the 10 and 391 buses are at the end of the road, on Palmerston Street.



Meanwhile, in nearby Bollington Cross, the Grade II-listed **Cock and Pheasant** has become a M&B tenanted house with Carl Bromley in charge. There are up to four cask beers available, with two lines being

free of tie. These are currently serving a rotating selection from Storm and Wincle breweries. The permanent beers are Carlsberg Britvic Wainwright and Molson Coors Doom Bar. Food is available from a non-pretentious menu with options to satisfy most tastes. Outside is a substantial beer garden and children's play area. There is also a car park, but if you wish to visit by public transport the service 10 bus stops are very close. This bus now runs on a Sunday.

## Macclesfield Pub of the Season

Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch Autumn Pub of the Season was **Alfreds** in Macclesfield.



Alfreds is a popular bar and diner, with a long frontage facing Park Green. On warm days, the doors open onto a terrace at the front, giving the feel of a continental café. Not immediately apparent is that this is a Hydes pub serving two cask ales. It has undergone

several transformations over the years, as the Jar Bar, 4 Park Green, Mandarina and now Alfreds.

It's one of Hydes' more southerly pubs, and has been managed by Louise Anderson since 2013. Cellar-work by the team is excellent so good cask beer can be relied upon. There is a cask discount Monday to Thursday. It hosts regular events which are advertised around the pub. As Louise was unavailable on the day, the award was presented to Craig who is second in command (and is seen above, right, receiving the award from CAMRA's Mike Wawioroko). The pub is within easy walking distance of both Macclesfield bus and railway stations.

## High Peak Pub of the Season



High Peak branch's Pub of the Season presentation for Autumn was the New Inn, Market Place, Buxton, with the presentation being made on Saturday 15 November.

After closing in July 2023, the **New Inn** underwent a transformation. Matt and Emma Blackstone bought the pub freehold and refurbished it in impressive style. They both have an extensive background in the licensed trade, having run both the **50 Degrees North** bar in Buxton and the **Duke** in Burbage. They also run the **Old Sun**, which is just up the road from the New Inn. Both of them have created a warm and welcoming environment that respects the heritage of the building. There is a collection of reclaimed furniture and a splendid wooden floor which give the pub a country feel.

There is a small but interesting menu, so this is still primarily a pub rather than a restaurant which sells beer. As there is no tie they can sell whatever beer they wish, with beers from Timothy Taylor's often featuring.

## Inn Brief

In Reddish, the ever-popular **Reddish Ale** on Broadstone Road has changed its opening hours and the good news is that it is now open seven days a week.

In Heaviley, Stockport, Robinsons' **Duke of York** now sells four cask beers. Cumbria Way and Trooper are the regulars and will be joined by various seasonal beers from the brewery, not least Old Tom.

In Bramhall, the **Drawing Room** closed, and was swiftly replaced by a new Irish bar called the **Blarney Barrel**. No cask beer is available.

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# In The Wood

## SPBW Greater Manchester

Firstly, we would like to extend our thanks to *Opening Times* editor John Clarke for offering us this page, writes *Mike Langley*. We appreciate his support. We hope that people find this introduction an enjoyable read and hopefully are inspired to join us on one of our monthly socials.



The national **Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood** (SPBW) was formed in 1963 in London, to campaign against the replacement of wooden casks with aluminium. This campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, so they moved to preserving beer served in wood casks in the few places it remained. At this point the society aligned itself with the bigger campaign to protect

hand-drawn real ales (CAMRA). This was more successful. The society remains small, with branches spread across the country and branches as far away as the USA and Argentina. The national SPBW runs events throughout the year, including a wood-only beer festival in May.

In 2021, the Greater Manchester Branch was formed at the **Angel** in Manchester. We quickly gained a passionate group of dedicated members who felt that the best way to preserve beer from the wood is to encourage its return to pubs and bars. In Greater Manchester we have a large collection of well-respected brewers, from big regionals to microbrewers, many of whom already use wooden barrels for ageing their special beers.



