

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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KK — beyond the Pale? by Helen Green

CAMRA's plea for choice of beers has met considerable success over the last few years. But some of this success is illusory. Having seen the demand CAMRA's created, the Big Six have revised their attitude towards Real Ale by homing in on the market for strong, pricey and therefore profitable, bitters. But the fight for the survival of once popular milds reveals the true measure of the Brewer's 'altruism'. Last year both Courage and Rayments axed their milds and now Allied is using mafia-like tactics to kill off their KK Light Mild. That good old maxim of supply meeting demand no longer applies; you get what you're given and in most pubs that means keg 'pale'.

Save it

The battle to save KK is of long standing for the mild, the sole survivor of Benskin's brewery, is clearly a nuisance. The Brewery has failed to advertise it or maintain quality and supplies. Under such pressure landlords and drinkers alike have been forced out of the market. And yet, if Ind Coope were a smaller brewery the local demand for KK would automatically warrant its continuation. CAMRA, determined that such 'minority' and unprofitable tastes should not go unnoticed by Ind Coope, have put forward to Hugh Campbell, their managing director, the following plan:

- 1) Continue production of KK at Romford, but guarantee it by putting some effort behind marketing;
- 2) Switch the brewing to Burton, where suitable facilities exist for small-batch brewing;
- 3) Failing 1) and 2), stock another brewer's light mild. McMullen, Greene King and Morrells, for instance brew not dissimilar beers.
- 4) As an alternative to 3), relax the landlord's tie for light mild so he can obtain supplies where he likes.

However, in view of the recent trend in the production of mild, it must be recognised that catering for the consumer just is not what the Big Breweries have in mind.

XX Good news for Greene King XX Mild drinkers on page 3! Ind Coope should take note of this campaign and what can be done with a little effort.

GRAFFITI CORNER

Cowardice rules OK—if that's OK with you.

Herts Guide Escapes!

The long awaited guide to real draught beer in the county should be available in June after the usual delays in its production. The new 72 page edition lists well: over 450 pubs in the area selling real ale, has town maps, illustrations and articles on brewing history.

This year's guide has been completely reset and the opportunity taken to expand pub entries and add comments to some of the towns themselves. It costs 45 pence plus a stamped addressed envelope from Dave Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Hertfordshire. It should also be on sale in pubs and bookshops through the county. Copies of the 1979 Good Beer Guide — recently number one in the Best Sellers list — are still available through your local branch. Your details of branch contacts are given on the back page of this issue.

The new action packed, Essex Guide is now on sale from Pete Foster, 60 Pynchbek, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, cover price is 50 pence or send 62 pence to include postage and packing.

LOCAL LIFE

Congratulations to local licensees Mr and Mrs Peter E. Shaw at the Bell, Cottered for winning their regional prize in the Brewers Society's Local Life Award. The aim of the award is to discover pubs that serve their local community well and the Bell certainly has this in mind by selling real Ind Coope Burton Ale.

Don't miss the Herts Beer Festival!

For details see the back page.



There were three things wrong with the American troops based in Britain during the Second World War, ran the old joke — they were over-paid, over-sexed and over here.

Now it seems we can lay another crime at their door — over-fizzy.

The problem was that the American troops and airmen didn't like traditional English ale. It was too warm and flat for their lager-conditioned palates.

What they did like, however, was our bottled beer — much sharper. But glass bottles, like everything else, were hard to come by in those days of wartime rationing. So the airmen on the bases in and around North Herts and Mid Beds turned to their nearest big brewer, J. W. Green of Luton, and offered to supply the company with all the necessary malt and hops — also rationed, of course — if Greens could come up with an answer.

And so.....

A newspaper cutting from a local paper, dated December 1944 reveals what happened next: In the writer's own words:

"J.W.'s have tackled the problem from a novel standpoint, and made history in British brewing.

"In effect they have given the Americans bottled beer from barrels, comparable with the brew they used to get at home".

And if you think that sounds like an apologetic PR man's description of keg — congratulations. You are perfectly correct, as the next paragraph of the report reveals.

"The beer is processed somewhat differently from English beer. It is chilled, filtered and carbonated (which means "fizz" is put into it) and then racked under counter-pressure into special casks."

Although the anonymous writer's description of the kegging process was spot-on, he was slightly inaccurate in saying that Green's had actually made history — Watneys had been independently experimenting with keg beer for the club trade back in 1935.

