

OPENING TIMES

MAY / JUNE 2026

FREE



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About Opening Times & Contacts

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News, articles and letters are welcome to the editorial address – John Clarke, 45 Bulkeley Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9HD. Email – stocam@btinternet.com. Phone 0775 383 6898. Advertising rates on request or online at: ssm.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=192265. Local advertising John Clarke (as above) or contact Neil Richards MBE at n.richards@btinternet.com

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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

Front Cover

Chess Slattery of Manchester Crafty Beer girls judging in the Stockport Beer & Cider Festival's Homebrew Competition. Results on page 9. Photo by Lawrence Devaney.

Contributors

John Clarke, Alan Gent, Dave Hanson, Peter Butler, Paul Felton, Dave Burston, Steve Davis, Chris Morris, Lawrence Devaney, Neil Worthington, Sue Lightfoot, Carl Burkitt, Dave Stearn, Pete Farrand, Jim Flynn, Jack Lyons, Neil Martin, Mark Reeves, Gabbi Middleton, Jill Hasler, Mike Wawioroko, Graham Privett, Steve Ingham, Dave Sheldon.

Distribution Manager – Janet Flynn

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Welcome

Mild Magic will be drawing to a close when this issue of *Opening Times* appears. Participation has gone up and up in recent years so we are hoping for another bumper turnout. More of that next time.

This issue focuses on the forthcoming Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, once again being held at Stockport's Masonic Guildhall. As usual, there will be a great range of beers, ciders and perries, with something for every taste. As last year, the Bottle & Can bar will have fridge-chilled lagers and alcohol-free beers if either of those is your tippie.

Don't forget to check out our Bar Nouveau, which will again feature the winning beers from the festival's homebrew competition. It's fair to say that, over the years we have been running this contest, the standard of entries has gone up and up. It's a tribute to the skills of local homebrewers that each category of the competition has numerous strong contenders for the top spot.

Don't forget that if you are a CAMRA member, you'll be able to get in for free – as long as you book a ticket in advance via the festival website (stockportfestival.org.uk) or come along to the Thursday afternoon Trade Session. You'll still need to pay a glass deposit and buy some tokens, but the deposit and the value of any unused tokens are all fully refundable.

Last month we also featured the Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2026. This time we are featuring the winners from High Peak, Tameside & Goyt Valley, Central Manchester and Macclesfield & East Cheshire branches. These are all on page 11 – and all three are well worth a visit. You will be guaranteed a warm welcome and good beer in them all.

I hope to see lots of our readers at the beer festival – I'll be on the Bottle & Can bar, so do come along and say hello.

John Clarke, Editor



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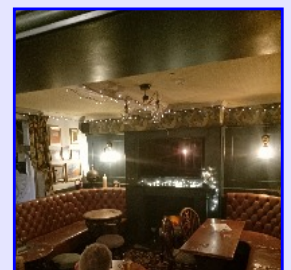
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Pubs of the Month

Stockport & South Manchester Winners for May and June



The Pub of the Month for May is Reddish Ale on Broadstone Road in Reddish. Jack Lyons tells you all about it.

Reddish Ale opened in 2022 in a former shop built in 1902, and is owned by brothers Christopher and Craig Ballinger. Craig had gained experience of beer and bars at home and abroad, and Chris had a knowledge of the area because he had lived there – so, when an opportunity came, they took on what had been in the past a shop and then a restaurant, and opened Reddish Ale.

This cosy pub has mostly refectory-style seating supplemented by narrow counters and stools around the perimeter and at the bar. There are some small tables outside at the front for use on sunnier days. The walls are decorated with mirrors, framed beer mats Craig collected on his travels, and some photos reflecting an interest in football..

Three handpumps dispense changing cask beers, of different styles, from a variety of breweries, many of them local, and there are several keg beers too. Real cider is available, and there's a fridge with bottled and canned beer to drink in or take out – information about what's on offer is on a board, and another shows what's 'coming soon'.

In the time it has been open, Reddish Ale has built up a regular clientele, and people of all ages (and their dogs) enjoy its relaxed and friendly atmosphere. There's a notice board for locals to place advertisements, and for posters about local events. CAMRA corner displays *Opening Times* and the pub supports CAMRA campaigns such as the Winter Warmer Wander, along with community events like Reddfest. Food waste is recycled by the local Edible Garden, and boxes of organic vegetables can be ordered and collected from the pub.

Various snacks and interesting meals are available – see reddishale.com for details of kitchen hours and special food events.

It's not the first time Reddish Ale has been awarded Pub of the Month but this further award is well overdue. Do come along on the evening of Thursday 28 May and help celebrate Reddish Ale's well-deserved success.

Bus 203 runs from Stockport and will drop you close by, near Houldsworth Square. Service 42A running from South Manchester to Reddish will drop you almost outside, as will bus 7 from Stockport.



June's Pub of the Month is the Red Bull on Hillgate. Neil Martin is a neighbour and regular, and explains why it won.

One of the few traditional pubs left on Hillgate, the Red Bull was a Bell's pub before Robinsons acquired that brewery in 1949. Tiles above the bar advise that the Red Bull has welcomed all since the days of George III. The imposing building itself is tucked back slightly from the pavement, and up some steps.

The pub was extended some years ago and now has a number of rooms off the bar, with a wood burner between two of them. On the right is a popular games room. The standard Robinsons beers plus a seasonal ale are available, along with a nice selection of pies and sausage rolls from local favourite Littlewoods.

Sofas in one corner add to the comfy feel, and there are a couple of booths if you want a more private conversation. The beer garden is a suntrap on the all-too-rare sunny days we have here in Stockport. You can find the pub on Facebook: facebook.com/redbullstockport, and on Instagram.

Landlady Emma Plant took over in 2025 and has taken the pub from strength to strength, with a regular Wednesday quiz night and popular music nights which are frequently 'one in, one out'. There is a good trade from people wanting a drink after work, with many also using it as a launching pad for going further into Stockport. Well-behaved dogs are welcome, and several regulars bring their humans with them.

I was pleased to nominate the Red Bull for Pub of the Month, not just because it's a great place to go, but also because Emma and her team have made great strides in embedding it in the community: I was only an occasional visitor before, despite living a literal two-minute walk away, but have become a convert. And the two things that really make a pub a pub – consistent beer and easy conversation – are readily supplied. The addition of an interesting range of teas has both attracted some more afternoon customers and been a bit of a talking point.

The pub is a short (uphill) walk from St Petersgate, and the 313 bus drops off close by, near the Sun and Castle.

