

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

FREE



## The Campaign for Real Ale

Christmas 1990/New Year 1991

CIRCULATION 4000

NUMBER 124

## ALLIED SALE

Allied Breweries' response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission rulings on the brewing industry appears to be taking shape in Hertfordshire as it continues to shed pubs and seek redevelopment approval.

Following the sell off of packages of pubs to regional brewers earlier in the year, they have been offering some pubs for sale to the sitting tenants. Whilst admirable in intent, we understand that the prices being asked are as much as 50% above the figure arrived at by independent valuers. The future of licensees who are unable to afford to purchase is open to doubt. Some are being offered long term leases (Vanguard leases) while others are being asked to remain as tenants while the brewery tries to dispose of the property. Pubs already sold include the **Swan**, Park Street, the **Hollybush**, Potters Crouch and the **Robin Hood**, Tring, all to Fullers. The number of other properties involved is not currently known.

Applications for demolishing pubs continue, although how much the local company knows about it is open to question; the application to demolish **Shades** in Watford was submitted without the trade manager responsible for the pub knowing anything about it.

The redevelopment application for the **Abbey Tavern**, St. Albans was described by the brewery spokesman as "just testing the water", and he did not believe that the brewery

had any long term plans for the pub; this exercise has been estimated as costing them over £5,000.

The regulars at the **Abbey Tavern**, which is reported to have recently had real ale in the form of Tetley bitter, launched a campaign to save their pub from demolition to make way for yet more offices. Any loss of a pub is regrettable, especially when it is a community pub like the **Abbey** which has a good following among devotees of live music, especially Irish. The strength of local feeling was demonstrated with letters to the local press, a well circulated petition and the ceremonial burning of an effigy of Joe Benskin outside the planning meeting on 5th November. St. Albans town planners did not approve the application. Another application refused concerned the **George** in Harpenden. The plans submitted by Allied Breweries involved the demolition of the pub and the remains of a neighbouring petrol station and build a three storey office block with shops and an underground car park.

It was turned down largely on the grounds that it would encroach on the surrounding common and would result in the loss of some mature trees. Barely a mention of the loss of a fine old pub, a local landmark that could be turned into a thriving business under the right management.

### The Crooked Billet

Colney Heath Tel: Bowmansgreen 22128



*One of  
Hertfordshires  
Old Village  
Pubs  
Traditional Old  
World beer in  
draughty  
surroundings*

Hot food available lunchtimes,  
other times pot luck  
Large selection of collectors Ales for sale.  
Live music (Folk) nearly every Tuesday.



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 6.30 pm Mon - Fri

....

Home cooked food weekday lunchtimes

## LOCAL NEWS

In St. Albans Elders (Courage) have again put in plans to redevelop the **Midland Railway** on the corner of Alma Road and Victoria Street into, you've guessed it, an office block. Last time the council rejected this proposal as unsuitable for the area; the plans have been refused again this time.

We have also heard that the **Beehive**, St. Albans is under threat; this time it is Whitbread who want to convert it to offices. The **Beehive** is one of those rare pubs that has a function room where regular folk club meetings are held.

At Hatfield Old Town, Benskins have performed a major renovation on the listed **Eight Bells**. And back in St. Albans they have re-opened the **King Harry** after spending a reported £100,000 on decorations and equipment, including a laser disc juke box and accompanying video screens; real ales available are Benskins and Tetleys. Fullers have plans to extend the bar and drinking area at the **Portland Arms** in St. Albans which was acquired from Whitbread a year ago. The **Portland** now regularly offers all three Fullers beers.

The **Punch Bowl**, a Benskins house halfway between Redbourn and St. Albans is all boarded up with the brewery livery removed; its future is unknown at present.

At Letty Green, near Welwyn Garden City, the **Cowper Arms** is believed to be on the market. The **Stag**, Chorleywood has been advertised for sale on a 19 year lease.

The **Foresters**, Bushey Heath is selling Fullers London Pride, but at £1.55 a pint. Adnams bitter has been on sale as a guest at the **Black Boy**, Bushey Heath, while Youngs Ordinary is guesting at the **Rifle Volunteer**, Oxhey.