But the Luton brewery men must have been amazed with the popularity of their new beer among the GIs stationed in Britain. Lorries would apparently call from far and wide to pick up supplies, and not a moments delay was allowed before the beer reached the lips of the gallant US airmen, according to the report.

"The special serving apparatus which is needed for the beer, including an icebox for the cask, is fitted onto jeeps, and when the great bombers touch down after smashing at the Hun, out dash the jeeps with a drink for the crews."

A Chilling Prospect

With horrible irony the report on Green's contribution to the war effort concludes: "Perhaps when the war is over the Luton people will themselves be able to try this special beer so much liked by the boys from over there."

Alas for the Luton people, and the Hertfordshire people too, most of them have to go out of their way now to get anything else but that wartime "bottled beer in a barrel." The company that took over five Hertfordshire breweries, and hundreds of Herts pubs, were obviously impressed by the way the Americans took to their fizzy drink.

Flowers of Beds

In the immediate post-war years the cost of converting to keg, with its large capital investment in containers, bar equipment and so forth, outweighed the apparent advantages to the company, and Green's concentrated on acquiring other breweries from Sussex to Sunderland.

But in 1955, after taking over the brewery — and the name — of Flowers of Stratford-upon-Avon, Green's began converting their pubs to keg in a big way using Flower's Original bitter brewed at Stratford and kegged in Luton, a beer "particularly suitable" for the process

according to the brewery.

Finally in 1969 Whitbread, who had taken the company over seven years earlier, closed down the old Park Street West brewery in Luton and concentrated everything at their £9 million fizz-only megakegery in Oakley Road. The Brewmaster, once the proud trademark of the Luton brewery had become a victim of the war on drinkers — and Green's old customers are the losers.



PAINES TRIPPER

BY KATHY ROBERTS

Paine's Brewery of St. Neot's will carry on producing their dark mild as long as publicans want it! A group of fifteen Herts North members was told this on a recent visit to the Market Square brewery in May. However Paine's are only producing a couple of barrels of mild a week, and most of this is taken by one pub. There have been rumours that mild had been dropped from their range of beers but Paine's seem happy to carry on producing even small quantities to satisfy their customers.

Head Paines

The whole brewery is on a small, and somewhat antiquated, scale, and with fifteen people tramping around it looked pretty crowded. We were shown around by the head brewer's son, who is incidentally studying at Hatfield Poly, and as this was my first brewery visit, I was interested to hear what he had to say. Most of the equipment was of a fair vintage, including the mash tun plates made from cast iron, rather than the more recent gun metal. The smallness of the brewery is reflected by the fact that they do not grow their own yeast but buy it from a London brewer — which one he wouldn't say.

For e.g.....

After a very informative visit, we were invited into the tasting room to try Paine's XXX bitter and the E.G. (named after the Eynesbury Giant from a nearby village.) Paine's also produce a third beer on a regular basis, the 1041. Unfortunately there was none of their delicious mild to taste, nor was this to be found in St. Neot's itself afterwards.

REAL ALE & FOLK

by Sandra Ward

Real ale and folk music are a traditional part of the English way of life and CAMRA has helped to preserve traditional ale and public houses. There are also many folk clubs that are keeping traditional folk music alive, many of which are held in real ale pubs.

DRINKERS VOTE XX

CAMRA officials visiting Greene King headquarters at the beginning of May for a liaison meeting were greeted with the heartening news that, for the six-week period ending 26th April, sales of XX Dark Mild from Biggleswade brewery have soared to 20% above the equivalent period last year.

Credit to CAMRA

Greene King intimated that much of the credit for this significant improvement in sales can be directed towards CAMRA's all out publicity drive to draw attention to this tasty but sadly unadvertised brew. Greene King stated that there were now no plans to discontinue XX, and that they would consider supplying XX to Rayment's outlets able to maintain a regular order.

While the future of XX is therefore secure for the time being, no doubt if sales begin to fall again, Greene King will once again wish to reconsider the economics of continuing to brew it. So we urge all readers who wish to try this unusual and appetising ale, to continue to ask for XX at your local Greene King outlet.

