

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER



The Campaign for Real Ale

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1989

CIRCULATION 5000

NUMBER 117

WATERED DOWN

It now looks like years of campaigning by Camra and two years of research by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, at great expense to the tax-payer, to save the British pub and what remains of the independent brewers will have been wasted.

By the time, recommendations from the MMC report 'The Supply of Beer' become law, they will be so watered down they will hardly be worth having. Instead of breweries being limited to 2000 pubs, they will probably be able to keep them all but 50% over 2000 have to be run as free houses, (what if they have an odd number?). There will also be no restriction on the number of pubs a non-brewing company will be able to own.


The guest beer system where tenant landlords could choose to stock a beer from another brewery other than the big 6 looks likely to be

dropped and any guest beer system is likely to be tied up by trading agreements between the big 6 brewers, continuing to block outlets for the small brewers.

The system of loan ties that restricts the choice in many clubs and so called free houses is likely to continue unchanged. This restriction of outlets has been the death of many new breweries trying to break into the market.

The biggest omission in the draft orders coming before parliament in the next session is that there is nothing to stop further brewery take-overs.

There must be something very wrong with an industry that has warranted so many investigations over the years. One can only suspect the worst when so little of the recommendations are taken up.



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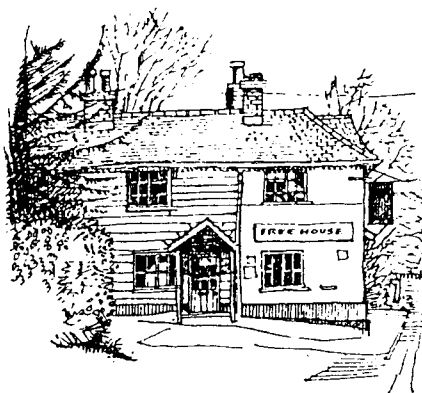
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NEWS OF THE BREWS

The 'new' **Tolly Cobbold** beers brewed by Camerons and trucked down from Hartlepool got off to a less than auspicious start when some sub-standard batches were sent south. The beer failed to settle and many landlords returned it saying it was undrinkable. There are distinct worries that Brent Walker do not intend brewing Tolly beers at Camerons for long, but a Brent Walker manager has said that Tolly would continue to be brewed 'as long as people want to drink it'. Cynics might be tempted to try and find a connection.

Brent Walker have announced that they are selling off about 150 of their pubs, some only relatively recently obtained from Grand Met, as part of a streamlining exercise and no doubt to try and raise some money to help with the group's next takeover.

Charles Wells who have recently agreed to buy the **Kings Head**, Bushey site from **Benskins** and to rebuild the pub there, have picked up another international Mode Selection brewing award for their Bombadier bitter. Bombadier is exported to West Germany where, according to their marketing director Tom Wells, 'it is one of the few non-German beers pure enough to pass the German Rheinheitsgebot laws'. It's wonderful what a bit of centrifuging will do.

OLD BREWERY NEWS

Whitbread have done a U-turn over their plans to convert the old **Wethereds** brewery site at Marlow into houses and shops. Strong local opposition was led by Anthony Wethered, a member of the family which founded the brewery.

NON BEER NEWS

Grand Metropolitan Breweries (otherwise Watneys et al) have announced a new low-alcohol bitter, Webster XL (1.2% abv). Rumours that it could be a stronger, bottled version of Websters Yorkshire Bitter currently remain unconfirmed.

The Crown



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TOWN AND AROUND

Once again the big brewers are showing themselves to be unfit custodians of the nation's public houses. **Courage** (part of the Australian Elders IXL empire) have submitted plans to demolish the **Midland Railway** on the corner of Victoria Street and Alma Road, St. Albans. They plan to replace it with an office block. The pub does quite a good trade in beer and reasonably priced food. With all the recent developments in St. Albans one would have thought more pubs would be needed to serve all the office workers not less. The **Midland**, built in the 'Railway Era' to serve the nearby station, is one of three **Courage** pubs in the town and was acquired from **Ind Coope/Benskins** about eight years ago in the great pub swop that was supposed to reduce local monopolies. The loss of the **Midland** would increase the proportion of pubs owned by the other big brewers again.

