

FREE



# The Campaign for Real Ale

## HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

May 1979

Number 16

### MILD-A POOR YEAR

Although there is no national 'Make May a Mild Month' campaign this year, the Hertfordshire branches of CAMRA will again be campaigning in an effort to try and ensure the future of the real milds now left in the county. A review of the fortunes of local milds since last May, shows why this is necessary, with McMullen's AK possibly being the only one to emerge with any sort of a future....

#### Summer '78

Fears grow about the future of Courage (London) dark mild, as the company continues with its 'centralisation' plan. Prospective outlets fail to materialise as pubs in the South of the county swap from Ind Coope to Courage.

#### Autumn '78

Courage DM quietly disappears, and after a CAMRA visit to Rayment's in Furneux Pelham, it is discovered that Rayment's AK is to meet a similar fate before the end of the year. This excellent brew to be replaced - but many regard its substitute, Greene King (Biggleswade) KK, as a poor one.

#### Winter '78

Further hints from Greene King that production of their Biggleswade XX dark mild is uneconomic, which leads to launch of local campaign to save the only dark mild left in Hertfordshire.

#### Spring '79

Future of XX still in the balance, despite distribution of free advertising material by CAMRA for Greene King, and increased sales. Grumblings of a marked decrease in the beer's quality in certain areas appear ominous.

Strong suggestions by Ind Coope (Romford) that their KK light mild is set to go keg, or even axed to make way for further lager brewing (this despite the keenness of several pubs to install KK on handpumps). One traditionally 'mild' pub - the Abbot John, Wheathampstead - is forced to withdraw the beer as supplies cannot be guaranteed. 'KK OK' badge produced.

#### May 1980...

McMullen's AK will almost certainly still be outselling its partner, Country Bitter, proving there is demand for mild, and the cost of bitter may well be beyond many peoples' pockets, making mild a needy alternative..... if there's any left by then!

#### Whitbread for Choice

-when you can get it!



Remember the slogan 'Whitbread for Choice'? Although thrust on the public a couple of years back, it is now perhaps of more significance, with Wethered's Bitter becoming increasingly available in the Home Counties. Many landlords are taking up the offer made by Whitbread (London) that any tied landlord interested in Wethered's should put their case forward. The trouble is, getting hold of the stuff!

#### Better Ignored

It is more than a well-known fact that the company's Luton brewery hasn't got the best worker-management relations in the U.K., and now the trouble has spread to Whitbread's local distribution depot at London Colney. Wethered's Bitter arrives here from Marlow, Bucks, and is then delivered to pubs mainly in the north of Hertfordshire. The truth is, however, that the London Colney site would have been better ignored in the first place. After only a few years it is been described as structurally unsafe, and economically unsure. The work-to-rule and overtime ban are not the first there.

#### Running Dry

This industrial action is leading to many tied-houses running dry, and publicans livelihoods being threatened. Permission to buy outside the tie has (had) to be granted, but this is proving to be too expensive for licensees of some smaller concerns. Now Whitbread have decided in their infinite wisdom to move the depot to Dunstable (after all, the Luton brewery beer was going to London Colney, and then back to Luton's pubs). The reason for the aggro at London Colney? You guessed.... the threat of possible redundancies when the new depot opens in September. It's tough at the top.

# Around the Pubs

## Cottered's Winning Couple

A local real ale pub has achieved success in a national pub competition. Congratulations are due to Peter & Joan Shaw of the Bell, Cottered, who were recently presented with the Northern Home Counties 'Local Life Award' at a luncheon in the Brewer's Hall, London. The couple received a plaque, a silver tankard and £100 cash to give to the charities of their choice.

Peter & Joan now go on to represent Herts, Beds, Bucks and Essex in the National 'Local Life' final in London on May 9th, being one of 13 finalists out of an entry of 1,600. The pub which is judged to have given the most to the local community will receive a bronze trophy and £3,000 to donate to a charity or community project of the landlord's choice.

The Bell serves Ind Coope Burton Ale (h'pump)

## Leaving the Tanners

People said it would never happen - but it has! After 40 years of association with the Tanners Arms, Bishops Stortford, licensee Marjorie Fuller has retired. The pub has been a regular Good Beer Guide entry for many years, and has remained virtually unaltered since the war.

On 25th April therefore, a small presentation was made to Marjorie by CAMRA to mark the occasion of her retirement. She commented that for the first time in her life she would now be living in a house with an inside toilet!

McMullens plan to carry out 'alterations' at the Tanners, are appointing a manager for the duration of these. Let's hope that the character of the house and the quality of the beer remain unaltered.

