

# OPENING TIMES

MARCH / APRIL 2026

FREE



**INSIDE: MILD MAGIC IS BACK /  
HERITAGE PUBS / LOCAL &  
NATIONAL AWARDS AND  
MUCH MORE...**



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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

From left to right: Amy Barker, Alan Gent and Chris Gent with the two awards presented to the Crown, Heaton Lane. Full story on page 15. Photo by Lawrence Devaney

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## Welcome

This month we are launching Mild Magic 2026. We have signed up no fewer than 102 pubs this year, so there are plenty to go at, and lots of chances to win prizes.

Our thanks go to all those participating pubs, Hydes Brewery for sponsoring the event again, and also Bollington and RedWillow breweries for offering visits as prizes for some lucky winners.

Last year we recorded over 80 different milds available during Mild Magic so there will be plenty of choice. Look out for Holt's Mild & Mighty, a 5.3% strong mild brewed especially for Mild Magic. You will find full details on page 11 and you will be able to pick up a card (or cards) in all participating pubs once Mild Magic has started. Alternatively, you can download a card from the Mild Magic pages on the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA website at: [ssm.camra.org.uk](http://ssm.camra.org.uk), and follow the link to the Mild Magic page.

Local branches of CAMRA choose their pubs, clubs and cider pubs of the year around now, in fact most may well have been chosen by the time you read this. This month we are featuring the Stockport & South Manchester winners and hopefully we will be covering some more next time. Do take time to visit all of the winners if you can as they are amongst the best that the area has to offer.

Finally, congratulations to the Crown on Heaton Lane in Stockport. It's been a runaway success since it reopened last August, and it's now picked up two awards for the excellent refurbishment and new life that's been brought to the pub. Full details are on page 15. I suspect these are just the first of numerous awards in the pipeline for this revitalised pub.

John Clarke, Editor



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Improved Pub 2025  
What's On in Stockport Pub of the  
Month, February 2026

# Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for March and April



Our high streets are evolving as shopping habits change and former shops are being converted to offer more leisure activities. Former shops often don't make for a welcoming, cosy environment but **Saints Club** on St Petersgate, the March Pub of the Month, is a good example of one that does, *writes Jack Lyons*.

Saints Club was opened in June 2025 by David Thorley, and his years of experience clearly show in the conversion of this retail unit. Being situated among already-established bars can be a challenge, but David has managed to create a unique venue. The former shop has been stripped back, but not too harshly, with subtle lighting, mixed seating and also retaining many features of its former existence. As David explained, elaborating on the bar's name Saints Club, there are a couple of inspirations for it. "I'm on Saint Peters Gate and it used to be a Christian charity shop. There's a crucifix on the door to the cellar which I thought might be unlucky to take down so I just repainted it." A club defines how Saints feels: almost exclusive and with a speakeasy vibe. Also, the walls are also covered with artworks for sale.

Outside drinkers are well catered for with a covered area at the front which, although eating into valuable retail space, also provides a place to sit and watch the world go by.

Three cask beers are available and, as owner David used to have a share in Brewsmith Brewery's bar in Bury, The Broad Street Social, Brewsmith beers will often be seen here. One of the three cask ales is usually a dark beer. There is a tap wall of about a dozen keg beers which is likely the most extensive in the surrounding area. Keg IPAs, sours and ciders are available, and there's almost always an imperial stout to try – thirds of a pint are offered. Saints Club also runs a loyalty card and other incentives to attract a more diverse audience.

Saints Club has quickly become another destination for beer lovers in Stockport and beyond, especially St Petersgate with seemingly new bars popping up all over.

Join us on Thursday 26 March from 8pm when we present David with his Pub of the Month award. Being in Stockport town centre, the bar is well served by public transport.



Such is the success of the **Heaton Hops** on School Lane in Heaton Chapel, our April Pub of the Month, that if Damian O'Shea ('The Aleman') and his partner Charlotte wanted to display all their awards they've won since they opened 11 years ago this month, they would probably have to move to larger premises. The bar is a regular in the *Good Beer Guide* and, of course, our Pub of the Year back in 2024, *writes Jim Flynn*.

The bar is based in converted shop premises with just two small rooms (the second is downstairs) and an extensive outside pavement drinking area which, in the summer especially, gives a continental feel; so let's hope for a warm spring evening when we make the presentation on 23 April to Damian and his team.

There are three changing cask beers, traditional cider and keg beers, along with bottled and canned beers from the UK and around the world. The aim is to promote local beers, although not to the exclusion of high-quality products from around the country; one of the cask beers is normally supplied by Timothy Taylor's.

Damian has become one of the most enthusiastic supporters of CAMRA initiatives such as the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival, Winter Warmer Wander and of course Mild Magic, which will be up and running when we make the presentation.

To say that the place has captured the imagination of local drinkers is an understatement, and it is packed out almost every night (don't go on Mondays – it's shut). So get there early to join the local CAMRA branch to celebrate the award, which will be presented on Thursday 23 April. The pub is on the 7 and 42A bus routes, the 192 stops round the corner, and Heaton Chapel train station is only five or six minutes away, so there is absolutely no excuse to miss this night!

*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 (see advert on previous page).*

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# Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

## Bollington Closures



Just a few days into the New Year came news that the **Poachers Inn**, formerly a regular *Good Beer Guide* entry was to close.

The reasons given were rising costs making the business unsustainable, but reports from locals have mentioned poor service and a licensee whose ideas were at odds with what his customers wanted. It is believed that the owners, Trust Inns, will re-advertise the tenancy.

Towards the end of January came the rather more surprising and sudden news that, with "genuine sadness", Lee and Kristin Wainwright of the Bollington Brewery announced the closure of the **Vale Inn**.

The pub, set in a row of stone terraced houses, just 100 metres from the original location of the Bollington brewery, was reopened in 2005 and had been in the *CAMRA Good Beer Guide* for nearly 20 years. Lee told us that the pub wasn't really working for them as a managed house but the plan is to reopen it as a tenancy. Encouragingly, he's already had early expressions of interest, so hopefully this excellent pub won't stay closed for long.

## Banging Bottles, New Mills



When Emily Southworth (pictured here) saw the empty shop to let, she had an epiphany. Tiring of her job as a solicitor, this was the chance to change direction and finally realise her ambition to run a bottle shop.



