

**FREE**



**THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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## THE GREAT PUB SALE

The worst news for the traditional pub in many a year; this is CAMRA's view of the announcement that the Watney brewing chain have sold off some 11% of their pubs, largely to companies more interested in property and "leisure" than in the requirements of the average pub goer.

Many of the 700 tenanted Watney pubs have gone to two companies which are virtually unknown in the pub world, Brent Walker and Heron International, although some are destined for the Salisbury brewers, Gibbs Mew. CAMRA believes that one reason for this sudden and unprecedented pub sale is Watneys' fear of a current Monopolies Commission investigation into the big brewers' dominance of the tied pub trade, and this is no more obvious than in Norfolk, where Watney's have had a virtual monopoly of pubs, and are now selling over one-third.

Brent Walker, who have bought many of the country pubs, have already indicated that they will put up the rents to their tenants, and that if a pub does not do enough trade, they will convert it to housing or another more profitable use. Commented Jan Molyneux, the Chairman of CAMRA's national Pub Preservation Group: "Watney's are already well known for not being afraid to close down the last remaining pub in a village, and now it looks as if other people will be doing the job for them. The future of the community local in many parts of the country is now very bleak. CAMRA will do all it can, to oppose any plans to close these pubs."

● Meanwhile Watney's have also announced plans to discontinue two of their local real ales: Combe's Bitter, the last traditional beer to be brewed at their Mortlake brewery, and Truman's Bitter.

● Also selling out is David Bruce, whose chain of home-brew "Firkin" pubs in London is on the market for over £6 million.

● And not to be outdone, Elders, the Australian owners of Courage, are leasing 100 pubs to Trust House Forte, the Little Chef empire, to be run as roadside pub-restaurants.

## LOCAL REAL ALE GUIDES

The 1988 Hertfordshire Real Ale Guide will be published shortly, and you will be able to obtain full details of how to buy it, in this Newsletter. Meanwhile, we know that many of our readers occasionally venture outside the county, so here are details of how to obtain our CAMRA guides to good local pubs and beers across the county boundary.

**BEDFORDSHIRE:** 64-page guide for £1.00 including postage from Mike Benyon, 6 Charlbury Court, Merton Road, Bedford (cheques to N.Beds CAMRA).

**CAMBRIDGE:** 96-page guide for £1.75 including postage from Paul Ainsworth, 9 Willingham Road, Over, Cambridge. (cheques to Cambridge CAMRA).

## ONLY A PENNY?

As this Newsletter goes to press, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is announcing his usual penny on the price of a pint. We wonder how many of our local brewers will take this opportunity to round this humble penny up to twopence, or threepence... or even a whole old shilling?

### 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.



castle street ... old hertford

*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."*

## WATFORD — TOWN WITH- OUT PUBS?

Hertfordshire's largest town faces a threat to yet another of its few remaining town-centre pubs. This time it is the Wheatsheaf in the lower High Street, which is part of a larger area proposed to be redeveloped as a retail warehouse and car park.

The Wheatsheaf is celebrated in Watford for its good Benskins beer sold at reasonable prices. Its misfortune is that it lies close to a proposed main road, which has caused the value of the property to shoot up. Already, the number of pubs in Watford's High Street has been reduced dramatically in recent years, as the brewers sell out to shoeshops and building societies.

Watford Councillor Mike Jackson commented: "There used to be a time when if you walked down the High Street and had half a pint in every pub, you wouldn't get to the end. Now, you can walk up and down it three times and still be stone cold sober!" Added Councillor Paul Harrison: "We are losing all of the culture of the town".

● Also under threat from the same road proposals is the Hit and Miss.

● Those attending a recent CAMRA pub preservation conference heard how, in Peterborough, where only five pubs remain in the city centre, local people including CAMRA members have met the local planners and got them to agree that there is a need for more, not less pubs. Perhaps it is time for a similar initiative in Watford.

## CLUB OF THE YEAR

A club which is so committed to traditional cask beer that it once buried its keg dispenser, has been made Club of the Year by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

The West Herts Sports and Social Club in Watford buried its keg Worthington E dispenser in the club grounds in protest at the difficulties of obtaining cask beer.

