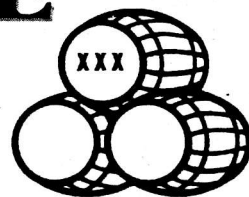




THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER



A bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1993

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WATERED DOWN BEER

When a landlord waters down his beer, he's liable for prosecution, but it would appear that Big Brewers can do it with impunity.

As reported in our last edition, the new system of collecting duty is based on the strength of the beer (alcohol by volume - abv) when it leaves the brewery, rather than on the original gravity of the beer in the early stages of the brewing process, as has been the case in the past. So, as a way of reducing the amount of duty they pay, Courage and Bass have cut the strength of some of their beers. Ruddles Best and County both drop .1% abv to 3.7 and 4.9 respectively, Worthington Best Bitter drops just over 5% of its strength to 3.6% abv, while Websters Yorkshire Bitter loses nearly 8% of its strength to 3.5% abv (if it was poor before, think how bad it will be in the future). And it's not just real ales: Holsten Pils will now be 8.5% weaker at 5.5% abv and Colt 45 drops from 5.4 to 5% abv.

The reductions in abv present a long term threat to the beers concerned. Mucking around with their strength affects the taste and body of the beer, as the 'experiments' with Burton Ale proved. While they might use the same ingredients, by not brewing out all the sugars in the brew the beer strength is reduced, and rather than producing a bitter, hoppy refreshing beer, a sweeter, more cloying product results.

The delay in paying duty on the beers will benefit the breweries enormously by improving their cash flow, reducing the time between when they pay duty and when they receive their money for the beer sold. However, you can be pretty certain that these benefits and the savings in duty will not be reflected in the prices the breweries charge. Reducing the strength is effectively a means of raising prices, so the punter gets clobbered once more.

Apparently, what has upset the big boys is that they will lose their wastage allowance. Under the old system 6% of all the beer a brewer produced did not attract duty. Due to the sophisticated brewing processes of the giant brewers this meant that 4-5% of the beer they produced was duty free. Did the government realise they were closing a duty loop hole when they introduced the legislation?

Continued on back page

Hertfordshire
South Branch
Pub of the Year
1992

Gordon and Sorrell
invite you to try their award-winning
**Fuller's Chiswick,
London Pride & E.S.B.**

at the



Gibraltar Castle

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Meals now available all opening times



castle street ... old hertford

Over 200 GUEST REAL ALES per. year

Fullers; Hook Norton
& G.K.IPA.

These HOUSE BEERS are direct from the Brewery
(NOT WHOLESALERS)

BEERS SERVED ON GRAVITY & HAND PUMP

HOMEMADE BREAD & FOOD WEEKDAY LUNCHTIMES

20% DISC. ON OFFSALE PINS/FIRKINS

WALLOPED

Beer drinkers are still being clobbered by price increases in excess of inflation. CAMRA members throughout the country surveyed about 1000 pubs and the results showed that the average price of a pint of real ale increased by 3.7% at a time when inflation was only 1.3%. The average cost increased from £1.35 last year to £1.40 this. Over the last four years, beer prices have risen by over 19% more than inflation.

The survey was carried out in April and May after the budget, but as some breweries delayed their increases until the end of May the increases could have been a lot worse.

The most expensive area of the country was the South East, where the average pint of real ale was £1.59, this was 2p more expensive than Greater London, with East Anglia a further 4p cheaper on average. Surprisingly, at least to anyone who hasn't drunk there, Scotland was the fourth most expensive area, averaging £1.51 a pint.

The cheapest areas to drink are Yorkshire (£1.28 a pint) and the North West with an average of £1.25, devotees of Holts (average price of bitter 95p) will find that excessive!

On average, beers in pubs owned by independent brewers were 7p a pint cheaper than in pubs owned by the national brewers.

Watford had the dubious privilege of having the tenth most expensive real ale in the survey, Whitbread Porter was on sale at £1.90 a pint.

Considering the hidden price rises discussed on the front page and other price rises in the offing, it certainly doesn't look as though beer prices are going to get any cheaper in real terms. And despite the guff reported below, the Brewers Society still proclaim to wonder why on-sales are declining at the same time as their members are raising pub prices at a rate above inflation and flooding the off-licence trade with discount priced beer.

MORE M.R. REVELATIONS

A recent market research survey revealed that apparently drinkers do not like the foil round the tops of bottles because it 'grates on the teeth!'

A CAMRA survey of some 413 of the English and Welsh pubs in the Good Beer Guide showed that 55% of landlords were in favour of some further relaxation of the licensing hours. Of those nearly a half explicitly stated that they would like longer hours on Sundays.