And so, in early December, the former gift shop at 66 Market Street reopened as **Banging Bottles**, aiming to champion local and northern beers. The range is impressive and growing but also features beers from further afield too. When *Opening Times* called, there was an interesting Scottish selection on the

shelves, as Emily had recently held a Burns Night celebration. This was the first of what will be a monthly series of events, each featuring beer and cider from a different part of the UK – she obtains a licence for on-site drinking for these.

The beers are very well chosen, as indeed are the ciders and perries as Emily is also something of a cider fan. Ciders from Pips, Ross-on-Wye and Hogans were on the shelves, plus some from Scottish maker Lanthorn (a rare find).

Business has been brisk, and indeed, while we were there, a steady trickle of customers came through the door. It's directly opposite **Beer Shed** so you can combine your visit with a beer or two there.

Banging Bottles is closed on Sunday and Monday, and opens 2-6pm Tuesday to Wednesday, 2-8pm Thursday, and 12-8pm Friday and Saturday. Well worth a visit (take bus 358 to New Mills bus station or the train to New Mills Central. It's a short walk from both).

## Handle-Bar, Hyde



*Opening Times* has always had a soft spot for **Relics 'n' Rust** on Commercial Brow in Hyde. It's arguably the quirkiest bar in the region and, when we last called, owner Howard Pedder told us he planned to rearrange the premises (which also include a barbers and a tattoo studio) to give the bar more prominence.



Well, he's now made good on that, and the bar area has at least doubled in size, moved to the right-hand side of the building, and has been branded the **Handle-Bar**. There's more of a proper bar counter and, significantly, a large fridge – while there's no draught beer, there is a large range of bottles. These include Belgian specialities, German lagers and plenty of UK craft beers. Azvex from Liverpool is a new favourite, but the highlight of the beer range has to be the 25-plus different bottles from New Mills' Torrside Brewing (and, unsurprisingly, these sell very well).

The grand opening was on 29 November and since then, Howard tells us that it's been hugely popular. Handle-Bar is at 4 Commercial Brow, which is walkable from Hyde town centre. Newton for Hyde station is less than a five-minute walk away. The bar is closed from Sunday to Tuesday, and opens from 11am to 8pm all other days. Highly recommended.

## News in Brief

The new licensee at the **Grey Horse** in Reddish is Nathan Moore. Nathan has been with Holts since 2018 when he commenced with them at the **Tavern at the Mill** in Thornton Cleveleys (he must have been very young when he started!). He is from Blackpool but his last pub was in Warrington. On our visit the Holt's Bitter was on excellent form.

The **Tollemache Arms**, a Robinsons pub in Mossley, may have a doubtful future as the pub has been put up for sale with licence by the brewery. At the time of writing it would appear that, based on the latest published sources, it has not yet been sold. If you have a spare £175,000 it could be yours! We understand the car park directly opposite the pub is also for sale for £130,000.

# Congratulations to The Victoria, Withington



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# Stockport & South Manchester Awards

## Pub, Cider Pub and Club of the Year 2026

### Victoria is Pub of the Year



This year, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA had a clear winner in its Pub of the Year vote. It's a pub that has come close to the top award before but this time the **Victoria**, on Wilmslow Road in Withington, took the crown.



Alyson and Paul Mitchell (pictured here with a Pub of the Month award) have been managing this very popular Hydes house for over 13 years now. Under their steady guidance, the Victoria has become a standard bearer for both the warmth of its welcome and the quality of its beer. Four or five Hydes cask beers are regularly available and they are always on excellent form – the pub is a regular in the national *Good Beer Guide*.

The couple are delighted to have won this award, telling *Opening Times*: “We are delighted and so proud to win the CAMRA Pub of the Year award for Stockport & South Manchester. We love what we do, but we couldn't do it without our amazing team and the incredible support that we receive from Hydes Brewery.

“The Victoria really is a special pub for us and has the best customers that you could ask for. A huge thank-you to CAMRA for nominating us for this award.”

The brewery is also delighted with this win for a pub that has already won numerous company awards. Hydes managing director Adam Mayers added his congratulations, telling us: “We are absolutely delighted that the Victoria in Withington has been recognised with this award. It's a fantastic achievement and a real testament to the passion, dedication and hard work of the whole team. The Victoria is a much-loved pub at the heart of its community, and this recognition reflects the brilliant job the team do every day to create a warm, welcoming and memorable experience for our guests. We couldn't be prouder of the team and what they've created.”

We are looking forward to a big turnout on the presentation night, which will be from 8pm on Thursday 30 April. It's bound to be a full house, so get there early. The Victoria is served by all the buses that run up and down Wilmslow Road, including the 42 from Stockport.

### Bakers Vaults is Runner-Up

The runner-up is another local family brewer pub – Robinsons' **Bakers Vaults** on Stockport Market Place.

This is a pub that packs a lot in and, indeed, is something of a local institution. Manager Luke Morgan and his team offer a wide range of Robinsons ales alongside three to four guest beers, which can include some unexpected finds, although Titanic Plum Porter is a popular and regular feature. Live music on Sunday afternoons is a popular feature as is the live music quiz. Food is served every day and includes gourmet hotdogs and burgers. It's a hugely popular pub with a great atmosphere and consistently good beer.



### Petersgate Tap is Cider Pub of the Year



When it comes to cider and perry, Stockport's **Petersgate Tap** is a serial award-winner. This will mark the eighth year in a row that the pub has won the Stockport & South Manchester Cider Pub of the Year award.

The reason for this string of awards is quite simple. When it comes to the depth and quality of the range of real ciders and perries on offer, both on draught and in bottle, the Petersgate Tap has no local rivals. Top quality products are sourced from leading producers, both local, such as Dunham Press, and further afield from the likes of Herefordshire's Newton Court, Gregg's Pit and Ross-on-Wye.

Co-owner Alan Gent told *Opening Times*: “We're immensely pleased that once again our cider efforts have been recognised by our eighth win in a row as Cider Pub of the Year. We never get complacent about winning anything, so we will continue to source the best range of ciders possible for Stockport's cider drinkers. Our thanks once again to Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA for making this award.”

The award is due to be presented on the afternoon of Sunday 22 March from 2pm.