"We were so frustrated at one stage that we ripped out this dispenser and buried the b..... thing for good," says the club's administrator, Jack Carter.

Now 20 years of supplying good quality cask beer has been recognised by the award of the 1987 Club of the Year by CAMRA's Clubs Committee.

"After surveying more clubs than I care to think, I am pleased to make this national award to the West Herts Sports Club because of its extraordinary commitment to real ale, and the quality and consistency of the cask beer sold there," said Ian Charlton of CAMRA's Clubs Committee.

This is a welcome success by a club in southern England. The 1986 title went to the ICI Recreation Club in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.

## PILS POPPING

Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones have worked together for most of their successful TV years, but of late have become adversaries in the fun-packed world of lager adverts.

However, not everyone becomes corrupted by such low-life, it seems. According to Smith: "Nobody at all drinks the (Kaltenburg) lager I advertise. I certainly don't."

Not to be outdone, Jones agrees with the claim that people remember the ads but cannot recall which lager (Holsten Pils) was being promoted.

He adds: "All the lager producers are looking for is a way of distinguishing what is completely indistinguishable as a drink".

## OFF LICENCE NEWS

The Flagon of Hops in St. Albans Road, Watford, is becoming more adventurous in the range of beers on offer. As well as Fuller's beers, Wadworth's 6X and Brakspear's Special have been available, and guest beers from Robinsons and Timothy Taylors are likely. A range of foreign bottled beers are also stocked (I've actually found a Heineken product that I like! — writes our Watford correspondent). Meanwhile, the Pints'n'Litres off-licence chain is understood to be selling up to new owners.

## PUB NEWS COUNTY-WIDE

Family connections of 142 years were ended when Frank and Gloria Robinson pulled their last pints at the Cricketers, *Ickleford*. New licensees of this popular free house are Ian and Sharon Reeve.

Meanwhile, in nearby *Hitchin* a much shorter connection has ended, with Fuller's surprisingly pulling out of the New Found Out. Licensees Mick and Norma Whelan, their London Pride and ESB are much missed. The pub is now a free house selling beers from the Watney empire.

Another Watney-orientated free house, the once-legendary Barley Mow at *Tythenhanger*, is believed to be changing hands: watch this space.

Beer-drinkers in *Harpenden* have welcomed the recent conversion of the Oddfellows Arms to real ale, with McMullen Country Bitter and AK now on handpump. Also welcome has been McMullen's decision not to proceed with plans to knock out the public bar.

Young's Special has made a welcome re-appearance in the Lower Red Lion, *St Albans*, after a three-year absence, joining Adnams Bitter, Fullers London Pride, Greene King IPA and Abbot.

Finally, the Battleaxes in *Elstree* is now a Trencherman restaurant and serves those who still want to drink, with Courage Best Bitter and Directors.

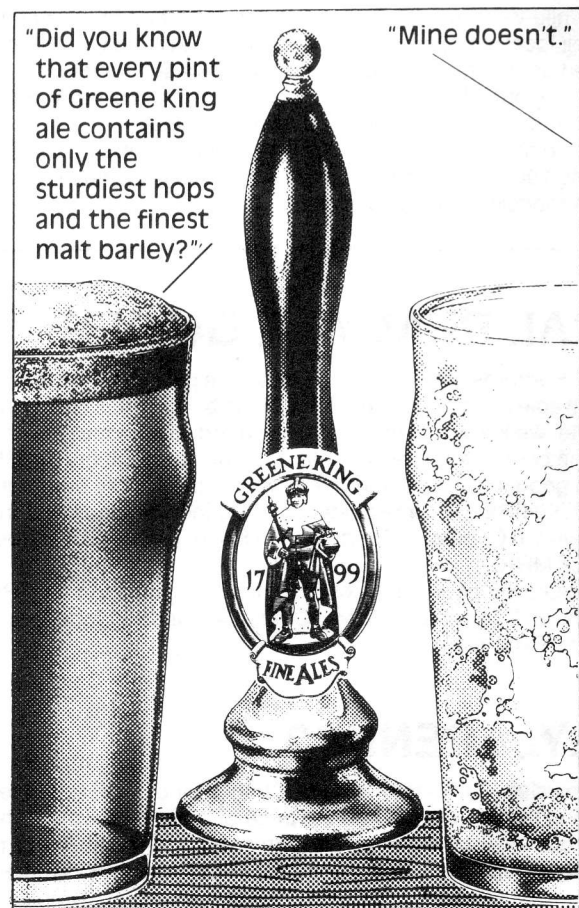
## YORKSHIRE HOGWASH?