A survey for the Brewers Society claims to show that stories of the demise of the British pub are greatly exaggerated. By

extrapolating their figures they've concluded that 12.5 million people visit a pub at least once a week, while 25 million consider themselves regularly pubgoers. Women's joint favourite tipples were revealed to be soft drinks and beer (presumably including lager). Most foreign visitors stated that they preferred British pubs to their bars 'back home'.

CAMRA's prices survey also revealed that 13% of pubs were breaking the law by not displaying a representative sample of prices.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BEER FESTIVAL

The 1993 North Hertfordshire Beer Festival will be held at the Plinston Hall, Broadway, in Letchworth town centre, on September 17th and 18th.

We expect to be offering beers from 40 different breweries, together with a wide range of traditional farmhouse ciders and perries. Also on sale will be a selection of bottle conditioned Belgian beers and a variety of items bearing brewery logos. Yet again, we are commissioning festival T-shirts and special commemorative glasses.

The festival will be open from 11.30am to 3pm and 5pm to 11pm on Friday 17th September, and from 11am to 3pm and 6pm to 11pm on Saturday 18th September. Admission will cost 50p for lunchtime sessions or £1 during the evenings, but will be free at all times for CAMRA members.

Our policy is to ensure that the maximum possible range of beers is available at all sessions; so even the Saturday evening session is worth travelling to for a few pints.

MAIL ORDER BELGIAN BEER

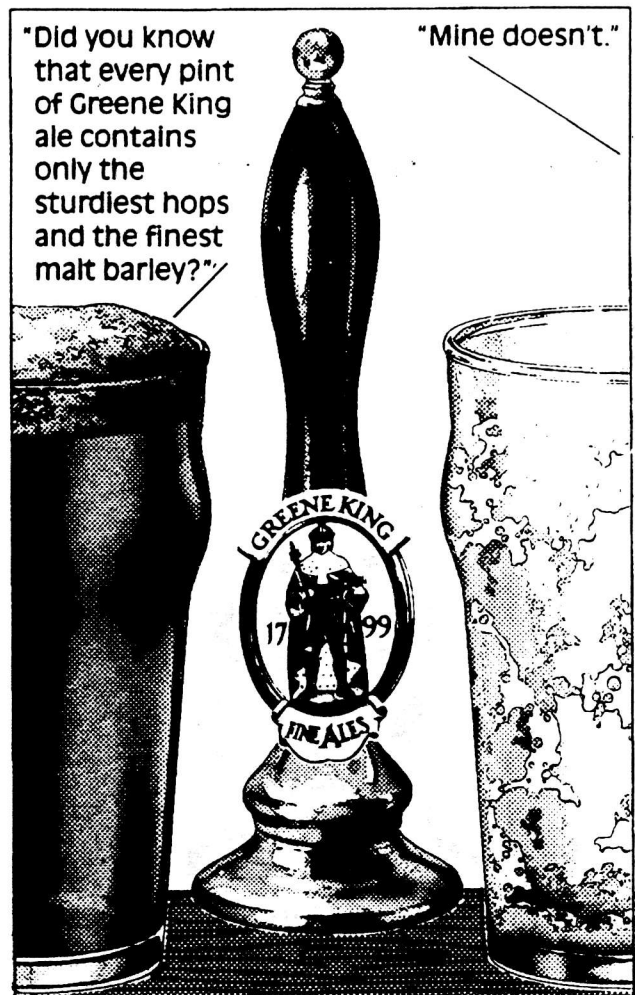
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Telephone:
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LOCAL LINES

First a correction! The derelict Beechtree Cottages which are to be converted to a pub are not in Welwyn Village but are actually on the St Albans-Hemel Hempstead road, near the M1/M10 crossing.

After years of closing down pubs in Watford, Allied (sorry, the Ind Coope Retail branch of Carlsberg/Tetley) have now got permission to open a new one. This will be on the site of the old Nat West Bank in The Parade. Among the conditions Watford Council laid down were that the ground floor area should be designed to allow good access for people in wheelchairs or with double pushchairs - obviously they think we'll soon be having children in pubs!

The **Old Shepherd**, Chorleywood, has been selling Tolly Original or Bass in place of Tetleys, while the **Estcourt Arms**, Watford, has been varying its guest beer: Everards Beacon, and Gibbs Mew Wiltshire Bitter and Local Line have made recent appearances. Ansells Mild is on sale at the **Three Horseshoes**, Garston and the **One Bell**, Watford. The range of beers at the **Pear Tree**, Stevenage, currently consists of Boddingtons Bitter, McMullens AK and Morland Old Speckled Hen, while the **Three Horseshoes**, Norton, has Charringtons IPA, Worthington Best, Youngs Bitter and Fullers London Pride available. The **Black Horse**, Chorleywood, is expected to replace Greenalls Mild with Davenports Mild.