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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Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2026

Preview and Festival Charity



The countdown is now on for the 2026 Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. This year, we are once again back at Stockport's Masonic Guildhall on Wellington Road South (more or less directly opposite the college).

As before, we will have plenty of seating and proper cooling – for both the beers and the festival itself. Also returning is the great range of beers, ciders and perries – **and once**

again we will have a small keg beer bar run in conjunction with Runaway Brewery.

In line with CAMRA's new policy if you are a member of CAMRA you will be entitled to **free admission** to the festival. Please note though, that, to take advantage of this, you will either need to **book an advance ticket**. Tickets can be bought through the festival website at stockportfestival.org.uk. CAMRA members without an advance ticket will have to pay a small admission charge (unless they attend the Thursday Trade session).

Here we bring you details of some of the beers, and also the festival's charity. Details of the [Festival Entertainment](#) are on page 10.

Festival Charity – Reuben's Retreat



We are incredibly proud that Reuben's Retreat is the Stockport Beer and Cider Festival's chosen charity for the third consecutive year, *writes Kate Bradley*.

For us, returning once again is a highlight in our calendar, an event we look forward to with excitement and pride, not only for the atmosphere but for the opportunity to deepen our connection with the Stockport community.

This ongoing partnership is helping to make a real difference where it matters most. Reuben's Retreat supports families facing the unimaginable loss of a child, as well as those caring for children with complex medical needs, unlikely to reach adulthood. In moments when the world feels impossibly heavy, we offer space to relax, recharge, remember, and rebuild. Our work provides vital emotional, practical, and therapeutic support, ensuring no family has to face their journey alone.

This is also a pivotal year for Reuben's Retreat. Our campaign to raise funds for four holiday apartments within the currently derelict section of our Retreat is now well underway, with plans to begin the ambitious project within the next 12 months.

Each year, the festival allows us to strengthen relationships with local residents, businesses, brewers and volunteers, and it is incredibly rewarding to see that support continue to flourish. Thanks to this generosity, last year's charity bar raised over £5,000, helping to fund specialist services that create moments of comfort and connection for families facing the most challenging circumstances.

Yet again, we have an outstanding line-up of brewers, including one already crafting a unique and distinctive beer inspired by our collaboration.

We can't wait for the 2026 festival.

Fridge-cooled Beers

While all of the festival's draught beers, ciders and perries will be cooled to cellar temperature, we will also have **fridge-cooled** lagers, ciders, IPAs and a wide range of foreign beers on the **Bottle & Can Bar**, which you'll find in the same room as the glasses stall.

This bar will also have a small range of **low- and no-alcohol** beers, as we know that some folk who come along with their friends might not want to drink. Everyone is catered for at the festival!

Bar Nouveau



Work on putting the beer list together had only just started as this issue of *Opening Times* went to press. However, we can confirm that the ever-popular Bar Nouveau will be back. This year, it's kindly sponsored by **Magic Dragon Brewery**, which will be having a brand-new beer on the bar. There will also, of course, be beers from our regular homebrew competition.



As usual, there was a bumper number of entries, and the judging took place at the **Petersgate Tap** in the town centre. Our thanks to Alan and Chris Gent for letting us commandeer their upstairs room for two Sunday afternoons.

So, it's congratulations to Adam Peirce, George Lee and Jonny Taylor from the Levenshulme Homebrew Club for their 5% Kentucky Common, a revival of an old-style brown ale from the USA. This will be brewed at **Steelfish**, who are also promising us a stronger version, too.

Levenshulme has another win in the ESB, Strong Pale Ale & IPA category, where Mike Cunliffe & Daniel Leaman took the honours with a 6.5% 'ESB/Old Ale', which will be brewed at **Cloudwater**.

The Chiverton Tap Homebrew Club also has two winners this year. Rob Walsh won Stout & Porter with a 4.5% brown stout inspired by an 1812 Truman's recipe. This will be brewed at **Torrside**, who, of course, will also be producing an imperial version. Fellow club member Howard Crook won Bitter, Pale Ale & Session IPA with a 4.5% black rye bitter, which had the judges gushing with praise. This will be brewed at **Marble**.

Finally, the Speciality category was won by Nigel Townshend with a very impressive 6% saison. This will be brewed by **Runaway** and may appear in both cask and keg formats at the festival.

Our thanks to all of the breweries for hosting the category winners.



The beer festival coverage in Opening Times is kindly sponsored by the Old Hall Inn at Whitehough, near Chinley. We can heartily recommend a visit to this excellent pub (an easy 15-minute walk from Chinley station). Scan the QR code for details.

Stockport Beer & Cider Festival 2026

Entertainment Preview

Once again, Stockport Beer & Cider Festival has pulled out all the stops to bring you a packed programme of entertainment. Here's a quick preview of what to expect.

Thursday Evening



Stockport-based five-piece **Blind Tiger** have mastered the art of being a covers band playing a wide range of classic rock, pop and indie songs over the past nine years that they've been gigging together.

The line-up is: Holly on vocals, rhythm guitar and flute, Rob on bass guitar and vocals, Chris on lead guitar and vocals, Brian on piano and keyboards and John on drums and vocals.

Blind Tiger are regular favourites at Foodie Friday in Stockport Market and are in demand all over the North West. Their repertoire is just as far-reaching with something for everyone across the decades, from the '50s with Chuck Berry to the noughties with The Courteeners. Blind Tiger always bring the party wherever they go, so you can be sure of a great night dancing and singing along to favourite songs.

Friday Afternoon



Stockport Ukulele Players are a community music group that have been regular fixtures at town-centre events for over ten years.

Led by Mark Rawsthorne of the band Dr Uke, the group meets locally at the Fingerpost in Offerton for the regular practice session of their ever-widening repertoire. If you love a sing-along, Stockport Ukulele Players have every classic in their song book, from popular modern songs to traditional folk and everything inbetween. As regular performers at Foodie Friday and many local music festivals, the group always creates a great atmosphere and audience participation is most definitely appreciated!

Friday Night



90 Proof are a four-piece covers band who offer an energetic mix of music across all genres including rock, pop, country, blues, soul and Motown. The line-up is: Ali Dickinson - vocals, Dave Grimley - guitar, Dave Clowes - bass and Martin 'Ted' Ainscow - drums. Rooted in

Stockport, 90 Proof are regulars on the local gigging circuit as well as appearing at special events all over the North West. 90 Proof are known for their entertaining, high-octane performances, so, if you enjoy a good laugh with top quality classic songs, make sure you make it a date with 90 Proof.

