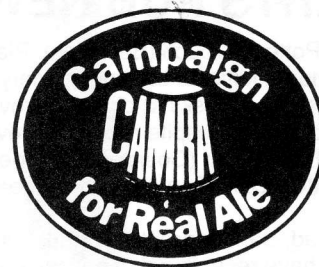




# Herts NEWSLETTER



**PUBS AND BEER IN HERTFORDSHIRE 5000 FREE COPIES NUMBER 106**

**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 1988**

## **BAN ALL BOOZE ADVERTS !**

A call for the complete ban on all mass-media advertising of alcoholic drinks is one of the seven points in CAMRA's Drinkers' Charter, the aims of which are to restore the British pint to its rightful place at the heart of our social lives, to encourage sensible and moderate drinking, and to provide help to small breweries.

The policy of fighting for a ban on alcohol adverts was agreed at CAMRA's last AGM. The argument was that as a consumer group associated with alcohol, CAMRA should not be seen to be promoting excessive consumption, and that the present level and style of advertising was almost an incitement to over drinking, especially among the younger elements of society. The announcement of the Charter was timed to coincide with the publication of the 1988 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide (more details elsewhere) which covers some of the issues in more detail. In summary the other points call for: — a restriction on the number of off licences to restrict the number of cans and bottles drunk on 'street corner'

— any liberalisation of the licensing laws to include Sunday, the one day they would be of benefit to most people

— the full listing of ingredients of alcoholic drinks either on the container or at the point of sale

— increasing the excise duty on high alcohol drinks such as spirits while reducing it on low alcohol drinks such as beer and lager in order to discourage hard drinking

— a change in the excise duty system to encourage small breweries and end financial penalties on those that mature their products properly

— action by the Monopolies & Mergers Commission to introduce fair competition, including the loosening of the 'tie' to allow all publicans to stock at least one product from a different company.

These last two points are expanded upon in the article on small breweries inside.

## **YOUNG IN HERTS**

In a surprise move, about a dozen Benskins pubs have started selling Young's bitter on a trial basis. The pubs in Hertfordshire that appeared on a provisional list of outlets were: Three Compasses at Patchetts Green, Two Brewers at Northaw, the Fox at Kingsbourne Green, Two Bridges at Croxley, Greene Manne at Batchworth Heath and the Crooked Chimney at Cromer Hyde. Initial reports suggest that the beer is being sold at about £1.00 to £1.04 a pint, which is about the same price as in Youngs pubs in the City. A similar number of Taylor walker pubs are also taking Youngs. It is understood that this is part of the trading agreement whereby Youngs take bottled Lowenbrau Special.

While on Benskins pubs it is expected that about 30 of them will soon be taking Tetley's bitter, Allied Breweries attempt at a national real ale. This is a change of policy on Benskins part as earlier this year they stated that unlike their sister companies in the south east, Taylor Walker and Friary Meux, they were only going to stock the keg version of the beer.

Other bits of Benskins news: their tied estate is increasing as a result of the transfer of about 300 pubs from their sister company Ind Coope and Allsopps and their Best Bitter received a 'highly commended' certificate at the 1987 Brewing Industry International Awards.



castle street ... old hertford

**Renovations now complete**

...  
*Widest selection of real ales  
in Hertford with many guest beers  
served on gravity and hand pump*

....  
Reduced prices on cask ale  
5-30 to 7.00 pm Mon—Fri.

*"Order your beer in Firkins from our wide  
selection. We will loan you taps & coolers."*

## **The Crooked Billet**

Colney Heath

Tel: Bowmansgreen 22128



*One of  
Hertfordshires  
Old Village Pubs  
Traditional  
Draught Beer  
in Olde-World  
surroundings*

Hot food *always* available  
Large selection of collectors Ales for sale.

## S. HERTS PUB NEWS

Hollybush, Potters Crouch (Benskins): Plans in for extension at rear to provide additional bar and scenery space.

Lion, Potters Bar (Benskins) plans approved for conversion to building soc offices, despite recent improvements to pub.

Chequers, Potters Bar (Courage) : Reopened after alterations.

Potters, Potters Bar (Beefeater): Has been closed for refurbishment.

Queens Head, Sandridge (Whitbread): Dennis and Marion Remington have recently retired. New tenants have moved from Queens Head at Harpenden which is to become a managed Bensins house.

Three Compasses, Patchets Green has reopened with Benskins, Burton and Youngs bitter on handpump.

Five Horseshoes, Little Berkhamsted: Now a free house, serving Greene King and Benskins.

Carpenters Arms, Harpenden (Watney) plans in for extension on side of building.

