

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

CAMRAFREE

The Campaign for Real Ale

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## SURPRISE GUESTS!

In a major reversal of its previous policy, Benskins have relented and will let certain of their tenants start to sell a guest beer from the September 1st.

Previously Benskins had only allowed their managed houses to take guest beers and they reiterated this view at a meeting with CAMRA at the end of May, even though it had become apparent that some tenants had managed to get round the restriction. It would appear that pressure from consumers and complaints from their own tenants have caused a change of heart. Benskins state that the policy was being formulated even before the publication of the MMC report with its proposal to allow tenants to take a guest beer.

Benskins tenants' complaints were based on the opinion that it was bad enough having to contend with other brewers let alone having to compete on unequal terms against others in the same group.

Benskins emphasise that they are aiming at quality rather than quantity and to that end are offering the opportunity to take a guest beer only to those tenants with a proven record of selling real ale. To qualify a tenant must currently be selling a combined total of

1 1/2 barrels (432 Pints) a week of two cask conditioned beers.

In our area the guest beers will mainly be restricted to Greene King IPA and Youngs Special. Although Adnams will also be available in Benskins pubs in East Anglia, trading agreements mean that it is likely to be only an occasional visitor to Herts pubs. A Benskins spokesman said that other beers within the Allied portfolio could also be ordered as a 'guest' beer. It is expected that the beers would be changed on an 8-week cycle and that the same range would be available to managed houses.

Incidentally the new lists of Alcohol By Volume (ABV) displayed in Allied pubs show a wide range of possible guest beers including Boddingtons, Smiles Best Bitter and Wadworths. Unfortunately the same Benskins spokesman put a dampener on this by stating that the list was a full list of Allied products plus those beers that have been available in their Nicholson's pub chains and that the additional beers would not be generally available except to such pubs as the **Rose and Crown** at Kings Langley. However Marstons Pedigree has been spotted on sale at the **White Hart Hotel** St. Albans...

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## PUB NEWS

There is welcome news from the north east of the county where handpumps have been installed in two pubs. Previously unreported are the hand pump in the delightful Greene King pub, the **Fox and Duck**, Church Street, Buntingford. There are two pumps in each of the refurbished public and lounge bars for IPA and Abbot Ale; Rayments BBA has also been on sale. This leaves the McMullens pub as the only outlet in Buntingford not selling real ale. Conversely, in Royston, McMullens have installed a hand pump in the bar of their **Banyers Hotel** to dispense Country Bitter. Now only Greene King have a pub in Royston without real ale.

The former **Gloucester Arms** at Great Offley, which has been closed for almost two years, has been extensively refurbished in art-deco style and re-opened as the **Prince Henry**. The pub contains a restaurant area and is one of the few pubs in the area to offer a full bar meal service on Sunday lunch times, thereby competing with its neighbour the **Green Man**. Although labelled as a free house, the keg and bottled beers are largely Whitbread products, and the only real ales are Greene King IPA and Abbot.

**The Half Moon**, Queen St/Park St, Hitchin has been refurbished. New features include a set of three hand pump serving Wethereds Bitter, Flowers Original and Marstons Pedigree.

**The Stag**, The Swillet, Heronsgate reopened at the end of June after a three month closure during which it underwent major renovations. A rear extension has been added and there is now a large car park and a garden area. Meals are served Mon-Sat lunch time (12-2) and all the food is home-prepared and cooked. Chris Rudge, the new landlord, spent the last ten years running the **Rose and Crown**, Woodcock Hill, Rickmansworth. Handpumped Benskins, Tetleys and Burton are available and there isn't a fruit machine or juke box in sight.

We were sorry to learn of the death in Spain on the 5th June of Roy Mills of the **Silver Cup** Harpenden. the S. Herts Pub of the Month for February. Roy and Rita had been at the Silver Cup for 19 years. Roy had also been chairman of the **Charles Wells Tenants Association**. The pub will be kept in the family, run by son-in-law Neil, ably assisted by daughter Lindsay and head barman Grant.

Three St. Albans pubs, **the Acom**, **the Boot** (both Benskins) and the **Bunch of Cherries** (Whitbread), have re-opened after varying degrees of refurbishment.

Note: Whilst our Pub News comes from reliable sources, it can be up to two months before it is published and hence on occasions items may no longer be topical or circumstances may have changed. The following couple of examples illustrate the point. In the April/May edition we reported that the leasehold of the GBG listed **Axe and Compasses** at Braughing was for sale. In June we were informed by the licensee that this was no longer true and that it had been withdrawn from sale before the Newsletter was published. In the June/July edition we reported that the **Oddfellows** at Harpenden was to close later in the year for major alterations. In June we were informed by McMullen's Property Manager that they have no intention at this point of making any alterations to the Public House, let alone adding a new restaurant. However we are fairly certain that the new licensees are Tony and Wendy Tansley, to whom we offer a warm welcome.

## POLL LARKS

It's not what you ask, it's the way the you ask it.