Saturday Afternoon



New Rose are Vash (vocals, percussion), Rob (guitar), Tony (guitar), Sean (bass) and Fitz (drums), who named themselves after the very first single by The Damned released in October 1976. 'New Rose' is notable as the first-ever single released by a British punk

band and is the spirit which this band clearly embodies.

Born out of the Manchester/Stockport live scene, New Rose started as a 'one rehearsal, maybe a couple of gigs' idea that snowballed into a full-powered band. New Rose are a high energy, melody-driven alternative covers band, putting their own guitar-driven spin on great songs from the '70s, '80s, '90s and beyond. Drawing from punk, new wave, indie and Britpop, with a punk-tinged edge, jangly guitars and no-nonsense live energy, New Rose bring a fresh twist – no synths, just pure guitar band goodness. They make songs their own – and every gig a proper party.

Saturday Night



The **Tall Faces** are a three-piece live band capturing authentic 60s Mod sounds. They are in hot demand as a tribute to the British Mod Sounds of the 1960s, playing the best of Mod, Soul, Beat and Northern Soul at mod and scooter festivals all over the North West. The line-

up is Chris – vocals, harmonica, stand-up drums, Briggsy – guitar, backing vocals and Rick – bass guitar, backing vocals. Three is the magic number with The Tall Faces as the trio packs a real punch with Chris doubling up with lead vocals and cocktail drum kit to bring the beat.

Their set list is filled with 60s classics, including songs by The Who, The Small Faces, Wilson Pickett, the Dave Clark Five, The In Crowd, Frank Wilson, Dobie Gray, and Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, to name just a few.

For the last night of The Stockport Beer and Cider Festival, the Tall Faces will be joined by their old mate, Stockport's legendary **Pete Maclaine**, to bring you some old-school rock 'n' roll classics. In the Sixties Pete toured with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, in Pete Maclaine and The Dakotas and Pete Maclaine and The Clan. This is a special night of music not to be missed.



The beer festival coverage in Opening Times is kindly sponsored by the Old Hall Inn at Whitehough, near Chinley. We can heartily recommend a visit to this excellent pub (an easy 15-minute walk from

Chinley station). Scan the QR code for more information.

More Pubs of the Year

High Peak, Macclesfield & Central Manchester

High Peak Pub of the Year



The High Peak, Tameside & Goyt Valley CAMRA Pub of the Year 2026 is the community-owned **Northumberland Arms**, on Compstall Road in Marple Bridge.

Known locally as 'The Thumb', this is the only community-owned pub in the High Peak branch area, following the successful buy-out of the former Robinsons pub in September 2017.

The pub is relatively small, and still has multiple rooms, so has the character that many pubs have lost. A quick look at the noticeboard will show you how many community events are based at the pub. Although there is no kitchen, they regularly have mobile street-food vendors on the front car park. Football and other sports are shown but do not dominate. In warmer weather, the small but perfectly formed beer garden is well used.



Four cask beers are usually sold – regulars are Robinsons Unicorn and Track Sonoma, and these are joined by ever-changing guests. Quality is such that the pub is a regular in CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide*.

This is the second time in three years that the Northumberland Arms has won the High Peak Pub of the Year award and, following its branch win in 2024, the pub went on to be

crowned Greater Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Year. Will it once again do the double?

Licensee Phil Jarvis is suitably delighted, telling *Opening Times*: "We are absolutely over the moon to win again. We were really happy when we won Winter Pub of the Season 2024, which then snowballed into the best Greater Manchester pub 2024, but to win our branch pub of the year twice in three years really is amazing. To think the pub didn't even exist nine years ago."

High Peak branch chair Ben Zwierink echoed this, saying: "With respect to the Northumberland Arms this is a remarkable achievement, the second time this community-owned pub has won the award in its short existence."

This very well-deserved award will be presented on Saturday 30 May at around 2pm. Buses 383 and 384 from Stockport will drop you outside.

Macclesfield Pub of the Year



Having amassed an already impressive collection of awards, the **Cotton Tree** continues to provide an excellent pub experience, rendering it wholly deserving of the Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch's Pub of the Year 2026, writes *Gabbi Middleton*.

Nestled in cosy Bollington, this pub is an absolute gem. Replete with quirky and historical decor, friendly locals and, of course, brilliant pints, the love Jayne and Christina put into this pub couldn't be more evident.

Having won the branch's Cider Pub of the Year in 2025, the Cotton Tree boasts a large selection of ciders and perries, as seen on the board presiding over the fireplace as you walk in. There is a good range of styles from sweet to dry, with fruity ciders as well. Should you find yourself spoilt for choice, the option to purchase a flight of three thirds for around £4 is available. For those more inclined towards ale, there are six handpumps: four regulars, such as Bass and Taylor's Landlord, and two rotating guest ales, all kept to an equally high standard.

If you seek a pub for more than its drink, the atmosphere is definitely recommended. The interior offers a range of comfortable seating, while the staff and the customers are very welcoming. For those who prefer a pint in the sun, it may be worth venturing into the lovely beer garden, filled with herbs, fruits and various other flora.

The Cotton Tree is on Ingersley Road, and relatively easy to get to: buses 10 and 391 from Macclesfield both pass by, or one might consider a scenic hour's walk via the Middlewood Way when the weather allows!

The presentation of the Pub of the Year award will be made on Saturday 13 June from 2pm.

Central Manchester Pub of the Year



Central Manchester CAMRA's Pub of the Year couldn't be more central, as the winner is **Café Beermoth** on Brown Street right in the City Centre.

Situated at the base of a modern block, Café Beermoth, which opened in December 2015, is a warm and welcoming bar and bottle shop.

Continues on page 13



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Heard at the Bar

Pub News from Stockport, Manchester, Tameside and beyond

Central Manchester Pub of the Year cnt'd.

Run by Scott Davies, **Café Beermoth** has been described as 'the very definition of a modern Manchester pub', and, despite the clean, modern frontage and the open-plan layout, it very much does have the feel of a pub rather than a bar.

The glass wall behind the bar lets you peer into the cellar, but it's difficult to draw your attention away from the superb selection of draught beers. Seven are cask and include the house beer, Stone's Throw, from Stockport's Runaway Brewery. The rest, and the ten keg beers, showcase the very best in local, national and international brewing.

To one side is a seriously well-stocked bottle shop (following its relocation from the Beermoth shop on Tib Street). All the bottles on display in the bank of fridges are available to either take away or drink in (subject to corkage).

Food comprises a variety of reasonably-priced bar snacks, including cheese and meat plates, and these snacks are available all day.

At the time of going to press, we didn't have details of the presentation date.