Crystal Palace, St. Albans (Benskins) now boarded up, pending outcome of another planning application for offices on the site.

Chequers, Redbourn (Watney) plans in for 2 storey extension to provide hotel accommodation.

Three Hammers, Chiswell Green: currently closed for alterations. Due to re-open mid-December as a managed, Benskins carvery with Youngs bitter available by Gordon and Lorrain Henderson, moving from the Acorn, St. Albans.

Garibaldi, St. Albans: recently a test outlet for a new Fullers real ale, Mr Harry (OG 1046-1050)

Peahen, St. Albans (McMullens) Lounge now reopened after major refurbishment on a Victorian theme.

Crown, St. Albans: Now reopened by Inn Leisure Ltd. Real ales are Greene King IPA, Abbot, Hook Norton, Old Hooky, Marstons Pedigree.

Blacksmiths Arms, St. Albans: About to reopen after major refurbishment by Whitbread.

Goat, St. Albans: About to reopen after refurbishment by Inn Leisure Ltd.

St. Albans: Vittle Inns have planning application in for conversion of a furniture shop in Chequer St to wine bar/cafe.

Wicked Lady, Nomansland: Whitbread have plans in for yet another extension to the pub. Still carrying a wide range of real ales with interesting guest beers (not just the usual Whitbread selection).

Bell, Ware: Now reopened by Whitbread.

Punch House, Ware: Leased to Clifton Inn — possible steak house?

Old Bulls Head, Ware and Wrestlers, Hatfield: two local winners of Burton Ale Grand Master Cellerman Award.

## PROBLEMS FOR NEW SMALL BREWERIES

Since 1974, around 200 new small breweries have been set up in this country, however less than half of these survive and many of them are struggling. There are many factors involved with the closures that have taken place but two of the major factors quoted are the system of charging excise duty and the lack of a genuine free trade in which they can sell their beer. The last point was reputed to be the reason for the closure of the two ventures in South Herts, Victoria and Swannells.

### Excise Duty

Excise duty on beer in the UK is higher than in any other of the mainland EEC countries (the overtaxed population of the Republic of Ireland suffer even more, and look at the state of their brewing industry!). It varies from being 33 times higher than in France, to 3 times that in the Netherlands with only Denmark paying anywhere near a comparable rate. But the majority of the EEC countries also offer some help by either having a sliding scale of payments (e.g. in Denmark the first 200,000 litres are charged duty at a 25% reduced rate), deferring payment at least until the beer leaves the brewery (e.g. in Belgium there is a 3-month delay in payment), staggering payments (e.g. in Italy payment is made over the two month following brewing) or a combination of these methods.

### Free Trade

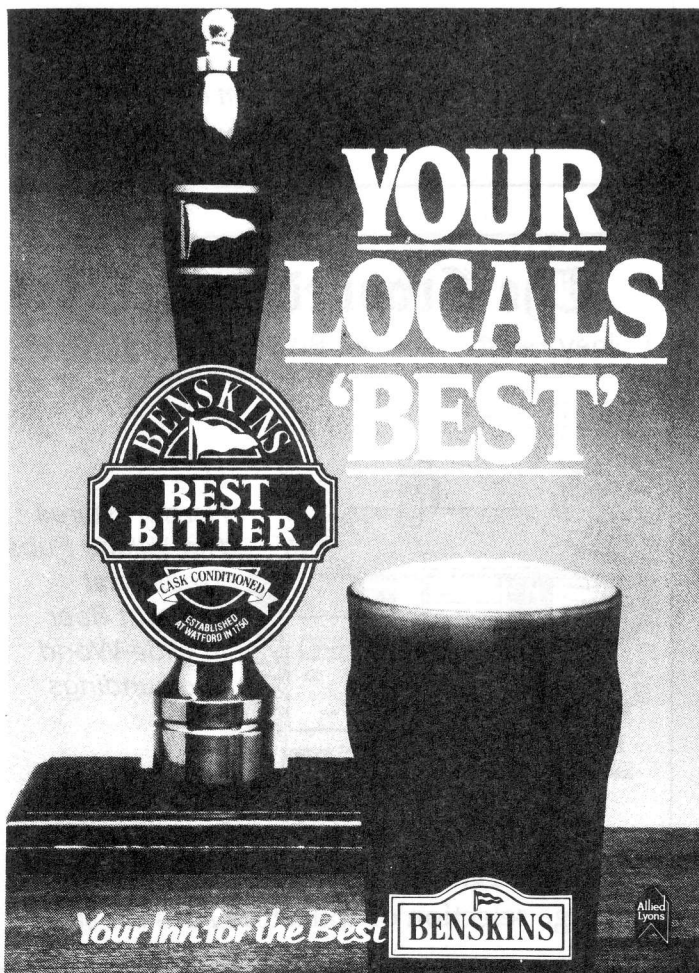
In 1986 over 46% of the 78,000 pubs were controlled by the Big 7 brewing companies (Allied, Bass, Courage, Greenall Whitley, Scottish & Newcastle, Watneys and Whitbread) leaving the remaining pubs to be divided among the 60-odd established independents and the new small breweries. But it's not just their hold over tied houses which causes problems, in 1985, the last year for which figures are available, the Big 7 gave loans amounting to over £358 million to free trade outlets in return for having their products sold, further reducing possible outlets for the independents. Add to those the number of pubs the Big 7 have sold to existing tenants with the condition that the 'tie' stays in place for up to 10 years, and it becomes apparent that few so called free houses are truly free.

