



The Campaign For Real Ale HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

10 February 1978 • Number 1

Ind Coope: 2p On A Pint

No sooner are we into 1978 and we find ourselves (yet again) at the mercy of the big breweries, this time Ind Coope who have slapped 2p on a pint. This increase (from a company which had profits of £77M last year) has incensed both publican and customer alike and any confidence held in the Prices Commission must surely have dwindled and will take much to repair. Ind Coope had originally applied for a 3p increase which was refused but they then found a tailor-made 'loophole' in the Prices Commission's rulings and applied for an 'Interim' increase of 2p pending the Commission's enquiries and investigations into the company. In this case 'Interim' almost certainly means permanent as it is extremely unlikely that the Commission could take away this 2p increase once granted. No doubt other breweries will be following Ind Coope's (or rather Allied's) lead which only goes to prove how we, the customers, are still unprotected against the whims of the big brewers. It's about time the still-learning Prices Commission grew some teeth. With Burton Ale now on sale at around the 40p mark, can you afford it?

Chaise and Pair

It's rare to find a free house locally which bothers to serve a mild beer. Most, with some honourable exceptions, seem to prefer to sell expensive and exotic high gravity beers only. The newly re-opened Chaise and Pair, in the pretty village of Barkway, is now serving not only a real mild but a dark mild at that, Greene King's excellent but elusive XX. Greene King have once again excelled themselves by installing handpumps in a free house for which they continually deny that there is a significant demand in their own tied houses, and there are three pumps here, serving XX, IPA bitter and Abbot. Also on sale is Courage Directors. Those who remember the Chaise and Pair in its former existence as a Whitbread tied house are in for a pleasant surprise if they visit it now, as the keen new landlord Ian Scott has refurnished the inside of this old pub expertly and the beer is reasonably priced too. Watch out for a Herts. North branch social here soon.

by Pete Lerner

The Woodman, Chapmore End

Anyone wanting to taste all four Greene King real ales under one roof might like to visit The Woodman in Chapmore End, a great village pub which is well worth a visit.



XX Mild

At a recent meeting held between Greene King and CAMRA brewery liaison officers, brewery officials stated that sales of the Biggleswade brewed XX Dark Mild were declining, and in the near future could possibly be replaced altogether by KK Light Mild. When CAMRA suggested that Greene King could give their excellent dark mild a boost by advertising it, they responded in the negative. Whilst visiting several Greene King pubs during the last few weeks I've noticed large quantities of 'King Keg' beer mats on display. Landlords said that sales of this product have dipped alarmingly over the past 18 months. To quote one landlord, "Someone has pressed the panic button at Biggleswade, I expect to receive quite a bit of new advertising for King Keg in the next few months, the brewery are quite concerned about the situation."

I don't think I need to say much more on the subject except that the double standards usually attributed to the Big Six seem to have spread elsewhere.

by Denis Robertson

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The Bishop's Tipple by Rob Candlish

If you wanted to sample real ale in Bishop's Stortford as little as three years ago you'd chosen a led town. Then, the choice was limited to three beers from two breweries in two pubs. Now you can enjoy thirteen beers if you're lucky or twelve if not, from nine breweries in over a dozen pubs.

Tie Up

The 'crawl' that follows is certainly a marathon, but of course you can start and finish where you like. Those hardy souls who reach the end having sampled every beer available en route can justifiably claim to have done 'The Bishop's Tipple' by sampling every beer available in town. If you've come by train I suggest you bring a ball of string with you and tie one end to a lamp post outside the station - you'll need it to find your way back afterwards!

First Stop

We start in the Wheatsheaf in Northgate End, a pleasant and small Rayment's house in which real BB and Abbot first re-appeared in the town. Make sure you go in the saloon - the public bar has gas taps. A brisk walk along Northgate End, Hedden Road and North Street brings us to Water Lane on the left. Down this back street is The Bakers Dozen owned by Simons, the restaurant and baking group, hence the name. This is surely the jewel in Stortford's real ale crown with no less than eight real beers - but we're only here for two of them - Adna's bitter and the lethal Theakston's Old Peculier, there are more pubs in which to sample the others.