What's the best selling bitter in London? Young's Special? London Pride? Charrington's IPA?!! No, if a recent Grand Met announcement is to be believed, it's (surprise, surprise) Webster's Yorkshire Bitter.

## FOSTERS AWAY

The new Australian owners of Courage are falling foul of local Councils in various parts of the country, for hanging banners advertising Fosters Lager on their pubs without first getting planning consent.

Once the banners have been taken down or have blown away, what's the betting that the perpetrators of the Anglo-Australian lagerade will remove the courage signboards and replace them with signs proclaiming "This is a Foster's House".



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The members of our association have asked me to write to you concerning an article in *Newsletter 107* entitled "Watch out for short measures".

While we believe the figures offered in this article are quite meaningless and innocuous we do take umbrage at a part of the report.

I refer to the words "which means that publicans creamed off an illicit £225 million."

While it is bad enough to make the false accusation that every licensee in the land is illegally and deliberately depriving his customers of liquor it really is going too far when you infer that we then pocket the profits.

Our association has been of the opinion that in the past your organisation has been beneficial to the trade but if this kind of accusation is going to be the norm than I am afraid we will have to rethink our position.

G.Ward

Vice Chairman/Acting Secretary

Hertford and District Licensed Victuallers Association

The New Rose and Crown

Ware.

*The Acting Editor comments:* this item was taken from a report in a high quality daily newspaper, and I have no reason to believe that the facts as reported are not correct. No doubt Mr Ward's organisation can point out any errors to the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, who were responsible (not CAMRA) for the survey. Meanwhile, we never doubted that licensees in Hertford and District always pull full-measure pints!

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## HEADY BUFFALO

Recently featured guest beer at the enterprising Buffalo's head, in Puckeridge, was Palmers IPA from Bridport in Dorset, reckoned by many (well, by your acting Editor) as the best beer available since the sad demise of Rayments BBA. If you like sampling unusual beers kept at top quality, the Buffalo's Head is well worth a visit.



# POETRY CORNER

## INN-PROVEMENTS

We're going to refurbish your local,  
You're in for a lovely surprise,  
At the moment it's cosy but scruffy,  
And we know we can double it's size.

First we'll knock out that inglenook fireplace,  
Then get rid of those old Tudor beams,  
Yes, we know people like to admire them,  
But they don't quite fit in with our Schemes.

For we're going to create a new image,  
With a theme that has proved quite a hit,  
We've already done fifty just like it,  
Not one of them varies a bit.

The design was worked out by computer,  
No creation of fallible man,  
And when your pub's like all those others,  
To do fifty more is our plan.

The decor will astound and delight you,  
With old implements once used on farms,  
Art Deco, and Victoriana,  
A few books, and those nice plastic palms.

Then we'll put in a new Aussie Lager,  
And American beer served ice cold,  
They come fresh from our brewery near Scunthorpe,  
But who's going to know if not told?

Yes, you may hear a voice raised in protest,  
Change to some is a thing they deplore,  
But we feel that we know their best interests,  
Don't forget, we've done all this before.

Leon de Blanc

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## BACK TO SMALL BARS

For years, the brewers, ably assisted and supported by the licensing magistrates, have been taking any and every opportunity to knock the insides out of our traditional pubs. Out have gone the Smoke Room, the Snug, the Public Bar: in their place, we have a large all-purpose, drinking area.

This loss of individuality, the coming of the "anywhere" pub, has been accounted for by the alleged need for licensees to be able to see all corners of their pub from one position. "Supervision" has been the name of the game.