### Ladybarn is Club of the Year



Another serial winner is the **Ladybarn Social Club** on Green Street in Ladybarn, which wins the Club of the Year award for the fifth time. Four cask beers of superb quality have earned the club a place in the *Good Beer Guide*. In addition to this, the club offers a wide range of facilities in a part of Manchester where

all the pubs have closed. The award will be presented from 8pm on Friday 26 June. Don't miss it.

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# Mild Magic 2026

## Visit Pubs, Drink Beer, Win Prizes

### Friday 10 April to Sunday 17 May

According to statistics, there are roughly twice as many Mild ales being brewed today than in 2000. To help continue this trend, we have organised yet another Mild Magic trail for you to enjoy. Dating from its origin in 1994, this is the largest and longest running Mild event in the country. If we continue to encourage the flow in our region, you never know, it might spread further afield.

This year again, we have managed to sign up 102 pubs to take part; many will be offering their customers cask-conditioned mild only for the duration of Mild Magic, and for that they have our thanks. Last year, no less than 88 different milds were noted during Mild Magic, so here's your chance to seek out some of this tasty beer style. They can come in many different forms, not always dark and covering a range of ABVs, some quite strong!



#### So what are we asking you to do?

First, enter a participating pub (see end) and pick up an entry card, or you can download one from our website ([ssm.camra.org.uk](http://ssm.camra.org.uk)). Second, buy a cask mild (pint or half) and ask the bar staff for a sticker to affix to your card. If no stickers are available, please get the card signed. Third, drink the mild and savour its taste. Fourth, enter a participating pub in a different area as shown on the card. Repeat from step two until you have filled your card(s). NB: check the pub opening hours, especially if you are making a special journey (details available at [www.CAMRA.org.uk](http://www.CAMRA.org.uk)).

#### How do I win a prize?

To complete the standard **Mild Magic**, collect stickers from **12 different areas** and you will receive a Mild Magic T-shirt.

Collect stickers from **24 different areas** to enter **Mild Magic Extra** and receive a Mild Magic polo shirt and a ½ pint voucher for a mild of your choice to be redeemed at the 2026 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. This will be held between 18 and 20 June at the Masonic Hall on Wellington Road South, Stockport SK1 3UA.

**Mild Magic Super** is a little more challenging. Visit **48 pubs from at least 36 different areas** (more if you like) and you will win a Mild Magic sweatshirt and two ½ pint vouchers for mild at the Festival.

Finally, we have the **Mild Magic Ultra** award for visiting every pub. This will win you a Mild Magic polo shirt, plus a sweatshirt, along with three ½ pint vouchers for mild at the Festival.

For an optional fun challenge, we also have **Mild Magic Scrabble**. Each participating pub has an associated letter (shown on the card and sticker). Collect enough stickers on one card to spell out MILD MAGIC and win two extra ½ pint mild vouchers for redemption at the Beer Festival.

To add even more interest, everyone participating is invited to vote for the most appealing pub where you enjoyed a mild. In addition, you can vote for the best mild you encountered on the trail – which may not have been in the most appealing pub! The winning pub and brewery will then be presented with a 'Mild Champion' award with everyone invited along.

#### How long do I have to complete all this?

Mild Magic runs from Friday 10 April to Sunday 17 May 2026 inclusive.

#### What do I do when I have finished?

Post all your completed cards to the Mild Magic address given on the card to arrive by 23 May (only one entry per person). Receipt of the card(s) will be acknowledged electronically, so an email address or phone

number is desirable. All entries are eligible for inclusion in a **Grand Draw** to be one of the people invited along to a brewery tour. If you are successful, full details of the time and date of the visit will be included with your invitation.

#### Where do I claim my garment and vouchers?

Garments and mild vouchers will be dispensed at the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival from the CAMRA Shop. If you are not attending the Festival, other provisions may have to be agreed.

#### Thanks to our Sponsor – Hydes Brewery

We are delighted to welcome back Hydes as the Mild Magic Sponsor. Hydes is one of the few breweries to regularly brew not one but **two** milds: Dark Ruby is a luscious dark mild, while 1863, now badged as a session amber ale, was originally sold as Hydes Best Mild, a classic northern light mild. You see, they don't all have to be dark! Look out for both as you go round the Mild Magic pubs.



As an added bonus, Holts are bringing out a special mild. Currently we know no more than it will be a dark mild called **Mild & Mighty** with a robust strength of 5.3% ABV, this being a typical strength for a mild before World War One. Many of our other local breweries, great and small, are also producing a special mild to correspond with Mild Magic.

There will also be trips organised to enable you to tick off a few Mild Magic pubs. Dates and routes are still to be finalised, but will be published on the branch website at [ssm.camra.org.uk](http://ssm.camra.org.uk) under the Events link.

If you haven't taken part in Mild Magic before, you must have a go this year; it's great fun and it's so easy – you only need to visit 12 pubs in 12 different areas over a five-week period – and there are 75+ areas to choose from! It's an excellent chance to visit some new places, try some new beers and win great prizes, while voting with your feet in favour of Britain's proud brewing heritage. **Please support our campaign to preserve cask-conditioned mild in this area!**

