

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

FREE

The Campaign for Real Ale

JUNE/JULY 1989

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MONOPOLY — ITS NO GAME

CAMRA has been campaigning for 17 years or more to get the monopoly of big brewers broken up, to curb their voracious appetite for swallowing up other breweries and pubs, and to stop them foisting over-priced inferior brands of beer and lager in over-decorated unwanted 'concept design' pubs in place of individual local and regional beers with taste and character in proper pubs that have evolved over the years.

It would be naïve and unrealistic to think we could turn the clock back but the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report: 'The Supply of Beer' does go a long way towards these aims. They have paid serious consideration to Camra's submission and dismissed much of what the Brewers Society say as not being in the public interest. They conclude that brewers should be limited to a maximum of 2,000 pubs; that landlords should be able to buy a non-tied beer from another brewery and soft drinks from other sources; that brewers should publish their price lists with all discounts available. They also found that, excluding excise duty and VAT, the price of a pint had risen by 15% over inflation since 1979 and that improvements in amenity in public houses can not explain increases in wholesale prices.

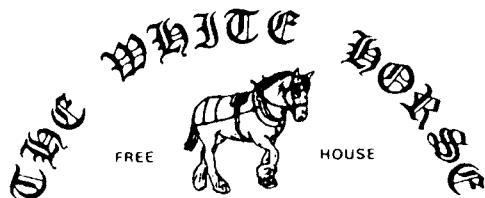
Lager prices are also criticised and they point out that the excessive advertising can only account for 1/4p a pint. Regional variations of 20-30% in prices of beers were also scrutinized.

They want to see an end to the dubious practice of the loan ties where breweries lend otherwise free pubs and

clubs money at low interest for extensions and alterations and then tie their beer supplies up for ever and a year. To summarize the full 500 page report is an impossible task, but in general Camra is all for it; however, there are many gaps that still need to be filled. The major one is that there is nothing in the recommendations to stop companies giving up brewing and keeping more than 2,000 pubs, or new chains setting up and monopolizing a corner of the retail market. Whitbread and Grand Metropolitan (Watney) are definitely thinking along these lines. (Who said they couldn't brew beer anyway?). The Consumer Association representing 1 million members, the 160 strong Small Independent Brewers Association, LVA and the Working Mens Clubs representing up to 8 million members are backing the report.

Unsurprisingly the big brewers are dead against it and they have railroaded a number of the smaller brewers in the form of the Brewers Society, that represents 48 breweries, to fight the proposals. Lewis Eckett in Whats Brewing says this is tantamount to signing their own suicide note. The Brewers Society are mounting a £6m campaign; some full page spreads that have already been criticized by the Advertising Standards Authority as untruthful and misleading have started to appear. To pay for this they are having a 17p a barrel levy. This is going to be an expensive battle and as usual the customers will end up paying.

continued on page 2.



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

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

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NEWS OF THE BREWS

Tolly Cobbold, the Ipswich Brewery, is to close. Fears for the future of the brewery were aroused from the minute the asset-stripping Barclay Brothers took it over. The beer from their pubs is to be supplied from their other brewery Cameron at Hartlepool. Some of Tolly's seven brews are bound to disappear; they include the Paine's of St. Neots brews that they took over in 1987 and closed.

As predicted in the Christmas edition of the newsletter Allied's review of their beer brands has resulted in the withdrawal of Ind Coope Bitter.

Adnams Bitter appears to be the latest guest beer in Benskins' pubs, although mine host at the Rose & Crown has just told me they are stopping this scheme as the guest beers are proving too popular and they are not selling enough of their own beers.

Theakston's Bitter (1037) is now being shipped down from the Tyne Brewery by Scottish & Newcastle for distribution from their Dunstable Depot.

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Some brewers have already reacted by giving all their tenant landlords notice to quit in order to replace them with managers so they have more control over their pubs.

Whilst Lord Young the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is 'minded to implement' the report although he seems to be weakening, some MP's have already been bought off by the brewers and resolutions to take no action over the report have been tabled. It's time you found out what your MP thinks and let him know your opinion. We will never get another chance like this.

W. Green of Bebington probably summed it up best in a letter to the Guardian: "The hypocrisy of the major brewers in their current campaign to preserve their excessive profits absolutely beggars belief.