8 Pumps

If you can tear yourself away from the sight of eight handpumps going up and down and persuade yourself not to finish the crawl here by running down the pumps, leave Water Lane the way you came in, turn right into North Street, go across the traffic lights back to the station (don't trip over your string - just follow it!) turn left into Station Road and at the other end is our goal, The Railway Hotel with Ind Coope Burton Ale and Bitter.

Rare Thirteenth

Having sunk 5½ pints so far (I hope you didn't have a pint of Old Peculier) when you leave The Railway, go straight on down London Road and drop in on the public bar of The Three Tuns which is on the left near the zebra crossing. If you're lucky Bob Parker, the landlord will have Stortford's rare thirteenth real ale - Rayment's AK Mild on gravity. If you're not you can count on either Rayment's BBA or Abbot Ale - all served the same way. Down London Road and over the railway bridge is The Tanners Arms, a typical Mac's local with AK and Country on handpumps and an awful lot of dominoes and crib going on usually. After a pint of each beer here and with 8½ pints of different beers in your tiny frame it's time to move on.

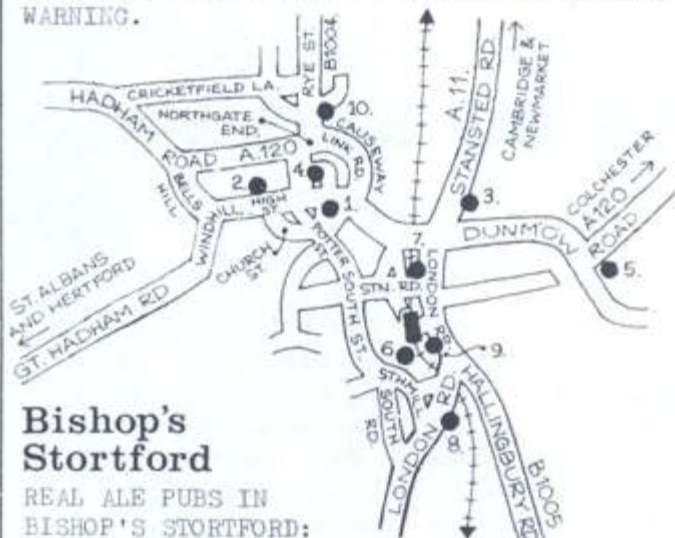
Outside The Tanners carry on down London Rd until you come to a petrol station on your left, opposite this is a road leading to Southmill Road and The Old Maltings in the Triad Centre. This is where those set on doing The Tipple have got four pints to contend with - Bass, Charrington's IPA, Ruddle's County and Ruddle's Blue. The Old Maltings was the first free house in the town and whilst it's probably been eclipsed by The Bakers Dozen is still very popular.

Sore Head

Having got this far all that remains is to find your way back to the station and not to think what your head will be like the next morning. When you wake up tomorrow you may well feel that you did The Bishop's Tipple three years too late - in 1975 you'd only have had to go into The Cock at Hockerill traffic lights and The Tanners Arms and drink three pints. The 12½ pint route of today is certainly only for the experienced or foolhardy.

Other real ale pubs in Stortford include The Black Lion, The Boar's Head and The Nag's Head.

THIS PUB CRAWL CARRIES A GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING.



Bishop's Stortford

REAL ALE PUBS IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Black Lion | 6. Old Maltings |
| 2. Boar's Head | 7. Railway Hotel |
| 3. The Cock | 8. Tanners Arms |
| 4. Crusty Loaf | 9. Three Tuns |
| 5. Nag's Head | 10. Wheatsheaf |

Rayment's

Our county's less publicised brewery, Rayment's of Furneux Pelham, are at present enjoying a well deserved real ale revival. Why not take pride in your local brew and let your friends know about it by wearing a Rayment's 'T' shirt, produced by Herts North branch, costing £2 (medium, large or extra large) and/or a 'Drink Rayment's' badge, costing 10p each which are available from Herts North, Herts South and Herts/Essex Borders branch. If you're interested speak to one of the branch contacts (see back page).