Poachers Inn, Bollington



There is finally good news in Bollington, as on Saturday 28 March the **Poachers** officially reopened, writes *Jill Hasler*. The much-loved pub has not been altered, but received a good clean-up, a fresh coat of paint, and a clearer bar area. It looks bright and fresh, but familiar to the many people who came to sample and then to praise.

The pub is now being run by the team of Katy and Chris Walton, who used to be regular visitors and who live locally, and Jack Wright, who worked at the Poachers previously. They are determined to make the pub a popular local again and are being very reactive, listening to what people want and adjusting accordingly.

There are still five handpumps, with one dedicated to dark beers, one each for beers from Storm Brewing and Beartown Brewery, and two for changing guest beers.

Food is also going to begin slowly a few weeks after writing, with good, simple bar food. All the signs are encouraging, and we wish them well.

Malt Disley

Malt Disley on Market Street in Disley, was the Macclesfield & East Cheshire CAMRA Pub of the Season for Winter 2025.

Established in a converted shop by mother and daughter Di and Lauren Booth during 2017, Malt Disley quickly became an established part of the village pub scene. It's been a regular entry in CAMRA's national *Good Beer Guide* since 2019, and has picked up a number of awards including one as CAMRA's Cheshire Pub of the Year 2021. In addition to the usual in-pub events, including live music, quizzes, comedy nights etc., the pub is also the centre of larger outdoor community events throughout the year. These involve collaborations

with other local pubs and businesses and include the annual Octoberfest celebrations and their first Sausage and Cider festival earlier this year.



Four cask beers, often from local microbreweries, are available and usually include a dark beer. Ten taps also serve a variety of keg and key-keg beers, and a range of British and continental bottled beers are also on offer to drink in or take away. Coffees (using beans roasted by Peak Bean at nearby Furness Vale) are available, in addition to cakes and snacks.

The award was presented on Saturday 21 February by local CAMRA member Geoff Williamson, who is pictured above (right) along with (left to right) Lauren (joint owner), Toby and Penny.

Clayton Closures



There are two pub closures in Clayton to report. **The Bridge Inn** on Clayton Lane has been converted to other use, while the **Victoria** on Croft Street (pictured here) is closed and up for sale.

Both pubs were privately owned and had a unique trading pattern in that they only opened when Manchester City were playing at home. Neither sold cask beer although the home game volumes at the Victoria might have justified it – the landlord told us he could shift 1,000 pints on a good day! It would be nice to think that someone will take on the Victoria as a pub but we aren't optimistic.

Stalybridge Surprise

Following the welcome news that the **Sportsman** in Hyde was saved from closure at the last minute by Andy Kleek, the CEO of a local business, there is now potentially more good news, writes *Ben Zwierink*.

Ben was contacted by Andy, who has also purchased the long-closed **Bulls Head** in Stalybridge. He will have a meeting with him in a few weeks' time to discuss further developments. The intention is to have real ale on offer. The Bulls Head was closed in 2022 (and has had a chequered history since, having been busted as a cannabis farm at one point). One of the oldest pubs in the Stalybridge area, apparently dating back to 1850, it is situated somewhat off the beaten track in Knowl Street, wedged between the river Tame, and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. More on this one in due course.

More news on pages 14 and 17

What's Brewing

Brewery News from around the region

Top Award for Robinsons

Robinsons Brewery is celebrating a landmark achievement after being named Best Brewing Pub Company at the 2026 Publican Awards, the most respected and competitive awards programme in the UK pub industry, and hosted by the *Morning Advertiser* trade paper.

The award recognises outstanding businesses who combine a successful brewery with a thriving, well invested pub estate. For Robinsons, it marks a major milestone in the business's internal ambition to become the UK's leading family brewer.



After being finalists numerous times over the years, this is the first time Robinsons has taken home the trophy. Oliver Robinson, joint managing director, Beer Division, said the accolade reflects the progress and change the sixth generation family business has made in recent years, saying: "This award represents the very best recognition the industry can give a brewing pub company. It reflects the passion and hard work of our teams across the business. This win is for them."

The judges highlighted a number of reasons behind Robinsons' win, including the continued growth and innovation of the brewery's own brand beer portfolio, a deep rooted commitment to beer quality, the opening of Robinsons' new £8.4 million state of the art brewhouse, which has modernised the production process and strengthened long term sustainability, and significant and ongoing investment across the pub estate.

William Robinson, joint managing director, Pub Division, added: "This award signifies more than a great night for Robinsons. It's a clear marker that our long term strategy, our investment in our pubs and beers, and the pride our people take in their craft are delivering meaningful results."

Win for JW Lees, too



Robinsons wasn't the only local brewer to come away from the Publican Awards with some silverware. **JW Lees'** managing director William Lees-Jones took home the award for Business Leader of the Year.

In addition to a stellar year of record sales, William has taken the family brewery to new heights, including leading the launch of **Founder's Hall** in Manchester and bringing back the legendary Boddingtons cask to its northern home.

William's cousin, Michael, proudly accepted the award on his behalf on the night; it was awarded for achieving exceptional results for the Manchester-based brewery, and for tirelessly campaigning against the Government's taxation of the industry.

Speaking on his win, William Lees-Jones said: "This award is all about flying the flag for the beer and pub sector at a time when it's never been so hard to run a pub."

Awards for RedWillow & Torrside

Local brewers are doing well in the current regional heats for the North West, Merseyside and Cheshire in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain competition.

RedWillow Brewery in Macclesfield picked up a Silver award for Weightless and a bronze award for Sleepless in their respective categories.

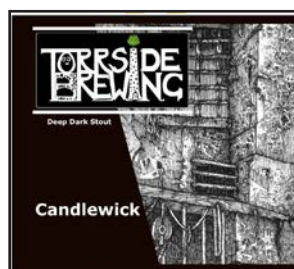


On receiving the awards, RedWillow owners Toby and Caroline McKenzie told *Opening Times*: "Fifteen years of brewing beer that makes us happy and it seems to resonate with others too. We're absolutely thrilled to have received CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain awards for both Weightless and Sleepless: a regional Silver for Weightless in the Pale, Blond & Golden Ales category, and a national Bronze for Sleepless in the

Brown, Red & Old Ales & Strong Milds category.

"On top of that, **RedWillow Macclesfield** has been named Macclesfield & East Cheshire branch Cider Pub of the Year, so it's been quite a night! We're proud and grateful for every award that comes our way, and huge thanks to Paul and Linda from CAMRA for coming down to present these lovely certificates in person."

Toby and Caroline are pictured above with their certificates.



