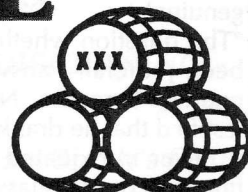




THE



HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER



LINED GLASSES
GUARANTEE
FULL PINTS

A bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

DECEMBER 1994/JANUARY 1995

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KEG THREAT RETURNS

For many years now, the comment has been made that CAMRA's work was done: real ale sales are on the increase, the big brewers have been persuaded to return to brewing the real stuff (some of it even drinkable), most pubs sell it, what else is there for it to do?

Well, apart from its other activities such as campaigning for consumers' rights and preserving pubs, there has always been a nagging doubt that some of the big brewers and the larger independents (or at least the financial and marketing executives now running them) were not fully committed to real ale, and recent events seem to bear this out.

First, they were found ways of making real ales easier to handle. By making them as much like keg as they could, with little fermentable material being left in the cask, they have produced a number of beers that drop bright quickly. This enables them to be served sooner by undiscerning landlords, and managers in particular, who have been 'encouraged' to keep their stocks to a minimum. The result is that the beer is sold too fresh, preventing it from developing the fuller flavours obtained by letting the beer stand in the cellar and undergo secondary fermentation. Second, was the introduction of the 'widgitised' can with the implied claim that it contained real ale.

Recent developments have shown further worrying 'progress' in the development of 'keg real ale' as some brewers have already erroneously called it. A fake hand pump has been developed which incorporates a resistance mechanism which makes it look as though the user is pulling a proper pint of real ale even when it's keg beer that is served! There has also been the introduction of a mix of carbon dioxide and nitrogen gases as a means of dispensing keg beers. This is similar to the mix used in the new wave of canned beers. This combination of gases gives a creamier head and taste than using carbon dioxide alone, and some brewers overuse of swan necks to produce thick creamy heads could be seen as a way of conditioning the public ready for the new beers. Add the introduction of mini-handpumps on top of the keg fonts or worse still, the use of the new breed of fake handpumps, and there is only one conclusion: they're out to con the public into believing they're getting something they're not. The reason, of course, is profit: keg beer keeps longer than real ale, hence less returned beer, and it needs less looking after, saving on training costs and time spent in the cellar.


Some breweries want to confine real ale to specialist outlets where they can charge premium prices, but real ale belongs just as much in the back street public bar as it does in any swish (or sawdust covered) lounge.

CAMRA does not object to the introduction of the new breed of canned and keg beers as such, what we do object to are the attempts to pass off these dead beers, which need the help of the gas board to resurrect them, as the tasty, matured, living alternative: Real Ale. The Campaign continues.

*A recent court case ruled that the term 'real ale' could only be used to describe cask conditioned beer.


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



THE WHITE HORSE
CASTLE ST. HERTFORD

WE NOW HAVE OUR OWN BREWERY PRODUCING:

UNICORN AL: 4.1%
LIGHT BRIGADE: 3.6%

(AS SERVED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BARS!!)

LONDON PRIDE & HOOK NORTON
AND EVER CHANGING SELECTION OF REAL ALES

FUNCTION/PARTY ROOMS AVAILABLE
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PROHIBITION NEWS

During the Pre-Prohibition era in the USA discussions were held as to whether beer should be exempted and only distilled liquor banned. One of the arguments was that beer was not intoxicating. The following extract is taken from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* of 4th August 1870. All names are genuine!

"The question whether lager-beer is intoxicating has again been judicially answered in the negative; this time by a court in Syracuse, N.Y. Jacob Pfohl, one of the witnesses, testified that he drank daily from one to two gallons of it and it never intoxicated him. [He] had seen men drink from fifteen to twenty glasses at a sitting without having any affect upon them. Xavier Zelt testified that he could drink fifty to sixty glasses a day and not be intoxicated. Benedict Harberlee testified that he drank from thirty to fifty glasses daily and it never made him drunk. Jacob Mantel swore that he drank from fifty to one hundred glasses per day and he thought it saved his life. All of which may serve to prove that the witnesses were never sober enough in their lives to know the difference between drunkenness and sobriety. That lager will intoxicate, nobody that knows anything about it has any sort of doubt. The difficulty is to induce anyone to go to court and swear that he had been drunk on lager."