The **One Oak**, Harpenden (formerly the Oddfellows) has increased its range of real ales, the **Greyhound**, St Ippollits has added a fourth handpump serving Boddingtons Mild, the **Victoria**, Baldock, now has two handpumps, Boddingtons Bitter and Banks & Taylor Shefford Bitter being available, while the **Wellington**, Watford, continues with its strong guest beers by popular demand. The locals insisted that Woodfordes Norfolk Nog remained on sale and the superb Hog Back Summer Lightning has also made a recent appearance.

The **Old White Horse**, Baldock, has gone real selling up to 6 different beers each week, including one genuine guest beer, the others coming from the Whitbread list.

Welcome to Elaine and Stuart Armstrong who have taken over the **Swan** in Kings Langley. The place has been redecorated, there is now a small children's room and a function room is available. Weekday lunchtime snacks are expected to be available now that the kitchen has been refurbished. Pedigree, Bass and Tolly Original have been on handpump, but the beers are liable to change.

A warm welcome is also extended to CAMRA members Stephen and Sarah Howe who have recently taken over as the managers of the **Huntsman**, Goose Green, near Hoddesdon.

New landlords also at the **Catherine Wheel**, Albury; the **Red Lion**, Preston; the **Mallard**, Stevenage; the **Bull**, Whitwell; the **Found Inn**, Hitchin; the **Raven**, Hexton (Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers IPA and Marstons Pedigree available); and the **Pig & Whistle**, Aston (selling Boddingtons Bitter, Flowers Original and a guest from the Whitbread list). The landlord of the very successful freehouse the **Elephant and Castle**, Amwell, has also taken a Pubmaster lease at the **Tin Pot**, Gustardwood. He is also hosting a LVA charity beer festival in the grounds of the Elephant and Castle on Wednesday 15th September.

Re-openings include the **Three Tuns**, Great Hornead, selling Greene King IPA, Rayments Special, and Abbot; the **Chaise and Pair**, Barkway, Bass, Worthington Best and Greene King IPA available; and, after refurbishment, the **Yew Tree**, Walkern. The **Anchor**, Weston, is being extended.

The **Station Hotel**, Ware was closed by McMullens in May for conversion into offices. Two more of their pubs are up for sale: the **Lamb & Flag**, Colliers End on the A10, and the

Queens Head at Stanstead Abbots. Two pubs closed with uncertain futures are the **Engine**, Ashwell, and the **Harrow**, Bendish.

The **Stafford Arms**, Potters Bar, is likely to go from a managed to a leased Ind Coope pub. The last manager who successfully introduced Ansells Mild has now moved to the **Hedgehog** at Welwyn Garden City, where we look forward to him improving the choice of real ales.

More and more Ind Coope pubs seem to be sprouting Mr Q's pool rooms. The **Green Man** at Potters Bar has been earmarked for the treatment, while there are plans to convert the function room at the **White Horse**, Shenley into a pool room.

On the 14th August the **Pennant**, Watford is holding a charity barbecue and music evening in aid of the Watford hospice and Macmillan nurses.

BREWERY NEWS

Following the success of their Traditional IPA, McMullens are introducing a new beer for the summer. Called Fine Summer Bitter, this 4.2abv beer is brewed from pure malt, using Goldings hops from Kent. The beer is described as light in colour, and is based on another old McMullens recipe. It will be available in 80 selected McMullen and free trade pubs.

The Alford Arms home brew pub in Frithsden, is now supplying 17 pubs across the south.

Greenalls have taken over Devenish to form one of the country's largest pub chains. Devenish ran the Inn Leisure pubs so some local changes are likely.

Greene King are not currently planning to dispose their 29% stake in Morlands, the legacy of last year's failed takeover bid, which reportedly cost them £2.5million.

Ridleys are expected to introduce a new 1045og beer in the autumn, by when production of their keg beers is expected to cease.

The Allied-Carlsberg merger is expected to lead to the loss of about 270 jobs throughout the country, including some at the Wrexham Brewery. This must now be under threat particularly as a Carlsberg-Tetley spokesman denied there were not plans to close it: the equivalent of a football manager getting a vote of confidence from the board.

The old Burts Brewery on the Isle of Wight is unlikely to brew again, but the name will survive. The island's other brewery the Island Brewery at Newport, have obtained the rights to the name and will be launching Burt's Best Bitter (abv 4.2) in August.