### CAMRA's proposals

CAMRA's recent submission to the Monopolies Commission as part of the latter's investigation of the brewing industry including the following proposals:

- that no brewer be allowed to own more than 33% of pubs in any licensing district,
- that each tenant or manager be allowed to stock one extra bulk beer of their choice,
- that there be limits on the loan ties to free houses,
- that those houses with any produce ties be forbidden from describing themselves as free houses,
- that beer duty is suspended on the first 500 barrels produced,
- that a sliding scale of excise duty be introduced,
- that excise duty only be levied when beer leaves its place of production,
- that pubs should not be sold without a license.

All of these proposals are designed to assist the small brewer both financially, by reducing the amount of duty payable and in delaying those payments, and in increasing the number of outlets into which they can place their beer. The public gains by having a larger choice of more distinctive beers available and by paying less, as the small brewers tend to produce beer at lower cost (assuming of course that the savings are passed on to the consumer!). Without some legislative action the Big 7's hold on the brewing industry looks certain to tighten.



# DO LOWER CEILINGS BRING HIGHER PROFITS?

(or the Identipub policy of Inn Leisure)

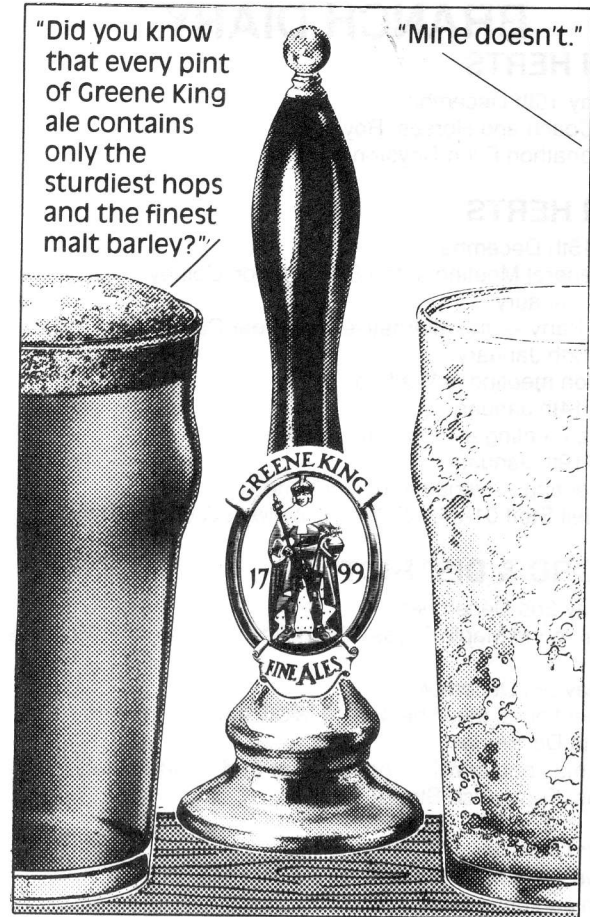
This year has seen even more of St. Albans' pub heritage coming under attack from the brewers and builders. Among the major refurbishments Bass Charrington has spent a vast sum on the Black Lion, Fishpool Street, and McMullens must have spent nearly as much on the Peahen, bringing a Victorian museum atmosphere to the centre of St. Albans, although the effect is somewhat spoiled by 1980's fruit machines and musak. Meanwhile Whitbread have refurbished the Fleur de Lys and the Blacksmiths Arms.