(Reproduced from *'Breweries of Wisconsin'* by Jerry Apps (University of Wisconsin Press, 114 N. Murray Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715-1199).)

WAGGON AND HORSES, ELSTREE

Neil Young of Chalfont St Giles, has written to us at length in praise of this pub north of Elstree on the Watling Road. Tom and Olive Hasler have run the pub for the best part of 20 years and Neil writes: 'If you want loud music and garish games machines, DO NOT go there, but if you can accept Radio 2 (at low levels), a dart board, bar billiards, shove halfpenny and other quiet pub games, these are on offer. Do not expect young children to be allowed in the main bar areas but they are welcome in a room to the side of the bars and in the garden. On the other hand, if you have a well behaved dog this will be well received. As far as food is concerned, there is an extensive pub menu plus daily specials... all pretty reasonable and home-cooked! Beers are limited but Tom keeps a good cellar and apart from their normal Greenalls Original and Adnams ales, they have had as specials recently both Wadworths 6X and Tollemarche Sunshine... Although the beers are more expensive than in managed houses, the general atmosphere and welcome are more in tune with the traditional style of pub of my youth than most in today's world'.

A CENTURY OF BRITISH BREWERS 1890-1990

Not a Mastermind specialist subject, but the title of a new book by Norman Barber of the Brewery History Society. The book contains a brief history of all the major brewers who operated in the British Isles during those dates, with even briefer entries for all known home brew outlets. The entries for Hertfordshire expand on those listed in Norman's previous work, 'Where Have All The Breweries Gone?', published some 10 years ago, but although there are entries for the likes of more recent enterprises such as Berkhamsted, Mickles and Swannells, the late lamented Victoria Brewery in Ware has somehow been overlooked. But, as the author admits in his introduction, a book of this size (148 pages of compact, A4, script) can never be complete or 100% accurate. Errors apart, it does stand as the most accessible, comprehensive reference to the history of the British Brewing Industry. It is available at £8.95 from CAMRA Ltd, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, AL1 3BW.

THE DARK HORSE STARTS WITH TWO WINNERS

As previewed in the last Newsletter the new Dark Horse Brewery, stabled at the White Horse, Hertford, is now up and running and in great form.

Owner Ian Harvey, with Rob Jones creator of the award winning Dark Star, have produced two brews of 3.6 and 4.1% a.b.v. which were launched on 23rd November as Light Brigade and Unicorn. They are both bitter beers with plenty of flavour, malty but not oversweet having unexpectedly a marked strawberry aroma.