Pressure Policy

At the same meeting, Greene King emphasised their commitment to stop pressure dispense for their beers, which in other words means that we shall have to fight every inch of the way if we want to see real ale, served by traditional methods, in any more than the present meagre 30% of Greene King pubs. Greene King have, however, honoured their long standing promise to supply real ale (including XX Mild) by handpump to the newly modernised Crooked Billet at Symonds Green, Stevenage, a favourite haunt of real ale drinkers, and also shortly to announce plans to bring back real ale to one, and possibly two, of their pubs in Hitchin. Elsewhere, excluding the stalwart minority of Greene King pubs who have consistently maintained their licencees' and customers' faith in real beer, we must redouble our efforts to persuade the remaining Greene King landlords to persuade their brewery that real ale leads to satisfied palates and increased profits! Perhaps we should remind them of the success story of Greene King's Hertfordshire subsidiary, Rayment's of Pelham, two thirds of whose pubs are now happily satisfying their customers with ale as real as nature intended.

by Peter Lerner

Ranters Folk Club in Enfield have been trying to promote folk music in that area but without real ale and have realized (with just a little help from me) that the two often go hand in hand. Many people who enjoy real ale also enjoy a traditional sing-song and many folk music lovers enjoy good ale. Therefore to promote folk music and real ale Ranters Folk Club are holding a real ale and folk evening with the support of the local branches of CAMRA at the Merryhills in Oakwood. It will take place at 7.30pm on Monday June 11th and admission is 75 pence. The Merryhills sells Ind Coope Burton Ale and bitter onhandpump and these will also be available in the meeting room on gravity.

As well as performers from the folk club there will also be some spots from CAMRA members along with guest artist Adrian May, a contemporary singer-song writer who blends the traditional with the modern just as traditional ale has often had to adapt to the modern world without destroying its traditional character.

COME ALONG ON THE 11th — EVERYONE WELCOME

QUICK ONES

RED IS DEAD

Watney's Red is finally dead.

The most aggressively marketed of all national keg beers, launched in a multi-million pound blaze of publicity just eight years ago, is now being withdrawn from the pubs.

Reason given by Watney's for the withdrawal of Red is that the beer has been "overtaken by other developments" — meaning, of course, the real ale revival and the local bitters Watney's have been forced to introduce to keep pace with customers' demands.

But the axeing of Red, once the cornerstone of Watney's empire, represents a tremendous about-face by the company. The beer was the descendent of Red Barrel, launched in 1936 as Britain's first ever keg beer, and at one time more than 50 other brewers took Red Barrel for sale in their own pubs. For the last year, however, Red has been restricted to just a few pubs in London and the South East — and in the meantime Watney's more than half-a-dozen cask-conditioned regional bitters have taken its place.

NEW BREW

Charles Wells are introducing a new bitter called Bombadier with an OG of 1042. It is expected to be on sale in 14 free trade outlets soon. What about a real mild Charles?

ALE IN CLUBS

In order to assess the increased popularity of real ale in Sports and Social Clubs, which are not generally open to the public, a survey is to be carried out of clubs in Hertfordshire and the assistance of club members would be appreciated.

The information required is type of beer, method of dispense and bar prices, also availability i.e. all week or weekends only. If your club hasn't real ale why not ask around other members to see if there is a demand and if there is then get on to your club committee.

All relevant information to Eric Sim, 10 Heron Way, Hatfield, Herts. Tel. Hatfield 60647.

CHERRY B—RIGHT?

Supplies of Whitbread beers can be variable during the current industrial troubles, and many customers are often pleasantly surprised by the guest ales bought in by the company's pubs to replace their normal supplies. But beware — the Cherrytree in Welwyn Garden City is selling John Smith's nasty bright beer through its pumps. I know that desperation can drive one to extremes — but this is too much.

MARRIAGE LINES

Best wishes to Nick and Val Page who have handed over editorship of this edition of the newsletter to become Mr. and Mrs. They were sent off in true style at their excellent reception at the Black Lion, St. Albans where a delegation from the branch helped to polish off a firkin of Rayment's BBA. At the time of writing they are suffering in sunny Crete — a place not known for its abundance of decent ale. Nick has, however, already started on the first Good Taverna Guide which is eagerly awaited by the Greek public. From next month they will be resuming their posts as joint editors when, no doubt, a new air of marital harmony will pervade the pages of this esteemed publication. Any articles or letters would be gratefully received by them at 28 Inkerman Road, St. Albans. Contributions from the fair sex are particularly welcome.

PUB NEWS

Sleepshyde — the Plough is selling Burton Ale on pump.
Newgate Street — both the Crown and the Coach and Horses are selling handpumped Ind Coope beers.

Markyate — the Swan is selling Wethered's bitter

Ware — the New Rose and Crown is awaiting handpumps.