Torrside Brewing in New Mills have picked up two gold awards for their bottled beers. These were judged in the North West, Merseyside and Cheshire heats of the 2026 Champion Bottled Beer of Britain competition. The brewery's Candlewick stout triumphed in the under 4.4% category, while I'm Spartacus IPA did the same in the over 4.3% category.

The heats are continuing. The champion mild for the North West, Merseyside and Cheshire was due to be judged at the Petersgate Tap in Stockport on 26 April (during Mild Magic), while Stouts and Porters will be judged at this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival.

Happy Valley

The **Happy Valley Brewery** in Macclesfield resumed production in November last year, writes *Mike Wawiorko*.

It's in the same ownership, and the brewer is now Matt Jones, who has previously worked at the Cheshire Brewhouse and who, until recently, ran the **Little Street Cellar** in Congleton. At present, just small runs are brewed, with one or sometimes two cask beers available in the **Happy Valley Tap** on Oxford Road. Beers brewed to date include Hoppiness dry-hopped bitter, Black Out XO rum porter, Black Magic stout and Lazy Daze old English ale.

Manchester's Best Beer Pubs and Bars

By Matthew Curtis



The **Hare & Hounds** serves two beers on cask: Ossett White Rat and Holt's Bitter. The latter – brewed less than a mile away at Joseph Holt Brewery in Cheetham Hill – costs just £3.40 a pint. Based on my regular visits, it's always served in perfect condition, writes *Matt Curtis* (pictured left).

Such a keenly priced pint wouldn't (or at least, shouldn't) be out of the ordinary in many towns, suburbs and villages, particularly in the north west of England. But here, on the edge of Manchester's

Northern Quarter, it's anything but.

This square mile of street art-decked lanes and alleyways winding between tall, proud former cotton mills serves as the city's cultural hub. Some of the best pubs and bars in the city can be found here, from modern destinations like **Port Street Beer House**, to proper Mancunian classics such as the **Castle Hotel**. It's also home to numerous live music venues, plus artists' studios like those at the Manchester Craft and Design centre on Oak Street. Although options for good beer within the Northern Quarter – or the NQ for short – are numerous, few offer an experience as quintessentially Mancunian as the **Hare & Hounds**. Fewer still will provide you with such a great-value pint of locally-brewed beer.



Directly opposite the Shudehill tram stop and Transport for Greater Manchester's signature yellow livery is the Grade II listed building that holds the pub itself. Tiles in dreamy shades of blue, green and grey cover the lower half of its facade, providing contrast to the sharp red of the **Lower Turks Head** a couple of doors down. You can enter from the less romantic surroundings of the car park to its rear, but doing so would rob you of glimpsing the lovely tilework at its front.

Although the building itself dates back to 1800, the current interior was reportedly installed around 1925. Stepping inside via the narrow

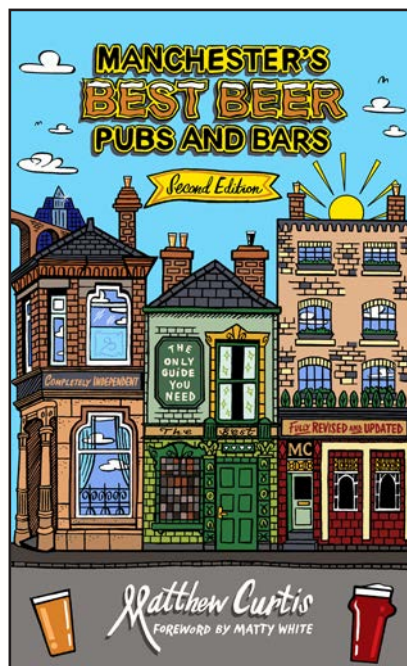
entryway, it really does feel like things in here haven't changed much at all over the past century or so. A few paces inside will lead you to the bar and seating area in the 'West Riding' fashion – potentially a leftover feature from the fact that this was formerly a Tetley's house. More seating can be found in a side room immediately to your right as you enter, plus in another room at the pub's rear.

In the front room, you can generally expect a quieter, calmer experience, soundtracked by some northern-accented chatter and the occasional clinking of pint glasses. More often than not, the back room will spring into life, hosting that most northern of traditions:

karaoke. This isn't a free-for-all affair, however, as pub regulars who participate take it very seriously indeed, and when it's their turn, it's time to sit down and listen. You're in for a genuine treat if the chap who does Frank Sinatra is present. He can be so entertaining you might want to close your eyes for a moment and pretend you're listening to Ol' Blue Eyes in the flesh.

What I find most interesting about the Hare & Hounds is that, often, it doesn't get referenced in the same breath as other iconic Manchester drinking destinations: the **Marble Arch**, the **City Arms**, the **Peveril of the Peak**. These are all essential stops, yes (especially the Pev on a Tuesday evening for trad night) but if I've learned anything from my regular visits into the city centre, it's that its most understated pubs often provide me with some of the best experiences.

I've spent the last 18 months updating the information compiled in my award-winning, CAMRA-published guidebook, *Manchester's Best Beer Pubs and Bars*. The second edition, which launched on 2 April, contains more than 50 new carefully-selected additions. After accounting for closures (which was about 20 of the pubs featured in the first edition) it brings the total number of pubs in the guide to 220. One of the best parts of researching the second edition wasn't discovering new pubs to add, it was the opportunity it presented to return to some of those that I perhaps didn't give enough time or focus to the first time around.



In the city centre, one pub I almost cruelly ignored is the **Salisbury**. While the rock pub might lack the old-world ambience of somewhere like the Hare & Hounds, it serves some of the best cask ale in town, including my go-to, Old Peculier. While visiting Bolton, I found myself lingering for longer than intended in **Bank Top's Brewery Tap**, a lovingly-maintained spit and sawdust pub that also sells remarkably well-priced pints. Down in my hometown of Stockport, I got to enjoy the restoration of the **Crown**, a former Boddingtons pub that lost its way under previous tenants, and is now arguably one of the best

pubs anywhere in Greater Manchester.

That's the thing about Manchester – it's easy to point at some of its big hitters and say, with conviction, "this is the best city in the UK for beer and pubs" because it is. However, when you scratch beneath the surface and turn your attention to some of those off the beaten track, a bit like the wonderful Hare & Hounds, you realise that this isn't some hubristic Mancunian provocation, it's just simple northern honesty. For beer and pubs, Manchester's better than all the rest.

Manchester's Best Beer Pubs and Bars (Second Edition) was published on 2 April, and is available now from the CAMRA Shop (shop1.camra.org.uk). It features over 220 pubs across the entirety of Greater Manchester, plus a foreword from Matty White, and cover art by David Bailey.