Thanks Marjorie, and best wishes for the future.

## Just One of One Hundred & Seventy!

The Tanners Arms is just one of the 170 McMullen pubs currently being 'ticked-off' by four local CAMRA members. Dave Chapman, Danny Blackwell, Philip Lee and Peter Land, from Cuffley, now have only 25 Macs houses left in their crawl around the brewery's pubs.

Some real ale breweries, such as Young's of Wandsworth, have in the past operated an official system for a customer on such a venture, giving some form of 'prize' at the end of what is basically a good publicity stunt for the firm. Macs do not do this at the moment, but should be represented by Mr. Shadbolt when the four lads do their last pub, the Bell & Crown, Hertford, hopefully on June 14th. Perhaps if a few more of their houses were to go 'real', Macs would be prompted to try offering a reward for visiting what is a reasonably large number of tied pubs, spread over a reasonably large area.

## Success breeds Success

The success of the two pubs that Charles Wells acquired from Bass-Charrington - the Jolly Sailor, St. Albans, and the Suffolk Punch, Borehamwood - have obviously been closely watched by the firm. Now the good news is that they are to meet shortly with South Herts CAMRA to discuss more possible inroads into the branch's area.



# Keele A.G.M. Results

The 1979 CAMRA A.G.M. was held at Keele University over the third weekend in April. A wide variety of issues were up for debate and below is a summary of the motions passed that should be of interest to the beer drinker in Hertfordshire:

- 1) To take a stronger line on prices.
- 2) Not to oppose the tied-house system.
- 3) To campaign for the introduction of at least one 'foreign' draught beer of the licensees choice in tied-houses.
- 4) To persuade breweries kegging all their mild to take a cask-conditioned mild from another brewery, where there is a demand.
- 5) To oppose the planned legislation to make oversize glasses compulsory.
- 6) To pay closer attention to the filtration & pasteurisation processes, the use of chemical adjuncts in brewing, and the use of gas pressure.
- 7) To deplore the introduction of keg Stone's Bitter by Bass in many new areas, without trying the cask-conditioned equivalent. (There is at least one outlet locally, in Leavesden, Watford)
- 8) To encourage legislation concerning the use of brand names made famous by cask-conditioned beers, being used to promote keg beers (eg Worthington E).
- 9) To deplore the practice of breweries subsidising clubs and free-trade outlets to the detriment of their tied houses.
- 10) To oppose pub closures, regardless of the availability of real ale.
- 11) To campaign for the preservation of public bars and pubs of architectural interest.
- 12) To objectively monitor the emergence of new breweries, due to the varying quality of beers being produced by such concerns.
- 13) To indicate in future pub guides where access is possible for disabled people.
- 14) To report any pub not displaying a price list to the local authority Trading Standards Officer.
- 15) To prepare and publish a list of keg, cask and lager strengths in view of a misleading one having been recently published in a Sunday 'paper'.
- 16) To support a campaign to end the sale of beer in cans and non-returnable bottles.
- 17) To support landlords experimenting with making provisions for non-smokers.

A fuller report of the A.G.M. will appear in the next 'What's Brewing'. To be sure of getting your copy join CAMRA now, and get THREE MONTHS FREE MEMBERSHIP.

Bob Norrish

## Bird's-eye view

CAMRA always seems to be male orientated and yet there are always a lot of females who support the pubs, principles and social functions, so, how about hearing the woman's point of view? Let me ask you these questions: Way do you go into a pub, is it to accompany your husband/boyfriend? What sort of pub do you like best and how do you judge? If you could choose a pub of the year what would it be like? Do you drink real beer/cider or shorts? What improvements would you welcome in pubs? I would like to see your answers to these questions, and they will be printed in following editions of this newsletter. Please try and make a contribution and send it to Val Page. (editor)

Pam Sim

# Brewing in Baldock



Many people reading this will remember that some of the best beer in Hertfordshire was brewed by Simpson's of Baldock. Indeed, so good were their beers that, unlike their competitors, Simpson's rarely, if ever, bothered to advertise their products.

When the Baldock brewery finally closed in 1965, it was not

because of financial problems, nor because the brewing equipment was out of date. It was a result of the chain of events which led to the Suffolk brewery of Greene King enjoying their present position as one of the dominant breweries in Hertfordshire.

## Early History

Starting from the beginning, though, the earliest record of the Baldock brewery is that in 1780 it was owned by James Ind (whose family later became successful partners with Messrs Coope). The next owners were the Pryors, a notable local family of Quakers and brewers, who were also associated with the Hatfield brewery of Prvor Reid & Co, and more recently with the London company of Truman, Hanbury and Burton. In 1853 the Pryors disposed of the Baldock brewery to two brothers named Simpson, nephews of the Royston brewer, John Phillips.