Our first objective was to fund the purchase of a wooden cask for the branch. This would allow us to experiment with which beers work/don't work in the wood, how to clean and maintain wooden casks, and for us to get wood beers back on bars in the area.

We started with a pin (a 36-pint cask) and offered it to brewers to fill, then asked their recommendation for pubs they felt would serve it well. We then hosted a social at said pub to 'lend a hand' in emptying the barrel. After only four years we now own a pin and three firkins (72-pint casks). In addition, several GM brewers and pubs have now purchased their own wooden casks. With the firkins, the aim was to have enough beer left over for the pub regulars and public to try and form their own conclusions. I'm happy to say they are popular wherever they go. We have a very close relationship with the **Wakey Wakey Brewery** in Rochdale, where our casks are cleaned, and WW beers often form the fillings of our casks. A beer from the wood is now a weekly fixture in Manchester at the **Lower Turk's Head**, where Joseph Holt's Bitter is served from the wood every weekend.

Following editions will hopefully include upcoming GM SPBW events as well as information about beer from the wood. If you are interested in attending a social, please send an email to the following address: [spbwgmsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:spbwgmsecretary@gmail.com).

## Commemorative Plaque



As explained by Mike Langley, the Greater Manchester branch of the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood was formed on 22 September 2021 at the **Angel** pub in Manchester. A plaque was presented to the Angel on Saturday 13 December 2025 to commemorate this. The extensive range

of ales included a Wakey Wakey stout called Slumber, served from a wooden cask. Pictured here (left) is John Brett, manager of the Angel, receiving the commemorative plaque from Peter Mitchell, chair of Greater Manchester SPBW.

## SPBW is Sixty-Two

On 6 December 1963, the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood was formed at the **Rising Sun** pub in Epsom, near London.



Each year, SPBW members gather at the Rising Sun on the first Sunday in December to celebrate this fact. In 2025, the event was combined with the annual Tony Littler quiz, named for a

late SPBW member, and which has an impressive shield, recording previous winners. This year, the winning team was Peter Chutter, national SPBW treasurer, Roger Jacobson, former editor of *Pint in Hand* (the society's quarterly publication), Chris Lucking and Peter Mitchell.

Pictured here is the Tony Littler shield being presented by Rob Shacklock, national chair of SPBW, right, to Peter Mitchell, on behalf of this year's winning team, at the Rising Sun in Epsom.

## Join SPBW

The Greater Manchester branch of SPBW includes as members any national member of SPBW from Greater Manchester and the surrounding area. If you'd like to join, please access the national website at [www.spbw.beer/information/join/](http://www.spbw.beer/information/join/). Annual membership starts from £7, or less if you sign up for more than one year, and includes the quarterly magazine, *Pint in Hand*.

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*The next SPBW page will appear in the July/August issue.*



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# What's Brewing

## Brewery News from around the region

### New Home for Steelfish

After four years of a nomadic existence, which has seen them brew at three different breweries, **Steelfish Brewing** now has a permanent home, and a new addition to the team – former homebrewer Gideon Foster has now joined founders Ali Combes and Simon Goodier as part of Steelfish.

Since starting in 2021, Steelfish has brewed at Temperance Street Brewery in Manchester, Ventile Brew Co in Reddish and latterly back in Manchester at Courier Brewing.

The new site is also on Temperance Street, at number 108, which is handily placed for Piccadilly Station, Mayfield Depot and Park, as well as the four existing breweries and taps behind the station.

If you look round the brewery at the moment, there are numerous vessels of various sizes and origins. There's a one-barrel kit, originally the pilot plant at Neptune Brewery, two half-barrel kits, and a more substantial four-barrel plant, which is on long-term loan from **Burton Road Brewing**, and is in the process of being recommissioned with invaluable assistance from experienced brewer Shane Swindells. If all goes to plan, this will come on line by the end of January.



The different-sized vessels will bring greater flexibility to the operation. Steelfish will be able to expand production of its own beers, both keg and cask (but will remain cask-led), and also produce small-batch specials and one-offs, some of which will be 'taproom-only specials'. Cask beers for Burton Road will also be contract-brewed here.