#### The Mild Magic Pubs

Here are all the pubs, with the larger areas below being subdivided on the card: **Altrincham:** Costello's Bar, Unicorn; **Ashton-under-Lyne:** Ash Tree, Half Way House; **Bredbury:** Steel Works; **Burnage:** Reasons to be Cheerful; **Buxton:** Ale Stop, New Inn, RedWillow Buxton, Wye Bridge; **Chapel-en-le-Frith:** Old Cell Ale Bar; **Cheadle:** Crown, James Watts, Wobbly Stamp; **Cheadle Hulme:** Cross Keys, John Millington; **Chorlton-on-Medlock** (University area): Salutation; **Davenport:** Milliner; **Didsbury:** Fletcher Moss, Gateway, Head of Steam, Railway, Wallop; **Droylsden:** Silly Country, Snug; **Dukinfield:** Angel; **Eccles:** Eccles Cross, Lamb Hotel; **Fallowfield:** Friendship, Great Central; **Gatley:** Horse & Farrier; **Glossop:** Bar 2, Smithy Fold; **Gorton:** Vale Cottage; **Hayfield:** Kinder Lodge; **Hazel Grove:** George & Dragon; **Heald Green:** Griffin; **Heatons:** Griffin, Heaton Hops, Nursery; **Hyde:** Jack's Bar, Queens; **Ladybarn:** Ladybarn Social Club; **Levenshulme:** Station Hop; **Macclesfield:** Blackjack Brew Co, Bollington Brewery Tap, Castle, Fountain, Park Tavern, RedWillow; **Manchester:** Abel Heywood, Angel, Britons Protection, City Arms, Fell Northern Quarter, Grey Horse, Lower Turk's Head, Marble Arch, Molly House, Old Monkey, Oxford Road Tap, Paramount, Piccadilly Tap, Smithfield, Victoria Tap, Waterhouse; **Marple:** Norfolk Arms, Northumberland Arms, Samuel Oldknow; **Monton:** Park; **New Mills:** Mason's Arms; **Patricroft:** Stanley Arms; **Poynton:** Cask Tavern, Kingfisher, Royal British Legion; **Romiley:** Voltigeur; **Rusholme:** Ford Madox Brown; **Sale:** JP Joule, Old Plough, Volunteer; **Salford:** New Oxford; **Stalybridge:** Bridge Beers, Society Rooms, Station Buffet Bar, White House; **Stockport:** Angel Inn, Bakers Vaults, Cocked Hat, Crown Inn, Magnet, Petersgate Tap, White Lion, Ye Olde Vic; **Stretford:** Bishop Blaize; **Swinton:** Morning Star; **Urmston:** Barking Dog, Lord Nelson, Tim Bobbin; **Whaley Bridge:** Goyt Inn; **Whalley Range:** Carlton Club; **Whitehough:** Old Hall; **Withington:** Victoria.



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favourite...



*Time for that  
taste of Taylor's*



# News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

## Award for Silly Country



The High Peak, Tameside & Goyt Valley branch winter Pub of the Season award took place at **Silly Country** in Droylsden on 17 January, writes **Ben Zwierink**. This is the second time the bar has received the award and deservedly so, as Silly Country has gone from strength to strength over the years. It has transformed the real ale scene in the area, which has been thin on the ground for good pubs. (A mention must also be made of the **Snug** pub opposite which has also been successful in changing the beer scene in the area.)

The pub was packed out for the presentation, the beers were on top form and an impressive buffet made it all the more enjoyable. Pictured above (left to right) are Silly Country's Harry, Tia, Ben, Drew and Phil plus High Peak branch chair Ben Zwierink.

Staying in Tameside, the **Sportsman** on Mottram Road in Hyde recently had a near-death experience. It was set to close, and indeed had celebrated what was thought to be its final night, but at the very last minute a local businessman stepped in and took over the pub, which promptly reopened. It would appear that it will continue in its present format but with new management. This is good news indeed as the Sportsman is one of the best pubs in Hyde and was a regular entry in the Good Beer Guide for many years.

## Marble Award



The final beer award from the 2025 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has now been made. The bronze award in the Beer of the Festival competition was won by **Marble Beers** for their Stratagem, a beautifully hoppy pale ale. Head brewer Joe Ince is shown here with the certificate, along with the rest of the brewing team (left to right) Tom Dutson, Chris Sherratt and Carl Eccles. This was in fact a joint brew with one of the beer festival's homebrew competition winners, Joe Lee from Sheffield Homebrew Club, who is pictured here, above right, with his certificate, which we presented in December.

## P-Noot Update

**P-Noot**, which brews in the cellar of the **Lowes Arms** in Denton, has extended its core range of cask ales to ten, and started to supply other venues across Tameside, e.g. **Jack's Bar** in Hyde and **Percy's**, the new bar in Denton near Crown Point. The new range includes Two Stags, a 4.6% Scottish Export ale, and a 5% rye IPA called Total Blam Blam.

## Strines Nightingale

As you will see from the advert on page 16, the **Strines Nightingale** on Strines Road in Strines is having a beer festival in mid-March. Among the local brewers featured are Thornsett, Torrside, Eyam, Pictish, RedWillow, Sureshot and Cloudwater. In addition, there are beers from further afield, including Verdant, Polly's and Ossett, amongst others. Nightingale Cider will also feature. The 158 bus from Stockport will drop you almost outside and, if you are a CAMRA member, you'll be able to enjoy a very generous 50p a pint discount.



Also coming up is a big music long weekend from 3 to 7 April, with 40 live acts, food stalls and guest beers.

## Magic Dragon

**Magic Dragon Brewing** combines traditional cask brewing with contemporary flavour profiles, delivering dependable, sessionable ales made in North Wales, writes **Liz Lever**. Their Old Magic Dark Mild, brewed as a traditional dark mild at a highly drinkable 3.6%, delivers smooth toasted malt flavours, gentle sweetness, and a comforting finish that keeps customers coming back for another pint. Old Magic won Bronze at the inaugural Indie Beer Awards in 2025 and a Silver Untappd award for Wales in 2025. It's available to order in nine-gallon casks and the brewery delivers across Greater Manchester, North Wales, Cheshire, and Shropshire. We are sure it will crop up during Mild Magic.

## Tatton Brewery

**Tatton Brewery** in Knutsford appears to have closed – at least for the time being. An announcement on the brewer's Facebook page said the current taproom was closing while premises better suited to the brewery's future needs were sought. They added: "During the transition, our beers will continue to be brewed through collaborations with like-minded breweries, ensuring our award-winning beers keep flowing."



However, at least one potential trade customer has been told that the beers are now being brewed by the **Wantsum Brewery** in Kent, which took over Tatton in 2024. In addition, BPI Auctions, based in Wakefield, announced the sale of the "entire contents of Cheshire brewery...due to site closure". The location of the brewery was given as Knutsford so it sounds like one and the same.

# Heritage Pubs

## CAMRA's National Inventory



Despite the turmoil in the licensed trade over recent years, Britain remains blessed with many pubs that retain traditional, and often beautiful, historic interiors, writes Paul Ainsworth.

Over thirty years ago, a body of CAMRA members began compiling a **National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors**. Initially, they aimed to identify and record the most intact pre-war pub interiors, regardless of their architectural distinction. Before long, it was decided also to include pubs with special features or rooms of national significance. By then, around 270 pubs had inventory status.

