

THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

The Campaign for Real Ale

FREE



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PRICE RISE ANGER

By the time this issue reaches you, Ind Coope Retail's (Benskins etc as was) latest price increase will have started hitting your pocket. Initial estimates were that the cost of a pint in a managed house would rise by 6-7p while the increase in wholesale prices of 5-6% announced by the brewery would raise the price in a tenanted house by at least 8p. Allowing tenanted pubs to retain their current profit levels means that this latter figure is likely to exceed 10p a pint.

Attacks on the price rises were quick to come from both CAMRA and trade representatives, and were followed up by much criticism in the daily press. The head of the National Licensed Victualler's Association criticised the brewery and stated that the rise was 'an embarrassment for publicans', others warned that it 'could well be the death of some of the smaller pubs'. Some customers have been drawn into action and staged 12-hour pickets outside pubs in protest at the increases.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the beer Allied are pushing as a national brand, Tetleys Bitter, suffers a price increase, in actual terms, of over 6% more than most other bitters. A further attempt to put what is an ordinary bitter into the premium bitter price range.

In justification, Allied are quoted as saying that the increases reflected increased business costs and that they fought hard to keep the price rise below the rate of inflation. However even this is a bit ingenious as their last 'official' price increase was only 11 months ago and on a year on year basis people in the trade have calculated that the average increase in wholesale prices is 9.7%.

Apart from Allied spokesmen, the other people surprised by the outcry were City analysts Barclays de Zoete Ward. They were quoted as saying that they 'failed to see why' there was such an outcry as 'beer is hardly a must have item and so there is no reason that we can determine why a brewer should not choose to implement the pricing policy that he determines the most likely to benefit the shareholders in the long or short term' (translated as screw the customer and keep our friends in the city happy). No doubt Barclays etc will have been pleased with the news that Ind Coope are lining their coffers with £23.6 million by selling off another 120 pubs. Fresh from their sale of 87 pubs to Greene King, 44 are going to Fullers, 43 to Gales and 33 to Shepherd Neame. If an overheard conversation involving a Benskins rep is to be believed further sales, particularly in Oxon and Bucks, can be expected.

The Crooked Billet

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in Hertford with many guest beers
served on gravity and hand pump

.....
Reduced prices on cask ale
5.30 to 6.30 pm Mon - Fri

....
Home cooked food weekday lunchtimes

PUB NEWS

The Horns, Watford (Courage) has added another handpump and is currently serving Theakstons Best Bitter. Amongst the Benskins pubs taking a 'guest' beer from their brewery are the Unicorn, Abbots Langley (Adnams), the Villiers Arms, Oxhey (Adnams) the Haydon Arms, Oxhey (Greene King Abbot) and the Hand and Crown, High Wych (Adnams). The beers are liable to change.

Despite earlier optimistic press reports the Batchworth Arms, Rickmansworth remains closed. As well as appealing against the original refusal to allow them to demolish the pub, Courage are also submitting new plans in an attempt to get round some of the original objections. This was once a fine pub and has the capability of becoming a good one again. The planning meeting is in September.

The White Horse, Chorleywood (Greene King) is changing landlords. It is believed the new couple previously ran the White Horse, Biggleswade. The pub is liable to be revamped to include a conservatory and there will be more emphasis on food but the public bar will remain, and there is the distinct possibility that IPA will at long last join the Abbot in being served without pressure.

Early examples of genuine guest beers in Whitbread pubs include McMullens AK at the Nightingale and the Sailor Boy, Hitchin; Green King Abbot at the Bull, Gosmore; and Banks and Taylor Shefford Bitter at the William IV, Mangrove Green.

Pubs expanding their ranges of real ales have led to the addition of Abbot at the Three Horseshoes, Hinxworth; Tetley Bitter at the Coach and Horses, Royston; Adnams Broadside at the Bull, Royston; and Brakspears Bitter at the Rose and Crown, Hitchin.