Having been cuckoo brewers themselves, the team is happy to host other brewery nomads. **Pandemonium Brewing**, which has, we think, been on a hiatus for the past couple of years or so, will be using one of the small kits for its small-batch beers, and we hear another cuckoo brewery will also be brewing here.



The brewery tap is, perhaps, a classic railway arch tap, but none the worse for that. Indeed, it's a very pleasant and welcoming space – the team is very keen to ensure it's inclusive and family-friendly. It's also south-facing

and it is hoped to take advantage of this during warmer weather.

The range of beers, Steelfish and guests, comprises three cask beers and six keg, and one of the beers will usually be dark. These are complemented by a range of bar snacks which should satisfy all tastes.

Opening hours are currently 5-10pm Thursday; 2-10pm Friday; 1-10pm Saturday and 1-8pm Sunday. The tap may be closed for the first two weeks of January, though, while work on the brewery is completed. Payment is by card only, by the way.

Very highly recommended and well worth a visit.

### Robinsons Seasonals

Local family brewer Robinsons played a strong game with their seasonal beers last year (*Opening Times* thought the 3.4% light mild, Broken Record, was arguably a classic of the style).

They are now set for a major year in 2026, reaffirming their commitment to cask by installing new pin (36-pint cask) stillage across all 250 pubs to allow cask beers to be served from these smaller containers for the first time. This move supports wider ranges with lower risk, ensures fresher beer through smaller containers, and strengthens quality. This is all part of the redevelopment of the brewing side at Robinsons, where the 500th brew was put through the new Brewhouse in early December.

Alongside this investment, Robinsons will release 11 seasonal cask beers this year, now rotating monthly, plus two bi-yearly beers – Citra and Big Sur – pouring for six-month periods from March and September.



New releases from Unicorn Brewing (Robinsons' craft beer arm) include **Eclipse** (dark mild, February), **Viaduct** (brown ale, April), **Tropic Like It's Hot** (tropical pale ale, May), **Mad Hatter** (red rye ale, September), and **Tarot** (stout, October). Robinsons will also partner with Stockport-based charity Prostate Cancer Support in March on a beer which will donate to the cause with each pint sold. These beers will be

joining favourites from 2025 such as Summit, HOPP, Broken Record, Throwback and Winter Nights.

Towards the end of this year, the brewery will be celebrating 130 years of Unicorn and the annual Old Tom Day will return on Saturday 7 November across Robinsons pubs.

### News from Hydes



Salford-based Hydes have 12 monthly seasonals out this year, and they cover a whole range of beer styles. They also have a vaguely hair and hairstyle theme in the names.

For January, look out for **Hairy Porter** (5.2%) which, as the name suggests, is a porter. The brewery tasting notes tell us this: "layers of smoky malt, roasted coffee, and chocolate blend like a perfectly cut trim, with hints of molasses, raisins, and liquorice adding real depth".

Sounds good. Meanwhile in February, we can look forward to **Mullet Over** (4.6%), a premium brown ale brewed with three different malt varieties. Expect a dark, biscuity beer with some citrus notes in the finish.

### RedWillow Subscriptions



Macclesfield's **RedWillow Brewery** has launched a subscription service. Every month, or every other month if you prefer, they will send out eight 440ml cans, which will always include the latest releases. The first box comes with a free pint glass, too. Full details are on the RedWillow website.

# News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

## The Marble Arch

The **Marble Arch**, Manchester's famous sloped-floor pub and a Grade II-listed landmark, has recently been at the centre of a major planning dispute, writes *Sean O'Mahoney*. The proposal from McGoff Group to construct a 15-storey apartment block on the car park next to the pub, drew widespread criticism from the pub's owners, local residents, and heritage advocates, who argue that such a development would undermine the pub's historic character and cultural value.