The next step was to develop Regional Inventories, capturing interiors that fell short of the criteria for the national list but were nonetheless of significant historic interest. Around the same time, early post-war pubs built on traditional lines and still intact also became eligible for inclusion.

A few years ago, CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group (PHG) agreed to move to a single Inventory, based around a grading system using star ratings. Interiors are eligible for consideration if they have remained essentially unaltered for at least 50 years. There are three key aspects for assessments:

**Layout** – survival of historic layout and internal divisions, either intact or readily discernible.

**Historic Fittings and Decor** – particularly old or original bar counters, bar-backs (gantries), fixed seating, fireplaces, plasterwork, vestibules, panelling, tiling and other ceramics.

**Notable Rooms and Features** – such as partitioned snugs, counterless pubs, tiled paintings, snob screens etc.

The **rarity** of both historic layouts and historic fittings counts very high in the selection process.

The current grading system is, we hope, simple and easy to understand. Within the single National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors are three grades:

**Three Star pubs** are of outstanding historic importance. They will have stayed wholly or largely intact, in terms of layout and fittings, and/or retain rooms or features that are truly rare or exceptional. Only limited loss of such components is allowable before an interior fails this standard. Currently 303 pubs are in this category.

**Two Star pubs** are of very special historic interest. They are highly important but fall just short of Three Star levels of overall intactness and/or rarity. Lost elements, often of layout, are clearly in evidence. There are presently 270 such pubs.

**One Star pubs**, by far the most numerous category (740), are of special historic interest. They have either readily identifiable historic layouts or retain rooms or features of special interest. More significant changes are allowable than for the first two categories.

Pub Heritage Group keeps gradings under continual review and makes changes where appropriate. Generally this is because alterations to an interior have impacted on the pub's historic importance. In other cases, members will reassess current gradings, especially where a pub has not been surveyed for a long time, or where a wider range of views is felt to be beneficial.

PHG also campaigns hard to protect and promote these precious heritage assets. Over the years, we've been able to get many of them statutorily listed so that they enjoy an extra layer of protection from unwanted alterations. Where Inventory pubs come under threat of closure or unsympathetic change, we'll do what we can to save them. On a positive note, we seek to raise awareness of the delights these pubs afford, through our website and a range of publications.

You can find much more information about the National Inventory, and heritage pubs generally, at [camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs](http://camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs). A complete list of Inventory pubs is at [camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs/national-inventory](http://camra.org.uk/heritage-pubs/national-inventory). We also issue a monthly bulletin featuring news about heritage pubs – to subscribe, email [bulletin@pubheritage.camra.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@pubheritage.camra.org.uk) with Subscribe as the subject.

We are always keen to hear from visitors to the listed pubs, especially where there have been changes that we might not know about. Thank you.

*Paul Ainsworth is Chair of CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group.*

Locally we are well blessed with numerous heritage pubs. Among these are the **Alexandra**, Edgeley (top left), the **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road in Manchester (above right) and the **Swan With Two Necks** in Stockport town centre (below). All photos by Mick Slaughter.



# Crown Does the Double

## Two Awards for Heaton Lane Pub



Since reopening last August, the **Crown** on Heaton Lane in central Stockport has gone from strength to strength. Now it's picked up two CAMRA awards which recognise this, and the work that has gone into it.

The first award is from CAMRA nationally. On page 14 this month, you can read about CAMRA's Heritage Pubs and the National Inventory. The Crown is on the Inventory as a one-star entry, which recognises the many internal features and much of the original layout have survived. It's a rare survivor despite the alterations that have been carried out over the years.

For many years, CAMRA has run a Pub Saving Award competition, which recognises community campaigns to save their locals. For 2025, a second category was introduced to recognise and celebrate the achievements of a heritage pub that has been revitalised in some way.

The decline of the Crown in recent years, with churning managers, unsympathetic redecorations and lack of respect for the pub's historic furnishings, was noted by many of the former regulars. It finally closed at the beginning of 2025, despite having a history of CAMRA awards. The lease was taken on by Alan and Chris Gent of the award-winning **Petersgate Tap**, along with Chris's partner Amy Barker, who acts as the pub's manager. As soon as they received the keys in July 2025, they embarked upon tastefully refurbishing both the interior and exterior of the rundown Crown, breathing new life into the pub, yet respecting its history.

The many broken or damaged window panels, and the historic feature mirror in the back room, were repaired, the glazed tilework and fireplaces were restored, and the exterior was repainted.

The result has been a triumph. After limping along for several years, the pub is regularly packed, and once again features a wide and interesting range of guest beers, alongside regular Draught Bass, which seems to be achieving cult status.

All this gained the Crown the runner-up spot in the new heritage awards. The winner, by the way, is also not too far away. It's the Vine at Pitshill in the Potteries.

Commenting on the win, local CAMRA chair John Clarke said: "We were delighted when this iconic pub reopened, after much hard work by the new team. It's a very overused phrase, but a huge amount of hard work really has seen the pub restored to its former glory – and not only in its appearance but also its beer range too. The fact that the Crown is now regularly packed shows how much Stockport's beer drinkers also appreciate what has been done here." Hot on the heels of this award, and also in recognition of the Crown's dramatic turnaround, Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA gave the Crown its Most Improved Pub award – only the second time this has been presented.

