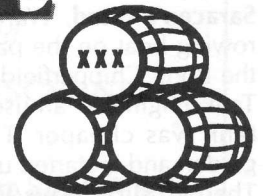


FREE



THE HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

LINED GLASSES
GUARANTEE
FULL PINTS



A bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1994

CIRCULATION 4500

NUMBER 147

PLENTY OF HEAD?

As you're reading this newsletter you will probably have a glass of beer in your other hand. Yes?, then take a look at it - what kind of head has it got? There is a good chance that the froth on your beer is tight and thick, forming a broad collar above the liquid. Up until a few years ago such a sight was quite unusual in southern England, beers brewed in this part of the country have been traditionally served through a short pipe from the handpump resulting in a loose head of bubbles which often disperses more or less completely.

In the 'North', which in this case started around Birmingham, things were different, a longer curved tube, the swan neck, was normal plus the addition of a fine mesh nozzle across the spout. The result was a swirling glass of beer that took time to clear and left a tight head that lasted to the bottom of the glass. The admittedly glorious sight was a marketing man's dream, it has become the image of what a 'proper' pint should look like.

The heavy promotion of famous northern brands such as Tetley's and Boddington's in this part of the country has contributed to the acceptance of the thick head style. The result is that we are seeing great southern beers like Fullers, Youngs and McMullen's served in the same way - a way they were not brewed for. You might think this is an esoteric point which is only of interest to beer bores but there are wider issues. Taste is undeniably altered, for the worse in most peoples opinion and the natural carbonation is hammered out of the beer as it leaves the pump. Remember the Government's climb down on oversize glasses? it's a lot easier to sell short measure with a thick head than it is with the loose version.

The inappropriate use of the swan neck is a serious threat to the diversity of British beer styles, it imposes a marketing concept on us all. By all means keep drinking northern beers with a tight head, there is much to be enjoyed, but the sight of Fullers ESB with the same head style should be greeted with the disdain it deserves. The observance of tradition is quite simple and in this case our distinctive southern brews can only benefit from it.

Hertfordshire
South Branch
Pub of the Year
1993

Enjoy a pint at
St. Albans' Oldest Freehouse



Lower Red Lion
Fishpool Street

Excellent range of regular ales
and unusual guest beers



castle street ... old hertford

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.....
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& G.K.IPA.**

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(NOT WHOLESALERS)

BEERS SERVED ON GRAVITY & HAND PUMP

.....
HOMEMADE BREAD & FOOD WEEKDAY LUNCHTIMES

.....
20% DISC. ON OFFSALE PINS/FIRKINS

DOWN YOUR WAY

Renovations & Refurbishments

Pubs with work currently underway include the **Woodmans Arms**, Stevenage, the **Bright Star**, Peters Green and the **George**, Harpenden. The **Cock**, Hitchin has reopened after an extensive refit as has the **Roundbush**, Aldenham. The **Saracen's Head**, Ware has opened again and boasts a 56' rowing boat on the patio. In a similar vein, Eamon Flynn of the Boot, Chipperfield wanted to buy a wooden Thomas the Tank Engine to amuse the kids but found a real Chieftain tank was cheaper. The war machine now stands in the garden and is started up on Saturdays.

The old **Mirrabeaus/JJs Bar** in the Parade, Watford is to be turned into a Yate's Wine Lodge while the **Sportsman**, Hertford, has reopened now under the ownership of Grovesnor Inns. Excavations at the **Black Lion**, St.Albans, have revealed a Roman malting oven, or at the least the site of one, dating from 200AD. The **Hart & Spool** at Borehamwood has reopened as part of the J. D. Wetherspoon chain.

New Incumbents

Tenants changing at the **Noahs Ark**, Shillington, the **Brown Bear**, Braughing, the **Plough**, Datchworth Green, the **Gloucester Arms**, Hitchin, the **Crooked Billet**, Ware and the **Woodman** at Chapmore End (all Greene King pubs). New licensees have taken over at the **Fountain**, Hitchin, the **Chequers**, Woolmer Green and the **Almond Tree** at Stevenage. The **Duke of Marlborough**, St. Albans has been given the Tap & Spile treatment and a guest beer list some 400 strong, we watch the pub with anticipation.

Currently Closed

The **Dimsdale Arms**, Hertford has closed for good, while the **Rose & Crown**, Sandridge is still closed for no apparent reason, anyone know anything?