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News Extra

More pub and brewery news from across the area

No Rest at the Spinners



Manchester will soon have a new venue added to its choice of places to visit when the **Spinners Rest**, previously the **Shamrock**, opens its doors in mid-June, writes *Steve Ingham*.

Work is continuing at pace to bring this new pub into being. The project

by Manchester family brewer Joseph Holt has taken some time to achieve but, despite this, we think we can look forward to this addition to their estate within the city.

The project represents a significant multi-million pound investment by the brewery. The hallmark of Holt's refurbishments is one of sensitive treatment and, as future visitors, we can look forward to meeting in a welcoming and much-improved space inside, with an extensive outdoor area.

Ancoats was long associated with the production of cotton, and other cloth goods were also synonymous with the city. They were termed Manchester Goods or Manchester Cottons. It's an amusing but appropriate tag to describe the Spinners as 'the newest thread in Manchester's fabric'.

The Spinners Rest is on Bengal Street, just off Oldham Road, and is within easy reach of the City Centre. Above is a CGI illustration of the Spinners Rest development.

Unicorn's Birthday

Robinsons Unicorn Best Bitter is 130 years old this year. To celebrate, Robinsons are unveiling a throwback look for 2026 to how Unicorn looked during the 100th birthday celebrations back in 1996 (see advert on back page), with plenty of competitions and prizes up for grabs as they approach the birthday in September. Unicorn is proudly sponsoring Stockport Beer & Cider Festival in June, so we hope you'll raise a glass of 'Best' in celebration of this milestone.

Egg-static Windsor Castle



Joanne Farrell, licensee of the **Windsor Castle** in Marple Bridge (and pictured here), raised over 5,000 creme eggs for Francis House Children's Hospice!

She started with it being just 100 and then she reached that total so quickly, she set the ambitious target of 5,000. Her local community, other pubs, and other businesses all rallied together to get this mountain of eggs. What initially sounded like a crazy goal became a local sensation.

Joanne, who described the response to her appeal as "truly overwhelming", said that she'd find creme eggs everywhere – in her porch, on her doorstep and in the corner of the pub. By the end of the campaign, the entire pool table (and more) was stacked with chocolate eggs.

A representative from Francis House said this donation was the single biggest egg donation they'd ever received! Each egg then went to be matched with a knitted Easter chick as part of their wider Easter Chick Appeal. Each knitted chick started at £2, meaning at a minimum the

efforts of the Windsor Castle have contributed towards over £10,000 worth of donations for Francis House.

On the day of collection, there were so many eggs, they wouldn't even fit in the car – two trips were necessary!

Petersgate Tap Presentation



The Stockport & South Manchester branch presented its 2026 Cider Pub of the Year award to Stockport's **Petersgate Tap** on the afternoon of Sunday 22 March. Many different ciders and perries were sampled during the course of the afternoon, some of which were contributed by Stockport Beer & Cider Festival cider bar manager Charlotte Bulmer, and branch cider rep Dave Preston. They are shown above, flanking Petersgate Tap co-owner Alan Gent displaying his certificate.

Old Hall and Paper Mill Update



There's a lot going on at the **Old Hall Hotel** and sister pub, the **Paper Mill**, in Whitehough near Chinley. At the **Old Hall**, the garden has been carefully reshaped – bringing it to life with flowers, and winding stone walls, and by making the most of the much-loved sun trap. The space has been extended to allow for more garden tables, creating the

perfect setting for summer afternoons. Customers can now enjoy a seamless experience, ordering across the gardens from the pizzeria and rotating pop-up kitchen to the traditional pub classics that define the Old Hall.

Just down the road, the **Paper Mill** has undergone a striking facelift and is thriving under its fresh spring look. With a hand-built Italian oven at its heart, and ever-changing pop-up menus, it's fast becoming a vibrant, evolving destination. Together, the two pubs are bringing new life to Whitehough.

New Beer Festival for Manchester?

CAMRA's Central Manchester branch is currently in discussions with the People's History Museum about running a beer festival in September at their museum on Bridge Street. Those with long memories may remember that this was the site of the first beer festival that the branch ran back in 2016, soon after the branch was formed. Full details will be in the next issue if discussions are successfully concluded.

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Pub Walks with Chris Morris

Chelmorton

Located three miles south east of Buxton, the Peak District village of Chelmorton is a peaceful oasis of calm and countryside views. It also boasts an excellent country pub, selling traditional cask beer of great quality. Despite being off the beaten track, it can be easily reached using the Transpeak bus and a short stroll. For those with more energy to burn, the following scenic walk takes us over the hill to the quaint village of Taddington, where we finish at the Queens Arms for a rewarding pint, before catching the bus back.

Public Transport Information

The Transpeak bus for this walk operates hourly from Buxton, with services running all week until the early evening. If getting the train to Buxton, the Transpeak bus stop is right outside the railway station. If taking the 199 bus to Buxton, the marketplace is a good place to change for the Transpeak. The last bus back through Taddington is just after 5pm, with later buses available on the A6 at the far west of the village, from the Hollow O The Moor stop. For bus times visit www.highpeakbuses.com or check Google Maps for live updates.

The Walk

The walk to Taddington is three miles, which it is advisable to do on a clear day to get the best views of the picturesque surroundings. As well as 100 metres of ascent, there are a number of stone stiles to climb over, where extra care should be taken when wet. Hiking boots are recommended. All pubs are dog friendly.

We leave the bus at the Old Coalpit Lane stop (ask the bus driver if unsure of its location). With the main road behind us and the Chelmorton sign on our left, walk along Common Lane for half a mile. At the end of the road, turn left and walk up the hill through the village. Our first pub stop can be found a further 150 yards on the left.



The **Church Inn** dates from 1742 and boasts an idyllic position in an isolated rural location. It majors on traditional country pub cosiness, with low ceilings and the smell of a wood fire when entering. One side is carpeted, and popular with diners enjoying the excellent home-cooked food. Around the bar and either side of the impressive double-fronted log burner, bench seating and wooden floors are featured – perfect for walkers. In the warmer months, the outdoor terrace takes centre stage with its peaceful setting and fine views of the church opposite, which is the highest in England with a spire. On my last visit, the four cask beers were Storm Force 10, Marston's Pedigree, Abbeydale Deception and Moonshine, with Buck Derbyshire Cider taking up the final handpump.

On leaving the pub, to walk to Taddington, turn left and walk up the road. This bends to the right after 50 yards and becomes a track. Follow this uphill, which then narrows. After 400 yards, take the right

fork and in a further 300 yards exit through a gate. Turn right now to walk a few steps along a lane before turning left through a kissing gate, and please shut all gates behind you.