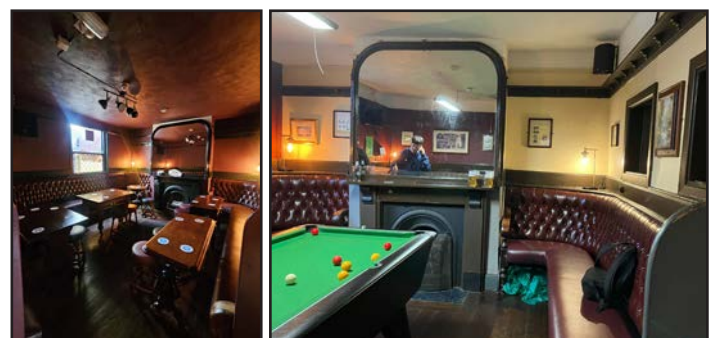
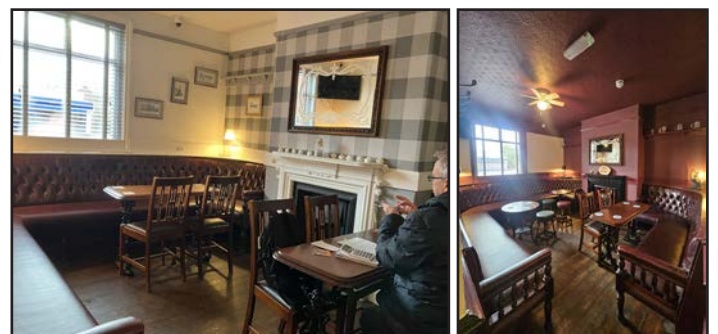
On hearing of the double win, pub manager Amy (pictured here with Chris) told *Opening Times*: "It is such an honour to have been awarded both runner-up for CAMRA's national Heritage Pub Award and winner of Stockport & South Manchester Most Improved Pub of the Year.



"To be recognised for all our hard work put in to restoring the Crown is gratefully appreciated. We wanted the Crown to be a place for all to enjoy again, to meet friends, drink good beer and share laughter, all under one traditional roof."

Both awards were presented to a packed house on Wednesday 18 February.

Here are before and after images of the left-hand front room and the main room at the back.



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# Stagger

## Edgeley & Shaw Heath with Geoff Thomason



Opened by Bell's Brewery in 1911, and sympathetically restored in 2024, the **Alexandra** in Edgeley remains an architectural jewel among Stockport's pubs, and would remain as such whatever it served. Fortunately, on this occasion this now-Robinsons pub was serving what, to this writer at any rate, was the best Old Tom of the season so far and,

at £3.40 a half, one of the cheapest. It was also, on a cold Friday evening with Christmas approaching, doing a roaring trade. Our group of five must have got the last remaining seats. Good reports, too, on the reliable stalwarts Unicorn and Dizzy Blonde.

It was then out along the cask-free corridor of Castle Street. At least three pubs were weighed in the balance and found wanting for offering nothing beyond football and very mainstream keg. It's a pity, because some of these look to have once been fine pubs with some character before they sacrificed themselves to Sky Sports and Stella.



By then we had become a party of six, and our aim was to go straight to the Armoury. Easier said than done. We could see the **Armoury** from Castle Street, but the extensive roadworks involved in rebuilding Greek Street roundabout meant that getting

there made finding the exits in IKEA look like child's play. Others had avoided the conundrum and joined us there, so there were now eight of us. That swelled the clientele to ten – a huge contrast from the Alexandra. The Armoury is another Robinsons pub, so most of us were keen to reacquaint ourselves with their new mild, Broken Record. Enjoyable, but by common consent not quite up to the level of what we had experienced elsewhere. The same view was voiced on the Unicorn, raising the question no doubt asked many times before as to how much our enjoyment of a beer is conditioned by the surroundings in which it is drunk. There must be a Ph.D. on this somewhere.



The next stop was just down the road at the **Nelson Commercial**, opposite Stockport Town Hall. Long known as simply the Nelson, and the haunt of Stockport College staff, it's now reverted to its original name of 1880. Interest was

initially raised by a clip advertising Dark Landlord; this, however, turned out to be a survival from Halloween and what was being offered as the only cask ale was Landlord plain and simple. Funny how, whenever you're drinking Landlord (and on this occasion that

meant all of us), someone will remark that it doesn't taste the same as it used to. And they're right. Landlord these days can prove an unpredictable beer. This one was met with general approval, with only a couple of doubting Thomases.



The **Wellington**, just north of the Town Hall and named after the eponymous road it fronts, is a relatively recent pub. It opened in 2018 on the site of a former betting shop and (remember this for your next pub quiz) regularly features the original Beatles drummer Pete Best as a DJ.

We happened to visit on Karaoke night which, as ever, reached the sort of decibel level one associates with a nuclear explosion, so there was more silent drinking than conversation. Weetwood Two Hoots and Cheshire Cat are also regulars here, but most opted for the Bass which has now joined them, and which it is to be hoped will remain in a pub that has tended to stick with the tried and tested rather than rotate its cask beers. It drew approving comments all round – as did the Cheshire Cat.



The final stop was **Ye Olde Vic** behind Stockport station. It's impossible not to like this quirky Good Beer Guide regular which can always be relied on for the quality of its beers. Most of us went for the Thornbridge Market Porter, which was their Winter Warmer ale. There was also

a very fine Nightingale from Green Jack Brewing Co that got the thumbs up from those who sampled it in addition to the porter. Ye Olde Vic is also a very friendly pub once you get to know it, and that counts for so much when you're trying to form an overall opinion of a place. Floreat Victoria!

As always, this article can only reflect what a group of us found on the night in question, and shouldn't be taken as a once and for all judgement on the pubs or their beers. Why not visit them yourselves and see what you think?

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# Pub Walks with Chris Morris

## Bollington

Spring is a great season to explore the countryside with a pub walk. As well as witnessing the reawakening of nature through bulbs, blossom and birdsong, more light and better weather means we can spend more time visiting fine pubs and drinking quality cask beer. The picturesque mill town of Bollington is the destination for this adventure, with good pubs along the way.

### Public Transport and Walk Information

This walk starts from Macclesfield Railway Station, which has an excellent train service from Manchester Piccadilly. The route to Bollington is a four-mile stretch along the Middlewood Way, with an optional four-mile walk back. The bus options back to Macclesfield are the 10 and 391. Last buses are around 6pm and unfortunately there's no Sunday service. The path is excellent on the Middlewood Way, with the return along the canal towpath becoming a little muddy after wet weather. All venues are dog-friendly.

### The Walk

Turn right on exiting Macclesfield Railway Station and walk down the approach to the main road. Cross over the zebra crossing then turn right to walk past the **Nags Head**. Stay on the same pavement to walk under the railway bridge, then the road bridge. Carry straight ahead and follow the Middlewood Way signs where we soon turn right then cross the main road at the lights. Turn right on the other side and immediately left to walk down Black Lane. Cross over the zebra crossing and walk along the path with the River Bollin on your right. After 300 yards, we walk through the road tunnel and turn right on the other side to continue along the wide tarmacked Middlewood Way.