A belated welcome to Jane and Pat Henry of the **White Horse**, Shenley. They will be adding Wadsworths 6X as a guest Beer to their range of Tetley Bitter, Benskins Best and Burton Ale. This will be for the Christmas period and, if successful, could be extended.

The latest Greene King pub to acquire handpumps for its IPA and Abbot is the recently refurbished **Victoria** in Hitchin. Another recently refurbished pub has significantly expanded its range of real ales: the **Station**, Knebworth now sells Flowers Original, Marstons Pedigree, Brakespears Bitter and McMullens Original AK.

The **Green Man**, Great Offley has dropped its Watney beers and now has Marstons Pedigree and Banks & Taylor Shefford Bitter alongside the Greene King and Flowers beers.

The **Adam and Eve** and the **Rose and Crown**, both in Hitchin, have stopped selling Brakespears Bitter but continue to offer handpumped Whitbread beers.

Greene King XX Dark Mild has been withdrawn from the **Sir John Barleycorn**, Hitchin due to low turnover. Instead, Abbot Ale stands alongside the IPA and BBA in this former Allied house.

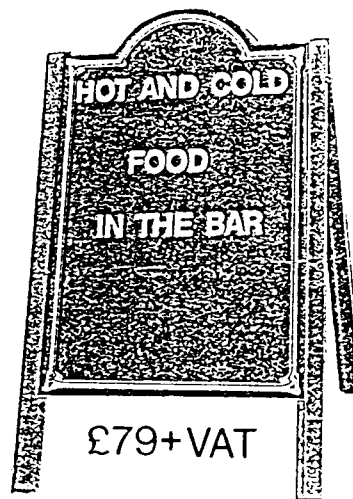
Charles Wells are converting twelve of their pubs back from managed houses to tenancies just a few months after they had become managed in an attempt to pre-empt the MMC report. Two of the pubs concerned are the **Bricklayers Arms**, Hitchin and the **Antelope**, Whaddon, just over the border in Cambridgeshire.

## LAST PINT UNDER £1

1990 must go down in history as the last year a pint of real ale could be bought in a Hertfordshire pub for **less than a pound**.

However, the **Woodman** at Wildhill near Essendon is still selling McMullens Original AK at **98p a pint**. The South Herts Branch will be presenting a plaque to the pub on 11th December to mark the end of an era. Do join them and take pleasure in the ale and in getting **change from a pound!**