During the consultation period, which has now closed, the Marble Arch's management and CAMRA's Central Manchester branch rallied support and encouraged public objections. Local councillors Sam Wheeler and Jon-Connor Lyons were among the most vocal critics, describing the plans as "reprehensible" and stressing the need for any development to respect Manchester's heritage and treasured community institutions. They

emphasized that the Marble Arch is a "Manchester institution known around the world" and called for developers to work collaboratively with the community and elected members to find an appropriate solution.

McGoff Group, the developer, maintains that its plans will contribute to the area's regeneration by providing much-needed housing and public realm improvements, and claims that the new build will complement the ongoing transformation of the Victoria North corridor. However, campaigners remain concerned that the unique character of the Marble Arch could be irreparably harmed if the development proceeds as currently proposed.

With the consultation now closed, attention turns to Manchester City Council's planning committee, which will decide whether this historic pub's legacy can be preserved amid the city's rapid development, or if it will be overshadowed by new construction. WE will keep you updated.

## High Peak CAMRA Name Change



A review of CAMRA branch boundaries has seen the High Peak, Tameside & North East Cheshire branch lose the 'North East Cheshire' part of its area – Disley, Kettleshulme and Poynton have been transferred to the Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch. This has led to a name change, and the branch is now called High Peak, Tameside and Goyt Valley branch.

Before all that happened, though, High Peak branch celebrated its 50th birthday with a big get-together at the **Paper Mill** in Whitehough, near Chinley.

Many branch members were present and enjoyed looking back at the branch's successful history over the previous half-century. This was accompanied by a very evocative slide-show of pictures from past events which featured members both past and present. The celebrations were of course accompanied by the excellent range of cask beers available at the pub, which is a sister establishment to the **Old Hall Inn** across the road.

## Cask Liverpool Road



The Central Manchester branch has given a special award to **Cask** on Liverpool Road to celebrate 15 years of consecutive appearance in CAMRA's national *Good Beer Guide*. This recognises their ongoing commitment to serving excellent cask ale. Branch chair Sean O'Mahoney is seen here (left) presenting the certificate to Matt Ashcroft, the manager of Cask, who has been at the helm for the last 13 years.

## Still Going Strong



Regular visitors to Stockport's **Arden Arms** will know Linda Oliver, who has worked behind the bar there for 20 years. Incredibly she recently celebrated her 80th birthday – and has no intention of retiring!

She told BBC Radio Manchester that she only planned to work at the Arden for two years but loved it so much, she's been there ever since. She explained that really she should be at home knitting, only she can't knit – but she can pull pints! The BBC also surprised her with a recorded birthday greeting from Alan Titchmarsh, her favourite TV gardener.

Her stint at the Arden is only the latest stage of a long career working behind the bars of the town's pubs. She started at the age of 17 in 1963 at the **Red Bull** on Hillgate, and hasn't looked back since.

Here at *Opening Times* we'd like to add our congratulations, and look forward to being served by Linda for many years to come.

## Coming next time...

In Hyde, the quirky **Relics'n'Rust** on Commercial Brow has become the **Handle-Bar**. We plan to get down there for a full report. Time also stopped us going out to New Mills and the new bottle shop, **Banging Bottles** on Market Street, but we'll be there in time for the next issue. And who knows, we might finally have some information about the enigmatic **Flow Brewing Co**.

# 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.*

## I am the pub dog

I can smell heaven  
floating through the room.  
Thick, juicy, jelly-covered clumps of heaven,  
hidden in cages known to humans as 'pastry'.  
The door just opened.  
WHO'S THAT? GET OUT! GET OUT!  
Oh, it's you, you're OK. The biscuit in your hand  
as you approach is the key to my canines.  
Ignore the man holding my lead,  
I've not "had enough today." Nom nom.

I don't know what a "good boy" is,  
but I've been called one six times,  
by six different strangers crouching down  
with a beer in their hands, since I walked in  
from the rain earlier. I wonder if that boy  
who always drops Mini Cheddars on the floor  
will be in this afternoon. Or that shouty lady  
who likes to make me try her wine  
after she's had two or six glasses herself.