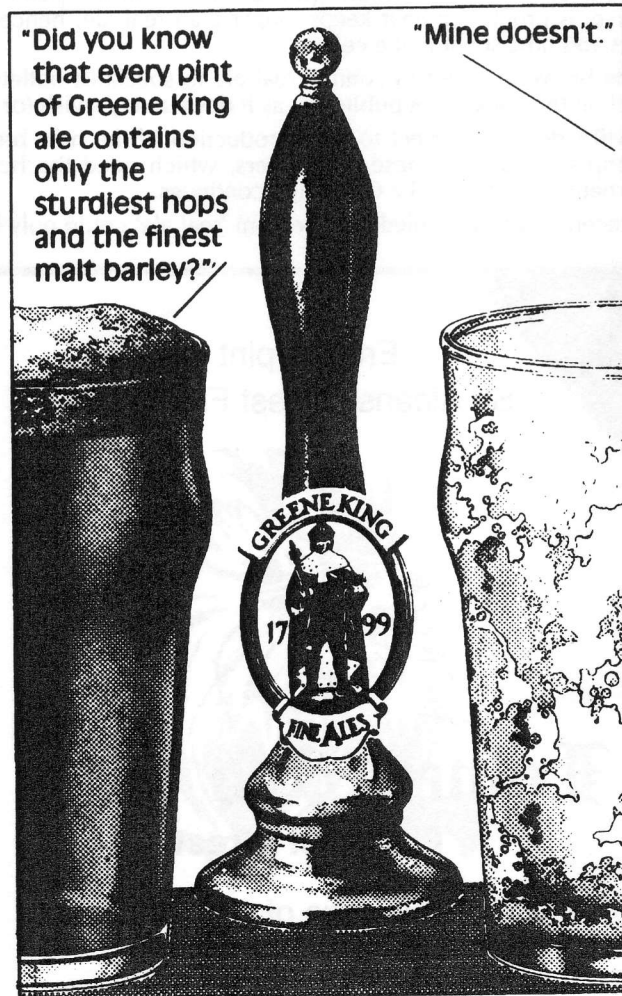
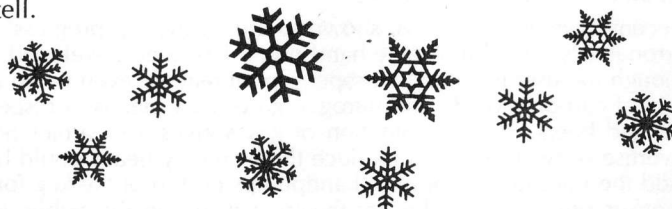
Their distinct flavours are doubly welcome at a time when too many offerings from well known breweries are bland and totally unmemorable.

Unicorn is a splendid full bodied ale which gives an impression of being rather stronger than its 4.1% a.b.v. and is already a firm favourite with White Horse regulars. It is still having some fine tuning which will enhance it further.

A 3.6% a.b.v. "session" beer is, in some ways, a greater challenge to the brewer and Light Brigade is an undoubted triumph. It has a proportion of roast barley which gives it a very distinctive and attractive character, followed by a fine, clean bitter finish. Quite the best beer of this type and strength that this correspondent has had for a long time.

Also on sale at the time of the launch was 4.6% a.b.v. trial brew, a future "Heavy Brigade" maybe?

Where does the Dark Horse go from here? There will be more brews for sure, including some seasonal brews, but will they be able to resist the temptation faced by other brew pubs to expand into supplying other outlets? Time alone will tell.



LOCAL NEWS

Renovations & Refurbishments

The exterior of the **Woolpack**, Hitchin, has been repainted and heavily labelled with 'cask collection' signs. However, the only real ale sighted so far is Boddingtons Bitter.

The **Old White Horse**, Baldock, is being extended.

Work on the new restaurant at the **Rose & Crown**, Chorleywood, is under way. The upstairs room at the **Assizes**, Hitchin, has been converted to a restaurant. The **Woodman**, Stevenage, is being refurbished.

Alterations to the public bar area are in progress at the **Robin Hood and Little John**, Rabley Heath.

The **Acorn**, St Albans, has reopened with a distinct Irish theme.

The **Cottage**, Welwyn Garden City, should also have reopened by now.

The **Blackbirds**, Hertford is now open all day, and Ind Coope Retail have applied to build a single storey extension to the bar area and to convert the outbuildings to a brewhouse and toilets, A possible Firkin pub? And there are rumours that they are also considering converting a Watford pub into one of the Firkin chain. There are also rumours that Wetherspoons have bid for the old Forum china shop in St Albans, the site of the Great Red Lion in years gone by.

The **George** in Harpenden is due to reopen as a Mr.Q's pool theme pub.

A new Bass pub in St Albans, the old Barclay's Bank, is due to open as the **Vintry**.