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



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Gordon and Sorrell

invite you to try their award-winning  
**Fuller's London Pride & E.S.B.**

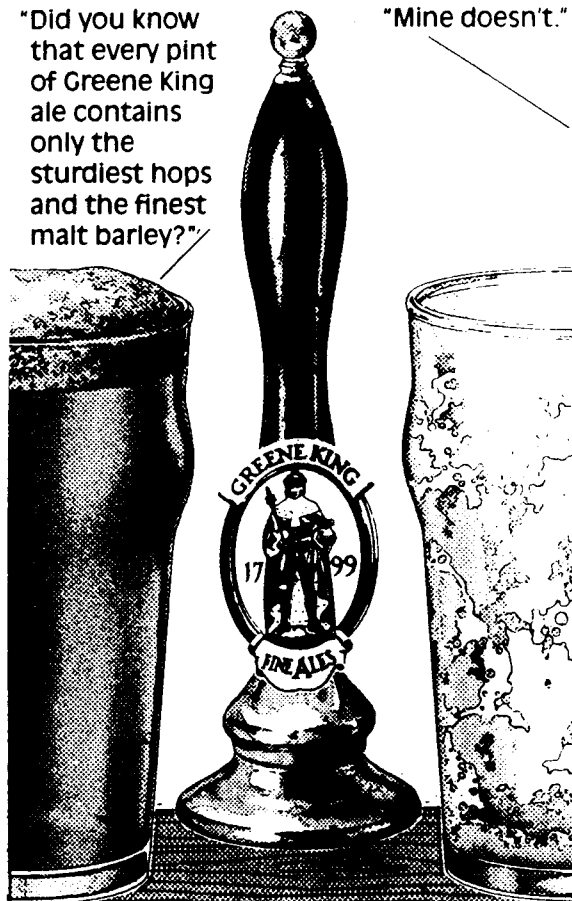
at the

## 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."



## WILLIAN PUBS

Although Willian is surrounded by Letchworth, Hitchin and Stevenage, it retains its unspoilt country character and boasts thriving pubs, the **Three Horseshoes** and the **Fox**. Reflecting on the 1991 Good Beer Guide entries for our area, the **Three Horseshoes** must be one of those few not to have had its handpumps ripped out during the fizz revolution. This is thanks to landlord Peter Jest, who had just taken over in September 1970 when Greene King's men arrived to install top pressure. He sent them packing because he wanted to sell real ale, which he has done ever since. Peter has been the only Greene King licensee to have a special beer brewed for his pub to celebrate his 20 year stay. During the licensing hours campaign in Hitchin and Stevenage districts, Peter worked with real ale stalwart Alec Reeve of the **Buck's Head**, Little Wymondley (aided by CAMRA) for the more flexible hours which we all now enjoy. The **Three Horseshoes** opens from 11 to 11 (ex-Sun), selling IPA and Abbot Ale on handpump, plus food at lunchtimes (Mon-Fri). The larger **Fox Inn** (Bass), sells Charrington's IPA and Adnams Bitter on handpump. The **Fox** has a dining room for evening meals (Mon-Fri) and Sunday lunches (book) as well as bar meals at lunchtimes. The car park leads to a pretty garden overlooking the church with swings and climbing frame. Hours are 11-3 and 6-11 (ex-Sun). Both pubs have games. Try a walk or bike ride out to Willian one weekend.

## IT'S OUT...

Eight years in the making, the long awaited drinking guide to Herts, "Real Draught Beer in Hertfordshire" is now out. The guide covers nearly 1000 of the county's pubs, surveyed by members from its five branches. It details the beers you would expect to see, which sells the best food, (vegetarian or otherwise), which encourage families and offer a warm welcome. Those that are near stations, have real fires and those that still have outside loos. It is humorous, comprehensive and can be slipped easily into your pocket.

With town descriptions and comprehensive maps, this is a guide that any self respecting drinker living or visiting the county cannot afford to be without.

From your local bookshop, priced £3.50, from better pubs, CAMRA by post to Eric Sim 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts. Tel: Home 0707 260647: Work 0438 755680. (Discount price available to CAMRA members).

## HUGE RISE COMING FOR CASK

**Whitbread** are predicting huge increases in the demand for real ale in the next two years, anticipating that half of their sales will be cask conditioned by 1993.

This is due, they claim, not only to the slump in keg beer sales but to a levelling of demand for lager. Significantly higher numbers of young drinkers are now turning to cask ales.

Colin Pedrick, **Whitbread's** Free Trade Sales Director commented: "Although national beer volume is still dropping, traditional beers are enjoying a resurgence — mainly at the expense of keg beers and also lager sales have evened out."

He added: "The cask market is set to enjoy dramatic growth over the next few years."

Whitbread now have a range of 26 cask conditioned beers which they have been heavily promoting. It includes five brands from four regional breweries: **Brains, Marstons, Fullers and Brakspears**.

In response to this upsurge the **Whitbread-owned Boddingtons** Brewery has already nearly doubled its production to 7,000 barrels a week.

## CASK ALE SET TO BOOM

The market for **cask-conditioned real ale** is set to boom — according to a leading European lager brewery.

**Grolsch UK**, the British arm of Grolsch of Holland, says that by the year 2000 **cask ale** should account for 16.2% of the total beer market. **Real ale's** market share in 1988 — the latest full figure — was 13.2%, according to Grolsch. These figures are substantially below CAMRA's own estimate of the size of the **cask market** but Grolsch confirms that the market sector is booming and will continue to do so.

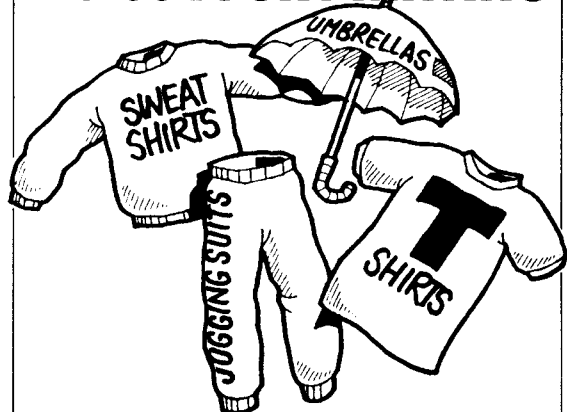
The lager company produced the figures to coincide with the launch in draught form of its lager in Wolverhampton & Dudley pubs. Grolsch in its familiar "swing top" bottles is one of the leading imported premium lagers in Britain.