The man holding my lead doesn't say much –  
not since suddenly having fewer people  
living in our house these days –  
but that's why we come here so often, I think:  
a chance for him to sit somewhere quietly,  
surrounded by familiar, friendly faces.  
The door just opened.  
WHO'S THAT? GET OUT! GET OUT!  
Oh, it's you, you're OK.  
Even if the little fluffy piranha you're with  
seems to want to bite my wet nose off.

I wonder if the man who leans his elbow  
against the bar as he drinks will be here later,  
I've not seen him for a few months.  
Same goes for the man with the backpack of treasure.  
You know, the curious chap who shares  
50-year-old news articles, poems his dad wrote,  
jokes by comedians who wouldn't be allowed  
to say that nowadays. He struggles, like me,  
when the child humans are too loud.

I like how the water is free here,  
how the floorboards are smooth and warm,  
how people remember my name.  
If I'm ever lost, I know  
where to go to feel found.

# Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

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



Both our pubs in this issue are in the Lancashire Hill area and linked with the programme of housing redevelopment in Stockport in the 1960s. Our first pub is the **Nicholson's Arms**, 16 Lancashire Hill, on the corner of Penny Lane, which dated to the 1820s. The name comes from an influential Heaton Norris

family. One early notable landlord, according to the 1834 Stockport Directory, was John Dodge whose relatives emigrated to America from Offerton in the 17th century and who, it is believed, gave their name to Dodge City, Kansas.

At one time there was brewing on site as, in the 1850s, the Nicholson's Arms was listed in rate books as a 'house with a brewery'. The original inn was remodelled in the middle of the nineteenth century and in 1886 became part of Frederic Robinson's expanding estate of houses. It was conveniently located close to Stockport, just a short distance from the Lower Hillgate brewery.

Our photo shows the pub as it was in 1963, but the old soon made way for the new. With the programme of housing redevelopment in the area in the later 1960s, the Victorian pub was demolished. It was replaced by a new mid-century designed house, set back further from the road in the shadow of the newly constructed Lancashire Hill tower blocks. The new pub was light and spacious, with a central bar and two large rooms. It was popular with beer drinkers, being the only Stockport pub to be listed among the 300 pubs in the first *Good Beer Guide* in 1974. It finally closed in 2007 and was converted into retail premises.



Also under the letter 'N' is the **Nip Inn** on Penny Lane. This pub was a brand-new one to serve residents of recently redeveloped Lancashire Hill. The licence came from the **Duke of Wellington** and the **Millstone**, both of which disappeared with the reshaping of the area. This Boddingtons house opened in 1970 but was short lived. Fondly remembered by many, along with the Nicholson's Arms at the other end of the estate, the Nip Inn provided a place for new residents to socialise, relax and get to know one another. It, too, closed around 2001 and was demolished. Over the years, there have been several planning applications to build apartments in its place, although currently nature has taken over the site and there is little evidence of the pub which used to stand there.

*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).*

# Obituary

## Peter Edwardson



Local CAMRA members were shocked to learn that Peter had died suddenly on Saturday 6 December at the relatively early age of 66. He was sadly found at home the next day when the police gained entry to his house, writes *John Clarke*.

Peter had been involved in CAMRA for well over 40 years, and during that time played a significant role in local activities. He was the branch secretary for several years and, perhaps more importantly, he was the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival treasurer for well over a decade. Festival organiser Jim Flynn paid tribute to Peter's work in that capacity saying: "It's no exaggeration to say, without Peter's involvement, the festival may well have folded many years ago."

Readers of *Opening Times* will be familiar with Peter's work as the author of the *Curmudgeon* column, which he wrote for around 27 years.



While his involvement in CAMRA had reduced in recent years, he still came along to quite a few branch meetings, took part in many of the monthly Staggers and also continued to

distribute *Opening Times*.

Peter's death also resonated much more widely than local CAMRA members. He wrote a blog, *The Pub Curmudgeon*, where he continued to promote his love of very traditional pubs and very traditional beer, as well as railing against what he saw as the worst excesses of the 'nanny state'. Depending on your point of view, it was perhaps easy to disagree with some of his writings but they were always well-researched, well-written and thoughtful. This, together with his *Pub Curmudgeon* Twitter/X account, which took a similar line, earned Peter a legion of similar traditionally-minded followers around the country. As news of his death rippled across various online communities, many expressed sadness and dismay at the news.