However, any one of these conversions could be considered tasteful and sympathetic when compared with what has happened at the Crown in Hatfield Road. It is true that in recent years this old Victorian hotel had taken on a decrepit look and the real ales were decidedly dodgy, proving that a free house with a wide range of real ales does not in itself guarantee a good pub. The new owners of the Crown are the freehouse chain Inn Leisure, who already run the Goat in St. Albans. They have gutted and rebuilt the inside of the Crown and what was previously a characterful if down at heel Victorian interior has become a vast mock-Tudor drinking emporium. St. Albans has plenty of genuine 16th century hotelries (including the Goat itself) without having to create a false one. The Crown now boasts a low ceiling with beams galore, and more second-hand books around walls than the Hertfordshire Library Service! How much more authentic a restored Victorian interior would have been, with a high ceiling, engraved mirrors, coloured glass, snob screens etc.

It transpires that the interior applied to the Crown is an 'identipub' formula used by Inn Leisure elsewhere. Sure enough, I was unlucky enough recently to stumble into the Bear at Maidenhead, once a coaching inn on the old A4, and discovered I was in a Crown look-a-like. There was the same low ceiling, mock beams and book shelves. Inn Leisure has the audacity to call it a Real Ale Bar, yet of four handpumps displayed only one was in use on my visit, and the Pedigree dispensed from that was certainly no advertisement for Marstons.

At the time of writing the Goat in St. Albans is closed for the Inn Leisure treatment, and I shudder to think how they will ruin that fine old building. Perhaps they will turn that into a fake Victorian pub?

Graham Allen



**Roger Protz's impression of the pub is similar and adds:** The attitude of the management was summed up in a widely distributed leaflet prior to opening which offered such "international lagers" as Fosters and other brands all brewed in the UK. The knowledge of beer is underscored by chalked messages above the bar inviting you to drink "Abbott" Ale and "Guinness" stout. The bar staff is young, constantly changing but with an impressively high level of pulchritude. But they know little about beer and customers usually have to lead the bar persons to the pump of their choice and then wait patiently while the handle is artlessly jerked half-a-dozen times to deliver a flattish, headless pint. The Fleetville area of St Albans urgently needs a good pub. But the Crown is not it. It is a designer pub, produced on a computer with no thought for what the locals might like and with a management with a woeful lack of training where beer is concerned. PS Dogs are not allowed in the Crown. You may feel that this deserves the RSPCA's award for Kindness to Canines. But it would be nice to know this fact, by way of a notice on the door, before you buy a pint, settle down with beer and pooch and are then told to drink up and get out.

**However Bill Austin writes:** Inn Leisure have just opened a new pub, the Artichoke, on the site of the Oliver in the Parade, Watford. Although it is another identi-kit pub, in this case its definitely an improvement on what was there before. Although the subdued lighting made it difficult to read the book titles around the walls, it was bright enough to read the above articles, and the muzak was not too obtrusive. Considering my visit was on a Sunday night, its fourth night open, and there had been no advertising of the opening the place was doing a very good trade, and, despite the general youthfulness of the clientele, the hand pulled beers were selling well — in fact too well, the manager had seriously underestimated the demand for Pedigree and had run out. As the other beers were Abbot (spelt correctly and selling well) and Courage Directors and Best Bitter (typically nondescript and not selling well), perhaps that's not too surprising, fortunately the range of beers is liable to change. However in the short term there will not be any Devenish draught beers because as the Inn Leisure pubs are run as free houses and currently are not forced to take particular beers, the brewery wants to ensure there are sufficient regular outlets before establishing a depot in the south East. As local residents have objected to the pub opening on the grounds that it will attract trouble, bouncers are employed to keep order (and apparently to ensure drinking up time is rigidly observed). Although far from being my ideal pub layout, if trade maintains its present level, it's going to be difficult to convince Inn Leisure that they've got it wrong.

## McMullen Country - McMullen Best

Whole hops from the hop fields of Kent, the finest traditional brewing malts from East Anglia, and the pure still water from their own McMullen Hertfordshire wells. That's the way the McMullen family have been brewing in Hertford since 1827. And that's what makes McMullen Country Best Bitter best.



*The hops go into the copper.*

**Brewers in Hertfordshire since 1827**

# BRANCH DIARY

## NORTH HERTS

Wednesday 16th December  
Social at Coach and Horses, Royston  
Contact Jonathon Fynn Royston 44043

## SOUTH HERTS

Tuesday 15th December  
Annual General Meeting at the Bull, London Colney  
Friday 8th January  
Bramfield Party — the alternative New Year Party.  
Tuesday 12th January  
Herts liaison meeting in Watford.  
Thursday 14th January  
Committee meeting — phone for details.  
Thursday 19th January  
Branch meeting — venue to be confirmed.  
Contact Neil Steff 01-242-0789 (w), Welwyn G.C. 335911 (h).