"It's your local," they boldly announce. Since when? Not for the past 25 years at least. It did not seem to be my local when they installed the juke box, the fruit machine, the cigarette machine and the keg beer. I don't recall it being my local when they gutted it, removed the public bar and turned it into a chrome-and-formica fun palace with Chesterfields, plastic plants, job-lot secondhand books and no intimacy.

The brewers did not ask me to be vocal when I cared; they've got a lot of nerve asking me to be vocal when I don't care."

maidaid bucks and shires



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PUB OF THE YEAR — NORTH HERTS

Two Diamonds, Stevenage

Built on the site of the great fire of 1807, the Two Diamonds was opened in 1880 by a Mr and Mrs Diamond — hence the name. One hundred years later the licence was taken over by Ron and Joyce Kirby. Fears that this traditional local would be spoilt were proved groundless. Except for a few alterations the unique character has remained. Today when beer drinkers talk about Stevenage, it is never long before the Two Diamonds is mentioned. Most evenings sees darts and dominos being played, and customers indulging in that ancient art of conversation — no juke box or music to blast the eardrums here. Two handpumps serve McMullens excellent AK and the third Country Bitter.

The much coveted Pub of the Year Award by CAMRA's North Hertfordshire Branch will take place on Wednesday 5th July, so come along and join us and celebrate the hard work Ron and Joyce put into making the Two Diamonds Pub of the Year.

P. Clarke

JUNE PUB OF THE MONTH

The Plough, Tyttenhanger

The Plough at Tyttenhanger used to be the pub you passed by if you were seeking out its better known neighbour. How the times have changed! While the 'other place' has been swallowed up by the dreaded Watney empire, the Plough has gone from strength to strength, firmly establishing its own place in the Good Beer Guide. The Plough is a deservedly popular pub with a wide following but retaining a local atmosphere. In winter there's a roaring log fire, in summer a pleasant garden for the family, and always an original menu of snacks and meals at lunchtimes.

In the past year the Plough has been carefully extended, giving a welcome increase in bar space, including a bar billiards table. The extension has also provided more display space for landlord Mike Barrowman's extensive collection of bottled beers and brewery adverts. Meanwhile, additional cellar space has enabled Mike to increase his range of real ales to nine, all from independent regional brewers. 'The widest range of murky beers in the parish' — if you believe the Plough's cryptic beer mats. In fact one of the best free houses in South Herts, and a worthy winner of our June Pub of the Month award.

Tobago

Congratulations to Pauline and Keith Huggins of the 'Roundbush' Aldenham who have won a Holiday in Tobago as part of the Benskins Customer Care Scheme. The award is for 'Hospitality, Standards and Staff Service', which has always been good in this thriving country local. The Benskins Best outsells all the lagers together by two to one. The Beer and atmosphere always make a visit worthwhile.

THE NEW OWNERS
COLIN & CHERRY WELCOME YOU TO

The Crown 

**FREE
HOUSE**

BASS IPA
MAULDONS SQUIRES
PLUS A DIFFERENT
WEEKLY GUEST BEERS
HOME COOKED FOOD

Market Hill,
Buntingford,
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BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 13th June Branch meeting at the **North Star**, Oaklands, Mardley Heath, Nr. Welwyn.

Tuesday 27th June Pub of the Month; **Plough**, Tyttenhanger, Near St. Albans.

Wednesday 12th July Branch meeting at the **Woodman**, Chapmore End.

Tuesday 25th July Pub of the Month; to be decided.
Contact: Bob Norrish Harpenden 69923.

WATFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Wednesday 7th June 8.30pm social at the **Dumb Bell** Hornhill.

Saturday 10th June 12 noon Skittles at the **Free Masons Arms**, Downshire Hill, Hampstead.

Wednesday 14th June 8.30pm Branch meeting at the **Escort Tavern**, Watford.

Saturday 17th June Minibus trip to Essex, see Contact for details.

Thursday 22nd June Darts at the **Sportsman**, Croxley Green.

Friday 30th June Pre-Christmas pub crawl, start **Ship and Blue Ball**, Boundary Street E2 5pm.

Wednesday 5th July 8.30pm Branch meeting at the **Old Shepherd**, Chorley Wood.

Monday 10th July 8pm Quiz at the **Black Horse**, Fulmer v. Windsor & Maidenhead.