His funeral is due to take place in Widnes in January. While a long-term resident of Stockport, he had expressed a wish to be interred there, near to his parents.

The pub and beer world has lost a distinctive and passionate voice, and CAMRA has lost a valued local member.

*Top picture: a light-hearted moment on a day out with friends (photo courtesy of Martin Taylor). Second picture: presenting a Pub of the Month award to the Sun in September in Burnage, November 2024.*

# Letter to the Editor

From Jim Flynn, Heaton Chapel:

I refer to the Reddish stagger article in the September/October issue, in which it was written in the paragraph about the Navigation in Heaton Norris that previous management "never truly grasped cask ale".

As a not infrequent visitor to the pub during the time of the then licensee Barry Harvey, I can state that this is not correct. Barry was the landlord for over a dozen years until his retirement, and during this time he typically had three or sometimes four cask beers available from Beartown, and often Holts (now, as the article stated, there is one) which were normally on good form or better. So much so that the pub received a Pub of the Month award from CAMRA on two occasions in 2014 and 2018!

Barry kept the pub going when almost every other pub in that part of Heaton Norris, on Lancashire Hill and Manchester Road, was closing, and then through the pandemic, and he deserves credit for his tenure in the pub not ill-informed comment.

*(In fairness to the author, I think it is fair to say there was some inconsistency in the cask ale here following Barry's retirement. I think we can all agree that his record was very good indeed. - Ed)*

# CAMRA Awards

## Recent Presentations

Stockport's **Petersgate Tap** has won a hat-trick of CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year awards for 2025, winning the local Stockport & South Manchester title along with the Greater Manchester and North West regional awards. Two of these were presented earlier in the year and, on Sunday 23 November, the Greater Manchester certificate was finally handed over.

Pictured below, left to right, are Greater Manchester and North West regional cider co-ordinator Sean O'Mahoney, Alan and Chris Gent from the Petersgate Tap, and Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA cider representative Dave Preston.



The North West win put the Petersgate Tap in the final 16 pubs for CAMRA's national Cider Pub of the Year. Competition is very stiff at this stage and sadly it didn't make it through to the final four. These include the **Blackfriars Tavern** in Great Yarmouth, the **Carpenters Arms** in Westrip, Gloucestershire, the **Bull & Dragon** in Meeth, Devon and **That Beer Place** in Chester, which was last year's overall winner. The 2025 winner, announced in October, was the Blackfriars Tavern.

# Pub Walks with Chris Morris

## Mossley to Greenfield

Mossley is a popular walking destination due to the stunning hill scenery nearby and the ease of accessing it, using the fast train service from Manchester Piccadilly. This pub walk uses the picturesque Huddersfield Canal to take us from Mossley to nearby Greenfield, and showcases some of the best views on offer. Fine pubs feature at the walk start and at the finish, with two others mid-way to keep an eye on.

### Train Information

Eighteen minutes is all it takes to transport you from the city centre to Mossley. Train services run half-hourly during peak times, Monday to Saturday. This is reduced to hourly during off-peak times and Sundays. The train ticket to buy is a return to Greenfield.

### The Walk

This three-mile walk is straightforward and flat, as it uses the towpath of the Huddersfield Canal. The path is good but can get muddy after wet weather, so appropriate footwear is advised. All pubs are dog-friendly.



After exiting Mossley Railway Station, for those after a pre-walk pub, you don't have to venture far. Turning right and walking over the railway bridge takes us to the **Gillery**. In 2019, the impressive, 19th century stone building was expertly converted from a former bank. The grand exterior is reflected inside, showcasing the high ceiling with intricate carvings, oversized windows and wood panelling. The use of subtle lighting gives a cosy atmosphere, with the seating surrounding the log burner proving particularly popular during the winter months. As well as regularly serving pizzas at peak times, the pub often has events on, including quizzes and live music. Often featured in the *Good Beer Guide*, the cask beers were Millstone Tiger Rut and Carlsberg Britvic Wainwright Gold when I last dropped by.