The Rebellion Beer Company based in Marlow is producing an IPA (3.9 abv) which is intended to resemble the old Wethereds Bitter that was brewed in the town until the brewery was closed by Whitbread some 5 years ago.

Hoskins have been taken over by Swithland, a pub and property owning chain.

SILVER LION

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9.30am until dusk

Bed & Breakfast from £25.00

Good Greene King Ale
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BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 10 August, Surveying social, start **Eight Bells**, Park St, Hatfield 8.00pm

Tuesday 24 August. Branch meeting, **Black Horse**, South Mimms, 8.00pm.

Tuesday 7 September. Surveying social, start **Overdraught**, Park St, 8.00pm

Tuesday 21 September. Branch meeting, **Cross Keys**, Gustardwood, 8.00pm

Contact: Bob Norrish: 0582 763133 x2554(w) or 0582 769923 (h)

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 11 August, 8.30pm, Branch meeting at the **White Horse**, Kimpton.

Wednesday 25 August, 8.30pm, Codicote Cellar Crawl, starting at the **Bell**, then on to the **Goat** and the **Globe**.

Wednesday 8 September, 8.30pm, Suburban crawl, starting at the **Three Horseshoes**, Norton, then on to **Ebenezers**, Letchworth, and the **Cricketers**, Ickleford.

Friday 17 & Saturday 18 September, **North Hertfordshire Beer Festival** at the Plinston Hall, Letchworth.

Wednesday 22 September, 8.30pm, Pub of the Year, the **Plough**, Datchworth.

Wednesday 6 October, 8.30pm, Branch Meeting at the **Raven**, Hexton (to be confirmed).

Contact: Paul Coard 0462 437249.

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Friday 6 August, Social at the **Great British Beer Festival** at Olympia. Meet by the Cider & Perry Bar at 6.00, 7.00 and 8.00pm,

Sunday 22 August, Meet 12.00 at the **Two Bridges**, Croxley, then taxi at 12.30 to visit the **Cricketers** at Sarratt at 12.40 and the **Boot** at 2.00pm

Tuesday 31 August. Social in Kings Langley: **Old Palace** 8.30pm, **Swan**, 9.15pm, **Saracens Head** 10.00pm.

Wednesday 8 September. 8.30pm **Clarendon Arms**, Chandlers Cross (transport from Watford Junction at 8.15pm), 10.00 **Sportsman**, Croxley Green.

Tuesday 14 September. Watford pub crawl: 8.30pm **One Bell**, 9.15pm **Wag and Bone**, 10.00pm **Wheatsheaf**.

Tuesday 21 September. Provisional: 8.30pm branch meeting at **Fox & Hounds**, Rickmansworth, hopefully with guest speaker on the problems facing pub tenants.

Tuesday 28 September. Pub crawl: 8.30pm **Bell**, Bedmond, 9.00pm **White Hart**, Bedmond, 9.45pm **Swan**, Pimlico (times to be confirmed).

Advance notice: Breweriana auction at the **West Herts Sports Club**, Wednesday 10th November.

Contact: Michael Birch 0923 773913.

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS

Contact: Derek Wisdom 0279 414200.

MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pontin 0494 78624(w), 0494 775409(h)

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St. Ippollitts No1 Freehouse for
REAL ALE & REAL FOOD EVERY DAY

Dining Room – Beer Snacks

Handcarved Roast Beef Sunday Lunch £5.95

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter,

Morlands Old Speckled Hen – Plus Guest Beer

Traditional music sessions. Sept 22, Oct 20, Nov 24

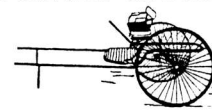
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Despite the fact that some regional brewers will lose out under the new system, there are no moves by them to water down their beers. In fact, Bunce's Brewery and Jennings are doing the opposite and actually increasing the strength of some of their ales.

As Roger Protz mentioned in a Morning Advertiser article, during the 1930's recession a music hall song had a brewer singing: "I'm the man, the very fat man that waters the workers' beer." Some things never change.

TILBURY

Inn off the Green



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Large selection of
cask conditioned ale including mild

Home made food available every
Lunchtime & Evening

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11.00 – 3.00	5.00 – 11.00	Mon – Fri
11.00 – 3.00	6.00 – 11.00	Saturday
12.00 – 3.00	7.00 – 10.30	Sunday

Brewery Trips organised periodically.
Coming next — Adnams, October 30th
— phone Ian Miller for details

Almost Live Music some of the time

Telephone: 0438-812496

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire North, Hertfordshire South, Watford & District, Herts-Essex Borders 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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