## Rise to Prosperity

For a century afterwards, the Baldock brewery gained fame and quiet prosperity under the name of Simpson's. Relying on their good name, and without any take-overs of local breweries or ambitious forays into new trading areas, Simpson's carefully increased their annual beer production from around 13,000 barrels in 1853 to some 20,000 barrels after the second world war. Possibly the two most spectacular events to occur in Simpson's first hundred years were the purchase of 12 pubs from Wright's of Walkern in 1924 and the formation of a private limited company in 1935.

## Take-overs

The 1950's found Simpson's with an estate of around 135 tied pubs, mainly in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, a somewhat cramped but otherwise well equipped brewery at Baldock, a healthy trade, and a new pub just completed, their first for many years, the Pied Piper in Stevenage New Town. But brewing was now becoming very big business, and small private companies were easy prey to take-overs by the fore-runners of today's Big Six breweries. Simpson's two closest local competitors, Phillips of Royston (with whom there were still friendly relationships) and Fordham's of Ashwell had just been swallowed up into the empire of the expanding company of J.W.Green of Luton, at that time in the process of changing its name to Flowers, and brewing keg beer on a large scale. Simpson's were also vulnerable to such a take-over; they had no financial troubles, but there were only 5 share-holders, and the prospect of estate duties was worrying. In 1953 the board decided

that the best prospect for the survival of the Baldock brewery was to merge with a public company with similar aims and ideals, and on January 1st, 1954 Simpson's were taken over by Greene King of Bury St. Edmunds.

## Final Closure

Although now owned by Greene King, Simpson's were at first allowed to brew their own range of beers under their own name, while taking in some products of the parent company, including Abbot Ale. They might have continued to do so until the present day, but in 1961 Greene King decided to merge with a much larger company, Wells and Winch of Biggleswade. It became inevitable that Greene King would realise that to operate two breweries within seven miles of each other, and sharing a similar trading area, was not sensible. The Biggleswade brewery was the larger, with enough spare capacity to cope with the Baldock trade, and so in 1965, after four years of operation as Greene King (Baldock) Ltd., the Baldock brewery finally closed. Simpson's name survived for a short while as their Double Top strong ale continued to be brewed at Biggleswade, but this did not prove popular, and now all that is left of Simpson's are a few mementoes in the occasional pub.

## Own Maltings

Simpson's maintained their popularity in their 100 years of brewing by concentrating on a small range of good beers for a local market; the only draught beers were bitter and dark mild, and the only bottled beers for many years were pale and brown ale, strong ale and stout being later additions. Guinness, Bass and Worthington were also bottled at the brewery. Their tied houses were mostly within a range of 20 miles of Baldock, within a circle bounded roughly by Braughing, Ware, Welwyn, Luton, Cloughall, Sandy and Royston, with outposts at various times, e.g. New Barnet, Dunstable, Bedford, St. Neots and Clayering (Essex).

Simpson's employed about 50 people at Baldock, where their own maltings (named after Mr. Ind) were also located. Hops were brought in from Kent, while the water came from their own wells. At one stage fresh yeast was sent to Baldock twice a week by rail from Mann, Crossman and Paulin's brewery in London, but this led to inconsistent beer and was stopped.

The main part of Simpson's brewery was demolished in the late 1960's, but the brewer's house and some outbuildings survive and have recently been restored. A suitable conclusion would be to remind ourselves that some of the finest ales can still be found in former Simpson's Pubs - the Fox at Aspenden, the Bell at Therfield, the Plough at Wallington, the Yorkshire Grey and Red Lion at Stevenage, the Plough at Ley Green and many others.

P. Lerner with acknowledgements to A. Bankham and K. Osborne.

## Information Needed

Unlike Simpson's there is a lack of information on local breweries, especially St. Albans, and the Hertfordshire branches hope to rectify this by producing a book. Please contact M. Cornell tel Stevenage 60675(h) or W. Gdn 27551 ext 27(w) if you can assist at all with material.

# Pub News

Barley At the Fox & Hounds, Greene King IPA is now available on handpump alongside (usually) Courage Directors and Adnam's Bitter on gravity. Boxworth Cambridgeshire's answer to the Barley Mow at Tyttenhanger, the Golden Ball, now has heated toilet seats.

Kinsbourne Green Handpumps for Wethered's Bitter are soon to be installed at the Harrow.

Reed The Cabinet has replaced Courage Directors with Marston's Pedigree on gravity.