After half a mile, we cross straight over the road at the lights, and a further half mile along we cross over the A523 on the impressive Middlewood Way Bridge. After another half mile, we walk under a bridge with a brick wall in the middle. We now have the option to leave the trail for our first pub stop. Taking the zigzag path to the left, up to Clarke Lane, we turn right at the top which brings us to the **Lord Clyde** after 300 yards. Originally a 17th century cottage, this charming country pub might be small in size but offers a big welcome in peaceful surroundings. Timothy

Taylor Landlord was the cask beer offering when I last visited, but up to three are available at peak times. Food is very popular.

Retracing our steps back to the Middlewood Way, we continue along the path for half a mile, including a zigzag incline, to Grimshaw Lane, as we enter Bollington. Cross straight across here to rejoin the trail and after a quarter of a mile we walk over the spectacular Bollington Viaduct, with stunning views of the town. At the end of the viaduct, we leave the Middlewood Way by turning right, to go back on ourselves, which takes us down large steps. At the bottom, turn left and walk next to the car park to Adlington Road. To the left is the **Vale Inn** which is owned by Bollington Brewery. At the time of writing, the pub was closed and awaiting a tenant. Hopefully this *Good Beer Guide* regular will reopen shortly.

Turning right instead, and walking along Adlington Road to the main road, then turning left, gives us the option for more pubs, a walk back to Macclesfield along the canal or to catch the bus back instead. After passing the **Dog & Partridge** – a cosy multi-roomed local, selling

up to three cask beers from Robinsons – a further 200 yards along the road and to the right brings us to some steep steps that lead to the canal. A more gradual upward slope is available on the opposite side of the road that leads towards the impressive Clarence Mill. But first, let me tempt you with two more pubs which are found along Palmerston Street, under the canal bridge.

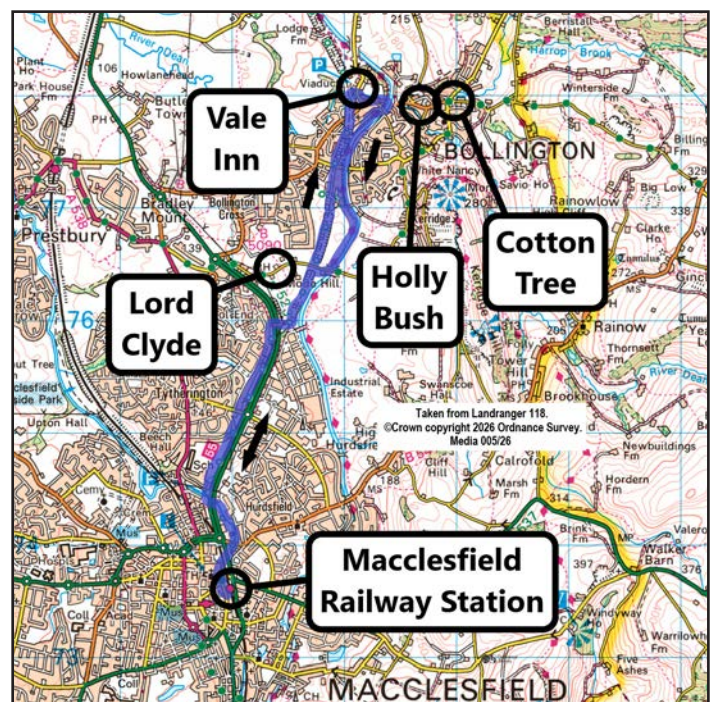
The **Holly Bush** is another Robinsons pub offering up to four of their cask beers in a cosy and welcoming space. Refurbished recently to a high standard, some old features were removed but what remains still offers much to the traditional pub fan, with oak panelling throughout, original wooden floors and real fires adding to the charm.



Conveniently located opposite the bus terminus, the **Cotton Tree** is a much-loved pub and a must-visit, with bags of character and an adorable hint of quirkiness. A wonderful mix of memorabilia adorns the walls and ceilings, with stone floors, scrubbed tables, settles and a real fire

turning the cosiness up to 11. D deservedly *Good Beer Guide*-listed, quality cask beer is at the heart of operations. JW Lees Boddingtons, Hogs Back Tongham Tea, Theakston Best Bitter and Draught Bass were available on my last visit, when a fine folk band was playing.

If walking back to Macclesfield along the canal, make sure you've got the water on your left. Follow the canal towpath for one mile until you reach Clarke Lane, at the snake bridge number 29. Turn right here, and after 150 yards we can rejoin the Middlewood Way by turning right, and retrace our steps back to Macclesfield. Back in the town centre, the **Castle** is always worthy of a visit before catching the train home, with the perfect blend of excellent *Good Beer Guide* cask beers and an outstanding heritage interior.





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# Scribbles on a Beermat



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

## If The Pub Were a Judge

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you guilty of  
loitering with intent to chat.  
She would find you guilty of  
charming strangers with tales  
of scrapes you get yourself in.

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you guilty of  
encouraging dogs to sit  
next to you by filling your hands  
with treats from the jar on the bar.

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you innocent  
of staying in for one more  
than you said that you would.  
She'd back your claim  
that traffic was horrendous  
on the journey back home.

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you guilty of  
underestimating the price of Mini Cheddars  
and the joy of a veggie pie.

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you guilty of  
pretending you like strong stouts,  
knowing what a DDH pale is,  
understanding what 'hoppy' tastes like.

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you innocent of  
wanting a bit of peace and quiet.  
She would find you guilty of  
refusing to be lonely, not shrinking  
into a life of saying 'I'm fine'  
when you are lucky to be asked  
'How are you feeling today?'

If the pub were a judge  
she would find you guilty of  
finding a place where you belong.

If the pub were a judge  
she would sentence you  
to a life of repeated visits.

# Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

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



Our first pub is the **Old King**, on the corner of Great Portwood Street and Lancaster Street. It was originally named the George IV when it opened in the 1820s, shortly after the flamboyant Prince Regent ascended to the throne. It became known to locals as the Old King after George died in 1830, but was only officially renamed in the 1970s. It produced its own beer in Victorian times under licensee William Knowles. It was taken over by George Ball in 1870, who went on to own a number of pubs in Stockport, with Old King Brewery supplying the ale. After Ball died in 1899, production continued for more than a decade as the Portwood Brewery, before being taken over by Hardy's Crown Brewery Ltd in 1912.