Ind Coope Retail has applied to double the size of the bar area of the **Crooked Chimney**, Cromer Hyde.

Watford's Wetherspoons pub, due to open before Xmas, will be called the **Moon Under Water**.

Conversion of the bar area of **Pinks Hotel**, Shenley, is underway. Tring Ridgeway Bitter, Youngs Special and Wadworths 6X are available.

Closures

The planning application in respect of the **Harrow**, Bendish, has gone through, despite opposition, and the building is now domestic premises.

Changes

Scottish & Newcastle have sold a number of pubs, including the Swan, Stevenage, the Red House, Croxley, and the Sportsman and Ebenezers, Letchworth, to the 'Magic Pub Company'. They will allegedly be operated as cask ale free houses, and the Swan has already gone real. Ian Miller of the Tilbury, Datchworth, has bought the Admiral Wells, Holme, near Peterborough, and will be brewing there as the Stilton Fen brewery. He is planning to open the pub early December and hopes to be brewing by mid-January.

Comings and Goings

There are new landlords at the **Gloucester Arms**, Hitchin, which now has the label O'Sheas on its hanging sign, and the **Red Hart**, also in Hitchin.

The tenant at the **Red Cow**, Barkworth, is leaving, and the **White Hart Tap**, St Albans, has changed hands.

The **Salisbury Crest**, Essendon, is now owned by Ray Curzen, who also has the 5 Horseshoes in Little Berkhamsted.

The **Hen & Chickens**, Baldock, has also changed hands, Michael Lawrence being the new tenant.

Beer Changes

The **Goldcrest**, Baldock, now has only Bass and Worthington Best on handpump. Mansfield Mild has been reinstated at the **Windmill**, Charlton.

The bar counter and the beer range at the **Chequers**, Woolmer Green, are being extended.

THE LORDSHIP ARMS

THE INN IN THE STICKS
Benington Nr Stevenage.
formerly The Cricketers

Recently refurbished

REAL ALE OASIS for the DISCERNING
DRINKER

Youngs Special, FullersESB, Sam Smith's OBB
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Homemade Bar Food served Daily
Two Course Sunday Roast £5.50

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The new landlord at the **New Found Out**, Hitchin, is currently selling Bass, Courage Directors, and John Smiths Bitter.

The **Woodhall Arms**, Stapleford, has returned to its old beer range: Hook Norton Bitter and Mild, and Butcombe Bitter.

Willet's Manor, Potters Bar, has installed a fourth handpump, while Olympus Wines in the same town, have stopped selling real ale.

The **Red Cow** in Harpenden is now brewing its own beer, Special, a 3.8abv brew.

The **Albion**, Ware, is selling Wadworth's 6X, Boddingtons Bitter, and Flowers Original and the **Woodman**, Wildhill has Eldridge Pope Country Bitter.

The **Lower Red Lion**, St Albans, has been selling New Ale Brewery beers.

The **Vault**, Waltham Cross (another Barclay's Bank conversion) is doing six real ales including Archers Best, Clark's Burglar Bill, and Crouch Vale Millenium. The landlord used to run the **Happy Pig**, also in Waltham Cross.

As well as six handpumps serving a varying range of beers, the **Land of Liberty**, Heronsgate, is also selling several Belgian beers and various foreign bottle beers including Westmalle and Jacobier. Real cider is also available.

The **Black Horse**, South Mimms, is now serving Greene King XX Dark Mild, and it's selling well.

Brewing commenced in November at the **Fishery Inn** overlooking the reservoir at Elstree. Owned by McNicholas the Builders who have their head office further down the lane, the manager, John Welsh, is now the head brewer in charge of the 20 barrel plant. There are five beers: McNicholas Bitter (3.9%abv), Pickled Trout (4.2%), Moby Dick (4.3%), Shipwreck (4.6%), and Lismariane (4.8%). Contact your local branch for a possible brewery trip in January.