In Harpenden, **Watney** (part of the Grand Metropolitan) plan to convert the **White Lion** in the High Street to a shop with offices above. The **White Lion**, which presently sells **Ruddles County**, is due to close in October we believe.

It is not only the national breweries that are closing pubs, the regionals are at it too. Our colleagues in East Anglia are getting very worried at the number of **Greene King** pubs closing, some of them being the last pub in a village. **Greene King** seem to have admitted to 50 pubs scheduled for closure; bar room gossip puts the figure at 150-200! The lesson must be; if you want your locals, use them!

Whitbread have stooped pretty low, changing the name of the **Half Moon** in Hitchin to the **Old Found Out** and trying to cash in on the good reputation of the nearby free house the **New Found Out** where Michael Crawley presides. Mike is now considering legal action; he says it is losing him trade and causing confusion with deliveries and taxis going astray. **Whitbread** tenant Vic Jackson, at the **Old Found Out**, was a former owner of the **New Found Out** and said he wanted the name changed for sentimental reasons. Apparently the name originated from the last century when the pub was a hospice where people were sent to have their diseases 'found out'. The **Half Moon** originated from a regular lunar occurrence.

Another name change in Hitchin by **Whitbread**; the **Jolly Taverners** has had £100,000 spent on it and has been reborn as **Oliver's**. This theme pub in the 'Dickensian style' has a restaurant at lunch-times that converts to dance floor and stage at night with music from soul to jazz. Who could ask for more? Real ale of course; **Wethereds & Flowers I.P.A.** now available.

Ken Keen called 'time' for the last time at the end of August at the **Bricklayers Arms** at Hogspit Bottom, Flaunden. Ken and Marge had been at this immaculate free house for 41 years. Ken's punctilious closing and excellent ales were legendary as was his reply of "About average" to any enquiry of his health. We wish them both a long and above average retirement in Dorset.

Another **Bricklayers Arms**, the one in Hitchin is a recent convert to real ale; **Wells**, Eagle Bitter now available.

The **Fountain**, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead that was scheduled for closure in June has had a stay of execution until April next year at least, Adnams Bitter, Youngs Special and Benskins are available. Also in Apsley, the **White Lion** now part of the Brent Walker empire is selling Tolly Cobbold Original all the way from Hartlepool.

The **Boot** in Hemel Hempstead recently celebrated its 50th birthday by selling 36 gallons of beer at a shilling a pint.

Sun Glint Inns Ltd of Luton have bought the **Bridgewater Arms**, Little Gaddesden; the new licencees are Tony and Clair Brown, formerly of the Griffin, Danbury, Essex. The **Bridgewater** has its own brewery but all the beers available at the moment are from the **Courage** stable.

Normal service has been resumed with the appointment of Gerry and Carmel as managers of the **Garibaldi**, St. Albans.

The **Red Lion**, Radlett has re-opened as a Beefeater after extensive alteration, apparently there are bouncers on the door so we have not been able to find what beer is available.

Plans have been revived for the conversion of the 200 year old Moor Mill in Park Street into a pub, restaurant and hotel by Regent Inns. The **Nelson**, Wheathampstead is still boarded up; but "under offer".

Plans have been submitted for extensions and alterations to the **Fox and Hounds**, Bricket Wood, the **King Harry**, St. Albans and the **Fox**, Kinsbourne Green. Yet another extension is planned for the **Wicked Lady**, Nomansland, Wheathampstead.

The **Barley Mow**, Tyttenhanger the once famous free house is closed at present. Rumour has it that they were over two hundred barrels short on their 550 barrel ground rent from the present owner Grand Metropolitan (Watney). These are hard times indeed.

OUT AND ABOUT

We have been told that the **Punch Bowl**, halfway between St. Albans and Redbourn, is coming up for sale. Also as we go to press the **Green Man** in the High Street, Potters Bar is due to reopen after refurbishment.

Welcome to Pete and Julie Martin, previously of the **Rising Sun**, Mill Hill, to the **Cherry Trees**, Wheathampstead. Pete was made a Burton Master Cellarman while at his previous pub and he says his first priority is to get the cellar into tip-top condition.