From the Gillery's front door, retrace your steps past the railway station and then continue straight ahead, crossing Manchester Road at the lights to go down Mill Lane. At the bottom, take the road to the left and cross over Two Mills Lane. We now cross over two bridges, first the River Tame and then the canal. To reach the canal towpath, cross over to the right side of the road and at the end of a stone wall, take a right to go back on yourself, with the stone wall now on your right. On reaching the canal, turn right to walk under the bridge and follow the canal towpath for half a mile, keeping the water on your left. At bridge 88 and lock 14W we cross to the opposite side of the canal, with the water now on our right. After another half mile we pass **Roaches Lock**. Unfortunately, this popular food-led Thwaites pub had stopped selling cask beer when I last visited. Hopefully this will be reintroduced in the near future. The interior has recently been refurbished to a high standard with a log burner taking centre stage.

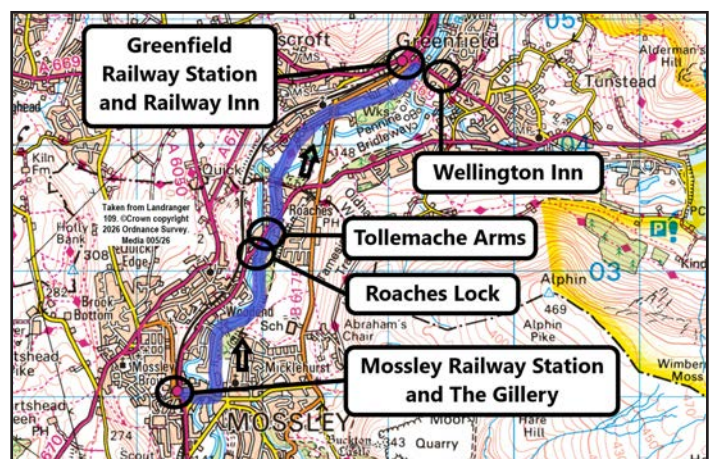
Continuing along the towpath for a further 300 yards brings us to the **Tollemache Arms** (pictured above top right), which has its own access from the canal up wooden steps. This small end-of-terrace local has been given a one-star heritage rating – a pub interior of special national historic interest. However, the future of this wet-led gem may be uncertain. I do hope it survives as it offers the ultimate in cosy welcomes and is a true home from home for the regulars.



every *Good Beer Guide* since 2013, the cask beer always excels, and with such comfortable and slightly rustic surroundings, it might be hard to leave. When I last visited, the five cask beers were from Ossett and Millstone, with Wainwright also available. Traditional pub food from 'Stockpot', reasonably priced, is served on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.



Retracing your steps back, then continuing along the main road which twists uphill, brings us to Greenfield Railway Station. If further refreshment is required, the **Railway Inn** opposite is perfectly positioned. This traditional local is a popular stop-off on the Transpennine Real Ale Trail and attracts all ages. Dogs are welcome in the cosy tap room, which features a real fire and photos of old Saddleworth. Also featured in the *Good Beer Guide*, the central bar serves up to five cask beers, which were from Millstone, Timothy Taylor, Ossett and Vocation when last sampled. The pub has specialised in live music for many years, and this is often featured from Thursday to Sunday.



When I last called by, the two Robinsons cask beers were Unicorn and Old Tom.