One opinion poll commissioned by Haig Whisky revealed that 84% of pubgoers wanted more choice of beer in pubs, while one carried out for the **Brewers Society** showed that 64% of drinkers were satisfied by the choice of beer on offer. And both were carried out by the same organisation, MORI.



# NEWS OF THE BREWS

Youngs have bought three pubs in Surrey to take their tied estate to 152.

Midsummer Leisure have opened two new 'Bruce's' pubs in London, the **Frigate and Firkin** at Olympia and the **Flock and Firkin** in Dalston.

The company created when Crown Brewery merged with Buckley's will trade under the name 'Crown Buckley' (bet that took a lot of deciding!). The new group has 130 pubs, but are hoping to supply Buckleys Best Bitter to over 800 outlets.

Eldridge Pope are to stop using the name 'Huntsman Ales' and will drop the 'Huntsman' logo following a deal with Tetleys. The two companies have had an agreement not to use their trade marks in each other's trading area, but now with Allied attempting to make Tetleys a national beer, Pope have been bought off.

Elgoods who were the first on the market with a low alcohol bitter, Highway, have come up with the country's first low alcohol brown ale.

Greene King are claiming that their IPA is now the 'fifth biggest brand in the South of England'. Is that good or bad?

While on sales, an Ind Coope marketing manager was recently quoted as saying 'the market for cask conditioned ale continues to show impressive increases' and in particular the market for 'premium' beers (marketing gobbledegook for 'strong') is apparently growing annually at 14%. So much for previous comments about the Real Ale boom not lasting.

Tetleys are introducing a new dark mild and Arkells have produced a new dark beer, Mash Tun Mild (1040 og) — MILD LIVES!

Before bulldozers move in to raze the disused Trumans Brewery in Brick Lane, the site is to be examined by archaeologists. Presumably looking for the mythical Ben Truman hop.

One brewery that wont be bulldozed just yet is the Tolly Cobbold Cliff Brewery in Ipswich. The local council planners have put a preservation order on the building. Brent Walker were planning to shut the brewery on the 14th July with the loss of about 110 jobs. 'Tolly' beers are to be brewed at the sister company, Camerons at Hartlepool, and brought down by tankers. How long that will last remains to be seen, particularly given the brewery workers' estimate that it will cost at least £600,000 a year. Already some Tolly pubs have become Brent Walker Inns and the fear is that they will revert to the policy of buying in beer from the big brewers at discount prices.

# LETTER

Dear Sir,

there is a nasty little dig on page 2 of the June/July issue under the heading 'June Pub of the Month'. This does not come under the heading of journalistic licence and is below the standard of CAMRA reporting and comment. The young couple at the **Barley Mow** do indeed have a lease from Watneys and very greedy Watneys are too! The Ales offered are Real and whether they are straight or mixed you cannot argue that their offer to the market should be denied. You are not justified in writing off the Barley Mow like that and possibly jeopardising the livelihood of the young couple there who work very hard supplying food both during the day and evening. Both **The Plough** and Mow are very good pubs with good guv'nors and are both well worth visiting. I support both and I should know, I live in the Lane.

Yours sincerely,  
John Henschley,  
2 Barley Mow Lane,  
St. Albans

Editors' reply: The writer of the Pub of the Month article was partaking of that most traditional of CAMRA pastimes 'Watney bashing'. It certainly was not intended as a 'dig' at the present licensees, with whom we sympathise, and he certainly had no intention whatsoever of jeopardising their livelihood. He was only pointing out how the popularity of **The Plough** had increased in the eyes of Real Ale drinkers since the days when the **Barley Mow** was a real Free House and a wide range of Real Ales were available. Nowadays it appears that Watneys will only allow the sale of part of their diminishing portfolio of Real Ales, irrespective of the wishes of their landlords. It is exactly this sort of attitude that led to the MMC drawing the conclusions they did in their report on the Supply of Beer, and why CAMRA has long opposed the Big 6 monopoly and, in particular, Watneys part in it.

# LATE PUB NEWS

Benskins have announced that they will not be rebuilding the Kings Head, Little Bushey Lane, Bushey. Apparently the main Allied board refused to approve the capital outlay on the grounds that they were unlikely to recoup the money. The site is being offered to other brewers, but if this doesn't materialise, it will be sold for redevelopment.

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## BRANCH DIARY

### NORTH HERTS BRANCH

Weds 16 Aug 8.30 Branch meeting then social at the **Cricketers**, Arlesey Road, Ickleford.

Weds 6 Sept 8.30 Social at **The Bell**, Cottered.

Weds 20 Sept 8.30 Codicote crawl, starting at **The Globe**, then **The Bell**, and **The Goat**.

Weds 11 Oct 8.30 Branch meeting and then social at **The Jockey**, Baldock Street, Royston.

Weds 25 Oct 8.30 social at **The Three Horseshoes**, Norton, nr Letchworth.