Talking of the 'Guild of Master Cellarmen', three Hertfordshire landlords have recently been certified. They are Anthony Szpak of the **Fox**, Kinsbourne Green, Joe Campanella of the **Fighting Cocks**, St. Albans and David Elliott with wife Sylvia of the **Bell**, Two Waters, Hemel Hempstead. To get the award they have to satisfy the brewery they can serve a perfect pint of cask conditioned beer, have extensive knowledge of the process and care of cask ale and have their beer monitored over a three month period.

Ex-oil man Viv Davies is the new landlord at the **Red Cow** Harpenden. The Watney pub is closed as we go to press but is due to reopen in late September.

At a recent Three Rivers Planning committee meeting plans for altering three pubs were considered.

A further application for extending the **Cart and Horses**, Commonwood, was again rejected primarily because of inadequate parking space.

Benskins submitted two applications involving the building of very similar looking 30-bedroom motel extensions to the rear of the **Garden Gate**, Chorleywood, and to the rear of the **Kings Head**, Hunton Bridge. Both were rejected, but not before members of the committee and local councillors had denounced the proposals as 'a job lot', 'quite dreadful' and 'the most unacceptable idea perpetrated on the residents'. With particular reference to the grade II listed **Kings Head**, we most heartily agree.

The renamed **Wellington Arms** Hotel, Woodford Road, Watford has reopened as a 'free house' with beers supplied by Allied's southern free trade arm, Ind Coope Sales. This has led to a changing range of beers from major independents (Adnams, Boddingtons, Marstons, Youngs) alongside Benskins, Tetleys and Burton.

The Lower Red Lion, St. Albans; Crooked Billet, Colney Heath; White Horse, Hertford; Prince of Wales, Hertingfordbury; Hatfield Polytechnic Students Union; Lord Louis, Stansted Abbots; Plough, Tyttenhanger Green; Anne of Cleves, Broxbourne; Woodman, Wildhill, will all be selling Theakstons Best (1038 O.G.) from the Masham brewery in the near future. They are all being asked to serve it in the traditional northern way; through a sparkler to give a thick creamy head.

HOURS REFORM ONE YEAR ON

Just over a year ago the new, more liberal, licensing laws were introduced amidst dire warning from various sources about increased alcoholism and violence. Fortunately these prophets of doom have been proved wrong with the Home Office reporting little difference in the number of alcohol related offences.

From the customers' point of view have the changes made much difference? It would appear from a survey CAMRA carried out while researching the 1990 Good Beer Guide, that the majority of publicans have taken advantage of the extra hour on Sunday lunchtime, but that the take up of other hours varies.

About one in five pubs reported that they were open all permitted hours, with about another 25% of all pubs open all day on Saturday and/or Friday. Conversely about a quarter of the pubs had not changed their hours and about 5% were opening fewer hours.

The survey showed that, in general, you are more likely to find a managed, town or suburban pub open all day than a tenanted, rural pub. This is no doubt partly due to some breweries insisting that some of their managed houses open all possible hours. It was apparent however, that many licensees were still experimenting with their hours and no doubt many more stayed open longer during our unexpected, hot summer.

As for the future, many landlords questioned would like even greater flexibility, including longer hours on Sunday and later closing on Friday and Saturday nights.

The one disappointing aspect was that only about 30% of pubs surveyed displayed their opening hours outside, although about another 20% had them on show inside the pub (a lot of good if you're outside waiting for the place to open!).

Overall, it would appear that the new laws are working as it was hoped, allowing publicans (or at least non-managers) the flexibility to open when trade demands, about 55% reporting an increase in trade, and several commented that there was now more civilised drinking and a more leisurely atmosphere in their pubs.

KEEP US POSTED

Any campaign needs a good intelligence network to pick up trends and movements at an early stage.

We need to know what is going on in your locals, what are the breweries up to? Is the beer changing? Are you being overcharged?

Any of the contacts on the back page will be pleased to hear from you if you have any news, rumour or gossip that needs investigating.

We would prefer to hear things several times than to be the last to find out. So if in doubt get in touch.

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DIARY DATES

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 10th October, Branch meeting, 8.30pm. **Rose & Crown**, Welwyn.

Tuesday 17th October, Conkers match, 8.30pm. **Rose & Crown**, St. Albans.

Tuesday 31st October, Pub of the Month, 8.30pm. **Silver Cup**, Harpenden.

Tuesday 14th November, Branch meeting, 8.30pm. **White Horse**, Hertford.

Tuesday 28th November, Pub of the Month, **John Bunyan**, Coleman Green.