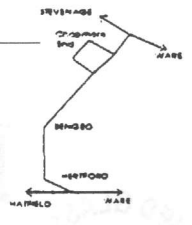
Additional Beer Changes

Some of the more unusual beers seen on sale in the county over recent weeks are noted below. The **White Horse**, Hertford, has been selling Hopback Bride's Delight at £1-25 a pint while the **Sportsman**, also Hertford, has been doing Exmoor Gold, Mitchells Best and Wadworth Summersault. Crouch Vale's Millennium has been on sale at the **Farmers Boy**, Brickendon while the Fox, Kinsbourne Green has recently had Sarah Hughes' Sedgley Surprise up for grabs.


Notices

The **Carpenters Arms**, Harpenden does NOT sell Scrumpy Jack cider through a fake handpump, John uses the proper keg dispenser. Bass have bought the old Barclay's Bank site on the corner of Hollywell Hill/London Road in St. Albans but there is no sign of work starting. Planning permission is being sought to convert the **Harrow**, Bendish into a private dwelling but this is being opposed by a local resident who wishes to purchase and continue running it as a pub. The **Bricklayers Arms**, Hitchin and the **Lamb & Flag**, Colliers End are now open all day Peter North of the **Galley Hall** at Hailey has become a Burton Master Cellarman.

The Watford & District Branch of CAMRA will be holding their **annual breweriana auction** on 9 November (see Diary Dates) which is open to allcomers. Lots include a **Henty & Constable** display sign, trays from **Spreckley's** of Worcester and **Phipps** of Northampton plus ash trays from the **Wrekin** brewery and **Well's** of Watford. Once again we've got a tie from the Rumbold Arms and if anybody knows the location of this establishment we'd be delighted if they'd let us know.



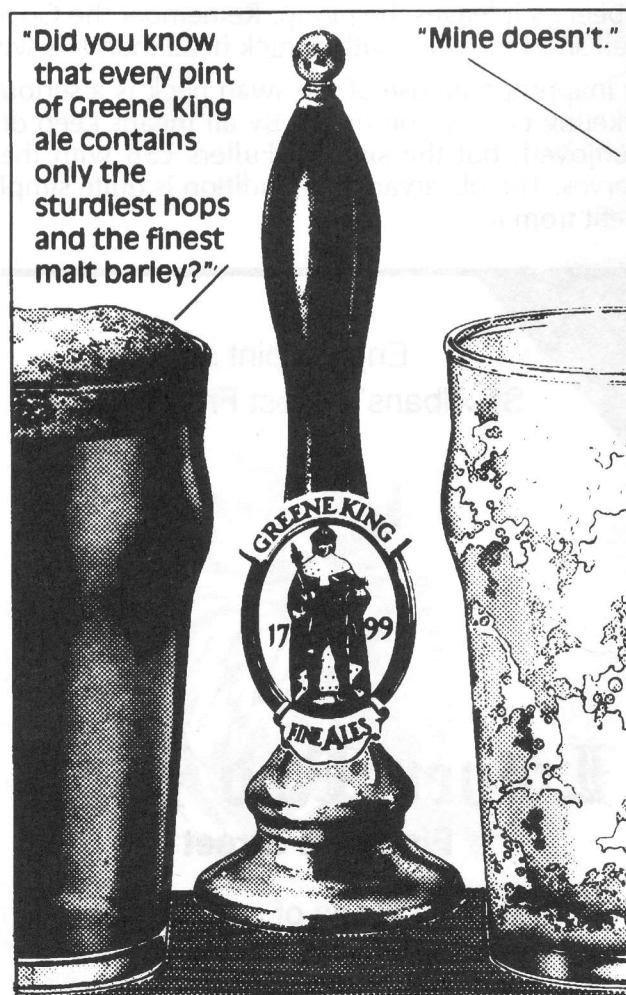
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and other events

JAMES LENNON

We are sad to report in this issue the untimely death of James Lennon who was the tenant at the Verulam Arms in St. Albans and the Tin Pot at Gustardwood until recently. James transformed the Verulam Arms into one of the best kept pubs in St. Albans. He was the most attentive of landlords knowing many of his customers on first name terms and always ensured that the standard of service was good. He was justly proud of the quality of his real ales, being a member of the Burton Guild of Master Cellarman, and the Verulam won its place in the 1992 edition of the Good Beer Guide. James was a man of forthright views, prepared to stand up to the Breweries, not least when he insisted on his right to have a guest beer of his choice; Bateman's bitter came in at the expense of Tetley's. With his German wife Uilly, the pub became renowned for its food, especially German specialities, and every October they had an 'Oktoberfest' featuring many varieties of German bottled beers. CAMRA needs landlords like James; his death is a sad loss to the real ale cause in Hertfordshire.