Contact: Paul Coard 0462 37249

### WATFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Sat 5 Aug Ramble, start Chesham station 10.15 am

Weds 9 Aug 8.30 Branch meeting at **The Stag**, Merry Hill Lane, Bushey.

Weds 12 Aug Minibus trip to Oxfordshire. Further details from contact.

Weds 16 Aug 8.30 Social at **Nascot Arms**, Watford.

Weds 23 Aug Oxhey crawl: 8.30 **Rifle Volunteer**, 9.15

**Haydon Arms**, 10.10 **Villiers Arms**

Sat 9 Sept Two-pub social in Sarratt: 12.00 **Boot** 1.30 **Cock**.

Weds 13 Sept 8.30 Branch meeting at **The Wheatsheaf**, Watford.

Weds 27 Sept Bushey Heath pub crawl: 8.30 **Foresters**, 9.00 **Devonshire Arms**, 9.45 **Black Boy**.

Contact: Martin Few Watford 52412

### SOUTH HERTS BRANCH

Tues 8 Aug 8.30 Branch meeting at **The Garibaldi**, St. Albans

Tues 29 Aug 8.30 Pub of the Month **Lower Red Lion**, St. Albans.

Tues 12 Sept 8.30 Branch meeting - **Artful Dodger**, Potters Bar.

Contact: Bob Norrish Harpenden 69923

### MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pointin 0494 783198

### HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Contact: Steve Marlow 0279 30450

## WHATS ON

The Intervarsity Club meets on the first Wednesday of each month in the left hand bar of the **Rose and Crown**, St Michael's St. Albans. This is a mixed sex social club for people over 25 which offers numerous social events throughout the year. Further details from Steve Lyden on St Albans 61037.

'Folk at the **Old Bulls Head**', Ware, reconvenes at 8.00pm on the 1st September and continues on the next four Fridays. A succession of different artists are promised. And the beer's good. Contact Ted Ovendon, (0992 583202) for further details.

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



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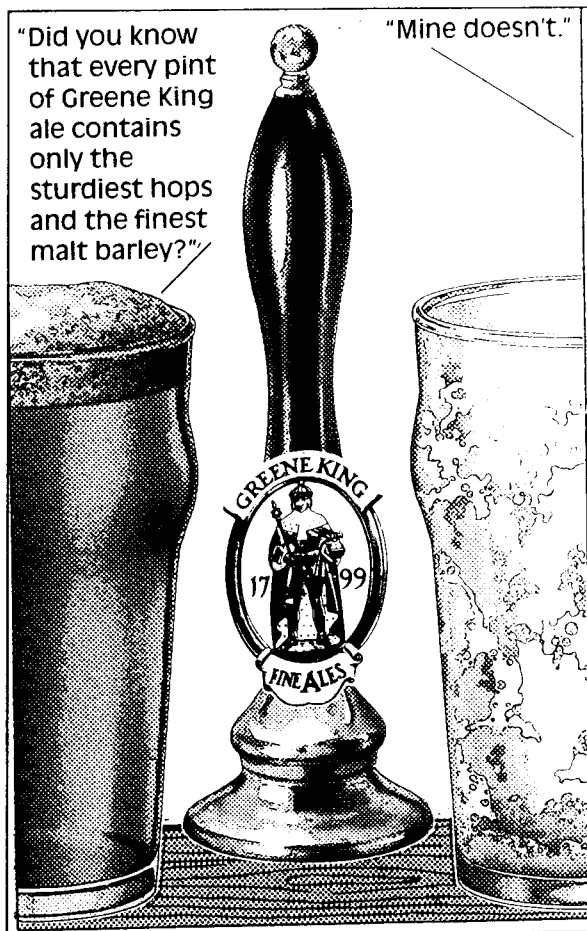
## COP OUT

As we were going to press Lord Young announced his watered down version of the MMC proposals to limit the number of pubs the Big Six can own. They will be able to keep as tied houses 2,000 pubs and half of those above that limit, the remainder must be run as free houses. This is expected to create a further 11,000 pubs free of tie. Unless Lord Young sees fit to implement restrictions on who can supply these pubs, the Big Six are bound to come up with some mutually attractive deals to supply each others' pubs.

Additionally, as there are no restrictions on the number of pubs a 'non-brewer' can own, there is still the danger that some of the Big 6 will split into brewing and retailing divisions, with the 'retail' arm maintaining control of 7-10,000 pubs and exerting their own monopolistic powers. A Brewers Society spokesman said that the plan would be 'extremely difficult to put into effect and will be detrimental to both consumers and tenant licensees', which given their usual vitriolic rhetoric would seem to indicate that they are reasonably happy with the compromise they have obtained.

Brewers will have two years to implement the proposals, and one year after that there will be a review by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Lord Young also announced that he would undertake a review of the licensing system. This has been prompted by the recognition that where breweries had local monopolies, they were able to defend them by objecting to any new licences on the grounds that local needs were being satisfied.



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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