Now, it seems, the pub designers have started to learn from, believe it or not, the experiences of the football terraces. Dividing football hooligans into small, fenced areas, it seems, reduces their chances of fighting each other — at least until they are out of the football ground. In the same way, whilst the huge open drinking bars much favoured by the "fun pub" fraternity seem to encourage pub hooliganism, it has been realised that smaller pub rooms encourage sociability rather than competitive violence, and that odd corners in pubs do not always lead to naughty activities, out of the guv'nor's view. A welcome step backward, and one that CAMRA has been advocating for years.

## WE JUST DRINK IT....

We note with some amusement that a previous Editor of this august Newsletter, and a former principal contributor, are now leading lights in the newly-formed Guild of Beer Writers.

We would like to advise our readers that none of those responsible for producing the current Newsletter is a member of that body, one of whose objectives is "to improve the status of the journalists and authors involved".

This Newsletter is more concerned, we hope you will be pleased to hear, with improving the quality of local beers and pubs, not with improving its contributors' status!

## What do you get as a CAMRA member?

- What's Brewing, the independent monthly newspaper for the beer drinker
- an information-packed Member's Handbook
- discounts on many products, including CAMRA's best-selling, annual Good Beer Guide
- up-to-date information about new beers and breweries, takeovers, closures and campaigns
- advance notice of beer festivals around the country
- the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of U.K. and foreign tours organised by CAMRA Travel

## What can you do as a CAMRA member?

- you can join in CAMRA's local and national campaigns
- you can participate in branch activities such as social, beer festivals and brewery visits — there is a branch near you!
- you can play a part in CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival, the country's biggest beer extravaganza

## CAMRA - THE PUBGOERS' CHAMPION CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

## JOIN NOW!

## APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP

I We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

NAME(S)..... DATE

ADDRESS.....

POSTCODE.....

SIGNATURE..... TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

I We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: **U.K. £9**   
**Overseas £12**

I We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

Please send your remittance (payable to CAMRA Limited) with this application form to:

**THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, CAMRA LTD.,  
34 ALMA ROAD, ST. ALBANS, HERTS. AL1 3BW**

## SUPPORT WETHERED'S

The campaign to save the threatened Thomas Wethered brewery in Marlow is gathering strength. This delightful brewery, supplying traditional beer to most Whitbread pubs in Hertfordshire, is to be closed down by Whitbread's in May, but this decision is meeting with opposition from far and near.

Following a special meeting in Marlow, the organiser of the campaign, CAMRA member John Robinson, said: "People from all over the country are sick to death of Whitbread closing down local breweries." And indeed, since 1980 Whitbread's brewery axe has already chopped local breweries in Romsey, Tiverton, Cardiff, Liverpool, Leeds, Portsmouth, and Luton, with another brewery in Manchester also to be closed this year.

Another supporter of the Marlow brewery is the current Mayor of Tring, Mr. Tim Amsden, who commented: "People have had enough — everywhere."

● If you would like to help the campaign to save Wethered's, contact your local CAMRA Branch (see details back page).

## BRANCH DIARY

### MID-CHILTERNES

Contact Roy Humphrey, Hemel Hempstead 833451

### NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

13 April: Social at The Cabinet, *Reed*. 8pm

22 April: Pub Crawl of *Old Stevenage*. Meet Marquis of Lorne. 8pm.

11 May: Social at Jolly Waggoner, *Ardeley*. 8pm.

25 May: Branch meeting at Maiden's Head, *Whitwell*. 8pm.

Contact Jonathan Fynn, Royston 44043

### SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE

5 April: Committee meeting at Woodman, *Wildhill*. 8pm.

12 April: Brewery trip to Harvey's, Lewes: contact J.Pirie (0707 54157) to reserve a place.

19 April: Branch meeting at East India College Arms, *Hertford Heath* 8pm.

17 May: Branch meeting at Woodman, *Wildhill*. 8pm.

31 May: Pub of the Month.

Contact Bob Norrish, Harpenden 69923

### WATFORD AND DISTRICT

Contact Martin Few, Watford 52412.

### ALL HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCHES

11 April: Hertfordshire inter-branch liaison meeting at Cricketers, *Redbourn*. 8pm.

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



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



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

**GOOD HOME COOKED FOOD  
MONDAY TO SATURDAY**

☎ Brent Pelham 227

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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