The Hermit of Redcoats at Redcoats Green, near Hitchin, has been refurbished into a more food-orientated pub, and has gained handpumps serving Greene King IPA and Abbot. The similarly refurbished Royal Oak at Chapelfoot has reopened with only Flowers Original on handpump. Ind Coope/Allied Breweries sales of pubs to Greene King include, in North-Herts, the Bull at Cottedred and the Sir John Barleycorn, Hitchin. The Sir John Barleycorn is serving Abbot, Rayments Bitter and Green King XX Mild. Meanwhile, a short distance away, the landlord of the Cricketers is hoping to get Ansells Mild from Ind Coope's "official" list.

The Prince Henry, Great Offley, now sells Marstons Pedigree instead of Abbot.

The Bull, Watton at Stone, which was severely damaged by fire earlier in the year, is now being rebuilt.

NORTH HERTS PUB OF THE YEAR

The 1990 winner of this prestigious award is a pub which has appeared in 15 of the first 17 editions of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. For more than 12 years, the current landlord, Tim Hunter, has been serving the best quality Charles Wells beers at the Windmill, Charlton, near Hitchin. Currently, in addition to Wells Eagle Bitter, it is possible to enjoy Adnams Broadside.

Apart from the consistent high quality of the beer, the Windmill's main claim to fame is the large number of ducks which occupy the lawn and neighbouring stream. On a good day it is also possible to see one of the peacocks out for a stroll.

One thing above all others makes Tim's pub unique. The Windmill is the only put to receive the North Herts branch Pub of the Year award on two occasions, having previously received the accolade in 1978. This is clearly something worth celebrating, so please join us for the presentation on Wednesday 12th September.

BANNERS

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BANNERS

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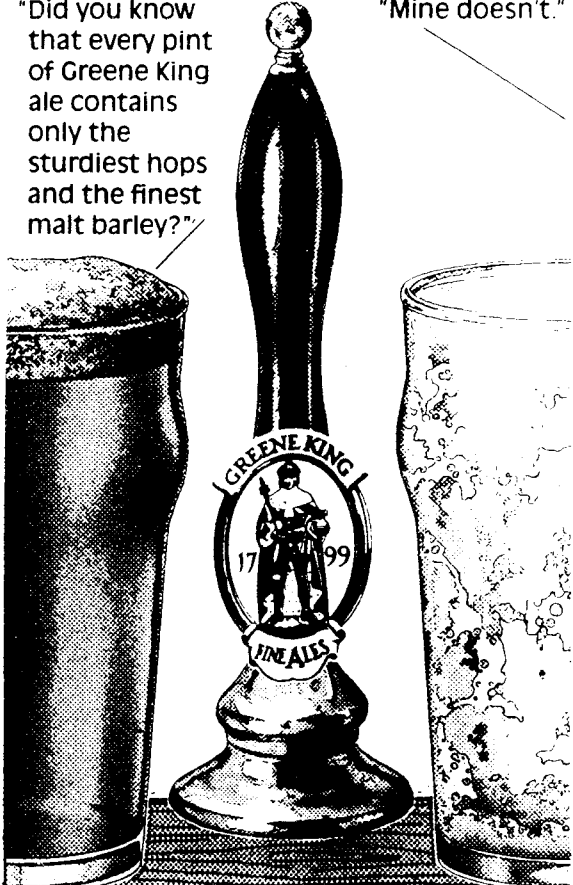
at the

Gibraltar Castle

Lower Luton Road, Batford, Harpenden

"Did you know that every pint of Greene King ale contains only the sturdiest hops and the finest malt barley?"

"Mine doesn't."



BREWERY NEWS

For once some promising brewery news. Following a management buyout the Tolly Cobbold brewery is likely to be in production again by the end of August. Members of both the Tollemache and Cobbold families have financially supported the deal. Probably the most surprising element of the deal struck with the former owners Brent Walker was the contract to supply Brent Walker pubs with Tolly beers for the next 5 years. This would mean that production of Tolly beers at Brent Walker's brewery in Hartlepool would be phased out. Amongst the reasons for Brent Walker's apparent about turn were the problems of distributing the Hartlepool produced Tolly beers (seem to remember reading somewhere about the lunacy of that idea) and the reluctance of Ipswich council to give them cart blanche planning permission for the Ipswich brewery site.