TRING RINGS THE CHANGES

The Hertfordshire market town of Tring has a long tradition of brewing. Ale was being produced on the site of what is now the Rose & Crown pub in the 16th century and in Victorian times the town housed two independent breweries. Brown's closed in 1898 and was followed by Rodwells & Batchelor in 1932. Sixty years were to elapse before the Tring Brewery Company was established in December 1992. The new brewery, off Akeman Street, is run by a staff of four of which only 2½ are full time. Kerr Hill, the sales director is an ex-soldier turned Hi-Fi salesman who founded the brewery with his friend Richard Shardlow. Richard is the head brewer and learned his trade at Devenish, Ruddles and Greene King before setting up his own business, Brewing Design Services Ltd., which installs brewing equipment at sites around the country. The assistant brewer, Barry Phipp, and Kerr's wife, Sandra, make up the rest of the staff. The accent at Tring is very much on quality of ingredients and tradition. Maris otter barley is renowned for its malting quality and as such is expensive to buy but Kerr will use nothing else. Many brewers find their water is too soft for good beer and are forced to add gypsum to Burtonise the liquor (make it harder). Fortunately, the water at Tring is ideal for brewing being semi hard/hard therefore needing very little treatment.

The output of 20 -30 barrels a week consists mainly of two beers, Ridgeway Bitter (4% ABV) and Old Icknield Ale (5% ABV) both are named after ancient trade routes which pass through the town. Brewing is seasonal however, and when demand for Old Icknield drops in the warmer months they produce a Summer Ale which was well received this year and stood out against the mediocre summer efforts from the likes of McMullen, Fullers and Wadworth.

Death or Glory is Tring's strongest beer and is brewed on the 25th October, the anniversary of the Charge of the Light Brigade fought during the Crimean War in 1854. The battle was fought by the 17th/21st Lancers (Kerr's old regiment) and hence the beer's ABV is 7.2%. The 17th/21st have been amalgamated with the 16th/5th Lancers to form the Queen's Royal Lancers who are delighted with the beery accolade and have allowed the brewery to use the skull & crossbones motto on the beer's label.

Tring's trading area extends up to a 15 mile radius around the town, within this range the deliveries are handled by Sandra and Kerr. Some beer is also sold to a distributor from where they have been taken as far afield as Wales, Scotland and even Lyon, France. Kerr is proud of the fact that he has received only good reports about how well the beer travels but is conscious that smart landlords know what a great selling point a locally brewed ale can be. This is just as well because Tring cannot sell their beer for the give away prices that the nationals can offer.

Expansion of the plant is a distinct possibility and their current premises has plenty of room, in fact the greatest limiting factor on the breweries output is simply the number of casks, they just can't get enough of them!

Kerr is understandably cagey about the production of any new beers but promises that the Summer Ale will return next year for a longer period.

The real ale revival has seen many new breweries appear around the country but Tring is a cut above and Hertfordshire is fortunate to have them within its boundary.

IN & OUT IN WELWYN

Welwyn village has a new "Bistro" called the Stable Door selling Adnams and Tetleys on handpump. The Tavern sees temporary managers in, while Caroline and Michael move on to the now being refurbished Long and Short at Lemsford.

THE LORDSHIP ARMS

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Benington Nr Stevenage.
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DRINKER

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NEW BREWERY FOR HERTFORD

Hertford is about to become a two-brewery town for the first time in 30 years when the Dark Horse Brewery starts production in mid October.

Based in the cellar of the White Horse in Castle Street, the three barrel capacity brewery will produce beers using only traditional, top quality ingredients and definitely no additives.

Owner Ian Harvey's new venture was launched on 17 September when installation of the brewing equipment was completed.

Ian has enlisted the brewing expertise and proven track record of Rob Jones, creator of Pitfield Brewery's Dark Star, a beer which has won CAMRA's national Beer of the Year award. Rob will be spending three months at Dark Horse, formulating brews and in charge of brewing quality control.

The brewery is capable of producing two different 1½ barrel beers concurrently, thus ensuring a constant variety at the bar.

The early beers will be in the OG1030 - 1040 range (that is roughly 3% - 4% alcohol by volume) and should be available at a deliberately affordable £1-20 to £1-30 a pint. All the beers will be cask conditioned in specially commissioned wooden barrels.

With promises of regular milds and seasonal brews (and, Ian stresses, no reduction in the wide range of traditional ales from around Britain) it looks like a visit to the White Horse, with its newly opened upstairs smoke free and family rooms, is about to become overdue.