Other Bits

The **Bricklayers**, Hitchin, has topped all other Wells tied houses for July's combined sales of Eagle and Bombadier.

The Woodman, Chapmore End, has new tenants who have negotiated a deal with a local taxi firm, whereby if you take a cab to the pub you get a 25p voucher which can be exchanged over the bar.

Allied Domecq the latest name for the old Allied Breweries is negotiating to sell its two Dutch breweries, best known as the source of Oranjeboom.

Fosters are rumoured to want to sell off Courage: Whitbread and Scottish & Newcastle are the City pundits favoured predators.

BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Tuesday 6th December, 8.00pm Branch Meeting & Pub of the Year, **White Horse**, Hertford.

Tuesday 24th January, 8.00pm Branch Meeting and AGM at the **Tap & Spile**, St.Albans.

Contact: Bob Norrish: 0582 763133 x2254(w) 0582 769923 (h).

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Wednesday 7th December, 8.30pm, Branch Meeting at the **Old White Horse**, Baldock.

Wednesday 21st December, 8.00pm Hitchin crawl, starting at the **Kings Arms**, Bucklersbury.

Wednesday 11th January, 7.30pm, post Xmas meal at the **Greyhound**, St Ippollitts.

Wednesday 25th January, 8.30pm, Baldock crawl, starting at the **Bulls Head**.

Contact: Paul Coard: 0462-437249.

WATFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Tuesday 6th December, 8.30pm the Stag, the Swillet, Chorleywood, 9.00pm **Land of Liberty**, Herongate.

Friday 9th December, Xmas Curry in London. Ring contact for details.

Wednesday 14th December, social in St Albans: 8.30pm **Tap & Spile** (formerly Duke of Marlborough), Holywell Hill.

Friday 30th December, post Xmas ramble, meet at Amersham Station 10.30am.

Tuesday 10th January, 1994 Pub of the Year award (provisional).

Friday 13th January, London pub crawl round Holborn area. Ring contact for details.

Wednesday 25th January, Watford Heath social: 8.30pm **Royal Oak**, 9.15pm **Load of Hay**.

Contact: Tony Smith: 0923 221155.

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS

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

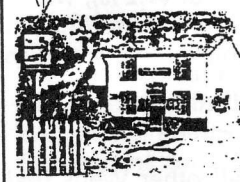
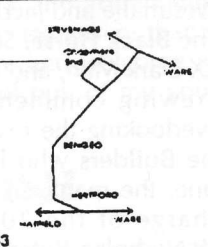
MID-CHILTERN BRANCH

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

ALL HERTS LIAISON MEETING

Monday 16th January, 8.30pm **Estcourt Tavern**, Estcourt Road, Watford (to be confirmed).

NICK & JANE BROWNE
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THE WOODMAN
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Wide selection of sandwiches and bar snacks

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Bed & Breakfast now available

REAL ALE & REAL FOOD

Snacks and Meals

Handcarved Roast Beef Sunday Lunch £5.95

Boddingtons Mild & Bitter,

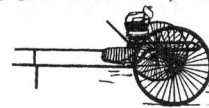
Morlands Old Speckled Hen - Plus Guest Beer

Traditional music sessions start Dec 7

MISPRINTS

As this learned journal has been known to have the odd cock-up of its own, we shouldn't really highlight others' misfortunes. But we will. First a meaty tale from a trade paper quoting the head brewer talking about the success of Charles Wells brewed Kirin Beer in an International beer competition: 'this award is worthy of the trust put in us by Kirin when they asked us to brew their beer for them', and secondly a timely tale from the same journal: 'Offley port is releasing its 1998 Late Bottled Vintage in time for this year's most crucial trading time'. Not to mention the pub, obviously a commercial enterprise, which claims to sell Adman's Bitter.

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Inn off the Green



Datchworth

(formerly Inn on the Green)

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11.00 - 11.00 Thurs, Fri & Sat

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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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