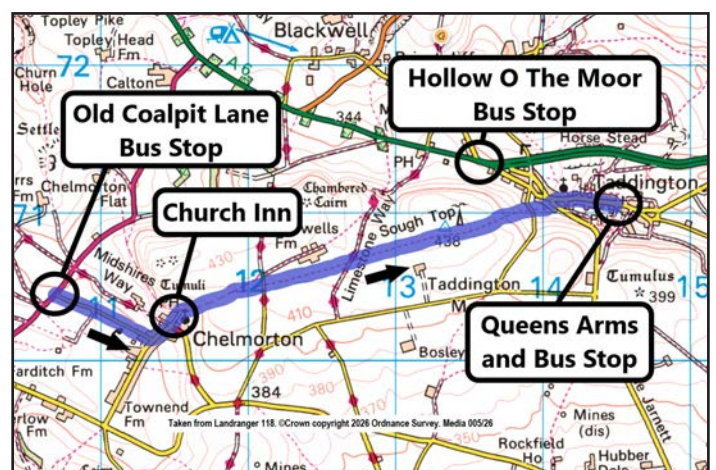
We now walk across a field, with the road behind us, to another kissing gate. Keep the stone wall on your left through the next two fields passing through two kissing gates, until we reach a track. Walking in the same direction as before, climb over the stone stile and follow the path between a wall and a fence. Over another stone stile, hug the stone wall on your left to another stone stile. Repeat this for the next five fields until the path bends to the right, then left over a stone stile to pass Sough Top reservoir. Diagonally cross the field to the finger post opposite and enter the next field via another stone stile. Diagonally cross this next field down to another finger post and across a collapsed wall. With Taddington now in sight, aim for the far right of the village when walking through the next field, passing through the remains of a wall, across the road beyond by a gate and through a gap in the wall on the other side. Turning right, we pass through another gap in the wall, then straight on down to a stone stile leading to a gap between two houses. Walk straight over the first road to turn right on the second, signposted to Ashford and Bakewell. We now walk through the village of Taddington for 500 yards for our rewarding pint.



Dating from 1736, the **Queens Arms** is a welcome sight at the end of our walk, with friendly staff and fine cask beers to quench our thirst. Following a recent refurbishment, the pub now feels more up to date, with added light and comfortable seating.

A log burner serves each of the two rooms, with the cosy games room, on the left, worth seeking out. The home-cooked food is popular, and a large outdoor seating area can be found at the rear with views of the surrounding countryside. The cask beers were Bradfield Farmers Blonde and Winkle Waller when I last dropped by. The pub is closed on Monday and between 2pm and 5pm Tuesday to Thursday.

The bus stop back to Buxton is located a few yards past the pub. The bus will be travelling in the opposite direction that you have walked through the village.



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CAMRA Awards

Recent Presentations

Opening Times has got a little behind schedule with some recent award presentations. Here are some Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month awards from recent months.



The Pub of the Month for December was the **Horse & Farrier** in Gatley. This classic village local is a Hydes pub with a central bar serving six separate rooms. There is also a small upstairs area available for functions.

Five of the brewery's beers are on handpump, alongside a good selection of other beers, wines and spirits. Manager Liz Bennett-Greaves oversees everything with a consummate professionalism, and she is seen here with her certificate.



The first Pub of the Month for 2026 was Robinsons' **Dog & Partridge** in Great Moor. It's a charming pub that takes pride in offering great-value food, and the classic pub-style menu includes a much-loved Sunday roast. The cask ale selection usually includes two different

beers – Unicorn, plus a seasonal beer or another of Robbies' regular ales. Landlady Karen Morton is seen here with husband Jamie and a group of their regulars.



The February award went to the **Puss in Boots** in Offerton. This Robinsons pub has been part of the Almond Family pub group since a major refurbishment in 2010 – and as this was typed, it was undergoing another major overhaul.

Nick Bateson has been the manager 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. Nick is shown here with his certificate.



Getting more up to date, the March Pub of the Month was **Saints Club** on St Petersgate in Stockport town centre. The pub was opened in June 2025 by David Thorley, and occupies a former retail unit.

Three cask beers are available, often including those from Brewsmith Brewery. One of the cask beers is often a dark beer. There is a tap wall featuring about a dozen keg beers, and these include an imported lager, IPAs, sours and cider. There's usually an imperial stout to try, too. David is seen here with his certificate.

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Scribbles on a Beermat



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

A Month Without the Pub

I can barely remember what it's called.
Where even is it? Next to Tesco? By the gym?
Behind the undertakers up the road?

A month without the pub.

I wonder if it still sells thick pork pies.
I can't imagine what flavours of crisps
they have now. Red pepper and salami?
Cheddar cheese and chive and pineapple?
Cucumber and vinegar? Egg and mustard?

A month without the pub.

What have all the dogs been up to?
Did the kids get the Easter eggs they wanted?
How much do peanuts cost now?

Will the landlord remember my name?
Will the landlady remember my usual?
Will the bar staff still compliment my jumpers?
I hope none of the regulars have died.

A month without the pub.

I haven't been waking up with a head
stuffed with hammered in nails,
muscles stiffer than an ungreased hinge,
a tongue as dry as a nail file on a beach.

I've been wandering outside spotting daffodils
with the strength to sprout through concrete cracks,
noticing how the clouds look like barrister wigs,

I've been drinking cups of peaceful, decaffeinated tea.
exploring corners of the town I've never seen
like a Stopfordian Christopher Columbus.

I've been keeping myself company,
listening to the thoughts in my own head,
forming my own opinions, learning to be
at peace with the person I truly am.

A month without the pub

(can't end soon enough.)

Stockport's Lost Pubs with Dave Stearn

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



Our first pub is the **Plough Hotel**, 4 Lower Hillgate. It is first mentioned in 1823, and in the 19th century was a coaching inn, with traffic stopping off three times a day on its way to and from London. It had large stables to the rear in Royal Oak Yard. There was a brew house on site in the 1830s, with home-brewed ales referenced in advertisements. It

became one of the five Stockport pubs owned by John Foster when it was taken over by him in the 1840s, when it is thought brewing ceased. Eventually, after Foster's death, his pubs were bought by Chesters Brewery in 1890.

The photo from around 1910 shows the prominent signage outside the premises used to tempt Stopfordians in for a swift half to break up their day. The Plough closed its doors in August 1921, with the building converted into commercial premises. For a time in the 1970s, it housed a DIY shop downstairs, with the upstairs rooms of the building reportedly largely unchanged. In the 2000s, the pub building was demolished, replaced by shop units, with apartments above.