Les Middlewood

SEDGWICK'S II

Following the article on Sedgwick's of Watford in Newsletter No. 146, I visited my local Sedgwick's pub. Unable to see anything different about the pub from pre-Sedgwick's days except for the fact that all the staff had a "uniform", a sports shirt with the appropriate name thereon, I asked if that was the only difference. The reply:-

"Yes, except that the price of the food will be going up."
The mind boggles!!

John Hurrell

BLUES AND BEER

Hitchin RUFC are holding their 17th annual festival at King George V playing fields on Saturday 26th November at 8.00pm. 14 beers available entry £2.

BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 11 October - Branch Meeting, the **Gate**, Brickett Wood, 8pm.

Tuesday 25 October - Conkers evening, **Lower Red Lion**, St. Albans, 8.00pm

Tuesday 15 November - Branch Meeting, the **Fox**, Kinsbourne Green, 8pm.

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

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 5 October - Branch Meeting at the Assizes, Hitchin, 8.30pm.

Wednesday 19 October - Countryside crawl starting at the **Woodman**, Nuthamstead 8.30pm, then to **Chequers**, Anstey, **Black Horse**, Brent Pelham and **Three Tuns**, Great Horstead.

Wednesday 2 November - Countryside crawl starting at the **Royal Oak**, Chapelfoot 8.30pm then via **Farmers Boy**, Langley to the Lytton Arms, Old Knebworth.

Wednesday 16 November - Royston crawl starting at the **Boars Head**, 8.30pm.

Wednesday 30 November - Belgian Beer tasting.

Wednesday 7 December - Branch Meeting at the **Old White Horse**, Baldock, 8.30pm (to be confirmed). Call contact if uncertain.

Contact: Paul Coard 0462 437249 (h)

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Tuesday 4 October - social at the **Stag**, Merryhill Road, Bushey, 8.30pm.

Wednesday 12 October - social at **Mt. Vernon Hospital Social Club**, 8.30pm.

Wednesday 19 October - Watford crawl: 8.30pm **Wag & Bone**, 9.15pm **One Crown**, 10.00pm **Estcourt Arms**.

Wednesday 26 October - Good Beer Guide launch, the **Bell**, Bedmond, 8.30pm.

Wednesday 2 November - Abbots Langley crawl: 8.30pm **Royal Oak**, 9.15pm **Kings Head**, 9.45pm **Boys Home**, 10.30pm Compasses.

Wednesday 9 November - Breweriana auction at **West Herts. Sports Club**, 8.00pm start, lot viewing from 7.30pm.

Sunday 13 November - beer tasting competition at **Croxley Committee Centre**, 8.30pm.

Tuesday 15 November - social at the **Swan**, Bushey, 8.30pm.

Tuesday 22 November - Chorleywood crawl: 8.30pm **Sportsman** (downstairs bar), 9.15pm **Old Shepherd**, 10.00pm **Black Horse**.

Friday 25 November - joint social with S.W. London branch at the **Sultan**, Norman Road, SW19, **Hop Back Brewery's** first London pub.

Contact: Tony Smith 0923 221155

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS

Contacts: Graham Darby, 0279 415895(h) or Derek Wisdom, 0279 414200(h).

MID-CHILTERNs BRANCH

Contact: Chris Pontin 0494 786241(w), 0442 834899(h).

ALL HERTS. LIAISON MEETING

Monday October 17 at the Assizes, Hitchin 8.00 - 8.30pm.

The Greyhound (Free House)

St. Ippollitts Nr. Hitchin Tel: 0462 440989

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REAL ALE & REAL FOOD

Snacks and Meals

Handcarved Roast Beef Sunday Lunch £5.95

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter,

Morlands Old Speckled Hen - Plus Guest Beer

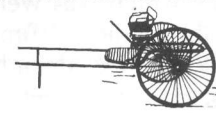
Traditional music sessions start Oct 5, Nov 2, Dec 7

STORMING BEER FESTIVALS

The Great British Beer Festival, held at Olympia in August, was an enormous success. Attendance records were smashed as 45,000 people thronged the great hall over the five day run. The lack of trains proved no deterrent, even the national press coverage was favourable as revellers almost drank the place dry and CAMRA signed up a further 1,200 new members. On a more modest scale the Lower Red Lion in St. Albans staged their own festival over the August bank holiday, around 50 beers were on sale and were brought on successively so that the good choice lasted until the Monday. Rumour has it that even Sarah came in the end.

TILBURY

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Almost Live Music some of the time

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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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