In the 1970s, now a Bass house, there was major remodelling of the pub, which officially adopted the Old King moniker. Modernisation work included major changes to the frontage and the removal of the original stained-glass windows featuring images of the King. They were converted into mirrors and hung inside the new look pub. The house finally closed in 2009 and stayed empty for several years, suffering at the hands of vandals. In 2012 it was decided to demolish the Old King, as planners considered that the loss of the locally listed building was outweighed by the economic benefit offered by redevelopment. A fast-food restaurant now stands on the site.



Also under the letter 'O' is the **Old Admiral**, Middle Hillgate, on the corner of Edward Street. The pub dated back to the 1830s and was named after the hero of the Battle of Trafalgar. The sign, reputedly painted by local artist William Shuttleworth, featured a portrait of Lord Nelson. The Old

Admiral also produced its own beer. Samuel Shaw, who was landlord of the pub in the 1850s and 60s, advertised in the 1864 trade directory as a brewer, wine and spirit merchant. The pub changed hands in the 1870s, when it is thought brewing ceased on the site.

The featured photo from 1960 shows the pub, minus its signage, taken shortly after closing its doors the previous December. The archway to the right was the entrance to the New Market, an unregulated second Stockport market site used briefly from the 1830s, located behind the pub. The market was closed a few years later after failing to get permission from the Lord and Lady of the manor. The Old Admiral, the archway and neighbouring shops were demolished around 1980. The area is now a car park.

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



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# Events, Socials and Meetings

## Plus local CAMRA Contacts

### Local CAMRA Contacts

#### Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

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

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

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

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

**Wednesday 11 March** – Lass O'Gowrie (upstairs room), 36 Charles Street, Manchester, M1 7DB. Will include branch AGM. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

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

**Saturday 14 March** – Cheshire Ring, 72 Manchester Road, Hyde, SK14 2BJ. Starts 2pm. (HPTGV)

**Tuesday 24 March** – Queens, 5 Albert Place, Macclesfield, SK11 6JW. This meeting will be the branch AGM. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 9 April** – Runaway Brewery Tap (upstairs room), 9-11 Astley Street, Stockport, SK4 1AW. Will include branch AGM. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 11 April** – Halfway House, 123 Whiteacre Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 9PS. Starts 2pm. (HPTGV)

**Monday 13 April** – Farmers Arms, 79 West Street, Congleton, CW12 1JY. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

### Social Events & Presentations

Everyone very welcome at these events.

**Tuesday 3 March** – Weekday Wander: Astley Bridge – A beer festival in a pub. Meet at 10:55 in the Platform 13/14 waiting area on the bridge at Manchester Piccadilly. (SSM)

**Friday 20 March** – Didsbury North Stagger: 7:30pm Station, 682 Wilmslow Road, M20 2DN; 8:30pm Head of Steam, 653 Wilmslow Road, M20 6QZ; final pub Fletcher Moss, 1 William Street, M20 6RQ. (SSM)

**Sunday 22 March** – Cider Pub of the Year presentation: Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. From 2pm. (SSM)

**Wednesday 25 March** – Trip to Liverpool. Catch 11:25 train from Stockport, 11:37 from Piccadilly. (HPTGV)

**Thursday 26 March** – Pub of the Month presentation: Saints Club, 22 St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1HD. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Tuesday 31 March** – Weekday Wander: Denton and Hyde - Something new, several things old. Meet at 11:20 in Stockport Interchange, stand J, for the 322 bus. First pub, Percy's in Denton. (SSM)

**Friday 10 April** – Mild Magic Launch Stagger: 6:30pm Nursery, Green Lane, Heaton Norris, SK4 2NA; 7:15pm Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, SK4 1HJ; 8pm Crown, Heaton Lane, SK4 1AR, plus various other pubs. (All)

**Friday 17 April** – Hazel Grove South Stagger: 7:30pm Rising Sun, 2 Buxton Road, SK7 6AD; 8:30pm Wilfred Wood, 204 London Road, SK7 4DF; final pub Grove Alehouse, 145 London Road, SK7 4HH. (SSM)

**Wednesday 22 April** – Trip to Ulverston. Catch 10:50 train from Piccadilly. (HPTGV)

**Thursday 23 April** – Pub of the Month presentation: Heaton Hops, 7 School Lane, Heaton Chapel, SK4 5DE. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Saturday 25 April** – Pub of the Season presentation: Hanging Gate, Winkle Lane, Higher Sutton, SK11 0NG. From 1pm. (MEC)

**Thursday 30 April** – Pub of the Year presentation: Victoria, 438 Wilmslow Road, Withington, M20 3BW. From 8pm. (SSM)

**Friday 1 May** – Mild Magic day out in Macclesfield: Meet by 1pm in the Castle, 25 Church Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6LB prior to visiting all six Mild Magic pubs. (All)

**Wednesday 6 May** – Weekday Wander: Stalybridge to Droydsden collecting Mild Magic stickers. Meet at 10:20 in Manchester Piccadilly Station for 10:30 TransPennine Express train. First pub, Society Rooms in Stalybridge. (SSM)

## Letter to the Editor

From Ian Gibbon (by email):

In the review, in the Jan/Feb issue of *Opening Times* of the February Pub of the Month, the Puss In Boots, reference was made to other Almond Group hosteleries but not the Fletchers Arms (Stockport Road, Denton).

I appreciate that, technically, it is 'outside' the Stockport & South Manchester area, being, for historical reasons, in the High Peak etc etc area. I hope though that, if only for the sake of completeness, mention could be made in a future addition of *Opening Times* as it would be a shame if Stockport drinkers (and indeed, diners) were to miss out on this excellent pub.

It is easily reached on the 322/327 bus services from Stockport and the 327 will also take you to Denton if you wish to visit 'Percy's', as mentioned in that issue's editorial.

*Opening Times* covers a wide area, including all of Tameside, so we are very happy to put the record straight here. In fact, we think the Fletchers was the original Almond Group pub and was a forerunner for their very successful format. Ed.

# dizzy blonde

AMARILLO  
PALE ALE



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