Saturday 15th July Day trip to Hertford, details from Contact.

Tuesday 18th July 8.30pm Darts at the **Bedford Arms**, Watford.

Saturday 29th July Treasure hunt, details from Contact.

Saturday 5th August Ramble, details from Contact.

Contact: Martin Few Watford 52412.

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Wednesday 14th June 8.30 Branch meeting then Social at the **White Hart**, Baldock.

Wednesday 28th June, 8.30pm Joint Social with N.W. Essex Branch at the **Six Bells**, Sandon.

Saturday 1 July All-day pub crawl around rural Essex.

Wednesday 5th July 8.30pm Pub of the Year, **Two Diamonds**, Stevenage.

Wednesday 12th July 8.30 Joint social with South Beds Branch at the **Musgrave Arms**, Shillington

Wednesday 26 July 8.30pm Social at the **Crown**, Buntingford.

Wednesday 16th Aug 8.30pm Branch meeting then social at the **Cricketers**, Ickleford.

Contact: Paul Coard 0462 37249

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pointin 0494 783198.

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Contact: Steve Marlow 0279 30450.

ALL HERTS LIAISON MEETING

Monday 24th July. 8pm **Cricketers**, Redbourn.

Anyone is welcome to attend CAMRA meetings. Or why not become a member and help protect the beers and pubs of Britain. For just £9 you will get Whats Brewing, the monthly newspaper for the beer drinker and pub lover, keeping you informed of everything going on in the brewing world from the punters viewpoint.

Send your money plus name & address to 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, AL1 3BW.

WHATS ON

Sat 17th June; Music Night, Sun 18th; Treasure Hunt, Mon 19th; Pub Games Evening, Tue 20th Standon Morris, Hertfordshire Holly, Hoddesdon Crownsmen, Ash Vale Long Sword and Thaxted Morris all at the Star Inn Furneux Pelham.

STOP PRESS

We have just heard that McMullens plan to sell six of their low barrelage managed houses. They are the **Harrow**, Bendish (near Whitwell), the **Woodhall Arms**, Stapleford (near Hertford), the **Duke of Wellington**, Barwick (near Much Hadham), the **Heron**, Standon, the **Crooked Billet**, Ware, and the **Nags Head**, Welpond Green. All are to be sold as going concerns.

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 —

HOW MUCH?

One reason why the cost of lagers are so high is that someone's got to pay for all that advertising. Below is a list of how much was spent on advertising the top ten most heavily promoted liquids (for the year to September 1988):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Carling Black Label (Bass) | £6.43 million |
| 2. Guinness | £6.36 million |
| 3. Tennants (Bass) | £5.47 million |
| 4. Heinekin (Whitbread) | £5.44 million |
| 5. Carlsberg Pilsner (Watney) | £5.33 million |
| 6. Fosters (Courage/Watneys) | £5.31 million |
| 7. Miller Lite (Courage) | £4.50 million |
| 8. Holsten Pils (Watneys) | £3.01 million |
| 9. Castlemaine XXXX (Allied) | £2.65 million |
| 10. Carlsberg Special Brew (Watney) | £2.64 million |

Skol, perhaps surprisingly, does not appear in the list, but then it was subject to a great deal of 'free' publicity last year.

CONSUMED

Camra's latest publication "The Good Pub Food Guide" by Sue Nowak ran into some unpalatable trouble just as it was about to be launched. The Consumers' Association served up an injunction saying that they owned the titles; The Good Food Guide and The Good Pub Guide and they thought this was a bit near the knuckle.

The Camra legal boys found this too much to stomach and settled out of court agreeing to re-hash the title.

One can't help thinking that had they a bit more guts they might have made Sue as famous as Peter Wright and the guide a best seller like Spycatcher. So this excellent guide for gastronomes is only available to Camra members under its present title; a reprint called "A Camra Guide to Good Pub Food" should be available in the shops by July, price £5.95.

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.

Subscriptions: £2.50 for 12 issues. Send to: 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts. AL10 8QL. Cheques payable: CAMRA Herts Campaigning Fund.

Advertising: £8 per 2.5 cm column. Artwork can be made up at extra cost. Contact **Eric Sim** ☎ **Hatfield 60647** for details. **COPY**

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