Back on the canal towpath, continue as before and walk under the road bridge. At bridge 86 and lock 16W we cross to the opposite side of the canal, with the water now on our left. Continue for just over a mile until we reach bridge 80. Here we climb the steps to the main road to arrive in Greenfield. Turning right and walking along the pavement for 200 yards brings us to the **Wellington Inn**, a friendly and welcoming end-of-terrace local that is the perfect finishing point for our walk. Featuring in



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# Events, Socials and Meetings

## Plus local CAMRA Contacts

### Local CAMRA Contacts

#### Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

[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)

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

X – @SSMCAMRA

#### High Peak, Tameside & Goyt Valley (HPTGV)

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

Contact: Ben Zwierink; [ben.zwierink@gmail.com](mailto:ben.zwierink@gmail.com)

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

#### Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

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

Contact: [contact@eastcheshire.camra.org.uk](mailto:contact@eastcheshire.camra.org.uk)

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

X – @MECCAMRA

#### Central Manchester (CMCR)

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

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

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

X – @MCRCentralCamra

CAMRA National website: [camra.org.uk](http://camra.org.uk)

### Formal Branch Meetings

CAMRA members only at these meetings.

**Tuesday 6 January** – Town Hall Tavern, 20 Tib Lane, Manchester, M2 4JA. Will include shortlisting for 2027 *Good Beer Guide (GBG)*. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

**Saturday 10 January** – Traders, 111-115 Stockport Road, Marple, SK6 6AF. Starts 2pm. (HPTGV)

**Monday 12 January** – Alderley Edge Union Club, Stevens Street, Alderley Edge, SK9 7NL. First *GBG 2027* selection meeting. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 15 January** – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Branch Pub of the Year will be chosen at this meeting. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Tuesday 10 February** – Park Tavern, 158 Park Lane, Macclesfield, SK11 6UB. Second *GBG 2027* selection meeting. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 12 February** – Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1HJ. Entries for the 2027 *GBG* will be chosen at this meeting. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 14 February** – Commercial, 137 Manor Park Road, Glossop, SK13 7SH. Starts 2pm. (HPTGV)

**Tuesday 17 February** – Ape and Apple, 28-30 John Dalton Street, Manchester, M2 6HQ. Entries for the 2027 *GBG* will be chosen at this meeting. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

### Social Events & Presentations

Everyone welcome at these events.

**Saturday 17 January** – Stockport visit: meet 12:10pm Bakers Vaults, Market Place, SK1 1EU. See branch website for more details. (CMCR)

**Saturday 17 January** – Pub of the Season presentation: Silly Country, 121 Market Street, Droylsden, M43 7AR. From 2pm. (HPTGV)

**Friday 23 January** – Heaton Moor East and Heaton Chapel Stagger: 7:30pm Elizabethan, 33 Heaton Moor Road, SK4 4PB; 8:30pm George

and Dragon, 422 Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel, SK4 5DH: final pub Navigation, 1 Manchester Road, Heaton Norris, SK4 1TY. (SSM)

**Saturday 24 January** – Altrincham Wander: meet 11:45am at the Unicorn, 1-7 Ashley Road, Altrincham, WA14 2DP. (MEC)

**Thursday 29 January** – Pub of the Month presentation: Dog and Partridge, 272 Buxton Road, Great Moor, SK2 7AN. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Monday 2 February** – Weekday Wander: Glossop old and new. Meet 10:55am, Piccadilly station, Platform 2, for 11:03 train. First pub: Smithy Fold, Victoria Street, Glossop SK13 8HS (SSM)

**Thursday 5 February** – City Centre Social. See branch website for more details. (CMCR)

**Friday 20 February** – Ladybarn and Fallowfield Stagger: 7:30pm Ladybarn Social Club, 13 Green Street, Ladybarn, M14 6TL; 8:30pm Friendship, 353 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, M14 6XS; final pub Great Central, 306 Wilmslow Road, M14 6NL. (SSM)

**Saturday 21 February** – Disley wander plus Pub of the Season presentation to Malt Disley, 22 Market Street, SK12 2AA. Wander starts 12:25pm at Rams Head, Buxton Road, SK12 2AE. (MEC)

**Thursday 26 February** – Pub of the Month presentation: Puss in Boots, 147 Nangreave Road, Offerton, SK2 6DG. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Tuesday 3 March** – Weekday Wander: Astley Bridge. Meet 10:55am Piccadilly Station, Platform 13/14 waiting area for 11:02 train to Blackpool North. First pub: Bank Top Brewery Tap, 68-70 Belmont Road, Astley Bridge, Bolton BL1 7AN. (SSM)



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