## WATFORD & DISTRICT

Wednesday 2nd December  
Anti-social round Maple Cross/West Hyde area. Meet 8.30 at the Cross.  
Wednesday 9th December  
Branch meeting at the Wheatsheaf. 8.30 start.  
Friday 18th December  
London Xmas pub crawl round the East End. Start at the East India Arms, Fenchurch Street. 5.00pm.  
Sunday 3rd January  
Committee meeting at West Herts Sports Club, 8.00pm.  
Friday 8th January  
New Year get together at the Haydon Arms, 8.00pm.  
Tuesday 12th January  
Herts liaison meeting — venue to be confirmed.  
Wednesday 13th January  
Branch meeting — venue to be confirmed.  
Contact Martin Few Watford 52412.

## MID-CHILTERNES

Wednesday 9th December  
Social at George IV, Copenhagen Street, London.

### GBG 1988

The fifteenth edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide is now available in the shops at £5.95. As usual Britain's leading pub guide includes a full variety of pubs among its 5,000 entries and provides details on every British brewery and their beers (apart that is from the one home-brew pub that is rumoured not

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



**THE STAR INN**  
**FURNEUX PELHAM**



**Rayments BBA ★ Greene King KK & Abbot**

**GOOD HOME COOKED FOOD**  
**MONDAY TO SATURDAY**

☎ Brent Pelham 227

Wednesday 14th December  
Christmas social, Royal Oak, Chipperfield. 8.30pm.  
Contact Roy Humphries Hemel 833451.

## KING'S MAJOR

Tony and Irene King, probably best known to Herts branch members for their organisation of many trips, have taken over a country free house. The Major's Arms at Halmonds Frome, north of Fromes Hill on the A4103 between Worcester and Hereford. The regular beers are Marstons Pedigree and Banks Bitter and as the fifteen or so people from Herts who succeeded in finding the place for the opening night will testify, a warm welcome awaits all old friends. We wish them every success.

## S. HERTS PUB OF THE MONTH

South Herts' pub of the month for October was the Bull at London Colney. Until two years ago landlord Gary Ellis was a successful manager in local football, but he gave up his sporting commitments, and with his wife Jackie transformed the Bull into a superb community pub. The building itself is very old, with an attractive half timbered exterior. In the cosy saloon bar the inglenook was hidden behind no less than four more recent fireplaces! The much larger public bar has been carefully preserved and is very popular with both indoor and outdoor sportsmen — The Bull has four darts teams as well as teams for football, hockey and dominoes. Upstairs a well-appointed meeting room is much used. South Herts branch had a most enjoyable evening sampling the unusually tasty Ind Coope Bitter and Burton, and Gary and Jackie generously provided a veritable banquet to fill us up. The Bull certainly deserves inclusion in the 1988 Good Beer Guide, the first time a pub in London Colney has had this accolade. Having recently seen some of the recent and "renovations" in the St. Albans' area I strongly recommend that the perpetrators should visit the Bull to see a job well done.  
Adrian Joliffe.

## BREWERY TAKEOVERS/CLOSURES

There has been a lot of activity recently and a summary is given below. Whitbread are planning to close both the Wethereds brewery in Marlow and the Chesters brewery in Salford in early 1988. Scottish & Newcastle have taken over Matthew Brown. Their cash offer made before the recent stock market slump unfortunately proved too attractive for investors to ignore, and the Office of Fair Trading has regrettably not seen fit to refer the £160 million takeover to the Monopolies Commission. Greenall Whitley plan to close their Wem brewery also in early 1988. Buckley has been taken over by Brodian who has given assurances that the brewery will continue 'for at least three years'. Netherton Ales are proposing to sell the Old Swan at Netherton (Ma Pardoes) to Hoskins for £250,000 and to allow them to manage the brewery there. This is expected to allow Old Swan Bitter to be sold at the five Hoskins pubs. Midsummer Leisure made a bid to takeover Boddingtons, the bid was rejected and withdrawn, and their 1.96 million shares in Boddingtons sold at a reported loss of about £40,000. On October 9th, Greene King closed the Rayments Brewery. This was despite a campaign which appeared to convince everyone except their chairman Simon Redman of the needlessness of the move. Greene King themselves look as although they could be under threat as Elders, owners of Courage, have built up a stake of 9.25% at the time of writing and look to be interested in increasing their holding.

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire North, Hertfordshire South, Watford & District and Mid-Chilterns branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, CAMRA Ltd or its Branches. Any articles or letters for publication should preferably be typewritten and double-spaced; handwritten items should also be well spaced and as legible as possible please. Send to: Eric Sim, 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 8QL.

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