Watney's

Whatever one may think of the qualities of Watney's Fined bitter one thing is certain - it is a more than welcome improvement over all their other products. Originally this beer was sold almost universally by electric pump which is satisfactory by CAMRA standards. However, it now seems that several of the houses are changing over to the Distillers Company air-pressure system which is used for Truman's Tap Pitter. Since air pressure dispense is not acceptable to the Campaign locally all Truman's Tap pubs, and now the aerated Watney Fined ones too, will be excluded from the new Hertfordshire Real Ale Guide. One notable exception is the Three Blackbirds in Flamstead, near Hemel. Here the landlord has very sensibly decided that traditional ale should be served traditionally and not by a glorified bicycle pump.

Real Tap and Fined

A simple reversal of the connections on a normal Fined Bitter barrel fitting allows him to serve his beer by proper handpump. There are only eight or so Fined outlets in the area (mainly in the south) but it would be nice to see them all follow the lead of the Blackbird's landlord, though Watney's seem reluctant to allow this. In the meantime the Hertfordshire Guide will continue to reflect the local branch's opinion of air-pressure dispense.

New Beer from London

In the not too distant future Watney's are bringing out a new, medium gravity, medium priced (oh yes?) beer. As yet this beer is unnamed although it may be called either Stag Bitter, Select Bitter, London Bitter or Richmond Bitter - a competition amongst landlords is to decide which. As with Fined, the deciding factor is going to be whether the beer is served properly or on air pressure - we'll have to wait and see. As for me, I'll be going up to Flamstead to try it. by Dave Burns.

Pub News in Brief

Not so many changes this month but a few new outlets for real ale in the south.

Aston End The Crown now sells Burton Ale in addition to Ind Coope Bitter.

Berkhamsted The Crown has recently introduced Ind Coope Burton Ale and Bitter.

Cuffley The Plough is selling handpumped Mac's Country Bitter.

Hitchin The Sir John Barleycorn is now selling Burton Ale alongside the bitter.

Northaw The Two Brewers has installed hand-pumps dispensing Burton Ale and Bitter.

Reed The Cabinet: Add Adnam's Old (winter).

Stevenage The March Hare sells Charrington's IPA but not Bass.

Ware The Rifle Volunteer in Musley Hill sells Mac's AK and Country by handpump during the winter but watch out for top pressure during the summer months

Furneux Pelham The Star. Handpumps have been installed presumably for Rayment's

Pub of the Year

How do you choose a pub of the year? Obviously, for a pub to be so honoured by a CAMRA branch it should sell real ale well, but should it be a new convert to real ale selling the local brew consistently well for years, a busy town pub, a remote country pub, a darts pub, a singing pub....?

Herts North branch members faced this dilemma when they voted for their 1977 Pub of the Year at their January branch meeting. After an interesting selection of pubs had been nominated and a keen voting session, the final and happy choice was The Cabinet at Reed.

The Ideal Pub?

The Cabinet has been a Good Beer Guide entry since 1975 and was the Herts North 'Pub of the Month' in July 1977, when a memorable social was held there. A pub more deserving of this first 'Pub of the Year' award would be hard to find; The Cabinet is a beautiful historic building dating from 1629, in the unspoilt village of Reed to the east of the A10, between Buntingford and Royston. It has a busy and active public bar, a warm and comfortable lounge and a large beautifully kept garden, where it is a pleasure to sit and drink in the summer. There is also an outdoor 'Children's Bar' where children can buy themselves pop and crisps.

Only Tolly in Herts.