St. Albans After being closed for several months, and at a cost of around £150,000, the Mile House has reopened as a Beefeater Steakhouse. To help swill down what looks reasonable value food in the split-level dining area, Wethered's Bitter is selling on handpump at 38p a pint.

St. Albans The Hare & Hounds is also now selling Wethered's Bitter on handpump, pushing the number of outlets for this beer in the city to six.

Tyttenhanger The Barley Mow currently has Weston Cider on gravity, and is rumoured to be securing delivery of an extremely rare beer shortly.

Naturally conditioned bottled Belgian beers are also expected to be on sale there soon.

Wareside Sold last year by Ind Coope, the Chequers, now a free house, has Everard's Tiger (44p a pint) on handpump, and Adnam's Bitter is to follow shortly.

Wheathampstead Sadly, as mentioned on Page 1, the Abbot John has withdrawn Ind Coope KK mild.

Wheathampstead The Wicked Lady has added Greene King Abbot, and more recently, Westcrown Regal Ale on gravity, to the existing range of beers.

P.S. Watch out for the possible disappearance of Ruddles' beers from the local free trade, due to a forced cut-back on production at the Rutland brewery.

## Branch Contacts

### HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Dave Burns.....Tel : Welwyn 7305 (h)

### HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Peter Lerner...Tel : Watton-at-Stone 616 (h)

### HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Pete Foster....Tel : Bishops Stortford 59942 (h)

## Newsletter

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced monthly by the Herts South, Herts North and Herts/Essex Borders branches of CAMRA. Any up-to-date information for future editions would be gratefully accepted by newly-wed editors...Val & Nick Page, 28, Inkerman Rd., St. Albans. Tel. 33810 (h).

## Membership

Why not join CAMRA and help protect part of Britain's heritage.



I wish to become a member of CAMRA Ltd. I agree to abide by the Memorandum & Articles of Association of the Campaign. I enclose £4.00 as my annual subscription. (£5.00 - husband & wife)

Name..... Address.....

.....

Date / /1979 Signature

Send to CAMRA Ltd., 34 Alma Rd., St. Albans, Herts  
Ask for further details from the Membership Secretary.

# What's On

'Make May a Mild Month' in Hertfordshire - come along to any of the mild socials listed below - there's bound to be one somewhere near you.....

### HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

7 May White Horse, Burnham Green (Ind Coope). 'May Bank Holiday Madness'. Mild social with Herts North branch including tug-of-war, yard of ale and darts. Cottonmill Clog dancers performing. 7pm start.

15 May Railway Bell, E. Barnet Rd., New Barnet (Ind Coope). Darts v Enfield & Barnet branch. 8pm start.

20 May Farriers Arms, St. Albans (McMullen). Starting point for cricket v Herts North. Continues about 2.30pm in Verulamium (weather permitting). All welcome - 15-a-side if necessary!

22 May Old Bull Hotel, Ware (Ind Coope). Branch Meeting. 8pm start.

24 May Horse & Jockey, Watling Street, Caddington (Free House - beers include Greene King XX). Mild social with Mid-Chilterns and South Beds. 7.30pm start.

### HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

8 May Chequers, Woolmer Green (Ind Coope). Branch Meeting. 8pm start.

12 May Visit to Paine's Brewery, St. Neots.

15 May Gloucester Arms, Great Offley (Greene King). Mild social with South Beds. 8pm.

19 May Crown, Aston End (Ind Coope). Mild social. 8pm start.

22 May Rest & Welcome, Haultwick (McMullens). Mild social. 8pm start.

23 May Old Red Lion, Shephall, Stevenage (Greene King). Mild social. 8pm start.

29 May Star, Standon (Greene King). Mild social with Herts/Essex. 8pm start.

30 May Cabinet, Reed (Free House - beers include Greene King XX). Mild social. 8pm start.

### HERTS/ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

2 May Coach & Horses, Nazeing (Ind Coope). Mild social. 8pm start.

9 May Visit to Tolly Cobbold Brewery, Ipswich.

14 May Three Horseshoes, Spellbrook (Greene King). Branch Meeting. 8pm start.

30 May Maltsters Arms, Abridge (Greene King). Mild social. 8pm start.

### FORTHCOMING BEER FESTIVALS

28 Jun 1979 Hertfordshire Beer Festival at and Hatfield Polytechnic (off A1, nr. Hatfield).  
29 Jun Lunchtime & evening sessions. Souvenir glass

5 Jul 1979 Essex Beer Festival at the Lion &  
-7 Jul Lamb Hotel, Chelmsford.