The Grolsch research shows that keg beer will decline from 37.3% of the market in 1988 to 21.8% by 2000. Lager will jump from 49 per cent to 62%.

The lager company's market research does not have good news for independent brewers though. It says that the national brewers' share of the **cask market** will grow at the expense of regional brewers and more breweries will close

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as fewer brands compete for the shrinking ale market. It will be up to CAMRA during this period to look after the interests of the consumer, as always, ensuring that choice and ale quality do not suffer.

## DIARY DATES

### NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 5 December, 8.30 Branch Meeting at the **George & Dragon**, Graveley

Wednesday 19 December, 8pm Baldock crawl starting at the **Cock**.

Wednesday 2 January, 7.30 for 8pm Post Christmas meal at the **Lytton Arms**, Old Knebworth.

Wednesday 16 January, 8.30 Ashwell Crawl starting at the **Bushell & Strike**.

Wednesday 30 January, 8.30 Benington and Walkern crawl starting at the **Bell**, Benington.

Wednesday 13 February, 8pm **Branch A.G.M.** at the **Crown**, Buntingford.

Wednesday 27 February, 8.30 Countryside crawl starting at the **Strathmore Arms**, St. Pauls Walden.

Contact: Paul Coard 0462 437 249.

### HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 11 December, Branch meeting and presentation for last pub in Hertfordshire to sell a pint of beer for less than a £1, **Woodman**, Wildhill, near Essenden, 8.30pm.

Friday 11 January, New Year Party, ticket only; contact Roger Filler: 0707 326 427

Tuesday 22 January, Branch meeting and **A.G.M.**, **Garibaldi**, Albert St., St. Albans, 8.30p.m. prompt.

Contact: Bob Norrish 0582 763133 x2554 or 0582 769923.

### WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Contact: Martin Few: 0923 52412.

### MID-CHILTERN BRANCH (WEST HERTS)

Contact: Chris Pontin 0494 786241(w) 0494 775 409(H).

### HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS

Contact: Angie Wright 0277 225815

### ALL HERTS LIAISON MEETING

Monday 21 January, 8.30 **Liaison meeting** at the **Cock**, Hitchin.

## PUBS AT RISK WARNS G.B.G.

Editor Jeff Evans placed the threat to the British pub at the centre of the Campaign when launching the **1991 Good Beer Guide**.

Increased rents, the new business rates and move to long leases threatened many landlords with disaster, Jeff said. The character of the pub was threatened by the tart-up teams and the chain pub-restaurants.

Jeff dubbed the Beefeaters and Chef & Brewers of this world as little short of criminal in the way they turned village social centres into identikit plastic hostelrys serving bland beer and bland food.

He warned that unless we saw more local campaigns against pub closures, and a change of heart by the big operators, there would be fewer and fewer pubs worthy of inclusion in the guide in future years.

CAMRA branches have provided a long list of pubs closed for development by brewers (see elsewhere in this Newsletter), wrecked by senseless refurbishment or converted to the pub equivalent of McDonalds.

The **1991 Good Beer Guide** has 5,000 pub entries and an expanded section detailing all the breweries and their beers. There are also some lively features including; hunting beer on the box; pursuing a pint in Parliament and Inspector Morse, the beer drinker's detective.

The top guide for beer lovers is now available in bookshops at £6.99 or at a substantial discount to members through branches or St. Albans headquarters.

*The Hertfordshire  
Branches of CAMRA  
would like to wish all  
brewers, publicans and  
real ale drinkers a Merry  
Christmas and a Happy  
New Year.*



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:** £3.00 for 12 issues. Send to: 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts. AL10 8QL. Cheques payable: CAMRA Herts Campaigning Fund

**Advertising:** £9 per 2.5cm column. Artwork can be made up at extra cost. Contact **Eric Sim** ☎ **Hatfield 60647** for details.

**COPY DATE for February/March Edition: 24th December 1990.**

**Composed by Welwyn Typographic Consultants on Macintosh DTP Quark Xpress Telephone 0438 840132**