The friendly licensees, Joan and Humphrey Cook, take pride in an interesting selection of real ales, all served by gravity and The Cabinet has for long been the only pub in the county serving Tolly Cobbold beers by traditional methods, and the rare Cantab is the speciality of the house. Also available are Adnam's bitter, Abbot and Courage Directors. Last summer Tolly's draught Cardinal Jubilee Ale was available and this winter Adnam's Tolly-No draught barley wine and Old Ale have been on sale. In the summer, a mild may be introduced. Most important, the beers are reasonably priced - no jump-on-the-real-ale-bandwagon-and-rip-off-the-customer pub this.

Presentation

As a lasting memento of the respect which the branch have for The Cabinet, the branch will present the pub with a CAMRA mirror, specially inscribed, at a social to be held there on Thursday 23 February, when the serious business of consuming the ale and challenging the pub's darts team will begin.

Join us

Try and join us then, or make an effort to visit The Cabinet soon and see what a great pub it is. by Pete Lerner

PUB SWOPS LATEST

The latest news on the pub swaps between Ind Coope and Courage or Bass-Charrington is that some of the handovers will now be as late as May 1978. Courage, meanwhile, have already applied for planning permission to change pub signs on some of the pubs involved.

Ton-Up

The Herts/Essex Borders Branch, now has exactly 100 pubs in its area selling real ale and has met its 1977 campaigning objective of 100 real ale pubs by the end of the year. When the branch started, in 1976 only 52 of the 263 pubs in its area sold traditional beer. The 100th pub, The Phoenix in Harlow (Courage) was discovered by branch member Derek Wisdom and the branch will hold a celebration meeting there on 8 March (see diary opposite).

The branch also wish to thank Steve Marlow, who is resigning as Social Secretary, as his wife is expecting a baby. Steve has set a standard that his successors will be hard pushed to follow. **ROB CANDLISH**

Mr Edwards to Retire

The latest news from Mac's is that Mr Edwards, head brewer for so many years, will be retiring this June and that a Mr Skipper of Bass (Runcorn) will be joining the brewing staff - a bit worrying as the Runcorn 'brewery' is keg-only. But whatever, we all wish Mr Edwards a very happy retirement and thank him for his services to the brewing of good beer.

Newsletter & Membership

This, the first Hertfordshire Newsletter is a new joint venture between the Herts. South, Herts. North, and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. Any contributions should be sent to the editor by the first day of the month: Les Middlewood, 81a Linden Way, Southgate, London, N.14 4NG.

BRANCH CONTACTS:

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The Mid-Chilterns branch area is covered in depth in the Mid-Chilterns Newsletter which is available from Tim Amsden, Mermaid Cottage, Hawridge Common, Chesham.

What's On

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

- Feb 15 February Branch Meeting
The Robin Hood, High St, Potters Bar (Ind Coope) 8pm. An extension has been applied for.
- Feb 24-26 Branch weekend trip to Bate-man's of Lincolnshire. Still a few tickets available.
- Mar 7 Branch darts championship at The Bell and Crown, Cowbridge, Hertford (Mac's). 7.30pm.
- Mar 21 March Branch Meeting
The Sportsman, Croxley Green. 8pm. (Ind Coope).

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

- Feb 22 Social at The Marquis of Lorne, High Street, Stevenage (Greene King) 8pm.
- Feb 23 Social and presentation of the Herts North 'Pub of the Year 1978' award at The Cabinet, Reed (Free House (see page 3)).
- Mar 8 March Branch Meeting
The George, Bucklersbury, Hitchin. (Ind Coope) 8pm.

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

- Feb 20 Branch A.G.M.
High Wych Memorial Hall, High Wych. 8pm.
- Mar 8 March Branch Meeting
The Phoenix, Tillwicks Rd, Harlow. (Charrington's) 8pm. See 'Ton-Up' on this page.
- Mar 21 Social with East London and Enfield and Barnet branches at The Old English Gentleman, Waltham Abbey (McMullen's) 8pm.



Details of membership (£4.00) can be obtained from The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts.