Berkhamsted — the George is selling the new ABC (Ind Coope) ale.

St. Albans — the Goat, in Sopwell Lane, recently sold for £115,000 should be extending its range of real ales soon.

Bishop's Stortford — the Star has Ind Coope bitter on handpump and the Old Maltings range of ales now reads Charrington's Crown and IPA, Bass, Wethered's and Ridley's bitter and mild — the first Ridley's outlet in the county. They also feature live rock music every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Standon, near Puckeridge — the Bell now sells Burton Ale on handpump.

Braughing — the Golden Fleece is selling Burton Ale on pump — the first of four pubs in the village to sell real ale.

Great Offley — the Crusty Loaf now has its Adnams on handpump and has added Marston's Pedigree on gravity.

St. Pauls Walden — the Strathmore Arms is now serving its Adnams from a newly installed handpump.

Watton-at-Stone — the Bull now sells Burton Ale on handpump.

KEEP WEARING THOSE BADGES

Real ale contacts can be made in the most unlikely places. The morning following my return from the CAMRA National AGM, real ale and CAMRA could not have been further from my mind as I waited anxiously for a transit bus to take me from a long-term car park to Heathrow Terminal 1, on a weeks visit to that big beer desert of the west, Ireland.

Two gentlemen in the bus queue remarked on my little enamel CAMRA badge, which adorns a certain jacket of mine. Both men came from the North Herts area, and are real ale drinkers although not members. We exchanged pub-knowledge chat and they expressed interest in what we do, and hope to attend a local social. So if you are a CAMRA member, don't forget to wear your badge. If you are not, but you like real ale, watch out for the CAMRA logo on a small badge, and the wearer might know something to your advantage.

Steve Barber.

MEMBERSHIP



Why not join CAMRA and keep some of Britain's heritage alive.

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

Name..... Address

Date / /79. Signature

Send to CAMRA, 34, Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts.
Ask for details from The Membership Secretary.

WHAT'S ON

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

June 10th Sunday Cricket vs Mid Chilterns branch at Verulamium Park, St Albans, 2.30. Meet at the Farriers Arms, Lower Dagnall Street before. All welcome.

June 11th Monday Folk Evening at the Merryhills, Oakwood — see 'Real Ale and Folk' on page three.

June 12th Tuesday BRANCH MEETING at the Three Horseshoes, Garston, 8.00. (Ind Coope).

June 29-30th Fri-Sat. HERTFORDSHIRE BEER FESTIVAL at Hatfield Poly, on the A1 south of town. See below for details.

HERTS—ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

June 20th Wednesday Social at the Rose and Crown, Hoddesdon, 8.00 (Wethereds).

June 25th Monday BRANCH MEETING at the Merry Fiddlers, Fiddlers Hamlet, Near Epping, Essex, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

June 13th Wednesday BRANCH MEETING at the Woodman, Nuthampstead, 8.00 (Greene King, Tolly Cobbold).

June 19th Tuesday Social to inaugurate the branch handpump at the White Hart, Baldock, 8.00 (Greene King).

June 26th Tuesday Branch Darts Championship, preliminary rounds and social at the Sir John Barleycorn, Hitchin, 8.00 (Ind Coope).

HERTS BEER FESTIVAL

Its beer festival time again and the third Hertfordshire Beer Festival promises to be better than ever. It takes place at Hatfield Polytechnic on Friday 29th and Saturday 30th June. Opening hours are normal for the area but extensions have been applied for. Over 20 beers will be available with real cider and food. Entertainment features Crustie Socke Ensemble and Dave and Pauline on Friday evening with Julian Stace Quintet and Pete Hogman on Saturday. There will be an entrance fee of 30 pence which at lunchtime will entitle you to a free pint. For details contact Tony Burns on Welwyn 7805.

ESSEX BEEREX

The Essex Beer Exhibition will be held at the Lion & Lamb in Chelmsford on 19th to 21st July. Watch this space for details.

BRANCH CONTACTS

Hertfordshire North Branch
Peter Lerner ☎ Watton-at-Stone 616

Hertfordshire South Branch
Dave Burns ☎ Welwyn 7805

Herts—Essex Borders Branch
Pete Foster ☎ Bishop's Stortford 59942

STOP PRESS: Branch 'Twinning Evening' 23rd June — Stevenage Old Town 5.30 — Coach to Cabinet, Reed 7.30. Contact Dave Bundy — Stevenage 60324.