Other good news is that the Higsons brewery in Liverpool will continue to operate as a brewery. Although the new owners, GB Breweries, had initially said that only canned beer would be produced there, it is now hoped that draught beer production will also be resumed. Incidentally, having recently consumed my first pint of the Sheffield produced Higsons imposter the editorial recommendation is not to bother with it unless, of course, you're an aficionado of Twitbread's Sheffield produced Trophy.

Youngs have increased their estate to 153 pubs. Amongst their new pubs is the Windmill, Mill Street, Mayfair, W1.

The Oak Brewery currently brewing at Ellesmere Port are planning to move into the old Phoenix Brewery site at Heywood, Greater Manchester. Later used by the Cornbrook Brewery which was taken over by Bass, brewing ceased at the site in 1970.

And finally for those of you with a specialist taste, the good news is that Bulldog Guinness is now being made available again.

EC GIVES TIE THE OK

The Commission's investigation of the beer market has concluded that the tied house system leads to more breweries, more brands more competition.

Those countries which have completely open markets such as the USA and Australia tend to be dominated by a handful of brewing giants. In contrast the three countries with tied house systems, the UK, Belgium and West Germany, have the most independent breweries.

The report comes down firmly in favour of the tied system for small companies and that for relatively small companies tying arrangements should not concern the European authorities. However the Big Brewers will continue to be under surveillance from the EC and in particular the policy of brewing under licence is liable to soon be scrutinised.

MORE PUB NEWS

A new hotel, the Oaklands, has opened in Borehamwood selling Charringtons IPA.

The Bridge at Potters Bar has McMullens AK as a guest beer, at £1.18 a pint! It's a Whitbread pub needless to say. The Guinea at Ridge is selling its own brand Guinea Bitter, the origins of which are unknown, but it could be Banks and Taylor.

Refurbishment work is currently going on at the Barley Mow, Tyttenhanger, and the pub is likely to reopen soon. Rebuilding of the Kings Head, Bushey, is now well under way.

The Crown at Hatfield Heath, an ex-McMullens pub, is now a free house selling Theakstons Bitter. The pub is currently being extended.

The Inn on the Green, Harpenden, is still closed and boarded up.

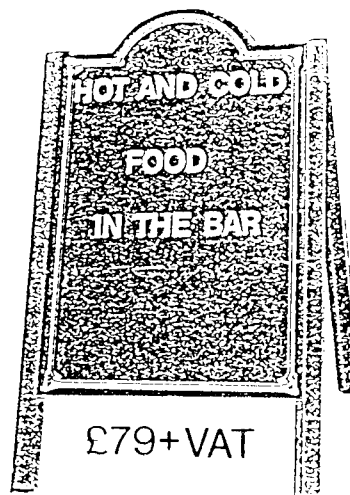
GOING EUROPEAN

CAMRA has joined forces with similar groups in Holland (the Vereniging Promotie Informatie Traditioneel Bier) and Belgium (De Objectieve Bierproevers) to form the European Beer Consumers' Union. The main aim is to provide a united front to the EEC in fighting against greater concentration in the European Brewing Industry.

CALM IT!

A new campaign has been launched which some of our readers may sympathise with. Called the Campaign Against Loud Music (CALM), it will make awards to pubs where drinkers can have a quiet drink and chat without having to compete against the noise from juke boxes, discos etc. Currently based in Humberside, the campaign arose after environmental health officers found that in some pubs the noise of the music exceeded that from a pneumatic drill.

ALL TYPES OF SIGNS, LETTERS, NEON,
BANNERS, REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE



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CHANGE FROM A POUND

No sooner had we issued the challenge to find the last pub in Hertfordshire to sell a pint of real draught beer for less than a pound, than McMullens (the last hope) goes and slaps fourpence on AK Original, taking it to at least a pound or more in most pubs.