Friday 5th January, New Year Party details later.

Contact: Bob Norrish; 0582 76133 x 2554 (W) 0582 769923 (H).

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Tuesday 3rd October, Chorley crawl, 8.30 **White Horse**, 9.15 **Gate**, 10.00 **Black Horse**.

Wednesday 11th October, Branch meeting, 8.30 **Fox & Hounds**, Rickmansworth, then social at the **Western**, 9.45.

Wednesday 25th October, St. Albans trip, 8.00 **Farriers Arms**, 9.00 **Lower Red Lion**, 10.00 **Garibaldi**.

November — Recruitment Month. Meetings to be arranged; see contact.

Contact: Martin Few; 0923 52412.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 11th October, Branch meeting & social, 8.30pm. **Jockey**, Baldock Street, Royston.

Wednesday 25th October, Social, **Three Horseshoes**, Norton, near Letchworth.

Monday 13th November, Visit to **Young's** Brewery, Wandsworth, see contact.

Wednesday 22nd November, Social; 8.30 **Cock**, Stocking Pelham then 9.30 **Black Horse**, Brent Pelham.

Wednesday 6th December, Branch meeting & social, 8.30pm. **Marquis of Lorne**, High Street, Stevenage.

Contact: Paul Coard; 0462 37249

MID CHILTERN BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pontin; 0494 786241 (W), 0494 775409 (H).

HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Contact: Steve Marlow 01-726 7506 (W), 0279 30450 (H).

LIAISON MEETING

Herts liaison meeting; 23rd October 8.00pm **Cock**, High Street, Hitchin.

REGIONAL MEETING

East Anglia Regional meeting; 18th November 11am — 5pm. **Old Bulls Head**, Ware.

WEEKEND TRIP

A trip to North Yorkshire to include a visit to **Theakston's** Brewery at Masham and many other places of alcoholic interest is being organised for the 27-29 October, coach and accommodation will be about £60. Interested? Then contact Ian Turvey on 0763 71570 (Work) 72726 (Home).

Peter & Lesley Reynolds welcome you to



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WHEN IS A HANDPUMP NOT A HANDPUMP?

... when it is 'an attractive lever to operate a pump', at least according to Arkell' chairman, Peter Arkell. He was commenting on CAMRA' decision not to sell any of Arkell's beers at the recent Great British Beer Festival because of his company's misleading policy of selling brewery-conditioned beer through handpumps, sorry, by the use of attractive levers. These 'levers' look just like proper handpumps and although the pump-clip (lever-clip?) does state that the beer is brewery-conditioned, the confusion is made greater by the brewery using the same name, 3B, for both the cask-conditioned and brewery-conditioned versions of the beer. Beer drinkers expect to get cask-conditioned, real ale from a handpump* and all-in-all, this practice seems designed to con them into buying an inferior product.

Other brewers have been dissuaded from this course and until Arkells reverse their policy you shouldn't see any Arkells beers at any CAMRA run beer festival.

*A recent survey asked people what drink they would expect to get from a handpump. Of those answering, 60% unprompted, stated real ale, traditional beer or a cask-conditioned beer, with another 15% using such terms as 'quality' and 'beer' where other answers indicated that they did not mean 'keg'.

GONE POTY

CAMRA branches throughout the country have been nominating their favourite pubs for the nationwide Pub of the Year. All the entries have now been whittled down to one per county. The Hertfordshire entry is the **Woodman**, Wildhill.

The Regional judges will be doing the rounds soon to short list four finalists by the end of October.

After the good beer, they will be looking for things like social centre; focus of community, good mix of ages and classes, friendliness, campaigning, pub games, staff and facilities, service, welcome, food, cleanliness, toilets, comfort. Atmosphere and appearance; External and internal, fires, lights, special feature etc. etc.

1990 COMING SOON

The indispensable **Good Beer Guide** for 1990 is to be launched on 23rd October and should be available in all the best pubs and later in book shops.

To be sure of getting your copy you can order direct from Camra HQ, 34 Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts AL1 3BW. Cover price is £6.95 with discounts available to Camra members. (480 pages and 5000 pubs).

Also available are 1990 **Camra/Letts Diaries** at £3.50.

Special offer of the two at £7.50 is available from HQ only. (P/P paid).

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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