Also under the letter 'P' is the **Pineapple Inn** on Heaton Lane, in the shadow of the viaduct. Dating back to the 1820s, and originally a coaching house, listings in the 1890s refer to it as being the premises of a beer retailer. It was first mentioned in the 1905 Stockport Directory as the

Pine Apple, with Sarah Crossley as licensee. The pub also became the headquarters of the Stockport Botanical Society. It was a Bell and Co. house until that firm was taken over by Robinsons in 1949.

For decades it remained a cosy, family-run local, popular with a regular clientele and workers from nearby office blocks popping in for lunch and a pint. The pub was mothballed in 2020 when, along with many other establishments, it was hit by the Covid lockdowns. Hopefully, this is not the end of the story for the Pineapple Inn as, in 2024, Robinsons unveiled a scheme to make a significant investment to revamp the premises and plans were approved by Stockport Council. The Pineapple will again be surrounded by hundreds of town centre homes with the Stockport 8 development taking shape nearby, and although renovation work is yet to start, a new chapter may soon open.

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.



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Events, Socials and Meetings

Plus local CAMRA Contacts

Local CAMRA Contacts

Stockport & South Manchester (SSM)

ssm.camra.org.uk

Contact: Lawrence Devaney; secretary@ssm.camra.org.uk

Facebook – facebook.com/SSMCAMRA

X – @SSMCAMRA

High Peak, Tameside & Goyt Valley (HPTGV)

highpeak.camra.org.uk

Contact: Ben Zwierink; ben.zwierink@gmail.com

Facebook – facebook.com/HPTNECCAMRA

Macclesfield & East Cheshire (MEC)

eastcheshire.camra.org.uk

Contact: contact@eastcheshire.camra.org.uk

Facebook – facebook.com/groups/897449270304045

X – @MECCAMRA

Central Manchester (CMCR)

centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Contact: Sean O'Mahoney; chair@centralmanchester.camra.org.uk

Facebook – facebook.com/groups/CentralManchesterCamra

X – @MCRCentralCamra

Trafford & Hulme (T&H)

thcamra.org.uk

Contact: Mark Reeves; enquiries@thcamra.org.uk

Facebook – facebook.com/groups/336531787379

X – @THCAMRA

CAMRA National website: camra.org.uk

Formal Branch Meetings

CAMRA members only at these meetings.

Saturday 9 May – Frog on the Bine, 9 Cavendish Circus, Buxton, SK17 6AT. Starts 2pm. (HPTGV)

Thursday 14 May – Sun & Castle, 54-58 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, SK1 3DL. Guest speaker from Holt's brewery. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Tuesday 19 May – Gas Lamp (in back room), 50a Bridge Street, Manchester, M3 3BW. Starts 6:30pm. (CMCR)

Thursday 4 June – Details TBC. See branch website. (T&H)

Tuesday 9 June – Bulls Head, Newcastle Road, Smallwood, CW11 2TY. Starts 8pm. (MEC)

Thursday 11 June – Blossoms, 2 Buxton Road, Heaviley, SK2 6NU. Possible guest speaker. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Thursday 9 July – Petersgate Tap, 19a St Petersgate, Stockport, SK1 1EB. Guest speaker Peter O'Grady from Mount St Bernard Trappist brewery. Starts 8pm. (SSM)

Social Events & Presentations

Everyone very welcome at these events.

Thursday 14 May – Evening social in Altrincham: starts 8pm at Station Hotel, 44 Stamford New Road, Altrincham, WA14 1EJ. (T&H)

Tuesday 19 May – Tuesday Tipples in Bury. Meet Bury Interchange at 12 noon. (T&H)

Wednesday 20 May – Trip to Ludlow: catch 11:30 train from Piccadilly (11:39 from Stockport). (HPTGV)

Friday 22 May – Heaton Norris East Stagger: 7:30pm Navigation, 1 Manchester Road, SK4 1TY; 8:30pm Magnet, 51 Wellington Road North, SK4 1HJ; final pub Crown, 154 Heaton Lane, SK4 1AR. (SSM)

Saturday 23 May – Away Day in Darwen. See branch website for more details. (T&H)

Thursday 28 May – Pub of the Month presentation: Reddish Ale, 14 Broadstone Road, Reddish, SK5 7AE. From 8pm. (SSM)

Saturday 30 May – Pub of the Year presentation: Northumberland Arms, 64 Compstall Road, Marple Bridge, Stockport, SK6 5HD. From 2pm. (HPTGV)

Tuesday 2 June – Weekday Wander to Oldham then Shaw & Crompton. Meet at Manchester Victoria for 11:23am tram to Rochdale, alighting at Oldham. First pub Ashton Arms, 26 Clegg Street, Oldham, OL1 1PL at 12 noon. (SSM)

Saturday 13 June – Pub of the Year presentation: Cotton Tree, 3-5 Ingersley Road, Bollington, SK10 5RE. From 2pm. (MEC)

Monday 15 June – Sunday 21 June – Set up, run and take down Stockport Beer & Cider Festival. (SSM)

Thursday 25 June – Pub of the Month presentation: Red Bull, 14 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, SK1 3AY. From 8pm. (SSM)

Friday 26 June – Club of the Year presentation: Ladybarn Social Club, 13 Green Street, Ladybarn, M14 6TL. From 7:30pm. (SSM)

Saturday 27 June – Club of the Year presentation: Alderley Edge Union Club, Stevens Street, Alderley Edge, SK9 7NL. This event will be preceded by a Cheshire county CAMRA meeting. (MEC)

Saturday 27 June – Away Day to Hebden Bridge. See branch website for details. (T&H)

Wednesday 1 July – Weekday Wander to top and bottom Upper Tame Valley. Meet at 11:45am at Piccadilly Rail Station adjacent to the platform 1 ticket barrier ready, for 12 noon TransPennine train to Greenfield Station. First Pub; Wellington Inn, 29 Chew Valley Road, Greenfield, OL3 7AF at 12:30pm. (SSM)

Letter to the Editor

From Jeff Carter (by email):

I was delighted to read in your March/April 2026 issue that the Crown Inn, Heaton Lane, Stockport, has been restored to its former glory and been awarded two awards in recognition of the achievement.

Many years ago, the Crown was on my list of favourite pubs for the selection and quality of the numerous cask ales available. Well done to all involved from the Petersgate Tap for saving a great pub. Always enjoy reading Opening Times when I pick up an issue on my travels.

I'm pleased you enjoy Opening Times, Jeff. We work hard to make it a good read. The Crown does seem to have hit the ground running and is proving extremely popular.

THE

Best

FOR 130 YEARS