However, we still know of two establishments selling it below a quid: the North Star on the B197 at Mardley Heath is offering AK at 99 pence and better still at 98 pence is the Woodman at Wildhill.

Are there any more out there? Which is going to be the last? Keep us informed!

MASTER CELLARMAN AWARDS

The latest Herts licensees to be awarded membership of the Guild of Master Cellarman for being able to look after Burton Ale properly are: Charles Pickering of the Beaver, Watford; Douglas Holland of the Essex Arms, Watford; and Peter Herbert of the Baton, St. Albans.

DIARY DATES

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 14 August Branch Meeting, Garibaldi, St. Albans (Fullers).

Tuesday 11 September Branch Meeting, Black Horse, South Mimms (Should be Greene King by then).

Contact: Bob Norrish; 0582 763 133 x 2554
or 0582 769 923

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Wednesday 1 August Pub crawl of Batchworth Heath. Prince of Wales (8.30), Olde Greene Manne (9.15), Gate at Northwood (10.00).

4-11 August Trip to Manchester

Saturday 18 August Ramble start St. Margarets 10.40 heading towards Ware.

Wednesday 22 August Watford crawl. Escourt Arms (8.30), White Lion (9.15), Nascot Arms (10.00).

For further details contact **Martin Few, 0923 52412**

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 1 August 8.30 Social at the Brewery Tap, followed by the Star, Furneaux Pelham.

Wednesday 15 August, 8.30 Branch Meeting at the Cricketers, Hitchin, followed by social at the Sir John Barleycorn (now Greene King).

Wednesday 29 August, 8.30 Woolmer Green Crawl, starting at the Red Lion.

Wednesday 12 September, 8.30 Pub of the Year, Windmill, Charlton.

Wednesday 26 September, 8.30 Letchworth Crawl, starting at the Broadway (public bar), near the station, and later visiting Ebenezers and the Wilbury.

Wednesday 10 October, 8.30 Five Village Crawl, starting at the Harrow, Bendish, near Whitwell.

Wednesday 24 October, 8.30 Branch Meeting at the Chequers, Barley, near Royston.

MID-CHILTERNES BRANCH

Contact: **Chris Pontin 0494 786 241 (W) 0494 775 409 (L)**

HERTS-ESSEX BRANCH

Contact: **Angie Wright 0277 225815**

**GREAT BRITISH
BEER FESTIVAL
1990
BRIGHTON METROPOLE
AUGUST 7-11**

BRITAIN'S INDEPENDENT BREWERS PRODUCE 450 REAL ALES . . . WHICH ONES HAVE YOU TRIED?

Most of Britain's beer is sold by the big brewers, created by decades of takeovers and mergers. They have expanded by taking over their rivals and tying up pubs with tempting deals — not by being cheaper, better or innovative. The Independent Brewers may only sell a fifth of our beer, but it is a fifth which matters more than most of the rest. That's why CAMRA says — **Support Your Independent Breweries!**

Independent Breweries offer:-

- Good Value
- Good Quality
- Real Variety
- Real Pubs

CAMRA believes the future of good beer and good pubs depends on the Independents.

We seek to promote good beer and good pubs, and that means promoting the good breweries too. Join the battle for our Independents by filling in the form below.

BRUCE TRIES AGAIN

David Bruce, who helped pioneer the new wave of home-brew pubs with his Firkin chain, has returned to the business. His first pub, of what is expected to be a chain of 12, is in Hove (Bertie Belcher's Brighton Brewery Company at the Hedgehog and Hogshead) and his beers still have punnish names: Brighton Breezy; Hogbolter; and Prickettckler.

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. I am/We are over 18 years of age (AGE.....)*

NAME(S)

DATE

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

I/We enclose remittance for individual/joint membership for one year: **U.K. £10**

Overseas £14

I/We would like to receive further information about CAMRA

* Knowledge of the average age of our members would be helpful. The information need only be given if you wish **ALL MEMBERS MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE.**

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
OR WHY NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIRECT DEBIT?**

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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